

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Jan-20 07:08 PM GMT

So on to March 2019 and the highlight has to be the sighting of a Large Tortoiseshell at Dungeness. We were not the finders. It had already been seen by several others, mainly locals, during the week. The 29th was warm and sunny so we decided to give this butterfly a try. Anyone who knows Dungeness Trapping Area will appreciate finding a butterfly in that vast expanse of Sallows and Brambles is not easy. Luckily it had only been seen in an area of about 150 metres x 100 metres so we were in with a chance despite others not finding it the day before. In total there was four of us looking when it suddenly rose in front of us and drifted slowly by before appearing to land near a dense clump of brambles. Another person had even better views as it flew slowly in front of him at less than a metre distance below waist high. Despite much searching of the area we could not refind it although we are confident it didn't fly off high.

This is the second year running that Large Tortoiseshell has been seen at Dungeness in the trapping area. The 2018 record was of a worn individual being seen, and photographed, by 3 others on the 23rd April 2019. Makes you wonder.

Otherwise March was fairly uneventful with the usual Cattle, Great White and Little Egrets being seen almost daily at Dungeness. We saw our first Sandwich Terns of the year at Hythe on the 6th. Dungeness also produced a male Smew, 2 Whooper Swans, several Goldeneye, Firecrest. The 19th saw a large flock of 64 Sandwich Terns at Littlestone (Kent), Our first garden Large White on the 16th, lots of flowering Cuckoo plants on the 19th at Shirley Moor (but no Orange Tips). Our first Wheatear of the year at Oare Marshes on the 20th.

Red Kites started to appear with one over Ashford (20th), 2 over Godmersham (23rd) and 1 over Witterhsam (24th). Spring passage over Kent is now fairly common, presumably birds drifting north looking for breeding territories, or returning to established sites in the Midlands and Scotland.

Other March goodies were a Glossy Ibis and Short Eared Owl at Oare Marshes (21st), Penduline Tit at Grove Ferry (23rd), an arrival over 200 plus Med Gulls at Pett Level (27th).

12 Brimstone, 6 Peacock and 1 Comma at Orlestone Forest (24th), followed by 2 Small Tortoiseshells and a Peacock at Dungeness (25th) whilst the 29th gave us a Hummingbird Hawkmoth at Dungeness.

Our expectations for March was probably too high. Would April deliver?



Always nice to see our first Small Tortoiseshell of the year.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Jan-20 02:46 PM GMT

April can be a very interesting month with winter visitors leaving and summer visitors arriving. With decent weather it certainly makes you feel that you should be out there looking, and looking we certainly were.

We started with a 1st winter Crane at Dungeness that remained for three weeks, although it could be elusive at times. We also saw our first Sand Martins of the year on the 2nd, plus Willow Warbler and Sedge Warblers, a few days later than normal. 6 Swallows the next day near Ashford was good, usually the bird that most people associate with the start of Summer. The 7th produced our first Common Terns of the year at Dungeness.

Marsh Frogs in full chorus at Oare Marshes on the 5th meant it was time for them to find a mate. It was not until the 8th that we saw more butterflies with a Brimstone and Small White.

Other goodies that week included a Red Necked Grebe at Dungeness on the 7th, a Black necked Grebe on the 10th, the usual Cattle and Great White Egrets. A Spoonbill at Oare Marshes on the 11th, and Glossy Ibis at Camber on the 13th.

A surprise find by a local patch birder was of a Stone Curlew at Conningbrook Country Park with 2 male Ring Ouzels in the same field. What a brilliant find for an inland patch in Kent. Things were happening fast now with 3 Cattle Egrets near Nacolts (Kent), our first Whitethroats and Black Tern of the year locally. Nacolts also saw our first Orange Tip on the 17th. Peacock, Brimstone, Small White and Small Tortoiseshell were now regular. The 19th was very good for butterflies with 8 Green Veined Whites, 29 Brimstone and 15 Orange Tips at Orlestone. Also 4 Nightingales singing their presence whilst watching the butterflies. What more could you want. But what we did and the next day delivered 2 Garganey, 14 Whimbrel and 18 Yellow Wagtails at Dungeness. The 21st added Lesser Whitethroat, 14 Bar Tailed Godwits, Cuckoo, Hobby and Whinchat at Dungeness. The same day and place saw a mass arrival or emergence of Peacocks with at least 30 seen.

They kept on coming with 2 Black Winged Stilts on the 22nd at Dungeness, with a Blue Headed Wagtail and our 1st Hairy Dragonfly of the season.

The 24th was quieter but we still managed a Swift over Ashford and 3 Emperor Moths at Oare Marshes. A visit to Stelling Minnis on the 28th found us looking at Toothwort, Early Purple Orchids and the beautiful Lady Orchid. Followed by a detour to Dungeness for a mobile but stunning male Serin. We ended the month at Oare Marshes (30th) watching 7 Emperor Moths then a quick dash to Pett Level for a male Ring Necked Duck.

April is a great month for us and really signals the start of summer. It seems like we were always on the go, but in reality we took 2019 a bit easier and reduced our mileage. Often staying more local but still enjoying the wildlife on offer.



This is Toothwort. A scarce plant in the South East. It is Parasitic on Hazel and a few other species of tree.



This photo would have seemed impossible 10 years ago. Here we see Great White Egret, Little Egret and Black Winged Stilt together at Dungeness. April 2019. All now regular visitors to the UK.



Emperor Moth at Oare Marshes on the North Kent Coast.

Re: Dave Brown

by Goldie M, 15-Jan-20 07:42 PM GMT

That's a great Moth shot Dave, don't think I've seen one of those yet 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 15-Jan-20 09:26 PM GMT

Wonderful shot of the egrets and the stilt, Dave. Seems a trifle too exotic for the UK but perhaps that's where we're headed....

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Jan-20 03:38 PM GMT

May can be an exciting month with many things happening at the same time. For us the month started with another visit to Oare Marshes where 6 Emperor Moths were still present, along with Nightingale, Lesser Whitethroat and 12 Yellow Wagtails. it was nice to see 3 Hobby's, but the fact that they were hawking over the reedbeds probably meant that they were after Dragonflies and possibly the Emperor Moths. Luckily, being it is one of Kent's only sites, the Southern Migrant Hawk was yet to emerge. Another visit on the 5th only found 3 Emperor Moths 😊 Nearby a Cattle Egret was on Luddenham Marshes on the 5th.

The 6th saw our first returning Turtle Dove, this was at Warehorne. Not much happened until the 12th when we saw a Night Heron fly over Conningbrook CP at dusk and head up the Stour Valley. Garden Warbler, Blackcap and Cuckoo also seen.

Our annual visit to Yocklets Bank for the Lady Orchids found a few in flower, along with 18 Fly Orchids, Turtle Dove purring and several Brimstone and Orange Tips. Next was Bonsai Bank for the Duke of Burgundy where we saw 21 individuals plus 5 Green Hairstreaks, 2 Dingy Skippers, 400 plus Lady

Orchids, 5 Brimstones and 3 Orange Tips. A beautiful reserve.

Next was a trip to Broadstairs to see the Pied Crow. Most likely a ship assisted bird but still nice to see. It was quite flighty and mobile but with patience gave decent views. The 18th found a fine male Serin at Littlestone (Kent) singing from what was to become its favourite tree. It stayed singing its heart out for nearly a month, but no mate seen. The 20th produced an Adult Whiskered Tern at Dungeness RSPB with the same day producing Mocha, Lime Hawkmoth and Scalloped Hazel at Rucking (all moths).

On the 21st we visited the Denge Wood complex looking for the rare White-spotted Sable moth, but without any luck. The same day gave us a garden Small Copper. Less than annual here.

The 22nd was a good day at Dungeness. We started with a fine Male Red Backed Shrike, Spotted Flycatcher, Black Redstart, our first Small Heaths and Brown Argus. Good moths with Great Prominent, Orange Footman, Lime Hawkmoth and Small Elephant Hawkmoth. Then with the help of 2 friends we were shown some good plants. Small Flowered Buttercup, Slender Thistle, Rough Clover, Suffocated Clover, Clustered Clover, Burrowing Clover, Yellow Vetch and finally Sea Pea. Some day for wildlife spotting.

Another visit to Yocklets Bak saw the numbers of Fly Orchid increase to 41 supported by 2 Greater Butterfly Orchids.

With good weather continuing we searched the Orlestone Forest complex on the 25th for Butterflies finding our first ever Grizzled Skipper in the Longrope part. We assume that these had spread from the nearby Faggs Wood small colony. The next day we found 3 at the same spot. Many Brimstones, Peacocks and Common Blues were also present. Calling in at Rucking we were treated to a Red Belted Clearwing, Sharp-angled Carpet, Dwarf Pug and Scorched Carpet (moths). The 27th saw Grey Birch and another Red Belted Clearwing at Rucking with 2 Garganey, Four Spotted Chaser and Azure Damselfly at Dungeness.

We ended a great moth with 17 Late Spider Orchids, 15 Man Orchids and 2 Bee Orchids at Wye NNR, together with 5 Adonis Blue, Dingy Skipper and Wall Brown. Nearby 80 plus Monkey Orchids were at Parkgate Down.

In summary May lived up to expectations, and the weather was generally enjoyable.



Pied Crow at Broadstairs (Kent). Bird of unknown origin.



Late Spider Orchid at Wye NNR.

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 23-Jan-20 07:18 PM GMT

That's a beautiful commentary on the month of May, Dave, with a few images that are redolent of that most gorgeous period in the year.

Good to see that you have a Duke site in Kent.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-Feb-20 03:21 PM GMT

June 2019.

June can be the month when we run around like a headless chicken. Usually there is so much wildlife on offer, including good species of both Butterflies and Moths, but this year it was, or seemed, quieter. We did get a good start with 9 Small Pearl Borders, 25 Small Heaths, 4 Dingy Skippers, 11 Brimstone and 3 White Legged Damselflies at Park Corner Heath. Old literature shows Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoth present but we couldn't find any. Nice to bump into Neil at this location, who confirmed that he personally had also not seen BB Bee Hawkmoth there for a number of years. Still, there is always next year.

On the way home we visited Rucking to see a Currant Clearwing, Sand Carpet and Large Nutmeg.

The next day it was back to Rucking to see Small Yellow Wave and a micro moth called *Triaxomera fulvimitrella*. We saw 3 more of this Micro moth flying in the Orlestone Forest complex along with 11 Common Blues and 2 Brimstone. Onto to Dungeness to see another Small Yellow Wave and a Grass Rivulet.

On the 4th we managed to track down a small clump of the rare Sea Clover near Camber (East Sussex). The next day saw us watching 3 Hairy Dragonflies and 5 Four Spotted Chasers at Oare Marshes with a nice showing of 300 plus White Helleborines in a wood a few miles away. An early June visit (6th) to East Blean Wood found 4 Heath Fritillary already on the wing and for the 3rd year running a Norfolk Hawker in the Car Park. This scarce British dragonfly seems to have taken a liking to this part of Britain, for small numbers are present at Westbere and Grove Ferry. It was not so long ago that you really could only find it in Norfolk. Calling in at Wye NNR on the way home we found 11 Bee Orchids, 7 Man Orchids, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak, Adonis Blue, Common Blue and Brimstone butterflies.

The 9th saw us in East Sussex looking at old stone walls at Winchelsea where we found lots of Wall Pennywort, also known as Navelwort. A more common plant in the west of Britain but very scarce here in the South East.

The 11th found us back in East Sussex, this time in Brede High Woods, looking for Greater Broomrape. This was an old location for this plant although I had not heard of any recent sightings. After a bit of searching, and a bit of help from another gentleman, we eventually saw 33 plants under Gorse bushes. Butterflies were hard to come by but we did eventually see 9 Small Heaths and 6 Brown Silver Line moths. Depending on your likes we did see a fine Adder basking in the sun but decided a wide berth was best.

The 13th was a hands and knees job to see good numbers of the plant Sand Catchfly at Littlestone (Kent). It seems strange seeing this scarce plant in an area full of tourists, walkers and children playing. The actual site of the plants is probably just enough off the well trodden areas.

Another visit to Wye NNR on the 15th found 3 Black Veined Moths, 17 Late Spider Orchids, 4 Adonis Blues, Dingy Skipper and the usual common butterflies.

The 17th found us at Malling Down (near Lewes) failing miserably on both Cistus and Scarce Forester moths. We are sure they are present here but we could not find any. We did find one plant of Knapweed Broomrape but little else.

The next decent day was the 20th where a few hours in the Orlestone complex found 8 Painted Lady's, 4 White Admirals, Ringlets and many Meadow Browns. In addition we again found White Legged Damselfly well away from water. On arriving back home we saw Painted Lady and a Hummingbird Hawkmoth in the garden.

The 23rd saw us make a quick and unexpected visit to Thetford where we saw many Proliferous Pinks, Spanish Catchfly,, Purple Milk Vetch together with numerous Oblique Stripped Moths. These were at both Cranwich Camp and Cranwich Heath. This reason we were there was to meet a good friend who would guide us to the very rare Tawny Wave moth. That was the plan, but it took around 2 hours before we spotted one. Fortunately it settled and big smiles were in order. His plant knowledge also proved invaluable with Bur Medick, Knotted Clover and Black Medick all being seen. Nerby a Six Barred Clearwing and hundreds of Purple stemmed Cats-tail was a nice end to the day.

Keeping up the good run the 25th found us at Dungeness looking at only our second ever Ringed Border (moth), supported by Scarlet Tiger, Red Necked Footman, Langmaids Yellow Underwing, the rare micro moths Chrysocrampus linetella and Dioryctria abietella, also 16 Painted Ladys and 5 Marbled Whites.

The 27th saw us looking at our earliest ever Willow Emerald Damselfly, whilst the 29th gave us 5 White Legged Damselflies, 8 Silver Washed Fritillary, 27 White Admirals, with many Ringlets and Meadow Browns in Orlestone Forest. To cap a fine day we ended at Tenterden looking at 188 plants of Ivy Broomrape.

The 30th ended a good month with a Red Barred moth at Ruckinge, with lots of Small Skippers, Large Skippers, Marble Whites and Small Heaths at Dungeness. Best of all was an amazing carpet of Sheeps-bit in full flower in a stunning blue colour.

To sum up June was, for us, a mixed month, with some goodies, but many nights of a poor showing in our garden moth trap and a general lack of butterflies on our garden flowers.



Wall Pennywort at Winchelsea



Norfolk Hawker East Blean (Kent).



Ivy Broomrape near Tenterden.



Sand Catchfly at Littlestone



Barred Red at Ruckinge.



Tawny Wave (Cranwich).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 29-Feb-20 10:25 AM GMT

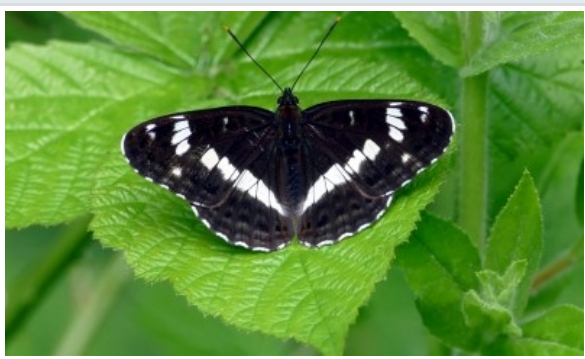
Continuing with a few photo's from June 2019.



Heath Fritillary at East Blean Woods.



Adonis Blue at Wye NNR.



White Admiral at Orlestone Forest



Bee Orchid at Wye NNR.



Red Belted Clearwing (Moth) at Ruckinge.



Greater Broomrape in East Sussex. Some of these plants were 0.8m tall.

Re: Dave Brown

by trevor, 29-Feb-20 06:47 PM GMT

Superb White Admiral image, Dave.

First day of meteorological Spring tomorrow, so we should be off the mark soon.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 29-Feb-20 10:31 PM GMT

`{quote=trevor-post_id=150819-time=1583002071-user_id=13654}`Superb White Admiral image, Dave.

Agreed. That is one lustrous insect, Dave. Beautiful specimen.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Mar-20 03:29 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor and David for your kind White Admiral comments.

July 2019.

As mentioned earlier 2019 was, in my opinion, poor for moths, compared to previous years. However it did have a few garden highlights. Our second ever Feeston Moth on the 06th was one of those. 2 White Points on the same night followed by one on the 11th was an indication that this once scarce species may be expanding in our area. Less than annual was Reddish Light Arches and the Miller, also on the 11th. Even better was our first ever garden record of the Gypsy Moth on the 21st. To give some idea of numbers this year our highest total of Large Yellow Underwing was 6, whereas we normally record daily totals of 40 to 50.

The 2nd found us back in East Sussex, near Ringmer, looking for Knapweed Broomrape. We managed to find one but had been expecting higher numbers. Still, the same site gave us 7 Painted Lady's and numerous Marbled Whites. The next day found us checking Elm trees near Warehorne where the very small colony of White Letter Hairstreaks was hanging on with 4 individuals. Again, good numbers of Marble Whites present. A quick visit to Dungeness where a Sussex Emerald, Goat Moth and micro moth *Sitochroa palealis* were available.

A pleasant walk around Stodmarsh/ Grove Ferry NNR found 16 Norfolk Hawkmoths viewable from the paths. Considering the vast areas of the reserve that are inaccessible to visitors it true numbers here must be significantly higher. We also came across the rare Marsh Sow Thistle near Marsh Hide. It's a very tall plant being nearly 3 metres high.

The 6th saw us at Ruckinge looking at the Small Chocolate -Tip moth. A scarce and seemingly decreasing moth in Kent.

A visit to Rye Harbour NR on the 10 July saw us looking at a fine patch of 200 plus Marsh Helleborine Orchids. A big thank you to the very helpful warden for showing us the actual spot. Also many Marsh Mallow plants.

Into the Orlestone Forest complex on the 11th where 16 White Admirals, 53 Marbled Whites, 29 Purple Hairstreaks and 4 Silver Washed Fritillaries cheered us up no end, but alas another year without Purple Emperors at this seemingly suitable location.

A visit on the 13th to Ashdown Forest, one of our favourite South East locations, was again enjoyable, with 15 Silver Studded Blues, 25 Keeled Skimmers

and 4 Small Red Damselflies.

A visit to Oare Marshes on the 16th to see a Lesser Yellowlegs was enhanced by 3 Southern Migrant Hawkers. The next day (17th) found 5 Southern Migrant Hawkers, 1 Small Red Eyed Damselfly and 2 Six Belted Clearwing moths there. The 18th saw us looking at a distant male Ferruginous Duck at Pett Level on one of the pools.

The 23rd could have been a brilliant day for us had we managed to find the Scarlet Darter (dragonfly) photographed the previous day at Pannel Valley (near Icklesham). Despite 3 hours searching could not relocate, still all the common dragonflies and damselflies were on the wing and made a most enjoyable visit.

The 24th saw us watching the returning Bonapartes Gull at Oare Marshes and another Six Belted Clearwing.

The 27th was a good day at Dungeness with 2 Temmincks Stints, 7 Wood Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpiper, 3 Spotted Redshanks, 10 Greenshanks and 2 Garganey. Together with a migrant Tawny Wave, yes we had gone all the way to Thetford last month to see this species, but that's the point of watching migration, you never know what surprise lies in wait. Also Pale Shouldered, Dewicks Plusia, Tree-lichen Beauty and Small Purple-barred. Probably our best moth day of the year. The next day saw a second Pale Shouldered trapped by another mother at Dungeness together with the beautiful Orache Moth.

We ended the month with 17 Willow Emerald Damselflies at Kenardington and the rare migrant micro moth *Ancylolmia tentaculella* at Ruckinge.

Not our best July on record but still a most exciting period of Nature Watching. Some more photos to follow.



Roseles Cricket at Wye NNR.



Spoonbill at Dungeness.

Re: Dave Brown

by Neil Freeman, 13-Mar-20 09:09 PM GMT

dave brown wrote:

...To give some idea of numbers this year our highest total of Large Yellow Underwing was 6, whereas we normally record daily totals of 40 to 50.

That is a remarkably low count for LYU Dave. My highest count for these here in my Warwickshire garden in 2019 was 92. It was a relatively poor year in my garden overall though with some usual suspects not turning up at all.

Cheers,

Neil.

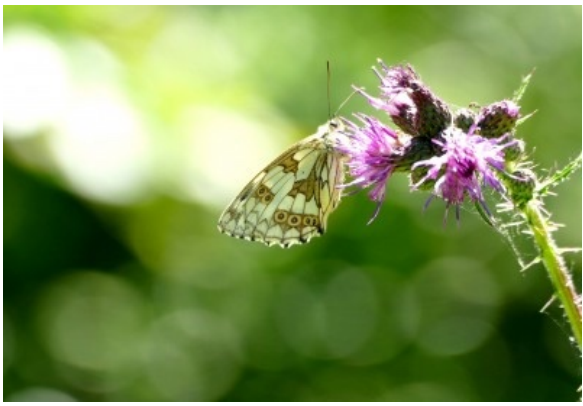
Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Mar-20 03:02 PM GMT

A few more photos from recent outings.



Azure Damselfly. A reasonably common damselfly as we travel around Kent.



Marbled White at Orlestone Forest.



Small Chocolate Tip.



Tawny Wave at Dungeness. This must have been a migrant for Tawny Wave is only resident in Norfolk/ Suffolk.



Late photo from May.



Willow Emerald Damselfly near Appledore (Kent).

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 17-Mar-20 11:13 PM GMT

Some nice reminders of last year, Dave, particularly the Marbled White.

Nature is giving oxygen to all our moods right now. I doubt we've ever needed it so much.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-Mar-20 01:42 PM GMT

Thanks David. You are right about nature giving us all something good to look forward too during what will no doubt be a very testing time for many, both emotionally and financially.

AUGUST 2019.

The month started well with 5 Wood Sandpipers at Dungeness on the 1st, with 3 Red Underwings resting on their favourite spot (the walls of Hanson Hide). The 3rd gave 2 Pied Flycatchers and 4 Painted Lady's at Dungeness. A trip into the Orlestone complex on the 4th found 11 Silver Washed Fritillary, only 1 White Admiral, 18 Painted Lady's, only 2 Marbled Whites, 16 Brimstone, 3 Brown Argus, 2 Essex Skippers and an amazing 73 Peacocks.

The 5th was a Garden Red Letter day with both Gypsy Moth (1st record was on the 21st July) and a Southern Oak Bush Cricket (1st garden record).

The 6th was time to visit Wye NNR for the Sickle-bearing Bush Crickets, 20 counted, Also 2 Wasp Spiders, a Roseles Cricket, 14 Wall Browns, 18 Chalkhill Blues, 11 Painted Lady's, 4 Brown Argus and one, yes just one, Silver Spotted Skipper. Can they hang on here in such low numbers.

The 7th found 2 Cattle Egrets at Dungeness and a Common Blue and 2 Painted Lady's in our garden.

The 8th found 8 Southern Migrant Hawkers at Oare Marshes.

The 10th would have been a good day had we seen the Queen of Spain Fritillary that was seen and photographed at South Foreland. After 3 hours we gave up but some compensation in the form of 2 Great Green Bush Crickets.

We counted 30 Willow Emeralds at Kennardington on the 11th. Another visit on the 13th to South Foreland again saw no sign of the Queen of Spain Fritillary. A check of Oare Marshes on the 15th found no Southern Migrant Hawkers, just Migrant Hawkers, on territories formerly held by SMH. This happened last year. There appears to be a period of 2 or 3 days where the SMH are totally displaced by Migrant Hawkers. The returning Bonapartes Gull was on it's usual haunts on the sea front.

The 16th was interesting for us with a Raven and 2 Med Gulls over the Garden. Clearing the weeds does have it's perks. A most unexpected sighting on the 18th was a Wheatear in Ashford Station Car Park at 07.40hrs. Spurred on by this we visited the Orlestone Forest complex later in the day to find 41 Painted Lady's, 24 Common Blues, 4 Brimstones and 300 plus Migrant Hawkers patrolling the rides in amazing numbers.

A visit to Wye NNR on the 20th found 25 Sickle-bearing Bush Crickets, 40 Chalkhill Blues, 3 Adonis Blues, 19 Brown Argus, 11 Painted Lady's but no sign of any Silver Spotted Skippers. The 21st saw a Osprey at Oare Marshes.

Never one to resist another visit to Wye NR this time (24th) we did find the single Silver Spotted Skipper, along with 35 Chalkhill Blues, 17 Adonis Blues, 20 Brown Argus and 4 Painted Lady's. The same day also gave us another Garden moth trap first in the form of Toadflax Brocade and our highest count

of Silver Y (31) of the year on the Buddleia Bush.

Not sure what was so special about the 25th but we counted 129 Willow Emerald Damselflies near Appledore (Kent).

So, one or two surprises, but on the whole numbers down. Hopefully it was just a case of insects finding shelter from the heat.



Dewicks Pulsar at Dungeness (from July).



Med Gull at Dungeness



One of many Painted Lady' in Orlestone Forest.



Southern Migrant Hawker at Oare Marshes.



Silver Spotted Skipper. The lonelly individual at Wye NR.

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 22-Mar-20 09:40 PM GMT

You **do** come up with some unusual stuff, Dave.

I'd never even heard of Dewicks Plusia, let alone seen it.

I searched on Google and it would appear that this is a pretty infrequent visitor:

A migrant to the UK, it has been recorded less than four hundred times, most often at light from coastal counties of England but numbers are increasing, possibly supported by transitory breeding. Easily recognised by large metallic silver 'dog-leg' mark in the centre of a pinkish-brown bar on the forewing.

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths/dewicks-plusia>

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Mar-20 03:47 PM GMT

September 2019.

September can be an exciting month for migration of both Birds and Moths but this year seemed flat.

The 3rd started well with both Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Vetical and Portland Ribon Wave at Dungeness with an Osprey over but nothing much else happened until the 7th when a small movement of 500 plus Swallows, 300 plus House Martins, 50 Sand Martins and the usual attendant Hobby passed over Appledore (Kent). A small fall of common migrants on the 8th at Dengemarsh was accompanied by large numbers of Migrant Hawkers.

The next decent day was the 10th at Oare Marshes with a minimum of 5 Clouded Yellows together with lots more Migrant Hawkers and 3 Curlew Sandpipers. The 11th produced a large movement of Sandwich and Common Terns with hundreds of each, chased by 3 Arctic Skuas. 3 Avocets on the ARC pit plus a Gargeney.

The 12th found us checking Wye NNR with 4 Sickle-bearing Bush Crickets, Roseles Cricket, 14 Chalkhill blues, 4 Adonis Blues and a Brown Argus.

A check of Orlestone Forest on the 14th sill found 5 Brimstones, 33 Commas, 16 Red Admirals, 7 Peacocks and a Painted Lady.

A check of Dungeness on the 17th found Pectoral Sandpiper, Cattle Egret, Spotted Flycatcher but only 1 Clouded Yellow.

The 21st found us checking Wye NNR for probably the last visit of 2019 with 9 Sickle-bearing Bush Crickets, 1 Adonis Blue, 2 Chalkhill Blues and 11 Small Heaths indicating that the season was drawing to a close.

Our friends at Ruckinge saved the Autumn with the very rare Shining Marbled (moth) on the 22nd. The first record of this very rare moth in the UK was not until 2006 since when a few records have been noted.

We noted a big movement, many thousands, of Swallows, over Oare Marshes on the 23rd. Always an impressive sight.

The 26th saw a small sea movement at Dungeness which included 6 Balearic Shearwaters, 12 Arctic Skuas and a lone Great Skua. The 28th was good for an American Golden Plover at Oare Marshes, together with 2 Greenshank, 2 Little Stints and a Curlew Sandpiper.

With the month coming to an end the 29th found us at Dungeness looking at 3 Little Gulls, Arctic Tern, Black Tern and a good candidate for Siberian Common Tern. Photos were taken by the boys with the big lenses so hopefully something may come of this record.

Well that was September 2019. In the main quiet, disappointing and also slightly worrying. Numbers of most species seemed low for whatever reason. We need a good breeding season in 2020 to allow numbers to recover. Unfortunately with development proceeding a pace ever where, and breeding habitat decreasing, numbers are likely to continue falling.



Shining Marbled at Ruckinge.



Red Backed Shrike at Dungeness from May.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 03-Apr-20 03:13 PM GMT

OCTOBER 2019

We looked so forward to October. It's usually a good chance to catch up with some scarce birds and also a last chance to enjoy butterflies before the cold weather sets in. We found it generally very disappointing despite much searching. I believe that others in this part of the Country also found October to be poor. We were catching few moths in our garden so ended up putting the moth trap away early and, whilst the garden flowers were still in good condition very few butterflies were attracted to them.

The 1st started well with the American Golden Plover and 16 Spoonbills present at Oare Marshes, but only one Clouded Yellow. Also a flock of 500 plus House Martins over Conningbrook CP (Ashford). The 2nd saw a Black tern, 3 Little Gulls, a Arctic Tern, 3 Cattle Egrets and 10 Yellow Wagtails at Dungeness. The best we could muster on the 3rd was a Curlew Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank and Greenshank at Oare Marshes.

The next decent day was the 5th with 3 Cattle Egrets, 8 Great White Egrets, Radford Flame Shoulder and 4 Delicates (moths) at Dungeness. The 6th was even better with another example of Radfords Flame Shoulder trapped at Dungeness. This is still quite a scarce moth in Britain with the first trapped as recently as 1983. Most records are in September & October. The 3 Cattle Egrets were still on the ARC pit. 7 Willow Emerald Damselfies were still on the wing at Warehorne.

We had to wait until the 13th for the next decent record when a Dewicks Pulsa was trapped at Dungeness (photo already posted) and the Streak. A Hummingbird Hawkmoth in the garden on the 17 October was nice. I have still to take an acceptable photo of this species. I struggle to get the whole insect in focus, or even in the frame, despite many attempts. Small numbers of incoming Redwings and Fieldfares over home were recorded on most days in the period 20th to 25th, and one big movement of 865 Chaffinches and 300 Goldfinches on the 20th.

The 26th produced 2 Goldeneyes and a Long Tailed Duck at Dungeness. On the 29th a migrant Stone Curlew gave us the runaround at Dungeness before showing to the large crowd on the back of the ARC pit. For such a large bird it could disappear very quickly over the shingle and vegetation. We ended the month with a Shorelark showing well at Dungeness on the 31st and a late Hummingbird Hawkmoth.

We did put a lot of time in the field this month but found very little to trouble the notebook. Butterflies were largely absent although a few Red Admirals and Small Coppers kept the interest going. Where were all the Migrant Moths ?



Shorelark at Dungeness

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Sep-20 04:23 PM GMT

November & December 2019.

I have not updated our diary for some 5 months, and in particular had not concluded our notes for 2019. I take this opportunity to do just that. Like many people we have had plenty of time on our hands this year, but we took the early decision to try and obey the rules that were in place, especially the one that encouraged essential travel only and limited mixing. Even when lockdown ended we continued with this view so have missed out on many good opportunities this year, including Purple Emperor, Black Hairstreak and Small Pearl Bordered amongst others. We have only been doing local bird watching although judging by the crowds reported at some sites this was probably a good move. Our favourite location of Dungeness, of which we normally visit 4 or 5 times a week, is only visited once or twice a month. On the few visits we do make the place is packed. Even midweek on a cool day can resemble a normal Bank Holiday on a hot day.

People everywhere, walkers, dog walkers, family picnics, cars trying to drive across the shingle (and getting stuck), drone flyers etc. Bearing in mind it is a National Nature Reserve for its plants and insects, as well as birds, I am not sure for how much longer it can take this punishment without affecting the very thing that makes it so special. Some of the locals complain that they struggle to get out, for when the car parks are full people park along the not very wide road restricting access to houses. In the current times we all need somewhere and sometime to stress out from the pandemic but the fact that Dungeness is a NNR seems to be forgotten by most.

It seems strange to summarise late 2019 but here goes. Dungeness produced the odd Painted Lady and decent numbers of late Common Darters but birdwise it was generally quiet with 3 Cattle Egrets and 4 Caspian Gulls on the 23rd November, with a Stone Curlew on the 17th November being the best. The usual early winter sightings included Dartford Warbler, Firecrests, Bittern, Black Necked Grebes and several Great White Egrets. Star insect had to be the Vagrant Emperor at Sandwich Bay on the 19th November. This female was struggling to survive in the cold weather and on some days she hardly moved at all, other than to wash and preen or change position on her preferred branch. With less than 50 records in Britain it was sad to see this scarce insect from Africa struggle.

December brought little change although a Glossy Ibis on the 8th on the RSPB was a welcome visitor, as was the 2 Whooper Swans on the 14th, but otherwise the month was uneventful.

So that concludes 2019. Little did we all know how 2020 was going to be known for all the wrong reasons.

I have so little to report for 2020 that I intend to summarise it all in one go around Christmas time.

I hope everyone stays safe.

Dave



Female Vagrant Emperor at Sandwich Bay. November 2019.

Re: Dave Brown

by Allan.W., 23-Sep-20 04:54 PM GMT

Yes Dave ,I Completely agree with your comments regarding Dungeness ,and certainly couldn,t have put it any better !!

We,ve had fewer visits there ourselves ,than in the past ,lets hope things return to some sort of normality in the not too distant future !

I found the Southern Migrant Hawk (and the Violet Helleborines) that you kindly put me on too,Thankyou Dave ! ,and had a bit of luck myself , finding another site for Sickle Bearing Bush Crickets near home .

Regards Allan.W.

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 24-Sep-20 03:55 PM GMT

Shame to hear about the saturation of Dungeness Reserve with people, many of whom behave irresponsibly, Dave.

I understand folks want to get outdoors following a period of confinement, but in all honesty if I visited a place and found it to be packed it would put me off going there again until I knew things had calmed down. Let's hope some kind of normality resumes shortly.