

IAC

by IAC, 07-Mar-11 11:28 PM GMT

Hi all,

I will try to!! keep updating this diary with the sightings and events in and around the Scottish Borders. The butterfly months though are usually chaotic...and finding time to do this will not be easy. There are some very interesting movements of Butterflies north in the past few years with gains and losses locally. Small and Large Skipper, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown and Comma have made major gains over the past few years....even the Brimstone is appearing from time to time....though the chances of the Butterfly settling here are debateable. The losses seem to be local especially of Scotch Argus and Large Heath...they are very few areas now supporting these butterflies in South East Scotland.

On the upside, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary and Small Blue previously thought extinct within Berwickshire District are doing well...

We have had a few local sightings of early Small Tortoiseshells in Berwickshire so far...I hope it won't be much longer before there is a lot more to see....it has been a particularly long winter.

Iain.

Re: IAC

by NickMorgan, 09-Mar-11 05:27 AM GMT

Iain,

I have enjoyed reading your posts on the East of Scotland forum and I'm looking forward to reading about your 2011 findings here.

Nick

Re: IAC

by Piers, 09-Mar-11 07:37 PM GMT

I second that Nick; coverage of Caledonian 'doings' will be very interesting and most welcome. I do love Scotland.

Felix.

Re: IAC

by David M, 11-Mar-11 03:12 AM GMT

In many respects, the borders of Scotland represent a key indicator of general butterfly health. I will eagerly await any reports relating to distribution and ubiquity of species.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 15-Mar-11 09:31 PM GMT

Hi all,

Thanks for your comments chaps.

Iain.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 15-Mar-11 10:10 PM GMT

Hi all,

Last year I did a little experimenting with my cameras (Canon 450d) ISO settings. I am very frustrated that having bought an expensive tripod, I found it to be cumbersome, and unresponsive. Like a scene from a wrestling match, I lost a lot of blood sweat and tears trying to get it to do what I wanted it to do. So I bodyslammed its weedy, unwieldy, collection of carbon fibre evil to the back of the cupboard. Which left me a problem to solve...how to hand hold in less than perfect conditions with a Sigma 105mm attached to the camera. I quite by accident discovered that ISO 200 and 400 produced pretty good results. Having always used ISO 100 whatever the conditions...so....it took a lot of getting used to. I also wanted to go to 7.1 aperture or thereabouts in order to open up a depth of field. This though made the shutter speed very low...so...eventually realised that even ISO 800 could be deployed given the right circumstances. It has made an enormous difference in the field, and gives me a little more confidence that I can pretty much do without the troublesome tripod.

Below are examples of one photo taken in July last year in overcast conditions of a fairly inactive Narrow Bordered Five Spot Burnet...lots of burnout issues here because of the high ISO 800 setting at 7.1 and shutter 1/80 sec.

The irony is...having belittled the tripod...it would have come in handy here...ha, ha,ha.

Having reviewed the photos I downloaded....I am not to sure that you can really see the grain on the original due to file compression....I will need a rethink on my current downloading strategy me thinks.

Nevermind....maybe you get the idea....does anyone have any thoughts on handholding in ISO of 200,400,800....any tips I should know from the experts much appreciated.

Iain.



Close up of original for noise issues.



Edited version with grain and burnout issues resolved.



Original photo with burnout issues caused by high iso.

Re: IAC

by Rogerdodge, 16-Mar-11 12:07 AM GMT

Iain

I agree that higher ISOs do not bring the noise with them that they used to.

However - even though I usually shoot at 400 ISO, I also always use EITHER a tripod or monopod.

The tripod, admittedly, gets less use than the monopod, but I tend to use it early mornings, and dull days when the critters are less lively (and the light

is a little lower anyway).

The monopod is a great tool. Use a good head like the Manfrotto monopod head (your lens really needs a tripod ring for this to change to portrait format etc.) and the results will speak for themselves.

The monopod is also a good walking stick, bramble/thistle/nettle displacer (very good if you have shorts on) and can be used to encourage over friendly or over aggressive dogs (or their owners 😊) to go elsewhere.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 21-Mar-11 10:45 PM GMT

Hi all,

Thanks for the monopod tips....it is possibly the way to go. I would as you have pointed out Rodge... have many uses for one. I will look into it.

Iain.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 21-Mar-11 10:56 PM GMT

Hi all,

Finally....the butterfly season has kicked off. Small Tortoiseshell the other day...and today 4 Comma by the river Whiteadder. Always in the same position...each and every spring. Without fail. Nice to see. Lots of running and jumping again...grinning and cursing....magnificent...Chiff Chaffs singing....just..well...you know.

No nectaring Commas today...perhaps over the next few days they will begin to do that. A very stiff breeze from the south west, but still managing 15oC.

Despite it being sunny..I still persisted with a 400 iso and 7.1 ap....not to bad. I have in the past only been able to get a half wing in focus or a stray leaf instead of the butterfly....400 works well. Handheld, still no monopod. I have this year also deployed an HD video camera....I need a lot of practice I think...very shaky indeed.

Iain.



Re: IAC

by IAC, 23-Mar-11 10:03 PM GMT

Peacocks at Large in the Scottish Borders.

I counted 11 Peacock today on the river banks of the Whiteadder, near Chirnside Berwickshire. Quite unusual to see so many so soon. Comma and Small Tortoiseshell are gimmers at this time of year..but Peacock tend to be ones and twos till mid April. Lots of territorial display from the Peacocks and nectaring sparingly on lesser Celandine. 2 Comma and 1 Small Tortoiseshell the only other takers today.

The Woods are full of Chiff Chaffs and the odd Nuthatch heralding an early spring...however I do hear that the weather is to turn again by the weekend....sadly.

Iain.



Re: IAC

by IAC, 25-Mar-11 11:37 PM GMT

It does look likely that the unusually warm spell has come to an end for now here in Scotland. Intermittent sunshine today and temps pegged back to 12oC. A high yesterday of 18oC was just incredible. Yesterday Small Tortoiseshell narrowly scored a victory over their bitter rivals the Peacocks with a late double score in extra time to win 15 to 13....a record, personally for March counts. The Comma had a final score of 8...very good and record breaking my previous best of 7, and that was last year in April.

Today things were a lot quieter with 5 Peacock, 4 Small Tortoiseshell and 3 Comma. An area by the river Whiteadder holds a south facing bank covered in Butterbur...it is a mecca for me in spring and likewise the butterfly population.

It will be a wee while yet for any of the Whites...my fave the Orange Tip earliest sighting was about the beginning of April...I think 2009...not sure...so fingers crossed. I think maybe a little rain now would be usefull...we do not need another dry spring like 2009 and 2010....the foodplants would benefit.



This Small Tortoiseshell was desperate for a ray of sunshine.



Peacocks just love this stuff.



A Comma takes a hearty swig of Ye Olde Butterbeer.



Butterbur bursts from the ground..the Springtime Butterfly lure.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 30-Mar-11 12:16 AM GMT

Hi all,

The weather aint half as bad up here as the met office would have you believe. Yes it may only be 11 and 12oC but the sun does shine from time to time and butterflies are quite active during these spells. Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma fairly widespread at the moment. I really do not expect any of the White butterflies to show up just yet though it is encouraging to see them emerging further south...especially the Orange Tips. On the look out for Holly Blue at the moment....I have never personally seen one in these parts yet... but their are local records...so fingers crossed.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GY5Mf0-ek7Y&feature=youtube_gdata

The video is of a Comma I filmed today on my swanky swish new HD camera....I am very chuft with it!!

Iain.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 03-Apr-11 01:50 AM GMT

The weather has eventually calmed down a great deal...lots of gale force winds and rain is not good. As the sun shone again today 6 Peacock and 6 Comma found on the Whiteadder banks.

The video below is a montage of the general behaviour of the Peacock fraternity today....it is quite shocking!!! As well as drinking heavily, posing in the sun,preening and showing off...one naughty boy got a little frisky with a lady Comma....much to her disgust.

Iain.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfGPVQUE7TI>

Re: IAC

by IAC, 16-Apr-11 05:50 AM GMT

Orange Tip, Green Veined White and Small White gradually getting up to speed here in the Scottish Borders. Comma, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell doing very well. 1 Red Admiral the only other species seen. Painted Lady sightings a week or so ago are dying down now. I expect to be seeing some Large White and Speckled Wood soon. I guess it is that time of year now to go Green Hairstreak hunting....we do not have any in Berwickshire...so...that is the mighty task...to unearth a butterfly that has as yet never been recorded in the VC....dont hold your breath.

Holly Blue in Berwickshire are scarce...only 1 sighting on the coast a few years back. I might find some somewhere...one day.

I was on an unofficial field trip a few days back to a Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary site within Berwickshire...they had become so scarce in the east it was thought they had become extinct within the VC....in 2009 I discovered a wet field site containing 20 or so adults...on further investigation of the area in 2010 we discovered 150 flying adults at peak....not so extinct now...on top of that I stumbled across 3 individuals 5 miles from this colony in late June...so....their are probably a lot more SPBF out their awaiting discovery. Tom Prescott from Scottish BC visited the site to look at the habitat and seemed fairly happy that it was at the moment stable...and would probably need annual monitoring for changes.

Below are some Orange Tip snaps...the first of the season with the tripod in toe...I have no love at all for the tripod...lugging it around is a real burden...however...it does ensure sharp images....most of the time.

Iain



Re: IAC

by IAC, 18-Apr-11 05:33 AM GMT

SPECKLED WOOD

It took a truckfull of patience to track down some Speckled Wood up here in sunny Berwickshire today...and as usual a large slice of luck...when does luck become experience I wonder...I dunno. Climbing a steep river bank strewn with Hawthorn and Bramble...in some very unScottish temperatures is hard work. Hard work made easier in following a male Orange Tip as he made his way up the slope sampling nectar from violets...then from out of nowhere a Speckled Wood shot from the ground in pursuit...and I was not far behind....okay....a good way behind...I chased the blighter for quite some time...about a minute in reality before I collapsed in a sweltering heap...another I presume male joined him briefly for a territorial tussle.....great stuff....you know....you just cannot beat this butterfly hunting lark...its just the bees golden knees.

Orange Tip just peeking with over 50 counted...they are difficult to count...the trick is too keep moving as they do..and keep an eye out for them lapping you.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuwoEB6DsZQ&feature=youtube_gdata

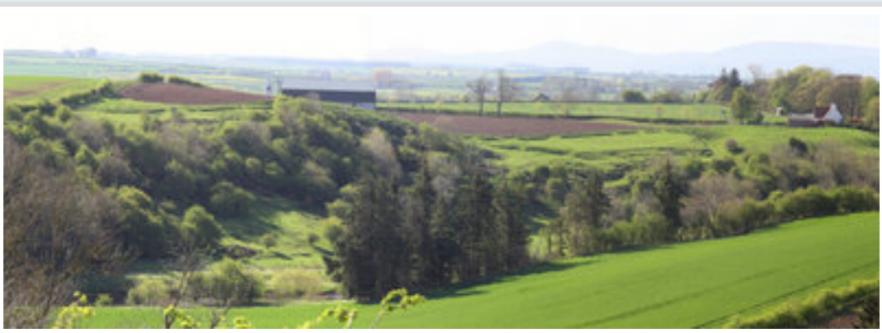
I am going coastal tomorrow to investigate an old Holly Blue sighting from a few years back...I do hope to get lucky.
Iain.



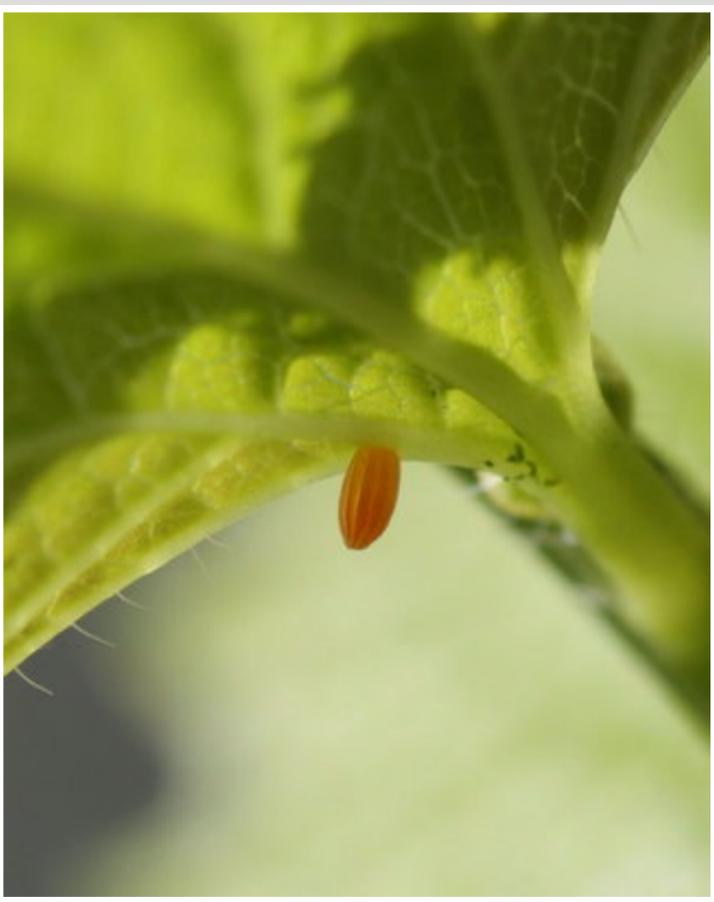
So hot today that the GVWs were seen keeping shady and cool.



Peacock by the Whiteadder banks today.



The area around Edrington less than 1 mile from the English Border.



Orange Tip ova on Garlic Mustard by the Whiteadder.



One of two Speckled Wood in Berwickshire today.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 30-Apr-11 04:23 AM GMT

April in East Berwickshire

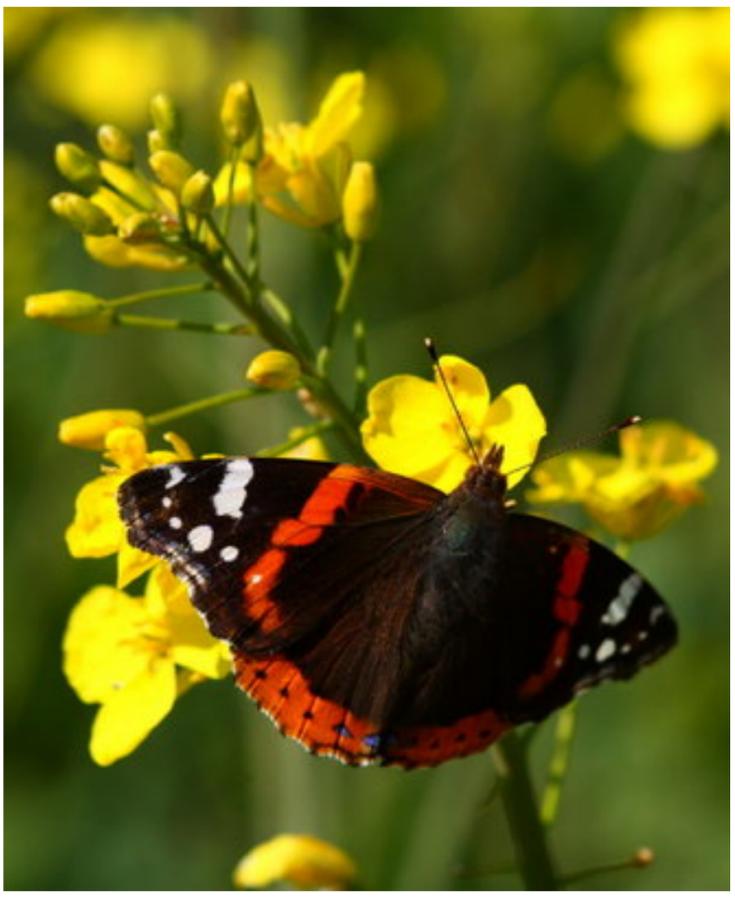
Finding it very difficult to keep up with the Butterflies this year...we have not seen much in the way of rain all month..as a result things are very dynamic indeed. Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell have driven themselves translucent and ragged..the Orange Tips exploded out of the blocks and are now twiddling their antennae wondering what to do next. Comma are finding that the cover of the wood is best to keep out of the bossy Peacocks territory. Searching for Speckled Wood has been challenging, however they are in all the same places as last year...the winter weather certainly not affecting a march northwards of this butterfly.

Yesterday at Burnmouth I found 3 Small Copper and a surprise Wall Brown male. I am just not sure how far in front we are this year...from records I have...it could be as much as 2 weeks!! I wonder what is next...I suppose Small Heath will be around...then perhaps Small Blue may make a very early jump...Northern Brown Argus?...it is very unpredictable.

We will have some timing issues involving field trips this year by the looks of it...



Small Copper on guard on the Berwickshire coastal path



Red Admiral on Oil Seed Rape at Burnmouth



The Berwickshire coast south of Eyemouth.

Re: IAC

by David M, 30-Apr-11 05:12 AM GMT

How common is the Northern Brown Argus in your part of the country?

Re: IAC

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

Hi David,
Common enough I expect. Historical records of Northern Brown Argus go back 150 or so years...and the butterfly is still holding on in most these original sites. The southern boundary suddenly halts on the Berwickshire coast at Burnmouth. Inland thier are larger colonies...best places being old quarry sites and volcanic plugs. Rockrose has more than likely declined from the lowland river banks where it once used to be common. I have found Northern Brown Argus rogues well away from any Rockrose leading to the possibility of another foodplant being used...I cannot at the moment prove that though. Geranium species are widespread...and when you do see a Northern Brown Argus 2 and 3 miles from a colony you have to wonder how it is that it got there....last year one of these fluke sightings was repeated at a site without Rockrose....so....a mystery to be solved. Dry springs seem to be threatening some colonies...especially the ones on open south facing cliffs with little soil structure. The Rockrose thrives no

matter how dry it gets....it is designed to be reasonably drought tolerant....however...my theory is that the Rockrose may change its cell structure to conserve moisture...hence...the larvae may be unable to feed properly....just my own uneducated theory...

Hope that answers your question.

Iain.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 08-May-11 05:37 AM GMT

Early May in Berwickshire

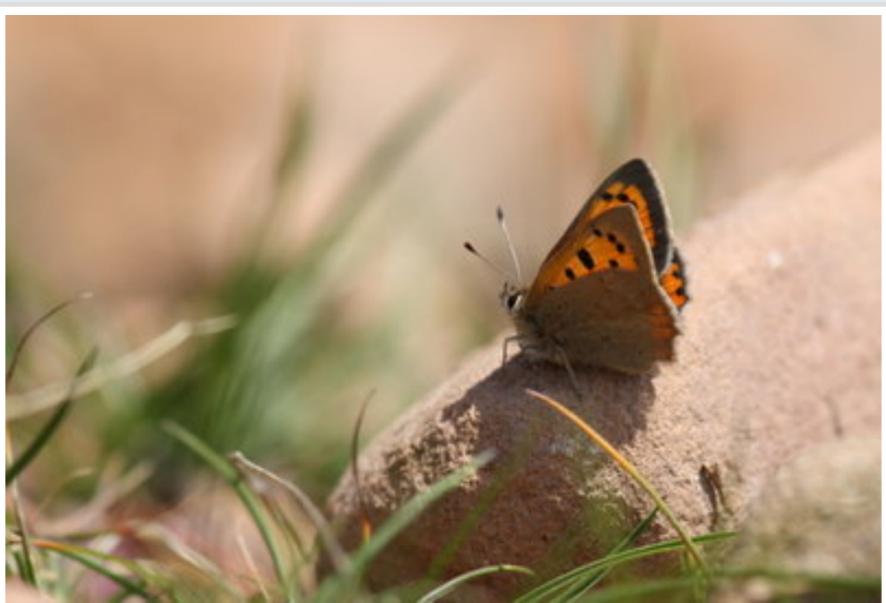
The weather has finally broken down...good or bad? I am convinced it has done so at just the right time.

Over the past few weeks butterfly numbers have remained stable. Small Copper are very obvious...an 18 count on a wee hillside cleugh near Duns is very high for spring....a mass emergence likely. Along with the posturing Small Copper, Small Heath are just coming to the fore as the weather turns. Red Admiral seem to be up here in reasonable numbers with at least 1 being seen a day. 1 Painted Lady last week flying at pace..as is usual. Wall Brown are again in numbers...I have observed their rise to power over the past 3-4 years...and it really is quite impressive. Very common on the coast now and beginning a march inland...as each brood emerges I am seeing them in new areas. I was out today in overcast conditions with rain threatening and I still managed to find one flitting down a farmland track.

I have been searching for Green Hairstreak for a few years now in Berwickshire...and still nothing to date. The closest known colony is over 20 miles away at Galashiels. So...I decided to go visit this site..and hopefully see my first ever Greens. Arriving at the site I realised how grand scale the habitat was..a large slab of hillside clothed in heather, scrub and Bilberry. I marched around for 3 hours...and nothing...Common Heath and Brown Silver Lines cursed on every footfall. After that depressing 3 hours...I was just about to give up..when it suddenly dawned on me that I had been searching the wrong area. I found some Birch scrub among scree boulders....and bang...two tiny rockets fired up into the sky spinning and turning....I quickly reached for my camera...and waited...and waited...and yes...the little blighter broke off the assault and set himself down on a rock about a metre from where I was primed to pounce. I was able to get very close...it is always very special to see a new butterfly...and this was very special indeed..I now, am more than ever encouraged to find the Greens in Berwickshire....but I know it wont be easy....it would not be any fun if it was easy.



A resting Hummbird Hawk near Eyemouth.



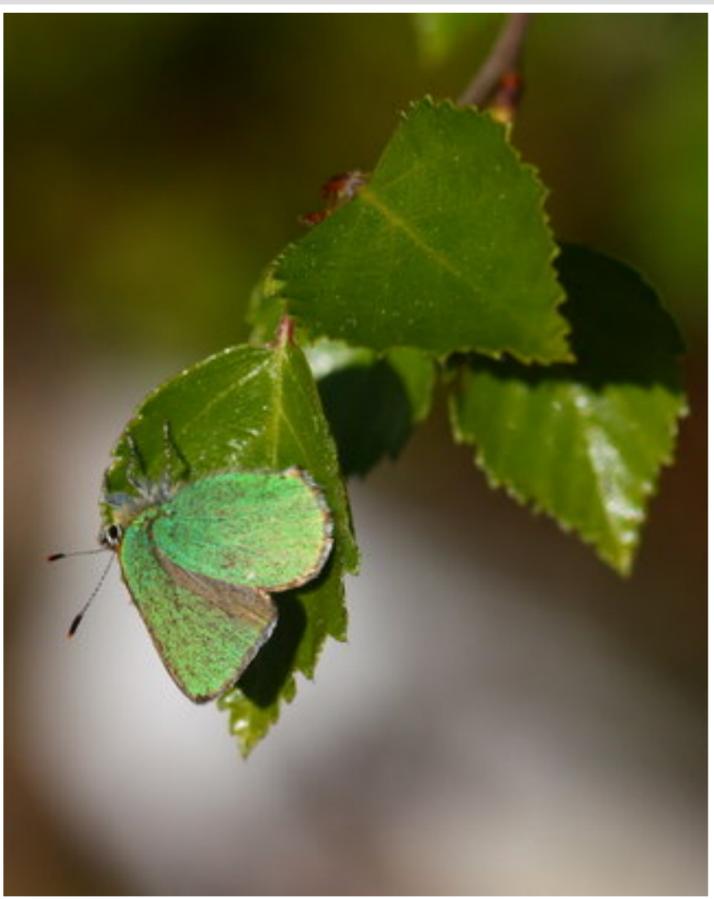
1 of 18 Small Copper on a hillside cleugh.



A resting Orange Tip today.



My first ever Green..



You need eyes of the hawk to see this...ridiculous.

Re: IAC

by Susie, 08-May-11 05:02 PM GMT

Well done IAIN, you can't beat seeing your first GH.

Re: IAC

by IAC, 14-May-11 05:45 AM GMT

May..the story so far

A good few trips to the coast over the past week in between the showers has revealed quite a few surprises. Small Blue males began emerging on the 9th!!!! Last year the 18th. On the 11th there were 6 males on site. The strange thing is that the KV has yet to flower...worryingly...next week will be very interesting once a few females begin to emerge.

Plenty of Wall and Small Copper on the coast and a few Small Heath covering from the showers. As yet Common Blue, and Northern Brown Argus are yet to show...their does seem to be window of warm weather forecast from the 21st...so....maybe that will initiate the next wave.



Wall Brown enjoying the Thrift by the shore at Burnmouth.



Small Blue male on the 11th

Re: IAC

by IAC, 30-May-11 02:23 AM GMT

Late May in Berwickshire

Some very interesting weather conditions during mid to late May have been key in suppressing the butterfly numbers usually associated with this time of year. It has been difficult...to say the least. The next wave of butterfly emergence in a normal year would begin about now...but as with the rest of the country, early emergence is still this year's norm...but not in all cases.

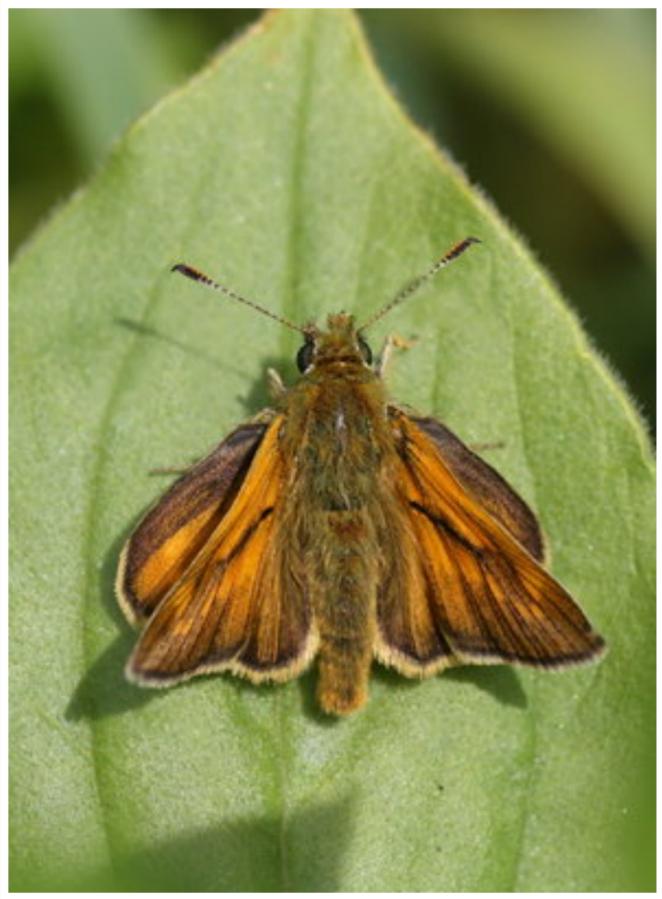
Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary emerged from the 22nd May on local sites, though it is likely that they had been around a few days before that. Common Blue have yet to appear in any number. I have only counted 1 so far. A female at a nearby quarry site...and strange to see a female before having seen any males. Large Skipper made for a very surprising single male sighting at the same quarry on the same day May 27th. Small Heath are dragging their heels a good bit with only 3 and 4 in any one spot, usually in hundreds. Orange Tip are still going strong inland..females still among them and still egg laying. Red Admiral are going to be very strong in late summer given the number of adults seen over the past few weeks...a marked difference from last year's low numbers throughout. Small Blue have been unlucky to have emerged and peaked during this weather. On my last visit to a coastal site there were 21 adults...mostly in shelter. The Kidney Vetch exposed to the high winds is off limits even to the most adventurous female. I found one isolated Kidney Vetch a few hundred metres from the main colony that had no less than 14 eggs attached to the flowerheads. Some of the eggs were laid in the usual standard and the others seemed to have been anywhere will do, with quite a few just stuffed down in between unopened buds.

The next butterfly on the wing up here will certainly be the Northern Brown Argus. I have been looking out for it the past few weeks. They seem to be

sitting tight...and rightly so. If David M is right about the Azores high....we will be seeing the little blighters sooner rather than later. As a matter of fact I will be searching again tomorrow at coastal sites...so here's hoping they have made a start already. Other news.. Speckled Wood seem to have just about run their first brood course. Some very worn individuals only. I expect in a week or maybe 2 a second brood. Wall Brown continue their unrelenting march inland, with many more inland sightings compared to last year...long may it continue...the Wall is a quite marvellous butterfly indeed. Small Copper have had an incredible season on most sites with high number concentrations....quite unusually high counts for Spring. The late summer will be Small Copper dominated I think.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVffA36X76I&hd=1>

Iain.



Large Skipper male taking a rest on the 27th.



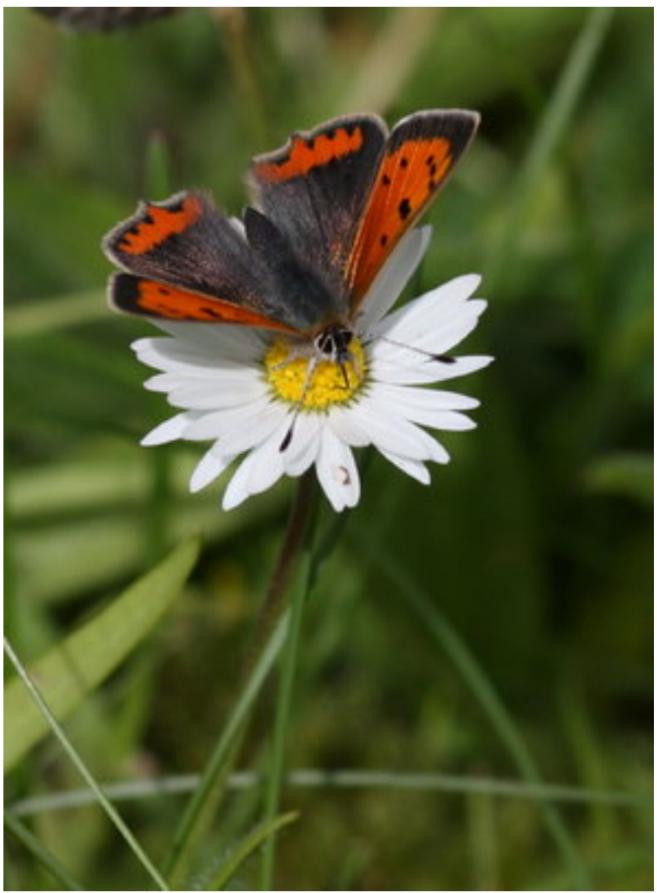
Small Pearl photographed yesterday in between the showers.



Small Blue out of the wind at the coast on the 14th.



Female Common Blue..so far the only CB seen this year so far.



Quite a fresh looking Small Copper seen on the 27th.



A single KV flowerhead containing multiple eggs. The plant as whole had 14 attached.



A male Banded Demoiselle..quite a rare insect up here...or is it?

Re: IAC

by IAC, 06-Jul-11 09:38 PM GMT

I have a lot of catching up to do it seems. June has been a very busy month indeed. My main focus perhaps has been establishing sightings of the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary in Berwickshire. Very recently it had been presumed extinct within the district. Happily that is no longer the case as a strong colony that at peak numbers 200-400 flying butterflies has now been found (2009) and studied since through 2010 and 2011. We organised a field trip to the site on June 25th that went very well indeed. Despite the overcast conditions we were still able to find 40 individuals. The Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary may well be more widespread in Berwickshire and the Borders in general than we had at first thought. It will take some time to round up these satellite sites if indeed they exist.

Another focus of the month has been Small Blue. We have only one active site with an average of 30-40 butterflies at peak. This site is coastal, and it seems that perhaps now the best areas to search for new sub colonies will be the coast. Inland sites of a suitable nature are dwindling rapidly.

A search along the coastline north of Burnmouth village revealed quite a surprise this June as a new sub colony was discovered containing no more than 6 individuals. The Kidney Vetch is plentiful and the habitat is rich....so a return here next year for a further study of colonisation will be required.

There have been no new additions to Berwickshire butterfly species this year with the total at 24. Searches have been made for Green Hairstreak without success. Searches will be carried out for Purple Hairstreak and White Letter Hairstreak. Pearl Bordered Fritillary once resided in the district but it seems no more.

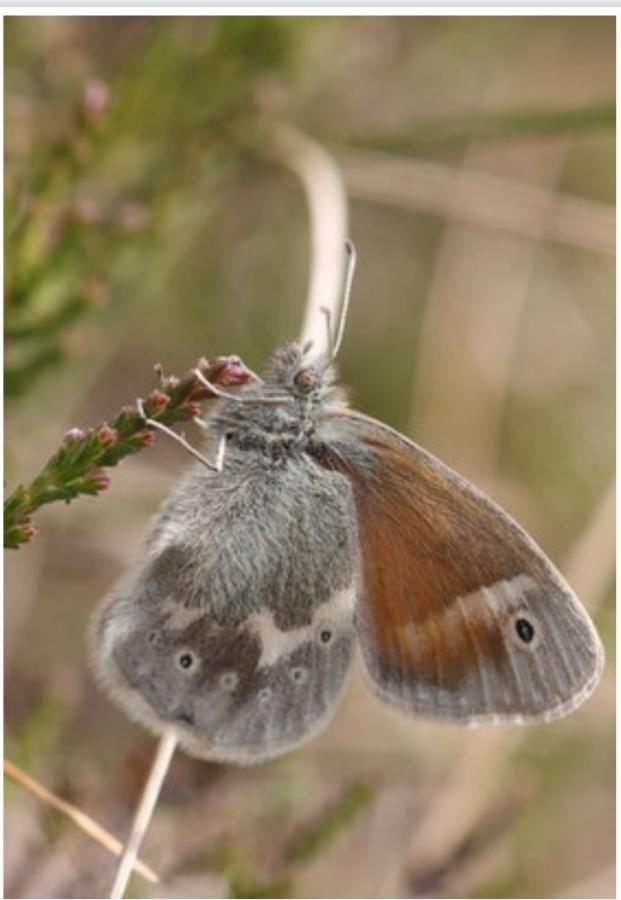
The new additions such as Wall Brown, Speckled Wood, Small Skipper, Large Skipper and Comma are now dug in and well entrenched within the district. The Small Heath, Meadow Brown and Ringlet seem to have dropped in numbers locally over the past few years. This is something to keep an eye on. The dry spring weather may be the cause. It has not affected the Large and Small Skippers at all as they are at record highs in local areas with many new sites recorded.

I went off to the wet moorland above Greenlaw at the end of June to try and find Large Heath. These habitats are always a challenge....but the rewards are high. The upland raised bogs are full of colour and vibrancy. Some spectacular plant life to be seen here. Very breathtaking indeed. The only butterfly that you will ever encounter on these brooding sphagnum rafts of Sundew and Cotton Grass are the Large Heath. In a short slog across the bog 10 Large Heath were seen. It took me a good while to find one worthy of a photograph. With one foot embedded and slowly being sucked southwards into a pitch pool and my face pressed into a damp sphagnum sponge...I managed to get a photo of the most difficult subject there is out there. I was more than pleased.

Other highlights of June, well, I managed to find a new Northern Brown Argus site on the banks of the river on the lowland stretch of the Whiteadder. This is especially rare as they are usually confined to the coast, the uplands and volcanic plugs in general....so to find them on a lowland riverbank was quite special.

The numbers of Large Skipper this year have been quite special, Dark Green Fritillary seem to be having a decent season, I have only to see Grayling this year to complete my Berwickshire list...they have been flying for about a week now..so that is what I will be doing next.

Iain



Large Heath on the raised bogs to the north of Greenlaw in the Lammermuirs



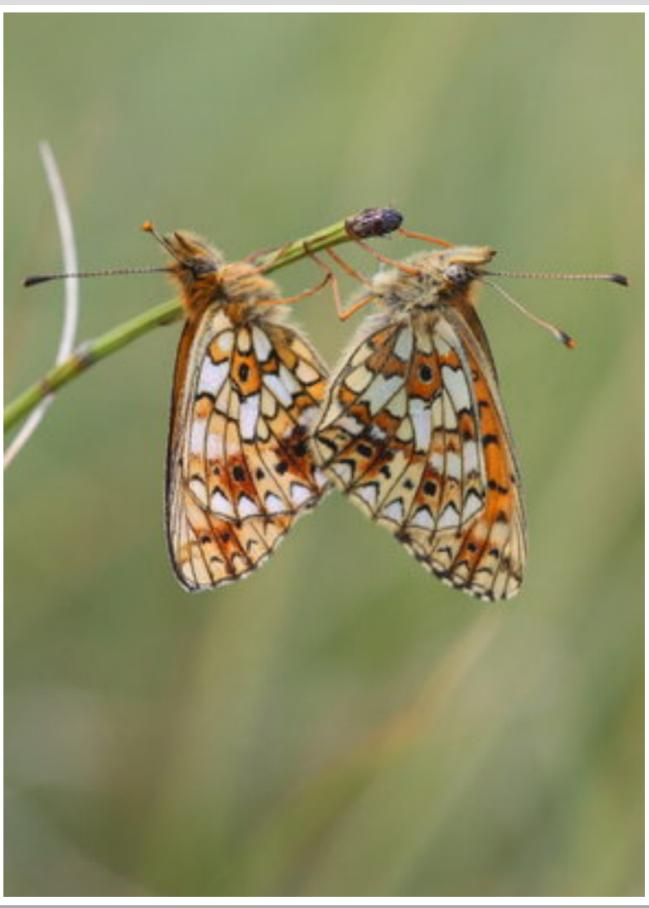
Below Burnmouth the sight of Northern Brown Argus perched upon the Valerian stands is quite iconic.



The Lesser Butterfly Orchid is a true jewel within what is left of the Berwickshire wet woods.



The Banded Demoiselle has expanded at a great rate over the past few years on the lowland river systems.



Thought to be extinct within the district. So this photo is incredible in all sorts of ways.



This Small Skipper is the aberration Pallida...the second year in a row this ab has been seen.



This Northern Brown Argus was photographed on the lower reaches of the Whiteadder this June



Large Skipper have really taken off in Berwickshire since last year.



The Six Spot Burnet seem to be having a bonanza year along with the Narrow Bordered Five Spots

Re: IAC

by millerd, 07-Jul-11 02:11 AM GMT

Absolutely fascinating stuff about habitat, a terrific variety of species and lovely pictures too.

Dave

Re: IAC

by IAC, 19-Jul-11 03:23 AM GMT

JULY...So Far..Not So Good.

These past few days have been a complete washout. It has rained like it has never done so before. And to think that some parts of the world are crying out for this stuff...well...we cant really complain can we..

Before I began work on the Ark there were plenty of good butterfly days to be had. The target species have been Dark Green Fritillary, Small Skipper and Grayling. On the 8th of July I visited a small hillside cleugh near Duns. It has always been a top spot for Dark Greens, and more importantly, fairly easy to get to. In all 28 Dark Greens were counted. Very good numbers for such a small area.

A search for Grayling on the 14th from Eyemouth too Burnmouth. I did not have to do much searching for these guys as they were swarming all over the coastal bluffs in incredible numbers. I counted 100...and thought that will probably do. Also on the 14th I saw 6 Hummingbird Hawkmoths...a female laying eggs on Ladys Bedstraw was witnessed. First time I have seen that.

Small Skipper search on the 15th. This new species to the area is ever increasing in number at local sites...yet...its range is still mysteriously restricted. There are some very suitable sites with nothing...then a few miles away hundreds on a similar grassy slope.

The Whiteadder river banks from the English Border too Chirnside are the best for the species...pretty much ungrazed sheer slopes with masses of flowering plants in July. On the 15th I counted 86 Small Skipper at 2 favoured locations on the riverbanks.

Meadow Brown numbers continue to concern...Small Heath...pretty poor. Ringlet...very average indeed. I think Meadow Brown though are the most worrying. Numbers were down last year and this...well...in some places they just aint there anymore. Just have to wait and see if they pick up again this year...seems a bit late now for a surge.

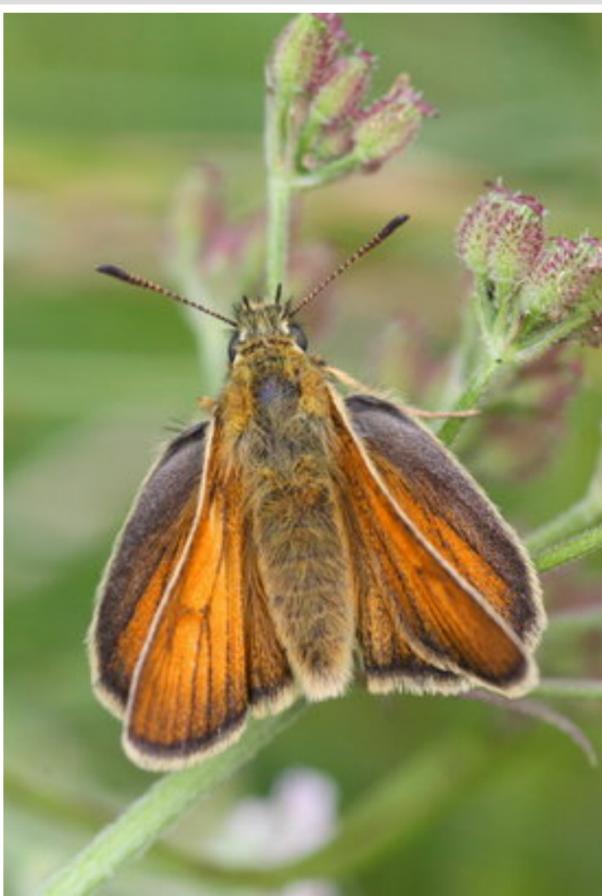
Thanks for you very kind comments on my last post Dave.



A very pretty Common Blue female near Duns Castle.



The Small Skippers can be devils to find when the sun is scarce...but not this one.



Small Skippers are here in the Scottish Borders in huge numbers...but locally.



Actually managing to photograph one these Dark Greens aint easy in sunshine.



One of many Graylings on the Eyemouth coastal strip.



Hummingbird Hawk taking a breather.



Hummingbird Hawkmoth eggs laid on Ladys Bedstraw.



A very fresh Northern Brown Argus on the 14th on the Eyemouth coast.



This Magpie moth was a highlight spot on the 14th.

Re: IAC

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-11 05:11 AM GMT

That Northern Brown Argus is cracking – and it's still on my "most wanted" list 🍷
Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: IAC

by IAC, 22-Jul-11 12:07 AM GMT

Small Blue Larvae Hunt

Today I visited the Burnmouth coast to look for Small Blue larvae. For those of you who have done this before...well done...well done indeed!!! This was my third attempt at this hair pulling task...and this time success was had at last. It is always the case that finding the first one is the most difficult....great patience and perseverance needed. In all I found 6...now...again...for those of you who have done this before, that is probably a paltry number, that demands laughter and mockery. Well...so be it....my knees are well bruised up with crawling around, I have plenty scratches and few ticks...but I am more than pleased with finding 6. 😊

One of the larvae was being attended by *Lasius Niger* ants.....or was it...is their evidence at all for this species to look out for Small Blue Cats... photo below does not paint the picture any more clearly. The ants seemed interested in the larvae...and that is about all I could see.

Wurzel thanks for comments on NBA.....they are smashing butterflies right enough. When the sun catches them just right you get a lovely electric blue sheen on the wings...Their are plenty of sites in the Scottish Borders for you to see them some time...at the moment their is maybe 2 weeks left before they begin to close down for the year.



My first look at these caterpillars...great stuff!!



V difficult to see among the buds



Lasius Nigra and Small Blue Cat

Re: IAC

by Pete Eeles, 22-Jul-11 12:21 AM GMT

Nice one IAC! Time well spent for sure!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: IAC

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jul-11 12:52 AM GMT

Yep, that last image in particular is a corker. Good work!

Neil

Re: IAC

by IAC, 22-Jul-11 01:59 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Pete and Neil..High praise indeed!!! 😊

Re: IAC

by David M, 22-Jul-11 04:37 AM GMT

Agree with the sentiments of others. Excellent work and certainly an education for me (and, I suspect, for many others).

Re: IAC

by IAC, 13-Oct-11 08:16 PM GMT

End of Season in South Scotland

Due to work commitments I have managed to miss a rather large chunk of what would have been a very interesting end to the butterfly season up here in the South of Scotland. I managed to keep my eye in over the past few months by visiting a short strip of nettles and thistles during lunch breaks...it has to be said I did not hold much hope of finding anything much of interest.....how wrong I was!! It seems that the late summer weather...if you can call it that....produced a good few late brooded Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock. I found many caterpillars and a few Chrysalis of both species well into late September. The majority though of fresh caterpillars belonged to the Red Admirals. I counted up to 50 Red Ad nettle tents in a short stretch, and waited, in anticipation for fresh adults to emerge.. Thanks goes out to Vince Massimo of this very forum for an excellent account of Red Ad early stages....what a great help that was in tracking down the Chrysalis. The Red Admiral Chrysalis where found inside the nettle tents...quite amazing!!! I also found many Chrysalis on nearby walls and fence wires...pretty much anywhere they could find. I learned a great deal about these butterflies...it seems out of nothing...

As for the end of season butterflies...well... up to a few days ago, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma and Speckled Wood could still be found. Red Admiral at the moment are still the more likely to be seen around flowering Ivy...my hunch is though that they will be off very soon on there travels south.

From July...late July that is, butterflies have been to hunt for,weather has been poor to poorer. However, with persistence they were there in numbers in the right places. On the coast Northern Brown Argus, Dark Green Fritillary, and Grayling were abundant. Great numbers of Grayling from Burnmouth to Eyemouth, 134 counted on the 6th August. Northern Brown Argus held on until the 8th of September on the coast at Eyemouth.

Speckled Wood seem to be on the move again with many wooded areas starting to see signs of colonisation. Comma doing a little better than last year with a few Hutchinsonii seen in July. I cant say much for how the Wall Brown faired this year as work got in the way of the second brood...I can say that they were later than last year. Usually the first few days of August.

I had read the Butterfly count report...and I saw that Gatekeepers have been seen in Scotland? I am not really very convinced at that...quite a few iffy ids out there...maybe.

Iain.



Peacock on the banks of the Whitadder river.



Speckled Wood ever increasing range in the south of Scotland.



Mating pair of Speckies in a woodand ride I had checked before and found nothing...that day there were 7 milling around.



An increase in Comma numbers this year in my local area.



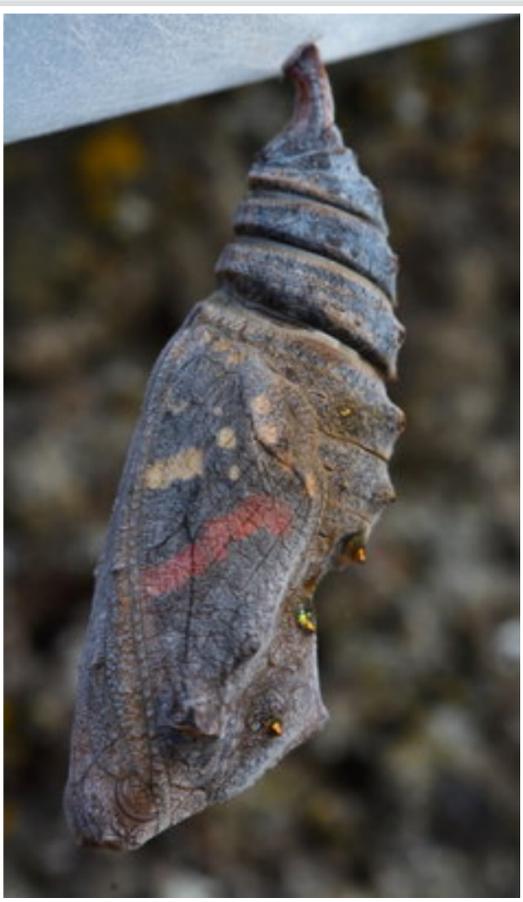
Red Ad Cat makes a break for it...final instar.



Freshly emerged Red Ad and Chrysalis...and stomach contents excreted below...yeeuuuch!!



My favourite coastal plant the most excellent Carline Thistle near Burnmouth.



Red Admiral Chrysalis just a few hours before emerging.



Small Tortoiseshell late broods..late September.



Small Copper on the typical Ragwort.

Re: IAC

by dilettante, 13-Oct-11 09:07 PM GMT

"IAC" wrote:

Northern Brown Argus held on until the 8th of September on the coast at Eyemouth.

Argh, you're just rubbing it in! I failed to see them on several visits at the start of August. 😊

Re: IAC

by IAC, 14-Oct-11 01:54 AM GMT

Not rubbing it in mate...not at all.....but.....here is what you missed.....sorry... 😊

Re: IAC

by ChrisC, 14-Oct-11 02:11 AM GMT

lovey video.

Chris

Re: IAC

by Vince Massimo, 14-Oct-11 11:21 PM GMT

"IAC" wrote:

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Thanks Iain, I'm glad you found my account useful, but something tells me that you probably would have found quite a few without my help. Your diary is a classic example of what can be achieved by putting the time in. In fact I would be hard pressed to pick a favourite image,..... but I would have to say the Small Blue larva with "attend-ant" . I also enjoyed the very evocative Northern Brown Argus video.

Is there any chance you could put a few images into the Species Albums? In particular the Large Heath, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary pair, the latest Small Skipper ab. pallida, Speckled Wood pair and of course the Small Blue larval shots.

Cheers,
Vince

Re: IAC

by MikeOxon, 15-Oct-11 01:11 AM GMT

I enjoyed those video sequences of the NBA very much – they made a 'dyed in the wool' stills photographer feel I should give video a try!

I particularly liked the sequence of the female warming up her flight muscles and, also, watching her furl her proboscis. Video is much better at showing these behavioural aspects than stills, although I also like to be able to spend time studying a still photo in detail.

Mike

Re: IAC

by David M, 15-Oct-11 02:26 AM GMT

Excellent video that. Am I mistaken or does one of those NBAs exhibit rearwing white spots?

Re: IAC

by IAC, 15-Oct-11 08:12 PM GMT

Hi all,
Thanks for your comment Chris.

Vince, thanks for your comments, I shall add the photos to the relevant galleries asap. I think you are right enough that the Small Blue and its attend-ant....(very good!!!)....just right place right time for that one. The Small Blue that are remaining here in the Scottish Borders are rare to near extinction, so I spend a good deal of time looking for patches of Kidney Vetch away from the main colony..then painstakingly sifting through the flower heads looking for eggs...This year I got very lucky finding an egg about a half mile from the colony...talk about chuft....then to better it, as I sat by a patch of Thyme by the shore line a Small Blue flipped out of the grasses right in front of me..its well worth all the fruitless searches when you are finally rewarded like that.....thanks again.

Mike, Thanks for your comments. Yes...video...I am very new to it and have just really been experimenting this year with a little JVC HD camcorder. I am hooked now, but I did find that initially it got in the way of my photography...I have smoothed that out a bit now though. I have been invited to do a few talks at local wildlife groups in spring 2012...so...I am hopeful I can piece together the few hours of footage along with my stills...thats the idea anyway..

David ,
Thanks for your comment. Yes David, it is the ab.quadripuncta. I dont seem to have many photos of this ab...though it is quite common .