

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Jan-11 03:28 AM GMT

1st January 2011 to 3rd January 2011

Almost a butterfly, actually a Winter Moth on the kitchen window attracted by the light. Hopefully a good sign for the coming year. We have had a good spell over the New Year holiday spending the first three days in the field. The 1st started with 3 Waxwings near Ashford and a further 5 birds near Brenzett. Always a smart bird to see and usually very vocal. Dungeness produced 4 Bitterns including the very showy bird in front of Scott Hide. This bird has allowed many to actually see a Bittern for the first time, and certainly has given everyone the opportunity to photograph one. Some families were even using their camera phone to record the event. Other birds there included Slavonian and Black Necked Grebe, Smew, Goldeneye and a full range of the more common duck. We then moved on to Pett Level to check out reports of a big arrival of wild geese. What a sight greeted everyone for the field contained a Red Breasted Goose, a Black Brant, 4 Pale Bellied Brents, at least 2 Bean Geese, 85 Barnacle Geese, 250 Whitefronted Geese, a minimum of 20 Dark Bellied Brents and a hunting Barn Owl. There was almost as many people birding on the sea wall as birds to see. Even people out walking were amazed at the number of geese on the fields and asked us about the species present.

The 2nd was less productive with 2 Red Kites near Ashford and 8 Hawfinches at the location near Canterbury. The 3rd bounced back because as we were checking the geese again at Pett Level a Rough Legged Buzzard flew into view and then stayed most of the day, although fairly distant. I understand that this is a very scarce bird in Sussex. The geese still included the Black Brant from America, 8 Pale Bellied Brents, 80 plus Barnacle Geese, 14 Whitefronted Geese and many Dark Bellied Brents. Also seen a female Merlin and 30 Red Throated Divers on the sea (which was flat as a pancake). We ended the day at Walland Marsh to see 2 Barn Owls, 2 Pink Footed Geese, 150 Whitefronted Geese and 40 Bewick Swans.

I have attached a very poor and distant photo of both the Rough Legged Buzzard and the Black Brant. The poor light in overcast conditions was too much for my little Panasonic Camera, but it gives a record shot. I give no excuse for also attaching another photo of the very showy Bittern at Dungeness.

Dave

Dave



The best sighting we have had of a normally very shy bird.



A record shot of the Black Brant following a mixed flock of Pale and Dark Bellied Brent Geese.



A poor distant record shot of the Rough Legged Buzzard, but it shows the very pale head and white uppertail.

Re: Dave Brown

by Lee Hurrell, 05-Jan-11 09:09 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Can I just say how much I enjoy your bird sighting reports. You hinted a while back that they might be out of place on this forum but please don't stop, they normally make me jealous indeed!

We used to go to Dungeness a lot when I was a lad and my dad and uncles would fish for mackerel from the beach. A wild, desolate but still quite beautiful place. We holidayed at Littlestone too.

Keep up the good work and all the best for the new year.

Lee

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 10-Jan-11 03:53 AM GMT

4th JANUARY 2011 TO 9TH JANUARY 2011

Thank you Lee for your kind words of encouragement. I do propose to continue the sightings summary as hopefully it will not be long before the first butterfly is on show. I am pleased you enjoyed Dungeness. We first started going there in the mid eighties and remember my first reaction on seeing the place. It was like visiting a wild west frontier town. Most houses then were basically converted old railway coaches and when the cold wind blew you could imagine the old tumbleweed blowing across the land. It still can be pretty bleak, but these days most of the houses have been upgraded to wood or brick. I love the place and get a lot of enjoyment in visiting what has to be one of Britains best National nature reserves.

Birdwise it has been a little harder this week with very little new on offer. On the 5th we visited Dungeness and saw 1 male and 6 female Smew, 2 Goldeneye, Little Egret, Marsh Harrier and 4 Ruddy Ducks (don't tell the RSPB- they allow Ruddy culling on the reserve). Pett Level produced Black Brant, 11 Pale and 25 Dark Bellied Brent Geese. 2 Ravens were present by the road and on the sea wall. On the 7th we did the Ashford area seeing 1 Long Eared Owl and 6 Common Buzzards with at least 400 Fieldfares in a orchard. The 8th saw the 1st winter Glaucous Gull again by the fishing boats at Dungeness and a Ringtail Hen Harrier around the reserve. 45 Bewick Swans and 100 plus Whitefronts were on Walland Marsh, but otherwise much the same as on previous visits. Today we saw a female Scaup in Dover Harbour (a scarce bird in Kent these days), 15 Waxwings in the car park at Fowlmead Country Park (near Deal), Sandwich Bay was very quiet so we ended the day at the Hawfinch site near Canterbury. Here we saw at least 7 birds in really nice weather for a change. Present today was a number of other well known Kent birders also enjoying the birds on offer. Hawfinch is an increasingly scarce bird in Kent. The well known Kent hot spot at Bedgebury no longer attracts the Hawfinch in the numbers of the eighties when it was possible to see 50 plus.

Dave



This stunning male Smew has been present at Dungeness for over two weeks.



This bird sat on top of a distant tall conifer for all to see but almost at the maximum range for my small camera.



This Waxwing was one of 15 present in the Fowlmead CP car park.

Re: Dave Brown

by Lee Hurrell, 10-Jan-11 04:30 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

My first ever White Admiral was at Bedgebury, many years ago now, I think in the 80's.

Cheers

Lee

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Jan-11 02:38 AM GMT

10th JANUARY 2011 TO 16TH JANUARY 2011

A real mix of weather this week, including several foggy days at Dungeness where you struggled to see across the road. If there was a good bird there you certainly would not have seen it on those particular days. Many birders flocked to see the potential Slaty Backed Gull at Rainham at the weekend, but suspecting it would not show we resisted the temptation. Instead we enjoyed a relaxing time checking local woods for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. We were not successful but it was still enjoyable just checking.

The week started off well for on Monday a Glossy Ibis dropped in at on the RSPB reserve at Dungeness. A most unexpected visitor at this time of the year. Tuesday saw us connecting with the Rough Legged Buzzard on Reculver Marshes. Presumably the same bird that has appeared at Dungeness, Pett Level and a number of other places. What a traveller and what a good bird. Also seen, an almost white Common Buzzard together with 2 normal Common Buzzards. We ended the day at Oare Marshes watching a male and a ringtail Hen Harrier, 150 Brent Geese, several Pintail and Snipe but little else.

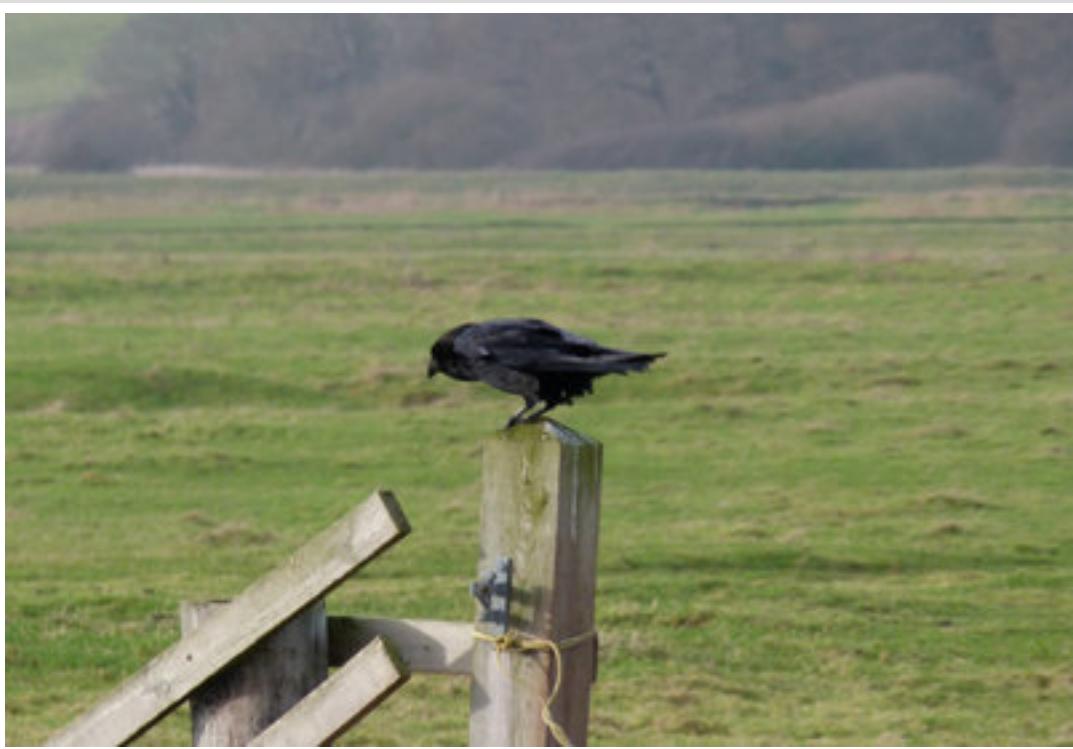
Other birds seen this week include 1 Tree Sparrow at Dungeness (13th), 12 Ruddy Duck (13th), 2 Ravens at Pett Level (15th), a large flock of over 100 Redwings near Hamstreet (15th), 4 Nuthatches, 8 Siskins and 3 Redpolls in Hamstreet woods, 2 Red Kites a few miles from Ashford and finally 2 Crossbills south of Faversham, both today.

A most enjoyable week.

Dave



Not the best of photos, but one of the two present near Ashford. A beautiful bird and an increasing visitor to Kent.



This bird was one of the pair close to the main road along Pett Level (Sussex).



This Glossy Ibis was a surprise visitor in the field to the right of the RSPB entrance track.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Jan-11 12:14 AM GMT

17th JANUARY 2011 TO 26TH JANUARY 2011

Firstly, I am aware that Dungeness Observatory had its first butterfly of the year. A Small Tortoiseshell on the 19th Jan. The weather has since turned for the worst, so not surprisingly it has not been seen again.

The bird life in Kent has remained much the same for the last few weeks so there is very little new to report. The Glossy Ibis at Dungeness seems to have moved on, but the 1st winter Glaucous Gull remains a regular around the fishing boats. There has been a massive increase in gull and auk numbers off the Dungeness coast in recent days. Rather unusually large numbers of the auks identified have been Razorbills. Normally Kent sees a ratio of 4 or 5 Gullimots to 1 Razorbill but

this time Razorbill may be the majority bird. They have been accompanied by large numbers of Kittiwakes and a few Gannets. The 2 Ravens at Dungeness have become more predictable and can often be seen around the RSPB entrance (Boulderwall Farm).

Birds seen this period include a Great Northern Diver off Minnis Bay (18/1), Hawfinches near Canterbury, 1 on the 18th and 4 on the 25th (this location is now very popular, with birdwatchers present most days from 14.30 hours—the birds are not normally seen before then), 35 plus Siskins at the same site. 40 plus Med Gulls off Copt Point at Folkestone (20/01), Cettis Warbler at Dungeness (20th), 2 flocks of Bewick Swans on Walland Marsh totalling 62 (23rd), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and 8 Brambling in a wood near Wye (24th). Finally, the local Common Buzzards have started to display with 6 in the air together on the 24th.

We can't wait for the first signs of spring and the associated butterflies, but I suspect we will have a few more cold spells before then.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Gibster, 27-Jan-11 04:09 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

just a quickie...regards that Smew pic taken on 5th Jan at Dunge. Did you notice the drake Ring-necked Duck sitting behind it? 😊😊😊

I was reading your blog and did a bit of a double-take at that pic. I've looked at it on zoom, and it still looks pretty good to me.

Cheers,

Gibster.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 31-Jan-11 02:14 AM GMT

27th January 2011 to 30th January 2011

A short observation period this time as I wished to take the opportunity to respond to Gibster on his observation of the other duck (period 4-9th Jan 2011). I can see why Ringed Neck Duck was suggested, (the white upturn at the front of the body pointing towards the head), but to be a RND the flanks would have been a lot greyer making the upturn (which is white) really stand out. A good query from Gibster, but I am happy that the duck is just a Tufted Duck. Especially as I scanned the ducks around the Smew and I am sure that I would have noted a RND. A pity really as I would have been very happy for it to be a RND, even if I missed it in the field. I have had it checked by a very good professional birder who agrees that it was a good old Tuftie.

This leads me nicely to the next item for the same person kindly informed us that the Northern Long Tailed Tits were showing well in the church yard at Dymchurch. 15 minutes later we were watching 5 of them slowly moving through the various bushes. I have no suitable photographs but this race of Long Tailed Tit is stunning with completely white heads giving them an almost black and white appearance. These scarce birds to Britain have been present for over a month now, covering a circuit that goes from the Church to the Murco Garage. Other birds seen include a Ringtail Hen Harrier (near Burmarsh), 32 Bewicks Swans near New Romney, 3 female Smew at Dungeness and a male Goldeneye.

A tour of the area around us looking for displaying raptors produced 3 Common Buzzards near Pluckley, 3 Common Buzzards and a Sparrowhawk over Hempstead Forest and 2 Common Buzzards over Willesborough. The 4 Bewick Swans remain near Wye.

For a change I mention a blast from the past. The Splendid Brocade moth was a very rare migrant to Britain. The first one identified in Britain was as late as July 2003, although there has been a small number since then in the Southern Counties. The Dungeness area was blessed with a small influx during 2010 with at least 10 being seen, mostly on the RSPB Reserve. Several others were trapped across Kent. One was also caught near Lydd during 2009. I am looking forward to another potential influx to Dungeness this year. The photo I originally posted was mislabelled and I have now corrected the caption. It shows a Middle barred Minor.

Dave



This photo of a Middle Barred Minor was taken in July 2006. Its colours were even better in real life.

Re: Dave Brown

by roundwood123, 31-Jan-11 03:51 AM GMT

Hi Dave, Great Diary, i dont think your Splendid is a Splendid, it looks like a Middle-barred Minor to me.
Steve.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 02-Feb-11 01:36 AM GMT

Tuesday 01 Feb 2011.

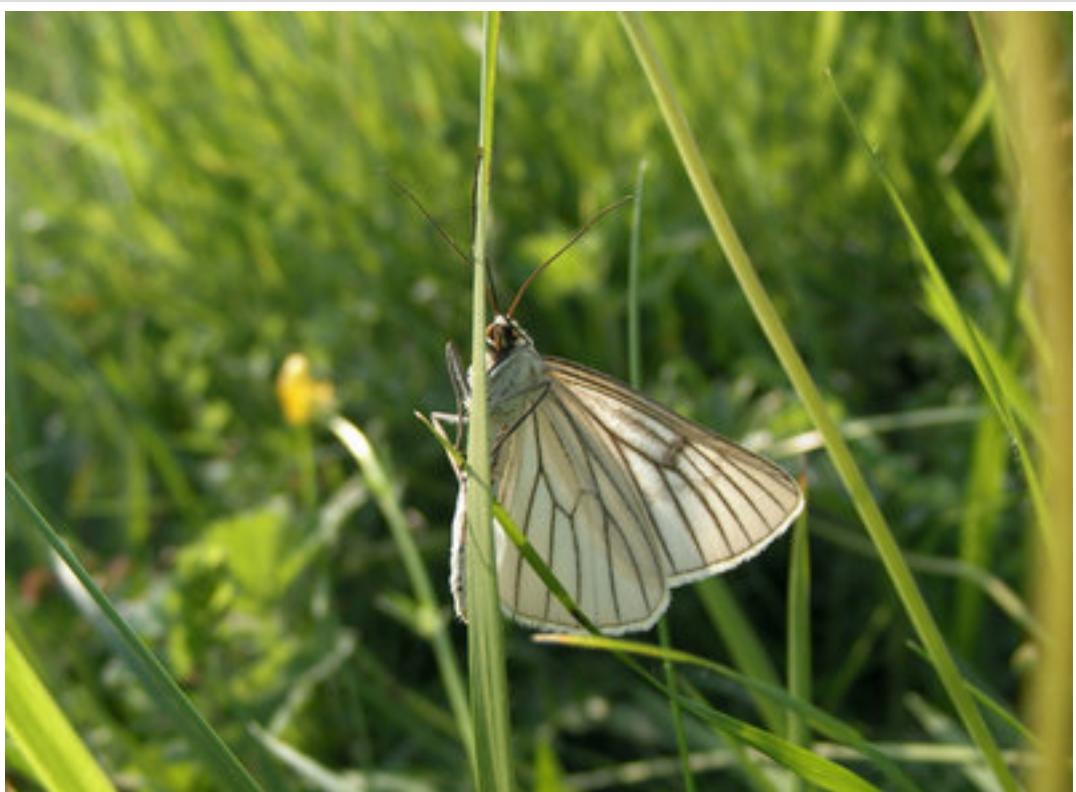
Thank you to Steve (roundwood123). I agree with you that the photo shows a Middle barred Minor. I have amended the caption accordingly. I should have known better for the photo was 2006 and the Splendid Brocade influx (over 10 number) into the Dungeness area was during 2010. Mainly around the RSPB entrance track. Worryingly, I have deleted over 600 photos this winter and I can not find one of Splendid Brocade in those that remain. Never mind, there is always this year to look forward too.

Having made one error I am reluctant to do another blast from the past with regards moths, (not my best subject). However, here goes, with this time a Red Data Species found here in Kent. For obvious reasons I can't give the exact location, but we are proud to host the Black-veined Moth in small numbers around the Wye area. These can be found at the same time as the rarer orchids are on display. We were privileged to have this one land very near us and was totally unexpected. It looks very similar to the butterfly of the same name and that would have set the pulse running.

Today we visited Stodmarsh but our visit was curtailed by the onset of bad weather before the Harrier roost took place. We did see over 100 Siskins, 6 Redpolls and a Cettis Warbler. We also missed a Bittern by 10 minutes. There was reserve management work going with a chain saw operating, so this may have contributed towards the lack of birds. The 4 Bewick Swans remain near Wye



One of the two adult Bewick Swans with their young near Wye.



Black-veined Moth at a location near Wye

Re: Dave Brown

by roundwood123, 02-Feb-11 02:45 AM GMT

Hi Dave, I was lucky enough to trap a Splendid Brocade in Essex in July which was probably one from the influx you mention, which was first for the County, very envious of the Black-veined Moth, a real stunner.
Steve.

Re: Dave Brown

by Lee Hurrell, 02-Feb-11 08:43 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

I was lucky enough to find a Black Veined Moth in France last summer – they are really beautiful aren't they?

Pictures on here: [viewtopic.php?f=20&t=4269](#)

Cheers

Lee

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Feb-11 03:22 AM GMT

02 February 2011 to 13th February 2011

Thank you to Lee and Steve for their comments on the Black Veined Moth. Yes a real stunner, and here in Kent. It can't be bad. Things have been very quiet the last two weeks. We have been going out looking, but it's been real hard work. The pick of the bunch has been a Red Necked Grebe, Black Necked Grebe, Firecrest, 1 male and 6 female Smew and 2 Ravens at Dungeness. Pett Level produced a Jack Snipe and nearby Winchelsea a Barn Owl. We have been seeing other good birds such as Merlin, Marsh Harrier, Common Buzzard, Redwing, Yellowhammer and Little Egret as we drive around, but nothing out of the ordinary. The female Scaup remains at Dover Marine in amongst the yachts and looks well at home. This is the only record I have heard of in Kent this winter for a species that used to be common at such sites as Scotney gravel pits. Not sure what has happened to this species in the last decade.

Despite a few sunny days, and a number of bees on the wing, we have yet to see a butterfly, so like many others we keep dreaming of better days to come. It's certainly warming up and the regular appearance of butterflies can't be too far away.

Dave



This distant Barn Owl was hunting along the railway line at Winchelsea during the middle of the day.



This female Scaup is enjoying an extended stay in Dover Docks

Re: Dave Brown

by Padfield, 14-Feb-11 03:53 AM GMT

Hi Dave. Sorry to butt in on your diary, but I was watching what I took to be a female scaup on the Deben in Suffolk at Christmas and took some very long distant shots. I wonder if you could say whether she is identifiable from them (as a scaup or as a female tufted). There were plenty of tufted and goldeneye on the river the same day.

<http://www.guypadfield.com/images2010/scaup102.jpg>
<http://www.guypadfield.com/images2010/scaup101.jpg>

Thanks!

Guy

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Feb-11 08:30 PM GMT

Hello Guy,

No problem. Difficult to be sure from the record shot but I believe its a Tufted Duck. The extensive white around the bill is a good pro Scaup feature but the jizz looks wrong. A few Tufted Ducks also have an extensive white base to the bill which can cause confusion. The back looks too dark for a Scaup, but could be an effect of the light and distance. When compared to a Tufted Duck a female Scaup looks more bulky/ heavy and is generally lighter. The head also looks more solid and it gives the bird a chunky feel.

I suppose a good glue is whether you picked out the bird based on white area around the base of the bill or the fact that it appeared bigger when compared to the nearby Tufted. If the latter then it could be a female Scaup but my gut feeling is that this is a female Tufted with a heavy white presence around the base of the bill.

Just like butterflies there are always a few seen at distance that remain uncertain, which is one aspect of our hobby that makes it so interesting.

PS I notice that Felixstone Birding web site for the 5th Jan shows a female Scaup on the River Deben around Waldringfield. This close up photo clearly shows the bulk of a Scaup when compared to a Tufted Duck. It could also mean that your photo does indeed show a Scaup and that my view of the jizz is wrong.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Gibster, 17-Feb-11 03:25 AM GMT

For what it's worth I'd agree that the bird in the pics is a Tuftie. It feels wrong for Scaup (but then I still think Dave's 5th Jan duck is a Ring-necked... 😊)

Cheers,

Re: Dave Brown

by Padfield, 17-Feb-11 05:48 AM GMT

Thanks both. I admit it was the extensive white around the bill that made me think it was scaup. And once you have it in your mind that something looks different you continue to see it as something different. I should have done what I always tell people to do with butterflies – take field notes instead of a photo!!

If tufted can look like that then the probabilities are heavily stacked in favour of tufted. The 5th Jan scaup at Waldringfield, just down the river, adds a little weight to that species, but not enough to tip the balance.

Guy

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Feb-11 01:06 AM GMT

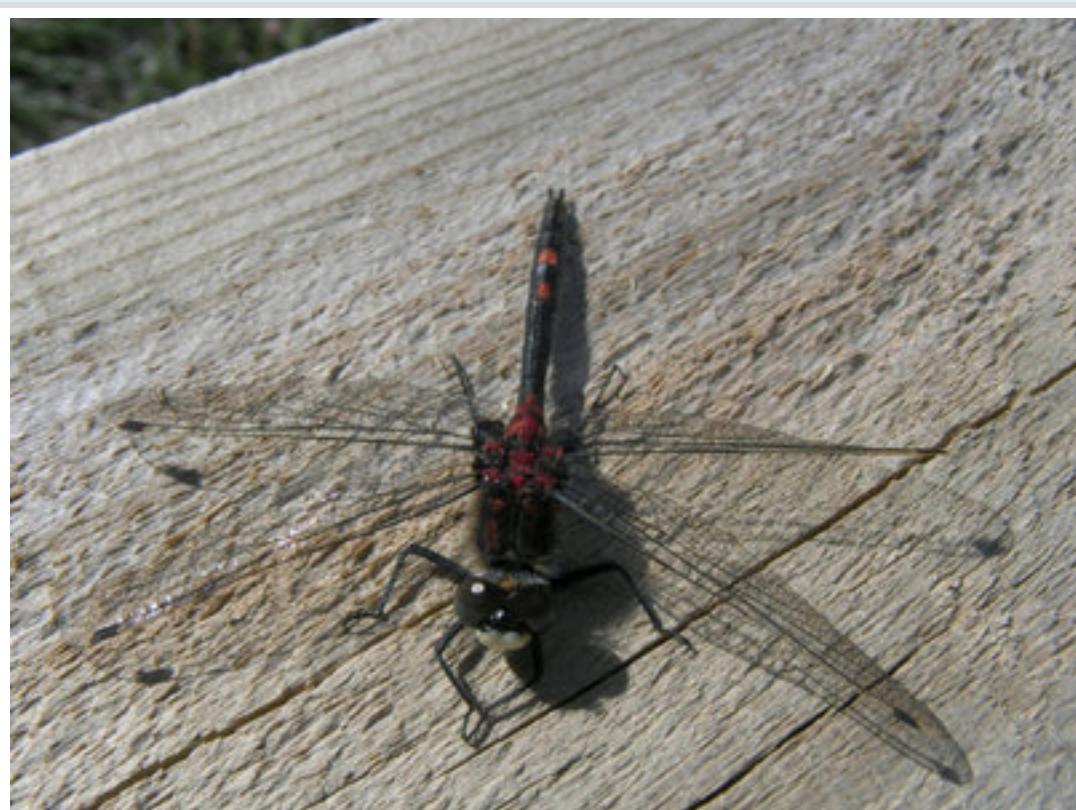
14th FEBRUARY 2011 TO 27TH FEBRUARY 2011

We have not had much chance to get out and about lately so our notes are few this time. We did visit Dungeness on the 20th Feb. The first winter Glaucous Gull was on view again at the fishing boats loafing around on the beach. Other birds seen in the Dungeness area that day included Ruddy Duck, Goldeneye, female Smew, Little Egret, Red Throated Diver and 62 Bewick Swans. At a pool near Camber we added Spotted Redshank and 3 adult Med Gulls.

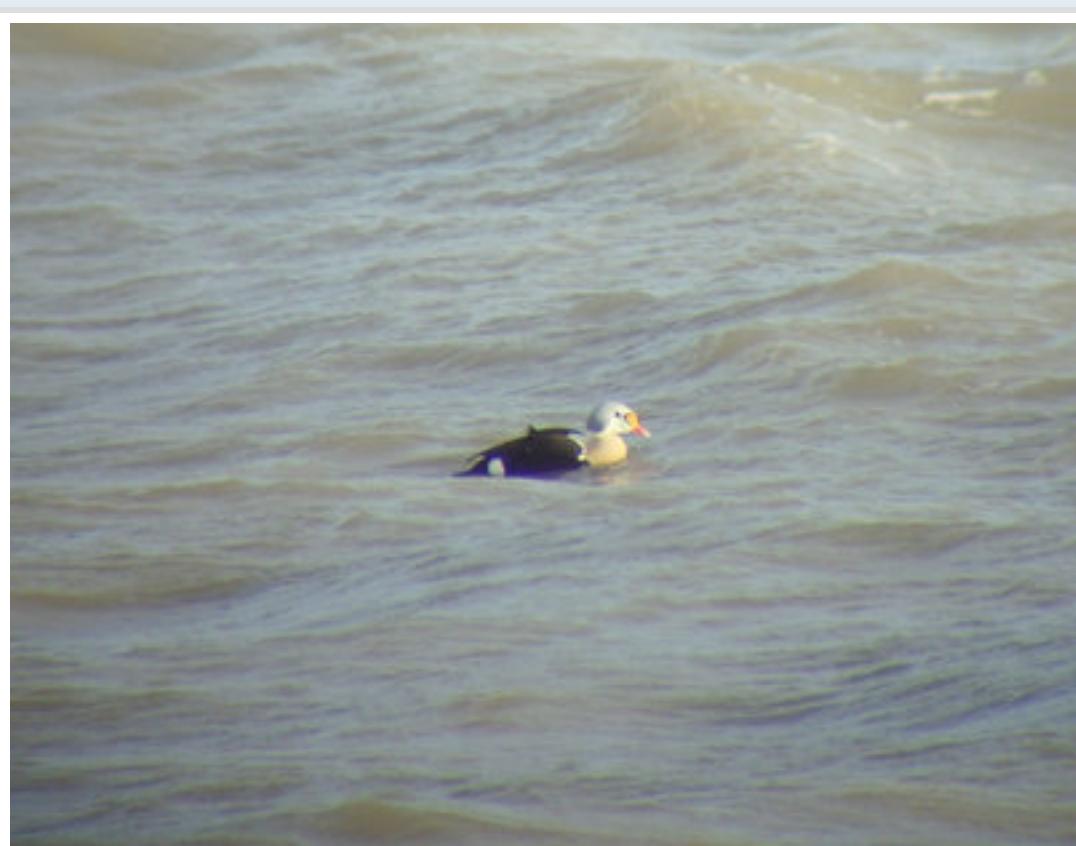
Yesterday we visited Oare Marshes but the very poor weather meant our stay was short, during which time we saw 12 Pintails. Today was much better and several hours spent raptor watching in the Challock/ Charing/ Chilham area produced at least 36 Common Buzzards, 2 Kestrels and 1 Sparrowhawk but no Red Kite. The two wintering birds seem to have departed after a stay of over 4 weeks. Like several other areas of Britain Common Buzzard was quite scarce but here in Kent they have expanded in both range and numbers. Fifteen years ago you struggled to see one, now you are unlucky not see one and like today it is often the most common raptor. If only Goshawk and Red Kite were to expand so quickly Kent birding would be on a different level. Many Sklarks were singing today, and Bluebells were just poking through the ground as we walked the local woods. Roll on Spring.

To make up for the lack of news I have gone back to the past. Our blast from the past today is the male King Eider seen off Dungeness and Pett Level during January 2009. This is a real goodie for Southern based birders and attracted large crowds on many days. Views could be difficult in the choppy seas but I believe most people connected with this bird eventually. I have also included a photo of a White Faced Darter seen on a small pool in Abernethy during our Scottish visit of June 2008. This pool seemed to be very reliable on sunny days with at least 4 different individuals present. I am sure the pool is well known but PM me if you want directions. Its not far from the Osprey Centre and is also good for Small Pearl Bordered.

Dave



White Faced Darter on a small pool in Abernethy, June 2008



King Eider off Pett Level during January 2009.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Mar-11 09:04 PM GMT

28th FEBRUARY 2011 TO 14TH MARCH 2011

Things are still fairly quiet in Kent although hopefully this will change shortly as Spring gets a step closer. So far we have resisted the temptation to go for the Oriental Turtle Dove in Oxfordshire, although we will probably crack before too long. The potential Baltic Gull photographed at Dungeness in the week looked really promising but despite spending 2 days looking for it we failed to relocate.

We have been seeing reasonable birds at Dungeness but it has been hard work with most of the winter birds leaving. Our sightings include the regular 1st Winter Glaucous Gull, one male and 5 female Smew (13th), male and female Goldeneye, up to 3 Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzard (Old Romney), several Little Egrets, 2 Ravens along Dengemarsh Road (12th), Green Sandpiper, 2 Slavonian Grebes, our first migrant of the year, a Wheater (12th), Black Redstart (13th), a singing Chiffchaff (13th) and singing Cetti's Warbler (13th). Sea Watching has included the return movement of Brent Geese and Red Throated Divers.

Our blast from the past this time is of a plant. Although the photo is of poor quality, (my old Fuji camera struggles with reds/ purples etc), I have included it because of the effort we put in to seeing it. This is not a rare plant, but is only found in the very north of Scotland and Orkney. Thus a trip of 700 miles was required just to get there. Then we nearly missed it. We first started at Durness Golf Club but none where in flower (June 2006). Not too disappointed we then moved to Dunnet at the other end of the north Scottish Coast. We had been told that the lady warden was very helpful and would often take you to the plants. What no one had mentioned was that the Visitor Centre was closed on a Saturday, and you can guess what day it was. By one of those odd strokes of luck she turned up at the very time we were in the car park for a purely personal reason, and although she could not take us she did give us directions, but with the bad news that none had been seen on a search in the week. Despite good directions we had failed to find any after 30 minutes but then our eagle eyed son stood still and smiled. Yes one plant was in flower and whilst we took a photo he found another one. You can imagine the relief on our faces. Obviously we had not travelled all that way for a plant, infact Mountain Ringlet at Ben Lawers was our target that holiday, but Scottish Primrose was a close second. So the photo is included for effort but not likely to win any competitions.

Dave



Scottish Primrose at Dunnet Bay in June 2006

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Mar-11 09:27 PM GMT

15th MARCH 2011 TO 27TH MARCH 2011

We have been unable to take full advantage of the recent very fine weather but have still managed one or two good days. Saturday 19th March saw us at St Margarets and resulted in our first identified Butterflies of the year with 4 Brimstones and 1 Red Admiral. A one hour migration watch resulted in 945 Chaffinches, 32 Siskins and 30 Brent Geese all heading North. Groups of 6 and 2 Common Buzzards may also have been migrants rather than local. 11 Common Buzzards and a Sparrowhawk were seen near Charing and the day ended with 2 male and one female Red Crested Pochard on Eastwell Park Lake. These are not of local descent but have probably escaped from some other part of Kent.

Saturday 26th March saw us at Dungeness where it was clear that a small fall of migrants had occurred. We enjoyed 5 Black Redstarts, 7 Chiffchaffs, 7 Wheatears, 1 Willow Warbler and 2 Goldcrests. Nearby the 1st Winter Glaucous Gull remained around the fishing boats, a Bittern was flying around Hookers Pit and 2 Marsh Harriers were displaying.

Yesterday the 27th March was a really sunny and warm day with some people just in tee shirts. We watched 11 Buzzards, 2 Sparrowhawks, Lesser Woodpecker, 4 Marsh Tits, 2 Nuthatches and 4 Treecreepers in the Chilham/ Charing area. We were just wondering where to go next when a phone call saying that a male Serin was still present at Dungeness made our minds up. We quickly relocated the bird on arrival but were pleasantly surprised to see 2 Serins together. These were much appreciated by the growing crowd who included a coach party visiting the local RSPB reserve. I attach a distant and poor record shot of the Serins which turned out to be quite mobile and difficult to photograph.

Dave



Beefly present in a local wood.



One of the male Black Restarts present at Dungeness



A distant poor record shot of the pair of Serins.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 08-Apr-11 09:43 PM GMT

28th March 2011 to 07th April 2011.

Like the rest of the South East the weather recently has been absolutely gorgeous. We have been unable to take full advantage but have still enjoyed our first good numbers of butterflies.

The 2nd April saw us checking the Charing area for raptors. We saw 6 Common Buzzards and 2 Sparrowhawk's. The 2 Red kites seem to have definitely left the area for summer. A visit to a local wood produced a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Nuthatches, 2 Marsh Tits, Coal Tit, Willow Warbler, 2 Blackcaps and 5 Chiffchaffs. The highlight though was the good numbers of butterflies present with 5 Brimstones, 2 Orange Tips, 3 Commas and a Red Admiral. Other insects included 12 Bee Fly's and one Hornet. A visit to Oare Marshes saw 2 Adult Med Gulls looking very smart with their Black Heads and a Little Stint present on one of the islands. We ended up at Eastwell Park to see a flock of 10 Buzzards circling together.

The day also produced good numbers of early flowers, including Cuckooflower, Wood Amemome and Lesser Celandine.

The 3rd April started very well with 2 Peregrines over the house for at least five minutes with the local gulls doing a disappearing act.

We then checked Hamstreet Woods where the highlight was a total of 11 Peacocks in a one hour walk. Also 6 Common Buzzards, 3 Sparrowhawks, Willow Warbler, 6 Chiffchaffs, Nuthatch and Treecreeper. A check of Hempstead Forest near Biddenden produced 8 Common Buzzards and 2 Sparrowhawks. Again early flowers were well represented.

During the week we have seen our first Holly Blue and Large White. This weekend is looking good for an even better showing of early Summer Butterflies, supported hopefully by even more migrant birds.

Best wishes

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Apr-11 08:12 PM GMT

08th April 2011 to 11th April 2011.

What another enjoyable weekend in temperatures of 20 degrees plus. Had this been a month later the numbers of Butterflies would surely have been much higher. We have come to expect too much in recent years and forget that it is still early April.

We planned to visit West Kent on Saturday to look for raptors and other delights. However our plans were changed on hearing the news that an Osprey had been seen near Ashford at 17.00 hours on Friday. We spent 3 hours Saturday morning checking likely locations but to no avail. We did see 18 Common Buzzards in the air at the same time around Charing, together with 5 Sparrowhawks.

Cutting our losses with regards the Osprey we paid a visit to Chilham seeing 3 Swallows, our first of the year. Also in a local wood we had 3 Speckled Wood, 4 Brimstones, Peacock, 2 Large Whites and a very worn Orange Underwing. The wood was alive with bird song which included 6 Blackcaps and 4 Chiffchaffs.

On Sunday we decided to visit Stodmarsh for some early migrant birds. We were not disappointed with 5 Sand Martins, 1 Yellow Wagtail, Reed Warbler and 2 Sedge Warblers. 6 Marsh Harriers were displaying over the reed beds. The surrounding area produced 12 Common Buzzards, 2 Peregrines, Sparrowhawk, 2 Bearded Tits and a Cettis Warbler. Butterflies were fewer but included 3 Orange Tips, 3 Brimstones and a Comma.

We ended the day on a very sunny Wye Downs where we saw 6 Green Hairstreaks, 4 Brimstones, 4 Holly Blues, 3 Orange Tips and a Comma.

What a good weekend.

Dave



One of 6 Green Hairstreaks present. Our first of the year.



This faded Orange Underwing moth was on offer at Chilham. This is the first one that I have managed to photograph.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Apr-11 03:06 AM GMT

12th April 2011 to 22nd April 2011

Wow, what a stunning weekend. The best Easter weather that I can ever remember. Easter Saturday and Sunday the temperature was 24 plus with wall to wall sunshine. This certainly has lead to a most enjoyable period of wildlife watching.

Saturday 16th saw us watching 4 Green Hairstreaks, 3 Brimstones, 3 Orange Tips, Comma and a Holly Blue near Wye. A Common Buzzard flew over the house.

Sunday 17th saw us visiting Hamstreet Woods to view 5 Brimstones, 6 Swallows, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and a early Nightingale. Our first Garden Warbler of the year was present at Warehorne, together with Orange Tip, Small White and Holly Blue.

An evening visit to Wye on Tuesday 19th April saw us looking at 9 Lady Orchid and 38 Common Twayblades. The Ladys were near to flowering and are extremely early, infact the earliest I have known. Also present 3 Brimstones and a Red Admiral.

Thursday 21st April we saw a Red Kite circling over Ashford town centre sending all the gulls wild with excitement (or fear).

Good Friday 21st April saw 40 plus Early Purple Orchids at Dungeness, with moths being trapped including Bordered Straw, Waved Umber, Swallow Prominent, 50 plus Tawny Shears, but best of all a beautiful Dusky Hook Tip. This stunning moth is a immigrant to the Southern Coast and only the second one we have seen.

The Dungeness day continued with 2 Grizzled Skippers, 5 Small Coppers and a number of Peacocks, Red Admirals, Large and Small Whites.

Bird wise we saw 7 Little Terns, 1 Common and 1 Sandwich Tern, 22 Bar Tailed Godwits, 4 Yellow Wagtails, Common Buzzard, 2 Peregrines, Cettis Warbler and 3 Swallows. Whilst driving around we saw 14 Orange Tips, 34 Large Whites, 2 Peacocks, 2 Hobbies and 4 Tree Sparrows.

More Easter wildlife news to follow including a mega insect sighting.

Dave



The photo probably does not do this Dusky Hooktip moth justice. It had been trapped overnight in a Dungeness private garden but was available for viewing thanks to the finder.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Apr-11 09:50 PM GMT

SATURDAY 23 APRIL 2011 TO SUNDAY 24TH APRIL 2011

SATURDAY

Much as we like Dungeness we thought it was time to check out a few other Kent locations. We started our day in the Naccolt / Conningbrook area of Ashford. This turned out to be a good move in the very warm weather, our first bird was a singing Nightingale in fine voice in a small wood, followed by Cuckoo and Whinchat nearby. Other birds included 4 Yellow Wagtails, Willow Warbler and Marsh Tit. Butterflies were in excellent numbers and comprised of Orange Tips, Large and Small Whites and Speckled Woods. What a good year so far for butterfly numbers.

We then did a tour of the Graveney / Seasalter area seeing a number of Little Egrets, a reeling Grasshopper Warbler which remained mostly out of sight, 2 Nightingales, many Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Chiffchaffs and a few Willow Warblers. 4 Speckled Woods and 2 Large Red Damselflies provided insect interest.

With the weather getting really hot we decided to go home and do a bit of leisurely shopping. Bad decision. Half the way round British Home Stores we got a telephone call saying that a VAGRANT EMPEROR (dragonfly) was currently on show at Dungeness and they were watching it fly up and down a small dyke. Wow, less than 30 British Records, non I believe twitchable, and only a reasonable distance to travel (once we had left the store in a hurry and walked the 20 minutes to home to pick up the car). We arrived on site about one hour later to be greeted with the news that it had been showing but currently not on view. It was an anxious 35 minute wait before it was picked up flying towards along the dyke, on view for a few minutes, before disappearing and not to be seen again that day despite another one hour wait.

It reminded me of a small Brown Hawker with a brilliant flash of blue on the body between the Thorax and Abdomen. What a beauty and at Dungeness, my favourite location.

The day got better with the sighting of a Bittern in flight, 7 Whimbrel flying over, 1 Greenshank, Little Ringed Plover, many Large White butterflies, Hairy Hawker and Blue Tailed Damselfly.

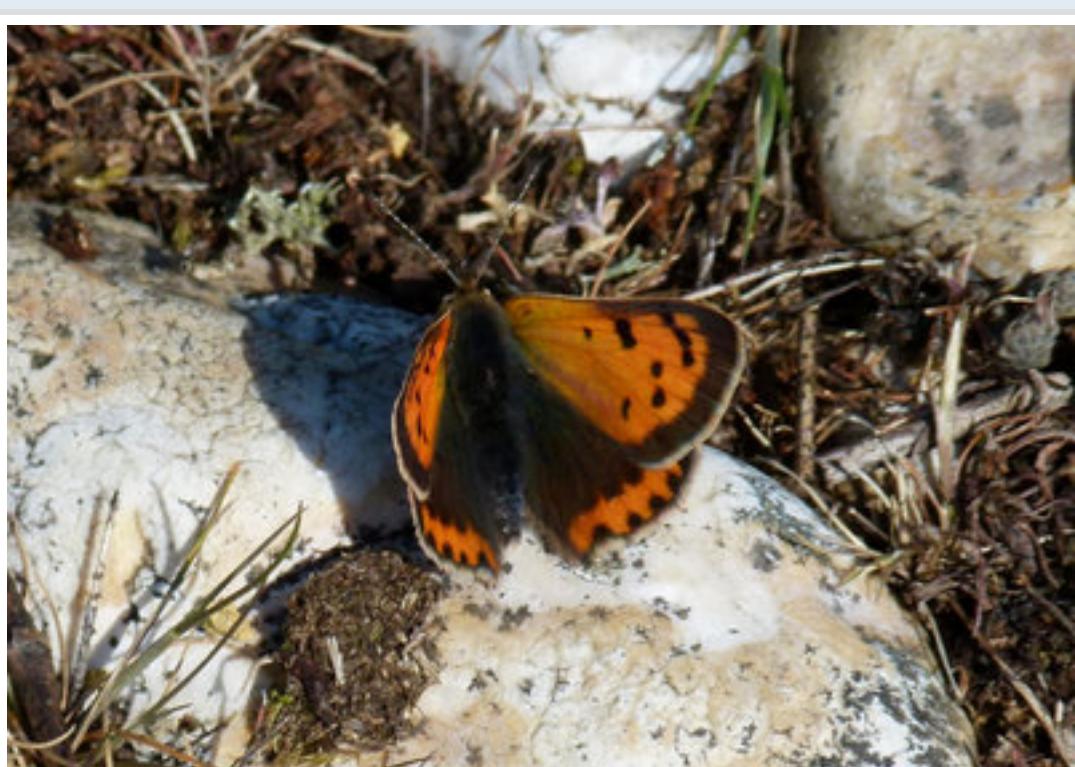
SUNDAY

Back at Dungeness, this time at least 2 male VAGRANT EMPERORS were on show, with a potential 4 number being seen in the general area. Also 3 Hairy Hawkers, 2 Blue Tailed damselflies and dozens of Large White Butterflies. There was 19 Med Gulls in one flock over Lydd Ranges with a reeling Grasshopper Warbler nearby.

A visit to Beckley Wood failed to locate any Grizzled Skippers, but a magnificent Red Kite overhead was just reward.

Another great day.

Dave.



Small Copper. One of several seen at Dungeness over the weekend.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 09-May-11 10:46 PM GMT

25th APRIL 2011 -

Bank Holiday Monday started as another fine day. The wind was a little stronger but the sun was still strong. Another visit to Dungeness was the order of the day. Whilst travelling across Walland Marsh we meet someone we knew who directed us to a very showy group of 21 Green Winged Orchids. All the years we have past this spot and we have never noticed them before. Apparently this is the first year for a while that they have flowered, or been left to flower by the sheep.

We then moved onto Dungeness to be greeted by quite a sizeable group of Dragonfly watchers looking for the Vagrant Emperor. Suddenly one was there and every one was happy although unlike the previous day it did not hang around too long. Also present Hairy Dragonfly, Large Red Damselfly and Common Blue Damselfly. Butterflies were thinner on the ground with only Large White and Red Admiral present.

29th APRIL 2011.

Today was a little better for butterflies with 24 Large Whites, 3 Orange Tips and Red Admiral on show at Dungeness. Moths included Light Brocade and Sharp Angled Peacock. Birds were 3 very obliging Hobbys, a brief Bittern, 15 Common Terns, 4 Little Ringed Plovers, Whimbrel, 7 Yellow Wagtails and a Common Buzzard.

30th APRIL 2011.

Today we ventured further a field and visited Elmley RSPB reserve. Disappointingly only Large White and Green Veined White present. Other goodies seen included 10 Blue Tailed Damselflies, 1 Hairy Hawker, 2 Hares, 15 Avocets and 10 adult Med Gulls.

For the second week running we returned home and decided to do some shopping. Wrong decision again. Half the way round we received a phone call to say a Bee-eater was currently showing at Fairfield. This time we arrived too late as it had flew high about 10 minutes previously. It was still a good little spell for we saw a Peregrine, Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler and 9 Med Gulls.

01st May 2011

A visit to Stodmarsh produced 2 Black Terns and 6 Artic Terns amongst a flock of Common Terns. 3 Marsh Harriers, 10 Hobbys, 1 Common Buzzard, 10 Swallows , and good numbers of Reed and Sedge Warblers were present. The only butterflies seen were Holly Blue, Orange Tip and Large/ Small Whites.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-May-11 09:22 PM GMT

02nd MAY 2011- 20TH MAY 2011.

02/05/11 A visit to Dungeness to look for butterflies proved disappointing in windy weather. We did see the strange sight of a Hare running across the beach. A Hobby, Raven, Whimbrel, Sand Martins, Swifts were the birding highlights, with a Streamer moth being the best of the moths present.

We had more luck with butterflies in Hamstreet Woods with Brimstone, Large White, Peacock, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood and Holly Blue seen. 8 adult Med Gulls were present in a field near Fairfield Church.

07/05/11. An attempt to use the moth trap in the garden resulted in poor numbers again. The only moths caught being Green Carpet, Garden Carpet, 4 Shuttle Shaped Darts and a Heart & Dart.

We later travelled to Dungeness where butterflies were again thin on the ground with only Large White and Red Admiral being noted. Moths were more encouraging with the following trapped overnight. Tawny Shears (many), Light Feathered Rustic (many), Maidens Blush, White Spot (a Dungeness goodie), Pine Beauty, Engrailed, Yellow Belle, and Chinese Character.

Birds included a Black Tern, Little Ringed Plover, Cuckoo, Cettis Warbler and 3 Marsh Harriers. 2 Hairy Hawkers and 5 Blue Tailed Damselflies added to the interest. 2 Ravens were seen near Fairfield Church. 5 Brimstones and a Nightingale were seen at Hamstreet.

08/05/11 A visit to Hamstreet Woods produced Yellow Underwing moth, 2 Brimstones, Speckled Wood, 3 Orange Tips, Large White, 2 Green Veined Whites,

We then travelled to an undisclosed site a few miles away to look for Common Buzzard and had the thrill of seeing a Honey Buzzard flying around and wing clapping. Further visits have failed to find it again so presume it was a migrant in the area for a day. 3 Common Buzzards were present, as was a Cettis Warbler.

We headed into East Sussex where we saw 4 Grizzled Skippers in Beckley Wood at a site with lots of Primrose and Bugle.

We called in a Fairfield on the way home to find the Ravens still present.

10/05/11. 2 quick phones calls in succession saw me leaving work and heading to Dungeness. A COLLARED PRATINCOLE was flying around in front of Christmas Dell hide giving us decent if somewhat distant views. The distance meant that any trailing edge on the wing was proving difficult for anyone to see, hence there was some discussion over the possibility of Oriental Pratincole, but the tail was too long and confirmed its identity as Collared. This was not the first one we have seen in Kent but an excellent bird to get to grips with. It only stayed the day, but allowed many Kent birders to catch up with it. It was too distant for me to photograph it, but I am aware some with mega expensive super telephoto lens got some acceptable photos. There were also at least 25 Swallows and 10 Swifts flying over the same pit.

12/05/11. The week got better when another telephone call sent us rushing to Dungeness in the evening to view 2 RED RUMPED SWALLOWS flying around over the same pit with 25 Swallows. As we left we heard a Bittern booming on Hookers Pit. What a good end to the week and making up for the lack of butterflies.

I have added three photos. Not the best quality but I am still getting used to my new Panasonic camera and its settings/ capabilities.

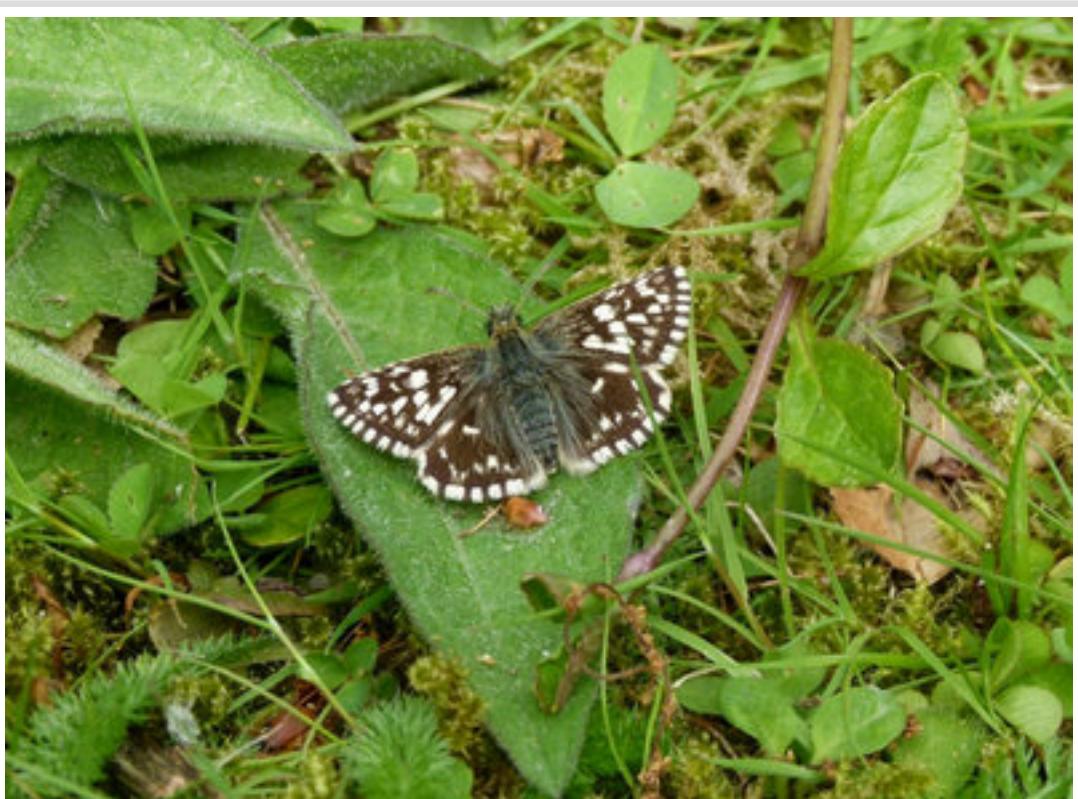
Dave



Green Winged Orchid on Walland Marsh



Med Gull @ Fairfield.



Grizzled Skipper @ Beckley

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 02-Jun-11 04:04 AM GMT

21st May -01st June 2011

21st May 2011.

A visit in the Faversham/ Whitstable / Canterbury area produced no butterflies until we reached East Blean Woods where an early emergence of Heath Fritillary produced 21 flying around the car park area and showing well alongside the footpath. This was a good start to their season, although the Cow Wheat was looking a bit dry due to lack of rain. Also present a Large White and Red Admiral. Early we had seen 3 Hobbies, Common Buzzard, Tree Pipit, Cettis Warbler and a Hairy Hawker on our travels.

22nd May 2011.

The garden moth trap was very disappointing with only a Grey Dagger, Heart & Dart and 3 Common Swifts. Next was a trip to Dungeness where a pair of Garganey was on show in front of the viewing screen. They were supported by a Juvenile Little Gull, Cettis Warbler, 2 Little Egrets, 2 Little Ringed Plovers, Hairy Hawker and a few Four Spotted Chasers. The observatory moth trap contained Purple Bar, Cream Spot Tiger and Angle Shades.

28th May 2011.

Today proved fairly quiet and lacking any butterflies. A field opposite Appledore Railway station held 28 Med Gulls, whilst 2 more adults were near Brookland. Dungeness was very quiet with just 200 Swifts and the Juv Little Gull of note.

29th May 2011.

Today was warmer but with a strong wind the only butterflies noted were Large White. The spring orchids at Yocklets Bank were just about over with only 5 Lady Orchids still in some sort of flower. A nice Greater Butterfly Orchid was on show. Nearby 14 Man Orchids near Crundale were doing their best in the very dry conditions. Kent is in need of some urgent rain, otherwise the summer flowers could finish very early leaving many butterflies short of nectar.

30th May 2011.

At last some warm weather without a strong wind and the insects responded accordingly. Dungeness produced 3 Small Tortoiseshell, 4 Large Whites, 2 Red Admirals, 20 plus Red Eyed Damselflies, Hairy Hawker and 5 Four Spotted Chasers. 11 Hobbys seemed intent on reducing the number of dragonflies present with most hawking over the reed beds. Elsewhere the area produced a male Black Redstart, Wheatear, Lesser Whitethroat, 3 Cettis Warblers and the long staying Little Gull.

1st June 2011

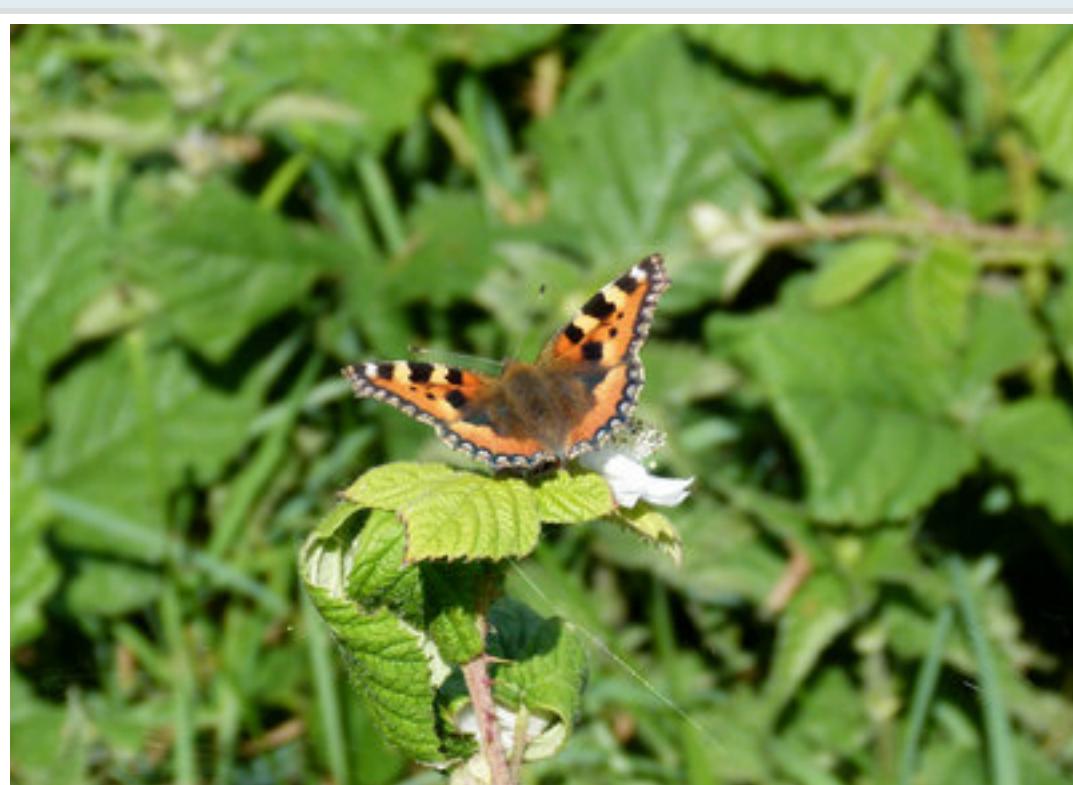
Today started with not one but two text messages from friends at Dungeness. An hour later we were longing at a GREAT WHITE EGREAT on Hookers pit. Was this last years returning bird, who knows, a good bird anyway. Big and white, the sort of bird that makes even casual walkers around the reserve stop and ask about the bird. Whilst watching this 2 CRANES flew over and then circled high for about ten minutes before heading off inland, possibly towards Walland Marsh.

Not content with this news broke of a Marsh Warbler singing near the ramp. Sure enough the bird was in song in a Willow Bush adjacent to a small patch of Willow Herb right by the ramp. Despite watching for an hour and a half we had to be content with a fleeting glimpse and nothing more despite it singing on a regular basis. 5 Cettis Warblers in the general area shows that this species may have survived the harsh winter better than expected.

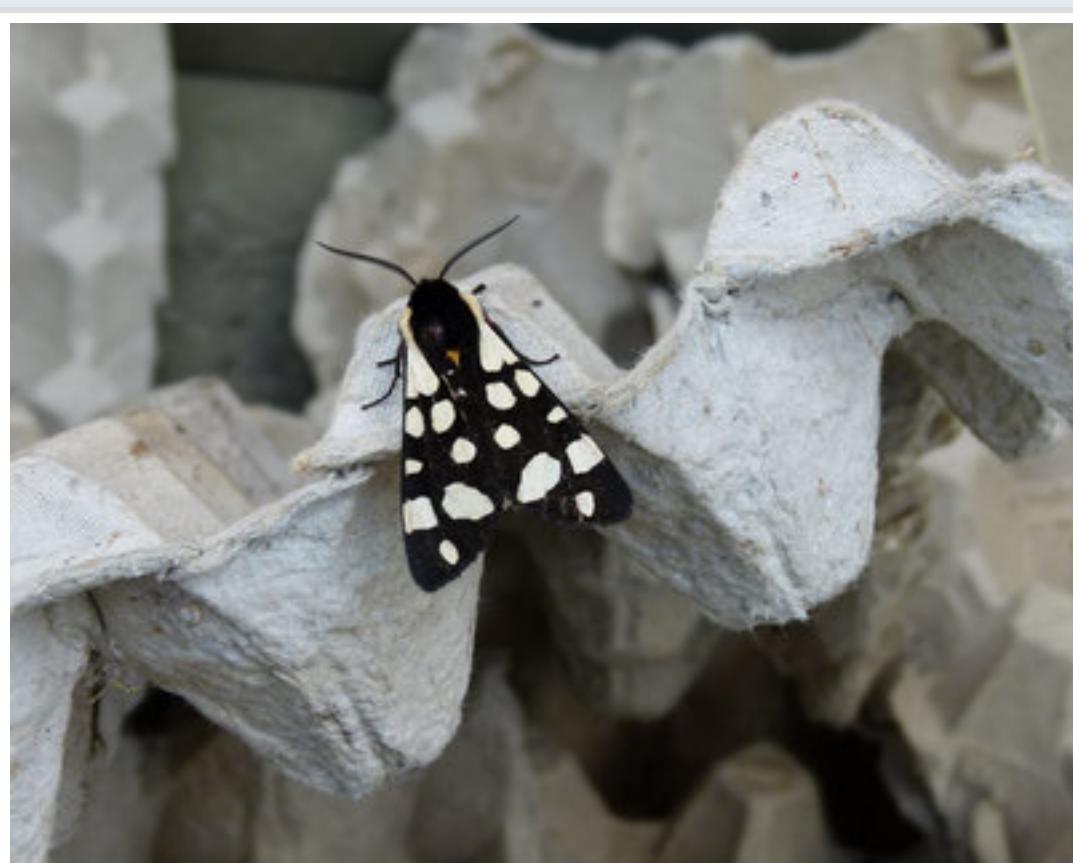
Dave



Lady Orchid at Yocklets Bank



Small Tortoiseshell at Dungeness



Cream Spot Tiger at Dungeness

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Jun-11 02:50 AM GMT

This is a Summary of our trip to Scotland 4th -11th June 2011

There were 3 targets for our planned trip to Ardnamurchan. Chequered Skipper, Pine Matin and the long shot of Wildcat. Not surprising we failed to see a Wildcat but we did manage the other two. This was our earliest trip ever to Scotland to tie in with the peak time for Chequered Skipper, so we knew that it would be light on many other things such as Dragonflies and Orchids.

4th June 2011.

A visit to Glasdrum Wood early AM did not provide the hoped for Chequered Skippers as the weather turned dull and cloudy. The visit was not without its highlights though for at 05.00 hours we saw a Pine Martin feeding at the edge of the road near Appin, and at 06.15 hours we saw an Otter feeding/swimming offshore right opposite the entrance to Glasdrum Wood. 2 Golden Eagles were seen between Lochailort and Glenug and another looking from Glenborrodale towards Mull. One Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary and 4 Crossbills seen at Glenborrdale.

5th June 2011.

One Chequered Skipper seen in poor weather at Ariundle Wood along the path that runs alongside the north of the river. One Four Spotted Chaser with 20 Northern Marsh Orchids nearby on the road to Polloch.

6th June 2011.

A trip from Glenborrodale to Mallaig produced an Otter fishing just north of Glenug, with many Northern Marsh Orchids and birds near Arisaig but no butterflies. The Golden Eagle was seen again near Lochailort and 11 Crossbills at Glenborrodale.

7th June 2011.

We arrived at Loch Arkaig in sunny weather with high hopes of Butterflies, but alas the cloud and drizzle arrived before we had done a through search and we had to make do with 2 Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries and 2 Green Veined Whites. 2 Lesser Butterfly Orchids near the main path did their best to cheer us up. The evening produced 3 Harbour Porpoise near Glenborrodale.

8th June 2011.

The 3 Harbour Porpoise were still present. There was a pair of Black Throated Divers and two Oters from the car park at Ardsignish. Kilchoan produced 150 Northern Marsh Orchids and a Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. Seawatching from Ardnamurchan Lighthouse was good with 1524 Manx Shearwaters passing or feeding offshore. At 15.10 hours, just after seeing a pair of Golden Eagles near Ben Hiant, a magnificent Adult White Tailed Sea Eagle went up. We watched it go higher in the distant when suddenly we became aware of another adult even higher. At one stage a Buzzard went up and started to mob the first bird showing the difference in size. The Buzzard appeared less than a quarter of the size of the WT Eagle, which we a few flaps headed back towards Mull.

Nearby 4 Green Veined Whites were flying in improving sunshine.

9th June 2011.

A Golden Eagle was sighted near Achalea. With the afternoon sunshine warming up nicely a visit to Ariundle Wood was in order. The 2 mile circuit proved a little disappointing with only 2 Chequered Skippers seen. However, 100 metres from the car park along the main track we found more Chequered Skippers, infact 5 more, plus 2 Green Veined Whites and a Golden Ringed Dragonfly.

10th June 2011.

Although the sun shone it was still fairly cold and only 2 Small Heaths were at Sanna Bay with 5 Green Veined Whites and 1 Small Pearl Bordered at Loch Mudle. With 1 Small Pearl Bordered, 1 Northern Emerald Dragonfly and 1 Four Spotted Chaser at Glenborrdale. A Corncrake was calling at Ardsignish earlier that morning.

11th June 2011.

The journey home produced 2 Red Kites near Doune and one over the A1(M) near Peterborough.

Overall the birdlife was great with many Grasshopper and Wood Warblers, with other goodies not normally seen by us here in the South East. I shall produce a full trip report later.

Dave



Chequered Skipper Seen at Ariundle Wood.



Seen at Glenborrodale. Sorry, not a Scottish Crossbill just a Common.



Small Pearl Bordered seen at Glenborrodale

Re: Dave Brown

by Gibster, 13-Jun-11 04:34 AM GMT

Aah, happy memories of last year on Ardnamurchan...although I'm positively green with envy at your Pine Marten sighting. I've spent hours and hours searching for them there with no luck at all. There's a good scree slope for Wildcat, apparently they hunt voles there. I've spotlit one there, plus had another bounce/lollipop across the road ahead of me. I'm in the middle of moving house at the mo so my stuff's in boxes. I'll PM you the exact site details for your next trip (by which time I should have finished unpacking! 😊)

Cheers,

Gibster.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Jun-11 04:03 AM GMT

Scottish Trip

We are pleased that our brief report has brought back happy memories for some (Gibster at least). Hopefully I can bring a smile to Gibster by attaching a photo of the Pine Martin at Appin. Our sighting was especially pleasing to us as we are aware that June can be a difficult month to connect with them. Apparently they became more secretive during the breeding season. The locals informed us that sightings are becoming regular on Ardnamurchan so hopefully others will connect on any planned visit.

Tuesday 14 JUNE 2011.

Today we visited the Kent location for the recently refound DAINTY Damselfly. The weather was really kind to us and we managed to connect with at least two pairs. The location is in the public domain with exact site details for anyone thinking of going. Today a group of about ten of us had more luck on the third pool. Previous sightings had been around the second pool. I suspect that time will show them to be more widespread in the general area as it seemed quite suitable.

For anyone thinking of going I should say that I found the Dainty difficult to indentify in the field. You do need good views and Photos are a big help. Patience was needed and we spent some 2.5 hours on site. Others spent even longer, so expect some effort to confirm the species you see is Dainty. Also present were good numbers of Black Tailed Skimmers, Four Spotted Chasers, Emperor Dragonfly and various other Blue Damselflies (Common, Blue Tailed).

Butterflies present were 50 plus Meadow Browns, 3 Large Skippeers, 2 Small Heaths and 4 Common Blues.

Dave



This Pine Martin posed by the side of road at Appin early in the morning.

Re: Dave Brown

by Padfield, 15-Jun-11 04:24 AM GMT

I LOVE that pine marten shot! It catches their character perfectly.

Guy

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Jun-11 08:53 PM GMT

I have uploaded a poor photo of the Male Dainty Damselfly, taken just as it took off.
So why was this a male Dainty?

1 Not obvious from my photo but clear in the field was the fact that the Pterostigma was twice as long as wide and a pale brown colour.
2 The black marking on top of abdominal segment 2 was U shaped, almost goblet shaped, but admittedly the U was not well marked as some recent photos. Suggesting that this was a different individual to that photographed at the weekend.

3 Segment 6&7 black.

4 Segment 8 blue

5 Narrow Antehumeral strip.

6 Coenagnon spur on side of thorax.

A feature mentioned on site was the fact that the wings appeared shorter than other blue Damselflies, but this was obviously subjective and whether it is borne out by actual measurements is another matter. The quality of my photo does not allow ID confirmation on its own, but luckily photos taken by others on site do allow confirmation of both the male and female.

One photo confirmed no spine on the underside of number eight segment. A spine would have indicated Common Blue.

The refinding of the Dainty Damselfly in Britain was down to the hardwork of John and Jill Brook who spend most of their spare time in the field. What else does Kent have in store for this year? More records of the Southern Migrant Hawker, Camberwell Beauty or even Queen of Spain Fritillary. If only the rain would leave off so we can get out there and look.

Dave



Male Dainty Damselfly near Kingsferry Bridge, Sheppey.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Jun-11 03:32 AM GMT

WED 15 JUNE 2011

Wondering what to do for the day a text message from someone at Dungeness made the decision easy. On show was a SQUACCO HERON, not an easy bird to see. We arrived just in time for it to be showing at the bottom of a bush on the edge of pool adjacent to Hookers Pit. Not the best of views, but considering how secretive they can be this was a good opportunity to see one without the long wait. Whilst walking back to the car park our son saw a Bittern in flight. This particular is being seen and heard on a regular basis. 2 Hobbies were hawking over the pits.

We came across 7 Small Tortoiseshells as we walked back. Later, along Dengemarsh Road we saw another 15. The day total of 22 is the most we have seen for a few years.

To end a good day we had a Hummingbird Hawkmoth visit the garden at tea time.

SAT 18 JUNE 2011

Another visit to Dungeness, this time we had flight views of the Great White Egret around Hookers Pit. It is in breeding attire but sadly without a mate. The cool and windy weather meant that a repeat showing of the Small Tortoiseshells was not forthcoming, with only 2 found.

TUES 21 JUNE 2011.

Today the weather was marginally better with a few sunny breaks. At Eastwell park we managed to find 9 Red Eyed Damselflies, along with 5 Common Spotted Orchids. Hothfield Common only gave a Emperor Dragonfly and no butterflies. However, a wood near Chilham was much more productive with 19 Ringlets, 14 Large Skippers, a late Brimstone, our first 2 Marbled Whites of the year, Comma, Red Admiral and 2 Speckled Woods.

We ended the day near Wye, which whilst light on butterflies, was quite good for orchids. The butterflies were 1 Marbled White and 3 Ringlets. Orchids were represented by 37 Pyramidal, 2 Common Spotted and 7 Common Twayblade.

With a better forecast for Kent for the weekend hopefully the butterflies will be out in good numbers.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 29-Jun-11 09:45 PM GMT

THURSDAY 23 JUNE 2011.

A change for the better to the weather forecast with a brighter warmer day meant a few spare hours were spent in Hamstreet Woods.

Butterflies seen were 8 White Admirals, 1 Painted Lady, 1 Comma, 3 Large Skippers, 62 Meadow Browns and 1 Ringlet supported by a Mottled Beauty

moth and a Nightingale.

SUNDAY 26 JUNE 2011.

As the weather warmed up late morning a return visit to Hamstreet Woods was our planned move and resulted in a Silver Washed Fritillary, 6 White Admirals, 6 Purple Hairstreaks, 4 Large Skippers, 25 Meadow Browns, a Comma, 2 Red Admirals, 3 Small Tortoiseshells, 2 Brimstones, 5 Large Whites supported by 2 Broad Bodied Chasers, 8 Azure Damselflies and a Large Red.

Nearby a visit to Warehorne found 2 Small Tortoiseshells, 20 Meadow Browns, Red Admiral and Large White.

With the weather now really quite warm we decided to visit Iden Moat in East Sussex for Dragonflies. On view were a Downy Emerald, 5 White Legged Damselflies, 3 Large Emperors, 10 Four Spotted Chasers and many Azure Damselflies. A Common Buzzard flew nearby.

MONDAY 27 JUNE 2011.

An overnight garden moth trap produced our first Poplar Hawkmoth of the year plus Fanfoot, 2 Scalloped Oak, 2 Large Yellow Underwings, Green Pug, Yellow shell, Dwarf Cream Wave, 2 Dark Arches, Light Arches, Heart & Club and Bee moth.

TUESDAY 28 JUNE 2011.

On hearing of a few good moths trapped overnight at Dungeness we made an evening visit to view the goodies on show. Wow, what a catch. The best was Britain's second ever modern record of DUSKY MARBLED BROWN. I understand that there are 3 or 4 records from the 1800's with one other in 2003. This continental species was quite rightly attracting a lot of interest including a few long distance moth enthusiasts.

This was supported the Continental form of Speckled Footman, Sussex Emerald, Small Emerald, July Belle, Scarce Black Arches, Small Marbled, Barred Red (Green form), Obscure Wainscott, V Pug and Fen Wainscott.

On offer was a Moth jackpot and well worth the effort of an evening visit. Also a big thanks to the warden of the observatory, David Walker, who made the time to explain and identify the species on offer to us.

An interesting side issue to the number of moth migrants on offer following this very hot spell, was the fact that a small number of Dark Green Fritillaries had been turning up at some British migrant hot spots, suggesting a European origin.

What a great evening.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Jul-11 07:00 PM GMT

What a great week for our urban garden moth trap. Not big numbers of moths but two new species for the garden, and both a very welcome but surprising addition. The first was Festoon trapped on Monday night, but I needed to have checked first before mentioning this National Scarce B moth. Happy to say the record was confirmed. The second was Small Ranunculus trapped on Thursday night. A few years ago this was a major rarity, but there does appear to be a small influx the last couple of years. Considering the low number of species we have caught so far this season we are very pleased to see them.

The other garden highlight has been a Hummingbird Hawk Moth on the 29th and again (or another) on the 1st July.

THURSDAY 30 JUNE 2011.

A visit to Stodmarsh proved very disappointing for Butterflies and Dragonflies with only 2 Red Admirals, 10 Meadow Browns and 1 Large Skipper seen despite reasonable weather. We did however have good views of the Juvenile Night Heron as it feed below a tree on the other side of the lake. The day was saddened by the sight of hundreds of dead fish around the lake, presumably a result of the recent hot spell and an increase in the algae levels.

FRIDAY 1ST JULY 2011.

Another warm day meant a visit to Cliffe was in order to view the Butterflies and Dragonflies on offer. The dragonflies turned out to be the highlight with 4 SOUTHERN EMERALD damselflies found, the second year running for this new species at this location. Supported by 21 Scarce Emerald Damselflies, 35 Blue Tailed Damselflies, 9 Ruddy Darters and 2 Emperor Dragonflies. Butterflies seen were 7 Small Heaths, 22 Red Admirals and 38 Meadow Browns. None of the hoped for Painted Ladies or Wall Browns.

SATURDAY 2nd JULY 2011.

Today looked good for a local White Letter Hairstreak search around Warehorne and the Royal Military Canal. Despite several hours on site we failed to find any. We did find 3 Purple Hairstreaks in nearby Hamstreet Woods together with 1 White Admiral.

A drive around Romney Marsh to try and locate singing Tree Sparrows as part of a Survey found a group of 7 and 5. This same survey also turned up 74 Large Whites, 20 Meadow Browns, 7 Red Admirals and 2 Small Tortoiseshells.

Dungeness held 2 Sussex Emeralds, a much localised species. Anyone wishing to see this species in Britain really needs to call in at Dungeness Bird Observatory at the right time of the year (now) and ask if any have been trapped. They usually catch a number each year and keep one or two on view for visitors. Outside of a small area this species is never seen. A Wood Sandpiper was nearby on the ARC pit.

SUNDAY 3rd JULY 2011.

A return visit to Warehorne for White Letter Hairstreak was more successful with 2 on show, also 3 Ringlets, 10 Meadow Browns and a Comma. With 8 Emerald damselflies and 5 Red Eyed Damselflies in the adjacent canal and ditches.



Purple Hairstreak at Hamstreet. This individual looked very blue.



Small Ranunculus moth (garden moth trap)



Southern Emerald Damselfly at Cliffe

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Jul-11 03:06 AM GMT

MONDAY 4TH & TUESDAY 5TH JULY 2011.

The garden moth trap was fairly quiet with a Dark Arches being the best of the limited bunch.

THURSDAY 7TH JULY 2011.

A visit to Stodmarsh proved uneventful with little to show except decent views of the long staying juvenile Night Heron and a Hobby hawking insects. Strangely butterflies were thin on the ground despite the reasonable weather. 15 Large Whites and a Red Admiral were all we could locate.

An evening phone call inviting us to a private moth trapping night in the Hamstreet area was too good an opportunity to miss so at 10.30 hours, and for the next two hours, we found ourselves looking at the following moths (not in any particular order),

Minor Shoulder Knot, Peach Blossom, Rosy Footman, Lobster Moth, Drinker, Buff Tip, July High-flyer, Common & Satin Lutestring, Poplar Grey, Figure of Eighty, Marbled White Spot, Red Twinspot Carpet, Leopard Moth, Nut Tree Tussock, Large Emerald, Peppered Moth, Mottled Beauty, Black Arches, Lackey, Lunar Spotted Pinion, Elephant Hawkmoth, Clouded Bordered Brindle, Common Footman and a few other common species.

Nothing spectacular, but very nice to catch up with the very impressive Elephant Hawkmoth.

FRIDAY 8TH JULY 2011.

Last nights moth trapping had alerted us to a rare moth trapped that day near Lydd. Today found us looking at the fast declining Dotted Rustic supported by a Copper Underwing before release. Apparently the Dotted Rustic is now so scarce in Kent that it attracted quite a few admirers.

SATURDAY 9TH JULY 2011.

At last today looked like a butterfly day so we visited the Chilham area, but numbers seem well down. We did see 5 Ringlets, 2 Large Skippers, 9 Meadow Browns and 20 Large Whites. Probably best of all though was a purring Turtle Dove. What has happened to this species this year? We have only seen 5 all year when we used to see at least 5 a day. This species needs an urgent action plan of recovery.

Next was Oare Marshes where strangely enough we saw our second purring Turtle Dove of the day. The only butterflies were Large Whites and dragonflies were represented by 2 Black Tailed Skimmers and 4 Ruddy Darters.

SUNDAY 10TH JULY 2011.

Today the sun encouraged us to visit Wye Downs where we managed to see 25 Marbled Whites, 15 Ringlets, 28 Meadow Browns, 3 Gatekeepers, 10 Large Whites and a Red Admiral. Next was Stodmarsh where we had a brief view of a Hummingbird Hawkmoth in the car park.

We then called in at Chislet Marshes where we saw 2 Gatekeepers, 4 Small Skippers, 2 Red Admirals, Comma and 40 Large Whites. A search of the ditches provided a Small Red Eyed Damselfly, 65 Red Eyed Damselflies, 5 Emperor Dragonflies and 2 Black Tailed Skimmers.

We ended the day at East Blean Woods where there was still two very faded Heath Fritillaries on the wing, together with 2 White Admirals and 15 Ringlets.

Another most enjoyable week of wildlife.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Gibster, 17-Jul-11 03:53 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

I spent some 6 hours at Cliffe Pools last week, most of them checking dykes and ditches for Southern Emeralds. Glad to see you skored where I crashed! Smart individual in your pic, definitely didn't see any like that.

Cheers,

Gibster.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 25-Jul-11 09:52 PM GMT

Sorry we are a little behind with our wildlife notes but we have been very busy of late. It does seem that the weather conspires against us whenever we can get out into the field. We seemed to have missed so much this year, especially as many species seem so early. Hopefully there is still a good selection of goodies to look forward to.

THURSDAY 14TH JULY 2011.

Today was sunny, but windy, and unlikely to produce good numbers of butterflies. We decided to try our luck at Elmley RSPB reserve. If it turned out good we could also visit the Dainty Damselfly site on the way home. However it remained with a cool wind all day so we restricted our day to Elmley. Seen,

Small Skipper, Meadow Brown, Large White, Peacock, Hummingbird Hawkmoth, 35 Blue Tailed Damselflies, Southern Hawker, Hobby, 4 Little Egrets, 3 Marsh Harriers, Avocet and 2 Hares.

FRIDAY 15TH JULY 2011.

After many disappointing days of poor butterfly weather today was looking good, it seemed a good idea to visit Beckley Wood in East Sussex where with luck the Silver washed Fritillary would be on the wing. So it proved with 16 noted along various rides. However, only 1 White Admiral was seen, when normally they are more numerous than the Silver Washed.

Also noted,

Purple Hairstreak, Large Skipper, Peacock, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Large White, Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker, Ruddy Darter and Common Buzzard.

SUNDAY 17TH JULY 2011.

Today we visited the reliable location of Dungeness. There is always something to see or do and today was no exception.

We explored both the RSPB and the Bird Observatory area. Despite a mix of poor weather and sunny spells we still managed a few interesting records.

A Painted Lady and Great White Egret along the Dengemarsh Road was a good start. Other goodies seen during the day were, Large Skipper, Brown Argus, Small Skipper, Meadow Brown, Peacock, Red Admiral, Wood Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, 3 Little Gulls, 3 Little Egrets, 200 plus Sand Martins, 300 plus Swifts.

A good selection of moths was on view including Privet Hawkmoth, Shore Wainscott, Dusky Sallow, Bordered Straw and Bordered Sallow.

Another most enjoyable week.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 31-Jul-11 03:57 AM GMT

THURSDAY 21ST JULY 2011.

A visit to Beckley Woods (East Sussex) to look for Silver Washed Fritillaries proved fruitless in poor weather conditions. All we had to show for a one hour visit was 2 Red Admirals and several Meadow Browns. We called in at Dungeness on the way home to see a fantastic Elephant Hawk moth, Rosy Footman and Pale Grass Eggar in the moth trap.

FRIDAY 22 JULY 2011.

A visit to a local wood near Chilham in reasonable conditions produced a White Admiral, 3 Large Skippers, 4 Speckled Woods, 3 Commas, 2 Bed Admirals and large numbers of Meadow Browns and Large Whites.

SATURDAY 23 JULY 2011.

Not really a day for butterflies so a few hours birding at Dungeness produced a Juvenile PECTORAL SANDPIPER on the ARC pit supported by 5 Common Sandpipers, 4 Little Egrets, 4 Little Ringed Plovers, 3 Little Gulls, 5 Marsh Harriers, 3 Common Buzzards and a Hobby.

SUNDAY 24 JULY 2011.

The weather gave hope for some butterflies today so we did a tour of several sites. First we visited Elmley RSPB where a Barn Owl, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, 3 Marsh Harriers, 4 Little Egrets, 2 Emerald Damselflies, 2 Common Blue Butterflies, 2 Small Skippers, 20 Meadow Browns, 12 Large Whites, 15 Gatekeepers, Red Admiral and a Peacock were on show.

Next we called in at the Dainty Damselfly site but we failed to locate any. However, it was quite good for butterflies with 2 Small Coppers, 5 Small Skippers, 15 Common Blues, 1 Brown Argus, 40 Large Whites, 100 plus Gatekeepers and 50 plus Meadow Browns. Here in Kent the Gatekeeper seems to be having a very successful season with large numbers everywhere, on the other hand Small/ Essex Skippers are appearing in very low numbers.

Finally we called in at Wye NNR to look for Chalkhill Blues. We only saw 8 instead of the usual hundreds. What is going on with this species? We will check in another week or so just in case it is just a late emergence but it is worrying. We did see a Brimstone, 2 Small Heaths, Common Blue, Brown Argus and the usual big numbers of Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Large Whites.

THURSDAY 28 JULY 2011.

We had just arrived at Dungeness when we received a message that a BEDSTRAW HAWK MOTH had been trapped overnight on the RSPB. Moths trapped there are not always on public display, not because they do not wish to show them, but because of the time constraints of their staff at a busy time of the year. With this in mind we carried on to look for dragonflies and butterflies around the area. We managed to catch up with one of the LESSER EMPEROR dragonflies on the Long Pits (3 have been seen some days), supported by 38 Small Red Eyed Damselflies, 3 Common Blue butterflies and the usual Gatekeepers. Arriving back at the Observatory we were pleasantly surprised to find that the Bedstraw Hawk moth was on show for about one hour whilst a really friendly member of the RSPB team had a break. He was also making arrangements to show it the following day. A small crowd of us

enjoyed the opportunity and are grateful for his efforts for giving up his free time. Other good moths on show were Scarce Chocolate Tip and Toadflax Brocade.

Another most enjoyable week, if only the weather would improve and become a real summer.

Dave



Scarce Chocolate Tip at Dungeness



Bedstraw Hawkmoth at Dungeness

Re: Dave Brown

by Lee Hurrell, 01-Aug-11 08:43 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Not sure if you caught it, but there was a small (repeated, from the Wild Places series with Matt Baker and Julia Bradbury I think) feature on Dungeness on Country Tracks from Sunday morning.

Here's the iplayer link, the bit on Dungeness starts at around 5mins 50 secs.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0...acks_Kent/

Cheers

Lee

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 04-Aug-11 09:12 PM GMT

Thank you to Lee for the link to the programme featuring Dungeness. I enjoyed the brief article, (but would have preferred Julia to have been there). Owen (the medicinal leech man) is a really nice guy who helps anyone asking wildlife questions (but again I am sure he would have preferred Julia to Mark).

SATURDAY 30TH JULY 2011.

Back to Dungeness to try and photograph any of the three Lesser Emperor Dragonflies being seen. We were totally out of luck despite the weather appearing suitable. In fact dragonfly and butterfly numbers seemed well down. Species seen were Emperor Dragonfly, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Ruddy Darter, a single Small Copper, 2 Common Blues, 4 Red Admirals, many Gatekeepers and Large Whites.

Stopping at a site near Old Romney to check for damselflies we found 11 Small Tortoiseshells and 4 Essex Skippers feeding on or around thistles.

SUNDAY 31ST JULY 2011.

A visit of one hour to a known Honey Buzzard site somewhere in Kent failed to locate any so we moved on to a site of Broad Leaved Helleborine near Faversham. Here we found 200 plus, or at least what remained of them. Them pesky Fallow Deer had decided to bit off the heads of most plants so only

a few are likely to flower this year. This is the second year running that this has occurred and will probably get worse as numbers of deer increase unless something is done to control them. How long this colony of scarce Kent orchids can survive is open to debate, but the deer are starting to clear the ground flora of several woods in the area.

WEDNESDAY 03 AUGUST 2011.

With predicated temperatures of 28 degrees here in Kent we thought that a visit to Cliffe Marshes was in order to look for any Southern Migrant Hawkers (a pair had been seen briefly ovipositing last year). Cliffe can also be good for butterflies so it looked like a good move. However, it proved rather disappointing with very few dragonflies and lower than expected numbers of butterflies. No sign of any Southern Migrant or Migrant Hawkers. Also no Emperor Dragonflies or Skimmers of any species were noted. 7 Scarce Emerald Damselflies were still on show along with 10 Blue Tailed Damselflies. 35 Common/ Ruddy Darters were present (mainly Ruddy), Butterflies included 21 Small Heaths, 40 plus Gatekeepers, 10 Meadow Browns, 6 Red Admirals and just 1 Common Blue.

Birds included Wood Sandpiper, 3 Ruff, 2 Greenshanks, 6 Green Sandpipers, 1 Common Sandpiper, 200 plus Avocets, Hobby and 2 Marsh Harriers. The weather was fantastic and made the visit even more enjoyable. A few more days like this and there is a danger of a sun tan.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Aug-11 12:26 AM GMT

We are sure that we are not alone in thinking that summer has been almost non existent at times. A few warm days are immediately followed by cold wet or cool windy days, not very agreeable for insect activity. Before we know it the peak insect period will be over and we only have our photographs to remind us of what could have been. High petrol prices have been another factor in the equation and have certainly meant we have restricted some of our more ambitious journeys. Scotch Argus for instance will have to wait for another year.

Now to the good stuff,

FRIDAY 5TH AUGUST 2011.

Despite the weather and reduced moth numbers two very good moths were on view at Dungeness. The first was DARK CRIMSON UNDERWING and the other was Langman's Yellow Underwing. The cool winds meant that we struggled to find any butterflies or dragonflies and the only decent birds were the long staying Great White Egret and a Hobby. We did spend nearly two hours looking for a reported Cattle Egret seen flying over the ARC Car Park but without luck.

SATURDAY 6TH AUGUST 2011.

A visit to Pett Level to look for early returning migrants met with limited success with 6 Sandwich Terns and 2 Bar Tailed Godwits on the pools. We did stumble on a Scalloped Hook Tip moth on a brick wall, but an early return home was in order.

FRIDAY 12TH AUGUST 2011.

The wind was really strong today so a sea watch at Dungeness looked inviting. There was a steady movement of Common Terns (110 plus), 12 Gannets, a few Kittiwakes but best of all was a Balearic Shearwater and 2 Artic Skua's harassing the migrating terns. A few Green Sandpipers on the ARC pit were a sure sign that autumn migrating is well underway.

SATURDAY 13TH AUGUST 2011.

Today looked more promising with periods of quite warm sunshine. We decided to walk around Stodmarsh nature reserve. It was immediately obvious that many Chiffchaffs were present with at least 40 counted. Butterflies included 4 Speckled Woods, many Large Whites together with a few Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Red Admirals. A look at last years WILLOW EMERALD Damselfly site near Little Grays Farm (Marshside) found at least 6 on the hedgerow next to the roadside ditch. Surprising very few other dragonflies were on the wing with only Ruddy Darter and Migrant Hawker seen. Probably best of all was a sighting of the Red Arrows doing a display over/ near Manston Airport. How do they get so close without actual contact. A really impressive end to a quite enjoyable day.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by ChrisC, 16-Aug-11 04:10 AM GMT

i think i'm becoming a lazy birder, just enjoying reading your reports now Dave 😊 . and yes it does have a rather autumnal feel.

Chris

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 21-Aug-11 03:04 AM GMT

SUNDAY 14TH AUGUST 2011.

One look out of the window today told us it was a day for butterflies and not a day to visit Dungeness. Could we be wrong? The nearest decent butterfly spot to us is Wye Downs, so 30 minutes late we walked the lower part of the Downs noting Chalkhill Blues on the wing. This was much better than on our last visit and a final total of 56 was pleasing, especially as they were supported by 8 Common Blues, a late Marbled White, 18 Gatekeepers, 15 Meadows and a number of Red Admirals and Peacocks. We also noted 6 Migrant Hawkers which have been in low numbers so far this year.

Next stop was a wood near Chilham where 2 Speckled Woods, 12 Gatekeepers and 20 plus Meadow Browns were on the wing. 9 Migrant Hawkers were hawking insects over one particular small clearing.

Next stop was an undisclosed site in East Kent for Honey Buzzard. For our third visit running we failed to see any, despite a wait of nearly two hours. Despite our earlier optimism as the day wore on the butterflies were becoming more difficult to locate, so it was home for a cup of tea. That always seems to do the trick, no sooner had we unpacked than it was time to pack again. A message had informed us of a just found White Rumped Sandpiper at Dungeness. 45 Minutes later we were sitting in a fairly packed Hanson Hide on the ARC pit looking at an Adult White Rumped Sandpiper. Unfortunately the bird would not come close enough for me to photograph but it was still very enjoyable. A number of people visiting the nearby RSPB Birdfair were able to catch up with this bird, and for some it was the rarest bird they had seen. It's always pleasing to see people new to birding experience the sighting of their first rare bird. For some that will be the sighting that hooks for them life. The more people we have interested in wildlife the more protection species will get.

FRIDAY 19TH AUGUST 2011.

A visit to Elmley RSPB was a mixed bag with few species of butterflies. Lots of Large Whites but not much else. Very few Dragonflies as well was very unusual for this time of the year. We are not really sure what to make of this year and its affect on butterflies and dragonflies. Maybe we have just been

spoilt by recent very good years, but numbers at some locations are very low. Still, we will keep looking and hopefully there is more to come as autumn approaches.

Birds seen included Hobby, 3 Common Buzzards, 5 Marsh Harriers, 8 Green Sandpipers, 9 Little Egrets and good numbers of returning Yellow Wagtails.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Aug-11 06:40 PM GMT

SUNDAY 21ST AUGUST 2011.

Today we visited Chislet Marsh to see if last years Willow Emerald Damselflies had consolidated their appearance in Kent. They had, although numbers were not great. We found 4 alongside the road at Little Gray's Farm, including a mating pair. Also present were 3 Small Red Eyed Damselflies, 3 Ruddy Darters, a Brown Hawker and 3 Common Buzzards. Butterflies were few with just Large and Small Whites with a few Gatekeepers.

We decided to extend our search for Willow Emeralds and it was pleasing to find 2 more alongside a road ditch along Chitty Lane, over a mile to the South East of Little Gray's Farm. This new site is only some 2 miles from the big Nature Reserve of Grove Ferry so hopefully it is only a matter of time before they are found there.

With the sun warming up it was time for a visit to Lydden Nature Reserve to see Silver Spotted Skippers. We were not disappointed. We found a total of 24 spread over the first three fields. Also present were 30 plus Adonis Blues, 12 Chalkhill Blues, 75 plus Meadow Browns, 10 Common Blues, a few Gatekeepers, a Red Admiral and a late Marbled White. Flowers included 15 Autumn Ladies Tresses and 2 Autumn Gentian.

The ground is still very dry despite the recent rain and this may be the reason for reduced numbers of the Tresses.

On leaving we had only driven about a mile when a Honey Buzzard flew over (14.30 hours) heading south. Presumably on its return migration.

A most enjoyable day.

SATURDAY 27TH AUGUST 2011.

A visit to Dungeness did not look too promising in quiet windy conditions but in the end it was good. We started with a Common Buzzard over the ARC pit and 2 Black Terns on the pit. 3 Hobby's were in the general area, the 2nd year Glaucous Gull remains at the fishing boats. 2 Ravens were along Dengemarsh Road. A tip off from the Observatory Warden saw us looking at a fine JERSEY TIGER MOTH in a bush on the RSPB reserve. This is a very rare moth in Kent with its mainland stronghold in the Dorset costal area, and of course very common on the Channel Islands. Presumably this was wind assisted migrant from the later location.

Elsewhere on the reserve we found a Small Heath, 2 Red Admirals and good numbers of Small and Large Whites. Birds included 3 Marsh Harriers and 3 Little Egrets.

In the evening we were surprised to find another Hummingbird Hawkmoth in our garden.

SUNDAY 28TH AUGUST 2011.

Another visit to Wye Downs produced 37 Chalkhill Blues, 2 Adonis Blues, 8 Small Heaths, 9 Meadow Browns, a Gatekeeper and large numbers of Small and Large Whites, 2 Treble Bar Moths and 4 Common Buzzards.

An afternoon visit near to Dungeness produced a Light Phase Pomarine Skua and 5 Artic Skuas, together with 200 plus terns probably all Common, and 85 Gannets. 27 Yellow Wagtails is a sure sign of returning migration.

Another very good period of wildlife watching. Just a pity that insects are becoming harder to find as the weather cools.

Dave



This Silver Spotted Skipper was clearly enjoying the goodies on offer from the flower.



This rare for Kent, Jersey Tiger Moth, was present for the afternoon on the RSPB.

Re: Dave Brown

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-11 04:39 PM GMT

Dave I am very jealous about the Glaucous Gull, I have tried to catch up with this species for many years but I always just miss it, or family binds mean that I can't get to where it's at 😞 Blooming bogey birds 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 07-Sep-11 08:24 PM GMT

During this last period here in Kent we have had the best couple of day's weather for some weeks. Unfortunately we were unable to take advantage of this and therefore a good period of butterfly watching was lost. Still it did give one interesting garden record so all was not wasted.

MONDAY 29TH AUGUST 2011.

Trying to avoid the chaos, otherwise known as Bank Holiday Monday, we drove around the Chislet Marsh area. We could see all the traffic heading for Reculver, Herne Bay and Thanet, and the fact that the car park at Grove Ferry was full and overflowing, seemed to justify our choice. There were many Large & Small Whites together with a few Meadow Browns and Red Admirals, but only one Gatekeeper.

It was pleasing to find 5 Willow Emerald Damselflies, Southern Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Blue Tailed Damselfly and Ruddy Darter. There was a movement of Swallows going on with at least 75 seen. Raptors seen were 6 Common Buzzards, Sparrowhawk and Hobby.

THURSDAY 01ST SEPTEMBER 2011.

After a day of very hot sunshine and little wind we were pleasantly surprised to be visited by 2 Hummingbird Hawkmoths together around 18.30 hrs for 10 minutes. Try as I might we could not get an acceptable photo to place on the blog. This is our first visit of two together and goes to show the potential of gardens even in an urban area.

SATURDAY 03RD SEPTEMBER 2011.

Guess where we went. Well to be honest the weather was not as good as the previous 2 days and a report of the Cattle Egret on the RSPB reserve meant it had to be Dungeness. A bonus would hopefully be a sighting of a Beautiful Marbled moth trapped earlier in the week. We saw the Cattle Egret within 20 minutes of our arrival as it was disturbed by a hunting Marsh Harrier. A Hobby and Common Buzzard flew around the same area. Next was the Observatory where our luck was in and the Beautiful Marbled was still on show. What a beauty, hence its name, and a British rarity. First recorded in Britain only 10 years ago there have been a few records since, but I believe this was the first for Kent. Equally attractive was a Feathered Gothic trapped the previous night. A Painted Lady on the ARC pit was one of a few Butterflies seen. Birds seen included 185 Knot on ARC pit and an early Pintail.

SUNDAY 04TH SEPTEMBER 2011.

The weather started off reasonable but deteriorated quickly. We spent some time looking for the reported Corncrake along Dengemarsh Road (Dungeness). As expected it proved impossible to see in its chosen Barley field so a number of Dungeness regulars remained disappointed at this Kent mega. The Glaucous Gull was on show at the Fishing Boat roost and attracted a large group of visiting birders (sorry Wurzel). Apart from many passing Gannets and Common Terns it was otherwise quiet. There was no chance of any butterflies with heavy falling rain.

We look forward to better weather.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Sep-11 09:37 PM GMT

SATURDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2011.

Today started off with an Old Lady (moth) trapped overnight in our garden trap. An impressive moth by any standard. Feeling that this could be a good day we headed to Dungeness where the CATTLE EGRET was showing distantly along the RSPB track. 2 late Swifts, with many Swallows and Sand Martins were flying around the pits. A Garganey, 3 Curlew Sandpipers and a Black Tern added to the autumn migration feel. The sun, or rather lack of, restricted butterfly sightings to 4 Red Admirals and a Small Tortoiseshell. Dragonflies fared little better with only 4 Migrant Hawkers and a Brown Hawker seen.

SUNDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2011.

Following up a sighting of an Osprey seen the previous day today we visited Emley RSPB. Unfortunately no sign today and little else. 8 Large Whites flew around the car park area, together with 14 Migrant Hawkers. A Common Buzzard, Marsh Harrier, Hobby, 6 Yellow Wagtails and a few hundred Swallows and Sand Martins were the bird interest.

We decided to call in at Oare Marsh on the way home to see if the Osprey had drifted further east. Alas no, but a Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper added interest. At least 20 Large Whites were on the wing but little else.

TUESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2011.

One of the Hummingbird Hawkmoth's visited the garden again in the late afternoon.

A message from a birding friend at Hamstreet saw us looking at a Marsh Mallow moth he had trapped overnight in his garden. This is a Red Data species and only known from two locations in Britain, both in Kent. The first is Romney Marsh and the second the River Medway near Maidstone.

Romney Marsh is a large area so I suspect that it may be more numerous than currently known. Based on current knowledge this was a goodie and we are grateful for the chance to see this rare moth.

WEDNESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2011.

The lure of a twitchable LONG TAILED SKUA was too much and early evening saw us on the beach at Dungeness looking at the bird, which we believe was a second summer, based on plumage details. The attached photo was the best we could manage in the windy conditions. The bird was keeping low trying to stay out of the wind so its underside was not visible, but in flight some white with barring on the body bird was seen. A quick call in at the ARC pit as we headed home found a Juvenile Little Gull, 3 Black Terns and a Artic Tern. 75 Sand Martins were hawking the insects low over the water.

A really good period of wildlife watching, although it does appear that the Butterfly season is all but over.

Dave



Long Tailed Skua (Second Summer) Dungeness beach by the fishing boats



Marsh Mallow Moth @ Hamstreet. (This photo was taken in poor light in the evening).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 19-Sep-11 08:19 PM GMT

Like everywhere else at the moment the weather in Kent has been a mixed bag. On suitable days the Hummingbird Hawkmoth has become a regular visitor to our garden. Some days have seen 3 visits, but I just have not been able to obtain a decent photo. It never stays still long enough for me to get a reasonable focus. Never mind, just to see this moth is a joy as it hovers over the flowers.

SATURDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 2011.

Today was definitely not a day for insect activity. Indeed the rain was so hard at times it was not a day for any activity, including human. And then there are the wind surfers, out in force on the sea at Minnis Bay. You have to admire their dedication as the rain fell like a monsoon. Bird wise the sea was very quiet, but between showers a large movement of Swallows was taking place. Strangely they were all heading west, which is inland towards London. I suspect that they were from the North Continent area, crossing through Britain via inland to leave us at Devon and Cornwall for Spain or Portugal. I am not an expert on migration, but 2000 Swallows, 500 House Martins and a few Sand Martins in less than 2 hours suggest that this was more than just a local movement. This figure was only those that we counted close to us as they were moving on a broad front, including many at sea. We probably only counted a quarter of those passing. Impressive to watch, whatever the movement reason.

Little else of note was seen during the day, but did include a Hobby near Reculver and a Spotted Redshank at Oare Marsh and a Grey Seal on the sea at Minnis Bay.

SUNDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2011.

Despite the poor weather forecast it was actually fairly decent when we arrived at Dungeness. We saw 3 Common Buzzards just outside Lydd before a message sent us heading towards the RSPB Reserve. Ten minutes later we were sitting in Firth Hide watching a PECTORAL SANDPIPER, our second of the autumn at Dungeness. This bird was well marked and gave reasonable views to its many admirers. Other birds seen included a Little Ringed Plover, Greenshank, 4 Marsh Harriers, 2 Sparrow hawks and 30 Sand Martins. The Long Tailed Skua and Cattle Egret of recent days seem to have disappeared. The sun failed to encourage insects to fly and only 1 Small Heath, 1 Peacock and 5 Large Whites were noted. At least 4 Cetti's Warblers were singing a sort of autumn sub song and the bushes contained a minimum of 20 Chiffchaffs. Not a bad day in the end.

Dave



A poor quality photo, but the best I could get of the very active Hummingbird Hawkmoth



Record photo of the Pectoral Sandpiper on Dungeness RSPB

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 25-Sep-11 04:12 AM GMT

A fairly quiet week for us due to work and decorating duties. The nights have been fairly cool so we decided not to put the moth trap out on any night. Friday 23rd September 2011.

The pattern of the day was interrupted by news of a Juvenile ROSE COLOURED STARLING at Dungeness, so tea time found us watching a mobile bird that could be surprisingly difficult to locate on the ground as it walked around in the long grass, despite its very light colour. It seemed to prefer the safety of a large group of common starlings and moved around between the Little Railway Station and the new Lighthouse. Juveniles are not the most attractive birds to see, but it had made the effort to reach Dungeness, so we made the effort to see it. There was little else of interest, just a few Swallows moving South. Moths on show included a very attractive Lunar Underwing, Autumnal Rustic, Sallow and a Feathered Brindle. The latter is classified as National Scarce B but it is reasonably regular around the South/ East Kent Coast.

Saturday 24 September 2011.

With temperatures predicted to be in the low twenties we thought a check of the Reculver area for any migrating Clouded Yellows was in order. However, little was happening. 5 Red Admirals, 2 Speckled Woods, Peacock, a few Large Whites and a worn Green Veined White was all we could muster. Nearby, Chislet Marsh still had at least one Willow Emerald Damselfly and 3 Ruddy Darters. It was more a day to enjoy the warmth of the sunshine rather than see what was flying.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Sep-11 06:02 PM GMT

A DOUBLE DIP DAY AND NO GOOD BUTTERFLIES.

That's not quite true as we did see a Small Copper, along with 8 Red Admirals, Peacock and a dozen Large Whites. So what was our double dip? Saturday evening at 18.00 hours we had a call from a friend birding at Cliffe, he and another gentleman just had a Juvenile Pallid Harrier fly past them and it was still on view. I don't think even Stirling Moss could have got there from our home before dark fell so it had to be a trip the next day. We knew it had been seen leaving its roost area so we arrived at Cliffe Sunday mid morning hoping that it would still be in the area. Unfortunately not, although it had been seen further east so we did a tour of the area but to no avail. During the course of the morning a well known birder had continued to search Cliffe Marsh RSPB and found a Juvenile Semi-Palmated Sandpiper. Although a fairly regular visitor to Britain from America it is a real rarity for Kent and

most of Kent's current birders who County list need this so it attracted a lot of attention. Being that we was only a few miles away we joined the growing crowd to look at the area it had flown into along with a large group of other waders. Due to the vegetation it was not immediately obvious and worst was to follow. Two people out walking were off the approved Nature Reserve footpaths and walked right past the spot where all the waders were roosting, so it was no surprise when all took flight with most heading off over the sea wall. Despite many eyes watching no one could pick out the bird for certain, so we all saw it but we didn't if you know what I mean. No one present at the time could count it apart from the original finders who saw it in the open. That's life, and it was still a good day in nice weather.

Sightings included 6 Greenshank, 2 Little Stints, 300 Avocets, Spotted Redshank, 75 Grey Plover, 8 Little Egrets, Marsh Harrier, 6 Migrant Hawkers and 3 Common Darters.

Dave

PS The Pallid Harrier returned to Cliffe late yesterday after not being seen for 24 hours, so all is not lost. Another visit may need to be planned.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 02-Oct-11 05:00 AM GMT

WEDNESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER 2011.

The Hummingbird Hawkmoth visited the garden several times during the day, but as ever it was very mobile.

THURSDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2011.

We paid a visit to Wye Downs even though it was late in the season. Its so dry that very few plants are in flower, and even less butterflies on the wing. We had hoped for a few late blues but we only managed one Common Blue, 2 Speckled Woods and 8 Red Admirals. The weather was hot so anything that had survived should have been on the wing, so we assume that is almost it for this year. 4 Migrant Hawkers added a bit of interest, as did a Common Buzzard.

SATURDAY 01st OCTOBER 2011.

We set out with the intention of visiting the Isle of Sheppy to look for any sign of the Cliffe Pallid Harrier, last seen on Tuesday, drifting East. Sheepy is a good place for raptors so you never know. A phone call made sure that we started at Elmley RSPB reserve, where a Juvenile BUFF BREASTED SANDPIPER was showing from Kingshill Farm. It was too distant for photos but showed to its admirers, often associating with a flock of Starlings. Raptors had decided it was too hot to fly as temperatures rose to 29 degrees. We can't remember a October day like this but we are not complaining for the hot sun appears to have been in short supply this year. 8 Migrant Hawkers, 24 Large Whites and 3 Red Admirals were noted. Nearby at Funton Creek 4 Greenshanks and a Common Buzzard were visible along with a good range of common waders.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Oct-11 02:05 AM GMT

A GOOD MOTH DAY FOLLOWED BY A MEGA BIRD DAY

Sunday 2nd October 2011 found us checking out the Dungeness area. There had been a small fall of migrants at Dengemarsh Gully. This included our first Firecrest of the autumn, a Whinchat, Redstart and 25 Chiffchaffs. We called in at the Obs where a splendid Merveille du Jour moth was on view. A scarce and rather stunning moth for Kent. Also a Dusky Lemon Sallow and Blairs Shoulder Knot were the best of the rest. A Western Conifer Seed Bug had also been trapped. Butterflies were 5 Red Admirals, 1 Small Tortoiseshell, 20 Large Whites. A Merlin flew near the Lighthouse.

Just as we were leaving news broke of the Sandhill Crane being reallocated at Boyton in Suffolk. It was too much for some and a stream of birders set off for this lifetime opportunity to catch up with this mega bird from America.

Monday the 3rd October broke with the sun shining and the temperature rising. Better still, the Sandhill Crane was still present in the Boyton area. Now we no longer twitch birds like we used to, but this was too good an opportunity to miss, so at one o'clock we found ourselves looking at the Adult SANDHILL CRANE in its chosen field near the sea wall. It was too far for a photo but what a great bird in a lovely location. Right next to where we were standing with our telescopes at least 3 Willow Emerald Damselflies were chasing each other. Apparently they had been seen egg laying earlier. Also seen 20 Avocets were flying near the sea wall, 3 Migrant Hawkers, 4 Common Darters and 2 Speckled Woods. A small local BBC film crew were present to film the crane and interview the local Vicar (the collection is in aid of the Church). What a good day in a lovely setting and with a group of well behaved people who all appreciated the day out.

Dave



What a stunning moth the Merveille du Jour moth is.

Re: Dave Brown

by Lee Hurrell, 06-Oct-11 03:45 AM GMT

The Merveille du Jour is a stunning moth isn't it! Quite literally, the Wonder of the Day.

I remember seeing my first, late one autumn evening at a light outside the recently built new library in Sevenoaks, Kent. This must have been in the late 80's and remains the only one I have seen to this day.

Cheers

Lee

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 08-Oct-11 12:58 AM GMT

WEDNESDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2011.

After the stunning moth and a mega bird the next day was very quiet. No decent birds and very few butterflies, so a phone call from a friend inviting me to view another good moth early on Wednesday came as bit of a surprise. He traps near Hamstreet and had another excellant moth called Clifden Nonpareil. A large moth with a beautiful pattern and when its wings were open there was this splendid blue colour. There can't be many better moths than this and it was a new one for us. It is a very scarce migrant, but is suspected of breeding in Kent. Other moths in the trap included Dark Chestnut, Chestnut, Large Wainscott, Lunar Underwing, Yellow Line Quaker, Sallow, Barred Sallow, Angle Shades, Vines Rustic, Hebrew Character, Shuttle Shaped Dart, Silver Y, White Spot and Rosy Rustic.

Not a bad haul for this time of the year and certainly welcome during this barren spell for butterflies.

Dave



Our second good moth this week was this Clifden Nonpareil near Hamstreet.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 12-Oct-11 02:15 AM GMT

A HAT TRICK DAY

No, not bowling for England, but rather our 3rd good moth this week. On Thursday 6th October we arrived at Dungeness Observatory to see a CRIMSON SPECKLED which had been trapped. This is another very attractive and rare migrant moth. It appears that there has been a small influx into Britain this past week, and even got a mention on BBC Autumnwatch. The attached photo shows it to be a very eye catching moth, and one we have only seen once previously in many years of wildlife watching. Also present was a Vestal moth. Birds seen during th day included the seemingly resident Great White Egret, Hobby, 18 House Martins, 2 Artic Skuas and a Wheatear. Driving back through Walland marsh we were pleased to see 11 Red Admirals and a late Hobby.

Friday 7th October 2011.

We did visit Dungeness to look for the Glossy Ibis but to no avail. It was really very quiet, although we did see the Great White Egret again.

Saturday 8th October 2011.

A trip to Oare Marsh proved disappointing with only 3 Little Stints and 200 Avocets of note. Again we could not find any Clouded Yellows at a location which has proved very good on previous years.

We put many hours into our hobby out in the field but many are disappointing, just like the last two days. It is always the chance of a good day that inspires us to keep trying.

Dave



Crimson Speckled at Dungeness. What a good looking moth.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Oct-11 02:23 AM GMT

SUNDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2011

Today was a good day and justified our many trips to Dungeness. Nothing mega was seen but rather a steady stream of good things. There was clearly an influx of Red Admirals going on. We actually saw a few come in off the sea. In total we saw 32, including 2 resting on the fishing boats. They must have been exhausted. We are aware that the Warden saw over 70 around the recording area. Sea watching for nearly 3 hours produced 1 Balareric Shearwater, 21 Great Skuas, 15 Artic Skuas, 1020 Brent Geese, 75 Common Scoter, 2 Razorbills, 25 Sandwich Terns, 10 Common Terns, 1 Artic Tern and 2 Red Throated Divers. Turning our attention to the land we saw the Great White Egret, an adult Yellow Legged Herring Gull, 10 Siskins and the more common waders. A tour of Walland Marsh produced the 2 Common Cranes, 3 Common Buzzards, Hobby, 12 Swallows, Sparrowhawk and a late Whinchat. A really enjoyable day.

MONDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2011.

Back to normal. Dungeness only produced 21 Red Admirals so clearly many must have made their way inland. Birding was quiet with just a Merlin of note. 4 late House Martins were around Walland Marsh.

TUESDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2011.

A trip to Pett Level today for a change. We were hoping for a few migrants but in reality only 29 Swallows and 5 Little Egrets were noteworthy. Calling in at Walland Marsh on the way home we were pleased to see 8 Red Admirals and 3 Large Whites hanging on in the late autumn sunshine. We keep thinking the season must be over, but out pops the sunshine and a few more butterflies appear.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 19-Oct-11 02:35 AM GMT

WED 12TH OCTOBER 2011

A visit to Oare Marsh produced little of note, although a Ring Tail Hen Harrier hunted the eastern edge and a Peregrine sent everything into panic on several occasions. Otherwise only 2 Little Stints, 1 Curlew Sandpiper and 200 Avocets were of note.

THURSDAY 13TH OCTOBER 2011.

We decided to try the moth trap for probably the last time this year. Only 3 moths were caught. Red Line Quaker, Common Marbled Carpet and a Large Yellow Underwing. A visit to Dungeness found that they had fared little better, although the Vestal and Mallow which they had trapped are unlikely to visit our garden.

It was quiet on the bird front, with only a Common Crossbill and Rock Pipit of note.

FRIDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2011.

Today was warmer and the wind easterly so we visited Shuart Farm near Minnis Bay. A very elusive YELLOW BROWED WARBLER was seen and heard on two occasions. Also a few Redwings were passing overhead. Butterflies were on the wing with 8 Red Admirals and 1 Large White. A check of the Willow Emerald site at Chislet failed to find any so that is probably it for this year.

SATURDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2011.

Another warm day with easterly winds so a visit to Dungeness was on the cards. We arrived at the Observatory just as they were about to release a PALLAS'S WARBLER in front of about 60 people. Its a few years since we have seen such a crowd there to witness this event. About half the crowd were visitors from the RSPB on one of their migration watch days. For many this must have been their first rarity and what better way than to see it close in the hand. This was supported by a fine Sparrowhawk and a number of Redpolls in a variety of different attire. Some of which were suggestive of Mealy (or Common) Redpoll with a fairly whiteish and lightly streaked rump. A Firecrest was seen in the moat and the PECTORAL SANDPIPER was on Hookers Pit. For a change the number of species of Butterflies seen increased with 2 Peacocks, 5 Red Admirals, Large White and 4 Speckled Woods.

Another good period of nature watching.

Dave



This Sparrowhawk was aged as a Young Male due to its in hand measurements



This was a very poorly defined Pallas's Warbler but still a cracking bird to see.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Oct-11 04:23 AM GMT

SUNDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2011

For a change we thought that we would check Hamstreet Woods. It was warm and sunny so there was a chance of late butterflies, also we were hoping for a flock of Crossbills as many have been reported at migration points. Alas, we saw no butterflies, neither Crossbills, but we did see a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and 38 Redpolls before a Sparrowhawk flew over and sent most things into hiding. After checking a few local fields we decided it was time for home and a cup of coffee. We had just made a cup when news of a Daurian Shrike at Cliffe Pools broke. An hour or so late we were looking at a superb male DAURIAN SHRIKE. It was a little stunner but beyond the range of most cameras on site. This was a race of the Isabelline Shrike, although most authorities now treat Daurian and Turkestan Shrike as separate species. We have seen both races/species in Kent with the last Daurian Shrike on Worth Marshes in 1993. It attracted many Kent birders and others from afar.

MONDAY 17th - THURSDAY 20th OCTOBER 2011.

During this period we stuck to local patch watching hoping for something special. It was not to be, but we did see 2 Wheatears, a flock of 30 Skylarks, Little Egret, several Common Buzzards, 4 Fallow Deer and several Red Admirals. The weather was really nice, although cold at times, but the wildlife did not quite match up.

Hopefully next week will bring better goodies.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Oct-11 02:18 AM GMT

I have attached a record shot of the Daurian Shrike at Cliffe. I really can't afford the cost of some of lens used by birders these days so I have to accept what I can produce with my Lumix camera.

SATURDAY 22 OCTOBER 2011.

A trip to Oare Marshes did not produce anything of real note. A Little Stint, 2 Rock Pipits and a Common Buzzard were the best. Whilst we were there news broke of a Great Grey Shrike that had been seen at Oare 2 hours earlier but despite us searching for a couple of hours it must have moved on.

SUNDAY 23 OCTOBER 2011.

Today we visited Reculver marshes and caught up with the Rough Legged Buzzard that had been present for a few days. It was quite distant and elusive but we had reasonable views in the morning. We discussed leaving and checking other locations but for some strange reason we carried on looking for migrants, then at 13.15 hrs we picked up a raptor over Minnis Bay. It was clearly a OSPREY and probably the latest we have ever seen. It then flew over Reculver Marsh at 13.20 hrs and headed inland towards Grove Ferry. It was time to track it. Not via the Roy Dennis tracking satellite system but the good old follow that bird in the car. We arrived at Grove Ferry at 13.45 hrs just in time to see it pass over, then over Stodmarsh at 13.50 hrs still heading south. Other birds at Reculver were Peregrine, Marsh Harrier and Sparrowhawk. In good weather we saw a Red Admiral and Large White plus a Migrant Darter and Common Darter.

So not quite over yet.

Dave



The male Daurian Shrike at Cliffe Pools last weekend.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 03-Nov-11 01:11 AM GMT

SATURDAY 29TH OCTOBER 2011

Dungeness had been fairly quiet during the week, although good numbers of Common Redpolls were still being ringed, so we decided to try East Kent for a change. We started at Sandwich Bay where we located a fine looking Firecrest in the Elms. What a smart looking bird the Firecrest is. It is often under rated when compared to similar rarities at this time of the year. Over the Elms we saw 1 Crossbill, 15 Siskins, 6 Redpolls, 5 Goldcrests, Chiffchaff and 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Restharrow pool saw a Jack Snipe. Once located it was easy to keep track of because of its habit of constant bobbing. Also there was 12 Snipe and a very late Curlew Sandpiper.

Insects were represented by a late Small White sunning itself and a Migrant Hawker.

Next stop was Stodmarsh where a GLOSSY IBIS was on view from the Marsh Hide. This bird had been present a couple of days so it was no surprise when it walked up out of a ditch and preened. Just as nice was the 5 Water Pipits present, two of which gave decent views. 2 Water Rails were heard giving their scream call.

The warm weather attracted 11 Common Darters, 1 Migrant Hawkers and 2 Red Admirals.

SUNDAY 30TH OCTOBER 2011

For once Dungeness let us down and very little of note was recorded. A late Mallow moth was on show, but otherwise the note book stayed closed.

WEDNESDAY 2ND NOVEMBER 2011.

We received a message saying that a Juvenile Purple Heron was present along Dengemarsh but it had clearly moved on time we arrived. The Great White Egret was still present on Hookers pit, as was a Bittern, 3 Little Egrets, 3 Marsh Harriers and a Stonechat.

Hopefully this month will still bring a few late surprises.

Dave



A distant Water Pipit at Stodmarsh. Its overall pale colour being obvious when compared to Meadow Pipit.



This is a Jack Snipe, honest. Its constant bobbing being a good pointer in addition to the well marked back and shorter bill.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 10-Nov-11 02:35 AM GMT

SATURDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2011

The weather this weekend in Kent was poor but not impossible. It was dull, cloudy and with long periods of fine rain. There was no chance of any flying insects,

but as it turned out 2 good moths were caught in the traps at Dungeness.

We started at West Hythe where after a wait of nearly two hours the Juvenile ROUGH LEGGED BUZZARD suddenly appeared on top of a bush. The light and distance made photography impossible but good views were had through the telescope. A Common Buzzard was also present, with a Grey Wagtail on the canal.

A flock of 50 dark geese flew over but proved difficult to identify. The feeling was they were Dark Bellied Brents, but came from over land and headed out to sea, so a little confusing but not an unknown flight pattern.

Next call was Dungeness where the 2nd winter Glaucous Gull was on view at the fishing boats. The ARC pit held a Long Tailed Duck and a Goldeneye. We ended the day checking Walland Marsh hoping to see the Pallid Harrier seen the previous day. Despite waiting for the harriers to come into roost the Pallid failed to show to the assembled crowd of 30 or so souls braving the poor weather.

SUNDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 2011.

If anything the weather was slightly worse than yesterday with the added factor of a cold wind. All we could do was catch up on the two rare moths caught the previous day. The first was a fine RED HEADED CHESNUT on the RSPB reserve. Thank you to the friendly staff on duty that day who arranged viewing for any one interested. The second was a COSMOPOLITAN caught at the Observatory. Again, thank you to the observatory team for the viewing. Both moths are rare to Britain and especially Kent.

The other highlight of the day was the mass arrival of Blackbirds. Although we did not see them all the obs counted well over 1,200 around the recording area.

An impressive sight indeed.
Dave



Cosmopolitan. This rare migrant moth was trapped at Dungeness Observatory.

Re: Dave Brown

by Gibster, 10-Nov-11 03:29 PM GMT

"dave brown" wrote:

The other highlight of the day was the mass arrival of Blackbirds. Although we did not see them all the obs counted well over 1,200 around the recording area.

An impressive sight indeed.

Hiya Dave,

seeing some 1200 Blackbirds "chukking" away in The Desert must have been almost as rare as the moths – and a somewhat more obvious indicator of mass dispersal. Wish I'd been there to witness the spectacle! I did have a similar experience on Portland a few years back, almost every rock, boulder and small bush had a Robin perched on top. No idea of numbers, but certainly many hundreds fresh in from the continent. It's always going to be a thrill catching up with a Daurian Shrike or Pallid Harrier, but these mass influxes can be just as rewarding (although I guess I'd probably retract that statement if the bird in question was a Blue-cheeked Bee-eater or Prothonotory Warbler, lol)

Keep up the good birding mate, it always makes for an interesting read!

Gibster.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Nov-11 04:43 AM GMT

A missed Kent birding experience.

Gibster, thanks for your encouragement. You mentioned that the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater would be a very rewarding bird to see and indeed it is the sort of bird that most birders get excited about. So I will bite the bullet and tell about my biggest Kent dip to date. Yes it involved the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, present for a few hours at St Margarets on the 22nd July 2009. On that day I was at work in an important meeting when the news first broke. I am not one to panic easily, so I took stock and felt that a bird such as this was likely to fly off once it had rested from its migration flight, and indeed it was quite mobile from all accounts. However, one hour later it was still in the area and being seen on and off. Well that was it, Chairman of the meeting or not, I made an excuse to close the meeting suddenly, (those who know me well realised something was about as I had received a couple of calls), and departed for home to pick up the car and family. An hour or so later we arrived at St Margarets and after eventually finding somewhere to park we walked into a field to be told that the bird had flown.

Yes, it had flown and straight towards us. My son suddenly said I can hear the Bee-eater near us. He was right, we could all hear it, but could I pick it up to see it. No, is the answer. He did though and said there it is and despite him and others pointing and giving directions I still could not see it. So my son has Blue-Cheeked Bee-eater on his list and my wife and I do not, despite us standing near him. It was not seen again, and now every time someone mentions Blue-cheek Bee-eater he just looks at us and smiles. Oh, to be young again with super vision and no need for glasses.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Nov-11 08:26 PM GMT

Okay, what's going on? It's mid November and yesterday I was wearing just a tee shirt in the garden. Yesterday we walked along the beach at Margate and the temperature was 15–16 degrees, warmer than most June days. We even saw 2 Red Admirals flying around, one at Minnis Bay and one near Reculver. Mind you I am not complaining, it is really good to have such warm days to enjoy.

SATURDAY 12TH NOVEMBER 2011.

The good moth theme continued, when following a call from a friend we were able to enjoy another Red Headed Chestnut, supported by Scarce Umber, Merveille du jour, Silver Y, Chestnut and December moth. What a good, but strange mix for mid November. In a field viewed from his house we could see a GREAT WHITE EGRET, Common Buzzard and 8 Little Egrets. The Great White is clearly a different bird to that seen at Dungeness as that bird is still present on Dengemarsh. What a brilliant hour or so of nature watching.

SUNDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 2011.

Today we visited Margate to view the EASTERN BLACK REDSTART which had been present for 2 days. Although it is only a sub species of the Black Redstart it is a little stunner and was attracting a lot of attention from twitchers and non birders alike. I was a little surprised to see so many birders with numbers approaching 40 during the time we were there, and some clearly having travelled a distance. This bird is of the form found around Turkey and Western Asia and certainly looks more attractive than the normal form seen in Britain.

Also seen 5 Rock Pipits, 50 plus Sanderling, 5 Gannets and a Red Breasted Merganser. At Minnis Bay we noted 8 Eider, a scarce but regular duck off the Kent Coast. We spent the rest of the day enjoying the fine late autumn weather.

A good end to a most enjoyable weekend.

Dave



This is Scarce Umber. Not a rare moth but quite local, so nice to see.



This very attractive Eastern Black Redstart was enjoying the sunshine on Margate beach.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 18-Nov-11 02:56 AM GMT

TUESDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 2011

I had said to myself to give Dungeness a miss for a few days to catch up on the decorating before the onset of the real cold weather, but the excellant Observatory Warden and loyal group of local watchers were determined to mess up my plans. So it was that today they found a 1st winter Desert Wheatear near the observatory. A good rare bird for Britain and enough to entice us down to Dung for a view, but obviously not exciting enough for others as only four other people were searching when we arrived. It was late afternoon when my son relocated it near the old lighthouse and so the gathering group of only 8 people were able to enjoy decent views of this rare bird. The poor record shot reflects the dullness of the day with overall cloud and some mist, but probably the very reason why it sought the safety of land in the first place.

Dungeness was otherwise very quiet except for a Raven near the Power Station, and a Merlin over the approach road. I also saw a late Red Admiral earlier in the day near home.

Back to the decorating, with one ear on the mobile.

Dave



1st winter Desert Wheatear in the late afternoon gloom at Dungeness.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 21-Nov-11 09:27 PM GMT

The butterfly sightings continue, just.

FRIDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2011.

Today we checked the Hamstreet area and saw last weekends GREAT WHITE EGRET near the garden centre, along with 6 Little Egrets. It looks right at home with its smaller cousins so hopefully will remain for some time. Next was Warehorne and to our surprise we saw 3 Common Darters and a Red Admiral enjoying the late autumn sunshine. We then moved around the area and saw our first big flocks of Fieldfares this autumn. 3 Flocks totalled 210 along with 5 Redwings and another Red Admiral. We ended up at Dungeness ARC pit where a new GREAT WHITE EGRET was on show from Hanson hide. The long staying bird was still present on Hookers pit.

SATURDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2011.

Time to visit Oare Marshes for a change where things were fairly quiet, although a Short Eared Owl hunted near the car park from mid afternoon. A Water Pipit was seen from the West Hide and 2 Greenshanks flew over. Otherwise it was much the same as on previous visits. It was a beautiful day and worth the walk around the reserve even if wildlife was thin on the ground..

SUNDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2011

Another sunny and enjoyable day, not like a usual November day at all. The ROUGH LEGGED BUZZARD was showing at West Hythe on our arrival before it headed off to the nearby hills, presumably to feed. Another Red Admiral was seen. Next was Dungeness ARC pit where the GREAT WHITE EGRET was on show, together with the Long Tailed Duck, a Redhead Smew, 2 Goldeneye, 2 Kingfishers (one fishing in front of the hide), Water Rail and Cettis Warbler. Dengemarsh held the second GREAT WHITE EGRET, a Little Egret and Marsh Harrier.

A most enjoyable weekend.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Gibster, 22-Nov-11 03:55 AM GMT

So how long until these GWEs start to breed down at Romney/on the Dungeness peninsular, I wonder????

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Nov-11 03:27 AM GMT

How many are there?

Well Gibster, breeding Great White Egrets could be on the cards. It may help if we could work out exactly how many there are in Kent at present. In my view there is a minimum of four and possibly as many as seven or eight. There are 2 at Dungeness, 1 at Hamstreet, 2 at various locations on the Isle of Sheppey, 2 have been seen near Appledore and 1 seen at Chatham and Ashford. Clearly there is some duplication going on, but as many are being seen on the same day numbers may be greater than we think. Some are hanging around with Little Egrets, and as that species is breeding in Britain there is some hope for the Greats.

FRIDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2011.

Due to decorating a quick afternoon visit to Dungeness was all we could achieve. A two hour visit to the ARC Pit produced the Great White Egret and 5 Little Egrets. Several flight views of a Bittern, the Long Tailed Duck, 3 Redhead Smew, a female Goldeneye, Pintail, Gadwall and all the usual ducks.

SATURDAY 26TH NOVEMBER 2011.

A quick visit to Hamstreet found 2 Great White Egrets along the Military Canal near the Garden Centre. These two looked attached to each other and could well be a male/ female pair. They followed each other everywhere and stood next to one another for long periods. If only it was April this could have been interesting. The local woods were fairly quiet so most birds must be moving into the gardens now as the natural food supply runs down with the steady drop in temperature.

It has been a most enjoyable November with warm days and late butterflies. Regretably, that's probably it butterfly wise until next March, but you never know.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Nov-11 08:43 PM GMT

How many are there, update?

Following on from my previous update we visited Capel Fleet on the Isle of Sheppey yesterday. The main reason was to look for raptors at this well known raptor hotspot, but we also took the opportunity to look for the Great White Egret(s). We were successful with one Great White Egret being seen

on two occasions in the afternoon. The question is, did we see one or two different birds. The second was seen some 100 metres from the first, although the first bird was out of view we had not seen it move though the reedbed or along any of the ditches. The sighting was from the RSPB viewpoint where two birds have been seen together on occasions. Either way a good bird see and part of the influx into Kent.

Other birds seen include 9 Marsh Harriers, 2 Ringtail Hen Harriers, Sparrowhawk, 15 Corn Buntings and 150 Brent Geese. We left before dusk so did not see any of the reported Short Eared or Barn Owls.

A really enjoyable day, but too cold for any insect activity for our second weekend running.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 04-Dec-11 04:02 AM GMT

No chance of any butterfly activity here in Kent over the last few days, with cold and wet windy weather. The best we could manage insect wise was one Humble Bee at New Romney, and that looked out of place in between the showers.

THURSDAY 1ST DECEMBER 2011.

We drove around the Eastwell area to follow up the previous days sighting of a Rough Legged Buzzard. It was more sensible than us and, if still present, was clearly sitting up in a tree out of the wind and rain.

FRIDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2011.

A visit to West Hythe found the Rough Legged Buzzard immediately on arrival. It was flying around its chosen home of the old quarry and hunting by hovering every hundred metres or so.

Next was the ARC pit at Dungeness, which for once was disappointing. We did see the Great White Egret and 4 Little Egrets, but most of the ducks and waders had gone. Neither was there any sign of a Bittern, although one had been seen from Hanson hide earlier in the day. A chiffchaff was following the Long Tailed Tit flock. A Water Rail was in front of the hide, 30 Pintail flew over the pit, a female Goldeneye was present and 17 Tree Sparrows were near the car park.

A check of the point found the bushes quiet except for a Stonechat and 2 distant Marsh Harriers, a drive around Walland Marsh failed to locate the possible Pallid Harrier, which was seen 10 days ago but not since. Apparently it is a very orange Harrier showing the features of Pallid and is presumably the same Pallid that was seen a month ago. Thats hope its seen well enough and long enough for all to enjoy.

SATURDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2011.

No birding today but it was much warmer in the sun. Perhaps there is still a chance of a December butterfly yet. We will keep looking.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Dec-11 08:53 PM GMT

How many are there, update upon update?

I have been made aware that 4 Great White Egrets were seen on the Isle of Sheppey during the week. These 4, together with the 2 at Hamstreet and 2 at Dungeness, make a minimum of 8 in Kent. This bodes well for the spring. Hopefully they will meet up somewhere and who knows. Its relative, the Little Egret, spread very quickly throughout Britain. It went from rarity status to breeding status and just about everywhere within 20 years. Probably one species that has benefited from Global warming, a willingness to wander and an increase in Nature Reserves. This is unlike many of our butterfly species, where colonies have become isolated from each other and most now relying on mans desire to protect and manage their habitat. If only we could turn the clock back I am sure that things could be so much better for wildlife, now that we understand their needs.

SUNDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2011.

We decided upon another visit to Elmley RSPB. No particular reason, but everywhere else was quiet. We presume that was because everyone was in Norfolk watching the Western Sandpiper at Cley, so little was being checked elsewhere. We saw 30 Whitefronted Geese, 1 Tundra Bean Goose, 2 Marsh Harriers, a Ringtail Hen Harrier, Little Egret, but best of all a GREAT WHITE EGRET flew over the entrance track at 12.15 hours, then over Kingshill Farm and finally lost to view when it came down the other side of the flood. We shall assume that it is one of the existing birds rather than a new bird, but you never know. They are an oddity in flight. Big (Grey Heron size) and white with a obvious stonking great yellow bill and very long trailing legs.

Next was Capel Fleet and Leysdown. Currently a Short Eared Owl hot spot with a minimum of 11 seen in the afternoon from about 14.00 hours. Most fairly close to road at the end of Leysdown or the road that goes through Capel Fleet. One Barn Owl, 12 Marsh Harriers, Ringtail Hen Harrier, Sparrowhawk, 11 Corn Bunting and 2 Green Sandpipers. Strangley we saw no Merlin or Peregrine, but thats not to say they are not there. A really enjoyable day.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Dec-11 02:50 AM GMT

WEDNESDAY 7th DECEMBER 2011.

An insect at last. A moth flew into our kitchen after we opened the door to put something in the recycle bin. It turned out to be a poor condition Winter moth and not the more expected December moth.

THURSDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2011.

The weather was poor to say the least but we thought it may be worth checking Dungeness as you never know what the poor weather will disperse. Not much was the answer. In fact the only new thing of note was a 1st Winter Caspian Gull, otherwise much the same as before.

FRIDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2011.

We checked a local copse to find that one Long Eared Owl had returned for the winter. Hopefully more will join it soon. We then moved on one of Kents best winter sites for Hawfinch near Canterbury. Despite a 2 hour wait until 15.30 hrs we failed to see any. May be its a little early, or more likely the tree felling currently underway may have disturbed them. It was not without its treats though as we saw flocks of 4 and 3, plus a single, of Brambling. Several Siskins were seen, together with a Buzzard and Sparrowhawk.

SATURDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2011.

There was no sign of yesterdays Great Northern Diver off Samphire Hoe (Dover), nor the one at Hythe. Also the wintering Rough Legged Buzzard was not at its usual spot at West Hythe. There was one Purple Sandpiper on the sea front at Hythe. There was also a large number of Med Gulls off Copt Point, Folkestone. At least 40 were flying around the area with most being adult birds. In my view this is still the best place in Britain to see them in Winter, although numbers are down from the 100 plus figures of ten years ago. We then made our way home through the Shopping chaos known as Christmas. It now seems to be a contest on how many shopping bags you can carry in the two weeks before the 25th, only limited by how much is left on the credit card. We still enjoy it though.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

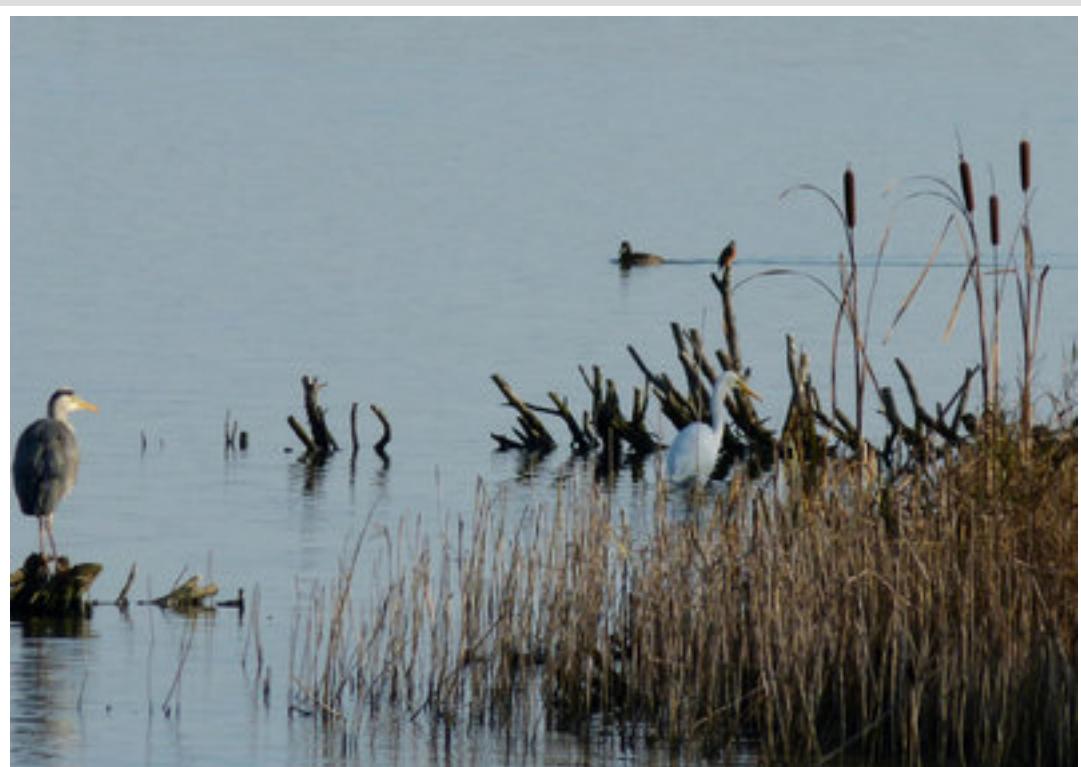
by dave brown, 13-Dec-11 09:32 PM GMT

SUNDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2011.

We started the day by driving around the Dymchurch and New Romney area, basically just looking. A Common Buzzard and Little Egret were seen near St Mary in the Marsh. As usual we called in at Dungeness, more in hope than anticipation. The sea was interesting with lots of auks, mainly Guillemots, but a few Razorbills were identified, and kittiwakes. Additional sightings included a Black Throated Diver, several Gannets and 8 Common Scoter. A Slavonian Grebe tried to hide in the vegetation at the ARC pit but little else seen there. Our last port of call was Pett Level where 5 White Fronted Geese and 4 Pint Footed Geese were on show from the road. Whilst watching the geese a Raven dropped down in front of us. This was unexpected as we have not seen one there since the spring. Finally 2 Common Buzzards were flying around in the background.

During the day, at an unnamed location, we had the pleasure of seeing a female Ruddy Duck. This is now a very scarce bird since the Government decided to blast them out of the sky, or the reedbeds, at vast expense. I understand all the arguments for doing it, but I personally think the money could have been better spent on buying land for nature conservation in general, thus protecting far more species. I just hope that other countries support the White Headed Duck as much as us, otherwise it's been in vain.

Dave



One of the Great White Egrets being seen on the ARC Pit at Dungeness. In case you notice, that is a distant Kingfisher on the post above the Egret's head.



This Raven was seen briefly on Pett Level

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 18-Dec-11 04:42 AM GMT

FIVE A DAY KEEPS YOU SMILING AND HAPPY.

I am not referring to 5 portions of fruit and veg but rather the increasing numbers of GREAT WHITE EGRETS.

THURSDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2011.

We started the day at Hamstreet where the 2 long staying GREAT WHITE EGRETS were on show along the Military Canal adjacent to the road bridge by Wyeval garden centre. One was either side of the bridge together with 2 Little Egrets.

Next we visited the Hanson Hide on the ARC pit at Dungeness in the hope of seeing the wintering, but elusive Penduline Tit. We arrived at the hide to be told the bird had been showing and calling but was now gone, also a Bittern right in front of the hide 10 minutes before we arrived. Never mind we can't see them all. We did see however, along with the Obs warden, 2 GREAT WHITE EGRETS. They flew out of the reedbeds to the right of the hide and appeared to land back down somewhere there out of sight. Also present was 1 male and 3 female Goldeneye, the female Long Tailed Duck and a Kingfisher.

We have always suspected that there could be 3 Great White Egrets at Dungeness based on the sighting times and locations so we drove around to Dengemarsh and there was the regular GREAT WHITE EGRET. We believe that this confirms the presence of 3 birds in the area. Especially as another visitor confirmed that he had been watching the Dengemarsh Great White when we had seen the 2 over the ARC. So 3 at Dungeness and 2 at Hamstreet gives us our 5 a day.

What an incredible sight, and this must surely be on the list as the next bird to colonise from the continent.

We ended the day looking for Short Eared Owls along the coast at Littlestone but to no avail in an ever increasing wind strength.

We bumped into several good birding friends during the day who seemed like us to be enjoying what was on offer on a bright but cold day. Most enjoyable.

Dave.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 25-Dec-11 02:52 AM GMT

THE YEAR ENDS ON A INSECT HIGH AS SANTA BRINGS A NICE PRESENT.

A most unexpected, but very welcome, highlight was Britains 3rd record of BLACK SPOTTED CHESTNUT. It had been trapped yesterday at Sandwich and today saw us looking at this little marvel with only the finder and one other present. We guessed today there would be fewer people visiting following the other two records this autumn, when at least 20 people were present to see the first one being photographed and released when by one of those moments in folklore a 2nd was trapped, but no crowd on a Saturday seems very strange. Perhaps everyone had left their Christmas shopping to the last minute hoping for even bigger bargains.

So what was this rarity doing to be trapped on the 23rd December, an almost unheard of date for any moth, let alone a national goodie. Speculation was that a series of mild days, the 22nd was 14 degrees here in Kent, triggered this moth out of hibernation. Whatever the reason it is a good end to a very enjoyable year.

We found little else in the Sandwich and Dover area. Folkestone Copt Point gave us 24 Med Gulls, 16 Gullimots and several Gannets, but again little else. We wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a good festive holiday.

Dave



The Gulls at Copt Point like to sit on the street lighting or wander around grass playing field.



This is one of the Great White Egrets at Hamstreet along the Military Canal.



Black Spotted Chestnut at Sandwich Bay. Sorry about the photo but the moth was too rare to take out of the tube and photograph.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Dec-11 03:33 AM GMT

DECEMBER 25TH DECEMBER 2011

Sad I know, but today we managed a little birding on the way to visit relations for Christmas celebrations. We checked out the Chartham area following a report during the week of another Great White Egret. We failed here, as we did when checking out last years Hawfinch site near Canterbury. In fact it

was very quiet in the wood and probably reflected the mood of day. Most parents were probably exhausted and sitting back after the kids had been up since who knows when, the roads were certainly very quite.

TUESDAY 27th DECEMBER 2011.

With every one seemingly at the sales we thought it would be nice to visit Grove Ferry for a change. There was a few people there birding or walking, and it was a very pleasant walk in dull but dry weather. The Birds must have been hiding, but we did manage to connect with one of the two Glossy Ibis's that have been present a while. The one we saw was ringed on both legs but it was too distant to read the number. The conditions were very dull for another than a record photograph. A Cetti's warbler called nearby and 2 Water Pipits landed near the Glossy on the Water Meadow. Surprisingly we did not see any Marsh Harriers although a flock of 200 plus Lapwings were very mobile and clearly something was spooking them. A Whitefronted Goose fly over but there was little else to note.

A slow drive back home along the country roads to avoid the masses at Canterbury (reports of car parks being full).

Dave



This Glossy Ibis was distant on the Water Meadows at Grove Ferry. The dull conditions prevented a better photograph and a opportunity to read the ring.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-Jan-12 02:58 AM GMT

With the year end fast approaching we decided to visit a few more Kent sites to see if anything has changed birdwise, besides its better than going to the sales and joining the crowd.

WED 28TH DECEMBER 2011.

Good old Dungeness, but its much the same. The 2nd winter Glaucous Gull was still hanging around the fishing boats. 40 Auks were passing of which at least two were Razorbills. Other seabirds included 15 Gannets and 30 Kittiwakes. A male Peregrine scatterd all the gulls as it flew through. At least one Great White Egret remains on the ARC pit, along with a few Goldeneye. Walland Marsh produced 30 Bewick Swans but little else.

THURSDAY 29TH DECEMBER 2011.

A visit to Oare Marsh found all the usual waders but no sign of the Short Eared Owls. A Common Buzzard fed on a dead rabbit near the A2 and another was nearby.

SATURDAY 31ST DECEMBER 2011.

At last something new. A Green Winged Teal (the American version of our Teal) was showing at Grove Ferry from the viewing ramp. It had clearly arrived today as this is a well watched location with its band of regular and helpful watchers. Nearby 2 Glossy Ibis were showing well on the Water Meadows, including the white ringed bird. A Bittern flew over the reedbeds, 4 Cettis Warblers were calling and 2 Marsh Harriers flew over looking for something to eat.

In summary, this has been a very good year for us with many highlights. Butterly wise the best was connecting with some very showey Chequered Skippers near Fort William. We hope that that coming year will be just as exciting as this.

Best wishes to everyone for a good and fulfilling New Year.

Dave