

Re: ernie f

by David M, 02-Jan-20 10:40 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

...If anyone sees Santa before next Xmas day let him know I found the hat he dropped! I didn't know Santa had gotten so big. No wonder he doesn't come down our chimney any more! Must be all those millions of mince-pies he eats while on his rounds!

😊😊 Very good, ernie. Hope you have a productive 2020.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 24-Mar-20 05:44 PM GMT

So the trick to this once-a-day exercise thing is to go places where no one else goes or to chose places that have wide paths. Gloria and I did our exercise walk at Alice Holt woods today – the wide path option. For one reason or another I have not been able to get out anyway this year until today. What a lovely sunny day! It hit 16 degrees mid-afternoon. I didn't take my camera so no pics but did encounter a Red Ad, a Comma and three Brimstone. Also heard two male Greater Spotted Woodpeckers tapping trees at one another.

On return home there was a Brimstone in our back garden and a Red Ad in the driveway.

Spring has definitely sprung.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 24-Mar-20 07:23 PM GMT

That sounds like the plan Ernie 😊 I'm glad you managed to get out 😊 I'm just hoping that the unthinking muppets don't ruin it for the rest of us that NEED to get out into the country for our mental health 😊 Stay safe.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 24-Mar-20 10:58 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

So the trick to this once-a-day exercise thing is to go places where no one else goes or to chose places that have wide paths. Gloria and I did our exercise walk at Alice Holt woods today – the wide path option. For one reason or another I have not been able to get out anyway this year until today. What a lovely sunny day! It hit 16 degrees mid-afternoon. I didn't take my camera so no pics but did encounter a Red Ad, a Comma and three Brimstone. Also heard two male Greater Spotted Woodpeckers tapping trees at one another.

On return home there was a Brimstone in our back garden and a Red Ad in the driveway.

Spring has definitely sprung.

Good to see you return, ernie, and well done on avoiding the crowds.

I think you might be the first to spot a Red Admiral this month on here. Given how mild last winter was, I'm surprised there haven't been more.

Re: ernie f

by Janet Turnbull, 25-Mar-20 12:03 AM GMT

It seems almost embarrassing to be out enjoying the butterflies, but I did the same as you and found a place well away from the madding crowds. Not that any were out today. 😊

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 25-Mar-20 10:11 PM GMT

David – oops – you spotted my error!

They weren't Red Ads, they were Peacocks!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 23-Jun-20 05:48 PM GMT

Tuesday June 23rd

Spring butterflies passed me by this year. Coronavirus has made me re-think so many things as I am sure it has many people – so I took the government advice and stayed at home.

Until June that is...

It was safe enough in Hampshire to go local and my annual Silver Studded Blue survey needed to be done and that is what finally gave me the impetus to get off my backside and venture warily outside.

My God, what's that big, yellow thing in the sky? Oh, yes – The Sun – I had almost forgotten about that!

Since Broxhead Heath where I do this survey is less than around 10 miles from me – that was pretty local I thought. But I have not finished my survey yet so the results will have to wait for another post.

Virtually next door to Broxhead Heath is Alice Holt Forest – just a mile further as the crow flies (but possibly 10 or more as the butterfly flies!) so that is where I went today.

Alice Holt is popular with people but when I got to the car park there was only one other car there before me. Great – social distancing will be a doddle I thought. Immediately I came across a runner and had to dodge out of the way – then another runner, then a woman on her mobile walking along totally oblivious to her surroundings, then a dog-walker and then a cyclist! What the...?

The car I had seen in the car park was certainly not big enough for them all, the dogs and the cycle. Blast – I had forgotten about the locals!

Never mind, the butterflies were just as numerous as the people.

My targets were Silver-washed Frit, White Admiral, Purple Emperor and Purple Hairstreak. I was prepared to see none of them and just satisfy myself with the Small and Large Skippers, the Meadow Browns and Ringlets, the Large and Marbled Whites and the Commas. But it was my lucky day because I DID see them all. The Frits decided to keep dashing about and when one stopped just long enough for me to set my camera it laughed at me and flew off again before I was even able to point it roughly in the right direction. I got a fair record shot of a Purple Hairstreak reasonably low down but they often creep around, half hidden behind those pesky Oak leaves, and this one was no exception. The Purple Emperor was fooling around in the canopy and didn't come down to play while I was there...

... but the White Admirals were something else. Settling on leaves, flowers and the ground and allowing me to get close. On one occasion, one came up to me and posed no further than a metre away from my foot. But my best photo opportunities were when they sat up on branches at my eye-level – no unpleasant bending required on my part. I was particularly startled by the way the sunlight glinted off the blue underside of one individual. I had never noticed this effect before.

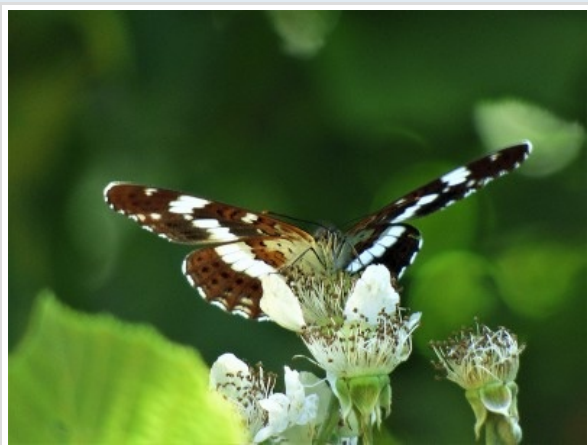
Before I left there was a very early second brood Holly Blue on the ground – perhaps my earliest ever second brooder.

Since I was on a roll I decided to do another local trip – to Odiham Common – one of my local White-letter Hairstreak sites. I have been there a few years now with some limited success but last year, after repeated visits I saw none and it really did worry me that they may have become extinct at this site. Still – ever the optimist and with so many firsts-of-the-year already under my belt I gave it a try.

I set up camp in my usual spot and craned my neck up to the tops of the somewhat raggedy Elms. It didn't look too promising. I scoured the brambles and thistles – loads of Small and Large Skips, Marbled Whites galore and one Comma nectaring directly above another (the pair forming a semicolon perhaps?). But no Hairstreaks. I was just about to leave when out the corner of my eye I espied a zig-zaggy flying object (ZZFO). I span round just in time to see it land way up on a Sycamore. I focussed my camera and took the shot of it without really being sure but when I zoomed it up on the camera screen it was definitely my target butterfly. Hopeless picture to post here but hey – I had just proved to myself they had not gone extinct here after all – they had just been avoiding me all last year – the little blighters.

Well that was it – I left Odiham Common a very happy bunny. On my return I celebrated with a glass of wine – well that was my excuse anyway.

Cheers.





Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-20 08:08 PM GMT

Great to see you back Ernie 😊 Lovely White Admiral Shots, a great way to strike your come back 😊🇺🇸 and I might have to nick your ZZFO – it would fit in nicely with UFW 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 24-Jun-20 03:43 PM GMT

Welcome back, ernie. Good to hear from you again. It's been a uniquely frustrating period but things are slowly improving and at least nature will have had a little 'breathing space' without we humans intruding in the way we normally do.

Certainly doesn't sound as though your White Admiral population has suffered. Glad you got such a great audience with them.

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 24-Jun-20 04:17 PM GMT

That's a splendid White Admiral backlit shot, Ernie! A definite 🇺🇸 for that one... 😊 They do seem to be having a good year.

Good to hear from you again, and it'll be interesting to learn how your SSBs are getting on.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 25-Jun-20 11:36 AM GMT

Wurzel: The White Ads are doing fine at Alice Holt – I expect the number will build up quite soon now. I am unfamiliar with the term UFW – guess Unidentified Flying wotsit?

David M: Thanks for the welcome back. It's good to be back, although the frequency of my entries may not be quite as much as previous years.

Dave: Thanks. The SSBs are doing OK, ups and downs with the weather though. Report due in early July.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 25-Jun-20 11:50 AM GMT

Where shall we three meet again...?

On a pile of poo at half past ten.



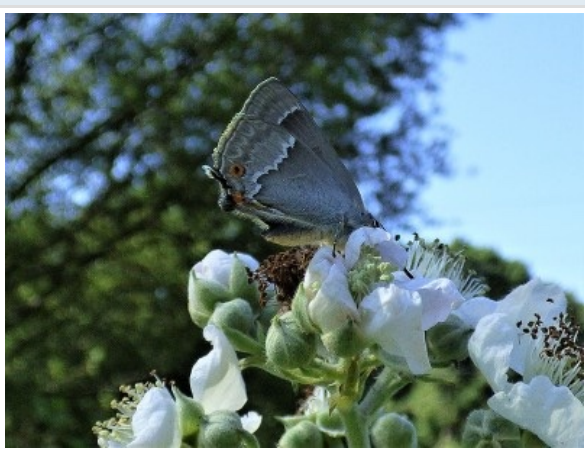
My apologies to The Bard.

That from Alice Holt yesterday – as was this...



The Purple Hairstreak season has started around here. Yesterday I found three Purple Hairstreaks at Alice Holt Forest, none of which were close enough for a decent shot.

Today at Binswood – another three, but one came down and posed for me. I could not resist so I took a whole bunch of this individual – many of my efforts are the same as loads of other pics I have taken of this species before but one was rather odd. I moved around to the rear end and was amazed at how a tinge of blue appeared out of the silver of its underwing.



It never opened its wings for me – I guess it was far too hot to bask – it was 8.30 am when I arrived and it was already clocking in at 22 degrees!

The Small/Essex Skipper population had exploded on the meadow, far outnumbering the meagre numbers of Large Skipper and the Marbled Whites were more numerous than in previous years too. I think the land management at Binswood has improved – or it could just be the predominantly drier weather has been a benefit – not sure. Not to mention the Meadow Browns although they are always in huge numbers at this location. But only two Red Ads, two Comma, a single Ringlet and no SW Frits or White Ads at Binswood (yet)! One possible Purple Emperor flying in the canopy but it was so fleeting I cannot be certain.

Re: ernie f

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jun-20 03:52 PM GMT

Welcome back Ernie. Glad to hear you are OK, I was wondering.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-20 05:59 PM GMT

Love the 'triple' shot Ernie 😊 It's great the way they all lined up so nicely for the photo 😊 I've always thought that there was something of the Bard in your prose 😊😊

UFW = Unidentified Flying White 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 28-Jun-20 08:24 AM GMT

Nice work with the Purple Hairstreak, ernie. Was it nectaring on those brambles? I don't think I've ever seen one feeding on flowers, neither in the UK nor in Europe. 🤔

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 28-Jun-20 01:08 PM GMT

Neil

Yep, I am fit and well. Well, not fit exactly... but well.

Wurzel

Although there are only two species represented in that dung shot I do love it when you can get three species in a single photo, something I might start up is a triple-shot collection if I can (but maybe without the dung).

David

Come to think of it I am not sure I have found Pstreaks nectaring from Bramble before. I'll have to look back through my past pics. If you click on the photo as posted in order to enlarge, it does appear that you can see its proboscis stretched out into a bramble flower.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 29-Jun-20 06:08 AM GMT

David: Re that "nectaring" Purple Hairstreak picture. I have now reviewed all my 140 photos of Pstreaks I have taken over the years and not a single one shows any individual nectaring from ANY flower, not even perching on one. I looked in the internet and only two pictures show a Pstreak perching on a flower head but not nectaring from it. I was so surprised I went back and took a closer look at my pic just to prove to myself that is WAS a Pstreak and it certainly is.

My pic shows it with its proboscis unfurled and stretching out to a neighbouring flower head to the one it is perching on – so it is obviously doing something. Whether it is actually nectaring from the plant or licking honeydew from its petals is open to debate but I think the latter explanation is more likely (unless anyone knows anything more about this).

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 29-Jun-20 10:53 AM GMT

Departed from Alton in full sunshine really early this morning. Arrived 15 minutes later at Odiham Common under a 100% cloud cover. Blast!

Nevertheless had a trouser encounter with a Marbled White!



Which I then lifted off with my finger for closer scrutiny.



If the sun had been out I guess none of this would have occurred. However there was the odd break in the cloud but not for very long.



Re: ernie f

by bugboy, 29-Jun-20 05:47 PM GMT

David M wrote:

Nice work with the Purple Hairstreak, ernie. Was it nectaring on those brambles? I din't think I've ever seen one feeding on flowers, neither in the UK nor in Europe. 😊

They don't do it often but they do do it. I came across this little fella last year at Bookham who I stayed with for about half an hour as he gorged on the Bramble blossom. I even disturbed him a couple of times lining up shots but he simply fluttered back to the flower. I've no idea how long he was feeding for, he was doing it before I found him and I left him to it after filling my boots with images!

<https://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/download/file.php?id=149938&mode=view>

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-20 08:41 PM GMT

Lovely Marbled White shots Ernie - I hate it when you get beaten to a site by the cloud, some of my most frustrating days have seen me racing to get somewhere before the blue sky disappeared 😞 but on the plus side the cloud worked in your favour with the Marbled White on the trouser 😊 I saw a Purple Hairstreak nectaring on Bramble last year as well, at the time it was very hot and had been for a few days so I reckoned that it was desperation as they honeydew had dried up? A quick google of "what do Purple Hairstreaks feed on" brought this up...

"What do purple hairstreak butterflies eat? Caterpillars: the leaves and flower buds of English oak and sessile oak. Adults: mainly honeydew (a sweet substance secreted by aphids feeding on tree leaves), but sometimes also nectar sources like bramble" 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by trevor, 29-Jun-20 08:43 PM GMT

Some very nice images recently. Ernie, especially the White Admiral underside. Pity about the ' wrong species ' on that pile of pool.

Great stuff, keep well,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by David M, 01-Jul-20 11:56 AM GMT

{quote=bugboy-post_id=155484-time=1593449249-user_id=13753}

David M wrote:

Nice work with the Purple Hairstreak, ernie. Was it nectaring on those brambles? I din't think I've ever seen one feeding on flowers, neither in the UK nor in Europe. 😊

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Interesting stuff, Paul. The only thing I've ever seen Purple Hairstreaks feeding from are unripe hawthorn berries, where they 'dab' at the part which joins the stalk with their proboscis. There must be something they particularly like contained in these berries as I see them in hawthorn almost as often as I see them in oak trees.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 01-Jul-20 02:18 PM GMT

Thanks to you all. It's nice to get out again, even if it is cloudy a lot at the moment.

Re PStreaks on Bramble. Thanks to Bugboy for sharing his pictures. That confirms they do.

And as if by magic, I visited Binswood again today and what do you know? Yes. Another PStreak feeding on a bramble flower. Like London buses, you don't see one for ages and then two come along at once!



And here is another shot of the one from yesterday.



Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 01-Jul-20 02:49 PM GMT

Dodging the showers today but still pretty good.

My first Peacock since the lockdown. My second and third Summertime Holly Blue (males) and my first Gatekeeper of the year. Plus the Purple Hairstreaks, SW Frits, White and Red Admiral, L Skip, Meadow Brown and Ringlet, S & L & M White and Comma.



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-20 08:30 PM GMT

Love the stained glass Silver-washed Ernie - I'd like that one in my collection 😊🌍👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 02-Jul-20 01:09 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

Dodging the showers today but still pretty good.

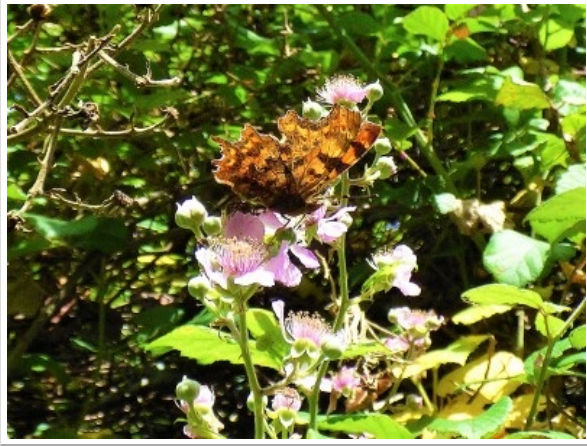
My first Peacock since the lockdown. My second and third Summertime Holly Blue (males) and my first Gatekeeper of the year. Plus the Purple Hairstreaks, SW Frits, White and Red Admiral, L Skip, Meadow Brown and Ringlet, S & L & M White and Comma.

Admirable return given the vagaries of the weather right now, ernie. I daresay Hedge Browns won't be long round my way – much as I like them it always makes me a bit sad as they herald the latter end of summer. 😞

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 03-Jul-20 11:50 AM GMT

Wurzel – I love trying to get those "Stained glass" backlit shots and the Frits are one of the best. But the Commas also can put on a show – like this one today...



David – I know what you mean but there is still a lot of the summer to go and the dreaded virus seems to have dropped-off a bit round our way. Sometimes I am glad I don't live anywhere near a beach!

Re: ernie f

by Goldie M, 03-Jul-20 12:00 PM GMT

Hi! ernie, my Daughter has just retired to a house near the beech and tells me it's been horrendous there, car's parked every where and loads of people 😞 Goldie 😊

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 03-Jul-20 12:08 PM GMT

3rd July 2020 – A day in the life of a Binswood Purple Hairstreak.

Breakfast time.

There seems to be something tasty under this petal.



Brunch.

And there is definitely something tasty on the top of this petal.



Lunch.

Something tasty at the base of this flower head.



High Tea

Something tasty on the top of the flower head too.



Dinner.

There is something tasty just about all over these brambles. Yummy!



Dessert.

Now I thought I saw a lovely young lady fly by. I wonder where she went?



Ah, there she is. I wonder if she would like to go out for Supper with me?



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-20 06:22 PM GMT

Love the style of reportage Ernie and cracking shots too 😊 I think we can categorically count Bramble as a food plant for Purps 😊 Or it could be covered in Honeydew 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 03-Jul-20 08:52 PM GMT

Wow! That bramble is quite a magnet for them, ernie. I'll have to reassess my approach to this species now and start paying a little bit of attention henceforth.

Re: ernie f

by trevor, 03-Jul-20 10:50 PM GMT

Your open wing female Purple Hairstreak is very mrgreen worthy, Ernie. 🍷
As soon as I return from Wiltshire I will be haunting my local patch for them.

Great stuff, keep well,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 04-Jul-20 08:22 AM GMT

Thanks everyone. This sequence of shots of a male investigating a bramble flower was only one. There was another individual further along the hedge doing much the same thing and that was added to the two occasions I have seen them do that recently – but never before. I wonder if the long dry spring has anything to do with it? Perhaps the Oak-top honeydew is not available to them?

It seems I left the word "Dessert" in the text. I had originally intended to show another picture for this entry of a Purple Hairstreak probing inside an almost completely closed bramble bud but I somehow lost the pic in my over-zealous culling of the hundred or so shots I took that day!

Nevertheless I found it fascinating that he would actually do such a thing given all the open blooms around.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 06-Jul-20 11:26 AM GMT

Binswood again! At this time of year I visit almost every day for the Purple Hairstreaks.

I found this one on a bramble again, feeding from a flower head well and truly "gone-over". In fact the one adjacent had already started to berry!



For some reason a male was creeping around in the grass and even opened its wings to bask at one point. It was not newly emerged, instead flying to this point from, you guessed it, another bramble bush.



At home, on the garage, an almost black moth which I think is called the "Crescent".



Re: ernie f

by meiga, 06-Jul-20 01:20 PM GMT

Hi Ernie

The black moth is the melanic morph form of the Box-tree moth.
Cheers

Maurice

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 06-Jul-20 02:46 PM GMT

I wonder if Purple Hairstreaks nectaring on brambles may be a feature of the summer, Ernie – I saw three doing this down at Bookham this morning, though none was prepared to open their wings like your lovely female. Splendid shot! 📷 😊 Things are advanced though – I've been picking edible blackberries since the last few days of June on my local patch, and more are appearing every day. (I always associated blackberrying with the end of the school holidays as a kid, but not so any more.)

The dark version of the Box Tree moth can catch the light rather like a male Purple Hairstreak and produce a subtle violet sheen, making this recently-arrived pest species rather an attractive insect!

<https://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/download/file.php?id=153677&mode=view>

<https://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/download/file.php?id=153676&mode=view>

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-20 07:37 PM GMT

More great Purple Hairstreak shots Ernie – I can see why you visit there everyday! 😊📷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 07-Jul-20 06:52 AM GMT

ernie f wrote:

...I found this one on a bramble again, feeding from a flower head well and truly "gone-over". In fact the one adjacent had already started to berry!

That makes more sense if they are after the maturing fruit which replaces the flower, ernie, since I've seen them prodding their probosces in hawthorn berries plenty of times.

Maybe this propensity to actually nectar from flowers is one of the vagaries of this ultra-strange season?

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Jul-20 12:33 PM GMT

Maurice & Dave – Thanks for the moth ID. Thankfully I have no Box in my garden!

David – I am sure you are correct. I have been over Binswood many times these last three years and as I said, never before saw one on a Bramble flower before, and yet now its almost as if I have come to expect it!

Wurzel – Thanks, yes I consider myself very lucky to have so many PStreaks to watch every year low down at this location which is barely 4 miles from my house.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Jul-20 12:41 PM GMT

Binswood for PStreaks again!

But first a short intermission...



Just good friends?

... and now back to the main feature.

I have started to arrive early, today it was 7.15 am. Cool to start but sunny and it soon warmed up.

The first one I saw was on the ground creeping through the grass licking leaves. It was not the only one doing this either.



Within the next hour I saw at least a dozen. Mostly in the bramble and low oak boughs. Some good open-wing shots before it got too hot.



Re: ernie f

by trevor, 07-Jul-20 02:49 PM GMT

10 Points each for the open wing male and female Purple Hairstreaks Ernie. 🍷
Even the fussiest among us would be happy with those shots.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-20 07:06 PM GMT

A great series of reports on the Purple Hairstreaks Ernie, love the last two shots of the male and female 🍷🍷😊

I wonder if the hot sun earlier in the year dried a lot of the aphid honeydew and the recent rain has washed off much of what remains so the PHs are coming down to the bramble blossom more than usual.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-20 08:14 PM GMT

A cracking set of shots again Ernie – I think I need to look up this Binswood and possibly make a trip there myself next year if it's this reliable 🤔📷 I reckon Neil idea could provide the explanation 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 08-Jul-20 11:44 AM GMT

Trevor: Thanks for those 20 points. I sure did get lucky that day. Arriving early paid dividends. I was there from 7.15 to 8.45 or thereabouts. At the start the only ones I saw were on the ground. A few minutes later they were moving along the hedgerow. Then a little while later, the hedgerow and the lower oak boughs. And so on, as it heated up, they got busier in flight and went higher too. By 8.45 there were many in the air at once but few came down and none by then seemed to want to open their wings.

Neil: Exactly my thinking regarding the heat drying the honeydew higher up on the oaks although I have to admit I hadn't thought about the rains later washing it down like you did. Excellent idea – and it kind-of explains why they were on the ground licking the leaves of low plants.

Wurzel: Binswood is a fascinating place. It was once a small medieval Deer Hunting Forest and is still partly surrounded by a Ha-Ha (and is still inhabited by Roe Deer). There was once a building known as King John's Hunting Lodge on a neighboring hill overlooking the woods (which before that was an Iron Age Hillfort skirted by a Roman Road which is still discernable in the land today). Even now, Binswood is an idyll because no roads pass through or directly adjacent to it. But it's a double edged sword. Once you are there it is great but it is difficult to find the best way in and equally difficult to park close by.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 08-Jul-20 12:04 PM GMT

Broxhead – Silver Studded Blue – End of 2020 season survey results

Introduction

I have now performed four years of records for this site, the last three are consecutive and with some degree of procedure in that I have visited the lek area regularly during the flight period of the Silver-studded Blue and followed the same planned route every time, only counting those individuals within a 180-degree field of view looking forwards – anything that flies into view from behind is not counted. Typically it is a walk at pace but unlike other people I have met that walk an official transect, I count anything I see, not just those within a few feet of me. Of course I will double-count to some extent when there are many in and around the lek all at once but I believe this is compensated for by the ones I inevitably miss – especially the later season females who will be low and camouflaged by the heather while egg-laying.



Habitat

Broxhead Common is a small dry lowland heath lying between Kingsley and Bordon in North-East Hampshire and about a mile from the edge of Alice Holt Forest. To the north is Alton and the Chalkhills of the North Downs. Broxhead itself lies on the Upper Greensand and is therefore a very sandy heath. Its specialities other than the SSB's are Small Copper, Common Heath Moth, Brown Argus, Dartford Warbler, Stonechat, Nightjar, Woodcock, Hobby and the rare Sand Lizard. The lek area for the SSB's is just the other side of the metal gate on the main lay-by between Kingsley and Bordon. I study this area in particular because I have discovered it is a good predictor of the health of the entire Broxhead colony which in fact spreads out over the entire heath, with pocket colonies dotted here and there with the odd individual flying between – but most staying within a short distance of where they emerged. By focussing my attention on this relatively small patch I can do my transect in about 30 minutes – it would take most of the day to cover the entire heath! This means I can repeat the transect more frequently and thus identify population trends over time. Broxhead Common lies adjacent to two other heaths (Kingsley and Sleaford) but the incidence of SSB's at those is negligible to none and likely this is due to the lack of the relevant ant species the SSB needs to complete its life-cycle.

History of the study

I did perform a full count of the heath in 2010 without any form of procedure but it took a number of visits each around 2 hours duration over some days around the peak of the flight period. I don't intend to dwell on this other than to say I was surprised at the healthy overall count of over 550 individuals and by this means identified the more densely populated areas and I discovered where the main lekking site was.

My first proper study was in 2018. Numbers were much the same across the entire reserve as they had been in 2010 (I did a lek count AND a full heath count that year), so presumed at the time this was the "normal" population size. But in 2019 there was a shocking surprise drop in numbers. So what would 2020 bring?

2020

This year we had a long wet winter followed by an exceptionally dry spring. The heath at the end of May was parched dry and many of the lower heather plants had yellowed. It was, I thought, touch and go whether we would get much of a heather bloom and how the butterflies would fare with such a reduction in nectaring opportunities. As the days rolled on the SSB's started to emerge, males first as usual. The first incidence I saw was on 28th May (2 males). This was my earliest ever record of this species at this site, a clear 9 days earlier than in 2018 and 18 days earlier than in 2019. It was odd to see them flying with so few heather blooms on show. It was very worrying. The dry spell continued and the numbers started to increase along the same curve as they did the previous year only much earlier. We did get the odd spot of rain and thankfully - those heathers that had not died back completely started to bloom. I breathed a sigh of relief. And then, just as the numbers were starting to build nicely the temperature crashed and we got four days of rain with a breeze. After that cleared away I discovered the numbers had been culled back but a further spate of sunny weather corrected that and the rain had actually been a great benefit to the flora with many more heather bushes now blooming. This explains the double peak with the dip between on the 2020 chart below, the previous two years were pretty much consistently fine for the entire flight period by comparison.

Overall, this year the numbers were slightly better than last year suggesting the population not only survived the crash of 2019 but were clawing their way back to the "good times". Only further annual reviews will be able to establish this for sure. Possibly the species has a boom and bust cycle over years such as some other species do. Whatever it was in 2019 that had such a drastic effect, the males were hit a lot harder than the females, and since it is the number of females that dictate future size of population it should be of no surprise that the colony held up into this year quite well.

The peak of males was 118 on date 26th June.

The peak of females was 24 on date 24th June.

The total population in and around the lek over the entire flight period was therefore

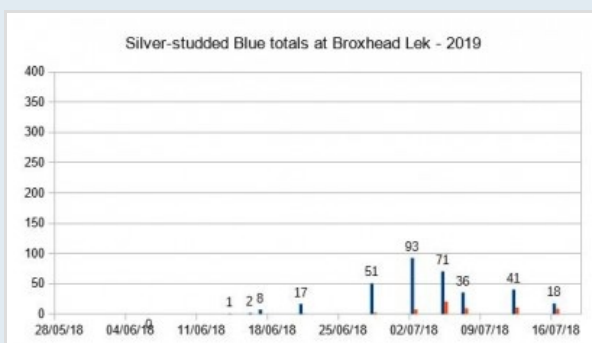
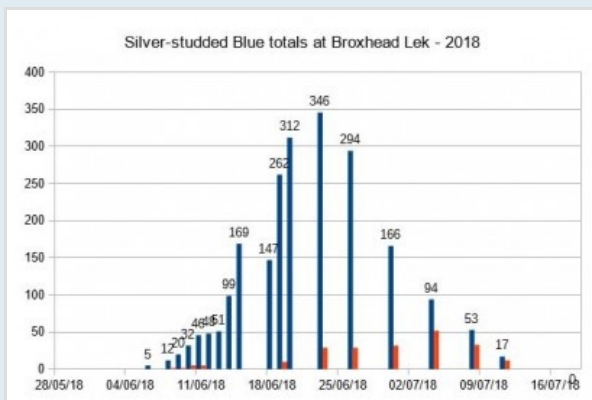
$$z = 118+24=142$$

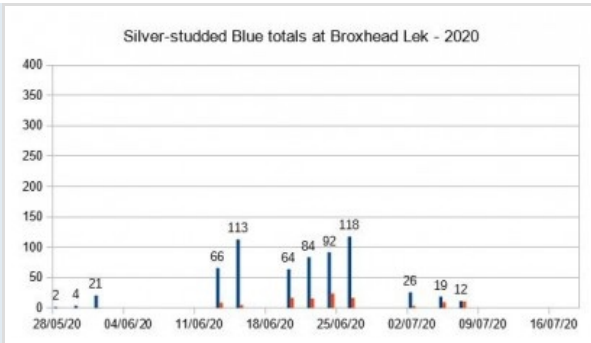
Since my observations in previous years concluded that the lek area typically contains 2/3 of the entire site population, the estimate of the entire population at Broxhead this year is therefore...

Total site population P = Population in and around lek * lek to site ratio

$$P = z * 3/2 = 213$$

Last three years trend charts for comparison. Blue bars are males, red bars are females.





The double peak suggests I have undercounted though. Not all of the 113 males I saw in the first peak can be assumed to be included in the 118 males in the second peak because the dip suggests some of those died in the cold snap.

Post-script: Other sightings for Broxhead this year.

During this season I saw a female SSB with wobbly wings, obviously not yet fully pumped-up after newly emerging and yet already she was vigorously wing-rolling, albeit in an odd "wings-ajar" kind-of way. Pictures of this can be found under the "General" forum entry for wing-rolling.

Plus my very first male Sand Lizard in fully resplendent mating colours. As I approached - it did not move. Then I realised it was dead. Sad. It reminded me of Monty Python's Parrot sketch. Beautiful "plumage" but dead. Does thinking that make me a bit weird? Probably. My wife (who I was out walking with at the time), moved it off the path and covered it with foliage, giving it a decent "burial".

The birds were very good this year. I stood watching two Dartford Warblers (a pair) for ages, taking pictures. They went to ground for awhile then suddenly appeared off to my side. How on earth did they do that I wondered. Then the two I had been watching re-appeared in front of me again. Oh, there were TWO pairs! Marvelous.



Oh, yes and the Stonechats too...



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-20 06:38 PM GMT

Very interesting to read your report Ernie 😊 Down out way the Heather got nipped back by an unseasonable frost 🙄 - it damaged most of the Ling and Bell Heather on the site I visit and I couldn't get back to see if they'd managed to hold on and take advantage of other nectar sources. 😊
Great shots especially the Dartford Warbler - a cracking little bird that one 🤩👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 09-Jul-20 08:13 PM GMT

You've certainly put considerable effort into those studies, ernie, fair play to you. Interesting to read about the annual fluctuations.

Lovely bird images too. How do you do it?

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 10-Jul-20 01:21 PM GMT

Thanks, guys.

Re the Dartford Warbler picture. I just got very lucky. I once lived in a house actually in the New Forest for 5 years. That was a time before my butterflying days – then my main nature passion was birding and in all that time I never got a picture of a Dartford Warbler anywhere near as good as the ones I am getting at Broxhead now.

Cheers

Re: ernie f

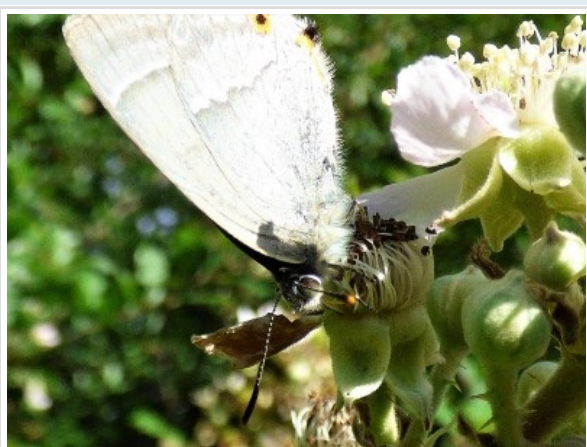
by ernie f, 10-Jul-20 01:38 PM GMT

Butterflying can become an obsession of course – we all have it don't we? But at the moment my particular obsession is with PStreaks. I make no apologies – they are a fantastic little creature and Binswood for the third year running seems to be remarkable for them.

Yet again today they were down on the bramble. After a cloudy start, I arrived in sun at 8am. They were already down! And they were still down at 10.30am. Sure some climbed the heights of the oaks by then, but I found an enclave of a very high hedgerow, pretty much untouched by human hand and there they were, at least four of them, all brambling happily away.



One seemed glued to one specific bramble flower for about 15 minutes.



At one point two joined in at the same time.



And sometimes they would open their wings for me.



Tearing myself away from them, what else was there? Ah, the Small Coppers – of course. I see a small number of them here every year and today I saw four. This one appeared to be freshly emerged.



As was this wobbly-winged GV White.



A lovely Holly Blue sunning itself.



And a mating pair of GV Whites.



Not to mention the Commas, Red Ads, M Browns, Gatekeepers, Ringlets, S&L Skips, S, L&M Whites and SW Frit.

All in all, a productive couple of hours.

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 10-Jul-20 08:02 PM GMT

Fascinating report about the SSB, Ernie. As Wurzel also mentioned, a couple of Surrey sites I visit (Fairmile Common and Dawneys Hill) were affected by a late frost at the start of May, which caught the heather blooms. It was this, rather than the lack of rain, which meant that flowers were crisped and sparse for the unusually early emerging butterflies. I hadn't realised this, but the guy who looks after Fairmile pointed it out to me on my first visit and expressed concern for the population there this year.

Your Purple Hairstreaks are amazing – their consistent behaviour in coming down and nectaring on the brambles is reminiscent of some White-Letter Hairstreak populations that descend from the tops of elm trees. I saw a few PH do this at Bookham earlier this week, but not in the way you have described and photographed – quite extraordinary. 😊 Worth some of these I'd say... 🍷🍷

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 11-Jul-20 10:36 AM GMT

Dave – Thanks for the confirmation as to why the heather had died back so much. It didn't occur to me that a short spell of frost at just the wrong time could have had such a dramatic effect but it clearly did.

The PStreaks are quite stunning at Binswood this year. At nearby Alice Holt Forest (no more than 4 miles away) they are there in good numbers but don't seem to want to come down as much as the ones at Binswood. But then, there are few mature hedgerows at Alice Holt!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 11-Jul-20 01:08 PM GMT

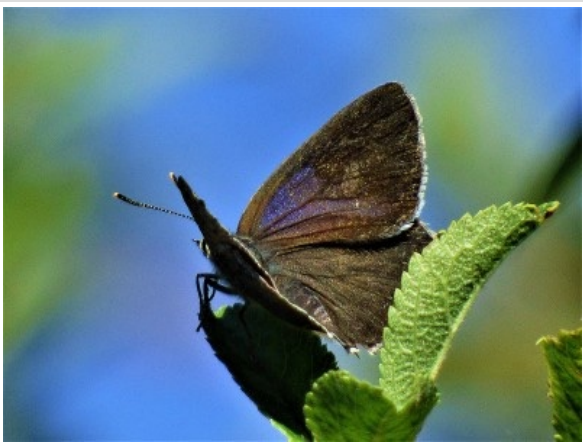
I think I might need professional help. I can't stop going to Binswood to see the PStreaks!!!

I got there at 6.45am today and saw my first in flight at 7am. By 7.20am they were feeding on the brambles again and generally messing about low down.





Yep, that was a PStreak too, an odd backside shot.





I think I have seen a Pstreak do a wing-roll before but cannot ever remember capturing it in a photo. Until today that is.



I'll try and crop these two pics closer and put them on the wing-roll thread under the general forum.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-20 06:53 PM GMT

With Purple Hairstreak photos like those Ernie there is no wonder that you keep going back – it's not an obsession it's just common sense 😊😄🌱🌿

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 12-Jul-20 10:13 AM GMT

Binswood (again) for Pstreaks.

I have come up with a whole new classification for Butterflies. It simplifies everything. There is the classification of "A Purple Hairstreak" for Purple Hairstreaks and there is the classification of "Not A Purple Hairstreak" for everything else.

So today at Binswood we had this...



A Purple Hairstreak (APH).

And this...



Not a Purple Hairstreak (NAPH).

Underneath the NAPH, backlit by the early morning sun.



On a more serious note. I was at Binswood for 1 1/2 hours this morning and only saw 3 Purple Hairstreaks. Looks like my obsession with them is about to be parked for another year.

Here is one of my favourite "Purple Patches" at Binswood. It doesn't look much but that small Oak in the centre of the picture harbours a colony and they come down to the hedgerow in front of it. It's where I got today's picture of one.



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-20 04:49 PM GMT

Great set of Purps again Ernie – but the backlit Common Blue is my fave from your latest offering 🤔👍 I think there is something about the conditions this year – I've seen Purps down at Bentley, Alners Gorse and even today I got a surprise one down on Nettles on the Down at Grovely Wood– I can't recall a season like it – it's as if they're on the Price is Right! 😊😄😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 12-Jul-20 09:33 PM GMT

You're really cleaning up with these Purple Hairstreaks, ernie. 🤔

This is probably the trickiest species for me and you have made it look so easy.

We have them in south Wales but I don't know a genuinely reliable place where they can be seen and photographed like you have been able to do. If I see them at all it's via good fortune so hats off to you for your ability to track them down and get such close up images.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 13-Jul-20 12:28 PM GMT

Wurzel – I get it! Come on down! You are our next butterfly on "The Price is right"! 🤔

I liked that backlit Common Blue too. The two pics are not of the same butterfly but both were within a few feet of one another, basking in the sun together.

David – I consider myself lucky to have Binswood near me. It was where I saw my first ever Pstreak and where I have seen the most individuals in any given year.

Re: ernie f

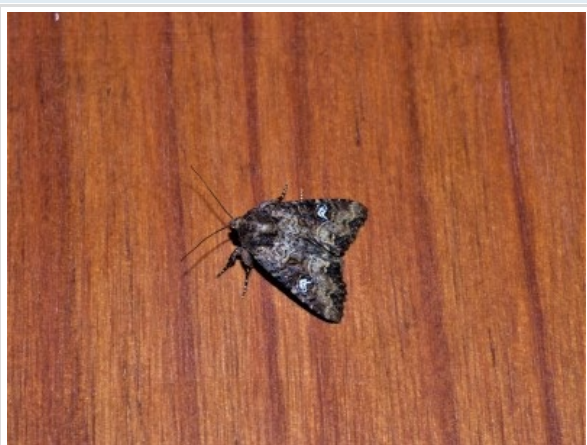
by ernie f, 13-Jul-20 12:43 PM GMT

Alice Holt today, not for any particular reason, but just to make a change from Binswood!!!

Did see 4 PStreaks there, but all were up in the oaks flitting about as they do. Also L & M White, L Skip, MBrown, Ringlet and Gatekeeper, R&W Ads, H Blue, Peacock, Comma and SW Frits.



Also this moth in my house last night. Don't know what it is for sure. Common or Lesser Common Rustic perhaps?



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-20 07:34 PM GMT

Cracking stained glass Silver-washed Ernie 🤔🇩🇪 If I remember (probably incorrectly 😊) the only way to separate the two Rustics is to 'gen det' them 🤔🤔

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 14-Jul-20 05:10 PM GMT

Interesting view of the Silver Washed Fritillary, ernie. Looks like a nice stretch of woodland clearing too. No wonder you're seeing plenty right now. 🇩🇪

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 17-Jul-20 07:13 AM GMT

Wurzel – Thanks for the info on the Rustic. I wasn't even sure it was one of the Rustics.

David – Its a nice spot in Alice Holt, favoured by Purple Emperors and Essex Skippers – neither there at the time I took the pic of the SWF though.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 17-Jul-20 07:14 AM GMT



Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 17-Jul-20 12:50 PM GMT

Hurrah, the Grayling are back at Folly Hill. 5 seen today, 4 of which were in the lek area and all of them fresh.



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-20 07:27 PM GMT

Great shots – is that Grayling an aberrant as the 'eye' looks pretty oval – if it was a Ringlet it would be an ab.lancelotta (or some such 😊) 😊 😊 🇩🇪

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 17-Jul-20 08:33 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

Hurrah, the Grayling are back at Folly Hill...

Gee, the summer is simply **flying by**. Silver Spotted Skippers and Brown Hairstreaks next week, in all probability.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 18-Jul-20 10:14 AM GMT

David – Yet again another butterfly that seems to have started flying slightly earlier this year.

Wurzel – What an Eagle-eye for detail you have. I never even noticed the flattened wing-spot. Maybe an ab but since it is very fresh the wings still appear to have that "concertina" effect which may be squashing in the spot somewhat. It may become more circular as the wings flatten out more? Unsure.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 20-Jul-20 12:45 PM GMT

I've got a book on butterflies published only 10 years ago in 2010. In this book it tells me that the usual flight period for the Dingy Skipper is from mid-May to end-June and then a possible second brood sometimes for a short period in the middle of August.

So why is it I saw two of them today at Noar Hill?! 🤔



Yet another example of a species flying earlier than expected. I cannot remember ever seeing a 2nd brood Dingy at Noar Hill anyway.

It looks like a Dingy to me. Its not some kind of day-flying Dingy-like moth that I am not aware of is it?

Re: ernie f

by Allan.W., 20-Jul-20 04:14 PM GMT

Hello Ernie ,

Amongst the hoards of Chalkhill Blues flying this morning at Temple Ewell Downs ,Kent i too saw a single reasonably fresh second brood Dingy Skipper, maybe a little early (although not much !),we see second brood Dingys at several local sites (mid-Kent),most summers .
Regards Allan.W.

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 20-Jul-20 09:58 PM GMT

Given the early season, we could be seeing a few other extra broods around, and maybe in spots where they don't usually appear. That's a nice sighting, Ernie! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 21-Jul-20 01:51 PM GMT

Allan – Nice to hear you have 2nd brood Dingies round your way too. I have yet to see a Chalkhill this year but then I have not yet visited my usual haunts for them yet.

Dave – And today I thought I saw a 2nd brood Small Blue too, but it was fleeting so no pics I am afraid.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 21-Jul-20 02:07 PM GMT

I counted 49 Peacocks at Noar Hill today and I only visited half the reserve. Also R Ad, L, S, GV and M White, S, L and E Skipper, SW and DG Frits (4 of the latter), S Heath, C Blue, poss S Blue (2nd brood) and another 2nd brood Dingy, bringing my total for this species this week to 3.



Small



Essex



Backlit DGF

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-20 08:18 PM GMT

Great shots of the Dingies Ernie 😊 I saw two or three today which brings my total to 5 this season so I think it'll be a good year for second brood Dingies 😊 It's good to see them though I don't know what impact it'll have on numbers next year – the odd one or two shouldn't really matter 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 22-Jul-20 12:04 PM GMT

For those of you who do not know but who have an interest, Comet Neowise is nearing its closest approach to Earth right now. It can be found in the North-western sky. When it gets dark enough (around 11.30 pm where I live ' cos I live in a town) it is a naked-eye object, a fuzzy core with a hugely long and fanned-out tail, the tail flaring upwards. If you live in the countryside and have little or no air pollution, you may even see it just after sunset. Best if you have a pair of binoculars though.

Locate the constellation "The Plough", also looks like a saucepan. Find the lowest star in the "pan" part of the constellation, the one closest to the horizon, then track vertically down toward the horizon and look for a smudgy thing.

Have fun.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 22-Jul-20 12:06 PM GMT

Oh – don't forget – never look directly at the sun, especially not with bins, not even as its sets.

Re: ernie f

by trevor, 22-Jul-20 12:19 PM GMT

Cheers for the info, Ernie. The plough is one constellation I do know. With your description I should be able to locate the Comet.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 22-Jul-20 12:56 PM GMT

Good luck, Trevor. My wife and I saw it last night. Its great through bins and imagine even better through a scope.

Re: ernie f

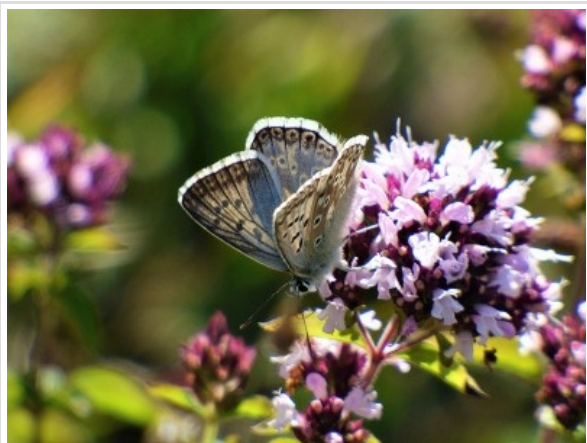
by ernie f, 22-Jul-20 01:13 PM GMT

I am thinking of starting a photo gallery of images of where a butterfly was a split second before I take a picture but in that moment decides to fly off!
Today at Magdalen Hill I lost count how many times that happened. For example...



Yep - that would have been a fantastic shot of a Chalkhill Blue.

But I got a few decent shots in.





And there were 2nd-brooders galore, including Small Blue, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Copper.





Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-20 08:28 PM GMT

I reckon they can hear the focus wheel/autofocus motor Ernie 🤖 We butterflies are a bit like fisherman – often regaling others with our tales of 'the one that got away' the similarity is even more marked when it comes to Grayling 😊😊 The shots you did manage to get are great Ernie 😊 and the one of just the plant is a cracking image of Bird's Foot Trefoil 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 22-Jul-20 09:37 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

...I am thinking of starting a photo gallery of images of where a butterfly was a split second before I take a picture but in that moment decides to fly off!

God, if I were to do that I'd threaten the bandwidth limit of the forum, ernie!

Good to see you've got plenty of Chalkhills to keep you occupied and the pristine Brown Argus is a major bonus. 🇬🇧

Re: ernie f

by Goldie M, 24-Jul-20 09:13 AM GMT

Hi! ernie, you could send me a Brown Argus please it's one I've missed this time 😊 lovely shot 🇬🇧 Goldie 😊

Re: ernie f

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jul-20 06:54 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

I am thinking of starting a photo gallery of images of where a butterfly was a split second before I take a picture but in that moment decides to fly off!

Ah yes! Plenty of those myself Ernie 😊😊

{quote=Wurzel-post_id=156464-time=1595446114-user_id=9821} I reckon they can hear the focus wheel/autofocus motor

Or get spooked by the little focus assist lamp that some cameras have. I always turn it off on mine since I noticed the effect it can have.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: ernie f

by trevor, 25-Jul-20 06:49 AM GMT

Like others, I must have had 100's of butterflies lined up perfectly in the viewfinder only for them to make a quick getaway as I was actually shooting. This happened only yesterday, I had a Wall Brown displaying perfectly on Vipers Bugloss, only for it to flap it's wings a couple of times and move to an awkward position, then it was off!



Had it stayed put for one more second, it could have been the shot of a lifetime!. There was some bad language.

Re: ernie f

by David M, 25-Jul-20 06:10 PM GMT

Wall Browns are one of the worst for doing that, ernie. 😞

If it were easy though it wouldn't be such fun. 😊

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 27-Jul-20 12:10 PM GMT

Wurzel – I think the main reason I get so many pics of butterflies with the butterfly actually absent is because I take liberties with them. I often set my camera to its super-macro close-up setting and creep up until I am only a few centimeters away!!! Invariably they clock me and do a flit.

David – Yep, I was very happy with this particular Brown Argus. As I mentioned to Wurzel above about my close-up efforts, I did manage to get within a few centimeters of it and get this pic before it flew off. And of course you are right. It's fun because it's difficult!

Goldie – OK, One Brown Argus is in the post to you. 😊

Neil – Or it could be the vibrations of my footfall or even my breath on them from being so close?

Trevor – You didn't do such a bad job with your pic of a Wall Brown on a Vipers Bugloss though. That pic you missed must have been fantastic.

Regards to you all

Re: ernie f

by Matsukaze, 27-Jul-20 02:18 PM GMT

Once in a while though, the photo opportunity gets enhanced when another butterfly decides to join in unexpectedly!

Re: ernie f

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

"Wurzel – I think the main reason I get so many pics of butterflies with the butterfly actually absent is because I take liberties with them. I often set my camera to its super-macro close-up setting and creep up until I am only a few centimeters away!!! Invariably they clock me and do a flit..."I used to do that but then I religiously put the hood on the end of the lens which meant that I got used to standing back a little 😊😊 I also developed the butterfly dance..."The Click Step", click, step closer, click, step closer, click, step closer etc... 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 29-Jul-20 02:00 PM GMT

Seeing other people have got fantastic shots of the Brown Hairstreak at Shipton and Noar Hill, I decided to try my luck today. Unfortunately I had to wait

in for a delivery so got to Noar Hill a bit late. Still, I found two males and got a distant shot of one perched. My first shot of the year.



The lack of a close-up was amply rewarded though by the behaviour of these two males. They did their jousting style battle as usual, heading for each other and then narrowly by-passing one another at the last minute but then, wow – they started to spiral in a helix around each other, up and up before parting suddenly at the apex to dive back down to different parts of the tree beneath them. Now I had seen White-letter Hairstreaks do this in the past but to my memory this was the first time I had witnessed Brown Hairstreaks do it. I was well chuffed. No vid though.

And when I got tired of craning my neck upwards, at my feet I found a female Common Blue and a Small Blue. It's amazing what you might miss right next to you when you are looking at something else in the distance!





And on my walk back – a very fine example of a Clustered Bellflower.



Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 30-Jul-20 12:08 PM GMT

More fun with Chalkhills and BARGs today.



My quest for the ultimate backlit shot of one continues.



A courting pair of BArg's?



No - he got the brush off in the end!

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 30-Jul-20 08:47 PM GMT

Great backlit shots Ernie 😊 I like your shorthand for Brown Argus - it fits right in with their aggressive nature - "A bit of Argy Bargy like!" 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 01-Aug-20 10:38 AM GMT

Wurzel – Yes, your right. I might start calling them Bargies!

Re: ernie f

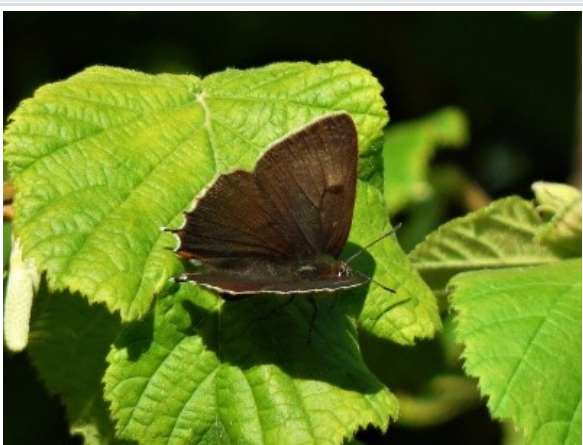
by ernie f, 01-Aug-20 10:55 AM GMT

Yesterday at Noar Hill I saw 20 species in 1 1/2 hours but by 10am it was 30 degrees and it got the better of me, so I went home. Many species were very energetic and rarely stood still for long anyway. However did get a nice Holly Blue female with its wings open.



Today I got to Noar Hill early and was staring up at an Ash tree by 7.45 am. It was already 16 degrees. Within 5 minutes I clocked my first Brostroke, and within an hour I had spotted four, all low down. They zig-zagged, they basked with wings open, they zoomed off making it look as though they had gone, only to sneak back round behind me – and they fought each other (all four were males). On one occasion, two males were jousting at around head height, the first time I had ever witnessed a Brostroke fight this low, and one of them came right at me and nearly flew right into my face, only swerving off at the very last second. Now I know what it's like to be on the receiving end of an intimidating male Brostroke in full fight mode. Scary!





That was an hour well spent I thought.

Re: ernie f

by trevor, 01-Aug-20 06:26 PM GMT

You get 10 points and a mrgreen for those open wing male Brown Hairstreaks, Ernie. 🍀
Something that has eluded me to this day. I once saw 22 males in two days, over a week, but not one opened up!. (Not seen a male since).

Great stuff, keep well,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 02-Aug-20 09:49 AM GMT

Trevor, thanks for the 10 points. I think I may have accumulated 30 points in total from you now over this year. 😊
I think the trick to see them with wings open is to get to site early. Around 8 am seems to do it.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 02-Aug-20 10:00 AM GMT

Proving the Brostreak open-wing phenomenon early-morning is no fluke.

I was at Noar Hill today for only 30 minutes at the Brostreak location that was so good to me yesterday and sure enough between 8 am and 8.15 am (a short window when it was both sunny and warm enough) they were up and about, basking, searching for females and fighting between themselves low down. Yesterday I worked out there were at least four at my chosen spot because when I got home and looked at my pics I found four with differing wear and tear marks. Today three were in the air at once having a squabble. I got more shots of them with wings open. Then it rapidly clouded over so I left because they settled out of view. It got sunnier later (as I write this) but I have shopping to do now. Darn.





Re: ernie f

by Janet Turnbull, 02-Aug-20 11:07 AM GMT

They're lovely shots Ernie, and I can't see the damage you speak of!
Janet

Re: ernie f

by trevor, 02-Aug-20 12:09 PM GMT

Too much to bear, Ernie, too much! 🍷🍷

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 02-Aug-20 05:40 PM GMT

Terrific shots of open-wing male Brown Hairstreaks, Ernie. 😊🍷 They seem to be coming down from the trees readily everywhere at the moment, and you certainly took advantage there! They were up and about pretty early too – good thing you were as well. 😊

Dave

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-20 07:40 PM GMT

Fantastic open wing Brostreaks Ernie 😊 Sometimes it's best to quit while you're ahead – if you'd hung around until the sun came out again they might not have behaved as well 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 02-Aug-20 09:35 PM GMT

Thanks Janet – It's true at least one of the Brostreaks is pristine. Take a look though at my Aug 1st pics. In Brostreak pic 2 you can see a chunk is missing from the left forewing. In Brostreak pic 4 there is a white scratch mark on both the left forewing and left hindwing. I took a whole bunch of pics

that day – not all of them posted, but there was another with nibble damage to its right forewing.

Sorry Trevor – But on the downside I haven't seen a female yet!

Dave – It's like my early start for the Purple Hairstreaks last month – I just can't get enough. Surprisingly Binswood for Purplestreaks and Noar Hill for Brostreaks and Greenstreaks are two of my closest Nature Reserves, and although they never seem to come down – I have a White Letter Hairstreak site in Chawton, the village next door to the town where I live. I seem to be surrounded by Hairstreaks of one kind or another.

Wurzel – Yep. And there is always tomorrow...



Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 03-Aug-20 11:49 AM GMT

Noar Hill again for Brostreaks.

Same place and same time as yesterday and the day before and guess what? None. Not a single male. I waited an hour (with Pauline for company) but no male Brostreaks for company. Then one hour later, around 9 am, a female landed just where the males had been the other day. You could almost hear her thinking "where are all the blokes". Like she had been invited to a party and was the only one to turn up.



Then not 50 paces away and on the other side of the same path, aha, now two or three males and no females!



I cannot tell if the males had just moved here or this was a new bunch because the pic I got today showed no wing damage to make a positive ID. They had better get their act together soon or we won't have any Brostreaks here next year at all.

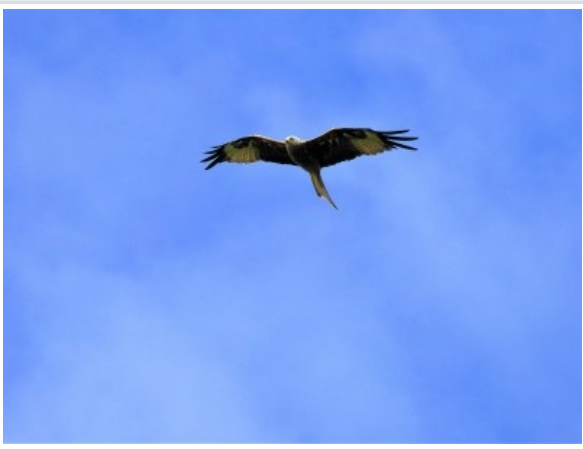
Then even these disappeared. Where did they go? It appears they moved back and up onto an Oak tree and used it like an Ash. Just like a group of males I saw last year on the other side of the reserve use a Beech. This Oak was distant so the pic is not going to win the Wildlife Photographer of the year competition, but at least it proves it WAS a Brown Hairstreak and not a late-flying Purple Hairstreak. I never expected to get a pic of a Brostreak perched beside an acorn!



To (mis)quote a Father Ted TV comedy joke. Is it small or is it far away? In this case, both.

On my exit I saw another Brostreak in the corner beside the exit gate but it didn't stop, and neither did I.

On my way home, a Red Kite graced the sky.



Re: ernie f

by trevor, 03-Aug-20 03:14 PM GMT

Don't worry, Ernie, the way your going female Brown Hairstreaks will flaunt themselves in front of your camera when they get going. It's about now that lovely fresh females should start to be seen, some fresh from pupation.

Good luck, and stay safe,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by bugboy, 03-Aug-20 04:04 PM GMT

They way things are going I think it will be raining Brown Hairstreaks soon like it was raining Purples 6 weeks ago!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 04-Aug-20 10:42 AM GMT

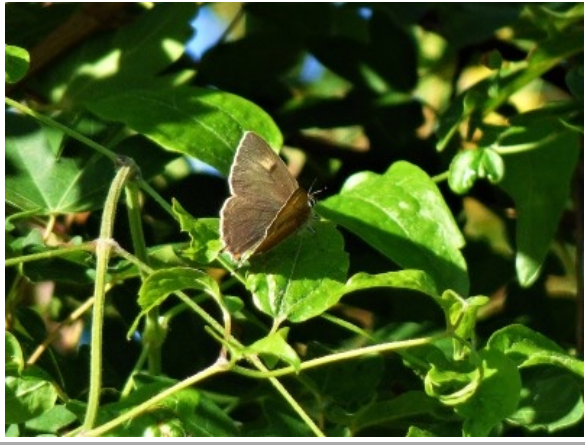
Trevor, Bugboy - You are right. The Noar Hill numbers appear to be creeping ever upwards.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 04-Aug-20 10:59 AM GMT

OK, so another morning at Noar Hill and more Brown Hairstreak news.

Yesterday I was not sure where the males went when I could not find them on the Hazel hedge but did find some further down the path on the Oak and on lower shrubs and trees in front of the Oak. Were they the same ones or not? Well today I still cannot prove it either way BUT I found one male buzzing around a medium sized Ash and lower foliage opposite the Hazel hedge. Here he is...



He left the tree, zoomed across to the Hazel hedge, flitted back and forth in search of females and then came back to the Ash tree, alone and feeling dejected. My guess is the ones I found congregating on the Hazel a couple of days ago, did in fact disperse very slightly to the immediate environs and in all probability the ones around the Oak ARE the same bunch as were on the Hazel. As I say, I cannot prove it – but the probability has increased that this is the case.

I then nipped across to the Beech tree beside the lower gate for the first time this year. I am usually able to find them there every year and indeed found two male Brostreaks on it.

This increased my Brostreak count here this year to a definite 8 so far. 7 males and 1 female.

Also this nice Small Copper stopped by.



Re: ernie f

by keving, 04-Aug-20 04:55 PM GMT

Ernie,

Some great photos of the male Brown Hairstreaks. A good early morning species, that's for sure. I don't own a photo of a male yet, but they are on the wing in my area, so hopefully I might break my duck before the week is out. If not can I borrow one of yours 😊

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 04-Aug-20 05:19 PM GMT

Kev – I just sent Goldie a Brown Argus at her request and now I have people asking me to send them Brown Hairstreaks!!! Soon I'll have no butterflies of my own to look at. But because it's you asking, I'll send one this time – just don't make a habit of it. 😊

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-20 10:21 PM GMT

Great shots Ernie 😊 Interesting that yours seem to be turning up early in the morning, in normal weather ie not in a heat wave I usually start seeing them around 10:30–11am – the ones at Shipton certainly like a lie-in compared to the Noar Hill Gang 😊 They're seem to be a bit better behaved at Shipton as well 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by kevlng, 05-Aug-20 01:08 PM GMT

Haha, you should feel flattered by all the requests Ernie. I'll get a male to go with my female, if I stake out my location for long enough.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: ernie f

by David M, 06-Aug-20 09:24 PM GMT

Good to know you're seeing a few Brown Hairstreaks, ernie. Must admit, I too wonder where the males disappear to. They can reliably be found squabbling in the tree canopy for 7-14 days at the beginning of the flight season, but then they mysteriously disappear. 😊

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Aug-20 01:08 PM GMT

Kev - Hope you get to see a female soon.

Wurzel - That's interesting. The ones on the Beech Tree at Noar Hill last year were there from 9.30 - 11.30 am, but once they start whizzing about in the warmth of the day - I hardly ever see them come down. The males that is.

David - Well they certainly ALL did a disappearing trick today at Noar Hill. I was there from 9-10 am and saw none at all, but it was already 24 degrees, so they were probably shading themselves. Or I was just unlucky.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Aug-20 01:27 PM GMT

I was at Noar Hill today from 9.00-10.00 am and saw no Brostreaks and in fact little was flying about in the heat. Did see C&H Blues, S&L Whites, MB&G and Small Heath, but that was about it.

But before that from 7.00-8.30 am I was at Oxenbourne Down for Silver-spotted Skipper and for Chalkhill Blue. This post I focus on the SSS. I'll leave the CHB for later because there is a lot to say about it today.

In that 1 1/2 hours I can only be certain I saw just one SSS, but I saw it multiple times.







Warm enough for it to be up and about but not so hot that it didn't hang around for its picture to be taken. 😊

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Aug-20 07:08 PM GMT

Oxenbourne - Part 2

There were many male Chalkhill Blue's flitting about as the sun warmed them from about 7 am onwards. I ignored them to begin with as my target was the Silver-spotted Skipper. With the pictures of that under my belt I focussed my attention on the CHB's. It was now about 45 minutes after 7 and the number of males had increased as if out of nowhere into the hundreds. The slope of the reserve on the hill at Oxenbourne is not large so it was like a sea of blue in places. On the lower part of the slope all hell broke loose. It looked as though a surge of females had just emerged and the males were on them right away. Each female had up to 4 suitors around her.



There were so many males converging you sometimes could not even see the poor female underneath them all.



I stood still and spotted five couples in-cop within a radius of 2 metres of me. It was an orgy.



One female was so fresh she hadn't had time to straighten out her wings before they were upon her, battling for attention. I don't think I have ever seen such curled wings. Most odd.



One male was just about to connect to her when another, very crafty male positioned himself between him and her, stopping him in his tracks.



But in the end, success, but which one it was I don't know, and I don't think she knew either.



There were so many males distracted by all the females that I managed to pick one up for a short while. He probably wondered what was going on but was reluctant to fly off straight away in case I was a female!



A moment later it was pretty clear to him that I wasn't, so he pushed off.

So did I, satisfied with my morning's work.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-20 08:19 PM GMT

Cracking looking Silver Spots and Chalkhills Ernie 😊 Mind you that behaviour is shocking to our modest eyes but in the tropics some males of some species will actually find a chrysalis with a female that almost ready to emerge and they will rip open the pupal casing and copulate whilst the female is still in the chrysalis 🤪🤪

More Brostreaks this morning at Shipton – first one turned up at 11am on the dot 🤪🤪

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 08-Aug-20 09:20 PM GMT

Wurzel – amazing info about males copulating with "unborn" females. Incredible.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 08-Aug-20 09:26 PM GMT

Noar Hill early yet again today. It was cloudy the entire time I was there, from 8–10 am but it was warm. Mostly I only saw butterflies if I disturbed them as I walked by. Usual stuff incl S&L White, Brim, S Heath, MB&G, C Blue, Small Tort, SW Frit but also DG Frit which I hadn't seen here for awhile.



Also a Shaded Broad-bar moth.



And a *Strangalia maculata* Beetle.



There were two Brostreak males in the corner of the reserve where I had until now only seen one, so my count of this species at Noar Hill this year has risen to 9 (8m +1f).



But they were staying fairly high and aloof.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 10-Aug-20 06:11 PM GMT

More fun with SS Skips at Oxenbourne.

Last time I visited, only a couple of days ago, I could only, hand on heart, say I saw one SS Skip here. Today I return (about an hour later in the day than last time) and I counted at least 30! I did a fast-paced walk around the site because they can of course fly quite some distance and quite fast when they want to. I also had to be careful because there were Small Heaths, some VERY small female Chalkhill Blues and even a Dingy Skipper to confuse the issue – but I am confident with my 30.

They were very active in the sun. On at least two occasions I had three males fighting together and on another occasion I had four individuals all in my forward field of view at one time.

Then I settled down to some photo-taking.



An opportunity arose for a backlit shot of one.



This one seemed to have pollen attached to it's head and back.



This pair were getting very luvvy-duvvy.





This guy was taking things to the next stage and she didn't seem to be saying no either. A sequence of 4 shots show the action.





And here is a pair in-cop. My blurriest picture of the day and it had to be THIS one! As I looked at my camera to reset it they must have flown off together – I could not find them again. Blast.



One of them seems to be taking a snack at the same time as doing the business!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 10-Aug-20 07:54 PM GMT

Chalkhill Blue, female

Do I have an ab here folks?



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-20 08:31 PM GMT

Looks good for an ab Ernie – probably a 'NOV' as the aberrant website likes to call most abs 😊😄 Lovely set of Silver-spot shots – they are not ones for hanging around when it comes to propositioning 😏😏😏

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 11-Aug-20 01:24 PM GMT

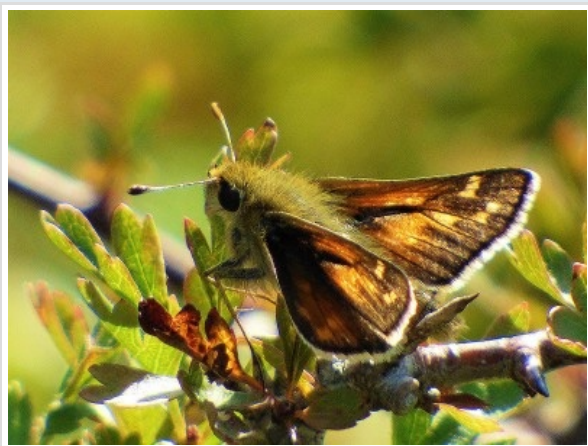
Thanks Wurzel – I looked through the list of ab pics online and many of them are quite bizarre. Mine is rather ordinary by comparison. Just a bigger blob than normal.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 11-Aug-20 01:35 PM GMT

Another day in paradise – well actually an hour and a half at Oxenbourne but not much difference when the Silver-spotted Skippers are at play!

I started with a few more backlit shots.





Then one posed for me on a berry.



I saw five in flight all at the same time, in a bunch and flying fast and quite high for a skipper (above head height). I guessed it was four males pursuing a female, but no pics as they were soon out of view. It was pretty exciting though.

Then a courting couple meet up. Ahh!



They nestled side by side. Young love, eh?



When all the while round the rear end naughty things were happening. I was a bit shocked. So much for the innocence of youth!



Then another male decided he would join in. Now I was getting rather embarrassed.



Neither of them seemed to succeed, even though the lady in question was available.

Meanwhile, nearby a couple quietly getting on well together.



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-20 07:18 PM GMT

They're at it again I see Ernie 😊 Honestly a female only has to land within a metre and the males are swinging their abdomens about all over the place 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 12-Aug-20 08:23 PM GMT

You're lucky to have these close to you, ernie. It's a species I see on the continent but never really have time to study so thanks for the behavioural sequence. Comical little insects, aren't they? 😊

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 14-Aug-20 05:45 PM GMT

You can never have enough of the charismatic little butterfly that is the Silver-spotted Skipper. I could watch them for hours (and have, once or twice!). Nothing rivals them for cuteness and that togetherness pose you caught so well just has it to a T. Brilliant. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by Neil Freeman, 14-Aug-20 06:47 PM GMT

Some great Silver-spotted Skipper shots there Ernie, I love the one of them nestling side by side 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 26-Aug-20 12:38 PM GMT

Wurzel – You might call them Swinging Silver Spotted Skippers. (SSSS?) 😊

David – They certainly are comical.

Dave – They certainly are cute.

Neil – They were getting very friendly.

They are in fact friendly, cute, comical, swinging silver spotted skippers!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 26-Aug-20 01:02 PM GMT

After a long bout of mostly awful weather – we had a break today. Cool and breezy for August but quite sunny. The bottom of Old Winchester Hill was fairly well sheltered from the worst of the breeze though. I was here for the Adonis Blue. Saw only three males and one possible female.



I have seen an Adonis Blue wing-roll only once in my life before but never got pics. Today I did get pics.



A good, solid tick in the box there then.

Usually you see some Clouded Yellows here around this time of year here but no luck today.

The main feature was the Silver-spotted Skippers. I thought I had got my fill of them for the year already but I was wrong. You can normally expect to see half a dozen on the slope below the car park in an average year but although I wasn't counting, I must have seen over a dozen and all of them without straying from the path! They were even at the lowest point along the path where I have never seen them before.





Also Red Ad, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Large White, Small Heath, Holly Blue, Common Blue.

I was there for just over an hour. Not bad at all really.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-20 07:47 PM GMT

You can indeed, never have enough SSSS's Ernie 😊😄 Lovely set of shots I especially like the second one where the male is curving his wings around the flower 🤓👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 27-Aug-20 10:36 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

After a long bout of mostly awful weather – we had a break today....

Been praying for that myself, ernie, but to no avail, sadly. 😞

Must be fabulous to see Silver Spotted Skippers & Adonis Blues in a break from the storms. Two very desirable late summer species that we don't get round my way.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 30-Aug-20 01:13 PM GMT

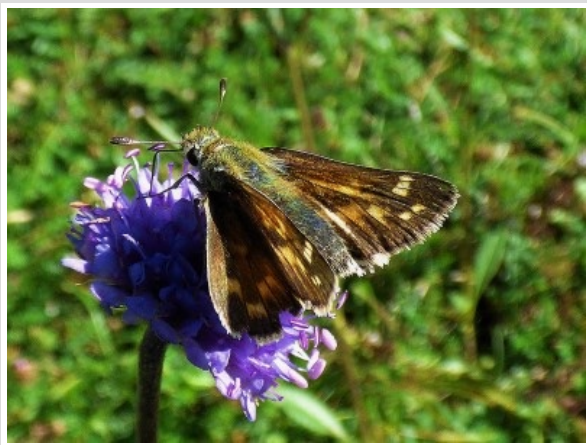
Wurzel – Yes, I was surprised at the one that wrapped its wings around the flower-head. I think it might have been a way of stabilizing itself against the breeze that was blowing at the time.

David – It is nice to have these two species near me. I know you have species near you that I don't have around here. That's why a forum like this so good. You get to see what is the "norm" and what is "special" in other peoples neck of the woods.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 30-Aug-20 01:22 PM GMT

St Catherine's Hill today during the sunny yet cool morning. My main reason for being here was to find yet more SS Skips. I wanted to find out if I could increase my annual record of sightings for this species. I already got my best ever day and location records for this species (30 at Oxenbourne). The other day I added at least another 12 to this count from Old Winchester Hill, giving me 42 in total and today I got another 5 at St Cat's giving me an annual total of 47 – and yes, for me this is an annual record, so I am well pleased.



Also, S Heath, M Brown, S&L White, Red Ad, Chalkhill & Common Blue and Brown Argus.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-20 08:28 PM GMT

"I think it might have been a way of stabilizing itself against the breeze that was blowing at the time." that could explain it indeed Ernie 😊 Good to see the SSSS still flying 😊

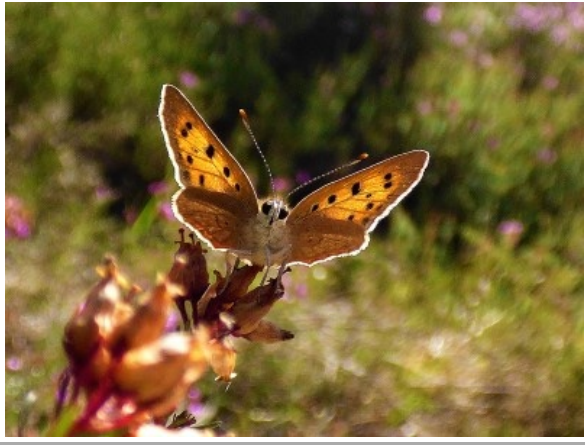
Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 01-Sep-20 12:18 PM GMT

Broxhead today to see if the 3rd brood Small Coppers were about. They were – I counted 14 in all at the bottom of the hill, all of them fresh.



This one had extra dark markings and a blueish flush.



And this one had a fly perched on its wing.



Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 01-Sep-20 04:06 PM GMT

Well it's September 1st and Autumn is here. We've had the weather of Autumn for some time already but today it was confirmed summer has ended.

Why?

Walking in Alice Holt woods this afternoon with my wife we came across a dozen species of fungi. As in previous years when I have posted about fungi, I have to give a percentage of confidence in my ID because I am not an expert and in any case many species are very difficult to identify anyway – even if you are an expert.

I found two batches of a species I have never seen before (perhaps because I never looked this early in the year for them).

The Ruby Bolete.

This example newly fruiting and in the shade (90%).



This example, a bit older and in full sunshine (80%).



Re: ernie f

by trevor, 01-Sep-20 04:38 PM GMT

Well done with the Silver Spots, Ernie 🍄 . I left them a bit late this year, only saw three. Good to see the 3rd Brood Small Coppers too. Saw some 3rd brood Wall Browns today. Great to see there is still some life left in the season!

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-20 06:26 PM GMT

Cracking Small Copper shot from the last post Ernie 😊 I know what you mean about the Autumn creeping up on us things do seem to be heading for an early doors – although at this time of year the weather can turn on a sixpence 😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 02-Sep-20 09:37 AM GMT

14 Small Coppers is pretty impressive at any time of year, ernie. I doubt I've seen so many in a single day more than a handful of times in my life. 🍄

Love the Ruby Bolete – a very nice colour for a mushroom. Looks like someone's spilled a glass of burgundy on it.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Sep-20 11:39 AM GMT

Thanks guys. Broxhead Common is a fine late year location for me because of the Small Coppers. I can normally guarantee fair numbers here in Sep/Oct and sometimes, in extended summers they can grow into large numbers.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Sep-20 11:45 AM GMT

Broxhead again this morning. I saw 12 Small Coppers today, 5 of which were in a different part of the common to last time so adding these to my count from before I get 19 in total here so far. (There was also one on the other side of the common in early summer – but this is not a good site for them at that time of year).

Today's pic shows the gold-dust effect. Click on pic to enlarge and see it better.



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-20 07:45 PM GMT

Lovely shot Ernie 😊 I noticed that golden dusting before on fresh individuals – I reckon that as they age they 'tarnish' and that golden dusting shows up as a greenish patina 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 10-Sep-20 07:26 AM GMT

ernie f wrote:

...Today's pic shows the gold-dust effect. Click on pic to enlarge and see it better.

Sure does, ernie. It has a 'brassy' effect like some of the ringlets on the continent.

Very attractive.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 10-Sep-20 07:10 PM GMT

Thanks Guys, yet another species I am lucky enough to have near me in reasonable numbers. Makes the end of the season interesting.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 10-Sep-20 07:24 PM GMT

Broxhead again.

6 Small Coppers today but I didn't cover much ground to get them. Five of them I had probably already seen on previous recent visits but one was on its own not far from the reserve entrance and because I had seen none there so far this year, it must have been one new to me, bringing my total for this

site to 20 this year. Usually when I see individuals of this species, both male and female, they tend to stick around one patch but not this one. I first saw it crawling around the sheep's sorrel so supposed it was a female investigating egg-laying opportunities but sadly I disturbed it – and instead of just flying off a little way, circling and coming back after a while it flew off fast and high over a gorse bush and into the distance and did not return.

One male was pursuing a female – walking along behind it and for the first time this year I witnessed the female doing its "turkey trot" go-away signal.



Someone else posted a toadstool pic recently – the Blackening Waxcap – one that is notorious for changing dramatically as it ages.

Today I saw my first Tawny Grizette of the year. Two were beside each other, one fresh and the other aged, showing side by side how difficult it can be to ID fungi!!!



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-20 07:47 PM GMT

Interesting behaviour Ernie – I've not seen Small Coppers walking after each other before – another thing to add to the ever growing list of 'things to look out for– I don't mind how big it gets 😊 My wife's 'Jobs' list on the other hand 😊 A Tawny Grizette – what a cracking name!

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 12-Sep-20 04:19 PM GMT

Wurzel – It is fascinating to watch them do this. Small Coppers seem to have so many interesting behaviors. There's the pursuing walk, the Turkey Trot of the female, the Stalk Walk of the male, they tickle one another with their legs while in-cop and perform the wing-roll on occasion. I've even seen a female Turkey Trot in flight while being pursued by a male, a most unusual thing while she is on the ground but quite a spectacle in the air!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 12-Sep-20 04:28 PM GMT

Noar Hill, 12th Sep 2020

The season in decline but still some interest here.

First I'm glad to report the Ivy Bee colony is thriving again this year at Noar Hill.

Next – a pair of Common Blues in-cop. A bit late in the year, but better late than never, eh?



A couple of years back I went to Old Winchester Hill to see 10's of thousands of Autumn Gentian in bloom. Normally purple of course but there was one and only one white version of this plant there. I scanned the slopes with my bins to prove this was the only one to myself. So it must be quite rare.

But I have recently discovered two patches of the white version at Noar Hill. I counted 8 plants in total but they do not all bloom at the same time. A few were in bloom a couple of weeks ago and today there were three in bloom, all different from the ones I saw before.



Re: ernie f

by Allan.W., 12-Sep-20 05:50 PM GMT

Good find Ernie ! ,seen hundreds of Autumn Gentian ,down the yearsbut have never seen a White one .
Brilliant find ! Regards Allan.W.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-20 06:01 PM GMT

Good to see the Blues making hay and having a roll in the hay while the sun shines Ernie – it that mixing metaphors or multi-tasking? 😊😄 Interesting to see the Gentians –my only experience of them is seeing them on a slide show given at a local RSPB group meeting which gave me the misconception that they're alpine species only seen clinging to the side of the Matterhorn 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 12-Sep-20 07:02 PM GMT

Fascinating looking at the Small Copper behaviour, Ernie. 😊 I am also lucky enough to have a thriving Copper colony nearby, and despite the numbers, I've hardly seen much interaction between males and females so you have given me some pointers as to what to look for. Certainly no pairings...yet. 😊

I was wondering how things were at Noar Hill – after seeing a Cloudie egg-laying back on 23rd July, it occurred to me that there might be some offspring appearing any time now... 😊 Nice Common Blue pair with the sky behind them though! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by David M, 12-Sep-20 09:56 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

...6 Small Coppers today...one male was pursuing a female – walking along behind it and for the first time this year I witnessed the female doing its "turkey trot" go-away signal...

They **are** comical the way they go about their courtship business, aren't they?

Good to see you've latched onto a Common Blue pairing too, ernie. That's pretty impressive for mid-September.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 13-Sep-20 12:02 PM GMT

Allan – I knew there were alba varieties of certain species of plant but until I saw a White Autumn Gentian I didn't even know they came in white. It wasn't mentioned in any of my plant books.

Wurzel – Well Noar Hill and The Matterhorn do have one thing in common. They are both hills! 😊

Dave – I did not see any Clouded Yellows at Noar Hill that day but thanks for the tip. I'll try again with a wider search at that location soon.

David – I didn't expect to see very many butterflies at all in the hour I spent at Noar Hill yesterday so I was quite surprised by the mating Common Blues. I first saw the male on its own fending off a Small Copper then when I glanced again the Small Copper was gone and in its place was the female Common Blue. The male sidled up to her and the rest, as they say, is history. I couldn't quite believe I saw them connect right there in front of me. The pic I took was after waiting some while for them to settle. I then picked the flower they were on and held it up to the sky for the picture. The camera was on super-macro and the lens was about 4 cm away from them. They stayed like that for ages while I took too many photos of them.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 13-Sep-20 12:12 PM GMT

Broxhead on a sunny Sunday morn – how lovely.

With a wider search than I have done so far this year here, I found 12 Small Coppers, 3 of which were in a different location to the ones I have been seeing recently bringing my count here for this Autumn to 23. This sounds a lot but Broxhead in recent years has been far better than this for numbers. Also, no Brown Argus that I usually find here around this time either.



However, did see my first "Blue Badge" of the year.



Also one male was doing a "Stalk Walk" down a heather frond. Another first of the year.

Plus L White, Comma, Red Ad, Red Kite and three Common Lizards.

Not a bad little haul in 1 hour.

Re: ernie f

by Katrina, 13-Sep-20 04:21 PM GMT

I am a bit late reading your posts but I love the SSS on scabious with the blue sky behind



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-20 04:39 PM GMT

Love that first shot Ernie – a mixture of close up and stained glass – brill 🤔🤔🤔

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 14-Sep-20 03:09 PM GMT

Katrina – Thanks. I'm a bit of a sucker for butterfly pics backed with blue sky.

Wurzel – Sometimes you just get lucky don't you? Mostly these critters spot you coming a mile off (well a couple of feet anyways) but once in a while you can get right in their face and since they arrange themselves so their backs are to the sun, being in front of them automatically results in a stained-glass effect.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 14-Sep-20 03:23 PM GMT

2.15 pm, 14th Sep 2020, the car drive next to my house. Full, bright sunshine on the hottest day of this month so far (27 degrees) and what do I see out of my kitchen window? A brown thrush-sized object flying about, a bit brown and a bit furry.

Furry?!?

Double-take.

No. It was a bat to-ing and fro-ing, catching insects that I could clearly see buzzing around. It stayed for a few moments, just enough to judge that it was quite big for a UK bat and very fast, then it was off.

I am not an expert on bats and even looking it up I cannot be sure but it may have been a female Noctule. They like woodlands and we have trees all around us. They are our biggest bat apparently and this was so big I thought it was a bird first of all. Noctules are known to feed in the day but so do other bats although it is by no means common for them to do so. What I found amazing is that the females migrate in Autumn but the males do not. I guessed this was a female getting a spot of extra nourishment before the big journey she was just about to make.

Any bat experts out there that could suggest any extra info about day-flying bats?

Thanks.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 16-Sep-20 09:23 PM GMT

Broxhead again

Small Copper numbers have doubled over the past 3 days since I was last here. I counted 39 today of which I am pretty sure 22 were new so I can add those to my accumulative total which is now 45 for this site, this month.

This one was showing verdigris and blue badges at the same time.



A male followed a female along a branch. She was NOT Turkey-trotting and instead seemed to be testing him as a potential suitor.



Another pair had seemed to have made a prior arrangement to meet up at an acorn. Please click on pic to enlarge.



While another one was "on the bottle".



I reported recently that there were no Brown Argus here as there usually are. I had jumped the gun. I found one today and this one was wing-rolling for me.



Also today here, 1 S White, 1 C Blue and two Common Lizards.

Other recent sightings.

At Alice Holt...

A cluster of Parasol Mushrooms before their caps open.



And nearby, one that had opened up.



Plus 1 Speckled Wood

Then at Noar Hill...

An elderly female Common Darter with a bent tail-end.



Plus a Red Ad, Peacock, S White, C Blue, S Heath, Sp Wd, M Brown

Re: ernie f

by David M, 17-Sep-20 08:13 AM GMT

ernie f wrote:

Small Copper numbers have doubled over the past 3 days since I was last here. I counted 39 today...

Fabulous total, ernie. It must be wonderful to see so many. I'm pleased you got a Brown Argus as well....and a nice, fresh one!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 17-Sep-20 12:50 PM GMT

Thanks, David. This single reserve is great in Summer for Silver-studded Blues and then later in early Autumn for the Small Coppers. The fact it's only a few miles away from my house means I am over there rather a lot!!! 😊

Re: ernie f

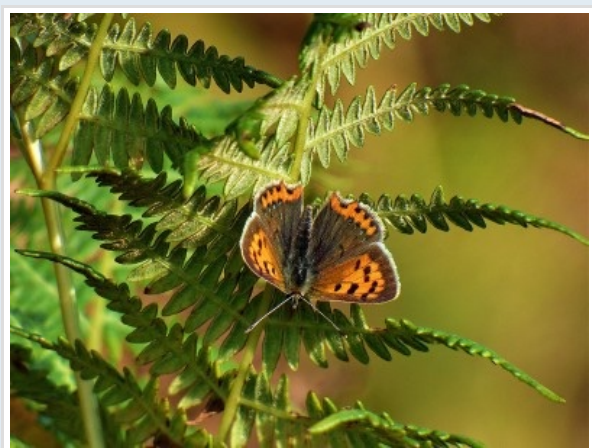
by ernie f, 17-Sep-20 01:09 PM GMT

Broxhead again

This time I walked a loop that was completely separate from where I have been looking up until now. I only found 3 more Small Coppers raising my count here to 48 but they were all fresh.

Two males were jousting when I came upon them first time. They took off, battled for a bit then one chased the other off across the heath. Maybe 60 yards or more. I followed unsuccessfully. When I got back to the spot where I first saw them I discovered that one had returned. How'd he do that, then? Somehow he had circled around me without me knowing, sneaky devil.

I watched him stalk-walking down a fern frond. He then flew to a neighboring fern and did the same thing. They never turn round and walk back up do they? Always down and then fly off.



But then he disturbed the other male who had also suddenly materialized as if out of nowhere and battle once again commenced. And again they flew off a great distance, one chasing the other. A repeat performance. This time I was wise to it. I did not follow but stayed where I was and sure enough, both of them eventually returned to the same patch. I wonder how many times each day they do this?

Recently I showed the Tawny Grisette mushroom on my PD. Today, on this walk I saw perhaps over 100 of them. They are not uncommon on the heaths around here but this is an amazing number by anyone's standard. I cannot recollect ever seeing so many in one year before, let alone one location.

Also, two more fungi species in rather good numbers. First, The Blusher. Related to the Fly Agaric (That magic mushroom associated with Pixies and the like) – but this one is pinkish rather than red and stains pink when damaged.



And an extremely variable Bolete, the Suede Bolete. Not always an easy one to ID, so I am only about 80% sure of it on this occasion but there were quite a few, of different ages and colouration, etc to help me with the ID. None looked exactly like they do in my book but did look like some examples I found on the internet and the habitat is right.



It is a very fine looking mushroom indeed.

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-20 08:23 PM GMT

A fine Constabulary of Coppers Ernie – but my top marks have to go for the most recent on the Bracken – cracking shot and judging by the the blue badges a D.I. at least 😊😄👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 18-Sep-20 12:17 PM GMT

Wurzel – I love the "Constabulary" of Coppers. I must try and remember that for future.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 18-Sep-20 12:55 PM GMT

Two more parcels of Broxhead Common investigated for Small Coppers today.

One section used to be excellent for them but over the years became choked with gorse and bracken – so much so there came a point where it was almost impossible to enter and if you could fight your way in, then it was impossible to venture far. Consequently the Small Copper numbers declined. I had almost written it off but tried it today and I am sure glad I did. The powers that be who manage this site have done a wonderful job of clearing back the huge gorse bushes and swathes of fern, leaving just enough for birds such as Stonechat to perch on. Instead I was faced with masses of new-growth heather and navigable pathways, and...

14 Small Coppers!

One male was walking behind a female while she Turkey-trotted at him. Two males flew after a female. Another male was doing a stalk walk down a grass stalk. It was all going on – the signs were good for this colony to increase over the coming years. Or should I say "Constabulary", Wurzel? 😊



Also saw a Southern Hawker.



And a hare. I got a good pic of it but when I looked at it on my computer closely I realized it was a very old one and almost blind so I decided not to share it here.

Then I moved on to the pond area of Broxhead Common. This in the past has never been as good as the locations on the other side of the road and so proved to be the case today with only 3 individuals seen there.

Altogether today though I found 17 new Small Coppers and adding this to my count for this location this month I now total 65.

In good years with a late September/early October warm spell there can be a fourth brood of Small Coppers. Lets hope we are heading that way.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 19-Sep-20 12:59 PM GMT

Broxhead yet again.

5 new Small Coppers today in another part of the reserve not yet visited for them this year bringing my overall annual total to 73 for this location (that includes the three I saw here when the Silver-studded Blues were around). I have now visited all those parts of the reserve that I know to have harboured Small Coppers here in the past. My personal annual best at Broxhead was in 2018 when I scored 79, so I am only 7 away from a new record. However the only way I am likely to do this now is if I wait a couple of weeks and hope for the weather to stay OK and fresh fourth-brooders to be about. That's the only way I got 79 two years ago.

A male was following a female who was Turkey-trotting and I got a fair pic of this before he flew off.



But my highlight of the day was a tatty old Grayling. Why? Because in all the years I have visited this reserve and the multiple times each year I do so (must be over a hundred times by now) I have never seen a single Grayling here. It is also very unusual, not because its the wrong habitat because being a heath, it isn't, but it forms a complex of heaths including Kingsley, Sleaford and Oakhanger and I have never seen a Grayling at any of those places either.



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-20 07:24 PM GMT

"Or should I say "Constabulary", Wurzel?" – definitely 😊😄

Interesting to see the out of place Grayling – do they inhabit any of the other heaths – I know you say you've not encountered them but perhaps their population is ridiculously small? If not where's the nearest colony to you that they could have come from? 😊 I had this a few years back with a Silver-studded Blue that turned up on the side of a Down on the outskirts of Salisbury when the nearest Heath is 10-11 miles away 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 19-Sep-20 10:04 PM GMT

That Grayling is a great find, Ernie. 😊 The heathland areas you describe which are good for the Silver-studs would be good for Grayling too, so you have to wonder if they've been hiding away there all this time (though the chances of you consistently missing them seem remote 😊). Where's the nearest known colony?

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 20-Sep-20 06:54 AM GMT

Wurzel, Dave – I have seen them at Thursley, Farnham – Folly Hill and Longmoor. After checking I believe I am right in saying Longmoor is the closest. The distance edge to edge between these two reserves is 5 miles but I have only ever seen them at Longmoor well into that reserve, and the one I saw at Broxhead was well away from the edge of that reserve too, so I estimate 6 miles between them. On the one hand the town of Bordon lies between the two reserves but on the other there is a heath-way corridor, almost but not quite linking the two called Woolmer Heath. I have never seen Grayling on Woolmer Heath either but I have not visited the entire place. There is a woodland between the two heaths but its not big. When looked at like this, its kind of a surprise I have not seen more Grayling at Broxhead.

I saw the Grayling very close to what used to be a location I classed as a Small Copper lek, so I do not think I would have missed them all these years if there had been a Grayling colony there right beside the Copper colony.

Also, talking about the lek – I have had to down-grade it in my estimation. It used to be the centre of action for the Small Copper community but for some reason much of the slope has become barren. There is still a lot of sheep's sorrel and a few heather plants but soil erosion has taken its toll on a vast swathe of what was one a green hillside. Luckily, extensive ground maintenance on the reserve has improved the lot of the Small Coppers elsewhere. None of them as good as the "lek" used to be but generally the numbers are spread wider and more thinly.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 20-Sep-20 08:27 AM GMT

Quick update re Grayling. I checked on the internet and there are records of Grayling on the Woolmer heathland. I guess this is where my one at Broxhead hailed from.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 20-Sep-20 12:45 PM GMT

I am a bit embarrassed.

I was so surprised that Grayling have been recorded at Woolmer when I thought I had never seen any at neighbouring Broxhead that I decided to wade through my records and sure enough – this was NOT my first sighting of one at Broxhead. I did see one before some years ago. So my overall count if Grayling at Broxhead is NOT 1, it is 2.

Just goes to show – it pays to keep records, but it also goes to show you should read them from time to time! 😊

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 20-Sep-20 12:57 PM GMT

And so to Kingsley Common.

Since I had exhausted the Small Coppers at Broxhead for a couple of weeks, it was time to move on – not far though – about half a mile away from Broxhead is Kingsley Heath. The transect today yielded 12 individuals but they were not easy to find because many were females egg-laying. Like in the pic below.



I have a nice couple of egg-laying sequences using burst-mode on my camera so I intend to make an animated gif – but it will probably end up being too large to share here.

Also saw one do a short wing-roll. Small Coppers don't do wing-rolls much so to get one pictured doing it, however slightly, was a surprise.





Again I have a sequence of this and will make an animated gif of it.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 21-Sep-20 02:05 PM GMT

Shortheath reserve at Oakhanger village

My closest heath. It's not big but it does have Coppers. In fact it had 14 today that I could see. This one flew off after having its pic taken and what a surprise. It went up and up and up until it was the height of the Oak canopy when it then flew between the trees! I have always seen them low down so this was yet another thing about them I never knew. You learn something every day.



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 21-Sep-20 08:59 PM GMT

Interesting behaviour and also something to look out for Ernie – especially a few week earlier in the season – yet another ginger jobby to divert our attention from Brostreaks, as if Vapourer Moths and Gatekeepers weren't enough! 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 22-Sep-20 12:19 PM GMT

Wurzel – I saw two more flying high at Kingsley today. Is it a trend amongst Coppers now or (more likely) am I just seeing it more now I know it happens?

Subconsciously looking for it perhaps.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 22-Sep-20 12:26 PM GMT

Kingsley Common

17 new Small Coppers today in a different part of the common to the other day bringing my total here to 29 this week.

But for me – more remarkable was a sighting of a Holly Blue. Kingsley is known for its Spring-time Holly Blues but not for its Autumnal ones so this was

unexpected delight. I looked back through my records to find that this was the latest time in the year I have ever seen one, three weeks later than my previous best, although my book does suggest it is possible to see them on the wing well into November if the conditions are right.



Re: ernie f

by millerd, 23-Sep-20 08:26 AM GMT

That's a nice late Holly Blue, Ernie. 😊 If there is a third brood (and some decent weather after the imminent cold snap), you might well see one in November (I've found one in mid-November both the last couple of years). I believe they've even been seen in December.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-20 10:13 PM GMT

Great stuff with the Holly Blue Ernie 😊 Interesting that you saw that behaviour again though that often seems the way – it only takes that initial observation and then eventually that's all you see 🤔 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 25-Sep-20 11:36 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

...17 new Small Coppers today in a different part of the common to the other day bringing my total here to 29 this week.

🤔 Another highly impressive count, ernie. They seem to be doing well practically everywhere even though conditions haven't necessarily been conducive to the later brood(s) this year.

Well done with the Holly Blue as well. If things stay mild, you may find a small third brood emerges round your way and lasts into November.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 02-Oct-20 03:08 PM GMT

Dave and David – I'll keep a look out for those late Holly Blues if the weather improves!

Wurzel – Yep – I saw another high-flyer Small Copper over the last few days. They are quite difficult as they can be in silhouette against the sky but as soon as you see them against the background of the tree canopy they become obviously copper coloured, even at distance.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 02-Oct-20 03:52 PM GMT

29th Sep 2020 Broxhead

My count of Small Coppers at Broxhead this year stands at 73, tantalizingly close to my all-time record which is 79.

The last time I did this particular transect was on 16th Sep 2020, 13 days ago. I saw a total of 15 Small Coppers on my walk today. Now it is of course possible I was in danger of double counting if I just counted everything I saw and added them to my annual total, so I had to have a procedure to minimize this. So I only counted them toward my annual total if I was able to take a good picture of each individual and when I got home closely

scrutinized in close-up each one to see if it was worn or had any nicks or splits in the wings and then only counted those that were obviously pristine and fresh, given that none of them would have been in this condition 13 days ago after the wind and rain we have had between. Only 4 met these criteria.

$73+4 = 77$. Damn - two away from my annual best.

1st Oct 2020 Broxhead

Not to be defeated I had another plan up my sleeve. I decided to do a transect of a different and entirely separate part of the reserve which I had last walked on 26th Sep 2020. Now that's not very long ago so I had to have a different strategy as the ones I saw there last time may well still look fresh now. Luckily I knew I had only seen three individuals along this route last time so I decided I would only start counting after I had seen three this time - any more must all be new to me. Of course there was no guarantee I would see more - in fact I resolved myself to the possibility I may see none at all - this being an area low in numbers at the best of times in previous years.

But it paid off - I saw 9 in total which I therefore assumed 6 were new to me - indeed I actually recognized a couple of them by comparing pictures of them to ones I had already taken but most of the ones I saw were actually along parts of the route I had seen none before.

So $77+6 = 83$.

Guess what? 83 is now my annual record for this location.

As you can probably tell by now I am a bit obsessive about counting butterfly numbers in my area, particularly whenever I get close to an annual best. I am as scrupulous as I can be to avoid double-counting. There is no fail-safe way of doing this of course because some do fly some distance but most usually return to their patch and if you walk fast enough and never count any that fly past you from behind you can usually minimize the difficulty - however it is amazing how sneaky they can be, especially when you crouch over one for a few moments to get its picture and another you already counted gets in front of you without you noticing! If I get even a hint that this might have happened, the sneaky one doesn't get counted - not even in my daily total.

The cool temperatures are making some a little lethargic which is good news for close-up shots.



Re: ernie f

by millerd, 02-Oct-20 05:59 PM GMT

Fascinating info about the Copper numbers, Ernie, and your strategies for avoiding double and repeat counting. I find avoiding the latter especially tricky with the species, having discovered just how resilient and long-lived they can be. I have a couple of series of photos showing individuals persisting in the same locations for well over a month (in one case throughout a prolonged period of sunny weather too, so the butterfly would have been continuously active). They are a great little insect, and easy to get hooked on! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 03-Oct-20 10:24 PM GMT

Sounds like you've got a good system for tallying up Ernie 😊 Love the close-up shot as you can see the 'eyelashes' 😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by David M, 05-Oct-20 11:04 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

Guess what? 83 is now my annual record for this location.

Excellent news, ernie. I'm wishing I kept records myself because I reckon this has been probably the best Small Copper late summer/early autumn I've known. They were around in slightly higher than average numbers in spring but since then their numbers have been extremely encouraging.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Oct-20 12:52 PM GMT

Dave – I had an idea they might be long-lived but its nice to see you were able to prove it.
Wurzel – Small Coppers have so many interesting features about them, don't they?
David – Nice to hear that Small Coppers are doing well round your way too.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 07-Oct-20 12:56 PM GMT

7th Oct 2020

Broxhead

6 Small Coppers in the area that has had highest numbers this year – so clearly we are now in decline. None can be added to my annual count though as they were all starting to show wear so I am almost certain to have counted them already.

Kingsley

2 Small Coppers on the verge beside the Car Park. Both new as I have seen none on the verge so far this year which brings my total for Kingsley this year to 34.



Re: ernie f

by millerd, 07-Oct-20 02:18 PM GMT

That's a particularly nice Small Copper, Ernie. A bit on the dusky side, plus a full set of blue spots as well. Then it went and posed among the purple daisies – showing off, I'd say... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 10-Oct-20 03:50 PM GMT

Deadwater Valley woods

In 2018 there was a path in these woods that was getting good sunlight in one spot and sustained a single Speckled Wood into late November. I checked it out and sure enough, again a Speckled Wood in exactly the same spot, right down to perching regularly on the same tree as before.



Already as of 10th Oct this one is very tatty so I don't expect to see it in late November!

Also, plenty of mushrooms.

For example the Splitgill, looking a bit like snowflakes.



And this one. It took me a while to ID it because the only fit was a mushroom that is normally seen in Winter. I believe it is the Velvet Shank, but I am only 80% sure. My books were not good enough so a search on the web told me they can start as early as September and can fruit right through to March. The only known mushroom that can suffer being completely frozen in mid-winter. I do in fact have a picture of one from years ago which was covered in frost. Today though - this is the specimen.



Re: ernie f

by zigzag_wanderer, 10-Oct-20 06:07 PM GMT

Hi Ernie,

Will bow to experts but it does really look like it could be Velvet Shank – but that would be a month and a half ahead of its usual start time.

But hey, this is 2020.

It definitely isn't the Funeral Bell – but I wouldn't risk Velvet Shank outside of mid winter !

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 10-Oct-20 08:04 PM GMT

I had to do a double take of the Splitgill Ernie – I was thinking "Frosts this early in the South!?" 😲 Beautiful icicle like hyphae 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by zigzag_wanderer, 10-Oct-20 09:26 PM GMT

{quote=zigzag_wanderer-post_id=158780-time=1602349653-user_id=19389} Hi Ernie,

Will bow to experts but it does really look like it could be Velvet Shank – but that would be a month and a half ahead of its usual start time.

But hey, this is 2020.

It definitely isn't the Funeral Bell – but I wouldn't risk Velvet Shank outside of mid winter !

Checked online too Ernie and yes, I can see as early as September mentioned (must admit I had it down as from late November). So would back your 80% ID level.

The wide gills and the darkening stem on view look good for Velvet Shank I think, but I am absolutely no expert.

I certainly wouldn't be eating it !

Re: ernie f

by David M, 14-Oct-20 08:43 AM GMT

ernie f wrote:

....The only known mushroom that can suffer being completely frozen in mid-winter. I do in fact have a picture of one from years ago which was covered in frost. Today though – this is the specimen.

Amazing. I never knew that, ernie. It's quite an attractive fungus too, along with the delicate looking splitgill, which actually **looks** as though it's been frozen.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 25-Oct-20 07:33 PM GMT

Thanks Guys

Zigzag. I always suggest to people not to eat any wild mushroom unless they are 100% sure of the species. I once thought any UK mushroom that had pores rather than gills was OK – but this is NOT true so it seems. Just as well I didn't try any!!!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 25-Oct-20 08:12 PM GMT

On the 24th October 2018 I saw 5 Small Coppers at Broxhead. This was my latest record for this species. I didn't go back again that year to find them again to extend my record. So today, being the 25th October, I went to Broxhead to try my luck. Now in 2018, the 24th Oct was a balmy 16 degrees with sun and had been reasonably clement before that date. This year we have had torrential rain and gales and today the temperature hovered around 10 degrees max.

Was I mad? Well yes but nevertheless I did see one – a very fresh 4th brooder.



So now this is my record for the latest-seen Small Copper.

Re: ernie f

by trevor, 26-Oct-20 05:32 PM GMT

A lovely find given the date Ernie, there is usually some intentional/unintentional competition on here to see who can find the latest/last butterfly of the year.

Until today you were the winner so far!
Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 26-Oct-20 05:37 PM GMT

Broxhead, same place, same time, next day (26th Oct 2020) almost same temperature as yesterday and same Small Copper. I managed to extend my record of late sighting of this species by another day. There is bad weather forecast for tomorrow. Will it survive?



Trevor - In reality, my only competition is with myself. If I tried to compete with others I would always fail because I know people see the Red Admiral flying in late December out in the open in some places in the UK. At the moment my goal is to keep extended my lateness record for the Small Copper and hoping this individual will still be around in November! 😊

Re: ernie f

by Allan.W., 26-Oct-20 06:14 PM GMT

Hello Ernie ,

On the subject of late Small Coppers ,my latest to date is November 5th 2018 ,when we found 5 on the wing ,on the shingle at Dungeness ,Kent 3 were in poor condition ,and 2 were in good nick ,with one male trying really hard to find an interested female .i reckon that the two in good condition ,may well have hung on for another 7 or 8 days ,if i remember correctly the weather was fairly kind ,so they may well have still been about on ,till the 13th or 14th. Regards Allan.W.

Re: ernie f

by Goldie M, 26-Oct-20 09:29 PM GMT

Nice shot ernie, of the Copper, no chance here of seeing Butterflies much to wet and cold. Hope you see it again 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-20 09:19 PM GMT

Cracking shot Ernie 😊 Hopefully it'll find somewhere out of the inclement weather so it'll last a few more days 😊 I can't remember my latest sighting of a Small Copper but one year I saw a butterfly in every month 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 02-Nov-20 01:21 PM GMT

Thanks, folks. I guess I am stretching my luck now. The end of season for Butterflies must have nearly ended by now.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 02-Nov-20 01:30 PM GMT

2nd Nov 2020, 11.30 am Broxhead, Mostly sunny but quite breezy.

Since my last post about a late Small Copper (26th Oct) it has rained every day and been quite windy. Last night there was one hell of a storm so coming out to Broxhead today was the height of optimism. Would I see my little copper friend again or not.

In a word.

Not.

But there was a consolation prize for my efforts – in fact two prizes.

First a Brimstone – but it did not stop. A distant shot while it was in flight was not easy as it was being chucked about in the breeze.



And a Peacock which landed momentarily before zooming off out of sight.



Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 02-Nov-20 08:46 PM GMT

A November butterfly is not to be sniffed at Ernie, good job 🍷 – and to have two well that's being a little bit greedy 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by trevor, 03-Nov-20 11:54 AM GMT

I totally agree with Wurzel, Ernie,
I think I have had my lot around here, but you never know.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: ernie f

by millerd, 03-Nov-20 08:54 PM GMT

Interesting that you saw a Brimstone, Ernie, as that was one of the three things I saw on the 2nd as well. Must have been a quirk of the weather... 😊 I'm not sure how many more there will be now, mind!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: ernie f

by David M, 05-Nov-20 11:50 AM GMT

ernie f wrote:

2nd Nov 2020...First a Brimstone....and a Peacock which landed momentarily before zooming off out of sight.

This month is already full of surprises and we're only on Day 5!!

Of all the adult hibernators, the two I would least likely expect to see are Peacock and Brimstone! I wonder whether, having had such a dismal spell for over a week, one bright, mild, sunny day triggered their instinct to wake up and fly?

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 30-Nov-20 08:43 AM GMT

Wurzel, Trevor, Dave, David

Thanks, Guys.

Those were to be my last butterflies of the year. I went back to Broxhead once more after that but saw nothing there and have not seen any butterflies since anywhere else either.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 30-Nov-20 08:53 AM GMT

29th Nov 2020, early evening on outside of kitchen door

I had to do a double-take. It was a moth, but when I first saw it, it had its wings pressed together like some butterflies often do.



I am no moth expert so it being November I looked in my books and went straight to November Moth. It certainly bears a resemblance but I found others such as Autumnal and Small Autumnal, Winter and Pale November moth – all of which could be candidates. My book says the November moth flies Sep to Nov and this being right at the end of November does make me wonder.



Perhaps it is a new species – the “almost December moth”? 😊



Seriously though, can anyone tell me what is most likely?

Also...

Every year there seems to be some weird Xmas decoration going up in or around the town where I live, Alton in Hampshire.

Last year someone completely covered up a real old red telephone box on a street corner with Christmas wrapping paper and ribbon. There was also a giant Santa's hat set up in the middle of a field.

This year I discovered our Marmot. Yes – that's right. Other towns might sport Robins or Reindeer decorations for Christmas. We've got ourselves a giant neon Marmot (16ft high). In fact it's supposed to be an Alpine Marmot (hence the skis). There really is a species of Marmot called an Alpine Marmot but to my knowledge not many of them go about on skis. It got into the national press where I learnt that some townfolk love it while others

hate it, so it was given the name Marmite the Marmot.



I did not see it when it was first erected last year but it went up again this year and now appears to have got a companion. This new character is another, smaller Marmot (called Meribel for some reason). Marmite's younger sister perhaps?



Looks like we shall end up with a whole family of them in coming years.

Re: ernie f

by Goldie M, 30-Nov-20 01:47 PM GMT

Love your decoration's ernie 😊, I've just put my tree up, I needed some thing to cheer me up 😊 your Marmot's certainly did 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: ernie f

by Wurzel, 02-Dec-20 08:29 PM GMT

I don't envy you having to look at those Mormots Ernie 😊 but I do envy the November moth – I've only seen one before and that was in December 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: ernie f

by Neil Freeman, 04-Dec-20 09:12 AM GMT

ernie f wrote:

I am no moth expert so it being November I looked in my books and went straight to November Moth. It certainly bears a resemblance but I found others such as Autumnal and Small Autumnal, Winter and Pale November moth – all of which could be candidates. My book says the November moth flies Sep to Nov and this being right at the end of November does make me wonder.

Hi Ernie,

The November Moth group are all variable and cannot be reliably separated without detailed genital examination – something for the experts 😊. I get a few in my trap and record them as aggs (aggregates). In my garden they fly from October though to December.

The Winter Moth/Northern Winter Moth are very similar but tend to be significantly smaller than the November Moths. In my garden these don't usually start turning up until well into December and continue through January.

Then there is the December Moth, a totally different species. These usually start from late October and have a peak during the second half of November.

Simple really 😊😊😊

Must say, I love your Marmots 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: ernie f

by David M, 04-Dec-20 09:03 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

Every year there seems to be some weird Xmas decoration going up in or around the town where I live, Alton in Hampshire.

Last year someone completely covered up a real old red telephone box on a street corner with Christmas wrapping paper and ribbon. There was also a giant Santa's hat set up in the middle of a field.

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Thanks for keeping us entertained, ernie. 😊

Yes, I remember the festively-wrapped red phone box and you've now got a bloody marmot!! Can't see any obvious link so heaven knows what may turn up in 2021?

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 20-Dec-20 10:18 PM GMT

Thanks Folks

Those marmots are a bit of a giggle.

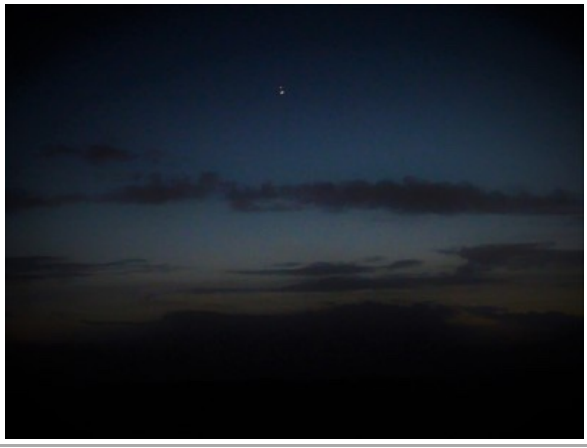
Thanks also Neil for the info on the November Moth group.

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 20-Dec-20 10:41 PM GMT

Well it's the Winter Solstice tomorrow and not only that – by pure chance it is also the Great Conjunction. That's when Earth, Jupiter and Saturn all line up, according to the internet an event that happened last over 400 years ago. Tomorrow it will appear like Jupiter and Saturn are combined but of course it's just Saturn passing behind Jupiter from our perspective here on Earth.

Tomorrow in my neck of the woods rain is forecast all day and night so seeing the actually meeting-up is not on the cards, but this evening was pretty clear so Gloria and I tried our luck by going up a neighbouring hill. Success. They were in plain view and were pretty close to each other already.



On full zoom and a bit of cropping I got this below – not too bad for a bridge camera (without a tripod!). Saturn is above Jupiter and although the rings are not well defined, you can at least see its shine is wider than it is tall because the rings stretch out all around.



With a bit of post-processing, by lightening the image you can even just make out four of Jupiter's moons. One is very close to the planet at the bottom right and looks like a bulge in the following shot.



If you don't have cloud tomorrow (21st) between 4.30pm and 6pm, look in the direction just south of the sunset. You may just be able to see the full conjunction. Good luck!

Re: ernie f

by ernie f, 20-Dec-20 10:59 PM GMT

Note

Guy has posted some even better photos under the General Forum. Go take a look – he even shows the names of Jupiter's moons alongside them.

Re: ernie f

by David M, 22-Dec-20 07:04 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

...On full zoom and a bit of cropping I got this below – not too bad for a bridge camera (without a tripod!).

Far better than I could manage with a bridge camera and no tripod, ernie. 😞

I tried several tricks but none returned images worthy of posting so fair play to you, you managed to get decent shots in spite of your lack of expensive equipment.