

dilettante

by dilettante, 19-Mar-12 08:56 PM GMT

Monday 19th March 2012

At last, my first butterflies of the year, seemingly after everyone else. Three, possibly four, Commas sunning, squabbling and spiralling at Cherry Hinton nature reserve, Cambridge

Re: dilettante

by Debbie, 19-Mar-12 11:04 PM GMT

I am still looking for my first Shropshire butterfly. I did go out this weekend and found a family of fast moving spiders and a ladybird, but no butterflies yet.

dilettante

by dilettante, 25-Mar-12 06:28 AM GMT

Sunday 24th March 2012

The game is afoot! In the warm Spring sunshine, I went for a walk with my wife around the fields and footpaths next to my village. Having only seen my first butterfly of the year five days ago, I saw loads today.

Brimstones were everywhere – all male and all refusing to settle even for a minute. And Commas were not hard to find either, doing their usual thing of pugnaciously flying after any insect that dared to venture into their territory:



© dilettante

Comma, 24-Mar-2012. Sony A700 + Tamron 180/3.5

I saw a white, which I'm pretty sure was a Green-veined, although it too didn't settle. I got a pretty good view through binoculars though (another satisfied Papilio customer!). I also encountered a couple of Peacocks:



© dilettante

Peacock, 24-Mar-2012. Sony A700 + Tamron 180/3.5

I was hoping (in vain) for a first Holly Blue, but was even more surprised when a small flash of green caught my eye – a fresh Green Hairstreak! Not only was I very surprised to see it so early, but I didn't know they were found there at all. Definitely one of those thrilling butterfly encounters that sets the pulse racing. It posed for a while, nectaring on some blossom:



© dilettante

Green Hairstreak, 24-Mar-2012. Sony A700 + Tamron 180/3.5

From there we walked through some woodland, normally home to many Speckled Woods but they didn't put in an appearance. But on the home stretch, we added two more species to the tally: A Red Admiral and a Small Tortoiseshell:



© dilettante

Small Tortoiseshell, 24-Mar-2012. Sony A700 + Tamron 180/3.5

Seven species in all – not bad for March 😊

Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-12 06:41 AM GMT

That is an absolutely cracking find and an equally cracking shot! 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: dilettante

by Susie, 25-Mar-12 06:46 AM GMT

I love your green hairstreak photo and can't believe you've seen one so early in the year! Fabulous. 😊

Re: dilettante

by Lee Hurrell, 25-Mar-12 09:22 AM GMT

Another 'post hibernator full house'!

Lovely Green Hairstreak shot.

Lee

Re: dilettante

by David M, 25-Mar-12 06:19 PM GMT

My God! Green Hairstreaks have only just emerged in the south of France!!

Excellent images as usual. As you say, seven different species is quite an achievement in March in the UK.

Re: dilettante

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

Seven species already!!! 🍷

Apart from singletons of Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell its all Peacocks and Commas around my way.

Excellent photos, I especially like the Green Hairstreak.

Keep up the good work 😊

Neil F.

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 30-Apr-12 08:55 PM GMT

Monday 30th April 2012

So after a glorious start in March, April has been a washout. I've seen virtually nothing all month, but on the last day, April has redeemed itself. A bit of sunshine and warmth, so I took myself off the Cherry Hinton Pit LNR, just outside Cambridge, at lunchtime (without camera, unfortunately).

First up was a fresh Speckled Wood, shortly followed by a male Orange Tip, which even sat still for a bit to give me a nice close look. Then a male Brimstone ambled by. All this was a huge delight after such a drought (!) of butterflies. A quick tour around the newer East Pit added Small White to my list.

2 Speckled Wood

5 Brimstone (3 male, 2 female)

5 Orange Tips (male)

2 Small White plus 4 other unidentified whites (probably Small, maybe Green-Veined or female Orange Tips)

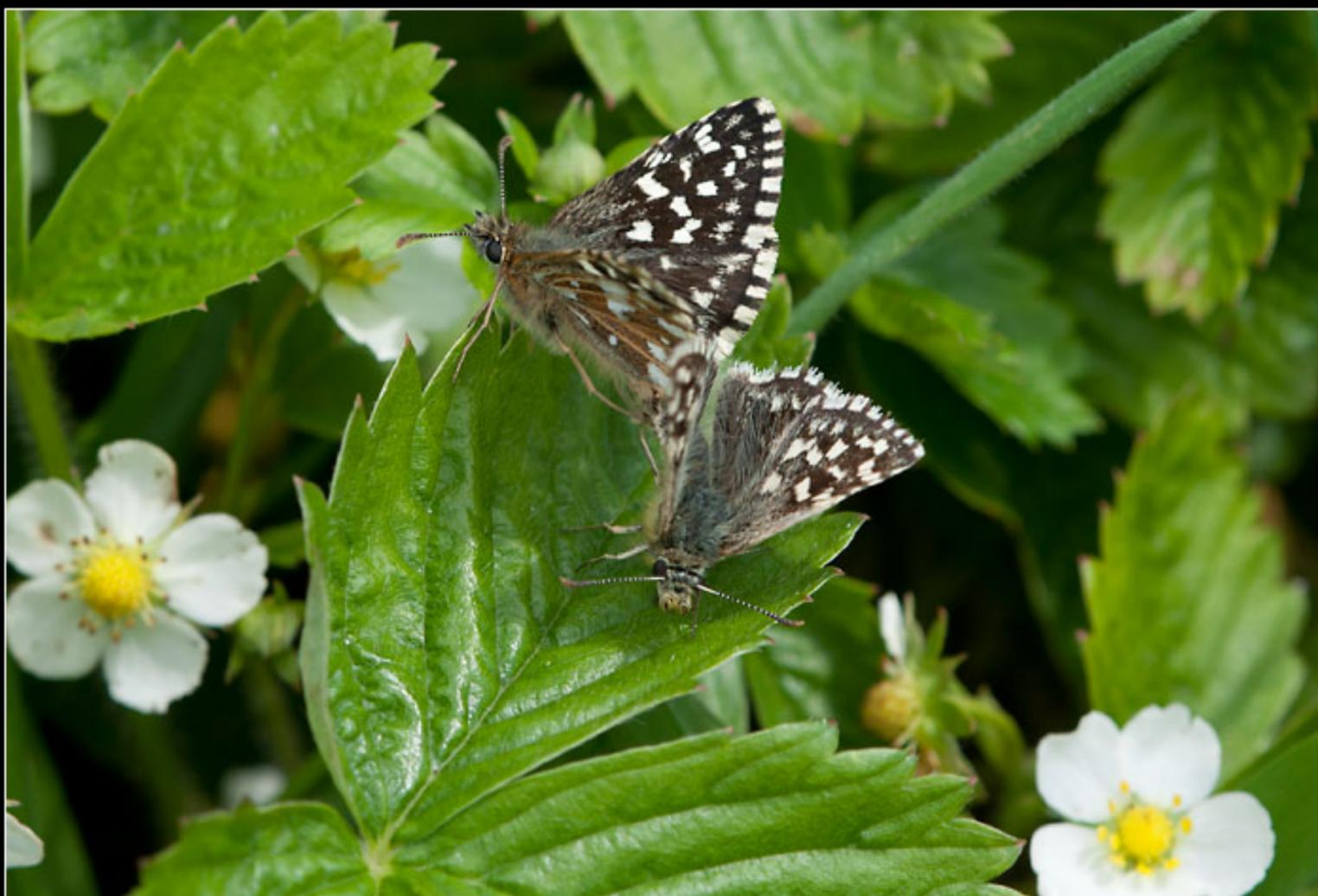
dilettante

by dilettante, 14-May-12 12:21 AM GMT

Saturday 12th May 2012

With the return of the sunshine (with rather a cold NW wind), and a day to myself, I went to Dunstable Downs, Beds in search of Dukes and Skippers. While there weren't many of any of them, I did find them all.

First up was a mating pair of Grizzled Skippers, the only two I saw all day. Maybe I was looking in the wrong places.



© dilettante

Grizzled Skipper pair

Moving on to the slopes and gullies described by Dave (millerd) [[url=http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6220&p=59436#p59436:9pty0lef](http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6220&p=59436#p59436:9pty0lef)]here[[url:9pty0lef](http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6220&p=59436#p59436:9pty0lef)], I encountered first a Dingy Skipper, and soon afterwards a Duke of Burgundy lurking in the grass. I saw 5 or 6 Dukes (and Duchesses) in all and a similar number of Dingy Skippers.



© dilettante

Dingy Skipper male



© dilettante

Duke of Burgundy male



© dilettante

Duke of Burgundy female



© dilettante

Duke of Burgundy female

Also seen were several Peacocks, Brimstones and Orange Tips, including this female:



© dilettante

Orange Tip female

Sunday 13th May 2012

While trying to mow the lawn and generally sort out the garden, I've had to make frequent stops to grab my camera and dash after butterflies, mostly Orange Tips. Generally they were rather active, but this male sat still for long enough:



© dilettante

Orange Tip male

And a little later, my son spotted this beautiful Holly Blue for me, my first of the year:



© dilettante

Holly Blue female

Things are definitely looking up!

Re: dilettante

by David M, 14-May-12 02:18 AM GMT

Stunning Holly Blue...and your female Duke of Burgundy is welcome too, as it's normally the males that are photographed.

Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 14-May-12 03:58 AM GMT

Cracking shots 📷 😊 Good to see you've been able to get out and about!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: dilettante

by Nick Broomer, 14-May-12 04:39 AM GMT

Your Holly Blue is a female.

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 14-May-12 04:45 AM GMT

"hideandseek" wrote:

Your Holly Blue is a female.

D'oh! You're quite right of course. Thanks for the correction.

Re: dilettante

by Pauline, 14-May-12 06:11 PM GMT

Beautiful OT and stunning DoB.

dilettante

by dilettante, 26-May-12 05:30 AM GMT

Friday 25th May 2012

I had the day off work, and the weather was perfect for a day's butterflying. My daughter joined me, being off school for the day.

We started at the Devil's Dyke, Cambs, from Reach, looking for Green Hairstreaks. A Holly Blue was our first sighting, then a female Brimstone and several Orange Tips. My daughter spotted a Small Heath, one of many we'd see during the day but my first of the year. Then at last a Green Hairstreak. The weather was quite breezy, so nothing really stayed still long enough for photographs, but we got good views of the four or five GHs we encountered.

From there we went to the other side of Cambridge, to dodge the guided buses at Over Cutting. Quite a few Grizzled Skippers around, plus my first Brown Argus and Common Blues of the year. A Peacock also put in an appearance.



© dilettante

Small Heath, Over Cutting, Cambs



© dilettante

Grizzled Skipper female, Over Cutting, Cambs

dilettante

by dilettante, 06-Jun-12 05:02 AM GMT

5th June 2012

I had an hour to spare before lunch this morning, so went to my nearby patch of scrub where last year there were plenty of Common Blues and a few Brown Argus. Despite reasonable weather (bright but overcast, rather windy, 15-16C) and a fairly thorough search, I only turned up one CB, a single Small Heath and several Large and Small Whites.



© dilettante

Common Blue male



© dilettante

Large White

In the afternoon I went for a walk with my family: 5+ miles through fields, hedgerows and plantations, and didn't see a single butterfly. Perhaps it was below the critical flight temperature, but I find it quite worrying. How are there going to be any butterflies next year if they're not out and about finding mates this year?

Re: dilettante

by Willow, 06-Jun-12 06:14 AM GMT

In South Wales today it's been like mid-winter, cold heavy rain and low grey cloud and mist, flaming June 😞

I'm as concerned as you are about future generations, I honestly cannot remember such low numbers of butterflies at this time of year, but nature usually has ways of coping, there's now't we can do about the weather, if we could we would most probably mess it up 😬

Some excellent images dilettante, very well done.

Bill 😊

Re: dilettante

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jun-12 08:07 PM GMT

"Willow" wrote:

Some excellent images dilettante, very well done.

Bill 😊

Agreed, very nice photos there 😊

Neil F.

dilettante

by dilettante, 11-Jun-12 12:04 AM GMT

Sunday 10th June 2012

Seeing the sun shine at last this morning, I forced myself (and my family) out of bed. I was going to head to Hockley for Heath Fritillaries, but from the forecast it looked like I'd spend the sunny hours in the car and arrive just as it clouded over. So instead we went to nearby Fleam Dyke.

Despite ideal conditions (warm, sunny and still), butterfly numbers were disappointing. I was hoping for a skipper or two, Brown Argus or Common Blue, but none were around.



© dilettante

Fleam Dyke, Cambs

In fact for the first half of the walk I saw nothing more than a few unidentified whites and a couple of Brimstones, and eventually one Small Heath.



© dilettante

Small Heath

I spent a bit of time with this Mother Shipton:



© dilettante

Mother Shipton

Highlight of the trip was a couple of rather sorry looking Green Hairstreaks:



© dilettante

Green Hairstreak

(Yes, there's some clumsy artificial blurring on a couple of those shot 😞)

Final tally was:

Brimstones - ~10

Orange Tip - 1 male, probably some females

Small Heath - 2

Green Hairstreak - 2

Holly Blue - 1

Large White - 1

Other whites - several

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 18-Jun-12 03:30 AM GMT

Sunday 17th June 2012

Some Summer weather at last, although rather windy, prompted me to make the trip to deepest Essex for Heath Fritillaries. Our first target was Starvelarks Wood, which seems to be this year's hotspot. It wasn't easy finding where to park to get access, but eventually we parked between Pound Wood and Tile Wood and walked through the latter to get to Starvelarks, passing a couple of Speckled Woods on the way. We soon found a well-managed clearing that looked promising:



© dilettante

Starvelarks Wood, Essex

And indeed the Heath Fritillaries were out in force. We spent a couple of hours here, with HFs dancing all around. At times I could see twenty or more while I stood in one spot.



© dilettante

Heath Fritillary male, Starvelarks Wood

This female seemed to be discouraging the amorous attentions of the male:



© dilettante

Some looked fresher than others, suggesting they're still emerging perhaps:



© dilettante

Heath Fritillary female, Starvelarks Wood

I also saw one Holly Blue, and one Large White here. Just near this spot there's an open meadow area with long grass, oxeye daisies and other flowers. There were a couple of HFs out here, and also my first Meadow Browns of the year – just two or three of them, avoiding being photographed as per. Still no Large Skippers for me yet though, which I found a little surprising.

After that, we moved on to Hockley Woods. HF numbers were much lower here. In fact if I didn't know where to look from having been there last year, I probably would not have found them. We saw probably four or five here, compared to scores at Starvelarks. But I did manage a few more photos:



© dilettante

Heath Fritillary male, Hockley (Great Bull) Wood



© dilettante

Underside of the same male

dilettante

by dilettante, 19-Jun-12 09:24 PM GMT

Tuesday 19th June 2012

A quick lunchtime walk around Cherry Hinton chalk pits just outside Cambridge: Two Speckled Woods (one beautifully fresh) and a Red Admiral in the old pit. In the newer East Pit, a rather faded Holly blue male basking nicely with wings open, and two or three Common Blue males. A couple of Small Whites, 2 Brimstones (1m, 1f), a Large White and a few other unidentified, probably Small Whites.

The East Pit was only opened a couple of years ago, so it's yet to reach its full potential, but it's looking better each year. At the moment, there's loads of Birds-foot Trefoil, Rock Rose, Wild Thyme, Buttercups and Purple Vetch – lovely!

dilettante

by dilettante, 24-Jun-12 12:00 AM GMT

Saturday 23rd June 2012

Today looked like the better for weather this weekend so we went up to Monks Wood to look for Black Hairstreaks. The sun shone for most of our journey up, but grey clouds took over almost as soon as we arrived, and the wind was still pretty strong.

A Large Skipper – my first of the year – was sitting motionless just by the entrance to the wood, but flopped feebly down into the long grass when I approached. Speckled Woods were in good numbers, though not as good as last year, and there were a few Meadow Browns. The well maintained rides are full of orchids (Common Spotted, I think):



© dilettante

We made our way to the main blackthorn bushes where we'd seen Black Hairstreaks last year, but despite searching with binoculars, and the sun making occasional appearances, we didn't see any. We continued round the wood, seeing a couple of Red Admirals along the way, and by the time we came back to the start, the sun was out again. So we returned to the 'master bush' and got a couple of brief glimpses of a presumed Black Hairstreak fluttering at the top of the blackthorns. I didn't manage to get a view through binoculars, let alone through a camera, but I'm pretty certain it was a BH.

A co-operatively posing Large Skipper on the way back to the car was not much of a consolation prize, but this year I'm happy with what I can get:



© dilettante

dilettante

by dilettante, 27-Jun-12 02:38 AM GMT

Tuesday 26th June 2012

I took advantage of the good weather and went to Therfield (Royston) Heath, hoping to find a Marbled White, but none to be found. Lots of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, a single Large Skipper, and my first Ringlet of the year, busying itself looking a second Ringlet of the year and not settling at all.

dilettante

by dilettante, 02-Jul-12 04:36 AM GMT

Sunday 1st July 2012

A blustery but intermittently sunny morning at Magog Down and Wandlebury, just outside Cambridge. It took a while to spot any butterflies at all apart from a few Small Heath. Eventually in a more sheltered spot we found a Ringlet stronghold – mostly fresh and chocolatey brown, but either not stopping for photos, or resting deep in the long grass. Across the road at Wandlebury, there were just a handful of SH, a Red Admiral, and Meadow Browns and Ringlets. (Also some very odd-looking religious ceremony being conducted in the Wandlebury Ring, involving people in black full-length coats, and at least one electric iron 🤪).

Back on the Down, I went to the sheltered corner where I've found Marbled Whites before, and sure enough there they were. Quite a few of them, also camera-shy, flitting about in the strong winds, but looking fresh and beautiful. I think MW are one of my favourites, maybe because I went many years without seeing one, so I think of them as rare and special, but also because of their distinctive markings unlike any other, and their association with sunny open places.

Also here were several Small Skippers (no Essex among the ones I checked), lots of Small Heath, some MB and Ringlet.



© dilettante

Fresh Ringlet, Magog Down

...

In the afternoon, I went cycling and the route home took me through the middle of Cambridge, so I called in on Mill Road Cemetery which NickB often reports on. It looks like a superb city-centre habitat, but I did only see a couple of MBs. I would like to have spent longer there though.

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 16-Jul-12 01:31 AM GMT

Sunday 15th July, 2012

With a break in the weather, I ummed and aahed about going in search of Purple Emperors today, but in the end decided to go closer to home: to Fleam Dyke, Cambs for a good walk with the family, and in search of Dark Green Fritillaries.

Eleven species in all seen, but the DGF were the highlight, and in reasonable numbers. 5-10 seen, though it's hard to know how many individuals that equates to. I did see three at one time though. They were generally very active in the strongish breeze, but I managed a couple of grab shots.



© dilettante

Dark Green Fritillary

11 species in total seen during the walk:
Ringlets (seem to be doing well this year)
Meadow Brown
Small Heath
Speckled Wood
Comma
Red Admiral
Small Tortoiseshell
Large White
Small Skipper (surprisingly few)
Large Skipper
Dark Green Fritillary



© dilettante

Meadow Brown

dilettante

by dilettante, 23-Jul-12 02:05 AM GMT

Saturday 21st July 2012

With the arrival of some sunshine, we went to Therfield (Royston) Heath, Herts, to look for Chalkhill Blues. As soon as we parked, one landed on the gravel near the car; as I stepped out of the car three more flew up from the gravel. This set the tone for the rest of the afternoon: CHB were everywhere, more than I've seen before. Not swarms or clouds of them, but they were abundant, mostly males, but many females too. I noticed quite a few had damaged or improperly formed wings, like the femal shown below.

Also seen were plenty of Gatekeeper (my first for the year), Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, a few Small Skippers, Small Whites and Small Heaths, and singleton Small Tortoiseshell, Large White.



© dilettante

Chalkhill Blue, female, with malformed wing



© dilettante

Chalkhill Blue, male



© dilettante

Chalkhill Blue, male



© dilettante

Chalkhill Blue, male



© dilettante

Marbled White, female. One of the few I saw without red mites

dilettante

by dilettante, 26-Jul-12 08:19 PM GMT

Wednesday 25th July 2012

With the good weather holding, I took the afternoon off work to go to Fermyn Woods for Purple Emperors. Of course, I should have gone in the morning, and by the time I got there around 2:30pm the main show was over. I did see a number of PEs flying and one perched about 4m up a tree, but none settled within camera range, which was rather frustrating. Anywhere else, seeing so many PEs would have been amazing, but for Fermyn, it was a little underwhelming.



© dilettante

I also failed to spot any Purple or White-letter hairstreaks although others reported earlier sightings. Apart from the usual Ringlet and Meadow Brown, and loads of Large Skippers, the only butterflies of note were a couple of rather worn White Admirals.

I guess being there from 2:30 to 5pm was probably the least favourable time.

dilettante

by dilettante, 30-Jul-12 12:16 AM GMT

Saturday 28th July 2012

I considered returning to Fermyn, but decided to go closer to home to look for Silver-washed Fritillaries. Nearby Hayley Wood has had some recent reports, and, most unusually, a recent sighting of a PE, so I headed there. Alas, all I saw were Browns and Whites, so I moved on to Gamlingay Woods. On the main ride, SWFs [I always read that as Single White Female...] were flying in some numbers, which was lovely. There aren't many places in Cambridgeshire where you can find fritillaries of any sort, so it's a great pleasure to see these. While none was fresh, and some were decidedly tatty, there were a few in fairly good condition. As ever, they didn't ever sit still for long when feeding, so photographing them was a challenge. I was glad to get a half-decent underside shot though.



© dilettante

SWF male, Gamlingay Woods, Cambs



© dilettante

SWF female, Gamlingay Woods, Cambs



© dilettante

SWF underside, Gamlingay Woods, Cambs

I also saw something small and shiny fly past at head height and land in a nearby bush – a male Purple Hairstreak. But I didn't see exactly where it landed, then I saw it fly off and I lost it. Still, that's the closest I've got to a PH for a while. There were also a few fresh commas about, plus the usual Ringlets and Small, Large and Green-veined Whites.

Adjoining Gamlingay Wood is a an area called Sugeley Wood – an arable field acquired a few years ago and being managed to allow the wood to expand into it. Currently though it's a lovely grass meadow with flowering vetch, trefoil, broom and the like, and here I found Marbled Whites, loads of Small Skippers, another Comma and a lovely fresh Peacock. A few weeks ago there were reports of Clouded Yellows here, presumably captive-bred, but I didn't run across any.



© dilettante

Comma, Sugly Wood, Cambs



© dilettante

Peacock, Sugly Wood, Cambs

Re: dilettante

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-12 07:29 PM GMT

Some beautiful photos and the Peacock is stunning. I think that is the first summer Peacock that I have seen posted.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: dilettante

by Debbie, 01-Aug-12 07:46 PM GMT

Great Pictures 😊

Debbie 😊😊😊

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 01-Aug-12 09:01 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil and Debbie. I was pleased with the Peacock shot, apart from that blade of grass across its wing – grr.

Re: dilettante

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-12 09:31 PM GMT

Never mind, its still a good photo 😊

I am currently sorting through a load of Scotch Argus photos from Arnside Knott to put in my diary later and there are blades of grass all over the place 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 01-Aug-12 09:49 PM GMT

Ah yes, they never seemed to settle on the end of long sticks for me either 😊

Re: dilettante

by MikeOxon, 02-Aug-12 12:12 AM GMT

"dilettante" wrote:

apart from that blade of grass across its wing – grr.

I would never have been able to resist a tweak with Photoshop. Just a small clone from the opposite wing (mirror-imaged) does the trick beautifully. 😊



Mike

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 02-Aug-12 12:30 AM GMT

Yes, I should give it a go. I'm always wary of doing things like that because I know Guy will spot a misaligned scale 😊

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 11-Aug-12 01:56 AM GMT

Just back from four days camping in the New Forest. I didn't really have time to look for butterflies, and the weather wasn't great for the first half, but did see a few Silver-washed Fritillaries (flying in drizzle!), lots of Gatekeepers, and only a couple of Purple Hairsteaks. Also a single Holly Blue (from the car).

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 12-Aug-12 06:28 PM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

"dilettante" wrote:

apart from that blade of grass across its wing – grr.

I would never have been able to resist a tweak with Photoshop. Just a small clone from the opposite wing (mirror-imaged) does the trick beautifully.



Mike

I finally got round to trying this:



© dilettante

Peacock, merge of two shots, with some cloning to remove grass stem

Somehow, I find it now looks a little pasted-in. Oh well. 😊