

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jan-15 04:54 AM GMT

Some really cold nights lately with frosty mornings and some snow showers during the past week or so has finally made it feel like Winter.

Going through my photos as usual for the species threads has reminded me of the wonderful places that I visited in 2014 and as I have done in previous years I have picked a few location shots to cheer myself up on a cold dark evening. Most of these have already been posted in my diary through the year but as they are favourite shots of favourite places I like putting a few together.

First off, Ryton Wood on a sunny day in April,



Bluebells in Ryton Wood – 24.04.2014. My first Green Hairstreak of the year seen here.

The Wyre Forest in early May for PBFs,



Wyre Forest – 05.05.2014

and then it was down to the IOW in late May for Glanville Fritillaries,



Wheeler's Bay IOW – 27.05.2014

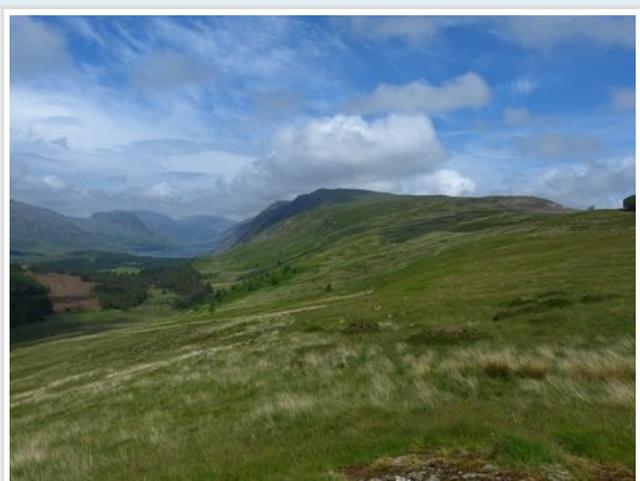
A couple of weeks later and I am heading North...



Warton Crag – 11.06.2014. Northern Brown Argus and SPBFs seen here.



Arnside Knott – 11.06.2014.



Irton Fell – 12.06.2014. Lots of Mountain Ringlets when it warmed up abit.

Back down South again for a family holiday near Weymouth,



South West Coast path looking towards Osmington Mills and Ringstead Bay 01.07.2014



Looking toward White Horse Hill, Osmington – 01.07.2014



Chesil Beach from Tout Quarry Portland – 30.06.2014

Despite visiting Aston Rowant for a few years now, I had never been to the southern part of the reserve until last year,



Looking across the M40 to Beacon Hill from Bald Hill at Aston Rowant - 29.07.2014

Then it was back to Dorset again at the end of August for another week, this time stopping at Durdle Door,



Durdle Door in the evening sun - 31.08.2014



Lulworth Cove - 31.08.2014. I took a very similar shot with a boat heading out of the cove last year.



Looking down on West Lulworth from Bindon Hill – 04.09.2014



Lulworth Cove and Bindon Hill from Hambury Tout – 04.09.2014



Path up to White Horse Hill, Osmington 03.09.2014. Adonis blues and Clouded Yellows favoured these depressions.

Looking back through that lot has got me keen to start making plans for 2015, time to get the calendar out and start looking up flight times and looking to what time I can book off work 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 20-Jan-15 05:11 AM GMT

I'm not surprised those images make you feel invigorated, Neil. What a lovely collection to remind us all of how wonderful the British countryside can be.

Roll on May!

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 20-Jan-15 06:54 AM GMT

Lovely photos, Neil, including some of my favourite spots. That bit of the Dorset coast, given the sort of weather you had, rivals anywhere in the world in my book.

I must also visit the southern side of Aston Rowant, having never been there either. It looks a bit quieter! 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 20-Jan-15 05:33 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Your view of Wheelers Bay on the Isle of Wight, shows the exact same spot where we found the Glanville Fritillary (page 4 of my diary). A Botanist could also have a fulfilling day there, such is the variety of coastal flora.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jan-15 05:08 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, very much appreciated 😊

Hi David and Dave, I definitely agree that the British countryside can be wonderful and in the right weather can rival anywhere in the world. Up until a few years ago I would regularly take family holidays abroad in the usual places, the Balearics, Greek Islands, France etc. but I find these days I enjoy holidays on home turf even more, especially as I usually combine them with my butterflying 😊

The south side of Aston Rowant is certainly a bit quieter than the north side being that bit further away from the M40. It was my first time to that side this year and if anything there were more Silver-spotted Skippers there.

Cheers Trevor, just checked out your diary, great reports and photos. It looks like I was on the IOW just a few days before yourself, I stayed in Ventnor for 3 days and as well as Wheelers Bay spent time on Bonchurch Down and Compton Bay. Reports and more photos on page 49 of my diary

viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5424&start=960

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 23-Jan-15 06:06 AM GMT

Some stunning shots Neil especially the jaw dropping one of Durdle Door – my favourite place in the world 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 23-Jan-15 04:27 PM GMT

Hi again Neil,

Just checked out your report RE, Glanvilles, Wheelers Bay 2013.

You enjoyed slightly better conditions than us, an underside shot was denied owing to the very bright, hot sun.

We later went on to Compton Bay, another Glanville hotspot and saw nothing, not even by the famous steps

(down to the beach). I think a return visit is called for! 😊

Many thanks for pointing out your lovely images.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-Feb-15 06:24 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and Trevor for your comments 😊

Sunday 8th February 2015

As with most of the country, it has been cold here of late with overnight temperatures well below Freezing and some frosty mornings followed by cold days which have reached the dizzy heights of 2 or 3 degrees for most of last week. We have also had a fair few snow showers, some heavy but none has stayed settled for long.

I haven't seen any butterflies yet, but then again I am not expecting to until maybe mid-march around here. All the usual birds have been visiting the garden including Blackbirds, Robins, Dunnocks, Bullfinches, and Great, Blue, Coal and Long-tailed Tits plus a couple of Great Spotted Woodpeckers and

an occasional Goldcrest.



Bullfinch tucking into sunflower hearts

Good old House Sparrows seem to be bouncing back a bit with me seeing them in increasing numbers over the past couple of years, although still nowhere near the numbers that I used to see 'Spugs' when I was a nipper.



House Sparrows

The photos above were taken through the window whilst I sat in the comfort of my back room, as was the shot below taken at maximum zoom of a visitor watching the house from the bottom of the garden,



Keeping an eye on the house.

As soon as it warms up a bit more I will have to start having a bit of a tidy up in the garden in preparation for this seasons butterflies, not too much mind, just clear away dead stems and such to allow the new growth to come through where I want it.

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 09-Feb-15 06:27 AM GMT

Aah, a Bullfinch! Beautiful birds.

I'm lucky that Swansea seems to provide an ideal home for them as they're relatively commonplace here, but I never get tired of seeing them.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 09-Feb-15 08:24 PM GMT

Love the Fox Neil, Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 10-Feb-15 06:59 AM GMT

Lovely image of the Bullfinch Neil 😊🇬🇧 I watched on through the window at work the other day and it brightened up the usual morning briefing 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 10-Feb-15 07:12 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Lovely image of the Bullfinch Neil 😊🇬🇧 I watched on through the window at work the other day and it brightened up the usual morning briefing 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Agreed, I used to see them a lot as a kid but I'm lucky if I catch a glimpse of one a year these days 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Feb-15 04:12 AM GMT

Thanks all for the comments 😊

I agree that Bullfinches are a lovely bird and I am fortunate to have a pair that regularly visits the garden, sometimes together or sometimes the male on his own although the female does turn up on her own occasionally.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Mar-15 05:14 AM GMT

Sunday 1st March

No butterflies for me yet but not surprising really as I have been busy lately with work and stuff around the house so I have not been out looking. After a nice morning yesterday it went all dull and grey with some blustery wind and showers and today we had some very heavy rain this afternoon. Before the rain came in I had a couple of coffee breaks and watched the birds coming and going in the garden from the comfort of the back room and as usual took a few shots through the window.

The Bullfinch pair are still hanging around,



Bullfinches - Coverdale 01.03.2015



Male Bullfinch - Coverdale 01.03.2015



Female Bullfinch & Great Tit - Coverdale 01.03.2015

I usually get four species of Tit visiting the feeders with me seeing Great, Blue and Coal Tits every day after work now that it stays light longer, with Long-tailed Tits two or three times a week,



Great Tit - Coverdale 01.03.2015

This morning a Great Spotted Woodpecker also showed up for the first time in a number of weeks,



Great Spotted Woodpecker - Coverdale 01.03.2015

I usually start to see butterflies around here from mid March in a normal year so hopefully it won't be long now before things get going.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 02-Mar-15 06:05 AM GMT

Who needs butterflies when you've got birds like those, Neil?

Not long to wait though. Spring is truly set to arrive from Thursday onwards.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Nick Broomer, 02-Mar-15 06:18 AM GMT

Hi Neil, lovely photos, especially the male Great Spotted Woodpecker. When i saw that photo, i thought, why did i stop birdwatching? and i couldn't remember. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Mar-15 06:21 AM GMT

More great Bullfinches Neil, I've seen a few more since you posted your first set of photos 😊 I hope David is right and Spring does arrive on Thursday as this has been a long old winter 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Mar-15 05:37 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David, Nick and Wurzel 😊

An hour around my local spot at Castle hills Solihull yesterday afternoon failed to produce any butterflies despite some glorious sunshine and nice blue skies. I think the rather cool blustery wind was keeping things tucked up as it was blowing directly onto the south facing hedges and corners which are the usual spots where I would normally expect to see something.

Dull and grey this morning with a band of rain heading in for this afternoon so it looks like it will be next weekend before I get another chance, weather permitting.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 17-Mar-15 04:36 AM GMT

Sunday 15th March

A fairly dismal weekend with dull grey overcast most of the time and temperatures well down in single figures meant that I spent most of the time doing jobs in the house. I still haven't seen a butterfly yet although last week my son Chris beat me to it by seeing a couple of Brimstones around Stratford where his girlfriend lives.

With the murky weather, the birds in the garden seemed quieter this weekend with less activity going on, although all the usual suspects turned up at some time or other including a dinky little Goldcrest. I am not sure how many of these delightful little birds visit the garden as I only usually see one at a time and they are very quick and never seem to stay still. These don't often come to the feeder but every now and then one will dart across and give me about the only chance I get to get a quick photo, as usual through the back room window.



Goldcrest - Coverdale 15.03.2015



Goldcrest - Coverdale 15.03.2015

By this time last year I had seen Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks, and Commas in good numbers plus a few Brimstones, so for me this season is starting off slower than last year. The weekend weather would mostly account for this but also by mid March last year I was seeing butterflies in the garden whereas this year, nothing so far.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-15 06:37 AM GMT

Great shots of the Goldcrest Neil 😊 If you're not seeing butterflies now hopefully it'll mean all the more when they do start emerging 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 21-Mar-15 04:22 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, managed to kick off my season this afternoon 😊

Friday 20th March

After a misty start to the morning, most of it had burnt off by 09.30 to leave a thin high overcast for the eclipse. Being at work I had a limited opportunity to watch it but did manage to catch a few minutes as it reached its peak. No photos unfortunately as I didn't have my camera with me, I am on auto pilot a bit at 06.00 when I leave for work and didn't think to take it.

After finishing work at lunchtime I went home and then with Jane we went around for our usual Friday afternoon visit to my Mom, this time making sure I had my camera...just in case 😊 A bit later, with a large patch of blue sky heading over, I left the women chatting and went to stretch my legs around the park just down the road.

By now it was feeling pleasantly warm and with very little wind I felt sure that it was looking good to see my first butterfly of 2015 and sure enough it wasn't long before I spotted a bright orange shape flitting back and forth along a stretch of overgrown hedge...a Comma 😊 As is often the way with these butterflies, he kept returning to the same spot to bask which gave me the opportunity to get a few shots,



Comma - Langley Hall 20.03.2015



Comma - Langley Hall 20.03.2015

Continuing on my circuit I soon saw a Peacock, quickly followed by a Small Tortoiseshell, and during the next hour I ended up with a total of 5 Small Tortoiseshells and 3 Peacocks at various spots around the park. these were all quite active and only settled for short periods giving me brief opportunities for record shots.



Small Tortoiseshell - Langley Hall 20.03.2015



Peacock – Langley Hall 20.03.2015

The Small Tortoiseshells included a courting pair that settled for a bit longer before being disturbed by a second male where upon all three took off out of site over the hedges,



Small Tortoiseshells – Langley Hall 20.03.2015



Small Tortoiseshells – Langley Hall 20.03.2015

With all three of the common hibernators around here seen this afternoon I was well chuffed with my little wander 😊 Brimstones are often a bit hit and miss for me early in the season as they often only fly for a couple of hours which, with me working in the week and often busy in the mornings at weekends, limits my opportunities to see them. Also I have never yet seen an early Red Admiral around here, but with climate change, maybe I will one day.

Now looking forward to the Specklies and Orange-tips to start emerging.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 21-Mar-15 03:56 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Three out of the five early spring regulars can't be bad, judging by their condition it could almost be high summer!. Lovely images too. However my first sighting this year was a Red Admiral on 17th Feb. But the weather round here has been too cool for much Butterfly activity ever since.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 21-Mar-15 06:19 PM GMT

Lovely images Neil, glad you managed to get them, you've made a great start to the season so far I've only seen them, the weathers gone cold again here worse luck. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 22-Mar-15 06:23 AM GMT

Great shots Neil 😊 Still need to find my first Comma and Peacock – hopefully I'll make it to Five Rivers tomorrow.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-15 03:43 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Trevor, Goldie, Wurzel 😊

This weekend seemed very much like one step forward and two back since Friday afternoon with yesterday being cloudy and cold and today being deceptively sunny but with an underlying chill remaining in the air. Nevertheless, the sun this afternoon tempted me out for a look around my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull where a circuit of the footpaths that cross the site produced a flypast by a single Small Tortoiseshell. I noticed that the willow catkins are still small and some way from flowering yet and likewise the blackthorn buds are still very small, both of which are usually starting to flower before things really get going around here.

Cheers,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Mar-15 06:16 AM GMT

Friday 27th March

A cool and breezy Friday with a few spells of warmer sunshine early this afternoon. A short 30 minute wander around the park by my Moms house produced a single Peacock that quickly disappeared into some trees and a single Small Tortoiseshell that lingered for a bit longer before it too flew into some shrubs when it clouded over again.



Small Tortoiseshell – Langley Hall 27.03.2015

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 06-Apr-15 06:29 AM GMT

Sunday 5th April – Easter Sunday

A trip up to Nottingham this morning to collect my youngest son who returned yesterday from a week in Spain with some of his mates from the University. By the time we were back home in the early afternoon the temperature was rising nicely and the sun peeked through the cloud cover a few times to make for an afternoon that was much more pleasant than recent days have been.

I decided to spend a couple of hours in the garden and was rewarded with my first butterflies seen there this year, a Brimstone that as usual passed through without stopping, and a Peacock that seemed to be doing a circuit between a couple of neighbours gardens and my own.

The Peacock stopped to settle a few times but every time it did so was during a cloudy spell which meant that it kept its wings firmly closed. Still, this did give me the chance to take a few underside shots which showed off the subtle black shades to nice effect.



Peacock – Coverdale 05.04.2015

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Apr-15 04:08 AM GMT

Monday 6th April – Easter Monday

Ahh! that's better 😊

Well today certainly turned out better than forecast with wall to wall blue skies and the temperature reaching the giddy heights of 18 degrees this afternoon. Some family stuff first in the morning but by lunchtime I was in the garden and the butterflies were showing up with at least 4 separate Peacocks identified by photos showing differences in wear and damage.



Peacock – Coverdale 06.04.2015



Peacock – Coverdale 06.04.2015



Peacock – Coverdale 06.04.2015



Peacock – Coverdale 06.04.2015



Peacock – Coverdale 06.04.2015

A couple of Brimstones also showed up, a male that passed through without stopping and a female that investigated the Alder Buckthorn at the bottom of the garden. With the buds on these only just showing some life she didn't seem too interested in laying but she did stop around for a while and settled a couple of times.



Brimstone female – Coverdale 06.04.2015



Brimstone female – Coverdale 06.04.2015

With singles of Comma and Small Tortoiseshell high up on the Sallow, this gave me 4 species in the garden in less than an hour 😊

With the weather being so good I just had to make the most of it so I decided to head round to one of my local spots at Bickenhill near Solihull. Setting off along a public footpath that leads to a field where I had seen loads of Peacocks and small Tortoiseshells last year I felt sure that there would be some about. So it proved to be with something like two dozen Peacocks and half a dozen Small Tortoiseshells seen in a couple of hours during the afternoon.

There was lots of territorial and courtship activity going on, with the Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells particularly, chasing each other about and spiralling up into the air in groups of 3, 4 or even 5 butterflies of both species together.



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 06.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 06.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 06.04.2015



Peacocks - Bickenhill 06.04.2015



Peacock - Bickenhill 06.04.2015



Peacock – Bickenhill 06.04.2015

Some favoured basking spots were quite popular as shown by these 2 different Peacocks soaking up the sun in the same spot,



Peacock – Bickenhill 06.04.2015



Peacock – Bickenhill 06.04.2015

A couple of Brimstone males were seen patrolling the hedgerows and a couple of Commas were holding territories at opposite ends of the field,



Comma - Bickenhill 06.04.2015



Comma - Bickenhill 06.04.2015



Comma - Bickenhill 06.04.2015

Although I had seen a few butterflies so far this year, the season had felt a bit start, stop, with the past couple of weeks feeling like it was going nowhere fast. Today finally felt like the season was off to a proper start around here with good numbers of hibernators waking up and on the wing 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 07-Apr-15 04:28 AM GMT

Lovely shots, Neil. Yes – it definitely felt truly like Spring today.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 07-Apr-15 05:20 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Good to know that there was a good emergence of Peacocks in your part of the World as well. Given the distance from Sussex to your area , it could be that today marked the start of mass emergence in other parts also. Some would say about time !.

Have a good season,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-15 06:28 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil especially those Peacocks:D It seems like your season is finally off with a BANG! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 07-Apr-15 08:33 PM GMT

Very nice spring photos, Neil 😊 we've waited what seems like a long time for this moment.

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Apr-15 04:08 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Dave, Trevor, Wurzel and Mike 😊

Tuesday 7th April

With another day off work and plenty of blue sky and warm sun I rushed through a few little jobs at home this morning and then headed around to Castle Hills at Solihull for the afternoon. As soon as I got out of the car I was 'buzzed' by a Peacock and heading off down the footpaths it soon became apparent that there were loads around again. During the course of a couple of hours wandering the paths around this site I saw them everywhere, I lost count around 30 and gave up counting but there must have been dozens all along the paths and hedgerows.

In the warm afternoon sun they were often settling with wings closed but as I got my eye in I could often pick out the dark triangle of a settled butterfly in the grass. On the occasions when I found one basking with wings open I found getting a photo 'challenging' as, more often as not, as soon as I lined up the shot another one would fly past and they would both spiral off up into the air.



Peacock – Castle Hills 07.04.2015

If not settled down in the grass they were often nectaring on the flowering Sallow or Blackthorn but in these cases they were often high up out of reach although I did manage some shots by stretching up and making full use of the articulated screen on my FZ150.



Peacock – Castle Hills 07.04.2015



Peacock – Castle Hills 07.04.2015

There were also something like a dozen each of Small Tortoiseshells and Commas around the hedges and which would often get involved in the territorial antics with the Peacocks.

The Small Tortoiseshell below looked particularly pale compared to the others seen, not sure if this is caused by fading or if it is a genuine pale individual,



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 07.04.2015

All the others seen were in varying condition but in colour looked more typical like these,



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 07.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 07.04.2015

There was also a Comma that almost had a summer 'hutchinsoni' look to it, brighter and with a paler underside than the others...



Comma - Castle Hills 07.04.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 07.04.2015

compared to the more typical ones seen,



Comma - Castle Hills 07.04.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 07.04.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 07.04.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 07.04.2015

With a single Brimstone seen early in the afternoon, this made for the same 4 species seen again. No Orange-tips or Specklies yet but they can't be long now given the recent weather and the fact I have seen that they are out not that far away from me.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 08-Apr-15 05:52 AM GMT

Neil, I'm sure the warm weather this week will see decent numbers of Pierids/Specklies, etc very soon in your part of the world.

Nice images of the vanessids.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-Apr-15 03:33 AM GMT

Thanks David, still no Orange-tip yet but I did get my first Specklie this afternoon 😊

Wednesday 8th April

My last day off work for Easter and it followed the same theme of doing some jobs around the house this morning before heading out this afternoon. Today we went around to see my Mom before she heads off up north to stop for a week with my brother in Newcastle. After chatting for a bit I left Jane and Mom talking and went for a wander around the park just down the road. There was a bit more cloud about today but with plenty of patches of blue sky still and with plenty of warm sun in the breaks.

I was soon seeing butterflies and for once the Peacocks were outnumbered by the Small Tortoiseshells with 3 of the former seen and at least 6 of the latter, including a courting pair that I got some shots of before the female shot off and gave the male the slip,



Small Tortoiseshells - Langley Hall 08.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshells - Langley Hall 08.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshells - Langley Hall 08.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Langley Hall 08.04.2015

At one point my eye was attracted to a butterfly with a more flapping flight pattern which proved to be my first Speckled Wood of the year 😊 I followed this with my eye and marked where it settled in the grass and after slowly approaching and taking a couple of photos noticed it was a slightly worn female.



Speckled Wood female – Langley Hall 08.04.2015

This surprised me a bit as I have not seen any males yet but then again, thinking about it, I saw a female in my garden last year before any males. Back home later in the afternoon, there were a couple of Peacocks and a Comma flitting about. The one Peacock made me smile as the eyespot markings on its hindwings looked like little smiley faces which I thought just summed up the past few days 😊



Peacock – Coverdale 08.04.2015

Back to work tomorrow, still just a couple of days and its the weekend again 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 09-Apr-15 03:45 AM GMT

Great pics Neil, that smiley faced peacock even has a parting in it's hair!

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 09-Apr-15 05:26 AM GMT

Great images, Neil.

Seems like Peacocks are having an outstanding spring thus far!

Long may it continue.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-15 06:28 AM GMT

Cracking stuff Neil 😊 I'm chuffed that you got your first Specklie 😊 Going back to your place Small Tort it does look different and the wings margins and blue triangles don't appear faded 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 09-Apr-15 06:43 AM GMT

I love your amorous Small Tortoiseshell photos, Neil – there are definitely far more of them up your way than down here (perhaps you have just shown direct evidence for why this is!). And I knew you'd get a Specklie before I did!

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Mike Robinson, 10-Apr-15 01:52 AM GMT

I really like the Peacock on the Dandelion.
Thanks for noticing my Peacocks yesterday.
Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-Apr-15 05:31 AM GMT

Thanks for all the comments guys 😊

Thursday 9th April

Back to work today so nothing seen until I was on my way home when a Peacock flew in front on my car as I waited at traffic lights on the A45 by Birmingham Airport. At home there was another Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell squabbling over the best basking spots in the late afternoon sun.

It certainly is good to see Small Tortoiseshells continue their recovery around here 😊



Small Tortoiseshell – Coverdale 09.04.2015

My first garden Speckled Wood of the year also showed up, a rather 'crumpled' male that looked like his left forewing had not developed properly. Nevertheless he was defending his corner with the usual feistiness displayed by males of this species 😊



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 09.04.2015

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 10-Apr-15 05:53 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Good to see your Speckled Wood, None around here yet and i've been to locations where they would be found, and hopefully will be very soon.

Keep up the good work,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Apr-15 05:43 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor, I am sure you will see a Speckle soon, I am seeing a few reports from all around the country now.

Friday 10th April

Last year I had considered replacing my trusty old Panasonic FZ150 due to the fact that it had become a bit 'knocked about' and the zoom had started to make an ominous sound when operated. This was probably the result of being dropped a couple of times, most notably a couple of years back when my foot had turned under me on the grassy slope of Aston Rowant and I had gone rolling down the hill 😞, much to the amusement of my son Chris who was with me at the time.

In the end I persevered with my FZ150 for the rest of the season and it continued to take photos that I was happy with, many of which have been posted in this diary.

With the start of this new season, my thoughts turned once again to getting a new camera, probably a FZ200 which I had looked into last year. I wanted something similar to my FZ150 and was drawn to the FZ200 with its constant f/2.8 aperture across the whole zoom range which I figured would suit my favoured method of photographing 'most' butterflies which is from a few feet away and using a zoom usually between 15x-24x. The reason for this is that when I am usually able to get out looking for butterflies is often during afternoons when they are at their most active and can be difficult to approach.

Anyway, this week I took the plunge and found a new FZ200 on eBay for a good price and this afternoon gave it a try out in the back garden.

First impressions in a completely non-technical way are that, compared to the FZ150 it is very slightly larger and heavier, but probably not noticeably so unless you have both cameras to hand. The zoom is very smooth in operation, especially compared to my FZ150 which as mentioned above had suffered being dropped a couple of times. The electronic viewfinder is much better than that on the FZ150 with a much higher resolution.

There were a couple each of Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells lurking about which gave me the chance to try some shots. Autofocus and shutter speed both seemed to me to be a bit quicker than the FZ150.



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 10.04.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 10.04.2014



Peacock - Coverdale 10.04.2014



Peacock – Coverdale 10.04.2014

I noticed that the Peacocks were both different individuals to the 'smiley face' one that I posted the other day. Looking back at some of my Peacock photos I can now see that the hindwing eyespots often look like faces, although not always smiling ones, and in fact I have now started to use the different 'expressions' on these faces as another way to identify individuals, along with the usual damage and wear.

A little later another male Speckled Wood showed up and took up a position in the late afternoon sun from where he chased off all comers...



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 10.04.2014



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 10.04.2014

...including my first Small White of the year which strayed too close to his patch.

Looks to be a cooler and breezier day tomorrow but with plenty of sun forecast for around here, who knows, maybe my first Orange-tip will show up ?

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 11-Apr-15 06:07 AM GMT

Yes I just caught up on your diary, you are to blame for all the faces! I like your Peacock on dandyion btw, the red is very deep and rich, his face looks decidedly angry though!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 11-Apr-15 06:26 AM GMT

Great Speckle Neil 🍀😄 The first of many I'm sure 😊 Good luck with the OTs!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 11-Apr-15 06:36 AM GMT

Well done on the Speckled Wood, Neil, and I'm sure your OTs will be about within the next few days!

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 12-Apr-15 05:37 AM GMT

More nice photos, Neil. You are still a magnet for Speckled Woods. Not much about today – I was in your neck of the woods with assorted offspring, and one of only two butterflies we saw (both Small Tortoiseshells) was at Solihull station! The other one was at Ryton Country Park.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-15 05:42 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy, I had never noticed the different expressions until the other day. Once seen they can't be unseen 😊

Thanks David and Wurzel, you were right about the Orange-tip 😊

Cheers Dave, I managed to see a few butterflies in the end yesterday despite the cooler and blustery conditions 😊

Saturday 11th April

A very wet and windy start to Saturday morning but it soon started to clear up albeit remaining a lot cooler than recent days and with a blustery breeze with quite strong gusts throughout most of the day. By early afternoon it was feeling reasonable pleasant with longer periods of good sun and, with a couple of Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells showing up in the garden again, I decided to nip around to my local spot at Bickenhill for an hour or so.

Making my way along the usual public footpath that crosses this site I soon started to see Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells along the more sheltered parts, fewer of the former and more of the latter compared to last week with about a half a dozen Peacocks and a dozen Small Tortoiseshells seen today.



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 11.04.2015

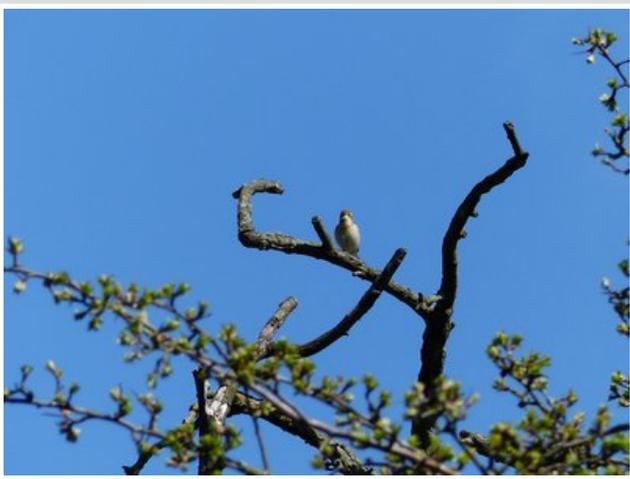


Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 11.04.2015



Peacock – Bickenhill 11.04.2015

For the past week or so I had been hearing Chiffchaffs but they were usually out of sight or too far away but I finally manage to get a long distance shot of one along the path in front of me,



Chiffchaff – Bickenhill 11.04.2015

My highlight of the day however was my first Orange-tip of the year which fluttered down the hedgerow and settled just long enough for a quick (and overexposed) record shot before it carried on its travels. In truth I was caught out by the different button layout on the FZ200 compared to the 150 and fumbled with changing the exposure so missed my chance of a better shot 😞



Orange-tip - Bickenhill 11.04.2015

After an hour or so I started off back for home but stopped off on the way for a brief look at another public footpath where I found another three Small Tortoiseshells and a single Peacock,



Small Tortoiseshells - Henwood Lane, Solihull 11.05.2014

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 13-Apr-15 04:32 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Your description of the weather on Saturday mirrors what we had down here. At least when the rain cleared the Butterflies came out, despite the wind. (my first Small White was seen). Lovely images as usual.

All the best ,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-15 06:16 AM GMT

I'm glad the luck worked for the OT Neil - I've seen three whilst driving now so any chance you can pass the luck back so I can get a shot or three? 😊
Great shot of the Small Tort pair 🍷

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 14-Apr-15 12:11 AM GMT

Lovely photos Neil, not so lucky here with the weather only Tortoiseshells in abundance, hope fully when the others arrive they'll be the same Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 18-Apr-15 04:41 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments, much appreciated as always 😊

Friday 17th April

A bit of a different week for me as I had been called for jury service at Birmingham Crown Court and this was my first week. This means that I have been getting home later than usual so I have less time to check out the garden.

Nevertheless I have managed to see the usual two or three Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells hanging around and also saw my first Green-veined White and Holly Blue of the year with singles of both these species passing through on Wednesday along with a single Orange-tip 😊



Small Tortoiseshells - Coverdale 14.04.2015



Peacock - Coverdale 05.04.2015

The first Bee flies showed up in the garden a couple of weeks back and have been seen on most days since,



Bee fly - Coverdale 15.04.2015

Today (Friday) has been cool and cloudy all day with quite a nippy breeze. No butterflies seen this afternoon but the usual birds were visiting the garden feeder including at one point a Great spotted Woodpecker at the same time as a pair of Bullfinches,



Bullfinches and GS Woodpecker – Coverdale 17.04.2015

The weather forecast for tomorrow is looking a bit better so I may be able to get out for a couple of hours, fingers crossed.

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-15 07:17 PM GMT

Saturday 18th April

The cool breeze from the previous day had dropped and with plenty of sunshine it soon started to feel very pleasant. I had some household and family stuff to do in the morning but managed to have a few looks in the garden, spotting a male Brimstone and Holly Blue passing through. There was also a brief visit from a very light looking, even for spring brood, Speckled Wood female that paused briefly before continuing her travels.



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 18.04.2015

By early afternoon I was free to get out so headed off to my local spot at Bickenhill. This had been a good spot for Orange-tips last year and I was keen to see if the decent weather of earlier last week (when I was stuck indoors) had brought any more out.

With the temperature on my car reading 14 degrees I arrived at about 2.30pm and set off down the usual footpath, almost immediately spotting a male Speckled Wood. He was a particularly dark individual, looking more like a later summer brood male, and made an interesting comparison with the light looking female in my garden earlier.



Speckled Wood male – Bickenhill 18.04.2015

Continuing on along the footpath Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells were again very much in evidence with loads of both species, plus a few Commas seen along the hedgerows and meadows.



Peacock – Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Peacock – Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 18.04.2015

The Small Tortoiseshell below was another pale looking individual, this being the second pale one I have seen this year after the one I photographed at my other local spot at Castle Hills the other week and posted on the previous page of this diary.



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 18.04.2015

Following on from some pale individuals seen last year plus other differences noted, it has made me more aware of the variation that can be seen in Small Tortoiseshells, no doubt greatly helped by the numbers that are once again around. Anyway, it was Orange-tips that I was keen to see and I was not disappointed as I soon saw males patrolling along the hedgerows. There seemed to be plenty of them with at least one in sight nearly all the time but I am wary of stating numbers of species such as this that can patrol back and forth across a large area. In fact I have taken record shots in the past that prove that I have seen the same individual in widely spaced parts of the same site which can give the impression that there are more individuals than there actually are. I took photos today that, looking carefully at afterwards, showed that there were at least six males plus a couple of females wandering around across the area. With the blue skies and constant sunshine the Orange-tips were typically very mobile and it was not until after 4.00pm that they started to slow down a bit and settle occasionally. It was not really a good day for taking photos of them with the bright sunshine on their white wings making it difficult to get the exposure right. Add to this the fact that I am still getting used to my new FZ200, which despite being very similar to my FZ150 has some differences and, on the same settings, takes a 'different' photo, and most of my photos were trial and error shots but in the end I managed a few that I quite liked. The first one that I saw settle was actually a female and sneaking up on her slowly I had just taken a couple of photos when she was 'hassled' by a male. I took a couple of quick shots before he took the hint and left her alone.



Orange-tip female – Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Orange-tips – Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Orange-tips – Bickenhill 18.04.2015

A little later a similar thing happened when I had just approached a second female; in fact I think that it may have been the same male again trying his luck, persistent little fellow 😊,



Orange-tip female – Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Orange-tips – Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Orange-tips – Bickenhill 18.04.2015

I eventually managed to get some reasonable photos of males as they slowed down a bit later in the afternoon,



Orange-tip male - Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Orange-tip male - Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Orange-tip male - Bickenhill 18.04.2015

I eventually did a couple of slow circuits around the site and apart from the species already mentioned I also saw a couple of 'whites' which I am sure were Green-veined, although they didn't stop to confirm one hundred per cent.

Later on back home, after seeing a couple of comments on twitter, I realised that I had missed the Warwickshire BC Spring meeting. For some reason I had got it into my head that it was on Sunday 19th...doh!

Oh well, I had spent all last week cooped up indoors and I really enjoyed being out this afternoon 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 19-Apr-15 10:47 PM GMT

Those Orange Tips are splendid, Neil. I've not seen many yet, and no females. Those two contrasting Specklies are also interesting. The male does indeed seem like one straight out of late summer, and the female is beautifully marked.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-15 10:57 PM GMT

Fantastic photos Neil, I'm just sat here being envious of everyone 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 20-Apr-15 06:46 AM GMT

You've "done the business" with those OT photos Neil. I've only see a couple down this way so far... in stark contrast to last year when they were everywhere by now. Please ask a few to come this way 😊😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by kevlng, 20-Apr-15 07:34 PM GMT

Great Orange Tip photos Neil. They have wetted my appetite for the mass arrival of these great Butterflies. But as yet, a quick flypast is all I've managed.

Regards Kev

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-15 04:01 AM GMT

Many thanks for all the great comments Dave, Goldie, B'rex and Kev.

Checking back on my notes from last year it was around the end of April that Orange-tip numbers started to build up around here so hopefully we should all be seeing more soon.

Sunday 19th April

A cloudy and cool day for the most part, in fact it felt decidedly cold compared with the previous day. Later in the afternoon the clouds started to break up and the sun popped out a few times which raised the temperature a few degrees. This was just enough to tempt a few butterflies out in the garden, the first being a Holly Blue that passed though as they do.

A spot of white on my variegated Weigela shrub attracted my attention and on a closer look turned out to be a male Large White settled with its wings partly open,



Large White – Coverdale 19.04.2015

This was the first Large White that I had seen this year and brought my total so far up to 10 species which is just about all of the ones that I could normally expect to see in my garden and around my local patch at this time of year. I could only possibly add an early Small Copper, which would be really early for around here. Anything else such as Green Hairstreaks or Grizzled and Dingy Skippers means spreading the net (metaphorically speaking 😊) a little further around Warwickshire.

Anyway, as I was watching the Large White I noticed a Green-veined White settled a little higher on the shrub and as they warmed up they both took to the air which disturbed a second Green-veined White which was also on the shrub. I have noticed before that this variegated Weigela is a favoured roosting spot for 'whites' and they can be remarkably well camouflaged when settled on it with their wings closed.

The Large White disappeared next door but both the Green-veined Whites soon settled again, curiously enough choosing another variegated shrub (I forget the name of this one but it is also a favourite spot for Speckled Woods).



Green-veined White - Coverdale 19.04.2015



Green-veined White - Coverdale 19.04.2015



Green-veined White - Coverdale 19.04.2015

The clouds soon came back and it went all gloomy and cold again.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 21-Apr-15 06:32 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Many thanks for the reply. You certainly found a beautifully marked Green Veined White. Down here they weren't stopping for anyone today !.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-15 03:49 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor, those shots were taken on Sunday when it was cloudy and much cooler around here. They were far more active on Monday...speaking of which.

Monday 20th April

My second week of jury service and it looked like I was going to be stuck inside again on what looked to be a glorious day. As it happened, I was not called for a case today (Monday) and along with others not on cases we were let go early to report back on Tuesday. This meant that I was back home by mid-afternoon which gave me a couple of hours to potter about in the garden, with my camera close to hand, just in case.

The first butterflies to attract my attention were the ever reliable Speckled Woods with two separate males squabbling over one sunny corner,



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 20.04.2015



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 20.04.2015

During the afternoon I was also visited by two different females...



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 20.04.2015

...the second of which looked like the nicely marked female that I saw on Saturday, only now looking worse for wear and with chunks missing from her hindwings where it looks like she had a narrow escape, from a bird perhaps,



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 20.04.2015

In the warm afternoon sun the males were often settled with their wings shut and angled to the sun so that both sides were in shadow. This gave me the chance to play around a bit and take some photos using fill-in flash and with different exposures to see how they turned out,



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 20.04.2015

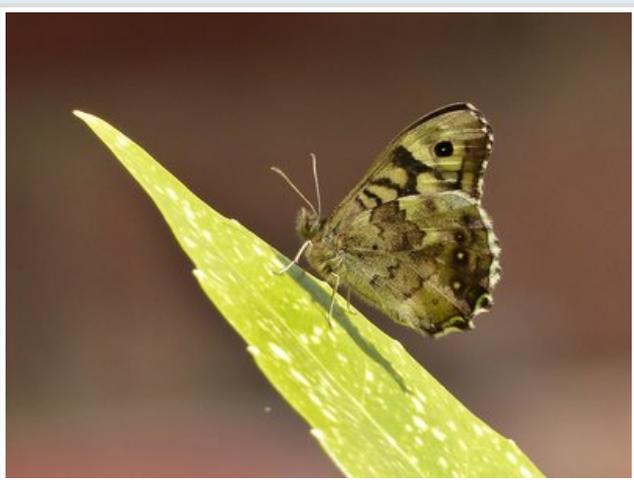


Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 20.04.2015



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 20.04.2015

I particularly like the results of these two taken against the background of the back of the house,



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 20.04.2015



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 20.04.2015

I had noticed a Holly Blue passing through a few times as it repeated a circuit and kept a close watch on it in case it decided to settle, which it eventually did after fluttering around one of my small Holly shrubs for a while,



Holly Blue female – Coverdale 20.04.2015

I just had time to sneak up and get a couple of photos before she took off and flew up the garden where, after fluttering around the Ivy there, she settled again briefly,



Holly Blue female – Coverdale 20.04.2015

I know that female spring brood Holly Blues are supposed to prefer to lay on Holly and summer brood females on Ivy but the way she fluttered around both plants made me wonder if she knew that 😊

During the couple of hours that I was out in the garden I also saw singles of Green-veined White, Small White and Comma that stuck around for a bit plus a couple of Orange-tips and a Peacock that just passed through.



Small White – Coverdale 20.04.2015



Green-veined White – Coverdale 20.04.2015



Comma – Coverdale 20.04.2015

A total of seven species in all, not bad for an afternoon in which I originally thought I would be stuck inside 😊

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 22-Apr-15 05:15 AM GMT

After all these years, I'm still waiting for a fresh, springtime, female Holly Blue to behave considerately for my camera!

Well done on those images, Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 22-Apr-15 05:20 AM GMT

I envy you your garden, Neil. Lovely photos as always, especially that female Holly Blue.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-15 06:10 AM GMT

Your garden is certainly producing the goods Neil 🍷 Lovely Specklies as always 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 25-Apr-15 04:06 AM GMT

Thanks again guys for the great comments 😊

Friday 24th April

My jury service came to an end yesterday (Thursday) with another early finish which saw me back home again by mid-afternoon and as before I retired into the garden to potter about, which to be more accurate consisted of mostly sitting there watching the butterflies passing through and listening to the birds singing 😊

With wall to wall blue sky and warm sunshine the butterflies were very mobile until gone 4.30pm when they started to slow down a bit and would occasionally settle to refuel. There are some people I know who think that I am barmy for allowing dandelions to grow where they like in my garden, well I reckon that if dandelions came from somewhere like China and garden centres sold them, then these same people would be planting beds of them,



Orange-tip - Coverdale 23.04.2015



Orange-tip - Coverdale 23.04.2015

I also remember last year extolling the virtues of the common Forget-me-not, another plant which I find invaluable for tempting butterflies to hang around for a while,



Holly Blue - Coverdale 23.04.2015

With my jury service now finished it was back to work as normal this morning and as usual I finished at lunchtime and later went around with Jane to visit my Mom. By then it had turned much cloudier but I still went out for a short wander around the park by my moms house to see if anything was about. Last year there were good numbers of Speckled Woods here and with this being a species that will fly in cloudy conditions I figured there may be one or two about.

Sure enough I soon found a couple flitting about and in the space of just 30 minutes or so I found 4 different individuals, 2 males and 2 females,



Speckled Wood male - Langley Hall 24.04.2015



Speckled Wood male – Langley Hall 24.04.2015



Speckled Wood female – Langley Hall 24.04.2015



Speckled Wood female – Langley Hall 24.04.2015

The only other butterfly seen was a single Peacock that I disturbed and which took off at a rapid rate of knots into the distance.

I also saw a Green Woodpecker, the first of these that I have seen here, although I do see them at my other local spots. Unfortunately I was not close enough to see if there was anything riding on its back 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 25-Apr-15 05:02 AM GMT

That was a great shot with the weasel Neil, what are the chances eh?

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Apr-15 03:01 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, what are the chances indeed?

Saturday 25th April

Today was a day of mixed weather with plenty of dark clouds, some rain showers, but also some nice sunny spells, in other words a typical April day.

After doing the usual Saturday morning shopping and stuff around the house, I was in two minds whether to pop out to one of my local spots for an hour or so this afternoon. Whilst I was deciding we had another rain shower which made up my mind to stay at home and potter about around the house and nip out into the garden whenever it brightened up.

During the afternoon the showers eventually stopped and although there was still plenty of cloud about and a bit of a breeze, the sun came out for some decent spells when it felt pleasantly warm. During these sunny spells I had what seemed to be a constant stream of Orange-tips visiting the garden but which in reality proved to be three different individual males repeatedly coming around. The alternating cloudy and sunny spells were ideal for getting some photos of these as they would settle when the clouds covered the sun. I could then wait for the clouds to pass and get a few shots as they opened their wings for a few seconds before taking to the air again.

The four shots below are all of same individual male but as others have said, you can't have too many photos of Orange-tips 😊,



Orange-tip - Coverdale 25.04.2014



Orange-tip - Coverdale 25.04.2014



Orange-tip - Coverdale 25.04.2014



Orange-tip - Coverdale 25.04.2014

And these are the other two individuals that I identified by slight differences in the black forewing markings,



Orange-tip - Coverdale 25.04.2014



Orange-tip - Coverdale 25.04.2014

I also took a few underside shots when they were settled up during the cloudy periods,



Orange-tip - Coverdale 25.04.2014



Orange-tip - Coverdale 25.04.2014



Orange-tip – Coverdale 25.04.2014

As well as the Orange-tips there was also a male Large White that passed through a few times, a rather tatty Peacock, a Green-veined White with large chunks out of its wings, plus at least three different male Specklies doing their usual squabbling over the best basking spots.



Large White male – Coverdale 25.04.2015



We have lift off..



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 25.04.2015

There were also regular visits from Holly Blues but as with the Orange-tips I believe that it was the same one or two individuals that kept circling around. Unfortunately despite watching them carefully whenever they showed up, none of them settled in the garden today.

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-15 04:39 AM GMT

Those OTs are particularly lushious Neil 🍷🍷 I'm not having much luck at the moment - I was desperate to get out today but instead I had to carry on knocking plaster of the walls ready for the Lime Plasterer 😞 Must be karma for those screwheads 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 28-Apr-15 12:23 AM GMT

Fantastic photos Neil love the Orange Tips Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-15 04:33 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and Goldie 😊, I must admit that I am lucky with my garden in that the Orange-tips usually come to me and when the weather is a bit mixed they will often stay there for a while.

Sunday 26th April

The forecasts on Friday and Saturday didn't originally look that good for Sunday but by the time the day itself arrived the forecast had changed and it looked like a cloudy morning would clear later for a sunny afternoon, albeit with a cool northerly breeze. So it proved to be and by 2.00pm I had decided to go out for a nose around some local spots.

First off I headed for Shadowbrook Meadows for my first visit there this year. During an hour or so I saw a couple of Peacocks, three or four Small Tortoiseshells and at least one, maybe two Green-veined Whites which were all quite active in the sheltered spots when the sun came out.



Small Tortoiseshell – Shadowbrook 26.04.2015

Most of my time here however, was spent watching a number of Orange-tips as they circled around the meadows. There seemed to be equal numbers of male and females with at least two, maybe three, of each in this quite small area. The females as usual were settling more often and nectaring regularly, mostly on dandelions,



Orange-tip female – Shadowbrook 26.04.2015



Orange-tip female – Shadowbrook 26.04.2015



Orange-tip female – Shadowbrook 26.04.2015

On a number of occasions again I watched as a male would get rejected by a female which had presumably already mated,



Orange-tips – Shadowbrook 26.04.2015

At one point I was staking out a patch of Ladies Smock when a male came along and flitted from plant to plant for a while which gave me the chance to get a number of shots,



Orange-tip – Shadowbrook 26.04.2015



Orange-tip - Shadowbrook 26.04.2015



Orange-tip - Shadowbrook 26.04.2015



Orange-tip - Shadowbrook 26.04.2015



Orange-tip - Shadowbrook 26.04.2015

After a while I decided to move on to Bickenhill where I had previously noticed another public footpath that I wanted to check out. This footpath runs back from Bickenhill in the direction of Castle Hills and is a couple of hundred yards to the south of the A45 where it has been moved to curve around the extension to the runway at Birmingham Airport.



Looking towards Bickenhill, the A45 and Birmingham Airport are a few hundred yards to the left.



On final approach to Birmingham Airport.

I only wandered a short way along this path but it was far enough to see three Small Tortoiseshells, a couple of Peacocks, three Orange-tips, and singles each of Green-veined White and Speckled Wood,



Green-veined White - Bickenhill footpath 26.04.2015



Small Tortoiseshells - Bickenhill footpath 26.04.2015

I will probably return here again as it looked promising for Small Coppers and the usual summer species.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 28-Apr-15 06:20 AM GMT

Some fantastic stuff in your diary lately Neil! I love your Orange Tip's, they've been giving me a hard time lately. Hopefully I'll manage to get a decent photo before they finish up for another year.

That first Female Holly Blue shot is a cracker too!!

Best Wishes

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 29-Apr-15 12:38 AM GMT

Lovely photos Neil, the May flowers are certainly out where you live they're not that good here yet and we've no Female OT's yet, last year they were a good fortnight after the Males so there's still time with Males only showing up here in numbers in the last couple of days . If they came out now they'd freeze to death 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-15 06:21 AM GMT

I agree with Rex - fantastic stuff Neil, the only problem is trying to choose my favourite shot! 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-15 05:27 AM GMT

Many thanks for the comments B'rex, Goldie and Wurzel 😊

Not much happening here this week, it has been quite cool and windy most of the time, even when the sun has come out. Just a few whites seen passing through the garden late in the afternoon when I get in from work.



Green-veined White – Coverdale 29.04.2015

Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and Green Hairstreaks are only just starting to be seen in Warwickshire plus I have seen the first PBFs reported from the Wyre Forest so hopefully I will be able to go looking for some of these sometime over the next couple of weeks.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-15 05:13 AM GMT

Sunday 3rd May

The Bank Holiday weekend got off to a dismal start yesterday (Saturday) with gloomy grey clouds all day and a pretty cold wind. After a fair bit of rain overnight it was still grotty this morning with a steady drizzle first thing and dark clouds for most of the morning. Just before midday the clouds started to lighten and break up a bit and the sun peeped out briefly a couple of times. During one of these short bits of sun I was looking out of the kitchen window and spotted an Orange-tip fly into the garden just as the sun disappeared again behind some clouds. This prompted him to settle and so marking the spot I grabbed my camera and went out to get some photos.

During the course of the next 45 minutes or so the sun continued to pop in and out from behind the clouds for very brief periods which encouraged the Orange-tip to flit about a bit but stay around the garden. This gave me chance to take some photos, both of his underside and, when the sun came back out, of the topside during those few seconds when he opened his wings before taking to the air.



Orange-tip – Coverdale 03.05.2015



Orange-tip - Coverdale 03.05.2015



Orange-tip - Coverdale 03.05.2015



Orange-tip - Coverdale 03.05.2015



Orange-tip - Coverdale 03.05.2015



Orange-tip - Coverdale 03.05.2015

During the afternoon the weather continued to improve with some longer spells of sun, although there were still a couple of short showers, and the other usual garden species started to show up. First off was a male Holly Blue that lingered around and settled a few times, possibly because he was not properly warmed up yet,



Holly Blue - Coverdale 03.05.2015



Holly Blue - Coverdale 03.05.2015



Holly Blue - Coverdale 03.05.2015



Holly Blue - Coverdale 03.05.2015

Other butterflies seen in the garden during the afternoon were at least one example of Large, Small and Green-veined White, Peacock, and of course a couple of Speckled Wood, all of which I got photos of although the Large and Small White ones were fairly ropery long distance record shots



Green-veined White – Coverdale 03.05.2015



Peacock – Coverdale 03.05.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 03.05.2015

A total of seven species through the garden during the course of the afternoon which was something that I did not really expect today given the forecast and the miserable wet morning that we had.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 04-May-15 05:49 AM GMT

More lushious OTs Neil and the Holly Blues are great too – oh for a garden again 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 04-May-15 02:58 PM GMT

I absolutely love your Holly Blue on the Bluebell Neil. They are difficult to photograph anyway but what lovely compositions there. I would have been delighted to get those shots 🍷🍷

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-15 03:25 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, the garden is a godsend on those occasions that I don't have time to go out anywhere. Even on days with dodgy weather, it only takes a brief spell of sun and something often shows up 😊

Thanks Pauline 😊

To be honest the Holly Blues are cropped for that composition. The originals were taken in landscape, as are most of my photos, and then given a quick crop and resize for posting on here. A lot of my photos are 'snap shots' of what are usually active butterflies and so my usual method is to get the subject somewhere in the middle of the frame and tweak the composition to some degree afterwards to get rid of empty space or superfluous vegetation for example. I always have the originals saved to play around with at my leisure at a later date.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 05-May-15 04:06 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Lovely Orange Tip shots, all of them. As for the Holly Blues 🍷 ,

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-15 04:00 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor, glad you liked them 😊

Monday 4th May – May Day Bank Holiday

With today (Monday) looking to be the best day weather wise of the Bank Holiday weekend and with Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and Green Hairstreaks being reported from Warwickshire, I figured that a little run down the M40 to Bishops Hill was in order. It is possible to find all three of these species at this site but going on past experience I reckoned that I was most likely to see Dingy Skippers with a fair chance of a Grizzled Skipper or two. Green Hairstreaks can be a bit hit and miss at this site, I have seen the odd one or two here before but have also been here and not seen any, but hey ho...you never know.

With some early cloud clearing and the temperature reading 14 degrees in my car, I arrived just before 11.00 and started a slow circle around the area. Within minutes a bit of silvery movement caught my eye and I was surprised to see it turn into a nice fresh male Small Blue. This is usually a good site for these but I had not yet seen any reported from Warwickshire so I was not expecting to see any here yet, especially not that one would be the first butterfly that I would see here today. I just managed the one quick photo before it took off again and I lost sight of him,



Small Blue – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

During the couple of hours or so that I spent here I saw a couple more Small Blues so they have obviously just started to emerge here. If they do as well this year as they have for the past couple of years then numbers should build nicely over the next few weeks.



Small Blue – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Small Blue – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Small Blue – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

As mentioned above I thought that I was most likely to see Dingy Skippers here and sure enough it was not long before I started to see some, with

maybe a dozen or so seen in total during the time I was here. These really are an attractive little butterfly when nice and fresh and before they have faded and taken on that look that gives them their name,



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

Before long I was also pleased to see my first 2015 Green Hairstreak, especially so as it perched fairly low down on a hawthorn so that I could get a few photos,



Green Hairstreak – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

Walking further up the hill I saw a number of Dingy Skippers and was watching what at first I thought was one of these chasing another when they flew past me and I got a flash of green from the one being chased. As they separated I watched where this one settled down in the grass and sneaking up, it proved to be another Green Hairstreak,



Green Hairstreak – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

I later saw another couple of male GHS 'scrapping' higher up above another hawthorn but these stayed well out of reach.

With three 'first for year' sightings I was already well chuffed when a little grey 'blur' flew in front of me and on settling resolved itself into a Grizzled Skipper,



Grizzled Skipper – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

It took off again and I thought that I had lost sight of it when it returned and settled again just a few feet away from me,



Grizzled Skipper - Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Grizzled Skipper - Bishops Hill 04.05.2015



Grizzled Skipper - Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

This turned out to be the only Grizzled Skipper that I saw here today. Other butterflies seen were a few each of Orange-tip, Brimstone, all three common whites and Holly blue, I am not sure of exact numbers of these as I never know if they are the same ones repeating a circuit. There was also a Peacock holding a territory at the bottom of the hill.

After a couple of hours here and with all three targets seen plus the unexpected Small Blues I still had a bit of time to spare so figured I would move on

to Harbury which is just a five minute drive...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by nomad, 06-May-15 04:13 AM GMT

That's an early Small Blue, great find. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 06-May-15 04:26 AM GMT

Neil, I'm so jealous of your Skippers 🍷 I've yet to see one , lovely photos of the Hair Streaks as well Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 06-May-15 05:15 AM GMT

Lovely shots, Neil. I'm a bit envious at your Dingies given I saw none on the same date 100 miles further south!!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 06-May-15 06:40 AM GMT

Cracking Small Blues Neil – looking forward to Harbury 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-May-15 04:58 AM GMT

Thanks all for the great comment, very much appreciated as always 😊

Having read Pete's comments about posting photos of habitat in this post

[viewtopic.php?f=11&t=8269](#) it reminded me that I took a couple of such shots at Bishops Hill but forgot to put them in the previous post so to start with here they are.

The first photo shows where Dinky and Grizzled Skippers and Small Blues can be found, usually anywhere in this view and all across the slope. The Green Hairstreaks were seen in the shrub line that goes up to the left of the photo.



Bishops Hill Warwickshire.

The next view is the same area but looking down the Hill showing part of a nice display of cowslips,



Bishops Hill Warwickshire.

Around 2.00pm I left Bishops Hill and moved on to Harbury Spoilbank which is only a couple of miles away. This is another reliable site for Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and I made my way to a sheltered spot where I usually first see them both here. Sure enough, within minutes I saw a Grizzled Skipper, in almost the exact same spot that I have first found one in the past two years.



Grizzled Skipper - Harbury 04.05.2015

A little later I saw what at first I thought was a second Grizzly as it was seen in a different spot a few hundred yards away from the first but comparing record shots afterward I now think that it was the same individual as the first one. This shows how much these little butterflies can move about in an area and gives a good example of why I am often wary of stating exact numbers seen.



This photo taken in second spot.

I also saw a few Dingy Skippers here but only managed a couple of photos of one individual as they were tending to settle in awkward positions, probably because by now it was getting cloudier and a breeze was blowing up.



Dingy Skipper – Harbury 04.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Harbury 04.05.2015

Other species seen were Orange-tip, Brimstone, Large and Green-veined White, Holly Blue and Peacock.

One particular highlight here however was watching a female Brimstone as she fluttered around a small (3 foot high) Buckthorn and proceeded to settle a few times and lay eggs. I managed to take a series of photos as she did this, some of which quite clearly show the newly laid eggs,



Brimstone female – Harbury 04.05.2014



Brimstone female – Harbury 04.05.2014



Brimstone female – Harbury 04.05.2014



Brimstone female – Harbury 04.05.2014



Brimstone female – Harbury 04.05.2014



Brimstone female – Harbury 04.05.2014

After spending nearly an hour here the clouds were getting thicker and the breeze was feeling cooler so I decided to call it a day and head for home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 07-May-15 05:38 AM GMT

Splendid photos from both those locations, Neil. Lovely butterflies. One day I shall drop into one or both as I pass right between the two spots every now and again. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 08-May-15 04:19 AM GMT

Lovely photos Neil, particularly the Brimstones I love the light on them showing their different shades of yellow Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 08-May-15 07:03 AM GMT

Lovely Brimstones Neil 😊 I love the way that the white shows through against the light lime 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 08-May-15 07:13 AM GMT

Nice images of the much ignored **female** Brimstone, Neil.

I still can't decide how I'd describe its colour to the uninitiated.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-15 03:46 AM GMT

Thanks Dave, Goldie, Wurzel and David for the comments. Glad you all like them 😊

Friday 8th May.

It has been back to cloudy and wet this week with some pretty strong winds and even a couple of short sharp hailstorms on Tuesday. After some more heavy rain, it did brighten up for a bit late yesterday afternoon and almost immediately there were some butterflies in the garden with a Holly blue and Green-veined White being spotted through the kitchen window. I have commented before on how I find it amazing how quickly butterflies will appear at this time of year given a brief window of opportunity on what can otherwise be some pretty horrible days weather wise

I grabbed the camera and popped out for a bit but the only thing that was staying around was one of the resident Specklies,



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 07.05.2015

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-15 06:55 PM GMT

Saturday 9th May

Another dull and cloudy day for the most part but there were some very brief spells of sun from midday and it felt a little warmer than of late. I decided to spend most of the afternoon in the garden tidying up some bits that had become a bit overgrown and as usual had my camera to hand in case anything showed up.

The first visitor was a Holly Blue...and then a second...and then a third, until all three of them were spiralling and chasing each other around the garden. They disappeared next door but seconds later one of them flew back and settled 😊



Holly Blue male – Coverdale 09.05.2015



Holly Blue male – Coverdale 09.05.2015

At least two different male Green-veined Whites were fluttering in and out of the garden during the afternoon during the brief times when the sun popped out,



Green-veined White – Coverdale 09.05.2015



Green-veined White - Coverdale 09.05.2015



Green-veined White - Coverdale 09.05.2015

As usual, there were also a couple of male Speckled Wood at each end of the garden plus at least one female that came passing through.



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 09.05.2015



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 09.05.2015

At one point I saw one of the male Specklies chase after a female who promptly dropped down and 'played dead' as they will often do when they are not interested,



Speckle Wood pair – Coverdale 09.05.2015

Just the three species this afternoon but enough for a few pleasant interludes on an otherwise grey day 😊

Bye for now ,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 10-May-15 08:49 PM GMT

Hi Neil, great reports and lovely photos in your recent posts 😊 especially those beautiful Small Blues 😊

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 11-May-15 01:36 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, lovely photos of all the Butterflies, I've got all sorts of flowers in the garden but the Butterflies have been very few and far between here, it's the wind that's so cold, hope fully tomorrow they've forecast warmer weather and less wind so there's a chance I'll see some thing else, I'm off (hope fully) to Warton Craig PBF have been seen there (fingers crossed) 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-May-15 06:12 AM GMT

Hi Mike, thanks for the great comments 😊

Thanks goldie, the weather has not been much cop around here lately either. Good luck with the PBFs at Warton Crag, it looks like it may be warming up a bit from tomorrow.

Sunday 10th May

With a dull grey overcast again for most of the day it was another one spent around the house catching up on various jobs. There were a few very short spells when the sun tried to come out but they only lasted for seconds before it went in again. Nevertheless there were a couple of Green-veined Whites

lurking about and noticing that one had settled I decided to try the different metering settings on my FZ200.

Not really being technically minded about cameras I have never altered these settings before, on my FZ150 I used to keep the setting on 'pattern', but I had noticed that whilst getting used to the FZ200 I had at some point altered it to 'centre weighted average'.

I was interested in seeing what difference it would make and seeing that the Green-veined White was likely to stay where it was for a bit I went down and took a series of photos, altering the metering settings every couple of shots.

The results are below, taken in cloudy conditions, one photo on each setting with all taken at $-2/3$ exposure compensation (my usual setting for whites). All are jpeg and are uncropped as the camera took them, just re-sized to 1024 x 768 from 4000 x 3000 originals to post on here



Pattern metering



Centre weighted average



Spot metering

It was only a quick experiment but I was interested in how much darker the results of the spot metering were compared to the other two. Given that it was a dull day it would be interesting to repeat this on a sunny day, but then again I don't suppose anything would stay still long enough for me to alter the settings and get a similar series of shots.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 12-May-15 04:41 AM GMT

Excellent images to add to your recent posts Neil, very comprehensive and interesting, your 'butterflying year' is shaping up very nicely 😊😊

Kindest Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 12-May-15 02:18 PM GMT

I've been meaning to comment for ages Neil, so apologies. Great shots you're getting right back to the Small Blues which are great (I always find them so difficult) right through to the lovely Green Hairstreak and the other Skippers. I shall pm you a little later.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 13-May-15 01:15 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, I switched to centre Weighted just to see what it was like when I went to Gait Barrow yesterday it was sunny and I didn't see Whites there but I took some more Duke photos witch I've put in my diary, seems we have to keep practising for results that suite us, it's certainly interesting and fun, I must say I think your whites look good now Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pete Eeles, 13-May-15 04:38 AM GMT

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

At one point I saw one of the male Specklies chase after a female who promptly dropped down and 'played dead' as they will often do when they are not interested

That is one of the best behavioural shots I've seen this year! Thanks for uploading it to the Species-specific Albums!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 13-May-15 04:48 AM GMT

Hi Bill, thanks for the great comments, very much appreciated 😊

Thanks Pauline 😊 I have trouble keeping up with everyone's diaries myself now that loads of species are about and people are off all over the place seeing them.

Hi Goldie, thanks for your comments on the whites 😊. I am still playing about to find the best combination of metering and exposure for the whites but I think am getting the hang of it now. I had just about got it sorted on my FZ150 but the FZ200 take a slightly brighter photo for any given settings in comparison.

Tuesday 12th May

True to sods law, after a mostly dull and cloudy weekend, the sun came out yesterday (Monday) when I was back at work and it turned into a beautiful if breezy afternoon, at least it was a warm breeze compared to the nippy one we had at the weekend. Today was similar after a wet start with clouds this morning clearing for another lovely afternoon.

On both afternoons I went into the garden after work and chilled out for a bit and as usual took a few photos of whatever butterflies turned up. The first arrival yesterday was a tired looking Peacock, not surprising that it was looking a bit worse for wear now considering that it has been around since last July.



Peacock – Coverdale 11.05.2015

As well as a couple of male Orange-tips yesterday there was also a female that was noticeably smaller compared with most I have seen. She was also the first female I have seen in the garden so far this year despite me seeing other females locally weeks ago.



Orange-tip female – Coverdale 11.05.2015

The male Orange-tips were back again today with one individual identified by a tear in his left hindwing and the other, which I didn't get a photo of, looking like he had taken a real battering in the heavy rain and hail we had last week.



Orange-tip male – Coverdale 12.05.2015



Orange-tip male - Coverdale 12.05.2015

As usual there were a couple of male Speckled Woods about with one individual spending some time nectaring on the Forget-Me-Nots,



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 12.05.2015



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 12.05.2015

I also spotted a little Mint Moth (*pyrausta aurata*). The photo below is a fairly tight crop of a shot taken about 3 feet away on full zoom.



Mint Moth – Coverdale 12.05.2015

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 13-May-15 06:37 AM GMT

That second OT really stands out Neil, it's a cracker. 🍷 Slightly worn Peacocks and Specklies – where's the spring disappearing too 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-15 05:29 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, that's the trouble isn't it, we wait for the season to begin and when it gets here it goes by too quick.

Wednesday 13th May

Last November my department at work moved to a new facility at Ryton just outside of Coventry. The downside of this is that I now have extra travelling time from where I live in Solihull but there is a bonus in that this location is only a couple of miles away from Ryton Wood and the Warwickshire BC reserve at Ryton Wood Meadows.

Up until now I have not been able to take advantage of this as I my lunch break is just 30 minutes which means that as soon as I got there I would have to turn around and come back. The weather has also often been against me on the days when I could have gone straight after work. Normally I go straight home as I do all the cooking in our house since my wife Jane had her stroke a few years ago which has left her with limited strength and movement in her right hand which means she struggles in the kitchen.

My chance came on Wednesday as Jane was spending the day at her moms and then going out to bingo which meant that I did not have to head straight home. With a bit of decent weather forecast I remembered to take my camera to work so I could go straight to Ryton Wood afterwards.

I arrived just after 4.00pm and walked through the wood towards the meadows, enjoying the display of bluebells and noticing a number of Peacocks flying about in the clearings along the way.



Ryton Wood – 13.05.2015

I walked through to the area of the meadows along the edge of the wood which is one of the best spots for Green Hairstreaks here and I soon spotted a couple of males spiralling about above a hawthorn. During the next couple of hours as I slowly wandered up and down this side of the wood I must

have seen a dozen or more, mostly males scrapping around the tops of hawthorns. I have noticed before that later in the afternoon, especially if there is a bit of cloud about as there was today, the male Green Hairstreaks would tend to calm down a bit and settle a bit lower down where it is easier to get a photo. Having said that I still made full use of the articulated screen on my FZ200 to stretch up and get some of the shots below.



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015

One individual behaved differently, fluttering about amongst the low down vegetation and 'tasting' the leaves with her feet, which led me to believe it was a female. She also settled regularly on patches of bare ground where she appeared to be taking minerals.

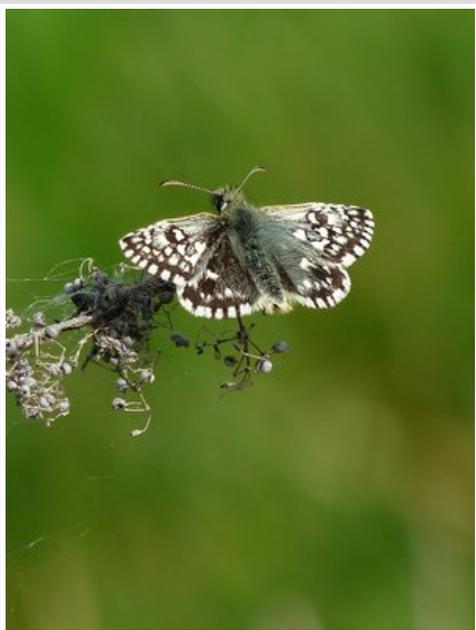


Green Hairstreak - Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015

In this area there were also a couple of Grizzled Skippers, at least two and possible three individuals although the shots below are of the same one,



Grizzled Skipper - Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015



Grizzled Skipper - Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015



Grizzled Skipper – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015



Grizzled Skipper – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015

There were also maybe a dozen or so Dingy Skippers which, as with the Green Hairstreaks, it was difficult to get an exact count of because of the way they were chasing each other about. Around 6.00pm these were starting to look like they were settling down to roost although, with a nice bit of early evening sun, they were still fairly active. As they slowed down a bit they started to settle higher up in some classic poses and I took quite a few photos which I will post separately so that this post does not get too long.

Other Butterflies seen during the couple of hours spent here were Peacocks, Brimstones, Orange-tips, Holly Blue and my first Small Copper of the year. I didn't notice at the time but looking at the shots of the Small Copper afterward, I reckon it is a female.



Small Copper – Ryton Wood Meadows 13.05.2015

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 15-May-15 05:44 AM GMT

I love your Hairstreak shots, since I saw my very first one a few weeks ago i've fallen in love with them. When the sun catches the green at just the right angle they truly stunning little things!

Also got my first Small Copper earlier this week which I suspect was a female as well!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-May-15 06:09 AM GMT

Great GHS shots Neil! Numbers 4 and 6 are my favourites. They are stunning when they are fresh aren't they. 😊

ATB

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 15-May-15 06:20 AM GMT

That 3rd Green Hairstreak image portrays an individual with a particularly bold set of underside 'streaks'.

Lovely specimen.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 15-May-15 06:33 AM GMT

Lushious Greenstreaks Neil and I really like the composition of the second Grizzlies shot it's a cracker 😊🍏 After work stop-offs often offer some of the best butterflying Neil, for the same reason that Scrumped apples taste all the sweeter I suppose.

Have a goodin

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 15-May-15 06:52 AM GMT

Beautiful Hairstreaks, Neil. They were just waiting for the sunshine! 😊 Historically, my best shots of Green Hairstreaks have all been taken there. That spot you describe is a very fruitful one for them and for Grizzlies, as well as the odd Dingy too. I envy you your proximity - there would be lots of extended lunch hours if I were working nearby... 🍏

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 16-May-15 03:41 AM GMT

Thank you all for the great comments, much appreciated as always 😊

Wednesday 13th April - Part 2.

As mentioned in the previous report from Ryton Wood Meadows, I also saw something like a dozen or so Dingy Skippers whilst I was there. When I first arrived at this spot after walking through the wood they were quite active, chasing each other about and usually settling to bask fairly low down on the vegetation.



Ryton Wood Meadows - 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper - Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper - Ryton 13.05.2015

Later in the afternoon, around 5.45pm, the Dingies started to slow down a bit and look like they were maybe settling down to roost, but with the sun being obscured by occasional clouds and then coming out again, they would settle and then be off on another burst of activity. Nevertheless, I managed to get some photos in nice poses which are probably the best Dingy Skippers shots I have managed to date as I usually see this species in the afternoon when they are most active.



Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper - Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper - Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper - Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015

I left about 6.30pm to head back and face the horrendous road works on the A45 but even this prospect couldn't take the shine of a great couple of hours.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 16-May-15 04:38 AM GMT

Excellent report Neil, your highly competent with your Panasonic Lumix FZ200, the **Green Hairstreak** images are crackers and do full justice to the species while your **Grizzled and Dingy Skipper** pics ain't half bad either 😊

Quality time...well earned after a working shift, and the weather was also kind for you 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by William, 16-May-15 04:46 AM GMT

Those Dingies are cracking Neil – very jealous 😊

BWs

William

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 16-May-15 04:50 AM GMT

Lovely pictures Neil, Dingies do such a great job in making greys and browns attractive 😊 And they do look cute whilst roosting 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 16-May-15 04:58 AM GMT

What can I say that has not already been said, you have done the Dinky Skipper proud Neil great photos! 😊

All the best

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-15 06:42 PM GMT

Many thanks everyone for all the great comments 😊 . It was great for once to be able to spend some time with the butterflies as they slowed down later in the day.

Friday 15th May.

After a horrendously wet Thursday, the weather cleared up again on Friday for a day of mixed sun and cloud although there was a fairly cool breeze blowing most of the time. As usual on a Friday, I finished work at lunchtime and then had some running about to do, between which I pottered about in the garden.

The first butterfly that caught my attention was a female Speckled Wood that was fluttering about low down amongst the vegetation,



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 15.05.2015

As I watched her she appeared to be laying eggs on some of the blades of grass and taking a couple of quick photos, I managed to catch her right in the act of depositing one,



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 15.05.2015

There were also a few Green-veined Whites about, at least two different males and a female,



Green-veined White male - Coverdale 15.05.2015



Green-veined White male - Coverdale 15.05.2015



Green-veined White female - Coverdale 15.05.2015

The only other butterflies seen were single Holly Blue and Large white, definitely less butterfly activity in the garden than there was before the heavy rain on Thursday.

Saturday 16th May.

A very similar day weather-wise to Friday, a mix of cloud and sun with a blustery wind that felt quite cool, especially when the sun went in. Later in the morning during the sunnier spells, the usual suspects started to show up in the garden, starting with a Peacock, a different one to the one that has been hanging around recently,



Peacock – Coverdale 16.05.2015

The male Specklies were also soon up and about and laying claim to their corners,



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 16.05.2015

With a bit of time spare in the afternoon I decided to check out the public footpath at Bickenhill where I had looked a few weeks ago and see if I could find any Small Coppers or maybe Common Blues. Almost immediately on setting off down the path I was 'buzzed' by a Peacock and along the first hundred yards or so there were two Peacocks and Two Small Tortoiseshells contesting their bits of territory,



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 16.05.2015

After a couple of false alarms from Burnet Companion Moths I eventually found what I was looking for, a Small Copper, which curiously turned out to be a female, as was the one I saw at Ryton last week. That is my first two Small Coppers this year being females and no males seen yet.



Small Copper – Bickenhill 16.05.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 16.05.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 16.05.2015

Also seen here were singles of Small White and Orange-tip. No Common Blues yet but with the first one in Warwickshire only being reported a few days ago, it is early days.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 18-May-15 01:07 AM GMT

Lovely Coppers Neil, we're really struggling here for Butterflies, hope fully we'll get some warmer weather soon until then we can only admire what people post so keep it up Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 19-May-15 06:12 AM GMT

You've taken so,e great shots recently Neil but that ovipositing Specklie is a real gem 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 19-May-15 06:46 AM GMT

I have to second Wurzel's opinion there, Neil. Almost impossible to get a better picture of an ovipositing butterfly. I'd be very pleased to have taken that – though I'd probably still be flat on the ground now... How did you get **underneath** it like that? 🤔🤔

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 19-May-15 07:21 AM GMT

Agreed. One of the best i have seen. I loved your Grizzled Skippers,too. Is it my imagination,or have there been very few Orange Tips around this year?

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 19-May-15 02:42 PM GMT

Neil, that shot of the Speckled Wood egg-laying has taken my breath away. It surely has to be a competition winner 😊 – why don't you put it in the behaviour section 🍷🍷 I wish I could get shots like that 🍷

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 20-May-15 04:32 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie 😊 I am keeping my fingers crossed for next week when I have some time off work, I keep telling myself that the weather has to pick up soon.

Cheers Wurzel, I was pretty chuffed with that shot myself. I love the fact that it looks like she has gone cross eyed with the exertion 😊

Cheers Dave, she was actually hanging on the grass at 90 degrees to the ground and the shot was taken from a crouching position using the vari-angle screen on my lumix 😊

Thanks Mark 😊 I saw quite a few Orange-tips around here a few weeks back but numbers have certainly dwindled since then and I have definitely had fewer in the garden this year.

Thanks Pauline 😊, I wouldn't normally consider putting any of my photos into a competition, I don't really think of myself as a 'photographer', more of a bloke that is interested in Butterflies and just enjoys taking photos of them to have a record of what I see. Having said that, maybe I will think about it.

Thanks again all,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 21-May-15 05:44 AM GMT

Lovely set of crisp images Neil, right up to your regular standard 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-15 02:58 AM GMT

Hi Bill, may thanks for the kind words, very much appreciated as always 😊

Thursday 21st May – part 1.

With most of my holiday from work now booked up for this year, I had a few days spare and earlier this week I saw that the forecast for Thursday looked promising and managed to book a day off at short notice.

Having missed seeing Duke of Burgundy last year I was keen to make up for it this year, so now I just needed to decide where. I could either have a run down to Bison Hill where I have not been before or head down to Cheltenham and one of my favourite sites at Prestbury Hill. In the end I decided to go for the site that I knew, and head down to Prestbury Hill.

My son Chris was also able to come along as he had not yet seen Duke of Burgundy and was keen to do so. This would be the first trip together we have managed so far this year, with the shifts he works and the fact that he now lives with his girlfriend in Stratford making it difficult for us both to be available at the same time.

We arrived at about 10.30 with some early cloud breaking up and some nice sun shining through and it was starting to feel pleasantly warm, albeit with a fair breeze at the parking spot in the lane at the top of the hill. As we made our way down the hill into the more sheltered lower slopes we started to see good numbers of Dingy Skippers along with a few Small Heath, my first of the year of the latter,



Small Heath – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Small Heath – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015

Moving slowly along the hedge line at the bottom of the slope and into 'Happy Valley' we soon found a couple each of Common Blue and Brown Argus plus a few Small Blues,



Common Blue – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Brown Argus – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Brown Argus – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Small Blue – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Brown Argus – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015

As it warmed up during the morning we started seeing more butterflies which also included Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Holly Blue, Brimstone, Orange-tip, Green-veined White and Large white, mostly one or two of each but as usual with some of these, I am not sure if we were seeing the same ones coming round repeatedly on their patrol routes. We also found a number of Green Hairstreaks scattered about along the shrub line,



Green Hairstreak – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015

So far though we had not found any Dukes despite checking the spots where I have always seen them in the past...after all, these were our main reason for coming here.

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 23-May-15 03:10 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, lovely photos of the Butterflies, you'd think if the Dukes are out in the North they surely would be in your area, then again no Common Blue or Brown Argus or Small Heath here yet and as for Pearl BF I'm holding my breath Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Glostopcat, 23-May-15 03:35 AM GMT

It was nice to meet up with you and Chris yesterday Neil, I had a very enjoyable day at Prestbury Hill and saw many more species than I'd anticipated seeing beforehand. I shan't spoil the next installment of your diary by revealing if the Duke of Burgundy did indeed put in an appearance! 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-15 04:31 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, the Dukes did eventually show up 😊, I think they were just a bit slow getting going. Prestbury Hill isn't really my area, it is an hour and a half drive from where I live but is the closest site for me to see Dukes.

Hi Glostopcat, it was a pleasure meeting you too. We had a great time at Prestbury Hill, one of my favourite places 😊.

Thursday 21st May – part 2.

After spending about an hour and a half in The Bill Smyllie Reserve part of Prestbury Hill without seeing any Duke of Burgundies, we decided to walk along the short stretch of the Cotswold Way which takes you through to the Masts Reserve and try our luck that side. Climbing over the style into the lower slope of this part of the reserve we immediately saw a couple of Small Blues and then a small orangey butterfly landed in the grass right in front of us, a Duke 😊, my first for a couple of years and Chris's first ever.

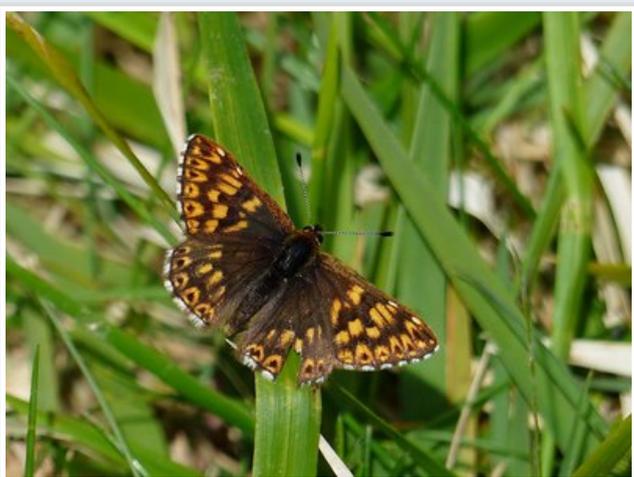
We spent about 45 minutes in this spot, during which time we sat down and ate our sandwiches, and reckon we saw at least 4 different Dukes along with more Small Blues and a couple each of Dingy Skipper, Common Blue and Green Hairstreak.



Lower slope of Masts Reserve. DoB, Small Blue, Common Blue, Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skippers all in this spot.



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



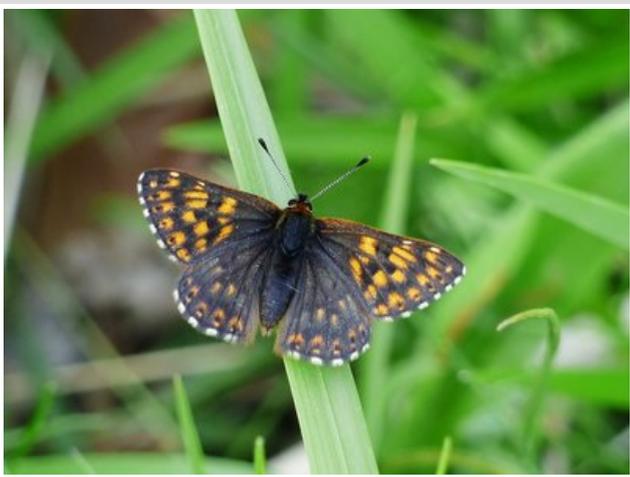
Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015

We then retraced our steps back into the Bill Smyllie reserve to check out one of the earlier spots, just by the gate where I had always seen Dukes before. Sure enough there were now a couple of individuals contesting one particular sheltered hollow. Perhaps they were just a bit slow waking up, not surprising really after the lousy weather earlier this week.



Duke of Burgundy – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Duke of Burgundy – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015



Duke of Burgundy – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015

It was whilst we were watching these that we were approached by three fellow enthusiasts including UKB member Glostopcat. After chatting for a while we went our separate ways and we slowly headed back up the hill to the car.

Before leaving the Cheltenham area I wanted to have a look at Nottingham Hill which is close by and was also thinking of making a little detour to Grafton Wood on the way home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Nick Broomer, 23-May-15 06:13 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Just been looking at your diary.

Lovely photos as usual but, that female Speckled Wood ovipositing must be the photo of the year. What are the chances of getting the butterfly at that angle, just as she deposits an egg on the grass stem. Brilliant. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pete Eeles, 23-May-15 06:27 AM GMT

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

As I watched her she appeared to be laying eggs on some of the blades of grass and taking a couple of quick photos, I managed to catch her right in the act of depositing one,

As others have pointed out, that is one amazing shot, Neil - well done! I've only just come across your photo, so apols for not mentioning this sooner!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Neil Freeman

by Glostopcat, 23-May-15 07:57 AM GMT

You got some really superb images of the dukes from your visit Neil, I managed to get quite a lot more shots in both parts of the reserve after you had departed for Nottingham Hill. I also got some images of small blues mating and a cistus forester moth. I hope you managed to see some wall browns at Nottingham Hill. I may visit that site when I've time or try Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common the other side of Cheltenham, a few miles away. This used to be a good location for wall browns, although i haven't seen any there for the past few summers 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-15 10:55 PM GMT

Many thanks Nick and Pete for your comments on the female Speckled Wood, it was really just a case of being in the right place at the right time and catching a lucky shot 😊

Cheers Glostopcat, no luck with the Wall Browns at Nottingham Hill but we didn't really stay that long and it was breezier there than at Prestbury. I took a record shot of a Forester/Cistus Forester Moth in the Masts Reserve at Prestbury but not being familiar with these I am not sure how to tell the difference.



Forester or Cistus Forester?

Thursday 21st May - part 3.

With wall to wall grey overcast today (Saturday) I have got time to catch up with a final post from last Thursday.

We left Prestbury and drove the few miles around the other side of Cleeve Hill to Nottingham hill. This is a spot that I had never been to before and I wanted to check it out to see if it looked like it would be worth another visit later in the season, as apparently Wall Brown and Chalkhill Blue can both be found here. I was not sure if we would see Wall Brown this time as talking to Glostopcat earlier at Prestbury, he was of the opinion that the season was running a couple of weeks late around here, but he thought there might be a slim chance.

From the parking spot we took a slow wander along the track as far as some woodland before turning around and retracing our steps. We didn't find any Wall Brown this time but did see a number of fresh Common Blue and Brown Argus, some Dingy Skippers in various states of 'dinginess', plus a couple each of Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock, all looking a bit tired and worn now. We also had a high speed flypast of what looked a lot like a

Painted Lady but neither of us was absolutely sure of the ID.



Looking towards Cleeve Hill from Nottingham Hill



Brown Argus - Nottingham Hill 21.05.2015

We didn't spend that long here, just under an hour before we set off again as I wanted to do a detour on the way home to Grafton Wood. A few years ago, 2011 I think it was but I could be wrong, there was a re-introduction of Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Grafton Wood and I was keen stop off and have a look.

We arrived at the church at Grafton Flyford at around quarter past three and set off through the farmyard and across the fields to the wood.



The walk across from the farm to the wood.

Last year whilst looking for Brown Hairstreaks here I had met John Tilt and Dave Williams from West Midlands BC and they had shown me where the re-introduction had taken place and which was still the best place to see them. Walking through the wood to this spot we had no sooner arrived than we saw one skimming across the clearing. We stayed around this spot for something like 45 minutes and saw maybe two males and one female, the latter spending some time fluttering around the low vegetation and leaf litter and stopping occasionally to lay eggs.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Grafton Wood 21.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Grafton Wood 21.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Grafton Wood 21.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary female – Grafton Wood 21.05.2015

We then walked back on our now tired legs to the car and carried on our way home, the PBFs having been a nice bonus to a great day.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 25-May-15 06:58 PM GMT

Saturday 23rd May

Saturday was a dull and gloomy day mostly with leaden skies that only cleared up right at the end around 7.00pm when I was settling down for the evening. I spent most of the day doing household and garden stuff to keep the 'brownie points' topped up in anticipation of next week when I have the week off work and am hoping to get out a couple of times, not sure where yet, that will depend on where the weather looks best.

I was doing a bit of tidying up in the garden when I accidentally disturbed a roosting female Orange-tip from where she had been tucked up out of sight. She fluttered weakly down to a hawthorn where she settled and where I took some photos before leaving her alone to carry on pottering about.



Orange-tip female – Coverdale 23.05.2015



Orange-tip female – Coverdale 23.05.2015

Including this one taken from the other side against the background of the lawn. It is possible to get an uncluttered background with a Lumix bridge camera without any manipulation...if the subject is in the right place 😊 Having said that, I am not overkeen on the uniform green background, preferring a bit of shading as in the first photo above.



Orange-tip female – Coverdale 23.05.2015

When I looked again a little later she had disappeared, no doubt to roost up again somewhere.

Sunday 24th May

Sunday morning started off with rain which slowly cleared up for a dry but cloudy afternoon with a couple of very brief spells when the sun made a half-hearted attempt to break through. During one of these brief spells I noticed a 'white' fluttering about down the bottom of the garden and going down for a closer look I saw that it was the female Orange-tip from the previous day.



Orange-tip female – Coverdale 23.05.2015

Although I have seen a few Orange-tips lately whilst out and about, numbers have definitely been down this year and have dwindled noticeably over the past couple of weeks, with the last one seen in my garden on May 12th. With the female above looking fairly fresh at least it looks like there are some still emerging.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 25-May-15 07:32 PM GMT

Hi Neil, just catching up. You've posted some great images in your PD recently, my particular favourites being the Dukes at Prestbury Hill, and your superb photo of the Speckled Wood ovipositing 😊 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 26-May-15 12:18 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, love the female OT's, sadly they've not appeared at my local spot, 😞 The meadow they were in last year was full of May flowers, It seems it was mowed very low last year, Why!! I don't know, I do wonder if this as any thing to do with their not showing because the flowers were very few this year, or if the weather is the cause, 😊 I'll just have to enjoy your shots Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 26-May-15 01:34 AM GMT

That first OT on the Hawthorn blossom is gorgeous, the evening light really works well in bringing her to life 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 26-May-15 05:45 AM GMT

Just catching up Neil you've been really busy recently – those Duke shits are great and the Small Blues – lush 🙌

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 26-May-15 05:53 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Just catching up Neil you've been really busy recently – those Duke **shits** are great..



Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-May-15 06:34 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

"Wurzel" wrote:

Just catching up Neil you've been really busy recently – those Duke **shits** are great..



Well spotted David 😄

Hee Hee 😄 have you been on the sauce Wurzel 😊

Thanks for your comments Mike, I was particularly chuffed with that female Speckled Wood shot 😊

Hi Goldie, not sure why but there have definitely been fewer Orange-tips around my patch this year as well.

Cheers Bugboy, the OT shots were actually taken earlier in the afternoon but the light was dimmer than in the evening when it brightened up a bit.

Monday 25th May

Another dull cloudy day around here so I stuck around the house to save the brownie points for another day. A couple of short spells when it was slightly less gloomy brought the female Orange-tip out but it didn't warm her up enough to go far, just a few feet in fact to a patch of brambles at the bottom of the garden. That is three days now that she has been in the garden without it warming up enough for her to continue on her way.



Orange-tip female – Coverdale 25.05.2015

The forecast is looking a bit better for tomorrow and with the rest of the week off work I am hoping to get out and blow the cobwebs off.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 26-May-15 10:01 PM GMT

I think Wurzel's mistaken spelling could sum up the coming weather here tomorrow until Friday 😄😄 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 27-May-15 05:51 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie, it wasn't too bad around here in the end today 😊

Tuesday 26th May – A walk in the Wyre Forest.

After the past few days of dull cloudy weather and doing jobs around the house, I had promised myself a day out today...but where? With another band of cloud forecast to head across the midlands from the west, I figured that if I headed west then it would clear from there first, so with this in mind I set out for the Wyre Forest.

I arrived at the Dry Mill Lane car park at around 10.30 with a rough plan of starting off along the old railway line and then dropping down and crossing over Dowles Brook and then seeing how far I went before deciding to turn back. In the end I made it as far as the 'pileline', so named because the pipeline that brings water from the Elan Valley to Birmingham runs under the forest there. The whole walk, taking a slow wander in both directions with plenty of stops in meadows and clearings to take photos, took me until just turned 5.00pm when I arrived back at the car, tired but happy 😊

My main target for the day was Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and these were easily the most numerous species seen...but I will come back to these later when I have sorted through the many photos that I took.

Other butterflies seen during the day in conditions of mixed cloud with sunny spells were Peacocks(4), Brimstone(2), Large White(1), Green-veined White (2), Small White(1), Common Blue(6), Small Copper(2) and Dingy Skipper(2).



Meadow by Dowles Brook. PBF, Common Blue, Small Copper, Small White all in here.



By the old railway track, this area good for PBF



Dingy Skipper – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Dingy Skipper - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Dingy Skipper - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Common Blue - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Common Blue – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Small White – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Small Copper – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

I usually come here around this time and this was the first time that I didn't see any Orange-tips, although I did speak to a chap who said there were plenty here a couple of weeks back.

There were also numerous Speckled Yellow Moths and nearly as many Common Heath Moths along nearly every ride and track that I went along. Both these species are difficult to get close to, when the sun is out they don't stop flying and when it goes in they disappear 😊 After many attempts I managed to get a record shot of each.

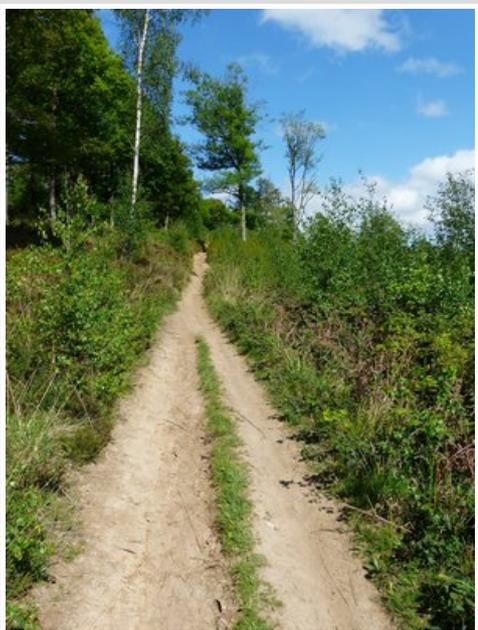


Speckled Yellow Moth – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Common Heath Moth – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

Along one particular track there were loads of Green Tiger Beetles, in fact I see them along this stretch every year when I come here at around this time.



Loads of Green Tiger Beetles along this bit plus Speckled Yellows and a couple of PBFs



Green Tiger Beetle - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

Now to sort through the rest of my photos for the next bit...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 27-May-15 02:50 PM GMT

It is difficult to choose a favourite from your lovely photos Neil as they are always of a very high standard but for me that Dingy Skipper stands out – how did you manage that angle? Those insects and moths are great too 🐛

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 27-May-15 10:37 PM GMT

Finally caught up with your diary Neil, must say, you really get the most out of your trips, super shots of super critters...much enjoyed 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-15 05:31 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Pauline 😊. That Dingy Skipper photo was taken with the camera at ground level and me crouching down using the variable angle screen on my FZ200 to line up the shot. I used the same method to get the shots of the two moths as they have a habit of settling partially upside down under vegetation 🐛.

Cheers Bill, with family and work usually taking up my time in the week I try and make the most of my opportunities when I have them 😊.

Tuesday 26th May – A walk in the Wyre Forest part 2.

As mentioned in my previous report, the main target of my trip to the Wyre Forest was Pearl-bordered Fritillaries which were easily the most numerous species flying with something like 30 or more seen during the day. It seemed like a lot more but in reality I was seeing a lot of the same ones on the return leg of my walk through the forest.

The weather conditions were a mix of cloud and sun with some of the cloud quite thick at times but with some good warmth in the sun when it was out. This meant that the PBFs were active but settling often which gave me some good opportunities for photos during the day.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

On a number of occasions when the sun went behind clouds I noticed PBFs settling on the hard surface of the track, no doubt taking advantage of some reflected warmth. The female below was a typical example of this...



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

...as was this male just a bit further along the same track,



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

I also saw a number of females fluttering about amongst the lower vegetation and laying eggs amongst the dried bracken. I tried to take some photos but most of these were partially obscured by vegetation apart from the shot below of one female laying right at the side of the track.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

At one point in the early afternoon, during a spell of fairly thick cloud cover, I disturbed a female PBF from the side of the track at the pipeline section. She flew to the top of a birch about 6 feet high where I managed to take a some shots at full stretch making full use again of the vari-angle screen on my Lumix.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

It was a bit breezy up there and she soon moved down to a lower position and posed beautifully as she shuffled about a bit getting comfortable,



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

With it looking like she was staying put for a bit, I tried moving the branch she was on for a different angle but this disturbed her and she flew off a few yards down the track and came to rest on a fern frond in another nice pose,



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

After taking some more photos I then left her in peace and started wandering back, taking some more photos on the way,



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

A great but tiring day with a lot of walking up and down slopes but worth every step 😊

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 28-May-15 06:02 AM GMT

Shows how late a season it's been in your neck of the woods, Neil.

Most of those PBFs look remarkably fresh.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 28-May-15 06:08 AM GMT

A lovely selection of Pearls, Neil, especially the various underside shots. The mix of sun and cloud is definitely the best to see them. Another spot on my visit wish list. 🍷 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-May-15 04:29 AM GMT

Hi David, yes we are running a bit late around here. The Pearls in the Wyre however are not actually that late. I saw very fresh examples last year in mid-May and in 2013 I didn't go until the first week in June and there were plenty of fresh ones about then.

Cheers Dave, The Wyre Forest is a great place but a large one and really needs a day there to do it justice.

Wednesday 27th May.

With our daughter Sarah coming round for the day yesterday(Wednesday) with her little lad Frankie we thought we would make the most of what looked like being another dry day and go out somewhere. I suggested having a drive down to Adam Henson's Cotswold Farm Park which is not far from Stow-on-the-Wold and is somewhere that none of us had been to before. This was also a crafty move on my part as there is a wildlife trail there which takes in Barton Bushes SSSI and which I had read was good for butterflies 😊.

So it was that we arrived at the Farm Park later in the morning, sometime around 11.00, and I went off for a walk, arranging to meet back up with the others after an hour or so. It was a pleasant sunny late morning with some white fluffy clouds but there was a bit of a breeze blowing that could make it feel quite cool when the sun went in.

The trail is well signed and goes through a couple of farm fields and then into Barton Bushes which is an area of unimproved limestone grassland and scrub with mounds and hollows which are apparently left over from shallow quarrying in the last century.



Barton Bushes 27.05.2015

I had read that there is a colony of Duke of Burgundy at Barton Bushes but in the time that I spent there I didn't find any, mind you I was not really sure if I was looking in the right places.

I did however find plenty of other butterflies, including at least a dozen Green Hairstreaks, mostly looking past their best now, and similar numbers of Small Heath,



Green Hairstreak – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Green Hairstreak – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Small Heath – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Small Heath – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Small Heath – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015

There were also around half a dozen each of Common Blue, Small Blue, a single Brown Argus, plus a couple of Dingy Skippers, often chasing each other about.



Common Blue – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Small Blue – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Small Blue – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Brown Argus – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015



Dingy Skipper – Barton Bushes 27.05.2015

After a pleasant hour, and not wanting to push my luck by staying too long, after all we were on a family day out, I made my way back to the others... just in time for an ice cream 😊. The Farm Park itself is a great place for families and I would certainly like to return sometime and have a longer look around the wildlife trail and Barton Bushes in particular.

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 29-May-15 06:44 AM GMT

Cracking Pearls Neil especially the stained glass one 🍷 Great Greenstreaks too, all manner of spots and streaks 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 30-May-15 03:55 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I thought you might like the stained glass shot 😊

Thursday 28th May.

After a couple of short, sharp showers in the morning, Thursday turned into another day with a similar weather theme as the previous few days, in other words it was breezy with lots of cloud and some sunny spells. Again, under the cloud it would feel quite cool, especially in the breeze, but when the sun did come out it could feel reasonably warm.

With me taking advantage of the better spells of weather recently to go a bit further afield, I had not had chance to check out any of my local spots for a while. After finishing off a couple of little jobs in the house I decided to nip out for a couple of hours and have a look.

With Common Blues making an appearance at some of the places I had been to this week, I was keen to look for them locally. My first stop was at Shadowbrook Meadows where I soon found half a dozen or so, at one point counting five males in view at the same time...



Common Blue – Shadowbrook 28.05.2015



Common Blue – Shadowbrook 28.05.2015



Common Blue – Shadowbrook 28.05.2015

...plus a couple of nice females,



Common Blue – Shadowbrook 28.05.2015

including this very blue individual,



Common Blue – Shadowbrook 28.05.2015

Shadowbrook Meadows is the site where I also saw the very blue female lacking the orange lunules that I posted a photo of in my diary at the time, and again recently in the Aberrant female Common Blue thread viewtopic.php?f=16&t=8297 The one above was photographed in almost exactly the same spot here as the one last year, something to ponder perhaps with regard to whether it is environmental factors that influence the amount of blue on some individuals.

Other species seen in the hour or so spent here were a couple each of Green-veined whites and, by now, tired looking Peacocks.



Peacock – Shadowbrook – 28.05.2015

No Small Coppers here though which surprised me a bit as this is usually a reliable site for them at this time.

I then moved a couple of miles up the road to Bickenhill and the public footpath which crosses a couple of meadows which I often visit. I had just started along the first stretch of path which runs along the side of a farmer's field when a splash of white on the path ahead attracted my attention. Moving slowly closer this turned out to be a white Cockatiel, something that I was really not expecting to see this afternoon. I would guess this was an escapee, possibly from a row of houses that are close by, and indeed it flew off in that direction.



Bit of a surprise to see this...

I wandered further along the path and into a meadow and saw a couple more worn looking Peacocks plus a couple of similar condition Small Tortoiseshells still hanging in there. There were also two or three Common Blues, all fresh males here, plus a couple of Green-veined Whites and a single male Orange-tip patrolling the hedgerows.

I was also pleased to find a couple of Small Coppers here, one of which was my first member of the 'blue spot club' for this year,



Small Copper – Bickenhill 28.05.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 28.05.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 28.05.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 28.05.2015

Now to go and do some packing, I am off to Cornwall for a week in the morning...fingers crossed for the weather.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 30-May-15 05:09 AM GMT

lovely couple of reports with some delightful pictures, as usual, to accompany them 😊. Hopefully more of the same from Cornwall 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 30-May-15 06:08 AM GMT

Looks like a male cockatiel given the bold orange cheek patches.

I hope he finds his way back to civilisation soon as he won't survive for long in the wild.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 31-May-15 04:06 AM GMT

That's the sort of thing that usually happens to me Neil – except somehow they usually end up coming home with me 😊😊 Now, I have a bone to pick – are you going to torment me all summer with your shots of SC with blue spots 😊😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 31-May-15 09:17 PM GMT

I'm still catching up on postings Neil, fantastic shots of the Pearl BF 🍷🍷 I can't find one 😞 How sad is that Goldie 😊😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 31-May-15 11:59 PM GMT

Super stuff Neil 😊 Nice to see **Small Copper** are back out and about, hav'nt seen many in my neck of the woods.

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 01-Jun-15 02:57 AM GMT

Evening Neil

Not sure how I missed your PBF's but the closed wing shots are great. I particularly like the second from last – that leaf, the background, all compliment the colour of the butterfly and the result is a very artistic photo of the sort I wish I could take 🍷🍷 I read your previous response re variable angled screen – they certainly seem to be an asset.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-15 01:03 AM GMT

My apologies for the late response but many thanks to everyone for the great comments, they are very much appreciated 😊.

Cornwall 30th May – 6th June.

We returned home late yesterday (Saturday 6th June) after spending a week in Cornwall, staying at Kennack Sands on The Lizard for what was essentially a family break with Jane and my Mom, during which I managed to do some good butterflying.

I had not been to Cornwall for a number of years and indeed had never previously visited early in the year, my previous times always having been family holidays during the main summer season in late July/August when the kids were still at school and we had to go during school holidays. For a couple of years now I had been thinking of visiting in early June and earlier this year we decided to go for it.

The weather was decidedly mixed, particularly during the first couple of days when we had some heavy rain and very strong winds, the worst of which were overnight on the Sunday and Monday.

Nevertheless I managed to see butterflies on every day except for Monday June 1st and from Tuesday afternoon it started to get much warmer and although there was still a stiff breeze for most of the time there was also plenty of sun.



Coast path at Kennack Sands – 31.05.2015



Coast path at Kennack Sands – 03.06.2015

During the week I visited some beautiful spots and managed to see all my target species which included good numbers of Marsh Fritillaries at a couple of locations and plenty of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. More on these to follow when I have sorted through the many photos that I took.

There were loads of fresh Speckled Wood just about everywhere I looked with every little bit of hedge seeming to have a couple of males flapping along it. Wall Browns, Small Coppers and Common Blues in all sorts of conditions would usually put in an appearance along most stretches of coast path that I walked, as did Painted Ladies which appeared in increasing numbers as the weather improved through the week along with my first Red Admirals of the year.



Wall Brown – Kennack Sands 02.06.2015



Speckled Wood – Kennack Sands 02.06.2015



Common Blue – Kynance Cove 03.06.2015



Painted Lady – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Painted Lady – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015

If I remember rightly I think that it was Neil Hulme who commented last year on the size of the Small Coppers that he saw in Cornwall, and some of the females that I saw there were particularly large and impressive. Size is not something that comes across particularly well in photos but the Ox-eye Daisy in the shots below gives some idea,



Small Copper – Kennack Sands 04.06.2015



Small Copper – Kennack Sands 04.06.2015

Also seen at Kennack Sands was this example with reduced forewing markings,



Small Copper – Kennack Sands 03.06.2015

Later in the week I took a drive over to Upton Towans where, along with Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and a single Clouded Yellow, I also saw a number of Silver-studded Blues...again more on these to follow.

To finish off a great week we made a little detour on our way back yesterday just before crossing into Devon, to Greenscombe Woods at Lucket, where I

saw Heath Fritillaries plus my first Large Skipper and Meadow Browns of the year...guess what, another report to come 😊.

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-15 05:48 AM GMT

Looking forward to the next report, do I need to get a bucket ready to be sick with envy? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jun-15 03:23 AM GMT

You should be ok Wurzel 😊 ...Marshies coming up next and I believe you have a good site for those. In fact that is something I am envious of myself as this is a species that I have to travel to see.

Cornwall 30th May - 6th June part 2.

Earlier in the year whilst deciding when to actually go to Cornwall, I had done some reading up on flight times of various species and realised that I had a good chance of seeing Marsh Fritillaries during our stay. In the couple of weeks leading up to travelling down I did some more research and found that there were a couple of sites near to where we would be staying on The Lizard that looked like they would be worth visiting. UKB member essexbuzzard also tipped me off about a site that he knew about in the same area which, when I looked on the map, proved to be just a few minutes away from Kennack Sands. In fact, a closer look on the map showed all of these sites to be around the area of Predannack Airfield which is a satellite airfield for RNAS Culdrose that is used for divers and training. I believe that Marsh Fritillaries exist in 'meta-populations' of loosely linked colonies and I would not be at all surprised to find that to be the case here with the colonies centred on the airfield.

On Sunday 31st May following a dull and drizzly morning the weather started to brighten up and by mid-afternoon the sun was breaking through, although there was still a blustery wind blowing. I decided to nip round to the site that essexbuzzard had given me the info for and following his directions made my way to the area where the Marsh Fritillaries could be found. At first there was a big dark cloud covering the sun and it all seemed very quiet but after a few minutes the sun came back out and I saw a Marsh Fritillary flitting over the grass...then another...then another, until I had a dozen or more in view around me at the same time.

Taking photos was challenging in the breeze with the butterflies settling regularly but usually low down in the vegetation with grass all over the place. Nevertheless, I managed to get some photos and was fascinated by the variation in markings with no two individuals being exactly the same.



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 31.05.2015



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 31.05.2015



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 31.05.2015



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 31.05.2015



Marsh Fritillary female - The Lizard 31.05.2015

I spent just over an hour here and probably saw a couple of dozen Marsh Fritillaries here along with a couple of very fresh looking male Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries.

Being so close to where we were staying, it was inevitable that I would return to this spot and I did exactly that on the afternoon of Tuesday 2nd June when I spent another hour or so in conditions that were slightly warmer and sunnier and when there were more Marsh Fritillaries on the wing, at a rough guess there were easily 40-50, maybe more.



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 02.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 02.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 02.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 02.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary male - The Lizard 02.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary female – The Lizard 02.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary female – The Lizard 02.06.2015

My thanks to essexbuzzard for the tip off for this spot without which I would most likely have gone straight past on my way to some of the other sites I visited.

Later in the week, on the Thursday afternoon, I saw more Marsh Fritillaries at Predannack Cliffs, more to follow from that location.

To be continued...

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 09-Jun-15 04:45 AM GMT

Beautiful photos, Neil. There is such variety and variability with this species, and you have loads of both here. As others have said, this is one you just cannot get enough of.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 09-Jun-15 05:57 AM GMT

Yes. Each of those individuals are different in some way from one another. I especially like the female – she's a real beauty!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 09-Jun-15 11:12 PM GMT

Wonderful images and comprehensive report on your Cornwall holiday Neil...is'nt it great to be able to share your interest and intergrate it with a holiday 😊 glad you enjoyed your hard earned break.

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jun-15 03:08 AM GMT

Thanks Dave 😊, this is one species that I really wish could be found closer to me so I could see them more often, I think my closest site is Strawberry Banks in the Cotswolds which is somewhere I have yet to visit.

Cheers David 😊, that female was a lovely and impressively large example, nearly twice the size of some of the males.

Thanks Bill 😊, I am lucky in that my family will usually listen to my suggestions on where to go on holiday knowing full well that I will be hoping to see some butterflies 😊

Cornwall 30th May – 6th June part 3.

On the morning of Wednesday 3rd June I walked the coast path from Kynance Cove to Lizard Point, enjoying the spectacular scenery under clear blue skies and accompanied by the sound of Skylarks singing high overhead.



Kynance Cove – 03.06.2015



On the way to Lizard Point – 03.06.2015

There were large patches of Sea Pinks (Thrift) all along this coastline and long stretches of dry stone wall that were also covered with this attractive plant.



Sea Pinks on dry stone wall.

My main target for this walk was Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and I saw the first one about a hundred yards from the Kynance Cove car park and then continued to see them all along to Lizard Point, not great numbers in any one spot but probably 25-30 pretty well spread out along the walk.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Kynance/Lizard 03.06.2015



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Kynance/Lizard 03.06.2015



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Kynance/Lizard 03.06.2015

Half a dozen Wall Browns were also seen which as usual were difficult to approach and when I did manage to sneak up on them they would be holding their wings half open to regulate their temperature as it got warmer during the morning.



Wall Brown - Kynance/Lizard 03.06.2015

Common Blues and Small Coppers were also present here, at least a dozen of each, many of the Common Blues in particular looking fresher than those I had seen so far during the week.



Common Blue - Kynance/Lizard 03.06.2015



Small Coppers – Kynance/Lizard 03.06.2015

After taking a slow dawdle along the coast path I arrived at Lizard Point at around mid-day and sat down for a break and a pasty before setting off back again to the car, enjoying the same walk in reverse.

The following morning (Thursday), the women wanted to have a look around Lizard Village, so after parking the car and leaving them to wander around the tourist shops, I took the opportunity for a little walk down to Lizard point and spent another half an hour or so on this bit of the coast path.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Lizard Point 04.06.2015



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Lizard Point 04.06.2015

Later on, after a bit of lunch, the women just wanted to chill out so I went off for another walk, this time to Predannack Cliffs...

To be continued...

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 10-Jun-15 04:10 AM GMT

Great photos from your trip to Cornwall Neil 😊 hard to single one out as they're all superb 😊 The Small Coppers however are my favourite.

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 10-Jun-15 05:36 AM GMT

Is it just me or does there not seem to be a 'hiatus' in this most south westerly part of the UK?

Species are often early and they keep on appearing when they have all but disappeared elsewhere in the country.

For instance, at the moment in south Wales, Speckled Woods and Small Coppers have all but vanished; Pierids are practically non-existent whilst Vanessa's haven't yet re-emerged.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 10-Jun-15 02:47 PM GMT

I am thoroughly enjoying your reports from Cornwall Neil. It is nice to see the lovely scenery along with all those smashing butterfly images 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jun-15 03:16 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments Mike, glad you like the photos 😊

Hi David, it seems that flight times in Cornwall can be somewhat extended for some species, Small Coppers for instance usually produce four broods there whereas on my patch I am lucky to see a third brood in a good year. Small Pearls usually produce a second brood which has been known to outnumber the first in some locations and apparently Silver-studded Blues have been known to produce a second brood on the dunes at Upton Towans.

Glad you like the reports and photos Pauline, the scenery is worth seeing in its own right, and I am sure that many people visit just for this, but add the butterflies and it truly is a special place 😊.

Cornwall 30th May - 6th June part 4.

One of the places I had read about in my research prior to going to Cornwall was Predannack Cliffs and on the afternoon of Thursday 4th June I drove round to the National Trust car park at Predannack Wollas and from there walked along a public footpath that leads to the coast path and turned North towards Mullion Cove.



Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015

This was another walk along spectacular scenery with parts of the cliff tops covered with large expanses of Sea Pinks, a beautiful sight.



A sea of Sea Pinks – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015

It was quite blustery along the more exposed parts of the path with little butterfly activity apart from a few Small Coppers and Common blues that were quickly whisked away in the wind if they ventured too high. As at Kynance Cove to Lizard Point, there were dry stone walls all along here, again covered with masses of Sea Pinks, and in the more sheltered sections this was where the butterflies were. Along one short length of wall, about fifty yards long at most, I counted 4 Painted Ladies, 3 Red Admirals, 1 Small Tortoiseshell, 1 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, 2 Wall Browns, 2 Small Coppers, 2 common Blues, 1 Large White, and a Hummingbird Hawk Moth.



Small Copper – Predannack Cliffs – 04.06.2015



Red Admiral – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Painted Lady - Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Painted Lady - Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015

I had already seen a couple of quite ragged looking Painted Ladies earlier in the week and now seeing these here, along with the other migrants seemed to show that a definite influx was happening, something that has been confirmed by all the sightings I have read about since returning home.

I had also read that Marsh Fritillaries could be found somewhere in this area, in fact this was one of the main reasons I had come for a look, but I was surprised when I found them in what was quite different habitat to what I was expecting, being quite exposed up on the cliff top.



Marsh Fritillary habitat – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary - Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary - Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015



Marsh Fritillary - Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015

In the end I wandered about half way to Mullion cove before turning back and walking slowly back to the car and heading back to Jane and my Mom.

To be continued...

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by keving, 11-Jun-15 04:27 AM GMT

Neil,

Beautiful photos from Predannack Cliffs. I like the first photo of the Painted Lady sitting on the lichen and the Marshies are excellent. I was not aware of them being at this site and it looks a habitat unusual to the Marshie. Well done for finding them and taking such good images.

Regards Kev

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 11-Jun-15 04:41 AM GMT

Just catching up on various diaries. Some great reports from Cornwall, looks like you had a great time with some nice weather. Love all those Marshies, gorgeous little creatures 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-15 06:35 AM GMT

Cracking Marshie's Neil, the first one is particularly stand-out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jun-15 02:51 AM GMT

Thank you Kev, Buggy and Wurzel for your comments, appreciated as always 😊.

Before going to Cornwall I had read that the Marshies were around that area somewhere but was a bit surprised to find them on the cliff top, I expected them to be a bit further back from the cliffs in a more sheltered spot.

Cornwall 30th May – 6th June part 5.

Before I continue with the next report I will just add the photo below that I forgot to add to the last one and shows the stretch of dry stone wall where the Painted Ladies, Red Admirals etc were seen as described above. Mullion Cove can just be seen in the background above the wall.



Dry stone Wall on Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015

Towards the end of the week before we went down to Cornwall, I had seen that Silver-studded blues had been reported from a couple of places including Upton Towans, an extensive system of dunes near Hayle on the north coast, and so had it in the back of my mind to have a look if I got the chance. My chance came on the afternoon of the Friday (5th June) when, after a morning spent doing touristy stuff (which included a stop off for a rather large Full English Breakfast 😊) with Jane and my Mom, I was free for a few hours.

Being down the narrow end of Cornwall, the drive from Kennack Sands on the Lizard to Upton Towns on the north coast took less than 40 minutes so I was soon parked up and wandering through the dunes. I didn't have a clue where to start looking or if there was any particular spot which the Silver-studded Blues could be found so I just figured I would check likely looking spots in the sheltered dips and hollows between the dunes.



Upton Towans looking towards St Ives Bay - 05.06.2015

The first butterfly seen was a Painted Lady that settled briefly on the path in front of me before heading off in a generally north direction along the coast.



Painted Lady - Upton Towans 05.06.2015

After a couple of false alarms from what turned out to be Common Blues, a smaller flash of brighter blue drew my attention and proved to be a nice male Silver-studded Blue. During the next hour or I found another half a dozen or so SSBs in various sheltered spots, all males, mostly in good condition but with a couple already looking a bit worse for wear.



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 05.06.2015



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 05.06.2015



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 05.06.2015



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 05.06.2015



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 05.06.2015



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 05.06.2015



Silver-studded Blues - Upton Towans 05.06.2015

As well as the SSBs and Common Blues I also saw a dozen or so Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, mostly looking more worn than those I had seen on The Lizard.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Upton Towans 05.06.2015



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Upton Towans 05.06.2015

A solitary Clouded Yellow also landed in the grass at one point giving just time to grab a record shot before heading off in a determined fashion, like the Painted Lady, in a northward direction.



Clouded Yellow - Upton towans 05.06.2015

Also seen here was another Hummingbird Hawk Moth, my second of the week after the one at Predannack Cliffs, and a couple of Lackey Moth larval nests.



Lackey Moth larval nest - Upton Towans 05.06.2015

This was my last afternoon in Cornwall, we were due to head back in the morning 😞, but hopefully we would be making a little detour before crossing into Devon 😊

To be continued...

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jun-15 03:19 AM GMT

Cornwall 30th May - 6th June part 6, the final instalment.

Having already had a great week in Cornwall, I thought it would be nice to finish off with a little detour on our way back on Saturday morning. I had already mentioned this to Jane and my Mom earlier in the week to get their views, as it would involve them staying by the car due to them both having limited mobility whilst I went off for a walk, and they both said it would be ok as long as I didn't disappear for more than a couple of hours.

So it was then, on Saturday morning we left Kennack Sands around 9.15 and headed for Greenscombe Wood at Lucketts where a colony of Heath Fritillary can be found. After heading towards Bodmin we left the A30 and carried on across country, past Liskeard, and arrived at the car park in Lucketts around 11.00am.

I walked along the track toward the wood and after a few minutes arrived at a point where the track divided into two separate ways into the wood...right then which way? I decided to try the right hand path first and walked along for fifteen minutes or so, noticing some areas along a slope that looked like they had been recently coppiced and where there was loads of cow wheat growing.

The first butterflies seen along here were a couple each of Brimstones and Holly Blues, a single Green Hairstreak that flew out in front of me and settled again a little further along, plus a male Large Skipper and a couple of fresh male Meadow Browns, both of the last two being firsts of the year for me.



Brimstone - Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015



Green Hairstreak – Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015



Large Skipper – Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015

There was also a Painted Lady to continue the theme of the past few days of them showing up everywhere I went.



Painted Lady – Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015

I then saw an orangey butterfly flitting and skimming across the slope which I was fairly sure was a Heath Fritillary but I didn't get a good enough view of it to be 100%. A little further along, I found a spot where it was obvious that people had previously walked up the slope and ventured up myself. I soon saw another Heath Fritillary (or maybe the same one again) and this one settled a couple of times so there was no doubt of its identity.



Heath Fritillary - Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015



Heath Fritillary - Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015

After a few more minutes here I decided to retrace my steps and try the other track. After going downhill for a short distance this track crossed a stream and then went uphill at quite a steep angle and eventually came out into a more open section of track and meadow areas. There were more Heath Fritillaries here, maybe a dozen or so in the first open bit of meadow, possibly more.



Heath Fritillary - Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015



Heath Fritillary - Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015



Heath Fritillary - Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015



Heath Fritillary - Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015



Heath Fritillary – Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015



Heath Fritillary – Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015

For a brief moment at one point I thought I had found a Marsh Fritillary but a closer look proved it to be a faded Heath Frit,



Heath Fritillary – Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015

I stayed around this spot for about half an hour or so before heading back towards the car park, conscious that we still had a long drive ahead of us. On the way back to the car park I bumped into Lee Slaughter and a group from the Cornwall Butterfly and Moth Society who were on a field trip and with who I had a pleasant little chat with before carrying on. I was sorely tempted to linger on for a while with them but with my couple of hours just about up I reckoned I had cashed in most of my remaining brownie points and I didn't fancy the ear-bending on the way home 😊.

All in all, a great finish to a great week 😊.

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 13-Jun-15 04:24 AM GMT

Great final report, the SSB and HF look stunning in your pics. Both are target species for me in the next few days, fingers crossed the weather plays nice for me 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-15 06:11 AM GMT

Cracking Silver-studs and Heaths, that last one looks almost like a Heath/Marsh cross 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 13-Jun-15 07:10 AM GMT

That's one hell of a break, Neil.

Looks like you racked up 20+ species.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 13-Jun-15 07:50 AM GMT

That's an amazing holiday you had, Neil. It almost reads like one of the reports from abroad we read enviously on here. All illustrated with some seriously good photos too. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jun-15 05:52 PM GMT

Thank you Bugboy, Wurzel, David and Dave for the great comments, it was a fabulous week if a bit breezy most of the time. I reckon I would have seen even more butterflies if the wind had dropped more often but I doubt if I could have found any more species.

Total species count was 22 as reported in the sightings thread for June last weekend when I was back home,

Marsh Fritillary...good numbers at two locations on the Lizard.
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary...good numbers at a number of locations.
Heath Fritillary...12-15 at Greenscombe Wood during visit on the way home
Wall Brown...15-20 seen during the week along various coast paths
Speckled Wood...loads of fresh examples everywhere.
Painted Lady...15+ seen mostly in second half of week.
Red Admiral...half a dozen in second half of week
Peacock...2 seen at Kennack Sands
Small Tortoiseshell...1 seen at Predannack Cliffs
Common Blue ...almost everywhere, some very worn, some fresh males.
Holly blue ...3 seen, 1 at Kennack Sands, 2 at Greenscombe Woods.
Silver-studded Blue ...half a dozen males at Upton Towans of Friday afternoon.
Green Hairstreak ...1 at Greenscombe Woods.
Small Copper ...20+ especially along coast paths.
Orange-tip ...half a dozen seen during the week both male and female.
Green-veined White ...half a dozen seen, usually individually at various spots.
Small White...a couple seen at Kennack Sands and Upton Towans.
Large White...half a dozen seen during the week.
Clouded Yellow ...1 seen at Upton towans.
Brimstone ...2 seen at Greenscombe Woods.
Large skipper...1 male at Greenscombe Woods.
Meadow Brown ...2 males at Greenscombe Woods.

Also seen were a couple of Hummingbird Hawk Moths at Predannack Cliffs and Upton Towns, and a Cream-spot Tiger Moth at Lizard Point.

Now I need to try and catch up on everyone else's diaries.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 13-Jun-15 06:12 PM GMT

Just drop me a PM next time you go on holidays Neil and I'll come with you... 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 03:41 AM GMT

Hi Neil, I'm so pleased you had a great time in Cornwall, blessed with good weather, too. Such a great set of images to share with us! And I'm glad you managed the sites you were looking for, as well as the species— those Marsh Fritillaries are fantastic and, as you say, the markings are highly variable on this butterfly.

When I went to Predannack this time last year, it was blowing a gale—and I recognise all those sea pinks! In fact, I recognise most of the places you visited. Isn't Kynance Cove to Lizard Point a fab place?

Delighted you got to Greenscombe Woods—I didn't know where to go on my first visit, either, but you found it in the end. And congrats on bumping into Lee. Shame you didn't have more time, as he would certainly have shown you around. But never mind, a great report from Cornwall and fantastic images, well done! 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurs rex, 15-Jun-15 04:08 AM GMT

You're having a really good year so far Neil "if you don't mind me saying so" your diary has been and great and packed with quality photos. I really enjoyed looking at it when I was ill recently.

Great stuff.

Best wishes

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jun-15 04:59 AM GMT

Hi Bill, likewise with some of your trips, you seem to be doing alright yourself 😊😄

Thanks Mark, I had a really great week as you can tell 😊 I would certainly like to return again and re-visit every one of the sites that I went to. Once again, many thanks for the info 😊

Glad you enjoyed my reports and photos James 😊 Sorry to hear that you have been ill recently and I hope that you are fully recovered now.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jun-15 05:24 AM GMT

Tuesday 16th June.

A few weeks back I had booked an appointment at our local doctors (or health centre as they insist on calling it now) for this morning, just for one of those annual check-ups that I seem to have copped for now that I am getting a bit frayed around the edges. I had booked all day off work and with the appointment at 8.00am I figured this would give me the rest of the day to go out somewhere...but where?

Black Hairstreak is one of only two mainland UK butterfly species that I have yet to see (Chequered Skipper is the other one) and I had seen over the past few days that they were starting to be reported from a few places so I decided to have a drive down the M40 to Bernwood Forest for a look. I had decided to park at the small car park at Bernwood Meadows and then walk along the hedges checking the blackthorn on the way and then continue through the woods to the M40 compensation area.

I arrived at just after 11.00am and immediately noticed the profusion of wildflowers, my previous visits have been later in the year when I have stopped off on my way back from Aston Rowant and the meadows have usually been cut by then. Common Blues were all over the place, many of them looking tired and worn but with some females still in fairly good condition. There were also a fair number of male Meadow Browns plus a single Marbled White, my first of the year.



Bernwood Meadows 16.06.2015



Common Blue – Bernwood Meadows 16.06.2015



Common Blue – Bernwood Meadows 16.06.2015



Marbled White – Bernwood Meadows 16.06.2015



Meadow Brown – Bernwood Meadows 16.06.2015

Within a few minutes of arriving, my decision to start here had paid off as I went through the gap in the hedge into the second meadow and looking up noticed two small brown butterflies dancing around each other above the shrubs on the corner. I watched them through my binoculars and as they separated one of them settled and I managed a quick long distance record shot of my first ever Black Hairstreak 😊



Black Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 16.06.2015

He soon took off again and was lost to sight so I continued on my way and into the forest, noticing numerous Speckled Woods along the way plus Large Skippers and Common Blues along the sides of the rides.



Speckled Wood – Bernwood Forest 16.06.2015

Having read a few other peoples experiences of trying to find the M40 compensation area I was quite surprised when I went straight to it with no trouble, mind you I had studied the rides on Google Earth last night before going and had a good idea where to head for. As I walked into the compensation area I met up with a couple who turned out to be from Upper Thames BC and who said to me that the BHs were a bit late getting started this year. They had seen a couple earlier and were just leaving to head to the meadows. I ended up spending a couple of hours in the compensation area in conditions of warm sun and some periods when large clouds would come rolling in and I reckon I saw 5 maybe 6 Black Hairstreaks scattered about the site, 1 at the north end by the brick building, 2 maybe 3 in the middle by the motorway fence, and 2 at the far south end. They all stayed high up so it was a case of watching through binoculars rather than taking photos, in fact I only took 3 record shots of BHs all day, the one in the meadows and a couple here, all at long distance.



Black Hairstreak – M40 Compensation Area 16.06.2015

I very much had the impression that they had only just started and that I was a few days too early really, perhaps next week would have been a better time for a visit...hmm! I wonder how many spare days holiday off work I have left. Having said that I was still pretty chuffed with seeing this species for the first time and I had good views of them through my binoculars 😊

Also in this area were more of the ubiquitous Common Blues and Speckled Woods and a fair number of fresh male Large Skippers plus some Burnet Companion and Mother Shipton moths. Those Burnet Companions really wind me up sometimes, they seem to have the uncanny ability to imitate almost anything 😬 Singles of Green-veined and Large White were also seen and a couple of Brimstones, 1 male and 1 female.



Mother Shipton – M40 Compensation Area 16.06.2015



Large Skipper – M40 Compensation Area 16.06.2015



Large Skipper - M40 Compensation Area 16.06.2015

I believe that it was someone on UKB that mentioned sometime last year about the amount of damage done by deer to the lower parts of the shrubs around this site. I couldn't help but notice this today, in fact it looked very much like a waist high tide mark around the site with practically no new blackthorn sucker growth. Around 3.30pm I wandered back through the wood and saw a number of the culprits of the damage to the blackthorn and was watched from a distance more than once.



Someone's watching me...

I then spent another hour or so in the meadows enjoying the late afternoon sun before heading off for home.



Bernwood Meadows 16.06.2015

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 17-Jun-15 05:38 AM GMT

Great stuff, Neil! Afraid I'll have to miss out on this species this year but these are the first 2015 images I've seen so that alone gives me a boost.

All you need now is a few days in Argyll next year to complete your quest!!

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 17-Jun-15 05:47 AM GMT

Well done on the Black Hairstreaks, Neil. 😊 I wonder whether they will stay high, as the leaves are very sticky with honeydew this year, and round here there hasn't been much rain to wash it off. No need for them to come down to the privet and dogwood to nectar...

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 17-Jun-15 06:25 AM GMT

Great stuff Neil. That looks like a great site, even with deer doing their best to eat their way through it! Congrats on getting that Hairstrek lifer as well, I've been having a fair few of those moments this year myself 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 17-Jun-15 03:41 PM GMT

Congratulations on the Black Hairstreaks Neil. I have only seen them once at a distance and didn't manage one decent photo. Well done 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 17-Jun-15 08:19 PM GMT

Well done Neil on your penultimate British species..and what a cracking little butterfly the **Black Hairstreak** is, a very timely report, I have it on my personal visit radar...cheers 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 18-Jun-15 03:58 AM GMT

Congratulations, not only for the Black Hairstreak, but also for all the other species you have found this season. Your Cornish trip produced some wonderful images. Some may say the best is yet to come !.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-15 05:49 AM GMT

David, Dave, Buggy, Pauline, Bill, Trevor, thank you all for the great comments on me seeing my first Black Hairstreaks 😊

Yes David, a trip to Scotland will have to be on the cards within the next year or two to complete my UK mainland list. Then I will probably be dropping hints for a trip cross the sea to The Emerald Isle 😊

Hi Dave, I am not sure what the weather was like around Oxford/Bernwood last weekend but around here it bucketed down all day on Saturday. I did notice the privet and bramble was still mostly in bud. Maybe as BHS numbers increase they may be tempted down.

Wednesday 17th June.

We have just had a rather nice sunset over the back garden 😊



Cheers,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Jun-15 06:13 AM GMT

WOW!! Black Hairstreaks Neil! You are lucky, they are still on my wish list. Great that you managed to see some for the first time – Hairstreaks are not always a given. 😊

Best wishes,
James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jun-15 04:18 AM GMT

Thank you for your comments James, appreciated 😊

Friday 19th June.

With the best of the weather lately being during the week whilst I have been at work and the past couple of weekends being either very dull or wet, I have not had chance to get out around my local patch to see what is now about.

Today, after finishing work at lunchtime, I popped around with Jane for our usual Friday afternoon visit to my mom and after having a cuppa and chatting for a bit I went for a quick look around the park down the road.

A previously overcast morning was slowly turning into a fairly nice afternoon with some good sunny spells and I soon saw half a dozen each of Speckled Woods and Large Skippers.



Large Skipper – Langley Hall 19.06.2015



Large Skipper – Langley Hall 19.06.2015

I also saw a male Common Blue, only the second one of these I have ever seen here, the first one being a couple of years ago.



Common Blue – Langley Hall 19.06.2015

Walking down the road back to my mom's house a Red Admiral flew past me, the first local one I have seen this year although I did see half a dozen during my recent week in Cornwall.

Back home later in the afternoon it had turned into a nice day with plenty of sun and the odd fluffy white cloud drifting across the blue sky so I decided to pop round to Shadowbrook Meadows for an hour.

Again, I soon spotted half a dozen or so each of Speckled Woods and Large Skippers but here they were accompanied by a couple of tired and worn looking Small Coppers and a single Brown Argus in similar worn condition. There were also three or four male Common Blues in varying condition and a couple of females that looked in better nick.



Common Blue – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015



Speckled Wood – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015



Speckled Wood – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015

Other butterflies seen during a very pleasant hour or so included my first Ringlets this year, again about half a dozen.



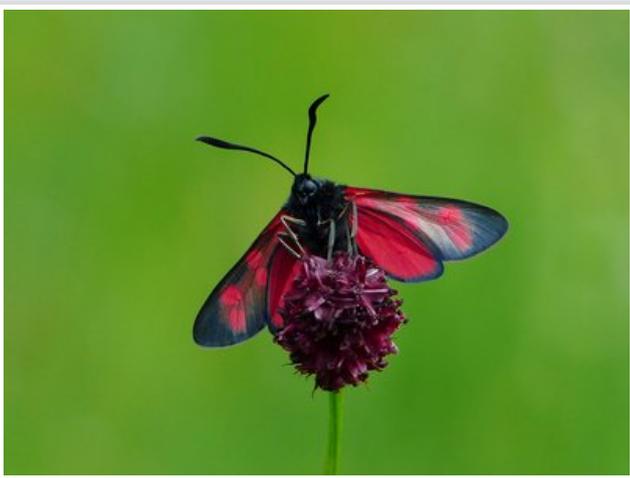
Ringlet – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015



Ringlet – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015

Seen but not photographed were singles of Meadow Brown and Small Tortoiseshell plus my second local Red Admiral.

Day flying Moths seen here included Burnet Companion (2), Chimney Sweeper (4), Yellow Shell (6), Silver-Y (2), and Six-spot Burnet (1)



Six-spot Burnet Moth – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015



Six-spot Burnet Moth – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015

Not great numbers of butterflies about but an afternoon that felt like things were just about to start kicking in around here for the summer 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-15 06:57 AM GMT

Congrats on the Black Hairstreak – a species on my wish list 🍷 Lush shots recently especially the side view of the Specklie showing the urple tinge on the margin 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 01:26 AM GMT

Good stuff Neil. I'm very impressed with you lovely Six-spot Burnet shots, in particular the last one, it's not easy catching them with wings posed like that – well done 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-15 02:16 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I was really chuffed with seeing the Black Hairstreaks 😊

Thanks Bill 😊, I know what you mean with the Burnet Moths, they are either buzzing about or settle with their wings closed hiding the red hindwings.

Sunday 21st June.

Yesterday was the second Saturday in a row that it has rained practically all day with this week it varying from a light drizzle in the morning to some really heavy stuff in the afternoon. At least today was better than last Sunday which although dry was really gloomy with dark grey clouds all day. It was still overcast a lot today but the clouds were lighter grey and they did part occasionally to let the sun through.

The summer brood Speckled Woods have been showing up in my garden for the past couple of weeks now and this morning there were three males squabbling over one corner plus a female that passed through whilst they were busy scrapping amongst themselves.



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 21.06.2015



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 21.06.2015



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 21.06.2015

This afternoon I went out for a walk at my local spot at Castle Hills and followed the footpath through to Bickenhill to see what was about. As mentioned above the conditions were mostly overcast with some occasional sun and there was also a bit of a cool breeze which knocked the temperature down a bit from what it has been recently.

The most numerous species today was Large Skipper with 20+ seen, mostly males with just two that were definite females.



Large Skipper male - Castle Hills 21.06.2015



Large Skipper male - Castle Hills 21.06.2015



Large Skipper males - Castle Hills 21.06.2015



Large Skipper female - Castle Hills 21.06.2015

There is some concern about Small Heaths in Warwickshire with numbers apparently in a steady decline and so this species has been specially targeted for recording in 2015 to ascertain its status. I therefore made a special effort to accurately count these today and saw 2 along one stretch of the footpath and 7 along another section.



Small Heath - Castle Hills 21.06.2015



Small Heath - Castle Hills 21.06.2015



Small Heath - Castle Hills 21.06.2015

Other butterflies seen this afternoon were Speckled Wood (6), Meadow Brown (5), Common Blue (3), and Green-veined White (1).



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 21.06.2015



Common Blue - Castle Hills 21.06.2015

No Ringlets here today, and with just 5 fresh male Meadow Browns seen instead of the loads of both species I usually see at this site, things are definitely running a bit later than last year. Mind you, every year is different anyway and butterflies emerge exactly when they intend to irrespective of our man made concepts of time. To paraphrase a character in a well-known fantasy film "A butterfly is never late, nor is he early, he arrives precisely when he means to."

I'm waffling now so...

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jun-15 05:10 AM GMT

Wednesday 24th June

After seeing my first Black Hairstreaks at Bernwood last week I went into work the following day and checked up on how much holiday I had already booked off for this year and if I had any odd days left. With the short flight season that the Black Hairstreak has, and with me going to be away for a few days next week, I figured that this week would be my only realistic chance of seeing this species again this year before they were over. Luckily I had a couple of days still unaccounted for and managed to book one of them for today.

Last week I had thought about visiting Whitecross Green Wood but ended up spending that much time at Bernwood, both at the compensation area and in the meadows that I ran out of time. Today I decided to go to Whitecross Green first and arrived just before 10.30. Walking down the rides I soon came across a few other enthusiasts and we started seeing Black Hairstreaks flitting about above the blackthorns, a couple down the first ride just a hundred yards or so from the car park and a couple along the ride towards the pond area. There were also numerous Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns and Large Skippers, it seems that they are finally showing up in numbers this week.

At the pond area there were more people and between us we probably saw half a dozen or so different Black Hairstreaks. It seemed like more but we were probably seeing the same ones again a few times. Most of these were staying high and settling within the shrubs making photography difficult although I did manage a couple of reasonable shots of one male which shows him taking up honeydew from a leaf.



Black Hairstreak – Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015

The other side of the same individual after he had done a 180,



Black Hairstreak – Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015

I had plenty of good views of a number of individuals through my binoculars and often saw them taking honeydew from leaves which possibly explains why I did not see one come down to any of the dogwood or privet flowers.

By mid-day it was getting very warm and more and more people were arriving so I decided to wander off a bit. Noticing a side path leading off the main ride I went down it and found a couple of chaps in what seemed to be a mini hot spot with possibly up to half a dozen Black Hairstreaks in one small area. There were at least a couple of females here and these seemed more willing to come lower.



Black Hairstreak - Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015

One particular nice looking female settled right in front of us and stayed down for a good few minutes whilst she shuffled about and kept turning and moving in and out of the shade of the leaves and stems around her. I now understand what other people mean when they talk about the frustration of trying to photograph this butterfly. Even though this one was just inches away she kept moving and turning so that the side facing us was always in shade. Luckily she stayed down long enough for me to play around with different exposures and flash to light up her shady side.



Black Hairstreak - Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015



Black Hairstreak - Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015



Black Hairstreak - Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015



Black Hairstreak - Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015



Black Hairstreak - Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015

After a while she flitted to another position just a couple of feet away but a bit deeper in the shade.



Black Hairstreak – Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015

She then took off again and went a bit higher up in the blackthorn where she proceeded to wander about amongst the leaves. Watching her through my binoculars she appeared to be laying eggs and by stretching up and using the vari-angle screen on my FZ200 I managed to get a shot of her in the act of laying.



Black Hairstreak – Whitecross Green Wood 24.06.2015

By this time it was just past 1.00pm and getting warmer and shortly afterward the hairstreak activity seemed to melt away so having spent nearly 3 hours here I decided to move on to Bernwood for the rest of the afternoon.

I went to the small car park at Bernwood Meadows to walk through to the compensation area following the same route that I did last week. This is a bit longer than the walk from the main Bernwood Forest car park but is more pleasant with the first bit through the meadows and then following side rides that join the main track part way along. Along the blackthorn hedge just before entering the wood I met up with some fellow enthusiasts who had seen 4 Black Hairstreaks along there and as we were talking one flew in front of us and settled half way up the hedge. I just had time for a distant record shot before he was off again higher up (as usual).



Black Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 24.06.2015

I carried on through the wood and along the main track met up with John Tilt and Dave Williams of West Midlands BC who were on their way back from the compensation area. They told me that they had been there since 11.00am but had only seen a couple of Black Hairstreaks and these had stayed high up. We did wonder whether it had got a bit warm for them and if they had tucked themselves away as I understand this species is prone to doing. I then carried on to the compensation area. By this time more cloud had built up with a bit of a breeze although it was still warm. I spent about an hour and a half here during which time I saw five Black Hairstreaks including three at the northern end by the brick building where I watched them for some

time including a number of times when all three were in the air at the same time chasing each other around. I also saw one individual half way down by the motorway fence and one more at the southern end. None of these came anywhere close with all of them being high up around the tops of the hedges. Nevertheless I did get good views through my binoculars which I was happy with. Numbers of Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites and Large Skippers were higher than last week, both here and in the meadows, although there seemed to be fewer Common Blues today. I then wandered back to the meadows, again seeing some of the culprits of the deer damage along the way.



Bernwood Forest 24.06.2015

By the time I got back to my car it was gone 5.00pm so headed for home.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 25-Jun-15 05:51 AM GMT

Glorious stuff, Neil. I'm so pleased you got some quality shots of this most difficult species.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 25-Jun-15 06:31 AM GMT

Some of the best images i have seen of the Black Hairstreak. Never seen one myself, something i must put right!

Happy hunting,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jun-15 02:59 AM GMT

Thank you for your comments David and Trevor, much appreciated 😊

Saturday 27th June.

At last, a decent Saturday after the wet and gloomy ones of the past couple of weekends. I did the usual Saturday morning stuff around the house and then decided to nip round to my local spot at Castle Hills.

Well, what a difference a week makes. I had come here last Sunday afternoon in mostly overcast conditions with a cool breeze and seen 20+ Large Skippers and just a handful of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths and no Ringlets. Today, on a warm afternoon with a mix of plenty of sun and fluffy clouds, there were loads of Large Skippers, Ringlets, and Meadow Browns.

Every patch of brambles seemed to have half a dozen or more male Large Skippers vigorously defending territories and chasing off intruders.



Large Skipper male - Castle Hills 27.06.2015

There were far more female Large Skippers about today...



Large Skipper female - Castle Hills 27.06.2015



Large Skipper female - Castle Hills 27.06.2015

Ringlets were everywhere, with every step along the paths seeming to put up at least half a dozen at a time.



Ringlet – Castle Hills 27.06.2015



Ringlet – Castle Hills 27.06.2015



Ringlet – Castle Hills 27.06.2015

Meadow Browns were lazily flopping about in the sun and were joined by a few Small Heaths plus some worn and faded Common Blues.

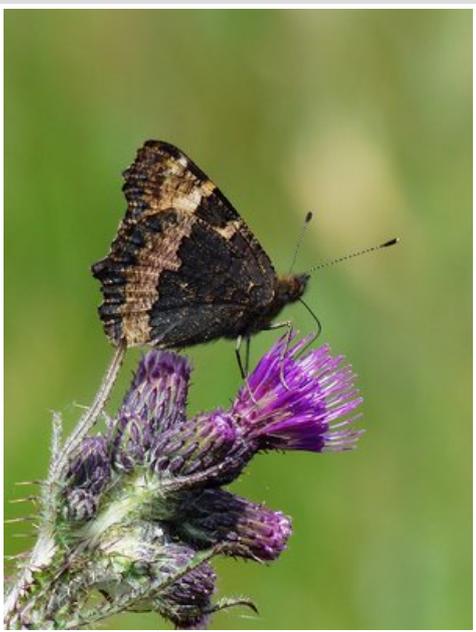


Small Heath - Castle Hills 27.06.2015



Small Heath - Castle Hills 27.06.2015

Summer brood Small Tortoiseshells are starting to show up around here with at least four, maybe five different examples seen today.



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 27.06.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 27.06.2015

With Small Skippers starting to be reported I was keeping a look out for my first of these for this year. After loads of false alarms from the many Large Skippers, many of which are still looking fresh, I spotted one with a slightly different flight pattern which proved to be a fresh male Small Skipper.



Small Skipper – Castle Hills 27.06.2015

I found just three Small Skippers here this afternoon, all males, including one that was already showing signs of wear and looking like he had already been out for a few days.



Small Skipper – Castle Hills 27.06.2015

It is still early days for Small Skippers around here and within a couple of weeks there should be loads of them at this site. Then it will be time to start looking for the Essex Skippers which usually fly amongst them as the latter species usually appears here a week or two after the Smalls.

Right then, off to do some packing...I am off in the morning with my wife Jane for a few days in the Heddon Valley 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-15 07:03 AM GMT

Looking forward to your HBFs Neil 🍷 Have a cracking time. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jul-15 04:29 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel...HBFs coming up 😊

Sunday 28th June - Heddon Valley Day 1.

On Sunday morning Jane and myself set out for a 3 day break in the Heddon Valley, the first such break that we had planned for this year. For the past few years we have settled into a pattern of having a couple of, usually 3 nights, breaks for the two of us and a couple of week-long family holidays with either my mom or my daughter and grandson. The beauty of this is that I usually have a major say in where we will go and everyone concerned knows that butterflies will be included in the planning, which gives me a chance to see species that would normally be too far for me. I have a self-imposed driving limit of about 2 hours (one way) for a day trip as I don't want to fall into the trap of whizzing all over the country just to get a 'tick' for a species. The other thing of course is that beautiful spots like the Heddon Valley really need a couple of days to do them justice and I find that three days usually gives me a good chance of getting a decent window in the weather

Anyway, we drove down in dull and wet conditions with an almost constant drizzle that turned into heavier rain every now and then. If the weather had been better I would probably have detoured to Haddon Hill, which we did last time we were down this way a couple of years back, but the conditions today made this not worth it. In fact from the A361 it looked worse in the direction of Exmoor than what we were driving through.

Having given myself time for this detour which I didn't do, we duly arrived earlier than planned at the Hunters Inn in the Heddon Valley where we were booked in for three nights. I thought, 'no harm in being cheeky' and went to see if our room was ready which luckily it was, so before 3.00pm we were settled in. Even better, during the past hour, the clouds had been breaking up and the sun was starting to shine through and it was looking like a nice late afternoon was shaping up.

I have mentioned before that since her stroke some years ago, Jane gets tired very quickly and so she suggested that I could go off for a walk for a couple of hours whilst she sorted her stuff out and then just chilled out for a bit. Not needing any further encouragement but also not really having the time to wander too far, I set off down the path towards Heddons Mouth, figuring to have a look in the meadows just past the stone bridge.

The first butterflies seen were a number of Speckled Wood along the shady parts of the path and then arriving at the meadows there were loads of Meadow Browns and Ringlets popping up out of the wet grass. I then spotted a flash of bright orange skimming along the treeline which proved to be my first Silver-washed Fritillary of the year. I had expected to see a few of these during the next couple of days but was a bit surprised that it was the first big orange Fritillary I saw, expecting that honour to go to either a Dark Green or High Brown Fritillary.



Silver-washed Fritillary - Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



Silver-washed Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



Silver-washed Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015

Shortly afterwards the High Browns started showing up, skimming up and down the meadow settling occasionally to feed off the head high thistles or settling to bask on the fern fronds. There were some patches of trampled down wet grass where people had obviously been here previously and I was interested to see the High Browns settling in these spots to bask quite regularly and sometimes with a couple squabbling over a favoured spot.



High Brown Fritillaries – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015

I have noticed before that High Browns seem to favour bramble flowers over thistles, which are usually favoured by DGFs but on this occasion the only Fritillary seen on brambles was the SWF seen earlier. In fact apart from the High Browns, of which I estimate there were about 10–12 in this spot, and the single SWF, there were only a couple of Dark Greens here, and worn and tatty ones at that. Never mind, they were to get their chance over the next couple of days.



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



High Brown Fritillaries – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015

The late afternoon sun had certainly woken things up a bit with increasing numbers of Meadow Browns and Large Skippers appearing along with a dozen or so of mostly well faded Common Blues.



Meadow Brown – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015

There were also a couple of nice fresh looking summer brood Small Tortoiseshells and a single Red Admiral that 'buzzed' me and flew off over the trees.



Small Tortoiseshell – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015

With the sun getting lower and starting to put the best thistles that I was staking out going into the shade, I called it a day and went back to get cleaned up ready for something to eat later.

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 02-Jul-15 04:53 AM GMT

Superb pics Neil! Btw can I borrow your time machine sometime,

Sunday 28th July – Heddon Valley Day 1.

, would be a great way to snap up all those hard to get species at my own convenience 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jul-15 04:58 AM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

Superb pics Neil! Btw can I borrow your time machine sometime,

Sunday 28th July – Heddon Valley Day 1.

, would be a great way to snap up all those hard to get species at my own convenience 😊

Oops! 😊 ...now edited. I've done that before. Reminder to self...must proof read before posting

Cheers,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-15 06:15 AM GMT

It was my own fault really, I encouraged you to post the HBFs and now I'm sick with envy 🙄🙄🙄😞 and some fantastic Black Hairstreaks prior too as well, please stop torturing me 🙄😞

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 02-Jul-15 02:27 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the HBF Neil. I can only say that my envy surpasses that of Wurzel 🙄🙄🙄🙄🙄

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-15 07:56 PM GMT

👍 I agree with Pauline and Wurzel, Neil, your photos are great especially the one with two High Brown Frits on thistles, It must be a couple of years since I've seen them, I must go up to Arnside Knot to see if they've arrived yet Goldie 😊👍👍

Re: Neil Freeman

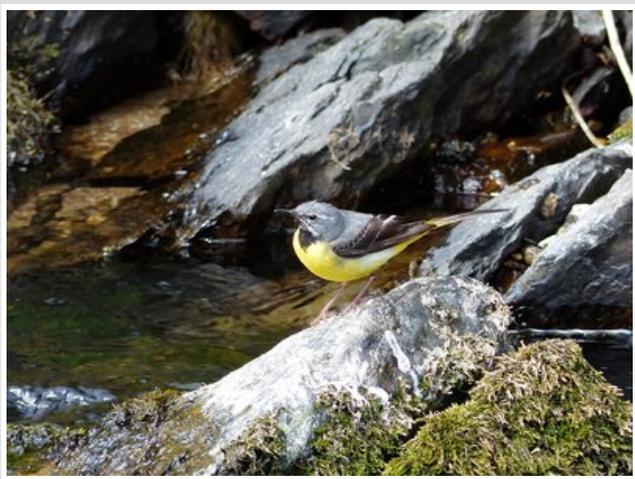
by Neil Freeman, 03-Jul-15 05:49 AM GMT

Thanks for the great comments Wurzel and Pauline 😊 you do know that envy is one of the seven deadly sins don't you, I am sure you are not sinful people 😊😊

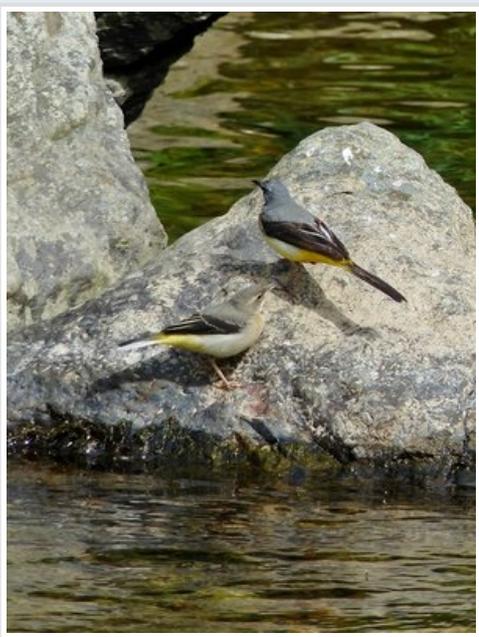
Thanks Goldie 😊 I believe the Arnside HBFs are usually a week or two behind those in the south-west which I think have been out now for a couple of weeks so yours should be out anytime now if not already.

Monday 29th June - Heddon Valley Day 2.

After breakfast I went for a little stroll down the path to Heddons Mouth, this time going down the other (left) side of the river. There was a fair bit of early cloud around and not much was yet stirring on the butterfly front, just a few Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods. Further along there is a wooden footbridge across the river where I crossed over and carried on down the other side. I spotted some Grey Wagtails looping and skimming up and down the river and watched them for a while as they were catching beaks full of flies and taking them to a couple of youngsters that I noticed sitting perched on rocks in the stream.



Grey Wagtail - Heddon Mouth 29.06.2015



Grey Wagtails - Heddon Mouth 29.06.2015

As it started to warm up I started seeing good numbers of Large Skippers plus flying amongst them a couple of fresh male Small Skippers.



Small Skipper – Heddons Mouth 29.06.2015

There were also a few faded Small Heaths and Common Blues along here with a few fresher looking Common Blues appearing amongst some really old and tatty looking examples.



Common Blue – Heddons Mouth 29.06.2015

I then went back to meet up with Jane, stopping off briefly to take a shot of the stone bridge on the way. Jane has commented before that she thinks that this bridge looks like it should have a troll living under it. That's what happens when you read as many fantasy books as she does (although I do see what she means)



We then went out for a little drive around to Combe Martin so she could have a nose around the touristy shops. The clouds were steadily breaking up and it was turning into a nice warm late morning so after sitting outside with a coffee in Combe Martin for a bit we headed back to the Heddon Valley. We then sat outside the Hunters Inn with a cold drink and carried on watching the world go by and occasionally getting buzzed by a Red Admiral that appeared to have taken up residence at the front of the pub.

Later in the afternoon I went out for another walk, this time heading through Parsonage Wood, to check out the wet meadow that UKB member Rogerdodge had told me about a couple of years back and where I had seen good numbers of DGFs and HBFs. Things had changed a bit along here during the past couple of years and I noticed that most of the open areas along the path had been cut back and had new locked gates preventing access, including the previously mentioned wet meadow. I am guessing that this is all part of the conservation efforts for the HBF which is being carried out in the area and is to encourage the right mix of bracken and violets that this species requires. The bank of brambles was still there and a single SWF and a couple of HBFs were flitting about on the flowers although in the now hot afternoon sun they didn't stay still long enough for any photos.

I then carried on along the track and picked up the path that leads up to Ladies Mile and carried on up the hill a bit to enjoy the view back down the

valley.



There were good numbers of both DGFs and HBFs flying rapidly across the slopes here but it was impossible to count them accurately as they whizzed back and forth across the bracken. The males would often appear to have settled but in reality they had ducked down into the bracken in their search for females and would pop up again a few yards further along and be off again at high speed.

The biggest problem I had here in trying to get a photo of the Frits was the number of male Large Skippers...



Large Skipper – Heddon Valley 29.06.2015

...there were loads of them all over the place and nearly every time a DG or HB looked like it was going to settle for a minute, one of the little s*ds would dart in and see them off 😡. I got quite exasperated with them and even found myself shouting at them a couple of times when they put up a nicely posed individual just as I was about to take the shot...must have been the heat 😞

In the end I just managed to get a couple of shots, one of each species.



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 29.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary - Heddon Valley 29.06.2015

There were also half a dozen or so old and faded Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries along this stretch, again often hassled by the Large Skippers, but surprisingly these seemed more willing to stand their ground instead of being chased off like their bigger cousins.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Heddon Valley 29.06.2015



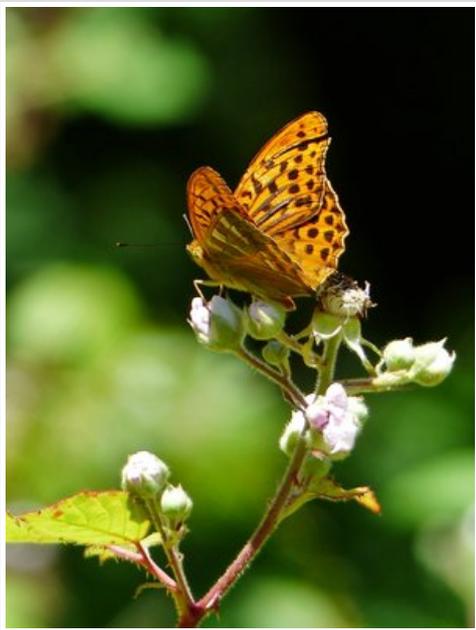
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Heddon Valley 29.06.2015



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Heddon Valley 29.06.2015

Meadow Browns were everywhere along with Ringlets, Common Blues and a couple of Green Hairstreaks. One of the latter looked to be in remarkably good condition and was posed nicely on top of a bramble blossom when it was hassled by a Common Blue which disturbed it and took its place 😊. I refused to take a photo of the Common Blue out of principle.

A couple of male SWFs were also patrolling the lower parts of the slopes by the trees, at least one of which was already showing signs of a hard life amongst the brambles.



Silver-washed Fritillary - Heddon Valley 29.06.2015

Now for something completely off topic that could have been so much worse but luckily wasn't.

Later on, back at the Hunters Inn and after having something to eat, we were sitting in the bar sometime after 7.30 where I was set up to enjoy a leisurely pint or two of Exmoor Beast (This stuff has to be taken leisurely otherwise it appears to alter gravity in your immediate vicinity). There was a crash and a bang from outside and everyone in the bar went out the front to see what had happened.

A mini-bus had come down the steep lane from Martinhoe and, failing to negotiate the bend at the bottom, had gone through the hedge and ended up on its nose in front of the pub 😱

The driver was the only occupant and once it was established that he was not hurt, the camera phones all came out, including mine...well, since I didn't have signal there I may as well use it for something.



Oops!



Apparently he had dropped a party off earlier that day and had a few days to himself to explore the area before picking them up again later in the week. The Gaffer called a local recovery truck and by the time we went down for breakfast the following morning the mini-bus was gone and all was looking tidy again apart from a bit of a gap in the hedge. Talking to the locals in the bar afterwards, apparently over the years a few cyclists have failed to make that bend but that was the first mini-bus that had done it.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 03-Jul-15 06:09 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Your High Browns and Small Pearls are owed a 🍺, especially as we in East Sussex no longer have a Small Pearl population locally.

Your pint of beer wasn't the only thing causing unusual occurrences with gravity !.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

PS. High Browns and beer sounds like an excellent combination.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-15 06:10 AM GMT

A fascinating report, great shots and with an unusual climax Neil 😲😄 I think I'll put HBF at the top of my wish list, though hopefully errant mini-buses won't feature in my visit 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 03-Jul-15 06:47 AM GMT

Well that was a very out of the ordinary end to what seems like a fantastic break!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 03-Jul-15 06:56 AM GMT

Great shots of the High Brown Frits from Heddon Neil. We can relate to your report having visited this site last year. Also great shots of the Black Hairstreaks on your second visit to Whitecross, your perseverance paid off 😊😄

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Hoggers, 03-Jul-15 10:41 PM GMT

Wonderful photos as always Neil. Brought back memories of my visits to Heddon Mouth. And if you're going to have a no casualty crash what a place to do it: right outside the pub!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-15 03:05 AM GMT

Fantastic shots Neil, not one but four different Fritillaries, now that's greedy 😊🌿🌿🌿 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-15 04:02 AM GMT

Hi Trevor, hopefully you may have Small Pearls back nearer home in the not too distant future.

Cheers Wurzel, now you have got your Heaths I reckon it won't be long before you get your High Browns 😊.

Hi Bugboy, out of the ordinary yes, but not quite the end. Still had another day to go 😊

Thanks Mike, Those Black Hairstreak shots were the result of one of those lucky, 'I'll just have a quick look down here' moments. If I had carried on past the side path I would have missed them.

Hi Hoggers, I suppose you could call it serendipitous 😊

Sorry about being greedy Goldie, still not beaten my last visit to here a couple of years back when I saw the same four species plus Heath Frits in Bin Combe on the same day, so not all that greedy after all this time 😊😄

Tuesday 30th June - Heddon Valley Day 3.

Monday afternoon had turned out rather hot and today was forecast to be even hotter so I reckoned the plan would be to have a walk in the morning and then see how it turned out before we decided what to do for the rest of the day.

The morning started beautifully with clear blue skies and not a cloud in sight, so after breakfast I went out for my little walk. I figured that it would soon be uncomfortably hot on the higher paths and so decided to head for the meadows just past the stone bridge where there was more shade available. Arriving at the meadow at about 9.30 it was obvious that the butterflies were already wide awake.



Not yet 10.00am and already getting hot.

Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Large Skippers and Common Blues were all over the place with a number of orange Fritillaries zipping back and forth over the thistles and stopping quite frequently to feed from them. At least two of these were SWF, easily identified by their larger size and different flight pattern but separating the others between DGF and HBF was not easy unless they settled long enough for a good view. There were also now a couple of new summer Commas here to add to the confusion of tawny orange butterflies. As is my usual practice, I found a couple of likely looking spots and just stood there or moved slowly between them to see what settled.

As in the previous afternoon, no sooner had a fritillary settled than it would often be investigated or accosted by another butterfly, but this time it was not just the Large Skippers...everything was getting in on the act 🐞 During the next hour or so I watched numerous occasions where a large gaggle of butterflies would develop and go tumbling off along the meadow, often consisting of most of the species present. I also watched trains of up to 5 fritillaries weaving and looping about above the thistles looking remarkable like they were all attached together with string, like some miniature oriental kite.

I did however manage to get a few photos, including some DGF undersides this time as they were already closing their wings more often in the heat, to regulate their temperature.



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



High Brown Fritillaries – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary - Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary - Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary - Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015

I reckon that there were probably equal numbers of High Browns and Dark Greens in this spot, around 10–12 of each to start with, although I did notice the numbers start to drop as it got warmer until there were just a couple of HBs and maybe four or five DGs left here about an hour later. Whether they were dispersing over the higher slopes or starting to tuck themselves away in the heat I am not sure, although I did watch a DGF fly high up into the trees by the river and stay there.

I then carried on down the path towards Heddon's Mouth and in a spot just before it opens out by a scree slope found another, slightly faded, DGF that was lazily skimming up and down the path and settling regularly which gave me another chance for a few underside shots.



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Still not a cloud in the sky...

With it getting hotter and hotter I then turned back to meet Jane at the Hunters Inn where we just plonked ourselves at a table outside with a cold drink to chill for a bit. Whilst there we noticed the Red Admiral from yesterday was still buzzing around although the only time we saw it settle was up on the roof of the pub.

Over the next couple of hours we went for a leisurely stroll along one of the shady paths that Jane could manage and then returned to have an ice cream from the National Trust shop. As we were sitting outside the shop enjoying the ice creams a Painted Lady came along, did a couple of loops of the flower beds by the shop and then continued off up the lane at high speed.

In the end we didn't do much else for the rest of the day, it had become too hot really and had turned into one of those days that is really best spent doing as little as possible, which we were both quite content to do...Mad dogs and Englishmen and all that.

The following morning, I went to put some stuff in our car as we were checking out after breakfast and spotted the Red Admiral already up and flying about the front of the pub. It teased me by circling my head a couple of times before shooting off and I thought that was the last I would see of it. I was wrong because a bit later, as we were getting into the car to leave, it flew back and settled on the ground a few yards away from the car. I quickly grabbed the camera which was on the back seat and took a quick shot before it was off again.



Red Admiral – Heddon Valley 01.07.2015

It almost felt as if it had come to say goodbye and was a nice final touch to a fantastic few days 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 04-Jul-15 04:48 AM GMT

Great stuff, I LOVE the sound of that meadow with all those butterflies tormenting you. So many fritillaries 🍄

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 04-Jul-15 04:55 AM GMT

I agree with Bugboy, that sounds like a cracking place 😊🍄, OS GRid references would be greatly appreciated 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 04-Jul-15 07:29 PM GMT

Excellent Heddon Valley reportage Neil, right up to your usual high standard and those images are cracking 😊

Your exasperation with the **Large Skipper** had me chuckling, I've been at odds with them myself and I'm so pleased to know I'm not the only one who shouts at them in frustration...and its got nowt' to do with the heat Neil 😡😓

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-15 07:39 PM GMT

Neil, your photos are mouth watering , your description of all those Butterflies sounds fantastic, some thing I've yet to see this year Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-15 04:13 AM GMT

Thanks Buggy, it was certainly great to just stand there and be surrounded by butterflies 😊

Cheers Wurzel , I have sent you a PM with a bit of info just in case you make it in that direction sometime 😊

Thanks Bill, good to know I am not the only one too. How many of us do the same and then sheepishly look around to see if anyone has heard us 😊 I had visions of hearing stories later in the bar about some mad bloke in the valley 😊

I am sure your turn will come Goldie, I have seen similar sights at Arnside in previous years. In fact I will be up your way again in a few weeks, stopping for a couple of days near Gait Barrows this time 😊 .

A busy few days so just a little catch up post to keep on top of things.

Thursday 2nd July

It is that time of the year now when Specklies are a constant presence in my garden. There are nearly always two or three males holding territories with fresh ones showing up constantly to replace the old ones as they come to the end of their turn in the ring. It is the females that I am always most glad to see as it hopefully means that eggs have been laid somewhere in the garden to continue the cycle.



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 02.07.2015

Friday 3rd July

A thirty minute walk around the park by my Moms house on Friday afternoon produced loads of Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Large Skippers plus a few Small Skippers. I saw at least three mating pairs of Meadow Browns and got some photos of the one pair that wasn't tucked well down in the long grass.



Meadow Brown pair - Langley Hall 03.07.2015



Meadow Brown pair - Langley Hall 03.07.2015

Saturday 4th July

Although my garden is not really ideal habitat for grassland butterflies, I usually have a few Meadow Browns show up during the summer. Saturday morning I spotted a nice fresh male that looked like he had emerged there rather than come wandering in. He had that lovely iridescent sheen that fresh examples have and which I have totally failed to do justice to in the photos I took,



Meadow Brown male - Coverdale 04.07.2015



Meadow Brown male - Coverdale 04.07.2015

Later in the afternoon I nipped out for an hour or so along one of the footpaths at my local site at Castle Hills. Conditions were warm and sunny with high fluffy clouds but also with a stiff breeze blowing. Meadow Browns and Ringlets were everywhere as were Large skippers, many of the latter now looking faded but with still a good number of fresh ones about. Small Skipper numbers were still low with maybe a dozen seen all told. Despite looking carefully there were no Essex amongst them as yet. No Gatekeepers here yet either but it cant be long now before both of these show up. I was also please to see that Marbled Whites have definitely consolidated their spread to this site with a good couple of dozen seen scattered about plus maybe a dozen or so of Small Heaths.

Taking photos was difficult, with the butterflies either active in the sun or settling low down out of the breeze when they did stop, so I only took a few record shots as I wandered about.



Marbled White - Castle Hills 04.07.2015



Small Skipper - Castle Hills 04.07.2015



Small Heath - Castle Hills 04.07.2015



Ringlet - Castle Hills 04.07.2015

All common and widespread species but lots of them on a pleasant afternoon despite the blustery breeze 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 07-Jul-15 04:19 AM GMT

You have an incredible ability Neil to make the more common butterflies look something really special. I am thinking in particular the Speckled Wood

and Meadow Brown (both last year's shots and this year). I have tried to emulate some of your shots and failed abysmally. I wish I knew how you did it cos I don't think I have one decent shot of a Speckled Wood 😞🍷

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jul-15 05:15 AM GMT

Thank you for those very kind words Pauline, they are really appreciated 😊

Once I have found the basic settings that I like I don't really fiddle with my camera much other than change the exposure as I have mentioned before. To be honest, other than the basics, I have not really got much of a grasp of the technical side of things. I consider myself a butterfly enthusiast who happens to take photos of them rather than a 'photographer' and try to capture the character of the individual species and I hope that this comes across in my photos.

I am also fortunate with the resident Speckled Woods in my garden which give me plenty of opportunity for practice, in fact I try to get a photo of as many as I can in order to identify different individuals.

Meadow Browns can be a challenge to get a decent photo, too bright and they close their wings, too dull and they close their wings, Too warm and they never stop, too cool and they stop down in the grass. Now I think of it I don't know how I manage to get any shots of them at all 😊.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-15 05:23 AM GMT

Lovely sheen on the Meadow Brown Neil, he looks fresh out of the box 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jul-15 06:15 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I reckon he had just emerged in the garden 😊

It's raining heavily outside at the moment so a chance to do a quick post...

Friday 10th July.

Friday was a nice a nice warm and sunny day with fluffy white clouds drifting across the blue sky. After finishing work at lunchtime and doing my usual Friday afternoon running about, I sat down in the back garden with a coffee to chill out for a few minutes.

As well as the usual couple of male Speckled Wood in their corners there were half a dozen Ringlets bobbing about the brambles at the bottom end of the garden. This is a species that I see in large numbers at my local spots at this time of year but only usually get the odd one or two show up in the garden so I reckon that these may have emerged here in the areas of long grass that I leave to grow.

Later in the afternoon, around 4.00pm, I popped out for a look around Shadowbrook Meadows to see what was about. As expected, there were loads of Meadow Browns and Ringlets with plenty of Skippers, both Large and Small but no Essex yet. I have seen the latter species here in previous years but all of the 'Smalls' I checked today were definitely those.



Small Skipper - Shadowbrook Meadows 10.07.2015

A couple of tired and worn male Common Blues were still hanging in there with one of them trying it on with an equally tired looking female who was having none of it,



Common Blues – Shadowbrook Meadows 10.07.2015

I spent about an hour here and as well as the species mentioned above also saw half a dozen unidentified whites and singles of Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and my first Gatekeeper of the year which like most things this afternoon didn't want to stop in the muggy heat.



Comma – Shadowbrook Meadows 10.07.2015

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Hoggers, 12-Jul-15 06:40 PM GMT

Hi Neil, I was struck by your photo of the female Common Blue giving the cold shoulder to a male as it reminded me of how the female Small Coppers go about it – similar kind of pose, only the Copper will flutter her hind wings whilst holding her fore wings vertically.

I wonder if it's the behaviour of the female that signals to the male that he should go elsewhere, or maybe a chemical that she wafts back at him that switches off his mating ambitions?

Fascinating report as always,

Best wishes,

Hoggers

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 12-Jul-15 07:27 PM GMT

I've not been able to have a look at your "and everyone else's" diaries much lately Neil so I'm catching up. Those High Brown and DG Fritillary photos of yours are fantastic. 😊

Best Wishes

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 12-Jul-15 10:47 PM GMT

Lovely selection of our more common yet favourite butterflies Neil, captured very nicely on your trusty FZ200 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jul-15 04:41 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers, yes it is a very similar pose, the female Common Blue was also fluttering her hind wings as you describe.

Thanks James, glad you like them.

Cheers Bill, some more common yet favourite butterflies, as you so aptly put it, coming up.

Saturday 11th July,

Yesterday (Saturday) morning started with a run up to Nottingham to collect my youngest son for the weekend. He would normally be coming back for the summer but this year he has an internship with Rolls Royce so will be staying up there most of the time with a few weekends back home. We were back by early afternoon so after a bit of lunch and a few quick jobs in the house, I took advantage of a pleasantly warm afternoon to go out for a walk along the footpaths at my local spot at Castle Hills. There was plenty of high cloud cover which made it feel warm and muggy but there was also a blustery breeze blowing. There always seems to be a breeze blowing when I go here, made worse by the fact that parts of the site are very open. The meadow areas were alive with Meadow Browns and Ringlets bobbing about above the grass closely followed in numbers by Marbled Whites. I have mentioned before that the latter species have spread around Solihull recently and it was fantastic to see the numbers here today, easily 50+, probably more but how do you count these things accurately when they are flying all around you?



Ringlet – Castle Hills 11.07.2015



Marbled White – Castle Hills 11.07.2015

Gatekeepers are now appearing with about half a dozen seen, all males so far,



Gatekeeper - Castle Hills 11.07.2015



Gatekeeper - Castle Hills 11.07.2015

Large Skippers were still in fair numbers although fewer than a week ago and mostly looking faded and worn now. They are now being replaced with Small Skippers which were everywhere, including plenty of females amongst them.



Small Skipper male - Castle Hills 11.07.2015



Small Skipper female – Castle Hills 11.07.2015

With the blustery wind meaning that most of the butterflies would settle low down in the grass, it was not easy to check the small Skippers or to get the head on shot for ID purposes but I eventually confirmed at least half a dozen Essex Skippers amongst them, all fairly fresh looking males.



Essex Skipper male – Castle Hills 11.07.2015



Essex Skipper male – Castle Hills 11.07.2015

Quite a few whites were seen along the hedgerows, mostly at a distance and unidentified but at least a couple were definite Large Whites.



Large White – Castle Hills 11.07.2015

A couple each of Speckled Wood, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell completed the tally for the afternoon.



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 11.07.2015



Comma – Castle Hills 11.07.2015

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-15 04:54 AM GMT

Sunday 12th July

We had loads of rain on Saturday night which continued on through most of the morning before fizzling out and by mid afternoon it had dried up and turned into a similar day to the one before, in other words warm and muggy feeling, with a lot of cloud about but also some nice sunny spells. The blustery breeze was still there as well, something that is turning into a bit of a regular feature this year.

With a couple of hours spare in the afternoon I went out for a walk along the footpath at my local spot at Bickenhill near Solihull, not far from the NEC and Birmingham Airport. The first part of the path follows a hedge along the side of a farmers field and I soon started seeing meadow Browns, Ringlets and Gatekeepers as well as a couple each of Commas and Small Tortoiseshells.



Gatekeeper – Bickenhill 12.07.2015



Gatekeeper – Bickenhill 12.07.2015

Further along, the path crosses a couple of grassy meadow areas which were heaving with Meadow Browns and Ringlets as well as loads of Skippers, mostly Small but with a few faded Large as well. Performing the usual contortions to get the head on view I managed to confirm at least one Essex Skipper here amongst all the Smalls. Most of the Small Skippers here looked quite fresh and they are usually starting to look faded before the Essex numbers start to build so I reckon it will still be a week or so before I see many of the latter around here.



Small Skipper – Bickenhill 12.07.2015



Small Skipper – Bickenhill 12.07.2015

One of the male Small Skippers looked a little different and a closer look showed him to have a couple of light patches on his forewings which I thought was quite unusual. I don't think I have ever seen a Small Skipper looking anything other than the usual standard shade orange.



Small Skipper – Bickenhill 12.07.2015

There were also a few more Commas and Small Tortoiseshells along this bit making it something like half a dozen of each seen here this afternoon.



Comma – Bickenhill 12.07.2015



Comma - Bickenhill 12.07.2015



Comma - Bickenhill 12.07.2015



Comma - Bickenhill 12.07.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 12.07.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 12.07.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 12.07.2015

A few unidentified whites passing in the distance and a fly past from a rather large looking Red Admiral competed a pleasant hour or so before I headed back home.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 14-Jul-15 04:57 AM GMT

Looks like Vanessa numbers are building impressively, Neil.

Can't wait till I can get out again to see a few. Your images have whetted my appetite!

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 14-Jul-15 05:36 AM GMT

The variety of Commas you have seems to match those round here, Neil. Lovely shots of my favourite Fritillary substitute. 😊

Do you have a lull between broods of Speckled Woods? I always look forward to your posts of each generation as they appear. 😊 Only one or two here at present.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-15 06:50 AM GMT

Some interesting variation in those Commas Neil and great Skipper shots...best of all though, an underwing-6-spot Hedge Brown 🇩🇪 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 18-Jul-15 01:26 AM GMT

Some of our commoner species are also some of the most visually beautiful too, can you imagine how much effort we would all put into chasing such species as **Small Tortoiseshell** if they were rarities...so I always treat them as if they were rarities Neil...but still rarely get images to do them justice...but you do 😊 ...and you can give me that fiver you promised me for saying that next time we meet 😊 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jul-15 04:21 AM GMT

Hi David, there were good numbers of Vanessids at Fermyn Woods on Wednesday as in the report below 😊 .

Thanks Dave 😊 , I am still seeing one or two Specklies in the garden regularly but only a few out at the moment around my other local spots. I usually have a short gap sometime in June after which numbers gradually build again through July and into August/September. The lull this year was a bit later, and numbers don't seem to be building up just yet. In fact most things are a bit later around here this year so far.

Cheers Wurzel, loads of Gatekeepers appearing now so plenty of spots to count 😊

Thanks Bill, comments like that are worth every penny 😊 😊

Wednesday 15th July.

Last year I missed out on seeing Purple Emperor due to spending my available time in other parts of the country and concentrating on seeing other species. This year the season seems to have caught me out a bit and due to work commitments in the week and family stuff at the weekends I haven't yet had the time to catch up with His Imperial Majesty. I was keen to get over to Fermyn Woods this year and noticing that the Purple Emperors had already been flying there for a couple of weeks, I had taken a gamble on the weather and booked this Wednesday off work, this being the only day that I could manage to get at short notice.

After a pretty grotty couple of wet days on Monday and Tuesday, the forecast for Wednesday was a bit so-so with cloud and showers in the morning clearing away for mixed cloud and sunny spells in the afternoon. Nevertheless, I decided to make an early start, mainly to get clear of the M42 and M6 at Solihull before the traffic built up too much, and after a 80 minute drive, pulled into the car park opposite the gliding club just before 8.00am. Despite the dull and drizzly conditions there were already a couple of cars there which showed that I was not the only one taking a chance on the weather.

I started off slowly wandering down the main ride and across the field to Lady Wood and at exactly 8.24am saw my first butterfly of the day... a Ringlet, not surprising really as this species will fly in quite dull conditions. During the next couple of hours I had a slow wander around the Lady Wood/Souther Wood circuit during which time there were a couple of showers of light rain when I took shelter under the trees. Between the showers more and more Ringlets were appearing and were soon joined by Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods and then a little later, Large and Small Skippers.



Nicely spotted female Ringlet – Fermyn 15.07.2015

One particular female Meadow Brown attracted my attention by having an unusual amount of orange, not only on her forewings but on her hindwings as well.



Very Orange female Meadow Brown – Fermyn 15.07.2015

By late morning the clouds were beginning to thin and the sun was starting to breaking through, just like the forecast said it would for once. More species were now flying including Gatekeepers, Large and Green-veined whites, Small Tortoiseshells and Commas.



Male Gatekeeper – Fermyn 15.07.2015



Male Gatekeeper with smaller forewing eyespots – Fermyn 15.07.2015

As it got warmer around mid-day Silver-washed Fritillaries started appearing in good numbers along with a few of both Red and White Admirals plus a couple of summer Peacocks.



Male Silver-washed Fritillary Fermyn 15.07.2015



Silver-washed Fritillaries – Fermyn 15.07.2015



Silver-washed Fritillary – Fermyn 15.07.2015



This male SWF was seen on the main ride in Fermyn wood later in the afternoon

I also saw my first Purple Emperor of the day flying high up by the conifers at the southern end of Souther Wood.

After wandering about for a bit longer and seeing a couple more Purple Emperors flying high up, but none on the ground I decided to wander back to my car and dump my jacket and haversack as it was now feeling much warmer and having eaten my lunch I could lighten my load for the afternoon. Just a couple of hundred yards from the car park I came across a small group looking up into the trees and they pointed out a Purple Emperor settled about fifteen feet or so up.



Purple emperor looking down from on high

Apparently he had come to ground a few times earlier and just as we were talking he flicked his wings and glided down onto the ride again. After letting him settle for a bit half a dozen cameras were aimed and photos taken before he was off back up into the trees again.



Purple Emperor - Fermyn 15.07.2015

Having dumped some of my stuff back in the car I then slowly retraced my steps back to Lady Wood where, talking to a couple of fellow enthusiasts by the first ride junction, we were buzzed by a Purple Emperor that then proceeded to settle on the ride a few feet away. This one was showing more wear and damage and was quite skittish and kept gliding a few yards down the ride and landing for a short time before moving on. After ten minutes or so of this he took off and disappeared high up into the row of conifers alongside this section.



Purple Emperor - Fermyn 15.07.2015



Purple Emperor - Fermyn 15.07.2015



Purple Emperor - Fermyn 15.07.2015

I then carried on round the Lady Wood/ Souther Wood circuit again, this time in the opposite direction to earlier. This time I saw maybe half a dozen more Purple Emperors flying high up and a couple on the ground but none close enough for photos. The last one that I saw on the ground was just after 4.30pm and I am ashamed to say that I nearly trod on it. I was walking through a quite shady section of ride when I spotted a Purple Emperor sitting on the ride with his wings closed and facing me, just where I was about to put my foot down 😞. He flew up into my face and after buzzing me around the head a couple of times flew up into the trees in a huff. I really didn't expect to see one in what was really quite deep shade and I think we were both taken by surprise.

I then slowly wandered back through the woods seeing loads more of most of the other species already mentioned plus a few Purple Hairstreaks flitting about high up around Oak trees in the late afternoon sun.



Peacock - Fermyn 15.07.2015



Comma - Fermyn 15.07.2015



Small Tortoiseshells - Fermyn 15.07.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Fermyn 15.07.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Fermyn 15.07.2015



White Admiral – 15.07.2015



Red Admiral – Fermyn 15.07.2015

From the perspective of seeing Purple Emperors, I have had better days here but I reckon that is down to the recent weather and my timing for this visit. The back end of last week and last weekend seems to have been the optimum time this year with the past couple of days of wet weather looking like it had put the brakes on things a bit. No-one that I spoke to had seen more than half a dozen Purple Emperors today although everyone commented on the numbers of Commas and Silver-washed Fritillaries that were here. Nevertheless, the sheer number of other butterflies made for a very pleasant day in a lovely location once the morning clouds and early rain had cleared away 😊.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 18-Jul-15 05:12 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Smashing report from Fermyn, and excellent PE.images too. My PE.hotspot didn't perform quite as well this year either.

Best wishes,.
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterfysaurus rex, 18-Jul-15 05:18 AM GMT

Dazzling array of lovely woodland butterfly photos there Neil! Your Purple Emepor and Silver Washed Fritillary photos are especially good.

Best Wishes

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-15 05:47 AM GMT

Fantastic images Neil, brill Emperors and SWFs but you already know which was my favorite 😊👍

Very interesting Meadow Brown – almost Meadow Brown/Hedge Brown hybrid 🤖🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by William, 19-Jul-15 03:33 PM GMT

Great shots from Fermyn, Neil – sounds like quite a place 😊. That male Silver-Washed on the ride is particularly nice!

BWs,

William

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 19-Jul-15 05:53 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, fantastic shots 🌿🌿 We're going to call at Fermyn on the way to Kent, we won't have long there but if I can just see an Emperor I'll be happy Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jul-15 07:08 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, James, Wurzel and Goldie for your great comments 😊

Yes Wurzel, I knew which one you would like 😊

Hi Goldie, If you don't have long at Fermyn, stick to the main rides in Fermyn Wood itself rather than yomping over to Lady Wood which is a longer walk. The whole wood complex is a big place and you can easily spend all day there. The first two PE photos in my report above were taken just a couple of hundred yards from the car park opposite the gliding club on Harley Way.

Thanks William, sorry I missed your comment earlier. Yes, Fermyn is a great place 😊

Thursday 16th July.

A decent sunny afternoon and getting in from work I went into the garden to unwind with a coffee. A couple of faded male Speckled Woods were holding territories as usual at each end of the garden plus a couple of Large and Green-veined Whites passed through along with my first summer brood Holly Blue.

There were also three or four Ringlets bobbing about around the brambles at the bottom of the garden along with a couple of Meadow Browns, including the female below,



Meadow Brown female – Coverdale 16.07.2015

Saturday 18th July

A busy couple of days on Friday and Saturday has meant that I haven't had chance to get out but at least yesterday I managed to grab a couple of spells in the garden between jobs. I was A decent day with some cloud and sunny spells but again a blustery wind blowing most of the time.

Increased numbers of Whites are about now with mostly Green-veined passing through but with a scattering of Large as well. The couple of male Specklies are still there, looking faded now but no less feisty for it, especially the one at the bottom of the garden who was constantly trying to chase Ringlets away from the brambles. A female Specklie passed through at one point and spent some time investigating the short grass on the mown section of lawn before carrying on her way. I don't think she laid any eggs here, at least I couldn't find any afterwards.



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 18.07.2015

After seeing a Large Skipper in my garden for the first time a couple of years ago , they have turned up very occasionally with just the one seen two years ago and again one last year. This year there have been four or five different individuals during the past few weeks, both male and female, with the males setting up territories around the long grass and brambles at the bottom of the garden. One male was there yesterday and I spent some time watching him chasing off intruders into his space. Interesting, he totally ignored the Ringlets but would chase the odd Gatekeeper that turned up, I guess it is the orange that sets him off.



Large Skipper – Coverdale 18.07.2015 07.2015

The surprise of the day however was another little orange butterfly, a smaller one this time that settled a couple of times and turned out to be a male Essex Skipper, a garden first for me. I really wasn't expecting one of these in the garden although there are colonies just a couple of miles away so maybe the wind blew him in.



Essex Skipper – Coverdale 18.07.2015

The male Large skipper soon spotted him and chased him off before I could get the classic head on shot but at least being a male I could make out the short straight sex brand on the forewing to confirm the ID.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 20-Jul-15 01:32 AM GMT

Just catching upon some diaries, looks like a good time was had a Fermyn 😊, and some lovely shots of your local garden inhabitants too!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-15 06:17 AM GMT

I'm very jealous of your garden Essex tick Neil 🍷🍷 When I had my garden a few years back we were visited by a Small Skipper and I always hoped for an Essex but alas it wasn't to be 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 20-Jul-15 06:19 AM GMT

I share your relative frustration regarding Fermyn, Neil. Like you, I arrived a little too late, although unlike you, I didn't see any grounded Emperors (just three that were airborne).

I agree with your estimation of ideal dates for this location. I reckon Wednesday 8th to Saturday 11th was the optimum time this year. The season ain't half short!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-15 12:24 AM GMT

Thanks Neil, it looks like if I'd have taken the chance and gone to Fermyn on that Wednesday like you did I'd have seen the PE 😞 Can't be helped, thanks for telling us about the Car Park etc, I've made a note of it and will make a bee line straight there 😊

We plan on setting off really early so hope fully fingers crossed I may get to see one yet 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-15 04:45 AM GMT

Thanks Bugboy...yes, it was a great day at Fermyn 😊.

Cheers Wurzel, I've still not had a Small Skipper in the garden though.

Hi David, I think 'relative' is the right word. At some other sites half a dozen Purple Emperors would be a good result.

Hi Goldie, not sure when you are travelling but at this stage of the PE season you stand more chance of seeing the males high up or flying along the rides searching for females than coming to the ground. Of course there is also the chance of seeing an Empress. There are still plenty of other butterflies at Fermyn worth seeing, SWF, White Admirals, Purple Hairstreaks etc. Good luck down south, ironically I am heading up north next week for a few days and will actually be staying in a B&B right next to Gait Barrows.

Sunday 19th July

After some overnight rain on Saturday night, followed by showers on Sunday morning it gradually brightened up until by the afternoon there were clear blue skies with just the occasional fluffy white cloud drifting across, albeit with the now usual blustery breeze. With a couple of hours free mid-afternoon I had a drive around to my local spot at Bickenhill for a walk along the footpaths.

All the usual suspects were soon seen including Commas, Small Tortoiseshells, Meadow Browns and Large and Green-veined Whites. There were fewer Ringlets about today with many of those seen looking well past their prime but Gatekeeper numbers had increased over the past week with all those seen today being males.





Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 19.07.2015



Gatekeeper - Bickenhill 19.07.2015

Back in the spring there were good numbers of Peacocks flying here after coming out of hibernation so I figured that it would be a likely place to see the some of the next brood and so it proved to be with half a dozen fresh looking individuals busy feeding up on the many thistles here.



Peacock - Bickenhill 19.07.2015



Peacock – Bickenhill 19.07.2015

There were hundreds of Small/Essex Skippers zipping about here today with many of these also feeding on the thistles which, due to their height made it easier to get a good head on view for identification. There appeared to be roughly equal numbers of each species present but due to the way they were whizzing about everywhere I didn't bother trying to count them.



Small Skipper female – Bickenhill 19.07.2015



Small Skipper female – Bickenhill 19.07.2015



Essex Skipper male - Bickenhill 19.07.2015



Not much doubt about this one...



Essex Skipper male - Bickenhill 19.07.2015

I was also on the lookout for second brood Small Coppers and was pleased when I found a male in one corner of one of the meadows...a blue spotted chappie as well 😊



Small Copper – Bickenhill 19.07.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 19.07.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 19.07.2015

I then found another male SC in the next meadow with just a faint hint of spotting this time.



Small Copper – Bickenhill 19.07.2015

With it turning into a beautiful late afternoon I could easily have stayed here much longer but I had promised Jane I would be back by 5.00pm so I headed back home in order to stay out of the doghouse 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 22-Jul-15 06:05 AM GMT

Good stuff, Neil. I'm not yet seeing Small Coppers in my part of the world, but Commas seem to be having some kind of party in terms of numbers.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-15 05:30 AM GMT

Cracking shots Neil, especially the 'obvious' Essex, that's a humorous greetings card that just needs a caption if ever I saw one 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 24-Jul-15 07:02 PM GMT

Just catching up from Fermyn through to your latest – your enjoying a fine season Neil, posting some lovely images with great personal touch reports 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 25-Jul-15 06:58 AM GMT

Likewise just catching up, Neil. A lovely array of photos from Fermyn, including that intriguing Meadow Brown. As Wurzel says, could it be a hybrid? The hind wings are pure Gatekeeper, and the forewings have two spots, not one. Fascinating. 😊 I am also envious of your Small Coppers, having seen so few this year, anywhere.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-15 12:44 AM GMT

Cheers David, I'm still not seeing many Small Coppers around although things are still running a bit late around here. Loads of Commas though, like you say 😊

Thanks Wurzel, getting the Essex shots was made a lot easier with them sitting on top of 4 foot high thistles instead of down in the grass.

Thanks Bill, I am actually finding the season a bit of a struggle sometimes this year. Most weekends seem plagued with cloud and wind and I have been caught out a bit with some species running a bit late...at least around my patch.

Cheers Dave, I don't think that female Meadow Brown is a hybrid although given the reports of them mating with other species I guess it may be a possibility. She is a nice variation though...maybe an ab, I don't really know. Regarding the eyespots, I see a lot of females around here with double pupils, maybe its a regional thing but I don't find it that unusual.

Saturday 25th July

After a really grotty Friday when it rained all day, Saturday started off much better with some nice sunny spells although the ever present blustery wind was still very much in evidence. After doing the usual Saturday morning household stuff I spent an hour or so pottering about in the garden, keeping my camera to hand as usual.

Sometime during the past week the two faded male Speckled Woods have been replaced by two new individuals who have taken over the same spots. It always fascinates me how successive males always pick the same spots in the garden year after year.



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 25.07.2015



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 25.07.2015

At least three Gatekeepers, two males and a female were down by the brambles along with a geriatric Ringlet.



Gatekeeper male – Coverdale 25.07.2015



Gatekeeper male - Coverdale 25.07.2015



Gatekeeper male - Coverdale 25.07.2015



Gatekeeper female - Coverdale 25.07.2015

I could have counted half a dozen or so Holly blues passing through but I suspect that in reality it was the same one or maybe two repeating a circuit around the gardens.



Holly Blue – Coverdale 25.07.2015

Large and Green-veined Whites are now being joined by Small Whites with all three species chasing each other around the garden this morning, often three or four together.



Small White – Coverdale 25.07.2015

A male Large Skipper zipping about and a brief visit from singles each of Red Admiral and Comma completed the tally for the morning.

With a couple of hours spare later in the afternoon I went out for a walk along the footpaths across my local site at Castle Hills. By this time although there were still some decent spells of sun there were also some thick clouds building up which made it quite dull when they blocked out the sun a few times.

All the usual suspects were around including large numbers of Meadow Browns but Ringlet numbers have now dropped with many of those seen being tired and worn. Gatekeepers have now emerged in large numbers with both males and females everywhere.



Gatekeeper female – Castle Hills 25.07.2015



Gatekeeper female - Castle Hills 25.07.2015

At one point I spotted a mating pair of Gatekeepers tucked into a large dock and as I was taking some photos another male attempted to intrude.



Gatekeeper pair - Castle Hills 25.07.2015



Gatekeepers - Castle Hills 25.07.2015



Gatekeeper male – Castle Hills 25.07.2015

This disturbed the pair who flew out and onto the nearby vegetation before they probably decided they were a bit too exposed and flew off through the hedge.



Gatekeeper pair – Castle Hills 25.07.2015

There must have been hundreds of Small and Essex Skippers in the open grassy areas with a lot of the Smalls starting to look worn and faded. The Essex Skippers tended to be in better condition due to the fact they emerge a bit later but even so there were some fresh looking Smalls and some faded Essex just to complicate matters. I didn't do an accurate count but it appeared that the Essex are now outnumbering the Smalls.



Small Skipper – Castle Hills 25.07.2015

Most of the Marbled Whites were looking a bit worn and faded now although I did see a couple of fresh looking females that were being pursued across the meadows by amorous males.



Marbled White - Castle Hills 25.07.2015

Commas were patrolling most of the hedgerows and half a dozen summer Peacocks were busy fuelling up in readiness for their long winter sleep along with a couple of Small Tortoiseshells.



Comma - Castle Hills 25.07.2015



Peacock - Castle Hills 25.07.2015



Peacock – Castle Hills 25.07.2015

A single fresh second brood male Common blue was in one sheltered corner although no Small Coppers were seen here yet which ties in with things being a bit late around here.



Common Blue – Castle Hills 25.07.2015

As I write this it is raining outside and has been all day so far with that depressing mixture of light rain and drizzle that just seems to hang in the air. The next couple of days are looking pretty grim as well, maybe not a good time to be heading north which I am doing tomorrow for a few days...oh well, fingers crossed.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-15 05:12 AM GMT

Lovely shots as always Neil 😊 Great Holly Blues and Specklies and a great range of Hedeg Browns, including a couple of *excessa* :D 🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 27-Jul-15 05:52 AM GMT

That Common Blue male looks a little unusual, Neil – the black spots along the hindwing edge are not something I've seen before. It's a nice shot, too.



Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 28-Jul-15 04:55 AM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

That Common Blue male looks a little unusual, Neil – the black spots along the hindwing edge are not something I've seen

before.

Nor have I. It's definitely noteworthy.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-15 06:22 AM GMT

I agree with both Davids, that is an interesting Common Blue, I was too mesmerised and green with envy at the Hedge Browns last time I read your PD so I missed it 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 28-Jul-15 02:46 PM GMT

Some vibrant and velvety looking butterflies in your recent posts Neil and yes, that Holly Blue is a stunner 🍷

Re: Neil Freeman

by Willow, 28-Jul-15 11:51 PM GMT

Top notch images Neil, lets hope your northern adventure goes well 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-15 03:51 AM GMT

Thank you Wurzel, Dave, David, Pauline and Bill for the great comments 😊. Apologies for the delayed response, I just returned late yesterday from a few days away and now have some catching up to do, both with my own PD and everyone else's.

To be honest I didn't notice the black spotting on the Common Blue at the time (should have gone to Specsavers... 😞) but now it has been mentioned I realise I have not seen one like it before either.

Tuesday 28th July - A few days up north part 1.

On Monday 27th July we set off up the M6 for a few days in the Arnsdale and Silverdale area, staying at a B&B right next to Gait Barrows National Nature Reserve. With rain forecast for most places on Monday we decided to take our time and didn't set off until mid-day. The run up the motorway was mainly under a heavy grey overcast and we didn't actually see any of the wet stuff until we had passed Lancaster but then it rained constantly for the rest of the afternoon. We headed straight into Arnsdale and had a coffee before carrying on and checking into our B&B and by the time we were settled in and freshened up we were ready to pop out for a meal.

With the weather for Tuesday looking like it was going to be more cloud and rain we decided to go to RSPB Leighton Moss which was just a minute or two drive around the corner from our B&B. We have been here before whilst up in the area and Jane likes it because there are good paths to some of the hides which she can manage with her walking frame. On the way in through the visitor centre one of the chaps behind the desk told us that there were two pairs of Marsh Harriers with juveniles that had been out most days when it stopped raining and also to look out for a Great White Egret that had been hanging around for a while.

After wandering along to the Tim Jackson and Grisedale hides and seeing a couple of Herons and some Lapwings out in the light drizzle we wandered back to the café at the visitor centre for a coffee. Coming back out onto the reserve again the rain had stopped so Jane went to Lillians Hide, which is the closest to the visitor centre whilst I went for a look from the new Skytower viewpoint which is close by.



The new Skytower at RSPB Leighton Moss

I had just got to the top of the tower when I saw a large white bird glide in and land on the far side of the pool to the front of Lillains Hide, albeit on the far side of a small Island which obscured the bird from the hide. From its size and exotic appearance, this was obviously the Great White Egret that we had been told about. I took a few long distance photos and went down to meet Jane in the hide and to see if it would come out from behind the island.



Great White Egret on final approach



View from the tower – the Great White Egret is a tiny white dot near the centre of the picture.

After a minute or two it came into view and spent a good twenty minutes or so wading up and down in a stately manner as if it knew it was the best looking bird in the pool.



Great White Egret – Leighton Moss 28.07.2015



Great White Egret – Leighton Moss 28.07.2015



Great White Egret – Leighton Moss 28.07.2015



Great White Egret – Leighton Moss 28.07.2015

At one point the Great white Egret took off and looked to be leaving but only went about ten yards before coming back down.



Lift off...but not for far.

After another ten minutes it took off again and this time flew off across the reed beds and out of sight.



Now it is on its way...

Shortly afterward, a Little Egret appeared on the far side of the pool, looking a bit shy as if it didn't want to show up whilst its bigger cousin was stealing the limelight.



Has it gone?

We then wandered back down to the Tim Jackson Hide where there were a pair each of mute Swans and Herons just yards in front of the hide.



A pair of Herons flying off across the reserve.

One of the Marsh Harriers then flew across in front of the hide and was joined by a second. They both flew about a bit providing distant but good views before flying off back to the north across the reserve.



Marsh Harrier - Leighton Moss 28.07.2015



Marsh Harriers silhouetted against the grey sky

After spending a few hours at Leighton Moss Jane was now tired so later in the afternoon, whilst she was having a rest back at the B&B, I went for an hour up on Arnside Knott. There was still a lot of heavy cloud and occasional light drizzle with the temperature display in the car showing 15 degrees at most.



Grey skies over Arnside.

Despite the dull and damp condition it was just about warm enough for Meadow Browns and Ringlets to be flying in good numbers plus a fair number of Gatekeepers. I have noticed before that a lot of the male Gatekeepers here are on the small side and the individual below was quite a dinky little chap.



Dinky little male Gatekeeper – Arnside Knott 28.07.2015

At one point a bit of movement on the ground alerted me to a Common Lizard trying to warm itself up on a bit of wet wood.



Common Lizard – Arnside Knott 28.07.2015

Then, in one of the glades above the scree slopes I spotted a much darker, almost black butterfly lazily flapping across a clump of ferns. It landed on a fern frond and a closer look confirmed it to be a male Scotch Argus.



Scotch Argus male – Arnside Knott 28.07.2015

All in all a good day despite the cloud and occasional rain which actually turned out to be lighter and less frequent than forecast. Not only that but I had seen my main target of Scotch Argus, just the one so far but well chuffed with that given the dull and damp conditions...and the forecast was looking a bit better for the next couple of days.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 01-Aug-15 04:09 AM GMT

Good stuff Neil, a nice variety for a drab, cloudy day 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 01-Aug-15 05:17 AM GMT

Very nice photos of the GW Egret and Marsh Harriers Neil 😊 but that male Scotch Argus is totally stunning – what a beautiful butterfly 😊

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 01-Aug-15 05:42 AM GMT

Nice, fresh Scotch Argus there, Neil.

Shame the weather was predominantly unfavourable. I reckon you'd have seen hundreds of SA had it been largely sunny and calm.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 01-Aug-15 04:04 PM GMT

Sounds like you're having a great time Neil. Wonderful shots of the birds and that Scotch Argus is stunning. 🍷🍷 Looking forward to seeing more.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-15 01:00 AM GMT

Thank you Bugboy, Mike, David and Pauline for all your comments 😊

Hi David, the weather improved over the next couple of days and I did see more Scotch Argus but it was obviously still early days for them and I reckon another week was needed for the numbers to build up.

Wednesday 29th July – A few days up north part 2.

The weather forecast for today (Wednesday) was much better with sunny spells and cloud in the morning with a chance of the odd shower in the afternoon. After breakfast I decided to have a look round Gait Barrows NNR which our B&B was right next to the south side of. To save time getting to the area I wanted to look around, I nipped round in the car to the permit holder's car park having had a permit emailed to me by Rob Petley-Jones, the Senior Reserves Manager for South-East Cumbria and North Lancashire NNRs, which I had printed off the week before driving up. Heading from the car park to the areas of limestone pavement for which this reserve is famous for I soon started seeing the usual Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, in fact many of the Ringlets were still in quite good condition compared to those back home in the midlands which reflects the later season in this part of the world.



Gait Barrows with Arnside Knott in the background



Gatekeeper female – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015

As the temperature slowly rose from around 15 to 17 or 18 degrees when the sun came out, I saw a couple of fresh looking Small Tortoiseshells and also three or four Graylings which did their usual hide and seek act on the limestone.



Small Tortoiseshell - Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Grayling - Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Grayling - Gait Barrows 29.07.2015

Small Skippers were buzzing about all over the place and at one point I watched a mating pair being hassled by a second male until he eventually gave up and left them in peace.



Small Skippers - Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Small Skipper pair - Gait Barrows 29.07.2015

I also saw around half a dozen Northern Brown Argus which whilst a bit worn and faded were still in better condition than I expected. In fact I have been up to this area at the same time before, give or take a day or two, and not seen any NBAs as they are often pretty well finished by now. I guess this year the generally late season has resulted in them hanging in there later than usual.



Northern Brown Argus - Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015

The NBAs found round this area are of the *salmacis* race which tend not to have the distinct white forewing spot that the Scottish *artaxerxes* race has. However, some individuals can be found here with partially white forewing spots although these are usually less distinct than those on *artaxerxes*



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015

As I was walking past the barn in the middle of the reserve, a Land Rover pulled up and the driver got out and as we started chatting he turned out to be the very same Rob Petley-Jones who had sent me the car park permit. We had an interesting chat about the state of the season this year and of some of the local butterflies, during which he said that the NBAs had started to emerge around their usual time but had then trickled out through the season which explained why there were still some reasonably good condition ones around.

He also said that Dark Green and High Brown Fritillary numbers had been worryingly low at a number of sites in the area this year, including Gait Barrows, and in fact during the morning I didn't see either of these species. Apparently this is the second year that the weather has not been too good here during their flight period which has not helped matters.

I then wandered back to the car and went back to meet Jane before heading out for some lunch.

To be continued...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 02-Aug-15 04:58 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

I'd come away quite happy with an image of a Scotch Argus of that quality! 😊. if only they would come further south !.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-15 06:53 AM GMT

Brill stuff Neil looking forward to the next installment 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-15 06:09 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor 😊 At least they give a good excuse to visit a beautiful part of the country...and after all, you have a few species down south that I wish would come a bit further north 😊👎

Cheers Wurzel 😊 I was going to sort through some more photos and post the next instalment tonight but some visiting relatives have scuppered that plan.

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-15 05:04 AM GMT

Back to work this week and just seemed to run out of time the past couple of evenings but I finally managed to get some photos sorted for the next part.

Wednesday 29th July – A few days up North part 3.

Wednesday afternoon saw me back at Arnside Knott in better weather conditions than the previous afternoon. Well, most of the afternoon was better, but I did find myself sheltering under the trees at one point for about 15 minutes from a fairly heavy rain shower.

Just before the rain came down I had been watching a Small Tortoiseshell circling around its patch and as the first drops began to fall it tucked itself

under a tree stump for shelter. When it stopped raining I went over and took a couple of photos, using flash to light up the shadow under the stump. He looked well camouflaged but would have blended in even better if he had landed the other way round so that the 'grain' on the underside of the wings had matched the grain of the wood.



Small Tortoiseshell – Arside Knott 29.07.2015

As the sun came back out the ST began to vibrate his wings to warm up, took off, did a circuit around the stump and then landed back on top of the wet wood to bask and warm up properly.



Small Tortoiseshell – Arside Knott 29.07.2015

I then carried on along the grassy slopes looking for Scotch Argus but before I found any more of these my attention was drawn to a small bright silvery object standing out against the green of a fern frond that turned out to be the underside of a Northern Brown Argus.



NBA ssp. salmacis – Arside Knott 29.07.2015



NBA ssp. salmacis – Arnside Knott 29.07.2015

During the afternoon I saw a few more Scotch Argus, maybe half a dozen different individuals. Not that many considering the numbers that can be found here but they were all males and in fairly good condition, all of which indicated that it was still early days in their flight period. I find this species can be difficult to approach and photograph, with the males in particular actively flapping about constantly looking for females. Either that or they settle deep down in the grass...or when they do settle in a good position for a photo, they seem to spot me from yards away with their large dark eyes and wait until I am just about to take the shot and off they go. Nevertheless, with a bit of patience and sufficient sneakiness I managed to get some photos.



Big dark eyes...



Scotch Argus – Arnside Knott 29.07.2015



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 29.07.2015

The two shots below are of the same individual, the first one taken when a cloud covered the sun and the second one taken a couple of minutes later when the sun was back out. I have posted them both together as I find it interesting how their appearance can change under different light conditions and I can't decide which one I like best.



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 29.07.2015



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 29.07.2015

There were some Fritillaries also flying about, mostly tired and faded Dark Greens from the ones that I managed to definitely identify along with a few Commas that at first glance do a very good Fritillary impersonation when in flight.



Dark Green Fritillary - Arnside Knott 29.07.2015



Comma - Arnside Knott 29.07.2015

Also of interest were a couple of what I think were Four-banded Longhorn Beetles, one of which flew into me and bounced off my jacket onto the grass.



Four-banded Longhorn Beetle - Arnside Knott 29.07.2015

I've still got a few photos to sort through for part 4...

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 05-Aug-15 05:09 AM GMT

Great photos from Arnside, Neil. It's a shame I missed my usual trip there this year - I'd have seen the NBA for the first time (but I think I'd have missed the Scotch Argus). Your timing was perfect! 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-15 06:42 AM GMT

More great shots Neil, bring on part 4! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 06-Aug-15 11:43 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, great shots from Arnside, your making me want to come home sooner to get the Scotch Argus,Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Aug-15 05:19 AM GMT

Thanks Dave 😊 , like you say, you would almost certainly have seen NBAs but quite possibly have missed the Scotch Argus, they were a bit thin on the ground still when I was there last week.

Cheers Wurzel 😊 part 4 coming up.

Thanks Goldie 😊 , no need to rush back for the Scotch Argus, from the reports I have seen it looks like numbers are building up this week but still not at peak yet.

Thursday 30th July - A few days up north part 4.

Thursday was our last day up in the Arnside area and with the weather forecast looking good I decided to pay another visit to the Knott. So far I had spent most of my time on the higher parts looking for Scotch Argus as described in my previous reports but when visiting here in previous years I had found one of the best spots for Fritillaries to be a large clearing in the lower woods. I was up on the Knott by 10.00am and wandered down to this clearing seeing the usual Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers along the way.

I soon saw a bright orange butterfly skimming over the bracken but this first one turned out to be a Comma,



Comma - Arnside Knott 30.07.2015

I wasn't long before I saw some definite Fritillaries and I reckon that there were at least two each of Dark Green and High Brown in the clearing. The Dark Greens were both females which looked tired and faded but still in slightly better condition than some of the tatty examples I had seen higher up on the Knott the day before.

With some fairly large clouds occasionally covering the sun they would cease their high speed flying about and settle on the fern fronds and the trick was to have one in sight when this happened so that I could then approach for a photo.



Dark Green Fritillary - Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



Dark Green Fritillary - Arnside Knott 30.07.2015

If the sun stayed in for any length of time they would eventually close their wings so it was a case of patiently waiting in order to get an underside shot.



Dark Green Fritillary - Arnside Knott 30.07.2015

The High Browns were both males and in better condition, with one looking quite fresh apart from a damaged hind wing and the other one more faded but without any damage.



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015

After a while here I went back to meet Jane and we went off for a bit of Lunch in Arnside. Later, with it turning into a very pleasant afternoon and being our last day in the area, Jane said I could make the most of it and go back up on the Knott for a couple of hours before setting out for home. I decided to have a last look around the usual spots for Scotch Argus and enjoy the views from the higher slopes, which at one point included watching a Kestrel quartering the slopes below.



Blue skies over the Kent Estuary



Cloudy over The Lakes but sunny over Arnside.



Kestrel over Arnside.

In the warm sun I found a few more Scotch Argus this time, maybe a dozen or so all told, still all males. They were even harder to get photos of with their almost constant flying in the sun and when they did settle they tended to close their wings to avoid overheating, although I did manage to catch a couple basking when the odd cloud covered the sun.



Scotch Argus – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



Scotch Argus - Arnside Knott 30.07.2015

I also found a few more Northern Brown Argus including one which apart from a mark on one forewing looked in quite good condition.



Northern Brown Argus – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015

There were a few Fritillaries flying around, one of which settled briefly and proved to be a female High Brown.



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015

I was heading back towards the car park when I spotted a Dark green Fritillary hovering around a patch of brambles and when she disappeared into them I approached and watched her wandering about on the ground amongst some violets. I think she was laying but couldn't be sure as she kept vanishing into the shadows where I couldn't get a clear view.



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside Knott 30.07.2015

We then set off for the drive back down the M6 to the midlands.

In the end it was a great few days with the weather on the whole turning out much better than we had feared it would be from the forecasts we had seen before going.

My timing was a bit early for Scotch Argus this year with only males seen and in comparatively fewer numbers than my previous visits. On the other hand I had the unexpected bonus of a fair few Northern Brown Argus which I am usually too late for when I come up here around this time.

Also this time, apart from the species already mentioned, I only saw a couple of Speckled Wood, one fresh male Common blue (at Gait Barrows), just a couple of fresh Peacocks, comparatively few whites and no Brimstones, all of which, gave me the impression that the season in the area was a week or two later than usual.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 07-Aug-15 05:50 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Superb images from Arnside Knott, complete with three species i have never seen.

The Dark Green Fritillaries must have emerged later at Arnside than down here as they are still in good condition.

Very enjoyable report.

TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 07-Aug-15 05:55 AM GMT

Neil your photos are fantastic, I think the High Browns were late coming out this year and I didn't see any Dark Green Fritillaries at all at Gait Barrow when I was there, If I thought they may be out when I got home it'd be great and I could combine them with the Scotch Argus 😊

Where about's is this little Hide away that the Fritillaries like Neil and where you've found them before? I'm

intrigued, is it through the lower Gate are the higher gate from the car park, I'll be there in a shot when I get back 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-Aug-15 02:06 AM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 , Yes, the DGFs would normally emerge later at Arnside than down south. The season in general usually runs later the further north you go; in fact in the midlands I am often a week or so behind the south east.

Thanks Goldie 😊 , when I met Rob Petley-Jones at Gait Barrows as described in my report on the previous page, he was very concerned about the lack of Fritillaries there.

The clearing at Arnside can be found by either,

– Walk back to the cattle grid and go over the stile on the left and down the slope. There is a gate near the bottom through the woods to your left and into the clearing.

or

– Go through the small gate at the end of the car park and walk straight on then bear right and go downhill into an open area. Half way down there is a path that branches off to the right, follow this until you get to the trees where there is a small gate in a stone wall. Go through the gate and follow the path down through the trees until it opens out into the clearing.

Right then, time for a bit of a catch up from last weekend...

Friday 31st July

We returned home late on Thursday (30th July) and then on Friday morning we had to get a bit of shopping in and do a bit of 'stuff' around the house. I also spent a bit of time pottering about in the garden and was pleased to be greeted back by a new Speckled Wood.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 31.07.2015

It soon became apparent that numbers of whites had increased during the week with all three common species chasing each other about through the garden. Female Holly Blues had also joined the males in their wanderings.



Holly Blue female – Coverdale 31.07.2015



Holly Blue male – Coverdale 31.07.2015

Later in the afternoon we went round for our usual Friday visit to my Mom and I took the opportunity, whilst the women were chatting, to have a look around the park down the road from her house.

Again, all three whites were plentiful as were Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns by the areas of long Grass. There were also a few Ringlets hanging in there but these were now very tired and raggedy specimens.



Green-veined white – Langley Hall 31.07.2015



Gatekeeper female – Langley Hall 31.07.2015

Small and Essex skippers were buzzing about in good numbers with the former now looking to be on the way out and the latter still going strong, no doubt due to the fact that the Essex normally have a slightly later flight period.



Small Skipper – Langley Hall 31.07.2015



Essex Skipper - Langley Hall 31.07.2015



Essex Skipper - Langley Hall 31.07.2015

I was also pleased to find a fresh looking male Small Copper in one spot defending his territory. Second brood Small Coppers had been thin on the ground locally so far and I was hoping that they were just late rather than having a particularly bad year...I have since seen more but that would be getting ahead of myself and they will have to wait their turn.



Small Copper - Langley Hall 31.07.2015



Small Copper – Langley Hall 31.07.2015

There are a number of mature Oaks in this park and I have often spent a bit of time looking up at them in the hope of seeing a Purple Hairstreak flitting about. I was eventually rewarded this afternoon by a silvery shape fluttering about the higher branches in typical hairstreak fashion and when it settled I managed to get a couple of (very) long distance photos to confirm the ID. The shot below is a tight crop of one of these which just about shows the PH in the middle of the frame.



Purple Hairstreak just visible in the middle of the photo.

I was well chuffed with this sighting as it confirmed my suspicion that Purple Hairstreaks were present in the park.

Sunday 3rd August

It was Jane's birthday on Saturday (1st August) so disappearing off butterflying was out of the question if I wanted to retain any brownie points for the rest of the season 😊. On Sunday, after the usual weekend stuff, I had a couple of hours free so went for a walk along the footpaths at my local spot at Castle Hills in what has become typical conditions, that is, mixed cloud and sun with a blustery breeze and temperatures around the high teens. The usual Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers were around in good numbers although not quite so many as the previous week. Loads of Small and Essex Skippers were in the grassy meadows with a lot of both species now looking worn and faded. There were half a dozen or so fresh looking male Common Blues scattered about and I also found what looks to be the same male (only a bit more worn now) with the spots on his hind wings that I saw here the previous week. He had moved into a new territory centred a couple of hundred yards away from the first and a new fresh male had moved into his old spot. I wondered whether the new one had kicked him out or whether he had moved on of his own accord and the new chap had just move into the vacant spot.



Common Blue with spots from previous week – Castle Hills 02.08.2015



The new occupant...



Another Common Blue male – Castle Hills 02.08.2015

Marbled Whites were still about albeit in lower numbers and looking faded now,



Marbled White – Castle Hills 02.08.2015

All three common whites were flying in good numbers and a few each of summer brood Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells completed the tally for the afternoon.



Small White and Cinnabar Moth caterpillar on Ragwort – Castle Hills 02.08.2015



Peacock – Castle Hills 02.08.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 02.08.2015

No Small Coppers at this site yet, in fact all second brood stuff seemed to be a bit slow appearing around here.
Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Aug-15 05:04 AM GMT

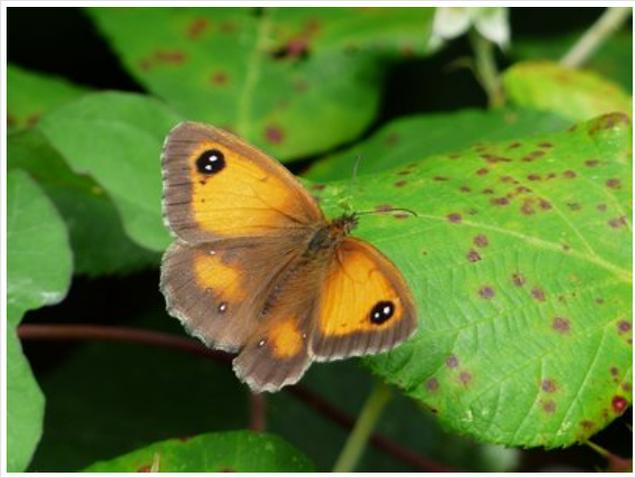
Friday 7th August.

After a busy week back at work I finished as usual at mid-day on Friday and popped round in the afternoon to see my mom. Whilst there I went for another quick wander around the park by her house to see what was about this week. All three common whites were flying in good numbers again, although the only ones that seemed to settle were the Green-veined that would visit the few remaining bramble flowers that had not yet set fruit.



Green-veined White - Langley Hall 07.08.2015

The numerous Gatekeepers were still looking to be in fairly good condition,



Gatekeeper - Langley Hall 07.08.2015

Half a dozen or so Speckled Woods were seen along the edges of the wooded areas.



Speckled Wood - Langley Hall 07.08.2015



Speckled Wood – Langley Hall 07.08.2015

In one spot there is a large stand of Rosebay Willowherb that was buzzing with Small and Essex Skippers. Some of the Essex Skippers in particular were looking remarkably fresh; in fact going by their condition I would not be surprised if some had emerged during the week since I was here previously.



Essex Skipper – Langley Hall 07.08.2015



Essex Skipper – Langley Hall 07.08.2015



Essex Skipper - Langley Hall 07.08.2015



Essex Skipper in more usual pose in the grass - Langley Hall 07.08.2015



Small Skipper - Langley Hall 07.08.2015

Just 30 minutes or so spent here this week before I had to head back to do a few little household jobs.

Later in the afternoon I was having a coffee break in the garden when a nice fresh female Speckled Wood came passing through and stopped briefly before continuing on her way.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 07.08.2015

Bye for now.
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 11-Aug-15 05:20 AM GMT

Wonderful imagies as ever Neil 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 11-Aug-15 05:35 AM GMT

Those Skippers do look new, Neil – they've pretty well disappeared round here except for some really beaten up ones. Nice images, too, and do I detect a return of the Specklies? 😊😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 11-Aug-15 01:53 PM GMT

More lovely images Neil, especially those from Arnside. Gorgeous Scotch Argus shots and HBF, and that DGF closed wing is stunning 📷📷 Have to say tho' that your photos make the more common butterflies look really special, in particular Speckled Wood and SC 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-15 11:42 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, When I was in Kent I was surprised the Large Skipper was still about but I never saw a Small Skipper or an Essex Skipper I thought this strange has the Large is usually out first, it was the same every where, Blean Woods , Dover, Temple Ewell, Your Essex are great really nice shots. 😊
Thanks for the directions for Arnside Knot I hope to go up there shortlyGoldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-15 04:35 AM GMT

Thanks Bugboy, glad you like them 😊

Cheers, Dave, the season usually runs a bit later around my patch than around yours but this year it is even further behind with a number of species hanging on in good condition when they would normally be all but finished by now...and yes, the Speckly numbers are on the up 😊

Thank you Pauline, not having any rarities around locally means I get plenty of practice on the more common species. More Small Coppers coming up and I apologise in advance for the blue spots 😊.

Thanks Goldie 😊 , I am only seeing a few tired and faded Large Skippers around my patch lately. Good luck up at Arnside.

Saturday 8th August

With just the one second brood Small Copper seen locally so far, I was keen to look for others so on Saturday afternoon I went to my local spot at Bickenhill near Solihull to see if I could find any.

Wandering down the usual footpath soon produced loads of whites, Gatekeepers, some Meadow Browns, a couple of Speckled Wood, and a couple of male Common Blues.



Common Blue – Bickenhill 08.08.2015

Half a dozen each of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks were busy feeding up on the patches of thistles in the meadows,



Peacock – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Peacock – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Peacock – Bickenhill 08.08.2015

On one of the thistle patches I spotted a flash of bright coppery orange which proved to be a nice fresh female Small Copper that posed beautifully for a few minutes when a cloud covered the sun before flying off across the thistles where I lost sight of her.



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Small Copper – Peacock – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015

I then carried on to one of the spots where I would normally expect to find a Small Copper or two and lo and behold there was a male waiting for me 😊



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015

I then spotted another male close by, this one looking like he had been about for a while but still showing some nice blue spots. This one seemed to be the more aggressive of the two and kept chasing the fresher one away every time it tried to settle.



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015

I then circled around the meadows and saw another couple of Small Coppers and half a dozen or so male Common Blues, all of which were very active in the now warm afternoon sun.

Walking back to the car along the path by the side of a farmer's field I spotted another Small Copper just as a small cloud covered the sun which prompted it to settle. This one turned out to be another fresh female, this time with a lovely set of blue spots on her hindwings.



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015



Small Copper – Bickenhill 08.08.2015

A great couple of hours in which I ended up seeing half a dozen Small Coppers, a good result for one of my local spots where half a dozen at any one site is the most I would expect to see. They are a good couple of weeks late around here, as are the Peacocks, but better late than never.

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 12-Aug-15 05:27 AM GMT

That last Copper is a serious stunner! Looks like you got so excited about the coppers yourself you went a bit copy & paste happy with the labeling of all those 'Small Copper – peacocks' 😊 Can't say I blame you though, they've been rather thin on the ground this year for almost everyone!

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 12-Aug-15 05:41 AM GMT

Agree with Bugboy. That last *caeruleopunctata* is to die for.

Re: Neil Freeman

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

Cheers Bugboy, edited now...the perils of copy and pasting and rushing things 😊😊

Thanks David, she certainly was a cracker 😊

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 12-Aug-15 02:48 PM GMT

Having found a Small Copper yesterday, only my 3rd of the season, I was feeling quite pleased with myself – until I saw these fantastic images 📷📷📷
Your apology is only grudgingly accepted! 😊😊😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 13-Aug-15 04:16 AM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Small Coppers Neil 😊 I've only seen a couple all season 😊

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Aug-15 05:22 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline, I must admit I was getting a bit worried about the lack of Small Coppers around my patch, I only saw a couple of first brood and the second brood are a good couple of weeks late showing up.

Cheers Mike, it seems that quite a few people are not seeing many Small Coppers this year...apart from Hoggers that is. I didn't think that they migrated but it seems they have all flown south to Dungeness 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 14-Aug-15 10:47 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Coppers Neil, also your Peacocks look great has well, no sign of Coppers here yet, I did see them in the Southport Dunes earlier in the year so may go there again when the weather picks up, I didn't get to Arnside Knot worse luck, I think my holiday tiredness caught up with me 😞 (I'd to rest Wednesday,) it was a lovely day as well, I did get compensated though with a peacock on my Budlia their late here as well Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-Aug-15 04:52 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie 😊 I should think the Scotch Argus will still be flying up at Arnside for a while so you would still have time to see them when you have got over your jetlag from going south 😊

Wednesday 12th August – Aston Rowant part 1.

On Wednesday I had a day's holiday from work and took a drive down the M40 to Aston Rowant. This site is one of my favourites and I usually take a trip down at the end of July or early August to see Chalkhill Blues and Silver-spotted Skippers. This year I had not yet managed to make it down there and due to various family stuff and jobs on the house over the next couple of weeks, this week was my only realistic chance.

I left Solihull just before 07.30 under clear blue skies and after a steady drive down arrived at the north side of Aston Rowant around 09.00. I had driven into a band of cloud on the way down the motorway which, by the time I was on the slopes of the reserve had turned into a continuous layer of overcast. Nevertheless, the air temperature was already around 16 or 17 degrees and Meadow Browns were up and about, closely followed at around 09.30 by Gatekeepers, Small and Essex Skippers and the first Chalkhill Blues.

I had thought that under the cloud I could find some roosting Chalkhills to take photos of but they obviously had other ideas as more and more of them took to the wing along the slopes. During the first hour or so many of the males posed nicely on the clumps of wild marjoram as they fuelled up before setting off on their low level fluttering in search of females.



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015

There were just as many females about, either feeding on the wild herbs or basking lower down in the grass or on the paths where they were far less obvious.



Chalkhill Blue female – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue female – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue female – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue female – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015

By 10.00 the overcast was thinning a bit and the sun was making its presence felt through the clouds and Silver-spotted Skippers were starting to become active. I soon started to see males chasing after females and watched a number of courtship attempts where a male would shuffle closer to a female only to have her edge away a few times before finally flying off in a quick blur leaving the male behind looking all rejected.



Silver-spotted Skipper pair – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



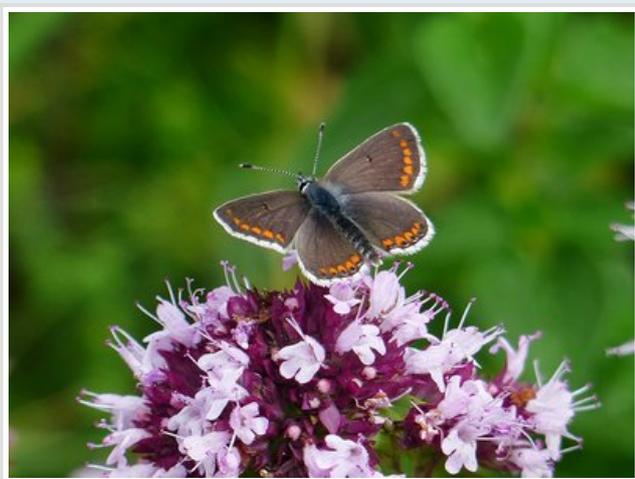
Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant 12.08.2015

By late morning the sun was breaking through occasionally and the slopes were alive with butterflies, the most obvious being the loads of Chalkhill Blues but also with large numbers of Silver-spotted Skippers and Meadow Browns. Along the hedge line at the lower slopes were Gatekeepers, Peacocks, Brimstones, Large, Small and Green-veined whites and a couple of Small Tortoiseshells.

A dozen or so each of Common Blues and Brown Argus were also seen scattered about plus two Small Coppers along the path down to the lower gate.



Brown Argus - Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Brown Argus - Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Common Blue – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Small Copper – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



The slopes of Aston Rowant north side



Looking down across the lower slopes

Every time I have visited this site I have seen a Kestrel or two hovering over the slopes and this time one perched for a while in the lower tree line where I managed to get a couple of long distance shots.



Kestrel – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015

After enjoying the morning on the north side of the reserve I went back to the car and went across the M40 to spend a couple of hours on the south side.

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 15-Aug-15 09:31 PM GMT

Great shots Neil, looking forward to the next batch Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

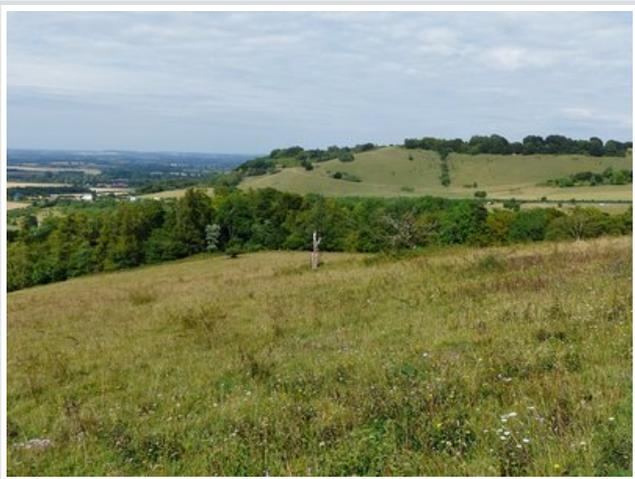
by Neil Freeman, 17-Aug-15 01:55 AM GMT

Wednesday 12th August – Aston Rowant part 2.

After spending the morning on the north side of Aston Rowant as described in the previous report, I drove over to the other side of the M40 to spend a couple of hours at the south side. Parking in the Cowleaze Wood car park, I crossed the road and followed the path through the gates to the left and onto the south facing slopes of Bald Hill.

The weather conditions were still mostly overcast but with temperature in the high teens and the occasional spell of sun pushing it into the twenties, there were plenty of butterflies flying.

All the species seen on the north side were flying here with the addition of a couple of faded Marbled Whites and a few Small Heaths, neither of which I had seen during the morning on the north side. Further along the slopes and around the end of the hill where you can look over to Beacon Hill on the north side there were loads of Silver-spotted Skippers, there seemed to be higher numbers here although I did not do an accurate count.



Looking across the M40 towards Beacon Hill from Bald Hill



Looking south-west from Bald Hill.



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015

On the other hand, Chalkhill Blue numbers seemed to be lower on this side although that was still relative with dozens here, just fewer compared to the hundreds on the north side.



Chalkhill Blues (and a Common Blue) – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue female – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015

One particular male struck me as looking a bit different with a white suffusion around the edges of all his wings.



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Underside of the individual above.

All three Common whites, Brimstones and Common Blues were widespread across the slopes along with half a dozen or so Brown Argus, but no Small Coppers were seen on this side.



Common Blue – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant South 12.08.2015

Bernwood Meadows.

Later in the afternoon I left Aston Rowant and headed back up the M40 and towards Bernwood Meadows, a little detour that I usually do when down this way. I arrived at the small car park at the Meadows at around 4.15pm and wandered straight down the narrow meadow to check out the 'Purple Hairstreak tree' at the end. This tree is a straggly hawthorn that was originally written about in a report on UKB by Michael Field in 2011 and where he had found a number of Purples Hairstreaks. I had also seen PHs in this hawthorn a couple of times including last year when I watched some fascinating behaviour and got some good photos.

Sure enough, as I approached the hawthorn I could see a number of small silvery shapes fluttering about around the higher reaches of the 12-15 foot high tree. They were difficult to count as they kept landing and walking around amongst the higher branches but I reckon there were 6-8 individuals in this small area. None of them came any lower than about 7 or 8 feet up but I managed a few shots by stretching up and holding my FZ200 above my head and using its vari-angle screen.



Purple Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 12.08.2015



Purple Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 12.08.2015



Purple Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 12.08.2015

I spent some time just watching the PHs and at one point noticed that one of them looked different. It was hard to tell when silhouetted against the sky but a good view through my binoculars confirmed my suspicion that it was a Brown Hairstreak. It looked a little worse for wear with some damage on the hindwings near the tails and the end of one antenna missing but as far as I was concerned it was the sighting of the day. As with the PHs, it spent all its time around the higher branches but I managed to get a few long distance shots as it shuffled about on the branches.



Brown Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 12.08.2015



Brown Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 12.08.2015

The shot below shows how well they can blend in with dead leaves, especially when in a bit of shadow. I brightened this shot to bring the butterfly out a bit and noticed a wasp that I did not see at the time I took the shot..



Brown Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 12.08.2015

Other butterflies seen around the meadows were the usual Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, Common Blues and some skippers including a single faded 'Large'. A single Comma and a faded female Silver-washed Fritillary brought my tally for the day up to 22 species seen both here and earlier at Aston Rowant.

With my tired old legs starting to feel the strain of being on them all day, I then set out for the drive home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 17-Aug-15 02:43 AM GMT

I love those BH shots Neil. I saw one in 'sightings' and have been waiting to comment on them 😊 I love the composition, the background colours, everything complements the butterfly – you have captured a lot of its character, especially with the camouflage one. There is a very Autumnal feel about them, very seasonal and I just love them 😊🍃🍃🍃

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 17-Aug-15 04:21 AM GMT

That's an epic report, Neil. I'm particularly amazed at the sighting of a Large Skipper. Even Small Skippers have now disappeared from my part of the world.

I too remember well Michaelj's post regarding the Purple Hairstreak sightings in Bernwood Meadows.

I'm glad you got to see a few and even more delighted that *betulae* put in an appearance too!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-15 06:05 AM GMT

I've got a lot of catching up to do Neil. Cracking series of shots Neil of the Skippers and both Hairstreaks 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 17-Aug-15 06:09 AM GMT

A brilliant day, Neil. I wish I could have done the same. I had to drive past Aston Rowant twice today (under dark cloud both times), and thinking about what was around up there was most distracting... And the hairstreak shots from Bernwood are excellent too! 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-15 05:14 AM GMT

Thank you Pauline 😊 there was a bit of luck involved in getting the BH shots as I held my camera at arms length above my head and used the vari-angle screen to try and line up the shot as it shuffled about.

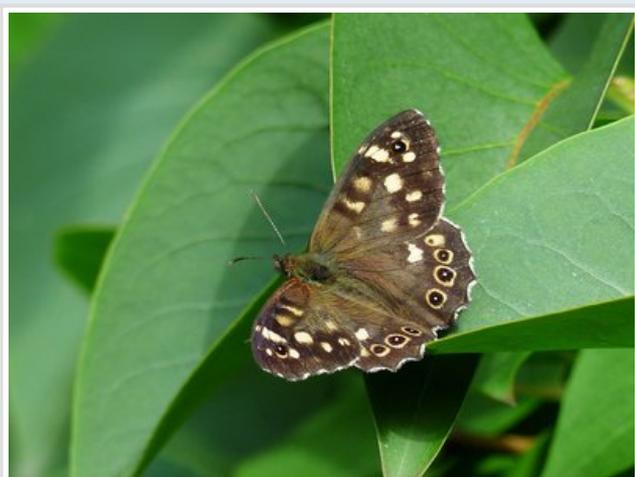
Thanks David 😊, the weather this year has led to a late season in general and some species seem to be having a more protracted emergence. The previous week I was still seeing fresh looking Essex Skippers locally and the Smalls were still in fairly good condition although the few remaining Large Skippers were tired and worn.

Cheers Wurzel, looking forward to you catching up on your continental adventure 😊

Thanks Dave, I was well tired by the end of the day after walking up and down the slopes of both sides of the reserve but I had that happy feeling you get after a really good day 😊

Monday 17th August

With a couple of bigger jobs to do in the house this weekend I didn't get out anywhere and with it being mostly dull and cloudy there wasn't that much butterfly activity in the garden. During the occasional brighter spell the usual whites and Holly Blues would wander through and there was a Speckled Wood or two in the usual corners.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 16.08.2015

This afternoon (Monday) it was a bit brighter and warmer when I got in from work and there were a steady procession of whites passing through, mostly Green-veined it seemed by the ones that I got a close enough look at.

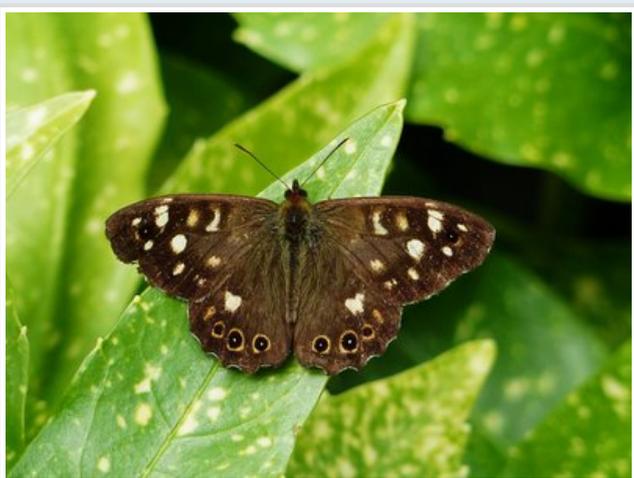


Green-veined White – Coverdale 17.08.2015



Green-veined White – Coverdale 17.08.2015

At least three different male Specklies in varying condition were contesting two favourite spots, with all three of them taking up a position in each spot at some point.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 17.08.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 17.08.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 17.08.2015

Looks like another generally cloudy week ahead, that has been the overwhelming impression of this year so far...loads of cloud along with a blustery wind.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 18-Aug-15 05:43 AM GMT

Nice PH and BH shots from Bernwood Neil 😊

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 19-Aug-15 12:06 AM GMT

Great shots from Bernwood Neil, you certainly had a great day 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 19-Aug-15 05:11 AM GMT

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

Looks like another generally cloudy week ahead, that has been the overwhelming impression of this year so far...loads of cloud along with a blustery wind.

Bye for now.

Neil.

The poor weather certainly hasn't stopped you from posting a huge number of high quality photos along side some very interesting reports

Neil. You've covered an impressive amount of different species this year as well! Your diary has been a joy to look at. I'm already looking forward to your adventures next year. 😊

All the best

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-15 01:45 AM GMT

My apologies for the delay in responding, it has been a busy week and my youngest son was back home for a few days and pretty well took over my PC.

Thanks Mike, really appreciate your comment 😊 .

Thanks Goldie, it certainly was a great day, I was tired but very happy 😊

Thanks James, I am glad you enjoy my diary 😊 . I prefer days of mixed cloud and sun but this year the balance has tipped the cloudy way a bit too often...and as for the almost ever present wind. Nevertheless, as you say, I reckon I have had a generally good season so far...and hopefully there is more to come yet before it is over.

Saturday 22nd August.

After a mostly cloudy week, Saturday arrived with the promise of a bit of sun, albeit with the threat of thunderstorms heading in later in the afternoon and evening. As usual I had a couple of hours spare in the afternoon, not long enough to go far but plenty of time for a nice wander around one of my local spots.

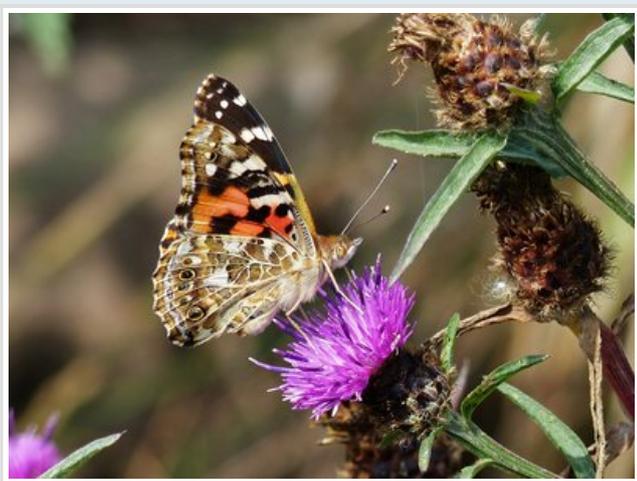
I had not yet found any Small Coppers this year at Castle Hills near Solihull so decided to go and have a look around there to see if I could find any. By this time it had become quite humid with plenty of cloud cover but also some good spells of warm sun.

At the beginning of one of the footpaths that cross this site there is a patch of waste ground with a long bank of earth by where it looks like a trench had been dug at some point. This bank of earth is about five feet high and has lots of knapweed growing along the sides and top and going over for a look I soon noticed at least half a dozen Peacocks along with some Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and all three common whites, with Common Blues, Small and Essex Skippers and a couple of Small Heaths in the long grass at the foot of the bank.



Sunny bank with lots of knapweed

I then spotted a Painted Lady, the first one I have seen locally this year although I did see a number in Cornwall back in June. All of these butterflies were quite active in the warm conditions and as I was trying to line up a shot on the Painted Lady another one flew into view and then another one until I had three Painted Ladies in view at the same time. I spent some time taking photos of these, two of which spent some time on the knapweed feeding, but the third one didn't settle for more than a second or two and spent most of its time flying at high speed up and down along the top of the bank.



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Painted Lady – Castle Hills 22.08.2015

A bit later I also saw what could have been a fourth individual across the other side of the field, but it could also possibly have been one of the original three, most likely the one that wouldn't settle.

I then carried on along the footpaths to see what else I could find. Good numbers of Common Blues were about plus a few more Peacocks, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and 'Whites' plus a couple of Brimstones.

Even though I know it is a generally late season, I was surprised to see how many Skippers were still about, both 'Small' and 'Essex' in varying condition from really old and faded to some that looked just slightly worn.



Lots of butterflies in this sheltered corner



Brimstone getting stuck in...



Essex Skipper - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Essex Skipper - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Common Blue - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Common Blue – Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Common Blue female – Castle Hills 22.08.2015

I don't think that I have ever been to this site without having a Buzzard or two circling around overhead and sure enough there were a couple today, even at times when I couldn't see them I could hear them calling to each other.



Buzzard calling overhead

I was also well chuffed to find a few Small Coppers scattered about, 4 individuals all of which I believe were females. The two I managed to photograph were both female and I believe the others were also by their size and the way they kept moving and not returning to favourite perches as males do,

although I could not get close enough to be absolutely sure.



Small Copper - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Small Copper - Castle Hills 22.08.2015

The second one was in a totally different part of the site but by coincidence I took a couple of very similar shots...



Small Copper - Castle Hills 22.08.2015



Small Copper – Castle Hills 22.08.2015

I had spotted some very dark ominous looking clouds heading my way and as I was taking some photos of the last Small Copper their arrival overhead was announced by a roll of thunder and some drops of rain. I decided to take cover under some nearby trees and was just about to reach them when I spotted a Small Tortoiseshell and couldn't resist stopping to take a couple of shots.



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 22.08.2015

The heavens then opened and I legged it under the trees to shelter from the deluge. I stayed under the trees for about fifteen minutes whilst the rain came down like stair rods, accompanied by rolls of thunder. By this time it was getting on for 5.00pm so as the thunder clouds moved on and the rain eased a bit I started to make my way back. Even now it was still warm and humid and with some light rain still in the air I saw some Meadow Browns, Skippers and even a few Common Blues still flying as I walked back.

A great couple of hours in which not only did I find my target for the afternoon (Small Coppers), but I also saw more Painted Ladies in one little spot than I have seen locally for the past few years 😊 .

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 24-Aug-15 01:55 AM GMT

Fabulous shots of the Painted Lady undersides Neil – comes into the category of 'wish I'd taken them'. Great Buzzard too – if I could take shots like that it would have saved many helpful folk from agonizing over my rubbish silhouettes trying to come up with ID's 🙄

Re: Neil Freeman

by MikeOxon, 24-Aug-15 02:31 AM GMT

Lots of splendid shots recently, especially those Painted Lady undersides – so much more spectacular than their plainer ups. I thought you did very well with those Brown Hairstreaks, using the tilting screen and maximum zoom – I know how tricky it can be in such circumstances 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 24-Aug-15 03:38 AM GMT

Couple of good reports with some excellent photos, I do like that Brimstone vanishing into the Bindweed flower! 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 24-Aug-15 05:15 AM GMT

Excellent late season stuff there, Neil. I'm particularly envious of your Brimstone which is a species I haven't seen for several weeks now!

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-15 07:07 AM GMT

Neil seems to have several species still going which have gone from the south– the skippers have gone from here, and Peacocks have already gone into hibernation.

Lovely images, as always. Lovely Painted Ladies Neil and great report from Aston Rowant– aren't Silver-spotted Skippers fantastic little critters?

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-15 07:17 AM GMT

I also agree with your sentiments regarding the summer weather. My impression is it's been rather cloudy, but otherwise not too bad. A dry start, rainfall has gradually increased, as it often does as we go through summer, indeed for East Anglia August is the wettest month of the year. And that looks like being borne out this week!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-15 12:28 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, great shots of the painted Lady, I'm still waiting for the Small Copper to show up here, your pic's of them are lovely, I also love the shot of the Essex Skippers Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-15 05:34 AM GMT

Cracking shots of the Painted Ladies Neil, especially those gorgeous underside shots 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 25-Aug-15 06:49 AM GMT

I've been studying your recent images, particularly those of Downland species. You certainly found some chilled out Chalkhills, they don't keep still for me! Excellent shots.

TREVOR.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-15 04:26 AM GMT

Thank you Pauline, Mike, Bugboy, David, Mark, Goldie, Wurzel and Trevor for all your comments, they are very much appreciated as always 😊

The past couple of days have been absolutely awful, quite cold as well as very wet, more like November than August. I hope it bucks up a bit for next week, I will be down in Dorset again for another late summer family break during which I usually manage to get in some good butterflying.

Cheers,

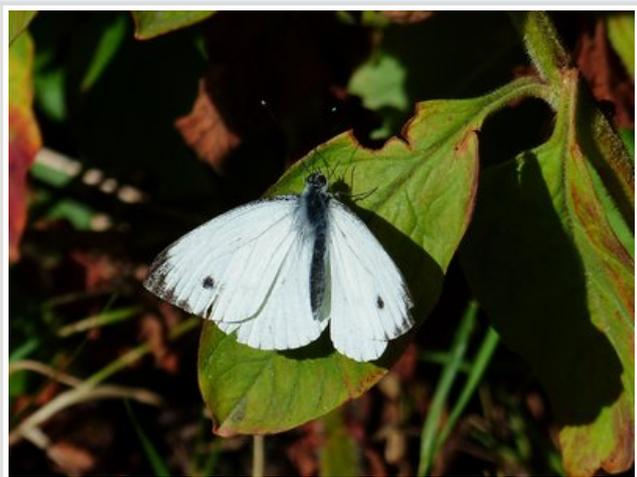
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-15 05:06 AM GMT

Wednesday 26th August

After a truly wet and miserable first half of the week the sun finally peeked out for a bit on Wednesday afternoon. Getting in from work I noticed that the garden was full of 'whites' that had come out to make the most of the lull in the rain, with all three of the common species chasing each other around.



Green-veined White - Coverdale 26.08.2015



Small White - Coverdale 26.08.2015

Friday 28th August

After some more rain showers yesterday and today, this afternoon turned out quite pleasant for a few hours and I spent some time in the later part just pottering out in the garden. All three common whites were again flying with many of them looking a bit worse for wear after all the recent rain.



Green-veined White - Coverdale 28.08.2015



Green-veined White - Coverdale 28.08.2015



Large White looking a bity bedraggled after all the recent rain.

A couple of Holly Blues were circling around the gardens, at least two different individuals that kept coming back every ten minutes or so.



Holly Blue - Coverdale 28.08.2015

There were also two or three little Mint Moths fluttering about,



Mint Moth – Coverdale 26.08.2015

The resident Speckled Woods were out again with a female and at least three males identified by slight differences in their markings.



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.08.2015



Speckled Wood male 1 – Coverdale 28.08.2015



Speckled Wood male 2 – Coverdale 28.08.2015



Speckled Wood male 3 – Coverdale 28.08.2015

I was quite surprised at one point to see two of the males basking quite close to each other, they don't usually tolerate each other presence and in fact seconds after I took the shot below the one on the right spotted the other one and the usual tussle followed.



A couple of male Specklies just before they started the usual scrapping.

I was just about to go back into the house when a large and darker butterfly dropped down close beside me and turned out to be a nice fresh looking Red Admiral, only the second one of these that I have seen in the garden this year.



Red Admiral – Coverdale 26.08.2015



Red Admiral – Coverdale 26.08.2015

Right then, I'm off to finish some packing for tomorrow. We are heading down to Dorset in the morning for what has become our usual late August/early September family break down there 😊

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-15 06:28 AM GMT

Stunning fresh Red Admirals Neil 😊🍷 Have a great time in Dorset 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Sep-15 01:39 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, we had a great time 😊.

Dorset part 1.

We returned yesterday (Saturday 5th Sept.) from a week staying at Durdle Door holiday Park for what was primarily a family holiday with our daughter Sarah and 5 year old grandson Frankie. Our week in Dorset in early September has become a regular thing over the past few years and this was our second time at Durdle Door having also stayed there last year when we took my Mom with us.

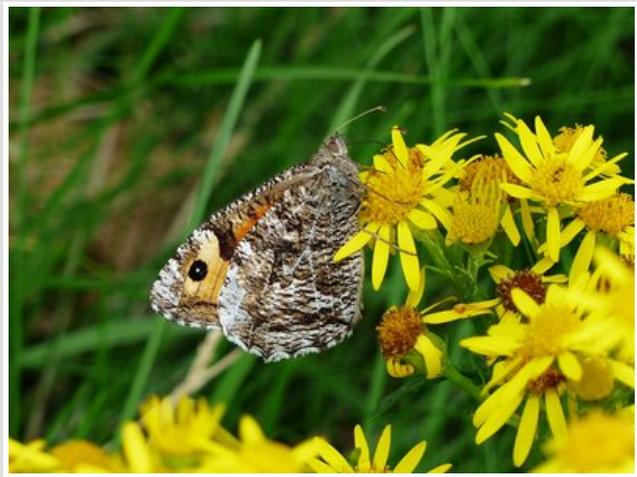
We had arrived late on the previous Saturday afternoon and by the time we had settled in and then had something to eat it had started to rain. We ended up having heavy rain on both Saturday and Sunday nights but apart from a little light rain on Bank Holiday Monday morning it remained dry for the rest of the week, albeit often dull and overcast with a cool northerly wind. Nevertheless there were enough sunny spells during the week for me to squeeze in some good butterflying between the usual family stuff.

Durdle Door, August 30th - 31st.

On both the Sunday and Monday afternoons, after going out for the mornings and returning to our caravan after lunch, I had the chance to have a walk along the paths across the downs between Durdle Door and the wonderfully named little valley of Scratchy Bottom 🤪 just to the west of the holiday park. On both days there was a heavy overcast but with enough warmth in the sheltered dips for plenty of butterflies to be flying. Most numerous were Meadow Browns with hundreds fluttering across the grassy slopes, closely followed in numbers by Graylings, plus a few Marbled Whites and a single tatty looking Wall Brown that shot off across the slope. One particular sheltered slope above the Durdle Door rock arch where I had seen loads of butterflies last year was equally productive this time with 20+ Adonis Blues and half a dozen each of Chalkhill Blue, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Heath plus a couple of Small Coppers.



Slope above Durdle Door rock arch, this was a very productive area all week.



Grayling - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Graylings, unsuccessful courtship attempt - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Marbled White - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Meadow Brown - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Small Heath - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Adonis Blue - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Adonis Blue - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Common Blue - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Common Blue female - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Chalkhill Blue - Durdle Door 31.08.2015



Brown Argus - Durdle Door 30.08.2015

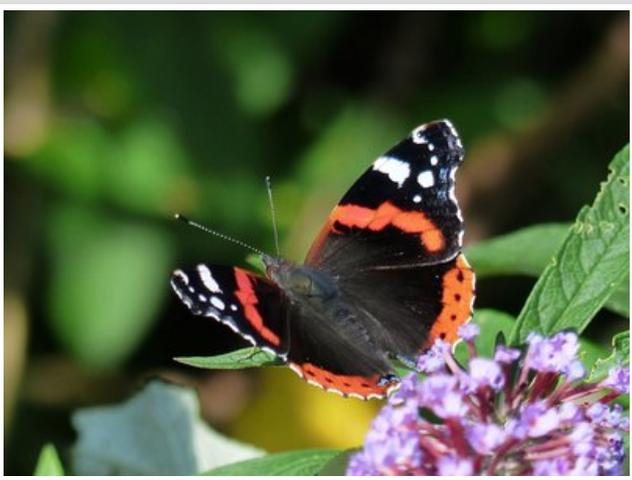


Small Copper & Meadow Brown – Durdle Door 31.08.2015

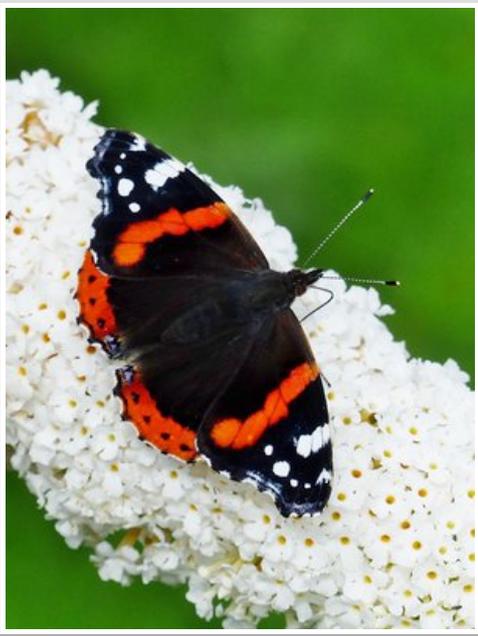
There were also some Buddleias around the back of the holiday park which I checked out on both days and saw a few Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells plus a couple each of Painted Lady, Peacock, Large and Small Whites and Brimstone.



Peacock – Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Red Admiral – Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Red Admiral – Durdle Door 31.08.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Durdle Door 31.08.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Durdle Door 31.08.2015



Painted Lady - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Painted Lady - Durdle Door 30.08.2015

On the Sunday, three or four Hummingbird Hawk Moths were flitting around the buddleias, I saw three in view at once a couple of times but an accurate count was made difficult by the presence of a couple of Silver-Y Moths buzzing about as well which can look similar in flight at a quick glance.



Hummingbird Hawk Moth - Durdle Door 30.08.2015



Hummingbird Hawk Moth – Durdle Door 30.08.2015

With a better day forecast for the following day (Tuesday) I was hopeful of getting the chance of visiting another site (or two) in the area 😊

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-15 04:34 AM GMT

Dorset, part 2 – Tuesday September 1st.

On Tuesday we got up to a beautiful if slightly chilly morning with clear blue skies and with the forecast looking good for the rest of the day. Jane and Sarah wanted to take Frankie to Monkey World which is near Wool and it was agreed that I could drop them off and go off somewhere for a couple of hours.

I decided to head for Swanage and **Durlston Country Park** and so it was that I arrived there at around 11.00am having arranged to go back and collect the others at 1.30pm. With just a couple of hours here, rather than try and cover the whole site, I decided to concentrate on the gully area and so went straight along the cliff path towards the lighthouse in order to work my way up the slopes of the gully from the bottom end.

By now it was late morning and had warmed up nicely although there was still a cool breeze which made its presence felt when the occasional cloud covered the sun. Along the cliff path I had seen a few Large and Small Whites and reaching the lower slopes of the gully I soon saw some little splashes of bright blue fluttering about which proved to be male Adonis Blues. A further look soon turned up Meadow Browns, a couple of female Gatekeepers, Common Blues, Small Heaths, Brown Argus and a Small Copper. Working my way along the slopes there were a good number of Adonis Blues scattered all the way up past the tarmac path which goes to the lighthouse, easily the most numerous species seen here today. Most were fresh looking males although there were a few that showed a bit more wear indicating that they had been out for a week or so. I also saw a couple of Fresh looking females, the first that I had seen so far this week, the Adonis at Durdle Door on Sunday & Monday all being fresh males so far.



Small White – Durlston 01.09.2015



Small Copper - Durlston 01.09.2015



Common Blue - Durlston 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue - Durlston 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue - Durlston 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue - Durlston 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue - Durlston 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue – Durlston 01.09.2015

One of my reasons for coming to Durlston was to look for late Lulworth Skippers which I have seen here in early September before. This is a known late site for this species, although I did wonder if the generally wet and cool August and the heavy overnight rain at the weekend may have finished them for this year. Around half way up the gully, at exactly the same spot where I have found them in previous years I found a worn and faded female.



Lulworth Skipper – Durlston 01.09.2015

A little further along I found another couple of Lulworths, both females in worse condition than the first one, but they were all that I found...still, better than none and given the conditions they have endured this year I was only half expecting to find any at all at this time this year.

I also saw a Clouded Yellow heading up the gully from the sea in a determined manner, stopping just briefly to top up from some flowers along the way. A little later I saw another one, this one going at high speed and not bothering to stop. They could well have been the same individual circling around but I had the distinct impression that they were two different ones.

With the time getting close to me having to make a move back to collect the others I made my way back down the gully and along the cliff path, briefly stopping to take some photos of a couple of Common Lizards basking on the stone wall.



Common Lizard – Durlston 01.09.2015



Common Lizard – Durlston 01.09.2015

A very pleasant morning and with a bit of luck I would still have time for another session somewhere later in the afternoon 😊

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 08-Sep-15 04:57 AM GMT

Lulworth Skippers have a really odd flight period. They can be found from June to September along a very restricted area.

I'd love to know why this is.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 08-Sep-15 06:18 AM GMT

Splendid photos from my favourite stretch of coastline and of some lovely butterflies. 😊 I'm glad there were Lulworths still to see there, Neil, and like David, I find it puzzling that (like the Meadow Brown) they have a protracted emergence over three months or so – I believe they are often out in May (this year it was May 21st).

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-15 10:04 PM GMT

Lovely Butterfly photos Neil you sound like you had a great time Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-15 04:48 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, a great combination of family time and good butterflying made for a very enjoyable holiday 😊 .

Thanks for the comments David and Dave 😊 . The protracted emergence of Lulworth Skippers is certainly interesting although it must be noted that they are not flying this long at all sites, Durlston is a known late site for them. I guess it is down to local microclimates. Having said that I also found a Lulworth Skipper at Durdle Door later in the week, details in a forthcoming report.

Regarding Meadow Browns, Jeremy Thomas notes in 'The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland' that they disappear at most sites by the end of August but that emergence is greatly prolonged on warm southern chalk downs although the actual reason is not known.

Marbled White is another species that is regularly seen here long after they have ceased flying elsewhere.

Dorset part 3 – Tuesday 1st September continued.

After collecting Jane, Sarah and little Frankie from Monkey World we went off to have a bit of lunch and then returned to Durdle Door. Sarah was usually keen for Frankie to have an afternoon nap, or at least rest for a bit, so that he could stop up a bit later than he usually would at home. He is at that age (5) when having a mid-afternoon nap can make all the difference to whether he is tired and whingy later on in the early evening when we would usually go out somewhere for a meal. This meant that I could take advantage of a couple of hours to go off for a walk somewhere and today I had decided that I would drive round to Osmington and have a walk up the path to White Horse Hill.

I have visited this site a number of times over the past few years and it has become one of my favourite spots in the area with beautiful views from the top of the hill. The south facing slopes have also reliably produced good numbers of Adonis Blues plus I have never yet failed to see a few Clouded Yellows here.

I parked up in Osmington village by the start of the bridleway that leads towards the hill and in the first stretch that is lined with trees saw a few Speckled Woods fluttering about. After a few hundred yards the path opens out and I started to see plenty of Adonis Blues, many of them basking on the path or taking up minerals around the damp patches that were left from the rain we had during the night on Saturday and Sunday.



Lots of Adonis on the path along here.



Adonis Blue – Osmington 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue – Osmington 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue – Osmington 01.09.2015

There must have been something like 30 or 40 Adonis Blues along this stretch and as I reached the corner where the path turns left and goes diagonally up the down I saw even more, absolutely loads of them all the way along the slopes. Most of those I saw were fresh looking males with few showing signs of wear but I did find a few nice fresh females in amongst them.



Looking back down the path across the slopes.



Adonis Blues – Osmington 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue - Osmington 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue - Osmington 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue - Osmington 01.09.2015



Adonis Blue – Osmington 01.09.2015

As well as the Adonis there were Meadow Browns in good numbers and around a dozen or so each of Small Heath, Common Blues and Brown Argus. True to form for this site there were a couple of Clouded Yellows speedily flying up and down along the slopes, one of which settled briefly in front of me where I managed to get a couple of quick photos. I saw two in the air together a couple of times and I think that I saw a third one further along the path but the speed with which this species can fly along the hillsides means I am not absolutely sure it was not one of the ones already seen.



Clouded Yellow – Osmington 01.09.2015



Clouded Yellow – Osmington 01.09.2015

Also seen were a couple of faded Marbled Whites and a couple of even more faded Gatekeepers. Three or Four Painted Ladies were flying about the lower slopes and flitting from flower to flower, usually just that bit too quickly to grab a photo although I did manage a few record shots.



Painted Lady – Osmington 01.09.2015

Three different Small Coppers were also seen, meaning that so far I had seen them everywhere visited down here.



Small Copper – Osmington 01.09.2015



Small Copper – Osmington 01.09.2015

Around 5.00pm the clouds had started to build up again and a cool breeze was making itself felt so I headed back down the path towards the car and back to Durdle Door.

About an hour later, back at the holiday park, the sun popped out again and whilst the girls were with Frankie at one of the play areas I went for a quick look at the Buddleias at the back of the park. By this time most of them were in shade but to one side there was a bit of discarded plastic decking and I spotted some splashes of colour that turned out to be five Small Tortoiseshells soaking up the last bit of sun for the day.



Small Tortoiseshells – Durdle Door 01.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshells – Durdle Door 01.09.2015

A nice little touch to what had been a splendid day with a couple of great sites visited and plenty of butterflies seen. And I still hadn't walked across the hill to Lulworth Cove and Bindon Hill yet, maybe tomorrow...
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 09-Sep-15 05:25 AM GMT

Lovely images, Neil. I'm particularly envious of the Clouded Yellow as I'm yet to see one this year in the UK.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 09-Sep-15 06:06 AM GMT

Beautiful Adonis and I love the Small Tort gathering 😊. Hoping to get some Clouded Yellows for myself tomorrow!

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 09-Sep-15 06:15 AM GMT

Another lovely bit of Dorset coast – and some wonderful Adonis Blues. I also like the Tortoiseshell gathering – not something you'd see very often these days. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 09-Sep-15 08:05 AM GMT

Lovely Clouded Yellow and 10 points for capturing the sheen in your first female Adonis image.

Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-15 03:43 AM GMT

Many thanks for all your comments David, Bugboy, Dave and Trevor 😊

Dorset part 4 – Wednesday 2nd September.

We got up to another pleasant morning on Wednesday with plenty of blue sky and as Frankie had been promised a boat ride we went into Weymouth so that Sarah could take him out on one. As Sarah took him out on one of the boat trips around Portland Harbour, Jane and I took the chance to have a quiet wander around the shops before meeting them on their return at the harbour. We then took a slow wander back through Weymouth and enjoyed a late morning Dorset Cream Tea before heading back to the car.

Back at Durdle Door later in the afternoon, whilst the others were having a lazy couple of hours, I took the opportunity for a walk across the hill and into Lulworth Cove and then up onto Bindon Hill.



Looking down on West Lulworth from Bindon Hill

By this time a fair bit of cloud had built up but there was still some good sunny spells during which I started seeing good numbers of Chalkhill Blues, some of which looked to be still quite fresh. I had seen a few Chalkhills at Durdle Door over the previous few days, and have seen them here around this time in previous years but I was a bit surprised by the numbers here today.



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blues – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015

There were plenty of females about although these were less obvious with their brown colouring and way they spend a lot of their time crawling around low down in the vegetation. Some of these showed some interesting variation as shown in the examples below.



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Chalkhill Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015

Adonis Blues were also present although in lower numbers than expected. All those seen were fresh looking males and I do not believe that I saw any females which seemed to indicate that they were only just getting going here.



Adonis Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Adonis Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015



Adonis Blue – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015

Brown Argus were well scattered about along the more sheltered lower paths and some of these looked in better condition than the worn and faded examples I had seen so far this week.



Brown Argus – Bindon Hill 02.09.2015

As well as the usual Meadow Browns, other species seen were Small Heath, Common Blue, a few faded Marbled Whites, a couple each of Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell and a single Small Copper.

With some darker clouds heading over I made my way down the hill and then up the path back towards Durdle Door, stopping for a few minutes at the top to admire the view back into the cove before the clouds covered the sun.



Looking back down into Lulworth Cove on the way back to Durdle Door.

An interesting afternoon which felt a bit like I had gone back in time a couple of weeks compared to the previous afternoon at Osmington where Adonis Blues had easily been the most numerous species. With the Adonis seeming to be just starting here and the Chalkhills still outnumbering them by at least 4 to 1, it shows how the season can vary at different sites in the same area.

Now to get back to sorting through the photos from the rest of the week...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 10-Sep-15 04:45 AM GMT

Another interesting report with some lovely pictures to accompany, I particularly like those female Chalkhills, nice variety of markings 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-15 05:24 AM GMT

Fantastic reports from the best place in the world (well to me anyway 😊)! I'm really envious of the Cloudy shots as I still haven't seen them this year 🇬🇧 The Chalkhills and Adonis do seem to be later this year – could that be due to the cooler, wetter 'summer'? 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps – how did you get up to Bindon Hill? I path I used a couple of years back collapsed. 😞

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 10-Sep-15 05:49 AM GMT

Wow! I'm quite surprised at how fresh some of those Adonis/Chalkhills are.

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 10-Sep-15 06:24 AM GMT

Loving your Dorset reports, Neil. As you know, I was there myself just a couple of weeks ago. When I went to the white horse, it was so foggy I couldn't see a thing, so a bit envious of your adonis blues there!

I have always found chalkhill blues to be dominant over adonis at Bindon Hill, though this may be because I go a little earlier than you. Saw one adonis last year, none in 2015. Great pictures, keep them coming.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-15 03:08 AM GMT

Thanks Bugboy, glad you like the female Chalkhills 😊

Cheers David, I usually see fresh Adonis when I visit this area in early September but the number of Chalkhill Blues on Bindon Hill surprised me as well.

Thanks Mark, we are usually there for the first week in September and in previous years it has been Adonis Blues that are dominant, which they were at the other sites I visited this year. It was just Bindon Hill that seemed to be running a bit later in comparison, as also indicated by the condition of some of the Brown Argus compared with the other sites. Sorry to hear it was foggy for you at The White Horse, I reckon this is the best site in the area on the right day.

Hi Wurzel, the whole season has been running a bit late in general this year but it would seem that different parts of the country have been affected to different degrees, as have different species.

Re. the path up Bindon Hill, I have marked it with a red arrow on the photo below. The path starts next to the end cottage which is just out of view and

has a wooden 'Public Footpath' sign.



View of Bindon Hill showing path

Cheers,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 11-Sep-15 05:31 AM GMT

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

Re.the path up Bindon Hill, I have marked it with a red arrow on the photo below. The path starts next to the end cottage which is just out of view and has a wooden 'Public Footpath' sign.

That's the path I ascended last year having first tried the one by the beach which was closed due to landslips.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-15 04:13 AM GMT

Hi David, I too found this path last year. I had gone up the hill by walking across the shingle beach to the other side of the cove and then taking the path up which leads onto the steep steps alongside the range fence. I had then walked back across the hill and found the path where it comes out at the top, followed it down...and realised that it would have been a lot easier than walking across the beach.

Mind you, this was on my earlier visit there last year in July and if I hadn't gone across the beach and up the steps I would have missed all the Lulworth Skippers across that side, certainly far more than up on the hill itself.

Dorset part 5 - Thursday 3rd September.

With Thursday forecast to be another dry day but with a lot more cloud about, we had decided that we would have a ride on the Swanage Railway. We nearly always find time to do this when we are down here and my daughter Sarah in particular has a thing for old cars and trains and seems to enjoy it even more than little Frankie.



Corfe Castle from the Swanage Railway.

We only spent an hour or so in Swanage itself, just long enough to have a coffee and a wander along to the harbour where there was an old ship that was apparently a replica of Peter the Great's 18th century Frigate 'Shtandart', the first ever Russian Navy ship, which looked particularly picturesque, moored up by the pier [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shtandart_\(frigate\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shtandart_(frigate))



The Shtandart moored at Swanage pier.

We then wandered back to the station to catch the train back to Norden and then head back to Durdle Door.



Steam train pulling into Swanage Station.

Just before we arrived back we had a little detour into Lulworth Cove for an hour where we all enjoyed an ice cream...Strawberries and cream flavour in my case 😊. By this time the clouds had built up into quite a thick grey overcast and the only butterflies seen at the cove were a couple of Small Whites on the Valerian growing out of the wall by the stream.

Later back at Durdle Door I went for a quick walk, first checking the Buddleias where despite the cloud there were a couple of Red Admirals.



Red Admiral – Durdle Door 03.09.2015

I then carried on to the grassy slopes above the rock archway where earlier in the week I had noticed large patches of Autumn Ladies Tresses. On some parts of these slopes there must have been thousands of these lovely little orchids with their spirals of white flowers standing just a few inches tall in the short sward.



Autumn Ladies Tresses – Durdle Door 03.09.2014



Autumn Ladies Tresses – Durdle Door 03.09.2014

In one of the areas of longer grass I found an attractive Wasp Spider...



Wasp Spider – Durdle Door 03.09.2015

On the exposed slopes there was quite a cool breeze blowing and any butterfly taking to the wing, mostly Meadow Browns, were quickly whisked away but in the more sheltered spots a few Common and Adonis Blues could be seen making short flights before disappearing down in the grass. I was just about to make my way back when a splash of orange attracted my attention to an impressively large female Small Copper. She was a bit frayed around the edges but with a set of blue spots she would have been a lovely individual when fresh.



Small Copper – Durdle Door 03.09.2015

A couple of hours later, around 6.00pm, a big patch of blue sky was heading our way so I went back down to the slopes above the rock archway, hoping to get some photos of the arch in the evening sun when in my opinion it looks its best.

The sun came out as I was on my way down and in the sheltered hollow above the archway I soon saw bright blue spots amongst the grass as Common and Adonis Blues opened their wings in the late sun. A couple of Brown Argus also took to the wing, one of which was a nice female still in quite good condition.



Common Blue – Durdle Door 03.09.2015



Adonis Blue – Durdle Door 03.09.2015



Brown Argus – Durdle Door 03.09.2015

I then took my photos of the rock arch and with the time now getting on for 7.00pm I headed back to the others who were getting ready to go out for a meal.



The famous archway lit up by the evening sun.

Given the overcast which had lasted for most of the day I hadn't really expected to see many butterflies but it had stayed dry again and the late sunshine was an unexpected bonus 😊 .

One more day in Dorset to go...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 12-Sep-15 07:24 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, I've really enjoyed your holiday shots of Dorset, such lovely Butterflies, it's made me want to go to Dorset again it's such a lovely county 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Sep-15 02:56 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, definitely one of my favourite parts of the country too...especially at this time of the year 😊

Dorset part 6 – Friday 4th September.

Our last full day in Dorset started off with a high overcast of light cloud which was forecast to linger around for most of the day. We decided to have a drive around to Portland and by 10.30 were parked up by the lighthouse at Portland Bill. As well as the cloud, there was a cool breeze blowing but a quick look in the grassy areas by the car park produced a few Meadow Browns, common Blues and Small Heaths flying in the more sheltered spots. After spending a bit of time with little Frankie exploring the rocky area to the side of the lighthouse we all went to the café and enjoyed a Dorset Cream Tea.

We then drove round to Tout Quarry and whilst Jane and Sarah slowly bimbled along the main path looking at the various carvings in the rocks, Frankie took me off exploring down the side paths. By this time it was just after mid-day and although still overcast it was feeling quite warm in the sheltered paths around the old quarry.

After spotting a few Meadow Browns, Common Blues, the odd Grayling and a single old and worn Wall Brown, we went down a narrow path and found a small Buddleia growing out of the scree in a bit of a hollow. On this were a number of Painted Ladies that were either nectaring on the bush or basking close by on the ground. I counted at least five although the most I managed to get into frame was three.



Painted Ladies – Tout Quarry 04.09.2015



Painted Lady – Tout Quarry 04.09.2015



Painted Lady - Tout Quarry 04.09.2015



Painted Lady - Tout Quarry 04.09.2015



Painted Lady - Tout Quarry 04.09.2015



Painted Lady - Tout Quarry 04.09.2015



Painted Lady - Tout Quarry 04.09.2015



Painted Lady - Tout Quarry 04.09.2015

As well as the Painted Ladies there were a couple of Small Tortoiseshells, a single Red Admiral and a Hummingbird Hawk Moth all flitting about this one fairly small but sprawling bush.

We then left Portland and headed back to Durdle Door where Frankie wanted to spend some time at the play areas on the holiday park, a kids zip-wire being a particular favourite of his there. This meant that I had chance for a final couple of hours on the downs above Durdle Door and with some breaks in the cloud and the sun breaking through it was turning into a pleasant afternoon.

During my walks along here earlier in the week I had been watching some Kestrels on a number of occasions and it appeared that there was a family of them, with the parents and at least four young birds around most days. I had tried, unsuccessfully so far, to get some photos of these and sitting on the slopes watching them again this afternoon I noticed one of them land on a fence post at the bottom of the slope. I slowly edged my way closer and noticed that she looked like she was a young female and managed to get a couple of shots before she flew off.



Kestrel – Durdle Door 04.09.2015

I then made my way further along the slope where I spotted bit of movement in the grass which proved to be another Kestrel, a male this time. He came out of the longer grass onto the shorter sward and spent a few minutes just wandering about whilst I managed to slowly approach to within a few yards before he took to the air.



Kestrel – Durdle Door 04.09.2015

He didn't go far and landed on a fence post a bit further down by the path where I took a few more photos before he took off and went back up the slope.



Kestrel – Durdle Door 04.09.2015

I then carried on around to the sheltered hollow above the archway where, with the sun out in a large patch of blue sky, there were plenty of butterflies flying including Meadow Browns, Graylings, Common and Adonis Blues, Brown Argus, Large and Small Whites and a couple of Small Coppers.



Adonis Blue – Durdle Door 04.09.2015



Small Copper & Meadow Brown – Durdle Door 04.09.2015

There were also a couple of Clouded Yellows circling around this spot, I saw two in the air together, only one of which I saw settle briefly a couple of times. I had seen a couple of Clouded Yellows here at this time last year in this exact same spot, I guess they find the sheltered hollow particularly

attractive.



Clouded Yellow – Durdle Door 04.09.2015

The surprise of the afternoon however was a little brown blur which settled and turned out to be a female Lulworth Skipper,



Lulworth Skipper – Durdle Door 04.09.2015

I was aware that this species could be found at this site, after all Lulworth Cove is just over the next hill, but I had thought that they would be finished here for the year. I had found a few faded females at Durlston earlier in the week but that is a known late site for them and as far as I know the only site where they regularly fly into September. Just goes to show that you can't take anything for granted and made me wonder if a better look earlier in the week around the grassy slopes by the steps at Lulworth Cove would have turned any of these up. Oh well, it was now time to head back to join the others and get ready to go out for something to eat...and then we would be heading back home in the morning.

So, to summarise the week;

The weather could have been a bit better but it could have been a lot worse. After heavy rain overnight on the first weekend and light rain on Bank Holiday Monday morning it dried up for the rest of the week. There was plenty of good sun on Tuesday and Wednesday with more cloud moving in for the second half of the week although there were still some good sunny spells. Temperatures varied from the mid teens under the thicker cloud when there tended to be a cool breeze, to the low twenties when the sun was out.

22 species of butterfly were seen during the week as listed below,

Adonis Blue – Seen at Durdle Door, Durlston and Bindon Hill but highest numbers at Osmington. Impression was they were a bit later than usual, particularly at Bindon Hill.

Common Blue – Seen everywhere, some very fresh and some really old and tattered.

Chalkhill Blue – A few at Durdle Door and loads at Bindon Hill including very fresh examples.

Brown Argus – Good numbers still about, most very worn and faded but a few still in good condition.

Small Copper – One or two seen at most places.

Meadow Brown – Everywhere, often in large numbers, some still very fresh.

Grayling – At Durdle Door in large numbers, smaller numbers at Bindon Hill and Portland.

Marbled White – A few seen at Durdle Door, Osmington and Bindon Hill.

Small Heath – Seen everywhere either in ones and twos up to a dozen or so.

Gatekeeper – A few still about but looking tired and faded.

Speckled Wood – Appeared at most places, some very fresh.

Wall Brown – A couple of old and worn examples seen at Durdle Door and Portland.

Brimstone – A few seen at Durdle Door, Durlston and Lulworth.

Large White – Seen regularly at most places.

Small White – Seen everywhere, highest numbers of the 'common whites'

Green-veined White – A few seen during the week at most places.

Clouded Yellow – Half a dozen seen at Durlston, Osmington and Durdle Door.

Red Admiral – Numbers seemed to increase during the week nearly everywhere, some looking very fresh.

Painted Lady – Seen at Durdle Door, Osmington, Bindon Hill and Portland. As with Red Admirals numbers seemed to be increasing through the week.

Peacock – A couple seen at Durdle Door on Buddleias.

Small Tortoiseshell – Seen everywhere, mostly in one and twos with half a dozen or so at Durdle Door on Buddleias.

Lulworth Skipper – a few old and faded females at Durlston and one at Durdle Door.

As with most of the country this year, the season seemed to be running a bit late in general down here, especially so at Bindon Hill where there were still good numbers of fresh Chalkhill Blues and the Adonis were just getting started. It was interesting to see the difference between this site and Osmington which seemed to be a couple of weeks ahead, albeit still a little later than previous years when I have been there.

All in all, another great week in one of my favourite parts of the country 😊.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-15 05:27 AM GMT

Fantastic reports Neil, a great round up of the delights of Dorset 😊 Cheers for the info on the path to Bindon, hopefully I'll be able to give it a go next year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 14-Sep-15 11:53 PM GMT

What a fantastic holiday Neil, I want to go there next year 😊 22 species as well, roll on, Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 15-Sep-15 12:19 AM GMT

Your account of the week you spent on the Dorset coast makes for very enjoyable reading, Neil, It's also illustrated with loads of lovely photos 😊 The stunning Painted Ladies in part 6, and the earlier group of Small Tortoiseshells, great stuff 😊

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 15-Sep-15 02:04 AM GMT

Great time by the looks of it, Neil. A 'late' year does at least guarantee fresh butterflies into September!

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 15-Sep-15 03:56 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Not a bad haul for September, you've captured the subtle colours of the Painted Ladies just right.

And a mrgreen each for the Clouded Yellow and Adonis Blue 🍷🍷.

Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-Sep-15 04:40 AM GMT

Thank you Wurzel, Goldie, Mike, David and Trevor, I am glad you like the reports and your comments are very much appreciated 😊

Saturday 5th September – Back home in the garden.

We arrived back home from Dorset mid-afternoon on Saturday and after unpacking our stuff I went to sit out in the garden to chill out for a bit with a mug of coffee. It was a pleasant afternoon with about 50/50 cloud and sun and I immediately spotted a number of Speckled Woods fluttering around the bottom of the garden where the patch of brambles had produced a good crop of blackberries. I went and grabbed my camera to take a few shots and soon realised that there were at least seven different Specklies in this small area, either feeding on the blackberries or basking close by. Four different males and three females were soon identified by slight difference in markings or condition, including the unusually pale female below.



Speckled Wood, pale female - Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood, pale female - Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood, pale female - Coverdale 05.09.2015



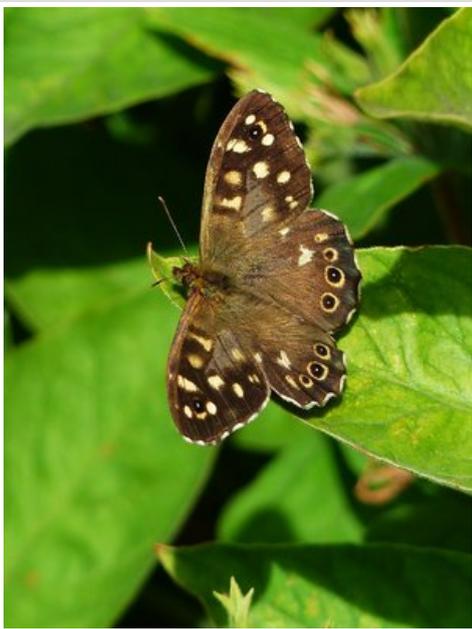
Speckled Wood, pale and normal females – Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood, pale female – Coverdale 05.09.2015

This was the one that I reported in the September sightings thread at the time...a week ago now last Saturday. She was a little worn with a degree of fading but taking this into consideration I reckon that she would have been an unusually pale individual even when fresh, a condition I would love to have seen her in.

and some of the rest...



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood female(L) & male(R) – Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 05.09.2015



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 05.09.2015

A great welcome home from my garden Specklies 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 15-Sep-15 04:43 AM GMT

I'm very envious of your Dorset holiday, Neil. A brilliant set of species, some beautifully fresh, and photos to match. 🍷🍷🍷

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 16-Sep-15 06:22 AM GMT

That is a cracking Specklie Neil 😊 – surely it must be an aberrant, something 'alba' or 'pallida' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 16-Sep-15 06:33 AM GMT

Very much enjoyed your holiday posts and thats a fine set of specklies, especially that lovely pale female. I think one of your males is an ab as well: 181, the one sitting on a yellowing leaf looks a lot like this one: <http://nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/scie...utterflies>

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 16-Sep-15 07:33 AM GMT

I knew you'd treat us to a whole album full of Speckled Woods before long, Neil, and my goodness you didn't disappoint. 😊 That photo with the pale aberration alongside a "normal" is a cracker, adding many 🍷 to finding the ab in the first place. Terrific stuff. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 19-Sep-15 01:43 AM GMT

Lovely pale Speckie Neil, Speckled woods always look cute and there seems to be loads of them about this time of year, so always some thing to photograph Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 19-Sep-15 06:04 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😊, I thought the pale Specklie had to be an ab. but no idea if it is a named one...one to look into during the dark nights perhaps.

Thanks Bugboy 😊, to be honest I thought that the male (181) was within normal variation, albeit at the darker end. I have seen similar ones in my garden before.

Cheers Dave, glad I didn't disappoint with the Specklies...they are certainly having a good late summer around here 😊

Thanks Goldie, I am glad you are seeing lots of Specklies too...one of my favourite butterflies, as you may have noticed 😊

Sunday 6th September

On the Sunday after we returned from Dorset my Mom had invited Jane and myself around for dinner which was a bonus as we had not had chance to go shopping and didn't have much in ourselves. During the afternoon, which was a nice sunny one, I had a walk around the park down the road to see what was about. After seeing all the Specklies in my garden the previous afternoon it was soon obvious that there were also loads out here, particularly on the clumps of blackberries growing around the edges of the trees. Along one particular short stretch just a few yards long, I counted at least 11 different individuals, maybe more as they were quite active in the warm sun.



Loads of Specklies on the blackberries along here.



Speckled Wood female – Langley Hall 06.09.2015



Tucking into the blackberries



Speckled Wood males - Langley Hall 06.09.2015



Speckled Wood male - Langley Hall 06.09.2015



Another unsuccessful attempt...



Speckled Wood female – Langley Hall 06.09.2015

Apart from all the Specklies, a single Holly Blue and a couple of Small Whites were also seen.

Friday 11th September

During the following week the Speckled Woods were in the garden on most afternoons when I got in from work, although with the days now getting noticeably shorter they were soon tucking themselves away for the night.

On Friday afternoon I spent a couple hours mowing the lawns and having a bit of a tidy up and as usual took a few photos.



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 11.09.2015



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 11.09.2015

As well as the Specklies all three common whites were seen passing through including a couple of fresh looking Green-veined Whites,



Green-veined White male - Coverdale 11.09.2015

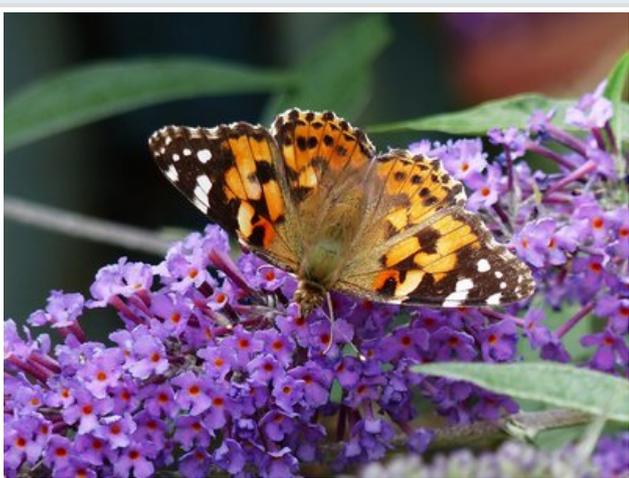
Sunday 13th September

Another reasonable day and at one point I noticed the pale female Speckled Wood fluttering about down the bottom of the garden. This was 8 days after I had first seen her when she was already looking a bit worn and she was now looking even paler than before.



Pale Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 13.09.2015

In my front garden I have a buddleia which was cut back hard this year and is consequently still flowering well. There had been a Red Admiral visiting regularly during the week which I usually disturbed as I pulled onto the drive in my car. This afternoon I spotted a Painted Lady on it, the first one I have seen in my garden since 2009.



Painted Lady - Coverdale 13.09.2015

This past week has been mostly dull and gloomy with some heavy rain showers but the weekend is looking promising so with a bit of luck I will be able to have a couple of hours around one of my local spots.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 19-Sep-15 06:34 AM GMT

Nice to see somebody's still observing Green Veined Whites. They've been abnormally scarce this autumn down here.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Allan.W., 19-Sep-15 06:45 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

That's a terrific selection of Specklies there Neil, the very pale individual is very striking,i,m surprised that it isn,t a named aberration(at least I don,t think it is)

,perhaps "Freemanii" !!

And very fortunate to get a picture ,with a standard Specklie, they,re looking pretty battleworn ,here in Kent ,but looking at your shots certainly make me want to look a bit closer at them in future....nice one . regards Allan.W.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 20-Sep-15 05:27 PM GMT

Hi David, I usually see Green-veined Whites well into September around here but numbers have been down this year, no doubt as a result of the poor summer.

Thanks Allan, the pale female really stood out in flight, unlike any other butterfly I get in the garden. I actually thought she was some kind of large moth when I first saw her until she settled and I got a good look at her.

Freemanii eh!... that has a certain ring to it 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 20-Sep-15 08:24 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, lots of Speckies this week even in my Garden, love your shots Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-Sep-15 04:22 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, glad to hear you have loads of Specklies too 😊

Saturday 19th September

A beautiful first half of the morning with not a cloud in sight although it was a bit chilly to start with. By 10.00am it was warming up in the sun and the Specklies were up and about in the back garden and a Red Admiral, probably the same one that has been lurking around all week, was in the front garden flitting between the buddleia and basking close by.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 19.09.2015

Earlier in the week I had spotted the distinctive little holes caused by Holly Blue larvae feeding on the Ivy flower buds in the back garden but didn't have time for a proper look until this morning. Most of the flowers are high up and difficult to get a good look at but I did find a couple of larvae on some lower flowers and managed to get some photos.

I used my old FZ150 with close up lens for these shots as I don't have an adaptor for my FZ200.



Holly Blue larva - Coverdale 19.09.2015



Holly Blue larva - Coverdale 19.09.2015

Later in the afternoon I had a couple of hours free so decided to nip around to my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull. By this time the clouds had built up, as they have so often done during the afternoons this year, but with the occasional bit of sun breaking through it was not long before I started seeing butterflies, a few Speckled Woods and whites to begin with plus a couple of late Meadow Browns. There were also a few Common Blues scattered about the meadow areas, mostly looking worn and faded now.



Common Blue - Castle Hills 19.09.2015

Around this time for the past couple of years I have found some Small Tortoiseshells on a large patch of Asters (at least I think that is what they are) and sure enough there were some there again, at least four different ones either on the Asters or close by.



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 19.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 19.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 19.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 19.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 19.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 19.09.2015

The clouds had now built up to 100% overcast and it had turned quite dull and gloomy so I started to circle back, stopping off to check out the bank where I had seen a number of Painted Ladies a few weeks back. As I approached I noticed an orange butterfly go to ground and sneaking up on it confirmed it as a Painted Lady and took a quick shot before it took off and disappeared at high speed.



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 19.09.2015

A few minutes later I saw what I thought at first was the same butterfly returning but when it settled it turned out to be a second individual, confirmed by some damage to its hindwings.



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 19.09.2015

I had been hoping for a Small Copper or two this afternoon but despite checking the usual favourite spots I didn't find any. Third brood of this species can be a bit hit and miss around here and some years they seem to have more of an extended second brood than a proper third one. I will hopefully manage to get back here for another look over the next couple of weekends, after all this is usually a good site for autumn Commas and I haven't seen any of those yet.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 23-Sep-15 04:57 AM GMT

Really nice Holly Blue larvae there Neil. It's been a bumper season for Hollies down here, hopefully the spring brood will be very productive.

Nice STS as well not seeing many of those where I am.

ATB

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 24-Sep-15 01:10 AM GMT

Lovely STS's Neil, they look in good condition too, I've had lots in the garden again, it makes the Autumn seem more like Summer, we've had some good weather here, raining here during the day for the first time for ages it's rained during the night before and been really nice through the day, it looks like we've also got a nice weekend to come Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 24-Sep-15 04:57 AM GMT

Holly Blues and Small Tortoiseshells have been doing well this year in south Wales, so it's pleasing to know they're thriving elsewhere too!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Sep-15 05:02 AM GMT

Thanks James, I have seen quite a few Holly Blues in my garden this year but strangely not that many whilst out and about around my patch.

Thanks Goldie, the first half of the week was a bit wet and gloomy around here, 'unsettled' they call it on the forecasts, but it has brightened up today and the weekend is looking promising.

Thanks David, I usually seem to get a late flush of Small Tortoiseshells around here.

Friday 25th September

This week has really felt like Autumn is here with it now being pitch black when I get up for work at 05.30. The drive from Solihull to Coventry has seen temperatures down to single figures on the display in the car with 8 or 9 degrees showing on a couple of mornings. After a fair bit of rain earlier in the week it has cleared up nicely today with a clear blue sky this morning and the usual cloud building up through this afternoon.

Pottering about in the garden this afternoon I watched at least three different male Specklies competing for the sunny patches which are now getting smaller as the sun gets lower in the sky.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 25.09.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 25.09.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 25.09.2015

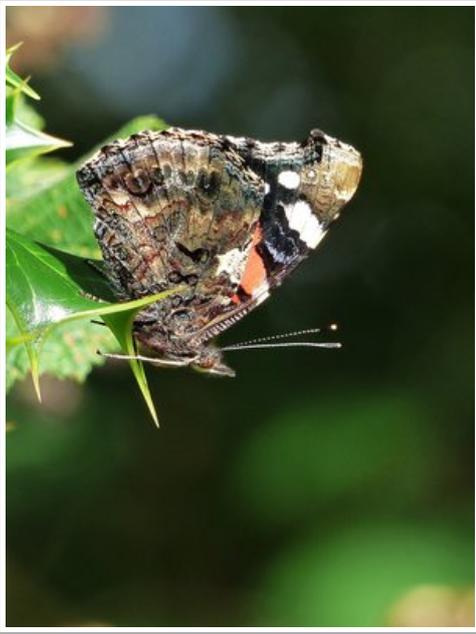


Speckled Wood – Coverdale 25.09.2015

A Red Admiral was hanging around for most of the hour or so that I was out there, a different one from the one that was about last week, identified as such by the small white dots in the red band on the forewing (*ab. bialbata*).



Red Admiral – Coverdale 25.09.2015



Red Admiral – Coverdale 25.09.2015

The weekend is looking promising for another look around one of my local spots but fingers crossed that the cloud doesn't build up as much as it did last weekend.

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 26-Sep-15 06:14 AM GMT

Still some life left in the season, Neil, so make the most of it.

It's a bit ironic that we've had to wait till late September for a guaranteed week of good weather but we'll take anything that's on offer!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 27-Sep-15 02:49 AM GMT

Love the Speckie with the Red Berries photo Neil, it really does look like Autumn, hope the rest of the week bucks up, nice Sunset now after a very dull afternoon. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 27-Sep-15 05:48 AM GMT

Lovely Red Admirals and Painted Lady recently Neil 😊 But the final Small Tort is a cracker, the contrast it great – a really dark individual 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Sep-15 05:08 AM GMT

Many thanks for your comments David, Goldie and Wurzel 😊

Saturday 26th September.

Another beautiful Saturday morning and this time it remained pleasant into the afternoon with occasional white clouds gliding across the sky instead of the grey overcast that has been developing all too often this year.

I decided to return to my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull and repeat the circuit that I had done last weekend to see what the better conditions would produce.

Starting off at the bank that had been covered with knapweed a few weeks back, there was still some in flower which was providing nectar for a couple each of Small Tortoiseshells, Small Whites and a Painted Lady.



Still some Knapweed in flower on this bank.



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Painted Lady - Castle Hills 26.09.2015

Moving on along the path, half a dozen Common Blues were still about albeit now looking a bit old and worn.



Common Blue – Castle Hills 26.09.2015

One of my targets for the day was Autumn Commas and I soon found a couple flitting along the hedges by the paths.



Comma – Castle Hills 26.09.2015

I made my way to the large patches of Asters which have been quite productive at this time of year as previously mentioned in this diary and noticed a number of butterflies feeding on them including four or five Small Tortoiseshells, a couple of Peacocks, and singles of Comma, Common Blue, Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood.



Meadow Brown – Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Common Blue - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Peacock - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Peacock - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Peacock - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 26.09.2015

After spending a bit of time watching the various butterflies and taking a few photos I then circled back, spotting a single Small Heath and another Peacock on the way.



Small Heath – Castle Hills 26.09.2015



Peacock – Castle Hills 26.09.2015

Just before getting back to the car I went for another quick look at the knapweed bank and saw the Painted Lady was still there. As I was watching, a cloud covered the sun for a few minutes and the PL went down on a patch of bare ground to bask so I took another couple of shots to finish off with.



Painted Lady – Castle Hills 26.09.2015

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 28-Sep-15 06:28 AM GMT

Cracking Painted Lady shot Neil and the 'distant' Small Tort is lush 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 29-Sep-15 05:43 AM GMT

Looks like there is still quite an array of flowering plant life in your neck of the woods, Neil. At this time of year, if you can find such a spot you can be almost certain that butterflies will have found it too!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 30-Sep-15 03:59 AM GMT

A brilliant selection of shots of late September butterflies, Neil 😊 very nice to see the lovely Peacocks, I've not seen any around here for a while, guess they're hibernating?

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 01-Oct-15 12:34 AM GMT

Love the photos Neil, the Butterflies always show off best when on lovely flowers Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-Oct-15 04:32 AM GMT

Apologies for the late response but many thanks for all your comments Wurzel, David, Mike, and Goldie 😊

Sunday 27th September

A sure sign that autumn is here is the increasing numbers of birds coming to the feeder in the garden with gangs of Great, Blue, Coal, and Long-tailed Tits visiting most days along with Robins, Dunnocks, Blackbirds and the occasional Wren picking up the fallen seed on the ground. There is also a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers with at least one juvenile that is usually around at some point during the day. Even if I don't see them I often hear the distinctive sound of one of them drumming on the trees with their beaks.

A pair of Nuthatches have also been about and it is interesting to see these the right way up for a change instead of hanging upside down which is how I usually see them.



Nuthatch - Coverdale 27.09.2015

Later on Sunday afternoon I went for a look around my local spot at Bickenhill but there was not much butterfly activity about despite the nice sunny conditions. A total of three Speckled Woods, one Small Tortoiseshell and a couple of passing whites was all that I saw. The difference between this site and Castle Hills on the previous day (Saturday 26th Sept.) was the almost complete lack of nectar flowers here with just a few straggly ragwort plants scattered about.

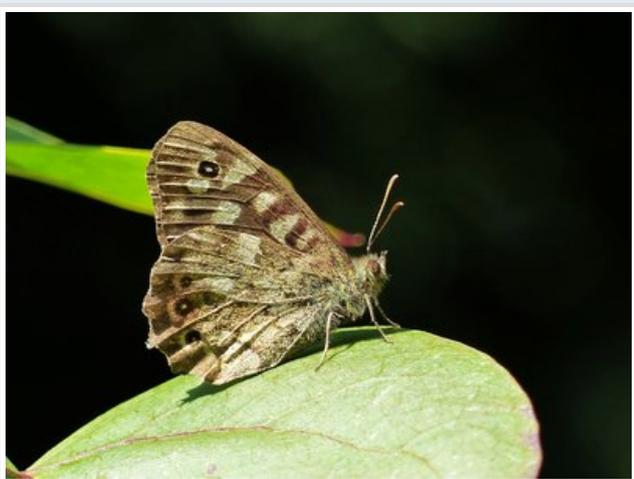
I did notice a large number of orb weaver spiders sitting in their webs that were stretched across the long grass and many of these were Four-spotted Orb Weavers (*Araneus quadratus*) along with the common Garden species (*Araneus diadematus*) that I usually see.



Four-spotted Orb Weaver - Bickenhill 27.10.2015

Sunday 4th October.

All week whilst I have been at work, after a foggy or cloudy start the sun has come out and it has turned into a beautiful afternoon. Getting home from work, the shadows are now lengthening across the garden and a few Speckled Woods and the odd Comma has been about, usually higher up around the trees which are still lit up by the sun.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 02.10.2014



Comma - Coverdale 02.10.2014

Saturday arrived and despite a forecast which promised another similar day of a misty start clearing for a sunny afternoon, it remained dull and cloudy all day with temperatures that refused to rise above the low teens. It was that dull and gloomy that not even the Specklies were tempted out.

Today (Sunday) dawned much better with clear blue skies and by mid-morning there was enough sun on the garden for a couple of male Specklies to be squabbling over the best spots.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 04.10.2015



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 04.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 04.10.2015

The forecast for today had it clouding up later through the afternoon but by 2.00pm with clear blue skies still as far as the eye could see and a couple of hours free I decided to go out and make the most of it...

To be continued,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-15 04:57 AM GMT

Looking forward to the next installment Neil, cracking shots of the four spotted Orb spider 😊🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 06-Oct-15 03:29 AM GMT

Great Speckie photos Neil, it was dank and dreary today no Butterflies Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 06-Oct-15 04:24 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, next bit coming up...

Nothing here today either Goldie, raining most of the day.

Sunday 4th October – continued.

As mentioned in the previous post, I decided to make the most of the beautiful October sun and nip out for a couple of hours in the afternoon. At this time of year, every weekend could be my last chance to get out so I went round to my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull again as I reckoned that the patches of asters and knapweed there would be my best bet of seeing some butterflies.

I pretty much followed the same circuit that I have followed on my previous visits here and sure enough soon found a couple of Small Tortoiseshells on the knapweed on the sunny bank. A few Speckled Woods were seen along with a couple of Commas as I carried on along the path towards the asters and arriving at these patches of flowers there were a couple more Small Tortoiseshells and three Commas feeding on them.





Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 04.10.2015



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 04.10.2015



Comma – Castle Hills 04.10.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 04.10.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 04.10.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 04.10.2015



Comma - Castle Hills 04.10.2015

A couple of ragged looking male Common Blues were also still hanging on in there,



Common Blue - Castle Hills 04.10.2015

With the good weather that we had last week I had been hopeful that a third brood Small Copper may show up and I was pleased when I found a nice female not far from the sunny knapweed bank.



Small Copper - Castle Hills 04.10.2015

When I was returning to the car later I checked this area again and found the female SC again and took a few more photos. I lost sight of her and found her again a couple of times and it wasn't until I checked my photos later I realised that I had in fact photographed two different females. Their similar markings and the fact they were in the same area made me think that they were the same one at the time.



Small Copper – Castle Hills 04.10.2015



The second one...

A single Peacock that I disturbed and which flew off rapidly and a few 'whites' actively flying around completed the tally for the afternoon. No Painted Ladies here today, probably headed south by now.

Also of note were the number of Dragonflies on the wing, mostly Common Darters with a few larger 'Hawker' types as well.



Common Darter – Castle Hills 04.10.2015

Not great numbers of butterflies but enough to make for a really pleasant couple of hours, particularly after the dull and gloomy day we had on Saturday. I reckon the weather forecasters got the days the wrong way round.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 06-Oct-15 05:11 AM GMT

That patch of Michaelmas Daisies certainly attracts the butterflies, Neil. I wish some grew around here. I haven't seen a Small Tortoiseshell round here

since early August (maybe even July) and no Coppers at all. A lovely Autumn selection of photos. 😊🍷

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 06-Oct-15 04:07 PM GMT

SUPERB. 😊😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-15 04:12 AM GMT

Lovely Commas Neil 😊 And the orange marginal markings on those Coppers seem huge 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurezl

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 11-Oct-15 06:07 PM GMT

The Comma's look great Neil but the Tortoiseshells stand out for me 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Hoggers, 11-Oct-15 08:38 PM GMT

What glorious photographs, Neil!

Am I letting down my favourite butterfly when I admit that I like the Comma photographs the best?!

I can live with the guilt...!

Best wishes,

Hoggers.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 12-Oct-15 02:54 AM GMT

Those Commas look lovely, they really stand out on that Michaelmas Daisy. I was hoping for a similar scene on Friday but my local rather large patch was totally devoid of anything but Bees!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Allan.W., 12-Oct-15 04:19 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Just sitting here perusing your excellent personal diary, while the rest of my crowd are being tortured by the "X" factor", and I came across your excellent shots for the 14th May, page 67, that Grizzley looks like an Abberation to me, if you're interested in such things, have a look on the Cockayne website, at the Grizzled Skips; bottom line, I believe your specimen is Ab; Scabellata, that's a cracking ab, I'd love to find one.!. Regards Allan.W.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Oct-15 03:40 AM GMT

Thank you Dave, Trevor, Wurzel, Goldie, Hoggers, Bugboy and Allan for all your comments 😊

Wurzel, I think the orange marginal band looks large because the marginal black spots are smaller than they often are in second brood which tends to be a bit darker. These third brood examples are more like the first brood. Also, they are both females which tend to have smaller black markings in general which can make them appear lighter and more 'orangy'.

Hoggers, I can't imagine you are letting your favourite butterfly down at all considering how much time you spend with them 😊

Allan, interesting observation regarding the Grizzly back in May. I will have to look into that one.

Sunday 11th October

With the season now winding down it has come to the time of year when I have to catch up on some of the jobs around the house that I have been neglecting during the weekends through the summer. Consequently last weekend was spent at home although I did manage to sneak out into the garden a couple of times on Sunday afternoon which was sunny albeit a bit nippy.

The Speckled Woods were still about and taking a few photos confirmed at least four different males in varying condition,



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 11.10.2015

Yesterday morning, on the way to work, the frost warning symbol was showing on my car for the first time this year and it looks like cold mornings for the rest of the week.

With the 'favourite photos' threads now started it is time for me to start looking back through my photos and putting a report or two together on my thoughts on my season.

Bye for now

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Paul Harfield, 14-Oct-15 08:06 AM GMT

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

With the season now winding down it has come to the time of year when I have to catch up on some of the jobs around the house that I have been neglecting during the weekends through the summer.

I know that feeling 😞 My wife keeps reminding me as well 😞😞

Lovely to see Speckled Wood doing well in your garden 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 17-Oct-15 06:19 AM GMT

Me too 😞 Mrs Wurzel has trapped me in various rooms of the house with various paint brushes, rollers and tins of paint for the last couple of weekends now 😞 Mind you come next season I'll have a huge amount of number of Brownie points stashed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 20-Oct-15 03:24 AM GMT

Thanks Jack, the Specklies have had another good year in my garden. They also seemed to have a particularly good autumn showing around here with loads at most of my local spots 😊

Yep, time to rack up those brownie points Wurzel...next season will soon be upon us and there are plans to make 😊

Saturday 17th October

Not much to report since the previous weekend, nights are closing in now when I get in from work and the temperatures have taken a definite drop with a cold north-easterly blowing for most of last week.

Saturday afternoon was quite pleasant if a bit chilly and a couple of Specklies, both males that I recognised from the previous weekend, came out to play for a while.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 17.10.2015



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 17.10.2015

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 23-Oct-15 01:54 AM GMT

I don't know what it is about it but that first Specklie shot just seems perfect 🍷🍷😄 Back to the Brownie Point earning... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Oct-15 03:45 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I actually prefer the second shot myself...just goes to show how subjective these things are 😊

Sunday 25th October

A reasonable day, dry but quite nippy with a proper autumn feel to it. It looks like the Specklies have finished now in the garden... oh well, they had a good year there this year 😊



Autumn in the garden.

Loads of birds in the garden including Bullfinches, Chaffinches, Great, Blue, Coal and Long-tailed Tits, Sparrows, Blackbirds, Robins, Wrens, Nuthatches and a couple of GS Woodpeckers. Photos below were taken through the back window whilst I watched them between jobs in the house.



Nuthatch - Coverdale 25.10.2015



Nuthatch - Coverdale 25.10.2015



Coal Tit having a bit of a go...



GS Woodpecker – Coverdale 25.10.2015

Barring possibly an odd hibernator, I'm not expecting to see any more butterflies now this year, especially now the clocks have gone back and it is getting dark when I get in from work.

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 31-Oct-15 08:50 PM GMT

Love the Bird shots Neil, I think my Butterflies have all gone now in-spite of the mild weather. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 03-Nov-15 04:41 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, I think I have seen the last for around here now, it may be mild but we have had thick fog all day here and the forecast is for it to be replaced by rain.

Saturday 31st October

We had a run down to Stratford on Saturday afternoon for the Warwickshire BC AGM. My son Chris is living with his girlfriend just around the corner from the NFU mutual head office where the AGM was being held and whilst we were waiting for him to walk round to meet us a Speckled Wood flew across the road in front of us.

The AGM was followed by a great presentation by Steve and Debbie Cheshire on the butterflies of the Maritime Alps where they had been earlier in the summer.

Sunday 1st November

A foggy morning cleared by midday to a beautiful sunny afternoon with wall to wall blue skies. I couldn't resist the temptation to nip around to my local spot at Castle Hill for a little wander to see if anything was about.

Despite the warm conditions, my car display was showing a steady 17 degrees on the way, it was eerily quiet when I got there and it took me a while to realise why... the constant background of bees buzzing and grasshoppers singing was missing. Most of the nectar flowers had now finished with just a few knapweeds still hanging on.

With the sun at this time of the year staying lower in the sky there were plenty of shady corners where the sun had not reached over the trees and where pockets of mist had lingered,



Sunlight through the mist

At least a dozen Common Darter dragonflies were still about which is normal for this species which will fly quite late in the year.



Common Darter – Castle Hills 01.11.2015

A couple of flocks of Goldfinches were also about, many of them tucking into the seed heads of thistles,



Goldfinch – Castle Hills 01.11.2015

So far I had not seen a single butterfly and with the sun getting lower and the shadows lengthening I was heading back to the car when a Small Tortoiseshell flew straight past me. It was heading somewhere in a determined manner and did not stop but at least I had seen a November Butterfly, not something I usually manage to do around here.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Dec-15 03:34 AM GMT

Looking back at 2015 – part 1.

As usual during the dark nights at this time of year, I have been looking back through my photos for the favourite photos threads, something which always gets me thinking back on the season and my impressions of it.

This year, a fairly mild winter here in the midlands was followed by a reasonably dry spring with the first hibernators starting to show up in good numbers in my garden and around the local sites from the end of March. It seemed that 2015 was a late season overall, with a lot of the summer species running a week or two later than usual at my local sites around Solihull. This obviously varied by species and some seemed to emerge around their normal time but then continued to come out in lower numbers but over a longer period. This is just my observation based mostly on what I saw around my local patch and others may have different thoughts in other parts of the country.

As well as my local sites I also travelled about a fair bit, either on day trips which tended to be on days that I had booked off work during the week, and on a couple of longer trips further afield. This year these were 3 days in the Heddon Valley in late June and then 3 days up in the Arnside area in late July. I also had a couple of week-long family breaks, first of which was down in Cornwall where we stayed on the Lizard, and then a week down in Dorset at the end of August/early September when we stayed at Durdle Door. The longer breaks were all booked earlier in the year due to me having to book my time off work in advance so as usual I was taking a bit of a flyer on the timing and whether I would see my target species on each trip. In the end I managed to see all the species that I hoped for plus a few bonuses that I originally hadn't expected to see this year. My final tally for the year was 50 species, a number that I have only reached once before and that was in the so called 'washout summer' of 2012. Out

of interest I looked back at my species counts for 2013 and 2014 and they were 48 and 44 respectively.

Here are the first 25 species, in approximate order that I saw them. The accompanying photos are not necessarily the best that I took (although I was well chuffed with some of them) but have been picked sometimes simply for the memories of particular days.

1. **Peacock** - Started appearing locally in Late March with good numbers flying from early April. The following summer brood was well down on the high numbers of the previous couple of years.



Peacock - Bickenhill 06.04.2015

2. **Small Tortoiseshell** - Good numbers seen both locally in spring and at most places later in the summer.



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 06.04.2015

3. **Comma** - Good numbers in spring but there didn't seem to be as many around locally later in the year compared with the previous couple of years, although I did see notable numbers elsewhere, most notably at Fermyn Woods in mid-July.



Comma - Bickenhill 06.04.2015

4. **Brimstone** – Quite a few seen wandering about in the spring but I don't seem to have seen many later in the year.



Brimstone – One from the garden 06.04.2015

5. **Speckled Wood** – These had a good year in my garden and were also seen almost everywhere through the year. They had a particularly good emergence locally through September and into October.



Speckled Wood – One of the early garden Specklies 20.04.2015

6. **Small White** – Regularly seen in the garden but not that many whilst out and about. Hard to say what kind of season they had as many 'whites' seen flying could have been any of the 3 common whites. My feeling is they had a below average year.



Small White on forget-me-nots in the garden 03.05.2015

7. **Orange-tip** - Although I saw quite a few locally my impression was that numbers were down on the previous couple of years. I also started to see females at the same time as the first males, the latter appearing a little late this year around my patch which made their flight period appear shorter than usual.



Orange-tip - Coverdale 03.05.2015

8. **Green-veined White** - Same comments in general as for Small White. Quite a few in the garden earlier in the year but definitely fewer around later in the year.



Green-veined White - Coverdale 09.05.2015

9. **Holly Blue** - Seemed to have a good year, especially in my garden, although not so many seen whilst out and about.



A male Holly blue that paused in the garden for a brief rest 09.05.2015

10. **Large White** - Seen regularly but as with the Small White seemed to have a below average year.



Large white - Preddanack Cliffs Cornwall 04.06.2015

11. **Small Blue** - Seemed to be doing well at the 3 sites I saw them, Bishops Hill, Prestbury Hill, and Barton Bushes.



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

12. **Dingy Skipper** - I saw good numbers of Dingies at a number of sites in Warwickshire plus loads at Prestbury Hill. My impression was they were

having a good year.



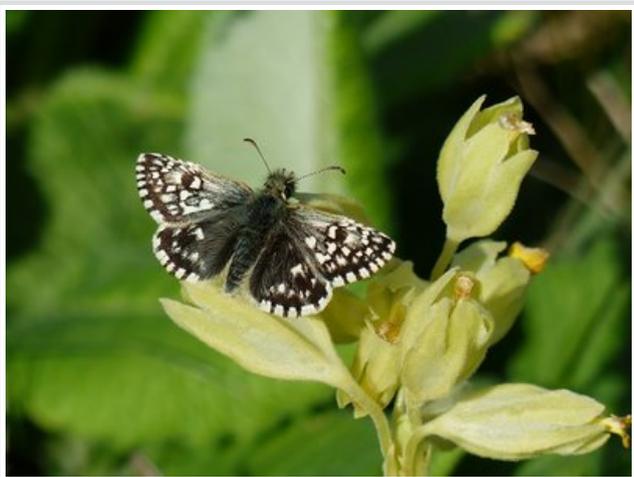
Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

13. **Green Hairstreak** – I saw more Green Hairstreaks this year than ever before, most notably at Ryton Meadows, Prestbury Hill and Barton Bushes with odd ones cropping up at other sites with the last one seen in the Heddon Valley at the end of June.



Green Hairstreak – Bishops Hill 04.05.2015

14. **Grizzled Skipper** – This year I saw these at Bishops Hills, Harbury Spoilbank, and Ryton Meadows. Not great numbers overall, just a couple at each site.



Grizzled Skipper – Ryton Meadows 13.05.2015

15. **Small Copper** – Not sure about this one. Apart from the reports by Hoggers and a few others from Dungeness, a lot of people seemed to be missing seeing this species this year. Personally I saw quite few through the year, not great numbers in any one place but in ones and twos at quite a few sites in my travels. Locally the second brood seemed to be a good couple of weeks later than usual with a partial third brood appearing at one site in early

October.



Small Copper – Bickenhill 28.05.2015

16. **Small Heath** – This is a species of concern in Warwickshire with recorded numbers dropping significantly over the past few years. Locally I found them at all the sites I would expect to where they appeared to be having an average year.



Small Heath – Barton Bushes 28.05.2015

17. **Common Blue** – This species appeared to be living up to its common name. Seen nearly everywhere I went throughout the year. As in the previous couple of years there were some lovely blue females about in the first brood.



Common blue – Shadowbrook Meadows 28.05.2015

18. **Brown Argus** – Just a couple seen at one local site this year after finding them at two sites last year. Also seen at a number of other sites whilst out and about and loads in Dorset during my week there at the end of August/early September.



Brown Argus – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2015

19. **Duke of Burgundy** - I saw this species on just the one occasion, at Prestbury Hill when I went specifically to see them and where I saw around a dozen in both the Bill Smyllie and The Masts reserves.



Duke of Burgundy – Prestbury Hill 21.05.2013

20. **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** - Good numbers seen in the Wyre Forest where they seem to be doing well and expanding into new areas. Also a couple seen at Grafton Wood where they seem to be just hanging on after a re-introduction by West Midlands BC a few years ago.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015

21. **Marsh Fritillary** - I have only seen this species once before this year. One of my targets to see during our week on the Lizard in early June when I saw good numbers at a couple of sites.



Marsh Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2015

22. **Wall Brown** - A few seen in Cornwall in early June and a couple in Dorset later at the end of August when some lousy weather just before we arrived seemed to have finished off the second brood.



Wall Brown - The Lizard 03.06.2015

23. **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** - Another of my target species whilst down in Cornwall. Good numbers seen, most notably along the coast path from Kynance Cove to Lizard Point. Also seen at a couple of other spots on the Lizard as well as at Upton Towans near Hayle.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - The Lizard 04.06.2015

24. **Painted Lady** - I started seeing these in Cornwall in early June where during the course of the week a bit of an influx seemed to be taking place along with Red Admirals, Large Whites and a few Humming bird Hawk Moths also spotted. Despite media reports of an impending invasion, a proper 'Painted Lady Year' never did materialise, although they did crop up throughout the season at a lot of places. Later in the year I saw more locally than I have for some years and I had the first one in the garden since 2009. These were mostly fresh looking examples which were probably offspring from earlier immigrants rather than new arrivals.



Painted Lady – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015

25. **Red Admiral** – I saw my first Red Admirals this year in Cornwall where they were coming in off the sea with other immigrants as mentioned above. After that they appeared regularly through the year with a number showing up in my garden.



Red Admiral – Predannack Cliffs 04.06.2015

That takes my season up to early summer. So far it had been a reasonably good spring with plenty of good warm sun and although there were also plenty of showers there had not been any prolonged wet spells. I was noticing the increasing amount of cloud that had been building up through May and into June and an almost constant breeze was making itself felt on most of the days that I went out.

To be continued ...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 08-Dec-15 05:41 AM GMT

Lovely presentation, Neil, with an interesting commentary on individual species. I'm looking forward to the latter instalment.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 09-Dec-15 03:59 AM GMT

An interesting read Neil. I agree with most of your feelings about the season and what was more or less numerous than 'normal'. My own theory is that the rubbish May we had delayed species that were larvae at the time. All the early spring species seemed to be about normal as far as I could tell.

Looking forward to the next instalment 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Katrina, 09-Dec-15 06:54 AM GMT

Congratulations on your competition place. Your Speckled Wood was my favourite photo posted in diaries on the website this year!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 10-Dec-15 05:43 PM GMT

Wow Neil 50 species 🍷🍷 looking forward to the next 25 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Dec-15 04:20 AM GMT

Thanks all for the comments 😊...I have been a bit busy lately but hoping to get the next instalment done soon.

And thanks for the comment on my Speckled Wood photo Katrina. Competitions are not usually my thing and only decided to stick some photos in this year on the spur of the moment.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 12-Dec-15 06:22 AM GMT

Interesting report Neil, and something I'm still working on, if only my 'other job' didn't demand so much of my time 😊😊 Looking forward to the next installment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Dec-15 06:03 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, next instalment is nearly done, just a couple more photos to sort out to go with it now. I know what you mean about 'other stuff' demanding so much time 😊😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-Dec-15 03:48 AM GMT

Looking back at 2015 - part 2.

...Continuing on with the summary of the remaining 25 species that I saw through the rest of the 2015 season, again in approximate order that each species was seen.

26. Silver-studded Blue - Having seen a couple of sighting reports of SSBs at Upton Towns just before we went down to Cornwall, I was hoping that I would get a chance to have a look whilst we were there. On the last Friday afternoon I got my chance and drove over for a look and found half a dozen or so mostly fresh males in sheltered spots in the dunes.



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towns 05.06.2015

27. Clouded Yellow – A single example seen at Upton Towans then half a dozen seen later in the year when we were down in Dorset in early September.



Clouded Yellow – This one from later in the year at Osmington Dorset 01.09.2015

28. Large Skipper – First one of the year seen at Greenscombe Woods when we stopped off on the way back from Cornwall on 6th June but it was another week or so before I started to see them around my local patch. They then seemed to have a very good year with large numbers around for the rest of June and most of July.



Large Skipper – Langley Hall Park Solihull 19.06.2015

29. Meadow Brown – Another species first seen at Greenscombe Wood on 6th June. Seemed to have a good year around my local sites and I also saw good numbers everywhere else that I went. They were particularly numerous around Durdle Door in early September.



Meadow Brown – A fresh male in my garden 04.07.2015

30. Heath Fritillary – This species was the reason for the stop off at Greenscombe Woods on the way back from our week in Cornwall. A dozen or more

were seen during the all too brief time that I could spend here before continuing on our way back home.



Heath Fritillary – Greenscombe Wood 06.06.2015

31. Black Hairstreak – A day down at Bernwood in on 16th June provided my first ever Black Hairstreaks with a couple seen in the meadows and maybe half a dozen at the M40 compensation area on a partly cloudy and quite breezy day. A week later I went down to Whitcross Green Wood where I saw another half a dozen or so.



Black Hairstreak – Whitcross Green Wood 24.06.2015

32. Marbled White – First seen at Bernwood Meadows on 16th June and then at a number of sites through the summer. This species first appeared at my local sites around Solihull in 2012 and since then numbers have increased year on year. This year was the best yet with good numbers seen at one site in particular. There were still a few in good condition around Durdle Door in early September.



Marbled White – Castle Hills Solihull 04.07.2015

33. Ringlet – Ringlets always seem to do well in cooler years and this year was no exception with them appearing in almost plague like numbers at most local sites. I also had them in my garden in greater numbers than ever with 6 at once on one afternoon.



Ringlet - Castle Hills Solihull 27.06.2015

34. Small Skipper - This was one of the species that was a bit late appearing in any numbers around my local patch but then had a good year with fresh looking examples still appearing well into August.



Small Skipper - Bickenhill Solihull 12.07.2015

35. Silver-washed Fritillary - I saw the first few in the Heddon Valley in late June followed by good numbers at Fermyn Woods a couple of weeks later. A couple of worn examples were still flitting about at Bernwood in the second week of August.



Silver-washed Fritillary - Fermyn Woods 15.07.2015

36. High Brown Fritillary - My main target species for my 3 day stay in the Heddon Valley. A couple of days of beautiful weather produced good numbers in the area. About a month later I also saw a few up at Arnside Knott but not as many as in previous visits to that area.



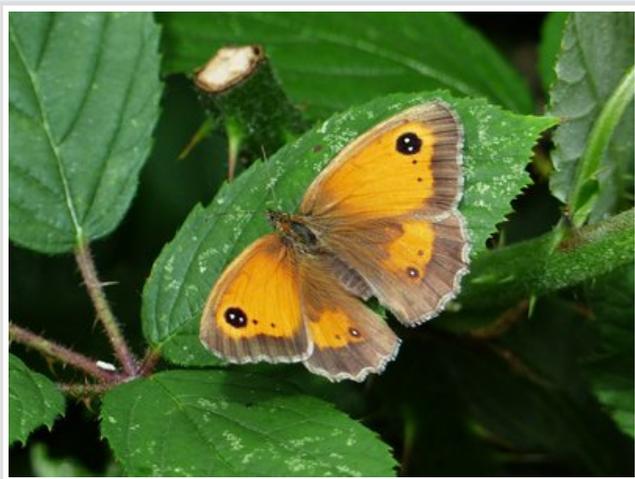
High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 28.06.2015

37. Dark Green Fritillary – My previous comments about the HBF apply equally to this species. Seen at the same places in approximately the same numbers.



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015

38. Gatekeeper – Another species that was a bit late appearing but then seemed to have a good year and hung around a bit longer than usual. There were still a few around in Dorset in early September.



Gatekeeper – Castle Hills Solihull 25.07.2015

39. Essex Skipper – Like the Small Skipper in that they were a bit late appearing and then had a good year. More numerous than the Small Skipper at some local sites and with their slightly later flight period they were still about in numbers well into August. Also a garden first for me this year.



Essex Skipper – Castle Hills Solihull 11.07.2015

40. White Admiral – I only saw this species on one occasion this year and that was at Fermyn Woods in mid-June. I quite simply didn't get around to seeing them at any of their Warwickshire haunts.



White Admiral – Fermyn Woods 15.07.2015

41. Purple Emperor – After missing out on a visit to Fermyn last year, I was determined to get there this year but unfortunately I was a bit late going and missed the best time by about a week. During a day that started off wet and then gradually improved by the afternoon I saw half a dozen with just a couple coming to ground. Numbers reported here this year were apparently well down compared with the showings of the previous few years.



Purple Emperor – Fermyn Woods 15.07.2015

42. Purple Hairstreak – Due to their elusive tree top living habits I have no idea what kind of year this species had. I saw them on a number of occasions at various sites flitting about the tops of trees and had a short but notable audience with a number of individuals at Bernwood Meadows when I stopped off there on my way back from a day at Aston Rowant. I was also pleased to finally confirm their presence in the park by my Moms house.



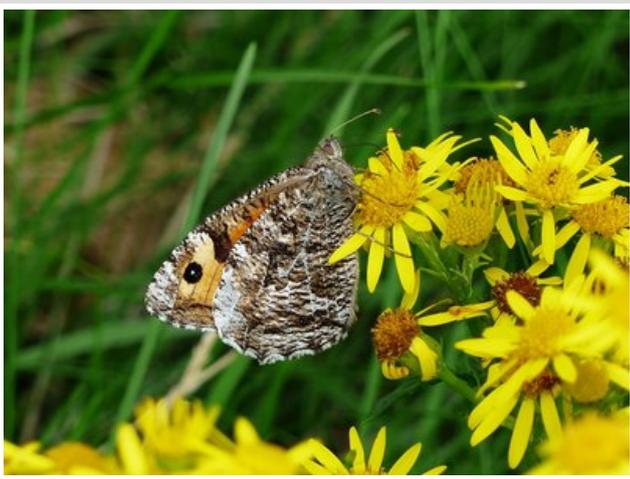
Purple Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 12.08.2015

43. Scotch Argus – My main target for the trip up to Arnside in late July. I was in fact a little early this year which combined with a slightly later emergence meant that I saw far fewer than previous visits and those I did see were all males. Apparently they were flying in good numbers a week or so later.



Scotch Argus – Arnside Knott 29.07.2015

44. Grayling – A few seen at Arnside Knott and Gait Barrows and then about a month later there were loads on the slopes above Durdle Door.



Grayling – one of the many around Durdle Door 30.08.2015

45. Northern Brown Argus – A bonus for me this year. I have previously seen this species at a few sites in the Arnside area when I visited last year in mid-June. During my visits in previous years which were later for Scotch Argus the NBA have usually finished so it was a pleasant surprise to find a number of good condition examples still around, both at Arnside Knott and at Gait Barrows. Apparently they emerged around their normal time and then dribbled out over a longer period than usual, no doubt as a result of the generally wet and gloomy weather in that part of the country earlier this year.



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015

46. Chalkhill Blue – I saw loads of these on both sides of the reserve at Aston Rowant on 12th August. My impression was they were a bit later emerging here as there seemed to be more fresh examples flying compared to my visits in previous years which have usually been a week or two earlier. I also saw loads still in good condition on Bindon Hill on Sept. 2nd, far more than my visits there in previous years when there are usually just a few late ones left.



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015

47. Silver-spotted Skipper – My main target for my visit to Aston Rowant. Good numbers flying on both sides of the reserve and although I did not make an accurate count there appeared to be more on the slopes on Bald Hill on the south side than there were on the north side of the M40.



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015

48. Brown Hairstreak – Just the one individual of this species seen this year, during my stop off at Bernwood Meadows on the way back from Aston Rowant.



Brown Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 12.08.2015

49. Adonis Blue – This species is always one of my main targets to see during our late summer family breaks in Dorset. Their emergence in this area appeared to be a bit late this year but varied by site with loads at White Horse Hill Osmington and fewer than usual on Bindon Hill. Also, I did not find any females at Bindon Hill which indicated that it was still early in their emergence there.



Adonis Blue – Osmington Dorset 01.09.2015

50. Lulworth Skipper – With Durlston Country Park being a known late site for this species and having seen them there before in early September I was hoping to see them there this year. Unfortunately there was a weekend of heavy rain at the beginning of our stay in Dorset which I feared might have finished them off so I was pleased to find a couple of well-worn females when I went to Durlston on 1st September. The biggest surprise for me however was finding a female still on the slopes above Durdle Door on the afternoon of our last day (4th September).



Lulworth Skipper – Durdle Door 04.09.2015

So that's it...50 species seen and photographed during what in some respects turned out to be quite a challenging year. As usual, I managed to make the most of my time by planning trips and family breaks to maximise the opportunities to see as many species as possible, but even so I managed to see a few species that I hadn't planned for at the beginning of the year.

The cloud that had been regularly building up through May continued to be a feature for the rest of the year, as did a persistent wind that made itself felt to some degree on almost every trip out. The weather wasn't all bad, there were some spells of decent warm weather, but overall the summer was a cool and cloudy one.

With me finally seeing Black Hairstreaks this year, it just leaves Chequered Skipper as the only resident UK mainland species that I have not yet seen. Of course to complete the UK list I would have to take a trip across the Irish Seas for the Cryptic Wood White. I have not yet made any attempt to see a Long-tailed Blue but if they start turning up more regularly then that may be on the cards before long. I also believe a LTB was reported from near Weymouth the week before we went down to Dorset so you never know.

With a couple of months of cold dark nights ahead still, it is time to start thinking of next season and of making plans on where to go and what to see.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 15-Dec-15 05:40 AM GMT

Superb once again, Neil. Lovely, sharp images too, especially the Silver Washed & High Brown Fritillaries.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pete Eeles, 15-Dec-15 05:59 AM GMT

I agree 😊 And your Gatekeeper is an ab., if you could add it here: [gallery/album.php?album_id=353](https://www.birdforum.net/gallery/album.php?album_id=353) 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 15-Dec-15 07:37 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

You've got some crackers there, and some species iv'e yet to see. Invariably they are the one's that are a long distance from home. Lovely shots of the High Brown and Black Hairstreak 🐛.

Now that I have a new car I will feel more confident embarking on a long journey to see some lifers!

All the very best,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 16-Dec-15 12:39 AM GMT

Fantastic photos Neil, I really envy them and wish I'd taken them 🐛🐛 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 16-Dec-15 04:10 AM GMT

Thanks all for the great comments, they are really appreciated 😊

Hi Pete, thanks for asking but Vince has reminded me that the Gatekeeper photo is already in the *ab.excessa* folder in the species specific gallery after he requested it a while back.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pete Eeles, 16-Dec-15 05:21 AM GMT

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

Vince has reminded me that the Gatekeeper photo is already in the *ab.excessa* folder in the species specific gallery after he requested it a while back.

I should have realised that Vince would be on top of things, as usual!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 19-Dec-15 06:04 AM GMT

An interesting report and one that's given me some food for thought as I write my '2015 Tally', cracking shots as well especially the Scotch Argus 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-Dec-15 04:19 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, looking forward to your summary of the season 😊

Looking back at 2015 - part 3.

Whilst looking back through my photos, it has become a bit of a habit for me to pick out a few photos that, although not necessarily the best I took I still find interesting for one reason or another. One group of these are photos that show more than one butterfly in the frame, sometimes displaying courtship behaviour or sometimes just simply nectaring or basking together.



Small Tortoiseshell pair - Solihull 08.04.2015



Orange-tip female rejecting a male - Bickenhill 18.04.2015



Speckled Wood female 'playing dead' to reject a male – Coverdale 09.05.2015



Small Coppers – Cornwall 03.06.2015



Silver-studded Blues – Upton Towans 05.06.2015



High Brown Fritillaries – Heddon Valley 30.06.2015



Silver-washed Fritillaries – Fermyn 15.07.2015



Small Tortoiseshells – Fermyn 15.07.2015



Small Skipper male trying to muscle in on a pair in cop. – Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Dark Green Fritillary with a very out of focus High Brown in the background – Arnside 30.07.2015



4 Chalkhill Blues and 1 Common Blue – Aston Rowant 12.08.2015



Small Copper and Meadow Brown – Durdle Door 31.8.2015



5 Small Tortoiseshells basking in the early evening sun – Durdle Door 01.09.2015



3 Painted Ladies – Portland 03.09.2015



Speckled Wood pair ignoring each other whilst tucking into blackberries – Coverdale 05.09.2015



A very pale Speckled Wood female compared with a normal one – Coverdale 05.09.2015

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 22-Dec-15 06:24 AM GMT

I love these kinds of photographs. Those Small Torties particularly made me smile. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Paul Harfield, 22-Dec-15 06:45 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Those Small Torties particularly made me smile. 😊

Me too 😊 And the Speckled woods of course. Lovely selection of multiples Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 22-Dec-15 05:29 PM GMT

You make shots of multiples look easy, but easy they are not. Luck, opportunity, right place at the right time are all needed in equal measure. How many UKBer's have a shot of male and female Orange Tip together, not many i'll bet.

Superb stuff 😊 .

All the best for 2016,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jan-16 03:03 AM GMT

Many thanks for the great comments David, Jack and Trevor 😊

Looking back at 2015 – the places.

With various family stuff going on over Christmas I have been a bit busy but with just a few hours left of this year I thought I would post a few photos looking back at the various places I visited during 2015.

During the spring I ventured out a few times around Warwickshire to places such as Bishops Hill, Harbury Spoilbank and Ryton Wood.



Bluebells in Ryton Wood – 13.05.2015

I also spent a day wandering around the Wyre Forest,



Meadow in the Wyre Forest – 26.05.2015

In early June I had my first trip further afield when we stayed for a week on the Lizard in Cornwall,



Kennack Sands Cornwall – 31.05.2015



Kynance Cove Cornwall - 03.06.2015



Coast path between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point - 03.06.2015



Predannack Cliffs looking towards Mullion Cove - 04.06.2015

Later in June I went looking for my first Black Hairstreaks at Bernwood and Whitecross Green Wood...



Bernwood Meadows - 16.06.2015

and towards the end of June it was down for a few days in the Heddon Valley,



Heddon Valley - 29.06.2015



Looking back up the path to Heddons Mouth - 30.06.2015

A month later I was heading north for a few days in the Arnside area,



Looking towards Arnside Knott from the limestone pavement at Gait Barrows 29.07.2015



Clouds over the lakes but sunny over Arnside – 30.07.2015

I was a bit later than usual taking my usual run down the M40 to Aston Rowant but this seemed to tie in nicely with the late season,



Slopes of Aston Rowant north side – 12.08.2015

Then at the end of August we were down in Dorset for our usual weeks break, again stopping at Durdle Door,



Looking up the gully at Durlston Country Park – 01.09.2015



One of my favourite spots, the path up to White Horse Hill at Osmington – 01.09.2015



Looking down on West Lulworth from Bindon Hill – 02.09.2015



Lulworth Cove in the early evening sun looking back on the walk back to Durdle Door - 02.09.2015



Durdle Door rock arch in the early evening sun - 03.09.2014

Overall I had a great year returning to some familiar places plus visiting a couple of new places for me 😊

Here's wishing everyone a Happy New Year and hoping that we all manage to see what we wish for in the forthcoming season.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 01-Jan-16 04:15 AM GMT

All the best to you, Neil, and many thanks for posting such uplifting images on a dreary New Year's Eve.