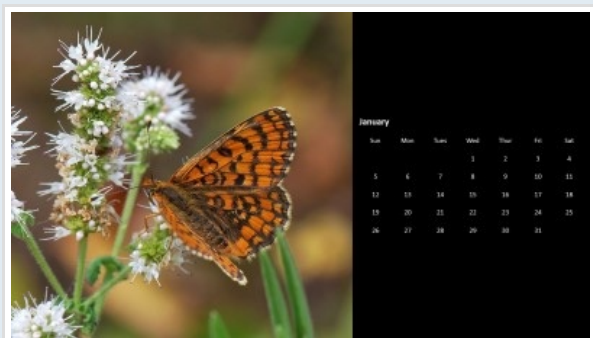


Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jan-20 08:05 PM GMT

[color=#FF0000]Happy New Year!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Jan-20 08:58 PM GMT

Broughton Down 23-08-2019

With the children off to York with their Grandparents and the chores done I was left at home kicking my heels slightly. The weather was turning out to be better than expected, perfect in fact for Silver Spotted Skippers and the weather for the following day was looking like it was going to get too hot – the butterflies would be solar charged so after an early lunch I was off on the road to Broughton curing at the dithering dawdler going 35 in a National Speed limit area, scanning the sky for clouds as I still don't have any faith in the forecasts and wondering if I would get lucky with the Skippers or had I left it too late at this early site?

I pulled up and then started up the never ending hill in the cool shade of the Beeches. It was unusually quiet and the Specklies that often play in the dappled sun from the small breaks in the tree cover were noticeable by their absence. After the torturous climb there were a few cars parked at the top (how the hell do they get there?) bit apart from this it seemed like I was the only person in the world it was so quiet. It didn't get much better once I was out of the trees and starting to patrol the small trackways that criss-cross the top of the down with only a couple of Meadow Browns and a single Brimstone flying. I was starting to wonder what was going on when I saw a blur out of the corner of my eye. As it was so difficult to follow as it flew fast and erratically I knew that it was what I come for. I managed a couple of shots before it was gone again. Brilliant job done but would I be lucky enough to find anymore?



Then things changed as if someone had flipped a switch. I've experienced this before. When you're anticipating seeing a particular species it can be really hard work to start with and then after a time period of seconds guesses and glimpses you finally find what you were looking for and then suddenly you can see everything else. It's like the specific focusing mechanism has been lifted, the visual filtering system turned off and you open your eyes wider. So it was now with Meadow Browns, Blues and Brown Argus zipping around all over the place. I carried on along the top track heading towards the fence line and the Plum Pudding and a Painted Lady paused for a photo after I'd passed through the gate.



I carried on following the track and just before the cleave in the Down I spied a ghostly blue butterfly making its way towards me - a male Chalkhill and one not in bad nick for this time in the season. After catching up with this another smaller butterfly appeared another Silver Spot but an aged one. So I'd found more than one but my hopes of a lovely limey golden Silver Spot seemed to be fading and I started ruing leaving it so late to try for them.



Best leave it there util the website isn't being so tempremental...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 03-Jan-20 12:03 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

It's not just me then having problems with this website.

I've noticed a few changes too. The images from earlier postings are no longer available. and ' pictures ' on the headline has gone, so presumably the personal albums have gone.

Hope all the problems are temporary, as this is a great site to belong to.

Have great new season, and work on those brownie points !.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jan-20 07:44 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 The website seems to be back in business and I'm finding it really quick now 😊 I'm all about the Brownie points in 2020 😊

Broughton Down cont'd...

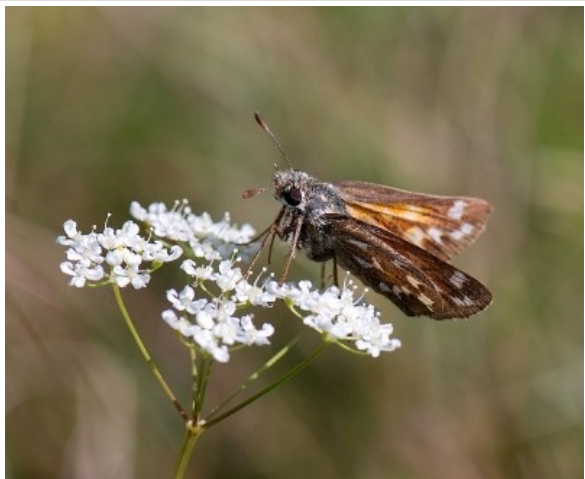


With this in mind I thought it best to check out the triangular field before trying the slopes at the East of the reserve. As I went down and then back up the steep banks I saw the blinding blue of a male Adonis as well as a couple of lilac Common Blues. The smaller butterflies were invariably Brown Argus in varying shades of disrepair. And so it continued on the other side of the crevasse. More Chalkhills and Adonis, Brown Argus and fewer Common Blues, Meadow Browns and the odd Small Heath. There was also the now obligatory Painted Lady but no Small Blues and I only saw 3 female Adonis and one female Chalkhill. Perhaps the additional burden of producing larger sex cells, fending off the unwanted advances of males and laying takes its toll and they expire more quickly than the males?





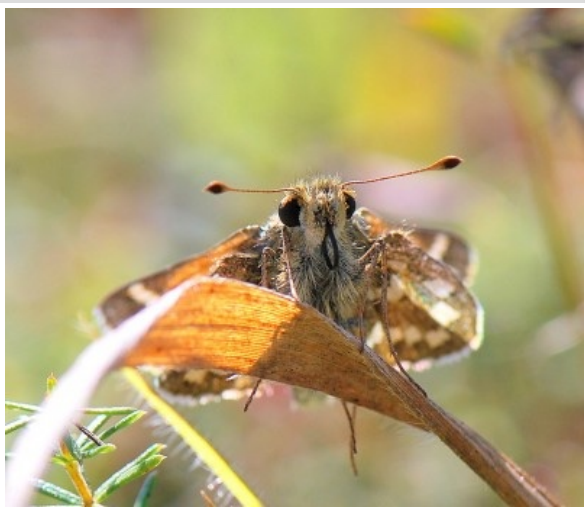
On the way back I checked the patch of Hemp Agrimony on one side of the Plum Pudding but unlike last year it didn't have anything much just a lonesome Meadow Brown but as I was about to walk through the gate a familiar brown blur announced the presence of another Silver Spot and this one was also a bit worse for wear. Dismayed I turned away and there was a much fresher specimen. Phew!





After this it seemed like yet another switch had been flipped or the Silver Spots had been released from their cages as they were now flying all over the place. As I walked back along the top path I saw a couple on my left hand side trying to oviposit and a further pair involved in courtship, though it wasn't going well for the male. In all case they would fly from their original position across the path and then on to my right into the shade offered by the overhanging Beech and brush. I carried on now walking along the tiny trackways created by rabbits adding a few more Silver Spots to the total. There were other butterflies around, lots of Brown Argus for instance but I found myself mainly concentrating now on the Silver Spots. I continued along the little trackways until I came out onto the side of the Down where the turf is short and springy and various wild flowers are dispersed. And it felt like it was alive with Silver Spots so much so that I easily lost half an hour just strolling around stalking Silver Spots.





Somehow I ended up at the bottom of the hill and so checked out the little clumps of Hemp Agrimony. Among the Blues and Brown Argus there was a Silver Spot sipping away from the Down almost. There was also a Small Heath which caught my eye as it was flashing its wings open. I did so several times, then it would settle down to feed before moving to the next flower head when it would wing flick again. I tried for a few shots but even with Sports Mode I couldn't quite capture the slightly open wings. I lost sight of the butterfly and thought that I spotted it so moved slightly and it started wing flicking again, only it was a second Small Heath as I rediscovered the original Small Heath. Still not sure why they do this?



I worked back up for a final flurry with the Silver Spots and during my remaining time on site saw males, females, unsuccessful courtships, hi-jacked courtships and Silver Spots in all manner of wear. As is often the way the best was saved until last with the freshest Silver Spot of the day sitting nicely on a dwarf Hawthorn and showing off the extraordinarily long legs. At least I thought it was the last but on the final walk to the top of the down when I was only a few steps away from leaving the turf and entering into the thick scrub there were two Silver Spots in courtship.





Spot the Silver-spot



After this I made the long walk across the top of the Down and then down the seemingly never ending hill enjoying the shade and also a final Specklie near the bottom of the hill. So my worries were unfounded not only was I able to add Silver Spots to the yearly tally but there were great numbers. Next

up a Clouded Yellow? I wonder...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jan-20 10:34 PM GMT

Lavender Farm 24-08-2019

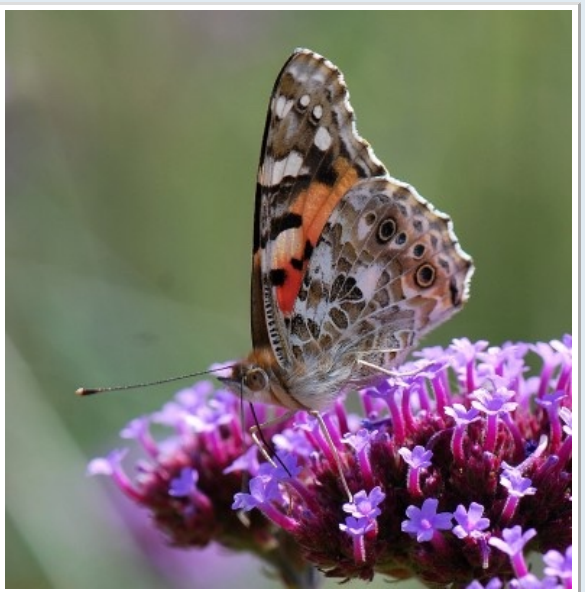
Our continued existence as 'just a couple' continued with the girls now on the second day of their third holiday of the summer so my wife and I settled into an almost forgotten groove, the one we ran Before Kids. Hence after a morning of doing this and that and wandering here and there round town we drove out somewhere for a spot of lunch; in this case The Lavender Farm at Landford.

After the delicious lunch we took to wandering the private garden and followed the lanes between the rows of Lavender enjoying the calming effect of the heady scent. At one point I stopped midway along a row and tuned out the noises coming from the café by lowering my head close to the ground. Instead of a clamour of barely recognisable human sounds all I could hear was the roar of the bees - it was fantastic! Lifting myself up again I set to searching for butterflies. There were a few whites flying not taking any notice of the neat rows and instead jumping haphazardly where the mood took them; diagonally or three rows over, to the other side of the same bush or back to the one they'd visited previously. It was slightly tricky for me to get anything as I was constrained to a few gaps in the rows and generally by the time I'd got anywhere near the butterfly it had randomly moved on. There were also a few Painted Ladies skulking about, their cryptic under wing patterns hiding them in plain site until they decided to move when the garish topside announced their presence. By the time I'd walked up and down half of the field I only had a handful of shots but I didn't mind especially as I turned and watched a mustard yellow butterfly moving at speed down the furthest row - my first Cloudy of 2019. I got to the end of the row turned left, flew the width of the field, turned around and half way back veered up and left over the boundary shrubs and disappeared from view. No shot but a cracking sighting none the less!





I was dead chuffed with my sightings and so now followed the example set by the Whites and moved haphazardly round various little bits of the garden. A Painted Lady there and another one here. A Peacock just to the right of a Painted Lady then a couple of male Brimstones. On the more formal floral arrangements a Red Admiral and then as we made to leave the main section and check the 'themed' garden a Comma which escaped my lens. All about were Whites - mainly Small, a few Large and Brimstones and I only saw 2 definite Green-veined but everywhere I went there were Painted Ladies - they'll probably be thin on the ground next year and so I made the most of them.







Eventually our wanderings had brought us back to the gate and so we headed for home. In the end the species count didn't get into double figures but for me that didn't matter as I had that all important singleton - hopefully a taste of things to come!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 07-Jan-20 12:09 PM GMT

Cracking shots Wurzel, I enjoyed the Painted Ladies too last year, I think Lavender certainly attracts the Butterflies I've two bushes in my Garden 😊 Roll on Spring 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Jan-20 08:30 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Lavender is great stuff - I always check out the bushes and strips when I visit any National Trust gardens. This one was great though as the were rows and rows of the stuff as well more formal flower gardens 😊. There is also the bonus of a cream tea - one of very vegan treats I allow myself 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jan-20 10:28 PM GMT

Martin Down 26-08-2019

The girls were still in Yorkshire so chores and jobs around the house get done really quickly - less than half the washing up, beds to make etc. So my wife and I again were able to head out for a picnic and today we set off for Martin Down. I wasn't expecting much in the way of butterflies as the recent reports seem to suggest that we're entering into 'The August' gap and with temperatures set to high the very high twenties I reasoned that any butterflies left would be aestivating or bombing around at such a speed that following them would be nigh on impossible.

As we broke out from the confines of the tall hedges that line the path from the main car park an Adonis Blue fluttered into view as if to greet us. From there we carried onto the Butts with the sun bouncing off the shiny surfaces of the flints and cooking us from beneath as well as from above. The butterflies didn't seem to mind much as there were plenty of Whites and Meadow Browns in view as well as the occasional swift gliding Painted Lady. However instead of sitting out the heat or flying too quickly they seemed to be flying at their usual speed just incessantly. Photography was proving very difficult so in the end I gave up and pressed onto the Half-way point along the Dyke noting plenty of Brimstone on the way and adding Small Heath and a couple of Chalkhills to the tally. Slightly beyond Half-way we stopped for the picnic just off the path. As we ate all the species we had seen so far stopped by on a small patch of purple flowers in front of me - Painted Lady, Chalkhill, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Adonis as well as various whites and Meadow Browns passing overhead.



After our repast we set out for the old Hotspot and a Peacock put in an appearance. Once there we set up camp again and while my wife read in the shade I had a general mooch about working my way round the Hotspot. The butterflies were still really hard to photograph as either they wouldn't stop flying or if they did something else would come by during an incessant flight and put them up. I found myself hovering by a likely looking flower and snapping away as soon as a butterfly landed on it. In this way I saw a few more Adonis and Chalkhill including an attempted and failed courtship.





I carried on down the slope on the smaller track that runs along the top of one of the Dykes banks and at the bottom where it rejoins the main track I sat and waited by a small clump of flowers (can't remember what they're called). A Brown Argus stopped to nectar, then an aged Small Copper and a slightly less aged Common Blue. Nearby was an Adonis and a couple of Chalkhills, one of which wasn't in too bad a state, were slightly further on.





Pleased with this five minute flurry of photography I worked back up along the main track intending to rejoin my wife. I turned once past the hedge and followed it along into a little scallop where a gorgeous female Adonis landed for just long enough for a Brown Argus to set her off. Gutted to have missed such a beauty I was just making my way back to my wife when a mustard yellow blur skimmed the top of the bank and carried on along the track. I ran back to the track and flying up and then landing was a Cloudy. After a few stalks I'd managed to grab a few pictures but always as I was about to take the final, killer image the Cloudy would take off. Still I was happy to have at least a few images on the memory card no matter how distant as my first of 2019 a few days previously was just an elongated fly-by.





After a bit more of a brief mooch around we headed off homewards. As we walked back to the car we saw all the same species again including another couple of run-ins with the/a Cloudy. So a pretty good picnic and now I've got some shots of a Cloudy hopefully I'll run into some more and get some even better shots.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Jan-20 06:12 PM GMT

Lulworth Cove 28-08-2019

The final day of our 'Empty Nest Trial Run' holiday had arrived and the weather wasn't looking good however determined to make the most of it we headed out for the day anyway. As we drove the straight stretch of road from Salisbury to Blandford the cloud thickened and the patches of blue became fewer and much shorter in duration. By the time we'd finished the more windy parts of the journey and were pulling into the car park at Lulworth the sun had all but gone. Whilst the weather was poor for butterflies it was ideal for the hill climb and subsequent cliff walk over to my favourite place in the whole world - Durdle Door. The last time I'd been here some 18 years ago; it was nearing midnight, there had been a smugglers moon and as we, the band, were on our way back to my folks house to crash after a successful gig in Weymouth I was fuelled by a mixture of lots of Cider and a crate of Red Bull. Needless to say I was glad today to have a chance of replacing my 'last memory' with something a lot more pleasant!

As we made our way down from the top of the hill to take the path leading to the little razor edged promontory a few whites started flying in the gloom and I could see the cloud was evaporating to be replaced with blue skies. The temperature started to rise and we made short work of the final part of the path. Down the narrow track and turning right we made for the Door side first. As we did so a Small Copper bombed by slowing down when it reached the safety of the crumbling cliff. A few steps down and there was a Rock Pipit. It was really close, only a metre or so away and as I focused a small kid ran up the steps and off it went. Luckily I had my camera set to Sport Mode and so managed to get a passable image.



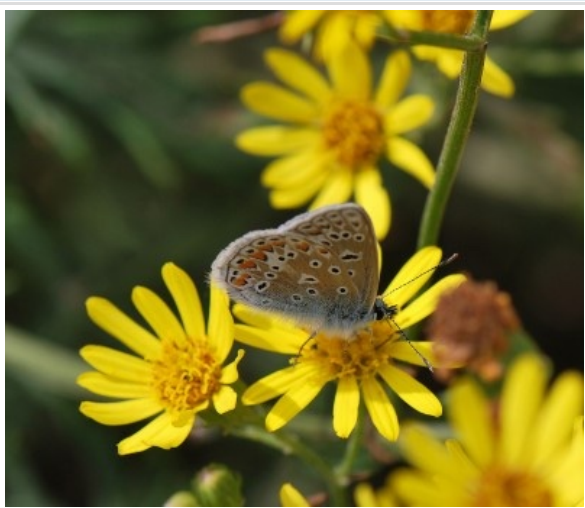


Is this the Man O War?





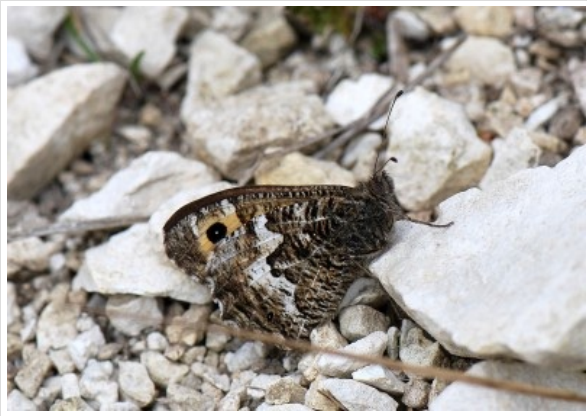
After experiencing the Door we climbed back up the steps and then climbed back down the other side to Man Of War Cove. On the way a saw a small clump of yellow flowers on which there were 5 Whites - one Large and 4 Small. There was also a Common Blue hiding away near the bottom of the clump. As we carried on down we met a Painted Lady coming up the other way. It stopped occasionally but only for long enough to wonder at the contrast between the light grey of the clay and the orange and black of the butterfly.



After we'd eaten our picnic on the beach we made our way back up, stopping on the way as one of the various Cabbage Whites was laying on a Sea Cabbage. The clouds had started to converge and the gloom was restarting almost to provide a sombre background for the much slower and harder walk back. I paused to take in the view at the start of the walk and watched a Kestrel being mobbed by a Crow. After a couple of minutes the Crow called for some help and another Crow joined the fray. Once they'd seen the Kestrel off they then turned their attentions to a passing Raven. This time instead of hassling the Raven off towards the sea they moved up the hill and over the top. As the show was over I made to start walking again and noticed a Small Heath and Brown Argus roosting in the gloom. They were quite sensible as about 100metres further on the rain came in for a quick sharp shower.



As we came over the 'hump' at the top of the coastal path the weather cheered and the clouds dissipated. Within a few minutes all the rain had evaporated from my T-shirts and trousers and more importantly the butterflies had started to emerge. A Painted Lady flew up the hill from the Cove and as it did I noticed a couple of medium sized dark butterflies fly onto the tiny chalk terraces on the banks of the path. After seeing so many during my recent Portugal Holiday I twigged right away what they were - Grayling. Where possible I got some shots but they seemed to like to land on the terraces on the highest and steepest (nearly vertical) parts of the bank and always those on my left where I'd have to climb up and never on my right where I'd be able to look down onto them. I managed a few shots in the end but it was touch and go at times as I scrabbled on the edge of mini precipices. The final butterfly here was a Meadow Brown seeking to divert my attentions by flying for all intents and purpose as a Grayling.



Once we'd safely made it to the lower slopes of the car park we kept on going feeling the downward pull of gravity as if water flowing to the sea. The beach was packed with Grockles despite the now only intermittent sun so we skirted round the beach and made up the old hotspot path. The foliage was looking brown and battered and gone was the lush greenness and sprinkles of colour from my previous visit and gone too were the Lulworths – at least for today they may have been sitting out the weather waiting for more favourable fair weather days? At the top I mooched about for a bit near some clumps of the yellow flowers. A Painted Lady, a fresh looking one, was really playing hard to get as was a female Adonis which was looking spectacular right up until I pointed my lens at her. Then she would either move out of range of close up shop, wings held tightly together. The Whites were more approachable here and I saw a Green-veined amid a few Small and a single Large. It seems to be getting to that stay of the season when even the smallest clump of reasonable vegetation holds several butterflies.





After a pleasant day with one or two surprises (the Grayling, the sun shining while we ate lunch...) we headed home. The girls were due back in a few hours and we couldn't wait.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jan-20 10:47 PM GMT

Martin Down 29-08-2019

After the recent successes and with my holiday fast running out I treated myself to another quick trip to Martin Down. When I set off from the Sillen's Lane end it was still intermittently cloudy with a gusty breeze which picked up and stray Whites and carried them off into the distance. Because of this the walk to the Dyke was pretty uneventful but things picked up once at the Dyke. I stood next to a large clump of Marjoram and I was soon joined by a Chalkhill, Adonis, Common Blue, Brown Argus and a Small Copper. They all visited this little patch over the space of 5 minutes or so in a little like an identity parade of Lycaenids. Further up at the back of the Dyke a Painted Lady stood out like a sore thumb amidst the Meadow Browns.







I worked my way round towards the 'terraces' checking out the Hollow checking out the Hollow at their feet and a Small Tort looked stunning compared to the less than tidy Adonis and Chalkhills which also frequented this little spot; the latter looked even more spectral now that they were a good way into their flight.



As I crossed the track a mustard yellow butterfly piped up and flew away leaving me wondering how I could have possibly missed it previously? It was in roughly the same position as I'd seen one/it a few days before and I did my best to follow it for a few shots. Suddenly it hit the turbo, dropped into a lower gear and tore off along the Dyke veering violently up and over the Dyke. Still it was great while it had lasted.



Pleased I started to make my way back towards the car. As I rounded the corner from the Hotspot and started my way back along the main track something (my Spidey-sense?) made me look over to my right. There a little moth like being was moving swiftly from flower head to flower head. As I cautiously moved closer it resolved into a Silver-spotted Skipper. I'd seen one near here a few years back so I couldn't work out if this was a wanderer from a colony nearby or a proper Martin Down Silver-spot? Pushing queries of its providence to one side for future cogitation I watched it for a while enjoying its life affirming vivacity whilst all the other species around seemed to be waning. Realising that I'd not taken any shots I rectified this situation and clicked away. It was then that I realised what great nick it was actually in. Perhaps if there is a colony here, of which this was a representative, they could be late emergers which is why I've failed to see them some years?





Feeling even more pleased I carried on back to the car the Silver-spot having 'spoilt' the majority of butterflies I spy on the way as they just don't compare. I only stop for an Adonis which stands its ground on the chalky path and a probable Small Blue in the longer turf that lines the hedge near the car park.



So that's it then - back to work all too soon and with it the feeling that the season is on the wane proper. Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Hi! Wurzel, you do seem to get the Blue out in the Butterflies 😊 they seem to Gleam 😊 those at Martain Down Especially 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 15-Jan-20 08:38 PM GMT

Some great late summer shots there. I reckon you were seeing a lot more than I was back then, more evidence of an east/west divide 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 16-Jan-20 08:02 PM GMT

Good to see you had some decent Clouded Yellow encounters last season. Personally I didn't see a single specimen in 2019, even the ' hot spots ' failed me.

Hope you are holding up in the butterfly desert that is January !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jan-20 07:45 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, just caught up on your report from Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door, one of my favourite spot too 😊 Looks like we will be down there again this year, this time for a family holiday in June 😊 ...and maybe again for a September visit if I can wangle it 😊

I only saw three Clouded Yellows last year, all in Dorset. One was at Fontmell Down, one at Osmington and one at Durdle Door about a week after your visit.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jan-20 10:14 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I'd love to take credit for it but I reckon it's a combination of the camera (I remember reading somewhere that Nikons are good for yellows?), lovely fresh butterflies and great light 😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 I suppose that's the advantage of the late start we seem to have in the West, it's followed by a late finish 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 That little spot is often quite good for Cloudies 😊 I was glad that I didn't have to do a late, and chilly trip to Southbourne for them 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 It wasn't a particularly good year for Cloudies so you did well with three different ones from three different sites 🍀 😊 Good luck with the wangling 😊 and give us a holler when you're down, I might have accrued enough Brownie points to get out butterflying by then 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 23-Jan-20 05:48 PM GMT

I don't think I've ever visited Martin Down as late as that, Wurzel – it obviously continues to be productive and looks well worth a trip. Good to find a Cloudie, though – I saw as many in Yorkshire in 2019 as I did down in the sunny south... 😊

I see you're off the mark for 2020 already. 🍀 🍀 Here's hoping it's just the beginning of a stonking season. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jan-20 06:21 PM GMT

Well done on the Silver Spotted Skipper, Wurzel. I had a good look at Martin Down in August last year, but failed to find any. So it's good to see they are still present.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jan-20 10:32 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 That particular spot is where I've found Cloudies on site on five occasions now, it's almost becoming my 'go to' spot 😊 Let's hope 2020 is a cracker 😊

Cheers Essex 😊 I still can't work out if they're thinly scattered over the site or whether this was a wanderer from somewhere else (although where I couldn't guess)?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Jan-20 06:03 PM GMT

Mottisfont 07-09-2019

There are some outings that I make when, shock horror, butterflies take a back seat. Don't get me wrong I still carry my camera and keep my eyes open but getting shots falls down the priority list. Today was one of those days as there was an exhibition of BEANO artwork on display in the house at Mottisfont. As Little L is an avid BEANO reader (who else is – let's see...DING?) the main aim was to have a look and hope to catch up with her favourite character Minnie. The visit was purely for Little L and was most definitely not for my benefit...

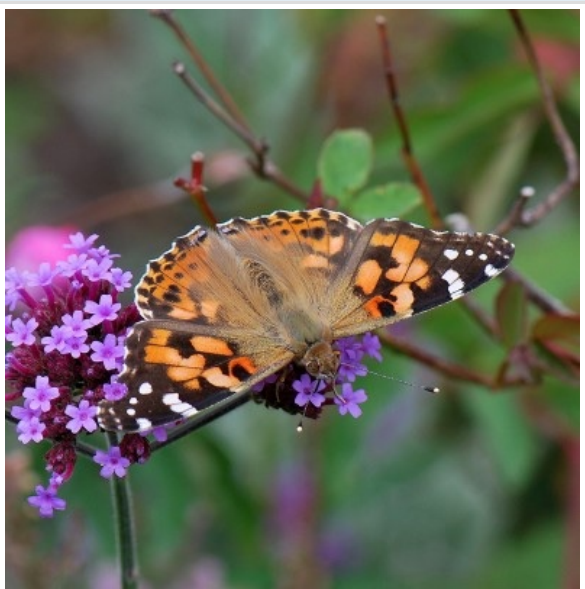
We arrived at midday and once we'd collected the rather spiffing badge for attendance we headed to the back lawn for lunch. While we munched a Darter lived up to its name above our heads flitting here and there in a jerky fashion reminiscent of a broken VCR with a faulty fast forward. There was also a UFW which flew lazily along the length of Lavender.

After lunch we strolled up to the Walled Garden noting various BEANO characters on the way and as we entered the veggie garden the new raised beds were alive with Whites. Most were Smalls with a few large and Green-veined thrown in. They were taking advantage of Nasturtiums and the various 'screening' plants in the main and possibly because of their numbers they were tricky to capture on film. This trend continued on into the middle garden with the quarter gardens that had Buddleia all boasting many whites but on even the most stealthiest of approaches they would take to the air in unison. Finally in the end garden I could settle down for some shots when I spied a lush looking Comma on what I think is Boules Mauve? Frustratingly the most well behaved and docile butterfly of the day had plonked itself down in the middle of the large flower bed. To get any shots I ended up leaning as far as I could with camera in outstretched arms and hoping that the single layer of Lavender hedge would support my weight. Still the strain was worth it for such a lush looking butterfly, a real Autumnal spectacular.





As I was making to leave the Comma another butterfly flew in from my left and landed with such force that the flower top bent over and sprung back like a Weeble. It was a gorgeous looking Painted Lady – but again it was deep into the bedding making getting any shots difficult. I edged round to try and get as close as possible and again leant in as far as I dared.



After this we ambled round and had a sneaky coffee while the girls took their own shots for Insta and after regrouping we started back towards the call of the Minx. On the way at the final Buddleia I glanced at a Small Tort and a second Painted Lady and so I tarried for a short while before sprinting to catch up with the others.



It was then time to put the camera away and enjoy a memorable hour laughing at the antics of the Bash Street Kids, Dennis and Gnasher and of course Little L's heroine Minnie the Minx. To be honest I don't know who enjoyed the exhibition more...probably me!
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-Jan-20 02:52 PM GMT

Some lovely shots there Wurzel, the Butterflies look great on the flowers , their colours really set off the Butterflies 😊
We're into the S's I see on the favourite Butterfly Post, nearly there now 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 27-Jan-20 09:21 PM GMT

As I found out last year, formal gardens can be excellent for late Summer/early Autumn butterflies.
They also offer a good source of nectar when most wild flowers have gone to seed.
And, importantly, there is sometimes a good café within the grounds to polish off the day!.

Great images from late Summer.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Jan-20 10:41 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 The butterflies make it quite easy for us sometimes don't they – somehow they manage to pick flowers to feed on that naturally offset their livery 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 There is also the fact that a trip to a National Trust House with gardens counts as a 'family outing' and therefore you don't have to spend valuable Brownie points to get a little butterfly fix 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Jan-20 08:20 PM GMT

The Devenish 08-09-2019

So jobs done /

Marking done /

A free hour to nip out to The Devenish? /

So indeed off I set Devenish bound. I was wondering what might still be about now that we'd entered the ninth month; Adonis, Small Copper maybe... maybe...maybe a Cloudy?

Once I was parked I made straight up to the small paddock. An agitated Peacock was hanging around here and a quick scan didn't produce anything else so I carried on down the dark tunnel and emerged into the Orchid Meadow. Another quick scan on my across to the gate produced only a single Brown Argus so I carried on. Normally I'd be able to take my time and search out everything but today with only an hour to spend I adopted the approach of just keeping going. I finally ceased wandering as the little path up the Down opened up onto the Downside proper as here was a fresh Small Copper waiting for me.



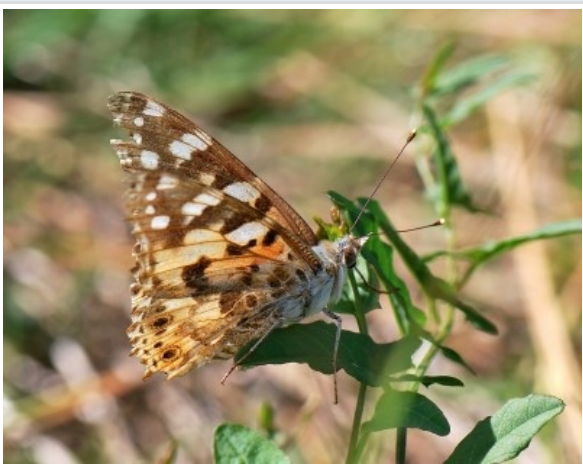
As I continued onwards and upwards I watched female Common and Adonis Blues (no chequers and chequers) which flew on either side of me and then I followed the diagonal path which bisects the Down finishing up on the far side at the bottom of the gully that demarks the edge of the Down. As I gently descended a Painted Lady bombed by and a male Adonis entertained me for a moment. At the far end there's a fly-by Common Blue which acts typically for a bit – flying low, grazing the grass tops as it passes before banking and climbing vertically to eventually disappear a la Holly Blue over the line of Beech trees.



In the gully I watch a very brief courtship of a pair of Green-veined Whites. Normally I feel sorry for the spurned male but this one put in such little effort I wasn't surprised or even sympathetic when the female raised her abdomen in defiance of his feeble advances. I really felt like taking him to one side and telling him to 'sort himself out'! There were also a few Small Whites here as well as the obligatory Specklie.



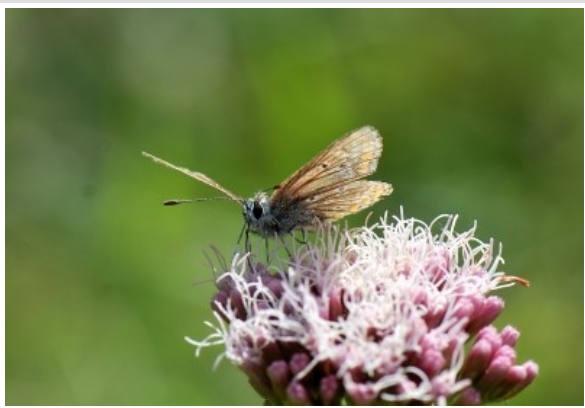
I now climbed up and out of the gully and started back to the original side of the Down along the top, scanning the hill from my vantage point. There were a few Whites and a Brown Argus about on the way and then I reached the flat area abutted by the boundary fence. In here I settled down and spent a bit of time as here there were 5 or 6 butterflies in view at any time. A Brown Argus popped up now and again whilst 2 faded and battered Painted Ladies kept niggling at each other and the three Small Heath jostled away with one always seeming to bumble into the 'territory' of one of the other two.





Cheered by their antics I set off back noting a few blues looking to lay on the way down and one back in the Orchid Meadow I turned right and made to the other end of this Paddock. A few Green-veined Whites finally succumbed and consented to pose and an almost mint condish Painted Lady lived up to its name, acting to all intents and purposes like a Jezebel. My time had almost ran out and so managed only a few more glances and record shots of a Brown Argus at the near end of the Meadow on the way back before I was vaulting gates and departing rapidly.





All in all not too bad a showing for an hour but there really is that end of the season feel which seems a little early this year? Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 30-Jan-20 09:00 PM GMT

Great shots once again but I know what you mean about the early end of season last year. Maybe we've been spoiled in recent years but it really did seem to die a death by the end of August 😊!

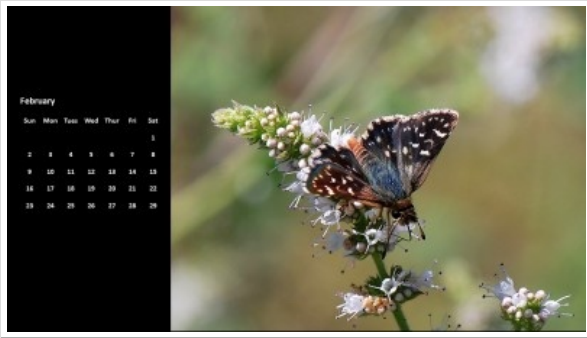
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Feb-20 11:11 AM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 For the last few years the butterflies have indeed spoiled us, definite 'early doors' this year 😊

February 2020

Happy February! Time to start looking out for Small Torts should we get dry sunny day with temps just into double figures 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Feb-20 11:51 PM GMT

The Devenish 14-09-2019

What a difference 6 days makes? When I was last here there were Brown Argus, Adonis Blues and Small Heath – the remnants of the late summer butterflies yet today things were quiet as though the butterflies were spent. There was a definite end of the season feel but even so I was still hoping for maybe 6-7 species?

I started off in the Small Paddock scanning up the side of the Down where there was little if any activity. The entrance to the tree tunnel was closely guarded by 2 Commas and a Speckled Wood. The Commas remained aloft, peering imperiously down at me from beyond the reach of my lens. They must have down their job as loo outs as I was buzzed a few times by the Specklie who was patrolling lower down.



On I wandered through the cool shade of the tunnel and emerging out the other side back into the warmth of the autumnal sun. Again upon entering the next section of the reserve I scanned ahead trying to work out where to concentrate my efforts. Normally I'd just wander through and see what cropped up but at the tail end of the season there are so few butterflies it pays to plan your steps a bit more so as to not miss out or even worse spook limited quarry that is still out and about. A Green-veined White flew along the boundary hedge hugging the sides of the reserves whilst a Red Admiral travelled in the opposite direction on the opposite side of the Meadow but much more hastily and much higher up. I headed towards a Common Blue that I had previously espied and felt slightly despondent by its decrepit state; chips and chinks missing from its wings and scales completely or partially rubbed away it looked like it was on the way out. I was quickly cheered up though as a Small Copper buzzed in. It was in fine fettle and the vibrancy of the orange on the fore wings brightened my mood considerably.



With a slight spring in my step I followed the tiny, steep path up the side of the Down and took the diagonal track towards the gully. Again things were much, much quieter than 6 days previously and for my efforts I could only manage a distant Red Admiral and a Holly Blue which was not hugging the hedge but instead hugging the tops of the tall Beech trees. At the Gully a few Whites were flying and some actually stopped long enough for a few shots. As I watched a Large White that I'd finished photographing fly off in the direction whence I'd come I saw a small group of Deer gambolling up the side of the Down.



After this flurry of activity things reverted to the peace and quiet I'd have expected here mid-winter! I still saw a few butterflies but despite walking along the top of the Down and exploring the furthest reaches of the Meadow I could only find a few more Whites and a single Red Admiral and not one more butterfly sat still long enough or landed low enough to enable any shots. I decided to make for home and as I did so I totted up the species tally – a reasonable 7 species. However things weren't quite over. As I reached the Small Paddock I became aware of a monotonous droning sound. As I got closer and closer it became less monotone and more clearly a buzzing sound. On reaching the gate I could see from where the noise was emanating; the floor of the Paddock was alive with (ivy?) bees. Some were flying low skimming the grass tops but most were just crawling over the ground or each other in a strange terrestrial river. I tried for a few shots but they were so active it was very tricky to get anything decent. At one point it seemed that some males had found a female as they all congregated around the poor soul and smothered it metamorphosing into tennis ball sized ball of bees. A wondrous spectacle with which to finish my visit.



It starts...



...half way in.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 03-Feb-20 09:57 AM GMT

Won't be long now Wurzel 😊 It'll be great to see some Butterflies in the Garden instead of the Squirrels which seem to have taken my Garden over, the birds can't get a look in. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Feb-20 08:39 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Those Squirrels are regular garden Bully Boys 😊 Hopefully only another week or so until the butterflies start coming out, probably just as I head to Wales to visit the Outlaws where there will be non-stop rain clouds 😊 Oh well at least I'll earn some Brownie Points 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Feb-20 08:39 PM GMT

Martin Down 15-09-2019

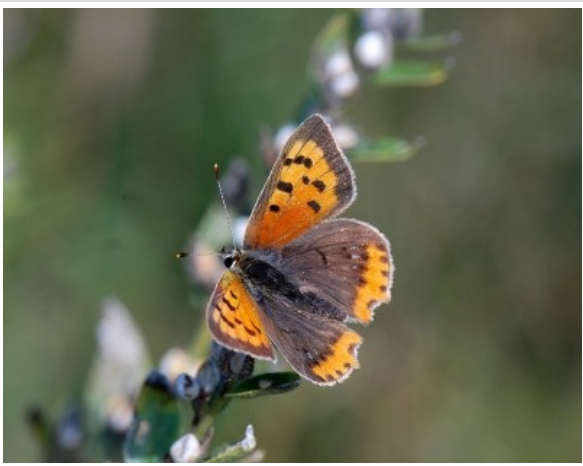
It was a gorgeous day and this being September, you can never be sure when the next good weather spell will occur hence a family picnic was the order of the day. We parked at the main car park and made towards the Butts and the loosely cropped turf behind them. As the sun shone down and little plumes of dust arose from our feet as we tramped down the track Whites and Meadow Browns would fly on either side of the path and a Small Tort was a blaze of colour as it fed eagerly from various flowers.



As we rounded the corner behind the Butts numerous Small Heath out in a dizzying display on the tiny bit of track that cut between the Junipers that bordered the foot of the Butts. As the ground opened up to the flat field the odd blue flew about standing out against the straw background but I ignored them and climbed down into the little hollow to eat lunch.



After our repast we split into three groups and each set about to our own devices; my wife to read the paper, the girls to explore and generally monkey about and me to look for butterflies. I started on the nearest side of the Butt where an overly large Hawthorn fashioned out a small scallop between it and the end of the Butt. In here a White (probably a Small) played around with a few Small Heath and an odd Meadow Brown. There was also the odd Common Blue and a single Adonis. A Small Copper floated down the side of the Butt and took up a territory on the other side of the scallop - occasionally it would fly out from its perch to see off an errant Meadow Brown or Small Heath. However every single butterfly would take to the wing when the Brown Argus put in an appearance. It flew from flower head to flower head hassling all and sundry in between. From here I worked back and cut across the flat, sparsely turfed field where I was entertained following a lovely fresh Painted Lady which dazzled amid the cryptic Small Heath and fading Blues.





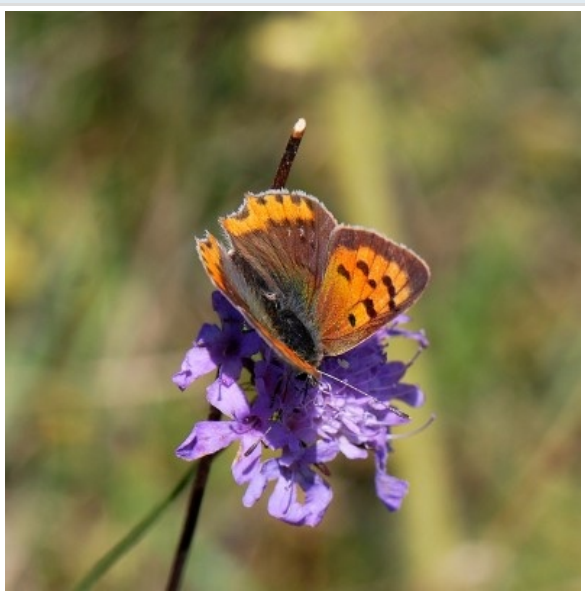


Round on the other side of the Butt there were a smattering of Blues in the more richly floral carpeted field but what really caught my eye was what I thought was the ghost of a Meadow Brown but what was actually another Meadow Brown aberrant similar to the one I found at Godshill. Gone were the orange flashes on the fore wing topside, gone the tangerine cream fore wing underside to be replaced by an ashen grey, almost silvery white colour.





After this pleasing interlude I wandered back round, mooching here and there and even following a Brimstone precipitously along the side of the Butt and momentarily getting wayaid by a Small Copper before meeting up with my wife who was still down in the hollow. When all three parties converged we packed up (ensuring we only left footprints and the odd bit of flattened grass which would soon spring back) and set off home. Another enjoyable late visit to Martin Down.





Have a goodun

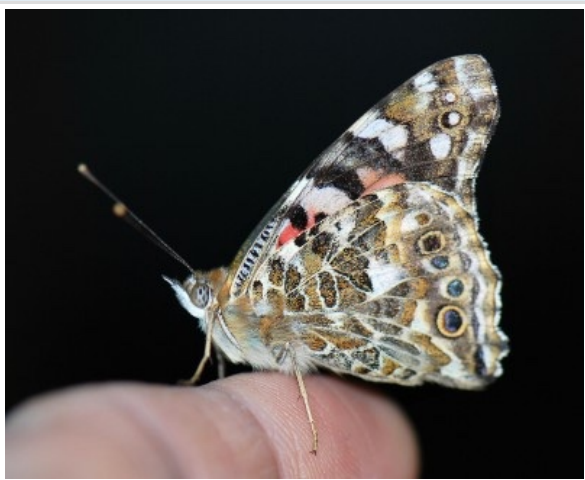
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Feb-20 10:55 PM GMT

Work 20-09-2019

So on the morning after the night before I was back in work at the usual time but it felt like I'd not actually been home. Last night had been Open Evening which meant the longest day of the academic year. The stint yesterday ran from leaving the house at 7:30am to finally getting back at 10:15pm - just shy of 15 hours out of the house! Still to cheer me up my colleague called me into her room as she'd found a 'Moff'. Only it turned out not to be a moth as such (although butterflies are moths) but instead a glorious Painted Lady. It was pawing at the window with its tarsi, staring forlornly at the world outside the window. I had no idea how it had gotten in or where it had come from seeing as though it wouldn't have wanted to be in here on the previous night as this room was alive with volcanoes (acid + carbonate reactions), rainbows (pH scale in a test tube) and sparklers (flame test). Still I gave up wondering at its origin and instead, after a few shots including a 'In the hand' one, I set about becoming its deliverer rather than its jailor...I opened the window and it was gone - possibly heading south?



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 13-Feb-20 09:55 AM GMT

I think your Lady colleague could do with a crash course on butterfly identification 😬
I am amazed at the number of people that don't know the names of common species.

I remember a high value question on 'Who wants to be a millionaire' "What sort of creature is a Speckled Wood?". They used up all their lifelines.

Never mind,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Feb-20 06:52 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 There is a growing disconnect between humans and the natural world 😬😬 Hopefully my school will be able to offer a GCSE in Natural History in a few years, fingers crossed 😊 Hope your hunkered down in Wiltshire, I'm in Wales and it's horrible out there 😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Feb-20 08:35 PM GMT

`{size=150}`Martin Down 21-09-2019
`[/size]`

The Indian Summer was due to end quite spectacularly today and so for this reason I wanted to get out while I still could and while there were still butterflies around. As I had to drop K off for her D of E practice expedition at Broadchalk on the return journey I went up and over Hogger Road, cut across at the Coote Arms and was soon wandering the path from Sillen's Lane end.

During the first stretch it was quite bare of butterflies with only 3 Meadow Browns, 2 Small Heath and a slightly worn Common Blue. In fact I was wondering if I'd made the right call and as that thought passed a shimmering, orange blur flew across the track and it seems my call had been right! I followed the LOJ into a small, flat 'field' to the left of the track. It landed briefly and then was disturbed by a second that flew in. This seemed to be a productive little area and so I had a bit of a mooch around turning up a third Small Copper. This one was a beaut, a real show stopper with the biggest blue badges I've ever seen - not so much a WPC but more of a District Commissioner. In amid the odd Small Heath and Meadow Brown I managed to locate a fourth Small Copper and as I was making to leave a Common Blue posed nicely for me, wings open wide.







Cheered by this sudden upturn in fortune I found my way back to the main track and set off once more for the hotspot. My progress was delayed again by yet another Copper – they appear to be having a final surge in this third brood. Eventually I made it to where the Sillen's Lane track crosses the Dyke and as I did so a battered Adonis was chased away by another Small Copper before I managed a shot. Instead I tried to console myself with Meadow Browns and Small Heaths before taking the extra few steps to the start of the hotspot. As I roamed down the little hollow before the 'Terraces' I spied a brace of Common Blues as well as representatives of the two Browns all sitting nicely. I was wondering which to go for first when a brace of really fresh Brown Argus bombed in like Bowling balls sending all the other butterflies spinning away like errant skittles. I couldn't be too annoyed though as they both clearly had other things on their minds; the male fancied a bit and was trying his best whilst the female was heavily investing in not copulating!



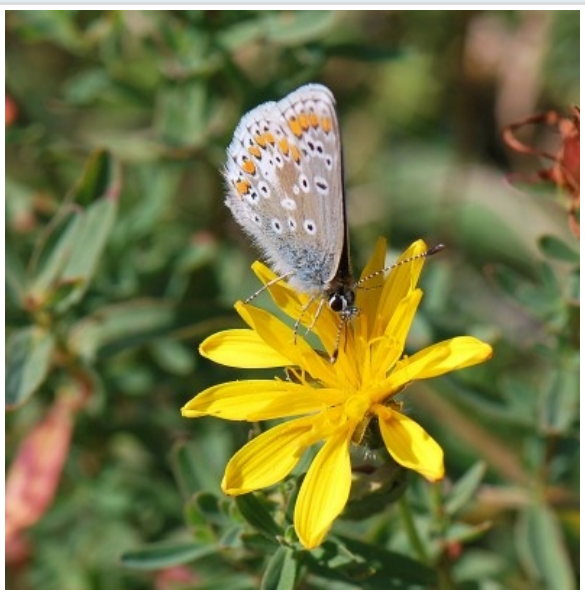


Climbing up the terraces at the hotspot I added a Small White and female Brimstone as well as a few more Small Heaths and Meadow Browns to the tally. I then checked out the little bit on the other side of the track where a Large White did a fly-by and an Adonis was having a scrap with a Common Blue. Both were looking slightly past their best, the Adonis more so and it was only when it caught the light from a distance that you could be sure of its identity.

As this had been a bit of a spur of the moment I hadn't brought my flask and I was starting to feel the prickle around the temples that meant I was in need of a drink and more specifically a coffee so I turned about and started to retrace my steps. The terraces now held double the numbers of Common Blues both of which seemed intent on hassling the more aged Adonis. It was like watching a gang of teenagers having a pop at an OAP. At one point a Small Copper joined in and so I walked away embarrassed by both the youth and the constabulary of the day!



As I wandered down through the hollow I watched a male Brimstone take nectar and then watched it further as it landed on the underside of a leaf and just disappeared from view. Mentally logging where it had landed I tried for a few shots of one of the fresh Brown Argus that I'd managed to relocate. Then turning back to the Brimstone I scanning where it had been I discovered that it had really vanished presumably crawling inwards to become lost in the shade.





On the walk back I was slightly delayed by a Painted Lady that dropped from high up at the top of a Hawthorn and almost took my head off! Then there were further stops for Small Coppers. Looking at them now they're possibly 'uncounted' individuals the first one was for sure as it was the only damaged one that I saw all afternoon. The second was a cracking WPC and the probability of her being a newbie is higher than her being a recount. Back in the field I could only find a single Small Copper but there were three at other later stages of the walk back so they must have moved on to take advantage of the smorgasbord of nectar sources available.





The final butterfly (well on site) was, as it seemed to be the day for them, unsurprisingly a Small Copper. This one was holding a territory around a particular shrub/clump of flowers and didn't stray very far. As I watched it the light would occasionally catch the wings turning them from orange to yellow and on through to green – a patina'd copper.



And that was it. I didn't count the Comma on the drive home but if I had I'd have seen a dozen species with 9 possibly 10 Small Coppers which isn't to be sneezed at (unless you're Hoggers of course!)

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Matsukaze, 20-Feb-20 06:44 PM GMT

Small Coppers are not the most sociable butterflies, are they? Even when there are little populations around, they only time I ever see more than one at the same time is when they are fighting, flirting or mating. Unlike their hairstreak and blue cousins, they never seem to nectar in groups or roost communally.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Feb-20 08:35 PM GMT

Cheers Matsukaze 😊 You're right - I've only ever seen two sitting together once before (both males) in 10 years of butterflying 🤔 and as you say you normally only see two together when they're involved in one of the three 'fs' 😊😊 I've seen Sooty and Iberian Sooty Coppers and they seem to behave in the same way - I wonder if being territorial is a 'Copper' behaviour trait?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 21-Feb-20 09:25 PM GMT

Interesting. I don't think they actually avoid each other, though. I took the linked photos (linked, so as not to clutter up Wurzel's diary with my piccies 😊) in Suffolk last September. There are four small coppers in the first picture and six in the second (a wider shot of the same group).

<https://www.guypadfield.com/images2019/phlaeas22sep2019a.jpg>

<https://www.guypadfield.com/images2019/phlaeas22sep2019d.jpg>

I can't remember how much ragwort was available on the site as a whole - perhaps not much, so they had to cluster up.

Guy

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Feb-20 08:51 PM GMT

Feel free to clutter away with shots like that Guy - I've never seen something like that before 🤔 - looks like the my Hypothesis is a non-starter, back to the drawing board 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Feb-20 11:02 PM GMT

Work 02-10-2019

It had been a while since the last time I'd managed to get out properly and see butterflies and looking back at the various folders on my hard drive it had been almost two weeks. In that time I'd seen butterflies here and there - mainly Red Admirals but the occasional (probably Small) White and a lovely Small Tortoiseshell. However I'd been in the car or in a building or they'd just appeared out of the blue and were gone almost as quickly. However today when this happened I decided that I wasn't going to hang around and I was going to try and get the shot...

A Red Admiral flew lazily across the quad towards my building. I was constrained by hosting a group of 27 Year 11 Separate Scientists and I swear that the butterfly knew this. Why else would it continue its lazy flight along the length of my lab at the perfect height of 3 inches or so above the bottom of the window frame? I followed it with my eyes, momentarily neglecting my concentration on Forces at equilibrium and using scale diagrams to resolve forces and as I ran out of window I peered out of the final pane and watched it land on the wall.

Grinding my teeth I pressed on but five minutes later I glanced out and it had moved slightly onto the signage that was up to promote the school from the previous Open Evening. Muttering something about 'such and such page, questions from through to, and don't forget to include your workings' I slipped out the side door camera in hand.

Two minutes later I was back in the lab and was proudly congratulating myself having gotten some shots at last and without the pupils being any the wiser...

"Did you get some good shots sir?" 🤔

Oh well if I can always justify my actions by putting any decent shots in the school Bulletin. 😊





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 25-Feb-20 11:37 AM GMT

Just catching up on my posts and saw your cracking shots of the Small Copper and all the other's, that's a great walk you had Wurzel in that field 😊 It's that sort of walk I'd love this Summer 😊 That's a sneaky shot of the Red Admiral has well 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Feb-20 10:14 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 That Red Admiral had been hanging around for a while, teasing me, so I had to go for the shot...I made sure that the pupils were up t speed with their learning first though 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 26-Feb-20 10:59 AM GMT

Thank god for your diary, at this time of year it is a ray of sunshine and boy do we need that this year 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Feb-20 08:01 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 Glad to be of service, my tardiness at posting does come in handy sometimes 😊😊 I'm starting to run out of 2019 UK Reports 🙄 Good job with this terrible weather that I've still got my Portugal trip to sort out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 29-Feb-20 08:53 PM GMT

I'm with Bugboy. With nothing but wind and rain since late September, it's been a long winter. Not cold, just diabolical.

Thank goodness for your late postings!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Mar-20 07:51 PM GMT

Cheers Essex 😊 We certainly need a break from drear – as that's all we have since the abrupt end of the season 😊 Hopefully the endless cycles of lows will cease soon, we just need that blessed Jet Stream to move a little 😊 Anyway to try and cheer you up a little...

March 2020

Please let this be the start of the season...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Mar-20 10:08 PM GMT

Larkhill 06-10-2019

My older daughter has been doing the DoE this year and today was the culmination of all those months of hard work as today I was off to pick her up from her expedition. Their final destination was a pub in a small neighbouring village to where I work. So I hatched a plan – drive to work, do a bit of marking, write a few reports, send a few emails and get myself sorted out for the next day and then when K was 15 minutes away she could text me and I wouldn't have entirely wasted the afternoon. It would also look really good should anyone check the time stamp on the emails and reports – “he's at work on a Sunday?” 😊

As my daughter's group had seen fit to call themselves the 'Lost Penguins' I fully expected to have to wait well past the 'suggested' pick up time of between 3 and 4 and so I treated myself to a quick check out of Larkhill. It being a Sunday I risked checking out the main car park area and so pulled in as close to the huge white boulders that block off the lay by and have made it so difficult over the past year. The Golden Rod had started to go over and the cloud that had appeared almost instantaneously I parked didn't help matters. I had a bit of a mooch around and didn't see a single thing be it bird or butterfly and so I moved back towards the car.

As I did I caught a flash out of the corner of my eye on the first patch of Golden Rod. It looked a little like a Red Admiral but the shape seemed wrong. As I approached cautiously it settled down and I got a few close-up shots and then it dropped down to the ground. It was now that its unusual look became apparent. There were chunks missing out of one fore wing and the rear margins were gone and the edges of the remains of the wings were spiked and jagged. After a little bit I left it in peace to eke out its final few hours.





Once at work the 'Lost Penguins' didn't live up to their name and so I managed only a quarter of the tasks I was hoping to get done. Still Bronze done for K, Silver next?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 07-Mar-20 07:17 PM GMT

From your description I'm guessing that your Larkhill 'stop off' is just off the main road through the camp, quite near the new roundabout. Much of the land either side of the Packway looks promising but there are few places to pull in. I often use the above route to avoid the crawl past Stonehenge.

Very unusual wing damage on your Red Admiral, multiple small nicks.

The season has yet to kick off around here !.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Mar-20 08:37 PM GMT

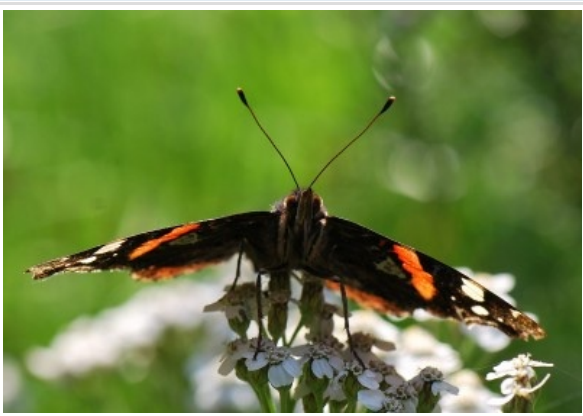
Cheers Trevor 😊 My Larkhill stop off is on the Shrewton side of Larkhill, there are two tiny lay-bys on opposite sides of the road which I use as the large lay-by come car park is blocked off now to stop the Travellers (not that they ever did any real damage/left any rubbish) 😞 I was wondering what could have caused the wing damage - it looks like it's been nibbled 😞 Also a pity it was so worn as it's got the white spot AND the break in the red wing bar 😞

Five Rivers 18-10-2019

I'd been itching to get out again and so when the weather report showed improving weather after lunch I settled in during the morning to do the various chores and then after lunch I walked over to Five Rivers. I'd only taken 15 or so steps when the sun was swallowed by cloud as once again the weather report had got it wrong. I pressed on regardless and I was soon on the muddy path that follows the river course. It was still cool and cloudy and I thought I might have needed my raincoat at one point but I kept pressing on and before I knew it I'd reached the corner of the reserve. From here I started back this time along the top of the Banks. I was just about to give it up as a bad job and head for home when two things happened. First the sun finally broke through the clouds and the grey was replaced by blue skies and second a male Brimstone passed by. I stood stock still and savoured the moment, content just to watch this glorious sight - possibly the last one I'll see for a month or three now.



Pleased to have had at least one butterfly to show for my efforts I started back thinking that I'd give the Town Path a try. As I was cutting through from the Banks through the little glades towards the River Path there, nestled on some white flowers was what I'd really come for. A Red Admiral basking in the sun on an autumn afternoon. It was nice to see it contrasting against the white flowers. After trying shots from a few different angles I back tracked and left it to its own devices.



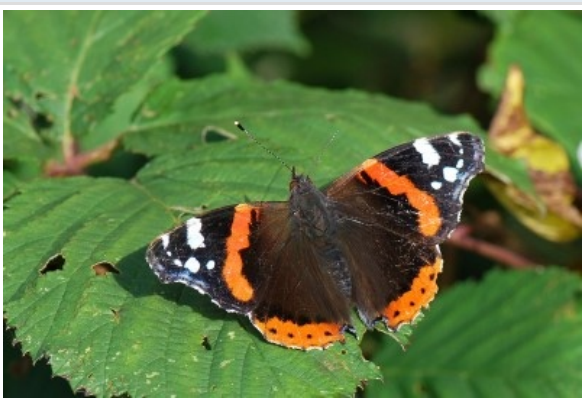
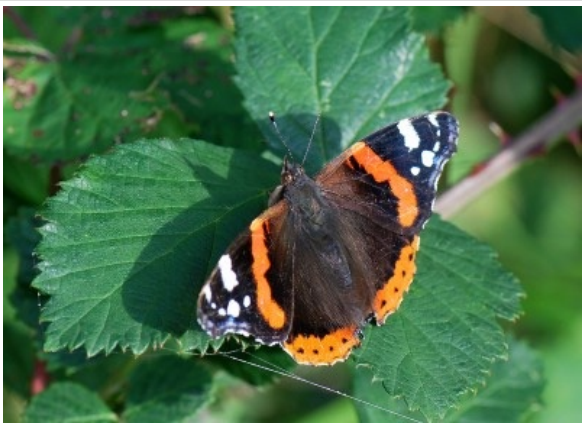


I stopped a short while later for a squirrel gathering nuts. I watched as he clocked me and then tried to stay still in the hope I suppose that I'd not seen it but then it gave up and took a run and leap into the tree.





The sun continued to shine although there were a few rogue clouds that would momentarily cover the sun and cause the temperatures to drop making a jumper necessary. On the town path near Waitrose I happened to pause to watch one of these clouds pass over. I don't know why but I looked across the Bramble and there was a Red Admiral. It was in quite good nick and I waited and watched as it did a few slow circuits out across the river and back to roughly the same place as it waited for the sun to reappear.



After that I made for home - three butterflies isn't great compared with what I've encountered in previous seasons at this time of year but then we haven't really had the Indian Summer nor the oddly warm week as previously so I'll take them.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Old Wolf, 08-Mar-20 05:30 PM GMT

Hello Wurzel.

I am glad to see someone is as behind as I am 😊

I love the squirrel sequence, a perfectly timed jump shot 😊

Re: Wurzel

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

Love the jumping Squirrel Wurzel 😊 I'd five of them in the Garden one day together with two cats 😊 I was annoyed because they chased the birds off and ate all the food, still I live near a small park so I suppose it's to be expected.

I've not seen any more Butterflies since I saw the Small Tort but I've got my Camera loaded and ready just in case 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Mar-20 12:15 AM GMT

Cheers Old Wolf 😊 I was chuffed with that sequence 😊 I've almost caught up now, only a few more from 2019 and then I can start on the Portugal holiday snaps 😊😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 That shot went down a storm with my daughters too 😊 It's getting to that time of year when I go everywhere with my camera too Goldie 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 11-Mar-20 10:03 AM GMT

Wonderful 2019 reports Wurzel, your Large Blues are sublime. 🍷 Still on my 'to see' list. Great Smessex shots, and I really like your Brostreaks as well (partly because I have had very little luck with them so far!). 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Mar-20 09:55 PM GMT

Cheers Andrew 😊 If you can get to Shipton Bellinger you might have a bit more luck with the Brostreak – even though 2019 was a tricky year for them Shipton still came up with the goods 😊

{size=150}Stourhead 19-10-2019

[/size]

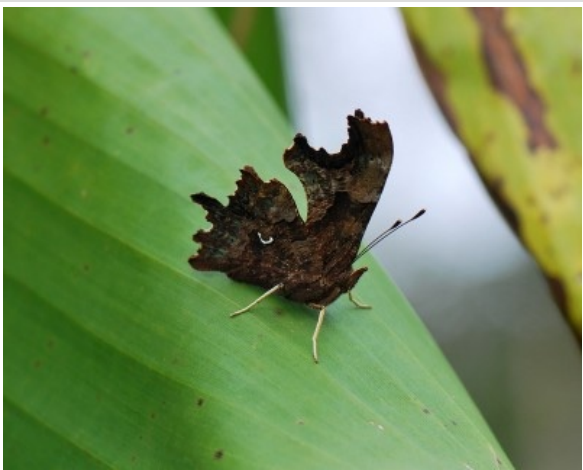
After yesterday when it was reasonably balmy I thought that today was going to be the same. Nice again but the weather report couldn't be trusted and at one point on the journey I had to put the wipers on – so much for sunny intervals until lunchtime! Once we'd parked and started the walk whilst it was dry it didn't get much better – it was so cold almost if the heating had suddenly been switched off. Up through the walled gardens and on I didn't see anything and it was only when we were making the descent of the woodland walk that I picked up anything of interest with a few fungi! Also I managed to recall some of my bird song lore and a bit of 'pishing' soon brought in Chaffinchs, a mixed tit flock and a Nuthatch. I had a go at teaching little L the technique and in doing so brought in a Goldcrest that set to flitting about in the boughs.



After this the walk was quiet despite the riot of colour from the autumn leaves. It still remained cold and with the circular walk over, lunch eaten and all the girls ensconced in Ye Olde Craft Fayre I revisited the walled garden. As I strode up the hill the sun came out and it suddenly felt noticeably warmer. I was cheered by this and imagined a Comma or Red Admiral sitting on some of the remaining flowers as I climbed the hill. As I walked up the second set of steps into the final garden there was something orange looking out of place amid the mauve flowers. I got a few distant shots and it played hard to get flying occasionally but always landing on the garden and just out of reach of any decent images.



I followed it as it flew and it looked like the lower temps meant it couldn't go far and eventually I managed to catch up with whilst it was close enough for a few proper shots. It had chosen to land in a fantastic and unusual juxtaposition. There I was in four layers, hat and wishing I had my gloves taking shots of a Comma butterfly on a Banana bush!!



Still it proved once again that it only takes one butterfly to make a day!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Love the shot of the Comma on the Verbena, great combination of colours. Verbena is a noted plant for butterflies, so I planted one several years ago.

To the best of my knowledge not a single butterfly visited the flowers.

It would seem things have started to move, at last.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 13-Mar-20 10:06 AM GMT

Well spotted Wurzel, hope fully we'll see more shortly 🍀😊 I saw the Sun for a short time this morning now we're back with the cloud 😞 Roll on!!
Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Mar-20 09:05 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I saw my first Brimstone last weekend on Saturday lunchtime and it was still there three days later the weather was so bad, and just as it improves I get busy at work 😞😞

Cheers Goldie 😊 If only we could get a few days of decent spring weather rather than just a few minutes worth 😞😞 Still can't be long now surely? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 15-Mar-20 10:32 PM GMT

It was such a terrible autumn, you did well to find even that. Six months later, we are still waiting for the sun to re-appear!

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 16-Mar-20 08:41 AM GMT

'Busy at work' is not a term I am familiar with, could you break the phrase down in easy to understand terminology! 😊. I can imagine with exams on the horizon that you are approaching silly season.

As for butterflies, the weather seems set to improve this week, and I might be able to bag my first Brimstone of the year. A real prize would be a Small Tort, but I doubt that around here.

Hopefully, unless things get worse, I should be in Wilts for Easter.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Mar-20 09:37 PM GMT

Cheers Essex 😊 I did manage one more trip out (see below) but it was a disappointing autumn. 😞 I saw the sun today though and it felt awesome 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I could try Trevor but then I'd have to work it out for myself first - I heard someone use it once, liked the way it sounded and so chucked it into my prose 😊😞 Yep silly season is on the way - the examiners time it to perfection every year - just as the butterflies start emerging in earnest the revision sessions start 😊 Hope to see you for some mutual self isolation at Easter 😊

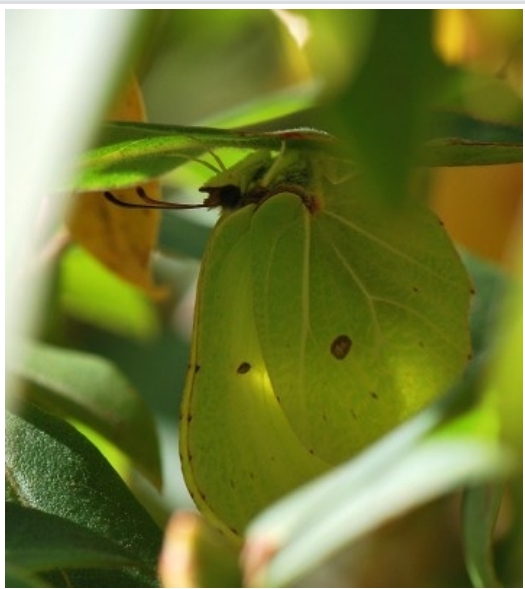
Stourhead 27-10-2019

Every October I'm inundated by sister-in-laws as they all descend on us for a few days visit. Luckily this means at least one trip out to a National trust site with Stourhead being the popular choice. So it was this year only I hadn't counted on national advertisement of the 'glorious autumn colours' which meant queueing to get into the overflow car park. Still it meant that we emerged from the ticket office into slightly warmer temps...if you can call them that. This year it's almost as if someone's flipped a switch; summer off autumn on. No Indian Summer, no shorts and T-shirt in October instead having to rattle round in the loft to find hats, scarves and winter coats.

We followed the traditional route - across the bridge, through the walled garden and stables, skirt the edge of the garden and dive down through the wood. Whilst there were more birds to see, their protective cloak of leaves dispersed and decaying, as well as fungi the insects were few and far between and as I wandered I wondered if I'd already finished the year?



As the woodland path came down the hill and merged with the lakeside track to flow together over the dam my question was answered for me. My season hadn't ended as there was a beautiful lemon Brimstone looking to all intents and purposes as a falling leaf caught on the breeze. I knew that it wasn't one though as in the slight breeze most leaves were spiralling diagonally downwards and this 'leaf' was moving horizontally. And just as quickly as it had come it was gone disappearing into a small tree which was bedecked in Brimstone yellow leaves. Nothing ventured nothing gained I tried to relocate the Brimstone in its hidey hole and amazingly there it was, hanging upside down looking remarkably like an apoptotic leaf ready to drop.



After this I kept my eyes open and in the remnants of the walk I spied out a further two butterflies – both Red Admirals and both high up and out of reach of my lens. I didn't mind not getting any shots of them I 'd rather they found somewhere snug to hide away as the autumn came quickly upon us.

And so ended 2019 for me...there were one or two more sightings but nothing down on memory card...I guess I'd better start sorting out the Portugal reports now then 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 17-Mar-20 10:28 PM GMT

Interesting, Wurzel – shots of Commas and Brimstones! You would almost think it was spring... 😊 I wonder if you'll see any of the self-same butterflies over the next few weeks that you got shots of in October? 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-20 11:43 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Not seen a Comma yet but I did get some photos of a Brimstone the other day and in fact it was in exactly the same pose as the one in that last post 😊 Hopefully I can cram in some butterflying before Lockdown 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

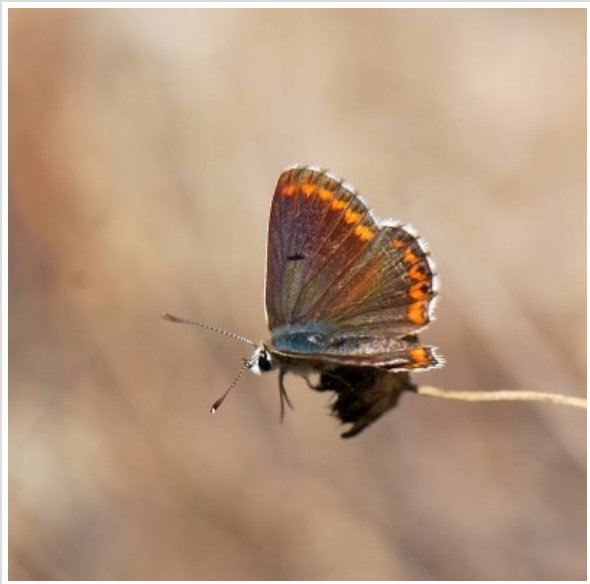
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Mar-20 09:10 PM GMT

Portugal First Day! 30-07-2019

The journey had been stressful but then there are always loads of things to sort out. Plus I discovered that despite telling my credit card company where I was heading my card didn't work! On the other hand the motorway journey was really straight forward, one bit for about an hour and then take a left and carry on through some stunning scenery and surprisingly quiet road for another 2 or so hours. Eventually we pulled off the motorway, found ourselves on the other side of the little village of Faia and were making our way up a very bumpy dirt track to Villa da Manta. As we were pulling up a massive butterfly and a smaller pair fly by without stopping for ID – interesting from the get go!

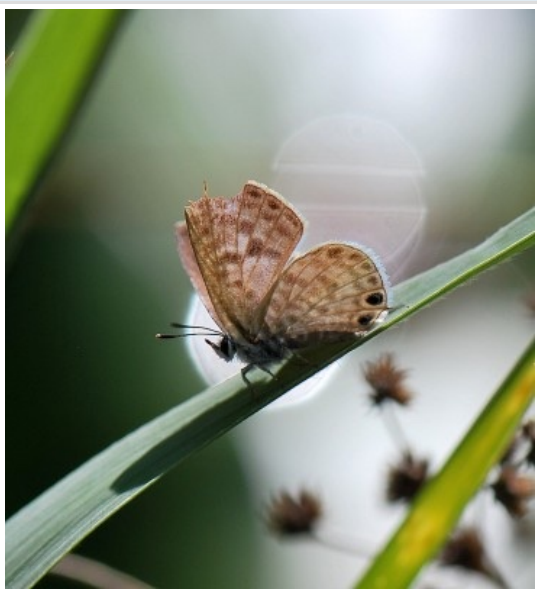
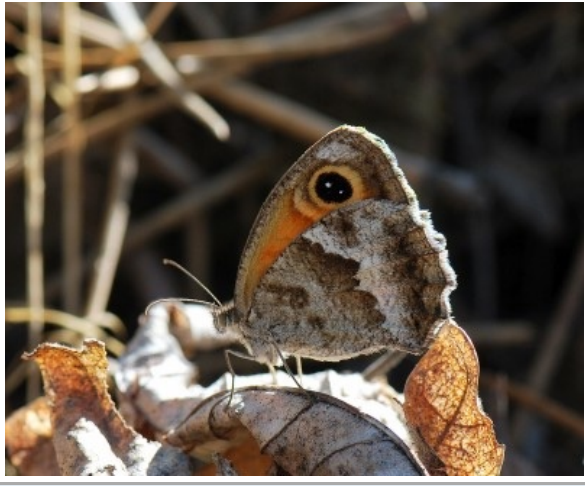
Once we were settled in and unpacked we took a wander round the various steep paths with the aim of finding the pool. On the way down I cursed the Gatekeepers as I was sure there were some Southern in among them but they didn't stop long enough for me. Something even smaller did stop though – my first confirmed Southern Brown Argus (SBA) and also my first 'Lifer' of the trip. We carried en masse on once I'd caught up with the others and at times it seemed bewildering as one steep path led to a new terrace and soon seemingly endlessly. Butterflies were flying about but I wasn't used to following them when they were flying so frenetically due to the 30 degree heat and they were so turbo charged they rarely stopped. In amidst the Gatekeepers I saw slightly bigger butterflies; Specklies, Meadow Browns, Walls and another new species for me – Tree Grayling. A bit like ours in habits but in a monotone grey colour. Finally we found the pool and a small butterfly bumbling in the reeds that lined it was a Lang's Short-tailed Blue. We headed back to our Safari tent and while the girls got ready for a swim I spotted a Purple Hairstreak in the Chestnut (?) tree opposite the veranda. Things were going well with two lifers while finding my bearings and now a Purple Hairstreak from the dining table.





The girls headed back down to the pool and I accompanied them and once they were in I set to having a bit of a mooch. I checked each Gatekeeper more carefully now just to 'make sure' but most were the familiar species although much more blonde and unicolour - quite different to the ones we get at home and I'd gotten used to seeing recently. I found my way back to the corner of the path where I'd found the Tree Grayling and it was still hanging about here (it could have been a different individual but seemed to be similarly marked) so I followed him into the Olive grove where he tussled with another. Slightly further down the hill I finally found another lifer and one I'd been hoping to see - a Southern Gatekeeper, even more flighty than the usual variety. Feeling the heat I sought some shade and so checked back in with the girls at the pool. The Lang's was there again and was a bit more co-operative this time. In the shaded area around the edge of the pool a few Specklies flew looking look a totally different species.







Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Mar-20 09:26 PM GMT

Portugal First Day! 30-07-2019 Part 2

I then set off down the main dirt track which we'd driven up earlier. Along the way a few Hedgies flew as well as a Holly Blue and some Meadow Browns. What really surprised me was the huge numbers of Grayling that were resting a la Walls on the walls, trunks of trees and rocks that lined the track. Some seemed to lack the white band on them?





Back at base I had a quick mooch about before tea and in the small field next to the decking was another SBA as well as a Small Heath and while we ate a/the Purple Hairstreak sat above us possibly attracted by the scent of my Bombay Badboy?





Later still, showered and with a beer to hand I sat and wrote up the day while Crickets churred and so too did a distant Nightjar...I can't wait for the morrow!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 19-Mar-20 11:00 PM GMT

I can imagine that a number of ' double takes ' were necessary on your hols. Namely, are the species you are seeing over there the same as at home, or are there subtle differences which make them unique to ' over there ' . In the Cevennes the Grizzlie lookalikes gave me mental indigestion, they all looked similar to our own but not one could be seen in the UK.

Great report, hope you have some of the spectaculars to show us later on.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 21-Mar-20 02:27 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Wurzel, it's always interesting to see different Species, I'd be happy at present just to see the Comma 😊 the wind is so cold and Hall-Lee-Brook is the only place so near that I don't have to travel to and when I went there last time nothing was flying. AH! well it's got to get warmer soon , I hope 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Mar-20 09:16 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 You're right as a lot of the species were new 'races/subspecies' for me but I didn't mind that 😊 I was due to head to the Cevannes this summer (in August) – don't think that will happen now 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Hang on in there the butterflies will come – I saw plenty today despite the near arctic wind – just look for those little dips and hollows out of the wind 😊

Have a goodun

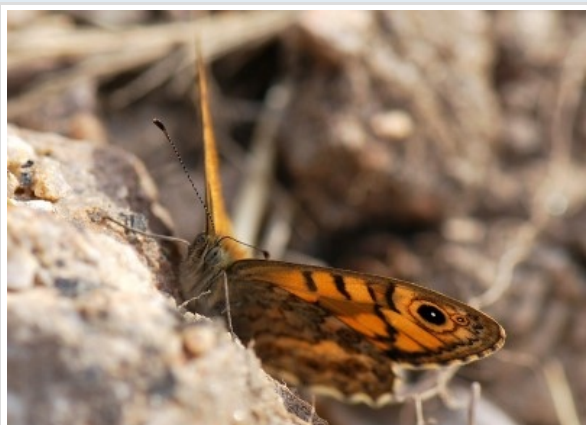
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Mar-20 09:30 PM GMT

Day 2 – Out and about the site....31-07-2019

Up bright and early and after a shower and fresh coffee I slipped off for an hour before breakfast to have a bit of a recce. I was looking for my 'go to' place as I had in the Dordogne. Down the track I was joined by only a single Hedgie which I wasn't too surprised about as in my T-shirt and shorts I felt slightly chilly. Slightly further down the track I spied a much larger and darker butterfly with flashes of white – a Great Banded Grayling? I wondered if it was and when I reached the spot that it had been at I found a fore wing lying on the deck. It still being a bit early for the butterflies was indicated further by a Grayling desperately soaking up the rising sun's warmth. At the end of the road I had a choice to make so I tried the right hand side before realising that there wasn't any open ground that I could access so I retraced my steps and followed the road on down to the left. A Scarce Swallowtail flew through the only 'garden' I could see away into the distance and after a 10 minute walk I came to the junction at the end of the road where there were flowers that I could access. It looked promising but at this time of the morning the sun hadn't reached it yet so I decided to come back later once it wasn't so shaded. On the way back I found an interestingly marked Jays (local race?) and a trip of Crested Tits – my first since Poland many years ago! Back on the main track up the hill the butterflies were just starting to wake up. There were a couple of Hedgies and a very nice male Wall. Nearer home I spied a Southern Gatekeeper and a brace of Small Coppers to add to the tally whilst a Grayling hung around in the small field near the tent. Not too bad for a pre-brekkie wander.





We needed food so we loaded the car up with bags and water and SATNAV and took a trip to Guarda in search of a Lidl but before I could drive away a P. Fritillary flew into our 'garden'. I managed a few shots before I was called away. On the drive I noted a few Browns and whites and a Scarce Swallowtail (the same one as earlier?) but the real kick in the guts came on our return as we ascended the track up to the lodge. A Cardinal dropped down on a leaf strewn bank on the passenger side. It looked like a larger 'normal' Silver washed crossed with a Valesina. Typically this was the one time that my camera was in the boot! Grinding my teeth I carefully carried on the slow drive up the track and then set about unpacking before I was able to take a quick detour down the track and back. I saw all the usual suspects but didn't add a Cardinal although to console me a female Southern Gatekeeper opened up.

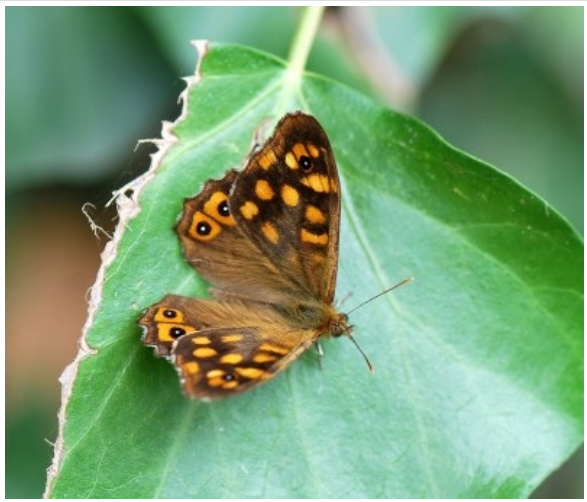


After lunch a GV White pretended to be a Bath White and just as I was cursing it a Southern Scarce Swallowtail landed on the other side of the veranda so I was able to get a few shots. Heartened by this I set off to check out some other parts of the site and I found a good looking place to check properly

later.



After lunch I escorted the girls down to the swimming pool/pond and once they were past the 'Guardian Frogs' I took to following various pathways that wound downwards towards the valley floor and what I thought was the end of the site. Despite the promising look of the various terraces and fields it was very hard work for only a little return. I did manage to catch up with a 'Swarthy Copper' - misnamed 'Small Copper' as it was so dark at first I thought it was Sooty Copper. It should have been renamed a Miniscule Amount of Copper. There were also the usual butterflies; Walls, Grayling a plenty, orange Specklies, Tree Graylings and also plenty of very flighty Hedgies and Meadow Browns.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 22-Mar-20 09:54 PM GMT

Superb capture of that Scarce Swallowtail, Wurzel. I remember sitting in a meadow in the Cevennes watching one in flight, just floating on the breeze, it reminded me of a child's kite. A very elegant butterfly, and not that scarce in some areas.

Great report, stay safe,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 22-Mar-20 10:30 PM GMT

An interesting selection there, Wurzel. I've also always enjoyed the sight of Scarce Swallowtails, ever since my first trips to the Greek Islands back in the 1970s. Really exotic-looking, which seemed to fit with the excitement of my first holidays abroad. Your photos bring it all back! 🤔🌍

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 23-Mar-20 04:18 PM GMT

Love that Swallow Tail Wurzel, it's a pity we can't have them over here, that really would be great. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-20 08:04 PM GMT

Just catching up on your Portugal trip Wurzel. Some interesting stuff there and great photos 😊

My youngest son and his girlfriend were due to fly out there at the end of the month but as you can probably guess that has been canned.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Mar-20 09:57 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Yep they were also the more common Swallowtail in Portugal while I was there 🤔 😊 And it was very kite like 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 Glad to have stirred up happy memories Dave – I think we're going to need them in the coming weeks 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I know they would certainly make an attractive addition to the UK fauna – perhaps if global warming continues they'll be over here soon 😊 That is one plus side I suppose 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Sorry to hear about the cancelled trip Neil – I reckon that my 2020 getaway could go the same way 😊 But if it means staying healthy then so be it...
Stay safe all.

Have a goodun

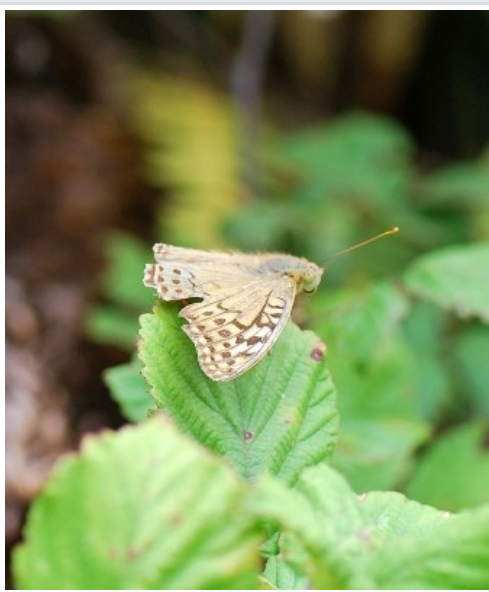
Wurzel

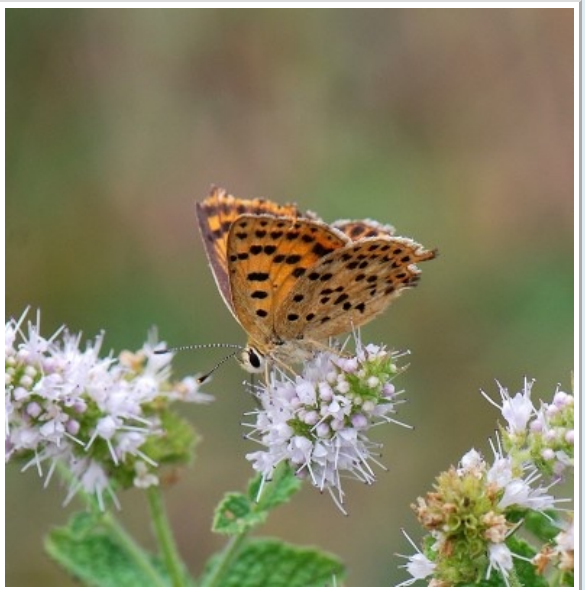
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Mar-20 07:32 PM GMT

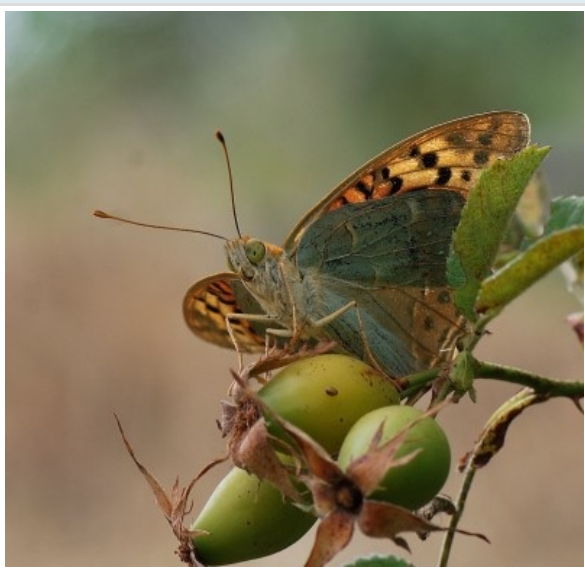
Day 2 – Part 2 – Out and about the site....31-07-2019

My next foray out came shortly after arriving back from the last this time I needed to pick up some more toilet paper from the main house so I set off on a slightly roundabout route to run my errand. I called in at the lush trackway that I'd spied earlier. My hunch about it's butterfly pulling power proved accurate almost immediately as the normally flighty and unapproachable Southern Gatekeepers actually sat still, occasionally posed and one even opened up to reveal the very tidy sex brand of the male. On one small bush I counted a Holly Blue, Small Copper, 2 Hedgies and 3 Southern Gatekeepers. From a different bush something much larger took off, a Cardinal. I managed a few snatch shots as it flew about though most ended up as 'record' shots because it insisted on flying and landing above head height on the foliage that overhung the path from the terrace above. Still at least I 'had' my Cardinal. As I was leaving another Copper caught my eye. At first, having now gotten used to seeing Miniscule Amount of Coppers that's what I thought it was but as it turned I could see the square of spots on the underside among the others so I knew that I had a Sooty Copper. As it turned and opened up the forewings I spied that it had 'tails' which checking later meant that this was an Iberian Sooty Copper. Shots of two lifers in as many minutes – since when is butterflying this easy?





I carried on my quest for the 'Roll of the Bog' but was brought to a standstill just shy of the house. I had unwittingly spooked a Cardinal (for such a big butterfly they're surprisingly good at disappearing) so I watched with bated breath as it soared by and on down the slope. Suddenly it veered back and landed neatly on a clump of yellow flowers. Somehow I managed to scramble down the slope and get enough purchase for a few shots. I think it took a liking to me as it moved round the bush into an even better position. I dutifully returned with the required loo paper, albeit somewhat later than expected and chilled for a bit in the camp with a coffee and my shots to look through.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 24-Mar-20 08:13 PM GMT

[quote=Wurzel post_id=151269 time=1584997065 user_id=9821]

Cheers Neil 😊 Sorry to hear about the cancelled trip Neil - I reckon that my 2020 getaway could go the same way 😞 But if it means staying healthy then so be it... Stay safe all.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

At least he got a full refund. I reckon quite few of us will end up with cancelled trips this year, especially if they are in the next few months.

On a brighter note, that Cardinal is a cracking butterfly 🦋 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 24-Mar-20 10:57 PM GMT

Your penultimate image of that Cardinal, is stunning. Mind you there is more of a chance of finding Cardinal over here, than to try and find a toilet roll for sale.

Hope you can escape for some exercise, Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

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

Those pics of the Cardinal are stunners, Wurzel! 🦋

We've had to cancel a trip too - we were going to walk the Ridgeway in May, with butterflying on the side. At least the wildlife will get a bit of peace this year!

Janet

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 25-Mar-20 10:45 AM GMT

You might well actually catch up this year Wurzel! Some very good looking butterflies there, love the Sooty Copper 🦋

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 25-Mar-20 09:48 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I love the comment from Trevor about the Cardinal and the Toilet Roll 😊 Lovely Butterflies, may be things will buck up sooner than we think and you'll manage a Holiday, my Daughters had to cancel her's and my Grandson hasn't got back from Mexico yet, it's worrying. Goldie 😞

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-20 12:22 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I'm hoping that there might be a few months respite between June and September - ever the optimist 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I've heard that Toilet Rolls are the only thing keeping the London Stock Exchange going at the moment 😊

Cheers Janet 😊 Yeah I've really noticed the birds and butterflies more this spring - the songs are soooo loud now they're not drowned out by cars pedestrian chatter 😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 You never know Bugboy stranger things have happened 🤪 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I hope your Grandson is okay. I like your optimism and I'm hoping the recent Oxford study is correct, fingers crossed 🤞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-Mar-20 09:46 AM GMT

My Grandson got home okay Wurzel, thank God, he got a talking too though from my Daughter 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 27-Mar-20 10:00 AM GMT

Just saw your jumping squirrel pic, Wurzel. Amazing. We have two in our garden at the moment – a male and female I think as the male is pursuing the female and although she is not running away she is certainly playing hard to get. She moves a few paces and waits, then he follows, then she moves a few more paces and waits and he follows again. Its quite funny to watch.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-20 09:41 PM GMT

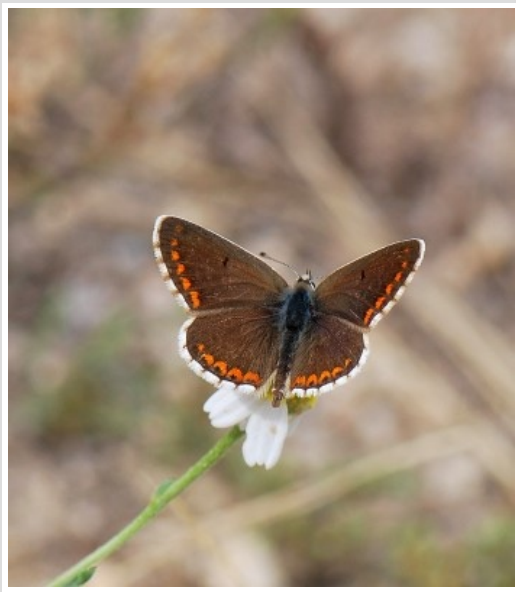
Glad he got back OK Goldie – although depending on the severity of the telling off perhaps he'd rather have stayed away 😊😞
Cheers Ernie 😊 Sounds like the female is making sure that the male is definitely up to scratch 😊 I wish him luck – sounds like he needs it 😊

Day 2 – Part 3 – Out and about the site....31-07-2019

The girls wanted to head to the pool again so again I escorted them down and once they were in I again ventured forth. Down through the Olive groves I went getting a bite from a monstrous fly (possibly a Mammothfly?) on the way and making the wrong call as to which of two butterflies to follow. As I was setting off a male Sooty and two BAs flew in from opposite sides of the track. In the ensuing melee I tried to follow what I thought was the Sooty but in the end was the SBA. Dusty and tired I stumbled upon a Lang's back at the pool when picking the girls up.



Spot the Tree Grayling...





The final venture of the day took me round the various trackways again. The heavily vegetated little spot held some nice Southern Gatekeepers, a Wall and a lovely fresh Holly Blue. Further along the path a Spotted Fritillary landed. It was a male but looked nothing like the artificial orange ones from the Dordogne. I wondered if it was a Lesser Spotted Frit at the time but looking more closely at it later it was just a Spotted - though of a different race possibly to those in the Dordogne. It was a cracking butterfly and should have been the perfect end to the day but foolishly I carried on, seeking a Striped Grayling but not finding one despite walking all the way down the track to the main road and then back up. This meant that the final butterfly of the day was a Meadow Brown (hopefully it'll be a Dusky 😊) but the perfect ending came later as I sat on the decking/veranda sipping red wine and watching the sun setting behind the mountain.





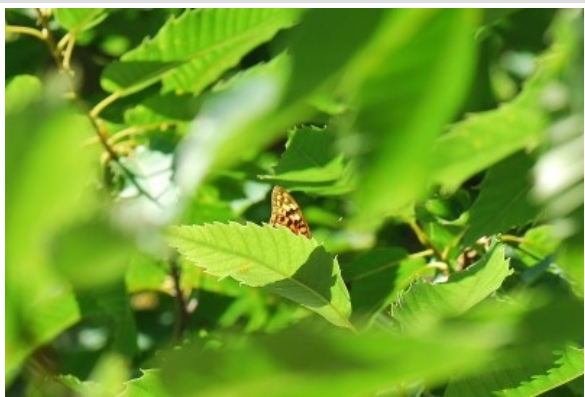
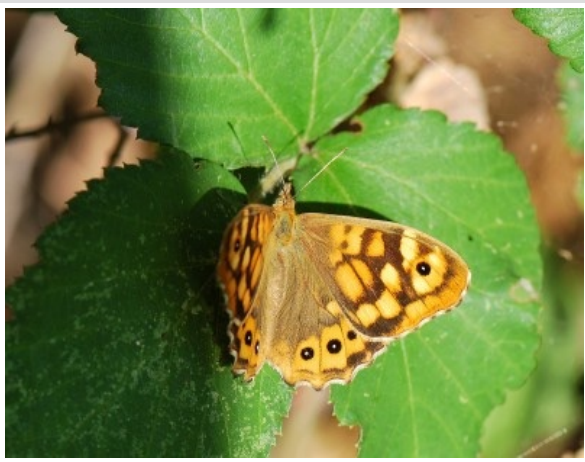
*Not too shabby a view to enjoy with a glass of vino to hand...
Have a goodun*

Re: Wurzel

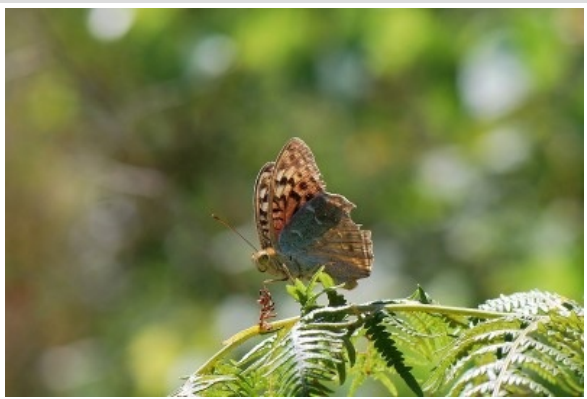
by Wurzel, 28-Mar-20 08:35 PM GMT

Day 3 01-08-2019

The breakfast walk brought Specklies (the brightest yet), Wall and Grayling. On the way back a Cardinal flew into the small field to greet us. It landed up high but I could just make out the reddish underwing shining through. It then led me on a bit of a merry dance. It would fly into a Chestnut tree, I'd watch it and then walk to the spot and it would have disappeared. As I'd sway left and right to locate it, it would take off and repeat! It made me grateful for the easy shots I got yesterday.

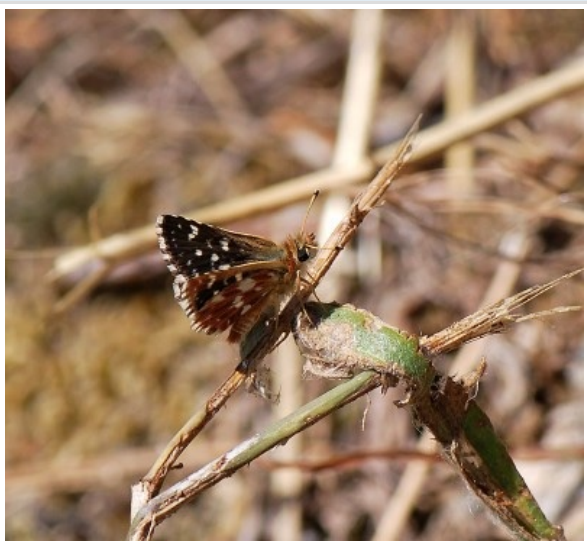
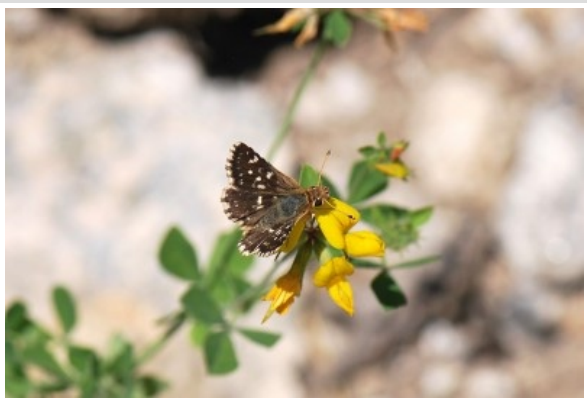


The girls headed off for the pool and I slowly made my way down, taking in the little trackway first. It was a hive of activity with all the usual suspects in droves with the added bonus of a pair of Cardinals. As I was coming away a really tiny, moth-like butterfly buzzed about. As I leant in I realised it was a Grizzlie of some description although I won't be sure which one. The row of tiny spots along the margin of the forewings suggested Red-underwing but it was off in a flash after only two shots. Slightly annoyed I carried on stopping for an unusual looking Small Heath.





Further on the now dusty track I encountered the little buzz ball again and this time I was able to clearly see the red under wing – ace a lifer and I'd finally seen a Portugese skipper that I was able to identify. It was a right little beauty. After this I carried on pool-wards – calling in at the garden on the way where a Painted Lady messed around almost literally in the garden and then on the compost heap...





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 28-Mar-20 10:38 PM GMT

That last Skipper shot is a great one to come back with of a new species on your life list, Wurzel! 😊 That Cardinal earlier on is a splendid butterfly too. 🇬🇧

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 29-Mar-20 12:27 AM GMT

Red-underwing Skippers are gorgeous little creatures, aren't they? And a bit easier to identify than the rest of the group...

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 29-Mar-20 07:13 AM GMT

As I said before the Grizzly types over there are a nightmare to tell apart, great that you seem to have something of a grasp of the subject!

Another great report,

Stay safe and well exercised,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-20 11:11 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was dead chuffed with that shot as it made the ID really easy 😊

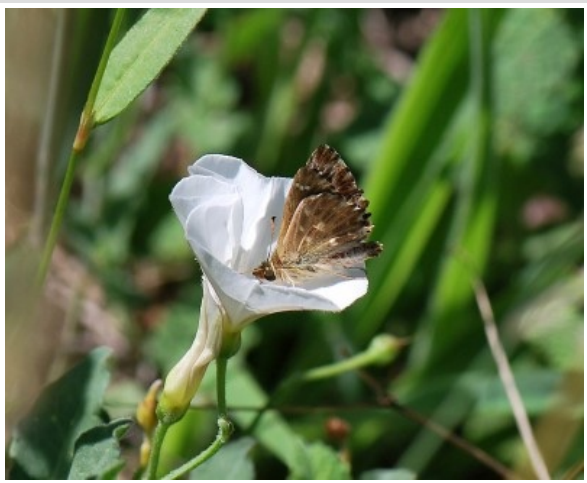
Cheers Essex 😊 They were very charismatic little critters and made our Grizzlies look positively grumpy 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I was all read up ready for the Grizzlies but apart from a Southern Grizzlie this was the only only species that I encountered – still it was a cracker 😊

Day 3 Part 2 01-08-2019

I set out to check the drainage channel at the end of the road and there were a multitude of Grayling trying to distract me on the walk down the dirt track. After the searing heat of the 10 minute walk on Asphalt it was a relief to stumble down the hill into the shade for a few minutes while I checked out the lay of the land. It looked great and so I set about trying to ignore the Hedgie, SBA's and Small Coppers to concentrate on those species that I'd spent less time with. First up was a Lang's and then a Spotted Frit of the sandy coloured form. It's not as spectacular as those I'd seen in France but still a lovely sight. My heart stopped for a moment when a larger, brown Fritillary appeared. It started again soon enough when it turned out to be a Dingy. Another Grizzlie-esque Skipper appeared and distracted me before I saw my first Mallow Skipper. I managed a shot and then a SBA saw it off, the little sod! Still I had that one shot. I checked out a few more including a fantastic Iberian Sooty and then watched a Southern White Admiral cutting its way down the slope before trudging back to the pool and then back to the tent.







As I walked up the 'front path' to the tent I spied to white butterflies. On my left was a Bath White and on my right a sort of pale Marbled White. I watched the Bath White but it carried going ceaselessly down the track once it was past me and then I lost it as it glided down the terraces. Turning I was able to watch the Marbled White land and I could see it was a lot less chequered – so an Iberian Marbled White.



Have a goodun and stay safe.

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 31-Mar-20 10:10 AM GMT

I'm really enjoying your posts Wurzel, they cheer me up in my rather bleak episodes of solitude, 😊

I'm wondering what can happen next!!! two years ago I lost my Husband, the following year I fractured my foot, this year we've got the virus, I should be depressed but for some reason my curiosity has got the better of me and I'm just watching and listening to the reactions of it all , may be I've gone (Whacko) already. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-20 08:20 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Glad to have been of service 😊 Well judging by the rule of three's you're due some slack – first Grizzlie in your garden? 😊😊

April 2020

I'd have chosen a brighter species for my calendar if I'd forseen this happening...mind you I'd also have stocked up on loo roll as well 😊



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 01-Apr-20 09:07 PM GMT

At least with your calendar, Wurzel, I can tick off the passing days in a similar fashion to those on a ten stretch!
I'm pleased to report that my sanity is still pretty well OK at the moment.

A warm weekend and some exercise should be the tonic we need 😊.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-20 06:02 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Glad you're still the correct side of mad 😊 I hope for once the BBC get their forecast correct as it would definitely be a tonic...mind you if not then Gin and lemon ain't too bad 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Old Wolf, 03-Apr-20 08:09 PM GMT

Hello Wurzel, I am catching up on your diary and what a ride it has been 😊

Stunning shots of some lovely butterflies and congrats on so many lifers for you on your trip 😊 I am particularly fond of the unders of what I think is the SBA. The forewing reminds me a paw print and now that I have seen it I cannot unsee it 😊

I am hoping there is more to come as I am thoroughly enjoying it although it is making me long for some sunshine 🌞

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Apr-20 08:34 PM GMT

Cheers Old Wolf 😊 I like the 'catspaw' I can't un-see it now either 😊 There is certainly more to come and you won't have to worry about it making you miss the sun so long as this weekend is as forecast 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Apr-20 10:11 PM GMT

Day 3 Part 3 01-08-2019

After lunch I set out on the 8km walk to scout it out and see if it was subtle for the girls to do. The path I was following dove down the hill, a narrow terrace walled on either side for a while before the one side was replaced by trees. It was alive with butterflies who sensibly were making the most of the shade. They'd fly out, glide and soar of a Grayling species or flutter in a panic if a Brown, before landing on a tree or the wall and sitting tight. Occasionally a really bright orange 'butterfly' would fly - a Jersey Tiger Moth but I also caught up with several Great Banded Graylings one of which I managed to capture by shining up a tree and photographing one handed.





Further along the path came to an end I crossed the road following a more open trackway. A different butterfly flew here and one I'd been hoping to catch up with. It was one of the smartest butterflies that I'd seen with clean black and whites chevrons and jagged lines crossing its folded wings, a Striped Grayling. I marvelled at the way that in the full sun the colours shifted just as they had with the Tree Graylings – this time from resplendent black and white to browns and creams.





The trackway joined a proper road and I made to enter into a little hamlet but before I crossed the bridge a Clouded Yellow flew lazily about in a lay-by and once in the hamlet a Cardinal frequented a tree in one of the garden of the bridge houses. It flew ahead of me and landed to take salts from some run off down the track.

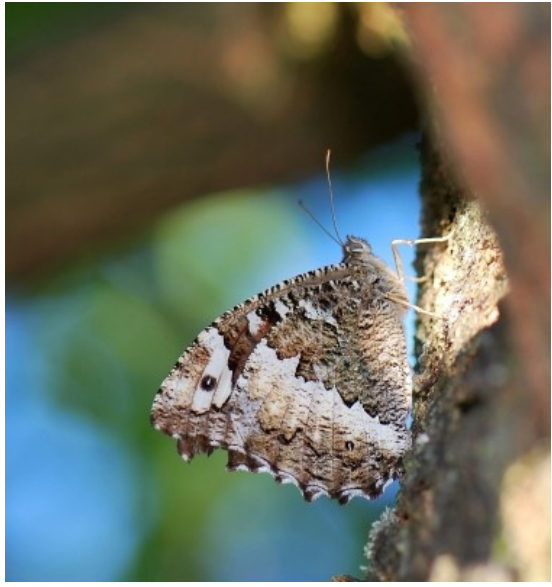




By now I was feeling a bit knackered and only half way through the walk so I didn't think this would be suitable for the girls, also I was in desperate need of a coffee so it became a case of head down and walk. There were a few stops on the way. A little clearing on the edge of the Roman road that I was on was alive with Small Copper and SBA and in Pero Soares a Geranium Bronze flew around some Geraniums. The final stretch was a bit of a blur I yet held a four of the Grayling species that I'd already encountered. It was a blur because my water had run out, I'd gotten a wriggle on and I was carrying a large rock and big stick as a massive dog was loping along behind me. It had started following me as I'd left Pero Soares barking nastily and it was hot on my heels all the way up the side of the hill...

Safely back I washed up and enjoyed a much needed coffee sitting in the sun. While we were having tea the IMW turned up and then I grabbed a few more Grayling shots while on the way to and from the pool for the evening swim.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-Apr-20 11:00 PM GMT

More interesting shots from your holiday, Wurzel. I particularly appreciate the descriptions in the narrative – they take you right there. 😊👍

Tell me – is that a second (smaller) butterfly in your first Grayling shot? Blurry and in the foreground a bit... A different type of Grayling? Maybe I'm seeing things, like the splotches of bird poo on leaves that look like Holly Blues... 😊😄

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Apr-20 05:45 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 There is indeed another butterfly there but as it was a typical/common Grayling I focused on the Great Banded instead 😊 I'm glad you're enjoying the writing – there's a piece I was really happy with coming up so look out for 'Middle Street Feb into March Take 2b' – I'd had a couple of beers and just watched some Family Guy when I wrote it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 05-Apr-20 09:42 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, don't the Graylings on the Tree's blend in well with the tree, if they didn't move you wouldn't know they were there 😊
Looking forward to your next pic's 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 05-Apr-20 10:11 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel. It's great to see your pictures from Portugal – they bring back lots of happy memories. I particularly enjoy the cardinals, which you will know are a special favourite of mine ... I have no idea if I'll be able to get home to Switzerland this year to see any.

Your strange-looking small heaths are form *lyllus*. Some authors (e.g., Leraut) treat this as a good species, following work by Boillat in 2002, but most consider it at best a subspecies, if not a form. I haven't been able to track down a copy of the original paper.

I'm a big fan of Family Guy – I still laugh out loud at episodes I've seen a thousand times. I think it was Paul K ('Kip') who first put me onto it. Obviously a lepster's thing.

Keep'em coming!

Guy

Re: Wurzel

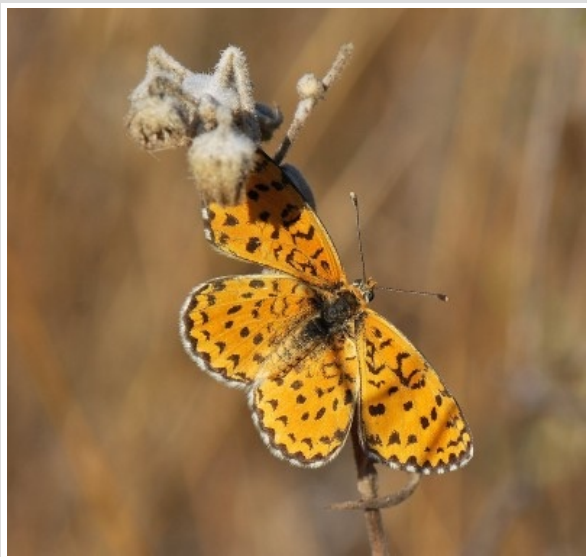
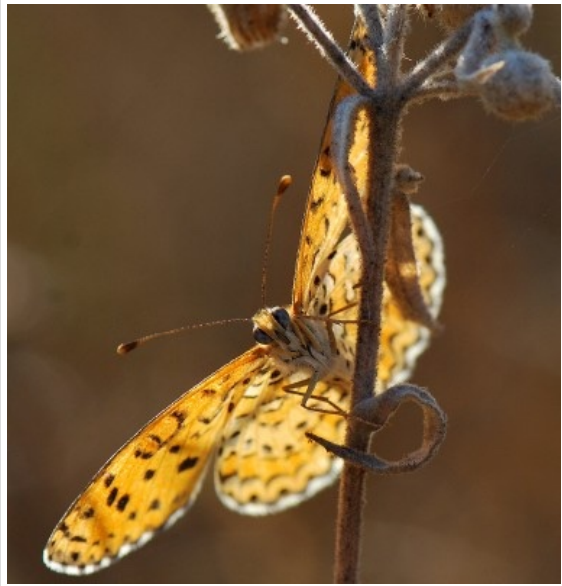
by Wurzel, 05-Apr-20 11:33 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 They were right pains for it as they'd fly really obviously across the road and then they'd land and disappear. I'd look for them and then they'd appear out of nowhere and fly off. 😊 Still kept me occupied 😊

Cheers Guy 😊 Thanks for the ID of the Small Heath – here's hoping they upgrade it to full species 😊 I was hoping to get away to the Cevannes in August – I can't see that happening now 😊 Family Guy does seem to be a UKB thing – it was discussed at great length during the Social I think it's just the right side of irreverent 😊😊

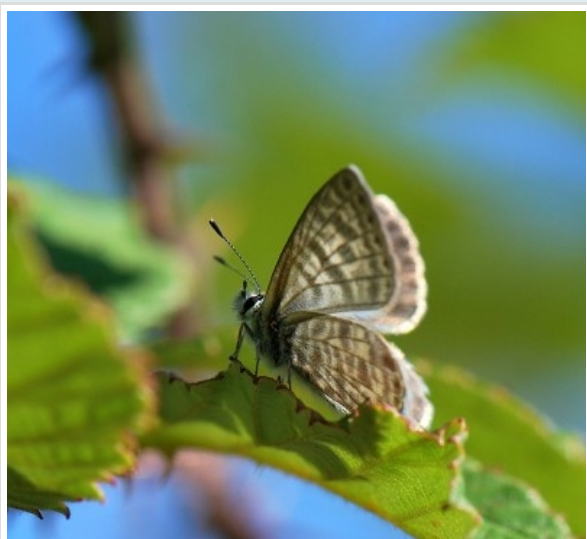
Day four Part 1 02-08-2019

A quick stroll after breakfast and before 2nd breakfast (coffee and fruit then continental down at the Villa) threw up a few early morning Specklies but they were still as demented as ever and there was also a/the Spotted Fritillary and a nicely posed Lang's. After this we drove over to Guarda to pick up a few more supplies from Lidl. Whilst I was at the till I enjoyed the incongruous sight of 2 Painted Ladies, a Hummingbird Hawk Moth, Silver-washed Frit and 4 Cardinals all feeding on the Buddleia outside. If only my trips to Lidl at home produced such classics I think I'd be there everyday!





Wing roll for Ernie



Later as I was setting off to catch up with the others round the pool a Cloudy flew through the small field and a Southern Gatekeeper looked nicely posed for once. After this I set off intending to meet the others directly but I got a little waylaid by the little lush track. It was even more alive with butterflies than before. There were SBAs, Small Coppers, the odd Lang's, Iberian Sooty, both Gatekeepers and also amid the Speckle and Meadow Brown and lovely newly arrived Southern Common Blue. A Spotted Frit joined the fray and a couple of Cardinals messed about. I was hoping to catch up with

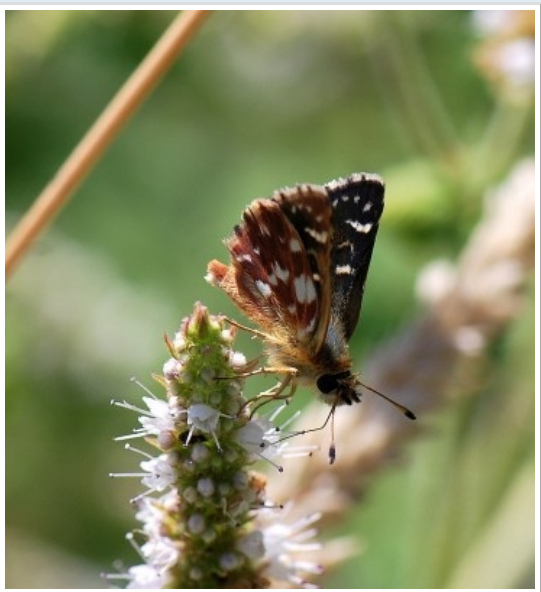
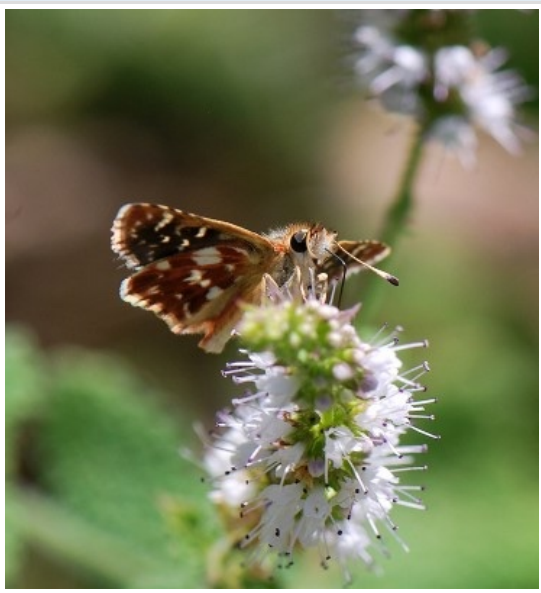
the Red-underwing Skipper and as luck would have it there was the tell-tale fuzzy little blur which resolved into a stunning fresh individual.



I then went from one scale to another as a Southern Scarce Swallowtail stopped by – looking more lemony than I remembered. I stayed for a short while before drifting off like an errant Kite gliding effortlessly down from one terrace to another. So I zoomed in again and relocated the Grizzlie.







Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 06-Apr-20 07:58 AM GMT

There's a couple of WOW images in your last report, Wurzel.
That Scarce Swallowtail is a wonderful specimen, with those elegant flowing tails.
The Spotted Fritillary 'stained glass' shots deserve a mrgreen. 🍃

All you are likely to get at our local Lidl is a dent in your car.

Keep well and exercised,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 06-Apr-20 02:14 PM GMT

Trevor's right Wurzel, WOW! 😄 It must have been Fairy Land seeing all those Butterflies especially the Swallow Tail, I thought our Swallow was lovely, no wonder they call that one Scarce, it's out standing. 😄😄 Goldie 😄

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-20 08:10 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😄 I was chuffed with that one as my ones from France last year only had a tail each and not the requisite two 😄😄 What you said about your Lidl car park is also true over this way 😄😄

Cheers Goldie 😄 It was a fantastic holiday as I didn't know what to expect from one day to the next 😄😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 06-Apr-20 09:26 PM GMT

Great reportage, Wurzel. I've never been to Portugal, but have seen butterflies in Spain a few times, and you have a few familiar species there.

One of my favourites is the striped Grayling, they are a very distinctive butterfly.

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 06-Apr-20 09:49 PM GMT

I'm very much enjoying your holiday snaps, perfect tonic in the current unavoidable situation 😄

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-20 10:41 AM GMT

Cheers Essex 😄 I was particularly enamoured with the Stripey 😄😄 I'd love to visit Spain as Portugal has a much lower species count 🍃

Cheers Bugboy 😄 I was glad to have them in reserve as it were but it does mean that once again, guess what, I'm behind with my PD 😄 Oh well at least in these strange times some things have remained the same 😄😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-20 10:23 PM GMT

Day four Part 2 02-08-2019

I eventually reached the pool and headed down the track to the exit with Grayings flying all over the place. I set out for 'Well/drainage pool' as surrounded by the intense aridity it seemed like it would be a magnet for the butterflies. For the next 30 minutes I alternated between the shade and sunlit flowers; when I started to feel too hot I nip into the shade and watch the activity from afar and then once cooled slightly I be back out in the sun. I managed to catch up with a Prov Fritillary as well as a Mallow Skipper. In fact with the latter I managed to triple my shot count for this species to three - they are extremely flighty! The Dingy was back again as was another RUS which were much friendlier than their larger carpet looking cousins.

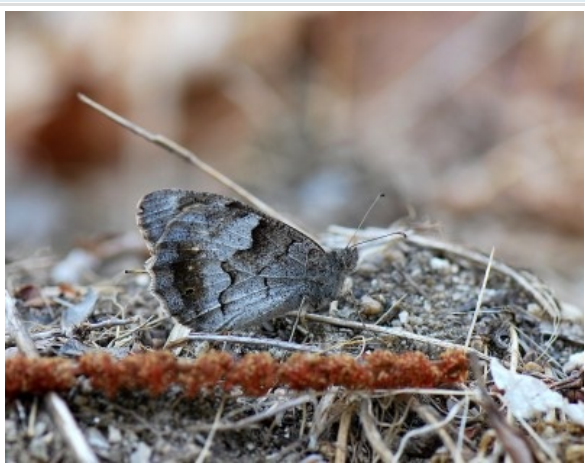






All of this in this tiny little space!

Tired and slightly baked I made my way back up the hill through the Grayling Gauntlet and sat down for a well deserved tea...well after a few more shots of a Cloudy were added to the memory card. Later still I watched a Great Banded Grayling fly across the pond as I floated and cooled myself down before bed.





Grayling Avenue





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-20 06:03 PM GMT

Great shots Wurzel ,I find Graylings are some times hard to find here and hard to photograph, for me any way 😊 Goldie

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-20 08:15 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 That was the thing with where we were staying, I was practically beating the Grayling off with a stick – towards the end of the stay I had to just look at my feet and march down the road as quickly as possible to avoid losing hours to Grayling stalking/watching 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

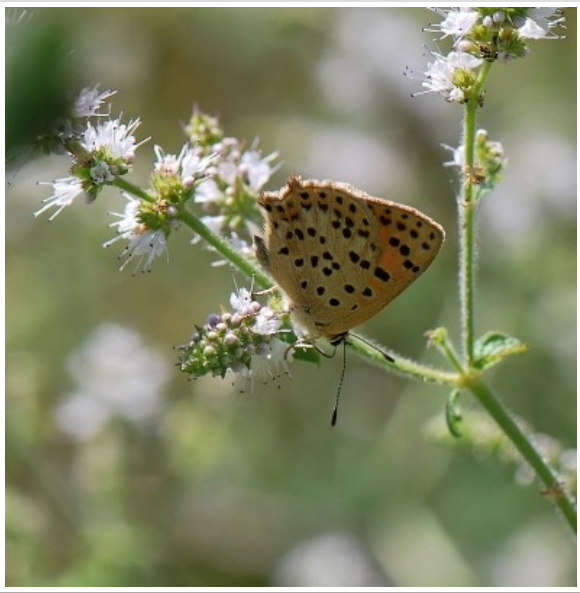
by Wurzel, 08-Apr-20 10:30 PM GMT

Day 5 Part 1 03-08-2019

The day started pretty well with a Clouded Yellow in the small field next to the tent along with a Holly Blue and the usual Browns, Graylings and Tree Graylings. After both breakfasts we packed up and drove straight to Guarda, parked up and then strolled up the hill towards the Medieval part of the city. On the way we passed a set of concrete stairs which were emblazoned with a giant snake twisting all the way upwards – it was fantastic and miles better than any graffiti we have at home. However over the course of the morning butterfly sightings were fleeting. Up near the Cathedral I spied a Geranium Bronze, Specklie and a Southern Gatekeeper and on the way back to the car a Scarce Swallowtail and a Green-veined White flew by me. The final butterfly sightings came from the Buddleia outside Lidl's in the form of a Painted Lady and nine Cardinals! However this fantastic sighting was beaten on the drive home when I saw an azure blue bird sitting on a telegraph wire – my first ever Roller.



After lunch I was free to roam so I set off for the Well. At least I intended too but instead I ended up at the little lush path again and it slowed my progress considerably. A Queen of Spain turned up but only put in the briefest of appearances, there were two Cardinals and two of the smaller Frits. As I was turning to leave I spotted another of the darker Small Heaths of the southern subspecies/race. At the end of the track a Long-tailed Blue finally made its appearance on the Holiday List. I'd been wondering where they'd been as the last time I was in Portugal (in Lisbon) the majority of my sightings were of three species and this was one of them; Geranium Bronze and Lang's being the other two.







I set off again for the Well stopping for the odd Grayling which were everywhere down the dusky track to the road. I making a cautious approach to a Striped Grayling when a hitherto unseen Wall spooked it. Luckily I managed to catch-up with it again a little further on and then spent the rest this part of the walk watching the three other species of Grayling flying round like diurnal bats...



Have a goodun and stay safe

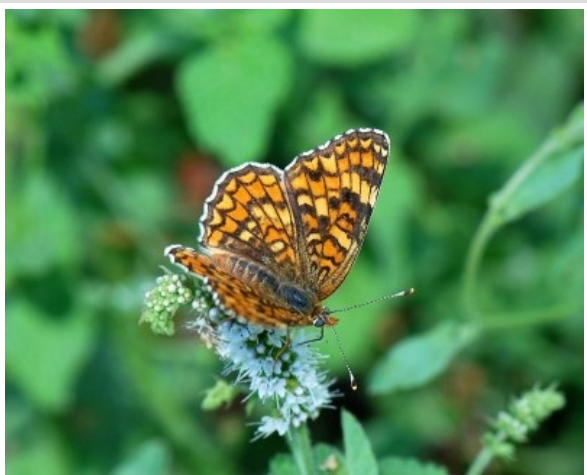
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 09:16 AM GMT

Day 5 Part 2 03-08-2019

I didn't see much else before I got to the Well, the heat and afternoon sun causing most of the butterflies to sit in the shade. As I approached the Well a small-medium Frit flew along the road leading me down into the Well. There was a second ever so slightly larger Frit as well, a Knapweed Frit which was easily recognisable after seeing so many last year in France. A Lang's caught my attention and then I went back to the Frits.





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-Apr-20 06:06 PM GMT

Simply beautiful shots Wurzel, the Butterflies look so delicate, what a fantastic holiday you had 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 06:42 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 It was great – something really different every single day 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 10-Apr-20 08:15 PM GMT

Lovely fresh Knapweed Fritillary, the one's we saw in the Cevennes were mostly worn. Back in January we were considering a return visit, good job we didn't book up!

Enjoying the tales from you Hols,

Stay safe 😊 and legal, 😊
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 08:23 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Unfortunately we did book to go to stay in the Cevannes in August...don't think that will be happening now – hoping that both teh Campsite and Easyjet will let us change the booking...to 2021 😞 😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 11:35 PM GMT

Day 5 Part 3 03-08-2019

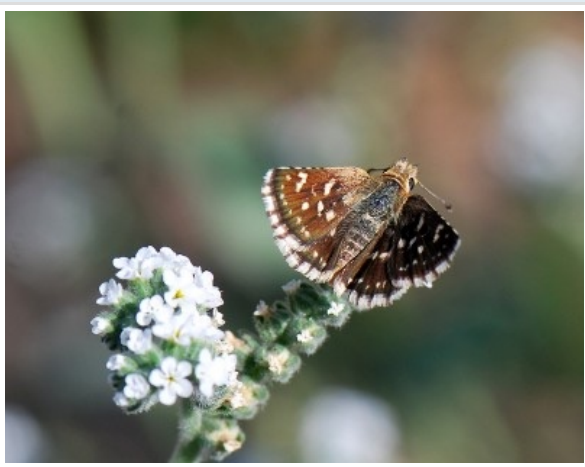
After this I braved the Hornets and massive Bees and climbed up and over into the Well itself so that I could catch-up with a Long-tailed Blue and try for a decent side on closed wing shot. While I was in the Well I also saw a Wood White, a Small White, Southern Common Blue, Southern Brown Argus and Iberian Copper as well as a couple of Small Coppers – although all were occupying their own little patches. I climbed back out braving the Hornets and other stingers to slide through the high sward for a few shots of the pretty obliging Frit and then followed another as it took salts from the mud. I then climbed back up the hill to the road watching a mating pair of Wood Whites on the way which were just out of reach of my lens. At the top I followed a Cloudy across the road but in the intense heat I was on a hiding to nothing and so gave up.





Later on the way down to the pool I spied a Great Banded Grayling with a small part of one of its wings missing so the topside was just visible. I also caught up with a lovely little Grizzlie like Skipper another Red-underwing.





After the evening swim and shower it sat out on the decking enjoying the warmth rising up from the wood as another Nightjar churred in the distant...

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 11-Apr-20 09:01 AM GMT

Wurzel

Cracking diary from your holiday last year. My favourite is the Lang's Short Tailed Blue on Day 5 Part 1. Those marine blue eye spots are far more prominent than the one I saw in France a couple of years ago. They almost sparkle.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-20 01:35 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 I was chuffed with the Lang's myself the light was just right to make those eyes really sparkle 😊

Day 6 - Sunday? Part 1 04-08-2019

I took a brief stroll before brekkie checking out the end of the path after the verdant trackway. It was pretty quiet down on the trackway although a Cardinal took off before I get a photo of it hanging upside down on the underside of a chestnut leaf. At the end a Frit was hanging around and I managed a few shots before it was off like a shot. At the end of my 'driveway' an Iberian Sooty looked gorgeous in the morning sun. I'm still not entirely sure that I've seen a male yet?





After second breakfast we drove to Pria Fuluvial – a well appointed river beach with water slide, café, changing area etc. It was a lovely setting and I spied out a few likely looking areas as we set up ‘basecamp’. After the girls had lunch and had zoomed down the slide a few times I checked out the end of the Fuluvial where they’d dammed the river. A few Lang’s fluttered around on the bank, a White cut across the river and a Holly Blue remained up high along the tops of the bushes. I didn’t mind though as a very large raptor glided across in the distance – it was a Short-toed Eagle! Awesome!



I then worked up to the first dam and crossed over it to check out the path on the other side. On the way there was a type of ringed Dragonfly, a few more Whites, Holly Blue and a few Specklies. Along the path I turned left up a track between two walled in fields. It was really lush here and there was a profusion of Clover. A Specklie and a couple of Hedgies followed me up the path whilst a Cardinal waited for me at the top where the path veered off to the right. After I'd dealt with the Cardinal I had a scan about and saw the ubiquitous Small Copper and Southern Brown Argus as well as something larger and browner. It was a Mallow Skipper and finally I was able to spend a little more time with this species. Chuffed I headed back and my wife called me over as a Swallowtail had done a fly-by. It came back but didn't stop and neither did a Cloudy that also flew over the sands near the dam at the far end of the river.





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 12-Apr-20 04:45 PM GMT

Another great post 😊 . I remember you being jealous about me seeing a Short-toad Eagle in Spain last year so I'm glad you've seen one too now. That Dragonfly is a handsome beast too, it's a male Large Pincertail I believe, *Onychogomphus unicus*.

Edit: Short-toed Eagle 🤔

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 12-Apr-20 05:42 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel. I agree with Buggy about the dragonfly. I initially took it to be *forcipatus* – the one I come across most in my own travels – but on closer examination all the key points seem to match *uncatus*.

Guy

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-20 10:32 AM GMT

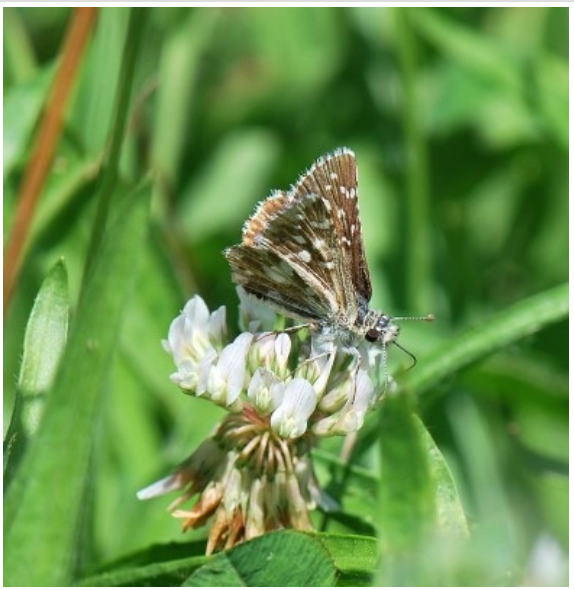
Cheers Bugboy 😊 Cheers for the ID now I know what it is I can read up about it 😊 I was chuffed with the Eagle as it's another one to add to the list and is one of the 'commoner' ones (my 'best' is Greater Spotted in Poland 😊 😊)

Cheers Guy 😊 Thanks for the ID – looking at the end of the abdomen it's common name is pretty accurate 😊

Day 6 – Sunday? Pria Fulluvial Part 2 04-08-2019

After checking in with the girls and providing them with fizzy drinks I made my way back to the little track. The Cardinal was there again as were the Hedgies et al but no sign of the Mallow. I looked over the wall into one of the neighbouring fields and it was filled with Clover, the greenest spot I'd seen all holiday. I climbed up onto the wall and peered in. I could make out at least 5 Cardinals, some blurry little butterflies (probably Coppers/BAs) and a Cloudy quartered the far end. I spotted something a little odd looking and leaned over losing my balance and ended up in a heap in the field, legs ripped to shreds by the brambles but camera held aloft and intact. As I was now in the field I decided to make the most of it and get some compensation for the lacerations on my legs and the burning embarrassment of having gone A over T 😊 so I had the slightest of mooches, hugging the edge of the field and leaning in so as not to trample or disturb the field. I managed to spot 5 Cardinals, Dingy Skipper, Southern Common Blue, SBA, Small Copper and Iberian Sooty. The piece de la resistance was a different looking Grizzlie which in all eventuality was a Southern Grizzlie.







Somehow I managed to clamber back out but received even more cuts from the brambles as a thank you for being so careful in the field 😊 and then I made my way back the way I'd come. On the way I followed a Wood White for a bit but it didn't stop even when in the cool shade of the tree lined riverside path. I also saw a Comma, it was extraordinarily bright and lightly marked but when I looked at the wing shape later it was curved and not straight so it wasn't a Southern Comma, just an H.Comma but still a nice looking one at that. Once back with the girls we discovered that the slide wasn't going to be open for another 2 hours 😞 and so we headed back 'home'.



Have a goodun and stay safe

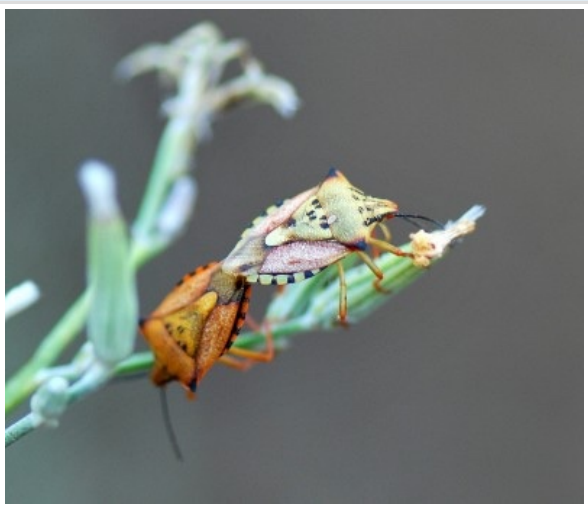
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-20 10:15 PM GMT

Day 6 - Sunday? Part 3 04-08-2019

After tea I made my way down to the pool with the girls for my now routine swim, stopping on the way for a lovely Striped Grayling - possibly my favourite new species of the trip so far. After the swim and feeling much cooler and less dusty we made the trek back up the hill. A Tree Grayling caught my eye and a mating pair of Shieldbugs caught the eyes of the girls. Then later still I turned my hand to moth trapping...Really this entailed seeing what was fluttering round the light while I was trying to read!





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 13-Apr-20 10:39 PM GMT

A continuing selection of great shots of some interesting butterflies, Wurzel. 😊 My favourites have to be the small Fritillaries (Spotted and Knapweed, the latter especially), and that gorgeous little Sooty Copper. I'm sure I read somewhere that if they were able to cross the channel, they would probably do okay in southern England. However, that stretch of water is just too difficult. 😞

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-20 10:24 AM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 There are still a few beauties left to come though only one more butterfly 'lifer' as far as I can remember 😊 These Sooty Coppers are the Iberian species as they've got the tails and the males are almost orange as the females – although I don't know if I actually saw a male? 😊 They would be a welcome addition to the British countryside 😊 so long as they don't interfere with our Coppers 😊 – I wonder if a female could stow away on a Ferry (if/when they start running again)? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 14-Apr-20 04:40 PM GMT

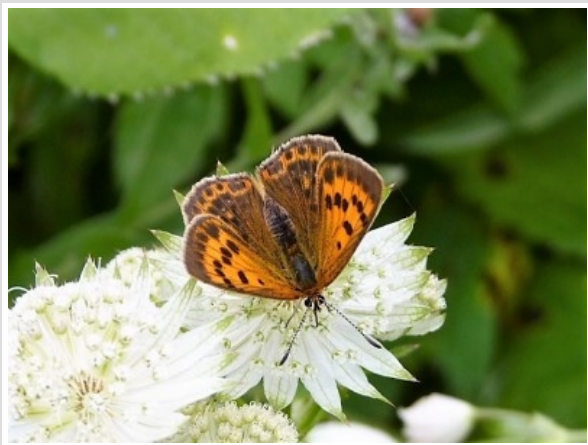
I thought for a moment that you had mis named your Sooty Copper, as it (to my untrained eye) looks just like a female Scarce Copper, of which we saw some beautiful, fresh specimens in the French Pyrenees.

I then noticed that the Sooty has tails, and the Scarce doesn't.

I didn't doubt you for a moment, honest !. 😊

Stay safe and well exercised,
Trevor.

PS. Great image of the Cardinal underside.



Female Scarce Copper.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 14-Apr-20 08:36 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Wurzel, I must say I've never seen the Butterflies you've posted, I'm ashamed to say although I traveled a lot I wasn't interested then in Butterflies, I could kick myself now 😊
I'm learning about them from your posts 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-20 08:34 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I wish it was a female Scarce Copper Trevor as I salivated at the shots that you got of that species but unluckily they don't fly in Portugal. Still the Cardinal made up for that 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I've experienced the same feelings Goldie 😊 Many moons ago I was in a clearing in Poland in the Biebrza Marshes surrounded by orange chequered butterflies which I now know were Fritillaries – but which species 🤔🤔🤔

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-20 10:52 PM GMT

I've still got a few days from my Portugal trip to write up but in the meantime i'm jumping forward in time but still back in time...if that makes sense 😊

Work – First Butterfly Photo 2020!

Having broken my duck back in January it was feeling like an eternity between my first sighting; an agonising view of a Red Admiral as it fluttered up high from one patch of Ivy to another; and my second. However all good things come to those who wait...

Having worked exceedingly well for almost all of the penultimate lesson of the day there came the inevitable lull in activity of my year 10 class during the final 5 minutes or so. I didn't mind initially as we'd managed to get almost 2 lessons worth of work covered in three quarters of a lesson. I minded even less when one of the pupils who has a penchant for insects pointed out a butterfly fluttering against the window. I'd been carrying my camera since being caught out by my first butterfly so I grabbed it and positioned myself for my first 2020 butterfly shots. Its mournful tapping against the glass was a stark contrast to the satisfaction of finally viewing a butterfly through the viewfinder.





After this I wondered where it had come from and what to do with it? As for the first question the ceiling tiles on this side of the building are closely fitting, even overlapping so it couldn't have come from above. Both doors and windows were open so it's possible it was disturbed from the 'paint store' and was flying along the side of the building and had come in only to be trapped with a room full of year 10's!
As to the second question – there was a weak sun, little to no breeze and the temperature was just nudging double figures so the initial observer carefully carried it on his finger tip to one of the bushes lining the building and let it go to seek more conducive quarters. And I got back to teaching... more Bond Energy calculations...

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 16-Apr-20 02:05 PM GMT

I wonder where that Small White came from? 😊 When was this, by the way?

Maybe it had pupated in a very sheltered spot that had just started to catch the sun each morning, perhaps close to a newly-opened window. It's a shame it had battered itself against the glass, as it looks as if it had started off as a very heavily-marked individual (underneath at least).

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-20 11:04 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I reckon it had been in the old Chemical/Paint store which has vented doors and no heating but is dry and sheltered which is why it was so tatty 😊

Continuing with 2020...

Middle Street Feb into March

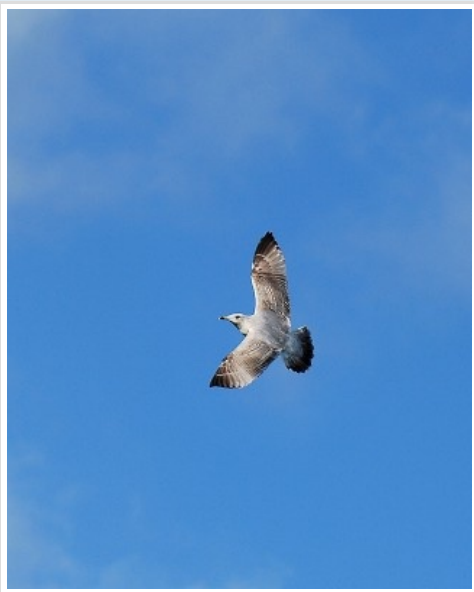


Take 1 (08-02-2020)

As January ended and we broke into February I started to get itchy feet. This is the time of year when the sap starts to rise, the buds start to unfurl and the anticipation starts to build. So I found myself wandering Middle Street—ward for no better reason than it was the first time in since I didn't know when! This was a very early visit and was actually just a recce, a chance to see how things lay ready for the season ahead. Where were the likely looking spots? Were there any quagmires (giggity) to avoid, any fallen branches blocking the path ways etc? Despite a few moments when some falling or odd coloured leaves or even blades of grass twitching in the slightest of breezes caught my eye I wasn't surprised when I didn't see any butterflies. It was still good to catch up with Reed Buntings and the ever explosive Cetti's; the cooler crisp air seeming to make his call even more ear shattering. On the return journey a teenager Herring Gull did a few piratical passes.



View through the entrance



Take 2 (22-02-2020)

With the days continuing to lengthen, the sap rising higher and the first flowers of spring in bloom I felt like it was time to venture forth and try my luck at Middle Street once more. Normally I'm onto my first butterflies in February and whilst it wasn't a mini unseasonal heat wave like in 2019 I have seen butterflies at around this time of year in cooler, greyer and damper conditions than we've experienced.

Today there was a first; it was the first time in 2020 that I got caught out by the weather forecast. I've come to take anything the Weather People say with a bucket worth of salt but I'd obviously forgotten this over the winter months and so despite showing no rain and light cloud I only got as far as the other side of the wooden bridge before the sun disappeared, the temperature dropped and down came the rain swiftly followed by hail.

Take 2b (01-03-2020)

So the second visit proper saw me wandering through 'mud'n bullets' as my dad says, the paths churned into a quagmire (giggity) 😊 by dog walkers

and poaching anglers. Dennis had menaced the site with one of the tracks blocked with a fallen tree and the various ditches and depressions were serving their purpose – they were filled with water. Needless to say I didn't see any butterflies on this trip either despite the slightly more favourable conditions and even the birds were scarce today, the only calls coming from the football pitch. I learnt that apparently Ron is a 'fornicating phallus'? 🤔



The river side path is now part of the river...

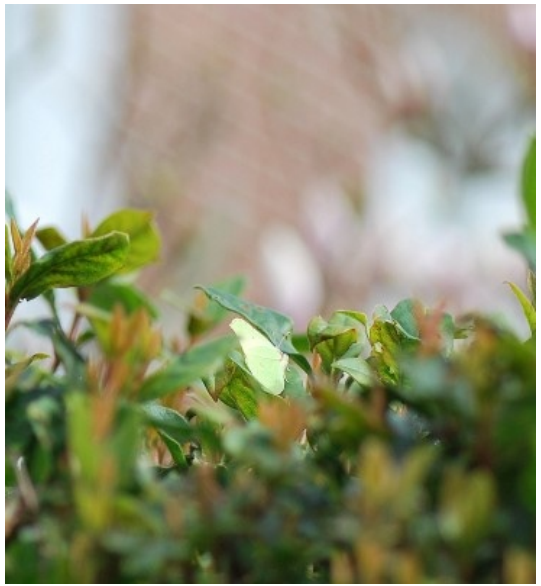


This, believe it or not, is actually a path, or was once.

Take 3 (07-03-2020)

It must be third time lucky now surely? So I decided that as soon as the chores were done I would take the now familiar stroll along the Town Path, cut through Harnham and saunter round Middle Street. During the morning around town the air was clear, the sky blue but there was still a nip in the air. As the morning wore on the occasional wisps of cloud appeared, the temperature started to rise and the cold breeze picked up meaning that when it blew the temp dropped back down again. It was one of those typical spring days which remind me of the mum and the dad bear in the Goldilocks story; the weather was too cold, or too windy or too dull – it was never just right!

Still I set out hopefully and as I turned the corner from South Street to Harcourt Terrace there was a sight that lifted my soul. The blazing yellow of a Brimstone. I watched it land on the flattened top of a hedge and by standing a few paces back and holding my camera out at full stretch I was able to get a few shots. I was stopped and asked what I was doing by the neighbourhood watch but when I explained that I lived round the corner and that I was watching a butterfly this seemed to placate them. Luckily to add further credence to my excuse and reassure them that I wasn't casing the joint the butterfly took off and started patrolling along the hedges along one side of the street. After a while it landed in another high bit of hedge and I kept my eye on its position and at the same time kept an eye on the NW. Once they were gone I had a think about how I could get some closer shots and in the end reasoned that if I stood on the low wall at the bottom of the hedge, leant in slightly and held my camera in one hand I might be able to get something on the memory card. So that's what I did.



After this I found that there was a definite spring in my step as I hiked to Middle Street. This soon stopped though as the reserve is even more flooded than previously, the cloud had built too and now when the sun did shine through and start to warm things up it was accompanied by an icy breeze. So I drew a blank again but did pick up Reed Buntings, Little Egret, Sparrow hawk, Red Kite and Buzzard on the notable bird front. Even more notable was a bloody gurt Raven gronking loudly as it passed overhead whilst I was on the Town Path. It spiralled round and down before landing in the field a dwarfing a male Blackbird near to it.





Almost at home I checked in on the Brimstone and it was still there, hanging upside down in its own little tent of leaves.



It was still there on Sunday when we set off for Ikea and when we got back. Come Monday afternoon when I went to Post Office I thought it would have nipped off during the morning when it was blue sky and sunny but nope it was still there.

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-20 11:45 AM GMT

I enjoyed your visit's to the Meadow Wurzel, I was doing the same (seems ages ago now) at Hall-Lee-brook when I saw a Comma for the first time and sadly I think the last before shut down, I didn't think at the time I'd see any Butterflies for ages, it makes me wonder now if I'd stayed home in other years in stead of going out traveling to see them if I'd been better off staying in the garden 😊 I've not seen a Brimstone yet but I'm hoping one will pop in the Garden before long 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-20 06:14 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I know what you mean - 😊 some of my favourite shots were obtained by grabbing my camera and sprinting up the garden as tea was being out on the table (this was when I had a garden 😊) I had quite a good list including Meadow Brown, Small Copper, Common Blue and Small Skipper 😊 Missing it now though - thankfully we're allowed our exercise walks 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 17-Apr-20 06:50 PM GMT

[quote=Wurzel post_id=152375 time=1587143673 user_id=9821] ...some of my favourite shots were obtained by grabbing my camera and sprinting up the garden as tea was being out on the table...

Oh yes!, I do that as well, and usually get a telling off from SWMBO 😊

Interesting to see what Middle Street looks like, even if it is a bit soggy.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-20 07:50 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 Good to know I'm not the only one suffering for their butterflying 😊 Although if Mrs Wurzel reads this the suffering will be much more intense! 😊 Middle Street is a funny old place but it's just right for Small Torts 😊 Almost as good as my little site at work...

Work 16-03-2020

All morning I'd been watching the sky outside my window and I'd go from cheerfulness to sadness and back again as the sky changed from blue to grey and back to blue. Luckily by the time lunch arrived the sky had reverted to blue and it had warmed up so I grabbed Niko (the 'n' of Nikon has worn off my camera strap) and made for the back path. I was banking on this outing as the rest of the week was either forecast as cloudy and cool, I'd be busy or even worse Locked Down/self-isolating.

As I cut across the footy fields checking the banks and patches of nettles which lined the fences the sun was swallowed by a single, lone cloud. I didn't mind too much though because I reckoned that by the time I reached the path the cloud should have passed by releasing its hostage. And so as I turned up the path the sun returned and by about a third of the way along I was feeling really warm. By the half way point I was actually considering taking my jumper off when all thoughts of thermoregulation went out of the window. There was a fluttery thing with the familiar black and orange stripes and the slightest hint of blue around the margins...my first Small Tort of 2020. After a few shots which were tricky to get as it was vibrating its wings to warm up, I carried on. A Peacock, another first for the year, took off from where it had been basking unseen before I could get any shots.



Up at the end there didn't seem to be anything and so I turned round and made for the Lab. In the neighbouring field another Small Tort was fluttering about. It seemed like it was agitated and so I leant over the fence to try for a few shots. As I did I discovered why it was being so antsy as there were two more Small Torts busying themselves with courting. The agitated Tort was a third wheel and couldn't manage to entice the female away even when three of them took to the air in a dizzying, spiralling Tornado of Torts. As I turned away I spied another two in a neighbouring garden which brought the tally to a definite 6. The walk back to the half way point saw another two giving a maximum count of 7. Brill!



Mr Third Wheel





From this point I let my feet take over the job of getting me back so my eyes could concentrate on seeking out butterflies. I managed to find a further two; a Brimstone and a distant Small Tort which brought my count to a maximum of 9 and minimum of 7. A fantastic 25 minutes 😊 made even sweeter as I don't know when the next time will come? 😊



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 17-Apr-20 10:24 PM GMT

Those Small Torties look absolutely fresh after their hibernation, Wurzel – as in fact a lot of the hibernated species have this year. Winter has been kind to them. As ever I envy you the number of this species you see compared to here. 🍷 Swap you a Holly Blue or two? 😊😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 18-Apr-20 06:45 AM GMT

A mrgeen x6 for those Small Tortoiseshells, Wurzel. 🍷 .
The one I saw locally a couple of weeks ago, I regard as a freak sighting!.
As you have said before, they are still doing well in Wiltshire, thankfully.
The only snag is I can't get there to see them.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-20 07:45 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Wiltshire does seem to be doing well – they have drastically decreased at Five Rivers but this could be because they may be very 'early' there but at Middle Street they've gone through the roof 😊 I'll have a word and get the current Small Torties to have a word with their kids ready for a swap later in the season 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I think the best thing is that this is only a narrow stretch of path and I have just enough time to walk there and back in my 25 minutes of lunch. The numbers increased a bit over subsequent visits too! 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-20 10:07 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, lovely shots of the Tort's, I'm still short of a Brimstone, so your one up there 🤔🇮🇪
That Small White you mentioned to me in my last post, is an ab, so that's not bad for being stuck in the Garden. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-20 10:14 AM GMT

Nice Small Tortoiseshells there Wurzel 😊 They have certainly done well in some parts this spring although apparently not everywhere.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 19-Apr-20 11:44 AM GMT

That last Tort is a corker! I'm glad you don't take them for granted, they are like gold dust in some parts further east now 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-20 06:06 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I thought that Small White was good for an aberrant - I've not seen anything like that before 🤔🇮🇪

Cheers Neil 😊 They do seem to have a more Western distribution now - wetter and better for nettles possibly? Though so long as it carries on I won't question it 😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 No I try and photograph every single one that I see, although they don't always make it easy 😊 I find they're a bit like OTs in that you can never have enough of them 😊

Anyway time to jump back in time to 2019...

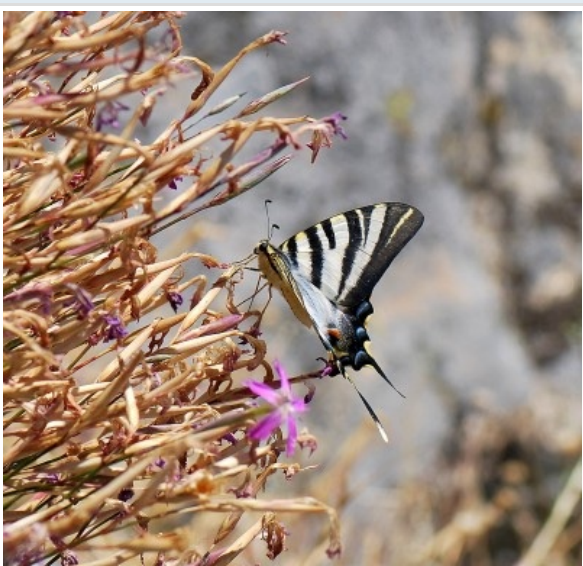
Day 7 Part 1 Out and about the Town 05-08-2019

We were taking a wander in Guarda again today so beforehand I took a pre-brekkie stroll to the end of the track and back. Hedgies and Meadow Browns reminded me of home but a Tree Grayling reminded me that I was actually in Portugal! As did the Lang's Short-tailed Blue.





After a short drive we ended up making the walk up the hill, past the massive snake painted on the stairs and then had a look around the old centre. We visited the La Vie shopping centre again as well as the museum which the woman told us was free and then as we went to enter told us that it was Fechio - closed! Slightly confused we retired for lunch on the grassy bank in the shade of the Cathedral where we were joined by a Specklie and a Small White and a Swallowtail drifted by like a lost kite. We eventually found the Torre de Montego (or some such) which didn't look like much but promised great views of the surroundings. As we followed the spiralling path upwards a larger, darker butterfly caught my attention amid the smaller silvery blues and golden blues (SBA, LSTB, LTB and SC respectively). I carried on up wracking my brains for what it could be - was it just another Grayling? At the top at least 5 Swallowtails constantly tussled, spiralled and fought the S.Scarce Swallowtails which were much more sedate rarely interacting with each other or the other species. Instead they floated and glided serenely over the exposed rocks and boulders. I managed a few shots of one that landed momentarily before it was buzzed by a Wall Brown.



This took me back to the large brown butterfly - it had shown similar flight to the Wall - could it have been a Large Wall? As I pondered this a very dark butterfly landed on a boulder nearby. I grabbed a record shot and could see the large multi 'pupiled' eye, the yellow raised eyes on the hind wing and the two brown zig-zag stripes against the grey background colour of the wings. Yep - Large Wall. I followed it and managed a couple of side on shots

that allowed confirmation.



I then started to work my way down and a S.Scarce Swallowtail posed invitingly for me plus it was in sublime condition. I also managed a few grab shots of a Swallowtail but they were still being very boisterous.



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 19-Apr-20 06:36 PM GMT

There's a couple of WOW's in your last post.

Yet another pristine Scarce Swallowtail, and you have done it full justice! 😊

Then that Large Wall, I saw one through sheer frustration, in the Pyrenees.

We were driven up a drizzly, cold mountain for lunch and a walk, not far below us the sun was out, so I left the party and wandered down the zig zag road to a rocky area. And there she was, a fresh, female Large Wall. Those I left behind saw nothing, and no more Large Walls were seen that week.

Stay safe,

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 19-Apr-20 06:46 PM GMT

Ooooh you've been saving that post haven't ya 🍷🍷🍷

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 19-Apr-20 08:15 PM GMT

Lovely Scarce Swallowtail, Wurzel, with splendid complete tails – they don't last long! Another species you feel would be happy in the south of the UK (perhaps not the Iberian version) – their caterpillars eat blackthorn and there's plenty of that.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Apr-20 08:02 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I was chuffed with the Large Wall as I wasn't expecting to see one – to be honest it wasn't even on my radar there 🤓😎

Cheers Bugboy 😊 You got me 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 It is surprising what a barrier the English Channel can be although I think a few Scarce Swallowtails have made it here in the past so there must be another reason for the lack of them over here? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 21-Apr-20 08:43 AM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Scarce Swallow Tail Wurzel , some to treasure and look back on 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-20 04:25 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 They were proper gems of butterflies those S.S.Swallowtails 😊😎

Day 7 Part 2 Out and about the Town 05-08-2019

After the now routine call in at Lidl's; for a couple of bottles of Argus Reserva 1844, some other foody bits and 5 Cardinals and a Painted Lady, we got back home. Whilst the girls set off to the pool I loaded up on water and camera batteries. First call was the verdant path. I was able to catch up with the QoS as well as the smaller Frit as well. I spent some time here as there was so much to see however it was all of the usual suspects.







A male at last?

I pulled myself away and set off down the dusty trackway. I then took the tree tunnel which was alive with butterflies – mainly Graylings with Hedgies, Specklies and the odd GBGrayling thrown in for good measure. When the tunnel finally finished instead of the left hand road which would have taken me down to the bridge (eventually) I carried down up the winding road reasoning that eventually it would bring me out by the Well. On the way I saw a small frit, a few whites and also 2 of the Small Heaths looking very dusky and worn but not "Dusky" enough! 😊





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-20 07:56 PM GMT

Just seen your Scarce Swallowtail photos Wurzel...Lovely 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-20 06:00 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 It's one of those Orange-tip like species – you can never get enough off them! 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-20 10:54 PM GMT

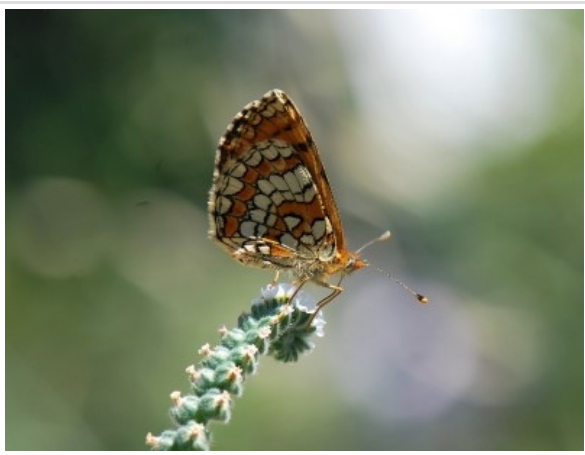
Day 7 Part 3 Out and about the Town 05-08-2019

At the Well there was another of the smaller frits and it seemed that the Southern Common Blues had started emerging as there were a couple flying around at the Well, the black spots on the hind wing margins giving away their ID. It was ridiculously hot by now, reaching above 34 degrees and so I braved the heat and brandishing a large stick in case the barking dogs got too close I headed back.





I checked the pool/pond but the girls must have already headed up and so I took the scenic route back to the tent/lodge, the one which gradually traverses the hillside in a series of gentle terraces. On the way I stopped briefly for a Wall, Tree Grayling and Frit.





Later when everyone was asleep I had a few beers and did a bit more mothing – I could get used to this!



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-20 07:16 PM GMT

Jump forward again...

Work 18-03-2020

It was actually only a couple of days until the next time that I got out as the weather report was more favourable than expected. So I grabbed my camera and headed out across the field to walk my usual route where a couple of Small Torts flew whilst I was wishing my dad a happy 70th. He was just starting his 12 weeks off work as a 'vulnerable' which he was pretty pissed off about particularly as my mum had produced the list of 'jobs I'll do when I've got time'...

Along the back path near the half way mark a really ginger looking butterfly flew from the large bush and I watched it fly out across the field – my first Comma of 2020 – bringing the species count to 6 for the year. Unfortunately as it boomeranged back and reached the shrub it kept on going into the

garden disappearing from view so I carried on along the path. Along the way I counted four Small Torts and right at the furthest end a Peacock flew up and was caught by the breeze shooting away. A Brimstone struggled by along the back fence following it down into the neighbouring field.



On the way back I stopped briefly for a basking Common Lizard which chosen a less than salubrious spot for its sunbathe – the rubbish pile. Still the old wooden boards made a nice backdrop for my photos. My very fast walk back through the estate saw me adding another 2 Small Torts to my daily Tally bringing their total up to a maximum of 8, not too shabby for a quick, spur of the moment wander.



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-20 10:18 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, the first Butterflies we see give you a lift for what's to come, don't they : 😊 Trouble is most of the early ones seem to have gone now and the SW and OT keep coming and aren't settling, there driving me mad. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-20 07:51 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 The whites are almost as infuriating as Meadow Browns – which only ever settle when they're all tatty and knackered 😊 although flying at a time of year which can be cool means you do stand slightly more of a chance with the Whites 😊

Middle Street 21-03-2020

We're moving into ever stranger times with people now encouraged to Social Distance and not mass together. To try and take both little L's and my mind off things and also to take advantage of the recent up-turn in the weather I decided that today would be the day when Middle Street finally yielded some butterflies. So I packed the girls in the car with some snacks and their books and away we drove as that seemed the 'safest' option.

Almost as soon as I was in through the gate there was a butterfly – a Small Tort waiting to meet us. It flicked about for a little bit but when it finally settled I realised that it was just trying to get into a nice position for me. We carried on round hugging the fence and then crossing the quagmire/path towards the hotspot – the girls thankful for their wellies and me skipping from dry spot to dry spot like a non-mountainous goat. Round at the hotspot a Brimstone didn't hang about long and neither did the Small Tort which took off and climbed ever higher before dropping down on the other side of the fence.



As we walked round the lake and visited the little pontoons we saw first of only a handful of people of the day and it was a bit jarring at first. Ordinarily it there would be a "Hello" possibly an enquiry and maybe even some polite chat yet today it was head down and start walking diagonally to the far side of the path as people are starting to keep away from each other. It seems more like Anti-social Distancing to be honest though I'm in no way detracting from its importance. We carried on along the river and a Small Tort popped by from the other river bank and settled long enough for a couple of shots so I was able to see that it was a different individual from the first of the day.



At the reserve there is a bank with a path on top which runs parallel to the river from one end of the reserve to the other, like the spine of the site. On one side is the football pitch and on the other is a thin sliver of land, slightly lower than the river path and split into three by two spinneys. These are the Dips and we dove down into the first Dip and I must confess from here on my memory struggles to function to its usual efficiency rating as I just wasn't used to the number of butterflies I saw. It seemed that there were Small Torts in every one of the three Dips as well as a few errant ones flying in the football field on the other side of the banked path.



Luckily for me the girls were there to sing out the numbers as yet another Small Tort hove into view or erupted from the undergrowth. In the first Dip there were several Small Torts and one of the Brimstones settled ever so briefly but just long enough for a few quick strides towards it and a grab shot. The main attraction for the girls at this Dip is the square of black rubber sheet, always worth a look and this time it came up trumps with a large Grass Snake. It was a huge one!



We carried on working our way down and into and up and out of Dips 2 and 3 before checking the large patch of bramble right at the end of the site. On the way we got up to a count of 16 Small Torts and this was conservative, knocking off a couple now and again to account for any possible double counting and some crossed the river leaving the confines of the Reserve. On the way back we got a bit more of a wriggle on and managed to pick up 9

Small Torts and also added a Peacock to the tally once back at Dip 1. With the eager for lunch we left the butterflies squabbling with each other and headed home for lunch. Still it was great to see so many butterflies in one brief sitting especially such good numbers of Small Torts.





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-20 10:27 PM GMT

Five Rivers 21-03-2020

So I dropped the kids home and after lunch loaded up the car to head over to Five Rivers while this was still allowed although I have a feeling that things will be changing soon. Anyway putting the very depressing (and scary) thoughts of possible quarantine and imprisonment in our homes aside I set off at a stroll, eager to drink in as much wildlife as I could. As my wanderings brought me to the 'glades' I spy a distant Brimstone and manage another grab shot before sighting the species I'd really come for. Flitting around in the sun was a lovely ginger beastie - a Comma and as I revelled in its enjoyment of the sun it dropped down on the deck to do a spot of sunbathing.





Looking back towards the Glades.

I backtracked and walked down to the riverside path and round the grounded Comma so as not to disturb it and carried on to Comma Corner which was a hive of activity. It was one of those moments when the dullness and the drear and the cold of winter finally is shaken off and you feel warm and alive as flying all around are the harbringers of summer. On this occasion the cast included 2 Brimstones that would patrol along the scrub in opposite directions, meet in the middle and have a scrap. There were also two Peacocks flying around like little Batman symbols and three Commas meaning Comma Corner lived up to its name once again. They really do seem to love this little sheltered patch of Bramble and my difficulty was which of the three to try and get a shot of first? The Peacocks meanwhile seem to have allotted each other billets. One favoured the edge of the path that runs past Comma Corner the other slightly round the corner on the opposite of Bank 1 although they never seemed to stay put for very long and insisted on winding the other up.





Comma Corner

From here I wandered back down to the river path and started following the little diagonal trackway along the Lower Banks. I kept going because the first bit is more scrubby and more suitable for Specklies when they arrive and when I got to the bit which is great for the hibernators (longer grass with patches of bare soil and less scrub) the butterflies were very feisty along this stretch. I still managed to differentiate a couple of different Commas and another Peacock but they were much more interested in beating seven bells out of anything that entered their airspace than sitting nicely posed for photos! So I carried on carrying on and eventually reached the very far side of the site which is much less sheltered – the wind whips up the hill, over the line of trees on the Banks and then slowly drops back down culminating in gusts on this side. Mind you on a windless day this can be the hottest part of the site as it is so exposed and the vegetation is different here too. This was probably why it was where I found a Small Tort. This site used to be the best for them but in recent years Middle Street has overtaken.





Looking along the Lower Banks



Back at Comma Corner there are only two Commas now but the two Peacocks are still taking up the same territories and so I wander across the middle path at the top of the banks to do a second walk along the Lower Banks in reverse. This time the butterflies are a little better behaved – possibly already knackered from all their earlier bouts of fisticuffs? So I manage to get a few shots of the Peacocks which do seem a tad more flighty/titchy this year – or is that just me remembering things through rose tinted specs? The final check in at Comma Corner sees only a singleton Comma but it is joined by the second Small Tort for this site for the day.





All in all a brilliant visit and I leave feeling much more mentally healthy than I have for a long time; work stress shed, anxiety about the virus temporarily lifted...

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 26-Apr-20 08:55 AM GMT

Great selection of typical Spring species in your last two posts, Wurzel. I say typical, I wish that was the case with the Small Tortoiseshells around here. You mention the virus, if it has an upside at all, the air is nice and fresh, the sun is brighter as it's not having to filter through aircraft exhaust trails (a problem around here, with Gatwick only 30 miles away), and no hum of distant traffic. The silence is deafening!. And of course our Planet is having a well earned break from Human activity. Sadly the death toll is worse than awful.

Stay safe and well (and exercised),
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 26-Apr-20 09:00 PM GMT

Especially envious of the high Tortoiseshell count there, Wurzel! 🐛 A great selection of Commas as well. I can also echo Trevor's comments about the aeroplanes to a large extent, though there are still a few going past my window.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-20 10:31 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Yeah I wrote this post back when it was all kicking off, Lockdown was threatened, people were wondering what Social Distancing?and now it's all too real and scary:?

Cheers Dave 😊 It was almost like they'd emerged all at once 🤔 WRT the planes, I suppose there's still a large amount of air freight to bring in? 😊

Lulworth 22-03-2020

Whilst others headed to the main beaches and Piers and promenades we made across country to Lulworth reasoning that it would be quieter, most

people that actually were there would go over the hill to Durdle Door and in the Cove itself there would be plenty of room to ensure Social Distancing. When we pulled up in the car park I witnessed the new etiquette that we're all going to have to develop. Whilst the cars weren't two metres apart we waited for the people on one side to leave before exiting our vehicle whilst the recently arrived car next to us did the same. One of the advantages of there being far fewer people was that the wildlife was much more approachable - well the Rooks anyway. They are a quite angular looking Corvids, all triangles...



Down on the beach I was surprised at how empty it was as I scanned left and right, there were the occasional little coloured dots moving on the far side and the odd little clump of people sitting but it the most empty I'd ever seen it. The usual hotspot didn't have anything at all and so we walked round from right to the left hand side of the Cove. On the way Rock Pipits called and sang, a Peregrine scythed through the sky and pulled a steep loop climbing up the side of the cliff and disappearing over the top and a few Mallard looked out of place out on the ocean waves. As we were approaching the far side where the cliffs slip I spotted a small dark shape gliding to and fro. It settled on the side of the land slide and flattened itself tight against the rock to absorb as much sun as possible. I managed to get in and so got some nice shots of a Peacock, the bright colours contrasting and standing out against the light grey clay. We then stopped for a brew up using the Kelly Kettle and whilst we did Stonechats and Rock Pipits squabbled about and the Peacock did a quick fly-by; trying to entice my up the cliff after it.







Brew drunk we carried on up the cliff path stopping occasionally for a breather which wasn't really a great idea as you'd look out on the stunning vista, the white rocks and perfectly round bay, the turquoise sea with the sun glinting of the tiniest of wave tops, and your breath would be taken away again. During one of these stops I came across an *Osmia bicolor*, the Two Coloured Mason Bee. It's a lovely little bee that looks like it's fallen into a red paint pot as the lower parts of its legs and abdomen are a deep red colour.



After the steep climb we followed the path along the cliff top, across Bindon Hill and back towards the car park. At one point we saw a few people walking towards us so we climbed up off the path and waited for them to go by, something we're going to have to get very good at over the coming weeks/months, but I didn't mind the enforced stop as there was a multitude of Green Shield Bugs to look at. This walk was proving thirsty work and so we stopped for another brew sitting in a little hollow away from the path with the Kelly kettle sitting directly on pure chalk. Whilst we were enjoying a combination of brew and view a Small Tort fluttered by, landed for just long enough to allow me to identify it and grab my camera, and as I was getting up it disappeared.



The rest of the walk was uneventful and we only saw a few more people before reaching the car and heading for home. Whether we'll be able to do this again anytime soon I don't know but I have a feeling that Lulworth Skippers might not make it onto my 2020 Tally. Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 28-Apr-20 06:42 PM GMT

Splendid photos of the Small Tort Wurzel. Always nice to see them given there lower numbers in recent times. One thing that this lockdown does, is lets you appreciate what is on your local patch.

Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-20 08:29 PM GMT

Cheer Kev 😊 I know what you mean about appreciating your local patch, luckily I've also got some really cracking sites with a 15 minute drive which I believe still counts as 'local' 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-20 10:07 PM GMT

Work 23-03-2020

More strange doings – today is exceedingly quiet with only those pupils who are classed as 'vulnerable' or those whose parents are keyworkers in the building. This is a grand total of 12 pupils that need supervision and so timetables go out of the window as pupils are sat in the computer rooms two computers apart to ensure Social Distancing. As I was on first shift I was able to crack on with my work and have an early lunch so that when the bell went I was able to get out and walk my route for possibly the last time this year? 😊

As I set off, a metaphorical black cloud hanging over my head, I almost missed a Peacock that was waiting for me on the corner by the Nursery. Along the field all was quiet and it wasn't until I'd reached the far end of the field that I spied anymore butterflies with an errant Brimstone bombing by and two Small Torts seemingly taking up neighbouring territories here.



For some reason I got a wriggle on today – hoping not to bump into anyone on the path I suppose and so before I knew it I'd reached the far end and I'd tallied 3 Peacocks (all of which were very flighty) and 12 Small Torts bringing the total to 14. Four of these had been two separate courting couples which made the counting much easier and more accurate.





As I'd reached the turn round point in such a quick time I tarried here for a short while enjoying the Small Torts nicely posed on the blue-purple Muscari. Then it was time to walk back and the count this time came to 16 Small Torts - so with the two from the field plus a final one just over the border in the Estate a grand total of 19. I didn't latch onto any of the Peacocks on this return leg but I did find one and a Comma on the walk/run back to work through the estate and right at the very end, just as I was passing back through the gate a Peacock went down next to the Tech block.





When I get home eventually it's announced that we will be in Lockdown – so there goes my holiday to France, there goes my Black Hairstreak visit in fact that's pretty much the 2020 season up in smoke. But it'll be a price worth paying if it saves lives...if only they'd got on and done it a bit sooner? Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 28-Apr-20 10:54 PM GMT

More 🍴 for your Small Tortoiseshells, Wurzel. Both quantity and quality – some of them look pretty fresh for their age! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 29-Apr-20 09:17 AM GMT

A great selection of Tortoiseshells Wurzel 😊

Regarding aircraft still flying, a lot of people don't realise how much air freight is carried in the holds of passenger aircraft even in normal times and that is exactly what most of the flights are now doing.

Living not far from Birmingham airport, it is really noticeable how quiet it is here lately as well.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-20 11:12 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 They must have found an almost empty shed to hole up in for the winter 😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Small Torts seem to be holding there own here – probably a bit wetter over here in the West? 😊😊

As the weather has gone a bit wet again here is something from sunnier times and climes...

Last Day Proper Part 1 06-08-2019

The sun rose on the last day proper and so I was determined to make the most of it. My pre-brekkie wander saw me concentrating on Hedgies – females of both 'normal' and Southern before we made our way to Guarda again and possibly on afterwards to a place called Manteigas...





We started in La Vie as the girls really liked looking in the different shops and seeing unfamiliar goods and even better familiar goods with Portuguese packaging and then we tried the Museum. Last time it was free but Fechio, today it was Aberto but decidedly expensive – how does that work then? It's free when it's not open but they charge when it is open – so it's never actually free? Oh well we headed back to the Welcome Centre and to get the low down on a few places nearby that we could visit and a Geranium Bronze flew in one of the flower beds on the way. While we mulled over where to go next we strolled back to Torre de Montenga.

The Swallowtails were slightly better behaved although most were a little tatty now and mostly tailless. They also seemed to be preferring the lower slopes feeding just off the path while the girls rested in the shade and prepared for lunch. A Long-tailed Blue flew in amongst the Sooty Coppers and Lang's on the lower slopes and at the top instead of marauding and malevolent Swallowtails it seemed that the Browns had picked up the aggressive bug. There were two little clusters of Browns bombing around and into each other with dizzying regularity. I'd watch one glide in the sun and then land it would land, I'd approach carefully work out what it was, lift my camera and then it would be off in spiralling, ascending bundle.



Somehow I managed to clock a Wall and two Large Walls in the melee. Round on the other side of the tower there were another pair of Large Walls and I managed to sneak up on one while it had its wings open - a male. It moved slightly and landed closed wings so I was able to get a better looking individual than on the day before. Back at the bottom while we lunched the Swallowtails continued to play around the lower slopes.





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 30-Apr-20 09:27 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I've really enjoyed your travels up to now , next time you go to the beach take a shot of that lovely view you mentioned, it'll be a breath of fresh air, I've not wandered out since lock down but I've been lucky with my garden so i've been compensated having the Butterflies come to me 😊 I noticed in some of your shots the Small Torts on the Grape Hyacinth's ,I wouldn't be without them in my Garden, they really attract the Spring Butterflies don't they? I'll be hoping for better weather, it's cold here and windy not the weather for sitting in the Garden, keep safe Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Apr-20 08:40 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Those Grape Hyacinths are brilliant for the spring butterflies and their colour contrasts well and really sets off the butterfly 😊 It could be some time before I can get down to Lulworth again Goldie – but next time I do I try and get a shot of the view – that is if I don;t get distracted by Lulworth Skippers 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

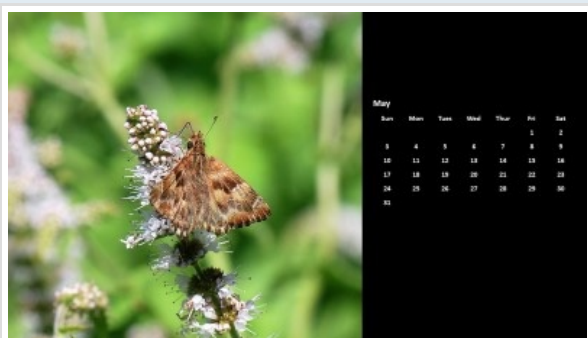
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-May-20 07:58 PM GMT

May 2020

This is the month when things would normally really start to kick off...I wonder how it will play out this year? 😊



Have a goodun and stay safe

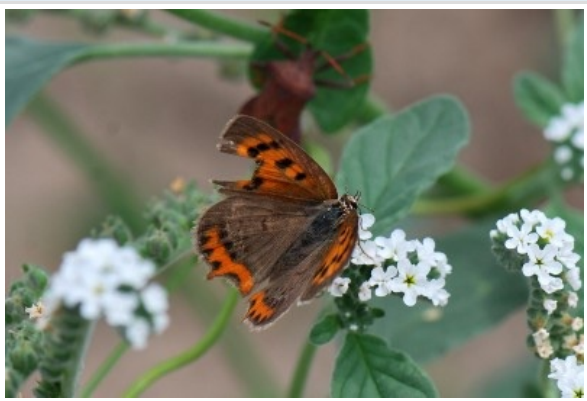
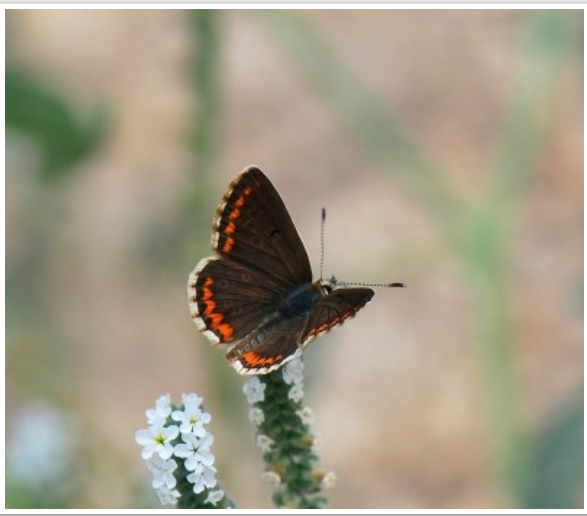
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-May-20 12:34 PM GMT

Last Day Proper Part 2 06-08-2019

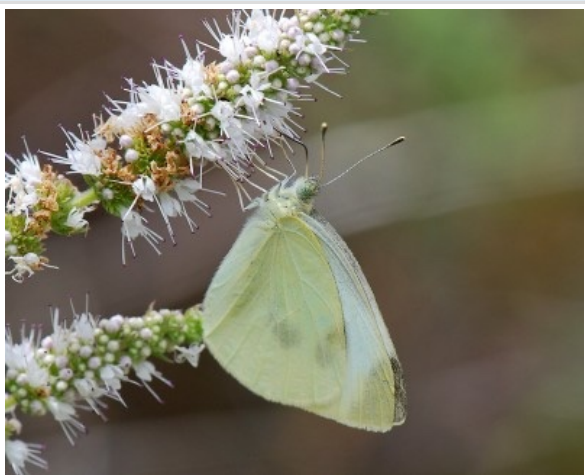
Once back home and with the girls off at the Pool/pond I had a chance for a final look round. The little part of the path on the way to the verdant track held a couple of SBAs and a Lang's. Slightly further along there was a Small Copper and by the little well at the end a Wood White and Long-tailed Blue.





On the next bend up a few Small Coppers flew as did a Striped Grayling and finally at the verdant area I spent my time with a small Frit and a Small White about which I wondered about being a Southern Small White not realising that they don't fly in this part of the world. I then went to check the time and realised that I'd left my watch up at the Lodge, so back up the hill I went but I didn't mind as I could have my coffee which I'd been leaving for my return.





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 02-May-20 03:12 PM GMT

Wurzel, some more lovely images from your European trip. I especially like the Langs on the whit flower heads. Your diary has brought back memories of my South of France holidays, where similar species were seen.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-May-20 05:46 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 I was due to head to the South of France this August – can't see that happening now unless there is a drastic change in circumstances 😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 02-May-20 07:53 PM GMT

I've enjoyed reading your posts of your exploits in Portugal last year, Wurzel, no shortage of species there 😊 I'm particularly drawn to the Striped Grayling, what looker 😊

You certainly seem to have plenty of Small Torts on your local patch 🍷 so far i've just seen the one, hope this changes. Not easy times and I understand your frustration. Hopefully things will begin to improve soon, and we can all get on with those things that have been put on hold 😊

All the best,

Mike.

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 02-May-20 08:26 PM GMT

Some great shots and tales from your hols.

A mrgreen for the Swallowtails and Grayling. 🍷 That long Tailed Blue saved you a trip to Sussex!

Talking of which, hopefully things may have eased for you to travel east for the Black Hairstreak in June, though that's only just over five weeks away. Looks like the Marshies are out for me this year.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-May-20 06:36 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 The Striped Grayling was my fave too 😊 – mind you saying that I've just remembered the Large Wall 😊 and that made me think of the Scarce Swallowtail 😊 which led me to the Red-underwing Skipper 😊... 😊
The Small Tort does seem to be doing okay over this side of the country – it could be because it's a bit cooler/wetter or much more rural – I don't know I just hope that it continues 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I'd still like a British LTB though 😊 Hopefully things will go okay – they're on about allowing people to travel to the countryside – it's just how far can you travel that will be the burning issue 😊 fingers crossed 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 03-May-20 07:19 PM GMT

More cracking shots Wurzel 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-May-20 08:13 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 The Portugal reports are coming to an end soon which is a good thing actually as I'm about 20+ reports behind from 2020 already 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-May-20 10:30 PM GMT

Last Day Proper Part 3 06-08-2019

On the main trackway down there were a few fly-by Hedgies and a Wall, Grayling and GB Grayling all of which stopped for a photo as it had clouded over and the wind had picked up. At the Well once I'd gotten there things were the quietest that I'd yet seen with all the usual suspects but this just goes to show how quickly humans get used to situations as the cast of usual suspects included - Southern Common Blues, Long-tailed and Lang's Short-tailed Blues Iberian Sooty Copper, Southern Brown Argus.







Oh well all good things must come to an end - although there may be some time to see things tomorrow before we fly. Plus there was still a cool pool to swim in, some ice cold beers to finish up and a little mothing whilst reading and listening to Scops Owls and Nightjars...



Have a goodun and stay safe

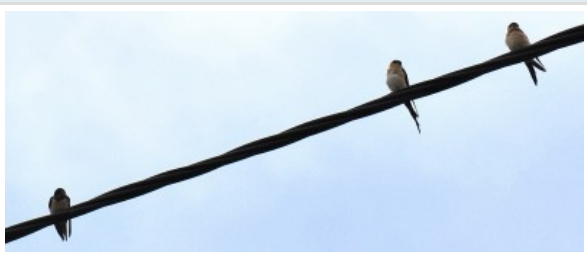
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-May-20 08:30 PM GMT

Final Day 07-08-2019

The final day dawned and was the prime example of pathetic fallacy as my mood matched the greyness of the cloud perfectly. Once we'd eaten first breakfast, packed and loaded the hire car we set off down the dusty track for our final 2nd breakfast and to say our goodbyes to the hosts. We then climbed back up the hill for the last time and still with not a butterfly in sight. While I waited for my final cup of coffee to cool enough to drink I took one last walk up the 'drive' and had a last look round. There were still no butterflies - kept at bay by the leaden skies. A single Tree Grayling was the only one I could find whilst wandering the tracks which had thrown up new species after new species for me the past week. At the end of the track some chirruping and clicking made me look up and a small flock of 30 or so Swallows landed on the telegraph wires. They looked lighter than they should be and when I looked more carefully I realised that only a couple of them were Swallows, or more correctly Barn Swallows and the rest were Red-rumped Swallows. I'd only seen this species once before on a trip to Kefalonia where they would skim over the surface of the pool, so it was great to catch up with them again.



Both species of 'Swallow'



So stopping briefly so little L could say goodbye to the goats we set off with the skies becoming darker and darker as we drove. The journey was pretty subdued and three Bee-eaters looked totally out of place amid the drear and recently started rain shower as they sat on the roadside wires. About half way through the journey we turned off the surprisingly quiet motorway to have a look around a small town called Viseau. We ended up driving right through the town before finding somewhere to park in the 'suburbs' and walking back. On the walk back into town there were a few whites and the odd Black Redstart but the cloud was keeping the butterflies away. Golden Orioles called as we ate lunch and then we went to have a look at some culture - checking out the medieval Old Town and Cathedral. Once in the little plaza we were dive bombed by Crag Martins another species I'd not seen for a few years.





Then it was back in the car, drive to the airport, drop the car off, fly home and drive home. We came down to earth with a bit of a bump finally getting back at stupid o'clock in the morning. The next day while feasting on toast and marmalade I let my mind drift back to the trip. Looking at the numbers it was a little disappointing. Only 41 species or so seen but then thinking about the nature of the holiday and when it was plus the fact that almost a third of the species seen were lifers and if races/forms are taken into consideration over 45% were new – it was pretty bloody great! 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 05-May-20 09:16 AM GMT

Great holiday shots Wurzel, you'll be sad to be home this year, lets hope we can all get a way some where later, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-May-20 07:46 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Yeah we were booked to a cracking place in the South of France with vultures and butterflies a plenty 😊 Hopefully we'll be able to visit there next year instead 😊 Oh well at least I've been able to get out during the daily exercise 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 05-May-20 10:36 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I'm going out tomorrow over to Hall-Lee-Brook, don't know if I'll see any thing but the exercise should do me good 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-May-20 07:26 PM GMT

I wish you'd said earlier Goldie – I don't think the Grizzlie I sent up there will make it in time 😊 I hope you have a great walk and find plenty of living things to fill your cameras memory card 😊 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-May-20 06:10 PM GMT

Middle Street 25-03-2020

So as I started working from home today I was at a bit of a loss about what to do over my lunch break as usually I would be walking the paths around the school and taking advantage of the decent weather? So I accumulated my mid-morning break and lunch time so I could get at least an hour and set out later than usual in the hope that I could avoid anyone else that might be taking a walk during their lunch break. We'd been given the correct guidance for Social Distancing now and most people seem to have got the idea except that is the cyclists – they seem to think that they travel faster than the speed of Covid-19 and so whilst people on the path get over to either side they can carry on travelling right down the middle path. Despite

having to keep a very cautious eye out for the two wheeled Pirates I managed to spy out 2Peacocks and a Brimstone on the walk over and also a Small Tort which flew into the back garden of the neighbouring house by the entrance to the reserve.

Safely on site I scanned around and could see no-one else so I was able to shift my gaze from head height down to foliage level and made straight to the Hotspot of old - sadly this year it seemed to not be delivering as many goods as it once did but today it was working hard to retain its title. As I negotiated the quagmire (giggety) track on the corner of the Hotspot a Peacock was basking down on the damp deck. A male and then female Brimstone passed by over the tops of the Briars by the now refilled pond and scattered about the flat turfed area were three Small Torts. It certainly seemed to be living up to its name in terms of temperature at least as the Small Torts were really hard work - having basked so effectively.



From here I followed the main track as it curved round towards the T-junction of the banked path that runs the entire length of the reserves and the rounded path which ran round the other side of the main pond/lake following the riverside. On the way I encounter a couple more Brimstones bombing by and not stopping for love nor a photo. At the very end there's another Small Tort playing around in the nettle beds at the top of the river bank.



Now's the time to nip down and check the Dips...Dip 1 being the largest holds the greater number of butterflies and my traipsing round on the boot wide trackways saw me able to count a Peacock and three Small Torts - some of which were in great nick if a little flighty. A Brimstone crossed from one side of the Dip to the other and just kept on going right the way across to the other side of the river and frustratingly with it river crossing completed it then chose to settle down and take nectar.



Onwards and upwards I went, well it was more a case of on and up and then on and down as I climbed out of Dip 1, walked along the banked path a short way before climbing down into Dip 2. This is often the most disappointing Dip at the early stage of the season as the ground is more thickly covered in vegetation so lacking in basking spots and any butterflies present are often hidden away in the tussocks. In here today was a single Small Tort and a Peacock which vaguely familiar? It took off and made towards the riverside path before disappearing amidst the tree branches. In Dip 3 there was another Small Tort enjoying the cleared patches where it was soaking up the sun. There was also another Peacock which I started to think was the same one I'd seen in both Pits previously?





On the final stretch to the end of the site I strolled along in the small field checking the side of the banked path as I went as this little sheltered sun trap is often popular with basking butterflies and so it was today with a further 3 Small Torts and a Peacock which looked different from the one I'd inadvertently been stalking in the Dips. At the very end was another Peacock taking advantage of the sheltered little alcove.



I had a look through my notes at this point, totalling up the butterfly haul. The possible double/triple count of the same Peacock was bugging me and as I didn't get any photos of it/the three of them I couldn't use the shots to confirm either way. Instead I settled for a quick walk back along the Banked path stopping to look over into the Dips and count any obvious butterflies - the better to not double up. This seemed to work and the walk back to Dip 1 in my notebook ran "ST, B, ST, ST, 2P, ST, 2ST, P and B" making a total of 6 Small Torts, 3 Peacocks and a single Brimstone which meant that what with the other Small Torts from elsewhere on site there were double figures and also I hadn't doubled or tripled up on the Peacock count on the outward checking of the Dips. To celebrate I spent a little time with the Small Torts in Dip 1 before making my way homewards, hour of exercise over bar the walk back and almost within time too.





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-May-20 08:43 PM GMT

Work 26-03-2020

So now I'm here at work on a Rota system. There are even fewer pupils here today so Social Distancing is even easier although during break and lunchtimes they don't really seem that bothered. After some time in the computer room doing some work the Science Department set out the materials for Water Rockets as it was a nice sunny day and that way we could ensure that there was plenty of hand washing. After they'd tried and failed to hit the security camera on the main block (my preferred target) and all were soaked to the skin I took them for a walk up and around the field to dry off noting a Peacock and a Small Tort at the start, a Peacock half way down the field and another Small Tort in the far corner.



I'm sure that I encountered some of the same butterflies when I set out for lunchtime walk with a Peacock along the fence and a Small Tort at the end corner of the field at the start of the back path. About a quarter of the way along a second Peacock flew about for a bit and then at the half way point a Small Tort and Brimstone interacted with each other - well the Small Tort had a go at the Brimstone.

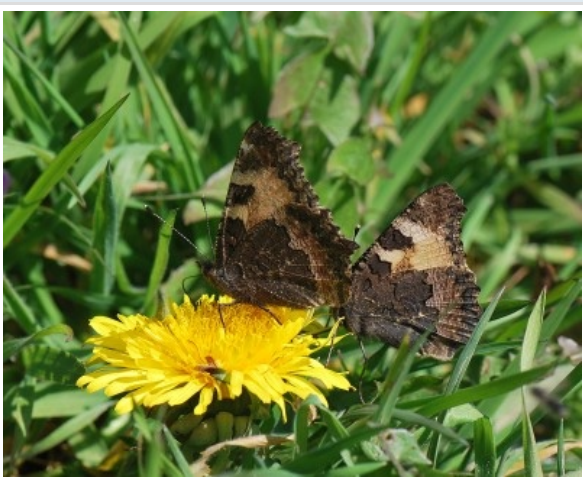




I carry on along the path ticking off butterflies as I progressed; Peacock, courting Small Torts, another pair of Small Torts, a solitary Small Tort hanging around near the rubbish heap and finally three Small Torts in the small Muscari field at the end of the track. Again I tarry a bit more here as there's a certain something about Small Torts on Muscari that appeals to me, possibly the contrast in colours orange against purple or maybe the contrasting silhouette - the butterfly is more angular compared to the globular flower? Whatever it is I like the combination.



None shall pass!



Couple number 1!



Couple number 2!



Loner on the rubbish heap...



Tearing myself I make the return leg this time seeing 8 Small Torts and 2 Peacocks. I'm just about to cut across from the halfway point through the estate when a Brimstone turns up and flies towards me doing that evasion manoeuvre where they fly directly at you and you have to duck out of the way. Luckily I managed to swivel round and spied where it had gone down and with a careful stalk I was able to get some half decent images onto the memory card.



The final quick trek back through the estate some adding singles of both Small Tort and Peacock to the tally bringing it to a respectable 11 Small Torts, 3 Peacocks and 2 Brimstones. I don't know what' happened to the Commas in these parts this year?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Janet Turnbull, 08-May-20 10:59 PM GMT

That's a particularly nice capture of the Brimstone, Wurzel, and I love the one of the Small Tort couple gazing at each other across a dandelion!
- Janet

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-20 11:56 AM GMT

Nice way of wangling a bit of butterflying in with your work day Wurzel 😊

Commas were a bit thin on the ground around here too, definitely a poor third place behind Peacocks (2nd) and Small Tortoiseshells (an impressive 1st).

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 09-May-20 02:44 PM GMT

All those Small Tort images are a bit taunting for us poor souls in East Sussex, Wurzel !.
Good news about the Marshies at Tilshead, hope they're not in a red flag area.
There seem to be regular sightings of them now, but I've always reckoned about 20th May at the Hill.

Keep well exercised, safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-May-20 05:03 PM GMT

Cheers Janet 😊 I like Couple umber 2 as well

Cheers Neil 😊 The lack of Commas did seem to be a thing this spring – hopefully just a blip? 😞

Cheers Trevor 😊 Sorry about the Small Torts Trevor – you'll be getting your own back later in the season I'm sure 😊🇧🇪 The Marshies numbers are building – they've started emerging at Battlesbury which is a couple of Hills along – so it won't be long now 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 10-May-20 09:41 PM GMT

What would the butterflies do without the dandelions in springtime? Great Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshell images – and I do like the one on the muscari flowers in particular.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-May-20 10:46 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Also what would butterfly enthusiasts do without them? In spring it's often a case of check the flowers to find the butterflies 😊

Middle Street 27-03-2020

It was cooler with more of a breeze than recently today and so I saved up my break and lunch and headed out for my exercise slightly later so as to give the butterflies a chance to warm up and get going. Later in the season it'll be a case of the earlier the better to try and catch them before they get fully solar charged but now it's often the case that they won't even emerge from wherever they go at nights should it remain cool. On the way over the wooden bridge I knew I'd made the right call as there was a Peacock flying in the field as if to greet me. Cheered by this I carried on and made the entrance in good time and continued directly to the Hotspot where there was a singleton Small Tort and a second was flying in amongst the reeds round on the river path. A third was hanging about on the corner of Dip 1 by the river so things were definitely looking good for Small Torts here.



I made my way down into the hollow of Dip 1 and standing in the middle scanned to my left and right looking for the tell-tale signs of butterflies or even the slightest of movement. I'd soon notched up four more Small Torts mostly on the side of the Dip nearest to the path – they seemed to all be

congregating in a small patch of low growing nettles almost as if they were attending a crèche or Nursery. As I watched them something flew by like a bullet and I watched as it threw on the anchors by some blossom and hovered – a Hummingbird Hawkmoth. It was nice to see but not what I really been hoping for...but there in the corner near the huge clump of Bramble was the butterfly I was after, a lovely gingery Comma. After some time with it I got back to the Small Torts and also checked out the black mat – which held a Grass Snake and one much smaller than on my last visit – had it shrunk in the wash?





Onwards and then downwards into Dip 2 which was empty. I reckon the slightly longer, lusher grass will make this a Skipper hotspot in the coming months and I'm looking forward to testing this hypothesis. As it was bereft of butterflies on this occasion I moved onto to the tiny Dip 3 and here I encountered a Small Tort which led me on a bit of a merry dance; first this way then that, out of the Dip and then back down into the Dip from the other side of the Banked Path. On the final leg of its foray it puts up two more Small Torts proving that this Dip may be small but it is perfectly formed.



At the far end a sole Small Tort held sway in the prime habitat and then I turned around and started back the way I'd come. To avoid going over my allotted time I started back and took the banked path peering down into Dips and 2 from above. As I started a couple of Small Torts were quarrelling over who was to have the best basking spot and looking down into Dip 3 I could make out a Peacock and a Small Tort. On the final stretch there was a Small Tort on the path between Dip 2 and Dip 1 and then I dove down to check out Dip 1 for a final time. Things were good in here as now there were four Small Torts the Comma was hanging around and I finally managed to nail a Peacock although the second evaded my lens very successfully! At least I thought that it had - looking back at the shots now it appears that I bagged both of them. Time was almost up and so I started for home...





While waiting for a couple of cyclists to pass me on the Town Path I nipped down the slip way to the side of the Mill Pond so as to remain effectively Social Distanced. For once I was glad of the unaware bicyclists as in stepping out the way I found a final two Small Torts to add to the days Tally which brought the grand total to...13 Small Torts, 1 Comma, 3 Peacocks and a Hummingbird Hawkmoth – oddly though no Brimstones?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-May-20 11:15 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, great shots of the Small Tort, they did very well round here this Spring, so did the Peacock , I can't tell which shot I like the best, your Brimstone really stands out so I think that one 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-May-20 08:13 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was chuffed with the Brimstone shot as it led me on a merry dance for a bit and then settled as if to apologise for its' previous poor behaviour 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-May-20 10:07 PM GMT

Five Rivers 28-03-2020

Having visited Middle Street yesterday today I made the walk to Five Rivers – more as a recce to see if there was a safe way to walk there (busy roads to cross, pinch points on the path to get through quickly etc) and also to work out whether I could get there, have a look around and get back within enough time to make up for break, lunch and or any of the usual spare time I'd be able to utilise at work. The walk there was pretty quick only taking about 15 minutes and there were a few pinch points but I came up with various work-rounds for them so in future I may be able to shave a minute or two off the walking time.

Once on site as it were I made straight for Comma Corner – in a week or two I'll need to check the River side path and the Glades for Whites and Specklies but at the moment the main action will be at Comma Corner and the Banks. As soon as I reached the foot of the little slope leading up to CC I saw that it was again living up to its name as I could see a couple of orangey blurs detaching themselves from different points on the Bramble, slamming together and spiralling upwards into the blue. After about 30 seconds of conflict they split up and went back to roughly the same places from which they'd left. Cautiously I approached the large Bramble and saw that there was a lovely looking Comma at the nearside foot of the bush whilst further in a behind a thin veil of thorns were three more Commas. As I took many, many shots a Peacock made its presence felt by almost scything the top of my head off and once it had obviously got my attention went down on the deck almost with a smug "look at me" appearance.



Leaving the Commas still jostling for what they deemed the best perch I followed a different Peacock (the original was still in prime posing position) down from the top of the first Bank through a gap in the hedge to the Lower Banks from where I wandered along eyes peeled when reaching any likely looking roosting/basking perches. All was quiet – it seems that Middle Street is now the place for Small Torts perhaps because the Banks have become a little too overgrown – I've noticed that the Small Torts at the start of the season like little patches of dried grass with low nettle growth and here the grass is easily higher than my boots. I did spy a Small Tort however at the end of the Lower Banks up in the middle branches of a small tree so perhaps the Small Torts have already been at their peak? I got onto the Small Tort as there was also a Comma up high in a neighbouring tree.



I carried on round as I was making good time and I wanted to see if a complete circuit was possible in the allotted time. All was quiet around the back part of the reserve and so I cut through the middle spying a Peacock looking gorgeous on the white blossom of one of the trees in the central copse. As I watched the breeze caught the tree shaking old petals off like a snowfall in miniature which looked beautiful but also dislodged the Peacock. I followed round and into the hollow centre of the copse and it landed on a less salubrious looking compost heap. I went for the shot anyway only to discover that my battery had gone flat. By the time the spare was in and I was ready the Peacock had gone. I carried on muttering and grumbling like Muttley and there was no Red Admiral along the bottom river path to console me either. Luckily the lovely looking Comma was still hanging around at Comma Corner to offer me the consolation I required and a great boost before I made my way homewards. It's always good to leave on a high.



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 12-May-20 03:10 PM GMT

It seems ages since I saw the Comma and Peacock Wurzel, at least we can venture forth now 😊 Hope fully !!!!! 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-May-20 08:21 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 It will be nice driving out and not having the worry about getting stopped even though you were allowed to drive to exercise 😊 They briefly flirted and raised my hopes about travelling to France before they dashed them again 😊 Still so long as we stay healthy that's the main thing 😊 When you get out there, there might still be the odd Peacock around 😊 😊

Middle Street 31-03-2020

So we continue into the strange circumstances of Lockdown and it's all a bit confusing really with contradictory guidance - "You must stay at home and not go out" but you can go out "to buy essential supplies, or exercise, or go to work if you're an essential/key worker (if you look at the list this is pretty much everyone)". The hardest thing for me to fathom is that I still go to work a couple of times a week and then I have to work from home - something I'm pretty adept at doing but there is only so much paper work, covering work to set and mark and then what? Still I cracked on with it all day and come the afternoon at 3ish I suddenly realised that a. it was clocking off time and b. whilst I'd been working solidly I'd also been sitting and had walked nowhere near the usual 12000 steps of a typical working day. So I grabbed my camera, gloves and facemask and set off for Middle Street.

On the way there was nothing to report as it was one of those afternoons when the sun is occasionally smothered in a blank of thick cloud. Looking over the Meadows towards Middle Street from the Town Path I could see that there was an imminent break in the cloud that if I timed it right I should be able to take advantage of. So I upped the pace, urging on my protesting calves and knees and managed to be several paces onto the reserve when the sun broke out. As if waiting and watching for this break just as I had a Small Tort flew up to greet me. On I went round to the Hotspot where I found a further two Torts of the Small variety.





My luck faltered slightly when I reached Dip 1 as the clouds which had been toying with the idea of holding the sun hostage rolled in with a vengeance. The previous cloud had been fluffy and light letting light filter through but this was a mean looking big old bugger, as it bulldozed its way across the sky the lights went out (almost). I'd managed to locate two Small Torts whilst it was completing its manoeuvres but once it was in place that was it as the temperature had dropped along with the light intensity. As I walked along the bank I spied out two more Small Torts hurrying across the field, fleeing the cool and looking for somewhere to sit out the dark cloud.



At the end I turned around and having not seen any other butterflies took to checking the state of play regards the cloud. As I'd wandered the length of the site it had shifted moving towards the centre of Harnham and as it crept ever Eastwards behind it the sun came out and with it two Small Torts - where they'd been on my walk towards the end I can't fathom but the minute the golden rays touched the soil suddenly they were there. Cheered by the butterflies and the increasing warmth I made the return leg of my 'Transect'. On the other side of the Banked path opposite Dip 3 a Small White hove into view working its way towards me. Rather than chase after it I stood stock still near a few Dandelions to see if it would land near me. Closer and closer it came and I fought the urge to step towards it. Then when it was a matter of metres away from me it settled so within a few steps I was within range and so I tried for a few shots. It then stopped near to me a couple times more after which it must have re-fueled sufficiently as it tore off along the Banked path and disappeared across the river.





Back in Dip 1 I relocated a pair of Small Torts so I'm guessing that they the same two that I'd already counted only they hadn't moved possibly as they hadn't warmed up fully after the torpor inducing cloud cover. On to the Hotspot and the two Small Torts had become one (a la Spice Girls). Well there might have been two but the second was nowhere to be seen - hiding/roosting out of sight? Still with the Small White (my second of the year) etched into my minds' eye I made for home pleased with my haul.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 12-May-20 10:59 PM GMT

Some spiffing looking butterflies there, they're all very tired and lackluster now. Now you can drive further afield I can expect some reports from 'the hill' in the coming weeks/months 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 13-May-20 11:42 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, some lovely shots of the Small Torts and you managed a Small White with open wings, I've had a struggle taking shots of them when they've arrived briefly in the Garden, they've shot off again Quickly just lately. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-May-20 10:13 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 Fingers crossed but the way things are going in other countries I think the 'Easing' may be short lived 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 The whites can be tricky little blighters especially in the spring, the summer brood seem a bit more chilled out and more likely to pose 😊

Daily Exercise – Five Rivers 02-04-2020

The weather report suggested that the day was going to be one of those write-off days. In fact I was kinda looking forward to it as each day of Lockdown when the weather isn't great means less FOMO 😊. However as I zig-zagged across the Waitrose car park in the queue the sun peeked out from the clouds and offered a little warmth. Once the weekly shop was done I was safely ensconced at home (with clothes in the washing machine and the bath water running out) I looked out the window and there was still sunshine and blue skies. I checked the BBC weather app which was adamant that it was grey cloud and would be for the rest of the day. I looked out of the window again and there was still blue sky...So for my exercise I headed over to Five Rivers.

It was the wrong call. I could tell that as I cut along the path behind the Waitrose garage because the cloud covered the sun for a minute and a Brimstone flew towards me, past me and carried on heading towards Middle Street! Oh well I plugged on. Through the 'glades' nothing – no Speckle no OT or indeed any other white. Comma Corner was distinctly lacking in punctuation and as I strolled the Banks there was a slight chill in the air as the sun had been swallowed and a dearth of butterflies...

And then as if turned on a sixpence the weather switched, the cloud disappeared, the sky became blue and the temperature rocketed to the point where I didn't need a coat. I scanned the sky I reckoned that this turn in the weather could last about 5-10 minutes and then I scanned the Banks. A Peacock went up brought out of stand-by by the sun's rays and as it flew sluggishly it spooked a Small Tortoiseshell which even from a distance seemed noticeably knackered. I plumed for the Peacock and so watched as it settled, stalked, took a few shots and backed off. Behind me the Small Tort took off from its hiding place in the grass and so I repeated the process.



After this the cloud swallowed the sun again but this time it meant business and it didn't come back out all afternoon. Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 13-May-20 10:49 PM GMT

Good grief, Wurzel, how on earth did that Tortoiseshell stay in one piece and actually fly? Quite a comparison with the Peacock – which do seem to be an extremely robust species when you think about it. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 14-May-20 06:37 PM GMT

I thought the same as Dave about that last Small Tort., good to see the others though. I note that Marsh Frits. seem to be appearing all over Wilts. at the moment, look forward to your images of them later on. I saw one in a meadow very near Devizes last year.

Say safe, and enjoy day long exercise.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-May-20 11:35 AM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I don't know but that's not the worst one I've seen there was a few years back that I nick named Stumpy 😊 It could just be round my way but the Small Torts are often out in numbers here first – when the plants haven't quite established themselves so the Small Torts always seem to be basking on stony, stick strewn, rough ground so perhaps that's why they get so messed up?

Cheers Trevor 😊 The Marshies are on the march indeed – they've got into the 100's at a couple of sites but the count from Cotley is still modest though not many people go though the trees and round the corner 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-May-20 06:49 PM GMT

Middle Street 04-04-2020

The day dawned with beautiful sunshine and so to give my wife a break from the Home-schooling I took the girls out and over the Town Path to Middle Street to try and catch some Minnows. It was only when I was half way there that I realised that today was a Saturday – I'd lost track of the days already and we'd only been in Lockdown for less than a fortnight! On the way over four Brimstones flashed by at various points, their lemon yellow shining out in the sunshine against the blue sky. The single Peacock that we saw by contrast looked more like a diurnal Bat as we could only see the underside of the wings as if bombed by overhead.

As we approached the entrance I looked over into the neighbouring garden and there was another Peacock and as we hugged the fence once on site I could see another two Peacocks in their back garden. The girls raced on ahead of me eager to get their jam jars tied up and their net in down at their preferred pontoon so I walked along the now dried up quagmire path (giggety) to the hotspot. Once there I had a mooch around but it was quite quiet with only a Peacock in one of the gardens and a male Brimstone which was soon joined briefly by a female Brimstone. From here I walk round to check that the girls hadn't fallen in, chucked each other in or tried to drown one another. None of things had happened and so I left them Minnow-ing and the set off along the river path towards the Dips with a Small Tort flying overhead and then to the opposite bank. As I was taking the river side path I actually started in Dip 3 and on the rough triangular patch of ground that slopes gently up to the banked path I spent some time with a Peacock and Small Tort.



I carried on after a fashion checking out the far end of the site before returning to check on the girls. In the longer grasses here is a tatty Peacock and a Small White hanging from the Bramble like the remnant of a plucked piece of bunting. It looked peaceful and docile enough but when I was still a good way away it took to the air and escaped over the fence into the neighbouring garden. On the walk back I checked out Dip 3 again and now there were two nice looking Peacocks.



Tatty P



The difference a little flash can make



I caught up with the girls and then set out again working my round the 'lake'. A Peacock was the first butterfly that I saw swiftly followed by a Brimstone and then I spy a smaller white. As it flies I notice it has a tangerine/cream look about it and it exhibits patrolling behaviour - the sure sign of spring - my first Orange-tip of the 2020. As is always the way for me it seems it leads me on a chase round the Lake eventually disappearing over a fence in the far corner of the Hotspot - oh well in the absence of a photo I'll take the memory of the wonderfully bright orange against the icy cool white. Once I'd completed my lap of the Lake a pair of Peacocks, one on the pontoon and another on the beach of the lake had cheered me back to my usual disposition.



So a quick check of the Minnows, a fair few and a Caddis fly larva, and I went back to check the dips again. As I got to the large bramble patch another or possibly the same Orange-tip flew by. This one didn't take me by surprise so I fired off some distant record shots before I followed and when he went for some nectar I was ready - some very quick steps in and a few shots fired off before he was any the wiser.



Chuffed but quite hot and sweaty from the chasing (no-one should dare ask a butterfly that's been pursuing an OT if this could constitute your daily exercise!) I spent some time down in Dip 1. A Small White was hovering about over the Bramble at the far end and threatening to land although it never did and there were a brace apiece of Small Tort and Peacock to keep me in photos for a while. But I couldn't help thinking back to the OT so it was with some reluctance that my next check-in with the girls became my final on as we returned the Minnows back to the River, double checked the jam jars were empty and wove our way back home.



Whilst we were waiting to cross the weir path which is too narrow for Social Distancing I saw a couple of butterflies spiralling on the slipway on the other side of millpond and once we'd safely navigated the narrow path a quick check confirmed them as Small Torts. First Orange-tip - Spring has definitely sprung!



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-20 08:36 AM GMT

[quote=Wurzel post_id=153587 time=1589404421 user_id=9821] ...but the way things are going in other countries I think the 'Easing' may be short lived 😊

Going by some of the behaviour I have witnessed here this week, you could be right Wurzel. There are some real idiots out there.

[quote=Wurzel post_id=153703 time=1589651361 user_id=9821] ... my first Orange-tip of the 2020...
Wurzel

Always a special moment. It already seems a long time ago to me here, what a strange year this is.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-May-20 08:49 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 That's the thing with being tardy with your PD - I've got the benefits of Marshies and Small Pearls whilst reliving my OTs again 😊 That's my excuse and I'm sticking to it 😊😊

The Muppets seem to be quite restrained in my neck of the woods Neil - though to be fair I've spent most of today walking deep in a wood 😊 Hopefully their restraint will last 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 17-May-20 10:23 PM GMT

Some of those Peacocks look as fresh as the day they hatched all those months ago. Amazing creatures. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 19-May-20 04:22 PM GMT

Although your most recent post was only from last month, species wise it seems ages ago. I have not seen an OT or Peacock for quite a while.

I was talking to Dave Cook the other day (who discovered the Black Hairstreaks at Ditchling) and he thinks they could be early this year. It will be great if they flaunt themselves for the camera, as they have in the previous couple of years.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-May-20 08:11 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I reckon it's cos they're wusses Dave, always perching and showing off and never getting down in the rough stuff like Small Torts 😊😊
Cheers Trevor 😊 Keep me posted on the Blackstreaks – if anything that is an Essential journey 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

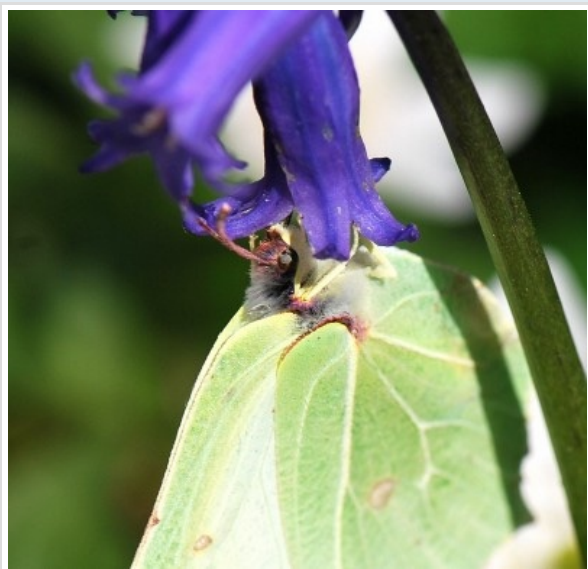
by Wurzel, 21-May-20 10:39 PM GMT

Garston Wood 05-04-2020

With Lock Down continuing and the weather set to bring many more people out for exercise we decided to drive a short way to complete our exercise for today and so we drove the back way to Garston Wood as it would actually be easier to Social Distance there than anywhere in Salisbury. As we drove past Lizzie Gardens which I would have had to have crossed to get to Middle Street there were already plenty of people strolling about so it looked like we'd made the right decision. When we got to Garston there were several cars in the car park but most importantly no people so we pulled in, parked and set off before that changed. To allay any possible criticism now; we only saw two older couples and one small family over the course of the next hour and when it came to Social Distancing there wasn't a problem as we stepped three or four metres off the path, said our 'mornings' and then when they'd gone past carried on our way. It was crazy to think that if I'd taken my exercise in Salisbury I'd have probably encountered twice the number of people within the first 10 minutes after leaving the house 😊😊. Anyway...

We started off taking the lower path to the other side of the wood and in among the sea of green and pungent aroma of lots of wild Garlic Anemones and Celendines and also the odd Bluebell poked out. Occasionally they would be very briefly visited by a passing Brimstone. The wood was alive with bird songs and calls so much so in fact that you had to strain to pick out the various species but there were a few Blackcaps, Marsh Tits and Nuthatch adding to the cacophony that I've been hearing around Salisbury recently.

Garston has, or rather used to have, an enclosure for butterflies where they were hoping Pearl Bordered Frits would recolonise. Alas they never did and now the gates have gone too but this is now one of the best parts of the Wood for the butterflies. As I stepped through the gate frame I spied a pair of Brimstone locked in a courtship flight though it didn't come to fruition and by the time I'd stalked close enough the female was gone. There were good numbers here flying up and down on either side of the straight path and so we paused for a while for a quick snack. I managed to get onto a couple of female Brimstones and took great delight in watching the antics of two Peacocks which were constantly sparring up and down the path. One would land and start basking and then its rival would appear and off they would both go before the usurper would land a little way ahead of us and the process would continue. It was exhausting to watch and at one point both came down onto the deck briefly for a breather before each felt the others present and then away they went again.



We then followed the path round through what used to be the 'Exotic Plantation' but in the last decade has been cleared and opened up. It now looks like it would be perfect for those Pearls 😊. All the way along the path there were Peacocks that would come down on the deck or down on a log at the side of the path. I thought that there could be just two which were following the same pattern as the other pair earlier but then as I moved in closer to one for a few shots I saw that there was another with wings tightly closed which it was hassling. A third flew in and settled briefly before the whole dance started again though now I knew that there were three at least.





All too soon we were back at the car park which again was lacking any humans so we could safely de-boot, load up and wagons roll home with all of us feeling infinitely better for having just gone somewhere different and experienced just the tiniest slice of 'normality'.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 22-May-20 08:48 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, love your Brimstone shots on the Bluebell 😊 much better than mine, 😊 my Brimstone landed slap bang into the Bowles Mauve 😊 I'm not grumbling it was my first. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-May-20 07:30 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I got lucky in that a couple of the Brimstones seemed to really develop a taste for the Bluebell nectar and were so intent on hovering it up that I was able to get up really close and personal 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 22-May-20 10:03 PM GMT

Brimstones on Bluebells – a real evocation of Spring. They do seem to have a particular fondness for them, though it requires a little extra effort to get the proboscis down that long tube of a flower... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-May-20 10:56 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 They do look a little ridiculous when they're on the Bluebells, like a 6'5" Rugby player sipping Lap Sang Su Shong from china cups 😊

Five Rivers 08-04-2020

Having spent the morning doing chores I was pretty eager to get out and do some exercise so almost as soon as the lunch was eaten and the crockery cleared I was out of the door and heading towards Five Rivers. As I walked along the Town Path alongside the river there wasn't an awful lot about; a Small Tort flew by near Waitrose and as I drew near the Wooden Bridge a Small White was visible on a bush on the other side of the river and a duo of Brimstones had a bit of a falling out. It remained quiet all the way along the river and through the Glades but I didn't mind as the quicker the journey the more time I'd have on site.

The action started as I purposefully strode up the gentle slope towards Comma Corner. As I paused by the little track that dissects the Copse and Brimstone cut through the air past me one way and a Small White came from behind. A Peacock was still holding its territory here and didn't want to get involved leaving the two whites to battle it out for supremacy of the air while it was content holding the terra firma. As I looked back the way I'd come to follow the tussling action of the two whites a third White species hove into view. I could tell by the tangerine cream colour that it was a male Orange-tip. It flew onwards nearer and nearer to the still battling Whites but when it was almost upon them it veered off to my right and disappeared from view across the river. Quite unsporing really.

However Orange-tips are like buses and just as I was considering making a move to somewhere else on the site another male appeared. This time it carried on towards me, flying directly obviously on a mission, and as it went past I found myself in hot pursuit. It flew dizzily at times along the Banks, occasionally dipping down the sides to find a likely looking source of nectar before returning back up top to carry on its mission. Whilst it was taking these pit-stops I'd dash down the side of the bank too and grab the odd shot when and where I could. At the end of the Banks the small wood should have brought its' progress to a halt and given me a chance to catch my breath but no the little blighter followed the left hand path, skirting the

edge of the wood and then flying on and down the Back Bank. At this point he found the clump of Bluebells and so I was able to grab the almost obligatory shot 'OT on BB'.



As I'm here I carry on zig zagging up and down the bank until I reach the far corner of the site from where I make the return journey. I get slightly waylaid on the way back as I watch a pair of Brimstones chasing each other until they flew over the hedge into the Allotments and in the Nettle Patch two Peacocks seem to be investigating the merits of some of the plants as a possible nursery. I look up and see two whites just on the corner of the Back and Lower Banks. One has the familiar Tangerine Cream look of a male OT but the other appears to be just a white though from the flappy flight and the size I reckon it could be a female OT. I watched from a distance expecting there to be a bundle and then a breaking apart if my surmise that it's a pair is incorrect. But instead of the spiralling tussle there seems to be more chasing than fighting. I get a little nearer and see that it is indeed a pair. My next thought was that it will all end quickly with the female landing and then raising her abdomen in rejection whilst the male might have a few cracks unsuccessful cracks at the whip. After 30 or so seconds of chasing, with a brief interruption by a confused male Brimstone, the female lands low down in the hedge right against the path. The male lands next to her but instead of her raising her abdomen he is swinging his round and Boom they're copulating. I stay with them for a fair old while taking advantage of the fact that they're otherwise engaged and so actually sitting still for once but then give them a bit of peace and privacy.





Mrs.

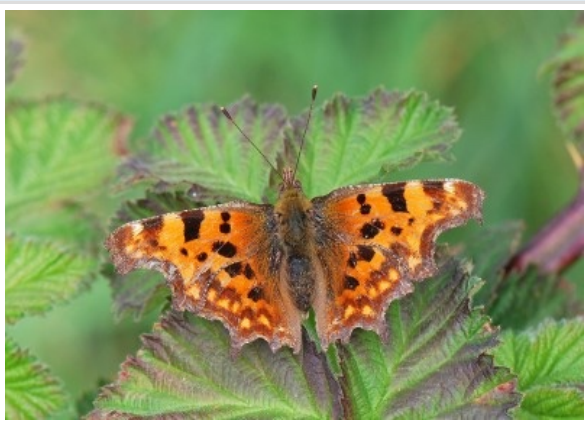


Mr.



I head back to Comma Corner where the only change in the butterflies was that the Peacock had become Peacocks so excusing me from the feeling of déjà vu (That strange feeling we sometimes get that we've lived through something before, that what is happening now has already happened...) and then back along the Banks to find that the pairing had finished and they'd gone their separate ways. Over at the far end of the site I clock up another Brimstone and male OT whilst a second OT leads me from here back towards the Banks again. On the corner I stare up and a flash of Blue becomes my first Holly Blue of 2020 and predictably it doesn't come down lower than 6ft the whole time that I watch it. I carry on now starting the inevitable journey back home following a female Orange-tip and cutting across the Lower Banks as I'd been remiss in not checking them before now. As I wade through the long grass which I'm sure has had a sprinkling of Miracle Gro, so quickly has it shot up, I have a little Purple patch with the female Orang-tip

settling within spitting distance of a Peacock and a Comma. I don't know what to go for first so point my lens at the closest and somehow manage to get shots of all three! I was now really glad that I'd opted for the more labourious route back as slightly further along still I manage a record shot of a Holly Blue and pick up my first Specklies of 2020.





After this I tarry for a while in the Glades as a pair of OT's look like they're about to be my second copulating pair only for the female to raise her abdomen in rejection leaving the male to try to drown his sorrows in some Red Nettles. There also 2 pairs of Specklies and three Holly Blues which unfortunately all decide to remain aloft - I found that I didn't really mind this I mean to be fair if you'd just crawled out a sleeping bag and found that you could fly I don't suppose you'd want to come down for a while. Somehow or other I manage to pull myself away and head for home. A brilliant period of exercise - 2 firsts for the year and my first copulating OTs!





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevling, 23-May-20 11:36 PM GMT

Wurzel, lovely Orange Tip photos and well done finding the finding the pair in copulation. I have yet to photograph this myself having only seen one pair several years ago without a camera with me 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 24-May-20 07:00 AM GMT

Yes, a set of OT shots to be proud of.
As with all 'white' species obtaining detail is difficult, so is avoiding glare or whiteout.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 24-May-20 08:53 PM GMT

A great set of Orange Tip images, Wurzel. 😊👍 Always good to see a pair engage like that, as nine times out of ten rejection ensues. When they do get together, there is virtually no courtship at all.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-May-20 08:48 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 Isn't always the way 😊 Fingers crossed you'll come across it again - I need Brimstones now to complete the Whites section of my 'In Cop' Collection - I was going to call it the Butterfly Kama Sutra but there seems to be only one position 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I got lucky in that the female was a bit prudish and so chose somewhere a little more sheltered and with a little shade 😊😊

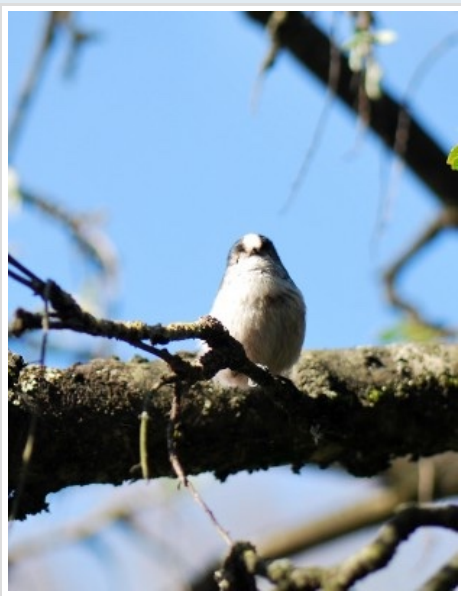
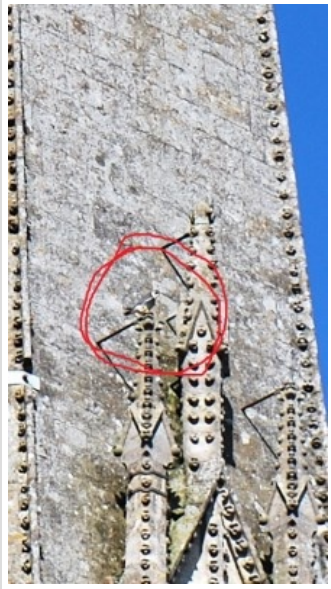
Cheers Dave 😊 It was literally a case of 'land and latch on' no messing about 😊😊

Daily Exercise - March into April...

On the days when I don't take my exercise at Five Rivers or Middle Street I will join my wife and the girls and we'll head out through the Close, under the town bridge and round the park on the Southampton Road before looping back and heading home past the Cathedral. There have been a few occasions when I've just looked and watched and a few when I've taken my camera just in case. The birding list is quite good with Red Kite, Buzzard and Little Egrets adding the quality to the usual fare.

29th March

This was one of those days which looked stunning but the blue sky belied the fact that it was actually quite cool - possibly too cool for butterflies. However the highlight of the day was first hearing the screech and then watching one of the Salisbury Peregrines as is sliced through the sky and landed near the base of the spire.



30th March

Again it was cool, almost cold and I had to revert to wearing my coat for the exercise walk. I've noticed that during this Lockdown the Wildlife in general has become much calmer and much more approachable. So it was today with one of the squirrels feeding only a few feet away from me. Also seen today were some Snake's Head Fritillaries, my first frits for the year 😊.





1st April

Another cold and grey day, another day when it is necessary to dig out the coat and another day of wandering and wondering what on earth is going on. It was really surreal today as the cold kept people in and away from their exercise, there was a real feel of Zombie Apocalypse. Mind you the birds are getting tamer by the day - much more Lockdown and even Mistle Thrushes will be eating out of our hands I reckon. Though I did see a few of those today the star was a cracking little Robin - cheering me up despite its slightly wistful and melancholic song possibly because it's in D minor which reminded me of the great Nigel Tufnel who informed us all that this is the saddest key: "...it makes people weep instantly". 🤔😄



The last two times I've done this the days couldn't have been more different...

6th April

We left home this afternoon (after 3pm is the quietest) in reasonably warm conditions – so much so that the coat was left behind and I was quite comfortable in my jumper – so spring is definitely here then! Along the way I kept my eyes peeled in case there was a butterfly about but no such luck but there were some Ashy Mining Bees. I tried for a few shots but they came out looking terrible probably because the bees were so active. Shortly the sun was swallowed by the cloud – so much for a day of full sun (BBC) or sunny intervals (Met). A little later still, round in the park, I noticed a slim, upright looking brown bird in one of the trees. I got close enough for a very distant shot just to confirm its ID and it was a female Kestrel. There is a nest nearby apparently so something to look out for on another day.



9th April

Today was a totally different story again! The butterflying started early-ish with a pair of Peacocks on the side of a shed up near my vets. I was waiting for Teddy to have his bandage removed and to keep to protocol was waiting outside the vets on the pavement. When I handed him in I had to place the cat carrier on a bench which was half way down the path. Then walk away while the vet came and collected Teddy – it felt like the handover in a ransom or gangster movie. That done and Teddy dropped off I carried on to Waitrose to do the weekly shop. While queuing in the car park and snaking round two parking spaces away from the nearest other shopper and in between reading my book I spied a Brimstone, Peacock and a Holly Blue. Then it came to the walk proper. First there was a fly-by Small Tort in The Close, then further along by the exit gate an Orange-tip flew. Along the road side near the bridge a Small White evaded my lens and then finally in the park I caught up with a butterfly – a Comma down on the deck.



On the return leg the/a male Orange-tip flew in the garden of the Gatekeepers cottage and outside the Cathedral a Peacock stood out against the limestone coloured ground.



That's an end to the 'Tales from Lockdown' or the Epistles of Exercise for now...

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 27-May-20 08:24 AM GMT

Hope you're bathing in Brownie points, two were seen in Cambridgeshire this week. 😊

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-May-20 08:44 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I hope they hold on a little bit as I've used some of my Brownie points to get me through until my new camera arrives at the weekend 😊😊

Garston Wood 10-04-2020

As we needed to do a drive by to my mum and dads out at Sixpenny Handley to do a food swap we decided to all go and then we could stop off at Garston Wood on the way and have our daily walk/exercise. We needed to do a food swap as we haven't been able to get any Olive oil and we had some staples (lentils, pasta, oats) that my mum's been struggling to get. On the drive over there were a few Brimstone here and there and through the top bit of hedge at Bowerchalke there were four male OT's patrolling along the hedgerow.

When we arrived in the car park there was only one other car there and so we set off down the paths before they came back. We took the usual route along the bottom path that runs parallel to the road and then gently climbs up the hill into the centre of the reserve before turning left and down the middle path. On the way we'd seen a few Brimstones and a Peacock in the distance flying over the newly coppiced area. Further along this path I paused for a Peacock whilst a female Brimstone pattered about nearby.



The path came to a T junction and so we turned right and had a breather by the large fallen tree which served as a comfy seat for a quick snack. Whilst here we were visited by the Peacock, a male Orange-tip and also a Holly Blue which descended from behind me, almost clipping my shoulder as it passed by. A duo of Treecreepers flitted about flying from up high to down low in the next tree and then working their way up. We then struck out across the reserve taking a slightly different route than usual. The path we took bisects the reserve and then meets up with the track that run around the border. The mercury was rising and the butterflies were now extremely fast moving and incessant in their motion but I was lucky enough to capture a couple of shots of one of two Peacocks. I didn't bother after this as any OTs or whites just kept moving and the Peacocks would take off from their basking place on the deck well before I could get within range. On the walk round to the Enclosure I counted 2 male OT's and Peacocks and a single male Brimstone but there were also Marsh Tits, a Garden Warbler singing and a GS Woody calling and doing a little light head-banging. In the Enclosure and on through there were more Peacocks and OTs and a Holly Blue which came down low and spent good few minutes circling various flower heads and always looking like it was just about to land but never actually doing it.



All too soon we were back at the car park, our car the only one present and we'd not seen a single person the entire time we'd been on site. We carried on to Sixpenny Handley and managed to do our food swap; my dad using a broomstick to lower the bags over the garden fence, and me using the girls

fishing net, the combined length of these being easily greater than the prescribed 2 metres.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 28-May-20 07:42 PM GMT

New Camera Wurzel 🤔 You've got some great shots with the old 😊 Lovely Orange Tips, I thought they'd finished till I got a visit from a Female OT today, I saw a Peacock at HLB yesterday but it was in really bad shape, the Butterflies are finding it to hot now, makes you wonder if it's worth a journey to find them. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-May-20 07:43 PM GMT

Middle Street 11-04-2020

After experiencing the incessant flying of butterflies in the heat of yesterday I decided to take my daily exercise earlier in the morning in the hope that the OTs might sit still, some even for long enough to get a few shots. As I was Middle Street bound the girls asked to come with me and so we set off down the street with the occasional quiet clink of jam jars as our musical accompaniment. On the way over we saw zero butterflies and I was slightly worried that perhaps we'd gone too early? It was still quiet once we were on the reserve. Well when I say quiet I mean there were no butterflies because there was a full on Avian concerto taking place. I was able to pick out Blue and Great Tits, Robin, Blackbird and Blackcap as well as Chiff Chaff and the excited explosion of a Cetti's crashing in like a mistimed set of cymbals. The girls headed straight for the pontoons and so I strolled down the quagmire (giggety) path that runs alongside the boundary fence and round to the hotspot. This was unusually butterfly free and so I worked around the pond to meet the girls where a male OT bombed towards me. I tried to follow and it led me on a merry dance back round to the hotspot before it buggered off into the neighbouring gardens. So not too early but if the frenetic incessant patrolling of the OT was anything to go by perhaps not early enough?!

Having checked in with the girls I made my way to the Dips a Peacock did a fly-by and as I continued so I spied a white flying across Dip 1. From where I was standing it wasn't a Large White or Brimstone, it wasn't 'square' enough for a Green-veined and the flappy flight suggested that it was a female OT rather than a Small. So I again tried to follow it in the hope of a few shots. It was better behaved than the male and flew closer to the ground and much more slowly. It landed a couple of times but obviously wasn't happy with its perch as it moved quickly on again. I managed a couple of grab shots before it finally decided that this wasn't an appropriate spot and flew away across the river.



rubbish grab shot

Dip 2 was empty but as I climbed back up onto the banked path and looked down into the football field I spotted a Peacock basking on a concrete man hole cover. Chuffed with the juxtaposition of the shot I moved up towards the very top of the site where a Small Tortoiseshell fed briefly for me. After this I did the slow walk back to check on the girls where I was able to hear and then see my first Sedge Warbler of the year. On the way there was another Peacock (they're doing really well this year) sitting down on the deck with wings tightly closed. At Dip 2 there was the Peacock which earlier had been on the field. I knew it was that one because of the damage to the fore wing.





I had high hopes for Dip 1 as it usually comes up with something and so it was today. I sauntered down into the Dip and when I was about half way across a white took off and flew across the field, up and over the bank path and down into the field. I was able to follow it and I had a suspicion that it was a female OT from the flappy way it was flying. She investigated several different perches but none seemed suitable for her until the last one where she settled down, closed her wings up and stayed put. She was a cracker and well worth the wait.





After this I met up with the girls and together we walked across the site picking up the two Peacocks in the daps and a male OT flies into view. I'd been speaking to my Vet and he wondered about having a small piece of white rag or paper as a decoy to attract the male OT in. I'd draw out a passable female earlier and carefully ripped out the outline ready. Little L after her antics with the Minnows was very much looking forward to trying it out but my plan of placing a decoy female was thwarted as 'she'd' fallen out of my pocket. So as a male OT hove into view we could only watch as it patrolled around and carried on and over the river. A Small White followed after him and then we realised that it was time to start back.



On the way a Peacock is on the tiny slip of and at the end of the bridge/weir path and a Red Legged Partridge is in the final field. While Little L and I are watching a Sparrowhawk calls as it swoops over perching in the Willows before being mercilessly mobbed by a Crow causing it to head into town.



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 29-May-20 08:02 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, lovely shots of the Female OT, there seems to have been loads of Female OT's this year compared to the Males, I don't know if others think this or not but I've noticed lot's more shots of them in people's post, may be it's just me having them in the garden 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-May-20 07:39 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 We really did cross over last night - I've only just seen your first Comment sorry 😞 Unfortunately my Nikon D60 died on me whilst I was out looking for Marshies 😞😞😞 - basically over the 11 years that I had it I hammered it so much that actually I was surprised that it lasted as long as it did 😊 It's not all bad though as I've now ordered a used Nikon D90 which has more pixels, a bigger sensor and is the same body as what my wife uses so I've had a test run with it 😊😊

It has been a good year for OTs so there probably are a few more females round 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-May-20 10:04 AM GMT

Five Rivers 14-04-2020

Technically this was the Easter Holidays but I still spent most of the morning working getting more remote learning work planned out and resourced. Come lunchtime I was raring to get out and move about and feel some sun so I wolfed my lunch down and made for Five Rivers as it was this sites turn for my patronage. On the way I called in at a little cutting into the trees that line the other side of the river/Town Path. It was a tiny break in the trees, roughly square in shape and barely 4 metres across but the break in the canopy allows the light to pour in and three Specklies were taking advantage of this and intermittently basking and scarping with each other. As I was watching their antics an Uncle of mine happened to be passing and so we caught up. It was quite a surreal experience standing several metres away and shouting pleasantries at each other.



After my Uncle had set off on his errands I got back to butterflying, stepping once more onto the Town Path and making for Five Rivers. On the way a White fluttered on the other side of the River by the Wooden Bridge and a Specklie greeted me as I stepped onto the site proper. I carried on flipping between sun and shade as I strolled along the Riverside path. A few UFWs fluttered about - probably Smalls as they weren't big enough for Large Whites - a male OT was on patrol and on some of the lower vegetation in a break in the treeline a Green-veined White finally settled just long enough for me to get my first definite images of 2020. After this I moved slightly up the slope and walked through the Glades where again a male OT was on patrol and 3 Specklies jostled in the sun whilst a Small White hurried by.



I reached the stage in the path and today forwent Comma Corner reasoning that it was probably past its best and instead worked my way along the Lower Banks. I was glad with my decision as I found first a Comma and then a Red Admiral, further singles of Small White and OT and a pair of Specklies. Slightly further along I came across a Holly Blue but it constantly stayed up high, refusing to come down apart from the occasional taunting dive which would culminate in it flying up even higher than from where it had started. I tried whispering at it but no joy as it seemed elated to just be alive and to be fair in the glorious warmth and sun who could blame it? About a third of the way along I encountered a Small Tort and a Peacock hung around the ever expanding patch of Bramble which has been migrating down the bank for a few years now.





At an earlier juncture in the year I might have turned around here and got back to scanning the slope for butterflies but now is the time to press on and head further round Five Rivers to take in all the habitat and so I did. Walking along the Back Path a Holly Blue flew in the distance and I watched for as long as I could before it disappeared into the Allotments and in the far corner a Small White finally behaved itself; whilst it fed greedily on a Dandelion I was able to get in really close to it and the slight shading from the surrounding Brambles meant that the white wasn't totally blown.



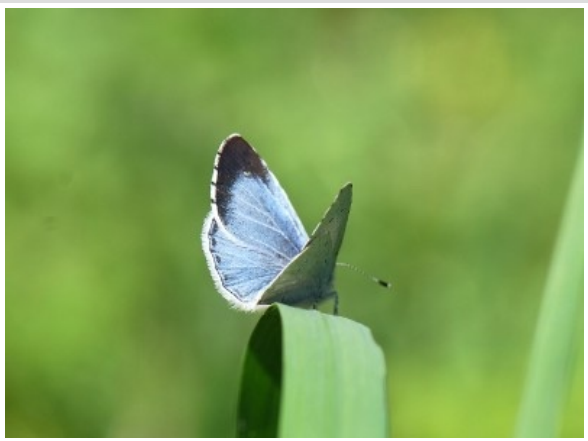
View towards the river from back path

I carried on picking up a couple more OTs by the time I'd reached the far corner and there were another couple patrolling the opposite side of the site. From here I cut diagonally across to get back to the Back path so as to complete the Lower Banks in reverse. Once here, in the nettle beds in the middle of the slope, I found a Small Tort and 2 Peacocks just like last time, leaving me wondering if they were indeed the identical butterflies?

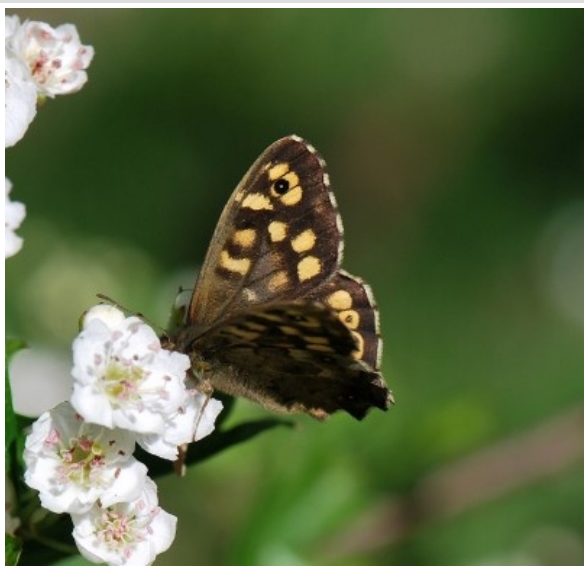


I followed a Holly Blue round the corner to the Lower Banks and then set off back the way I'd come accompanied by a male OT. As I reached the final stretch it all kicked off and I entered into one of those Purple Patches that sometimes you find yourself in. First there was a male OT which set off a Small White, this in turn put up a Speckle which was subsequently attacked by a Red Admiral. As I got a few shots of the Admiral hiding amid the foliage I saw a blue flash to my right out of the corner of my eye. Having finished with the Admiral I turned, got a bit nearer and started focusing on the Holly Blue. A passing White spooked it and I let out a curs but managed to keep it in sight and when it went down again I was able to get in really close to, what turned out to be, her. I watched her for some time as she appeared to be laying, pirouetting around a flower head before fluttering to the next and repeating the same balletic performance. I looked closely as she moved on and there didn't appear to be any eggs so I was left wondering if she was looking for the 'right place' to lay but wasn't having much luck? Whatever her reasons I spent so long with her I had to eventually swap out a battery and still she carried on. She'd fly to a flower head, walk around, ovi-posture and then fly down to a leaf of twig lower down, have a little bask and then fly to the next flower head and so on.





I left her after a while hoping that my presence wasn't the reason that she wasn't actually laying eggs and carried on to the Glades noting a Small White and male OT on the way. Once in the Glades I tarried for a while here as once again the butterflies put on quite a show with 2 Holly Blues chasing each other higher up, two Small Whites fluttering around aimlessly a male T patrolling diligently and four Specklies taking it in turns to try and eat the crap out of each other.



All too soon I had to tear myself away and start for home but the Specklies it seems didn't want to go. On the stroll back along the Riverside path 5 different individual tried to lure my back like miniscule brown and cream Sirens. I didn't succumb to their wiles but I did find myself pausing with a male OT. It was standing out like a sore thumb sitting in the grass at the edge of the site. As clicked away I noticed that he appeared to be missing his left antenna and so I wondered if this was why he was in such an unusual attitude?



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 31-May-20 06:55 PM GMT

Not many Butterflies about at present Wurzel, just two again today one of them a Small White was in really bad shame but still flying, the other one, a Green Veined White was really cute and again the wings looked yellow 😊 we really need some rain, (I never thought I'd say that 😊). I hope your new Camera is has good as your old one, it took some great shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-20 07:30 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Typical isn't it - we enter into the June gap, the butterflies have burnt themselves out in the heat and now the weather is set to change- just as I've got my new camera to play with 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-20 10:26 PM GMT

Martin Down 15-04-2020

What with some clarification on whether we are allowed to travel for exercise today we decided to travel the furthest yet for our daily walk so we drove all the way to Martin Down, a whole 19 minutes away! I was eager to see if the spring specialist were out and about on site and I had high hopes of bagging at least one new species for the year whether it be green, dingy or grizzled. Whilst enjoying the new found sense of freedom we considered which parts to avoid and so instead of the main car park and a walk along Bokerley we instead parked at Sillen's Lane. It was a good call as when we arrived there was only one other car which had already been vacated and a Small Tort did a fly by as if to greet us.

From here the plan was to walk to the Hotspot along and then take a left walking parallel to Bokerley and right up to the top where we could pause for a snack. So we set off, me more eagerly than the rest possibly. It was quite quiet along the main track with a few birds calling and whilst the girls stuck tot eh path I went down the Hedge Tunnel. On the way down the path I almost stood on a female Brimstone, a Peacock unusually played up and I was surprised to find the Specklie and Holly blue were the ones playing ball for once. Normally they either wait for you to approach and focus and then take off just as the shutter comes down (Specklie) or they make feints as if to come down and land within range (Holly Blue). This morning however they did neither and both sat nicely for a few shots. At the other end of the Tunnel a pair of Specklies battled it out to the death, a Peacock did quite a poor impression of the Black Knight and a Green-veined White was the only butterfly encountered on the walk from the Tunnel to the Hotspot.



The girls paused for a short while at the Hotspot to have a quick drink and a bit of a rest as Little L does like to remind us that she's only got little legs. Whilst they recuperated I had a quick mooch around the scrub and various pathways that form the Hotspot. A couple of Brimstones flew around us as the girls sat down but I was hopeful of something different so I set out alternately looking up at the Hawthorn and down at the dusty bare spots on the deck. I walked along the main track that cuts through the scrub and carries on to the very top and spied a couple of little dark butterflies. First the pair became three and then four and then they became Greenstreaks instead of LBJ's. Brilliant I'd found a FFY but now I had to get a few shots. This was easier said than done as they seemed to prefer the twigs that stuck out at around head height which also caught the breeze, so getting shots was tricky and made even more so because they kept attacking each other. In fact it was a little like a Mexican Wave of aggression as one set off the other and so on.





I moved on from here working my way round to the other little track that leads to the small 'field' behind the scrub. The track is starting to get a bit overgrown with Hawthorn whips rising to reclaim the land from the centre of the track. Despite having to be a bit careful not to get impaled I think it actually worked in my favour as it helped break up my silhouette at least this is what I reckon as the Greenstreaks were much more approachable and I counted a further 3 as well as spying a male OT here. I made my way back to the picking up the girls on the way so that they could witness the delights of the Green One and the butterflies lived up to their billing.





With the Greenstreaks well and truly ticked off the year list and the girls rested slightly we all then started the long trek up to the top of the Down proper following Bokerley Dyke to the top. I say following I actually spent most of my time walking in Bokerley and on the way up I found another couple of Greenstreaks right at the start of the Dyke and a Holly Blue about half way up. However what I was surprised by was the number of Brimstones – they seemed to be everywhere and I easily got into the early 20's when I was still bothering to count them. I watched with bated breath as a male approached and then proceeded to court a female as I was hoping for a mating to occur. But after a great deal of persuasion she finally gave him a very forceful “No” and he backed off...only to move straight onto the next available female. Eventually I climbed out of the Dyke and made to catch up with the family who were now at the very top and I could see a coffee awaiting me. But I didn't get there immediately as a little grey blur caught my eye. Was it a moth a wonderer within with a creeping hope that it wasn't...It went up again and this time I strained my eyes as hard as I could and managed to keep it within view. It went down again and I rushed over and there it was my first Grizzlie of 2020. Brilliant! A few shots as proof and I rejoined my family for a well earned coffee.





Doubly chuffed I start checking through my shots whilst sipping coffee and a jewel bright butterfly pops up. No cautious identification of this one as I can see straight away that it's a Small Copper – my third FFY. Unfortunately despite my excitement it takes off before I can get a shot of it – oh well you need to leave something for future visits! After this we take the diagonal path that leads almost straight back to the car park. On the way there are plenty more Brimstone, the occasional Peacock and a massive Grass Snake, the biggest I've ever seen slithers away before I can raise my camera to my eyes.

So a three first day, brilliant!

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 02-Jun-20 06:28 AM GMT

Brilliant Green Hairstreak shots, particularly that last one. The mrgreen is reserved for finding them on Gorse 🍀.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-20 07:48 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Greenstreaks on Gorse does make a great pic – the green and gold does go well together 😊 Fingers crossed for Saturday 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Chris L, 03-Jun-20 07:53 PM GMT

Nice Grizzled Skipper photo Wurzel and yet another snake sighting !

How long do Grizzled Skippers last for? I want to try and see one of those and yet the weather for a while is quite grotty.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-20 10:22 PM GMT

Cheers Otep 😊 They're getting to the end of their flight about now but there may still be some nice ones left, those that had a bit of a lie-in earlier in the season. I saw one on Sunday which still had most of its chequered margins intact so there's still time 😊

Vernditch 16-04-2020

On the way back from checking in on my mum and dad over at Sixpenny Handley we decided to call in somewhere for our exercise on the way home and as we'd taken the fast route along the Blandford Road we stopped at Vernditch. There were only two other cars in the car park when we arrived and we sat and waited for one of them to load up and leave before we exited our vehicle. As the Forestry Commission work this wood the main track up the hill and into the wood is really well maintained and there are nice wide verges on either side of it. It was these that I scanned as we walked but apart from a fleeting view of a Stoat there were only a few unapproachable whites on the trek up. As the track levelled off we could see that is carried on straight and even but there was a smaller unkempt track branching off to the right so of course we took this one. We now felt like we were in the Wood proper as Specklies played in the shafts of sunlight pouring down between spaces where trees had been excised.



Eventually the track turned by a gate and ran alongside a large field for what seemed an age. Instead we went through the gate and stepped into Coppiced Woodland. As I looked around at the stools of Hazel which were probably 2 years old lit by the dappled sunlight that had managed to smuggle itself past the burgeoning leaves it was strange to realise that technically I was on Martin Down for that was what the sign at the gate had said. The path opened up, the trees overhead that had made the roof of a tunnel were gone and once through another gate (a wide open one) we stumbled onto closely cropped turf which was like a river of grass with the surrounding trees the banks hemming in the flowing grasses. We stopped here for a snack in one of the little Ox-Bow lakes of grass before making the return journey where we were greeted by Specklies (probably the same ones) at roughly the same junctures. As we were about to leave the now empty car park a female OT enticed me briefly over the road and then we carried on homewards, exercise done.



Despite not seeing an awful lot it looks really promising so worth a revisit, possibly the next time we check on my parents or if Lockdown eases ever so slightly...This is definitely one of the few positive things about Lockdown - discovering new local sites.

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 04-Jun-20 08:27 AM GMT

That was a rather profitable April expedition to Martin Down, Wurzel - Green Hairstreaks especially. 🍷😄 Your comment about the Brimstones mirrors my experiences there in Spring - there are too many to count, and there is constant harassment of females by males but 100% rejection. When they do mate, I suspect they pair very quickly and dive into the greenery where they effectively disappear from sight. 😊

Cheers.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-20 08:29 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I sometimes wonder if certain males monopolize the females – a bit like the Beach Masters with Elephant Seals? 😊

June 2020

Better than never...finally remembered to update the calendar 😊



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jun-20 07:40 PM GMT

Martin Down 19-05-2020

Today felt strange as it was a Sunday and ordinarily it would also have been the last day of the holiday. But these are strange times and instead of having a last trip out before having to head into work for the 8-3 5 days a week I was getting ready to sit at home from 8-3 for 5 days as I wasn't on rota for another week yet! Still I made the most of it and the fleeting moments when I felt the Sunday dread were quickly displaced again. With this in mind we made our way over to Martin Down to take our exercise without having other people round to bother us. On the drive in along Sillen's Lane there was a distinct lack of Social Distancing with a Green-veined White and 6 male Orange-tips patrolling along the verges.

The route that we'd taken before had proved to be a bit of a winner with the girls and so we decided to follow it again setting off on the track that followed the hedge along the bottom of the reserve with a female Brimstone joining us for the start of our walk. Once we'd passed the old gate a Holly Blue fluttered down from the top of the hedge and hung around down within easy reach. It opened up slightly and I could see that it was a male with the more pastel blue/grey colour to the wings and more discrete chequers. A Red Admiral also came down to the deck and walked about for a bit amid the grass blades – why they do this I don't know but it's a double edged sword when it comes to photography, yes they're down on the deck and within easy reach but there are multiple obstructions to the shot. Still this one was a beautiful so I didn't feel too bad about the odd 'green pointer' being in shot.





From here the family group split into two with the girls all sticking to the high road whilst I took the Hedge Tunnel. As I entered I could feel the breeze ceasing, the air stilled and along with it the temperature was a tad higher. I scanned the hedge on my right which was lit by the sun but all I could muster at first was a single Specklie which looked a little bored with no sparring partner. At the second break in the left hand hedge where the light floods in a Peacock held court but after this I didn't see another butterfly in the tunnel until the very end where three Specklies were taking chunks out of each other.

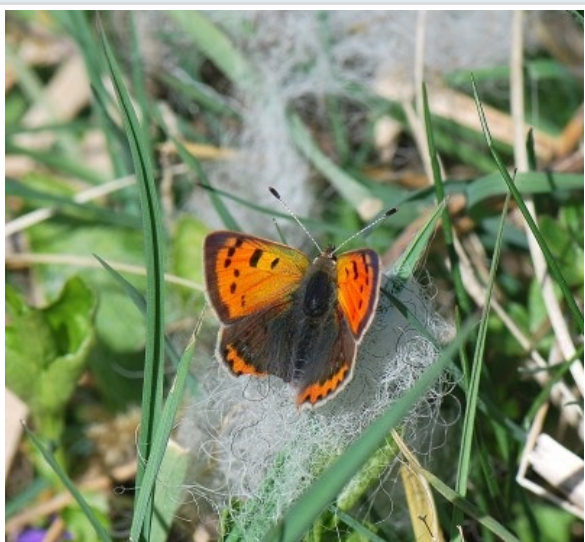


After this we regrouped and cut across towards the Hotspot skirting round the old Iron-age earthworks watched all the while by the Guardian of the Down. This time we didn't stop for very long at the Hotspot - just long enough for the girls to have a drink and refill their bottles so while they were doing this I nipped over to the little field where I'd seen the second set of Greenstreaks before. Today there was only the one guarding its territory on the corner of the trackway into the field. Working my way back to where the girls were having their pitstop I found two more Greenstreaks and these were right on the end of the scrub by the hollow next to Bokerley. The first of the pair was adopting the upside 'ready for take-off' pose that I'd seen the others adopting previously and sure enough just as I lent it for a shot the second appeared out of nowhere and the first dropped into flight to start scraping.





It seems that I hadn't learnt my lesson from the last visit and again I found myself wandering up the bottom of the Dyke whilst the girls shot up the main path. It was a hard slog and at this stage of the season it yielded little reward, the numerous Brimstones not really making up for sweat and blood I was shedding in my search. But just as I was going to get out and leave the Dyke having reached the top of the hill and the dead end where another track cuts across the dyke I received my payment in full. No silver or gold for me just a Small Copper. It was a little beauty as well and I didn't even mind that it was missing a chunk out of one of its hind wings. If I'd taken the easy route up I'd have missed it!



Chuffed I climbed out of the Dyke but kept following it looking down from above for the little grey blurs of Grizzlies. I didn't find any little grey blurs but instead found a little slog and blur - my fist Dingy of 2020. I watched and waited as it bumbled about at the bottom of the Dyke and then it flew up the side and landed slightly in front of me. Every year I forget how small they are especially when you're used to Brimstones and Peacocks from the early spring. Doubly chuffed I finally caught up with the others and we sat down and had a quick snack at the top of the hill overlooking the panorama below.



A few Brimstones fly by as we munch and a Small White or two as well but I'm eager to try and relocate the Dingy so while my coffee cools I head back to where I'd seen the Dingy and sure enough I manage to catch up with it again. This time it stays still for even longer and also starts moving its wings into different positions so I'm able to get a few $\frac{3}{4}$ open shots as well as a glimpse of underwing. I decide to push my luck reasoning that my coffee is probably cold now anyway (WINK) and so I walk back down towards the Dyke and where I'd found my Small Copper. After a very hot and scratchy 5 minutes in the dust and thorns at the bottom of the Dyke I hadn't had any luck with the Copper. Instead I'd found something possibly even rarer. Over the years I've seen my fair share of Common or Viviparous Lizards and among them I've seen a red and black morph but this morning I was treated the unusual green form – an adaptation to grasslands in the offing I wondered while I marvelled at its wonderful colour.





Upon re-joining the girls we took the direct diagonal route back to the car accompanied by the three species of Whites. And there were even more on the drive back down the Sillen's Lane with 5 male OTs, 2 female OTs, 3 Brimstone, a Small White, 2 UFWs and a Specklie a little out of place. It was great to get out without fear of bumping into someone or a bike knocking into you, and where the nearest person is a couple of hundred metres away but can't help feeling like I still haven't had a proper Martin Down visit yet? Hopefully I'll be able to rectify that soon.

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jun-20 10:01 AM GMT

Just catching up again Wurzel, great reports as usual 😊

Love that first Green Haistreak shot in the last report, great combination of colours and background 🌿 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 07-Jun-20 09:19 PM GMT

Great to see you today, Wurzel. Glad the directions were useful. More importantly you didn't go home empty handed!.

Look forward to your shots (soon!).

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-20 06:58 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 There's something about Greenstreaks in the sun especially when combined with the golden yellow of Gorse 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 It was a good day even if my shots were 'passable' – still leave wanting more 😊 Here's a taster to keep you interested 😊 😊



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-20 10:24 PM GMT

Exercise 20-04-2020

There have been a few times recently whilst out with my family taking our exercise that I've seen various butterflies. There have been several whites including the ever patrolling male Orange-tips, a distant Red Admiral and a Holly Blue which kept coming down tantalisingly close within range of my lens before bugging off back up to the top the Ivy covered tree where it would land and frustratingly open up. However today I finally got lucky again...

We were about half way through our walk and had walked under the road bridge, into the park and were following the riverside path when a white flew feebly in and around some Garlic Mustard. From its slow, flappy flight quartering the flowers and checking them out I guessed that it was a female White, probably an Orange-tip. So I ran on ahead and when I was within 2 metres (I can judge this distance pretty well now) I stopped dead and watched. It landed and so two steps later I was within range, in position and I got a couple of shots before it had even realised I was there. Of course once she had sussed that I was a human and not a weird looking bush/tree she was off flying so weakly across the river that I was concerned that she wouldn't make it! Job done I got on with the walking and talking and keeping an eye out to ensure the 2 metre rule stood fast.



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 09-Jun-20 10:29 PM GMT

Well stalked, Wurzel! 😊 When they are intent on nectaring, female Orange Tips can be surprisingly obliging. Their rather feeble flight helps as well.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 10-Jun-20 07:06 AM GMT

That's not a bad shot of that BH considering the dearth of sightings on Sunday. I imagine the BH will now become an itch you'll have to scratch! 😊

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-Jun-20 11:42 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, Love the Butterfly shots, 📷📷 The Green Hair Streaks are one of my favourite's and I love the June calendar 😊 also that's a lovely shot of the Orange Tip. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-20 08:34 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was quite chuffed that I didn't end up blundering about in the undergrowth for once – it was probably because I bit concerned about falling in the river 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I don;t know about an annual itch...a Large Heath would be nice on my list 😊 – if only I could find a valid reason to get into Wales...

Cheers Goldie 😊 That's the thing with Lockdown – I thought that I was going to be able to catch up but I've been out loads more due to exercising that I'm as far behind as I ever was 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

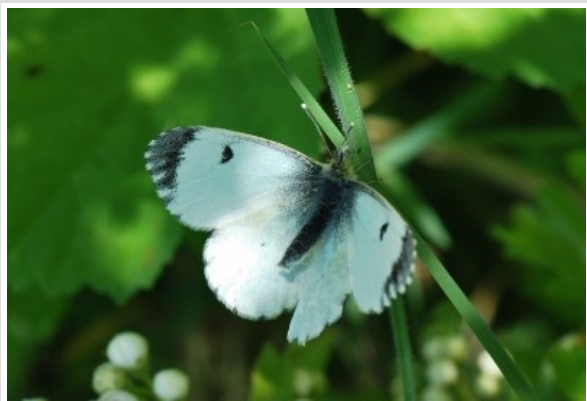
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-20 11:26 PM GMT

Middle Street 21-04-2020

Having spent most of the day yesterday working solidly and only getting out for the usual brief walk/exercise today I was looking forward to being out of the house for a bit more time so I planned to use my lunch, break and then work on slightly longer into the afternoon. So I started early and got a lot done and then as lunchtime approached I made the girls wolf down a sandwich and away we went to Middle Street. The way over was quiet with only a Holly Blue on Ivy at the corner house neat the Mill.

As we entered and scanned across the football pitch looked like it had been covered in snow due to the profusion of Daisies. We hugged the boundary fence and walked through, no correction, waded through the grasses and Cow Parsley which seem to have shot up since our last visit and juts before we had to dive under the Carb Apple tree's blossom bedecked branches a Holly Blue fluttered round in the little patch before flying over into the neighbouring garden. It wasn't until we reached the small field near the hotspot that we saw anymore butterflies with a brace of Red Admirals. I really wanted to get some shots of one of them as the red band on the hind wing wasn't red by a creamy tangerine colour, like the dye had washed out but try as I might I just couldn't get close to it. We followed up onto the bank path past the pond and back round to the Hotspot before I lost sight of it without getting a single shot. As if to make up for it one of the several whites flying around and about at the Hotspot settled for me and resolved into a female Orange-tip. She was almost immediately hassled by a male and then a second male joined in before both suitors got the message loud and clear as the female arched her abdomen menacingly.



We carried on our meandering and worked back to the pond and carried on round the other side. A Peacock paused briefly but that was about it so we moved hastily on to the Dips. Whilst in Dip 1 I could only watch as a male OT patrolled and two UFWs passed by as the temperature had risen since we'd arrived and now the butterflies were motoring! Dip 2 very briefly held a Red Admiral which sailed on over to the other side of the river. Dip 3 was bereft of butterflies as was the end part of the reserve and so I turned round and started back. As I did a Small White flew along the bank path and I did my best to follow it down one side of the bank to the Football Pitch and then back over into Dip 2. It landed a few times I was able to get in close enough for a few shots. I love the lemon triangle on the underside of the fore wing. Whilst with the Small White a male OT and two UFWs pass through. They seem to fly in a repeating pattern; say they're flying ahead of you from your right to left about half way across they'll flip back and go from left to right before turning round once again when they're a quarter of the way back and then carrying on from right to left. This doubling back is something I'd not noticed before.



I carried on back, conscious that the girls had given up exercising and were now sitting making Daisy chains – although to be fair there were only one other couple on site with us. Down into Dip 1 and a Peacock went up and as I watched it fly across the Dip a second joined it on the other side. I also followed and managed a few shots of a female OT but the male and the other 2 UFWs didn't stop at all – but again showed the same partial doubling back pattern in their flight.



On making my way out of the Dip and working back to the Hotspot I found a Holly Blue territory but I could only manage a few record shots at distance so carried on to the Hotspot itself. By now the butterflies were extremely active and getting to the point of being unapproachable so this became more an exercise in recording than photography. Amongst the Whites the Hotspot threw up a brace of Peacocks which were both basking on the dead long grass/reeds of the rapidly drying pond. I picked the girls up and we made our way back checking the little patch by the back gate which again had a Holly Blue but this time also 2 Small Whites and a Red Admiral. The stroll back unusually didn't produce any butterflies but a Little Egret kept Little L's interest and became her second favourite animal (after Fennec Fox and before her Patronus the Orang-utan). All too soon I was back in front of the keyboard working away and paying back my lunchbreak.



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-20 08:12 PM GMT

{size=150}Five Rivers 22-04-2020
[/size]

Another day and a load more work done. This working from home malarkey is really interfering with my butterflying as with the weather we're having at the moment first thing seems best - just creeping into double figures and the butterflies aren't too mobile. By the time I get to go out (having combined lunch, break, an early start and a late finish) the butterflies are screaming about ceaselessly. Also you end up doing much, much, much more work than you would ever do when actually at work - there's no packing up and waiting between classes, no down time at all really just solidly plodding along from start to finish.

Sill I was glad to eventually temporarily log off the remote desktop and pick up my camera and head over to Five Rivers. I didn't see anything until I'd crossed the Waitrose car park and was walking smartly down the narrow path to the Town Path when a Holly Blue erupted from the low vegetation and promptly disappeared again. The little patch where the Specklies were battling it out previously was empty and my second butterfly wasn't seen until I was actually on site and starting the riverside path when a Specklie flew out from a tiny stand of trees. Slightly further on I reached a bit of the path which is open to the river, the ancient tree that had previously stood guard on the river bank now toppled and decaying covered in a blanket of moss and nettles. A few whites were playing in the sun here including my first definite Large White of 2020 as well as a Small White, a brace a piece of Orange-tip (males) and Green-veined Whites as well as a couple of UFWs and a Specklie looking out of place like a sock in the wrong wash. I only managed the occasional grab shot of most of the whites but one male Orange-tip fed for a while so I was able to get something decent of him.



I reached the Glades and stood watching a Large White for a while. It flew the same circuit five or six times while I watching it - it would fly towards me up high take a left turn and fly around in the smallest of clearing before flying away from me the way it had come. It would then fly round the back of the large 'clump' before doing a neat figure of eight over a small cluster of Dandelions and promptly heading back towards the river where I guess it turned around and started the circuit again. Eventually it didn't come back so I carried on having already clocked 2 Holly Blues and two Specklies here whilst it was round the back of the 'clump'. All that time watching the Large White and it hadn't landed once, all I had were a few in-flight shots that would probably be pants.

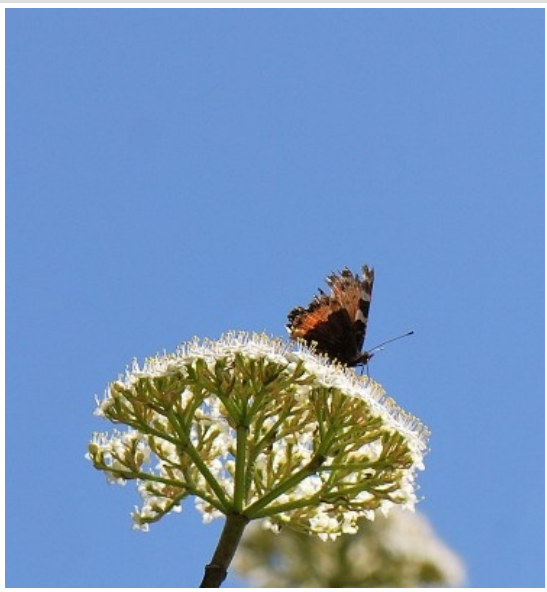
In the warmth and strong sun I decided not to visit Comma Corner but instead carried on along taking the path that cuts across the Lower Banks. On the lower side of Bank 1 there was a conglomeration of whites - almost the full UK set with males of Orange-tip, Brimstone and Large White, two Small Whites and a Green-veined White. The Large White was motoring along so I tried for the Green-veined White and managed to follow it for a short while. As I was so doing a Peacock glided over me and carried on down the slope.



Things were really going frenetically now and so I spent much of the remaining time just wandering and recording again pretty much like I had previously at Middle Street. On the second Lower Bank there was a second Peacock and then at the back path the breeze was blowing right the way along the slope which meant that the male OT which was feeding on the Bluebells was an impossible target. As I started along the back path to the far corner of the reserve a Red Admiral took off a shot away. In the far corner a Holly Blue fluttered over the hedge into the allotments as did a male OT so I turned about and made the walk in reverse.

The wind had dropped a bit now but the butterflies were as unapproachable as before just now they would have to bugger off a shorter distance as their escape wasn't wind assisted. On the nettle beds here there was again a Peacock and to OTs had a go at each other. It was interesting to watch as one caught up with the other, they had a bit of scrap and then both went off in opposite directions - I wondered if they followed a set circuit and if so how many times had that particular skirmish been played out?

Back along the Lower Banks there was a male Brimstone, a couple of Small Whites, a Peacock and then another and another as well as a Red Admiral. Try as I might I just couldn't get anywhere near it. It would fly a few trees/bushes further along the hedge, I'd stalk it, line my shot up and then it would fly a few trees/bushes further along the hedge... I gave up on it in the end I tried for a few more Green-veined White shots instead. At the far end I finally got some distant shots of the Red Admiral as well as the surprise of the day - a Small Tort still hanging on in there!



Back through the Glades and along the River Path I went seeing the same butterflies that I'd seen earlier minus the Large White and with bonus Red Admiral and Specklies. Not a bad bit of exercise really though next time I think I'll need to try and get out early in the morning and work rather longer in the afternoon/evening?



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-20 08:48 PM GMT

Garston Wood 23-04-2020

After getting the spending all morning on yet more Curriculum Intent documents lunchtime was approaching so while I finished typing the girls got a snack ready and as soon as I finished we rushed out of the door, jumped in the car and made for Garston Wood so that we could have a walk round for our daily exercise without fear of people not being able to Social Distance properly. This is becoming a bit of thing now it seems as we enter yet another week of Lockdown and on our daily exercise walks we're encountering people doggedly sticking to the middle of the path and not getting over, cyclists just appearing silently like assassins from behind and groups of people walking together or just standing around chatting thinking that the fact that they're wearing trainers and jogging bottoms will somehow justify a total lack of Social Distancing?

When we arrived there was only one other car in the car park but we couldn't hear or see another human being and it was sheer bliss to walk on soft ground warmed by the sun whilst being serenaded by bird song the heady aromas of the Bluebells, Garlic and slowly decaying wood lulling us into an almost meditative state. Strangely we only saw one butterfly by the time we'd reached the large log when we were about a third of our way into our walk and this was a Holly Blue a few turns in the track earlier. Whilst we munched our snack a Brimstone fluttered by almost as if it was inviting to start walking again and so we did.

We carried on down the track leading to the back path which arches around the boundary of the reserve before diving straight through the enclosure and on across the middle of site. We started seeing butterflies and they were in roughly the same places that we had encountered them on our previous walk of this route. First up was a Peacock which I almost stood on as it sat casting no shadow on the path. Then further around while we were admiring the sea of Wild Garlic looking like a fluffy eiderdown had been laid over the ground a Specklie and a pair of white flew by, a few Brimstones played over the tops of the small patches of Bluebells that broke the gorgeous monotony of the white Garlic flowers. Just before the track turned back into the reserve a male Orange-tip stopped to take nectar from various Bluebells, calmed somewhat by the shade it seemed.



On we went the occasional Brimstone or Orange-tip in the distance and a Peacock that just didn't seem to understand that we were walking one way along the path. It would fly behind us, then it would soar back over our heads before landing 10 or so metres in front of us, down on the path. We would get near it and off it would go again, flew toward and behind, turn round, low over their heads and then land further ahead on the path. It did this the whole way along the path until we reached the T-junction and then it panicked as it couldn't land 10 or so metres ahead of us because there was a hedge and trees in its way!



Down through the Plantation we went seeing a few more Brimstones, 2 Peacocks and 2 Specklies but I was keen to get back as I was in danger of straying out of my allotted lunch and break timing. The drive back was punctuated with Orange-tips and other miscellaneous whites but before too long I was sitting staring at my laptop screen wondering if I'd actually been out at all or had I nodded off in the midst of Curriculum Intent planning?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-20 08:41 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 24-04-2020

I'd seen that Pearls were about in the Wyre, Abbots Wood and also Hawksgrove which is the other side of Bentley from where I normally visit (generally I start in the Eastern Clearing) so off I went in search of Pearls – for me the species which signals that the season is really happening! Reasoning that early morning would be best I set off and made good time arriving just before 9am. The car park has been enlarged and hard core put down so its reasonably level but I have a feeling that I will miss the tress that encroached on the car park. The best thing though was that the car park was empty so Social Distancing was going to be a breeze and so I set off enjoying the bird song on the way – I managed to pick out a Goldcrest which, with my collection of years is becoming harder to hear, it's now almost beyond my range of frequency, and there were also a few Willow Warblers with their lilting song.

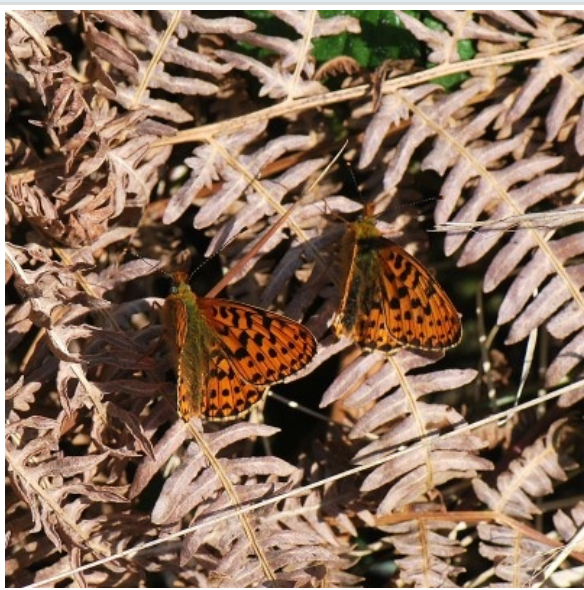
The Eastern Clearing is the same as ever although the fencing is still up in annoying places across the reserve, just ready to catch out the unwary butterfly as they avidly stalk their target. I did a circuit down the middle following the ditch to the bottom and back around, then a checked out the middle area on the other side of the ditch after crossing one of the two wooden bridges. Nothing. I carried on having a look round in the far patches. More Willow Warblers, Garden Warblers etc. but no butterflies. Was I too early in the morning? Was I too early in the season? I retraced my steps back into the middle of the Clearing and there a fast moving, ginger blur. Phew it was a Pearl and this wasn't going to be a waste of Brownie points. It was like a switch had been flipped – too cold no Pearls, click, right temperature and then there were Pearls and ones which were intent on breaking the land speed record! In fact it was moving surprisingly fast even though it was early in the morning. The temperature was about 12 set to get to 16 but even so they were motoring.



I managed a bit of stalking and got a few shots so at least the pressure was off as it were. As I followed my first Pearl it ended up over by the little triangle near the notice board where there a criss-cross of little tracks that wind their way through dead bracken. As I'm watching 'my' one another flies into view and then a third joins in the fray. I follow one of them all the way down to the bottom bit which is overgrown and is often frequented by the Duke and then carry on round before skirting out over to the far track.



I get onto another one here on the far side but lose it again quickly as it goes back over the barbed wire fence – these are a right bloody pain in the arse so I follow the track back up the hill hoping that any that I encounter stay on the margins of the track and don't deviate through the barbed wire. Another couple of pearls announce themselves when I'm reaching the top of the track and I end up doing a bit of back tracking whilst trying to keep an eye on one in particular. The fact that they are now flying at breakneck speed doesn't make it easy and neither do the trip wire bramble runners which snake out across the path unnoticed until one is wrapped around your ankle or shin. One Pearl flies towards me and keeps hiding in the dead bracken clumps taking off whenever I get about 2 metres away – perhaps they're practicing Social Distancing? Another couple are on the other side of the ditch in the large field which was cut back a couple of years ago and so they're not even on my radar except to keep a note of numbers. Talking of which I reckon I've seen at least 4 different individuals up to a maximum of 8. I'm starting to bemoan not getting here even earlier when a grey little blur detaches itself from the grass and lands near my feet – a Bentley Grizzlie! After I've spent a little time with it (strangely in exactly the same place that I saw one here last year and the year before) a Peacock bombs away up the path but whilst I'm happy for Pearls to lead me astray and play that game no way for a Peacock (five weeks ago maybe it would have been a different story?)





I carry on to the top of the path and take a right up and further into the wood - it was good here last year but so far the Pearls haven't found back to it so instead I get a Small White as my reward for making the trip. I turn round and move back down the track past where I'd originally turned off and then work back into the Clearing from the Marshie field (again another recently cleared area). In here there seem to be a couple more Pearls - or the same three or four that were flying in the main clearing earlier? Either way all of them are still totally unapproachable and I almost give up and call it a day when one, maybe sensing my frustration, suddenly calms down and starts taking nectar. I'm back in the little triangle by this point and I'm able to get down low and approach without the little bugger going mad. The Bugle is the just the ticket as it offers up enough nectar to keep the Pearl occupied and in roughly the same spot for long enough to get some shots. Bluebells look nice and a Pearl sitting on one is very aesthetically pleasing but they seem very low on nectar and just as you're lining up your shot the butterfly is off seeking its next drink. No give me a Bugle any day of the week as that keeps the Pearls playing ball.

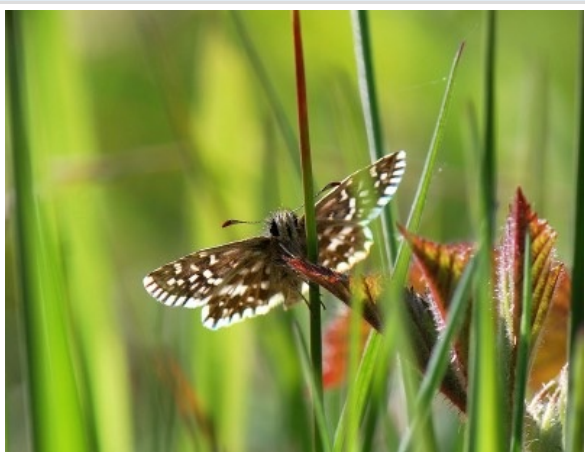




As I make my way back into the main clearing I find a definite new individual which I can be sure of as it has one of its hind wings is damaged. This doesn't stop it nipping off just as I get in range though so I keep on keeping on and walk back to the very bottom of the reserve where yet another Pearl plays hard to get and there is also a male and two female OTs.



As I'm making my last pass along the main track that bisects the Clearing from top to bottom I'm suddenly spoilt for choice as in the middle of the clearing by the ditch the damaged Pearl and a second both sit down on the deck within a foot of each other. I know that if I go for the Grizzlie which is further away than the Pearl is going to spook it. Obviously I'd rather have the Grizzlie but the Pearl does indeed keep spooking it and to make matters worse each time it does it follows the Grizzlie landing near it so that when I approach again the Pearl spooks the Grizzlie again. This isn't playing fair but by walking all the way round to the wooden bridge and crossing over I manage to briefly get on the near side of the Grizzlie and fire off a couple of shots before the Pearl twigs what I've done and sets about ruining it.



Oh well some shots in the bag hopefully so I head off hoping to return here one evening when it's slightly cooler and the Pearls are starting to settle down for the night - this should be easier now that we're going to have more pupils at work so the rota has been altered - 3 days every two weeks...still it's great to get a taster of retirement - something to look forward too!

Have a goodun and say safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 16-Jun-20 09:14 PM GMT

Some splendid Pearls there, Wurzel! 😊 At least they seem to be doing okay down there at Bentley. Sitting on bluebells as well (perhaps to make up for the lack of bugle in the clearing these days). 😊 And a Grizzlie bonus too.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

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

Lovely sequence of shots Wurzel, 🍷🍷 Especially the Grizzlie 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-20 06:35 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 If only the Smalls were doing as well 😊 mind you fingers crossed that the newly cleared bits will come to fruition? 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Sorry about the Grizzlies, I don;t mean to rub it in 😊 hopefully you'll see one soon and then I can stop feeling bad about posting them 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 18-Jun-20 08:26 PM GMT

Great Pearl report Wurzel, brownie points consumed well!. PBF seem an age ago now. Early in the morning they are manic if they've found some early sunshine, and docile if they chose to roost in a spot that catches the sun later on.

Stay well,
Trevor.

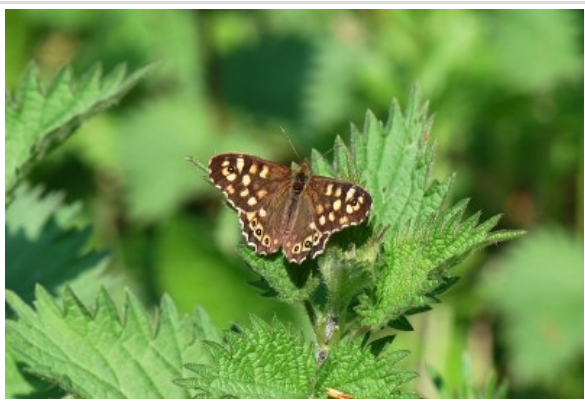
Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Trevor 😊 In recent years I've managed to visit Bentley in the evening and that's been pretty good for shots – but this year my services have been required at home – 'sharing the pain' of Lockdown as it were 😊😊

Vernditch and on...25-04-2020

As the weather continued to hold we decided to make the most of it and take our exercise over at Vernditch and so we packed a snack, loaded up the car and drove over. When we pulled into the car park there were a few cars here but then this wood is popular with dog walkers and what with it being a Saturday I suppose that was to be expected. However there was no-one around as we exited the vehicle and started on the walk up the hill. At about 20 steps in we were greeted by a male OT and a pair of Green-veined Whites one of which flew lower and in a more dithery fashion than the other and when it paused for a while I could see that it was female. There was something to be said for choosing this walk as even though it was slightly cooler the 'sunny intervals' had become 'sunny' and so the butterflies were a little better behaved in the shade of the wood.



As we made the turning off the main Forestry Commission track a Brimstone flew past us and added itself to the days tally and then a pair of Specklies played in roughly the same spot as I saw them last week when we'd previously visited. When we reached the crossroads (or should that be cross tracks?) a Peacock enjoyed the full sun that was able to shine down due to the absence of the canopy here and a Specklie basked on the corner on the far side. As we walked the final stretch of the woodland path before venturing onto Martin Down a few whites flew in the distance visiting clumps of flowers which were growing where a tree had fallen or been excised like little oases in a sea of bare soil, twigs and branches. At the end enjoying the sun was another Specklie basking and a couple of longhorn moths looked spectacular. Glittering golden when they caught the sun.

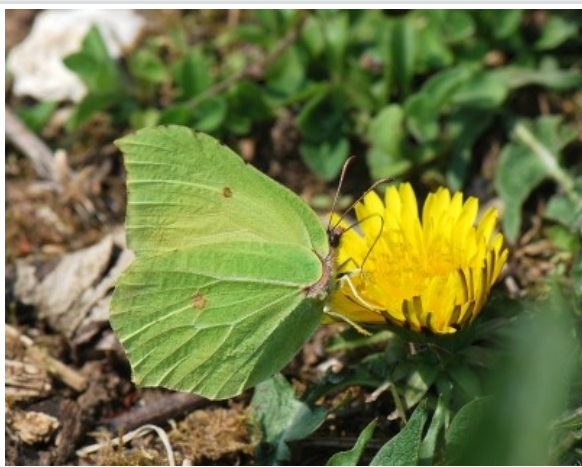
We now entered into Martin Down – which seemed a bit odd as the tree cover here was denser here than in the 'Wood' at least it seemed that way as it must have been coppiced in the recent past because there was a wonderful sea of wild Garlic every which way you looked. Along the path a single Specklie flew in the only circle of full sun along the stretch of path and it was weird to experience the temperature difference felt by taking one step into the sun and then stepping back one step into the shade. Onwards we went before the path veered to the right and the treeline receded so we didn't feel so hemmed in before finally stepping through a gate into the area known as Kitt's Grove/Grave with wide open thinly turfed slopes and tall scrub.



While we stopped for a snack I watched a series of butterflies all flying along the scrub hedge, still hugging it as it dove down the slope and into the cutting before carrying along the bottom and hugging the opposite hedge as it climbed back up the slope and carried on into the site. In no particular order the butterflies seen were 4 male Brimstones, 2 females Brimstones, a male OT, a Holly Blue, Specklie, Large White and various other whites. While the others finished their snack and enjoyed sitting in the sun (a little luxury this for a family without a garden) I carried on walking into the site down the gently sloping banks and working my way along the bottom of a the very shallow valley eyes peeled for Grizzlies as I had a hunch that there should be some here – the habitat just looked right for them. Sure enough there was the familiar Moth-like little grey blur but I couldn't get any shots of this one as it was too fast. I followed it with my eyes for a bit but then it did the zig zag manoeuvre and it was gone. Never mind there might be more and sure enough at the end once I'd wandered over there was a lovely little Grizzlie at the end of the track. Well the end of the bit I was going to walk to anyway – the site carries on and round before being severed from the rest of Martin Down by the A354.



As I was enjoying this, my second Grizzlie of the day spied a third and so stalked towards it but it played hard to get – pirouetting around the Bugle so that it was never in a decent pose. Still it was great to see them and for my hunch to play out. Not wanting to break exercise rules I made my way back to catch up with the girls past various whites and a Peacock. The original Grizzlie was back in the same sort of place that I'd seen it previously but this time there was a male Brimstone in the way. I wouldn't be able to get in close to the Grizzlie without spooking the Brimstone which would then set the Grizzlie off. I thought about walking in a long, wide arc round around to try and get in form the other side by the Brimstone was so close (probably about a foot and a half away) that wouldn't work either So in the end I settled for a few shots of the Brimstone itself. Once I'd finished I slowly stood back and watch the Brimstone for another 30 seconds or so and sure enough once it had finished and took off the Grizzlie went also.



We then packed away the drinks bottles and made sure we'd left nothing but footprints and set off. Well the others did I waited for a Holly Blue to settle and open up before running to catch them up. The walk back was pretty quiet with whites and Specklies flying along in the open wood or along the side of the track where the sun broke through and nothing where it didn't. All too soon we were ensconced in the car heading out on a mission to get lemons for my wife's evening G&T - if that isn't essential shopping I don't know what is!



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 21-Jun-20 08:33 AM GMT

Playing catch up with your diary after a busy week. I always enjoy reading your annual report from Bentley Wood. Some great photos of the PBF and Grizzlies.

I visited there in holiday four years ago and will definitely return again one spring.

Kind Regards

Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-20 09:16 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, no worries, I'll get those Grizzlies one day, 🤔 Great shots , Martin Down looks lovely from your shots, love the one of the Holly Blue. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-20 06:57 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 I'm lucky that I live so close to it so there are a few more posts from there in the pipeline 😊 Knowing how far behind I am with my PD they'll probably be up around November time 😊😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was a bit off as I predicted that you'd get one this year...mind you you still might if they have a very early second brood – fingers AND toes crossed 😊

Martin Down 26-04-2020

With the weather set to change back to normal British weather next week – as in wet and cool – we decided to make the most of the sun and have our exercise at Martin Down and so off we toddled in the morning pulling into the car park just before 11. With the glorious sun shining down we set off along the path that hugs the boundary hedge making for the tunnel and from there to cut across to the Dyke and the Hotspot. The first butterfly we encountered was a male Brimstone feeding eagerly from a Dandelion on the edge of the track and he was quickly joined by a male Orange-tip which was in full-on patrol mode. A second OT was following hot on his heels possibly hoping to knock the first out of his territory? Just past the old gate I spotted a brownie blur ahead of me. It buzzed around with a moth like flight in ever decreasing circles before it finally settled with an almost perceivable 'plop' down onto the path. I was intrigued by the markings on its wings as they looked like little raindrops turned on their sides. After a few shots we skirted round it and carried on with my first Lesser Whitethroat 'wee-chugger-chuggering' as we continued.



The girls branched off to follow the track that runs parallel to the hedge Tunnel on strict instructions to holler if they saw a Dingy, Grizzlie, Copper or even the first Marshie of the year. I took the tunnel path but it was surprisingly quiet. There was the occasional white – Brimstones of both genders and OT's, a pair of Specklies near the end of the 'tunnel' in a very similar place to where I'd encountered them previously and then finally at the end another brown blur gave away my second Dingy of the day.

I met up with the girls and we took the path up the slope along the side of the old hill fort but while they turned left onto the main path that runs all the way up the hill I kept on going until I was in the Dyke before I turned left as it were. As seemed to be the way today there were good numbers of Brimstones flying in the surrounds of the Dyke – in fact they probably the most seen butterfly of the day so knowing that you'll forgive me if I don't comment on every single one now but there was also a Peacock and this time the little buzzing blur was a grey colour –it resolved itself into a Grizzlie. I climbed out of the Dyke at the hotspot and examined the Hawthorns at the end where I wasn't disappointed to find a brace of Greenstreaks. Well they found me actually – as I inadvertently walked into the middle of their skirmish. The victor took pride of place back on his perch so to the victor the spoils and I immortalized him on my memory card.



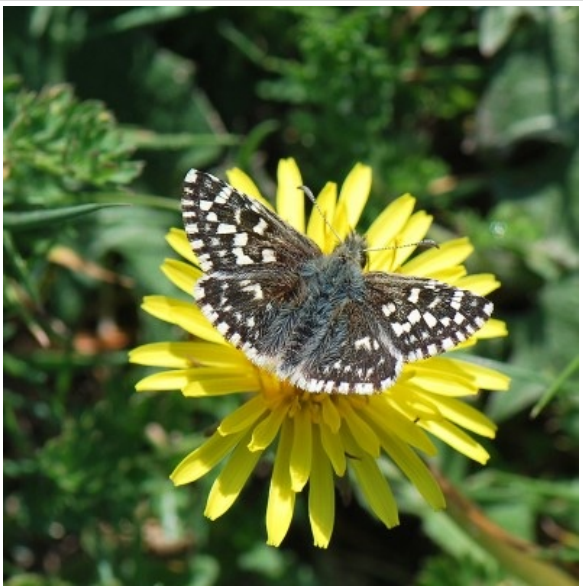
At this juncture the girls were well ahead of me and were already a good way up the hill so I walked back down into the Dyke and started working my way up the hill. My journey up this time was much slower as I'd stop occasionally to follow a Dingy or a Grizzlie and at one point a representative of both species sat close by each other but unfortunately the Grizzlie was shaded by a low hanging branch. On and up I went with another Dingy, then a Grizzlie, then another Grizzlie before Peacock gate crashed the Skipper fest! I'd reached the bit of the Dyke where the paths branch off from each other; one path blocks off the Dyke here so I had to climb out, cross the path and then climb back down. This second half of the Dyke rises steeply up to the top of the Down and it was here that I saw my first Dingy of 2020. I looked around and sure enough there as a Dingy - the same one as before?



After this I caught up with the girls and we setup camp for a snack and so that they could have a breather after the hot, sweaty climb. While I waited just long enough for a coffee to cool down to drinking temperature I scanned across the hill below me - there were plenty of whites abroad, a Peacock traversed the side of the hill and a Speckle bombed straight over head and dove down into the scrubby trees behind us. A Buzzard took off from our right, a Cuckoo called from further down the Down and the short spaces of silence between the birdsong was punctuated with the drumming of a Woodpecker in the small wood nearby. I left the girls and their snacks and had a brief look around the top of the Down to our right. I've not been to this part before and so I was pleasantly surprised to spot at least 6 more Grizzlies and finally a Dingy. I only managed a couple of shots before it was off but it was a lovely looking Dingy - the markings on the forewings joining together to form white(ish) stripes.



I walked back round to the girls and climbed up to the top of the bank on the other side of the Dyke. Strolling along here I scanned down the slope into the Dyke but it was so high I wouldn't have been able to have seen anything smaller than a Marshie so instead I concentrated on looking where I was going! A Greenstreak surprised me by flying up here whereas I'd always thought that they liked to fly at the bottom of slopes. I tight-rope walked along the top spying out the ubiquitous Brimstones and the odd OT from above and then where the path crosses the Dyke I climbed down and started walking back up the hill. ON the way I located the Dingy for a third time as well as finding yet another Grizzlie. I also succumbed to the Brimstones and actually tried for a few shots of a female which was ovi-positing or at least ovi-posturing as I couldn't see any eggs left behind when she'd passed by.





Rejoining the girls we made our way down the slope and again our progress was punctuated by the occasional stop for a Grizzlie or Dingy. At the top there Grizzlies were easily outnumbering the Dingies but now on the lower slopes and at the foot of the Down the Dingies became dominant. In fact from the bottom of the hill back I counted 5 Dingies and only a single Grizzlie. Mind you all told I must easily have seen double figures of each over the course of the exercise trip.



A Holly Blue looked out of place perched on a tiny Hawthorn, and a OT waved us off but all too soon we were on the road again heading back home past whites galore.

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 21-Jun-20 07:28 PM GMT

The essence of spring there, Wurzel – Dingies and Grizzlies, with Green Hairstreaks thrown in. 😊 Though midsummer is full of other excitement, I always feel a certain regret that those spring species are over for another year. Great shots there to revive that spring feeling! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Dave 😊 I am trying desperately to catch up as I was hoping to only be two weeks behind this year 😊 the problem is that just as I come close I suddenly manage to fit in a run of trips and then I'm back to square one again – it's a lovely problem to have 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

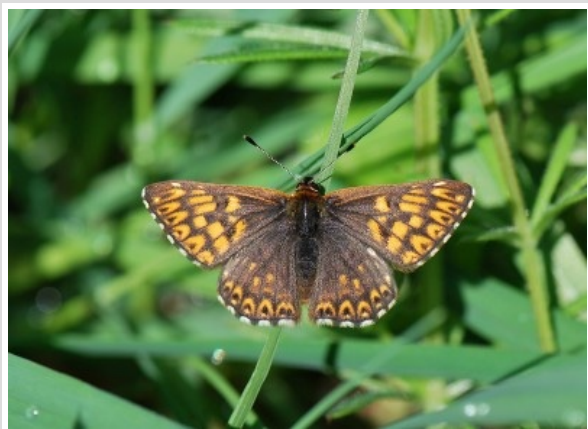
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-20 06:51 PM GMT

Fovant 01–05–2020

A mate of mine on Instagram recently pointed me towards a great little site for Dukes that I've seen mentioned in times past but never knew how to 'work' (where to park, where to start, pitfalls of the site and where are the hotspots etc). He sent me detailed instructions and maps on where to find the Dukes once I got there and a brief look on google maps and AA Routeplanner indicated that it was easy to get to and most importantly I could do the journey in less than 25 minutes as it was about 10.5 miles away. So under current rules as long as I spent at least an hour on site (I'd hopefully be in the presence of Dukes so this would be very easy) I could drive there to take my exercise.

I did a bit of work as soon as I got up and then set out aiming to arrive at around 10, stay for about an hour or two and then catch up on missed working time by carrying on into the evening. However what I hadn't planned on was the road works that meant Wilton was inaccessible so I had to drive to Great Wishford and double back adding 6 miles and more minutes than I cared for to the journey time – especially as I was racing the thickening cloud. But finally I could see the 'Badges' carved into the chalk on my left which meant that I was almost there. I pulled into the lay-by, grabbed my gear, crossed the road, climbed over the gate and set off down the tractor rutted by-way. I realised I'd been visualising it back to front and the slope up instead of being on my right was actually on my left – strange how sometimes you can imagine things so differently to what they are? As the hill curved round I started up the slope into the bowl of an ancient quarry working. This was where I should start to see Dukes...But there was nowt here; had the week of mixed weather and torrential downpours knocked them all on the head? I walked up the side of the Bowl and made my way along the diagonal path which wend its way up to the top of the down. I'd only gone a few steps when I spotted a small butterfly which in the dull light looked quite dark. Brilliant a Duke and a lovely dark male lacking most of the orange panels on the hind wing.



I carried on further up the hill on a diagonal track which seemed to peter out about half way up. It looked like someone had thought this would be a great track, got half way up realised it was a bit too steep, a bit too hard going and so they'd left it, walked back to the bottom and started on another which climbed more gently up. Also it seemed to be divided up every now and again by clumps of briar or Hawthorn and on the hill side of the track were hollows which provided shelter from the strengthening breeze. There was a second Duke, more orange-y in appearance when it flew – a bit like decaying leaf or old wicker colour as it erupted from almost under my boot. It didn't hang around or land as it was caught by the breeze and was swept vertiginously up the side of the down. I didn't mind too much as I soon got onto a third just as the track petered into a wall of briar and steep slope. The Duke flew to my right down the steep side of the down onto the lower and more gentle ascending path which was also on the top of a bank with the slope on one side and a hollow on the other. It was into this hollow that the Duke plopped down and so I clambered down after it. Luckily the sun had been covered by a small cloud so the butterfly became more docile and I was able to get a load of shots before the passing cloud moved on, the sun warmed the butterfly and it set off on its frenetic business.



I climbed back up to the original track and worked back down the hill to see if I could relocate the other two Dukes. Which indeed I did although the 2nd Duke again proved problematic as I was just moving in for a shot when another butterfly happened to pass and the Duke went mental at it. The skirmish was very short and I followed one of the butterflies- the loser wondering if it was another Duke but when I caught up with it I realised straight away that it was something different, slightly larger and much brighter orange it was my first Small Heath of 2020.



As I was almost at the bottom I thought that I might as well walk round to the Bowl, see if the increasing temperature had brought out any other butterflies and then do another circuit. The Bowl was still bereft of Dukes but instead a faded and tired Small White actually sat still long enough for me to get some shots.



So off I went again. I reached the spot where I'd encountered the 2nd (and also the 4th if it was different?) Duke and it was still here. It had a tear in the hindwing which meant I'd be able to differentiate it from any other and after a few shots I offered it my finger and it crawled on so I was able to try for a few 'in the hand' shots. I placed it back down in some cover and as it had started to rain I crawled under a Hawthorn and had an early lunch whilst the shower passed - good old Extra Hot Lime Chilli Pickle with added Nooch.





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 26-Jun-20 10:30 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, love your last shot, it's unusual to get one on your finger like that 😊 Raining here today and storms forecast, can't wait for my journey to Kent, near the end of July. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 26-Jun-20 06:02 PM GMT

That's a good selection of Dukes (and Duchesses I think), Wurzel. I particularly like the penultimate one with the close-up of its head – I like the way they perch with their legs set foursquare and perfectly balanced. Maybe they all do this, but Dukes always seem to strike a pose! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Chris L, 26-Jun-20 07:17 PM GMT

That was a lucky break getting the Duke on your finger Wurzel. Had it been pre 'Extra Hot Lime Chilli Pickle' you might have been on to something there as I am fairly sure that this will never have been used as butterfly bait before !

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-20 06:20 PM GMT

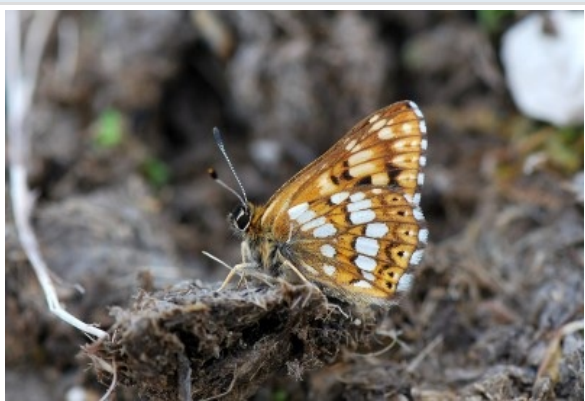
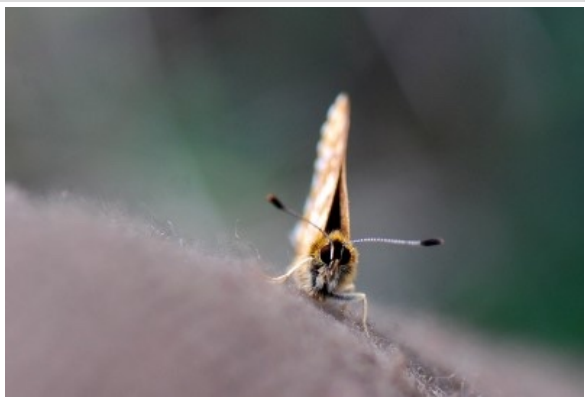
Cheers Goldie 😊 I just offered it my finger and it crawled on 😊 – desperately trying to warm up as when the sun went in it was much cooler 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 I like that pose as well Dave – their legs are held perfectly parallel – it's a joy to behold for the neat freak in me 😊

Cheers Otep 😊 Can you imagine if it was – it would probably have the opposite effect to the one desired with butterflies roaring round in search of water 😊😊 Saying that you certainly get a bit of a sweat on after a few mouthfuls – so perhaps that might work as an attractant? 😊😊

Fovant 01-05-2020 Cont'd

The next blue patch of sky arrived and so I rolled out from under the Hawthorn and set about looking for some more Dukes. I swiftly found two one of which I may have already encountered as it was in a similar place to before in the hollow between the hill and the banked path but the second I'm fairly sure was a new one (so definitely 4 maybe 5) but it didn't stop for too long as a Dingy decided to have a bit of a go at it. They spiralled up for a little bit but the Dingy realised that it had met its match, (I mean come on, the Dingy is named after a bit of carpet and the Duke is name of nobility!) and promptly came down onto the deck followed by the gloating Duke. It was a sublime 2 species shot but I couldn't get it as I was still down in the hollow and too far away for them to be in range. I clambered out but my clumsy stalk set the Dingy off with the Duke once again showing it was made of sterner stuff standing its ground. As I finally got in close enough the Duke took off and the breeze suddenly gusted blowing the tiny butterfly straight into me with it landing on my arm. So I knelt down and lowered my arm in the hope that the Duke would hop off which he did, just as a large cloud swallowed the sun. The temperature dropped and so the Duke sat still patiently waiting for the sun to return.



After getting plenty of shots I pulled my iPod out of my pocket and caught a bit of video. When the sun made a reappearance I thought the butterfly would be off and so this proved to be however it wasn't necessarily the temperature or the sun's warmth that made the butterfly take to the skies as when I looked back at the video I could see an ant hassling the Duke just prior to it flying. So happy with my haul of shots I made up the slope and back

towards where I'd encountered the second Duke (ole Split Tail) who was again there being hassled by another Duke (so 5 maybe 6). Split Tail again came out on top and settled down for me to get a final set of shots before I made my way down to the bottom of the hill and started back along the tractor ruts. A Red Admiral was waiting for me to add itself to the days tally and then a male OT patrolled along the track by the entrance/exit gate.



I crossed over the road and walking past my car carried on over the gate onto the Fovant Badges site proper. There was a large bowl cut into the side of the hill from another of those old quarries and in this a Dingy was holding a territory. I climbed out and walked up the hill but it was quite breezy by now and the wind was blowing straight up the track so the banks offered no shelter but just funnelled the wind right up the slope. Down near the gate things were a lot more active with several whites flying around a small stand of trees. I was able to pick out a Large Whites looking so much bigger than the two Small Whites, a male Brimstone and Orange-tip also did fly-bys.



The Badges in the distance...

The Large White came back and was briefly joined by a female but she didn't hang around. What was strange is that the male followed her but then came back a couple of moments later and flew back to roughly the same place she'd been and seemed very interested in a leaf that had folded over showing the silvered underside. I managed to grab a few shots when he landed and then off he went but kept returning to roughly the same spot? All the while a Dingy was pestering me round my ankles.



I left very thankful to my mate for putting me onto this great site with his excellent set of directions. 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-Jun-20 11:32 PM GMT

Some Cracking shots of the Duke Wurzel, it's great when the clouds make them still for a while and you can get decent shots, just as long as the Sun appears again 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-20 07:36 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Sometimes a little bit of cloud is a godsend, other times though it can push right off 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-20 02:10 PM GMT

{quote=Wurzel_post_id=155437_time=1593369396_user_id=9821} Cheers Goldie 😊 Sometimes a little bit of cloud is a godsend, other times though it can push right off 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

So true Wurzel. Last week we could have done with a bit of cloud. Now it is all I can see, and windy with it 😬

Great report(s) from your new site. It is always good to find somewhere new to visit 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-20 08:53 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I've been watching sightings of Dukes come in from there for a few years now but could never work out the best places for them as the website only has a 6 figure grid reference which is generally where you can park the car 😬 Luckily my daughter got me onto Instagram and through there a was furnished with directions and maps which were pinpoint accurate – I could almost see the red pin hovering above my first Duke 😊😬

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

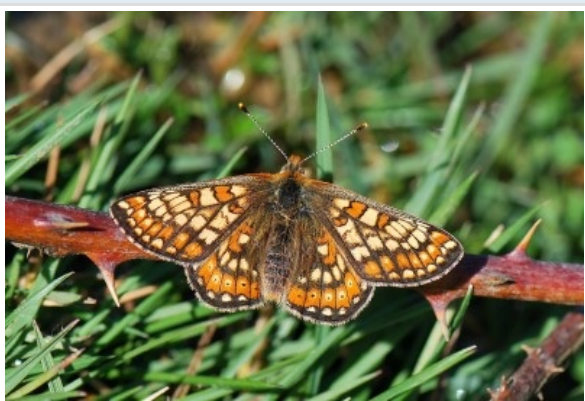
by Wurzel, 01-Jul-20 10:32 AM GMT

Bentley Wood 02-05-2020

So after the last time I didn't feel the need to arrive quite as early as previously plus I had the girls again and so an early arrival wasn't ever going to be on the cards as I'd have to get three people ready to leave and in the car etc. Still by about 9:15 we were strolling down to the Clearing from the car park which is definitely an achievement. As we entered into the Clearing the sun was beating down and in those parts out of the shade the dew had already evaporated and the foliage was dry. There were also butterflies already on the wing and so I set about trying for a few shots once I'd seen to the girls and gotten their little camp set up. As I wandered along the little trackways the criss-cross the Clearing I saw at least three different individual Pearls some of which were behaving more graciously than those from a week prior; posing nicely here and there and allowing an approach of closer than 2 metres (no Social Distancing here).



I ended up wandering down to the bottom section, curtained off by a stand of trees but my hopes of finding a Duke here were dashed as pretty much all of it was still in shade and so I carried on round and back into the Eastern Clearing. I took the little trackway that hugged the stand of trees and as I looked across into the reedy patch a slightly smaller, dark butterfly went up. From the flight it looked like a Fritillary and so I watched it land and took a few steps towards the spot it had gone down at. It was a Marshie but it had landed in amongst the reeds so getting a nice unobstructed shot was going to prove problematic. It's at times like this I start designing the ideal 'butterfly scissors'© in my head – they'd have to have long, thin and very sharp blades with very long handles so you wouldn't spook the butterfly. Luckily they wouldn't have been necessary even if they had existed as the butterfly started crawling up the first stem and then started walking about becoming more and more exposed as it did so. At one point I offered it my finger which it crawled onto eagerly to soak up some more warmth. I gingerly placed it on a handy looking perch and after a few more shots left it to its own devices.



After checking in with the girls it was time to get back to the Pearls...So I started following them round the main sections of the Clearing with at least

three of them flying about in the main section of the Clearing. They really seemed to like the little triangle Bracken near the Notice Board where they would bask on the deceased orange fronds or feed on the Bluebells.

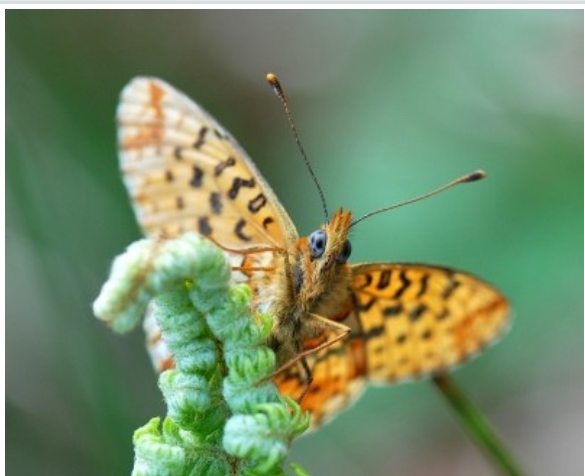


After this I crossed the tiny bridge and made towards the newly cleared area (well newly cleared a couple of years back). To be honest it didn't look like it would be the best habitat but I managed to find 4 more Pearls here. They seemed to prefer the furthest side of the field where the small birch saplings are greater in number. They were a little confusing at times as I'd be watching one and another would enter the flight path, there would be a scuffle and they would head off in directions to each other. I was able to track on as it went down right at the back by the fence line. As it dropped to the deck it slowly but surely closed up shop, wings held tightly together.





I worked my way back to the main Clearing down the back path where there were a couple more flying in the 'scallops' on my left hand side. Once back in the Clearing I was able to relocate the Marshie which was still down near the bottom section in the reedy patch. I picked up shots of Pearls here and there in my wanderings and whilst investigating the middle section (again clothed in the reedy grass) the sun went in for a bit. I used this to my advantage as I had just spotted a Pearl flying in this little bit. As the temperature dropped so too did it, plopping down on an uncurled Bracken head. I got a few shots and then after a quick look above waited for the cloud to pass. When it did I was in prime position for some side on shots of the glorious under wing.





As I worked back into the Newly Cleared part I again looked up and used the increased cloud cover to my advantage but this time I watched as a much more yellow Pearl sized blob settled down to sit out the cloud. However as I got closed I could see that it wasn't just the cloud induced drop in temperature that had sedated it but possibly the fact that it was in cop.



After this I had the quick walk around with Little L and then we headed for home. It had been a bit of an unusual visit with 15 butterflies seen, one of which was a Marshie and the other 14 were Pearls! How often does that happen?
Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by keving, 01-Jul-20 06:45 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Great diary this week. You've certainly found a great site at Fovant. Those Dukes are lovely. Glad to see you working your charm not only on one of them but a Marshie too. We'll have to start calling you the Butterfly Whisperer 😊

Keep em coming

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 01-Jul-20 07:49 PM GMT

That was a good visit to Bentley, Wurzel! 😊 Some splendid Pearls, which deserve a 🍷 as I didn't get to see any that fresh this year, and a brand new Marshie too. Looks like a female to me and I can remember encountering them behaving somewhat doozily like that when new. A very nice butterfly though. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

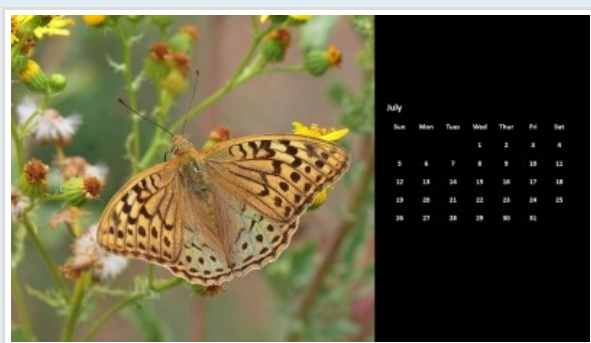
by Wurzel, 01-Jul-20 08:44 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 I was dead chuffed to have finally but he bullet and visited there – if it wasn't for Lockdown I'd never have visited and gone to Noar Hill instead 😊 – much better to only need 20 minutes to get there 😊😊
I think the title of Butterfly Whisperer has already been taken by Dave Miller (millerd); he starts mumbling and Holly Blues literally throw themselves at his feet 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 I've noticed a few times now that Marshies do like a bit of a lie-in and are often the last to get up from their roost, a butterfly after my own heart 😊😊

July 2020

Almost missed it...You can tell it's July as you need to carry a broly with you whenever you go out 😊



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-20 10:58 AM GMT

Marshie's on your finger now, How do you do it 😊🍷 love the calendar shot as well, weathers awful here at present, no Sun to speak of 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-20 07:05 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 The trick is to have really sweaty fingers so the wearing the gloves as part of Co-vid19 prevention came in handy 😊😊

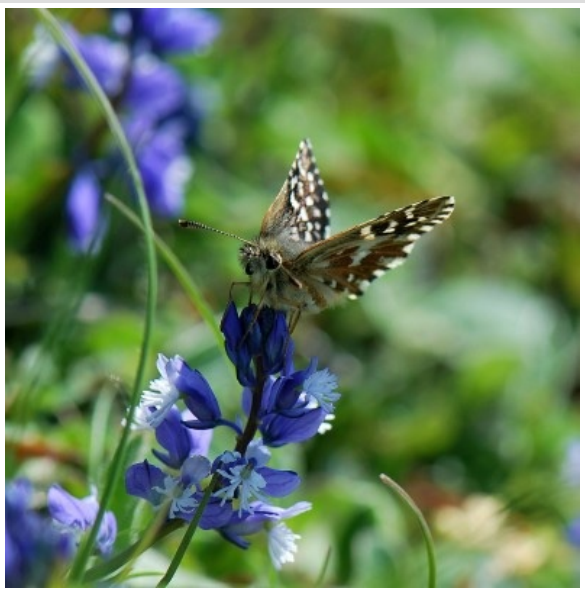
The Devenish 04-05-2020 Star Wars Day!

One of the joys about Lockdown has been spending precious time with my girls. However sometimes you can have too much of a good thing! 😊 So this afternoon it was nice to head out for some exercise over at The Devenish with just my wife so we could both enjoy some peace and quiet. The journey is over within about 5 minutes but even though we're allowed exercise once a day and the reserve, which is relatively unknown, would be the perfect place the gate at the car park is locked. Luckily there are a few other pull-ins and lay-bys just up the lane from the site entrance and so car dumped we stroll back down the lane enjoying the dappled sunlight on the way.

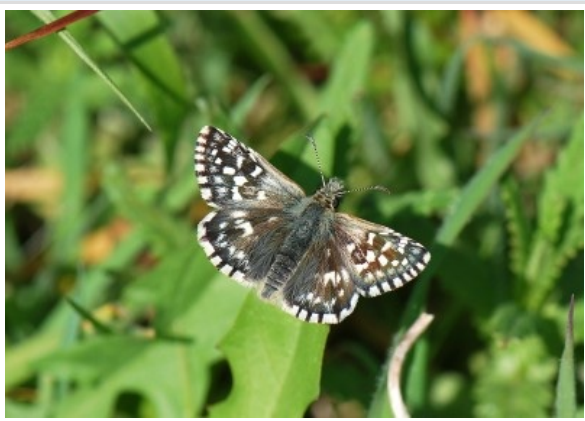
We take the woodland path up and round to the Orchid Meadow passing a Green-veined White on the way and once over the gate I pause just long enough to spot a Dinky buzzing around in the flower tops. However we're here for walking and so we start on our way up the vertiginous slope of the Down. If there weren't steps cut into the chalk I reckon it would be steep enough to warrant ropes and crampons! As we made some headway on the ascent a Brimstone fussed about in the Bramble hedge and a Grizzlie showed off its aeronautical skill when we were about half way up the stairs. We follow the diagonal path along to the far side of the Down and I see a further two Grizzlies and then we walk back along the top surveying the stunning countryside scenery below us. Up here on the Downtop a duo of male Brimstones are scarping and at one juncture a Small White tries to join the fray though the larger Brimstones seem to turn aside their anger for each other and direct it at the Small White. Once the irksome, bantam weight pretender is sent backing the heavyweights resume their hostilities.



After the effort spent getting up here my wife and I take advantage of the Beech hanger wood and the shade it offers so we stroll once more through shade and dappled sunlight cooling down as we go. By the fence which separates the middle and end paddocks there are a pair of rope swings so while my wife idly swings I descend back to the lower slopes of this middle section. Once down I drift ever so slowly here and there randomly working my way up the hill and back to where my wife is still on the swing. My wanderings produce a male Orange-tip and three more Grizzlies, two of which are still in really good nick.



My wife was happy just enjoying the bird song and the peace as she swung so I descended once again and made my way into the end paddock through and over the assortment of gates. It was much livelier here than elsewhere on the reserve which surprised me as usually this is better in the middle of the season when the Browns are in ascendance. A few Specklies flew along the wooded margins of the Paddock whilst a male Orange-tip and male Brimstone quartered the flatter ground at the base of the Paddock. A Peacock erupted from the tussocky grass. As I made my way back to the gates a Dingy and then Grizzlie sat for a few photos. Once again the Dingy was looking faded and tired, rough around the edges whilst the Grizzlie looked in fine fettle. This got me wondering; do the Grizzlies emerge over a longer time period than the Dingies? If so it would explain the much better condition of the butterflies from this species that I am seeing.



I climbed back up the Down and we reluctantly carried on along the top into the next section and took the steps back down to the car park. A blissful way to spend the afternoon.

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-Jul-20 07:32 PM GMT

That sounds like a great spot to have to yourself, Wurzel. 🍷🍷 I'd love to have somewhere convenient with Dingies and Grizzlies for company! I think you're right about the emergence of the two species – wherever I go to see them, Grizzlies are always first to appear, but fresh ones still pop up when the Dingies are starting to look like faded carpets. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-20 02:33 PM GMT

Lovely shots Wurzel, 🍷🍷 I'll get one shot in some day 😊😊 Daughter is arriving Thursday to take me to Kent, can't wait 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-20 08:06 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 It is a cracking little and little known reserve – also has had DGFs, SWFs, Chalkhills, Adonis and a couple of Cloudies in the past – just need a passing Emperor to round the list off nicely 😊😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Hope you have a great time in Kent, the weather looks set to be improving by next week so hopefully you'll get onto some cracking butterflies 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-20 08:43 PM GMT

Martin Down 06-05-2020

After recent visits for exercise had produced four of my 'Firsts for 2020' I was wondering what today would hold in store. From my previous visits there had either been a nice range with only the odd one or two of each species seen or there had been good numbers but only from a limited palette as it were. As I drove down over from Salisbury I didn't see a single butterfly and so I reckoned that the Butterfly Gods were holding everything back until I got to my destination and so I drove with the growing feeling that this was going to be a bit of an epic visit despite the limited time I would be able to spend on site.

As I drove down Sillen's Lane it was as if the 'Butterfly Switch' had been clicked on and there were male OTs patrolling all the way along the hedge. I would have counted them but I could only catch glimpses of them as I was too busy concentrating on missing the potholes and dips in the road/track. At one point I glimpsed another white butterfly and it was as though time has stood still for it stood out from the background pin sharp and crystal clear - a Green-veined White. Then Physics caught up with me and I had to turn my eyes once more road wards. I parked and set off along the track that follows the hedge and I was soon adding butterflies to the tally with first a Grizzlie and then a Greenstreak. I'm guessing the GH was a female as it was low down in the grass as opposed to sitting up high and holding court? Further along was another Grizzlie and this one had been joined by 2 Dingies and a female Brimstone all down on the deck. Was this because it was still early and they were gathering warmth? It could also have been that they were trying to suck up the dew and any minerals that were dissolved in it as the ground was parched and baked hard and the only other source of moisture/dissolved minerals that I could see was a deep tractor rut that still held some mud. As I approached I saw 2 more Grizzlies crawling around and mud puddling. Chuffed at witnessing this behaviour I tarried for a while to watch but I didn't want to try for any shots until I was going to move on as I didn't want to disturb them. At this point the path curves away from the hedge leaving a triangular 'verge' and in this little patch I counted a brace each of Greenstreak and Grizzlies and a singleton Diny.





By now I'd reached the start of the tunnel but before I could dive down into it a tiny Small Blue was trying to punch above its weight class as it scrapped with a Dingy and a Grizzlie - it was like a miniature Fight Club. In between bouts the Small Blue would pause and I could make out the blue scales lightly dusting the wings making this a male and also explaining the high testosterone levels on display! Once the Skippers had made off I settled down to get a few shots of the SB as it recuperated and refuelled. Looking back at the photos later it appears that there were actually two Small Blues here as I got shots of one that didn't possess a single blue scale - a female.





Onwards I went into the tunnel which was actually very quiet, the only places I saw butterflies were at the various openings; the few places where the scrubby hedge on one side had been pulled up. In the light from the first of these I found two Dingies and another Small Blue and at the second there were a couple more Grizzlies including one which flew up high, jinking around in such a fashion that had I not seen it down on the deck and had I to have guessed its ID I'd have gone for Greenstreak! I could tell when I was reaching the end of the Tunnel as I started seeing Specklies one of which was down and taking salts from one of the rare damp patches on the ground. As I broke out into the sun shine at the far end I watched for 3 Dingies for several moments. They were involved in a bit of a fracas and I'm guessing that either all three were males squabbling over territory or possibly a brace of males squabbling over a none too impressed female. At one point during the seemingly random acts of violence a hapless Grizzlie got dragged into the fuss as well.



Onwards and upwards I went - literally as I followed the track up the hill and skirting round the rings of the hillfort. I got onto the main track and then cut across towards the little meadow looking chiefly for Greenstreaks. On the narrow and overgrown tracks I picked up 2 Dingies and another Grizzlie and in the now usual place I found a/the Greenstreak looking quite tired and ragged. I cut back through to the main trackway near the hotspot and spent some time here with a female Holly Blue that was down near the ground. She was tempted to open up but small twigs or leaves kept interfering with her wishes. Luckily she had enough of this and so flew up the path a bit towards some of the tussocky grass and the less cluttered bramble leaves at the side of the path. Also here were a couple of Greenstreaks and a male Brimstone. The real star of the show here though was an almost black Small Heath which didn't possess a single blue fleck - its inky sheen contrasted gorgeously with the almost silver white margins - a real stunner.



Round at the Hollow were a further 2 Greenstreaks, a comparatively docile Small Heath and singletons of Grizzlie, Dingy and Peacock. I now started the slow trudge along the Dyke towards what I think of as the top end of Martin Down, the bit by the main car park. I walk along meticulously noting down the butterflies that fly within view and hoping that some will actually land. On the way my note book pages start getting filled running along the lines of:

Dingy, 2 Grizzlies, female Brimstone, 2 male Brimstones, Greenstreak, male Orange-tip, 2 Brimstones...and Ariston... 😊

It felt like I was spending more time with my nose buried in my notebook than actually watching out for butterflies. It also felt like I was seeing a lot of the same but when I reached the bit of the Dyke which started to level off near to the cross path that enters the reserve from Dorset a Small Copper saw me writing in some different initials. Though I also had to note down a few Small Blues prior to this WINK. Just as I was enjoying these a large butterfly appeared cutting and slicing its way through the air and then gliding past before veering off in a new direction with a flick of its wing tips and a rapid set of flaps. It was a Marshie and it was swiftly followed by a second that followed flew a similar flight plan before disappearing over the bank and disappearing into Dorset. But whilst I was again able to write something different in my notebook I wasn't able to add something different to my memory card...yet...



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 06-Jul-20 09:46 PM GMT

Good to se your Small Blues, Wurzel. A species I failed to catch up with this Spring. Back home tomorrow to more wind and rain if the forecast is to be believed. Looking forward to another Tilshead visit in August.

Keep well,
Trevor.

PS. A Brown Hairstreak was photographed in Sussex recently, and a Large Tort in my local woods.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 06-Jul-20 10:12 PM GMT

Some lovely Small Blues, Wurzel, especially that inky black one. 😊 It could be a very fresh female. When brand new, they can be very dark and often have that almost oily sheen that some new brown female blues display. Martin Down is such a great site... 🍷

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-20 08:36 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was thinking that myself - she was a beauty 😊😁 That's been one of the positives of Lockdown - reacquainting myself with this cracking reserve 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I visited Martin Down at the weekend and saw a second brood Small blue there so you might be able to catch up with them when you're out and about 😊. If you're back early August we could sort out a Shipton visit for Brostreaks - that's if they haven't already finished, it's been a crazy year so anything's possible! 😊😁😊

Martin Down 06-05-2020 Part 2

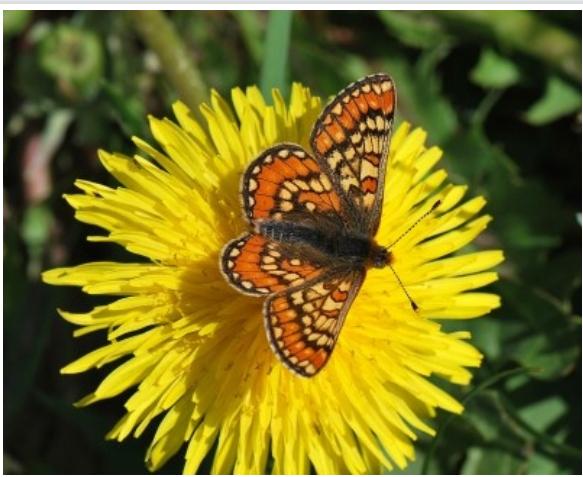
The Dyke had now ended, petering out to the same level as the rest of the fields a Large White flew rapidly by and there were a couple more Small Blues and a Peacock but what I had been really looking forward to seeing had disappeared in a flash of red and ginger. I strolled across the grass looking out for Adders and took a turn down the small path at the ½ way point. As I strolled down the path a Brimstone flew by and was quickly followed by a second, two Dingies scrapped low down and on a little cleared bank a Small Copper tried to have a breather but two Greenstreaks kept coming down from the surrounding Hawthorns and hassling it. At the end a third Greenstreak was flitting about and on my return a second Small Copper posed on a Dandelion and I don't know what was brighter - the yellow flower or the orange of the butterfly?



After this brief respite I plunged back down into the Dyke...well that was the intention but the Dyke was closed off with electric fencing. Typical as now I started seeing Marsh Frits - sitting on the far side of the Dyke and well beyond the sensible reach of my lens. I carried on looking down longingly into the Dyke and spying another Small Blue and Marsh Frit. Luckily as I was drawing near to the Butts the fence ended and I was able to get down into the Dyke again and start seeking out Marsh Frits and I was successful, finally after seeing at least 5 individuals without any shots. Also here were a brace of Peacocks that started following me as I progressed further along the Dyke.



Just beyond the Butts the Dyke starts to shallow out again and run for 20 metres or so barely noticeable amidst the other vegetation but then after a track crosses it returns rapidly to its original depth. It was at this point that I started to really get onto the Marshies. First there was the tell-tale flight of one lone individual, the vanguard of the group as it were. Then several just appeared and at one point had had three in one view. These were joined by another two so a small square of approximately 4 metres held up to 8 Marshies – a nice density! Possibly feeling left out by all the attention their distant cousins were getting a Peacock, Small Copper and a Small Heath also put in an appearance but I'm sorry to say they got short shrift as I was enjoying the Marshies so much particularly the variation I could see. Every year I forget and so spend my first few encounters with Marshies revelling and wondering at their difference in appearance. So it was on this occasion; one had a beautiful milk chocolate brown ground colour and yellow and cream chequers whilst another had a similar ground colour but this was only visible as thin streaks in between orange and yellow blocks. My favourite however was a very fecund female who was jet black with orange and red blocks.





After getting started again so abruptly the Dyke then stops abruptly again but only because there's a large growth of scrub blocking off a section of the Dyke. So I walk round to the final part before the Dyke is cut off by Blandford Road. This final part is divided up by a series of little cross paths into about 4 sections the furthest two don't hold much and most of the action seems to be focused in the two just after the 'blockage'. So it's this part that I climb down into. I spend 10 minutes or so in here with a Dingy, patrolling OT and Brimstone and four brilliant looking Marshies. I climb back out to pour a coffee and leave it to cool by my bag and follow another gorgeously fresh looking Marshie. It lands just as my phone rings. It's work:

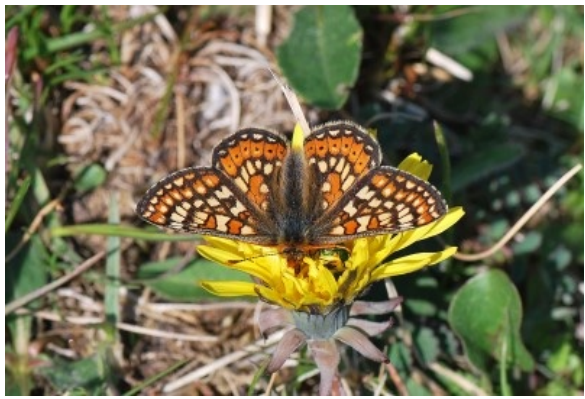
"Can you get onto the network?"

"Err...I'm taking my exercise?"

"Okay stay on the line we can put you through speaker phone while we Zoom"

While this was happening the Marshie had landed in a perfect position...I passed my phone to my other hand, leant in with camera one handed and fired off a few shots and then carried on with the call. Once it was complete and my coffee was drunk I got back to the butterflies picking up even more Marshies and a Greenstreak that was wing rolling and hinting at the chocolate brown uppers.





One handed...

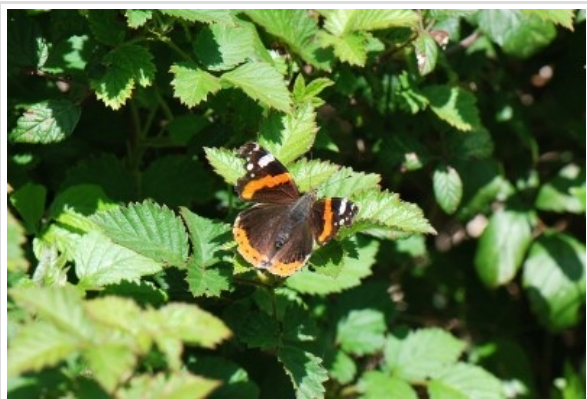
After this delightful time I realised that I needed to get back as despite having the Conference Call (well I suppose that's what it could be called) I was dangerously close to being out too long when accumulating my lunch, break, free lessons and the fact that I was intending to work an extra hour in the evening. So I started back and for a while I refrained from counting, just put my head down and motored for home. I was going quite well until I got past the Butts and got onto the diagonal track that carves a the reserve into half when still head down and still motoring I almost trod on a Small Copper. I checked my watch and did a few mental calculations and realised that I still had a bit more time than I'd previously thought. Now motoring reverted back to 'proceeding' a gait used by both the Police and Teachers where you can cover ground with minimal effort. I'd just passed the old patch that in years gone by had been ploughed up especially for Stone Curlews when I had a little purple patch. A Dingy started it all off as it appeared from nowhere in the middle of the track. A female Brimstone did a flyover and then a smaller brown butterfly hove into view. At first I was a bit confused about what it could be but luckily it went down on the deck and I found that it was a Greenstreak, totally out of place amid the sea of grass that forms this part of the site. As I look up a male Brimstone flies along the edge of the track – possibly looking for the female and a few steps on a Grizzlie also pops up.



After this I reached the little hollow near the entrance to the tunnel. I saw three Dingies and a Grizzlie all hanging out nearby to each other in the various different ruts. I checked back in my notebook and was so left wondering whether they were the same individuals that I'd encountered squabbling to their hearts content earlier in the morning? Added to this group of reprobates were a few Small Heaths and a pair of Marshies and as I made into the tunnel I was again left wondering - but this time where the Marshies had been earlier in the morning? I seem to recall that of the three Frits that I've encountered at Bentley this year Marshies are generally the last species spotted so I reckon that they are the most 'Student' like of Frits - odd fashion and favouring long lie-ins. I dove on down into the tunnel stopping here and there for the odd butterfly and to make the odd note in my book. By the end I'd amassed braces of Holly Blue, Specklie, Diny and Brimstone and then I was leaving the cooler, pleasant shade of the tunnel and starting the final furlong. I didn't get very far from the entrance/exit to the tunnel when a Small White flew into view. It's not often that this species does me a favour and usually I'm left cursing it as they've just spooked my target species, but today as I was watching the Small White if flew past a Red Admiral and I was able to get at least a record shot before it realised that I was onto it.



On the final stretch there were more Dingies and Grizzlies - most of which I'd probably already counted on the outward route and there was also singletons of Brimstone, Small White and Greenstreak. The star of the reprise was a male Small Blue that was sitting on the very edge of the hedge where it curves round at the old gate. Smiling I thought it best to leave it at that and head home directly. A truly epic morning with both quantity and quality - Martin Down at its spring best!





Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 07-Jul-20 08:46 PM GMT

Lovely fresh Marshies, Wurzel – I didn't get to see them there until they'd worn a bit and lost that clean fresh look. They do like the dandelions, don't they? Yellow flowers are definitely a favourite, and they wear them well too... 😊 Great shots. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 07-Jul-20 09:57 PM GMT

Agreed. We were hoping to catch up with Marsh Fritillaries this year, but it wasn't to be.

Re: Wurzel

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

Some stunning, mrgreen worthy, shots there Wurzel.

That fresh Small Blue 🦋, And the very fresh Marsh Frits. 🦋

I missed out on both species this year owing to ' the bug '.

Shipton sounds good, anything to get an open wing male BH.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jul-20 09:25 AM GMT

Some cracking Marsh Fritillaries there Wurzel 🦋 😊

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=155827 time=1594155464 user_id=11426] We were hoping to catch up with Marsh Fritillaries this year, but it wasn't to be.

Same here. Oh well, maybe next year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-20 07:50 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Martin Down has certainly come on in terms of Marshies over the last few years, when I started you had to keep schtum about sightings 😊. Did I detect a reference to Rod the Mod there? 😊

Cheers Essex 😊 I know the feeling – Heath Frits and Large Blues for me. I also have missed out on Wood Whites as I allowed myself only one 'Big Trip' this year – oh well it's always good to have something to look forward too 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I'll see what I can rummage up from Shipton – hopefully they'll have a more 'normal' season this year and stick to their rule book 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 It has been a funny old year, I only did one 'Big Trip' this year instead of a three or four I was considering but staying local where possible has brought it's own rewards 😊

I recently watched 'James May in Japan' or some such on Amazon TV and loved the idea of Haikus...So for the last two posts here goes...

Martin Down in May
Was marvelous for Marshies
Chequers in the grass

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-20 07:08 PM GMT

Vernditch 07-05-2020

As we all managed to get most of our work done first thing and as the weather is still so nice we decided to pack a snack and head over to Vernditch for our daily exercise. The good thing about this site is that it's little known and so really quiet, on this visit there was only one other car in the car park as we arrived. The leaves have unfurled now and whilst the sun was shining strongly overhead lighting the path a few steps into the woodland meant that you were enveloped by a green shade. The Bluebells are still upright but no longer do they form a sea of blue, more like a scattering of small ponds and puddles and whilst the Wild Garlic is still pungent in aroma their petals are starting to thin forming a mosaic of pale green and white. We only encountered a couple of butterflies on the walk through the woodland and those were Specklies, numbering 3, in the now usual spots.

As we broke from the cover onto the open scrubland of Kitts Grave a male OT tore past us from behind almost as a welcome. This time we kept walking to the 'end' sticking to the high path. Once there we stopped for the snack and while my coffee cooled I watched a couple of Brimstones patrolling, a Peacock basked momentarily on the path and a male OT dropped in for a quick drink. Even in their dotage they're still able to move like rockets and approaching them is still tricky. A Specklie came down close as I drank my coffee but was seen off by a malignant little grey blur which swiftly became a diminutive Grizzlie.



The girls then started the slow walk back to where we usually had our snack where they would settle down and give my 10 minutes or so to try and find some butterflies. Whilst they took the top path I strolled down the bank and worked along the bottom of the valley (if you can call it that?). Straight away I found a few butterflies. As well as the larger whites patrolling about and sexually harassing one another and a Silver Y which behaved itself for a few seconds there was a smaller brown blur. It was a Dingy Skipper and once it had buzzed around and about it seemed to relax and landed on my boot.



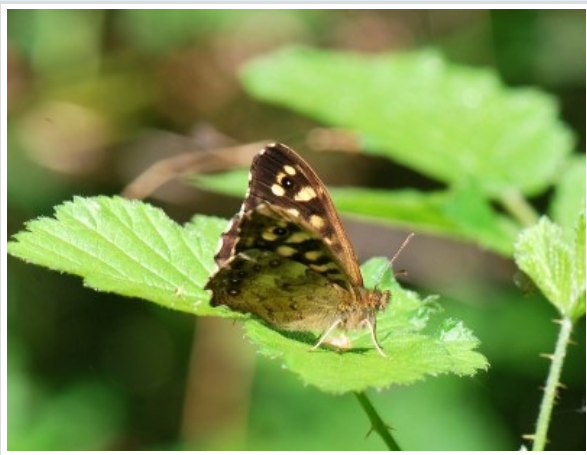
The little valley I was in was dissected occasionally by another path at right angles which continued up into the woodland on my left. This means that the valley is almost broken up into four sections. As I came into the next one the larger butterflies were all present – a couple of Brimstone males and a female, a Small White and a male OT but all were hanging back in the longer, thicker vegetation on the valley bank. The floor of the valley though held the smaller butterflies and here there were three little blurs around in a little cleared area where there had been a clearance fire. One blur was slightly bigger than the others and was brown – a Dingy and the other two were silver and grey. I reckoned the grey had to be a Grizzlie but what about the silver one? Could it be what I'd been hoping to see? Unfortunately all three were at each other throats the whole time. One would fly in upset the other two, they'd all spiral around each other upwards and then break apart flying off a speed in different directions. Luckily I managed to be in the right place at the right time as the silvery blur landed next to the Dingy and I was able to get a couple of shots of my first Brown Argus of 2020.





I carried on with my walk seeing a Dingy in each of the two remaining sections before working up the hill and having a fleeting view of a Red Admiral. Meeting up with the girls we dispatched a Tick which had been unable to latch on to little L and made our way back again seeing the Specklies in the usual places, a total of 4 this way. I'm really enjoying this daily exercise!





Love chocolate orange
Belligerent butterfly
Little Brown Argus

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 12-Jul-20 07:02 AM GMT

Wurzel – Loved your recent Marshie pics and that brilliant Small Blue.

Question – Your pic of the Green Hairstreak showing a small portion of its upper hindwing. Was it doing a wing-roll? Is that why we can see it? If so, is it OK to copy this pic into the general forum thread on wing-rolling?

Cheers

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 12-Jul-20 07:20 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, not much time down here for two many posts 😊 but spotted your lovely shots of the Marsh Frit's , they really are a great. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-20 05:00 PM GMT

Cheers Ernie 😊 They were a joy to behold

Cheers Goldie 😊 Glad you're busy with the butterflies 😊😊 It was wing rolling and so I'll put the picture in the gallery forthwith 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

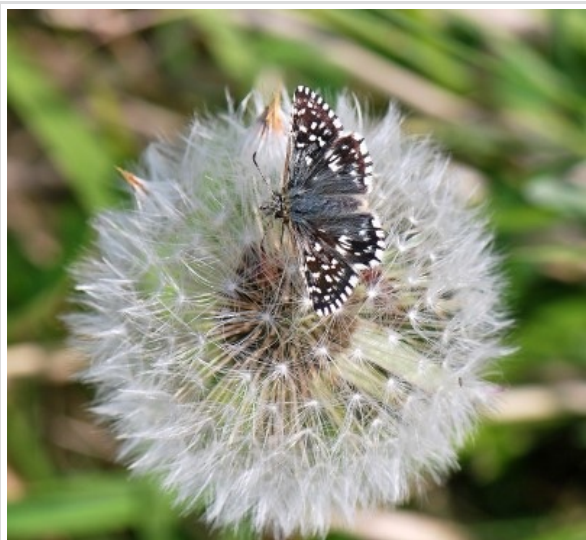
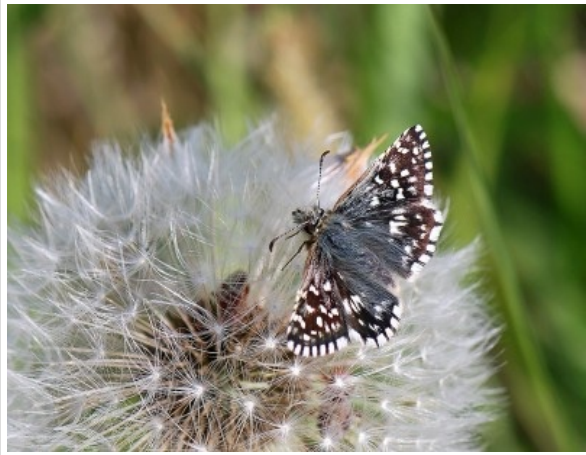
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-20 08:22 PM GMT

Duke Site (Hopefully?) 08-05-2020

To give my wife a bit of a break and also to get the girls away from the computer screens that they've been staring at day after day since March (et moi aussi) I bundled them and a picnic into the car and we set off for my Duke Site. In previous years, when I first visited and I gave it its moniker there were Dukes all over the trackways. Alas in subsequent years the numbers dwindled and so my Duke site reverted to its original name. Then in 2019 they were back so I was hoping that the site could hold onto its name in 2020...

We left the car with the dust settling over the body work and made our way straight across the spongy turf area which is now decorated with huge scars from tank tracks. There were plenty of Dingies and Small Heath about but the little section on the margin of the small copse was bereft of Small Blue unfortunately so we kept on making our way across the side of the hill and then up the other along the main trackway with more of the same flying but not much else, occasional Small Heath, Grizzlie and Dinky and the odd white drifting by. It felt strange to be wandering along and only seeing the odd butterfly here and there and not the teeming abundance I've come to associate with this place. A quick walk around the Cypress and in the field in front of it and there again was more of the same - it was almost like things hadn't really woken up yet?





We carried on traipsing the trackways and there was a slight change in temperature and all of a sudden there was also a change in the fauna. A Mother Shipton played really hard to get and a Peacock bombed by. At the top of the track turned left and we cautiously crept along the narrowing path, or feet seeming to disappear, 'sinking' in the grass as we walked in the ruts. In the far corner we pause as the tussocks amid the moss and short spongy turf have held Dukes many times in the past. I'm startled momentarily by a brown blur but all too quickly I realise that the 'jizz', its flight is all wrong and my supposition that its just a Dingy is swiftly confirmed when it lands momentarily. It's soon up and away again as a second Dingy inadvertently wanders into its airspace/territory. It seems butterflies only really have two things on their mind, fighting and f...meeting their Biological Imperative. At this juncture a Brimstone passes overhead and so I'm diverted from the Dingies. As I drop my head once the Brimstone has passed a small, darker butterfly is there sitting on a strand of the tussocky grass. It's a Duke and I watch it and get a few shots revelling in its feisty demeanour despite its diminutive size while all the while chuffed that I can still call this my Duke Site for another year at least.



The girls had already walked round to the T-junction of paths opposite the little 'Valley' so instead of walking back the same way I came I cut through the line of trees and walk back to meet them across the sparse turf on the dusty gentle slope. Again there are more Dingies and Grizzlies (they seem to be having a fantastic season!) as well as the odd Small Heath and then out of nowhere there is a silvery blur that announces the presence of a Bad Attitude (my name for Brown Argus). This one keeps on going passing through and looking for another hapless victim to intimidate and rough up.

Luckily a second is enjoying a brief breather between bouts so I click away.



Next I climb over the stile and have a quick scout around in the Little Valley – guess what butterflies are there? Yep Small Heath and the ickle Skippers but another Bad Attitude is also here this time it's scaring off a Red Admiral, a butterfly that has to be at four times its size! This observation leads me to come up with an hypothesis as why I can't recall seeing bird strike marks on a Bad Attitude; it's because they fly towards their erstwhile predator and try and nut them to death! Chuckling to myself at this fanciful idea I make my way back over stile and collecting the girls we make our way back up the hill on main track brilliant. About half way up we're stopped dead in our tracks as an electric blue butterfly flies towards us singing our retinas it's so vivid. It lands just over the fence and so I slip under the barbed wire and stalk it, hoping it'll go down which eventually it does but only after buzzing about in random circles for a few moments.



Last year I discovered that the little crossroads at the top of the track is a good spot for Walls and so I was hoping for maybe one or two to be hanging around here this year. What I hadn't bargained on was there being four whizzing round and patrolling the verges of the tracks. The girls watch as the butterflies shoot by meet in mid-air and then spiral upwards locked in a duel to the death. Eventually some of them need to refuel and so by positioning myself near patches of yellow flowers I'm able to get a few shots that at least are recognisable as Walls.





Grizzlie on the clock
Good to still see the Duke here
Cor Adonis Blue!

Have a goodun and stay safe

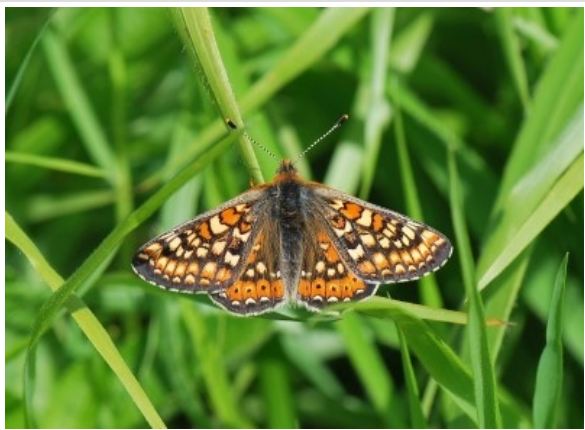
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-20 07:40 PM GMT

Duke Site (Hopefully?) 08-05-2020 Part 2

The girls were starting to get a bit peckish by now and so we pressed on through the gate and into the rings of the hill fort at the top of the site. It seems we were followed by one of the Walls as it set about another that had been sitting peacefully on the top of the inner ring. A female OT flashes by enticing us to walk further along the floor of the ditch created by the two rings. There is also a splendid Marshie here nestled in among the long grasses which in places reach my waist. A bit further round we pause and set up camp for a snack. Whilst the girls munch and read I walk a bit further on round to where the rings open out onto the side of the Down. Most of the side of the ring is clothed in short turf but where the grass is missing and the bare earth is exposed the butterflies seem to be sitting absorbing the warmth of the sun. Indeed among the by now 'usual fare' I find two Small Copper sitting out and standing out against the bare earth like discarded garnets. There is also a Wall - flying by and not stopping and a Marshie sits atop a yellow flower which sets of the colours marvellously.





After checking in on the girls I keep walking back the way we'd come a short way and come across a Wall sitting on the corner of a break in the outer ring. I'm frustrated at myself for flushing it and so check out some of the more verdant patches of grass in the sheltered spots around the rings. It seems that the Grizzlies favour these little areas but they're all a bit too quick for my camera lens. As I'm making my way back to the girls the Wall is back on the corner. This time I spot it in advance and wait and watch to see what it will do. After a moment or two it sets off and so I make my way through the break and back into the ring but I don't head straight back to the girls. I play out a hunch which delightfully comes off. Within a couple of minutes the Wall is back in roughly the same spot. It sits still for a short while and then off it goes again. I stay still and wait and sure enough a minute or so later it's back again, same butterfly, same spot. This time whilst it is off on patrol I sneak in, get comfortable and focused in ready on where it had sat previously. Sure enough it comes back, lands and I get some nice close-up shots. After a few more shots from another visit I wait for it to go on patrol and then back away into the middle of the ditch and re-join the girls.





The walk back is joyous but by now it had gotten extremely hot so instead of baking out on the dusty, reflective and exposed tracks we take a path through the Beech wood seeking both shade and Orchids. I know that there are two particular species growing here and K spots one of them almost as soon as we set foot in the cool and dark bosk although how I don't know as it's a Bird's Nest Orchid and perfectly camouflaged among the small twigs and branches littering the woodland floor. The others are really obvious with their small enclosed white flowers glowing little fairy light sin the gloom – White Helleborine. After cooling down we venture once more out into the sun and we check out the Duke hotspot again as Little L was eager to catch up a Duke. As we step off the path into the little patch a Duke flies into view almost in greeting. However I can see straight away that it's a different individual than before as one of the wings has lost its yellow colour and the chequers are ghostly pale.



On the final leg of the trip the site is once more awash with butterflies and I stumble homewards marvelling at the sight. In the heat we stop only once on the walk back when finally I spy a Greenstreak. This one is low down on the deck and as it's the only one I'd seen all morning I try for a few shots. There were also a pair of very flighty Marshies that just wouldn't stop and then we were back at the car and making our way homewards after a thoroughly brilliant morning.



Marshies and Coppers
Beaten by the worn old Duke
Wing rolling Greenstreak

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 13-Jul-20 09:14 PM GMT

Another terrific site, by the sound of it, Wurzel. The chalk hills of Wiltshire offer that bit more than the ones in my neck of the woods (Dukes, Marshies

and Walls in fact!). Some great shots there and your Wall-stalking technique is worth copying I think... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 13-Jul-20 10:03 PM GMT

Your new site is certainly productive, and should produce some fresh Dukes next year. That last Green Hairstreak is one of the brightest I've seen.

Great stuff, keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-20 09:11 AM GMT

Cracking shot of the Grizzlie on the dandelion clock Wurzel 🍷 😊

You have a great selection of species within easy reach down there at what sound like some lovely spots 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-20 08:15 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I just wish I'd noticed the behaviour and thought to give it a try sooner – mind you I might have a few more pounds on my frame without using the normal technique of photographing Walls i.e. run faster than a Whippet to try and keep up! 😊 😊

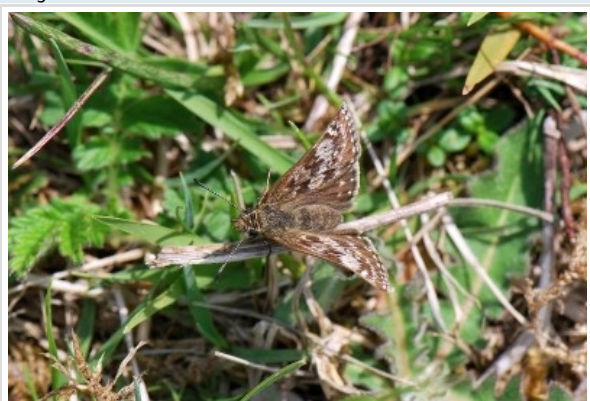
Cheers Trevor 😊 It is a cracking place and has also had Chalkhills, Clouded Yellows and Brown Hairstreaks 😊 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I was actually quite enjoying Lockdown as I could 'tick' off most of the species within the allowed 'short distance to exercise' 😊

Vernditch 09-05-2020

'The weather is a changing' could have been the (mis) theme of the day but as we looked out of the window at blue skies it seemed hard to fathom that the temperatures were forecast to drop by as much as 10 degrees, the north could have wintery showers and we were due winds gusting at 40-50 mph. So to make the most of the good weather while it lasted we drove the short distance to Vernditch to take our exercise. Whether we'll soon be able to travel further once the possible Easing has been confirmed was the main topic of conversation between my wife and I as we strode up the steep hill track at the start of the usual route. On the way to our usual Pause Point or Snack Spot it was a case of head down and take in the sights of the wood with the Bluebells looking seriously dented and the Ransoms looking decidedly 'plucked' but still there were enough of each to break the monotony of green as the light filtered through the ever thickening canopy. There were a few Specklies on the way at the usual points but for now I was content just to walk and gaze.

While we had our snack a Holly Blue did a fly-by a Red Admiral passed us by heading on into the wood, a Peacock went in the opposite direction and several Brimstone fluttered about (the females) or patrolled punctiliously (the males). None of this was in the least unexpected but a Dingy appearing and hanging around us while we munched on apple and carrots was. It seemed out of place up here where the grass is closely cropped, short and bearing few flowers or other sources of nectar. But it seemed happy to just hang out and bask on any small twigs or other (ever so slightly) taller foliage.



Snack over we set off again and this time I walked along the top with the girls. I scanned ahead to watch out for any butterflies disturbed by our footfall and spied another Dingy in the distance and I took the smaller, grey blur to be a Grizzlie. Another or the same Peacock from earlier passed over heading in the direction we'd just come from and on the bend a male OT bustled by hugging the hedge and the shade it offered. We'd usually have turned back here but today we kept on the track as it bent round and as it carried on there were occasional cleared areas carved out of the dense scrub/wood. In the first of these I spied a little Grizzlie and in one of the later there were two Brimstones. This sort of habitat looks ideal for Silver-washed and I was left wondering if that species is found here later in the season?



The track then curved round again so that it was running parallel to the Blandford Road and on the Martin Down side the woodland disappeared replaced by rough grassland. Due to this change in habitat I wasn't surprised to find a couple of Small Heath which made a nice addition both to the daily Tally and the Site List. One settled with the shard of forewing exposed giving a tantalising suggestion of what lay beneath.



The track curved again becoming ovoid and we now walked through a coppice woodland which hadn't saw or loppers for far too long as some of the smaller branches were thicker than my arm. In the darkness of the dense shade there weren't any butterflies about. But the minute we stepped into a spotlight of sunshine from a fallen tree there were the butterflies; a Specklie, then a male OT and finally a Red Admiral which effectively chased us out of the woods. We came out almost back where we'd snacked and now started the walk back from Martin Down into Vernditch proper. There were a couple of Specklies on the way again in the usual places and at the corner of the turn off to the main straight track that runs down the hill a Red Admiral was down on the deck. I felt like pointing out to it that it was a couple of months too early for that sort of behaviour but as I made towards it for a few photos the Specklie that patrols this section had a go, diving in and buzzing the bigger Admiral. Luckily for me you don't get to be an Admiral by being a big wuss and so after a couple of angry circles the Admiral was back down on the deck asserting its authority!





All too soon we're back at the car and loading up and shipping out with an OT waving us adieu as we depart.

*Fresh Red Admiral
Emperor imitation
Settled on the deck*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-20 07:52 PM GMT

Middle Street 12-05-2020

Today was one of those odd days when appearances could be deceptive and the weather app doesn't do the sun's warming powers justice. Yes it was cool, some might even say fresh as I walked towards Middle Street, but during the periods of uninterrupted sun the temperature rose noticeably and the jumper which had been a necessity was now a bother. Despite this I didn't see any butterflies on the journey over with just a Little Egret tempting me for a few shots. It was a similar story as I strolled through the gateway and started mooching about. I'd only been here 3 weeks ago but the difference in that time was amazing. What had been boot high grasses and flowering plants were now knee and over hip height respectively, the Cow Parsley in particular has really shot up and the banked path is now much more interesting to the butterflies than the Dips. The football pitch instead of being a sea of green and white now has patches of gold as the Buttercups flower and it feels like the pitch is now adorned with its own advertising hoardings which are in fact swathes of long grasses, sedges and Cow Parsley. I'd literally gotten as far as the damp little patch where I'd previously seen the female Orange-tip when I spied what I'd come to see. There was the violet blue of my first Common Blue of 2020. As I watched a small cloud went in front of the sun and the butterfly closed up shop becoming a little white flag.



As it didn't seem to want to go anywhere I offered it my finger and climbed on and clung on as I ever so carefully extended my arm out so I could focus in on it with my macro lens. As I was getting some shots of it closed up the small cloud moved off and the temperature started to creep back up. Feeling the UV Radiation the butterfly started to open up beautifully whilst still on my finger and I could see how beautifully fresh it was with intact margins, an almost Adonis Blue colour and a white leading edge to therefore wing. Stunning and worthy of a moniker of much higher esteem than 'Common'. Sufficiently warmed he took flight from my finger and I managed a few more 'natural' shots and carried on.



I decided to forego the Hotspot until later reasoning that now that we were well past Hibernator time it would have served its purpose and so I strolled along the lower side of the Banked path on the edge of the Football pitches. A few Whites went by and a female Pheasant scurried up the side of the bank, over the top and sought shelter in the small copse between Dip 1 and Dip2. I kept on going eyes peeled for any movement but it wasn't until I reached other end of the site that I happened across any other butterflies. It was another male Common Blue. This one had been out a bit longer than my first, the margins looked ever so slightly frayed and a light grey in colour rather than brilliant white. Also the blue colour was more a washed out greyish blue. I didn't mind though as it sat nicely, wings open on a blade of cooch grass, its weight bending it so it became a little green bridge.



I carried on right to the end but apart from some bees and a Burnet Companion moth tha wasn't anything else to report so I turned about and started through the end field towards where I'd found the blue. Just before I got to where it had been the grasses were more open and in the sunny spots I saw something basking. It was a Grizzlie - so it seems that there might be a (very small) colony here after all as this is the second time I've found them here. It was a cracking little butterfly with the ground colour looking more rusty red when the sun caught it right rather than the expected dark grey. More chuffed than earlier I made to see what else was around here but at that moment the sun disappeared again and the grasses went quiet. I waited it out and managed to relocate both the Common Blue and the Grizzlie a second time.





I then headed back reasoning that whilst here I should check out the Dips and the Hotspot. Both Dips 3 and 2 were overgrown – indeed at Dip 2 the grasses were almost thigh deep so I made towards Dip 1 via the banked path. As I did I couldn't resist trying for a few shots of a Small White which was fluttering about and taking nectar but I didn't get onto it as I got distracted by a tiny orange blur. I managed to follow it and watch it land and then I saw that it was a Small Copper. I got a few shots but it wouldn't open up or sit somewhere for an unobstructed side view so I went back to the Small White expecting it to have disappeared as they always do. But no it was still there and for some reason it wasn't as flighty as I've come to expect.





On I went through the jungle that is now Dip 1 and made my way along the river side path. I didn't make much progress here as I kept stopping to listen to the Reed Warblers that were having a Battle of the Ballads. I counted at least 8 singing males at one point and they were making quite a racket. I was also joined by a few whites - one of which I was fairly convinced was a Green-veined though the other remained UFWs. As I was now almost back to where it had all started with that lush Common Blue I was ruminating over the various species that I'd seen and I thought that what with the Small Copper and Common Blue and Brown Argus would be a nice way to round off my exercise trip... Out of the corner of my eye to my right a little slivery butterfly flew up above the grass tops. Due to its size I thought it might have been a moth or a Grizzlie but its flight was more direct and flappy and less 'blurry'. It landed and it looked like I'd got my Brown Argus - powerful stuff this manifestation malarkey! It was a joy to behold and I spent some time with it enjoying the contrasting chocolate brown and orange so much that I didn't want to leave.



Somehow I tore myself away and headed home in a state bliss (warm, sun drenched almost floating) that even a few inconsiderate fellow pedestrians couldn't rupture.

*White flag turns to blue
Lightning lilac shining out
Not 'Common' to me*

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-20 08:30 PM GMT

The Devenish 13-05-2020

So today was the day that we'd been waiting for, 6 odd weeks (but only if you lived in England) after Lockdown first began today those in power deemed us worthy of a general easing. We were allowed out for exercise (we were already) we could drive to the countryside for said exercise (we were already) and we could stop during our exercise and have a picnic (you were already so long as it was short snack). So as a treat we decided to take a picnic lunch rather than the usual snack and head over to The Devenish for lunch. However it seemed like the notice about the easing hadn't reached the Wildlife Trust as the car park was still locked. Luckily there are a couple of lay-by's slightly further on from the entrance and we managed to pull into one of these and stroll back along the road.

Once on site we wandered up and through the small wood and climbed over the gate and into the Orchid Meadow. As we did the sun momentarily reappeared and where before there had been no butterflies all of a sudden there were plenty. They must have been sitting out the cooler temperatures bidding their time as now they were zipping about all over the place. They went from 0-60 in a fraction of a second almost as if the cloud/cooler temperatures had acted like a 'Pause' button and now the sun was back out the 'Pause' was well and truly switched off! Over the course of about 20 seconds I'd seen a male Common Blue, Brown Argus, a second male Common Blue, a tired Grizzlie and a Small Copper. All were highly mobile and only one of the Common Blues settled for long enough for a shot or three.



I thought that the Down was going to be more of the same and so I braced myself for fast moving butterflies as I climbed the steep and narrow part of the path before it opened up onto the Downside proper. At the bottom there was a Common Blue but having seen it the cloud covered the sun and for the rest of the trek the Downside was bereft of butterflies. We took the steps up then followed the diagonal path, back up the gully on the far side and then along the top setting up camp near the gate through to the other third of the Down. After our picnic I took 10 minutes or so to have a quick check as the sun had again graced us with its presence. After the shortest of walks I back on the diagonal path with a Brown Argus before my lens. Slightly further on I managed to follow a Mother Shipton moth and cursing it as it eventually landed amongst the grass blades I realised that they formed a sort of tunnel through which I could get an unobstructed view of the moth albeit framed in green. My meanderings after the moth had brought me to the bottom of the Down and so I checked out the Orchid Meadow one more time but all I could find was one of the two Common Blues.





I rejoined my wife and we set off after the girls who, having heard tales of rope swings in the Beech hanger, had found the energy to race on ahead. Whilst they swung I had a look at a nest they'd spotted in one of the trees and after this I broke through the Beech and checked out the middle third of the Down. About half way down I spied a familiar little grey blur that when it eventually stopped resolved into a slightly tired looking Grizzlie. Chuffed I headed back into the noticeably cooler shade and then from there we made our way homewards down the steep steeps carved into the hill. Hopefully things will continue in this vein as it was nice to get out without the need to have an explanation ready.



*Brown Argus and blues
Show stealer Mother Shipton
No excuse needed*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 19-Jul-20 09:56 PM GMT

The highlight for me in that rather splendid selection has to be the perfect female Brown Argus, Wurzel. 😊 The various Common Blues aren't half bad either... 😊 You're right - nothing common about them! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Dave 😊 My local site Middle Street doesn't do quantity (apart from Small Tortois) but does have quality 😊😊

Larkhill 14-03-2020

Time was when I'd visit this little stop-off regularly, sometimes even twice a day. But then the timings of the school day were changed and the earlier start meant that most butterflies were still hidden away and on the return leg it was early enough that I could meet my wife and youngest after her school finished. To make it even harder massive white concrete rhomboids were placed at the entrances to the car park to block out the Travellers that frequented it for a couple of days round the Solstice. So for these reasons here I was mid-way through May making my first visit!

I pulled in at the tiny lay-by and then cheated death crossing over to the path. As I turned the corner to start up the track 4-5 Small Heaths exploded vertically from the longer grass tufts in the ruts of the track. None sat still for my lens so I carried on. A few more steps and 3 more Small Heath exploded upwards but then it went quiet for a bit. The susurrant of the grasses being strummed by the breeze was occasionally broken by Whitethroats and Corn Buntings calling and singing as I strolled onwards and literally upwards (albeit imperceptibly). A Common Blue flashed by which drew my eyes to the grasses on my right. I spied a little grey blur which I assumed to be a Grizzlie. It landed and what had been grey was now a lovely chequered little butterfly. It was really hard to focus on him though as the breeze was pulling at his perch throwing him wildly back and forth. So I held my breath and kept focusing and in one of the few drops in the wind I 'clicked'...then the wind started back up.



I realised that this wasn't to be the victorious homecoming to the site that I'd been hoping for and so I turned about and trudged on my way back. A Mother Shipton teased me on the way, settling just long enough for me to focus and then she'd be off. I almost gave up and just carried on walking and the Moff flew urgently ahead of me and landed in prime position, totally unobstructed by the foliage. As I relented and lent in for a shot, focused and that's when it took off again, chuckling with glee almost as it went.

At the end I stopped for a few shots of one of the better behaved Small Heaths. It was doing the Grayling posturing, leaning into the sun to reduce/hide its shadow not realising that I was on the 'wrong' side of it and the shadow it was trying so hard to hide was giving it away as effectively as a massive arrow pointing towards it.





Taking my life into my own hands again I crossed back over and quickly got in the car before any passing vehicle could take the door off. It was strange to be back but I'll have to make more of an effort from now on.

*Safely over road
Small Heath leans into the sun
Casts a shadow not*

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-20 10:31 PM GMT

Love your shot of the Grizzled Skipper Wurzel 🍷 One Day 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 22-Jul-20 08:07 AM GMT

Somehow I've missed that superb Brown Argus shot, a post or two back. That image is up there with the best!

Please keep me in the loop for Shipton B.

Stay safe and well, and don't work too hard!.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-20 08:42 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 One day soon I hope 😊😊

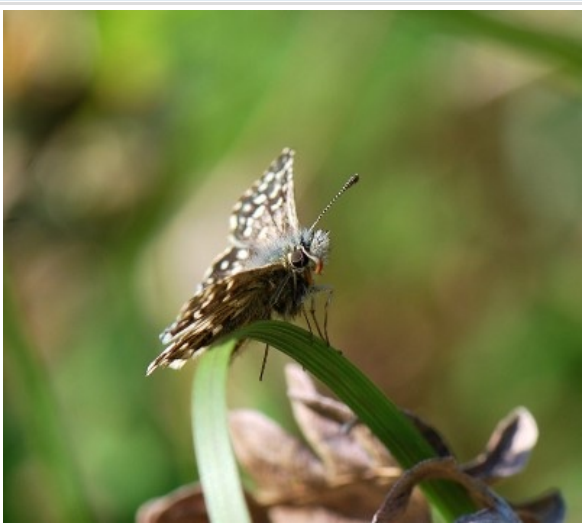
Cheers Trevor 😊 I was dead chuffed with that one myself 😊 Brostreaks at Alners Gorse yesterday so they could be at Shipton within the week 😊

Bentley Wood 15-05-2020

After my last visit here when the Pearls should have been well behaved but because of the sun were whizzing around all over the place on this visit I arrived, with the girls in tow, very early. As we strolled down into the Eastern Clearing to set up the camp for the girls it was warmish in the sun but not double figures and in the shade you would require a jacket if you were hanging around there. It was looking good then, or so I thought. After traipsing round the main part of the clearing and neighbouring fields I still hadn't seen a butterfly. True my bird list was doing very nicely - Willow and Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Chiff Chaff, Tree Pipit, Tawny Owl from deeper in the wood, GS Woodpecker and a mewling passing Buzzard that couldn't quite get the height it wanted as the thermals were still establishing. I could see signs that things were about to kick off, the bees were flying, the Tiger Beetles were out as were the Speckled Yellow Moths in their droves and I was starting to feel a little too warm in my jumper. I carried on wandering and I eventually reached the large recently coppiced field further away from the road than the Clearing proper and I stumbled across my first butterfly a Small Heath - it had taken a good 45 minutes though!



I picked my way through the birch saplings and ended up crossing the field diagonally reaching the far corner where the fence makes it difficult to cross the ditch and reach one of the main paths. Here there is some activity in amidst the dead Bracken stools which cover the floor to waist height in some places with little trackways criss-crossing them. I've seen Pearls settling down to roost on dead Bracken before but today I was witnessing them waking up from here. Mind you to the four Pearls flying through them these must appear like canyons with their steep cliff sides. I can see why the Pearls like them though as when they go down the jumble of rust coloured fronds and stems and the various shadows offer the Pearls the perfect opportunity for camouflage. Also taking advantage of these useful hiding places is a little Grizzlie which taking the Canyon hyperbole to the extreme, pauses like an aged Prospector to spit out his baccy. There are a further 2 Pearls using the cover of the Bracken to add to the nicely growing tally.



I head back and check in with the girls and then working along the little triangle by the Notice boards break though into the small field behind where a Pearl and a Brimstone fly about ceaselessly. As I make my way back to the EC I come down the main path which runs alongside the Notice Board and through the little Triangle and I check out the reedy field. Along with 2 Pearls, which seem to be everywhere but never stopping, I also find a Bentley Dingy which is a nice addition to the tally. After getting a few shots I watch as it zigs and zags off and I count up the Pearls in my head coming to a total of 9 which isn't too bad really especially as I suspect there are plenty more about that I haven't encountered yet.

I realise that I haven't checked out the bottom end of the Clearing and as I walk there I keep my eyes peeled but the central part of the Clearing is till bereft of butterflies. As I walk through the doorway of trees into the bottom part something catches my eye away to my left, the tell-tale brown blur of a Dingy and my second of the day. The only problem is that it flies to the other side of the ditch through the fence. I debate whether to follow it or not and I eventually do, sliding under the bottom wire of the fence rather than climbing over.



Once I've relocated myself back to the main part I watch a couple of Pearls seemingly playing in the sun in the corner by the bench. I follow the narrow track way round to the other corner where the Dukes hang out but I hang out with three Pearls instead one of which seems to be taking dew from the blades of grass which have only just been exposed to the morning sun as it had climbed sufficiently to reach over the tree tops. I carry on round in the shade and traverse the main clearing finding 2 Pearls as I enter the sunlit section. One of these Pearls is remarkably fresh with margins still intact and that beautiful 'glow' that they have for the first few days after emerging from the chrysalis.





After checking in with the girls I again make my way down to the bottom end and I'm glad that I do as there is a blur of orange which resolves itself into three butterflies as I move closer in. A bit closer still and I can see that two are a deeper, darker orange and seem imperceptibly smaller and faster moving. Even closer still I catch a few of the underside and it looks more beige than yellow - it's Small Pearl. I grab a few record shots just in case it decides to 'do one' which of course it does but I manage to keep up with it as it flies along to and then along the ditch heading back to the main part of the Clearing. I was worried that as soon as it broke from the dappled shade and sun of the end part into the strong sun of the main clearing it would disappear off in a puff of scales but miraculously it goes down. Creeping on hands and knees now I get in close enough for some 'better' shots although it doesn't stay for long and is promptly up and away again bombing and veering violently along the ditch which is why I eventually lose it from sight. Still however fleeting it was a definite Small Pearl and I have at least some shots of the species I'd hoped but not expected to see.



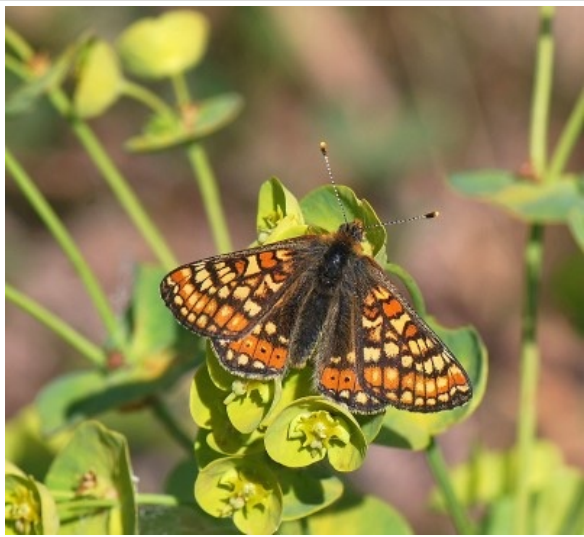


I head back to the bottom end hoping to catch up with the second Small Pearl and there is still no Duke with the three Pearls occupying the usual Duke territory. As I had no joy here I move back into the main part of the Clearing and it became apparent that the temperature had finally reached the optimum for the Mashies as there, in the tiniest amount of moor grass and reed is a Marsh Frit being harassed by a fading Pearl. After getting a few shots of this little beauty I find a definite second. As I'm getting shots I realise that I'm in actually in a circle of about 2m diameter where I've already photographed 2 other species of Frit this morning - not bad going. I just wish I'd brought a long a deckchair as if I'd known I could have had a sit in the sun and done a little less exercise 😊





The morning was wearing on and I was close to having to head for home having used my break, lunch and 'double year 11 gained time' but before we packed up and shipped out for good I took Little L for a bit of 'Out-of-Home Schooling'. We strolled across the main clearing and towards the back trackways hoping to spy a Small Pearl instead only seeing a few Pearls which I was able to point out the ID features of. We listened out and identified Willow Warbler, Garden Warbler and Tree Pipit and saw a few Scorpion Flies to add a little horror to the school day. Back in the Clearing proper we scanned around and I found third Marshie and a Duke popped up just long enough to ID before it took to the wing and was gone - too quick and too small to follow in this big old space.





After this we head for home...though I feel that I'll be back, at least I hope very much to make a return visit!

*Small Pearls hanging on
Marshies like a long lie-in
Duke briefly pops in*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 22-Jul-20 10:08 PM GMT

A veritable Feast of Fritillaries, Wurzel. 😊 Finding fresh examples of all three species in the same place on the same date takes some doing. 🇬🇧 Some great shots of them too. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 23-Jul-20 07:07 AM GMT

Lockdown ruined my plans for the Marshies this year, so it's good to see yours. As for PBF and SPBF, like you, I had a great time with them this year. Hopefully the SPBF second brood will be out at Park Corner soon.

Great stuff, as always.
Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-20 06:54 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Hopefully we'll still be able to next year – I really hope the Small Pearls hang on 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 The hill was good this year but other sites are catching it up in terms of quantity (Martin Down) and quality (Bentley) 😊😊 Good luck with the second brood Small Pearls

So it was third time lucky at Shipton Bellinger today – very out of sequence but couldn't wait to post it! Should be plenty more by next week when the good weather is due to return 😊



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 23-Jul-20 07:52 PM GMT

Brilliant to see that Brown Hairstreak, Wurzel! A great pose too. 😊👍 I didn't come across any at Noar Hill this morning, by the way...

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 23-Jul-20 10:19 PM GMT

mrgreens x infnlte for that one, Wurzel!. They don't come better than that !. They are appearing at some of the Sussex sites too. About two weeks early.

Posted in envy! 🍷👍

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 24-Jul-20 08:49 AM GMT

That's a great shot Wurzel, it's one I've yet to see, with the Grizzled Skipper another one has you know 😊👍👍
The ones I've not seen here so far I really expected to see, the Small Heath and the Brown Argus, I'm off on Sunday having had a great time here. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jul-20 06:58 PM GMT

Blimey Wurzel, where is the year going? I have seen a few Brown Hairstreak photos this week including a couple from nearer me in Worcestershire.

Cracking shot 🍷😊

[quote=trevor post_id=156476 time=1595484423 user_id=13654] Lockdown ruined my plans for the Marshies this year, so it's good to see yours.

Ditto.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-20 05:35 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Yep it was a case of third time's a charm 😊 Now they're out we just need a bit of decent weather. This one was in a spot I rarely visit as well so hopefully the Hedge will produce the goods this year 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 Things have still kept on speeding along even though eh weather has reverted to cool and damp for a bit – next week things are looking better though 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 From reading your PD you've had a cracking run Goldie – you've always got to leave something for next time 😊😊
Cheers Neil 😊 2020 has been one of the 'funniest' (not ha ha but odd) year I've known – even the cloudy weather and low pressures haven't slowed things down – I hope something does otherwise the butterflies will all be over by August Bank Holiday 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-20 08:00 PM GMT

Grovely Wood 17-05-2020

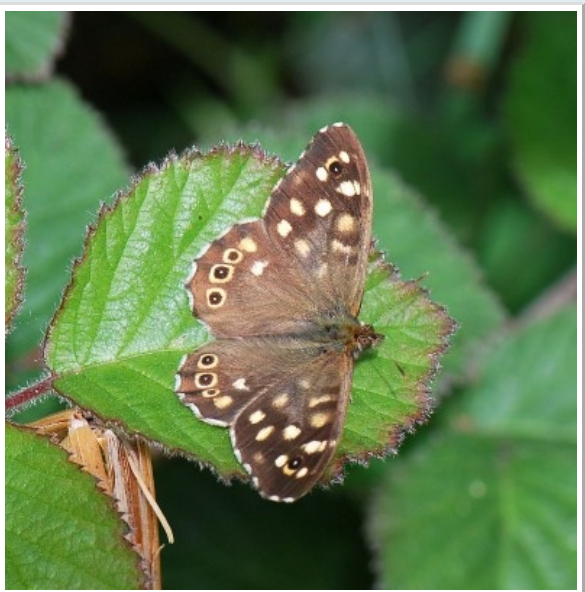
After being stuck in pretty much most of yesterday I was eager to get out today. However there were no trips to Bentley or The Hill planned to take advantage of the new rules on travelling to the countryside. Instead it was a family walk through Grovely Wood, a massive mixed woodland which straddles the Down running from Wilton to beyond Wishford. After the steep ascent with a few Specklies we were soon walking along an avenue of giant beech trees as we sought out 'The Witch Trees'. Due to the shade created by the burgeoning leaves I didn't see any butterflies but stumbled across a slow moving Slow Worm which was slightly torpid in the cool under the canopy. Having had a quick look at the Witch Trees with their offerings strewn and hung from the lower branches there was a slightly eerie feel in the gloom. However this was quickly dispelled when I walked around the huge trunk and saw a large plastic box which people were asked to put their offerings in. True this was much more environmentally conscientious but did spoil the mysterious aura somewhat.



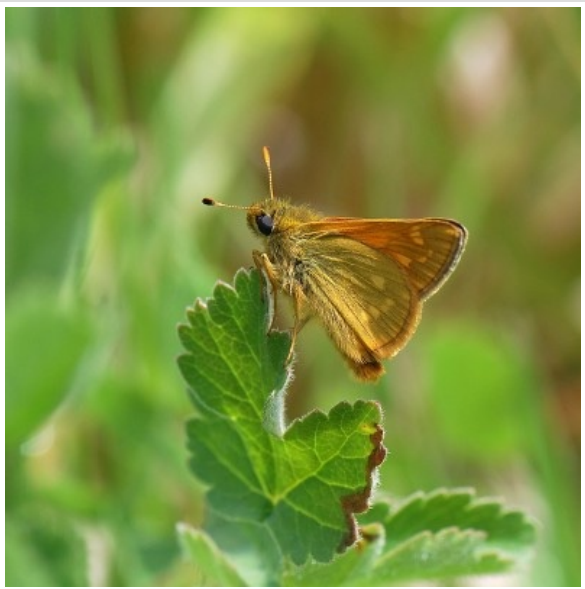
After this we headed off the Roman Road/main track down one of the side paths. As we walked the treescape changed from Beeches to Pines but the pathway was opened up, a slither of light which was quickly shut off as you walked towards the thick tree cover. A few more Specklies flew along the track way flying up as our feet bore down on the muddy ground, a white flew in the distance too far away to ID confidently and the occasional Speckled Yellow Moths were nicely lit by the sun that was pouring down in the open section over the path.



We stopped for a picnic lunch here and while they munched I tried for a few shots of the surrounding Specklies that were squabbling worse than my girls have been. There were also two massive caterpillars that probably have a some protective poisons in them – at least I hope they did as they stood out like a sore thumb amid the long grasses.



We got back onto the trail and followed the path downhill for a way and then it gently curved round to hug the side of the down. The track was wider here and as it was cut into the side of the Down the canopy on the downhill side was lower so light flooded in. There were a few Specklies on the way and a few whites - mainly Small but with a couple Green-veined Whites and a lone Brimstone now that the sun was lighting the way. The downhill trees thinned out even more in places and there were a few wonderful vistas out over the valley. At one such opening the trees had been removed and there were a series of strips like little terraced fields. I had a quick look in and was really glad that I had for there was the now familiar grey blur of a Grizzlie. I could tell it was a She as she was fluttering close to the ground and investigating the leaves of various plants, curling her abdomen round and ovipositing. As I looked up I spied a larger bright burnt umber butterfly. I did a double take and then realization dawned - it was my first Large Skipper of 2020, an immaculate looking butterfly. Elsewhere in the little section of field I came across a second Grizzlie and two Common Blues.



After this we put our heads down the scent of home in our nostrils and we made good time. Walking across Downland and then back into Coppice before emerging at the bottom of a hill in the car park. As K got in the car she checked her step counter and we'd covered almost 5 miles, over 11000steps but it felt like so much less. What a brilliant wood!

*My first Large Skippers
Payment for a massive walk
Soon be back Grovely*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-20 08:37 AM GMT

[quote=Wurzel post_id=156613 time=1595790014 user_id=9821] Grovely Wood 17-05-2020

... There were also two massive caterpillars that probably have a some protective poisons in them - at least I hope they did as they stood out like a sore thumb amid the long grasses...

Drinker Moth Wurzel. Not particularly toxic as far as I am aware although they do have hairs which are probably irritant.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-20 08:42 PM GMT

Cheers for the ID Neil 😊 I did wonder about those tufts of hair/the Punk hairdo 😊😊

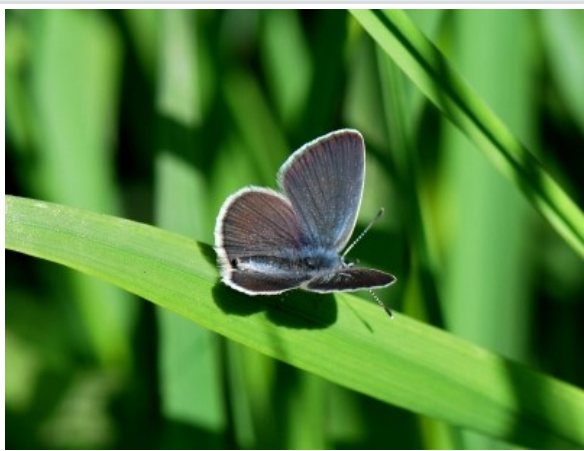
Cotley Hill 18-05-2020

Today was set to be a cracker - the Marshies had reached the end of their wave of emergence along the valley from Warminster which meant that the Hill should be in tip-top productivity. Also after successful trips to Bentley, Martin Down and my Duke site the pressure was slightly off in terms of Marshies and so I set out to enjoy the butterflies as well as a Socially Distanced catch-up. I'd done a lot of my work the day before so what with break, lunch and free lessons I should be able to hang around for most of the morning but to take full advantage I left early as well.

Once I'd parked up and gathered all my gear I near on galloped up the narrow track emerging out of the small trees that line the path at the long hollow. This is always a good little place and I spy a minuscule Small Blue still roosting in the longer tussocks near the fence line. A Dinky zips about, obviously energetic after a nights rest and I look across the side of the Down and spy a familiar silhouette on the far side. A quick call confirms it as Dave and we stroll towards each other meeting about half way round. After a quick catch up and a Holly Blue we decide to work back round and down to the small wood by the gate and from there cut through to the other side of the Down. On the way we stop for a Greenstreak in the hollow and this and that as we make our way round to the other side.



Once there it's as if the butterfly alarm clock has gone off and everything has crawled out of bed. In the little hollows at the foot of the down there are skippers and Small blues and Greenstreaks and Brown Argus. I lean in to get a few shots of a cracking looking Small Blue, line up the shot and get it brilliantly in focus but after a couple of clicks nothing. I try removing the battery and replacing it with a fresh one. Still nothing. Then I try changing the memory card and still nothing. I check all of the switches on the lens, turn it off and on again a few times as it suggests but no - my Nikon D60 is a goner - the shutter release mechanism is kaput. Mind you I have caned it over 11 years but it's still a shock to the system that my constant companion is now just a useless little box of plastic. 😞😞😞



the last of it's kind...

I wander round in a slight daze alternating between barely noticing the butterflies and trying in vain to capture some images on my iPod. Luckily at this point Philzoid calls and announces that he's arrived and he offers me his second camera for the morning! As he places it down and steps back and I step forward, picking it up and clutching it eagerly in my hands I feel like Gollum recovering his Precious! So we talk a bit and wander round the Down finding various different things to get shots of. The Adonis and Common Blues seem to favour the lower to middle slopes, the Skippers and Small Blues the small hollows at the bottom and the Greenstreaks the hedge at the very bottom. The Marshies are much more Catholic in their preferences and are scattered across the Down every which way.



Eventually we regrouped as much as we could whilst still Social Distancing and made our way back through the little woodland track and up the hill to the Hollow again. The Marshies had awoken on this side now too and so we worked our way really slowly round picking them up here and there as well as other bits and pieces like Common Blues, Brown Argus, Small Heath and round by the Amphitheatre a couple of Small Blues - who once again showed a preference for the tussocky grass at the foot of the Down.





As we were now down here we stuck to the level ground which wrapped itself round the foot of the Down and made our way along to the little quarry. The Marshies were about in reasonable numbers and every now and again something else would drop in – a Small Tort, an Orange-tip, Greenstreak, Small Blue, Adonis Blue, Common Blue Dingy Skippers. It was a joy to behold and I would have been sill raving about it come the summer if I wasn't still feeling slightly fractured by the loss of my good old D60. Round at the Bowl we paused and took in what was available whilst the warmth that had crept up on us had made everything much more twitchy. And so we made our way, in fits and starts, back towards the car park.





After a bit of triangular conversation we said our goodbyes and headed off on our separate ways; Philzoid to Bentley, Dave to Martin Down and myself off home still in a daze desperately trying to work out how I would get a replacement body in Lockdown?

*Marshies and Small Blues
But no my dreams are shattered
Niko is no more...*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 27-Jul-20 09:00 PM GMT

That was as always an excellent day on the Hill, Wurzel. Aside from the large and varied helping of butterflies, it was good to catch up with you and Philzoid in carefully spaced triangulated fashion. At least the fortuitous arrival of a backup camera saved the day somewhat from your perspective, and that's a great selection of shots (that very last one of the Small Blue from your much-venerated Nikon was a cracker for it to go out on... 😊).

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

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

Just spotted your Hairstreak shot Wurzel 😊 Reckon I might be headed that way sometime this week. Nice shot of the slow worm too 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-20 08:37 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 It wasn't a bad swan song really and to be fair it had wracked up some considerable mileage – definitely got my money's worth 😊
Cheers Pauline 😊 Up until that day I'd only heard reports of two singletons but they should be emerging nicely now the weathers gotten a bit warmer

and drier 😊 Mind you after your success at Noar Hill you might not need to visit Shipton as there are plenty on your doorstep 😊

Vernditch 20-05-2020

So that was quick - two days and I'm back out with my camera...well a camera. All it took was asking my wife if I could borrow her camera body in the interim and when I got back from the ill-fated trip all the research had been done, comparison tables, contact numbers and a name and phone number of someone that had a perfect looking camera! Next day delivery and I was away! So with neck strap attached and battery newly charged we drove over to Vernditch for our daily walk. I had high hopes and for the visit - all the usual species but hopefully I'd be able to pick up a Common Blue or even an errant Marshie that had lost its way and flown over the Blandford Road.

It started well enough spotting a few Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites on our walk up the hill from the car park. One of the OTs paused to take nectar from some (what I think is...) Herb Robert and so I leant in and fired off a few shots before we carried on. So I'd taken my first butterfly shots with my camera. I looked eagerly at the images on the screen and whilst they seemed very bright, possibly brighter than those from the old D60, I didn't like the lack of sharpness nor the focus. We carried on walking while I fiddled with the Autofocus settings which I was only able to do as the wood was so quiet - only a few Specklies in the usual places.



Having broken out of the shade and into the sun at Kitt's Grave we settled down for a spot of lunch and while we were munching we were joined by a Dingy and a Grizzlie. Whilst none too shy they flew around us but there seemed to be a no-fly zone a metre out from the picnic blanket as they'd fly towards us and at the same point veer away to right or left.



With lunch done I left the girls to let their dinner go down and walked to the end and back. I saw plenty but most of it was very flighty and just wouldn't sit still long enough to train my new lens on it. I ticked off Small Heath, Dingy Skippers, the hoped for Common Blue, Brown Argus but unfortunately not a sniff of a Marshie and not one shot on the memory card. The return leg wasn't much better even though I caught up with (possibly) the same individuals. Eventually some of the butterflies took pity on me and paused for a few photos. One of a couple of Grizzlies stopped for a snack and so I clicked away and in the final little 'valley' a pair of Brimstones were courting.



The walk back was surprisingly quick – possibly because it was quite quiet with again only Specklies in their usual spots? However the real reason was probably because I was preoccupied with thoughts about the new camera. It still didn't seem to be producing as good results as the old D60 despite having 4million more Pixels? I reasoned that it was the slightly smaller sensor that could explain the lack of definition but I resolved to give it a few more trips before deciding what to do next.

*Vernditch was quiet
New camera is it as good?
Preoccupied me*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-20 08:54 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, sorry to hear about your camera woes but glad to see you are all sorted now. Although I am now using the Nikon setup, I usually carry my old FZ200 as a backup just in case. You know what they say, it is better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it.

A great selection from Cotley Hill. I saw a lot of photos from there on twitter and facebook this year, seems to becoming a popular place.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Jul-20 10:29 PM GMT

Lulworth Cove 21-05-2020

With the restrictions still easing we decided to take our exercise at Lulworth Cove as the walk over Bindon Hill would certainly blow away the cobwebs and it would be a great opportunity to show Little L various coastal erosion features that she'd been learning about. We'd checked ahead and the main car park was still closed but I know of a few other places in and around the village where there are spaces to park and so we loaded up and headed off

back to sunny Dorset. The drive there was glorious as the sun shone and there were still so few cars on the road and very quickly we were traipsing the tarmac heading towards Bindon Hill walking the reverse route to our previous visit here the day before Lockdown began.

Up on the hill it was already very warm despite only just being past 10am and as I scouted round I only flushed one Small Heath. I'd read that Lulworths were out at Corfe Castle car park which is usually the first site but I was hoping that they may have merged here spurred into action by the warm weather so one Small Heath after being on site for 10 minutes or so was quite worrying. Slightly further round the hill I spotted a fast moving Dinky and a surprisingly fast moving Small Heath, an improvement but only slightly. By this point we'd reached the junction where the path dove down into the wood – part of the old route which due to a cliff slide is no more. Another Dinky zipped by and I went to follow it using the various rabbit runs and tracks as a stairway as I clambered up the side of the hill after it. Alas I didn't have much success with it and as I turned to retrace my steps to catch up with the others a smaller brownish mustard Skipper grabbed my attention. It too was really active jinking about and doing the Craw step manoeuvre that Skippers do whereby they can break the laws of Physics and bend time and space. Luckily the first time it had paused it did so just long enough for a few shots and to allow confirmation that it was a Lulworth. After that it became a guessing game as to where it would land and take nectar but I was quite chuffed that I managed to successfully guess and so be in the right place for a few more shots.



I realised that by now the rest of the family were well ahead of me and so I hotfooted to catch them but even though I was travelling at great speed I was aware that now there were plenty of butterflies about. When I caught up and caught my breath we continued along the clifftop and the Lulworths seemed to be everywhere but now they were joined by the rest of the supporting cast. A few Adonis Blues (mainly males although there was one luscious female) added a bit of bling to the mixture of browns and brownish oranges produced by the Lulworths, Small Heath, Dinkies and Large Skippers which were dominating the scene (from largest in number to smallest). The occasional Greenstreak didn't add as much colour as expected as all were old and tired looking, in the later stages of their lives but the only Brown Argus that I saw did. The Lulworths aside the main highlight of this stretch was a Wall which stopped in the middle of the path. It too was as aged as the Greenstreaks with nicks in and massive chunks missing from its wings but it was still a delight to see, especially as it comically blocked our further progress along the path:

"Stay back, don't come any closer" it seemed to be intimidating...we'd take a few more steps and it would take off only to land slightly further along the path.

"I really, really mean it don't come any closer!"...again we'd take a few more steps and it would take off, fly a short way and land ahead of us on the path.

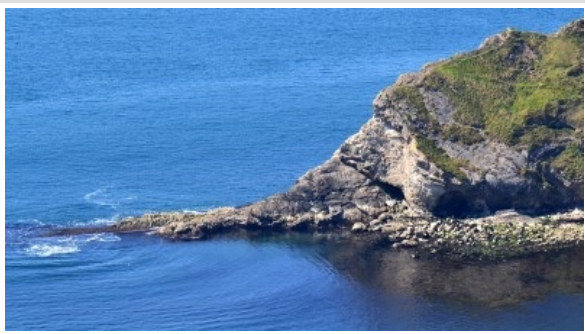
"Right that's it! You're in big trouble now! One more step and I'll...I'll...Well you'll be sorry!"

Eventually it worked out that if it flew in an arc it could double back and land behind us and so would avoid any more disturbance!





At the end of the path we went through the gate and paused at the edge looking down and across into the Cove. We could see the bands of rock, the folds and tortured twists in the strata and what most impressed Little L on the other side caves, a stump and a raised beach - we were only missing the arch and stack from the complete set of coastal erosion features that she'd looked at the day before. Then we set off down the impossibly steep steps destination - the beach accompanied on the way by yet more Lulworths that were scrabbling around the cliff edges each time I looked away from my feet. On one of the flatter areas, like a little terrace, a few Adonis took advantage of the nectar sources. Well they tried to but a Brown Argus was having none of it and bullied Adonis and Lulworth alike.





Eventually the precipitous journey came to an end we were safely sitting on the strand. Yet even here whilst enjoying my sandwich the Lulworths kept informing me of their presence as one flew by between bites! So whilst the rest of the family had a paddle and looked about for more Isopods I skipped mountain goat like back up the hill seeking out the little flatter grassy patches and little crescent moons within the tussocks. I spend a fantastic 20 minutes up near the top, getting shots, clinging to the side of the cliff as other walkers pass by one the stairs and just enjoying watching the funny little blurs of yellow ochre as they went about their business – feeding, flying and fighting. Unfortunately I didn't witness any activity of the fourth 'f' kind but that wasn't through any lack of effort on the part of the male Lulworths that I saw. Eventually the call of 'not wanting to get into strife' became louder than that of the joyous little butterflies and so I descended the hill and walked once more across the ever decreasing stones to the strand line.





As all were now refreshed, watered and fed we carried on the walk round suddenly remembering how hard going it can be because of the constantly shifting and uneven ground. We paused about half way round as the girls had found a perfect paddling spot, a large flat boulder of chalk, polished smooth by the passing of the grit that edged it made a perfect platform into the sea. Whilst the girls paddled I had a quick look around the cliff slip, the fertile clay covered in pinks and purples, greens and yellows was also alive with butterflies; a brace of Common Blues – both males, a passing white, a couple of Dingies and at least 6 Lulworths all in a patch no bigger than two dining tables.



As the sun beat down ever stronger and the temperature rocketed we came to the end of our trudge round the cove and stepping once more onto target it was as if a weight had been lifted, I near on floated up the high now that I was on a fixed and even surface. I was let off the leash a second time and so quickly covered the ground to my Hotspot area – the little 'path' on the far side of the Cove. However it didn't live up to its reputation with only two Lulworths here, one at the top and one at the bottom, and nothing else butterfly wise. Still it was worth a check and pleased with the additional brace of Lulworths I re-joined the girls and we made for home.



So ended a cracking morning's exercise and we drove home slightly sunburnt but happy none the less.

*Turquoise sea below
Lulworths cling to the cliff side
Crescent moons glitter*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-20 11:17 PM GMT

Glad you managed to get down there, Wurzel. After being stuck close to home all that time, what a great way to get some proper exercise—and get some special butterflies in as well. It's win-win!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Jul-20 11:57 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 Sorry I forgot to reply earlier 😊 The camera situation is all sorted now I'm also thinking, like you, about a back up so I might by another D90 body just in case 😊

Cheers Essex 😊 I was slightly odd being effectively told to stay in Wiltshire when I still consider Dorset home 😊😊 If only I had the camera body I've got now 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 31-Jul-20 08:44 AM GMT

A great selection of Lulworths there, Wurzel, flying around in their "home". It somehow seems right to be seeing them in and around Lulworth itself. 😊 Looks like it was a good time to go, with glorious weather and before the crowds descended. With so many folk not going abroad this summer, I imagine it will be tricky to get near this bit of coast before mid-September.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 31-Jul-20 01:38 PM GMT

Wonderful report and I love you poem!

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 31-Jul-20 10:15 PM GMT

Definitely need to catch up with Lulworth's next year after last years abortive attempt and now this year, lovely olive green tinge to those tiny fuzzy hogs 🐷

Re: Wurzel

by kevlings, 02-Aug-20 01:32 PM GMT

Wurzel,

Cracking photos of the Lulworth Skippers at Bindon Hill. Love your account of pursuing the Wall Brown. I can relate to that with several species 😊 I know it's been a year for early appearances for many species, but is 21st May normal for Lulworth's to be on the wing?

Keep em coming,

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-20 08:16 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 It was perfectly timed as they closed the Lulworth car park but being a local I know a few of the secret parking spots plus the masses descended on Durdle Door 😊😊

Cheers Katrina 😊 I was inspired by James May of all people 😊😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 I'm lucky in living relatively close and also that my family love the place so we can go on a family outing and "I'll just happen to have my camera with me" 😊😊

Cheers Kev 😊 The Lulworths have been creeping earlier and earlier and this is a 'middle' site for them – they're normally out first at the Corfe Castle Car Park. Luckily they've got a protracted emergence so they could be flying at the end of August 😊😊

August 2020



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurel

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 03-Aug-20 04:34 PM GMT

Lulworth is one of my favorite places – ever since I did a geology field-trip down there while at school in East London. What a contrast! But I haven't been down there since I started getting interested in butterflies. One day I shall need to rectify that to get the Lulworth Skipper.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-20 10:46 PM GMT

Cheers Ernie 😊 Let me know when you get round to organising it and I might be able to meet up and get you past all the Grockles 😊

Bentley Wood 23-05-2020

It was forecast to be 'changeable' with the distinct possibility of some showers but Philzoid and I still went ahead with our planned Socially Distanced Meet-up. We reasoned that after previous visits when everything was bombing around as if their arse-ends were ablaze the cooler temperatures and passing cloud would calm everything down a little. This was the hope anyway and at Bentley it's always worth a punt. My chief concern was more that my new camera wasn't living up to expectations and this could be its final outing...

We strolled down the main ride and made it into the main section of the Eastern Clearing where it was all very quiet. It seemed like we'd need to find the butterflies and then watch and wait for the sun to break through the cloud to get the decent shots. After trawling most of the middle section we finally turned up a Grizzlie near the central ditch and a female Common Blue – not exactly the Bentley specialities that we'd come for but still welcome all the same. I didn't stop for these butterflies though as I'd spotted a ghostly looking Pearl in the little square cleared area on the other side of the ditch (and that bloody fence). Looking at it now I can't work out whether it's as pale as it is because it's worn or because it's an aberrant? On the side of 'worn' the fringes were gone and there was a chunk missing from one of the hind wings. On the side of it being an aberrant I've not encountered a worn individual that was this pale before and also the dark markings near the inner side don't appear faded? Oh well...Once we'd gotten a few shots it was back round to try and relocate the female Blue.





We took another wander round and our meanderings took us from the main section of the Clearing, though to the other side, the new cleared area and back around into what I think of as 'the Marshie Field'. There were no Marshies here and we had to duck under the cover of some of the trees in the copse by the Notice Board to escape a sharp and heavy shower. It was one of those showers that came out of nowhere, pelted it down and then was gone just as swiftly. Once it was over the sun came back out and apart from the yet to evaporate droplets you'd have been hard pressed to have thought it had just been raining. In the middle of the field trying to dry out after the shower a Pearl sat out in the open looking like it had been caught out by the swiftness of the showers entrance.



We carried on chatting and wandering, our minds engaged on the talk but our eyes on scanning the flower tops and Bracken and we managed to turn up a brace of Dingies and a thrice of Pearls...if that is actually a thing. However I still couldn't seem to get the camera to function as well as the old D60, the shots just didn't appear as sharp as before? We ended up in the bottom part which the Dukes had favoured in previous years but our shuffled quartering didn't yield any this time. Things did perk up though as the sun broke clearing the clouds before it and finally bringing out the butterflies. A Large Skipper was first on the scene, occupying the Dukes historical territory. Then we were treated to a Small followed by a (Standard) Pearl. The Small Pearl stopped a couple of times, warming up in the recently returned sun and so we were both able to get a few shots.





Pleased that we'd finally found what we were looking for we made it back to the main section while the sun still shone to see if the infra-red had brought out a few more butterflies. It seems that the dowsing in radiation had worked as a Pearl and a second Small Pearls flew around in the very middle of the Clearing, using the tiny tracks as their roadways and so avoiding clipping their wings on the thorns and spikes of grass. However their dose was a little too high as they only stopped long enough for identification and by the time you'd pointed your lens at them they would be away again. It was all a bit frustrating but a tired old Marshie awakening after a long lie-in cheered us up and made up for the unsporting behaviour of its cousins.



After this the sun retired again and so we trudged back to the car and decided to split up - me to head home and accrue some Brownie points and Philzoid to try the other side of the wood. I think I did slightly better out of this...as I drove towards Winterslow and home the heavens opened in a vicious shower that made the earlier one look like a bit of drizzle; drops the size of two pence pieces! When I got home and looked through despite having many shots only a few stood out...normally I'd be having trouble deciding which of the multitude to keep whereas now I was having trouble finding anything decent...back to the drawing board for the camera me thinks...

*Pearl sits out the rain
Sharp showers dampen spirits
Still got three Frits though!*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 05-Aug-20 10:48 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I've been surprised this year at the lack of Painted Ladies, I've seen none and the Small Heath the same, even when I was down South, not one, have you noted this ?

That's certainly a pale Pearl, the SPBF I saw that day back in 2012 was Whiteish I hope your's is an ab 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-20 08:31 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 It has been a very quiet year for Painted Ladies although that does seem to be the way with them - after the feast the famine as it were 😊 I'm still not sure about that pale Pearl - I'll have to post the pic on the new Facebook Group I've joined - see what they say and let them argue over it 😊😊

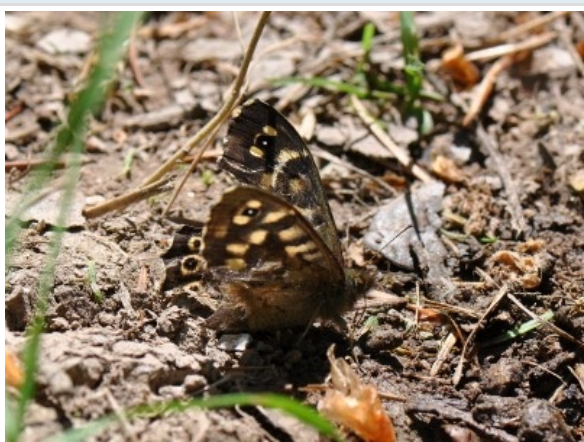
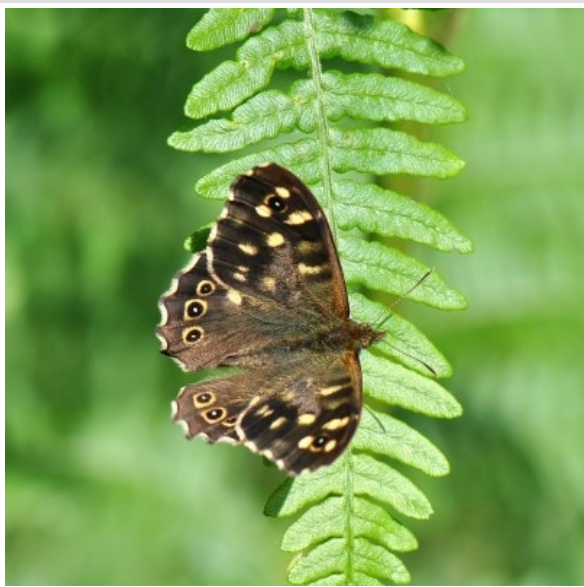
Grovely Wood 24-05-2020

After yesterday's atrocious weather forecast which went from sunny and warm to heavy showers and cloudy with only a few sunny spells I woke to find that it looked like they'd gotten it right. However as the morning wore on it became increasingly obvious that the weather so inaccurately predicted yesterday was in fact occurring today. So we packed a small picnic and headed out to Grovely, the increasing sun brightening not just the sky but also my mood which has been on the down side since my stalwart D60 bust a week hence. Still I was trialling my wife's D90 body and with its bigger sensor I

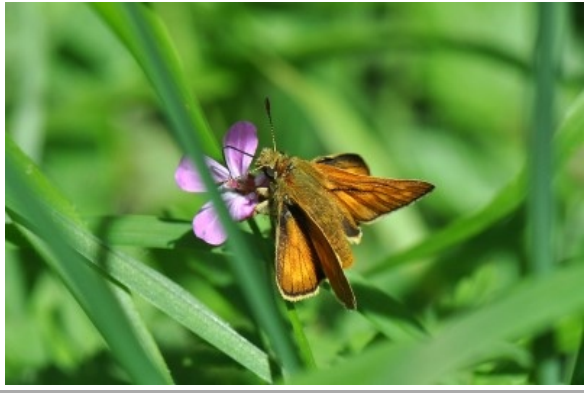
was hopeful that I might have found a replacement.

As we set off up the steep hill into the middle of the wood the odd Specklie flew on the sunny side of the track and at one point a Red Admiral did a few passes and then flew low to the ground investigating various plants which suggested that it was a She and was looking for a suitable place to lay. Unfortunately for me none of the nearby plants were suitable and she moved up further into the wood away from the path. We followed the same route as on our last (and first) visit and after the Witch Trees took the trackway off to the left that took us perpendicular to the main track. Along the way here Specklies played in the dappled light that by now streaming down from above but they rarely settled and if they did it wasn't for very long as another Specklie would pop up and they pair would spiral upwards and out of sight.

At the junction we turned left and a little way along here we stopped for our picnic. While we ate a spied a Large White in the distance back along the path from where we'd just come and there were also at least 6 different Specklies all jostling each other and scraping untidily in the sunlit spots. I managed a few shots before we packed up and headed on ensuring that we left only a few depressions in the grass.



After this we took the track to the right which wended its way down the hill and occasionally one side of the treeline opened up letting more light in. When it did Whites flew catching the sun and leaving me almost blinded by the light. I was able to pick out a female Brimstone and a couple of Small Whites and I'm guessing that the others were also this species but they were a little too far away for a positive identification. As we neared the field of little cleared strips which yielded my first Large Skipper a week ago another of the same species appeared and fed in the verge. Whilst the others went on I had 5 minutes in these little strips. I saw a grey buzz of a Grizzlie and there were two male Common Blues. But I got slightly annoyed with one of them as it spooked the second just as I was lining up a shot. Luckily a Brown Argus took pity on me and fed merrily on Spurge so I was able to at least get some shots of a smaller butterfly to try out the lens properly. It was a beauty even if it was a little frayed around the fringes.



I caught up with the others and we made the final trek down the hill with a few Specklies on the way and the resplendent bird calls surrounding us and wrapping us up in a sonic blanket. I enjoyed the final part of the walk as I felt like a weight had been lifted; I was happy with the images I was seeing on the view screen, so I just strolled along. At one point I found what I think is an Ent? 😊



*Camera trial
Lovely looking Brown Argus
Can I see an Ent?*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Secret Squirrel Site – Wiltshire 25-05-2020

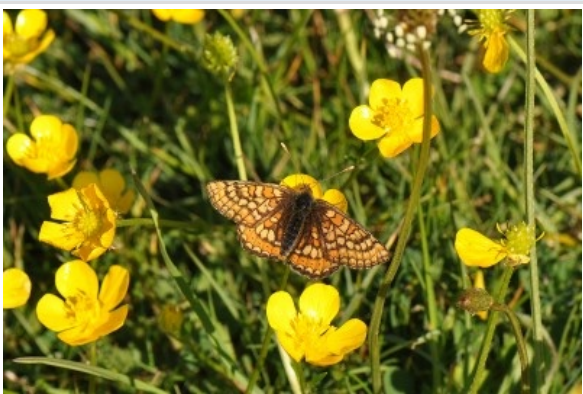
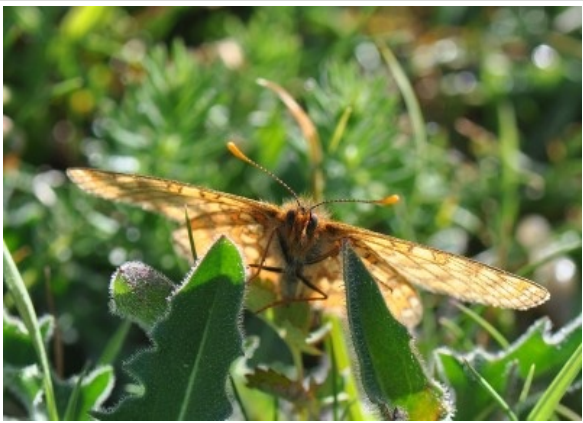
With Lockdown still rumbling on and restrictions on travelling for exercise meaning that my 'Big Trips' were on hold for this year I was wondering, how I could get to see certain species this year? One of those for me that is often on my Yearly Tally is Glanville Fritillary and after last years' confirmation that they are still going strong at Wrecclisham I would have really loved to have made the day trip again this year but it didn't seem possible and so I was sure that there would be a Glannie shaped hole on my 2020 Tally...Then my Instagram mate, he who had provided such accurate location information that enabled me to get onto some mighty fine Dukes, furnished me with yet another set of directions and a map, this time for Glanville Fritillaries in Wiltshire! They were just over 30 minutes away and so I could reconcile the trip with my conscious on both environmental and Co-vid 19 grounds. Also this would mean that I could be there and back in the time taken for lunch, break and free lesson plus I could do a bit of extra work over the weekend

to bridge the gaps as it were.

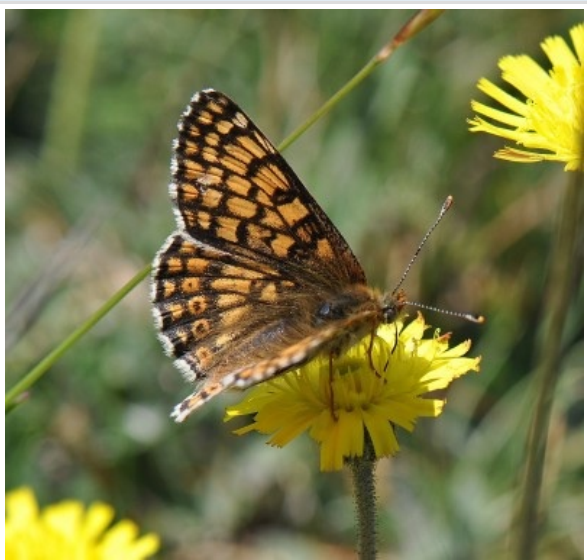
So come Monday I grabbed my wife's camera body, clicked my lens on it, bundled the girls into the back of the car and we were away, blue skies above and good tunes on the iPod. It was good going until the last little bit of the journey when the road became more and more like a track, winding uphill and when I pulled into the car park I was glad that I hadn't met another car on the way up because if I had I might still be there now! We climbed over the stile and took about four steps along the path and then the down swapped down more like a cliff face than a hill and like cautious mountain goats we carefully picked our way to the bottom of the slope and started having a look around. It was still early and the butterflies barely seemed to have woken up but even so they managed to accelerate away rapidly, they certainly weren't sluggish going from torpid to full throttle in the time taken to lift my camera to my eye. Still we saw a few Small Heaths and a gorgeous fresh Small Tort which was sitting in a bowl like depression at the foot of the hill. Something larger and darker than the obvious Small Heaths fluttered by and it became my first Meadow Brown of 2020 - so the trip had already paid dividends even if slight 😊



We carried on working our way along the bottom of the hill scanning both ahead and up the hill as we went. There were a couple of Greenstreaks flying and lots and lots of Small Heath but we didn't see much else from here until we was about half way round the curve of the base of the hill. At this point the slope became much more gradual and there was a small flattish field of lush grass. Nestled in this sea of green was a Common Blue shimmering in the early morning sun like a little sapphire. Something larger and frit like flew in the longer grass but it wasn't a Glannie, it was too dark by comparison; much less marmalade than the hoped for species and when I got a little closer in my suspicions were confirmed, it was a Marshie. Even though it wasn't in the best of nick and looked tired its behaviour didn't in anyway reflect this and I had a hell of a job following with my eyes let alone on foot!



The girls had found a little hollow and had set up camp, snacks at hand and books open so I left them to read and had a bit more of an explore. I carried on walking away from our start point and then started to work back but zig zagging up and down the slope as I went so as to cover as much ground as possible. On the way I encounter the odd Brimstone a few Common Blues and a ton of Small Heath. At one point a Small White drifts down the hill past me like a discarded handkerchief caught on the breeze and eventually I end up right at the top of the hill, precipitous slope on my left and a series of hollows and banks, the remains of an Iron Age Hillfort on my right. I have a bit of a mooch about with the usual suspects again appearing but still no Glannies! Checking the instructions again my mate reckoned that he found them at about 9:30 so I carry on along the top until I reach the start point and then start the second lap of the circuit again. It's now 9:30, according to the map the first bit of the site was where my mate had seen them and as I start off and scan up the slope there is a medium sized, marmalade butterfly gliding gracefully from flower top to flower top. It's now 9:30sih so once again my mate can't be faulted for his accuracy! I spend a bit of time scrabbling about trying not to lose my footing as it continues to feed and sometimes I'm above and sometimes below the butterfly with each different angle giving a slightly different colour it seems. It's gorgeous and I find myself really glad with however introduced this species here and I'm kinda hopeful that it will remain.





Chuffed and now with my eye in I carry on zig-zagging up and down until reach the girls. On the way a Grizzlie pops up and I start seeing a few Peacocks which in the bright sunlight appear absolutely huge. In fact most things on this morning appear bigger – due to the clear skies and bright sunshine? I reach the girls and regale them with tales of the Glannie, a bit of ripping yarn if I do say so myself whilst waiting for my coffee to cool and a second Meadow Brown and Red Admiral pop by while we're taking a break.





We then start to meander our way back – spread out across the hillside so as to cover more ground and hopefully turn up another or even the Glannie again. On the way the Small Heaths put in a really good showing which was great to see after a few years of worrying about this species, a Brown Argus made it onto the days Tally and so did an Adonis Blue as it flashed by like a streak of horizontal lightning. When we were almost back to where we'd started at the foot of the hill the girls sat down in the shade for a bit and relaxed whilst I went for a final look-see. The end bit beyond the hollow was much more gently sloping with a thicker coverage of grass and in the tangles of the green sward were another Meadow Brown and surprise, surprise, many more Small Heaths. I worked back to the steep slopes and spotted another couple scouring the hill. It turned out to be another person I knew – usually round and about in Salisbury where he would be on the Wiltshire Wildlife stall; it was good to see him out enjoying himself in the wilds. Again we split up and then there was another flash of marmalade and a/the Glannie was back. After a few attempts and a few more shots the girls decided that it was time to go; it was getting really hot even in the shade by now and they'd ran out of water plus I was getting dangerously close to "almost taking the mick/skiving" so I said my goodbyes and wished them luck and we made our final ascent and loaded up; wagons roll!

It was only on the drive home that I suddenly remembered; today was the start of half term so I needn't have left! Oh well...On the plus side once again my mate had been spot on and it was a pleasure to see the butterfly so close to home so fingers crossed that they 'take' to the site and remain a permanent fixture.

*Glanville Fritillary!
How come they are in Wiltshire?
Great news if they stay...*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 08-Aug-20 09:16 PM GMT

Glanvilles in Wilts? I look forward to reading in your next years diary that they are still there.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 09-Aug-20 09:00 AM GMT

Love your shots of the Heath Fritt Wurzel, it looks a great place to visit, I was a bit late going to East Blean but so pleased to find one or two still flying 😊

I'm busy here getting valuations, I'm determined to move 😊 I just got the holiday in on time before lock down here again, still going out though, the weathers not been too hot for the Butterflies here they've loved it 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 09-Aug-20 09:10 AM GMT

Interesting report with the Glanville Fritillary Wurzel. I saw some Glanville photos on twitter earlier in the year taken in an 'undisclosed location' in Wiltshire.

I assume this is another unauthorised release.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-20 08:43 PM GMT

Cheers Ernie 😊 Hopefully, fingers crossed 😊 It's great seeing them at the Surrey sites but a bit too many miles 😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 Good to hear the ball is rolling –you'll soon be up to your armpits in Grizzlies 😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Yes but they've been seen here for several years on the trot so it might be a fledgling colony now 😊

Duke Site 27-05-2020

My older daughter had planned to visit one of her school friends and they'd cooked up a Socially Distanced Birthday treat for her involving separate picnic blankets, my daughter had taken her own snacks, a cake cooked whilst wearing gloves and a face mask and lots of loud chat. Whilst she was enjoying the 'new normal' I had almost 2 hours to 'kill'. It seemed pointless to drop her and return only to do the same thing an hour later but luckily the village her friend lived in was en route for Tidworth and my Duke Site. So K dropped off I put pedal to the metal, pumped up 'Maiden and made tracks.

As I pulled up I was engulfed in a cloud of dust of my own making as the surrounding tank tracks are desiccated – I hate to say it but we could do with a few drops of rain. The turf is still springy here but instead of the softening of your footsteps it now adds a scratchy motif to the dull clumps of your boots. The fresh tank tracks gouged into the turf provide evidence to explain the difference between it and the surrounding 'fields'; its regularly ripped up and torn by parking and turning tanks. Still the butterflies don't seem to be minding much at the moment and I quickly tick off Small Heath, Meadow Browns, a pair of Common Blue racing about and chasing/being chased by the brighter Adonis Blues who were obviously trying to show up the carpet dull Dingies. Down in the longer tussocks at the edge of the spinney I also found a slightly worn Small Blue. When I'd last been here 3 weeks previously there wasn't a sniff of them but I must have missed them by a week as this one wasn't fresh with the margins all roughed up and the white underside looking like some of the paint had peeled off.



Happily I strolled onwards down the track that skirts the spinney and then backup hill slightly. The vegetation changes here from short and mossy to a thick carpet of long stemmed grasses that comes from being allowed to become established. There are many more blues here as well as Small Heath which seem to be back on track number wise after a few worrying years of relative scarcity. The blues here seem to be playing a very complex game of Hide and seek amid the grass stems. Complex in that if you find a Blue butterfly it wasn't actually the one that you were seeking. In the end I give up trying for any shots here as I can feel time slipping through my fingers and all the shots I'm lining up have the recurring theme of 'blade of grass with butterfly behind', getting a clear unobstructed shot is next to impossible. At the corner of what used to be the main Duke track a Marshie pops up and on my continued progress up the track it is swiftly joined by a second along with a Brimstone making its debut on the daily tally plus the odd Dingy and Grizzlie. It's difficult to get a precise number for these as they are far too intent on ripping chunks out of each other or any hapless and passing Small Heath to be as civilised as to sit still for me.



At the top of the track a Green Hairstreak surprises me by flying low over the dust and gets itself into a spot of bother as it enters a Grizzlie patrolled no-fly zone. Still chuckling about this behaviour I turn right and when standing in front of the Cypress trees I scan back into the field that I've just walked alongside. I can see three Marshies straight off and they keep bundling into each other. One sits there quietly trying to catch some rays and one of its mates dives on it so up they go which sets off the third one. A Brown Argus joins in at one point, looking ridiculously small against its cousins but easily holding its own!



I carry on upwards with the sun beating down so strong that I'm starting to cook in my Metallica T-shirt so I stick to the shady side of the path for a bit of respite. This means that I don't get to look over the top field but I'm guessing that the small track ways hold host to Large Skippers and Brown Argus as they do most years. A Greenstreak draws me temporarily out of the shade and once I'm out I stay out as a Mother Shipton leads me on a bit of a dance in amongst the tussocks. I cut across to the Duke Hotspot on the way spotting a Common and Small Blue. But the Common races on by and after a couple of shots the Small Blue makes off and no matter how hard I strained my eyes I just couldn't follow the diminutive blue. Once in the corner a Dingy passing causes me a moment of exultation as I think it's a Duke and as I'm recovering from my disappointment the real McCoy pops up. While I'm lining up my shot I realise that this is a different individual for those seen on my last visit so they seem to be doing better here than hoped for!





As I cut through the line of trees at the back of the Hotspot I stopped momentarily as there was a Bird's Nest Orchid – looking a bit more open than on previous visits. After this brief sojourn in the shade I broke free from the trees and worked my way along the bank of springy turf. All the usual suspects were here and all were behaving as expected. The Grizzlies and Dingies bickered like long separated family who'd been brought back together at a Wedding only for someone to mention "what our Jane said about our Susan..." The Common Blue darted backwards and forwards in desperate need for attention; positively screaming "Look at me!" and the two Brown Argus attacked all and sundry should anything, be it bird or butterfly, enter their airspace. An unsuspecting Treble Bar made the near fatal mistake of wandering too far into the BA Seclusion Zone and almost instantly regretted not staying true to its usual form of skulking around on the underside of large leaves.



I carried on up the steep slope to the top and the cross tracks were the Walls hang out and then turned left and made towards the rings. I paused by the gate and realised that I was close to needing to turn round and make my way back so after watching a Small Heath, 2 Large Skippers and a Common Blue for a few moments I made to go. That's when the Wall turned up although it didn't stop - like most of the butterflies by now the heady mix of sun and it's warmth had got them moving as if all turbos were engaged. As I crossed the final little section of field to get back to the car a Marshie waved me goodbye, the final little flourish of the trip. But no that came as I was changing boots and stowing away my gear when a Small Blue carried by the breeze landed on the footplate!





*Running short of time
Small Blue but the big highlight
Quite usurped the Duke*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-20 08:34 PM GMT

Those Marshie shots are great Wurzel, I've not seen them for yonks, 😊 maybe next year 😊 Goldie 😊

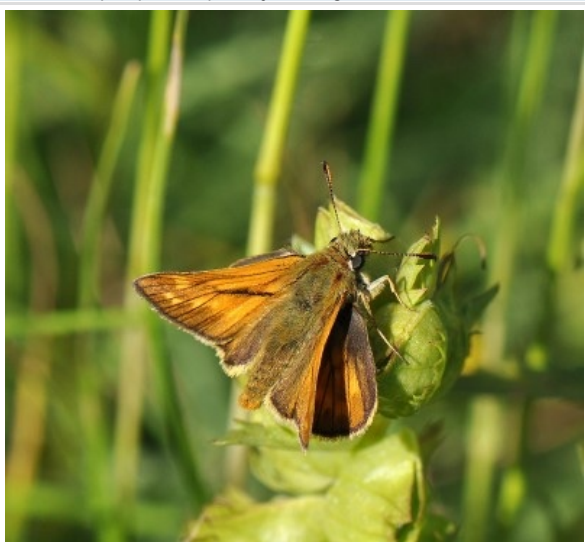
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-20 07:46 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 That's how far behind on my PD - 'YONKS' 😊😊 I'm sure you'll be able to rustle some up next season 😊

The Devenish 29-05-2020

I was hoping that me new(er) camera was going to turn up at some point but I headed out anyway with the girls to The Devenish. We decided to go early to try and avoid the main heat of the afternoon. We started off in the Orchid Meadow but all was quiet and the only on butterfly that was up and about flying in those patches that the sun had penetrated was a Large Skipper. We carry on up the narrow and very steep track to the main part of the Down where again the place is almost entirely bereft of butterflies. Only a couple of Small Heath break the monotony and so we keep on moving along the top of the Down and into the woodland. When we reach the swings I leave the girls and work back diagonally down the middle section of the Down. Again all is quiet with only singles of Large Skipper and Red Admiral (very distant) to train my lens on. Even the little Paddock area is devoid of butterflies and so I make my way back up to rejoin the girls.

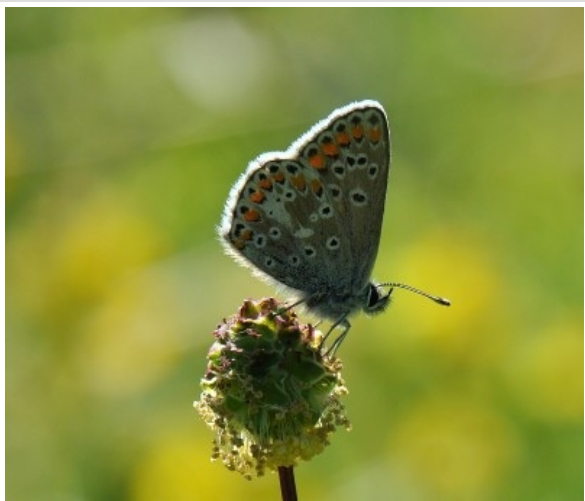




From my treetop vantage point I look both ways along the valley and I can see where the problem lies. The sun is only just reaching these parts of the Down and then only where there are breaks in the treeline, the light like light fingers clawing their way through and at the grasses beyond. Having spotted the problem I then come up with the solution – so I leave the girls and again make my way diagonally across the middle section of the Down this time directly with no weaving here and there to likely looking nectar sources. Now I'm making for those little sections where the sun has broken through sending the shade scattering before it. It does pay and the number of Large Skippers is doubled and then I inadvertently startle a Meadow Brown disturbing it from its slumbers. It flies not just seeking the cover of the longer grasses but also the shade. This means getting slightly different shots than normal with the little shining from behind but I'm quite pleased with this because it gives the butterflies a wonderful halo.



As the girls are still not swung out I move back down into the Orchid Meadow which is the best lit area of the site now although the trees lining it on all sides are still stubbornly refusing to let go of some shade but what sun they have let in has been sufficient to finally get the butterflies up and about. There has in fact been a total sea change and in a very short space of time there are same number of butterflies as I'd seen throughout the rest of the morning. There are two Brown Argus – one of which sits backlit like the Meadow Brown and again producing an aesthetically pleasing pose and a Grizzlie. At the far end a distant Specklie flies more confidently about then the fluttering collection of whites which at times look like they'll literally fall out of the sky and Blue, joins the tally, judging by the shade and the height its flying at probably a Holly.





I then hotfoot it back up the steep steps cut into the chalk to the top of the first section of the Down spotting at least 5 Large Skippers scattered though the grasses lining the foot of the down at the margins of the line of Beech trees which have been casting their shadows all morning. I come up with another Grizzlie as well as a fast moving Adonis Blue flashing past like lightning here and a the Meadow Browns all follow the Adonis lead. I reach the girls and we finish the circular route that we started and paused so they could swing, leaving the canopy and stomping down the steps before plunging into yet more woodland and ending up back at the Orchid Meadow. The girls settle down in the small sections that are still offering shade as the sun now has a firm grip on the situation and the temperature is rising fast! Whilst they read and try to keep cool I build up a sweat trying to follow the now very active butterflies. The Dingy Skipper didn't cause any problems as it looked so old and tired I'm not that sure it had much live left in it at all? I sits atop a flower in a most unusual pose, wings held low forming a tent over the flower. It kind of reminded me of a pupil hunkered over a test covering it with their arms lest any cheaters see their answers. However the Brown Argus and Blues cause much racing forward and back as they just won't sit still and as for the Orange-tip - well not a chance in hell! Surprisingly a Golden-ringed Dragonfly behaves decently and sits nicely for a few shots.



By now it is hot, hot, hot even in the shade and so we beat a retreat for home where the through breeze and cool white walls await.

*At The Devenish
A different perspective
Happy with results*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Matsukaze, 12-Aug-20 08:10 PM GMT

Golden-ringed must be a nice find for your part of the country!

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 12-Aug-20 08:11 PM GMT

Very much looking forward to your shots from Saturday (sooner rather than later?). 😊
What a day that was!. Such a great place for everything else as well. Boots well filled.
I hope to pay a return visit while I'm in Wilts over the next few days, as well as Tilshead.

Great time, great company!.
Stay safe & well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-20 08:19 PM GMT

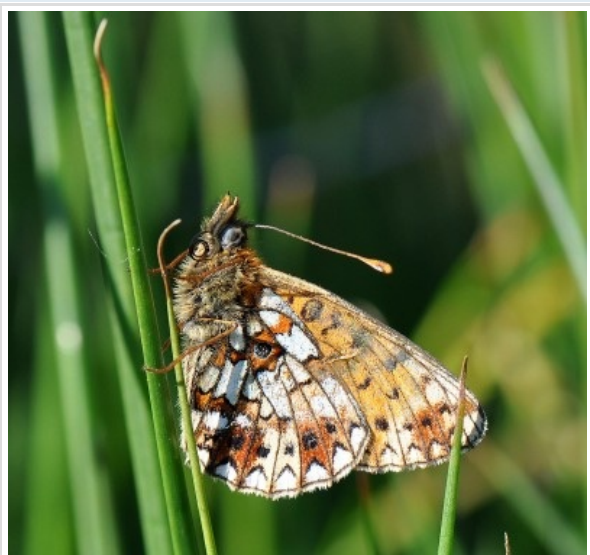
Cheers Matsukaze 😊 I'm not really up on the distribution of Dragonflies – they're a sort of added bonus to a days butterflying 😊😊 Speaking of which...

Cheers Trevor 😊 Working on getting the shots sorted out – I've only got about 38 other posts to do first though 😊😊 The change in the weather hasn't been great – don't know when I'll be getting to Shipton again 😊

Bentley Wood 31-05-2020

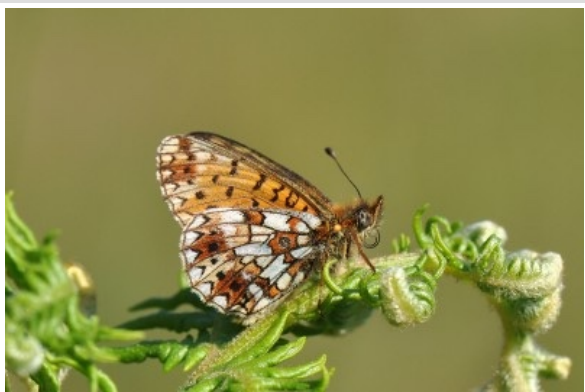
I find that my butterflying year can be neatly subdivided by which sites I visit. I start off at Middle Street and Five Rivers, move onto Martin Down and my Duke Site and now I'm getting towards the end of the first stint of Bentley Wood visits. Also as the season progresses I find the ideal time of arrival becomes earlier and earlier as the average daily temperature rises and the butterflies awaken and fly frenetically more quickly. This visit coincided with almost reaching the peak of 'early bird catches the worm' and so a little after 9 of the morning clock Dave and I were slowly Social Distancing around the Eastern Clearing. We chatted away as we wandered which was just as well as it seems no-one had told the butterflies about the importance of waking up early during this part of the season. After wandering forwards and backwards across the whole of the main section and some of the further reaches of the Clearing including the little 'sub clearing' at the very bottom all we had to show for our efforts was a single Speckled Wood.

We ended up in the central part of the EC where the vegetation is criss-crossed by animal trackways and I check my watch. A couple of minutes past 9:30 and suddenly the switch is thrown – there are butterflies. First up is a Large Skipper and it's swiftly joined by two more and it's not the only one gaining more company as another couple of butterfly enthusiasts have arrived to share the clearing with us. They seem pleasant enough but I do expound a few tuts at their lack of SD etiquette. As I'm trying to keep my distance more effectively I spot a moribund Small Pearl (at least I think I spotted it – it might have been Dave that first clapped eyes on it) which is struggling to get out of bed as it crawls up the spiny rush to warm up a little in the morning light. I offer it a hand and it crawls onto my welcoming finger and from there onto a Bracken frond which has been out of the shade for long enough to allow the dew to evaporate. After a few shots I step back and take a quick stroll round this section of the Clearing and another Small Pearl flies and despite missing a chunk from its fore wing this one seems fresher and is much more active. The other enthusiasts are also not that up to date on butterfly etiquette as Dave is having a hard job of getting anything as one of them is a 'Hogger' but eventually Dave can get in and I can get a second round of shots.





As is so often the way the butterfly is nicely posed, sitting still and then Philzoid arrives so can be handed his shots on a silver platter as it were (😊 😊). While he's catching up on the shots Dave and I catch-up with him whilst we wander about in the little section turning up the second Small Pearl again and a brace of Grizzlies. We then regroup...well as much as you can whilst staying 2 metres apart and do a circuit of the main part of the Clearing. At the bottom end there are two Large Skippers and once back in the main part the Small Pearls have now woken up proper and are too active for photography so we move over to the other side of the ditch and check out the area that was cleared a few years back. As we spread out and cover the ground various butterflies turn up; 2 Small Heath, a male Common Blue and two Meadow Browns but most are very flighty and so I try and concentrate only on the Frits. In doing so I found a Pearl, Small Pearl and a Marshie. The first two are flying non-stop now, fully recharged after a brief bask. As I have previously noted however the Marshies like a bit of a lie-in and this one seemed to have followed the same pattern and so was the most sluggish of all the species encountered bar the very first Small Pearl. However what it lacked in energy it made up for in cunning and so once it realised that I was trying to photograph it it glided through the barbed wire fence and flew around the Bracken on the other side mockingly. I wasn't having that and so I dove under the fence and after a brief stalk got a couple of shots which shut up the smarmy Marshie.





After this our wanderings brought us back to the Main Clearing where the Small Pearls were still bombing around and they had been joined by an aged Marshie, a Skipper (possibly Small?) and a Small Tort – something of a rarity here. Onwards we went and with a quick refreshment break in the car park we set out to see what else was about in the woods. Not an awful lot is seemed until we reached the small pond down past the crossroads. This was alive with Dragon (4 Spotted and Broad-bodied Chasers, Emperors) and Damselflies (Azure and Large Red) and the newer, larger pond we even better although there were fewer perching points.





Eventually even in the shade it had got far too hot and so we walked back and went our separate ways. The next few weeks will see me checking out various grasslands as the Browns and Golden Skippers start to emerge – speaking of which I'm sure that was one I saw earlier...

*Three Frit day again
Dragons and Damsels hold sway
Small Skipper maybe?*

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-20 07:56 PM GMT

Slop Bog 02-06-2020 Part 1

The Season was in full throttle and things were progressing very nicely. I felt the calling back home again, I'd already 'done' Lulworth so I knew that it was time to visit the amazingly named Slop Bog! The only trouble was that I was back to 'working from home' so I would have to be flexible in terms of hours. Luckily the weather aided and abetted me as it was going to be hot – mid to high twenties which would see the Silver Studs motoring around like loons – so I reckoned an early start or an evening visit would make for the easiest photography and I could capture their images in the golden glow at the start or end of the day.

So I managed to get on site by 7:30 and as I strolled along the boardwalk I strained my eyes across the tops of the Purple Moor Grass the occasional tuft of Cotton Grass looking like someone had littered looking for little blue flashes that would inevitably turn into Silver Studs. No such luck but whilst I was being vigilant for the butterflies I was being 'vigilised' by the local security – in this case a Fox which watched my progress along the boardwalk and through the gate. Satisfied that I'd kept to the path it was gone. Normally I feel a difference under foot as I step down off of the hard timber boardwalk onto the soft, almost spongy, humus poor soil but not today. The dearth of rain means that this is now less Slop Bog and more 'Slop A Little Bit Damp In Places' and I move from a hard timber floor to a hard, compacted soil floor. Nevertheless I scan across the first bit of Heathland and straight away I'm counting double figures of male Silver Studs. I feel a quiet satisfaction that this bit of heath – Silver Studded Heath – is still living up to its name and start following the tiny trackways between the bulging tussocks and tumbling stacks of older heather.





The males even this early in the morning are proving difficult to keep track of as they alternate between basking and flying around within a fraction of a second as I focus in, position myself or even get within 2 metres of them. Still I manage to catch a few males out by standing still and pretending to be a tree. After a few minutes there are blues all around me and I can reach in and get a few shots. This technique seems to work- the only danger is staying still for too long makes me a Tick magnet so between finding a good spot to settle down and wait I spend a fair amount of time brushing my legs or flicking the little gits away into the Heather.







So far it had been all males as to be expected during the first part of their flight so I set out to try and find a few females. I therefore stopped being a tree and started wandering the trackways through the heather and that's when I twigged what was wrong with the scene before me. Usually it's a sea of mauve, pinks and white but today there were the odd purple bells scattered about but the main colour of the heather was a greyish brown. It seems that the maritime climate hadn't protected the heather from the late frosts as I had hoped and they had succumbed, the delicate florets lost, bitten by the frost. I carried on through this depressing landscape which I normally find so joyous to revisit and a singing Tree Pipit does his best to cheer me up. He succeeds and I carry on my quest hoping that the butterflies will emerge and just get on with ensuring the next generation rather than worrying about nectar too much and/or that they can last until the replacement flowers bloom.



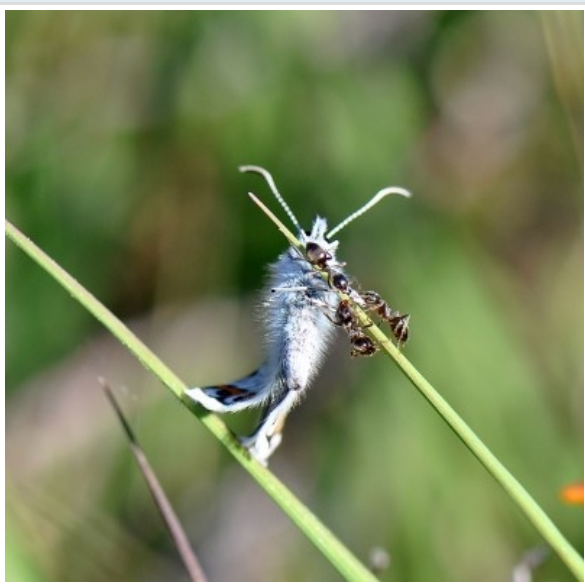
By now I'm deep in the Heath, well half way in which isn't really that far as this is a tiny ribbon like site and I'm starting to see the odd female. The ratio is still quite drastic at about 1 female for every 20 males but surprisingly when I find the females they're slightly apart from the groups of males. In fact the butterflies seem to be clustered together in disparate little groups, scattered among the Heather. Had I arrived a bit too early and they were only just dispersing from their communal roosts? Perhaps not as now instead of being a tree I could just march through the Heather to one cluster, take a

load of photos before they got too warmed up or worked out what I was and then move onto the next cluster. In doing so I was delighted by the subtle variation natural selection would have to work with all cooked up by sexual reproduction. In some males on their hind wing they had bands of colour – white fringes, blue/black and then the royal blue of their ground colour, one end of the spectrum. Others had the same combination of colours but the blue/black cut into the royal blue in a series of scallops (the middle) whilst others at the far end of the spectrum had the white fringe, blue/black band but there were distinct spots akin to those seen on other blues. Brilliant!



After dallying here for some time and finding a few females and trying to get that oily sheen I also stumble (in this uneven terrain this isn't purely metaphorical) across a male that has only recently emerged. He'd managed to climb to the top of a strand of Purple Moor Grass and his wings were almost fully inflated and dried, with only a slight curve around the base of the hind wings. As I watched an ant climbed up the grass stem and set about the butterfly. It was swiftly joined by a second and then a third and they crawled over the butterfly, clambering over the wings. At first I thought that they were 'tending' to it but then I thought that they could be attacking to it as they seemed to have clamped their mandibles on at times?





I'll leave it there for now...

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 17-Aug-20 11:34 PM GMT

Wurzel, Slop Bog. I thought you'd made that name up, it's brilliant. Lovely SSB photos, especially the observations with the ants.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-20 07:44 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 I too love the name although there is an interesting Instagram hashtag for it "#slobogisntactuallythatwet" or some such 🤪🤪

Slop Bog 02-06-2020 Part 2

Eventually my meanderings through the moor had brought me back to the patch I'd started at first thing. As is often the way it seems like the best had been left until last as I watched a male approach a female and then bang they were in cop. I settled down into the Heather to try for a few shots but then another male flies in and proceeds to chase them across the Heather tops, when they settle another male joins in the chase and so I wish them luck and leave them to flee whilst still being romantically entangled as it were. However there in front of me were another pair already locked on and in cop – how I'd missed them before I don't know but now there they were and actually in a better position than the original pairing. As I'm shooting a second male flies in and tries his luck to no avail and luckily for me the pair remain resolute and stay solidly fixed to their stem.





Three's a crowd...



...the Loser.





The victor!

This seemed a fitting end to the visit (perhaps this is why the best is saved until last?) and so I headed home getting in at just gone 10; so perfectly timed to start the working day and carry on straight through lunch. I'd been on site for just shy of 2 hours, seen hundreds of butterflies including males, females, fresh individuals, those in cop, tired and worn ones, a range of variation even had one on my boot but all were of the same species and that was the only species I'd seen all the time I'd been there. A real habitat specialist!

*Sapphire shining
Amid the dusty Heather
Silver studs jump out*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 18-Aug-20 08:49 PM GMT

Fantastic SSB shots, you really captured the steely blue of the males as well as that wonderful oily sheen on the females. I didn't get enough of them this year for obvious reasons and next year may be a bit dodgy after half of Chobham Common went up in flames last week 🤔😞.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 18-Aug-20 10:05 PM GMT

That was a great account of that morning in the Eastern Clearing, Wurzel – I'm pretty sure it was you who found that sluggish SPBF at the start. A very enjoyable visit.

Slop Bog looks a great place too – different from the very dry sandy heaths of Surrey where I see SSBs every year. I think I've driven past it any number of times on the A31, but never stopped (except in the obligatory traffic queues on that particular bit of road... 😊) Some terrific shots too: Bugboy has rightly singled out the oily iridescent females – they are a real favourite of mine. 😊🇧🇪

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 19-Aug-20 10:30 PM GMT

Wurzel, what happened to that Butterfly with the Ants crawling on it 😞 It made my skin crawl just to look at it!!! Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 19-Aug-20 11:05 PM GMT

Two great Silver Stud sequences, Wurzel. Your visit was timed to perfection.
Some great shots of very fresh specimens, male and female.
They are one species I miss some years, as the nearest reliable colony is 60 miles from home.

Stay safe & well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-20 10:30 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 Philzoid was telling me about Chobham today 😞 H was really pi\$\$ed that the only reason it got on the local news was because they had to evacuate the nearby Golf Club – don't worry about the habitat loss 😞 but do worry about a rich persons play park 😞

Cheers Dave 😊 I can't remember who found that SPBF what I remember very vividly was the speed with which the other bloke came running once one was seen 😊😞 Next time you're stuck in traffic pop over – you'll be able to get a few shots before the traffic starts up again 😊😞

Cheers Goldie 😊 It was alright in the end – I think it was freshly emerged so once it had dried out it flew off and the ants fell away. 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 They are around at a couple of sites nearer to me – with some even straying into Wiltshire at Landford Bog but I always end up at Slop Bog mainly because of the name 😏😂

From the sublime to...

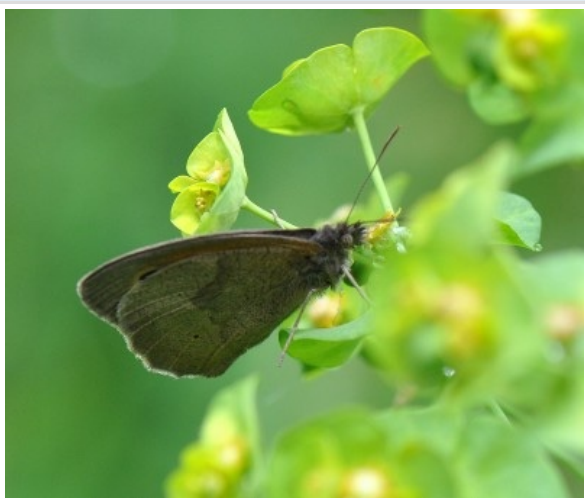
Garston Wood 03-06-2020

This was only a quick trip so that I could check in on my mum and dad. The weather had finally broken and the glorious sun and warm weather had been replaced by something much cooler and wetter – almost to the extent that I was left wondering whether the person that had come up with the phrase “Flaming June” was having a laugh!

Despite the cool and wet though I still carried my camera as we followed our usual route around the Wood. Along the bottom track that runs parallel to the road for a bit before it turns to the right and leads uphill into the centre. At the cross-tracks a few Butterfly Orchids were still just about in bloom – as to whether they're Greater or Lesser I don't know but they still seemed in fine fettle. I kept my eyes open as we walked on round to the stopping point for Twayblade but I didn't see any, most probably because I didn't venture from the path unlike the last time I'd found some.



On through the butterfly enclosure and there were no butterflies, Orchid or proper but the Spotted Orchids were putting on a good show and in the gloom they really stood out. It was only right at the end as we were walking down the main track, with the car in sight that I finally saw a butterfly – a Meadow Brown looking if anything even more miserable than I felt. Oh well some days are like this and you have to have days like these so that you can really appreciate the cracking days. The effort spent today could eventually be repaid by finding a Clouded Yellow or having a storming day filled with Brostreaks later in the season...Fingers crossed!



*Too wet and too cool
More Orchids than butterflies
Hope Karma repays?*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

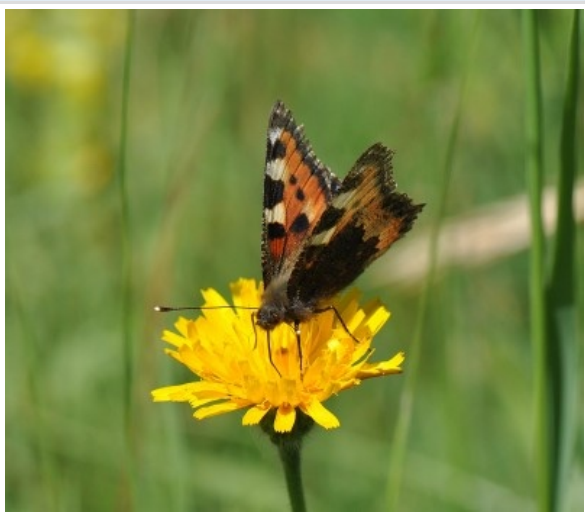
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-20 06:05 PM GMT

The Devenish 05-06-2020

My wife fancied a bit of a break and so once the girls and I had finished their school work we quickly packed up some food and headed over to The Devenish for some exercise and our lunch. Through the shaded short woodland path we went and Little L demonstrated her gate climbing prowess whilst I went over the stile and K just opened the gate into the Orchid Meadow. It was looking like an insect paradise with different coloured wildflowers peppering the multi-levelled grasses and Demoiselles danced and Bees buzzed energetically with the odd butterfly adding a little bit of panache and je ne c'est quoi to the ensemble. A Large Skipper welcomed us zipping past to our left, a Brown Argus came next bullying another Large Skipper to our right. As we followed the narrow path that runs diagonally across the meadow from the entrance gate to the other gate which leads to the Down one, two, three, four Meadow Browns each completed a superb Jeté from their hiding place in the grass. Then the danseur arrived on the scene completely outshining all the previous members of the chorus - it was a stunning male Dark Green Fritillary catching the sun perfectly and moving like a finger of fire leaping aflame from one nectar source to another. One each of Small Heath and Small Tortoiseshell and a further Meadow Brown completed the chorus line but all eyes were on the lead. When they first arrive on the scene they're the three 'B's' - Big, bold and brash.

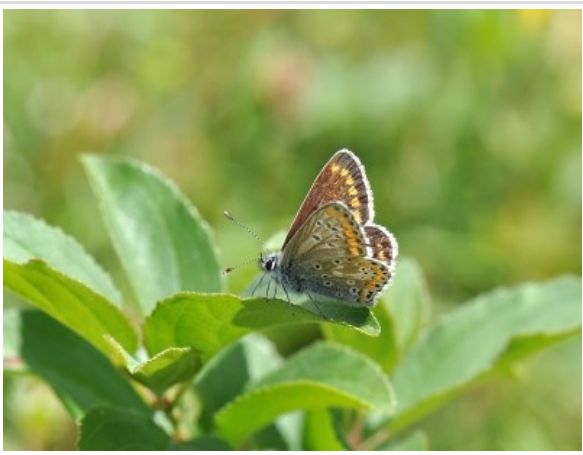




We carried on mesmerised up the steep steps cut into the chalk and I scanned from left to right along the side of the down as we climbed. As we did a medium sized, greyish butterfly flew quickly past before plopping back down into the grass. It took me a moment to realise that it was my first Marbled White of the year so I carefully stepped off the path and waded through the grass to roughly where it went down. It was almost entwined with various stems but I managed a record shot as it's always nice to get a shot of the first of the year. A worn Adonis Blue male cut by and a few Small Heath made a fuss as we carried on back up and a female Common Blue successfully played hard to get as we reached the top.



Once up I settled the girls down and checking that they were happy I grabbed a few bits of lunch and carefully climbed back down into the Orchid Meadow munching as I went. Butterflying whilst eating has often yielded good results as the butterflies can sense your slight preoccupation I'm sure and so they are a little more approachable - at least this was what I was hoping for particularly as the DGF might still be about. Once in a strolled about working my way to the other end of the field. The Small Tort had been joined by a mate, the DGF was bombing around like it really was aflame and I turned up a second Brown Argus at the far end holding territory and warding off any Meadow Browns that strayed into its air space. On the walk back a Grizzlie popped up for a bit looking lovely and golden in the sun and a Large White did a cursory fly-by.



I made my way once again up the steep slope but this time it was made easier as I took the diagonal tracks that transect the side of the down on the way seeing a few Meadow Browns and another DGF - although this one didn't stop. Once I met up with the girls we packed up our things and followed the top path as it wound its way along and through the wood to the swing where the girls once more set to swinging. We had a little explore about in the woods as well critiquing the various shelters that others had made and left but we couldn't locate the mysterious 'third swing'. Upon our eventual return to the Car Park, our circular walk complete we set out for one last check of the Orchid Meadow. The Ensemble was bolstered by a fantastic male Common Blue and another Grizzlie had turned up but amid all of these species and the numerous Meadow Browns the DGF still captivated the audience (i.e. me) whilst it completed Arabesques, Plies and Pirouettes around the flower tops. Eventually we had to leave the show closed in the same way it had started with a Large Skipper bidding us farewell.





Big and bold and brash
The Dark Green Fritillary
The meadow dancer

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 23-Aug-20 08:18 PM GMT

Your first Meadow Brown might be a slight ab. hints of *addenda* with that small extra spot under the main ocelli 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 23-Aug-20 09:35 PM GMT

Superb Dark Greens, another species I missed this year! 🇮🇪.
Would be interested to know what you make of Larkhill.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-20 06:51 PM GMT

Lovely fresh Dark Green Fritillaries Wurzel. They take me back to those hot days of early summer, seems a long time back now there is a hint of autumn in the air.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-20 10:46 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, lovely shots of the Dark Green Frit, I missed them this year but I believe they've moved into Brockholes CP which is near me, so hope fully I may get to see them next year, that's if I'm still living here 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-20 08:58 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 I did wonder if that was an ab. so I was hoping that you'd pick up on it and save me trawling through the internet trying to work out what it was 😊😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 Thanks for the tip-off I'm definitely going to follow that one up...Whitters on my doorstep all this time 😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Autumn has come knocking...well more like it's kicked the door in! 😊 Mind you we're still to have the 'Back to School Heatwave' 😊😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 You never know you might end up watching them on the South Downs having already filled your boots with Grizzlies earlier in the year 😊😊

Ditchling Common 07-06-2020

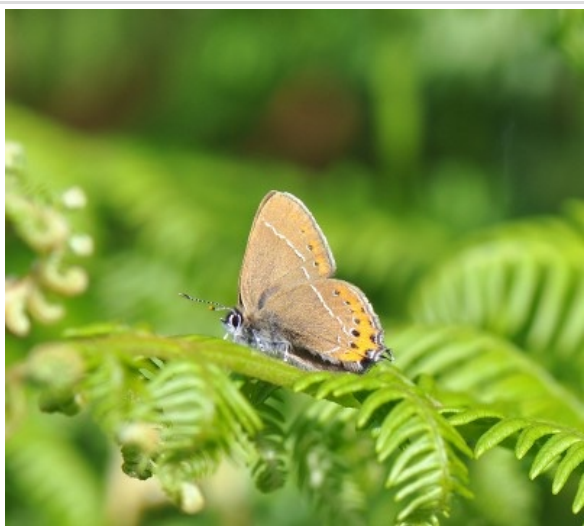
This year was looking so good back in January. I'd planned trips to Daneways/Collard Hill, Wrecclesham and Chiddingfold, maybe a second trip to Chiddingfold around Emperor time, our holiday destination looked like it was going to be amazing and I was even thinking about biting the bullet and going for my first British Lifer since 2015 in the form of the Black Hairstreak. Then Covid-19 happened, we went into Lockdown; my French holiday was effectively cancelled, Daneways was closed, Collard Hill visits were discouraged, we could only drive short distances for exercise and then driving distances was discouraged...Things were not looking good! Then there was an easing of Lockdown and travel was permitted and more to the point by not making any big trips earlier I'd accrued a sizeable amount of Brownie Points and so I found myself setting out for Ditchling Common at silly o'clock hoping to reach my destination by 8am. The drive wasn't too bad with selected tunes from Maiden and a large travel mug of coffee to keep me going

and so I pulled in just before 8 and only moments after Dave had gotten there.

After collecting all my garb and greeting Dave and Trevor (our guide for the day) we set out to across what felt like a Country Park to the fabled Blackstreak Alley. There were a few butterflies on the wing the best of which was a Green Hairstreak sitting in mixed bed. We carried on arriving at the Alley directly and then we had a little walk around to get a feel for the hotspot. There were a few sections of Blackthorn hedge and I noted the various bramble flowers and nectar spots. After picking up Philzoid we all settled down, socially distanced, to wait for the butterflies to wake up. It was a matter of waiting and watching, staring at the hedge and willing the tiny butterfly to take to the wing or reveal itself.



So we stand and stare...A few Meadow Browns flutter about trying to distract us all and finally just as my neck is starting to seize a tiny dark butterfly appears at the top of the hedge. It jinks its way along the hedge plopping down at the far end. After even more staring at the greenery I manage to relocate it and by stretching my arms out as far as possible and peering through the view finder I have my first images of a Black Hairstreak. It remains here for 5 minutes or so enabling a few people to at least see it and those with the telephoto lens earn the envy of those of us with macros. After this I return to the very short distance to the start of the hotspot. As Dave, Trevor and I are talking a Black Hairstreak just appears in one of the tree tops on our left and then flutters down landing on a stand of Bracken just in front of us. As we watch it 'hops' to another stand of Bracken allowing a couple of shots before it flies up high and landing somewhere in the middle of the hedge at the very top.



After this we all split-up and wander round trying to find a few more Blackstreaks. Along the way there are Meadow Browns and Large Skippers a plenty and after completing a circuit round I find myself just round the corner and so on the other side of the hedge from the main Alley. A few of us watch

with bated breath as a distant butterfly jinks its way downwards in typical Hairstreak style. As it lands on the Bracken all of our lens, be them camera of binocular, are pointed at the little butterfly like a lepidopteran firing squad. The butterfly doesn't hang around down on the bracken long, possibly because it can detect the palpable air of disappointment, and it swiftly arises again muttering "I didn't ask to be Green Hairstreak did I?" to itself as it goes. So it's back to hedge staring and I end up back where the first one had been seen. Something is moving up high and I can see the now familiar little triangle for a few fleeting seconds before its twists and turns mean that its face on and so it drops off the radar. For some reason I find myself rooted to the spot, willing it to come down from its lofty perch. And so it does but not to the surrounding flowers but just about head height. I call out and others come running and we fan out around it trying for some shots. Its not in a great position and it quite mobile so the stunningly sharp shots that I was hoping for look like being evasive but still I click away. It flutters to another leaf where it is slightly obscured and then another where it's slightly higher and it looks to be seeking out a suitable spot to lay eggs eventually crawling along a twig upside down and dragging its abdomen along the bark. I don't care about the leaves in the way, I don't care that its constantly moving and so getting any sort of shot is down to luck, I'm just enjoying watching a new species. I'm drinking it all in, observing for all I'm worth - trying to work out comparative size, marvelling at how the colours changes from dark brown almost black to a golden grey as the light hits it from different angles, noting the weak fluttery flight when it looks sometimes like it'll just drop from the sky, noting how hairy it is and the identification features (extended orange band which runs onto the fore wing and the black spots) - it's a cracking looking little butterfly. Then it sits still perfectly in line with my lens, it's the perfect Black Hairstreak shot. As I focus I'm chuffed that I'll get that one shot that'll I'll cherish...and then some bloody Johnny come bloody lately bloody bloke bloody well stands right in bloody front of me! 😞 Then the butterfly is gone, back up to its refuge in the top of the tree. The perfect shot, my 'payment' for patiently waiting for it, ripped away from me...but it's okay because Johnny Come Lately got his shot! 😞😞 Gnashing teeth I move back to the Hotspot and angrily take a few shots of a Large Skipper - almost wrenching the focus wheel off the lens in my frustration.





I get back to walking the circuit (still stomping slightly) and staring at the hedge even though it's seeming like all is now lost, my chance missed, I just hoped that one would come down again. But as I walk it feels like this is becoming less and less likely. Two more are seen but both are up high and show no inclination of debasing themselves. They're just not coming own today. Still even if the butterflies aren't behaving at least the company is great and we have a good old chinwag in between forays out from the hotspot. As we're regaling each other with tales Dave Cook appears and tells us that he's had 6 or 7 and all down low over the course of the morning almost admonishing us for sticking to the Alley. So we set off further into the site which it turns out is actually huge continuing on the other side of the road. As we walk every clump of Bramble is checked by 5 pairs of eyes but apart from one dead one there is still a lack of butterflies. When we cross the road we carry on seeing lots of perfect looking habitat and loads of other butterflies from an ever expanding range of species - H.Commas, Peacocks, Specklies and Small Heaths. There are Large Skippers all over the place and Meadow Browns aplenty but alas no Hairstreaks and so we wend our way back to the Hotspot as my time is running out and it's on the way to the car.





Once back at the Hotspot I'm rounding up the day, saying goodbyes, making future arrangements and generally stealing myself for the long journey back when I spy two small butterflies at the top of a large Oak. When I focus in and then crop in as much as Impossibly can on my camera I can see that it is a Black Hairstreak and so we all now crick our necks back as much as possible and watch and hope that it decides to descend. Something Hairstreak like does indeed come down but it's a Greenstreak – possibly the same as earlier in the day and once again it flies off stung by our disappointment. But then the one we've been watching does come down. It stops oh so briefly on a Bramble leaf but then does that annoying 'angling to the sun' trick before flying off again.



I say my final goodbyes and back to the car chuffed that I've seen a few and got something for the Black Hairstreak folder waiting for me to populate on my laptop at home. They weren't the best views nor shots but next time the pressure will be off and it won't matter as much so I should be able to get something a little better. It was also great meeting up with Dave, Philzoid and our inimitable guide Trevor for the day!

*A massive journey
And butterflies don't behave
Still get a Blackstreak*

OR

*Small jinking black blob
Shy little butterfly hides
Fleeting glimpse down low*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 26-Aug-20 09:28 AM GMT

A certain law was well and truly in charge on the day of your visit to Ditchling!
The conditions were near perfect, but the Black Hairstreaks refused to play ball in any number.
At least you managed to make the most of those few that did appear, with some great shots too.

Co-incidentally we have both acted as tour guides for each other this year,
and Hairstreaks were the target on both occasions. Shipton B is now on my annual 'must visit' list!

Strangely, I had a 'Johnny come lately' type at Steyning once. He had never seen a Brownie before.
I located one, and foolishly, called him over before I had taken a shot myself. He came charging in
with all the finesse of a Bull in a china shop and sent the thing up without even seeing it! 😊

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-20 08:17 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I think we should set up an annual Hairstreak Exchange trip 😊 Unfortunately though I might need to save the Brownie points for a different species next year 😊
There should be an Anti-Johnny Come Lately Law as far as I'm concerned 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 28-Aug-20 10:07 AM GMT

I'm hoping so Wurzel, to be on the South Downs with my Camera would make my day, Roll on, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-20 08:03 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 You'll be there before you know it 😊😊

Garston Wood 11-06-2020

I took an early lunch today so that we could meet up with my mum and dad for a walk (Socially Distancing of course) at Garston Wood. The weather report was as vague as usual; "sunny intervals with gusting breezes and possibly a shower" so pretty much all bases covered then, hence it was no real surprise when we passed through a shower on the way there. All a bit depressing really but as we pulled into the car park the wind dropped to barely a whisper, the rain ceased as quickly as if a tap had been turned off and the sun came out. As we'd arrived a bit early I took a quick stroll up the main track from the car park. Meadow Browns flew in the vegetation along the verges and I counted 5 Large Skipper including 2 females spread along a short stretch of verge.

Once my parents arrived we set off along the bottom path following our usual route and I stopped at one clump of Bramble for a distant Green-veined White and an interesting looking Hoverfly. The Bluebells are well over now but a few Butterfly Orchids were still putting in a good showing dotted occasionally at the edge of the paths. We ended up at what had been the snack point but now that we can linger longer is the picnic point at the fallen log.



After our repast we packed up and started off again and after a few steps I spotted a couple of Meadow Browns. One in particular caught my eye as it

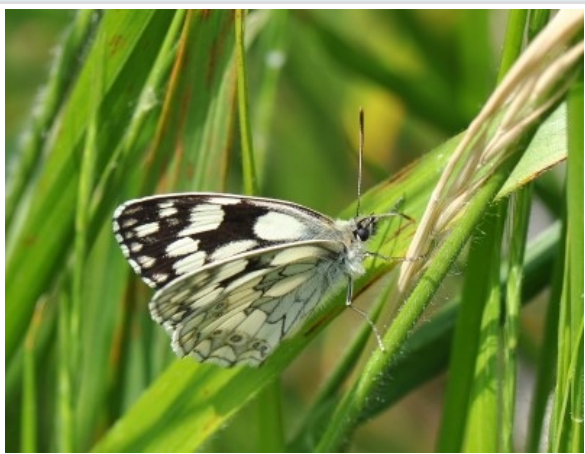
caught the light perfectly as it opened up to bask changing the leading edge of the fore wing to a band of orange with green streaks. It flew and landed a bit nearer to both the path and me and angled itself so as to maximise its basking potential. Again it opened up and again it caught the light but instead of the myriad of colours along the leading edge the entire butterfly took on an almost metallic lustre, like a browner version of Copper, with the occasional scale glittering. I'm finding myself becoming more and more fond of Meadow Browns, they always have something new to offer once you get past the stereotype of them being 'common and mundane'.



On through the 'enclosure' we went with a single a white and a Red Admiral bombing past the only butterflies of note here. Neither of the blighters stopped for a photo but to be honest I didn't mind because by not stopping to try and get shots of them I was perfectly placed to see my first Silver Washed of the year. Even better it flew up from in the middle of the foliage to land in a Bramble flower just to my right. I was able to lean in and get some shots of what turned out to be a ridiculously fresh specimen - it was immaculate, not a tear or rip in sight, not a scale out of place even and actually it was so fresh that the androconia were almost standing upright from the wing. It was stunning and made even more so as it's the largest butterfly I've seen this year - huge by comparison to the Large Skippers, Brown Argus and even the Meadow Browns I've seen recently. To think if I'd tarried with the Red Admiral I could have missed this?!



Further along as the path started to climb I spied a second which wasn't as well behaved but to be fair to it this was five or so minutes later and 5 more minutes of basking/sun's warmth makes butterflies much more lively. Meadow Browns and Large Skippers were becoming more numerous now but and as when we reached the small cleared field roughly in the middle of the old Plantation the Meadow Browns did the fantastic party piece where they erupt from the tall, tussocky grass en masse. As one flew up it stuck out like a sore thumb and I watched as it settled and then went in for a few shots - a Marbled White and like most of the butterflies today beautifully fresh looking.



A few Specklies accompanied us as we took the final stretch to the car park and then we said our goodbyes, piled in the car and made for home stopping only once for some Watercress. As we left Broadchalk the heavens opened so our walk was perfectly timed as well as perfectly pleasant!

*Metal Meadow Brown
In Garston Wood be hiding
Show-off Marbled White*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 29-Aug-20 04:38 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Wurzel, so fresh, That Sliver Washed Fritillary is a Beauty, I didn't realise the Marbled White came out so early or the SWF, I was lucky to see both in July, hope fully I'll be on the move next year and get to see more Butterflies 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-20 08:35 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Things have been getting earlier and earlier over the last few years, fingers crossed for you for 2021 😊😊

Grovely Wood 14-06-2020

"Never trust the BBC App! I did once and I didn't get away with it!" This was my overriding thought first thing when I looked out of the window. The forecast for the last few days had continually shown Saturday to be cooler, cloudier and wetter, in fact it had done so right up to my last check at about 10pm on Saturday. Sunday morning it's tipping it down! Luckily it started to rain less and less heavily as the morning wore on and it started to brighten slightly. On the journey over to Grovely there were even a few patches of blue sky though when we started these had been quickly filled in with grey. As we strolled up the hill and then into the wood there were only a few Meadow Browns to write down on the tally but these didn't appear until after the Witchy Trees in the longer grass on our turn off track. Also here was a Specklie that had been caught out by the drop in temp as the sun had disappeared. It was moribund on the deck only capable of the weakest of flaps when one of the girls pointed their finger at it.

Still things did start to brighten up as well walked along the track to the picnic spot and as we ate lunch started to brighten more and more and with the lightening skies came more and more butterflies; Specklies mainly with the occasional Meadow Brown. I then experienced one of those odd behaviour set-ups. I went to approach on Specklie that was sitting really nicely on a frond of Bracken and I noticed that sitting behind it slightly deeper into the verge was a second. After a few shots of the closer I lent in slightly to try for the second. I thought that I was going to have to be quick as I was now stretching over the first Specklie and I was convinced I would spook it. But no it sat there good as gold not moving. The second Specklie that I had manoeuvred so carefully for however took flight after a single shot which I couldn't fathom. As I extricate myself from the Bracken the first Specklie remains seated only taking to the wing once I've backed away and started down the path again!



After this we got back to walking but when we reached the little cleared field with its strips of land demarked by the thin Bramble hedges I tarried a while. The grass is now above waist in some places and Meadow Browns would erupt like little puffs of smoke as I snaked my feet in and around the grass stems. A Red Admiral on one of small Bramble hedges caught my eye and after watching it for a moment I was able to get in for a few shots. As I'm enjoying the Red Admiral I spy a couple of Meadow Browns sticking out amid the unusual Browns and a Silver-washed glides downhill out of the wood seeming to bounce over each of the little hedges as it continued its descent. It must have felt a little uncomfortable exposed and out in the open as it was and at the final hedge it did a 'U-y' and quickly retraced its flight disappearing back into the wood. I followed its lead and made to retrace my steps when I spotted a Skipper that didn't 'fit' with the Large Skippers I was seeing. It was noticeably smaller and more of an orange colour than yellow. Luckily for me it paused to take a sip of nectar and there was my first Small Skipper of 2020. Brill.





I set off to catch up with the others and a Red Admiral flashed by but I paid it little heed and when I had reached the others we were in the field at the top of the down. All along the top there were large Thistles randomly distributed and I immediately thought - DGF. So whilst the others admired the view and had a brief wander I walked quickly scanning all of the flower tops hoping for a flash of bright ginger. I spotted a Meadow brown and then another, a Large White went by without stopping but where were the DGFs? This looked like manna from heaven for them yet they were nowhere to be seen? At the furthest point that I reached in the field I did see an orange splash - but it was the wrong shade of ginger. As I cautiously approached it whilst it sat on the deck I saw that it was a fresh Small Tort. I then got called back and is so often the way what I was looking for turned up just as I was leaving. I risked a quick grab shot and then hurried to catch up with the rest of the family.



The walk back from this point was quite quiet with only a couple of Large Skippers (two of which were females) to note and all too soon we were back in the car park and heading for home. Back to (going into) work again tomorrow.



*Once more to Grovely
First Small Skipper of the Year
Dark Greens a no-show?*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-20 07:40 PM GMT

September 2020

Hopefully we might get an Indian Summer to stave off the autumnal feel as I'm not quite ready to pack away the camera yet!



Not just a Brown Argus but a Southern Brown Argus...

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

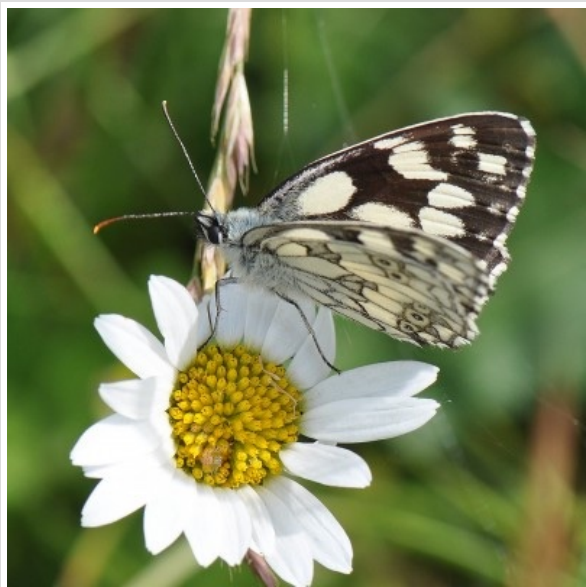
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-20 07:59 PM GMT

Woodhenge 15-06-2020

With the sun shining down at lunch time I was tempted to get out and check out the far corner of the round by the broken mower and the large Bramble patch. The only problem was that I didn't see how I could get there without first entering into Bubble A's Zone - I wasn't even sure if that was allowed and I didn't want to cross contaminate the work zone. So instead I stopped off on the way home at Woodhenge. This had the advantage that there was a large space and so more butterflies but the disadvantage that by now it was warmer so there were much less likely to sit still. Bearing this in mind I girded my loins and set to stalking.

I checked out the old dead road by the car park first and managed to locate what I was hoping to see almost immediately. There was a lovely Marbled White sitting atop a Knapweed. However appearances can be deceptive and whilst it looked lovely it had a bit of a bad attitude in that it kept flying off just as I was about to get my shot. I persevered and got at least a record before moving on to the small field in front of the car park. When I did Meadow Browns erupted before me as I waded through the sea of grass seeking out the little islands of flowers. I was sure that there were some Ringlets in there somewhere but I couldn't confirm a single one as any likely suspects either kept on flying or if they did land became Meadow Browns. I settled into the old rhythm of taking a few steps and watching and waiting for butterflies to settle nearby - although at this temperature this meant mostly just waiting! Once I got amid the Ox-eye Daisies the numbers I was seeing drastically increased and instead of the Meadow Browns being ubiquitous suddenly the Marbled Whites felt like the most common species. There were also a few nice little additions with a Small Tort standing out like a sore thumb on the white petals, a Dragonfly dropped in and kindly sat still long enough for an approach and I managed to spy a Small Heath. It seemed to be playing Gooseberry as the clump of Knapweed held host to several Marbled Whites.









A really nice way to relax after a very unusual day at work.

*Bubble work complete
Good numbers of Marbled Whites
Watch them and unwind*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 02-Sep-20 08:51 PM GMT

That Dragon Fly shot is sublime, not sure if it looks like polished brass or gold. It's certainly a species I've not seen before. Marbled Whites seem an age ago.

More great stuff, stay well.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-20 07:40 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Philzoid ID'd it for me as a female Black-tailed Skimmer – I didn't expect to see that there to be honest 😊😓

Larkhill 16-06-2020

After the shock to the system of spending two consecutive days in work I called in at Larkhill on the way home for a brief spell. Once the dangerous job of crossing the road had been completed successfully I paused to work out which of the three routes to take. It had been a fair old while since I was here last and so the grass had grown and was now smothering out all but the tallest wild flowers. The taller patch of scrub which runs from the path across the field at ninety degrees to the road looked promising and so I set off straight ahead.

Due to the time of day most butterflies were a blur as they bombed by fully warmed up and solar charged and I'd soon spotted a couple of Large Skippers on the edge of the path, a Small Heath and handfuls of Meadow Browns erupting from the deck as is their wont. Something larger and brighter took off from in the middle of the scrub which is a poor excuse for a hedge and I watched with baited breath as a gorgeous Small Tort glided back and forth trying to pick out where to land. The first time it went down I managed only the briefest of shots before it had decided it wanted something with a bit more piquancy and so took off again. Again I managed to follow it and then it went down to feed on a Pyramidal/Fragrant Orchid – brilliant another shot for another of my collections!



Chuffed with this I walked back to the path adding another Small Tort, a Common Blue and a brace of Marbled Whites to the tally. On reaching the path I turned right heading up the slight incline and I set to scanning left and right of the path where the vegetation is more verdant and welcoming. There were even more Meadow Browns now as well as the occasional Marbled White, the odd Small Heath, a third Small Tort and also some slightly smaller almost black butterflies which in all probability were my first Ringlets of 2020 but they didn't ever stop nor even get close enough for confirmation. Looks like that FFTY will have to wait for another time. The thinner vegetation in the central part of the path seemed to be the favourite hunting ground of the Skippers and amidst a babble of Large and a very faded Common Blue one smaller skipper stood out – a brilliantly fresh Small Skipper.



After this a tiny butterfly flashed by forcing me to retrace my footsteps somewhat. It led me on a bit of a dance for a while and I was concerned that it would get caught by the breeze and would be carried away before I could get anything on it. Luckily for me it now chose to have a bit of a breather and it dropped down almost in front of me – good to see Small Blues still here.



I carried on up the track with more of the same species flying but none seemed to want to play ball and when I spotted a Brown Argus it just refused to land almost as if it was locked into a perpetual motion loop. By now, whilst still bright, the cloud had thickened and was quite threatening and as I felt raindrops soaking into my back I decided that now would be a good time to call it a day; in fact I could call it a Day of Smalls.

*Brief stop on drive home
Butterfly on Orchid – yay!
Afternoon of Smalls*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 04-Sep-20 08:11 PM GMT

A bevy of mrgreens 🍃🍃🍃 for that Small Tortoiseshell shot!
It fills me with nostalgia and acts as a reminder of what they look like!.

Great shot, keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-20 07:57 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I was chuffed with that one – especially as it was dancing atop an Orchid 😊

Larkhill 17-06-2020



So this week gets weirder and weirder as today I headed in for the third consecutive day! It's almost like having to go to work for a living and just when I was getting the hang of the working from home routine. Oh well...As Wednesday is shopping day and I was going to be at work all day I'd have to race to Waitrose (other shops are available) to get the food after work. This would mean no chance of a stop off and with dire rain showers and thunder storms predicted over lunch I called in at Larkhill on my way to work. The main advantage of stopping on the way to work is that I don't need to cross the road, the disadvantage is that the morning dew soaks your trousers from the thighs down within moments of being on site. So it was this morning and with my trousers sticking to my legs I turned left and headed up the slight incline along the main track.

I was looking chiefly for Ringlets and little white flags which would be blues still roosting and I didn't have to wait very long for the latter as just past the corner I spied a miniscule white flag. From its size it could only be one thing – Small Blue and as I leant in I guessed that it was the same one that I'd seen the afternoon before.



Onwards I went but in the dull morning light it was all very quiet. The spiders webs had absorbed the dew so well it looked like a feast of Candyfloss has been mislaid by a massive party of children and no matter how hard I scanned about I couldn't find any more flags nor any Ringlets just warming up. This was slightly worrying as in previous years the Ringlets were the most numerous species on some visits yet this year I still haven't had a definite sighting. In my desolation I scanned even more intently but to be fair I think spotting another white flag was down to coincidence rather than my increased effort. This one was slightly larger and I could make out a fine layer of dew droplets bedecking the tightly closed wings. As it was a very worn Common Blue it looked almost slate grey in the morning light and the dew drops like little crystals embedded in the rock.



I made my way back to the car happy with what I'd got even though I had hoped for more. Onwards to work again – mind you if this is the 'new normal' I think I could handle three days in and 2 days working from home 😊

*Morning cool and damp
Common Blue now a slate grey
Twinkling diamond dew*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-20 10:24 PM GMT

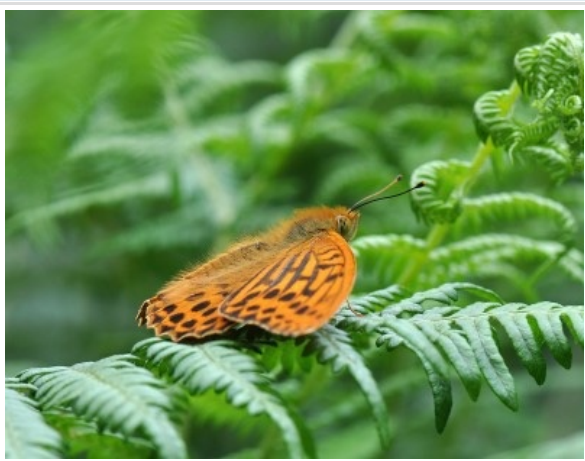
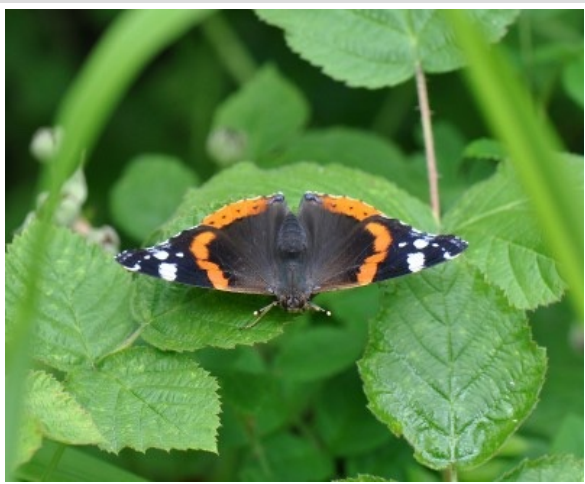
Garston Wood 20-06-2020

It had been a couple of days since I'd last been out properly and from what I'd seen on the weather forecast I thought it was going to be a fair few more until I could get out again. However I looked out the window and compared it to the BBC App...reality looked more favourable than the computer generated model. So after lunch I headed out to Garston for a couple of hours with my fingers crossed that it would be warm enough even if not sunny enough for something to be flying and as I drove through first Broadchalk and then Bowerchalk it became noticeably brighter and there were even one or two patches of intermittent blue sky.

From the car park I headed up the hill taking the main track way. I scanned the bramble patches on either side of me and the right hand side seemed to hold all the butterflies. There were flappy Meadow Browns, much darker, almost black Ringlets (but still no bloody photo of one!), orangey blur of Large Skippers and a male Silver Washed. All pretty good and all very flighty. However the first butterfly I try for a photo of is a Valesina which plops down towards the back of the Bramble bush which abuts the fence into the old Plantation. I could only manage a couple of record shots as it was so far back but to be honest I was just chuffed to once again catch up with this 'form'.



As it didn't return I carried on up the track still finding the right hand side to be much more productive. Slightly further up I spot a Red Admiral sitting under an archway of grasses and waiting for the intermittent sun to show itself again. A male Silver Washed was doing likewise on a Bracken plant that was taller than me! Hence the best I could get was a side on view. As I moved back after getting a couple of shots the butterfly took off and disturbed a second male SWF that had been basking on a lower standing fern, lesson learnt look all round before making your approach.



The main track carries on right to the top of the reserve but I took the second track to the left which meant that now I was walking the usual route in reverse from the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark and the track would now run down to the Enclosure. On the way I stopped for a Green-veined White a species which hasn't been particularly amenable this year. Ignoring the trackways that branch off I keep to this trackway and reach a large clump of Bramble on my right - and the opposite side of the path from where I'd seen my first Silver Washed as week ago. As well as the odd Meadow Brown and Ringlet it holds a brace of Silver Washed, both males, and a Large White stops by for a while allowing a reasonable approach. However my eye is drawn to the Honeysuckle cascading down at the back. Just as I'm thinking - this looks good for White Admiral - one slices its way through the air. I watch mesmerised and then have to stop as I'm feeling giddy from trying to follow its perfectly controlled erratic flight pattern. Unfortunately it doesn't come down and when I have steeled myself to look back and I relocate it I can only watch as it glides effortlessly over the tops of the trees and is gone.



I turned my attention to the other side of the path and it seemed to be a bit of a haven for Silver Washed. The sun had nipped off for a break by this point and so the first Silver Washed I spotted was basking on the top of a frond of Bracken. As I waded in to try for a few shots I spotted a second, then further back amid the 'wall of Bramble' a third appeared, then a fourth and a fifth and finally a female dropped in and promptly shot away again followed by several of the males. At the final 'field' of bracken before the enclosure another White Admiral soars about up high and I spend a few more moments in rapt appreciation in this wonder of natural selection.

Once in the enclosure things quieten down somewhat but actually I'm glad about this. It's been many years since this enclosure was coppiced and cleared so now it's almost fence to fence Brambles so even if I did spot a butterfly it's more than likely to be beyond reach. Luckily some of the butterflies prefer the edge of the path and I watch as two Small Whites fly along the margins daintily. One of them lands and as I lean in for the shot I see that it is immaculate, in mint condition, a beautiful lemon colour.



I start retracing my steps pausing at the same points again marvelling as I watch the White Admiral for a bit but it still doesn't want to come down. I also spy out a Red Admiral and an H.Comma. Both are sitting atop fronds of Bracken, both at just about head height and both take off just as I raise my camera. Where before there had been multitudes of Silver Washed now there are a brace of males and a female and the large clump has another/the original White Admiral tearing through the air, I swear I can almost hear atoms being ripped apart as it changes direction so quickly and so violently. Back up where the Green-veined White had sat so nicely another H.Comma plays a bit harder ball, sitting on the tallest of fronds and again after a successful stalk I raise my camera and he's off!

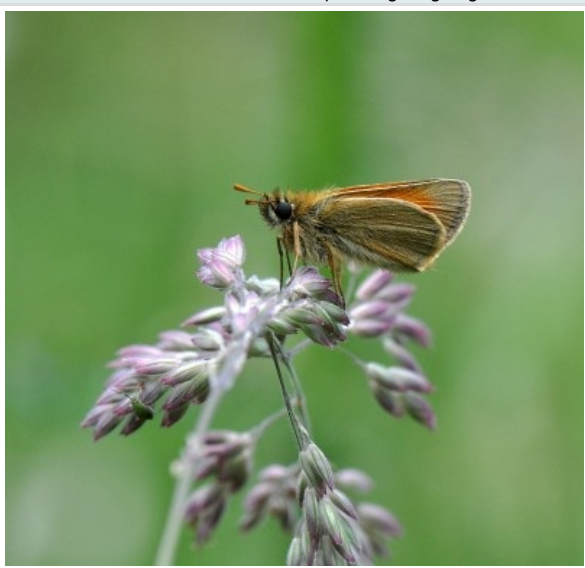
Muttering I pause on the corner at the top of the track. As I scan across the grass I finally spot a Ringlet which is going down. Cautiously, as I'm very aware that things have been very twitchy this season, I snake my feet through the grass, lean in and click away. Phew - for a while there I really thought that I might not get any shots of this species this year! This one is lush - intact silver white fringes contrasting with the almost dark plum velvet ground colour. A second flies by and they have a bit of a scrap and then one of the two settles, closed wing so I can get a few shots of the rings which give this species its name. As I straighten up I catch sight of a Silver Washed hiding among the Bracken on the other side of the path.





I now head back down the main track with more of the same species showing up that had done so on my arrival with the addition of a White Admiral and minus the Valesina so I take a shortcut path into the Old Plantation and head up the hill past one large scallop and onto the next, smaller one. There is a Comma sitting atop a very tall thistle and I try for a few shots but the light is against me as is the slight breeze and it sends the butterfly rocking forward and back. I start back and the first large scallop I came to has Meadow Browns erupting all over the place or sitting three/four abreast on the thistle heads. A smaller Scallop slightly lower down the hill has more of the same but I spot a smaller Skipper which turns out to be a Small. I offer it my finger and it crawls on sending out its proboscis to take salts from my digit. As I make to leave I spot a second Small involved in turf war with a Large – definitely a case of Small Man Syndrome here!

I head back to the car park and from there homewards. Not too bad an afternoon actually – a Valesina, two FFTY and another addition to my 'In the Hand' collection. And to think I wasn't planning on going out...



*Took a slight gamble
A Valesina pays up
Ringlet finally!*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 10-Sep-20 09:04 AM GMT

Shame that valesina wasn't more co-operative, Wurzel. Personally I've not seen one since 2011, so even a shot like yours would have suited me just fine. Still, it's the hope of a find like yours that will send us out next season to do it all over again!

Stay safe & well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 11-Sep-20 12:11 AM GMT

A cornucopia of goodies there Wurzel. I have never seen a Valesina so a few 🍯🍯🍯🍯🍯
The Small White photo is beautiful. 😊😊😊
The SW is brilliant too. I find them very tricky.
A range of great shots !

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-20 08:46 AM GMT

A cracking series of shots from Garston Wood Wurzel.

I especially like the open wing Ringlet, I struggled with any decent shots of these myself this year. They seemed to come and go quite quickly around my way and I found it difficult to find fresh examples.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-20 08:31 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 You're right the butterflies often leave you wanting more – although I went out a few more times looking for this species and it paid off 😊😊

Cheers Katrina 😊 I also struggle with SWF most seasons but this year I found early mornings, dull days or in the shadier parts of the woods more conducive – they're a bit dopier in these conditions 😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Each year I find myself noticing that a species is 'blink and its gone' and this year it seemed to be the Ringlet – perhaps it was too hot for them? They certainly gave me the run around 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-20 06:10 PM GMT

Vernditch 21-06-2020 Happy very belated Solstice

As the weather had improved somewhat today we packed up some things for lunch and set out for Vernditch for a walk and a picnic. Having not visited this site at this time of year before I wondered what butterfly species it would hold but as we strode up the hill on the main track things didn't look too good. The surrounding trees didn't look great for White Admirals or Silver Washed and the verges on either side of the rides are quite thin not like Garston or Bentley. Still just before the turn point one of the trees had fallen over and in its wake a huge Bramble towered up smothering all competing plants for light. Around this were a profusion of butterflies, mainly Meadow Browns but I could also see the odd Ringlet and Large Skipper and there was a Silver Washed. It was feeding and tilting on a flower which explain why I hadn't seen it sooner – now the bright orange livery was on show rather than the cryptic underwings. I would have liked to have gotten a few shots but it was too far away and I didn't fancy wading through an unknown depth of Briar to get any closer so onwards we went.

Things went quiet again after this as the trees are all in full leaf and little light reaches the woodland floor. So I contented myself with walking and talking. As we cut through the coppice after the gate at Martin Down it was more of the same and only when we rounded the corner coming out at Kitt's Grave did we finally start seeing butterflies. There were a few Large Skippers in the tussocky grass on the entrance corridor and when the path opened out onto the fields a DGF flew past, swiftly followed by another. I stood entranced in the middle of the field – Meadow Browns and Ringlets, fewer Marbled Whites, a few Small Heath still eking out a living, violent orange blurs Smessex and Large Skippers abounded in the spaces between the Browns and flying amid this lepidopteran cacophony were DGFs numbering at least double figures. I tried my best to get some shots of the DGFs but even though it was cloudy it was still warm and so they jetted about rarely stopping. When they did I barely had time to point my lens in their direction let alone focus before they were off again. I gave it up after a while and we strode on round on the circular route along through the wood. On the way I spotted two DGFs on Bramble in one of the cleared 'scallops'. One evades me but the second was much more amenable.

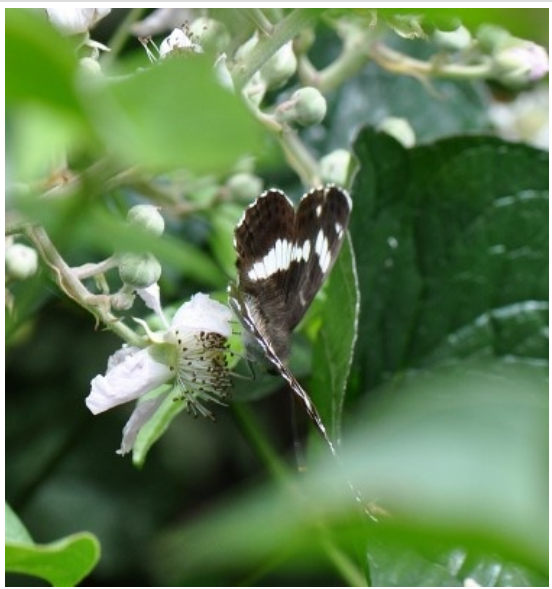


We turned another corner and the path now ran parallel to the Blandford Road slightly sheltered from the breeze by a bank on one side and a wall of vegetation/the wood on the other. As I walked on my left I spotted Marbled Whites, Small and non-identifiable Smessex Skippers as well as the odd Ringlet, DGF and Small Heath. On my right however was a totally different habitat with stands of Honeysuckle and Bramble entwining themselves round the trees and filling in any gaps in the 'wall'. Here I there were plenty of Meadow Browns and Large Skippers as well as singletons of Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Silver Washed.





The next stage dove back into the wood and at times it felt like we were walking down a trench although there was the occasional scallop and a small clearing. Again there was a similar range of species but with the added bonus of a White Admiral. Unfortunately it was deep in the Bramble so I could only manage a couple of record shots by the time I'd negotiated the twigs and leaves that were obstructing my view - still I did better than yesterday! The strangest thing here was a massive snail - clearly different from the Garden variety as this one was really big and didn't have with a grey-brown muscular foot and dark shell in cryptic patterns. This one had a large light brown shell with a cream of mushroom soup coloured body. Also did I mention that it was Huge? I mean ma-hoo-sive - at least twice the size of a normal snail. I'm guessing that it was an edible snail like what the Romans brought over?





From this section of the path every now and then I could see the little valley that I've explored on previous visits. Almost at the end I let the others walk on and then made my way down to the valley floor. There were good number of Thistles down here and along with them good numbers of DGFs. One lovely lady one (white margins?) paused for a refuel and so I tried for a few shots while she was otherwise engaged. Vowing to come back here one evening when the butterflies will have calmed slightly I caught up with the others and we had lunch surrounded by butterflies on all sides.



As we walked back through the gate and into the Coppice the butterfly switch was clicked and the butterflies disappeared...I will be back here though - I've discovered a little gem.

Dark Greens everywhere
White Admiral surprises
Roamin' Roman Snail

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 12-Sep-20 07:14 PM GMT

What a splendid Roman Snail, Wurzel – I've only ever seen the vacated shells on the North Downs, or the unfortunate beasties themselves in a pool of garlic & parsley butter in a French restaurant... 🤔😄

Great to cover unexplored territory and have a few surprises crop up: that's a nice little solstitial selection. 😊 I remember visiting Kitts Grave perhaps ten years ago after seeing dozens of DGF at Martin Down, and finding SWF and White Admirals galore as well as more DGF. I always meant to go back, but never have.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-20 04:43 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I saw a few of them on subsequent trips and I think they're being monitored here. L'escargot is delicious – good job I have a plant based diet now or that chap would have been dinner! 😊 Kitts Gave it great – it adds a few new species to the day tally when on a trip to Martin Down 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

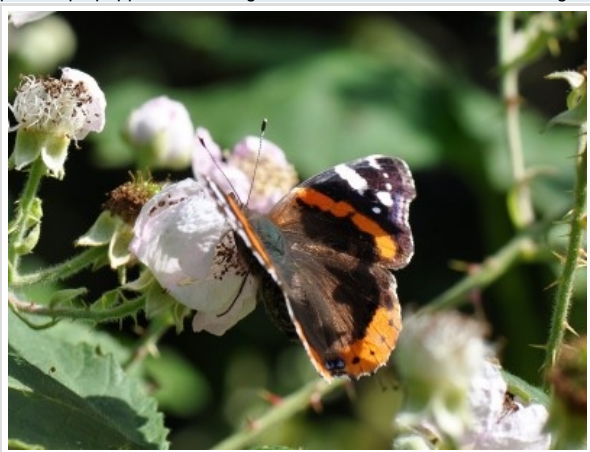
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-20 10:26 PM GMT

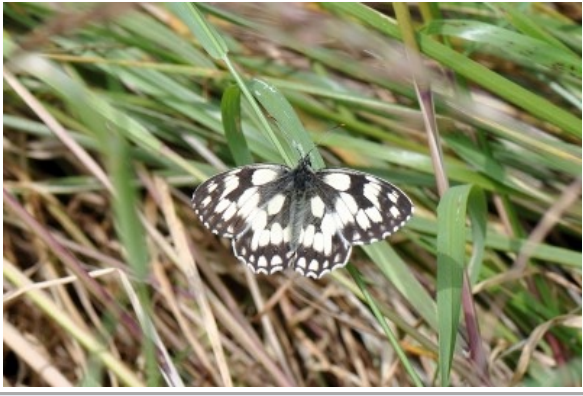
Work and home 22-06-2020

With the Pandemic still in full swing (and likely to be for a very long time) I'm still 'working from home' – essentially sitting in front of a screen, tapping away making new resources and marking work electronically. However I'm still going in for a couple of days a week to supervise the vulnerables and Key Worker children, phone tutees and get various of those jobs done that can't be done at home so when I'm not able to get my Exercise I can at least have a wander up the field and stop off on the way home at Larkhill...

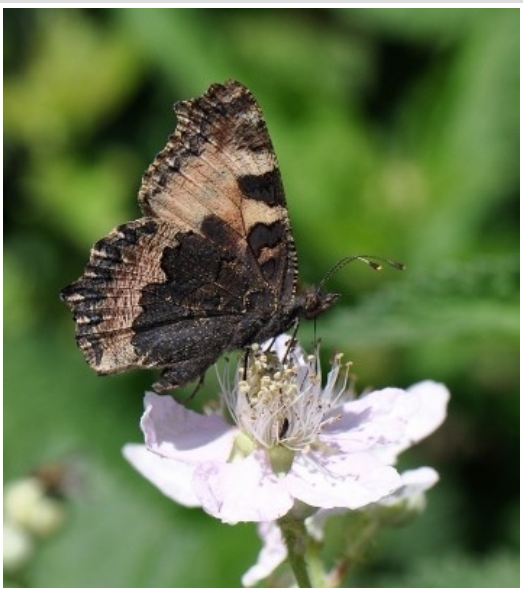
Today was one of those 'In Work Days' and so as well as the usual bag of work paraphernalia I also grabbed my camera. I got my first opportunity to use it almost as soon as I'd pulled the car into my usual space. I usually drive the length of the car park, turn and park so I can just pull away pronto at the end of the day – I like to have a fast getaway planned! On the drive I spotted a Red Admiral on the Bramble at the edge of the car park so car safely pulled up I popped back and got a few record shots before heading back in and putting my nose to the grind stone.

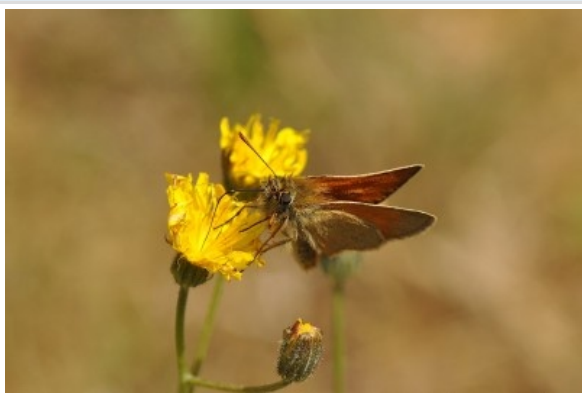
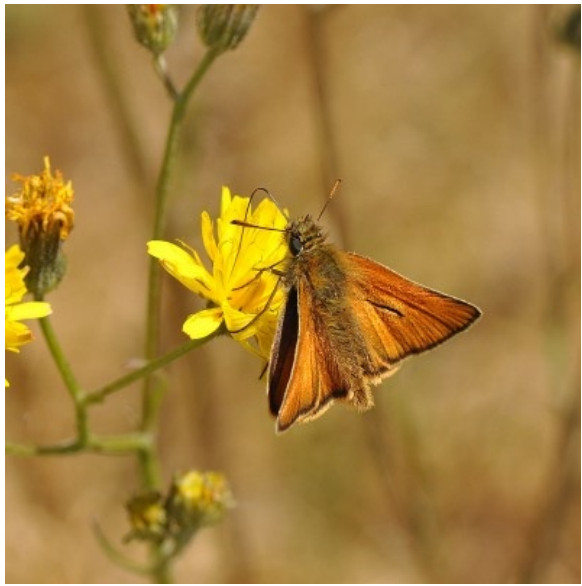


At lunch I sanitized my hands, grabbed my camera and headed out and round to the field – because of the 'Bubbles' I can't just cut through the school. As I started to follow the thin trackways between the tall grasses (between knee and thigh height) I was able to make out the odd Meadow Brown and Ringlet that were hiding away amid the stalks. The Smessex Skippers were easier to make out as they zipped across the grass tops, never quite clipping them, and then they'd suddenly alight on one so that I was able to strain my neck in odd directions and positively identify them as Smalls. There were a few Large Skippers about not looking quite as neat and tidy as the Smalls but they favour the Brambles so no wonder that their livery gets a bit dishevelled. However the real star here was a Marbled White which was playing to the crowd and showing off a little as it cut through the air metamorphosing from black and white to a quick silver.



I walked on round the Bramble patch whose considerable girth has increased to become almost 'worrying' as soon there might not be a way round it and on the other side of the Bramble Behemoth there were a few more Marbled Whites. They were pretty active in the warm sun and so I pressed on, aware that my 30 minutes was slipping by at an alarming rate and came through the trees to the corner of the field. Tucked into the corner, bordered by the trees another large Bramble bush grows and it acts as a magnet to the surrounding butterflies. While I watched today there were various Meadow Browns and Ringlets and Small Skipper and a cracking looking Small Tort which had comically curved antennae. It bimbled about from flower top to flower top all the while looking like a Disney character due to the aforementioned 'feelers'. I had to leave it there though as I could almost hear the "da-da, da-da, did-el-e-dee" signifying the end of lunch.





Throughout the day I was able to catch the odd glimpse of a butterfly as I looked out of various windows whilst walking to different 'lessons' the best of which was a large, peachy coloured individual that flew along the side of the Science towards me and it got so close that I was able to see my first Painted Lady of 2020. But I had to wait until the end of the day for anymore photography...

So the end of the day came and I'd loaded up, washed hands and the epic guitar riff from Leafhound – Freelance Fiend was shredding my speakers – I was on my way to Larkhill. True this isn't exactly the most exciting location. It's not the largest or most species rich but it is my 'Local'. The dangerous parking and road crossing manoeuvre completed I set off straight to the scrub hedge that sits bang in the middle of the rolling grass. As I worked along the length away from the road there were Skippers, Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Marbled Whites all over the place as to be expected. And then there standing out like a gem amid the greenery was a Small Tort. It didn't stop though and was speeding off across the Plain before I'd had a chance to even raise my camera. Momentarily disappointed I trod on and I was literally disappointed for a moment because a few steps on and a female DGF was avidly feeding on the Knapweed. She was a real beauty, terribly dusky with a hint of melanism a real stunner and so I followed her from flower to flower, occasionally having to run when she was caught by the wind. She didn't seem to mind the attention which was lucky because the wind made photography tricky – I'd just have the shot lined up and focused and then the breeze would pick up and she'd be hanging on to the flower for dear life as it rocked forward and backward. Still after several attempts I hoped that I had something on the memory card and I moved on and left her in peace.





I went a short way the track after this noting how the butterflies had congregated here in the shelter afforded by the roadside hedge on one side and the linear thicket of Hawthorn on the other. There were good numbers of Smessex – most of which remained so with those that sat nicely for identification all proving to be Small Skippers. Most of the butterflies fluttering about were Meadow Browns and then Ringlets. There were about three Large Skippers adding a bit of panache with the odd Marbled White adding a dash of tone and the colour was provided by the two male Common Blues and the single Small Tort, a different individual from that seen along the Hedge. It was on the return journey whilst scrutinising the Smessex that I found what I was hoping to see. The Smessex was a sandier, more honey colour than the surrounding orange Smalls. As I leant in I could barely see the sex brand and when I was able to discern one it was straight – my first Essex of 2020. Chuffed I strolled back down the path and having safely gotten back to the car I headed for home after a very enjoyable butterfly day – who knew that a day at work could be so productive?



*A full day at work
Grab all opportunities
Essex on the list*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 16-Sep-20 06:28 PM GMT

You have a 📷 fabulous shot of that pristine female Dark Green Frit, Wurzel. And an extra 📷 as I completely missed them this year.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 16-Sep-20 11:02 PM GMT

There is a lovely golden shine on the Small Tortoiseshell and the DGF is a beauty!

Re: Wurzel

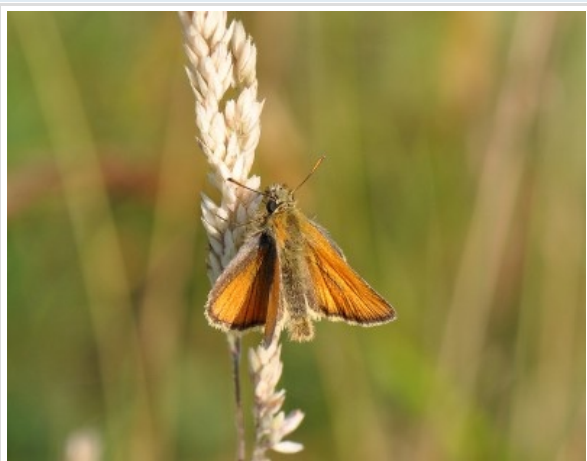
by Wurzel, 17-Sep-20 08:39 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 She was a very dusky maid that one – though to be honest the females that I did encounter were all rather dusky and looked like they'd gone a bit overboard with the mascara 😊😊

Cheers Katrina 😊 I think she wasn't long out of the chrysalis as they do seem to fray at the edges quite quickly 😊

Bentley Wood 24-06-2020

As it looked set to be a scorcher I decided to try and get to Bentley early so that I was there ready for when the butterflies started to fly and also because the early morning seems to be the best time for Purple Hairstreaks to come down to the deck. I managed to pull into the car park a few moments before 8am and set off directly down the main track. Already it was warm enough to be in short sleeves but only when in the sun, in the shade it was noticeably cooler, enough to raise a few goose bumps. So over the next 20 minutes of pretty solid walking I experienced many temperature changes – a good job I'm into Rock and not actually a Rock else I'd have been experiencing 'Onion Skin Weathering! As I strolled along the main track to the Switchback and then onto to Donkey Copse and beyond even further I saw very few butterflies and even though I was straining my eyes looking on Bracken fronds for small, grey/brown butterflies that would hopefully be Purple Hairstreak all I could come up with were two a piece of Ringlet and Meadow Brown. By now I'd ended up at the track which opens up onto one of the fields and so I pressed on to see what was flying down here. It was still really quiet but just as I was thinking this the butterflies suddenly started appearing and the grass stems that previously had been devoid of life were now teeming with Smessex Skippers and Meadow Browns. There were a few Large Skippers about, mainly on Brambles on the periphery of the field and a few Marbled Whites added a touch of the class a la Pierrot, one of which clambered onto my offered hand, probably as its fore wing was slightly damaged. It could still fly and once it had absorbed enough heat from my digit it set off again leaving me to retrace my steps up the track and back to walk the woodland rides.



As the path crossed the tree line I paused slightly past the border and scanned about me finding myself to be surrounded by Large Skippers, Ringlets and Meadow Browns. A Red Admiral did its level best to avoid my capturing it on film by hanging right at the back of the large Bramble bush that covered the verge from the edge of the path right back to the treeline. As I couldn't 'get' to anything I decided to work my way back into the Wood to see what else had woken up but as I turned to leave I had a sense that I should have one last look over the Oaks that form the gateway to this section of the wood. I'm glad I did as a small silver butterfly jinked its way across the airspace from one canopy to another. My first Purple Hairstreak of 2020. I stayed for another 5 minutes of so but it didn't come down from its perch just occasionally flew backwards and forwards between the Oaks so I moved on. Slightly further along the track among the usual shower a Red Admiral behaved in a slightly more friendly fashion, coming in a bit closer to the track so it was within reach of my lens and a couple of male Silver-washed acted like Hoons tearing about the place.



On the twisty walk back through the wood to the corner of Donkey Copse I kept scanning as I walked trying to check the canopy and the deck and everything else in between at the same time. All the usual butterflies flew but like everything they were very flighty in the sun. I decided to have a proper look on the corner as this was where I'd encountered His Nibbs several years on the trot so I poured a coffee and deposited my bag and started

slowly wandering round neck articulated through 90 degrees. There was no Emperor but a White Admiral flashed past and did a couple of searing runs which made the neck ache worthwhile. When I resumed searching at a lower altitude a male Silver-washed was an easy spot, standing out like a sore thumb but the H.Comma was surprisingly cryptic as it fed on whatever was impregnated in a piece of old rope, in fact it was only the movement that made me aware of its presence at all.



I thought that as I was here I should have a look along the grassed track that runs the opposite way from the corner. The advantage of this little area is the closer growing trees and the aspect means that this area stays shaded for much longer and so the butterflies should be more easily approachable. Indeed so it turned out. I'd only walked 20 metres or so along the track when the Bracken became alive with Silver-washed with at least 5 in one view, possibly more as they kept swooping in, landing and then being disturbed or becoming embroiled in various brawls. A Peacock tried its best to stay out of it but didn't have much luck and an H.Comma found that its usually effective camo was rendered redundant by the sharp eyes of the feisty Silver-washed. It was a wonderful sight to behold but not exactly conducive to great photos as I found that my subject was quickly becoming the victim of an attack. Luckily in the end I found one sitting calmly on a frond of Bracken slightly further along the path and so away from all the action. I have a suspicion that this one was fresh out of the box as not only was it immaculate but it seemed to glisten slightly as if the paint hadn't yet dried.

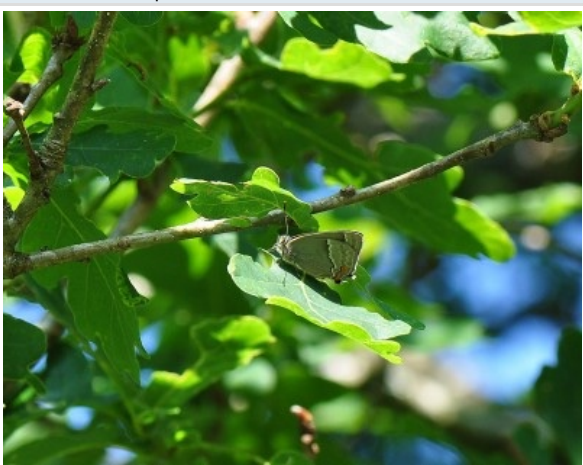




On the return there were about three Silver-washed happily carousing about on the first part of the track. As I watched them one landed quite close so I leant in for the shot and a small, silver butterfly took off and slowly flew up and at me – it was a Purple Hairstreak that had been down on the deck, and I'd missed it ahhhh! Cursing myself I headed back to the corner but my dark mood was brightened considerably as a large bat like shape flew across the track – darker, more obviously striped and more stocky than a White Admiral it was my first Purple Emperor of 2020. My frustrations with purple butterfly were squashed by the exultation of seeing a different Purple one. I headed back to the Switchback, buzzing slightly not even minding that the triangle down on the deck was only a Red Admiral pretender but also managing to get a few shots of a Bentley DGF.



Once at the Switchback it was decision time, carry on up to the memorial to see if I could catch up with any Whitters or walk back to the car and home. The call of the Whitters won and so I made my way across the crossroads and set out North up towards the Memorial and the stand of Wytch Elms. On the way I had cause to stop when I was half way to my destination as ahead of me on the deck was a dark triangle on the track but alas it was only a Red Admiral taking salts from something icky. Again my disappointment was almost immediately dispelled. The Red Admiral that wasn't a Purple Emperor took off and as I watched it fly across the verge and into the trees it spooked another Purple Hairstreak which, just like last one, flew up into the trees but unlike the other it stayed at a reasonable height whereby if I stood on tiptoes and held my camera out at arms' length I was able to get a few shots. Chuffed with this I pressed onwards.





Last year the few Wytch Elms on the side of the track as it curved round to the right held only a single White-letter Hairstreak and they were starting to show signs of succumbing to DED but this year they had succumbed with only an H.Comma taking advantage of the bare and decaying branches. So it seemed that my reliable White-letter site was over...then I remembered when I first read about the Bentley White-letters mentioned that they used to come down round the actual bench itself and so I set off along another track overshadowed by to find said bench. When I did I could see that I wasn't going to have much luck there as it was shaded out so completely by the tress that had grown around it that is was almost pitch black. But slightly further along the path there were a few breaks and I could look up with my binoculars and check out the tops of the various trees. When I did I quickly spotted what I was hoping for - a dark grey, square cut looking butterfly that would fly out from its perch, attack something and then fly back and perch again. One of the times it did this the thing that it attacked was another grey, square cut butterfly - a second Whittier. I found a third on another tree slightly further back and then went back to watching the antics of the first- eventually it came down and perched so I was able to see the side-on profile through my binoculars. It was brilliant watching them and as I retraced my tracks back I realised that I was on for a 'Hairstreak Fullhouse'!

The walk back was much quicker - buoyed at finding three firsts for the year and the good news about the Whittiers and my happy wandering was only briefly interrupted as I was buzzed by a His Nibbs. He flew down the track towards me at speed, the sun catching his wings and flashing purple/electric blue, almost took my head off as he passed, circled me once, twice and then carried on at speed up and away. So two brief audiences with His Nibbs... hopefully I'll get a grounded one soon. When I reached the Switchback I carried on down to Donkey Copse again mainly in the vain hope that I might find an Emperor down. I didn't but there were a few Silver-washed about and also a fellow enthusiast down in a ditch. As we exchanged pleasantries a Purple Hairstreak landed down on the wood pile, but try as I might I couldn't get close enough to it for anything sensible. It seemed that today though that when things weren't going my way with one species another popped up to set things right again. This time it was the turn of a White Admiral. I didn't want to try and get too close to it in case it did one but it was really nicely posed, feeding on Bramble it was face on so I had great views of those gorgeous under wings - such beautiful colours and pattern it gives the best Fritillaries a run for their money when it comes to the most attractive under wing.





After this I finally made for home. It had been a cracking morning despite His Nibbs not playing fair. Though I wasn't thinking that when I got home a read about 2 Purple Emperors at Groveley Woods and even one down on the deck at Garston Wood! Oh well this is still year 2 of 3 so next year...for definite!

*His Nibbs plays hardball
White Admiral consoles me
Hairstreaks help as well*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-20 08:10 PM GMT

Garston Wood 25-06-2020

Another chance for a Socially Distanced meet up with my folks at Garston Wood and with the heat almost driving me to distraction I held little hope of getting anything on 'film' let alone catching up with the Purple Emperor that had been reported a few days back. We took the usual route, the bottom track which runs parallel to the road and then does a right angle turn to the right climbing up and into the wood and then on to the fallen log for a snack. It's very quiet on the way - the heat keeping everything in the shade or possibly active elsewhere? Occasionally there is the orange fuzz that is a Silver-washed or a grey/red blur of a Red Admiral one of which decided to do a fly-by as I'm sitting down mid slurp of coffee!

We carry on walking and chatting and generally enjoying each other's company until we reach the Enclosure where a White Admiral mixes it up a little with a pair of Whites among the Silver-washed which in this part of the wood seem to be all over the place and in great numbers. The White Admiral stays back from the track, gliding over the tops of the impenetrable wall of Bracken and Bramble. It seems in a Piratical mood, hassling and chivvying the Whites to an unknown end, never stopping and just patrolling, Lord of all it surveys. Whilst it's a glorious sight it's also really frustrating as it's always that little bit too far away. Luckily as we continue along the path leaving the partial confines of the Enclosure another White Admiral hove into view and this one plops down momentarily. Unfortunately it chose to land in one of the shadiest parts of the wood so the light was terrible - probably to find some relief from broiling sun that was beating down and melting me on the path. I stepped into the blessed shade and got a few shots before leaving it in peace still sitting there infra-red radiating from it.



As we start back along the top path the Silver-washed are going off their nuts in the sun, zipping all over the place and only sitting still for a fraction of a second when they very occasionally land. Only a Large Skipper sits nicely for long enough to grab a couple of shots. At one point I spook an H.Comma which zips off putting up a smoke screen of Ringlets as it escapes my lens whereas a Large White remains aloof and aloft. It's a good thing that we're having an enjoyable conversation as the butterflies really aren't playing nicely! We eventually reach the Plantation where finally one of the four or five Silver washed actually sits still for a few shots but another White Admiral just keeps on going...just as we do until, tired and slightly baked we reach the cars and then say our Socially Distanced goodbyes which is still strange but it had been a lovely walk even if the butterflies had passed by like strangers in the night on Amphetamine.



*The White Admiral
Glides and scythes the air in two
Master of the sky*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 19-Sep-20 09:58 PM GMT

That looks like a very typical White Admiral pose to me, Wurzell! Edge on... 😊 In hot weather they seem to spend a lot of time gliding about in the shade under the trees, wonderfully elegant and graceful to watch but impossible to capture except as memories. A great butterfly. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Sep-20 10:19 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Yep the fact that they're so gittery and at times hard work makes them even more beguiling 😊

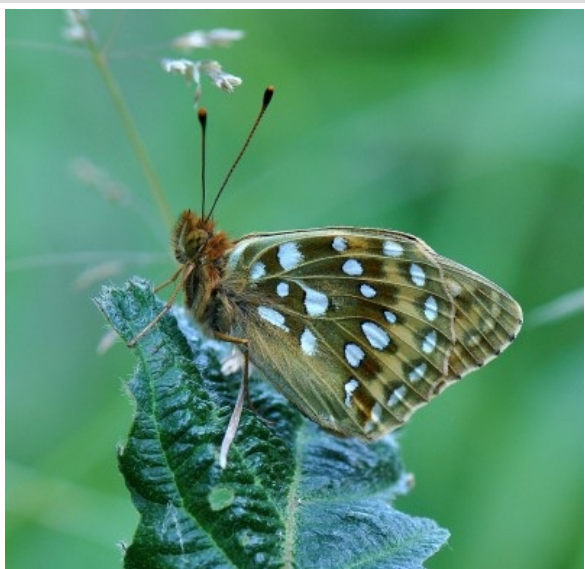
Bentley Wood 26-06-2020

I should have gone to Chiddingfold today but I didn't want to take the mickey and 'skive' and besides I was hoping that I would pick up a Bentley Emperor. As it was set to be another blisteringly hot day and so I was at Bentley at just before 8 am. I scanned around in the car park and there was nothing to see although the various birds were still singing the Dawn Chorus so I set off down the Main track doing my best to scan the tree tops and the deck at the same time. I had to stop this after a while as I was starting to feel slightly nauseous from all the head movements though it did pay off as a White Admiral was sitting in a small tree just off the track. Slightly further on there's a Silver-washed on the left and an H.Comma on the right but unfortunately I wasn't stuck in the middle with His Nibbs...All the way I was accompanied by Ringlets and Large Skippers with the odd Purple Hairstreak overhead and momentarily my heart skipped a beat but alas it was another great pretender, a Red Admiral, the angle of the sun making its shadow overlarge and suggestive of His Nibbs.



When I reached the crossroads I stopped to Socially Distance chat with a couple of other observers, one of whom was hoping for a Purple Emperor as it was the last of the British species that he needed to photograph. There were a few Purple Hairstreaks flitting about at the top of the Oak tree and as we continued talking and an Emperor flies up the track towards us. With a trio of bated breaths we watched it circle around the crossroads and then it lands on the deck. I can feel all the muscles in my legs twitching as I strain to stay perfectly still and overcome the urge to stalk it. Unfortunately it doesn't like what it's tasting and so flies up landing on a ridiculously tiny twig on the weediest of saplings in the entire Wood before taking to the air and disappearing over the tops of the trees. No photos but it was the best view I'd had in two years and image or no image I didn't really care as, if I close my eyes even now, I can still see the flash of purple as it flew to the pathetic little tree-let. Cracking! 😊

Wishing the 'Last Tick' good luck I set off down the left hand track towards Donkey Copse accompanied by the other enthusiast that had made our near triumphant triumvirate. As we strolled down the track we pause by the log pile and little dip. I don't know what the current thinking is about butterflies being territorial but in my experience certain spots always seem to hold either the same species or possibly even the same individuals? Whatever the thinking the little dip again holds a Silver-washed and a White Admiral, though today it sits slightly further back. A Purple Hairstreak also comes down like last time but just like usual is too far for the reach of my lens so we press on down the track. There's plenty of variety in the verges as we wander – a Peacock, Large White, Red Admiral, Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, Ringlets and Marbled Whites – all of which are pretty active in the sun and when they fly into the shade all be a hasty retreat. I mention to the other gent that I saw a DGF around here and then he spots another that's just started vibrating its wings. It doesn't seem to want to move on and then the sun goes behind a cloud, the temperatures drop and we can settle down as the butterfly isn't going anywhere. It's immaculate, in tip-top condition and so I wondered if the white fluid below it on the leaf was merconium and it was fresh out of the chrysalis? The sun comes back out and I manage a few shots in slightly better lighting but as its either trying to finish pumping it wings, revving up its wing muscles for the first time or trying to warm up from the recent temperature drop, once it opens up getting sharp shots proves difficult as it continues to vibrate it wings rapidly. It flies weakly a short distance to a slightly to another bush and after a few more shots we leave it in peace and carry on our way.





We press on now in a series of strolls and pauses. The first official stop is on the corner near Donkey Copse where a Red and then White Admiral fly around trying to (unsuccessfully) convince us that they're something a bit more imperial. Just prior to this another enthusiast is heading home having gotten what we were all hoping for, shots of a grounded Emperor, the first time she'd ever seen one - His Nibbs really does like favouring the beginners! The next stop is just after Donkey Copse in the little section which looks like a layby and this time we've missed an Emperor by only a few minutes - though it was only down for 30 seconds before it disappeared off into the distance not to return. The final stop comes on the track way leading down to the meadows and as we wander down to end we're accompanied by all the usual butterflies, the full range of species seen so far barring His Nibbs. I wish the others well and then turn round and make my way back. As I turn to go the White Admiral that's been cutting through the air around me leads me on a merry dance up the path before settling on a Bramble where it thinks that it's out of reach. However a couple very careful footsteps, snaking my feet through the Brambles, I'm within reach and a few shots are my reward for putting up with all the taunting the butterfly has been dishing out.



With time pressing and the temperature rising I started back double time. When I reached the corner a brief catch up with the group that'd gathered there revealed that I hadn't missed anything and so I carried on to the crossroads. With no more sightings there either I kept on going down the main track to the car park. Something fluttered down in front of me and at first I thought that it was a leaf but a quick flash of purple persuaded me otherwise and so I approached it more cautiously. As I peered ahead the dull grey 'leaf' opened up and caught the little light that was able to penetrate through the shade. There on the deck was a resplendent female Purple Hairstreak, the purple showing like little pin pricks of iridescence in the gloom. It didn't stay opened up for long so I was able to get round and lie down to get a few closed wing shots While I was laying there I watched its yellow proboscis flick out so on a whim I gingerly extended my finger and she crawled on. Now I was able to manoeuvre into the light and the purple really perked up and after a few in the hand shots and a bit of iPod video I placed her safely on a leaf at chest height so she didn't get crushed on the path by less observant walkers. What a cracking way to finish the trip!





My euphoria lasted all the way home and on into the evening until I saw some cracking Purple Emperors from Chiddingfold! Oh well there's always next year which will be the third year in the three year cycle!

Mint condish Dark Green
Purple Hairstreak on the deck
Purple flashes out

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 21-Sep-20 11:26 PM GMT

Truly beautiful Purple Hairstreak, top and bottom, Wurzel. Many of these deserved 🍷🍷🍷!

Dare I say it, more striking than the big purple beastie for the rarity value alone! 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 22-Sep-20 07:08 AM GMT

Some wonderful images from High Summer, Wurzel.

But first prize, and many mrgreens 🍷🍷 must be reserved for that mint fresh Purple Hairstreak. She is certainly well endowed with very bold purple. When I find something like that it takes a second or two for the brain to comprehend what the eyes are seeing!

Smashing stuff!, stay well.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 22-Sep-20 08:55 AM GMT

Ah yes! I saw you post that female Purple Hairstreak on the FB group and wondered when it would appear on here 🍷🍷.

Those Dark Green Fritillary undersides are also worthy of a 🍷🍷

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-20 10:51 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 To be honest I was thinking that on the day and have many times since...this has nothing to do with missing out on shots of a grounded Emperor of course 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 She was down in the shade to start with so I almost walked on by 😊 Luckily the cloud shifted and then the purple shone out 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I'm not quite as behind on Facebook...but only by a day or so 😊😊 I was chuffed with the DGF and that was the star butterfly right up until the last 10 minutes of the trip 😊

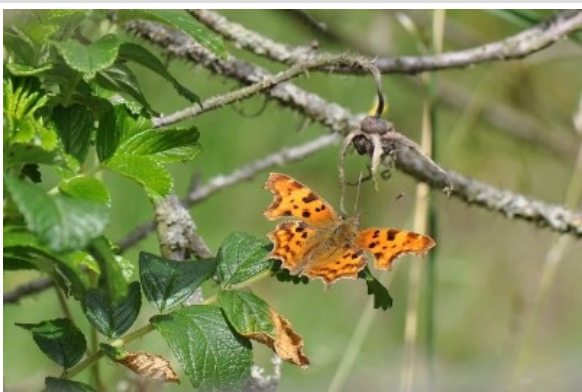
Five Rivers 28-06-2020

I'd been stuck indoors (well not out butterflying) for what felt like an age after the sudden turn in the weather. We went from sweltering in 30 degrees with wall to wall sunshine to unpredictable, changeable weather which was on the whole cooler, cloudier and windier with intermittent showers ranging from mizzle to coming down like stair rods. To make matters worse today I should have been at Chiddingfold enjoying congenial company of both UKB members and His Nibbs alike but no I was stuck at home, the unfavourable weather and road closures postponing my dreams of quadruple purple until 2021. By the afternoon I'd had enough and so muttering 'BBC weather App be damned' I set off for Five Rivers hoping to catch up with the Browns as they at least put in an appearance during 'changeable weather'.

Exiting the car I looked up and spied a cloud edging its way towards the sun and so I set off at a pace to try and cram in and see as much as possible before the cloud covered the sun and the butterflies hunkered down. The first Bramble clump I came to had been graced by the presence of a Red Admiral and a Meadow Brown skittered across the stones in the parking bays landing Grayling fashion - tilting towards the sun.



I then strode purposefully down through the glades which are now almost unrecognisable. The various low growing flowers and grasses covered by a sea of grass stems at thigh height and slightly taller flowers. As I waded along the small paths that had been mown through the vegetation Meadow Browns took off from unseen launch pads as did the smaller, darker Ringlets. Even in this cooler weather they were quite unapproachable and so I carried on to the edge of the glades where the large Bramble patch grows up one of the trees. Once here a Comma caught my eye as it flew to a perch on a small clump of Rhododendron. After spending a little time with it I moved across to the huge Bramble. A Red Admiral fed up high, too high and too far in for my lens to reach but luckily there was another, really beautifully marked Comma down low. Whilst following its various exploits it landed in the Bramble and just behind it was a second Red Admiral looking very regal especially as it was so fresh and vivid compared to the surrounding serfs (Ringlets and Meadow Browns).



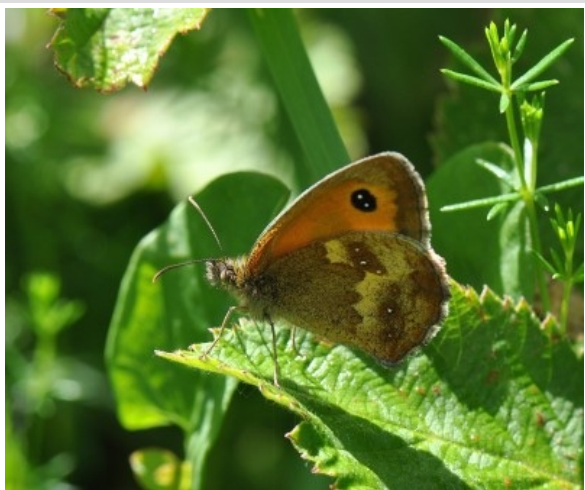


The cloud had thickened considerably whilst I was in the relative shelter of the Glades and as I made for Comma Corner I felt a few whispers of rain. It quickly became a whispered discussion and by the time I was at Comma Corner it was having a bit of a rant so I hid in the Copse and waited for it to run out of things to say. After a minute or so the cloud had passed and the sky was getting brighter with each passing second – one of the good things about windy days is that the rain clouds can be carried swiftly away – so I set about checking out the Top Banks. The small patch on the opposite side to Bank 1 held a Smessex amid the Meadow Browns and a few Pyramidal Orchids shone out despite the best efforts of the surrounding grasses and on Bank 1 proper I spied another Smessex and a Marbled White. I had high hopes for Bank 2 but these were dashed as I scanned across the slopes – the Buddleia had only 4 florets in bloom and what was once a tall and slim shrub was now squat and sprawling so no Painted Lady in the offing here. Instead the most it could muster aside from the main two Brown was a Marbled White and a Red Admiral which fed on the Bramble looking longingly at the less than lack lustre Butterfly Bush. Things did perk up here as I started to leave as I spied a definite Essex, a couple of Smessex and a Large White did a fly-by.





On the final Bank I walked down the slope from the top path and started checking out the Brambles – again there was a Red Admiral – they seem to have suddenly invaded. However after this I forgot to count anything else as a rufous coloured butterfly flew up from in the undergrowth to have a pop at a Meadow Brown. Eagerly I watched it waiting for it to settle and knowing that that it was one of my favourites. Eventually it went down but not in a great position – still I was able to at least get a record shot of my first Hedge Brown of 2020.



Chuffed I left it sitting in the cover of a large Bramble leaf – whether it was seeking cover in case of more rain or simply wanted to get out of the shade I'll never know – so I pressed on squeezing my way past the bushes that are crowding out the path to the Lower Banks. I' just recalling that Silver–

washed Frits had been recorded here previously when an orange blur bombs by. Luckily having visited The Devenish, Grovely, Vernditch and Bentley Wood recently I've got my eye in when it comes to BGBs (Big Ginger Buggers) and this wasn't a Silver Washed but a Dark Green – a first for me from this site! What with my FFY and now a First For Site I was becoming increasingly pleased that I'd bitten the bullet and braved the poor weather reports. Unfortunately despite letting me see the more rounded wings and the profusion of black spotting it didn't sit for any shots though it did brand a facsimile of itself on my retina. From here I wandered round the corner and started along the topmost Back Path, keenly eyeing any thistles and other purple headed flowers as I went lest they were furnished with a DGF. No luck but there was a fresh Small Tort basking on the path. I was lucky in that a small cloud went over so I could get almost directly above it and when the cloud moved there was a glowing Small Tort in frame.



At the next available opportunity I took a right and made my way across the centre of the site checking out the profusion of Rock Rose and the various patches of flowers nestled in amid the grasses as I did so. I spent some time around one clump of thistles as well as at the bramble patch on the other side of the Copse to Comma Corner. Whilst I was here another Small Tort flew by, there were many Smessex, a couple of Large Skippers and Marbled Whites, Ringlets and Meadow Browns made up the bulk of the rest. I found myself drawn back to Bank 3 and so I found myself back by a familiar patch of the Bramble where the Hedge Brown was still sitting. I stake him out and await a hapless Meadow Brown or Smessex to pass and rile him up. When one does he takes off after it and then lands somewhere else once he's sent the intruder packing. I'd expected him to fly back to his original perch but he keeps shifting his way gradually along the Bramble until eventually he settled properly near the top path between Banks 2 and 3. Whilst here he opens up and get a view of a gloriously orange male.





I make my way back but find myself tarrying once more in the Glades. By now there is only one Red Admiral - still feeding up high but I can see that both the Bramble and Rhododendron Commas are still hanging around. I also see a golden Skipper sitting atop one of the closed flower heads. As the wind rocks it back and forth it occasionally catches the sunlight and so it looks like it's sparking and twinkling. Getting shots however isn't nearly as restful as watching it swaying delicately in the breeze as focusing is near impossible. The only hope to line up ready and hope that when the breeze drops momentarily you can focus in quickly enough before the wind starts rocking it again. As well as looking resplendent and clearly showing itself to be an Essex it also pulls an unusual pose. I've seen Skippers with wings closed and in standard X-wing arrangement but I can't recall seeing them with their wings back and in the same plane as their body - it looked more like a miscoloured Forester Moth than a butterfly as it held its wings in this way. As I make to leave I note that the 2 Commas have become 3 and a female Meadow Brown coquettishly opens up but soon there are stones beneath my feet instead of grass and then metal as I'm driving home.



*Either side of the shower
The butterflies fly*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 24-Sep-20 01:19 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, catching up on your post's at last 😊 Some lovely shots there I love the Essex skipper shot, I didn't see any whilst in Kent, I never saw a Painted Lady either which surprised me, not a one here either, looks like it'll be next year now before we see them again, hope fully I'll be in Kent then. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 25-Sep-20 11:59 AM GMT

I don't think I've seen many Comma images that deserve a 🍷.
But that one of yours basking on a twig certainly does!
As others have stated, Commas seem to be thin on the ground this Autumn.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-20 07:38 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Fingers crossed for your move Goldie and then you'll be able to confuse everyone with a Kentish Essex 🤪😄😄
Cheers Trevor 😊 Commas seem to have had a quiet year this year Trevor, hopefully they'll do a bounce back next season 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Sep-20 08:33 PM GMT

Garston Wood 02-07-2020

I thought that an early morning visit with the temperatures below 15 degrees would have meant that the butterflies were relatively calm. I thought this... however as is often the way the data didn't support the hypothesis and so if this had been a proper scientific hypothesis I'd be heading back to the drawing board. As I was in fact in Garston Wood I had to just press on and see what would happen!

It had started well enough as upon exiting the car the cloud was covering the sun but it was still bright enough for the butterflies to fly. As I walked the site in reverse, starting from the car park and walking uphill through the Plantation and I reached the first of the small clearings Meadow Browns and Ringlets erupted from the grass like Death Eaters apparating in a flurry of hexes (guess what I've been reading recently...). There was the odd smaller golden blur of ailing Large Skippers now getting on into their dotage some of them. This was to be expected and pretty much par for the course but what I hadn't expected was that the first Silver Washed I saw was a turbo charged as on the hottest of days. True the cloud had wandered off somewhere and the sun was shining nicely now. I carried on and over the course of the next two clearings on my left and the one after that on the right I spotted more of the same; huge numbers of Meadow Browns and Ringlets, some acting like Purple Hairstreaks and fluttering around at the top of the smaller trees before floating feather like downwards and landing on a thistle top or patch of Bramble whilst the Silver Washed tore through the clearings like boy racers tearing through a city centre. At this last clearing the cloud had regrouped and rallied momentarily and all the Silver Washed suddenly calmed down, some even stopped for refuelling.



As I was about to turn the corner and take the path out of the Plantation I paused to watch a very small yet bright Meadow Brown. As it crept out of hiding out onto an exposed leaf in an attempt to soak up the sun I could see that it was actually my second Hedgie frustratingly too high for a shot but still as a reasonable height to enjoy. After a few moments savouring one of my favourites I pulled myself away and carried on through the gate and out of the Plantation. I carried on walking our usual route in reverse and so instead of the walk up the straight track it was a walk down the straight. One of the large Brambles which climbed up one of the non-coppiced trees formed a wall of thorns and flowers and I counted three Commas and two Red Admirals here and on the other side of the track another Comma was disturbed by a passing Green-veined White as it fed on the low growing carpet of Bramble.





I dove on down trying to get to the spot where I'd encountered White Admirals twice before now whilst the sun still held the cloud at bay. A quick glance up suggested it was fighting a losing battle so I quickened the pace trying to ignore the Silver Washed that tore across the path as I knew for a fact that they had no intention of stopping despite their apparent interest in this flower or the other. As I reached the large mound of Bramble which looks like an old fashioned haystack, not a round toilet roll looking thing but like a little house with a pitched roof, I slowed down. I'd made it! A quick scan around and I noted several Commas, a Peacock and a few Silver Washed as well as a myriad of Ringlets and Meadow Browns all causing a fuss and a kerfuffle. As I looked the Bramble over again and a silvery fighter jet fast butterfly launched itself from a leaf and tore off through the air. It was a White Admiral and as I watched it, trying to see if it would come back or land somewhere else it rose and made into the wood behind the Bramble stack. I was hoping that it would come back but the sun finally capitulated to the cloud and surrendered. As the surroundings lost their definition and as the gloom engulfed those butterflies that had previously been manic they calmed down and sat still. The White Admiral was nowhere to be seen so I consoled myself with the Aristocrat display. I counted four Comma, a Peacock was the closest but also the most twitchy of the butterflies and trying to remain unobtrusive a Red Admiral slightly further into the stack.



Once I'd gotten shots of these I checked the heavens again and it looked like the cloud was going to have an extended reign so I retraced my steps up the gentle slope and at the top made my way down the main track stopping on the way to hear that I'd missed out on a Valesina and a few Purple Hairstreaks - typical. The final push down the hill saw me adding Marbled White to the trip tally but not the aforementioned species - oh well you can't have everything and some days you have to put up with only a little though that might be a bit harsh on the Peacocks, Commas and Red Admirals.



So new hypothesis - above a certain temperature it doesn't really matter and butterflies will still fly as long as the sun shines! Need to start collecting data now...

*So starting early
Didn't go quite as hoped
Frantic butterflies!*

Have a goodun and stay safe

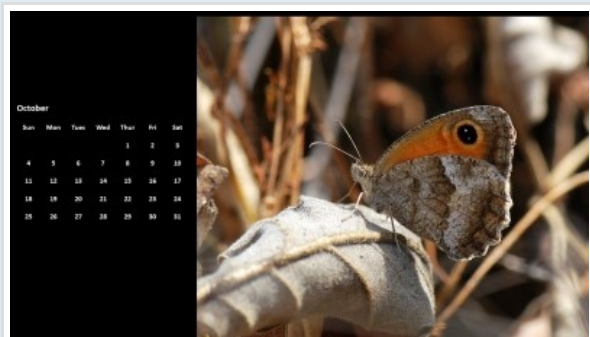
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-20 08:02 PM GMT

October 2020

Got in early for once 😊😁



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Oct-20 07:57 PM GMT

Five Rivers 03-07-2020

Today was a very strange day in that I had to do the school run - something I've not done for a fair few years now but K's school have opened up on a 'Bubble' timetable for year 10's and on this morning she was sitting doing tonal drawings for her GCSE Art. As I needed to pick her up at 12:15 which coincided with lunch I decided to put the laptop down and pick my camera up instead as K's school backs onto Five Rivers.

I didn't have as long as usual so instead of my leisurely proceeding I shifted up a gear and strode across the car park and down through the glades. On the way a Green-veined White sat on the path and singletons of Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood flew in the dullness as the cloud had swallowed the sun. As I reached the towering Bramble at the end of the Glades the sun came out and with it the butterflies and also a huge beetle which seemed a little bit perturbed that it was at the top of a tall flower and didn't really know where it was going next- I reckon it's a Lesser Stag Beetle, a first for me if it is but I'm ready to be corrected. Where before there had been nothing but a sea of grass and the tall white flowers now the odd golden Smessex, Meadow Brown or Ringlet sat atop the flowers and the huge Bramble had come alive with Meadow Browns and Ringlets. Amid their duller distant cousins sat a pair of Red Admirals and a (H) Comma, feeding up and occasionally hassling each other or the Large White which dropped in unannounced.



Lesser Stag?



My striding took me on to Comma Corner but rather than following the path up and walking along the top banks I turned right and followed the hedge that runs parallel to the football pitch. This turned out to be a good idea as almost immediately I spot a small, ruddy looking butterfly. As I get in closer I can see that it's a Hedgie and an excessa at that; with two small dark dots on each of his forewings. Unfortunately another flies in and I lose sight of him before he has a chance to open up again. Whilst these two are scrapping a third sits nonchalantly nearby looking slightly embarrassed by the actions of his peers. At the end of the hedge I follow the track up and check out the compost heap on the corner of the copse where there is another Hedge Brown and a cracking looking Comma. On the way out a Peacock takes off from the path.



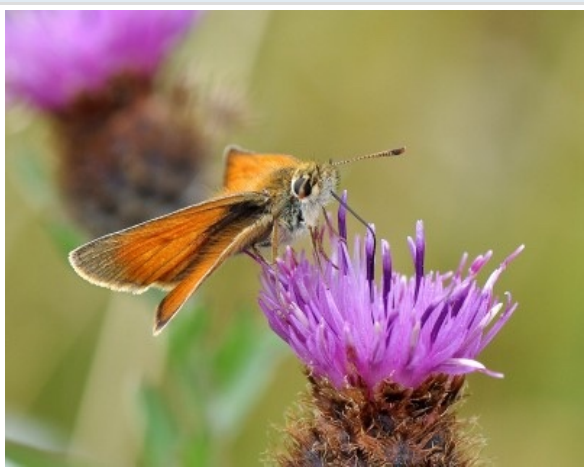
Slightly excessa...



Time was marching onwards and so I cut up one side of the bank and walked along central path scanning down into the banks as I go. At the middle Bank the large Buddleia had gotten so large that it collapsed in on itself and so instead of the tall bush now sprawls over almost a third of the bank at waist height. This makes it much trickier for getting shots as now the butterflies can sit right at the back and so are out of range of your lens. Luckily there are only a few flower heads in bloom and most of those are on the outer fringes so even though I miss out on the Red Admiral on the far right and a Comma on the far left I manage at least a record shot of the Small Tort in the middle front. Sadly these vanessids aren't joined by the hoped for Painted Lady. Also here a few Marbled White and the odd Smessex make themselves known whilst the other browns are staying out of sight. At the end Bank a Smessex sits still long enough for me to have a closer look and positively identify it as an Essex - lucky for me it was a male so it was a straight forward ID but it won't be long now until things get much trickier due to there being more females about with the additional problem of wear and tear masking some of the salient feature of identification.



The cloud had recovered the sun so the chances of relocating the DGF from the other day had dwindled so I turn about and start making my way back to meet K from school. At least this was my intention but I got a bit waylaid at the middle bank as I couldn't resist following a golden Skipper. It was a female so no useful sex brand to help out but I had a hunch that it was a Small and after a bit it finally landed and in such a pose that I could examine the underside of the antennae. Indicators blinking and my hunch proved correct - a Small indeed. Then there was a lovely looking Marbled White on Bank 1 - another female. I love the creamy ground colour of the female Marbled White - cracking. Of course another stop had to be made at the Towering Bramble where now a single Red Admiral had the whole bush to itself. I still managed to make it back in time to successfully complete the School Run. I could get used to this - is it too late to become a Stay At Home Dad?





*A stay at home dad
Picks up a lovely Essex
And a Marbled White*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 01-Oct-20 08:44 PM GMT

Amazing Stag Beetle, Wurzel. I've not seen one since I was a boy. We used to see them in the garden, the males with their large 'stag horn' pincers, and the females with the smaller ones could give a nasty nip. From memory both sexes were huge. At school you really were someone if you could produce a Stag Beetle concealed in a matchbox!,(a good way to scare the Girls!).

A great report from High Summer1.

Stay well,
Trevor..

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 02-Oct-20 10:03 AM GMT

Good to see you catching up with the Hedgies, Wurzel. 😊 Also, that beetle is splendid as Trevor says – if you see one in flight it looks like a miniature helicopter and you'd be forgiven for thinking it was a modern contrivance rather than part of the natural world.

A very nice female Marbled White, too. 😊 Most evocative of early Summer.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Oct-20 10:49 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I think that although I was out butterflying that Beetle was probably the sighting of the day for me 😊😊

Cheers Dave 😊 We need a little evocation of summer at the moment Dave 😊😊 I was chuffed with the Beetle in flight it must look like a Chinook 😊😊

Vernditch 04-07-2020

As we were heading out for some fresh air and exercise to Vernditch I debated about whether to take my camera. The skies were leaden, there was moisture in the air and the BBC weather App looked to be pretty accurate (funny how they manage to forecast crap weather so accurately?) so there was little prospect of any sunny intervals as it was black clouds for the whole day. On the flip side though the cloudy conditions should make getting shots of Ringlets easier. In the end I took my camera and instead of it loosely swung over my shoulder I hung it round my neck and stuffed it down inside the dry of my jacket.

The walk up through the wood was very quiet and I saw only a single Meadow Brown on the walk between the Car Park and the first of the fields at Kitt's Grave. All the way my camera hung uselessly round my neck, a deadweight and feeling like an unlucky mascot like the Albatross a la Coleridge. But then I had one of those moments of serendipity when the whole feel of a day turns on its head and your mood flips 180 degrees. As we walked through the gate at Kitt's Grave a 'Blue' sized butterfly took off from the path. As it weakly fluttered up and about I caught flashes of purple at the front of the butterfly. Neurones fired and I realised that it was a female Purple Hairstreak. It flew towards a small Oak that I'd not recognised as such before and settled a bit too high up for photos. My luck held though as it didn't seem to feel comfortable here and so flew back across the path to the trees that line the field. I followed it and again it moved, and again. It just didn't seem to find somewhere that it liked until the fourth trip after which it settled down and stayed put. Ironically each time it moved it managed to put itself in a better position for photos. At first it was too high, then it was at about shoulder height but in the gloom under the canopy and in the penultimate perch it was reasonably well lit and at a reasonable height but there were leaves partially obscuring it. The final 'resting' place was much better, low down on a small branch sticking out from the main body of the tree. After a few shots I re-joined the family grouping and we carried on the walk.





As we dove along the woodland path in the tunnel of trees I only saw butterflies in the small breaks from the gloom where clumps of trees had been cleared or fallen. There seemed to be a particular formulation of butterflies; Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Marbled Whites in a 4:3:1 mix. This pattern seemed to be constant as we followed the path onwards and eventually as it turned right and then right again forming the homeward stretch. As we approached the small Bramble bush that had produced a White Admiral we came across another one of the monstrous snails, this one was called Sally!

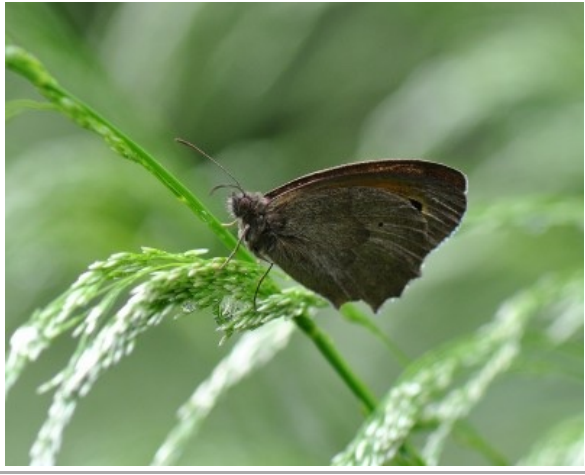


As we carried on we saw more and more of the same species of snail although these were numbered rather than named so I'm guessing that they are part of a release/capture research study? I took a break from Mollusc monitoring and investigated the field opposite what will now be known as WA Bush. The Brown ratio held fast but a larger orange butterfly, a DGF, provided some nice colour to the grey. They're already looking a bit tatty and worn so I can't see them lasting into August as in some years which just brought it home to me how odd this year has been - it's like we've had summer and we're now 'enjoying' a damp autumn...

Along the path we continued with more Browns and another couple of DGFs which were feasting on Thistles further down at the bottom of the shallow 'valley'. There were also more snails including numbers 18 and 645 (so possibly quite an extensive study) and a Scarlet Tiger blazed by brightening the dullness no end. As we picnicked the odd DGF flew in to investigate but apart little else probably put off by the mizzle.



On the return journey there were only two highlights of the walk. The first was a little patch of longer grass on the side of the path surrounded by large beech trees. Droplets of rain still clung to the seed heads making it look like the brace of Meadow Browns and the brace of Ringlets were sitting on diamond encrusted thrones. In the cool drear they sat tight allowing close photos for once, a nice change from the usual behaviour of erupting from the grass as you focus the lens on them. The second came from a male Silver-washed which was feeding on a small patch of Bramble when we had almost finished the walk. I didn't try for any shots of this because I didn't fancy getting my legs ripped to shreds and also I felt like I'd used up my quota of luck for the day on the Purple Hairstreak.



*Mizzle and damp drear
Flash of purple brightens day
Slither slow Sally*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

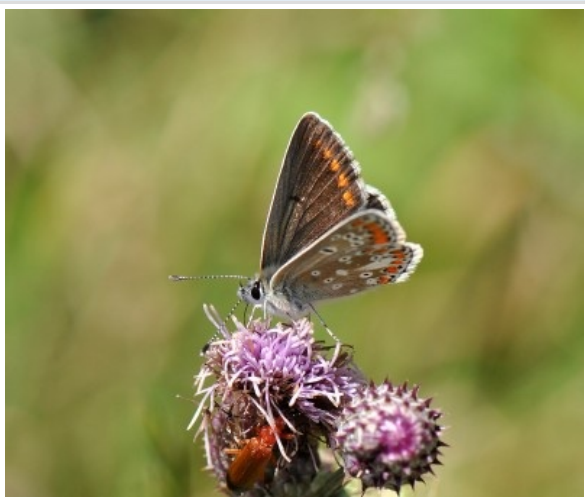
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-20 10:30 PM GMT

Martin Down 05-07-2020 The Blues are back in town...

I only had about an hour and so once the car was abandoned at Sillen's Lane I strode quickly down the main track towards the Hotspot directly. On the way a Small White and a Marbled White flew on one side of the track. When I say 'flew' they actually flapped for a bit not making any headway and then were swept away by the gusty breeze. Bearing this in mind I made a mental note to pay particular attention to the sheltered spots in the lee of the wind. The first of these was the triangular patch near to old gateway where they access track to neighbouring fields adjoined the main track in a 'T'. A Red Admiral caught my attention at first when it landed and momentarily hung from the hedge. After this I shifted my gaze downwards and swept it across the grasses. As I did I picked up good numbers of Skippers glistening amid a straw coloured backdrop. Something darker flitted about at the furthest point of the triangle but I couldn't relocate it again and I was left with the impression that it was a Small Blue. However I dropped this idea when a few seconds later a Brown Argus popped up and started to hassle first one and then both of the male Common Blues. There were also a few representatives of the Browns about with a single Meadow Brown and three Ringlets, a Marbled White dropped in but the Lycaenids had the bigger contingent when they were joined by three separate Small Coppers. It was interesting to note some of the different nectaring behaviours. The Small Coppers liked to sit atop the larger more sturdy flowers (Queens Lace?) whilst the Common Blue flew lower favouring the Clover. The Bad Attitude was all over the place and was much more catholic in its tastes. A lovely little representation of resource Partitioning.





I could have stayed here for the whole of my time on site but I was eager to see if the Chalkhills had made an appearance and as none were forthcoming at the triangle I set off again towards the Hotspot stopping now and again at where the little clumps of Knapweed acted as oases in the sea of dried grasses. There were plenty more Smessex zipping about all over the place and between the aforementioned Knapweed oases and a Large White stopped, slowed by the fall in temperature that accompanied a brief increase in cloud cover. Most of the Browns were Meadow but the Ringlets were more eye catching as their darker colour contrasted more pleasingly with the beige of the grass. One in particular stood out less as it was an ab. arete with tiny little pinpricks of white instead of the beautiful eyed rings.



When I reached the Hotspot it was disappointingly quiet as the cloud that had grounded the Large White earlier had hung around. As I scanned around the sides and then the bottom of the Dyke all I found was a single Peacock feeding up, the gloom making it appear even more garish than usual. I checked out the hollow and as I took the tiny path a DGF appeared, then another and another. All told I saw 6 in an area the size of a small kitchen and 4 of these were sitting on the deck in a line along the path practically sucking up warmth from the dust beneath them. I carried on round past the Hollow, crossing the main track and working my way round into the little Meadow where the Greenstreaks had been up until a month ago which now feels more like 6. A Small Heath was added to the Tally, a couple of Whites and the ubiquitous Meadow Browns and Ringlets and in the small meadow the sole occupant was a Small Copper.



I'd completed a rough circle and was now almost back where I'd seen the Peacock. I'd love to have walked all the way up to the top of the Down as I had an inkling that was where the Chalkhills would be found but time was against me so I only ascended about 100metres up scanning all about me as I went. Again there was a Peacock though it was probably the initial one I'd seen but there was also a Small Tortoiseshell hiding among the leaves down in the bottom of the Dyke. I tried to move in for a shot but because I had to watch my footing so as not to go 'A over T' and also as I didn't want to trample anything it was there one minute and then the next time I looked up it had gone. As if to cheer me up though three more DGFs flew about me and one plopped down practically right in front of me.



As is so often the way I realised I needed to head back, put me head down, ranked up the pace and then when I was almost back at the car realised I still had a bit of excess time. This was fortuitous as I checked my watch, discovered my chronological advantage and spotted a Small Copper basking on the chalky path at the tip of the triangular patch that I'd started at. So I now spent my remaining minutes here catching up with probably the same butterflies that I had seen earlier. Again there were two Small Coppers, making the three with the one still basking on the path. I relocated one Common Blue and then the second, the Browns has burgeoned although there was still only a single Marbled White, the Brown Argus was hassling anything that entered into its flight path and the Smessex were all over the place. Things were slightly different now though as I found a/the Small Blue - proving that I hadn't imagined it earlier, a DGF did a fly by and a pair of Smessex were busy copulating. As I made to leave the Red Admiral was back, sitting wings flat to the ground on the track but taking off and flying a short way every time I got within range. I tore myself away and said my goodbyes to the erstwhile martial siren most chuffed that the Blues are back in town!





*A quick stomp around
Plenty of variety
Blues are back in town*

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 06-Oct-20 06:40 PM GMT

I love the contrast between the female and male DGFs there Wurzel. They could almost be different species. 😊 Martin Down is such a great spot, and definitely not one to visit when you have time constraints. I had my first ever trip there on my way down to Somerset to see a friend and managed to arrive at my final destination two hours later than expected... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 07-Oct-20 11:35 AM GMT

Wonderful image of the mating ' Smessex ', Wurzel.

And I'm 🍋 envious of your constant DGF shots, mainly because I didn't see a single one this year!

Your retrospective reports are making me yearn for Summer again.

Looking forward to your take on our visit to Shipton B. sometime.

Stay safe & well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 07-Oct-20 07:23 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

I'm catching up with peoples diaries. Your turn.

You've been doing well. Love the open wing and finger shots of the PStreak. The mating skippers. The Stag Beetle...

And of course Sally the Snail. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-20 08:30 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I know what you mean but having to get back is good for me, otherwise I'd be there until the early evening waiting for the butterflies to roost, then into the wee small hours looking for Barn Owls etc and of course then I'd have to stay for the dawn chorus and then well blow me, the butterflies have woken up! 😊 My photo might well end up on the side of a milk carton 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I did make a few more forays to Martin Down and so there may be a few more DGFs so you might want to look away in some future posts 😊 I'm working on the posts - but work keeps getting in the way - hopefully the post in question will be out in 2020... 😊 😊

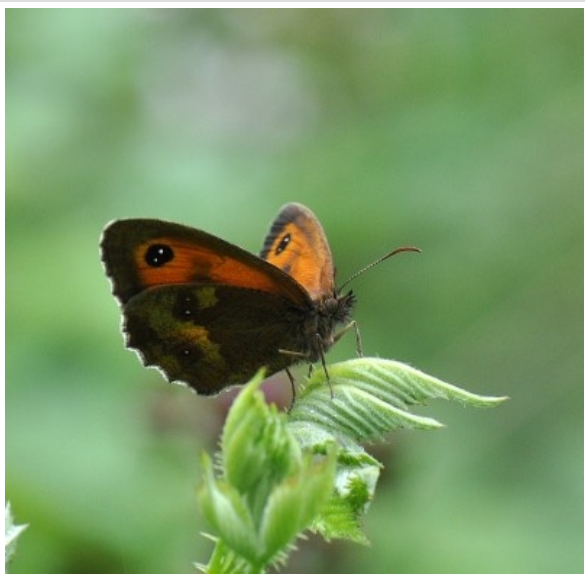
Cheers Ernie 😊 Sally did hold a special place as I'd found shells of her cousins before a Hutchinson's Bank but never seen one on it's foot before 😊 😊

Garston Wood 07-09-2020

With marking done and the next sets of remote lessons prepared and uploaded my thoughts turned to lunch and the possibly of combining the days exercise (yep still on that one - I'm used to doing about 11000 steps a day during a normal days work so to go from that to sitting on my bed played havoc with my legs) with a picnic lunch before returning to face the next onslaught of electronic marking. So my wife packed a lunch and sorted the drinks out whilst the girls finished up their 'lessons' and pretty soon we were pulling into the car park at Garston Wood. Having been in the 'Bubble' the day before it was typical that today the weather had turned for the worst. Gone was the glorious sun and mini heatwave, gone the sky of blue and the faintest of wisps of cloud. Instead it was dull grey and despite the thermometer telling me that the temperature was high enough for it to be considered 'warm' the slight cling of moisture in the air and the threat of rain/drizzle made it feel much cooler - so much so that a jumper was required. As we strolled along the bottom things were very quiet - the damper weather dampening the spirits of the butterflies but I scanned among the Bracken just in case anything was sitting waiting for the return of the sun. This paid off in a short while as I thought I saw a Green-veined White a little way away. However when I got bit nearer I could see that my supposition was incorrect and it was in fact a slightly worn Black Arches which was sitting in such a way as to reveal the pink marks along the abdomen, something I'd not seen before.



After this we trailed round to the large log so we could have our lunch with nary a butterfly to be seen. It was strange after the encounters that I'd had here recently for it to be this quiet. As we reached the log the threatened rain arrived but luckily the canopy offered enough cover that we didn't notice and with lunch eaten I was feeling a little more hopeful as the rain seemed to have washed away a little of the cloud; the merest hint of sun was creeping through and it started to actually feel as warm as the thermometer suggested. With the rising temperatures finally some butterflies took to the air. Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers started crawling out the tussocks of grass and the Bramble enclaves and round near the White Admiral spot a Comma basked for all it was worth on a Bramble leaf.



Even though the butterflies were flying I was a little too busy just walking and talking with my girls and before I realised we were almost through the Plantation and back at the car! Luckily my wife wanted to look at some of the flowers so I had a couple of minutes of reprieve. I hurried through the shortcut from the Plantation and out onto the main path. The usual suspects were about – Skippers, Gatekeeper, Meadow Browns, Specklies and as well as a few tired looking Marbled Whites plenty of Ringlets. One in particular caught my eye as instead of the set of concentric circles which give the species its common name there were little pinpricks of white – it was an ab. arete. Chuffed with this last minute find I re-joined my girls and we completed the walk and made for home.



*The weather cools down
The butterflies hide away
Not the arête though!*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 09-Oct-20 01:55 PM GMT

That has to be the best example of that particular ab. I've seen, Wurzel; the butterfly looks really new too. It's also a very "Ringlet" pose, with the sun in and raindrops on the leaf all around it.

A very nice find all round. 😊🐛

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 09-Oct-20 07:08 PM GMT

Very nice shot of the Ringlet ab. Wurzel 🐛😊

Have another 🐛 for the Black Arches, one I have yet to get in my garden trap although I know of people not far away who have had them.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Oct-20 08:25 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was chuffed with that shot - it made up for the miserable weather. I found a few more over the year and there's another great one coming up from Alners Gorse soon 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Black Arches are a cracking looking moff, I'd not seen the little pink dots on them before though...there's always something new to observe 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-20 07:32 PM GMT

Alners Gorse 10-07-2020

Part 1

It had been several years since my last visit to Alners Gorse but over that time I've kept my eye on the sightings that would come in from the site and I noticed in successive years they had one of, if not the earliest sightings of Brostreaks. I'd also noticed that Whitters, Valesina and Purple Hairstreaks had been recently recorded and so when deciding where to head next my thoughts erred towards Dorset. With the weather report looking a bit ropery but a ringing endorsement from the Oracle I set off under leaden skies heading hopefully towards a tiny blue patch of sky away to the west.

I was a bit surprised when I arrived on site to find the car park and the verge almost full with cars and even more surprised when I spied no-one else on the walked down the hill and only a couple of people in the far left corner by the gate. Where all the hoards were would eventually become apparent but nor now I didn't mind in the slightest as it felt like I had the whole reserve to myself. Along the way I encountered a few Meadow Browns and Ringlets that had come out in the gloom (I'd missed the blue sky patch it seemed) and as I passed the Oak which was ringed in Brambles I met a few other enthusiasts eagerly surveilling the tops of the border trees. After a few pleasantries I carried on following the hedge deeper into the site and looking for clumps of brambles and flowers amid the grasses. There was a definite brightening, the clouds now taking on a whiter tone and with the increasing light intensity more and more butterflies were starting to fly. By the time I'd reached the newly cleared woodland towards the back of the site I'd picked up Smessex and Large Skippers as well as Hedgies a plenty and a few fluttery Whites. In this new clearing (the last time I'd been here it had been impenetrable coniferous woodland) the sun broke through momentarily and a Marbled White led me across the intermittently tussocky ground to a stand of bramble. Large and Small Whites were present but there were 4 or 5 Silver-washed that really caught the eye.





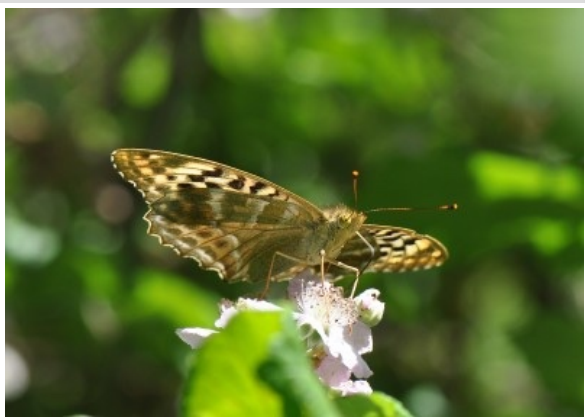
By now the sky was unfolding like the introduction to the Simpsons and so I hurried back to the hedge and the Oaks that I'd started at. The other two enthusiasts are there also and so all three of us adopt the Hairstreak searchers pose – standing stock still, head crammed back into your spine and conversing without looking anywhere but at the tree tops. A few Hairstreak like butterflies make a foray of two from the main hedge to the free standing Oaks and vice versa and a couple of Ringlets and Hedgies try and catch us out but they don't fly high enough, look square cut enough nor jink properly. One Purp does flutter around slightly lower which draws our attention away from the hedge and towards the Oak behind us. It's the one that's ringed at its base in bramble and while our scrutiny is side-tracked I have a proper look at this. A Red Admiral is sunning itself and numerous Hedgies have taken up residence; so many in fact that it's become something of a Gatekeeper High Rise. While we continue our scanning one of the smaller grey butterflies drifts down and eventually lands on the Bramble. It slowly opens up and the third enthusiast who's a regular stands aside and let enthusiast number 2 (who turned out to be John) and myself in one the butterfly. It's a Purple Hairstreak, slightly worn in that it looks a paler, more faded grey but the purple flashes were still in really good nick and they glimmered in the morning sun.





After a short bask she must have warmed sufficiently as she made off up into the Oak sitting high up on a leaf and then peering down and inspecting us. As she'd made her move so did I and wishing Enthusiast 3 well John and I headed off deeper into the reserve towards some of the prime spots that John knew about and ultimately making for the 'Banks' at the far end of the reserve. Our trail takes us past most of the prime sites but all was quiet so on we went, leaving the diamond of the reserve behind and walking through grass lined paths and mixed woodland. The expected butterflies all fly and the highlights are a super fresh Speckle and the numerous Silver-washed Frits.

When we reach the gateway into the large field and the hedge which is termed 'the banks' there's a bit of a queue which explained the numerous cars I'd seen on my arrival. Everyone was as clustered as Social Distancing would allow around the one tall bramble bush that is growing up and over the gate post before merging with the hedge. It's quite amazing to watch groups of people stepping forward, staring intently at a piece of hedge and then stepping aside before re-joining the queue at the back. Once John and I had negotiated the Holly Blue that had decided to come down to the deck we were able to pass through the gate and see what everyone had been queuing for. As I scanned the bush I checked and ticked off the species - a beautiful male Beautiful Demoiselle - if I reached the front of the queue in time that would be a first but worth all the excitement? A Green-veined White and a Large White - doubtful. Gatekeeper - not unless it was an aberrant. Peacocks - flashy, stunning, beautiful, conceited, narcissistic - whatever you think about them they're not really worth forming a queue for. Could it be one of the Silver-washed that were using the Bramble like an 'all you can eat' Buffet? Very possibly...and in fact definitely and I could see why. Among the bright ginger males and the more muted 'orange with a hint of green' females there was a striking Valesina. At first glance she appears almost monochrome but as she turns purples and blues cascade across the surfaces of her wings. She is very flighty, much more agitated than the others and is often further back in the hedge, within the shade or under the leaves using them as parasols. These quirks in behaviour should make her an annoying subject, but only add to her allure. I can almost understand the queuing for a brief uninterrupted moment with her more than makes up for the loss of butterflying time.





*Looking for Hairstreaks
Amid Dorsets' hidden gem
Greenish takes top spot!*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 11-Oct-20 08:31 PM GMT

Well, that was worth queuing for, Wurzel! And worth a few 🍷🍷🍷 as well. Lovely shots of that *valesina* female. 😊 Is it right that the site is known for them (which would explain the popularity)?

After that butterfly gem, the stonking "normal" SWF female and a nice Purple Hairstreak too, I wonder what you are waiting to serve up in Part Two...

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 11-Oct-20 08:41 PM GMT

Superb female Silver Washed shots, Wurzel, both normal and valesina.
Another great report from the peak of Summer.

Stay safe,
Trevor.

PS. I was treated to a wonderful 'festive' display in the garden centre the other day 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-20 08:34 PM GMT

Dave 😊 In part 2 I morphed into a Victorian collector minus net and pins as there were plenty of aberrants about 😊 Alners Gorse is a good spot for Greenish but to be honest I've never been there that early in the season and also I never knew that the Banks existed until this trip 😊😊
Cheers Trevor 😊 It went a bit cloudy later but some aberrants came out 😊 I didn't like to mention that one of my local supermarkets had already stacked the Christmas shelves on Saturday – we haven't even had Halloween yet 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 13-Oct-20 10:39 PM GMT

Yep, pristine female Walls and father Christmas in the same week doesn't gel somehow.
It's two fingers to the ad men who want me to get excited about Christmas this early.

Stay safe,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Oct-20 08:48 PM GMT

Alners Gorse 10-07-2020

Part 2

John heads back to try and recover his lens hood and the 'party' move on as well so it's just me and another bloke (who it turns out is from near to where I grew up in Poole) left to the Banks. The Valesina comes and goes, numerous Silver-washed vie for our attention including a pair in cop. Once John has returned, unfortunately empty handed, I make my way back into the reserve to try and catch up with more Hairstreaks. I find a couple near the Hotspot tree which had been pointed out to me earlier but both are up high, topping up their tans whilst the sun is still showing through the cloud. Among the Specklies and other Browns the main highlight of my wander back to the main hedge is another Valesina. I was watching a Hedgie as it fluttered down low in a Bramble. As it passed a little 'alcove' in the bush one of the leaves caught my eye. It was moving incorrectly for it to be the slight breeze that was gently playing over the bushes. It was also the wrong colour and shape. I looked a little more closely and realised it was a Valesina. They really are remarkable creatures; so different on their topsides that they could be easily mistaken for a different species like black Leopards being called Panthers, but now I was able to see the difference in the underside as well, something I hadn't appreciated fully before. She fluttered about striking various poses but never quite sitting square-on. I didn't mind though as with these shots, combined with those from earlier I now had the full Valesina repertoire.





I carried on after this leaving her in pace and followed the border hedge into the bottom corner. This is prime Hairstreak territory and in the past I've found both Brostreaks and Whitters here, on one notable occasion both species were in shot and forming a triumvirate with a Meadow Brown. However today there is only a Purp and they're up too high for my lens to get anything sensible. I stare at the hedge and surrounding tree tops while I drink a coffee and have lunch but apart from Peacocks and various Browns the only other butterflies of note here are the Smessex Skippers. Lunch finished I had a choice to make - stay in one place and wait for the sun to come back out of hiding or have a bit of an explore while the cloud held the butterflies back...I plumbed for the latter reasoning that it would be good use of the down time, I'd get a feel for the place ready for subsequent visits plus I was sure I'd hear the clicks of cameras and sighs of pleasure should a Whitter or Brostreak turn up. So I started retracing my footsteps which led me to opposite corner of this diamond shaped site, working along the edges I pass the 'hotspot' tree which now holds 2 fewer Purp than earlier and there are Browns and Whites about including a couple more Marbled Whites that had been noticeable by their absence since my first forays of the morning.



More stuff starts turning up once I start walking to the 3rd edge probably driven out of hiding by the occasional breaks in the cloud when the sun was able to blast down. There were a few more Peacocks, a lovely female Brimstone and a couple of 'abs'. As well as a wing damaged Hedgie one individual had only one pupil apiece in its eyes. I've found one of these before but have been hoping to catch up with another for some time. There was also an ab. arete Ringlet. Writing this now, several months since the day and with the season drawing to a close I can appreciate how common this aberration can be as I've seen 4 or 5 of them this year from different sites. This one however was by far the best with the tiniest markings. Even better than this it was a female so when she opened up during a break in the cloud instead of the usual 'eyes/rings' on the topside there were a few white pinpricks.







Chuffed I thought about making my way home as by now I'd reached the final corner of the diamond and the straight, wide track that lay ahead of me was tempting me up the hill. I debated about just popping back to the Hairstreak patch and doing one last check for Brostreaks or Whitters but a couple that had only just left there informed me as they passed by that they'd only seen the one Purp there. As I watched them go and readied myself to follow suit John arrived and so we walked and talked up the hill to the cars. He'd still recovered his lens hood but hoped to find it as he was coming back in a few days. I wish I was!

*As the day wore on
Aberrants became the norm
No more Hairstreaks though*

Have a goodun

Wurzel

P.S. John did go back a few days later and there was his lens hood, sitting atop the gate post; we're a nice bunch us butterflyers! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 16-Oct-20 09:55 PM GMT

Another beautiful *valesina*, Wurzel. What stunning butterflies they are. More of these, I think... 🍃🍃😊 The various abs are interesting too – considering the Hedgies probably reached three figures at the height of their season on some days on my local patch, I saw very little variation at all. The Ringlet is a corker as well – I've seen an *arete* in the past, but not the upperside. 😊

Happy summer days... 😊😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 16-Oct-20 10:31 PM GMT

You're rubbing the valesina's in a bit Wurzel. 🍷
Especially painful as I have not seen one since 2011.
Great to see though, and it's the hope of finding one that will sent me out again in 2021.
I also look forward to more Ringlet ab's .next year.

Keep safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Oct-20 08:02 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was chuffed with the topline ab. arete but possibly more so with the single pupil Hedgie – I've wanted a decent one of those for a few years now 😊 The funny thing was I saw all of those aberrants and a few more I've didn't include pretty much one after the other 😊 Before that I had one Hedgie excessa for the whole season 😊
Cheers Trevor 😊 Sorry I don't mean to rub it in, there's only one more set of shots to come and in those it's looking a little shabby 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 19-Oct-20 03:46 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, just coming up for air at present, 😊 I love the shots of the Valasina 🍷🍷 I've only seen one once and my shots weren't very good because the Butterfly was at the base of a tree in the bushes 😊 plus the fact I wasn't use to the camera then 😊 excuse's ,excuse's, 😊

No nearer to selling the Bungalow yet but things are bad here with the Virus so the viewings have stopped 😊 It's given me a chance to get rid of some rubbish so some things are moving if not me 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-20 10:37 PM GMT

Good to hear that you're keeping busy Goldie 😊 My wife is trying to get me to buy some paint so that "I've got something to do" shuld we go into another Lockdown 😊

Wilton Garden Centre and Godshill 11-07-2020

It was a weird morning as it was almost as if nothing was wrong? We parked in the Wilton Shopping Villages' car park and then walked to the garden centre though the dappled shade of the early morning sun. The reason for our early bird antics was so we would be first the queue as other shopper would have to park before lining up to be let in. As we waited I checked out the Buddleia near the exit gate and I was delighted to see 2 Red Admirals and a Peacock up high. Getting shots of them both proved difficult as they both fed on the large spray of Buddleia and so getting both in focus was very tricky and made even harder as they kept moving around. As is often the way the fresher and so more attractive Admiral was the most awkward. After a bit they seemed to have their fill and split apart to find different basking places. The slightly worn individual landed even closer on one of the signs attached to the gate whereas the 'looker' was off sitting at the top of the entrance to the centre all the way over on the other side of the car park.





As we wandered in our slightly befuddled and confused manner; can't get used to this 'going to normal shops malarkey', we were accompanied by a few more Admirals with three in the outdoor aisles with a fourth inside above the gloves and hats along with a Peacock. Once we left I had to pass the Buddleia again and now it played host to a Meadow Brown within range, a Comma much further back and only obtainable by a little, light trespass as well as a Peacock still up high and a Red Admiral down low...near and far, high and low, I'm sure there's a song in there somewhere? There were a few more on the short walk back to the car but to be honest I wasn't paying attention as I contemplated a morning in.



After lunch Little L surprised me by asking if we could go out somewhere for a walk and it seemed to be the perfect day for Grayling so we set off to Godshill. We cut across the Cricket pitch and navigated our way through the wall of Gorse with Little L loving the soft, springy sandy track, the Ponies and Cows in the distance and the view itself down the valley from the top of the track before it spilt down the hill taking us with it in ever lengthening strides as gravity took over. Once down safely we wandered along various trackways, talking as we walked all the while keeping our eyes peeled for our target. We cover the ground to the apex of the triangle and then mooch around in the further fields of heather steering clear of the Ponies and Cows and while we manage to find both a male and female Silver Stud, a brace of Small Coppers, numerous Meadow Browns and Hedgies we draw a blank with the Grayling. A Peacock and Dark Green Fritillary do fly-bys, a few Small Heath appear now and again; their orange colour making them really stand out against the browns and greys of the heath. More and more Meadow Browns are flying and every Gorse seems to hold at least a couple of Hedgies as we wander onwards but the only thing which I train my lens at is an odd looking Meadow Brown – odd in that it seemed to have gotten into a bit of a muddle when closing its wings as one is bent back against the other.



When our meanderings had brought us back to the 'Hotspot' track a Grayling finally flies by but it was going so quickly and so erratically that I couldn't follow it as it glided up and over the ever encroaching Bracken. Still at least it was on the yearly Tally and so under Little L's instructions we followed the track back and set up a little camp for her in the shade under a stand of tall Gorse. As she settled down to read I scampered off across the dry Heather, the scritch and scratch sound of it against my jeans as I passed as familiar as an old friend. I get right to the top of the hill were the mess of mud and

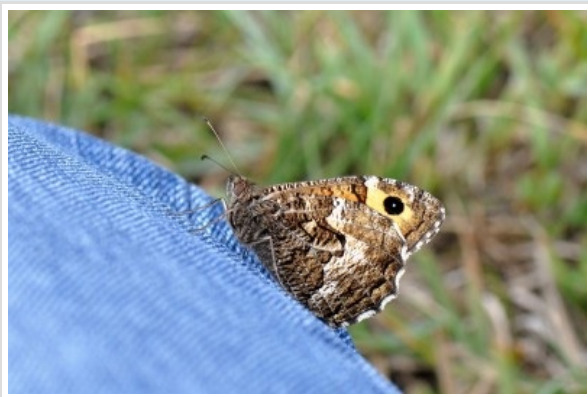
clay indicate the birth of the spring and now with muddy boots I zig-zag my way back down; partly trying to cover as much ground as possible and partly because I was following a Small Copper that was trying to take evasive manoeuvres. While I was stalking the Copper another Silver-stud passed by but I tried to stick with my quarry but it didn't end as I'd hoped and so I got back to seeking Grayling.

I was almost at the bottom of the hill when my second Grayling pops up from a spot that I'd previously scrutinised and I follow it all the way back up the hill where it precedes to jink round a bush and disappear. Finally on the next descent a third Grayling plays ball...eventually. It went up at first and each subsequent flight got shorter and shorter until eventually it was only a few steps away. It's in a cracking position for a lovely shot...and then another flies in and they off they both go so no decent shots, just records. This was getting a bit silly now, it must have been too hot so they were charging about all over the place so dejectedly I decide to cut my losses, collect Lottie and lead home. This was when a Grayling popped up and behaved really well. It felt like I'd gone from the frustrating to the sublime and then to the ridiculous as this one sits out in the pen and then perches on my jeans. Once I've 'de-Graylinged' myself and its sitting down on the deck I call Little L over and it behaves so nicely that she managed to get a few shots on my iPod, with the camera only an inch away from the butterfly!

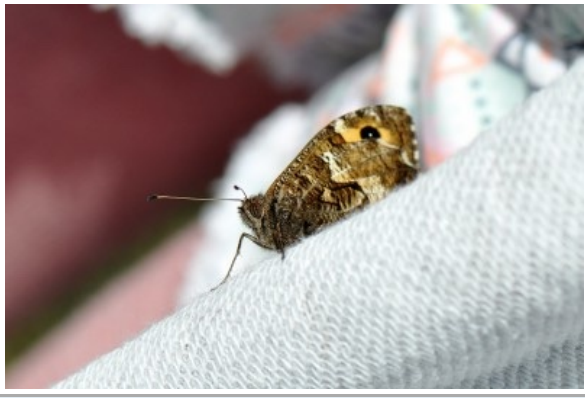




So that's where they disappear too!



As we go start to make a move it circles us and lands on Little L's leg, then her arm where it samples a bit of sweat and after its filled up on salts it flies back and this time lands on her shoe. We want to head home but the butterfly won't leave us and after 5 steps it still clinging onto Little L's shoe. When it does lose its purchase it starts to follow, flying ahead and landing on the deck for us to walk past it before flying ahead again, I was thinking that at this rate we might have adopted a new pet. Luckily it gets the message and after one last quick circle round us it disappears amid the greys and browns of the heather.



On the walk back we turned our attention to various other bits and bobs. There were the ponies which Little L was pretty enamoured with, all the usual butterfly suspects flew about us; amid the Gorse it was mainly Hedgies and in amongst the Heather it was Meadow Browns but a Peacock livened things up. On the way down we'd noticed a congregation of small holes burrowed into the sand so on the way up we stopped for a sort while to watch and wait and see whether we could spot what had made them. In a very short time something landed and I think it's a Digger Wasp (*Cerceris rybyensis*). The something really brightened up the day, a tiny jewel wasp glittered as the sun struck it. The minute I saw it I realised that I'd not encountered this species before as it divided up into bands of metallic green and red - a beautiful little fella, *Hedychrum aureicolle* - cracking! Nearer the top of the hill another spring broke free from its geological confines collecting in the peat/humms and trapped by clay and it seemed that even the plants wanted to get it on the spectacular stakes; Sundew and Bog Asphodel looked eerily alien and striking respectively.





By the time we got back to the car Little L was tired from the hill climbing but had been wowed by the stunning gems of the natural world – a brilliant afternoon!

*A dusty heathland
Holds a cryptic character
The sneaky Grayling*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 20-Oct-20 10:05 AM GMT

Great evocation of the antics of the Grayling, Wurzel! Once they've found you they can be very hard to shake off...I've never inadvertently brought one home, but it can only be a matter of time. 😊 That jewel wasp is an exquisite little creature (as many wasps are – it's the common variety that gives them all a bad name). Are they associated with sandy heathland? I ask as that's the sort of habitat where I've spotted them in the past (Chobham Common).

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 20-Oct-20 02:00 PM GMT

Great Grayling shots!, with some backdrops where they can't blend in and 'disappear'. Stunning colours on that Jewel Wasp, never seen one before.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 20-Oct-20 03:41 PM GMT

That's some fabulous butterflies there Wurzel but two *valesina* in one day, that's just plain greedy! 🍴🍴🍴😋

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Oct-20 08:53 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was a bit worried that we were going to have to adopt a (very short lived) new pet! 😬😬 I'm not too sure about the Jewell Wasps habitats. I've seen the all green one and that was at the edge of woodland at the foot of a chalk Down where I've also seen a different species there. The second one was green on the thorax and red fading into gold on the abdomen and I've also seen that in the grounds at work and in my garden (when I had one). I do recall some experienced photographers in Bentley Wood mentioning that they would go to the New Forest for them as well so sandy heaths will probably be good hunting grounds for them 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 The colourful backdrops are another of the advantages of taking Little L butterflying with me 😊😊 I'll see if I can rustle up a Jewell Wasp for you next season 😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 I've since found out only seeing 2 *Valesina* there meant that it was a pretty poor showing 😬😬 I think the area has a higher density of Greenish than most other places 😊

Grovely Wood 12-07-2020

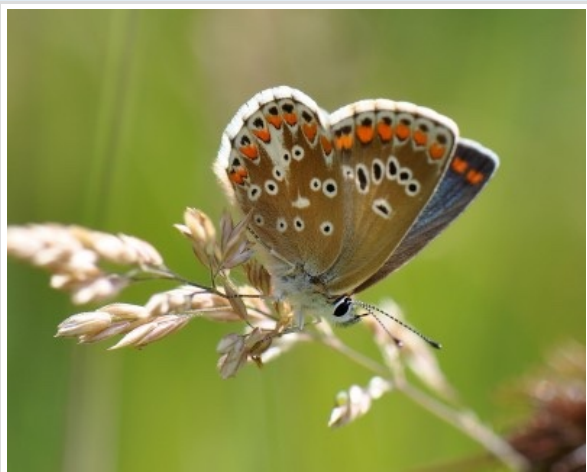
It had only been a couple of weeks between visits but what a difference that made! Back then the butterflies had been playing hard to get and things were very flighty amid the grey – only emerging when the sun briefly came out and it became a washout not just metaphorically but in actuality when the heavens opened in a sudden squally deluge. Today the weather was set fine, warm and with very little breeze and there were butterflies everywhere. I didn't know as we set off but this would probably be one of the best Grovely Walks I'd had. We'd almost not come as I'd had plans to visit Martin Down for an appointment with some Chalkhills but I'd been over-ruled by my wife who'd wanted a walk in some dappled shade what with the weather report showing full sun all morning and not wanting the girls to burn to a crisp.

As we pulled into the car park I was still imagining wandering along Bokerly Dyke but my daydreaming of ghostly pale Chalkhills was soon dispelled by the local butterflies as a Peacock, Silver Washed and a Comma all flitted about above the parked cars. A pretty good start by all accounts and on up the main track there seemed to be Whites lining the banks, Red Admirals littering the floor and a Holly Blue, the only representative of its family, threatening to come down on the deck but never quite landing. It reminded me of someone placing their toe in the water to check the temperature; it would flutter low along the path, one or two of its tarsi would touch down and then it would decide that it wasn't quite right and would be off again. Whilst this was enjoyable to watch it didn't make for any photographs so we carried on walking, the others chatting and me all the while scanning the whites. All three of the common species were flying here and occasionally taking nectar but possibly because they're bigger and catch the eye easier, most seemed to be Large Whites.

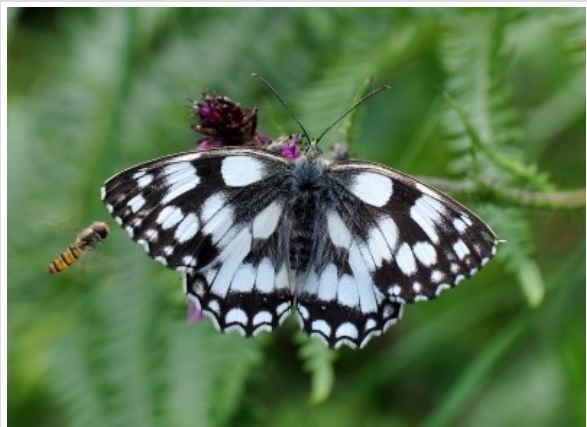


After taking the usual left hand branch in the track we were soon following the straight Roman Road and things quietened down in the shade afforded by the wonderful mosaic layering of the Beech leaves. Occasionally I could see a Silver-washed gliding in small clearings on the further side of the Beech avenue but that was it. Luckily the others stopped to chat to an acquaintance so while they talked loudly across the wide road I nipped off ostensibly for a 'Jimmy' though I got side-tracked down one of the side tracks. Behind the line of trees was a cleared area – by the amount of growth possibly cleared

two or three years before? But the light that flooded the area had brought on a collection of wild flowers that decorated the edges of the path. The first butterfly that I spot is really small – a fantastic Brown Argus. It is an absolute stunner and can't be long out of the chrysalis. I do have to do a double take as it starts to open up as the angle its wings are at refract the light to give the Brown wings a speckled steel blue sheen. But no, there is no cell spot and the spots on the underside hind wing make an 'omega' rather than an 'arc' so it's definitely a Brown Argus!



I mooch on a little bit still a bit dazzled by both the Brown Argus and from walking out of the gloom of the Beeches and slightly further on among the scores of Whites a few Marbled Whites sit nicely upon some of the taller Bracken. There are Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Hedgies, some more Marbled Whites and even more Whites and also at last 4 Peacocks scattered along the edges of the path. The butterflies don't seem to want to venture more than a metre or so away from either side of the path, preferring to fly along the margins which is great for me as the Bracken growing between and almost as all as the saplings looks like a Tick haven. Remembering why I was down this track I do what I'd set out to do and then retraced my steps back to the others. I timed it perfectly as I fell into line as they passed and I'm not really sure they'd noticed that I'd gone.



We delve on into the Wood and once past the Witchy trees turn off left. The track's vegetation has grown considerably over the last few months and not it looking lush and verdant with the grasses reaching up to mid-thigh. As we walk little plumes of dark smoke erupt from the grass - Ringlets and Meadow Browns. Again Peacocks feature heavily and a few Silver-washed males flap powerfully and then glide over the grass tops, their wingtips lazily grazing the tufts as they pass. At the other end of the path I spot the source of their machinations - a female, sitting out of the way and trying to look unobtrusive. After getting a few shots as I step back from her I spy an odd looking dead leaf which at the height of summer looks out of place even this far in the wood. As I peer in more closely I can see that it's a Ringlet and then there are two, the pair of them locked together in a love embrace.



The Peacock trend continues as we stroll along the track where we usually stop and take lunch and when we start downhill towards the set of little terraced fields there are even more of them, encouraged no doubt by the more open vistas on offer. The odd Smessex, Small and Large Skipper all buzz around on the Bramble and the odd Brimstone adds almost an overdose of colour. However I can't afford to stop for too long as the girls are now reaching the point of no return, next stop 'H-angry squabbles' and so I only take the occasional grab shots as we pass on by.



Eventually we reach the Down top and the girls no ravenous leap like Servals over the stile. The Wood doesn't pass over to the Down land grasses with

good grace and there are a few Oaks staunchly proclaiming their territory several metres away from the boundary fence and it's near some of these that we roll out the blanket. As I'm doing so I snatch a look up at the canopy and sure enough I see a couple of Purps flitting about in the medium sized Oak that's furthest into the Down and directly above is a third, which if I crane my neck right back I can watch from the comfort of the blanket! As we eat I watch as a Painted Lady ebbs and flows across the Knapweed knowing full well that by the time I've finished it'll be long gone. However just as the final morsel has passed my epiglottis I watch a Purp flutter slowly down and land on a low growing Nettle. It walks over the leaf and then flies to another and then another. Strange behaviour - not quite sure why it would come down to the deck? As I was up and the others will having a bit of a rest I took a quick wander through the good showing of thistles. There were plenty of the Browns and Whites but also a couple of DGFs. One in particular was very well behaved as it wove forwards and backwards across the purple flower heads and when the sun caught it at just the right angle the white spots shown out in silver.





After lunch we completed the final stretch pretty quickly and it was quite quiet until the Comma greeted us back from our walk in the car park. A fantastic haul for a summers' walk where I wasn't really 'trying', I love days like this.

Lovely Brown Argus
Massive numbers of Peacocks
Surprise Purple Streak

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-20 11:25 AM GMT

Work 14-07-2020

A day at work and one of those days when everything seems to turn up when you can't get to it and then buggers off when you can! In fact I almost put this down as a 'non-butterfly' day despite seeing a range of species when I walked from one teaching space to another. During the morning I watched a Red Admiral fly by as I went in the side door from the car park, my hands full with work, lunch and sanitizer. Then as I walked to my Lab there was another Red Admiral - or possibly the first - waiting to torment me as I walked past the spindly stand of Buddleia on the corner. I dropped my stuff off, ran out of the side door and back to the corner of the building but it had gone. Later as I walked across to Staff Room at break again there were butterflies on this Buddleia - a brace of Whites this time and again I was without camera. I could see that they were still there when I wandered back through the link corridor to room three. From room three it was back across the Quad to the Music Room from where I was able to watch, and watch only, as a succession of species frequented the Buddleia that was standing on the corner waiting for a certain young butterfly to come by...

Finally with a lesson 'free' I was able to actually make a Quad crossing with my camera and was rewarded with a Large White - not an earth shattering butterfly but the only one I was able to get a shot of all day despite the Buddleia being more active than a waterhole on the Serengeti! Oh well some days are like this...



*Full on frustration
Butterflies torment and tease
Single shot Large White*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 24-Oct-20 01:23 PM GMT

A rather good selection of high summer butterflies, Wurzel. 😊 Mid-July is always the peak for numbers (and species) round my way. Purple Hairstreaks seemed to spend quite a lot of time lower down this year if my experiences at Bookham were anything to go by – they often seemed to be sucking moisture on the low plants. Whether this was dew, or stickier things that had dripped from the trees above, I'm not sure but it always seemed a bit odd to be watching them at ground level rather than upwards with a crick in the neck! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Oct-20 07:26 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I know what you mean about the Purps – most of my decent shots are of them on Bracken so I always feel like their latin name is a bit of a misnomer – this was the first that I've seen on Nettles though 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 26-Oct-20 05:16 PM GMT

Some very tantalising stories and images from high summer, Wurzel.
A very mrgreenworthy shot of that DGF underside, superb detail. 🍷

Rubbish weather in Wilts at the weekend, didn't even bother,
but had some luck on the way home today!.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 26-Oct-20 09:05 PM GMT

Some beautiful shots there Wurzel, keep them coming, whilst I'm busy it's great to see the Sun shine and Butterflies in people's post 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-20 09:32 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I actually managed to get close to that DGF 😊😊 You don't need to remind me about the weather it was goddam awful – I was starting to think that I needed to build a big boat 😊😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I'll do my best – I have a few more posts stashed away 😊😊

Martin Down 16-07-2020

It was warm and breezy as I walked along the hedge from Sillen's Lane to the hotspot. I'd seen Meadow Browns, Ringlets fading fast, Small Whites in various stages of repair, tired Smessex, a Peacock flying strongly overhead, Hedgies and a Brimstone but not much was settling. Spurred on by the warmth and the breeze things were flitting about restlessly like school kids on a wet and windy day. Even the triangle was quiet today and I plodded along the dusty track turning my lens this was and that with only limited success. Things would either take off just as I focused on them or feint settling in the first place. It felt like it was going to be one of 'those' afternoons so I girded my loins and persevered...However as is often the way my fortunes flipped and things suddenly started behaving. Whether they'd sensed my resolve or it was a lull in the breeze who could tell (?) but now a Large White settled and Hedgies started playing ball. A Comma went over and things really came to fruition at the turn off point at the entrance to the tunnel when a male Small Blue paraded itself around wing rolling and just generally looking stunning with its immaculate fringes and scattering of powder blue scales.



check out the hairy fringe!

Cheered by my new found fortune I took the left hand fork, foregoing the tunnel and instead sticking to the level path that intersects the Dyke just near to the hotspot. The butterflies came thick and fast now - the field covered in Marjoram and other floral treats acted like a magnet pulling the butterflies in and holding onto them. There was a Small Heath party on the path, male Common Blues added highlights to the basic tawny coloured background. Several Whites drifted across the tops of the hay, kin to discarded feathers, and the usual assortment of Browns were bolstered by a few aged Marbled Whites. A few flashes of colour proved to be fast moving DGFs - but one equally speedy burst of colour was a more mustard hue. It was smaller as well and its flight characteristics were different, instead of a rapid, strong and direct flight this was direct for a time broken with occasional intermittent circling. It drew close enough to see that it was my first Cloudy of 2020, which promptly disappeared during another section of direct flight.



My meanderings had brought me to the Greenstreak field where again all the usual suspects flew – the highlight being a gorgeous female Common Blue. However I hadn't found what I'd hoped to see yet and so leaving the Browns, DGFs and Smessex behind I followed the little break through the hedge to the banks and scrapes behind and made my way towards the hollow hotspot. On the way a Peacock went up from the path both of us spooked in equal measure I felt and I was lucky enough to watch a Small Blue as it delicately deposited eggs. It was very balletic with a lot of pirouettes but instead of pointing toes, or tarsi even, the butterfly pointed with the end of its abdomen. When I reached the hotspot I spotted a couple of ghostly blues and the combination of their size and colouration giving them a more ethereal appearance than their smaller, darker cousins. They didn't seem to have a distinct end point, they just peter out to nothingness with their endpoint undetermined. All musings aside I was pleased with my second First For the Year of the trip so I set to trying to get them on memory card (doesn't have the same feel as 'on film'?). The Chalkhills proved difficult as despite their 'deathly' appearance in the sun's warmth they were pretty vital. Things weren't made any easier by the plethora of species present either. It was a bit fox in a chicken coop for a while so instead of rushing round like said fox and snapping at everything, I stilled myself and took in the scene before me whilst plotting out my course to where the Dyke restarted so as to photograph as much as possible. As I scanned I scribbled initials and numbers down in the notebook which read; 2 Chalkhills, 3 male Common Blues, Peacock, DGF, 2 Small Coppers, Red Admiral, Brown Argus, a couple more DGFs and in the distance in the little corner I could just make out 2 Peacocks, female Brimstone, Small Copper, Brown Argus (silvery flight), 2 Common Blues and some Smessex...With everything logged I set off almost on autopilot...step, turn right, stoop, click, click, click, straighten up, twist left, click, click, click etc...I paused on the corner and added Small Heath and Small Blue to the list along with a few more male Chalkhills and a brace a piece of Large Whites and Small Whites. So twelve species all within easy reach of this one little spot!

Better leave it there for now...





Ghostly Chalkhill Blues
Wingtips infinitely fade
Phantom butterfly

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 28-Oct-20 10:05 AM GMT

If I had to pick anything out of that splendid selection, Wurzel, I think it would have to be the fluffy-fringed male Small Blue. Aside from those perfect fringes, it has a very generous helping of blue scales and looks immaculate. Lovely butterfly. 🍷 😊

Martin Down performs again - time I paid it another summer visit as well, having firmly placed it on my springtime itinerary! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-20 08:49 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I think that Small Blue was fresh out of the packet 😊 This year, Wall aside, I found Martin Down to be a better site than Cotley dare I say it... 😊 Certainly easier on the ankles and knees 😊😊

Martin Down 16-07-2020 Part 2

Now with the wind having picked up I started the ascent of the Down sticking to the various narrow animal tracks just to the right of the main path in order to see down into the Dyke more easily. It was strange to watch a butterfly being blown about all ways as it would fight against the wind staying almost still, then when the breeze would drop it would accelerate off like a rocket! They'd also be struggling across the side of the down then drop down into the sheltered Dyke and I swear I could see them give a shrug of the forewing in relief! As I continued the climb among the Common Blues and a couple of Peacocks I was noticing more and more DGFs and Whites. At one point I watched 2 Brimstones scrapping and it turned into a melee with 7 other individuals piling in and all setting off across the floor of the Dyke flying in close formation. Once at the top a Chalkhill stopped briefly and then it was decision time.



Ordinarily I would follow the diagonal path down across the Down back to the car park but today I carried on along the top past the Lockdown picnic spot and onto the scrub where I'd previously found Dingies and Grizzlies a plenty. As I walked following the same animal tracks that ran along the side of the Down like contour lines there were DGFs everywhere. I found a strip of Bramble that was flitted about taking nectar here and there. A Peacock stood out like a sore thumb and then when it closed its wings vanished Houdini like. There was an immobile DGF and three Hedgies and I carried on adding another Peacock, a further three DGFs scattered along the final length and a Small Copper was the prize awaiting me at the end of the hedge before it shot off without so much as a shot.

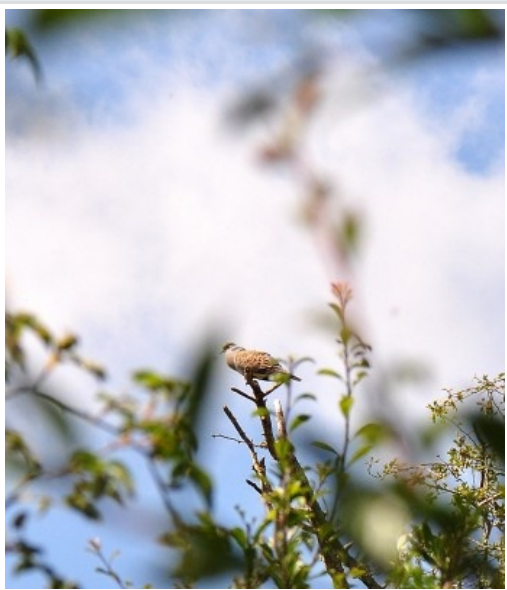




I retraced my steps and diverted from the contour thanks to those leading diagonally down with gronking Ravens overhead and DGFs and Browns (including Marbled Whites) keeping apace with me as I descended. The climb down brought me to the dry stony flats at the foot of the hill. The sparse vegetation meant lots of prime basking spots which explained the numerous Blues and Small Heath that erupted upwards when I walked towards the little oasis of springy turf mid-way along the flats. Some of the Blues actually paused here including two males and a lovely looking female Common Blue. There was of course a DGF but a (further) brace a piece of Common Blue and Marbled White made a nice change from the ubiquitous Browns of earlier. As I photographed away the jarring gronking of the Ravens was replaced by a pleasant, almost meditative "turring". Somewhere around there were some Turtle Doves and so I crossed the flats and field towards the large island of scrub from where the calls were issuing.



They were calling from deep within the scrub but hadn't banked on a human finding a tunnel like path that ran 2/3's of the length. I made a cautious advance down the track pausing often so as not to spook my quarry and also to try and locate it, after brief views I also turned up several Hedgies (with so much hedge this was a given) and also a crackling looking Dragonfly - Common Darter maybe? Having successfully gotten sight of a Turtle Dove and a few shots I tried to get a better photo but it proved impossible as the several birds were all amidst the impenetrable foliage. After several attempts I gave up and just enjoyed watching for the occasional glimpse all the while being serenaded and lulled into a very relaxed state.



Eventually when I was able to break free from the somnolence induced by the continual turring and I made it to the end of the tunnel without further succumbing to the avian sirens and realising that time was now in short supply I made haste along the final sections of track that completed my circuitous route. The final show was a fantastic, dusky female DGF which caught the light perfectly - topside glittering deep emerald green over the black livery whilst the spots showed up like Aluminium when she revealed her underwings. A fantastic and fitting end to a fantastic trip.





Turring Turtle Doves
Lull to a somnolent state
Dark Green showstopper

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 30-Oct-20 09:00 PM GMT

Cracking reports from Martin Down Wurzel with an enviable selection of butterflies 🦋😊. A site I have never visited being too far for me for a day trip, I will have to try and take it in some time on our way down for one of our breaks down in Dorset.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-20 06:24 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 If you can get to Martin Down it's well worth it – give me a shout as well and I'll guide you to the best spots. 🦋

November 2020

Well after the downpours and with frost forecast for next week that cold be it so the only butterflies we might see now will be on screen...



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Matsukaze, 01-Nov-20 06:59 PM GMT

I didn't know you had Striped Grayling in Wiltshire 😊

The dragonfly is Southern Hawker.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Nov-20 08:56 PM GMT

Cheers Matsukaze 😊 There is a very small population of Striped Grayling here in Salisbury...on my hard drive 😊 Cheers for the ID – for some reason I had a brain fart and called it a Common Darter when I meant Common Hawker – at least then I'd have only been half wrong 😊

Shipton Bellinger 17-07-2020 First Call

Over the last few years the last day of the summer term has usually been a half day and so I've made it somewhat of a tradition to make my first visit to Shipton Bellinger on the way home. This year I intended to do the same but it was going to be a strange one for several reasons. First of all it was much earlier than in usual years as we'd completed enough 3 hour twilights to get the final three Teacher Training Days off in lieu. Plus I'd not been in on a Friday for 6-7 weeks as I'd been allotted Monday, Tuesday and alternate Wednesdays. The final reason for the strangeness was that I wasn't going into work but just to say goodbye to various of members of staff that were moving on; including horror of horror my Technician. So instead of pulling up behind the hedge and wandering round to find Brostreaks already active and possibly ready to be pointed out to me by observers already on site I arrived early when the Brostreaks may have only just been getting out of bed and I would have to do all the hard graft myself at the same time as memorising my colleagues goodbye speech.

I started off by checking my watch which revealed that I had about hour until I needed to be on the road and heading into work for the final time of the 2019-20 academic year. As I walked down the length of the hedge I alternated between scanning the top and main body of the hedge on my left and the grasses beneath my feet and ahead. There were all the usual suspects, mainly the two Browns with the occasional additional Peacock, Small Heath and Specklie. The best bits on the way down and then back up the hedge were a Comma and a Holly Blue. Both species were on Bramble, the Comma feeding away merrily and the Holly Blue just sitting in the shelter and slight shade afforded by the mosaic of surrounding leaves and neither of them deemed to open up. I couldn't fault the Comma for remaining closed, the last thing it would want to do was tear at its perfectly formed wings but the Holly Blue was just sitting there so I felt a bit miffed with it to be honest. Once I'd made it back to where I'd started I kept on going, sticking to the track as it started the steep but short climb up on the now blinding white chalk path. About half way up I was forced to pause as there was a Hummingbird Hawk Moth taking nectar from some of the very few flowers that were growing amid the barren chalk wasteland of the path.





I stopped at the top of the climb, the flat thin turf stretching out before me on one side as it metamorphosed into grassland proper, on the other side ran the ribbon of woodland and ahead of me I could make out the first of the scallops through the gateway of small trees. I hadn't meant to pause for breath or to take in the view as time wasn't on my side but a second Hummingbird Hawkmoth had thrown a nice spanner in the works. This time it was a little easier to get shots off (if that is actually possible?) as there was a much greater selection of flowers and they were growing in close association to one another. There were several more Peacocks in the various scallops and a female Brimstone in the final one standing out nicely amid the sea of Brown butterflies. There was more of the same on the return journey and a Brown Argus in the final flat patch upon my return to the top of the hill was a nice addition but there wasn't a sniff of a Brostreak, not even a distant possible flying high in the hedges.





I still had some time so I wandered back down the hill making for the main hedge. When I'd safely reached the bottom, the compounded chalk slick and slippery underfoot, there was a Holly Blue taking salts from a small depression on the main track. Once I'd watched it for a bit I moved in ever so cautiously took a few shots and carefully reversed leaving my quarry still supping away. From here I did another down and back up the main hedge. There again a Holly Blue and a Comma stood out amongst the Browns but on this journey down another Brown Argus proved to be the star. Or so I thought...





On the return leg I was starting to make haste as time was ticking ever onwards. I happened to glance back up the hedge while I hurried onwards and flying towards me was a mustard yellow butterfly. It shot past me and then doubled back flying strongly ahead of me. It was a Cloudy and I slowed my pace in the hope that it would do a return patrol. Luckily it did and a few times it broke out of its straight run and investigated some of the flowers. I watched it do this a couple more times and then it had reached me. It took a sharp left turn, stalled and plopped down on a flower head. As I reached for my camera a Meadow Brown piped up and started hassling it. It flew to another flower with the Meadow Brown hot on its heels, and again, and again. Each time it landed and it was looking like I'd be able to get a shot or two off the Meadow Brown intervened. Finally it was so close that I leant down, focused and just as I was about to 'click' the Meadow Brown appeared on the scene again but this time rather than buzzing the Cloudy and backing off when it moved on it continued to harry the Cloudy and I had to watch my quarry being chased up, up, up and over the top of one of the tallest tress at the back of the hedge.



Grinding my teeth I made it back to the car and then onwards to work. A missed Cloudy and not hide nor hair of a Brostroke – was this prophetic fallacy? Were the butterflies reflecting my sombre and slightly sad mood? I reckon so and I must confess to barely making it through the farewell speech with choking up. Sad times...

*No early Brostreaks
A meddling Meadow Brown
Reflects my blue mood*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 02-Nov-20 10:10 PM GMT

Seems like only yesterday when I was out looking for my first Brown Hairstreaks, fair to say things improved from our first forays!

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 03-Nov-20 11:46 AM GMT

Superbly 'frozen' Hummer there Wurzel! 🇺🇸

Shipton B is certainly an eye opener. Do you remember the sheer variety there on the day of our visit?, where to point the camera was the difficulty that day!.

Chatting to Katrina at Whitehawk hill, she asked me what the highlight of my year was. At the time nothing really stood out, but upon reflection it was my visits to Shipton B. A fabulous place that is now firmly on my annual itinerary, along with Tilshead.

Great report, stay safe,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-Nov-20 09:03 PM GMT

A bit of a calm before the storm at Shipton B. there, Wurzel, knowing how things picked up later on. As Trevor says, it's a must on the annual plan these days. 😊 As is Martin Down of course – like you say it might have the edge on Cotley for variety on one day, and multiple visits just add to that as well. Bad luck with that Cloudy, though – they can be incredibly frustrating when they're in full flow of activity and they do get harassed by other butterflies. Common Blues don't seem to care for them much! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-20 08:51 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 Yep things really went well this year – they started following the rule book again 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I was chuffed with that shot – 'Sports Mode' did the trick 😊 Shipton is a cracking cracking site and I seem to be spending more and more time there each year 😊 I've booked you in for next year 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 It's great having a reliable site that produces the variety that Shipton does – I've also booked you in for next year 😊 I didn't mind about the Cloudy too much as one played ball a little later in the season 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Nov-20 08:24 PM GMT

Garston Wood 18-07-2020

The weather had been a bit hit and miss earlier in the month but now it looked to be back on track and to take advantage of this and also check in on my parents we arrange a Socially Distanced picnic at Garston Wood. We arrived a little before my mum and dad and while we waited and readied ourselves a Large White flew around in the car park while Ringlets and Meadow Browns feasted over the remains of the Bramble flowers. As we started our walk following the trail and tested trail some 'slightly less ginger' female Silver-washed flew across the coppice, keeping low to the ground and stopping to investigate various leaves and flowers. Having recently encountered fresh Valesina or Greenish Silver-washed today I was struck by how unapt a common name that was as the females of the normal form appear ginger with a greenish tinge whereas in strong sun the Greenish can actually appear silver? However this was only a momentary musing and I reverted to the 'walk and talk' of a Social Distanced meet up.



After lunch at the large log we moved on into the old Enclosure and the numbers of butterflies picked up. As we entered there was a Small White, then a brace of Peacocks and a Red Admiral. On it went with various Browns, mainly Ringlets and Meadow Browns fluttering by. The occasional Silver-washed would glide by, investigate us and then veer off sailing over the Bracken tops and away. One of the Silver-washed didn't follow this pattern instead it went down in the verge slightly ahead of the group. I expected her to take off as we approached by she didn't instead she crawled through the vegetation for about 50 cm before taking to the wing only to plop down again another 50cm away at the base of a tree. She stayed still as I cautiously approached and I could see that she was ovi-positing in the moss and crevices of the bark.





As we continued on up the track the most noticeable butterfly not just in terms of appearance but in number too were the Peacocks and there seemed to be one or two on each large clump of Bramble. A Comma finally joined the days tally, I'd expected one earlier as it crawled from one leaf to another and then I found what I thought was at the time the highlight of the visit – a pair of Hedgies in cop.



Chuffed we carried on into the final section of the walk – through the Plantation where some joker had hung a skull to a tree. This might have had the desired effect on the human visitors as the whole section was quiet excepting the swarm of Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Hedgies as well as the platoons of Silver-washed Fritz. Seriously it was difficult working out what to try and get a shot of and doubly difficult to approach then in their solar turbo charged state. In the end I plumbed for a reasonably well behaved Brimstone. This was lovely to look at however the real highlight of the day then deemed to turn up. Slinking and sidling in the shadows it was a Silver-washed, a Valesina and despite its preference for the shade it too was very twitchy, possibly because the darker colouring absorbs more infra-red than its orange siblings. It was also tricky to photograph because its shade seeking habits kept it further back and deeper in the cover of the undergrowth. My dad and I watched it settle down and once it had found a spot to its liking we stalked it so I was able to let my dad have a clear view before I got a few shots and we re-joined the others for the final furlong back to the car park.





Greenish Silver Frit
Slinking sidling shadow seeks
Blue rinse not ginger

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

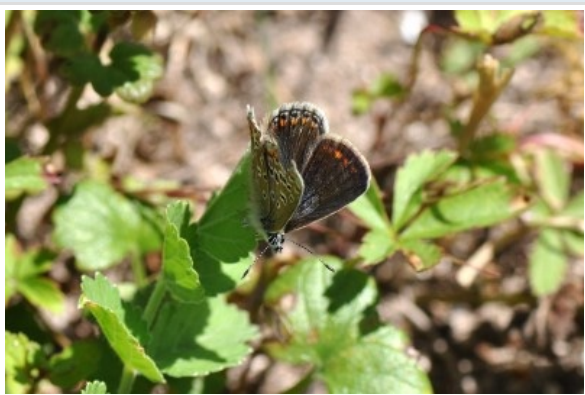
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Nov-20 10:46 PM GMT

Shipton Bellinger 20-07-2020

So began the summer holidays proper. It was strange to be out butterflying this early and even stranger to not get up early and get a couple of hours work in to pay in advance for my butterflying. Instead I took the opportunity to have a lie-in and once I had leisurely broken fast I set forth seeking the gentlemen's butterfly - the Brostroke. It was still a few days earlier than my normal first sighting date but I was hopeful having seen a few more reports trickling in from other sites and intended to use my new freedom to make a complete tour of the site covering all of the usual haunts. I parked at the back of the main hedge and with my ears still slightly bleeding from some exceeding loud Iron Maiden I rounded the corner and set off down the line of the main hedge. It was a hive of activity and by the time I'd walked the stretch singles of Comma, Red Admiral were joined by braces of Whites, numerous Peacocks and scores of Meadow and Hedge Browns. Whilst it was nice seeing all these butterflies the hedge didn't throw up what I was hoping for.

Next stop was the little clearing round by the edge of the main road. As I was making my way from the main track a tiny carpet covered butterfly, mainly the colour of old sacks with the occasional peach flash, caught my eye. To be honest I shouldn't have seen it as it was flying low over the tops of the short turf and should have been keeping watch on the hedgerow but I was glad that I'd slipped from my Brostroke vigil as here was a second brood Dingy. It was lovely to see one of these charismatic butterflies again as I realised that I'd missed their cheeky chappy demeanour. Its flutterings led me round into the clearing where it continued showing off for a bit before it nipped off leaving me with a lovely female Common Blue amid the long list of usual suspects.



From here I retraced my steps and worked back diligently up the main hedge, carefully watching and checking every Meadow Brown and Hedgie (of which there were a lot, hence my slow progress) that flew among the whites occasionally. I would let my eyes stray away from the confines of the hedge and in doing so I spotted a cracking Brown Argus and finally a Small Copper. However still no Brostreak so when I reached the break in the hedge I broke away and had a little walk around in the scallops where previously I'd encountered a Silver Spot. No luck today although I did spot a DGF here as well as a couple of jostling Common Blues.



As I was heading in that direction I carried on past the old Ash Master Tree and down the main track heading towards the village. In the alternating sun and shade the butterflies were patrolling and a Comma, Red Admiral and Peacock all did fly-pasts before settling on the various Bramble bushes. Speckled Woods dominated this section, flying from their chosen perches to do battle with each other, spiralling upwards seemingly never-endingly. Another Peacock on the corner where the track splits into a dual carriageway helped me decide which path to take. So I stuck with the lower side, pushing my way through some of the more overgrown sections and all the while scanning the hedge, almost trying to stare though it. However despite there being plenty of activity it still wasn't of the type that I was hoping for and after a Brostroke free wander up and down this path I took a little sojourn in the little field on the other side of the main hedge. There was a lovely display of the soft thistles that the Brostreaks seem to have a penchant for. A Smessex and Marbled White were feeding here and so made it onto the days tally and there were also the expected Meadow Browns and Hedgies along with a Comma and a Large White feeding on the flower tops. I made a mental note to try and get back here on subsequent visits as this looks like a likely spot for the Brostreaks.





By now I reasoned that it was still a little too early for the target species and so I cut across the main track through one of the breaks in the dense hedge and strode across the large field towards the main Hedge. As I did so a DGF flew rapidly away but despite checking none of the Whites here turned into Cloudies. In previous years the scallops at the top of the hill often held the Hairstreaks I was seeking, and often the males were a bit worn suggesting that they emerged early here so from the main hedge I carried on up the hill, negotiating the slippery chalk slope and reaching the hill top in one piece. Once at the top I had a quick look around and I could see that the small path that wound its way in between the various scallops had been blocked by a fallen shrub and so I continued checking out the little patches of turf but from the alternate side. Another DGF and four male Common Blues gave me the run around in the first scallop and as I wandered along the path, hedge to my right and open down to my left, I managed to find another Red Admiral and Peacock among the many, many Browns and Whites. The final scallop was surprisingly quiet and it was starting to cloud over now so I returned via the same route to the first scallop where a Small Heath actually sat still. After this I made my downhill but on the other side of the hedge. This was much more open, stretching away to the road and it was full of flowers. All the Browns were there but a male Common Blue caught my eye above all others as it was so brilliantly fresh. At times it caught the light and appeared white.





When I checked my watch I could see that I was coming towards the end of the golden hours and also that it was still early date wise so I decided to head for home. A prompt return and one before time usually means a few extra Brownie points accrued so hopefully I'd be able to cash them in for a few more return visits. I may have been a bit early for the Shipton Brostreaks but the habitat is looking good, the weather is set to fair for Brostreaks so in a couple of days' time a return visit to any of the spots I'd visited today should pay dividends.

*Second Shipton trip
Too early for Brostreaks still
But things set to fair...*

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Nov-20 08:20 PM GMT

Perham Down 21-07-2020

I'd made a few trips to Shipton hoping to pick up an early Brostreak what with seeing reports from Sussex and Dorset that they were already out. However I'd drawn a blank on my visits but I had picked up some useful information about a Wiltshire site for Silver Spotted Skippers so today I set forth looking for them rather than the reticent Brostreaks. The new site was just the other side of Tidworth and it felt slightly odd driving past 'Range F' and not pulling in as I continued on my way there diligently following the Satnav.

At the first stop that I made I didn't hang around as there were a load of Squaddies hiding in a barn so I didn't want to draw attention to them hence I drove parked up at the foot of the down at the start of the ranges rather than in the middle. The track from the car was lined by Blackthorn and Hawthorn (I was thinking about Brostreaks?) and on one side there was a mature wood (Purps) and on the other a flat meadow which I strolled through to reach the foot of the down. As to be expected Meadow Browns flew up from the grasses along with a few Marbled Whites and DGFs. Hedgies made forays from the hedges and a Common Blue flitted from flower to flower in the lower level grasses along the path. Slightly unexpected but still a welcome sight was a second brood Dingy Skipper.



The ground started to slope gently as I reached the foot of the down and I paused in a sheltered little spot as there seemed to be a lot going on amid the springy turf. I spotted a couple of male Common Blues having a scrap that was dizzying to watch. A Holly Blue briefly drifted down from up on high and another second brood Dingy entertained me for a bit. Then there was a lime green and gold blur. I found myself willing it to settle under my breath as I stood stock still for fear of spooking it. It ceased its buzzing and dropped, flopping down and starting to nectar. As it did so it revealed an array of white spots standing out from the lime green background. It was a Silver Spot, so job done and I hadn't even gotten to the main spot of the site!

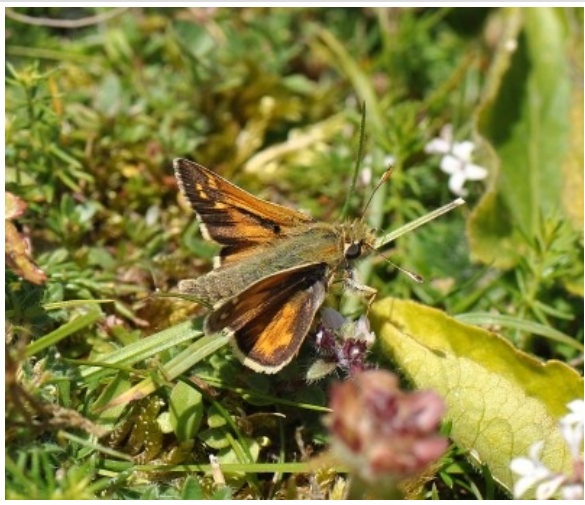


After I'd picked up a few shots it zipped off and I tried to follow it until it eventually decided to stop toying with me and with a sudden jink to the left it just vanished. I didn't really mind as during 'the chase' somehow I'd made it three quarters of the way up the steep side of the down without even noticing it! So I kept on climbing and once at the top I turned to look back across the view where I caught sight of plenty of Meadow Browns and Hedgies, a Common Blue and a DGF instead. They were all hanging out around a stretch of Bramble that lined the top of the down like a bad comb over. On along the top a clattering of Jackdaws put on an aerial display whilst the breeze tugged at my hat brim - not a good sign. So it proved to be as when I spotted my second Silver Spot the wind wrenched it away from beneath my lens not to be seen again!



The breeze was starting to become somewhat of an annoyance by the time I'd reached the end of the Down. Luckily as the down tapered off gently into the surrounding fields of Oilseed Rape and wheat the thin wisps of shrubbery began to thicken and with this increased shelter the temperatures started to climb along with my opportunities for photography. Before examining the micro clearings between the thorns I checked out the demarking track way which snaked around the bottom of the down. The fact that it was a blinding white chalk track helped to highlight the contrast between the wildflowers of the down and the manicured and highly stylised topography of the cultivated land. A few scraggly plants were cling on, trying to reclaim their territory and on these a few Meadow Browns and Smessex sought succour whilst a Small Copper dazzled more than the chalk. From the bottom corner I stepped back onto the Down and worked through some of the little clearings. Again Meadow Browns abounded whilst the Hedgies held sway on the thickets and bushes. Both Peacock and Red Admiral added flashes of colour but the real reason I remained here were two Silver Spots which seemed to take it in turns to sit for me. They were in really good nick and the spots really stood out - that is when they sat in the 'perfect pose'. Most of the time however they'd sit $\frac{3}{4}$ open like X-Wings caught half way between hyperspace and attack configurations. I didn't mind though as this meant that I could capture the large, metallic sex brand on film; looking like a discarded strand of steel.





As this was a new site I decided that I should have a look around and so I set out back to the range that I'd started at - this time though unlike the way out I worked back at about half way up the slope...on average to be honest as there was plenty of walking up and down the slope after this butterfly and that. There were another two Silver Spots and a few DGFs as well as my first Small Heath of the day. Once at the range I cut back across the top to what shall hence forth be known as the 'Hotspot' picking up another Silver Spot and making the most of its amicable demeanour on the way.







By now it was getting 'Mighty W' as my dad always says and so I worked through the thickets to the foot of the Down on the ranges side and through a field of Bird's Foot Trefoil, a Common Blues heaven as the usual green of grass was replaced with a sea of vivid custard yellow. Still dazzled by the sight I stumbled diagonally back up the Down where the Hedgies were still in great abundance, it seemed that almost every bush or piece of scrub was covered in them almost as if a crate had been upended. In amongst the smaller browns the occasional DGF would glide by – one was too knackered to fly and was using the breeze to carry it, when there was a lull in the breeze it would flop down. On one of the times it dropped and the crawled through the grass to the nectar source it had missed when it belly flopped.



I ended up back at the Down in the little patch of springy turf where I'd spotted my first Silver Spot. The Common Blues had either woken up or gathered here from other areas as there was now a plethora of them. I managed to count 9 in one view but there were still some behind me and on either side of me out of view. As well as these the Skippers were also well represented with plenty of Smessex, a definite Essex, another or possibly the same Dingy and a fly-by Silver Spot.





As I set off three Squaddies were silhouetted in the distance as they finished their ascent of the Down and I was struck by the incongruity that this haven for wildlife had come about due to the more destructive side of human nature. However my introspective and sombre mood was suddenly lifted when I rounded the corner of the thicket. There was another Squaddie edging towards me on the other side of the scrub...

"Alright mate?" he asked.

"Yeah cheers. I've just seen three of your mates up on the top of the hill" I replied.

"Nice one, thanks!" And then he dove into the bush. Looks like I'd helped him avoid capture during a (serious) game of Manhunt. Chuckling about soldiers playing a 'kids game' and having done my good deed for the day (well I saved someone's life) I cut back across the field and reaching the car I poured a much needed coffee. Whilst it cooled down I did too, standing in the blessed shade offered by a large Oak. Coffee drunk I decided to check a little of the wood as I had a hunch which paid out as I spotted a couple of Purple Hairstreaks up high.

On the way home I still had a little time and so popped into The Devenish for a quick progress check. I was hoping for a few Chalkhills as they'd been recorded at other sites. So I did a circuit round from the Orchid Meadow, up the first section, diagonally down the middle section and back through the tiny paddock. There were masses of Common Blues and a lovely Small Copper right at the top of the Down but no Chalkhills...Still it had been a cracking afternoon, at a cracking site, I'd gotten what I'd gone for and I'd saved someone's life to boot!



*Try out a new site
Up the Down and through gold fields
Argentum micro*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 11-Nov-20 09:51 PM GMT

Great to explore a brand new spot, Wurzel – those areas of Salisbury Plain used by the forces seem to be brilliant for butterflies. 😊 Four types of Skipper is pretty good going too, and you found some great SSS (early too)! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 12-Nov-20 08:13 AM GMT

I find it very odd that you can drive past ' F Range ' without popping in!
I also think your last two posts are spoilers or teasers for the main event.

Great shots of those second brood Dingy Skippers, and Wilts Silver Spots.
WLH next year?! 😊

Great stuff, stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Nov-20 07:52 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 The Plain is really productive as so much of it is just left to its own devices = the only draw back is that you have to be a bit careful where you place your feet for fear of unexploded ordnance 😬 Extreme butterflying 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 Defo WLH next year – cheers for the tip off 😊😊 It was really tricky but I had too as I only had limited time, though muscle memory almost got the better of me and I did veer across the central markings when I got close to the turning 😬😬😬

Shipton Bellinger 23-07-2020

This was to be my third trip to Shipton for Brostreaks; “would it be third time lucky?” I wondered as I drove to the site, Iron Maiden on full whack as is customary. The timing was more likely, the time of day was spot on bit I needed a large dollop of luck when it came to the weather which was quite frankly pants! I decided there and then to treat this more as another recce ready for the visitors I'd be expecting over the coming weeks and with that in mind I also decided to check out a little area which always looks promising...

First though I made the usual pass down the main hedge – eyes mainly held at the level of the bush tops. In the cloudy conditions there wasn't an awful lot flying and I quickly reached the end of the hedge with only a Large White to show for my efforts. On my journey down the hedge I'd bumped into a few other butterflies and some socially distanced chats revealed that I wasn't the only one bereft of Brostreaks. So it was onwards and upwards to the bit of the site that I wanted to have a closer look at.



At the end of the hedge is a stone road at right angles to the hedge behind which there is a small wood. If you follow the road round as it bends to the left there is a tiny track on the other side of the wood which runs parallel to the first part of the road and runs across to the small clearing where I'd recently seen my second brood Dingy Skipper. It was this little patch that I wanted a proper look at. I'd visited this spot before a few times but generally once I'd been sated with Brostreaks from the Main Hedge either that or I wasn't willing to check it out fully because of FOMO. But this time with the cloud holding everything back I wouldn't be missing out on much so it was worth a punt...

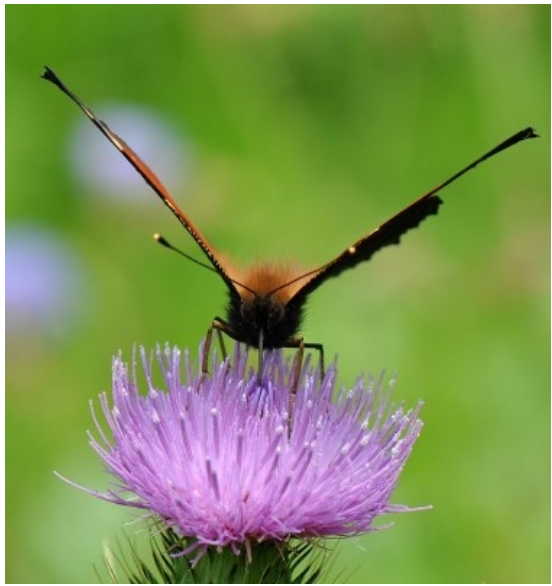
I'm not a gambling man by long shot suddenly romped home. There sitting atop a soft thistle was the familiar triangle shape of a Hairstreak. At first I wondered if it was a Whitter as not only was it still pretty gloomy but it was sitting in the shade from what little light was available and hence it was an unremarkable dark and dull colour. However it moved to another flower head, I got a little closer and the final part of the triumvirate, the sun chose that moment to break through the cloud.



After realising that it was in fact a Brostreak I risked a glance heavenwards - the break in the clouds was growing and more and more light was filtering down, even better behind this break a few more blue patches were drifting my way, I reckoned maybe an hour's worth? So now I had to hope that the Brostreak would stick around hence I set too and got a few shots while he continued sitting still. He was a corker, beautifully marked and as he sipped away I wondered if this was his first outing since emerging; a closer look revealed a little grey patch where the scales had rubbed off so perhaps a day or more old?



I could have spent the remainder of my time here but even though this butterfly was a cracker he wasn't actually doing very much and after a few photos I decided to risk leaving him for a bit and seeing what else there was to offer here. As I edged down the narrow path there were several different species flying despite the 'hemmed in' feel. Various Whites flew and there were three species of Brown in evidence and Peacocks showed really well. Reaching the end of the track without finding another Brostreak I checked out the path to the right scanning the Blackthorn on one side and the large bed of deep green nettles with the occasional light purple soft thistle peeking up above the parapets. Still no more Brostreaks but a Comma and Red Admiral seem enticed by the nettles and the small whippings of Blackthorn look good for the female Brostreaks. I retraced my footsteps and head back to the section of the path where the Brostreak was which was easy to find again as the hedge was flattened back with a Field Maple bordering the woodland behind.

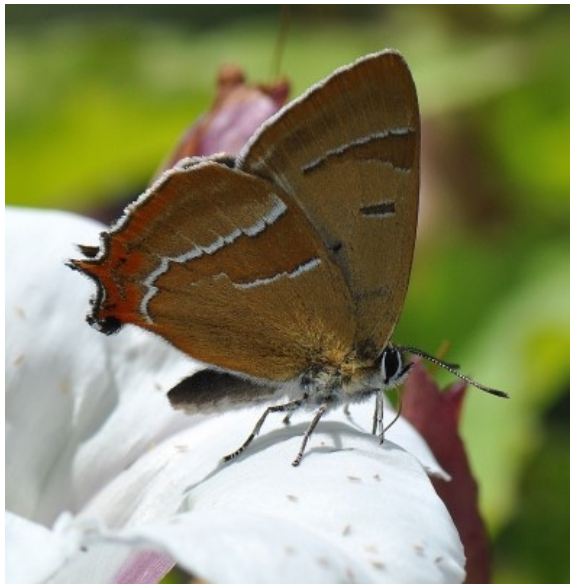


The Brostreak was still there and I spent 10 more minutes or so revelling in its gloriousness and marvelling how the colours and textures shifted as it moved from flower top to flower top; from full sun to shade and back again. In the shade it seemed to become more orange and smoother looking, whilst in the sun it took on more honey tones and the scales gave it a furry appearance. I also noticed that when the fore wing is held lower it looks more rounded yet when the fore wing is held upright and forward its silhouette is very much more pointed and shark fin like. With plenty of shots in the bag I left it alone and stood back and watched. After a couple more minutes it pirouetted around a flower top, getting its bearings, before flying off in its inimitable jinking style.



Honey and rounded



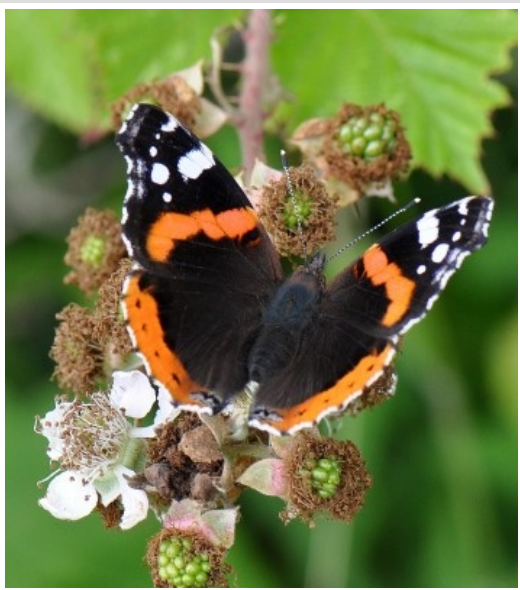


Orange, smooth and shark fin-esque



Furry

Once back on the stone road the final patch of blue dwindled to nothing and the cloud resumed it hold over the sun. The butterflies too started to phase out and it was a very quiet walk back up the length of the hedge towards the car. Among the fleeing Browns a Red Admiral seemed to have gotten caught out by the sudden coolness in the air as it sat on a Blackberry angling its wings to try and soak up a bit more sun. A Brimstone had also been caught out, unfortunately its entrapment wasn't thermally induced, it had fallen prey to a large spider instead and the arachnid was now sizing up its victim, its palps positively quivering in greedy anticipation! And with that final image doing its best to dispel all of the brilliant Brostreak images I loaded up and made for home, third time lucky indeed!





*Would a long shot pay?
Its third time luck indeed!
Brostroke sits pretty*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 14-Nov-20 02:21 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, still following your adventures 😊 Some stunning shots in your posts 📷📷 not been lucky here, nothing seen since the 6th October, mind you I've been busy trying to tidy up and get rid of stuff, Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 14-Nov-20 08:28 PM GMT

We've had the spoilers and teasers, but I think your latest post is just an aperitif for what's to follow. That's a mighty fine male Brown Hairstreak for starters. I'm just hoping you didn't manage a pristine male with wings wide open 😊

Enviably shots! 📷 stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Nov-20 06:22 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I hope the 'decluttering' is going well 😊 even though things have stalled for now at least when things pick up you'll be ready and raring to go 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I can't promise that further males open winged or not won't feature in future posts... 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Nov-20 08:29 PM GMT

Martin Down 28-07-2020

It had been a few days since I'd last managed to get out properly so I took advantage of an early lunch and headed over to Martin Down. Having seen two Cloudies already I was hoping that my usual spot (behind the Greenstreak field and further into the reserve from the hotspot) would turn up at least a semi-photographable Cloudy. So I set off from Sillen's Lane on the lookout for pretty much anything but especially anything yellowy...

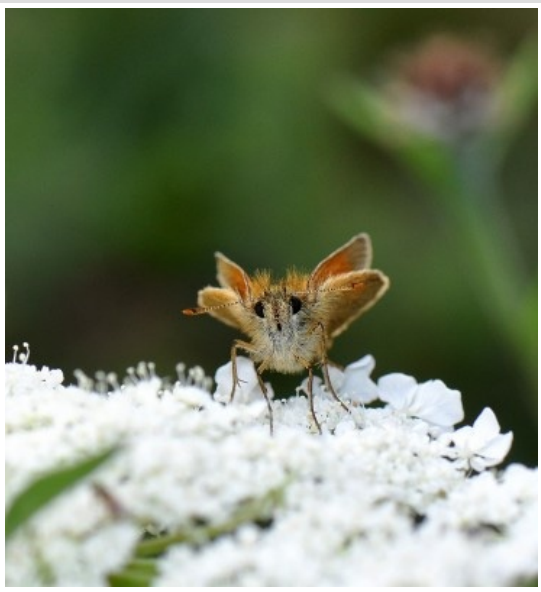
The short walk up to the gate threw up all the usual fare with a Holly Blue, Peacock, two each of Common Blue and Brimstone and the bucket loads of Meadow Browns and Hedgies that I'd come to expect. What was a surprise here was a second brood Dingy; practically the first butterfly of the day fluttering around the dry but not dusty track. I paused at the gate and again it produced the goods with a Common Blue, 2 females and a male Hedgie, 3 Meadow Browns and a male Brimstone passing through. The prize for pausing was a male Holly blue threatening to open up in the sun. Not bad for a section of land about 4 metres at the hypotenuse.





I carried on along the track eagerly scanning the verge and hedge alike. Whites flew along the margins of the fields to my left whilst Common Blues danced about catching the eye and leading it away from the more drab but larger Meadow Browns which were joined now by the occasional aged Ringlet. A DGF bombed by, far too fast to follow whilst a Turtle Dove lazily passed overhead. As I watched it I was struck by the way that the head, tail and thorax/chest all appear completely still with only the ends of the wings in motion. A very lazy way of flying I felt but it does match their lackadaisical and hypnotic call. Forsaking the tunnel I veered left along the flat path leading to the hotspot. The fields opened up and the wild flowers grew in random splotches like a Pollock splatter painting. Chalkhills started appearing now amid the notable Common Blues and other usual suspects. "Wet yer lips!" rang out from somewhere low down in the foliage but try as I might I couldn't pinpoint where it was coming from what with the call being so sudden and short lived. I also reckon that they can throw their voices, just another reason that Quail are a devil to see. As I continued to progress more Chalkhills turned up as well as a Marbled White, DGF and Small Heaths. The butterflies were easy to find, all I had to do was hang around one of the clumps of Marjoram or Thyme and they would come to me. Whilst at one such clump a Smessex Skipper eventually landed and I was able to call it a Small correctly. All too soon I was carefully traversing the narrow gap though the hedge and approaching the Cloudy spot...





As I broke free from the closed in feeling of the little path as well as the ensnaring brambles that have grown up through the track this year I spotted a ghostly looking butterfly. I idly watched it land thinking to myself that it was going to be just another Chalkhill and one that looked a little tired to boot. Then I remembered that last year I'd not put in the hard graft with the Chalkhills and had made a promise to myself that I'd put a bit more effort into them this year so I raised my camera in readiness and moved in for a few shots. As I got closer I saw that my original supposition was indeed correct and it was a tired looking male; the fringes were a bit tatty and the usually resplendent sky blue was looking a bit grey and patchy. However as I looked even closer I saw that some of the hind wing lunules had nice and juicy orange tops - the heaviest looking ab.suavis I've encountered. It fluttered off weakly and then my attention was drawn to a Small Tort and then to another Chalkhill. This one was much fresher and also much more active. As I closed in and got the shots I thought that it was a standard male it was only when I had a closer look at home that I saw the tiniest of range tops to a couple of the lunules - a second ab.suavis. If I could have somehow combined the two I would have had the perfect specimen!





The Chalkhills had led me up the bank and as I turned to look long the trough and the hedge towards the Hotspot I spotted a mustard yellow butterfly flapping enthusiastically towards me. It seemed too bound through the air like a puppy eager to greet me. However once it reached me it wasn't quite as affable and bombed about this way and that. Some faded DGFs also came into the mix making the job of following the Cloudy slightly more difficult as they occasionally erupted from the grass and left you wondering for a fraction of a second which butterfly was which. Luckily while all this was going on the sun was swallowed by the cloud and the field when from buzzing with butterflies to silent and still as if a switch had been thrown. Even luckier still the last butterfly that I'd been watching was the Cloudy and so I simply strode over, peered through the grass and then got a few shots while the butterfly was momentarily torpid. It did make the weakest of slights while I was watching in when a slither of sun split its way through the cloud but it didn't go far.





Best leave it there for now...

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 17-Nov-20 10:23 AM GMT

Spot-on timing with the cloud and the Cloudie, Wurzel. 😊 Every now and again it works out after all the time spent watching them whizz around in the sunshine – and then them being out of sight when the sun goes in. Martin Down comes up with the goodies once again! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 17-Nov-20 10:57 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, love your shot of the Skipper, they've got such an impish face 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 17-Nov-20 07:31 PM GMT

Well done with the Cloudie Wurzel. Though not a Clouded Yellow year I think anyone determined enough should have been able to locate a few this year. Unlike last year when I didn't spot a single one, even in the air!

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-20 08:52 PM GMT

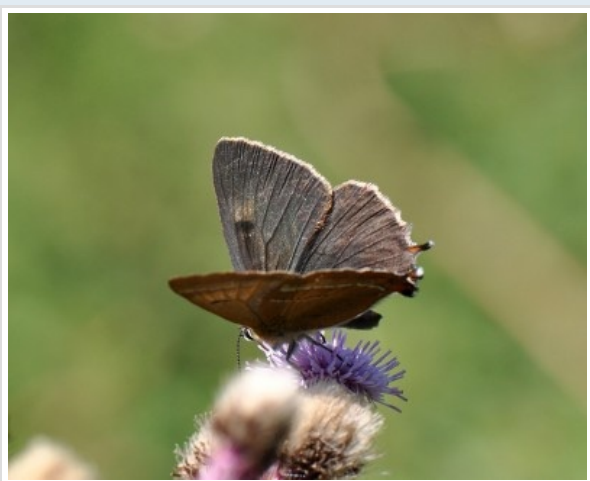
Cheers Dave 😊 I had a hell of a year at Martin Down – one more of the good things about Lockdown, my Cloudy hotspot paid up again 😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 They are cheeky little blighters, probably because they know the lengths we have to go to to get a positive ID 😊😊
Cheers Trevor 😊 Cheers Trevor they do seem to turn up in the same place year after year 😊 Sorry in advance for the next post – you might want to look away...

Shipton Bellinger 30-07-2020

Part 1

Having broken my duck a week earlier and with the weather finally back on track I had a good feeling about the trip when I set off to meet Philzoid in the Central Car Park. After the briefest of catch-ups we set off in convoy bombing along the back roads and eventually pulling into the other 'car park' moving behind the main hedge at Shipton. As we mooched over to the other side of the hedge we talked about what we were hoping for and Philzoid mentioned that there were a number of species that he'd like to see – with five in particular that he was missing out on I quickly dubbed them the Bug Five – Brown Hairstreak, Clouded Yellow, Painted Lady, Wall and Silver-spotted Skipper. Musing on whether it would be possible to get all of them we spotted a familiar silhouette on the other side of the track moving towards us from the old 'Master Tree'. Once Dave had joined us the unholy trinity set off down the main hedge, eyes peeled for False Streaks and Brostreaks. There were plenty of the former with Meadow Browns and Hedgies doing their best to impersonate the species that we'd come to see. They didn't play fair and didn't stick to the rule book as they'd fly up high along the tree tops rather than sticking to the grasses and lower levels as their names suggested they should. On this first walk down the hedge quality came in the form of the most 'un-blue blues' – the Holly Blue which in my mind acts more like a Hairstreak a Brown Argus and a Small Copper. When we reached the end of the hedge we started scanning along the hedge on the other side of the track that runs at ninety degrees to the main hedge. There was something up high in the hedge that was the right colour, the right shape and flew in the right way but it was too brief a view to really be sure...

We carried on round to where I'd seen my first one a week previously and there sitting atop a soft thistle in the nettle bed is a Brown Hairstreak, swiftly followed by a second. The first is an absolute stunner as it pirouettes round the top of the small soft thistle head, flicking its wings open just long enough to get something on film. The second is in even better nick but he decides to hang around in the shadows lower down in the thistles. I didn't mind this as I kept a close eye on the first and take plenty of shots marvelling at the way the colour of the topside changes from a deep brown which is almost lack through to chocolate as more and more light catches it before glistening golden in the full sun. The underside is none too shabby as well. Eventually the second puts his head above the parapet and all that can be heard is the whir of motors, the click of the shutters and the sighs of appreciation. Things were going well and we're one down on the Bug Five! We all spent a bit of time here alternating between the Brostreaks and seeing what else is on offer. Unsurprisingly with such a substantial amount of nettles there are a few Vanessids about and along with a Smessex Skipper and a fast flying Silver-washed we recorded Peacock, Comma and Red Admiral.





We also make a few forays up the little track way and among the Peacocks and the Browns there are a further 3 males all hanging about near to a Field Maple with an Ash slightly further back in the Copse. For a fleeting moment a female descends and opens up in the shade. She must have decided that it was a little too shaded as she soon flies off and up seeking the sun I guessed. In among all this Brostreak action a Holly Blue came down to the track on the corner of the nettle bed. It must have felt a little left out as it hung around down on the deck for a good while all the time outing itself at risk of an accidental trampling. Ordinarily this would have been one of the highlights but with 6 Brostreaks about it only got a cursory check over.





We eventually made it to the other side of the nettle bed and out from the narrow track onto the hard-core topped road. Straight ahead from us was a large break in the hedge which the local farmer used to get to his field. From my previous visits I was aware that there was a strip of Brassicas that ran the length of the hedge on the margin of the field. Guessing that there might be a few Whites we strolled over to have a look. As we did so Philzoid remarked that he'd quite like a Painted Lady...

"What like that one over there?" I said pointing at a marmalade butterfly that had just flapped from one flower head to another 😊. It was indeed a Painted Lady, and a lovely swarthy one to boot. It didn't hang around for too long possibly as it felt a little outnumbered by the many, many Whites that were flying about all over the place down the margin of the field, but we all managed to reel off a few shots. Chuffed with this serendipitous find we mooched back to and then along the main hedge. A female Holly Blue showed well and another male showed up as well as two Small Coppers and a Peacock and these butterflies were again almost easy to lose amid the numerous Browns and Whites. As we crossed the track way at the far end of the hedge there was a Dingy Skipper down in the muddy puddle. It looked a little lonely and I couldn't help feeling that if this was on the continent there would have been multiple butterflies of many species all taking advantage of the opportunity of the opportunity to mud puddle.





*The Brostreaks play ball
A Painted Lady drops in
The Bug Five is on...*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 18-Nov-20 10:43 PM GMT

Not quite as sickening as I feared, Wurzel. Just a sequence of superb shots! 🍷
The sheer variety on offer there is truly amazing. Must take an empty memory card
on my next late summer visit to Shipton B..

Great stuff, stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Nov-20 08:02 PM GMT

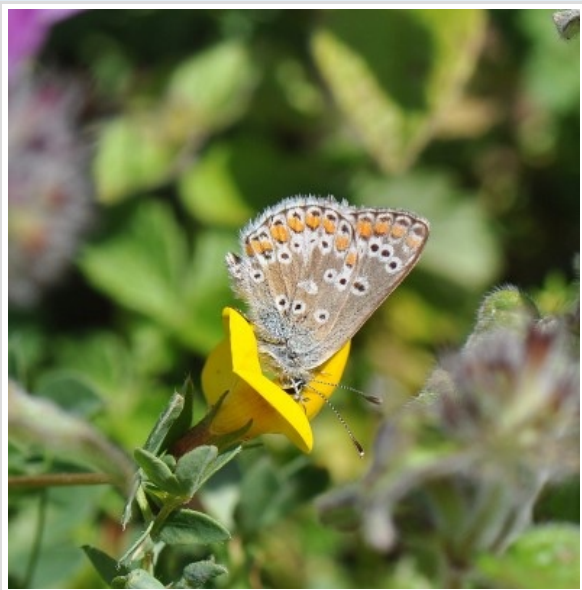
Cheers Trevor 😊 I always take a spare memory card with for these trips 😊😊

Shipton Bellinger 30-07-2020

After grabbing a spot of lunch and a male on the corner of the hedge as the track headed back to the car park we carried on from the main hedge along the smooth, rock hard and strangely slippery chalk path and up the hill carefully scanning the bramble bushes and any other likely looking nectar sources as we go to no avail. When we reach the summit a marmalade butterfly bombs past us. Knowing that this is a known spot for them and judging by the size and colour I'm convinced that we've ticked off another of the Bug Five - Wall Brown. Phizloid however is slightly more cautious having only had a fleeting glimpse so I put it down as 2 or 3 out of five (WINK). We work our way under the arches and through the selection of micro clearings to the end but again all is quiet. Well when I say that I mean quiet for Brostreaks - there are Common Blues, the odd Brown Argus, Meadow Browns by the bucket load, some errant DGFs as well as numerous False Streaks (Hedge Browns) and the usual smattering of Whites. Still out appetites had been whetted and so worked back but on the other side of track so instead of walking through narrow paths and under arches of shrubbery we had a hedge on our left and on our right the down sloped ever so slightly down. Again no Brostreaks but the complete list of all the others.



At the final corner of this hedgerow we paused before making the descent back down and had a little mooch around in the small scallop. The turf here was thin and springy but there was a profusion of flowering plants a little yellow and purple blobs bedecked the dark green ground colour. Again there were all the usual suspects as well as a few Small Heath and a Hummingbird Hawk Moth. Also there were a couple of male Brostreaks hanging around on the corner. They alternated their behaviour from seeking out the sun and basking before plunging into the shadows and seeking out the remaining ripe and particularly the overripe Blackberries. They wouldn't fly far preferring instead to walk along the branches and shoots towards the fermenting droplets their proboscis tasting the air and leading them in the right direction to the choicest morsels. At one point both were in few together but annoyingly, with my lens, I could only manage to get one or the other in focus - the other turned into a blurry blob.







Eventually sated of Brostreaks but myself in desperate need of a coffee, we stumbled back down the hill slightly dazed by numerous Brostreak encounters that we'd experienced. It came to a grand total of 9 males and a single female – although Dave added another one (or was it two?) on his walk back to the recycling centre cum car park in the village. Philzoid and I, having wished Dave well and 'safe journies' drove over to Perham – still with a few more of the 'Bug Five' to pick off...

Once the cars were safely deposited we strode across the small flat field towards the foot of the down ignoring the warning signs about unexploded ordinance as we went. Across this flat field there was the odd Brown and blue and a few fly-by Whites and then as we left the lush meadow and started to cross the tanks tracks that scarred the bottom of the Down Philzoid hollers out "Cloudy!" and there was Bug Five number 3 or 4 depending on whether the Wall counted or not. A great start! Slightly further on was the small springy turf area where I'd encountered my first SS Skipper on my first visit here. Unfortunately this species wasn't here but as a consolation there were other Skippers. They came in the form of many Smessex and a single Dingy. As we were watching this a larger Dingy flew into view, it was almost twice the size that I'd have expected one to be and was also showing signs of struggling to fly. It was only when I watched it land that I twigged that this was a pair in cop.





As we're about to set off another or the original Cloudy, I can't work out which, bombed by ensuing this was ticked off from the Bug Five checklist. A Chalkhill Blue was another welcome addition to the day list and I also my site list (well this was only my second visit here). Once we were up the hill things quietened down somewhat and we were only seeing Browns fluttering about. I guessed that this was because of the exposed nature of the top and so we made haste towards the far side of the down and its more gentle slopes and little nooks and crannies. As we approach the favoured area sure enough a Silver Spotted Skipper pops up. Unusually it sits still long enough for us to get a few shots and tick species 4 or 5 off of the Bug Five checklist. With this done we then set to having a closer look and soon we've found several. My next two were involved in a failed courtship. The female sat on a leaf and slowly turned her abdomen away from the excited male which was arching his abdomen round with gusto and frantically scrabbling for purchase. The female was having none of it and crawled around and onto the underside of the leaf leaving the male sitting topside and looking a little lost poor chap.



The next we found was a stunning individual and having gotten a fair few shots on my previous visit I tried for a different view this time. So I knelt down on the backlit side and managed to get a few shots of the sun shining through the eponymous spots and the fringes and lighting the tufts of hair giving the butterfly more of a golden hue than silver. Another was busy feeding up and I managed a few shots while it took a bit of a breather in between slurps.





Time was running out but for once I didn't really mind as we'd seen so much and the afternoon had been full of quality – to be honest there wasn't an awful lot more that we could find and so we walked back to the cars along the foot of the down, through the wonderful field of gold and along the scars of the tank tracks. On the way we picked up Chalkhill Blue and Common Blues 'a' or 'the' Cloudy did another fly by and then there was a marmalade butterfly flying swiftly by. Both of us got a good look at it and it was a definite Wall so job done – the Bug Five in the bag! What a fantastic day, they don't come much better than this!

*Cloudy, Silver Spots
And then finally a Wall
Bug Five in the bag*

In fact it was so good...

*Great time with great mates
Bucket loads of Brostreaks
And see the Bug Five*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 22-Nov-20 10:24 PM GMT

It's good to see the second part of your day went just as well as the first, and you and Philzoid ticked off all the Magic Five you were looking for. Managing Painted Lady and Wall (as well as a Cloudy and a Silver-spot) all on the same day was pretty good going! 😊 Not to mention mating second brood Dingies... It was a great day, very sociable, and yes I did find another Hairstreak on the way back to the car! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 23-Nov-20 08:27 PM GMT

I have travelled miles to various sites for the species you saw that day in one place!. Well done with the mating Dingies, second brood too 🍷 .

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Nov-20 08:22 PM GMT

Cheers Dave
Cheers Trevor

Martin Down 03-08-2020 A little break from Shipton 😊

Another quick trip to Martin Down as I was picking the girls up after they'd spent the morning with my mum. I only had about 45 minutes and so I planned to do a pretty rapid walk from Sillen's Lane to the Hotspot and back. Once on site the sun was intermittently hiding behind the clouds and when it did the temperature would drop a little bit and the butterflies would calm down or in some cases drop down (to the ground). Along the boundary hedge the odd Holly Blue flew up high whilst down low the territory was occupied by Meadow Browns and the whites quartering along the hedge. At the triangle two Common Blues scrapped away regardless of me wandering past and then where the track turns I made my first stop. Something drifted down, jinking as it did so. It landed and I could see that it was the wrong colour for a Brostreak. Getting a bit closer still I could see that it was in fact a Small Copper so what it had been doing up at the top of the tree I have no idea.



A few steps on I paused again to listen to the 'Turring' call of at least three different Turtles Doves scattered along the length of the hedge. They didn't show themselves but were obviously watching me because as I started walking again one by one they fell silent as I approached. I didn't mind though as a Common Blue was mobbing a slightly larger more spectral looking butterfly which eventually managed to shake off its smaller aggressor and landed on the path. It was a lovely male Chalkhill and I was able to take advantage of the cloud cover and get some nice closed wing shots.



By this point the path was bordered on one side by a Hawthorn hedge come thicket whilst on the other there is the odd clump of Gorse but it's mainly wild flower with Wild Thyme, Marjoram and Cow Parsley. The fact that one side if just a hedge is actually very handy as your eyes are automatically drawn to the right and the wildflowers and you can walk along and not have to scan back and forth. The patches of Marjoram act like little oases and the easiest way to get any shots is to stand by one and wait for the butterflies to fly in or climb back up. Unfortunately as I'm pressed for time all I can do today is scan over and if anything particularly nice pops up then I can wade in and try for a few shots. I manage to see a couple more Chalkhills, a few Brown Argus and more numerous Common Blues enjoying said flower oases. There are also plenty of whites and I spot all four of the main varieties flying now plus a couple of Smessex although the most numerous species by far is the Meadow Brown. I make way across the field towards the Greenstreak Hedge and I stop for a nice looking Common Blue female. Some of the spots on the underside of the forewing have merged and look a little like a moustache, this is accentuated by the cell spot and spot 2 looking like a pair of eyes.



On through the gap in the Greenstreak Hedge and there is no repeat performance from my previous visit as there isn't a Cloudy to greet me so instead I settle for checking out the clumps of Marjoram. All the usual suspects are present and so I try and spend a bit of time with the Chalkhills although it's tricky as the breeze has strengthened so when they land anywhere but on the ground they get blown about all over the place, and even on the ground the breeze catches the tops of the wings. As I carry on towards the hollow at Bokerley a fresh brown Argus stops by, a few more Chalkhills fly by and my attention is diverted to a cracking looking Small Tort which doesn't stop long enough in one place.



After this I walked down the track and through the hollow to the dip where Bokerley starts up again. There were more of the same flying here with the addition of a few more Smessex and a Small Heath. I tried out the wait and see technique by a clump of Marjoram and it worked a treat. There were a couple of Meadow Browns, a Brown Argus and two male Common Blues and on the furthest side of the clump what in the dull light looked like a third Common Blue. As I slowly stepped round to get a better view I could see that there were chequers along the margins – it was a second brood Adonis Blue.



With time almost up I started back along the main track towards the car park on the hurry up, trying not to pay attention to the butterflies that were flying across the fields now on my left. At one point I succumbed as I spied a female Common Blue which didn't seem all correct. She had one wing which was all washed out – possible water damage. Then there was a ragged Small Tort and finally a Holly Blue which caught the light so it practically glowed against the dark green of the hedge. Still I'd made it back in the nick of time and with another productive Martin Down trip in the bag.



*Pop to Martin Down
With second brood Adonis
Glory days are back*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 27-Nov-20 08:59 AM GMT

Martin Down is a site I've never been to, but from your reports that location does seem to come up with the goods. Perhaps a guided tour one day?.

Stay safe,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Nov-20 07:36 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I'm sure we can sort something out – there's a very similar species range to Cotley with the bonus of it generally being flat 😊

Shipton Bellinger 04-08-2020

Little L and I went for a walk. We needed to, to stave off the boredom that comes when her older sister is at work. We needed to, to give my wife some peace. We needed to because...well, I wanted to get back to Shipton. We'd had a few days since the epic, yet male dominated trip and I wanted to see if the girls had started to show.

We parked behind the border hedge and walked through from Wiltshire into Hampshire and both started looking at earnest at the Hedge with Little L informing me about all manner of things that are important in her world. Due to the cloud cover I wasn't hopeful of actually finding any Brostreaks as I always associate them with sunny, almost autumnal days but it was great just wandering along and scanning the bushes as Little L chattered away. To be honest the whole trip out could have been a bust and we'd not see anything and it still would have been a great outing because of this. As it was though the butterflies started up from the scrub as we passed and due to the aforementioned cloud they seemed somewhat subdued. The Meadow Browns (come down and fly along the ground) and Gatekeepers (fly up to the middle of the canopy and along attacking anything in sight) did their best to convince me occasionally that they were Brostreaks but without the sun glinting off them they realised this wasn't going to work as effectively as usual and I could tell that their hearts weren't in it. The full selection of seasonal whites squabbled their way along the bottom of the hedge occasionally making fast forays out towards the middle of the field and then returning somewhat sheepishly when they realised that they weren't a Clouded Yellow and so I wasn't going to chase them. So far so usual and also to be expected there was even a female Holly Blue that was trying to open up to catch what little of the sun broke through.



We carried on round the corner and on to the other little enclosed area where I'd previously seen the 2nd brood Dingy. It too is quiet in the gloom but we have a peak around and spy a Meadow Brown on the deck with its wings wide open. It's an interesting looking female as she has the patches of orange on the hind wings so I snake my feet along the ground doing my best not to disturb any of the vegetation, for as Dave reminded me, every bit of Bramble is connected to every other bit of Bramble! I managed to get within range, lift my camera and start focusing and then I see a perfectly sharp leaf though the viewfinder. The butterfly was gone oh well it was only a Meadow Brown and so I walk out and Little L and I have a backwards scan and there on a bramble is a male Hairstreak. Just like that feeding away as if he didn't have a care in the world. I swear he must have been sitting there the whole time I was focusing all my efforts on the Meadow Brown chuckling as he slurped away. So now I had to repeat the same slow, gentle stalk, snaking my feet along the ground again so not to disturb anything; not dancing the 'Click-step' but instead opting for the 'Click-shuffle'. Most of the images ultimately ended up in the bin but at the time I just wanted a record. Luckily Brostreaks are pretty sedate butterflies as once they've settled they don't seem to mind a bit of human-butterfly interaction and so I was able to get some nice side on shots each time he pirouetted around the flower.



After a few moments both Little L and I watched with bated breath as he fluttered about this way and that before finally he landed within reach. Breathing a sigh of relief for I didn't want the encounter to end we stood still and let him settle for a moment or three. After a time he started to incrementally open up, taking just over 2 minutes to go from closed to almost fully open, wings held in a very shallow 'V'. At about a minute into this opening up he also started turning clockwise on the leaf starting from facing at 7 o'clock and slowly turning until he'd reached 11 o'clock. Turn completed, wings opened sufficiently to catch what little of the sun was puncturing through the cloud he then sat motionless for a couple of minutes before taking to the wing again. I thought that was it and so passed my camera over to Little L to have a go and the sun crept out. As she excitedly wandered about clicking away I stared at the bramble patch and it seemed like my 'willing it into being' worked as a medium sized, dark butterfly jinked its way along the hedge up high and the plonked itself down on a cluster of bramble flowers close to where it had been before (at least I'm taking it to be the same one). This time there was no messing and he opened up three quarters right from the get go before closing up tightly and feeding away.





Little L's shot

Eventually we left him in peace and carried on round to the Nettle Bed. Now I'd gotten my eye in we make short work of finding another. It was literally a case of; "Well Little L there were a couple of them in here the other day...oh look there's one!"



Having found this one so quickly and also possibly being sated by the first I got a few shots and then we carried on without tarrying here. Down the narrow path where the Browns and Whites flew amid the occasional Peacock and a Comma. Our next close butterfly encounter was much less joyous and more macabre. I spotted a large white butterfly and realised that it was a pair of Large Whites in cop. However something was not right. The male was trying to fly but not getting anywhere – it looked a lot like the toy planes that are on a stick which fly round and round in circles close to the ceiling. When the male stopped momentarily I had a bit of a closer look and it looked like the females head was superglued to the white flower head. Only it wasn't superglued, when I looked more closely still I could make out a couple of dagger like white legs. It had been attacked by a Crab Spider and was now held in its vice like grip. It shows the extraordinary strength they have as it was holding not only the dead weight of the female but also the locked on male when he was trying to fly full pelt away. At one point a fly even landed on the female adding a bit more weight and yet still the spider didn't budge! After this gruesome sight we wanted to get away from the narrow path as quickly as possible and so a third male near the Field Maple/Acer (?) Master tree was given short shrift – mind you after the first encounter I don't think there were many more different shots of the males to get.



We carried on round still chattering away and watching the hedge as we passed. Back at the main hedge I set Little L up on the rug with her book and sketch pad and went for a quick investigate stopping for a brief distanced chat with a couple of Transect walkers. On the walk up the hedge towards the usually productive end there was the usual activity of Browns and Whites and I made the occasional stop for something slightly different and in doing so added Brown Argus, Common Blue and Small Copper to the tally none of which stopped for long. The walk back I took more slowly reasoning that this would probably be the penultimate pass for the trip and the ultimate one on my own. I started scanning slightly deeper into the hedge too, trying to look past the 'outer layer' of bramble flowers and peering through small gaps in the almost impenetrable wall of Blackthorn and Bramble. I managed to catch a female Gatekeeper wings akimbo and also a female Meadow Brown which had double pupils. There was also another spider victim, this time a male Holly Blue. He looked quite tired and had lost his margins so hopefully he would have met his biological imperative already.



I was almost back with Little L when I blinding orange flash at about midriff height caught my eye. It was a stunningly fresh female bimbling around on the Blackberries and probing them with her proboscis. I tried for a few shots but she was a surprisingly difficult model. She was at an awkward height, too high to get shots from above and too low to get anything from below, never flat on so a bit was always drastically out of focus and she was constantly on the move, turning this way and that round and round from one droplet to another. I clicked away from several different angles in the hope that something would pay off and all too soon she had eaten/drunk her fill and so flew up to the treetops where she opened up fully and basked in the sun.





I rejoined Little L and we made for home, the female still sitting in her vantage point up in the canopy. I'll be back so hopefully there will be plenty more females to capture with my lens and all in all a none too shabby visit considering the cloud and murk. Plus Little L had a great father daughter trip.

Hairstreaks seem doubtful
Yet despite the cloudy dull
Orange shines on green

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 29-Nov-20 08:41 PM GMT

Your displaying male Brown Hairstreak has earned a grudging WOW! 🍷🍷
That sequence of shots is about as good as it gets!.

Quality stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 30-Nov-20 01:41 PM GMT

I'm still following your posts Wurzel, and I'm 🍷🍷🍷 It's so good to see all the Brown Hair Streaks because other's have seen a decrease this year, roll on the Vaccine for next year and normal life. I'll be out looking for them 🍷 Goldie 🍷

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Dec-20 08:42 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 🍷 I was even more chuffed with those shots as I hadn't expected to see anything due to the cloud cover 🍷 Just goes to show butterflies don't read the rule book 🍷🍷 Although I reckon Little L's shot is one of the best of the bunch 🍷

Cheers Goldie 🍷 Glad I could help out by giving you a virtual Brostreak fix 🍷 Hopefully things work out with the vaccine roll out and 2021 will be a much better year for everyone! 🍷

December 2020

A little bit late but got there in the end...finally 2020 is almost over, stroll on 2021 🍷



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 02-Dec-20 09:52 PM GMT

Some definite 🍷🍷 for the open-winged male Brown Hairstreaks, Wurzel! I saw more of the males this year than ever before, but not showing off to that extent. Not that they have much to show off compared to the ladies... 😊 I suppose you could say it's more subtle. Great shots as ever.

It occurs to me that last weekend had something significant missing from it – a meeting of sociable like-minded souls in a certain Hampshire hostelry. Hopefully we can have a spring gathering in 2021 as was tentatively planned for this year.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 02-Dec-20 10:08 PM GMT

Crazy amounts of Brown Hairstreaks, I'm just glad the Bookham ones showed as well or I might overdose in little green men. Still a few for those open wing male shots though 🍷🍷🍷

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 03-Dec-20 10:16 AM GMT

Really Jealous of those Brown Hairstreaks Wurzel 🍷😄

By all accounts the males had a good showing at Grafton Wood this year but I was down in Cornwall at the time and by the time I got back the weather had turned and I missed them. I did eventually make one trip over there but only managed a couple of glimpses of individuals high up.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Dec-20 07:59 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 The males did put in a good showing this year and the females did alright eventually as well. A spring gathering would be nice and some compensation for missing the end of year bash 😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 I was a bit worried as the Local Collector did the rounds again, picking em off and they still haven't gotten back to the numbers after the collector took a bucket load a few years back 😊 But it came good in the end as I don;t think he bothers to try the more remote parts of the site 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Shipton Bellinger is a great site for them – if you're ever passing through a feel like a detour then just give me a holler and I can show the hotspots 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Dec-20 07:43 PM GMT

Shipton Bellinger 08-08-2020

Part 1

It was with some trepidation that I set out towards Shipton Bellinger. The weather report had mentioned strong sun and plus 30 temperatures which would make things extremely hard work – the butterflies would be all over the place and we'd be baking. Also the target species, if they behaved as in other years when it was really hot, would be up and about well before the renowned Golden Hours. Factoring all this in I met Trevor by the Hotspot

Hedge at 9ish so we'd hopefully catch the Brostreaks before they disappeared and stayed in the treetops.

We set off from the cars avidly following the Hedge to the end of its length. There were Hedge and Meadow Browns all over the place, plenty of Whites as well as Holly Blues, Brown Argus, a single Small Copper and for Trevor's benefit a fresh male Adonis and second brood Dingy Skipper. A little further on there was a lovely female Common Blue, a rather brown one for once. All very nice but no Brostreaks...Round the corner in the little enclosure of hedges there was more of the same with the addition of some well-behaved Brimstones which for once were being particularly pliant for photography... still no Brostreaks though. Round at the Nettle Patch there were even more Whites but apart from them occasionally taking to the air like dislodged feathers it was all pretty quiet. We ended up back at the cars having completed a Brostreak free circuit of almost all of the spots that I'd seen them on my last three visits. Had they moved on? Had we reckoned wrong and arrived too early? Was it already too hot?



We set out on a second circuit with a fresh intake of coffee boosting our morale however the Hedge was still bereft of betulae, the enclosure was in terms of Thecla was tenebrific and then we reached the Nettle Patch. A quick walk around in the now well-worn pathways in amid the nettles didn't throw up any either so we carry on along the main trackway. I checked my watch it was a fraction off 11. I looked up and there is a male Brostreak, that marvellous sight of an orange shark fin atop a purple thistle head. I check my watch again as I still can't believe what happened but yes it's a fraction past 11 now and despite the heat the Brostreaks have arrived bang on time. They're certainly acting in a well-trained manner at Shipton this year, almost as if they've actually read and followed the rule book for once! I call Trevor over and let him get onto something of a rarity for him - a male Brostreak. A Meadow Brown is also in shot and keeps hassling the Brostreak so it flutters from one Thistle head to another and back again each time it's disturbed by its larger distant cousin.



Might seem a familiar shot...



After a few shots I leave the Brostreak with Trevor so the two can get better acquainted and start following the little trackways around the Nettle Patch where I bump into the same bloke from my visit before last and put him onto the Brostreak before carrying on my recce. A Comma and a Small Tort are feeding just at the edge of the bed and two Small Coppers are tussling down on the deck zipping around like the tiny trackways like boy racers. After this I walk down the tiny trackway towards the Maple trees with the Ash Master behind it and as I'm working my way back another Brostreak pops up, another male. It's joined by a second which starts to open up so I call Trevor over. At this point a Silver-washed flies across our lines of sight but we're too enthralled by the Borstreaks which have started showing well and are now performing as expected.







*What a cracking start
Brostreak bang on eleven
One opens up too...*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 07-Dec-20 11:47 AM GMT

The intense heat of the day before our visit nearly put me off going at all. But to say I'm glad I did attend is an understatement. What a day! Even the journey to Shipton B was full of anticipation, a new site known for Brown Hairstreaks, a guided tour, and the weather behaved, what's not to like!

That first male you found is familiar in your shots, complete with the pesky Meadow Brown. The day also produced a lifetime first for me, seeing male and female BH on the same day.

I've always thought of the BH as the gentleman's butterfly, (usually) time enough for a leisurely breakfast, and home in time for tea. Indeed I arrived home, after 110 miles, at 4.50pm.

Thanks once again for a great day,
stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Dec-20 08:40 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 It was a brilliant day at Shipton – the site was certainly easier to work this year than last despite the intense heat the day before. 😊 I saw a fair few females ovi-positing so next year should be good too 😊 Speaking of the females...

Shipton Bellinger 08-08-2020

Part 2

Time was pressing on and so we work our way back along the main Hedge so that we can get back to the cars and pick up some lunch. As we walked I scanned through the Blackthorn seeking out a honeyed or bright orange shape and all my effort was paid off when we were only about a quarter of the way along as there nestled atop a leaf was a female Brostreak. She was a lovely looking thing but also awkwardly placed – what with being at just above head height. However she wasn't totally out of reach and by holding my camera out at arm's length and peering through the viewfinder I was able to get a few shots as she started to open up. She then fluttered a short distance and plonked herself down not quite as high but this time slightly further back which meant a few shots were only possible so long as you accepted a spearing by the thorns and a scratching by the Bramble. As we're enjoying the Brostreak I spot two things which eventually turn out to not be what I thought they were. The first is what I think is a Purple Hairstreak but as I get closer I realise that it's the same mark on a leaf that has caught me out on my last couple of visits! I take a few shots of it hoping to break its spell so I don't get caught out next time I wander this bit of hedge. The second was what I initially took to be a feather and so as all good butterflyers should I went to remove it so others weren't embarrassed by mistaking it for a White. However this was actually a moth – either a Yellow or Browntail and so I stopped short of touching it luckily as both species can release a noxious or irritating secretion!





After lunch and coffee we worked our way back down the shady side of the Hedge which I think is still in Wiltshire but what with being shaded for most of the day didn't hold any more Brostreaks and only the occasional Holly Blue or Meadow Brown flew in the shade. There was a clear demarcation between the shaded zone and where the sun had managed to reach and along the strip of wild flowers bordering the path Wild Parsnip and Marjoram pulled in all sorts of butterflies all over the place with Common Blues, including a few females, Brimstones, aged Gatekeepers and ubiquitous Meadow Browns. We pressed on straight to the Nettle Bed as that's where the Brostreaks were so why not?

On the corner of the little track there were a few other observers who were watching a male. We managed to spot a second and then the two males were still sitting together in one view again...at least I thought they were the original duo, a bit of a closer look proved that one was a new individual as there was a chunk missing from the hind wing. While we were watching the closer of the two started to open up, twitching his wings coyly to start with and then opening up fully but he was a bit worn and so after a few shots I reverted to trying for one of the two Silver-washed that were about and left him to Trevor and the others who were a bit more appreciative of him.



After this we made our way back round to the main Hedge discussing this and that and generally talking about how good a day it had been and how the weather wasn't exactly (luckily) as forecast and how the butterflies were playing by the rule book. The Brostreaks continued to follow the rules as now we were entering into the early afternoon which is when the females should start appearing and sure enough midway along the hedge we encountered another female. She was feasting on Blackberries – or at least the water/juice that was between the dooplets. It's great to capture them like this as they often sit still for an age the only problem this time was the breeze which kept pulling at her wings like wind gathering in a sail. It meant that I had to take a multitude of shots to make sure that I got something...oh well never mind 😊 . She was a little beauty this one and much more engaging than the first wandering about and supping from various Blackberries.





Once we'd had our fill of photographing her and she'd had her fill of Blackberry she took to the wing and landed up high to bask and so warm up a little after her frays in the shade and we took this as our cue to stroll along the final length of the Hedge. The usual butterflies accompanied us on the way and I spotted a male Brostreak further back in the hedge through a little 'window' between two spikes of Bramble but with my mind still alive from the encounter with the female things passed in a slight blur and I found that it was difficult to focus on the other species. Right at the end just as we turned the corner there was another Brostreak in the dip of the Bramble patch. She flew closer in landing down low right at the edge of the patch almost overhanging the path but she was very flighty and neither Trevor nor myself could get in to get the classic side on profile shot. She abruptly took off and then landed much further in, almost beyond the reach of my lens but I gave it a go anyway just so that I had a record of lady number three. To be honest she was the only Brostreak of the day that didn't behave so I can't grumble - there's always one! So ended a fantastic day with brilliant company, the 5-6 males and 3 females a cracking justification for the visit which we almost didn't make!



*Brostreaks a plenty
Males and females showing off
Slurp on Blackberries...*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 08-Dec-20 09:15 PM GMT

An absolutely lovely female Brown Hairstreak tucking into the blackberries, Wurzel. 😊 It's only when you see both in proximity that you appreciate just how much more orange the females are compared to the males. Also the orange contrasting with the white of the underside of the body always makes me think of the colours of a fox... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 09-Dec-20 07:12 PM GMT

Great shots of the female on the blackberry.
And you managed a shot of that BH as we were leaving, very uncooperative that one!

And so ended a great day!.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-Dec-20 09:21 PM GMT

Absolutely fantastic shots Wurzel 🍷🍷 roll on 2021 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Dec-20 07:21 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I see what you mean about the 'Fox' 😊 but with the stripy socks I'm reminded of the Holland kit (even though they don't have the aforementioned socks 😊) 😊 The difference is quite apparent especially when they sit, wings closed 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 It was a cracking day 😊 - subsequent visits saw several females egg-laying so next year should still be good despite the 'Collector' 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Yes indeed, the sooner that we can forget 2020 the better! 😊 Although to be fair I did get to see some cracking butterflies so I'll have to be selective over my memories 😊

Martin Down 10-08-2020

The wonder of the summer break is that there are so many opportunities to get out butterflying just as on this particular day. Instead of kicking my heels round the house and wondering what to do I loaded my camera into the car and set off to Martin Down for a quick hour walk around... I followed the hedge along from the Sillen's Lane end picking up the full complement of the usual species. The highlights of this part were a fly-by male Adonis Blue, cutting through the air like a horizontal lightning bolt and a male Common Blue which looked a little washed out as it sat atop a dried grass head. At first I thought that the muted colours were down to it being an aged individual but when I looked a little more closely I could see this wasn't the case. All of the markings were immaculate, there were no signs of scales that had been rubbed off, there wasn't a single tear of nick anywhere to be seen and the fringes were still full and luscious. So it was a new male but instead of the bright orange lunules they were instead so pale that they were almost lemon which would make it an ab.flavescens.



Chuffed with this slightly different blue I continue on along the path joined by Chalkhills and more Common Blues. These flew across the grass tops in the sun whilst the Smessex, Meadow Browns and various Whites favoured the slightly shaded margins of the hedge – possibly as some were getting on a bit and so had already had their time in the sun as it were. As I reached the bit of the path which forks off towards the tunnel another Adonis Blue plonked itself down right at the edge of the path, almost as if it was inviting me to take its photos and so I dutifully did.



I forewent the tunnel again and took the left-hand tine of the fork along to the flat fields that were filled with Marjoram and Thyme and other floral delights. Remembering the trick from my previous visit I picked my way round various clumps of flowers, snaking my feet where possible so as to disturb as little as possible. While I sought out the likeliest looking nectar source which to set up shop butterflies flew all around me. It was a magnificent sight with Meadow Browns everywhere, Small Heath popping up here and there, violet Common and electrically charged Adonis Blues with the odd female among them indistinguishable from each other whilst in flight. I found a good looking bush, stood back and awaited the butterflies. It worked a treat again and within a matter of seconds I was joined by all those species that had accompanied me to my photo spot as well as the odd Chalkhill.





The butterflies were by now flying at full throttle and so I did my best to ignore them when they toyed with me by landing and then taking off again the moment I turned my lens towards them, and instead concentrated on getting to the large clump of wild flowers just past the Hotspot Hollow where the Dyke starts up again before winding its way the hill. Once here I again stood back and let the butterflies come to me. I got a reasonable count of 4 Meadow Browns, 2 Common Blues as well as a DGF and a Brown Argus - all clinging and jostling atop the one bush. Further on the Hotspot was living up to its name and my biggest problem was working out what to try and photograph first so I settled back down and just watched and counted. Buzzing around the were 5 Adonis Blues, a couple each of Common Blues and Brown Argus, the odd Small Heath and Chalkhill Blues. There were also a number of Meadow Browns about too. When they were feeding they seemed happy to share their perch with any of the other species except the Chalkhill Blues: "Hey come on over Mr Common Blue...I'll shuffle up a little bit Mrs Brown Argus...Hey Chalkhill bu\$\$er off!"...and then they would chase the 'oh so offensive' butterfly off! Also here was a second brood Dingy showing off the underside nicely and closing up in a less than normal fashion for a Skipper.





As I work round to the other side of the hedge the Cloudy that I'd hoped for doesn't materialise but instead there's another Dingy and a worn DGF among the usual collection of butterflies. Looking the most resplendent of them all was a really fresh male Adonis which would have looked even better if it had decided to open up. In the end my time was ticking away fast and so I put my head down and hit the high road home...well back to the car park at any rate. I did make one brief stop for a pair of Common Blues. It looked a little like they'd had an argument as they were both facing away from each other intent on not making eye contact!





*Blues and a Dingy
Rather stropy Meadow Brown
Chases Chalkhills off!*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 11-Dec-20 09:49 PM GMT

Yet another splendidly productive visit to Martin Down, Wurzel. 😊 I grow increasingly 🍷 that you are within "popping down" distance of this spot: variety and numbers as well. A nice selection of Blues to deal with the other (seasonal) kind... 😊😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by j-d welch, 12-Dec-20 10:15 AM GMT

Good day Wurzel, i have just read through your diary for your Shipton Bellinger trip that you told me about when we met at Alners Gorse... I am pleased that your visit was so productive & it sounded like a perfect day in the field. Your BH photos were brilliant and the female on the Blackberries was a Beautiful series...kudos to you!!

I also went back to read your Alners Gorse episode just to bring back memories of a wonderful Summer visit...in the end I visited Alners 3 times in 5 days but I did not see a BH. On my last visit I photographed PH & WLH and was hoping for a BH but the closest I got was speaking with a couple who arrived late morning and they photographed a fresh female on the bramble, very close to where we first met !! So I believe your Daughters predictions were not far wrong.

Anyway I went on to see BH at Otmoor , Asham Mead, Netherclay reserve (Taunton), Ryton Wood ...the Netherclay reserve was a first for me . Whilst wondering around Thurlbear Quarrylands, I had a chat with a young couple who work in Conservation and they recommended that i visit Netherclay because they had seen plenty of BH caterpillars . So I was able to visit the reserve quite a few times over August / September and saw BH's every visit and then in Oct I saw lots of eggs.

But I also had an amazing experience by chance when I met a couple of friends, that had been rearing BH eggs (saved before the Blackthorn hedge was flailed), that were releasing several female BH on the 24th July. So I was able to get some amazing shots, open wing etc... It was such a cool experience that I was inspired and I have decided to attempt to rear some BH eggs from blackthorn hedges that will be flailed. This is part of a re-release project run by The Warwickshire branch of Butterfly Conservation. Therefore I have a couple of large clay pots with 2 & 3 year old blackthorn planted and waiting for BH eggs. Obviously lockdown has interfered with getting the eggs from Warwick but I have identified several blackthorn hedges close to Thurlbear quarrylands which have eggs, i'm just hoping the farmer has not flailed those hedges.

So I will update you in the new year as to my BH progress but in the meantime I wish you & your family Best wishes over the festive season and all the best for 2021 ...

Kindest regards, john

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Dec-20 11:05 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Martin Down certainly came into it's own for me this year – and I reckon it was better for Marshies than Cotley 😊 – just don't tell anyone that I said that 😊

Cheers John 😊 I'm glad that my musings managed to evoke happy memories of summer – particularly at this butterfly bereft time of year 😊 You did well to get the White-letter as well 🍀 I've seen two out of three myself but never the complete trio – gotta leave something for another day 😊 Good luck with the Brostreaks – sounds like you'e all ready 😊 I hope you and yours have a cracking Chrimbo and a brilliant new year – hopefully catch up with you again in the new season – and hopefully it'll be a bit more 'normal'. Stay safe 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 15-Dec-20 04:25 PM GMT

All the best for Christmas and the New Year Wurzel, hope it's a much better Year for every one 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Dec-20 10:30 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I hope you have a cracking Chrimbo too! 😊

Mottisfont 11-08-2020

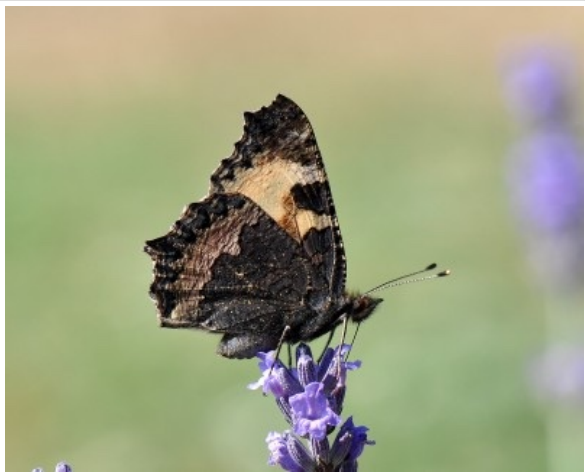
It had been a while since we'd visited any National Trust Gardens for obvious reasons at first and then because phoning up and having to book a slot felt kinda wrong after over a decade of just turning up but today we bit the bullet and went to Mottisfont. Well I guess we'd really bit the bullet last Friday when we woke at 6m to be first in the queue and get the admission slot that we wanted but that doesn't quite fit the narrative, anyhoo... It was going to be a scorcher so once in we hugged the shady side of the path as we made our way round the one way system towards the Walled Gardens where there was yet another one way system in place. It seems the that the butterflies were revelling in their privacy and they'd worked out which spots of the gardens were roped off an inaccessible as that's where they seemed to head when disturbed by the people in front of us or where they could be seen hanging to various Buddleia florets. Several Whites and a few Brimstones as well as a Red Admiral were all out of range of my lens by virtue of this behaviour so I had to console myself with the more dopey Meadow Browns that seemed a bit zonked out from the heady mixture of heat and Lavender fumes and the more daring Whites.

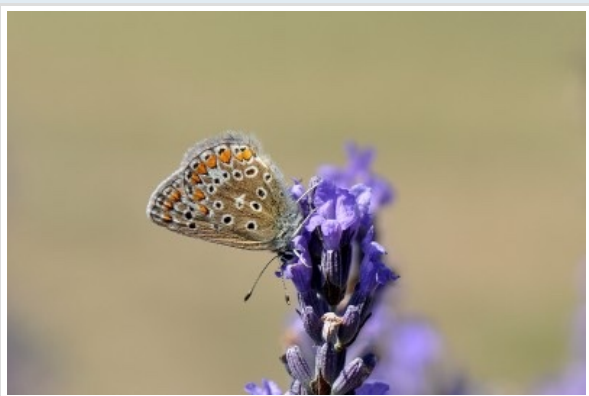


After we had successfully Social Distanced/shuffled our way we exited to the main parts of the grounds once again we were able to walk from shady spot to shady spot. Booking the first 'time slot' was proving to be a great idea as it was so quiet that we felt like we pretty much had the place to ourselves and so we carried on the 'circular route' cutting across the recently mown fields, through the gate and along the river path. As we walked the odd couple of Specklies sparred or courted (I couldn't work out which) sometimes spiralling across and almost skimming the top of the chalk stream. Banded Demioselles and the odd dragonfly zipped about and below the water Rainbow and Brown Trout swung their tails lazily from side to side so as to remain stationary against the brisk current. All too soon we left the riverside path and the wonderful light show from the sun stealing through the trees and playing on the tops of the ripples.



By way of compensation though we found a shady spot at the edge of the lawn and had lunch. Just prior to lunch and directly after I was able to walk up and down the single strip of Lavender which bordered the lower and upper Lawns. There were numerous Meadow Browns - including the occasional odd looking one with double pupils or an almost double pupil. The Whites proved really tricky as they would almost tip-toe fly from one head of Lavender to the next, take the briefest of sups and then move on - I don't know if this is because Lavender only has a little nectar or whether they were just playing hard to get? Judging by the behaviour of all three of the Commas and the Small Tort probably the latter as the Vanessids spent much more time on each purple floret. However they weren't much easier to photograph as even though they remained in the same location they pirouetted constantly. In the end I lined my shot up and waited for them to work back to me. The Commas were great and were easily identifiable from each other as one was entirely normal and complete, another was an 'o-album' and the final one of the trio had a portion of its hind wings missing - it looked a little like a Julia to be honest. Three Blues also graced the Lavender with their presence - two males and a lovely little female.





It was good to get back to the Trust properties and enjoy a little 'light butterflying' again after the recent punishing trips in the heat! However this wasn't the end as when we arrived home and I was packing things away Little L called down that a butterfly had landed on her Horse Chestnut sapling in our concrete courtyard. I quickly grabbed my camera, opened the back door and got a couple of shots before it realised that it had made a mistake by landing in an almost barren space. A garden tick no less...well if you can call an old butler sink a garden...



*Mottisfont reprise
On the Lavender they flew
In the scorching sun*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Dec-20 07:41 PM GMT

Dyrham Park 16-08-2020

After a week of 'weather' I was finally getting out this time for a bit of a walk round Dyrham Park an National Trust property at the of the Cotswolds, all sweeping vistas and rolling hills with the House nestled snugly in the 'V' between two hills. We've been here many times...well we've used the facilities and had lunch in the car park many times as we use it as a stop off point on our way back from visiting the Outlaws. Today was actually our first ever 'proper visit' and we promptly set off across the hill top, through the avenue of trees and onto the wide, open park land. With the sun hidden behind the cloud and the near constant threat of rain I wasn't surprised that I didn't see a butterfly for a good long while. Instead I watched the herd of Fallow Deer run by. Once they regrouped I practised my stalking skills; keeping downwind and using the side of the hill to hide my silhouette I managed to get reasonably close but my autofocus kept wanting to focus on the nearer grass - I need to get a proper telephoto.



We carried on down the path and the trees started to thicken and as we round a corner the house appeared in front of us wedged in the gap between the hills - it made me think that they must have a set of culverts under the building as all the water flowing downhill would run straight through the front door! Still it was very impressive and surprisingly as we left the stylised wilds behind us and ventured into a more urbane and (even more) artificial habitat I started seeing butterflies with a Red Admiral flying along the line of citrus trees on the terrace at one side of the house. There were also whites as we wandered through small sections of garden which culminated by a brief coffee stop overlooking the pond. Representatives of all three White species were flying about but each time I got close they'd take off from their prominent position and land further back and masked by the foliage. Still the Dragonfly kept me occupied for a bit while others supped at scalding coffee/tea and a few steps away a Small Tortoiseshell looked resplendent.





We then took to wandering from garden to garden the best one of which was a fantastic rectangle with lines of bedding plants. Unfortunately we were restricted in where we could wander here but it was great to see so many whites bimbly about and at one pint a Peacock bombed by. Up through the wood and it clouded over again so even though we were walking in their prime habitat not even a single Specklie flew. Luckily as we came down the terraced hill the sun peeked out from behind the curtains warming those butterflies up just enough that they could take to the wing - there were a few Gatekeepers flying amid the Meadow Browns in between the tombstones of the church/grave yard.





We ate lunch on the lawn at the front of the house with a few more whites weaving in and out of the potted citrus trees on the terrace and a Bank Vole scurried and hid under various pots of the aforementioned citrus fruits. We were nearly reaching our allotted time slot and so we packed up and started on the return leg of our journey – unfortunately up the massive hill we’d walked down. This path was lined with trees and at one point there was a sign indicating that the closely mown field was a wild flower meadow even though it looked like a bit of grass. I was still surprised that on the return walk I saw only three butterflies – 2 Meadow Browns and a single Speckle which sat for only a few seconds. Finally slightly puffed out we said our goodbyes and with the phrase “we should do this again” still floating on the air we started the drive home. I certainly would like to go here again as this place certainly has some interesting little spots and potential – just go to get the timing right.

*Rolling green parkland
And ornamental borders
Butterfly boycott?*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 22-Dec-20 02:23 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the white's and Deer Wurzel also the Dragon Flies, I always find Dragon Flies hard to photograph especially when their over water 😊

My plans have gone out the window, no Christmas in Kent this year, like lots of others ,it's a stay at home this year, What a Year!!!!Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 22-Dec-20 06:33 PM GMT

Good effort with that male Southern Hawker, never manage to get them in focus when I attempt an in flight shot 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 23-Dec-20 02:33 PM GMT

I must agree with Bugboy, excellent results with those Dragonflies, 🍷 and a great report. Keep'em coming!.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 23-Dec-20 06:51 PM GMT

{quote=trevor-post_id=159934-time=1608734004-user_id=13654} I must agree with Bugboy, excellent results with those Dragonflies, 🍷

Me too.

Cracking shots and great reports as always Wurzel 😊 .

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Dec-20 08:21 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Sorry to hear that your plans got wrecked 😊 Hopefully it'll be like lots of other things in that it'll get worse (as it is now) before it gets better 😊 I hope that you have a Merry Christmas none the less 😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 Cheers Trevor 😊 Cheers Neil 😊 The wonders of 'Sports mode' allowed me to get that shot...and also digital technology meaning that the four hundred crap shots can be binned almost immediately 😊😊

Martin Down 17-08-2020

Today was a bit of an unusual day, I don't really know what happened but I ended up making a morning visit to Martin Down and to make matters even less usual I started from the main car park! My plan was to end up at the flat sparsely turfed field behind the Butts but rather than taking the main track I headed right from the car park, diving down into the 'bowl' behind the Gorse boundary. There were plenty of butterflies about and I picked off Meadow Browns, Common Blues, Small Heath and whites as I sauntered down one side other bowl to the bottom. Here there were large clumps of Marjoram like pinky-purple stands of coral buffeted by the currents of a sea of green. Choosing a likely looking clump I stopped for a moment or two. First a Chalkhill went by and then a Common Blue stopped. It's joined by an Adonis and then the Meadow Browns piled in, last in first out with them! As I wandered away the butterflies dispersed, taking off in unison. I was obviously in a Maritime mood as their sudden simultaneous flight brought to mind fish zipping away from the coral as a Shark passes by. Reminding myself to listen out for "dah, dah...dah dah..." I continued on.





I worked up the other side of the bowl and then walked a short way along the top of the ramparts of the Dyke. A very blue female Common Blue catches my eye as does a Small Copper with absolutely huge badges. I watch as it flies down into the Dyke and so I follow suit but I lose it as it twists and turns among the multiple Meadow Browns and I also have to keep looking down to check my footing on the steep side of the Dyke. The little area I found myself in now was the one that was so productive for Marshies back in May and again the small section produced the goods. I had a quick look around and spied a Chalkhill, then a Common Blue, an Adonis announces itself by opening up and catching the sun in an ice cold blast of colour whilst a Bad Attitude is attacking everything in sight. The final butterfly added to the tally here is a Small Copper. Such variety was great to see but what was odd was that there were one of each and they were all males – had I stumbled onto a butterfly Boy's Club?







After telling the lads that they "needed to get out more" I climbed out of the Dyke and carried on along the path. The vegetation quickly changed from a lush green to a tar brown colour and my nostrils were assaulted by a strong whiff of creosote. I wasn't sure if this was an accident or was some form of management but I quickly moved away noting a few Chalkhill and a lush female Brown Argus a little further on once the air had become fragrant, the stench of creosote abated and the more soothing colours of summer had reappeared. I'd reached the Butts and so I checked out the little field on the near side. A quick scan across meant that I could select my targets from the single Adonis, the two female and two male Chalkhills and the pair of Chalkhills in cop.





Leaving the lovers too it I wandered round to the field on the other side and as I round the foot of the Butt and looked out across the flat expanse it was a sight to behold. There were butterflies blimbling about all over the place. I could make out the larger Meadow Browns in flight but the moment they settled they vanished. There were more numerous Chalkhills; spectre like butterflies, their subtle blue colour making them look like the ghost butterflies of summers past. They too would land and disappear, hidden in plain sight. The Common Blues were less numerus and the Adonis fewer still but unlike the others the males would land and whilst their wings were open they could still be made out – semiprecious stones twinkling amid the beige. I spent what felt like nowhere near long enough here just walking backwards and forwards retracing my steps and cross-crossing the entire field multiple times as the butterflies alternatively sat or led me on in a dance. It was brilliant if a little dizzying.





All too soon I felt the call of home (the mobile buzzing in my pocket) and so I begrudgingly trudged back onto the main track. Round the Butt I was enticed to tarry in one of the little scallops by an Adonis. It sat at the edge of the path and as I moved closer it flew further back into the scallop drawing me in after it. There was also a female Chalkhill and a Small Copper amid plenty of Meadow Browns all of which further waylaid me. After another short while, as the temperatures rose and the butterflies started to act more and more silly as they warmed up, I pulled myself away. By virtue of putting one foot in front of the other I made it back to the car whilst ignoring the many Chalkhills on the way.



*A morning visit!
Start at the main car park - shock!
All the blues abound*

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 23-Dec-20 08:36 PM GMT

Another brilliant selection from Martin Down, Wurzel. 😊 I almost invariably park at the main car park when I visit since the time many moons ago when I went over the road to Kitts Grave as well. I've never yet been disappointed! There are large areas of amazing downland whichever way you do it.

The Blue Badge Copper stands out for me amongst all those, plus the nice Common Blue female. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Dec-20 04:37 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Over this year I've found the main car park area to be great for the Marshies and Blues and Sillens Lane is best for Holly Blues and Greenstreaks and also good for the Cloudy spot 😊 This year I kept ending up at Kitts Grave by way of Vernditch and it's a great little spot 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Dec-20 08:26 PM GMT

Shipton Bellinger 20-08-2020

The dreaded day had finally arrived – Results Day! Although this year I already knew the worst case scenario having sent in the grades that the pupils had proved themselves capable of. Most years I assuage the mild misery of this day by a stop-off at Shipton Bellinger on the way home, and so it was this time with the added bonus of it being a met-up with Philzoid. After the last buff envelope had been collected, the traffic at Tidworth negotiated and with the dying chords of Purgatory still ringing in my ears I stopped the car behind the main hedge.

As I walked round the corner I simultaneously spotted Philzoid and a Small Copper so we started chatting and catching up with each other's business from the last couple of weeks. As we're doing so Philzoid lets me know that there hadn't been a sniff of a Brostreak in the hour he'd already been on site...then I spotted a female up high. She was too high for me really but at least it was a start.



Pleased that they'd started to show we made our way slowly down the hedge, picking up a few Blues, a Holly Blue and a Comma which was also up high. Strangely there weren't any Gatekeepers? This would possibly have been a good thing had there been plenty of Brostreaks about – less to confuse them with, but their absence was a tad odd. We carried on working our way along the hedge and then onto the little enclosure. Finally our diligent examination of each and every likely looking leaf and slightly orange object came to fruition as there feeding down low was a Brostreak. It was a tatty male, very worn with its lack of scales giving it a washed out sandy grey appearance which after the glorious examples a fortnight or so previously was something of a disappointment. Still he posed nicely and so we both made some time for him. I was left wondering whether this was the same male that I'd seen here a month earlier with Little L?



Also here were some Brimstones and the Gatekeepers started to crawl out of whatever hole they'd been hiding in. Things were still quiet though even round by the nettle bed where only a few Whites put in a lacklustre performance. There was a strange feeling about the place...not like 'things are all over' but more 'things are about to kick off'... So we start back towards the main hedge with a possibly male jinking by and another high up Comma on the way only offering a mild distraction from our course. The feeling that things are just bidding their time before the grand finale grows and grows so much so that as we reach the main hedge I hear myself muttering "I think we're about to start seeing butterflies..." We're only about a ¼ of the way along when a chocolate and orange butterfly can be seen at the top of one of the small trees. At her altitude the slight breeze swings her around and about so I can't get anything more than a blurry distant record shot. Then tired by the battering of the breeze she takes and flies deep into the hedge. We press on and suddenly things start to happen as another female turns up, lower down and laying eggs in the cover of the leaves.



A few more steps along the hedge and we came across yet another female which is in slightly better nick and a few steps on again yet another female. As a certain Law dictates she was the best behaved of the bunch but also in the worst condition. Philzoid weren't complaining though as in several strides we'd picked up 4 different females and so we filled our memory cards with various posed shots. The more mature female exhibited the usual pattern of behaviour whereby after clambering along a twig in the shade and depositing a few eggs she flew/walked into the sun, opened up and basked for a bit. Sufficiently warmed she then set off back into the shade to lay a few more eggs.





By now we'd made it two thirds along the hedge and luckily we were a little sated of Brostreaks as from here on it got remarkably quiet again so we reverted to walking and talking until we reached the end/start of the hedge. There again was another female Brostreak, possibly the same as the first of the day? If this was to be our final one of the day then the best had definitely been saved as she was in cracking condition as she hung upside down from a twig. There's something very satisfying about the tightly packed short hairs fading into the almost furry looking scales on a fresh Brostreak and the colour is second to none! Also here playing a little second fiddle was a Small Copper and a cracking pair of Brown Argus locked together in cop.







As time continued to tick away we headed on, keeping to the track as it headed up the hill to the little scallops adding a few Specklies along the way. We checked out all of the scallops and the little enclosures and then worked back round to the top of the hill on the more open side. There weren't any more Brostreaks (so the best had indeed been saved until last) but instead a Wall and an Adonis entertained us for a bit. On the walk back down the hill we ventured onto the other side of the hedge and there were plenty of Brown Argus and Common Blues about but to be honest, and I occasionally find this, I felt like I was just going through the motions. The excitement of earlier surrounded by all the Brostreaks had made me immune to further endorphins and so whilst I hoped for another stunning female Brostreak I wasn't really paying an awful lot of attention to the other butterflies. This meant that the final stretches of the day were devoid of the multitude of shots.

All told it was a cracking day; a single male and 5 or 6 females isn't to be sniffed at, especially as we hadn't investigated any of the other spots where Brostreaks frequent. So it was with a certain amount of melancholy that I drove home after the final meet up of 2020...oh well next year things should be better Co-vid wise and there will be plenty of trips to make!



*Last meet of the year
The ladies were out in force
Bodes well for next year!*

Have a goodun and stay safe

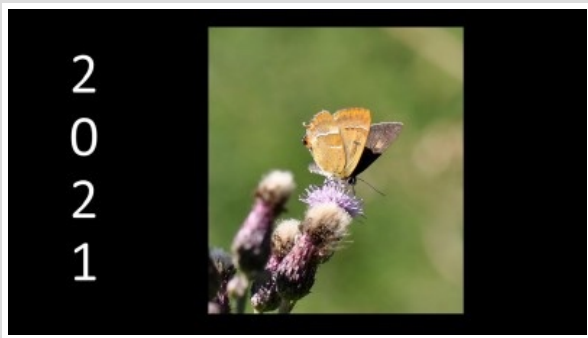
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Dec-20 06:44 PM GMT

Happy New Year Everyone!

I just hope that 2021 is better than 2020...even slightly better would be great 🙏 Fingers crossed...



Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel