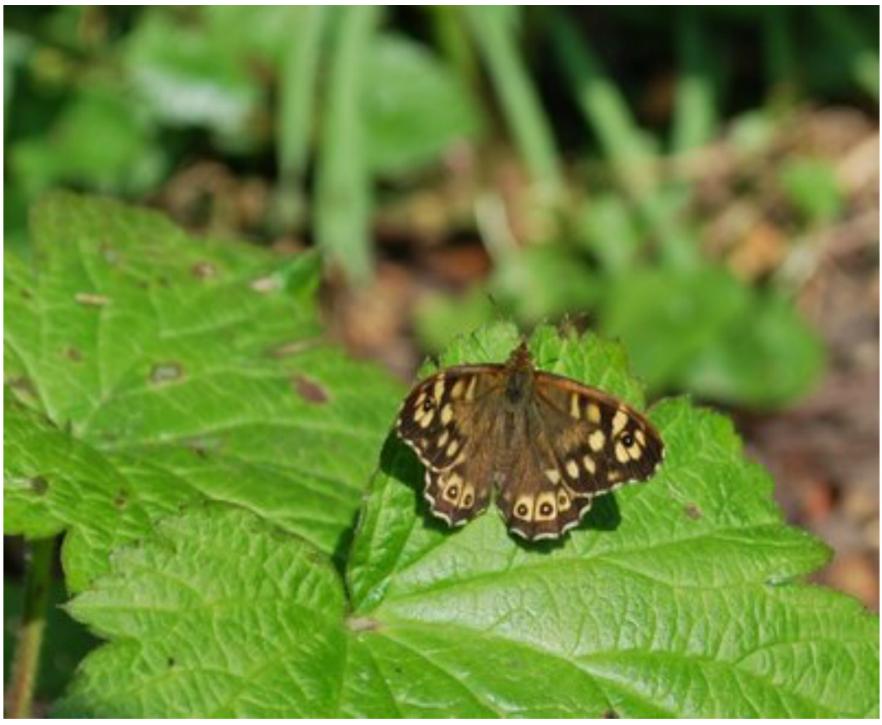


Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-11 03:43 AM GMT

While enjoying the peace and quiet that only ever occurs when the girls are staying at their nanny and dad-dad's a wander up the garden allowed me to get my first Speckled Wood shot of the year.



Headed up to Martin Down to make the most of the nice weather and also to try and get a few photos of a Green Hairstreak – mainly to try and wind up Zonda 😊 but apart from a brief fly-by they weren't in as much abundance as last year – still too early here? Still there were plenty of other butterflies about with 2 Holly Blues, Small White and a male Orange-tip patrolling the hedges along the footpath/road from the Sillens Lane car park. Looked around the Hawthorns for Green Hairstreak where the path crossed Borkerley Ditch and there was a faded looking Small Tortoiseshell being much hassled by a Peacock, loads of Brimstones, 2 Speckled Wood and a Common Lizard. The star butterfly of the day was Grizzled Skipper (2 individuals – one near the car park and the other at the other end!).



There were also some good birds – Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Chiff Chaff and Blackcap all singing as well as 1 pair of Turtle Dove. Got home and Brimstone, Small White, Holly Blue and a male Orange-tip all accompanied me as I mowed the lawn.

Have a goodun all

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 18-Apr-11 04:14 AM GMT

fingers crossed i'll be getting up there soon, wasn't too far away at a lovely Garston Woods on saturday.
Chris

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-11 05:16 AM GMT

Alright Chris?

I'm heading to Garston tomorrow – did you see much there? Good luck for your visit to Martin down

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 18-Apr-11 06:14 AM GMT

was quite a dull day so no, there wasn't much about butterfly wise. there was a day time tawny owl though. willow warbler, chiffchaff, blackcap, my first house Martins in sixpenny, a bit of sun would have made all the difference. Lovely place though. and turn left from the carpark and you'll find a small colony of these charming mining bees mining in the middle of the footpath.



Chris

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-11 04:51 PM GMT

Cheers Chris, I'll look out for them! Garston is great, it used to be my local patch when I lived in Sixpenny Handley. Check it out later in the year, I found Greenish Silver Washed Fritillary there last year (it was late in the season so was very battered)

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Zonda, 19-Apr-11 12:05 AM GMT

Wurzel:

Headed up to Martin Down to make the most of the nice weather and also to try and get a few photos of a Green Hairstreak – mainly to try and wind up Zonda 😊

History now mate, i have them ticked. Might whip up to Martin Down for a shot of those DSs tho. That's my next goal, and another lifer for me. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-11 04:13 AM GMT

Alright Zonda

I saw the photos and they're cracking! I was in two minds – chuffed that you'd got your lifer, but disappointed that a wind up didn't come off 😊 – are there any other species that you're after in particular? 😊

Martin Down last year in May was great, Dingy and Grizzled Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Small, Common and Adonis Blue. Then in early August there

were all the blues, Brown Argus and Silver Spotted Skipper! Great place.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-11 04:50 AM GMT

Took Kitty for a wander up to Martin Down. Again no Green Hairstreak – have they been and gone or have they not turned up yet? I've tried the same perching posts as last year but they just aren't there. Does anyone else know of any other sites near Salisbury where they hang out?

Still there was plenty to see – loads of Grizzled Skippers, my first Holly Blue shot with open wings and my first Small Copper of the year as well as sightings of Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, loads of Brimstones, a few Orange-tip on patrol and a pair of Speckled Woods having a scrap.





Then when I got back there was a Holly Blue (probably the same one that has plagued me for the last week or two) in the garden and it stayed still long enough to actually get a shot!



I'll try Bentley Wood in the next week – does anyone know if the Pearl Bordered Frits are about there?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-11 03:11 AM GMT

Took my younger daughter for a recce at Bentley Woods this afternoon and didn't expect much...everything was very flighty – Speckled Woods, Orange – tips, Green Veined Whites, Peacock, loads of Brimstone and at least 6 Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. Managed to get some pretty close shots after abandoning the dash and grab technique and favouring the wait and pounce. The most amazing thing was how patient and helpful Lottie was – I didn't even think that a 3 year old would be able to say Fritillary – let alone point excitedly while exclaiming "pee bowdered fritillily" and it was – the one photographed too! That will probably be it until next weekend now as family duties are beckoning – I only managed to get out this week by bringing one or other of the girls along. Will it be to late for the Duke and Dingy by then, will they be burnt out by then like Alan Thornbury suggests?

Have a goodun

Wurzel



Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Apr-11 05:03 AM GMT

With all the women in my life sated for weddings, "that dress" and the "kiss" I cunningly suggested a walk at Martin Down. Brimstone and Small White accompanied us down the path from the car park and as it opened out Grizzled Skippers seemed to be all over the place! A Small Copper turned up but it was very quiet as the sun went in and the breeze picked up. Got a good way across the reserve when my first Small Heath of the year appeared – but I didn't manage to get a photo as I almost trod an an Adder! Now I remember why no matter how hot it was I always wore boots when visiting here last year! Still haven't managed to find Green Hairstreak or Dingy Skipper here – perhaps they haven't emerged here yet? Oh well trying Hod Hill for Marsh Fritillary maybe on Sunday...here's hoping.

Have a goodun Wurzel



Not a happy Adder



One of many Grizzled Skipper...

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-May-11 04:09 AM GMT

I really am getting good at persuading the girls to come out to find butterflies with me, all it takes is a packet of skittles! They're getting pretty good at it now, and are much more observant than me. Took them for an early morning walk at Bentley Wood and apart from 1 or 2 Large White and Speckled Woods the only butterflies there were Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. The early morning was perfect for getting close – at one point there were 6 basking on one path! Tried to get some unusual angles including a face-to-face confrontation...really must try to get somewhere different tomorrow!

Have a goodun

Wurzel





Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-May-11 06:23 AM GMT

Hod Hill today - I did manage to get somewhere different. I thought turning up early might get me some close shots of Marsh Fritillary as it seemed to work for PBF's at Bentley Wood - but I was very wrong! The sun was very intermittent and apart from Wheatear and lots of Yellowhammer there wasn't an awful lot else around. I bumped into Pete from Suffolk and we found a likely looking place but both agreed that it was still too early. I set off along the bottom of the ditch and worked my way back to the start. There were a few butterflies around - 2 Speckled Wood and a GV White and a brief foray onto the top during a brief spell when the wind died down yielded 2 Grizzled Skippers. I thought this wasn't going to be my day and then around 10am things started to happen. I was working my way along the second ditch in from the North entrance heading east when there were skippers everywhere - Grizzled and Dingy (the late being more numerous and so I managed to get some nice close shots - don't Dingy Skippers look like bats when face on?



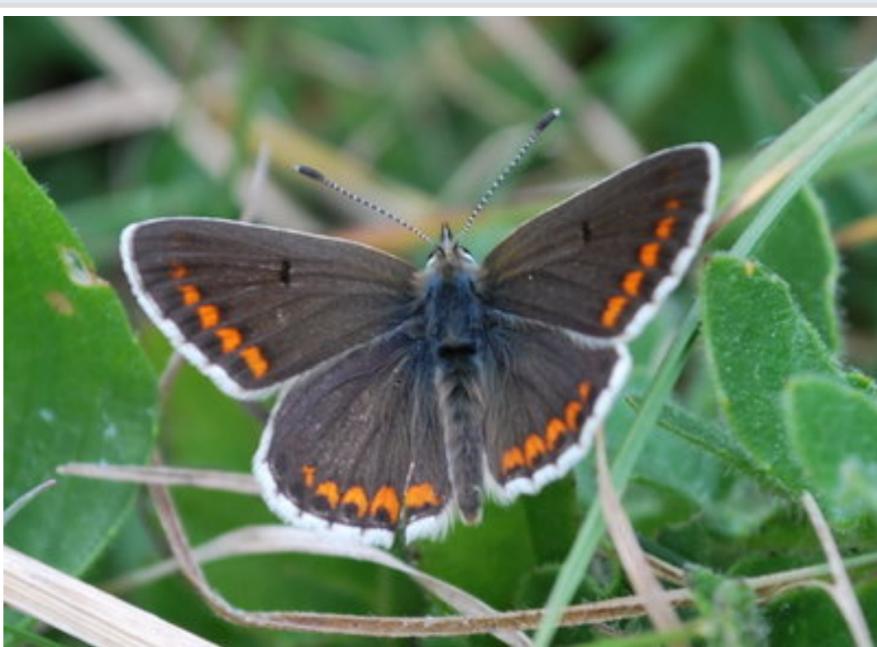
When I had worked my way back to the southern side I bumped into Pete again who informed me that there were a few more species out and about. He set of the way I had come for Grizzlies and I decided to have a coffee on the path that cut across the rings at the southern entrance, and I barely got my flask out when there were butterflies eveywhere – Brown Argus, Small Heath, 2 Dingy Skippers and a Grizzled and 2 Small Coppers – one of which was *caerleopunctata*



I worked along the bottom of the ditch and there was the Marsh Fritillary nestled on the side of the bank, then another and then 2 facing each other on the bank side. I clicked away and then did a manic run back to get Pete so he could have a look. Ace I lifer in the bag!



Wandered back around the ditch and down the crazily steep hill to the car park – accompanied on the way by numerous skippers, 2 Common Blue, Brown Argus and a few Marsh Fritillaries



Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-May-11 04:54 AM GMT

Had a family day out at Mottisfont (National Trust) fantastic place. The girls loved feeding the fish, Grayling I think they were and instead of seeking out butterflies it was nice to just chill and enjoy the sun. That said there were plenty of whites about - GV White, Small White and a male and female Orange-tip. The walled garden was a definite hotspot as the walls radiated off the mornings heat and I managed to get my first shots of male Holly Blue.



(see later posts - this is now a Common Blue - with no orange markings on the underwing - still I have a bit of time to get shots of male Holly Blue and after my success with Marsh Fritillary I mustn't be too greedy on the lifer shots!)

Still buzzing from the Marsh Fritillary yesterday cheers to those people that helped with all the info - it definitely paid off! Also it wasn't just the new species it felt good to see such a range of species, let the good times roll! What's next - SPBF and possibly the Dukes at Bentley Wood or Wood White at Powerstock?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-May-11 04:58 AM GMT

I'm afraid that's a Common Blue - Holly Blues have chequered fringes on their forewings and a bit of black edging there too.

Here's one...

Dave



Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-May-11 05:18 AM GMT

I thought it was a Common Blue at first – but it was flying at higher than head height all around the walled garden and it had the underwing patterning of Holly Blue but I didn't get a photo of that because I've already got a load of those. Also when I zoomed in really tight on another shot there is a very small black leading edge and very faint black markings which fade before the reaching the edge of the white, and the black markings on the lower wing. Is this an aberrant then?

Cheers

Wurzel



Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-May-11 05:30 AM GMT

On the Common Blue the wing fringes are the same on both fore and hindwings, and any black lines usually fade before they reach the edge. On the Holly Blue the chequering reaches the edge of the forewing, and is absent on the hindwing. This one's definitely a Common Blue, which looks (to me) a lot like yours.

The underside is a giveaway, though, as you say. They are entirely different. No orange spots on a Holly Blue.

Dave



Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-May-11 05:45 AM GMT

Now I'm really confused – your photo looks the dead spit of mine 😊 but the underside was white with black dots – the "usual Holly Blue" shot that I get 😞 . Are there aberrant forms of Common Blue which lack the pigmentation or are the aberrant forms of Holly Blue which lack the chequers hmmm? 😞 I think I'll have to remove this from Holly Blue to the folder titled "working on id..." 😊

Cheers Dave, have a goodun

Wurzel 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Hulme, 03-May-11 05:59 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Dave is correct – it's a Common Blue, although from its behaviour I can see why you thought it was a HB. Easy to confuse the two if, as here, one decides to wander into habitat more typically occupied by the other! But the size and relative position of the underside spots (visible through the upperside of your specimen) is also 100% Common Blue.

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-May-11 04:21 PM GMT

Cheers Neil – I did get a view of the underside and there was definitely no orange – so looks like having moved this from Holly Blue to "not sure of id..." now I'll move it to Common Blue, which is good as I needed a better shot of the male anyway, perhaps I can use it on the cover of my second book?

Cheers, have a goodun Wurzel

ps – is there an aberrant form of Common Blue which doesn't have any orange markings?

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-May-11 05:31 AM GMT

Took the girls out this afternoon – not to Bentley Wood as planned as the weather was a bit hit and miss. Instead I took them to the Old Sarum end of the Avon Valley LNR. Didn't expect much to be about and there wasn't really – a male Orange-tip, a single Brimstone and a Speckled Wood on the way to our fishing spot. It went very well with a nice sized Minnow and lots of tiny fry. The only problem was that just as I'd got the girls still and the silt had settled a dog walker would appear and Fido would charge in scaring everything away. In the end gave up and sat amid a shower and as the girls had their sweeties I did a "hearing" list – Cuckoo, Green Woodpecker, warblers a plenty (Garden, Cetti's, Reed, Sedge, Willow, Blackcap and Chiff Chaff), Yellowhammer, Little Grebe and Coot. There were also fly-overs by Sparrowhawk and Buzzard. The highlights of the day were on the way back where I managed to hear and see a Grasshopper Warbler (2nd seen, 3rd heard, 1st found) reeling away like a manic fisherman and a pair of common Blue – both males and looking very fresh and resplendent. 😊

Try Bentley tomorrow perhaps the Dukes are still there or the Small Pearls are out? 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Important information for parents – It seems that Skittles are now out of favour and Tootie Fruits are in! 😊



It is in there – honest!



Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-May-11 04:45 AM GMT

After all the recent long weekends where did this one go? I barely got started and now it's back to work for a week 😞 Still decided to risk having a look for the blessed Duke over at Bentley Wood. Got there nice and early to try and find some Small Pearls for underwing shots and I realised that I was a bit too early as the cloud cover was so thick. Instead watched a Tree Pipit display over the eastern clearing, a pair of Garden Warblers having a scrap and 3 Muntjac Deer in the more conifer plantation area at the back. It was there that I found the first butterfly of the day a male Orange-tip looking very drenched and not at all happy. Then there were plenty of Pearl Bordered Fritillaries, most looking faded and one aberrant with the marking fused together on the upper wing.

Moved back to the eastern clearing and there were Frits everywhere – the Small Pearl Bordered seemed much brighter and more contrasting in colour than the Pearls.



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary

Another butterfly watcher had found the Duke so I hung around there and drank coffee while waiting for the sun to finally come out and stay on strong. There were a few more Frits around, Large and Small White and also lots of Lizards basking, there were four on one stump at on point.



As is often the way I was just thinking about having to head home when the sun finally came out and stayed out. I managed to find a Grizzled Skipper and Crab Spider and started heading homewards. Only for another butterfly watcher to let me know that there was a Duke about so I kept my eyes open and there it was. Managed to fire off a load of shots and it was very obliging – even giving me a peak of it's underwing.





So headed home happy – last year I finished my book with a list of target species – and so far I have got shots of three of them – next on the list Silver Studded Blue or should I go all out for Glanville Fritillary?

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Shirley, 09-May-11 05:34 AM GMT

Glad you found him 😊 and photos as well. Happy Butterflying.
Shirley

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-May-11 09:10 PM GMT

Cheers Shirley! It was good to catch up with the Duke at Bentley Wood as it will save me a fortune on petrol (very good for the environment too!) 😊 . Unfortunately I didn't take my daughters as I was worried about them getting bored and then haring around in the underground trampling who knows what – as it was I had to search/wait for about 3 hours! Still now that I've got my eye in and the pressure of getting a photo is off I'm sure that I'll be able to locate them next year for the girls (who will hopefully be more patient by them).

Sorry again for blocking your diary for a couple of days – but hopefully the debate it started will produce a policy or practice that will help to protect butterflies better in the future 😊

Have a goodun and be lucky!

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-May-11 05:09 AM GMT

I had a morning off at Martin Down. So I started at the Sillens Lane end and wandered up the hill. There were Small Blue everywhere – at one point there were 8 individuals flying round a dog turd! I managed to get lots of shots and that started me on the old problem of sexing them. Some had obvious blue scales on their wings so were males but finding one without the blue scales that was a female was really tricky – I think I got a photo of one but I'm not sure...



A certain male



Is that a female?

Finally I made it to the top of the hill, having encountered Small Heath, Common Blue, plenty more Small Blue, a couple of Adonis males, Brown Argus, lots of Grizzled and Dingy Skipper and a single, solitary Small Copper. I couldn't believe how many Skippers there were about, after Small Blue they seemed to be the next most common species. There was one individual who was in a right state, with wings folded right round its body all crumpled up so badly that it couldn't fly it could just hop like a grasshopper.



Grasshopper or Grizzled Skipper?

I worked my way down Borkerley Ditch and the sun went in so it went very quiet. When it came out so did the butterflies – lots of brilliant Common Blue and Adonis Blues (a couple of them had dark marks on the upper wings and folded wing parts) and eventually a Green Hairstreak. I did manage to get a photo but it was a pretty bad one as it wasn't just sitting in a bush but was nestled in amongst the grass. Then I checked the haunt from last year for another Green Hairstreak but no more luck. Instead got some more Adonis shots including some females including an individual with a deformed wing.



Male Adonis



Folded wing or aberrant?

The girls are back from Nanny and Dad-dads so not sure where I'll be tomorrow, have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-May-11 05:03 AM GMT

I took the family to Stourhead again today and it was very quiet butterfly wise. There was a dragonfly on the path – I don't know whether it was on it's last legs but I couldn't leave it where it was so I moved it to a large leaf at the edge of the path. As it clung to my finger I took a few photos so I could try and identify it when we got back. Unfortunately I don't have any books on dragonflies so any help would be gratefully recieved.



Any ideas what species this is?

At the top of the hill in the woodland walk and the garden behind the house there was much more butterfly activity with a single Red Admiral holding court on a cut tree stump, Speckled Woods seemed to be defending every tree edge, 2 Common Blue males having a scrap right the way across the lawn and back and back again. There were also numerous whites - most seemed to be Small Whites (judged by size and also the much fainter black on the wing tips) as well as a few GV Whites.



GV White

Well back to work tomorrow - will the Glanvilles still be about next week...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 16-May-11 05:21 AM GMT

It looks like a downy emerald dragonfly (*Cordulia aenea*) to me.

Guy

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-May-11 05:45 AM GMT

Cheers Guy- it's certainly a snazzy sounding name 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 16-May-11 05:54 PM GMT

I would imagine first legs rather than last legs for the dragonfly, it looks in mint condition.

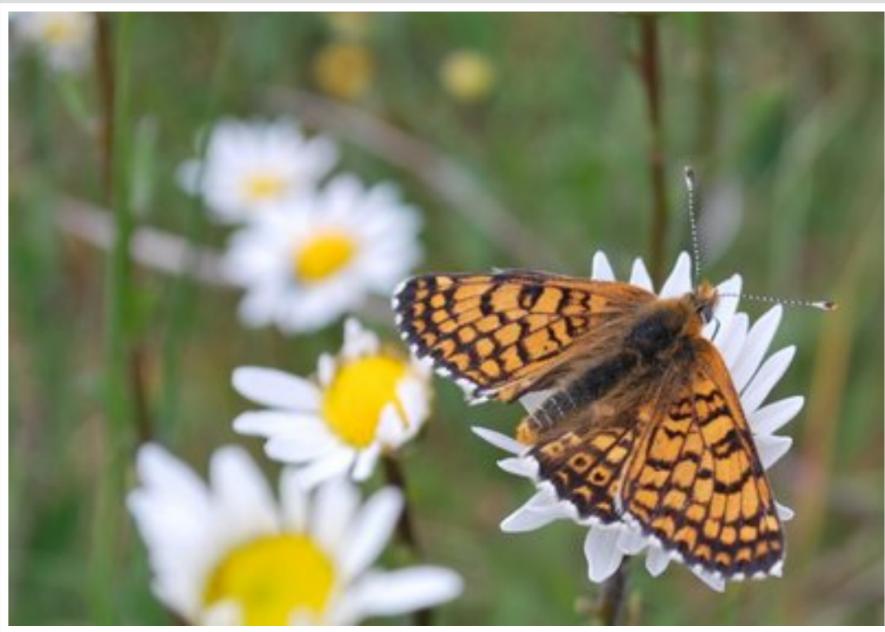
Re: Wurzel

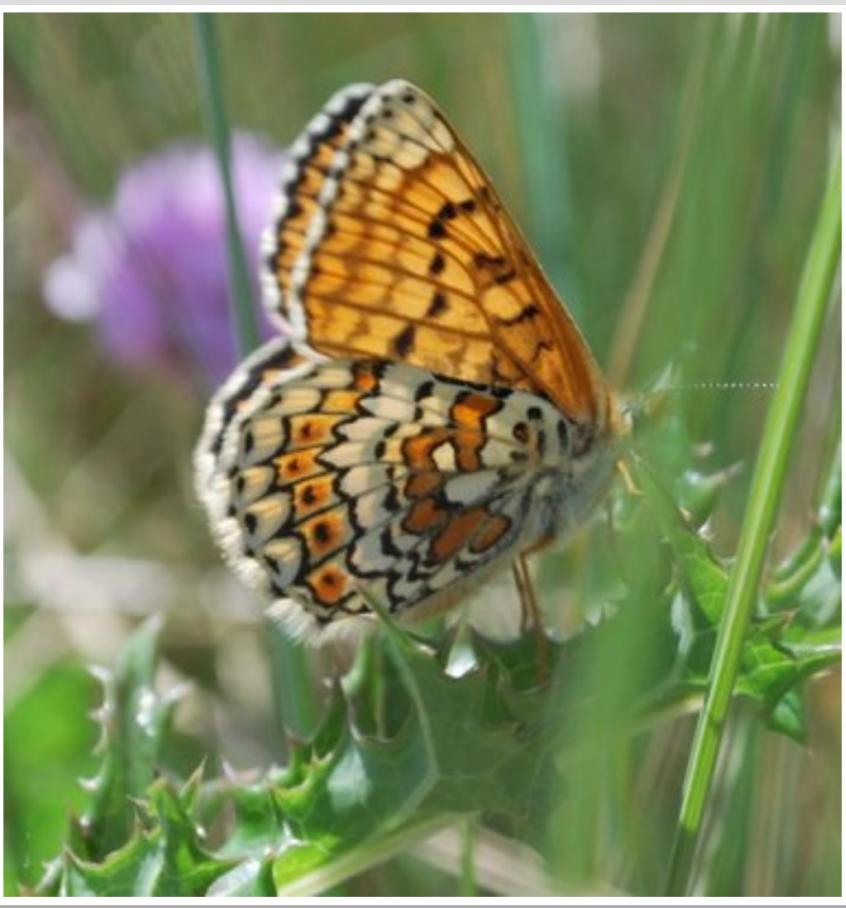
by Wurzel, 22-May-11 05:38 AM GMT

Last year I used Blurb to put my first years worth of photos into a book which I finished with...

"The target species are Purple Emperor, White Letter Haistreak, Silver Studded Blue, Glanville Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Lulworth Skipper and Duke of Burgundy...oh and Orange-tip!"

So having spent the last 2 months (just a slight exaggeration there!) reading about nothing but Glanville Fritillaries; plus photographing 3 other target species already and it being far to early for the others; I decided to try and find some Glanvilles, and I did (even though it was a hell of a long drive 😡)! They are just stunning and for my money have the best underwing markings of the entire family. I loved the way that they would flick and glide over the vegetation at the edge of the path 😊, but hated the way that they could just disappear as quickly. 😡





I also saw plenty of what I think are Cream Spot Tiger and a very blue female Common Blue. Great days...I suppose next will be Silver Studded?



Cheers and have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-11 06:01 AM GMT

Visited a small private meadow at Bishopstone not expecting much as the dearth seems to be upon us. Sure enough it started with not one sighting but as I moved further into the meadow and reached a large patch of Ox-Eyed Daisies I noticed a couple of very worn Common Blues along with a tired looking female.



As I moved further in I also saw a very fresh looking, almost perfect male Common Blue and a couple of very fresh looking Brown Argus (one of which seemed to have a blue furry body with the typical underwing patterning?) – has the second wave started or were these late comers from the first wave?



Also flying were both Small White and a bright looking (so male?) Brimstone as well as my first Meadow Brown of the year. A nice little pick me up as the weather starts to turn for the better! Off camping to my old stamping ground on the Isle of Purbeck so perhaps I'll get some shots of SSB?



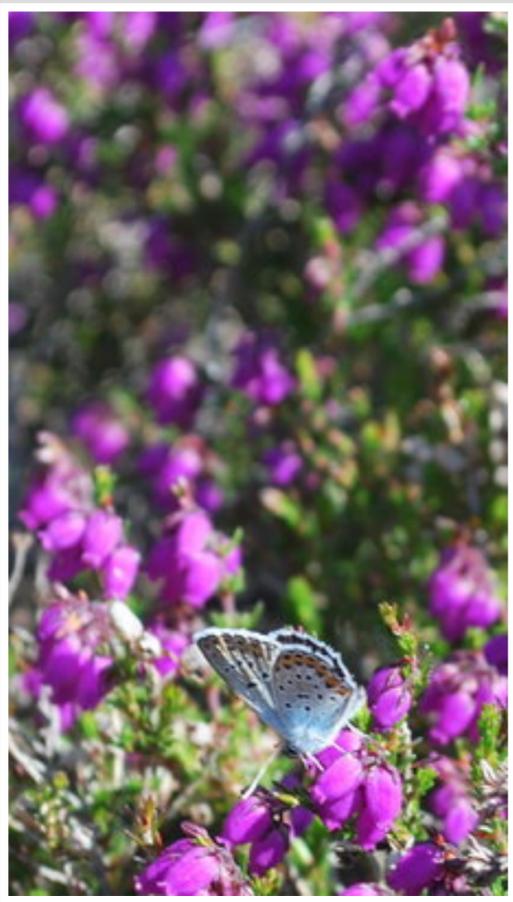
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-11 05:21 AM GMT

During my family camping trip I managed to see one or two species – a couple of Small Tortoiseshells and Meadow Brown at Downshay Farm Campsite, but no Wall this year, also Large Skipper and Speckled Wood on the "wildlife walk" up to Corfe Castle but the star of the show was Silver Studded Blue at Arne. The wardens are very helpful and both suggested areas produced SSB's easily. I started off looking round the Shipstal Point end and there were 4–5 males flying near to the path. Difficult to follow them and they didn't settle for very long. Much easier was the group of about 3 males at the Coombe Heath (I think?) side, just past the pond where the heather is pretty sparse. Again very flighty, all male and also much smaller than I thought they'd be. Still cracking little butterflies too see! Sorry if some of the shots are of the "on a stick" variety...





Might try another site next weekend to see if I can find some females to try and photograph, and then I need to try and find some Lulworth Skippers. Have a goodun all...

Wurzel

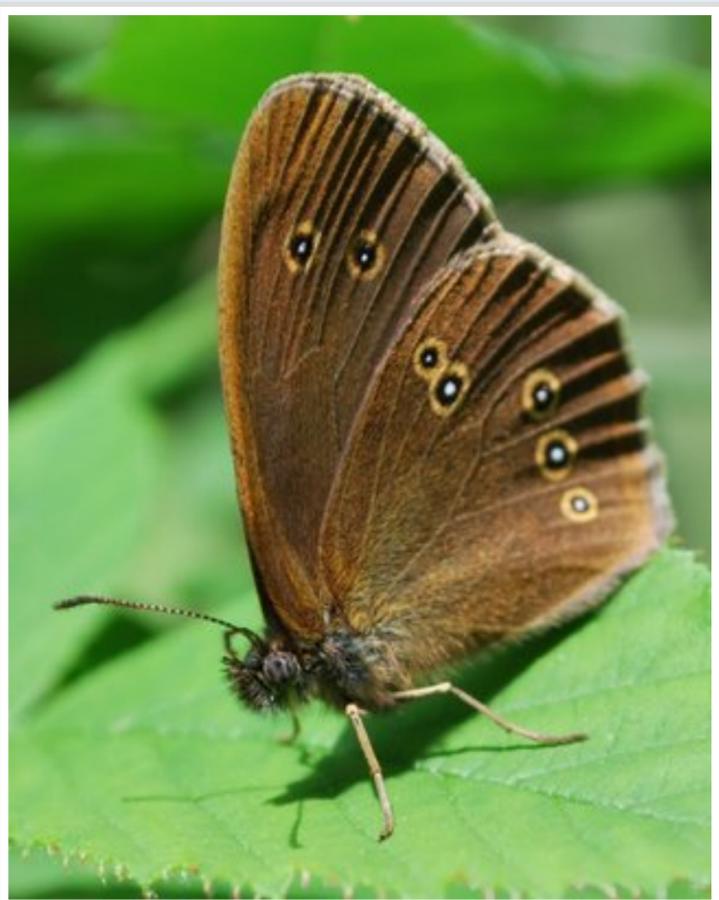
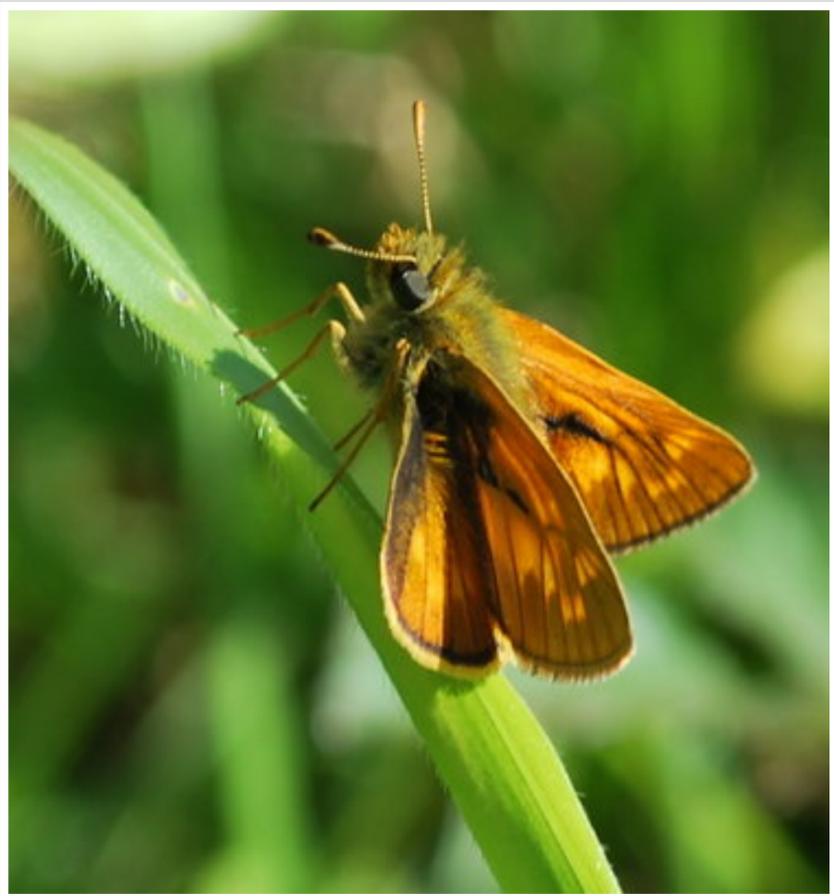
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-11 01:29 AM GMT

Taking inspiration from Alan Thornbury's recent blog post I set out on the quest of "new", and bearing in mind that the weather might be against me I

crammed 3 visits into one day. I tried an old area with new habitat (due to some recent clearing), a new part of a many times visited spot and one totally new, never been there before site.

First up was Garston Wood for a recce for Silver Washed Fritillary. I saw them there at the tail end of last year and they have emerged elsewhere so I was hoping they might be about now. No joy though but the recently cleared area is looking good and there were butterflies there – Speckled Wood, Small White, plenty of Meadow Brown, very accomodating Large Skipper and my first Ringlet of the year.



Next up was Slop Bog near Ferndown. A tiny bog/heath surrounded by a by-pass and housing estate, and with clouds massing I was hoping that it would still be warm enough for Silver Studded Blue to be about. Luckily as I strolled across the boardwalk the cloud lifted and I couldn't believe what I was seeing – they were everywhere! I could see 12 males all neatly spaced out but all within my line of vision! I carried along the board walk and once down and onto the heath path proper they were very accomodating, much more so then those at Arne. The slightly cooler weather also meant that they were open wing basking more so I managed to get some (I think) nice shots of their blue and black uppers. They were slightly coy at times though – they'd settle, start opening their wings and then close them as I edged the lens toawrds them. So I would retract the lens and they would open their wings, and I would edge the lens forward and they would close the wings! On male did this 5 or 6 times, then I swear he winked at me and in a very

dramatic flourish opened his wings as wide as he could. There were also some females about but they were much more low key. As the sun retreated behind the clouds one lady decided to actually climb onto my finger as I delicatly brushed aside some purple moor grass so I could get a shot! I left feeling very elated, what a stunning little reserve!





Finally a new part of an old favourite as Martin Down. By the time I got there the shower for the day had arrived so I wandered dispondently seeing only a Speckled Wood and a Meadow Brown. Once I retreated to the car for Lime Pickle sandwich the sun came out and with it the butterflies I walked along the path at the edge of the reserve from the Sillens Lane end towards Borkerley but followed the path off to the right where it travelled with hedge on either side. There were a couple of Common Blue, lots of Small Heath and Meadow Brown, plenty of Large Skipper and then singles of Small Tortoiseshell, Small Blue, Green Veined White, Small White, Speckled Wood and a bedraggled female Orange Tip.



And so ended a very busy day of "new", it was just as well that I crammed all of that into one day as today it looks like a November day outside! Hopefully by next weekend the sun will have returned and I might try my luck at Bentley for SWF and WA?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 14-Jun-11 01:21 AM GMT

That's a very comprehensive and informative report Wurzel, seems you had a great day out. That lime pickle sandwich sounds tempting too, I must try one myself 😊

Bill 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-11 06:35 PM GMT

Cheers Bill! I did try to cram as much as possible in – I think that if I'd have finished off at Bentley Wood as I had intended I would probably have gone home to an empty house or if not that certainly a very disgruntled Mrs Wurzel 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Jun-11 04:06 AM GMT

Last night we took the whole family to Martin Down for an evening picnic tea. While everyone else was munching down on cous-cous and home baked rolls I managed to slip away and briefly check out the hedges. Meadow Brown, Large Skipper, Small Blue and Small Heath were all about but there was no sign of the aging Orange Tip although a fresh looking Common Blue very obligingly perched for a "blue on a stick" shot. I had to be quick otherwise I might have missed out on the chocolate cake. As the evening sun felt hot enough on my back to burn it got me thinking – what time do butterflies disappear and roost for the night? The working week restricts me to trips at the weekend when the weather isn't always good; so perhaps the answer would be to make visits during the early evening? Or by the time that I get to places will they all be tucked away roosting?





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-11 06:16 AM GMT

As it was Father's Day I managed to persuade the entire family to head out for a walk at Bentley Wood. I knew it would be a good day when a Silver Washed Fritillary was there to greet us in the car park. We started off along the ride that headed North along the edge of the eastern Clearing and there was a ghostly looking blob that was out of place on the fresh green of a bracken. I managed to get in a little closer and it revealed itself to be a Purple Hairstreak that grimly refused to open its wings. I didn't mind as the closed wing shot is one that I haven't got anyway, so I clicked away and then backed off leaving the charming little butterfly looking out of place, contrasting with the green. This little area proved very productive with my first White Admiral of the year, very fresh looking Ringlets, plenty more SV Frits and Large Skippers that appeared to be almost everywhere! While I was enjoying all of these fresh and vibrant specimens a faded and worn Small Pearl Bordered Frit did a tired fly by that made me slightly nostalgic for the heady days of May...





By now the girls had finished the bribery sweets (to them butterflies = Dolly Mixtures) so we headed along the switch back to the cross roads with it's comfy bench and lunch. I couldn't help but keep noticing orange and black jobs all along the path, one of which turned out to be a Dark Green Fritillary.



While the rest of the family settled down to a relaxing lunch I checked out the path sides in all directions. Large Skipper was the most numerous species, followed by SV frit, then White Admiral with plenty of Meadow Browns and singles of Red Admiral and Hutchinsons's Comma. But the SV Frits and White Admiral were the main targets of my lens as I haven't managed to get a decent closed wing shot of these species...I still haven't but now I get to come back to this ace site (who knows perhaps His Nibbs will be about next time?)





Have a goodun

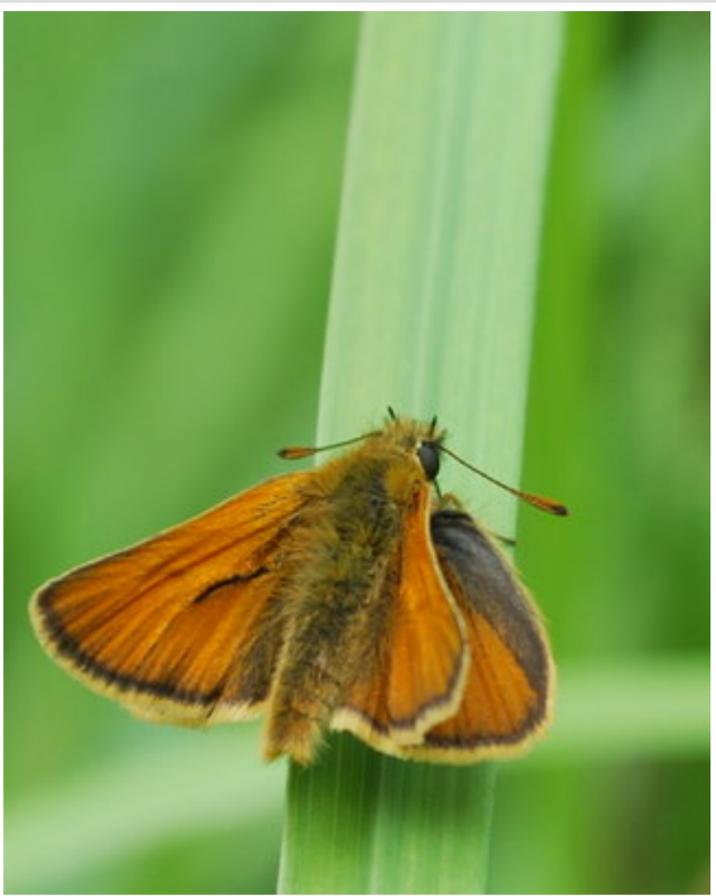
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

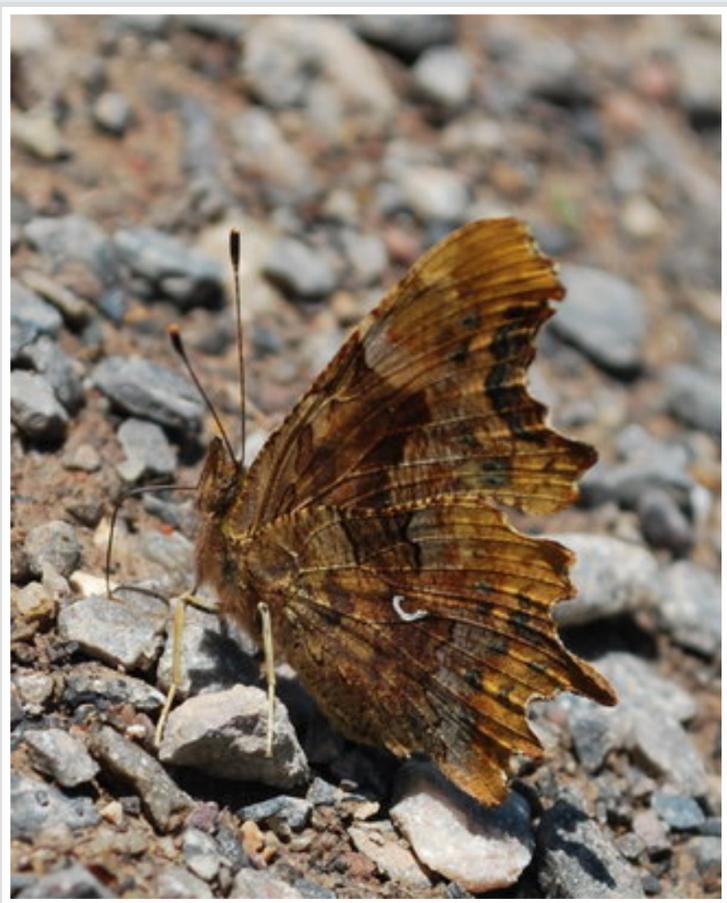
by Wurzel, 28-Jun-11 06:49 AM GMT

As the weekend approached a migraine struck but luckily had passed by Sunday when I dug out our old little point and shoot for my daughter who accompanied me to Bentley Wood. She had a fantastic time getting shots of Large Skipper and Ringlet and helping me to see Hummingbird Hawk Moth, SPB Frit and SW Frits with Marbled Whites in the eastern clearing. We then walked down the switchback as the sun ate away at the cloud cover which seemed to have a strange affect on the butterflies White Admirals, SW Frits and Ringlets aplenty all fluttering around at about head height. I mean that's not playing sportingly now is it. By all means stay away from the edge of the path if you don't want to be photographed but don't taunt us by fluttering around just out of reach!

The various ride edges held lots of Ringlet and Large Skipper and SW Frits glided along often being mobbed by Large Skippers. There were also one or two Small Skippers around who were less boisterous.



On our way back we found a little patch where there were some smaller Oaks and a large bramble patch. A Hutchinson's Comma spent some time sunning itself and pretending to be a leaf while a DG Frit spend ages patrolling and seeing off SW Frits, Large Skippers and eventually said H Comma. It was very interested in my little girls hat and did land on my hand twice but both times flipped off before I could get the camera raised! No joy with his Nibbs although others did see him, but there's always next year!



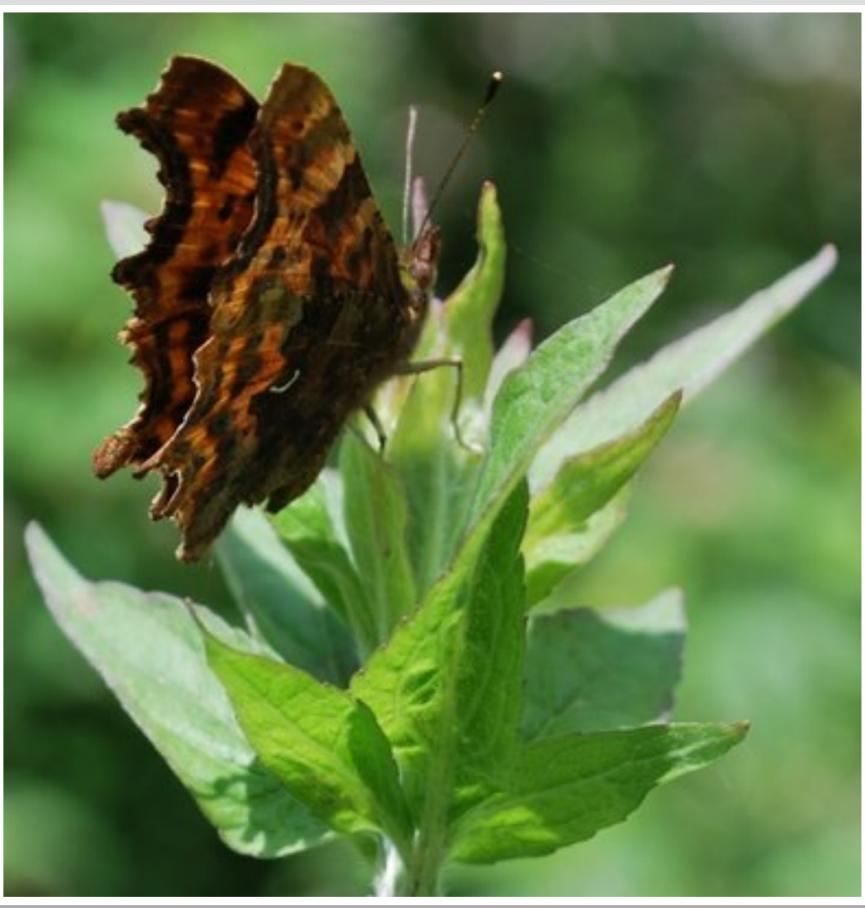
Have a goodun all

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-11 04:52 AM GMT

Somehow I managed to get off work very slightly earlier than usual so I called in to a couple of place on my way home. First up was Scotchell Reserve a small local reserve fen which had a mass of bramble growing up a railway embankment at the edge of the reserve. This was a very popular place wiht H Comma, Red Admiral, Small White and Large Skippers all flitting around and nectaring.



H Comma

Then I took a walk around the edge of a small field near the local playpark where the grass has grown to almost knee height. This had Large Skippers at the edge, a Common Blue put in a brief appearance along with a Small Skipper and Meadow Browns and Ringlets a plenty.



Large Skipper

Finally I stopped on the way home where there was a field of white, Ox-eye Daisies for as far as the eye could see. It was a stunning sight and in the strong sun blinding at times!



This was also a great little find – with Small Skippers aplenty, Ringlets and Meadow Browns abounded as well as a battered and tired looking Brown Argus and male Common Blue. Finally there was a Marbled White flitting around and seemingly perfectly camouflaged amongst the broken white and dark background.



Meadow Brown



Female Small Skipper



Female Small Skipper – orange underside to antennae just showing



Marbled White

I had to drag myself away so as not to get into too much trouble with my wife – but now I might be able to sneak the odd 15–20 minutes on the way home from time to time...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-11 05:16 AM GMT

A very busy day but once my wife was ensconsed with our younger daughter in the leisure centre watching our older daughter have her swimming lesson I ducked out for a brief 20 minute foray. There are some fields at the back of the Five Rivers Centre which make up a small local nature reserve. With the sounds of Reed and Sedge Warbler interspersed with Garden Warbler drifting and over the hill and up from the river side I strolled around the cut paths brushing the swards on either side of the path with my hands. Just enjoying the solidtude and the greedy satisfaction of being the only person with the butterflies and birds. There were numerous Meadow Brown, Ringlets abounding and Marbled White in very good numbers. One shot had a couple of MWs interlocked while a third party was trying to force in between them 😬 There were also some golden skippers around and using the advice from Sussex Kipper, David M and Gibster, I managed to get some shots of ink padded Essex Skippers as well as one or two shots of the male which showed the sex brand which was much smaller, straighter and fainter.





Shots got it was back to family duties...and hoping that next weekend the weather is as good.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-11 04:30 AM GMT

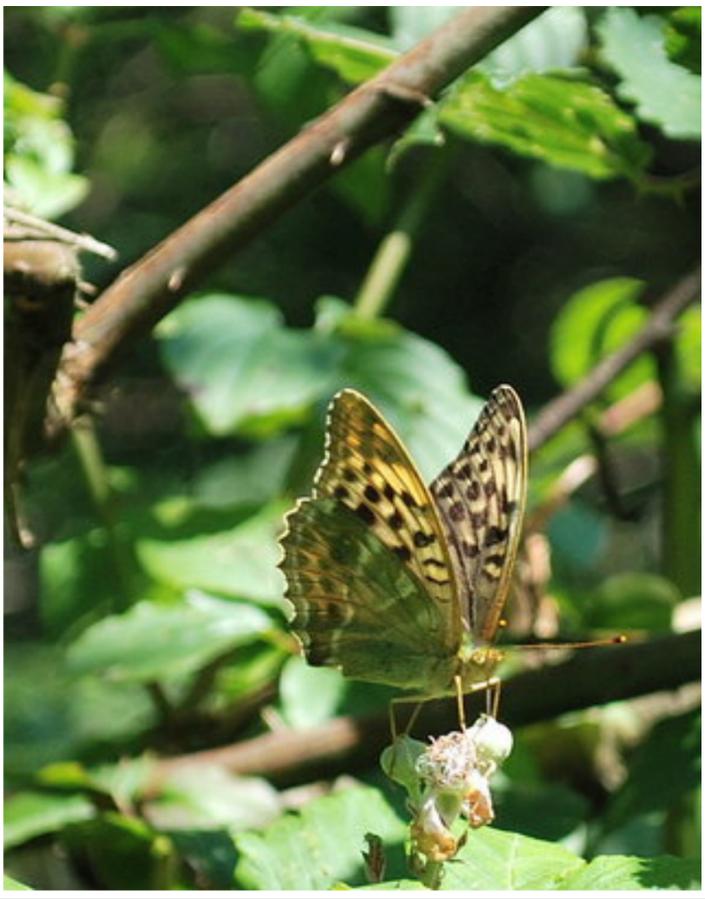
Having managed to nip out for 20 minutes yesterday I didn't think that I'd get another chance...but managed to wangle a quick stop at Garston Wood as it was on the way to my parents. Started out in the area tht used to have the ornamental trees but has recently been cut right back with certain key trees and bushes left. It certainly seems to be working for butterflies with Meadow Browns, Large Skipper and Ringlets on every available bush. The odd white did a fly by as well a few very frantic Silver Washed Fritillaries. A small orange blur left from one of the paths but the jizz (do butterfly watchers use this term?) seemed wrong as it landed back on the path. Some sneaky footwork meant that I found Small Heath in the middle of a wood? Not it's normal habitat but then there isn't much wood left here at the mo!



In the middle of the cleared area I found a second picnic bench set-up which was surrounded by brambles and gave some cracking opportunities for shots of SW Frits, and allowing some clear underside shots – one of which showed some dark smudges – possible damage?



Carrying on through we came to the end of this particular enclosure and started off down the main path down the hill to the car park. Alongside the path amongst some ferns was a large bramble bush and on it were numerous butterflies – Ringlets, Meadow Browns, SV Frits all joined for a very brief appearance by a White Admiral (so quick that I couldn't get a shot – but I'll be back!). And then out of the shadows flapped *valesina* as it glided into view it almost appeared black and white, then when it landed briefly in had almost a metallic lustre appearance. Unfortunately for me it decided to hang in the shadows and quite far into the ferns and almost to far out of range. Eventually it came in closer and I could get one or two shos before it glided off high and disappeared into the sun.



Back in the car park I ended up groaning – earlier I'd been messing around getting my 6 year old to take some head shots for my avatar and I hadn't altered my settings back to macro! Lesson learned – always check your gear before you leave the house!! Still some shots came out okay.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

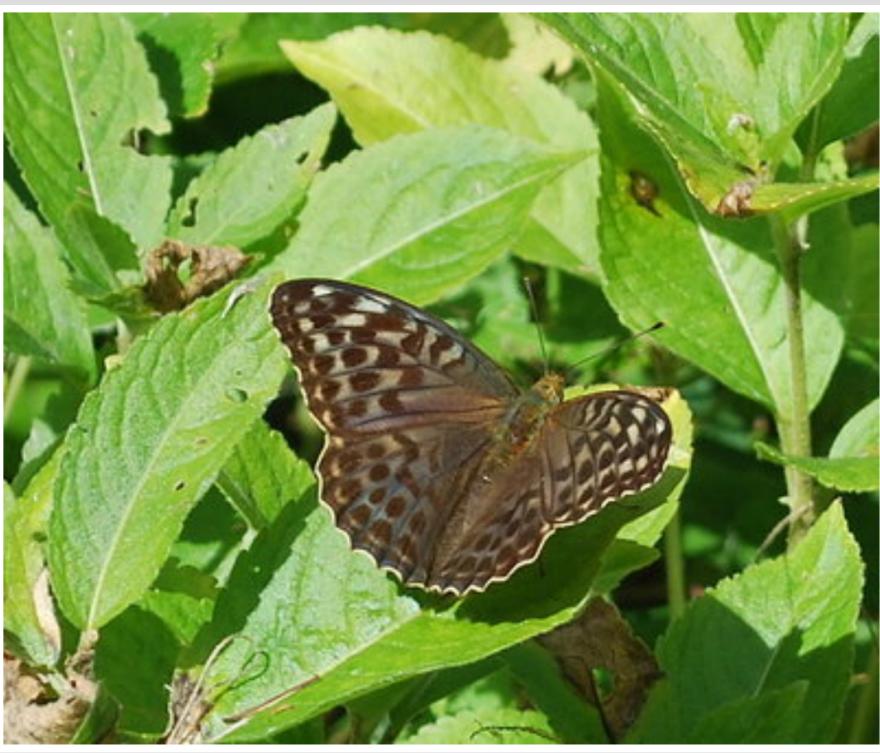
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-11 04:25 AM GMT

Started the morning off in Garston Wood and from the car park checked out the new cleared area of the coppice. There were one or two Silver Washed Fritillary around, along with Ringlet and Meadow Brown. There were also a few Large Skipper, Small Copper and my first Gatekeeper of the year – that wouldn't open it's wings. I settled down to wait for it to change it's mind and just as they were opening a dog came bounding by off it's lead and it was gone!



The hot spot from last weekend housed a single H Comma and then I moved back from the main path into the enclosure. This proved a really good move with, flighty White Admiral, Greenish Silver Washed Fritillary and an unusual Gatekeeper.



I noticed that the GSW Frit seemed to stay more in the shade and when hassled by Meadow Brown or Ringlet would fly up and perch higher up in a tree unlike their ginger relations that seemed to bask more and zoom off elsewhere when hassled.

From there I moved up to Martin Down, the Blandford Road car park, for Dark Green Fritillary as suggested by Philzoid. Amazing there were 4 DGFs in the car park before I'd even got out of my car! Set off towards Borkerley Ditch with DGFs all around feeding like mad on the Knapweed. There were more Small Copper, Marbled Whites, Small and Essex Skippers, Small Tortoiseshell but the stars were DGFs. Including a feisty individual who was desperately trying to get in between two lovers – almost trying to headbutt the other out of the way! 😡 Finally they gave up...





Where tomorrow?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 10-Jul-11 05:01 AM GMT

That is a lovely *valezina* Silver-washed! Very envious – I've never seen one...

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-11 03:57 AM GMT

Cheers Dave! 😊 This is the second year that I've found them at Garston Wood so it's becoming something of a secret hot spot – don't tell anyone 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by dilettante, 11-Jul-11 04:16 AM GMT

It's no fun when your target species is waiting for you in the car park. You have to work a little for your reward 😊

Nice pictures of the copper and the SWF.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-11 05:43 AM GMT

Cheers Dilettante – it's was slightly less fun to have them there on arrival but it certainly made a nice change for me – everything else always seems to turn up either as I've just poured a coffee or I'm about to leave! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-11 06:20 AM GMT

Sunday saw me winding my way back to Bentley – possibly for the last time this year. The underwing shot of White Admiral is eluding me still despite seeing 2 of the beauties yesterday at Garston Wood. As I got there early I set off to the White Letter Hairstreak site. Once there the birds went mad – with a female Blackcap feeding on the ground, a mixed Tit flock which I'm pretty sure contained a Willow Tit (more bullish neck than Marsh) and a family of GS Woody. All of which were nice to see but with so many predators around all the butterflies kept a low profile. Still hung around on the corner waiting for a certain little butterfly to come by. Coffee drunk, neck severely cricked and still no joy I decided to head slowly back and see if His Nibbs had come out to play.

On the way back there was much more to see – Large Skippers, Ringlets (which I'm getting annoyed with now as they scare off everything just as you about to get the shot! 😡), SW Frits – including a female or too, Marbled White, possible faded DG Frit, Smessex Skippers and a single Red Admiral.



The star of the day was a male Purple Hairstreak which decided to have a rest on a frond of braken. What is it with Purple Hairstreak, me and braken – I only ever see them on braken? This little chap very obligingly decided to show me his wings and having reeled off a load of shots I left him there to have a little snooze!





The PE did show but with a very distant view and when I finally decided to head home (it was either that I face the wrath) a groan went up from the group watching it so perhaps it had been demoted to a White Admiral? 😞

And so next onto Grayling, Lulworth Skipper and possibly White Letter Hairstreak if there's still time!?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Lee Hurrell, 12-Jul-11 04:27 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:
Smessex Skippers

Brilliant 😄

Re: Wurzel

by Gibster, 12-Jul-11 07:00 PM GMT

Marlow Tits and Comic Terns? 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-11 02:30 AM GMT

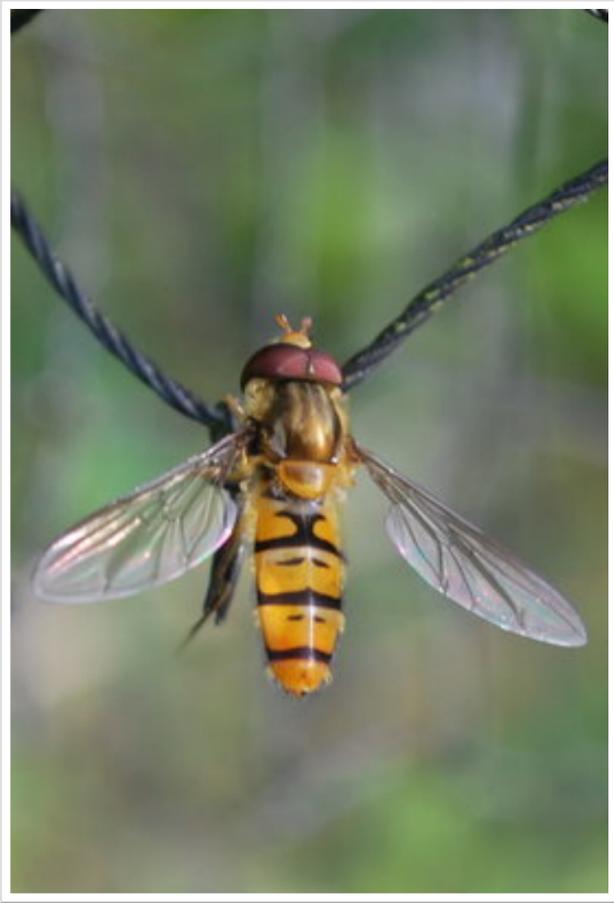
Cheers Lee and Gibster – it seemed the best way to describe the little golden blur that you catch out of your eye 😊, and is a bad habit that I picked up from my years as a birder! 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

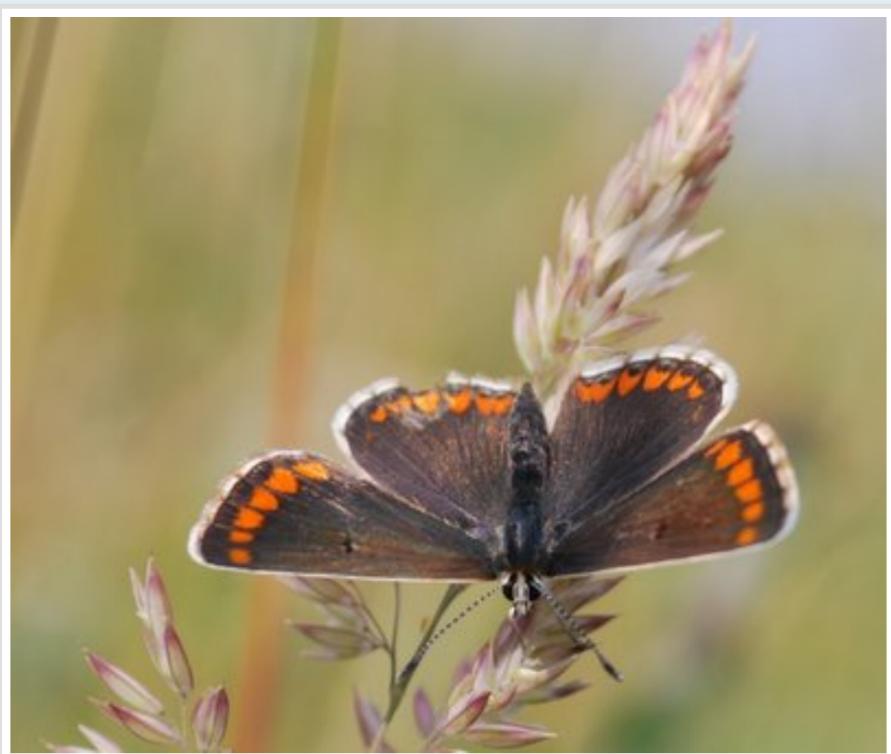
After a bit of a disaster at the weekend I took inspiration from Chris and headed into the garden to sort my camera out. Once I'd noticed that I'd somehow knocked the VR off (🙄) I tried a few shots of Hoverflies to check that it was back on track.



Then having checked the weather and groaned when I saw rain pretty much all weekend (lets hope it changes again tomorrow) I thought I'd better make the most of it while it was still warm and dry! So I dropped my older daughter off at Rainbows and then hightailed it to Five Rivers for exactly one hour. The light was stunning and the ground was lovely and warm – almost balmy and a Spckled Wood was there to meet me.

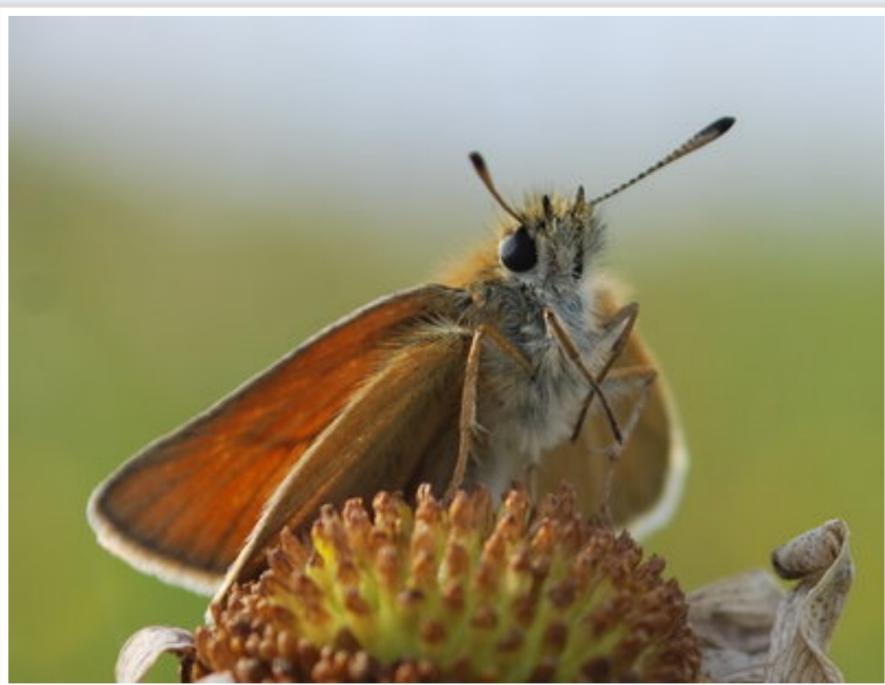


At first butterflies were scarce and I thought they'd all roosted but as I moved towards the south facing bank they soon emerged. The odd Meadow Brown, fewer Marbled White and then a Smessex and a couple of Ringlet and a male Gatekeeper. Once I got to the banks I had my eye in and one little patch provided me with another Gatekeeper (they really are tricky!) and what seemed to be a pair of Brown Argus.





There were also more Meadow Brown, and fewer Marbled Whites and a few Smessex Skippers that rested still long enough to identify as first a female and then male Essex Skipper. The female really seemed to love the camera and she was posing in all shapes – head on, wings shut, wings open, leaning back on to legs and even doing an impression of Mantis from Kung Fu Panda! Luckily she decided that she'd had enough posing and skipped off as I then had 10 minutes to get back and pick up my daughter. On the way back there were a couple of Large Skipper in the brambles and again more Meadow Brown and Marbled White (fewer of the later).



Hopefully the weathermen will have got it wrong and a high will sweep in from the continent on Friday!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-11 04:55 AM GMT

I called in at Woodhenge on the way home from work on Friday – shhhhhhhh don't tell the wife 😊 Still it was literally for 10 minutes and involved a quick stroll round the field near the picnic bench. This time there are far fewer Marbled Whites – they seem to have been replaced by Meadow Brown (5 against 30+). Skippers were also harder to find but in the end I found a nice female Small.



Also around was a Comma investigating some brambles and the usual flighty White (possibly Green Veined?) and something that at first seemed very unusual – a strange pink looking thing – it was only when I got a bit closer that I realised that it was a bee with pink pollen (?) collected onto its legs.



I was glad that I called in here as Saturday was a complete nightmare – rain all day – and so far today I've felt trapped in the house, nipping out between showers to capture an image of my first garden Ringlet



I did manage to get out in the afternoon with my younger daughter to my local patch – Five Rivers – but more on that tomorrow as I've just seen the Countryfile wether – let's hope they get it wrong...why is it they always get wet weather right, and the sunny weather wrong? 😞
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 18-Jul-11 05:44 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I photographed bees just like that one last year. It must be the pollen from the scabious that does it. Nice pics 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-11 04:22 PM GMT

Cheers Susie! I was thinking that it was an 80's throw back bee with it's lovely leg warmers!:D

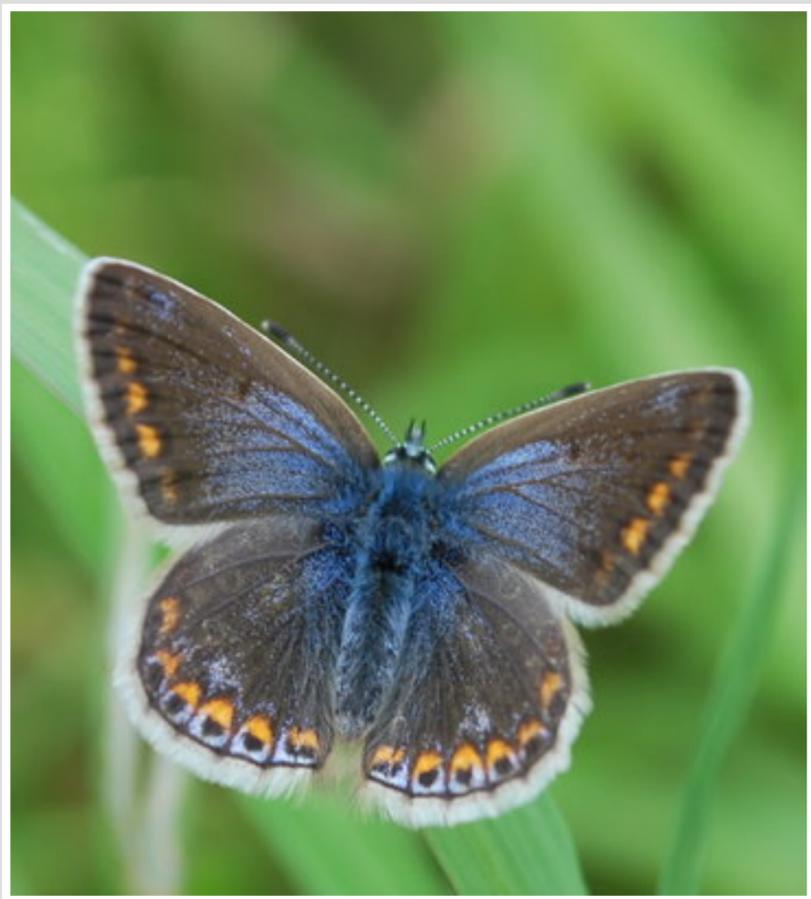
Have a goodun

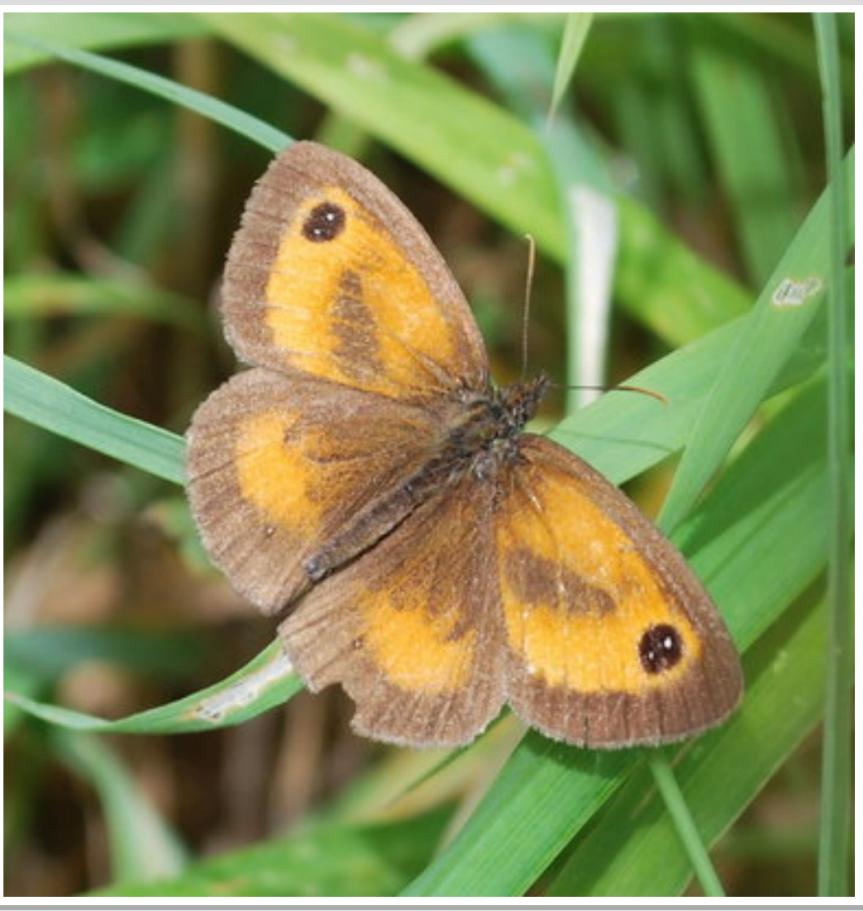
Wurzel

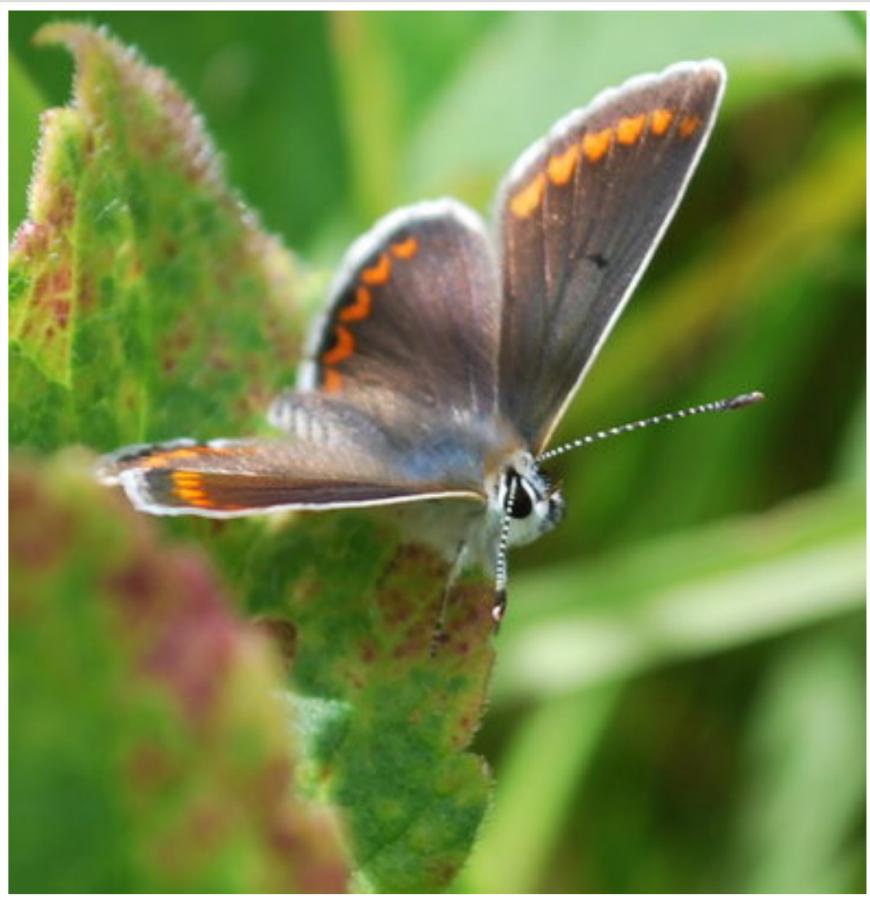
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-11 05:44 AM GMT

Despite the rain showers that had been forecast all day I did manage to take my younger daughter out to Five Rivers for an hour to blow the cobwebs away. I asked if she wanted to come with me and she put her head on one side and questioned "sweets?" 🤔 (she's learning fast!). So sweets bought and opened we wandered through the shorter grass paths, leaning over every now and again to find different species peeking out at us. Lottie again surprized me with how much she has caught on as with almost an entire packet of Randoms stuffed into her cheeks she announced "sweets gone, time to go home now?" 🤔🤔. Luckily a Skipper did a buzz past and she got caught up in looking for butterflies again. Once the wind calmed down a little and the sun made a brief appearance we found a large group of thistles and brambles and the butterflies were everywhere – a real purple patch – with GV White, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Brown Argus, male and female Common Blue, Comma, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Smessex Skippers, and both sexes of Gatekeeper. Little Lottie was pointing at thistles at her head height and exclaiming "butterflies daddy" all over the place. As we strolled back to the car we found singles of each of these species but nothing like the throng from the thistles and added a Large White and Peacock. Once back at the car the wind picked up and within 30 minutes rain was falling again.







Here's hoping that the weather improves so that I can get out next weekend for Lulworth Skipper or Grayling?
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 19-Jul-11 07:06 AM GMT

Looks like the weekend will be dry and fairly sunny according to the forecast. Good luck with the Lulworths/Graylings.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-11 06:07 AM GMT

Back to Five Rivers again today – this time with both girls and without the bribes! 😊 I was hoping to get to Martin Down for Chalkhill Blues but work didn't finish as early as I thought it would. Still getting out is still getting out!
We check out the "purple patch" area again as Kitty wanted to get a few shots. I think that she did as seemed happy to click away at a Green Veined White and then a Common Blue. All the while Lottie was keeping her eyes peeled for tigers! 😊
I too managed to get onto some Blues – all perched head facing down and occasionally being buzzed by Brown Argus, while Speckled Wood spectated from the bramble sidelines (they are well hairy aren't they? 🤪).





There were also several Gatekeepers around about showing a further range of variation in spotting from the individuals I found last time...and also looking a bit fresher.



no spots on the lower wing



no brown spots on the fore wing

Off to Godshill tomorrow to try my luck for Grayling for the first time...I don't know why but I'm kinda nervous about it! 😊 Cheers for the luck David! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 23-Jul-11 06:13 AM GMT

The second one is a female – that's why it lacks the brown sex-brands on the forewings. They also tend to have more hindwing spots.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-11 04:43 PM GMT

Thank you for your comment – I already know that the bottom one is a female – I wasn't referring to the androconical organs (or sex brands) but was referring to "**brown spots**" that I have recently seen and photographed on a female that had reduced hindwing spots and 2 brown spots marking the fore wings. I photographed it on my previous visit to Five Rivers – so have a look and see what you think? Or I could repost the picture for you...

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 23-Jul-11 06:27 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:
referring to "**brown spots**"

Millerd was not alone in mis-understanding your initial post but, now you have explained, I can point out that the Gatekeeper is prone to aberrations in both colour and spotting. Millerd has an example of a colour aberration in his thread "Golden Gatekeeper".

Regarding spotting, Russwurm in his book on butterfly aberrations states: "On the upper side of the forewings, there may be anything from one to four extra spots below the apical spot: all these variations are classed under the name *ab. excessa* (Tutt.)." On the upperside of the hindwings, three extra spots are *ab. posttriexcessa* (Leeds) and four are *quadriexcessa*. All in all, a rather variable butterfly!

Collecting and naming aberrations was quite a passion in Victorian times.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-11 07:21 PM GMT

Thanks Mike – I think I might do a separate post with some of my variants to see if they can be classed according to the descriptors you gave. 😊
As to the misunderstanding I'm not sure how that happened – I suppose it's because I've always considered spots to be round, and sex brands appear to be like lines or stripes... 😊 I think from now on I'll sex (oo-er 😊) the photos when referring to variants. Cheers 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 24-Jul-11 04:55 AM GMT

Oops, I did indeed misunderstand. 😊

I think the sex-brand on the Gatekeeper is more of a splodge than either a line or a spot. 😊 I saw a female today with no spots on either wing – yet another variation, I imagine. (Posted on the July sightings thread)

They really are hugely variable.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-11 05:06 AM GMT

I think that egg and our faces were indeed in alignment! 😊

I just started another thread purely with all of my variations as nfreem also posted about them today. If you add your own shots to it would could set up our own version of the Cockayne! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-11 05:26 AM GMT

Yesterday I made a lunchtime dash out to Godshill to try and bag Grayling, I had 2 hours of "allowed time" and I was actually nervous about trying for it – new species, new site, limited time! So I put my faith in Alan Thornbury – the site guide on his website had a map with an arrow showing the hotspot, so I memorised the map and went for it!

As I headed towards the site, the sun went in and every driver in front of me decided to tootle along the road at 15 miles below the speed limit 😡 Once I got to the car park I raced across the cricket pitch and then stopped at the top of the hill to drink in the glorious sight of heathland and the sun coming out! Starting to feel much happier I strolled down the hill, enjoying Meadow Browns that weren't in meadows, fresh looking Small Coppers and Gatekeepers that stood guard on braken that lined the path.



Dark Gatekeeper



Nice fresh Small Copper, but not here for that!

Once at the bottom of the hill I crossed the brook and found myself in the triangle of paths that I memorised from the map. And praise be to the mighty Thornbury for there was my target. If my inner triangulation was correct I was actually standing under the arrow tip! 😊

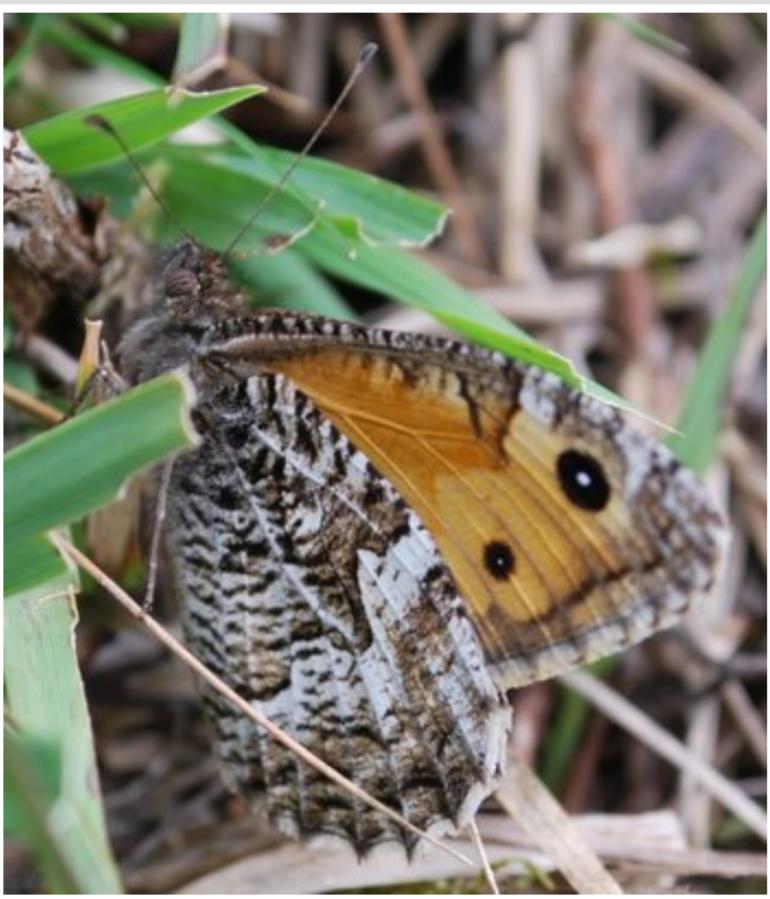


I then spent the next 40 minutes or so watching, waiting, stalking and learning about these amazing creatures. I'd watch one fly, it would land in a patch of grass amongst the heather, then I'd cautiously move to the spot and it would be invisible!



It is in there somewhere – look top right...

In the end I learnt to just wander up and down the tracks and hope that some would land on the track itself or quite close to the edge. This did pay off and then the next surprising thing – how variable they appear to be, from black and white to creams and browns, and stunningly patterned so much so that they appear almost textured... One individual flashed the orange wing tip and allowed me to sex it (🤪) – the lower black spot had a white spot in the centre which made the individual female? I was unlucky not get a shot of one nectaring on bell heather but it was such a brief occurrence, almost like a plane refueling in mid air – land, drink, off, all in 2 seconds!



Lower spot on the forewing is eyed = female?



Time up I wandered up the hill happy and at peace.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

p.s. sorry for the ecclesiastical tinge to this post – but I am writing it on a Sunday 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 27-Jul-11 09:41 PM GMT

Smashing pictures of the Grayling Wurzel 🙄 Love their crytic markings and the way they use them and position themselves to just blend in with the background. And, if you get a bit too close out comes the eyespot flash 😊

Finger's crossed see some over Chobham Common (heathland) this w/e 😎

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-11 07:23 AM GMT

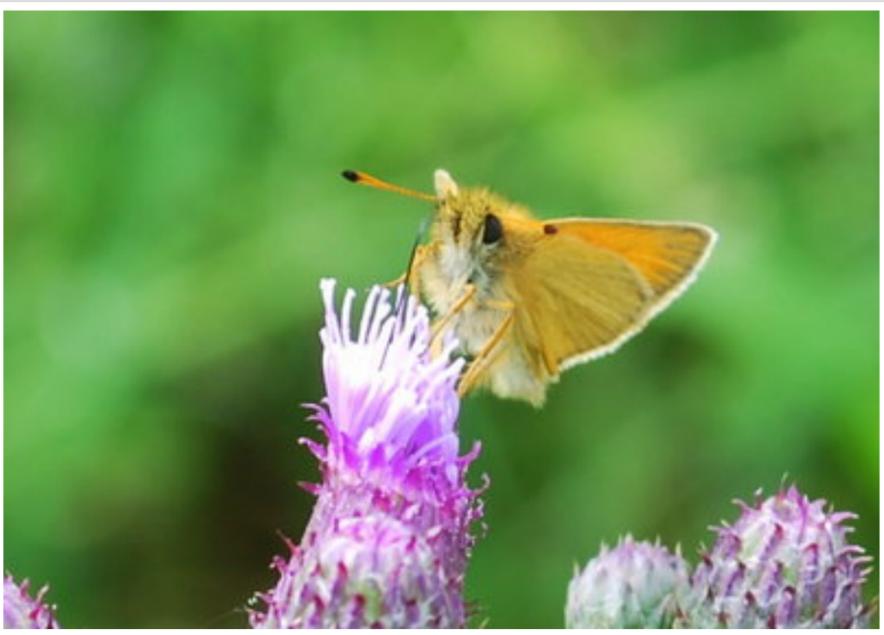
I took the family for a camping holiday to Gloucester last week. The camping site (Thistledown Farm) was totally amazing, with mixed woodland and a mixture of flower meadow and hedges...it was so good we spent the first 3 days practically on the campsite – apart from two brief forays to Stroud – one for sugar and one to have a tick removed from my leg (I feel that now I am a proper butterfly enthusiast as I have been blooded! 😊). It provided me plenty of opportunities to catch up with a few of the more common species although they were very flighty, including Peacock which I have struggled to see this year – it even allowed me to get a shot of the closed wings looking for all the world like a burnt leaf. A Small Copper tried to join us in our tent, as did a field vole and the Gatekeepers showed a nice range in variations (no spots, 2 spots, four spots etc). The list by the end of the holiday was; Green Veined White, Small White, Brimstone, Large White, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Marbled White, Speckled Wood, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Large Skipper, Peacock, Comma, Red Admiral and Small Copper. We also managed a little foray to Woodchester National Trust but more of that for another post 😊 Having spent today digging spuds and mowing the lawn I think that tomorrow I might be able to swing a little visit to Shipton Bellinger to try for Brown Hairstreak and I'm also taking the girls to Martin Down in the morning (maybe Chalkhills and Silver Spotted?).

Have a goodun

Wurzel



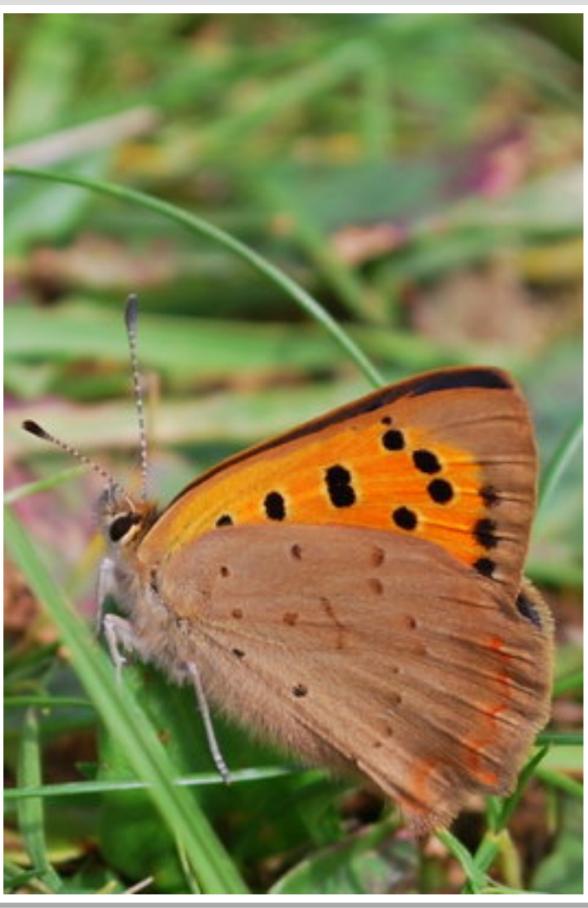
Not a butterfly but not sure what species it is?



Essex Skipper



Small Skipper



Small Copper



Peacock - for sure



Peacock - or is it a burnt leaf?



Cabbage White

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 01-Aug-11 06:36 AM GMT

Your Dragonfly is a female Common Darter. Nice report and pics by the way Wurzel.

Bill 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-11 06:40 AM GMT

Cheers Bill, on both counts! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

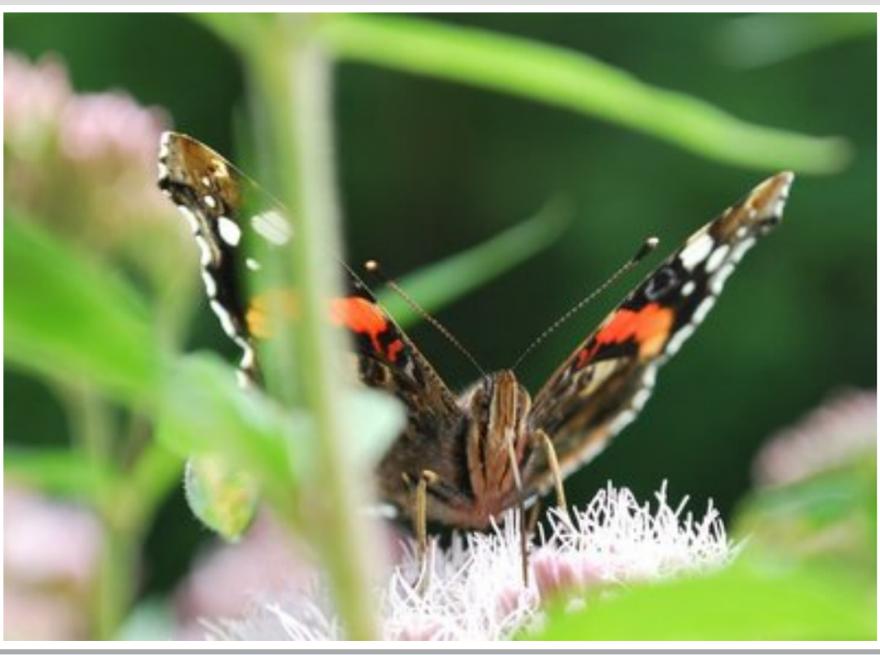
by Wurzel, 02-Aug-11 04:30 AM GMT

During our holiday to Gloucester we decided to head to the local National Trust site, Woodchester, as a way to tear ourselves away from the campsite. It started off with a wander down a beech covered lane, and then it got steeper and some Dutch people coming up warned us that it was a long way...but we carried on, confident in the scale of the site map. Finally the beech woodland opened out into pasture as we continued to walk downhill – finally reaching the ruined Mansion. Apparently it is a haven for bats – but as it wasn't owned by the NT we didn't look in. We carried on to the first of the five lakes, all the time exchanging worried looks as our three year old teared further downhill oblivious to the prospect of having to walk back up! 😊

Having seen the lake (we decided not to mention the others) we thought that it might be a good idea to start the climb back up while the girls were in high spirits. Whilst they were having a little break (the first of many) I dodged round a field of thistles and tried to get some close shots of Peacocks – as there were 6 or 7 of them in the small patch.



Peacock



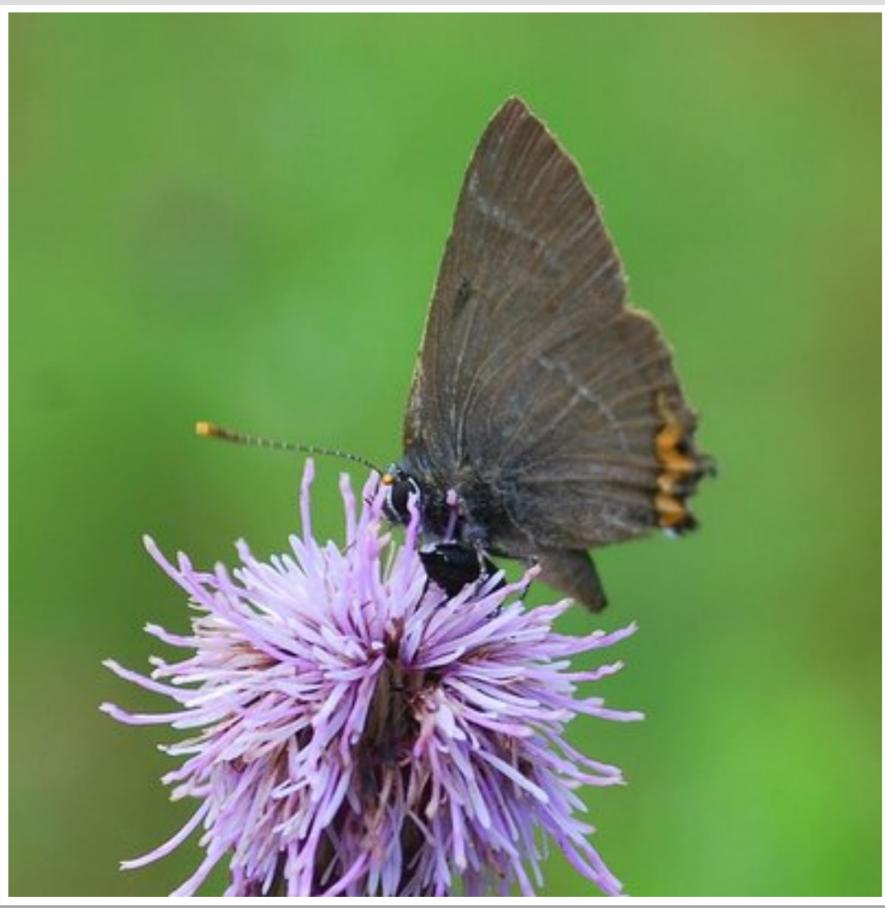
Red Admiral

While I was getting quite close a small odd looking brown butterfly flipped into view. I clicked away a few shots before realising that it was a White Letter Hairstreak! It may have been a bit worn and tatty but I'll take it for the pure surprise/luck value!



My lucky find...





Having got as many shots as I could I had to rejoin the family. When I told my wife of my lucky find she merely raised an eyebrow and then spent the rest of the entire torturous journey back up the hill shooting me suspicious looks...I swear it was just a lucky find, but I still don't think that I've persuaded her. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

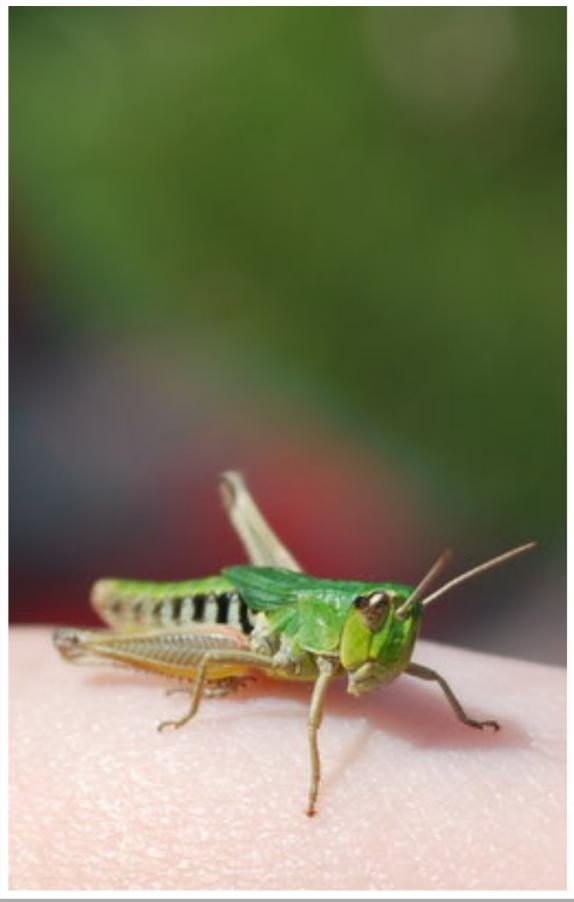
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-11 05:30 AM GMT

As my wife wanted to have a break at the weekend I agreed to look after the girls for the morning. So I loaded them and a picnic lunch into the car and set off to Martin Down. There were one or two Small Blues along the path up to Hanham Hill but we got there too early in the morning for Silver Spotted Skippers I don't think it was warm enough for them to be out and about. We then headed right to the top of the Down and had a little break for biscuits – but the weather wasn't very accomodating as the wind picked up. There were 2 Common Blues having a scrap, a couple of Small Heath and Meadow Browns and a Dark Green Fritillary.



Once snack was over we had a bit more of a wander and then eventually ended up back at Hanham Hill where we had our picnic lunch. There were one or two Small Heath, Meadow Brown and a Brimstone. Still no Silver Spotted Skipper – so I'll have to make a trip back here or to Stockbridge – but I did find one of my target species – a female Chalkhill Blue.



My older daughter receives a visitor



Once lunch was over we worked out back down the hill accompanied by various whites and browns and joined by a Small Copper near the car park on the path. As I gave my wife a break during the morning I thought that perhaps I'll might have been able to blag a break that afternoon... 😊



This little fella waved us off...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

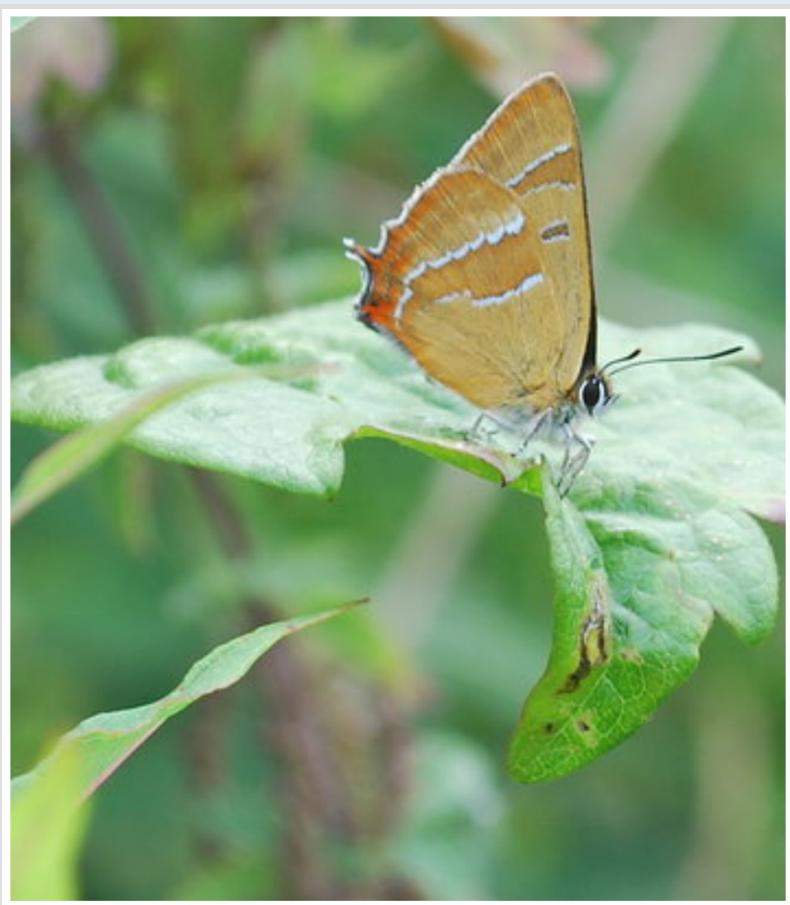
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-11 05:08 AM GMT

Having thought that I might have been able to blag an afternoon free I was quite surprised when I was actually able to – it seems that the White Letter Hairstreak has been accepted as a happy accident 😊

So girls deposited in the garden and my wifes purchases perused, weather checked and found to be warm and sunny, I headed out to Shipton Bellinger to try my luck for Brown Hairstreak (the mighty Alan having already been successful). Once there I strolled up the track to the hedge and for a change wandered up the right hand side. Gatekeepers were about in good numbers and were very distracting when caught out of the corner of your eye – flitting by all orange and brown. There were also Speckled Woods and Green Veined Whites present.

Once at the top I tried round the corner and found Meadow Browns and a female Brimstone. I noticed another couple and tried the trick of "any luck" and as we got chatting I found out that I'd met Clive and Shirley – my first "meet" with people from the website! They then very kindly asked me to join them in checking out the spot where they'd found a male earlier and when we got there it was back – a clean, honeyed looking male. A cracking little critter and well happy with that! 😊





We then worked our way to another local hot spot and here were BH there – at least 2 maybe 3 but the spot made photography really difficult. 😞 Once back along the hedge there were 2 Holly Blue, a Comma and Gatekeepers and Browns all the way back.

It was great meeting up with Clive and Shirley and thank you to them for pleasant company and the Brown Hairstreak! 😊

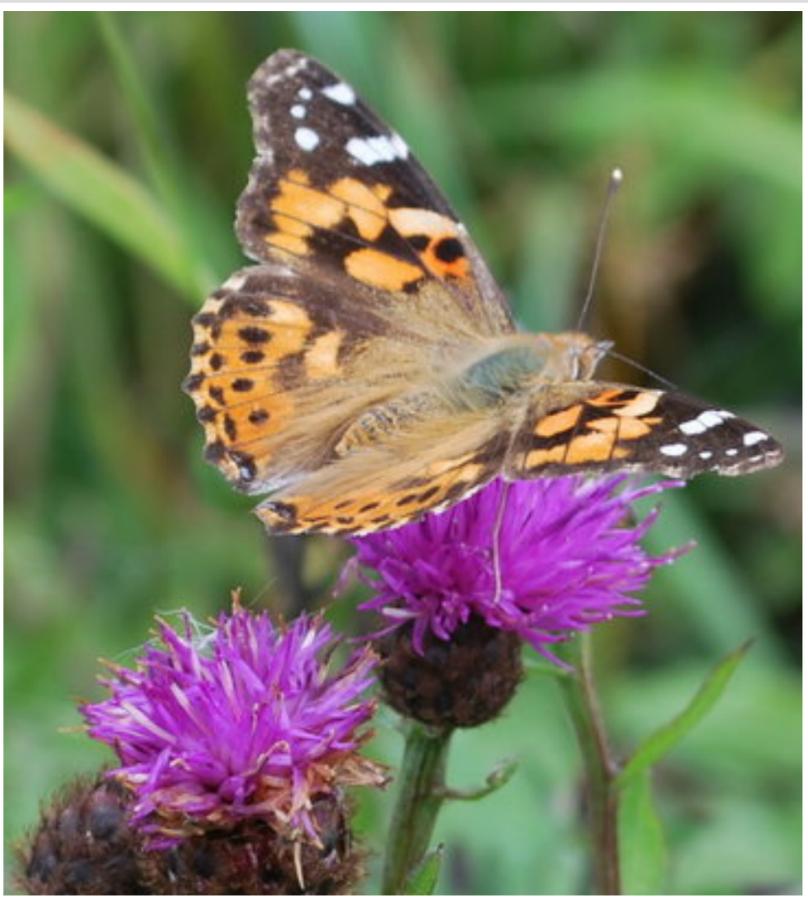
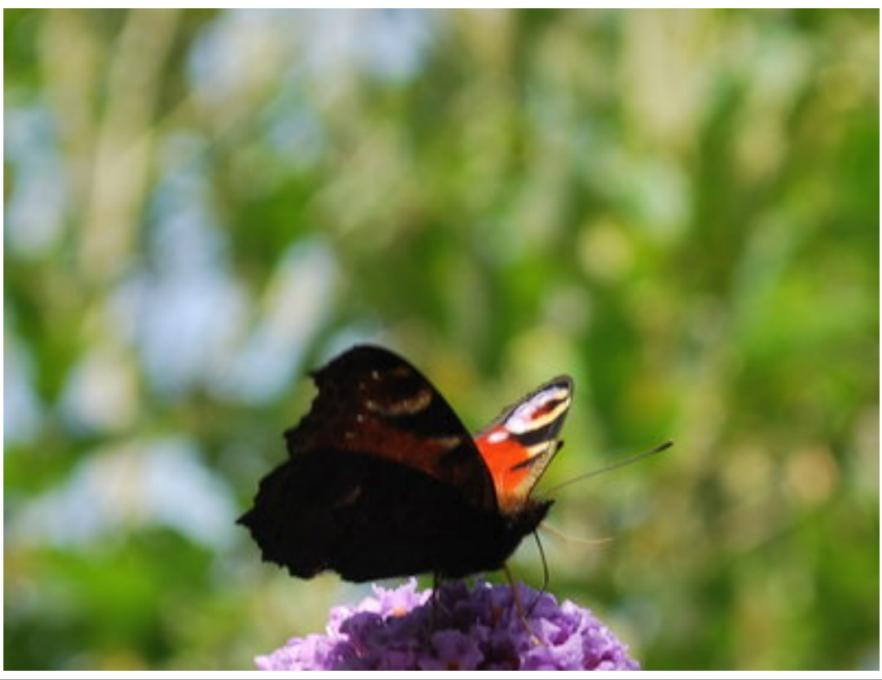
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-11 04:43 AM GMT

Finally back after a few days with the in-laws in Wales. My in-laws live near to Aberaeron which would have been great if it had been April/May as there's a very good site for Marsh Fritillary – but in August there isn't too much about. Still made the most of the sun while it shone and wandered up and down the lane a few times. There were Gatekeepers a plenty all showing a range of spotting from none to very many and lots of flighty whites. I also managed to take a family stroll along the old railway line that runs alongside the Aeron towards Llanachaeron. Up through the woods there were Speckled Woods and the odd Green Veined White. In one of the breaks there was a large Buddleia which held a Comma, a Red Admiral and 3 Peacocks. Further up the woods opened out into a couple of small fields on either side of the track. There were thistles and Knapweed a plenty but barbed wire prevented close up shots of the vanessids and whites that were around. Luckily one butterfly decided to feed right up close to the fence and as I gingerly approached it revealed itself to be a Painted Lady – my first and only so far this year! 😊



Once back I ambled round the garden and happily watched Speckies having a scrap, Holly Blues flitting around just out of reach and a very obliging Small Tortoiseshell.



All very pleasant and restful – but my feet are itching to get back onto the chalk for those blues, hairstreaks and skippers!
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-11 04:48 AM GMT

I decided that the weather wasn't good enough for my first time visits (Stockbridge Down or Alners Gorse) and hopefully Thursday stays as good as it looks, so instead took a few hours out at Martin Down. I strolled along from the Sillens Lane car park towards Borkerkley Dyke and there wasn't an awful lot about – a few Meadow Browns and the odd white that decided to risk a mauling by the blustery wind, as well as a plucky little male Smessex that got dropped of briefly in the middle of the path.

Things weren't looking good but I was hoping to find some blues at the hot spot where the path transects Borkerley. And blues I did indeed find. First up were an Adonis and Chalkhill that landed for a brief pause in their dogfight. Then there were Meadow Browns setting off Common Blue males that would spook some Chalkhills. Then everything would hunker down while the wind ripped down the ditch before starting up once again when the sun peeked out from the clouds and the wind died back a little.



Two males (Chalkhill and Adonis) take a moment...



Male Adonis



Male Chalkhill closed wing



Male Chalkhill posing for an identification guide

This theme continued up the hill all the way along the ditch with the odd Brown Argus, White or Gatekeeper getting involved in the fray. A Peacock and 2 Dark Green Fritillary put in an appearance but nothing messed with them apart from the plucky little Brown Argus!



Plucky little devil

About half way up the wind died down a bit and I found the females – Adonis, Common Blue and Chalkhills. While I watched one female Chalkill she fluttered amongst to males, landed and then gently fluttered her wings, in what I thought was, invitation. One of the males seemed interested at first and became a blue blur around her, but then he swooped in a forced her from the perch. This happened 4 times, and then the female seemed to give up and went and hid under some larger leaves! 😊



Quick get Barry White on, dim the lights...



Don't worry it's not you...

Having reached the top of the down I worked my way along and down to Hanham Hill but no luck again with the Silver Spots – it felt warm enough but perhaps it wasn't, or perhaps it was too windy? Oh well got to leave something for Stockbridge 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-11 03:40 AM GMT

I was on family duty today – but as always I took my camera just in case! My wofe and I took or girls to "Flowers of Hatch" near Tisbury. Almost didn't get there as my Sat Nav decided to send me up a farmers track and then an ox drove! Once we did manage to find the farm we had a cracking morning. You start of by a bunting strewn shed at the top of the field where you pick up scissors and a bucket and then you stroll around the "wildflowers" helping yourself and poppingthem in the bucket. I was more interested in the large area of thistles at the bottom of the field where there wasa Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and at least 4 male Common Blue. There were also whites around and I manged to get a shot of what I think is a small white as well as a cracking Small Copper.





From there we headed across Fovant to Sixpenny Handley to my dad's allotment. It was tempting to have a quick look in at Garston – but if I play my cards right today and keep butterflies on the down-low I should be able to get out tomorrow on my own 😊 Once there we had a picnic before setting to work digging 4 rows of spuds (Pentland Javelin and Wija for the potato enthusiasts – I'm sure there must be some out there! 😊). Over the lunch there were a few fly-bys from a Red Admiral; Gatekeeper and Small Tortoiseshell nectared up in a small patch of herbs but the whites provided the entertainment. One of the plots was obviously into cabbages in a big way, with 2 thirds dedicated to the brassica! The whole plot was well weeded and surrounded by netting. But this didn't stop the whites, they just flew into it and then squeezed through, and then had a little party in there – presumably safe from their predators! When we left; sweat on the brow, hands dirty and boot laden down with many kilos of spuds; there were at least 7 whites all in the net 😊 I did feel sorry for the growers really... 😞



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-11 05:00 AM GMT

Keeping the butterflies on the down-low yesterday worked so I was allowed out today over lunch 😎. The weather felt warm so I headed to Stockbridge Down for the first time. By the time I got there it wasn't as warm and very windy. Ahhhh what is it with me trying for Silver Spotted Skipper 😞? Still there was a new site to explore and Chalkhills all over the place. Found a good little place half way up the path where the hedge provided a wind break. Sat down and waited and they came to me. Managed to find one two aberrants...



Female arcuata



Female arcuata



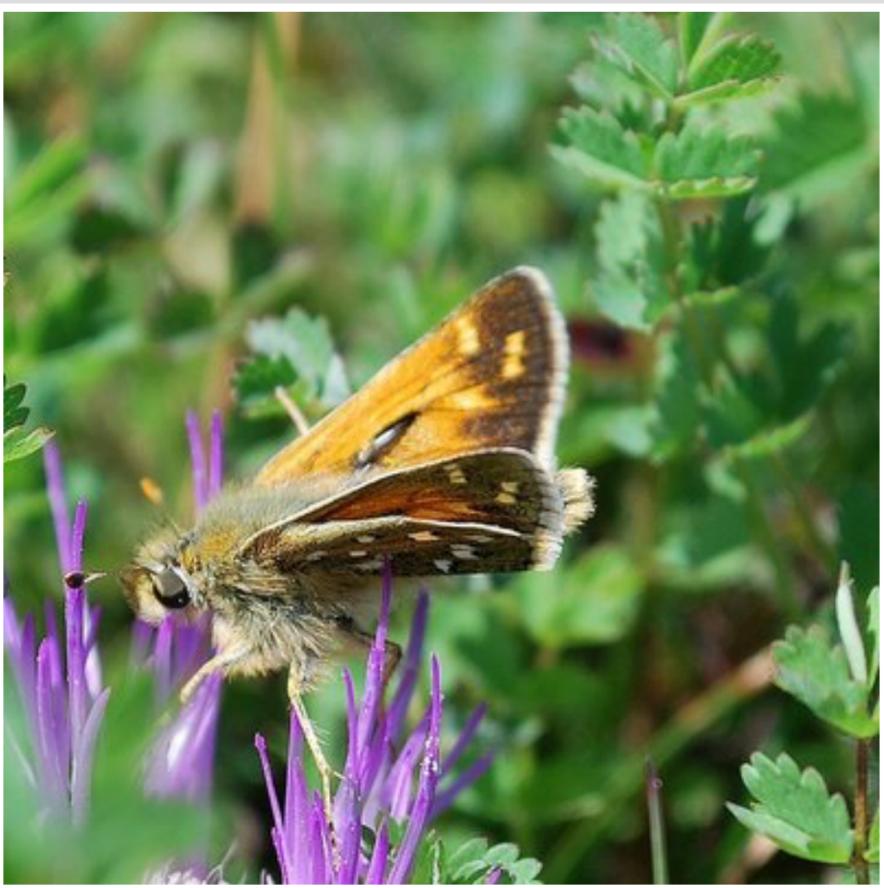
What is going on with the antennae - one is huge!



Male post-obsolata

Then had a look around and discovered how big the site actually is, some earthworks, a small wooded area and plenty of short turfed downland. There were Meadow Browns and Gatekeeper, Common Blues and even a Chalkhill up the woodland area. A Dark Green Fritillary headed by looking a bit tatty whereas the Small Copper I saw looked very fresh and dapper, as did the Brown Argus that I eventually managed to find sitting still for once!

But there were still no skippers! I'd spent 2 hours looking and even the company of the Whitearses (Wheatears 😊) was starting to wane. As is so often the way I was doing the slow walk back to the car park when I spied one. Well actually it almost hit me in the face like a bullet due to the tail wind! 😲 Then there was another at the edge of the path which sat still enough for a photo or two, and another that was sitting in the middle of the path and almost ended up with a Merrel tread print across its abdomen. Luckily it flew and I managed to follow it to where it landed and then I clicked away in the hope that some shots would come out as the wind was really blowing now and on the exposed hillside the nectaring butterfly was rocking forward and backward insanely.



Looks like the luck of a new site paid off – I'll be back here next year I think! 😊 So now there's female Brown Hairstreak and then I guess I'll dig out the old telescope and get back to the birding – unless there are some late Wall's knocking around? 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps Cheers to Piers for the identification of the aberrants! 😊

Re: Wurzel

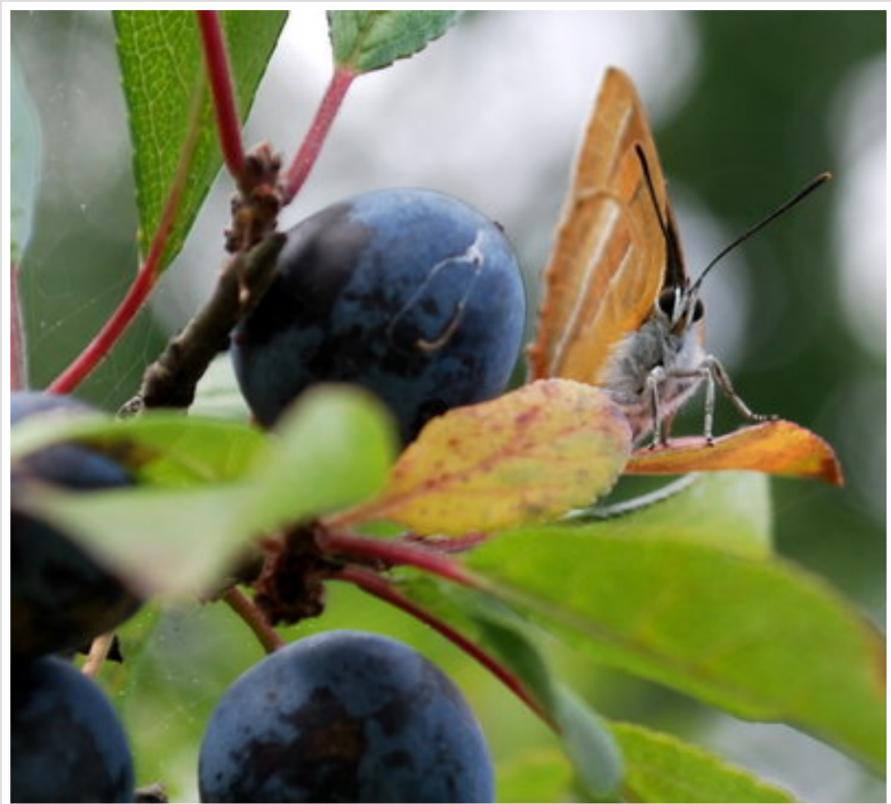
by Wurzel, 16-Aug-11 04:46 AM GMT

Today was a day of firsts...I decided that having been in since last week (shudder) it was time to get out there again and try to blag a female Brown Hairstreak - I've already managed a male but why not be greedy 😊

The first "first" of the day was the actual site - Alners Gorse. Thanks to Zonda 😊 for some simple directions that made my visit really easy. This really is a cracking reserve, nice gentle walk, loads of good habitat and some real crackers of butterflies 😊. Started off strolling down the hill noting plenty of activity along the hedges. Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns aplenty, a few whites around and various shades of Speckled Woods (some really fresh, others on their last legs!). Following the advice I turned left at the bottom and checked out ever thistle on the way. The last couple of times I've been after the Brostreak I've almost given myself a headache staring high up into the branches or analysing the brambles so to look for the contrast of orange against purple made it much easier. I certainly paid off as by the time I'd reached the gate I'd found my first female 😊. She seemed to have had enough nectar and decided to have a break and so headed for the safety of a bush but I managed to follow and relocate her.



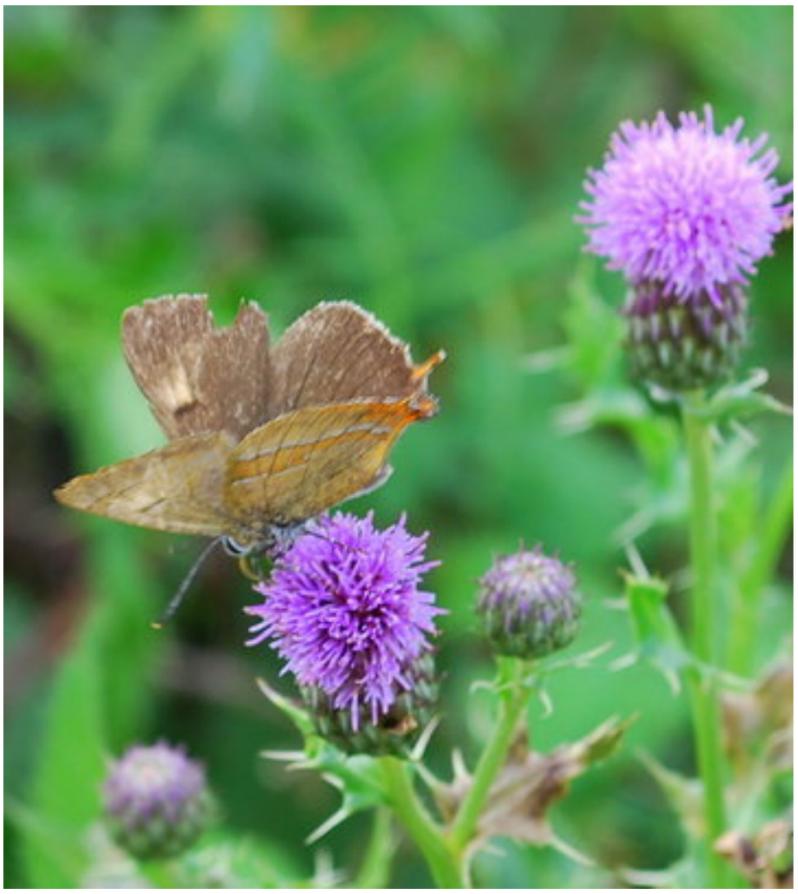
First of the day



You can't hide there!



I then spent the next hour just wandering up and down the hedge from the gate to the large bramble bush at the bottom of the approach path. It was here that I got another first – a male that decided to flash me his wings 😊 He was a bit tatty but allowances can be made so long as he's been involved in providing some photo subjects for me next year 😊



Tatty old male – hopefully this is a sign that he's been hard at work...

Back down at the gate I found another tatty old male. The fact that he is still around seemd to be because of the confusion caused by his tails – which he was lacking!



Male – it seems the "tails" might confuse predators

After this I thought that I should have a look around to see what else the Gorse has to offer. So far it had felt very autumnal with all the butterflies being brown and orange in colour – but we're in summer (just) so I sought out some more colour. I managed to find a Purple Hairstreak, a Red Admiral, a couple of Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshell as well as a couple fo Smessex Skippers and at least 4 male Common Blues which brightened the day up to match the warming sun. From the edge I wandered back along the main path winding my way back to the first hedge and the gate. Something caught my eye...far too yellow to be a White, too yellow to be a Brimstone and as it flew towards me at head height I could make out the black tips and edges to the forewings. A clouded Yellow 😊 well I hadn't expected that today...to be honest I hadn't expected to see one ever really! I watched it land and then overcame the urge to catch a photo, letting it settle. As I clicked away I hoped that it would open it's wings but it seemed that it wasn't going too and was adamant that it wasn't going anywhere else!



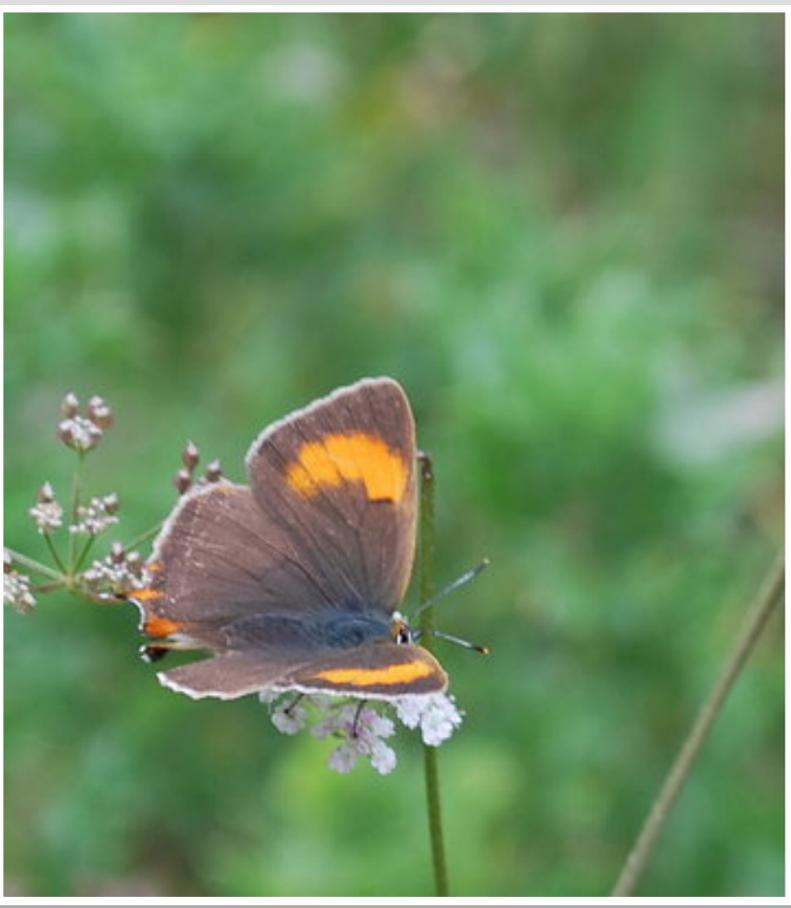
Surprise of the day



Shock over and another first, I headed back to the gate and had my lunch (lime and chilli pickle this time with cucumber ends and tomatoes from the garden) and wait for the sun to come back out. When it did I found a few more males and one or two more females. I clicked away almost in a daze having got the yellow...



Pristine female



Open wing female



One last shot...

This really is an amazing site – even without my "tick" from today – and I'll be back here again.

That could well be it for this year 😞 – unless I can find a good site for Wall in this locale, but if it is then what a way to go – out with a bang! 😎
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Hulme, 16-Aug-11 05:01 AM GMT

Nice one Wurzel – happy days 😊 . Next time try to get your Brown Hairstreak to actually sit on a sloe.... I've been waiting for years. Lovely specimen of Clouded Yellow.

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 16-Aug-11 05:50 AM GMT

Lovely Hairstreak, and splendid Clouded Yellow – I haven't seen one for nearly two years (but that time there were hundreds...)

You commented: "...I hoped that it would open it's wings but it seemed that it wasn't going to..." I'm afraid you could wait for a very long time. That really would be a once in a lifetime shot!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-11 03:50 PM GMT

Cheers for your comments Dave and Neil! I reckon that I can get a Brostreak on a Sloe next year and a nice open wing shot of the the Clouded Yellow then as well – ever the optimist – or is that fantasist 😂 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 16-Aug-11 10:57 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

a nice open wing shot of the the Clouded Yellow

To the best of my knowledge, Clouded Yellow never open their wings at rest, so you'll have to get an in-flight shot! This is a crop from a very distant shot I took a few years ago.



BBOWT Bix reserve, nr. Henley - August 2004

Incidentally, Brimstones are also said not to open their wings at rest but they do occasionally when courting.

Good luck!
Mike

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 16-Aug-11 11:23 PM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

To the best of my knowledge, Clouded Yellow never open their wings at rest, so you'll have to get an in-flight shot! This is a crop from a very distant shot I took a few years ago.

Good spot that, Wurzel. Clouded Yellows are always a highly pleasant bonus.

Mike, what kind of shutter speed do you need to get butterflies in flight without blurring?

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 17-Aug-11 12:54 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

what kind of shutter speed do you need to get butterflies in flight without blurring?

For that CY shot, I used 1/1,000s @ f/5.6 with my 300mm lens. If possible, I would recommend at least 1/2000s, which is just about sufficient for dragonflies as well. Nowadays, for in-flight shots, I set my lens wide open and select aperture-priority mode on the camera. This ensures maximum possible shutter speed for the conditions. If the light isn't too good, then I increase the ISO setting, to maintain the necessary shutter speed.

In practice, I find that maintaining sharp focus is a bigger problem than shutter speed, when a butterfly is moving randomly amongst foliage. The focus, in my CY shot, is actually on the flowers in front of the butterfly, and the softness of the butterfly is very apparent if I enlarge the photo! I took that photo on my, then, newly acquired Nikon D70 but it was inadequate AF performance that eventually led me to buy a D300s. The much more sophisticated AF system, in cameras like the D3/D300/D7000, shows its advantage in these tricky situations, when these cameras have an uncanny ability to lock onto the subject as it moves through distracting objects.

(sorry, Wurzel, if I've hi-jacked your personal diary but I hope you will find this helpful too, when you are on the hunt!)

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-11 03:35 AM GMT

Cheers for your comments David and Mike 😊

Mike wrote "sorry, Wurzel, if I've hi-jacked your personal diary but I hope you will find this helpful too, when you are on the hunt!" No worries for the hi-jack I always feel that if a question is asked it's great to get an answer wherever! Also it will be something that I'll be having a go at if I can actually work my way round the tech stuff – boy I've got a lot to learn 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 17-Aug-11 04:55 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cheers for your comments David and Mike 😊

Mike wrote "sorry, Wurzel, if I've hi-jacked your personal diary but I hope you will find this helpful too, when you are on the hunt!" No worries for the hi-jack I always feel that if a question is asked it's great to get an answer wherever! Also it will be something that I'll be having a go at if I can actually work my way round the tech stuff – boy I've got a lot to learn 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Me too, but I guess now's the time to experiment given that the season is coming to an end.

Thanks for the info, Mike. Much appreciated.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Aug-11 03:38 AM GMT

On Tuesday I took all the girls to Mottisfont. After we'd fed the fish (Grayling, Brown Trout and one or two sneaky Perch) and been round the house and looked at the Flower Fairy exhibition we headed to the Walled Garden. Having been dull and cool all morning now the sun came out and it rapidly heated up, good timing eh 😊

The gardens held an assortment of Whites as well as singles of Holly Blue, Comma, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood and strangely Meadow Brown (obviously a bit lost!). I decided that, Orange Tips aside, Whites were something that I hadn't really concentrated on this year so I then spent the next hour wandering backward and forward, leaning over box hedges and rushing up to bushes only to watch my quarry flitting off into the blue. Still I managed to get one or two shots of both males and females of three whites, I think 😊 I've been burnt over identification at this site before but here goes...

First up I went for Large White females due to the heavier darker markings that show through from the upper surface of the fore wings and also as they were massive compared to the other whites flying around!



Large female



Large female

Then the male Large White as I managed to get a sneak peak of the open wings – well defined black tips with no spotting on the upperwings



Large male

From there to the Green Veined White with the green veins on the underside of the hind wings, a female first then a male (less spotting on upper wings)



Green Veined female



Green Veined male

Finally the Small White, I always find this one the most confusing as the wing tips can appear to be like the Green Veined – more diffuse and less well defined and other times they can appear quite dark like a Large, and if they have their wings closed then I really do get stuck. I usually then wait for them to open their wings or fly! First was the female which displayed a different jizz to the other whites, spending more time in the foliage, but I told this one by the size and also by the patterning of spots while it had its wings open 😊. The male has slightly more diffuse, less defined black tips and only one spot on the upper fore wing.



Small female



Small male

On the way back to the car we dawdled along the stream so the girls could have a little paddle and an aged Silver Washed Fritillary made a brief appearance before a Holly Blue got up in his grill!

When we got back home this little critter turned up, I have no idea what it was, but my wife vacuumed it! 🤪



What is this?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps If I've made an error in identification then let me know, be gentle though please 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 19-Aug-11 07:01 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

When we got back home this little critter turned up, I have no idea what it was, but my wife vacuumed it!

Looks to me like a false Widow, *Steatoda nobilis* from the shape and the 'messy web'. Originally from the Canary Islands I'm aware that it is becoming an increasingly common spider, often turning up nowadays inside our house as well as outside. It is also known as the biting spider as it reputedly capable of giving a painful bite. Best not let the kids handle this one.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-11 05:00 AM GMT

Cheers Philzoid! Good job the wife did vacuum it then 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-11 05:58 AM GMT

As the rain clouds had finally drifted off somewhere else I took the family out for the day – so we headed off to Cholderton Rare Breeds farm. I took my camera more for family photos than butterflies – but well you never know (Shipton Bellinger is just down the road and perhaps I might find a previously undiscovered Brostreak site 😊)?

There were a few wilder areas amongst the barns and the pig racetrack and I would slip off too these in between goat feeding, chick handling and piglet wrestling. Throughout the morning I managed to see a Comma, various Whites and a Holly Blue as well as a Meadow Brown with 2 pupils in its "eye".



Two pupils

It was after lunch when the sun burnt through the clouds and the girls having seen, petted and maimed all the animals, that I managed to leave them on the bouncy castle and trampolines and have a proper mooch around. First up was the path leading up to the house, hedges on either side allowed views of Red Admiral, various whites including a Brimstone and a flitting Holly Blue.



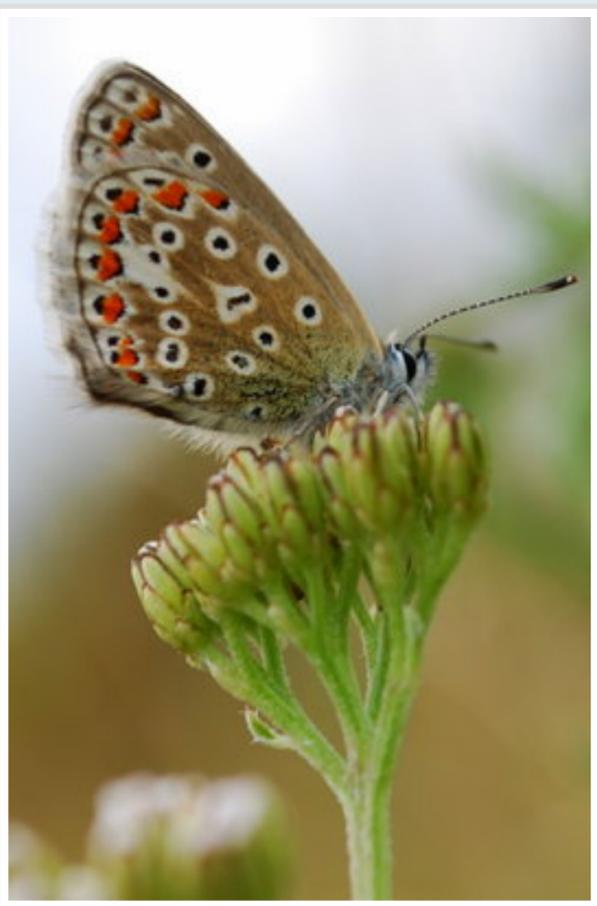
The "back garden" with its pond had a cracking dragonfly and a very blue female Common Blue.



not sure - need to read up on dragonflies



I then walked up to the edge of the farm, past the Donkey to the dung heap which was a great place for butterflies – probably because it was left alone. Here there were 3 male Common Blue and another, more brown female, a couple of Meadow brown, 2 Gatekeepers and again more whites.





I got called back my wife and we decided it was time to go as my younger daughter was busy "making angels" in the sand pit! 😊
Look like going out with a whimper rather than the hoped for bang 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-11 05:09 AM GMT

I had family duties over the weekend as well as work to do and this morning I had itchy feet. I was supposed to take my wife shopping but she very kindly agreed to postpone it and I was off like a shot. 😊

I headed back to Stockbridge Down as I wasn't happy with my Silver Spotted Skipper shots from my last visit due to the blessed wind and today it was much calmer and warmer. Having arrived I wandered down the track that runs parallel to the road and there were Meadow Brown and Small Heath everywhere. Amongst the various whites was a Small Tort and a Brimstone. Everything was more approachable – perhaps because I'd arrived at 10:30 so they were still heating up? Still even if I can't fathom the why it made photographing much easier!



As the grass and flowers thinned out I became more aware of the blues. Almost all were tatty looking male and female Chalkhills but there was a fresh looking, second brood Adonis Blue.

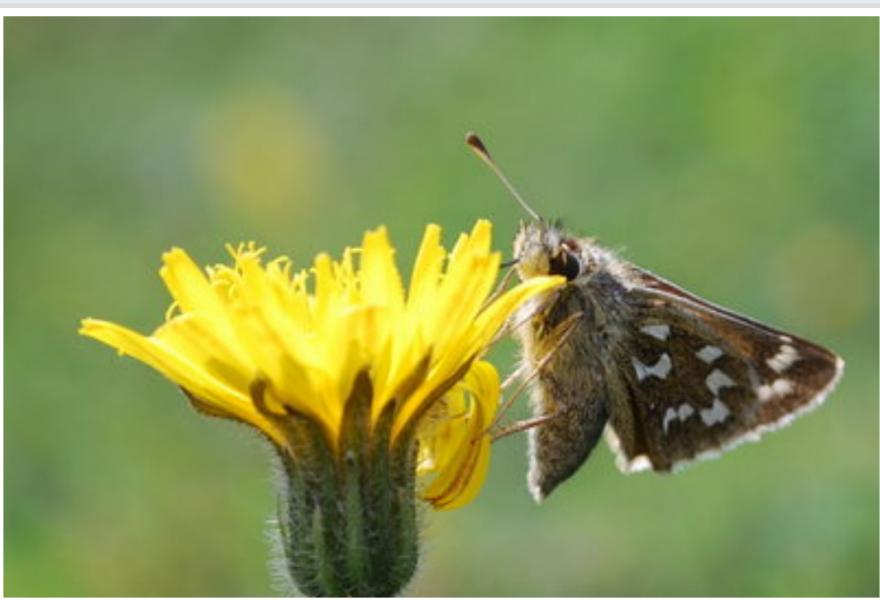


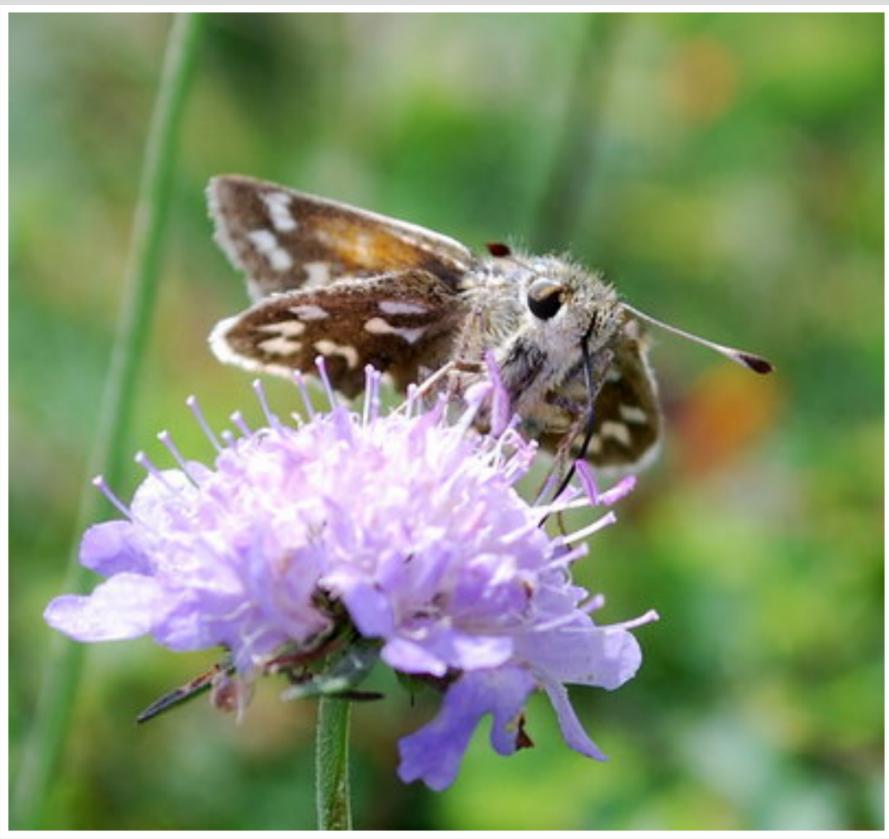
Chalkhill



Adonis

It was now warming up nicely and the Chalkhills were fluttering low to the ground and barely stopping so I strolled for a bit in the sun. I ended up on the track where I'd found the Silver Spots last time and low and behold there was another. And another. And another. And another. I couldn't believe it! 🤪 Last time I spent hours wandering forward and back, looking in all the likely looking places with no joy and today I can't move for fear of trampling them! 😊 While I clicked away I noticed the colour of the antennae – almost cherry red which contrasted with the white face.





Once I'd drunk my fill of these charismatic little charmers I headed back towards the car park with a slight detour for this years second Painted Lady. Although she wasn't very painted, in fact she was more tatty than the Chalkhills. 😊
Have a goodun

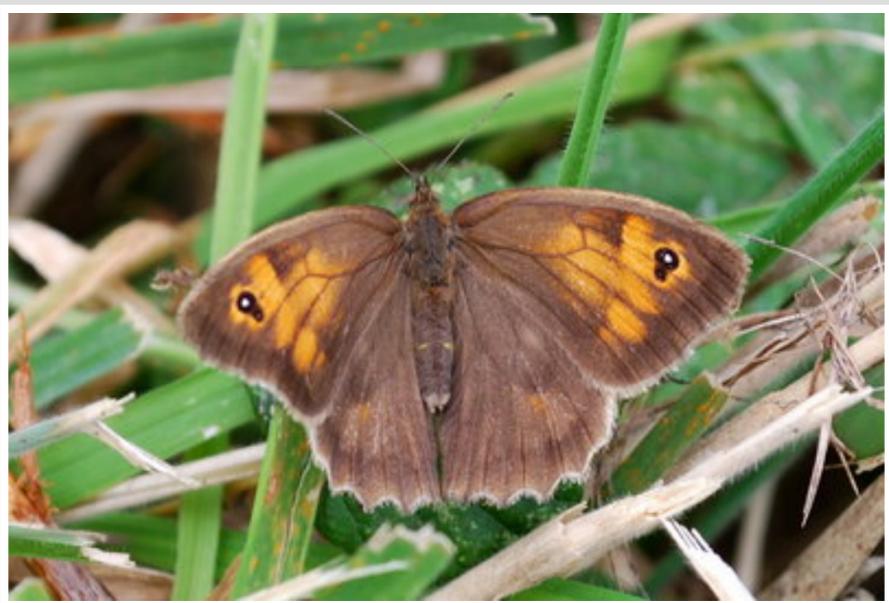
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-11 05:19 AM GMT

Yesterday I finally got round to visiting Keyhaven for Wall Brown. The weather wasn't looking that good (all cloud and cool) but my wife forced me to go out so that I wouldn't embarrass her when her friends and their children came over. I don't know whether that is a good thing...but hey it might be something worth considering more in the future! 😊

Once I arrived I set off down the back path towards the small soak away come pond area where Wall Brown have been seen in the past. It still didn't feel very warm and butterflies were few and far between. There were a couple of Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood and a single white. A bit disappointing really - it felt really autumnal with some leaves already turned over and many more Blackberries than flowers.





Around the coastal side I reached the gate where one path dived down to the same level as the lagoons and settled down for a coffee. As usual I'd just taken my first sip when something orange caught my attention. At first from a distance it reminded me off a lueistic Tortoiseshell (is it called lutea?) but then I realised that it was what I'd driven through bl**dy Lyndhurst for – a Wall Brown, and a female which I haven't photographed before. However I just couldn't get close. I watched it for a while to see if it would settle, but it would land for about 4 seconds, then fly, land for 4 seconds, fly etc etc. Eventually I realised that if I was to get a shot I'd have to watch, stalk and then try and get off as many shots as possible in 4 seconds, and then hope that one would turn out okay. The results I got were pretty rubbish – but to prove that I actually did see it, here is a rubbish shot or two.



Sadly it continued in this fashion and worked it's way over the fence and go further and further away. I settled down to see if it would return and as there was a dearth of Butterflies dug out my scope – Greenshanks, Knot, 3 Curlew Sandpiper, Grey plover in almost full breeding plumage, Curlew, Dunlin, Little Stint, Redshanks, Bar-Wit, Kingfisher and on the nearby Gorse; Whinchat, Stonechat, Redstart, Dartford Warbler, 2 Whitethroat and a small group of argumentative Meadow Pipt. It was really strange I felt like a traitor 😬 Still sitting round wasn't going to get me any more Walls so I did four or five lengths of the path below the sea wall and back to no avail. Time up I head home enjoying 3 Small Heath on the way



I know the conditions weren't exactly right but it just felt like the end 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 01-Sep-11 05:54 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Nice report and I'm glad you saw your Wall even if you didn't get the shot you wanted ... next time!

"Wurzel" wrote:

my wife forced me to go out so that I wouldn't embarrass her when her friends and their children came over

Are you married to my wife? 😊 (sorry I've nicked your smile).

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-11 05:41 AM GMT

Yesterday was my last day of the holiday so I took the family to Stourhead for the day. It felt very autumnal again and some of the leaves have already turned. During the walk around the gardens I really struggled to find butterflies. I was managing to get shots of other wildlife but not butterflies. There were a couple of dragon and damselflies, my first ever Scorpion fly (they are really weird looking things 😲) as well as what I think are Purple Heron because of the brown colouration 😊. What surprised me most was what I think are Chrocuses in flower? 😊



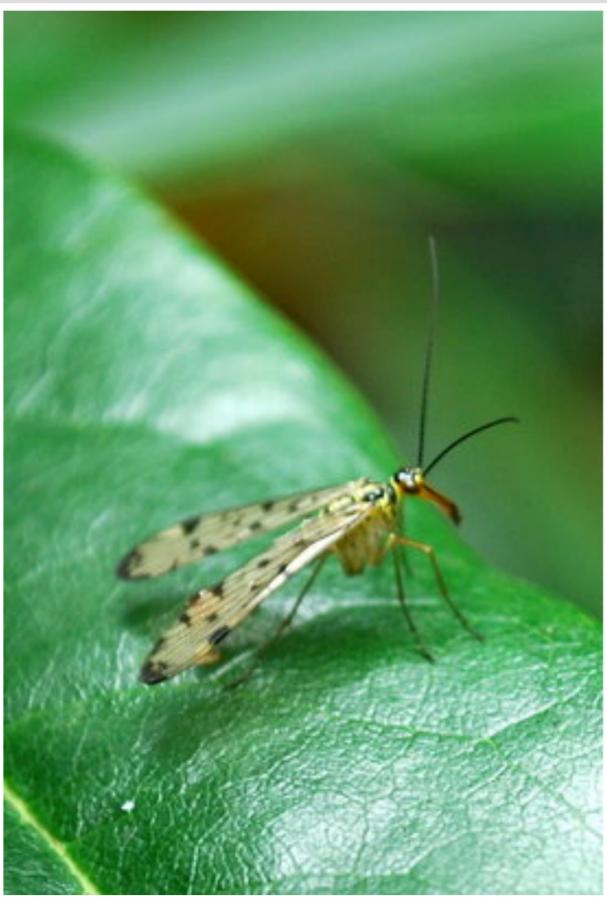
Wolf Spider?



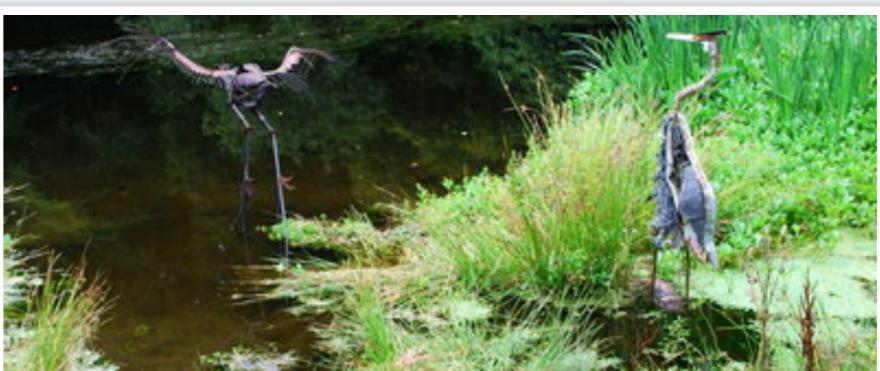
?Female Keeled orthethrum?



?Common Blue Damselfly or *Orthetrum coerulescens*?



Scorpion Fly



The brown plumage suggests Purple Heron!



Should this be in flower?

Finally having walked round for about an hour we had lunch and by then it must of got warm enough because there were one or two species around. A Speckled Wood (I got a photo as I wouldn't have felt right posting this on a butterfly site with no butterflies in sight 😊), a few whites (too far away to differentiate) and a Red Admiral was the entire tally for the day!



Finally a butterfly!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 02-Sep-11 05:45 AM GMT

There are crocus which flowers in the autumn, Wurzel 😊 I've had cyclamen out here for a couple of weeks as well.

Re: Wurzel

by EricY, 02-Sep-11 11:20 PM GMT

Wurzel, autumn crocus are called "Colchicum's" several varieties, this is probably autumnale. The national collection of them containing 30-40 varieties is at NT's Felbig hall in Norfolk. Eric

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 03-Sep-11 03:18 AM GMT

The colloquial name for Colchicums is "Naked Ladies" (no leaves) so be careful what you tell your wife that you have been photographing!

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-11 05:49 AM GMT

Thanks for the info – I suppose I thought it was unusual due to the stereotype effect – in my mind Crocus bloom after Snowdrops and before Daffs, and so to see an autumnal variety just threw me. Cheers for the heads up Mike – I didn't share their common name with my wife – so strife and the doghouse avoided 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Brian Anderson, 08-Sep-11 12:55 AM GMT

Wurzel, forgive the note on your page but i saw your comments on the Glaucous Gull at Dungeness. Just thought i'd let you know that this bird is almost guaranteed on a trip to the fishing boat area. (near the observatory) It's been there for months and shows no sign of moving on (i think it has trouble with the tail feathers preventing a long flight...but that's just my pheory)

Anyway if you can find time to get down there and find a group of gulls on the shingle around the fishing boats....sitting on the fringe of that group will be the Glauc.

Hope it helps you get one your after. 😊 (and the reserve always makes the trip worth while too)

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Sep-11 04:57 AM GMT

Cheers for the info Brian! 😊 Unfortunately living in Salisbury I don't know if I can justify the massive drive there to see it, 😞 hopefully one will turn up nearer here and then someone will give as much helpful info as you have 😊

Cheers and have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-11 06:12 AM GMT

Neil and others have already commented on how autumnal it now feels – leaves turning and falling, spiders joining me to watch New Tricks or CSI and the nights drawing in. All this is reflected in the what feels like, huge amount of time since my last post – I've almost forgotten how to do it!

Today I saw a Small Tortoiseshell and a couple of White butterflies as I flew home (never rush to work – save that for the journey home 😊) and that's it...when I got back there was one Small White in the garden and it's all a bit depressing really 😞 Tomorrow I'm off to an apple festival so perhaps there will be a few butterflies drunk and sheltering from the rain? If not that really could be it this year...

Still I'll console myself with looking back and looking forward and also trying out a bit of Bathroom Entemology – cheers Mark great idea – however I haven't got a clue what I'm looking at so any ideas greatly appreciated...they were taken in my hall does that count? 😊



I always thought these were Wolf Spiders but are they jumping spiders?



Moff - don't know what - do know it was a good job I had a clean t-shirt on!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 10-Sep-11 06:29 AM GMT

yes to jumping spider, salticus scenicus and i'd say square spot rustic for the moth.

Chris

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-11 06:48 AM GMT

Cheers Chris for the id's 😊 I'll have to bite the bullet and buy a Moth book and set up a Moth folder for my Moff shots...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-11 05:57 AM GMT

I spent yesterday lunchtime at the Waldorf Shop in Ringwood. With mixed weather I wasn't surprised by the lack of butterflies – not one seen until the journey home (a couple of whites along the verges in Breamore). So while my wife perused the books and gifts I headed out and settled down to try and get some Bees and flies. At first I found them very frustrating as they don't stay still when nectaring and then just as you're in position they bu**er off to another flower! Once I'd sussed that I clicked away as quickly as I could and then hoped that something good would come out.

Once home the problem was identifying what I had photographed. As the girls were with Nanny and Dad Dad I pulled out all my books with information about Bees and Hoverflies...a very small collection of tomes numbering three. I used "The Natural History of Britain and Northern Europe" by Denis Owen, the "Towns and Gardens" edition as well as "Fields and Lowlands" from the same collection; and also Field Guide to the Butterflies and Other Insects of Britain part of the Readers Digest Nature Lover's Library.

Identification guides at the ready, coffee brewed I set down to some serious identification. It was a quite satisfying feeling to immerse myself in this new world – but the guides not being the best I'm sure there may be errors, hopefully less than the number of species I couldn't identify! As usual any help is greatly appreciated!

First up the not sures...



help needed with id



this was much smaller than the Bombus/carder bee below – different species or same but smaller?



not a clue...

And this could be a Carder Bee – although the images in the "tomes" show it like a ball of ginger fluff!



Bombus species - carder bee?

Here are some more bees that I think I indentified...



Bombus lucorum



Honey Bee - Apis mellifera

So tomorrow the flies...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-11 05:21 AM GMT

So to part 2...welcome back!

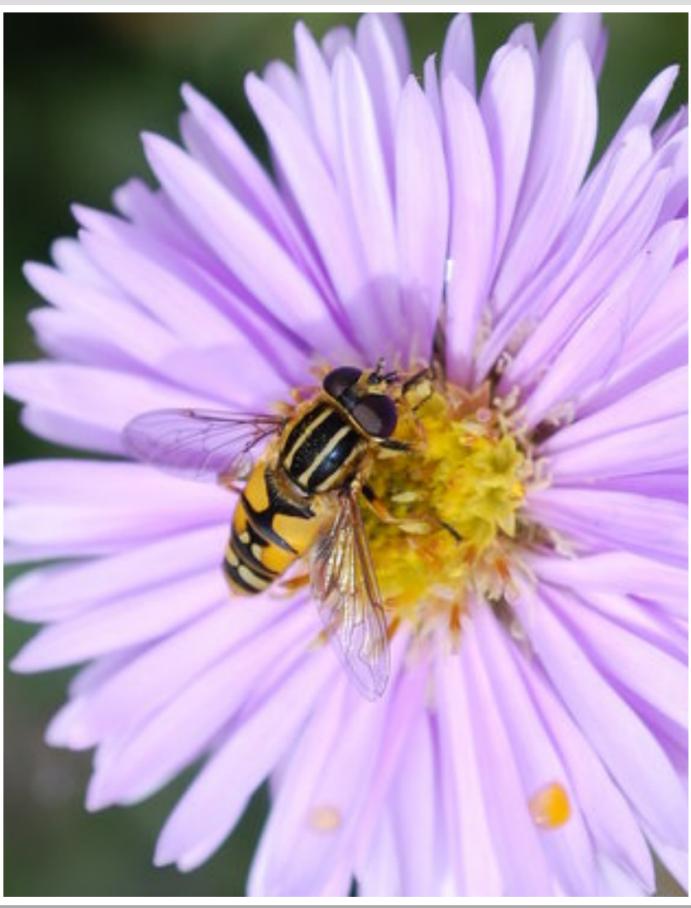
On Saturday during a dearth of butterflies I took some time to photograph various bees and flies. Having spent an engrossing hour or two trying to identify them using a very limited number of texts my girls returned from their grandparents so I had to call it a day. I was happy that I managed to identify most of the species but almost all are as close as I could get with the books that I had so feel free to point out any mistakes. I know a bad workman blames his tools - but I don't think that that holds if you ain't got any tools fullstop 😊



Dronefly - Eristalis tenax



? *Hoverfly - Episyrphus balteatus* ?



Sunfly – *Helophilus pendulus*



? Common sympetrum – *Sympetrum striolatum* ?

I'm eagerly awaiting my new lens so hopefully I might be able to get out next weekend to start getting to grips with it!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 20-Sep-11 05:33 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I'm not too good on bees or hoverflies but 2 web bookmarks i have are <http://www.hoverfly.org.uk/> <http://www.bwars.com/Gallery.htm> All the best
Chris

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-11 06:13 AM GMT

I've got those links on my favourites now cheers Chris they look really useful, I'm off to have a look now...

Cheers again

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-11 06:24 AM GMT

The BWARS site is great – that Bombus species I thought was a carder bee is actually *Bombus humilis*...I'm off to check out the Hoverflies now...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 23-Sep-11 04:04 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Just had a look at your hoverfly pictures ... nice work!

The first picture from your post of Sunday, 18th September is *Eristalis tenax*, the drone fly (Syrphidae). The third picture is another species of *Eristalis* but not *tenax*, I would have to see a specimen to id it. Just to complicate matters, it should be noted that markings are variable within the genus. If I get time I'll have a look at some of the others.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 24-Sep-11 01:45 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

As promised, I have just taken a look at your hoverfly pictures from your post of Monday, 19th September.

The first one you have a query on, which you have tentatively identified as *Episyrphus balteatus*, is a *Syrphus* not *Episyrphus*, though I cannot identify it 100% without the specimen. The last one is *Helophilus pendulus* as you have already said.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Sep-11 05:47 AM GMT

Cheers for the identification help Mark! The books I had to use are hang-overs from my teenage years and have about 6 pages in total "detailing" Hover flies. Can I just ask what resources you've used for identification so that I can get a copy myself! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 24-Sep-11 03:22 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Get hold of a copy of *British Hoverflies – An Illustrated Identification Guide* by Alan Stubbs and Steven Falk. This is Published by the British Entomological and Natural History Society. I have the first edition from 1983 though I know there is a later edition which I believe was published in 2002. A good place to purchase books of any entomological slant is Pemberley Books – <http://www.pembooks.demon.co.uk>. I have used them on many an occasion and find their service first class.

Good luck.

Kind regards. Mark

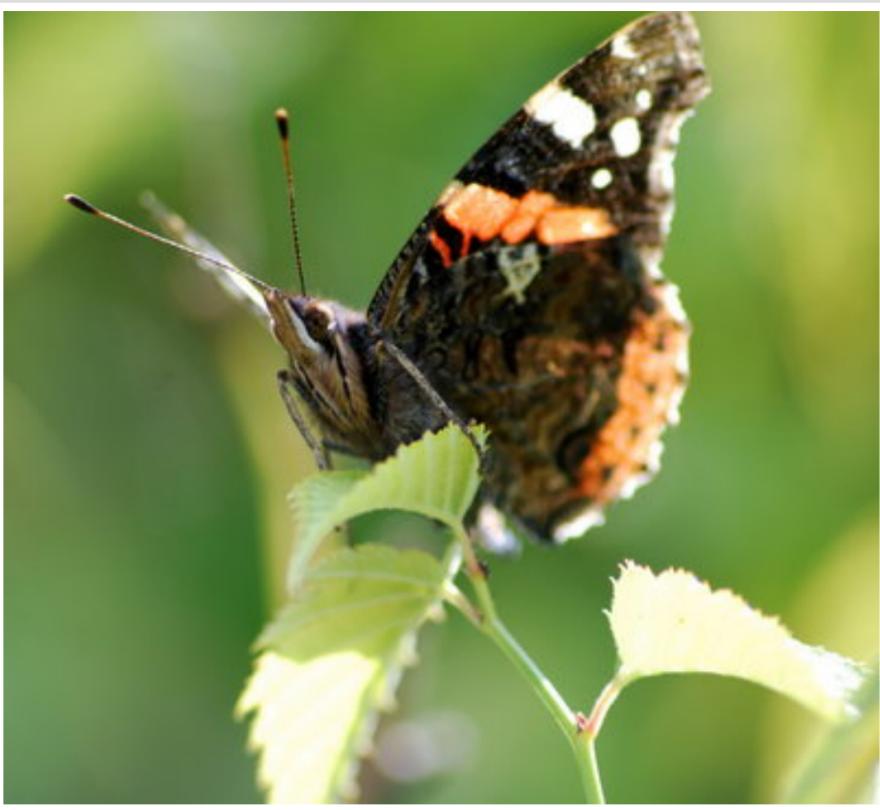
Re: Wurzel

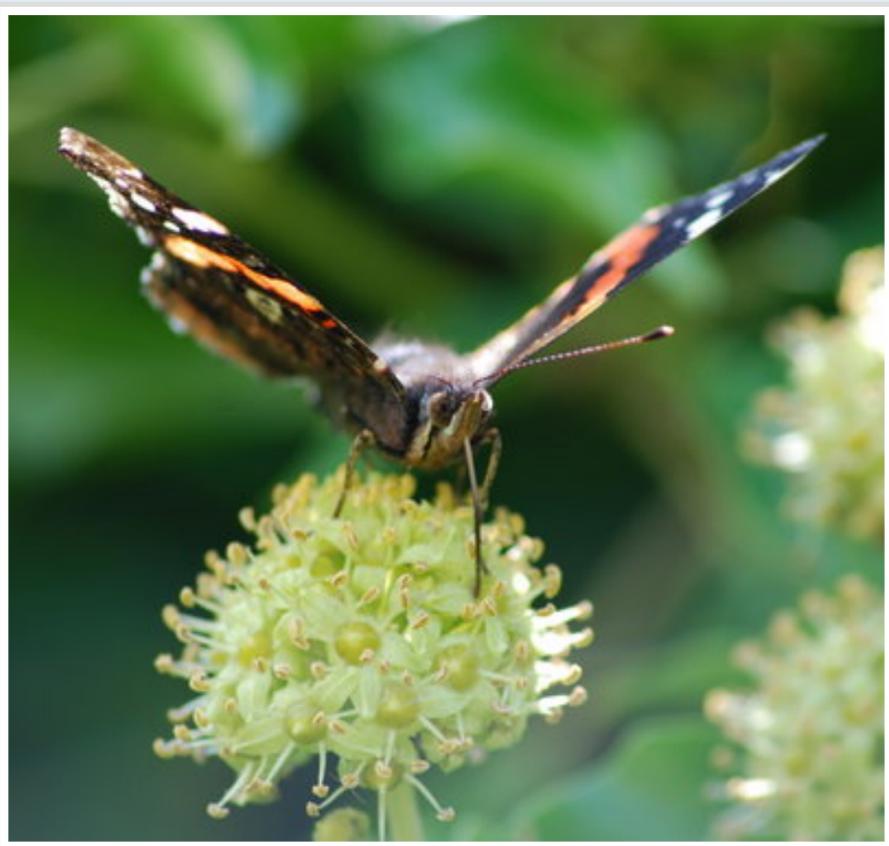
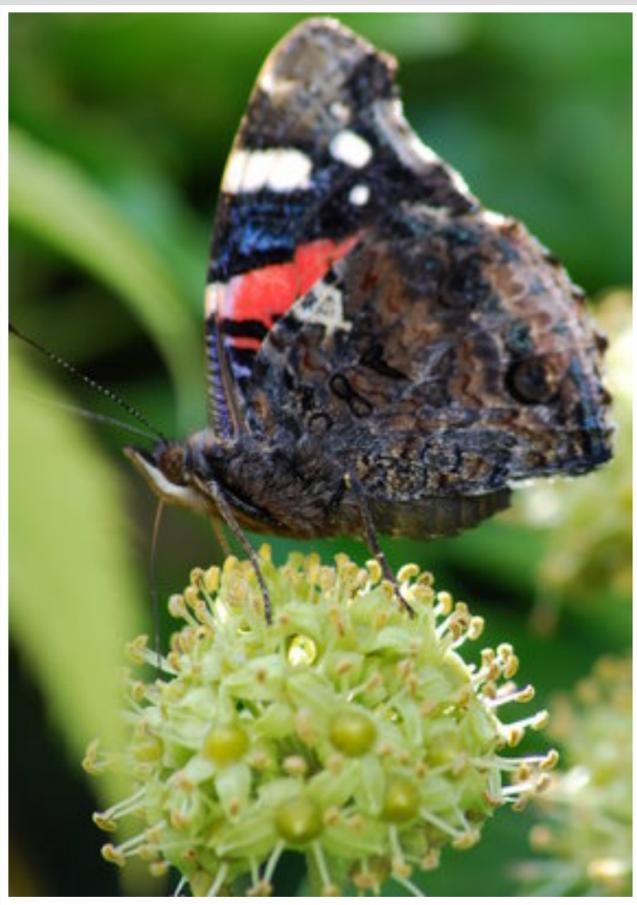
by Wurzel, 25-Sep-11 05:06 AM GMT

Cheers for the info Mark – I'll have a go at tracking it down when I can get some readies! 😊

I bought a new lens last week and it turned up on Wednesday so I've been trying to get to grips with it. It's a hard process and my mind is still full of doubt as to whether it's the right one for me – but I suppose I just need to learn how to use it like I did with the last lens. It's a Sigma 70–300 DG, with "close focus/macro" and the hardest thing is remembering to stand back so I can actually get my shot in focus! Still it works quite well with the flighty individuals as I don't need to approach them.

The main testing ground has been the garden and I've had to try out on flies and bees as there has been a dearth of butterflies here; though today I did manage to have a go at a Red Admiral which settled for an age. I've never really noticed the blue markings that they have, the chevron like markings on the edge of the wing in particular.





Later in the afternoon I did manage to wangle a quick trip to Martin Down, more of that tomorrow...
Have a goodun

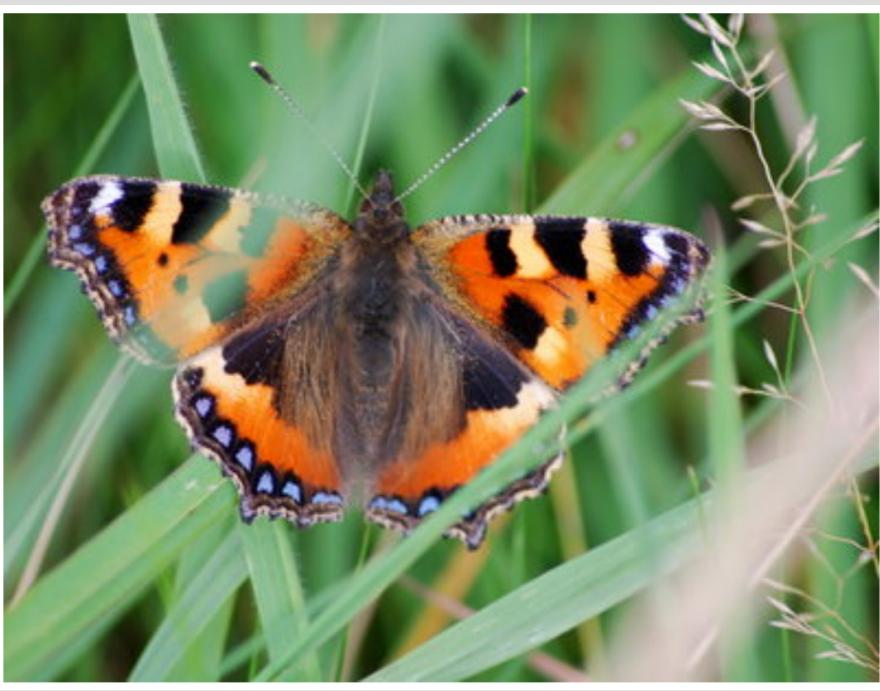
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

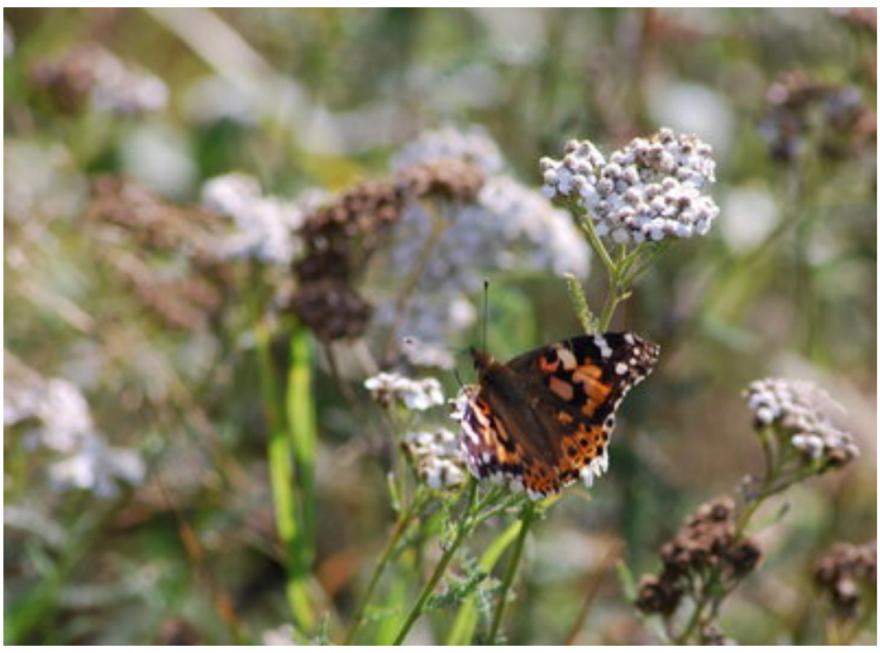
by Wurzel, 26-Sep-11 04:59 AM GMT

Yesterday I took my new lens out to Martin Down to try and get used to it. For as long as I've been photographing butterflies (about 2 years) I've been using a 18-55 lens so I've had to learn to either click shots as I get closer in or stalk right up to it. The biggest thing about my new lens is that getting up close isn't possible, I have to stand about 3 feet away, crank it to 300mm, lock my body stock still and then I can get the shot that I want... I wasn't expecting much from yesterday as it wasn't as warm as it has been and there was quite a breeze blowing. I'd also psyched myself up that the season was over.

Parking at Sillens Lane the first butterfly was a Small Tortoiseshell which allowed me to try out the lens. Another problem presented itself - I had to stand so far back that all kinds of things got between me and my quarry. Still the Small Tort was stunning.



As I wandered along towards Borkerley there were also plenty of Meadow Brown flitting up from the path, a Green Veined White flew by and then 2 Red Admiral which were swiftly followed by a Peacock. Further along the path something more orange than the Meadow Browns caught my eye – my third Painted Lady of the year – and plus points for the lens as my usual tactic would have meant that it would have flown and I'd have missed the shot.



I then got onto a purple patch with both male and female Small Copper, one looking very fresh, surrounded by Meadow Browns. It seems that their little corner was in the lee of the wind and so they could settle down to do what they wanted to do without getting blown all over the place!



By the time I got to Borkerly Ditch my expectations were raised to almost high summer levels! More Meadow Browns, a Common Blue male, two female Common Blues and a wornout looking male Adonis Blue!



The verdict is out on the new lens – my gut tells me that it ain't sure so I'll have to put up a separate post to ask for some advice .
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 26-Sep-11 05:09 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Less of that sort of language! 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

I'd also physched myself up that the season was over.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 26-Sep-11 05:37 AM GMT

hi wurzel

do you set your new lens on macro when you are using it? i used the same lens, or very similar and used macro all the time. it takes a bit of getting used to but worth it in the end. i had never used a macro lens before.

here is a picture i took with my sigma 70-300 macro

hideandseek

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Sep-11 06:11 AM GMT

Sorry Mark I didn't mean to offend you – I don't normally use such disgusting phrases 😊

Cheers for the encouragement hideandseek – I did have it switched to macro, it just freaked me out not getting so close, I'll be having another crack next weekend (weather permitting) so hopefully I'll get the hang of it.

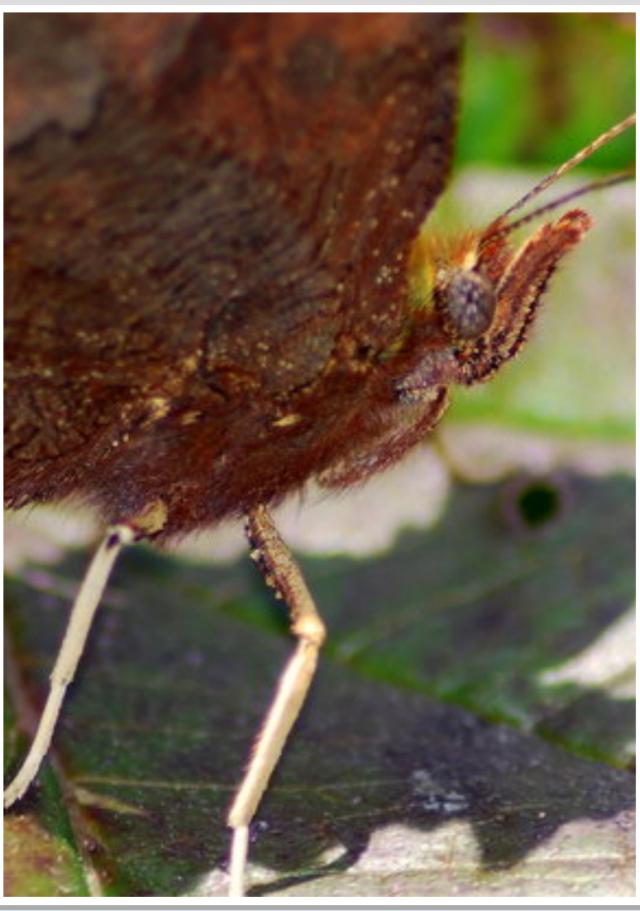
Have a goodun

Wurzel

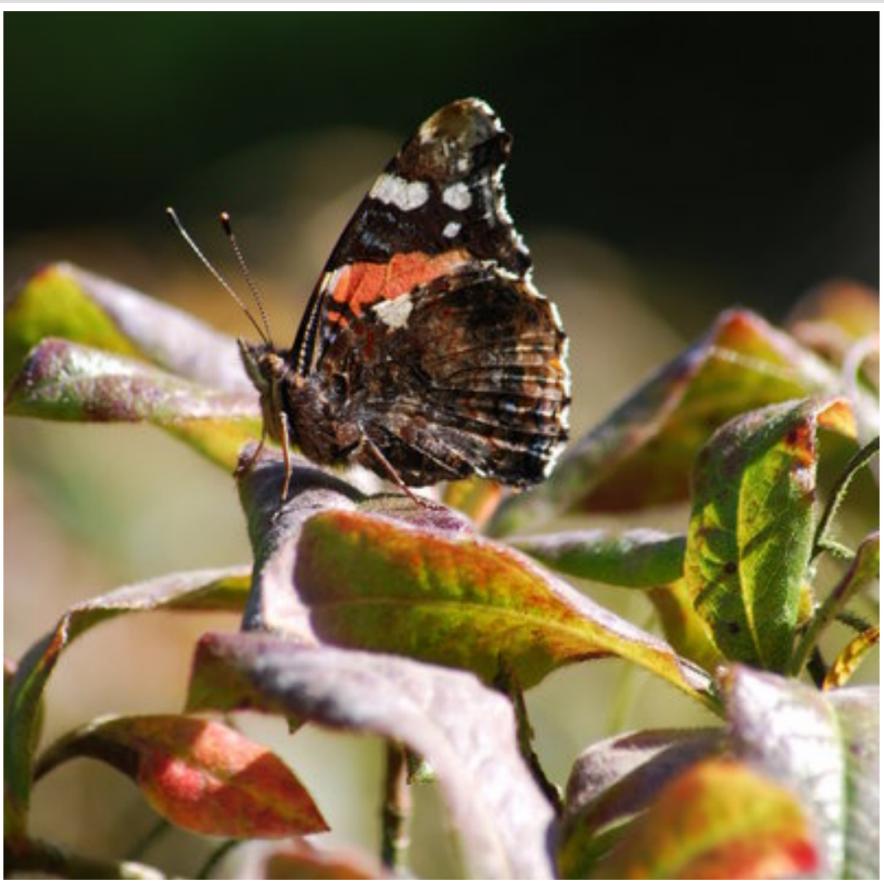
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-11 06:40 AM GMT

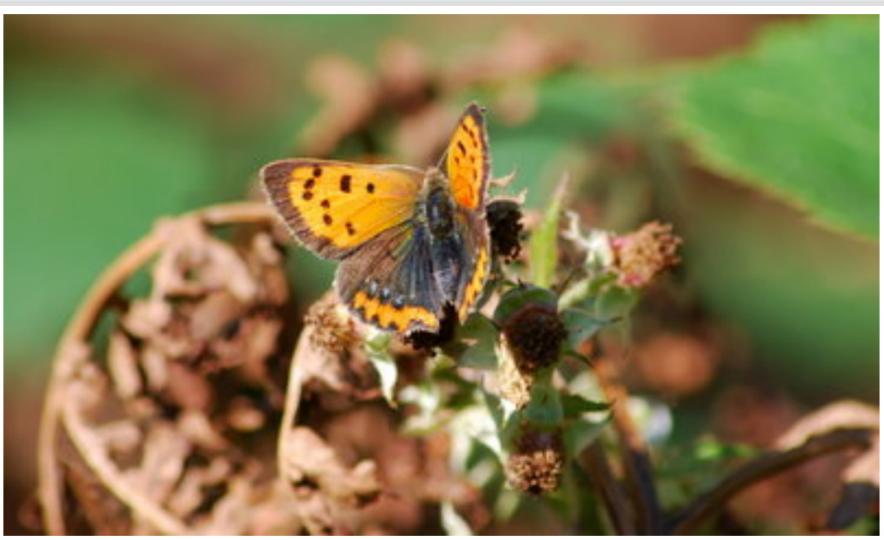
I took advantage of the fantastic weather over the weekend and also the fact that Lottie is over Chicken Pox (she was insisting she was "baby dragon chicken" for a short while but is now back to being just "baby dragon") to take the family to Stourhead. It was looking like it was going to be a good day as I counted 13 or 14 large dark butterflies on the journey there. While we enjoyed a picnic near the entrance we were joined by a Speckled Wood and a Comma.



We then took a slightly different route and rather than following the herds down and around the lake we took the woodland walk alongside the house. Here there were a couple of Red Admirals who were tirelessly twirling ever upwards as we moved along the wide and lush woodland ride.



After the Ha-Ha we took a small, steep path down through the woodland and came out near the cattle's grazing area near the ponds. Here the bramble bushes offered perches if not nectar for a Small Copper and some, what I think are, Common Darters(?).





Makes a change from Common Blue on a stick – I couldn't find a Brown Argus tree but this was almost as good ;-)

By now little legs were tired and with the uphill stretch ahead of us we didn't stay here for long but it was nice to see that the Purple Herons were still in the same place, almost as if they hadn't moved! 😊 That has to be it for the season for me, surely? 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 10-Oct-11 12:51 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

I'm sorry to hear you are getting rid of your new lens. I was waiting for your results [pictures] before giving an opinion, or saying anything. I was hoping the manufacturer would have improved the lens since i purchased mine, it seems they have`nt. I hope you don`t think i was trying to mislead you into thinking it was something it was`nt, if so, i apologize, if i did.

Having said that i have some great pictures which i took with my Sigma 70-300, for which i will never get to repeat, unless i get really lucky, again.

good luck on your new purchase,

all the best,

nick

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Oct-11 04:25 AM GMT

Alright Nick (?) – no worries about the lens – I did give it go but there were a couple of problems I couldn't get round – not getting as close as I'm used too and the fact that it didn't have image stabilization/vibration reduction. In no way did I find what you wrote misleading, in fact I'm glad that you wrote what you did so that I gave it a fair chance and I did get some cracking shots but I ended up binning so, so many more that in the end I just had to bin it. I think that perhaps it was running before crawling as I went from a 55mm to 300mm, I think I'm going to look into a slightly smaller step up to a prime 100mm macro and see how I get on with that (slightly smaller step in lens, probably huge step in price!). Cheers 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Oct-11 03:50 AM GMT

As the girls were on a play date in Burton I managed to nip out the few further miles to Stanpit Marsh. Once there I wandered about as much as I could which wasn't far as it was high tide and flooded. Still that was actually an advantage as it drove all teh birds close into the path. Amongst the Brent Geese there was the bird I came to see – my second Red Breasted Goose. It spent alot of the time preening and then mooching about until a Sparrowhawk put everything up!

As the tide started to drop I worked my way to Crouch Hill and set up the scope on the bench so I could have my lunch. Also present were usual waders – Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Grey plover, Ringed Plover, Redshank, Black Tailed Godwit, Bar Tailed Godwit, Lapwing and Curlew. Also there disappearing in and out of the creeks was a Spotted Redshank.

As I sat watched and munched I noticed numerous Red Admirals flying around. With the last week or two of torrential rain, frosts and gales I didn't think that there would be many butterflies left about so I contemplated not taking my camera, but force of habit saw me put it in the boot anyway. In the end I was glad that I did I finished up the birding and picked up the camera for a very brief foray to see what was about. The fore mentioned Red Admirals were on a mission and I only saw one of the many stop. So I settled for what I could find and the Ivy bushes seemed to hold lots of insects.



I was chuffed I got a feeding shot



The dreaded Harlequin?

Finally I did find a butterfly, an aged Speckled Wood, who sat on a Bramble leaf looking disdainfully at me. His hairy old face reminded me of an old man, sitting there complaining that "things aren't good as they used to be".



Don't get Bramble leaves like you used too...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Introduction

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-11 09:58 PM GMT

Here is the first instalment of "Butterflies 2011 – Sites and Sights" as the original is expensive to purchase!
The preview of the book is available here <http://www.blurb.com/books/2595151/pages/0#basic>



Front Cover



Intro

Last year I wrote a book to showcase some of the butterfly shots that I'd managed to take. It was in the style of an identification guide and it meant that I was jumping around all over the place explaining about what I saw and where the photos were from. This time around I thought that it would be easier to focus on the site itself. Again there was some jumping around in my mind while I was writing it as the book is in alphabetical order and I didn't visit sites in that order and sometimes I visited more than once. Still, it was more enjoyable to write as I could cast my mind back to one or two days and relive the sights and sounds (and in some cases, smells too).

I am still using my Nikon D-60 with its Nikkor 18-55mm lens; with all shots fully zoomed in on macro setting and switching between auto and manual focus.

I dedicate this book to my wife and the girls who have again given me the help and acceptance that I needed.

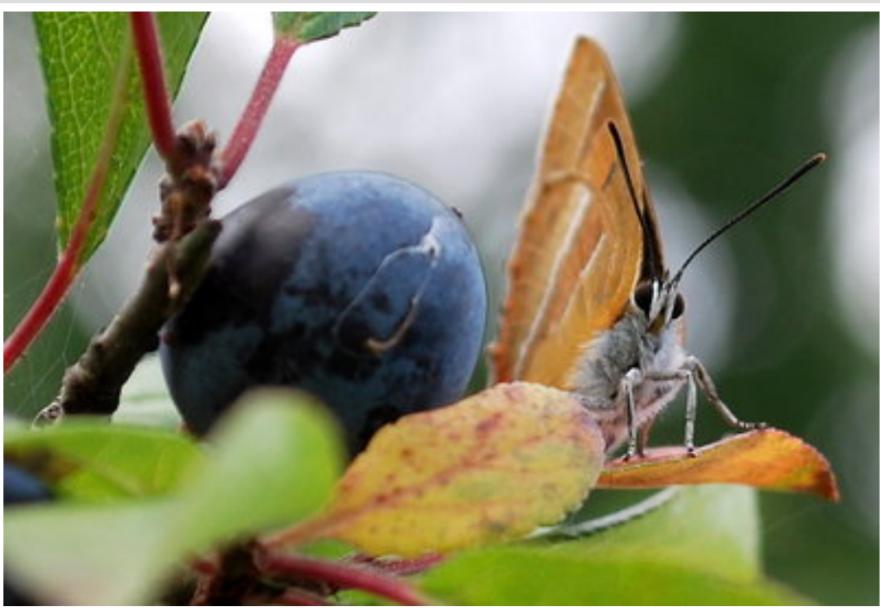


Back cover

Alners Gorse

by Wurzel, 10-Nov-11 04:51 AM GMT

Alners Gorse



It is slightly ironic that the first site that I write about was actually the last site that I visited. Alners Gorse is a Butterfly Conservation Reserve and it is comprised of 14 hectares of scrubby grassland with veteran Oaks. It is a remnant of one of the old Blackmore Vale commons. The grassland is being restored to encourage Marsh Fritillary but I was there for the Hairstreaks. I am aware that this site houses three, possibly four, hairstreaks but my visit in mid August proved to be too late for White Letter, although I did manage to see two species.

Having arrived I wandered down the approach path and right in front on me at the bottom of the hill was a large bramble bush at which I took a left along a large hedgerow. I then spent a couple of hours doing laps from the gate at one end, along the hedgerow to this bramble bush and back. It did pay off as I managed to find both male (very worn by now) and female (much fresher and brighter) Brown Hairstreaks.

Highlights included a very worn old male missing his "tails", another male that flashed the upper side of his wings – a very unusual sight, a lovely open winged female sunning herself and another female that was trying to hide behind some Sloes! Usually I'd expect them on the brambles where their colourings helps them blend in, but today they seemed to prefer the thistles; the contrast of purple and orange made for much easier viewing and they were relatively easy to find.





Having seen my target species I took to further exploration. Amongst the hedgerow edged pathways was a small area with conifers and rough almost heath like scrub. Here I found a surprising array of butterflies. Amongst the expected Meadow Brown, various whites and Gatekeepers were a few Small Heath as well as what seemed like several pairs of Common Blues. There were also *Nymphalids* here with Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Peacock all looking stunning in the midday sun. A Brimstone added yellow to the to the colour wheel and on my way back to the original hedge where I'd found the Brown Hairstreak a single, aged Purple Hairstreak completed my rainbow of butterflies.

It was then that I saw something out of place. It was far too yellow to be a Brimstone and had black edges to the wings? I was stunned, "surely not" I said – but it was, a Clouded Yellow. Now some years there are thousands of these visiting us from the continent, but this year wasn't one of those years so I could not believe my luck. I let it settle and it was happy for me to click away for what felt like half an hour. Having got about 100 plus shots I left it still in the same place, still marvelling at the strange "eye" on the underside, the canary colour and the peach legs; which it is thought act as camouflage protecting it from Crab Spiders when it nectars .

So that was Alners Gorse then – perhaps I'd saved the best until last?



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 10-Nov-11 04:58 AM GMT

Nice shots there, Wurzel. Having visited Alner's for the first time last July I can only give it the same ringing endorsement. The moment you arrive you just know it's going to be butterfly heaven. Wide rides, scruffy and unkempt at the edges with an assortment of different habitats.

I'm delighted you chanced upon a Clouded Yellow. I think the unexpected sight of one must be one of the best feelings any UK based butterfly enthusiast can realistically experience.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Nov-11 06:27 AM GMT

Cheers David!

The Clouded Yellow was definitely up there as a highlight of the year! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Arne

by Wurzel, 13-Nov-11 05:57 AM GMT

Arne



Arne is an RSPB reserve overlooking the Purbecks and Poole Harbour. I have spent many happy days wandering round the 1250 acres of acid rich grassland, salt marsh, woodland and reed beds looking for various species of birds. Last year I visited with the girls while we were camping nearby and then, as now I was looking for butterflies. Unfortunately I left it too late for my target species so this year when we went camping we headed back to the reserve in the balmy, sun baked May weather. It was now too early in the season but luckily, this year, everything has been emerging anything up to a month early (probably because of the heat) so I struck lucky with my target species – Silver Studded Blue.

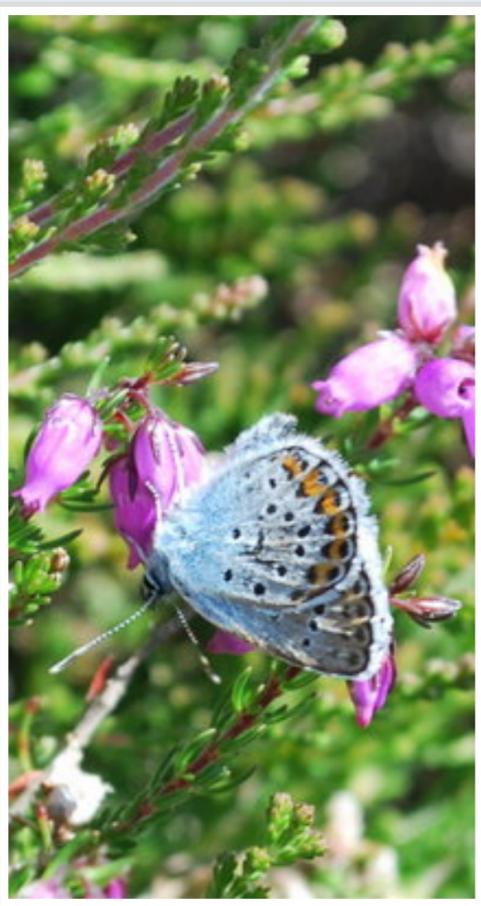
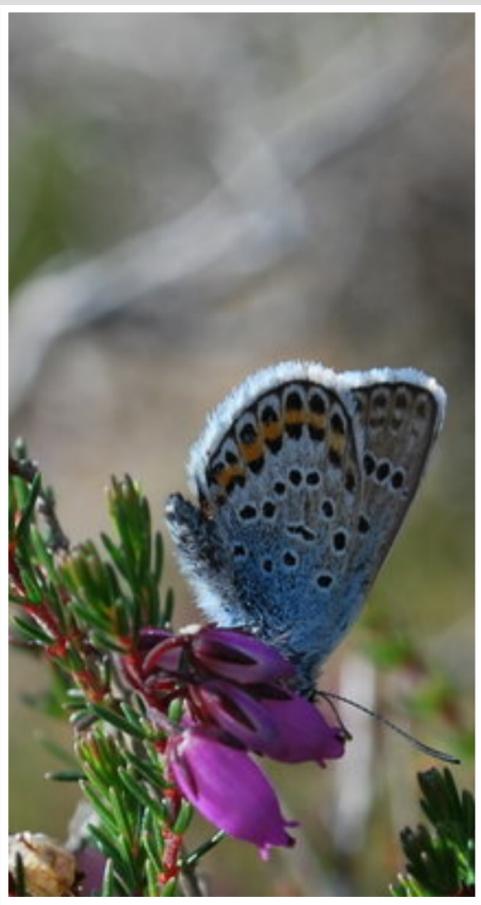
It did feel strange walking the board walks and the sandy paths and scanning not for Dartford Warbler but small blue butterflies. Luckily I managed to find two different hotspots which gave me the opportunity to get some shots.





These shots show one of the individuals feeding on the heather and shows the habit of perching head down. It has been suggested that this allows them to drop into flight should a threat present itself. The silver studs which give the species its name can be seen in all of these shots – however sometimes they aren't present and then other features need to be used to identify the butterfly. I was glad that the studs were present because try as I might I couldn't persuade any of the butterflies I found to open their wings and so I couldn't have used the dark edging to the upper wings to confirm identification. Also all the shots here are of males – I didn't find a female all day – perhaps because it was very early in the season and males often emerge a week or two before the females. The key to sexing them as males lies in the overall blue colouration whereas the females appear more brown or beige and their studs are large and very bright.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Bentley Wood – Part 1

by Wurzel, 20-Nov-11 04:08 AM GMT

Bentley Wood



Bentley Wood is a large mixed wood on the Hampshire/Wiltshire border. The majority of the reserve falls on the Wiltshire side – indeed it forms the

largest contiguous woodland in the whole county. It has been designated an SSSI due to its importance for butterflies, with a mixture of tussocky grass, clearings and lush woodland rides.

Being only 25 minutes from Salisbury and with the mix of habitats, for me it holds special memories. Not least because of the large number of my "firsts" that it has supplied, nine "lifers" in the last two years. It is a place I come back to throughout the year following the waxing and waning of key species found here. The first visit is usually in late April and the final during July – with luck and the woodland specialities seen I'll then focus mainly on the nearby chalk downlands.

The first species to look for is the Pearl Bordered Fritillary with its "flying" chevrons allowing identification of the upper side and the two clear white patches on the underling confirming suspicions or clarifying the upper wing view. This year started very early and they lived up to their old name of "April Fritillary". Indeed when I first took Lottie to look for them it was supposed to be as a recce and to give me a chance to remember how to work my camera!



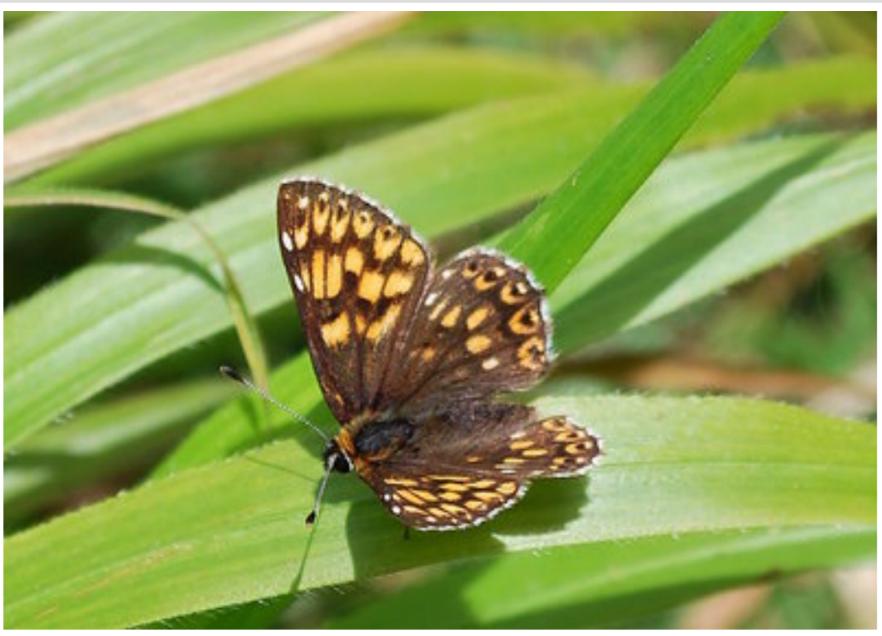
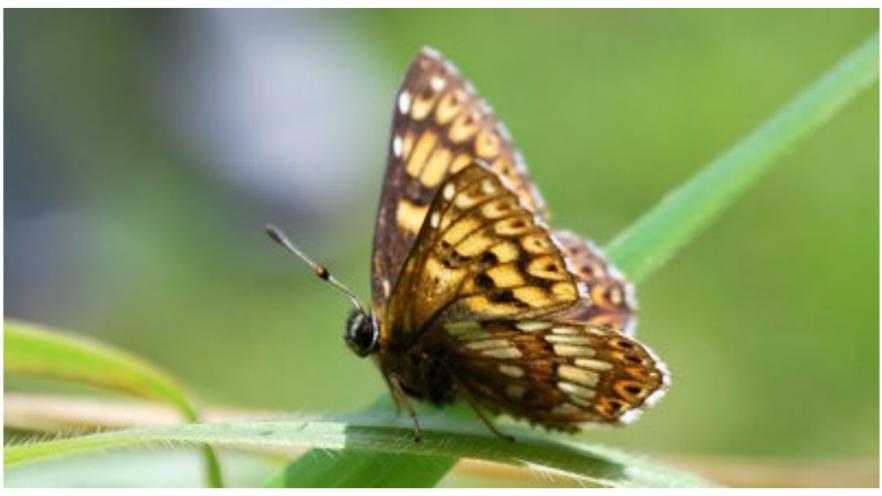
I've been lucky enough to get my girls involved this year although it has cost me a lot in bribery sweets. One of the main advantages has been that they have such sharp eyesight so I get them to spot the butterflies and then I can stalk them to get the shots. It's quite something to hear Lottie pronouncing "Pewl bowder fritillarwe" but during the early spring she was almost terrier like in tracking them down for me, squealing with delight as the buggy went over bumps and ruts as I chased her quarry.

The next species on the calendar was the very similar looking Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. When I went the weather had cooled from the balmy days of early spring and I made my usual mistake of turning up too early so I took a recce walk while sun started to dry up the mist. There were butterflies around and they proved easy to photograph as they were very sluggish and happy to just sit but they were all "Pearls". What I was really after was the Small Pearls with their stunning chequered under wings. It was only after a lot of upper wing shots that I managed to find one in the classic closed wing shot. Having previously got shots that were of quite worn individuals it was a relief to find this little beauty who was happy to pose not just for me but for at least 4 other photographers. Eventually while photographer number 6 was wrapping up the butterfly flew proving that it was actually alive!





There is a small population of Duke of Burgundy at Bentley and until this year I would read the reports and search for them time and again to no avail. This year I visited so many times that it was almost inevitable that I found them. I have noticed a that when I go looking for a species I often have no joy for hours and then just as I'm giving up it appears! It was the same for the Duke. Someone tipped me off "it was over there 5 minutes ago"...Two hours later, just as I was heading along the path back to the car park, someone else points to another bush where it had been a minute ago. Indeed it was a charming and feisty little butterfly and I was surprised at the size, more akin to a blue than a fritillary.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Gibster, 20-Nov-11 04:19 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Indeed it was a charming and feisty little butterfly and I was surprised at the size, more akin to a blue than a fritillary.

Or even a Metalmark, lol 😊

Catchya Saturday Wurzel! 😊

Gibster.

Bentley Wood – Part 2

by Wurzel, 20-Nov-11 04:21 AM GMT

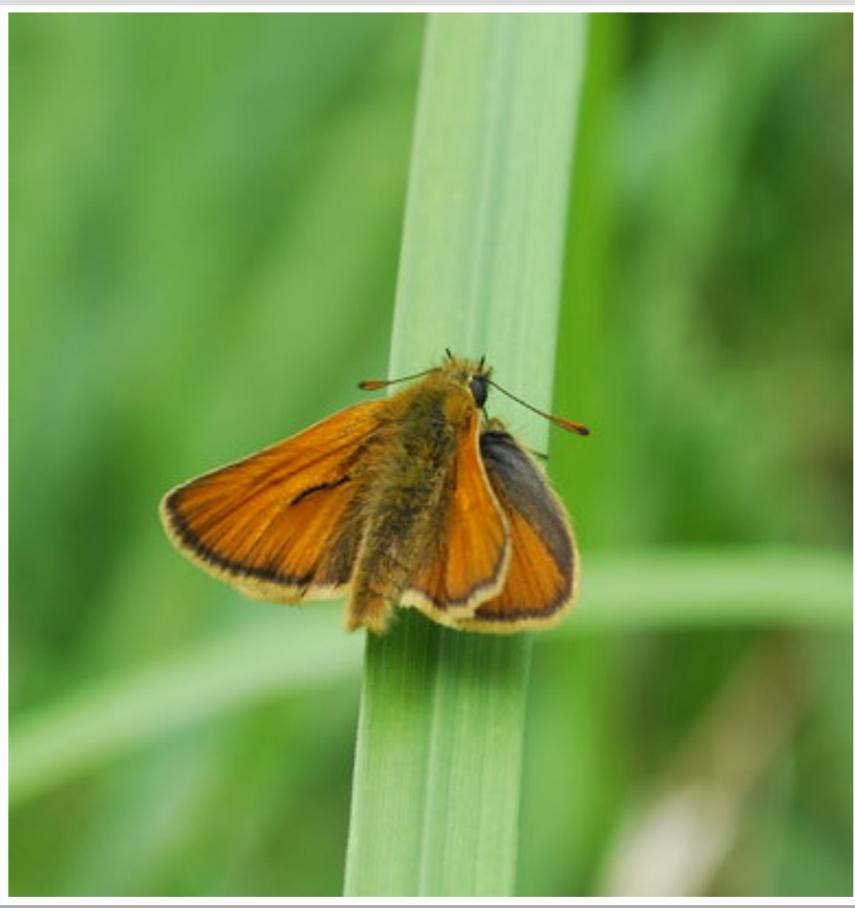
Bentley Wood continued...





On another visit with Kitty I was enjoying one of those purple patches. We were about half way along the switchback to the crossroads and there was a large Bramble bush on one side and a small Oak on the other. A few Purple Hairstreak put in an appearance and disturbed a White Admiral. Whilst waiting for these to descend (unsuccessfully) to a lower level a Dark Green Fritillary "buzzed" Kitty and I. Then it had a scrap with a Small Skipper, then a Silver Washed Fritillary, then it buzzed us again, then went onto to have a go at a Comma. And so on and on, even landing briefly on Kitty's arm. It appeared in very poor temper and obviously wanted the place for itself.





Bentley for me is a real "purple" place. I've seen Purple Emperor here twice, had numerous purple patches...but my favourite purple s are the Hairstreaks. I seem to have extraordinary luck with them here. Over 2 years and on 5 different occasions I have seen them, and managed to photograph the females with wings open, captured the classic closed wing shot and also got a male with wings open. Strangely for a species which has such an affinity for Oak (even sharing its name "Quercus") I've always found them on Bracken? The shots here were my consolation for several unrewarding hours hoping for White Letter Hairstreak.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Nov-11 04:30 AM GMT

That was fast reading Gibster – I swear I'd only just posted it! 😲

I can never understand why early butterfly enthusiasts lumped it in with the fritillaries? It looks and behaves more like a blue, a Brown Argus even, from what I've seen from my limited encounter with it. I suppose it was the brown and orange markings...or sharing a similar habitat? 😊

Still I expect in generations to come they'll look back at some of the classifications we've made and laugh their heads off (I mustn't be pessimistic and say that a lot of the species we know will be extinct by then 😊)...

See you next weekend

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Ebble Valley

by Wurzel, 27-Nov-11 11:39 PM GMT

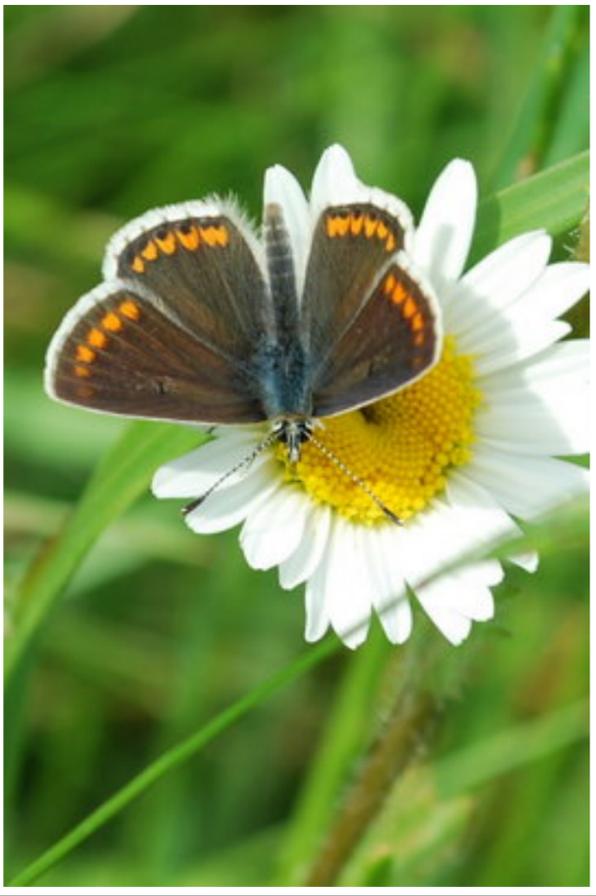
Ebble Valley



This isn't a Nature Reserve; it is actually a privately owned field in the Chalke Valley. The river marks the boundary on one side of this ribbon like piece of land and there are dragon and damselflies a plenty in the correct season.

People are allowed access to the site so back in late May the whole family took a stroll here. The weather was great, warm and sunny with no breeze and the farmer/owner had left a strip uncut right through the middle of the field from one side to the other. It was this strip of long grasses and wild flowers that held my attention as the girls sat amongst the Ox Eye Daisies and peered into the river looking for fish.

After a brief glance I had managed to spot Brown Argus, Common Blue and a single Brimstone and the road side boundary had my first Meadow Brown of the year. I set about stalking the blues and browns along the edges of the tall grasses. The Brown Argus were at first very difficult to approach but patience paid off as I waited and let them settle to feed. The Common Blue on the other hand was much easier to get shots of, and as I focused in the answer suggested itself to me. The Brown Argus looked immaculate, freshly emerged and full of vigour. Whereas the Common Blue looked much older; battered, wings torn and lacking in scales. The Common Blues were knackered!





Have a goodun

Wurzel

P.S. I was preparing some of my later posting from this series and one includes shots of Greenish Silver Washed Fritillary. It got me thinking about why only the female shows that characteristic? On the way to the recent Winter Jolly I spent my time on the train utilising GCSE level knowledge of Genetics to work out that the *valesina* form of Silver Washed Fritillary must be caused by a Dominant allele linked to the Y sex chromosome. As it is only seen in the female I also deduced that they must be heterozygous in terms of their sex chromosomes (XY) which explains why it is only found in the female as males are XX. I also worked out that this would mean that any female offspring of a *valesina* would also be "Greenish".

I felt a bit chuffed having achieved this so imagine my frustration when I looked through the "variation" section after listening to Pete yesterday at the Jolly, only to see that it was all there freely available! 😞

Never mind, some might say this was a "sad" thing to do but I had great fun for 20 minutes drawing out various genetic cross diagrams and working it all out, back to front, from first principles, even if Pete got there before me by about 9 months 😄

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 27-Nov-11 11:53 PM GMT

A worthwhile 20 minutes, Wurzel!

For you to investigate further: I believe the allele responsible for *valezina* is located on an autosome, not a sex chromosome, and thus may be found in the male too. It is, however, sex controlled, and thus only expressed in the female. The strange thing is that, being dominant, you would expect it to be expressed in more females than is observed to be the case, or if it is detrimental, to be rapidly eliminated from the population.

Various reasons have been proposed for its low frequency, including behavioural aspects of the female (seeking the shade) and the diminished attractiveness of the female to males.

Guy

EDIT - at your request, this post and any following on from it can be deleted or removed to a new thread to keep the integrity of your diary.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Nov-11 04:20 AM GMT

No worries Guy – your comment got me heading back to my book case and looking at my Genetics literature at a slightly higher level than GCSE 😊
Is the non *valesina* condition an example of "epistasis" – where the allele of one gene overrides or masks the effects of another gene, so a gene that could be on another chromosome and expressed later has an inhibitory effect on the actions of a later gene even if it is a dominant gene? Ahhhhh it's making my brain hurt trying to remember stuff from 12 years ago! 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bentley Wood – Part 1

by Lee Hurrell, 30-Nov-11 11:19 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

I've been lucky enough to get my girls involved this year although it has cost me a lot in bribery sweets. It's quite something to hear Lottie pronouncing "Pewl bowder fritillarwe"

Magical story – I'd imagine these are memories you'll treasure for years to come 😊

PS – I am really enjoying these reports, Wurzel.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Wurzel

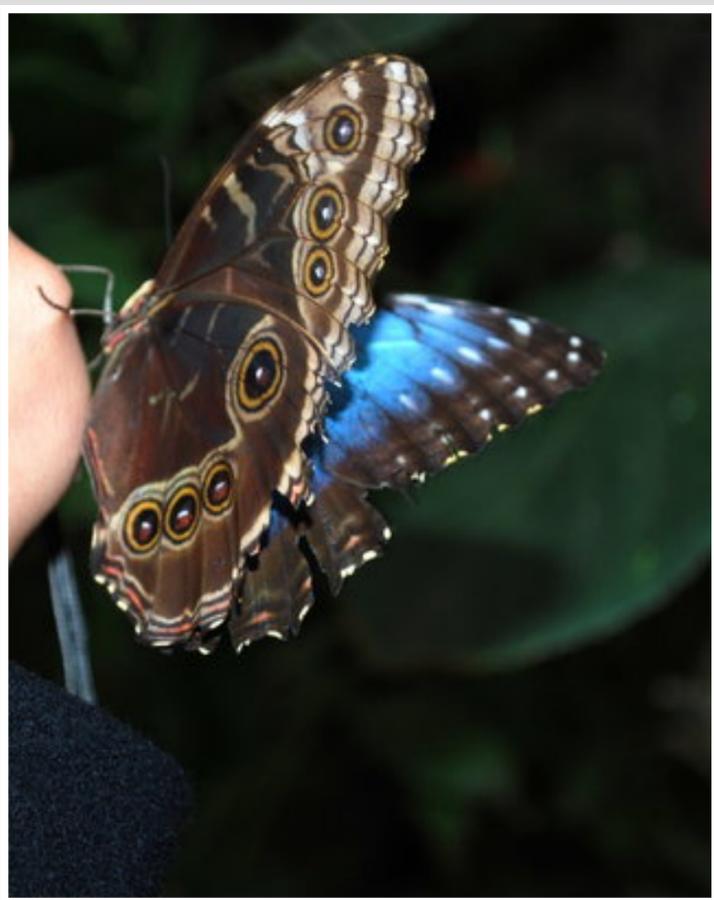
by Wurzel, 02-Dec-11 05:01 AM GMT

Cheers Lee, I'm glad you're enjoying the reports – and I've enjoyed sharing the memories! Lottie actually asked me to read the page that that was on as she wanted to remember the day. I read it to her and she went "ah yes, butterflies". 😊 Perhaps it is sinking in? 😊

I'm going to have a brief break from my sites guide and I'm going to cheat for this post...

Today was our annual school trip to Bristol Zoo which we take all of the year 7 pupils to so they can "classify the animals". I felt a little sorry for the group that I was escorting round the Zoo as once I'd found the butterfly house that was it! Luckily we'd already seen the Gorillas (I managed to get one shot of a female sticking her middle finger up and grinning – at least that's what it looked like 😊), Lions, Seals, Penguins and Meerkats. I got chatting to one of the (I think voluntary) keepers who helped me find pretty much all of the species including some right crackers.

First up a Blue Morpho I think...



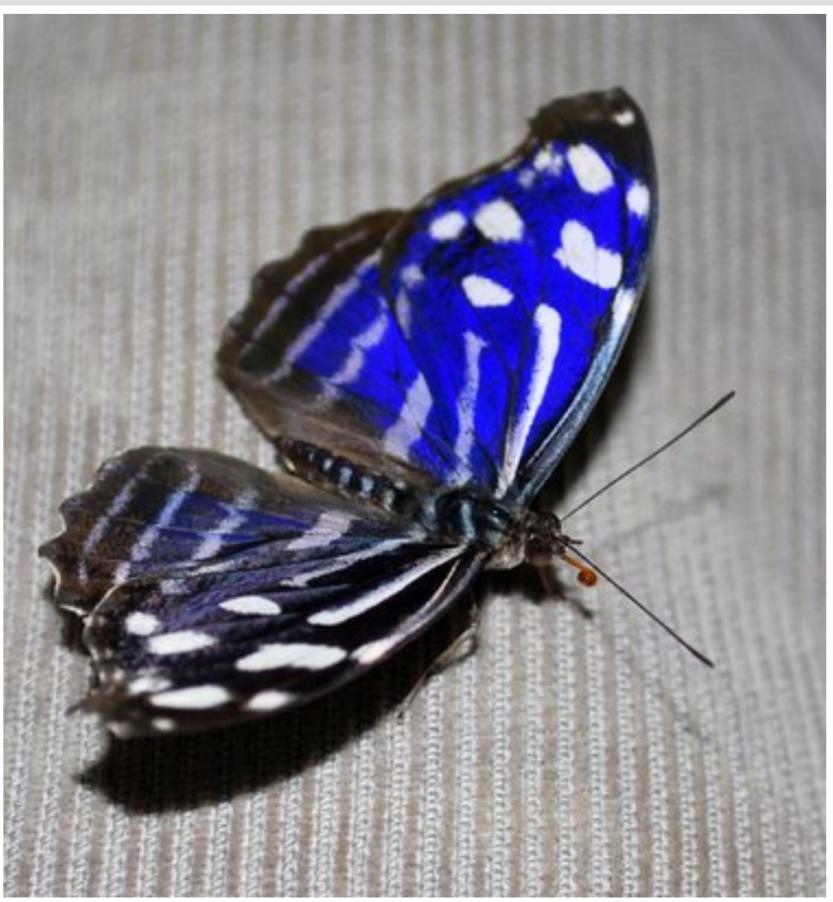
Then a stunning Leaf Butterfly from this...



...to this



Then there was a butterfly that reminded me of Purple Emperor. It landed on my leg and then turned round and round before settling down while I walked around and about in the enclosure. When the light was right it became stunning.



Then there was the Monarch - complete with caterpillars.



There were also Glasswings, Postmen, Owl Butterflies, Julios(?) and five or six other species. However my favourite was the most drab – it was different shades of brown but with very similar marking to a Tortoiseshell – just all in brown a bit like looking through a "brown filter" or sepia.



If anyone has any suggestions of the correct names they'd be greatly appreciated. Regular reports will return at the weekend – next up Five Rivers
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 02-Dec-11 07:25 AM GMT

Amazing butterflies there Wurzel. That leaf butterfly would really give you a fright if you came across it in the wild and it flicked its wings open.

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 03-Dec-11 10:27 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

That brilliant blue butterfly you described as being like an emperor is a male *Myscelia cyaniris*, from South America. The last one is *Junonia* sp. It reminds me of *Junonia iphita*, that I saw in India (the 'chocolate pansy'), but the genus is very widespread in the tropics and I wouldn't swear to that, not knowing where this butterfly is from.

Guy

Re: Wurzel

by Vince Massimo, 04-Dec-11 01:19 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

It is very difficult to exactly identify a butterfly species without knowing where it is from, so a best guess has to be applied to anything from a butterfly house. The most likely candidate for the Blue Morpho is *Morpho peleides* which flies in Central America. I have made no progress on the leaf butterfly, but am pleased that Guy managed to get *Myscelia cyaniris* because I was struggling with it. I agree that the last butterfly is similar to *Junonia iphita* (Chocolate Pansy/Soldier) but the wingtips are more hooked than I would have expected.

Cheers,

Vince

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 04-Dec-11 01:51 AM GMT

The leaf butterfly is in the genus *Kallima* – quite possibly *Kallima inachus*, though I must stress that most of my non-European identifications come from reading books, not experience in the field. I didn't see any leaf butterflies on my brief trip to India.

Guy

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Dec-11 05:33 AM GMT

Nick – it did scare me even when in captivity. I was taking a shot of something else and this leaf suddenly moved!
Cheers for your identifications Guy and Vince – I checked them out on google images and they certainly fitted the bill – I don't now how you guys do it! It was easy for me, I just typed in your suggestions to google images, and there they were!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Five Rivers

by Wurzel, 05-Dec-11 05:53 AM GMT

Five Rivers

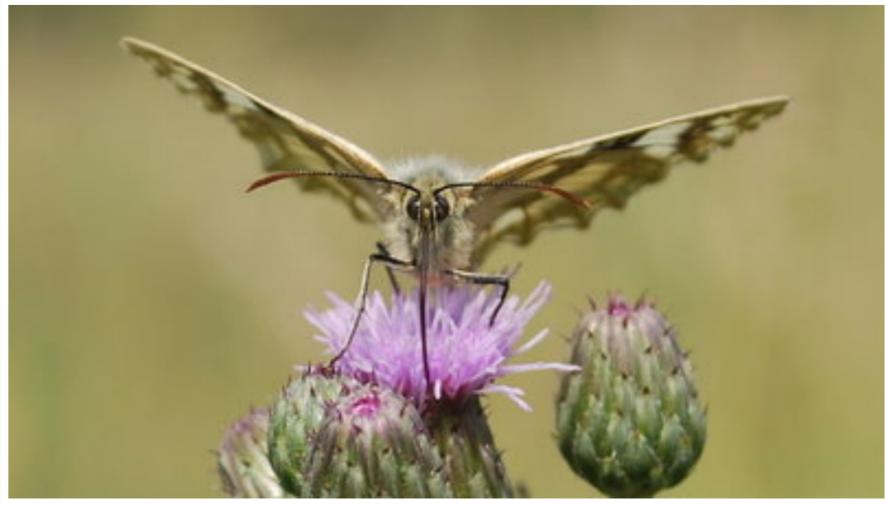


Five Rivers is actually Avon Valley Local Nature Reserve. However I first discovered it after dropping my family off for swimming sessions at the Five Rivers Leisure Centre and since then the name has stuck, for me anyway.

It is a small area alongside the Avon with reed beds, grass banks and patches of longer grasses amongst numerous pathways. Even though it isn't very big and doesn't have a very wide range of species compared to other sites there are several things about this area that keeps me coming back time after time.

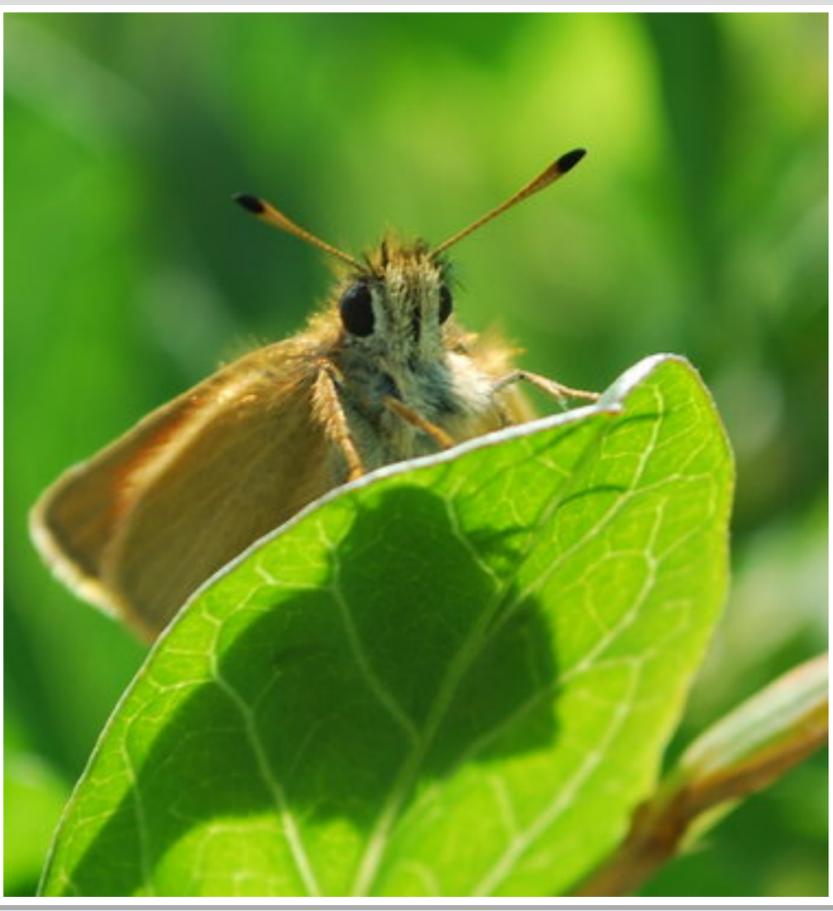
The main draw is the proximity to my home with it actually being in the centre of Salisbury. This allows me to just nip out for an hour and see more species than can be found in my garden or I can pop over for a brief evening trip to make the most of the summer days. The fact that it is small also means that finding the butterflies is relatively easy and with the multitude of paths created by dog walkers there is easy access for shots without trampling the habitat. Plus not only is it good for butterflies but also birds, the scrub, bushes and reeds have meant that in some years I have seen 10 different species of warbler in one season.

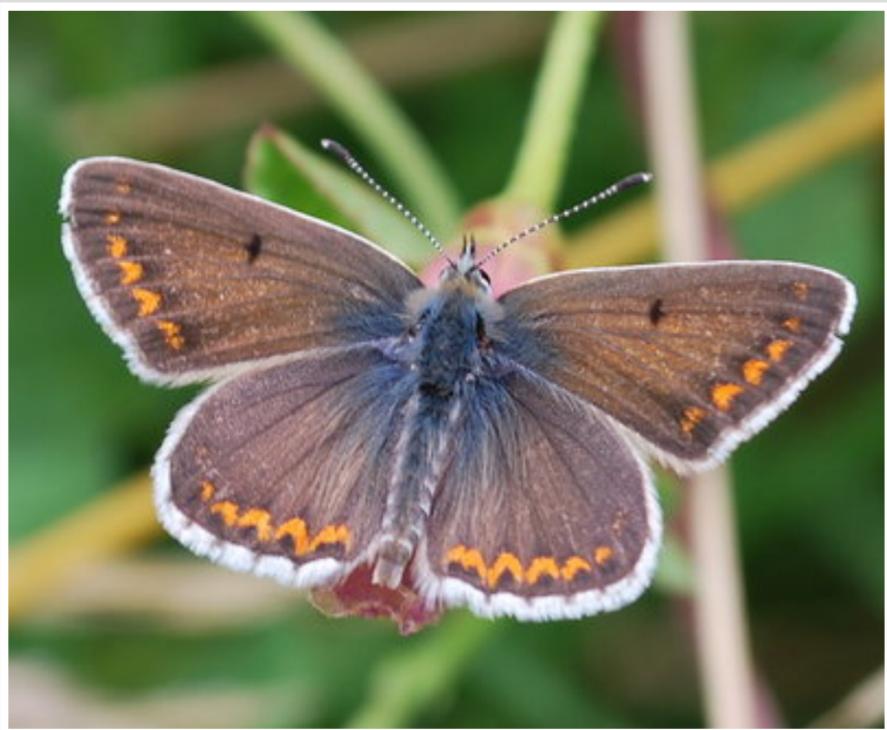
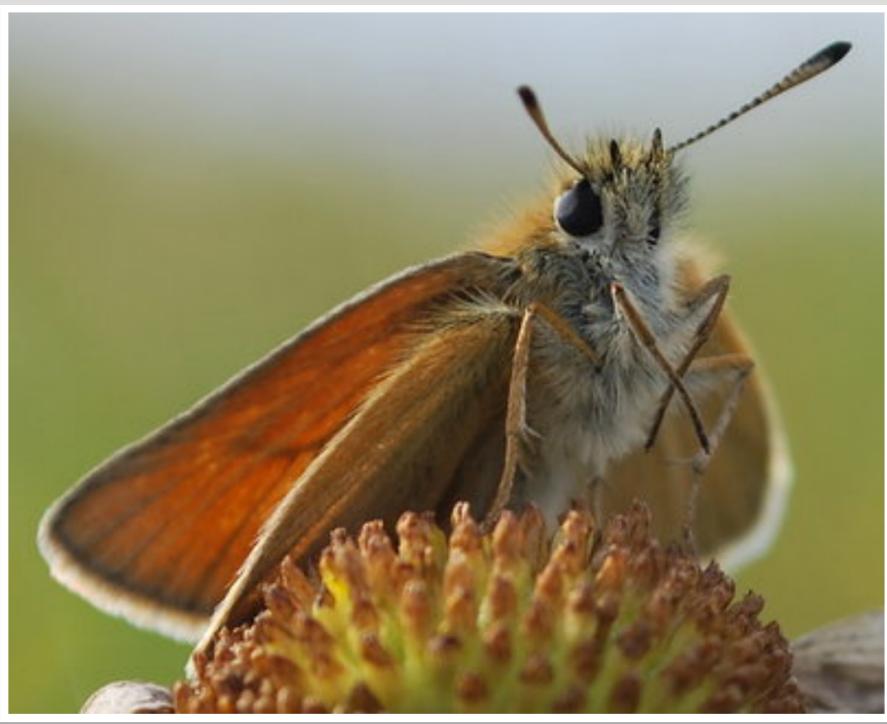
Marbled Whites Essex Skipper, Speckled Wood, Brown Argus and Common Blue all photographed here.



These are Essex Skippers and now I know what I'm looking for are relatively easy to differentiate from Small...the males anyway. They have a shorter and fainter straight sex brand on their forewings as well as the black under sides to the antennae. With the females however you have to try and actually get under them at the head end so as to view the antennae from underneath. When you do you can see the black tips that look like they've been pressed onto an ink pad – almost as if they've been finger printed! I was lucky here in that I managed to find the male and later a female who didn't mind posing while I lay in the undergrowth cricking my neck in the process.







Over the past couple of years I have managed to find a total of 23 species here and whilst they might not be the rarest or the most spectacular I have enjoyed them just as much because when I visit I feel like they're mine, that I'm the only one that knows that they're there. And having added to my memory card and eased away the everyday stresses I can finish up with a few shots and in a hundred yards I can be in Waitrose choosing my beer for the evening.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

My Garden

by Wurzel, 12-Dec-11 04:05 AM GMT

My Garden



My garden is long and is broken up into several sections. From the back door there is a lawn with borders and rose bushes and small trees along the fence. Then there is the greenhouse with a large vegetable plot. Then another small lawn and finally a smaller veggie plot, flower beds and the fruit trees – apple, pear and plum. Scattered throughout the garden are bramble bushes, Buddleia, Holly and Ivy bushes. As it's large it's hard work so some areas can seem wild.

It was in my garden that I first got the "bug" for butterfly photography. I was trying out my wife's first digital SLR and fortuitously got a shot of a Speckled Wood. That camera is now mine having paid for my wife to have a considerable upgrade/replacement! Since that first shot I've had a range of species – 17 including Ringlet, Small Copper and a golden skipper, probably Small but it got away. My principle time to try and get some shots is the late afternoon while I'm setting off to water the greenhouse. But just in case I make a habit of leaving my camera downstairs ready in case a butterfly should catch my eye while I'm marking test papers or reading the girls a story. I can then dash outside to try and get the shot. Usually by the time I get to where the butterfly was it's flown but I persevere with this tactic as occasionally it pays off!



My greenhouse has turned out to be a haven for "Amy" the frog (named by Kitty after a school friend). But even with Amy on patrol among the cucumbers and tomatoes some caterpillars survive – as evidenced by this Green Veined White that was one of my first butterflies of the year. Last year my greenhouse produced Small White, this year Green Veined, any bets on Large next year? I'd much rather it was a Bath White but that would really be wishful thinking!



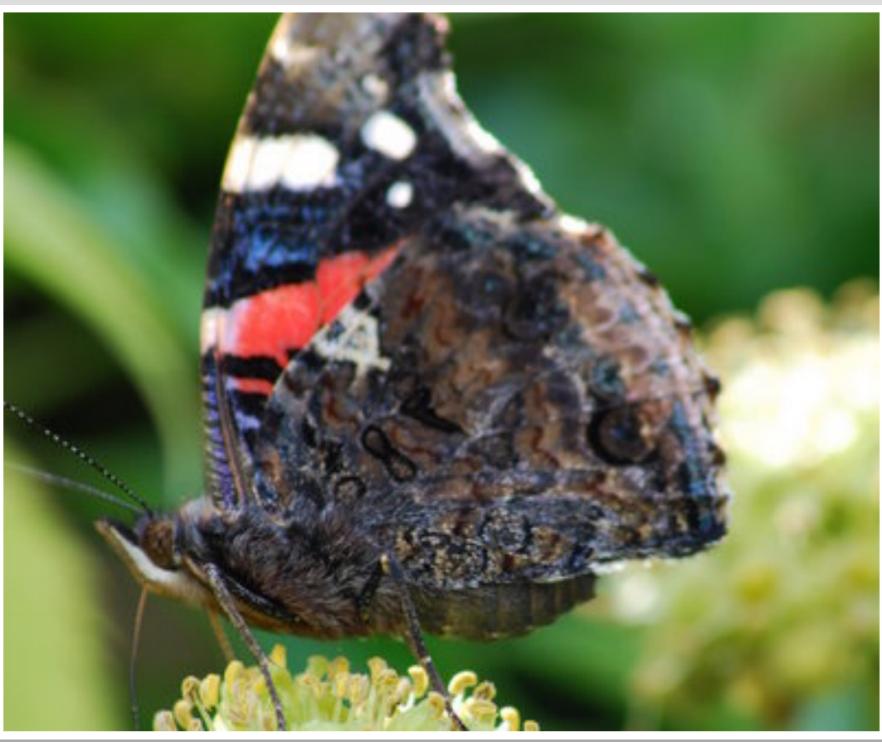
During the summer months Red Admiral sightings can be daily occurrences, but they generally start off in the front garden. This is much smaller so I cheekily include the gardens of neighbours on either side as "my garden" mainly as they are quite sterile places. There are large bushes and a few other sources of nectar but on the whole they're covered in gravel or cars. The individual shown here was looking a bit worn and probably hatched as part of the first wave of Admirals in the early spring and is busy fuelling up on my neighbour's plants.





This year my garden provided me with my first first of 2011. Last year I saw a female Orange-tip at the top of the garden but by the time I'd made it back she'd flown. This year I thought the same thing would happen when my wife informed me that there were some white butterflies at the top of the garden. Convinced that they'd have flown I sauntered up top and they were still there. At one point there were 3 individuals spiralling up the side of the apple tree engaged in a three way dogfight. One (the victor) remained in the vicinity and took to nectaring and basking in the late afternoon sun allowing me to get ridiculously close. He just wasn't bothered about me being there. Then another male flew over the fence and battle recommenced.







This was my second first for the garden list this year, one of only two this year. I'd gotten home from work and a Meadow Brown caught my eye as I was making my way up to the greenhouse. Once the tomatoes had been watered I picked my camera up and tried to relocate it.

Fortunately it decided to lead me on a bit of a dance around the lower part of my garden. A couple of times it disappeared from view acting almost Grayling like, angling its body so that it didn't cast a shadow.

Previously I said "fortunately", if the Meadow Brown hadn't played hard ball I'd have gotten my shot and headed back in doors. As I was still in the garden fifteen minutes later I was there to witness a very dark butterfly flying over the hedge and literally dropping into the grass. I assume that it was tired as I live in the suburbs, far from its natural habitat. Also it didn't attempt to move once it had landed, it just clung to the grass and let me get in really close for my shot.

This autumn my wife and I will be having a look at trying to improve some areas of the garden for wildlife; clearing some of the borders to plant "meadow" species, putting in raised beds, pruning the Buddleia to promote fresh growth and also leaving some bits to their own devices.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 12-Dec-11 08:42 AM GMT

nice entry wurzel, gardens in towns can be real havens for wildlife. my old garden in Hayes Middlesex was such an oasis. gardens for quite a distance were fairly sterile places for wildlife and as this was my first ever garden (lived over shops most of my childhood) and i wanted it special. so i had a "weed patch" as the neighbours called it. It was 2 borders about 15ft long and maybe 4ft deep. planted over the years with a real selection of mainly native plants. lavender, buddliea and a couple of verbena bonariensis being the exceptions. i ended up with a butterfly list of 20 or 21 species in the end. the most numerous occasion i recall was 21 butterflies of 5 different species at the same time, 12 of which were gatekeepers on marjoram. so keep up the good work. It really is worth it.

Chris

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Dec-11 02:57 AM GMT

Cheers Chris - I certainly intend to keep on top of "not doing too much" in the garden this year. It's great I can leave alot of stuff as it is and say "it's for the butterflies and other invertebrates" and "I want a more wildlife friendly garden", no more weeding or pruning (except in the veggie plot of course) I saw something on one of the recent River Cottage programmes where this gardener does no digging and lets other plants do it for him - sounds like something I need to investigate! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Garston Wood

by Wurzel, 19-Dec-11 03:00 AM GMT

Garston Wood



Garston Wood is a 34 hectare RSPB reserve in North Dorset close to the village of Sixpenny Handley. For a couple of years it was my "local patch" for birds but I discovered it was great for butterflies too after a late season trip with Lottie, my younger daughter. It is an ancient Hazel coppice with a number of woodland clearings. The RSPB have stepped up their management over a number of years; even opening up the small, dark and at times seemingly impenetrable area of conifers and exotics. Indeed this area has provided some of my best butterflies at this site...



These shots were taken relatively early in the season as a recce for future visits and part of a whistle stop tour of a day that included Slop Bog and

Martin Down! Once I'd pulled up in the car park I headed off to the right of the car park to the previously mentioned cleared area. It was a warm day and I worked my way along the edge of the reserve where there were plenty of large bramble bushes left intact. As I wandered up the hill the path veered into the middle of the clearing and here was a large strip of bramble bushes, standing like an oasis amongst the desolation of logs and stumps. This served as the focal point for the butterflies with Comma, Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Speckled Wood all visiting the flowers to nectar with the added bonus of a picnic table and benches. Somewhere to sit back, pour a coffee and enjoy being surrounded by butterflies! With whites, more Meadow Browns and the addition of some Ringlets, it made a great pit stop.

Stars of the show were the Large Skipper and beautiful, velvety Ringlet, almost galaxy chocolate covered. The skipper acted in typical skipper fashion – a psychotic ball of rage buzzing everything in sight and sitting still for no longer than 2 seconds at a time. The Ringlet was much more reticent, walking over leaves to avoid my camera lens and trying to hide under the bramble leaves.



Slightly later in the season I made a number of visits even taking the whole family. As it's so close to my parents we could stop off for a "quick" walk before heading on for a huge lunch, almost the appetiser!

The "clearing" as I called it was the main focus and provided most of my shots. The Brambles provided excellent habitat for Silver Washed Fritillaries. I had a couple of different techniques to get shots of them. There was the "follow" where I'd literally stay on the tail of one individual until it had landed three times, and then I'd back off and then let it go about its business. Or I could use the dash and grab where I'd stand back then nip in, get my shots and nip back before it had a chance to realise that I'd snapped it. The easiest strategy by far was to just stand by a bush and wait for them to come to me, or even better wait with a coffee at the picnic bench!

This year certainly seemed to be a good one for Silver Washed at Garston and I was rewarded with some cracking sights on a number of visits. As seems the way the males were out first, earlier than expected and then the females by some of my later visits. I did find my way round the whole of the reserve a number of times, and whilst there were Silver Washed along the rides, the clearing offered easier photographs and greater numbers of butterflies.





During one of these visits to find Silver Washed I managed to find and photograph a real gem of a butterfly, the jewel in the crown of Garston Wood – Greenish Silver Washed Fritillary. This is the common name for the form valesina which only affects females; where the orange is replaced with a bluey green.

The first time I ever encountered it was last year, here at Garston, on brambles in the clearing before it was cleared. This year I was with my family, we were just heading back to the car park when I came across a small bramble bush along the main path. This one bush held a Comma, male Silver Washed and a White Admiral. While trying to get some shots of the White Admiral something else almost black and white, but larger, drifted down from the shadows. It was a pristine Valesina. Unfortunately I'd been using my camera for portraits and hadn't reverted back to macro settings so the shots weren't great. Cursing we headed off for lunch at my parents. The following weekend I was back, all set up properly this time! As well as more usual Silver Washed there was also a cheeky little Small Copper, and an aberrant Gatekeeper with unusual spotting. But I was here for Valesina and back at the same bush it was there again, hanging back, staying in the shadows where its colouration helped it blend in...stunning!





Have a goodun

Wurzel

p.s. Happy Xmas and a prosperous New Year!

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 19-Dec-11 03:09 AM GMT

and doesn't that patch of garlic smell. i went a couple of times before i bought the camera, didn't make it back after. will have to meet up at Martin Down sometime. i could do with the local knowledge 😊

Have a good'un

Chris

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Dec-11 06:24 AM GMT

Cheers Chris - what little knowledge I have I'm willing to share so we'll definitely have to sort out a meet in season!

Have a goodun (Christmas and New Year that is!) 😊

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Dec-11 04:26 AM GMT

I decided to interrupt my Sites and Sights series of posts today as 2 fantastic things happened today.

First: I was choosing books with my daughters in the library when in the childrens section I stumbled across an amazing book. It's called "INSECT DETECTIVE" and is written by Steve Voake and illustrated by Charlotte Voake. Amongst the beautiful cartoonised watercolours is brief yet informative text covering Wasps, Ants, Solitary bees and Dragonflies and at the end of the 25 pages there are suggested Insect Detective activities - why didn't I have this book when I was 6?! My younger daughter (3) sat entranced by the images and the main text while my older daughter (6 and 5 months) loved the extra information surrounding the main text. Brill!

Second: It seems the nature watching rubbed off as the second fantastic thing was my younger daughter telling me "we're going birdwatching at the hides, okay". So we ended up at Blashford Lakes in the dim afternoon. Highlight for her was watching the feeders in the Woodland Hide with their Nuthatches and Woodpeckers. Highlight for me was watching 20+ Goosander roosting and glowing pink in the falling sun with my little girl nestled up. Turns out however that she wasn't showing affection to her dear old dad as she then pushed me out the way so she could use the scope! 😊



Have a goodun (Christmas and New Year that is!)

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Gibster, 21-Dec-11 05:27 PM GMT

Hiya Wurzel,

do you ever visit <http://dorsetbirds.blogspot.com/2011/12/reports-tuesday-20th-december-2011.html> (shows the daily listings of Dorset birds) There are quite a few "goodies" around at the mo.

Catchya later mate,

Gibster.

PS - there's a bunch of us staying at Portland Bird Obs 3-6th Jan if you fancy tagging along? Got the place pretty much to ourselves!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Dec-11 06:09 AM GMT

Cheers Gibster - I am gutted that there have been Great Grey Shrike and Short Eared Owl at Wyke Down as that just down the road from my mum's! I'll be lucky if I can get out again now until the big one on the first 😞 Hopefully a few Waxwing might end up over here like they did last year 😊 Failing that a lifer or two on the first would be nice! I,m back to work that week but if the 6th is a Saturday then I might try and blag it past the missus 😊

Have a goodun (Christmas and New Year that is)

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Dec-11 02:29 AM GMT

Godshill



Godshill is part of the New Forest and is an area of undulating lowland heath land. Having parked and walked across a cricket ground I set off down the

hill towards the bottom of the valley. On either side Gatekeepers flashed from the Gorse one of which was almost black and was nicely balanced out by a very bright Small Copper.



I first read about this hotspot for Grayling on a website and included in the description was a map with an arrow helpfully indicating where to go to see Grayling. There exactly at the arrow tip was a Grayling. Luckily for me it was in the middle of the path so didn't blend in well so I was able to get my eye in.

First impressions were that it was large, very discreetly marked and had an unusual behaviour. It would fly so you'd be able to just follow it and then it would flutter lower and suddenly drop into the grass or onto the path. Careful stalking would get to the exact spot it had landed but it wouldn't be there, until your shadow fell on it. Then it would explode up from right under your nose and you'd have to repeat the whole procedure again.

By the end of an hour I'd almost perfected the stalk required and had managed to get a number of shots of different individuals and it was then that I realised how variable they were – some were almost black and white, others beige. Whatever colours they wore they were simply stunning in their subtlety.





Have a goodun

Wurzel