

Re: David M

by David M, 02-Jan-20 11:46 AM GMT

A look back at 2019

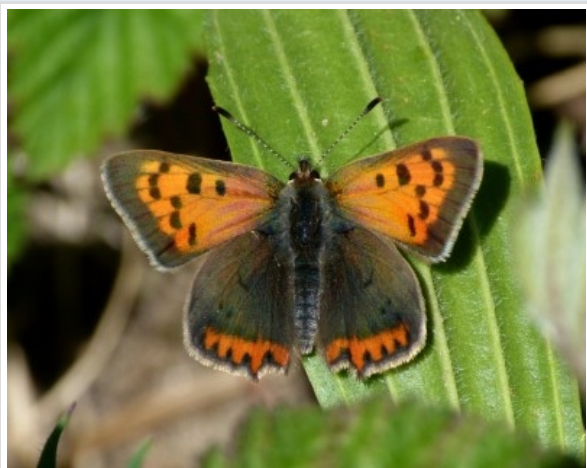
Spring cont....

May wasn't particularly warm for the most part, but there were plenty of sunny days and the hot Easter ensured that species emerged earlier than they do normally.

I encountered my first Wall Brown on 4th May:



Later that day, I saw my first Common Blue as well as eight Small Coppers:



Like Speckled Woods the month before, Dingy Skippers were proving elusive; that is until a walk around my workplace at lunchtime on 10th May threw

up half a dozen or so:



The following day, it was the turn of Small Heath to reveal itself for the first time in 2019:



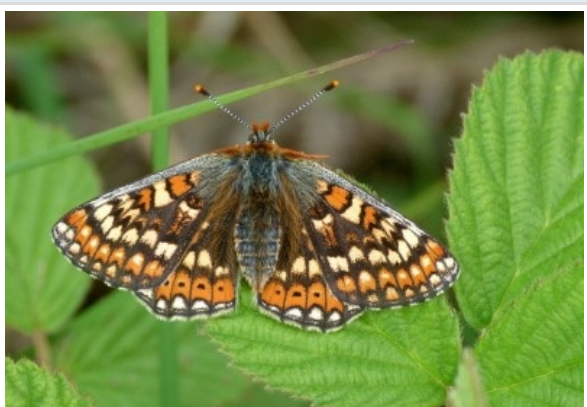
On Sunday 12th, Small Blues had emerged at a coastal site on the east of Swansea, with at least 40 seen:



With my first foreign jaunt looming on Sunday 19th, it was more in hope than expectation that I visited Fairwood Common on 16th to look for Marsh and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries, but I managed to find both:



By the time I returned from France on Thursday 30th, numbers had skyrocketed, and I had best counts of 75 Marsh Frits and 39 SPBF:





Re: David M

by David M, 09-Jan-20 08:44 AM GMT

A look back at 2019

Summer....

The weather conditions during the first ten days or so in June were reasonable, and I managed to spot my first Meadow Brown on 6th and my first Large Skippers on 9th:





However, due to my visit to the Italian Alps on 15th June, I didn't venture out in the UK again until 27th, where an extremely early start allowed me to find a small number of High Brown Fritillaries at their only Welsh site:



Present that day were my first Ringlets of the year:



I **did** manage to see White Letter Hairstreak too at Loughor, but the several individuals observed were constantly flying around the tree canopy.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 09-Jan-20 01:30 PM GMT

Hi! Dave a nice look back to Summer and things to come 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Jan-20 05:45 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie.

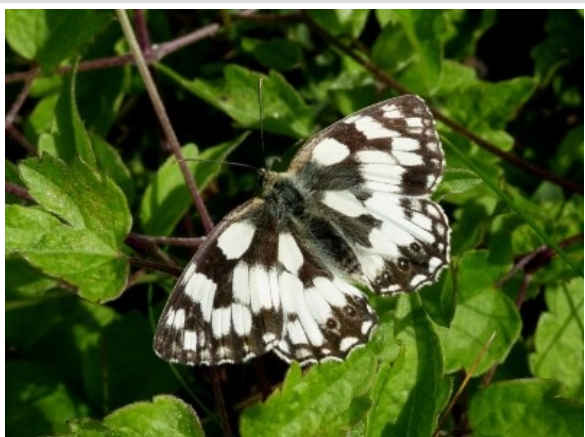
Yes, only a few weeks to go now. If we don't get any real cold weather I reckon my bulbs will be out before the end of the month!

A look back at 2019

Summer cont....

My annual fortnight in France coincides with what I consider to be peak butterfly period in the UK, i.e. the first two weeks of July. As ever, when I returned I had plenty of catching up to do.

First up were Marbled Whites at Whiteford Burrows on the north Gower coast on 14 July:



Also present were Small Skippers:



Highlight of the day was undoubtedly this beautiful female Dark Green Fritillary who I spent about 20 minutes with as she pottered about the dunes:



It wasn't until the following weekend that I caught up with Hedge Browns. There were a few in the orchard at the top of Castle Meadows:



Essex Skippers were about too:



On the meadows themselves I saw this lustrous summer brood Peacock



The highlight though was the first Marbled White I've ever seen in this part of Wales, although it was nearing the end of its flight period:



Re: David M

by trevor, 20-Jan-20 07:30 PM GMT

You are very lucky to have High Brown Fritillaries close to home, David. Apparently they were found on Ashdown Forest some years ago, about 15 miles from home. Now your local population is probably one of the closest to me.

Have a great new season (when it arrives),
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 25-Jan-20 06:39 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor. Yes, whilst I miss out on the chalk downland species here in south Wales, compensation is provided by way of Marsh, Small Pearl Bordered and especially High Brown Fritillaries.

Pleased to share that they had a good year in 2019. 😊

A look back at 2019

Summer cont....

Late July gave me a chance to catch up with Graylings on the Gower coast prior to decamping to Spain for 9 days:



When I came back, I was struck by how things had an end of season look to them, something which seems to be increasingly common these last few years. My first major outing in August was on 15th, a trip to Pembrokeshire in the hope of seeing Brown Hairstreaks.

This time of year is now usually when I see my first home-grown Silver Washed Fritillaries:



It was nice to see a few vanessids on the wing, with encouragingly decent numbers of Small Tortoiseshells and Painted Ladies:



This ridiculously blue female *icarus* was also a welcome sight:



I only got to see one female *betulae* on this visit, but she was mint fresh:





Like at many other UK locations, this species was scarce in 2019, and a further visit to the site on August Bank Holiday Monday returned a blank; the first time this has happened in my visits at this peak period for the females.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 27-Jan-20 02:42 PM GMT

Some cracking shots David 📷📷 Love the Hair Streak , what a beauty 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jan-20 07:17 PM GMT

Seconded. That's a fantastic Brown Hairstreak!

Re: David M

by David M, 31-Jan-20 05:42 PM GMT

Thanks, Both. Yes, she was immaculate, but sadly one of only 4 I saw in 2019. It was a dismal year for them everywhere seemingly. 😞

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 31-Jan-20 07:34 PM GMT

Some nice reminders of summer days in your recent reports David and something to look forward to 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 01-Feb-20 12:17 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

Some nice reminders of summer days in your recent reports David and something to look forward to

Thank you, Neil. Yes, plenty to look forward to now February has dawned. I can feel a real spring in my step! 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 08-Feb-20 10:46 PM GMT

A look back at 2019

Autumn....

Autumn 2019 will be mainly remembered for a feast of Painted Ladies and precious few Brown Hairstreaks.

I have been visiting the main Welsh site for *betulae* in Pembrokeshire since 2010, and this year was the worst ever in terms of adult sightings. Having only seen one during August, I suppose I should have been grateful for the three I encountered on 8th September, even though all were showing signs of wear:



Yet strangely, I managed to find 40 eggs which is a decent return in early September, so goodness knows why the adults were so difficult to find. September is also a month where certain species bow out, such as Hedge Browns, Small Skippers & Common Blues, and are replaced by late emerging vanessids & migrants.

After a poorish year, Red Admiral numbers suddenly increased significantly:



Painted Ladies were everywhere; I estimated on one occasion at Port Eynon dunes I saw well into 3 figures:



Even more pleasing was seeing a handful of Clouded Yellows:



I kept looking for Long Tailed Blues, especially after hearing that one had been spotted at Kenfig dunes about 20 miles down the coast, but sadly didn't find any, although there were late Common Blues and even Brown Argus around:



The season wound down pretty quickly during October, with butterfly numbers withering on the vine by mid-month. I saw my final Speckled Wood on 6th October in Abergavenny:



My last butterfly of 2019 was a Red Admiral flying out to sea on 10th November at Port Eynon.

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Feb-20 09:21 PM GMT

Thursday 13th February – On the cusp....

This wet and stormy spell of weather is in direct contrast to the benign, mild and sunny conditions we had in 2019 in mid-February.

A brief lull in the winds and rain saw me nip out to Oystermouth Cemetery on the Gower and it felt pleasantly mild in the sunshine, with plenty of spring plants emerging:



No butterflies, unfortunately, although a quick visit to Limeslade Bay on the coast saw quite a few insects nectaring on the hebe, including three bumblebees:



The appearance of bumblebees is usually a pre-cursor to butterflies. When I see them in early spring, I can generally be confident that butterflies are likely to be around. However, I personally did not manage to find any, although all it will take is just one calm, sunny day with temperatures 8c or above to coax them out...

Re: David M

by MrSp0ck, 20-Feb-20 09:37 PM GMT

David M wrote:
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It seems to have been a bad year for sightings everywhere in 2019, all our egg counts are down on the previous year, but it seems where they are spreading its not as bad as on existing colonies. We did have 6 females in view at once on Featherbed Lane Verge, which is quite good for last year, there was also a good showing at Spring Park although nobody saw them, from the number of eggs on this new site. I found a cut piece of Blackthorn at Hutchinsons Bank yesterday it had 20 eggs on it.

Re: David M

by Matsukaze, 21-Feb-20 10:43 PM GMT

{quote=MrSp0ck_post_id=150702_time=1582234654_user_id=13333}

David M wrote:
A look back at 2019

Autumn....

Autumn 2019 will be mainly remembered for a feast of Painted Ladies and precious few Brown Hairstreaks.

I have been visiting the main Welsh site for *betulae* in Pembrokeshire since 2010, and this year was the worst ever in terms of adult sightings. Having only seen one during August, I suppose I should have been grateful for the three I encountered on 8th September, even though all were showing signs of wear:

It seems to have been a bad year for sightings everywhere in 2019, all our egg counts are down on the previous year, but it seems where they are spreading its not as bad as on existing colonies. We did have 6 females in view at once on Featherbed Lane Verge, which is quite good for last year, there was also a good showing at Spring Park although nobody saw them, from the number of eggs on this new site. I found a cut piece of Blackthorn at Hutchinsons Bank yesterday it had 20 eggs on it.

Brown Hairstreaks in New Addington! I had not realised where this reserve was until now. I lived a few miles away at one point but had not discovered butterflies at the time. On my only return since I found a WLH egg on Selsdon Park golf course - 1 in 10 minutes compared with 1 in 10 years here in Somerset...

Re: David M

by MrSp0ck, 22-Feb-20 11:16 AM GMT

There are a few Mature Elms at Selsdon Park Golf Course, and dotted around the area so the White-Letter Hairstreaks are around these, we are lucky to have 4 of the 5 hairstreaks in good numbers now.

New Addington if you include Hutchinsons Bank as part of it has 40 species of butterfly, so not bad for Little Siberia or the Big A some of its other names.

We find WLH larvae every year on the ELM at the entrance to Chapel Bank NR.

Re: David M

by David M, 24-Feb-20 06:27 PM GMT

{quote=MrSp0ck post_id=150702 time=1582234654 user_id=13333}It seems to have been a bad year for sightings everywhere in 2019, all our egg counts are down on the previous year, but it seems where they are spreading its not as bad as on existing colonies...

Yes, MrSp0ck, *betulae* remained pretty aloof everywhere in the UK last year, seemingly.

The year before, they also behaved strangely, sticking rigidly to their normal flight period when just about every other species emerged early due to the abnormally hot summer.

I found a decent number of eggs however, so hopefully things will recover.

Re: David M

by MrSp0ck, 24-Feb-20 08:17 PM GMT

The year before we were finding eggs laid in weird positions on mature Blackthorn, in the shady north facing hedgerows and on Hawthorn. This winter every egg has been on the top join of a bud off the main stem of Blackthorn in a sunny location.

Re: David M

by David M, 16-Mar-20 11:54 PM GMT

Dates of first sightings 2020:

1. **Comma** – 16 March, Swansea Vale
2. **Small Tortoiseshell** – 16 March, Swansea Vale
3. **Brimstone** – 22 March, Cwm Ivy, nr. Llanmadoc, Gower
4. **Peacock** – 22 March, Cwm Ivy, nr. Llanmadoc, Gower
5. **Holly Blue** – 22 March, Cwm Ivy, nr. Llanmadoc, Gower
6. **Small White** – 25 March, Cwm Ivy, nr. Llanmadoc, Gower
7. **Orange Tip** – 25 March, Cwm Ivy, nr. Llanmadoc, Gower
8. **Speckled Wood** – 4 April, Lower Kilvey Hill, Swansea
9. **Large White** – 4 April, Lower Kilvey Hill, Swansea
10. **Red Admiral** – 8 April, Gelli-Hir Wood, Gower
11. **Green-Veined White** – 11 April, Welshmoor, Gower
12. **Green Hairstreak** – 21 April, Fairwood Common, Gower
13. **Wall Brown** – 22 April, Kilvey Hill, Swansea
14. **Small Copper** – 23 April, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
15. **Dingy Skipper** – 26 April, Swansea Vale
16. **Small Heath** – 26 April, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
17. **Small Blue** – 2 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
18. **Brown Argus** – 6 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
19. **Common Blue** – 9 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
20. **Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary** – 9 May, Fairwood Common, Gower
21. **Marsh Fritillary** – 10 May, Fairwood Common, Gower
22. **Pearl Bordered Fritillary** – 15 May, Ewyas Harold Common, Herefordshire
23. **Wood White** – 15 May, Haugh Wood, nr. Fownhope, Herefordshire
24. **Duke of Burgundy** – 15 May, Rodborough Common, nr. Stroud, Glos
25. **Adonis Blue** – 15 May, Rodborough Common, nr. Stroud, Glos
26. **Meadow Brown** – 25 May, Prior's Meadow, Gower, Swansea
27. **Large Skipper** – 28 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
28. **Dark Green Fritillary** – 31 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
29. **High Brown Fritillary** – 2 June, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
30. **Painted Lady** – 2 June, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
31. **Small Skipper** – 13 June, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
32. **Silver Studded Blue** – 15 June, Prees Heath, Shropshire
33. **Large Heath** – 15 June, Whixhall Moss, Shropshire
34. **Marbled White** – 19 June, Bernwood Meadows, Buckinghamshire
35. **Black Hairstreak** – 19 June, Bernwood Meadows, Buckinghamshire
36. **Ringlet** – 20 June, Bernwood Forest, Buckinghamshire
37. **Silver Washed Fritillary** – 20 June, Bernwood Forest, Buckinghamshire
38. **White Admiral** – 20 June, Bernwood Forest, Buckinghamshire
39. **Large Blue** – 24 June, Daneway Banks, nr. Sapperton, Glos
40. **Purple Emperor** – 25 June, Fermyn Woods, nr. Corby, Northants
41. **Essex Skipper** – 26 June, Mill Lane Orchard, Abergavenny
42. **White Letter Hairstreak** – 12 July, Glanymor Park, Loughor
43. **Hedge Brown** – 19 July, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
44. **Purple Hairstreak** – 19 July, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
45. **Large Tortoiseshell** – 22 July, Portland, Dorset
46. **Chalkhill Blue** – 22 July, Portland, Dorset
47. **Lulworth Skipper** – 22 July, Portland, Dorset
48. **Brown Hairstreak** – 22 July, Alner's Gorse, Dorset
49. **Grayling** – 29 July, Bracelet Bay, Gower, Swansea

Last UK butterfly sighting: Red Admiral – 11 Dec, Swansea Vale

UK butterflies seen on the continent in 2020 but NOT seen in the UK:

50. (Southern) Grizzled Skipper
51. Silver Spotted Skipper
52. Swallowtail
53. Mountain (Northern Brown) Argus
54. Heath Fritillary
55. Glanville Fritillary
56. Mountain Ringlet
57. Clouded Yellow

UK species not seen: Cryptic Wood White, Scotch Argus & Chequered Skipper

NON UK species seen in 2020:

French Alps:

58. Tufted Marbled Skipper
59. Large Grizzled Skipper
60. Safflower Skipper
61. Olive Skipper
62. Dusky Grizzled skipper
63. Red-underwing Skipper
64. Geranium Argus
65. Silvery Argus
66. Mazarine Blue
67. Glandon Blue
68. Idas Blue
69. Alpine Blue
70. Amanda's Blue
71. Damon Blue
72. Turquoise Blue
73. Eros Blue
74. Escher's Blue
75. Chapman's Blue
76. Cranberry Blue
77. Long tailed Blue
78. Ripart's Anomalous Blue
79. Purple-edged Copper
80. Sooty Copper
81. Scarce Copper
82. Sloe Hairstreak
83. Mountain Fritillary
84. Shepherd's Fritillary
85. Titania's Fritillary
86. Marbled Fritillary
87. Lesser Marbled Fritillary
88. Cynthia's Fritillary
89. Queen of Spain Fritillary
90. False Heath Fritillary
91. Spotted Fritillary
92. Knapweed Fritillary
93. Grisons Fritillary
94. Poplar admiral
95. Map
96. Great Banded Grayling
97. Pearly Heath
98. Dusky Heath
99. Chestnut Heath
100. Alpine Heath
101. False Mnestra Ringlet
102. Almond-eyed Ringlet
103. Common Brassy Ringlet
104. Large Ringlet
105. Blind ringlet
106. Dewy ringlet
107. Marbled Ringlet
108. Sooty Ringlet
109. Large Wall
110. Great Sooty Satyr
111. Scarce Swallowtail
112. Apollo
113. Small Apollo
114. Black-veined White
115. Berger's Clouded Yellow
116. Mountain Clouded Yellow
117. Moorland clouded yellow
118. Mountain Dappled White
119. Mountain Green-veined White
120. Peak White

Montes Universales, Spain:

121. Mediterranean Skipper

122. Mallow Skipper
123. Southern Marbled Skipper
124. Sage Skipper
125. Cinquefoil Skipper
126. Iberian Scarce Swallowtail
127. Purple-shot Copper
128. Iberian Sooty Copper
129. Spanish Purple Hairstreak
130. Blue-spot Hairstreak
131. Ilex Hairstreak
132. Lang's Short-tailed Blue
133. Southern Brown Argus
134. Spanish Argus
135. Mother-of-Pearl Blue
136. Azure Chalkhill Blue
137. Spanish Chalkhill Blue
138. Oberthur's Anomalous Blue
139. African Grass Blue
140. Cardinal
141. Twin-spot Fritillary
142. Lesser Spotted Fritillary
143. Provençal Fritillary
144. Southern White Admiral
145. Southern Gatekeeper
146. Spanish Gatekeeper
147. Dusky Meadow Brown
148. Oriental Meadow Brown
149. Zapater's Ringlelet
150. Esper's Marbled White
151. Iberian Marbled White
152. Black Satyr
153. Rock Grayling
154. Tree Grayling
155. Striped Grayling
156. False Grayling
157. The Hermit
158. Southern Hermit
159. Bath White
160. Cleopatra

Total species seen in 2020 – 160

Re: David M

by Andrew555, 17-Mar-20 09:11 AM GMT

Well done on your first sighting David. And what a great 2019 roundup! Love your Fritillaries and Brown Hairstreak. 🍷

Re: David M

by Old Wolf, 17-Mar-20 10:45 AM GMT

Hello David, Snap! I too saw a Comma on 16th. In fact I saw two 😊

Great to looking back at your 2019. I have never seen a HBF or BHS so enjoy looking at your pictures.

Re: David M

by David M, 19-Mar-20 02:23 PM GMT

Thanks, Andrew/Old Wolf. Yes, it's been a long time coming (we're usually quite 'early' round here due to our proximity to the warm coast), but the lack of sunshine and regular gales has hampered things in 2020.

Monday 16th March 2020 – A ray of light in dark times...

Even in a 'normal' year I would have been desperate for a spring butterfly after a 4 month+ hiatus, but with each passing day bringing ever more worrying news regarding Covid-19, rarely have I ever been in such need of a boost to my spirits.

An hour's walk around the green areas adjacent to my workplace provided just that, as three Commas were seen, the first popping up in a reliable spot on the south side of the goods railway embankment:



A further one was seen flying energetically over a hedgerow before the last was located at another known 'hotspot' for this species:



This sheltered stretch is a bit of a microclimate and it was no surprise to see this little fellow holding territory there:



Re: David M

by trevor, 19-Mar-20 07:21 PM GMT

The Comma does not tend to get much attention as the season progresses, but at the start we really look forward to them, as a sign that the new season has started. Your specimens are all in good condition, many around here have suffered the ravages of Winter.

Stay safe,
Trevor.

Re: David M

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

Thanks, Trevor. Yes, I agree we rather neglect Commas, except for at the beginning/end of the season and when the *hutchinsonis* emerge in June.

Fascinating butterflies though, and their territorial antics are always a pleasure to observe.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 21-Mar-20 02:12 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, everybody seems to be seeing the Coma but me 😊 love your shots 📷📷 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 21-Mar-20 10:45 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Hi! Dave, everybody seems to be seeing the Coma but me 😊 love your shots

Thanks, Goldie. Don't worry, Commas will appear on your patch in due course. I still haven't seen a Brimstone and we're beyond the equinox (must check to see when that last happened).

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 22-Mar-20 06:00 PM GMT

Hi! David, finally got my Comma today with an added Bonus 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 22-Mar-20 10:03 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Hi! David, finally got my Comma today with an added Bonus 😊 Goldie 😊

Saw it, Goldie, on your PD!! Well done. Many more to follow, I'm sure.

Re: David M

by David M, 23-Mar-20 07:30 AM GMT

Monday 16th March 2020 - Bonus butterfly....

Having seen the Commas, I extended my lunch break and drove round to the other side of my workplace to the riverbank where I regularly see early season Small Tortoiseshells:



In a normal season, I tend to do this during the first week of March, so I'm not used to seeing quite so many celandines adorning the steep banks. Thankfully, there was a solitary Tortoiseshell busily nectaring away:



Re: David M

by Chris L, 23-Mar-20 08:42 AM GMT

Lovely photos David. I was interested to read that lepidopterists tend to neglect Commas. Whilst I have not seen many butterfly species to date, I would class them as my favourite so far.

Re: David M

by David M, 23-Mar-20 10:55 PM GMT

[quote=Otep_post_id=151245-time=1584949335-user_id=19316] Lovely photos David. I was interested to read that lepidopterists tend to neglect Commas. Whilst I have not seen many butterfly species to date, I would class them as my favourite so far.

Thanks, Otep. Yes, Commas aren't given the attention they deserve. Their behaviour is both interesting and entertaining compared to lots of other species. They're also fairly easy to approach and photograph; very obliging in the sense that they will hold territories and keep returning to the same area even when you are present in their air space.

Re: David M

by David M, 25-Mar-20 06:58 PM GMT

Sunday 22nd March 2019 - The joy of spring.....

It had been a long time, but finally we got a mild, sunny, calm day. The butterflies seemed even more grateful for it than I, as Cwm Ivy was teeming with them.

Brimstones were dashing up and down the woodland ride and over the dunes. This male paused to rest though:



I lost count of them within half an hour, but I'd estimate there were between 30 and 50 in the two and a quarter hours I was there.

All were males, except for this demure little lady:



There were plenty of Peacocks and Commas too. I reckon 15-20 Peacocks:





...about a dozen Commas were defending territories:



This sheltered dip harboured 3 Peacocks and 2 Commas, and aerial jousts were continual:



Here's a view over the bay towards Llanelli:



A male Holly Blue popped up too which was something of a surprise, although a resident Comma chased him away before I could get an image.

The cobwebs have been fully dusted away! 😊

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 25-Mar-20 09:34 PM GMT

Sounds and looks lovely, David. There are some advantages to the current 'stay at home' scenario!

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 25-Mar-20 09:40 PM GMT

Love your Brimstone's David, Next on my list if possible, I must look out for the Holly Blues as well 😊 trust the Comma to chase it off , the Comma I saw was chasing the Tort's and the Peacocks 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 26-Mar-20 09:40 AM GMT

Thanks, both. At this time of year, we all generally keep close to home. The species one needs to travel to see come later in April and through May so fingers crossed we have these restrictions lifted within a month or so.

Re: David M

by David M, 26-Mar-20 07:10 PM GMT

Wednesday 25th March 2020 - Surreal outing.....

Butterflying shouldn't be an activity fraught with apprehension but having requested (and been given) a 3 hour lunch break I wasn't 100% sure whether I'd successfully reach my destination due to the authorities stopping people from visiting local Gower beauty spots.

Cwm Ivy and Whiteford Burrows are certainly beautiful, but on a week day they don't attract crowds, and thankfully my progress there was unhindered.

Although it was warmer than Sunday, there were fewer butterflies about, however Brimstones still numbered two dozen or so and were the commonest species.

I saw about half a dozen Commas, but they were eclipsed by Peacocks, which numbered around 15:



Most pleasing though were the numbers of Holly Blues. I saw one fleetingly on 22nd, but this time I counted 11, all of which were males. None were prepared to settle wings open, so I had to make do with an underside:



This area here is a real hotspot for them:



I took a walk round the dunes and saw a White flying about. I kept tabs on it and it came down in long grass. A record shot proved it to be a Small White:



It then took off and settled on the wrong side of a barbed wire fence:



I still had nearly an hour so I walked via this route back to the woodland glade:



Whilst watching the antics of the resident Commas & Peacocks, another White caught my eye. It was a distance away and at first I assumed it was another Small White. However, it was fluttering rather too weakly for *rapae* so I followed it and was surprised to find it was actually a female Orange Tip:





The same thing happened last March too at this site; my first OT was a female, but unlike then, this time I did not see any males afterwards, so this delightful little lady was able to enjoy at least one unmolested day of life! Little does she know! 🤔

Re: David M

by trevor, 26-Mar-20 08:09 PM GMT

A couple of very notable sightings there, David. Your local Holly Blues are ahead of my local hotspot, nothing yet. And a female Orange Tip already must be near a record. Again nothing around here up to today. Lovely images.

Your exercising has paid dividends!.

Keep safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by Old Wolf, 26-Mar-20 08:16 PM GMT

Hello David, that is a lot of Peacocks and Brimstone you have around your way 😊 I am only seeing ones and if lucky twos at the moment.

I do love an Orange Tip and your images of them are great. I am looking forward to when they start appearing round my way. I have earmarked a couple of locations that I reckon will be good and can't wait to see if they are 😊

Re: David M

by ernie f, 27-Mar-20 10:22 AM GMT

David – great counts of Butterflies on that walk of yours. Also a Holly Blue! I must keep check for them. Not seen one in our garden as yet but they usually visit us at some point in Spring.

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 27-Mar-20 07:45 PM GMT

A great selection of butterflies there from your local spots David and some great photos.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 01-Apr-20 09:53 PM GMT

Thanks, all. Yes, OT season is underway and I expect numbers to seriously build over the next week or so. Let's hope we can all grab a handful.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 02-Apr-20 09:41 AM GMT

Fantastic finds David, you've encouraged me to go out this week-end, hope fully in the Sun 😊 It's started to rain here, it should do the Garden good ready for week-end 😊 Love the Orange Tip 🍷 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by Chris L, 02-Apr-20 07:29 PM GMT

Lovely photos David and it was nice to get some perspective with some photos of your walk. I think my favourite photo was the Peacock in the sand. The Comma on the tree a close second.

Knowing that certain species are out is handy for others to know and, in my case, knowing what some actually look like with wings closed is helpful too ! I bought this (link below) the other day which will help. It was recommended to me.

<http://www.buckinghampress.co.uk/british-butterflies.html>

Re: David M

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

Thanks, both. Yes, the next few days are a good time to be getting out and seeing up to a dozen different species.

Saturday 4th April 2020 – First Speckled Wood...

A trip to Lower Kilvey Hill, where few people go walking, gave me an opportunity to see my first Speckled Woods of 2020. In the event, I only found one, along this historically reliable semi shaded corridor:



I actually spotted it after another walker went by and disturbed it. Like most Speckle males though, we wasn't going to desert his territory and he soon came back to the same spot:





Re: David M

by trevor, 05-Apr-20 01:30 PM GMT

It's always good to see the first Speckled Wood of the year. Later on, when numbers have increased, they become a pain by sending up the butterfly about to be photographed.

This morning I saw two long lasting Speckle duels, caused no doubt by an intruder invading another's territory or air space.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by Matsukaze, 05-Apr-20 01:54 PM GMT

No sign of anything but overwinterers up here in the hills, but then again the blackthorn is not yet properly out. Peacocks are doing well in these parts.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 05-Apr-20 09:59 PM GMT

It looks really nice in those woods David, glad you got your Speckie shots , the weather here turned out to be awful, the clouds hid the Sun for two days with the exception of one hour and we'd a cold wind to boot. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 06-Apr-20 11:45 AM GMT

Thanks, all. I'm confident that with this week's mild forecast Orange Tips and Speckled Woods will be emerging everywhere.

Saturday 4th April 2020 cont - Almost double figures....

My walk up lower Kilvey Hill to find Speckled Woods might have only turned up one, but I was pleasantly surprised at the range of species that were flying.

First to greet me was a male Holly Blue, whilst half a dozen Brimstones and a couple of Commas were seen too. I also saw my first Large White of 2020, though he simply would not stop even though all he did was fly up and down the lower slope.

I jumped over the wall into Dan-y-Graig cemetery and noticed a Peacock basking on one of the graves amongst the copious cuckoo-flower:



A solitary Small Tortoiseshell was observed, as well as a couple of Small Whites, including my first female of the year.

This location doesn't tend to attract Orange Tips, so I was surprised to see a male as I was on my way down Kilvey Hill. Whilst walking round the cemetery, I saw another and noticed that he'd stopped flying. The cloud had covered the sun and it was quite cool so I quickly walked over to the patch of cuckoo-flower where I'd seen him come down:



As the cloud thinned, he slowly came back to life:





In certain sheltered spots, the bluebells are already out:



I returned to my car and took this image of Swansea looking towards Mumbles Head:



As I turned round, I noticed another Orange Tip fluttering close by. It was about to go cloudy again, and he very helpfully decided to rest on a primrose leaf at ground level:



Spring definitely in full swing now!

Re: David M

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

Wonderful Orange Tip images, David. I'd be happy with any of those. 🍷

Keep safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 06-Apr-20 01:50 PM GMT

Lovely shots David, I'd be happy with just one photo of an Orange Tip 🍷👍 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 06-Apr-20 08:34 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Stay patient. There are plenty of OTs on the way! 😊

Re: David M

by Chris L, 06-Apr-20 09:09 PM GMT

Nice photos David. Thank you for sharing. I concur, I also want a Holly Blue and an Orange Tip.

Re: David M

by David M, 07-Apr-20 06:30 PM GMT

I'm sure Holly Blues & Orange Tips are imminent for you, Otep. 😊

Tuesday 7th April 2020 – Wall of Blue.....

I took a long lunch today and went over to Cwm Ivy again. It was deserted, unsurprisingly, although the glade where all the butterflies are is always devoid of people, although today it was full of Holly Blues.

A handful of Brimstones were about (10-ish) and around half a dozen Speckled Woods:



Eight Orange Tips were seen, including this individual who was posing at such an angle that the sunlight was reflecting off the left half and causing the underside mottling to show through on the right half:



The blackthorn still isn't quite at its peak; I reckon another 4 to 5 days:



There were around half a dozen Peacocks and a couple of Commas buzzing around, but by far the commonest species was Holly Blue, which must have numbered 40 or so. This spot had around a dozen swirling around the sunlit area by the ivy clad tree trunks:



Practically all were males, and in between their dogfights they willingly came to rest and basked:



However, it was females that I had come to search for, and I managed to find this little stunner in a quiet corner:



I was surprised at how much more light was reflected off the hindwings than the forewings. I took a risk and cast my shadow over her for a more even image:



The only other species was a White, which could possibly have been my first Green Veined White of the year, but it remained airborne and I couldn't get close enough.

After leaving, I took a different road out and couldn't resist taking an image of this lovely view overlooking Whiteford Burrows:



Re: David M

by Chris L, 07-Apr-20 07:24 PM GMT

Lovely photos David and the jealousy is still there for me. Another day and still no sightings. I am quite close to declaring them extinct in my area. 😊

Re: David M

by trevor, 07-Apr-20 07:48 PM GMT

Beautiful Holly Blue shots. David. The female is posing perfectly. You have also captured the intense blue of both sexes.

Great stuff, stay well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 07-Apr-20 11:05 PM GMT

Thanks, both.

Keep trying. Holly Blues are seemingly scarce....until you find their perfect habitat! They can be surprisingly accommodating when they're in the mood. 😊

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-20 05:54 PM GMT

Lovely shots David, I always have a tussle with Holly Blues especially when they come into the Garden, your's are lovely. Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 08-Apr-20 10:30 PM GMT

It helps when you find a location where Holly Blues are incredibly numerous, Goldie. Sadly, there are few gardens which host these numbers which is why they remain difficult to observe.

Re: David M

by Pauline, 09-Apr-20 05:49 PM GMT

Envy-inducing shots of the Holly Blue David - reminiscent of the luminescence on the Adonis. Way too modest tho- - real skill in getting shots like that.

Re: David M

by David M, 10-Apr-20 08:33 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline. In spite of how common they are, getting Holly Blues (particularly females) to behave is extremely difficult.

Thankfully, not far from where I live is the best spot I've ever known for this species, and if you have exceedingly good numbers in a small area then photo opportunities are bound to arise.

Re: David M

by millerd, 10-Apr-20 11:34 PM GMT

You're right, David - having a lot of Holly Blues to choose from really does enhance the chances of getting shots as good as yours are. 😊 I generally find the best opportunities for getting good photos of females are when they are laying. They tend to take a breather between bouts and will often bask while doing so. Both sexes will also bask open-winged when the weather is cooler and there is sun with passing cloud. You can stand for a long time next to a butterfly waiting for the sun to pop out again... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 12-Apr-20 08:03 PM GMT

`{quote=millerd post_id=152045 time=1586558055 user_id=9839}`You're right, David - having a lot of Holly Blues to choose from really does enhance the chances of getting shots as good as yours are. 😊 I generally find the best opportunities for getting good photos of females are when they are laying. They tend to take a breather between bouts and will often bask while doing so. Both sexes will also bask open-winged when the weather is cooler and there is sun with passing cloud. You can stand for a long time next to a butterfly waiting for the sun to pop out again.

Yes, Dave, you're right. Part cloudy and cool conditions are good, as are activities such as mating or laying eggs. In some ways, this species is quite 'Hairstreak-like' in its behaviour, meaning that you need patience and/or good fortune.

Interesting Holly Blue behaviour....

On the subject of Holly Blues, it was my great fortune to find not one, not two, but **three** mating pairs whilst at Cwm Ivy last Tuesday. In spite of this woodland area being a paradise for them, I had never seen this before.



The first two pairs were in cop in full view of the maelstrom of males circling around, and every now and then one would descend to check things out:



Strangely, this behaviour remained watchful, rather than participatory. At no stage did the additional male make any attempt to physically interrupt the paired couple:



At all times, the wings of both the males and females remained tightly shut, although I did get a glimpse of the apex of this female's upf as this pair moved along the branch of this evergreen:



Re: David M

by trevor, 12-Apr-20 09:18 PM GMT

I wonder how many people have seen a pair of mating Holly Blues, let alone three. Quite a remarkable find and something else for me to look out for.

Superb shots too!.
Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by millerd, 12-Apr-20 09:21 PM GMT

Good finds, David! 🍷 Mating Holly Blues is something I have still to see on my local patch (that as you know has no shortage of the species!).

Cheers,
Dave

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 13-Apr-20 09:23 AM GMT

[quote=trevor post_id=152115 time=1586722720 user_id=13654] I wonder how many people have seen a pair of mating Holly Blues, let alone three. Quite a remarkable find and something else for me to look out for.

Superb shots too!.
Stay well,
Trevor.

Indeed, something I too have yet to see.

I particularly like the shot with the pair and the open wing male, either of which would have made a good shot in it's one right 🍷 😊

Cheers,
Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 13-Apr-20 09:18 PM GMT

Thanks, all.

Yes, finding any mating pair would have been notable, but three was off the scale. This is the fourth spring I've been visiting this site, and I haven't seen anything like that before. I suppose if you go often enough you eventually get lucky.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 13-Apr-20 09:57 PM GMT

Fantastic shots David, it's great you found them in Pairs has well 🍷 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by Pauline, 15-Apr-20 01:54 PM GMT

Great sequence showing interesting behaviour. The boundary hedge at Shipton is good for mating pairs but I haven't seen that sort of interaction before with Holly Blues.

Re: David M

by David M, 16-Apr-20 06:51 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie/Pauline. Yes, it was a fortuitous period, as was this....

Interesting Brimstone behaviour

On Sunday 22nd March, whilst spending time in the woodland glade at Cwm Ivy on the NW Gower coast, I saw large numbers of Brimstones. Amongst them was this female:



Knowing it was early in the season I suspected there was a chance she might not be mated, so I decided to follow her wherever she went, unless, of course, she disappeared somewhere inaccessible.

She made a couple of short flights in the glade, and within a couple of minutes a male homed in on her.

They spiralled up towards a large clump of ivy surrounding a pine tree trunk and a second male soon flew over to investigate. This second male was flying around wildly, but the other male and the female were stationary. A distance shot with my zoom proved they were in cop:



The persistence of this additional male made their perch untenable though, and after three minutes or so they floated down to the woodland floor:



Here they remained, seemingly reasonably well hidden. I took a few images and then stood back. What followed was quite a surprise. Just about every male that flew along this glade somehow 'spotted' this pair and began to investigate (and in some cases, to interfere with the pair):





I can only assume these males were able to detect the pheromones as the pair were not in a prominent position from a visual perspective. Some males were exceptionally persistent, but at no stage did either of the mating pair attempt to move; they simply allowed the marauder to exercise his curiosity until he gave up and flew off.



After half an hour or so, I moved off but returned an hour later and the pair were still in the same spot. Half an hour after that I returned again but they had gone.

So, if this is typical behaviour then Brimstone courtship (assuming the female is unmated) lasts all of two minutes. Whether the ideal location is high up in a tree, in shrubs or near ground level I couldn't say, but once grounded, they remained fixed in place despite the interference from other males.

Re: David M

by Pauline, 16-Apr-20 07:00 PM GMT

Another really interesting sequence David. In all the years I have been watching butterflies I have only ever seen 3 mating pairs of Brimstones and they have all been hanging upside down from leaves, well-camouflaged, about 2' from the ground.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 16-Apr-20 07:17 PM GMT

Fantastic shots David, I've only ever seen them chasing after the female 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by bugboy, 16-Apr-20 07:43 PM GMT

Great capture, that mating is worth several dozen Green-veined White in-cop pairs 🍷

Re: David M

by millerd, 16-Apr-20 10:57 PM GMT

That's terrific sequence, David. 😊 I think I've only ever encountered one pair of Brimstones in cop, and didn't see the preliminary chase. It does show that the elaborate dances we see later in the year with males chasing females high into the sky and back to the ground must involve females that have already mated. Unmated females lose this status in double-quick time! I've observed this extremely brief courtship in Large Whites and Orange Tips as well, so it is probably a Pierid thing. Does your experience of Continental Pierid species confirm this by any chance, David?

Cheers

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 16-Apr-20 11:30 PM GMT

`{quote=bugboy post_id=152326 time=1587062608 user_id=13753}` Great capture, that mating is worth several dozen Green-veined White in-cop pairs 🍷

Sounds crazy, but I'd trade that pair in for a few good Green Veined White shots this year, such is my frustration, Paul. 😊

Re: David M

by trevor, 17-Apr-20 08:09 AM GMT

As with your Holly Blue mating pairs, your Brimstone saga is another case of right place, right time. I've seen several chases with the Summer brood, with up to five males in pursuit of a female.

You must be very pleased with your encounters so far this year. 🍷

Keep safe & well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 17-Apr-20 06:23 PM GMT

`{quote=Pauline post_id=152318 time=1587060010 user_id=1095}` Another really interesting sequence David. In all the years I have been watching butterflies I have only ever seen 3 mating pairs of Brimstones and they have all been hanging upside down from leaves, well-camouflaged, about 2' from the ground.

Yes, I suspect most of the time this takes place amongst the greenery. I would never have spotted this pair had I not fortuitously latched on to that early female, and whilst the first interfering male was doubtless a nuisance to the coupled pair, he certainly did me a big favour! 😊

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 17-Apr-20 06:46 PM GMT

Interesting sequence of the Brimstones David. I have only once seen these in cop and the pair ended up about 10 feet high in a shrub after a brief chase. This occurred a few years ago but I remember it was well into May which made me suspect it was not the female's first pairing.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 17-Apr-20 08:15 PM GMT

`{quote=trevor post_id=152349 time=1587107353 user_id=13654}` You must be very pleased with your encounters so far this year.

Yes, Trevor. Two forms of behaviour in common species I hadn't ever seen before.

`{quote=Neil Freeman}` Interesting sequence of the Brimstones David. I have only once seen these in cop and the pair ended up about 10 feet high in a shrub after a brief chase. This occurred a few years ago but I remember it was well into May which made me suspect it was not the female's first pairing.

To be honest, Neil, had it been May I wouldn't have bothered tracking the female, but given it was March, I thought it was worth the effort.

Re: David M

by David M, 19-Apr-20 06:17 PM GMT

Easter period....

Once again, Easter was pretty good weatherwise, and with a few days off work, and a couple of kilograms to shift now that I'm working from home, I set out on several long walks around my immediate area.

Last year, I found a lovely spot on Fairwood Common, which turned out to be very good for Green Hairstreaks & Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. Sadly, it has recently been burned (whether this is accidental or intentional I'm not sure):



Here's how it was:



The bird's foot trefoil is now emerging, meaning Common Blues are soon to be on their way:



Small Blues won't be far behind either, since kidney vetch is also beginning to flower:



Not huge numbers of butterflies on these walks, but all the usual suspects, with Peacock being undoubtedly the species most regularly seen.

I did manage to get my first image of a Large White this year though:



And I also pointed the lens at the occasional male Orange Tip:



Re: David M

by jenks, 20-Apr-20 10:40 AM GMT

Hi David and everyone on UKB,

Yes I know Fairwood Common and the adjacent Welsh Moor as a good place for Green Hairstreak, Marsh Frits and other butterflies. Probably won't get a chance to visit either this year, unfortunately. The Welsh news carried pictures of the common last week in an article on a spate of arson attacks on moorland and commons which was causing the emergency services extra work. I simply cannot understand the mind-set of individuals who carry out such attacks. Apart from the ecological damage caused, our emergency services are under extreme pressure at this particular time and do not need to be deployed on senseless man-made fires.

One of the silver linings (the only one?) of Corona virus is that I have been exploring local footpaths and walks that ordinarily I would drive past. My exercise walk yesterday took me alongside the River Taff, along an old railway line, through woodland and onto a gorse-clad hillside before returning to the main road and my home near Pontypridd. I saw 3 male Orange Tips, at least 5 Brimstone (including 4 males chasing each other along a ride), 2 Red Admirals, numerous Peacocks, Speckled Wood, Small and Green veined White and last but not least a Holly Blue. I had been scouring ivy-clad trees and

Holly without success and then just before I came back to the road one flew from near some gorse and into a tree. Birdsong along my walk was fantastic too and accentuated by the lack of traffic noise. Such sightings do lift the spirits.
Jenks.

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Apr-20 10:31 PM GMT

Thanks, Gareth. Sad to hear that this damage has been done deliberately and not as part of a managed campaign. I suspected as much, since the burned areas had a haphazard pattern, whereas in the past when it has been done rotationally, the affected areas were very self contained.

Thankfully, only a small percentage has been damaged, and I'm sure there will still be plenty of Green Hairstreaks, Marsh and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries in a month or so.

Re: David M

by Padfield, 20-Apr-20 10:55 PM GMT

Just catching up on your diary, David. I don't know how I missed your amazing mating shots – brilliant stuff. You haven't been buying pheromone after-shave online again, have you?

Tragic to read of the arson attacks. Fortunately, the damage caused by burning is often more superficial (literally) than you might think. The heat drives upwards and the ground layer, with valuable roots, seeds and insect stages, may escape the worst and retain a lot of life, ready to spring back with a little time, water and sun. Let's hope the damage your photo records is superficial.

Guy

Re: David M

by David M, 21-Apr-20 04:46 PM GMT

Thanks, Guy. Yes, those parts of the Common will quickly recover; in fact, the areas that burned last year look as though they were never affected. The bracken and the grasses regrow and all that's left are the charred remnants of gorse bushes and brambles.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 21-Apr-20 05:38 PM GMT

Hi! David, we've had the same trouble here with Moor land fires, this happened a couple of weeks ago when we were all suppose to be in shut down, Winter Hill at Rivington and also the Darwin Moors were set a light, the cause at one point was people Bar-ab-cuing . since then some one purposely set the moor on fire again. most of the land is rich in Peat which really burns and the Firemen had real trouble controlling it. Some people are really stupid.Goldie 😞

Re: David M

by David M, 22-Apr-20 08:26 PM GMT

Ah yes, Goldie. Winter Hill. Know it well from my childhood.

Sad that this appears to be a leisure activity for some. Part of Kilvey Hill went up in smoke last night. I hope it didn't burn my Wall Brown hotspot. 😞

Tuesday 21st April 2020 – Green Hairstreaks

Had an hour and a half's lunch break and drove over to the part of Fairwood Common that has recently been burned to have a more thorough check of the damage. Thankfully, only a 300m or so tranche has been affected, and in the lower, damper part the habitat is still intact.

That is a good thing because I saw my first AND second Green Hairstreaks of the year at the margins of this area:



The first individual was too flighty to photograph, but I spotted this one after he intercepted a passing Peacock and he very conveniently chose to bask on a leaf for a few minutes:



Re: David M

by David M, 23-Apr-20 04:03 PM GMT

Wednesday 22nd April 2020 – Wall Browns on Kilvey Hill

An early morning visit to the supermarket saw me in the vicinity of Kilvey Hill, which overlooks Swansea Bay.

Having learned of grass fires on the hill the day before, I was eager to go up and check how much damage had been done. Luckily, the prime Wall Brown spot had been untouched and within 5 minutes of sitting down on the ruins of the old windmill at the top of the hill, I noticed one basking about 10 yards away from me.

There are never many up here, but this old stonework attracts them like a magnet:



There were two males up there, and every time one settled to bask, it would soon be off in pursuit of the other. At one point the pair of them disappeared for over 5 minutes in what must have been an almighty joust, but the victor returned to his patch and went back on patrol:



Even by 10am, he would close his wings within 5 seconds of landing, although I was able to make a few close approaches whilst he was like this:



He seemed particularly keen on settling beside some fragments of what looked to be a beer bottle. Whether he could smell or taste something interesting I don't know:



I wanted an upperside image, but I've tried 'shading' Wall Browns before and it never works. However, just as I was about to give up, I slowly cast my shadow over him after he'd been settled for half a minute, and in no time at all he opened his wings:



Re: David M

by Pauline, 23-Apr-20 05:24 PM GMT

Well, that's one species I definitely won't be seeing this year! Nice shots – well done 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 23-Apr-20 07:57 PM GMT

Shame they're largely no longer inland, Pauline. I guess you'll see more species that I won't be able to by the end of the year....unless, of course, we get a reprieve!

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-20 10:07 PM GMT

Hi! David, your Wall Brown brings back memories of me taking shots of them with a crutch under one arm 😊 Didn't think I'd be stuck in another year 😞
So glad for you that the Wall's didn't suffer. Love the Green Hair Streak shots , I think the HairStreaks are lovely little Butterflies
I might miss them this year, hope not!!! Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 24-Apr-20 08:54 AM GMT

Nice to see the Wall Browns David 🍷 😊

I am aware of a few inland colonies further afield around the West Midlands but they have not been seen in Warwickshire for some years now. One I am likely to miss unless restrictions ease later in the year in time for the second brood.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 25-Apr-20 05:08 PM GMT

Goldie – your comment regarding this being your second successive spring housebound strikes a chord. Hopefully this episode will be quicker to 'heal' than your last one!

Neil – yes, for those who live well inland Wall Brown is not an easy species to see. To think 40 years ago you could find them all over the place!

Re: David M

by trevor, 25-Apr-20 08:38 PM GMT

Great to see your Green Hairstreak and Wall Brown.
I've yet to see the former, and the latter is out of bounds.

Great shots,
Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 26-Apr-20 04:05 PM GMT

[quote=trevor post_id=152720 time=1587843496 user_id=13654] Great to see your Green Hairstreak and Wall Brown. I've yet to see the former, and the latter is out of bounds.

The latter is double brooded, Trevor, so hope is not yet lost. 😊

Re: David M

by bugboy, 26-Apr-20 06:29 PM GMT

David M wrote:

[quote=trevor post_id=152720 time=1587843496 user_id=13654] Great to see your Green Hairstreak and Wall Brown. I've yet to see the former, and the latter is out of bounds.

The latter is double brooded, Trevor, so hope is not yet lost. 😊

Triple brooded where Trevor roams 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 26-Apr-20 08:06 PM GMT

[quote=bugboy post_id=152754 time=1587922183 user_id=13753].Triple brooded where Trevor roams

Yes, very probably, Paul.

Thursday 23rd April 2020 – Small Copper...

One species missing from my inventory that I would expect in late April was Small Copper.

So, I visited the site that is the most reliable for this species in my area, Crymlyn Burrows, and duly found two. Here's a shot of the general habitat:



I found my first in an area that is always a hotspot:



Walking back, I was not surprised to find a second in this area:



It was quite warm, so at first it was settling with wings closed:



A slightly open winged view proved that it was a partial *caeroleopunctata*:



Re: David M

by millerd, 26-Apr-20 09:08 PM GMT

Seeing those Coppers means Spring is well and truly here, David. 😊 I just brought up the map to try and put your photos into context – in the first shot of the view, is the sea to the left and is that Kilvey Hill (as mentioned in your earlier posts) in the distance?

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

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

Correct, Dave. The sea is approx 500m to the left and Kilvey Hill is about 4 miles away in the distance. 😊

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 28-Apr-20 12:03 PM GMT

Glad your Wall spot survived the fire David.

I fear a little for the south Essex colonies, they had just started to emerge for the third generation, late September, when the weather collapsed. Not sure if they managed to lay any eggs? We will find out in due course...

Re: David M

by kevlings, 28-Apr-20 06:21 PM GMT

David,

Very enjoyable April diary. I love the mating Holly Blues. One species I haven't seen in cop yet. Well done on your Wall Browns too. Do you normally see them this early in the year David. I usually get me first encounters at the end of May on the Anglesey coast (Sadly not this year as our travel is curtailed along with everyone else).

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: David M

by David M, 28-Apr-20 09:12 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=152832 time=1588071785 user_id=11426] Glad your Wall spot survived the fire David.

I fear a little for the south Essex colonies, they had just started to emerge for the third generation, late September, when the weather collapsed. Not sure if they managed to lay any eggs? We will find out in due course...

Thanks, Mark. We don't have quite the same temperature pressure 'out west', but even so Wall Browns are quite localised and generally coastal here. One wonders how many more years of climate warming it will take for this species to break through its developmental trap and become triple brooded in these isles (or, at least, in the warmest places therein).

Re: David M

by David M, 29-Apr-20 05:26 PM GMT

[quote=kevlings post_id=152846 time=1588094513 user_id=10218]...Well done on your Wall Browns too. Do you normally see them this early in the year David. I usually get me first encounters at the end of May on the Anglesey coast (Sadly not this year as our travel is curtailed along with everyone else).

22nd April is the earliest I've ever seen them in the UK, Kev. I would usually expect them by the end of the first week in May round here, but as you know, since lockdown on 24 March practically every day has been sunny and warm so the life cycle has been accelerated somewhat.

Re: David M

by David M, 30-Apr-20 01:50 PM GMT

Sunday 26th April 2020 – Dingy Skipper....

The last warm, sunny day for a while (or so the forecast said) so I went and did some shopping and given the proximity to my workplace I thought I'd pop in to the expanse of waste ground across the way, which is the best place I know of for Dingy Skippers in my area:



I'm not sure what used to be on this site, but the rubble from the demolished buildings is still about, and birds foot trefoil abounds, which is what presumably attracts the Dingies.

I saw about half a dozen; they were all highly active but I managed to get a few images:





They've built several units adjacent to this waste land, so I'm not sure how much longer it'll be before they decide to do likewise here. If they do, it'll be another rich butterfly habitat destroyed. 😞

Re: David M

by Maximus, 30-Apr-20 09:16 PM GMT

You're lucky to have a Dingy Skipper site adjacent to your workplace, David, lets hope that this site will be spared from further development 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 01-May-20 06:35 PM GMT

Yes, Mike. Few people know about it so the butterflies thrive. Like you say though, there are always dangers lurking – the site could be developed at any time. 😞

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 01-May-20 06:59 PM GMT

Hi David,

I hope your Dingy site survives. Truth is, it is a tricky balancing act, many conservation bodies urge the development on brownfield sites to try and save greenfield ones but the brownfield sites can be important habitats in their own right.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 02-May-20 04:18 PM GMT

Correct, Neil. It's often a case of concentrating on the most valuable areas whilst simultaneously taking the occasional 'hit' on the ones deemed to be able to be 'traded off'. Sadly, each one of these trade-offs slightly depletes the overall available habitat and the detriment over a period of many years is equal to what we've all seen since we were kids – devastation.

Sunday 26th April 2020 – Small Heath

I had been hoping to perhaps see Common Blue, Small Blue and Brown Argus at this site today, but I hadn't factored in seeing Small Heath, which I don't think I've ever encountered prior to May.

Just the one seen, and I think he had freshly emerged, as he wasn't too keen to fly and his wings looked a little floppy:



This species prefers more open habitat, which was where he was seen:



Re: David M

by David M, 02-May-20 07:54 PM GMT

Saturday 2nd May 2020 - Bizarre moment....

A trip to Crymlyn Burrows on the Swansea coast saw plenty of butterflies, as is usual at this time of year.

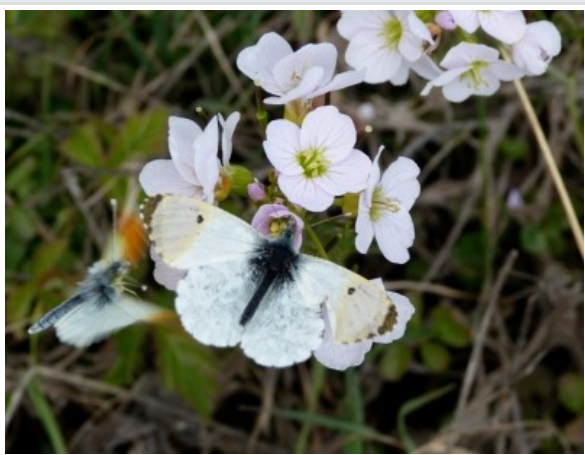
There were Orange Tips aplenty:



One individual stood out though:



Although the colour was abnormally pallid, it was clearly a male, but I suspect that it fooled other 'normal' males into thinking it was a female, as it was constantly harassed:



Normally, a mated female will bend her abdomen upwards signalling rejection, or she will try to drop into the vegetation to escape unwanted advances. This butterfly behaved differently – it was determined to carry on nectaring and made no obvious signals with its abdomen, and was thus pursued with zeal by several other males, only to repeatedly come back to the same patch of cuckoo flower where he had left off:



I've never seen anything like it before, and doubt I ever will again...

Re: David M

by Pauline, 02-May-20 08:04 PM GMT

Great sighting David – probably once in a lifetime! Not sure what to say as I haven't seen anything like that before but perhaps others will have more intelligent observations. Thanks for sharing – great shots!

Re: David M

by trevor, 02-May-20 08:07 PM GMT

An exceptional male Orange Tip, David. I think all of us on here would have had to look twice at it just to try and comprehend what the eyes were seeing.

As a bonus it obviously hung around for several shots, very nice work.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 02-May-20 08:47 PM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=153048 time=1588446273 user_id=1095]Great sighting David – probably once in a lifetime!

Thanks, Pauline. I'm sure it WILL be a one-off; I've certainly never seen anything like it before.

Even more interesting was the behaviour of the attendant OTs, which were clearly fooled into thinking this one was a female! 😊

Re: David M

by millerd, 02-May-20 10:57 PM GMT

That's a bizarre Orange Tip, David. I've heard of examples where the orange is replaced by yellow, but in that one it's such a pale shade as to be almost invisible. No wonder the other males were confused! 😊 However, it shows that they rely heavily on sight to identify females, rather than smell, as you'd assume this one was emitting male pheromones as normal.

What a great sighting. 🍌 in abundance! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by Katrina, 02-May-20 11:17 PM GMT

Great find! I haven't seen any OTs this year so great to see your unusual one 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 03-May-20 07:29 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor/Dave/Katrina.

Certainly made me do a double-take, and a reminder that no-one ever knows what strange creatures are lurking in the commonest places.

Re: David M

by Maximus, 03-May-20 08:02 PM GMT

An amazing Orange-tip, David, that's part of what makes this pastime so enjoyable – you never know what you're going to find 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 04-May-20 02:58 PM GMT

Absolutely, Mike. There may not be exotic new species to discover, but there are occasionally exotic forms of commonplace butterflies to stumble upon.

Saturday 2nd May 2020 – Small Blue...

After the excitement of the freak Orange Tip, I moved to the more open side of this large site, and was pleased to find my first Small Blues of the year, one male and one female:



A couple more Small Heaths were seen, but no Common Blue or Brown Argus yet. Another visit over the Bank Holiday weekend should see them on the wing.

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-20 06:45 PM GMT

Just seen your Orange-tip ab. David, what a great find 😊

And then following up with a pair of Small Blues, great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: David M

by David M, 04-May-20 08:31 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil. Was a good day, that's for sure.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 05-May-20 09:10 AM GMT

That's an amazing find David, lovely shots too 😊 I thought I'd posted to you already about your ab but mustn't have pressed the Submit Button 😊
Lovely Small Blues as well, your making me long 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 06-May-20 04:19 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie.

It'll be all white.....

Since Easter, I have tried to spend some time concentrating on Green Veined Whites, given that everybody else seems to have them eating out of their hand on here 😊

They haven't been about in huge numbers, but with a bit of patience I managed to capture a few, and a bonus female Large White too! 😊





I'll leave Small Whites till later in the summer, as they are equally frustrating.

Re: David M

by David M, 09-May-20 03:06 PM GMT

Wednesday 6th May 2020 - Brown Argus....

Another fabulous spring day, so I popped out for my daily exercise to Crymlyn Burrows again where I was hoping to find my first Common Blues of the year.

Strangely, there were none, but compensation was had when I stumbled upon this lovely little fellow:



I was particularly taken by the little white 'eyeball' around the black discal spot. I don't see too many of these round my way.



Small Heaths starting to build in number, though I only saw four Small Blues.

One Dingy Skipper and six Small Coppers added to the usual suspects, such as Orange Tip, Peacock, Brimstone and Whites.

Re: David M

by Allan.W., 09-May-20 03:20 PM GMT

I found my first Brown Args todayfifteen ,in fact on my "new " patch ,a stones throw from home ,watched several laying females , I think your white spotted individual is AB;Snelleni. Nice shots David !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: David M

by trevor, 09-May-20 06:29 PM GMT

There's two species I won't see this Spring, Small Blue and Brown Argus.

Unless Boris comes up with some good news!.

Great stuff, David.
Trevor.

Re: David M

by Pauline, 09-May-20 06:39 PM GMT

Another great find David 😊 - I clearly need to brush up on my observation skills; always something to aspire to.

Re: David M

by David M, 10-May-20 02:12 PM GMT

Thanks Allan/Trevor/Pauline. I should point out that you've two chances with Small Blue & Brown Argus. By the time the second broods are out, hopefully our freedom of movement will have been restored.

Saturday 9th May 2020 - Finally, Common Blues.....

They've taken their time round my way in 2020, but the recent sunshine and warmth finally brought 20 or so Common Blues on to the Crymlyn Burrows site in Swansea on what was probably the nicest day of the year so far.

The first one I saw was a female, and what a cracker she was:





Then, on my way back to the entrance, I came upon this little tranche of terrain:



There must have been two dozen or so small butterflies warring amongst themselves in this area. The vast majority of them were male Common Blues:



There was at least one Dingy Skipper, and probably 5 or 6 Brown Argus:



Other species seen were a dozen or so Small Heaths, 5 Small Blue, Large & Green Veined Whites, Peacock, Small Copper, Brimstone, Speckled Wood & Orange Tip.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 10-May-20 11:26 PM GMT

Lovely Common Blues David, that looks like a Northern Brown Argus, could it be 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

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

Thanks, Goldie. Was good to finally see them on the wing.

As for NBA, no, just a regular Brown Argus. 😊

Saturday 9th May 2020 – Beginning of a May Fritillary Fest.....

It was so warm and sunny after I'd left Crymlyn Burrows, that I thought it wouldn't do any harm to spend an hour and a half on Fairwood Common in the probably vain hope that Marsh & Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries might have emerged.

Sadly, there were no Marshies about, but I was fortunate enough to stumble across this single Small Pearl Bordered Frit, and even more satisfying was that it was in the area of prime-looking habitat I had identified just over a week before following the fires that destroyed a portion of the Common back in late March.

It wasn't particularly flighty, but it had an annoying habit of settling well into the bramble scrub, far away from the reach of either me or my camera lens.

Patience prevailed though, and I was eventually able to get a few images of it, and it was surprisingly offering its undersides rather than its uppers despite the heat:





Re: David M

by Goldie M, 12-May-20 03:17 PM GMT

Lovely shot David, it was far too hot for Butterflies here on the 9th May, that's probably why it closed its wings 😞 the 10th of May was awful here with 40 mile an winds, roll on week-end and back in the Sun (hope fully.):D Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by trevor, 12-May-20 06:29 PM GMT

Well done with the Small Pearl, David. Apparently the colony in Park Corner, here in East Sussex has just started too.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 12-May-20 08:32 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Yes, things should be warming up again from tomorrow so Marsh & Small Pearl Bordered Frits look to be in for a good start to their season.

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-20 09:04 PM GMT

Nice fresh Small Pearl there David 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 12-May-20 09:47 PM GMT

Congratulations on the SPBF, David. I've seen them in west Cornwall in mid May, but yours is surely early? Regardless, it's a very nice find.

In Cornwall, Marsh Fritillaries are usually only a few days later than SPBF, so might be worth checking this week, if you have time.

Re: David M

by David M, 13-May-20 04:29 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Yes, Mark, I found more time to search for Marsh Fritillaries..... 😊

Sunday 10th May 2020 – Marsh Frits emerge.....

After finding Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries yesterday, I checked out Fairwood Common for Marsh Frits this morning.

The best area for them has been largely burned back, so I racked up 6,000 Fitbit steps walking all the way down to where I'd seen the SPBF the previous day. Whilst I found at least half a dozen more of that species, along with plenty of Green Hairstreaks, it was with some angst that on my way back I found several male Marshies flying within 100m of where I'd parked my car!!

Here is the small area where they were active – the Common to the left was scorched in late March, but the Marshies have still stayed faithful to the small area of longer grass which they favour round here:



The wind was picking up by this point so they were not easy to photograph:





This should herald an interesting 3 weeks or so here, with numbers of both these Fritillaries set to rocket.

Re: David M

by Janet Turnbull, 13-May-20 04:53 PM GMT

Superb shots of the marshies, David – my favourite among the fritillaries. How typical to find them near the car! 😊 Still, the exercise must have been good for you 😊
Janet

Re: David M

by David M, 14-May-20 05:38 PM GMT

Thanks, Janet. It was no hardship walking all those steps when you've got Green Hairstreaks and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries for company. 😊

Re: David M

by trevor, 14-May-20 06:15 PM GMT

You live in a very special part of the UK for Butterflies David.
Assuming the colonies are natural, you have Small Pearl, Marsh, Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries nearby, and later on, Brown Hairstreaks. I am particularly pleased to see your Marsh Frits. as I will probably miss them this year.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by Chris L, 14-May-20 06:23 PM GMT

Fantastic photos David. I particularly like the female Common Blue. I too am impressed at the variety of butterfly species that you seem to have readily available there. How many of the UK species do you get to see most years?

Re: David M

by David M, 15-May-20 09:32 PM GMT

`{quote=trevor-post_id=153612-time=1589476541-user_id=13654}` You live in a very special part of the UK for Butterflies David.
Assuming the colonies are natural, you have Small Pearl, Marsh, Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries nearby, and later on, Brown Hairstreaks. I am particularly pleased to see your Marsh Frits. as I will probably miss them this year.

The colonies are definitely natural, Trevor, and yes, this part of Wales is pretty blessed in terms of butterfly species (although we obviously don't have the chalk downland specialists).

The High Browns are 20 miles away, and the Brown Hairstreaks/Silver Studded Blues about 50, so travelling is obligatory for some of the rarer ones. They ain't all on the doorstep, although I consider myself fortunate that such species as Marsh & Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper are all reliable within a half hour walk from my front door!

Re: David M

by David M, 16-May-20 07:36 PM GMT

`{quote=Otep-post_id=153614-time=1589477037-user_id=19316}`...I too am impressed at the variety of butterfly species that you seem to have readily available there. How many of the UK species do you get to see most years?

Hi Otep, I've got just over 30 within a 10 mile or so radius and a further four or five within 30-60 minutes drive.

Generally, I will see all but a small number of the UK species every year, but that's because I travel to France, Italy & Spain, meaning that species I'd have to travel for in Britain are seen fairly easily, e.g. Glanville & Heath Fritillary, Lulworth Skipper, Chalkhill Blue, Swallowtail, Mountain Ringlet, Wood White, Chequered Skipper & Large Blue.

That said, because of my times of travel, and the scarcity of certain UK species in the places in Europe I visit, there are some that I routinely do not see, for example Purple Emperor, Scotch Argus & Large Heath.

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-20 08:43 AM GMT

I too am jealous of the butterflies on your doorstep David, especially the Marshies and Small Pearls within walking distance 🍷🍷🍷

I haven't been to South Wales for years, I really must make the effort when things are back to normal. Maybe next year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 21-May-20 06:50 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

..I haven't been to South Wales for years, I really must make the effort when things are back to normal. Maybe next year.

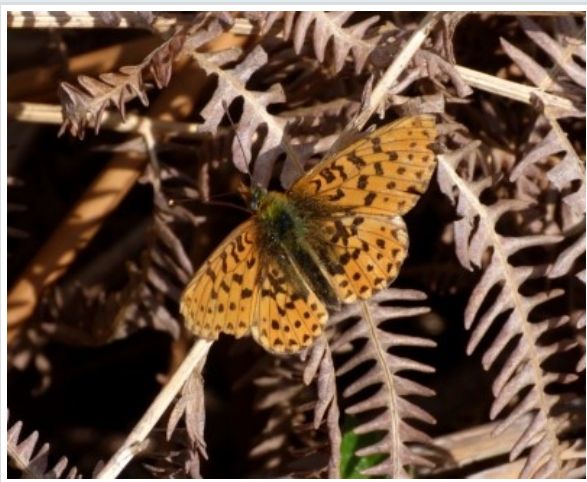
...and if I am still here I will happily do what I can to assist you in finding what you're after, Neil. That said, this latest episode from Dumb and Dumber as regards Coronavirus has set my mind to returning to England, so my presence here might be temporary.

Friday 15th May 2020 - Pearl Bordered Fritillary....

No-one likes toothache, but I had been suffering for a while (probably since last November when I underwent a particularly nasty extraction). I couldn't put it off any longer, meaning that I had to visit my private dentist in Abergavenny where I used to live.

Once I was out, it was a mere 6 mile journey to the English border just beyond Pandy, and I took the opportunity to pop into Ewyas Harold Common to see if there were any Pearl Bordered Fritillaries still flying.

There were; I counted 11 in all, although almost all were understandably showing signs of wear:



I got a bit lucky though as I spotted a female who was in presentable condition just prior to a heavy cloud obscuring the sun. She very conveniently flew up onto a gorse flower to sit out this cool, overcast spell:



The site was in decent fettle however, far drier than I'm used to, and at a more advanced stage as I generally visit around the beginning of May:



Re: David M

by Goldie M, 22-May-20 09:53 AM GMT

Hi! David, I hope you got your teeth got sorted, there's nothing worse than tooth ache, Your seeing all the butterflies i'm not with great shots of them to match, 🍷🍷 love the Pearl shot's Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 23-May-20 04:19 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. Even the darkest clouds have a silver lining! 😊

Re: David M

by kevlng, 23-May-20 11:47 PM GMT

Cracking diary as always David. You are certainly rattling through the species in your neck of the woods. Going back to 9th May that must be the beautiful female Common Blue I have seen.

Regards Kev

Re: David M

by David M, 25-May-20 07:56 PM GMT

Thanks, Kev. Yes, she was a real beauty, although I find that the 'bluer' females are becoming commoner by the year.

Friday 15th May - Wood White

On the subject of clouds having a silver lining, this visit fulfilled that epithet to a tee.

I left Ewyas Harold Common with clouds building, and by the time I had arrived at nearby Haugh Wood the sun was practically obscured.

I haven't been to this site since 2013, mainly because of the numbers of biting flies, but one thing I remembered was that several rides had wide margins full of vegetation so there was a chance of seeing a Wood White roosted.

This proved to be a sound theory, as the only butterfly I saw was a roosting Wood White:



This was the overcast overview at the time of the sighting:



Amazingly, a minute or so later the sun came out for 2 minutes, and the butterfly quickly got active and flew a short distance. It very soon came down on the opposite side of the ride:



So, no interaction between the sexes which is what I was hoping to see, but this is the first time I've seen Wood Whites in the UK for 7 years, and I won't leave it so long again!

Heading south

Skies were leaden by the time I left Haugh Wood, but there were obvious clear breaks further south so I headed to Stroud, arriving at Rodborough Common about an hour and a half later. I made my way to the Duke 'hotspot', but the first butterfly that caught my eye was one I wasn't expecting – a Marsh Fritillary. I hadn't previously been aware that they are present here:



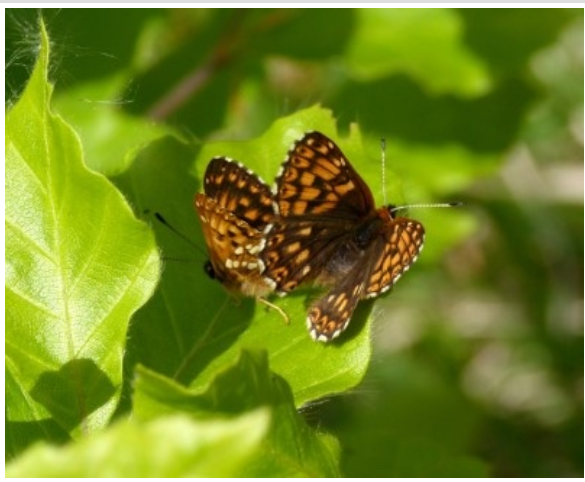
As ever, there were good numbers of butterflies of many varieties in this spot:



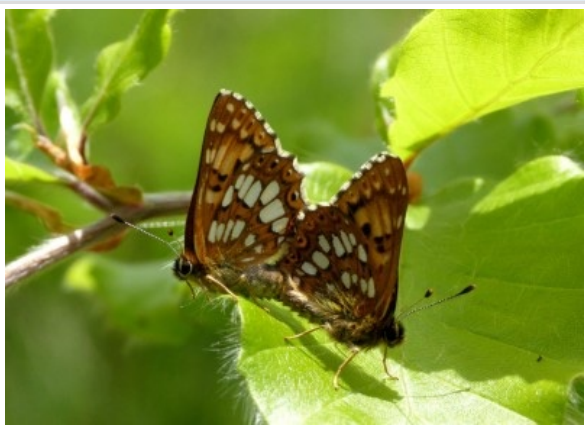
There were quite a few Dukes, a lot of which were still in good condition:



I managed to find this mating pair:



This image was revealing as it shows the six legs the female possesses compared to the male's four:



After spending a while concentrating on the Dukes, I went off to try and find some Adonis Blues. The first I found was this male aberrant:



The only other male I found was normally marked:



I never tire of the iridescent uppersides:





Re: David M

by David M, 28-May-20 07:14 AM GMT

Wednesday 20th May – Pleasant surprise....

Another visit to the coastal dune site at Crymlyn Burrows produced all the usual suspects, Common Blue, Small Heath, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper, etc, but it also provided a real shock.

I've been visiting this site extremely regularly since 2013 and today was the first time I have ever seen a Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary there:



This may prove to be a one-off (I once saw a solitary Marsh Fritillary here but have never witnessed any since) but the habitat looks quite good for them, with plenty of damp, wooded areas as well as copious violets growing all over the site.

The only other butterfly to stop me in my tracks was this beautiful female Large White:



Re: David M

by Sylvie_h, 28-May-20 01:41 PM GMT

Hi David,

Strangely enough David, I was at Crymlyn Burrows on Monday 25th this week and there were butterflies in good numbers :

- Small and common blues
- A very tattered small copper
- Small heath
- Small skipper
- Orange tip
- Brown argus
- Peacock
- Large white

and then I saw a fritillary flying pass me and I knew it was not a dark green. Unfortunately, it did not stop and although I did follow it, it carried on over the trees Reading your thread I am pretty sure now that it was a small bordered fritillary. There must be a colony there surely.... something to explore.

The ponds were quite dry and I wonder how the dragonflies will flare this year as a consequence. I saw only 2 Azure damselflies....

Sylvie

Re: David M

by David M, 29-May-20 12:37 PM GMT

Yes, Sylvie. I'm sure it would have been a Small Pearl Bordered. I was there again yesterday but there were no Dark Greens (I expect them to emerge next week), so it couldn't really have been anything else (unless it was another rogue Marsh Frit like the one I found there in 2013!)

I'm glad you mentioned the Azure Damselflies, because there were a few buzzing about the bramble growth on the track by the university car park just before it loops round towards the beach. The tree cover is quite dense so there's no way the swamp will dry out.

PS - I presume you meant Large, rather than Small, Skipper?

Re: David M

by Sylvie_h, 29-May-20 03:53 PM GMT

Hi David,

Now you tell me, I've had another good look again at my picture and I mistook it for a small skipper because the markings are hardly visible on the specimen I saw, but looking at an enlarged level you are right it is a large skipper. Thank you for questioning this otherwise I would not have had a second look.
Sylvie

Re: David M

by David M, 30-May-20 05:09 PM GMT

No problem, Sylvie. I generally don't see Small Skippers till around midsummer's day, so I suspected it might have been a Large Skipper instead.

Monday 25th May – Fritillary count....

I spent a couple of hours on Fairwood Common this morning attempting to count Fritillaries. I was a little disappointed at 17 Marsh and 21 Small Pearl Bordered, although to be fair a large swathe of the Common was torched in late March, destroying much of the breeding habitat.

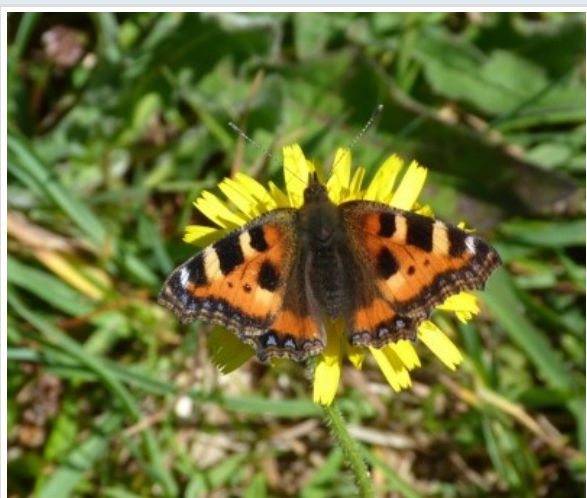
I did manage to find my first female Marshies however:



I then drove the short distance to Prior's Meadow at the NE end of the Common, where I bumped into my first Meadow Browns of 2020:



Another welcome sight was this fresh, summer brood Small Tortoiseshell:



Re: David M

by David M, 31-May-20 01:11 PM GMT

Wednesday 27th May 2020 – Fritillaries peaking....

I always know when my local populations of Marsh and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries are peaking because I suddenly start to see plenty of females.

This morning, I concentrated on the area lying about 10 minutes walk from my home, as it has copious ragged robin blooms and I fancied they might harbour a Frit or three.

I was right – 26 Marsh Frits and 16 SPBFs in just over an hour. I love the way these insects practically bury themselves in the flowers:



This female Marshie could barely fly so laden was she:



She happily walked onto my finger which I offered when she was embedded in the gorse:



Nice to see several female SPBFs too. They'll still be around in a fortnight but by then the Marshies will probably all be gone:



Re: David M

by Goldie M, 31-May-20 07:08 PM GMT

Your so lucky David, being so close to these lovely Butterflies 🍷🍷 Lovely shots of them has well 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 01-Jun-20 08:19 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. Yes, I'm aware of how lucky I am to have these on my doorstep; in fact, the latter half of May is when I'm luckiest of all!

Re: David M

by Janet Turnbull, 01-Jun-20 09:24 PM GMT

I would feel so honoured if a butterfly voluntarily walked onto my finger! And the one you have there is such a gorgeous specimen! 🍷🍷

Re: David M

by David M, 01-Jun-20 10:29 PM GMT

I was indeed honoured, Janet. It happens every year. Some of the female Marshies are so weighed down with their load of eggs that they struggle to fly. They are normally quite amenable to a helping hand!

Re: David M

by David M, 02-Jun-20 04:06 PM GMT

Thursday 28th May 2020 - Large Skipper

A routine couple of hours spent at Crymlyn Burrows. All the usual suspects, but a new species for the year was Large Skipper:



The other interesting moment was when a male Common Blue persistently harassed a notably blue female of the species. It took several minutes for her to finally shake him off. Perhaps this is why the bluer females seem to be becoming more common – the males take a particular shine to them:



Re: David M

by Pauline, 02-Jun-20 05:36 PM GMT

That's a great photo David – wish I'd taken it 📸 Smashing action shot which grabbed my attention because of my interest in them. Could it be that the males are attracted to them because they are more active (and therefore obvious) than their brown counterparts?..... and of course there's the colour. Perhaps the initial intention was to chase off a rival male but on approaching couldn't believe his luck 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 03-Jun-20 05:48 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline. Yes, it was an interesting spectacle, particularly remembering that Silver Washed Fritillary males are reputed to be far less interested in *valezina* females than they are nominative form ones.

Of course, it's hard to know what a nominative form female *icarus* is these days. Perhaps, as you suggest, the males are initially confused into thinking it's another male that they must chase off but then realise it's actually a female and pursue them with zeal? Certainly, you'd expect the more brightly coloured females to be more visible from distance so maybe fewer of these are 'missed' by the males leading to more pairings?

Re: David M

by Chris L, 03-Jun-20 07:33 PM GMT

Lovely photos as ever David. That was lucky to have the Marsh Fritillary walk on to your finger like that. Reminds me of March – April time when I wished a Comma would sit up for a photo instead of flying off and a few minutes later one landed on my hand. Alas my camera was in the same hand.

Re: David M

by David M, 03-Jun-20 08:25 PM GMT

Thanks, Otep. The longer you spend in the field the more opportunities will come your way!

Certain species are quite approachable in the right conditions.

Re: David M

by David M, 04-Jun-20 02:20 PM GMT

Sunday 31st May 2020 – Dark Green Fritillary.....

The earliest I had ever seen Dark Green Fritillary was 9th June, but given the prolonged hot spell, I fancied there may be one or two about at Crymlyn Burrows on the coast today.

I was right, there were four in fact, although only the first one settled for any length of time, justifying my decision to arrive early:



The lack of rain has seen even this normally damp area begin to look jaded:



It's rare for a Swansea resident to wish for some rain, but a healthy dose would do wonders right now.

Re: David M

by David M, 06-Jun-20 10:49 AM GMT

Tuesday 2nd June 2020 - Painted Lady....

Finally, I got to see my first Painted Lady of the year today. A welcome sight even though it wasn't in the best of shape.

Hopefully the first of many:



Re: David M

by David M, 07-Jun-20 11:04 AM GMT

Tuesday 2nd June 2020 - Fritillary Frenzy....

Having seen Dark Green Fritillaries two days earlier and with the warm spell of weather set to break on Wednesday, I headed down to Alun Valley in Glamorgan to see if there were any High Brown Fritillaries on the wing.

I arrived early and saw 4 large Frits within minutes, one of which I positively identified as High Brown and one as Dark Green. I then went to the lowest point of the site and had good numbers flying around me. I stayed in this area for over an hour and noticed that many of the Frits had their favourite territories which they would keep coming back to:



This enabled me to be in position for when they decided to settle, although all it would take was another Fritillary to fly by and they would be off in pursuit.

Higher up on the steep banks I found a large patch of brambles, a nectar source that High Browns find irresistible. So, despite the heat I managed to get close to a fair few – I saw 6 definite HBFs and 7 DGFs, but at least 20 went by without me being able to identify them for certain. Given that it's so early in the flight season, it could prove to be a bumper year for this extremely rare and threatened species here in south Wales.





This pose interested me because the reflected light shows clearly the raised sex brands which set this species apart from Dark Greens:



There were plenty of other species seen, including 4 Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries and a very encouraging 27 Small Tortoiseshells.

Re: David M

by Janet Turnbull, 08-Jun-20 11:10 PM GMT

A great set of HBF pics 🍷🍷 I didn't know about the raised sex brands – very interesting. I hope it will be a good year for HBFs – they certainly need one.

Janet

Re: David M

by Pauline, 11-Jun-20 05:05 PM GMT

What an interesting image – I had no idea they had raised sex brands and to catch the light reflecting like that demonstrates it so well. I really like the shot above too which is posed beautifully and pin sharp 😊. Not often you see High Browns on the diaries.

Re: David M

by David M, 13-Jun-20 01:52 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Yes, the raised sex brands in the male are key to differentiating these two species on the uppersides. I find High Browns have a richer ground colour too but that's not always definitive.

Re: David M

by millerd, 13-Jun-20 03:49 PM GMT

Some great shots of the High Browns, David – the distinctive undersides in particular. 😊 Many 🍷 for having such a thriving colony within relatively easy reach. It must also be a great opportunity to see how behaviour differs between the HBF and DGF, and to see if you can actually learn to reliably tell them apart from a distance. A good excuse to spend a few days with them! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by kevling, 13-Jun-20 03:52 PM GMT

David, Nice photos and observations of the High Brown and Dark Green Fritillary. Two more species that are not within my range this year, so nice to see them in your diary.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: David M

by Chris L, 13-Jun-20 10:25 PM GMT

Lovely photos David and I bow to your incredible knowledge. I have a lot to learn and a long way to go. 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 14-Jun-20 04:06 PM GMT

Thanks, all. Yes, it is great to have a local site where both species fly, and there ARE differences in behaviour as well as appearance. I'm pleased to say I've been back to the site today and counted 59 'large' Frits, so both are currently doing pretty well here.

Re: David M

by trevor, 14-Jun-20 04:17 PM GMT

Your area comes into it's own at this time of year, David. Fritillary heaven!
I might get to see High Browns one day, if only they were nearer!
It must cause mental indigestion when they're flying with Dark Greens.

Great stuff, stay well.
Trevor.

Re: David M

by Chris L, 14-Jun-20 07:18 PM GMT

59 of just one species in a day falls 6 short of the 65 I saw in total across all species today. 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 16-Jun-20 12:37 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor. Yes, 'mental indigestion' is an apt descriptor, particularly when there are so many flying around.

Otep, the 59 refers to the combined total of two species as it's impossible to tell DGFs/HBFs apart from distance when they're racing around in the air. Long experience has taught me that the ratio tends to be around 4:3 in favour of DGF at this stage of the flight period.

Saturday 13th June 2020 – Small Skipper

Warm but fairly cloudy and windy this morning, so no surprise that there weren't too many butterflies on the wing at Crymlyn Burrows. However, I did see my first Small Skippers of 2020 (around 10 of them):



Re: David M

by Goldie M, 16-Jun-20 03:44 PM GMT

Just spotted your HBF's David fantastic shots 📷 I bet their out in the Lake District and then with weather like we're having at present, may be not 😊 also like your Small Skippers, when the rain stops that's another Butterfly to look for here 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 17-Jun-20 12:13 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. Yes, I'm sure they're now out in the Morecambe Bay area. Next nice weekday you should think about getting over to Arnside.

Sunday 14th June 2020 - High Browns doing well....

The weather started to improve by late morning so I set off to my nearby HBF site to try and do a count.

I was there just short of two and a half hours and duly recorded 59 'large' Fritillaries, most of which were zooming by me like brown bullets meaning definitive IDs were impossible.

Of those I was able to approach when settled, 4 were High Browns and 4 were Dark Greens, so it's safe to say HBFs made up a good proportion of that tally of 59.



The recent rain has helped the colour green return to the Down; it was looking very scorched on 2nd June when I last visited:



There were plenty of Meadow Browns about, some of which were settling with wings open during the cloudy spells:



The other notable thing was the dozen or so Red Admirals encountered. Prior to this, I had seen only three all year:



There were a couple of Painted Ladies too, a few Small Heaths & Speckled Woods, and three very worn-looking female Small Pearl Bordered Frits:



No Ringlets yet though. they're usually about 7-10 days behind Meadow Browns, but given that I saw my first of the latter on 25th May, it's clear that the break in the warm weather on 02/06 has delayed their emergence. They won't be long.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 17-Jun-20 03:30 PM GMT

Lovely shots again David 🍷 I can't go up to the Lakes ,every thing is closed and I've not ventured so far on my own yet 😞 If I'd some one to go with me it would be different, no one I know is interested in the Butterflies like I am so I'm doing things slowly on my own. Maybe next year I'll be braver 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 18-Jun-20 12:36 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. Shame about the continued pressure to stay away from certain beauty spots. Ironically, this probably means places like Arnside are much quieter than normal right now making them even more appealing.

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Jun-20 09:53 PM GMT

Monday 15th June 2020 – Prees Heath

This was one of those days where you were left cursing the hopelessness of weather forecasters.

The night before, I had pored over the various forecasts and every one said the same thing – sunny all day with light winds.

The scene was far different when I arrived in Shropshire at 9.10am; mist, 100% cloud cover and winds so gentle that they couldn't shift a paper bag on the summit of a mountain!

Here is an image of the scene that greeted me:



Thankfully, Silver Studded Blue is quite possibly the easiest UK species to find in such adverse conditions, and there were approaching two dozen roosting in the heather depicted in the above image.

Here's a male:



In the hour I was there, a couple briefly took flight, but only this one opened his wings:



I scoured the area for a female, and eventually found this little treasure:



Much as I was happy to find them, I was hoping to see them active but that simply wasn't possible. The only other butterflies seen were a couple of hardy Small Tortoiseshells.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-20 09:25 AM GMT

Hi! David, I like your shots, I always think the best part of the SSB 's are their under side's any way 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 21-Jun-20 08:10 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

...I always think the best part of the SSB 's are their under side's any way.

Agreed, Goldie, particularly the females'.

Monday 15th June 2020 - Large Heath

After leaving Prees Heath, it was only a 15 minute drive to Whixhall Moss, which is one of the best locations in the country to see the *davus* form of Large Heath.

Anyone who has studied this species will know that whilst seeing them in flight is easy, getting close to them when settled definitely isn't! In fact, it's probably true to say that Silver Studded Blues are the easiest butterfly in Britain to observe, and Large Heaths are the most difficult.

However, the dull conditions gave me some hope that they might not be as hyperactive as usual, but given the heavy cloud cover when I arrived, none were visible at all!

As time went by, the cloud became lighter and hazier, but due to the warm temperatures there was no preliminary stage in the butterflies' behaviour - they went from completely inactive straight into overdrive.

A couple of images of the terrain/habitat:





There must be thousands of them at this site (I certainly saw hundreds) but all the usual frustrations dogged me. The first is actually seeing one settle. This doesn't happen too often and even then it's usually a distance shot with zoom to avoid disturbing them as they seem to react to the slightest movement/vibration. Then there's the issue with obstructive vegetation:



...or you just can't get them at the right angle:



....or you have to position yourself to get a clear view through the grasses:



After just over two hours, the skies had practically cleared and it was humid and very warm. I was ready to call it a day but decided to track a female as she was near the grassy pathway and looked to be ready to settle.

She eventually came down in a great spot on a cross-leaved heath flower. I had to step 3 metres into the boggy grass to approach closely but to my surprise she stayed put and I was finally able to get an unobstructed image of this species after years of trying:



Re: David M

by Pauline, 21-Jun-20 08:35 PM GMT

Well done David! You must be pleased as punch with that lovely unobstructed and uncluttered image 😊. Just as well I don't have them to contend with after my abysmal failure (so far) with DGF 😞

Re: David M

by Katrina, 21-Jun-20 10:02 PM GMT

Brilliant shot of the Large Heath. They certainly are tricky often hiding amongst the vegetation. I have to say you davus form is prettier than the ones I find in Scotland.

I know I am a bit behind but I have to give you a few 🍷🍷🍷 for your HBFs I haven't managed to catch up with them ever.

Re: David M

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

Agreed. Excellent images of the Large Heaths. It's been a few years since I've seen this species, and I won't see them this year either. Living over there has it's advantages,

Glad you are getting about, David. Thanks for sharing, you get one of these 🍷

Re: David M

by trevor, 22-Jun-20 05:41 AM GMT

Your last image of the Large Heath is the best I've ever seen of this species. 🍷

A perfect pose with no clutter in the way, which is so often the case with this species.

They would be a lifer for me.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by Chris L, 22-Jun-20 07:37 AM GMT

Excellent photos David and a very informative, educational narrative too. Whilst I have only seen 20 species of butterfly to date I have been forming in my mind a character assessment of those species that are more difficult and more easy to get acquainted with.

Re: David M

by David M, 22-Jun-20 06:32 PM GMT

Thanks, all. I must say this is one of the most neglected species in the UK, which is a shame because it is extremely attractive, in spite of its frustrating behaviour and, of course, its preferred habitat, which isn't for the faint hearted.

It's also one I don't get to see in Europe so every now and then I feel the need to go and acquaint myself with it, and pleased to say this time I did better with it than ever I have previously (though that's not saying much). 😊

Re: David M

by kevling, 22-Jun-20 06:40 PM GMT

Cracking photos of the Large Heath's David. This is one of the few remaining British species on my unseen list. I never get the chance to travel far in June as my leave falls each side in tune with the school holidays. After next year that will not be a problem anymore so I will fill my boots 😊

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: David M

by David M, 23-Jun-20 08:52 PM GMT

Thank you, Kev. I presume the magic word 'retirement' is in your mind? 😊

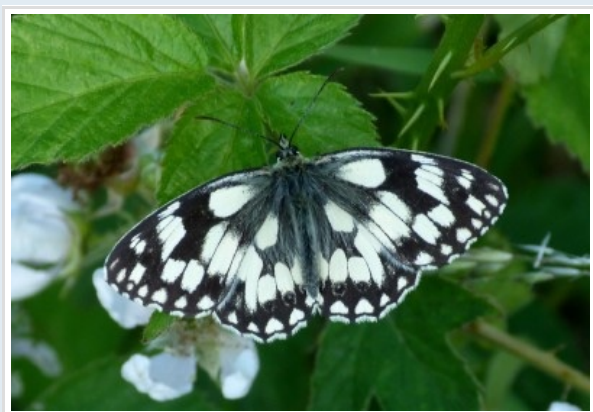
If you get chance to travel next year, Whixhall is swarming with this species so you definitely won't draw a blank!

Friday 19th June 2020 - Evening opportunity....

A necessary trip to Berkhamsted gave me an opportunity to sneak into Bernwood Forest for an hour or so at around 6pm.

The sky was largely cloudy but I figured a few sunny intervals would be all it would take for the meadows to come alive.

By 6.15 the sun emerged and the grasses came alive with Meadow Browns, Large and Small Skippers, and my first Marbled Whites of the year. In fact, there were so many it was tricky to choose an individual to track. I eventually opted for this one:





Just prior to leaving, one butterfly caught my eye, being dull in colour but only half the size of a Meadow Brown. I nonchalantly walked towards it and suddenly realised it was a Black Hairstreak, a species I thought had finished for the year.

It flew up into the blackthorn and I was unable to locate it, making me angry that I hadn't pursued it more slowly when it was on the ground.

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-20 07:18 PM GMT

A nice session with the Large Heaths David, they can certainly be a frustrating butterfly for photography.

David M wrote:

...I must say this is one of the most neglected species in the UK...

Not sure about that, I usually see a lot of Large Heath photos on social media posted by enthusiasts from the midlands and further north, most of whom never post on UKB.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 27-Jun-20 09:27 PM GMT

Good to hear others are paying attention to this beautiful species, Neil. It really is an extremely attractive little butterfly.

Saturday 20th June 2020 - Morning after....

It was cloudy this morning, but I fancied paying another visit to Bernwood on the off chance that things might brighten up. It was dull for much of the time first thing:



Things DID improve though, and the rides came alive with Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites and Skippers whenever the sun broke through for a few minutes.

At other times, it was the sort of warm, humid and cloudy conditions that make butterflies do strange things, i.e. stop flying and remain perched immobile with wings fully spread to absorb maximum warmth.

The grassy ride edges were absolutely full of Large Skippers doing just that, awaiting their next opportunity to fly. I don't think I've ever seen so many; certainly more than 200.



I also saw plenty of Ringlets, a first for me this year:



About a dozen Silver Washed Fritillaries were seen in the sunnier intervals:



Two White Admirals were also seen in the wooded area by the car park. Both made things difficult with their propensity to perch in the trees. This was the best I could do with this particular specimen with a hefty chunk missing from the forewing:





It was nice to see a few Commas again:



A couple of Common Blues were seen in the meadows, along with a solitary White Admiral, but the best moment came when I spotted another Black Hairstreak, proving that the previous evening's sighting was not a figment of my imagination:



Re: David M

by Goldie M, 27-Jun-20 11:18 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Marbled White David, and the Skippers and Large Heath, Chester Zoo has helped bring some Large Heath to Lancashire, near Wigan , it's all new at present but it'll be great if they can get them to breed there, it's only down the road from me, next year should be interesting 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 28-Jun-20 01:14 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. Yes, I've heard about the Large Heath reintroduction. Hopefully it will be a success and give you a new species to see locally very soon.

Wednesday 24th June - Daneway....

Few things are finer in life than rising early in the morning on a glorious midsummer's day. However, even finer perhaps is arriving at Daneway Banks at 7.50am and finding you practically have the place to yourself.

The reduced footfall is possibly due to the problems the site was suffering in early June because of the extended spell of hot, dry weather, which obviously had an adverse effect on much of the habitat.

Thankfully, things have recovered somewhat following the wet spell from 3rd June onwards, and whilst the sward is noticeably shorter than usual, it still looks in reasonable shape:



I wasn't sure how many Large Blues would be around, but I needn't have worried; I saw 31 in total in just two and a half hours, which is the most I've ever seen here, and the early start meant several of them were resting with wings open:





This female was particularly accommodating as she potted around the marjoram on an egg laying run:





I was also fortunate to find this mating pair:



There were frequent jousts, with this one seeing three Large Blues chase one another:



Plenty of other butterflies around too, with Marbled Whites and Meadow Browns in the hundreds, lots of Large & Small Skippers, a few vanessids and a couple of Dark Green Fritillaries.

I reckon there's still a couple of weeks worth of Large Blue activity here, so anyone wanting to visit should do so as soon as they can.

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-20 02:06 PM GMT

Some cracking Large Blue action there David, great shots 📷 😊

Daneway was quite busy in early June from what I saw on social media with a lot of photos posted in the first two weeks. Apparently the site didn't suffer as badly from the dry spring as Collard Hill did.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 30-Jun-20 12:08 PM GMT

Yes, I heard Collard had suffered quite badly in comparison, Neil. I think it helps that Daneway has plenty of tree/shrub cover to prevent slippage on the banks in heavy rain as well as providing some extra protection from the strong sun during hot spells.

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jun-20 11:24 PM GMT

Some fine pictures there, David. Just shows the virtues of getting up early in mid-summer!

Must have been a fantastic morning.

Re: David M

by David M, 01-Jul-20 07:28 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=155540 time=1593555854 user_id=11426] Some fine pictures there, David. Just shows the virtues of getting up early in mid-summer!

Must have been a fantastic morning.

Sure was, Mark. Best of the year so far. 😊

Re: David M

by millerd, 01-Jul-20 07:55 PM GMT

Very nice Large Blue shots, David. 😊 Interesting to see one laying on marjoram instead of thyme – I imagine its flowering this year is a bit earlier than usual. I'm also distinctly envious of the shot of the mating pair – one I still lack in my collection. 😊 📷

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 01-Jul-20 09:45 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=155564 time=1593629724 user_id=9839]...Very nice Large Blue shots, David. 😊 Interesting to see one laying on marjoram instead of thyme

Thanks, Dave. From what the ranger told me, this is very much the norm rather than the exception.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-20 10:28 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Large Blue David, they're doing well, lets hope the Large Heath introduction in Lancashire is also a success 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 02-Jul-20 01:21 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. Fingers crossed!

Thursday 25th June – Fermyn....

Been 5 years since I saw a Purple Emperor, and that's way too long. Normally, I'm in Europe during their flight season but with trips abroad still off the menu I thought I'd make the most of my time here to visit Fermyn Woods to hopefully catch up with this iconic species.

The roads were quiet and I arrived just prior to half past seven, which gave me an opportunity to observe a few relatively docile White Admirals before it

started to warm up appreciably.



I kept walking between the main ride by Fermyn's westerly entrance and a cleared area of woodland in the part on the opposite side of the road:





Just two were seen, which was a little disappointing. The first was doing what everyone has commented on so far this year – flying low to the track, occasionally circling you only to then retreat back to the tree canopy.

The second, however, was on the ground on the main track, feasting as per usual on something unpleasant:



Remembering Neil Hulme's advice from a few years back, I first tried to shade it, but when this didn't work (by 10.20am it was already about 24c) I then grabbed a nearby grass stem and delicately 'tickled' the Emperor's hindwings which, thankfully, had the desired result:



I spent a good half hour watching it as it flew up and down this ride, settling whenever it latched on to the scent of something rotten. Plenty of other butterflies in the wood, with Silver Washed fritillaries and White Admirals both putting on a good show.

Re: David M

by ernie f, 02-Jul-20 05:14 PM GMT

That's a neat trick, David. I must remember to tickle Purple Emperors myself. Could be the start of a whole new hobby. 😊

Re: David M

by Pauline, 02-Jul-20 08:00 PM GMT

Good decision. Well done! 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 07-Jul-20 06:44 AM GMT

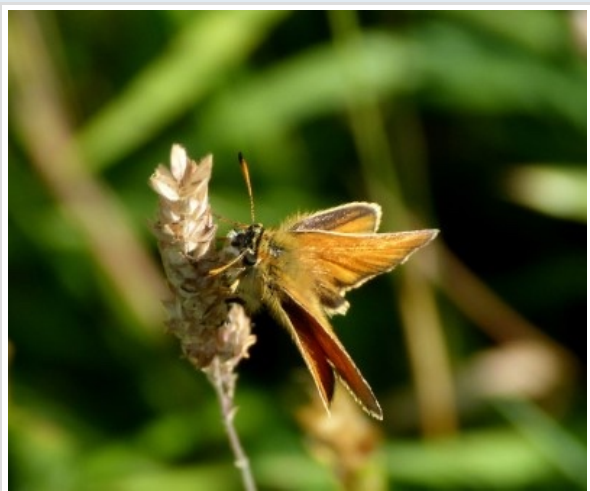
Thanks, both. The 'tickling' approach definitely works with Emperors, and I have employed it with other species with varying degrees of success.

Friday 26th June 2020 – After the Lord Mayors' Shows.....

Two successive days with two successive target species; both highly desirable – Large Blue & Purple Emperor.

It's highly likely that I saw Essex Skippers on both of these outings, but I had neither the time nor the inclination to verify this whilst paying major attention to other species.

However, once back in Abergavenny, I found myself with Essex Skipper top of the list for once, and not for the first time I saw several in the long grass of Mill Street Orchard:



I spent 3 summers living in Abergavenny and never saw a single Marbled White, but it appears they are expanding their range (probably along the River Usk) as I saw one last year and today I saw three:



I'd be delighted if it established itself round these parts. Always good to see butterfly species spreading rather than contracting in range.

Re: David M

by Janet Turnbull, 07-Jul-20 10:40 PM GMT

I have not heard of tickling butterflies before, David – I must give it a try! Glad you got to see the Emperors. I didn't go this year and am suffering withdrawal symptoms.

Janet

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jul-20 10:26 PM GMT

Good news indeed, David! I have no idea these two species could be found in those parts.

Re: David M

by David M, 09-Jul-20 08:15 PM GMT

Janet Turnbull wrote:

I have not heard of tickling butterflies before, David – I must give it a try!

Doesn't work all the time, Janet, but if you do it ever so gently you can usually elicit a response from the butterfly without actually spooking it.

Re: David M

by bugboy, 09-Jul-20 10:27 PM GMT

Just catching up with your summertime outings David which are rather different from your usual offerings (I can actually name everything without needing to read the text for starters 😊). with regard to the Large Blues laying on Marjoram there's an excellent explanation on pages 350–351 in a book by some bloke called Mr Eeles 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 12-Jul-20 11:27 PM GMT

Thanks for reminding me, Paul. I shall get my copy out and take a look later today.

I hope to have a few less readily identifiable species appearing over the next few days! 😊

Re: David M

by trevor, 14-Jul-20 08:24 AM GMT

Your long distance trips have been well rewarded this year David. When we invest time and petrol on such expeditions we have to hope the British weather plays ball too. It's a case of good planning and luck!.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 18-Jul-20 03:43 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor. I don't normally make so many long journeys in the UK, but given I've only been able to take one foreign trip in 2020, I have had more time to devote to our native species.

Sunday 12th July 2020 - Frustrating little butterfly.....

I've looked on with envy at images taken by those on here who can find White Letter Hairstreaks at comfortable heights/distances.

That's because in my part of the country, they stubbornly refuse to leave the tree canopy. There is a good colony at Glanymor Park in Loughor, where there is a healthy elm plantation, so I made my way down there and suffered my annual hour and a half stiff neck for very little reward.

In fact, it is this ash tree that seems to be the gathering point for WLHs here:



Not at any time did one settle below 20 feet up in this darned tree, and the only reason I managed to get a distant image of this one is because it perched on a branch with no leaves obscuring my view:



Oh for a cherry picker!

Re: David M

by trevor, 18-Jul-20 06:02 PM GMT

From your image of the Elm it doesn't look as though there is any incentive for the WLH to come down low.

A site in Brighton I visit has plentiful bramble and thistle blooms below the Elms on which the WLH can regularly be found nectaring.

Having said that I missed them this year as it was too windy when I went.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by millerd, 18-Jul-20 09:22 PM GMT

[quote=trevor_post_id=156281_time=1595091758_user_id=13654] From your image of the Elm it doesn't look as though there is any incentive for the WLH to come down low.

A site in Brighton I visit has plentiful bramble and thistle blooms below the Elms on which the WLH can regularly be found nectaring.

Keep well,
Trevor.

That's also the case with the WLH I regularly go over and see in Essex, and in all the other places I've seen them, come to think of it.

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 19-Jul-20 08:56 PM GMT

Thanks, both. The image is deceptive, as there are copious bramble blooms all around the central ash tree, as well as other potential nectar sources should this butterfly ever develop the urge to come down and visit them....trouble is, they don't round these parts. It's almost like it's a different species. Same with Purple Hairstreaks; they're permanently ensconced in the upper environs of the trees. 😞

I guess it's payback for the ease with which we can see Marsh, Small Pearl Bordered and High Brown Fritillaries.

Re: David M

by David M, 21-Jul-20 09:20 PM GMT

Sunday 19th July 2020 - Good numbers.....

After some deplorable weather lately, I couldn't miss the chance to get out in the warmth and sunshine today and decided to drive down to Alun Valley as it's probably the best site in Wales in terms of numbers of species.

I wasn't disappointed on that score; some 18 different types of butterfly were seen, and overall numbers were pretty impressive too. I'd just climbed the slope onto the Down when I came across my first Hedge Browns of the year:





Ringlets and Meadow Browns abounded, whilst there were plenty of Speckled Woods about near the wooded areas. All three (former) *Argynnis* Fritillaries were seen. The Silver Washed were looking fresh:



There were still quite a few female High Browns on the wing, some a little worn, but others looking very presentable:







Most were found in this clearing where there are plenty of thistles:



Three Dark Greens were also identified, but they are looking extremely faded now and will probably be gone by next weekend.

I managed to find one White Letter Hairstreak (again, up in the higher reaches of the trees) and also my first definite Purple Hairstreak of the year, although once again they were not in any mood to give me a chance of an image - this is the best I could get, perched on the end of the bare twig just left of centre 😞



Other species seen were all three Whites, Peacock, Comma, Small Heath, Holly Blue, Large Skipper and Red Admiral.

Re: David M

by David M, 23-Jul-20 11:27 AM GMT

Tuesday 21st July 2020 – Dozen up...

One of the benefits of working from home is that on sunny days I can get out round the grounds of my estate at lunchtime.

This is what I did today and was able to see 12 different butterfly species within 300m of my house.

These were Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Large, Small & Green Veined Whites, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Hedge Brown and these two little beauties:



Re: David M

by David M, 23-Jul-20 08:08 PM GMT

Wednesday 22nd July 2020 - Quite a day....

At the moment, and unless something unexpected happens relating to Covid, I will be off to Spain next week. That meant that I only really had one chance to see reasonably fresh Chalkhill Blues in the UK this year, so I decided to head to the south coast.

I had set my alarm for 4.30am, intending to leave at 5.30, however I must have pressed the 'off' button rather than 'snooze' because I woke up at 5.26am and had to rush to get out before 6!!

Then I got caught in a horrendous traffic jam on the M5. I was wondering what had caused this at 7.20 in the morning but after half an hour I finally got past where the accident had happened - a van was on its side blocking two lanes.

So, rather than arrive at Portland at 8.30 I only got there at 9.40 and was feeling a tad irritated.

That didn't last long though. I had seen two people with cameras by a buddleia near to where I parked my car on the way up. I walked down to where they were and a guy with a beard told me he was watching a Large Tortoiseshell.

It took me a couple of minutes to pick it up but eventually I could see it, although it was quite a distance away in the upper reaches of the bush.



It eventually flew into a better location:



After about 10 minutes, it flew off up the hill and although I walked up the path I wasn't able to locate it again. Here's an overview of the area where it was seen:



I must thank Stevieb for sharing where he'd seen his LT a few days ago. He was spot on to within yards and I was also very lucky that the guy with the beard was there before me - had I arrived at the time I originally planned, I may have walked right past this area. Fortune shines on you sometimes.

Re: David M

by trevor, 23-Jul-20 10:09 PM GMT

Very well done, David. That is the location they were seen on the day I went. Although I didn't find that out until back at home. I also understand that particular bush was host to three Large Tortoiseshells recently.

You must take several mrgreens. 🍃🍃🍃

Stay well, good luck in Spain.
Trevor.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 24-Jul-20 08:57 AM GMT

That last shot of your's shows it off really well David, that's certainly one I missed 😊 It's good to know they seem to be back. Goldie 😊

Re: David M

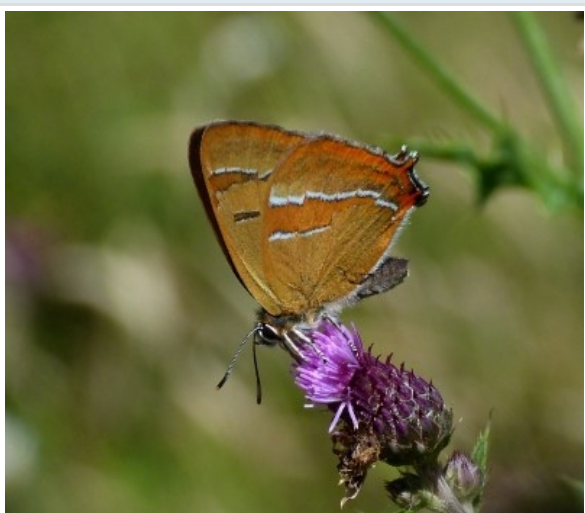
by David M, 24-Jul-20 11:56 AM GMT

Thanks, both. I think the cliff areas and the quarries are probably the places to look for Large Tortoiseshell in the spring, when they will likely be using the rock faces to warm themselves. On a warm, sunny morning, I thought they would probably be more likely to be visiting nectar sources which is why I chose the spot I had been tipped off about.

Heart warming coincidence.....

After I'd left Portland in the early afternoon, I thought I'd make a short detour to Alner's Gorse, primarily to try to get close(ish) to White Letter & Purple Hairstreaks. Sadly, that never happened; I saw three WLHs in the elm trees and two Purple in the Oaks, but none came within camera range.

However, whilst checking out the marsh thistles in a sheltered nook, I saw this little stunner:





I spent 5 minutes or so with this male Brown Hairstreak before I noticed someone walking towards this spot. As he came closer I recognised him – it was the guy with the beard that had helped me see the Large Tortoiseshell a few hours earlier!!

Time to return the favour – I shouted over to him and beckoned him in. He'd been round the site looking for *betulae* without success, so I was delighted to step out of the way and let him take over. Talk about karma!!

Re: David M

by Pauline, 24-Jul-20 01:22 PM GMT

Some very enviable images recently David 🍷 Well done! 😊

Re: David M

by millerd, 24-Jul-20 01:53 PM GMT

Nothing like a favour repaid, David! 😊 I'm very envious of those sightings, especially the Large Tortoiseshell – still, the hours you put into that makes it well-deserved. 😊 🍷

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 26-Jul-20 04:06 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Yes, if you put the hours in the greater the chance of reaping the rewards.

One thing's for sure, if you **don't** go, you definitely **won't** see anything.

Re: David M

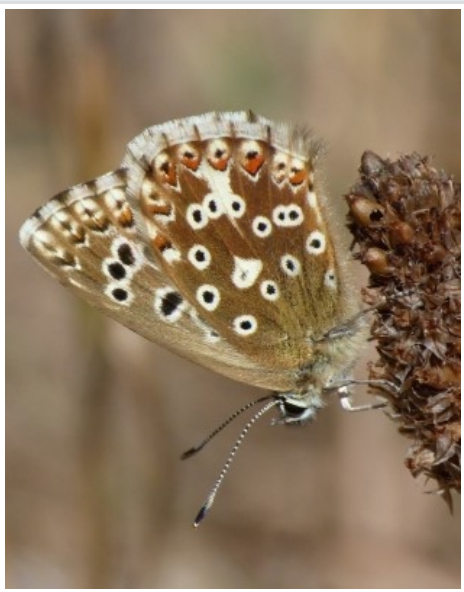
by David M, 27-Jul-20 10:06 PM GMT

More Portland pictures....

After the excitement of the Large Tortoiseshell, I moved into a grassy field nearby and was immediately confronted with sizeable numbers of Chalkhill Blues:



I only saw two females. Here's the first:



....and the second:



There were also at least two Lulworth Skippers in this field, though the one that kept settling was rather worn:



I really enjoyed my morning here. Never been to Portland before, but I will return at some point and spend more time there. Chesil Beach is an amazing natural feature, and the views generally were extremely attractive:



The range of butterflies was excellent:

Large Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Large, Small, Essex & Lulworth Skipper, the three Whites, Brimstone, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Hedge Brown, Ringlet, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Small Copper, Holly Blue & Marbled White.

Adding White Letter, Purple & Brown Hairstreak, Silver Washed Fritillary & Small Heath at Alner's Gorse took my day's total to 26 species, and with a little extra effort I'm sure I could have exceeded 30, with Grayling, Wall, Dark Green Fritillary, Small Tortoiseshell & Brown Argus all surely about too.

Re: David M

by David M, 29-Jul-20 08:53 PM GMT

Wednesday 29th July 2020 - Grayling....

Another pleasant coastal jaunt this morning, only this one much closer to home; about 15 minutes drive away in fact.

The Coastguard Agency building is at Bracelet Bay near Mumbles Head and walking round it provides perfect habitat for Graylings:



This is their favoured stretch, with lots of heather to nectar from:





Just on the other side is Limeslade Bay:



It's not a very big area, so there are never more than low double figures, although they can also be found pretty much all round the coastline on the Gower.

Re: David M

by keving, 02-Aug-20 01:42 PM GMT

David,

Catching up with your diary and enjoying your Portland pics. I can't remember the last time I saw a Small Tortoiseshell on Buddleia, let alone a Large. Well done indeed.

That's a cracking Brown Hairstreak too. I was fortunate to see a fresh female last week and they are stunning.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: David M

by David M, 11-Aug-20 06:33 PM GMT

Thanks, Kev. Ironically, Small Tortoiseshell was one butterfly I **didn't** see whilst on Portland. Coming to something when the large version is commoner than the small!

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-20 08:14 PM GMT

Lovely views David, it's quite a while since i visited Portland they bring back some happy memories 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 16-Aug-20 04:14 PM GMT

Yes, it's quite some place, Goldie. I'd never been before (although I'd seen it from afar when nearby on the south coast) but I'll definitely go back. I found it extremely interesting even though it's a bit of a traffic bottleneck.

Re: David M

by David M, 21-Aug-20 10:00 PM GMT

Thursday 20th August 2020 – Out of quarantine....

I wasn't too fussed having to undergo quarantine upon my return from Spain on 5th August. Female Brown Hairstreaks at the Pembrokeshire site tend only to peak at the end of August and in any case, the weather this last fortnight has been, in the main, pretty dismal.

That said, it was nice to finally get out again, and a visit to Port Eynon dunes on the Gower was a pleasurable reintroduction to the butterfly fauna of these parts.

This area near the car park is full of escaped Everlasting Pea. One day I hope I'll find a Long Tailed Blue here:



There is currently lots of valerian in flower on the dunes here, and the commonest butterfly was probably Small Tortoiseshell, with around 50 seen avidly gorging themselves:



Meadow Browns weren't far behind in numbers. Most were happy to settle with wings open in these part-cloudy conditions:



Small Whites numbered around two dozen:



I had hoped to see a few migrants, but there were no Painted Ladies (they were very common here last year), nor any Clouded Yellows. Even Red Admirals were scarce – this was one of just two seen:



However, Silver Y moths were about in serious numbers, and I also saw around 10 Hummingbird Hawk Moths, which is the most I've ever seen in Wales in a single day:



Other butterfly species seen were Large White, Hedge Brown, Common Blue & Brown Argus.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 22-Aug-20 11:00 AM GMT

WoW! David, ten Humming Bird Hawk Moth's 🍷 I'm lucky if I see one in the Garden , when I do I love to watch them even if I can't get a shot 😊😊
Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 25-Aug-20 01:15 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. Yes, it was quite a surprise, particularly given how few butterfly migrants are around right now.

These moths are captivating to watch.

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-20 08:11 PM GMT

Good to see the Small Tortoiseshell, David. There were loads of them about these parts in early summer, and I found plenty of caterpillar nests shortly after as well. But very few of these seem to have made it through, as I have seen hardly any adults since then. We will find out in early spring.

Amazing numbers of hummingbird hawkmoths as well, I have yet to see any this year. Must have been quite a sight.

Re: David M

by David M, 02-Sep-20 09:00 PM GMT

Hi Mark. Yes, the humming bird hawk moths were a great surprise, but a most welcome one, as are the healthy numbers of Small Tortoiseshells in south Wales right now.

I never get carried away though. As you mention, it will pay to await next spring to see if this positive cycle is continued.

Saturday 29th August 2020 – Festival of the ordinary.....

A much welcome positive weather forecast for today saw me venture to Crymlyn Burrows on the Swansea coast for the first time in almost 3 months.

It was a cool day, and rather annoyingly, cloud cover outstripped sunny intervals for much of the time.

That said, there were still butterflies to be found, although very much the 'regulation' ones for this time of year.

I was pleased to see around 20 or so Meadow Browns, with many of the females still looking to be in good condition.

The first to attract the attention of my camera though was this female Brown Argus:



There were also several Common Blues still on the wing; mostly females and this one, which 20 years ago might have been considered abnormally blue, is pretty much what I would describe these days as relatively normal:



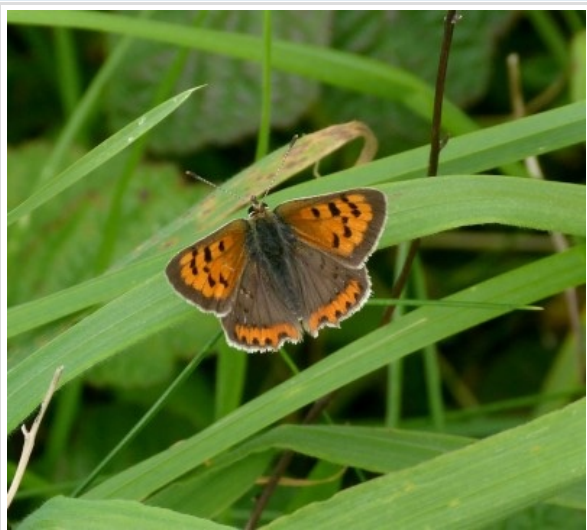
I found 9 Small Heaths, and whilst I generally don't take many images of them, I found this individual irresistible given how it was posing on a scabious flower:



This site isn't great for Small Tortoiseshells, but I saw three, and this one was rather darker than I am used to seeing:



Two Small Coppers were also seen, with this one posing nicely:



Other species recorded were all three Whites, three Red Admirals and a couple of Speckled Woods.

Re: David M

by David M, 06-Sep-20 12:40 PM GMT

Sunday 30th August 2020 – Brown Hairstreaks....

I first saw a male Brown Hairstreak on 22nd July, but since then, with a week spent in Spain and an obligatory 14 day period of quarantine (not to mention a run of totally unsuitable weather) I hadn't had the opportunity to go looking for females until today.

The site at West Williamston in Pembrokeshire is under considerable attack from ash die back, which gives me some concern for the future of this species in this location. Last year, in three visits I saw just four females, so I wasn't sure how successful this excursion was going to be.

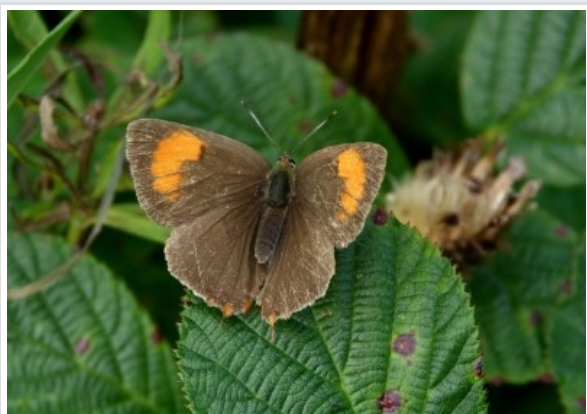
In the event, with conditions fairly cool but thankfully sunny with light winds, I ended up seeing three, the first of which I spotted at the entrance to one of the 'glades' by the foreshore:



She pottedered about on mature blackthorn for a while without laying any eggs:



It was the second individual that was of particular interest though. I found her in more open terrain in the middle field, watched her ovipositing on young growth before a short cloudy spell caused her to bask for a while:



What she did next was unprecedented in my experience at this site – she flew onto some ragwort and began nectaring, which might be commonplace behaviour in England but is unheard of at this location:



It has since been suggested to me that this unusual behaviour might be attributable to the almost complete loss of ash trees at this site, thus depriving the species of much of the aphid honeydew it normally relies upon.

This theory sounds plausible and it will be interesting to see whether this leads to more individuals being observed taking nectar from flowers on the site in the future.

Re: David M

by bugboy, 06-Sep-20 08:26 PM GMT

Well done with your Hairstreaks, this year has been nearly unprecedented almost everywhere it would seem! Perhaps this will become the new normal what with hotter summers predicted to become more common place. I imagine the aphids aren't keen on these summers so the Hairstreaks normal food source is becoming scarcer?

Re: David M

by David M, 11-Sep-20 08:43 PM GMT

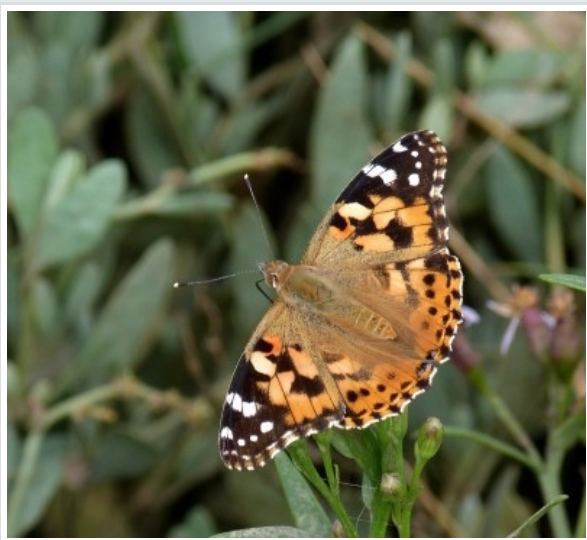
Thanks, Paul. Yes, it's been a bizarre year without doubt, and I'm not sure what 'normal' is anymore to be honest. It may take a few years for that to become clear.

Sunday 30th August - West Williamston....

Aside from Brown Hairstreaks, this site is a good one for plenty of other species. A pleasant surprise when I arrived was this Comma resting on the fence at the back of the parking area.



The sea asters on the foreshore attract good numbers of butterflies; last year, 50+ Painted Ladies were gorging themselves on this nectar source. Today, I only saw two, but given I'd hitherto only seen half a dozen or so in 2020, they were most welcome:





The most numerous species was Small Tortoiseshell, with around 50 seen. There were also decent numbers of Red Admirals, with around 20 spotted:



This Tortoiseshell was much paler than the rest:



There were around two dozen Small Whites, as well as 7 or 8 Green Veined Whites, the latter being a species I've seen precious few of lately:



Hedge Browns had disappeared, but Speckled Woods were fairly common, with 15-20 on the wing, and there were still a couple of Silver Washed Fritillaries hanging on, one very tatty male and this slightly more presentable female:



I thought I'd spotted a Common Blue settling in the grasses, but it turned out to be this female Holly Blue:



On my way back to the car park, the 'Royal Flush' of vanessids was completed with this Peacock:



Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 11-Sep-20 09:58 PM GMT

A good haul that, David. And nice to see someone else has been getting into the Painted Ladies.

Good to see a Peacock, they have long gone from here.

Re: David M

by millerd, 12-Sep-20 07:22 PM GMT

A very nice Painted Lady, David – good to see when they've been so sparse this year. The SWF female seems really late, given it was nearly September – she's done really well to keep going! 😊

I'm pleased you saw some Hairstreaks in your usual spot – Hopefully they will adapt to using alternative tree species to gather in. Certainly at the hotspot down at Shipton Bellinger they appeared to have adopted a large field maple (I think that's what it was – some kind of acer anyway).

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 13-Sep-20 06:33 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Agree that it's nice to see a few Painted Ladies finally. This has been an exceptionally poor year for them so far – I think there have probably been more Clouded Yellows! 😊

Dave – SWFs can hang on to the second week of September round these parts, due presumably to the fact that they emerge a fair while later than those in much of southern England.

I certainly hope you're right regarding the Hairstreaks finding alternative trees to use. Trouble is, at this site it is 60% ash (there are precious few oaks) and it's quite tragic to see such a high proportion dying back. It's really taken root over the last couple of years and I **do** fear for this colony here. 😞

Re: David M

by David M, 16-Sep-20 07:30 PM GMT

Thursday 10th September 2020 – White City...

There are plenty of dunes along the Gower coast, but Port Eynon is unique in that it is replete with valerian flowers, which presumably are escapes from the gardens adjacent to the site.

Today, I must have seen at least 100 Small Whites, most of which were flying frantically around these blooms as well as the wild cabbages that are common here:



Pleasingly, there were also quite a few Large Whites doing likewise, certainly 20+:



The only other species seen in double figures was Small Tortoiseshell, with a dozen or so:



Red Admirals remain comparatively thin on the ground. Numbers have increased here lately but today I only saw two:



No Painted Ladies, sadly, but there were still a few tatty Meadow Browns on the wing, and I also recorded two female and one male Common Blues, a Brown Argus and a Speckled Wood.

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Sep-20 06:44 PM GMT

Saturday 12th September 2020 - Whiteford Burrows....

Another gloriously sunny day saw me head over to Whiteford Burrows for the first time since 7th April. There were plenty of butterflies on the wing, but they were eclipsed by the hundreds of small, reddish-coloured dragonflies, which were absolutely everywhere. I'm presuming these were Common Darters:



Two Brown Argus were seen, although both were very worn:



A handful of fading Common Blues were around too:



Surprisingly, Meadow Browns were easily into double figures, with both males and females happy to pose wings open, which is something they rarely seem to do when fresh:



I counted 9 Small Heaths, 4 Red Admirals and 3 Speckled Woods as well before making my way back towards the entrance where I stopped by a damp area replete with flowering mint. There were quite a few butterflies buzzing around this, including 2 Small Tortoiseshells and this fresh Painted Lady:



I hit the shutter on this one just after it took to the air:



Three Small Coppers were present, with the inevitable aerial skirmishes occurring when they came into close proximity. This one was the nicest looking:



Small White was still quite common, but Large and Green Veined were present too in smaller numbers, whilst a solitary Peacock nectaring on hemp agrimony brought up a respectable 13 species for the day.

Re: David M

by millerd, 23-Sep-20 09:04 AM GMT

A very resplendent Painted Lady, David, especially as they've been so scarce this year. Obviously the scant few that arrived earlier in the year managed to produce a few offspring. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 26-Sep-20 08:02 PM GMT

{quote=millerd_post_id=158420_time=1600848283_user_id=9839}A very resplendent Painted Lady, David, especially as they've been so scarce this year. Obviously the scant few that arrived earlier in the year managed to produce a few offspring.

Thank you, Dave. Yes, I saw three Painted Ladies in early June but the next ones I saw weren't till late August, so one presumes the latter were the progeny of the former.

Sunday 13th September 2020 - Nicholaston Burrows....

The warm weather continued, so I thought I'd drive 15 minutes down the road to a site I hadn't visited for quite some while, Nicholaston Burrows, a small dune system just to the east of Oxwich Bay which can be seen in the distance:



The commonest species during this walk were Small White (20–30) and Red Admiral (approx. 15). In fact, I counted 9 of the latter on one particularly sheltered patch of ivy in the light woodland at the top of the slope, as well as a solitary Small Tortoiseshell.

Also about in this area were a handful of Speckled Woods:



On the dunes I found a couple of faded Brown Argus, a few Large Whites and several Small Coppers, one of which was the finest *caeroleopunctata* individual I've seen in a long while:



The only other species seen was Common Blue; two tatty looking females and a surprisingly presentable male.

Re: David M

by David M, 30-Sep-20 10:15 PM GMT

Monday 14th September 2020 – Unseasonably hot....

It's not often the Swansea coastal strip basks in temperatures of 23c, but that was the case today at Port Eynon....and in mid-September too!!

Winds were light, so I trekked up to the top of the hill at the SW edge of the site:



It's always a little bittersweet when we get hot days such as these after the main butterfly season is over, and in truth there weren't huge numbers about. Perhaps they had dispersed given the fact that the temperatures were such that they didn't need to seek out the sheltered microclimates.

Around 40 Small Whites were seen, with probably a dozen or so Large Whites too, but apart from that there was little else – a couple of Red Admirals, three or four Small Tortoiseshells, a few ragged Meadow Browns and the odd tatty Common Blue along with a solitary Small Copper.

The notable sighting of the day was this Hummingbird Hawk Moth, which, rather unusually, decided to take a break from flying endlessly and rested for quite a while, wings folded, on a dead plant stem:



Re: David M

by trevor, 01-Oct-20 07:30 AM GMT

Superb image of that Hummingbird Hawk Moth, at rest David. Quite a contrast to darting blur we are more familiar with. I once found one at rest on the beach at Tidemills, East Sussex.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by millerd, 02-Oct-20 10:07 AM GMT

That is an excellent shot of the HBHM, David. It looks immaculate – I didn't realise how bushy the tail-tufts are... 😊 It makes a change from the usual in-flight shots too.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 06-Oct-20 07:08 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor/Dave. This is only the second time I've seen one at rest for any length of time and given its condition I'd say it was a recently emerged one. They blend in surprisingly well given how strikingly noticeable they are when in flight.

Wednesday 16th September 2020 – Botanic Gardens....

My neighbour and I took our annual early autumn trip to the National Botanic Gardens near Carmarthen today, as we both love the displays of flowers and the cafe (which serves an enviable vegan range which she likes). Of course, there are butterflies around too, although the building that houses tropical species is closed currently due to Covid. 😞

Of the wild butterflies, there were, once again, plenty of Small Whites, with a few Red Admirals, Tortoiseshells and Large Whites, a Small Copper and a Comma, but the highlight of the day was seeing a male Brimstone, which doesn't happen very often for me in the month of September:



Re: David M

by trevor, 07-Oct-20 11:44 AM GMT

It's been an amazing Autumn for various late butterfly species, David.
So your Brimstone doesn't surprise me at all.
It was only this Monday that I saw a fairly fresh female Wall Brown.

Stay safe & well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

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

David

Just catching up with your PD – I must admit to having to go back a bit. My favourite is your pic of a Hummingbird Hawkmoth at rest. That's quite a rare image! I bet you are pleased with that.

Re: David M

by David M, 09-Oct-20 05:48 PM GMT

Thanks, both. It's been a great autumn for the south and SE of England due to the numbers of Clouded Yellows and the regular third brooders, but we in Wales tend not to see these things, so it's been very much a case of 'business as usual' round here.

That said, Red Admirals have picked up over the last few weeks, and there have even been a few belated Painted Ladies, along with several Hummingbird Hawk Moths, which are always a delight to see.

Re: David M

by David M, 11-Oct-20 09:02 PM GMT

Sunday 27th September – Plenty of variety still.....

Another visit to Port Eynon dunes on a mild, pleasant, sunny day saw plenty of butterflies still flying.

Again, Small Whites were the commonest, with at least 40 seen, and Large Whites reached double figures, no doubt attracted by the copious valerian that's still in flower at this coastal site.

On the dunes, I saw two Common Blues. The first was a very faded female but this male is certainly a third brood specimen; he was immaculate:



A solitary Small Copper popped up as well as what will surely be my final Meadow Brown of 2020.

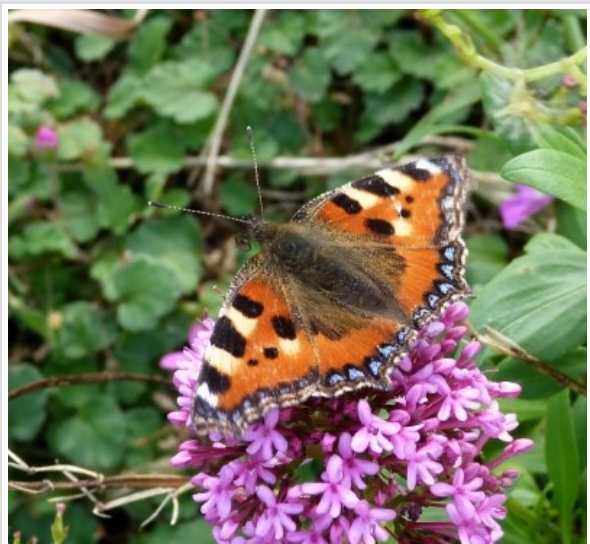
However, a visit to the churchyard in the nearby village was the highlight of the day.



This Comma was immediately seen basking on some foliage:



There were two different Small Tortoiseshells nectaring on the valerian:



This patch of south facing ivy was buzzing with insects. I counted 9 Red Admirals, a Comma and a Painted Lady:



A solitary Green Veined White brought the overall species count to 10, something I may not see again till next May.

Re: David M

by millerd, 11-Oct-20 09:16 PM GMT

A very good count for the end of September, David – that ivy bush has a splendid array of butterflies. 😊 Fortunate to include a Painted Lady too – Clouded Yellow sightings have now exceeded those for Painted Ladies on my local patch this year, and overall on my wanderings as well come to think of it. The Comma is welcome too, as they seem quite thin on the ground this autumn.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 17-Oct-20 01:51 PM GMT

Yes, 10 is pretty good on the cusp of October, Dave, even though all were common species, although I agree Painted Ladies have been far from common this year. Coming to something when there are more Clouded Yellows recorded in some parts!!

Thursday 1st October - Diminishing returns.....

A return to Port Eynon just 4 days after my previous visit saw 6 fewer species. I had hoped to notch up an October Meadow Brown on the dunes, but the only butterflies flying there were 20 or so Small Whites and a Red Admiral nectaring on the ivy at the back of the site.

However, a short walk to the churchyard once again was a joy, with several Large Whites flying around the valerian blooms, including this lovely female:



A couple of Small Tortoiseshells were also enjoying the feast:



A handful of Small Whites were flying in this area as well as three more Red Admirals, which were again steadfastly glued to the ivy flowers.

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Oct-20 02:20 PM GMT

Thursday 8th October 2020 - in Abergavenny....

This week was spent looking after my friends' guest house in Abergavenny whilst they were away on holiday.

The weather was so appalling early in the week that the chickens practically stopped laying eggs, but by Thursday things had improved so I nipped out to Castle Meadows:



It was fairly windy and I only saw a solitary Small White, but the more sheltered confines of Linda Vista Gardens were far more productive. This Speckled Wood (one of three seen) was basking on a leaf by the entrance:



I was delighted to find a smallish buddleia that was still almost in full flower:



A Red Admiral stopped here briefly before flying off, but this Comma wasn't going anywhere:



There were a couple more Small Whites flying around as well as two male Large Whites nectaring from the verbena:



Re: David M

by David M, 25-Oct-20 07:56 PM GMT

Sunday 11th October 2020 - Last hurrah?....

Another visit to Port Eynon, but this time the only species flying on the dunes was Small White. I took the trouble to count them in the hour I was there, with a respectable 25 being the final tally (which included a couple seen in the nearby churchyard).

Just one Red Admiral was found nectaring on the ivy-clad wall at the back of the dunes:





The churchyard was still full of flowering valerian, but butterfly numbers weren't great.



There were solitary Large White and Small Tortoiseshell, but other than that the only butterflies were two Small Whites and a fairly impressive eight Red Admirals, including this one basking on a garden wall:



Re: David M

by David M, 28-Oct-20 03:19 PM GMT

Wednesday 14th October 2020 - Limeslade Bay....

A trip to M&S in Mumbles on a sunny morning gave me the excuse to visit Limeslade Bay to see whether there were any butterflies nectaring on the hebe shrubs which have taken root in this area.



I noticed a Small White before getting out of my car, then I spotted a slightly damaged Red Admiral feeding nearby. However, when I scanned the most sheltered area at the back along the wall, I was delighted to find another Red Admiral, this one in pristine condition:



Further along there was a Comma:



And at one point they fed almost side by side:



Higher up, a solitary Large White was indulging in the feast:



A pleasant surprise to find four different species in a 20m square area in mid-October.

Re: David M

by David M, 03-Nov-20 12:23 PM GMT

Wednesday 14th October 2020 - Oystermouth Cemetery.....

On my way back from M&S, I took a detour into Oystermouth Cemetery. Apart from a fly-by Red Admiral, no other butterflies were seen except for 4 Speckled Woods. Three of them were seen by the wooded area at the top of the site, but this one was holding territory in a sheltered, sunny spot as if it were late April:



Re: David M

by David M, 05-Nov-20 02:30 PM GMT

Saturday 17th October 2020 - More Speckled Woods....

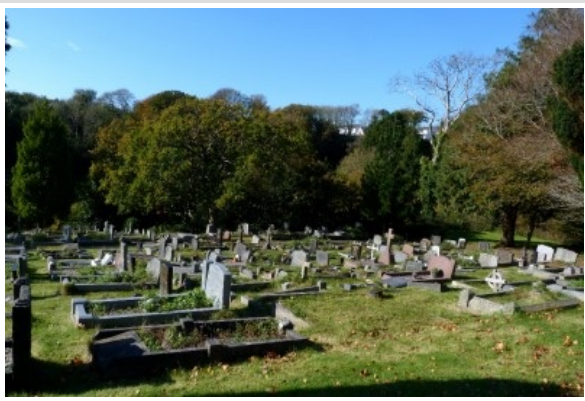
Another visit to Oystermouth Cemetery saw three more Speckled Woods, the first one being seen next to the car park basking on the warm soil:



It looked in very good condition, as did one of the other two which I saw, once again, in the wooded area near the highest point of the site:



I searched this area where clumps of valerian are in bloom on many of the graves but saw no other butterflies:



Re: David M

by David M, 08-Nov-20 07:59 PM GMT

Thursday 22nd October 2020 - Life goes on....

I was briefly in Abergavenny again, so on the day of my departure I visited Linda Vista Gardens, on a reasonably mild and sunny afternoon.

As I was walking towards the sunlit area, I noticed a Red Admiral flying around a buddleia that was now 90% in shade. I tried to get closer but it spooked and zoomed off.

I had better luck when I emerged into full sunshine where the late flowering buddleia I had seen a Comma nectaring from two weeks earlier was still in surprisingly good shape:



This time, there were **two** Commas enjoying the late season feast. One of them was rather worn:



The other one, however, was immaculate:



I took a walk around the gardens, but was not able to find any Speckled Woods (they are usually quite reliable here; in season, at least!) Unless something freakish turns up, I suspect the only butterflies I may see from here on in will be adult overwinterers.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 14-Nov-20 02:50 PM GMT

Hi! David, there's certainly a lot of Sun in your shots, much more than there is here at present 😊 you've got some lovely shots of the Comma on the flowers which sets the colour of the Butterfly off nicely, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by trevor, 14-Nov-20 08:52 PM GMT

That's a great final(ish?) flurry David. As in the Spring, and at this time of year we start to look out for Speckled Woods again. I am guilty of largely ignoring them in between, though I do keep an eye open for spectacularly marked female Specklies.

Keep safe and well.
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 15-Nov-20 08:10 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Hi! David, there's certainly a lot of Sun in your shots, much more than there is here at present

Seems like an age ago sadly, Goldie. It's done virtually nothing but rain ever since. 😞

Re: David M

by David M, 23-Nov-20 08:33 PM GMT

[quote=trevor_post_id=159389_time=1605387153_user_id=13654] That's a great final(ish?) flurry David. As in the Spring, and at this time of year we start to look out for Speckled Woods again. I am guilty of largely ignoring them in between, though I do keep an eye open for spectacularly marked female Specklies.

Yes, that was a final flourish for Specklies round my way, Trevor. You're right, most of us only really pay attention to them at the beginning and end of the season. I guess that's because we're practically never without them in between.

Wednesday 4th November 2020 - Last embers.....

Knocked off work at midday today as I had a dental appointment at 2.40pm. That gave me a little time to kill, and seeing that the wet and windy spell had decided to give us a break, I thought I'd venture out to Limeslade Bay on the Gower coast to check out the hebe growing in the sheltered corner near the footpath.

To my delight, I saw a Red Admiral straight away. It was perched on this fabric sack, no doubt taking advantage of the additional warmth.



Here's an overview of this little microclimate:



There was another Red Admiral on the hebe nearby:



A third Red Admiral was seen basking on foliage nearby:



At one point, two of them clashed and spiralled into the air, with the pursuer chasing his rival over the top of the wall. I strolled a couple of hundred metres down the track that leads to Langland Bay. This is a very picturesque spot which is ideal for walking at any time of year when the sun is out and the winds light:



Just the tonic I needed before having a tooth filled!

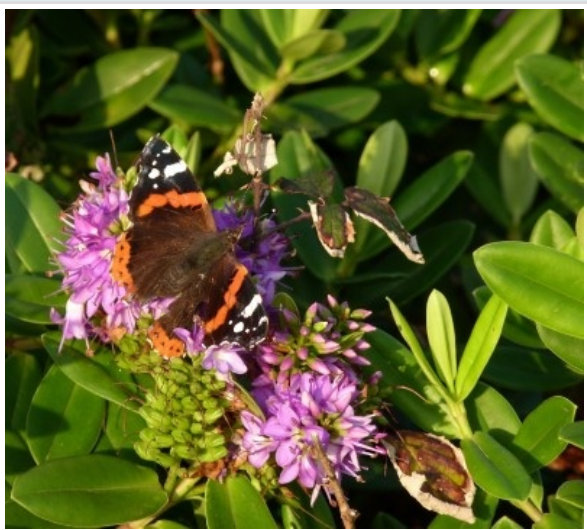
Re: David M

by David M, 27-Nov-20 12:24 PM GMT

Sunday 8th November - Brief opportunity....

A post-Bonfire Night butterfly is always a precious thing (although becoming commoner these last few years) and I was fortunate enough to see one thanks to a brief weather window where the overcast conditions on a mild day (14c) gave way to an interlude of sunshine in the mid-afternoon.

I headed down to Limeslade Bay just before 3pm and managed to find a solitary Red Admiral on the only stretch of flowering hebe that was still in full sunlight:





There were plenty of bees and flies too in this little oasis, and I suspect they will continue here unless we get some particularly cold conditions.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 30-Nov-20 02:28 PM GMT

Hi! David, cold conditions forecast for here, snow on hills this week, it'll be a change from the rain if nothing else 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 07-Dec-20 09:17 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

..David, cold conditions forecast for here, snow on hills this week, it'll be a change from the rain if nothing else

I noticed the reports, Goldie. Looks like the north had quite a bit of snowfall, as well as Dartmoor, although we seemed to escape here in south Wales. I guess that'll finish off most of the Red Admirals that were still about. 😞

Wednesday 25th November 2020 – Hebe still producing results....

A still, mild, sunny late November day saw me try once again to find butterflies at Limeslade Bay.

I sat on a large stone bollard for 10 minutes, all the while glancing at the wall where the flowering hebe grows in such profusion. Several bees and flies zoomed past but eventually I saw what appeared to be a large butterfly taking to the air in the upper reaches.

Intrigued, I remained seated, but after a few more minutes without any further movement I walked to the southern edge to scan the part-obscured higher tier of this expanse of late-flowering non-native growth:



Something caught my eye in the sheltered niche above this patio area:



...and there it was, a solitary Red Admiral glued to a hebe flower in the most protected corner of the site:



Re: David M

by Goldie M, 08-Dec-20 11:54 AM GMT

WoW David, Seeing the Butterfly will make your Winter feel shorter, it's been much too wet and cold here since the beginning of October, we also missed the Snow though, it changed to rain here. Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 15-Dec-20 06:48 AM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

WoW David, Seeing the Butterfly will make your Winter feel shorter...

Yes, I suppose that's right, Goldie. We're halfway through December but with things being so mild, it's almost like winter hasn't appeared yet. Maybe it will at some point but right now I'm quietly confident I'll go fewer than 3 months without a butterfly, unless we have another dire late February/early March. 😊

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 15-Dec-20 09:58 PM GMT

All the best for Christmas David, lets hope the New Year is better 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 18-Dec-20 11:53 AM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

All the best for Christmas David, lets hope the New Year is better

Thank you, Goldie. All the best to you too and I sincerely hope 2021 will bring a considerable improvement (although it's not looking that way right now, sadly).

Re: David M

by Matsukaze, 20-Dec-20 01:09 PM GMT

Those Hebes look familiar!

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Dec-20 08:12 PM GMT

{quote=Matsukaze post_id=159870 time=1608469752 user_id=23} Those Hebes look familiar!

Yes, Chris, and it's hard to believe that it's just a week short of a year since we were having a pint within a short walk of them! Everything seemed so familiar and straightforward back then. 😞

Re: David M

by Matsukaze, 21-Dec-20 01:11 PM GMT

We had hoped to stay on Gower again this New Year, but it will have to wait. At the moment it is hard to believe that creatures like butterflies exist, but we could have wandered the beaches watching the wading birds, and making giant sandcastles. January 2022 perhaps...

Re: David M

by David M, 22-Dec-20 01:59 PM GMT

Thursday 26th November 2020 – One last outing....

Yesterday was very pleasant for the time of year, but today was even better – a max of 9c, full sunshine & barely a breath of wind. I figured there'd still be valerian and scabious in flower at Port Eynon dunes so I ventured down there at lunch time hoping there might be a butterfly or two as well.

Sadly, in spite of the benign conditions I didn't see any and decided to have a quick look round the churchyard about 5 minutes walk away. Again, there seemed to be nothing around, until I looked in the direction of this old wall:



I could make out a triangular shape on a valerian flower so I walked closer:



It was surprising to find it was a Small Tortoiseshell. They are usually tucked up in hibernation by now:



The homeowner came out on to his driveway having seen me pointing my camera at something, and he was delighted to find his property had a butterfly visiting it less than a month before Christmas.

From memory, this is the latest date in the year I've ever seen a Small Tortoiseshell.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 22-Dec-20 02:27 PM GMT

I'd love to see a Small Tort David it might brighten the next few days 😊 No journey to Kent for me this Christmas, at least I'll stay safe, hope fully 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by trevor, 23-Dec-20 10:43 PM GMT

Well done with your late Small Tortoiseshell, David. 🍷
My East Sussex total this year was six, and two of those were on the same day.

Have a great Christmas, and hopefully a more normal 2021.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 27-Dec-20 06:44 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

I'd love to see a Small Tort David it might brighten the next few days 😊 No journey to Kent for me this Christmas, at least I'll stay safe, hope fully

Best to sit this one out, Goldie, given the circumstances. Like everyone else, I hope that 2021 brings some kind of accelerating relief from this Covid nightmare and yes, a Small Tortoiseshell in early spring would do wonders for morale!

Re: David M

by David M, 29-Dec-20 06:46 PM GMT

Friday 11th December 2020 – Major surprise....

At 2pm today, I ventured outside my workplace and almost immediately noticed a butterfly flying around the perspex-covered smoking shelter at the corner of the car park.

It seemed to be constantly testing the metal frame at the top but in between doing this, would fly around and settle elsewhere for brief periods. Being at work, I wasn't armed with my camera, but I managed to get a few images on my mobile phone:



I took a short video of it as its behaviour was intriguing – it would fly out into the open before coming back to the shelter as if magnetised:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tju5CH5uNA>

My last image of it before I went back inside was when it settled on the metal 'a' of the company's logo on the front of the building. I guess the temperature was a bit higher here:



This is the second latest I have ever seen a butterfly in the UK, beaten only by the Red Admiral flying round the hanging baskets in Abergavenny town centre on 20th December 2008.

