

Susie

by Susie, 20-Mar-10 04:49 AM GMT

Well, I've only seen two butterflies so far this year, a Red Admiral at Wakehurst Place and a peacock in my back garden on Monday, but I think it would be nice to keep a record of the coming year's events. It will probably be full of lots of brown hairstreak comments 😊

There were brown hairstreak eggs in the front garden but I can't see any now. Perhaps they were all eaten by birds or perhaps I am just not being very observant.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 20-Mar-10 09:35 PM GMT

In this dreary damp weather the garden looks absolutely ghastly at first glance. There are plenty of green shoots if you take the time to look though.

The only item of obvious interest in the pond which is a seething mass of hormonally charged frogs. I've lost count of how many splodges of spawn there are but we certainly won't have any shortage of tadpoles this spring. Around the edge of the pond the maroon shoots of ladies smock are a couple of inches tall. These are very easy to propagate and have tiny roots along the stem at leaf nodes later in the summer. It's easy just to pinch off a bit and pop it into some moist compost. From one garden centre bought plant three years ago there are dozens around the pond now and I hope they prove a draw for the orange tips in a month or so.

Tucked away in the ivy covering an old tree trunk is a robin's nest. I've been keeping my distance as the robins appear to be very wary and I don't want to disturb them at this critical stage but I think there are eggs as they ceased their toing and froing with bits of twig, leaf and later spiders' webs and moss a week ago.

The first of the miniature daffs are just about in flower which is nice as they can carry on from where the snowdrops are finishing off around the oak in the front garden. Only one aconite is in flower there this year, they obviously don't like that site. As the grass around the oak doesn't get cut until summer because of the daffodils I'm going to put in some wildflower plugs to liven up the area. Ox eyed daisies should look a treat.

In the main beds there are plenty of honesty and sweet rocket, these did so well last year for the butterflies.

I've just come back from Elmhurst Farm where my eldest is going to help with lambing. We just missed the birth of one lamb and the pens of mothers and babies were absolutely gorgeous and should taste delicious too in time! I'm looking forward to visiting the farm regularly as it is on the south facing side of the hill and should be good for butterflies and I know there are purple emperors over there although I have never seen them myself. As the front door by the lamp had half a dozen moths on it I am thinking a trap on the farm would be a good idea too, but it's early days yet. 😊



Re: Susie

by Susie, 21-Mar-10 11:34 PM GMT

What a difference a day makes! The sun is shining, the birds singing, spring is sprunging and butterflies are on the wing. Hurrah!! 😊

This tatty old peacock was feeding on *Daphne odora aureamarginata* which is in a large pot by the kitchen door and smells heavenly. It could possibly be the same peacock I saw at the start of the week, but that one was in absolutely pristine condition so if it is the same it must have had an awfully tough time in the past few days.



I also had something flying around the garden which looked very like a Painted Lady 😬 As it didn't settle and as I didn't get a photo I will give it the benefit of the doubt as my id skills are a bit ropey at the best of times but, just think if it was, how exciting!

Re: Susie

by Susie, 24-Mar-10 02:10 AM GMT

A spot of gardening was in order this morning and it was good to see while out there that the dots in the frogspawn are turning into commas (not the butterfly 😊).

Several seven spot ladybirds were on the hellebores and I was pleased not to find any of the bright red lily beetles today. There aren't many insects I kill but these always get squished. As much as I admire their appearance I'd rather kill them as adults than as the grubs which live in a slimy mess of their own waste and are very unpleasant.

Even better was while at the garden centre later on they were giving away free packets of seeds 😊 Butterfly attraction mix was just one of the several packets available which I chose. Now I just have to work out where to put them as I have no room in the garden!

Re: Susie

by Susie, 27-Mar-10 02:55 AM GMT

Still no butterfly sightings to report but the first tadpoles have hatched, there are four eggs in Mr and Mrs Robin's nest, the wild primroses are starting to flower along the roadside around here and the first cherry plum and sallow blossom is out.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 29-Mar-10 12:56 AM GMT

There was a beautiful male brimstone at Southwater Country Park this afternoon. 😊

Perfectly timed to the opening of the lungwort in the garden was the appearance of a bee-fly yesterday, this means there should be solitary bees about. I've seen bumbles and honeybees but no solitaires as yet although I did hear a hairy footed flower bee yesterday; they are really noisy little critters! I always think that bee-flies look like they've been put together with odds and ends that someone had left over, they certainly aren't the prettiest, but I am uncommonly fond of them.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 31-Mar-10 12:20 AM GMT

Over the last few days we have had more than our fair share of April showers so outdoor activities have been limited and butterflies nowhere to be seen. In the meantime the garden has been busy with lots of new green shoots appearing; the comfrey and alliums seems to be growing at the rate of an inch or two per day at the moment and I keep seeing shoots of plants I forget I had. 😄 I've potted my seeds up and moved a few things about.

A local cat has been trying to get the robins' nest so I don't give the chicks much chance of survival once they hatch. 😞 Nesting birds don't seem to do very well here; last spring a wren nested in one of the hanging baskets at the back of the house. It faces south and the poor little chicks were cooked in the heat of last May.

I hope the Easter weather will be better. I had a trial run at making meringue nests for the kids to fill with whipped cream and chocolate eggs during the holidays. I'm an old hand at cake making but this was a first for me and I was quite pleased how they turned out, crispy on the outside and deliciously mallowy inside. Next time I'll bake at a lower temperate as my oven runs hot to keep them white. We had this batch with mixed berries after dinner last night and they were yummy.



Re: Susie

by Neil Hulme, 31-Mar-10 04:57 PM GMT

Hi Susie,

It's already time for Sophie Dahl to move over and make way for your cookery programme. 😄

Neil

Re: Susie

by Susie, 31-Mar-10 05:17 PM GMT

Lol. At least her meringues were white! 😄 I tend to make Eton mess for Christmas supper as it is a nice light pudding and goes well with a cold buffet as no one tends to have much room after the gluttony of dinner but I use raspberries and bought meringue and by god it's good! Nicer than her rhubarb thing 😄 Not sure I approve of her use of peas either! I'm definitely a Nigella girl at heart; I don't like the food she makes either, I just like her! 😄

Sorry this isn't about butterflies but this is my diary and so will probably have a fair sprinkling of gardening, other plants, and cooking – especially til the butterflies appear. 😄

Speaking of plants, in the front garden there is a shady patch which has walls on three sides and the only open side faces north-west. It isn't as daunting as it sounds to get plants to grow there and cyclamen, primroses, miniature daffodils, crocus, lungwort, creeping comfrey, celendines, quince and hellebores are in flower at the moment. There are a couple of wild hellebores and some cultivated ones. The bees and ladybirds love the stinking hellebore, which is much nicer than the name implies. Some of the cultivated varieties are very pretty, in particular the doubles, and others less so. It's a shame they hang their heads as it is hard to see how nice the flowers are and it is easy to walk past without noticing.

The Sophie Dahls of the hellebore world, which are pretty enough:-





and the Nigellas:-



Re: Susie

by Susie, 01-Apr-10 03:19 AM GMT

Poor old robins.

I've just been out to look at the nest as the adults were acting peculiarly. The male was in the garden, dipping his tail and looking alarmed. He kept flying in and out of the nest. Then I saw him feeding the female, who was sitting on the other side of the garden. It seemed decidedly strange so I went to investigate.

The eggs weren't visible as part of the nest was folded over on top of them, I unfolded it and the first one I saw was smashed; all blood and eggshell. The remaining three were intact but they were cool to the touch. I retreated back indoors and immediately the male went to the nest, now at least he could reach the eggs and he flew straight back out again with the broken egg in his beak, then back to the nest. I wondered what he was thinking as he flew from the nest to the female and back to the nest again, he gave the impression he wanted her back there. Eventually she went back in but a short time after she was out. Again he seemed to try to encourage her back but she wasn't having it. Perhaps she knew the eggs were dead or perhaps she was so scared by the cat attack, because that is what I think happened, that she didn't want to go back.

I hope they get a chance to try again this year but in a safer place.

I wonder how long eggs can stand the cold before they cease to be viable? I did briefly consider putting them in an incubator but I couldn't look after them if they did hatch, I'm too old for babies. Best to let nature find its own path.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 02-Apr-10 07:58 PM GMT

This weather's hideous. COLD and WET. Meh. There's quite a lot of flowers out now but not a sniff of a butterfly, they'd have to wear scuba diving gear to survive this. The tadpoles are starting to swim though and all the rain water is stopping the spawn jelly from going stinky and poisoning the pond so there is a positive to the horrible weather.

On days like this it pays to do something constructive that wouldn't get done at other times so later I'm going to sit down a list the plants in the garden. I may even post it on here, then if anyone wants a cutting of anything all they need to do is ask. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 07-Apr-10 01:28 AM GMT

Deep joy. I have just been bombed by peacock butterflies! 😊 Behind where I live there is a strip of grass alongside a busy road. On the side nearest the houses there is a blackthorn hedge and edging this is a drainage ditch. Now I am sure you have no interest in this, and neither did I, until today. The semi dry ditch is full of butterflies!! There must be a dozen peacocks and at least a couple of small tortoiseshells within it. I assume they are sheltering from the wind and the place is a sun trap as it faces south and with the wall and hedge behind it which must reflect heat; a logical place for butterflies really. The peacocks were very territorial and were chasing each other, three up in the air sparring at a time, chasing off queen bumblebees and trying to chase me off too! It was wonderful 😊

I only had my pocket camera on me but manage to get a snap to show just how close these butterflies were to each other.



I took the kids for a walk over the fields and high wood this afternoon and the hill is a mass of wood anemones, primroses, violets and celendines. The first of the cuckoo flower is out too. 😊

I forgot to mention, in all my excitement, there are loads of bees around too. A good few hairy footed flower bees as well as some others and the usual bumbles in good numbers.

Over the weekend we went to Suffolk to attend my nephew's wedding. We had a lovely time and the weather was kind and the sun shone on Saturday afternoon. It also felt a lot milder there in Kersey, Suffolk than at home, but I still didn't see any butterflies. I did see a Little Egret in a field on the journey there though. The wedding afternoon was particularly memorable because my sis-in-law arranged for a Spitfire to give a display. It looped the loop, wing waggled and goodness knows what else for a good 10 to 15 minutes and was spectacular.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 09-Apr-10 02:16 AM GMT

It's gutting when you have to go to work and you know that it is going to be a warm sunny day and perfect for seeing butterflies but isn't it always the way? To make the most of the glorious weather I took a walk at lunchtime down to the market in Cranleigh (supposedly the largest village in England), there isn't much there but a short stroll back to the office along the Downs Link was productive. A small tortoiseshell was the first butterfly I saw circling over a patch of nettles, it was very flighty but did settle from time to time. An attempt on my part to get a pic ended up with very sore and stung feet as in my haste I had forgotten I was dressed for the office and not for stomping around in undergrowth. 😊 I soon gave up on that idea but further on there were a couple of peacocks and a brimstone feeding on dandelions. Walking back from the office this evening there were more peacocks and another small tortoiseshell. This is far more butterflies than I would expect to see, will this be a good year for them? I do hope so! 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 10-Apr-10 02:30 AM GMT

Another brief walk along the Downs Link at lunchtime turned up more brimstone, peacocks, small tortoiseshells and a red admiral. I am not sure if there are more butterflies around at the moment or I am getting better at spotting them. Most of the butterflies I saw today were initially spotted feeding on sallow and once upon a time I would never have thought to look up there for them.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 12-Apr-10 05:58 AM GMT

We popped along to Buchan Country Park this afternoon with my Dad as it had an event on. There was a lot less there this year, just a few stalls of wildflowers and nothing I wanted that I didn't have already. There was one brimstone flying. The husband and my Dad spent most of their time talking about whether we could nick some logs off of the wood pile (obviously they didn't). They've become obsessed with logs since we got a woodburner last year and there isn't a dead tree or scrap of waste wood in half a mile of my Dad's house that isn't cut down, chopped up and carted down to us. It probably costs him more in petrol to bring the stuff than it would for us to buy it but it keeps him busy. 😊 My middle brother has even bought a chainsaw to help so Hanwell had better look out too!

This afternoon there was a small white flying around the garden feeding on forgetmenots and loads of bees and bee flies. One bee fly was dipping her abdomen in the soil and I think she was laying eggs*. It is the first time I have seen this behaviour. Usually they drop eggs in flight.

When digging I came across half a dozen or so unformed solitary bees in the ground. I covered them back up but I reckon they're done for. 😊 This is the only patch of unimproved clay left in the garden and I am going to try and leave it like that as the bees do seem to love it. It's a bit of a dilemma when gardening as to what species it is best to encourage. I've done my best to improve the soil here so it can better support the flowers to encourage in insects but at the same time I am reducing the habitat for one of my favourite species. 😊

*Edit. I've since found out that she was dipping her abdomen into the soil to coat her eggs in dust so that she'll have better accuracy when flicking them towards the solitary bees' nests. I must remember that next time I go ten pin bowling. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 18-Apr-10 01:53 AM GMT

At last a home grown Orange Tip! His flight was a bit ropey to start off with but after a feed on some honesty and cuckoo flower he took off. Hopefully be back with the Mrs soon to start a new family in the garden.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 19-Apr-10 05:27 AM GMT

Sussex Butterfly Conservation were taking members on a walk around their new reserve, Rowland Wood, today. Unfortunately I was stuck in traffic and then it took me a while to find the reserve and so arrived late but the butterflies were there even if the others weren't when I arrived. There were good numbers of brimstone about as well as orange tips, peacocks, commas and my first speckled wood of the year. Park Corner and Rowland Wood really are lovely reserves and the BC volunteers have worked very hard to make them very special. I bumped into the others half way around and met another UKButterflies forum member there.

One of the enjoyable things about going on these walks is what can be learnt about things other than butterflies. How to make wine from silver birch sap, the correct name for toad tadpoles (toadpoles is what people came up with, but I am sure that can't be correct, can it? Frog tadpoles aren't called frogpoles are they so I can't see any logic to it) and how to remember the call of the stonechat (like two pebbles being knocked together) were a few of the things I learnt this morning.





Re: Susie

by Dave McCormick, 19-Apr-10 06:17 AM GMT

One of the enjoyable things about going on these walks is what can be learnt about things other than butterflies. How to make wine from silver birch sap

That's something that's new to me, interesting though. Like the speckled wood shot, still waiting for my first one here

Re: Susie

by Susie, 19-Apr-10 06:01 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, I don't think it will be long before you see one where you are. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 20-Apr-10 03:16 AM GMT

I'm starting to get that feeling on sunny days where I don't know where to go first, there are so many opportunities to see interesting things. As I only had a short while this morning I opted to keep it very local. 😊 A walk over my local woods and fields turned up plenty of orange tips, small whites and a couple of peacocks. Surprisingly no brimstones about. The wood is still looking a picture, wood anemone, celandines, ground ivy, violets and primroses are everywhere. The bluebells are just starting to come out. The ransoms will be flowering in a week or two as well; I don't like the smell but they look pretty spectacular when they fill a valley nearby. Mind you, being by the sewage works even wild garlic is an improvement. 😊



I do wonder what might be in this wood. There are so many primroses and violets around. I am sure there are purple emperor here too but I haven't seen one yet. Maybe this year.



The daffodils in the garden are just about coming to an end.



Sitting in a beer garden this afternoon I saw my first holly blue of the year and plenty of brimstones, peacocks, orange tips and a small tortoiseshell. Back home this afternoon and a couple of peacocks flew over but didn't stop. My orange tip was back though and feeding on honesty again.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 20-Apr-10 11:37 PM GMT

Cuckoo!

Couldn't decide whether to go to Denbies Hillside for green hairstreak and skippers or Cissbury Ring so went for a walk around some fields in Warnham today instead and heard my first cuckoo to the south of where I was. Its always great to hear the first one of the year and we are lucky to have them locally.



The trees are just starting to get leaves. Give it a week and it will be a mass of green.

Also heard was chiffchaff, willow warbler, reed warbler, whitethroat, blackcap, great, blue and long tailed tits, song thrush, buzzard, green woodpecker, great spot woodpecker drumming, greenfinch, chaffinch, pheasant, coot, sparrow, dunnock, robin, rook, crow, blackbird, and wren.

Plenty of orange tips around now, male and female. Small whites, speckled woods, and peacocks in good number too.

Edit: This afternoon a female orange tip was feeding on honesty and I thought Mr OT would get lucky. However, whenever he came by and got friendly she pulled up her abdomen and spurned his advances. Seems she didn't want to be ravished. She seemed to have a very skinny abdomen so I don't think she would have been full of eggs. Anyone got any idea what the reason was or did she just have a headache? 😊





Re: Susie

by Susie, 21-Apr-10 08:18 PM GMT

The mason bees have been emerging from the bee boxes on the back of the house since last weekend and I was able to watch one little chap as he did exactly this. I was surprised that after munching away with his mandibles on the clay plug that had kept him safe all winter once he emerged he flew off like a rocket, leaving me standing there like a lemon waiting to get a good shot. I had expected a drying off/warming up period as you get with dragonflies when I could take my time and get some decent shots but this little chap wasn't hanging around. It was quite comical to watching him trying to push his head through a tiny gap, only getting one antenna out, then both, then both and one leg, turning upside down and trying to s-q-u-e-e-z-e himself through but failing and having to have another little nibble until finally he shot out like a champagne cork. 😄

After watching the bees and having a couple of hours to spare between physio at the hospital this morning and work this afternoon I sallied forth to Denbies Hillside to see if there were any skippers or green hairstreaks around. A cold wind was blowing and despite searching out sheltered places where they were seen over the past few years none were found. Only one speckled wood seen there although plenty of orange tips on the way back.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 22-Apr-10 02:05 AM GMT

Uploaded the bee pics from this morning and it seems one mature mason bee has some passengers. Mites perhaps?



Squeeze!!



Re: Susie

by Susie, 26-Apr-10 05:30 AM GMT

A black bee with a white stripe was spotted yesterday when we were out on the field trip which caught our interest. It was the same type (or at least something very similar) to one spotted last year in my back garden which turned out to be *Melecta albifrons*. The females lay their eggs in the nests of ground nesting bees (such as hairy footed flower bees) and then when the eggs hatch they eat the food put by for the ground nesting bees' offspring.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 27-Apr-10 05:51 AM GMT

I was asked at the weekend if I had anything in flower in the garden. The answer is, of course! There is just about always something flowering here whatever time of the year it is. In particular I've tried to ensure there is food for the bees over the winter, even when there aren't any bees to enjoy it.

This year the garden is a couple of weeks behind, but this is the front garden at roughly this time last year.



There is a lot of euphorbia, garlic mustard, red campion and wall flowers in this picture.

The year before annual flowers were grown from seed to create an insect attracting border. In early summer this was the effect of purple toadflax, corncockle, poppies, cornflowers, etc .



Re: Susie

by traplican, 27-Apr-10 10:38 PM GMT

"Susie" wrote:

Cuckoo!]

When I moved in Traplice my wife was surprised by Cocuckoo callings: It had sounded not only "cuckoo" but in May also "Cocouckcoukoo" etc. In May cuckoo is probably very upset and calls multiple 😊.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 28-Apr-10 12:23 AM GMT

That's interesting, Traplican, I shall have to listen out for that. Thanks. 😊

What a splendid day for butterflying it has been. Good numbers of orange tips, brimstone, peacock, green hairstreak, dingy and grizzled skippers, green veined whites and a single speckled wood. Quite a few day flying moths about as well including a cinnabar but it was too flighty for a photograph.



Several of the green hairstreaks were laying eggs, one was laying on bramble which I haven't seen before. I love hairstreaks, they are such feisty little characters. When they he wasn't dog fighting with other hairstreaks one chap was taking on peacocks and anything else that came his way.





Re: Susie

by Susie, 28-Apr-10 07:32 PM GMT

Three years ago I dug a pond in the back garden. It was filled with plants which have spread and now have rather taken over – to the point that you can hardly see the water in the summer – and it has proved to be a real draw for wildlife.

One of the plants put in has not flowered up until now. I think it is one of our most beautiful and delicate British wildflowers and so would have expected it to have a delicate name like angels' breath but oh no. Someone, in his infinite wisdom, decided to give it the homely name of BOGBEAN! 😊



Around the fringes of the pond grow a lot of wild flowers including water forgetmenot, cuckoo flower, hemp agrimony and devils bit scabious which like damp toes, all of which are a draw for butterflies.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 29-Apr-10 04:13 AM GMT

The Emperor Moth cocoons bought at the AES Exhibition last autumn have started to hatch. I'm sooo excited as it realises a dream I've had since I first became interested in moths and bought a copy of the Field guide to the moths of Great Britain and Ireland about five years ago. Anyone who has a copy and looks at the cover will know why 😊

The best bit is the first one out is a female and as I know there are wild Emperors not too far away I hope she'll have company come a'courting. Fortunately she is in the netted pot of blackthorn I had for the brown hairstreaks last year.



Re: Susie

by ChrisC, 29-Apr-10 04:43 AM GMT

i'm jealous, still yet to see one, hopefully going looking over the weekend though as i know they are around my neck of the woods.

lovely Hairstreak pics too by the way, i've still only ever seen the single green 😊

best wishes and good luck with the males, emperors that is.

Chris

Re: Susie

by Susie, 29-Apr-10 04:49 AM GMT

Thank you and good luck with your search.

I know a great site for green hairstreaks where even I can find them in numbers. It is an awfully long way from Dorset though. 😊

Four more cocoons to hatch yet. 😊 If any of them are males then I could end up with oodles of eggs. I have read that the caterpillars will eat blackthorn so I can leave them in the container they are in at the moment. If anyone didn't know better they would have thought I planned it.

I don't want to go to work tomorrow now! Am far too excited.

P.S. Cocoons can always be posted in the autumn if there are spares 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 01-May-10 04:47 AM GMT

Yesterday = nothing. 😞

Today, I come home from work to find another moth had emerged; a lovely **male** Emperor!

They must have done the deed before I got home because early this evening she started laying eggs on the blackthorn. 😊

Three more cocoons left ...



Re: Susie

by Susie, 04-May-10 05:19 AM GMT

Michael Blencowe and Clare Jeffers led an enjoyable walk along the Wey & Arun Canal at Loxwood for Sussex BC this morning. The weather wasn't great but I was convinced it would dramatically improve as the morning went on. It didn't. I saw two orange tips during the walk with the group and one on the way back (I had to nip off early due to family commitments). However, Michael kept us entertained with tips on how to look for leaf miners and find orange tip eggs. The birders in the group pointed out several interesting birds to the group such as nightingale, grey wagtail, whitethroat, garden warbler, chiff chaff, blackcap, house martin and the swallows swooping and diving low over the canal were a sight to behold. 😊 The countryside along the canal and rivers is lovely and lush and I imagine that it will be a superb place for all sorts of insect life on a fine day and especially good for dragonflies.

This may not have been a successful walk as far as spotting butterflies is concerned but it is definitely a place I am going to visit frequently over the summer. 😊 If nothing else, I have found a local pub and the public car park to the wey and arun is accessed through the car park to the pub so ideal for popping in for a spot of light refreshment after a morning's walking. http://www.onslowarmsloxwood.co.uk/_Web...age=FindUs

I had to leave the walk a bit early because my dad was coming down for a visit. He prefers coming down here than for us to go up to Greenford. Wonder

why? 😊 We visited another local pub for the first time (which was full of character and with ceilings and beams so low that even I nearly kept on banging my head) and had a really smashing lunch (no pun intended). After we went for a drive around and showed Dad the bluebell woods which he loved before home to a warm next to the log burner. All in all a very pleasant day.

http://www.thequeensheadbarnsgreen.co.uk/?page_id=2

I found a couple of tachinids in the Emperor cage today so I guess that's why the other moths didn't emerge. Meanwhile the female is laying dozens and dozens of eggs but looks pretty done in by now.

Re: Susie

by Lee Hurrell, 04-May-10 04:49 PM GMT

"Susie" wrote:

He prefers coming down here than for us to go up to Greenford. Wonder why? 😊

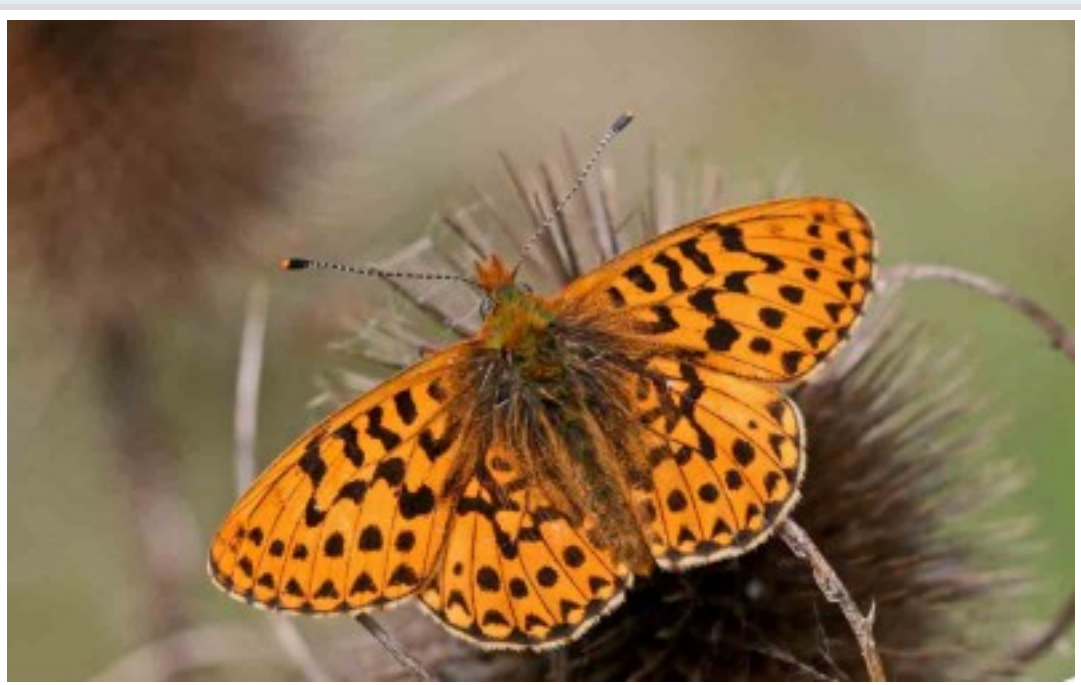
I have an idea why...

Re: Susie

by Susie, 04-May-10 11:11 PM GMT

lol. Lee.

It was cold and overcast this morning and I arrived at Rewell Wood later than planned and without much motivation. For a while it looked like nothing was going to come out to face the cold north wind but after a while the sun came out and it started to warm up a bit. A pair of male pearl bordered fritillaries started patrolling the ride and sparring and it was lovely to see. A yellow shell moth and broad bodied chaser dragonfly were around too but that was all.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 07-May-10 02:45 AM GMT

Sussex BC are trying to log orange tip sightings for the whole county so although I've not been able to get out to do any butterflying over the last

couple of days I've been doing a bit of "drive by spotting" on my journeys to and from work. It's scarily addictive. 😊 Now I just have to try and work out the grid references for the butterflies I've seen.

I came home to find a female orange tip sitting in the garden enjoying the last rays of sunshine of the day.



Re: Susie

by ChrisC, 07-May-10 03:46 AM GMT

i'm still waiting to see my first garden one this year.

if you do plant spotting too while sitting in traffic it makes the journeys more bearable too. I used to do both plus birds down the Hayes bypass on the way to work in the mornings.

Chris

Re: Susie

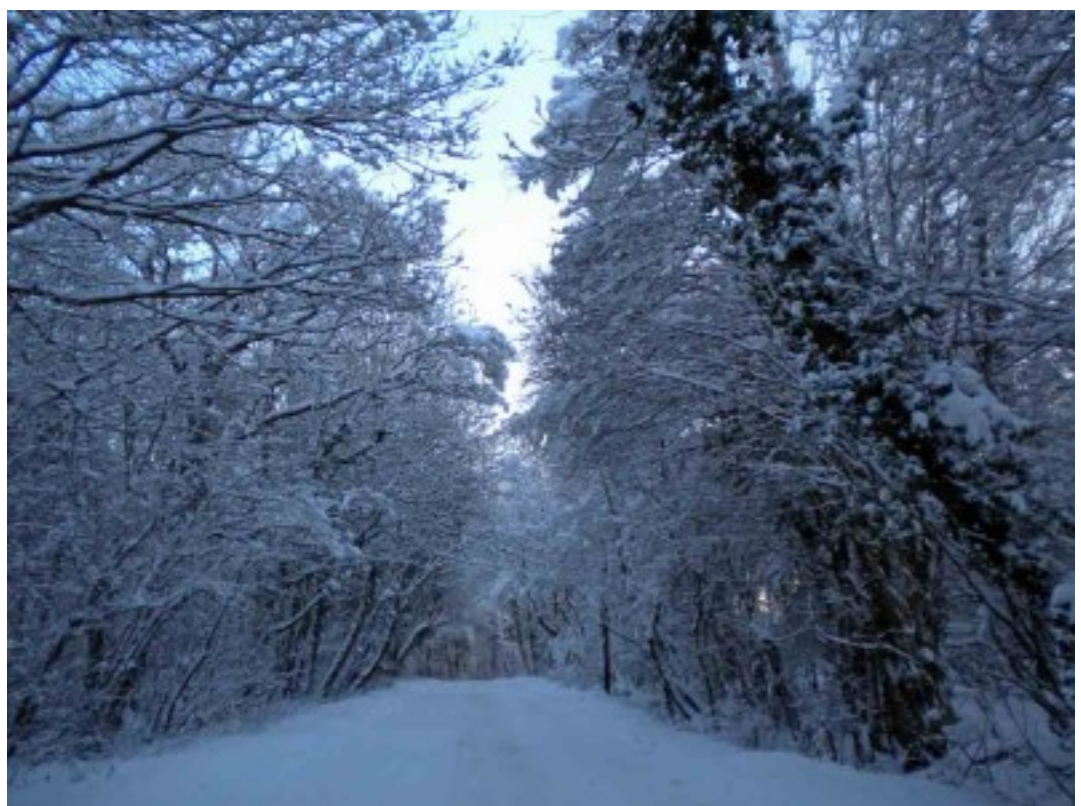
by Susie, 07-May-10 03:59 AM GMT

Oh, I do that too, only now a days my journey is a tad more pleasant than it used to be back in the old Hayes days. The only difference is there isn't any sitting in traffic on my journey, because there isn't really any other traffic! The only thing which may slow me down is the odd tractor or just a beautiful view. The bluebell woods I pass at the moment are gorgeous! 😊

For those fortunate enough not to know the Hayes by pass here is a picture of it prior to its opening (just imagine that full of cars and that is pretty much it for a lot of the time now – if you know Hayes then you'll know why people want to by pass it) *:



And this is a picture of part of my journey to work back in January when we had the snow:



I'll have to get a few more up to date ones.

* the green space to the right of the picture is Minet Country Park. I was a volunteer ranger there for a while. It was a very good site for birds and it is surprising what good stuff you can get even in pretty urban environments.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 11-May-10 01:04 AM GMT

The weather at the weekend wasn't great so we popped along to the Horsham English Festival on Saturday which is always great fun and this year was no exception despite the rain.

This lady wasn't in the process of parachuting in, even the women were dancing.



On Sunday we went to the Cowpie show. I was surprised to see that the temperature on Sunday actually went down! 12 degrees when we left home at 11ish and down to 10 degrees several hours later on the way back from Cowpie. Not surprising nothing was flying despite it being mid afternoon. The rest of the day was spent in front of the fire and rounded off with a slap up roast dinner.

All they need is a pastry crust 😊



Today it was a little warmer so I did manage to get out with the camera. Sitting on the hillside even the hairstreaks were lying down and enjoying the sunshine.



Good numbers of dingy and grizzled skippers were around. Peacocks, brimstone and orange tips still on the wing too. And I saw a single Small Copper laying eggs on dock until a spider tried to pounce on her. She escaped just in time!

On the way home I heard a noise by the path. This little chap thought I couldn't see him if he stayed very still and kept his eyes closed.



after a while he decided to make a run for it but the young wood mouse wasn't quicker than me and I was able to pick him up for a moment or two before putting him safely back by the hedge



Re: Susie

by Susie, 13-May-10 02:42 AM GMT

A quick walk over my local fields (or my little piece of heaven, as I like to think of it) didn't produce many butterflies this morning; one peacock and a couple of orange tips and possibly a large white were all I saw.

However the dragonflies are out at last. A dozen or so large red damselflies were around and a single banded demoiselle. In a few weeks I expect there will be literally hundreds of these here and you have to be very careful as you walk through the grass.



Everything seems to be so much later this year. The meadows were full of dragonflies and buttercups this time last year but today there was no sign. The bluebells are still looking lovely in the woods though.

If you follow a footpath you come to a valley of coppiced hazel which is full of ramsoms and the flowers are just starting to open, next week I expect it will look wonderful with ramsoms as far as the eye can see but the smell is horrendous! Along the field edge where there is more sunshine a few bluebells, greater stitchwort and yellow archangel grow as well. Through the middle of the valley a deep ghyll winds its way and although there is only a few inches of water in there at the moment during the winter I am sure it must flood the whole valley.





Re: Susie

by Susie, 17-May-10 11:49 PM GMT

The weekend was pretty unremarkable apart from a red kite gliding low over the garden. I saw very few butterflies, just a green veined white and a large red damselfly in the garden and a few orange tips out of it.

This afternoon the weather looked good so I went to Heyshott Down. It was overcast and windy the whole time I was there which was disappointing. The view right from the top wasn't bad though. I saw at least two and possibly several more duke of burgundy, several grizzled skippers, dingy skippers, orange tips, a speckled wood, a blue of some sort and either a female blue or a brown argus. The wind meant that as soon as I spotted something and it took to the air it was whisked away quicker than my eyes could follow it. It's a lovely site though with the cowslips out and at least now I know where to look for DOB there next year.



I don't know where to go tomorrow! It's that time of year where there is so much to see. So, Adonis Blues, Wood Whites or Scarce Chasers? It's the best kind of dilemma. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 19-May-10 12:13 AM GMT

Got out for a walk this morning but the sunny conditions at home again disappeared when I got out and about. Still, quite a few butterflies were around, dingy and grizzled skippers, small heath, common blue, a single holly blue, green hairstreak, speckled wood, orange tip, peacock, small white and good numbers of burnets and burnet companions too.





Roman snail shells are scattered around all over the place but this is time I have seen one which is inhabited by the original occupant.



This spider, a type of crab spider I assume, was chomping away on a wood louse when I found it. I thought the only spider which could get through their armour was woodlouse spiders. Obviously that's not the case.



And finally a couple of pics of the garden. The front garden has a mixed hedge down the outer edge which was planted as whips and is gradually thickening up and pushing the flowers out but there is still plenty of buddleia in there.



This is the south west facing corner of the back garden. The soil is heavy clay and is very poor so it is a devil to get a lot of stuff to grow in as the mediterranean plants which love it in the summer die in the cold wet winters. I'm perservering though with a mixture of native and mediterranean plants.



I've been trying to remember the names of all the plants in the pictures, and can't! Too much stuff. 😊

Re: Susie

by ChrisC, 19-May-10 04:51 AM GMT

I wish i could get away with cutting my grass the way yours is under that tree susie 😊 from other forums i know you have put a lot of work into it. lets hope for sunny days to sit out on that seat and enjoy the fruits of your labour
Chris

Re: Susie

by Susie, 19-May-10 05:22 AM GMT

I have to battle the neat police to keep that bit of long grass the way it is 😊

Anyone who knows me knows that I never sit in the garden for long, there's always something needs tweaking. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 19-May-10 05:47 AM GMT

Whoops, I missed this chap off earlier. There were still good numbers of these about today.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 20-May-10 03:50 AM GMT

A walk along the Arun with my better half this morning looking for Scarce Chasers was fruitless this morning, in fact we didnt see any dragons at all; just a dozen or so large red damselflies and twenty or so banded demoiselles. The husband pointed out a 'butterfly' in the grass which proved to be a mother shipton moth, we saw six or seven of these. It proved to be a good day for butterflies; small tortoiseshell, red admiral , two peacocks, plenty of orange tips, green veined white and small white.

When we got home there were mating large red damsels by the pond.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 21-May-10 04:18 AM GMT

Eeek! Evil rosemary beetle in the garden this evening. 😡

The good news is that the robins are nesting in the ivy covered tree trunk again, hopefully a bit higher up away from the cat this time. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 25-May-10 12:25 AM GMT

This weekend's been great for butterflies and there were good numbers out at Kingley Vale on Saturday, it was nice to see so many blues but the heat made them nigh on impossible to photograph. Plenty of brimstones around too which I found surprising.

Today was a good day for mating pairs.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 01-Jun-10 07:15 AM GMT

I've not seen many butterflies this weekend, I've had hardly a one in the garden. My one walk out yesterday over my local fields bordering the Arun looking for dragonflies produced a few; large white, green veined white, orange tip and quite a few common blues. It is the first time I've seen common blues in that particular field so I was pleased with that.

I was looking for scarce chasers, but only saw one which I put up from the grass and zoomed into the nearest tree so I didn't get a good look. There were no other large dragonflies about and just 30+ banded demoiselles, similar numbers of large red damselflies, a couple of blues (not sure which but common would be my guess) and one white legged.

Luckily for me a scarce chaser turned up in the garden yesterday evening and it was back today at lunchtime too. Now I don't even have to walk down to the river to see them 😊



Re: Susie

by ChrisC, 01-Jun-10 07:19 AM GMT

very jealous 😊 but does remind me that i need to get down to my local country park with the other halves camera 😊 Chris

Re: Susie

by Susie, 01-Jun-10 07:37 AM GMT

I'm sure your pond produces some pretty good dragonflies too.

Obviously that one wasn't home grown, just visiting from the local river. And I should really get down to my local CP too, that produces some good dragonflies (and butterflies).

Re: Susie

by ChrisC, 01-Jun-10 07:53 AM GMT

apart from large reds the only other odonata i have seen come out ,and trust me when i say i look very often 😊 , is this southern Hawker.



but the list for the garden's not bad, though i somehow can't see me getting scarce chaser 😊

Chris

Re: Susie

by Susie, 01-Jun-10 07:56 AM GMT

Neither can I. Good, isn't it. 😊 😊

My pond produced broadbodied chaser last year too, but I think it is too overgrown for that to happen now.

Quite a few dragonflies turn up here as well as banded demoiselles, common blue and azure damselflies but these are all from the river I think. The only thing my pond produces good numbers of is large red as far as I am aware but i am looking out for exuvia so who know. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 13-Jun-10 05:03 AM GMT

The definitive mixed emotion: watching the robin which is nesting in the garden again collecting orange tip caterpillars from the garlic mustard. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 15-Jun-10 04:59 AM GMT

Very little going on here at the moment; the odd meadow brown or green veined white through the garden and occasional common blue flying over the garden but that's it.

Re: Susie

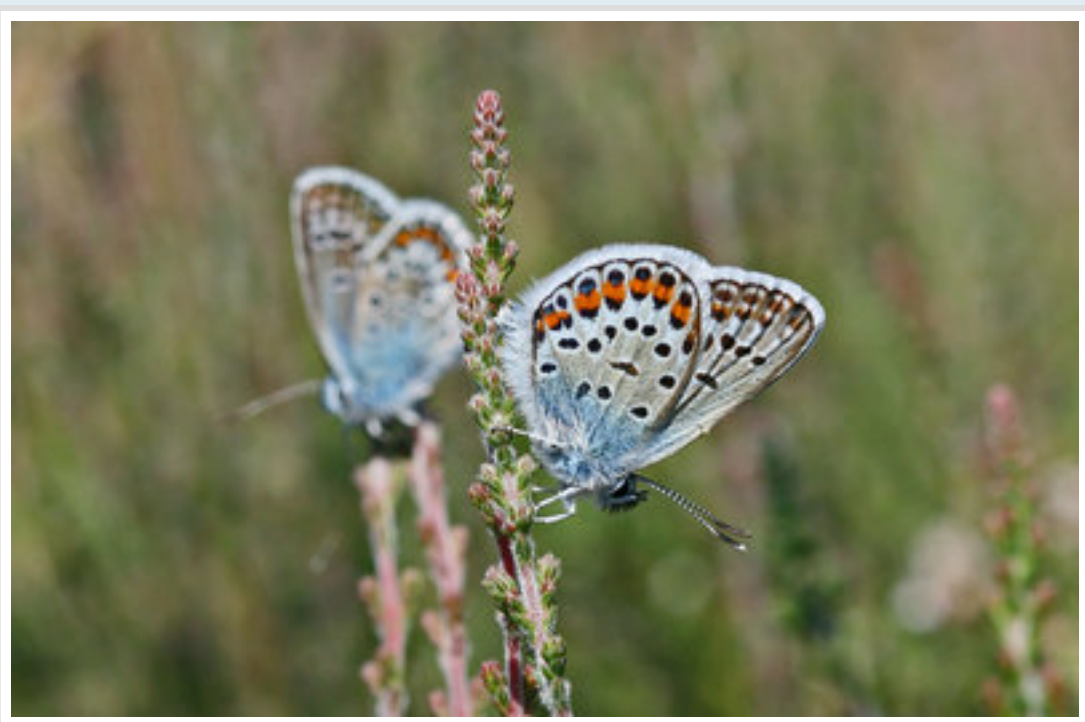
by Susie, 23-Jun-10 02:35 AM GMT

A trip to Iping today turned up good numbers of silver studded blues. Gorgeous little creatures they are too.





Thanks Kipper 😊



Re: Susie

by Jack Harrison, 23-Jun-10 05:50 PM GMT

....but like so many species, they are reluctant to open their wings in scorching hot weather such as we are getting at present. Unbroken sun shine is all very well....

Jack

Re: Susie

by Susie, 24-Jun-10 12:46 AM GMT

You are right, Jack. There were a few opening their wings and loads flying around but I can't get the depth of field with my camera for those shots. The light was very strong and harsh too.

At Denbies hillside this morning there were 8 or so male marbled whites about, all male and zooming around in the sunshine despite it being quite early. Plenty of skippers, meadow brown, a handful of tatty blues, a grizzled skipper which looked in remarkably good condition, a ringlet and a painted

lady.

At the allotment this afternoon there was a small tortoiseshell. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 29-Jun-10 11:57 PM GMT

Saturday 26th: On Saturday in the garden there was a hummingbird hawk moth, which I was thrilled to see. There was also a host of rosemary beetles on the lavender which I wasn't.

I joined David Bridges on his transect of some fields in Warnham with half a dozen or so other people on Saturday afternoon. It was scorching hot but there were good numbers of meadow browns and skippers around but not a lot else but it was very enjoyable nonetheless. The site has a huge potential and I shall enjoy seeing how it progresses.

Tuesday 29th: Despite the weather today being variable with sunny spells, the odd rain drop, but mainly overcast I went on the annual pilgrimage to Southwater and wasn't disappointed. I don't believe in omens but as I drove to the woods a Buzzard shot out of the trees and then flew in front of my car at car height for a while before alighting in a tree so I could get a good look at it. I've never seen a wild Buzzard close up and it was quite some experience and this put me on a high before I'd even started butterflying. Good numbers of white admiral and silver washed fritillary were around to greet me and I also had a brief glimpse of his Majesty. There were also plenty of meadow browns, a few ringlets, large and small skippers, marbled white, a comma, and a red admiral. I put up the red admiral when I was chasing a valezina silver washed fritillary across felled branches at great personal danger. Having failed to get a picture of the Purple Emperor I really wanted to get a photo of the abberant frit but didnt succeed at that either

😊 It really did blend in well against the felled wood which camouflaged it perfectly.



The SWF in the second photo has lost the ends of its antenna

Re: Susie

by Susie, 05-Jul-10 07:56 PM GMT

I only had an hour to spare this morning so I dashed up to Southwater. I had to leave by 10am so wasn't expecting to see anything much but what an hour; the place was fair busting out with butterflies. 😊 I've never seen so many abberant silver washed fritillaries either, pics to follow later of a couple.

Re: Susie

by Jack Harrison, 05-Jul-10 08:12 PM GMT

I have seen several Speckled Woods with ends of one or both antennae missing. I wonder how such accidents occur and how they affect the individual? I

can't say that I noticed any odd behaviour by the injured butterflies.

Jack

Re: Susie

by Vince Massimo, 05-Jul-10 08:27 PM GMT

Thanks for the tip-off Susie, I'm going down now and will be spending the rest of the day there.

Vince

Re: Susie

by Lee Hurrell, 05-Jul-10 09:51 PM GMT

I think I will go back at the weekend too!

Cheers

Lee

Re: Susie

by Susie, 05-Jul-10 10:39 PM GMT

My eldest kids are being sent to the stables so, whohooo, freedom!!! I'm going back to Southwater too 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 06-Jul-10 02:54 AM GMT

It was nice to see Kipper and Vince at Southwater this afternoon.

Southwater's such a gorgeous place, sitting in a field of flowers watching the butterflies, deer and buzzards, I find it hard to tear myself away when it is time to go home.

Anyhoo, a few pics from today:-

When I arrived this morning there were masses of silver washed fritillary feeding.



And quite a few abberations:-



(more abberations to follow when dinner's dished up, the hoards are waiting to be fed!).

Re: Susie

by Susie, 06-Jul-10 06:27 AM GMT





If anyone knows what the first three abs are called, I'd be grateful. I know the last one is valezina.

Cheers.

Re: Susie

by Trev Sawyer, 06-Jul-10 06:37 AM GMT



... All these lovely photos of Frits Susie... Here in Cambridge, we seem to be in a total desert as far as *any* kind of fritillary is concerned.

Please send some "spares" over here 😊

Trev

Re: Susie

by Susie, 06-Jul-10 06:48 AM GMT

Best put your order in with Sussex Kipper, Trev, he said he thinks the site will have even more SWF next year!

I am sure you aren't doing too badly though, there is plenty of good stuff to see in Cambridgeshire I think. 😊

I must admit that I have never known a place like it here*. I used to go to Ruislip Woods in Middlesex when I lived up that way and be thrilled to see a couple of White Admiral, here they are so frequent they don't get a second look and the same with the SWF. All the "ordinary" butterflies don't even get mentioned half the time but they are fab too. One of my favourites is marbled white which is what I actually went to photograph today.



(*apologies for my over enthusiasm but I've only lived in West Sussex for three and a half years and still can't get over how flipping gorgeous it is!)

Re: Susie

by Susie, 07-Jul-10 09:57 PM GMT

Today started off cloudy and potentially poor but it warranted a text to the Mighty Hulme. Photos to follow. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 07-Jul-10 10:35 PM GMT



Re: Susie

by Jack Harrison, 07-Jul-10 10:52 PM GMT

Ah, the Freddie Mercury of the butterfly world 😊

Jack

Re: Susie

by Vince Massimo, 08-Jul-10 12:15 AM GMT

Well done Susie. All these Fritillary aberrations seem to be attracted to you. Whereabouts in the wood did you see it and at what time of day? I may make a visit tomorrow.

Now, where did I put my lucky trousers?.....

Vince

Re: Susie

by Trev Sawyer, 08-Jul-10 12:24 AM GMT

Well done Susie,
That is *definitely* one for the photo album. Reminds me of those old "Two Ronnie's" sketches where they are dressed as a man on one side and a woman on the other. 😊

Trev

Re: Susie

by Zonda, 08-Jul-10 12:39 AM GMT

Cripes,, amazing pics,,,, until last year i thought abbs were stomach muscles that i didn't have. I think there are a couple of Dorset sites for SWF's, and i'll be off as soon as the weather clears up. 😊

Re: Susie

by Susie, 08-Jul-10 02:45 AM GMT

Good luck everyone. I've PM'd you, Vince.

From looking closely at the bilateral gynandromorph seen on Sunday by Colin Knight and posted on Sussex BC site and this I think it's the same critter.

I always did attract odd characters; a tranny butterfly is hardly surprising. 😊

And some more pics from today.

Freddy again.



And two new ones (I think)



List of species seen today (in no particular order):

- Silver washed fritillary
- White admiral
- Red admiral
- Purple emperor
- Purple hairstreak
- Peacock
- Comma
- Gatekeeper
- Meadow brown
- Ringlet
- Marbled white
- Large white
- Large skipper
- Small skipper (and possibly Essex)
- Speckled wood

Re: Susie

by Pete Eeles, 08-Jul-10 02:59 AM GMT

Brilliant – thanks for sharing Susie. Your photos are definitely improving 😊

If you could also put these marvels in the relevant species-specific albums so that they're saved for posterity, I'd really appreciate it!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Susie

by Susie, 08-Jul-10 03:04 AM GMT

All of them or just the bilateral gynandromorph, Pete? And I'll try to upload them but I'm not the most technically competent person. I'll ask for help if I get stuck.

My thanks has to go to Kipper and Vince too, if they hadn't mentioned the aberrations I wouldn't have known what to look for. Goodness knows how many abs I have dismissed in the past. They pointed out an ab white admiral on Monday to me, I had just thought butterflies like that were worn and not worth photographing! 😊

Re: Susie

by Vince Massimo, 08-Jul-10 03:10 AM GMT

Flippin' eck, Susie, I did not expect all those other abs as well. That second male from today is definately a new one for you. Excluding the Valezina, you now have photos of 5 SWF aberrations (3 male, 1 female and 1 whotsit).

Thanks for the PM, I'm already dressed for the occasion 😊.

Vince

Re: Susie

by Lee Hurrell, 08-Jul-10 06:03 AM GMT

I'm speechless!

Wonderful photos Susie 😊

Cheers

Lee

Re: Susie

by Susie, 08-Jul-10 06:22 AM GMT

Thanks Lee.

Hi Vince, I make it 4 males, 1 female, the valezina and Freddie (as it is now nicknamed). Which of the males do you think I have doubled up on? Thanks.

Re: Susie

by Vince Massimo, 08-Jul-10 06:40 AM GMT

Yes Susie, you are right. I mistakenly thought 2 of your photos were the same male, but in fact you do have 4 different males there. I am embarrassed and impressed in equal measure 🙄

The forcast looks promising for tomorrow and I have put a nice fresh data card in the camera.

Vince.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 12-Jul-10 07:03 AM GMT

Saturday morning I kicked off early with a moffing breakfast and then moved on to Southwater Woods for an hour as the day was already hot. There were quite a few people out looking for Purple Emperor but I wanted to photograph something a bit different (and I'm getting a bit bored of SWF abs 😊). There were good numbers of purple hairstreaks around but getting them to land low enough for me to reach proved very tricky. They really set out to tease me, posing for the perfect symetrical photo if only I was eight feet tall!

Alas this is all I managed to get.



By pulling down the branch with the aid of an upside down tripod (I knew it would come in useful for something one day 😊) I managed to get a shaky photo of another one which didn't seem to be bothered by my watching him eating.



I spend all day at home today as we were having a bit of a party but very little in the way of butterflies passed through the garden despite some of the buddleias being out.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 13-Jul-10 06:36 PM GMT

OMG, it's raining! Not a statement I would usually use an exclamation mark for but we haven't had anything other than the odd rain drop for three or four weeks now and all the predicted showers have passed us over. The garden's going to love this. 😊

Yesterday it was overcast but I went to Denbies Hillside anyway to see if I could find any chalkhill blues – and I did. There were a good number of marbled white around some sitting very obligingly on flower heads. Many of them (virtually all I saw anyway) were affected by parasitic mites and some of the skippers had them too. I don't know how badly this affects them but it can't be a good thing. It seemed a day for parasites and predators, some of the burnet moth papery cocoons were infested with myriad tiny cocoons which I assume are a parasitoid wasp or fly. A crab spider was sitting prettily on scabious awaiting the unwary. Possibly worst of all were some of the yellow meadow ant mounds appeared to have been dug into. Initially I thought this must be badger or some other kind of critter but later on I noticed that the excavations have distinctly straight and square sides so I wonder if they were shovel marks. I hope not but I fear someone has been after the butterflies. 😞

The chalkhills were everywhere but look as I might I couldn't find a pile of dog or fox poo anywhere so the mass of chalkhill blues I had hoped to photograph in one place as in previous years didn't happen. Dog owners must be getting more responsible about clearing up their dogs' mess, I just wish they were better at controlling their animals. Twice I was nearly knocked over by people's over enthusiastic dogs and as much as I love dogs I am getting really fed up with their owners. 😡

Seen yesterday: Marbled white, ringlet, meadow brown, small heath, large and small skippers, chalkhill blue, large white, small white, brimstone, white admiral.

Marbled white with parasites



Chalkhill blue





Re: Susie

by Susie, 13-Jul-10 07:09 PM GMT



crab spider



burnet parasitoids



My mind has been turning more towards brown hairstreaks lately. I cut the blackthorn hedge in the garden yesterday so it'll be ready for them and had a look over the playing field this morning for any sign but there was nothing, mind you it was drizzling so there was no butterfly of any type to be seen.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 16-Jul-10 02:44 AM GMT

I went back to Denbies on Tuesday. More of the same plus very fresh common blues and brown argus.



I have seen a couple of flashes of orange in the garden but I think they are probably herald moths.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 19-Jul-10 06:18 AM GMT

I wont continue to whinge about the lack of butterflies here at the moment, rather I'll list the few I've seen flying through or over the garden this weekend:- large white, small white, holly blue, gatekeeper and one tatty and very pregnant purple hairstreak who dropped in for a drink of water.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 21-Jul-10 05:37 AM GMT

I wasn't sure if I could be bothered to get changed to go out butterflying this afternoon but I made the effort and was glad I did. A brief visit to Denbies Hillside threw up a real surprise, a white letter hairstreak. 🤩 I've never even seen elm here and certainly didn't know there was WLH in the area.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 25-Jul-10 07:15 PM GMT

I had a very pleasant day out at Longstock yesterday among the butterflies and buddlieas and had a chance to take a few snaps with my new camera. For some reason I am a bit nervous about using it but I am sure that will wear off as I get used to it.

The UK Butterflies team were doing sterling work on their stall and Pete brought along some swallowtail cats to entertain the public. They really are impressive looking critters.



Re: Susie

by Gruditch, 26-Jul-10 04:26 AM GMT

Nice to see you there Susie, I managed to sneak one of the cats out for a few pics, when Pete wasn't looking. 🙄

Regards Gruditch



Re: Susie

by Michaeljf, 26-Jul-10 04:38 AM GMT

I guess those are European Swallowtail caterpillars because they're feeding on Fennel?

Re: Susie

by Pete Eeles, 26-Jul-10 05:39 AM GMT

Nope - they're ssp. britannicus, which will take Fennel in captivity.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Susie

by Jack Harrison, 26-Jul-10 02:06 PM GMT

Pete:

....will take Fennel in captivity....

And also ordinary carrot foliage.

Jack

Re: Susie

by Susie, 27-Jul-10 11:15 PM GMT

And suddenly there are butterflies in my garden. Large and small white, holly and common blue, gatekeeper, meadow brown, comma, red admiral and small copper. More than there has been for ages.

I took a walk up to the end of the road to look for brown hairstreak but no sign yet but there was a very tatty silver washed fritillary.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 29-Jul-10 03:13 AM GMT

the boys are back in town!! 😊

A brief walk up to the field at the end of the road today gave me my first brown hairstreak of the season. He was on the ground briefly and then flew up into an ash tree. For a while i only got glimpses and then the sun came out and he flew around and settled to bask with wings open. Sadly he was too high up for a picture but it was great to see him anyway. The purples were far more obliging and came down to feed on the brambles.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 16-Aug-10 03:28 AM GMT

I've just come back from holiday and I've been wondering while I've been away how the brown hairstreaks have been getting on. I briefly glimpsed one a couple of weeks ago before I went away so I knew they were out.

Today I saw two feeding on brambles by the master tree and when I came back there was one in the garden in pristine condition feeding on hemp agrimony.



Later a second one came along and stayed all day, in fact it is probably still out there! It had a couple of nicks out of the wings and was a lot tattier than the first, which I think was a female. It was so approachable that at one stage it flew onto my arm and opened it's wings to show me the brown upper side 🐛

I am so glad to be home. The garden was full of interesting things this morning (bees, flies, hoverflies, butterflies, beetles – so much to see!!!). There were more butterflies in the garden today than I have seen all year. All I saw in nasty old Spain was geranium bronze, a Lang's short tailed blue, a glimpse of a swallowtail and a hummingbird hawk moth. Pah! Here there were all sorts of whites, holly and common blue, small copper, speckled wood, gatekeeper, meadow brown, comma, silver washed fritillary (must have been a very venerable old age and very tatty to prove it) and, of course, my favourite brown hairstreaks. I love England! 😊





Re: Susie

by Lee Hurrell, 16-Aug-10 04:57 PM GMT

Welcome back Susie, I thought you'd been quiet!

I'm off to Spain in a few weeks and will probably see much the same as you...

Cheers

Lee

Re: Susie

by Susie, 16-Aug-10 04:59 PM GMT

Hi Lee, thanks, and have a lovely holiday too. 😊 There was probably much more to see than I managed, but as I was stuck with the family and not able to explore I didn't do very well.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 29-Aug-10 02:08 AM GMT

Well, what a cracking day and it's not often I get to say that recently! 😊

I joined the Sussex BC walk at Steyning this morning led by none other than our own Kipper. He'd arranged the weather so it was a gloriously sunny morning after a couple of weeks of cold, wet, gloomy grot so the butterflies would be on top form and indeed they were to delight the large turn out of people who attended. It is always nice to chat to other butterfly addicts ... I mean enthusiasts ... and it was a pleasure to meet Tom Ottley briefly this morning before he and his companion went off looking for BH elsewhere.

I've not been to Steyning rifle range before but the site is excellent and I can see why the butterflies like it. I will definitely be back at other times of the year. The work which has been put in by the management to date is already paying off.

I won't go into too much detail because I am sure Neil will do that in his diary entry but I saw my second ever Wall butterflies which I was very pleased about and we found a first for the site; one of the other members spotted something interesting in a patch of chalkland flowers on a steep slope. Neil

was about to lead the group off to see further delights but must have spotted our excitement and called out to us regarding what we had found to which I shouted "Adonis!". Not this time a reference to the gorgeous Kipper but instead a reference to the beautiful blue butterfly before us. I fairly skipped down the slope back to the brown hairstreak reserve I was so full of the joy of butterflying.

Species for the morning at Steyning: Brown hairstreak, meadow brown, speckled wood, brimstone, small white, large white, green veined white, holly blue, common blue, adonis blue, brown argus, small copper, small heath, wall, peacock.

It was also a cracking place for dragonflies with some lovely hawkers. It was nice to see a big group of swallows and martins flying around over head and a couple of buzzards calling.

Late this afternoon I thought that I had better check the potted blackthorn in the back garden for eggs. I had left the pots which I used to raise the rescued brown hairstreak eggs on last year next to the hemp agrimony in the back garden and lo and behold there were four eggs on one pot and five on the other. Then I thought I would have a look in the front garden too and there are more eggs on the blackthorn in the hedge. Hopefully there will be more eggs appearing over the next week or so. How good is that?! 😊



Re: Susie

by Jack Harrison, 29-Aug-10 03:26 AM GMT

Susie:

...Not this time a reference to the gorgeous Kipper but instead...

Well Neil, sounds like Susie is the founder member of a Fan Club. You might be a damn good naturalist but I would not have expected anyone to think of you in those terms.

Jack - a distinguished elderly gentleman.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 31-Aug-10 01:42 AM GMT

Jack you are lucky that when time is added men become distinguished, women just go downhill.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 31-Aug-10 11:04 PM GMT

A couple of hours today with my youngest daughter was enjoyably spent at Denbies hillside. The sun was shining brightly and the butterflies were making the most of it. Good numbers of meadow browns and small heath were around when we first arrived. I hadn't expected to see much in the way of butterflies today as I thought they would all be over by now but boy, was I wrong! Chalkhill, common, adonis and holly blues were flying as were brown argus, gatekeeper, speckled wood, whites and small copper. I was surprised by just how many chalkhill blues were still around. Then a brown hairstreak threw itself out of a hedge at me and I knew I was in business. I spotted a mothy-thing buzzing around and waited til it settled - it was a silver spotted skipper. There were some male brimstones around in lovely condition who seemed intent on feeding up and were no where near as active as the spring ones I had chased without success. My daughter took my little camera and enjoyed herself taking photos as well as catching crickets and watching lizards. Perhaps some of the nature-bug might wear off on her after all. 😊



Re: Susie

by Jack Harrison, 01-Sep-10 04:14 AM GMT

I was on Denbies today between about 1300 and 1500 hours after dropping off my daughter nearby. I almost certainly saw you two in the distance further west from where I was searching but it never crossed my mind that you were other than ramblers enjoying the sunny weather. But I spent more time chatting to people than taking pictures.

Adonis Blues were thin on the ground with only three definite males and three probable females. But as you say, Chalkhill were still abundant, although the males were very tatty. And those very fresh Meadow Browns - surely second brood? Plenty of Brown Argus and Small Heaths, one Holly Blue but no SS Skippers. No Brown Hairstreak either.

I hope your daughter does get the bug. There are far worse ways of wasting time.

Jack

Re: Susie

by Pete Eeles, 01-Sep-10 04:39 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

I hope your daughter does get the bug. There are far worse ways of wasting time.

"Wasting time" 🤪 Surely not!

Good on yer, Sooz 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Susie

by Susie, 01-Sep-10 05:43 AM GMT

It's one of my favourite wastes of time. 😊 The older I get the grumpier I seem to be; I'm not overkeen on very late nights and hate music so loud that I can't hear anyone else speak (unless it is played by me in my car 😊), anything which means I am likely to miss my dinner is automatically ruled out but butterflying still fills me with joy. 😊

I am sorry that I missed you today, Jack. It was certainly a lovely day to be out at Denbies so I am glad that you got to enjoy it too. Unfortunately we cut back through the woods on the way back otherwise we would have probably passed you on the path. My camera battery died half way round right after taking the photo below and I didn't have a spare so enjoyed chatting to a couple of people too.

I thought what good nick some of the chalkhills were in. I had expected them to be finished by now but some looked very fresh indeed. I agree about the meadow browns, some looked absolutely mint.



Re: Susie

by Susie, 01-Sep-10 06:18 AM GMT

Oh, btw, just a thought I wanted to mention ... how often are brown hairstreak master trees at the top of the hill?

Re: Susie

by Susie, 03-Sep-10 03:47 AM GMT

A quick visit to Denbies yesterday turned up good numbers of butterflies again. Several silver spotted skippers and good numbers of fresh adonis and chalkhill blues around as well as the other species I saw yesterday apart from the brown hairstreak. It was a shame to have to drag myself away and go to work.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 21-Sep-10 01:27 AM GMT

After half an hour unsuccessfully stalking a comma in the back garden on Saturday I decided this is a silly thing to do and joined a gym instead. That's me and butterflying finished!!!

Til next spring anyway 😊 x

Re: Susie

by NickMorgan, 23-Sep-10 08:54 PM GMT

Don't give up Susie! Those are lovely pictures you have taken and you have so many species that we don't get up here. Keep up the good work!

Re: Susie

by Susie, 25-Sep-10 04:08 AM GMT

Never fear old chap, I can resist anything except for temptation and once a butterfly addict, always a butterfly addict. 😊 I'll be jolly surprised if I'm not back out there next year. And thanks.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 11-Oct-10 06:11 AM GMT

A pristine small copper fed on the *vebena bonariensis* this afternoon and enjoyed the hot sunshine in the back garden today. It seemed a shame to have to spend part of the afternoon indoors but as it was the Sussex AGM I trundled off and wasn't disappointed. The hall was packed and it was great to see some familiar faces there. Under the skipper's leadership of the Mighty Hulme Sussex BC is going from strength to strength – both in numbers of members and achievements – and it is wonderful to see butterfly numbers of rarities such as the Duke of Burgundy rising here; long may it continue. Patrick Barkham gave a very enjoyable talk and brought back happy memories of seeing the Queen of Spain last year. I was glad to get in early and get a signed copy of his book before they sold out. However, the main event had to be Michael Blencowe's talk. I didn't think it was possible to top last year's but, boy, did he and then some! It was thoroughly entertaining and all the more to Michael's credit considering that he was carrying an injury incurred at a work party this morning. However, I do now have a vision of Kipper's alter ego burned into my brain which is most disturbing. 😊

The afternoon was only marred by a gentleman who took a tumble in the carpark, but he seemed to be in very capable hands as Kipper and BC members took care of him as I left. I hope he was alright and only shaken.

After a brief taste of summer and such a lovely afternoon I felt quite sad to leave, it feels like such a long time until I'll see my fellow butterfly enthusiast buddies and indeed butterflies again. 😞

Re: Susie

by Susie, 05-Dec-10 12:35 AM GMT

Not a lot to report over the last couple of months, other than finding some more brown hairstreak eggs.

Recently we took in two under weight hedgehogs. Sadly one of them died last week but the other one is doing well and putting on plenty of weight.





The snow has all but gone now, but we had nearly a foot and it was fun while it lasted.



I defrosted and refilled the bird bath on Wednesday night, on Thursday morning it was like this



Re: Susie

by Susie, 11-Dec-10 11:15 PM GMT

Neil must have spoken to the weather fairies again as despite this freezing cold snap we've been having today was positively mild. It was perfect weather for hunting for brown hairstreak eggs and that was the plan at Steyning rifle range where a decent sized group of people gathered to be led by Neil Hulme and Michael Blencowe on a Sussex BC event. We were shown where to look, what to look for and what to look on. Before long cries of one here, two there, or even four on this one were ringing out. A microscope linked up to a laptop provided excellent close up images of the eggs.

At lunchtime the group broke up and on my way home I decided to stop off at Southwater to see if I could find any brown hairstreak eggs. I've never been to Southwater in the winter and it felt slightly odd without it's high summer canopy of leaves, flowers and butterflies. Once into my stride though I soon felt more at home and despite the mud trying to slurp my wellies off I bimbled on feeling utterly peaceful and at home. I had ear marked the site as being potentially good last summer and went straight to the spot where I had made a mental note to revisit. Voila! The first stem of blackthorn I looked at had a group of three eggs and a single egg on it. To say I was eggcited was an understatement. After searching the perimeter of the field I found a total of 11 eggs. I must admit to being a bit disappointed after such a flying start. Apart from the first cluster all the eggs were single and a fair distance apart, whereas I normally find that if there is one egg around there will be plenty more in the vicinity. A lot of the blackthorn was overhung by trees and the bushes were large and lichen covered which is never good. The small blackthorn whips that the butterflies prefer had been taken out when the field had been mown and I searched a few of the shredded twigs on the ground in the hope of rescuing any eggs there but didn't find anything other than a couple of moth eggs. As time was running out I made my way home but resolved to go back and check the adjacent field where the marbled whites fly in summer as this tends to be sunnier and the blackthorn will be more exposed.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 12-Dec-10 07:38 PM GMT

I'm not really a birder but when a white tailed sea eagle turns up only half an hour away and it is a beautiful sunny morning it's simply too tempting to resist. As I pulled up by a group of birders I asked had they seen anything but they hadn't. I parked the car next to them, got out, and there it was flying, being hassled by corvids and with two buzzards flying next to it. By golly but it's a big critter. Great stuff!! 🦅 Then it settled into a tree and sat there for the next hour without moving, so I went home. The birders there were a lovely bunch and were very generous with letting me view through their spotting scopes as my binos didn't have a hope.

Re: Susie

by Susie, 25-Dec-10 02:45 AM GMT

Driving home from work today I was chuffed to bits to see a sundog. I just got a quick snap on my phone as I stopped at a road junction.



Re: Susie

by Jack Harrison, 25-Dec-10 03:22 AM GMT

Susie:

I was chuffed to bits to see a sundog

Optical atmospheric effects are a great passion of mine. This is an excellent link: <http://www.atoptics.co.uk/>

Sundogs (parhelia) are far more common than is often realised. From the air, are seen almost every flight that is at the right time of day as you fly through patches of cirrus. But that doesn't make them any less interesting.

The phenomenon I really enjoyed when flying was St.Elmo's Fire: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Elmo%27s_fire I would rather cruelly call the cabin crew to the flight deck on the pretence of wanting another coffee and said absolutely nothing to the girls when she came into the cockpit. Many were terrified by the light show as I pretended nothing was happening.

One day I couldn't resist calling one of the girls to the front to show her an interesting cloud formation. It was an exact phallic shape. She failed dismally in the attempt to stifle her giggles 😊

Jack

Re: Susie

by ChrisC, 26-Dec-10 01:26 AM GMT

all this talk of sun anomalies reminded me of a link a friend in canada sent to me. hope you don't mind my adding it.

<http://worldwellnesssymposium.wordpress.com/2010/12/24/ire-light/>

Happy Christmas

Re: Susie

by Susie, 26-Dec-10 04:53 AM GMT

it's interesting stuff, isn't it Jack, and thanks for the links. 😊

Those photos are stunning, Chris, the last one in particular.

Re: Susie

by Lee Hurrell, 26-Dec-10 07:07 PM GMT

That waterfall is amazing.

My friend Michael, who likes clouds and related phenomena, noticed a sundog in the summer this year when we were in Seven Sisters Country Park in the summer.

The strangest thing I've ever seen was in Leicester some years ago. There was a blanket of cloud but with a squarish hole right through it. On the inside walls of the void was a rainbow, quite beautiful.

Cheers

Lee

Re: Susie

by Jack Harrison, 26-Dec-10 07:16 PM GMT

Today's (26th Dec) high cloud has the potential to produce some good sundogs this afternoon. But the cloud is thickening from the west so might spoil things if it becomes too thick.

Start looking from about 1430 hours, that is about 1.30 before sunset. Sundogs occur 22 degrees either side of the sun at the same angle above the horizon. Frequently one sundog is much brighter than the one on the other side. Indeed, sometimes only one side has a sundog.

If you are very lucky, the much rarer phenomenon of a 22 degree halo (or part of) can be see but this is not usually coloured except in the sundog location either side of the sun.

Jack

Re: Susie

by Susie, 27-Dec-10 07:00 AM GMT

The conditions looked suitable when I was driving up to London at lunchtime but I didn't see anything. It was probably a bit early and watching the weather while driving is not really recommended anyway. 😊 I'll be looking out for them from now on anyway.