

philm63

by philm63, 25-Jun-12 02:53 AM GMT

Hi to all

I'm new to the forum and pretty new to butterflies in general, developed from a something to do period during the summer bird watching lull. About a year later also got into dragonflies.

I am a pretty static observer tending to watch my 'local patch' which being on the edge of the Pennines in West Yorkshire is only moderate for birds never mind butterflies and dragonflies.

I live in the Bingley area, which is in the Aire valley between Bradford and Keighley and not far from Ilkley Moor, the primary habitat locally is rough grass pasture leading to moorland on the higher ground with some moderate conifer plantations, with more intense farmland and deciduous woodland down in the river valley or along the canal.

I intend to back fill my diary so will be digging into my records and starting from the earliest records in the year, building up to the current time, whenever I catch up. Please excuse the occasional references to dragonflies / damselflies, I enjoy them all equally.

Re: philm63

by Pete Eeles, 25-Jun-12 03:03 AM GMT

Welcome Phil,

Look forward to your reports and I'm sure you'll come across folks from your area on these forums!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: philm63

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jun-12 03:16 AM GMT

Hi Phil and welcome to the forum.

My son has also just joined and will be starting posting soon as gothic_dreams.

Looking forward to your postings, don't worry about the dragonflies / damselflies, I enjoy them also and have been known to post photos of them 😊

cheers,

Neil F.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 25-Jun-12 04:27 AM GMT

2012

January - April

Very little except a hibernating Small Tortoiseshell in my car port that flew in mid-April and a Small White in late March

1 April

Small Tortoiseshell 2 Heights Lane

[Heights Lane is a road that runs along the skyline over the fields beyond where I live; both sides of the road are pasture but the east and north sides are rough and merge into the edges of the moors a bit further on]



Re: philm63

by philm63, 25-Jun-12 04:43 AM GMT

22 May

Visited Strid Woods at Bolton Abbey in Wharfedale for my once a year May trip. This is primarily looking for a few specific birds such as Pied Flycatcher, Wood Warbler and Common Sandpiper. Managed to get all three, it was quiet butterfly wise unlike some past years but did see Large and Small Whites in low numbers and a male Orange Tip I managed to get a few shots of.



Re: philm63

by philm63, 25-Jun-12 04:06 PM GMT

23 May

Went up to Whetstone Gate, here a metalled road runs out into Ilkley Moor to a radio relay station. The borders of the moor hold a number of patches of mixed Bilberry and Heather and I came up looking for Green Hairstreak. I went to look at a patch about 800 yds from the car park, a patch I had found in 2011, and was not disappointed. The little colony looked to have around 20 Green Hairstreak,

Local naturalists suggest these colonies exist all around the edge of the moors here, and last year I found a second colony at Shipley Glen, also on a Bilberry / heather patch but much nearer the valley.

Very close to my home is Prince of Wales' Park in Bingley, this park is actually a wooded area on a hillside not the usual open type; with a central clearer area with a large area of Bilberry. This is also supposed to hold Green Hairstreak but I have yet to find one here, the park also holds Purple Hairstreak on its many oaks, never managed to find any last year, so hopefully this year will be more fruitful



Green Hairstreak Whetstone Gate

Re: philm63

by CJB, 25-Jun-12 06:57 PM GMT

Hi Phil,

Welcome to the UKB site. I too am a new member and have been following the posts for a while.

I drive a desk in London which means that my excursions are limited, but am trying to record all the UK species on my mobile telephone and have so far reached 39, with a handful of firsts when I went to Cerne Abbas earlier this year. I too have been a birder for about 30 years and have always looked at butterflies without paying too much attention until a friend of mine developed my interest, which is now bordering on an obsession!

I look forward to following your progress as you tick off the species.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: philm63

by philm63, 25-Jun-12 10:09 PM GMT

"CJB" wrote:

Hi Phil,

Welcome to the UKB site. I too am a new member and have been following the posts for a while.

I drive a desk in London which means that my excursions are limited, but am trying to record all the UK species on my mobile telephone and have so far reached 39, with a handful of firsts when I went to Cerne Abbas earlier this year. I too have been a birder for about 30 years and have always looked at butterflies without paying too much attention until a friend of mine developed my interest, which is now bordering on an obsession!

I look forward to following your progress as you tick off the species.

Flutter on!

CJB

Thanks for that CJB, you'll no doubt rack up a list I'd be envious of. I do not travel much and it's grim up north (birds, butterflies and dragonflies)

Phil

Re: philm63

by philm63, 25-Jun-12 10:19 PM GMT

25 May

A trip down to the Wharfe valley at Knotford Nook, not too far from Otley. This is a pair of old gravel pits that are now angling lakes, set right beside the River Wharfe. It is a spot I visit a few times a year in all seasons and is good for all general wildlife. The Red Kites spreading out from Harewood often are pretty regular here and is first class for Dragonflies in summer, even if the species list is limited.

A circuit of the river bank and up towards Otley gave me:

Orange Tip 4, Small White a few, Large White a few, Speckled Wood 5 and Peacock 3

Common Blue Damsel c1000

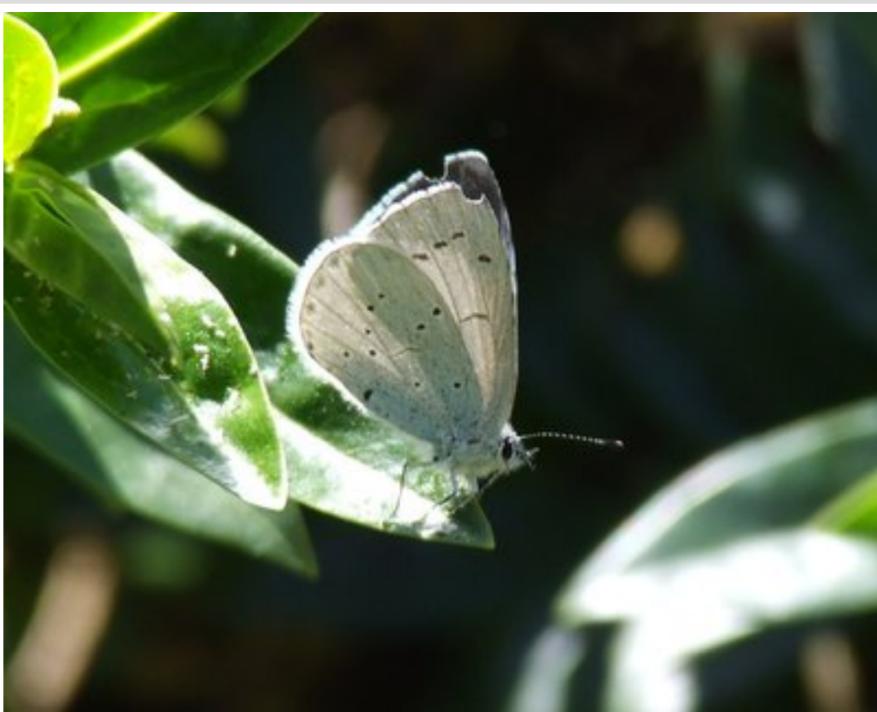
Will be back later in the summer here as it is one of the few spots locally to hold Gatekeeper and some of the larger Dragonflies

Arrived home to be pleasantly surprised by a female Holly Blue in the front garden. Managed to get one decent shot. I have seen Holly Blue a few times but have not yet found any Common Blue locally. If anyone knows of a site close to Bradford please do let me know.

From today – Common Blue Damsely, Female Orange Tip, Speckled Wood and female Holly Blue



Male Common Blue Damsel



Holly Blue female



Speckled Wood



Orange Tip female

Re: philm63

by philm63, 26-Jun-12 12:05 AM GMT

26 May

From Ireland Bridge in Bingley you can follow the river in both directions. Upstream goes through Ravenroyd and arrives in the area of Marley. Downstream leads through Myrtle Park.

Ravenroyd and the area around is a very pleasant walk, at the Marley end is a small bog with an Orange Tip colony, last year there were 40+ here with a few Green-veined White, the hanging woods are predominantly conifer but do hold Speckled Wood, and the fields at the Bingley end near St Ives Estate hold Small Copper.

Myrtle Park is another pleasant riverside walk, with a strip wood leading to the park proper which has the open area right down to the banks of the River Aire. there are two footbridges, the first leads to an open area and then into a hillside wood, the second passes an allotment area and then continues down the valley.

The open area over the first bridge was where I had a Banded Demoiselle last year, which started me onto Dragonflies.

I walked down through Ravenroyd to Marley, back through the woods and crossed the road to then go into Myrtle Park. The Orange Tip area was very quiet compared to last year, but I think I am a few weeks later in visiting than 2011

Seen:

Large White 3, Small Tortoiseshell 4, Holly Blue 1, Orange Tip 11, Small White 1, Red Admiral 1, Peacock 4 and Speckled Wood 7

Blue-tailed Damselfly 2, Common Blue Damselfly 20, Broad-bodied Chaser 1 female (all these were in the the open area of Myrtle Park, the Chaser was a total suprise)

From todays photos - Peacock underside, male Common Blue Damselfly and the female Broad-bodied Chaser



Male Common Blue Damselfly



Female Broad-bodied Chaser



Peacock undersides

Re: philm63

by philm63, 26-Jun-12 04:02 AM GMT

4 June

Started the day in Myrtle Park, then headed down the valley to Cottingley. Picked up the river again and followed it to Dowley Gap, then returned to Myrtle Park by a slightly different route. Dowley Gap, apart from the sewage works, is a lovely spot where the canal passes over the river on a viaduct. Hirst Wood on the canal side is one of the premier woodland sites in the Bradford area, but much frequented by the public, Bull Coppy Wood on the river is much smaller.

Seen:

Small White 2, Orange Tip 3, Peacock 1 (very worn), Small Tortoiseshell 3, Large White 1, Small Copper 1

The Small Copper in Myrtle Park was fresh-looking and my first for the year.

Common Blue Damselfly 12, Banded Demoiselle 22, Azure Damselfly 1, Large Red Damselfly 1, Blue-tailed Damselfly 1

Most of the Banded Demoiselle and the Large Red were at Dowley Gap, the rest at the usual spot in Myrtle Park

Pictures from today – male Banded Demoiselle, Large Red Damselfly, Small Copper



Male Banded Demoiselle



Large Red Damselfly



Small Copper

Re: philm63

by philm63, 26-Jun-12 04:13 AM GMT

17 June

Two weeks of bleak weather ended temporarily with a brightish day, but the other half decided the garden needed doing. I was not too pleased until another female Holly Blue decided to visit the garden, this time the back; and conveniently landed on a not too distant bush next door, so managed to get a few shots. It amazes me, as last year 2 of my 3 sightings of Holly Blue were actually in the garden, this year it is, so far, 2 of 4, I would have expected to see more locally, still if they want to visit the garden that is fine by me.

One of the Holly Blue shots from today



Holly Blue female

Re: philm63

by Gothic_dreams, 26-Jun-12 04:16 AM GMT

Hey phil, like you i am also new to the forum, you have some lovely photos, i look forward to seeing more of your shots 😊

Chris

Re: philm63

by philm63, 26-Jun-12 04:39 AM GMT

"Gothic_dreams" wrote:

Hey phil, like you i am also new to the forum, you have some lovely photos, i look forward to seeing more of your shots 😊

Chris

Chris

Thank you, I was very impressed with those on your diary, the subject matter makes me envious, maybe one day!! I actually was considering not including any of my images as a lot of them are not up to the standard I see around, they are more really record shots, although occasionally it all comes together. I will be posting some of my pre 2012 shots when I catch up with the dates, and I have a series of shots of a Peacock I am extremely proud of from a few years ago. Today was another good day and I got some good shots of a year first, but I will leave that till I catch up also. I actually only run on a 4-year old Fuji Bridge camera, I got hold of a 12.1 m pixel Nikon Coolpix Bridge as a long-service award at work about 18 months ago and it is awful, I doubt if I have had a dozen decent shots of it. Will probably be excellent for potraits and landscape, but most of my shots are taken at zoom and in macro and it doesn't seem to be able to deliver. The Fuji has a SLR type viewfinder as well as the LCD screen which helps finding the target, but even then and after so long, I still bin loads because the autofocus hasn't decided what was the main point of focus. I sometimes miss the old manual focus film cameras, then again there is no cost in binning the rubbish from a digital

<http://www.butterfliesoffrance.com/>

The weblink above, if you have not visited the site before, is a revelation for the photos, the species yet to see and also is done informatively making it interesting to browse.

Phil

Re: philm63

by Gothic_dreams, 26-Jun-12 05:04 AM GMT

Thank you phil, i am also very new to taking photos, those on my diary are only my first and second ever attempt at it. Im lucky enough that my dad gave me his old Panasonic Lumix FZ38 when he upgraded, which is a pretty decent camera for a beginner like myself 😊 Im glad you decided to put some shots up, its always nice to see what other people see about 😊 Also the link you sent made a very interesting read, thanks for that 😊

Chris

Re: philm63

by philm63, 27-Jun-12 03:34 AM GMT

23 June

A bit better weather so hoped for an improvement on the last trip which produced not a single butterfly.

Did my local patch around the top outskirts of Bingley, Walsh Lane – Heights Lane and Prince of Wales' Park. The latter provided the only butterfly of the day a Speckled Wood.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 27-Jun-12 04:31 AM GMT

24 June

Surely cannot have another day like the last few. So decided to do my local patch again.

By the time I got to the old barn on Heights Lane it was appearing that it could be as bad, here I can take a slight extra loop down the bridleway and footpath to Eldwick reservoir, so decided to take the plunge. The final footpath has a central walkway of nice Yorkshire flags which seem popular with some butterflies for basking, also there are walls on both sides so it is a bit of a windbreak. The path had turned up some nice butterflies last year. It did not dissappoint as I saw my first Wall Brown of the year, a male with some wing damage but still looking reasonably fresh. All the cares fall away! Carried on up to the Reservoir gate then turned back to retrace my path. Spotted a second Wall Brown male about 50 m from the spot I had the first. I am sure it was a different individual.

In Prince of Wales' Park found a badly damaged Red Admiral on the ground at the start of a path, I have had them in this very spot on a number of occasions, never any other species. Is it coincidence or possibly something in the earth like minerals? Funnily enough this very same area gave me my first and only Southern Hawker last year.

Photos from today – Wall Brown, Red Admiral



Red Admiral with hindwing damage



Wall Brown male

Re: philm63

by philm63, 28-Jun-12 12:26 AM GMT

25 June

The car in for repairs so took the day off, and the weather was looking reasonable. Walked from the garage and down Riverside Walk to Myrtle Park in Bingley, the river is in full spate still after all the rain. On the way passed a male Banded Demoiselle, so the omens were good. Got to the clearing across the river and found around 20 Common Blue Damselfly and 7 Banded Demoiselle, kept doing a circuit as the sun appeared and disappeared behind clouds. A nice Speckled Wood also put in an appearance.

To get home on foot involves climbing a long steep hill, so I normally take a diversion over footpaths and side roads that evens the journey out. This would take me past Bingley Bog North, so decided to pop in and see if anything was about. Bingley Bog North is a rough grassy area very close to Bingley Town Centre where a beck from the hills runs into the valley, and usually has an area of standing water with reeds. Bordered by the canal and the town by-pass, it runs between Three-rise and Five-rise locks on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal. This is an area I really enjoy, most of the people using the very close canal towpath completely ignore this area, and the council have done some very good changes to make the area more amenable, especially the pathway. I worked my way over to the far corner closest to the by-pass (thankfully screened off) and along the extra bit of path here. This area of grass produced my first Meadow Browns of the year, the butterflies were flying very low in and out of the grass, and when alighting were very low and difficult to photo due to intervening vegetation. Had about 3 including what I took to be a mating pair. Whilst attempting a photo I noticed a skipper move, this proved to be my first Large Skipper of the year. Moving up and down the edge of the area counted 4 Large Skippers of which 3 were males and the fourth not seen well enough to make a call. These were much more photogenic and got some good shots.

This area always struck me as ideal for dragonflies/damselflies but I found none last year, so consider my surprise as I approached one of the skippers to spot a female Blue-tailed Damselfly resting on a bush, which added to an already enjoyable day

This site will hold Small Skipper later and the usual Ringlets which are common locally, it also produced one of the few Commas I had last year, so hopefully more to come here later.

To cap of a good day on the way home, my route passed a well vegetated path near one of the becks and during a period of sunshine; and this produced the first damselflies for this particular spot as well. Saw three in total which I got shots of, at home identified them as Emerald Damselfly which was a lifetime first for me.

Also a few Small and Large Whites roaming about today.

Photos from today below



Emerald Damselfly



Large Skipper male



Large Skipper male



Blue-tailed Damselfly female



Large Skipper male



Large Skipper male



Large Skipper male



Meadow Brown



Speckled Wood



Speckled Wood



Banded Demoiselle male



Any ideas??



Banded Demoiselle female



Common Blue Damselfly 2 males

Re: philm63

by philm63, 28-Jun-12 11:34 PM GMT

Looking back

Being new to the forum I thought it would be nice to occasionally look back at some of the images that have a special place for me

Peacock August 2009

I was still predominantly a birder back in 2009, but looked at anything I came across of interest. It was a lovely August day when I passed the allotments on the edge of Myrtle Park in Bingley and spotted this Peacock, initially on a plant then it moved onto a post, I took a series of shots even though it was not particularly close. When I retrieved the shots later I was then hooked on seeing my local butterflies. The colours appeared so vibrant and a decent image unlike most of my bird shots. I have seen and photographed Peacocks on a number of occasions since, but they have not come close to my joy of these shots.

The images have all been compressed to about a third of their usual size to allow upload





Re: philm63

by MikeOxon, 29-Jun-12 12:40 AM GMT

"philm63" wrote:

I was then hooked on seeing my local butterflies.

I can understand that after seeing these images. Your photos have caught the velvet look of Peacocks very well. I think some butterflies look better in photos than in reality, when they are sometimes too small to appreciate properly - I think Marsh Fritillary is an example in this category.

Mike

Re: philm63

by Pauline, 29-Jun-12 01:23 AM GMT

I totally agree with Mike. Your Peacock images are stunning.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 29-Jun-12 04:16 AM GMT

Mike and Pauline

Thank you both.

I feel there is something intrinsically beautiful with butterfly images. That does not mean they are all good, but when things come together, the pose and focus it can be visual magic. You are right Mike about the images sometimes being better than the real thing to view, looking at my recent Large Skipper images the minute details that you can see, such as the fringes, the total effect of the mottling, colour changes on the antennae, eye-rings all bring the creature to life. I wonder if I am too concerned with getting an image in the field that it detracts at times from watching the actual living creature. In my birding I have always been a local patch person, enjoying whatever was there and super-enjoying the unusual which was not necessarily rare; could never get into twitching at all. I would still love to have a super rarity on my own patch though, some things are always constant.

Would you believe having a Brimstone here would be nice, yet to turn one up. They do occur further down the Aire valley, I have seen them a few times at Fairburn Ings RSPB Reserve, just not seen one locally

Phil

Re: philm63

by Goldie M, 30-Jun-12 01:11 AM GMT

I love your Peacock pic's the colours are fantastic Goldie 😊

Re: philm63

by philm63, 30-Jun-12 03:21 AM GMT

Goldie - Thanks

Looking back

Never be afraid to ask!!! - Green Hairstreak April 2011

I usually pop up to Whetstone Gate on Ilkley Moor at least once a year to pick up Red Grouse and Wheatear. It is somewhat bleak in anything but very good weather, the wind is always a constant (at least when I visit it is). Not far from the car park was a birder with his scope out, birders are notorious for the "anything about?" calls with which they greet each other, understandable when the other guy is usually a total stranger it kinds of breaks the ice. Got talking birds then I mentioned butterflies, to which he remarked there are a few Green Hairstreak about on the bilberry. Well I had seen Green hairstreak in my field guides, and I dearly wanted to see one live. Only one problem, well swallow the pride and go for it - "Err what does bilberry look like?". Quick introduction given to a small plant nearby "Like this, head in that direction and look for a biggish clump". So I did, headed in that direction, found a biggish clump with heather nearby and some glacial boulders and lo and behold I found my Green Hairstreak, and not just one. Two days later, another spot, tried it again and found more.

More is the pity I only see occasional birders around, the park nearby has oaks, and it has Purple Hairstreak I've read it, even seen pictures of them taken in that park, So I've found the oaks but I yet haven't found the Purple Hairstreaks, now if a Butterflier (actually what is the term?) happened to be around I wouldn't hesitate to ask "Where are the b****y Hairstreaks?"



Green Hairstreak on bilberry

Re: philm63

by philm63, 01-Jul-12 04:57 AM GMT

30 June

Will the rain never cease! Went out to Prince of Wales' Park today and saw only 1 Red Admiral and 1 Speckled Wood. Ringlets have not emerged locally yet but soon I hope.

Looking back: Beauty in all you survey - The Browns

i was initiaally disappointed that the only butterflies I encountered locally in any numbers were the 'dull browns'. I have since learnt to appreciate the subtle tones of the Ringlet, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper and I rank Speckled Wood as one of my all time favourites, especially seing it in the the dappled parts of the woods it inhabits. Wall Brown is always appreciated when found.



Wall Brown male



Speckled Wood



Ringlet undersides



Ringlet male



Meadow Brown male



Meadow Brown undersides



Gatekeeper male

Re: philm63

by Gothic_dreams, 01-Jul-12 05:02 AM GMT

Some more lovely photos Phil 😊

Chris

Re: philm63

by philm63, 02-Jul-12 04:36 AM GMT

Thanks Chris

1 July

Decided to give Bingley Bog North a go again, weather is holding with some bright spells, but the wind is still fresh, one of the features of 2012 it seems to have been windy all year here.

On the way popped along Sty Lane to come in via the canal. At a similar place to last year, only 1 day different I again found a small colony of what I believe are Peacock caterpillars on field edge nettles. {Reliably informed some if not all were Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars based on the photo below which is from the second group} This year the caterpillars are only half the size they were last year at this time.

Bingley Bog North had nothing showing, no whites in the fields, no nymphalids moving about but did find:

Meadow Brown 3m1f, Large Skipper 2m1f and Ringlet 3m (a first for the year). It was hard work finding anything as the browns were hugging the bases of the grasses and only moving briefly if disturbed to then go back to ground. The Ringlets were semi-comatose and could be handled. It took four passes and a brief sunny spell to find the skippers, but well worth the wait. This site also holds Small Skipper but no signs as yet. No other butterflies seen today at all.



Small Tortoiseshell caterpillar



Ringlet male



Ringlet male undersides of above



Large Skipper female head on view



Large Skipper female



Large Skipper male

Re: philm63

by MikeOxon, 02-Jul-12 05:41 AM GMT

"philm63" wrote:

if a Butterfliar (actually what is the term?) happened to be around I wouldn't hesitate to ask "Where are the b****y Hairstreaks?"

The usual answer is "out of sight on the upper surfaces of leaves at the top of an oak-tree"! For PH, look for little light-grey butterflies high in an oak tree and then wait patiently until one comes looping down to explore a lower branch. I think Hairstreaks in general fall into the category that has to be looked for and doesn't just 'turn up'.

I think 'butterfliar' is a reasonable term - I have heard 'butter' used but that sounds more like a goat! 😊

Mike

Re: philm63

by philm63, 02-Jul-12 08:46 PM GMT

Mike, thanks for that. I am determined to get to grips with them this year, I know of another site where they occur in a wooded valley. It is possible to walk on both sides at about tree-top height, so will take the binos up there and, weather permitting, give that area a go. As for the local ones I may well be looking at the wrong patch of oaks.

Looking back: Missed opportunities - The Blues

I spent the 1970s and the first part of the 80s in West Germany whilst I was in the army, I have had an interest in wildlife from an early age and I carried this into adulthood with me, it was not until the last few years in the army that it developed into birding proper. This army period presented some different missed opportunities that I particularly look back on. The first is bird related; I was into wildlife but had yet to take up photography that would come later when I was back in civilian life. During my time in the army I went four times to the Battlegroup training area on the prairie at Suffield in Alberta, Canada. I would when time allowed walk around the areas we spent the periods between the different exercises. Here I had close encounters with Western Sandpiper, Willet, American Avocet, Franklin's Gull, American Robin, Slate-coloured Junco, Lesser Yellowlegs and Killdeer; to name but a few. In some cases, because they had developed no fear of people, I had them almost at my feet. I have regrettably no photos to remind me of all this, just the memories. The second is butterfly related, my interest in butterflies has only covered the last few years so it was an amazing moment for it to have stuck in my memory. In the early 70s I was part of a small group from my unit chosen to do border patrol. I am certain we covered from around the area of the Harz Mountains in Germany, along the Elbe up to near Travemunde on the Baltic coast and alongside a West German Border Police patrol. On the first day we arrived in the first accommodation stop in a small country village, it was high summer and the weather was glorious as most continental summers appeared to be. The next day we came out to prepare for our first day patrolling and even now I can picture the scene as I came out into the garden there were small, predominantly blue, butterflies everywhere, some flowers / plants had 10 or more on them. Everyone remarked on it, I have no idea what and how many species were present, I now look at my field guide and the maps and wonder what species I may have added to my

tally if I had an interest in butterflies then like now. Back to the present day, regrettably this area is not a stronghold for blues in the UK, but I look forward to when I can start getting about a bit more and adding these glorious creatures to my seen list. For the moment I was more than happy with my Holly Blue encounters this year.



Holly Blue female June 2012

Re: philm63

by Pauline, 02-Jul-12 09:10 PM GMT

Lovely to hear about your previous encounters and at least you have the memories. I hope you find the Hairstreaks – there will be others looking for them also, you can be sure of that but unless this weather improves

Re: philm63

by Vince Massimo, 02-Jul-12 11:15 PM GMT

Hi Phil,

Your caterpillar is that of a Small Tortoiseshell. There are significant differences between Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell larvae at this stage of their development. Basically the Small Tortoiseshell is mainly black with some yellow markings while the Peacock has white or silvery spots. The rearward sets of legs also usually appear much pinker on the Peacock. These aspects are best illustrated by the photos below.



Small Tortoiseshell larva



Peacock larva

I will remove these images from your diary in a few days time.

Vince

Re: philm63

by philm63, 03-Jul-12 12:00 AM GMT

Vince

Thanks for the correction, there were two groups about 50 yds apart, I was sure the first ones were Peacock and probably took it for granted they all were, I posted the best image I had which was from the second group. On reflection they were probably all Small Tortoiseshell. I am happy for the images to stay as a reference, but it is up to you

Phil

Re: philm63

by philm63, 03-Jul-12 05:55 PM GMT

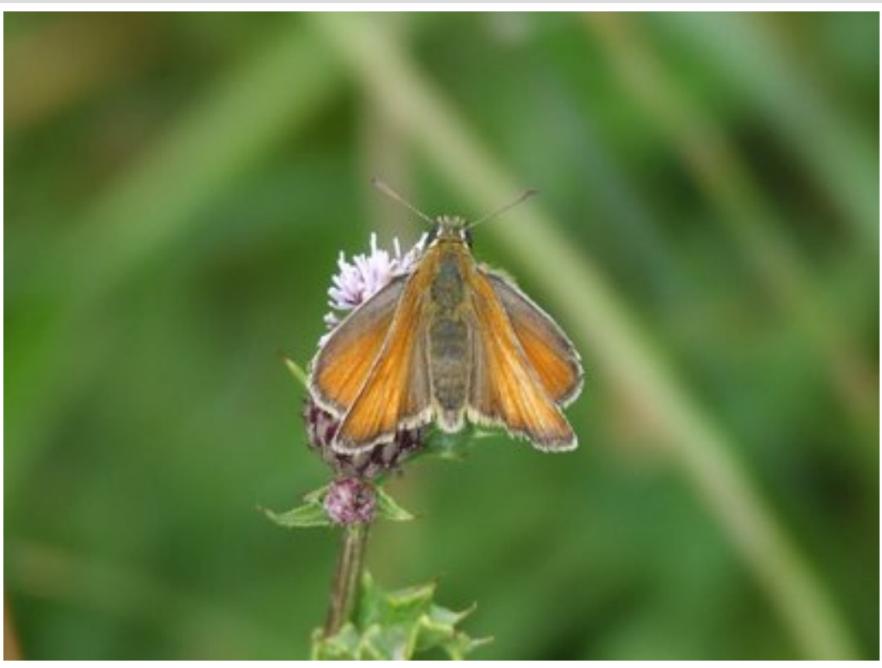
Looking back: Seek and ye shall find - The Skippers

In 2011 having had a reasonable first year in 2010, I was determined to add some more species to my seen list. Looking at the field guide I could see these moth-looking species called skippers. I knew from research that a few species occurred locally, yet in all the time I had walked around birding I had no recollections of seeing anything like them. I had a visit from one daughter last summer on a nice day, and she loves butterflies. There are butterflies all over her house, on the fridge, the walls and so on as magnets and pictures. She does not go out at all looking for them, just enjoys what she sees wherever it occurs. So decided to take her out on a local walk, we came to the path leading up to Eldwick Reservoir and in a few feet we put up a small golden butterfly, surely not a skipper. Tried to follow its flight but lost it. Never mind it returned soon enough and yes there was my first Small Skipper, I really enjoyed that. On the way home we passed the old barn, an overgrown site that I like, and there we saw something similar but not quite the same, camera out and shots taken. Looking at them at home we realised we had seen a Large Skipper. My first ever skippers and I had got both local ones on the same day. Luckily for me in one way I didn't have to worry about splitting the Small Skippers from Essex and Lulworth Skippers. The jizz was implanted now and I started looking at all likely spots, by the end of last year I had identified Large Skipper locally in six different areas and Small Skippers from five. One spot in particular held both with some very amenable Small Coppers, but regrettably it has disappeared under bulldozers this year as they build some more canal-side apartments.

Why had I seen none before, because I was still going around "birding", I was covering the same ground but my viewpoints were still being driven by 30 years of looking for birds - what is flying over, what is in the trees over there, or tucked in the corner of some body of water. I was walking past places but with a distant viewpoint, whereas now what I wanted was down at my feet. At the weekend looking for Large Skippers at Bingley Bog North it really came home as I made multiple passes over a path-side verge, in looking specifically for the skippers I was going to miss that bird passing nearby. The other point is you add to your repertoire, as with the Green hairstreaks and biberry, I now am becoming more aware of the plants and flowers down at ground level, and I now see the Bird's-foot Trefoil and start thinking good area to look



Small Skipper female



Small Skipper female



Small Skipper



Small Skipper male



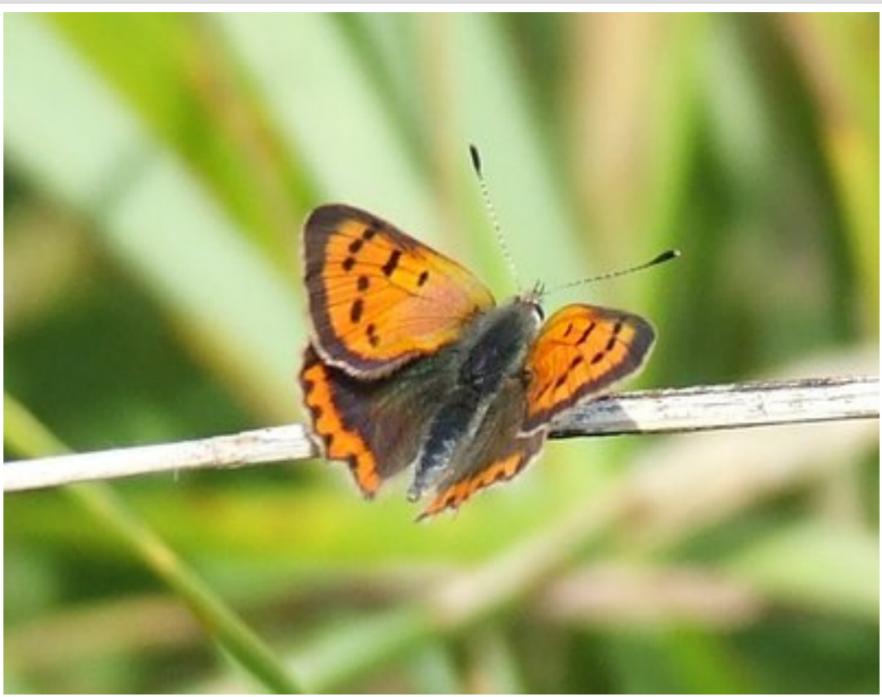
Large Skipper male

Re: philm63

by philm63, 05-Jul-12 11:41 PM GMT

Looking back: Current favourite - Small Copper

This exquisite little gem is a delight for me as it is probably the butterfly I currently most enjoy seeing locally. Not as brash as the nymphalids, common enough to be found in a number of places and across quite a broad period of the summer but still a delight when one is found. Then again, this year's sightings of Holly Blue have pushed for a spot there at the top, and I know if I had been able to keep track of a vivid blue butterfly I saw briefly last year and had managed to get some shots; it would no doubt have jumped to the top of the tree. Still I will continue to treasure all those sightings had and yet to come of the Small Copper





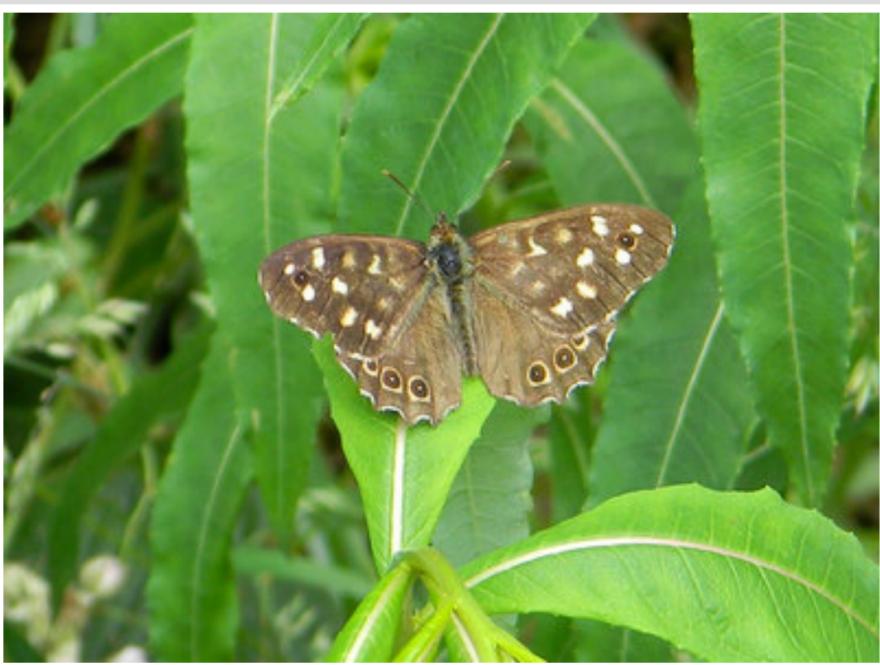
Re: philm63

by philm63, 08-Jul-12 03:08 AM GMT

7 July

Best bit of weather for a while so popped out to do my local patch. Things started well as I entered Prince of Wales' Park which had 11 Speckled Wood along the area I walked and a clearing held 3 Meadow Brown. Some shots of the various Speckled Wood are below. The most unusual thing was the small clearing that last year held a Southern Hawker in July, had another one today, no close views but I suspect either Common or Southern Hawker. I then moved onto Heights Lane and further on down to Eldwick Reservoir, sunshine was becoming more infrequent. Very little moving about with Large White 3, Small Tortoiseshell 3, Meadow Brown 1 and a Speckled Wood seen. The field by the reservoir overflow channel held a single Common Hawker that would not come close. No Ringlets at all today.

The rest of Heights Lane produced 2 Oystercatcher and a magnificent view of three Buzzards together, I normally only see the occasional single. Walsh Lane held two Large Skippers but too distant to get any good shots and the area over the wall there is out of bounds to the public.







Re: philm63

by philm63, 15-Jul-12 04:36 AM GMT

Sat 14 July

No sunshine but a bit warmer. Started well when, not 30 yards from the house, a Speckled Wood settled on a house side wall about 15 feet up, unusual position but nice to see one.

Travelling up Walsh Lane the situation looked less welcoming. the fields and road verges are still all empty, no passing whites, browns or nymphalids, it seems almost eerily quiet. Checked all the areas besides the wall for Large Skippers but to no avail and a simialr situation on Heights Lane. Then one after another I started turning up fresh male Ringlets, had 7 in total in about 300 yards. Not huge quantities but all were fresh looking so they must be starting to emerge up here now, about a mile and a half away down in the valley I had them a few weeks ago. Matters not, the weather forecast is starting to sound better so prospects may look up now. I got half way along the road to the area of the old barn where I found a single Meadow Brown sheltering in a wall and then the rain started again, the rest of the way home was dismal and wet. Nothing at all seen in Prince of Wales' Park.

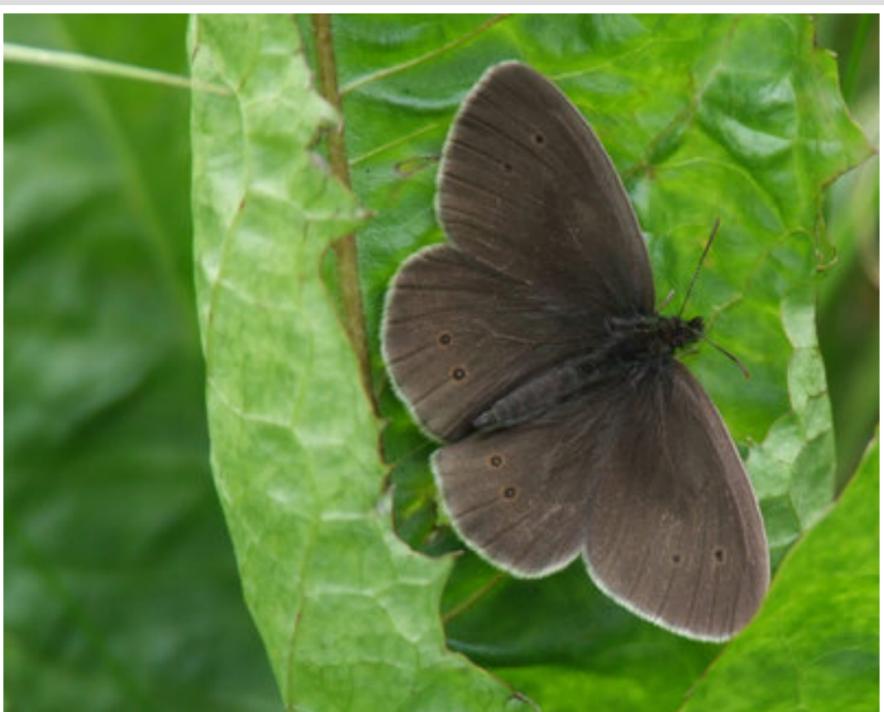
Given a dry day tomorrow will try a trip down into the valley, if it is quiet on the butterfly front should at least pick up some dragonflies/damselflies, but am hoping for my first Small Skippers of the year

Reading the other diaries I can only gnash my teeth in envy at what other areas have available, seriously though the main thing is to enjoy what you do

Some of todays Ringlet



Ringlet male underside



Ringlet male

Re: philm63

by Pauline, 15-Jul-12 05:01 AM GMT

I am enjoying reading your diary Phil (in fact I have just re-read it), your recollections and your new discoveries, and I am so pleased you decided to keep posting your photos. I see where you are located now but as you rightly state it is about enjoying what you are doing and what is around you and the unusual is a bonus.

Re: philm63

by Nick Broomer, 15-Jul-12 05:29 AM GMT

Lovely Ringlet photos Phil, the composition of the first picture is wonderful.

All the best, Nick.

Re: philm63

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jul-12 05:39 AM GMT

Agreed, cracking Ringlets. A very under appreciated butterfly especially when fresh.

Regards,

Neil F.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 15-Jul-12 08:19 AM GMT

Nick, Neil

Thanks for the compliments, but it was sheer luck. It is usually a few weeks before these start "posing" on the thistles around here and by then they are usually damaged or worn. The first six today were all landing at the base of grasses and presented few chances for a good shot except the one that landed on a wide leaf which is the upperwing shot above. The seventh was luckily near a nettle bed and landed just right, but I made no actual thoughts about composition, just wanted a good side on view and got lucky. Normally if something hangs around after I have got my "record" shots I then start to try for more unusual angles, face on etc. The number of those I have deleted is probably around 90%, but the few that have worked I enjoy looking back on. Your own diaries contain some cracking shots, I really must plan a trip to a more southern area at some point next year, I am dying to see and try photographing some of the lovely blues and fritillaries I see in other diaries, and certainly Marbled White.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 16-Jul-12 03:26 AM GMT

Sun 15 July

Bingley Bog North

Managed to get out in the afternoon, much brighter but the sunny spells were brief and it was far too windy.

I saw a Blue-tailed Damselfly near the three-rise locks and later had two more immatures near the open water so this area is starting to get better for sightings, no shots worth posting,

The bog held around 25 - 30 Ringlets, 1 male and 1 female Large Skipper, 10 - 15 Meadow Brown and a single Small Tortoiseshell. The Ringlets varied from fresh specimens to some quite faded and well damaged, but included my first females for the year; most of the Meadow Browns were similar. The female Large Skipper was a luck view as it was stock still and I nearly missed it, the male on bramble was about to be a super shot till it took off and disappeared just as I was about to press the button. The Small Tortoiseshell was the first for a few weeks and was another lucky find as it was static and hidden, I was following a Ringlet when I found it.

I must admit to not having seen a toad this colour before.



Ringlet female



Meadow Brown



Small Tortoiseshell



Sandy coloured Toad



Ringlet males



Meadow Brown male quite faded



Meadow Brown



Large Skipper female



Ringlet male

Re: philm63

by Mark Colvin, 16-Jul-12 04:44 AM GMT

Hi Phil,

From what I can see I'm fairly sure your pair of Ringlets are two males. The 'Ringlet' below is in fact a worn male Meadow Brown.

I hope this helps?

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: philm63

by philm63, 16-Jul-12 05:00 AM GMT

Mark

Thanks for that, I have amended accordingly. I presume then that the right hand Ringlet is just a well-marked male. Of course the other is a Meadow Brown, amateurish mistake by me, I can only put it down to my advancing years. Live and learn!!!

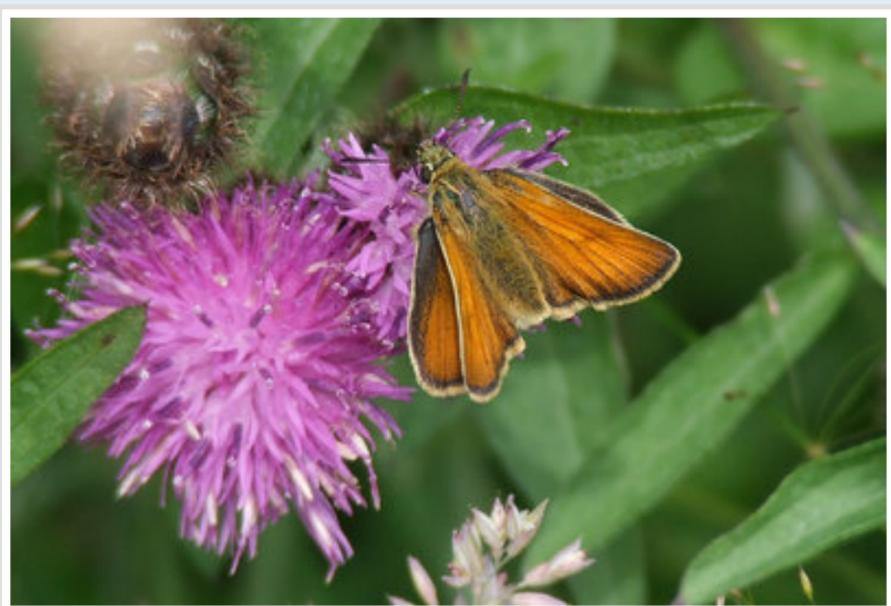
Re: philm63

by philm63, 22-Jul-12 04:03 AM GMT

Sat 21 July

Started in Myrtle Park which held a few butterflies and damselflies plus a nice group of Goosanders and a Kingfisher
The walk down to Cottingley produced little, then got onto the riverside footpath to Dowley Gap. Where the bridge carries the by-pass over the river valley is a slope that gave me my first Small Skippers of the year and a nice second-brood Green-veined White, A bit further on where the path narrows a 100m stretch held around 60 Ringlets including a patch of bramble with 13 Ringlets and a few Meadow Browns. Dowley gap was quiet but did photograph the web that appears here every summer; I do not know what moth caterpillar is responsible
Walked back to Bingley on the canal and did a quick circuit of Bingley Bog North which held a few more Small Skippers and my first Comma for the year. Also photographed what I think are Burnet moths?, have seen quite a few the past couple of weeks

Seen today -
Ringlet c100
Common Blue Damselfly 3
Meadow Brown 12
Banded Demoiselle 7
Small Tortoiseshell 2
Green-veined White 1
Small Skipper 10
Large White 1
Speckled Wood 1 (suprisingly low number)
Peacock 1
Comma 1



Small Skipper



Burnet moths??



Small Tortoiseshell and a spider



Comma



Peacock faded



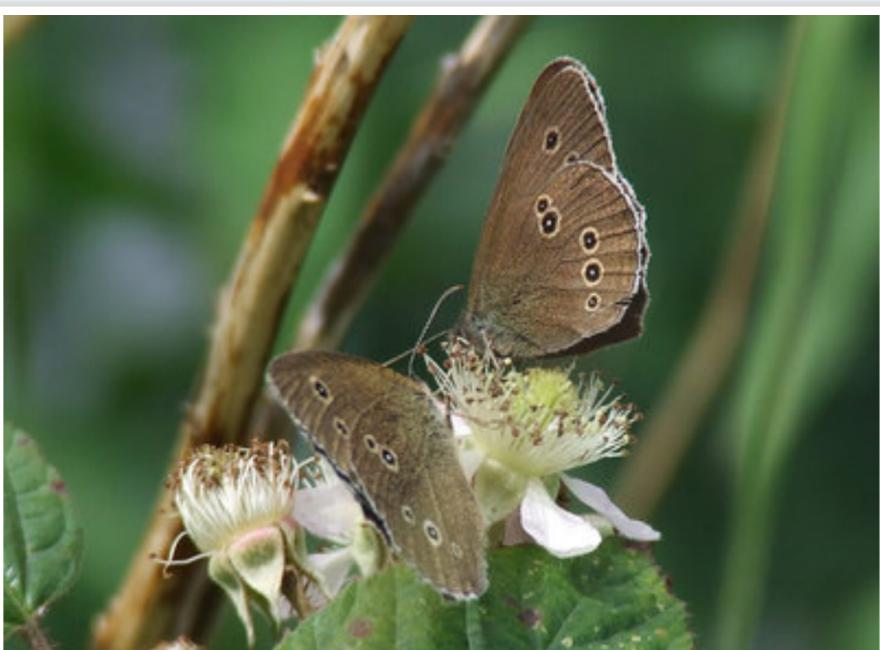
Small Skipper



Small Skipper



web on bushes and fence at Dowley Gap





Ringlet



Meadow Brown



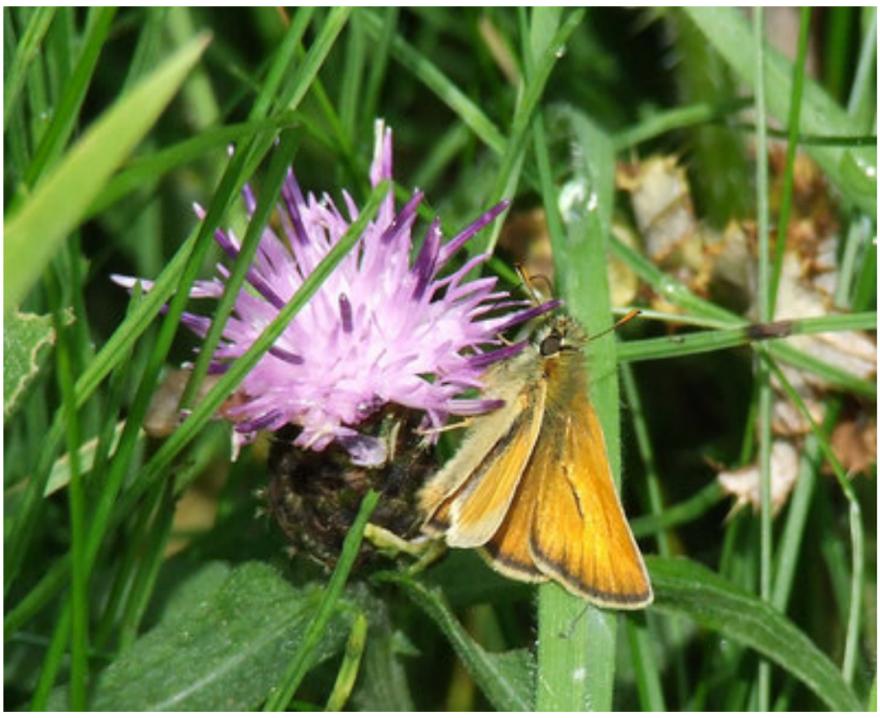
Ringlet and Meadow Brown



Ringlet



Small Skipper



Small Skipper



Small Skipper



Green-veined White male second-brood



Meadow Brown male



Ringlet female



Common Blue Damselfly male



Goosanders

Re: philm63

by philm63, 23-Jul-12 05:11 AM GMT

Sun 22 July

The weather was sunny virtually all day, but with a stiff breeze at times that whisked away any butterfly higher than the surrounding vegetation, hence for long stretches the butterflies were there but staying deep in the vegetation. This issue subsided with my arrival in Prince of Wales' Park as the trees created a wind-break and the time here was hot and humid.

Local patch circuit

One of my local Little Owls has succumbed to traffic; I found it at the road-side along Heights Lane. The family about half a mile from the house are extremely photogenic, they use a wall in a field that is close to the road and hence I have lots of shots of them. Usually one but a maximum so far of three can be seen, two other families of Little Owls are within another mile but are seen less frequently. The Lapwings have now all moved down into the valleys and today I saw none but the odd Curlew still lingers. Once again at exactly the same spot I saw a Southern Hawker in the park, and once again this same spot held Red Admirals, photos below. The park held a good number of Speckled Wood, and I found a Large Skipper in the glade, the first I have seen in the park. Ringlet was again the predominate butterfly today even considering the wind restricting sightings.

Seen -

Speckled Wood 10

Meadow Brown 7

Ringlet 35

Small Tortoiseshell 2

Large White 1

Southern Hawker 1

Red Admiral 2

Large Skipper 1 or 2



Robin juvenile - wishing me a good day's hunting as I set off



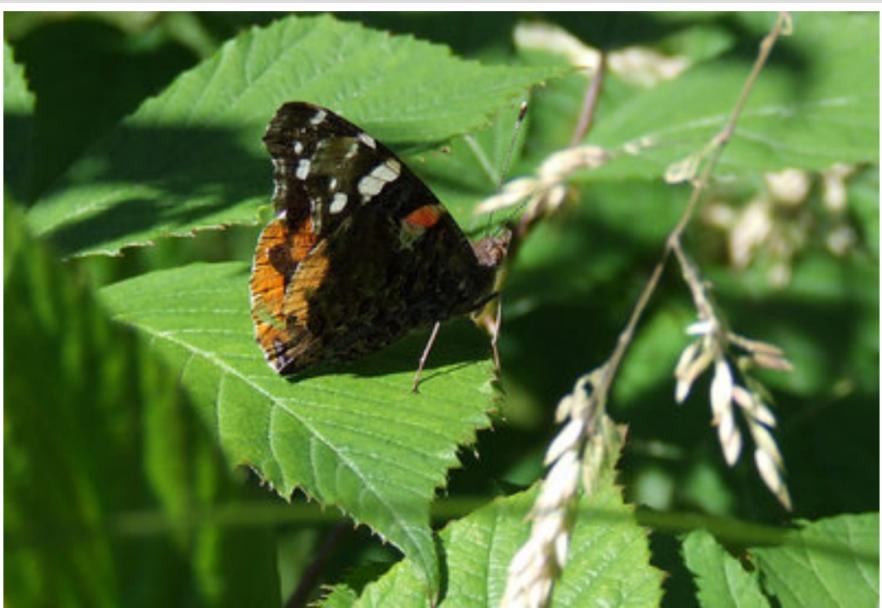
Curlew – a few still linger around



Southern Hawker trying to hide in an oak tree



Speckled Wood



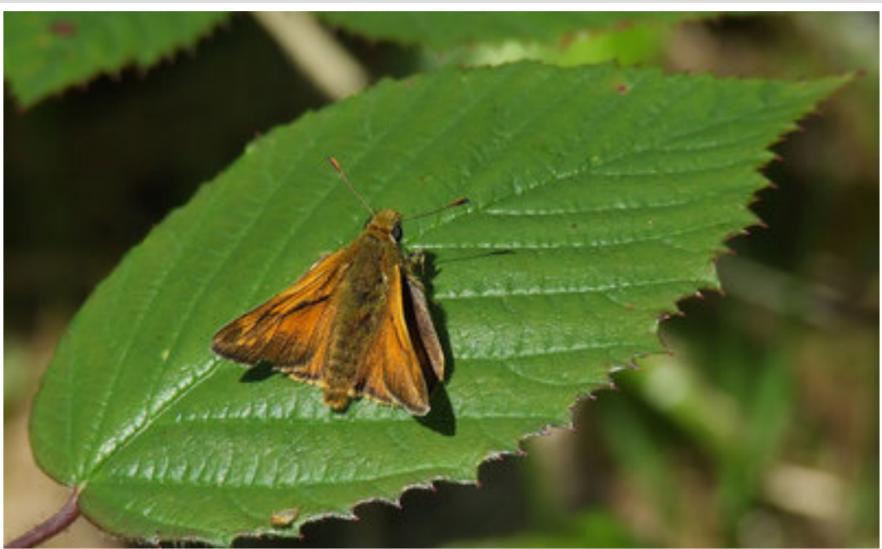
Red Admiral undersides



Red Admiral uppersides of above (a bit tatty but still nice)



Meadow Brown female undersides



Large Skipper male

Re: philm63

by philm63, 29-Jul-12 04:22 AM GMT

Sat 28 July

Prince of Wales' Park and Heights Lane

A day of two halves, the decent weather of the morning was already deteriorating as I set out early afternoon. Once again the periods of sunshine were spoilt by the strong wind and this got worse as the afternoon progressed, the sky clouded over completely and it started to rain.

I cannot get over how few butterflies are around, no whites at all today and a single Small Tortoiseshell. A few browns and a single Small Skipper that was clinging to a thistle head for all it was worth as the thistle blew back and forth in the wind, getting the shot I have posted took some effort.

Unless August brings some decent weather and some more butterflies this year will have been the worst I can remember, Luckily, from the other diaries I have read, not everyone is having it so bad and the year may not be a total loss. In the valley the buddleia are in full bloom and all the verges locally abound in blooming thistles, but no butterflies.

On the other side of the scales the glade in Prince of Wales' Park was playing host to the Southern Hawker, now 100% identified as an immature male. I took over 30 shots in total some of which are below, really pleased with the results and at this time it was primarily sunny and quite sheltered so an enjoyable time. I ran into the hawkker again later in its usual space but it would not land so I left it to its own devices.

A walk around the old barn area on Heights Lane produced no Small Coppers, maybe a bit too early yet here. Did see the caterpillar below which was quite striking, any one putting a name to it would be a great help!! {Informed this is a Cinnabar Moth larva}

Seen today -

Speckled Wood 3

Southern Hawker imm male

Ringlet 12

Meadow Brown 2

Small Tortoiseshell 1



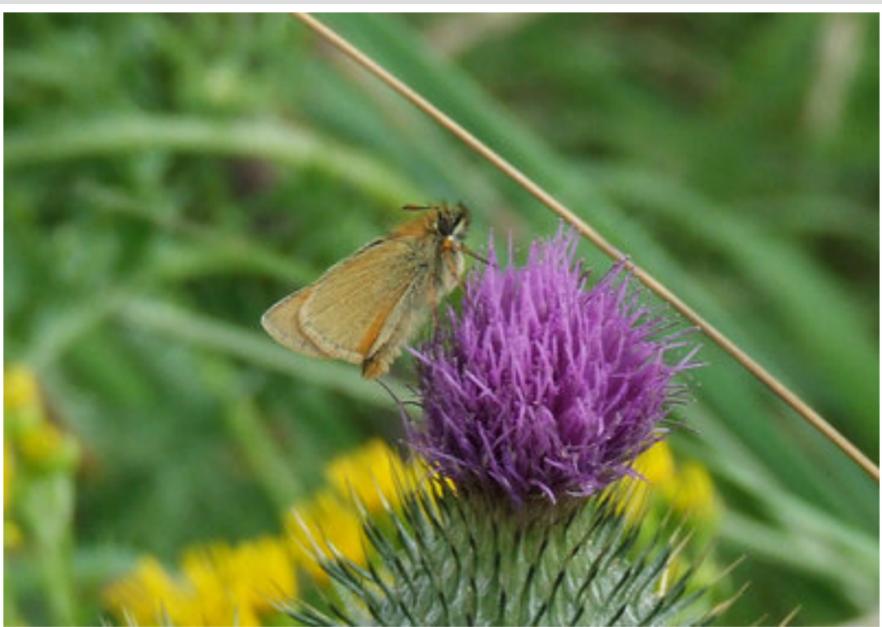
Ringlet female



Speckled Wood



Cinnabar Moth larva



Small Skipper - hanging on for dear life



Southern Hawker immature male





(photo should be vertical but looks better this way)



Re: philm63

by Nick Broomer, 29-Jul-12 05:14 AM GMT

Looks like the larva of a Cinnabar Moth.
All the best, Nick.

Re: philm63

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-12 05:48 AM GMT

Yep, Cinnabar Moth Larva, usually found on Ragwort, I have seen loads of these just this afternoon at one of my local spots 😊
Neil F.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 29-Jul-12 11:38 PM GMT

Nick, Neil

Thanks for the id, I will remember that one as it is very striking

Re: philm63

by philm63, 06-Aug-12 02:36 AM GMT

Sat 4 Aug

A family affair today as we visited relations in the Wakefield area. Weather was reasonable veering from sunny spells to some heavy showers. Whilst there we had a nice spell and they have a reasonably large butterfly-friendly garden. Spent 10 minutes out there with my brother-in-law and saw 20 fresh whites (mostly Large), a Small Tortoiseshell and a Comma. On the way home we visited a family grave in a Bradford cemetery and once again a reasonable number of fresh whites around.

After finishing the day's activities I managed to get out to stretch my legs around 6.40, still warm but overcast, and decided to do a quick local circuit. Kept to the main paths in Prince of Wales' Park as the vegetation was soaked and a brush against it resulted in soaked clothing. I was hoping to see if the Southern Hawker was gaining his adult blue and yellow colouration but he failed to show where I was. Passing a line of oaks I have had high hopes on, I saw a flash of silver going between two trees at height and managed to get a 15 second view through the binos of my first Purple Hairstreak. I spent another 15 minutes eagerly awaiting a repeat but it was not to be, still I have got my target trees now, when the undergrowth dries off a bit there are a few good vantage points, and if I take my scope, at least one higher point that may give reasonable views of the canopy around that area. The rest of the trip was a bit of a glow, from my own satisfaction at a first and from the setting sun. Found two roosting Ringlets and a single roosting Meadow Brown. Added to the Sparrowhawk in the park, three Curlews and a Tawny Owl on the final stretch, an enjoyable if short walk.

*Ringlet roosting**Large White***Re: philm63**

by philm63, 06-Aug-12 02:52 AM GMT

Sun 5 Aug

A reasonable morning, weather-wise, as I did the weekly shop, including some more local whites and a single Large White passing through the garden. Early afternoon my time to go out coincided nicely with the skies clouding over completely and peels of thunder. Still I went anyway, down Greenhill Lane, along the canal to Bingley Bog North and back through Greenhill Woods. Apart from a few monthly ticks I saw light rain, medium rain and, twice, heavy rain. Did manage to see 1 Small Tortoiseshell, 2 Ringlets and 1 Meadow Brown. The one compensation was the approximate 100 Cinnabar Moth caterpillars I found. Most plants (type not known) had one, some smallish groups; all were smaller than the one I saw just over a week ago.



Small Tortoiseshell



Cinnabar Moth larva



Cinnabar Moth larva

Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-12 06:26 AM GMT

That is an absolutely cracking shot of the Small Tortoiseshell Phil, the background really compliments it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: philm63

by philm63, 07-Aug-12 03:58 AM GMT

Wurzel

Thank you for the very kind comment.

It is on the wooden screen that hides the by-pass in this part of the area. When I got back to the path after taking the shot I looked like I had been paddling as my boots and pant bottoms were soaked from the grass. As it happens the Small Tortoiseshell moved soon after and landed on the wall right next to the path where I got a few more shots (one below) but I didn't post them. I have been following other diaries such as yours, Pauline's, Sussx Kipper's, nfreem's etc and I must admit I am getting a bit self-conscious about posting images now, not that I am unhappy with my efforts, especially as I am using a compact camera; more I am becoming aware of the limited spread of species to hand here and worry about boring people to



The same Small Tortoiseshell a few minutes later

Re: philm63

by Pauline, 07-Aug-12 04:04 AM GMT

Phil, your diary is definitely NOT boring (otherwise I wouldn't keep reading it 😊) and please keep posting the photos. I particularly like that last Small Tort as I haven't seen one for about 2 years now. It is a really good shot, sharp and shows the colours splendidly.

Re: philm63

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-12 04:12 AM GMT

I agree with Pauline. It's a case of 'horses for courses' and despite living in one of the best parts of the UK (for butterflies) I'm always interested in reading what others are seeing on their own patch. Ringlets and Speckled Woods ... love 'em.
Neil

Re: philm63

by Neil Freeman, 07-Aug-12 04:28 AM GMT

Hi Phil,

I totally agree with the comments above, carry on posting.

I live in the West Midlands and there is only a limited number of species around me locally, I have to travel a bit to see some of the rarer ones. You will see in my diary that two of my favourites are Green-veined White and Speckled Wood and I will always post these, especially when I see them in my garden 😊

Seconded on the photo of the Small Tortoiseshell on the fence, the pattern of the wood really sets it off nicely. I also am not seeing many of these this year.

Oh, and by the way, the plant the Cinnabar larvae are on with the yellow flowers is their normal foodplant, Ragwort.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 07-Aug-12 04:59 AM GMT

Pauline, Neil, Neil F

I thank you all for the kind words of encouragement.

I think the weather this year is getting to me, every time I manage to get the time to go out it seems to cloud over or rain, and this is not a rich area at the best of times, but I still love it. Alas though, summer appears to be slipping away without really arriving; hoping there will be something worth seeing when I have my hols later in the month.

On top of that my trusty old Fuji is starting to play up, I think after 5 years of loyal service it is starting to suffer a terminal illness; have been using the new Nikon a lot more trying to master the differences. I have to take the shots on a much lower zoom and then crop up but as it is 12 mp compared to 5 mp it doesn't suffer too much; have only posted one from it so far the last of the Southern Hawker shots.

I heard again today from Bradford Environmental Action Trust and it seems good news is coming. The company I work for owns a reasonably sized piece of woodland next to the main site which is a relict of the old forest that covered this part of the world. The company acts in association with the BEAT to make the area accessible to local schools and so on for environmental studies, but to all intents and purposes it is closed to the public and there are no paths or trails within. From our canteen area there is a outside boardwalk that looks into the wood and I always fancied a trip around. To cut a long story short I volunteered to do a regular survey and make the logs available; and also to produce some illustrated information boards for my company and the trust to use. In return I would get access maybe twice a month to what would be almost a private domain. Today I heard it looks like a done deal, and I will get a definite yes/no on Thursday - fingers crossed.

Neil F / Pauline

I thought it might be Ragwort but wasn't sure, I noticed you had mentioned that plant after my other post, and so many were on it, it must have been a

primary foodplant. I usually have about a dozen Small Tortoiseshells on a day out around this time through to Sept / Oct but the odd one seems about it at the moment; and I have only seen two worn and faded Peacocks over the last month or so and they are reasonably a guaranteed sighting for me in summer. Strange that you see so many fantastic butterflies but struggle for a species I have no trouble with finding usually. Small Copper are worrying me at the moment since the one in May I have seen none in their usual haunts, hopefully there is still time. The prime site locally went under the dozers in spring, and trucks are ripping up the next best site as they prepare to start converting the old barn site for conversion to housing. Hopefully it will be after the season finishes before the site is ruined forever. Now if only Comma was a bit more regular!!



Comma from 2010

Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-12 07:00 AM GMT

Keep trying for the Small Coppers Phil. I was pretty worried too but since doing a post about them I've found them at four different sites so the second brood will be on their way to you soon! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: philm63

by philm63, 08-Aug-12 04:54 AM GMT

What actually is the standard look of a Speckled Wood upperwing in the area of the spot?

I have four field guides (two excellent ones) and none seem to totally agree, and three were done by the same individual.

Looking through my photos I tend to see three main varieties –

1. The spot completely surrounded by a large patch
2. Patches above and below with a distinct area also to the outside edge of the spot, almost a crescent
3. Distinct patches above and below with the spot almost sitting on the main wing colour as opposed to being within a patch

No doubt some of this is down to sexual variation with the females having larger and brighter patches, is it also just a very variable feature on this species

I have tried to illustrate some of the variation I mention below









Re: philm63

by philm63, 09-Aug-12 08:21 PM GMT

Looking back - Regrets, I've had a few - The whites

As previously mentioned I got into birding proper during my latter years in the army, and on return to the UK I jumped into it in a bigger way. In 1987 I was part of the group that started the Bradford Ornithological Group, and I was recorder for its first two years. Then in the early 90's I started feeling the pressures of work, I usually worked Saturdays also and it was family matters on Sundays, I found myself going out less and less, then around September 1994 I went on an RSPB cruise off Flamborough Head with a friend, excellent day out; but it was to be my last. For some reason I just packed away my binos and scope, sold my book collection and gave it all up. I would still look at birds as I went about my daily life but not in the same way. The final bit came during one of our house moves, when I dumped all my yearly logs and my entire collection of photos. In 2007 I sensibly realised what I was missing and started out again, kicking myself for all the memories I had dumped along the way. Funnily enough in the earlier active years I had no transport of my own, and I bussed all over the place in West Yorkshire, then walked miles just to get to places like Fairburn, Lindley Woods Reservoir and Timble Ings, I would even take a train to visit the coast for the day at Filey or Scarborough. I now have my own transport and invariably I do all my outings locally and hardly travel at all.

As my interest widened to butterflies I started visiting a number of sites on the web, one thing that became apparent from the photos I viewed from around Europe and beyond were the number of butterflies photographed "puddling", it is not something I notice locally and I am not sure if it occurs elsewhere in the UK in a big way even though I do see the occasional photo. Then looking back through my images I noticed one I had taken in 2009 above Ravenroyd where I had seen 3 Green-veined Whites on the ground at a field edge. These appear to be taking either moisture or minerals, one of the images is shown below, so maybe it occurs more often than I believe. The whites to me are a frustrating group, common enough (except this year), seen all over and pretty obvious; but I cannot seem to get many good photos; except perhaps for Green-veined White. Invariably they will not settle, and when they do the images taken always seem to be poor, I have least images on file for these and they are among my most frequently encountered butterflies. I had hoped to put this right during this year's season, but the weather continues to frustrate my efforts, so will have to wait and see what the time left brings.



Thurs 9 August

Well what a day, lovely weather, best day for a long time. I had my meeting with the guy from the Environmental Trust at 4 so I drove over from my site to the main one, getting out of the car I had almost immediately Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and a few whites as they meandered around the edges of the car park. Walked down towards the meeting point at the entrance to the plantation, and as I was a bit early passed further down. The Ragwort here were heavy with Cinnabar Moth larvae.

The plantation is not "old" as I was led to believe, it was actually planted in 1860. I was given a brief guided tour around the main parts, and it looks excellent. Huge trees but well spaced, no footpaths or roads. I will talk about it more after my first proper visit, hopefully this weekend. I didn't even get to fully see the lovely pond or the south facing warm slope today all which seemed excellent. Even though I was paying attention to my companion and trying to take it in, in the 30 minutes I was there I saw at least 30 Ringlet / Meadow Brown, what I think was a passing blue, a Common Blue Damselfly and in an excellent clearing 4 Small Skippers within two feet, at that point I had 7 butterflies in view. I have never seen more than two skippers at one time, this clearing may have held over a dozen if I'd wandered around. There is an excellent area of beech (Bramblings this winter), Alder in the wetter areas and some lovely stands of oak, so I am expecting more Purple Hairstreaks here.



Cinnabar Moth larvae

After getting home and eating etc, the wife almost forced me to go out. It would be the last hour of full sunshine and am I glad she did. I headed to the old barn via the footpath around the fields from near home, the first part was quiet, then I entered the field by the barn, sticking close to the wall around the field I started to see the occasional Small Tortoiseshell, at the field corner I stayed following the wall as it headed directly to the barn. This wall faced the sun directly, and in 100 metres I had 11 Small Tortoiseshells. Practically every 10 metres there would be one sitting on the wall, all were very skittish, launching themselves at other passing STs. It was hard to get any shots as they would just not stay still. An excellent 15 minutes. At the barn I then did the overgrown area that borders Heights Lane where the trucks have recently flattened part of the vegetation. More Small Tortoiseshell, a few Large Whites and Small Whites, a single Green-veined White, 3 or 4 Meadow Browns and a fresh Small Skipper. I have never seen so many Small Tortoiseshells in one day, never mind in a walk of around half a mile, I conservatively reckon at least 20 individuals (sorry Pauline!!). Went home the way I had arrived, savouring the STs again along the wall as the sun lowered itself to the horizon. Life can be good at times



Small Tortoiseshell



Small Skipper



Green-veined White



Re: philm63

by philm63, 12-Aug-12 04:42 AM GMT

Sat 11 August

The plantation

An initial visit to orientate myself. The weather was not brilliant in the early part but picked up with some sunny spells in the last 40 minutes or so. The plantation has two long clearings separated by a belt of trees, both these and most of the site is long grass, except for the back part which is covered in old beech mast under a stand of huge old Beech trees. The clearings have thistle, Ragwort, trefoil and other plants growing in sections. At the left and right margins of the plantation are two small streams, and the area of these have the better Oak stands and the Alder and other such damp ground trees. There are a few Scotch Pine dotted around and some nice clumps of bramble. Most of the trees are huge and well spaced; in some areas newer plantings of a number of tree species provide variety. There are two ponds, a largish one at the front in fields that line the old galcial overflow channel this site is noted for, the other is well shaded and by the back road and is newer being formed by a blockage to the stream there.

I did a circumference transect and then moved in and checked parts of the two clearings more closely, the site is very exciting for me, I have never seen butterflies in such numbers.

At the main clearing with the most thistle I arrived when it coincided with the sun coming out and I had to give up counting, I was putting up Skippers and Ringlets every few yards, just looking where to go next every way I looked there were butterflies. I have honestly never experienced anything like it, even when it got a bit duller there was still lots going on. And there were areas I have not looked at in detail yet I am going to enjoy this site.

In addition saw a few Roe Deer and a half-dozen or so Common Blue Damsel fly also Small Copper in small numbers at last.

Ringlet 72 counted (estimate 100+ seen)
Small Skipper 24 counted (estimate 40+ seen)
Small Tortoiseshell 2
Green-veined White 7 counted (estimate 20+ seen)
Meadow Brown 9 counted (estimate 15+ seen)
Large White 3
Speckled Wood 1 (expected more)
Large Skipper 4 counted (estimate 7+ seen)
Small Copper 2
Comma 2
Common Blue Damselfly 7
Blue-tailed Damselfly 1



Roe Deer buck



Small Skipper





Large Skipper

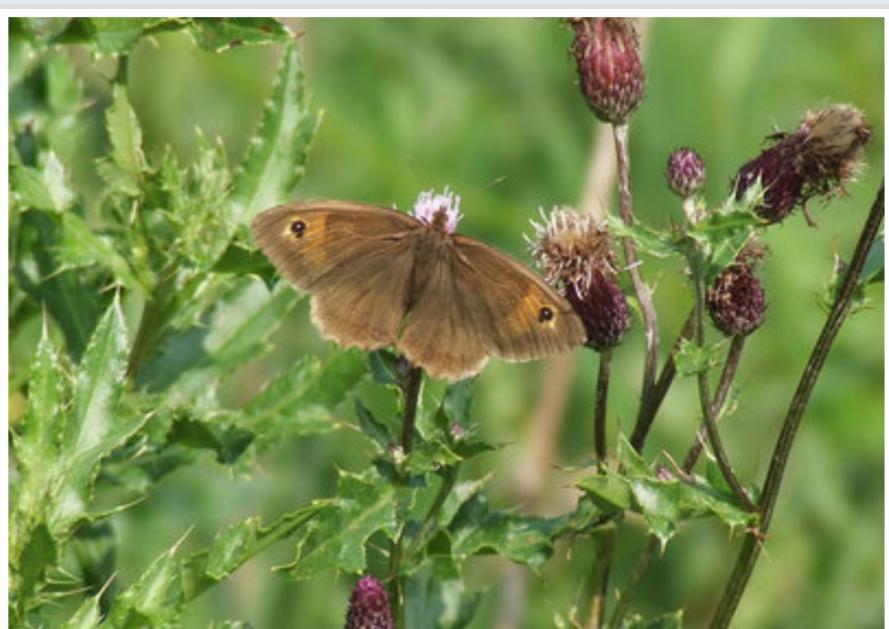




Ringlet

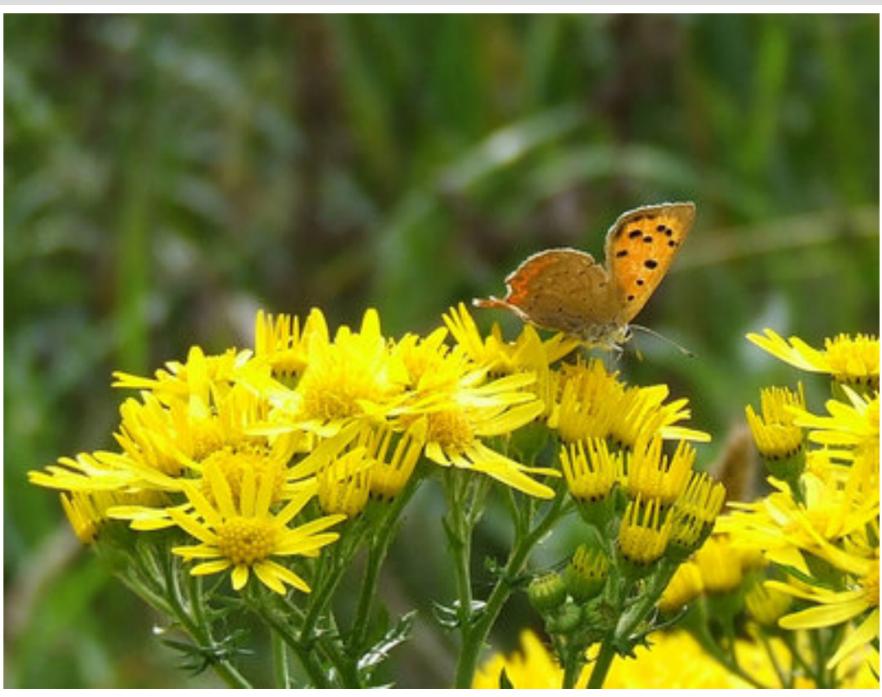


Green-veined White



Meadow Brown





Small Copper



Comma



Re: philm63

by Nick Broomer, 12-Aug-12 05:22 AM GMT

Hi Phil.
Some lovely photos, especially your last picture of the Comma, great.
All the best, Nick.

Re: philm63

by Pauline, 12-Aug-12 05:47 AM GMT

I actually love the first Comma Phil - looks like it is melting in the sun and dripping gold. I also think the Torts are lovely especially the one on the lichen covered log - the colours are beautiful. I tried for an hour today but failed miserably, so on the topic of ST Phil, all I can say is 🍷🍷🍷😄

Re: philm63

by philm63, 12-Aug-12 07:29 AM GMT

Nick, Pauline
Thanks for the comments. Today was one of those days when I could have just stayed hours in one small area. Luckily the two Commas, about 10

metres apart were around as the sun shined, turning round from the first one (on the thistle) I had to quickly pick up on a Small Copper, the first for ages, but the second one (on the grass) was happy to just hang around and wait for me
Phil

Re: philm63

by philm63, 13-Aug-12 04:08 AM GMT

Sun 11 August

Local patch

The day boded well with views in the morning of a juvenile Willow Warbler that has been around the garden for a few days, and a pair of Siskin that have been around for a week or so, followed by a Small White in the garden.

Weather however was dissapointing again; very overcast changing to rain later. Started in Prince of Wales' Park, no sign of the Hawker, or Purple Hairstreaks, in fact only saw a single Speckled Wood; very poor showing.

Walked up Heights Lane to the old barn and then along the wall that had held all the Small Tortoiseshells on Thursday, the action had mainly moved from the wall itself to the swathe of nettles and thistles close by. Still found 12 today at the site in total and a Little Owl near the barn buildings. No Small Coppers and no skippers here though, at least not showing,

Choices - continue along Heights Lane or down the bridleway to the reservoir, chose the latter, the bridleway was quiet until I approached the reservoir path when I found a single Small Skipper. Along the path I clocked up a few oddments - Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Green-veined White. I was hoping for Wall. I stopped near the last field as the path approached the overflow, the field here looked busy. I had come across another sizeable Small Skipper colony; the area by the fence held around a dozen and that was just a small corner of a huge area stretching away into the distance. Crossed the overflow and headed uphill by the reservoir, it was here I had my first local Wall in the past, but none showing. Turned round and started back when I spotted a small butterfly flying close to the path edge, waited for it to settle. It proved to be a small male Gatekeeper, my first for the local area, but in a awkward position to shoot. Really lucky as 10 minutes later it started raining and that was that for the day.

Speckled Wood 1

Large White 2

Ringlet 3

Small Tortoiseshell 16

Green-veined White 5

Small Skipper 13+

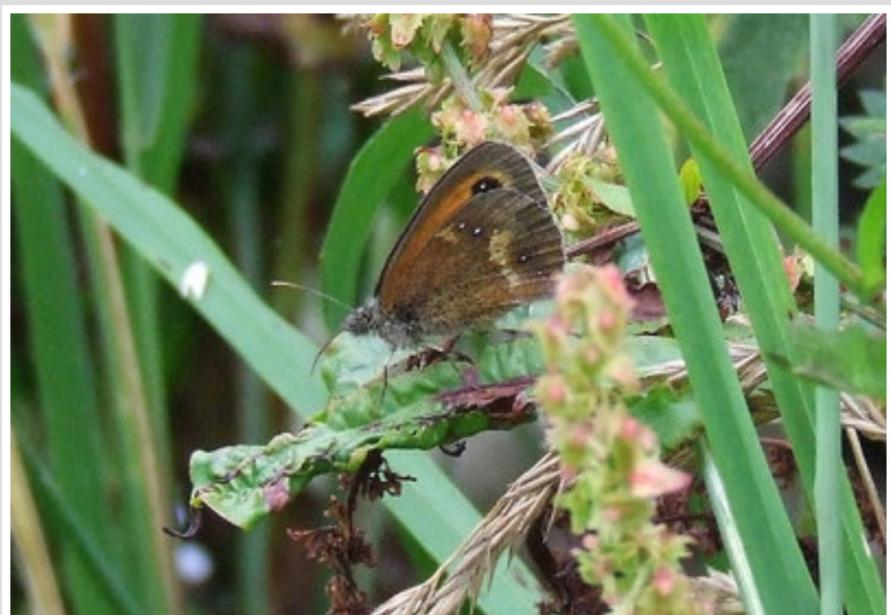
Small White 1

Meadow Brown 3

Gatekeeper 1



Gatekeeper male



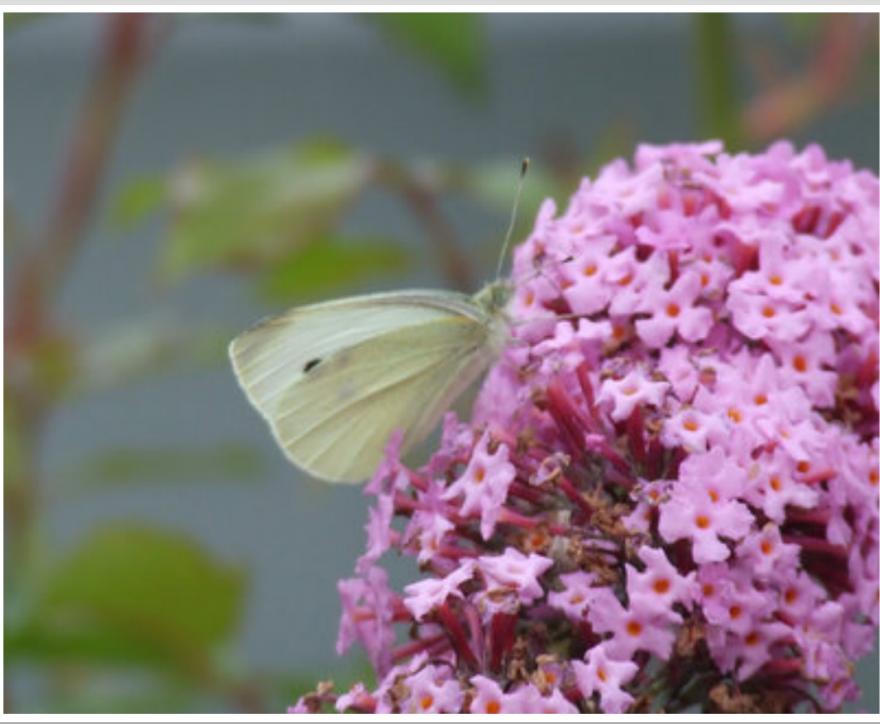


Small Skipper – this image was shot from about 5 feet quite pleased with the result



Small Tortoiseshell





Small White

Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-12 05:35 AM GMT

Sorry to didn't get your Wall but 16 Small Torts 😲 You've got to be happy with that! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: philm63

by philm63, 25-Aug-12 04:43 AM GMT

Saturday 18 Aug

Position is everything! I have a butterfly bush in the garden and so far this year it has produced the odd white and a single Small Tortoiseshell whilst I have been looking, and I prune it back each year to keep it at a decent height and to promote flower growth. Set off today down into the valley, on the way about 250 yds from home I passed another bush in a driveway, it was half the height of mine and only had about 9 blooms on it but held 5 Small Tortoiseshell at the time I passed, another 50 yds away two large bushes held nothing.

The weather continues unsettled up here, walked along the canal and entered Bingley Bog North from that end, the line of buddleias near the entrance were also empty of butterflies. The whole area was quiet with a passing unidentified darter one moment of interest, it was not re-located. The fields / bog area over the fence produced a few Green-veined Whites and a single male Small Skipper. The skipper was very thin and worn looking, probably on his last few hours. A second visit to the buddleia line produced a few Small Tortoiseshell, A Buzzard crossing the valley was a nice spot.

With a bit of time to spare popped up to Prince of Wales' Park where the highlights were a single Holly Blue that didn't want to stop and a group of about 4 fresh Speckled Wood in one spot, unusual in that I had seen only one other in the rest of the park. On the way up I passed the allotments near five-rise locks and these held around 15 assorted whites.

Large White 7

Small Tortoiseshell 10

Small White 2

Green-veined White 10

Small Skipper 1

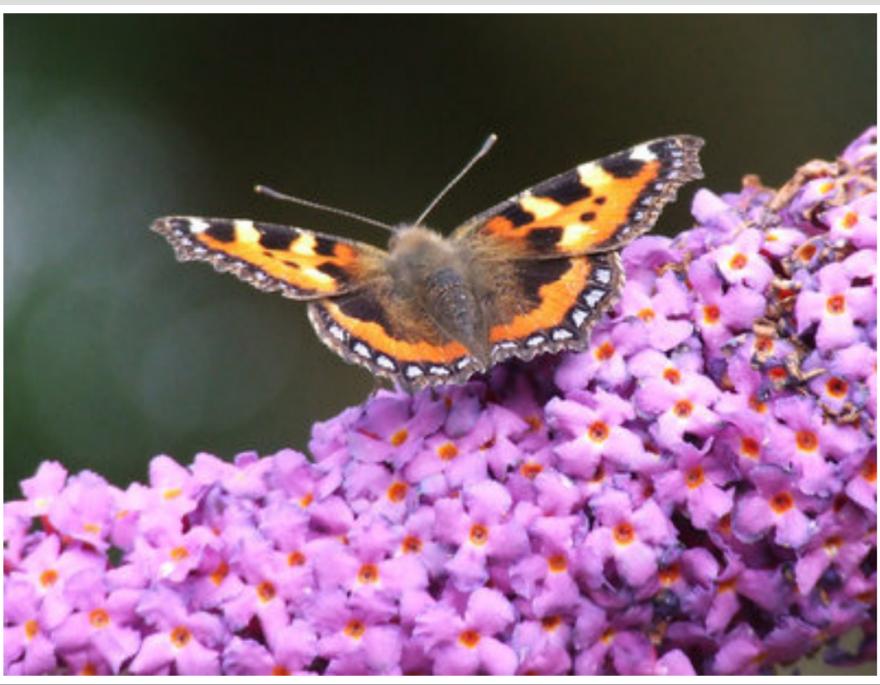
Assorted whites 15

Speckled Wood 6

Holly Blue 1



The bedraggled male Small Skipper



Small Tortoiseshells



Speckled Woods





Re: philm63

by philm63, 25-Aug-12 04:52 AM GMT

Thursday 23 August

Day off due to car being in for its annuals so did a trip around Bingley visiting Dowley Gap, the river to Beck Foot, Myrtle Park, Bingley Bog North and part of the valley down to Raven Royd.

The weather stayed dry but it was generally overcast and dull. There was very little about butterfly wise with mainly just a few of the expected dotted about. A single Meadow Brown at Dowley Gap was a late one, and a few fresh but very skittish Peacocks seen, none staying still long enough to photograph, I tend to leave them if I cannot get a shot the first few attempts, their life seems bad enough this year without being pestered by me.

Myrtle Park was very disturbed as they prepare for the music concert next weekend but found a few Common Blue Damselflies, all males. Bingley Bog North was also very quiet. Highlights today were a few juvenile Willow Warblers at Dowley hunting flies, a Kingfisher along the canal and a Common Newt on the canal bank

Meadow Brown 1

Small White 6

Large White 3

Speckled Wood 1

Common Blue Damselfly 3

Red Admiral 1

Peacock 3

Green-veined White 3



Robin, Willow Warbler and Wren. I bet the odds of ever repeating this shot are astronomical



Small Whites



Male Common Blue Damselfly



Green-veined Whites



Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-12 06:10 AM GMT

Cracking shots Phil especially the three birds perfectly placed along the diagonal 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: philm63

by philm63, 26-Aug-12 02:20 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel

To be brutally honest I thought I took a picture of a Robin and a Willow Warbler, it wasn't until I saw the shots later that I realised the Wren was even there. I was concentrating on getting one of the juvenile Willow Warblers on disc as I had been trying for five minutes as they popped in and out of the ivy you can see on the right. I shot this view and a second, then and only then, moved closer for a shot of the Willow Warbler alone which I managed to get but not as close as I would have liked



juvenile Willow Warbler at Dowley Gap

Coming back from shopping today past three-rise locks on the canal I was suprised when a beautiful mature male Banded Demoiselle landed on the wooden fence in front of me, sat there for about 50 seconds then moved to some vegetation close-by. As is the norm in these cases I did not have either camera with me. I had thought I had seen my last of these this year a few weeks ago so this was a very pleasant surprise. The weather however was not, if I thought some of the recent weeks were bad today. was atrocious. I am on holiday next week and Monday already seems doomed looking at the forecasts, hoping some of the remaining days allow me to get out

Re: philm63

by Pauline, 26-Aug-12 03:30 AM GMT

Phil I just love the photo of the Robin, Wren and Warbler – smashing shot.

Re: philm63

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-12 05:35 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cracking shots Phil especially the three birds perfectly placed along the diagonal 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Agreed, that is a great photo 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 27-Aug-12 10:14 PM GMT

Pauline, Neil - Thank you both for the kind comments

Sunday 26 August

Started out on a walk with the wife going down into the valley and along the canal. On Greenhill Lane spotted a large dragonfly hunting a hedge / tree line, definitely a hawk but views not good enough to id any more specific, could well have been the Southern that was in the park earlier as it is not far away. We reached the canal towpath and turned towards Crossflats and soon after the rain started, then got heavier and heavier, we arrived home drenched and had seen very little; and as is oft the case the rain stopped.



Jackdaw near the canal just before the rain started

During the afternoon spotted a butterfly struggling to fly across the tarmac out front of the house, popped out with the camera and shot this very worn and damaged female Meadow Brown, I suppose a very venerable old lady at this stage of the year



The venerable old lady out front of the house

As the weather had improved I popped out during the evening and did the local circuit in reverse. Actually saw very little but it was nice as the sun started to drop and it was quiet, a time to just enjoy being alive and be able to collect your thoughts. Did find another female Meadow Brown by the old barn, and saw lots of rabbits especially along Walsh Lane.

I intend to do the plantation for the second time during my hols this week, will see what is still around, but not expecting much now. Apart from the odd sighting I think the season up here is coming to a close for the bulk of the species; it has been spoilt by an atrocious run of weather, but I have had some nice encounters. Most of all it has been lightened by the friendly people I have followed on this forum, a big thank you to you all!!

I will keep posting as long as there is something to write about and I have my last two 'looking backs' prepared just need to post them

As most people will have no reason to pop up here to see any butterflies, I intend on future posts to include some pictures of the places I go. Most of

the my local trips are based around public roads, I am in reality watching the verges and field borders. The picture below from yesterday evening's walk is taken from Walsh Lane looking somewhat west across the Aire Valley, Bradford is out of shot but would be to the left, and Keighley also out of shot is too the right; Bingley itself is down in the valley and not visible. The buildings on the other side of the valley are around the area of Wilsden, Harden and Cullingworth. For those with sharp eyes there is a windfarm on the distant (about 4 - 5 miles) skyline to the right, just beyond that lies Haworth (of Bronte sister fame) and a few more miles beyond that you will actually be entering Lancashire. The plantations seen across the valley centre around Cottingley on the left, and to the right on St Ives Estate, which is a spot I have visited all too infrequently. Typical pennine landscape below the moors



Re: philm63

by philm63, 29-Aug-12 04:03 AM GMT

Tues 28 August

That will teach me to be presumptuous about the season end, lovely day with some good sunny spells. The morning saw a Small Tortoiseshell, a Peacock and a few Large Whites in the garden



Small Tortoiseshell in garden



Shows how hairy they can appear



Undersides

In the afternoon I took the plunge and headed for the plantation I am surveying. Handy as I could park in the works car park, collected the key and set off. Once inside and onto the area of the southern clearing I knew I was going to have a good day, still reasonable numbers of Small Skippers around, but many more Small Coppers. I then did a full circuit which showed the butterfly of the day was going to be the Speckled Wood, some of the mature trees had 4 - 5 individuals floating around. Then did an up and down of the two main clearings, the latter was pretty quiet except for the entrance end where I had a nice encounter with some more Peacocks (saw quite a few fresh ones today). Most of the Peacocks were actually grounded on what was very wet grass (it was appalling here yesterday for rain) in most cases this was in the vicinity of nettle beds. The first I was aware of a lot of them was when they took flight as I approached, they could probably hear my feet squelching

A few Large Whites, Green-veined Whites and Small Tortoiseshells were also seen. Plus a small number of worn Meadow Browns dotted about. No Ringlets and no Large Skippers today.

One area produced all the dragonfly sightings with a Common Darter, a Common Blue Damselfly and an unidentified Hawker. With a few more Roe Deer, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a few Jays and a Tawny Owl there was also a bit of something else, would expect the birds to start showing more from next month

Counted:

Peacock 13 (probably 20+ seen)
Large White 5
Small Skipper 12 (probably 20+ seen)
Small Copper 6
Speckled Wood 46 (probably 70+ seen)
Common Blue Damselfly 1 male
Common Darter 1 female
Comma 1
Small Tortoiseshell 2
Holly Blue 2
Meadow Brown 2
Green-veined White 3
Hawker sp 1



Some of the Speckled Woods seen today

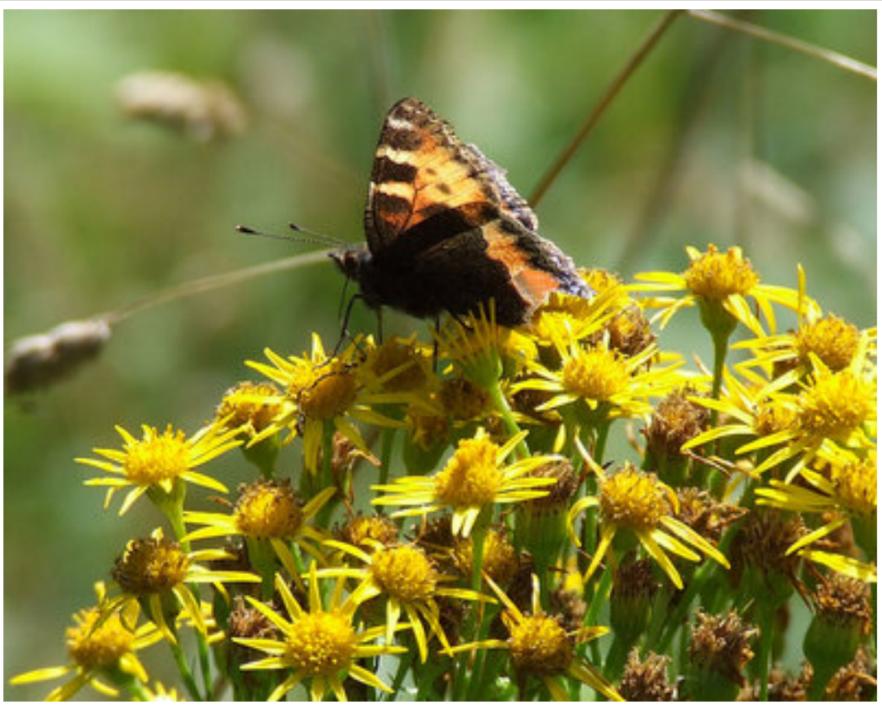


Some of the Peacocks seen today





Small Copper (bottom left) and Peacock (top right)



Small Tortoiseshell



Green-veined Whites





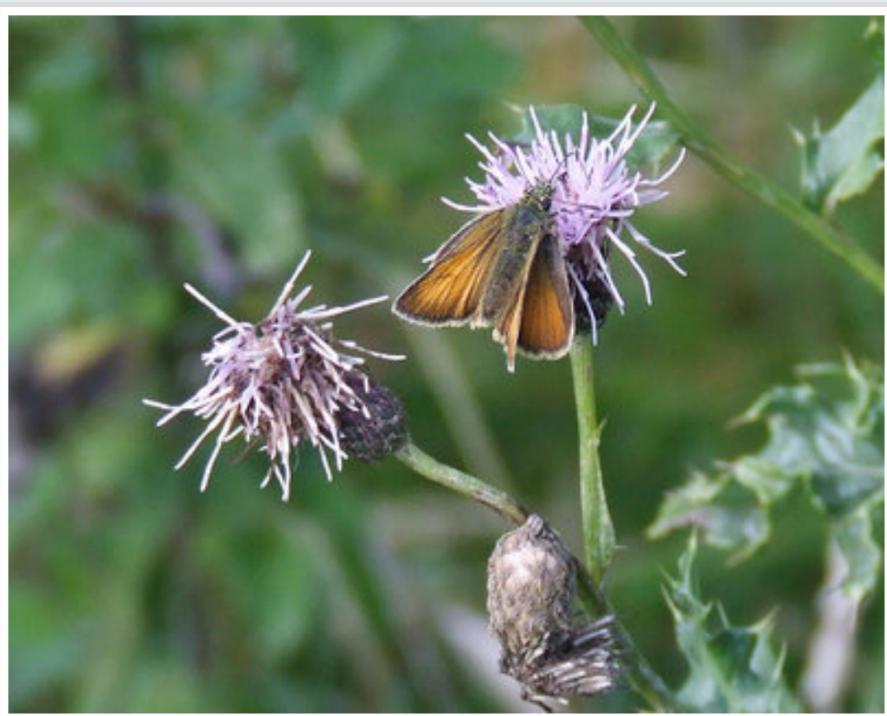
Comma



I am sure this is a female Common Darter not a Ruddy Darter



Some of the Small Coppers seen today



Some of the Small Skippers seen today



Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-12 06:01 AM GMT

Great read and shots Phil 😊 Don't you just love it sometimes when butterflies don't read the script and turn up despite the season "ending" 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

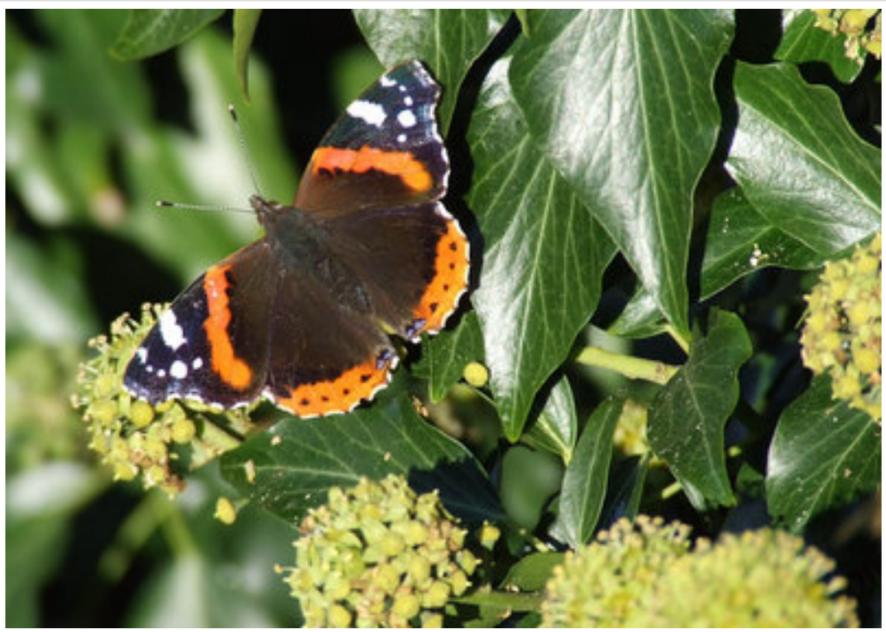
Re: philm63

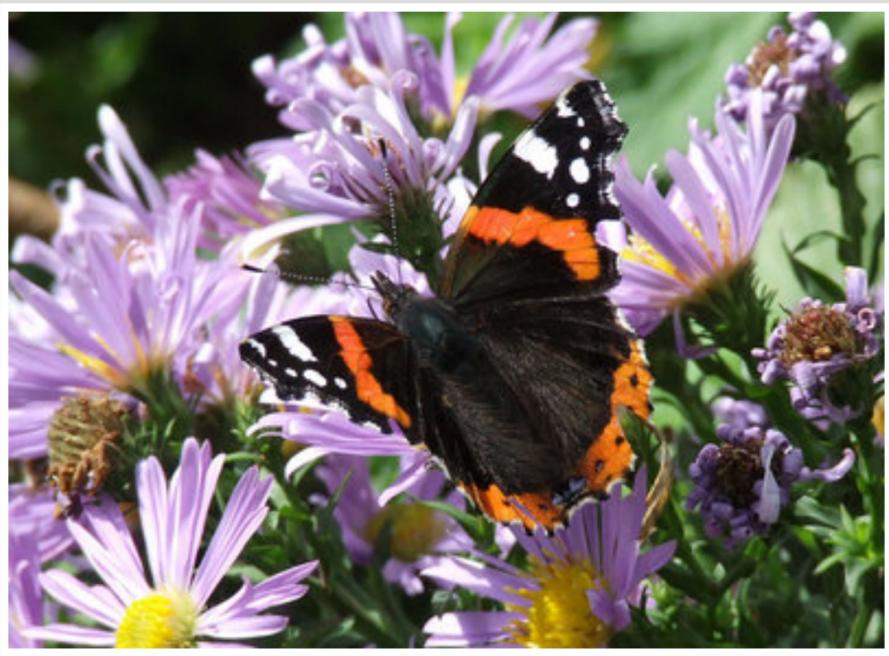
by philm63, 31-Aug-12 04:14 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel!!

Looking back - No sexes please we're British - The nymphalids

Unlike the whites this group love to pose and I will normally see Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Peacock during early and late summer quite frequently. Comma is not a frequent butterfly here so is enjoyed when it occurs, the sightings I have had have varied from literally 50 yards from where I live to others dotted about the area with no set pattern. Painted Lady is unusual with it being such a migrant, I started taking butterfly pictures in 2009, with 2010 being my first main year; and 2009 was the last big influx of these beauties locally. Whilst not numerous here that year, they were pretty widespread in small numbers and I can remember some nice encounters quite close to home, I do not recall seeing one since that year. In 2009 the fields nearby were heavy with creeping thistle and held all the commoner nymphalids, something else that has not re-occurred since. It was very close to the footpath there that I took the photo below showing the two Small Tortoiseshell, I would presume it is a pair, with the right hand one being much more worn than the left, so possibly the male; but I must admit I have not been able to master sexing nymphalids. I hope time, experience and continued exposure will remedy this; still, I will enjoy the encounters anyway. Peacock and Red Admiral are such stunning butterflies we should all be grateful we can enjoy them so frequently. I had seven Red Admiral last October on a smallish flowering ivy, it was stunning to see; the bush abutted the road and I had to be so careful in taking pictures as the road is bendy and narrow at that point but frequently used by motorists







Re: philm63

by Pauline, 31-Aug-12 03:14 PM GMT

Not posting but still reading a few diaries and I had to comment on your Small Tort pics Phil. They are lovely esp. the one on 28th which is beautiful – looks like a painting. Detail is sharp and background complements, would look good framed.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 01-Sep-12 03:03 AM GMT

Cheers Pauline!!

Fri 31 August

Last day of the month and it was a nice morning, after lunch it clouded over but was still dry.

During the morning I had some nice sightings in the garden with a variety of finches, a Nuthatch, a Jay and the odd butterfly passing through.



Siskin in the back garden

After lunch I went out covering Prince of Wales Park, Heights Lane up to the bridleway, then down to the path to Eldwick Reservoir; retraced my steps to Heights Lane and did the old barn then over the fields to home.

The kindergarten near home has a lovely buddleia which held 4 Peacocks, sadly it is not in a photo friendly position. Prince of Wales Park held a single

Speckled Wood and another Peacock, plus my first Treecreeper for a while. Heights Lane was quiet as was the bridleway except for the odd passing butterfly. Along the path to Eldwick Reservoir it seemed as that too would be quiet but the corner of the fields near the overflow still held 2 or 3 Small Skippers and a Green-veined White. A dragonfly flew past but at the time I had my hands full (see below). As I was photographing the male skipper the female shown below landed on my hand and stayed long enough for a series of shots; difficult with only one hand, a unique moment to be cherished. The reservoir itself held a nice Grey Wagtail around the very little border not under water and a Sparrowhawk passed very close. The old barn area had a few Peacocks and a Small Tortoiseshell with a few more in the fields beyond as I made my way home. Once again they were hugging the ground around the edges of nettle beds.

Seen today:

Peacock 9
Large White 1
Speckled Wood 1
Small Tortoiseshell 6
Green-veined White 2
Small Skipper 2 or 3
Dragonfly sp 1



Path from the bridleway that passes Eldwick Reservoir, the bank of which can be seen left of centre



Male Small Skipper nectaring



An intimate interlude with a female Small Skipper



The old barn area off Heights Lane



Peacock



Peacock undersides



Small Tortoiseshell

Re: philm63

by philm63, 03-Sep-12 11:40 PM GMT

Sat 1 September

Went over to Knotford Nook in Wharfedale. weather quite reasonable and improving

Covered the riverside walk, then the corner of the main pool before carrying on along the river path towards Otley, round the scrub area then back to the car via the river and main pool. Pretty quiet for butterflies, but a lot of dragonfly action. A new species for me, Brown Hawker, plus a copulating pair of Southern Hawker and a single adult male; also saw Common and Ruddy Darter and 100+ Common Blue Damselfly. In addition clocked two Kingfishers, a few Great Crested Grebes, a nice Spotted Flycatcher and a Grasshopper Warbler. All in all a great day.

Speckled Wood 9
Common Blue Damselfly 100+
Common Darter 7
Ruddy Darter 1 minimum
Green-veined White 3
Southern Hawker 3 minimum
Brown Hawker 2
Large White 4
Peacock 4
Small Copper 2

At home a Holly Blue went through the garden twice without stopping either time



The path beside the River Wharfe



The main pool



Speckled Woods



Common Darter



Ruddy Darter



Brown Hawker, shot through masking foliage



One of the Kingfishers



Southern Hawkers mating



Southern Hawker adult male



Large White



over mature female Common Darter



Peacock



Common Blue Damselfly, pair about to start mating

Sunday 2 September

Day at home, garden visited by a few Large White and Peacocks and a single Speckled Wood, regrettably not the Holly Blue. Tried out a few different camera settings and techniques.



Large White



Re: philm63

by Nick Broomer, 04-Sep-12 07:00 AM GMT

Hi Phil,
some lovely photos, especially the Peacock on Thistle, [28 Aug.] and the Peacock showing the undersides of the wing in the grass, [31 Aug.] plus the Kingfisher, what a beautiful bird.
All the best, Nick.

Re: philm63

by philm63, 05-Sep-12 04:04 AM GMT

Cheers Nick
Your comments are most appreciated.
Phil

Re: philm63

by philm63, 10-Sep-12 03:52 AM GMT

Sat 8 September

Dowley Gap - Beck Foot along River Aire

Speckled Wood 6

Large White 8

Green-veined White 5

Suprisingly no Peacocks, and have not seen a Small Tortoiseshell for a while

Speckled Wood

The majority of the later-brood Speckled Woods appear in my eyes to have a deeper and richer colour



Speckled Wood undersides



Speckled Wood

Green-veined White

At Dowley Gap watched a group of around 3 Green-veined Whites interacting not far from the river. One appeared to be chasing another, the first (a female?) landed and the second (a male?) fluttered nearby which resulted in the one on the ground pointing its abdomen skywards in rejection [first photo]; the male then landed on the female which wedged itself into material on the ground to stop mating occurring [second photo]. The male gave up and flew off, about 30 seconds later the female crawled out and then flew off



Male flying and trying to land, female points abdomen skywards in rejection



Male lands, female wedges itself out of reach (can be seen under and forward of the male)

Garden in early evening

The Holly Blue has been enticingly passing through or across the bottom of the garden all day but would not stop. Sat out for over an hour waiting to no avail, but did see in compensation a Goldcrest, two Buzzards and a Red Kite

Sun 9 September

Holly Blue at it again late morning and 3 Buzzards together passed over, plus a Peacock and an unidentified medium sized Dragonfly actually visited the garden.

Early afternoon out for a walk with the wife around the local circuit -

- Peacock 7
- Meadow Brown 1 (late!)
- Speckled Wood 2
- Large White 1



Speckled Wood on Walsh Lane

Saw a Hedgehog on Heights Lane having a good scratch



Hedgehog having a good scratch

Late afternoon, early evening in garden

Holly Blue seen 8 - 9 times and actually photographed as it landed on a bush at the far side of one of my neighbour's garden, but a long distance off; still could identify it as a Holly Blue and a female at that



At last the Holly Blue, a female, but in the next garden

Peacock 1
Speckled Wood 1
Large White 2



Speckled Wood on my garden fence