

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-Jan-20 10:27 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=150034 time=1577653278 user_id=9839]...Interesting. Does this count as a December sighting? Not really I suppose, but nearly..

I had one brought to me that had been found by my neighbour in her cottage a few doors down last January. It's always nice to see a butterfly but this mild winter must have caused all kinds of disruption to their attempts to hibernate.

A cold snap soon, please!

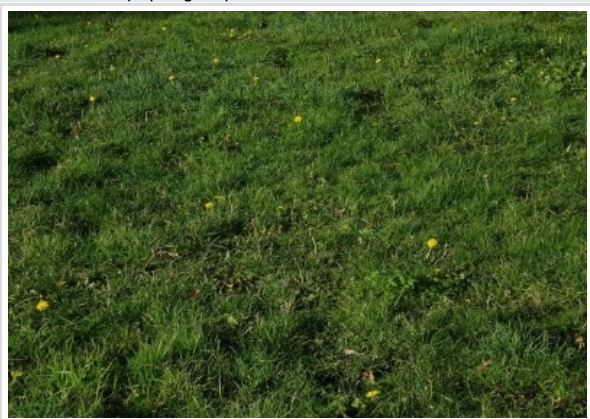
Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jan-20 04:07 PM GMT

Cheers, everyone – it was indeed a very pleasant and well-timed (not to mention appropriate) Christmas present! 😊

Into 2020...

Despite a series of sunny mornings recently, including one with temperatures up to 13 degrees, no butterflies have yet been in evidence on my local patch. There are a variety of nectar sources available, should any bold individual choose to appear, including a good number of dandelions which are their usual early spring staple diet.



The relatively mild winter thus far has meant for some slightly less usual blooms: This large clump of ox-eye daisies for example...



It's a good thing Holly Blue caterpillars munch on a wide variety of food plants in the spring and do not rely on the eponymous bush.

The local lake looked very pleasant in the winter sunshine, though there was the inevitable intrusion visible when I looked more closely at the photo. 😞



The days are getting longer now, and it has become noticeable (just) that evenings are becoming lighter. Onward towards spring! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Jan-20 10:36 PM GMT

It has been a very mild (if stormy) start to the year – I can't work out if we'll get a really cold spell or a crazy hot spell this year which will throw everything into disarray – it would be nice to just have a 'normal' spring for once 😊 Still only about 6 weeks until the butterflies start emerging properly – fingers crossed!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 15-Jan-20 12:34 PM GMT

`{quote=millerd_post_id=150249 time=1578931649 user_id=9839}`...The days are getting longer now, and it has become noticeable (just) that evenings are becoming lighter. Onward towards spring!

Judging by your images, Dave, one could be forgiven for thinking spring's already here!

Same in my area right now. A few celandines and daffodils are already out and with no meaningful cold weather forecast for the next few days, this unseasonal flowering of plants looks set to continue.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 15-Jan-20 07:30 PM GMT

Much colder here Dave with some really strong winds, UGH! Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Feb-20 04:52 PM GMT

Still nothing lepidopterous local to me, despite a fair bit of sunshine and generally mild temperatures. It has been windy, though, extraordinarily so on Sunday as it was across the whole country. This was particularly interesting round here, as a significant proportion of incoming flights at Heathrow were aborting their landings at the last minute and going round again. Several made more than two attempts before succeeding.

Nevertheless, the overall mild weather has reinforced the spring feel that began in January. More flowers are out...



...and the weeping willows have that overall yellow-green tinge and fuller look they acquire as their buds swell too.



I am keeping a close eye on the various magnolias in local gardens, as they too have bulging buds and precocious blooming puts them very much at risk of being spoiled by frosts.

This all does seem a bit early... It is still the first half of February.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Feb-20 10:49 PM GMT

Things are certainly looking more 'Sprung' round your way Dave so it won;t be long I reckon til you get onto some butterflies – a Small Tort or Red Admiral. 😊 Hopefully we won't get hit by some last minute cold snap, no-one's mentioned a 'Beast from the East' so fingers crossed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Feb-20 02:55 PM GMT

Those Violets look like Sweet Violets, I only have Dog Violets, but at least they are helping with the Pearl Bordered breeding programme.

Believe it or not there are some Sweet Violets growing under some brambles at High and over, the only ones I have seen around here.

The new season is getting closer!
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 16-Feb-20 07:42 PM GMT

Nice to see your 'pre-cursors' of spring, Dave. Yes, it's been stormy, and may continue so for a few days yet, but given how mild it's been, all we now need is one sunny calm day with reasonable temperatures.

That will kick 2020 into action.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Mar-20 11:45 AM GMT

The weather is starting to look promising, but still no sightings around here yet.

Talking weather, it is interesting to look back at some statistics for Heathrow over the winter period. It certainly has been a mild one!

From 1st November until today 11th March, there have only been eleven nights when there has been an air frost, i.e. an air temperature of zero degrees or below (three times in November, three in December, three in January, two in February and one in March). The lowest temperatures have been when minus two degrees was recorded, on the mornings of November 19th and January 21st. On all the other instances, the temperature just edged down to zero, but no further.

As for day maximum temperatures, the lowest recorded over the same period was 5 degrees on November 21st. Since then the nearest approach has been the high of 6 degrees recorded only a few days ago on 5th March. The three "winter" months in between had no days with a high lower than 7 degrees, and very few of those. The highest maxima recorded for each month have been: 16 (November 1st), 14 (December 6th), 13.5 (January 9th), and 15 (February 23rd). March has only just started, but 15 was reached yesterday, and higher is promised next week.

There has definitely been a lot of rain, especially recently, and much of the ground over which I regularly walk is still waterlogged. However, the River Colne has gone down thankfully, and no longer overflows the path in the way it did last week.



As for snow... Personally, I observed the odd wet snowflake in amongst the heavy rain on both the two low temperature days noted above (21st November and 5th March). And that's all!

Does this actually count as winter? Certainly not in the traditional sense of there being frost and snow, but the amount of rain and the frequency of windy days probably allows for a stretch in the definition!

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Mar-20 02:35 PM GMT

Immediately after the last post above, I set out on my usual walk once again. Cloud began to give way to warm sunshine, and I spotted something tucked in amongst the tangled brambles that didn't quite look right for a dead leaf. Risking shredding by the foliage I got close enough to confirm my suspicions – the first butterfly of 2020, a Brimstone.



from a distance – the first shot of the year



I shouldn't have bothered to brave the lacerations as within ten minutes I'd seen a total of seven of the species, including four in one vista. They were a bit sluggish as the sun was somewhat intermittent, and kindly perched in amenable poses.





On the return half of the walk, I also disturbed first a Peacock, and then a Small Tortoiseshell – but neither was near enough for a photo. Until those garden sheds open, possibly at the weekend, I don't expect to see many of the latter species! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 11-Mar-20 08:12 PM GMT

Interesting weather analysis Dave, an exceptionally wet Winter for sure. Good to see you off the mark with that Brimstone. On another site there is a report and image of a female Holly Blue on a Magnolia in Thames Ditton, seen today.

Only one Red Admiral sighting for me so far (camera at home!). Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Mar-20 09:44 PM GMT

Great to see you're off the mark and in a spectacular fashion too Dave 😊 Still to find my first Small Tort 🐛 I get what you mean about the 'Winter' it's felt more like an extended Autumn really 😊 Hopefully it got cold enough at times to knock the butterfly parasites on the head 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 11-Mar-20 09:54 PM GMT

I'm with Wurzel there, Autumn never ended I reckon. Of course since it's statistically more likely to snow at Easter than at Christmas in the UK (well in the south anyway), who knows what's in store... 😊

Good work with those Brimstones too, hopefully I'll have better luck next week 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Mar-20 10:16 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – no Holly Blues here yet, but it can't be long. Magnolias are in full bloom round here too at the moment and are a magnificent sight. I hope there aren't any frosts to spoil them. 😊

I'm not sure it's been cold enough to do any pests much damage unfortunately, Wurzel. The few frosts there have been wouldn't have penetrated very far into the vegetation. The grass and some plants (nettles for example!) haven't stopped growing this winter, and daisies and dandelions have been flowering on and off throughout. Still, good to see the Brimstones waking up – apparently all at once! 😊

Hopefully with Easter falling relatively late this year it won't snow, but as you say Bugboy, statistically it happens more at this time of year than in deepest darkest December.

On Thursday March 12th, there was sunshine, but it was quite a bit cooler and much windier. There were also some unexpected hail showers. However, on **Friday 13th**, it was calmer and the temperature had increased a little so I was hopeful I might see something on my usual walk at around half one. No Brimstones, but instead I came across three Commas, widely spaced out and definitely three separate individuals.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Mar-20 11:40 PM GMT

Great find, Dave. Those Commas look to have come through hibernation unscathed.
The weather forecast for next week looks more promising. Maybe at last we have kick off!

Take care,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Mar-20 08:48 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Dave – you're using the not having to work to the full advantage – I could only look longingly out of the window on Friday 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 16-Mar-20 07:19 PM GMT

Lovely to see your Brimstones & Commas, Dave. Not so lovely to see the floods, although at least we DO seem to be out of that seemingly endless cycle of Atlantic fronts.

Hopefully it will warm up and brighten up properly now, drying out the terrain at the same time.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Mar-20 09:47 PM GMT

Yes, Trevor – the forecast from about Sunday looks increasingly good, but it may well change (after all, ten days ago the forecast for the current week was equally favourable, but that didn't work out! 😞).

Thank you Wurzel – the weather gave the weekend a miss again and yesterday was glorious. Not working has so many advantages. 😊

Cheers, David – the waters have subsided again, and the paths are drying out nicely. Many the butterflies I'm posting are perched on bits of ground that were submerged only a couple of weeks ago. 😊

Monday 16th March was a lovely early spring day, with lots of sunshine and lighter winds for once. By afternoon it was also reasonably warm too. A lengthy stroll around my local patch revealed that the Peacocks had been busy waking up, and allowing for possible double-counts I saw a minimum of seven individuals. There were also definitely five different Commas, plus three Brimstones in the early part of the day and a single Small Tortoiseshell.



Tuesday 17th was still warm, but even when the persistent cloud thinned a fraction, I only managed to see a single Peacock today.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-20 10:02 PM GMT

A cracking set of shots Dave – it looks like you caught me up in one sitting 😊 Luckily I managed to get out during lunch otherwise my mr green count would be much more numerous 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 18-Mar-20 11:03 AM GMT

Beautiful Dave (looking forward to the Holly Blues!). 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 20-Mar-20 12:59 PM GMT

Looks like we all filled our boots on Monday, Dave! 😊

Nice to rack up the four UK adult hibernators in the space of a single stroll.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Mar-20 05:35 PM GMT

Another great haul there, Dave, and all in remarkable condition. Shouldn't be long now for some of the ' new ' Spring species to appear.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 20-Mar-20 08:56 PM GMT

A nice selection there Dave, looks like your local spot is off to a good start.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 21-Mar-20 02:10 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, what lovely shots 📷📷 You certainly seeing lots of Butterflies, I did go to Hall-Lee-Brook (my local haunt) the only thing I saw there was a large Rat 🐀 The wind has been really strong here and bitter cold, hope fully we'll get some milder weather shortly. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Mar-20 10:45 PM GMT

Many thanks to all of you. 😊 It has been a reasonable start to the year, now there has been some strong sunshine at last. However, in recent days, the sun has been accompanied by strong winds and relatively low temperatures, and the butterflies have remained tucked away. Spring growth has continued unabated, and I'm keeping my eye on the garlic mustard. This year, there is lots coming up (it appears in abundance round here only every other year) and the first flowers opening magically coincide with the first Orange Tips. It's rare for them to be out of synch: looking forward to it... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Mar-20 11:03 PM GMT

Sunday 22nd March. The wind had dropped just a fraction, the sun was just that little bit warmer, so I set out around my local circuit with a bit more optimism. I saw virtually no one along the route – and coming back to hear later of the madness that seemed to have afflicted large swathes of the population seemed rather strange.

Butterflies had appeared again – not many, but it still wasn't that warm truth be told. I saw just two Peacocks and two Commas over the whole circuit. Still, it is early days.



Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Mar-20 11:24 PM GMT

Monday 23rd March. Today was calmer, sunnier and (by lunchtime at least) warmer than the preceding days. I went out twice today, and over the day came across 18 butterflies of four species. The Brimstones were back with the more favourable weather, and included my first female of 2020.



The lakeside paths were very peaceful, and increasingly lacking this sort of disturbance...





This evening's news indicated that going out for just one walk a day is still allowed. I count myself lucky to have a productive area on my doorstep, even if there are only common species.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 24-Mar-20 08:33 AM GMT

That last Comma image really hits the spot, Dave, nicely perched on a twig. Commas in general seem to have overwintered very successfully. Hope your local patch is within 'exercising' distance from home.

Stay well,
Trevor.

PS. Male Holly Blue was seen in Sussex yesterday (not by me).

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Mar-20 12:13 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – I like that last shot too. Perfectly posed with a nice leafy spring backdrop. The Commas do indeed seem to have had a good winter. Their abdomens look nice and plump which means (I think!) that they haven't had to draw on too much of their fat reserves during hibernation.

I am on my local patch two minutes from home – some of these recent photos were taken within a couple of hundred metres of my front door. Just hoping for Holly Blues now – one has been seen not so far away apparently – and the first Orange Tips. They both appeared on the same day and together in the exact same spot in 2019 (along with my first Red Admiral of last year).

Dave

Re: millerd

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

Great set of shots Dave 😊👍 I'm with Trevor – that last shot is a classically posed Comma 😊👍 "I count myself lucky to have a productive area on my doorstep, even if there are only common species." Likewise Dave – mind you all the muppets were still out in force – I've seen facebook photos of crammed tube trains and people letting their kids play on the swings 😲😞😞 – how much longer before we're not even allowed out to exercise 😊 Make the most of it while you can, stay safe.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 24-Mar-20 11:01 PM GMT

Good range for this time of year, Dave.

You even captured that rarest of events – an aircraft! I reckon in 2 months they may be extinct.

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 24-Mar-20 11:55 PM GMT

Just one walk a day. I don't recall the PM said it had to be from your front door though – maybe I missed something. Your Comma and Peacocks are amazing, Dave – they look as though they have just hatched! The ones I've seen round here look considerably weathered. The small white seems very early, but then the seasons seem to be shifting.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Mar-20 09:25 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – yes, I doubt I'll get a better shot of a hibernated Comma (though it won't stop me trying! 😊).

Indeed, David – it is only March after all and there is all the season ahead if we are able to make the most of it. It would be quite interesting to be confined to my local patch all season, as I would get a more accurate picture of species abundance. As I go out elsewhere quite a bit during peak season, the local area can be overlooked for a whole week or even more sometimes.

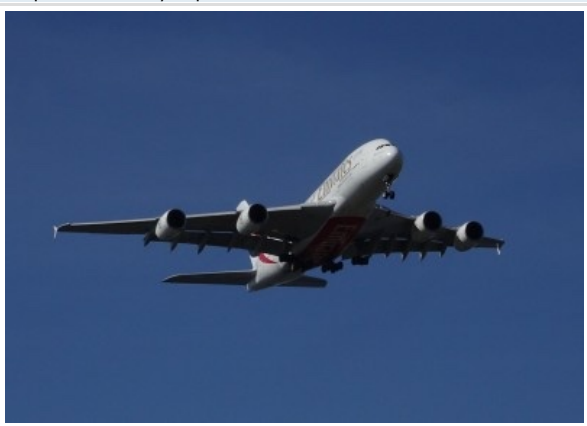
Thank you Janet – some of them are indeed incredibly fresh. Of course, some of those Commas and Peacocks didn't hibernate until late October: the second brood of Commas went on emerging quite late, and there were second brood Peacocks too. This may explain their relative freshness. You could be right – though the emphasis on unnecessary travel tends to point against travelling distance to get your exercise. Give it another fortnight and I will no doubt have exhausted the local possibilities for a while and will be itching to get out further afield – but who knows where we'll be then.

Tuesday 24th March was another sunny and quite warm day. Butterfly numbers increased again, with at least 22 individuals seen of five species on my local patch: 7 Brimstone, 5 Peacock, 4 Comma, 3 Small Tortoiseshell and 3 Small White. A selection...





The planes are not yet quite extinct...





Interesting that one of the airlines still flying regularly into Heathrow is Alitalia.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 25-Mar-20 09:34 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, I see you managed a Small White 🍀🍀 I'd one in my Garden today I couldn't believe my eye's I wasn't lucky enough to get a shot, it looks like things are really kicking off now, 🍀 Goldie 🍀

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Mar-20 09:45 PM GMT

Glad to see things are underway up there too, Goldie. I think it may actually have been warmer up there today than down here in the south. 🍀 Small Whites are surprisingly tricky to approach, especially at this time of year – my shots were all with lots of zoom!

Wednesday 25th March. More warm sunshine, and today the breeze had dropped to a gentle waft of fragrant spring air. I say warm – at sunrise there was a noticeable ground frost, but this quickly disappeared. There were substantially more butterflies again today – interestingly, we were experiencing a very similar spell of weather this time last year with comparable numbers. The weather became even warmer at the end of March in 2019, but things are set to do the opposite this year unfortunately.

So, what was there? 15 Peacocks for a start, 9 Commas, 8 Brimstones, but just the one Small Tortoiseshell today.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 26-Mar-20 06:31 PM GMT

[quote=millerd-post_id=151368-time=1585169156-user_id=9839]. The other main point of interest was spotting a courting pair of Peacocks. I've commonly seen this behaviour with Small Tortoiseshells, but much more rarely with Peacocks.

Yes, Dave, one regularly sees them jousting in the air but it's rare to see them indulging in courtship behaviour on the ground; certainly you see Peacocks doing this less frequently than Small Tortoiseshells.

Well done with the Orange Tip. I hope these early emergees will survive the polar chill from Saturday onwards.

Re: millerd

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

Hello Millerd, great shots you have been getting and congrats on the Orange Tip 😊

Stupid question time, is the difference in colour of the courting pair of Peacocks due to difference in sex?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Mar-20 09:36 PM GMT

Yes, David, this courting behaviour doesn't seem to be witnessed as often with Peacocks, despite the fact that they are far more frequently seen around here than their close relatives these days. The last time I saw this happen was curiously enough a couple of summers ago, when a newly emerged male was trying it on with a female. She was having none of it – after all, the majority of new adults in the summer have no interest at all in breeding – but he clearly had a second brood in mind. 😊

Thank you, Old Wolf – I noticed the colour difference too, but have no idea if this is a constant trait or not. I doubt it somehow, or the books would probably all mention it. The female is slightly larger than the male, and has a plumper abdomen (packed with eggs), but I suspect the colour varies between individuals regardless of their sex. How they have passed the long months of hibernation will no doubt play a part, as well as their condition at the start of that period of inactivity.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-Mar-20 09:55 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave, you saw an Orange Tip has well, that's great but they must be early, I hope the cooler weather doesn't put them off too much. I can't wait to see one 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-20 12:08 AM GMT

Great news about the OT Dave 😊👍👍 I'm hoping to get a glimpse of mine soon during my daily exercise, fingers crossed it lasts 😊 That was an unusual plane to see 😊 Mind you that airline is a breed apart. I flew with them from Milan to Warsaw – they lost my baggage, the same Tom and Jerry cartoon was on loop the whole way, the seats were of a similar design to those fold up canvas ones you used to get and when we landed everyone tried to stand up and give the pilot a standing ovation 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 27-Mar-20 10:12 AM GMT

Great pic of the courting Peacocks. never seen that behaviour before.

I also had a flight once with Alitalia. Never again. It's the only aircraft I have ever been on which during initial ascent repeatedly lurched upward as though climbing a staircase. It was like being in a car with a learner driver who couldn't yet engage the clutch smoothly.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Mar-20 11:34 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – Orange Tips do tend to appear in March these days down here in the south, but they won't get properly going for a week or two. You should see them when we get to the other side of this cold snap. 😊

Interesting comments about that particular airline, Wurzel and Ernie. I've never flown with them myself. Still a few planes today, but not many – it's splendidly quiet and the birds have stopped shouting to make themselves heard. (Apparently they really do this!)

I've been making the most of my exercise allowance, seeing as more than one walk out is allowed, and as long as it's local in a wide open space. No problem there!

Thursday 26th March. Another day of similar weather, and I had hoped to see another Orange Tip. No luck there, and no Small Whites either, but there

were several Brimstones and plenty of Commas and Peacocks again, plus a couple of Small Tortoiseshells. The numbers of the latter species have not risen as they usually do here at this time of year when the sun shines as it has done for several days in a row. I hope there are ore to come.





Friday 27th March. More of the same weatherwise, though the easterly breeze picked up again. My first butterfly today was a Small White, which was helpfully fuelling up on the dandelions.



...and when trying to get a bit closer I disturbed a Comma warming up right down in front of me. As I tried to get a shot of one or other butterfly, a third fluttered across my view. This turned out to be an Orange Tip. It also settled, rather far away, but I managed a shot in the end.



Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 27-Mar-20 11:56 PM GMT

Wow, an Orange Tip! Although sunny, I don't think it's been warm enough for OT round my way- the highest temperature I have recorded here this week is only 12C.

But in spring, it's usually a bit warmer to the west of London than to the east. Your OT earns you a 🍷

Re: millerd

by trevor, 28-Mar-20 08:28 AM GMT

You must take a mrgreen for that Orange Tip, Dave 🍷.
All the other species in your last post look so fresh, it's hard to believe that the ex hibernators are 6 to 7 months old !.

I am sure your first Holly Blue is imminent !.

Keep safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Mar-20 10:55 AM GMT

Orange-tip 🍷

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-Mar-20 11:34 AM GMT

Old Wolf wrote:

Stupid question time, is the difference in colour of the courting pair of Peacocks due to difference in sex?

It is a good question but I suspect the colour difference is mainly caused by the wings being at different angles to the light.

Hi Dave,

Some great reports and photos there, your local spot is certainly coming up trumps for you. Nice one with the Orange-tip 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Mar-20 08:19 PM GMT

I again drew a blank on the OT's Dave so here again are a few... 🍷🍷 Hopefully they'll slow down their emergence if the cooler weather that is forecast arrives 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Mar-20 10:26 PM GMT

Many thanks to all of you - I'm not sure I can remember going out and seeing butterflies on seven straight days in March, but that's what has just happened. If the weather were to continue like this, I'm sure Orange Tips would appear in numbers, but everything will now go on hold for a bit. Hopefully the next spell of warm sunshine will also prompt some Holly Blues to emerge - they have been notable by their absence, but it's only four months since the last one I suppose... 😊

Saturday 28th March started much as other recent days have done, but the northeasterly breeze strengthened quickly and by lunchtime had brought a lot of cloud down with it. My permitted morning walk still turned up three butterflies - two Commas and a Peacock braved the cool wind.



One or two planes continue to land, from various parts of the world.



I imagine air cargo continues to some degree, as that is how a lot of our more exotic and out-of-season fruit and veg arrives in the country and my local Sainsburys had no shortage of such things yesterday.

Tomorrow is going to be COLD... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 29-Mar-20 12:21 AM GMT

Yes, I hope you have had your fill of butterflies this week, as next week is not looking good...

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Mar-20 07:43 PM GMT

Amazing you're still seeing planes right now, Dave. I guess freight is the likely reason – can't be many passengers arriving in the UK from abroad right now. I guess it's reminiscent of when Eyjafjallajökull erupted back in 2010 which brought air traffic in Europe almost to a complete halt for a while.

I'm almost glad the weather's becoming cooler. Last thing we want right now is a warm spell whilst compelled to stay indoors. I hope Orange Tip emergence can be put temporarily on hold until things improve.

Re: millerd

by Old Wolf, 30-Mar-20 07:48 PM GMT

Hello Millerd, congrats on the Orange Tip. I am yet to see one but am hoping they start appearing round here soon 😊

{quote=millerd post_id=151427 time=1585254995 user_id=9839} Thank you, Old Wolf – I noticed the colour difference too, but have no idea if this is a constant trait or not. I doubt it somehow, or the books would probably all mention it. The female is slightly larger than the male, and has a plumper abdomen (packed with eggs), but I suspect the colour varies between individuals regardless of their sex. How they have passed the long months of hibernation will no doubt play a part, as well as their condition at the start of that period of inactivity.

Thanks for the info Millerd. I had to ask. I am learning new stuff here all the time 😊

Neil Freeman wrote:

It is a good question but I suspect the colour difference is mainly caused by the wings being at different angles to the light.

Thanks Neil, I appreciate you taking the time to answer my stupid question 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Apr-20 09:53 PM GMT

Yes Mark, there has been a short hiatus in sightings, but luckily not too long.

There is still a constant stream of planes, David, but at considerable intervals instead of every 30 seconds! Quite a bit of cargo being carried I suspect.

Cheers, Old Wolf – Orange Tips are now well and truly underway, and should start appearing everywhere this week with the weather looking pretty good.

Thursday April 2nd. After a few chilly days, the 2nd was a bit warmer, and in a burst of morning sunshine I ventured out and managed to see a handful of butterflies: Brimstone 2; Small White 1; Peacock 2; Comma 1.





Friday April 3rd was cooler again, but there was actually more sunshine. Only a small number of sightings, all later in the day: Small White 1; Peacock 1; Comma 3.



Saturday 4th April, however, saw the arrival of the promised spell of warm sunny weather. Early mist and low cloud cleared by midday and into the afternoon, it had become pleasantly warm (probably up to 17 degrees). The butterflies responded as expected, and over the length of my local circuit (slightly extended I have to admit) I counted around 80 butterflies of seven species.

The newcomer today was the Speckled Wood.



Commas were common, and I spotted a female investigating nettles and probably laying.



pausing for a rest

More worryingly, there were still only a few Small Tortoiseshells, and (I never thought I'd be saying this) I am still waiting for my first Holly Blue.





An excellent day – and this is only the start of the fine spell. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Apr-20 10:48 PM GMT

80 in one afternoon! That's more than I've seen all year, by a very significant margin 🍀🍀🍀

Re: millerd

by trevor, 05-Apr-20 07:59 AM GMT

What a brilliant haul, Dave. Yesterday was definitely the day butterflies had been waiting for. You mention a lack of Small Tortoiseshells (plural), I was pleased with one locally.

A mrgreen is reserved for your OT shots, 🍀 I was hoping for some yesterday, but had to make do with multiple Specklies.

Keep safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Apr-20 05:34 PM GMT

That is an impressive sum Dave 😊 Great to see Specklies on your PD as that means I could be seeing them in about a weeks time 😊😊 Great shots especially liking the Small White which has a very, very slight lemony tinge 🍀🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 05-Apr-20 09:49 PM GMT

WoW!! what a great haul, I bet you were pleased 🍀🍀 We're still waiting for warmth here . 😊 Love the Orange Tips, they're a lovely sight in Spring 🍀
🍀 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-Apr-20 07:22 AM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=151733 time=1586033602 user_id=9839]...The butterflies responded as expected, and over the length of my local circuit (slightly extended I have to admit) I counted around 80 butterflies of seven species.

It's amazing how butterfly numbers suddenly go from few to a great many as soon as conditions become optimal. 80 individuals is good going at this time of year, as is to witness 7 different species.

Lovely to see a few images of male Orange Tips; the first of many hopefully.

Re: millerd

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

Cheers, everyone. 😊

Saturday was a good day, and in some ways, **Sunday 5th April** was even better. I didn't walk so far, but saw nearly as many butterflies, including the first Holly Blue of the year pottering along the top of the bramble thickets but not stopping for a moment. All the other species seen so far this year were represented, though seeing one single Small Tortoiseshell was very poor, given the conditions. A selection:



female fuelling up first thing





Other points of interest in the air included this Red Kite, which has been over the village quite a bit recently...



This evokes distinct nostalgia for my youth, as I had had an early 747 Airfix kit completed in just this colour scheme. It just shows how long this type of plane has been flying. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-20 10:34 AM GMT

Great to hear that millerd is back onto the Holly Blues, a little bit of normality creeping back in 😊🇬🇧 Great shots as usual Dave eep em coming as I need to know what to look out for next round my neck of the woods 😊😎

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 07-Apr-20 05:49 PM GMT

Hopefully your Holly Blues will be sitting pretty in front of your camera lens before long, Dave. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Apr-20 09:07 PM GMT

Yes, good to finally see the Holly Blues reappearing, Wurzel. I miss them, you know! 😊

You appear to have seen decent numbers already in your neck of the woods, David. I think you've mentioned in the past that your bit of coast is warmer in the winter than it is round here, and I suspect that's why you're well ahead. 😊

Monday 6th April. The day dawned with something not seen here for a couple of weeks now – a bit of light rain. However, by late morning, the clouds were breaking up and more warm sunshine brought forth the butterflies. I saw not quite as many as the previous day, and only six species – but one of these was another new one for the year. This was a single Red Admiral, pausing only briefly in the midst of a rapid flight pretty well due north. From the glimpse I had it seemed to be in good nick, and it occurred to me that it might be an immigrant, rather than a survivor of the winter. Sunday's southerly winds could well have brought a few over.

Aside from 29 Peacocks, today's stars were the Orange Tips, including a couple of females.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Apr-20 09:30 PM GMT

Tuesday 7th April. More sunshine, and the day became really warm by afternoon. I embarked on a slightly longer walk in a wide loop taking an hour or so, and concentrated on counting Peacocks as accurately as I could. By the time I was back home, I had seen an amazing 45 of the species. It is quite possible, given their rapid flight, that there was some double-counting, but equally there will have been others I missed simply by looking in the wrong direction.





Around 90 butterflies of nine species seen today, and the year tally is now eleven.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 07-Apr-20 09:37 PM GMT

Don't think I've ever seen a fresher pair of butterflies in cop! Your patch is still far outdoing mine ten fold in both species and sheer numbers 🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-20 10:15 PM GMT

I'm with Bugboy those GVWs are in mint condish – it must have been the shortest courtship ever – emerge meet my mate, copulate, biological

imperative met, relax and enjoy the sun 😊😄 Lovely shots and those OTs from yesterday 🌱🌱

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-20 06:05 PM GMT

Your having some good luck with the Butterflies Dave, great shots of them all 🌱😄 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 08-Apr-20 07:04 PM GMT

Your patch is certainly doing you proud again Dave. Great Orange-tip shots and lovely fresh Green-veined White, I have yet to see one of the latter.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Apr-20 08:40 PM GMT

Thank you, everyone. 😊 The run of fine weather has really been behind the good numbers of butterflies seen here recently, and it appears to be continuing. However, as others have noticed, Peacocks in particular are having an unusually good spring.

Wednesday 8th April has been another fine day. Though there was a lot more cloud, it was noticeably warmer and more humid, reaching about 23 degrees. I didn't walk as far today, so only clocked up 24 Peacocks...



I spotted a Large White again, almost certainly the same male as yesterday, and grabbed an "in-motion" snap as it careered past me, confirming the ID.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-20 08:45 PM GMT

Great shots of the Orange Tips Dave, and I love the Ducks 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-20 10:14 PM GMT

Great set of shot Dave – even the Large White which is very reminiscent of my annual first attempts at an OT photograph 😊 I reckon there will soon be oodles of Holly Blues gracing your PD once you start your whispering ways 😊😊😊 I too thought that was a large clutch for a Mallard and wondered if the duck had adopted a few stray Ducklings so I goggled it and apparently they have a clutch of between 6 and 13 and won't tolerate, even killing, other ducklings that stray to near to their brood 😊 So I was wrong on both counts 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 09-Apr-20 07:42 AM GMT

Somehow I missed your post from 7th April, Dave, so a retrospective 📅 for the mating GVW's. It's good to read of plentiful Orange Tips in your area, so far my sightings are of singletons. Holly Blues are showing well along the old railway, but refuse to land, they always seem as though they are about to touch down, then promptly swoop up to the tree tops!

Some great reports and images recently,
Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Apr-20 10:05 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie – the ducks were too cute to ignore! 😊

Cheers, Wurzel. I was told today that the clutch started off as fourteen ducklings, an astonishing number. Duck eggs a wee bit larger than hens' eggs, so you do wonder how fourteen could be accommodated all at once in one mother duck before being popped out over a relatively short period.

[\[quote=Wurzel post_id=151937 time=1586380459 user_id=9821\]](#) ...I reckon there will soon be oodles of Holly Blues gracing your PD once you start your whispering ways 😊...

Wurzel Depending on the exact definition of an oodle, things may have started to pick up today... 😊

Many thanks, Trevor – the Holly Blues I've seen so far have been behaving exactly as you describe, until one or two today.

Thursday 9th April. Yet another day of strong sunshine, and it warmed up very quickly today, probably reaching 24 degrees this afternoon. I was out much earlier today and did another shorter variation on my usual circuit. I then stretched a point slightly and nipped out very briefly at the end of the afternoon and covered a bit I'd missed earlier. I managed to see ten species today, counting nearly 90 individual butterflies. A third were Peacocks as you might expect, but they are beginning to move from basking on paths and hedgerows to flying freely over the areas of grass and settling on nettle clumps. They still look very fresh.



Several more Speckled Woods have emerged now, and in relatively close proximity to one another leading to many prolonged dogfights.





While the weather is so warm they are not going to be very sluggish, nor will they open up much or often, but when it cools down next week, things may improve.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 09:11 AM GMT

I don't think that's 'oodles' yet Dave, I'd say that was definitely more than a 'Smidge', possibly a 'bundle' of Holly Blues? 😊😄🇩🇪 Interesting that the Peacocks seem to be doing so well this spring although round my way they're still not around in the same numbers as the Small Torts were but that species seems to be on the wane now 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

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

`{quote=millerd post_id=151924 time=1586374808 user_id=9839}`...I spotted a Large White again, almost certainly the same male as yesterday, and grabbed an "in-motion" snap as it careered past me, confirming the ID...

I think I'm going to have to employ that tactic, Dave. There are plenty of Whites on the wing now but this warm weather means they just won't stop.

Maybe next week, when it's supposed to go cooler, one or two will begin to co-operate!

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 10-Apr-20 06:11 PM GMT

Love the Holly Blues Dave 🍷 which they'd pay my garden a visit 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

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

Hopefully I'll get up to oodles in the next few weeks, Wurzel – numbers of Holly Bues are on the up! 😊 Peacocks outnumber Small Tortoiseshells on my patch this year by a factor of ten to one, something I don't think I've seen before. Astonishing really as I only saw a handful between August and October before they went into hibernation.

To find a settled white butterfly, David, it has to be early in the day or possibly early evening (if you can't spot one tucked into a roosting spot for the night! 😊) This is certainly true of the spring broods, though they are more inclined to nectar later in the year.

Thank you, Goldie – more Hollies today! 😊 I hope some do find their way to your garden: it seems to attract a lot of other butterflies.

Friday 10th April: More glorious warm sunny weather. I went out early again, to avoid the heat as much as anything, and found that half eight was only just early enough to find things still warming up. Almost immediately I spotted the tell-tale silver triangle of a Holly Blue sitting in a spot where I find them every year – a large wild buddleia bush nowhere near flowering but which this species seems to find attractive for early basking. After a few side-on shots, the butterfly flexed its wings open for a second or two before taking to the air.



I saw 15 of this species overall today, but none of the others was as obliging.

No big surprises today, just variations on the theme that has emerged during this week's sunshine. I did find a few Small Tortoiseshells, dispersed now into the open field areas along with increasing numbers of Peacocks moving away from the paths and wooded bits.



Finally, a Small White had settled down, but had unusually dusky scaling on its underside. Unfortunately, I disturbed it while trying to get a clearer shot.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 11:27 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 😊 That Holly Blue is an excellent shot gurt lush 🤩🤩🤩 and tat Small White is unusually dusky 😊 I'll have to try the early exercise tomorrow as we're in for another scorcher 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 11-Apr-20 12:30 PM GMT

Good to see your Holly Blues are out and about. I've seen one so far who looked like she'd had a close shave with a strimmer!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Apr-20 10:04 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel and Buggy – that male was only open like that for a second or two so there was some luck involved there! Good to see the Hollies out and about again, and with luck they'll be flying here on every decent sunny day for the next six or seven months. A constant joy. 😊

Saturday 11th April. A curious patch of cloud evolved and covered the sun for a couple of hours first thing this morning, but by the time the sunshine came through at around ten, it had become very warm and one or two butterflies were already flying. For the first time in a week, Peacocks were not the most frequently seen as I actually counted more Orange Tips – and nearly as many Holly Blues. Between them those three species accounted for two-thirds of all the 90-ish sightings today (ten species altogether).

Females have started to appear amongst the Holly Blues. Easier to follow than the males (they don't patrol endlessly, nor do they make soaring excursions into the trees and back) and if conditions are right, perhaps a bit more inclined to open up. I found a couple this morning which did oblige a little, but it was just too warm for them to open up to any greater extent. The angle of the wings fine-tunes the amount of heat reflected onto the butterfly's body incredibly sensitively, and even a bit of passing thin cloud can make a difference. Today, the optimum angle appeared to be 30 degrees or less, which doesn't make for brilliant photos... 😊





White butterflies behave similarly (apparently the reflective scales of white butterflies are an incredibly efficient mechanism), hence the rareness of seeing them with wings wide open.



Small Tortoiseshells have none of this sophistication and soak up the sun...



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Apr-20 08:56 AM GMT

Great Holly Blue shots, Dave. I agree about the males, from experience I would say that Purple Hairstreaks were an easier target!. Maybe the cool weather forecast for Monday might induce better Holly blue behaviour (from our perspective). Also good to see your female OT, not seen one yet.

Keep safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-20 12:57 PM GMT

Great shots and really interesting information there about the temperature regulation Dave – something I'd not really considered 😊😄 Looks like you've reached 'oodles' level of Holly Blues 😊🍀

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Apr-20 09:48 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor! 😊 I have to disagree, though – I find Holly Blues much easier than Purple Hairstreaks, though as David M. said somewhere, they do behave quite like Hairstreaks at times.

Thanks, Wurzel – yes, I think I reached oodle magnitude today as I counted over 20 Holly Blues for the first time this year.

Sunday 12th April. A fair bit of intermittent thin cloud to start the day, and when I went out just before nine, it turned out to be ideal conditions to

demonstrate that temperature regulating behaviour again. The first butterfly encountered was a female Holly blue, sitting winding her wings in and out as the sun varied in strength. She was a cracker.



I did find a particularly new-looking Small White resting at one point though...



All told, around 100 butterflies of eight species today. The stars of course though were those initial three Holly Blues at the start of the day.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-20 10:25 PM GMT

A cracking set of Holly Blues again Dave – looks like you're back on form with your whispering ways 😊😄👍 Early morning does seem to be a good time for getting Holly Blues that 'open up' I recall last year at Martin Down there were several males and females and all desperately wanted to sit low down with wings open wide 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Apr-20 08:26 AM GMT

There's no need for you to take any more Holly Blue shots, Dave.
Your shots of the female are as good as it gets 🍷, with the male images close behind.
We didn't get the early morning high cloud, it was blue sky and warmth from the start.

All you need to find now is three mating pairs in one day!

Superb stuff! 🍷
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 13-Apr-20 09:02 AM GMT

Wow to those Holly Blue photos Dave 😍😄🍷

I have to wonder what kind of Faustian Bargain you must have made in order to get so many shots like that 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by Stevieb, 13-Apr-20 11:28 AM GMT

Superb Holly Blue shots. 😍

Re: millerd

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

I see normal Holly Blue service has resumed, Dave. 😊

Beautiful, fresh set of individuals (although your Small White is rather attractive too).

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Apr-20 09:25 PM GMT

Many thanks to everyone for your appreciation of the Holly Blues. 😊 Every year they appear here in good numbers and adopt the same habits in the same spots as their ancestors did in previous seasons. Looking back I have yet to record any appreciable dips in numbers that relate to the interaction with their parasite – abundance seems remarkably consistent year on year. Neither have they apparently suffered from squeezing in a third brood every autumn, though to be fair this is never in large numbers, and really just features as a bonus when everything else (except Red Admirals!) has disappeared. They are a particular joy every spring and 2020 is no exception – especially when the world is currently so full of alarm, gloom and sad events.

Monday 13th April. As confidently predicted by the forecasters, today saw a cloudy and windy start and an astonishing dip in temperature of nearly fifteen degrees. However, sunshine reappeared in the afternoon, and though the wind dropped a little, only the bravest of butterflies were out and about. For the first time since the start of the month, I failed to find a Peacock – though there were three Commas around. A few Orange Tips and Small Whites responded to the sun (which seems to be more important than temperature for them)...





Only 18 butterflies of six species were seen today.

One point of interest – only one small part of my local patch has any cuckoo flower, the Orange Tip's favourite larval foodplant and the one from which it gets its name (*cardamine pratensis*). Here I found the first egg of the year.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-20 07:44 PM GMT

A lovely set of shots Dave– especially the open winged male – almost blinding that blue sheen 😊 Interesting pint about the sun being more important

than the temperature for whites 😊 I've noticed that a few times when I've gone out thinking it was warm enough but with high cloud and there hasn't been anything about 😊 Other days there's a real icy tinge to the air but blue sky and the whites are away! 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Apr-20 09:45 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. 😊 Holly Blues are very shiny butterflies, and getting the settings right on the camera can be tricky in strong sunlight. Definitely easier with a bit of cloud around. Still, at the moment there are opportunities to practice every single day.

Tuesday 14th April. Brilliant sunshine from the outset today, and the wind had pretty well dropped, but the temperature only climbed a little above Monday's. The morning especially felt distinctly chilly. However, sun and lack of wind were triggers enough for the butterflies on my local walk, and I saw around 80 individuals of ten species. As is becoming the norm at the moment, Orange Tips and Holly Blues were most in evidence, and the Peacocks were back in numbers today as well. Today's Orange Tips included a couple of females (these have been a bit thin on the ground so far).



Commas posed as ever...





...as did a few Speckled Woods.





And sooner or later, one will decide to bask...



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 15-Apr-20 10:45 PM GMT

More stunning Holly Blue and OT shots, your local patch certainly performs. 🍷
The way things are shaping up around there, it's only a matter of time before you get a mating pair of Holly Blues. They are not so obliging around here!.

stay fit and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-20 10:46 PM GMT

Wow Dave that looks like Holly blue Nirvana – all the species they like in one spot! 🤪🤪 Cracking shots as usual – I'll be trying the Whispering out in the near future, wish me luck 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 15-Apr-20 11:08 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=152280 time=1586983556 user_id=9839]...Here is a tree which seems to be the equivalent of a student house for the species – it's a Holly, festooned with ivy, entangled with a hawthorn and with an understorey of dense brambles...

So **that's** how you do it! 😊

Does look the perfect des-res. Might be tricky getting down to my own Holly Blue site over the next couple of weeks so good to know I can rely on you for my 'fix'. 🍷

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 16-Apr-20 07:04 PM GMT

Some lovely shots there Dave of the Holly Blue. Having been absent for a while and returning in these strange times it is reassuring to see them once again in your diary 😊.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 16-Apr-20 07:14 PM GMT

Dave, your lucky with the Holly Blues and what beautiful shots of the open wings 🍷🍷 I wish I could find a place they love round here 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 16-Apr-20 08:03 PM GMT

Can you whisper some of those to the other side of London please Dave, I've seen a grand total of 2 Holly Blues so far and one of those was in

someones front garden! 🌿

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Apr-20 10:45 PM GMT

Many thanks again to all of you! 😊 I wish I knew what it is about my neck of the woods that produces so many Holly Blues, and not just that, so many accommodating ones. The tree I've singled out is part of it, but realistically only a small part. There is a lot of ivy around, festooning trees and crumbling walls and sprawling over blocks of garages. I thought the population would take a hit when a whole line of ash trees covering in ivy was lost following drought (loosening the roots) and some strong winds, but it has made very little difference. There are certainly plenty to spare - I'd love to send a few out to those of you suffering a deficit! 😊😊😊

Wednesday 15th April. Another very sunny day indeed, with little wind, and temperatures back up to 19 degrees. I tried to concentrate on counting the butterflies today and keep the camera tucked away - with a bit of success. It did show that my ad hoc estimates of numbers were fairly close to what emerged from more rigorous counting, which is encouraging. All told, I counted 110 butterflies, seeing all eleven of the species that have appeared on my local patch thus far in 2020. The breakdown:

Holly Blue 27
Orange Tip 24
Peacock 18
Small White 17
Speckled Wood 7
Comma 6
GV White 4
Brimstone 3
Large White 2
Small Tortoiseshell 1
Red Admiral 1

This is the first day I have seen all eleven, and it was made by the appearance of that solitary Red Admiral. As with the only other one I've seen this year, I suspect it to be an immigrant - overwinterers would have appeared a while ago and made their presence known. This time, I made an exception and took a few photos, particularly as it was (typically) a bit of a poser.



A few other odd ones from the day:





This is the 14th consecutive day I have been out on my local patch – rarely achievable at any time of year, let alone in April. Amazingly, there is always something different, and some little gem that makes it worth the excursion.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-20 10:56 PM GMT

Great to see the Red Admiral Dave 😊 – they've been a bit scarce late, I saw only my second the other day and it was a lot more battered than yours 🤔
😞 What do you reckon to the clarification to the 'driving to do exercise' rules? Does this mean that I can drive to Bentley Wood so long as I spend at least an hour there walking around after Pearls? Would Cotley Hill be within the bounds? 😊😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-20 12:12 PM GMT

Great seeing the Red Admiral Dave, I'm still hoping for a Brimstone and Holly Blue and Red Admiral, I shouldn't grumble though I've had a great time and not been out of the garden with the exception of the Comma, we're back with the cold wind today though. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Apr-20 07:36 PM GMT

{quote=millerd_post_id=152335_time=1587073502_user_id=9839} Holly Blue 27
Orange Tip 24
Peacock 18
Small White 17
Speckled Wood 7
Comma 6
GV White 4
Brimstone 3
Large White 2
Small Tortoiseshell 1
Red Admiral 1

Impressive list is that, Dave.

It's the top and bottom that stand out. 27 Holly Blues is tremendous, but I prefer the single Red Admiral to be honest, given the dearth of them there have been so far this spring.

17 Small Whites is also encouraging for the spring brood.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Apr-20 09:10 PM GMT

Yes, the Red Admiral was good to see. Though they do make it through the winter, numbers don't seem to be great and they are often early (Jan/Feb) sightings ahead of the true hibernators and it may well be that they have succumbed to old age by the time the other species are out in numbers. This means that most sightings like this one are probably immigrants – it is known that we receive significant migrant numbers from the continent most years. We are probably also about to see the handful of new individuals hatched from overwintering caterpillars as observed by Vince down here in the temperate south of England. Quite a complicated picture really! 😊

Thursday 16th April. Another sunny morning, with increasing hazy sunshine as the day went on, and an increasingly muggy feel to things. Even a few raindrops, something hardly seen since the deluges stopped in mid-March. Only around 80 butterflies seen today and only eight different species, but as my walk today started before nine, I found a few just starting their day with a bit of breakfast. Orange Tips to start with:





Then a male Green-veined White, which was only a metre or so away from the male Orange Tip.





Just for contrast, a dazzling new (though slightly crumpled) male Small White.



After this burst, the walk took in the customary Peacocks and Commas...



...plus a singleton Small Tortoiseshell. There has almost always been one, though generally just that – one only.



Finally, as things warmed up, the Holly Blues appeared.







Spring is such a good season, don't you think? 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-20 07:30 PM GMT

It certainly is Dave, it's a cracking season with so many species of butterfly 😊 A fantastic array of shots – that Small White was a cracker 😄 😊 🇬🇧

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Apr-20 09:48 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – that Small White was dazzling. 😊

Friday 17th April was cool, and very soon turned cloudy and then wet, with the first significant rain in about a month. A quick walk before the rain produced a solitary Speckled Wood, and nothing else. Very nearly a blank day to interrupt the run – but not quite... 😊

Saturday 18th April started off even cooler and the overnight rain had left a lot of puddles. The forecast for the day didn't look that promising, but around half three in the afternoon, it was confounded by the appearance of the sun. Though it was hardly blazing, there was enough of it to warm things up to a reasonable 16 degrees, and spark off some butterfly activity. I found around 40 all told, though only six species. Orange Tips were first off the mark and predominated throughout. I found one roosting on a cuckoo flower plant and waiting for the sun to appear. It was sufficiently comatose to wander onto my finger briefly, but once back on the flower the sun appeared and it quickly opened up before dashing off completely revived. Reviewing the shots, I see that the next generation has squeezed into the frame as well.





Small and Green-veined Whites were also warming up. The former bask on the brambles and make brief forays to and from the dandelions, but the latter flit constantly at low level between flowers and often bask on the flowerheads. After a while you can *fairly* reliably tell which is which in flight.



Only a handful of Holly Blues were flying, including this male...

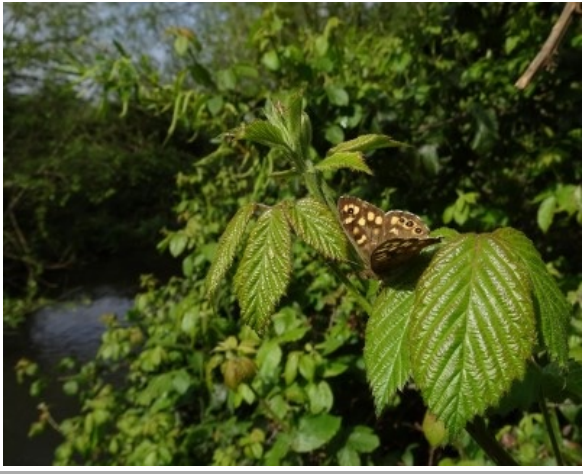


...and I spotted this rather worn one sitting it out.



A very fresh female was also seen, but basking high up in the holly tree mentioned in my earlier posts.

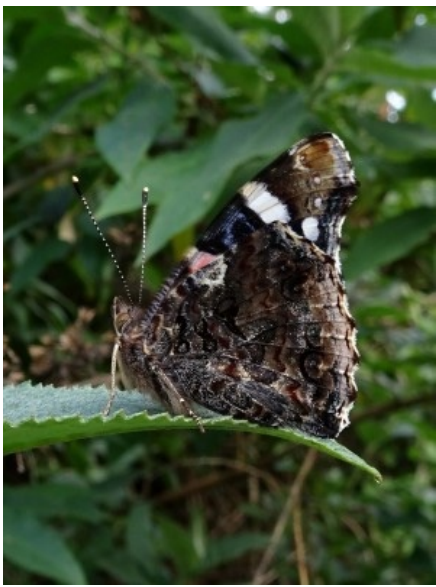
It doesn't take a lot of sunshine to bring out the Speckled Woods – after all they spend a lot of their time in the shade – and I managed this context shot with the River Colne in the background.



A bit further on, another Specklie put up another butterfly – this turned out to be a fresh-looking Red Admiral, but before I could get more than just a record shot, it set off in pursuit of the smaller butterfly.



A few metres further on again, I thought the Red Admiral had returned to sit more amenably for me. It was only after looking closely at the photos later that I am pretty sure this was actually a different butterfly.





Though the shot of the first one is distinctly blurred by distance, the telltale spots of a bialbata are visible when it's enlarged – the second butterfly does not have these. Both butterflies looked new, the second in particular is a lovely velvety creature. Having said in my last post that locally-emerged specimens might be making an appearance at any time, this could well be what these two are. I shall keep my eyes open for more.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Apr-20 07:18 AM GMT

Your day yesterday very much mirrors mine.

There was a thunderstorm here Friday night, which freshened things up.

It was all go from the start when I arrived at the old railway just after 11am.

I envy your Holly Blue sightings and images, 🍷 there's plenty of them locally, but they just won't play ball!. Good to see some Red Admirals about at last.

Great stuff, stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 19-Apr-20 11:56 AM GMT

You were lucky Dave, the cloud thinned a bit over here but couldn't really call it sunny spells, didn't stop me popping out for some exercise though 😊, I managed 3 butterflies!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-20 05:41 PM GMT

Cracking Red Admirals Dave 😊 I had to do with just exercise yesterday as there wasn't even a glimpse of sun all day and I didn't see a single butterfly so you were lucky Dave 🍷 Mind you today was a different story – what a difference a day makes 😊😊

Have a godun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 20-Apr-20 08:45 AM GMT

You're seeing plenty of butterflies, Dave, and seem to have no trouble getting them to pose for you. I'm highly envious of those Green Veined Whites, and the Red Admiral is welcome too – I believe there has been a recent influx in the south.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 20-Apr-20 09:32 AM GMT

Great set of Butterflies Dave, especially the Red Admiral 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Apr-20 09:43 PM GMT

😊 Cheers, everyone. It was great to see the Red Admirals, and to find one so very fresh as well. I wonder if it was a local, rather than one of the new arrivals from the continent? 🍷 😊

Sunday 19th April. More sunshine, and reasonably warm again as well. The most curious thing about today's sightings was that I only saw one Peacock – surely that bit of rain can't have finished them off. Orange Tips (19) and Holly Blues (an amazing 31 counted) comprised the vast majority of what was flying on my local patch today. There were two more Red Admirals – one spotted flying strongly north, and the other marking out a territory in the same place as the one seen on 18th. In fact, it was actually sitting on precisely the same perch as the one I saw back on 15th. Definitely a different butterfly to all those previously seen.



This is behaviour I have noted before – certain sheltered nooks are frequented by a series of Red Admirals. Problems arise when numbers build and two or more try to occupy the same space. And then the Speckled Woods get involved... 😊

In amongst the many Holly Blues flying, I actually found a mating pair here for the first time (remarkable it's taken so long really). They weren't very accessible and I only found them because of the repeated visits from other male butterflies.



There were plenty of other HB photo opportunities of course.







who says they don't visit flowers?



A selection of some of the rest on show:





Altogether, around seventy butterflies of ten species seen.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 21-Apr-20 08:56 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Holly Blue Dave , 🍷🍷 I've yet to see one 😊 maybe one will move into the Garden shortly 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-20 03:58 PM GMT

"In amongst the many Holly Blues flying, I actually found a mating pair here for the first time (remarkable it's taken so long really)."Perhaps that's why the rest are so accommodating Dave – they're running cover for the very shy mating pairs 😊😊 Lovely set of shots of the HB's but my face has to be the initial Red Admiral – gorgeous, velvety looking I can't seem to get near them at the moment 😊🍷🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 22-Apr-20 06:46 AM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=152523 time=1587415437 user_id=9839]...In amongst the many Holly Blues flying, I actually found a mating pair here for the first time (remarkable it's taken so long really). They weren't very accessible and I only found them because of the repeated visits from other male butterflies.

Well done, Dave. Good things come to those who wait! 😊

Nice Red Admiral too. Hope we'll see a few more of these shortly.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Apr-20 10:38 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – I'm sure a Holly Blue will find its way into your garden sooner or later.

Interesting theory, Wurzel – there are so many, they could be diverting my attention all the time... 😊😊

Thanks, David – yes, it's been a while coming, that pairing. And Red Admirals are on the increase now... 😊

Monday 20th April. More sunshine, and up to 19 degrees again. Curiously, no Red Admirals today, but there were a few Small Tortoiseshells hanging on, including this wraith of a specimen.







Dave



Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-20 10:51 PM GMT

"Interesting theory, Wurzel - there are so many, they could be diverting my attention all the time... "what that says about the Holly Blue I couldn't possibly comment 😊😄 Good to see the Small Torts hanging on in there Dave and a cracking Green-veined White 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 23-Apr-20 08:02 PM GMT

Great final image, Dave. That Orange Tip is gorgeous.

I daresay this next week or so will see a gradual disappearance of all the adult overwinterers. Good that Holly Blues seem to hang on round your way to compensate for this.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 23-Apr-20 09:46 PM GMT

Some nice fresh Holly Blues, Dave, and a mating pair!
You're right about Specklies getting involved, sending up the Butterfly you've just focussed on.
Sometimes they can work in our favour, by sending up something we hadn't noticed.

Great sets of images, as usual.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-20 09:57 PM GMT

Lovely Orange Tips Dave, and I'm envious 🍷🍷 of your Holly Blues 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-20 11:59 PM GMT

Thank you all once again. 😊 Being tied to my local patch, plus this extraordinary run of good weather, certainly provides ample opportunity to get out at different times of the day and see how things vary. Being out by nine or alternatively after four in the afternoon seem to provide the best results.

Tuesday 21st April was a case in point. It was brilliantly sunny again, but the fresh wind was quite chilly first thing. The Holly Blues were out, but largely sitting tightly closed low down on the vegetation. With your eye attuned to those little silver triangles, it was surprising just how many there were.



A short extra walk late in the day was perfect timing for the recently arrived Red Admirals – found once again in the same sunspot, though different individuals than before.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-20 06:47 PM GMT

Crickey Dave the open Holly Blue female (before the Red Admirals) is an absolute cracker 🤩👍 And then to really rub it in you've got one crawling over your hand – looks like you're a Black Belt 9th Dan Holly Blue Whisperer now! 🤩👍😄
"Being out by nine or alternatively after four in the afternoon seem to provide the best results"...too true – but unfortunately both times I can't be out a the moment (working from home and feeding the kids) 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 24-Apr-20 09:27 PM GMT

Just love those female Holly Blues, Dave. 🤩

I see you've got back to your 'whispering' method now. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Apr-20 11:34 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – she was rather a splendid creature, wasn't she? 😊 At the moment, the males are quite keen on a bit of moisture (often to be found on damp shady patches) so tempting one onto a finger wasn't too difficult. It then hung on and continued sucking up whatever it had found regardless of the buffeting by the wind. I'm afraid my nearly 15-year-old son has to work around my outings – breakfast before an early one and dinner after a later one! To be fair, he comes along on any late afternoon stroll often as not. 😊

Thank you, David – you'd think I'd be fed up with Holly Blue photos by now, but they are such attractive beasties, there's always another angle you can come up with. I know some folk find them tricky, but to be honest, the local population here are generally very amenable as you can see.

Wednesday 22nd April. The run of extraordinary weather continued along with sunshine all day, it was warmer and less windy. The breakdown of species continued as before, but as always there were some points of interest. I found a female Brimstone, an unusually small one that I mistook for a Green-veined White at first, with her fluttering flight in and out of the hedgerow. However, having correctly identified her, I realised she had led me to an alder buckthorn growing in the midst of the overall bramble tangle, and was carefully selecting sprigs of bursting buds on which to lay eggs. I have never been able to pick out this shrub in the local vegetation, but here was the best qualified guide there could be! 😊



the result

Overall, there were perhaps a few more Brimstones (especially females) about today than recently – maybe the stronger wind discouraged them.



There were more females amongst the healthy Orange Tip numbers as well...



...but the settled males are hard to resist as well – their season is all too brief.



There were more Red Admirals today too – seven popped up in patches of sunshine along the mostly shaded bits of path, and of course they were squabbling every time they encountered one another, soaring high into the sky in twos and threes.



the classic pose
Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-20 10:11 PM GMT

Are you passing on the ways of the Whisperer to your son Dave? I'll have to keep a look out for damper patches next time I encounter a Holly Blue Dave as I've only witnessed them taking salts once before 😊 Good numbers of Red Admirals as well – 7 in one sitting isn't to be sneezed at 🍵

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Apr-20 11:04 PM GMT

He takes a bit of an interest, Wurzel, can recognise all the local species, and finds things like the Brimstone egg worth looking at. However, he's a bit tired of spotting blue butterflies at the moment... 😊😊 I see Holly Blues taking minerals from damp spots along the edges of the paths on most days, though they never congregate in any numbers – two at most in fact. With rain forecast in the days ahead, they may well be doing a bit more of this in the sunny spells in between the showers.

Thursday 23rd April. A very warm day, up to 24 degrees at Heathrow and constant sunshine again. I decided to take today's walk 10–15 minutes drive away (the lack of traffic made the trip very short) at the southern part of Bedfont Lakes Country Park. Much quieter and far less manicured than the bit north of the railway, and I virtually had the place to myself. I was surprised how few butterflies there were, compared to my usual daily fare – half a dozen Peacocks, a few Brimstones, Orange Tips and Whites, and only four or five Holly Blues flying much higher up than I'm used to. I've seen many more in previous years. One Brimstone stopped for a breather.



However, my target here was none of these – I was seeking out the Green Hairstreaks that can be found almost anywhere on the site. I found one quite quickly in a spot where the grass is left to grow long and Birds' Foot Trefoil is mixed in with it, but it took off for nearby trees and disappeared. I wandered a bit further to another wilder bit of the park, well out of the way of normal footfall, and was rewarded with another Green Hairstreak – a female investigating another low-growing patch of BFT with a view to laying. However, she was equally happy to spend periods just sitting in the sunshine, so I took advantage.



I felt lucky to have found this butterfly, as I may well not have another opportunity to see them this year.

A quick stroll round my local patch later produced nothing of note, but I couldn't not take at least one Holly Blue photo. This one was nectaring, appropriately, on the flowers on the Holly tree.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 26-Apr-20 08:17 AM GMT

Well done with the Green Hairstreaks, Dave. Good clear shots to complement them. They can be tricky to photograph in sunshine, as the wing surface tends to fluoresce, resulting in a white blob in the photo. I have yet to find a GH so far this year, hope to put that right today.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 26-Apr-20 09:07 AM GMT

I'm glad you stumbled upon that Green Hairstreak, Dave. If we're not going to be allowed to range far and wide then some species are going to be tricky, if not impossible, to observe this year.

Agree with your comment regarding locating the buckthorn bushes – leave it to the female Brimstones; they can 'sniff' it out from hundreds of yards away. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Apr-20 08:42 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor – a nice bit of luck there, and the Hairstreak was a bit of a poser too, offering both sides for my admiring glances. 😊

Cheers, David. I was very pleased to see this one. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Apr-20 08:48 PM GMT

I just noticed an oddity I forgot to include on my post relating to the **22nd April**.

I really did a double-take when I saw this particular Holly Blue. You'd think its parents had had an assignation over on Collard Hill... 😊



However, I think the curious symmetrical pattern is probably caused by some moisture trapped between its wings when roosting, and otherwise it appeared to be a perfectly normal male butterfly.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-20 08:36 PM GMT

Great work getting the Greenstreaks Dave 😊 It's good to get another species 'ticked off' though it's going to be tricky this year 😊 Interesting Holly Blue – I reckon you're right about it being 'water damage' as they would explain the shape and the symmetry although at a glance you'd have been forgiven for thinking 'Large Blue' 🤔🤔

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Apr-20 08:44 PM GMT

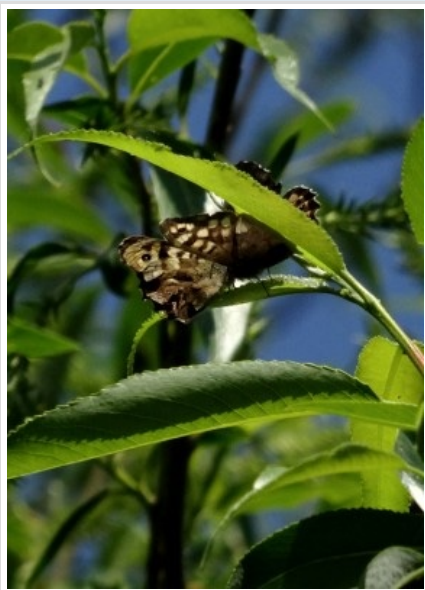
Cheers, Wurzel – yes, a definite double-take there. 😊

Friday 24th April. Yet another day of warm sunshine – a high of 22 degrees today – and the total butterflies seen reached around 120, the highest yet this year, of ten species. Curiously, no Commas were amongst them.

During this morning's excursion, I found myself following a Speckled Wood along the path. I spotted another one coming the other way and expected the usual interaction of a frenzied tight spiral under the trees which might go on for some time. However, the approaching individual was dived upon by the one I'd been with, and virtually pinned to the foliage. A female – but rather than playing dead to reject his advances, some courtship behaviour ensued.



I can't say I've ever seen this before, with the two butterflies face to face in this way. It didn't last for long at ground level – the pair quickly took off into the trees to continue matters, and this was my last view of them.



I've already noted that the Holly Blues have been taking minerals from damp spots along the paths. The continued dry weather seems to have had other species doing it too, and I encountered a Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell not far apart indulging in the same way.



The Hollies continue to entertain, and today's bit of curious behaviour was from this female apparently laying on some cow parsley. Close investigation after the event revealed no eggs were laid on this unlikely plant, but it seems from this and from previous years that they will think about laying on almost anything in the spring.



Another highlight of the day was actually getting a couple of decent shots of Large Whites for the first time this year.



Red Admirals are around every day now, in the same places but not usually the same individuals each day.



Another sign that summer isn't too far away – my first Silver-Y moth of 2020 characteristically playing very hard to get.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-20 10:07 PM GMT

Lots of interest as well the great shots here Dave 😊 First up really interesting behaviour between the Specklies – I've not witnessed anything like that before apart from in Wood Whites – normally courtship involves, chasing, harassing and in some cases almost violence but the image makes it look affectionate 😊 Also interesting to still see a Small Tort – I've not seen one in a week now and I thought they'd gone. Finally interesting Holly Blue behaviour – I saw and photographed something similar a week or two ago and I couldn't find any eggs either – is this like a 'dummy' run or a practice or has the innate urge been suppressed because the female recognises it as the wrong host plant?? 😊 Intriguing. 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Apr-20 10:15 PM GMT

Having seen Holly Blues apparently laying on a wide variety of unrelated plants in the spring, Wurzel, it looks as if they are attracted to almost anything with flower buds of approximately the same size. However, quite a few are "oviposturing" and don't actually lay – at the crunch moment something must feel wrong and the egg fails to be triggered. The abundance of the species coupled with the relative scarcity of buddy holly (sorry – I couldn't resist that 😊) means that the females must start to become desperate to lay and become more catholic in their tastes. Generally round here this means dogwood (which is quite common), vetches and goats' rue.

Saturday 25th April. Cooler again today, and a bit of cloud to start, but with light winds and strong sun later, it was another lovely day with around a hundred individual butterflies seen again. Orange Tips, Peacocks and Holly Blues remained the commonest species, with Small Tortoiseshells being the one absent species today. However, there was a newcomer – I found a brand new Small Copper, making the 12th species on my local patch so far in 2020.



Amongst several Red Admirals with various degrees of wear, I found one to add to the list of mud-puddlers...



The lower air temperature meant the Holly Blues were opening up noticeably more than recently.







Another Large White female cooperated...



Later in the day, after yesterday's absence, one or two Commas appeared – though they are looking a bit more faded now.



Finally, Orange Tips were also settling down and allowing closer approaches.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 29-Apr-20 05:16 PM GMT

Great to see a few Large White images creeping into people's PDs, Dave. The one you depicted in your last but one report is particularly well marked.

Glad you stumbled on a Small Copper too. Always nice when the regular group of species are joined by a newbie. By the time the weather clears up I guess we can expect Common Blues, Brown Argus, Small Heaths and a few more besides?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Apr-20 10:22 PM GMT

Cheers, David. Getting decent photos of Large Whites is not the easiest of tasks for such a common butterfly! 😊 You're right - I'm hoping that once May is underway the very species you mention will appear on my patch. Following previous years, it would probably be Brown Argus and Small Heath first, followed a few days later by Common Blue. Then towards the end of May, Large Skippers and maybe an early Meadow Brown or two. If there's to be an influx this year, this is when I'd expect to see the first Painted Ladies as well. Fingers crossed! 😊

Back to the summer weather in April. **Sunday 26th April** was glorious again, sunny throughout, calm winds and up to the 21 degree mark by late afternoon. Over a hundred butterflies seen again today, with all the usual suspects doing well including Holly Blues topping the 30 mark. There seemed to be yet more fresh males appearing, three weeks down the line from the first ones appearing - the month has been excellent for them.



They do have a liking for these flowers (alkaenet?)...



...but some prefer their namesake.



I thought initially that this was a female, but on second thoughts what you can see of the upperside tends to indicate otherwise.

The Small Copper seen on 25th appeared again in the same spot, and posed a little more than before.





More Red Admirals...



Another very full day dominated as ever by Holly Blues. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-20 11:03 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots and reporting Dave but where has the 'summer' weather gone 🤔 As I type this it's bucketing down outside 😊 Mind you a drop of rain is long overdue and I've got to work to tomorrow so it can do what it likes 😊 Good luck finding those Greenstreaks on your local patch 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Apr-20 08:57 PM GMT

`{quote=millerd post_id=152909 time=1588195355 user_id=9839}`...Little knots of three or four males squabbling were pretty common..

That's the behaviour I'm used to seeing round my way, Dave, but it tends to happen quite early in the season and then stops. I note that many of your specimens look quite fresh, whereas the ones I'm currently seeing are invariably quite worn now.

Nice to see numbers of Red Admirals on the rise. That's yet to happen here in south Wales. 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 30-Apr-20 09:26 PM GMT

You've an amazing local patch, Dave, nice to have in these very trying times. I am amazed at the amount of butterflies you've seen, and the great shots that you have managed, makes for very nice viewing 😊 especially those Holly Blues 😊

Mike.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Apr-20 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – yes, a drop of rain is definitely required. Some of the nettles that the Red Admirals were looking to lay on had started to curl, which is a sure sign they are a bit thirsty. I'd guess that after the last three days of April they'll be fine. Looks like things are back on the up now. 😊

Definitely fresh male Holly Blues still emerging, David. Quite surprising considering they have had 26 consecutive days suitable for flying and in a normal year they would probably have had half that or fewer. In fact, many butterflies will have worn themselves out with such a lot of continuous activity – an average of around 8 hours of sun a day during this April, and an average high here at Heathrow of nearly 18 degrees. 😊

Thank you, Mike. I am lucky to have such a productive area within easy reach of home. The majority of the Holly Blues are within five minutes walk, and everything else within about 20 minutes. 😊 Nothing particularly rare or unusual, though – but you can't have everything!

Monday 27th April. Much less sunshine today and a bit cooler (up to 19 degrees), though it remained dry. Fewer butterflies (around 70 or so) but the change in weather didn't deter the Holly Blues that much – a third of the total were of this species. Of note today though was another Small Copper, patrolling a different spot. It was quite a diminutive individual as can be seen here – barely larger than the buttercup it's sitting on.



...and another on the blue flowers again.



The remainder just sat in characteristic poses.



The less said about the last three days of April, the better – even Wednesday 29th (which was dry and not too chilly) produced no butterflies at all here. Better days ahead in May... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-May-20 03:15 PM GMT

More enviable Holly Blue shots, Dave. I admire the way you have trained them to pose within camera range. 🇮🇪
The problem with the old railway is there is so much high vegetation, and very little lower down.
Could your Small Copper be an ab?, with fewer forewing markings. 🤔

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 01-May-20 07:01 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Can you send some of those Holly Blues up here please, I have only seen a handful so far and only one of those was a female.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-May-20 07:48 PM GMT

That is a tiny Copper Dave 😊 And more lovely Holly Blues 🇮🇪 Things do look better weather wise in the near future though we're due a blip on Tuesday – luckily I'm rota'd on then 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-May-20 02:37 PM GMT

Lovely Holly Blues again, Dave. Some of them look impeccably fresh, especially the one basking on the leaf towards the end of the sequence.

Nice to see a Small Copper too, and rather an unusual one as well.

Re: millerd

by kevling, 02-May-20 02:54 PM GMT

Nice Holly Blue photos, especially the female open winged. Can't remember the last time I had one pose like that for me.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-May-20 08:21 PM GMT

Many thanks to all of you. It's a good thing Holly Blues seem to be a popular subject, or you'd all be bored with them by now! There was an appreciative article about them in the *Times* today (2nd), with some rather poetic descriptions, which I thoroughly approved of until the end, where the writer made an astonishing error by stating that they overwintered as adult butterflies. Rather disappointing 😞 I shan't believe anything I read in the papers ever again – so much for fact-checking! 😊

Friday 1st May. After three distinctly inclement and butterfly-free days, the forecast was better. Unfortunately the forecast was as reliable as that *Times* article and quickly launched into heavy showers. That said, the showers were interrupted by some reasonable bursts of sunshine, and I managed a bit of a walk without getting wet. The butterflies must have been relying on the forecast too as I managed to see a reasonable number, of which nearly half were Holly Blues. I only found six other species today, but the relatively cool air kept them more subdued than recently.







Oh, I nearly forgot 😊 – some Holly Blues





Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-May-20 08:24 AM GMT

The Holly Blues in your patch have a long emergence period. Some have clearly been around for a while, with some in your last post looking very fresh indeed. I am getting daily HB flypasts over my garden, but they are not as friendly around here. Also that is a great, sharp, OT shot in the above post.

Stay well and healthy!,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-May-20 08:07 PM GMT

More brilliant stuff Dave – the third from last Holly Blue has caught the light just right to make it look almost like a Common Blue 🤔🌍 The papers often disappoint when it comes to writing about this country's flora and fauna 😞 although in this case perhaps we can let them off the hook as I think they probably got a bit over excited as they were writing about something other than Covid-19 😞😞 There is talk about a slight easing in that they will make it clear that you can travel to the countryside (although not the beach) so you still might be able to get some Marshies – they've only just started 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 04-May-20 06:45 AM GMT

That is an enviable female Green Veined White, Dave, a species I've really struggled to photograph so far this year.

Those fresh Holly Blues keep rolling off the production line round your way! Are they continuously brooded? 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-20 09:53 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Lots more cracking Holly Blues recently, I really am becoming convinced that mine have all gone down the M40 to you, perhaps word has got around up here about the great conditions you have for them down there 😊

That female Green-veined White stands out for me though, with the extended dark markings along the rear edges of the forewings, a striking example.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-May-20 08:56 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – you're right about the Hollies. They keep on coming, and in fact though numbers do drop briefly before the second brood arrive, it's very rare for there to be an actual gap. It is possible to see one on any day from the last week of March right through to the end of November.

I don't think they are actually continually brooded as you suggest, David – they do have a few months off over the winter! 😊 Two full broods and a partial third one almost every year. I think it may be this last one whose offspring are the later individuals emerging now. Just a theory. 😊

GVW are quite variable, Neil, especially at this time of year. When fresh they are beautifully marked butterflies. 😊 If it were possible to export a few Hollies, I'd be happy to – I had seen 18 this morning before I saw another butterfly, and all before 10am.

I really hope your optimism is well-founded, Wurzel. 😊 The problem might be deciding where to choose as a destination. And the famous Law of Sodde will no doubt case the weather to crash spectacularly... No one likes a soggy Marshie (however appropriate that actually sounds 😊).

Saturday 2nd May. Sunnier and warmer again. My walk around my local patch was a bit truncated today as I had another plan in mind for later on. Nevertheless, I found a couple of new Small Coppers again.



It's interesting that though they do get a bit tired and faded as the season progresses, you hardly ever see a torn Orange Tip.



Unlike even relatively new Red Admirals...



Though there were once again plenty around (I counted around 20), only a couple of HB photos today.



With just a relatively brief break, I continued my walk in a different direction, heading south to Staines Moor. I had forgotten how close this area is, and what it was like, and it is only the limitations of the current situation that sparked me to try something different. I'm glad I did – but I'll continue the tale in a new post in a bit.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 05-May-20 07:37 AM GMT

Lovely fresh Small Copper, Dave. I saw a mint specimen yesterday but it was too quick.

We will have to see whether any restrictions are eased, in the planned government covid 19 meeting next Sunday. Longer distance car travel would suit us!. Social distancing can be observed whether we are 1 mile or 50 miles from home.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 05-May-20 09:02 AM GMT

Lovely selection there Dave, especially the Small Copper, it's bit dead for species in my Garden at present only Whites so far and they're giving brief visits so it's great to see your Butterfly shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-May-20 07:31 PM GMT

That Small Copper is an stunner Dave 😊🍷 You made a great point about the OTs Dave –I can't recall ever having seeing a torn one, it could be because they feed and roost on 'soft' plants or their camo underwings work a treat or the distasteful substance that makes them 'white' OR maybe all three 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-May-20 08:11 PM GMT

Fingers crossed, Trevor. Though the (mostly) excellent weather has meant staying local hasn't been too much of a hardship so far, with all those other species out there now, the feet are getting distinctly itchy... 😊

Thank you, Goldie and Wurzel – new Small Coppers are lovely butterflies. 😊 Which is good, because I have discovered a veritable Copper Mine just down the road from me... 😊

On **Saturday 2nd May**, after a quick pitstop, I headed south down a footpath alongside one of the reservoirs near me, with the River Colne just to the right. I had been this way before, but not for a while and could only remember some tempting but inaccessible bits of land – and on one walk, whole areas covered by water making the footpaths impassable. However, today I took a right turn down a path I didn't remember, and after about ten minutes came out into a vast open area with the river winding through the middle.



On the way home, a sunlit bit of path had been adopted by a Red Admiral for the early evening.



With so many Small Coppers, and a large area to explore, I could see that I would have to make further visits. 😊

Dave

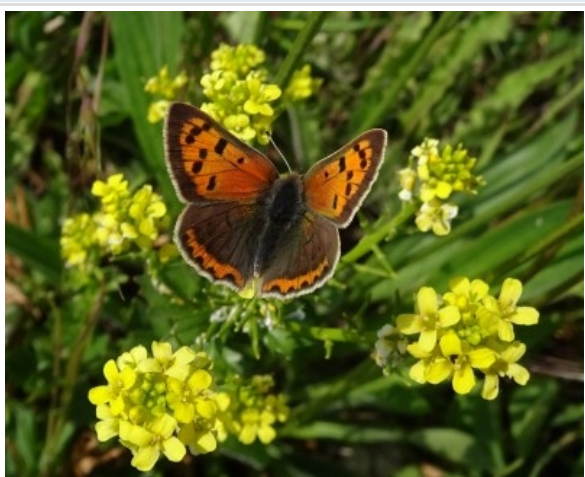
Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-May-20 09:21 PM GMT

Sunday 3rd May was a bit of a contrast, with no sunshine at all and relatively low temperatures. All I saw out while I was out walking today was a solitary Red Admiral surprised from somewhere down in the grass.

However, **Monday 4th May** was better again, with some morning sun in particular and a high of 18 degrees. There were more Small Coppers around today (they must have heard I'd been seeing others down the road recently) – I counted six, which is a good first brood total here as in some years I've struggled to find them at all in the spring.





Both Small and Green-veined White females were flying low over the grassy areas, looking for wild cruciferous plants on which to lay. They don't stop long whilst doing this and I was lucky to catch a GVW taking a breather.



Initially I thought I'd found another one, but this butterfly was instead intent on nectaring as much as egg-laying – a female Orange Tip.



As ever, Holly Blues were the commonest species with a count of 20, and still the odd new one in the mix.





After Saturday's success, I decided to head down to Staines Moor again later on.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 06-May-20 08:25 AM GMT

Lovely, Lovely, Butterflies once again Dave, I'm still searching for an Holly Blue 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-20 08:57 AM GMT

Nice find with the 'new' local site Dave, especially with all those Small Coppers 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-May-20 07:15 PM GMT

There's something about the 2nd Small Copper from the 2nd May Dave – I can't work out whether it's the dark brown that's darker (almost 80% Cocoa), the orange on the fore wing that's paler or a mixture of both but it does look 'more different' than the normal variation? 😊😊 Anyway that's a cracking local find Dave 😊🍷 If you get a good pair of binoculars I reckon those reservoirs could be really productive in the winter – may even get Smew 😊🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-May-20 08:22 PM GMT

Great selection again, Dave, though your last open-winged Holly Blue is rather like those I'm still seeing round my way.

Like you, I too have set foot in previously rarely explored terrain. A reminder that we all become a bit lazy having found all our local hotspots over the years – a little bit more adventure is never a bad thing!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-May-20 08:40 PM GMT

Thank you all – it's great to find a new spot to look at, especially with a healthy number of Small Coppers. It occurs to me that the first brood is generally the least numerous, so if that pattern works through, come the third brood this site could be knee-deep in them. There is certainly no shortage of foodplant. There is a lot of variation amongst them, in terms of size, markings and depth of colour so there will always be some interest. I know large populations throw up the odd aberration too, so I shall be on the lookout... 😊

So on the afternoon of **4th May**, I went back to Staines Moor. Warm, fairly still, and mostly cloudy by now – but that was probably a good thing as the Coppers were more prone to basking. However, there were other things of interest too. First up I came across a female Orange Tip laying on what looks to me like wild rocket.



No sooner was the egg laid when she was accosted by a male.



In the same area was a stand of bramble around which several Holly Blues were flying – I resisted the temptation... 😊 However, nearby I spotted a silvery flash of a small butterfly, a complete contrast to the little coppery sparks flashing past. This turned out to be a new male Brown Argus, my first of 2020. He posed nicely, helped by the cloudy conditions that induced him to bask fully open.



The rest of the visit was devoted to the Small Coppers in all their variety.



One in particular looked rather pale, more pale gold than copper.





All these looked freshly emerged (though there were several others that looked more worn), and I probably saw over 20 individuals altogether.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 06-May-20 10:14 PM GMT

All those Coppers 🍄. If I'm able to get to Epping Forest in the coming weeks I should be able to add them to my yearly list. That plant your Orange-tip is laying on might be Hedge Mustard *Sisymbrium officinale*. Pretty sure I've seen it being used by them myself.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-May-20 06:50 AM GMT

Superb Small Copper sequence, and as for the Brown Argus 🍄. Fingers crossed that any easing of restrictions will benefit us!

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-May-20 05:50 PM GMT

Cracking Brown Argus Dave 😊 And that final Small Copper – that's got to be a named ab surely 😊 🍄 Fingers crossed for Sunday...

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-May-20 09:46 PM GMT

Thanks for the plant ID, Buggy – I've seen one with yellow flowers now and see it's a kind of mustard. The leaves do look a bit like rocket – I wonder what they taste like? Hopefully the Orange Tip caterpillars will enjoy them. 😊

Somehow photos don't fully capture the deep chocolate colour of a new Brown Argus, Trevor and Wurzel, but that one wasn't a bad stab, I must admit. 😊

There will be a few more Coppers to post I suspect, but that last one does look pale enough to qualify as an ab. However, there are well over a hundred different abs to sort through! Oddly enough though, the very first one illustrated on the British Butterfly Aberrations website is ab. *intermedia*, described as brassy rather than reddish-coppery coloured. <http://www.britishbutterflyaberrations.co.uk/species/lycaena-phlaeas/aberrations> It looks like a close match to me: the one I saw was brand spanking new, with full fringes and not a mark on it, and compared to the others was markedly pale (as you can see in the other photos). It is a sort of halfway point between normal and the exquisite silvery-white ab. *schmidtii*. Now that **would** be something to see!

Tuesday 5th May. Cooler, breezier, but generally sunny. Within a few minutes of leaving home on my morning walk around my local patch, I spotted a Holly Blue flying very uncertainly at the bottom of the hedge and watched it flop down into the grass. Time for a rescue! It clambered onto my hand with no encouragement at all, probably because of the relative warmth and shelter it afforded from the cool breeze. In fact it readily opened its wings to reveal a splendid new female butterfly.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-May-20 10:00 PM GMT

May 5th (continued). My afternoon walk to Staines Moor did indeed produce another good spread of Small Coppers, as well as another couple of Brown Argus.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 08-May-20 08:17 AM GMT

That fresh female Holly Blue !! 🦋🦋, superb.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-May-20 08:31 PM GMT

Congrats on the Common Blue – not seen one yet myself this year but looking forward to it 🦋🦋 Those Holly Blue shots are something else Dave – I think the words of Ted Theodore Logan and Bill S Preston esquire sum them up best; "Bodacious and most triumphant dude" 🦋🦋🦋🦋

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-May-20 07:31 AM GMT

You've done it again haven't you, Dave? What an honour to have that delightful Holly Blue basking on your hand! 🦋

Nice to see a Comma again; they vanished a couple of weeks ago round my way. At the other end of the emergence spectrum, Brown Argus & Common Blue are welcome additions.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-May-20 08:49 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – there are more of these little beauties coming in the next few days–worth of posts! 🦋

Thank you, Wurzel – good to see a Common Blue for a change, even from a bit of a distance. Hopefully there will be a few more very soon. I believe I know the origin of your quote – a reference from popular culture possibly? 🦋

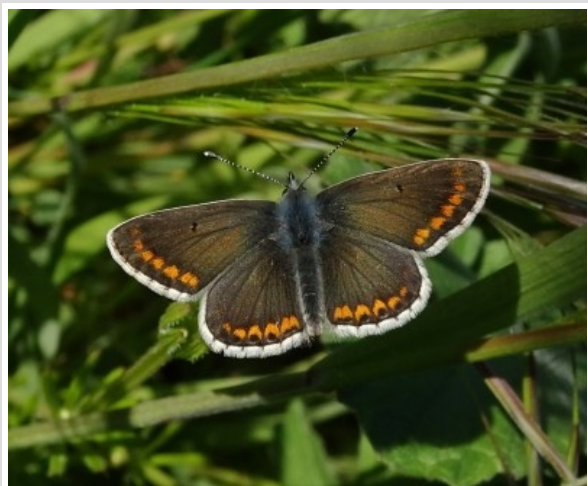
Thanks, David – as I said above, more Hollies to come as the females start to emerge, and then head off to lay on a variety of plants.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-May-20 09:12 PM GMT

Wednesday 6th May. Lots more sunshine today and pleasantly warm too: 60 or so butterflies seen locally, of 12 different species. One of those 12 was a new one for 2020 – my first Small Heath.



Peacocks continue to appear every day, but numbers are beginning to dwindle.

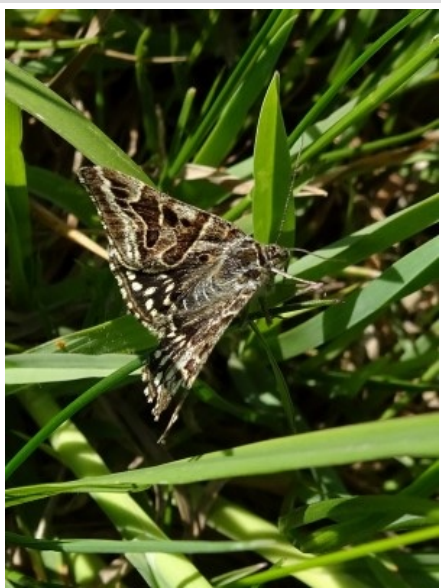


This is the first time I've see this plant used, though to be fair almost anything with a flower bud will do at present.

On my way back, I checked the buckthorn for Brimstone caterpillars, and was rewarded with this tiny little chap – at least I think that's what he is!



Finally, I actually managed a shot of a Mother Shipton moth. At least there are no species here with which to confuse them! 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-May-20 09:26 PM GMT

The afternoon wander down to Staines Moor also on 6th May had no surprises, but there was a bit of interest. Small Heaths had appeared here too...



I found a female Orange Tip minding her own business and as I was getting a shot or two...

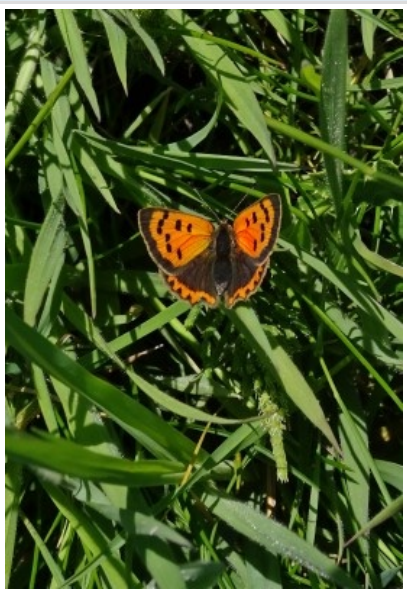


Rejection was the fate also suffered by an amorous Small Copper, who pursued the lady of his desires for some while through the grass, and must have thought at one point that he had met with success.





She finally escaped, and here she is regaining her composure.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 09-May-20 11:09 PM GMT

Looks good for a Brimstone larvae, a freshly moulted 2nd instar if I'm not mistaken 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-May-20 04:56 PM GMT

Tis indeed Dave - I'd been reading about them making number 3 😊😊 More cracking images - it seems you can't escape the Holly Blues 😊😊 Love the shots of the Brown Argus where it's opened it's wings almost as wide as it can - like it's having a really good stretch 😊😊 You've got to feel for the Small Copper - so close 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

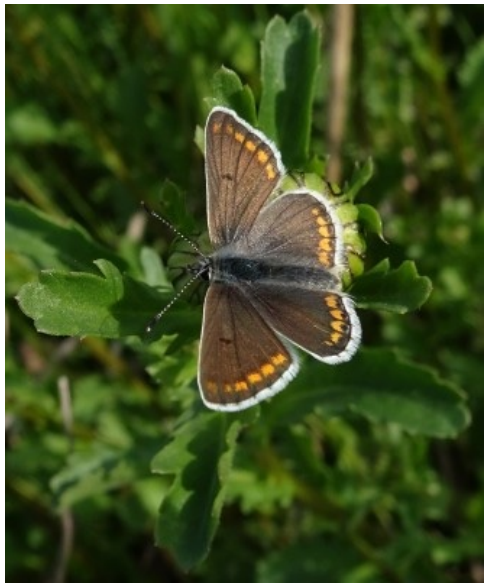
by millerd, 10-May-20 05:18 PM GMT

Thank you for the confirmation, Buggy and Wurzel. 😊 I could always go and look these things up in Pete's book of course, but then I'd get sidetracked for hours... 😊

And another female Holly Blue to come next as well... 😊

Thursday 7th May. Another 12 hours of sunshine, and a hike in temperature up to 23 degrees. Butterfly numbers remained similar, around the 70

mark with 11 species seen locally. There were notably more Brown Argus today (7)...





...and more Small Heath too (4)





These two kept darting between my feet.



The Small Coppers can't compete with those down the road, but there were still a few around.



However, the Holly Blues certainly can, and there were over 20 seen again. In fact the first butterfly I saw today, soon after 0830 this morning, was another glorious new female.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-May-20 08:47 PM GMT

As has become customary, I followed the early circuit on **7th May** with another walk down to Staines Moor. The novelty of being able to see so many Small Coppers has yet to wear off! The warmer conditions made them much more difficult to approach, but a wide loop around taking about an hour allowed me to count just over 30 of them. As ever, double-counting was highly likely, but I no doubt walked right past a few too. It all evens out. Some of them were quite dark in colour, which seems unusual for the first brood – maybe the almost constant sunshine and relative warmth since mid-March has caused this as they are certainly darker in later broods during hot summers. Not only were they more difficult to approach, but they were reluctant to open up much – but at least that meant some underside shots were available for a change.



...and one final surprise, a very ancient and careworn Small Tortoiseshell.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 10-May-20 09:50 PM GMT

[quote=millerd_post_id=153406_time=1589127532_user_id=9839]...In fact the first butterfly I saw today, soon after 0830 this morning, was another glorious new female...

Sublime! 🍷

Dave, we now officially 'surrender' to you.

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 10-May-20 09:59 PM GMT

That's a glorious female holly blue you have there, Dave!

Re: millerd

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

That Holly Blue Dave - "We're not worthy, we're not worthy..." 🤪🍷🍷🍷 (Another pop culture reference - see if you can get this one 😊) The Brown Argus shots are mighty fine too 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

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

What can I say Dave 🍷🍷🍷 and that doesn't cover it 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 11-May-20 09:50 AM GMT

Some great shots of butterfly behaviour Dave – particularly like that Holly Blue egg-laying as I know how hard it can be to get such clear shots when you only have a couple of seconds. I was interested in your tiny Brimstone larva – to me it looks like 1st instar as it seems identical to 'my' Brimstone. I could be wrong – I shall know better as my ones develop.

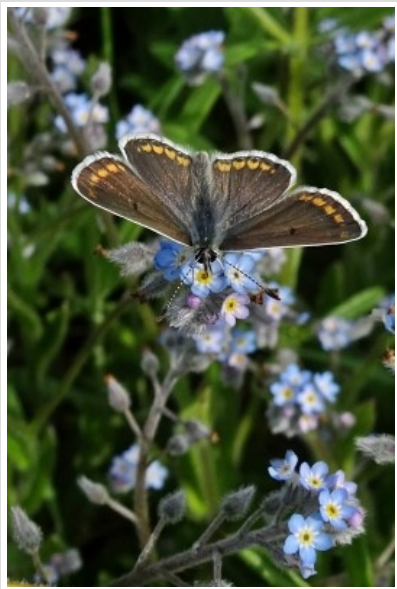
Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-May-20 09:44 PM GMT

Many thanks once again for all your votes of appreciation for the Holly Blues. There are more to come, believe it or not – popping up everywhere, they are. 😊

I'm glad you like the behavioural shots, Pauline. They are the one thing you cannot deliberately set out to get and their spontaneity somehow provides a greater sense of achievement than just a standard posing Small Copper or Brown Argus (though the best of these are also rewarding). Hopefully there's a mix of both coming up.

Friday May 8th was yet another sunny day, with temperatures reaching a summery 24 degrees locally. 80 butterflies seen, 12 species. The relative newcomers put on a good show, first the Brown Argus...

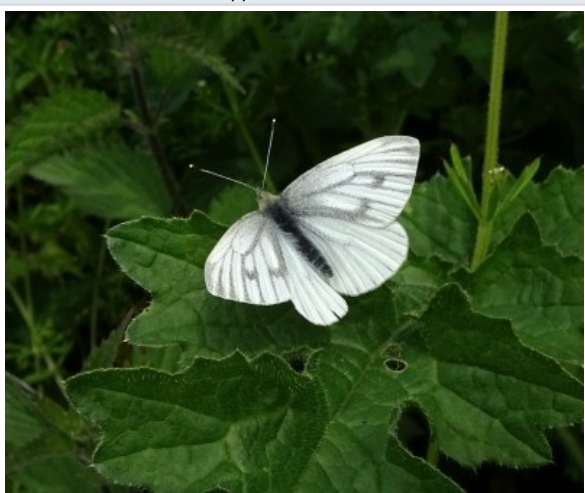




...and then the Small Heath.



Difficult to resist a Small Copper...



...or an Orange Tip, especially as the latter's days are surely numbered now in such a continuously sunny flight season.



However, knowing that they were just starting to appear, I was on the look out for shiny new Common Blues. The day was a complete failure on that score – I saw a series of blue butterflies cruising across the gentle grassy slopes, but every single one turned out to be a female Holly Blue. Most ended up on the frequent goats' rue clumps, looking to lay or actually doing so. I ended up with an extraordinary number of photos and have spent a while pruning them down to a manageable representative few.









I think there were four different butterflies involved overall. I did manage one shot of an egg! They were surprisingly difficult to find...



It's interesting to compare the degree of black marking on the various females seen here – some almost approach the levels seen on the summer brood.

That's probably enough Holly Blues for now... 😊😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-May-20 10:42 PM GMT

I've noticed the Goat's-rue is just starting to bud on my patch and Holly Blue numbers are very slowly starting to creep up, two or three a day rather than the odd one every two or three days. They're still very uncooperative but when they start fixating on the Goat's-rue I'm sure I'll be tripping over the little buggers 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-May-20 11:47 AM GMT

Your shots are Fab Dave, especially the Holly Blues, I've yet to see one, looking forward to more shots from you. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-May-20 08:30 PM GMT

That's no way to talk about these delightful (not to mention amenable and numerous) little creatures, Buggy! 😊😊 You're right though, they do get zoned in on the goats' rue from their bases in hedgerows some way off and have been annoying me on an almost daily basis by flying quite a long way a foot or so above the grass to reach their target. Doing this they look uncommonly similar to male Common Blues... 😊

Thank you again, Goldie – you're bound to get a Holly in your garden sooner or later I'm sure. 😊

Saturday 9th May. Perhaps even hotter than Friday, with lots of sunshine once again. If anything, the heat subdued butterfly numbers a bit today, and certainly made photography more difficult. Though having already resolved not to take any shots of Holly Blues today, I couldn't help myself follow a blue butterfly to a typical resting place on a bramble. Getting closer, I was very surprised to find it was actually a Common Blue – the first on my local patch for 2020.



With Holly Blues flying across open fields and Common Blues frequenting hedgerows, it just shows how general rules of thumb can be overturned just like that... 😊

The only other reasonable shots I took here today were firstly of a fresh Brown Argus nectaring on its foodplant...



...and secondly a nice Green-veined White.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-May-20 08:43 PM GMT

Late on the afternoon of **9th May**, I popped down to Staines Moor again to see how the Small Coppers were doing. The sun was still strong, and it was hardly any cooler, so it was a while before the butterflies settled to become something more discernable than bright orange flashes in the sunlight chasing each other around. When they started to stop for nectar, they spent a lot of time with their wings closed, allowing for a different kind of photo.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-May-20 08:55 PM GMT

Those buttercups really set off the butterflies well Dave 😊😎 Gurt lush 😊 I had another look at your OT from a few posts back – is it just me or are those quite large black markings on the wing tips? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Allan.W., 13-May-20 09:15 PM GMT

A cracking array of Coppers there Dave, they are glorious arn,t they when fresh ,glad someones finding them in good numbers this season , I,ve seen a few on my local jaunts but ,really missing the numbers (and variety) we see most years at Dungeness ,which is closed to the public for at least another week ,but with luck should catch some in the second brood (hopefully !!)
Regards Allan.W.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-20 10:25 PM GMT

For **Sunday 10th May**, the promise all week had been that the weather would turn really chilly overnight. However, the cold front moving south decided to edge its way rather slower than expected, and Sunday morning had hazy sunshine, and for a few hours it was still quite warm. Around midday though, the cloud that had been visible in the north made its presence felt and within an hour the sun had gone, the wind had risen, and yes it was really quite chilly. In fact by 1800 it was only 9 degrees – having been as high as 18 earlier on (and 24 degrees 24 hours earlier!).

The morning had however provided some decent butterfly entertainment. Small Coppers, looking fairly fresh, or in some cases, very worn indeed.



Small Heaths are appearing regularly now too.



The Holly Blues appear not to be sensitive in this way, and I counted 14, more than anything else.



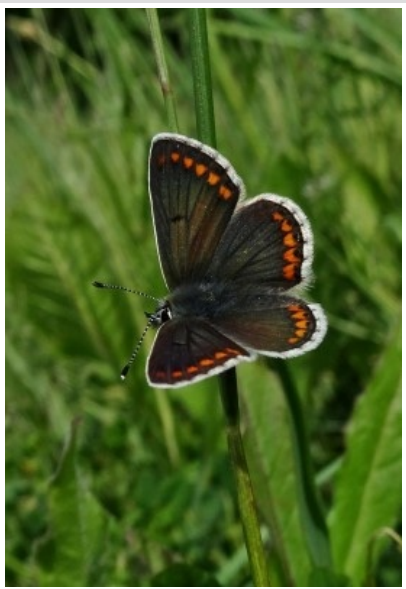
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-May-20 08:55 PM GMT

Sorry, Wurzel and Allan, I forgot to acknowledge your appreciation for the Coppers! The population I've found at Staines Moor is the largest I've come across anywhere outside of Dungeness (but that one is just in another league!) I wonder what the second and third broods will be like? Should be quite impressive as well I hope.

Monday 11th May was rather chilly as forecast (only 12 degrees at best), but without too much wind and quite a lot of sunshine, I actually saw forty-odd butterflies on my local patch, with ten species represented. The surprise of the day was the first Comma for nearly a week, though it was wearing rather thin as the saying goes...





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-May-20 11:29 AM GMT

To say that he's got some cajones is an understatement Dave 🤪🤪🤪🤪 I was reading your post and thinking "cool, great shot, etc etc" but my mind is now blank and all I can picture is that final image, brilliant- cheered me up no end! 😄😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-May-20 09:54 PM GMT

I'm glad that brightened your day, Wurzel! 😊 Definitely one of those lucky accidents discovered when going through all the images and deciding which to post - not a shot you could seek out to achieve... 😊😊 Almost worthy of a caption competition.

Tuesday May 12th was less chilly with reasonable amounts of sun, and I managed to count over 50 butterflies on my local patch. Small Heaths in particular were popping out of the grass everywhere and I saw at least 14.



The dry weather has prompted a few butterflies to look for ground moisture, and this female Green-veined White was an example.



There seemed to be a small increase in GVW numbers today in fact, illustrating the variability in markings.





Brown Argus were also showing well, though none in amusing poses today.





Finally, another good performance from the Holly Blue contingent.





The photos also show a distinct colour difference between the male and female. I think the female is the one in the first HB shot above, and is definitely a more grey-blue shade. The male is the next one down, and is distinctly bluer. Something else to add to my building dossier on the species! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-May-20 12:09 PM GMT

Interesting to note the difference in shade of the male and female Holly Blues, Dave. If anything, I'd have expected the female to be slightly darker, given that she has good-sized black forewing margins.

Great to see you finally stumbled upon mating pairs too – good things come to those who wait. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-May-20 07:53 PM GMT

There's always something new to discover, David – it's what makes the hobby interesting and not at all repetitive. 😊

Wednesday 13th May was very disappointing. Distinctly chilly again, breezy and with not a great deal of sunshine either. I only saw two butterflies, both of them tucked up tightly against the weather.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-May-20 08:37 PM GMT

That BA on your finger is one of those shots I wish I'd taken Dave 📷 I could do with that species in my 'In the Hand' collection 📷 Interesting to see the different hues of the male and female though I'd be at a loss trying to describe which colour blue they are 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-May-20 08:38 PM GMT

`{quote=millerd_post_id=153750_time=1589741608_user_id=9839}`There's always something new to discover, David – it's what makes the hobby interesting and not at all repetitive.

Absolutely, Dave. Every year I see new things and many of them are quite a surprise. Even when you go out in marginal conditions you can turn up something novel. It's always worth the effort, perhaps now more than ever given what we're going through.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 18-May-20 06:49 PM GMT

More cracking Holly Blue photos Dave, especially the pair, but I rather like that shot of the Orange-tip and Green-veined White on the ground 📷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-20 09:30 PM GMT

It's surprising how many different species can be persuaded onto a finger, Wurzel – I've had Small Blues and Swallowtails – and most things in between as well. 😊 Yes, the Holly Blue contrast is intriguing – another chapter for my book ("Holly Blues Wot I Have Seen") 😊

Cheers, Neil. I rather liked that GVV/OT combination too – I have a penchant for different species sitting close together like that, and it's surprising how rare it is and how they are often much further apart than you think when you come to take a photo. These two were unusually close. 😊

Thursday 14th May was an improvement. A bit warmer and more sunshine, and notable for the emergence of quite a few Common Blues on my local patch. I saw at least ten today and they appeared in a variety of spots.



There are still new white butterflies appearing - here's a nice GVW...



...and a Small White too.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-20 09:36 PM GMT

Later on **14th May**, I popped down to Staines Moor once again, and found that Common Blues were out here too, joining the throng of Small Coppers and sprinkling of Brown Argus. The late afternoon sun brings out the Coppers' colours particularly well.





Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-May-20 07:22 AM GMT

That's a nicely marked female Speckle in your penultimate post Dave. Good to see your local patch thriving, especially concerning those Small Coppers. They seem to be quite scarce around here.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 19-May-20 02:17 PM GMT

Love that sequence with the Holly Blues Dave but here's the thing – that colour difference is quite marked but is it just on that one individual or is that always the case? You know what you're going to have to do, don't ya??? 😊😞 For most folk it would be asking a lot for a repeat performance but I reckon you're up to it 😊😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-May-20 08:06 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – yes, that was a lovely Speckle! 😊 The Small Coppers are doing pretty well considering their numbers are usually lowest in the first of the three broods they usually fit in here. It also helps having discovered a large area of prime habitat just 15 minutes walk away!

Thank you Pauline – yes, I know, I have set myself a task here! The problem (as you no doubt realise) is that I do have an awful lot of Holly Blue photos to sift through. Hardly any of them though have the male and female side by side, so proper comparisons may be tricky to achieve taking into account lighting differences, camera settings and photographer incompetence. We'll see... 😊

Friday 15th May. With a decent day of sunshine forecast once more, I decided that now it was allowable again I would venture further afield and visit a few spots within a reasonable distance. I headed northwards, and set myself a route including three Chiltern destinations.

The first of these was up at Aston Rowant (north side), somewhere I would probably have been to two or three times already in a normal year. The first thing that struck me was how dry it was for the time of year. The lack of any worthwhile rain since the early March deluge has left its mark. However, before long I had stirred up a Green Hairstreak or two, though both were worn and clearly the species was well into its flight season.



Once I had my eye in, I started to realise there were quite a few females around as well.



It appeared to be a decent showing from the Adonis, as they never usually seem very numerous here in the first brood. Maybe they were having a good day! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-May-20 08:56 PM GMT

The next stop of the day on **15th May** was at Pitstone (the old chalk quarry). Almost my first sighting here was of Wolfson, who I had last seen in exactly the same spot in May 2019. Good to catch up with you again! 😊 The main target here was the healthy Small Blue population – which though not as numerous as last year were still around in good numbers. Also seen: Common Blues, Small Heath, Dingy Skippers and one or two Brown Argus and Grizzled Skippers. We both remembered seeing Green Hairstreaks last time, but neither of us found any at all today.

First up, a couple of courting Dingy Skippers, with the old worn and faded male trying his luck with a very new bright female. He was unsuccessful in the end.



However, the Small Blues were having more joy in that department – here are two of several pairings seen.



As happened last year, I found that staying still in certain spots near to a favourite basking point caused the butterflies to come and settle on me. This one almost became a nuisance, repeatedly transferring to my camera hand.



They are such endearing little things it is hard to stop taking photos of them...







Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-May-20 09:21 PM GMT

Cracking good Small Blue shots Dave. A species I rarely catch up with, all in pristine condition, and a mating pair!. Jam on it!. 🍷

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

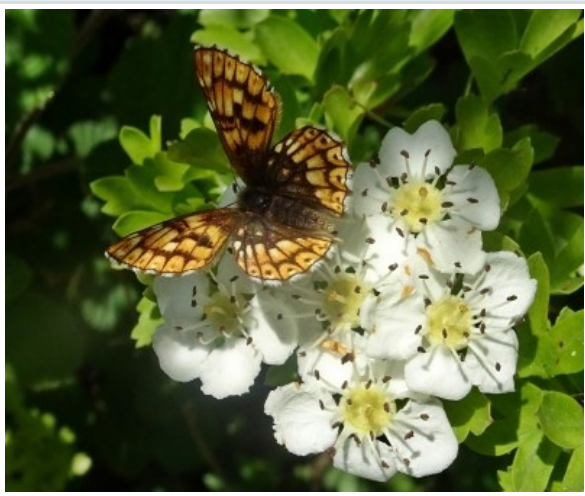
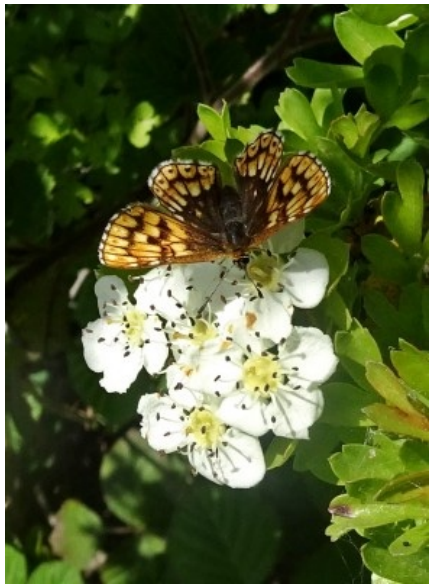
by millerd, 20-May-20 03:09 PM GMT

They seem to be very cooperative in this particular spot, Trevor. 😊 Well worth seeking out – there must be some in your neck of the woods somewhere... 😊

The third stop on **15th May** was a only another 15 minutes further on, up at Ivinghoe Beacon. There were quite a few people around, but none seemed interested in the particular gully I visited looking for any Dukes that might remain. I found several – a few somewhat worn and slightly faded males...



...plus this beautifully marked female nectaring on a hawthorn in the semi-shade.



I think this may be another example of ab. *gracilens*. The subtle pale brown ground colour always puts me in mind of Caramac chocolate bars... 😊

Aside from the Dukes, there were both Dingy...



This rounded off what was a really full day, making up for a bit of lost time and catching up with some delightful spring species.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-May-20 09:44 PM GMT

Saturday 16th May. Much warmer, with lots of sun up till lunchtime, but a bit of cloud building in the afternoon. I returned to my local patch for the morning walk, and the change in species to those of later spring was noticeable – Common Blues, Brown Argus and Small Heath made up the majority of the numbers, all in double figures now. The Common Blues were all beautifully new, as yet unscarred by battle and vegetation.



Small Heaths were as ever tricky to approach, but some were prepared to perch.





There surely can't be that many more fresh ones still to emerge in this initial brood. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 20-May-20 11:06 PM GMT

Love that shot of the male brown argus! Do you think he was struggling to remove some goose-grass cleavers?
Janet

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-May-20 07:54 PM GMT

Crikey Dave - there I was thinking that I've got a hard task catching up with my own PD and then (because of camera issues) I have a few days off UKB and catching up with your PD is almost as massive a task 😊😊😊 I would find myself repeating a lot of comments - generally superlatives and "Wow that is a lovely..." so here are the highlights:

Awesome fresh Common Blues - I love it when they have the fringes intact like those and the blue along the margins looks almost white 😊

Beautiful Small Blues - the fine blue dusting on the wings - brilliantly caught 😊

Dukes - cracking and I'd go with Gracilens for that ab 😊👍

That female Holly Blue - you've surpassed even yourself with that one 😊😊👍👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 22-May-20 10:01 AM GMT

Just catching up on your posts Dave and what a selection you've seen 🤔👍👍 fantastic shots I have to go with Wurzel's comments, I can't better them.
😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-May-20 03:15 PM GMT

I suspect you're right, Janet. 😊😊 However, I wouldn't put anything past a Brown Argus. I remember finding a couple of males a few years back indulging in what can only be described as a bout of fisticuffs. I've never seen two butterflies go for each other so closely and so aggressively. They certainly get charged up on something! 😊

Thank you for all that appreciation, Wurzel – the catch-up process has been pretty good so far. 😊 It seems the local Holly Blues are determined not to be outshone by anything, and keep trying to surpass themselves. And every time I think they've reached their peak, another one comes along and poses in front of me. 😊 They were at it again today (22nd) – but it'll be a few days before those ladies make it onto the UKB catwalk... 😊

Thank you too, Goldie. It's been a great few days and with the weather being so good, there's more to come... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-May-20 09:19 PM GMT

For the afternoon of **16th May**, I decided to go further afield again, and headed down to Chiddingfold to see how the Wood Whites were faring. By now, there was more of a mix of sunshine and cloud which at least would mean the butterflies would settle at least occasionally.

I came across the first Wood White only a few metres down from the Botany Bay entrance, and I saw one or two more along the path into the wood. However, as is usual, after crossing the bridge at the bottom of the dip Wood Whites appeared on both sides of the path, and in good numbers. Though finding pairs of this butterfly indulging in their enigmatic face-to-face ritual is not uncommon, I don't think I've seen quite so many doing it as I did today. Here are a couple of these.



There were plenty of individuals to choose from as well, but the fast-changing variations in the light made things hard work.





Things began to get interesting when some of the pairs attracted the attentions of additional butterflies, with at one point four extra individuals attempting to join in. Capturing this on camera proved very difficult, but I think I managed shots including at most four butterflies altogether.





All this activity does allow for the opportunity to try for a few open-wing shots, and I managed one or two with variable success.





There was a fair bit of egg-laying activity, and I managed to track down one of these eggs.



Almost an honorary butterfly. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pete Eeles, 22-May-20 10:04 PM GMT

Great photos, Dave! The foodplant looks like Meadow Vetchling.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-May-20 10:11 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, you say it felt like hard work but you've got some great shots hard work or not 😊👍👍 you've captured their delicateness to perfection 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-May-20 09:56 PM GMT

Thank you, Pete! 😊 The foodplant you refer to was abundant alongside the path and fingers crossed there will be a healthy second brood (as there usually is). In 2018 it was particularly good with many dozens of butterflies flying.

Many thanks, Goldie – they are indeed really delicate little things, but somehow they manage not to tear their wings at all. 😊

On **Sunday 17th May**, more warm sunshine drew me out and this time it was for my first visit of 2020 to Denbies Hillside. In "normal" years I'd have been here at least a couple of times from early April onwards, and with the early season this year as well I wondered what stage things would be at.

The hillside looked very dry, with no great amount of grass growth to conceal the large amounts of horseshoe vetch. There was a good variety of chalk downland species, with Dingy Skippers, Small Heaths and Adonis Blues the most numerous, and Common Blues, Green Hairstreaks, Small Coppers and Grizzled Skippers (and even Holly Blues) in far smaller numbers. Of the Green Hairstreaks seen, all were females flying low over the grass looking for spots to lay.



The familiar sight of a Holly Blue wandered along the bottom of the field with the Common Blues, but took an interest in the dogwood bushes – which they ignored.



However, this one stood out.



Amongst all the Small Heath, a fellow enthusiast had singled out one that he thought looked a bit pale and thought it might be just wear though possibly an ab. However once it flew, in flight it was almost white and once caught up with you could see that though a bit worn, this did not account for its ghostly appearance.



Both Neil H. and Guy P. have confirmed this to be an example of the rare ab. *alba*. Thank you both for this expert ID. 😊

That just leaves the Adonis Blues – which I will post separately as it became evident that there were just as many (if not more) females around as there were males, and there is of course more variety to be seen amongst them.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-May-20 10:14 PM GMT

May 17th - Denbies Hillside (continued) - Adonis Blues

There were nice fresh examples of both male and female butterflies across the hillside, with (once your eye was in) it likely that the latter were actually more numerous though far less conspicuous of course. First, the males:





Secondly a selection of females, none with a great deal of blue scaling:





I was surprised at how amenable they were when settled.



Finally, (surprisingly considering how many there were around, this was the only example I saw) a mating pair. Down on the ground their camouflage was excellent.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-May-20 10:47 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff Dave – that ab is a stunner – it should be called the Ghost Heath 🤔🇩🇪🇩🇪 That tiny Common Blue is a bit of a cracker as well – another ab possibly? Is there such a thing as a ab. minima? 😊😄🇩🇪

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by keving, 23-May-20 11:42 PM GMT

Dave, great Adonis Blues. The colour of the males is so striking. Interesting to see your tiny Common Blue. I saw an Orange Tip only half it's normal size recently and it got me thinking why this occurs.
Regards Kev

Re: millerd

by trevor, 24-May-20 07:25 AM GMT

Congrats. for your recent Wood White and Adonis shots.
I will miss the Spring brood Wood Whites, but will go to Chiddingfold for the Summer brood.
I dare say I will see you there before then though!.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-May-20 09:59 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel and Kev! 😊 I've occasionally seen undersized Common Blues before, but it's usually been in the context of a dry summer with them appearing in the second brood. There were quite a few seen in 2018 that fitted this scenario. Dwarfism like this therefore seems to stem from a lack of food, which leads to undersized caterpillars – however, they still manage to complete their life cycle. I suppose this is a species survival mechanism as the trait probably doesn't have genetic implications – their subsequent offspring would be normal, all environmental factors being equal.

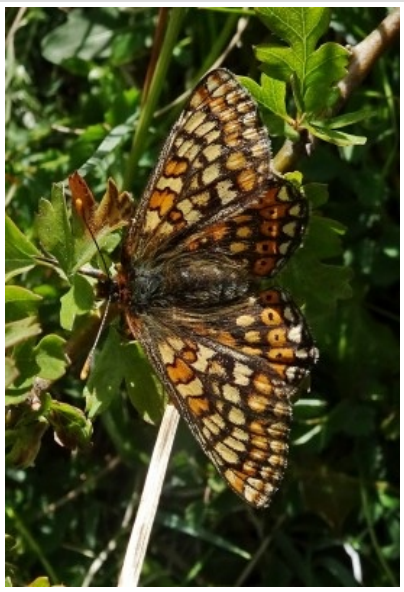
Thank you, Trevor – I hope to see you there! 😊 Most years the PE season overlaps one or other brood of Wood White – and sometimes both – so you may find you hit both targets in one go. Everything is likely to be early this year, with the sunny warm conditions forecast to continue well into June, so I'd anticipate White Admirals before all that long down there too.

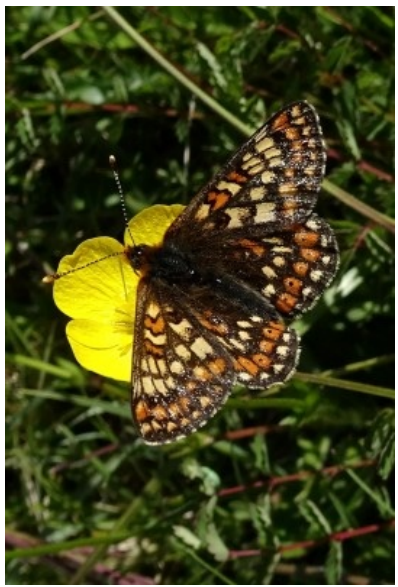
Monday 18th May. Time now for a major expedition, and luckily one that is established as an annual event becoming possible just in time. In bright but chilly sunshine I set off for a certain Wiltshire hillside. I probably arrived a bit early, failing to remember that I currently needn't allow an extra 20 minutes or so for the M25 at the start of my journey. The cool wind across the hillside kept things quiet for the best part of an hour (aside from a trio of very noisy ravens), until Wurzel appeared, and then a bit later Philzoid. I would say that the area was past its peak for number of species this year – certainly the Marsh Fritillaries (which were the main attraction) were far from pristine. That said, there was a fair selection, and the fritillaries were still good to see. There were also my first Large Skippers of the year.

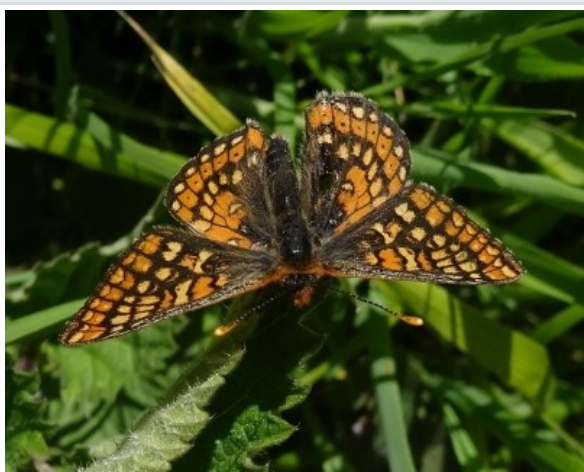
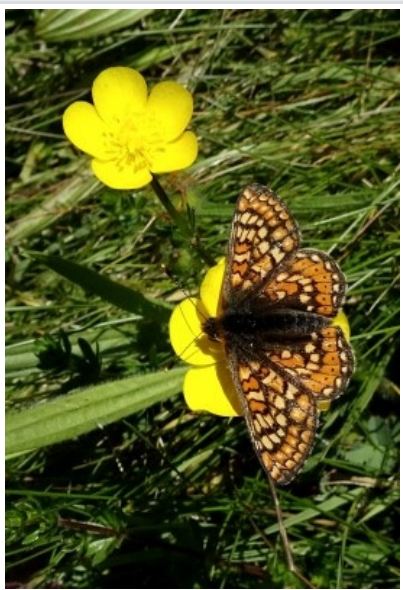




Most photos were of the Marshies in all their variety.







Unfortunately, Wurzel suffered a camera malfunction, but the fortuitous arrival of Philzoid with a spare mitigated the problem somewhat. Around lunchtime we decided to leave, chatting briefly first with another enthusiast who turns out to have been Medard (who has already posted from his day on the Hill). Wurzel then headed for home, Philzoid for Bentley Wood, and myself on to Martin Down... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-May-20 09:35 PM GMT

Martin Down later on **18th May** was very warm and sunny, and the butterflies (of which there were many) were very mobile. As I've noticed at this time of year before, there are always plenty of Brimstones flying, even when they have all but disappeared at home. They spend a lot of time in abortive courtship attempts, spiralling in pairs high into the sky. I can never get the camera to focus on this fast-moving target!



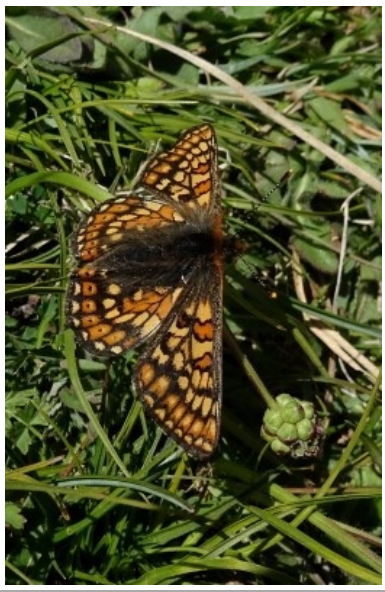
I walked along the edge of that prominent feature, Bockerley Ditch, and saw all the following: Small, Common and Adonis Blues;



Small Heath; Dingy and Grizzled Skippers; Peacocks; Small Whites.

Of course, once again the star of the show was the Marsh Fritillary population all along the Ditch (though the Small Blues were definitely more numerous).







I found there was still time to pop into Bentley Wood on the way back home...

Dave

Re: millerd

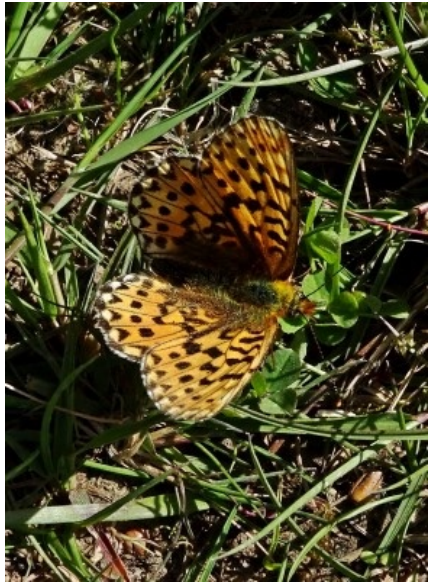
by millerd, 24-May-20 09:57 PM GMT

As I pulled into the car park at Bentley Wood late afternoon on **18th May**, I found Philzoid again, just taking a break from his wanderings in the woodland. We made our way down to the Eastern Clearing and it wasn't long before Fritillaries appeared. But which ones were they? In fact, the first couple seen, and the ones that proved easiest to approach, were more Marshies.



Also flying were a number of paler-looking orange butterflies which rarely stopped at all and when they did they tended to do so by nectaring on bugle in semi-shade. They were all very worn.





Philzoid decided to leave, as he had already spent some time here earlier. We had at one point spotted a much deeper orange butterfly, flying a bit higher and more strongly, but had completely lost track of it. Only a few minutes after Philzoid's departure from the clearing, I sighted it again (or possibly another) across the little bridge into the adjacent cleared area. It went down to nectar, and before it was away again I managed some distance shots – enough to positively identify it as a fresh Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.



A three-Frit day! In fact a three-Frit site in Bentley Wood.

It had been a very full day, with some sociable chat as far as you can from the vertices of an equilateral triangle with two metres to a side... 😊 and four new species for the year for me.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-May-20 08:29 PM GMT

That was a 3 to the power of 3 day for you Dave – three butterflies, three sites and three Frits 🤪😄 Great set of shots and I'm glad the later visits paid off 😊 I think I've got my camera woes sorted now – fingers crossed 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-May-20 09:01 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – yes, triples all round for that day! 😊 Good to see you and Phil, and a few butterflies besides... 😊 Glad to hear you're fixed for future photos now too. 😊

Tuesday 19th May – back to base and a local trip, out in the customary warm sunshine (close to hot at 26 degrees today). Common Blues dominated (I counted over 30) but were really active.



Small Heaths seem to be about the same.



However, today's surprise was something a bit different. Around noon, I came across a male Brimstone – not so unusual you'd think, but this one was repeatedly going from dandelion to dandelion, frantically nectaring in the manner of a summer emergee feeding up before hibernation. It also ignored all other butterflies, even the white ones that flew close by, and was extremely approachable. It also did appear very new. Considering the early season, it is just about possible for this to have been what it certainly appeared to be – a newly-hatched summer specimen. I took a lot of photos, taking advantage of its reluctance to fly any distance before nectaring again and trying to establish just how fresh it was. This included attempts to get the upperside – with a bit of success.



I have to say it looks pretty new to me. Any thoughts, anyone?

Dave

Re: millerd

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

Wednesday 20th May. Very warm (28 degrees) and very sunny (14 hours today). Consequently my walks were a bit shorter, and the butterflies were not very cooperative, though in number terms Common Blues, Small Heath and Brown Argus accounted for nearly all of around 70 seen altogether. It does mean today's selection is not particularly spectacular. Still, you can't have excitement every day... 😊



one of 18 seen – the highest this year so far



they particularly like the grass vetchling



also looking for a likely spot to lay



a bit ragged



this one looks familiar...



a new one, but hiding in the shade most of the time
Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 27-May-20 08:16 AM GMT

It's a job to keep up with your recent expeditions, Dave!

A mrgreen your three in a day Frits, especially the trip to Marshie central. 🍷

Where did you see most Marsh Frits this year, in the dip or through the trees to the right of main path?

Also congrats for capturing those sharp, open wing Brimstone images, not easy to do.

We seem to have an early ' June gap ' around here, not much around at all.

Stay well, not long now!!.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-May-20 08:19 PM GMT

May not have been 'exciting Dave' but still nice to catch up with the regulars 😊 Your ragged Red Admiral was a nice find they've been a bit scarce round our way this year – I can count the number I've seen this year on less than two hands 😊 🍷 I know what you mean about the warm weather, it looks great and then when you get out there everything is bombing by at 90 mph 😱 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-20 09:04 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor – on the Hill, they were up that path through the trees again for the most part, though we saw some others on the "traditional" part of the slope as well. They were probably easier at Martin Down in the end, though with the day's heat, nothing was particularly easy (exactly as you say, Wurzel, in fact... 😊).

I've done OK for Red Admirals so far – I tend to see one, maybe two, bombing around in the morning right up high, or the occasional female skulking around in the shade looking for scruffy nettles to lay on. Then around four in the afternoon, the males start appearing in regular sunlit bits of the path – always the same spots, but frequently not the same butterflies in the same locations. There's been a real mix of fairly new and ripped to bits, and there is a lot of jostling in the air. It's a reliable bit of entertainment.

Thursday 21st May. More sunshine, and time for another expedition... I headed north this time, back to the Chilterns and two more sites I usually visit. First, I went to Totterhoe, having discovered I was too early in the day to park up at Dunstable Downs. Following my usual route to the old chalk pits and gullies which generally harbour Dukes, I expected to see Small Blues in what has been a very reliable spot in the past. However, I saw not a single one, and noticed that their favoured basking points on the wild clematis had been badly scorched by frost (there were a couple of very chilly nights recently, and this is a susceptible spot). As I continued, I started disturbing Dingy Skippers along the way, and on entering the first little gully another one put up a second butterfly – the first Duke of the morning. There were at least three in this spot, and carrying on to the larger dip further on I found several more.





Back now to Dunstable Downs, where the car park had opened.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-May-20 07:34 PM GMT

Brilliant Dukes and Small Blues Dave – the deep almost black colour of the SBs is lush 🤩🍷 Looking forward to seeing what Dunstable Downs has to offer – I'm guessing something to do with good looking Greek? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-May-20 07:46 PM GMT

Catching up with your post is breath taking Dave 😊 so many species of Butterfly and I'm still stuck with the Whites 🍷🍷😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-May-20 09:38 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – when a fresh Small Blue catches the light just right, they become almost midnight blue-black. With a sprinkle of tiny stars... 😊 Hmm – still thinking about the Greek (you'll have to see whether your prophecy is fulfilled shortly...).

Thank you Goldie – I'm lucky to have some good spots within 20–30 minutes drive, and some of them are really near each other too. Interestingly, White butterflies have temporarily disappeared round here now, including (very sadly 😞) all the Orange Tips, both male and female. It's good to see you still have them. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-May-20 10:02 PM GMT

It was late morning on **21st May** when I reached the car park at the top of Dunstable Downs. Unfortunately, the cafe was still shut of course so no refreshing National Trust tea today, just my own supply of increasingly luke-warm water. I headed carefully between the kite-flyers and straight down to the bottom of the slope in order to walk westwards along to the point where the most interesting gully angles back up the hill at a more gentle gradient. The path at the foot of the slope was alive with frequent Dingy Skippers and a few Brimstones, and I also came across a fresh-looking Small Copper...



...and a couple of Grizzled Skippers which I failed to get close to at all.

It was good to see the Dukes doing well on both the sites I visited today, and good to find fresh examples on the Downs.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-May-20 07:33 PM GMT

Cracking shots Dave – I love that you've captured the metallic lustre on the fresh individuals 🤩🌿 – is this where Metalmark comes from? 😊 So is Dunstable Downs a National Trust site? Does this bode well for Collard Hill as I hear that Daneways is closed (just thinking ahead 😊)?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-May-20 10:20 PM GMT

That's an interesting theory, Wurzel – I've often noticed that sheen on the brown of new Dukes in the past and never thought that they might share attributes with their more colourful tropical relatives. 😊

Dunstable Downs are NT, yes, as is Collard Hill. I receive the newsletter from Collard and the site is open, as is the car park, but there won't be a "Large Blue Ranger" this year, nor will they actively publicise the butterflies as they normally do with daily updates on numbers. A couple of locals will, however, monitor how the species is doing in order to maintain continuity of recording effort. As you might expect, the weather will have had an impact – an extraordinarily wet February, then very little rain since mid-March plus record sunshine and a good deal of warmth ever since. However, it is uncertain exactly what the impact of all this might be – the key issue is the thyme flowering at the same time as the females are looking to lay.

Friday 22nd May. A bit cooler (23 degrees) and rather cloudier today. I stayed local and as expected the same trio of species as before provided the bulk of the 80-odd butterflies seen (*Common Blue* (27), *Brown Argus* (16) and *Small Heath* (15)). However, other species actually provided more interest. Firstly, Holly Blue females continue to lay on the goats' rue.





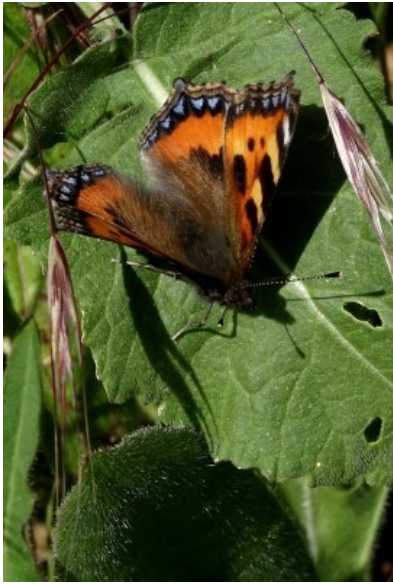
They have also started nectaring on the newly opened bramble flowers, a particular favourite of the summer brood to come.





However, the most eye-catching were the brilliant orange flashing flybys of two new Small Tortoiseshells. They were very hard to approach and this is the best I could manage.





I also managed to get my eye in and started spotting Orange Tip caterpillars.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-May-20 09:54 AM GMT

Cheers for the info Dave – I saw that singletons have been seen at Collard now so it's good to know that a visit is still possible even if it looks like it'll be hard work 😊😄 Is it just me or do the fresh Small Torts always seem to have a more muted orange to them – the hibernators often seem to be bright almost reddy orange by comparison?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-May-20 09:02 PM GMT

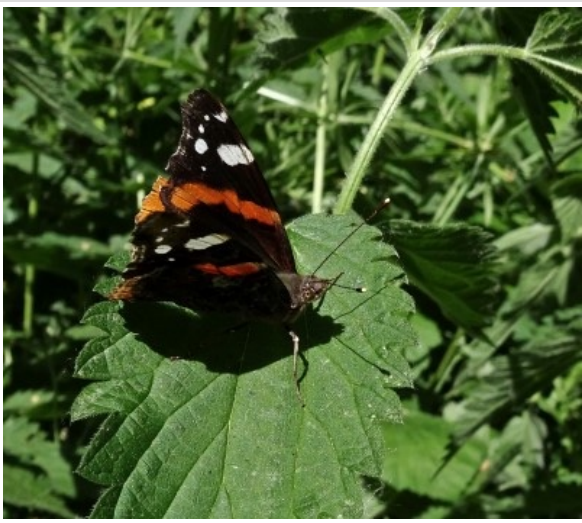
Large Blues in May sounds unheard of! It would be nice to see them, but I'll have to think about that one... 😊

The new Torties seem distinctly bigger and more vigorous than their forebears, and brighter too – I think the hibernators have a greater intensity of colour, like worn blue butterflies tend to have.

Saturday 23rd May. Still sunny for the most part, but distinctly cooler (only just 20 degrees today) and windy too. I didn't see a great deal on a rather shorter walk than usual. The first thing I saw was a Green-veined White, which I had thought was between broods at the moment.



A Red Admiral was down on the nettles, and I suspected it was a female resting between egg-laying forays.



Finally, there was a nice new Speckled Wood.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 31-May-20 07:42 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, Not seen any Holly Blues here yet only the couple that shot through the garden 😊 I'll have to wait for later in the year now and see if they visit again. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-May-20 10:31 PM GMT

I hope the summer brood Hollies come and visit you, Goldie! 😊

Sunday 24th May wasn't too sunny and though reasonably warm, I didn't see very much. I did find another Brimstone caterpillar though...



...and then later when looking for Orange Tip caterpillars on the garlic mustard, found these little chaps instead.



I'm so used to seeing them on nasturtiums, it took an extra second for the penny to drop.

A male Holly Blue then surprised me by settling right in front of me and immediately opening up a bit - I've been seeing almost all females lately. It showed the characteristic intensification of the blue colour that male blue butterflies seem to develop as they age.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-20 06:54 PM GMT

"I think the hibernators have a greater intensity of colour," I'm glad it's not just me 😊

That new Specklies is cracking – such a great sheen/lustre to it 😊

I think I'm giving Large Blues a miss this year – Collard is open but the site is really fragile so they're discouraging people from going, mind you I don't know what Green Down is like 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-20 09:40 PM GMT

Yes, I think the Large Blues may manage better without our attentions this year, Wurzel. There may be others in trouble too – I discovered the SSB site at Thursley in Surrey had suffered a major fire at the weekend after receiving large numbers of trippers and is cordoned off by the Police. Add that to the frost damage to the heather flowers at Fairmile removing almost all the nectar sources for the SSB population there and the same thing at Dawney's Hill (as I discovered today)... 😊😊😊 The weirdness of the weather plus more direct stupidity by us humans will impact on the butterflies for certain.

Monday 25th May. Back to hot sunshine again (26 degrees and 14 hours at Heathrow). An early start on my local patch was the only way I was going to see anything staying still. More caterpillars appeared on the menu – firstly an Orange Tip...



...and then a whole host of Peacocks in various stages of development. I'm guessing that a relatively small area of sunlit lush nettles must have attracted four or five egg batches at least.



However, today I concentrated on the Common Blues whilst the first brood are still relatively new. They are having a good year here and I counted 33 individuals this morning. The colourful females are now appearing in good numbers, but keep close to the ground and often lurk in the shade when it's hot.





At their freshest, they can nearly approach Adonis Blues in intensity of shiny blueness.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-20 10:14 PM GMT

Brilliant Brown Argus Dave – they're great when in good nick and the light catches them 😊
Sad news about the heather – hopefully the coastal heaths might have just escaped the frost 😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-20 10:10 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – I hope your SSB sites have fared better. The trouble is the sandy soil, which cools down more at night. I think Hurn Airport (not that far from Slop Bog I think) is a bit prone to frost for this reason.

Tuesday 26th May. The day matched Monday for weather – and largely for butterflies, though I did see two more new Small Tortoiseshells...



Today's main item of interest was finding two different sets of mating Common Blues within a few metres of each other. There must have been something in the air today...



female (L) - male (R)



male (L) - female (R)
Dave

Re: millerd

by CallumMac, 03-Jun-20 10:53 AM GMT

Sorry to hear about your SSB site Dave. Up here we have a similar story, with an ongoing fire at Hatfield Moor (one of the Large Heath sites on the Humberhead Peatlands) having been burning for the best part of three weeks already. Probably over 600 ha of the site has burned (~40% of the SSSI). Today's rain is very welcome!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-20 01:11 PM GMT

That's all very concerning, Callum, particularly if it's suspected that human carelessness is behind the fire. At least you have rain - so far down here

today there hasn't been enough to dampen the ground.

Later on **26th May**, I popped down for the first time this year to see how things were at Bookham Commons. Looking at both open meadows and a bit of the woodland, I found only a very small number of butterflies: One Small Copper, one Speckled Wood, a couple of Peacocks and an elderly Comma which came and unexpectedly landed on my hand.



Things were redeemed somewhat by the appearance of a single new Large Skipper, which struck some good poses.



Obviously it must be between spring and summer here at the moment, though the complete lack of Small Heath, Common Blue and Brown Argus in the fields on a warm sunny day seemed worrying.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-20 01:26 PM GMT

Wednesday 27th May: just as warm, though not quite as sunny. On my local patch today I recorded the highest number of different species on one day so far this year – 14. This was boosted by the appearance of two new ones, the first Large Skipper and first Painted Lady of the year. I did my best to count the butterflies today too, with the following results:

Common Blue 18
Small Heath 16
Brown Argus 9
Speckled Wood 8
Holly Blue 8
Red Admiral 5
Small White 2
Small Copper 2
Small Tortoiseshell 2
Green-veined White 1
Peacock 1
Comma 1
Large Skipper 1
Painted Lady 1
A selection:





Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 03-Jun-20 05:13 PM GMT

What can I say Dave!!!! what a great selection 🍷🍷😄 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-20 06:27 PM GMT

A cracking selection Dave and a great count of Common Blues – nice to see them living up to their name 😊🍷

I visited Slop Bog and it didn't escape the frost damage – hopefully the butterflies will just get on and do the 'business' before their energy supplies run out or they can find their way to the few remaining florets 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Chris L, 03-Jun-20 07:04 PM GMT

Lovely photos to peruse Dave. Some real gems there and an interesting narrative.

I was interested in that Brimstone Moth and I hope to see one of those now (on my ever growing list).

Re: millerd

by David M, 03-Jun-20 08:50 PM GMT

Your butterfly count of 27/05 very much reflects what I'm seeing on my patch, Dave – a good sized range but with low numbers of most species. Hopefully these cooler, damper conditions might change all that.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-20 09:25 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie! Yes, it was a day with a lot of variety. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – those Common Blues are doing much better this year than last for some reason. The next brood could be really good too, as the dry weather has suppressed the grass growth and the trefoil, medick and clover has been flourishing. The females have had no shortage of places to lay. Sorry to hear that Slop Bog has also suffered in the way my local SSB sites have. It could be the case across all their habitats, which would be very worrying indeed.

Thank you too, Otep. Yes, the Brimstone moth is pretty striking and it takes a bit of doing to track it to its hiding place if you disturb one – I was a bit lucky here! 😊

It will be interesting to see what effect the change in weather has, David. Before the heat ended, things were already subtly different with Meadow Browns beginning to rise to the ascendant very quickly. A week can see big changes. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-20 09:37 PM GMT

Mentioning Meadow Browns... 😊 On **Thursday 28th May** (not quite a week ago) I saw my first one of the year, out on my local patch. As always, it proved very difficult to approach – these early males almost invariably are! However, in the end it stopped for refreshment...



Also of note was finding a Small Heath very close to home, rather than out on the main open field/meadow area between the M25 and the River Colne.

One or two seem to turn up here every year, and either they stray from further afield or there is a tiny resident population.



Earlier in the day, I had been out elsewhere to look for another species I suspected would be early this year. I was right, but I'll save that for another post.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-20 10:17 PM GMT

Lovely Meadow Browns Dave 😊 As you say they are right pains at this time of year and then when they're all tatty, faded and/or ripped they sit around posing brilliantly 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jun-20 10:18 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – an awful lot of effort can be expended on new male Meadow Browns in June... 😊

However, I've skipped an episode. First thing on **Thursday 28th May**, I set off for Fairmile Common, just off the road between Cobham and Esher. Knowing they had been seen elsewhere, I hoped to see some fresh Silver-studded Blues. As I rather expected, the site looked very dry and bare, but there was an extra element – though there was a good spread of various heathers throughout the common, virtually none of it was in flower. All the flowers seemed to have been crisped – brown instead of pink and purple. I have subsequently been told that the late frosts at the start of May were to blame, enough to wipe out the majority of the early flowers. Though they will certainly bloom again, this may be after the rather early flight period of the SSBs this year, and their prime nectar source will therefore not be available. I believe that a number of SSB sites (being sandy soils and prone to frosts) have been similarly affected – which is hugely worrying.

I did see the butterflies, perhaps a dozen males and a single female. They were indeed searching high and low for any flowers they could find, resorting to alternatives like the stonecrops that grow here, and some of the brambles that have come into bloom. Here's one on stonecrop.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Chris L, 05-Jun-20 05:53 PM GMT

A lovely selection of photos Dave. A tough call but I would say my favourites were the last two.

Yes, I am new to Meadow Browns and the few I have seen (less than 10) are incredibly active. Furthermore, I concluded that they have a bit of a bad attitude about them. 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Jun-20 07:21 PM GMT

Lovely sequence of shots Dave 😊 Fingers crossed the butterflies can get on and copulate quickly 😊 Slop Bog was similarly affected I'm just hoping there are enough florets for a few of them to get by on 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Jun-20 10:30 PM GMT

Thank you, Otep – SSB are splendid little things when new. 😊 You're right about Meadow Browns – I was trying to get a shot of one yesterday, and every time I pointed the camera at it, it swivelled around so it was edge-on. No attempt to fly away, just persistently being awkward. 😊 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – fingers crossed for them being able to improvise with what else is around and get themselves through the life cycle. At least the disappearance of the recent hot sun means they don't have to fly around for 12 hours every day and use up all their energy. 😊

On **Friday 29th May**, I had another look at Fairmile, principally to see if I could locate a female SSB. I was successful, but inevitably got sidetracked by the males as well. First, the female – which looked as if it had been out a day or two as it had mostly lost the rainbow sheen a fresh female has.



Second, a selection of males.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jun-20 09:58 AM GMT

Love the SSBs in your recent reports Dave. In many ways my favourite species of Blue although one I will be missing this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jun-20 07:39 PM GMT

That's a shame, Neil - they are indeed a lovely species. I imagine the colony in Shropshire is just a bit too far for an easy daytrip from Solihull.

After Fairmile on **29th** I paid a visit to Box Hill to see what might be about. There was an easy answer to that one - almost nothing at all. I covered the slopes east of the viewpoint and beyond, and then over to Burford Spur, but came up with one or two Common Blues, a few Small Heaths and Meadow Browns, a single Speckled Wood and finally this lone female Adonis Blue searching out horseshoe vetch.



Everywhere looked dry, there were not many flowers of any sort and the grass was not exactly lush. Not the conditions right to welcome the imminent arrival of early summer species.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jun-20 08:28 PM GMT

Saturday 30th May - no major excursions today, just a couple of local walks. Lots more warm sunshine, so I went round my standard local patch quite early. After only appearing a couple of days ago, Meadow Browns were already getting properly going, with double figures seen. All males so far, and

consistently difficult to approach.



Nearly as bad were the numerous Small Heaths...



Rather newer were the Large Skippers.



Every time I go out I seem to find additional nests of Peacock caterpillars, some of which are getting quite large now.



Also seen today: Speckled Woods, Small Tortoiseshells and Holly Blues, with a total of over 60 butterflies over the morning. Finally, out in the middle of nowhere I came across a solitary orchid, almost swamped by the long grass.



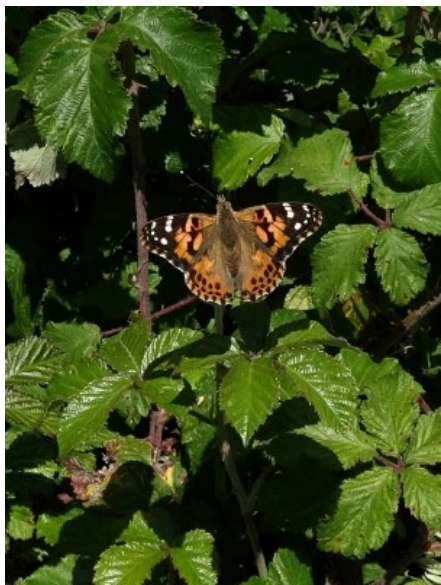
I think this is a Bee Orchid, but happy to be corrected.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jun-20 08:41 PM GMT

Late on the afternoon of **Saturday 30th May**, I went down to Staines Moor for the first time in a while. A few worn Small Coppers were still flying, as well as Brown Argus, Small Heaths and a couple of Common Blues, but my attention was immediately diverted by something larger and bright salmon-pink zooming up and down the path. When it finally stopped, I immediately identified a Painted Lady.



Within a few seconds it was off again, and it quickly became apparent that the reason for its departure was the arrival of a second one.





There may have been a fourth, but I only managed photos of three distinct individuals. After twenty minutes or so they all decided to move on at the same time, heading with the strong wind northwestwards. A very fortuitous encounter really, and great to see – maybe part of an influx from the south and east? I know others have been seen around the country in recent days during the spell of warm winds from the continent.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-20 09:11 AM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=154597 time=1591468781 user_id=9839] That's a shame, Neil – they are indeed a lovely species. I imagine the colony in Shropshire is just a bit too far for an easy daytrip from Solihull.

Dave

It's about on the limit of what I would do for a day trip. Whixall Moss is just a bit further so you can do both in one trip, which is what I have done before to see SSB and Large Heath in one day. The thought has been crossing my mind but Prees Heath in particular, being the only SSB site in the midlands, can get a bit busy, so I think I will be happier leaving it for this year.

Looks like you had better weather than us yesterday (Saturday). We has some brief sunny spells but also loads of rain including some very heavy stuff and even some hail.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jun-20 05:24 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

Looks like you had better weather than us yesterday (Saturday). We has some brief sunny spells but also loads of rain including some very heavy stuff and even some hail.

Cheers,

Neil.

I'm afraid I'm a week behind in my posts, Neil – those Painted Ladies were a week ago yesterday. Yesterday's weather (6th) was atrocious (like yours) for most of the day.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-20 05:49 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=154628 time=1591547064 user_id=9839]

Neil Freeman wrote:

Looks like you had better weather than us yesterday (Saturday). We has some brief sunny spells but also loads of rain including some very heavy stuff and even some hail.

Cheers,

Neil.

I'm afraid I'm a week behind in my posts, Neil – those Painted Ladies were a week ago yesterday. Yesterday's weather (6th) was atrocious (like yours) for most of the day.

Dave

Doh! That's what happens when I post before I have had my first coffee in the morning 😞

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-Jun-20 09:13 PM GMT

Very much enjoyed meeting up with you and Wurzel today, Dave. The BH weren't performing at their best, despite the almost perfect conditions. Still a day like today makes us appreciate the good days even more.

See you soon no doubt!.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

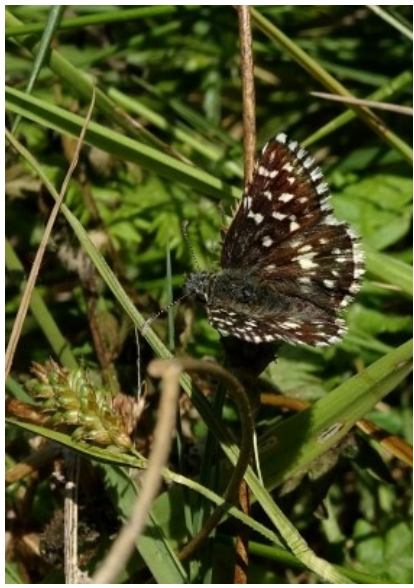
by millerd, 07-Jun-20 09:57 PM GMT

I know what you mean about the coffee, Neil – an essential morning ritual, after which everything gradually comes into focus. 😊

You're absolutely right, Trevor – if we didn't have to work hard at it sometimes I think the whole thing would lose its interest. And there are often surprises when you least expect it. 😊

Back a week again to **Sunday 31st May**. Clear blue sky and warm sunshine once again to finish off May and break all kinds of spring weather records by miles. It has been exceptional.

I met up with Wurzel and Philzoid again down in Bentley Wood, hopeful of seeing a few more Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. We succeeded, but they were hard work and there were really very few flying. The first one seen was perhaps the easiest, with Wurzel spotting it clambering from its overnight roosting spot. It actually seemed a bit the worse for wear, distinctly faded and translucent and not particularly mobile.



...and a few Large Skippers.



There were also new Meadow Browns, including my first female of the year.



Mixed outcomes really – we got to see the target species, but they weren't particularly impressive, and we all started to recall previous seasons up to ten years or so ago when the SPBF were far more numerous.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Jun-20 07:51 PM GMT

There was still time when I returned home on **31st** to go out locally and make the most of the last of the extraordinary number of hours of May sunshine. Several species were enjoying the early arrival of bramble flowers (I expect to see ripe blackberries at the start of July, if not before).

Holly Blue...



...and two Large Skippers chasing each other and anything else that moved.



One of the many insects they disturbed turned out to actually be a pair, revealed by the lugubrious flight they made under the power of the male butterfly only. A conjugal couple of Large Whites.



A fresh Speckled Wood sat in the sun.



All in all, well worth the extra wander out.

As has been publicised, the spring sunshine of 2020 has been exceptional, and that during May in particular. My source of local weather stats (for Heathrow – the weather station is just on the northern perimeter of the airport, only a few kilometres away from me) reveals that we experienced 310 hours of sun in May (exactly 10 a day), with an average maximum temperature of a shade over 21 degrees. The butterflies round here must be worn out! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Padfield, 08-Jun-20 07:57 PM GMT

`{quote=millerd_post_id=154666 time=1591642309 user_id=9839}`spotted a Brimstone caterpillar in its curious priapic pose...

😊 That's Priapus after a night on my homebrew, I think!

Guy

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-20 06:53 PM GMT

Cricky Dave – it's been a bit of a marathon catching up with your PD 😊😊 Stunning looking Silver-studded Blues, probably my favourite of group 😊
👍 I've still to see a Painted Lady, get alone get a shot of one 👍 Cracking looking Meadow Browns – really large spots on the hind wing 😊 Bentley Wood was a good trip, if hard going butterfly wise, they certainly made us work for the shots after that first drowsy one 😊😊 Hope to catch up again soon, possibly in a wood somewhere with a faint odour of Tesco Tuna chunks 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jun-20 09:49 PM GMT

`{quote=Padfield_post_id=154668 time=1591642655 user_id=665}` `{quote=millerd_post_id=154666 time=1591642309 user_id=9839}`spotted a Brimstone caterpillar in its curious priapic pose...

😊 That's Priapus after a night on my homebrew, I think!

Guy

Goodness, Guy – what goes into your homebrew?!? It's the bright green colour I think I'd be most worried about... 😊

You're right Wurzel – the heady aroma of Mr. Tesco's finest canned tuna gently warmed by the sun certainly evokes a certain type of summer morning...

😊 Hope you can make it. 😊

Monday 1st June. The warm sunshine continued – for a couple of days at least. Small Heaths and Common Blues provided almost all today's sightings, though Meadow Browns are rapidly increasing too. Female Common Blues provided most interest – there have been none of the very blue ones seen in this brood during 2019, most being a bit blue, a bit brown.





I thought I was following a Holly Blue when this male flew up and nectared on the bramble.



A relatively new Small Copper appeared – I thought the first brood were done, but it could be an early second I suppose.



Adding to my hopes about a bit of an influx again, a Painted Lady turned up on the nearest brambles to home.



For the afternoon, I thought I would have a look at Thursley Common to see how the Silver-Studded Blues were doing, and if the heather there had also been affected by frost. What I hadn't realised was that the area had suffered a bad heath fire at the weekend (almost certainly started by disposable barbecues left by the rash of picnickers who had visited). Accessing the village (let alone the common) was prevented by a notable Police presence.

Plan B - a quick visit to Chiddingfold, which is after all no great distance from Thursley. The woods were very peaceful, and first brood Wood Whites were still flying, though I only counted eight or so. They barely stopped for a second in the hot sunshine, and I decided photos would take a lot of getting! Aside from these, there were a couple of Large Skippers and nothing else at all. Hard to imagine how those paths will be in just a few days from now.

I then returned to the original plan, which was to call at Dawneys Hill on the less direct route home, and look for Silver-studs there too. There were only a few males flying - I counted no more than half a dozen. Here as well the heather (what there is left of it as the gorse is quickly taking over) had been frosted and there were virtually no flowers. Alternative nectar sources here are vanishingly few - the odd low-growing bramble is about it. The population here could well be on the way out... 😞 A few shots of the Blues:



No other species were seen here at all.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-20 10:22 PM GMT

Some really electric looking Silver Studs there Dave 😊 I hope they can muddle through; I've frequently been surprised by how effectively butterflies can bounce back - I hope it's the case here too 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jun-20 11:44 PM GMT

Sounds like that site could do with a bit maintenance, Dave. Do you know who owns it?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jun-20 09:26 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – the blue colour of fresh SSB is stunning. Let's hope this site recovers.

I don't know exactly who manages it, Mark – it has to be done with the Grayling population in mind as well, but the unchecked spread of the gorse at the expense of the heather will eventually also swallow up the bare areas the latter species favours. It won't be long before they will also be appearing.

Tuesday 2nd June. Another hot sunny day, but probably the last for a while. The bright sunshine made everything very active and also made getting any decent photos more difficult than usual. I managed to pin down a couple of Large Skippers for a second or two...



My attention today was distracted by some other insects. A juvenile cricket...

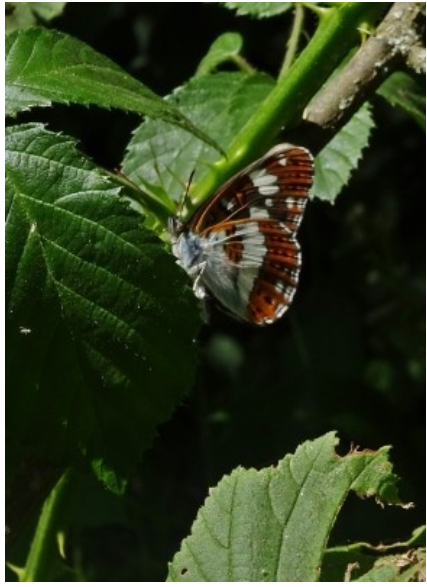


...and a couple of dragonflies which unusually both allowed close approaches and were actually sitting only a few metres apart.



For the afternoon of the 2nd, I decided to see if anything more had appeared at Bookham. To start with, only a few Meadow Browns and a couple of Large Skippers were seen, but then I spotted something else gliding through the dappled shade. I suspected it was a White Admiral, but it wasn't until a few minutes later that another one came into view to confirm it. The brambles here were only just opening and the majority were shaded or inaccessible from the paths, and when I finally found a butterfly actually stopped for refreshment I couldn't get either a close view or a clear view. Over an hour or so, I counted four or five in different parts of the woodland, gliding gracefully in and out of the shade, generally avoiding any direct sunlight. A very early emergence for the species – certainly as early as I have ever seen them.





There was still time for another stop or two. I popped into Denbies next and confirmed that Marbled Whites were on the wing. There were as yet only a handful, all keeping to the shade along the top of the hillside and rarely stopping.



I also caught sight of three Dark Green Fritillaries – one in Steers Field and the other two flying up and down the main hillside at high speed. Having seen these, I also had a quick look at Box Hill, Burford Spur in particular, but there were no Marbled Whites here yet, and only one equally energetic DGF.

A full day, with three new species for the year seen at the end of an extraordinary spell of sunny weather. Things would now change... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jun-20 10:38 PM GMT

Wednesday 3rd June. What a difference a day makes, and don't you hate it when the weathermen get things right? 😊 17 degrees was the high today, and no sunshine at all was recorded at Heathrow for the first time since 3rd May. Nevertheless, there was enough warmth coming through the cloud for a few things to be flying on my local patch – though only a handful of species were seen.

Meadow Browns are not shy of dull weather, but they were still difficult to get close to.



More surprisingly, a fresh new brood Small Tortoiseshell was attempting to warm up on the leaf litter. It was slightly unusual in that the blue marginal spots on the forewings were almost non-existent.



...and a whole new nest of Peacocks.



There's always something to see, whatever the conditions. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 11-Jun-20 07:43 AM GMT

Well done with the White Admiral, Dave. That's a very good sign indeed!.

Stay well

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-20 11:02 AM GMT

Wow Dave! it looks like the Butterflies are really emerging now, great shots 😊👍 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-20 08:30 PM GMT

Brilliant find that really early Wood White Dave 😊👍 Hopefully pick them up myself this weekend 😊
I could be wrong but I reckon the second dragonfly is a female Black-tailed Skimmer and the first is a female Emperor but I reckon it could be the less usual blue form 🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jun-20 09:45 PM GMT

Thanks, all, and particularly Wurzel for the dragonfly IDs. I see a lot of different types around here, given the proximity to the River Colne. In fact another one features in this next post, but in a different role... 😊

Thursday 4th June. The weather continued to be nothing special, cool and largely cloudy. However, as long as the cloud isn't too thick the sun's warmth gets through at this time of year (especially in the middle of the day), and can be enough to allow the butterflies to fly. In fact I saw around fifty on my local patch today – mostly Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, but a respectable ten species altogether, including one new one for the year and the welcome appearance of a summer variation. Orange and brown was the order of the day, except for a few Common Blues.

The 2020 first sighting was of a Small Skipper.



In fact, I saw three of these beautifully marked insects in different spots.

The new brood of Small Tortoiseshells are also emerging, with a couple seen today.



Looking at the photo, it is possible the butterfly was actually a female Holly Blue (rather than a male Common Blue as I had first assumed) as it was caught close to one of the areas of goats' rue where the Hollies have been laying.

Even on a relatively dull cool day, there is always something worth seeing. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

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

Cracking shots Dave – glad you got a confirmed Small Skipper 😊😊 Those Small Heaths are in very fine fettle 😊 Fascinating to see the Dragonfly (Black-tailed Skimmer) almost guarding its prey; like a Lion on the Serengeti 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jun-20 01:46 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. There are a lot of fresh Small Heaths at the moment – and ta for another dragonfly ID. They can be pretty fearsome creatures, especially if you happen to be a small butterfly. 😊

Friday and Saturday 5th/6th June continued the cool and mostly cloudy theme. I didn't venture beyond my local patch, and didn't see very much of note either day.



there are still one or two Brown Argus around



I always like this view of a Large Skipper



I see these every day at the moment
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jun-20 02:21 PM GMT

The forecast for **Sunday 7th June** was rather better. As a consequence, arrangements were made to head for Ditchling Common in Sussex and to meet up with various like-minded folk to hopefully see Black Hairstreaks.

The sun appeared on cue, as did Trevor, Wurzel and Philzoid. However, the Hairstreaks were rather more reluctant, and for a while there was especial frustration for Wurzel for whom they would be a lifer. Eventually, some were seen, and Wurzel managed to squeeze in some decent shots. I didn't fare so well, glimpsing them mostly high in the trees...



...and I was completely the wrong side of the only one I was close to lower down.



Phil also discovered the remains of one that had been predated – interesting, but not quite the kind of shot I would like to have had. 😊



Never mind – it was another very sociable kind of day, even if the butterflies didn't behave as we would have liked. Also seen (far more amenably!)



.. several Meadow Browns and a couple of glimpses of a Silver-washed Fritillary.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jun-20 08:18 PM GMT

Soon after leaving Ditchling on the return journey I drove through heavy rain, which put paid to any ideas of stopping anywhere interesting en route. Nor could I even have a quick walk out locally.

Monday 8th June was cooler and mostly cloudy again, but at least a local walk was possible today.

Meadow Browns were now becoming abundant, with 41 seen today, nearly all of them males still. But not quite all – and one of the few females I found did me the honour of opening up in a moment of weak sunshine.



Small Heaths were also frequent (23 seen)...



...and even a Small White – there haven't been many white butterflies lately.



Nearly a hundred butterflies seen today – not bad for a day lacking much proper sunshine.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jun-20 08:52 PM GMT

Tuesday 9th June was a warmer day, with more sunshine. I started the day locally again, and quickly counted over 130 butterflies of 13 different species:

Small Heath 39
Meadow Brown 36
Common Blue 25
Small Tortoiseshell 7
Brown Argus 6
Small White 4
Small Skipper 3
Comma 3
Red Admiral 3
Large Skipper 3
Holly Blue 2
Small Copper 2
Green-veined White 1

One Red Admiral was a very new one, and another example of ab. *fructa*.



Some more bright Small Tortoiseshells...



I have a near-continuous record of photos of this individual from his usual haunt during the (at least) 39 days of his life – how long do they last? Bearing in mind this particular butterfly lived through the 300+ hours of May sunshine, plus the 40 hours of sun since, he won't have led a very sheltered life. Quite extraordinary – I expect though from his current state I may not get to see him again.

Lastly of note was that other old favourite – the Holly Blue laying on goats' rue. There can't be many more first brood females doing this during this year now... 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Jun-20 06:11 AM GMT

You made the most of the few photo opps on offer last Sunday. That was a very enjoyable meet up. This is usually a very solo game.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-20 07:59 PM GMT

As usual a cracking set of shots Dave 😊 The Blackstreaks did live up to their reputation as one of the most awkward butterflies and there was one individual that didn't really have a clue about Social Distancing but all in all it was still a great day (having gotten a lifer of course I'm bound to say that 😊😊). Thanks for the reminder as well - I've been trying to recall the name of the aberrant Red Admiral and was adamant to remember it and not just google it 😊 Hopefully see you soon 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jun-20 08:43 PM GMT

Cheers, both - it was a most enjoyable day, regardless of the Black Hairstreak (non) performance! 😊

Later in the day on **9th June**, bearing in mind the partly sunny and relatively still conditions, I went down to Box Hill to look for Dark Green Fritillaries and their usual companions there, the Marbled Whites. I met with success, though the latter species were only out in very small numbers as yet. The DGF were better – a probably saw six or seven individuals altogether. Aside from these two species, there wasn't much to see – a few Meadow Browns, Large and Small Skippers, and a single female Common Blue. She was worth a photo, though.



At least those few Marbled Whites I found were fresh ones.

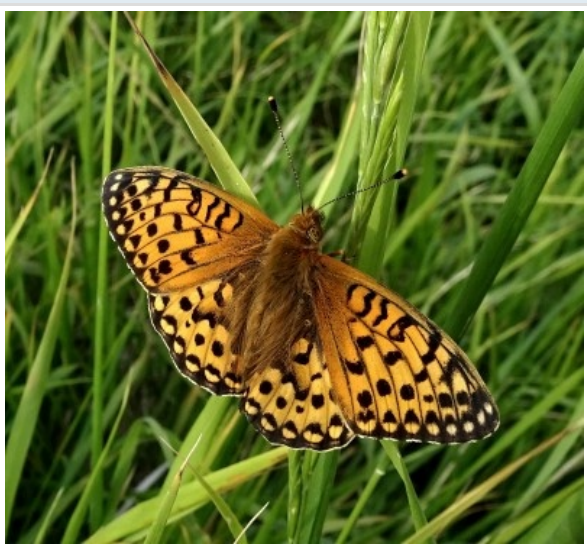


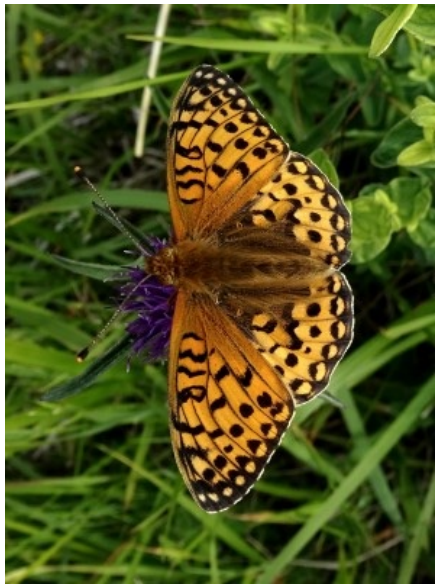
The stars though were the lovely bright new Dark Green Fritillaries. With the sun being far from constant, they were stopping to bask relatively often, and were reasonably approachable. I spotted one down in the grass which proved to be unusually so – I suspect it was perhaps quite newly emerged. I gave it a helping hand to a spot where photos might be a bit easier, whereupon the sun disappeared completely for a while and I had to wait some time for it to return and wake the butterfly back up. In the interim, I did manage a whole variety of undersides and closeup shots with changing light levels making quite a difference to the colours of the butterfly.





However, patience paid off, the sun returned and I was rewarded with some excellent upperside views of this butterfly and a couple of others.





They really were glowing in the late afternoon sunlight. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-Jun-20 08:55 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, what a lot of Butterflies, 🐛🐛🐛 I see you saw Holly Blues on the 9th June, I thought they might be finished by now, I must look, see, 😊

Fantastic shots of the Fritillary and on your finger as well, they're usually al over the place 🐛🐛🐛 That Common Blue is lovely too! 😊 I hope the Marbled White ore still a round when I get to Kent 🐛 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Chris L, 13-Jun-20 09:53 PM GMT

Brilliant photos Dave. You certainly have both the volumes and an enviable variety of species.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-20 03:34 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie. 😊 The Holly Blues are pretty well over for the moment, though I expect the summer brood to appear any day now. Marbled Whites should be around into July, so hopefully if it's not too long before you visit Kent, you'll see them. 😊

Thanks, Otep - yes, my local patch is very fruitful, and other sites within 40 minutes drive provide quite a few more species. 😊

Wednesday 10th June was cool and cloudy again. The only species relatively undeterred by this on my local patch was the Meadow Brown, flying up from the grass at the slightest excuse. Small Heaths were a bit more reluctant, and almost everything else stayed tucked away. One or two exceptions: A couple of Common Blues and a Brown Argus...



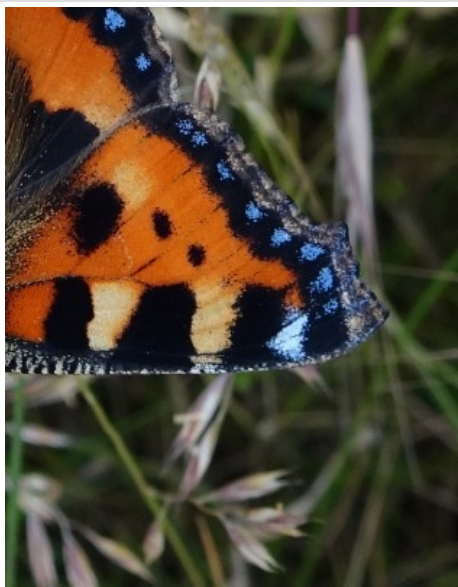
...a Small Skipper...



...and a Small Tortoiseshell.



There was something slightly different about this last butterfly, and though it could be a trick of the light, I formed the impression that the two spots at the outer top corners of the forewings were actually pale blue rather than white or pale cream. Here's a close-up.



I noticed this at the time (hence the close-up) so it's not a feature of the photography process. I have to assume this is within the normal range of variation as it isn't recorded as an ab. anywhere that I can find.

Dave

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 14-Jun-20 05:28 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Lovely photos of the DGF at Box Hill, along with the Marbled White. They are very early this year aren't they. I remember a similar day with both species there a handful of years ago and it was mid July. I particularly like the head on shot, not an angle you see very often.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-20 05:41 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the DGFs Dave 😄 They really explain the green bit of their name 😊 though I'm not sure about the 'dark' bit 😊
I see what you mean about the Small Tort – I zoomed in as much as I could and there do appear to be some blue scales around the edges of the white marking which could explain why it looks light blue when zoomed out – not seen anything like that before – something else to keep a look out for 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-20 08:32 PM GMT

Cheers, Kev – yes, they do seem early, though the Marbled Whites are clearly only just starting. I like those head-on shots – they bring out a bit of character, like the spiky ginger hairdo for a start! 😊

It's an interesting one, Wurzel, that Tortoiseshell... There's always something different out there it seems. 😊

Thursday 11th June was cloudy and showery, though definitely a bit warmer again. I just had the briefest of local walks and between showers found an amenable Small Heath. They do tend to get overlooked in normal circumstances.



The afternoon looked a bit better, and there were patches of blue to the north, so another trip out seemed worth the risk...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-20 09:21 PM GMT

So on the afternoon of **11th June**, I headed up the M40 to Aston Rowant. In these times of diminished traffic it only took half an hour, but the blue skies that had lured me up that way were steadily encroached upon by cloud, and on the steady climb up to the top of the Chiltern ridge, the rain started. Luckily it wasn't all that much, so when I stepped out onto the hillside, things had brightened up again. To begin with, all I saw flying were Small Heaths and Meadow Browns (I could have stayed at home for those! 😊), but then a streak of orange from the bottom to the top of the slope announced the presence of a Dark Green Fritillary. Shortly afterwards, a tentative white fluttering resolved into a Marbled White. A brief burst of real sun produced a flash of electric blue – a worn male Adonis Blue.



I hadn't expected any of these to still be flying, and it was the only one I saw. Next was another orange flyby – smaller though this time, and a different shade. This turned out to be a Small Tortoiseshell, and a slightly unusual one at that.



It was quite pale, with little difference in colour between the main orange ground and the yellow patches. The two black forewing spots were blurred, one of them almost to the point of disappearance. It certainly looked different – and attractively so. I saw another one later on, which was rather more normal.

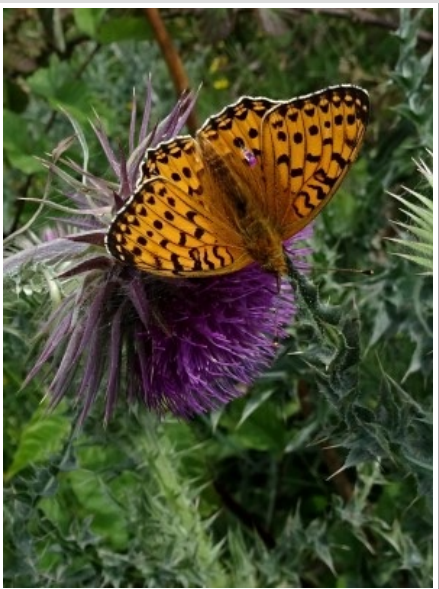


After concentrating on this quirky butterfly, I looked up to find the skies had darkened considerably, and by the time I returned to the car to shelter, it was raining quite hard. Of course, it then eased off and began to brighten once more. In fact, I was then treated to about an hour of mostly sunny skies, though the breeze had picked up, especially near the top of the slope. The good thing was that the sunshine brought out the DG Fritillaries from wherever they had been hiding, with nectaring a priority. I found one seemingly glued to a patch of thyme, completely engrossed and undisturbable.





Others sought out the large thistles by the path along the top of the hillside, regardless of the breeze.



Another in the same area preferred to bask on the ground, and seemed thoroughly more laid back. By its darker colouring and shorter, plumper abdomen, this appeared to be a female.



Having mostly seen females up north, where they are often a very different-looking butterfly to the males, I had forgotten that down here in the south they can be quite similar.

Returning home I found that there had been no sun at all to speak of, so my decision to head for the hills had worked out very well indeed. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jun-20 08:17 PM GMT

Friday 12th June was warm again, and a bit sunnier. The local walk was once again full of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, but the other notable species was the Small Tortoiseshell with ten individuals seen. To those of you living in more favoured spots this probably doesn't sound much, but a count into double figures is worth noting down here these days! 😊





No sign yet of Essex Skippers, with those seen being definitely of the Small persuasion.



However, the highlight of the walk was finding a Marbled White. They reappeared here in 2019 after a long gap since the previous sighting, and hopefully there will be more to come.



In fact, having just attached and studied these photos, it appears that there were two different butterflies! (1) and (3) are the same, but (2) is not.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 16-Jun-20 05:51 AM GMT

Lovely Small Tort shots, Dave. I would only get into double figures of

Small Torts, from East Sussex, if I added last years tally to this year's. three seen this year so far.

Might see you today!
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 16-Jun-20 06:35 PM GMT

Struggling to keep up Dave but basically very envious of your DGF, great shot of the Dragonfly with butterfly (I think!) and I, too, have noticed a couple of ST with blue where the white should be. Have I forgotten anything? – probably 😊😄

Re: millerd

by Chris L, 16-Jun-20 07:38 PM GMT

I learn from the thread, with some surprise, that Small Tortoiseshell are not commonplace and abundant everywhere. This really surprises me. I am learning something new every day.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-20 08:36 PM GMT

There is definitely something unusual about that Small Tort Dave – it could be a named aberrant – it's not just the fine markings but also the ground colour that looks different to all of the other Small Torts that are about at the moment which are much darker 😊🌍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jun-20 08:40 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – the Tortoiseshells are having a decent year so far round here, but still nothing like the numbers of ten years ago or so.

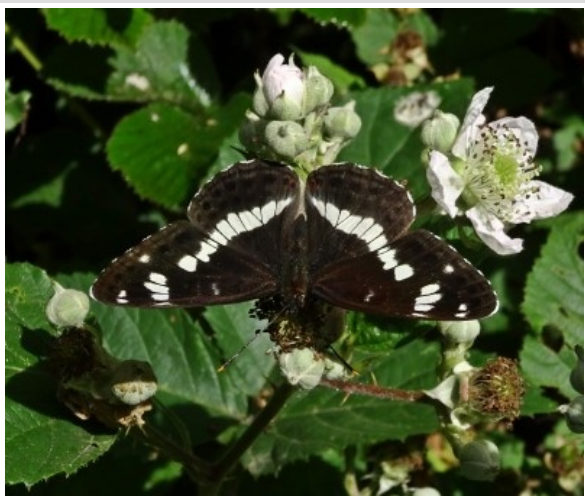
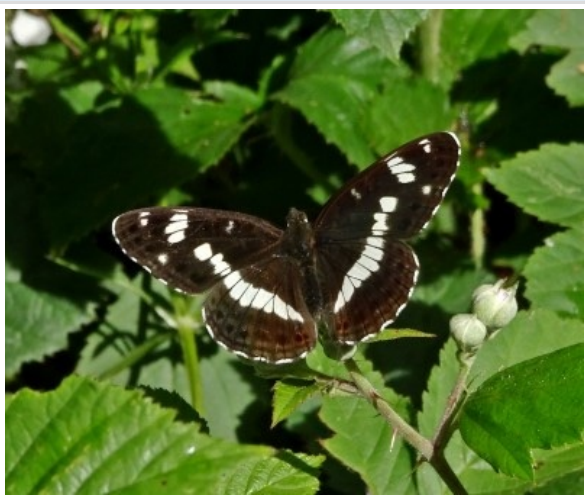
It's true, Otep – Small Tortoiseshells are no longer commonplace butterflies in parts of southern England. They have by no means disappeared, but gone are the days when dozens would gather on buddleia and other flowers at the end of the summer. In the Midlands and further north, they are doing better (Neil Freeman's diary illustrates this really well! 😊).

Thank you, Pauline. I was very pleased with the DGF from both Box Hill and Aston Rowant – they are delightful butterflies. 😊 Helped to pose nicely by the weather of course. Don't worry, I struggle to keep up as well – I tend to forget which order I've seen things and what happened where. Age and decrepitude in my case, no doubt. 😊

I did wonder about that, Wurzel – maybe I'll pop it into a separate thread and seek opinions... 😊

Saturday 13th June. More sunshine, at least initially, so I set off early down to Bookham to see if anything had joined the White Admirals I'd seen there on 2nd. Not as early as Philzoid it turned out, who had been there a good half hour before me looking in vain for emergent Purple Hairstreaks. We soon saw several White Admirals, and they turned up everywhere along the rides pausing occasionally to nectar on brambles, usually in some inaccessible or half-shaded spot. Aside from these, only a few Meadow Browns, Speckled Woods, Large Skippers and Commas were seen – no SWF, Ringlets or Small Skippers, nor any Hairstreaks. A selection of the main attraction here today:





Having seen all I suspected I was going to see, I headed off, leaving Phil to examine the clearwing lures he had strung around the woods. Good to see you once again, Phil! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 16-Jun-20 09:39 PM GMT

You've cleaned up on those mid-summer species, Dave. Fresh Marbled Whites are a joy, but even they are eclipsed by fresh White Admirals.

Nice to see you got a good audience with DGFs, and I agree, that 'monochrome' Small Tortoiseshell is quite unusual.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Jun-20 04:03 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, lovely shots of the WA, I love to see them fly their so graceful, I hope I get the chance to see one this year 😊 Goldie 😊

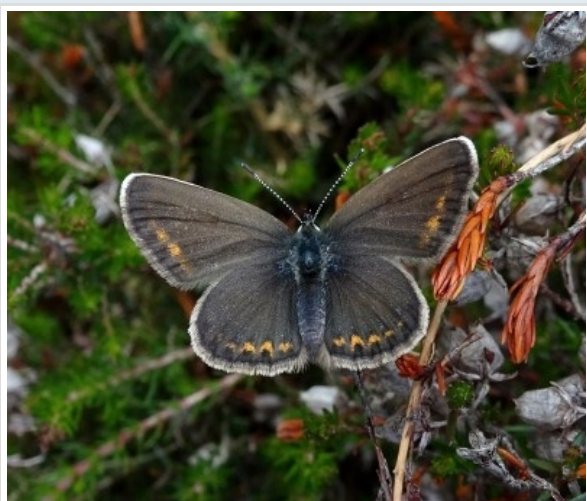
Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jun-20 05:38 PM GMT

Cheers, David – interesting you should mention "monochrome" and also refer to Marbled Whites and White Admirals. In a world of colourful insects, two black-and-white ones really stand out! 😊

Thank you, Goldie – I do hope you get the chance to see the Admirals, they are lovely to watch floating around the woods. 😊

13th June (continued): From Bookham, it's only a short distance to Fairmile Common, and I was interested to see how the Silver-studded Blues were faring after the worries about the frosted heather. I'm pleased to say that things looked a lot better now, with a second flowering of the heather underway and as well as a good number of male butterflies there were also plenty of females. These can be hard work as they hardly stand out from the vegetation or the ground (they often sit on the latter) and there are small moths that mimic them in flight. However, I found enough to start looking at the surprising variation between individuals. This isn't helped by the way they change in appearance, sometimes substantially, with the amount and direction of the sunlight on them. The first two are the same butterfly...



These next two are different individuals, but the orange lunules on both wings are virtually absent. The second of the two was very dark, looking almost black from some angles, and quite similar to a Small Blue female.



Two others were more typical, with reasonably well-defined lunules.



Finally, there was this one, which I wish I'd seen when it was fresher as even in its current state the blue spotting was striking.



The undersides of those I looked at were remarkably similar to one another: this is the very dark one, but the others were pretty well the same.



The males were generally looking a bit more tired than on my last visit, but a few were quite fresh.



Not unexpectedly with so many females around, I also came across a mating pair.



A fascinating visit, well worth dropping by again.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Jun-20 07:01 PM GMT

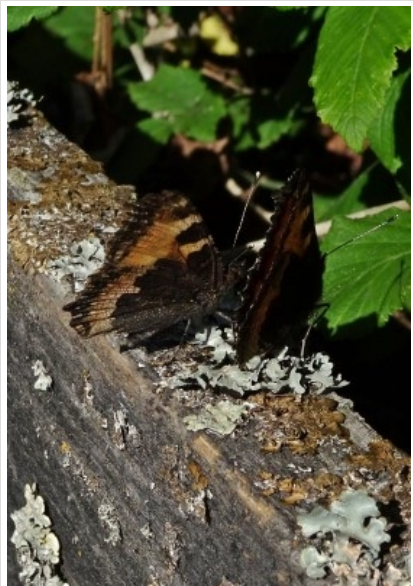
Hi! Dave that last shot is fantastic 🍷🍷 it shows their lovely colouring , just lovely 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jun-20 08:48 PM GMT

Many thanks again, Goldie! 😊 They are very attractively marked for certain.

There was still time on **13th June** to nip down to the edge of Staines Moor – after all the last time I did this I found three Painted Ladies! 😊 Not so today – there were a few Small Skippers, a Meadow Brown or two and lots of Small Heaths, though it was by now after five. However, in the same spot as I'd found the Painted Ladies, I came upon a couple of Small Tortoiseshells indulging in mad circling courtship flights, stopping every so often to become better acquainted. They had two favoured settling points, one on a bridge where they were constantly disturbed by passing footfall...



...and another on a piece of log.



Eventually they relinquished both and disappeared across the river, but were hotly pursued by a third Tortoiseshell – I don't know how that intervention went... 😊

This of course bodes well for another generation before the end of the summer!

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 18-Jun-20 05:35 AM GMT

Your recent trips out have been rewarding.
Your first WA sighting was extremely early. A good variety of Silver Studs too.
Still, we have all things purple on our minds at the moment!

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-20 06:31 PM GMT

Cracking set of reports as per usual Dave 😊😄 Really interesting to see the variation in those Silver Stud females – I've not seen the darker forms before and that one with a line of blue scales on the hind wings – looks like it could be a totally different species 🤔😄🌍 Hopefully things Purple wise will pick up at the start of next week – we're due a mini heatwave 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Jun-20 08:32 PM GMT

Yes, there have been several good days recently Trevor, and more to come. However, there is a growing sense of anticipation in the air, with a purple tinge to it... 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – it was unusual to have so many female SSBs around in conditions that made them reasonably easy to study. 😊 Female blues of other species often provide some interesting variety, and it seems that this is true of Silver Studs as well. There is always some new angle to concentrate on.

Sunday 14th June. I headed down to Denbies today, with an early start in case the car park filled up. A good decision, as it was already mostly full when I arrived at 8am, though annoyingly a substantial number of those parked were cyclists with no intention of going out onto the slopes at all. The day was warm and a bit muggy, as early bright sunshine had deteriorated into cloud. However, with lightish winds and strong June sun through those clouds, the butterflies were not deterred from flying but were prompted to stop and bask more regularly – almost ideal.

This is an interesting time of year. It is a sort of hiatus before the throngs of blue butterflies appear in high summer, a time when the slopes belong to Satyrid species – Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and above all Marbled Whites. The latter species was ubiquitous, turning up in all parts of the hillside and in good numbers too.





The Browns were also represented by the first couple of Ringlets I've seen this year – really difficult to approach despite the cloudy conditions.



Another interesting day out.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-20 08:14 PM GMT

More cracking shots Dave 😊 Small Skippers at this time of year when they're fresh really live up to the Golden Skipper moniker, lush examples there 😊
That first shot of the Marbled White is particularly fine, really like its posture 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jun-20 09:43 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – Small Skippers really are golden when fresh. That posing Marbled White you like was very unstable and only stayed in that position for a second. Luckily that included the time I pressed the shutter button... 😊

A quick scoot round a bit of my local patch later (after 4pm) found these two butterflies engaged in one of those typical annual tussles – Large Skipper v. *hutchinsoni* Comma. I think the Skipper won in the end.



This is the time of day when Speckled Woods and Red Admirals like to set up territories in sunny parts of the paths.



That Red Admiral was particularly new, and was yet another example of ab. *fructa*, with the forewing red band split in two by a black bar.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jun-20 08:29 PM GMT

Monday 15th June. A start of a curious week of generally warm weather where sunny mornings gave way to showery (sometimes thundery) afternoons and evenings. I started as ever on my local patch, with twelve species seen today, dominated by Meadow Browns (74) with an upsurge in the numbers of females, and Small Heaths (35). Small Skippers were widespread across the whole walk – I saw ten altogether; I checked the majority and none of them were Essex. Nothing out of the ordinary today at all.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-20 09:36 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, love your shots of the Skipper's , I'm still on the look out for the Small Skipper 😊 the Whites haven't surfaced here yet.
Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jun-20 09:44 AM GMT

Thanks, Goldie – Small Skippers and a new generation of whites should be appearing any time up with you I reckon. You seem to have your fair share of Large Skippers already though! I 😊 try to get close to the Small Skippers to see if they are actually Essex, which sometimes results in some quite cute-looking shots (but an awful lots of blurry ones to go in the bin!).

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jun-20 12:41 PM GMT

For the afternoon of **15th June**, I went down to another relatively close heathland site at Chobham Common to see how the Silver-studded Blues were doing there (and to see if there were any precocious Graylings in this unusually early season). By now, there was quite a lot of cloud around, but it remained warm and humid, and fairly calm. No Graylings yet, but there were a good sprinkling of Silver-studs which appeared fresher than the others I'd seen recently, probably because this is a less-sheltered site and their emergence is later. There were also several Small Heaths, which are notable here because of their particularly yellow appearance in flight and overall sandy look. In many spots, you can "tune out" Small Heaths from your butterfly spotting, but here they are impossible to ignore.



The SSB males put on a good display in the bright mostly cloudy conditions (I only had one fleeting glimpse of a female)





Also seen were a few Large and Small Skippers.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-20 06:48 PM GMT

The colours on those Silver Studs is still so vibrant Dave – they seem to take on a more violet blue hue when it's cloudier 😊 How was the heath there –

its difficult to tell as the butterflies will seek out any available flowers? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 21-Jun-20 07:40 PM GMT

I love the second last shot the blue on pink is brilliant.
I think I may miss this species this year

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jun-20 09:55 PM GMT

These seemed to be very new butterflies, Wurzel – deep shiny blue enhanced by it being mostly cloudy. The heath here is different from the other sites in that there is a lot of bell heather, and the cross-leaved heath flowers a bit later and seemed to have mostly escaped the frost. Consequently, the SSB are synchronised with the flowers and were not lacking in nectar opportunities. 😊

Thank you, Katrina – it is a great combination! 😊

Tuesday 16th June. Another fine morning with thundery showers threatened later. However, the forecasts seemed to show that the eastern side of southern England might escape those downpours, so I took the opportunity to drive over to Essex for a couple of targets. I knew it might be a bit early for larger numbers of White-letter Hairstreaks at Hadleigh, but I also knew the Heath Fritillaries had been out in various spots for a while, and didn't want to miss them.

I parked at Leigh-on-Sea station (deserted!) and walked all along the bottom path on the southern edge of Hadleigh Country Park. Scrubby hedgerow elms line a fair bit of this path, with convenient brambles flowering underneath them. There are also lots of grassland areas with flowers. I saw a good variety of species. As I've noticed before, Holly Blues here are some weeks behind my local population and I saw about a dozen on and around the brambles which they clearly use as a foodplant.



There were several new Commas, including this rather dark one.



The grassy areas hosted good numbers of fresh Marbled Whites...



...and I also found a Ringlet skulking in the grass under the brambles.



I spent a lot of time following skippers to try and establish positive identification of Essex Skippers, but to start with, all were Small.





Interestingly, the Essex were easier to approach than the Small - if I'd known that earlier, I wouldn't have chased quite so many... 😊

However, the main target was the White-letters. I saw the first ones not far from the station, but they were squabbling high up, and there were only three or four.



Sometimes luck can be firmly on your side! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

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

That is a brill shot of the Whitter Dave – the 'W' really stands out 😊📷 Mind you I better save some Mr Greens for the other reports from this trip 😊
Good news about the Silver Studs at that other site 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jun-20 09:33 PM GMT

Probably my best shot yet of a WLH, Wurzel, and as I said, luck played a major role in it! I'm very pleased with that one. 😊

Later on **16th June**, I left the station car park in sunshine and drove a handful of miles to one of the nearby woods between Hadleigh and Rayleigh. By the time I arrived twenty minutes or so later, there was a lot of cloud, but it was still very warm, and I was confident that this would not have put my next target off in any way. Various woods in this area have populations of Heath Fritillary and more effort has been put in recently to manage and maintain these after several disappeared. I had seen a report of good numbers in Pound Wood and this is where I ended up. I visited this site once before some years back and amazingly remembered the way from the entrance to the area under the power line that hosts the butterfly. To be honest, it feels a bit artificial as a series of narrow rectangular blocks have been cut, following the cables overhead, completely separate from the network of paths in the wood. There are well-trampled routes through and between these. Stepping across the threshold into the first one, I was immediately met by a series of Heath Fritillaries, basking open-winged in the bright conditions. A bit of light rain soon afterwards made no difference, and it was only when the sun came out properly that they started moving around. There were both male and female butterflies, varying from those just emerged to some that looked quite worn. There was a range of variation in markings as well, and I amassed a fair few photos in a relatively short time. The undersides are beautifully marked, and a backlit underside rivals any other similar fritillary.

Undersides first:

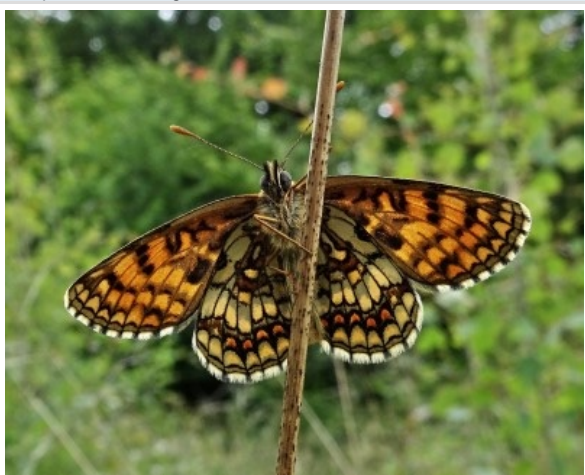


Uppersides:





Finally, that stained-glass backlit shot...



An excellent day again, well-worth the trip over to Essex. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 23-Jun-20 09:56 PM GMT

Had it not been for lockdown this is a day out I would have already done this year, perhaps on more than one occasion! great shots 📷

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jun-20 11:45 PM GMT

Glad your trip to Essex proved productive, Dave.

I have visited various Heath Fritillary woods this year, and found their populations rather variable. Good in some, not so at other sites. But, overall, satisfactory.

White-letter numbers have not built since last week, when I visited yesterday, so seem to be having a poor year.

Re: millerd

by Andy Wilson, 24-Jun-20 09:20 AM GMT

I must confess I share some of your concerns about the Heath Fritillary locations being artificial. I have visited East Blean Woods in Kent most years recently (but not this year), and the place is always full of them if you go to the right place at the right time in the right weather conditions. But all around there is hardly anything. It's like they are living in a gilded cage.

However, I suppose we would be worse off if they had just been allowed to become extinct in eastern England. It's a conundrum.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-20 06:45 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking shots – glad I saved the Mr Greens 🍷😄🍷🍷😄

I've seen this species in France and they were never as dark as the British ones – I wonder why they're so heavily marked in the UK? 😊 Maybe they'll be classed as a new subspecies – so i can get an 'armchair' tick 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jun-20 09:17 PM GMT

Yes, Buggy, it must be unbelievably frustrating not to be able to get out even down the road to Essex. Hopefully things will continue to ease and you'll soon get to see more.

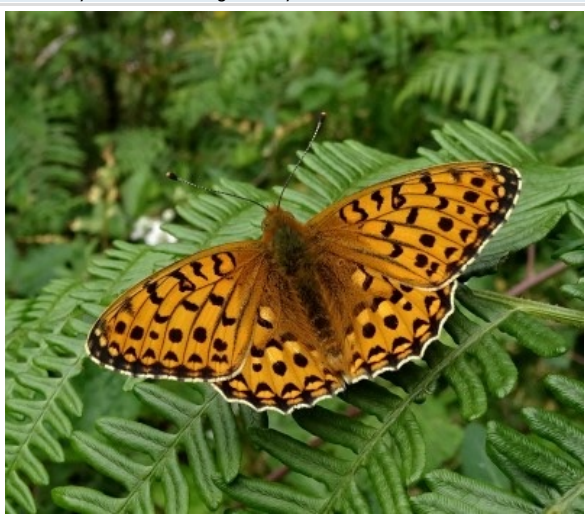
Cheers, Mark – yes the annual visit to Essex is an essential and very worthwhile trip. It's a shame the WLH are a bit thin on the ground here so far – every year I've visited before there have always been a profusion. Pound Wood seemed good for the Heath Frits, with plenty of new individuals and they were their usual obliging selves – in cloudy conditions I can't think of an easier butterfly to be honest. 😊

I agree, Andy. It always seems odd that in the UK they survive (generally with a fair amount of specialist help) in certain select habitats with very particular requirements and can sometimes be seen in large numbers – yet on the continent they appear to be a butterfly that turns up all over the place in odd ones and twos.

Thanks Wurzel – having never seen a French one myself, I didn't realise that ours were noticeably darker – it may also be something to do with none of those shots (bar one) being taken in sunshine! 😊 Some of the males I saw at Hockley last year were possibly even darker. Interesting.

Wednesday 17th June. A similar day in prospect weatherwise, and time for a traditional curtain-raiser visit to Chiddingfold before the Purple season kicks off (though there is always the outside chance of an early Emperor).

I arrived quite early at the Botany Bay entrance coincidentally at the same moment as Andrew555. We then ambled gently around the woods seeing what was about. The immediate first impression was that the White Admirals were well underway and were having a good year – plenty were flying, and were reasonably amenable and generally still unblemished.



There is a continuing small population of this species in the wood which certainly adds to the variety here.

A good day (and good to see you again, Andrew!). Things looked nicely set for more exciting times on the next visit in a few days... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 24-Jun-20 09:19 PM GMT

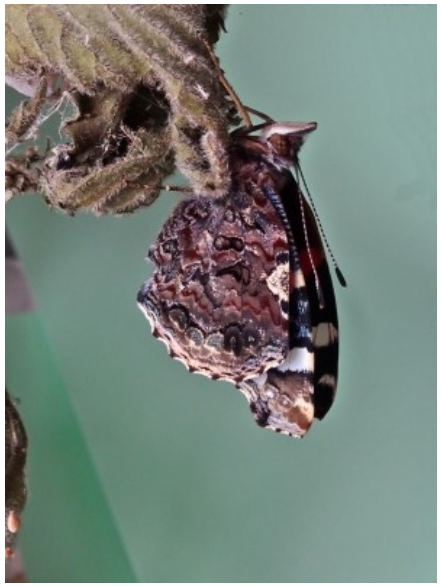
Wow! You've really filled the scrapbook with those Heath Frits, Dave. Beautiful and vivid images showing both uppers and unders. Can't fault it. Well done. 🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jun-20 09:57 PM GMT

Thank you, David. 😊 I was very pleased with that set of Heath Fritillary images – like you say, a pretty comprehensive set! Conditions were ideal, which very much helps.

The next two days, **Thursday 18th and Friday 19th June**, both involved rain and I remained local on both days. On **18th**, the Red Admiral caterpillar that had pupated on a nettle sitting in a glass of water on my kitchen windowsill decided to emerge in the middle of a hefty shower. I was luckily close by as it made its way out of its tent and found a suitable angle to hang its wings out to pump up and dry.



After a while, I saw a hint of blue sky in the distance, and the light level increased. The butterfly was ready and waiting and as soon as it was bright enough (never mind the bit of drizzle still falling) it launched itself through the open window and away. The timing of its emergence in relation to the improvement in the weather was pretty well spot on.

Later on, there was some proper sunshine, and a wander out locally revealed that a number of Commas had decided to make the most of it.



...and a new male Green-veined White.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jun-20 10:15 PM GMT

The weather on 19th was nothing special either, but enough to bring out another selection of Commas. The *hutchinsoni* form is such a splendid creature.





Quite a few Small Skippers were flying, and not one I checked was of the Essex variety. Hopefully there will be some here this year, though numbers have been falling recently.



New Red Admirals...



These were amazingly flighty (the breeze didn't help), but they looked quite dark in the glimpses I got of them. They are very early, and there could be many more considering how many caterpillars I have seen. It is also quite feasible that they will go on to breed again, rather than go into hibernation. A few did in 2019, and I've observed this phenomenon before that as well, so in an early year the chances no doubt increase.

Finally, I had a brief sighting of another new species for the year – a Gatekeeper. I had been following one of the Commas, when another flash of orange pattered across in front of me. It couldn't be a Large Skipper, as rather than perch on the foliage, it went into it and hid in the shade. I peered in and discovered its identity, disturbing it so that it flew up into a tree instead. A photo for the record (of sorts) was possible here at least.



Dave

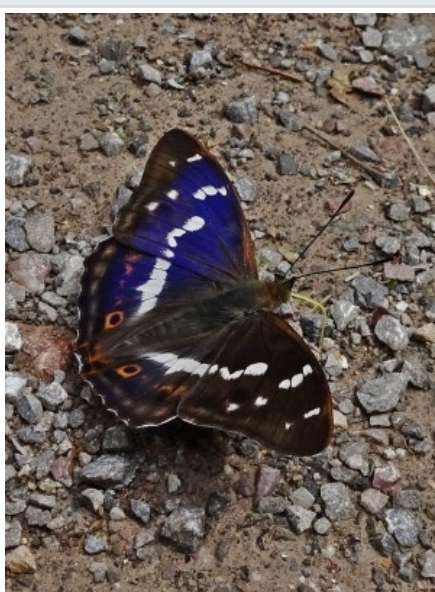
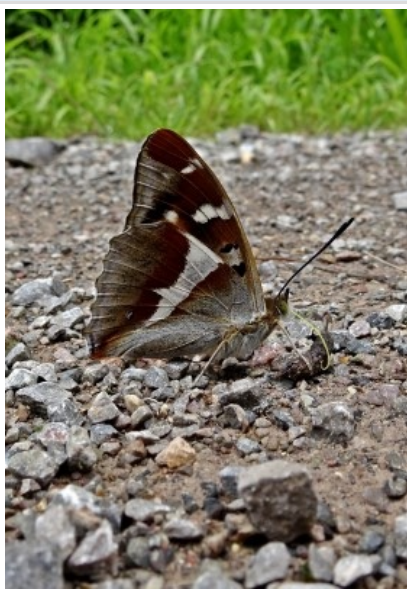
Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jun-20 08:15 PM GMT

Saturday 20th June. Better weather, with more sunshine, at least to start with. Today had to be the day to head back to Chiddingfold and start looking for Purple Emperors in earnest. Other like-minded folk were around, and naturally the first I bumped into was Trevor, who had set up camp at the spot he had found most favoured in 2019. After a while looking at what else the wood had to offer...



...I returned to Trevor's post to find that the first Emperor of the season had appeared in my absence. Luckily, it was still around – and stayed around for quite a while despite a short shower.



However, even though things brightened up again, we saw no further Emperors. Still, things were underway, and the buzz that comes with this time of year was now apparent. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-Jun-20 09:31 PM GMT

Some cracking shots in your posts Dave 🍷🍷 I'm still stuck with the Whites 🤔 roll on Kent, 🤔 Goldie 🤔

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jun-20 10:56 AM GMT

Blimey Dave, it is difficult to keep up with you 🤔

I have only just seen your White Admiral photos from 17th June, the second one is a real cracker 🍷🍷

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-20 06:06 PM GMT

Absolutely blinding set of report recently Dave 🤔 His Nibbs, gorgeous White Admirals, cute Smessex, glowing Commas – stunning stuff! 🤔🤔🍷🍷
But favourite has to be...the return of the Hedge Brown! 🤔🤔

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jun-20 09:56 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – I'm sure Kent will do you proud. 🤔

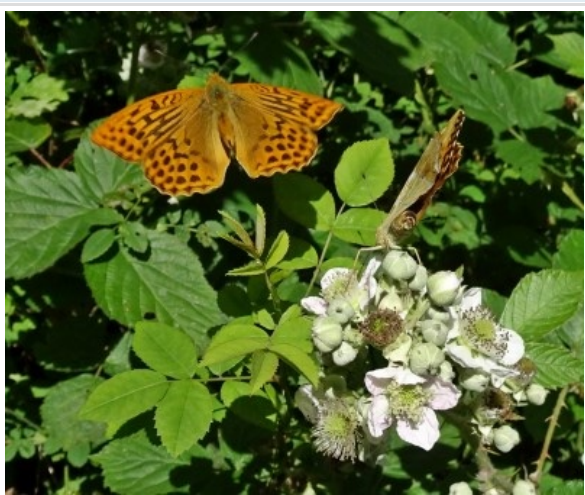
Thanks, Neil – I have been out a bit recently, but the warm weather has been an encouragement! 🤔 It's interesting that you should like that particular shot as the original was rather overexposed. I was shooting through a dark patch into a small contrasting pool of bright sunshine where the butterfly was sitting, and the camera (unsophisticated beast that it is) was adjusting for the wider view rather than the bit in the middle. To achieve what you see here required quite a lot of "tweaking". 🤔

Cheers, Wurzel! 🤔 I thought you'd be pleased to see that the Hedgies have appeared, though he's a bit early and I've yet to see another either here or anywhere else. It can't be long now, though.

Returning home on **20th June**, walking round to the local shop I spotted this Comma in a rather curious pose on a bit of barbed wire.



Sunday 21st June. The morning's weather wasn't anything special, but it improved later on, so I popped down to Bookham and wandered around the woods there for a while. Reaching a recognised high point, I found two or three people craning their necks skyward, and sure enough there were a number of unmistakable Purple Emperors chasing each other around the treetops. They were too far up for me to manage any photos, so after ten or fifteen minutes I carried on to a large sheltered stand of bramble sitting in the sunshine where I found White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries, including my first sighting of a female of the latter species. Unfortunately, she appeared to be the first female the various male butterflies had seen too, and they bothered her constantly – but she showed no interest.



The males were able to pose unmolested of course.



A couple of White Admirals flitted in and out of the shade...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 27-Jun-20 11:09 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave, I find the SWF so swift and hard to take shots of but their a beautiful Butterfly in flight, well done with your shots 📷📷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 28-Jun-20 05:33 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the PE Dave. Very nice! You must be one of the lucky few who have managed decent shots this season.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jun-20 06:53 PM GMT

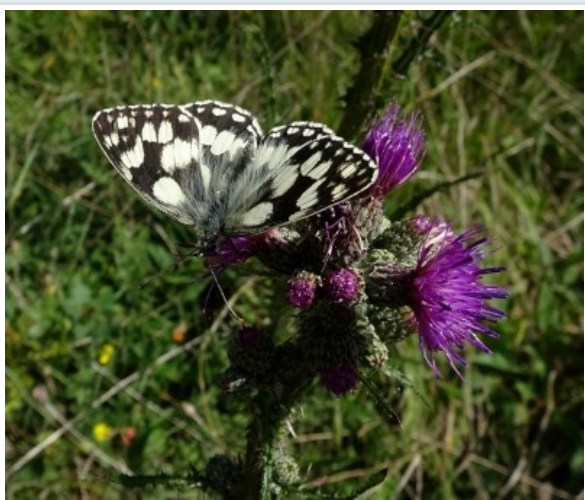
Thank you, Goldie – the in-flight shots of those male butterflies were complete luck, as I was trying to take pictures of the female on the bramble! The males kept interrupting... 😊😊

Many thanks, Pauline – I was quite pleased with that one, but then things became harder over the next few days as you'll see. However, there was some more success too. 😊

Monday 22nd June. Back to Chiddingfold, though I had a narrower window of opportunity than I would have chosen. Over three hours, no Emperors were seen, though I found a few other things to keep me amused.



Emperor bait attracts other butterflies too



Quite a few in one of the clearings



Also attracted by something noxious on the ground

On my way home I went through some hefty showers, so at the time I didn't regret leaving.

In the afternoon of **22nd**, the sun returned and during a couple of hours walking on my local patch I clocked up over 150 butterflies of 15 species, two of which were newcomers for the year – a single Essex Skipper and a couple of Ringlets. I didn't get shots of either, but some of the usual customers obliged happily enough.



The Commas really are a delight here at the moment – great substitute for the local lack of fritillaries! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-20 07:35 PM GMT

I saw my first Hedgie today Dave wahoo! 😄 Cracking Comma shots especially the final one 📷😎 PE hunting has been quite tricky this year and now with the wind I don't see it getting any easier 😞 I think you've done mighty fine considering 📷📷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jun-20 07:43 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – well done on the Hedge Brown! 😊 I've still to see another... Things did improve on the PE front, but not just yet.

Tuesday 23rd June. Warm sunshine, and back down to Chiddingfold again. An earlier start this time but after several hours of patient searching, still no showing of anything Imperial. However, something purple did appear when one of the several sets of eager eyes at the Triangle spotted a Purple Hairstreak wander down from the canopy to sit at around head-height. This soon attracted quite an audience and became the most photographed butterfly of the day.



Again, there were a good selection of other species to look at (including some rather tired first brood Wood Whites – which still refused to stop in their increasingly slow meanderings).



I found a Small Skipper puddling, though just the one. A shame they don't congregate in the way they do abroad.



A White Admiral posed remarkably well considering the warm sunny conditions – I think this may be a female.





I called it a day at lunchtime, but would return again on 24th, when the weather would have heated up further.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 28-Jun-20 08:22 PM GMT

Yes, last week was frustrating but interesting and enjoyable at the same time. As always it was good to see many of the regular faces and have a catch up. More importantly we both came away with some worthwhile images.

Might see you next week if the weather forecast improves.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 29-Jun-20 05:33 PM GMT

Always frustrating when Emperors fail to show up, Dave, but Silver Washed Fritillaries, White Admirals and Purple Hairstreaks must provide some solace?

Hard to know what to predict with the PE behaviour over the next week or so. This weather is all over the place; either glorious or hideous with nothing in between. I wish you luck when the sun and warmth finally return.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-20 08:44 PM GMT

Love the Purple Hairstreak images among the cracking most recent set Dave 🤔👍 As they only rarely open up I don't know why they weren't called the Silver Hairstreak to be honest? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jun-20 09:01 PM GMT

It was a very sociable week indeed, Trevor, and it was great to see so many familiar faces and exchange sightings and experiences, and to meet a few new faces as well. 😊 It is a bit of a pity the Emperors weren't quite playing ball, but that seems to be part of their attraction – not to follow their own "rules" necessarily. If they were utterly predictable, a whole dimension would be lost from the enjoyment we all have from this highpoint of the season.

As you say, David, this particular spot always has plenty of other interest on offer, and this year has provided the unusual spectacle of both broods of Wood Whites flying together at the same time as the Emperors, White Admirals, Marbled Whites and both Silver-washed and Dark Green Fritillaries. There are probably not many places that can boast that kind of entertainment. 😊

That Hairstreak was very new, Wurzel, and there were hints of iridescence about it – subtle greens and blues over the silvery-grey ground colour. They wear to a sort of pale lilac dove-grey in the end... 😊

On the way home on **23rd June**, I made the detour via Dawney's Hill to see if any Silver-studded Blues remained, and also to see if the warm weather had brought the Graylings out. As far as I could tell, there were as yet no Graylings (even standing still in the open areas failed to attract the first inquisitive males as would work like a charm should any be flying), but I counted around 20 male SSB, plus about half as many females. The latter are hard to see and I no doubt missed a few. The heather flowers here have not recovered much from the late frost as they have elsewhere, and are rather

sparse to start with: I found males nectaring on low-growing brambles and generally well-dispersed across the site presumably searching out flowers.



I also saw a few Small Heaths, Meadow Browns and Small Skippers.

Dave

Re: millerd

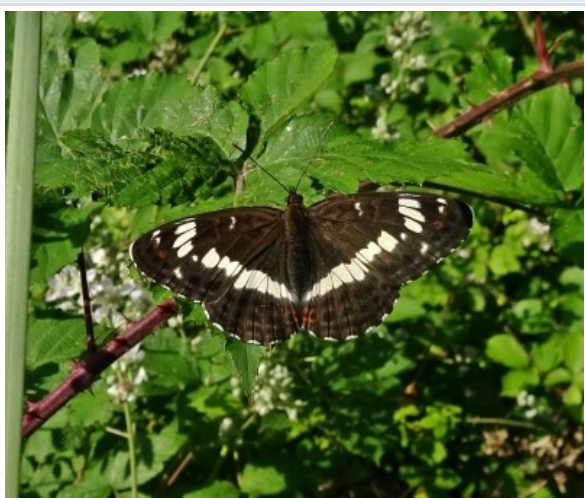
by millerd, 29-Jun-20 09:32 PM GMT

Wednesday 24th June. The first of three sunny and particularly hot days (Heathrow recorded the highest temperature on record for the date: 32.6). Down to Chiddingfold again, and despite the appearance of a persistently grounded Purple Emperor, it feels in retrospect a slightly frustrating day. The

insect mentioned appeared early, being down on the ground at the highpoint before 0900. During its initial audience, it was seen to be less than perfect and showing wear and tear. Nevertheless, it remained down for some considerable time, and I think everyone in the wood got to see it at least once. Collectively, the probable best achievement of the day was the discovery of a *valesina* female Silver-washed Fritillary. However, only the lucky discoverer of this beauty got to see it, but he came away with some stunning photos and several of the rest of us spent quite a while searching in vain for it. Overall, a great deal of searching was done, but apparently no other Emperors appeared until later in the day after many of us had left again. Today was perhaps the busiest of the week in terms of people there, so the most sociable – but in the end perhaps the least rewarding.

First thing, butterflies were a bit less active and posed quite well in the slightly more golden light of early morning.





It may be my imagination, but White Admirals this year seem to have suffered less damage than usual and have posed for photos more often with intact wings.

Here is the much photographed Emperor – not showing any purple at all, just the long shadow from his early appearance! The second photo was taken over an hour after the first.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Jun-20 09:39 PM GMT

Thursday 25th June. Perhaps slightly hotter than Wednesday, it was once again hard work down in the Woods of Chiddingfold.

The early morning sighting of interest today was of this brand new Painted Lady breakfasting on some thistles.



However, it wasn't long before reports of Purple Emperor sightings started to come in from all directions, and I had several flybys during the morning. Typical behaviour today was for the butterfly to come down, sit for a few seconds in shade or semi-shade, cruise along the ride for a few casual wingbeats and then repeat. Finally, after a last investigation of a likely patch, the Emperor would head sideways into the trees and disappear (probably to double-back high up and return to the original spot! 😊😊). Following such highspeed skipping flights along the paths proved futile, but gave us plenty of exercise in the hot sunshine!

Various places had been baited with tempting substances, and proved their efficacy by attracting Commas, Red Admirals, White Admirals and even a Silver-washed Fritillary.



Around 1100, P.J. Underwood arrived and mentioned that on his way down from the Botany Bay entrance, no fewer than three different Emperors had been on the ground at one point or another. I was already headed that way, and sure enough about three-quarters of the way back, I watched one circle around and land on the gravel path. For once it remained in place, and after allowing it a few minutes to become engrossed, I started to take a few photos. It had chosen a spot where the shade of some oak branches moved back and forth causing constant changes in the light, but in compensation the butterfly remained perfectly still, with its wings flat on the ground.



After that welcome bit of success, I decided that I had had enough of the heat for the day – and there would be another opportunity to come on Friday.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-20 10:27 AM GMT

I had to stop reading your latest post Dave and go and get a bucket so I could continue to read whilst being sick with envy 🤢🤢😁😁 That's the type

of experience I was hoping for this year with His Nibbs but wasn't granted an audience 😞 Oh well maybe next year (which will fit in with the three year cycle 😊)

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by keving, 01-Jul-20 08:07 PM GMT

Dave, I'll borrow the bucket after Wurzel. They are cracking shots of the Emperor. Also like the Purple Hairstreak from your previous post too. Not any easy butterfly to get close to either.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-Jul-20 09:47 PM GMT

Great work with the Emperor, Dave. This could be one of those frustrating years when very few are given 'audiences' on the ground like that.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-20 10:24 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel - I was lucky to have an amazingly compliant butterfly that sat motionless with its wings spread. If only they were all as easy... 😊

Thanks, Kev - I'd never have known the Hairstreak was there if someone else hadn't spotted it, and it also sat quite happily for quite a while. 😊

Maybe, David - but perhaps I was on a roll... 😊

You may want to have that bucket handy for the next post too... 😊 😊

Friday 26th June. The overnight thunderstorms were to the east (Trevor said he'd been woken by one at around 0400), but there was still a bit of rain overnight. Nevertheless it quickly became hot and sunny again, and I was off on the commute to Chiddingfold once again.

As ever, there were some good curtain raisers before the main event. First along was a Wood White, soon identified as a second brood individual and one of at least half a dozen seen during the morning.



Next was a Silver-washed Fritillary, one of increasing numbers appearing now.



Around twenty past ten, I was wandering hopefully along the bit of ride by the logpiles where the SWF *valesina* had been seen earlier in the week. Looking up, I spotted the familiar graceful circling of a Purple Emperor trying to decide exactly where to land. After a couple of aborted attempts, it selected a spot and settled. It was, however, somewhat restless and wandered around on the ground in an area that was under the trees and therefore constantly changing between light and shade and all points in between. The good part was that it didn't seem to be about to take off again and lead me a dance down the path, so I carefully approached and tried to get a decent angle on it. I ended up with a lot of shots, taken on a variety of settings to try and take account of the variable light: They are perhaps not as sharp as I would have liked, but I did achieve quite a bit of glorious purple... 😊



With all the extra attention, it finally became unsettled and retired to a nearby tree.



I had one further flyby sighting, but the encounter depicted above marked the zenith of this year's Purple Emperor season for me. All the hours of patient plodding, the chasing skittish butterflies down rides in the heat, the knees lacerated by the Forestry Commission's very best sharp gravel, were well worth it. 😊

It has been as always a very sociable and thoroughly enjoyable time, with much chat with a whole variety of folk – some very familiar faces who it is always a great pleasure to see again, and some new ones it was good to meet and get to know. Forgive me if I don't name everyone (I'm bound to forget one or two names and that would be embarrassing!). There has also been an excellent supporting butterfly cast as well, keeping those many minutes waiting for the Imperial presence filled with interest. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 02-Jul-20 07:13 AM GMT

Congrats. for your Emperor conquests Dave. On both occasions I was in the wrong area.

A certain law has plagued my PE season this year. 😊

I must award a mrgreen for both of your closed wing on foliage shots, and the encounter above. 🍷

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jul-20 07:56 AM GMT

Well done on getting the all four wings purple shots Dave 🍷 😊

Like you say, a nice supporting cast too.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-20 10:22 AM GMT

Fantastic Emperor shots Dave 🍷 🍷 It certainly is a fantastic looking Butterfly when the Sun catches those wings 😊 Nothing but rain here at present 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 03-Jul-20 03:11 PM GMT

You cracked it, Dave!

Ten out of ten! 😊 🍷

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 03-Jul-20 03:27 PM GMT

Best images of PE I've seen this season Dave. Your persistence paid off 🍀

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-20 06:58 PM GMT

Thanks for the bucket warning Dave it most definitely needed – especially for 'four wings purple shots' 🍀🍀🍀
I do have a theory though that it was only because of the 'newbie' that it behaved so well – so next year I'm going to drag along a complete newbie and get the to walk bout 3 metres ahead of me so that I can nip in and get a load of shots when an Emperor lands on them 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jul-20 09:56 PM GMT

Many thanks to all of you for the appreciation of that rather splendid Purple Emperor. 😊 It was definitely a case of saving the best till last and of persistence and patience paying off in the end. That makes it sound a bit like a chore, but it certainly wasn't – it was a great week or so down at Chiddingfold, and we were lucky with the weather considering what has followed for the remainder of June and for July so far. 😊

The **last four days of June** were much cooler, much cloudier and distinctly breezy with some rain. I spent my time out on my local patch whenever it was bright or actually sunny, with a couple of wanders down to Staines Moor (on 28th and 30th) as well. There were plenty to see of the common species, and there were subtle changes afoot with the mix. Essex Skippers now outnumbered Small; new broods of Holly Blue, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper, Green-veined White and Peacock were starting to appear; Red Admiral numbers were building as well, with lots of new examples. On 29th (the best of these days), a rough count gave me around 170 butterflies of 15 different species. I shall try and single out a few of the better butterflies from this period – a daily record might be a bit repetitious! 😊



a Comma egg laid typically on the tip of a leaflet



Brown Argus



paler looking – especially pale in flight





a dark red-orange example with a reduced hindwing band

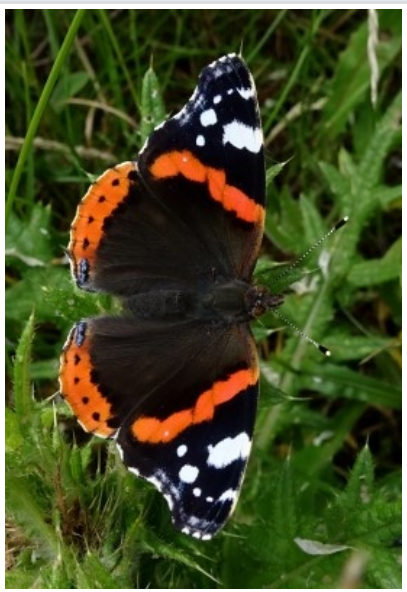




unmistakeably Small



most definitely Essex





Despite no better weather, 1st July would prove to be even better... But that's another post. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Jul-20 11:07 PM GMT

Just catching up with your Purple Week Dave, very nice, especially the 4 wing purple 🍷. Just had a very close look and your final one is the same one I caught up with a couple of days later, a little more worn but still intact 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-20 07:58 PM GMT

That does look a Hibernator Comma Dave – much less two-tone and richer shades of brown 🍷 It's great to see the Blues are back in Town – great set of shots 😊😊 Soon be time to visit Shipton Bellinger 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-Jul-20 03:58 PM GMT

Nice tutorial with the Small and Essex Skippers, Dave, and I love the contrast between the Small Coppers. Just shows how variable they can be.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jul-20 10:02 PM GMT

Cheers, Buggy – interesting that you should have seen the same Emperor. 😊 It does show that they come down on more than one day, perhaps several, to build up their mineral levels.

Thanks, Wurzel – the standard-type Commas are starting to appear amongst the summer ones now we are well past the solstice. Overall, there are very good numbers this year round here. Yes, looking forward to at least one trip to Shipton B., maybe before July is out at this rate! 😊

Thank you, David – when you have a lot of Essex/Small flying together, it's an interesting exercise to try and guess which they are by their flight and then seeing how often you are right. Surprisingly, I've found my success rate has improved! 😊 I have also found that Essex are more inclined to pose in a way that shows the underside of those antennae, putting their ID beyond doubt. 😊

Wednesday 1st July. The new month dawned very much in the same vein as the last few days of June. Bright, warmish, and a tendency for the odd shower. I spent three hours on my local patch (0930–1230) and covered a fair bit of ground, clocking up over 230 butterflies of no fewer than 18 different species – both figures being highs for the year so far.

Essex Skippers now outnumber Small by two to one (established by dip-sampling across the piece) and are more widespread. For both, numbers are much higher than in 2019 – which is probably down to the area not being mowed so far this year. This happened plumb in the middle of their season last year. This is an Essex Skipper.



Perhaps the most striking aspects of today's walk were the numbers of both Red Admirals and Peacocks – 28 of the former and an extraordinary 34 of the latter. Maybe it's not quite so surprising given the large number of Peacock caterpillars seen earlier in the year.



The Red Admirals were already setting about kicking off another generation.



...and the result

Staying with Nymphalid species, as mentioned above the Commas are having a great year too and 15 were seen today mostly enjoying the brambles along with the previous two species.



Added to this to complete the set were a single Painted Lady...



...and a single Small Tortoiseshell.



One new male Brimstone was seen busily nectaring and easy to approach...



...and all three common species of white butterflies. There were only a handful of Large (just 3), but plenty of both Small (26) and GVW (17). Naturally enough, Meadow Browns were plentiful (around 40 seen), but Small Heaths seem to be tailing off at the moment (15 seen today). However, Gatekeepers are now appearing and I expect them to become plentiful throughout July.





Also just beginning to kick off are the second brood Lycaenid butterflies – Small Copper...



The first part of July is generally the peak of the season here in terms of numbers of species (I think 20 is the maximum I've ever seen on one day here), so the next series of local reports should also have a lot of variety.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 07-Jul-20 07:13 AM GMT

I am a bit behind looking at diaries but have just seen your 4 wings purple. Congratulations! 😊😊😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-20 08:25 PM GMT

I usually check on the last day of work as it's a half day but luckily this year we finish a week earlier but I reckon in a fortnight the Brostreaks will be out proper – not the odd, unusually early sighting 😊😊 I was just getting caught up and we seem to have entered into the next frenzied period with Grayling, Chalkhills and Brostreaks popping up all over the place 😊😊😊 Cracking report again – my favourite has to be the Common Blue – I love it when the spotting shows through onto the topside 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jul-20 09:57 PM GMT

Thank you, Katrina! 😊 It was a great way to finish the week or so at Chiddingfold and also the run of lovely weather. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – yes, the underside spotting does often show through on Common Blues, though it doesn't seem to do so on Adonis. The latter appear to have a less translucent layer of scales. I'm hoping for a good showing from the second brood of Common Blues after a splendid one from the first (which actually only petered out a couple of weeks ago).

Thursday 2nd July. More of the same weatherwise, but now the addition of blustery wind. Not very summery... 😞 I did venture out, but not all that far, and I saw little of note. A very bright new Comma basking between showers...



...and the coyest of Essex Skippers – I love the way it's just fractionally peeping round the side of the stem and you can see one "eyelash".



Dave

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 07-Jul-20 10:26 PM GMT

Couldn't help laughing at your Essex Skipper, Dave! It could not hide its antennae though. 😄
Janet

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Jul-20 07:58 PM GMT

Glad you liked the Skipper, Janet! 😊 For all their similarities, I always think that Essex Skippers are somehow cuter than Small Skippers – they certainly seem to strike more pleasing poses and are definitely less likely to take off when I'm trying to record them for posterity.

Friday 3rd July. A bit more sunshine today, but still windy. I toured my local patch again, seeing around 170 butterflies of 16 species. I'm still a bit mystified why Ringlets are relatively uncommon here, but I did manage to see one today. There must be something missing from the grassland edge habitat where it borders the bits of woodland.



A selection from the day:



nearly new



quite striking when fresh like this
Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-20 07:38 PM GMT

I personally don't think there is much better than a fresh Hedge Brown Dave – particularly one as well caught as that one 🤔🌱 You did well with the Essex as well, the ones round this way are a bit more reticent about showing their true identity 😊 hence why I am currently suffering from 'Skipper

Neck' and 'Smessex Knee' 🤔

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Jul-20 08:34 PM GMT

You've picked out some real nice specimens there, Dave, best of which in my opinion is that stunning female Green Veined White. 🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jul-20 08:39 PM GMT

A much-underrated butterfly the GVW, David. Fresh females are stunning. 😊

There are some lovely fresh Hedgies around at the moment, Wurzel, and the bright, rather than sunny, conditions mean that they are out in the open and displaying rather nicely. One of the species that doesn't mind a bit of drizzle too, especially if it's warm and muggy. My efforts to ID the Smessex Skippers one way or the other have mostly resulted in being soaked through from wading through and crouching low down in wet grass. They don't mind a wee bit of drizzle either, but at least they head more readily for somewhere to settle in those conditions. I've been estimating numbers by representative sampling, and lately helped by the fact that the Small are getting a bit worn, whereas the Essex (which first appeared two and a half weeks later) are not.

Saturday 4th July. Another very similar day, with showers, virtually no sunshine, and a stiff breeze. Unsurprisingly the numbers and mix of butterflies locally was pretty well the same as it was on Friday, though there seemed to be a lot of skippers today, with Essex predominating. One or two highlights:







I find them hard to resist when they are as fresh as this. No doubt when the Silver-spots start to appear my fickle allegiance will waver, but for the moment... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 09-Jul-20 10:16 PM GMT

Those Essex Skippers have got a couple of weeks left before you knock them off the top of the list, saw my first SSS on the 28th last year over on Box Hill. Your Brown Argus looks like an ab, missing the all important diagnostic spot on the hindwing 😊 .

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jul-20 09:08 PM GMT

I've seen one or two Brown Argus locally either missing that spot or having one that is almost invisible. Maybe it's in the local genes... 😊 Yes, not long till SSS – the first one I saw in 2019 was on 22nd July up at Aston Rowant. I may well pop up there during the forthcoming spell of reasonable weather just in case. 😊 😊

Sunday 5th July. More sunshine today, but still blowy. I delayed my local walk until mid-afternoon, just for a change, and came up with 18 species again, though not quite the same ones as on 1st. A notable addition was the return of the Speckled Wood – I'd only seen one in the last month, and generally they have been very thin on the ground.



...and finally, again within sight of home, an agitated male Small White caused me to peer more closely at the hedge. He had discovered a mating pair and after a half-hearted attempt to dislodge the incumbent male, he left them alone.



Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 11-Jul-20 10:43 AM GMT

Dave

My favourite image from your recent posts is that "coy" Essex. Fantastic.

I am a great fan of the odd angle if you can get it, and you certainly nailed that one.

Cheers.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-20 07:05 PM GMT

Brilliant set of shots Dave 😊 That Brown Argus is an interesting little blighter with that missing spot – and not particularly well marked topside either 😊😊 I'm with you – the Essex are cuter than Small – they seem to have more rounded, fluffy features than Small – but Silver Spots beat both hands down in the cuteness stakes 😊

No luck with early Brostreaks yesterday down at Alners – I'll be checking in on Shipton at the end of next week so I'll keep you posted 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-20 09:18 PM GMT

Thank you, Ernie – a bit of luck with that Essex pose really, but I was pleased with the quirky result. It's good to bring out a bit of character sometimes. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel! I shall be awaiting your Brostreak Bulletin with bated breath... 😊😊

During the **first week of July** and its rather indifferent weather I also popped down to Staines Moor a few times – primarily to see how the second brood of Small Coppers were doing, considering how numerous the first round were in the spring. Of course, this flat and open bit of moorland is not exactly sheltered and it was generally pretty windy down there, added to which I seemed invariably to get rained on by everything between drizzle and downpour. The vegetation was very wet, and very quickly so was I. Here is a typical view of things.





Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Jul-20 04:05 PM GMT

Some lovely fresh specimens in your last few reports, Dave. July is always a good time of year; the single brooded summer species are on the wing and being joined by second broods of various others. All makes for a great spectacle.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-20 04:54 PM GMT

Cracking report Dave – you've gotta love those Coppers especially the Blue Badger 😊😊 I read something on Facebook recently where one of the 'posters' reckoned that he only counted them as *caeruleopunctata* if they had all four blue spots, how or why he decided this I'm not sure 😊 So by this classification method yours would definitely be one 😊👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jul-20 09:52 PM GMT

True enough, David – lots of fresh variety on show, even on cloudy days. 😊

"Four spots only" sounds elitist to me, Wurzel! 😊 The Latin word just means "sky-blue spotted", so if you are picky about the number, it should be "*caeruleoquadripunctata*" for four, "*caeruleounipunctata*" for one and so on. To me, it crops up so regularly it doesn't even warrant the title of "aberration", just a variation on the norm. After all, take any half a dozen Small Coppers at random, and they will exhibit six slightly different sets of spots, shades of orange/red and degrees of darkness. Some will have four prominent blue spots, some none at all, and there will be all kinds of gradation in between. If you look at the British Butterfly Aberrations website, you'll see all kinds of nuances graced with individual grand-sounding and convoluted Latin names. 😊

Whatever you decide to call it, it was an attractive little butterfly battling against not the best of weather. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-20 10:59 PM GMT

I agree with you Dave – he came across as a bit of a...well I'm sure you know what I'm thinking 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jul-20 08:22 PM GMT

Ah well, Wurzel, it takes all sorts... 😊

Monday 6th July. With a sunny morning forecast, I ventured further afield again, heading down to Bookham. Definitely a good idea, as summer woodland butterflies were in full swing. Sheltered sunlit patches of flowering bramble (with a few tall thistles) were the places to be, and I found several of these. Silver-washed Fritillaries, White Admiras and Commas rather monopolised the action, with a sprinkling of other species, Purple Hairstreaks

being notable among them. I saw a number of these butterflies low down and nectaring on the brambles and was able to point them out to a couple who had never seen one before (and had better views than me in the end!).



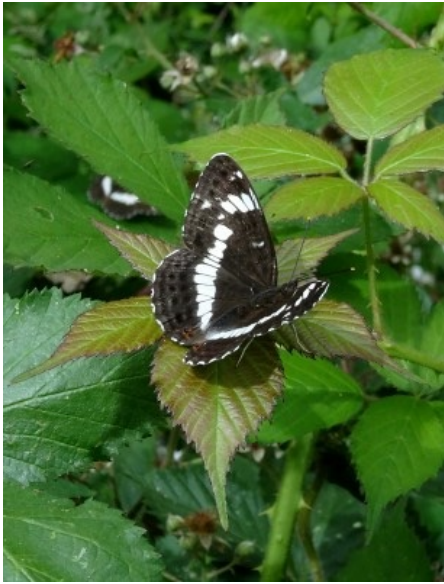
Others in the supporting cast...



Commas were everywhere, and frequently tangled with the SWF the males of which take an interest in anything orange (just in case).



I saw my first White Admirals here on 2nd June, so most of those seen were showing signs of wear now and I suspect many were female (I did see a few flying around honeysuckle in the shade, which also points at this). However, what they lacked in condition they made up for in approachability.



Both aspects applied to the unusual "Black Admiral" that dropped by at one point. A great pity not to have encountered this one when it was new.



the worse for wear, sadly

Silver-washed Fritillaries emerged a while after the White Admirals this year, and many of those seen looked pretty fresh (especially the females). However, to avoid overloading this post, I shall continue with the SWF in a new one.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jul-20 08:41 PM GMT

6th July – Bookham (continued): Silver-washed Fritillaries

A number of the elegant balletic SWF courtship flights were seen, at least one of which resulted in a pairing. However, the majority of butterflies seen were males...





Overall, it was a great morning, with a lot of splendid butterflies. Multiple species views were quite frequent, but these three were unusually close together. I was concentrating on the White Admiral, and first the Red Admiral and then the Comma slipped into the near background of the shot. Unfortunately, the latter two remained a bit out-of-focus.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Jul-20 09:57 PM GMT

Excellent Silver Washed sequence Dave, and that last shot is something else! 🍷
There were many SWF flying this morning and every one had chunks out of the wings.

They don't stay fresh for long.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 14-Jul-20 04:11 PM GMT

Great treble shot!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jul-20 10:06 PM GMT

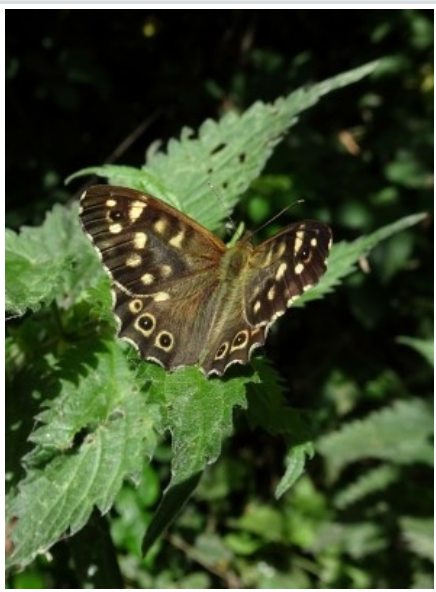
Cheers, Trevor – the SWF were the stars at Bookham on the 6th without a doubt. I still can't get over how large that female in the pairing actually was – she'd have matched a male Emperor for certain! 😊

Thank you, Katrina (and Trevor again) – lots of luck getting that "treble" of course, and they didn't stay for more than a few seconds. Most felicitous lineups are gone before you can get a lens on them, but the second two arrived when I had already set myself up to take a shot of the White Admiral. 😊
Not likely to happen again! 😊

Back home for the afternoon of **6th July** and still time to clock up 15 species locally, a number of which were ones I'd not seen at Bookham. Common Blues, Brown Argus and Small Coppers for example...



Puddling Holly Blues and a nice fresh Speckled Wood were also worth a mention.



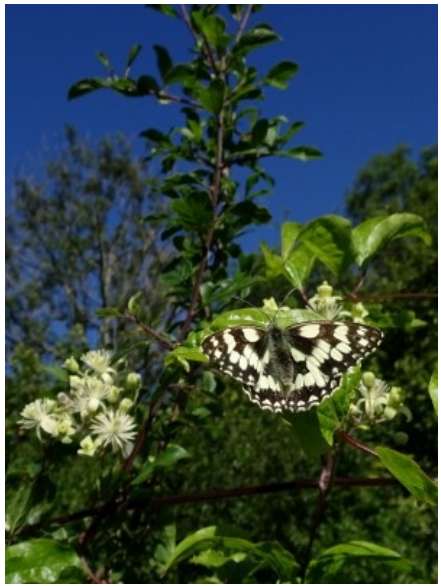
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jul-20 08:02 PM GMT

Tuesday 7th July. A glorious-looking morning first thing, so I headed for Denbies Hillside to see if the Chalkhil Blues had finally emerged here.

As is customary, the path down the western side of Steers Field produced a few Small Coppers, as well as Marbled Whites, Ringlets, Skippers and one or two Gatekeepers.



Out onto the main hillside, there were more Marbled Whites, plus Meadow Browns and about half a dozen female Dark Green Fritillaries. These latter butterflies were scooting around energetically before diving into the turf to seek out violet plants, close to which they would lay their eggs. They were impossible to photograph as they were constantly on the move or buried in the shade of vegetation. After traversing the slopes a couple of times, encountering a couple of Common Blues and wondering where all the Small Heaths had vanished to, I finally came across a fresh male Chalkhill Blue.



I only found the one, though Essex Buzzard (who was also here today but whom I somehow managed to miss!) found one or two more.

I moved back up to Steers Field, heading east along the bottom and then gradually back up to the top where there is a kind of division between sections of the hillside. There was a good variety of all the species seen so far (other than Chalkhills), and I was trying to keep track of the Small Coppers that were whizzing around. I spotted something about the right size, but apparently the wrong colour, and was about to dismiss it as an unusually active Gatekeeper when it settled not that far away. Just to satisfy my curiosity, I went to investigate. Now that I could see the butterfly, I still couldn't immediately identify what it was - but then the penny dropped. It was a Small Copper, but not one like any other I have ever seen (though I have subsequently been reminded of images of the species from the Mediterranean that are similar). As ever when you have something wildly different in front of you, you expect the butterfly to disappear without trace before anything more than a blurred record has been snatched. Amazingly, this little Copper was happy to sit on its perch for some time and show off its extraordinary colouring, reminiscent of glowing embers.



As you might imagine, that rather made my day and is unsurprisingly a highlight of the year so far. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-20 08:10 PM GMT

I was reading through and was pretty envious of the Black Admiral but then I reached the end of my catch-up and best had been saved until the end – that Small Copper 🤩👍👍👍 I mean can it even be called a Copper as it has so little of the colour? 😊 Awesome and I can easily see why that's the highlight of your year 🤩👍👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 16-Jul-20 11:56 AM GMT

Nice triple combo with the Admirals and Comma earlier, Dave, but that Small Copper is absolutely astounding. As I scrolled down the page I thought at first it was a female Brown Hairstreak.

What a find! 🤩

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 16-Jul-20 03:04 PM GMT

It certainly is a stunning butterfly Dave. I should also add that your lovely images show it off to best advantage. I never did go back for a second attempt

but thanks for the opportunity to locate.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 16-Jul-20 04:03 PM GMT

Fantastic find Dave, 🍷🍷 really unusual Copper 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jul-20 08:44 PM GMT

Thank you everyone – that Small Copper was indeed a splendid little butterfly, one I shall long remember. 😊

Heading back from Denbies on **7th July**, I thought I'd pop into Bookham again especially as road works near Leatherhead meant a bit of a diversion anyway. I concentrated less on the SWF today, though I did find another mating pair, and a reasonable female.



In the end, it was one of the smaller species that proved most interesting: more Purple Hairstreaks were relinquishing the tops of the oak trees and heading for the brambles and the bracken. Unfortunately they tended to stay around head height today, so though profile shots were not too difficult...



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jul-20 09:04 PM GMT

On **Wednesday 8th and Thursday 9th July**, no sunshine at all was recorded at Heathrow and the temperature just scraped 20 degrees. Nevertheless, there were a few butterflies around on my local patch, though my walks were more limited than usual. A selection from both days:





Most were new butterflies – I couldn't help feeling that a few decent sunny days might trigger an explosion in numbers of the new broods just underway.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-20 07:45 PM GMT

Cracking reports Dave 😊 The White Admirals seem to have been a bit 'blink and you'll miss them', 'here one day gone the next' this year round my way 😞 Good to see the Purps still coming down – were those whispered out of the trees? 😊 I gave Shipton a look-see today – no Brostreaks yet – maybe by next weekend?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Jul-20 08:40 PM GMT

`{quote=millerd_post_id=156199-time=1594929859-user_id=9839}`...I couldn't help feeling that a few decent sunny days might trigger an explosion in numbers of the new broods just underway.

Me too, and it will happen next week if the forecast is to be believed. 😊

Nice Purple Hairstreaks again, Dave. Doubt I'll see any so close round my way. Like the WLHs, they seem to prefer remaining in the higher canopy by me.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jul-20 10:46 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – the White Admirals started at Bookham at the very beginning of June and seem to have been going strong ever since (there were still a few scruffy ones pottering around on Monday 13th July). An early season, but six weeks and counting – though I suspect they will be gone soon, sadly. I'm afraid I don't speak very good Hairstreak, so they would only come so far and no further. Hopefully you'll have some luck with the Brown dialect of the language down at Shipton – keep me posted! 😊

Numbers have started to rise, David, as you'll see in forthcoming reports – there were lots of Common Blues yesterday for example. 😊

Despite the sunless weather, I also popped down to Staines Moor again on **8th July** to have another look at the Small Coppers. It doesn't take a lot of heat from the sun making its way through the clouds to mobilise this species, and I ended up seeing around a dozen. I also came across a mating pair of Ringlets – another species unafraid of a few drops of rain. It always strikes me as ironic that this shade-loving butterfly that is unbothered by cloud and a bit of drizzle times its emergence at the height of the English summer – surely no coincidence... 😊



The Coppers are less happy with such weather, but the lack of proper sunshine meant they were mostly basking with wings open to catch what warmth there was.





Quite a variable selection... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jul-20 11:04 AM GMT

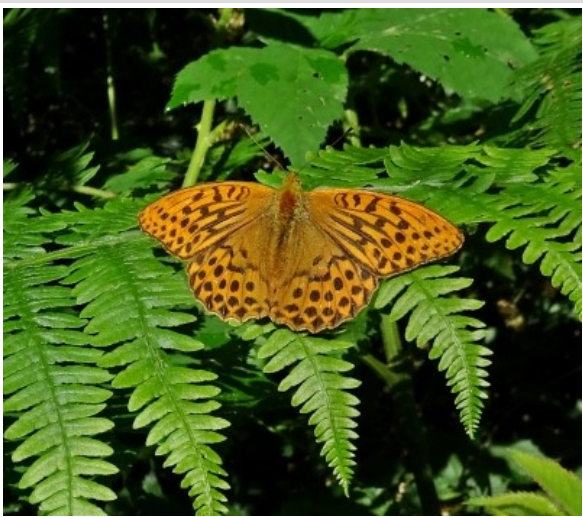
Friday 10th July. Sunshine again first thing, so I made another trip down to Bookham. The Purple Hairstreaks were not accommodating today for some reason, though this Holly Blue down on the bracken had me hoping for a second or two.



More female SWF were around, and were quite amenable in the early sun, basking and nectaring.



The females seem quite variable in colour, but the males are generally all the same shade of orange.

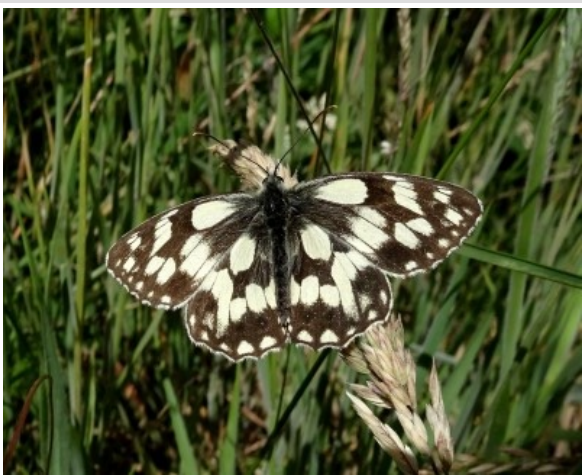




There were still plenty of Large Skippers (though these have long disappeared from my local patch)...



White Admirals were around, but really not very many now.



Another ten days or so will hopefully see the appearance of those hairstreaks.

Dave

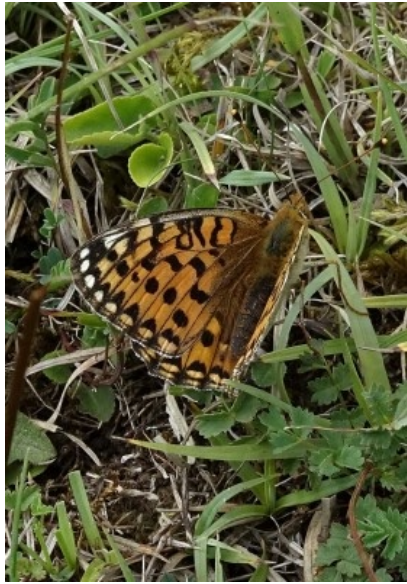
Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jul-20 11:21 AM GMT

After Bookham on **10th July**, I carried on down to Denbies again. On the usual route down the western edge of Steers Field, there was the customary Small Copper...



Several female Dark Green Fritillaries were busy across the slopes, seeking out suitable spots to lay. The sun had become a bit hit and miss now, and they stopped periodically to bask and warm up.



a violet plant is visible at top left



I returned to the car park for a coffee from the van, and wandered across the road to the long line of large oak trees. Sure enough, I could see Purple Hairstreak activity, and one or two came down to the brambles between the path here and the road, but none were in a photographable position. For the second time today, my hopes were dashed by a potential target turning out to be a Holly Blue.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-20 08:27 PM GMT

Brill Coppers Dave and the "!" 'definitely differently marked' Chalkhill – oddly enough Goldie has posted one with a similar looking marking 😊
No joy with Brostreaks on Friday, I'll try and get over mid-week 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jul-20 08:32 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – it was an unusual marking... 😊 I shall await further news on the hairstreak front. 😊

The last visit for the day on **10th July** was over the way from Denbies at Box Hill. I saw a lot of Marbled Whites, which were quite a bit fresher than those at Denbies (where they were out several days earlier after all – interesting that adjacent sites should have significantly different emergences). These included a mating pair.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Jul-20 10:12 PM GMT

Female Dark Green Fritillaries are particularly lovely when they sport those silvery tips, Dave. The Marbled Whites are impressive too. Shame they've such a short flight period. I guess they'll disappear within the next week or so.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jul-20 08:39 PM GMT

Some more female DGF coming up, David... 😊

On **Saturday 11th July**, I started out early with a drive up to Aston Rowant. Still too early for Silver-spotted Skippers, but as recompense the aforementioned Dark Green Fritillaries were behaving quite well. With these dusky females, it is easy to appreciate how they came by their name – they have a distinct green tinge to them.





Compared to the chalk hillsides of the North Downs, this Chiltern slope (which faces northwest rather than south) is much lusher at the moment, with an abundance of flowers. The butterflies are more concentrated, less spread out, and there seemed to be a much greater variety than recently seen at Denbies for example: DGF, Peacocks, Red Admirals, Commas, Small Tortoiseshells, Small and Essex Skippers, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, Small Heaths, Marbled Whites, Speckled Woods, Large, Small and GV Whites, Brimstones, Small Coppers, Brown Argus, Common Blues and Chalkhill Blues. It was quite often tricky to decide at what to point the camera.







Just before leaving, I spied another DGF nectaring in the midst of a patch of thistles. Its struggle to share the flowerhead with a large bee made what I felt was quite a nice sequence of shots.





As can be seen, an amicable compromise was reached. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jul-20 09:02 PM GMT

Back home for lunch and a quick look locally. There's always something to see...





Finding a Small Tortoiseshell, albeit a rather worn one, was a bit of a surprise as I'd only seen a couple since the middle of June.



For the afternoon of **11th July**, I headed south this time, to Dawneys Hill near Pirbright to see if the Graylings had started to appear. Close to the entrance to the site, I quickly came upon a couple of blue butterflies. Confusingly, these turned out to be different species – one Silver-studded Blue and one Common Blue.





I found a few more SSB elsewhere, though the males were all more worn than the first one. I also spotted a couple of females, one of which was really quite fresh.



Finally, on the patches of open ground at the far end of the site, the target species discovered me. In typical fashion, one bounded over the gorse and heather to investigate the mobile tree that had appeared in its world. Having circumnavigated me, it dived to the ground and (almost) disappeared.



A successful trip! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-20 08:46 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave – brill DGFs – it's great when the light catches them in the right way to make those white spots shine silver 😊 Those Silver-studs are holding up well 😊🍀 – when I go to find my Graylings there are usually a few about but they're invariably on their last legs 😊
Still no Brostreaks – I tried again with no luck and none have been reported today...still thrid time lucky next time then 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jul-20 10:05 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel! 😊 I seem to have more luck than usual with the female DGFs this year – they seem to have been more inclined to sit still for some reason. 😊😊 I was surprised to see relatively fresh SSB with the Graylings, as they are (as you say) usually very much past their best by then. There were no Brostreaks at Bookham today either, so maybe they are going to confuse us by going by the book this year for a change. 😊😊

Sunday 12th July was my birthday, and I actually managed not to photograph any butterflies despite excellent weather! 😊😊

However, on **Monday 13th July**, I was out again and back down at Bookham. The main point of note about this visit was the number of Purple Hairstreaks that were down low. They just kept appearing. Some were on the brambles with the SWF and occasional tattered White Admiral, some sat on the bracken, and one or two were even down on the grass and low plants. The downside was that unfortunately all showed wear and tear from their adventures out of the oak tree tops, but nevertheless I achieved more photos of the species today than on any previous occasion.

First though, a few other butterflies. The SWF were still worth a look:



...and a splendid new Small Copper.





However, the Purple Hairstreaks were the main entertainment. Firstly, there were those near or on the ground.



female



male



male



female



male

Needless to say, I was very pleased with the morning! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 21-Jul-20 10:17 PM GMT

Still have no idea how our paths didn't cross that day. We must have been so preoccupied with it raining Hairstreaks we walked straight past each other 😞

Re: millerd

by trevor, 22-Jul-20 08:17 AM GMT

[quote=bugboy post_id=156426 time=1595366222 user_id=13753] Still have no idea how our paths didn't cross that day. We must have been so preoccupied with it raining Hairstreaks we walked straight past each other 😞

I like the sound of ' raining Hairstreaks ', Dave. You really got among them that day!
Unfortunately my ' hot spot ' was trashed last winter, at least Bracken will grow back.
Why did they have to dump the wood chips in that particular spot!. That law at work again!.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

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

It does seem unlikely, Buggy, as we tend to look for the same things in the same places, and those Hairstreaks were in one of the usual hotspots for the most part. 😞 😞

Bugboy's phrase isn't really an exaggeration, Trevor – you could see them tumbling out of the trees if you stood and watched in certain places. Not all came within reach, or even made it down to eye level, but there were a lot around. Looks like luck really hasn't been smiling on you one way or another: the law of Singular Ongoing Disappointment... 😞

After the purplish hairstreak morning, on **13th July** I had the usual stroll near to home in the afternoon, making the priority a count of numbers rather than photography. That never quite worked, of course. 😞

One particularly memorable aspect was a length of bramble hedge close to where I had seen Holly Blues laying on the goats' rue a few weeks back. Along its length were a couple of dozen fresh Holly Blues, some nectaring, some puddling on the path for minerals and some just sitting on the leaves. Amongst these was a mating pair – easy to find because of all the attention from other males that they were getting.



Other new butterflies included a male Brimstone practically welded to this burdock...



Also among nearly 350 butterflies of 18 species seen over about two and a half hours:





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-20 08:34 PM GMT

Cracking Hairstreak shots – this has definitely been the year for them coming down low 😊 It would be nice if the behaviour was heritable as then we could expect more of the same next year 😊😊
That's a useful tip for finding mating pairs – watch out for other males trying to muscle their way in on the action – great shots! 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

ps. Brostreaks were seen at Alners Gorse yesterday Shipton is usually about a week later so hopefully some time next week...fingers crossed 😊

Re: millerd

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

It's kind of frustrating when Hairssteaks eventually decide to descend when they are nearing the end of their lives, but you should consider yourself fortunate, Dave, for seeing them like this at all.

I'd willingly swap the majority of what I see in south Wales for a few Hairstreaks posing like that, regardless of how fresh/faded they are. 🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jul-20 11:03 PM GMT

It is strange that behaviour differs from one part of the country to another, David. They've been doing this at Bookham for several summers now,

though this has been my best experience of the phenomenon. 😊

Maybe it is inherited behaviour, Wurzel – I shall be expecting it again next year certainly! 😊

Monday 14th July. The weather was much less sunny today, but still quite warm. I stayed within walking distance of home, but started with another wander down to Staines Moor. The purple rain of the previous day was washed away by a sea of copper – the second brood of Small Coppers was in full swing. The advantage of bright (rather than sunny) conditions came to the fore again, as the butterflies basked with open wings to maximise their heat input. There is so much variety in this species, you start to wonder what a "typical" Small Copper would actually look like. 😊 I think each of these is a different individual.



There were other butterflies, but I'll keep those for another post.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 24-Jul-20 08:40 AM GMT

Love the Small Coppers Dave, I managed just one all the time I've been here 😊 Funny thing is I've seen some Butterflies I've not seen for years but I've not seen any Brown Argus or Small Heath 😊 they're usually at Temple Ewell so I'm not sure why. I'm not lightly to see them now but the SH could be at home. (hope fully) Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 24-Jul-20 10:13 AM GMT

What a gorgeous array of Coppers, Dave....almost 'Hoggersesque'.

Nice to see a quality *caeruleopunctata* amongst them. 🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jul-20 09:04 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie! 😊 Aside from the legendary Dungeness, Staines Moor is pretty well the only place I've ever been to with double-digit numbers of Small Coppers. Everywhere else, my experience has been the same as yours, Goldie, with the odd one here and there. It is odd (and a shame) you didn't get to see Small Heath and Brown Argus – they are usually out at the same time as the Common Blues (both are near me at the moment).

Cheers, David – "Hoggersesque" is probably an undeserved accolade, as Hoggers always managed to depict them indulging in a variety of different behaviours as well as showing off a wide selection of variants and aberrations that puts this little group somewhat in the shade. That said, most of these were quite fresh, and one or two really stand out as being a bit different. And as you mention, there was a nice *caeruleopunctata* in amongst them. 😊

There were other butterflies at Staines Moor on **Tuesday 14th July**.

Male and female GVW...



Curiously, despite the presence of good numbers of trefoil plants, I saw no Common Blues. However, not far away on my local patch, it was a different story.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jul-20 09:17 PM GMT

With what little sunshine there was disappearing, I spent a scant hour during the afternoon of **14th July** on my local patch. I still managed to see 16 species, but didn't count their numbers today, and with poor light, took very few photos. However, I disturbed a series of female Common Blues, which I've noticed are more ready to bask in low light levels than the males are. I'm guessing that they seek every opportunity to warm themselves sufficiently to go egg-laying, and their darker colouring absorbs more of whatever sunlight is getting through. Males aren't concerned with such matters, of course.





The first one is unusually brown – almost all the females I see are more like the third of these three.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jul-20 10:10 PM GMT

Wednesday 15th July was particularly dismal, with no sunshine and the temperature only reaching 19 degrees at Heathrow. A few butterflies braved the conditions – I actually counted around 80, of 16 species – including one I've seen very few of here this year, as they only rarely stray down from their colonies just to the north: a Marbled White.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-20 05:28 PM GMT

Cracking sets of Blues and Browns Dave but the stars of the show have to be the fantastic Coppers 🇮🇪 – looks like your very own Police Force 😊😄
Looking at their 'uniform' it looks like there's a Sarge and a Detective Inspector in the collection 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jul-20 09:54 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel! 😊 I love the fantastic variety on offer with the Small Coppers – you never know what may turn up next. 😊

Thursday 16th July was a much warmer day (up to 25 degrees here), but there still wasn't much actual sunshine. Nevertheless, on a deliberate attempt to count the butterflies locally today, I achieved the highest total of the year thus far – 376, made up of the following 17 species:

Gatekeeper 68
Common Blue 64
Meadow Brown 64
Small White 49
Peacock 23
Essex Skipper 20
Holly Blue 18
GVW 13
Brown Argus 11
Comma 11
Red Admiral 11
Large White 9
Speckled Wood 6
Small Skipper 5
Small Heath 2
Marbled White 1
Small Copper 1

The Essex/Small Skipper totals are based on the 4:1 ratio from dip-sampling of the 25 butterflies seen. I'm more confident that the Small White/GVW total is what was actually seen as the behaviour and flight is different and on each occasion I checked I found I had ID'd correctly.

The middle of July in 2019 was also the peak in terms of numbers – it will be interesting to compare the individual species totals at some point.

Meanwhile, I managed to fit in a few photos... :) After all those Coppers down at Staines Moor, the single one seen today managed to be different again, with a real burnished sheen to it.



Some of the Brown Argus were absolutely new, deep chocolate in colour with their marginal lunules standing out in bright vermilion.



Only two individuals from all those Common Blues – a dark female and a male with strong marginal markings.



New Speckled Woods today – the six seen is the best showing since May and the third highest total of the year. Not a very good season at all.



Lots of Gatekeepers, though. I managed a shot of a female at last – they are a surprisingly difficult target – plus a male with hints of extra spots.



A typically posed Essex Skipper, a fresher example than most are now. The few Small ones seen were even more tired.



A couple of mating pairs were seen: First spotted were the Meadow Browns, both looking quite fresh.



Second were a pair of Small Whites, so closely joined that it was initially difficult to tell that there were actually two butterflies there.



Finally (though I think they may have been the first butterflies I actually saw today) were the Holly Blues. Initially nectaring on the brambles, one female decided to sit on the leaves and open up in front of me.





What more can you ask? 😊😄

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-20 08:51 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

A cracking selection of butterflies from your local spots recently.

`{quote=millerd_post_id=156512_time=1595541783_user_id=9839}` ...There is so much variety in this species, you start to wonder what a "typical" Small Copper would actually look like...

Indeed, in fact variation is something I notice with a lot of species these days and is something that makes me a bit cynical regarding trying to put a name to every little difference. I am convinced that many so called named abs in some species in reality fall within normal variation. Our aurelian forebears were obsessed with fitting everything into it's own little box but nature is more fluid than that.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-20 07:57 PM GMT

Another cracking collection Dave 😊 That first Copper does have a touch of verdigris about it 😊 You can't beat a mint condish Brown Argus in my book...well maybe with a Gatekeeper 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 26-Jul-20 08:47 PM GMT

Some real stunners in your latest offerings, Dave. The female Hedge Brown stands out but that last Holly Blue is wonderful....glad to see you've rediscovered your 'mojo' with this species. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jul-20 03:37 PM GMT

Cheers Neil, Wurzel and David! 😊 Another atypical Copper (if such a thing exists... 😊) and an obliging female Holly Blue is always welcome! 😊

Friday 17th July. With a decent sunny start to the day, I headed up to Aston Rowant again with the chances of an early Silver-spotted Skipper increasing. I didn't see one today, but it turned out that I was only a few days premature as I believe the first one was spotted here on 20th. Chalkhill Blues were now the main feature of this lovely flowery site, with the more obvious males taking centre stage (though there were also plenty of females skipping low to the ground and seeking out the horseshoe vetch foodplant).



However, the main surprise was to discover that there were still some fresh-looking Dark Green Fritillaries nectaring in the morning sunshine.



One particular area of marjoram was hosting dozens of Peacocks, plus Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshells and Gatekeepers, and across the slopes there were Brown Argus, Common Blues, Small Coppers, Meadow Browns, Small Heaths, Small and Essex Skippers, Marbled Whites, Brimstones, Large and Small Whites, and GVW. One or shots of these...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-20 08:25 PM GMT

Cracking Chalkhills Dave 😊 I really need to get out and see a few more of them...I keep meaning to each years but then I feel the call of the Brostroke 😊 Those DGFs are in really good nick for the time of year – they normally last into August but they're usually a pale reflection of their former glory by then and I can't recall seeing any that are in as good a nick as some of those 🤔😁🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

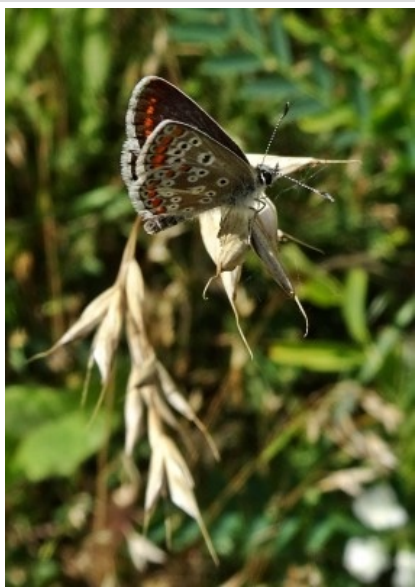
Wurzel

Re: millerd

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

Yes, Wurzel, the DGF did come as a bit of a surprise, especially as on my previous trip here they all looked like the first one I've posted above – a bit pale and jaded. 😊 Still, I wasn't complaining. 😊

A quick look locally later on **17th July** produced one of the smallest Brown Argus I have ever seen, about the size of my fingernail.



There were a couple of Commas – one doing its best to be a dead leaf in an appropriate setting...



...and another sitting much more obviously in the late sunshine.



Saturday 18th July. Another warm largely sunny day, which I started on my local patch. The next round of Small Heaths was underway, but as yet numbers are low. Summer ones do seem paler than those earlier in the year.





Dave



Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-20 08:37 PM GMT

Great report Dave 😊 Interesting Brown Argus that final one – the second spot anti-clockwise is practically non-existent – I've seen a few like this recently 😊 Mind you that's probably because I'm actually looking for it now 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

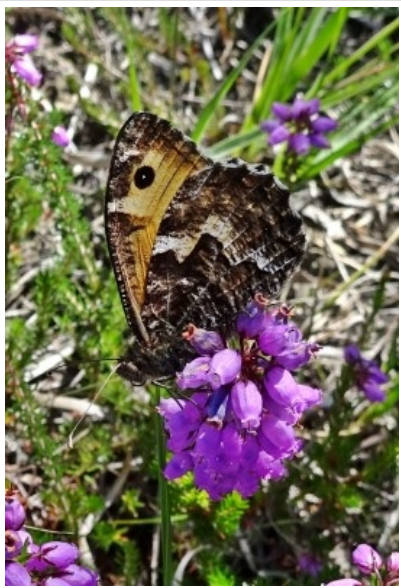
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jul-20 08:48 PM GMT

I think the (near-)disappearance of that spot is quite a common thing, Wurzel. I've seen it on perhaps a third of the Brown Argus round here. 😊

With the threat of a change in the weather arriving from the northwest later on on **18th July**, I decided to check out the Grayling on Chobham Common. Arriving up at one of their hotspots, it didn't take long for one to find me.





A few Silver-studded Blues were still flying, all rather worn, and rather curiously for the location a single female Holly Blue. I came across this butterfly sitting on a sprig of heather, where it appeared to be laying an egg.



However, I checked and found no egg had been laid, but I was still puzzled. A second brood female (as far as I know) would lay exclusively on ivy flowers, so this would have to be a very late first brood female. Very late indeed – but it appeared pretty fresh, not worn at all. One of nature's mysteries... 😊😊😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Jul-20 10:23 PM GMT

Great to see the Graylings, Dave, and also good to see fresh Dark Green Fritillaries in the latter half of July.

By me, this species is practically done by the third week in July. All the ones I saw at the High Brown site near Bridgend a week ago were very worn indeed.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 28-Jul-20 06:06 PM GMT

Good to see those Graylings, Dave. Love to see them on Heather.
Also like your female Chalkhills, really fresh.

Keep up the good work,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

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

Great Graylings Dave 😊 I'm finding it a bit weird just seeing them on Heath this year after last summers holiday to Portugal where they were everywhere – including outside Lidl's 🤪😬 Good to see that you managed to conjure up a Holly Blue even here 😊😬

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jul-20 10:04 PM GMT

Thank you everyone – Graylings are entertaining to watch, but can be so difficult to get a decent shot of. 😊 Things get even better when the females appear and there is some courtship and displays of the uppersides. Some of those females are big butterflies too... 🤪😬

Right on cue, the weather on the morning of **Sunday 19th July** was wet and cooler. However, things brightened a bit at lunchtime, and it was enough to energise the butterfly population on my local patch. It really doesn't take a lot to get the local Common Blues into the air.





There was one rather odd moment – I reached the small piece of field which was the territory of the very long-lived Small Copper that had held it back in May/June. Right at the point where that individual liked to perch was the ghostly form of another very old Small Copper.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jul-20 10:23 PM GMT

With half an afternoon left on **19th July**, and Small Coppers in my head, I decided on another visit to Staines Moor. There were a few Brown Argus around...



...and a notable female Common Blue



...but aside from a few Skippers, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers...



...it was the Small Coppers that held the attention again.



One individual in particular caught my eye, a quite dusky one with markedly large spots, prominent tails and interesting dark lines along the veins through the orange hindwing bands.





A brand new female, it was a striking insect.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-20 09:02 AM GMT

Another great selection of species in your recent reports Dave.

I remember seeing quite a few Dark Green Fritillaries still flying at Aston Rowant when I went there last year at the end of July, not in as good condition still as yours though.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jul-20 09:45 PM GMT

Cheers, Neil. There were still a few quite fresh-looking DGF flying at Aston Rowant yesterday, so I wouldn't be surprised to see them in August this year. Considering they started a bit earlier than usual this year too, they've had a long season.

Monday 20th July. An ideal summer's day really, with over 12 hours of sunshine and a high locally of 23/24 degrees. Unsurprisingly during a morning walk, I saw over 300 butterflies of 17 species (though around a third were Meadow Browns and another third were Gatekeepers). A significant number of the rest were Common Blues – this species had a really good first brood, and is clearly doing well in the second as well. I see far more of them here on my doorstep than anywhere else I visit to be honest. Currently there is a constant supply of new males...



I also came across an unusual bit of behaviour for the species – I found one which I mistook initially for a Holly Blue because it was flying low over a damp patch and ended up taking minerals from something on the ground.



When it stopped for a breather, the underside ground colour looked unusual too.



A selection of the rest...



A fresh-looking individual

Finally, another distinctly unusual Small Copper, with non-standard spotting, a dusky overlay and a bit of a sheen at an angle to the light. A fresh male.



There's always something worth seeing at the moment.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Jul-20 08:58 PM GMT

Lovely set of shots Dave – that final Small Copper is reminiscent of some of the sultry/dusky ones I was seeing this time last year in Portugal 😊
Great catching up today – we need to do it again soon as I've got the metaphorically taste for Brostreaks 😊😁

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Jul-20 09:07 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – there have been a few Med-style Coppers around this year. Perhaps they should be called Les Petits Gendarmes... 😊 Yes, after today's excellent adventure, at least one more bout of Brostreaks-huntingdown there is essential I'd say! 😊

Tuesday 21st July. The forecast was again good, so I went further afield again, starting with a morning at Bookham which included a hopeful (but unsuccessful) look for early Brown Hairstreaks. In fact, the first butterfly I encountered was another of their Purple cousins, displaying nicely down on a burdock leaf for all she was getting a little ragged.



Silver-washed Fritillaries were still around along the sunlit tracks, but the White Admirals had disappeared.





Even the skippers were posing today, with a nice example of a fresh and very golden Large...



Echoes of Southern Comma there... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Jul-20 09:32 PM GMT

With still more sunshine and the afternoon of **21st July** to play with, I headed down a bit further to Box Hill. Even on weekdays at the moment, the NT car park is full, but I was lucky enough to spot someone leaving and nipped in. As ever, the place was teeming with cyclists and the drive up the zigzag road was pretty hazardous. The Olympics have a lot to answer for! The refreshment counter has now reopened, which was a distinct bonus. I headed east of the viewpoint slopes out onto Dukes, which even on such a busy day was relatively quiet. The further east along this hillside I went, the more butterflies appeared – mostly Chalkhill Blues, but there were quite a few Common Blues too, ageing Marbled Whites, Brown Argus, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and a couple of female DGF. However, as yet, no Silver-spotted Skippers, though it can't be long before they appear. It was warm and very sunny, which unfortunately meant that the Chalkhills were not opening up at all really, aside from the odd individual. I spotted one of these from a way away and noticed that every time it landed it did open its wings, at least a bit. This allowed me to see that there was something distinctly odd about it. When I finally got a bit closer, I could see that it had white margins to the wings where normally they would be dark, and the overall colour was more silvery, with only a hint of pale blue near the body. The underside was pale and lightly marked, but not exceptionally so.





I managed to catch up with a few of the "normal" ones in the end.





Of course, no day anywhere is truly complete without one of these.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Jul-20 08:39 PM GMT

Wednesday 22nd July. Another day of warm sunshine in prospect, and I set out on a trip I'd be promising myself, taking in a few of the Sussex sites I tend to visit as it gets a bit later in the season. I started off the furthest away, up at **High & Over** at around 1000. It was probably a bit late, as with the strong warm sunshine the species I'd hoped to see were already very active: the Walls. There were well over a dozen I'd guess, at and close to the viewpoint, as well as along the open bit of downland by the road down to Alfriston. This area also had good numbers of Chalkhills, Common Blues, Brown Argus and a few rather worn Marbled Whites. The wooded area at the hilltop had Red Admirals, Specked Woods and Holly Blues, plus one or two Peacocks and Commas. I managed a few shots of the target species, but nothing at all special. A return trip early in the third brood in less sunny weather seems like a good idea.



To add to a somewhat frustrating visit, I came across a Hummingbird Hawk Moth, but it constantly sought nectar sources down in the grass, so offered no decent views at all.



I headed back westwards, and considered stopping at Tide Mills near Newhaven, but the car park was full and overflowing so I carried on back past Brighton and down to the sea at Southwick (Shoreham Harbour). A walk back and forth along what has in the past been a very productive path was surprisingly sparse in butterfly life – a few Red Admirals and Whites was pretty well it. However, hopes were raised by a Clouded Yellow flyby. I expected this butterfly to return as they so often do when patrolling up and down – not that there was any cloud to potentially cause it to come to ground. In fact I didn't see it again. I decided to cut my losses and carry on a bit further to the slopes of Mill Hill.

Mill Hill of course had lots of butterflies. I made my way down to the bottom of the main slope, where there were good numbers of Chalkhill and Common Blues, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Brown Argus, Brimstones and various Whites. Curiously, both these butterflies show similar v-shaped "beak marks" from unsuccessful bird attacks.



Also unusual, though becoming less so these days (I think they are seen here most years) were second brood Dingy Skippers. I saw at least two, and probably three, of these along the hedge margin at the bottom of the hillside.



I looked up from following the rapid flight of this species and started watching a few white butterflies. One of these was flying more rapidly than usual, and away from the edges of the hillside – quartering the territory with brief pauses to nectar, across and back, across and back. Something clicked – this was how a Clouded Yellow flies. I managed to get close enough to a flypast to see the wings, and my suspicion was confirmed – it was indeed a Cloudie, and a very pale *helice* one at that. I attempted to get close enough for a shot or two, with a modicum of success, but the lack of clouds was annoying. The disappearance of the sun for even a couple of minutes would have been enough to ground the butterfly and allow a close approach. However, this is what I was able to manage in the end.





I realise that I hadn't seen the *helice* form of the female Clouded Yellow since the big influx of 2009 when I had seen several at the same time down near Birling Gap. Quite a day in the end! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 31-Jul-20 09:29 PM GMT

Very nice *Helice*, Dave. There are reports of odd Clouded Yellow sightings nationwide at the moment, so hopefully we will be busy this Autumn.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 31-Jul-20 09:55 PM GMT

nice set of Cloudie pics, better than anything I've managed so far this year 😊. I'd say your hummingbird Hawkmoth was looking to lay eggs, that's Lady's Bedstraw in the background, the LHP 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-20 09:09 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor and Bugboy! 😊 Definitely a case of right place right time for that *helice*, but I will admit to putting a bit of effort into chasing the thing between its brief settling points, praying in vain for the sun to go in... 😊 Worth it though, even if I didn't get as close as I would like (and you both know how close I prefer to get!).

I never considered that the Hummer might be laying, Buggy. The behaviour fits squarely with that, as it was right in amongst the greenery rather than nectaring out in the open as I normally see them – and I didn't know what the foodplant looked like to make the connection. Thanks for that idea! 😊

Thursday 23rd July. More sunshine in the forecast, though a bit cooler perhaps with a bit of cloud. A change of scene today, and a visit to Noar Hill. Unusually, this was my first time here in 2020 as the lockdown kept me away at the start of the Duke season. The site looked glorious as usual, covered in flowers, but I arrived a bit early for most butterflies as I had overestimated how warm it would be first thing. However, things did warm up nicely and I saw a great variety of different species.

Both SW and DG Fritillaries.



A few Brown Argus and lots of Common Blues.



Second brood Small Blues. I'd never noticed just how much Kidney Vetch there is here when visiting earlier in the year, and to be fair have never seen many Small Blues here before either.



In the same area as the Small Blues, I found a second brood Dingy Skipper, quite at home with them to chase of course.



I scoured the Hemp Agrimony (just bursting into flower at the moment) for Brown Hairstreaks without success, but did find Peacocks and Red Admirals.





I believe this butterfly hung around the site for several days at least as Pauline reported seeing one with the same wing damage a few days later. If eggs were indeed being laid, this bodes well for some time in September... Fingers crossed. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 02-Aug-20 06:57 AM GMT

Dave

Good you could make it down to my neck of the woods. Noar Hill can be wonderful at this time of year. I have been looking for a Clouded Yellow here but been unsuccessful this year so far, but you got lucky. 🍀

You even got the Dingy too. I once in a previous year saw a second brood Duke here but no luck so far this year.

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 02-Aug-20 12:31 PM GMT

Quite a day at Noar Hill for you Dave with the 2nd brood Dingy Skipper and Clouded Yellow. Nice photos of the Small Blue. I've just been treated to a 2nd brood on my local patch too. Nice to see.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-20 07:55 PM GMT

Cracking Cloudies and Small Blues Dave 😊 But the Helice 🦋 Still not seen one myself 🦋 Just need a few more Brostreaks now 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

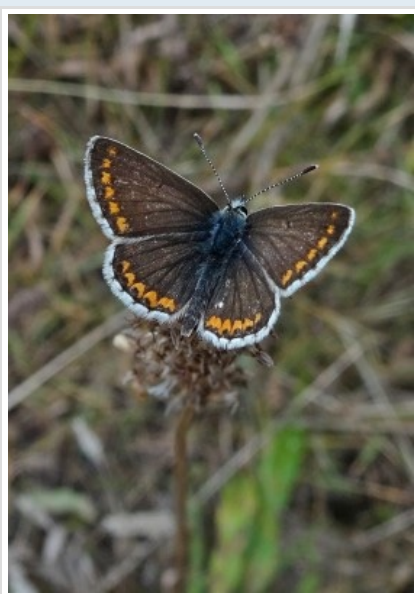
by millerd, 02-Aug-20 08:38 PM GMT

Cheers, Ernie – yes, Noar Hill is really good at the moment, so much so that I shall be down there again very soon, hopefully to see those Hairstreaks you encountered. 😊 Second brood Dukes – now there's a thought... 😊

Thanks, Kev – it was a really good mix of the less run-of-the-mill stuff. A Brown Hairstreak would have been good, but I'll see if I can rectify that shortly... 😊

Cheers, Wurzel! Summer's really here when the Cloudies appear – though to find the *helice* female was a bonus with a cherry on top. Eleven years since the last one. 😊 😊

After all that, the weather on **24th and 25th July** took a nose-dive. There was only one hour of sunshine between the two days locally, and though 24th was pretty warm, 25th wasn't even that. My excursions were pretty limited, and most of what I came across were roosting butterflies.





One standout moment was actually on 25th. It was damp and gloomy, and I'd almost given up on seeing anything at all, when something large and brilliant orange erupted from the vegetation in front of me. It only got as far as a nearby willow, and quite low down at that – a bright new Jersey Tiger moth.



These spectacular insects appear hereabouts most summers now, and seem to be on the increase.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Aug-20 09:19 PM GMT

Sunday 26th July. The sun reappeared this morning, though not totally convincingly and it was slow to warm up. However, I set off down to Bookham again in search of Brown Hairstreaks. The Gatekeepers were out in force along the hedgeline where I've always found hairstreaks in the past and they are very distracting, though their unsettled jittery flight patterns are not the same as those of the target species. In the end, as there were some nice fresh ones around, I took a few shots of them.



Never mind - the season has to start somewhere. 😊

As I made my way back to the car, a Comma also made me stop and look twice for a moment...



Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 03-Aug-20 04:23 PM GMT

Love that Jersey Tiger Moth. Not a species I have yet encountered.

And good to see you are getting started on the Brostreaks round your way and low down enough to be on a fern too. I always think its great when you get a pic of a butterfly from above when it is from a species you usually spend most of your time craning your neck upwards to see!

Re: millerd

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

Those Jersey Tigers are amazing beasts, Ernie, especially when one explodes out of the greenery right in front of you. 😄 More Brown Hairstreaks in a post or two's time, also without any neck strain at all! 😊

First of all, two more relatively cool and not very sunny days – **Monday/Tuesday 27th/28th July**. I stayed local and saw little beyond what I would normally see. the 28th was a bit sunnier, and the counts of Common Blues (40) and Brown Argus (21) rose accordingly. There were still plenty of new ones amongst them.



The species that did stand out a bit was the Small Heath. The current brood is only just underway, and 12 were seen on 28th. They are quite variable as these two new examples show.



Dave

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 04-Aug-20 05:03 PM GMT

Dave, Nice photos of the Small Heaths and interesting how different their markings are. I sometimes struggle to photograph this species close up as they don't like being approached (unless I am very heavy footed) 😊 So to get two of them, hats off to you.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Aug-20 08:27 PM GMT

Thank you, Kev! 😊 Like all things, there is a knack to getting close to Small Heaths. Your best chance is when it's a bit cloudy and you disturb one from the ground. It will quickly find somewhere else to sit and with a bit of luck will be accessible. You have to work out where your shadow might be, as even if you can't see one the butterfly will sense the subtle change in light level. Get down to its level early and creep in low down. I was particularly lucky with the second one above, as it chose to perch higher up and you have less opportunity to disturb the foliage when they do that.

Tuesday 28th turned into a very sunny afternoon, so later on I decided to head up to Aston Rowant again, hopefully for some more Silver-spotted Skippers. There were quite a few flying, but it was a while before I managed to find one that didn't immediately take to the air again.



Meanwhile, the air was full of Chalkhill Blues – lots of showy males, but good numbers of the much drabber females. Both sexes vary quite a bit, and are always worth a closer look. Males:







A couple of females:



Amongst other species seen were fresh Common Blues...



...a particularly vibrant Small Copper...



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Aug-20 09:15 PM GMT

Wednesday 29th July. Sunny and warm and the lure of Brown Hairstreaks took me down to Bookham again. Not totally unexpectedly, I bumped into Bugboy – for the first time in this rather curious year. Good to see you, Paul. 😊 As usual, the many Gatekeepers proved a bit of a distraction...



However, we tracked the Brown Hairstreaks down to a particular ash tree, where three or four could be seen flying around high up. It wasn't helped by the presence of at least one Purple Hairstreak from the nearby oak trees. Eventually, Bugboy spotted a female settled open-winged up in the tree. To the naked eye, it was a brilliant orange dot, but to the zoom of the camera it was... a bigger rather blurred orange dot! However, the images show enough detail to reveal that this particular butterfly had already been in the wars and lost the tails from one wing.



We then wandered in different directions, but not long later Bugboy summoned me back by phone – he had found a male Brown Hairstreak nectaring on a patch of thistle.





The sun went in for a bit, and the butterfly suddenly moved – but only onto a nearby bramble leaf.



It looked as if it might open its wings, but instead this turned out to be the precursor of flying back into the trees. I suspect I might have disturbed it before Bugboy managed any decent shots of it on the leaf (he was changing lenses), but I'm pleased to say he found another one later on after we had parted company.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-20 10:42 PM GMT

Great to see all of those Brostreaks Dave 😄 It looks like they might have a great season despite some concern when they were first emerging 😄 They seem to frequent the same spots as well, I went back to the nettle bed at Shipton today and found a couple there again for the third time 😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Aug-20 09:59 AM GMT

I think you might be right, Wurzel. I went to Bookham again yesterday and saw six low down, all males too I think. 😄

But funny you should mention Shipton B., as it's now time for the report from our visit there on **Thursday 30th July**. Sunny and very warm with light winds, and an easy journey down the A303.

I met up with Wurzel and Philzoid around 1000 and under Wurzel's expert guidance we set about looking at likely areas for Brown Hairstreaks. The site covers a large area and has a great deal of blackthorn, but we ended up in a likely spot for nectaring, with a bed of thistle not far from the blackthorn hedge and trees behind. Sure enough, sitting on one of the thistles was a male Brown Hairstreak.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 05-Aug-20 10:39 AM GMT

Glad some ones getting the Sunshine Dave, it's like Autumn here 😄 Love the Brown HS shots 📷 I always imaged them on the Black thorn 😄 Shows what I know 😄 Sounds like one was drunk 😄 Goldie 😄

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-Aug-20 12:59 PM GMT

It'll be a week or so before my pics of that day show up but I got plenty of decent shots of that first one before it bugged off 😄. Good to finally bump into you this year!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-20 07:56 PM GMT

That was a cracking day Dave – we really did well as so far that's the highest day total I've read about or seen this year 😄 Plus there were a fair few 'possibles' too 😄 We'll have to have a repeat performance when the females are out in numbers 😄 Have a cracking time oop North when you go – bring us back a Scotch Argus 😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Aug-20 12:13 PM GMT

Thank you all. It was, as Wurzel says, a cracking day at Shipton B. 😊 I saw more than twice as many male Brown Hairstreaks as I'd seen in my entire life before, and most of them were low down and easily approachable. 😊

Back from a few days in the north of England, so some catching up to do from a fortnight ago!

Firstly, I appear to have overlooked a local walk after the Bookham trip on **Wednesday 29th July**. For the most part, nothing particularly unusual.



both males and females love the pink bramble flowers...



...but the males frequently puddle as well

The exception was this fresh male Common Blue. It was particularly silvery-grey underneath with the very pale yellow lunules characteristic of *ab. flavescens*. I see these regularly on my local patch, though haven't noticed them much elsewhere. I think this could well be a rather overlooked ab, as many examples are no doubt ignored as being worn – and in any case Common Blue undersides are probably not generally scrutinised in detail on a regular basis.



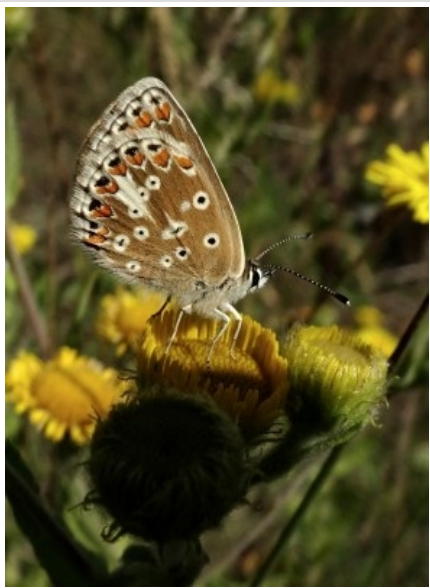
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Aug-20 12:23 PM GMT

Appropriately enough - typing this with temperatures currently into the mid-30s again round here - **Friday 31st July** was a very hot sunny day (the third hottest ever recorded in the UK, and the hotspot of course was just up the road at Heathrow). I had a brief walk out, but unsurprisingly, not a great deal was flying.

A Brown Argus had its distinguishing hindwing spot rather reduced (as Wurzel has commented on in the past).



A Holly Blue choosing shaded brambles to nectar on (others were on fleabane in deeper shade).



A fresh Speckled Wood nearly edge on to the sun.



Small Whites finding the energy to pair: both seem to be fresh and distinctly lemony in colour underneath.



Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 11-Aug-20 01:09 PM GMT

Dave – A fantastic set of Brostreak pics. Love the last of the set and the pair on the berries but my favorite is the one set against the clear blue of the sky.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-20 08:30 PM GMT

A lovely series of shots Dave, the Brown HS look great 🍷🍷 I've yet to see them hope fully next year 😊 Goldie 🍷

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Aug-20 07:35 AM GMT

{quote=millerd post_id=157176 time=1597144415 user_id=9839}...The exception was this fresh male Common Blue. It was particularly silvery-grey underneath with the very pale yellow lunules characteristic of ab. *flavescens*. I see these regularly on my local patch, though haven't noticed them much elsewhere. I think this could well be a rather overlooked ab, as many examples are no doubt ignored as being worn – and in any case Common Blue undersides are probably not generally scrutinised in detail on a regular basis.

That's a really interesting *icarus* underside, Dave. The fact it was fresh surely marks it out as an ab. I presume the upperside was the 'normal' shade of blue?

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Aug-20 12:11 PM GMT

It's great to have a personal guide when at an unfamiliar site.

Wurzel fulfils this role with aplomb! It would seem that you and I both had a great time at Shipton B., and we both came away with a camera full of Brown Hairstreak shots.

I agree that the upper side of the male BH is unremarkable, but it was great to see, in my case. for the first time ever!.

Great stuff Dave, and keep well.
Trevor.

Silver-spotted Skipper courtship and mating

by millerd, 12-Aug-20 02:51 PM GMT

Cheers, Ernie – yes, I rather like that particular shot as well! 😊 There was a bit of computer tinkering to bring out more detail on the butterfly as it was quite dark against the brightness of the sky, but the result was surprisingly good.

Thank you Goldie – I hope you get to see them as well – Brown Hairstreaks are worth seeking out. 😊

The upperside of that Common Blue was entirely normal when I saw it in flight, David, though I didn't get a shot of it. Other *flavescens* I've seen have been unremarkable on top as well. It's certainly listed as an ab, but like so many, I suspect there are all shades in between this and the "normal". 😊

You're quite right, Trevor. Wurzel's knowledge of Shipton B. is invaluable, and the first of those male Brown Hairstreaks were right where he said they would be! 😊

Saturday 1st August was just as sunny as the last day of July, but a great deal cooler. I took myself off up to Aston Rowant again, hoping the change in conditions would make spotting Silver-spotted Skippers a bit easier. True, they were easy enough to spot, but actually getting close was distinctly tricky. Eventually, I saw one go to ground, and stay long enough for me to approach. When I sat down close by I saw not one, but two cute skipper faces peering up at me.



They didn't stay like that for long: very soon the male made his intentions known.







The female didn't appear interested, and the male moved a little way away – though he remained quite agitated and knew where she was.



I was able at this point to get a shot of each of them separately.



Back down to the grass she went, and this time his positioning when he followed her was pinpoint accurate, despite a bit of fluttering on her part.



The connection was made...



...and consolidated.



A bit of brighter sunshine caused both parties to open their wings...



I think the remainder of the butterflies seen there can wait for another post!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-20 07:42 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking set of Silver Spots Dave – its quite amusing watching them buzz in and then walk towards a female waving their abdomens around like that 😊 Looking forward to the Northern species, I don't normally like spoilers but I'm wondering if there might be a second brood NBA this time? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

ps – cheers for the ab.flavescens reminder – I found one at Martin Down on Monday so now I can name it correctly 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Aug-20 05:15 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – those SSS make a great subject for a series of photos! 😊 I'm afraid where I went up north, there either aren't any NBA (Yorkshire Wolds) or they were over (Cumbria). In the latter area, the summer has been at a normal pace and much wetter than down here, so a second brood was probably unlikely. Certainly I saw none at either Smardale or Arnside.

Other than those two Silver-spots at Aston Rowant on 1st August, I saw plenty of others darting about – another good season for them here by the look of things. The Peacocks, so numerous here recently, were reduced to just two or three, but there were instead a good helping of Small Tortoiseshells.



...and plenty of Brown Argus.





There were pairs...



One even managed to photobomb my SSS shots.





However, one in particular stood out, but unfortunately was the least willing to open up for a decent shot.



I have seen examples with a lot of blue here before and I think a good view of a fresh example like this one would be quite striking: the hindwings seemed largely blue and the forewings had patches of blue scales as well..

Another excellent trip out. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 14-Aug-20 06:57 PM GMT

Just catching up on your recent reports Dave, great stuff with more great selections of species 🍷 😊

`{quote=millerd_post_id=157262-time=1597335308-user_id=9839}` CWolds)...so a second brood was probably unlikely. Certainly I saw none at either Smardale or Arnside..

As far as I am aware, NBA never have a second brood, although I suppose anything is possible these days.

`{quote=millerd_post_id=157262-time=1597335308-user_id=9839}` ...I have seen examples with a lot of blue here before and I think a good view of a fresh example like this one would be quite striking: the hindwings seemed largely blue and the forewings had patches of blue scales as well..

I remember seeing a striking female CB with blue hindwings at Aston Rowant a few years back and have seen a few similar ones reported over the years. Strangely enough, I have never seen any as striking looking reported from anywhere else.

Edit: It was 2014, just dug out a photo. Feel free free to delete it Dave if you don't want it in your PD.



Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

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

" Certainly I saw none at either Smardale or Arnside." Oh well one less thing to be envious about then 😊 😊 I was wondering though as there were some shots of the Scottish NBA from a few days back and they were really fresh 😊 Lovely set of shots from Aston 😊 That is a really interesting looking female - she could almost be a partial Gyandromorph 😊 🍷 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Allan.W., 14-Aug-20 08:27 PM GMT

Thats a very unusual female Chalkhill Dave ,very nice find ,never seen a female with a Blue hindwing like that ,nice One !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Aug-20 09:17 PM GMT

Thank you Neil. I haven't yet heard of a second brood in NBA either, even in the more southern populations, though I assume these emerge earlier than the Scottish ones. I've only seen them at Arnside, and the latest there has been late July.

Cheers Neil, Wurzel and Allan - that was a very interesting Chalkhill female, and it's worth noting that you've seen something like it there before, Neil. I saw something similar back in 2012, also at Aston Rowant - both examples are on the UKB abs pages. Maybe it's in the local gene pool.

The following day, **Sunday 2nd August**, similar weather sent me south instead to the slopes of the North Downs. I started off at Box Hill (getting parked on a Sunday at the moment means an early start too.) Chalkhill Blues were the most prominent feature of the slopes at Dukes...



I counted four individuals altogether.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Aug-20 09:32 PM GMT

2nd August continued...

The queue for coffee at Box Hill had become too long for a comfortable wait, so I headed across the Mole Valley to Denbies Hillside and (to be honest) much better coffee from the van there. I think I've mentioned it before, but the slopes at Denbies are generally far drier and less green than those up at Aston Rowant, and the butterflies more spread out. There were once again plenty of Chalkhills across the main slopes...





...and down at the bottom I found a very worn second brood Dingy Skipper (this is the fourth place I've seen them this summer).



However, I only caught a few brief glimpses here of any Silver-spots, but moving onto the slopes east of Steers Field I found rather more. This area is more sheltered, has more scabious and other nectar plants, and also has numerous rabbit scrapes on which the species likes to bask.



Dave

Re: millerd

by MrSpOck, 14-Aug-20 09:41 PM GMT

Lace Border Moth

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Aug-20 09:44 PM GMT

Thank you, Martin! A very apt name for it too. 😊 I see it is found most commonly on the North Downs, though not as much elsewhere, and overall is considered "scarce".

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Aug-20 10:30 PM GMT

Monday 3rd August. With another sunny morning forecast, I went down to Noar Hill again hoping perhaps to bump into Pauline who might show me the best bits of the site for Brown Hairstreaks. I was there quite early, but somehow managed to miss both Pauline and Ernie, who had been there even earlier... 😊 I spent some while looking at likely areas, and at one point a male Brown Hairstreak landed quite close by on a hazel next to the path. It posed nicely, but far too briefly as it was immediately disturbed by a large fly before I had even pointed the camera. There was plenty of other variety, and one particular area of hemp agrimony (apparently renowned for attracting Brown Hairstreaks in the past) hosted around a dozen Red Admirals, and a few worn Silver-washed Fritillaries.





There were Common Blues all over the site, mostly worn, but this female was an exception.



I think Pauline has mentioned that they've been hard work at Noar Hill this year – I can vouch for that: I saw no more during my visit. 😊😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 14-Aug-20 11:43 PM GMT

Hi Dave

I think I got lucky way back in July when I saw all those newly emerged males. Since then they have taken a lot of finding and I have only managed 2 females to date. Just like last year the eggs seem to be disappearing quickly. You did well to find a fresh male. Such a shame to have missed you.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Aug-20 08:15 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline – there was quite a lot of time invested in finding that male, but Noar Hill is such a lovely spot, it can never feel like time wasted. 😊

On the way home from Noar Hill on **3rd August**, I dropped by Dawney's Hill to look at the Graylings. It was getting pretty warm by now and the bright sunshine was going to make things difficult for photographing them. Initially I began to wonder where they were, but in the area furthest from the gate where the gorse has yet to encroach, half a dozen or so appeared. As usual, they found me as much as the other way around, and one in particular was particularly hard to shake off – I thought at one point it might have to come home with me...



The scent scales of the male are actually clearly visible on the forewings.

Wandering back to the car, I turned up a few more Graylings around the bigger gorse bushes and the small areas of heather frequented by the Silver-studded Blues a few weeks ago (plus one or two Meadow Browns doing Grayling impersonations), but overall numbers seemed low and I don't think I saw a female. I will return in a couple of weeks and see if there is any difference.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Aug-20 09:16 PM GMT

On **Tuesday 4th August**, knowing that I would shortly be away for the best part of a week and seeing the morning's sunshine might not last, I went down to Bookham again with Brown Hairstreaks in mind.

To start with, I was distracted by a few other butterflies...



A nice newly minted *Brown Argus*
...but before too long I found my target, happily nectaring.



Shortly afterwards, there was another...





...and then one more.



Overall, including those I failed to get anywhere near, I saw six or seven individuals: not a single one opened its wings. I'm confident however that the first one pictured above (first three photos) was male, but the other two (last four photos) I'm not 100% sure about. Any opinions welcome! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 16-Aug-20 05:22 PM GMT

After recent events I am a bit wary of sticking my neck out on this one Dave 😊😊. Fresh males can sometimes look remarkably similar to females and in this case I would guess they are all males. I shall wait to be corrected now 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-20 07:51 PM GMT

Another massive catch-up session Dave 😊😊 So to get started...

Is that first slightly open wing Adonis Blue a *ab.scalens* (?) as it has the spotting on the hind wing?

Cracking sets of Silver-spots and Chalkhills 😊

Interesting looking Ringlet 😊😊

'Sexing' Brostreaks from photos is really difficult Dave as it all depends on the lighting – I wouldn't touch it with a 60ft pole 😊😊 But if I had to I would have those down as males as they all looked a bit 'honey' coloured and not a bright orange 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Aug-20 08:14 PM GMT

Thinking back to the day itself, Pauline and Wurzel, I came away believing I had only photographed males – it was only going through the shots later on that any doubt crept into my mind. I saw a female today at Bookham, and comparing that one and the definite female I saw at Shipton the other week, I reckon you're right: the females are a much brighter shade of orange. 😊 I'm just not used to seeing so many males down nectaring – it's been a very odd season for them.

I'll have to check that Adonis variety out, Wurzel – I know I've seen a few like that before. There are minor abs everywhere you look! 😊

5th August was spent travelling up to see my sister in Yorkshire. With the impending heatwave forecast, I was pleased to be heading for more temperate weather, and generally it was cooler and cloudier up there.

On **Thursday 6th August**, despite initially cloudy skies I drove out to Kiplingcotes, the old chalk pit reserve near Market Weighton. As I had anticipated, it was bright and warm enough for butterflies to be flying, and towards the end of the time I spent there the sun did make an appearance.

As usually happens, my walk down from the car park was accompanied by Speckled Woods and a few Green-veined Whites.



I chatted to a fellow enthusiast who had taken the bus from York to Market Weighton to get here: he asked me whether I'd seen any Essex Skippers as he'd heard they had expanded their range into the area. I then set about looking more closely at all the skippers flying which I had routinely dismissed as Small. Fairly quickly, I found one that seemed comparatively fresh and luckily it obliged with a few suitable poses.



Quite clearly, this was an Essex Skipper. I have to say it felt odd to reckon this as a significant find when I was seeing dozens of them at home only a few weeks back. There were Small Skippers as well of course.



They vary hugely, but it may still have a name... 😊 😊

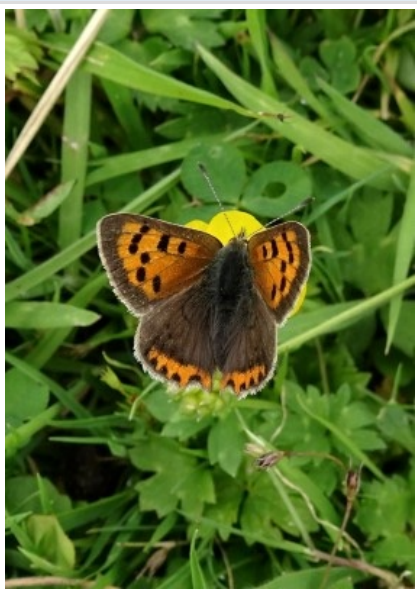
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Aug-20 09:15 PM GMT

6th August (continued).

On my way back to my base in Wilberfoss, I stopped a mile or two short at Calley Heath, which is notable for Small Coppers in particular. They obliged, though not in great numbers.



This is also a good spot for Brown Argus, but the few that I saw were new so the second brood is likely only just starting in this northerly population.



There were a few Small Skippers (no Essex that I could find!),



However, holding centre stage as it dashed madly between clumps of ragwort in characteristically energetic flight, was a fresh-looking Painted Lady.



I invariably seem to see Painted Ladies on my summer trips to Yorkshire, whatever kind of season they are having nationally, so I was pleased to continue the sequence for another year.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-20 07:38 PM GMT

Lovely looking Lady Dave – they've certainly been at a premium this year – I've only seen two so far all year 🤔 Mind you hopefully the Cloudies will pick up some of the slack 😊 Interesting to see things comparatively behind up North – are they about a fortnight slower?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Scotch Argus at Smardale Gill

by millerd, 18-Aug-20 09:09 PM GMT

The Painted Lady was a very welcome find, Wurzel – and such a fresh one as well. 😊 Overall, things are about two or three weeks behind in that bit of Yorkshire, and perhaps a bit more over in the northwest where most of the sunshine and warmth have been replaced by rain and wind (as Goldie will attest!). The fresh Essex Skipper was also a highpoint because of its novelty value in this part of the world. 😊

After a couple of days break from butterfly-related excursions, on **Sunday 9th August** I set off for a site completely new to me, but highly recommended as the best place in England to see Scotch Argus: Smardale Gill just over the border in Cumbria, but geographically part of the Yorkshire Dales. It was mostly sunny, but with sensible temperatures – on arrival at around 1100 it was a comfortable 18 degrees and only rose to about 22 by the time I left in the afternoon. There was a pleasant breeze as well. The nature reserve basically follows the track of a disused railway along the side of a valley, and eventually onto an impressive Victorian viaduct that crosses the stream at the bottom. However, the guardrails on this structure have been ruled unsafe, so you have to divert off along a path along the valley side – which turns out to be a bonus as far as the butterflies are concerned. Signs in the reserve advertise two highlights: the presence of red squirrels, and the presence of the Scotch Argus butterfly. Unfortunately, I didn't glimpse any squirrels, but there were excellent numbers of the highlighted butterfly.

The track from the car park passes under a famous bit of working railway – the Settle & Carlisle Line – and immediately after this bridge, the Scotch Argus started to appear along both sides. In fact they were numerous enough for walkers I passed to comment on how many butterflies there were. The numbers gradually increased as the viaduct was approached, and the track opened out a bit, and then the slope of the hillside down to the stream in front of the structure was full of them – if they had been blues, they would have shimmered, but you were aware of the constant movement. The view...



What I found deceptive is that the stream flows left to right (top photo); towards the camera in the other two.

I took a lot of photos. There were only a few other species around: Notably Red Admirals, Peacocks and a single Large White along the initial enclosed path and then Small Heaths and Small Skippers on the open slopes. I couldn't ignore this bright new Red Admiral.



Now for the main attraction. Both males and females were present, with the latter somewhat fresher on average.





A few behavioural shots:

This female appears to be egg-laying, a fact I didn't notice until I went through the photos that evening.



A bit of context!



Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 18-Aug-20 10:50 PM GMT

What a fantastic looking place. I love the Scotch Argus photos they make me think of chocolate orange – must just be the colours!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 18-Aug-20 11:09 PM GMT

I can only offer a stack of mrgreens, Dave for all those Scotch Argus. 🍵🍵🍵

I've read and heard that the place is heaving with them, and you caught them just right. That viaduct was part of the Stainmore route from Tebay, a very wild and desolate line at the best of times.

That location is on my itinerary, it's the likely bad weather in that area that's always put me off.

Great stuff, and images!.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 19-Aug-20 12:58 AM GMT

Those pictures bring back happy memories 😊. I only spent a morning there a couple of years ago but I could have easily have spent an entire week there!

Re: Scotch Argus at Smardale Gill

by David M, 20-Aug-20 03:56 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=157440 time=1597781372 user_id=9839]...After a couple of days break from butterfly-related excursions, on **Sunday 9th August** I set off for a site completely new to me, but highly recommended as the best place in England to see Scotch Argus: Smardale Gill just over the border in Cumbria, but geographically part of the Yorkshire Dales.

So glad you managed to get up there, Dave. It's a wonderful site, surely one of the most picturesque locations in Britain to go looking for butterflies.

As you say, there is no shortage of *aethiops* there; in fact, I would say that Smardale eclipses Arnside for this species by some degree. When I went there in 2014, they were all over the scabious blooms in the last 200m or so of the linear path prior to the viaduct, and there were well into three figures on that stretch of steep grassland that you have depicted in your images.

Nice, fresh specimens too. You clearly picked a good day.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-20 10:14 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Dave – brilliant shots of a butterfly I've still to see 🍷🍷 Especially jealous of the 'indication...' shot although I can see how that might actually be a problem – which one to focus on 🤔 but what a problem 🍷🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Aug-20 10:39 PM GMT

Thank you, Katrina – I know what you mean about the chocolate orange! 😊 However, if there's a butterfly that evokes that image more though, it has to be the female Brown Hairstreak... 😊😊

Cheers, Trevor – if you can get there at some point, you really should. To do it justice you need an overnight stay somewhere – I started the day at my sister's near York, and it took exactly two hours with favourable traffic.

Thanks, Buggy – your descriptions of the place were part of my inspiration for making the effort to see Smardale, and it was well worth it.

Many thanks, David. It is one of the most scenic spots I've been to butterflying and thoroughly to be recommended. I was lucky with the weather on the day I picked, considering it had been planned a week ahead. The forecast kept changing, but as the day approached it improved, and the reality was probably better than the forecast. A bit of luck is always welcome! 😊 There were lots of butterflies, many were reasonably fresh, and they presented good opportunities for photographs including some aspects of behaviour.

As you say, David, in terms of spectacle and numbers Smardale beats Arnside hollow – I was able to make a direct comparison as you will see shortly. It is rather curious that the species hasn't spread into other parts of the Dales, considering that it clearly flourishes here at Smardale. I wonder what the key factor is?

Cheers, Wurzel – you really should save a few (hundred?) Brownie points and do a Big Trip North one day. 😊 Scotch Argus are worth seeing. You're right as well – sometimes it was difficult to decide which one to concentrate on next. 😊

9th August (continued): Dragging myself away somewhat reluctantly from Smardale mid-afternoon, I drove on another hour to Arnside Knott to see how Scotch Argus were doing at their only other English stronghold. (I am aware that there is at least one introduced population elsewhere, but I'm not sure of the current state of play with that so I don't count it! 😊)

Quite a contrast – I really had to search fairly hard to track down the target species over rather more arduous terrain. In fact, there were very few butterflies of any sort flying at all: I found Gatekeepers, one or two Meadow Browns and a Small Heath or two.



Finally, I tracked down only around a dozen Scotch Argus in two distinct hotspots – one up by the trig point, and the other toward the bottom of the southern slopes.



The last one I tracked down nectaring in Heathwaite meadow



The plan now was to stay the night down the road at Lancaster, and come back up to the Knott in the morning before it got too warm. Originally this was to allow two bites at the cherry should the weather be hit and miss, but in the end there were no worries on that score.

So on the morning of **Monday 10th August** I headed back to Arnside, with rather similar results. However, this time I managed to stumble upon a rather worn Grayling. They emerge early at this site (rather like the subspecies on the Great Orme in North Wales to which it has been suggested they may be closely linked), so this was right at the end of their season here.



Though the hemp agrimony here was in full swing, there were no Fritillaries left to enjoy it, just a Peacock or two. The Scotch Argus prefer lower-growing flowers, especially the wild marjoram and knapweed.





I left Arnside at around half ten, and headed back for London. When I started, the temperature was around 23 degrees. After an abysmal journey with assorted road closures, alternative routes full of unexpected roadworks, and relentlessly increasing heat I arrived back seven hours later with the temperature nudging 37 degrees outside and even higher in my shut-up house. However, having seen what was forecast for Heathrow over the coming days, I had booked nights in local air-conditioned hotels which were to prove a godsend in relation to getting a decent nights sleep. They were relatively cheap (desparate to fill rooms with the low level of air traffic I imagine), and I could walk home each morning for breakfast.

Phew! Quite an excursion... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 21-Aug-20 07:24 PM GMT

Great reports from Smardale and Arnside Dave and interesting to compare the two. The Scotch Argus at Smardale are certainly doing much better than at Arnside these days but a few years ago the reverse was true with hundreds at Arnside and much lower numbers reported at Smardale. I have not been to Arnside for a couple of years now and like you (and Bugboy at the time) I found Arnside to be much harder work than it used to be.

[quote=millerd post_id=157547 time=1597959545 user_id=9839] ...I am aware that there is at least one introduced population elsewhere, but I'm not sure of the current state of play with that so I don't count it!..

I have heard though the grapevine that they are doing well there this year. I am not sure if that is due to being topped up or if they are flourishing by themselves.

I have also seen a few random reports over the past couple of years of small numbers being seen elsewhere in Cumbria, closer to Kendall. Not sure if these are wanderers from Arnside or another introduction.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Aug-20 07:37 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil! 😊 Looking back I see that I visited Arnside on exactly the same day in 2019 and found a similar situation with regard to the Scotch Argus, so they do at least appear stable – though not a bit on a par with my first trip about ten years ago. However, there were far more other butterflies last year, including dozens of Painted Ladies!

Interesting info about the species being seen at other sites. I have recently read a couple of times that it is not very mobile, with the females especially not travelling more than a few hundred metres at most – which goes some way to explaining why it doesn't spread from its core sites to other nearby likely areas if there is no suitable intervening habitat. Maybe it once existed in such places, but the "pools" of butterflies have gradually dried up. All this means that any sightings elsewhere can only be (re)introductions unless a tiny residual population or two has gone unnoticed over the years.

Good or bad? I know opinions vary on this subject! 😊

Back to the heat of southern England. Over the next few days, it was too hot to comfortably go out looking at butterflies, and when at last the heat began to diminish, thunderstorms arrived to make things tricky in other ways. I did venture into the woods at Bookham a couple of times, and made one brief foray locally, but saw little of any great interest.

A few shots...

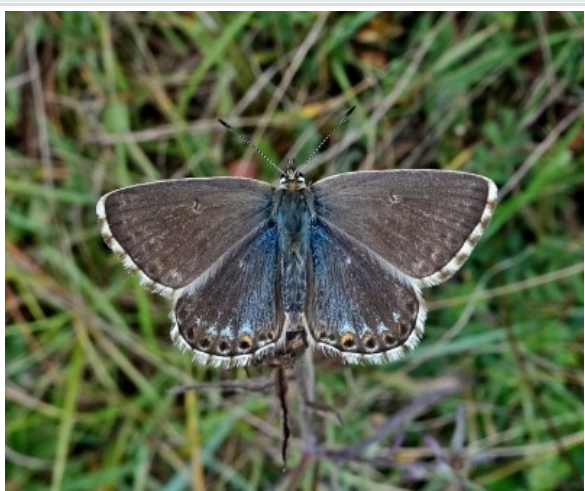


Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Aug-20 08:06 PM GMT

On **Friday 14th August**, the weather became more conducive to going out a bit further again. I headed down to Denbies with Adonis Blues and Silver-spotted Skippers in mind. I saw both of these, plus a few Chalkhills too, though the males of the latter species were getting decidedly worn now.



I think I saw around a dozen male Adonis – not a particularly high number, but hopefully they will build over the next couple of weeks as females emerge to join them.







That left the Silver-spots – which I think deserve their own post.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Aug-20 08:17 PM GMT

14th August (continued): Silver-spotted Skippers at Denbies – but first a nice fresh Small Heath that seems to have got into the mix.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-20 05:50 PM GMT

Another cracking round of reports Dave – Scotch Argus, Adonis, Silver-spots – all brilliant 🤩🌱 Interesting to read about that Grayling – a possible sub-species/race 😊 I tried Shipton on Saturday but could only manage one female – I don't know how many will still be about this coming week but if they are there they'll take some searching out 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 24-Aug-20 09:23 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

Great reports from Smardale and Arnside Dave and interesting to compare the two. The Scotch Argus at Smardale are certainly doing much better than at Arnside these days but a few years ago the reverse was true with hundreds at Arnside and much lower numbers reported at Smardale. I have not been to Arnside for a couple of years now and like you (and Bugboy at the time) I found Arnside to be much harder work than it used to be.

Agreed. When I first visited Arnside in 2010 I was impressed but Smardale in 2014 put things into perspective. I know High Brown numbers have been causing concern at Arnside for a couple of years now and that makes me wonder whether there is a wider issue at this site.

I would hope such negative trends would be addressed at some point as this area is undoubtedly the most species-rich butterfly one north of the Midlands in the UK and deserves special attention.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-20 11:14 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, you seem to have captured everything I've missed this year 🤔🤔🤔 Fantastic Scotch Argus, We always used to go to Arnside to see them, I never knew about Smardale, just shows you can live near some thing and not realise it exists , I wish I'd known, my late Husband hated going to Arnside, he always got loads of insect bites 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Aug-20 09:56 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – with the weather the way it is, I don't think I'll be venturing out much more this week... 😊

I'm not sure what the issues might be at Arnside, David. I believe the HBF are doing OK at other sites nearby, but I don't know how they performed at Arnside this year as I didn't get to visit early enough to see any fritillaries at all. I know there have been concerns. Scotch Argus numbers have diminished since the first time I visited nine or ten years ago, but seem the same this year as last with around a dozen seen. It's certainly a very warm site for the latitude and obviously has a coastal climate unlike that which must prevail at Smardale. The whole thing needs analysis from someone more knowledgeable than me I think! 😊

I know what you mean about the bites, Goldie! Ticks can be a real problem at Arnside – I deliberately wore light-coloured trousers this year and was able to intercept two of the little so-and-sos making their relentless way up my legs! 😊 Smardale is another hour further on, but was well worth it. I shall go again, and with luck I might get to see a red squirrel as well! 😊

Saturday 15th August. It remained pretty warm and muggy, but cloud had now replaced the relentless sunshine of a few days before. I walked down to Staines Moor for the first time in a while. It's surprising how many butterflies you can find in such conditions and some were even flying. Both Small and GV Whites were enjoying the fleabane, which was in full bloom.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Aug-20 10:21 PM GMT

On **Monday 16th August**, some sunshine tempted me to make another trip down to Bookham to seek out those elusive female Brown Hairstreaks.

Confusion species had really become almost non-existent now, with the disappearance of the Gatekeepers and there being a much smaller number of Meadow Browns around. However, the presence of Speckled Woods did cause a few moments of misplaced excitement with their habit of flitting just above the hedges. One in particular was quite eye-catching in its own right...



...as did the obligatory Small Copper.



My efforts to get a bit closer inevitably disturbed the butterfly, which luckily only went as far as the other side of the path where she set off purposefully into the blackthorn on an egg-laying mission.





I waited for her to emerge for a breather and hoped she would then bask in a suitable spot. No such luck...



Finally she moved further off, before disappearing over the hedge and out of sight.



She was the only one I saw all morning – the females really have been hard work this year. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Aug-20 02:26 PM GMT

On **Tuesday 17th August**, I set out round my local patch for my first somewhat more extensive survey for about a fortnight. It was fairly sunny and reasonably warm with a high of around 25 degrees.

Overall, I managed to find 13 different species and a total of around 170 individual butterflies. There was nothing startling in the mix of course, but some interest none the less across a decent variety for the latter end of the season.

Gatekeeper 5

Very much the end of their season – numbers drop off remarkably quickly, mirroring the steep rise at the start. A good year overall, with a peak day count of over 100 in mid-July.



Meadow Brown 50+

Good numbers continue, with fresh females especially still appearing.



Small Heath 19

Numbers seem to be reaching a third peak for the year – always difficult to distinguish specific broods for this species, as it is around pretty well every day from the start of May.



Speckled Wood 3

It seems to be another poor year here for this species – maybe the dry sunny spring didn't suit them.



Small White 32

Good numbers and ubiquitous in all types of habitat here, seen on more days than any other species too.

Green-veined White 8

Nowhere near as common as the Small White, and probably undercounted a little.



One female of each: Small(l) and GVW(r)

Large White 6

Numbers always increase at this time of year, and behaviour changes as they start to be attracted to nectar sources, particularly buddleia.

Red Admiral 1

Only the one seen today, but going out later in the day always reveals a few more. There is a steady trickle of new emergences, which hopefully will step up markedly in September and into October as it normally does.



Painted Lady 1

The first since 1st July, and only the fifth one seen here this year.



Comma 2

Very few around at the moment, either from the summer *hutchinsoni* form, or from a new set of hibernators-in-waiting.

Brown Argus 5

They haven't had such a good year as they did in 2019 and the second brood is largely over. Hopefully there will be a third.



Common Blue 27

By contrast, this species has made a very good showing in both broods and there are still one or two reasonably fresh individuals around. Females seem relatively dark in the second brood this year.





Holly Blue 11

After a typically good first brood here, the second has been disappointing – maybe their parasite has caught up with them at last.





To finish off, there was another Jersey Tiger moth making a spectacular entrance with a bright flash of its orange underside: rarely on show when it settles, though.



I'm guessing the third brood Small Coppers will soon be making an appearance, and I keep my fingers crossed for a Clouded Yellow at some point, but generally things feel as if they are just starting to decline towards autumn.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-20 08:13 PM GMT

Interesting looking Brown Argus from a couple of posts back Dave 😊 The female Brostreaks have been hard work this year, not helped by the sudden downturn in the weather just as they were coming out to play, and also not helped at Shipton where the bloody Collector was back again this year – I didn't see him personally which is probably a good thing 😊 Your Local Patch still seems to be producing the goods – mind you things have taken an even more Autumnal feel recently so the butterflies will start looking a bit more battered from now on 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Aug-20 10:07 PM GMT

Not good to hear about that Collector, Wurzel. 😞 Let's hope this curious season caused him to mistime his visits and fail to find anything. I'd have thought attempting to net a hairstreak in a blackthorn bush would present quite a challenge in any case. You're right about the autumnal feel too – things have got a lot more worn since that day last week.

Tuesday 18th August. Another reasonable day weatherwise – at least to start with.

However I had to get the car MOT'd, which meant a trip to Kew Bridge of all places and instead of the usual "while-you-wait" service, COVID regulations involved an additional three hours to allow for the car to be sanitised. I decided to walk down the Thames Path to Richmond, find some lunch and then wander back. I ended up eating on a bench in the Old Deer Park (I looked in vain for the Old Dears) watching a monster of a storm build up over to the north. Aside from a few drops I missed the rain, and actually found a few butterflies between the Park and the River. These were all Green-veined Whites (a dozen or so) except for a single Meadow Brown. I managed a few shots... Having a pocket-sized camera means no excuses for not carrying it everywhere! 😊 These two (the first and second shots are the same individual) were both males and both are interesting.

The first has an extra spot on the forewing...



...and the second has strong black scaling along the veins on the hindwing margins.



Good news – the car passed the MOT, and had been cleaned inside and out for nothing as part of the "sanitisation" process. Not so good – I returned home to massive puddles, further heavy rain, and no prospect of any more butterflies today.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-Aug-20 10:04 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, I saw one in my Garden similar to your Second shot mine was a Large White and turned out to be an ab 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 28-Aug-20 01:38 PM GMT

`{quote=millerd_post_id=157739_time=1598534780_user_id=9839}`Overall, I managed to find 13 different species and a total of around 170 individual butterflies.

That's pretty respectable for the time of year, Dave. Nice to see a few more Holly Blues – I wonder if you'll get any later brooded ones like in years gone by?

Excellent male Green Veined White in your subsequent post. I don't think I've seen one so boldly spotted ever, whilst the second one has an unusually extended margin, and interesting hindwings too. 🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-20 07:59 PM GMT

Good news about the MOT and the free Valet Service, that's the thing about the Co-Vid crisis you have to find the positives no matter how small 😊
Interesting seeing that extra spotted Green-Veined, the second individual is very eye-catching with the marks on the hind wing 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-20 07:21 PM GMT

Thanks, all. It just shows that even amongst commoner butterflies like the GVW you can find some interesting variations. 😊

Here's hoping for some third brooders, David. Among the relatively few Holly Blues I've been seeing some seem very new, so perhaps they are early third, rather than late second brood. 😊

Time to catch up a bit, after another weekend in Yorkshire (which included one day teleported straight from January... 😊)

Wednesday 19th August was very wet, so **Thursday 20th** was my next outing. I started at Bookham again, but despite covering more ground than last time I was disappointed as far as Brown Hairstreaks were concerned. However, there were a few Speckled Woods and Small Heaths around...





The first two are different individuals, but both were heavily marked; the third is more of a "classic" specimen.

In the afternoon, I went out on my local patch – nothing exceptional here either, though I came across a nice new Red Admiral...





I don't think I've ever seen a crab spider lurking on a bramble flower or quite so high up before. Still, that male Holly Blue appeared worn enough to have already led a productive life, so you can't begrudge the predator its meal really.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-20 07:57 PM GMT

Those are quite dusky Coppers Dave – is that the third brood – I've lost track now – or late second? 😊 Some lovely photos and looking out for the Southern Small White is bound to pay off soon – aren't they at Calais now? 😊

Have a goodun and stays safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-20 09:08 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – yep, Southern Small Whites were seen just down the Channel coast from Calais in 2019, so sooner or later they'll get blown across. When I lived in Dover back in the 80s, there regularly used to be migrations of white butterflies from across the Channel: one year in particular I remember seeing clouds of them. If that happened now, I'm sure any *mannii* would be swept along with the throng. Anyone checking the Kent coast for LTB and Cloudies should be looking at all the Small Whites as well – a whole new species would be a much bigger find (though not terribly spectacular from an aesthetic point of view of course! 😊).

More dusky Coppers to come, this time from my local patch – I think these are definitely third brood looking at the pattern of sightings here.

Friday 21st August. Some morning sunshine and reasonably warm at 24 degrees. I had another shorter walk on my local patch (large areas are now bereft of butterflies since the heatwave – apart from the odd Meadow Brown – so are no longer really worth looking at).

This Holly Blue looked pretty new...





However, the highpoint of the walk was finding three fresh Small Coppers that definitely hadn't been there the previous day.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Sep-20 01:02 PM GMT

Saturday 22nd August. Another sunny(ish) morning and another extensive look for Hairstreaks at Bookham without success. There were some more new Small Coppers and a Comma feeding up on fermenting blackberries.



Sunday 23rd August was very similar, but proved to be a victory of hope over expectation. This time my searches down at Bookham came up with this brief view of a female Brown Hairstreak.



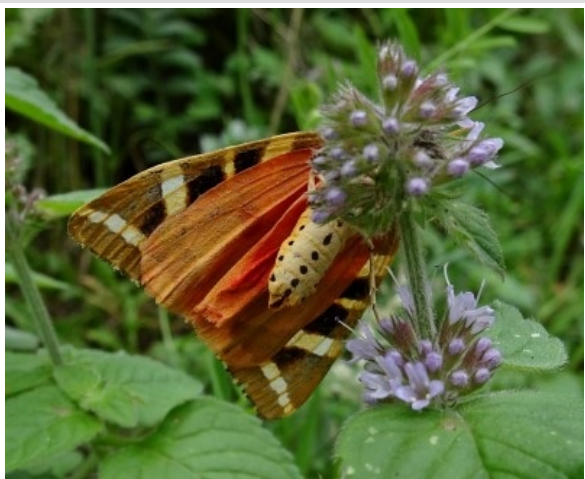


Nearby was a female Common Blue, something of a surprise since I've seen very few of these down at Bookham.



Finally, as I wandered back to the car I was startled by a sudden splash of orange – a Jersey Tiger moth was whizzing around before settling down to nectar and providing some unusual views of its underside.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Sep-20 08:45 PM GMT

With continuing warmth and a bit of brightness, I decided to spend the afternoon of **23rd August** down at Denbies – starting of course with a coffee from the van.

Overall, the visit was rather disappointing. Only the last few male Chalkhill Blues remained, tired and ragged now...

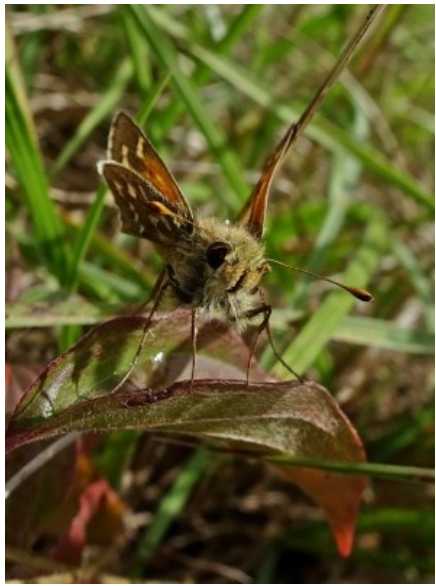


They seem to have had a very poor second brood here. There were reasonable numbers of female blues, but trying to call the species when they are so worn became impossible. I did however manage to single out a Brown Argus from amongst them.



There were still quite a few Silver-spotted Skippers, though these too had seen better days.





Even the numbers of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths were far lower than I would have expected to see. Aside from the odd Small Copper, that was about it. No sign of any Clouded Yellows...

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-Sep-20 10:30 PM GMT

Your Jersey Tiger deserves a 🍷 . I have never seen one.

It must be a good year for them, I've seen many reports of them on other sites.

I've never had much luck just happening upon spectacular moths, except a fresh Emperor moth at work many years ago.

Not seen a Cloudie yet either,
Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-20 06:11 PM GMT

A great set of shots Dave 😊 Those Coppers certainly were dusky 😊 surely the one with the massive markings is an ab.maxima or some such? 😊 Those Silver Spots do look a bit knackered, still cute though but more like a well worn and loved Teddy now than one that's fresh off the shelves at Build A Bear 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Sep-20 07:40 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor – yes, Jersey Tigers are certainly appearing more often round here, and make a spectacular sight when flying. They tend to settle in shady spots and under leaves, so this one nectaring in the sunshine was a real bonus. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – I've got another selection of interesting Coppers coming up in a few posts time. Such a variable species – I may have to consult that ab. list again to see if any qualify! 😊 😊 I've also got a few more SSS waiting in the wings too, with at least one from a couple of days ago only just out of the cellophane wrapping. 😊

Monday 24th August. Back to the local area for the morning, with things staying warm (24 degrees) though not very sunny (bright though). A count notched up a bit over a hundred individuals of 12 species.

The three white butterfly species accounted for half the total:

Large White 10



Small White 34



Green-veined White 6



I could only find one remaining Brown Argus.



There were however 8 Common Blues. The underside of the first one had very pale lunules, but it was too worn to say for certain whether it was *ab. flavescens*.



Two Small Coppers today, recognisably two of those seen a few days earlier.



There were a few more Speckled Woods, but with just four seen, they remain thin on the ground here.



26 Meadow Browns was a pretty reasonable total for this stage in the season, and the 13 Small Heath also wasn't a bad showing.



It was also pleasing to see another Painted Lady in a year notable for their near absence, even though it was far from perfect.



Red Admirals are always around though.



Finally, I was entertained by a Holly Blue. I saw only four altogether, including a worn but nicely posing female...



...but a fresh male provided a better show. I first spotted it enjoying the minerals from a large muddy puddle. At one point it nearly landed on the water surface, but luckily thought better of it.





As is often the case, it felt the need to warm up after these exertions and sat on a bramble and basked for a bit.



However, instead of returning to the mud, it decided to nectar instead.





It then took off as I pressed the shutter and disappeared.



That left the afternoon to play with.

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 04-Sep-20 10:36 PM GMT

Nice to see Large Whites making up a decent proportion of your daily sightings, Dave. Not been great numbers of those around my way this year.

You seem to also be seeing some very nicely marked Small Coppers as well as some Holly Blues in pretty good condition.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-20 07:54 PM GMT

Some lovely marked Whites there amid the immaculate (and some not quite so) Holly Blues and Dusky Coppers 😊🍷 The green-veined White in particular really stands out 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Sep-20 09:43 PM GMT

Yes, decent numbers of Large Whites have only just started appearing, David. The only caterpillars I've seen this year were on a patch of Garlic Mustard in a bit of woodland, so hardly a garden pest. 😊

It's good to see that there are still some fresh butterflies around, Wurzel. That male Holly Blue was very new and I wonder that since the second brood started to appear at the end of June, this might be the first of a third brood. The fresh Coppers definitely are, but they have been known to squeeze in a fourth brood in favourable years.

As it seemed warm and bright enough, I decided to spend the afternoon of **24th August** up at Aston Rowant again. This chalk hillside is definitely more rewarding than the North Downs sites at this end of the season with many more flowers and appreciably more butterflies.

Despite the lack of much bright sunshine, I found that there were still a fair few Silver-spotted Skippers flying: most were starting to look a bit worn now.





One seemed very docile...



...but was happy enough to be given a lift to a nearby scabious.



There were more male Adonis Blues than I'd seen at Denbies, and some were still quite fresh – though they continue to be brilliantly coloured even as they wear.





Amongst the many female blues flying, for some reason I felt that this one was an Adonis, rather than a Chalkhill.



There were still Chalkhills around, some in reasonable condition for the very end of August.



This (I think! 😊) is a female Chalkhill.



Also seen were lots of Brown Argus...



...but very few Common Blues. There were also still plenty of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, and not to be left out, a handful of new Small Coppers. For once, this example appears to be the standard textbook version – with no oversize spots, no colour variation, and no blue scales...



Overall, there's still plenty of life at this Chiltern site to carry on into September.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Sep-20 08:48 PM GMT

For the next three days (25th–27th August) I remained local. It was reasonably warm on the first two days, and the 26th also had some sunshine so unsurprisingly that was the best day for the butterflies with around a hundred counted again. A selection:



an attractive pest species

I was now away in Yorkshire for the last few days of the month, including Saturday 29th – a day that did not belong to the summer at all.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 07-Sep-20 09:24 PM GMT

Nice selection but it's that GVW that really caught my eye, heavily marked enough to approach ab. status with elements of *triangulata* and *striata* looking at various images.

Re: millerd

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

Cracking set of reports Dave 😊 Most jealous of the Silver-spot in the hand – a species I need to add to my collection 🍷🍷 Also what's up with that Green-veined White – in the words of the 'yoof' "It's like well inked" 🤪🤪

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Sep-20 06:55 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=157998 time=1599508094 user_id=9839]...Finally as I reached home, this little chap emerged from my neighbour's box hedge. The caterpillars seem to have made a mess of the foliage again, so there could be more to come..

Oh dear! I do hope not, Dave.

This moth has decimated the foodplant in parts of the Alpes Maritimes over the last few years. They were everywhere in both 2018 AND 2019, and are an import we could well do without. 😞

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Sep-20 09:24 PM GMT

Cheers, Bugboy – it was only when I looked at the photos later that I realised just how heavily marked that GVW was. A mixture of *striata* and *triangulata*... that must be *strangulata* then... 😊😊

Strangely for such an active little butterfly, Wurzel, I've coaxed several Silver-spots onto my finger. In the depths of the archive I've even got a photo of my youngest aged about 3 with one sitting on his nose... 😊

Unfortunately, David, I think the Box Tree Moth is here to stay. Ironically, pest species can also be quite attractive: and attractive species can also be pests. In the oft-quoted example, Long-tailed Blues are supposed to be a pest on broad beans in Hawaii... 😊

I travelled north on Friday 28th August, watching the temperature steadily drop as I gained latitude. On Saturday 29th August I met a friend for lunch on a day that could have been any day of the year – with perhaps the exception of July or August! It was breezy, grey, increasingly wet and the temperature dipped to only 10 degrees. Hard to believe when less than three weeks earlier I'd been booking myself into air-conditioned hotels to escape the night-time heat... 😞

However, **Sunday 30th August** was a better day – distinctly warmer and with a bit of sun. The butterflies responded and the main protagonists were

Small Tortoiseshells. Both in my sister's garden in Wilberfoss and up the road at Allertorpe they were plentiful – and quite variable too.



It was great to see so many – the last one I saw on my local patch was way back on 11th July...

My sister's Victoria plum tree had burst forth with an excess of ripe fruit, something the local Red Admirals find impossible to resist.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-20 09:05 AM GMT

Some great photos in your recent reports Dave. I particularly like the Jersey Tiger, a species that is becoming more widespread every year with even a few reports from Warwickshire this year, something that would have been unheard of just a few years ago.

`{quote=millerd-post_id=158091-time=1599769448-user_id=9839}` Unfortunately, David, I think the Box Tree Moth is here to stay.

It is indeed. Many sighting in Warwickshire now and moving further north each year. My son Chris is getting them regularly now in his garden moth trap in Stratford-upon-Avon although luckily he has no box plants plants in his garden. I've not had any yet in my trap but it can only be a matter of time.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-20 08:24 PM GMT

I love watching the Red Admirals get smashed Dave 😊 they're like a Saturday night in miniature – even getting a bit leery and starting on one another 😊 Good to see so many Small Torts – although we're still not doing too bad for them over my way 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Sep-20 09:57 PM GMT

Thank you, Neil – the Jersey Tiger is a splendid beast, and it's good to hear it is beginning to spread even further. However, not so the Box Tree moth... That's sort of a one-all draw, I suppose... 😊

Cheers, Wurzel. I have to agree – Red Admirals are very entertaining when they've had a few. They flop around and then chase anything that moves – on my local patch I've seen them react to planes taking off as the shadow goes past. No plums here though, just lots of alcoholic soggy blackberries which they have to share with Commas, Speckled Woods and even a Holly Blue or two.

The Bank Holiday **Monday 31st August** was warmer again, and there was some pleasant sunshine. I was able to go out and have a look at two other spots I always visit when up in this part of Yorkshire – Calley Heath and Kiplingcotes. Very different sites really, the former being a bit of lowland sandy heath, and the latter an old chalk pit.

Calley Heath had produced a Painted Lady on my last visit three weeks earlier, but couldn't oblige again today. I had to make do with Small Tortoiseshells...





There were a few fresh Speckled Woods around, including this one keeping an eye on the gate.



The Coppers (half a dozen or so) varied from almost invisible to brilliantly shining in the sunlight.





By contrast, there wasn't a lot of variety later in the day at **Kiplingcotes**. Initially, I found a Brown Argus here as well (but none of the Common Blues I had expected to see).



...the inevitable Small Tortoiseshell...



I headed back south at the end of the day and found the traffic suitably light – which was the plan! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-20 06:07 PM GMT

Interesting to see the difference between the sites Dave 😊 Lovely set of shots, cracking Small White but the 🍷 worthy one for me is the Brown Argus on a Dandelion – wish I had that one in my collection 😊🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Sep-20 10:01 PM GMT

Nice to see you're getting a few Small Tortoiseshells, Dave.

Lovely Small White too. Not only did it pose well but it's a very well marked individual.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-20 08:12 PM GMT

It's a pity that Brown Argus wasn't in better nick, Wurzel, as it did decide to pose very nicely. 😊

Small Whites probably get even more ignored than the Large and GV varieties, so sometimes it's worth paying the fresh ones a bit of attention. This is especially true now there may be a continental interloper amongst them of course! 😊

I did have to go to Yorkshire for all those Small Tortoiseshells, David. 😊 They were in all the locations I visited, and several at a time in each of them too. No longer an end-of-summer event down here in the south, as it was when I was young... 😊

Tuesday 1st September. Back home, and a day with long hours of sunshine and back to balmy southern temperatures too (well, 21 degrees at any rate 😊).

I started the day with a recce of my local patch after a five-day gap. White butterflies dominated proceedings, with 14 Small, 8 Large and 4 Green-veined.



Most other species were just singletons, though there were 5 Holly Blues...



...and 4 Speckled Woods.



...and a very new and brilliant Small Copper which was prepared to pose for some time and a whole series of photos.



By now it was about half eleven, so I decided to head to somewhere else within relatively easy reach – Bookham Commons. The place had a real autumnal feel to it now, and I struggled to find anything flying at all. Eventually I unearthed a few Small Coppers (of which these were the most whole)...



Pretty well resolved that this would be my lot, I suddenly spotted something in flight that confounded that idea. Down it came, close to the same barbed wire as the last one I'd seen here – a female Brown Hairstreak.



She didn't open up, nor did she stay long, but she made a pleasant coda to the visit. 😊

Dave

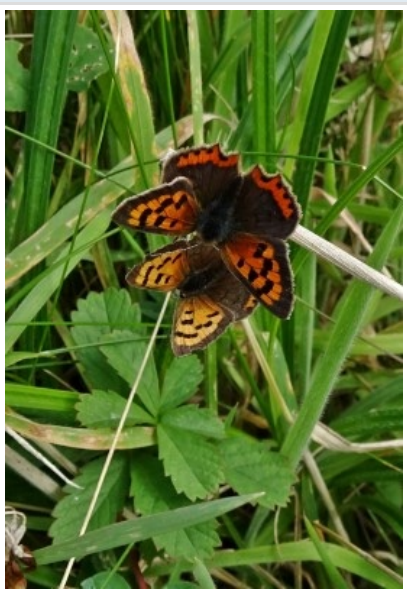
Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Sep-20 08:42 PM GMT

I finished **1st September** with another walk down to Staines Moor to see if the Small Coppers there had anything interesting to offer.

First of all, I found a couple involved in a chase sequence similar to that recently described by Ernie.



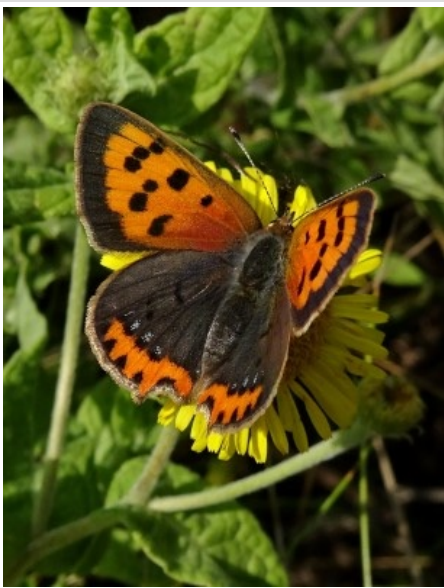


The female hid deeper in the grass in the end and the male gave up looking for her.

There were a whole variety of other largely quite fresh examples.



One had a noticeably reduced hindwing orange band.



Finally, a more worn individual made an appearance. This one would have been very striking had it been fresh, but even in its less than pristine state it was clear the lefthand side was very pale.



I imagine this is not a genetic aberration, but more likely a congenital one from the pupal stage of development. Quite a contrast, though! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-Sep-20 09:00 PM GMT

I've seen that behaviour with Small Coppers.
A very persistent male after a female, when the Lady is clearly saying no.
Long may this weather continue (with the odd drop of rain) and extend the season.

Take care,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-20 08:36 PM GMT

That Brostreak made a nice end to the Bookham visit Dave - I'd have been tempted to have called it there but I'm glad you didn't as those Small Coppers are a sight for my work weary eyes 😊👍 The final one is interesting - aren't the pale ones often cited as 'pathological'? Either way it certainly stands out even if it isn't the 'newest recruit' 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Sep-20 09:39 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor - yes, long may the sunny weather continue, though it's been a tad on the hot side here the last couple of days.

Cheers, Wurzel. 😊 You're right "pathological" is the term, but I couldn't remember it. Another somewhat unusual Copper to add to the increasing collection. 😊

Wednesday 2nd September was not as sunny, nor as warm, but encouraging enough for another half-hour drive up the M40 to Aston Rowant.

As with everywhere else I go at the moment, there were Small Coppers. There have been one or two past years when I've struggled to see them, but that's far from true these days.





This last one appeared to have part of the pupal shell still attached to its body.



I was surprised to find one or two Chalkhills still hanging on, especially the males...





However, I hardly saw a Common Blue at all. By contrast, all the bright blue butterflies seen turned out to be Adonis. They remain incredibly eye-catching even when they begin to wear – the iridescence of the wings actually seems to increase as they age.



Silver-spotted Skippers were still busily darting around, though almost all of these were females now, and even most of these were starting to look a bit weary. Just one worn male...



The sun proceeded to disappear for the afternoon so that was it for the day, and as it turned out for the following one as well: **Thursday 3rd** had no sunshine at all.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-20 10:22 PM GMT

Lovely 'late' Silver-spot Dave 😊😊 I've noticed that change in the Adonis as well Dave – I saw one last weekend and it blindingly burn your retina blue. I was convinced that it was a fresh one and then it landed and it was in a right state! I noticed a similar thing with the male Chalkhills as well – they'd be flying around looking pristine and sky blue and then when they landed they'd be worn and grey – perhaps as the scales wear the refractive index changes so they bend the light more/less and so appear bluer 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Sep-20 09:07 PM GMT

I think you're probably right about the changes to the scales on the wings of blue butterflies, Wurzel. Even Common Blues can look fresher in flight than they actually are close up (though I did see some genuine new third brooders locally today – give it a fortnight and you may see the images here! 😊).

On **Friday 4th September**, there was a bit of sunshine – enough to tempt me out locally for an hour or so: around 50 butterflies of 10 species.

Notable today was a glimpse of a Comma – there have not been many around at the end of the summer here compared to most years (maybe they've all gone straight into hibernation with the Tortoiseshells and Peacocks).



Though as usual most of the 24 white butterflies seen were Small Whites, I concentrated again on the GVW amongst them, which are generally a more attractive subject.



Meadow Browns are pretty well finished here now, but this one opened up to reveal a very worn individual almost looking like it had been badly coloured in by a less than interested child...



Still not a bad range of things to see as the season starts to wind down.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 16-Sep-20 10:58 PM GMT

Nice dusky copper! also a 🍷 for your Holly Blues – you seem very good at finding them!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 17-Sep-20 07:28 AM GMT

Is it just me or is there an exceptional number of fresh specimens of certain species around at the moment. In the last week I've seen fresh Common Blues, Small Coppers, Large, Small & GV Whites, Cloudies, and most Vanessa's.

It will certainly be an Autumn to remember!.

Keep up the good work,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-20 08:30 PM GMT

"give it a fortnight and you may see the images here! 😊" – could be worse, I'm still posting from June 🙄🙄🙄

Those Green-veined Whites all looked really well marked – I can't recall a season where I've seen so many of those that are heavy marked – the hot weather earlier in the year perhaps? A very apt description of the Meadow Brown – if I look closely enough I swear I can see where they've gone over the lines 🙄🙄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Sep-20 10:10 PM GMT

Thank you, Katrina. 😊 Holly Blues are a daily staple on my local patch, though they do seem to be disappearing now...

Cheers, Trevor – there are new examples from quite a few species around, and I can readily add Brown Argus and Wall to that list of yours (not to mention a certain other blue butterfly... 😊😊).

Cheers, Wurzel. You're probably right about the GVV – the hot spells have darkened some of the other butterflies, so why not them as well? 😊

Saturday 5th September. Some more decent weather, and another multiple site sort of day starting at Box Hill. Very little was flying now, but I managed to track down a few individuals over on the slopes at Dukes.



an old male Brown Argus



very fresh Common Blue – third brood again

Several of this attractive flower were now appearing though they appear to hold no interest for the butterflies. Autumn Gentians?



Over at Denbies, it was largely a similar story. However, there were still a few remaining tattered Silver-spotted Skippers...



There were also a variety of faded and ragged female blue butterflies, but none worth the effort of photographing and struggling to identify afterwards. I'd say most were probably Chalkhills.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Sep-20 10:29 PM GMT

At this time of year, quite often the more specialist downland sites lose out to the ordinary general countryside. Later in the day on **5th September** was a case in point – a walk down to Staines Moor again provided more interest and variety than the North Downs had that morning. There were more Small Coppers for a start...



A Red Admiral was another bonus.



Dave

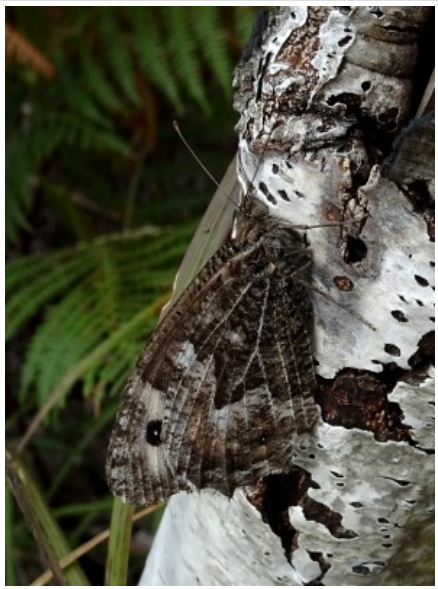
Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Sep-20 11:16 PM GMT

Sunday 6th September had some hazier sunshine, but it continued warm. I remembered that Bugboy had mentioned that he had recently been to Chobham Common to see if the serious recent fire there had harmed any of the areas where Graylings (and Silver-studded Blues) are usually found. He'd discovered that these parts of this extensive area had been untouched (the fire appeared to have spread the other way, towards the outskirts of Sunningdale). I therefore headed down there to see if any Graylings were still flying at what must be the tail end of their season.

I was surprised to find quite a few butterflies (20-30 at a guess) spread over a wide area of mixed heather, gorse and birch scrub, with plenty of bare sandy patches and bits of charred wood debris where there had clearly been fires in the past. Though I saw both males and the larger females, I didn't come across any courtship behaviour and so had no opportunities to see and photograph any uppersides. Plenty of posed undersides were on offer though, demonstrating how the camouflage of this butterfly blends with a variety of backgrounds.







It was a relief to see them, and doing pretty well too I'd say. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-20 07:29 PM GMT

A cracking collection of Graylings – one of my favourites for so many reasons (habitat, behaviour, variation, time of year they're about etc) 😊😎 It's great to see a 'good news' story about butterflies as well, makes a nice change 😊 Seeing the date of that visit has got me wondering if there might still be a few now, ekking out a living in the New Forest – wonder if I can wangle a 'family walk' there tomorrow 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

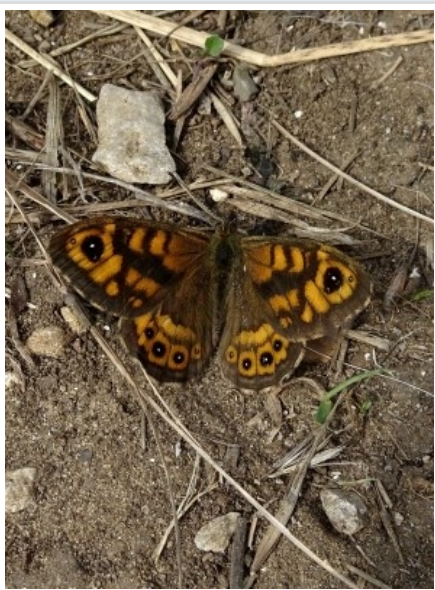
by millerd, 19-Sep-20 09:38 PM GMT

They might well still be around, Wurzel – this was a fortnight ago, but some were fairly fresh (and I note that Guy P. has been seeing them in East Anglia much more recently too). On the subject of behaviour, here's one I missed somehow, sucking up minerals from a damp mossy patch. I don't recall seeing one do this before, but as many species do there's no reason why Graylings should be any different.



Another sunny morning first thing on **Monday 7th September**, so I made an earlyish start and headed down to High & Over on the South Downs behind Seaford. Trevor had mentioned fresh Wall Browns and he was spot on – however, I wish I'd heeded his sage advice to be therereally early, as they were already extremely active in the sunshine. It didn't help that a stiff breeze was blowing parallel to their favourite hedge, so that neither side was sheltered. The steps and the path above them were reasonably out of the wind but unfortunately there were constant interruptions from passing walkers both with and without dogs.

Well, that's the excuses out of the way – I did manage a few reasonable shots by the end of the visit. I also have to admit to chatting for some while to Andrew Burns, previously encountered at Chiddingfold in the Purple Season. Good to see you again, Andrew.



Next on the agenda was Tide Mills near Newhaven, but on the way I stopped off at the spot where I had seen good number of Long-Tailed Blues last year at the same time. This year the BLEP was almost entirely gone over and there were no LTB this time round. However, the chalky bank had attracted other butterflies, including (what else? 😊) a Small Copper...



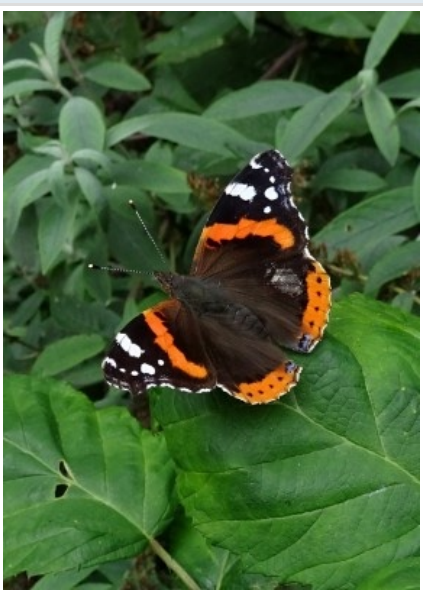
Tide Mills itself was very much a disappointment too – it was windy down there, and aside from a few Whites and more Common Blues I saw nothing of interest. With the days shortening now, I hadn't left myself enough time to go anywhere else – Brighton would have to wait for another day.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Sep-20 10:09 PM GMT

Tuesday 8th September. The car was due a service today (annoyingly they couldn't do it at the same time as the MOT), so I was restricted to just a local walk. Still, at least it was very warm (25 degrees today) and 40 or so butterflies of 11 species wasn't so bad, including the highest counts of Red Admirals (8) and Speckled Woods (5) since the end of July.





The familiar heavily-marked Small Copper was still holding the same territory...



A newish Common Blue was not far away as well, probably another third brood example.



One surprise was finding a Peacock along a sheltered stretch of path where I'd seen does in the spring. I only had time for a distant shot before it sailed away over the hedge.



Unfortunately, the car service highlighted an urgent problem that couldn't be fixed until the following day, so I was unable to do very much on **9th September** – which as it turned out was lacking in sunshine anyway. A very brief walk turned up a single Brown Argus, though nowhere near their usual haunts. They do seem to range out at the end of the summer.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Sep-20 10:12 PM GMT

My machinations didn't come off Dave so I didn't get to search for aged Graylings after all 😞

Another great set of reports 😊 – your first and last Wall look to be the ab.anticrassipincta with the extra spots around the fore wing eye 😊🇧🇪
I hope your car got troubles got sorted out 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 23-Sep-20 06:04 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=158347 time=1600547923 user_id=9839]...and nectaring on the last remaining pea flowers in initially heart-stopping fashion, a fresh Common Blue...

I'm sure your heart skipped a beat for a moment, Dave. 😊 I see Common Blues around the copious BLEP at a coastal site near where I live and they always give me a start even though there's practically no chance of them being *boeticus*.

I'm impressed how your Graylings and Wall Browns last into September. They're gone not much after mid-August round my way. 😞

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Sep-20 08:04 PM GMT

Shame you didn't get to look for any dodderly Graylings, Wurzel... 😞 The car was successfully fixed – a broken bit of suspension, probably from some of the potholes in the roads round here that make that drive up to the car park at Bentley Wood look like a racetrack.

Other Blues are definitely attracted to the BLEP too, David – I saw both Common and Adonis visit it at Kingsdown in Kent last year. I was impressed at the longevity of the Graylings at Chobham too, but the Walls are just par for the course at High & Over (and a number of other Sussex sites) as they are third brood individuals which are often seen well into October these days.

Third brood Small Coppers were the next attraction, as on **Thursday 10th September** (another sunny and fairly warm day) I spent a bit longer down at Staines Moor to specifically seek them out.

Other species seen : a few Meadow Browns, rather more Small Heaths and a couple of new Common Blues.



A Red Admiral was also spotted, enjoying some very squashy blackberries. I had intended to pick some of the better ones, but decided to leave them to the butterfly.



Over the course of about two hours, I counted no fewer than 19 Small Coppers, with the usual variety of ages, colour and spotting (dark and blue).



It's quite likely some of the very worn individuals not included here were leftovers from the second brood; I think their presence here is near enough continuous from April onwards with the broods running one into the next, and it remains to be seen how long they will be around this autumn.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Sep-20 10:19 PM GMT

On **Friday 11th September** I set off down to Brighton to see the Long-tailed Blues up at Whitehawk Hill. Though there were perhaps a dozen enthusiasts already there (including a lot of familiar faces), there were decent numbers of butterflies as well, and no shortage of photo opportunities. There was some hazy sunshine, but it wasn't hot by any means and it was good to see the butterflies routinely opening up. This was quite a contrast to the day I'd spent with them near Seaford in 2019 when they had almost invariably kept their wings shut. The other difference was that at that spot last year there had been a lot of BLEP still in flower, whereas up at Whitehawk today most had gone over.

Firstly, some undersides.





Well worth the slog up and down the hill from Brighton Station! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-20 10:37 PM GMT

A fantastic collection of LTBs Dave 🥳🥳🥳 The second open wing shot in particular is a right royal cracker – really shows off the tails to great effect 🥳🥳🥳 If only they'd come a bit further west 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 25-Sep-20 08:15 AM GMT

`{quote=millerd-post_id=158444-time=1600895999-user_id=9839}` **Well worth the slog up and down the hill from Brighton Station!** 😊

Dave

Absolutely, so much so I've done that walk four times so far this year! 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 25-Sep-20 12:14 PM GMT

Some superb studies of LTB, Dave.

The noticeable thing about them this year was the ease of finding them. In previous years, at the locations I've seen them, they really do take some searching out.

I think Neil Hulme posed a question to consider, should we be delighted or alarmed that LTB's are now frequent visitors?.

If you get fed up with the long slog from the station, PM me for a car park with a bus stop nearby, the bus takes you to the base of the hill.

Great stuff, stay well.
Trevor

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Sep-20 10:32 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. 😊 Maybe if they come our way with increasing frequency (as they seem to be doing), the LTB will advance on a broader front and make landfall further west along the south coast and further north up the east coast. It would need the population size on the continent opposite to prompt them to cross bigger stretches of water combined with suitable weather patterns. The obvious factor which gets in their way is that they run out of summer every year. They are simply not equipped to survive the lower temperatures of a northwest European winter at any stage of their life-cycle.

Thank you, Trevor 😊 – you're right, they were relatively easy this year, though it does appear that they do have favourite spots which they regularly aim for (as well as Brighton, I believe they found their way to the clifftop at Kingsdown in Kent again for example). Of course, this does mean we tend to stop looking for them elsewhere, and encounter them elsewhere by chance rather than design.

It's difficult not to be delighted to find them more frequently, and see their status on the British list evolve from "rare migrant" into "regular migrant". I have probably seen more LTBs this year than Painted Ladies in fact (though not in so many places). The alarm must stem from the reality that this is another symptom of the changing climate, which has potential downsides which are not in any way balanced by the arrival of a single attractive insect in increasing numbers.

I don't actually mind the walk up and down the hill, Trevor, and the fitness benefits are a bonus of course. I'm not sure about doing it four times though, Buggy... 😊😊 In fact I drove down to Southwick and caught a train to Brighton from there (unlimited free parking along the road above the harbour a few minutes walk from the station). I did notice that the No.2 bus runs all the way from there right up to Whitehawk, but goodness knows how long that might take... 😊

11th September (continued).

Returning to Southwick, I had a good look along the harbour to see if the BLEP had hatched any LTBs here, but it appeared not to have done. I spotted a few Common Blues and a Small Copper, but not much else.

As there was still some time and sunshine left in the day, I drove the short distance up to Mill Hill. One or two worn male Adonis Blues were still flying on the main slope (plus females, but these were more difficult to pin down).





. Three or four (maybe more) Clouded Yellows were patrolling back and forth, rarely stopping (so in all probability male butterflies)...



Quite a sight.

All in all, not a bad end to a very successful and full day.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-20 07:35 PM GMT

"Maybe if they come our way with increasing frequency (as they seem to be doing), the LTB will advance on a broader front" – fingers crossed Dave 😊
Another envy inducing report Dave 😊🍷 Cracking Walls but that Cloudy is soooo yellow and then there's the ridiculously blue female Common Blue 😊🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Sep-20 09:17 PM GMT

That blue female was a cracker, wasn't she, Wurzel? 😊 Much easier to get a shot of than those Cloudies which as you say were very yellow indeed. When most of the year your eyes are tuned to the yellow of Brimstones, then they really do come as a shock to the eyes. 😊 What we need are a few more Swallowtails to confuse things further – they look vaguely coffee-coloured in flight.

Over the weekend of **12th/13th September** I had other things to occupy me, including taking my son to rugby training for the start of the new season on 13th. The venue has switched to a site on the fringe of Bushy Park in Hampton, so given the glorious summery morning I set off to explore. I hadn't realised just how large the park is and was pleased to see extensive areas of uncut unmanicured grass... and several deer (sensibly keeping to the shade).



There are a number of water features, including a circular pond with a statue of the goddess Diana in the middle. This figure was clearly a popular feature – at least among the local cormorants... 😊





Thus far I had seen no butterflies at all, but then one piece of the dried up grass seemed a bit different: Small Heaths appeared and then a couple of Small Coppers (the latter sitting on the caterpillar foodplant).



I'm guessing that earlier in the year there would have been more, plus Meadow Browns galore, Common Blues and maybe Brown Argus.

During the afternoon of 13th, I paid another quick visit to Staines Moor – it appears Small Coppers can become addictive...





Dave

Re: millerd

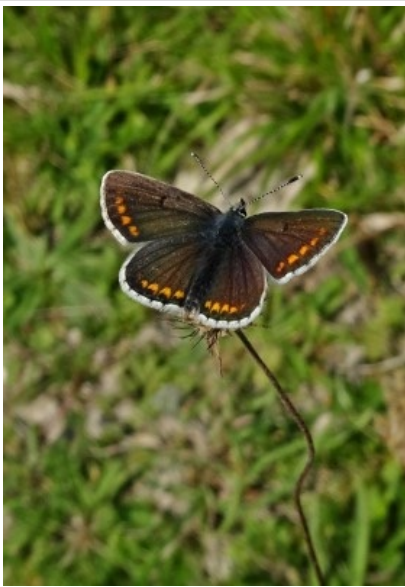
by millerd, 26-Sep-20 10:02 PM GMT

14th September proved uninteresting – I did go out locally, but nothing appeared worth a close look or a photo. **Tuesday 15th September** was another warm sunny day, and after the school run (and knowing I'd be covering the afternoon one as well!) I headed up to Aston Rowant again.

Having seen the Adonis Blues in Sussex fading fast, it was good to see the Chiltern ones still looking pretty good.



Chalkhills had now disappeared, except for a possible few pale brown females and though there were a few flying, there was none of the Common Blue abundance that prevailed at Mill Hill. However, I did find a couple of new third brood Brown Argus...



...several Small Heaths...



Good to find a nice new Clouded Yellow somewhere other than on the south coast! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 27-Sep-20 09:44 AM GMT

Congrats for obtaining that 'open wing' Clouded Yellow shot, Dave. 🍀
I have often wondered how they have evolved to never open up when at rest, or when nectaring. It can't be to make them inconspicuous as their underside is very bright anyway! They are masters at keeping their beautiful markings to themselves.
I also saw one well inland last Sunday, not far from Devizes.

All the best, stay well.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Sep-20 08:41 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – one day I'll get a closer, less blurred, open-winged female Clouded Yellow... 😊 Still, it means there's always something to aspire to! The females are particularly attractive, with subtle shading on the hindwings combined with the large orange/peach spot in the middle. I suspect they are quite variable too, but you never get to find out.

Wednesday 16th September and more warm (even hot – 27 degrees) sunshine lured me onto my local patch again. 12 species today and a total of over 50 butterflies – which is pretty good for mid-September:

Small White 20
Common Blue 12
Speckled Wood 5
Small Heath 5
Red Admiral 3
GVW 2
Brimstone 1
Large White 1
Small Copper 1
Holly Blue 1
Brown Argus 1
Peacock 1

A selection:

Small Whites continue to predominate.





This last one appeared to be lacking the diagnostic forewing spot that normally distinguishes the species.



However, I believe this is not an uncommon occurrence.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Sep-20 09:33 PM GMT

Thursday 17th September continued the run of warm sunny weather, so I decided to drop in on a few spots that I could cover over just a few hours.

I started at Denbies (with another excellent coffee from the van) and soon encountered a couple of Small Coppers – in fact the species turned up in several spots across the hillside.



There were other female blues around, but this was the only definite Adonis I was able to approach. Another possible turned out to be a nicely marked female Common Blue...

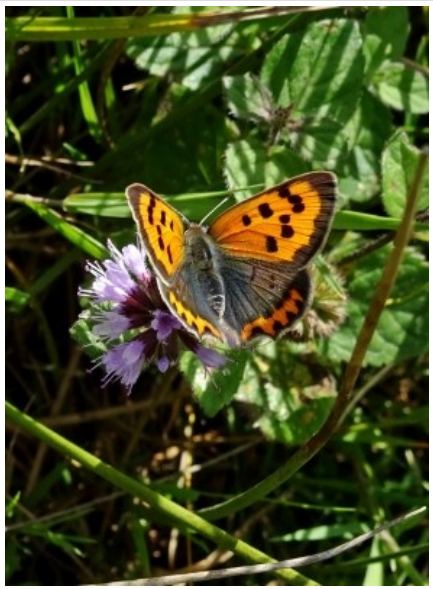


There were male third brood Common Blues as well, though not in any appreciable number. Curiously, this particular very fresh individual (like the one I'd seen local to me the previous day) lacked the diagnostic forewing spot.



After Denbies, I headed back to Bookham Common. I had looked at the various blackthorn areas at Denbies in case of late Brown Hairstreaks (no luck)

and the story was the same at Bookham. More Common Blues and Small Coppers also made it a bit of a similar story altogether.



The final Copper had suffered a deformity (in the pupal state I imagine), but was still able to fly and dispute territorial rights with other males.



My final stop was just up the road the other side of Cobham, at Fairmile Common. I remembered seeing a Silver-studded Blue here at the end of August in 2018, so it was worth a check in case the current season had produced a second brood too (they were out early this year after all). There were none to be found, but another half-a-dozen Small Coppers enjoying the heather flowers made the visit worthwhile.



It does seem to be a very copper-coloured autumn so far... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Sep-20 08:28 PM GMT

Another cracking Constabulary Dave 😊🇧🇪 Also like the Cloudy shots – they haven't been quite as numerous this year though I'm hearing good things from Southbourne Undercliffs I need to try and get down there 😊 That Common Blue that's missing the 'diagnostic' spot is interesting as I've heard tell of this but never actually seen it – it also looks a little 'washed out' as well – wonder if the two things are linked?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 28-Sep-20 10:05 PM GMT

Had I seen those Common Blues minus the cell spot on the continent, Dave, I'd have been tempted to believe they were Chapman's Blues. 🤔

No such dichotomy in the UK, but it proves that butterflies can have a range of natural variation that confounds the text books!

Still plenty going on round your way in mid-September. Clouded Yellows are a welcome addition to the local butterfly brotherhood, although it's the other yellow individual that caught my eye – Brimstones are seldom seen on the wing in the autumn, so definitely a 🇧🇪 for that one.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Sep-20 05:19 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – yes, the Coppers have been out in force almost everywhere this year. 😊 More Cloudies to come in forthcoming posts too, including one I saw locally today. 😊

It was a very odd coincidence to see two Common Blues in quick succession with the same unusual variation – and in two completely different places as well. I wondered what you might think of this, David – knowing your expertise with matters continental – clearly that diagnostic spot is not 100% conclusive. Luckily (or unluckily perhaps), we only have the one species it could be here in the UK.

The Brimstone was a bit of a surprise, and clearly it confused the Clouded Yellow for a moment or two as well. 😊

Friday 18th September. Warm and sunny again, so another visit to Whitehawk Hill in Brighton seemed like a good idea. The one drawback was that the wind (though warm) was strong and gusty from the east, and the favoured area of last week was not very sheltered. However, on the western side of the TV mast there was a bit of meadow out of the breeze, full of purple michaelmas daisies (a variety of wild aster certainly) and attracting a variety of butterflies including half a dozen or so Long-tailed Blues. Compared to the visit on the 11th, they were rather more world weary and less willing to stop and pose. The other butterflies that had set up territories here (notably a Common Blue and a Small Copper) constantly interfered with the LTBs (which were also interacting with each other in their typical ascending spiral dogfights – cut short each time they reached where the wind was blowing above the trees).



a constant antagonist of the LTBs



It was all thoroughly entertaining – and very sociable once again with faces familiar and new. In fact the time passed rather more quickly than I'd realised, and my intended side trip afterwards to Mill Hill again fell by the wayside. That would have to wait for another day... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-20 01:12 PM GMT

Saturday 19th September. The run of decent weather continued, but I stayed local today and caught up with the emerging third broods of Common Blues, Brown Argus and Small Coppers.





With the afternoon to play with as well, I took in a walk down to Staines Moor. As well as the inevitable Small Coppers (now looking to lay on the carpet of sheep's sorrel here)...



Good to see, as there have been relatively few of this species around lately – very unusual for the second half of September.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-20 07:54 PM GMT

Glorious looking Brown Argus's Dave 😊😄 and that Red Admiral is a right stunner – they've been a bit thin on this ground so far this autumn over this way – hopefully though it means they'll be a round for a while yet 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-20 08:39 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. The pretty good September weather (in the South East at least) has kept things going nicely and enhanced the third broods.

In fact, I've been looking at the weather stats for my neck of the woods from April onwards, and they look quite interesting. All the numbers are close approximations, and no doubt official figures will vary a bit from these – but not by much I think.

Each month, followed by the average daily sunshine hours and then the average daily maximum temperature:

APRIL 7.8 hours 18.0 degrees
MAY 10.0 hours 21.1 degrees
JUNE 5.9 hours 22.8 degrees
JULY 5.6 hours 23.8 degrees
AUGUST 5.2 hours 25.3 degrees
SEPTEMBER 5.7 hours 21.6 degrees

This table really highlights just how sunny the spring was – more sunshine in the two months April+May than in the three June+July+August. And for September to be sunnier than July or August, and nearly as sunny as June (bearing in mind how much shorter the days are) is pretty good. May of course was unprecedented for sunshine.

Out of these six months, I think all were on the warm side except for July. There were notable spells of particularly warm weather in all of these months, some of it exceptionally so.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-20 09:18 PM GMT

Sunday 20th September was once again sunny, and temperatures local to me reached 25 degrees or so. I decided to look at Aston Rowant again, and up on the Chiltern ridge it was comfortably cooler.

Across the main slope of the hillside, there was no longer very much flying – just the odd Small Heath and Meadow Brown and a few white butterflies. The luck that presented me with a Clouded Yellow here a few days earlier was absent today. A strongly marked Small White had to do instead.



I went through the gate at the bottom of the slope and headed onward along the path along this bottom edge – not all that far from the M40 itself. Ahead was another relatively sheltered area.



No doubt someone will be able to identify what they were.

With eyes returning to ground level, I started to find a variety of Adonis Blues, wearing a bit, but largely still in one piece and still brilliantly blue.



Competing for attention were some very fresh third brood Common Blues, though not in any numbers...



Here too were more Small Coppers, dividing the path up into approximate territories with consequent frequent boundary disputes.



While the sun shines, the season continues – even up on the Chilterns well away from the balmy south coast. This though was where I would be headed again over the next couple of days.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Vince Massimo, 30-Sep-20 09:58 PM GMT

Hi Dave, I used to be very keen on vintage aircraft in my youth.

The plane on the left is a Harvard. This particular one is used as the training aircraft for pilots of the Hurricane (on the right). They are part of the Shuttleworth Collection, based at Old warden, Bedfordshire.

Hurricane: <https://www.shuttleworth.org/news/r4118/>

Harvard: <https://www.shuttleworth.org/news/newcolours-noorduyn-harvard/>

Vince

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Oct-20 07:53 PM GMT

The invisible line shot made me chuckle Dave – they also seem to be doing their best not to look at each other either, if they can't see it then there ain't a problem 😊 That Small White made me do a double check of it's wing-tips – if they'd been a bit darker and extended down the wing a little more I'd almost have gone for Southern Small 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-Oct-20 09:42 PM GMT

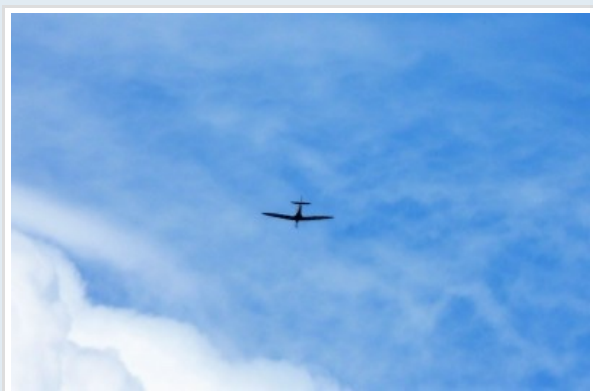
Still plenty to see around your way Dave.

I've been cheating and visiting a garden with plenty of nectar.

On another matter, we get an almost daily fly past from a Spitfire.

Here is a distant shot of it today.

Stay well,
Trevor.



Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Oct-20 10:19 PM GMT

Thank you for the aircraft info, Vince – fascinating. I thought the one on the right was a Hurricane, but had no idea what the other one was at all. I knew someone on here would know something! 😊

Cheers, Wurzel. Those Coppers were great to watch – the moment the nearer of the two flew ahead, the other one was after it in a flash and they disappeared off round a wide loop at top speed before returning separately to similar positions. Meanwhile, not far away, that female was ignoring the male antics and getting on with egg-laying.

I wondered about that Small White too(which is why I included it). It's a pity the photo wasn't a bit better. Of course, the main SSW foodplant (*iberis sempervivens*) grows wild on the Chilterns apparently...

Yes, things have by no means finished round here, Trevor, but last week I did venture down to Sussex quite a bit. 😊

Monday 21st September. The equinox already, but another day more resembling summer than autumn. Rather than go to Brighton again, I decided to make the shorter trip to Mill Hill, always a good spot for late-season butterfly bounty. Three species in particular grabbed the attention – third brood Walls, Clouded Yellows, and the extraordinary numbers of third brood Common Blues.

I found good numbers of Walls, including examples of both sexes, at various points across the whole site. As usual they were not easy to approach.



The meadow areas all along the top of the hillside, especially those near both car parks, were alive with Common Blue butterflies – they almost certainly numbered into three figures and most seemed to be fresh. The variety amongst the females was amazing – no two were the same.







However, a lot of my energies today were expended in the traditional sport here of chasing Clouded Yellows. As with the other two species, they were widespread, but flew faster, longer and overall less accessibly. At least there were quite a few to choose from, and I amused myself once again in trying to get a few shots of their uppersides in flight as they whizzed past tantalisingly close.



I also encountered Dave Cook enjoying the late season butterfly spectacle, and we spent a considerable while chewing the fat amidst the blues and yellows as they gradually thought about settling down and roosting. Good to see you again, Dave. 😊

An excellent day, and I decided it would be worth repeating on the Tuesday to make the most of the last day of summery weather.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Oct-20 10:21 PM GMT

The weather forecast seemed intent on bringing the warm sunny summer-like weather to a close on **Tuesday 22nd September**, so I decided to repeat Monday's trip to Mill Hill (perhaps a little earlier this time). This was probably a good thing as from around one o'clock, the wind started getting up from the southwest and it became firstly hazier and then fog and low cloud rolled in from the sea. However, it was a productive sunny morning with the same set of species as the day before.

There were subtle differences: there didn't seem to be as many Clouded Yellows or Walls around, but I managed a few shots of both. The first species also sparked a long chat with a lady from Brighton who took a great deal of interest in their appearance here and in the legions of Common Blues all around. Unusual or numerous butterflies definitely do still grab the attention of the public.

Cloudies...



...and Walls.



However, today I decided to minimise the chasing of these two species and concentrate on the Common Blues and in particular the astonishing variety of female butterflies on offer everywhere.





Nine different examples there, and there were dozens more – from pale blue to chocolate brown. There were just as many males, probably more in fact, and they must have still been emerging as some examples were shining new. The dimming sunshine encouraged them to open right up, and somehow enhanced the depth of the blue colour.



This last example must rate as one of the most stunning examples of the species I have ever seen.



Another terrific day on this site. As it happened, five or six miles inland the sun still shone, but probably not for long – within an hour of my return home it had completely clouded over.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 02-Oct-20 10:56 PM GMT

A couple of great days out there, Dave. Very impressive Clouded Yellow inflight shots 📷, with both male and female captured. You have also done well with female Walls, always far more elusive than the males. Also a nice selection of 'blue' female Common Blues. I can't remember when I last saw any brown ones!

There has certainly been plenty of action so far this Autumn.

Great stuff, stay well.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Oct-20 08:46 PM GMT

Many thanks, Trevor. I shall however continue to persevere with the open-wing Cloudie shots: they are much trickier to achieve than Wood Whites or Brimstones for some reason. (Probably because they are so much more attractive! The males are an astonishing deep eggy yellow with a bright orange spot, plus very black borders, and the females a more subtle blend of yellow, black and greenish with that standout peachy spot.)

Your part of the world is always worth a visit or two at this time of year – almost like stepping back a season! 😊

Wednesday 23rd September was distinctly different, about eight degrees cooler and not even an hour of sunshine to mitigate it. Nevertheless, a walk around my local patch scraped together 15 butterflies of six species – including one not seen at Mill Hill. Here are five of the six – none of the Speckled Woods seen today were close to the path.

A female Common Blue, to continue the trend from yesterday.



A nice new-looking Small Copper (which I may have seen before).



24th September was a bit cooler still and what little sun there was came at the wrong time of day: I didn't go out. However, on **Friday 25th September**, it was sunnier (though now only 15 degrees was the high – it had been 25 degrees 72 hours earlier). Another local walk managed just nine butterflies today, comprising the same selection but without the Holly Blue. I am now convinced I keep seeing the same Small Copper despite the apparent absence of wear. It proved quite tame today (probably because of the low temperature)...



This is where you start to feel the season is really starting to trickle away...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Oct-20 10:37 PM GMT

A marvellous collection of Blues in these recent posts Dave – they'd have had a Victorian collector filling up another draw – an the final male on the last but one post 🤩👁️ Woah! 🍷🍷 Also a few 🍷🍷 for the in-flight Cloudy shots 🤩

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Oct-20 05:15 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. Victorian collectors would have had a field day up there – one sweep of the net would have brought in a dozen or more assorted females in some spots... 🤩 That male you referred to was an absolute beauty too – as fresh as they come and stunningly blue (enhanced a bit by the cloudy conditions that prevailed at that point I have to admit).

The weekend of 26/27 September was a bit of a writeoff, but the forecast for 28th and 29th was better. Therefore, on **Monday 28th September** I set off for Sussex once again, and paid another visit to Whitehawk Hill in Brighton. There were a handful of folk up there, including Ben and John W. – locals of course! There were still a few (two, maybe three) male LTBs around, but those that I looked at were so worn now that photos really didn't seem worth the effort. No emerging females appeared, much to our disappointment (no doubt including that of the male butterflies...). However, Several Clouded Yellows were flying, and one or two Walls, Common Blues and even a Speckled Wood. Chasing the Cloudies became the priority, especially as at least one female was nectaring frequently and allowing some close approaches.



Luckily, the butterfly remained in roughly the same plane of focus as the flower and any blur is almost all wing movement.

Conscious that the days finish early at this time of year, I dragged myself away to have one more look at Mill Hill.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Oct-20 05:30 PM GMT

Lovely open winged shot there 🍷, sometimes a bit of luck provides the best results 🤩

Re: millerd

by trevor, 04-Oct-20 05:51 PM GMT

That's better Dave, nice and sharp 📷 😊 .
Normally photo opps with Cloudies are a bit limited, always closed wing,
forewing up or forewing down and that's about it.
Having said that they are rather addictive!.

Great Cloudie shots,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 04-Oct-20 10:39 PM GMT

Well done with the CY shots, Dave.

I've seen a few around, but photo opportunities have eluded me.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Oct-20 07:22 PM GMT

Absolutely right, Buggy – luck plays a major role a lot of the time. I can think of half a dozen examples this year alone. 😊

Thank you, Trevor. Cloudies don't provide quite as much scope as other species, hence the need for the afore-mentioned luck! 😊 However, one shot that I particularly like with them is the backlit one, like the fourth one down amongst the daisies. More mundanely, this also identifies for certain which sex it is.

Cheers, Mark – this one was perhaps the most cooperative of all those seen this season so far. 😊 Almost all the others I've come across haven't been particularly keen to sit in front of a camera. There's still time for you to get some shots in as I am still seeing them on my local patch (three today), so I guess they'll be around in the same haunts for a few days yet.

For the rest of the afternoon of **28th September** I left Whitehawk and made my way up to Mill Hill again. Six days had passed since my last visit and the Common Blue numbers had markedly dropped. Nevertheless there were still fresh examples flying. Males...



...females...



...and an underside with two spots nearly joined...



The Clouded Yellows here (there were several) were much less accommodating...



...and the Walls even worse to the extent that there were no successful photos today. I made do with a Green-veined White (I haven't seen many lately anywhere)...



...and finally a very new Red Admiral making the most of the late afternoon sunshine.



Even here at what is a real late season hotspot, things are now winding down a bit.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-20 10:17 PM GMT

Cracking Cloudy shots Dave especially the open winged one – that's brilliant 🍷😄🍷 Really like the back-lit shots too – I'm even more jealous of your employment status now 😊🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Oct-20 08:48 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. That particular butterfly provided a real selection of shots. 😊 Cloudies could become even more addictive than Small Coppers... as you'll see from the next few days. 😊

It remained quite warm (20 degrees) and with some sunshine on **Tuesday 29th September**. I set off round my local walk and counted 21 butterflies of 8 species. The icing on the cake today (considering the hours put in chasing them up and down Sussex hillsides) was finding a Clouded Yellow. I almost invariably see one on my local patch (some years, like 2019, it's just the one) but I generally have to wait right until the end of the season to do so.

Small Whites (7) and Common Blues (7) were the most frequent seen today.



...and an uncommon sight this autumn so far, a newly-emerged Comma. This was so new, the meconium from the chrysalis was visible on the foliage next to the butterfly.



However, the Clouded Yellow stole the show. Soon after I spotted it, the sun went in and caused the butterfly (a male) to thankfully lose interest in courging up and down at high speed. With no sunshine to energise it, it started to settle – though it took a few goes before it was completely happy with the best location to wait for the sun to return. Patches of bare ground (which presumably re-radiate absorbed heat) are often favorites.





The arrival of this species makes a grand total of 25 for my local patch during 2020 (out of the 50 I've managed to see overall in the UK this year). The season would have been incomplete without it! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

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

Dave

Catching up with your PD.

Love your open-wing Cloudie shots and the one with blue sky behind. I have not had much luck with them this year. I believe I have only seen two and both in fast flight. Nice to see your Coppers of course, esp the finger shot. And the finger shot Small Heath too.

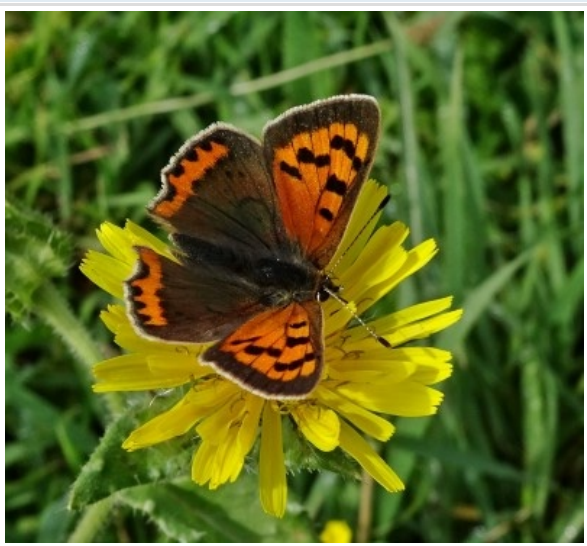
Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Oct-20 09:31 PM GMT

Thank you, Ernie – I've had some luck with the Cloudies this year, with being able to get close to a few, fluking some open-wing shots, and then having them turn up on my doorstep as everything else winds down. 😊 I find it amazing how easy it can be to persuade a butterfly onto a finger, even something as wary as a Small Heath! 😊

My next opportunity to have a look around was a couple of days later on **Thursday 1st October**. October already – where did that season go to? My local patch produced seven species today (the Comma was missing from the tally clocked up on Tuesday): Common Blue (7), Clouded Yellow (2), Small Heath (2), Small Copper (2), Small White (1), Speckled Wood (1), Brown Argus (1). I'm always cautious about logging multiple Clouded Yellows as it's easy to encounter the same one flying in long loops and back and forth over the same area. However, in this case, the two (male) butterflies met in the course of their constant meanderings and had a brief tussle not too far from where I was. Neither one was particularly approachable today.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Oct-20 07:35 PM GMT

The weather now took a nose-dive, and over the next three days (2nd-4th), I saw very little. I had a glimpse of a Speckled Wood on Friday 2nd, and then on **Saturday 3rd October** in a brief brighter moment before increasingly threatening skies took over, I somehow found two butterflies down in the

grass.



Sunday 4th was very wet, and cold as well, and it was difficult to imagine how anything would survive it all and be flying breezily about in the sunshine 24 hours later...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-20 08:22 PM GMT

Congrats on the Cloudy on your local patch Dave – great shots too 🤩👍👏 Twenty five is a great haul for a Local Patch too 🤩 The end of the season has certainly raced away this year it seems 😞 Oh well all good things must come to an end 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Oct-20 01:08 PM GMT

You really DO have an enviable range of species down there for late September/early October, Dave (as well as a few interesting aircraft!)

The third broods are seemingly quite reliable these days. In the 1980s October was a pretty cold month, but more recently the temperatures have been routinely 13–17c throughout the month (and even into early November). That's more than enough for butterflies to remain active. I guess it's what happens to the resultant larvae that poses the problems.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Oct-20 04:45 PM GMT

One way and another, it has been an interesting season Wurzel, with quite a few highlights. Every year is different – and completely unpredictable as well, which is what makes the whole thing so addictive! 😊 Still, it is by no means over yet, and as of the time of writing I have seen 11 species on my local patch since the start of October (and not one Comma amongst them...). 25 for the year is very satisfying, though it doesn't include anything more unusual or exciting than the Cloudies really! 😊

You're right about third broods, David. Holly Blue, Common Blue and Brown Argus (and Small Copper of course) routinely produce a few third brood individuals here these days. In 2020 (as in some other locations) the notable one has been the Common Blue – which has had a terrific year overall on my patch, becoming the most frequently seen butterfly after Meadow Browns and Small Whites. That third place accolade usually goes to the Holly Blue which by contrast hasn't done so well here this year. Once the season has finally come to a close, I'll produce a few stats – there will be some quirks in there I'm sure. 😊😊

However, the 2020 season is by no means at an end. After the cold (only 11 degrees here) and wet of Sunday 4th, **Monday 5th October** couldn't have been more different. There was sunshine (four hours of it) and it was warm (18 degrees as a high today).

Clearly one day of distinctly adverse weather does not have a significant effect on the butterfly species currently around. On a local walk today between 1030 and 1300, I counted 33 individuals from seven species. Today's tally:

Common Blue 11
Small White 10
Clouded Yellow 3
Red Admiral 3
Small Copper 2
Peacock 2
Speckled Wood 2

The warm sunshine meant the Cloudies were almost unapproachable, but by dint of seeing two in a bundle in front of me while a third whizzed past my legs the other way I was able to establish that three were around. They all appeared to be males. Today's shots were nothing special...



another male flypast

A variety of Small Whites, including one that was almost completely white.



a very white individual



a normal male



a female

Among the Common Blues were a couple of females, but they proved impossible to find settled. The males here soon seem to lacerate themselves on the vegetation, but some were largely in one piece.





I found a Small Copper in the usual spot, but looking at it I think it may not be the same male as I saw there a week earlier. It also had a companion – a female was flying not far away, and it was unlikely given their proximity that they had not yet encountered one another.



male



female

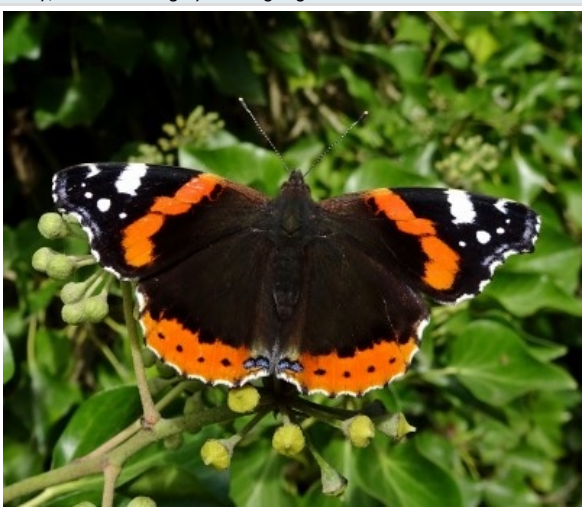
There were a couple of Speckled Woods around, looking very much the autumn butterfly in this sort of pose.



I was also surprised to see two Peacocks flying vigorously around fairly high up, and only stopping to bask pretty well inaccessibly in the trees. A record shot only here...



Finally, a hitherto largely missing ingredient of the autumn was added to the mix – three different Red Admirals on the ivy.



A very good morning, given the date and the weather of the day before. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 09-Oct-20 06:59 PM GMT

[quote=millerd_post_id=158752-time=1602258310-user_id=9839] ...Still, it is by no means over yet, and as of the time of writing I have seen 11

species on my local patch since the start of October...

Well done Dave, that's 11 more than I have seen. That is a cracking local patch you have there 🍀🍀. The first week of the month here was horrendous with 5 days of almost continuous rain.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

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

There has quite a bit of rain here too, Neil (enough to make the River Colne overflow again as it did last February), but in between there have been a few sunny mornings. I have been surprised how well the butterflies have been holding up, even though they have not been quite the ones I would have expected to see.

Tuesday 6th October: not as warm, nothing like as sunny, and a bit of a stiff breeze. Nevertheless, a few things were flying locally – a couple of Speckled Woods and two hardy Common Blues.



During the sunny interval when that particular Common Blue appeared, one of the resident Clouded Yellows nipped past with the wind. I watched it as it reached the end of the bit of hedge it was following and returned back towards me, fighting against the breeze. The sun promptly went back in and the Cloudie soon headed to the ground where I caught up with it.



I soon realised that it had now settled for the duration, and while it remained cloudy and cooler it would be possible to entice it onto my finger.



After it had posed for its portrait I looked for somewhere suitable, more out of the wind, to put it back down. The grassland here (especially in October) lacks any prominent photogenic foliage so I made do. I was not assisted by the fact that the butterfly initially resisted being decanted from my finger – I've encountered this before, and suspect that they enjoy the warmth radiated in the same way that they often choose bare patches of warm ground to wait for the sun to reappear.



It settled down further, with its antennae now closer together – a sure sign of impending torpor.



I can quickly see from the markings that this is not the one I photographed on 5th or 3rd, and probably not the one from 29th September either – that underside hindwing spot is almost like a fingerprint. I will need to study the photos more closely once the species is over for the year to establish just how many there were.

For a summer migrant from warmer climes, Clouded Yellows are a very resilient species.

Dave

Re: millerd

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

Brilliant Cloudy shots Dave 🍷🍷 The fly-past one is great too. The male Small White from a post back is quite interesting – that's the kind of Small White I'd expect to see in the spring brood 😊😊 Very unusual looking 😊😊 We've had it a bit rougher over our way so the season is finalizing a bit more

quickly – also Mrs Wurzel has produced paint brushes and tins of paint recently... 😊😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 11-Oct-20 03:38 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=158752 time=1602258310 user_id=9839]...Once the season has finally come to a close, I'll produce a few stats – there will be some quirks in there I'm sure.

I shall look forward to those, Dave.

Very regularly I note that the area round Heathrow has posted the UK's warmest temperature of the day so if third broods are likely to become commonplace, then it's understandable that they do so round your way.

Unfortunately, unlike the southern half of France, November is a huge obstacle for early stages to surmount, with night-time frosts and cool, wet and often stormy days quite prevalent. Much as I like the idea of additional broods, I fear the consequences if our climate changes much more. Even here in south Wales, we barely have frost or snow any more during the late autumn and winter.

I'm impressed at your scrutiny of individual Clouded Yellows. I'd love it if we could make sufficiently light GPS trackers to see where these migrants go. Maybe one day...

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Oct-20 08:05 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – the varied weather (the mix of sunshine and cloud really) has made Cloudy shots a bit easier to come by than usual, especially considering that all those found locally appear to be males. Females tend to be less active. I think we've been reasonably lucky with the recent weather in having a few fairly warm sunny(ish) mornings and a bunch of very hardy butterflies undaunted by sitting out the old day of cold and wet! 😊 You never seem to be without a tin of paint to hand – have you secretly built a life-size model of the Forth Bridge in some trans-dimensional part of your back garden and now have to keep painting it? 😊 (You can tell I watch too much sci-fi... 😊).

End-of-season stats sometimes have surprises, David – perceptions don't always equate to the hard reality the figures bring out. Local temperatures are included and the point you mention about Heathrow being frequently the UK hotspot is most certainly borne out. 2019/20 was a snowless winter too.

Tracking individual butterflies with GPS would provide an amazing insight into the movement of migrant species. Capture-mark-and-release schemes are very hit and miss with anything that flies any distance. However, it seems that the local Cloudies have decided to stay put – maybe because they are males waiting for a wandering female to stray into what they consider to be good breeding habitat (which is quite possibly accurate as there are currently decent amounts of birds-foot trefoil and clovers available for egg-laying).

Wednesday 7th October was a bit sunnier, especially in the morning, and I managed to find 15 butterflies of 8 different species today. The more consistent sunshine kept the two Clouded Yellows seen from settling for long.





another "moment of take-off" shot

Rather curiously I saw no white butterflies at all today, despite the sunshine, and the commonest species was the Common Blue with six seen.



The only other species seen twice in fact was the Speckled Wood.



The other five were all singletons. Small Copper:



Red Admiral:



A very old Small Heath, probably towards the end of its last day in the sun:



A new-looking Peacock, avidly feeding on the last wild buddleia flowers – a second brood individual, perhaps:



Finally, sitting quietly in a sunny spot amid the brambles, a new third-brood Holly Blue:



Even in October, new things can still appear... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Oct-20 07:32 PM GMT

Thursday 8th October was actually a bit warmer (18 degrees again) but sunshine was in short supply. Nevertheless I set off round my usual local circuit and managed to track down a handful of butterflies: two Common Blues and one each of Clouded Yellow, Small Copper, Holly Blue and Red Admiral.

The Common Blues (both males) were quite fresh and as yet scarred by their environment. This is one of them.



I think the Small Copper is the same one seen on previous days – it was certainly in the same place exactly.



The sole Cloudie seen today was of course rather subdued by the lack of bright sunshine. I managed to locate it in this area of habitat where it and its cohorts have been flying for at least ten days, and where they have frequently gone to ground.





This one still looks remarkably whole, though a little more worn now.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-20 08:24 PM GMT

More cracking reports Dave – excellent Cloudies and Holly Blues but my favourite shot has to be the open wing shot of the Common Blue with the spots showing through the wings 😊 I'll have to try and gwt out an look for some of those hardy butterflies sitting out the cold, I just hope they hang around for 10 days or so...fingers crossed! 😊

WRT to painting I reckon the Forth Bridge would be a doddle compared to my two up two down terrace house – you see the girls are a bit spacially unaware of their bags and coats and shoes 😊 To be fair it has been a year or two since the last coat 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Oct-20 09:02 PM GMT

Many thanks again, Wurzel – that Clouded Yellow was very compliant in the relatively cloudy conditions. 😊 I've noticed how some Common Blue males seem to have a lighter dusting of scales than others, allowing the underside spotting to show through even when not backlit. They show up quite well in both upperside shots of the one in that last post. Let's hope the butterflies continue for a bit longer... 😊

They did on **Friday 9th October**, despite a cooler day. To be fair, there was more sunshine, and today's Clouded Yellow was correspondingly much more active and difficult to approach.



The bit of wing damage identified this individual as one I'd seen before.

I found 14 other butterflies, including six Common Blues today, some of which were still quite fresh.



After a five day gap, three Small Whites appeared – and then (the first one since mid-September) a male Large White.



Checking back, this appears to be the latest I've seen this species here.

A familiar Small Copper was waiting for me in its usual spot (I shall miss it when it finally disappears)...



To round off the walk, there was another Peacock nectaring on late-flowering buddleia. Certain wild bushes are producing quite a strong second burst of flowers.



Seven species today (and eleven for October so far). How much longer will the season carry on I wonder? 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Oct-20 09:12 PM GMT

Saturday 10th just didn't make the cut, weatherwise, but **Sunday 11th October** was much better – some sunshine and light winds in the morning, and reasonably warm. I was at Bushy Park again for my son's rugby training, and had another walk in this extensive green space in West London suburbia.

The first thing I noticed were lots of folk brandishing long lenses, followed by quite a bit of loud bellowing. It then clicked – the renowned herd of deer in the Park were now into their rutting season. There were some impressive antlers on display, but I didn't see any battles, just a lot of standing around really.





Having just taken these shots, I became aware of something fluttering around my feet. Peering down, I saw that it was a Small Copper investigating some sorrel plants.



I was surprised to see it as it was not yet 10 o'clock and the temperature was only just into double digits.

I wandered on and it became a bit warmer. The goddess Diana was still wearing her collection of cormorants in the middle of the lake.



After further wanderings, taking in a rather handsome parasol mushroom...



I was reminded immediately of Staines Moor, and close examination of these anthills revealed another similarity – they were covered in small sorrel plants.



No sooner had the connection been made than another flash of orange caught my eye – a second Small Copper.



Before the lure of a coffee became too much, I saw four altogether in this area. Considering the look of the habitat, there could be quite a reasonable population here overall. It is after all essentially the same as Staines Moor – both are within a mile or so of the Thames, very much part of the original flood plain, and have not been under cultivation any time recently.

By the time I was home again, the sunshine had become distinctly half-hearted and it was not worth going out locally. Never mind, it had been an interesting morning. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Oct-20 07:36 PM GMT

There followed two more days of unsuitable weather, and I wasn't able to go out on my local patch again until **Wednesday 14th October**. Five days had passed since my last look around, and at this time of year with every day shorter than the previous one and sunshine and warmth at a premium, a lot

can change. However, in what sunshine there was today I managed to find 13 butterflies of six species – though there was no sign of a Clouded Yellow for the first time in just over a fortnight.

A couple of male Common Blues looked familiar and one at least was increasingly ragged.



There was also a female, but she was flying fast and low and I quickly lost track of her.

I found two Small Coppers again. The first was a rather tattered female, but the second one (a male) was once more exactly where I expected (does it sit and wait for me, I wonder? 😊).



Though numbers are far lower than usual for October here, I did also count three Red Admirals. This one was also enjoying an impressive spray of buddleia – a shot that could just as easily be from July.



There was also a single Speckled Wood, but it was flying alongside a main road where there was no path so a closer approach would have been somewhat foolhardy!

Some sunshine is forecast for the next two mornings, so it's definitely not time to call a halt to proceedings yet. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Oct-20 08:42 PM GMT

I was quite surprised to see that Peacock Dave – I always thought they headed off to 'bed' very early 😊 Still good to see butterflies but I think you've been a bit luckier weather wise than us over in the west but hopefully a few more sunny days will produce the goods, I'm finding the dreaded "W" word keeps getting in the way 😊😊 There was one really fresh looking Common Blue from your most recent posts that keeps springing to mind – it looks great 😊 and even had a few black spots near the hind wing margins 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Oct-20 09:29 PM GMT

I think the one or two Peacocks I've been seeing lately may be second brood examples, Wurzel, with a pressing need to feed up before heading for hibernation. The weather has been slightly better than marginal here, in the mornings at least, and a bit of sun is all the handful of remaining butterflies seem to need. 😊

Thursday 15th October was a couple of degrees cooler, but there was still a bit of morning sunshine. However, my local patch could only conjure half a dozen butterflies today – though one was the welcome reappearance of a Clouded Yellow.



It was still warm enough for the usual Small Copper to be active...



There were just a couple of Small Whites, one of which was a fresh male which sat in the hedge at one point with its wings in an unusual position, the forewings angled below the hindwings, so that the leading edge of the latter was in front of the former.



It then relocated to a more conventional pose on the ground, where a burst of sunshine showed its underside to be quite a strong shade of lemon-yellow.



Without so much sun, it looked a bit less dramatic.



A small dark insect then darted from the grass, but in a pattern that didn't fit any butterfly I'd expect to see – not surprisingly it turned out to be a newly-emerged Silver-Y moth.



Last of all today was the chance to cover myself in embarrassment my misidentifying a caddis fly as "some kind of moth". I'm grateful to Bugboy for attempting to dilute my faux-pas by pointing out that there is a common ancestor back in the mists of time... 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Oct-20 06:29 PM GMT

Cracking Cloudy and Small White – that is an unusual posture 😊 it must be doing some form of insect yoga 😊 I've been caught out by the Caddis Fly before – the shape of the wings is very reminiscent of lots of the micro moths 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Oct-20 08:20 AM GMT

They all seem to be hanging in round your way, Dave, even though the vegetation looks distinctly autumnal (bar the buddleia flowers).

I'm delighted you've seen third brood Holly Blues again, and what chance is there of a November Cloudie? If things stay mild it's a distinct possibility.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Oct-20 10:17 AM GMT

Hoping to have a few more days out, like you I don't want to give up yet.

David M. mentions a November Cloudie, Nov 18th is my latest a few years back.

We have been spoilt so far this Autumn with plentiful LTB's and Cloudies, and as yet no frosts.

A festive Holly Blue this year?.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 19-Oct-20 03:58 PM GMT

WoW! you're still seeing Butterflies Dave, nothing here, even the Bee's have vanished 😊😊 Love your shots of the Cloudies , at least they come every year and don't seem to mind the rain too much now. It would be great if I could move house in the Spring then I could catch up on the Grizzlies 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Oct-20 09:19 PM GMT

Thank you everyone - it's good to still be seeing butterflies, though I'm beginning to suspect that they are quite often the same ones each day! That Small Copper certainly is, and I expect the Cloudies are as well. I'm still waiting for them to finish for the year so I can look at the (many!) photos and see just how many there have been.

Aside from the couple seen ten days ago, Holly Blues have been sadly lacking - though I have to remind myself that the last sightings of recent years have always been in November... 😊 I'm not particularly hopeful, though.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Oct-20 09:31 PM GMT

Thanks for supplying me with another excuse for that misidentification of the caddis fly, Wurzel! It did indeed look very mothlike to me... 😊

Clouded Yellows seem pretty robust, David, but I suspect the ones I've been seeing have already been around for about three weeks. However, they still appear largely intact so given enough sunshine to enable them to nectar and an absence of frosty nights they may last another week or so. The lifespans of adult butterflies (aside from hibernators) don't feature a great deal in species accounts in the books I have. We shall have to see! 😊

Yes, Trevor, it's certainly worth a few more excursions when the weather's favourable. These days, down here in the south of England you really can't declare the season over until we're into November. And not always then! 2nd December is the latest I've seen things locally... 😊

Fingers crossed for you moving in time for spring, Goldie! Grizzlies can last into June sometimes, so you have a little breathing space! You'll always see Cloudies in Kent too. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Oct-20 10:26 PM GMT

Friday 16th October was a bit warmer than the previous day, and produced a sunny morning again. There was a bit less wind and I ended up seeing 13 butterflies altogether around my local patch with six species represented.

I will start with Old Faithful, the Small Copper that has weathered everything October has thrown at him so far...



There was also a Speckled Wood today – I thought it was two, as the sightings I had were not that close together, but the photos show it was the same butterfly.



I spotted two different Small Whites (they really were in very different areas... 😊), but neither were close enough for photos. Red Admirals were more obliging – and there were actually three today. Still unfortunately nowhere near what I usually see at this time of year.



By contrast, Common Blues are not usually a feature of the middle of October, but there were four flying today, including a nice new female.



This left one further species, one which has become a familiar and almost routine sight this month – the Clouded Yellows. Plural today, as there were at least two males around again. The conditions today meant that though they performed their usual patrols back and forth along their customary routes, they stopped frequently to nectar. I assume that as the days shorten they need to maximise their fuel intake to cope with the longer cooler nights and shorter hours of daytime sunshine. Time spent looking for females reduces accordingly. However (unfortunately for these males) I have yet to see a female here this year – if any appeared with them, they must have moved on.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-20 10:31 PM GMT

Cracking set of images Dave – especially those back lit Cloudies – cracking they are 😄😄👍👍 Love the final shot of the two in flight – they look like they're flying in formation 😄😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Oct-20 08:19 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel – nothing like a a bit of luck to enhance the day! 😄 I also do like a backlit butterfly, and Cloudies have such an intense yellow colour, even when getting a bit worn as these now are that they make a particularly good subject.

The weekend of 17th/18th October was uniformly overcast and not particularly warm – well, it is well and truly autumn now.



I went out again on **Monday 19th October** fearing that the break might have boded badly and despite some sunshine and warmer temperatures I might not see anything.

Better than I had expected: Seven individuals appeared with five species represented. Two male Common Blues...



...a couple of Red Admirals



In some ways it's not surprising that Common Blues have been doing well, and that there has been a good Clouded Yellow showing this year – large clumps of birds'-foot trefoil have appeared. There is far more around than in previous years – it's a pity there are no Dingy Skippers here to enjoy it too (and scant evidence of any Green Hairstreaks either). Good to see nonetheless.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Oct-20 08:37 PM GMT

You did well with those species Dave 🍷 I could only muster a Red Admiral today and during any reasonable weather recently I've been working 😊 Stroll on next season! 🤔🤔

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 23-Oct-20 02:49 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=158972 time=1603142795 user_id=9839]...The unzoomed result amounted to a couple of bright yellow dots, but enlargement revealed that somehow I had caught them both with wings fully open towards me as they had flown past. I'm not sure that such a result could be achieved deliberately – a very happy accident, and despite the lack of detail from such distant and unfocused shot, one that evokes the whole atmosphere of watching Clouded Yellows making the most of the autumn sun.

Agree with that. Lovely image and great that you captured both with wings fully open in flight.

Interesting too is your observation regarding birds' foot trefoil. Maybe it isn't coincidental how there are such good numbers of both Common Blues AND Clouded Yellows this autumn.

Nice to see Small Coppers and Small Whites are still active round your way. Last couple of times I've been out there haven't been any of either, so they look to have packed up for the year near me.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Oct-20 09:35 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. It's getting more and more difficult to find anything, and the weather has been a tad uncooperative this week as well. 😊

Thank you, David – I was very pleased with that lucky Clouded Yellow shot as getting two males in the same frame is well nigh impossible in the normal course of things. 😊 The Small Copper I've been seeing is the last one around here, but it seems to be a resilient little thing. I first saw it on 5th October (it wasn't brand new then) – and it was still going strong on 22nd.

On **Tuesday 20th October**, it was really quite warm (19 degrees), but the weather gods saw to it that a frustrating combination of high and low cloud put paid to almost all the sunshine. All I spotted today was one Small White...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Oct-20 07:24 PM GMT

That Copper is holding up well Dave, although I suppose that's because he's not doing as much fighting at this time of year 😊😊 The weather is really sticking it too us over this way at the moment – but with a lot of effort there are still a few butterflies about – don't now how much longer that will continue so I'm looking forward to your future posts as they seem to have a longer season further east 🍷😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 26-Oct-20 05:24 PM GMT

Belated congrats for your in flight double cloudie shot Dave 🍷🍷
A shot like that could never be planned, a classic case of right place, right time, and camera at the ready!. What are the odds of an opportunity like that?.

Trust you've bought a lottery ticket.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-Oct-20 09:11 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, nothing here at all for over a week or two now , the weather has been miserable cold and wet so it's it's good to see your Butterflies 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Oct-20 10:22 PM GMT

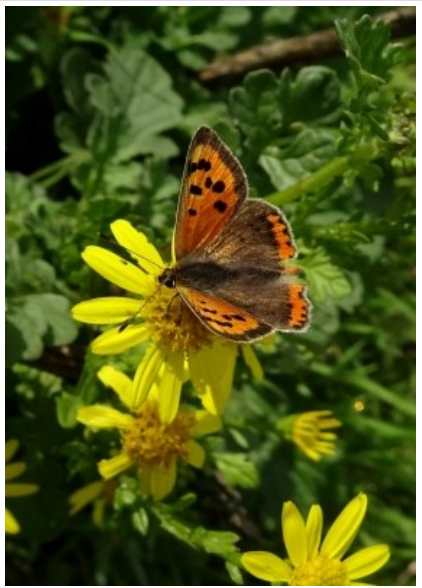
Cheers, Wurzel – that Copper probably had a sparring partner at the start of the month, and maybe a love interest as well, but seems to have run out of anything to chase now – not even a Common Blue. They do seem capable of living for several weeks though – I followed the life of one individual for over a month back in the spring. 😊 Luckily their wing patterns are fairly individual, especially if they also acquire an identifiable bit of wing damage early on in their lives, and their highly territorial nature means you can follow them quite closely over a period of time.

Thanks, Trevor! The chance of another shot like that is vanishingly small I would guess, even when there are a few Cloudies around as there have been this autumn. Somehow I doubt the luck would transfer to the lottery... 😊

Thank you, Goldie. 😊 Even down here, the butterflies are becoming few and far between. 😊 Just a few more to post now and I'm up to date.

Thursday 22nd October. After another grey day on 21st, Sunshine beckoned me out onto my local patch once again. I looked in vain for Clouded Yellows, and suspect that they must have finally succumbed to the far from ideal weather. I decided a similar fate must have befallen the Common Blues, but in the end I did catch a glimpse of a single female scooting low down across the grass.

The Small Copper was holding the fort in its usual locale, concentrating on a particular bit of ragwort that is still flowering well. I think this particular plant has been almost wholly responsible for sustaining this butterfly in recent days.



On my way back, I firstly saw a fresh-looking Small White sail across the path and up into the trees, and then a bit further along I found a Speckled Wood sunning itself at a convenient height.



Annoyingly, by concentrating attention on this butterfly, I completely overlooked a Red Admiral which had been on the ground close by (presumably with its wings closed). Disturbed, it also made for the trees and didn't return.

Fortunately, as I reached a reliable clump of ivy, another one of the same species was waiting for me.



So, six butterflies, five species – not too bad really. However, the forecast ahead didn't look good... 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-20 09:23 PM GMT

The weather hasn't been great recently Dave – I'm lucky if I get a singleton on a visit 😞 Could be another NBN (Non-butterfly November) this year again 😞 Mind you your shots cheered me up 😊 especially the penultimate Copper shot with the dusting of gold scales in view 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Oct-20 06:11 PM GMT

You're spot on with that weather assessment, Wurzel. 😞 Since the 22nd, there have been no further suitable days to see anything. Sunshine (if there's been any) has been hazy, or accompanied by chilly winds. Warmer days have been cloudy and/or wet. I saw a single Red Admiral pass by on Monday 26th, but nothing else at all. I've checked that enduring Small Copper's patch a few times, but without luck, and clearly the Cloudies have also finally disappeared.

I shall keep looking (as I did this morning), but that may well be it for the year. Still – it's been an interesting one (as they all are in different and usually unexpected ways!). 😊 I shall attempt an overview at some point – of my local patch at least – and do my best not to duplicate what goes into the

"Favourite Photo" threads. That works as a pretty comprehensive retrospective of the season in itself.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 30-Oct-20 08:49 PM GMT

[quote=Wurzel post_id=159087 time=1603830198 user_id=9821] ... Could be another NBN (Non-butterfly November) this year again..
Wurzel

Look on the bright side guys...I have had a NBO (Non-butterfly October).

Just seen your double open wing Cloudie shot Dave. Great stuff, definitely one I wish I had taken 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-Nov-20 11:03 AM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=159071 time=1603747366 user_id=9839]The Small Copper was holding the fort in its usual locale, concentrating on a particular bit of ragwort that is still flowering well. I think this particular plant has been almost wholly responsible for sustaining this butterfly in recent days.

I've grown rather fond of that Small Copper, Dave, and I guess you have too. I hope he'll still be there when the sun and calm return on Tuesday.

Other than that, the Speckled Woods and ivy-nectaring Red Admirals are the very essence of late October, although the Common Blue is a surprise (albeit a pleasant one).

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Nov-20 04:53 PM GMT

Thank you, Neil – as already mentioned, the Cloudy x 2 photo was 99.99% luck! 😊

Unfortunately, David, that Small Copper is now long gone. I've looked regularly since that last sighting and there has been no trace. When a clearly recognisable individual appears regularly in the same spot, you can indeed feel a bit of an attachment as you describe. Daft really! 😊

October is now over, the wet and lack of sunshine doing its best to spoil the month down this way. The average maximum temperature was only 15 degrees, and the high for the month was just 19 degrees (on 20th). The total of only 54 hours of sunshine averages out at only one and three-quarter hours a day – not a lot.

However, the surprisingly numerous third brood of Common Blues spilled over from September, and the presence of a handful of Clouded Yellows gave the month an unexpected lift. Ten species were seen altogether during October (and strangely two species not seen at all then appeared on 2nd November...).

Since 26th October, I had seen no butterflies at all. The last day or two of the month, plus 1st November, became noticeably warmer though as often happens at this time of year this warmth was accompanied by strong winds, cloud cover and rain. However, on the morning of **Monday 2nd November** (after an unusually warm night) the clouds broke up and warm sunshine ruled for a few hours. The wind was still strong, but there were sheltered spots along my usual local walk. One bit of path between two bramble hedges was particularly favoured, and I looked ahead to see a male Brimstone bowling along. It must have been disturbed by the unexpected combination of warmth and sunshine, but was clearly intent on finding another suitable hibernation niche as it repeatedly wandered into the hedge and out again. Having watched Brimstones seeking roosting spots in the past, I have noticed how picky they are in deciding what will be the right location and this one was no exception. I gave up any hope of it actually settling near me, so pointed the camera at it as it passed and hoped for the best.



I wondered if this was going to be a complete one-off and then also remembered that curiously a Brimstone had been the first butterfly I had seen in

2020, back on 11th March.

I'm glad to say I was wrong – on the way home, via a sheltered bit of flowering ivy, I spied a Red Admiral. Not really a surprise as I've seen this species at some point during almost every November in recent years.



Though the weather is set to settle down now, with more sunshine, there are going to be some frosty nights and it remains to be seen whether any more butterflies are tempted out. Still, today was a satisfying outing! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 03-Nov-20 07:58 PM GMT

Saw a Red Admiral at work yesterday too, no chance to grab a snap but it was a welcome sight 😊. Maybe tomorrow might be the final chance to see something...

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-20 08:27 PM GMT

Great find with that Comma Dave 😊👍 I've noticed a few have been reported recently on Facebook – so where have they been hiding this autumn? I managed to join the NBC (November Butterfly Club) as well today 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-Nov-20 08:16 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=159216 time=1604422392 user_id=9839].Unfortunately, David, that Small Copper is now long gone. I've looked regularly since that last sighting and there has been no trace...

Not surprising, Dave, but a little sad all the same. 😞

Still, Brimstone and Comma isn't a bad way to start November off, and given the sightings coming in from the south of England lately, I feel you may have a few surprises before the late autumn frosts kick in.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Nov-20 07:50 PM GMT

Cheers, everyone! The season routinely continues into November round here, but it's often Red Admirals and not much else (other than Holly Blues of course, but this year they all seem to have fallen through a wormhole that opens out by Shoreham Harbour... 😊).

After a cloudy day on 3rd, **Wednesday 4th November** dawned sunny, but there was the first ground frost of the autumn first thing. Temperatures soon rose to 11 degrees, nothing spectacular but the usual walk around my local patch showed that the sun was still strong enough to encourage a butterfly or two to take to the air.

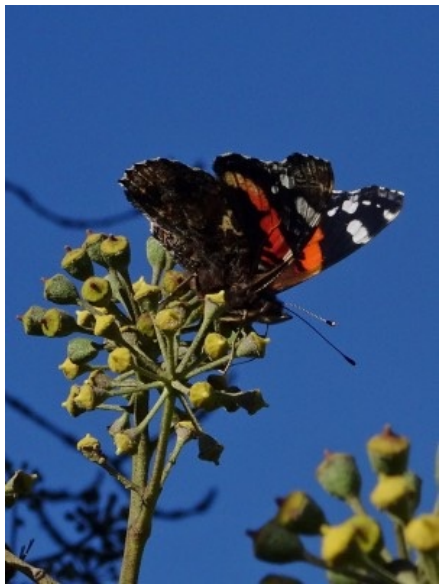
I was surprised first by a female Common Blue, so much so that she darted away and I didn't manage to get near enough for a photo. She was rather ragged and worn in any case, and probably the one I'd succeeded in getting a shot of last week.

I then approached a large mass of ivy, hopeful of a Red Admiral – and immediately identified something fluttering nearby. Not an Admiral though: after sailing back and forth higher up for a while, the butterfly responded to a little verbal encouragement and settled lower down. It was a Speckled Wood, and in fairly good condition as well for all that it had lost a piece from one hindwing.



I have a feeling that this species hasn't featured in previous November sightings here, and certainly not one so fresh.

The next big patch of ivy was more true to expectation, and was playing host to two Red Admirals (one of which I'd seen on 2nd). The other one had a large chunk missing from one wing, and didn't come very close.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Nov-20 07:36 PM GMT

The next couple of days (5th/6th) also started very chilly, and what little sun there was not surprisingly didn't prompt any butterfly activity that I could find.

I had a look back at October's weather: there were only 54 hours of sun over the whole month at Heathrow, and the average maximum temperature was only 15 degrees. The highest for the month was just 19 degrees (22nd), but there were no frosts at all. (It was quite wet too.) Looking at all that, it was perhaps surprising that I saw as many butterflies as I did – ten different species with 140 individual sightings over 14 days of looking. November has now followed with two species not seen at all throughout October – it's been sunnier and the average high so far has been barely any lower than October's at just over 14 degrees.

With it continuing mild, there should be a little more to see, hopefully. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Nov-20 07:32 PM GMT

Saturday 7th November turned out to be a glorious day, with plenty of sunshine and temperatures up to around 16 degrees local to me. As ever, I set off for a prolonged walk around my local patch, finding a coat wasn't even necessary and remembering a grim day back in June that was several degrees cooler and was grey and wet with it. Finding a single Red Admiral wasn't particularly remarkable (I was actually slightly surprised I didn't see more)...



I'm told this is a Common Darter.

Six different species seen this month now.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Nov-20 10:41 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave – six species in November is really good going – I've only managed 3 or 4 before during one very good November 😊🍷 I would go with Common Darter for the dragonfly – they seem to 'rust' as they age and then their 'red paint' peels off 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 14-Nov-20 02:42 PM GMT

What can I say Dave, 🍷🍷 Lousy weather here, I'll have to wait until next year, nothing here since the 6th Of October. 😞 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-Nov-20 08:18 PM GMT

Some great November finds there Dave. If the fat Lady holds off for a while longer your local patch might produce some late Holly Blues.

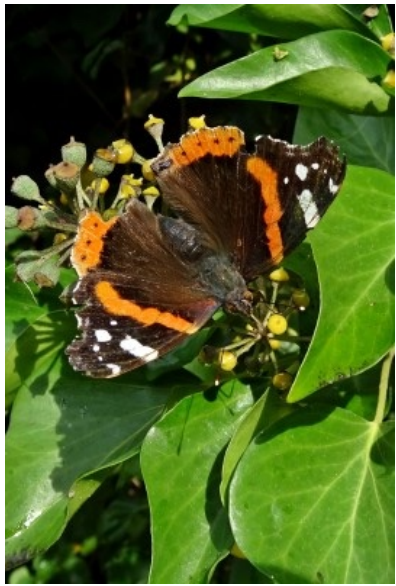
Then she can sing her heart out! 😊

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Nov-20 08:59 PM GMT

Thanks all. 😊 Since that last post I've only seen one butterfly – a Red Admiral on 9th November.



This is despite warm days and a certain amount of sunshine. However, no Holly Blues have been around since the beginning of October and though the last one of 2019 was on 27th November, I have a feeling that it's all over for 2020.

I shall now embark on a retrospective of 2020, concentrating on my local patch – highlights from elsewhere will probably pop up in the species favourites threads. With luck, I shall finish it before the 2021 season starts!

2020 kicked off in March...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Nov-20 06:19 PM GMT

Looking forward to the 'looking back' posts Dave 😊 Mind you that's all I ever seem to post 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Nov-20 07:08 PM GMT

You'll have to wait a little longer Wurzel, as no sooner had I declared the season over than I found another couple of butterflies. 😊

On **Sunday 15th November**, the overnight rain and wind abruptly cleared, leaving wall-to-wall sunshine for an hour or two. It was quite warm in the sun, and I paddled off around a portion of my usual local walk – it was very soggy indeed underfoot. I didn't really expect to see anything, and consequently failed to notice a Comma basking on the ground under an ivy-covered wall. I disturbed it, and after toying with settling on the ivy it departed on the breeze downwind and out of sight. This did mean that I started to search all the other bits of ivy a bit more carefully, and before long came upon a Red Admiral. Aside from missing the tips from both forewings, it looked pretty new and had probably emerged very recently.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Nov-20 08:18 PM GMT

Well that Red Admiral is certainly worth waiting a bit longer for the 'look back' Dave 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 16-Nov-20 09:49 PM GMT

Clipped wing tips or not, that's a very fine end of season Red Admiral. For me I think that is about it for 2020.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Nov-20 08:02 PM GMT

That was indeed a nice one to end on. 😊 I've been out locally during several short spells of reasonably warm sunshine since, but I think that it does now look like 2020 is over here. Consequently I can now look back at the season, and as mentioned before, I shall largely concentrate on my local patch, plus the inclusion of Staines Moor (as it is within walking distance and has been a major revelation for any fan of the Small Copper!).

First, an overview of my local patch.

A large part of the ground I cover on local walks is the area bounded by the M25 (to the west), the A3112 (to the south), the River Colne (to the east) and up to the Old Bath Road (to the north). It is basically grassland, though bounded in places with woodland and bramble thickets. The soil is poor, being for the most part composed of the spoil dug out when Heathrow Terminal Five was constructed, and the land is owned by Heathrow and maintained by the Airport as part of the Heathrow Biodiversity Conservation Area. Aside from supporting a healthy wildflower and therefore butterfly population, I believe there are a good variety of other invertebrates (I see many dragonflies, and have found wasp spiders and stag beetles in the past). It also hosts nesting birds, including skylarks and lapwings, and there is a lot of other passing birdlife (I am no expert here!).

When Heathrow expansion was on the cards, this whole area would have been swallowed by development. Heathrow was committed to replacement of like for like, but appeared not to realise that sites like this take years to evolve and you cannot create a replacement overnight. Thankfully the current COVID pandemic seems to have thoroughly dampened down any enthusiasm for the expansion – I doubt there is currently any money in anyone's pocket to finance such a huge venture and it will be many months (maybe years) before air traffic returns to levels known before 2020.

Unfortunately there has recently been a threat to the area of a different nature. Since its creation, Heathrow has maintained a route from one end to the other for the benefit of walkers, cyclists and horseriders. Simple gates were installed. However, over the last twelve months, local off-road motorcyclists and quadbikers have discovered the area, and at weekends in particular have been (ab)using it more and more, churning up the grass and in recent weeks creating large areas of mud. The gates proved no obstacle – they were attacked with boltcutters and physically removed. Replacements went the same way within 48 hours of installation. Rigorous policing by Heathrow conservation staff is not a practical option (in cash-strapped times it can hardly be a high priority, and staff do not work weekends when most damage occurs). Nevertheless, in conjunction with the local council, access points have recently been obstructed by large concrete blocks. Pedestrians can pass through, and pedal cycles can be lifted over with care. Unfortunately, horses can no longer access the site. It remains to be seen how the bikers react to this latest development.

The remainder of my patch is the area around Hithermoor Lake, with the River Colne running alongside. There is mixed deciduous woodland, good stands of ivy and plenty of brambles and nettles. Wild buddleias are a useful feature as well. One open bit of grass would support good numbers of wildflowers if only it wasn't mown two or three times every year – one year when the midsummer mow was somehow overlooked, there were many more butterflies! Apparently local people really do complain if the grass doesn't look like their front lawn... 😊 This area around the lake is where the season

usually kicks off, and 2020 was no exception.

MARCH

March began to warm up at the end of the first week, and became increasingly sunny, putting the extremely wet February into distant memory. Overall, the average daily high at Heathrow was nearly 12 degrees, with 15 or 16 being reached on a few days. Overall, 148 hours of sun were logged (near enough four and threequarter hours a day), a welcome trend that was to continue for the rest of the Spring.

The first butterflies appeared on 11th, in 15 degree sunshine. Three species too – a Small Tortoiseshell, a Peacock and no fewer than seven Brimstones. Three more species were seen before the month was out: Comma (13th), Small White (23rd) and Orange Tip (25th). All six were seen on 26th.



Spring had arrived. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Nov-20 08:04 PM GMT

I still don't get why people want every green space mown to a height of 4 cm 😞 Still a cracking set of shots Dave – that pair of Peacocks are stunning 😊 It's good to remember that there were some good things about March 2020 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Nov-20 02:21 PM GMT

It baffles me too Wurzel, though there is one advantage – when the grass is short it's much easier to spot and avoid the piles of dog excrement... 😊😊

That was my first ever shot of courting Peacocks at ground level, despite having seen this behaviour in Small Tortoiseshells many times.

APRIL

April turned into another sunny month (233 hours at Heathrow, or around 7hrs 45mins a day), and it became warm, sometimes very warm (average daily high 18 degrees, with 12 days recording 20 degrees or better). With the exception of one brief outing to Bedfont Lakes CP, I remained local under the constraints of lockdown but because of the excellent weather managed to go out at some point on 26 out of 30 days. Six more species made their first appearances: Speckled Wood (4th), Holly Blue (5th), Red Admiral (6th), Large White (7th), Green-veined White (7th) and Small Copper (25th). Several days had counts of well over 100 butterflies, and eleven species (out of twelve) were seen on some days. Notable counts included a staggering 45 Peacocks on 7th, and a respectable 32 Holly Blues on 26th. Orange Tips had a good month as well, with counts on many days mid-month reaching 20–25 individuals, including the first females.



14th - male



7th - a very fresh pairing



16th - female

The visit to Bedfont Lakes on 23rd ticked off Green Hairstreak, so I had reached a respectable 13 species for the year at this point.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 26-Nov-20 07:04 PM GMT

An interesting look back to April Dave.

A mrgreen for those superb shots of the very fresh male and female Holly Blues 🍷 .

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Nov-20 03:31 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor – the Hollies are a staple of the local butterfly contingent, and I hope they will remain so. 😊

On to May...

MAY

May has to be my favourite month of the year, both in terms of butterflies and more generally too. The greening of the countryside, longer hours of daylight, and overall warming up with the transformation into summer cannot be surpassed in my book. Sitting here at the opposite time of year at the tag end of November, under chilly damp grey skies, I find thoroughly depressing.

May 2020 was exceptional. Heathrow recorded almost exactly 310 hours of sunshine during the month, a record and equating nicely to an astonishing average of 10 hours a day. It was fairly warm too, with the average high for the month being just over 21 degrees, and the second half of the month recording several days over 25 degrees. Rainfall was almost non-existent throughout. Perfect conditions for butterflies, though with so much sunshine and long days, they would have been kept very active throughout and lifetimes (in terms of calendar days) may well have been shortened as a result.

On my local patch, six more species appeared in May: Brown Argus (5th), Small Heath (6th), Common Blue (9th), Large Skipper (27th), Painted Lady (27th) and Meadow Brown (28th). The splendid weather probably shortened the Orange Tip season, with the last one being seen on 19th May – a very early date as they usually continue into the first week of June in most years.

However, eighteen species were seen during the month, with a maximum of 14 on 27th. Overall day counts were lower than April, despite the greater diversity, with around 80 counted on several days. Holly Blues were most common at the start of the month (30+ recorded), but Common Blues (also 30+) and Brown Argus (15+) were the species seen most often later on. A trend for the year, with Common Blues considerably outnumbering Brown Argus, was therefore established at the outset, reversing the pattern of recent years.







Before the end of May, some species were already producing another brood – Small Tortoiseshells...



...and Speckled Woods.



I was able to go out locally on 28 out of 31 days in May (and managed to visit other sites as well – I think a separate post might be needed for that). This continuity allowed me to follow the appearance of a particular Small Copper throughout the month.



2nd May



30th May

I have a selection of shots between these two (which were taken four weeks apart), and others going into the first week of June. I have followed individuals Small Coppers before over several weeks, and their potential longevity is quite surprising (for such a small and active butterfly!).

May was the month when I discovered another productive area within walking distance of home, which is worth a separate post – Staines Moor.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Nov-20 07:29 PM GMT

A cracking set of shots Dave, even more pleasing to the amid the dank and drear 😊 Really interesting reading your reports with the species counts - 😊 also interesting to read about the shortening of the OT flight period - something I'd not thought about until I read this and then realised that it was very similar over this way. Looking forward to further reports 😊

Have a godun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 30-Nov-20 02:10 PM GMT

Hi! Dave , great shots, like Wurzel I loved the Peacock shots 😊

Where I live the land they made into a small CP as got really over grown with Blackberries, the grass cutting this year was absent but it only encouraged a few Butterflies has the wild flowers have been covered by the berries. it's a real shame because it was a delight to see the Many Orange tips there, this year I saw a few but none stopped, lucky for me, I found them in my garden 😊 I did think maybe the CP being over grown did me a favour because I got most of the Spring Butterflies in my Garden 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Nov-20 08:42 PM GMT

Cheers, both of you. 😊 There's been no sunshine here now for several days and over the weekend the irresponsible biking community has been continuing to turn areas of my local patch into vast expanses of mud, despite Heathrow's efforts to keep them out. 😊 Not very uplifting, so I shall continue with my retrospective and move on to my (re)discovery of Staines Moor.

MAY: Staines Moor

At the start of the month, with longer-distance travel still being discouraged, I made my way south on foot parallel to the River Colne and found a large area of damp grassland which is essentially floodplain and probably originally created by the Thames many moons ago. It is unspoiled, grazed by cattle and horses under a long-standing arrangement, and is an SSI. In particular, the anthills created here by a particular species are believed to be the largest of their type in the UK, and there are numbers of ground-nesting birds and various waterfowl. I quickly spotted that large areas of the ground were covered in sheeps sorrel, and before very long it was no surprise that Small Coppers appeared.

I came down here on nine days in May, and continued to visit throughout the summer. Small Coppers were without doubt the highlight during the month, with as many as 30 seen on one occasion, and including a lot of variability.





Finding such a great site within 20 minutes walk from home was a real bonus. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 02-Dec-20 06:36 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, lovely Coppers, It's great when you find places like that, I saw a Copper at Hall-Lee-Brook that was pale, I just thought it was faded with the weather 😊 may be it's an ab after all 😊

I've got some flowers like the Sheeps sorrel in the garden, it's in the damp part of the rockery and just suddenly appeared 😊 The Peacock Butterfly seems to like it so I left it alone, I have seen it in some wooded area's , would this be where it's usually found? Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Dec-20 08:32 PM GMT

Fantastic set of Coppers Dave –each one seems to be an individual but that golden yellow one really stands out 🤩🤩🤩 It's good to have a couple of Local Patches 😊 – especially in so in 2020 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 03-Dec-20 10:18 AM GMT

Some great retrospective posts there Dave, they really brighten up a dark and wet morning here 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Dec-20 07:25 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – there's so much variety with the Coppers, I wouldn't be at all surprised if there was a paler one amongst those you saw. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – I'm lucky with my local area really, considering its location, but it does make you wonder what else lurks in the semi-suburban London fringes... 😊

You're spot on there, Neil – a retrospective is a good way of blocking out the evil winter weather which descended today. Rain all day, seven degrees at best and dark by half two. I just take solace that in not much more than a fortnight the days start getting longer again... 😊

Before I leave **May**, I'll mention the other species I managed to find away from my local area. I had a Chiltern day out on 15th, and managed to track down five new ones for the year: Small Blue (Pitstone), Duke of Burgundy (Ivinghoe), Adonis Blue, Grizzled Skipper and Dingy Skipper (all Aston Rowant, with the second two seen at Ivinghoe as well). I followed this on 16th with Wood Whites at Chiddingfold. 18th saw the annual pilgrimage to Cotley Hill (meeting up with Wurzel and Philzoid) where amongst other things were my first Marsh Fritillaries. Later the same day I took in Martin Down (a great variety here including more Marshies but nothing actually new) and then finally Bentley Wood where as well as even more Marsh Frits there were Pearls and Small Pearls as well. A selection...



Aston Rowant 15th



Chiddingfold 16th



Martin Down 18th



Bentley Wood 18th

On now to June, and after a couple of sunny days, the weather changed considerably... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Dec-20 07:48 PM GMT

Cracking shots Dave – I remember Cotley – it was a 2 out of 3 day for me, great company 😊, great butterflies 😊 but a knackered camera 😞 That is a mighty fine Small Blue 🍷🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Dec-20 07:39 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – Cotley is always worth a visit, but managing to combine it with Martin Down *and* Bentley too was an excellent move. A great day out. 😊

It seems that I forgot a species off the **May** list – towards the end of the month I went down to Fairmile Common on both 29th and 30th to see how the Silver-studded Blues were doing. Just a few males around on 28th, but only 24 hours later there were both sexes and better numbers too.



female 29th

Now for a look at June... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Dec-20 08:42 PM GMT

JUNE

After two days that mimicked the weather of May, things went downhill for a week. Though thankfully conditions improved towards the end of the month, June was overall somewhat less spectacular weatherwise. The daily average high was not far off 23 degrees, which is actually very respectable, and 24th - 26th recorded over 30, reaching 34 on 25th. Despite the longer days, average sunshine hours were just under 6 daily.

New species for the year on my local patch were: Small Skipper (4th)



4th June

Marbled White (12th)



4th June

One species was seen for the last time in June – Large Skipper on 27th, after a very short season here and disappointingly low numbers too.



22nd June

Marbled Whites have now been seen three years running, but only in very small numbers. There are good sites not far to the north, and a few must stray down – it was notable that their first appearance on 4th was shortly after the wind changed to blow from that direction. Ringlets are (for a common butterfly) also scarce on this site, with only a handful seen – though they do mingle with Meadow Browns along the hedgerow and may be undercounted. The appearance of the first Gatekeeper was on an early date, as they often don't emerge here until July. I didn't recognise what it was at first.

Overall, 22 species were seen here during June, with a high species count of 15 on both 22nd and 29th (though not the same ones!). The same days recorded the highest totals for individual butterflies seen, approaching 200 on both days. High counts for particular species saw Common Blues stand out at the start of the month (a high of 28), Red Admirals at the end (26), Meadow Browns from mid-month onwards (84) and Small Heath throughout (39). Small Tortoiseshells reached double figures (just...) with 10 mid-month.

Small Tortoiseshells were also a feature of my visits to Staines Moor, and I found a courting pair, not something I've observed in the summer brood before.



Courting Torties 13th June

Small Copper numbers had dropped somewhat, though at the end of the month there was evidence of another brood emerging, with one at least looking quite dark.



A dusky new Copper 28th June



Standard version 30th June

Small Skippers were also appearing here as well, to join the Small Heaths and Meadow Browns, but no Essex.

June was another month for taking advantage of more relaxed travel, and another eight species were seen on various trips elsewhere. That will be the next post... 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-Dec-20 12:05 PM GMT

You're zipping through Spring and Summer at a great rate, Dave. And that's how this season seemed to go. I missed Cotley as it was 'illegal' to stay over for a few days, but i'm glad that you and Wurzel had a great time. Good to read your version of the year, accompanied with some great shots!.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Dec-20 08:28 PM GMT

Another cracking sample of 2020 Dave 😊😄 – looking at your highlights you'd be forgiven for thinking that it was a 'good year' – I still don't know how non-butterfly enthusiasts have gotten through all that's been going on 🤔😅'

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Dec-20 08:59 PM GMT

You're right, Trevor – the season seemed to flash by this year despite me managing to pack quite a bit in. 😊

I think our hobby definitely helped to get us through this year's problems, Wurzel, along with the associated brilliant weather, particularly in spring. 😊

June of course is another month when further specialist species tend to emerge, and some more travel was required. The weather meant that one or two were very quick off the mark too. I found my first White Admirals at Bookham on the unusually early date of 2nd...



...and later the same day spotted Dark Green Fritillaries at both Denbies and Box Hill (though didn't manage any photos until later visits there and also to Aston Rowant).



Box Hill (9th)



Denbies (14th)



Aston Rowant (11th)

On 7th, with Whitecross Green Wood still closed because of the virus, I went down to the "new" colony of Black Hairstreaks at Ditchling Common. The butterflies were a bit of a disappointment, but there was excellent company once again with a host of familiar faces and the standout moment was Wurzel getting his "lifer" at last. This was the best I could manage...



Another Hairstreak was the target on 16th, this time over in Essex at Hadleigh Country Park where there are notable colonies of White-letters. The usual spot not far from Leigh-on-Sea station was strangely bereft of the usual throng, and after only glimpsing one or two I moved on to hedgerows further into the Country Park, where I eventually was lucky enough to have a nice fresh one find me while I was actually concentrating on a Marbled White.

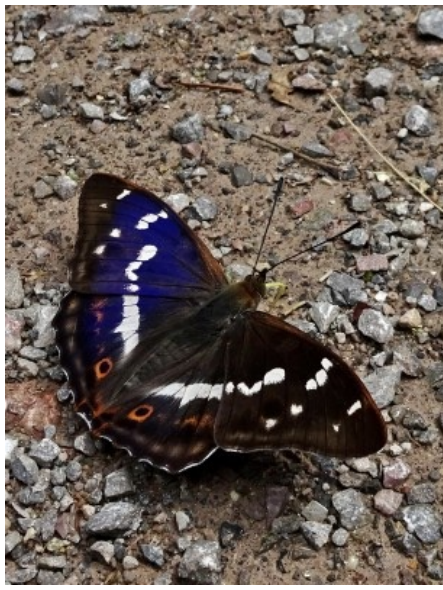


Within a few miles of here are several Heath Fritillary sites, and I knew they would also be out. I chose Pound Wood this year and in the ten or fifteen

minutes it took to drive from one site to the other, hot sunshine had given way to bright overcast with spots of rain. This turned out to be ideal for the Fritillaries, which sat and posed beautifully.



I had glimpsed my first Silver-washed Fritillary at Ditchling, but the first I photographed was on 20th down at Chiddingfold.



20th

These last ten days of the month contained some hot days, and further sightings of this splendid creature, including one unforgettable individual.



26th

Chiddingfold also provided my first sighting of a Purple Hairstreak for the year...



Once again, the whole week or so was a very sociable affair – a veritable highpoint to look back on as we now approach the dark days of the opposite end of the year and start to climb back into the light... 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 08-Dec-20 11:20 PM GMT

Some lovely shots there with a few 🍷🍷 for some species I missed this year and an extra 🍷 for that superb HIM!

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Dec-20 10:16 PM GMT

Enviably June selection there, Dave, including probably the best 'All Purple' shot of an Emperor on here this year.

It was indeed a strange month, starting off gloriously only to misfire quite badly for much of the remainder, but any period that sees Heath Frits, Wood Whites, White Letters, et al cannot be sneered at. 🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Dec-20 07:03 PM GMT

An absolutely cracking Purple Emperor Dave 🍷😄🍷 Hopefully it made up for the Blackstreaks that didn't really play ball – looks like I'll have to try and get to Chiddingfold next year, Bentley was hard work with little reward this year 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Dec-20 04:40 PM GMT

Thanks, everyone – that Emperor was a cracker of a butterfly, and one I had almost entirely to myself. It doesn't often happen... 😊

June had also seen the start of a number of second broods (like those Wood Whites) which usually don't appear until July. My local patch saw new examples of Holly Blue, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Peacock, GWV and Small Copper.

However, it is now time to look at...

JULY

Overall, the month was barely warmer than June on average, with a daily high of a bit less than 24 degrees. Nor was it particularly sunny, with slightly over five and a half hours each day. However, one day stood out weatherwise: on 31st, 37.8 degrees was recorded close by at Heathrow, the UK's third highest temperature ever.

As is normally the case, the month saw the highest butterfly totals of the year locally, with close to 400 seen on one or two days in the second half of the month. Several species had notable high numbers:

Peacock (34 on 1st and 33 on 13th)



21 Brown Argus on 28th was also the highest for 2020, but noticeably lower than 2019.



Purple Hairstreaks were the only new species seen here this month (though I'd already seen them at Chiddingfold in June). Overall, 22 species were found here during July, with highs of 18 on 1st, 5th and 13th.

As with the previous months, there were other species to seek out elsewhere:

I found my first Chalkhill Blues at Denbies on 7th



Graylings at Dawneys Hill on 11th



Walls at High & Over on 22nd



Clouded Yellows at Mill Hill on 22nd



Silver-spotted Skippers at Aston Rowant on 24th



Brown Hairstreaks at Bookham on 26th



There were some further visits to Staines Moor, and one or two other particular highlights, worthy of a separate post.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Dec-20 07:37 PM GMT

Fantastic sequence of images Dave – especially like the Chalkhill – a right beauty that one – almost more of a Chalkhill Silver 🤔🤔🤔. I'm looking forward to August 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Dec-20 08:58 PM GMT

July at Staines Moor didn't produce any surprises, but as I expected there were lots of second brood Small Coppers. No two were the same.





...but I did find a striking example of a blue female.



More July highlights still to come...

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 23-Dec-20 10:25 PM GMT

A very variable bunch of Small Coppers, Dave, some are very dark. Your blue female Common Blue is a stunner, I have seen many this year, but not many brown ones. Looking forward to the 2021 season, covid permitting!.

Have a great Christmas, and stay well,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Dec-20 07:20 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – I could probably post Chalkhills all day from amongst those I saw in July, both male and female. That shimmering blue on a chalk hillside is the quintessence of summer. 😊

Thank you Trevor – I think Small Copper may be my butterfly of 2020. I saw them in many locations, and my discovery of a splendid colony 15 minutes' walk from home was a real bonus. A such variety... 😊

The final selection from July covers a host of things. It is certainly the most bountiful month for species and numbers, so definitely justifies another post. One or two more from home to start with:

Another couple of unusual (and very contrasting) Small Coppers



A Small Heath – paler in the summer generation



During July, I also spent as much time at Bookham as anywhere, and was treated to lots of White Admirals, Silver-washed Fritillaries and Purple Hairstreaks. Brown Hairstreaks joined the party at the end of the month as the others began to disappear.





More Brown Hairstreaks came from a terrific day at Shipton Bellinger...



...and A trip down to Noar Hill brought me second brood Small Blues for the first time in a while (amongst many other things).



Quite a month (and I still feel as if I've skimmed the surface!).

August next. 😊

Dave

SEASONAL GREETINGS

by millerd, 24-Dec-20 07:31 PM GMT

A very Merry Christmas to all on UKB, and all the best for a less unusual kind of year in 2021.

Keep safe and well, everyone.

Cheers,

Dave



(A seasonal image from last year as the Holly Blues weren't playing ball in Autumn 2020!)

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Dec-20 04:29 PM GMT

Great selection of highlights Dave – that day at Shipton was a cracker 😊😄 Love the little Picture-wing Fly that photobombed the mating pair of Small Blues 😊🍀

I hope you had a great Christmas and will have a even better New Year 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel