

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Jan-12 12:57 AM GMT

JAN 1ST 2012

Happy New Year to everyone. I hope that we all have a good butterfly season.

It is a tradition amongst many birders that they spend the first day of the year birding, with many trying to see self imposed targets of 100 plus species. In the past we have done this ourselves, but this year we decided just to do casual birding and concentrate on the Isle of Sheppey. We started the day at Funton Creek with only one other birder present. The usual waders here with a large flock of Avocets and 2 Little Egrets. The first raptor spotted was a Common Buzzard rather than the expected Marsh Harrier, of which 2 soon appeared. Emley was next with another Common Buzzard, 3 Marsh Harriers but no sign of the White fronted Geese. Next was Capel Fleet where 2 Ring Tailed Hen Harriers enlivened the scene with several Marsh Harriers hunting. A flock of 15 Corn Buntings were sheltering from the wind. The sea at Leysdown was quiet but nearby at Muswell Manor a big flock of Brent Geese were entertaining but failed to produce any of the rarer species. We then checked the area for Lapland Buntings and Twite when the heavens opened and the sky turned dark. It looked set in for the rest of the day so it was home to relax. The drive home in an absolute deluge was interesting with many roads temporary awash with water.

JAN 2ND 2012.

Today we cracked. Until now we had resisted the urge to go and see the Western Sandpiper (small American wader) that has been at Cley Nature Reserve for nearly a month. This is a major rarity and would be a new British bird for us, but we don't go out of Kent so much these days. To be fair it was not immediately identified as a definite Western Sandpiper because of a range of features that could not rule out Semi-palmated Sandpiper. Over time a series of good photos, good views, dedicated observation and expert opinion have now identified this as definite Western Sandpiper. So today we took the plunge and travelled north on a 400 mile round trip in cold, but brilliant sunshine. The journey up produced 11 Common Buzzards in the air over suitable woodland. We arrived at Cley near mid-day to find the place awash with people, mainly families out walking enjoying the fresh air. We had a job to park at Cley but luckily someone left fairly quickly and so we spent the next couple of hours around the reserve. The visitor centre has been completely rebuilt since our last visit some years back and is quite impressive. It was certainly full of people and took a while to buy our permits. After a wait of some 45 minutes in the crowded hide the Western Sandpiper flew in and offered reasonable but flighty views. It was too far for my camera and to see the finer detail such as Rufus tinge to the scapulars, which have helped confirm its true identity, but its small size, black legs more towards the rear of the body, long thin tipped bill, all helped confirm that this was the bird identified as a Western Sandpiper. Some people present were seeing this bird for about the fourth time but had still not got really good quality photos. It was getting closer to the hide so the cameras were getting ready when suddenly everything took off and we did not see it again during the next 45 minutes. We checked the rest of the reserve to see good numbers of Golden Plover, Dark Bellied Brent, Teal, a few Ruff and Black Tailed Godwits. A Great Skua flying along the beach was a good unexpected bonus in the mid afternoon sun.

It was now getting really crowded on the Reserve and on the beach so we decided to head inland, where we saw several flocks of Pink Footed Geese numbering in excess of 500. It was really too crowded, and with heavy traffic, to head for our last planned port of call at Titchwell RSPB so it was home to reflect on another good and enjoyable day in the field.

Dave



The impressive Visitor Centre at Cley



The pair of Glossy Ibis at Grove Ferry. This time allowing the ring number to be read. Apparently it was ringed in Belgium



Part of one of the flocks of Pink Footed Geese near Cley, Norfolk

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Jan-12 11:16 PM GMT

I will start this update by saying that we have seen our first butterfly of the year. A Red Admiral flying in a wood near Faversham on Saturday 14th January. What it was doing I don't know for I was frozen, so I am sure it must have been too.

SATURDAY 7TH JANUARY 2012.

An afternoon visit to OARE MARSH saw the usual Rough Legged Buzzard over Mocketts Hill, with a Peregrine over the East Flood and a Greenshank present.

SUNDAY 8TH JANUARY 2012.

DUNGENESS. A nice drake Smew has arrived on the ARC pit. In my view a cracking bird in its snow white plumage. Nearby a female was trying to pretend she had not noticed him. 3 Goldeneyes, 5 Little Egrets, 2 Marsh Harriers, 8 Tree Sparrows, Merlin, Sparrowhawk and a Chiffchaff were of interest. We called in at Hamstreet woods to see 20 Crossbills, 50 plus Redpolls, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Coal Tit and Sparrowhawk livened up the late morning visit.

4 Ruddy Duck present at a site in East Kent. This species is not quite eliminated, but numbers are very low and will soon become a description bird at this rate.

THURSDAY 12TH JANUARY 2012.

A female Marsh Harrier over our house late morning was unexpected. This is only the third record of this species we have seen from the house in 25 years of watching. We can only imagine that this was some form of cold weather movement. The local corvids ensured it did not hang around long.

SATURDAY 14TH JANUARY 2012.

ELMLEY MARSH. Not much has changed since our last visit. 30 White fronted Geese. 6 Marsh Harriers, Peregrine, 2 Little Egrets, 100 plus Linnets. Good numbers of Lapwings and Golden Plovers have moved in. The female Rough Legged Buzzard seems to have moved to the Harty area.

SUNDAY 15TH JANUARY 2012.

DUNGENESS. The 2nd winter Glaucous Gull remains around the fishing boats. It sometimes roosts on the beach with the other gulls, but generally can be found within a few hundred metres of the boats. The sea held reasonable numbers of Gannets and Kittiwakes but the big movement of auks and Red Throated Divers seems to have ended. The RSPB area held the male & female Smew, 8 Goldeneye, 3 Marsh Harriers, 3 Ruddy Duck, Long Tailed Duck and 9 White fronted Geese amongst the more common birds. Nearby Scotney held a Black Necked Grebe and Walland saw 48 Bewick Swans and 2 Tree Sparrows.

Despite searching we could not find the Caspian Gull on the beach although others said it was still present.

An enjoyable but cold weekend.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-Feb-12 11:48 PM GMT

Sorry about lack of updates recently but it really has been quite here in Kent with very little changing.

SUNDAY 22 JANUARY 2012.

HAMSTREET WOOD. 2 Redpolls, Coal Tit and Common Buzzard. There was no sign of any Crossbills or the big flocks of Redpolls.

WAREHORNE. No sign of any Great White Egrets, just 2 Little Egrets feeding in the canal.

DUNGENESS. The regular Great White Egret still present, 2 Little Egrets, 3 Marsh Harriers, Goldeneye and Stonechat.

WALLAND MARSH was very quiet with just the wintering flock of Bewick Swans present (50).

SATURDAY 28TH JANUARY 2012.

FOLKESTONE COPT POINT. 70 Med Gulls present, mainly adults, with large numbers of auks off shore. At least 40 were Razorbills and appeared to easily outnumber Guillemots.

DUNGENESS. A Peregrine flew over the Airport approach road scattering all the Golden Plover far and wide. The Great White Egret was showing well along the RSPB entrance track. A Ruddy Duck present proved that DEFRA shooting party earlier in the week had missed one. A Kingfisher showed well from the RSPB viewing screen pleasing the small crowd as it fly to and fro across the pit picking off the odd small fish. Almost all dives were successful. A female Smew and Goldeneye showed from the road otherwise pretty much the same as the last few weeks.

We missed the wintering Dotterel seen near the Airport and despite searching over the next 4 hours we failed to relocate it.

I attach another photo of the Dungeness Great White Egret. Sorry, but not much else to photograph. I have also attached an old photo of a Nightjar seen on Walland Marsh. There is a reason for this so I will explain. I forget the exact date, but it was in September, around 1990. The bird was clearly on migration and had been brought down by heavy overnight rain. We had first found it sitting on a post near to a small country lane around 9 am. We mentioned the sighting to several locals, but no one seemed interested until the early afternoon. It was then that 2 locals, Ray Turley and Chris asked for further details. We took them to the site and surprising the bird was still on the same post and showing fairly well. We had to look through some scrub to avoid flushing the bird, and although it looked settled it would occasionally turn its head to look at us. Ray then spent the next hour or so grilling the bird to rule out anything rarer and then just to enjoy the sighting of this very rare bird for the Dungeness area. This was typical of Ray, who would enjoy every bird he saw, common or rare. Seabirds were his special favourites, and he would often sea watch from dawn to dusk. Everyone who knew him, or met him, could not fail to be impressed by his enthusiasm and knowledge of his subject. He would make sure that birders, or anyone who

asked, was shown the bird and given any information they requested. He knew his butterflies but birds were his love. He was known nationally for his birding and as a wildlife artist. Sadly, last year Ray died suddenly whilst birding in India. The reason for the Nightjar photo. It's coming up to a year since his untimely passing. He was an excellent birder and a really nice person. It's our way of saying that Ray is still sadly missed by us all.

Dave



A Nightjar on autumn migration on Walland Marsh



The regular Dungeness Great White Egret

Re: Dave Brown

by ChrisC, 02-Feb-12 02:42 AM GMT

nice sentiments Dave.

Chris

Re: Dave Brown

by Mark Colvin, 02-Feb-12 03:13 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

That's a really nice touch.

"dave brown" wrote:

It's our way of saying that Ray is still sadly missed by us all.

I'm sure Ray would appreciate it.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 19-Feb-12 04:40 AM GMT

Thank you to Chris and Mark. Your comments are much appreciated.

FRIDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2012.

With the cold weather continuing it has been hard work birding. A visit to Dungeness saw a Bittern showing from Hansons hide, with 4 Goosanders, 5 Smew, a Goldeneye, 2 Cettis Warblers, Green Sandpiper, Woodcock and 4 Marsh Harriers around the reserve (and it was bitterly cold in the open).

SATURDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2012.

Minnis Bay proved quiet with only 75 Brent Geese of note. A walk around Margate Cemetry produced 4 Woodcock and 2 Redwings, otherwise quiet. SUNDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2012.

A visit to Pett Level produced 140 Dark Bellied Brents and 4 other birds that looked very good for Pale Bellied Brent. They were distant and elusive in the many dips and tussocks but were very Pale and obvious even at distance. Over 200 Great Crested Grebes were on the sea but little else was with them. A female Merlin seen near Walland. Dungeness produced the long staying Great White Egret, 15 Goosander, 4 Ruddy Ducks, Smew, Goldeneye, Little Egret and MarshHarrier. We also saw 2 Woodcocks in the trapping area. On the way home we called in at St Botophs bridge near Hythe and saw yet another Great White Egret, together with one Smew.

THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2012.

Whilst undertaking some part time work I received a very welcome phone call advising of a 2nd Winter WHITE TAILED SEA EAGLE near Walland Marsh. Hastily arranged permisison to leave work for a couple of hours saw us looking at a splendid Sea Eagle one hour later. Only the second one we have seen in Kent and worth the headless chicken arrangements to get there in time. You have to say they are impressive. Big is an understatement, they are enormous. The bird showed distantly in a tree and then took off to fly over us. We later saw it again in flight at some distance. It was then back to work as I did not wish to abuse the goodwill gesture of my manager. Others remained on site and saw it several times before it flew off high to the north. It was not winged tagged so may be of Scandanivan origin.

I attach a photo which is all my poor camera could produce. At least it gives you the impression of its size, in particular the powerful bill. Thats hope its refund for others to enjoy.

Dave.



2nd Winter WHITE TAILED SEA EAGLE near Walland Marsh.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Feb-12 09:59 PM GMT

Guess what we saw?

FRIDAY 17th FEBRUARY 2012.

PETT LEVEL. A mid day visit saw the number of geese present increasing from our previous trip. There was now at least 140 Brent Geese including 2 Pale Bellied, 11 Whitefronted and 2 Pinkfooted geese plus a number that kept moving up and down the many distant ridges. We did not bother counting the many Greylag and Canada Geese but one of the field contained 250 Wigeon, 28 Curlew and a male Marsh Harrier.

We decided to go home via Appledore and on reaching a farm some ½ mile south were rewarded with a stunning male Hen Harrier flying around a nearby field. Whilst watching this we become aware of yes, you've guessed it, another Great White Egret feeding on the Military Canal (see Sunday's notes).

SATURDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2012.

It was about time that we caught up with the long staying 2nd Winter Kumliens Gull at Dover. This bird we missed on our last visit, but we managed to see it this time. We did have to wait nearly an hour but it finally showed and flew around near the lorry park. In the meantime a Peregrine put in an appearance and a Common Seal floated up and down the harbour.

Next was the sea front at St Margaret's where 2 Peregrines were on show with Gannets and Fulmars flying up and down.

A visit to Oare Marshes produced the long staying Rough Legged Buzzard over Mocketts Hill together with 2 Marsh Harriers and a Common Buzzard. We ended the day at Eastwell Church, where on getting out of the car a Firecrest was singing. We managed to see it before it flew off towards the lake and then lost to view.

SUNDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2012.

An adult Iceland Gull had been seen on our local gravel pit (Conningbrook) the previous afternoon so today found us looking for the bird fairly early. It had been seen up until moments before we arrived, but despite us checking at various times throughout the day it failed to return. Whilst scanning the local fields another Great White Egret was seen standing alongside a ditch. Just as we were making a few phone calls about this sighting another Great White Egret flew in from the West and landed on the pits. Two on our local gravel pits in one day. Just how many are there in Kent? A scan of the water revealed a female Goosander and 4 Little Egrets on the waters edge. What a fantastic morning and we had gone less than 5 miles.

Later in the day there was several reports of the White Tailed Sea Eagle near Folkestone and Hythe. Despite two visits we failed to connect with this majestic bird. We ended the day at Eastwell Lake where a female Red Crested Pochard was the only bird of note.

Finally, I have to comment on what I think is a brilliant photo on Guy Padfields personal forum of the neighbour's chalet. What a stunning photo showing such a wonderful location. Thanks to Guy for sharing this picture postcard.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Padfield, 23-Feb-12 10:55 PM GMT

Thanks! 😊 I thoroughly enjoy browsing your diary, too. I don't often comment, so as not to break the flow.

Guy

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Feb-12 11:48 PM GMT

Thank you Guy. I try and make the reports as interesting as I can. I realise that the main interest on here is Butterflies, but I think that most of us have an appreciation in all wildlife, even if our levels of interest vary.

FRIDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2012.

What a glorious sunny day. Just the day to spend on the North Kent coast and just see what was happening (sea fog predicated at Dungeness on the South Coast). We started at Graveney Marshes following up yet another sighting of Great White Egret. To be fair this could be the one seen earlier in the year on Sheppey, so may not be a new one for Kent. This one was hiding and we did not see it in a visit of one and half hours. However, a fine male Marsh Harrier was a delight to watch.

Next we called in at nearby Oare Marsh and watched the regular Rough Legged Buzzard hanging in the wind over Mocketts Hill with 3 Common Buzzards and 2 Marsh Harriers. It would hang there for 5 minutes at a time showing a gleaming white upper tail area and light coloured head in the bright sunshine.

The floods were quiet with only 2 Ruff and 11 Pintail of note.

SATURDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2012.

The weather was predicated to be another fine day. With very little reported at Dungeness we decided to try the North Kent coast again. This turned out to be a good decision for on arrival at Graveney at the GREAT WHITE EGRET was showing, although somewhat distant. Still, a very nice bird to see and worth the admiring glances from the few birders present. With such a nice day we decided this time to visit Elmley RSPB reserve to see what raptors were on the wing. To our delight the long staying but elusive, (well to us), adult and Juvenile ROUGH LEGGED BUZZARDS were on the wing, although distant. Also present 4 Marsh Harriers and a Sparrowhawk, with good numbers of Lapwing.

It is very sad to know that the RSPB warden and well respected member of the local birding community, Gordon Allison passed away suddenly recently at the early age of 50. He had been doing excellent work making this reserve more accommodating to Lapwings and other breeding waders. We all hope that his replacement and the current team manage to continue his fine and committed leadership.

SUNDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2012.

A local visit to Conningbrook produced 4 Little Egrets but little else. Next was a wood near Chilham where we saw our first Primroses of the year in flower. In addition a few Lesser Celandine were out on a nearby bank. This is really early, but indicative of the warm spell we are currently experiencing in the South.

We guessed that Dungeness would be packed on such a nice day so we did a tour of the Graveney, Challock and Chilham areas looking for Raptors.

Altogether we saw 29 Common Buzzards and 1 Sparrowhawk soaring, but none of the hoped for Red Kites. Red Kite is a regular spring migrant in Kent and a warm sunny day is ideal for looking for them.

We ended the day watching the Great White Egret at Graveney and this time a female Marsh Harrier was hunting across the marsh.

What a great weekend for watching wildlife.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 07-Mar-12 12:44 AM GMT

A rather disappointing few days, mainly due to poor weather, but also a lack of change in the birds on offer to view. Still, come rain or shine we are out there looking because every day brings new opportunities to see different wildlife.

Friday 2nd March 2012.

Today saw a visit to Dungeness, but not only was the weather poor but visibility limited in the misty conditions. Little has changed from previous visits but a close fly by Bittern in front of Hanson Hide pleased the few of us sitting patiently waiting for something good. There was no sign of the regular Great White Egret, or any Marsh Harriers, but reasonable numbers of Kittiwakes and Gannets were passing at sea. There is currently a very large flock of Great Crested Grebes on the sea off the fishing boats and around the bay area. It numbers in excess of 200, although they can be mobile and scattered over a large area. A search of the area around the fishing boats failed to find the Snow Buntings, seen by others the previous day.

Saturday 3rd March 2012.

We checked Oare Marsh, but in fairly heavy rain perhaps this was one day when we should have stayed at home. 2 Little Egrets, 2 Avocets and 12 Pintail tried to cheer us up, as did a flock of 500 plus passing Brent Geese, but it was not a day for walking. We checked Graveney Marshes but did not find last weeks Great White Egret so headed inland. The weather was trying to clear up and a Common Buzzard and Marsh Tit near Sheldwich was encouraging, but on finding little else we decided to head home.

Sunday 4th March 2012.

We decided to visit Dungeness again. It was raining hard so sitting in the car was really the only sensible option. This time the Great White Egret was again visible from the road, as was the long staying Long Tailed Duck. The sea was quieter than last time but Kittiwakes and Gannets were still moving. A visit to Scotney gravel pits produced an interesting flock of 31 Snow Geese. It is anyone's guess whether these are feral or wild. Everyone assumes they are feral, possibly from Holland where a number are known to breed. However, a flock visited North Kent in the eighties and to everyone's surprise one ringed bird was proved to come from North America. We tend to write off sightings of Snow Geese as escapes, but perhaps we should be more open minded. Incidentally, this same flock has also been seen at various locations around Britain including Hampshire and the Home Counties, although at one time it numbered 32.

Let's hope that next weekend brings better weather.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Mar-12 10:21 PM GMT

What brilliant weekend weather wise and certainly a time to be out in the field. It felt like there should be lots of butterflies on the wing, but despite searching we failed to find one.

FRIDAY 09TH MARCH 2012.

DUNGENESS. A disappointing day really with very little changed from the last few weeks. A few ducks were displaying but hopes of some migration proved to be wishful thinking. We even failed to find any Sandwich Terns, which had been recorded over the last few days. The local Cettis warblers on the RSPB have found their singing voices and must be getting ready for breeding.

SATURDAY 10TH MARCH 2012.

With not much happening we did some house work in the morning and did not set out until after mid-day. This turned out to be a good move because a message soon had us heading down to the excellent Country Park at Samphire Hoe near Dover. Not only is it probably Britain's best site for Early Spider Orchid but on this occasion a SHORT TOED TREECREEPER was present near the railway line. This is a mega bird for Britain, although several well watched sightings in the nineties meant that this was never going to attract the crowds. So it proved with only about 20 people present when we

arrived. We could hear it calling on a regular basis on the footpath side of the railway line but it took about 20 minutes before we saw it, and another 20 minutes to obtain reasonable views. The call is more like a Coal Tit rather than the typical Treecreeper high pitched call and it was this that first drew attention to the bird. We managed to see well the flanks, which are a yellowish to brown colour rather than the pure white of the British species. Whilst we did not manage any photos several others did and I am sure that these will be submitted to support the identification of the bird. A very good find by the Country Park wardens and a well behaved small crowd of birders. Offshore 3 Harbour Porpoise delighted the few watchers but we missed the Raven that flew over. In brilliant sunshine this was a very good and enjoyable afternoon.

SUNDAY 11TH MARCH 2012.

The bright start lulled us into a false sense. We checked a local wood but failed to find any butterflies at a site that normally gives us early Brimstone. The number of Primroses on show has increased but the ground is very dry so it will be interesting to see how they fair. Bird wise things were also quiet so we moved to the coast near Faversham hoping for some raptor movement. We did see 3 Common Buzzards and a Sparrowhawk but these were most likely local. A mist descended over the scene so it was time for home and the garden. Oh, the sun came back out as soon as we arrived home.

MONDAY 12th MARCH 2012.

A male and female Peregrine circled over the garden for 10 minutes early afternoon. They seemed more interested in each other rather than the scattering flocks of pigeons and gulls. This is the second time we have seen them in recent weeks so this may be a good sign of things to come, (unless you are a pigeon).

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Mar-12 12:06 AM GMT

Hot news on a very warm day.

I have just been informed that a Large Tortiseshell was seen at Dungeness at 13.15 hours today. Not yet refound but hopefully will be seen again.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-Mar-12 11:06 PM GMT

What a cracking day weather wise Thursday turned out to be. Pity I had to spend it in the office but that's the way it goes. A White butterfly seen in the garden was too quick to be positively identified, although I suspect it may have been a Small White.

I am pleased to say that some photos were obtained of the Short Toed Treecreeper (see previous post) and hopefully will be submitted to support the identification of this major rarity.

FRIDAY 16TH MARCH 2012.

It had to be Dungeness today in an effort to see if yesterdays Large Tortoiseshell was re-found. Unfortunately the weather was much cooler and no butterflies could be located by anyone. Amazingly the observatory warden had seen a Hummingbird Hawk moth earlier in the week. This is very early, but a most welcome sighting. What Dungeness lacked in butterflies it made up for in migrant birds. We walked around the area and saw 9 Wheatears, 4 Black Redstarts and 7 Chiffchaffs, with various flocks of returning Brent Geese flying over totalling in excess of 200. Again we failed to see any Sandwich Terns but did find a splendid looking White Wagtail in with 20 plus Pied Wagtails on the ARC pit and a Rock Pipit was heard calling. A pair of Marsh Harriers were displaying, Cettis warblers were singing but we failed to locate the 2 Gargeney seen the previous day.

This was a really enjoyable March day.

SATURDAY 17TH MARCH 2012.

Dull and overcast with drizzle in the air. We found ourselves at Oare Marshes to look for any early migrants but none were forth coming. In fact little was seen other than the local Avocets pairing up and 2 smart Red Breasted Mergansers on the Swale river. There are still quite a few of the winter duck remaining including a dozen or so Pintails. The local Marsh Harriers were flying around Mocketts hill.

SUNDAY 18TH MARCH 2012.

A day in the garden but enlivened by the sudden appearance of 2 Common Buzzards and the female Peregrine over during mid afternoon. The Peregrine showed a big interest in the passing Buzzards, but did not feel compelled to chase them off.

Another enjoyable and interesting weekend.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 22-Mar-12 09:43 PM GMT

Are we too optimistic?

WEDNESDAY 21st MARCH 2012.

With forecast temperatures of 16 degrees and full sunshine it just had to be a day for butterflies, forgetting that it is still only mid March. Anyway, we decided to call in at Grove Ferry after the visiting the dentist. It seemed a good move, especially when one of the first birds we saw was a flock of 8 Pink Footed Geese on Westbere Marshes. They were not totally unexpected as a small flock had been present a few days. A Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard circled overhead. Next was the ramp viewing point at Grove Ferry itself and eventually we found 2 distant male Gargeney in amongst good numbers of Teal, Shoveler and Lapwings. A female Marsh Harrier caused initial panic, but things soon settled down to reveal even more Teal that had been hiding in the reeds.

We then walked to the water meadows where 5 Little Egrets, 3 Water Pipits, a Water Rail and lots more Teal were present. There were now 4 Marsh Harriers and 2 Common Buzzards circling the area but all seemed more interested in establishing territories than hunting.

A feature of the walk so far was the number of birds singing, including 14 Chiffchaffs and 6 Cettis Warblers, but no butterflies. Things now changed with firstly a Comma and then a Peacock near the footpath but neither came close enough for a photo. On the way out we saw our first Cuckoo (Ladies Smock) flower of the year.

In general a very good day, but butterflies are still proving hard to find.

Because of the lack of butterflies I thought I would add a photo of a Chequered Skipper seen on our Scottish Visit last year. Its just a reminder of the goodies yet to come in a location with stunning scenery. If only we can afford the petrol to get there and see them again this year.



Chequered Skipper June 2011.



2 Male Garganey present at Grove Ferry

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Mar-12 10:44 PM GMT

SATURDAY 24 MARCH 2012.

With fog predicated on the east coast of Kent we thought we would start off in a local wood. It should have been good for a few butterflies, especially Brimstone, but in the event all we saw insect wise was 8 Beeflys. Bird wise it was also quiet with only singing Chiffchaffs and a fly over Common Buzzard being of interest. The number of flowering Primroses has greatly increased since our last visit. A good showing of Dog Violets and a few Lesser Celandine is a good sign that spring is on its way.

We headed to the North coast but the mist/ fog was still present so not surprisingly we only saw one Common Buzzard and a Sparrowhawk.

We should have stayed at home for the garden produced a Peacock enjoying the increasing sunshine and stayed for most of the afternoon. 2 Common Buzzards circled overhead.

SUNDAY 25 MARCH 2012.

More costal fog predicated so we headed for Hamstreet Woods in really pleasant weather. During a stroll lasting a few hours we saw 5 Common Buzzards, Sparrowhawk, 6 Nuthatches, 3 Treecreepers and 2 Woodcocks amongst the common woodland birds. Plants included many Wood Anemone, Lesser Celandine and Dog Violet. Once again we drew a blank on butterflies despite the temperature being around 16 degrees.

We then tried an old favourite near Wye Downs. This time we struck lucky with Peacock and Comma.

This really warm spell is most enjoyable and should help wildlife to recover from the winter. I am a little concerned, probably wrongly, that for some wildlife it is a little early and could do more harm than good. I suppose nature has a way of balancing things out. I am now off to find the sun tan.

Dave



Our first Cuckoo plant of the year at Grove Ferry last Wednesday.



Not my best photo of a peacock, just so nice to see one after the long winter months.



Part of the banks of Wood Anemone in Hamstreet Woods.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-Apr-12 03:28 AM GMT

FRIDAY 30TH MARCH 2012.

This was predicated to be the last day of the current warm spell so we felt that a big effort for early butterflies was in order in our local woods. We did a tour of the Hamstreet complex of woods, but disappointingly the only butterflies turned out to be one Peacock and one Red Admiral, with a few Orange Underwing moths and reasonable numbers of Beefly. Plant wise things were much better with good numbers of Wood Anemone, Bluebells and Primroses carpeting the woodland floor. What a joy to see and hopefully a lot more to come. Bird wise we did not do too bad, with a group of 14 Common Crossbills being the best. They are quite a hard to find species in Kent with numbers generally low, although we do get occasional parties on migration. This particular flock contained at least 8 males in their bright red plumage. I tend to think that these were on migration as the local ones should be breeding by now, being one of Britain's early breeding species. Whether local or migrating it was still very nice to watch them feeding on the pine cones in their bright colours.

Other birds noted included 8 Redpolls, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker drumming away, 9 Nuthatches, Common Buzzard and Sparrowhawk in addition to the common woodland birds.

SATURDAY 31ST MARCH 2012.

A much colder day and no chance of any butterflies. Indeed many of the birds seemed to have stopped singing, although 2 Blackcaps singing at Eastwell was a pleasant surprise.

Oare Marshes proved fairly quiet with no sign of any spring migrants on our visit. 8 Little Egrets were nice to see, as was the dozen or so Avocets, but the lack of any Sand Martins or Swallows was disappointing. The journey to and from home however produced good numbers of Primroses, Cuckoo Flowers, Bluebells and even a few Greater Stitchwort made sure the trip was worth while.

We ended the day by driving straight onto the local petrol station forecourt and filling up. No queues, no panic, only me and a couple of other cars. It's so nice to be back to normal after the chaos of the last few days.



One of the bright male Common Crossbills seen in Hamstreet Woods.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 04-Apr-12 09:26 PM GMT

SUNDAY 1ST APRIL 2012.

The weather appeared to be a bit warmer than the forecast so we decided to head for Stodmarsh in the hope that some early summer migrants had arrived. A walk to Marsh Hide produced a singing Blackcap and 8 Chiffchiffs, but that was it with regards migrants. 4 Bearded Tits were showing and calling near the hide with 3 Cettis Warblers singing. 2 Red Admirals and a Small White cheered us up, as did small patches of Cuckoo flower, but the weather gave the hint that it should have been better. Then we did a raptor watch from Collards Hill and saw a total of 12 Common Buzzards and 8 Marsh Harriers. We were then joined by Martyn Wilson, whose is the dedicated local patch watcher and puts many hours into watching the Stour Valley. He had earlier seen and heard 4 Sedge Warblers and also mentioned that a visitor had reported a Hobby over the ramp at Grove Ferry, so things are on the up. Just as we were leaving 3 Red Admirals flew past. I ended the day at a friends house and whilst in the garden a Swallow flew around giving us our first sighting of the year. Another good day in Kent.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 09-Apr-12 03:06 AM GMT

What a strange couple of weeks. Ten days ago I was sitting in the garden in a tee shirt with temperatures of 22 degrees thinking that butterflies are here, and today its cold with showers and obviously not a butterfly in sight. Hopefully this little cold snap is only temporary and we can soon return to walking in the woods.

FRIDAY 6TH APRIL 2012.

The last reasonable day before the temperature drops found us walking Hamstreet Woods again. This time we had better success with a fine male Brimstone, a Green Veined White, 2 Peacocks, Red Admiral and 2 Large Whites. 3 Common Buzzards circled overhead whilst a Blackcap sang its lovely musical song.

We then toured Dungeness to add Speckled Wood to the list. A Spoonbill has made itself at home the last couple of days and today it was actually feeding around its favourite island in front of Hanson Hide instead of its usual pose of being a sleep. The ARC pit also produced a Swallow and 4 Little Egrets, with 5 Cettis Warblers scattered around the area. We had just arrived at the observatory when the warden informed us that a second winter Iceland Gull was now showing from Makepeace Hide on the RSPB. Fifteen minutes later we were enjoying decent views of this rare Dungeness bird. A most enjoyable and unexpected sighting, although there have been decent numbers reported around the British coast this winter.

SUNDAY 8TH APRIL 2012.

Today at Dungeness we birded in cold, mist and the odd shower. There was no chance of any butterflies today and to be honest little chance of any migrants. However, we put a few hours into searching before the lure of a warm room tempted us home. The Spoonbill had returned to sleeping, 4 Sand Martins looked lost as they flew over the Dungeness Road during a break in the showers. A Raven flew towards the Power Station, the Long Tailed Duck entertained us at the south end of the ARC pit. Finally, after a long wait the Water Pipit returned to the same area of the pit and showed briefly. It really felt like the end of winter rather than the start of spring. Tomorrow does not look much better, it can only be the Easter break.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 10-Apr-12 02:37 AM GMT

What can I say about the weather today. We did go out, but it rained all the time. Needless to say we saw very little. The highlight being a pair of Ravens at Langdown Bay (Dover). The sea was very quiet with just a few Fulmars passing. Before we left home we had the unexpected sight of 32 Med Gulls circling over the house and heading in a north direction calling all the time. This is the biggest flock we have seen over our house. To put it into perspective the most we have seen here before is five so this was clearly a large movement. Hundreds have been seen in the Rye area over the last few weeks so perhaps our flock was part of this large influx.

With not much to write about I have had time to download a few photos taken over the last few days.



Green Veined White at Hamstreet Woods.



The second winter Iceland Gull at Dungeness. Sorry about the light. The sun was behind, but it was a case of press the shutter before the bird woke up and flew off.



This Little Egret was at Oare Marsh

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 12-Apr-12 02:50 AM GMT

CAN GIBSTER SEE INTO THE FUTURE?

Just over a year ago I posted a photo of a male Smew which also contained, in my view, a Tufted Duck. Gibster however thought it may show a Ringed Necked Duck. I now post a couple of photos taken yesterday at Dungeness, and if Gibster says Ringed Necked Duck this time I will agree.

The events of the day started as we got into the car with the intention of heading to Dungeness. A phone call even before I had turned the car key ensured that we headed straight for the ramp at Hookers Pit where a male Ringed Necked Duck was on show, well occasionally, as it spent most of its time sleeping and hiding in the reeds. This is only the second time we have seen this rare American Duck at Dungeness in 25 years of visiting. The light was not the best in cloudy conditions, but I managed a couple of acceptable photos to show the main features. These being the white bands around the bill, the white spur at the front of the body contrasting with the light grey flanks, and no tuft on the head of course.

A Bittern boomed nearby, 3 Bearded Tits pinged away in front of us, a Willow Warbler sang and 3 Marsh Harriers displayed. A small crowd of the Dungeness regulars had gathered and it was good to be amongst a great group of people. Almost as exciting as the RN Duck was the report of a Dartford Warbler, but despite a big search by a number of people we were unable to relocate it. This species seems to have been hit hard by the last couple of cold winters. We then saw a smart breeding condition Slavonian Grebe on the New Diggings and 4 Little Egrets, with 2 newly arrived Yellow Wagtails and the long staying Long Tailed Duck on the ARC pit.

On the way home we called in at Hamstreet Woods to look for butterflies and managed to see Green Veined White and 3 Orange Tips. Numbers still appear low but it is early in the season.

What a fantastic day.

Dave



Another view of the Ringed Necked Duck



Male Ringed Necked Duck near Hookers Pit at Dungeness

Re: Dave Brown

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-12 06:18 AM GMT

Absolutely cracking bird is the Ring-necked Duck and that is a very handsome specimen! 🍷 I love the markings on the bill.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 18-Apr-12 08:15 PM GMT

Downhill all the way.

That's my reference to the weather. We are still managing to see good birds, but where have all the butterflies gone in this poor weather? As for moths, the nights have either been too cold or wet, so not surprising, not one seen by us.

Thursday 12th April 2012.

We visited Oare Marsh and the surrounding area. 6 Common Buzzards, 11 Marsh Harriers, 2 Little Egrets, Sedge Warbler and Swallow seen. No butterflies.

Friday 13th April 2012.

A visit to Dungeness was interesting. We were aware that Harbour Porpoises had been seen close in over the previous few days, and sure enough at least 6 individuals were on show, many inside the buoy. After about an hour 3 Dolphins appeared in front of, and alongside, a distant sailing yacht. Although a lot bigger than the Porpoise to be honest they did not show well enough and close enough to be positive about their identification. Several days earlier 8 White Beaked Dolphins had been seen briefly in the area and whilst it would be nice to think that they were this species, (we have not seen White Beaked), our views did not eliminate Bottle Nose despite one jumping out of the water. Hopefully they will reappear sometime to confirm their identification. The sea watch continued during which a steady stream of Common and Sandwich terns were noted, some being harried by a passing Arctic Skua. 4 passing Whimbrels proved some migration was taking place. The Power Station and point produced 2 Black Redstarts and a Swallow. The ARC pit produced a Little Ringed Plover and 3 Tree Sparrows otherwise very quiet, and certainly no butterflies.

Saturday 14th April 2012.

A warmer but winder day so into the Stour Valley to see what migrants had arrived. We heard our first Reed Warbler of the year, 3 Sedge Warblers, 6 Cettis, 4 Blackcaps, many Chiffchaffs, 2 Common Buzzards and 5 Marsh Harriers. 4 Orange Tips basked in the sheltered sunny spots.

Sunday 15th April 2012.

Elmley for a change, but the wind grew stronger and the visible birds less. We did see our first House Martin of the year, a Yellow Wagtail, 12 Avocets

and 41 adult Med Gulls feeding close to Kingshill farm. Pairs of Lapwings were displaying, a Peregrine buzzed a Common Buzzard, 5 Marsh Harriers were trying to display and a distant Buzzard species was probably the long staying Rough Legged but I just could keep the scope steady enough to confirm its id.

Let's hope that the weather improves for the coming weekend. We still have not seen Grizzled Skipper this year so it would be nice to catch up with.
Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 29-Apr-12 03:55 AM GMT

I think the least said about this run of poor weather the better.

SATURDAY 21ST APRIL 2012.

Today we were up and about early. We had volunteered to take part in the national Nightingale survey and had been allocated 2 squares to the east of Hamstreet. These surveys are a good way to not only look for the target species, but to look for butterflies and plants in areas you don't normally do. Despite our enthusiasm we failed to hear or see one Nightingale in our squares, although we did hear two birds just outside the area. We think the recent poor weather must be holding birds back, as apart from Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps very few migrants were present. Not one butterfly was seen all morning.

We then called in at Dungeness to see 3 Stonechats, 3 Marsh Harriers, 3 Swallows, Sedge Warbler, Cettis Warbler and 4 Tree Sparrows.

29 Early Purple Orchids were showing, but the local rabbit was taking a fancy and I don't think there will be many left by next weekend, when they should be near their best.

SUNDAY 22ND APRIL 2012.

We did a tour taking in Lenham, Stalisfield, Chilham and Lyminge. With an improvement in the weather we thought we would tie up visits to look for raptors with butterflies.

Birds noted were 17 Common Buzzards, 4 Sparrowhawks, 2 Marsh Tits, Blackcap and Garden Warbler.

Butterflies noted were Brimstone, Orange Tip (4), Green Veined White (2), Small & Large White, Speckled Wood and Red Admiral.

A much better day.

THURSDAY 26TH APRIL 2012.

Back to the strong winds and showers. A Large White at Dungeness was the only butterfly seen.

A one hour sea watch produced 1 Great and 3 Arctic Skuas, with 40 Gannets, 25 Common Terns and 4 Common Scoter. Our first Swifts of the year (15) were flying over the ARC pit, together with 2 House Martins and 1 Yellow Wagtail. Scotney pit produced 2 Whimbrel and 6 Dunlin but little else.

I hope to post a few photos in the next few days.

This poor weather is quite frustrating, but we have to accept that the rain is badly needed. An illustration of this is shown by the very dry conditions of a local beech wood where we see White Helleborine Orchids every year. This year the ground is so dry we are not sure what will happen this year. So far there is no sign of any.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Apr-12 03:03 AM GMT

I have added a few photos taken on visits over the last week or so. Very few Butterflies so far this year. The Blue Headed Wagtail is just a sub species of the Yellow Wagtail and is usually found on the near Continent. There is about 8 or 9 variants of this species and they can be very confusing. I tend to just admire the look of the bird for it is of Britains declining species and no longer a common bird of the countryside.

Dave



This Blue Headed Wagtail was present on the ARC pit at Dungeness from the road.



Speckled Wood near Chilham



Cowslip about to flower at Wye National Nature Reserve.



This Stonechat at Dungeness has been favouring the old lighthouse area for a couple of weeks.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-May-12 09:56 PM GMT

Okay, what is going on weather wise! Saturday and Sunday are wet and windy, all go back to work on the Monday, so the sun comes out.

SATURDAY 28 APRIL 2012.

In between the heavy showers and long periods of rain we managed to see a reasonable selection at Dungeness. A Blue Headed Wagtail, a Channel Wagtail (don't ask, just another sub species of Yellow Wagtail), 6 Yellow Wagtails, 2 White Wagtails, 2 Little Ringed Plovers, 9 Redshanks, 200 plus Swifts, 35 Swallows, 2 House Martins, 25 Common Terns, 80 Gannets and 1 Arctic Skua were reward for being silly and birding on a day when sensible people were indoors keeping dry.

SUNDAY 29 APRIL 2012.

Heavy rain in the morning gave way to warm sunshine around mid-day so we again headed for Dungeness. What a good decision for the rain had brought down a good selection. Pride of place went to a fine Pied Flycatcher hanging around the Old Lighthouse, supported by a male Redstart, Nightingale, Lesser Whitethroat, Black Redstart, 8 Wheatears, Med Gull, 3 Pomarine Skuas, 1 Arctic Skua, 150 Common Terns, 9 Whimbrel. There was an interesting mass emergence of Small Coppers with 26 being counted around the point and inland of the little railway station plus 2 Large Whites.

We called in at Northpoint Pit on the way home to see 5 Swallows and 10 Med Gulls.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 09-May-12 12:07 AM GMT

What a weekend here in Kent. Wet, windy, cold, sunny, you name it we had it.

So what did this mean to our wildlife? Well to start we saw no Butterflies until yesterday (Monday), but bird wise it was quite exciting and we even saw a few orchids.

BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND – PART ONE.

FRIDAY 4TH MAY 2012.

What a day at Dungeness, nothing mega rare but the best fall of migrants we have seen for many years. David, the Observatory Warden estimated in excess of 1,500 Whitethroats, 800 Willow Warblers and lots of other species including Garden Warblers, Blackcaps, Redstarts, Spotted Flycatchers, Pied Flycatchers, Wheatears, Lesser Whitethroats, Yellow Wagtails, Nightingale, Wood Warbler, Swifts, House martins, Sand Martins and Swallows. They ringed 320 birds of 19 species, with many arriving during the day, ensuring a very busy day. This was like it used to be in the eighties.

We saw the following,

Whitethroats 150 plus, including a staggering 15 birds in one small bush less than a metre high eating every insect in sight. Willow Warblers 200 plus, Wheatears 25 (including a few of the Greenland race), Garden Warblers 10, Blackcaps 20, Redstart 3, Spotted Flycatcher 2, Pied Flycatcher, Whinchat 3, Lesser Whitethroat 2, Wood Warbler, Nightingale, Yellow Wagtail 5, Hobby, Swifts 250 plus, Swallows 750, House Martins 30 plus, Sand Martins 50, Greenshank, Black Tern 2, Whimbrel 5, Stonechat 2 and finally 2 WHITE STORKS at Scotney Gravel Pits.

During a break in the day we headed for nearby Rye Harbour Nature Reserve. They have made some real good changes to the reserve with new flooded areas. The birds have responded and today we saw a female KENTISH PLOVER, 2 Curlew Sandpiper, 4 Avocets, 5 Little Terns, 4 Med Gulls, Ringed Plover 75, many Knot, Bar Tailed Godwit, Sandwich and Common Terns.

Part Two to follow.



Distant record shot of the two White Storks at Scotney Gravl Pits. Both unringed and fully winged.



Pied Flycatcher trapped at Dungeness



Spotted Flycatcher trapped at Dungeness



This female Redstart was one of several seen during the day.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 12-May-12 12:04 AM GMT

BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND -PART TWO

SATURDAY 5TH MAY 2012.

After Friday's excitement the rest of the weekend was less so, especially today. It rained hard most of the morning, but to our surprise a Ringtail Hen Harrier passed near us as we drove around Walland Marsh. It was hunting, but how successful in the rain we will never know. Next stop was the Green Winged Orchid site on the edge of Walland. Disappointingly only one plant was visible and in flower. Once again the farmer had been very obliging and removed the sheep from the field, so we can't say they have been eaten.

Around the observatory and RSPB recording area we noted 1 Redstart, 25 Whitethroats, 10 Willow Warblers, 10 Wheatears, Common Sandpiper, Little Egret, 5 Whimbrel, 8 Bar Tailed Godwits, 200 plus Swifts, 600 Swallows, 25 House Martins and the same number of Sand Martins. Not a butterfly all day.

SUNDAY 6TH MAY 2012.

Dungeness again in the hope of something special but it was not to be. The strong winds put paid to migration although there was a few more waders around. 2 Common Sandpipers, 14 Bar Tailed Godwits, 3 Whimbrels, 2 Marsh Harriers, Spotted Flycatcher, Cettis Warbler, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, 2 Hobby, 200 plus Swifts, 750 plus Swallows, 40 Sand Martins and a Cuckoo. The only butterflies were Brimstone and Large White.

MONDAY 7TH MAY 2012.

Today we undertook our BTO Nightingale survey again. Being 2 weeks after the first visit we were hoping that our tretrads had welcomed some late arrivals. Despite the three of us looking and listening hard we only encountered 2 Nightingales. One right on the edge of our survey area and the other about 100 metres outside. This is a disaster compared to the seventies and we can only put it down to a change in the habitat. Nightingales like areas that were coppiced about 5 years ago and very little of our two tretrads contained. Indeed, one is almost all farm land. I have heard that this year's survey is showing nationally Nightingale figures are down by about 50%, compared to the last full survey in 1999. We saw or heard all the common woodland birds and two groups of Early Purple Orchids.

As usual we ended up at Dungeness but heavy rain set in, so with very few birds around we headed home. Wrong decision. Mid afternoon the sun came out and almost immediately a CRESTED LARK was found near the Observatory. Although this would be our second Dungeness record this very rare bird was too tempting to miss so back to Dungeness to see the bird, arriving only minutes before it flew off and not to be seen again. Along with a few others we spent the next couple of hours searching for it because people were still arriving hoping to see it. It was now quite warm and a few Large Whites were on the wing. Whilst the weather ended on a high, in general the weekend weather was poor and insect activity even poorer.

Still there is always next weekend to look forward to.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Gibster, 12-May-12 06:40 AM GMT

Hiya Dave,

sorry to be a bit late to the party but I think your bird is indeed the (*returning* heh heh heh) Ring-necked Duck 🦆

Good luck with the rest of the Spring goodies. I'm reckoning a rare Sylvia and Bee-eaters could be coming your way...

Cheers mate,

Gibster.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-May-12 12:37 AM GMT

Thanks Gibster. Although I am wondering how you have the time to spend on the forums being as its your honeymoon. 😊

I know that we are all moaning about the recent spell of wet & cold weather but it does seem to have encouraged the Bluebells out. Our local woods are about the best I can remember for some time with wonderful carpets of blue and a smell that makes it good to walk just to wlk through. Challock Forest on Sunday was jam packed with people out to enjoy the display.

FRIDAY 11TH MAY 2012

We undertook the BTO Nightingale survey again in the same Tretrads, but again failed to find any additional birds singing. We may try once more but accept that we are unlikely to increase the number counted. Butterflies encounterd were Orange Tip, Large & Small White. Back home, and after settling down for the early evening, we received a message to say Two White Stocks were present near Appledore. After driving around for a little while and seeing none we received a text giving us exact directions for the 2 birds, which were not viewable from any road. A walk across two fields via a public footpath enabled us to view the birds distantly. Were these the same pair as at Scotney a week ago, we don't know. It is possible, but those birds were also seen in Susses and Hampshire.

SATURDAY 12TH MAY 2012.

A trip to Stodmarsh and Chislet Marsh produced 27 Hobby's, 4 Marsh Harriers, 200 plus Swifts, 15 Sand Martins, Green Veined White and 4 Large Whites.

SUNDAY 13TH MAY 2012.

Today we decided to check out a site in North Kent where Emperor Moths have been seen in the past. We saw none, but did have 2 Peacocks and 5 Large Whites. Also adult Med Gulls were still a feature. 40 plus were seen so we presume that they must be breeding nearby. We ended the day near Wye NR in less than ideal conditions but did see Dingy Skipper, 4 Holly Blues, 2 Green Hairstreaks, 2 Orange Tips, Brimstone, Peacock, Large & Small White. Also present was 6 Lady Orchids with a few Common Twayblades coming through.

MONDAY 14TH MAY 2012.

A much better morning although the cloud and cold returned after mid-day. We visited Wye NR again and this time we had reasonable numbers of butterflies. 7 Dingy Skipper, 4 Wall Bronws, 1 Small Copper, 1 Green Hairstreak, a Treble Bar moth, 5 Early Purple Orchids and a good number of Cowslips. A much more enjoyable day all round.

Dave



Dingy Skipper at Wye NR.



Wall Brown at Wye NR.



Small Copper at Wye NR. Trying to hide in the Brambles.



Lady Orchid at Wye NR.



This Hobby showed fairly well at Dungeness but was difficult to photograph in the drizzle and poor light.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-May-12 11:23 PM GMT

And the sun comes out.

WEDNESDAY 16TH MAY 2012.

With the sun shining and the wind decreasing we thought that we would check Beckley Woods for Grizzled Skipper. No luck, and very few butterflies, with only a Speckled Wood and Comma to note. A beautiful patch of at least 75 Early Purple Orchids was a real treat, but other than 3 Common Buzzards there was little to note.

THURSDAY 17TH MAY 2012.

A trip to Dungeness was note worthy for its quietness. 3 Hobbies, 100 Swifts, 25 House Martins, Raven, Tree Sparrow and Cettis Warbler was little reward for many hours in the field. We did see two moths, Cinnabar and Small Waved Umber. Returning via Walland Marsh we noted that the Green Winged Orchids had increased to four number, and a Hare running down the road towards us was usual.

FRIDAY 19TH MAY 2012.

A return visit to WYE NR found another 7 Dingy Skippers in a different part of the reserve. They appear to be having a very good year at this location. Also present 2 Large White, Treble Bar and Yellow Shell moths. Nearby in a country lane we saw Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Large White.

SUNDAY 20TH MAY 2012.

The BTO have extended the Survey recording period for Nightingales due to the late arrival of some individuals. It has not helped us for another walk around our tretrads today failed to locate any new individuals. We realise that negative news is just as important as positive in a study if its to justify the results but its still disappointing as one know that one of our tretrads has held reasonable numbers in the past.

A check of a White Helleborine site near Faversham later in the day found 100 plus near to flowering, possibly a week away, unless the Deer get them first.

MONDAY 21 MAY 2012.

A visit to Samphire Hoe was designed to catch up with the Early Spider Orchid and to see more of the Wall Brown. We gave up counting the Early Spiders once we had got to 500. The Wardens notice board said that there was a total of 11,500 on the site. We can well believe this as they are everywhere, even around the overflow car park. 10 Wall Browns, 3 Dingy Skippers, 2 Orange Tips and 4 Large Whites kept us engrossed for a couple of hours.

A most enjoyable period of nature watching especially now the sun has come out to play. Yesterday (Tuesday) was 25 degrees here and the evening was really stunning.

Dave



Wall Brown at Samphire Hoe.



Speckled Wood at Beckley



Dingy Skipper at WYE NNR



Early Spider Orchid at Samphire Hoe.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-May-12 11:17 PM GMT

Hopefully the sunshine will continue and the sun glasses will have to come out.

TUESDAY 22 MAY 2012.

We needed to catch up with Grizzled Skipper so today we headed for Dungeness. They are not in big numbers at this location but you can normally see a few individuals just as the trapping area starts. Today we saw 3 on a grassy area between some cleared brambles, joined by 4 Small Coppers. Next it was a visit to the patch (power station outfall). The adult Iceland Gull was still present, as was a 1st Summer Little Gull. The walk to the patch produced 4 Pale Grass Egger caterpillars. Not much on the pits although it was nice to see 2 Hobbys and 4 displaying Marsh Harriers.

In the evening we had just finished tea when we received a call to say that 3 Red Kites were in the Shadoxhurst area following a tractor. We arrived a little too late to see them in flight, but we had two sitting in nearby trees. Photographs by the person who found them proved that there was 4 individuals present, none of them were tagged or ringed and some looked pretty tatty, suggesting they were continental ones migrating through.

WEDNESDAY 23 MAY 2012.

We again arrived too late to see the Red Kites in flight. Worse news was to follow, for the person on site had not only seen the 4 fly out of the tree but 2 more joined them before all 6 headed north. Followed moments later a seventh individual. 7 in Kent at one spot is unheard of but perhaps a sign of the increasing numbers of this species, both in England and the near Continent.

Hoggers had told us that the Dukes were out last week at Bonsai Bank so today we headed for there. Numbers were still low with a total count of 6, possibly 7, with 2 Dingy Skippers, Holly Blue, Green Hairstreak, 2 Orange Tips and many Large Whites. A Turtle Dove purred and a Willow Warbler was singing its heart out. It's a pity that the Duke numbers are still so low as much management work has gone into the area. Perhaps it's just the effect of the cold winter and dry spring. Nearby a male Brimstone and Holly Blue were at Crundale.

Another good two days of nature watching.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-May-12 03:17 AM GMT

What a scorcher. The last few days have been brilliant weather wise, although the numbers of butterflies present still seems low.

THURSDAY 24 MAY 2012.

Today we undertook a walk around Wye Crown. This is all part of the WYE National Nature Reserve but is some 800 metres away from the popular Devils Kneading Bowl and where we normally visit. The objective of the day was to see if any Burnt Tip Orchids were present at one of its last sites in Kent. The search was to no avail but we did see 2 Wall Browns, 14 Dingy Skippers, 4 Green Hairstreaks, 3 Small Heaths, Red Admiral, Orange Tip, Holly Blue and many Large Whites. A Cuckoo was letting us know of its presence.

FRIDAY 25TH MAY 2012.

Following a trip to the Supermarket we visited the other part of Wye NNR as Hoggers had seen a Brown Argus. We did manage that but saw 11 Dingy Skippers, 4 Small Heaths, 2 Orange Tips and a Green Hairstreak. Plus the usual Large and Small Whites.

Next stop was Parkgate Nature Reserve (Kent Wildlife Trust). This is a public site for Monkey Orchid, the only problem with it is finding it in the first place. Once there though it is a lovely location and the Monkey Orchids were just coming out. Numbers seem down although it is early in the season. About 20 were present in the field closest to the road. About a dozen Early Purple Orchids had already gone over.

We put the garden moth trap for the first time this year. Only 8 species caught but these did include Angle Shades, Chocolate Tip and Treble Lines.

SATURDAY 26TH MAY 2012.

We had intended to go into the Stour Valley/ East Kent area and an early morning text confirmed that was the right place. Two White Winged Black Terns had been present since first thing, although a bit mobile. On our arrival we were pleased to find that they were showing from the Lampen Wall, together with a few Common Terns and 10 Hobbies. A bittern was heard booming and our son saw it in flight. 2 Water Rails screamed from somewhere in the nearby reeds. 3 Cettis Warblers sang their heart out. 2 Bearded Tits pinged from the reedbeds, and 3 Marsh Harriers flew around. We saw our first Hairy Dragonfly and Four Spotted Chaser of the season. A number of Azure Damselfly were on the wing and were already mating.

A really enjoyable few days of nature and weather.

Dave



Duke of Burgundy at Bonsai Bank (Kent).



Monkey Orchid at Parkgate NR (Kent).



Dingy Skipper at Wye. This species appears to be having a very good year here in Kent.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 31-May-12 02:51 AM GMT

SUNDAY 27TH MAY 2012

We ran our moth trap overnight. No surprises and still low numbers, but they are increasing. We recorded 12 species including our first garden record of Rustic Shoulder Knot. Other new ones for the year included Common Marbled Carpet and Spectacle.

Today the forecast temperature for our area was 25 degrees. This would mean the seaside and other popular destinations would be packed to overflowing. So today we decided to tour the local area, just seeing what was on offer. We visited Charing/ Stalisfield/ Lenham and Hamstreet. It was actually quite hard work with butterfly variety very low. We did see lots of Large and Small Whites, 7 Orange Tips, 5 Brimstones, Peacock, Red Admiral, several Holly and Common Blues, but no Skippers or Green Hairstreaks. Birds were represented by 7 Common Buzzards, Hobby, 5 Nightingales and lots of Garden Warblers and Blackcaps. It was nice to hear a few Willow Warblers, one of our favourite songsters.

TUESDAY 29TH MAY 2012.

Following a text message we spent 2 hours watching a private garden at Dungeness, (with the owners permission), for a female Red Breasted Flycatcher, without success. Of the dozen or so people present only a few managed to connect with this attractive little flycatcher as it remained elusive all morning. Our attention was diverted at 11.10 hours when a fine Honey Buzzard flew over being mobbed by couple of Herring Gulls. It slowly made its way inland never to be seen again. Butterflies seen were Small Copper, Common Blue, Holly Blue and Large White.

We ended the day at Hamstreet where, following a tip off from a local birder, we managed to find 2 Grizzled Skippers and a Small Copper, with 5

Brimstones. Seven Large Red Damselflys were our first of the year. 2 Nightingales and a Cuckoo were the bird highlights. Another warm and enjoyabe day.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 03-Jun-12 07:40 PM GMT

WEDNESDAY 30 MAY 2012.

I thought we would have a lazy day today as it was damp and overcast, but very mild. Wrong, an early morning phone call alerted me to a Squacco Heron at Dungeness. So off we went and it actually turned out to be a very good morning. The Squacco Heron showed well but distantly on Dengemarsh, although photography in the poor light was impossible with my camera. A Bittern flew over and another boomed near the ramp. A Drinker moth caterpillar showed itself, and early Emperor Dragonfly flew around as did a number of Four Spotted Chasers. A Common Blue butterfly enteredained us whilst watching 2 Bearded Tits, 2 adult Med Gulls flew over, as did a Little Egret. 3 Cettis sang their hearts out as a Marsh Harrier and Hobby flew over looking for dinner. Many Swifts and Swallows were hawking insects, Sea Thrift was looking stunning and finally we saw one of the recently introduced Short Haired Bumblebees on white nettle near the RSPB entrance.

On the way home we checked a stream near Old Romney to see if the Red Eyed Damselflies were out. 11 were present with most already paired up and egg laying.

What a wonderful day, and the sun finally came out. Nature at its very best.

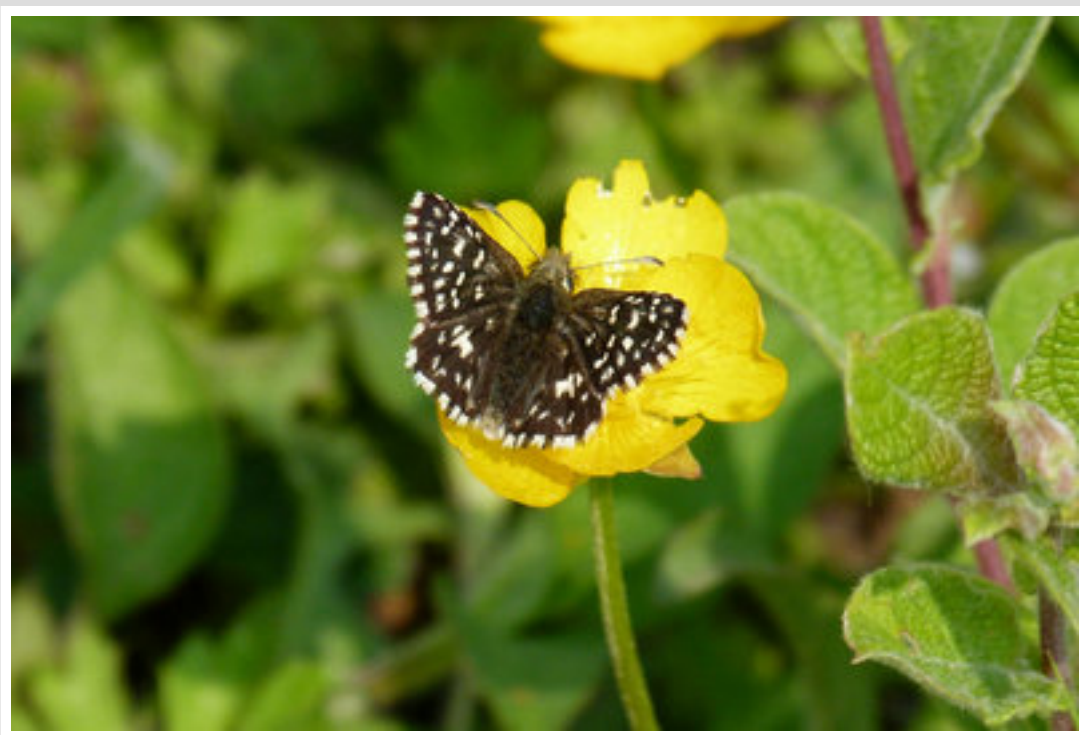
THURSDAY 31ST MAY 2012.

We had run the moth trap overnight and although there was only 9 species, one was a real goodie for us. It was White Point and obviously our first garden record. Twenty years ago this was only known as a migrant, and then only from the south coast. Over the last few years it has been suspected of breeding along the coast and the fact that a friend trapping at Hamstreet caught 5 fresh ones the following night seems to confirm this theory.

Dave



Grizzled Skipper at Beckley Wood (East Sussex).



Grizzled Skipper at Hamstreet (Faggs Wood)



Four Spotted Chaser at Dungeness



White Point moth in our garden moth trap.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 07-Jun-12 07:08 PM GMT

What can we say about this awful spell of cold and wet weather here in Kent. Nothing really positive so I will move on quickly.

SATURDAY 02ND JUNE 2012.

A visit to Dungeness did not really produce that much. 2 Hobbys, 3 Marsh Harriers and 2 Garden Tiger moths were about the best. The only butterfly species seen all day was Large White.

SUNDAY 03 JUNE 2012.

I think most of us saw the bad weather on the Queens Jubilee parade. We did go out for a few hours but it was hard work. We saw a Spotted Flycatcher at Eastwell Church, 10 Man Orchids near Crundale and a Common Tern flying around a small pool near Naccolt. That was the only surprise for the day, other than why did we go out and get wet.

MONDAY 04TH JUNE 2012.

A distant Buzzard species near Canterbury may actually have been a Honey Buzzard judging by its jizz and flat wings. We have another look on a better day. Calling in at a site near Faversham we counted 131 White Helleborines in flower and another 200 either about to flower or with their heads bitten off by the deer. 2 Common Buzzards flew over as we counted the Orchids, but otherwise fairly quiet.

WEDNESDAY 06TH JUNE 2012.

A quick visit to Wye National Nature Reserve saw us looking at 33 Late Spider Orchids. Amazingly all seemed to have a slightly different pattern on the flower itself. This is quite a good number this year and may actually have been helped by all this rain we have had of late. Most were under protective cages and we managed to locate a few spare cages, or ones that had come off, and cover them, once we had taken a few photos. This site is not on the well trodden popular areas, as I am sure it would not last long judging by the number of visitors to the reserve on some days.

We then set about looking for butterflies but had only managed to see Common Blue, Dingy Skipper and Speckled Wood before the skies opened again and another heavy shower followed.

Roll on the sunshine.

Dave



Late Spider Orchid at WYE NNR. One of 33 present this year.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Jun-12 02:27 AM GMT

Find a Butterfly.

Not quite that bad, but very hard work in this poor June Weather. I believe most parts of Britain are as bad, and as for the poor folks in Wales. Who would have thought you would need wellington boots, or worst, in June .

SATURDAY 9TH JUNE 2012.

Very little chance of butterflies today but we did see a few. Starting at Stodmarsh we saw a Speckled Wood and Red Admiral, together with a few Variable and Blue Tail Damselfly. There was 200 plus Swifts in the area, together with 2 Hobbys, 3 Marsh Harriers, Nightingale (near Reed Hide), 3 Cettis Warblers, Common Buzzard, 3 Marsh Frogs and a Yellow Shell.

Next we called in at East Blean Wood. Whilst very little was in flight we did manage to see 11 Heath Fritillaries sitting around. Another gentleman present said that he had seen 24, so despite the dull weather it was not too bad.

SUNDAY 10th JUNE 2012.

Out today before the predicated rain arrived. We started in the Lynsore Valley but only located 2 Lady Orchids and 100 plus Common Twayblade.

Next was Parkgate where 75 plus Monkey were on display, plus a Greater Butterfly Orchid and many Fragrant, Common Spotted and Common Twayblade Orchids. The only butterfly species seen was Common Blue. There was a small movement of Crossbills going on with a minimum of 35 seen. 21 were feeding near the parking area in the adjacent pines, including many bright orange/red males.

Our final call was at Yockletts Bank where we managed to locate 2 Fly Orchids, 2 Lady Orchids, a White Helleborine and many Common Spotted and Common Twayblades. We also had 2 flocks of Crossbills, 6 and 10 number, all heading north to south.

A quick dash home just as the rain started to fall. Considering the weather not a bad weekend.

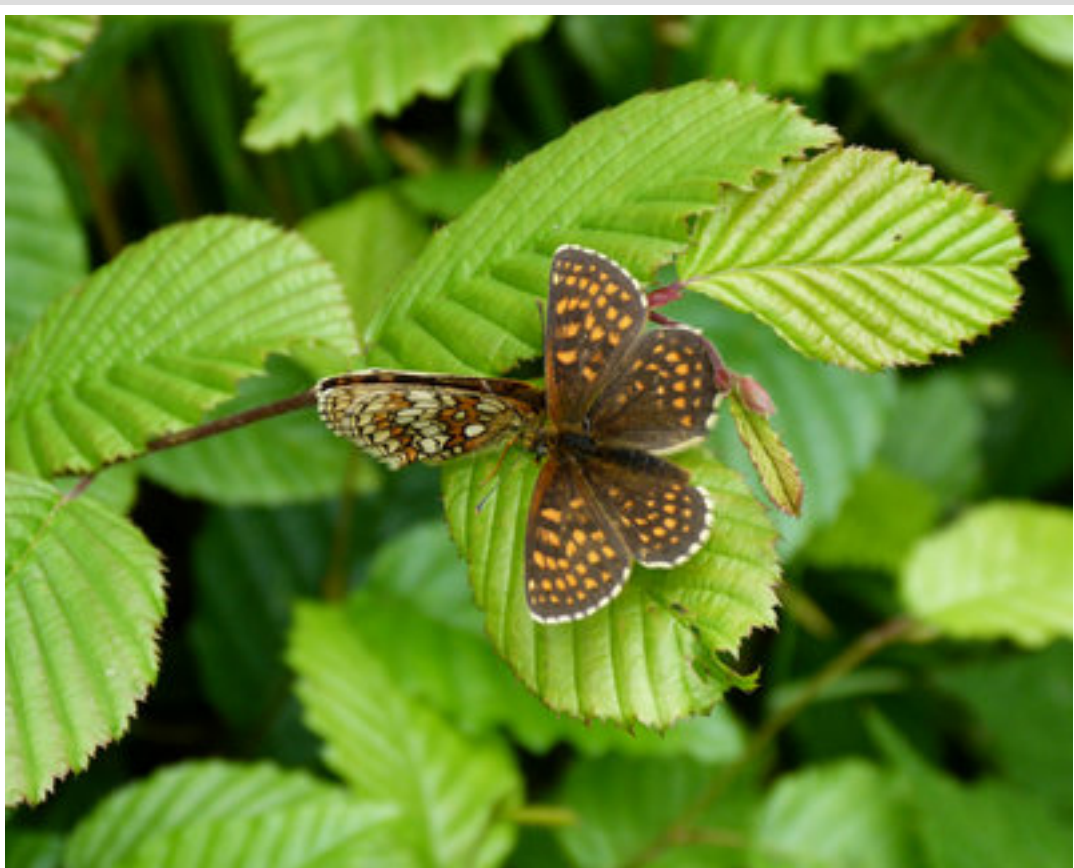
Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 12-Jun-12 03:24 AM GMT

No real chance of any butterflies around here today although a Holly Blue in the garden between the showers and a break in the clouds was a surprise. I have therefore added a few photos from the weekend. The light was poor and photography was difficult.

Dave



Another Heath Fritillary at East Blean.



Heath Fritillary Butterfly at East Blean.



Greater Butterfly Orchid at Parkgate.

Re: Dave Brown

by Goldie M, 12-Jun-12 06:25 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, I'm coming to my daughters in Canterbury 1st of July, we usually come earlier in June, do you think the Heath Fritillary will still be around then?
When we've tended to come later there doesn't seem to be many around or we've not been able to find them, we always go to Blean Woods Goldie 😊

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Jun-12 04:40 AM GMT

Hello Goldie,

Most years there will still be some Heath Fritillaries around then. This year is proving odd to say the least, and yes, it's raining again today. We will check again nearer the day and update you. Always happy to meet you and show the best spots, although you can't go wrong really, as this year the best area is actually adjacent to the car park (10-20 metres) in a coppiced area full of Cow Wheat.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Goldie M, 16-Jun-12 12:49 AM GMT

Sorry I've taken so long to get back to you, too much going on 😊 I'll make a beeline for the coppiced area when I get there. My favorite spot around there is Lydden, I hope the weather takes up. Goldie 😊

Re: Dave Brown

by MikeOxon, 16-Jun-12 01:51 AM GMT

"Goldie M" wrote:
we always go to Blean Woods

I usually go to East Blean Woods – car park at TR194642 – Heath Frit often in the car park itself and along adjacent ride. Abundant when I was last there on 2nd July 2010.

Mike

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Jun-12 03:48 AM GMT

Hello Goldie, Mike makes a useful point about it being East Blean Woods. There is also a Blean Woods (RSPB Reserve) which is off the Whitstable Road. East Blean is off the Herne Bay Road about 2 miles after leaving Sturry. I always assume that people are aware of the difference when looking for Heath Fritillaries. As you drive into the car park the best spot is the coppiced area to your left. The adjacent ride is also good, but a little more overgrown this year.

WEDNESDAY 13 JUNE 2012.

The sun came out and so we headed for the lower slopes of Wye NR. Very disappointing to say the least. Only 2 Common Blues, a Speckled Wood and Red Admiral, supported by 4 Silver Y's and one Common Shell moth. 3 Common Buzzards and a Sparrowhawk were enjoying this break in the recent bad weather.

Next was Covert Wood south east of Canterbury. The only butterflies seen were 2 Large Whites. On the way back to the main road we came across a delightful little local nature reserve known as Jumping Downs. Butterflies seen were 2 Small Heathes, 4 Common Blues, 2 Meadow Browns and a Large White. A Latticed moth was on the roadside and 18 Crossbills flew over into Covert Wood.

Our final stop of the day was Castle Hill, Folkestone. This area of chalk down can be good for butterflies but today only Common Blue, Red Admiral and Large White seen. We did find a small group of 5 Bee Orchids and many Fragrant and Common Spotted Orchids were coming into flower.

Whilst working in the greenhouse I came across an Early Grey moth.

THURSDAY 14 JUNE 2012.

Today we visited Monkton Nature Reserve near Ramsgate. This is an excellent local reserve in old old chalk quarry. Speaking to the warden he stated that most plants present were a couple of weeks behind and so it proved. This is a very good spot for Southern Marsh Orchid and many were out, including one or two that looked like the one known as Leopard Orchid or possibly an hybrid. There were many Common Spotted, 15 plus Man Orchids and 9 plus Bee Orchids. Butterflies seen were Common Blue (2), Red Admiral and Comma. Dragonflies included Four Spotted Chaser, Broad Bodied Chaser and many Azure Damselflys.

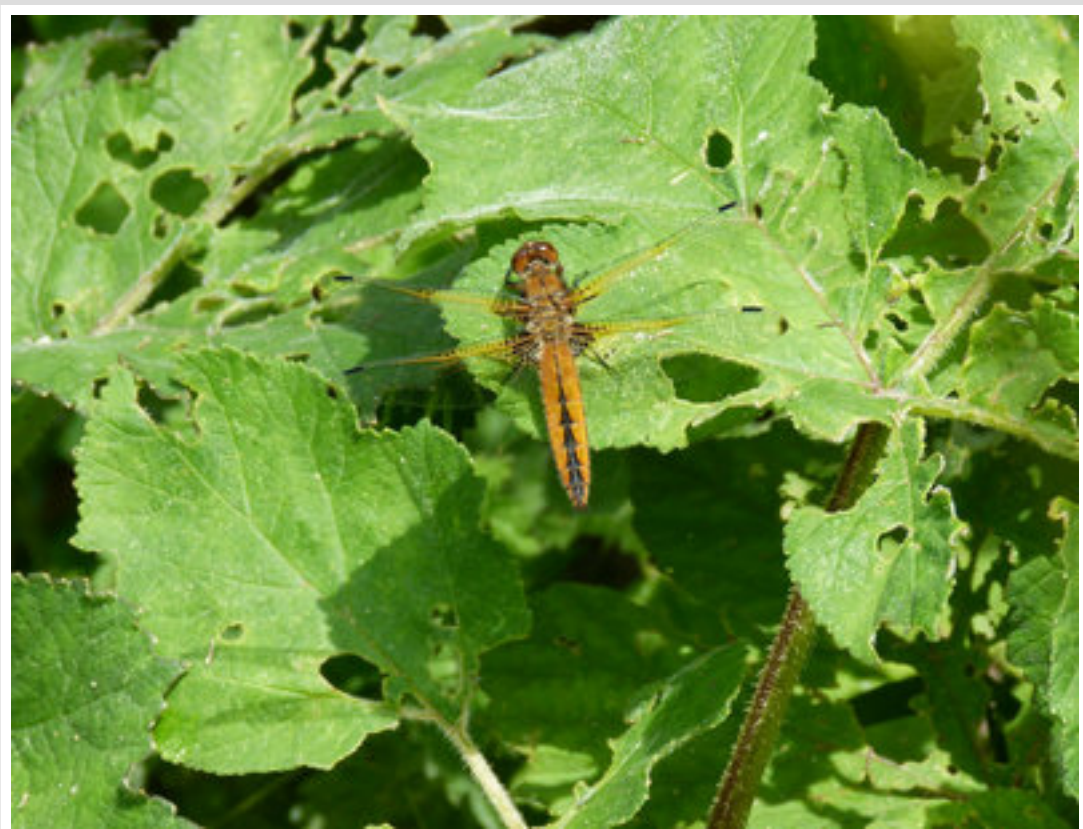
We ended the day at Westbere but could only find one Scarce Chaser alongside the River Stour, together with 5 Banded Demoiselle.

We badly need the sun to get things moving here in Kent.

Dave



Common Blue at Wye NR.



Scarce Chaser along the River Stour at Westbere



Bee Orchid at Castle Hill Folkestone

Re: Dave Brown

by millerd, 16-Jun-12 04:10 AM GMT

I am happy to be corrected, but that Blue looks more like an Adonis to me. The black chequering on the fringes looks as if it reaches the edges of the wings.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Jun-12 03:47 AM GMT

Thank you Neil and Dave. I am happy to be corrected. Looking at it more carefully, (I know I should always), I fully agree that the black on the fringe fully reaches the edge and therefore makes it Adonis, our first of the year.

SATURDAY 16 JUNE 2012.

What can I say about today that is acceptable on a forum. Heavy cloud, dull and very strong winds. Even a heavy rain shower at one time. We did go to Stodmarsh in the believe that something should be on the wing, although most things seemed to disagree with our logic. We did see 4 Red Admirals and a Large White, also a few Blue Tailed Damselflys, a Marsh Harrier and still good numbers of Swifts. That was it really.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Goldie M, 17-Jun-12 08:30 PM GMT

Thanks Dave and Mike for the information we'll go there when we arrive first i think, Herne Bay road, 2 miles after leaving Sturry. If I write it down it goes into my head better 😊 Tell me have you ever been to Denge Woods 🤔 we went last year and didn't see very much but the year before we saw Silver Washed Fritillaries, Red Admiral and White Admiral, not too mention Ringlets and Gate Keepers, it's worth a visit, it' s also got Duke-of-Burgandy, but we're never there in time to see them we go up to Gaits Barrow here for those. Goldie 😊

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 21-Jun-12 03:46 AM GMT

SUNDAY 17 JUNE 2012

We had heard that a fellow UKB member had seen and photographed a Norfolk Hawker on his local patch in Kent. This is the 3rd record of this species in Kent in the last two years so does a breeding pair(s) exist? Today we took the opportunity to check Chislet Marshes, an area near his local patch and a good spot with several ditches and dykes. Of course we failed, but thats the point of checking an area, you never know. We did see 11 Red Eyed Damselflies, 5 Blue Tailed, 1 Azure Damselfly, Banded DEmoiselle and a Turtle Dove. But no butterflies.

MONDAY 18 JUNE 2012

With a reasonable day in prospect we checked WYE NR. Near to the Late Spider Orchids, many of which have now gone over, we found 1 Adonis Blue, 1 Common Blue, 2 Small Heaths, 1 Pyramdial Orchid and 4 distant Common Buzzards.

TUESDAY 19 JUNE 2012.

With fine weather forecast we made or way to Sandwich Bay to view the Lizard Orchids. It appeared that many others had the same idea as there was a steady stream of admirers all morning. We started the day at the Field Centre to see an area of field that contained many Southern Marsh Orchids and one orchid that shows all the features of the sub species known as Leopard Orchid. Next we took the public footpath from the Field Centre to the sea front that crosses the golf course. The groundsmen there really look after the orchids on their course and leave many areas untouched or marked off. You must remain on the footpath but many Lizard Orchids are at its the side or on the grass verges of the sea front road. We estimated in excess of 300 Lizard Orchids supported by many Pyramidal, 6 Bee Orchids, many Common Broomrapes with a number of Clove Scented Broomrape (also known as Bedstraw Broomrape).

Butterflies were well down on previous visits with 14 Small Heath, 2 Large White and 1 Common Blue. All the locals are also reporting greatly reduced numbers so it is not just us. Perhaps this part of Kent suffered badly in the artic winter conditions we experienced.

We then spent a lot of time looking for the nationally rare Sand Catchfly on the sea front dune system without luck. Back at the Centre we mentioned our failure to see this plant when a very kind lady offered to show us some. Back we went on the long walk, but it was worth it when she pointed out an area containing 30 plants. This flower is only about 60-70mm tall so it is no wonder we failed to find it in amongst all the grasses. A delightful little flower, although most were actually not in flower.

This was a really enjoyable day out at a lovely location.
Dave



Lizard Orchid Sandwich Bay



Sand Catchfly at Sandwich Bay sea front.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Jun-12 06:02 PM GMT

Just an update on the Heath Frits at East Blean Wood, mainly for Goldies benefit, but may be of use to other visitors. I understand that a casual count yesterday in fairly good conditions produced 70 number, with many around the car park area. Being that many were also in reasonable condition I would say that this weekend and next week will be good for them (assuming it is not raining).

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Jun-12 03:42 AM GMT

With the weather warming up a little and less rain of late, (did I really say that), with have managed a few locations where butterflies should be, but I have to say numbers are still very disappointing. It appears to be the turn of the north to get the rain and I really feel sorry for those locations that had so much in a little space of time. It tends to put things into perspective when things like that happen.

WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE 2012.

Today we checked last years site for the rediscovery of the Dainty Damselfly, which incidently is also quite good for butterflies. Alas no sign of any Dainty's and both dragonflies and butterflies numbers disappointing. 50 Blue Tailed Damselflies, 1 Hairy Hawker, 1 Four Spotted Chaser, 2 Burnet Companion, 3 Cinnabar moths, 5 Common Blues, 11 Small Heaths, 6 Large Skippers, 1 Small Skipper and a Red Admiral.

We ended the day checking a site near Brook where the endangered Black Veined moth hangs on. Today we only saw 2 individuals and 3 Common Blues. Nearby the Late Spider Orchids were going over but a few were still good to see.

SATURDAY 23 JUNE 2012.

Today we revisited Parkgate Down in the hope of seeing Musk Orchid and downland butterflies. We normally see Musk Orchids here in single figures so it was much to our surprise to find at least 217 out in flower. Speaking to someone who visited later he said that in all there was just over 500 if you count those yet to flower. So the bad weather appears to have been good for at least one species. A Greater Butterfly Orchid was going over but there was a good showing of Common Spotted and Fragrant Orchids. Butterflies though were really poor with only 1 Common Blue, 2 Large Skippers, 3 Red Admirals and a Silver Y.

SUNDAY 24 June 2012.

Today we visited Dungeness but in reality we should have stayed at home. It was hard going and very little to report. The always friendly observatory warden said the area had been very quite all week and even moth numbers were very low.

MONDAY 25 JUNE 2012.

A local visit today to WYE NR. At last a few butterflies with a good support of Orchids. 4 Ringlets, 9 Meadow Browns, 5 Large Skippers, 3 Common Blues, Small Heath and Red Admiral. 4 Bee Orchids, 250 plus Common Spotted and 200 plus Pyramidal Orchids. We ended the day at Eastwell Church where 3 Spotted Flycatchers seemed to be finding plenty of insects.

I seem to recall the recent series of Springwatch suggesting that butterfly numbers were about 20% down. That may be nationally, but here in East Kent I would suggest that the figure is probably nearer 40 or even 50%. Very worrying for some species.

Dave



Large Skipper at Parkgate.



One of only two Black Veined moths we could find this year.



Musk Orchid at Parkgate Down. The plants there are really small (75mm tall).



This Yellow Wagtail was near Kingsferry Bridge.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-Jul-12 12:40 AM GMT

A further update for Goldie M with regards the East Blean Heath Frits. We called in this afternoon for a quick check on the situation. You need not worry if you are still intending to visit tomorrow. We saw 54 plus within 50 metres of the car park. Indeed we even had a few fly over and past the car in the car park. Many are still in very good condition and will make excellent photos, so we hope you have a good day. Remember to take the Herne Bay road out of Sturry (over Sturry railway level crossing and immediately left, up the hill) and then look for a road on your right called Hicks Forstall Road after about 2 miles. The car park is at the eastern end of the wood.

TUESDAY 26 JUNE 2012.

Today we visited Langdon Bay. I seem to remember many years ago visiting there to see Small Blue, but today we could find none in a two hour search. Infact the only butterflies we found were 4 Large Whites, 2 Meadow Browns and a Small Skipper. Not very good at all.

FRIDAY 29 JUNE 2012.

Today we returned to Wye NR as this usually is fairly good. Despite reasonable weather we only managed to find 7 Ringlets, 11 Meadow Browns, 3 Common Blues, 2 Large Whites, Red Admiral and one very poor condition Brown Argus. Where have they all gone. The lower slopes were almost devoid of butterflies and day time flying moths.

SATURDAY 30 JUNE 2012.

As mentioned above we saw 54 Heath Frits, 2 Meadow Browns and a distance butterfly which I am convinced was White Admiral, at East Blean Woods. Earlier we had seen 5 Red Admirals, 2 Large Whites, Large Skipper and Comma at Stodmarsh. Dragonflies were just as scarce with only one Hairy Hawker, 1 Broad Bodied Chaser and a few Common Blue Damselflies. 5 Marsh Harriers and 4 Cettis Warblers did little to lift the gloom.

We urgently need a warm dry spell to help our insects recover.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Gothic_dreams, 01-Jul-12 06:26 AM GMT

Some lovely photos Dave, I like the Black Veined moth 😊

Chris

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 10-Jul-12 04:36 AM GMT

Thanks Gothic_dreams for the kind comments.

I am currently sitting here updating this forum when we should be in Scotland looking at Mountain Ringlet, Northern Brown Argus, Azure Hawker and other northern delights. Don't ask, just look at the weather forecast. At least we did not suffer directly by the flooding unlike many people.

TUESDAY 3RD JULY 2012.

A text message sent us rushing off to Dungeness following a report of a Little Swift on the ARC pit. Despite a lot of people looking no further sign was seen of what would have been a mega bird for Kent. It could have been the one seen a week ago on New Brighton near Liverpool. No butterflies were seen during our 2 hours there, indeed very little of anything except the flock of over 200 Swifts and 3 House Martins.

SATURDAY 7TH JULY 2012.

A quick afternoon visit to Oare Marshes produced 45 Avocets but again no butterflies or Dragonflies.

SUNDAY 8TH JULY 2012.

With a 2 hour break in the dull weather we called in at Hamstreet Woods and were rewarded with a decent showing of butterflies. Our first Marbled Whites of the year and our first definite White Admiral. Ringlet 40 plus, Marbled White 7, White Admiral 5, Large Skipper 11, Meadow Brown 15, Silver Y 7, Southern Hawker and 4 Common Darters. With such a decent showing we quickly moved onto to Warehorne to see if any White Letter Hairstreaks were on the wing. Alas we could not find any but did see Meadow Brown 20, Large Skipper 3, Blue Tailed Damselfly 10, Common Darter 1 and a Red Admiral.

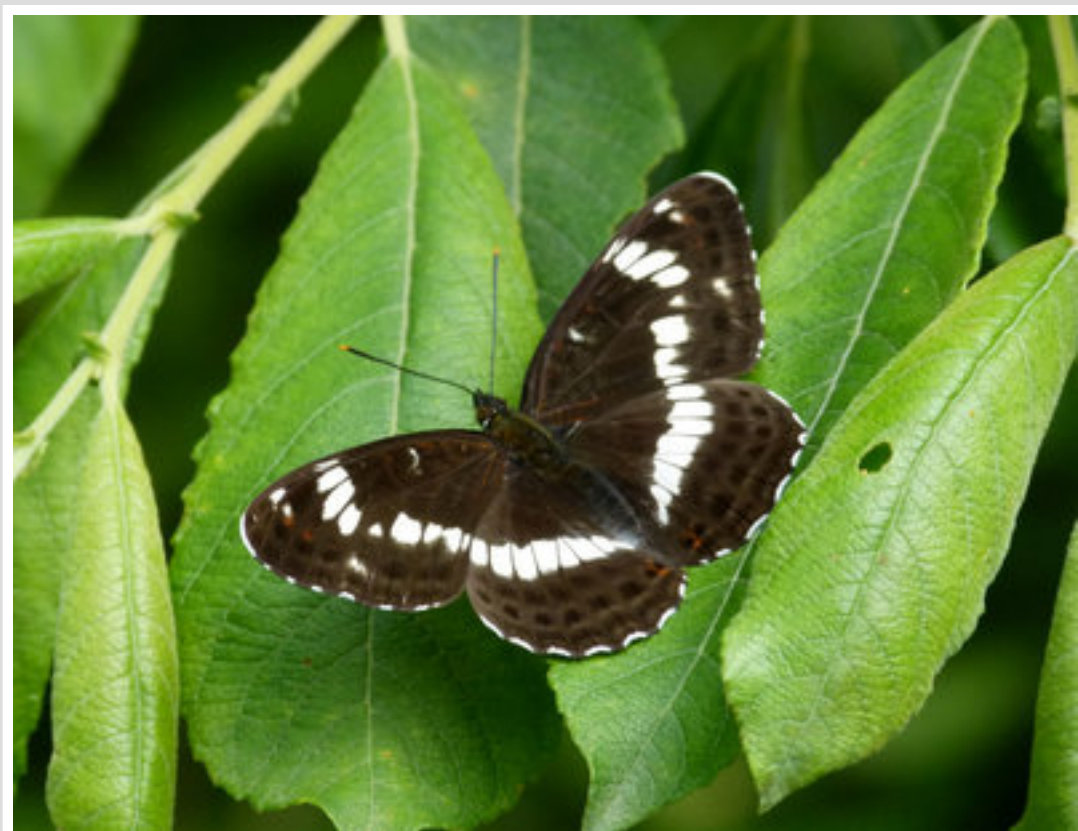
MONDAY 9TH JULY 2012.

Today we called in at a site near Maidstone to see if any Yellow Birds Nest (plant) were out at what may be Kents only site. The answer was no but we did see 12 Ringlets. Next stop was Elmley RSPB reserve where we were pleasantly surprised to see an emergence of Meadow Browns. We counted 300 on roadside verges but the fields contained many more and numbers must have been in the hundreds. Every Knapweed seemed to have 3 or 4 on it and considering the scarcity of butterflies this year this sighting was very welcome. Also 11 Large Whites, 1 Small White, 4 Large Skippers, 1 Yellow Shell (moth), 2 Wood Sandpipers and 4 Marsh Harriers. Best of all was a mobile Quail calling alongside the main entrance track. At times we began to wonder

if two birds were present due to calling from different parts of the roadside. It certainly seemed to be able to move quite some distance without being seen.

Looking at the forecast there seems to be a further week or two of this poor weather so not sure what will happen to our local Chalkhill Blue. Only time will tell.

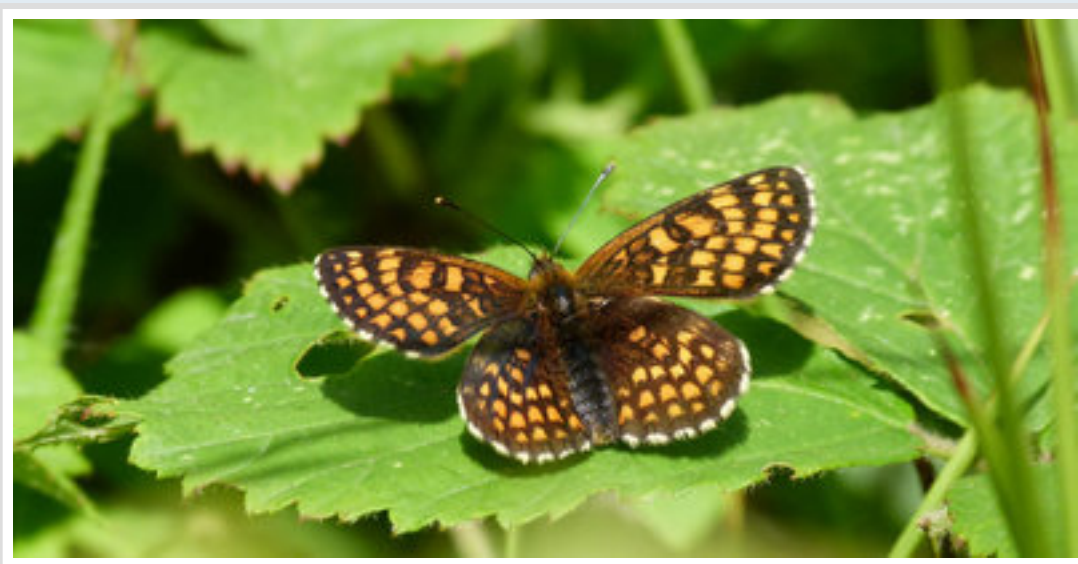
Dave.



White Admiral at Hamstreet Wood



Ringlet at Hamstreet Wood



Heath Fritillary at East Blean Wood

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Jul-12 11:38 PM GMT

WEDNESDAY 11 JULY 2012

Today looked promising so an early morning visit to WYE NR was undertaken. Still very little sign of any Blues but numbers of other butterflies was encouraging.

Meadow Brown 85, Ringlet 55, Large Skipper 4, Small Skipper 2, Small Heath 2 and 1 Comma. Also 6 Silver Y moths, 4 Common Darters, a Common Buzzard and many Fragrant and Pyramidal Orchids.

Next was a wood near Chilham where numbers were much lower and no sign of any White Admirals. Meadow Brown 27, Ringlet 18 and one Large Skipper.

THURSDAY 12 JULY 2012.

This time of the year we often visit Warehorne for White Letter Hairstreak. It used to be a very good spot but the last few years has seen single figure numbers. Today we managed to see only one, together with 5 Purple Hairstreaks. Also present 2 Marbled Whites, 5 Small Skippers, 4 Large Skippers, numerous Meadow Browns and one Hoggars. Yes, we had the pleasure of meeting fellow UKB member Hoggars (Paul). We spent a very interesting hour together talking about the butterfly scene whilst straining our necks to pick out any White Letter Hairstreaks. As we left we sighted 3 different Brown

Hawkers, our first of the year.

We both went on to do other things, but strangely bumped into each other in the Hamstreet Woods complex. We left him looking for Silver Washed Fritillary whilst we were just looking. This walk was quite rewarding seeing a total of 7 White Admirals and our first Gatekeeper of the year.

Species seen were Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Marbled White, White Admiral, Large White, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Red Admiral, Southern Hawker and Common Darter.

A really good day all round.

Today we bumped into a local well respected Orchid and Butterfly who confirmed what we already knew, and that was no Burnt Tip Orchids were seen in Kent this year (unless any one out there knows better). This is the 3rd year running where no one seems to have seen any. Hopefully they are not lost to Kent, unlike the Frog Orchid which has not been seen for at least 15 years. We lost the Pearl Bordered Fritillary about 20 years ago, probably the Frog Orchid and now possibly the Burnt Tip Orchid. Lets hope for better news next year. Incidentally, there has been an attempt to reintroduce the Pearl Border at a West Kent RSPB reserve the last couple of years. I am sure that news will eventually be released on how successful that has been.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Jul-12 02:48 AM GMT

What an enjoyable hobby nature watching is. We had gone out yesterday (Saturday) with no expectations at all. It was dull and showery when we left home so it was more a case of being out in the open air, However, it actually turned out to be a very good day. Nothing too exciting, just the unexpected.

SATURDAY 14 JULY 2012.

It had been nearly two weeks since we had visited Dungeness, (almost unheard of), but we were aware that things had been really quiet. We drove by the ARC pit and saw little other than a flock of about 200 Swifts and 5 Sand Martins. However, on entering the Dungeness Estate in, by now, decent weather, we saw the Observatory team of David and Gill on their hands and knees searching the ground in amongst a big group of wild flowers, mainly Burgloss. Always a good sign to see the very helpful and knowledgeable team looking intently downwards with cameras in their hands. Both are not only good birders but use the summer months to sharpen their extensive botany skills. They had found at least a dozen Red Hemp-Nettle plants, a fast declining species of waste and disturbed ground. Better still was the presence of a number of very small beetles on the plants which they photographed for later identification. Apparently Red Hemp Nettle attracts a very rare beetle. We spent a very pleasant hour with them during which time we learnt that the Stinking Hawksbeard were out and a Small Fan Footed Wave was on show at the Obs. So off we went to see the moth, the only one on show due to the continuing very poor and wet weather. On returning David and Gill had been joined by another good botanist from the past, Steve, who was a Dungeness regular in the eighties and early nineties. We ended the day looking at a big group of Stinking Hawksbeard. This plant had been declared extinct in Britain some 20 years ago but everyone seemed to miss a big patch near some housing. Since then a few plants were introduced at Rye and a few other sites, but I believe the Dungeness site remains the only wild one. One thing I did learn was that you have to see the plant early in the day, as like we saw, the plant closes up.

SUNDAY 15 JULY 2012.

Butterflies at last. A visit to Wye NR produced 46 Marbled White, 32 Meadow Browns, 8 Ringlets, 3 Small Heath, 1 Large and 1 Small Kipper. What a good end to the weekend.

Dave



The Marbled White has to be one of Britains most attractive butterflies.



Red Hemp-Nettle. A new plant for us, found by the Observatory Team.



This group of Stinking Hawkbeard had closed up for the day time we arrived early pm.



Just how many can you get on one plant?

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 19-Jul-12 12:34 AM GMT

TUESDAY 17 JULY 2012.

Today we visited Rye Harbour Nature Reserve. There has been real effort to improve this nature reserve over the last few years and now it must be one of the best in the South East for waders and breeding gulls and terns. It was no surprise to see many Sandwich and Common Terns as we walked the trail, although I understand they have had a very poor breeding success this year. The star of the reserve is the Little Tern, and despite a good start I believe all young were lost to predation. However, the target of our visit today was infact a plant. Rye is one of very few places in Britain for Least Lettuce and even here it is hard to find. Today was no exception for we failed to find any near the old lifeboat station, its tradition site. It should be out now, but this year is so strange that maybe its just late. A second visit will be required.

Butterflies were around in reasonable numbers. 1 Small Copper, 5 Gatekeepers, 30 plus Meadow Browns and 4 Large Whites.

Next we visited Beckley Woods in East Sussex for our annual fix of Silver Washed Fritillary. Numbers were down but we did see 11 individuals, together with 25 Ringlets and many Common Browns. Just two dragonflies, Brown Hawker and Common Darter, and surprisingly no White Admirals.

On the way home we saw 3 Turtle Doves at Warehorne, a decreasing bird of the British Countryside.

Last night we ran the moth trap. Nothing special caught, although a Buff-tip was a pleasing reward.

With warmer weather on the horizon perhaps the late butterflies will give us a show that will help us forget this very poor summer, that also cost us a cancelled holiday in a very wet Scotland.



Silver Washed Fritillary at Beckley Woods.



This Buff-tip moth is a master of disguise.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 22-Jul-12 11:41 PM GMT

THURSDAY 19 JULY 2012

Its raining purple. Sorry, not Emperors only Hairstreaks. 17 of them, whilst actually looking for Emperor in Hamstreet Wood. We are aware that the Purple Emperor is seen most years in very low numbers (1 or 2) at Hamstreet. We also know the rough location so today we spent several hours checking for this magnificent butterfly. Although we failed we did note that almost every oak tree had one or two Purple Hairstreaks and 17 was the minimum number we saw, (we tried not to double count any that moved between trees). The Marble Whites had fallen off very quickly with only one present, although Ringlets (42) were still numerous. Also seen, 20 Large Whites, 2 Large Skippers, 9 Small Skippers, 8 Meadow Browns, 2 Red Admirals, 2 Silver Y's, 10 Crossbills, Brown Hawker, Southern Hawker and 3 Common Darter. A really pleasant few hours.

SATURDAY 21 JULY 2012.

A walk along the Military Canal at Warehorne to look for White Letter Hairstreak failed to locate. This is really disappointing as this particular colony was always very small. Lets hope its not lost. We did see 5 Small Skippers, 12 Meadow Browns, 6 Gatekeepers, Marbled White, 5 Red Eyed Damselflies and Large Red Damselfly. We also had a brief glimpse of what only could have been a male Redstart. Unable to relocate this must remain unconfirmed in such an unusual location for July in Kent. Later in the day we visited the concrete jungle of Ashford Town centre, and there sitting up high on the biggest building around was an Eagle Owl. News had broken of its presence the previous day, infact it is believed to have been present for 3 or 4 weeks. Probably an escape, but who knows these days. It certainly was impressive in size and shape. It would move around a little, but generally starred at you with those big red eyes. It was also seen to eat a pigeon during the afternoon, and probably explains the reduction in pigeon, gull and rat numbers around the building. Hopefully it will remain for a while and allow all to see.

I will update with a few photos in a day or so.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Jul-12 11:37 PM GMT

I have added a photo of the Eagle Owl at Ashford and a Purple Hairstreak at Hamstreet.

SUNDAY 22 JULY 2012.

In really good weather we paid a visit to Cliffe RSPB reserve. We hoped to see the rarer dragonflies together with good numbers of butterflies. Disappointingly the butterflies were in very low numbers and only one other person was present. Very unusual on both counts. We spent a very pleasant hour or so in the company of Mike and our patience was rewarded with at least 7 Scarce Emerald Damselflies. The larger hawkers were none existant. Apart from 25 Small Heath butterflies we really struggled with other species, although Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Red Admiral and Comma were noted. We did see 2 Marbled Whites from the 1st ramp, but no Wall Browns. 3 Essex Skippers were also identified but we normally see dozens of all the species mentioned. 2 Greenshank, 4 Ruff and 4 Little Egrets were the bird highlights.

The Scarce Emeralds were on the track that heads NE opposite the second ramp, on the left hand side in the ditch that runs alongside the track, between the second and third gate.



One of the 17 seen at Hamstreet. This one came down the lowest but was still quite high up.



The Eagle Owl in Ashford. Really impressive in size whether its an escape or not. Seen to eat a feral pigeon just before we arrived.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Jul-12 11:59 PM GMT

The Eagle Owl is still around Charter House in the centre of Ashford Kent. We saw it today (Thursday) and yesterday (Wednesday) on the Shell garage side. Afternoons and evenings appear best. This is some impressive bird, although the chances are it is an escape from somewhere. Its certainly making a dent in the local rat and feral pigeon population.

MONDAY 23 JULY 2012.

We ran the moth trap overnight, but numbers are still well down on other years. Only 27 moths of 17 species, with Nut Tree Tussock being the pick of the bunch.

We had another look for Purple Emperor in Hamstreet Woods, but without success. Marbled Whites at this location appear to be over for the year as we only saw 3. White Admirals (4), Large Skippers (3), Small Skippers (8) added interest but remarkably no Purple Hairstreaks. Perhaps it was too hot (29 degrees).

TUESDAY 24 JULY 2012.

Time to check Wye NR for Chalkhill Blue. No sign of any blues except for one Common Blue. Marbled Whites holding up here with 54 counted. Still 6 Ringlets and Small Skipper numbers increasing with 10 seen. Next we visited Jumping Down near Barham where Marbled Whites were also in good numbers, with at least 60 counted. Meadow Browns were everywhere and must have exceeded 250. 12 Small Skippers, 5 Common Blues and 8 Gatekeepers, together with a number of Pyramidal Orchids made this a most enjoyable afternoon visit.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 29-Jul-12 05:36 AM GMT

WEDNESDAY 25 JULY 2012.

It was about time that we visited Lullingstone Country Park for Dark Green Fritillary, so today found us visiting West Kent. Before we went into Lullingstone CP we called in at a nearby site for Green Flowered Helleborine. I believe it is Kents only site and strangely enough right by a very busy main road and not on any nature reserve. We were a little late as they had finished flowering, but numbers were good, with at least 32 plants found. At this same site we also saw 5 Yellow Birds Nest. Again these were past there best, but still a good plant to see in Kent. I am only aware of one other site. We arrived at the Country park very pleased with the day so far. I am afraid things then went down hill for despite searching for nearly 2 hours we saw no DarK Greens, just plenty of Meadow Browns and 15 Small Skippers. We seem to have left the visit about a week late.

We saved the best to last and called in at Dene Park near Tonbridge for Purple Emperor. It was now very hot (30 degrees) and most butterfly activity had ceased. We saw no Purple Emperors and just one each of White Admiral and Silver Washed Fritillary. 4 Brown Hawkers around the car park tried to cheer us up, but its disappointing not to see PE at what was probably Kents best site last year.

Our moth trap had produced little although Swallowtail and Fan Foot were new for the year.

SATURDAY 28TH JULY 2012.

Although not as hot as the last few days it was still warm enough for insects, so off we went to Chislet Marshes. We arrived at Little Grays Farm to find 2 other people already looking at Willow Emerald Damselflys. One was Derek Smith, co founder of the first record for Kent at nearby Chambers Wall. We

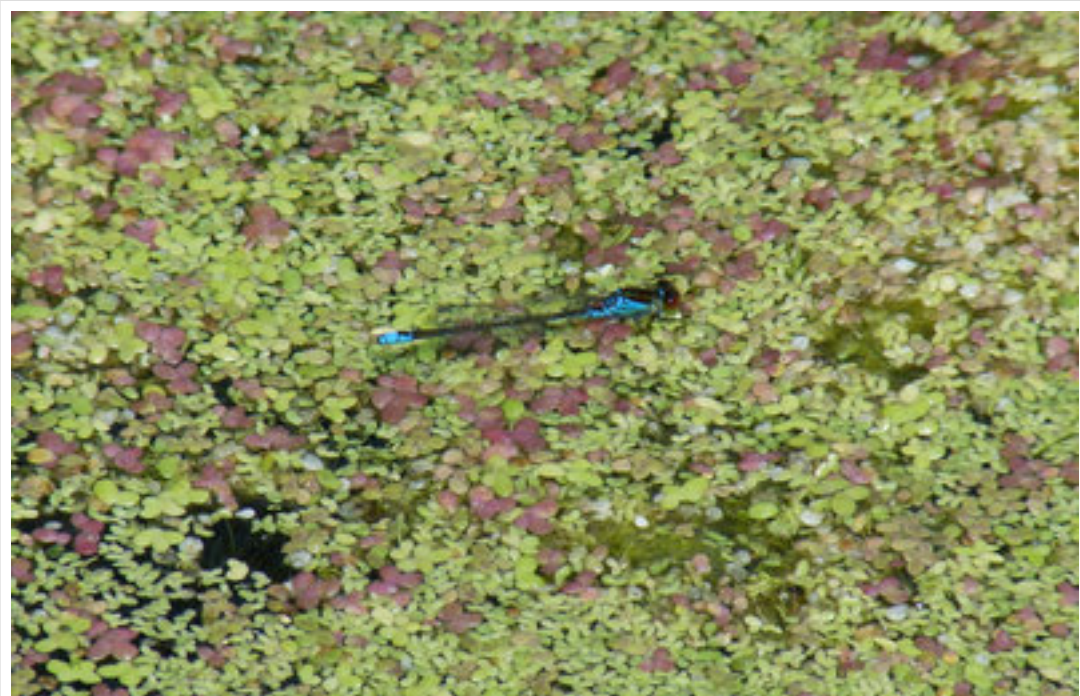
had a very pleasant chat and it transpires that the Willows have been around at least a week. We saw 9 in total, with most being males. I mentioned that we saw Small Red Eyed Damselflies at this site last year so we set about searching. At first all we saw was Red Eyed Damselflies, but Derek soon picked up 3 or 4 Smalls flying in the ditch slightly north of Little Grays Farm entrance. In total we reckon at least 10 were present. The same area produced a Comma, 12 Gatekeepers and many Large Whites and Meadow Browns.

To end a very good day we called in at nearby Chitty Lane where last year we found a Emerald Damselfly near the pumping station. Apparently they are rare in this area, so we were pleased when we found one in the same place as last year.

A great day out in the field. Will be even better if a viewable Purple Emperor is found in Kent this year.

Incidentally, the Eagle Owl is still present in Ashford munching its way through the local rat population.

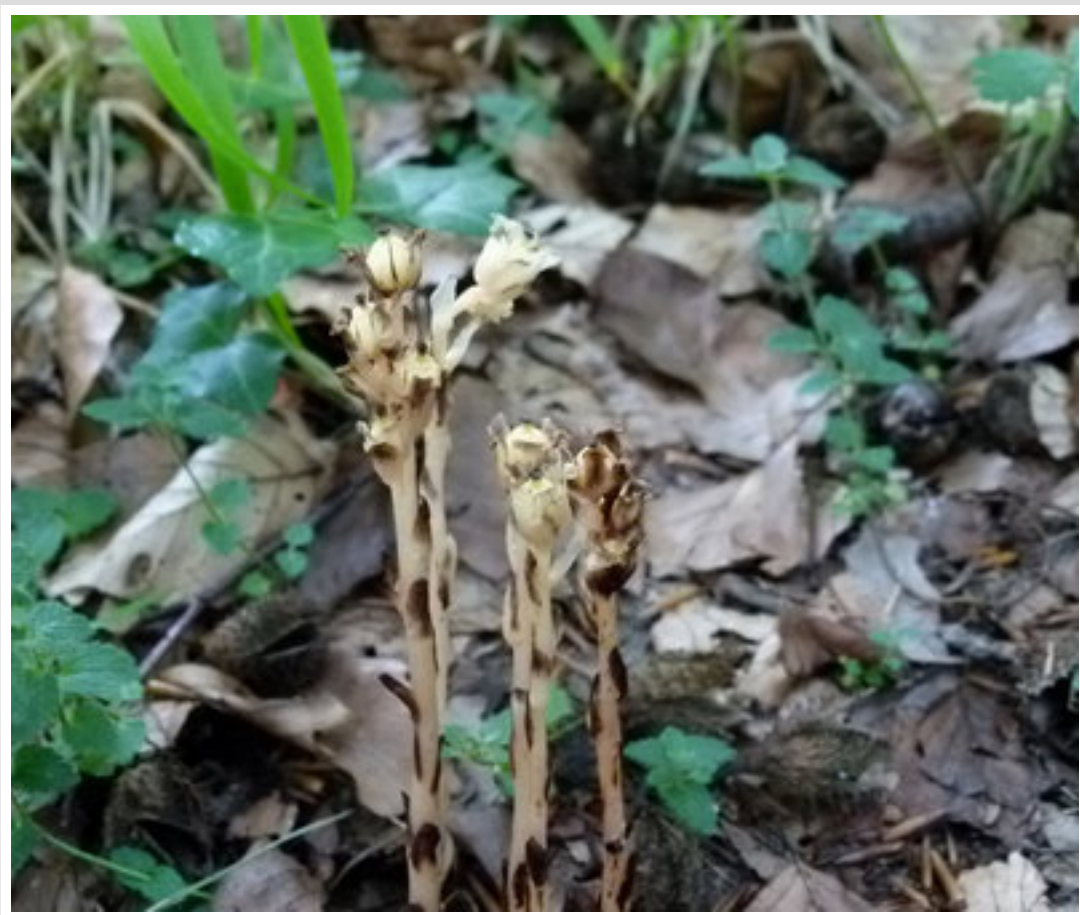
Dave



Small Red Eyed Damselfly at Chislet Marshes



Green Flowered Helleborine well past their best near Eynsford. Kents only site.



5 plants of Yellow Birds Nest near Eynsford, just past their best.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-Aug-12 03:48 AM GMT

SUNDAY 29 JULY 2012.

Before the dull and damp weather arrived we managed a short while at Hamstreet Woods where a Marbled White performed, plus 4 Ringlets, 20 Meadow Browns, 8 Small Skippers, 11 Gatekeepers and a Red Admiral. 2 Turtle Doves near Warehorne were a nice surprise in a very quiet year for the species.

MONDAY 30 JULY 2012.

Although dry and mild a stiff wind was blowing when we arrived at Oare Marshes, so it was no surprise that we only saw 5 Gatekeepers and no dragonflies. Birding was just as hard with no real treats. One Greenshank, 2 Ruffs, 3 Little Egrets, a male Marsh Harrier, 75 Avocets and 500 plus Black Tailed Godwits were par for the course at this costal reserve.

We then moved on to Hothfield Common. A lot of good work has been undertaken at Kents only nature reserve containing areas of bog. Much has been done in the last couple of years to get rid of undergrowth and bracken. Heather is being encouraged back and it is now a much more friendly reserve, with several families present on our visit. It has had a bit of a troubled past, but regular visits by the wardens and police seemed to have resolved matters and it has the makings of a brilliant reserve, with a visitor centre currently being proposed. I wonder if they have considered reintroducing the Silver Studded Skipper? Anyway the purpose of our visit was to see the Keeled Skimmer. We only had time to do the small boggy area, but that produced 21 males and 3 females. I have been informed that there are over 100 on the main bog. A good success story for a change. Also seen 2 Four Spotted Chasers, 4 Common Darters, 15 Small Heaths, 24 Meadow Browns and a Common Blue butterfly.

Dave



Male Keeled Skimmer at Hothfield Common. Ready to protect his patch from rivals.



I think the Marbled White is a delightful butterfly.



Gatekeeper at Hamstreet.



Female Keeled Skimmer at Hothfield. This individual was seen to egg lay.



Willow Emerald Damselfly on Chislet Marsh.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Aug-12 03:20 AM GMT

WEDNESDAY 1ST AUGUST 2012

Following a sighting (and photograph) of 2 Scarce Emerald Damselflies at Oare Marsh, probably the species most eastern location, and evidence that they be expanding out of the Thames corridor, today we visited Oare to see if we could see and report any more. We searched the dykes from the road to the West Hide but only recorded 11 Emerald Dameselfies in less than ideal conditions. We did see 2 Small Heaths and many Meadow Browns, together with 4 Greenshanks, 2 Bearded Tits and a Turtle Dove.

On arriving home the sun appeared and almost immediately a Banded Demoiselle appeared in our garden. A first for the garden and not bad considering the nearest river or stream is half a mile away. It just shows what can turn up if you keep looking. It stayed for a couple of hours and appeared to be feeding on flying white fly.

THURSDAY 02 AUGUST 2012.

Following reports of large numbers of Chalkhill Blues, in particular hundreds of thousands by Sussex Kipper, it was time to check our local hot spot of Wye NR. In the area we choose we could only find 24 so not the numbers seen in Sussex. We will check another area of this large reserve later in the week. We did see a good mix however and the day was really interesting. 6 Marbled Whites, 20 Meadow Browns, a fresh Brimstone, Red Admiral, Common Blue, Brown Argus, 2 Ringlets and 5 Gatekeepers.

We ended the day at Hothfield Common. The weather was a bit cooler than last time but we still managed 9 Keeled Skimmers, this time on the main bog. A Southern Hawker and 14 Migrant Hawkets fed in the sheltered spots between the trees. The Heath Spotted Orchids had long finished, the Meadow Browns totalled 25, and back at car park a Essex Skipper showed well.

SATURDAY 04 AUGUST 2012.

Following a phone call received to ask us for directions for Willow Emerald, we took the opportunity to actually go to the site and show 2 friends the spot.

This time 15 Willow Emerald Damselflies were located, together with 8 Small Red Eyed Damselflies. The Willow Emeralds do not usually get on the dyke but rather hang about on the bushes and hedges on the west side of the road. The dyke is on the east side. 5 Migrant Hawkets and big numbers of Meadow Brown and Gatekeepers were also present. We spent a very pleasant hour or so in good company before meeting up again at an undisclosed site for Honey Buzzard, where a fine male showed twice.

Another good day in the field in Kent. Just a pity we don't appear to have the mass numbers of Chalkhill Blues (yet). Photos to follow.
dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Aug-12 03:32 AM GMT

SUNDAY 5TH AUGUST 2012

Some of you may have noticed that I have not mentioned Dungeness too much recently. The fact is the area has been very quiet, both on the bird and insect front. When we have gone there has been nothing to report. However, today was an exception and a text message from the observatory team was very welcome. We were already half way there as we called in to see *Oncocera Semirubella* (moth) trapped by a friend the previous night. Of added interest was Marbled Green, Dusky Sallow, Lackey and Popular Grey. Next stop was Dungeness Seawatching hide where we had just missed the Adult SABINES GULL after it drifted off west. We don't give up easy at Dungeness and along we several other birders we searched the patch and beach when

finally the gull flew back into view and showed long enough for about 25 people to catch up with it. Next stop was the observatory fridge, not for food, but rather the delights of last night's moth catch. Only Kent Black Arches, Garden Tiger and another Marbled Green on display, but still very enjoyable. Walking around the observatory area we enjoyed views of 31 Common Blues, 1 Marbled White and 1 Small Copper, with many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers.

TUESDAY 07TH AUGUST 2012

Today was Oare Marshes although it proved hard work with very few Butterflies or Dragonflies on the wing. The only bird of note was a Juvenile Wood Sandpiper. A few miles away we visited a Broad Leaved Helleborine site where about 100 plants were in flower with an equal number with their tops beaten off by the local deer.

THURSDAY 09TH AUGUST 2012.

We had run the moth trap overnight and although 14 species were caught it was still quiet for this time of the year. The Spectacle and Dunbar were good local moths, but the real surprise was only 2 Large Yellow Underwings when we normally get dozens.

Next we visited the Hamstreet wood complex and spent some time looking for any Purple Emperors. I have not heard of any sightings this year at this location and today was no exception. A late White Admiral, 2 Silver Washed Fritillary, 54 Peacocks, 31 Brimstone, 6 Speckled Woods, 6 Purple Hairstreak, 8 Small Skippers, 4 Marbled Whites, 100 Meadow Browns, 50 Gatekeepers and 2 Red Admirals are all good, but do not generate the excitement of the Emperor. It's probably too late now so we will resume the search next year. Hamstreet has always been a Purple Emperor outpost, and indeed there are rumours from time to time of releases, although there is no evidence of this. White Admiral and Silver Washed is present so why not Purple Emperor.

An evening phone call sent us back to Hamstreet to view a Mocha (moth) trapped by our friend, where Nutmeg and a probable Maple Pug were also on show. It was then a dash home just in time to see Bolt overtake a jet plane on his way to winning gold in the 200 metres. What a race, and one where the last person in eighth place recorded a time that would have won in Beijing (2008).

Dave



This Holly Blue had taken a liking to Golden Rod.



There appeared to be a big emergence of Peacocks in Hamstreet Woods.



Nice to see the Brimstones in good numbers at Hamstreet.



This juvenile Wood Sandpiper was present on the East Flood at Oare Marsh.



One of 100 Broad Leaved Helleborines near Faversham.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Aug-12 11:49 PM GMT

FRIDAY 09 AUGUST 2012

Today we visited WYE NR where we hoped for a good display of butterflies. We were not disappointed with 90 Chalkhill Blues, 15 Common Blues, 75 Meadow Browns, 18 Gatekeepers, 1 Marbled White, 6 Brimstones, 2 Peacocks, 3 Small Coppers and a Wall. Also seen, 3 Common Buzzards, Peregrine, Hobby, Sparrowhawk, 2 Spotted Flycatchers, 12 Migrant Hawkers and 2 Brown Hawkers. Nearby 9 Beautiful Demoiselle were on the river Stour at Godmersham. A very good day.

SUNDAY 12 AUGUST 2012.

It was time to give Cliffe RSPB another visit for damselflies, in particular Southern Emerald. It was not to be in disappointing weather of a slight mist and strong winds. We did see 2 Scarce Emerald damselflies, many Ruddy Darters, 3 Small Heaths and many Gatekeepers but no Southern Emeralds. We did not see any Migrant Hawkers either, and unknown to us at the time a few Southern Migrant Hawkers had been seen in the area on the Friday and one on Saturday. Birds included 14 Greenshanks and 5 Little Egrets.

TUESDAY 14 AUGUST 2012.

Now aware that a few Southern Migrant Hawkers had been seen over the last few days we visited Cliffe RSPB again, this time in much better weather. We did not see any Southern Migrants in a 3 hour visit, indeed we only saw 5 Hawkers all day and I am confident these were ordinary Migrant. Numbers of Scarce Emeralds were up with at least 30 present near the second ramp. Also 2 Emperor Dragonflies, many Common and Ruddy Darters, 1 Black Tailed Skimmer. Butterfly numbers were better with 14 Small Heaths, 3 Small Tortoiseshell, 8 Small Skippers with many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers. We only saw 2 other people all day who were looking for dragonflies and they also had drawn a blank with regards Southern Migrant. They are there somewhere, its just a case of where.

THURSDAY 16 AUGUST 2012.

A bit dull and windy so we checked out Grove Ferry. A Great White Egret had been seen the day before but today there was no sign. Butterflies included Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells in reasonable numbers. Next was Chislet Marshes where 7 Willow Emerald Damselflies were on the wing, together with 9 Small Red Damselflies, many Common Darters and a few Common Blues and Brown Hawkers. Peacocks continue in good numbers but Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper numbers were much lower. 2 Common Buzzards, 2 Marsh Harriers and a Hobby were the avian highlights. Another really good day.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-Aug-12 11:33 PM GMT

FRIDAY 17 AUGUST 2012

A walk around Hamstreet woods was quite productive with 3 Silver Washed Fritillary, 31 Peacocks, 25 Brimstones, 3 Purple Hairstreaks, 4 Speckled Woods, 3 Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admiral and many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, supported by a Brown Hawker, 21 Migrant Hawkers and many Common Darters. Summer is really here.

SATURDAY 18 AUGUST 2012

With the promise of fine weather we again checked out CLIFFE RSPB for any signs of the rare Southern Migrant Hawker. We joined two others who had been on site several hours, but a sighting was not to be. Despite the occasional sighting this species has yet to expand into public parts of the reserve and marsh. We only saw several Scarce Emerald Damselfly, 2 Black Tailed Skimmers, Emperor Dragonfly, 15 Migrant Hawkers with many Common and Ruddy Darters. Butterfly numbers at this reserve are reducing, although there are still many Peacocks, Red Admirals, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers.
SUNDAY 19 AUGUST 2012.

We joined the weekend crowds at Oare Marsh to see 2 Wood Sandpipers, a Juvenile Little Stint and 2 Garganey amongst the usual fare. This reserve gets very busy on a Sunday with many birders, dog walkers, fishermen and some sailors with boats to launch on the ramp. With only room for about 20 vehicles, along a single track road and few passing places, I need to tell myself to avoid this reserve on a Sunday.

MONDAY 20 AUGUST 2012.

After a bit of shopping we felt the need to visit Dungeness. It was about time a few things should show up on migration, however no one has told mother nature and it was generally very quiet. We did spend some time looking for Saturday's sighting of a Lesser Emperor Dragonfly, also the Great White Egret present for the last few days. No luck on either front so it was with some relief that a text message informing us of a trapped TREE LICHEN BEAUTY (moth) was received. A quick trip to Hamstreet saw us looking at this fairly unusual moth for Kent. It was very faded, but still very welcome, as it has been a few years since our last sighting. Also present Cloaked Minor, Rosy Rustic, Olive, Pretty Chalk Carpet, Pebble Prominent and Straw Underwing. A pleasant hour spent in very good company.

TUESDAY 21ST AUGUST 2012

Today we called in at Stodmarsh to see if the Great White Egret was present. It was, sitting around near the Cormorant tree. Disappointingly butterflies and dragonfly numbers were low with only a few Brown Hawkers, Migrant Hawkers, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Red Admirals present.

WEDNESDAY 22 AUGUST 2012.

Following a phone call the previous evening informing us of a Southern Migrant Hawker seen at a public place on Cliffe RSPB, we again spent over 3 hours on site. Yet again we failed to locate it although the support act kept our interest going until time to leave. Species seen were Scarce Emerald Damselfly, 11 Migrant Hawker, 21 Red Admirals, 2 Small Tortoiseshells, Peacock, Small Heath, many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, 2 Spotted Redshanks and 2 Hobbys. This is a nice little reserve in a partly industrial setting, with much shipping passing on the nearby Thames. I just hope that the proposed Boris Island does not spoil its potential.

THURSDAY 23 AUGUST 2012.

With another fine day predicted we decided it was time to catch up with Silver Spotted Skipper at Lydden. We eventually saw 17 scattered around the first field, with 30 plus Chalkhill Blues, at least 40 Adonis Blues, 20 Common Blues, 2 Brown Argus, Wall, Peacock, 8 Large Whites and many, many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers. We found 35 Autumn Ladies Tresses with lots of Autumn Gentian. What a great nature reserve. We did not do the other fields as it's much the same, although numbers would have run into 3 figures for the blues. Instead we called in at a wood near Chilham to check for any late woodland species. No White Admirals, but it was nice to find a faded Silver Washed Fritillary, our first at this site. 8 Brimstones were still enjoying themselves, but no sign of any skippers.

Another really good week in reasonable weather. Now for the hard work of downloading the photos and seeing if any are good enough to post.
Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Aug-12 04:04 AM GMT

I have added a few photos from the last few days.

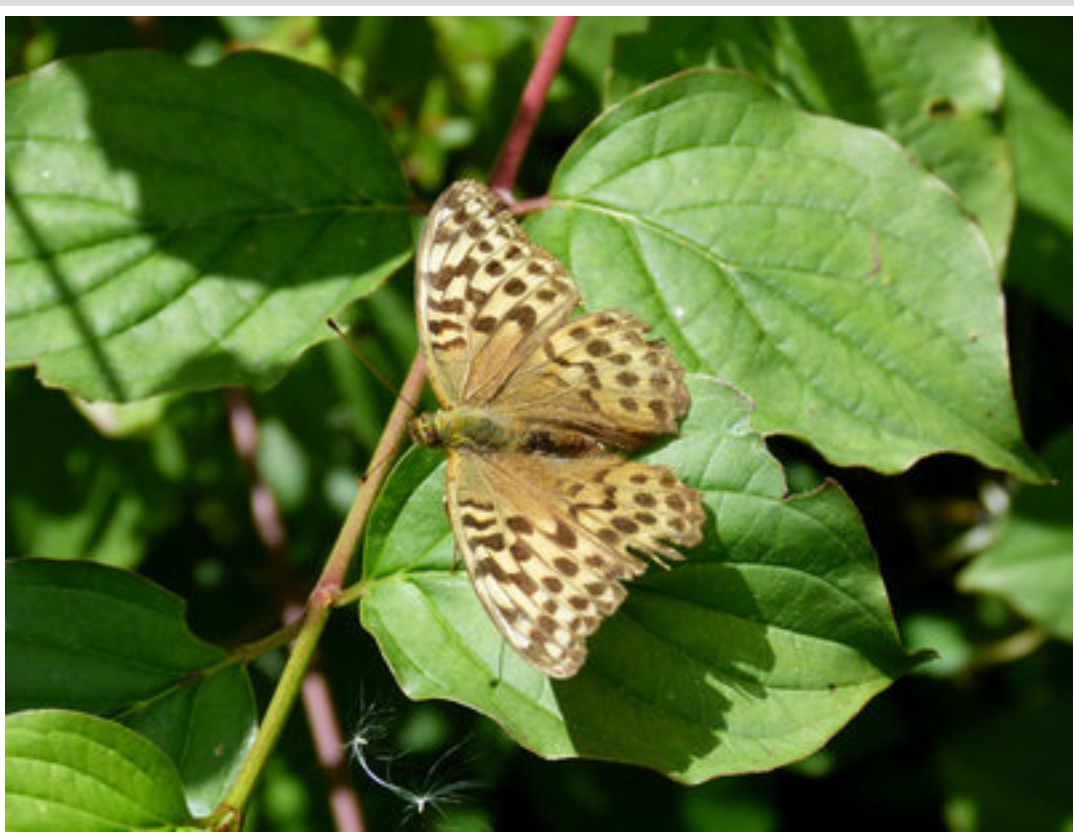
FRIDAY 24TH AUGUST 2012.

Following a report of a Clouded Yellow at WYE NR yesterday we spent a few hours at this location, but failed in our attempt to relocate it. Many Chalkhill Blues, Adonis Blues, Common Blues, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers still on the wing, plus 2 Wall Browns, 2 Brimstones, 15 Red Admirals and a Small Tortoiseshell. We also found a few Autumn Gentians which was a pleasant surprise. I am sure that there are many here, but it's the first time we have noticed them. Our eyes are usually focussed on butterflies and birds.

Dave



Silver Spotted Skipper in the first field at Lydden NR.



This faded Silver Washed Fritillary was a nice find, and our first for a local wood at Chilham.



Chalkhill Blues are still at Lydden and Wye NR in good numbers.



Many Meadow Brown still on the wing.



Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 31-Aug-12 02:46 AM GMT

SUNDAY 26 AUGUST 2012.

A text message sent us heading towards the Bank Holiday crowds at Camber Sands, luckily for us our target was short of the masses. A Juvenile Montagus Harrier had arrived at Lydd Ranges and was performing regularly, but distantly in the area normally closed to the public because of Army firing. This Bank Holiday the ranges were silent and open for the public to walk along the few public rights of way. The bird was hawking and catching dragonflies, something I have not seen a Harrier do before. It kept this up for the couple of hours that we were there. It was clearly very good at it for it collected several at a time before settling down on the bank to eat its catch. This part of Kent/ East Sussex faces the sea so it was no surprise when we spotted 2 Painted Ladys working their way along the bank and then inland.

MONDAY 27 AUGUST 2012.

We spent the morning on Walland Marsh looking for, and checking, all butterflies and dragonflies, in the hope of something unusual on migration. It was not to be and only Red Admirals, Large Whites, Small Whites and Migrant Hawkers were noted. Not known to us but nearby Dungeness was having one of its best sea watch days for years. By mid-day 11 Long Tailed Skuas, a Sabines Gull, 14 Baleriac Shearwaters and many Great and Artic Skuas had passed. Supported by 280 Black Terns, and we missed it. We did see 2 Little Stints on ARC pit, 2 Ravens and a Hobby along Dengemarsh Road, and a Black Tern on Betts pit.

TUESDAY 28 AUGUST 2012.

We realised it was very late in the year, but we had one last try for Purple Emperors in Hamstreet Woods following a report of 2 on the 23 August 2012. The weather was not perfect but we only saw 5 Brimstones, 2 Red Admirals and a late Meadow Brown in 1.5 hours. Perhaps better luck next year.

THURSDAY 30 AUGUST 2012.

Another text message, followed by a 1.5 hour wait, eventually saw us watching a Cattle Egret in front of Dennis Hide at Dungeness RSPB reserve. We later saw the bird again on Dengemarsh. Also noted was 4 Little Egrets, 20 Knot, Common Tern, Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk, 50 Sand Martins and 2 Common Sandpipers.

The only butterflies noted were Small Tortoiseshell and Large White, together with 2 Emperor Dragonflies.

We have not run our moth trap for a week or so but this morning we were pleasantly surprised to find a CONVULVULUS Hawkmoth on a post in our garden. It was very faded, worn and in poor condition following the overnight rain. Its condition means a photo fit for publication is not possible, but still a good record, and a first for our garden.

Dave



A very faded Tree Lichen Beauty is well hidden against on a tree trunk. The moth should be a lot greenier.



Brimstone in Hamstreet Woods.



Cattle Egret on Dungeness RSPB reserve, along Dengemarsh Road.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Sep-12 11:30 PM GMT

Despite being early Autumn and the right time for migration it has been quite hard work of late. Either the weather has been wrong for moths, or when it is right moth numbers have been low in our garden. Apart from our Convolvulus moth the first sign of migration was the sudden increase in Silver Y numbers on Monday. We went up overnight from 4 or 5 to a minimum of 14. This increase is also reflected in the numbers we have seen in the field. SATURDAY 01 SEPTEMBER 2012.

We paid another visit to Dungeness, this time seeing the Great White Egret that had been present a week or so along Dengemarsh Road. Sand Martins were on the move with at least 75 in the area. Otherwise the only thing of note was the rapid increase in Red Admirals with 15 being seen.

SUNDAY 02 SEPTEMBER 2012.

The moth trap produced 12 species, with Flounced Rustic being the most numerous with 9. Next was a visit to St Margarets. This is a location that we normally do a few times in the autumn. It has a dedicated loyal band of regulars who walk around the area most days of the year so not much goes through without them knowing. It usually turns up at least one good bird every autumn so heres hoping. The Autumn Ladies Tresses were out on the green around the monument. The mower had got some but there was still 30 plus on show. We also saw 14 Common Blues, 8 Red Admirals, 2 Meadow Browns, 10 Silver Y's, 2 Redstarts, 2 Wheatears, 2 Crossbills (calling) and 12 Willow Warblers. Even better was the weather with temperatures normally seen in July.

MONDAY 03 SEPTEMBER 1012.

With the sun still shining we called in at WYE NR. Still no sign of any Clouded Yellows but 25 plus Chalkhill Blues still flying, also 6 Adonis Blue, 12 Common Blue, 2 Brown Argus, 12 Small Heath, 5 Brimstone, 30 Meadow Brown, 2 Speckled Wood, 2 Red Admirals, 11 Silver Y's and numerous Large and Small Whites. A Common Buzzard flew over and a Little Owl called.

Weather wise the rest of the week looks promising, hopefully there will be lots to enjoy.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 10-Sep-12 02:45 AM GMT

TUESDAY 04 SEPT 2012.

With continuing good weather we thought Dungeness may be worth a visit for Butterflies and Dragonflies. It was actually very quiet although a trapped Restharrow (moth) was of interest and a Feathered Gothic was rather late emerging this year. A walk around the ARC pit produced a Little Stint, 2 Avocets, 3 Common Blue butterflies and 15 Migrant Hawkers.

WEDNESDAY 05 SEPT 2012.

A early morning phone call alerted us to the fact that a probable Corys Shearwater had been seen off the Isle of Sheppey. Despite two visits during the day we failed to connect with this species or indeed any other shearwaters or skuas. 2 Common Blues and a Meadow Brown fluttered around us while we sea watched then it was home to check the moth trap. Despite 16 Silver Y's in the garden none were in the moth trap, even though we saw them flying around it the previous evening. We caught our 2nd ever Whitepoint and two Snout's were new for the year. The most attractive moth was a Angle Shades.

THURSDAY 06 SEPT 2012.

Back to Dungeness as a Southern Oak Bush Cricket had been trapped. This is a very rare, although increasing, Cricket in Britain. The first one was reported in 2001, with London seeming to be the core location. How one ever got to Dungeness is a mystery as they are flightless. Joining it in th trap was a Eyed Hawkmoth. Butterfly wise things were a little better than the last visit with a Small Copper, 10 Small Heaths, 2 Meadow Browns and 6 Common Blues. 2 Black Redstarts were along the entrance road near the old lighthouse and a Common Sandpiper was on the ARC pit.

SATURDAY 08 SEPT 2012.

Today was our first ever visit to Steyning Rifle Range. What a good little spot, and even better was the fact that we meet Sussex Kipper. What a really nice gentleman, friendly, informative and a Brown Hairstreak fanatic. Which meant that we were in with a chance of seeing our first ever Brown Hairstreak. Indeed it was Neil who located the first at the far end of the field, and despite his calling we only managed to arrive in time for a flight view. However, about 20 minutes later we located a different female in the same bush. This individual seemed fairly fresh and showed for about 10 minutes before flying back to the edge. On the way back Neil and others had found three more, of which we managed to see one. Three in one day not bad for a new species for us. Pleased with our day we did toy with the idea of visiting Portland for the Monach butterfly, but it was already 13.30 hours and the Saturday traffic was heavy so we decided to call it a day and head home. Other things noted at Steyning were Comma, 6 Red Admirals, Small Heath, 8 Common Blues, 5 Speckled Woods, 8 Meadow Browns, Spotted Flycatcher, 2 Common Buzzards and a passing Little Egret. A really good day in great company at a well managed location for Brown Hairstreak. Surely the best spot to see them in Britain at the present time.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by Gibster, 10-Sep-12 03:55 AM GMT

Hiya Dave, you've clearly been spending lots of time in the field lately, lucky fella 😊

Regards your Southern Oak Bush-cricket at Dungeness, I'd offer one obvious explanation as to how it got there – as a passenger in somebody's car. I've had both the Oak Bush-crickets inside the cab of my truck from time to time. Just a guess, but plausible?

Cheers,
Gibster.

Re: Dave Brown

by philm63, 10-Sep-12 04:14 AM GMT

Dave
Haven't posted on your diary yet, but a regular read for me – a really good interesting diary, keep it up!!
Phil

Re: Dave Brown

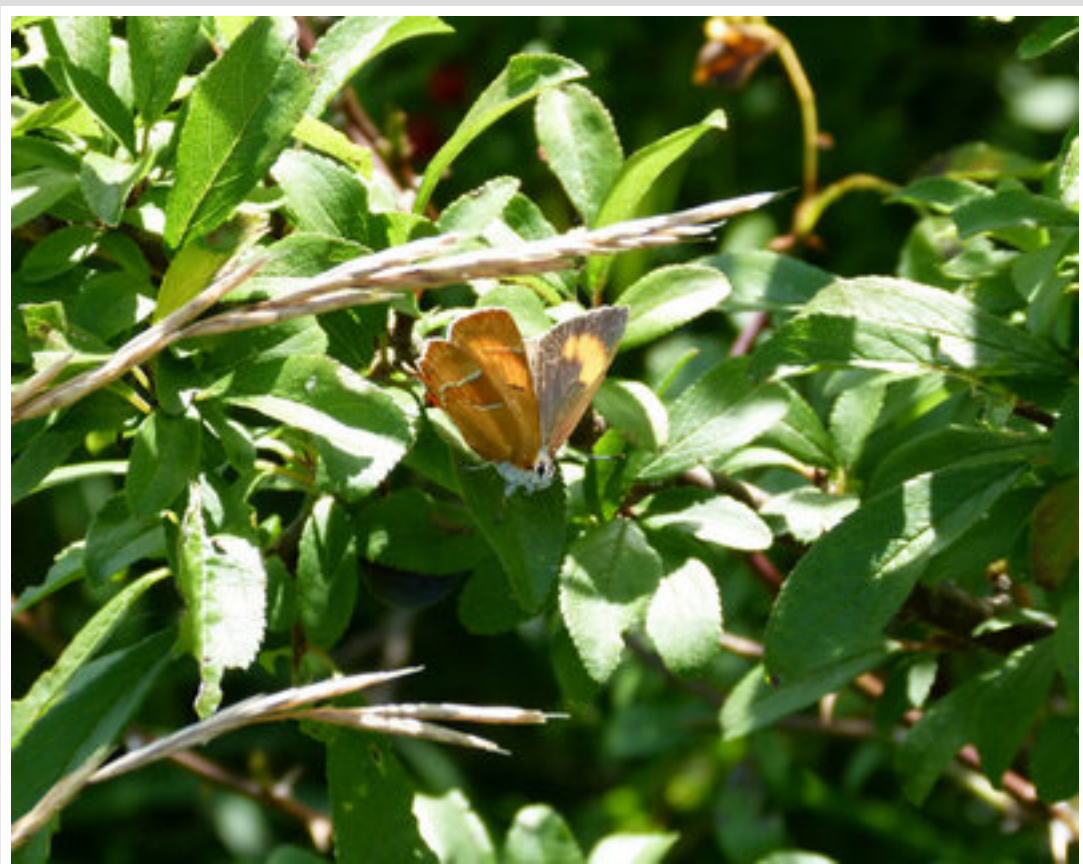
by dave brown, 10-Sep-12 10:46 PM GMT

Gibster,
I am sure that you are right about the car or lorry theory with regards the Southern Oak Bush Cricket. With reference to your comment about us spending a lot of time in the field lately. All I can say is, not as much as you. You have just had 3 months in the field, admittedly with sorer feet and probably wetter cloths. Did it ever stop raining? I hope that you and Sami are both recovering well after your little stroll 😊

I have just read Sussex Kipper's update. We just knew he would crack and go for the Monach. You could just see it in his eyes when he spoke about the butterfly on Saturday. I half expected him to go straight from Steyning on Saturday.

My apologies to Susie for not introducing myself on Saturday. I did recognise you, and we did speak briefly, but I caught up in the excitement of seeing my 3rd Brown Hairstreak in the space of an hour or so and then it was time to leave. A real nice group of people there, all looking and trying to help each other.

I attach a few photos to update my entry yesterday.



Brown Hairstreak at Steyning Rifle Range. It was actually quite hard to photograph as it worked its way around the bush.



Brown Hairstreak at Steyning Rifle Range



Rest Harrow. This rare moth was trapped at Dungeness



This Southern Oak Bush Cricket was found at Dungeness. Being flightless its appearance is a mystery.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Sep-12 12:19 AM GMT

On his entry for the 13th September Gibster wrote

Oh Yeah Baby...MONARCH ON MY LIST!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I just love that expression to describe the thrill of seeing what must, in my view, be the butterfly of the year. Not only is it rare, but it is a little stunner and available to all who wish to see it. I cannot remember another Mainland record that has stayed so long on one bush and viewable whenever the weather is suitable. First Sussex Kipper cracked, than Gibster and finally the Brown's. Despite a round trip of nearly 8 hours this was one beauty worth seeing. Now in it's tenth day and showing signs of wear it was still worth all the effort.

SUNDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER 2012.

A visit to Dungeness produced a Black Necked Grebe on the ARC pit and a passage of at least 50 Swallows. Next a look down Galloways found a small fall of Chats with 7 Whinchats, 10 Wheatears and 4 Stonechats. Whilst wondering what to check next a text message sent us to the RSPB reserve where a Juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper was showing in front of Firth Hide. A nice little wader from America and hopefully the start of many more. A feature of the day was the slow but steady passage of Red Admirals, presumably migrants on their way inland. At least 20 seen around the area.

THURSDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2012.

A sunny and warm day found us checking WYE NR around the Devils Kneading Bowl area. Whilst a lot of the butterflies were in poor condition, indeed some seemed on their last legs, others were not too bad, and their numbers were rather surprising for such a late date. In total Brown Argus 5, Common Blue 18, Red Admiral 4, Chalkhill Blue 3, Adonis Blue 6, Meadow Brown 20, Small Copper, Small White 5, Large White 12. Also 5 Migrant Hawkers, Common Darter, Common Buzzard and Hobby. A really good day in the Autumn sunshine.

SATURDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2012.

What can we say? A cracking day spent at Weymouth and Portland. We started off at Lodmoor seeing views of the Short Billed Dowitcher trying to hide in the Juncas on West Scrape. After an hour, and without better views, we decided to head for Portland and the Monarch Butterfly at Easton, leaving at least 50 others desperate for a better view. The Monarch was showing immediately on our arrival, and at a distance of only 5 metres. What could be better? A beautiful sunny day, a stunning butterfly and only 15 people present. It performed throughout our 30 minute stay, although at times it flew to the back of the bush, at others it would be right in front. Even the locals were taking an interest with some using their mobiles to capture the moment. Not surprisingly after ten days it is showing some wear but it still has the wow factor. We did check around Portland Bill briefly for any late Lulworth Skippers but none were seen. Butterflywise the only other species seen was Red Admirals and Large Whites. 10 Yellow Wagtails flew over and there was

a constant passage of Swallows, otherwise things were fairly quiet. We then returned to Lodmoor early afternoon to find the Short Billed Dowitcher showing right in the open and only 5 other people present. A mega rarity (admittedly present for 10 days or so) and only 8 of us in total present on a Saturday afternoon. Despite the crowds in Weymouth and Portland (there appeared to be many things on) we had a fantastic day out.



Monarch Butterfly at Easton (Portland).



Monarch Butterfly at Easton (Portland).



Monarch Butterfly at Easton (Portland).



Monarch Butterfly at Easton (Portland).



Pectoral Sandpiper on Burrowes Pit (RSPB Reserve) Dungeness

Re: Dave Brown

by Hoggers, 17-Sep-12 04:11 AM GMT

Hi Dave seems like a long time ago that we were standing by the canal gazing up at that Elm for White Letter Hairstreaks! Just wanted to say how much I enjoy reading your diary and Congratulations on seeing the Monarch! Great Stuff!

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Sep-12 11:37 PM GMT

Well, the Monarch and Short Billed Dowitcher was always going to be a hard act to follow, especially as these sightings were on a warm sunny day. It seems that both the wildlife and the weather has been poor ever since (rain lashing down at the moment). Summer, if you can call it that, has certainly given way to a wet Autumn.

TUESDAY 18 SEPT 2012.

Between showers we visited Stodmarsh where actually 4 Red Admirals, a Speckled Wood and many Large Whites were still on the wing, together with 4 Migrant Hawkers, 3 Common Darters and 2 Emperor Dragonflies. Birdwise we saw 3 Bearded Tits, 2 Hobbys and a Water Rail amongst the more common ones. This reserve, and nearby Grove Ferry, needs a bit of loving care. The reed beds are becoming overgrown in places, sometimes restricting the view from public viewing areas. It has to be said its not the fault of the local warden, who now covers more than one reserve, but rather one aspect of the cut back in funding and manpower resources. This is probably a national problem that we may need to get used to, as funding will get even tighter in the years to come.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY 22/23 SEPTEMBER 2012.

We spent both days in the Dungeness area in the hope of some goodies, but it was not to be. Saturday was warm enough to encourage a few butterflies such as Common Blue, Red Admiral, Small Copper and Large White, but Sunday was a wash out. Bird wise there was good number of Swallows and Sand Martins moving, with large numbers of Chiffchaffs grounded. Saturday also saw a few Blackcaps in the bushes around the ARC pit. Wader wise it was quiet although the Pectoral Sandpiper is still around. Moth trapping had been quiet with Frosted Orange and Sallow being pick of a poor bunch. An interesting feature on Sunday was watching 174 Swallows head out into the channel in heavy rain and a storm force south westerly. Those factors would appear to be a disaster for them, we just hope that they come back to land safely somewhere nearby.

Finally, to end this brief update I will mention our ongoing local discussion over a wader which was present at Dungeness for several days, which we all thought was just an odd Adult Little Stint, that may yet prove to be Kents first Semi-Palmated Sandpiper for many years. This bird was always very distant and no one got a enough field description to get it past the BBRC Rarities committee. Luckily someone got some long distance photos, which when blow up and cropped show several features indicative of Semi-P. Whether these photos are good enough to convince the panel is another matter. This may just be the one that got away, but it does show what can turn up anywhere and anytime. Its what makes our hobby of wildlife watching so enjoyable and fulfilling.

Hopefully we can get the rain out of the way and still see a few late butterflies in addition to lots of other goodies.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Sep-12 04:52 AM GMT

TUESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2012

Today was a St Margarets day. We did see a Painted Lady and 4 Red Admirals but little else apart from 25 Chiffchaffs and a few Swallows passing through.

THURSDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2012.

It was quite sunny so we visited Dungeness to see what had been brought in on migration. There was hundreds of Swallows and Sand Martins passing through but surprising the area was quite hard work. We noted 2 Black Terns and a Black Necked Grebe on the ARC pit. A Pied Flycatcher was near the point and the bushes contained many Chiffchaffs. We could not find the Redstart or Firecrest seen earlier, but we did see 3 Small Heaths, 4 Small Whites, 2 Red Admirals, 40 Large Whites and a Small Tortoiseshell. Other insects included 15 Migrant Hawkers, 5 Common Darters and the areas second record of Southern Oak Bush Cricket.

SATURDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2012.

With good temperatures forecast for today we decided to visit Stodmarsh and look for any Willow Emerald Damselflies. This Damselfly has yet to be recorded at Stodmarsh but it can only be a matter of time. They breed about a couple of miles away, and the conditions look perfect for them. Despite the good weather we saw none. Next year perhaps? Birdlife was quite good with the long staying 2 Great White Egrets present, a late Hobby, Kingfisher, 3 Bearded Tits, 2 Cettis Warblers and a flock of 10 Siskins. Butterflies were down to 2 species with just Red Admiral and Large White. Migrant Hawker numbers were high with at least 20 on the wing. We saw many Swallows, Sand Martins and House Martins feeding up and passing through. Just as we were settling down to a late snack a welcome phone call from the friendly Dungeness team informed us that a Barred Warbler had just been trapped.

Depending on the traffic we were at least an hour away, but this is a good Kent bird so we headed south. We arrived at Dungeness just as it reappeared in the Moat following its release and a period of rest. These are always difficult birds to see in the open and today was no exception with the bird remaining in brambles whilst it fed on blackberries. 2 Small Tortoiseshells and a Red Admiral passed as we watched the bird. The only decent moth at the Obs was the Gem and nearby in the gull roost at the fishing boats was the adult Yellow Legged Herring Gull.

A really enjoyable sunny day at a couple of good locations.



Barred Warbler trying to hide in the bramble bushes around Dungeness Moat.



Sallow seen at Dungeness last weekend.



One of the two Great White Egrets present at Stodmarsh.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 09-Oct-12 03:24 AM GMT

What a strange mix of weather in the last week. Several days of heavy rain, but also a few days of warm sunshine. Not sure that it has done much to benefit the insect life as the numbers and variety on offer dwindle quickly. Still, its nice to get out and look.

TUESDAY 02 OCT 2012.

Today saw us at Dungeness where many Swallows and Sand Martins were feeding up before the long flight south. 2 Hobbys on ARC pit were hawking the dragonflies and mainly catching Migrant Hawkers. The martins were keeping a safe distance as they end up on the menu when circumstances dictate. The bushes were full of Chiffchaffs but little else. We saw at least 40 Migrant Hawkers, (although numbers were reducing quickly), and 10 Common Darters. Despite the warm conditions only 1 Red Admiral and 4 Large Whites.

THURSDAY 04 OCT 2012.

We had not visited Pett Level for a while so today saw us looking at the Pools and surrounding area. Again, there were many Swallows and Sand Martins, with a few House Martins, passing through. Other birds included 2 late Yellow Wagtails, 6 Wheatears, 2 Black Tailed and 1 Bar Tailed Godwit, Greenshank, Marsh Harrier and Common Buzzard. Butterflies were few but Large Whites and Red Admiral kept us interested. We then toured the outskirts of Dungeness seeing a Marsh Harrier and 200 Golden Plovers on Scotney and a late Whinchat along Dengemarsh.

Some of the habitat conditions on Walland Marsh look very similar to Chislet Marsh where the Willow Emerald Damselfly has become established, so we spent the rest of the afternoon checking likely spots for this beautiful damselfly. We spent sometime along a suitable lane seeing 75 Common Darters, 15 Migrant Hawkers, 40 Red Admirals, many Large Whites and a few Small Whites, but no Willow Emeralds. It can only be a matter of time for this species to be seen here.

SATURDAY 06 OCT 2012.

Today we visited the North Kent Coast, in particular Reculver Marsh and the seaside town of Margate. Despite a hint of Northerly wind nothing much was happening until about mid-day when suddenly migrants start landing in trees, or flying overhead. At Margate we noted 25 Jays, 3 Common Buzzards, 2 Sparrowhawks, 25 Chiffchaffs, 10 Goldcrests, 19 Fieldfares, 75 Redwings, 12 Song Thrushes and 4 Redpolls. A Comma, 3 Vapourer Moths and 3 Common Darters represented the insects. We stopped at nearby Acol for a snack and was pleased to see another Common Buzzard, 11 more Jays and a further 25 Redwings.

On our way there we had received a text to inform us of a good Kent moth at a friends house. So tea time found us at Hamstreet looking at a male Four Spotted Footman. Although they breed in Devon and Cornwall they are a very rare migrant in Kent. They do migrate from the Continent, but equally this one could have come from Cornwall on the South Westerly winds we have had lately. A brilliant end to another good day in Kent.

Dave



Male Four Spotted Footman caught at Hamstreet on Saturday.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 12-Oct-12 04:01 AM GMT

I can't compete with the Butterfly photos Sussex Kipper is posting on his blog at present. Some are rare, others are stunning and some are just *wish you were there*. However, despite our cancelled holiday because of the weather, we have still enjoyed ourselves this year. There is still a chance of

something good even this late so we will keep looking.

SUNDAY 07 OCT 2012.

We started the day with a decent moth in our garden. A Herald, not rare but most enjoyable. Next on the menu was Dungeness, but it proved hard work with only Red Admiral and 5 Migrant Hawkers on the insect front, birdwise 36 Chiffchaffs, 7 Brent Geese, 6 Greylag Geese at Sea (wild?), 3 Jays flying out to sea, 3 Stonechats and a Sparrowhawk. We again checked Walland Marsh for any good insects, but only noted 3 Migrant Hawkers, Comma, 2 Red Admirals and 10 Large Whites. A big difference from a couple of days ago.

TUESDAY 09 OCT 2012.

Sorry, Dungeness again, but this time a few more migrant birds with 6 Firecrests, 3 Stonechats, a late Lesser Whitethroat, Marsh Harrier and Little Egret being the most notable.

WEDNESDAY 10 OCT 2012.

For a change we decided to visit St Margarets around the Bockhill Farm area. There was clearly some migration going on for we saw 2 Firecrests, 6 Blackcaps, 12 Goldcrests, 10 Chiffchaffs, 80 Goldfinches, 14 Siskins, 2 Redwings, Sparrowhawk, Redpoll, 10 Swallows and 15 House Martins. Butterflies were Small Copper, Comma, Red Admiral and Large White. It was most pleasant in the sheltered spots and we spent nearly 3 hours in the field.

THURSDAY 11 OCT 2012.

Heavy rain was forecast for today so we stayed home but did see 77 House Martins migrating. In addition 3 Goldcrests and 2 Coal Tits visited the garden before the rain set in for the rest of the day.

Dave



This Herald moth was a nice garden surprise.



Firecrest at Dungeness. Poor light affects the sharpness of the picture.



This late Lesser Whitethroat was at Dungeness. Poor light affected the quality of the photo.



This male Blackcap was one of 6 enjoying the berries on offer at St Margarets.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Oct-12 04:59 AM GMT

Here in Kent the Autumn migration for birds and insects has been very disappointing. The movement of Red Admirals has so far failed to materialise and there is hardly any moths at all, migrants or residents. There is some movement of birds, in particular Jays, but where are the scarce ones we all love to see once a year.

There has been reports of Dartford Warbler, Rough Legged Buzzard and Penduline Tit, but only seen by the finders and not the general masses.

SUNDAY 14 OCTOBER 2012.

It had to be Dungeness on such a fine day. A walk around the recording area produced a Ring Ouzel, at least 6 Jays, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Siskin, Redpoll, Skylark, 9 Swallows, 2 Sparrowhawks, Migrant Hawker, 2 Red Admirals, 10 Chiffchaffs. Most strange of all was the sight of 4 Brent Geese on the beach with the public walking about. They must have been tired as no feeding conditions exist there. The only decent moths were Feathered Brindle and Feathered Ranunculus.

At the ARC pit we saw 5 Common Buzzards fly towards the coast. Ten minutes later we saw another 4, but this time they seemed more local as they just circled around, joined by 1 Marsh Harrier and a Merlin. Also present was 1 Cetti's Warbler, 23 Swallows, 12 Chiffchaffs and 3 Goldcrests.

The day ended happily at Hamstreet viewing a Delicate Moth and 2 Beaded Chestnuts, with groups of 3 and 2 Jays flying over. The Delicate is still quite a scarce moth in Kent so this opportunity to view was most welcome.

MONDAY 15 OCTOBER 2012.

I was up early and first in line for the dreaded flu jab, followed by a visit to Seasalter. A scarce bird at last with a Red Breasted Goose reported in a flock of Dark Bellied Brents. It showed fairly well bobbing about on the sea with a group of about 40 Brents. Their feeding area of eel grass was covered by the high tide

so they sat out the time on the sea rather than in the nearby fields. In total there was about 500 Brents spread along a mile or so stretch. Whilst watching this someone nearby called out Bonxie. Sure enough 3 of them were heading into the Swale into a South Westerly wind. Most unusual, as this part of the coast gives better sea movement with a Northerly aspect.

In the 2 or so hours we were present a continuous and steady movement of Chaffinches and House Martins took place, only interrupted when a Peregrine put in an appearance. We did see 2 Red Admirals and 4 Common Darters but little else insect wise.

I have included a few photos, but will add some moth photos later in the week.

Dave



Red Breasted Goose at the West end of Seasalter.



Red Breasted Goose at the West end of Seasalter.



Red Breasted Goose on the sea near the Sportsman Pub at Seasalter



This Jay was trapped at Dungeness. One of many appearing in the country at present following a failure of the acorn crop in Europe.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 21-Oct-12 03:28 AM GMT

Kents quiet spell continues. What there has been we have missed so I will say no more.

TUESDAY 16 OCT 2012.

A day at Dungeness for a change 😊 A mix of sea watching and walking around the RSPB/ ARC pit complex produced 2 Ravens, 2 Cettis Warblers, 8 Swallows, Marsh Harrier, 10 Chiffchaffs, 4 Artic Skua, 36 Gannets, 12 Auk sp (probably all Razorbills), a Red Throated Diver, Med Gull, 8 Kittiwakes, 6 Sandwich Terns and 4 Common Terns. Not too exciting but great to be out watching wildlife.

THURSDAY 18 OCT 2012.

Yesterday there had been some decent sea movement off Dungeness (14 Sooty Shearwaters), but not today. We did see a few Razorbills, Gannets and Sandwich Terns but not much else. On the beach was the presumed returning Glaucous Gull from last winter. Its now in 3rd winter plumage with some grey showing through on the back. Hopefully it will remain all winter with the fishing boats being its favoured spot. The only other new bird was a Great White Egret on New Diggings. There are now 3 birds around the area with one usually seen from the main road. The other two are normally on Burrowes Pit or Dengemarsh. What with up to 10 Little Egrets and good numbers of Cettis Warblers the RSPB is looking more Med like every day. If only the sun would respond.

Insect numbers have really dropped off with only a few Migrant Hawkers, Large Whites and a couple of Red Admirals noted. They may just make November this year and certainly no sign so far of a big Red Admiral Autumn movement.



Delicate moth at Hamstreet. A migrant moth seen most years in Kent.



Beaded Chestnut at Hamstreet. A common enough, but still a smart looking moth

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-Oct-12 04:16 AM GMT

SATURDAY 20 OCT 2012.

We awoke to signs of some migration. Over our house between 07.00 hrs and 09.30 hrs we saw and heard 4 Crossbills, 60 Redwings, 10 Song Thrushes, 6 Blackbirds, 150 Chaffinches, 80 Goldfinch, 8 Siskins, 5 Redpolls and 2 Skylarks. What better reason do you need to head for the coast and check the bushes. Later that morning we arrived at St Margarets for a casual walk round in wonderful sunshine. It was a really nice Autumn day and the butterflies tried to respond. We only saw two species, Red Admiral and Large White, 2 of the former but 8 of the latter. A few Migrant Hawkers represented the dragonflies. There was no sign of any rare birds, but it was enjoyable just to see a decent number of birds. Birds seen were Ring Ouzel, Fircrest, 12 Goldcrests, 16 Jays, 8 Skylarks, 35 Goldfinches, 60 Swallows, 20 Song Thrushes, 8 Blackbirds, 20 Chaffinches, 11 Redpolls, Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Raven.

We ended the day round our friends house at Hamstreet to view a reasonable collection of moths for this time of the year. On show was Red-Green Carpet, Beaded Chestnut, Oak Nycteoline, Carnation Tortix, Barred Sallow and Cypress Carpet, Green-Brindled Crescent, with a Common Buzzard circling the house. A really nice end to a most enjoyable day.

Dave



Oak Nycteoline. A small but quite attractive Marco Moth. A first for us, although it is fairly common in the South East.



Green Brindled Crescent at Hamstreet



A slightly worn Cypress Carpet at Hamstreet

Butterflies hang on, just.

MONDAY 22 OCTOBER 2012.

We were late out today so it was somewhere local. With news of a Pallas's Warbler at Samphire Hoe we decided that was the place to go. It turned out to be a good move for it was probably the only place in Kent not shrouded in fog. Infact it was a most pleasant and warm afternoon with the a local temperature of 18 degrees. The Pallas's Warbler was quite mobile but did show regularly, although always on the other side of the railway line so no one managed a photo. It was a well marked individual and its yellowish rump stood out as it sort of hovered to catch insects on a ivy bush. Also on show was 2 Ring Ouzels, Common Redstart, Black Redstart, Coal Tit, Peregrine and Britains most well known twitcher, Lee Evans. Obviously touring Britain clocking up his year list.

Despite the pleasant weather insects were hard to come by, although Red Admiral, Large White and 2 Migrant Hawkers kept the flag flying.

TUESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2012

With signs of bird migration from the north today we visited Thanet. Margate Cemetry produced 1 Firecrest, 40 Goldcrests, 32 Redwings, 14 Jays, several Song Thrushes, 2 Chiffchaffs, 35 Chaffinches, Redpoll and many Robins.

When is a Bird not a Bird? When its a Ringed Necked Parakeet, and we saw 5 of the damm things. Some people love them but I find they are very noisy and frighten most other things off. They have their place in nature, but its not in Britain. In some parts of London and the South East they gather at dusk in their hundreds and can be heard for some distance. I much prefer the humble Starling, which when seen close up the plumage details is actually quite stunning.

WEDNESDAY 24 OCT 2012.

A bit of a insect day at our favourite place of Dungeness. Thanks to the excellant observatory warden and his team on show was a good range of migrant and domestic moths. These included 2 Vestrals, Delicate, Scarce Bordered Straw, Pearly Underwing, a number of Rush Veneer (actually 60 had been trapped) and a Pink Barred Sallow. A prolonged watch from Dengemarsch Gulley saw 2 Peacock butterflies, 2 Ravens, 227 Goldfinches, 12 Siskins, 40 Redpolls, 25 Skylarks, 65 Meadow Pipits, 20 Redwings, 6 Blackbirds, 5 Song Thrushes, 5 Reed Buntings, Merlin, Black Redstart and 18 Chaffinches. A further 3 Black Redstarts were around the new Lighthouse. We did not see it ourselves but the Glaucous Gull was still present around the fishing boats. A really good day.

FRIDAY 26 OCTOBER 2012.

With strong Northerly winds forecast it was time to dabble in the black art of seawatching. We choose Minnis bay and it proved a good move. We saw 4 Great Skuas, a Pomarine Skua, 10 Little Gulls, 50 Kittiwakes, 60 Gannets, 125 Brent Geese, 200 Common Scoter, 11 Red Breasted Mergansers, a Diver Sp, and 5 Auk Sp. Some other ducks were moving but proved hard to identify due to distance. At home we had 1 Peacock Butterfly.

Not a bad week although still no sign of any butterfly migration. Surely its too late in the year now.



One of 2 Vestrals present at Dungeness Observatory.



Pink Barred Sallow (sorry about the glass reflection).



This late Redstart was present at Samphire Hoe.



In the mist a Ringed Necked Parakeet at Margate enjoys the feast.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 02-Nov-12 12:35 AM GMT

SATURDAY 27 OCT 2012

More very strong Northerly winds forecast for today so it was back to Minnis Bay for a second day of sea watching. It turned out to be very strong winds with little moving, although what was moving was quality birds for Kent. The strength of the wind was such that many birds were pushed quite close to the shore, indeed, some were almost level with the sea wall. The best bird, and only seen by our son and a few others further east, was a Storm Petrel. This was pushed to within a hundred metres of the shore. Despite him calling directions I failed to pick it up. Luckily we all have seen Storm Petrel in Kent before when Dungeness experienced an early summer movement a few years ago. At 10.20 hours all 3 of us picked up a Manx Shearwater heading east, shortly followed by 3 Great Skuas and 2 Artic Skuas. Other birds noted was a Pomarine Skua, 4 Little Gulls, 17 Brent Geese, 21 Gannets, Kittiwakes, a Swallow and a possible Little Auk. That disappeared before we could positively ID it. We also saw a few Skylarks and Goldfinches hugging the shore as they flew by. To be honest the numbers seen was poor return for 4 hours of sea watching, but it was interesting just watching the high waves hit the sea wall and then cover the entire road with spray. Even at our high advantage point we was still getting covered in sea spray.

SUNDAY 28 OCT 2012

A early morning text sent us to Walland Marsh for the opportunity to see 2 Whooper Swans in amongst a group of Mute Swans. Although we see Whoopers most winters they are still a scarce bird in Kent so well worth the effort. A tour of Dungeness was disappointing with all the usual suspects still present. A Common Scoter on ARC pit was presumably a bird blown in off the sea following the previous days strong winds. We did see 2 insects, one Peacock butterfly and 1 Migrant Hawker.

TUESDAY 30TH OCT 2012.

With the prospect of a fine day on offer we headed for St Margarets. We hoped for a little late migration but generally things were quiet. We did see 17 Swallows and a small passage of Goldfinches and Redpolls, together with 3 Crossbills and 4 Jays. A long walk produced just one butterfly, a Red Admiral. With a mixed bag of weather predicated I can't see us recording many more butterfly sightings.

We were just about to return home when a message sent us to Oare Marshes where a stunning Male Penduline Tit had just been found. We saw it immediately on arrival at the site in a ditch near the East Flood hide. It remained on show on and off for the next two hours. A hunting Barn Owl in broad day light and sunshine was a bit of a surprise, although the Common Buzzard and Peregrine was more expected. We saw just one Migrant Hawker and like the butterflies, there can't be to many more of them this year.

An enjoyable, if hard work, period of nature watching.

Dave.



Penduline Tit at Oare Marsh.



Penduline Tit at Oare Marsh.



This late Red Admiral was at St Margarets, Kent.



One of two Whooper Swans present near Midley Cottages on Walland Marsh.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 10-Nov-12 11:23 PM GMT

TWO OUT OF THREE NOT BAD, SO NEARLY THREE OUT OF THREE AND THE BUTTERFLIES RETURN.

I am referring to the Penduline Tit in Kent. You will note from our last entry that we managed to see the one at Oare last Tuesday, well on Monday (5 November) we had a text to say one was currently showing in front of Hansons Hide at Dungeness. We were already on our way to Dung so this message was a bonus, but in the 20 minutes or so that we took to get there it disappeared. Despite a wait of an hour or so, and an attempt to spread the search over a wider area, we failed to see this bird. It is an interesting sighting as it was ringed, so may well be the returning bird of the last two winters. Where does it go to for the summer? A Long Tailed duck from Makepeace hide was too distant for photography. Swallows are still passing through with 3 over the ARC pit, and at least 3 Great White Egrets on Burrowes pit. Finally a visit to Walland produced the 2 Whooper Swans and 6 Tree Sparrows.

TUESDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2012.

A trip to Grove Ferry in fine sunshine was rewarded with 2 Red Admirals and 3 Common Darters. Insects are still hanging on in this mild spell for Kent. A Water Pipit flew over calling, and over 200 Fieldfares and 8 Redwings was a sign of continuing migration. The reedbeds held 5 Bearded Tits, 2 Water Rails, 2 Cettis Warblers and 3 Marsh Harriers.

THURSDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2012.

A report of a Penduline calling early morning near Feast Hide at Grove Ferry by one of the locals was enough to encourage us back to Grove Ferry. Late morning saw us arrive at the Feast Hide and within 10 minutes my wife had found a Penduline Tit feeding on reed mace. It was only on view for a few minutes when it disappeared towards the front of Feast hide. Whilst waiting for it to return we heard another one call behind us so naturally thought that it somehow passed us and moved through, but realise now this could have been a different bird. After 45 minutes, with no further sight or sound, we made our way back to the car park noting no butterflies but still 1 Migrant Hawker and 2 Common Darters. A mixed flock of Fieldfares, Redwings and a couple of Reed Bunting were in the entrance copse. We passed one other couple and informed them of our Penduline Tit sighting. We later learnt that 3 Penduline Tits had been seen 40 minutes after we left, and the number increased to 4 birds the next morning.

So why all the excitement over the Penduline Tit. Well in the 70's and 80's this species was being widely predicated to be the next one to colonise Britain from the Continent. It never happened, although sightings have been regular ever since. Now we have at least 6 birds in Kent at 3 different locations, in the space of a week, so could this year be the one they stay and bred? The next few months could be very interesting.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Nov-12 04:08 AM GMT

SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2012.

A morning visit to Pett Level in pleasant sunshine proved very quiet. The only highlight being 3 Common Buzzards going high north along the sea wall, so may well have been on migration. We were about to make a slow drive home when news broke of a sighting of a Crane near Scotney early morning. We thought that it was worth checking so 30 minutes later saw us looking across Scotney gravel pits. Two other people there said it had not been seen for several hours and they drove off. Minutes later we picked up the bird flying over the windmills, slowly gaining height and heading north all the time. We watched the bird for some twenty minutes until finally we lost it flying somewhere near New Romney and thought that was it. We had released the news and other local birders were now arriving to be told that we had seen it fly off. Suddenly it was there, back in the same field. No one had seen it fly back in and for such a large bird this was amazing. It was always too far for photos but still a nice bird to see. Support was in the form of 2 Common Buzzards, a Marsh Harrier, Ringtail Hen Harrier and nearby 10 Tree Sparrows and a Yellowhammer.

TUESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2012.

Another visit to Grove Ferry but this time very quiet. Well actually very noisy as two parties of school children were visiting the reserve. They seemed to be enjoying the experience even if we were finding birding hard. 2 Water Rails called, as did a Cettis Warbler. 5 Bearded Tits pinged in the reeds but proved hard to see, 350 Fieldfares and 15 Redwings flew over and were probably heading for the local orchards for the fallen apples.

WEDNESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2012.

We started the day looking for a Snow Bunting at Littlestone without success. A visit to Dungeness ARC pit produced 2 Peregrines disturbing all the ducks, but little else on offer. Till now we had been wondering where all the local birders were. We had seen none of the regulars at all, which is unusual. Suddenly a phone call explained all. They were watching a Pallas's Warbler in the Observatory garden. Ten minutes later we too were enjoying views of the rarity from Siberi, supported by a Firecrest, several Goldcrests and a Black Redstart. We then had a call to say that the Snow Bunting was back at Littlestone and showing well alongside the sea wall that backs onto the golf course. It was showing well when we arrived and seemed undisturbed by the many dog walkers passing by.

Uptil now we have not mentioned any insects but all that was about to change thanks to our good friend at Ruckinge. He had a few moths for us to see and so we ended the day seeing the stunning Merveille du Jour, 2 Feathered Thorns, 2 Cypress Pugs, 2 Sprawlers, Rusty Dot Pearl, Grey Shoulder Knot, 3 Red Green Carpet, November and December moth. What a day of wildlife watching.



Record photo of the Pallas's Warbler at Dungeness. Difficult to photo as mobile, poor light and rubbish photographer. It does show the central crown stripe.



Snow Bunting at Littlestone



I know I posted one last year but the Merveille du Jour has to be one of Britains best moths.



Feathered Thorn



Sprawler moth

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-Nov-12 03:58 AM GMT

Things have been fairly quiet here in Kent, although a brief and photographed Desert Warbler at Samphire Hoe would have attracted many if it had stayed. Despite this we have still enjoyed ourselves and have seen a few insects.

SATURDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2012.

A day spent decorating was livened up by sightings of a *Red Admiral* in the garden and a late Swallow over the house heading South West. Later we also had 9 Fieldfares and 2 Redwings fly around. Not our latest Red Admiral, but getting close.

SUNDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2012.

A trip to the Military Canal at Hamstreet saw us connect with a freshly arrived Great White Egret, joined by a Little Egret. Whilst along the edge of the canal we counted 3 Common Darter and a Green Sandpiper. The wood complex was quiet although we did see a November moth. Arriving home for a cup of tea we watched a Common Buzzard and Sparrowhawk fly over the garden. We toured the local area in the afternoon but only a Common Buzzard at Godmersham was of interest.

MONDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2012.

Today was a housework and gardening day. It was whilst pruning some rose bushes that our son saw 4 **Waxwings** land in our neighbours tree. In the time it took me to get the camera they were gone, flying off west. Hopefully they are still local and feeding on some berry bush. Perhaps the start of Kents invasion following large numbers further north.

Over the last few days we have been seeing a mouse in the garden (despite the 2 cats next door). Rodents are not my best subject but I believe it is a Wood Mouse, and attach a photo taken in the early morning poor light. I hope that it survives but I think the odds are stacked against it.

Dave



Wood Mouse? Trying to survive in a Cat filled environment.



Part of a flock of Sanderling on Littlestone Beach.

Re: Dave Brown

by Neil Freeman, 20-Nov-12 04:36 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Looks like a Wood Mouse to me going by the larger ears and eyes and pale underside.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Nov-12 03:42 AM GMT

Thanks Neil for the confirmation of the mouse. Surprisingly it still survives despite the cats smelling around the area. They seem to know of its presence, but equally it must know of them, presumably hence the term playing *cat and mouse*.

We have not had any luck refinding the Waxwings so presume they have moved on.

TUESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2012.

Today we started off at Walland Marsh seeing the 2 adult Whooper Swans in amongst the flock of Mute Swans. Near Midley we also saw 6 Tree Sparrows and 100 plus Fieldfares, but no sign of the recent Brambling. Then to Scotney Gravel Pits to see 3 Pintails and a Marsh Harrier. Next was a look from the road across the New Diggings (part of the RSPB Reserve) where there was now 4 Great White Egrets. On the opposite side of the road (ARC pit) was 1 Little Egret and 2 Goldeneye. With fairly strong winds we thought that a sea watch maybe worthwhile. In the event it was just Kittiwakes (many), Auks (numerous—mainly Gullimots) and Gannets, with 14 Common Scoter, that were passing. The 3rd Winter Glaucous Gull was patrolling up and down the beach, often landing by the fishing boats and loafing around. At the moment this bird is pretty reliable in its movements and presence, it is seen on most days for most of the day. Often just off the sea end of the concrete road leading to the fishing boats.

We ended the day at Littlestone beach where last weeks Snow Bunting has been joined by a second bird. Its nice to have a mate on cold and windy days with the extra pair of eyes scanning for predators. They are both very tame and will show down to 6 metres.

There is little else to report now with the onset of winter so I will do another blast from the past. This time its a flower called the Marsh Gentian, which I believe has one of the most stunning blue colours in the British wild plant world. The attached photo was taken at a location in Ashdown Forest on the 25 August 2007 where we found 64 spikes in a small fenced area for their protection but alongside a public footpath. We visit Ashdown Forest several times a year as it is a fantastic spot and is the nearest location to us with Silver Studded Blue present. It also holds Black Darter and Small Red Damselfly. On a hot day its great just having a slow walk and letting the wildlife come to you.

Dave



This is the second Snow Bunting at Littlestone



Marsh Gentian, Ashdown Forest, 2007.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Nov-12 04:12 AM GMT

Winter appears to be here.

For most of the past 7 days the weather has been dire and the wildlife has responded accordingly. To be honest very little wildlife has changed over the past couple of weeks so it has been an easy decision for us to continue with the decorating and house maintenance. Being at home has brought benefits and possibly our last sighting of a butterfly this year. A Red Admiral visited the garden several times on Sunday but its chances of finding any nectar must have been very low. I tried to help by putting out a butterfly solution soaked onto a sponge, but I did not see it feed on it. We have seen Redwings and Fieldfares on most days flying around the area, or sitting at the tops of trees, also Peregrine, Merlin, Sparrowhawk and today a Common Buzzard. Not bad for an urban garden and a watchful eye (now you know why the decorating takes me so long).

My blast from the past today is mainly for Jack. We have never been to Mull but have viewed it many times from Kilchoan, just across the water. I attach a photo taken on our visit in 2007 of the small daily ferry leaving Kilchoan for Mull, which is the land mass behind. Standing where we were we could, with a telescope, easily see all the different and brightly coloured houses on Tobermory. Mull looked very tempting, but I am not a good sea traveller, and that boat looked small on a big sea. Still the wildlife around Kilchoan was excellent, although I can't say the same for the June weather. I am sure that Jack will enjoy his time on Mull with all the wildlife (once the rain stops).



The ferry leaving Kilchoan for the distant island of Mull, late June 2007.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 03-Dec-12 04:02 AM GMT

The sun brings the birders out, but not the butterflies (well it was only 4 degrees).

SUNDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2012.

Today was most enjoyable with pleasant sunshine but very cold temperatures. We were aware that 5 Waxwings had been seen on Walland Marsh yesterday so it was time to visit one of our regular patches. The news had attracted a number of birders, both local and visitor. Most eventually caught up with the Waxwing although they were quite mobile, as was the 1000 plus Fieldfares and 160 plus Redwings. We saw a total of 4 Waxwings, including 2 feeding close to the road at Cheyne Court. Also present was 6 Tree Sparrows and a large number of Chaffinches, thanks to the local farmer who puts seed out for the smaller birds. We did not see it but the wintering Crane was reported, as was a Ringtail Hen Harrier.

Next was Dungeness New Diggings and the ARC pit where the Juvenile Black Throated Diver and a Great White Egret were on show. Finally we ended the day at the Orbital Industrial Park at Ashford where 38 Waxwings were showing and feeding close to Kent Paper Works and the Nissan Showroom.

A really good winters day in the field.

Dave



One of a group of 38 Waxwings present at Ashford Kent.



Tree Sparrow trying to hide in the brambles near Cheyne Court, Walland Marsh.



Distant view of the Black Throated Diver, which was always looking towards the sun

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Dec-12 04:07 AM GMT

The Waxwings continue.

Yesterday we had 18 Waxwings visit next doors tree. They rested and trilled for about 10 minutes before flying off east.

Wednesday 5th December 2012.

Another text from a friend had us heading to Hamstreet where 28 Waxwings had been present early morning. We arrived too late to see them but noted a big increase in Fieldfare and Redwing numbers. Next was a visit to Pett Level where we hoped a Hen Harrier or Short Eared Owl may be present. We did not see one and to be honest it was fairly quiet. We then headed to Walland Marsh where the Waxwing flock had increased to 10. The place is still alive with large numbers of Thruhes, and especially Fieldfares. The Lapwing and Golden Plovers numbers are also building so perhaps they will attract something special. Last year it was a Dotterel for a couple of days. Dungeness remains much the same with the 3W Glaucous Gull and the 4 Great White Egrets.

dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Dec-12 03:58 AM GMT

So far in December we have seen not one butterfly, moth or bee. In fact its been dam cold most days. I think that must be it now until March, but we thought that last year and a good moth turned up (Black Spotted Chestnut on Thanet).

THURSDAY 6TH DECEMBER 2012.

It was bitterly cold at Oare Marsh when we arrived and the poor showing of birds did not warm us up. From the reserve we saw 4 Marsh Harriers, 2 Common Buzzards, Peregrine, 6 Pintail, 6 Snipe and a Little Egret. Otherwise it was the common waders and ducks on offer. Most of the East Flood was frozen over so that explained the absence of birds.

Next was a spot just off the busy A299 near Dargate where 8 Waxwings were on show. We could hear others trilling away below the bridge but we could not see them because of the bushes. These birds were supported by good numbers of Fieldfares and Redwings. We had planned to visit Seasalter, but it was so cold that a warm fire at home was too much of a temptation.

SUNDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2012.

A return visit to Dargate found 22 Waxwings, again supported by good numbers of Fieldfares and Redwings. Next was Hampton, but we failed to see the Purple Sandpiper. A bonus was a Shag that flew by and headed towards Herne Bay. A few have been reported off the Kent Coast this winter although it is still a good Kent bird. The sea was otherwise fairly quiet. Our final visit of the day was to Stodmarsh. Surprisingly we saw no other birders in our visit of one and half hours. A few families were out walking in the bright but cold sunshine. A Brambling flew into the Alder wood calling, as did 2 Siskins but otherwise the wood was quiet. Whilst scanning the distance for Marsh Harriers, of which there was 5, we noticed a Great White Egret siting in the Cormorant tree. Clearly very much bigger than the Cormorants, it preened and seemed reasonably settled, although whether it stays remains to be seen. There was two there earlier in the year so whether this is one of those returning birds is open to debate. Of note was the very large number of Teal and Shoveler present.

MONDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2012.

A successful visit to Johnsons Corner, Hamstreet, found us connecting with 22 Waxwings although 36 have been recorded there today. Next was a tour of Dungeness but little has changed lately. 2 Redhead Smew have arrived on the RSPB but there was no sign of yesterdays Ringed Necked Duck up until the time we left mid afternoon. Duck numbers are still very low for this time of the year. We did see 2 Tree Sparrows around Boulderwall Farm at the entrance track but with no real change it was time for home and a cup of tea.

Hopefully things will improve soon.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Dec-12 03:49 AM GMT

The Waxwings continue.

TUESDAY 11 DEC 2012.

An excellant start to the day with 2 Waxwings on our berry bush. They did not stay long, nor did they return. They however set the theme for the day with 30 Waxwings at Johnson Corner Hamstreet and a further 25 near the North exit off the B2070 into Hamstreet. A Little Egret was on the Military Canal and 2 Common Buzzards on the edge of Walland Marsh. The Marsh was still full of Fieldfares and Redwings, although the berries are fast disappearing. Next was Pett Level where a female Merlin, 2 Common Buzzards and 2 Marsh Harriers were the highlights. We had hoped that the frozen pits would encourage a Bittern to show itself, but it was not to be.

WEDNESDAY 12 DEC 2012.

Still freezing cold, frozen pits and not too many birds. 4 Rock Pipits fed along the shore and 2 Marsh Harriers over the Swale was encouraging but most waders remained elusive. 14 Reed Buntings fed in the reeds and 9 Snipe sat on the frozen pit, as did at least 100 Dunlin and a few Ringed Plovers. It was time to try elsewhere. A flock of 200 Wigeon sat on the sea at Seasalter. This flock also contained 1 Teal and 1 Pintail. There was 9 Black Tailed and 1 Bar Tailed Godwit on the shore plus lots of Sanderling, Dunlin, Curlew and Grey Plover. Last stop of the day was Dargate where only 8 Waxwings were present.

THURSDAY 13 DEC 2012.

A Black Throated Diver has been present in Dover (Granville) Docks for a few days so today was time to visit. Thanks to the kind Dover Harbour staff who allowed us escorted access to the other side of the fence we were able to enjoy very good views of the bird diving amongst the moored boats. The staff were very friendly and understanding of the needs of us birders who preferred not to have to view through a fence. Also present was a Grey Wagtail and a Rock Pipit. We ended the day at Deal where, looking towards the pier, a flock of 81 Scoter contained at least 4 Velvet Scoter. The white in the wings was a give away every time they took flight. We did check for a Surf Scoter, but perhaps this is a species for the future. There was at least 25 Red Throated and 1 Black Throated Diver in the area, with many more Red Throateds passing at sea. 18 Auks passed at sea all heading west.

A really good few days although the weather has been very cold.

Dave



Waxwing at Johnsons Corner, Hamstreet.



Black Throated Diver in Dover Granville Docks.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Dec-12 11:30 PM GMT

WHAT A GOOD WEEKEND (if you ignore the 2 hours on the M25).

SATURDAY 15 DECEMBER 2012.

I have mentioned before that these days we do very little twitching outside of Kent/ East Sussex, however the lure of the Buff-bellied Pipit at the Queen Mother Reservoir, West London, was too much to resist. It should only be about an hour and a half from home, but of course there's the M25 to consider. We travelled late morning and so did very one else. It took us 12 minutes to do the last 1/2 mile having been travelling at 30-40 mph since Junction 7 (M23). Then there is the roadworks from Junction 5 to Clacketts Services. What is it about the M25 that makes it a nightmare most hours of the day. Unlike the organisation of the Buff-bellied Pipit, which was one of the best twitches I have been on. You were greeted at the gate with a friendly smile and full directions to the bird and details of the parking arrangements with the sailing club, plus they had arranged full use of all the facilities of the sailing club. Very handy on a cold and blowey day.

The bird showed well most of the day, although photography was difficult in the poor light with my Lumix camera. (I note the new Lumix FZ200 goes down to F2.8 through the range of magnification, but is beyond my pocket at the moment). Earlier people had seen 2 Red Kites, Red Necked Grebe and Long Tailed Duck. The water was very choppy when we was there, even the sailors had retreated to the comfort of the club, so we saw none of those. The locals have raised nearly £800 so far and if it stays over the Christmas period I am sure that it will top £1,000, with proceeds going to the Berkshire Birding Society. A good bird and a very well run Birding Club by a really friendly group of people. 4 Common Buzzards were seen on the journey.

SUNDAY 16 DECEMBER 2012.

Today was a day of more Waxwings. We saw 3 at Hersden (near Sturry), although a group of 25 had been seen a little earlier. Grove Ferry was still full of Fieldfares with well over 1,000. We ended the day at a location south of Canterbury where, after a long wait, 4 Hawfinches came into a pre dusk roost. Our son saw 2 the other side of the wood, but we presume that these may have been part of the 4. Also seen or heard was 6 Siskins, 2 Common Buzzards, 2 Tawny Owls and one Little Owl. It was also nice to meet up and chat with a number of the local birding community.

Note- We still have not seen one butterfly or moth this December despite looking hard.



Buff-bellied Pipit at the Queen Mother Reservoir.



One of the 3 Waxwings at Hersden.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 21-Dec-12 04:21 AM GMT

THE YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE

There has already been many good summaries of the year, supported by an excellent range of photographs, on other Personal Diaries. I do not propose to take this route but rather just do an overall summary. Well 2012 has been an interesting year, mainly because of the poor weather. In fact it was so poor in July that it cost us a pre paid week in Scotland. It was so wet and cold that it would have been a complete waste of time and money, as in the event it rained there every day and temperatures never got above 13 degrees. We had so looked forward to seeing Northern Damselfly, Northern Emerald, Azure Hawker, a range of Orchids, Mountain Ringlet and hopefully an early Scotch Argus. With the exception of the Wall, Meadow Brown and Dingy Skipper all our local butterflies appeared to have a poor, or very poor, year.

It was hard work on some days with butterfly numbers in single figures rather than dozens or hundreds.

Now for our personal highlights, and there was a few. We saw 2 new species of butterflies, Brown Hairstreak (thanks to Neil) and Monarch. We also saw 3 new birds, Western Sandpiper (Cley), Short Billed Dowitcher (Weymouth) and Buff-bellied Pipit (Queen Mother Reservoir). Thanks to the excellent Dungeness Observatory team and a good friend at Ruckinge we managed a few new moths and plants. Dungeness and its very friendly group of watchers managed to keep pulling a few goodies out of the hat when things went quiet. It's a privilege to be a part of that group which ensures full daily coverage of one of Britain's best migration spots. We just need someone to find a twitchable Camberwell Beauty or a Large Tortoiseshell and we will all be happy.

TUESDAY 18 DEC 2012.

I am pleased to report that a Peacock butterfly was seen on the RSPB reserve at Dungeness yesterday. Today we saw the usual suspects although duck numbers are building slowly. 2 Great White Egrets were on New Diggings, 2 Goosanders, 2 Smew (male and female) and 3 Marsh Harriers were on Burrows Pt. There was no sign of the long staying Black Throated Diver on New Diggings, but a few Tree Sparrows were around Boulderwall Farm. Most of the Thrushes have moved from Walland Marsh having stripped the berry bushes clean although Tree Sparrows remain near Midley, as does a group of Bewick Swans. We did not look for it ourselves but the Glaucous Gull remains around the fishing boats. The group of Waxwings at Johnsons Corner Hamstreet also appears to have moved on. Little unusual was on Scotney Gravel pits and no sign of the Common Crane which has been seen on a few occasions over the last couple of weeks.

Dave



Our butterfly of the year. The Monarch present for a week on Portland.



Female Goosander on Burrowes Pt, Dungeness RSPB.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-Dec-12 03:22 AM GMT

THE WOOD MOUSE SURVIVES (for the moment).

Despite the attentions of the local cats the Wood Mouse continues to be seen. It collects seeds and other things we place out for it. I think that this poor weather maybe helping as the neighbours cats much prefer to be home in the warm.

With Christmas fast approaching the number of birders we see out at the moment is very low, although the committed, (perhaps we should be), continue to cover the area. With little new being found on Friday (21st) we decided to visit Pett Level for a change. Little was happening until we were just about to leave when out of nowhere 2 Ravens flew over calling and then landed on the beach. This is the first we have seen them there since the spring. We are sure that they are still local, but this very good bird for East Sussex has remained out of our reach for most of the latter part of the year. Also present was 2 Marsh Harriers, 100 plus Curlew, many Lapwings, a lone Brent Goose and a Common Buzzard.

Next was Scotney Gravel pits where the Barnacle Geese population (feral?) has built up to 80. Impossible to say where they come from although Holland must be high on the agenda. There was no sign of the Common Crane just good numbers of common wildfowl. Lapwing numbers continue to build with small numbers of Golden Plover. Finally a tour around Walland Marsh produced very little really. Fieldfare numbers are now very low and we only saw 2 Marsh Harriers and one Common Buzzard.

SUNDAY 23 DECEMBER 2012.

We really should have been thinking of Christmas shopping but a message informing us of a Great White Egret at Conningbrook Gravel pits (Ashford) sounded better, so 30 minutes later we were watching a Great White Egret and 6 Little Egrets. Late afternoon we went back for second helpings and this time they were joined by 150 Lapwings and 200 Fieldfares. Very little else appeared as darkness fell. With only one day left before Xmas we really should consider some shopping.

We wish everyone a very Happy and peaceful Christmas.

Dave



One of two Ravens present on our visit to Pett Level (East Sussex).



This Great White Egret was present at dusk at Conningbrook Gravel Pits (hence the poor photograph).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Dec-12 02:46 AM GMT

In between the usual Christmas family duties we managed to squeeze in a little local birding on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. On Christmas Eve we revisited

Conningbrook Gravel Pits where the Great White Egret was still present feeding around the eastern edge of the main pit, supported by 3 Little Egrets. A flock of 75 Fieldfares was in the hedgerows and 6 Yellowhammers feeding on a farmers track. Christmas Day was showery but surprising busy on the local roads. A flock of 44 Waxwings was present in trees adjacent to the Kings Head Public House, Shadoxhurst. We then tried to visit Eastwell Lake but the approach roads were starting to flood in places so we decided to return home and a nice Christmas meal. At least our roads were passable with care, unlike the unfortunate areas in other parts of the country. There seems to be no end in sight for this current spell of very wet weather and some people must be dreading the thought of being flooded for the third time this year. Lets hope for a prolonged dry spell in January.



Waxwing at Shadoxhurst near Ashford. Picture taken in poor light due to showers.



Waxwing at Shadoxhurst near Ashford. Picture taken in poor light due to showers.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Dec-12 03:50 AM GMT

With continuing poor weather and little new around, Dungeness has hardly changed for a couple of weeks, I thought that it was time for another blast from the past. This time with a slightly different twist. Not a bird, insect or plant but rather a place. That place lies within our favourite part of Britain, Northern Scotland. The location is good for Large Heath, Azure Hawker, Northern Emerald, White Faced Darter, Golden Ringed Dragonfly, Black and Highland Darter and finally Creeping Ladies Tresses. Obviously not all at the same time but very late June, to end of July, will see you connect with most. That location is called Bridge of Grudie on the A382 between Kinlochewe and Gairloch. If the list of Scottish specialities does not make you mouth water then the scenery will certainly do so. The spot is alongside Loch Maree a mile or so past the Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve Visitor centre. It's where the River Grudie passes under the A832. The whole area is full of small bogs and is very wet underfoot, so take care. Watch where you walk although we managed it quite easily with only walking boots. We have done several visits to the site and found the area North of the road, near the old bridge, is good for Northern Emerald and Golden Ringed Dragonfly. The area South of the road was best for Azure Hawker, but like any location insects move around so it is best to spend a few hours here and check both sides. Beinn Eighe nature trails are also good for dragonflies but has more visitors. Slatterdale is the new hot spot for Azure Hawker and is further along the road, just past the Loch Maree Hotel.

The scenery between Achnasheen and Gairloch is some of the most beautiful in Britain and is worth the visit alone. The A832 is a pretty good road, having been upgraded in recent years. You also stand a good chance of seeing White Tailed Eagle and Merlin around Loch Maree, with Otter at nearby Gairloch. So if you are staying in the Aviemore or Inverness area in late June or July treat yourself to a day out and be blown away by the scenery, and stand a chance of some good insects at the same time.

PS. This site and all this information is in the public domain, including several Site Guide books. However, it is remote and visitor numbers to the Bridge of Grudie are very low. The most we have seen is 3 others when we visited in early July 2006.



The north side of the Bridge of Grudie looking from the A832.