

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Mar-12 02:20 AM GMT

Sunday 11th March 2012

I has been a beautiful Spring day here in the West Midlands.

I had my first butterfly sighting of the year when I disturbed a Red Admiral in my back garden earlier this afternoon. I went and grabbed my camera and waited around for a little while in case he returned but it was not to be.

Looking up at the clear blue skies I decided to pop round to Elmdon Park nature reserve to see if anything else was about. The nature reserve area is seperated from the actual park by a wooded area with footpaths cutting through and last year I saw numerous Peacocks and Commas here in late March and early April.



Elmdon Park Nature Reserve – path through trees.

I was not long before I saw my first Comma this year and managed to take my first butterfly photo of the year.



Comma – Elmdon Park Nature Reserve.

The paths lead out into a couple of meadow areas seperated with hedgrows. There were some clumps of primroses under the shrubs along here. Along these stretches I saw a couple of Peacocks and another Comma.



Elmdon Park Nature Reserve.



Elmdon Park Nature Reserve – Primroses in the hedgerows.



Elmdon Park Nature Reserve.



Peacock – Elmdon Park Nature Reserve



Comma – Elmdon Park Nature Reserve

Going around the area in a circle I headed back through the trees and saw the first Comma again and another Peacock. Both butterflies were patrolling at opposite ends of a small clearing and would often overlap each others 'airspace' which led to them tumbling and spiralling around each other for a few minutes until they broke off and went their separate ways until the next time.



Heading back through the trees



Comma – First individual again



Peacock – The Commas adversary

A very enjoyable couple of hours with a total of 3 Peacocks and 2 Commas seen which has started me off nicely for this season.

Bye For Now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 13-Mar-12 03:47 AM GMT

Great start to the year Neil, hope the rest of the year is equally productive, you've probably got used to your Panasonic by now so I look forward to seeing lots of great shots on your diary as the new season progresses.
Have fun!

Bill 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Mar-12 05:30 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Many thanks for the comments, heres looking forward to the season 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Mar-12 05:07 AM GMT

Sunday 25th March

A weekend of good weather saw me spending a few hours yesterday out in the garden, mowing lawns and generally pottering about and seeing what is showing signs of growth. Given the almost constant sun I was surprised to not see a single butterfly in the garden during the past two days.

This afternoon I decided to circle round to a couple of local spots to see what was about.

First call was Shadowbrook Meadows, about 10 mins from my house.



Shadowbrook Meadows – Solihull.

I spent about an hour here and saw 2 peacocks plus my first Small Tortoiseshell of the year. These were very flighty and the only photo that I managed was a record shot of the ST.



Small Tortoiseshell – Shadowbrook Meadows.

I then called in to Elmdon Park Nature Reserve where I had seen a few Peacocks and Commas a couple of weeks back. Sure enough, in about an hour or so here I saw half a dozen of each.



Comma – Elmdon Park Nature Reserve.

One thing that struck me at Elmdon was how dry the ground was considering we are still in March. The ground looked to me to look like what I would expect far later in the season. The Peacock photo below shows what I mean.



Peacock – Elmdon Park Nature Reserve.

I have still not seen a Brimstone this year, its all Peacocks and Commas for me. The Alder Buckthorn that I planted in my back garden last autumn is starting to burst into life so maybe that will tempt a wandering female, fingers crossed.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-12 06:37 AM GMT

I know what you mean about butterflies in the garden – I've had a few but nowhere near as many as last year – or is it just too early still? I'll swap you a Peacock for a Brimstone? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Mar-12 03:46 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

It may be bit early still around here despite the weather.....glorious days but I am still scraping ice off my windscreen at 06.30am when I go to work.

Looking back at my notes for last year it seemed that the first week of April was when things really got going and I started to see Speckled Woods, Holly Blues, and Orange Tips in my Garden. Looking at the forecast for the week ahead I reckon that there is a good chance I may just beat that by a few days this year 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 31-Mar-12 05:19 AM GMT

Friday 30th March

I have been at work all week during the best of the weather and today being Friday, when I finish earlier, it has clouded over and gone cooler. Even so, despite a rather dull and gloomy morning the sun did start to break through after lunch and by mid afternoon it was quite pleasant if not as warm as the past few days.

As posted last year in this diary, I had a large Sycamore tree cut down at the end of my back garden and this has opened up an area that I intend to 'develop' as a wild area with a focus on plants to encourage butterflies.



View down back garden

I planted half a dozen Alder Buckthorn 'whips' along the edge and end of the garden last November which are starting to show fresh growth. Apart from these and a Buddleia 'Pink Delight' that I planted last week, I am just waiting to see what comes up before I decide what to keep, remove, or plant. So far there are patches of Nettles, Garlic Mustard, and Forget-me-knots springing up as well Dandelions dotted about and loads of unidentified 'stuff'.



Back Garden - Wild area springing to life.

During the past couple of days there has been a Comma staking out a territory in this area and I finally managed to get a photo of him this afternoon.



Comma - Back Garden.

I was also pleased to see my first Speckled Wood of the year in the garden, a few days earlier than last year.



Speckled Wood – Back Garden

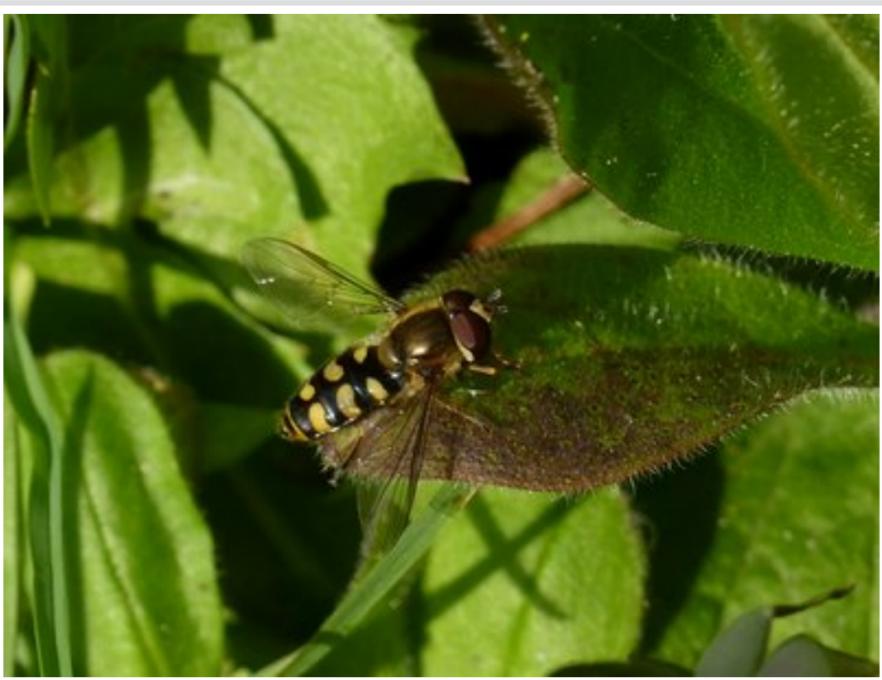
And then my first Small White that settled near the top of a six foot Lilac bush. I grabbed a chair out of the garage to stand on to get the photo below.



Small White – Back Garden

Closely followed by my first Holly Blue that flew in, did a circuit, and then departed.

There were also numerous bees and hoverflies, numbers of which have been increasing all week. I have no idea of the correct ID of any of these. There were loads of the one in the photo below,



Hoverfly – Back Garden.

A few of the one below, these kept hovering about head height in front of me so I managed to get this shot. I swear that he is smiling at me 😄



Smiling Hoverfly – Back Garden

And some of the ones below, again I do not know what they are.



??? – Back Garden



??? – Back Garden

The weather is looking a bit 'iffy' over the weekend so fingers crossed.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 31-Mar-12 05:58 AM GMT

Looking good there Neil and your prediction looks to have true, a couple of days and we'll be in April and most of the spring species seem to be about

😊 The next couple of weeks look like being back to normal so here's hoping the butterflies don't mind 😊

The Bees are something I been getting into recently, Chris C recommended BWARS last year and it's proved great for iding them. The little chappy could be some form of mining bee 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Lee Hurrell, 01-Apr-12 05:56 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Good to see your wild patch coming to life.

My first instinct on the last two were that they were bees rather than hoverflies, but I'm no expert I'm afraid.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Apr-12 05:41 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, Lee, thanks for the comments. I am afraid that if it is not a butterfly or one of a small number of moths then my knowledge of other insects is very limited.

I was thinking that the last two were maybe bees because they didn't hover like hoverflies 😊 mind you, that doesn't stop them from being something else entirely 😊

Sunday 1st April

Yesterday was dull and quite cold, in fact we had a bit of rain in the morning, not much but enough to wet the ground.

A little bit of cloud around this morning but by lunchtime it was clear blue skies, fairly pleasant but with a bit of a cool breeze.

I saw two Small Whites pass through the garden this afternoon and a single Holly Blue, all three were constantly mobile and didn't stay around long.

There is still just the one Speckled Wood in residence and he was also spending most of his time on the wing patrolling up and down the side of the garden. I did manage to get the one photo of him during one of his brief moments of rest.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 01.04.2012

Back to work tomorrow for the week and then I have a week off 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-12 06:37 AM GMT

What is it with the butterflies at the moment? They're not playing fair – never staying still long enough for a crafty approach – or just as you're settling to focus in they're gone! 😡 Still it's early days...and by the time you're on your week off the weather might have turned back nice again...fingers crossed.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-12 04:55 AM GMT

Wednesday 11th April.

Half way through my week off work and I think I have seen more rain than at any time yet this year 😬.

The Easter weekend was horrendous weatherwise but as my daughter came to stay for a couple of days with our little grandson the time was occupied anyway 😊

Today was the best day for a while with occasional brief bursts of sun but still with some heavy showers.

I went out for a bit this afternoon around Sheldon Country Park but unfortunately this coincided with one of the showery periods and with this and the cool breeze that was blowing I was not surprised to draw a blank.

Back home later in the afternoon the sun popped out for a little bit again so I went out into the still wet back garden to have a look.

First thing that I noticed were some cowslips that I planted last year in a rough part of the lawn towards one side. I remember getting these from Brandon Marsh Nature Centre last year when they had a sale of native plants. <http://www.warwickshire-wildlife-trust...-ssi.aspx>



Cowslips in the lawn

Once the Speckled Woods start to appear in my garden I can usually rely on seeing at least one at almost any time from April onwards and sure enough, having seen one before the weather turned, there was another one there today. Comparing with a photo of the previous one, it was definitely a different individual.

I am not sure how long adult Speckled Wood butterflies normally live for at the best of times let alone during the kind of weather we have had around here during the past week or so. I am guessing the one that I saw ten days or so back may not have survived through the turn in the weather and if he did he would be a bit bedraggled by now.



Speckled Wood – Back Garden.

I also had a visit from a Holly Blue of the type that I have come to expect e.g. appear from next door, do a circuit or two then disappear over the other side without stopping.

There were quite a few bees around, including a number of what in my ignorance I would call 'bumble bees'.

I noticed the bee below which is a type I had not noticed before, probably because I have not looked before 😊 Now that I am actually looking at the bees and hoverflies etc, it has surprised me how many different types I have in the garden.



Bee ??? – Back Garden.

The forecast for the next few days looks more like typical 'April Showers' weather albeit going a bit colder again for the weekend. Lets keep our fingers crossed.

Bye for Now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 12-Apr-12 06:19 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Your bee is the rather attractive Tawny Mining Bee (*Andrena fulva*).

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-12 06:25 AM GMT

Great shots there Neil, the Tawny Mining Bee is little gem! If the light catches it it can almost glow orange. Keep your eyes open for a slightly smaller grey and black bee – the Ashy Mining Bee, it's a beaut and my favourite. Here's hoping for some more clement weather 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-12 05:41 PM GMT

Thanks for the bee ID Mark, it is a rather attractive creature 😊

Wurzel, I will keep a look out for the Ashy Mining Bee. If I see any likely looking candidates I will post a photo on here for an ID.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Apr-12 04:54 AM GMT

Thursday 12th April – In the garden again.

Some sun and heavy showers this morning, in fact a couple were really heavy with that straight down like stair-rods type of rain. We went out family visiting and got back mid afternoon just in time for the clouds to clear a bit. Looking at the sky there seemed to be a fair bit of blue coming over so I made a coffee and sat out in the back garden with my camera to hand just in case.

The sun lasted for just under half an hour before the clouds came over again and during that time the same Speckled Wood from yesterday was patrolling up and down the border and basking in a couple of favourite spots. I took the opportunity to get a bit more practice in and took a few more photos of him.



Speckled Wood – back garden



Speckled Wood – back garden

I also had a visit from another Holly Blue....or the same one again from the past few days. How likely is it that these are different individuals? I know that Holly Blues wander about but do they just keep going or do they follow a circuit around ?

Anyway, this one decided to stop for a rest and settled just long enough for me to stretch up and get a couple of photos before she carried on her way 😊



Holly Blue – back garden



Holly Blue – back garden

Looking around the bottom of the garden I noticed a number of Seven-Spot Ladybirds,



Seven-Spot Ladybird

and this one,



Ladybird ???

There were also loads of bees of the 'bumblebee' type. I noticed there were at least three types of different size and tail colour. I am going to try a bit of seaching to try and identify them. None of them stayed still long enough for me to get a reasonable photo so theres one of my challenges for the next few days depending on if the weather is good enough for me to get out further afield 😊

It then clouded over again and we had another shower, a bit lighter this time, so I went back inside. By the time the clouds cleared again the tempereture had dropped and everything had tucked up for the night.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-12 05:59 AM GMT

Cracking shots there Neil 😊 Bees are catching aren't they – they're also good training for photographing butterflies as they don't still still for very long, and can be much smaller. I'm using BWARS for my identifications and it's a really useful site, check it out.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Apr-12 05:20 AM GMT

Friday 13th April – Orange Tips

Following a cold and dismal start to the day this morning the sun began to peek out after lunch and by mid afternoon there were some spells of quite pleasant sunshine. After a week of heavy showers today was the first day that we did not have any rain either 😊

I decided to get out for a couple of hours and headed over to one of my local spots, Castle Hills near Solihull, about 10 minutes drive from my house. This is an area of agricultural and grazing land that surrounds a group of listed farm buildings that are currently leased for residential use. There are a number of meadows that are broken up by hedgerows and small woods with a couple of public footpaths crossing the site.



Castle Hills – Solihull

I spent a couple of hours here and during that time the sun would pop out for ten minutes or so and then hide behind clouds for ten minutes or so. The two photos below were taken in the same area at different times in opposite directions and clearly show the conditions.



Castle Hills – cloudy



Castle Hills – sunny

Anyway, the main reason that I had come here was that so far this year I had not seen any Orange Tips and thought that this was one of the best local places to try.

When I first got there and started walking along the hedgerows it was fairly cloudy and initially there was nothing to be seen. As soon as the sun started to pop out though I saw my first Orange Tip heading up the path towards me.

I followed him for a bit and as the sun went behind a cloud watched as he settled on some Blackthorn blossom. I took a few photos of him settled with his wings closed and then as the sun came out again he opened his wings for a few seconds before taking off to continue patrolling the hedges.

I soon saw another one and then another and then another 😊

I found that the best way to get a photo was to watch them until the sun went behind a cloud and mark the spot where they settled. I could then approach carefully and take my photos of them settled with wings closed. I would then check the clouds and if it looked as if they would soon pass, I would wait. Usually, a few seconds after the sun hit the butterfly it would open its wings fully for a few seconds, long enough to get a couple of shots, before taking off.



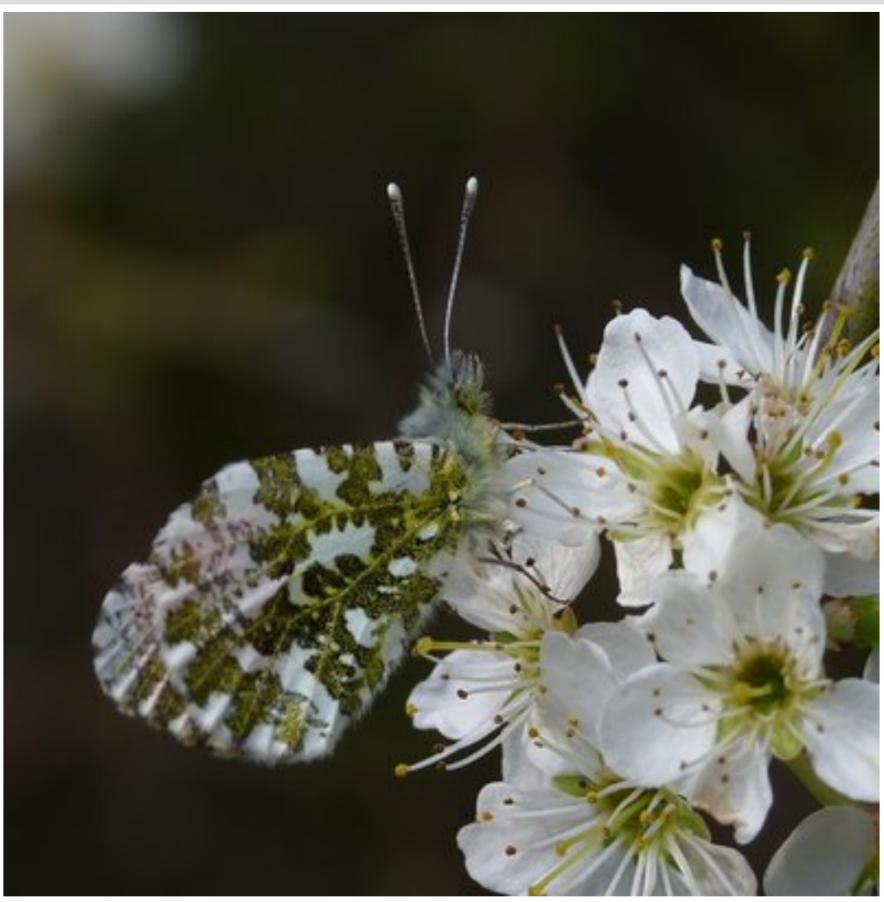
Orange Tip – Castle Hills Solihull



Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull



Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull

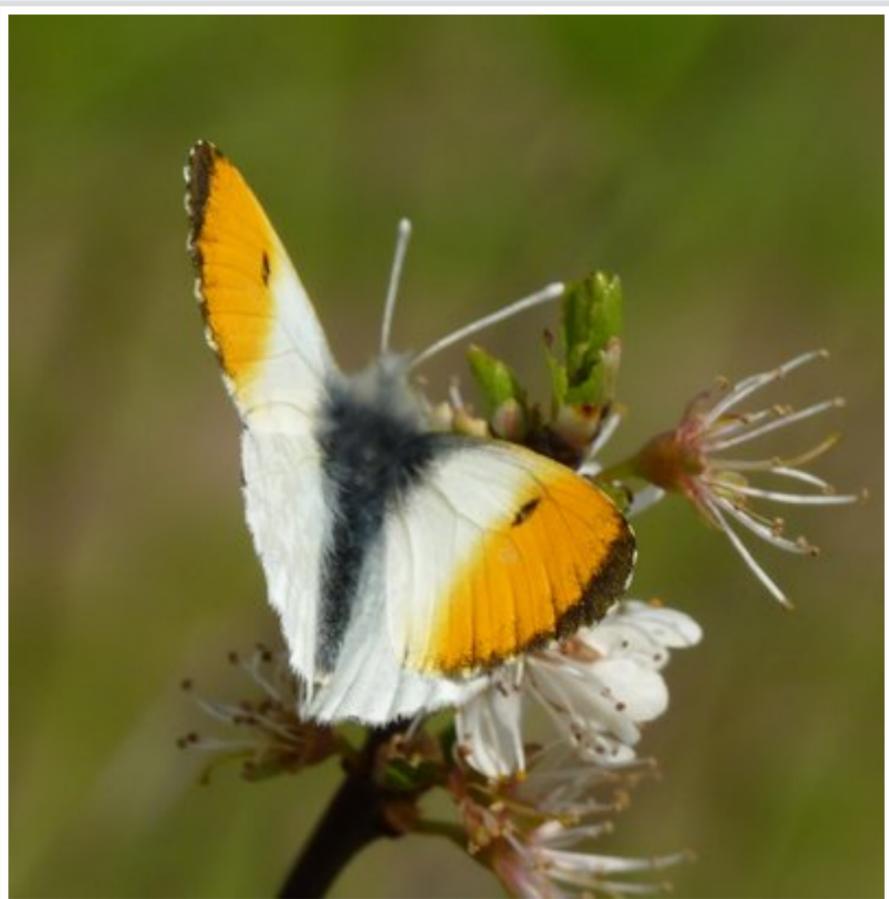


Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull



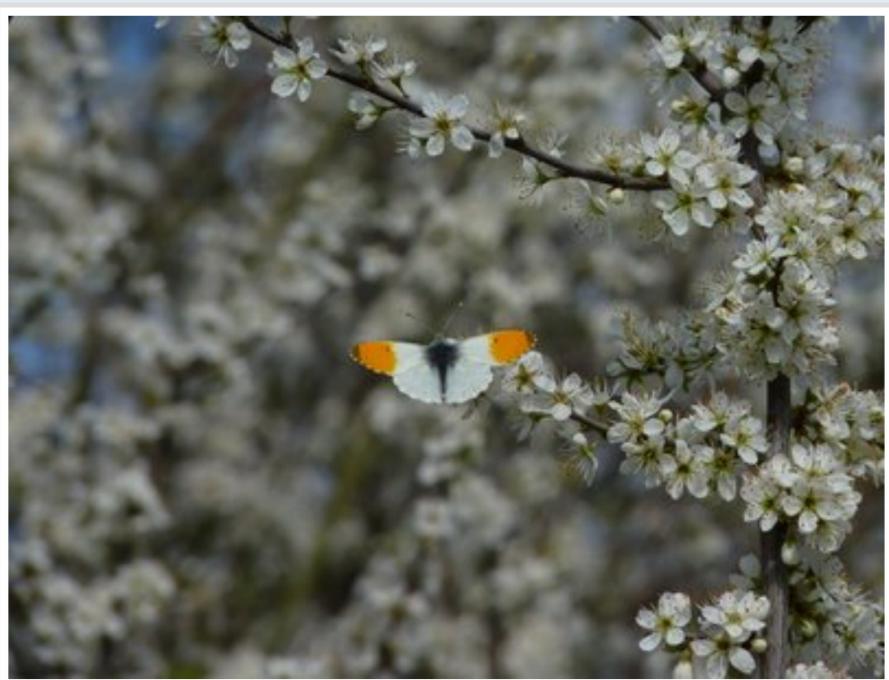
Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull

When I positioned myself to take a photo of the individual above, he proved to be the only one that didn't wait a few seconds with his wings open before taking off. I thought that he looked a bit darker at the time and checking the photos at home he seems to have more black on his forewings similar to some I have seen reported on other posts. Just my luck that this was the one I didn't get a better top shot of.



Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull

The photos above were all taken with the close up lens fitted to my lumix but I took the one below with it removed and at 18x zoom. I have posted it uncropped straight out of the camera as I just like the effect of the butterfly against the blossom. I just looks like Spring to me 😊



Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull

Other butterflies seen were single examples of Peacock, Small Tortioseshell and Speckled Wood.

Turned out to be a great afternoon, all the better for being unexpected given the gloomy morning.

Bye for now.

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-12 06:40 AM GMT

Some absolutely cracking shots there! 😊 The last one is a real gem as is the one with the sun shining through the wings, giving that great orangey glow.

The darker wing tips shot definitely do look darker to my mind – but I'm sure that others more knowledgeable than me will let you know if it's an aberrant. The "waiting for the sun to go in trick" is something I haven't tried with orange-tips so I'll give it a go, but it definitely works for Skippers – although they're much harder to find when they land suddenly! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Apr-12 07:13 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I'm still not sure about that Orange Tip, maybe just a very fresh one with shiny new markings that look darker.

Saturday 14th April.

Cloudier today with just a couple of short sunny spells.

The Speckled Wood in my garden has been joined by a second male and I watched them a couple of times when they met up and did that rising spiralling round each other thing that they do.

Planning to head over to Warwickshire BC Spring meeting tomorrow.

Bye for now,

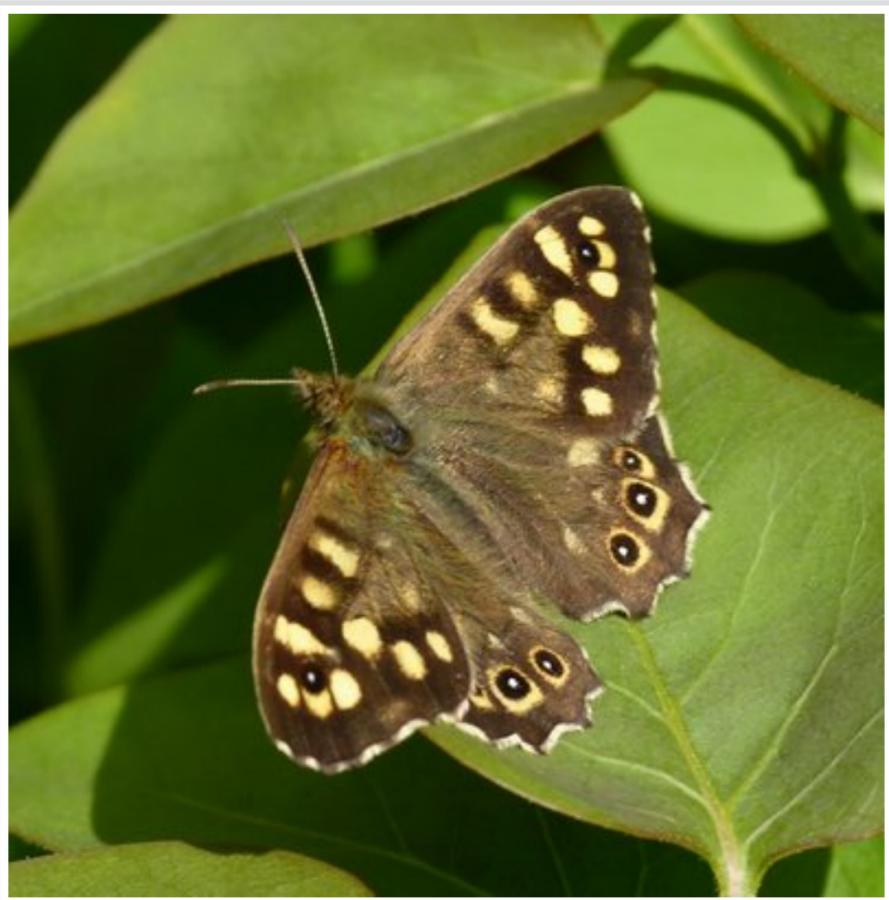
Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-12 05:05 AM GMT

Saturday 21st April

A reasonable bit of weather today from mid morning to mid afternoon has brought the Speckled Woods out in my back garden. At one point I could see three different males at the same time, all staking claims to their little patch of garden and intercepting each other and anything else that flew close.



Speckled Wood male – back garden



Another Speckled Wood male - back garden

I also had a brief visit from a male Orange Tip that that just passed through, thats the first OT I have seen in my garden this year 😊

After a bit of lunch, with the weather still holding I decided to go and have a look around some lanes about 20 minutes drive from me to scout out possibilities for return visits.

By the time I had parked my car and started looking around the wind had picked up a bit and some big black clouds were heading my way. Nevertheless, I walked along a public footpath between a couple of fields and managed to see a Peacock, two Small Tortoiseshells and a couple of Orange Tips, one male and one female. None of these settled close enough for photos and I returned to the car just in time for the first rain drops to start falling.

Looks like the weather for tomorrow and into next week is going to be more of the same.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 22-Apr-12 05:41 AM GMT

I also use the 'sun behind the cloud' trick for Orange Tips, and many other species. Much as we are complaining about the weather at the mo, we must remember that in warm, sunny conditions, Orange Tips fly endlessly all day without stopping, and there would be no photo's coming into the forums. And there have been many excellent ones already - i never tire of this fantastic species! 😊

The OT season is very short, and every day one is seen should be cherished.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-12 06:05 AM GMT

Much better shots of Speckled Wood than I got today 📷 Like you I'm diving out when I can to try and find some butterflies - those 2 weeks in March really spoiled us! Good luck and weather for next week...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-12 07:04 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments chaps, much appreciated.

I am fortunate with the Speckled Wood in that I have a small resident population in my back garden and can rely on them being there when the sun pops out.

Even though they are there almost continuously from early April until October usually, I never get bored of watching them and taking ever more photos in search of a 'better' shot.

And I agree that the Orange tip season is all too short, especially when the weather limits the time that you can get out and about.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

Sunday 22nd April.

Its been another one of those days with loads of cloud, some heavy showers and a few sunny spells in between.

Mid morning, I was in the kitchen looking out of the window when I spotted an Orange Tip perched on one of my shrubs. The shrub in question is a Mock Orange (Philadelphus) that is just starting to show new growth.

As this side of the house doesn't get any sun until around midday I presume that the OT had roosted there since yesterday afternoon when it clouded over for the rest of the day.

I grabbed my camera and took a few photos whilst he was waiting for it to warm up a bit.

The one below was taken leaning out of the kitchen window and is straight out of the camera apart from a resize to post on here. The butterfly is about 20 feet away from the window, you can just see him in the centre of the photo.

I only realised afterward that these first photos were taken with the close up conversion still set to 'on' in the menu because I forgot to change it 😞



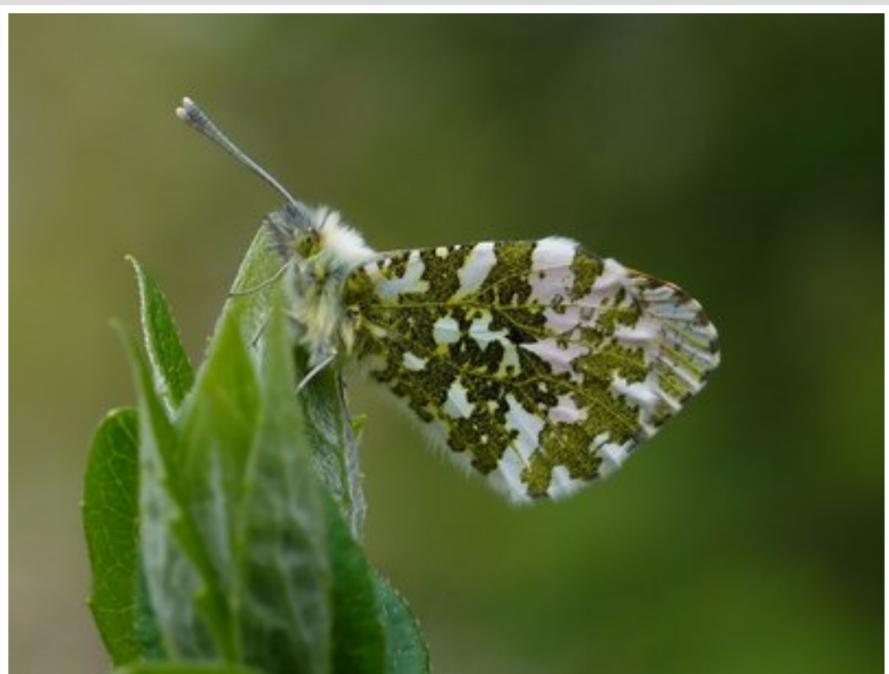
Orange Tip from kitchen window

The next one was taken from the same position with the cameras maximum 18x optical zoom.



From Kitchen window 18x zoom

And the rest were taken with the close up lens fitted.



Orange Tip - back garden.



Orange Tip - back garden

I kept checking on him throughout the morning and he hung on to his twig through a couple of short, sharp showers. Eventually, just after midday the sun came out long enough to warm him up enough to take flight and I looked out just in time to see him take off. He landed again half way down the border before continuing on his way.



Orange Tip - back garden.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Apr-12 03:39 AM GMT

Well, hasn't the weather been dismal this week!!!

Loads of rain, mostly in the form of heavy showers with very little in the way of sun in between, in fact I don't think that it stopped raining all day yesterday and through last night.

A little bit better today with a couple of sunny spells this afternoon and I saw my first butterfly of the week, a Green Veined White in my back garden which was also my first GVW for this year 😊



Green Veined White – back garden.

He did not stay still for long, probably making the most of the brief bit of sun which actually felt quite warm whilst it was out.

The next few days are not looking much better....possibly a bit of sun on saturday, we'll wait and see.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by ChrisC, 27-Apr-12 03:53 AM GMT

I noticed it was a certain persons Birthday today. many happy returns 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Apr-12 04:40 AM GMT

Thanks Chris,

I think the GVW was a special present 😊 considering the weather we have been having.

Re: nfreem

by Lee Hurrell, 27-Apr-12 04:45 AM GMT

Happy Birthday Neil 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-12 06:02 AM GMT

Happy Birthday! Did you ask for butterflies as a present? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Apr-12 06:45 AM GMT

Hi Lee and Wurzel,

Many thanks for the greetings.

I didn't ask for any butterflies but I did get a couple of books 😊

This one to help me with ideas for my wild end of the garden

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/0955 ... 06_s00_i01](http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/0955...06_s00_i01)

And this one to help me identify some of the other little critters I am seeing

Cheers,

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-May-12 04:47 AM GMT

Monday 2nd May - In the back garden again.

My PC died at the weekend and at the moment I am reduced to using my sons laptop to get online. There is another PC in the house which is currently set up as my sons gaming machine as well as another laptop....methinks there is going to be some conversations around these over the next few days



Anyway, following a few days of miserable gloomy weather and rain, it brightened up today....whilst I was stuck at work.

I got home at around 4.00pm and went out into the back garden. It had clouded over a bit by then but was still fairly bright and reasonably warm.

Within minutes I saw a Speckled Wood, not sure if he is a survivor from last week before the weekends rain or if he has emerged today...he looks fairly fresh ?

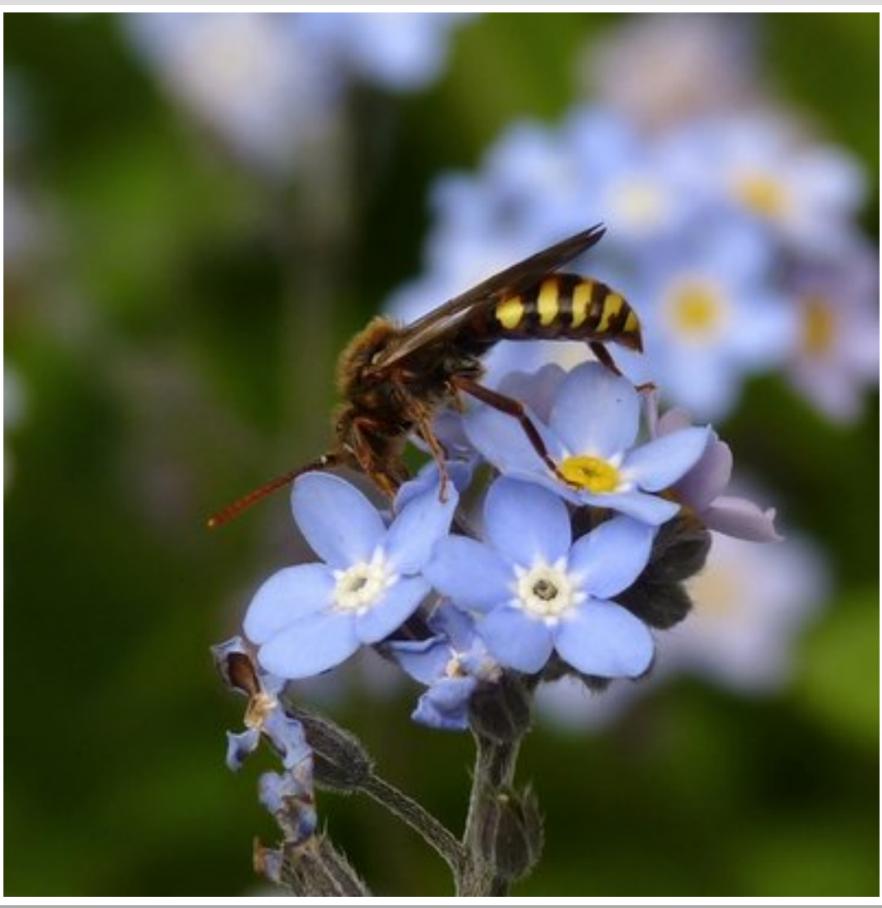


Speckled Wood - back garden

The 'wild end' of the garden has loads of lush fresh growth including a nice patch of forget-me-nots that was buzzing with bees and hoverflies.



Forget-me-nots - back garden



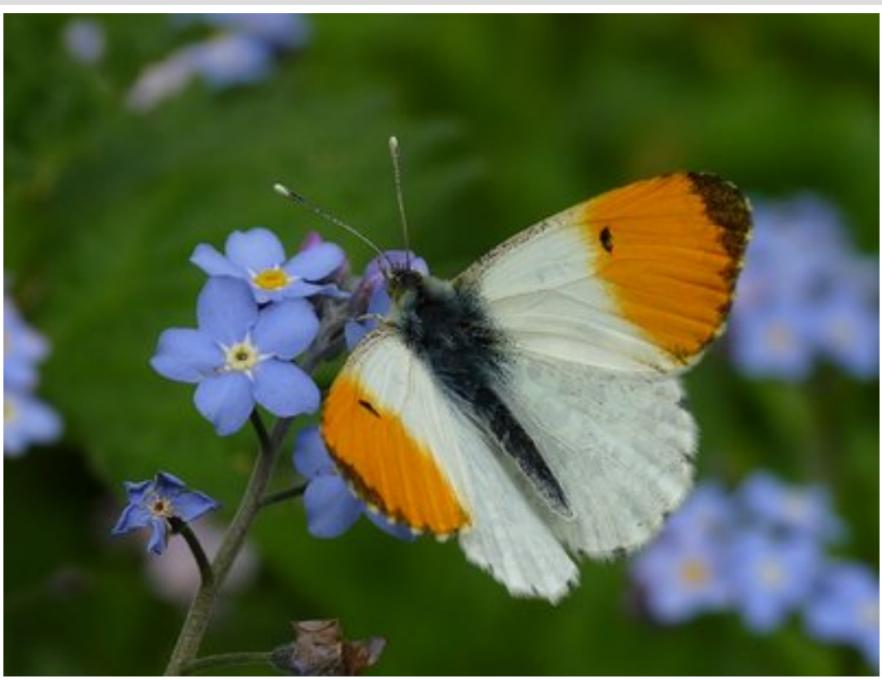
Nomada bee species...I believe?

Looking around this patch during a cloudy spell, I spotted an Orange Tip settled on the flowers.



Orange Tip - back garden

The sun briefly popped out again for a few minutes and he obligingly opened his wings before closing them again as soon as the sun went in.



Orange Tip - back garden

I checked on him just gone 8.00pm and he is still there having settled in for the night on the same flower head.

Also spotted in other parts of the garden were this pair of bugs,



Pair of Bugs?? - back garden

and this bee, I cannot decide if this a male Tawny Mining Bee or something else?



Male Tawny Mining Bee ???

Seeing some of the other sightings by UKB members I am starting to feel the need to get out further to look for some of the more out of the ordinary species.

Heres hoping that the weather turns for the better before long.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Pawpawsaurus, 03-May-12 07:46 AM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Also spotted in other parts of the garden were this pair of bugs,

<image>

Pair of Bugs?? - back garden

Yes, they're bugs all right - I believe they're Hawthorn Shieldbugs, *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*, the largest species we have.

Paul

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-12 03:03 AM GMT

Hi Paul, thanks for the ID on the Shieldbugs, I looked them up last night and that is what they are.

Thursday 3rd May - A bedraggled Orange Tip.

I got up to go to work this morning at 06.00am and it was raining...and it has hardly stopped all day, very grey and gloomy 😞

Getting home at just after 4.30pm this afternoon, I wondered if the Orange Tip that I posted about yesterday was still there on the forget-me-nots.

I waited for the rain to ease off a bit and went down the garden to have a look....and there he was, still sitting there looking a bit wet but otherwise perfectly ok.

I took a couple of photos and left him there to sit out what looks like being another wet night.



Orange Tip - roosting in wet back garden

I should be home just after lunch tomorrow and will check on him again, that's if there hasn't been enough sun by then to tempt him into the air.

Heres hoping.

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 04-May-12 04:06 AM GMT

Cracking shots 📷 😊 That's definitely a Nomada but I'm struggling with it due to the hairy back (could be ruficornis?)

The bee is most likely Andrena nitida...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-12 06:15 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Thanks for the Andrena bee ID 😊

I have a another shot of the Nomada if that helps?



Nomada bee - back garden

Cheers.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 04-May-12 06:51 AM GMT

Could be a female lathburiana judging by the dark red legs and head? Sorry still guess...I mean learning 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-12 05:37 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

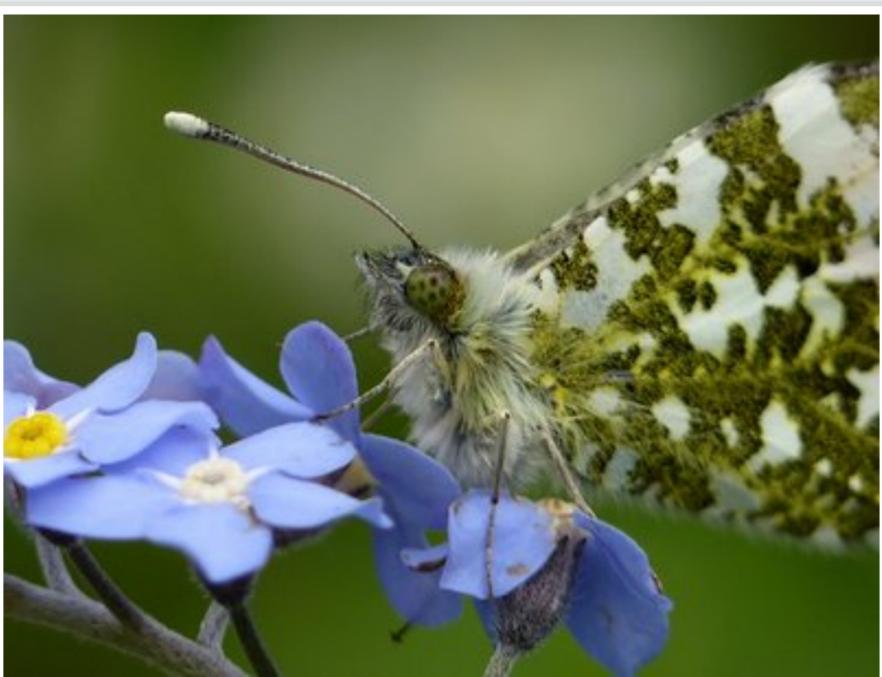
Sorry still guess...I mean learning 😊 Wurzel

I know exactly whay you mean Wurzel 😊 compared with butterflies, some other insects are not at all easy to identify 😊

Friday 4th May.

It was another dull day today with a couple of spells of drizzly rain but otherwise dry. The sun almost broke through this afternoon but only in a half hearted way and soon hid behind grey clouds again.

The Orange Tip from the past two days is still there and settled in for a third night on his forget-me-nots.



Orange Tip - third day roosting

There are some sunny periods forecast for tomorrow albeit with it going a bit cooler. I am hoping that it may warm up enough for him to continue on his way.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 05-May-12 06:48 AM GMT

When I found my Orange-tip still outside at 10:42pm I wondered then, as now, do they remain mentally active during the bad weather or do they "sleep"/go into some sort of stasis? Still if there aren't any other butterflies around tomorrow at least you know where to find one 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-May-12 04:50 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

When I found my Orange-tip still outside at 10:42pm I wondered then, as now, do they remain mentally active during the bad weather or do they "sleep"/go into some sort of stasis?

I have been wondering the same thing myself. I am guessing that being cold blooded, insects will go into some form of torpor when the temperature drops too low for them to function normally. When it gets warm enough, they then resume normal activity as if nothing had happened. That is certainly how it seemed with the Orange Tip in my garden.....

Sunday 6th May - the Orange Tip has left the garden

Yesterday was another cool and cloudy day and although the sun tried to break through a couple of times in the afternoon, it was just not enough to stir Mr Orange Tip in to action.

This morning I got up to sun and blue sky with a few fluffy white clouds dotted about. The spot where the OT has been settled is in the shade first thing but around 10.00am the sun moves around enough to shine full on him. Sure enough, after a few minutes of sun he started to open his wings. A few minutes later he took off, did a bit of a circuit of the end of the garden and settled again on a patch of nettles for a couple of minutes before taking off and carrying on his way 😊



Orange Tip - day 4 just before take off



Orange tip - on his way

From the time that I saw him settle until his leaving this morning he spent four days and nights in a quite exposed position in some heavy rain showers and quite cold night time temperatures. When he took of this morning he went off perfectly ok as if the past four days had just not bothered him.

Unfortunately by early afternoon it had clouded over but nevertheless I decided to have a bumble down to Snitterfield Bushes to see what the bluebells looked like. There were some nice looking carpets under the trees but looked to me as if another week would see them looking even better.



Bluebells – Snitterfield Bushes

Looks like rain again for the week ahead 😞 . At least I will be at work. Fingers crossed for next weekend.

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-12 04:09 AM GMT

Tuesday 8th May

Well I was at work today and how I wish I wasn't, the sun was out and the temperature had gone up a couple of notches. Not only was I stuck in an office but I was all bunged up and sniffing, hayfever or summer cold or something to make me feel even more dejected 😞

Anyway thats enough of me feeling sorry for myself because as soon as I got home around 4.00pm my spirits lifted.

The sun was still out 😊, so having half an hour or so before domestic duties beckoned, I went straight out into the back garden.

A flash of something orangey at the bottom of the garden caught my attention and proved to be a fairly fresh looking Comma, if this was one that has survived the winter and our spring so far, it is looking surprisingly good for it. It was very flighty and soon disappeared next door.

I next had a visit from a female Orange Tip, the first female I have seen this year. She settled briefly on a straggly cuckoo flower in the lawn and then a couple of times elsewhere before carrying on her way.



Female Orange Tip – back garden

After she had gone I checked the cuckoo flower and sure enough there was a single egg on it. I also have some good clumps of Garlic Mustard but these are not quite in flower and she ignored these.



Orange tip egg – back garden

There were also a couple of Speckled Woods, one of which spent quite a bit of time nectaring on the Forget-Me-Nots.



Speckled Wood nectaring on Forget-Me-Not

Also seen within a period of about twenty minutes along with the above were a couple of Holly Blues.

I also seem to have had an invasion of Ladybirds, mostly Seven Spot but with a few others as well. Standing in one spot and looking around I counted 26 in plain view without looking too hard.



Ladybird ?? – back garden

In fact the 'wild end' of my garden was positively alive with bees, flies and bugs of various kinds most of which were too mobile for photos, except this pair that look as if they are about to get disturbed 😊



'Oi!! get orf my leaf!'

It actually looks like, after the next couple of days of rain, the weekend will brighten up a bit.

Fingers crossed,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 09-May-12 04:52 AM GMT

Your last photo with the mating green bugs, is a lovely and unusual picture, Excellent.

All the best,

Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-12 05:02 AM GMT

Hi Nick,

Thanks for the comment, glad you like it.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Susie, 09-May-12 06:35 AM GMT

I've been trying to find out what your ladybird is. I am not sure if it is some sort of variation on eyed ladybird or if it is a harlequin or something else. 😊
The only thing I can say for sure is that it's a ladybird. 😊

Funnily enough when I was doing an image search on eyed ladybird one of my avatar's came up from another forum. Funny the stuff that's floating around on the web!

BTW, smashing photo of the bluebell woodland. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-12 01:50 AM GMT

Hi Susie,

Thank you for your comments.

I think the Ladybird is too small for a Harlequin, its difficult to tell from the photo but it was a fair bit smaller than the Seven Spots that were all over the place. It was nearer in size to a Ten Spot ...which is a possibility as I believe that these can be very variable in colour and number of spots 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Gibster, 10-May-12 05:41 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

your ladybird is a Cream-streaked ladybird (*Harmonia 4-punctata*). Nice pics too!

Cheers,

Gibster.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-May-12 02:49 AM GMT

Hi Gibster,

Many thanks for the comments and Ladybird ID, much appreciated 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-12 03:58 PM GMT

Friday 11th May

I finished work for the weekend at lunchtime and spent the afternoon rushing around shopping etc, the plan being to keep my weekend as free as possible as the weather forecast is looking promising.

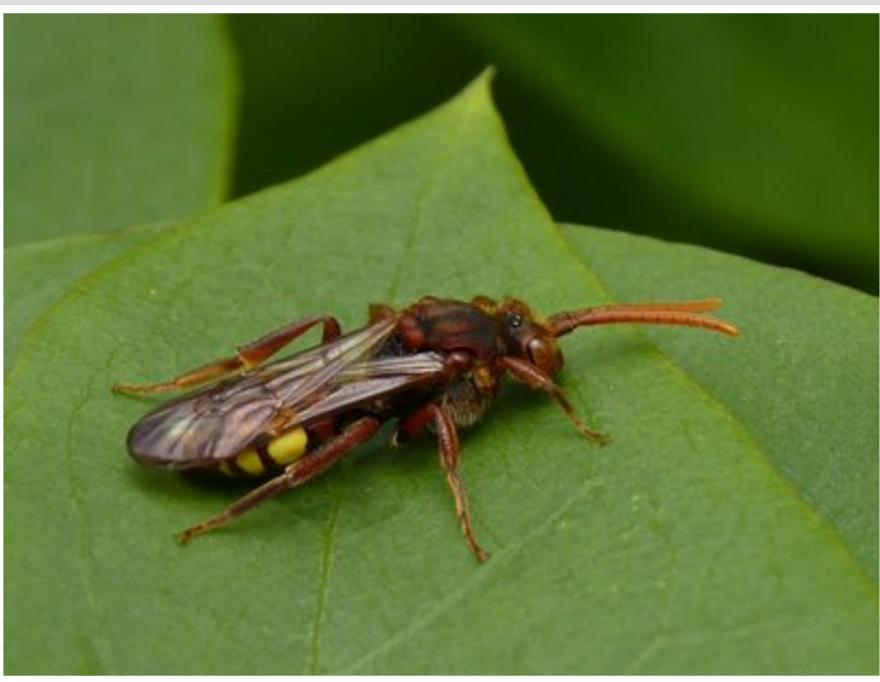
There were a couple of showers whilst I was out but by the time I got back home the sun was out and stayed out for a reasonable amount of time.

Twenty minutes or so in the back garden produced a passing male Orange Tip and a Green Veined White that spent some time flittering around a patch of Spanish x hybrid bluebells that have been there since I moved into the house.



Green Veined white – back garden

There were also loads of bees all around the garden including what looked like two different types of *Nomadas* plus various other types.



Nomada Bee species – back garden



Unidentified Bee ?? – back garden

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 12-May-12 04:07 PM GMT

Your garden sounds amazing Neil – sounds like it's teeming with insects and with so much going on there you don't have to venture far to get some lovely pics 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-12 04:24 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Pauline.

I am fortunate in having a large garden with a lot of mature trees and shrubs. I had a large sycamore taken out at the end of the garden last year which has opened up a decent space that I am developing as a 'wild area', there are some pics further back in the diary.

The garden truly has been a godsend this spring with the weather being like it has so far. There has been a decent amount of sun hidden amongst all the rain but it has been infrequent and comes in short spells that do not make it worth going out far. I only need a few minutes of sun to make it worth going out in the garden to see what is about.

It has helped keep the frustration at bay somewhat 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-May-12 04:15 AM GMT

Alright Neil, likewise the garden is a godsend for me too, if only I didn't have to do any upkeep 😊

I think the Nomada is flava and the other bee could be Andrena nigroaenea? Great shots as always 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-May-12 04:26 AM GMT

Saturday 12th May – In the garden again

The heavy rain that we have had so far this spring along with the intermittent sunshine has led to some very lush plant growth and my garden is no exception. I have not been able to do anything like the normal amount of looking after that I would normally do, even the 'wild bit' needs some attention if it is going to develop how I would like.

Therefore I decided that, despite the temptation to get out, I would spend the day getting on top of things in the garden, mowing, pruning, cutting back and generally catching up on at least a months worth of 'stuff'.



The 'wild end'

It was a beautiful day with the sun out most of the time, just being covered by some clouds on the odd occasion and from mid-morning onwards had almost constant visits from Orange Tips, Holly Blues, GV and Small Whites and a Comma.

I could not say how many in total as I do not know how many times I was seeing the same individual butterflys coming round again.

One thing that I did notice was that until today the Orange Tips were nectaring on Forget-Me-Nots mostly but today they were ignoring those and going exclusively for what I believe is Herb Robert.



Orange Tip on Herb Robert



Orange Tip female on Herb Robert

At first I thought the Holly Blue below was nectaring on the bluebell but then noticed it was taking moisture from outside the petals.



Holly Blue on Spanish xhybrid Bluebell

Thats enough from the garden for now, I am off to Prestbury Hill tomorrow 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-May-12 04:30 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

likewise the garden is a godsend for me too, if only I didn't have to do any upkeep 😊

Know what you mean Wurzel hence my last post 😊

Thanks for the bee IDs, I am slowly getting to recognise some 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-12 02:58 AM GMT

Sunday 13th May - Prestbury Hill Gloucestershire

Well, I finally got out of the garden and went out a bit further travelling down to Prestbury Hill in Gloucestershire for a butterfly walk organised by

Warwickshire BC.

About 20 people turned up for the mid morning meeting time with the weather being nice and sunny but with a cool breeze at the top of the hill. It was more sheltered further down the reserve and got quite warm at times before the wind picked up a bit more and it clouded over during the middle part of the day.

Later in the afternoon the clouds cleared and the sun came out again for a lovely end to the afternoon.

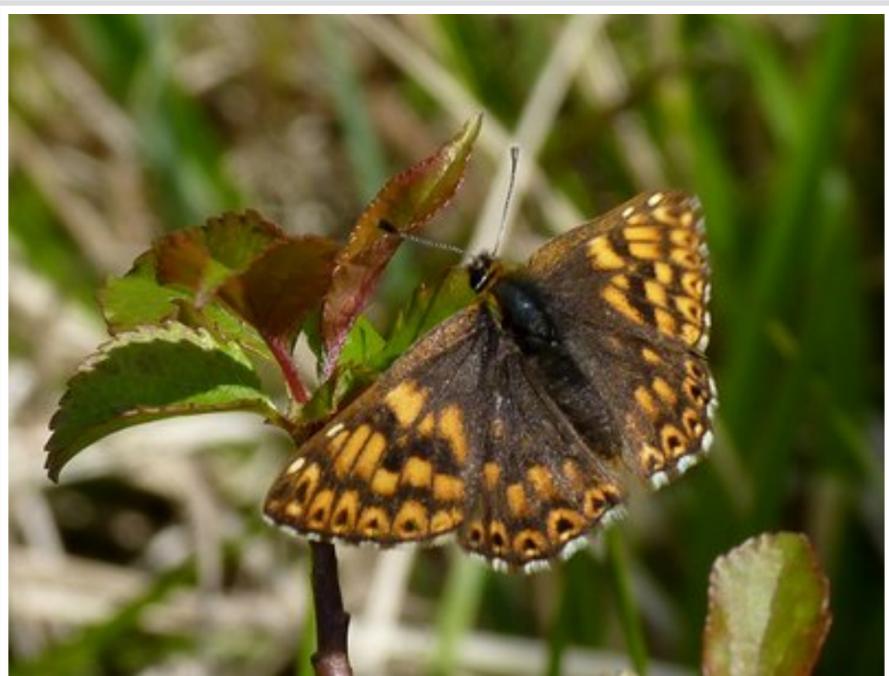
The main target for the day was Duke of Burgundy and I think that everyone saw a few with around half a dozen being seen by some. I believe that up until today (Sunday) Dukes had only been seen here on a couple of occasions so far this year, a single individual each time. We were obviously lucky with the weekend weather bringing a few more out.



Duke of Burgundy – Prestbury Hill 13.5.12



Duke of Burgundy – Prestbury Hill 13.5.12



Duke of Burgundy – Prestbury Hill 13.5.12



Duke of Burgundy – Prestbury Hill 13.5.12

Other butterflies seen were Dingy Skippers, Green Hairstreaks, Peacocks, female Brimstone, GV white, Small Heath and one very fresh male Small Blue that I saw in the morning but lost track of before I could get a photo. I believe that someone else in another part of the reserve later saw another Small Blue.

The windy conditions meant that the Dingys and Green Hairstreaks kept settling low down in the grass making photos difficult.



Green Hairstreak – Prestbury Hill 13.05.12



Dingy Skipper – Prestbury Hill 13.05.12

Other creatures of interest seen include a glow worm, a Wood Tiger Moth caterpillar and an impressive looking spider.



Glow worm – Prestbury Hill 13.05.12



Wood Tiger Moth larva – Prestbury Hill 13.05.12



Spider ?? – Prestbury Hill 13.05.12

An enjoyable day.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 15-May-12 03:07 AM GMT

Your spider is a Wolf Spider, If the size of the spider was about 15mm in length then its a female.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-12 03:44 AM GMT

Hi Nick,

Thanks for your comment.

I have just had another ID through twitter of a Nursery Web Spider, *Pisaura mirabilis*. Is that of the same family?

The body length was about 10/12mm with a leg spread of a good 35mm.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by ChrisC, 15-May-12 04:45 AM GMT

it is indeed pisaura mirabilis a very variable spider but one of my favourites.

Chris

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 15-May-12 05:23 AM GMT

In my book on insects it has Pisaura Mirabilis down as a Wolf Spider also know as a Nursery Web Spider, easily recognized by the light-yellow line on top of its head and the light coloured flaps beside her eyes.[attachment=0:2hlag4lf]7.5.2011 054-1_1.jpg[/attachment:2hlag4lf]

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-12 05:26 AM GMT

Many thanks for the confirmation Chris,

and for the extra information and photo Nick 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

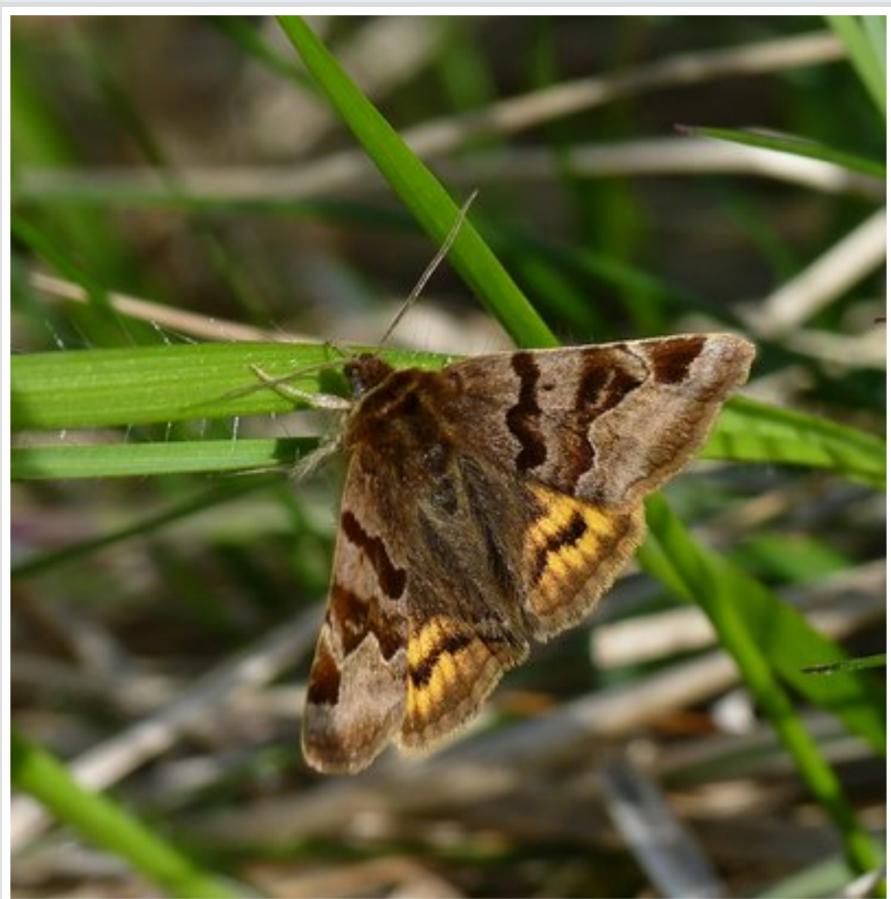
by Neil Freeman, 16-May-12 04:34 AM GMT

Sunday 13th May – Prestbury Hill – there's one....no its not!

Further to my earlier post on Sundays visit to Prestbury Hill, one thing I did not mention was that there were a number of Burnet Companion moths flying around.

When in flight these had more than a passing similarity to a Duke of Burgundy, especially earlier in the day before we had got our eye in and quite a few times I heard a cry of 'there's one...hang on...no its not'.

I remember last year trying to get a photo of one of these moths and found them very difficult to get close to so I was pleased when I managed to get the shot below.



By a spooky coincidence considering Paulines post in her diary about her Foxes, I was relaxing in the back room at home when I looked out of the window and saw a Fox chilling out in the evening sun looking like he hadn't got a care in the world.

I sneaked round to the back door and managed to get the shot below from about 25 yards away on full 18x zoom of my FZ38, the picture being cropped by about half.



Fox – Back Garden 13.05.2012

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 16-May-12 03:22 PM GMT

Neil I just love your photo and I am so envious. Although I have wild foxes visiting every night I have never had one looking so relaxed. Mind, having said that I have had a badger fall asleep whilst waiting for her cubs to finish eating! If you have any more similar encounters I hope you will PM me.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-12 05:10 AM GMT

Thank you for you comments Pauline.

No Badgers in the garden for me 🦡, although I do know where there are some not far away.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-May-12 03:48 AM GMT

Thursday 17th May

Nothing in the way of butterflies for me since Sunday, I have been at work during the days and the weather of an evening has mostly been cloudy if not downright gloomy.

The Orange Tip egg that was laid on Cuckoo Flower in my back garden last week has been going orange over the past couple of days.

I have been checking on it every so often and this evening when I went fo a look I found a male Orange Tip had settled down for the night on the same plant.

I tried taking a close up photo of the egg but kept on focusing on the plant so ended up practising on the butterfly instead.



Male Orange Tip and egg on Cuckoo Flower - 17.05.2012



Orange Tip - back garden 17.05.2012

Whilst I was taking the photos a small moth landed by me. It looked a bit like the longhorn moths that I have seen swarming in some places but had shorter antennae and seemed to have more of a 'brassy' colour.



Longhorn moth ?? - back garden 17.05.2012

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-May-12 05:57 AM GMT

Alright Neil - cracking shots as usual I like the tufts on the rear of the wings! 😊

I too have noticed some shorter antennae on the Longhorn moths and thought it could be either wear and tear or more likely the female? Just a guess though...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 18-May-12 06:24 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Your moth is a female Green Longhorn (*Adela reaumurella*).

I find them absolutely captivating creatures.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-May-12 02:03 AM GMT

Many thanks for the comments guys,

and Mark for the ID of the Longhorn moth 😊

I had a suspicion that it might have been a female but was not sure, up until now I have only seen what I presume are males with extra long antennae.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-May-12 04:54 AM GMT

Sunday 20th May

A dull, cloudy and fairly cool weekend here in the Midlands, I was tied up all day yesterday and most of today with 'domestic duties'.

Around mid afternoon today I had the chance to pop out for a couple of hours and decided to try and find a Grizzled Skipper.

I had still not seen one this year and looking through last years photos, I realised that I only had shots of the topsides. I did not hold out much hope for finding anything flying as it was too cool and dull but thought that would try my luck at looking for one roosting and get photos of one with its wings closed.

With this in mind I headed down towards Harbury as I know that Grizzled Skippers could be found there.

<http://www.warwickshire-wildlife-trust...-ssi.aspx>

Walking into the reserve I started looking around, there was nothing flying apart from a couple of large bees. After about 20 minutes or so of looking at dead seed heads and such like I found what I was looking for 😊



Grizzled Skipper - Harbury 20.05.2012



Grizzled Skipper - Harbury 20.05.2012

I took my photos and looked around for a little longer but by this time I was beginning to feel the cool wind getting to my hands so decided to call it a day and head home.

This was the only butterfly that I have seen all weekend but considering that I found what I set out looking for I was a happy chappy 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 21-May-12 05:15 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Lovely detail, particularly in the first shot, of a butterfly difficult to do justice to – at least in my opinion.

You obviously held a steady hand for those shots ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-May-12 05:47 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Many thanks for the comments, I think they are my first Grizzled Skipper shots that I have been happy with 😊

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

You obviously held a steady hand for those shots ...

The butterfly was only 12 inches or so above the ground and it was one of those lying down with elbows braced against the ground moments 😊

I am starting to see the benefits of an articulated screen 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 21-May-12 06:03 AM GMT

Some very nice images Neil, considering the weather we've had you've done exceptionally well, keep up the good work 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-12 05:55 AM GMT

Hi Bill, thanks very much for the comments 😊

Tuesday 22nd May

A couple of cracking days weather and I am stuck in work. I went out for a quick stroll round the block at lunchtime and almost immediately saw a male Brimstone passing through.

It then dawned on me that this was the first male that I have seen this year, I had seen a female a couple of weeks back but that has been it for me so far this year. Perhaps that is the price I have paid for all the Orange Tips I have seen, can't have it all 😊

I arrived home this afternoon and after the 'domestic duties' had been done I spent an hour or so doing some gardening followed by another hour or so of chilling out and listening to the birds singing as the afternoon turned into evening.

Butterflies seen in the garden were the usual Orange Tips, Holly Blues, Speckled Wood and Green Veined White.



Green Veined White - back garden 22.05.2012



Green Veined White - back garden 22.05.2012

Another good day forecast for tomorrow, hoping to get out for a couple of hours. I don't know where yet, will see where I end up.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 23-May-12 06:25 AM GMT

That second shot is a classic delicately balanced on the Dandelion head:mrgreen:

I too was stuck at work but I escaped for a few hours this evening, I can heartily recommend it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 23-May-12 07:38 PM GMT

Lovely pictures 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-May-12 05:30 AM GMT

Thank you for the comments Wurzel and DMS, much appreciated 😊

Wednesday 23rd May

I had managed to book the afternoon off work at short notice, not that easy usually 😊

After doing a couple of quick chores I headed down to Bishops Hill, about 40 minutes down the M40 for me. This is an area made up of Limestone waste from a local cement works that has made a remarkable recovery and part of it is now managed as a nature reserve.

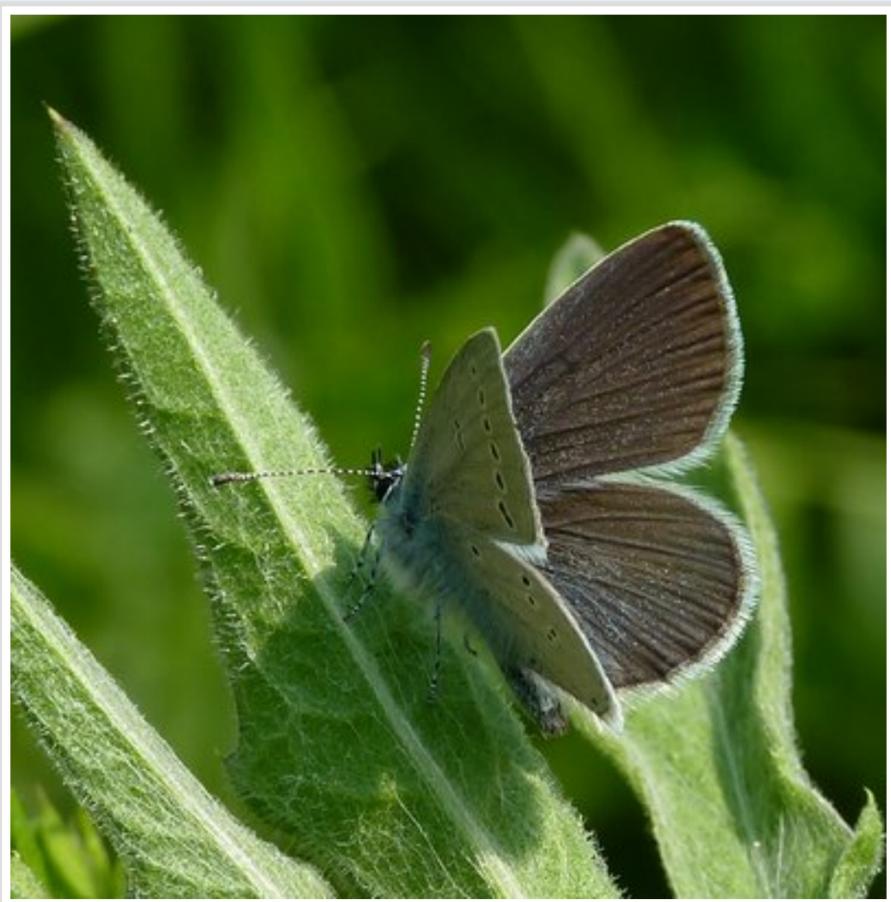
My main reason for heading to here is that it is one of a small number of places in Warwickshire where Small Blue can be found and I was figuring that the past couple of days of sun may have brought them out.

Indeed it had 😊.

I spent a couple of hours here and saw well over a dozen Small Blue along with equal numbers of Dingy Skippers. There may well have been more but I am wary of counting the same ones more than once.

Also seen were 3 Grizzled skippers, 3 Common Blue and a fair number of Orange Tips and Brimstones passing through, again I do not know how many times I saw the same ones going backwards and forwards.

It was very hot here and the butterflies were very active, occasionally settling in a slightly shadier place which enabled me to get some photos.



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 23.05.2012



Small Blue – Bishops Hill 23.05.2012



Dingy skipper – Bishops Hill 23.05.2012



Dingy skipper – Bishops Hill 23.05.2012



Common Blue – Bishops Hill 23.05.2012

Around 4.00pm I decided to carry on to Ryton Wood / Meadows which is about 20 minutes drive towards Coventry from here. I parked in the WWT car park at Ryton Wood and walked through the wood towards the meadows which are managed by Warwickshire BC.



Ryton Wood – 23.05.2012

Coming out of the wood, I headed to an area along the hedgerow where I had seen Green Hairstreaks last year and sure enough there were about half a dozen doing aerial acrobatics above some Hawthorne and around an Oak tree. These remained too high up to get photos of but I did manage to find a couple more further back in the meadow.

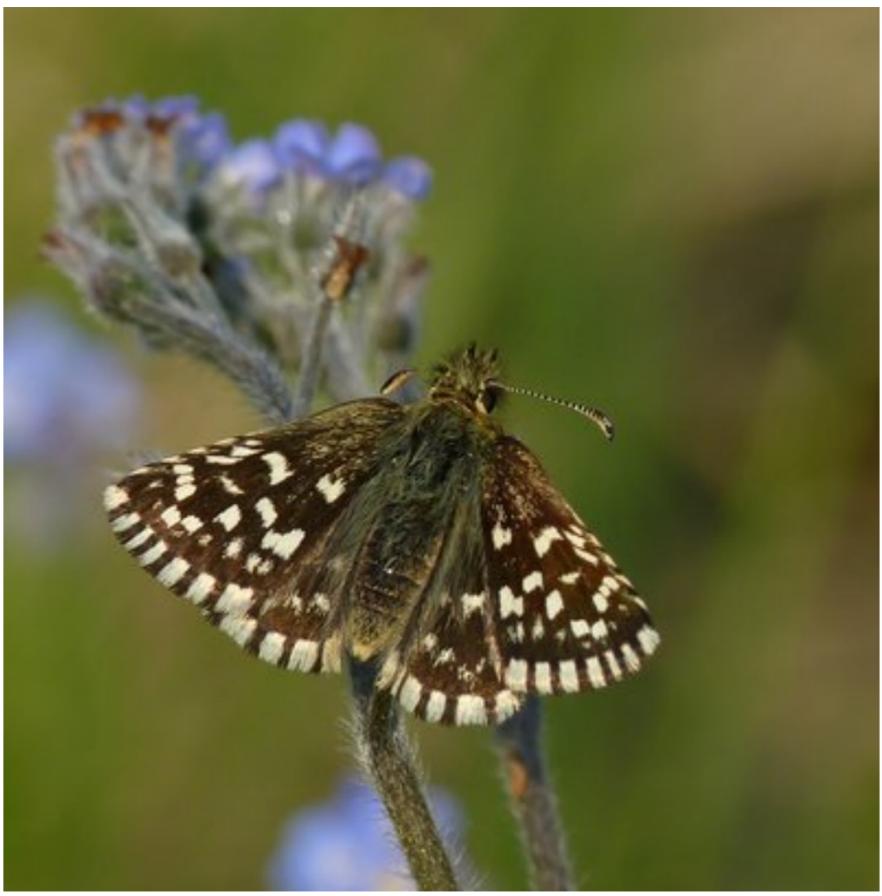


Green Hairstreak – Ryton Meadow 23.05.2012



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Meadow 23.05.2012

Also seen here were half a dozen each of Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and again a few Brimstones and Orange Tips passing through along with some whites that remained too far away to identify.



Grizzled skipper – Ryton Meadow 23.05.2012



Grizzled skipper – Ryton Meadow 23.05.2012

By this time it was around 6.00pm so I walked back through the wood to the car and headed home.



Ryton Wood 23.05.2012

A great afternoon into early evening and one which felt like the butterflies were finally out in numbers 😊

Back to work tomorrow then I am off to Norfolk on Friday for a week...fingers crossed for what I see there 😊

Bye for now

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 24-May-12 05:50 AM GMT

Great photos, nfreem, and one can sense your euphoria at finally seeing butterflies in decent numbers.

Is it me or is practically everyone seeing Grizzled Skippers this year?

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-May-12 06:44 AM GMT

Cracking photos again but it's that damn green thing again 😡 As it was low to the ground is it a female?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jun-12 06:45 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

it's that damn green thing again 😡 As it was low to the ground is it a female?

Wurzel

The shots are of 2 different individuals (sorry Wurzel 😊 I hope you have seen one by now). They are both females I believe, they were both shuffling about in clumps of Birds foot Trefoil which they breed on at this site.

Saturday 26th May - Norfolk part 1

I returned home today from a week spent on a family break, staying on a caravan site at Burgh Castle in Norfolk.

This was the first break that my wife had felt confident to go on since having her stroke at the end of 2010 and so with my 2 grown up sons we had booked a week when we could all get the time off from work and college.

My wife can get about a bit now with the aid of a stick or frame and with my sons around to help out it meant that we could get out a bit and do a bit of exploring and during the first weekend, when the weather was glorious without a cloud in the sky, we had a look around the local area.

Around the back of the site we were on there is the remains of a Roman fort (the 'castle' in Burgh Castle). The walk from the car park here passes through some lovely meadow areas and this was where we saw our first butterflies, Orange Tips, Large and GV Whites and a couple of Small Coppers 😊



Small Copper - Burgh Castle 26.05.2012



Small Copper - Burgh Castle - 26.02.2012

More photos to sort through so more to follow.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-12 06:50 AM GMT

Looking forward to seeing some more great shots!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

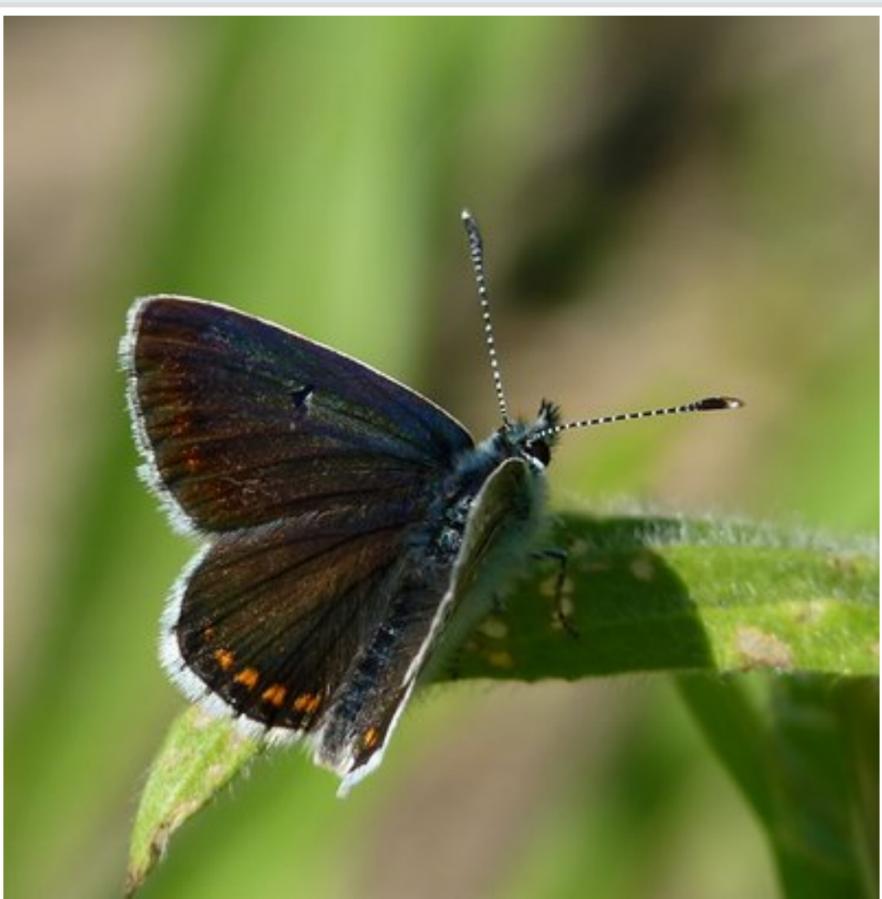
Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jun-12 11:33 PM GMT

Saturday 26th May - Norfolk part 2.

After chilling out for a little while later on Saturday afternoon, I decided to take a little walk around just outside of the site. I had spotted a lane leading down to some fishing lakes and thought it would be worth having a look.

Just before getting to the lakes there was a meadow area and it was not long before I had found a nice little colony of Brown Argus with around half a dozen individuals flying, mostly males.



Brown Argus - Burgh Castle 26.05.2012

I also spotted this mating pair and was just about to line up another photo when another male tried barging in 😊 . After a minute or so of attempted interuption he gave up and flew off.



Brown Argus mating pair - Burgh Castle 26.05.2012



Brown Argus - attempted interuption



Brown Argus - still trying

I also saw quite a few Peacocks, both around this patch and elsewhere around the local lanes. Some of these were fairly 'tatty' but some were in surprisingly good condition still considering how long they must have been around.



Peacock - Burgh Castle 26.05.2012

Also seen were large numbers of 'blue Damselflies', I believe the one below is an Azure Damselfly but could be wrong.



Azure Damselfly? - Burgh Castle 26.05.2012

The area was also patrolled by a Broad Bodied Chaser that I did not get a photo of and a Four Spot Chaser that I did 😊.



Four Spot Chaser - Burgh Castle 26.05.2012

More photos to sort through still,

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-12 02:24 AM GMT

Alright Neil? I had a look at your damselfly and I think you got it right- Azure Damselfly. I borrowed the Collins Complete Guide to Insects from the library the other day and the section on damselflies is really good with sketches of the second abdominal segments which are used to differentiate the little blue damsels. The "U" on your on isn't stalked making it an Azure. Cheers for providing me with an educational 20 minutes 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-12 10:38 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I have got the Collins book, a present from one of my sons last month 😊, that was where I got the ID but wasn't quite 100% sure I was seeing the marking right on the photo.

Monday 28th May - Norfolk part 3, Strumpshaw Fen.

Although seeing a Swallowtail was not the primary reason for going to Norfolk, considering that I was there at the end of May, it would seem remiss of me not to make the attempt 😊

I had seen on the Strumpshaw Fen website that the first one had been reported there on the previous Wednesday and as this reserve was only about 30 minutes drive from where we were staying I thought that, given the good weather for the following few days, some more may have emerged.

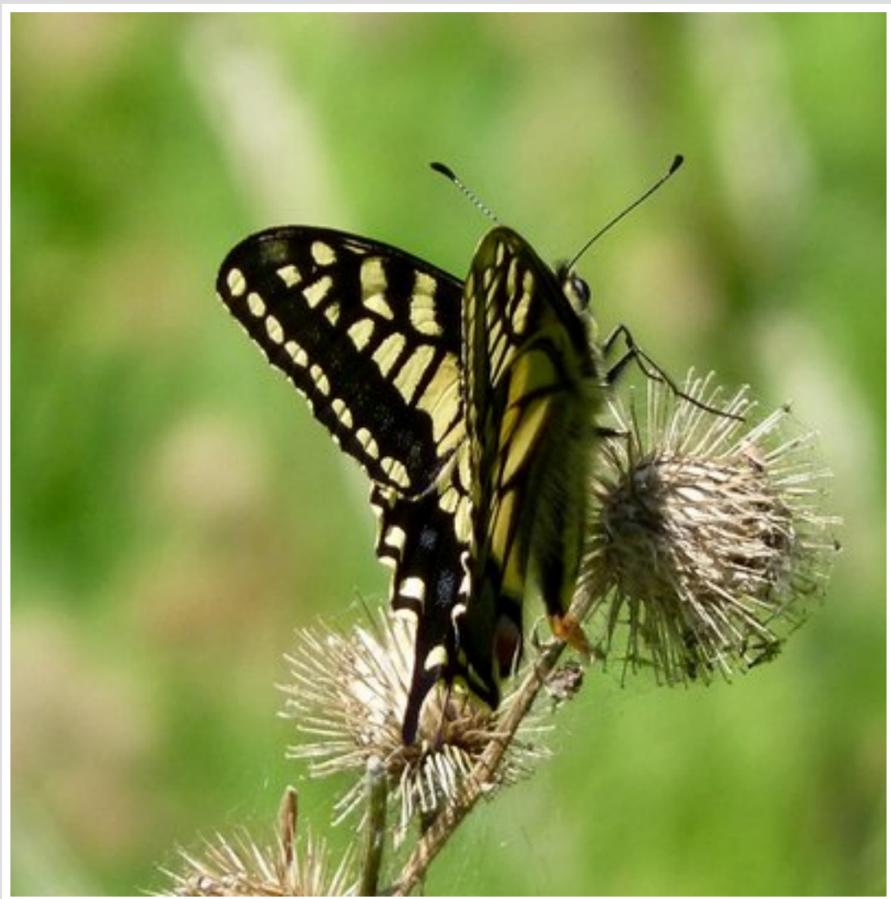
I checked the weather forecast and as it looked like a change was on the way from Tuesday, decided that Monday would be my best bet.

So it was that around 10.30am on that morning my eldest son and myself pulled into the RSPB car park at Strumpshaw Fen. We went into the visitor centre where we were informed that a Swallowtail had been sighted that morning by the Fen Hide.

Having read previous posts on UKB last year on where the best locations were I decided to walk along the lane past the Doctors garden and check out the bit of wasteland just past there before continuing on the trail around the fen.

Just before we got to the doctors garden there is a bit of an open area on the right hand side amongst the trees and this was where we saw our first Swallowtails, 2 of them very actively flying around each other.

We were soon joined by a few other people and stood watching for a while as they disappeared and returned a few times. Occasionally one would settle very briefly before taking off again and I managed to get a couple of photos, not that good but a first for me 😊



Swallowtail - Strumpshaw Fen 28.05.2012



Swallowtail – Strumpshaw Fen 28.05.2012

After a while we decided to continue on, passing the doctors garden where there was a solitary Peacock on the flowers and check out the wasteland in the corner just past there. We saw 2 Swallowtails here and believe that they were the same 2 from before and that they were flying between the 2 areas.

We then entered the fen and continued round the trail seeing numerous damselflies and some Hairy Dragonflies along with a number of Orange tips and Brimstones.



Strumpshaw Fen – trail approaching north corner



Strumpshaw Fen – A mating pair of Hairy Dragonflies

About half way along the trail from the North corner to the river we saw another 2 Swallowtails. These were again very active and during the time we watched them neither of them settled once.

We continued around the trail, seeing loads more Orange Tips, Brimstones, a few Peacocks and a solitary 'tatty' Small Tortoiseshell, eventually completing the full circle and then carried on back around to the area where we had seen the first pair of Swallowtails earlier that morning. There were quite a few people there by now who told us that the Swallowtails had been seen on and off for a couple of hours including when we saw the other 2 on the fen trail which makes me believe that we had seen 4 different individuals in all.

Also seen on the fen trail was the dragonfly below, I am not sure but think it may be a female Black Tailed Skimmer.



Strunpshaw Fen - Black Tailed Skimmer, I think.

And for the bird experts, is this a Reed Bunting?



Reed Bunting? - Strunpshaw Fen

Although I only managed the 2 record shots of the Swallowtails, watching them in flight and skimming over the tops of the reeds in the fen was an absolute delight.

We also saw a pair of Marsh Harriers performing over the fen, heard the calls of what I was told were Cetti's Warblers and saw a load of other birds, most of which were new to me.

Oh yes, and a Grass Snake along the trail by the tower hide.

All in all a really good day 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 03-Jun-12 11:40 PM GMT

Your Dragonfly could also be a Black-Lined Skimmer, could be wrong. And your Bunting is definitely a Reed Bunting as you suggested.

All the best,

Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jun-12 12:30 AM GMT

Hi Nick,

I have just done a bit of googling and it seems that Black Tailed Skimmer and Black Lined Skimmer are both common names for *Orthetrum cancellatum*.

And thanks for the confirmation on the Reed Bunting.

Cheers

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-12 03:42 AM GMT

Wednesday 30th May – Norfolk part 4.

The other species that I had hoped to see during our stay in Norfolk was Wall Brown. I remember these being quite common where I grew up in the Midlands but they seem to have disappeared, apparently the last one was recorded in Warwickshire in 2007.

Following advice given to me by a couple of people at Strumpshaw we took a drive up to Horsey where I had been told I should be able to find a Wall Brown on the path behind the dunes, although numbers here were apparently down on what they used to be.

We arrived at around midday just as the clouds were clearing with some nice blue sky heading our way and my eldest son and myself started out along the right hand path from the car park.



Horsey Dunes – right hand path looking towards car park

It was not long before we saw some Small Coppers and Small Heaths.



Small Heath – Horsey Dunes 30.05.2012

Walking a little further along the path I saw some movement to one side and there he was, my first Wall Brown for years 😊



Wall Brown - Horsey Dunes 30.05.2012



Wall Brown - Horsey Dunes 30.05.2012

This turned out to be the only Wall Brown that we saw although we didn't go much further as we had left my wife reading a book back at the car with my other son. Even so, I was a happy chappy as this meant that I had seen both the species that I had hoped to see whilst in Norfolk 😊.

We also saw quite few of these, some kind of sand wasp perhaps? something else for me to look up 😊



Sand Wasp? - Horsey Dunes 30.05.2012

Bye for now,

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-12 06:37 AM GMT

Wednesday 30th May – Norfolk, the final part.

We left Horsey after a couple of hours and as it had turned into a decent sunny afternoon we decided to do a bit of a detour on the way back and call in at How Hill.

We arrived at How Hill just before 4.00pm and after parking in the car park we all walked across the grass and down the track towards the little shop by the river.

Just before we got to the shop we spotted a Swallowtail flapping its wings and nectaring on a clump of small pink flowers.

This made my wife's day as she had now seen a Swallowtail herself after hearing my son and myself talk about them after Strumpshaw. Unfortunately, before any of us could get our cameras into action it flew off over the river.

We went into the shop and told the gentleman behind the counter of our sighting and he told us that just one other had been seen earlier that day.

We spent a little while at How Hill and saw a few Orange Tips, a Brimstone and a Peacock but no more Swallowtails.

Continuing on our way, just before we got to Great Yarmouth, we turned off past the racetrack to check out the dunes along the front to see if we could find anything of interest.

We parked up on the road along the front and whilst my wife and no.2 son stayed at the car reading their books, no.1 son and myself went for a look.

We had only gone about 20 yards when we spotted some Common Blues basking in the early evening sun. The more we looked, the more we saw, and all along the stretch of dunes that we looked we found them in various size groups.



Common Blue male – GT Yarmouth north dunes



Common Blue male – GT Yarmouth north dunes



Common Blue female - GT Yarmouth north dunes



Common Blue female - GT Yarmouth north dunes



Common Blue underside - GT Yarmouth north dunes



Common Blue mating pair - GT Yarmouth north dunes

By the time we left the butterflies were taking up roosting positions for the night.



Common Blue - formation display team

Thats it, the last update from our week in Norfolk. Thursday was cloudy so we went and did did some shopping and touristy stuff and Friday we came home.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by ChrisC, 05-Jun-12 06:03 PM GMT

great last shot of the display team 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-12 10:05 PM GMT

Thanks Chris 😊

I have been reading with interest the comments on other threads on UK from those who have bought the Panasonic Lumix FZ150.

For a number of reasons, not least being the articulated screen, but also the fact that my eldest son has been showing an interest in taking photos of butterflies and other 'little critters', I decided to treat myself and splash out on a FZ150 and pass the trusty FZ38 on to him.

I am expecting my photos to remain at about the same standard but, like others have said, hope to find it a bit easier to take some of them, my joints have begun to creak a bit lately 😊

I took the new camera out with me yesterday to the Wyre Forest to try out. No close up lens fitted as yet, I need to get a new adapter.

Monday 4th June - Wyre Forest

Not having managed to see Pearl Bordered Fritillary yet I took a drive over to the Wyre Forest. I knew that they had been out here for some time but was hoping they would still be around plus hopeful that Small Pearl Bordered may have started to emerge.

I parked in the car park at the end of Dry Mill Lane and took the path that follows the other side of Dowles Brook, starting at Knowles Coppice and looking in the meadows between there and just passed Coopers Mill where I crossed the brook and came back along the old railway track.

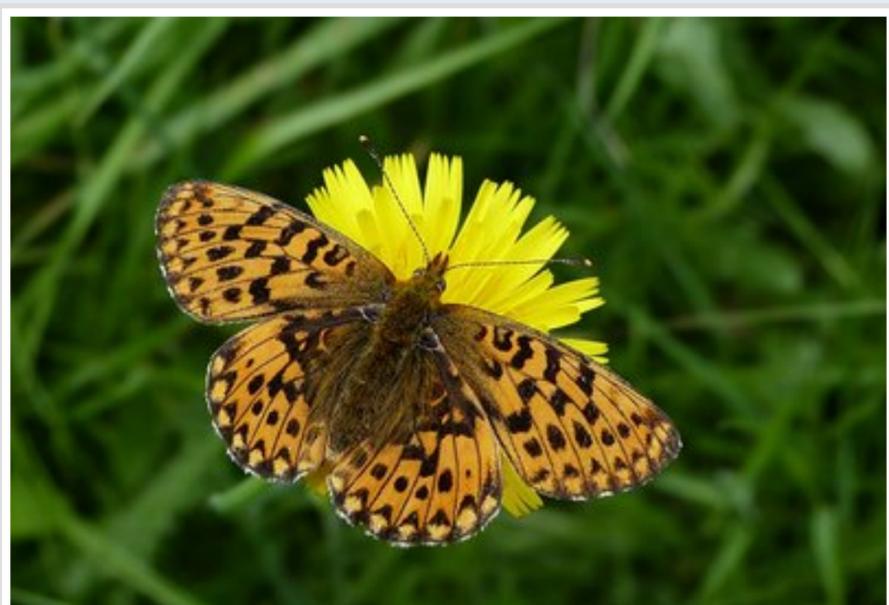


Wyre Forest – meadow along Dowles Brook

During the next few hours the initial cloud eventually gave way to some decent sunny spells and I managed to see a fair number of PBFs in varying condition plus a few nice fresh SPBFs.



Pearl Bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest



Pearl Bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest



Pearl Bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest



Pearl Bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest



Some were more faded than others



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest

Also seen were a Brimstone, a very faded Speckled Wood, a few Common Blues, loads of Chimney Sweeper Moths, A couple of Burnet Companions and Mother Shiptons.

Bye for now.

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by ChrisC, 05-Jun-12 10:49 PM GMT

well they are pretty darn good without a close up lens 😊

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 05-Jun-12 11:03 PM GMT

Great pictues 😊

Debbie

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 05-Jun-12 11:21 PM GMT

Some really good shots there Neil and I am sooooo jealous of your Swallowtail pics – had hoped to see them myself this year for the first time but don't think it's going to happen now.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-12 11:32 PM GMT

Thank you very much for your comments Chris, Debbie and Pauline.

We were a bit early really for the Swallowtails this year Pauline, they had only been around for a few days and were full of newly emerged vigour 😊

Given the unsettled weather over the past few days, I would think that they will be emerging for a while yet.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-12 05:07 AM GMT

Wednesday 6th June.

A day of heavy showers and some sunny spells. I had a few jobs to catch up with both in the house and garden so was in and out like a yo-yo between the showers.

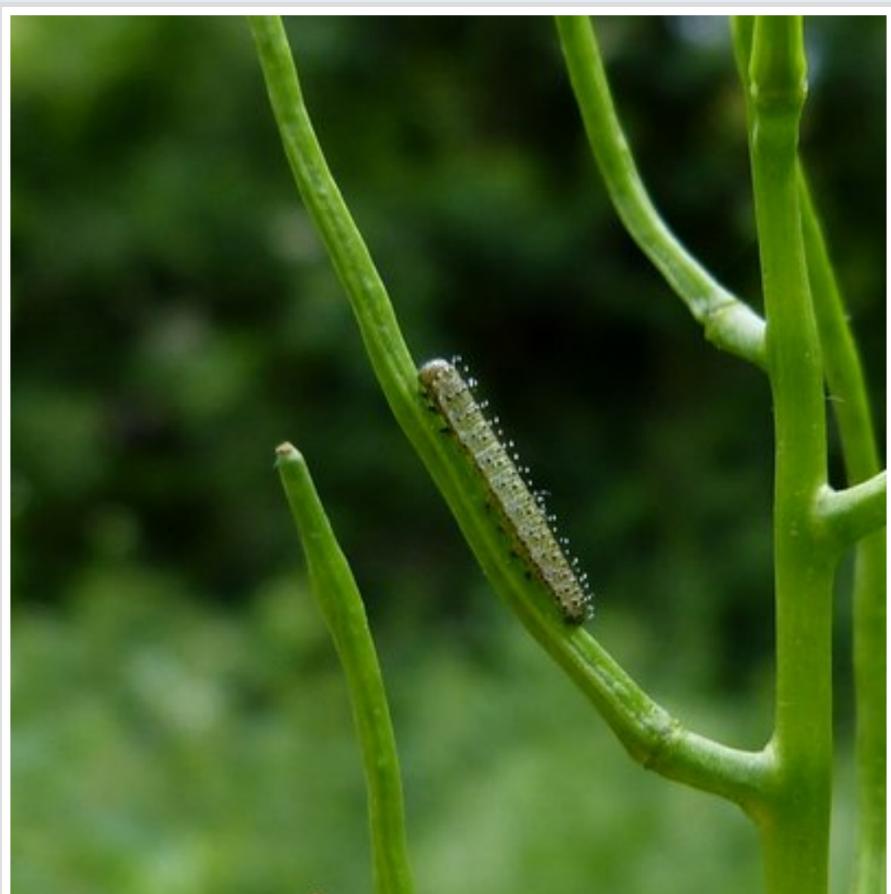
As mentioned in an earlier post, I had seen a female Orange Tip lay an egg on a Cuckoo Flower in the back garden and not having checked on it since before going to Norfolk I had a look today.

During the past couple of weeks the Cuckoo flower had been swamped by other plants that have sprung up like a mini jungle around it and I could not see any sign of egg or larva without running the risk of accidently pulling up the plant.

There are some clumps of Garlic Mustard also in the garden and searching these I was pleased to find four small Larvae, one to a stem. 😊

Taking photos of these was tricky with the breeze that was rocking the stems about like they were on springs but I managed a couple of shots that I was quite happy with 😊

I had to give up the seach when the heavens opened again, this time with a heavy downpour that lasted some time and ended my outside activities for the day 😞



Orange tip larva on Garlic Mustard – Coverdale Road 06.06.2012



Orange tip larva on Garlic Mustard – Coverdale Road 06.06.2012

The weather is looking dreadful for the next couple of days, fingers crossed that the little fellas can hang on. At least the weather should keep the predators in hiding as well.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jun-12 10:18 PM GMT

Saturday 9th June.

Following on from a couple of days of appalling weather, along with a few others it would seem, I was feeling the need to get out for a couple of hours. My son was also keen to get out and try out my old FZ38 that I have given to him.

Saturday started off fairly grey and cool but the forecast at least said it should stay dry, so early afternoon we decided to head down to Bishops Hill. I had been there a few weeks ago to see Small Blue and as my son had not seen them yet I suggested we went to see how they were looking after the bad weather.

Also this area contains a small local reserve called Yellow Land that has hard paths and benches so my wife could come with us as we would not be wandering off too far from her 😊

By the time we got there it had warmed up a bit and although still mostly cloudy, there were a few brighter spells with the sun breaking through occasionally.

We spent a couple of hours here and saw loads of Common Blues, around a dozen or so Small Blue, a couple of Grizzled Skippers and Small Heaths and a couple of very faded Dingy Skippers. Moths seen were a few Burnet Companions, a couple of Silver Y and a Yellow shell.



Bishops Hill looking down towards Yellow Land reserve area.



Common Blue male - Bishops Hill 09.06.2012



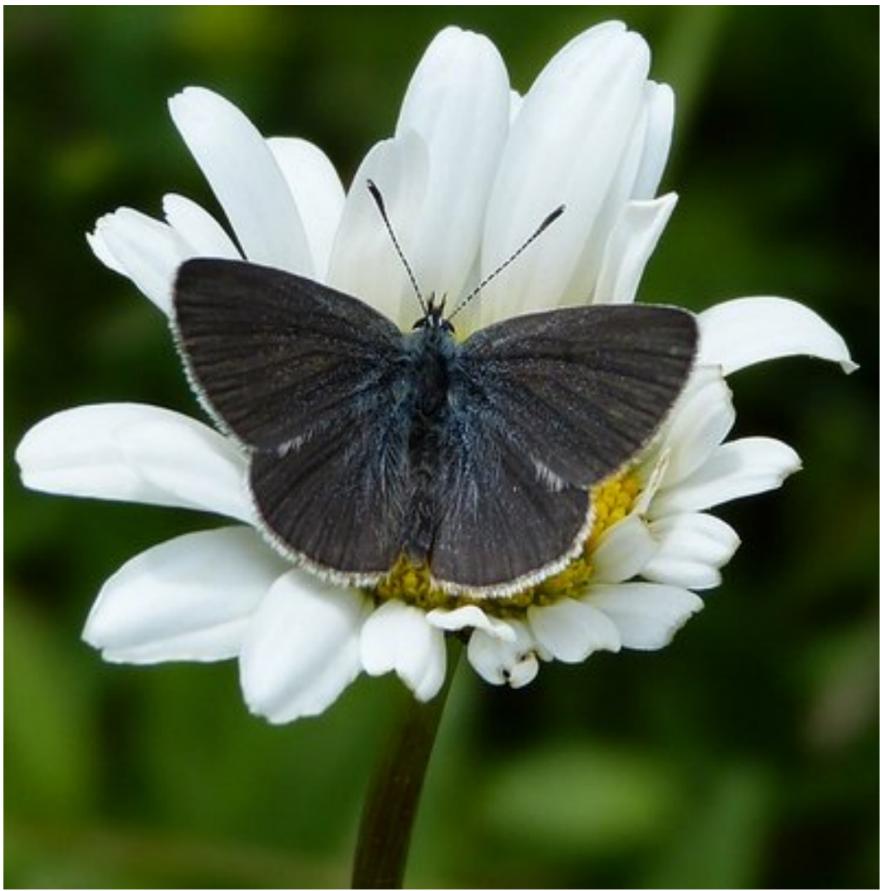
Common Blue female - Bishops Hill 09.06.2012



Small Blue female - Bishops Hill 09.06.2012



Small Blue male - Bishops hill - 09.06.2012



Small Blue male - Bishops Hill 09.06.2012

There were also a large number of Common Blue Damselflies,



Common Blue Damselfly - Bishops Hill 09.06.2012

and some like the one below. Is this an immature Common Blue Damselfly? it looks different to the females that I saw.

Edit; I think I have identified it now as a White-legged Damselfly, possibly immature.



White-legged Damselfly - Bishops Hill 09.06.2012

A very pleasant couple of hours that blew the cobwebs away somewhat after the past few days 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-12 03:35 AM GMT

Cracking shots the Wall and the Swallowtail 🍷

I'm really struggling with the Damselfly - it looks too different to be the same species - it even has an extra White/yellow line down the thorax? Sorry I can't be more help, the Collins Guide just isn't up to it.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jun-12 04:53 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Many thanks for your comments.

I have just spent some time on google and I now think the Damselfly is a White-legged Damselfly,

<http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/s...-damselfly>

cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

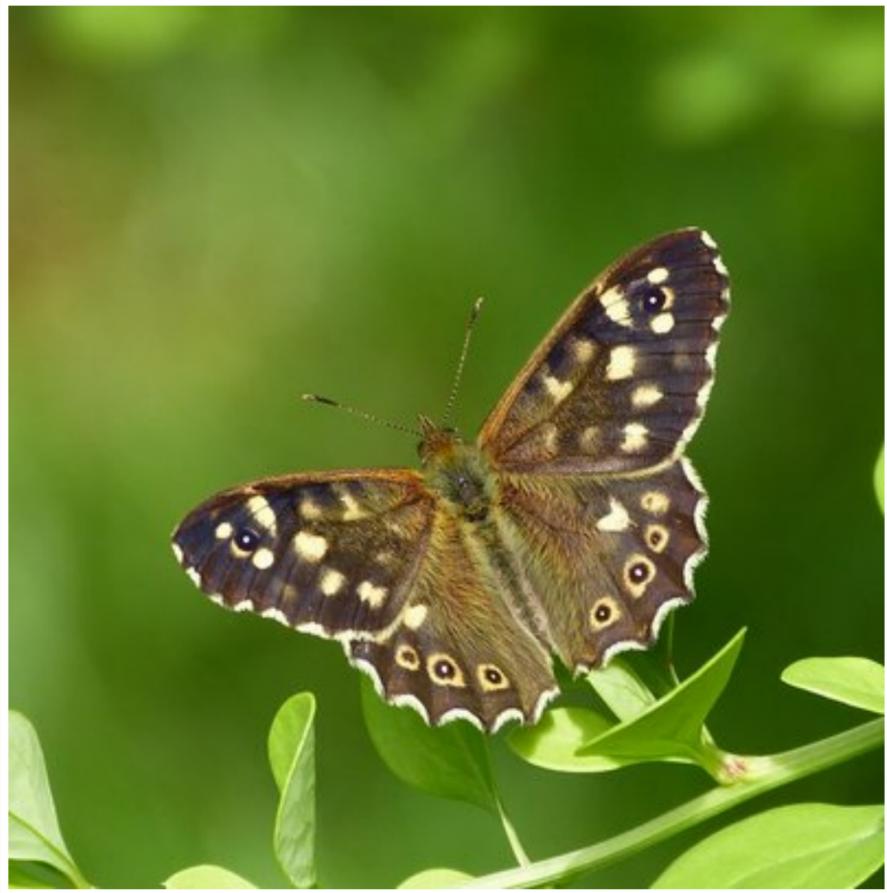
by Neil Freeman, 12-Jun-12 03:56 AM GMT

Sunday 10th June

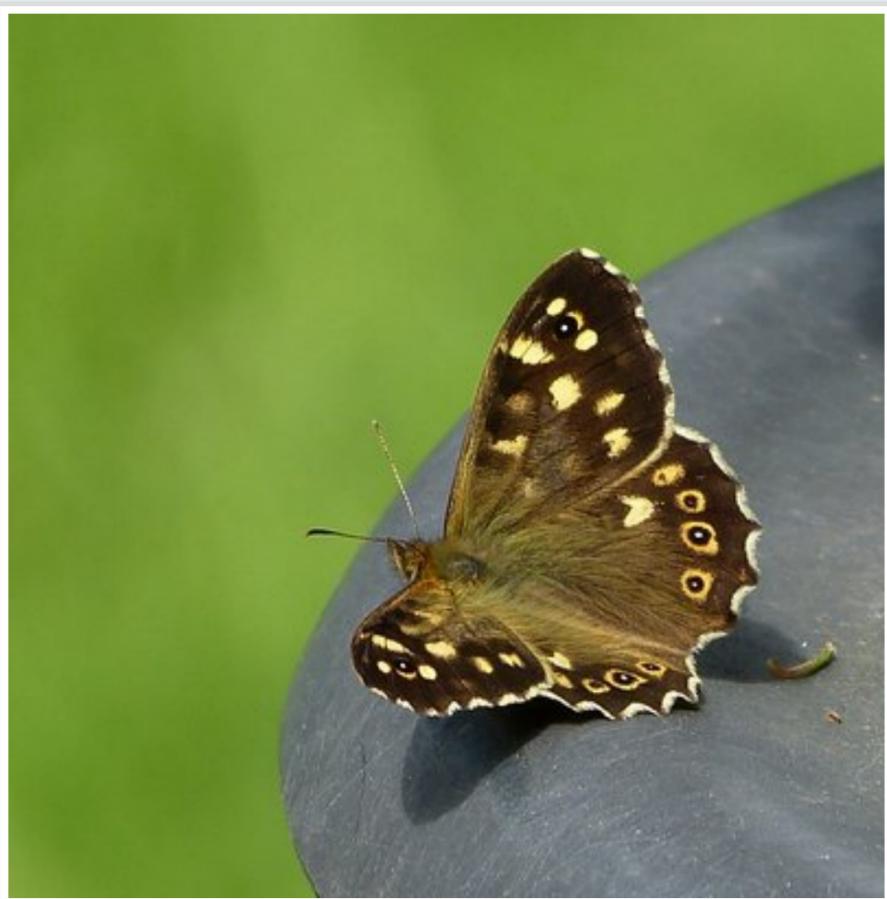
A pleasant bit of sun for a change on Sunday morning that actually lasted for couple of hours has tempted a couple of nice fresh second brood Speckled Wood out to play in my back garden 😊

From about mid morning two males staked out territories, one at each end of the garden, and spent their time intercepting anything that flew close, including each other when they would spiral high into the sky before breaking off to their respective ends.

The photos below are all of one individual as the other one had chosen basking posts that were more inaccessible.



Speckled Wood male – back garden 10.06.2012



Living dangerously – basking on the bird table.

The photo below was taken with the butterfly on a garden bench looking into the shadow of a bush behind it. I quite like the way it has turned out, just a shame about the blurred bench in the foreground.



Speckled Wood male - back garden 10.06.2012

Back at work this week and the weather is not looking good for a while so who knows when I will be able to get out again.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 12-Jun-12 06:14 AM GMT

I love your Swallow Tail Photo's. I was in Dorset third week in May and every day I chased after this Wall who wouldn't settle for more than a sec, never did get him 😞 lovely Pics of yours though 🍷 Goldie

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jun-12 05:03 AM GMT

Thank you for your comments Goldie 😊

Tuesday 12th June

The stands of Garlic Mustard in my back garden have taken a bit of a battering in the weather lately.

Earlier this evening I put my wellies on and squelched over the soggy lawn and went to see if I could see any of the Orange Tip caterpillars that I found last week.

The stems of the plants that they were on are now all over the place making it difficult to tell if I was even looking at the same plant. Nevertheless I managed to find 2 caterpillars out of the original 4 which is more than I really expected 😊

Looking around I found an attractive little spider sitting in its web over a depression in a dock leaf.



Small green spider?

Bye for now,
Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 13-Jun-12 05:14 PM GMT

What a lovely little spider.

Debbie

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jun-12 03:21 AM GMT

Hi Debbie,

I thought it was rather cute 😊

I have just searched for 'small green spider uk' in google images and think it is *Araniella curcurbitina*

cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 14-Jun-12 04:08 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

I had it down as a Araniella Cucurbitina, i posted three photos of the same spider in my personal diary on page 8.

All the best,

Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jun-12 05:24 AM GMT

Hi Nick,

Thanks for the confirmation on the spider.

I have just looked at your photos, super images 😊

I do remember seeing them but did not make the connection of it being the same species.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-12 04:52 AM GMT

Sunday 17th June

Not a good weekend weatherwise here in the West Midlands.

Yesterdays grey day with heavy showers was followed today with clouds and light showers. Everthing is very wet and my lawn is the soggiest that I have ever seen it at this time of year.

A brief five minute spell of sun this morning lasted just long enough to bring a single Speckled Wood out before another shower sent us both back into cover.



Speckled Wood – back garden 17.06.2012

There are still a couple of Orange Tip caterpillars on the garlic mustard.



Orange Tip caterpillar – back garden 17.06.2012

It looks like we will have a few days of good weather next week, think I will have to try my luck at work and see if I can book a days holiday at short notice and have a day out somewhere.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-12 05:49 AM GMT

Good luck there Neil, I'll keep my fingers crossed for you! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jun-12 03:37 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel.

Day off successfully sorted out for tomorrow 😊 weighing up options on where to go.....

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-12 05:29 AM GMT

Wednesday 20th June - Salcey Forest

I spent a good portion of Tuesday night checking various regional BC sites for sightings before I made my final decision on where to go on Wednesday. I finally decided on Salcey Forest as I particularly wanted to see Wood Whites and had not had the chance so far.

Salcey Forest lies just south of Northampton, right next to the M1 and along with Fermyn Woods and others in the area is a remnant of the old Royal Forest of Rockingham, a medieval hunting forest. On a good day I could get there in about an hour and a quarter from my house but unfortunately I hit some congestion on the M6 going past Coventry and it took me a good hour and three quarters before I arrived.

I parked in the horse box car park in the southern part of the forest and started off along the tracks, heading in the general direction of the meadow alongside the M1 described in David Newlands 'Discover Butterflies in Britain'.

After about 10 minutes I saw my first Wood White, a female, fluttering amongst the vegetation at the side of the main ride.



Salcey forest - first female Wood white seen along here



Wood White female - Salcey Forest 20.06.2012

Continuing along I soon saw half a dozen more, mostly males patrolling along the rides. It was a nice sunny morning with the occasional passing cloud that gave me the opportunity to take some photos as they settled and waited for the sun to reappear.



Salcey Forest – Wood Whites seen along here



Wood White male – Salcey Forest 20.06.2012



Wood White male – Salcey Forest 20.06.2012

I also saw a couple of Red Admirals along here, my first this year.



Red Admiral – Salcey Forest 20.06.2012



Red Admiral – Salcey Forest 20.06.2012

By the time I had walked through to the meadow it had clouded over and for about an hour or so it went quite dull until the sun started breaking through in the afternoon. Apparently Black Hairstreaks may be found along the treeline in this meadow where there is a lot of blackthorn but I had noticed that only a couple had been reported recently from elsewhere so I was not that hopeful. Nevertheless I had a good look around the blackthorn but without success.

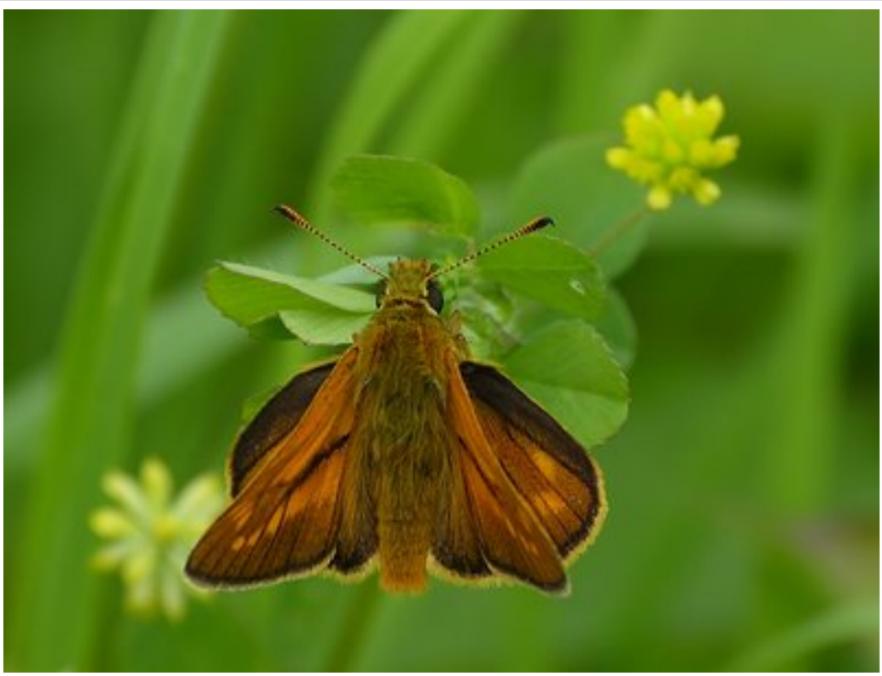
I did find my first Large Skippers this year, four of them, all males.



Salcey Forest – meadow alongside the M1



Large Skipper male - Salcey Forest 20.06.2012



Large Skipper male - Salcey Forest 20.06.2012

I think that is enough for this post, I was going to post photos of other stuff, Dragonflies etc plus a few more butterflies but will save them for my next entry.

Edit; Location photos of rides and meadow added.

Bye for now

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-12 06:11 AM GMT

Great to see that you managed to get out and get some cracking shots – can I uncross my finger for you now? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-12 08:25 PM GMT

Thanks for crossing your fingers Wurzel, I hope they are uncrossed now 😊

Photos of rides and meadow added to the previous entry.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jun-12 05:42 AM GMT

Some more from Salcey Forest

Continuing on from my day at Salcey forest on Wednesday.

Making my way slowly along the meadow previously mentioned, I came to a small pond near the far end. As I approached it I saw a grass snake slide into the water and swim across to some rushes on the far side. Getting closer I also noticed that the water was teeming with tadpoles and there were a number of newts just hanging at the surface of the water. I tried taking some photos but didn't get any good ones against the reflection off the water.



Salcey Forest – pond in meadow

There were three male Broad-Bodied Chasers that were busy 'chasing' each other across the pond and were occasionally joined by a Four-Spotted chaser. The resulting dogfights were brilliant to watch with each individual breaking off for a quick rest before rejoining the melee.



Broad-bodied Chaser male – Salcey forest 20.06.2012



Four-spotted Chaser - Salcey Forest 20.06.2012



Large Red Damselfly - Salcey forest 20.06.2012

Also in this area were a number of Cinnabar Moths and I finally managed to find one that was not settled at an angle deep amongst the grass.



Cinnabar Moth - Salcey Forest 20.06.2012

I spent over an hour watching the goings on around this pond and by the time I started to make my way back down the meadow it was mid-afternoon. Along the treeline I saw what at first I took to be another Wood white but when it settled it turned out to be a faded female Orange Tip which surprised me a bit as I had thought that they had finished flying for this year.



Orange Tip female - Salcey Forest 20.06.2012

Walking back through the rides towards the car park I saw a few more Wood Whites, or the same ones again that I had seen earlier, and also a Peacock which again surprised me a bit. I can only assume that he was a late survivor as I cannot imagine that any of this years have emerged yet and he certainly did not look fresh.



Peacock - Salcey Forest 20.06.2012

Arriving back at the car park, I was walking up to my car when a glimpse of something white moving in the vegetation to the side attracted my attention to a female Wood White busy ovipositing deep amongst the vetch.



Female Wood White ovipositing on vetch

A nice end to a good day 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by ChrisC, 23-Jun-12 06:58 AM GMT

stunning wood white, fantastic wing detail. the dragonflies are pretty darn good too 😊

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 23-Jun-12 02:03 PM GMT

Lovely photos of Wood Whites Neil, especially the egg-laying. Isn't it just so hard to get a clear view and you have to be so quick!

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-12 05:35 AM GMT

Thank you Chris and Pauline, your comments are much appreciated 😊

Saturday 23rd June.

Last week my oldest son Chris had mentioned that driving home from work he passes Babbs Mill Park and LNR and asked me if it was worth a visit.

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/parks/babbsmill.htm>

I told him that although I knew of the place and that it formed part of Kingfisher Country Park in Birmingham I had never actually been there.

<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/kingfisher>

To correct this lack in my local knowledge we decided to go and have a look this afternoon, not expecting to see much due to the blustery wind and grey overcast, but to have a recce to see if it was worth further visits.

We were pleasantly surprised to find a large lake at the side of the River Cole with good paths around that went past the lake and through some good meadow areas with plenty of shrubs and mature trees.

We had a good wander around, at one point enjoying a very low flyover from a pair of Herons on their way towards the lake 😊

As mentioned we did not expect to see much in the way of Butterflies due to the weather and so were well pleased to see a Painted Lady in one of the meadows albeit one that had seen better days. This was a first for us this year, in fact I only saw one Painted Lady during the whole of last year.

Shortly after, the sun made a feeble attempt to break through the clouds but it was enough for us to see our first Meadow Brown of the year 😊



My son Chris taking photos of the Painted Lady with my old FZ38 that is now his.



River Cole in Babbs Mill LNR



Painted Lady – Babbs Mill 23.06.2012



Meadow Brown male – Babbs Mill 23.06.2012

Despite only seeing the two butterflies, it was a very pleasant couple of hours and we will certainly be back there again.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-12 06:00 AM GMT

It's great when you find somewhere new, I'm always on the look-out for places to call in for 10 minutes on my way home from work 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jun-12 05:01 AM GMT

Sunday 24th June

Spent the day at home today and tried to do a bit of gardening but kept getting interrupted by regular but brief showers, just enough to keep everything a bit wet.

I checked on the Orange tip caterpillars and was pleased to see that there are now three again, one of them had been hiding lower down on its plant and was munching on the leaves instead of the seed pods.



Orange tip caterpillar – the largest one.



Orange Tip caterpillar – lower down on garlic mustard leaf

There was another recently emerged male Speckled Wood fluttering about between the showers. Thinking about it, I have not seen a female in the garden yet this year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Gothic_dreams, 25-Jun-12 05:26 AM GMT

Nice to see the caterpillars doing so well despite the bad weather of late 😊

Chris

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jul-12 04:59 AM GMT

Saturday 30th June

My son Chris said he was popping in to his work for a short while this afternoon and probably going to drop in to Babbs Mill on his way home. I made a last minute decision for him to drop me off at Babbs Mill on his way past and then he could meet me there later as he was only going in to sort some rotas out for his work next month and wouldn't be long.

It was reasonably sunny with the odd cloud but there was a strong blustery wind that made me wonder if there would be anything flying. As it turned out, over the next couple of hours, including when Chris joined me later, I saw a total of 7 Large Skippers, 5 Ringlets, 4 Red Admirals and a single Speckled Wood.



Large Skipper male - Babbs Mill 30.06.2012



Ringlet - Babbs Mill 30.06.2012



Ringlet - Babbs Mill 30.06.2012 06.2012



Red Admiral - Babbs Mill 30.06.2012

There were also loads of 'blue damselflies' that when checked closely turned out to be a mixture of Common Blue, Azure and Blue-Tailed Damselflies. The females of Blue-Tailed Damselfies may occur in five colour forms of which we identified two today.

<http://british-dragonflies.org.uk/speci...-damselfly>



Blue-Tailed Damselfly male - Babbs Mill 30.06.2012



Blue-Tailed Damselfly female form 'typica'



Blue-Tailed Damselfly female immature form 'rufescens'

An enjoyable couple of hours, especially as it was a last minute decision 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Gothic_dreams, 01-Jul-12 05:11 AM GMT

Some more lovely photos father, Especially the Large Skipper and the second Ringlet underside shot 😊

Chris

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jul-12 06:12 AM GMT

Thanks Chris,

Here is one of you in action 😊



Chris (Gothic_dreams) taking photo pf Red Admiral

The Father 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-12 03:06 AM GMT

Wednesday 4th July

Both Chris and myself had booked a day off work and planned to go somewhere for the day, the exact location depending on us trying to second guess the weather and where the breaks in it might be.

We both fancied the idea of heading for Prees Heath and Whixall Moss as they are not far from each other and Chris especially was keen to see Silver-studded Blues and I had never seen any Large Heath before.

The forecast held a slim hope of some breaks between the rains so getting up on Wednesday morning we made a final decision to go there.

We left Solihull in heavy rain and during our drive up we had rain on and off for most of the way, arriving at Prees Heath at about 09.30am in the dry but under a grey overcast sky.

We spent a couple of hours here looking for roosting Silver-studded Blues and found a dozen or more in the vegetation between the paths and the row of trees along the old runway. During this time we had a few showers when we ducked under the trees for shelter, popping out again to continue searching the wet vegetation when it stopped.



Chris in action between the early showers



Silver-studded Blue male – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue male – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue male – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue female - Prees Heath 04.07.2012

It was gradually feeling warmer but despite this we failed at this time to find any SSBs with their wings open, around 11.30am we decided to head for Whixall Moss and maybe return to Prees Heath later in the afternoon to try for some open wing shots, depending on how the weather turned out.

Whixall Moss will be in the next posting otherwise this one is going to get too big

Returning to Prees Heath just before 4.00pm in the afternoon we saw our first SSB just yards from the entrance flying out of the open area to the right of the path.

This was soon followed by a couple more and continuing up the path of the runway we soon saw dozens, either basking or fluttering around patches of vegetation.

There seemed to be 4 main concentrations of them fairly evenly spaced along and usually centred on taller clumps of vegetation such as Willowherb. It was a beautiful sight seeing a dozen or more at a time flying within an area just a few feet across.



A few of the many



Silver-studded Blue male – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue male – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue male – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue male – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue female – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue female – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue mating pair – Prees Heath 04.07.2012

We spent another couple of hours here during which time we had a couple of sunny spells but also some light rain during which some of the SSBs continued to fly.

Also seen here were about a dozen each of Meadow Brown and Small heath plus a couple of nests of Peacock caterpillars and some Mullein moth caterpillars.



Peacock caterpillars – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Mullein moth caterpillar – Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Small Heath - Prees Heath 04.07.2012

We finally left about 6.00pm for the drive home having had a great day that turned out much better than expected given that we were fearing the worst from the weather.

Bye for Now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-12 06:47 AM GMT

Absolutley cracking shots Neil and I'd be very jealous if I hadn't just got back from Slop Bog having sen my own Silver Studs 😊. The Small Heath is a cracker too and I'm looking forward to seeing the Large Heath shots as that is a species that I have yet to encounter. Whereabouts is Whixall Moss?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 06-Jul-12 06:56 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

A great post and some lovely SSB shots. I particularly like the blue peppered female before the mating pair, I'm not sure if that's within the range of normal ... 😊

I look forward to your Large Heath pictures from Whixall Moss.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-12 08:35 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, they are very much appreciated 😊

Wurzel,

Whixall Moss is in North Shropshire, a few miles SW of Whitchurch.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwor...06173.aspx>

Mark,

I think the female SSB is within the normal range for Prees Heath.

This population used to be thought of as belonging to the ssp. *masseyi* which is now considered extinct. Whatever the case, some of the males here tend to have brighter blue uppersides with narrower black borders and the females tend to show a bit more of a blue flush than some of their southern cousins.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 07-Jul-12 01:41 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Thanks for your observation.

"nfreem" wrote:

I think the female SSB is within the normal range for Prees Heath. This population used to be thought of as belonging to the ssp. *masseyi* which is now considered extinct. Whatever the case, some of the males here tend to have brighter blue uppersides with narrower black borders and the females tend to show a bit more of a blue flush than some of their southern cousins.

I should of clarified myself, It's the lack of orange markings on the hindwing that I was referring to particularly if compared to the individual above?

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-12 02:44 AM GMT

I see what you mean now Mark.

I have just done a bit more reading and although SSBs seem to be a very variable species most of the photos I have found of females so far show orange on the hindwings to a greater or lesser degree.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-12 03:12 AM GMT

Wednesday 4th July - continued.

After spending a couple of hours at Prees Heath as described above, we decided to move on to Whixall Moss which is only a few miles away.

We parked up in the car park by the canal bridge at SJ 493354 and almost immediately a Small Tortoiseshell was seen at the beginning of the path past the bungalow opposite.



Small Tortoiseshell - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012

Continuing down the path we went through the gate into the reserve and through a short wooded stretch that was literally alive with Ringlets fluttering about amongst the long and still very wet grass.



View through entrance gate looking through 'Ringlet City'



Ringlets in wet grass - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012



Ringlet - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012



Ringlet - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012

The weather by this time was still overcast but the showers had stopped and it was feeling quite warm.

Coming out of the trees onto the moss trail, within minutes we saw a couple of Large Heaths flying around a few yards into the moss itself..

These remained frustratingly out of reach for photographs as there was no way that we were going to try and follow them into the moss as it was obvious that going off the paths would be very foolhardy, in fact I believe that to do so requires a permit here.

Following the recent weather the actual paths were very soft and muddy and we really had to be careful where we walked.



View along main moss trail



Looking North West across the Moss towards Wales.

We slowly walked the length of the path through the middle of the moss seeing more than 30 Large Heaths but only managing to get a few record shots at maximum zoom.

During this time the clouds occasionally thinned a bit with the sun even popping out a few times and we noticed how quickly the Large Heaths would disappear and reappear according to the cloud cover.

Looking down a side path off the main trail we noticed a Large Heath slowly fluttering along and settling every few yards.

Approaching this individual slowly we finally managed to take some better photos as it perched a few times along the path before taking off into the moss.

The photos below are all of this one individual which looked nice and fresh and knowing how difficult this species can be to photograph due to the habitat I was well chuffed with these 😊

I am afraid I am not familiar enough with this species to tell if it a male or female.



Side path off main trail where Large Heath photos were taken



Large Heath - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012



Large Heath - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012



Large Heath - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012



Large Heath - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012



Large Heath - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012

There were also good numbers of Large Skippers and Meadow Browns around the paths nearer the edges of the moss.

Also seen were some medium sized Dragonflies but these were very active and did not come close enough to ID.

We did manage to ID a number of Damselflies including some delicate looking Emerald Damselflies that almost disappeared against the background vegetation when they took off.



Emerald Damselfly – Whixall Moss 04.07.2012

After our earlier spell at Prees Heath and now seeing Large Heaths here we already considered our day a great success. The day got even better on our return to Prees Heath as described in the previous post 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 07-Jul-12 04:27 AM GMT

Lovely photos, and I'm very envious (having never seen them!).

Cheers,

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Hulme, 07-Jul-12 04:52 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Those first two shots of Large Heath (better focused around the head area), particularly the second, are exceptionally good. It's a species which falls to pieces rapidly and is very difficult to approach. On top of that they are often half buried in clutter when you do get close enough. Some of the best I've seen – congratulations.

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 07-Jul-12 05:12 AM GMT

Amazing photos Neil. I'm not that keen on the small heath but I would love to see a Large Heath. I shall live in hope

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-12 06:49 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil of a species that seems quite out of reach for me 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by David M, 07-Jul-12 07:28 AM GMT

Those are particularly good shots of Large Heath. I suspect that the cloudy conditions made them far easier to approach than they are normally.

The underside markings are very striking; in fact I don't think I've ever seen them so pronounced.

Excellent stuff and thanks for sharing.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jul-12 04:39 AM GMT

Thank you all for the kind comments, they are very much appreciated 😊

We were very lucky with that particular Large Heath, as well as settling a couple of times in a position that we could actually approach, it was a well marked individual that looked like it had not long emerged.

A definite case of just being in the right place at the right time 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 08-Jul-12 04:51 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

A couple of super posts and pictures 😊

Thanks for sharing.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jul-12 05:06 AM GMT

Thank you for your comments Mark 😊

I have just had a busy weekend of jobs to finish around the house and family 'stuff' so have not had chance to get out anywhere, a couple of faded Speckled Wood in the back garden being the only butterflies that I have seen for a few days.

To lift my spirits a bit I have just been going through my many photos from last Wednesday and decided to post a few more that I like 😊

First, some more from Prees Heath,



Small Heath - Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue male - Prees Heath 04.07.2012

Edit: I have replaced a duplicate shot with the two below that show that, despite my earlier comments regarding males at Prees Heath tending to have narrower black borders, these two show that not to always be the case.



Silver-studded Blue male - Prees Heath 04.07.2012



Silver-studded Blue male - Prees Heath 04.07.2012

It wasn't until I looked closer that I realised that The pair below are a different pair to those previously posted.



Silver-studded Blue mating pair - Prees Heath 04.07.2012

And from Whixall Moss a different Large Heath to the individual posted before.

These photos are cropped from shots taken from a few feet away at maximum zoom due to not being able to get any closer without going off the path, not a good idea in that habitat.

They are not as good as those previously posted but without that bit of luck I would have been happy with these.



Large Heath - Whixall Moss 04.07.2012



Large Heath - 04.07.2012

And a Meadow Brown to finish, the first female that I have see so far this year.



Meadow Brown – Whixall Moss 04.07.2012

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 09-Jul-12 06:09 AM GMT

Super pictures 😊😊😊

Debbie

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 09-Jul-12 06:19 AM GMT

Some of your Large Heath are definitely tending toward *ab. lanceolata*!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: nfreem

by David M, 09-Jul-12 06:32 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Some of your Large Heath are definitely tending toward *ab. lanceolata*!

Yes, they definitely err toward the 'teardrop', don't they.

I think these are the best images I've ever seen of Large Heath, and nfreem has coupled that with capturing some extremely beautifully marked specimens too.

Not a butterfly many of us have as a priority for photography (unsurprising given that a: it never opens its wings at rest, and b: its habitat is one most of us would prefer to avoid), so to produce something of this quality is all the more praiseworthy.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jul-12 04:03 AM GMT

Thanks for the comment Debbie 😊

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Some of your Large Heath are definitely tending toward *ab. lanceolata*!

Cheers,

- Pete

Thanks for the observation Pete, I noticed the elongated eyespot on the second individual but not being very familiar with this species do not know what comes within the normal range of variation.

David, you are making me blush 😊😄😁 seriously though, there are some excellent photos of Large Heaths on the species-specific gallery on this website.

I noticed earlier that I had uploaded a SSB photo in my last post that I had already posted...oops! 😞
I have now edited that post and replaced that photo with a couple of others that show some variation in the black borders of the male SSBs at Prees Heath.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 11-Jul-12 04:11 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

I think these are the best images I've ever seen of Large Heath, and nfreem has coupled that with capturing some extremely beautifully marked specimens too.

Indeed. I feel distinctly *polydama*, if not *scotica* - not many forums you can say that on without getting sympathy / arrested 😊

I think I need to get out more 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jul-12 04:56 AM GMT

Many thanks Pete 😊

Not sure if I should be worried that I understand what you mean 😊😄

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 11-Jul-12 05:02 AM GMT

Don't worry, Neil. Nobody to my knowledge has ever posted images of *scotica* so you needn't feel ashamed.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jul-12 03:38 AM GMT

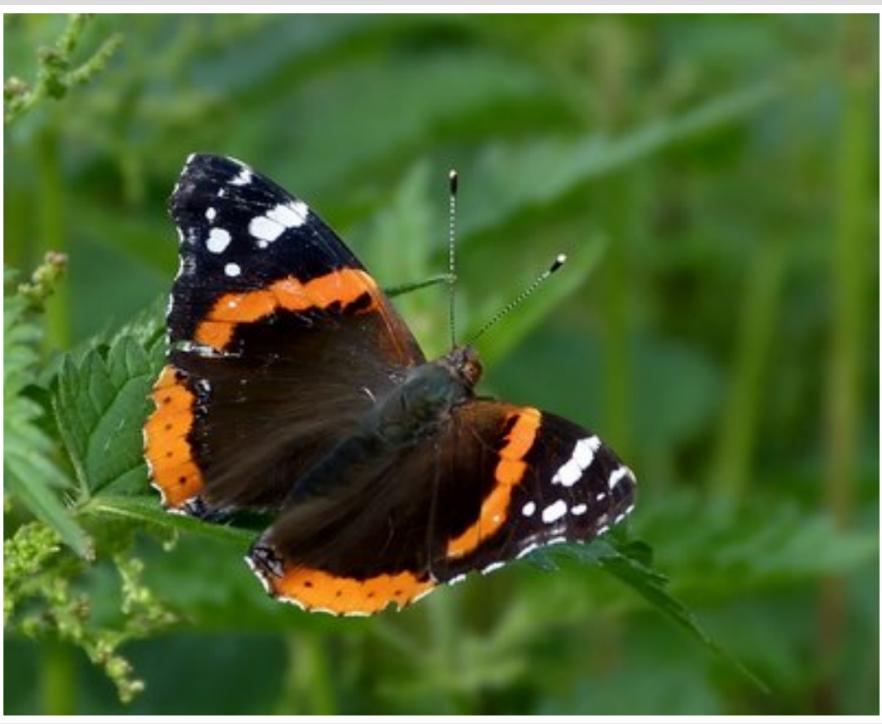
Wednesday 11th July

Yet another day of heavy showers with some sun in between, feeling quite warm when it was actually out.

I arrived home from work this afternoon and looking down the garden through the kitchen window I noticed a Red Admiral flying around the wild bit at the far end.

The sun was out at this time and so I went out and watched him for a while as he kept taking off, flying round for a bit and coming back to the same patch of nettles to bask.

The sun didn't last for long and soon another 'orrible big black cloud came over and he took off again and disappeared next door, but not before I managed to take a couple of shots of him.



Red Admiral – back garden 11.07.2012

A nice few minutes before I had to go back in and carry on with the domestic duties 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 13-Jul-12 06:28 PM GMT

Just had to tell you Neil that I recently heard a group of UK butts members discussing photos and yours were given as an example of very good photos indeed. I couldn't agree more.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-12 02:35 AM GMT

Blimey!

Thanks Pauline, what can I say!!!

There are a good number of people on here, including yourself, that post beautiful photos.

To be counted amongst that number makes me very proud and happy and I really do appreciate it 😊😊😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jul-12 05:20 AM GMT

Saturday 14th July – Warwickshire BC Open Day.

Today was the Warwickshire BC open day at Ryton Wood and Meadows just south of Coventry and Chris and myself went along.

We arrived just before 11.00am and drove along the track into the meadow to the arranged meeting place, noting the pools of water along the track, something that I had never seen before on any previous visit.

The weather was a bit dull and cloudy to start with but by midday had brightened up nicely with some nice spells of sun.

The ground condition in the meadows and woods were extremely wet and muddy 🤔 with a lot of people commenting that they had never seen so much standing water here before.

Nevertheless, butterflies were in abundance with hordes of Ringlets in the woods and nearly as many Meadow Browns in the meadows, where else 😊

I saw firsts for the year of six species 😊

Marbled Whites – at least two dozen, maybe more, in two main concentrations in the meadows.

Small Skippers – around half a dozen in both meadows and woods.

Gatekeepers – Five seen at various points along the rides in the woods.

White Admiral – two seen but too flighty for photos.

Silver-washed Fritillary – three males and one female seen.

Purple Hairstreak – one seen coming out of one Oak tree and flying over us towards another.

We also saw a dozen or so Large Skippers, a couple of Red Admirals, a comma, one tatty male Brimstone and a fresh male Common Blue in the meadows plus numbers of both Six-spot and Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet Moths and Silver-Y moths.

I believe a few other species were seen by others during the day including Small Heath and at least one Green-veined White.



Mid morning under cloudy skies – note the wellies



Setting off on first walk showing water on track.

Some Ringlets first, just because I like them 😊



Ringlet – RWM 14.07.2012



Ringlet - RWM 14.07.2012



Ringlet male - RWM 14.07.2012



Ringlet female - RWM 14.07.2012

And now the rest,



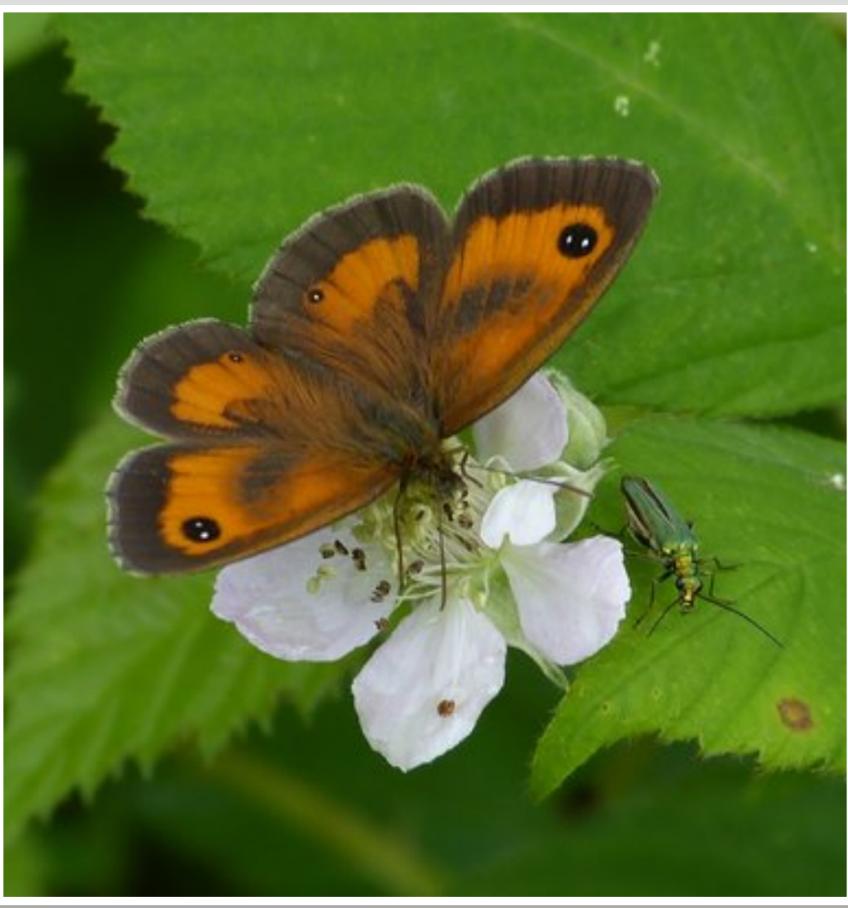
Marbled White - RWM 14.07.2012



Marbled White - RWM 14.07.2012



Gatekeeper male - Ryton Wood 14.07.2007



Gatekeeper and little friend



Comma - Ryton Wood 14.07.2012



Small Skipper - RWM 14.07.2012

The SWFs below spent some time together with much vibration of wings at each other but in the end it came to nothing and they went their separate ways.



Silver-washed Fritillary male - Ryton Wood 14.07.2012



Silver-washed Fritillary female - Ryton wood 14.07.2012



Silver-washed Fritillary courting couple



SWFs vibrating wings at each other.

I also saw the female Meadow Brown below which looks very pale. I can't make my mind up whether she is faded or an unusually pale individual.



Meadow Brown pale female - Ryton Wood 14.07.2012

A great day in good company with loads of butterflies 😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 15-Jul-12 05:26 AM GMT

Great Comma shot, Neil. It look as though it's just about to launch itself at an intruder. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 15-Jul-12 05:46 AM GMT

I know i am a bit behind, [been very busy]there are some lovely photos you`re posting, your Large Heath photos are the best i`ve seen along with your sons.The Silver-Studded Blue pictures are also the best i have seen, brilliant.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 15-Jul-12 06:50 AM GMT

It looks even wetter and muddier than last weekend, Neil! But you saw more than I did, which is terrific, and you got some great photos. I would like to have come along, but it was the "wrong" Saturday for my regular trips to the area, unfortunately.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-12 07:05 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 And the Hedge Browns are emerging! 😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 15-Jul-12 03:37 PM GMT

Neil,
As always a delight to see your lovely pictures.
Debbie

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jul-12 05:11 PM GMT

Thank you all for your very kind comments 😊

Although I keep this diary primarily for my own reasons, it give me great pleasure to know that others enjoy it as well 😊

Yes Wurzel, the Hedge Browns are out...time to start checking those spots 😊😄
They were always Hedge Browns in my youth and in a way I will always prefer that name.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jul-12 05:31 AM GMT

Sunday 15th July

I popped out this afternoon for an hour with my wife and daughter to Babbs Mill / Kingfisher Country Park. Having heard Chris and myself describe it, my wife was keen to go and have a look as she also had never been here.
My wife is slowly getting more mobile now and can manage to walk a fair distance with the assistance of a delta frame which is a massive improvement from a few months ago when a even a short trip like this would have meant using a wheelchair.

Whilst the women bimbled along the main path through the site, I checked out the adjacent meadows and in particular went up a bit of a hill into an area where Chris had been a few days ago and seen 5 Small Tortoiseshells.



Babbs Mill / Kingfisher Country Park



Babbs Mill / Kingfisher Country Park

Whilst the weather was not as sunny as when Chris visited, it was still pleasantly warm with mixed sun and cloud for the half an hour or so that I was in this area and during this time I saw 3 Small Torts, only one faded specimen of which stopped for a photo. I also saw 2 Small Heaths and a mating pair of Green-veined Whites hiding in the brambles as well as the now usual Ringlets and Meadow Browns.

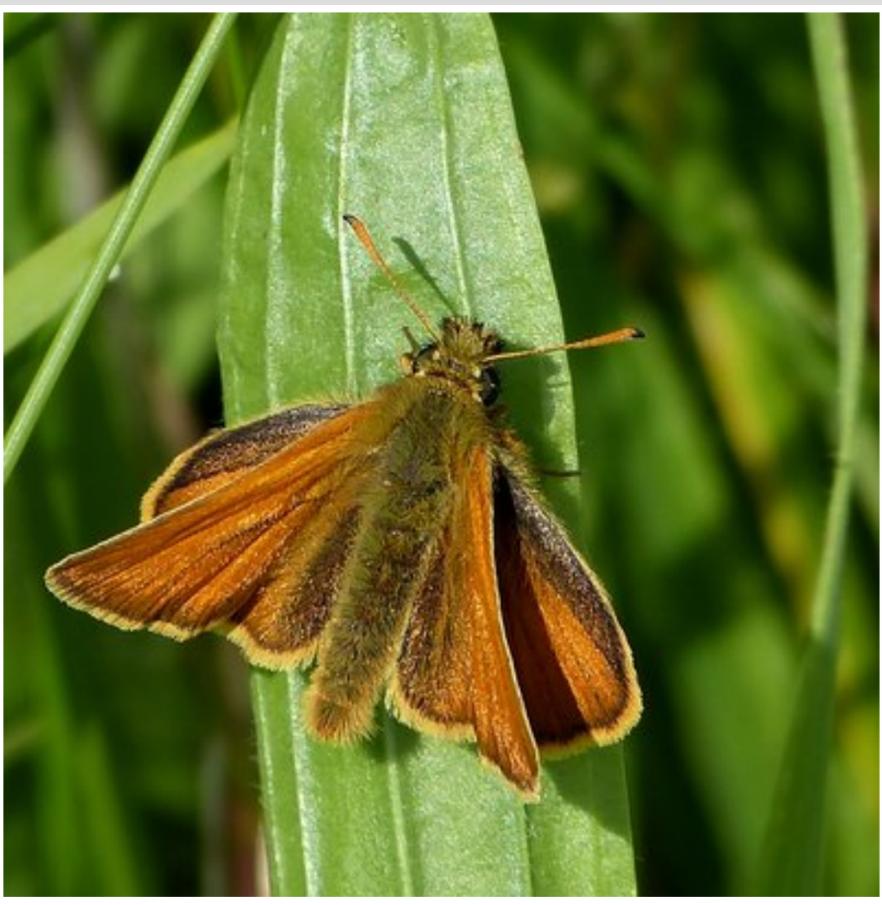


Small Tortoiseshell - Babbs Mill 15.07.2012



Green-veined White mating pair - Babbs Mill 15.07.2012

There were also what I took at the time to be half a dozen or so Small Skippers but looking through my photos at home later I am 95% certain that at least one of them is an Essex going by the thinner, straighter sex brand on the forewing.



Essex Skipper I believe



This one is a Small Skipper

I was also surprised to see a Marbled White fly past me and over a huge patch of brambles where I could not follow, I did not know that there any of these at this site.

A nice hour at a site where I really must spend more time and have a proper look around.

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 16-Jul-12 05:53 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Some more great shots and I'm really glad to see you are getting to grips with your new camera. I do however think your Essex is a Small; the sex brand is too big and the antennae are not right for Essex.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jul-12 01:15 AM GMT

Hi Mark, thanks for the comments.

I am going to go out on a bit of a limb and say that I am still reasonably sure that the first skipper is an Essex.

Unfortunately that first photo, which is cropped and resized to post on here, is not that clear around the sex brand, especially as there is a fold in the wing along the vein.

On the original it appears that the brand stops just short of the vein beneath it which is what made me think it is Essex. On male Small Skippers the brand is not only longer but clearly crosses the vein.

Here is another crop marked with an arrow to show where I mean.



position of sex brand finishing above the wing vein

I know that Essex Skippers are found close to this site so next time I go back I will be going for the head on shots 😊😄

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 17-Jul-12 06:40 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Thanks for your comments.

As I'm sure you are aware, it is not always easy to gain correct scientific determination from a picture, particularly when key diagnostic features are either obscured or not shown. If, as your latest image suggests, the sex brand ends at the arrow then Essex it may well be and I would agree that the brand does appear rather thin and parallel with the leading edge of the forewing. I appreciate what you say about the fold in the wing, but to me there appears to be an angled extension of the androconia beyond the fold of the vein, in which case it would suggest Small? I don't feel enough of the underside of either antennae can be seen to allow accurate confirmation by this means.

I expect I'm wrong and I'm glad we are not trying to sort out European *Pyrgus*.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by David M, 17-Jul-12 06:52 AM GMT

At risk of being over-ruled by those more experienced, I too would venture to say that my first impressions (and subsequent) are that this is Small, rather than Essex, Skipper.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jul-12 03:50 AM GMT

Thanks for the responses guys,

My first impression was Small, then Essex, now I am not sure....

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

.... I appreciate what you say about the fold in the wing, but to me there appears to be an angled extension of the androconia beyond the fold of the vein, in which case it would suggest Small?.....

I was seeing this as the curve of the vein itself with the androconia stopping just above it but it may well be the angle of the wing and the folds that make it look that way to me 😊

Whatever it is, and I am happy for it to be either as I know there are good populations of both locally 😊, I will be back to check out this site, hopefully

soon.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jul-12 06:24 AM GMT

Wednesday 18th July

Today was the only day that Chris had available this week due to his shifts at work and so I had booked a day off as well so that we could go out for the day. Chris particularly wanted to get some more Marbled White photos if possible and was also keen to try and see White Admirals. We had seen a couple of WA at Ryton Wood last weekend but only fleeting glimpses as they flitted past us.

The weather forecast did not look promising but nevertheless we set out, fully equipped with wellies and brollies 🌂, for Snitterfield Bushes and Oversley Wood, two sites within 15 minutes drive of each other near to Stratford-upon Avon.

Arriving at Snitterfield at around 10.00am, the initial heavy rain lightened into a light drizzle and so we went through the woods to a meadow where I knew that Marbled Whites could be found. We soon found a number of individuals roosting and took some photos of them in the rain, in fact some of them were even starting to fly in the drizzle.



Chris taking photos in the rain



Marbled White – Snitterfield Bushes 18.07.2012

The weather was coming in from the west and as Oversley Wood is a bit further west than Snitterfield we decided to move onto there figuring that if the weather cleared, it would do so at Oversley first.

We got to Oversley at around Midday and set off round the wood in a steady light drizzle. Even in these conditions the place was alive with Ringlets and we were amazed at how they would continue flying, even during some heavy spells of rain that sent us scuttling under trees for shelter.



Ringlet female - Oversley Wood 18. 07.2012

We also saw large Numbers of Meadow Browns, a couple of Marbled Whites, and a single Green-veined White.



Green-veined White - Oversley Wood 18.07.2012

The rain eventually cleared for a bit and for 30 minutes or so we were in the right place at the right time as half a dozen or so Silver-washed Fritillaries came out to play in the sun 😊 . There was also a brief visit from a White Admiral but again no photos as it did not stick around.



Silver-washed Fritillary - Oversley Wood 18.07.2012

Watching the sky, we decided to head back to the car before the next load of rain arrived and we just made it back before the heavens opened again. There was some promising blue sky heading our way and so we headed back to Snitterfied on our way home for a second look.

We arrived back at about the same time as the blue sky and looking in the woods we found a few more SWFs and a Comma 😊 .

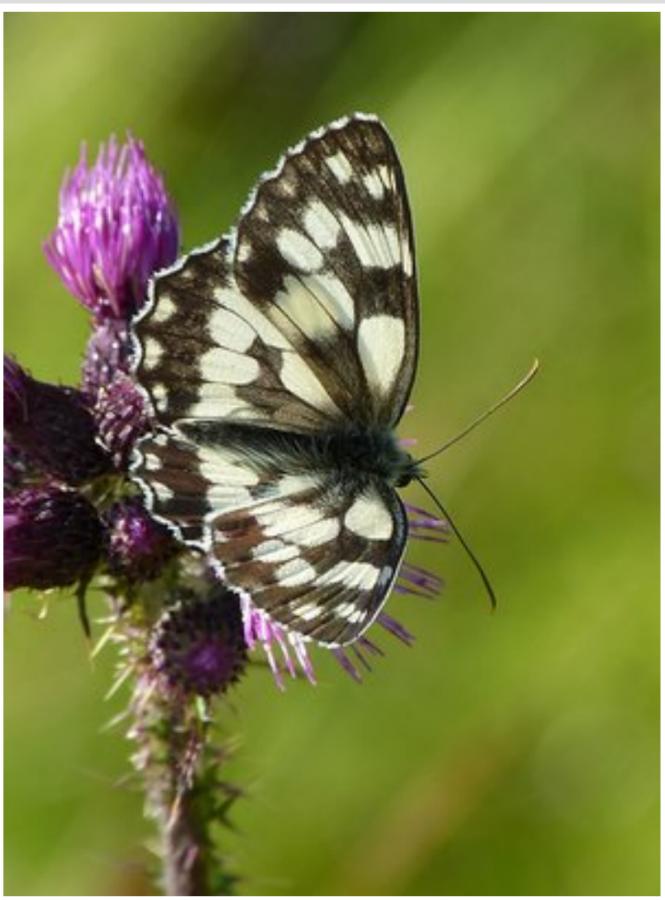


Silver-washed Fritillary - Snitterfield Bushes 18.07.2012



Comma - Snitterfield Bushes 18.07.2012

Going back through to the meadow where the Marbled Whites were, the place was alive with dozens of them as well as Meadow Browns all over the place. We stayed around here for another hour or so until it clouded over again and they all began to roost up again.



Marbled white - Snitterfield Bushes 18.07.2012



Marbled White - Snitterfield Bushes 18.07.2012



Marbled White - Snitterfield Bushes 18.07.2012

A bit of a strange day considering we spent a good part of it sheltering from some heavy rain 😞 but one which also proved that if you are out in it you can still find a lot of butterflies in the brief spells in between 😊

Bye for now.

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-12 07:09 AM GMT

Great shots Neil 😊 Looks like I'll have to add brolly to my ever growing list of must have essentials! Apparently the jet stream is moving north so we might get a summer soon...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-12 05:20 AM GMT

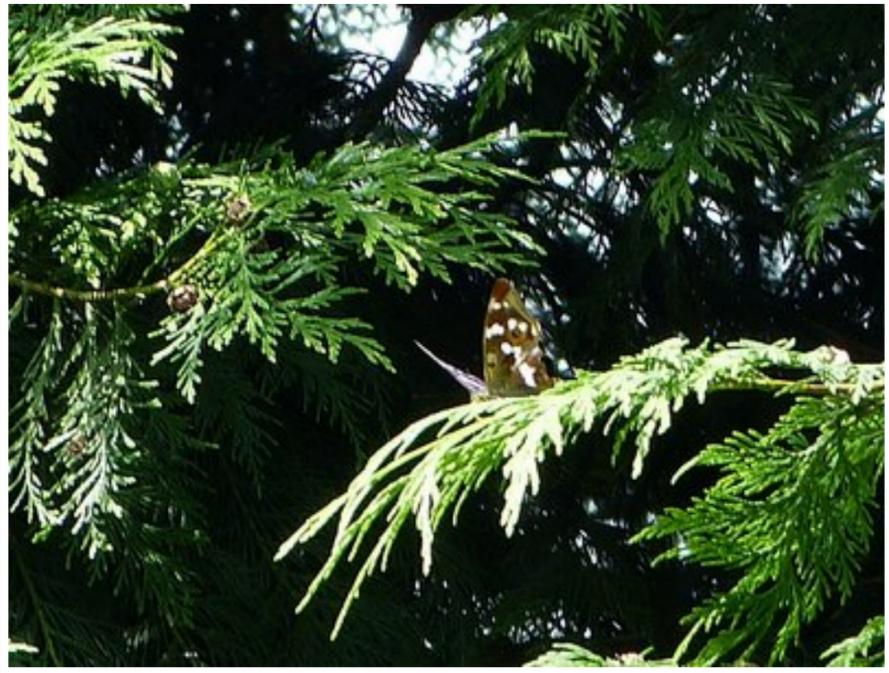
Saturday 21st July - No brollies this time

With better weather forecast, Chris and myself decided to pay a return visit to Oversley Wood as during our last visit it had rained for 3 parts of the time we were there.

We arrived mid morning and walked a couple of slow circuits around the wood in warm conditions of mixed sun and cloud.

We had already seen good numbers of Silver-washed Fritillaries, 4 White Admirals and 1 Red Admiral, as well as the now familiar numbers of Ringlets and Meadow Browns, when Chris called out behind me.

I turned round just in time to see a Purple Emperor fly just over our heads and head up into a stand of conifers. It settled about 30 feet up in a tree at least the same distance away and I just managed to get a quick photo before it went up and over the top of the trees.



Purple Emperor - Oversley Wood 21.07.2012

We hung around for a bit but it did not come back so we carried on our way.



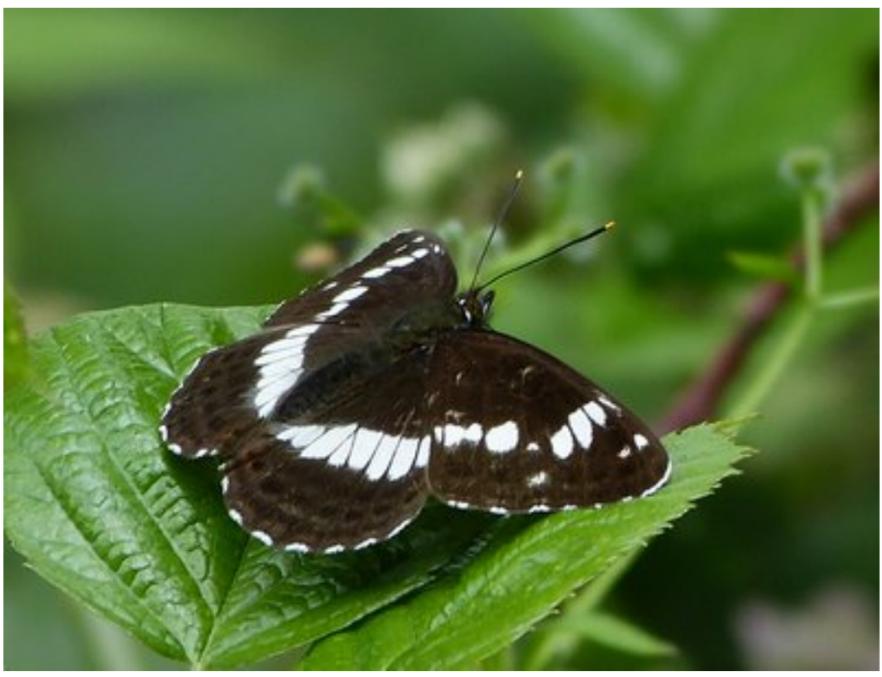
Red Admiral - Oversley Wood 21.07.2012



Meadow Brown - Oversley Wood 21.07.2012



White Admiral – Oversley Wood 21.07.2012



White Admiral – Oversley Wood 21.07.2012



White Admiral – Oversley Wood 21.07.2012



Silver-washed Fritillary - Oversley Wood 21.07.2012

Further along the path I saw a quick flash of purple again but this one was much smaller.



Purple Hairstreak - Oversley Wood 21.07.2012



Purple Hairstreak - Oversley Wood 21.07.2012

Other butterflies seen were a few each of Large and Small Skippers (Definitely Small, I took few head on shots 😊 but all down in the grass and not worth posting), 1 Gatekeeper, and around half a dozen Green-veined Whites.



Green-veined White - Oversley Wood 21.07.2012

We also saw a beautiful SWF female Valesina 😊 but unfortunately she did not settle long enough for a photo.

We left Oversley mid afternoon as it clouded over a bit and decided to call in to Snitterfield on our way past.

Whilst at Snitterfield, the sun popped out again and we saw around 8 SWFs and 3 White Admirals as well as 2 Commas during the hour we spent there.



Silver-washed Fritillaries - Snitterfield Bushes 21.07.2012



Silver-washed Fritillary female - Snitterfield Bushes 21.07.2012



White Admiral – Snitterfield Bushes 21.07.2012

also notable was the fact that for the first time for ages I noticed various unidentified Whites flying along the verges as we drove to and from these places today 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-12 05:39 AM GMT

Cracking shots as per usual Neil 😊 Those White Admirals are practically glowing! I too have started seeing whites again – but still no Small Coppers 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-12 06:12 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel, the White Admirals were my target for the day, The PE and PH were icing on the cake 😊

Still no summer brood Small Coppers for me either, must admit I saw a fair few first brood in Norfolk when I was there back during the last week of May.

First sighting of a local second brood Small Copper for me last year was 23rd July, so any time now I will be looking for them.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by jonno, 22-Jul-12 06:20 AM GMT

Hi Neil

We also saw a beautiful SWF female Valesina but unfortunately she did not settle long enough for a photo

I visited Oversley last week and captured a few distance shots of this Valesina by the bench at the end of the northernmost straight. Photos don't really do justice to this brilliant creature

Best wishes

Jonno



Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-12 07:07 AM GMT

Hi Jonno,

Nice ones...our sighting was about a hundred yards along from the bench. She flew past us and over a large patch of brambles where she settled briefly before carrying on further into the wood.

A gorgeous butterfly 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jul-12 05:20 AM GMT

Sunday 22nd July

A beautiful afternoon, albeit a bit breezy, saw myself, Chris and my Wife Jane trundling over to Babbs Mill / Kingfisher Country Park.

I had two particular reasons for wanting to have another look around this local spot. The first was that last time that went, I had a fleeting glimpse of a Marbled White and wanted to try and confirm their presence at this site. The other was to look for Essex Skippers because as previously noted in this dairy I now had doubts about seeing one here.

We had a slow bumble along the main path towards the area that I wanted to check out, noting the many Meadow Browns and Ringlets along the way along with 3 Commas, a good number of highly mobile unidentified Whites and numerous Cinnabar Moth larvae on clumps of Ragwort.



Comma - Babbs Mill LNR 22.07.2012



Cinnabar Moth Caterpillar - Babbs Mill LNR

We arrived at the spot we were heading for which is a rise up onto a meadow area and noticed a dozen or so Small Skippers 'mud puddling'. We spent some time trying to get some head on shots to confirm ID but found it next to impossible due to the fact that they were very flighty in the warm sun.



Small Skippers 'mud puddling'



Small Skipper on the mud.

In the end, both Chris and myself managed to get enough shots to confirm most of their IDs as 'Small' although Chris does have one head on shot that looks 'Essex' but I will leave that for him to post if he wants 😊 .

We saw loads more 'small skippers' further up the hill but taking photos of them was a real trial in the warm sun plus the breeze up there that had them settling low down in the grass when they did stop for a brief second or two. Nevertheless I did manage some head on shots, all of which were definite 'Smalls'.

I was more successful in my other 'mission' in that we saw 3 Marbled Whites including a mating pair thus confirming their presence at this site 😊



Marbled White mating pair – Babbs Mill LNR 22.07.2012

Other Butterflies seen were a couple of Small Heath and Red Admirals and a few Gatekeepers all of which were male.

A good couple of hours but a bit warm and breezy for photographing the skippers, I may try again sometime this week but in the early evening.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 23-Jul-12 05:52 AM GMT

I feel like I've arrived late at a party 😊 But the second brood Green-veined White female is a cracking shot of a cracking individual! Thx for posting in the species-specific galleries!

Just goes to show that we (well, me anyway!) can get as much pleasure from a "common" species as from those that are extremely rare, as Vince constantly demonstrates with his lifecycle studies which are superb! And I watched a Small White ovipositing on some cabbage in our garden today – a very simple pleasure and simply wonderful. I hope the offspring munch away!

Great stuff; keep up the good work all 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jul-12 03:33 AM GMT

Many Thanks for your comments Pete 😊

I quite agree with you regarding the more 'common' species, in fact the Green-veined White is one of my favourites, I like its more 'subtle' beauty.

Monday 23rd July

My back lawn has finally dried out enough to give it a cut and whilst doing this earlier this evening I was visited by a faded Speckled Wood, a hyperactive Red Admiral, and a second brood Holly Blue that actually stopped in the garden long enough for me to get my camera 😊



Holly Blue - Coverdale 23.07.2012

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-12 03:54 AM GMT

Great shot of the Holly Blue 😊 What is it about mowing the lawn? I hadn't seen a butterfly in my garden for a long while, I get the mower out and there's a Red Admiral, Comma and Small and Large White! Next time I think I might mow the lawn I go butterflying instead! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jul-12 04:00 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

I just wanted to say that I'm thoroughly enjoying reading your diary. I particularly like the Purple Hairstreak from Oversley Wood and well done with the Holly Blue 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jul-12 04:16 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel and Mark, thank you very much for your comments 😊

The Purple Hairstreak was perched 7 or 8 feet up on top of the leaf. Those shots show the advantage of the articulated screen on my FZ150, the camera was held at full stretch above my head with the screen angled down.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Hi Neil,

I just wanted to say that I'm thoroughly enjoying reading your diary. I particularly like the Purple Hairstreak from Oversley Wood and well done with the Holly Blue

Agreed. These are two fairly widespread butterflies that are hard to nail down with a photograph.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-12 04:08 AM GMT

Tuesday 24th July - Fermyn Woods.

With glorious sunshine forecast for a few days I had booked a day off work in order to take advantage of it. I had not made any particular plans on where to go but reading the reports of Purple Emperor numbers growing at Fermyn over the weekend, this was far too much of a temptation to resist.

Fermyn is only 60 miles or so from my house and I arrived there just before 08.00am to find a few cars already parked by the gliding club. Passing a few pleasantries with a fellow enthusiast (more of whom later 😊) who had arrived just before me, I set off down the ride.

Last year when I came here, I had seen my first Purple Emperors down at the southern end of the Lady/Souther/Titchmarsh Wood complex so I figured that I would head straight to there and then take a leisurely bumble back through the rides.

Sure enough, I saw my first PE at 09.05am down at the south end doing the usual thing of sitting on top of a pile of 'pooh' taking in minerals. I took a few photos but I already had loads of 'PE on pooh' photos from last year and really wanted to try for some shots of Emperors on 'green' Leaving this individual to carry on obtaining his nourishment, I started back up through the woods seeing a few more including two having a bit of a dogfight by a stand of pines.

This gave me my first 'PE on green' opportunity albeit at long range as one of them broke off and settled about 15 feet up in one of the pines. Further along in Souther Wood I came across an Emperor on the ground at about the same time as another 'PE hunter', and this was soon joined by another male as well as the chap I had spoken to earlier in the car park who turned out to be none other than fellow UKB member 'Tuts'.



Purple Emperor - Fermyn Woods 24.07.2012



Purple Emperor - Fermyn Woods 24.07.2012

These two PEs stayed on the ground here for quite some time during which Tuts saved them from potential disaster from a passing vehicle by gently lifting them on to his fingers to move them out of the way.

This gave a photo opportunity that just begged to be taken 😊



'The Purple Emperor Bookends'

After this they continued to remain here, occasionally taking off and circling around the growing number of watchers and they were still there when Mark (Tuts) and myself continued on through the rides.

During the morning I think we saw 16 individuals including a dozen or so on the ground, a few of which would occasionally take off and settle on nearby shrubs fairly low down 😊



Purple Emperor - Fermyn Woods 24.07.2012



Purple Emperor - Fermyn Woods 24.07.2012



Purple Emperor - Fermyn Woods 24.07.2012



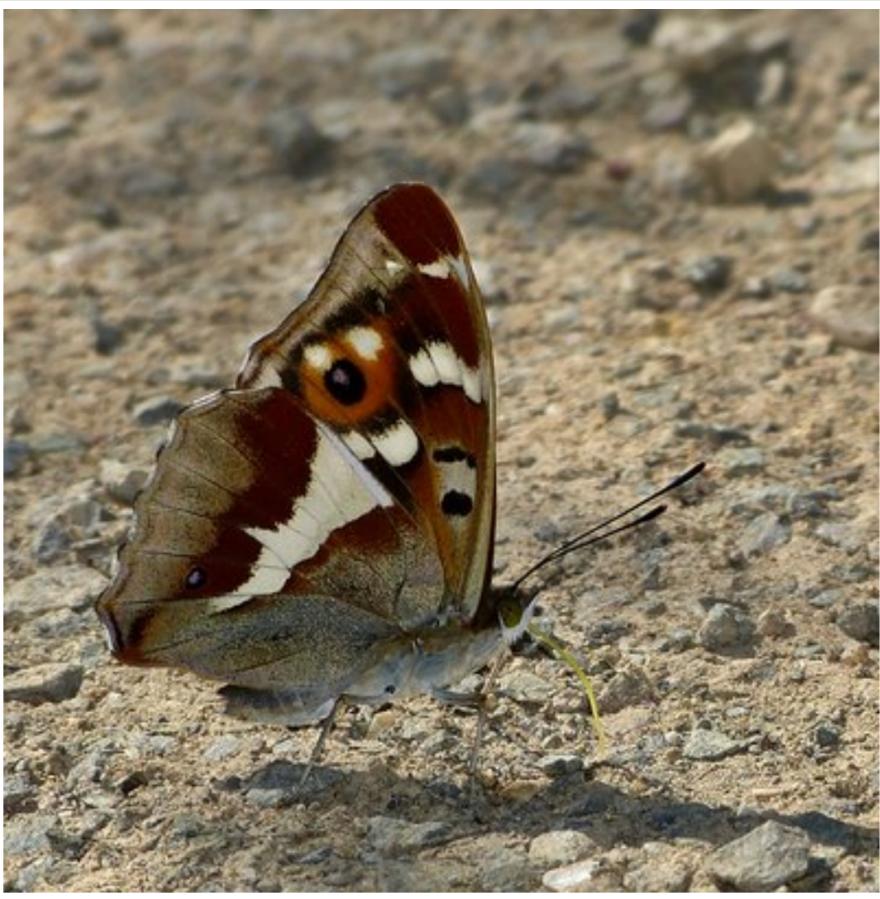
Purple Emperor - Fermyn Woods 24.07.2012



Purple Emperor - Fermyn Woods 24.07.2012

By midday it was getting very hot and butterfly activity had definitely quietened down with those that were still about being very mobile. We walked back through Fermyn to the cars for a bit of lunch seeing our only female of the day diving into some Sallow.

The afternoon was much quieter than the morning and we only saw a few, which, I believe due to their locations, were some of the same individuals we had seen during the morning. Those that we did see low down were very flighty, only settling for seconds before rising again. Walking right through to the south side again at around 4.30pm we found a male on the ground taking minerals by a puddle and this one stayed around for a while but kept his wings clamped tightly shut in the heat.



Purple Emperor - Fermyn Woods 24.07.2012

Mark made the observation that the habitat at this end, where you are actually coming out of the woods, was unlike any he was used to seeing Purple Emperors in, being much more open and more like a hedgerow.



Last grounded Emperor seen just beyond puddle.

We then walked slowly back towards the cars seeing just one more flying rapidly along the ride in Lady Wood.

Other butterflies seen during the day were;

A few White Admirals

Silver-washed Fritillaries – more of these than last year.

Purple Hairstreaks – High up flitting about as usual.

White-letter Hairstreak – 1 individual in the ride from the gliding club in almost exactly the same position where there was one last year.

Meadow Browns, Ringlets and a large number of very active Large Skippers.

Large, Small and Green-veined whites in encouraging numbers.

A great day, which whilst apparently quieter than the previous one, was highly enjoyable with enough Purple Emperor action to keep me happy 😊😊😊

Bye for now,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by GOLDENORFE, 26-Jul-12 04:24 AM GMT

very good Neil , what an amazing place it is!

great shots on the trees 😊

does sound at lot different to monday when i visited , presume alot more people on the tuesday upsetting them ? they where still grounding well after 4 pm along the main track monday.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 26-Jul-12 04:33 AM GMT

I love your PE shots Neil – so glad you had a good day (PS love your P Hairstreak shots too)!

Re: nfreem

by Mark Tutton, 26-Jul-12 04:44 AM GMT

Great shots Niel and good company I must say 😊 .

We certainly seemed to have done better than most on Tuesday? Matthew Oates seemed to be of the opinion that sometimes when you experience a 'super purple' day like Monday when males fly into the evening the next day can be quieter. It was certainly very hot and the first time I have experiences an emporer flying across a corn field. Mark 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-12 04:56 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Yes, it was a great day and I really enjoyed wandering around with you, many thanks 😊

It may have been quiet by the previous days standards but for me, something like 30 or more sightings of 15/16 different Purple Emperors counts as good going 😊

Hi Phil,

Thanks for the comments 😊

I am not sure if there were many more people than Monday, we didn't see masses but then again I think we wandered further into the woods than most. There were times when we were alone with our Emperors.

Pauline, glad you like the shots, yes it was a very good day and passed amazingly quickly.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 26-Jul-12 04:59 AM GMT

What a bonanza! You deserved your good fortune, Neil, for all the effort you've put in.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 26-Jul-12 06:37 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Congratulations on some really good shots. The Emperors of Fermyn appear to be in far better condition than those in my local woodland. Of the five seen today all were very tatty.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-12 04:30 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

What a bonanza! You deserved your good fortune, Neil, for all the effort you've put in.

Many Thanks David, we certainly put some footwork in. Mark (Tuts) was wearing a pedometer and apparently we clocked up over 42000 paces, something like 21 miles 🤩

Thank you for your comments Mark.

I believe the main emergence at Fermyn occurred last weekend into Monday and they have enjoyed excellent weather since then. I was there on Tuesday so most were still nice and fresh 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by EricY, 27-Jul-12 05:44 AM GMT

Neil, you deserve a medal if you walked 21 miles on tuesday & the super photos were your just reward. Far too hot for me that day to do any more than a basic walk to Lady wood & back & anyway about 4 miles is my max distance! Eric

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-12 06:29 AM GMT

Many Thanks for the medal Eric 😊 in all honesty we did not realise we had walked that far until after we had finished.

Saturday 28th July

The rest of this week has been spent back at work and just chilling in the garden afterwards.

The weather this week has certainly seemed to bring things back on track a bit and there has been a steady procession of Holly Blues and Whites thought the garden plus the Speckled Woods are out again with yesterday evening there being 2 different males as well as a faded female all in sight at the same time 😊



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 26.08.2012

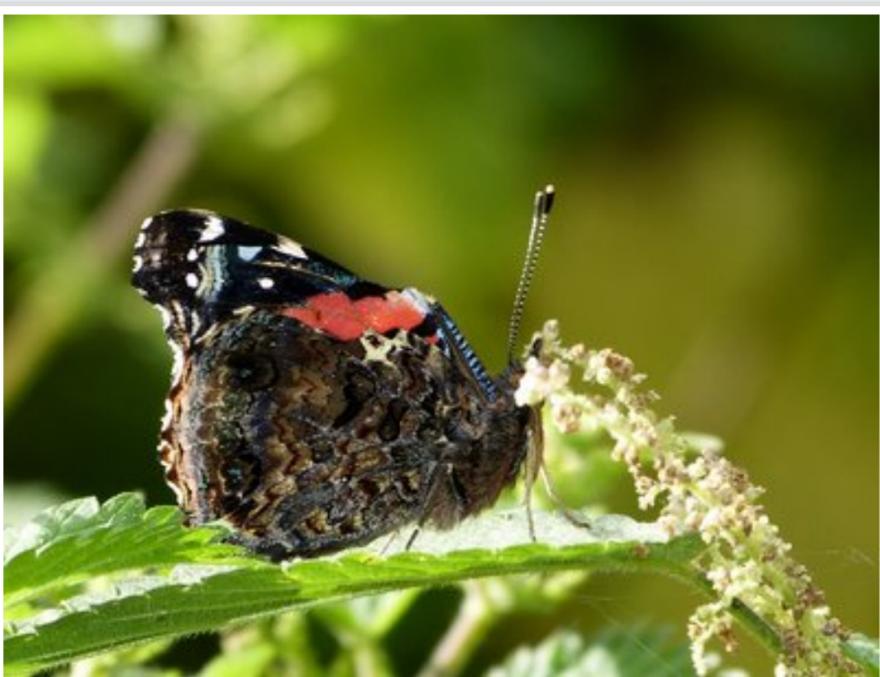


Green-veined White - Coverdale 28.07.2012

There has also been a Southern Hawker Dragonfly hanging around the past few days and yesterday I saw it having a bit of a dogfight with a Red Admiral. I am not sure who was picking on who but this evening I saw what I believe is the same Red Admiral with a chunk missing from its RH forewing.



Southern Hawker - Coverdale 27.08.2012



Red Admiral - Coverdale 28.07.2012

This afternoon I trundled over to Babbs Mill again to have another look for Essex Skippers 😊
It was cooler than my last visit, although still pleasant, and there was only a light breeze which made getting some head on shots much easier. Most of them proved to be definite Small Skippers,



Small Skipper – Babbs Mill 28.07.2012

all except for the female below, both shots are of the same individual.



Essex Skipper – Babbs Mill 28.07.2012



Essex Skipper – Babbs Mill 28.07.2012

Also seen here were numerous Whites, Meadow Browns, a couple of Commas and Red Admirals and loads of Gatekeepers including the first females that I have seen this year 😊



Gatekeeper male – Babbs Mill 28.07.2012



Gatekeeper female – Babbs Mill 28.07.2012

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-12 02:59 AM GMT

Sunday 29th – Tuesday 31st July

Arnside Knott.

On Sunday morning, my wife Jane and myself, went up to Arnside for a couple of days.

We had booked into a Bed & Breakfast located right at the bottom of the lane leading up to the Knott and as such is in a perfect location to be able to walk up to the top. I had found this accommodation simply by looking on google and on arrival we found that it is run by a lovely couple, the lady of whom is also interested in butterflies and does a transect in a nearby meadow 😊 .

I was hoping that Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries would still be about and that Scotch Argus would have started to emerge so that I could see them in nice fresh condition. I had also not seen Grayling for a few years so was also hoping for these as well.

Later on Sunday and during Monday, I went up the Knott a few times in a mixture of weather, including cloud, showers and sun.



Arnside Knott - 30.07.2012

Scotch Argus were in abundance on some of the grassy slopes and clearings. You could stand in one spot and see a dozen or more without trying as they flapped lazily above the grass looking like dark meadow Browns. Despite the numbers, I found these difficult to get good photos of, they were either mobile in the sun or would drop from sight when a cloud came over. When I did find them basking with open wings they were hard to approach and would take off at the slightest movement.



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 30.07.2012



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 30.07.2012



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 30.07.2012



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 30.07.2012

There were quite a few Grayling around on the rocky slopes up from the car park. Another species that I found hard to get a good photo of due to the way it hides down on the ground and tricky to follow over the loose scree on the slopes.



Grayling - Arnside Knott 30.07.2012

A good number of Dark Green Fritillaries were still flying. The males varied in condition from faded to very tatty but there were still some females around looking nice 😊.



Dark Green Fritillary male - Arnside Knott 29.07.2012



Dark Green Fritillary female - 29.07.2012



Dark Green Fritillary female - 30.07.2012



Dark Green Fritillary female - 30.07.2012



Dark Green Fritillary female - 30.07.2012

The heavily marked female below must have looked very striking when fresh. Despite the wing damage she could still fly strongly.



Dark Green Fritillary female - 30.07.2012

I think I saw about half a dozen or so different High Brown Fritillaries, mostly males with varying amounts of wing damage and at least one female. There may have been more but those are just the ones that I was sure about either by seeing the undersides or the pronounced sex brands on the forewings of the males.



High Brown Fritillary male - Arnside Knott 29.07.2012



HBF male with a missing antenna - 30.07.2012



High Brown Fritillary female – Arnside Knott 30.07.2012



High Brown Fritillary male – Arnside Knott 30.07.2012

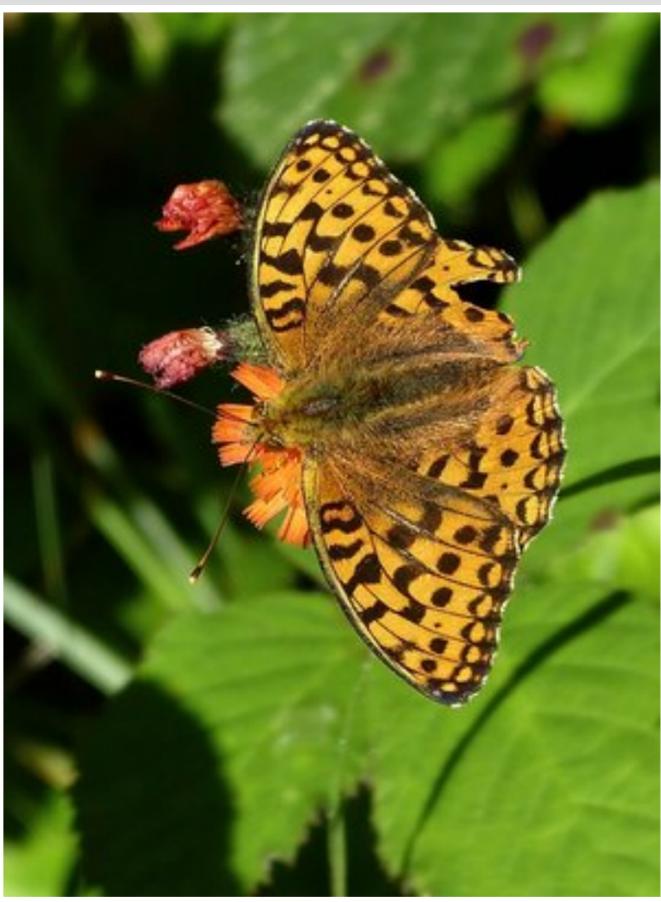
After watching both DG and HB Frits for a while, maybe it was just me, but I am sure I noticed a difference in flight patterns with the DGs being a bit faster and more 'direct' in their flight than the HBs.

The difficulty in counting how many I actually saw is shown by the individual below. The first photo was taken around 10.50 Monday morning in a glade near the foot of the Knott.



High Brown Fritillary male – 30.07.2012

This next photo was taken around 5.30 in the afternoon in a clearing near the top of the Knott.



High Brown Fritillary male – Arnside Knott 30.07.2012

It wasn't until I was going through the photos later that I recognised it as the same individual by the rear wing damage and a couple of other little marks. If I had not noticed this I would have counted these as two different individuals where in reality it was the same one in two separate parts of the Knott.

Having read so much in praise of Arnside Knott, I must admit I was wondering how my visit would turn out, but I have to say this really is a butterfly heaven and I would certainly love to return 😊

All in all this was a wonderful couple of days made that much better by staying in excellent accommodation in a beautiful setting.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 02-Aug-12 03:20 AM GMT

Neil I just love your DGF photos especially the females with wings closed – absolutely stunning! Your Scotch Argus aren't bad either 😊😊 Wish I could have been there.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 02-Aug-12 03:52 AM GMT

A lot of lovely photos Neil. My favourite has to be your female DGF with her wings closed, and the second DGF female picture down is a lovely specimen, colour wise, the photo I hope to get next year. All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 02-Aug-12 04:08 AM GMT

Just had to have another look at your pics Neil. They are really very good and the High Brown with wings shut is a lovely composition as the colour of the bracken complements the markings on the butterfly beautifully. Can I come with you both next time 🤔😊😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-12 05:02 PM GMT

Hi Pauline and Nick, many thanks for the kind comments 😊

Pauline, not quite sure how I could put that to my wife? ...'can we take a lady that I met on the internet' could be misinterpreted 😊😊😊

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-12 08:22 PM GMT

Thursday 2nd August

Due to Chris's shifts at work, we had not had chance to get out together for a while.

This afternoon we were both at home together and as there looked to be a promising break in the showers we took the opportunity for me to show Chris one of our local spots, Castle Hills at Solihull. Last year there were Small Coppers, Common Blue and Essex Skippers out here in late July as well as Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Peacocks, Small Skippers and Whites.



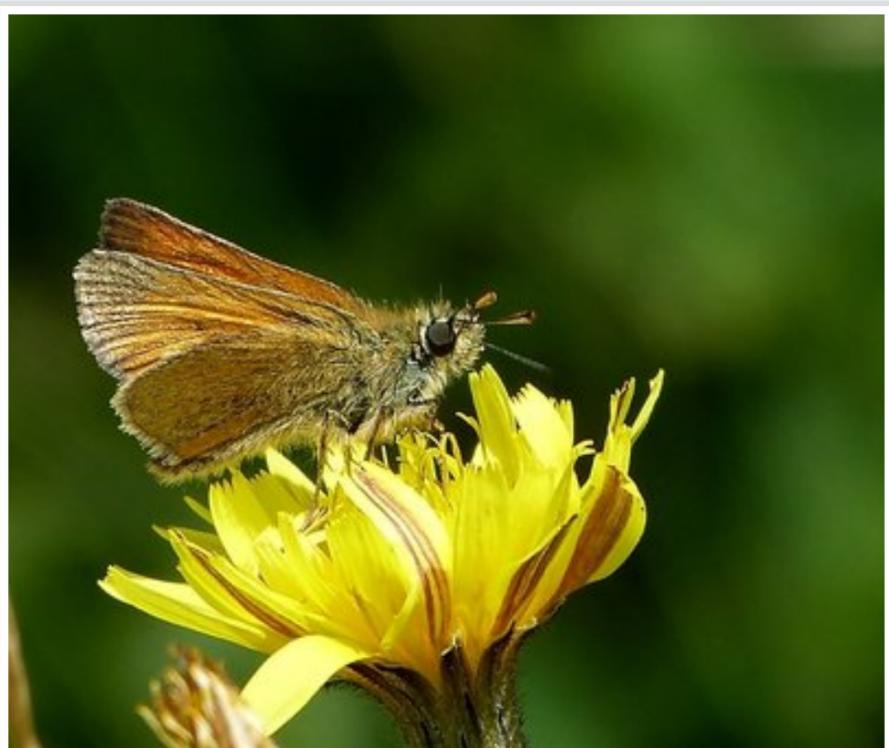
Castle Hills Solihull, one of the meadow areas.

We soon saw a profusion of Gatekeepers along with meadow Browns and began trying to take head on shots of the 'small' skippers. This was not easy due to a steady breeze but one of the first that I took proved to be an Essex.



Essex Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 02.08.2012

Moving on to another part of the site, the meadow was alive with Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Skippers, which in this area proved to be all 'Small'



Small Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 02.08.2012



Small Skpper - Castle Hills Solihull 02.08.2012

There were also good numbers of Whites about and I took my first Large White shot of the year. In fact for the first time this year I photographed all three 'common' Whites at one site, not very good photos but I was pleased to get all three on one day considering the summer that we have had so far 😊.



Green-veined White - Castle Hills Solihull 02.08.2012



Small White - Castle Hills Solihull 02.08.2012



Large White – Castle Hills Solihull 02.08.2012

We also saw a very 'tatty' Marbled White which was a first for me at this site, that is the second local site where I have found them where I did not know they were 😊

Unfortunately there was no sign of any Small Coppers or Common Blues yet.

Last year these were a week or so later appearing around here than down south so I am hoping that they will start showing up soon.

After an hour or so some thunderous looking clouds were heading our way, so we decided to head back home which turned out to be a good decision as we arrived back just in time for a heavy shower to start.

Later in the afternoon the sun popped out again and sitting in the garden I saw a couple of Holly Blues, 3 Speckled Wood, some Whites and a Red Admiral circling around the nettle patch.

I have seen Red admirals here on and off for a couple of weeks and by taking photos have identified at least 3 different individuals coming and going.



Red Admiral – Coverdale 02.08.2012

Interestingly though, despite having a Buddleia in the back and one in the front garden, I have yet to see anything actually on them this year 😞.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-12 04:31 AM GMT

Some cracking shots Neil 📷

I need to try and persuade my wife that a family holiday up North 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-12 06:08 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Ironically I am having a family holiday down south at the end of the month 😊

Saturday 4th August – Goings on in the garden

I have had a few things to do at home over the past couple of days so I haven't been out anywhere.

There have been some showers, some of them heavy and thundery but between there has also been some nice warm sunny spells when I would grab 10 or 15 minutes in the garden.

There has been quite a bit of activity with at least 3 male Speckled Woods identified plus a female yesterday.



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 04.08.2012



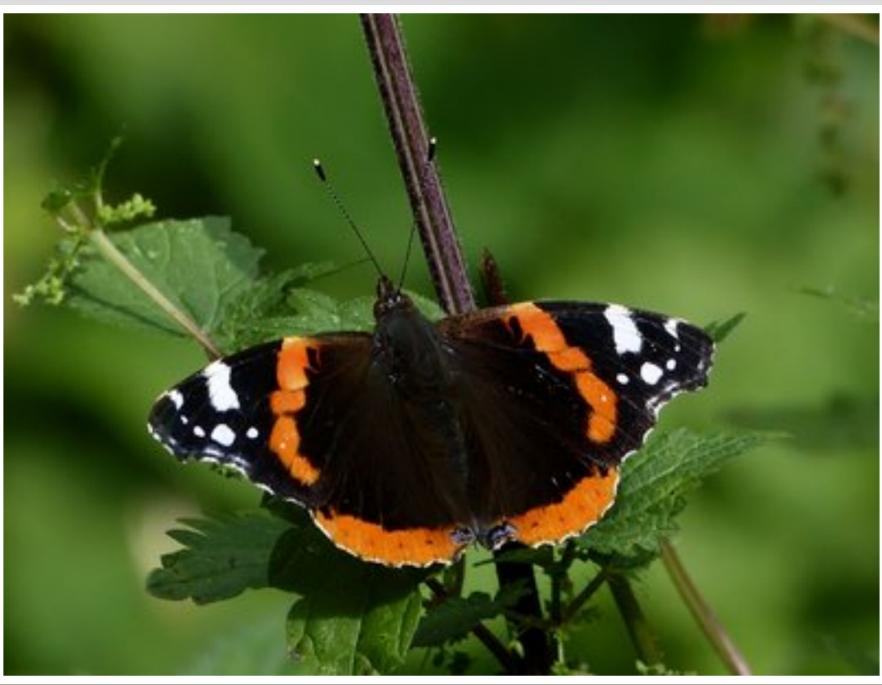
Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 03.08.2012

The Red Admiral activity is centred around the nettle patch with 2 different individuals visiting yesterday and today.



Back garden showing nettles at far end

My previous RA shots had seemed a bit 'washed out' with regard to the red so I knocked the exposure setting back to -1 for the shots yesterday and I prefer the result.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 03.08.2012

The Southern Hawker is still lurking around, I can tell it is the same one by a patch of something white stuck to its left forewing.



Southern Hawker - Coverdale 04.08.2012

I was surprised today to see one of the male Speckled Wood actually take off to intercept it as it flew past 😲. I knew they were feisty but I thought that was a bit risky.

Other Butterflies visiting over the past couple of days have been a number of Holly Blues, I saw 3 at once at one point yesterday. Also growing numbers of all 3 whites, it seems that they are back to normal numbers again 😊



Green-veined White - Coverdale 04.08.2012

I have also disturbed up to a dozen at a time of a moth when stepping around the nettles. They proved impossible to photograph as they would always settle upside down under a leaf.

In the end I captured one in a small jar and took a photo before releasing it.

After doing a bit of 'googling' I have identified them as Mother of Pearl Moths, a common species that is actually classified as a micro-moth even though they are a good 25-35mm wingspan. <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?bf=1405>



Mother of Pearl Moth - Coverdale 03.08.2012

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Aug-12 03:31 AM GMT

Wednesday 8th August

A few more photos from the past couple of evenings in the garden with now usual Red Admirals, Speckled Woods, Green-veined Whites and Holly Blues all showing up when the sun popped out.

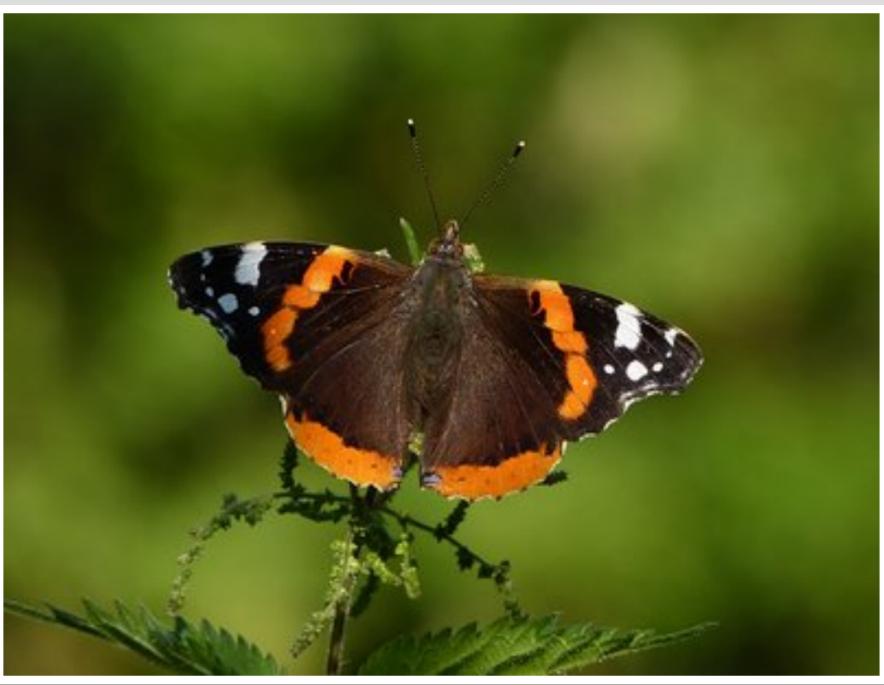
I have been experimenting a bit with different exposure settings, trying to make the most of the early evening sun.

One Red Admiral, recognised by the white dot in the red band on the forewings, has staked a territory centred on the nettle patch and defends it from all comers including a second RA.

A couple of times this afternoon I watched as they spiralled high into the sky before losing sight of them. A few minutes later the defender would return to its perch to bask for a while before taking off to intercept the next interloper.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 07.08.2012



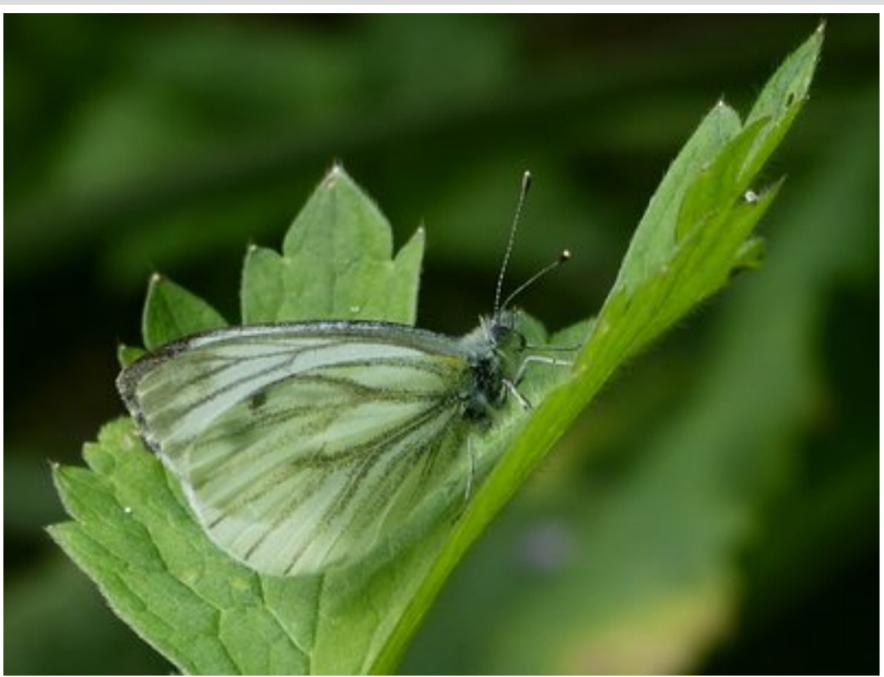
Red Admiral – Coverdale 08.08.2012

The Speckled Woods have increased and I have now identified 4 different males and 2 females by taking photos and comparing the variations in the markings and the amount of wear.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 08.08.2012

Holly Blues and GV Whites have usually been chased off by the Red Admiral or Speckled Woods 😊 but occasionally one would escape their attention and settle for a bit.



Green-veined White – Coverdale 07.08.2012



Holly Blue - Coverdale 08.08.2012

The weather is looking good for the next few days. I am hoping to get around a couple of local spots and look for Common Blues and Small Coppers, neither of which have I seen second brood around here yet.

Bye for now

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Aug-12 03:36 AM GMT

Thursday 9th August

Sitting in the garden after work, with my camera by my side, paid dividends earlier as a Holly Blue came fluttering up past the shrubs along the side at a fairly low height thus avoiding the aggressive attentions of the male Red Admiral and Speckled Woods.

Reaching a length of fencing that is covered with Ivy, she stopped to investigate and settled for a while, even better, she flicked her wings open a couple of times 😊😊



Holly Blue female - Coverdale 09.08.2012



Holly Blue female - Coverdale 09.08.2012

There were also passing visits from a Gatekeeper (Hedge Brown) and a female Brimstone 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 10-Aug-12 05:06 AM GMT

Lovely shots of that Holly Blue, Neil. Such a rare chance to see the wings so wide open – quite unlike any other Blue.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-12 06:10 AM GMT

I agree with Dave great stuff Neil 😊 I'm with you on the keeping your camera to hand at all times– I carry mine now even to water the greenhouse! Though there isn't an awful lot that can in there past the Triffids/tomatoes.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Aug-12 06:18 AM GMT

Many thanks for your comments Dave and Wurzel 😊

Having seen the Holly Blues passing through the garden so much recently I have been sitting there for the past couple of late afternoons / early evenings watching and waiting for one to do exactly what this one did tonight.

I hoped that sooner or later one would stop just long enough, and lucky for me this evening this one did 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Aug-12 04:03 AM GMT

Friday 10th August – An Audience with The Speckled Wood

I have mentioned before that the Speckled Wood is one of my favourite butterflies, largely because I have a small resident colony in my back garden so I have become familiar with them over the past few years.

The Speckled Wood is unusual amongst butterflies in the UK in that it can overwinter as either a larva or a pupa. The first adults emerge from pupae in spring and are followed by those that spent the winter as larvae in early summer. The following broods from both these sets of adults are then strung out over a long period through the summer and into autumn.

In my garden this usually manifests as me seeing adults almost constantly from April through to October with sometimes a bit of a gap in June. This year the gap was in late June/Early July, no doubt delayed a couple of weeks due to the wet and gloomy weather.

Over the past few weeks there has usually been a couple of adults present in the garden with numbers increasing gradually until earlier this week when I spotted 4 different males and 2 females on the same afternoon.

This afternoon after work, I had about half an hour spare before starting the 'domestic duties' 😊 and decided to spend it in the garden with my camera and see how many different individuals I could photograph.

It was immediately apparent that there were a number of males but trying to tell them apart was difficult due to the way they were interacting and mixing it up between their territories.

Checking the photos afterward, I managed to get photos of 5 different males, all in less than 30 minutes, and that includes being distracted by other species passing through.

Condition varied from nice and fresh looking;



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 10.08.2012

through various states of wear;



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 10.08.2012



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 10.08.2012



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 10.08.2012

to the raggedy individual below who had obviously seen better days but was still feisty and mixing it up with the rest.



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 10.08.2012

No females today but I know they are more secretive and I did see a couple the other day.

An enjoyable use of a spare 30 minutes 😊

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-12 06:26 AM GMT

Interesting to see the contrast in the wear between those individuals Neil 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 12-Aug-12 02:53 AM GMT

Neil,

Lovely speckled woods.

Debbie 😊😊😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-12 05:04 PM GMT

Hi Debbie, many thanks for your comment 😊

Hi Wurzel, the difference in wear is due to the adults now emerging over a well spaced out period of time.

These are now the offspring of the earlier 2 sets of adults and, due to the way in which the caterpillars develop at different rates, I usually see fresh individuals from now on until sometime in late September/ October.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-12 07:01 PM GMT

Saturday 11th August

Seeing that others are now reporting Peacocks, Small Coppers and Common Blues again, I wanted to get out to see if any of these were about locally at last.

With this in mind I decided to nip over to Shadowbrook Meadows near Solihull where I had seen all of these last year although checking my notes that was more than three weeks earlier than now.

Things looked promising even before I left home when I saw a nice fresh Peacock on my Buddleia in the front garden. I have two Buddleias, one in the front and one in the back and this was the first butterfly that has actually bothered with them this year.

Arriving at Shadowbrook mid afternoon, it was overcast but still warm and the first thing that struck me was the number of Meadow Browns, there were hundreds of them all over the place.

Many of the females were nectaring on the knapweed, thistles and bettony that was in flower and I noticed that a fair number of them had double pupils in their eyespots.



Shadowbrook Meadows – Solihull West Midlands



Shadowbrook Meadows – Solihull West Midlands



Meadow Brown female - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012

I spent a couple of hours here doing a couple of slow circuits of the meadows that make up the site and along with all the Meadow Browns there were good numbers of Hedge Browns (Gatekeepers) and Small Skippers plus Six-spot Burnet moths and a few Antler Moths.



Six-spot Burnet Moth - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012

I did not notice when I took the photo of the Antler Moths below but something is going on in the bottom left corner, Is that one spider or 2?



Antler Moths - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012

The cloud thinned during the second hour or so that I was there and when the sun broke through I saw at least half a dozen nice fresh Peacocks.



Peacock - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012



Peacock - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012

The one below has particularly blue eye-spots on its hindwings, in fact it looks as if a bit of blue has spilled over onto the wings 😊



Peacock - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012

By way of contrast, I also managed to get a reasonable underside shot showing the subtle shades of brown and black.



Peacock underside - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012

After a bit seaching I found a couple of Small Coppers 😊



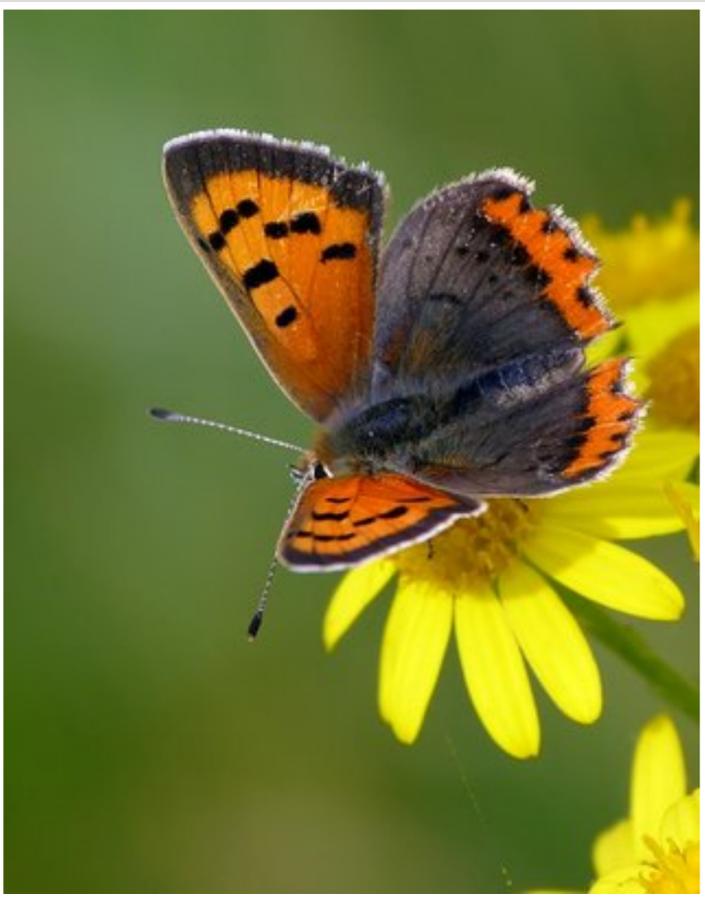
Small Copper - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 11.08.2012

Unfortunately, despite looking carefully all over the site, I did not find any Common Blues here. As I did not come here earlier in the year I could not say if there were any first brood here this year although there were a fair number last year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 12-Aug-12 07:11 PM GMT

Hi Neil,
Beautiful photos of the Peacock, well done, thats one butterfly i have not seen for a few months.
All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-12 07:29 PM GMT

Hi Nick,

Many thanks for the comment 😊

Those were my first summer Peacocks yesterday, a full month later than I saw them last year at Snitterfield on July 10th.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-12 05:46 AM GMT

Just catching up after a night at my parents... great Peacock shots and I really like those Antler Moths, I'll have to look out for them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 13-Aug-12 08:30 PM GMT

Super pictures.

Debbie 😊😊😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Aug-12 05:13 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I was quite pleased with my Small Copper Shots as well until I saw yours 🎁 Oh well!, all the more reason to go out again and look for some more 😊

Hi Debbie, thanks for your comment, hope to see you posting your diary again soon 😊

Tuesday 14th August.

Another spell in the garden after work just sitting and watching the butterflies coming and going.

The one Red Admiral is still defending his spot on the nettles. He is getting a bit faded now but is still full of life and is great to watch as he spirals all over the place.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 14.08.2012

I am making no excuses for posting another Speckled Wood photo, I just like the way this one looks in the evening light against the texture of the wood on one side and the dark background on the other.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 14.08.2012

I had booked a day off work tomorrow but the weather looks like it may be a bit too wet for even me to go out with my wellies and brollie 😊 so have put it off until Thursday. Lets hope that I have made the right choice.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Aug-12 05:43 AM GMT

Thursday 16th August

Well, changing my day off proved to be the right choice 😊 as today turned out much better than yesterday with its band of heavy rain sweeping across the country.

Chris had also managed to arrange his shifts to get today off and as he had not yet seen Chalkhill Blues or Silver-spotted Skippers we decided to take a run down the M40 to Aston Rowant.

Arriving just after 10.00 it was overcast to start with but fairly warm. This gave us chance to get some photos of the silver-spotted Skippers before the sun came out and turned them into the little rockets that they can be.



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012

There were already loads of Meadow Browns about but when sun started breaking through a little later they were joined by hundreds of Chalkhill Blues and the hillside was alive with butterflies.



Aston Rowant north side of M40. Hillsides that were alive with Meadow Browns and Chalkhill Blues when the sun came out.



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012

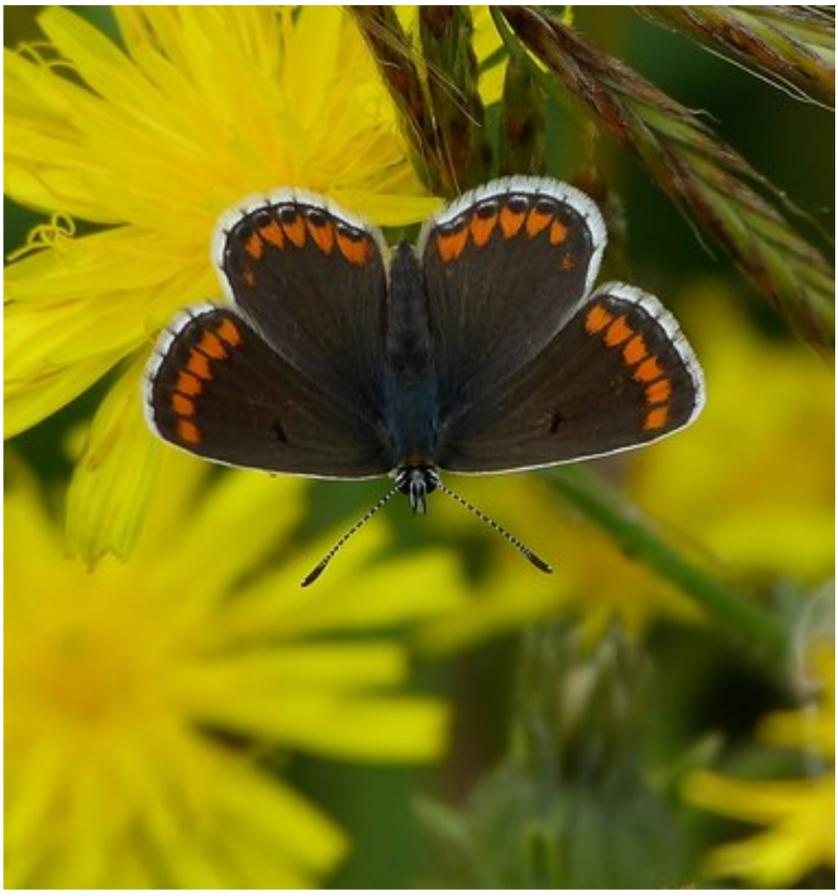


Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012

These were joined by good numbers of Silver-spotted Skippers with Brown Argus and Small Coppers on the lower slopes.



Most Brown Argus and Small Coppers seen along these lower parts of the hillsides.



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Brown Argus courting couple – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Small Copper – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Small Copper - Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Small Copper - Aston Rowant 16.08.2012

I took some photos of a Small Copper var. *caeruleo-punctata* with the blue spots on the hind wings but sadly they are not in focus.

I also took the photos below of a Small Copper, a female I believe, but one with hind wings like I have never seen before.



Small Copper female ab. radiata – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Small Copper female ab. radiata – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012

Other Butterflies seen included Brimstones, Peacocks, Hedge Browns, Large, Small and Essex Skippers, a couple of Common Blues and single examples of Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Small Heath and Small Tortoiseshell.

A great day with 19 species seen at this one site. Some more photos to sort through so I will probably do a part 2.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-12 05:55 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 🍷 I could be wrong but I think that's a radiata your var. Small Copper 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 17-Aug-12 05:56 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

You female Small Copper looks like ab. *radiata* to me. A nice find, well done.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Aug-12 06:00 AM GMT

Many thanks Wurzel and Mark,

I have just thought to look in the species gallery on this very site and it certainly looks like *radiata* 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-12 01:24 AM GMT

Thursday 16th August – more from Aston Rowant

I have edited my previous post and added some more photos including a couple of location shots plus 1 each of Chalkhill Blue, Brown Argus and Small Copper to keep them together.

A selection below of other butterflies seen during the day.



Meadow Brown – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012. The numbers of these present qualify for at least one shot.



Brimstone male – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Brimstone female – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Peacock – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Small Tortoiseshell – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012



Common Blue, very blue female – Aston Rowant 16.08.2012

As mentioned before, the final tally of species came to nineteen (19) which were as follows;

Meadow Brown – hundreds
Chalkhill Blue – hundreds
Silver-spotted Skipper – dozens
Brown Argus – a couple of dozen or more.
Small Copper – a dozen or so.
Hedge Brown(Gatekeeper) – about a dozen.
Small Skipper – a dozen or so.
Brimstone – 4 males, 2 females.
Peacock – 6
Large Skipper – 4
Green-veined White – 4
Small White – 2
Large White – 1
Common Blue – 2
Small Tortoiseshell – 1
Speckled Wood – 1
Ringlet – 1
Small Heath – 1
Essex Skipper – 1 definite identified by photo, good enough for ID but that is about it 😊

We also called in at Bernwood Meadows on the way back on the chance of Brown Hairstreak.

No luck with the BH but we did see a couple of faded female Silver-washed Fritillaries in the woods bringing our total for the day up to 20 species which we were well pleased with 😊

I think if we want to get more than that at one site we will have to move further down south somewhere 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 18-Aug-12 04:45 AM GMT

I love the composition of your Speckled Wood shot Neil and your Small Copper ab is stunning 🍷

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Aug-12 03:53 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, many thanks for your comments, very much appreciated 😊

Saturday 18th August.

Following on from last Saturdays failure to find any Common Blues at Shadowbrook Meadows near Solihull, I thought that I would have another look given that there has been some warm weather between the rain this past week.

I nipped over this afternoon with the weather a bit overcast but very warm and muggy to start but with the sun coming out for longer spells later.

Two of the meadows had been cut sometime during the past week, something that I believe happens around this time each year.

Nevertheless, there are still two other areas that had not been cut and walking through to these I soon noticed a number of Peacocks flitting about, even more than the half dozen or so that I saw here last week.



Peacock - Shadowbrook 18.08.2012

It was not long before a rapid little orange blur attracted my attention to the first Small Copper of the day, a nice male that was soon joined by another one. Between bouts of chasing each other about, they both kept coming back to the same flower heads.



Small Copper male - Shadowbrook 18.08.2012



Small Coppers - Shadowbrook 18.08.2012

Moving further down the field I noticed the female Small Copper below that looked lighter orange than normal. Closer examination revealed that not only did she have some blue spotting on the hind wings but the forewings were more lightly marked than normal.



Small Copper female - Shadowbrook 18.08.2012



Small Copper female - Shadowbrook 18.08.2012

I know that Small Coppers can be very variable and am not sure if she falls into the normal range or qualifies as an ab. either way I am happy as I think she is a very attractive individual.

Following the ab. radiata at Aston Rowant, I seem to be having some luck with Small Coppers 😊

Anyway, getting back to the main reason that I came here, I was just on the point of heading back when I spied a bit of blue fluttering around some long grass.

There he was, a male Common Blue, the first one I have seen at any of my local sites, almost 4 weeks later than last year.



Common Blue male - Shadowbrook 18.08.2012

Oh well, now I have found one, I now need to get out and check other local areas 😊

Also seen along with the still numerous Meadow Browns were quite a few Dragonflies, half a dozen or so large 'Hawker' types and about a dozen Common Darters of which I managed to get shots of a male and female 😊



Common Darter female - Shadowbrook 18.08.2012



Common Darter male - Shadowbrook 18.08.2012

Bye for now.

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 19-Aug-12 07:23 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 I would hazard a guess that your Small Copper is a names ab, mainly due to the reduction in the size of the markings 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Aug-12 03:12 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I have looked a bit but can't find a name for it yet.

Sunday 19th August.

Not quite as hot as further south perhaps but very warm and uncomfortably sticky. I was busy at home this morning and just had a couple of hours spare this afternoon.

Although Chris had seen a number of Peacocks at Aston Rowant last week, he had not managed to get a photo that he was really happy with. Hearing that I had seen some at Shadowbrook Meadows yesterday, and also with him never having been there, we decided that I would take him this afternoon to show him where it was and so that he could have a chance to get some better Peacock photos.

The Peacocks were still there in the same numbers along with all the Meadow Browns plus a Couple of Small Coppers but unfortunately for Chris we did not see the faintly marked female from yesterday.



Chris stalking Peacocks at Shadowbrook



A couple of Peacocks - Shadowbrook Meadows 19.08.2012



Another Peacock at Shadowbrook - 19.08.2012

As well as loads of tired and worn Meadow Browns, I noticed today that some of the females looked a bit fresher.



Meadow Brown female - Shadowbrook Meadows 19.08.2012

We also found another male Common Blue in another part of the meadow.



Common Blue – Shadowbrook Meadows 19.08.2012

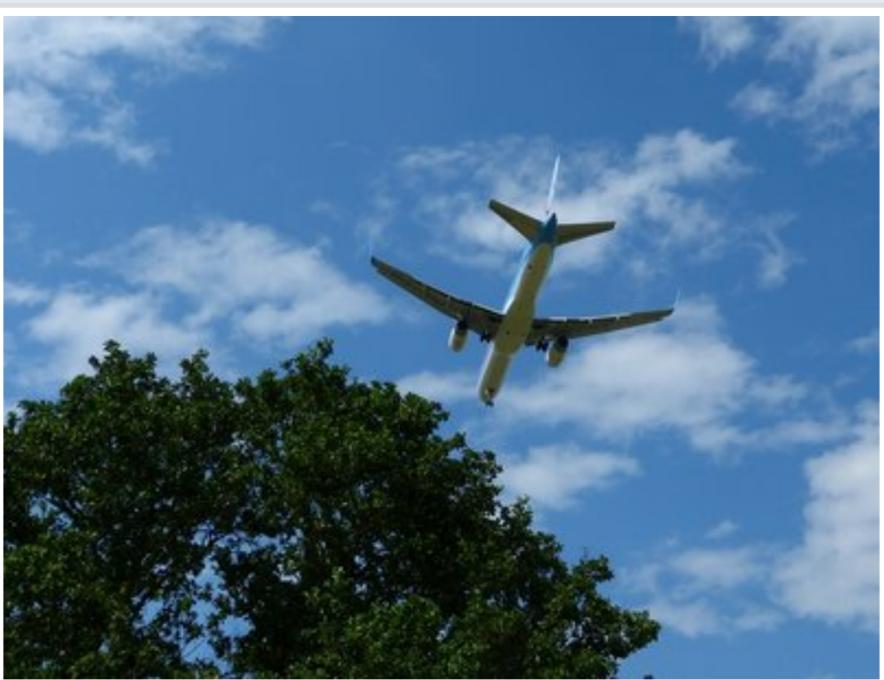
I have compared photos and, going by some small marks on the forewings of yesterdays, it is definitely a different individual. so that's two now 😊

Speaking of Blues, there were a few Holly Blues patrolling along the hedgerows and one of them actually decided to stop and nectar on some Willowherb for a while.



Holly Blue – Shadowbrook Meadows 19.08.2012

This site is actually under the flight path to Birmingham Airport (which gives me an excuse to post the photo below 😊), the opposite side to Sheldon Country Park, which is another of my local sites I need to get round to see how things are doing there.



There were a few distractions.

Back in the garden this evening, the nettle patch is still being defended by the same old Red Admiral although he is looking a bit tired and worn now.

Earlier whilst he was away, probably chasing something else, I noticed another Red Admiral fluttering in and out of the nettles. Sneaking up slowly, this one looked like a female that was dipping in and out of the nettles and ovipositing.



Red Admiral female - Coverdale 19.08.2012. Flash used on this photo to fill in the shadow she was casting on herself.



Red Admiral female - Coverdale 19.08.2012

A nice end to a good afternoon that I didn't expect to be doing 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-12 07:01 AM GMT

Great photos Neil and Shadowbrook looks like a cracking reserve 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Aug-12 05:45 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊

Shadowbrook Meadows is a smashing place, just the right size to spend an hour or two there, and only 10 minutes from my house 😊

I am going to be a 'grockle' in a couple of weeks 😊 heading down to Dorset for a weeks family break, should get chance to visit a couple of places.

I am thinking perhaps Durlston Country Park and Ballard Down maybe for Adonis Blue and whatever else may still be around in this late year. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 21-Aug-12 05:27 PM GMT

Neil you are taking some lovely photos. The ones I particularly like are your Small Tort, Small Copper ab and Peacock – all the ones I would like to take 🍷 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-12 01:09 AM GMT

Alright Neil? Both those sites should produce butterflies, there were Lulworths at Durlsyon about a week ago so there should be one or three still about and Ballard might also have Wall. You could also try some of the heaths for Grayling, Dave found some at Studland just be careful of the nudists 😳 If you can get in land a bit to the north of the county then try to visit Alners Gorse for Brown Hairstreak. Almost forgot there are always rumours of Clouded Yellow at Bournemouth...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Aug-12 03:03 AM GMT

Thank you Pauline, glad you like them 😊

Many thanks for the info Wurzel 😊, some food for thought there.

Hmmm!! Bournemouth...shops for the wife and daughter whilst I take a wander looking for Clouded Yellows, I see the beginnings of a cunning plan 😏

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 23-Aug-12 06:22 AM GMT

It'll be a bit of a wander, Neil, as the Clouded Yellows have usually been seen at Southbourne, a stroll of three miles or so along the prom east of Bournemouth Pier. When you get there, you'll probably be tempted onwards to Hengistbury Head.

As for natural hazards at Studland when looking for Grayling, I ventured very little distance into the dunes from the sea, not very far from the NT car park at Knoll Beach, and saw nothing untoward... 😊

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Aug-12 03:14 AM GMT

Thanks for the heads up Dave, I am ok with a few miles, it just depends how long I can get away for 😊

As for (un)natural hazards at Studland, I have done a bit of checking and as long as I stay away from the northern end of the beach with my camera 😳 😊I should be ok, I hope 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-12 05:28 AM GMT

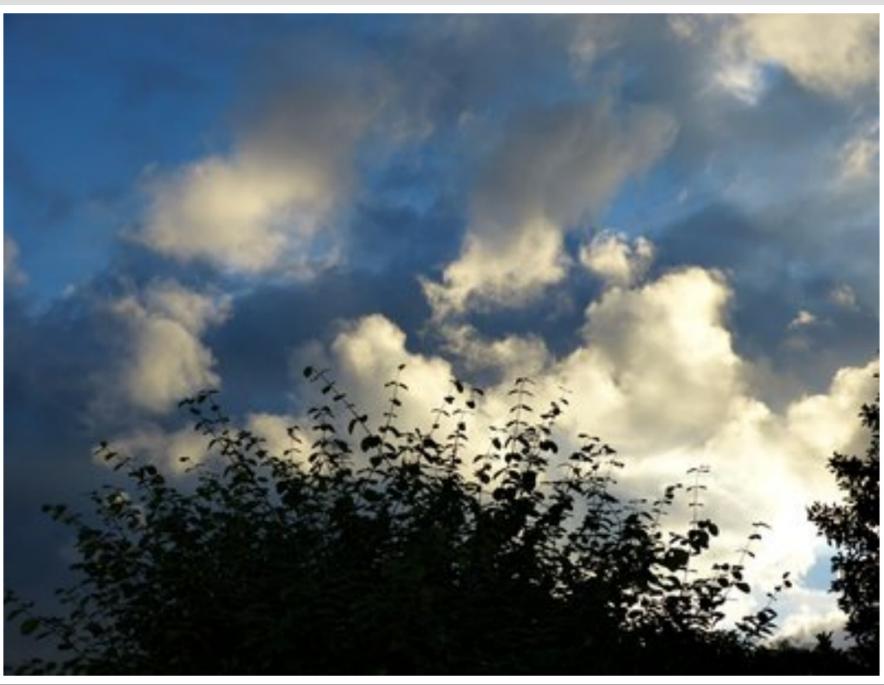
Saturday 25th August

A day of very 'interesting' weather.

The day started off with some nice sun but soon started to cloud over and by this afternoon we had black clouds, thunder and lightning and heavy rain coming down like stair-rods. All this interspersed with breaks in the clouds when the sun would shine with considerable warmth.

Despite the downpours, it only took a few moments of sun for Holly Blues, Green-veined Whites and Speckled Woods to take to the wing and it was amazing how many butterflies I saw passing through the garden during the breaks in the storms.

No butterfly photos worth posting today but I did like the shot below of the next storm heading our way with the last vestiges of sun on the clouds.



Storm clouds gathering.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Aug-12 06:45 PM GMT

Sunday 26th August.

Hearing that there had been a few Brown Hairstreak sightings from Grafton Wood in Worcestershire, I had originally planned to go over on Bank Holiday Monday for a look.

Seeing that the weather forecast looked pretty awful for Monday, I decided to nip over this afternoon (Sunday) and make the most of what sun was still about.

I was busy with family 'stuff' in the morning and so I did not arrive until around 2.30pm which was probably too late for any Brown Hairstreaks as I have read that an hour or so either side of midday is the best time.

Nevertheless, I decided to have a slow bumble round the wood before heading back to the hedgerows on the west side by the old orchard, which is said to be the best BH spot, on the off chance I would find a female doing some late nectaring.

There was plenty of butterfly activity with Red Admirals, Peacocks and whites all being seen along with the expected Hedge and Meadow Browns plus a single male Common Blue.



Common Blue male - Grafton Wood 26.08.2012

Also some nice fresh Speckled Wood including the female below.



Speckled Wood female - Grafton Wood 26.08.2012

Walking through the wood to a clearing on the eastern side, I was delighted to find half a dozen Brimstones all nectaring together on a large patch of Bettony. I counted 4 males and 2 females all in this one spot just a couple of yards square.



Brimstone male - Grafton Wood 26.08.2012



Brimstone female - Grafton Wood 26.08.2012

After taking the next photo he took off just as I was taking another, giving me a nice action shot which is probably the nearest I will get to capturing a Brimstone topside.



Brimstone male - Grafton Wood 26.08.2012



we have take off...

During the afternoon I had two possible Brown Hairstreak sightings in different areas, both times they were fairly high and disappeared over Blackthorn hedges, but that was the closest I got.

There were also large numbers of Dragonflies on the wing including Common Darters and Migrant Hawkers.



Common Darter male - Grafton Wood 26.08.2012

A good afternoon despite not getting a 100% definite Brown Hairstreak.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 27-Aug-12 08:17 PM GMT

I particularly like the image of the Brimstone taking off, Neil.

I notice it still has its proboscis in the trumpet of the flower! 😊

Greedy little blighters, aren't they?

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-12 05:40 AM GMT

Saturday 1st September – Bournemouth Air Festival.

With my wife Jane, my daughter Sarah and my youngest son Danny, we had a week's holiday booked at a caravan site just north of Wareham in Dorset. Unfortunately, my eldest son Chris could not come with us due to work commitments.

We had picked the dates around my work and so that Danny could come with us before starting University, and the location as it looked to be a good base to visit a few places from.

We were booked from Friday to Friday and so after arriving and settling in on Friday we had a clear Saturday to start with. I had not realised at the time of booking but Bournemouth Air Festival was on during our first weekend and so it was that we went there.

During a full afternoon of watching the brilliant air displays, I could not help but notice the amount of butterflies along the cliffs, mostly Red Admirals but also Large and Small Whites and a couple of Painted Ladies.

These were all either too far down the cliffs or too mobile to photograph but they did give me a good feeling for the week ahead 😊

As there were no butterfly photos from this day here is Vulcan XH558 instead, the only one still flying and a most impressive machine to see.



Vulcan XH558 approaching to begin its display.

Sunday 2nd September – Ballard Down

Following the good weather of the previous day, Sunday was overcast with a bit of light rain in the morning. The rest of the gang wanted to have a quiet day after spending most of Saturday on their feet so in the afternoon I decided to have a drive over to Ballard Down by Swanage to have a look around. Parking in the layby at Ulwell, I started up the path and turned right along the lower slopes. Almost immediately I saw the first Adonis Blue and despite the still overcast conditions it was soon apparent that there were good numbers of them, in fact, the further along the path that I went, the more I saw.

Even in the sheltered areas at the bottom of the slopes there was still a bit of a breeze and most were settling down in the grass although I did find a couple posed nicely for underside shots.



Ballard Down – path along lower slope.



Adonis Blue male – Ballard Down 02.09.2012



Adonis Blue male – Ballard Down 02.09.2012



Adonis Blue male – Ballard Down 02.09.2012



Adonis Blue - Ballard Down 02.09.2012



Adonis Blue - Ballard Down 02.09.2012



Adonis Blue - Ballard Down 02.09.2012

When I took the shot below I first thought that it was a female Common Blue, of which there were a few flying with the Adonis, but looking at the photo afterwards I had second thoughts. I posted it in the identification forum where Pete Eeles has confirmed it as a female Adonis. The ragged fringes on the wings threw me at first but there is just enough black showing, particularly on the left forewing.



Adonis Blue female – Ballard Down 02.09.2012

A good couple of hours with one of my main targets for the week, the Adonis Blues and I still had the rest of the week ahead of me 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-12 06:45 PM GMT

Monday 3rd September – Durlston Country Park.

The deal for today was that we would go to Durlston Country Park in the morning and Continue onto Studland later in the afternoon so that the other three could spend a couple of hours on the beach.

Arriving at Durlston at around 10.30 under clear blue skies, it was already getting warm. I arranged to wander around for an hour or so and meet up again with the others at the Castle.

Having a quick look around, I spotted a Buddleia a short distance along the path just north of the castle that had 4 Red Admirals and 3 Small Tortoiseshells on it along with a couple of what I first thought were meadow Browns.



Small Tortoiseshell – Durlston 03.09.2012

One of the Meadow Browns moved out of the shadow it was in and proved in fact to be a nice Grayling, a female I think going by size and more rounded wing shape.



Small Tortoiseshell and Grayling – Durlston 03.09.2012



Grayling female – Durlston 03.09.2012

I next went along the cliff path towards the lighthouse spotting a few Common Blues, Silver Y moths and Lulworth Skippers.



Common Blue male – Durlston 03.09.2012

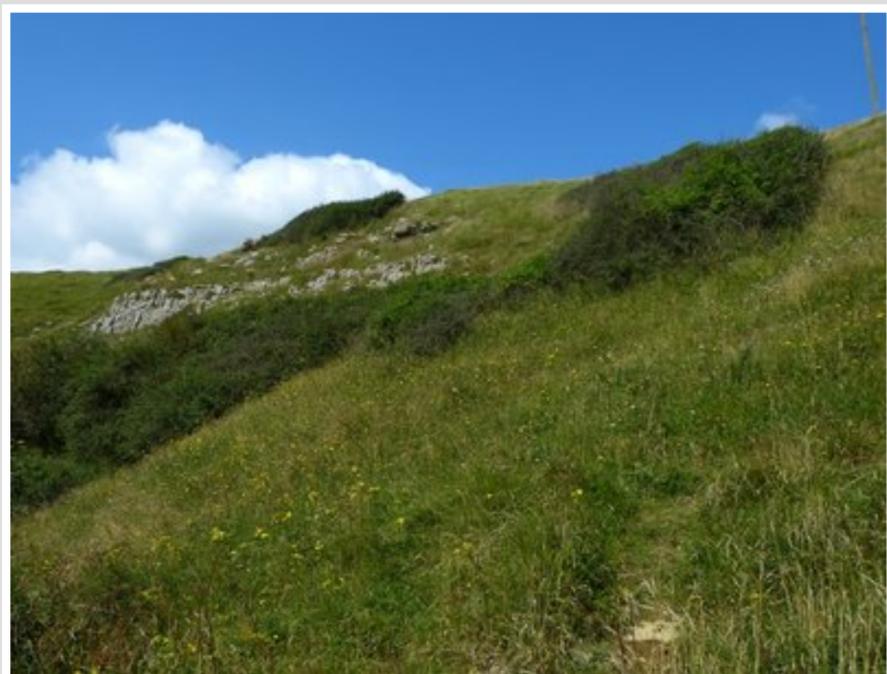
I was hoping to see the Skippers here and had checked the Durlston ranger diary so I knew they were still about, although I guessed that they would be getting a bit old and faded by now which they indeed proved to be. Nevertheless, as the first of this species I have ever seen, I was well chuffed 😊

Continuing along the path, I reached the bottom of the 'gully' and started to meander along the grassy path where I started to see the first Adonis

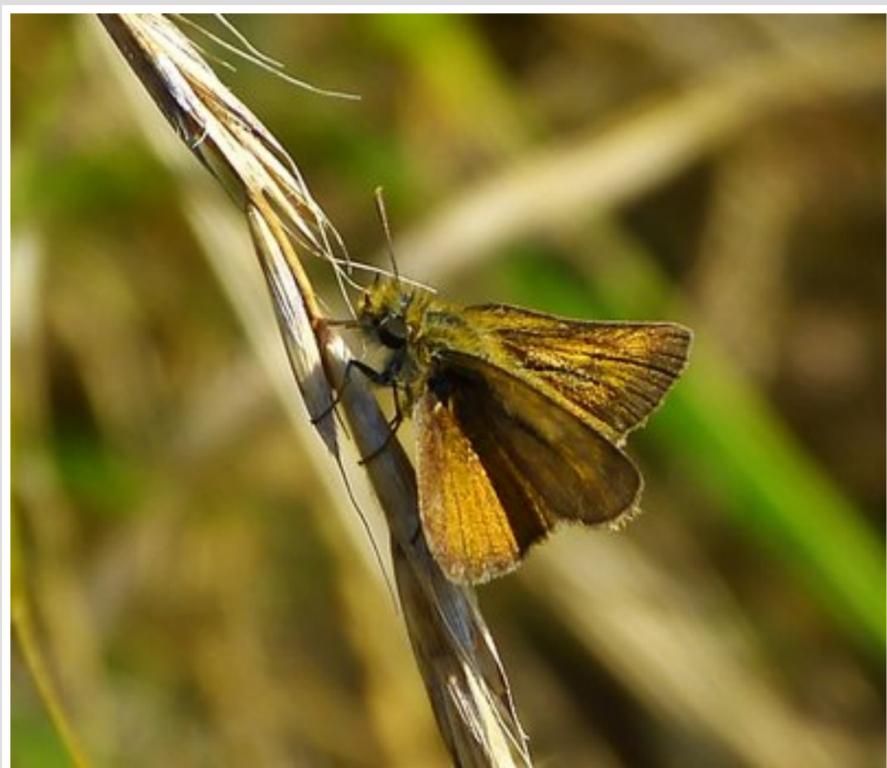
Blues. The south facing slopes here were alive with Meadow Browns and Adonis Blues along with fair numbers of Common Blues and Lulworth Skippers and a few Brown Argus.



The 'Gully' Durlston Country Park



Sunny slope in the 'Gully'



Lulworth Skipper male - Durlston 03.09.2012



Lulworth Skipper female - Durlston 03.09.2012



Lulworth Skipper female - Durlston 03.09.2012



Adonis Blue male - Durlston 03.09.2012



Adonis Blue male - Durlston 03.09.2012



Adonis Blue male - Durlston 03.09.2012



Brown Argus - Durlston 03.09.2012

I circled around up the gully and back through the meadows to the castle where I met up with the others for a coffee. Jane and the (big) kids said that they were happy for me to wander off again for a bit so I went to have another quick look at the Buddleia.



Small Tortoiseshell – Durlston 03.09.2012

I was just about to walk off when I looked down and saw a Jersey Tiger Moth just in front of me on one of the lower flower spikes.



Jersey Tiger Moth – Durlston 03.09.2012

I then circled around in a similar route to before but in reverse, seeing all the same species as before but in seemingly even greater numbers. Silver Y Moths especially were everywhere.



Silver Y Moth – Durlston 03.09.2012



The 'Gully' looking out to sea.



Common Blue female – Durlston 03.09.2012



Adonis Blue female – Durlston 03.09.2012



Lulworth Skipper female – Durlston 03.09.2012

By this time it was getting quite hot and the butterflies were very active. This made it trickier to get photos but if anything made it a more pleasurable experience to be surrounded by so many butterflies in such a lovely location 😊

I then made my way back around to meet up again with the others before heading off to Studland.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by MikeOxon, 09-Sep-12 06:56 PM GMT

Splendid photos, Neil. 😊

You seem to have found an excellent 'crop' at Durlston, and your Lulworths look to be in pretty good condition still. I must try going there a bit later in the year myself next season, as they were rather too flighty for photos when I went in July.

Very nice pic of the Vulcan too – particularly impressive with a bit of foreground to add impact.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by David M, 10-Sep-12 12:32 AM GMT

Amazing that Lulworth Skippers can still be found. I recall Sussex Kipper photographing them in early June near Lulworth Cove so this has to go down as a bizarrely long flight period by anyone's standards.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-12 02:35 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil I'm dead chuffed that Dorset delivered the goods (stunning blues, a lifer and Grayling on Buddleia) 😊
That gully is great for bird migrants too.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-12 02:49 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, they are much appreciated 😊

Mike,
There were plenty of well faded Lulworths about with a few reasonable ones, a benefit of the late season this year I guess.

David,
I remember Sussex Kippers post, I believe that they were still around Lulworth in mid August but we did not see any there last week. I understand that Durlston is a reliable late site for Lulworth Skippers but even so this year must be unusual.

Wurzel,
I was well chuffed by this stage and there was more to come 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-12 03:10 AM GMT

Monday 3rd September - Studland

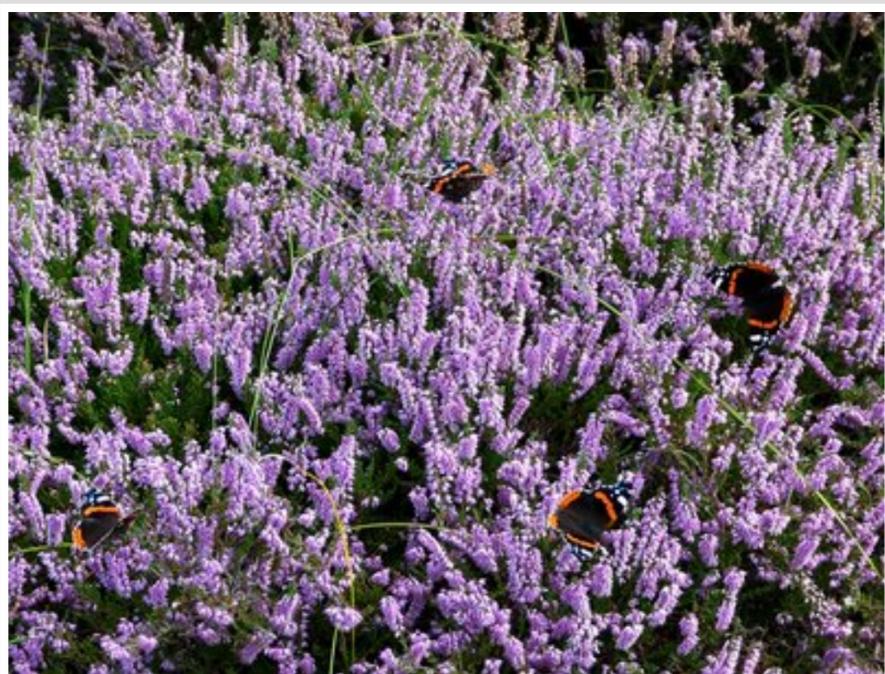
Leaving Durlston in the heat of the day around 2.00pm we drove the 10 minutes or so back through Swanage and out the other side to Studland and parked up in the NT car park at Knoll Beach.

After settling down on the beach and enjoying an ice cream, I went to have a wander around in the dunes to the north of the car park, remembering advice from Millard and Wurzel to be careful where I wandered with my camera 😊

I had been seeing Red Admirals all day and as soon as I started along the path I began to notice large numbers of them nectaring on the heather. The further I went, the more I saw and it soon became apparent that there were literally hundreds of them along this stretch amongst the heather.



Red Admirals - Studland 03.09.2012



Red Admirals - Studland 03.09.2012



Red Admiral – Studland 03.09.2012



Red Admiral – Studland 03.09.2012

This whole area reminded me of an immense Buddleia that had been laid out across the dunes 😊



Heather just north of Knoll Beach car park

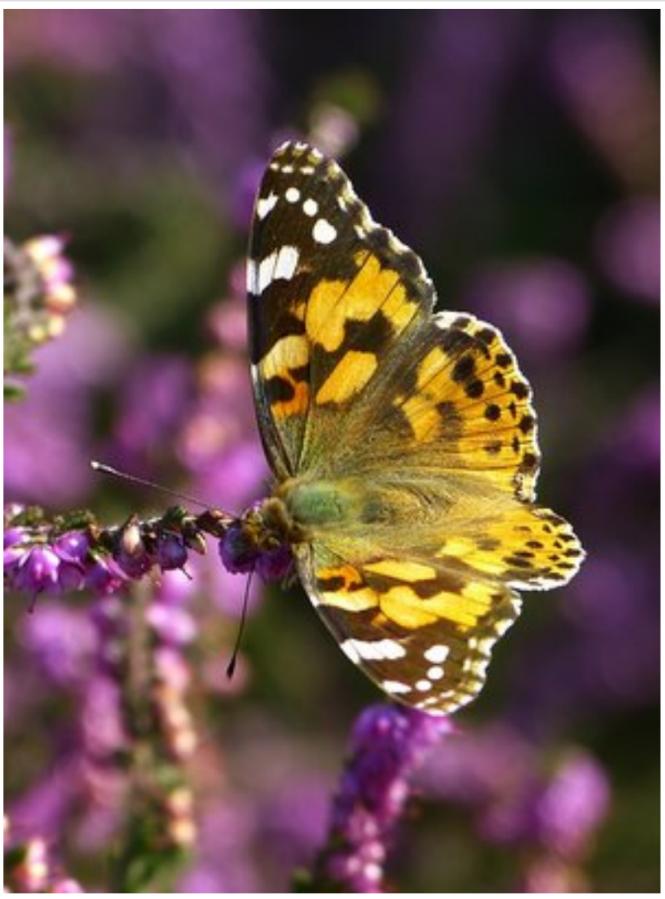
There were also a few Painted Ladies present, I am not sure exactly how many because it was hard to keep track of individuals with them flitting between clumps of heather, but I think there were possibly as many as half a dozen along this stretch. Most were flighty in the heat but one individual stuck around the one spot for about 10 minutes 😊



Painted Lady – Studland 03.09.2012



Painted Lady – Studland 03.09.2012



Painted Lady – Studland 03.09.2012



Painted Lady – Studland 03.09.2012

One thing that I did notice was that, unless they spread their wings wide, the Red Admirals blended into the heather remarkably well and could be hard to see from a distance until you walked past and they took off in small flocks.

In the photo below the Painted Lady is easy enough to see but there are also 5 Red Admirals where I have marked the positions.



1 Painted Lady and 5 Red Admirals

I was also pleased to see at least a dozen Small Tortoiseshells, in fact I had noticed that numbers of these had seemed to be building up.



Small Tortoiseshell – Studland 03.09.2012



Small Tortoiseshell - Studland 03.09.2012

I spent a couple of hours here, a good portion of that time just sitting and marvelling at the spectacle. I have never seen as many Red Admirals in one place at the same time before, I have no idea how many there were along this stretch but numbers must have run into hundreds.

On my return home, I e-mailed Dorset BC with my sightings and apparently what I saw was part of a much larger influx of Red Admirals that was taking place. I have posted the full reply in Millards personal diary where this influx is also mentioned.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by philm63, 10-Sep-12 04:11 AM GMT

Neil

Fascinating stuff, hopefully I'll have some coming my way in the not too distant future

Phil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-12 02:56 AM GMT

Hi Phil, thanks for the comment. I'll keep my fingers crossed for you.

Lets hope some of them get further north before the weather turns and they either tuck themselves away for the winter or decide to head south again.

I wonder how the mechanism works that decides this, why do some go into hibernation whereas others have been seen to return south 🤔

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-12 03:24 AM GMT

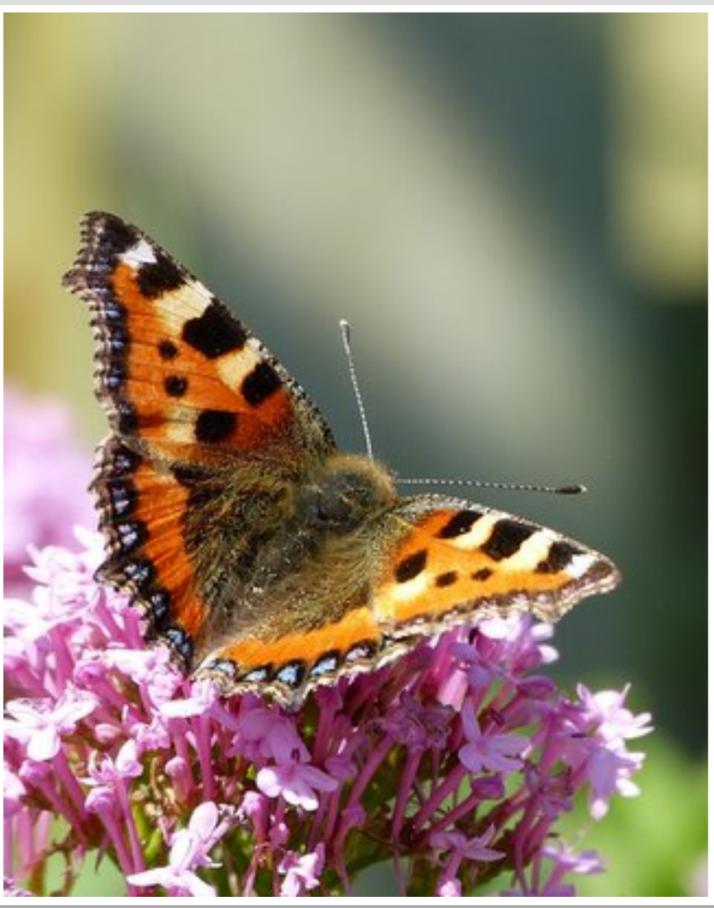
Wednesday 5th September - Lulworth Cove.

Most of Tuesday was spent in Swanage after parking the car and riding in on the Swanage Steam Railway, an excellent variation on a Park and Ride. Whilst there we all continued to notice Large numbers of Red Admirals, most appearing to fly in from the sea.

The plan for today(Wednesday) was to go to the Tank Museum at Bovington first and then continue on to Lulworth Cove afterwards.

Arriving at Lulworth around 2.00pm on another glorious sunny afternoon, the others agreed that I could wander off for a couple of hours whilst they spent some time around the cove itself.

I soon found the steps leading up to Bindon Hill and started climbing up them, noticing almost immediately a couple of Small Tortoiseshells and a single Painted Lady on the Red Valerian growing by the side of the steps.



Small Tortoiseshell – Lulworth 05.09.2012



Painted Lady – Lulworth 05.09.2012

Continuing up through the trees and out onto the hillside I turned right and followed a rough path slightly higher up than the main path.



Looking down on Lulworth Cove.

The whole hillside along here was swarming with butterflies, mostly Meadow Browns and Adonis Blues, but also Large and Small Whites, Graylings, Common Blues, Brown Argus and a few faded Chalkhill Blues and Marbled Whites in reasonable condition which I was surprised to still see. Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells were also flitting about very actively in the heat.

I noticed that most of the Meadow Browns, Graylings and Marbled Whites had red mites on them, this being the only site so far that I had noticed this.



Marbled White - Lulworth 05.09.2012



Adonis Blue - Lulworth 05.09.2012



Adonis Blue - 05.09.2012

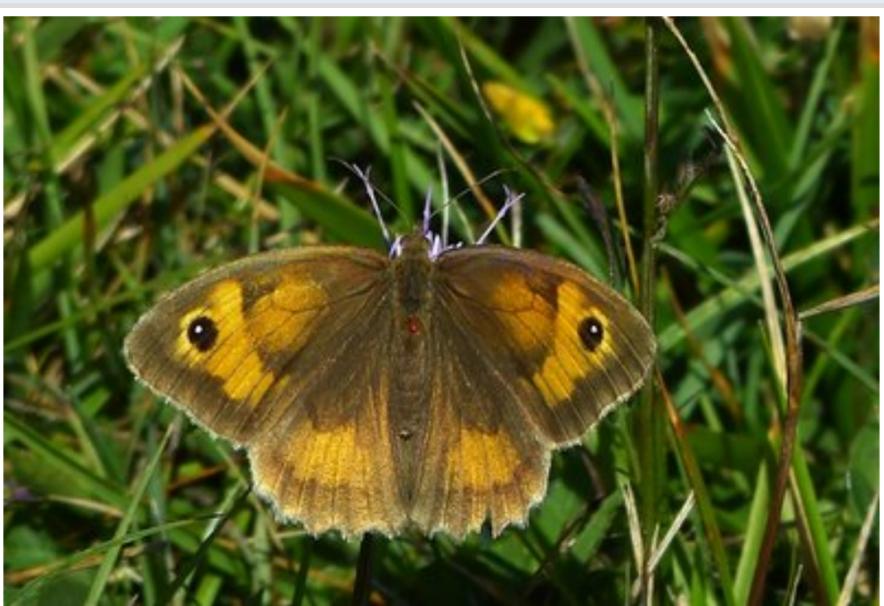


Brown Argus – Lulworth 05.09.2012



Common Blue female – Lulworth 05.09.2012

The female Meadow Brown below is the most 'orangey' one that I have ever seen.



Meadow Brown female – Lulworth 05.09.2012

There were also a couple of Wall Browns patrolling along the path which were very hard to get close to. They always seemed to stay about 20 feet in front of me except for the once when one settled on some gorse and I managed to get an underside shot.



Wall Brown – Lulworth 05.09.2012

Reaching the spot by the fenced off MOD range where the path drops down a long flight of stone steps, I turned round just in time to see a Clouded Yellow fly close past me and over the fence.

It went over a slight dip and appeared to settle so I waited around in case it came back but when it did reappear it carried on further into the range. I was chuffed to bits seeing this 😊 as I have not seen a Clouded Yellow for years, not since I was a nipper on holiday in Weymouth if my memory is right.



Looking along the hill to where the Clouded Yellow flew over the fence.

Time was getting on by now so I returned along a slightly different path, seeing another Painted Lady fly up and over the hill and an Adder that raced through the grass in front of me at high speed.



Adder – Lulworth 05.09.2012

One species that I did not see any sign of here was Lulworth Skipper.

I see that Essex Buzzard had seen some a few weeks previously but I think they had finished here by now. I had already seen some of these at Durlston as described in my earlier post which I understand is known to be a late site for them.

During the past few days I had noticed numbers of Small Tortoiseshells increasing steadily and on my walk back to meet up with Jane, Danny and Sarah, I saw plenty. In fact walking back up through the cove to the car park there are many clumps of Valerian growing out of the stone walls most of which had 2 or 3 STs on them.



Small Tortoiseshell - Lulworth 05.09.2012



Small Tortoiseshells on Red Valerian



Small Tortoiseshell - Lulworth 05.09.2012

This was another excellent couple of hours 😊

The good weather of the past few days was certainly bringing out amazing numbers of butterflies after the dull and wet previous weeks.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 11-Sep-12 04:16 AM GMT

Glorious photos, Neil! I love that part of the English coastline – in weather like that it beats anywhere in the world.

Having a closer look – had you considered whether the Blue female was in fact Adonis, rather than Common? I can see what look like dark lines passing right to the edge of the fringes.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-12 05:46 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Dave, it sure is a beautiful part of the world and the weather last week was perfect for enjoying it 😊

I can see what you mean about the female blue but I am fairly sure that she is a Common. On the original photo you can see that the wing has slight folds along the veins and the dark bits look like they are actually shadows.

I could be wrong though, it wouldn't be the first time 😊😂

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 11-Sep-12 06:09 AM GMT

Great images, Neil. I particularly like the one where the sun is reflecting off the sea just beyond the cove.

Of course, the numbers and range of butterflies are equally impressive. here we are practically in mid-September yet there are Marbled Whites and Chalkhill Blues abounding.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-12 02:43 AM GMT

Hi David, thanks for your comments, much appreciated.

I have just looked through my notes and I saw 18 species around Lulworth Cove and Bindon Hill.

Brimstone – 1 by the main car park.

Large White – lots all around the cove and hill.

Small White – a few mostly around the cove.

Green-veined White – 3 seen in the cove.

Clouded Yellow – 1 seen on hill.

Small Tortoiseshell – lots, some on the hill but most around the cove.

Red Admiral – lots all over.

Painted Lady – 1 on steps and 1 up on hill.

Speckled Wood – 1 going through the trees on the path up to the hill.

Meadow Brown – loads of them all over the hill.

Wall Brown – 2 patrolling the paths on the hill.

Marbled White – 4 seen up on the hill.

Small Heath – 3 seen across the hill.

Grayling – good numbers higher up on the hill.

Adonis Blue – Loads all over the hill.

Chalkhill Blue – 5 seen, all getting on a bit and looking tatty..

Common Blue – about a dozen, mostly males with a couple of females.

Brown Argus – a dozen or so spaced out across the hill.

This is more than I expected, probably due to a combination of a late season and the good weather.

In fact given the summer that we have had, I can hardly believe how many butterflies I saw last week 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-12 02:57 AM GMT

Wednesday 5th September – Sandford Heath

Looking on the map I had noticed that Sandford Heath was just down the road from the caravan site that we were staying on.

For the past few days I had been meaning to go and have a look but had not yet got around to it.

Returning from Lulworth later in the afternoon and with there still being a clear blue sky, I decided to nip over to see if anything was there whilst Jane, Sarah and Danny chilled out for a bit.

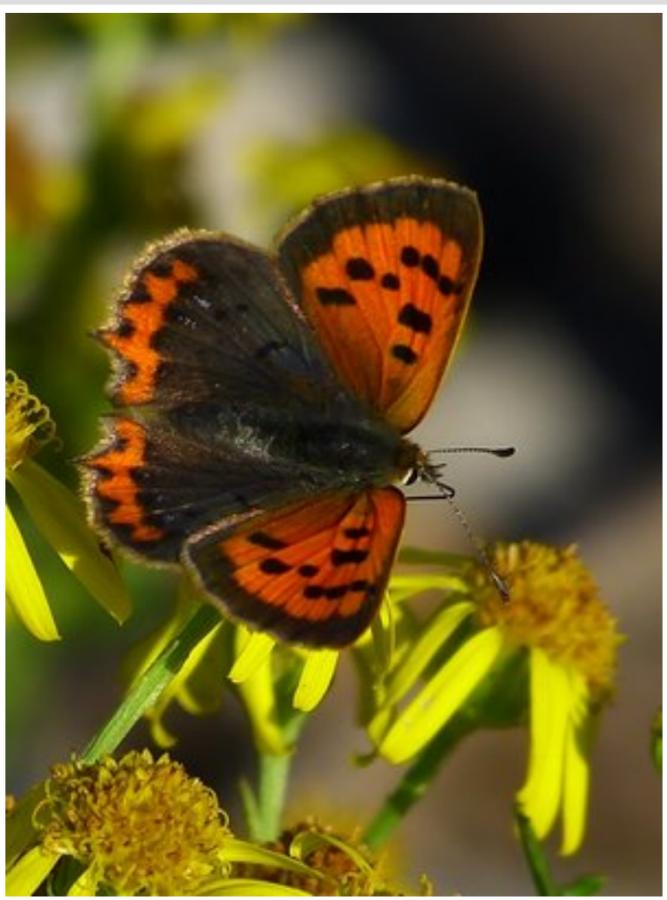
I went down the road leading to Holton Heath railway station and found an access point about half way along by a gate with a path leading onto the heath.

I spent about an hour here walking around before the sun dropped too low, the shadows lengthened and it began to feel a bit cooler.



Sandford Heath

The first butterfly that I saw was a nice Small Copper basking in the late sun.



Small Copper - Sandford Heath 05.09.2012

Further along, I found a number of Graylings flitting about amongst the heather and a mating pair posing nicely on a piece of wood.



Grayling pair - Sandford Heath 05.09.2012

There were also a few Red Admirals that seemed to be heading purposefully in a northerly direction across the heath, probably some of the large influx of the previous few days heading further inland.

A lot of Dragonflies were still about chasing flies in the late sun, including Southern and Migrant Hawkers and loads of Common Darters.



Common Darter male - Sandford Heath 05.09.2012

Heading back, I noticed a Small White perched on a grass stem and took one last shot for the day.



Small White - Sandford Heath 05.09.2012

The Small Copper had made the tally for the day 19 species 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-12 06:52 AM GMT

Stunning Small White shot Neil 😊👍 Sandford is one of those cracking places that seems to get overlooked but I saw some great birds there when I was a nipper (Hobby, Nightjar, Crossbill, Woodlark etc)

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 12-Sep-12 07:44 AM GMT

Hi Neil,sounds like you had a great time in Dorset,and i'm delighted for you.

It looks like you visited some of the sites i went to-only with better weather!

I saw Lulworth Skippers at both Bindon Hill and Durlston CP,but you're right,i think by September, Durlston is probably the better late site.

I'm a bit jealous of your Red Admirals at Studland,i've always been a bit scared to go there with my camera,to be honest 😊😄

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Sep-12 02:39 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments Wurzel, I'm not too good at birds but I did see a couple of Green Woodpeckers at Sandford.

Hi essexbuzzard, following comments from Wurzel and millerd, I made sure that I didn't go too far north of the Knoll Beach car park at Studland, happy to say I did not have any awkward encounters 😬😬

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Sep-12 02:59 AM GMT

Thursday 6th September.

This being our last day in Dorset and looking like being another nice sunny one, Jane, Sarah and Danny had already decided that they wanted to spend most of it on the beach.

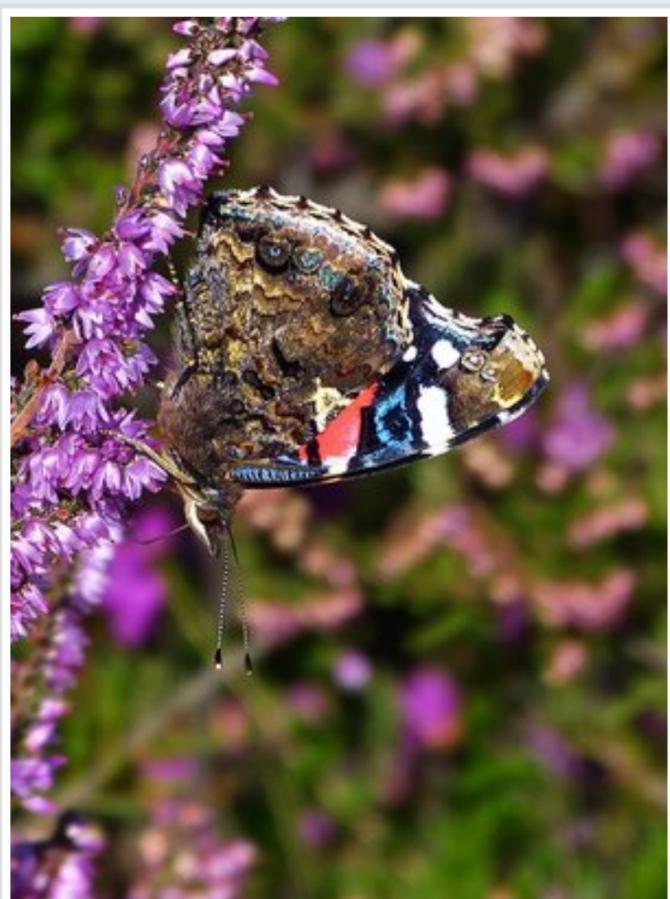
We agreed that I would take them back to Studland, where the beach is within Jane's limited walking distance from the car park, and I could have a few hours to myself.

We arrived at Studland at around 10.30 and after having a 'compulsory' ice cream 😊 went to have a look behind the dunes where I had seen the profusion of Red Admirals on Monday.

There were still a fair few RAs here but not the same numbers as previously, I imagine most had dispersed further inland by now. I only spent about 30 minutes here and as well as the RAs counted 11 Small Tortoiseshells before deciding to make a move.



Small Tortoiseshell - Studland 06.09.2012



Red Admiral - Studland 06.09.2012

I had decided that I would nip round to Ballard Down which is only a few minutes' drive from Studland then finish off by continuing through Swanage to Durlston Country Park before returning to collect the others later in the afternoon.

When I went to Ballard Down on the previous Sunday, it had been a bit dull and breezy but today (Thursday) was much warmer and following the same path as before it was soon evident that Adonis Blues were there in great numbers all along the lower south facing slopes.

I also noticed many more females flying than on my previous visit including a fairly blue one similar to the individual posted from my first visit but in better condition.



Adonis Blue female – Ballard Down 06.09.2012



Adonis Blue females and hoverfly – Ballard Down 06.09.2012



Adonis Blue female – Ballard Down 06.09.2012



Adonis Blue male – Ballard Down 06.09.2012

I believe that this is a Hornet Mimic Hoverfly, it was certainly a big beastie which doesn't really come across in the photo.



Hornet Mimic Hoverfly – Ballard Down 06.09.2012

A bit further along I saw another Clouded Yellow which circled around a bit before looking like it was thinking of settling on a patch of wild herbs. At this moment it was intercepted by an aggressive male Adonis Blue and carried on flying down the path and over some scrub where I lost sight of it 😞

I didn't think I would ever swear at an Adonis Blue but I did at that moment. Still, I can't complain, after not seeing a CY for years, I had now seen 2 in 2 days 😊

After a little while longer I carried on to Durlston, arriving there just before 2.00pm.

I had a quick look at the Buddleia up the path to the left of the castle counting 4 Red Admirals and 4 Small Tortoiseshells.

Next to this there was a clump of Valerian growing out of the cliff face with a couple of Large Whites on it. There was also a Brimstone doing some late feeding up before hibernating.



Brimstone – Durlston 06.09.2012

Following a similar route as the other day around the cliff path and up the gully, I saw a similar selection of butterflies, this time with the addition of a Comma, only the second one of these that I had seen all week.



Comma - Durlston 06.09.2012

There was a bit of a breeze coming in off the sea this time which meant that most butterflies were settling fairly low down in the grass when they landed.

I took the shot below of a male Adonis attempting to court a female but before I could get a better one they were gone with the male chasing the female over the slope.



Adonis Blue courting couple - Durlston 06.09.2012

I also saw a few mating pairs, those below being the only ones that were not partially hidden right down in the grass.



Adonis blue pair - Durlston 06.09.2012

About 4.00pm it clouded over a bit and the breeze picked up so I headed back to Studland to collect the others.

That was it, the end of a cracking week in Dorset with some glorious weather and some excellent butterflying, we were departing back to the midlands in the morning (but not before going out for a nice meal later).

Prior to going, I had been hopeful of seeing Adonis Blues and whatever else may still have still been about but I certainly did not expect to see the amount of butterflies that I did.

The sheer numbers of Adonis Blues on the hillsides at Ballard Down, Durlston CP and Bindon Hill plus the amazing sight of all the Red Admirals at

Studland were real highlights 😊

Add to all that, the Lulworth Skippers which were a first for me and the Clouded Yellows which I had not seen since my childhood made it a truly memorable week 😊😊😊

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 13-Sep-12 05:17 AM GMT

A splendid account of some glorious days spent in some of Britain's best coastal countryside, with butterflies to match. Pretty high on my personal enviometer I would say! 🍷

Many thanks for taking the time to share it, Neil.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by David M, 13-Sep-12 05:58 AM GMT

Ditto. In fact, I'm highly envious as weather conditions in south Wales are anything but conducive to venturing out to see butterflies.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-12 06:59 AM GMT

Great report and cracking shots Neil 😊 You made me feel envious of your trip even though I'm from Dorset 🤪😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Sep-12 03:11 AM GMT

Many thanks for the great comments guys 😊, I didn't mean to make anyone envious 😊

Writing these reports this week made it easier to cope with going back to work 🙄 after having such a fantastic time.

I did manage to squeeze in another little trip last weekend.....

Saturday 8th September – Grafton Wood.

Returning from Dorset on Friday I had later noticed the sightings of the Monarch at Portland, a bit of bad timing for me as I could have done a little detour before coming back to the midlands 😞.

That really would have been a perfect end to the week....oh well, I can't have everything 😞

I also noticed that Brown Hairstreaks had been showing well during the previous few days at Grafton Wood and with this being only 45 minutes' drive from my house it was possible to pop over there for a couple of hours.

The following is a slightly altered report that I posted on Gillian Thompson's new Brown Hairstreak Blog, *Ash Brownies*, a few days ago.

<http://betulae.blogspot.co.uk/>

I have saved posting it on here until now to maintain the timeline.

With the weather set to stay good over the weekend, I mentioned this to my son Chris, and as he had a day off from his work today (Saturday) we decided to drive over for a look.

We left just after 10.30am in glorious sunshine but nearing Grafton, it steadily got cloudier and foggier and we looked at each other as if to say 'where's this come from?' As we parked up by the church however, the sun had started to break through and we could feel it getting warmer.

We had heard that the best time to see Brown Hairstreaks was for about an hour or so each side of midday, depending on the weather, so we decided to have a walk through the wood to have a look around before heading for the 'orchard' area which is the most reliable part of this site.

I had seen a couple of Brown Hairstreaks on the other side of the wood in 2010 so we headed for that area first which is a sort of clearing with good Blackthorn growth around the edges. After seeing a few 'whites', Speckled Woods, Red Admirals and Silver Y moths, I caught sight of something orangey, it was a definite Brown Hairstreak. We watched it for a while as it flew around about 15 feet up before losing sight of it behind a large Oak. Circling back around to the orchard we found a few other people there and we all started checking the Blackthorn. At around 1.00pm the first female was sighted low down where she stayed obligingly for twenty minutes or so during which time a second female joined her so that we had two together within 10 feet or so.



Brown Hairstreak - Grafton Wood 08.09.2012



Brown Hairstreak - Grafton Wood 08.09.2012

A few more sightings were made during the next hour or so but it is impossible to say exactly how many there were as I think some of them were the same ones being seen again, although going by slight differences in markings and damage, it looks like I photographed at least 3 different individual females.



Brown Hairstreak - Grafton Wood 08.09.2012



Brown Hairstreak - Grafton Wood 08.09.2012



Brown Hairstreak - Grafton Wood 08.09.2012

By 2.00pm things had quietened down a bit and we did not have any more sightings after this time.

This led Chris to comment 'My kind of butterfly, they get up at lunchtime for a bit then go back to bed' 😊

Feeling very happy with our sightings and having got some photos we decided to leave shortly afterward and head home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-12 07:05 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil they made me go all misty eyed and nostalgic 😊 I was wondering if the triangular "crimp" in the fore wing of the first female was a bird strike?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 14-Sep-12 04:38 PM GMT

Fabulous pictures Neil, This is a site that I had my first visit to recently and is a wonderful place.

Debbie 😊😊😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-12 06:12 AM GMT

Wurzel and Debbie, thank you for your comments 😊

Wurzel, I was wondering if that triangular 'crimp' was a birdstrike myself. Either that or possibly damage incurred on emergence.

Saturday 15th September

A nice sunny day here in the midlands tempted me to nip out this afternoon to have a look around one of my local spots, Castle Hills near Solihull. It wasn't long before I found a couple of Commas flitting around the blackberries among the hedgerows closely followed by a couple of Red Admirals

that insisted on settling higher up to bask in the sun.



Hedgerow at Castle Hills near Solihull



Comma - Castle Hills 15.09.2012



Comma - Castle Hills 15.09.2012



Comma - Castle Hills 15.09.2012



Red Admiral against Hawthorn - Castle Hills 15.09.2012

Meadow Browns were still around in fair numbers along with Speckled Woods, Small Whites and a few Common Blues which I was pleased to see as they have been a bit scarce around here this year, emerging late and only showing up in ones and twos at most sites.



Meadow Brown - Castle Hills 15.09.2012



Small White - Castle Hills 15.09.2012



Common Blue - Castle Hills 15.09.2012

At one point, a series of screeching calls drew my attention skywards to where I saw four Buzzards above me. These stayed above me for a while putting on quite a display. I am not sure what behaviour I was seeing, whether it was two pairs or one pair and juveniles or even four totally separate individuals, but they were fascinating to watch for a while until they moved too far away.



Buzzards - Castle Hills 15.09.2012



Buzzards - Castle Hills 15.09.2012

I couldn't get all four in one shot but I did manage to get three.



Buzzards - Castle Hills 15.09.2012

A very pleasant couple of hours with a definite early Autumn feel to it.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-12 07:04 PM GMT

Saturday 15th September - In the garden later

After getting back home later in the afternoon, I was sitting in the back garden having a mug of coffee and just contemplating things when my eye fell on some Ivy growing up and over a fence between us and our neighbours.

This is where I had seen and photographed a female Holly Blue some weeks back and as there had been a steady procession of Holly Blues through the garden at the time and also remembering Sussex Kippers post in his diary about looking for caterpillars, I thought I would have a look.

Following the advice to look for the tell-tale holes in the flower buds it was not long before I found the first caterpillar, followed by two more, all at around head height 😊.

There may be more as the Ivy grows up to about 10feet or so and most of the flower buds are high up. I will have to get the ladders out to check them.



Holly Blue caterpillar - Coverdale 15.09.2012



Holly Blue caterpillar - Coverdale 15.09.2012



Holly Blue caterpillar - Coverdale 15.09.2012

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 16-Sep-12 10:02 PM GMT

Excellent shots, Neil. I shall keep my own eyes open for these little holes in the ivy buds as I see the occasional Holly Blue round here.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-12 05:51 AM GMT

Great stuff Neil! I'll have to check out my Ivy in the next few days.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Sep-12 05:51 AM GMT

Many thanks for the comments Wurzel and David 😊

I had another look on the Ivy today but none to be seen, I am hoping they have moved or pupated rather than becoming a tasty morsel for a predator.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 23-Sep-12 05:54 AM GMT

Must admit, I scoured the ivy at West Williamston in Pembrokeshire today looking for the tell tale holes.

Didn't find any, but I will persevere as there is an entire riverbank bedecked by this sprawling shrub near to me and surely I will find one eventually.

Re: nfreem

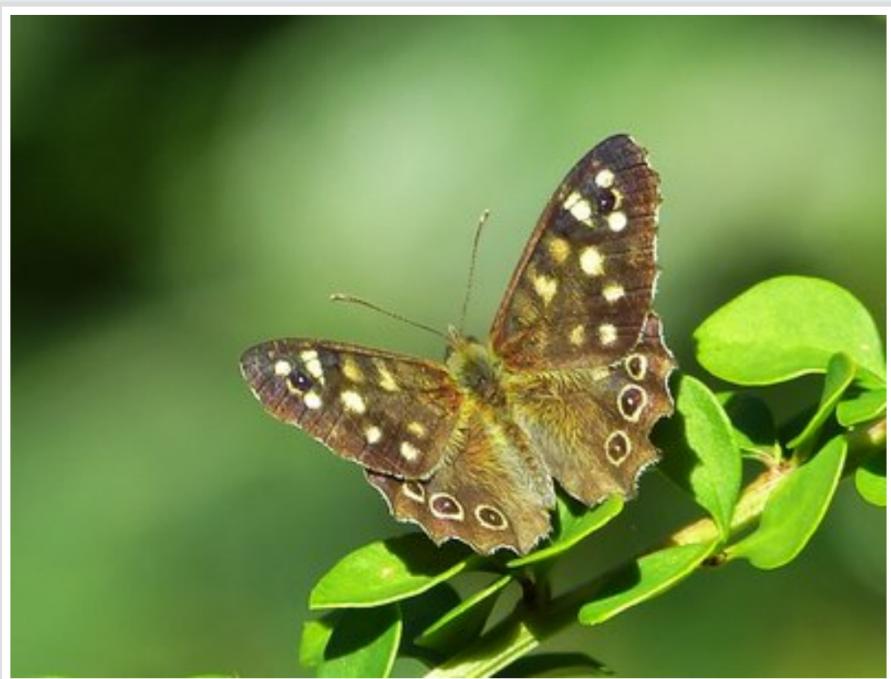
by Neil Freeman, 23-Sep-12 06:08 AM GMT

Saturday 22nd September

Following a busy week at work, the weather was looking promising for today so I had a hectic couple of hours this morning, getting the domestic duties out of the way in order to have an a couple of hours spare this afternoon.

The day had started with a beautiful morning and by 11.00am had warmed up enough for the ever reliable Speckled Woods in my back garden to be getting lively with 2 males defending their territories.

It is interesting to note that during the year, successive males have used the same perches on the same shrubs, the male in the photo below is in almost the same spot as one that I photographed back in June.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 22.09.2012

Shadowbrook Meadows

Rather than wasting too much time driving too far, I decided to have a look around a couple of local spots so headed first for Shadowbrook Meadows. By early afternoon some cloud had bubbled up and there was bit of a cool breeze. It warmed up nicely when the sun popped out between the clouds and as the afternoon went on there was more sun and less cloud.

I spent about an hour and a half here during which time I saw 6 Commas, 3 Red Admirals, 2 Speckled Wood, 1 Small Tortoiseshell and 1 tatty male Common Blue.



Comma - Shadowbrook 22.09.2012



Comma - Shadowbrook 22.09.2012



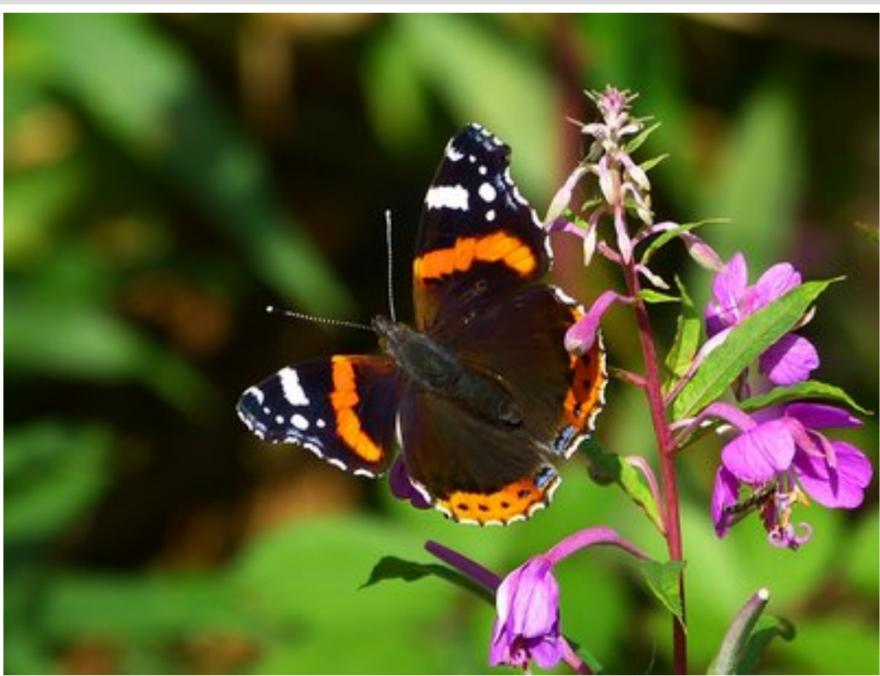
Comma - Shadowbrook 22.09.2012



Comma - Shadowbrook 22.09.2012



Red Admiral - Shadowbrook 22.09.2012



Red Admiral - Shadowbrook 22.09.2012



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 22.09.2012

Sheldon Country Park.

I then headed back towards Birmingham and turned off to Sheldon Country Park which is on the opposite side of Birmingham Airport to Shadowbrook. I walked along to just past an area at the end of the runway where people gather to watch the aircraft. The grass here is cut back a couple of times a year but around the edges there are areas that are left where I have seen Common Blues and Small Coppers previously.

I did not find any Small Coppers today but I did find another male Common Blue that had seen better days and a nice looking female.



Common Blue male - Sheldon CP 22.09.2012

The shots below are all of the same female, the topside shots show how the amount of blue can vary depending on the light and angle.



Common Blue female - Sheldon CP 22.09.2012



Common Blue female – Sheldon CP 22.09.2012



Common Blue female – Sheldon CP 22.09.2012

Also seen here were 2 Speckled Wood, 2 Small White and a single Red Admiral.

A very pleasant afternoon, one which could well be my last one looking for butterflies this year.

Looking at my diary last year, the last butterfly that I saw was a Red Admiral in my garden on 30th October so it will be interesting to see what will be this years.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 23-Sep-12 06:21 AM GMT

I like the Common Blue, Neil, but your first Red Admiral is even more stunning (it also has the seldom seen white spot in the red forewing band).

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Sep-12 07:04 AM GMT

Cracking Comma too Neil 🍷 They won't seem to open up for me at the moment? How are you doing for Brownie points at the moment? I'm starting to save mine for next season 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Sep-12 05:09 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments David and Wurzel, much appreciated as always 😊

I am not sure how I stand on Brownie points at the moment, I tend to use them up as fast as I earn them, in fact I probably owe a few back 😊😊

With the horrible weather of the past few days and the evenings getting darker again, I have taken the opportunity to look back through my notes from this year.

I had been thinking that I had probably seen 40 or so species this year and was quite surprised to see that the Brown Hairstreaks at Grafton Wood the other week had made it a nice round 50 😊

I am well pleased with this, especially considering the 'less than ideal' weather we have had this year and the fact that there were a number of species that I made no attempt to see due to distance or timing (or both)

I have also learnt a number of valuable lessons this year including the fact that a surprising number of butterflies can still be found even when the weather would indicate otherwise. This is perfectly illustrated by the photo below which I posted in this diary back in July.



Chris photographing a Marbled White in the rain

I think the second most important thing that I have learnt is that flight times can vary enormously from year to year and it would be quite possible to look for a species at the wrong time and miss them .

A good example of this is with Peacock Butterflies which around my area appeared in the summer about 4 weeks later than last year and were only really abundant for about 2 weeks before mostly disappearing. If I had not been in the right place at the right time and seen good numbers then I might well have missed them.

Having said that, I have also had some good luck this year in that the later flying times of some species has meant that I have managed to see some butterflies that I did not anticipate earlier in the season, I guess every cloud has a silver lining (well maybe not all given the number of clouds this year)



Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-Sep-12 06:52 AM GMT

Friday 28th September – Sunshine after the storms

The week started with a horrendous few days of heavy rain and wind, at least around here it was not as bad as they had it further north.

It started to ease off a bit mid week and by today there were some decent sunny spells between the showers and it actually felt quite warm in some sheltered spots out of the breeze.

One such sheltered spot is in my back garden where the Ivy grows up and over a fence behind some shrubs, the same spot where I found the Holly Blue larvae the other week.

Finishing work at lunchtime today, I arrived back home and looking into the garden noticed a splash of orangey brown flitting about by the Ivy. 'Aha' I thought, 'a Comma'.

Grabbing my camera I nipped out and was pleased to see not just a Comma but 3 of them 😊 all busy nectaring on the Ivy flowerheads which have only just started to flower.

I then had to go out for an hour or so, which coincided with another shower of rain, but on my return the sun was out again so I went back out for another look.

This time, not only were the Commas still there, they had been joined by another making a total of 4 plus a Red Admiral 😊

The RA only stayed for a few minutes before disappearing off next door but the Commas stayed around for over an hour, until the sun went too low thereby putting the Ivy in the shade. They then flew off up into the taller trees around the garden, presumably to roost for the night.



Comma - Coverdale 28.09.2012



Comma - Coverdale 28.09.2012



2 Commas on Ivy in my garden

There were also 2 Speckled Wood, a male and a female, both of the which spent some time nectaring on the Ivy, especially the female. This is the most I have seen SWs nectaring on flowers since the Spring when I observed males nectaring on Forget-me-nots in my garden.



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 28.09.2012



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.09.2012

The weather is looking good for tomorrow again so despite me thinking I had probably had my last trip out last weekend, I may well find time for another couple of hours around some local spots 😊

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 29-Sep-12 10:01 PM GMT

Lovely shots Nfreem, It seems they like Gardens this time of year, I've been lucky in mine with STS and Peacocks, also SW. They were a welcome sight after the Storm, Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-12 06:21 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 There is something poetic in the way that gardens are the prime hotspots at the start and then the end of the season. WRT butterflies disappearing over the fence – for me it is the only drawback to backyard nature watching 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Sep-12 10:50 PM GMT

Many thanks Goldie and Wurzel 😊

I remember back in March posting that it was all Peacocks and Commas, now we are coming to the end of September and its all Red Admirals and Commas. Lets keep our fingers crossed for next March when we should be seeing some of these very same butterflies.

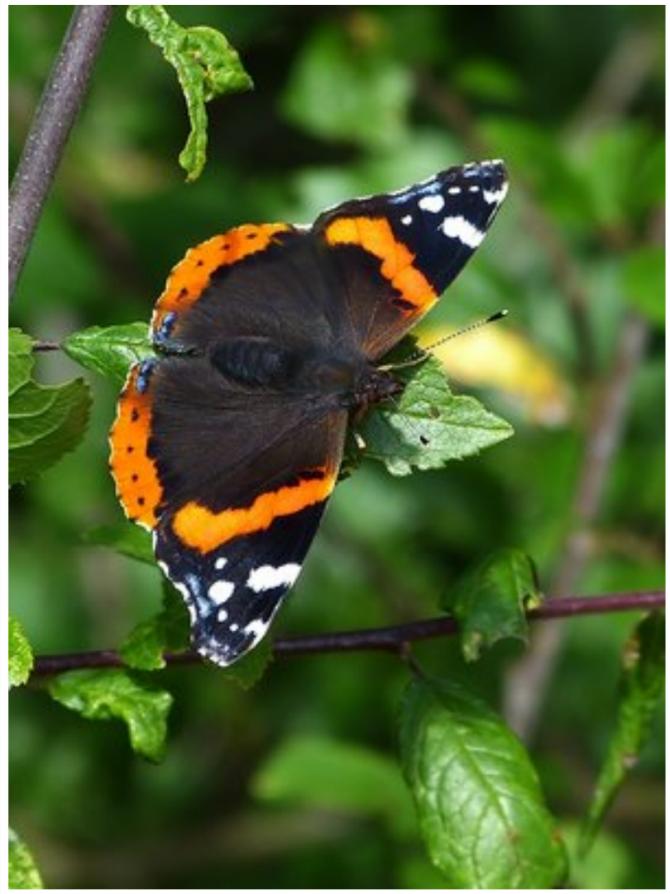
Saturday 29th September

The weather yesterday (Saturday) round here did not live up to the promise of the forecast, after a bright and sunny start it soon clouded over and became quite windy. Around midday I checked the forecast online and whilst it was telling me that I had clear skies and unbroken sun, one look out of

the window told me that I had around 75% cloud cover 😊

Anyway, I decided to make the most of it and headed over to Castle Hills near Solihull. I spent a couple of hours wandering around the hedgerows between the fields during which time the sun came out for a few spells 😊

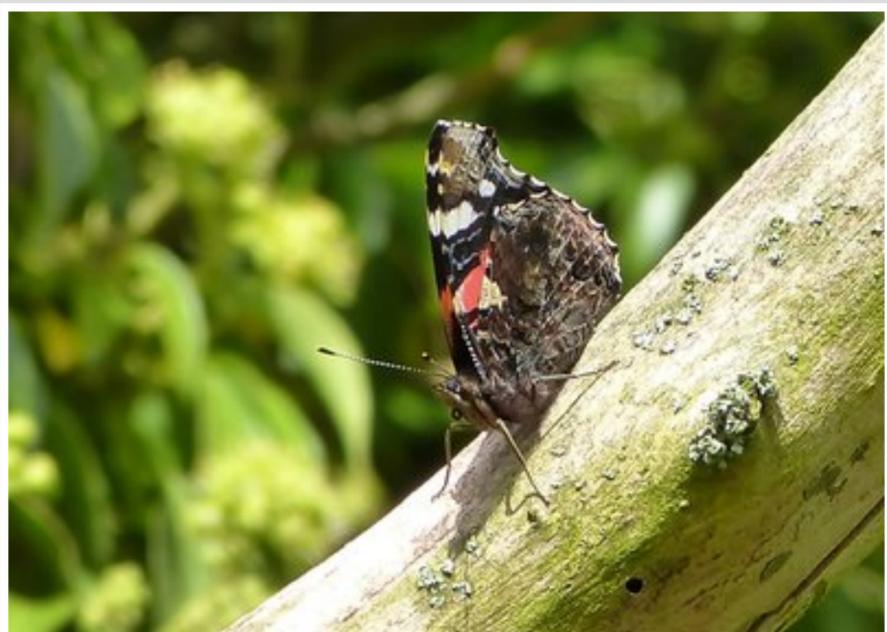
There were a good number of Red Admirals about, particularly on one large clump of Ivy that was clambering 20 odd feet up a dead tree which had 7 at one time. I also saw a dozen or so Commas, these tended to be spread out more along the hedgerows amongst the blackberries.



Red Admiral - Castle Hills 29.09.2012



Red Admiral - Castle Hills 29.09.2012



Red Admiral - Castle Hills 29.09.2012



Comma - Castle Hills 29.09.2012



Comma - Castle Hills 29.09.2012



Comma - Castle Hills 29.09.2012

Other butterflies seen were a singles of Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown and Peacock.



Peacock - Castle Hills 29.09.2012

I had another good look around where I had seen Small Coppers here last year but without success. That's 2 local sites where I saw them last year and have failed to find them this year 😞

Back Home later, the sun popped out briefly again so I had a quick look on my Ivy. No Commas on it this time but there was a Solitary Red Admiral to finish the day off nicely 😊



Red Admiral - Coverdale 29.09.2012

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 30-Sep-12 11:21 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Some lovely photos, especially your female Speckled Wood, [28-9] and photos one, six and seven from the 29th. 6 and 7 being my favourites, [Comma/Peacock] Two excellent pictures. I haven't seen a Peacock since the end of March, but hopefully my day will come.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Oct-12 05:12 AM GMT

Thanks Nick, much appreciated 😊

As mentioned previously, there were plenty of Peacocks around my area in March.

The summer brood was very late and I only really saw good numbers for 2 weekends in August before they disappeared. I believe that Peacocks go into hibernation fairly early so despite emerging late I guess they still tucked themselves away at about the usual time, pure speculation on my part but it would explain what I saw locally.

Yesterdays was the only one I have seen since then.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Oct-12 04:01 AM GMT

Saturday 6th October

The third Saturday in a row with no rain (although there has been plenty in between) and I managed to get out again for a couple of hours 😊

Instead of spending my time at one place, I had a little drive around the lanes out the other side of Solihull towards Knowle and Hampton-in-Arden, stopping off at a few places by public footpaths where I had a little wander and a nose around.

I was on the lookout for 3rd brood Small Coppers but unfortunately didn't find any.

What I did find was Red Admirals and Commas as expected. I was surprised however by the numbers of Commas about, there were at least 1 or 2 at every place that I stopped, usually more, with about a dozen on one particular patch of brambles/Blackberries.



Comma - Solihull 06.10.2012



Comma - Solihull 06.10.2012



Comma - Solihull 06.10.2012



Three Commas - Soihull 06.10.2012

Apart from the Commas, the Red Admirals that I saw were far more flighty and when they did settle were usually out of reach for photos. There were also a number of Dragonflies about, mostly Southern and Migrant Hawkers, which gave me a chance to photograph something that wasn't a Comma 😊



Southern Hawker - Solihull 06.10.2012

Another good couple of hours that may well be my last of the season looking for butterflies, but then again I thought that last weekend as well 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 07-Oct-12 04:12 AM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

I was surprised however by the numbers of Commas about, there were at least 1 or 2 at every place that I stopped, usually

more, with about a dozen on one particular patch of brambles/Blackberries.

You and me both, Neil. They seem to be having a purple patch at the moment.

Wherever you find either blackberries or ivy you can expect to find one or two.....or even three. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 07-Oct-12 05:55 AM GMT

I thought last weekend was going to be it for butterfly watching too so was as pleasantly surprised to see butterflies as you 😊 I only had two Commas today though so perhaps they're waning down here? Anyway musings over – cracking shots as I've come to expect 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Oct-12 02:25 AM GMT

Hi Guys, thanks for the comments 😊

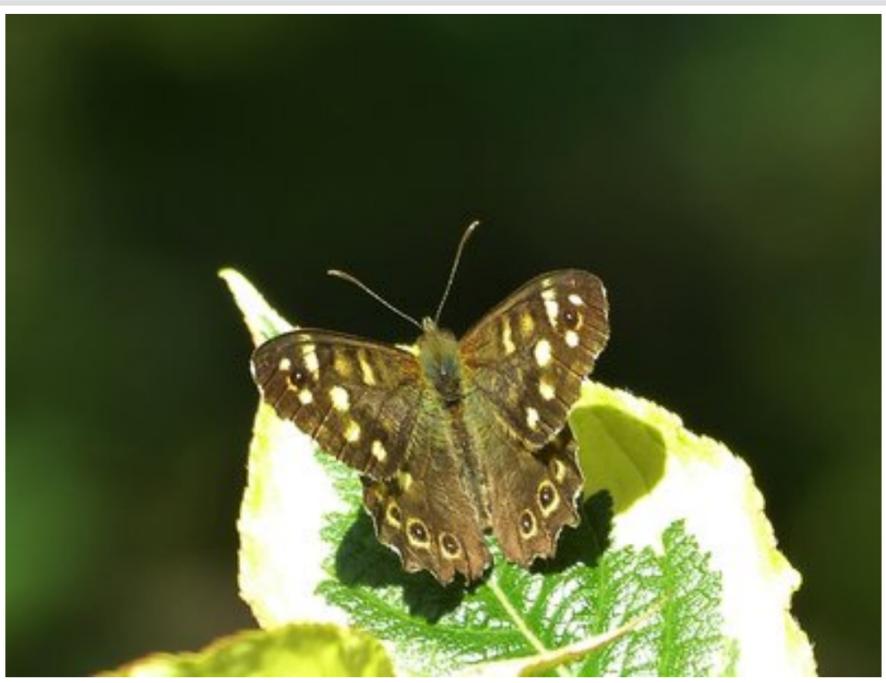
It will be interesting to see how many Commas are about next spring, I remember there being quite a few around here last March and there has certainly been loads about over the last couple of weeks.

Sunday 7th October.

A Nice sunny morning that clouded over around midday and throughout the afternoon.

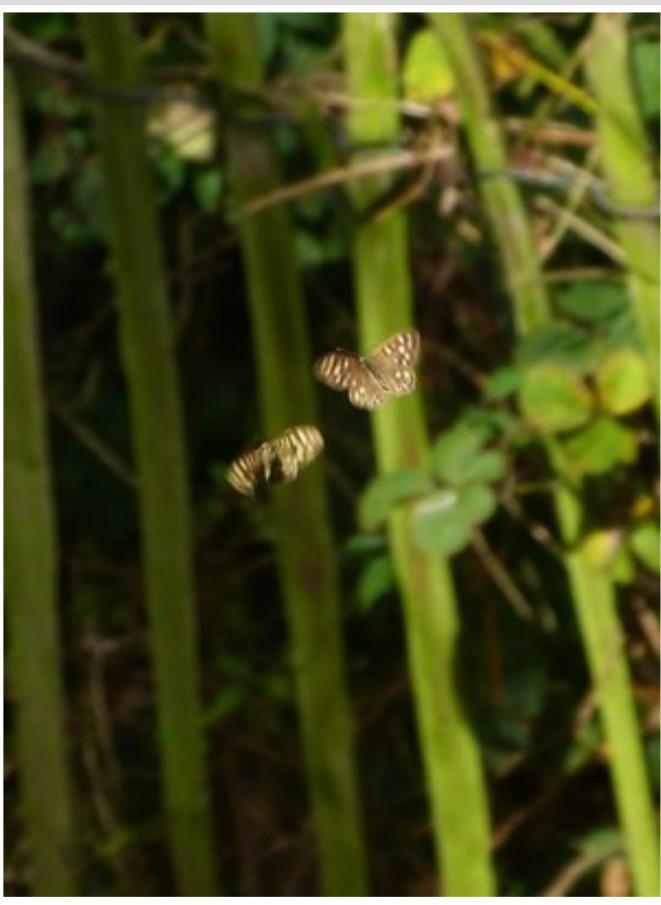
I had stuff to do around the house plus my daughter and little grandson being with us for the day today so I just popped into the garden a couple of times to see what was about.

Apart from a couple of fly throughs by Red Admirals, the Speckled Woods are still hanging in there with a couple of males defending their territories in the late morning sun.



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 07.10.2012

With their territories overlapping, they would regularly intercept each other and spiral around the garden. Remembering Wurzel using 'sports mode' on his camera a while back, I gave it a try and managed to get the shot below which I quite like 😊



Speckled Wood males squabbling in the back garden.

Probably a bit late this season to try any more like this but definitely something to remember to try next season.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-12 05:37 AM GMT

I like it to Neil 😊 – action shots are great for capturing the fragile yet robust nature butterflies – it must be the autumn as I've started musing 🤔 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Oct-12 06:17 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel,

I had never thought of using the sports mode to try and photograph butterflies in flight until I read your previous posts. Seeing the SWs spiralling around today reminded me to try it.

Yep, plenty of time for musing during the next few months 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Oct-12 03:33 AM GMT

Looking back at 2012 – Spring

The 2012 butterfly season was without doubt a poor one in many respects with many species suffering badly under the persistent rain and prolonged overcast that were a feature of this summer.

It had all started so differently back in March when there were many areas still in drought and for a glorious week or so around my area there were Commas and Peacocks in plenty and the season seemed full of promise.

I remember taking the photo below and noticing how dry the ground looked.



Peacock on dry ground in March

The weather soon started to change and through April it got gloomier and wetter.

Despite this there were enough gaps when the sun peeked through for me to see good numbers of Orange Tips.

I saw them regularly in my garden, but out and about locally, numbers seemed down on last year which had been a very good one around here for Orange Tips.



Memories of Spring – Orange Tip against Blackthorn Blossom

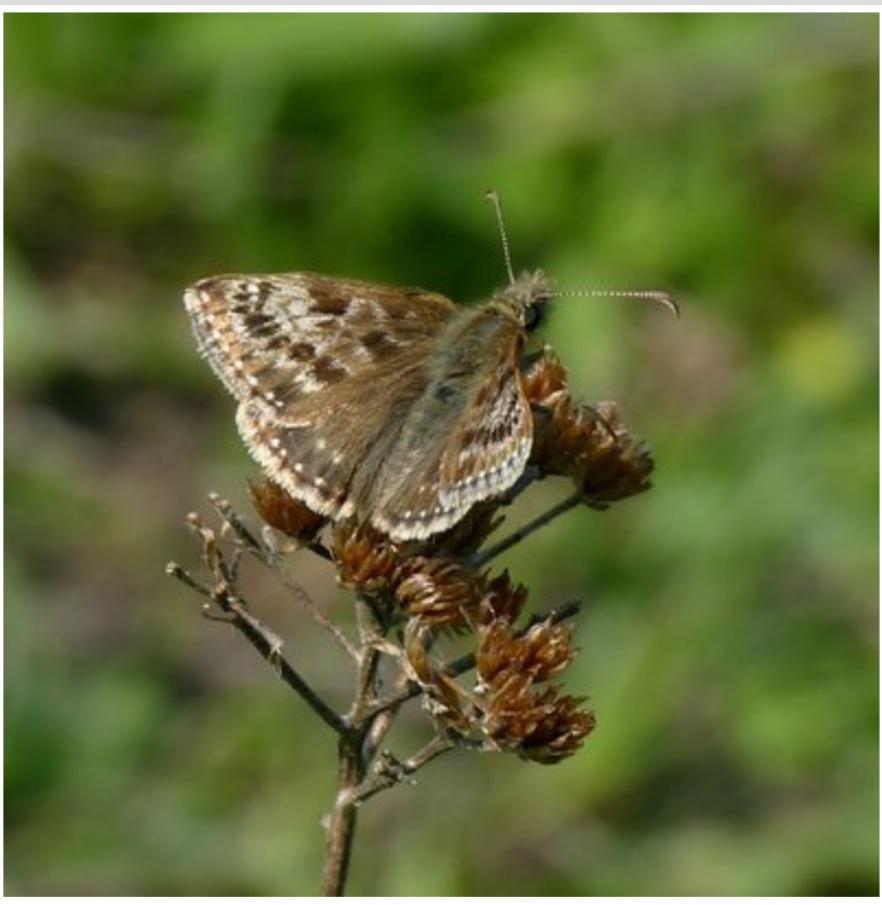
At the end of March the first Speckled Wood appeared in my garden but it was not until the end of April that they became a constant presence, one that would continue all year apart from a gap for a couple of weeks in June.



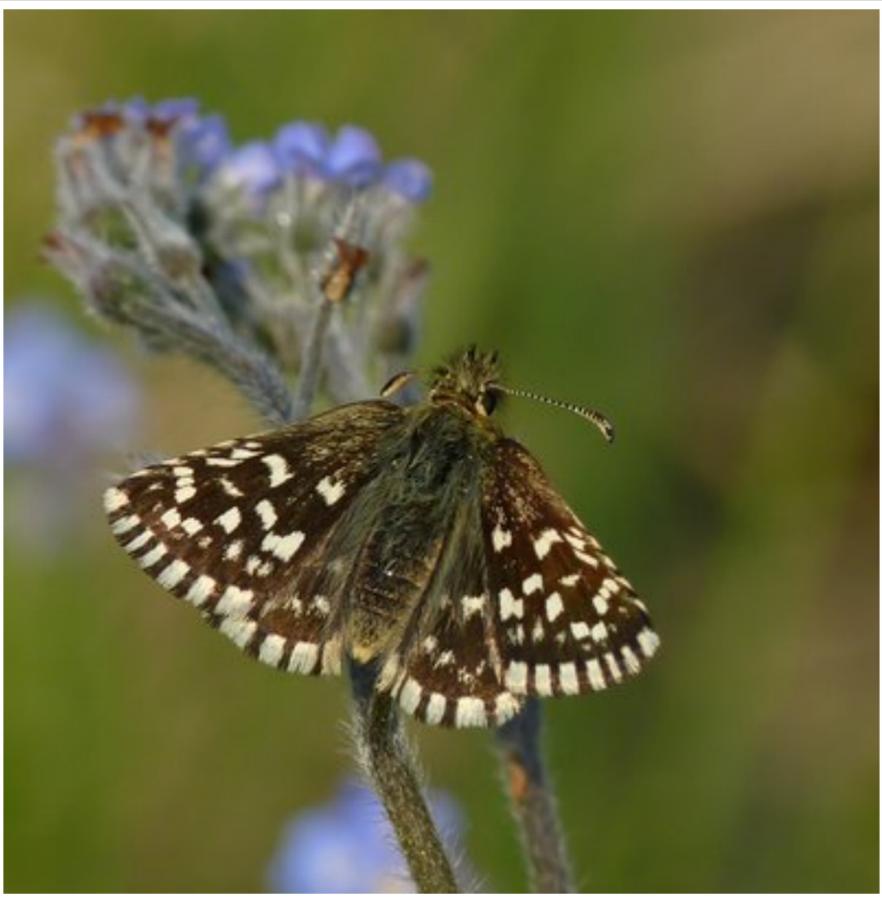
Early April Speckled Wood

Travelling a bit further afield around the midlands during May, Dingy Skippers seemed to be doing well at a couple of sites I visited whereas Grizzled Skipper numbers seemed a bit down on what I saw last year.

Also Green Hairstreaks were about in good numbers at the couple of sites that I saw them.



Dingy Skipper at Bishops Hill, Warwickshire



Grizzled Skipper – Ryton Meadows, Warwickshire



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Meadows, Warwickshire

I am not sure how accurately this ties in with others observations; it is all about the timing and if I had visited a bit earlier or later then things may well have been different. In fact, as the season continued it became apparent that a lot of species were appearing late and it was all too easy to go looking for a given species too early and see nothing.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 22-Oct-12 03:43 AM GMT

Nice commentary, Neil.

I think we all recognise that 2012 was almost a nadir for British butterflies. It was cool, it was wet, there were several extreme weather events, etc...

There's nothing we can do about it. We simply have to hope 2013 is relatively 'normal'.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Oct-12 06:33 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 I'm torn between the Orange-tip and the Greenstreak for my fave 🍷 I've still got a couple of catch up posts to go before I start reflecting back on the year but I imagine I'll say similar things, fingers crossed for a good one next year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Oct-12 02:44 AM GMT

Thanks for the comment guys 😊

I think everybody had broadly similar experiences this year but the details may well be slightly different depending on where in the country you are. The last post and the next are primarily focused on my own personal experience in the midlands.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Oct-12 03:51 AM GMT

Looking back at 2012 - Summer.

As late spring turned into summer on the calendar, even if it didn't really feel like it, I managed to get out a fair bit to various sites around the midlands.

With the weather being as 'unreliable' as it was and my time being limited to some weekends and occasional days off work during the week, I tried to be careful with my selections of where to go.

I found that by checking sightings and looking at last minute weather reports, I managed to have mostly successful days even if the weather was not ideal. In fact I found that on some days I found surprising numbers of butterflies flying during brief sunny spells between the cloud and rain.

Travelling a bit, usually between 60-90 minutes from my house, I went to some excellent sites including The Wyre Forest for Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Salcey Forest (Wood whites), Prees Heath (Silver-studded Blues), Whixall Moss (Large Heath), and Fermyn Woods (Purple Emperor)



SPBF - Wyre Forest



Wood White - Salcey Forest



Silver-studded Blue - Prees Heath



Large Heath - Whixall Moss



Purple Emperor - Fermyn/Souther Woods

A little closer to home, around 30-45 minutes' drive, I went to Oversley Wood, Snitterfield Bushes and Ryton Wood and saw Silver-washed Fritillaries in good numbers at all three sites. I also saw white Admirals at these sites but only a few at each, this seemed to be a second year that white Admiral numbers were down in Warwickshire.



Silver-washed Fritillary - Oversley Wood



White Admiral – Oversley Wood

Of my local sites near Solihull, I spent most time at Castle Hills and Shadowbrook Meadows plus also started visiting Babbs Mill LNR which was a new site for me.

Meadow Browns and Ringlets were at all these in large numbers as in fact they had been at all the sites I visited around the midlands. Meadow Browns especially seemed to increase in numbers even more as the Ringlet flight season came to an end.

Gatekeeper numbers were definitely down on last year, there were still good numbers at most sites but not the profusion that I saw last year.



Ringlet – Babbs Mill LNR



Gatekeeper – Babbs Mill LNR



Meadow Brown – Shadowbrook Meadows

Large and Small Skippers were at all local sites in good numbers and I found Essex skippers at both Castle Hills and Babbs Mill (eventually 😊) although I didn't manage to check Elmdon Park where I had found Essex last year.



Large Skipper – Babbs Mill LNR



Small Skippers – Castle Hills



Essex Skipper – Babbs Mill LNR

I also found Marbled Whites at these two sites, only a few including a mating pair at Babbs Mill but I had not found any at all around Solihull last year although they may be found in good numbers not far away including at Ryton and Snitterfield.



Marbled Whites – Babbs Mill LNR

As the 'summer' continued, I became increasingly worried at the lack of Small Coppers and Common blues around my local patch and it was not until late August that I found the first examples of both species at Shadowbrook Meadows along with good numbers of Peacocks which had also appeared much later than last year. Small Copper and Common Blue numbers both appear to have suffered locally, I only found Small Coppers at one site (three last year) and a few Common Blues at two (also three last year).





Common Blue – Shadowbrook Meadows



Peacock – Shadowbrook Meadows

Summer broods of all three common Whites were also late to get going, these also not appearing in good numbers until late August.

In the garden the Speckled Woods were ever present apart from a brief gap in late June which was a bit later than last year. Holly Blues also showed up regularly, perhaps not quite as many as last year but still enough for 1 or 2 to be seen every time the sun popped out.

From mid-July I also seemed to have a constant Red Admiral in the garden which actually proved to be 2 or 3 individuals which followed each other in claiming a territory over a patch of nettles.

Apart from my trips around the midlands, I also had a week in Norfolk at the end of May, a few days at Arnside Knott at the end of July and a week in Dorset during the first week of September but as these have been covered in some detail previously in my diary I am not going to go into them again now.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 24-Oct-12 03:56 AM GMT

Some excellent shots there, Neil, and a pretty comprehensive *commentaire*.

Like you, I have bemoaned the lack of Small Coppers this year and feel sure I'll breathe a huge sigh of relief when I see my first one next year.

PS: Once again, that Large Heath is almost unbeatably impressive!

Re: nfreem

by Neil Hulme, 24-Oct-12 04:09 AM GMT

Agreed. Some lovely shots in there Neil. It seems that many of us managed to squeeze everything we possibly could out of a very tricky season. BWs, Neil

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 24-Oct-12 05:01 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

It's really good to read your diary and to indulge in the recollection, via your pictures, of the highlights from the past season 😊

Whixall Moss for Large Heath and Fermyn Woods for Purple Emperor are two locations I'm hoping to visit in 2013.

Fingers crossed ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-12 06:04 AM GMT

Fantastic review of the year, brill photos and some food for thought for next year...ace 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Oct-12 01:46 AM GMT

Many thanks for the kind comments all, they are very much appreciated 😊

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

.... It seems that many of us managed to squeeze everything we possibly could out of a very tricky season.

BWs, Neil

We did indeed Neil, I have been going through my final tally for the year and did surprisingly well 😊

Rather long post to follow shortly,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Oct-12 04:06 AM GMT

Looking back at 2012 – The final Tally.

My weeks in Norfolk and Dorset and the trip up to Arnside Knott had added a number of firsts for me this year including Swallowtail, High Brown Fritillary, Scotch Argus and Lulworth Skipper.

I also saw a couple of Species that I had not seen for years, namely Wall Brown and Clouded Yellow.

I had not been keeping a running total of the number of species I had seen and didn't actually do a count until after I had seen Brown Hairstreaks at Grafton Wood in September.

I had thought that I had probably seen something like 40 or so species and was surprised to find that the Brown Hairstreak had made it a nice round 50 which, considering the year that we have had, I am well pleased with.

My final tally for the year is below, along with a few notes from my own observations and from some conversations with people that I met whilst out and about.

1. Small Skipper – First seen 14th July. Good numbers at most local sites
2. Essex Skipper – A few found at Castle hills and Babbs Mill near Solihull from mid-July. At Castle hills found in different part of meadows to Small Skippers.
3. Lulworth Skipper – A first for me. I was surprised to find fair numbers still flying at Durlston Country Park first week of September.



Lulworth Skipper - Durlston Country Park 03.09.2012

4. Silver-spotted Skipper - Loads seen at Aston Rowant on 16th August along slopes north side of M40.



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant 16.08.2012

5. Large Skipper - First seen 20th June at Salcey Forest.. Found at most local sites but numbers seemed lower than last year.



Large Skipper - Salcey Forest 20.06.2012

6. Dingy Skipper - First seen 13th May at Prestbury Hill, Gloucestershire during Warwickshire BC walk. Good numbers at Bishops Hill Warks. in late May.

7. Grizzled Skipper - First seen 20th May at Harbury Warks. Also at Ryton Meadows 25th May but numbers seemed down on last year.



Grizzled Skipper - Harbury 20.05.2012

8. Swallowtail - Another personal first. 4 seen at Strumpshaw Fen 28th May and 1 at How Hill on 30th May. According to locals very late and apparently had a bad year.



Swallowtail - Strumpshaw Fen 28.05.2012

9. Wood White - Half a dozen seen at Salcey forest, Northamptonshire 20th June. I believe they have done well here with good numbers seen earlier in June.

10. Clouded Yellow - 2 seen in Dorset, 1 on Bindon Hill, Lulworth 5th Sept. and 1 on Ballard Down 6th Sept. These were the first ones I have seen for years.

11. Brimstone - First seen 13th May at Prestbury Hill. Then occasionally from July until September when I found half a dozen together at Grafton Wood.

12. Large White - First seen in May then not again until August. Loads in Dorset first week of Sept.

13. Small White - First seen 23rd March in garden, then nothing until July when started to see almost everywhere until early October.



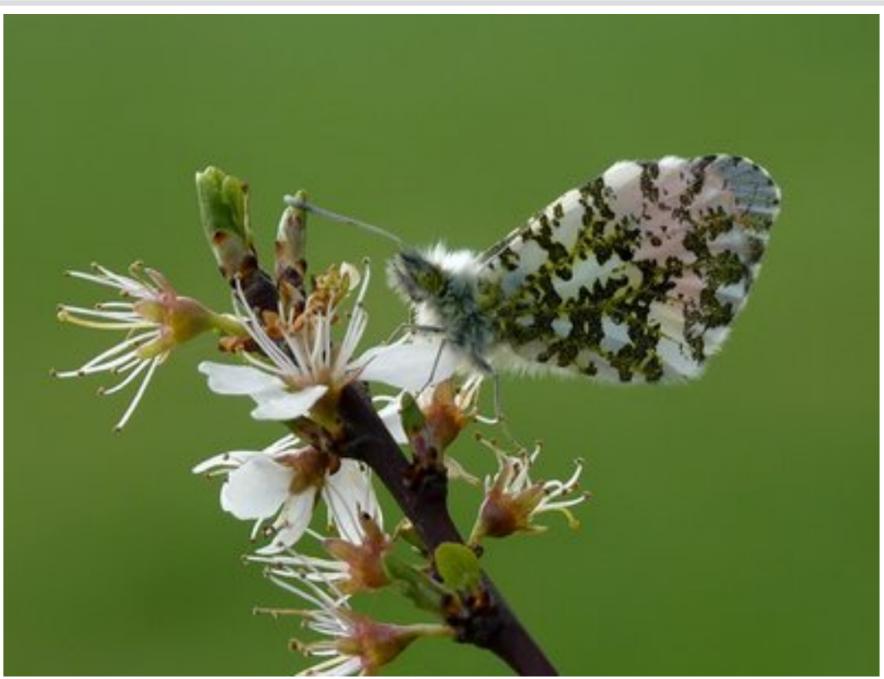
Small White – Sandford Heath

14. Green-veined White – First Spring Brood seen 26th April in garden. Summer brood not in numbers until late July onwards then seen everywhere.



Green-veined White Coverdale 11.05.2012

15. Orange Tip – First seen 13th April at Castle Hills, Solihull. Good numbers around but not quite as many as last year. Last one seen was a female at Salcey Forest 20th June.



Orange Tip – Castle Hills 13.05.2012

16. Green Hairstreak – First sighting at Prestbury Hill 13th May. Half a dozen at Ryton Meadows 23rd May, a couple of weeks later than last year.

17. Brown Hairstreak – Half a dozen at Grafton Wood on 8th September. A late emergence here but apparently showing well through September.

18. Purple Hairstreak – First seen 14th July at Ryton Wood during open day. Also seen at Oversley and Fermyn but definitely not as many as last year.



Purple Hairstreak - Oversley Wood 21.07.2012

19. White-letter Hairstreak - Just 1 seen at Fermyn woods on 24th July on Elm in main ride. Possibly the most photographed WLH in the country this year 😊 but I did not get a good shot.

20. Small Copper - Seen at 4 sites in Norfolk last week in May. Summer brood only found at 1 local site from 11th August. Half a dozen seen at Aston Rowant 16th August including a nice ab. radiata.



Small Copper ab. radiata - Aston Rowant 16.08.2012

21. Small Blue - 1 seen at Prestbury Hill 13th May. A dozen or so at Bishops Hill Warwickshire during 2 visits late May and first week of June.



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 09.06.2012

22. Silver-studded Blue - Loads seen at Prees Heath 4th July in 3 main concentrations along old runway.



Silver-studded Blue - Prees Heath 04.07.2012

23. Brown Argus - Small Colony found at Burgh Castle in Norfolk 26th May. A dozen or so at Aston Rowant 16th August. None seen on my local patch this year.

24. Common Blue - Loads in dunes north of GT Yarmouth 30th May. Good numbers at Bishops Hill Warks. 9th June. Summer brood very late around local patch, not seen until 18th August at Shadowbrook Meadows and numbers low.

25. Chalkhill Blue - Loads at Aston Rowant on August 16th on slopes north side of M40. A few faded individuals still on Bindon Hill, Lulworth 5th Sept.

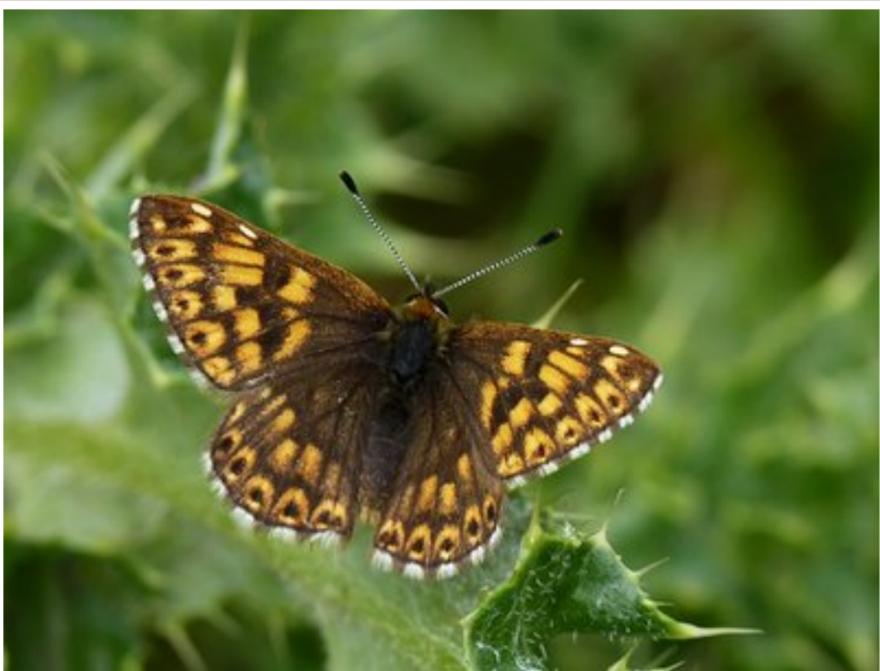
26. Adonis Blue - Hundreds seen in Dorset first week of Sept. at Ballard Down, Durlston CP and Bindon Hill. Apparently not such a good year for these elsewhere.

27. Holly Blue - First Spring brood seen 12th April in garden, Summer brood from 3rd week in July. Good numbers seen in garden, possibly slightly down on last year.



Holly Blue - Coverdale 09.08.2012

28. Duke of Burgundy - Half a dozen at Prestbury Hill 13th May, apparently the most seen here up until then. Definitely later than last year when I saw them here in April. Not a good year for this species.



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 13.05.2012

29. White Admiral - A few seen at Oversley Wood, Ryton wood and Snitterfield Bushes during mid-July. Looks like another bad year for WAs in

Warwickshire following on from a bad year last year.

30. Purple Emperor – First one seen at Oversley Wood, Warks. 21st July. Good numbers seen at Fermyn Woods 24th July, just after the main emergence which was late but good this year.

Apparently also seen in Salcey Forest after being absent for a number of years.



Purple Emperor – Fermyn Woods

31. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Good numbers seen at the Wyre Forest 4th June, most nice and fresh. I had timed my visit here to try and see both PBF and SPBF.



Small-pearl Bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 04.06.2012

32. Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Good numbers in the Wyre Forest 4th June, most getting a bit faded. Apparently had a good year here.

33. High Brown Fritillary – Another first for me, half a dozen seen at Arnside Knott 29/30th July. According to local info numbers were down this year.



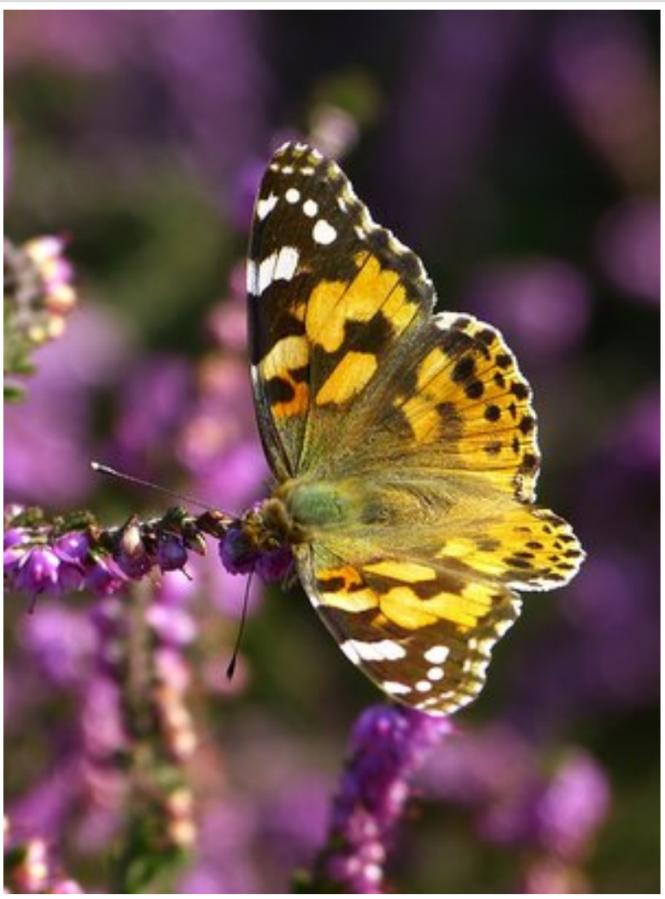
High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2012

34. Dark Green Fritillary – Good numbers at Arnside Knott 29/30th July. Most getting tatty by now but some nice females still around.



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2012

35. Silver-washed Fritillary – Good numbers, similar to last year, seen at Ryton Wood, Oversley Wood and Snitterfield Bushes mid to Late July.
36. Red Admiral – First seen 20th June, then regular individuals until first week of September when I saw hundreds in Dorset. Then loads around local patch until first week of October.
37. Painted Lady – 1 faded specimen seen locally 23rd June. Approx. a dozen seen in Dorset first week of September with all the Red Admirals.



Painted Lady – Studland 03.09.2012

38. Small Tortoiseshell – First local sighting 25th March, a couple more in June then nothing until first week of September in Dorset when good numbers seen.
39. Peacock – Good numbers around locally last week of March. Summer brood very late and not seen until late August, when good numbers around for a couple of weeks.
40. Comma – Also around in good numbers locally in late March, I remember at the time, whilst others were seeing Brimstones, commenting that it was all Peacocks and Commas for me. Individuals seen regularly at most sites from mid-July then loads from mid-September to early October.
41. Speckled Wood – First one in the garden 25th March, a few days earlier than last year. Then present in garden all year apart from a normal 2 week gap. This year the gap was in late June which was a couple of weeks later than last year. Also seen regularly at most local sites. Numbers appeared similar to last year.
42. Wall Brown – 1 seen at Horsey Dunes in Norfolk 30th May. Half a dozen seen on Bindon Hill, Lulworth first week of September. Another species that I have not seen for years, apparently it is extinct in Warwickshire.



Wall Brown – Bindon Hill 05.09.2012

43. Scotch Argus – My final first this year, there were loads at Arnside Knott 29th/30th July. They had only been flying for a few days when I was there and I only saw males.



Scotch Argus – Arnside Knott 30.07.2012

44. Marbled White – First seen in good numbers at Ryton Meadows 14th July. Also Hundreds at Snitterfield 18th and 21st July. Found at 2 local sites for the first time this year.



Marbled White – Snitterfield Bushes 18.07.2012

45. Grayling – Abundant at Arnside Knott 29th/30th July. Loads seen in Dorset first week of September, particularly on Bindon Hill and Sandford Heath.



Grayling pair – Sandford Heath 05.09.2012

46. Gatekeeper – First few seen at Ryton 14th July. Good numbers around local sites through July and August but not in the same profusion as last year.

47. Meadow Brown – First seen locally on 23rd June, numbers built to the point where they were abundant everywhere I went. I was still finding fairly fresh females in Dorset during the first week of September and my last local sighting was 15th Sept. This species seemed to have a very good year in the midlands.

48. Ringlet – First seen locally 30th June, this was another species that appeared to have a very good year, appearing in huge numbers at some sites during July.

49. Small Heath – First seen at Prestbury Hill on 13th May. I saw Small Heaths at a number of sites from July and at a number of sites in Dorset but only ever in ones and twos.

My impression is that locally they have not had a very good year.



Small Heath – Prees Heath 04.07.2012

And last but definitely not least,

50. Large Heath – Seen in good numbers at Whixall Moss on 4th July.

Considering that I made no attempt to see Chequered Skipper, Large Blue, Black Hairstreak, Mountain Ringlet nor Marsh, Heath or Glanville Fritillaries, this means that I saw just about everything that I set out to see plus a few that I did not expect.

I just missed out on Northern Brown Argus at Arnside Knott, apparently a few were still flying just before I went. I also missed the Monarch on Portland by a day, I read about the sighting on the night that I returned home from Dorset, oh well, musn't get too greedy 😊

This means that it was a good year for me despite the weather which was 'challenging' at times if not downright atrocious. Amongst the gloom there were sunny days, of which some were glorious, 24th July at Fermyn Woods and the first week of September in Dorset springing to mind. Others were mostly cloudy and wet but still managed enough brightness to produce butterflies, my visits to Prees Heath / Whixall Moss on 4th July and Oversley / Snitterfield on 18th July being prime examples.

Here's looking forward to 2013, whatever it brings.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-Oct-12 06:08 AM GMT

With the wind moaning outside at the end of a grey day this post cheered me right up 😊 I might nick the format for my own posting if that's alright Neil?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Mark Tutton, 27-Oct-12 08:03 AM GMT

Hi Neil – 24 July at fermyn would be my best day of a pretty dismal year. Probably one of the most pleasant weather wise but also a great introduction to the best emperor site I have visited and of course meeting up with your good self – well worth spending seven hours in the car for! Regards Mark 😊

Re: nfreem

by David M, 27-Oct-12 09:12 PM GMT

Excellent resumé that, Neil. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it.

You listed 50 species and then went on to mention the following that you didn't see:

Chequered Skipper, Large Blue, Black Hairstreak, Mountain Ringlet, Marsh, Heath, Glanville Fritillaries and Northern Brown Argus.

That's 58 species in all but which is the one missing if the UK is supposed to harbour 59 in total? 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Oct-12 05:28 AM GMT

Many thanks for the great comments guys, they are always appreciated 😊

Wurzel, feel free to use the format, all I did was list the butterflies in the order they may be found in my books and added my comments.

Hi Mark, I'm glad Fermyn is closer for me, about 90mins or so, I am not sure I could have coped with a 7 hour drive after all the walking that day. A fantastic day and definitely one of the highlights of my season too 😊

David, I would go for Reals Wood White (or whatever it is called now, seem to remember something about it being now called Cryptic Wood White) being number 59. Could be wrong though, I often am 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 28-Oct-12 05:57 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

David, I would go for Reals Wood White (or whatever it is called now, seem to remember something about it being now called Cryptic Wood White) being number 59.

Spot on, Neil. Thanks for clearing that up.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Nov-12 03:50 AM GMT

Nothing much to report from the past few weeks, I have been much too busy catching up on stuff around the house that I kept putting off through the summer.

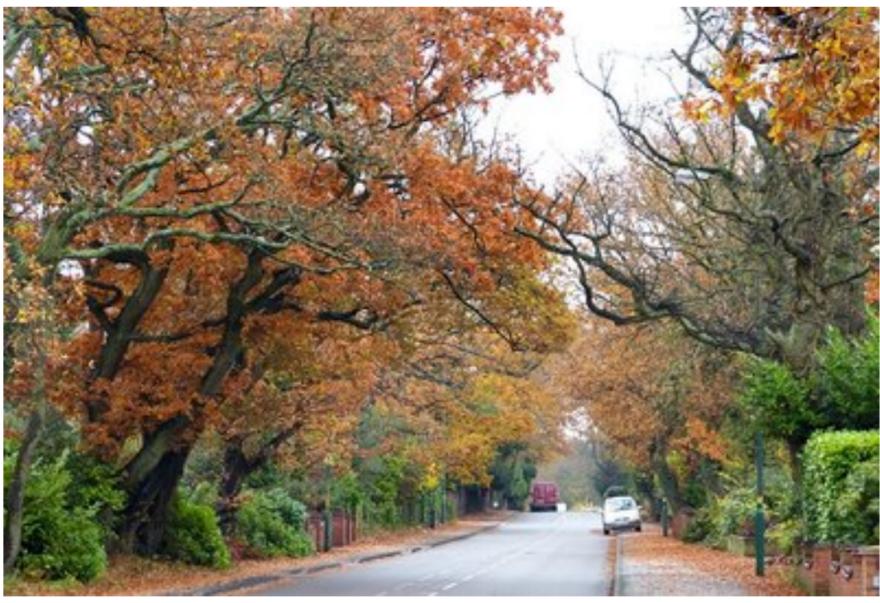
Birds are coming back into the garden now that the weather is turning colder, some days there has been a bit of rowdy little gang consisting of Great, Blue, Coal and Long-tailed Tits all squabbling over the feeders. I keep trying to get some photos of them but so far nothing that I am happy with, they are far too lively.

There have also been a couple of Nuthatches visiting regularly, the first time I have seen these in the garden. The photo below was taken some weeks ago and is the best that I have managed so far, I need to do a bit of practising taking photos of birds.



Nuthatch in garden.

Amongst the glorious Autumn colours of the trees this year I have noticed that the Oaks are looking particularly striking. There is one particular road near my house which I regularly travel along but had never really noticed the colours until this year.



Autumn Oaks - 17.11.2012

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-Dec-12 04:41 AM GMT

When the sun shone through...

I have been going through some of the many butterfly photos that I took during 2012 and it has struck me that on a surprising number of occasions I took location shots that show that the year was not a total washout.

I am not saying that the year was all that brilliant, I also have a load of location shots taken on gloomy days, in fact earlier in this diary I posted shots of my son Chris photographing butterflies in the rain.

A few shots below in memory of some of the better days of 2012 and in hope that 2013 will be a better year.



The year started off with such promise - Elmdon Park in March, loads of Commas and Peacocks.



Castle Hills near Solihull in mid-April



Strumpshaw fen during a good week in Norfolk in late May.



Salcey Forest in late June



Fermyn/ Souther/Lady Woods in July



Babbs Mill – clear blue sky in July



Shadowbrook meadows in August, not that sunny but a very warm and muggy day.



Sandford Heath, Dorset – what can I say about my week there, absolutely glorious.



Sheldon Country Park – late september.

Heres hoping,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-12 05:52 AM GMT

Certainly some photos to bring back warming memories. I was interested to see the shot of Fermyn as it wasn't the way I imagined it perhaps I ight make it there next year? My personal favourite shot was of Sandford Heath, but I am biased of course 😊

Have a cracking New year

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 31-Dec-12 03:14 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

If I remember correctly the Fermyn shot was taken in Souther wood, just to the south of Lady Wood which is across a farmers field to the south of Fermyn Wood proper. Some more shots below showing different aspects.



Looking across the field from Fermyn to Lady Wood



Another ride in Lady/Souther Wood



Southern end of Souther Wood, opening out before coming completely out of the wood. Last PE of the day seen here at around 4.00pm.

And heres another photo take in Dorset 😊



Corfe Castle taken whilst passing on the Swanage steam railway.

Happy New Year, I hope its a good 'un 😊

Neil.