

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-Jan-11 09:12 PM GMT

Happy New Year

Happy New Year to all UKBers. After a very frustrating two weeks with severe IT problems, I've only been able to occasionally glimpse some of the best threads I've seen on this website, without the ability to contribute. I'll start catching up today.

To kick off the New Year I thought I'd show an etching by my brother Mark, who is visiting Sussex with his family from Antwerp. It commemorates the pernicious attack by a Purple Emperor on a Great Splatted Woodpecker, observed at Marlpost (Southwater) Wood on 26th June 2008. There might be too much sex and violence on TV, but there's little I enjoy more than sex and violence in the world of butterflies.



Wishing you all a butterfly-filled 2011.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jan-11 07:32 AM GMT

Return Of The High Brown?

Hi Matsukaze and Jack,

A re-introduction of High Brown Fritillaries isn't really on the cards at the BC Rowland Wood Reserve, for a number of reasons. First – a little history of the species in Sussex (much of which is courtesy of Colin Pratt's definitive work on Sussex butterflies). Following a steady decline throughout the 20th Century the species became extinct in West Sussex in 1986, and finally on Ashdown Forest (East Sussex) in 1987. *If* a Sussex re-introduction were ever to be attempted, the latter would probably be the location to look at. HBF became extinct in Vert Wood (of which the BC Rowland Wood Reserve is part) in the early 1960s, and ten years earlier in Abbot's Wood, a short distance to the East; both of these woodlands were once prime locations for HBF in East Sussex. The species certainly persisted in Kingspark Wood (West Sussex) until the early 1960s, but there was an attempted re-introduction in 1973. I imagine it was one of these butterflies that you saw there Jack; I believe that specimens were occasionally seen up until about 1982.

So it's a very long time since HBFs were seen in this part of the world, and the demise of the species here (and elsewhere from southern woodlands) was long before sufficiently detailed autecological studies were made, which could perhaps have revealed the precise reasons for decline, and possibly the knowledge to arrest it. As you say Jack, I don't think we know enough about the HBF's detailed requirements in this particular habitat type, to have a realistic chance of long-term success. One thing we do know about the species in its remaining core areas (in different habitat types), is that conservation success relies upon a landscape-scale approach, perhaps more so than for any other British species. So it would not fulfill many of the criteria for a BC-supported re-introduction; Rowland Wood does not provide a sufficiently large area of highly suitable habitat with a sustainable management plan for this particular species. Furthermore, BC-supported reintroductions require that they form part of a wider, strategic plan, which is more likely to achieve long-term success. At best, a re-introduction at Rowland Wood would create a HBF 'zoo', with only short-term (medium at best) prospects. Much better to throw everything we have at conserving the species in its remaining strongholds, where we now know a great deal more about its detailed habitat requirements, and are at last achieving some successes, at least locally. And better to work outwards from these areas, rather than create an isolated 'island' of HBFs.

I would dearly love to see the High Brown flying in Sussex woodlands again, but I suspect I'll always have to make long journeys to see it for the rest of my lifetime. On a happier note, I think that things will be looking a good deal rosier for Small Pearl-bordered and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries here in just a few years.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jan-11 06:15 AM GMT

Ornamental Duck House Removed

It was good to see a massive turn-out of 27 volunteers at Michael Blencowe's Rowland Wood work party today, blessed by beautiful sunshine and clear blue skies. Knights-in-shining-armor included Marie Buss, Anna Grist, Susan Suleski, Nikki Kent, Clare Jeffers, Catherine Tonge, Sherie New, Carol & Nigel Kemp, Dave Mitchell, Andrew Burns, Mark Bunch, Tom Ottley, Dave Harris, Roy Wells, Roger Carter, Keith Alexander, Peter Atkinson, John Luck, Richard Roebuck, Colin Brinkhurst, Andy Stokes, Vince Massimo, David Bradford and Peter Coyston. I like to think that this hard-working army is making the reserve 'their own' by contributing in this manner. Those going 'the extra mile' today included Vince Massimo who travelled from Surrey (and supplied one of the images below), and Mark Bunch who joined us all the way from Essex – many thanks! A great deal was achieved and with every visit the reserve just looks better and better. The prospects for this summer really excite me.

One of the jobs on today's list was the removal of the first of two ornamental duck houses on the lake – no longer allowable as an 'expense' following last year's financial investigation. Michael bravely took to the water, and the large crowd of onlookers seemed only slightly disappointed that his partner Clare's emergency repair of his waders held up.



The work party provided the first opportunity to try out my new Silky Zubat 390 Japanese saw – an awesome weapon worthy of any conservation ninja. Apparently, zubat, or zubatto in Japanese, is the sound a samurai sword makes as it strikes its target. It's razor-sharp and cuts on the pull rather than push stroke. It will be particularly useful for attacking coppice stools, allowing the outer poles to be cut from the 'inside', hence working with, rather than against gravity. The 'cage' on a standard saw means cutting from the 'outside', which often closes the kerf and traps the blade.





While most of the party were removing trees, Clare Jeffers and Tom Ottley planted a mixed batch of ten Dutch Elm Disease-resistant strains of elm tree, kindly supplied by Andrew Brookes of Portsmouth University and BC Hants & IOW Branch.



It was one of those days when I came away full of optimism for the future of our butterflies and moths. While people like this are willing to give so generously of their time, I'll always remain optimistic.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jan-11 07:43 AM GMT

Hedgerows And Butterflies

On Thursday (13th January) I gave a talk 'Hedgerows and Butterflies' to a group of Sussex farmers, along with representatives from Natural England, RSPB and Hedgelink. The idea was to promote best hedgerow management practices for the benefit of butterflies, moths, birds and the farmers themselves! The consistent, harsh, annual treatment of hedgerows, which does so much damage to the prospects of our wildlife (including Brown Hairstreaks), serves only to shorten the useful lifespan of a hedge, so the adoption of better practices actually benefits all parties. I learned a lot about the mechanics of hedge growth from Nigel Adams of Hedgelink, so every time I look at a hedge from now onwards I'll be seeing it through different eyes.



It's easy to underestimate the importance of the humble hedgerow to butterflies – I know I used to. Hedgerows, and hedgerow bases, might only provide quite limited opportunities for breeding, nectar, shelter and hibernation per metre, but when their lengths are added up they form a massive, linear nature reserve; all the better if they are adjacent to wider grass buffer strips, set-aside headlands and conservation headlands (unsprayed crop margins), which can be financially encouraged via agri-environment schemes.

With the obvious exception of Brown Hairstreak, most of these species are common 'non-specialists' (e.g. Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Large Skipper, Orange Tip, Green-veined White, Holly Blue). But hedgerows also provide migration corridors across the more difficult terrain for butterflies, allowing them to disperse over the landscape. With fragmentation of richer habitats becoming ever-more an issue, these butterfly 'trunk roads' are vital in allowing travellers a place to rest, nectar, shelter and avoid predators.

Some of our rarer butterflies had a much better season in 2010, and species such as the Wood White, Pearl-bordered and Dark Green Fritillaries demonstrated high rates of dispersal. There's little doubt that many of these would have hedge-hopped across arable landscapes while travelling from A to B. We need to see more sympathetically managed, rotationally cut hedgerows, with wider, uncut bases.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Piers, 17-Jan-11 06:26 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

The work party provided the first opportunity to try out my new Silky Zubat 390 Japanese saw

I'm looking forward to pics of your first Silky injury Neil – they are *never* pretty and it *will* happen 😊. Mine was a forearm slice, nice fat scar it is too...

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 17-Jan-11 06:43 PM GMT

Excellent Neil to hear of your educational talk about hedgerow management. Was your mate Eddie Norfolk in the audience? 😊

That Silky looks a RELATIVELY benign piece of kit, a top-of-the-range-pruning saw.

But all pruners, secateurs and the like can bite if misused. My worst accident was when using an ordinary small anvil pair of secateurs. I was stretching just too much and holding the branch down with my left hand, I managed to prune into my left thumb-nail. The injury wasn't in fact all that bad, but I have to admit that I suffered a mild degree of shock. I still shudder today when I think about it (and I bet that you too, dear readers, are also shuddering!)

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jan-11 11:19 PM GMT

Hi Felix and Jack,

Nothing wrong with a timely reminder that these tools are to be treated with respect! I do get a little queasy at the sight of tomato ketchup, so I'm not going to think too hard about either of your war wounds. I've never even considered getting a chainsaw licence – I watched 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre' at too tender an age.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-Jan-11 03:01 AM GMT

DED-Resistant Elms

On Saturday (15th January) I helped clear some ground in a lovely wood just north of the Downs, in readiness for planting with Dutch Elm Disease-resistant trees. The BC Sussex Branch is following in the footsteps of our Hants & IOW neighbours, by introducing some of the elms that Andrew

Brookes (Portsmouth University) has been trialing since 2000. These cultivars, Lutece, Vada and Morfeo, have been chosen as particularly suitable hosts for the White-letter Hairstreak, in a landscape still ravaged by the disease.

A batch of these elms will shortly be planted along the southern fringe of this wood, which is owned by a couple of friends. Pete and Sally manage their own piece of paradise here, with 'manage' being the most important element of their ownership. Many woodland blocks are purchased simply as long term investments, often resulting in the wood becoming overgrown and of limited value to wildlife. That won't be happening here. With regular coppicing of the hazel understory in the sheltered depression shown below, it's not hard to imagine this area being carpeted with wood anemone, primrose and bluebell in the springtime – and home to good numbers of Silver-washed Fritillary later in the year. During my visits to the wood I always get the 'Purple Emperor twitch' – they've not been spotted yet, but I know they're here.



The three of us really got stuck in and by mid afternoon we had made good progress in clearing hazel and ash to make way for ten elm trees. There's still more work to be done before the two areas are ready for planting, but the sheltered embayments are already looking like homes for hairstreaks. It will take the best part of ten years before these trees are likely to support White-letters, but in the meantime the areas we have cleared (and which will be kept clear) will provide suitably sunny glades for fritillaries and White Admirals.



Pete and Sally at work



Area cleared for DED-resistant elms

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Matsukaze, 19-Jan-11 04:17 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Excellent stuff. A few questions though – how good are these elm cultivars as timber trees? Can they be marketed as investments for the future, as elm

wood makes good timber and is probably in short supply in this country at the moment? How much do they cost, and are many people prepared to give them a try?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Piers, 19-Jan-11 08:36 PM GMT

Probably not. Elm has few commercial uses, and although it has a decorative grain it's primary use (in America as well as Europe) is for pallets, packaging timber etc. Elm is a cheap timber to purchase reflecting its commercial value.

Felix.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-Jan-11 09:23 PM GMT

Hi Matsukaze,

You raise an interesting point. As you say, elm is a good timber, much beloved of wheelwrights, cabinet makers and ship builders, and English and Wych Elm is unsurprisingly in short supply these days. With more than 25 million elms lost (to DED) from our countryside (the large majority of the pre-disease stock) there's an awful lot to replace – and the British countryside is much the poorer for the vast gaps it's left. These cultivars can go some (relatively small) way to filling these holes, but of course it would be much nicer to see the 'original' tree repopulating the landscape – which seems highly unlikely in our lifetimes.

As far as commercial use is concerned, I can only see them serving a tiny and very expensive (slow-growing) niche market and I doubt these cultivars would ever be used widely, purely for timber. Let's face it, these days we can't even wait long enough for soft woods, such as pine, to weather properly before a coat of paint is slapped on, and they're incorporated into new-builds, only to rot within a couple of years. Thankfully there are still a few around that do a 'proper' job – although not the team of highly skilled craftsmen 🙄 that put up my last house.

Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton have recently shown that White-letter Hairstreaks are still widely distributed where elm survives – more widely than suspected before their mammoth survey. So we are planting these trees both as a little 'insurance' against further, massive outbreaks (DED is always at work now, to some degree), and also from an aesthetic, landscape point-of-view. The demise of the three gigantic elms that graced the skyline on the other side of Patching Pond, as I fished for tench in the early mornings of the 1970s, will sadly leave a scar that can never be healed. 🙄

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-Jan-11 09:28 PM GMT

Hi Felix,

It's true we don't have many wheelwrights or ship builders living in my street these days. Not building Man-O-War anyway.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Piers, 22-Jan-11 02:29 AM GMT

Indeed. Elm was used by Wheelwrights for the wheel hubs (not the rim or the spokes though); and it's well known water resistant properties made it popular for coffins, water gullies, maritime use, etc. etc. Elm was also traditionally used for the seat of English chairs, Windsor chairs for example.

Irrespective of how much Elm is (or could be) available in this country it now has few uses commercially other than a pulp timber or for disposable items such as pallets, packaging etc. Hence it has a low commercial value, even in countries which are able to produce a significant quantity of the timber such as the USA.

Felix.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Jan-11 05:25 PM GMT

Revealing Downland History

On Thursday (27th January) I joined local BC man Dr Martin Kalaher and Simon Mockford of the South Downs Joint Committee to complete some scrub clearance on the Downs behind Worthing. SDJC volunteers had been up here the previous week, and had done a fantastic job in almost completing one area (many thanks). The area we had earmarked for clearance originally looked like this....



Although the effective conservation of declining species such as the Duke of Burgundy relies upon a landscape scale approach, as is so often the case 'the devil is in the detail'. It is generally the small areas of land, such as this microtopographical feature, that are the keys to success in providing the perfect egg-laying sites for very fussy species. Catering for the early developmental stages (eggs and larvae) is of paramount importance, more so than for the much more visible adults. The image below shows the same area on completion of the work.



The deep, linear feature revealed from beneath the mature scrub and trees will provide a sheltered (from all sides) refuge, which receives sun for only part of the day and will retain moisture. Removal of the vegetation will also allow morning sunshine to penetrate the sheltered embayment we cut into the woodland edge, just to the right of the area shown.

It was only when the scrub and trees came down that this feature revealed its true identity – a beautifully preserved section of an old sheep drover's track (a bostal in ye olde shepherd's speake). The point from which the second image was taken (showing Martin standing on the droveway) forms an apparent closure to the linear feature, which can be picked up again further around the Down. This section of 'fill' was caused by a large rotational slip of chalk which has slumped into the bostal, probably long after the last flock was driven up this hillside. As we dragged large sacks of cut material down the old track to form log piles in the wood below, I wondered how many decades have passed since the path was last used.



Not far from where we were working, contractor Mark Goulding was doing a superb job in clearing heavy scrub from a steep coombe. This area will provide a new playground for a wide variety of downland butterflies. As always I went away with a feeling of anticipation and optimism for summers to come, when it will be very satisfying to see these new areas of habitat occupied.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Jan-11 02:45 AM GMT

Elm Grove

On Friday (28th January) I joined Tom Ottley of BC Sussex and Steyning Downland Scheme members Pete Varkala, Dave Buckett and Nigel Bowman to plant 13 DED-resistant elms at Steyning Rifle Range. This is part of our own campaign, which follows in the footsteps of the 'elm pioneers' in the Hants & IOW Branch. After completing the preparatory clearance work, including the removal of a large quantity of decaying elm wood, we built a 'dead hedge' to provide a wind-break and hopefully deter any unwelcome interference with the planting. With the sad remains of so many native elms around, we are confident that these trees will thrive here, and go at least some way in mitigating the losses.



Getting started



Felling a dead elm



Elms for the future



Protective 'dead hedge'

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 31-Jan-11 03:24 AM GMT

Neil

Your hands-on conservation is second to none. I know we have on these pages had "issues" with BC Headquarters Management style. I don't think anyone would have any issues with the way Sussex Branch is being run.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Feb-11 07:41 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

..... I know we have on these pages had "issues" with BC Headquarters Management style.....

Hi Jack,
This is one area where we must agree to disagree. Of course this is a highly subjective topic and everyone will have different expectations, which of course may or may not be met. But I'm very much in agreement with the comments made by Felix at the top of page 4 in the 'Forest sell-off' thread. Bearing in mind the amount of time I give freely to the cause (which for me is synonymous with BC), I would be horrified 😡 if PAID senior staff found the time to join in the rough and tumble on a forum site. We are paying them to do a job on our behalf and I've only ever seen them doing it well very well indeed! I've got a great deal of respect for all the staff (at all levels) and Council members I've ever met and am very happy to nail my colours to the mast. I don't see myself as biased either - I'm just a subscription-paying BC member that volunteers a lot!
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Feb-11 08:08 AM GMT

Wonderful Wisley (Part 1)

On Thursday (3rd February) I visited 'Butterflies in the Glasshouse' at Wisley with Hannah and my parents. This was my first visit and I was mighty impressed! The camera was out of the bag before we got anywhere near the exhibit, as this cutesy robin posed for us.





The place was packed with visitors (weekends must be a nightmare) and like all UKB posters before me, it was a while before my equipment unsteamed 🤔. For those that haven't been yet – it's well worth a visit. Here's my first batch of exotics. Lovely as they are you can't beat an English Purple Emperor, spread-eagled on a woodland ride on a warm July evening.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Feb-11 03:24 AM GMT

Wonderful Wisley (Part 2)

[More images from Wisley.....](#)





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Feb-11 05:46 PM GMT

Last Elms Go In

On Friday (4th February) we managed to get the last of our DED-resistant elm cultivars in the ground. After much huffing and puffing over previous weeks, two clearings had been fully prepared at Pete and Sally's private woodland paradise. I joined Pete (Varkala), Dave Buckett and Tom Ottley to finish off this BC Sussex project, which covers four locations and will hopefully provide habitat for White-letter Hairstreaks long before I'm planted.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 12-Feb-11 11:48 PM GMT

Steyping Downland Scheme Open Evening

On Thursday evening (10th February) I attended the Steyping Downland Scheme Open Evening, held at the Steyping Centre in the heart of this picturesque small town. The event was attended by approaching 100 locals, who are justifiably proud of their community project. The scheme covers a large area of mixed chalk grassland and wooded downland habitats owned by the Wiston Estate. The project has successfully 'connected' the town's folk with this rapidly improving area of countryside and has gone a long way towards uniting the various interest groups. The Steyping Downland Scheme puts the involvement of young people high on the agenda and has greatly improved the relationships between users of the land – apparently the local mountain-bikers used to use the badger setts as jumps!

The meeting was opened by Richard Goring (Wiston Estate) and Bryony Webb, the project co-ordinator, went on to give an overview of the scheme since its launch in 2007. Steering Group Committee member Pete Varkala then showed one of his excellent short films about the project. Go to <http://www.steyningdownland.org> to find out more about the Steyping Downland Scheme. Click on 'New Videos' to the right of the homepage and watch the first (top) film to see some nice butterfly footage, including Brown Hairstreaks.

The butterfly interest here now extends far beyond the Brown Hairstreak. Following the fencing and cattle grazing of the Rifle Range (and other areas), the habitat is improving in a rapid and spectacular manner. Waste-high Tor Grass has been stripped away to reveal numerous ant-hills, which have become reactivated as the turf warms up and is allowed to 'breathe' again. The Adonis Blue has already returned. The site is very good for Wall Brown and the area of scrubby grassland above the Rifle Range will become increasingly good for Green Hairstreaks and the spring Skippers. I said a few words about the ever-improving situation for the butterflies here; the area is getting so good that I'll be leading two walks for SDS/BC this year.

While media coverage usually focuses on the negative pressures affecting our countryside, I think it's important to highlight the success stories too. Everyone involved with the Steyning Downland Scheme should feel proud of their ongoing achievements.



Image by Pete Varkala

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 14-Feb-11 11:42 PM GMT

The Rise Of Rowland

Over the weekend (12th/13th February) another army of volunteers descended on the new BC reserve at Rowland Wood, continuing its rapid metamorphosis into a paradise for woodland butterflies. Marie Buss, Sherie New, Susan Suleski, Dave Mitchell, Keith Alexander, Colin Knight, Nigel Kemp, Peter Atkinson, Peter Coyston, David Bradford, Jim Barrett, Bob Foreman, Richard Roebuck, Dave Harris, Crispin Holloway, Colin Brinkhurst, Roger Carter, Tim Duffield, Alan Dengate and, of course, Reserve Manager Michael Blencowe, all laboured hard to supplement the recent clearance work performed by contractors.



Dave Mitchell – pyromaniac (and probably the greatest single contributor to the upkeep of the Park Corner Heath/Rowland Wood area over several decades). Image by Michael Blencowe

A network of sunny, open rides and clearings is fast developing. It's not difficult to envisage these areas being carpeted with violets and bluebells in the future. The transformation from a dark, oppressive forest dominated by non-native conifers has occurred within a very short timeframe.



Recently cleared Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary habitat

Helping out on Sunday were Marie Buss and new volunteer Jack, who did a great job of moving some of the heavier timber through the woods, without cutting up the surface.



Marie Buss, Richard Roebuck and Jack. Image by Michael Blencowe

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Feb-11 07:20 PM GMT

15 Minute Make-Over

15 minutes was all it took to put together a brief report for the organiser of a small community wildlife garden in the centre of Worthing. One of our members sent me an email about this fledgling project, which is 'on her doorstep' and only a couple of minutes drive from where I live. I dropped by to have a quick look, just to get some idea of how large it is and what's already growing on this piece of 'spare' ground sandwiched between rows of houses.



With a list of butterfly-friendly plants and BC 'Gardening for Butterflies' leaflets to hand, it didn't take long to put a list of recommendations together. Being adjacent to the large open space of a local cemetery, I'm sure it won't be long before the area is awash with Speckled Woods and Holly Blues. These small areas may at first appear insignificant, but when similar urban patches are given a quick make-over, a useful network of habitat begins to emerge. 15 minutes well spent.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 15-Feb-11 07:57 PM GMT

...'spare' ground sandwiched between rows of houses...

A significant point is that once it is a thriving mini-reserve, it will become much more difficult in the future for builders to move in.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Feb-11 11:27 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

In this case that might well be true. I *think* the land is council-owned and has been 'donated' to the residents via an (undoubtedly non-binding) agreement to use the space as a mini-reserve, making it much more difficult to snatch back. Let's hope so anyway.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 18-Feb-11 05:51 AM GMT

'High' On Heyshott

For me, today was the best day yet in 2011. As BC Regional Officer Dan Hoare and I chatted on the steep climb up Heyshott Escarpment, we could see the bonfire smoke rising through the trees, and the sun was just beginning to burn through the thin cloud. We joined up with an enthusiastic mix of Murray Downland Trust and BC volunteers to open up an area of overgrown hazel coppice on the lower slopes of the reserve. This will act as a habitat corridor to encourage the movement of Duke of Burgundy from the more exposed old chalk workings higher up the reserve, down into the lower wooded areas. The Murray Downland Trust manages this reserve superbly – having ecologist Mike Edwards on the team does help! We've been working on this site specifically for the benefit of Dukes for a few years now, and last season they went bonkers. Maximum daily counts of 2s and 3s gave way to 7s and 8s, before suddenly increasing to 51 last May. Looking at the work-in-progress I'm confident that these numbers will increase again – perhaps significantly.



John & Trisha Murray, Naomi Barnett, Mike Edwards, Rowan Edwards, Mike Snelling, Roger Martin, Robin (Brinsbury College), Mike Hadley and Dan Hoare enjoying a well-earned break.



The Dukes will like this.

Once the work was done, Dan and I couldn't resist climbing further up the slope to enjoy the views here. In only ten weeks time these humps and hollows will be home to numerous Dukes, Dingy Skippers, Grizzled Skippers and Green Hairstreaks. As we sat looking out over West Sussex, with buzzards wheeling overhead, I got the first feelings that spring is not far off now.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Rogerdodge, 18-Feb-11 02:18 PM GMT

Neil

Thanks for the memories

My visit to Heyshott was one of the best days of the year. The work you and your colleagues have done up there is admirable.

Thanks

The Duke at Heyshott

by 59 SPECIES, 18-Feb-11 08:21 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Sorry to clutter your blog up. A quick couple of questions if it's ok. I'm planning a trip to Sussex in May, hopefully around the 12th, 13th and 14th. To be honest, I'm specifically coming down for the Duke. Assuming spring isn't early or late (say average lol!), when does the Duke start to emerge on Heyshott Down? Heyshott is one of the sites I have highlighted, but is it necessarily one of the best places to see him? We hope to stay at Arundel or close by. Any help or information would be much appreciated.

Best regards

Pete Simpson

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 18-Feb-11 09:18 PM GMT

Thanks Roger – the best is yet to come, so I hope you can visit again some time. I think you're on hols this spring, but by next year the numbers should be very good indeed.

Pete – yes, your timing will be perfect, irrespective of it being an early/average/late year. Those dates will ensure success, but spring temperatures will determine if this is peak or pre-peak time. Heyshott is suddenly a *very* good place to see Dukes! Feel free to PM me nearer the time. I'm out surveying Dukes every day that the sun shines during the flight season and if any (proper) work comes in, it gets done in the dead of night if necessary. So I should be out-and-about and able to hook up with you. Good timing for PBF locally too.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Rogerdodge, 18-Feb-11 10:00 PM GMT

Neil

WE are back in UK for Mayday – so I shall probably be at Heyshott the following weekend.

Be good to meet up again.....

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 18-Feb-11 10:18 PM GMT

Hi Roger,

Sounds like a good idea to me! 😊 Here's a table of dates/abundances from last year to assist with planning.

May 12th – 7

May 14th – 10

May 15th – 9

May 17th – 12

May 18th – 8

May 20th – 27

May 21st - 51

Heyshott is a 'late' venue (steep, north-facing slope) and 2010 was a 'late' year.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 19-Feb-11 12:14 AM GMT

I presume that in the same way that plants need a crucial temperature for growth to commence, butterflies do not really develop until certain temperature levels are reached. So whether it's cold or VERY cold in December and January makes little difference. I suspect though that February is a critical month as temperatures can easily be high enough in some years to trigger development whereas in other years, it remains too cold.

Locally in the Cambs/Herts/Essex area temperatures so far this February are running at about 3°C above long term average. These figures are more representative of an average March. I haven't looked at data for other parts of the country, but I suspect there would be similar anomalies. The signs are that we will remain in a generally westerly regime until the end of the month so that implies above average temperatures will continue for a few more days at least.

Of course, March might well be bitterly cold. But if this recent spell of milder than average weather does continue, then we could be in for an early butterfly season.

Jack

Re: Dukes at Heyshott

by 59 SPECIES, 19-Feb-11 12:54 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Many thanks for replying. I'll take you up on that offer to meet up. Really appreciated. I'll send you a pm with the exact dates nearer the time (say mid-Aprilish). Yes, would like to see PBF aswell on the visit.

Regards

Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 19-Feb-11 03:55 AM GMT

Great pics and great work, Neil. Can't wait to get back there myself.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-Feb-11 06:04 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

As you say, late winter temperatures will not have much influence on emergence dates (from pupae) in the spring. However, prolonged cold through the spring (March, particularly April, and even early May) will have a significant influence on the rate of pupal maturation, leading to delayed emergence. This was very marked in 2010. In West Sussex the first Green Hairstreak emerged on an 'average' date of 13th April, but over the following weeks the number of observed adults remained extremely low. On 13th May the long-prevalent northerly winds (responsible for unseasonably cold nights until this point) turned to the SW, with a consequent rapid rise in temperatures. The next few days saw a real avalanche of emergences, both of Green Hairstreaks (dozens appeared 'overnight') and other spring species. A one month separation between first sighting and first significant numbers is a reflection of the unusually (for recent years) cold and prolonged spring.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 21-Feb-11 12:00 AM GMT

Neil, if there is a late frost or other unusual weather prior to the Dukes' emergence do they suffer from aberrations in the same way that white admiral and silver washed fritillary do?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Piers, 23-Feb-11 07:22 PM GMT

Hi Susie,

Yes quite possibly, but the frost would have to be very late in the year, i.e. July/August cusp or thereabouts when the larvae are pupating. A late Spring frost would have no impact upon the emergent insect in this respect.

Felix.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 23-Feb-11 07:32 PM GMT

The question:

Is it the temperature just AFTER pupation or just BEFORE emergence of adult that can give rise to aberrations? Most likely the former but it is possible

that even both scenarios could have an effect.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Piers, 23-Feb-11 07:47 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

'Tis in the last 24 hours of larval stage and the first 48 hours of pupal stage (or thereabouts) that the insect is susceptible to such triggers. It has long been known that extreme shocks of either heat or cold during the last 24 hours of the larval stage and the first 48 hours of the pupal stage can disrupt the natural process of metamorphosis and inhibit or disrupt the processes in which organic chemicals create the colouration of the wing scales. Much work has been carried out around this subject and countless experiments have been performed on many species.

The extremes of temperature required for such aberrations to form however are right on the cusp of what would be fatal to the insect. Hence these types of aberrations are scarce. There are exceptions however, and certain species (such as the purple emperor) are particularly susceptible to producing aberrant forms induced by temperature shock, indicating that aberration occurs at a lower temperature (or higher temperature when considering cold-shock) than would generally be considered to be fatal.

Aberration in purple emperors is actually quite common; which can be evidenced in the amount of aberrations seen in any particular year as a percentage of actual adult butterflies observed.

Felix.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Feb-11 07:55 PM GMT

Hi Susie,

Most of these environmentally-induced aberrants, including the numerous White Admirals, SWF, Comma etc seen at Southwater Woods, appear to be caused by large diurnal temperature swings (warm days and cold nights) during the period of pupation and very early pupal development (late May to mid June). Dukes pupate quite late in the 'preceding' summer (late July and August), when temperatures are relatively stable and diurnal ranges are quite low. They are therefore less likely to be affected in this manner.

Aberrant forms of Duke of Burgundy are quite rare, apart from ab. *gracilens*, and all the 'abs' that I have personal experience of are genetically controlled. This includes the rare ab. *leucodes* shown below. *Leucodes* appears at first sight to be a very faded, almost sun-bleached individual, but the patterning over the proximal area of the hind wings and colour of the thoracic hairs are a give-away. Within the limits of natural variation, many males within woodland (cf scrubby grassland) populations are noticeably 'dark'. However, I'm sure that some of the dark 'abs' recorded in the past are environmentally-induced, due to the conditions outlined above occurring unusually late in the year.

Neil



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Feb-11 07:59 PM GMT

Hi Felix,

😄 That's not the first time you've been quicker on the keyboards than me. I must improve my words-per-minute.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Piers, 23-Feb-11 08:01 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

I'm sure that some of the dark 'abs' recorded in the past are environmentally-induced, due to the conditions outlined above occurring unusually late in the year.

Quite possibly, although it's worth mentioning that some colonies produce 'dark' individuals on a regular basis, with 'dark' individuals being the norm in the population. Such specimens have greatly reduced areas of orange markings (particularly in the males where the hindwings are pretty much totally dark with the exception of the fringe and the marginal markings).

Felix.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Piers, 23-Feb-11 08:15 PM GMT

What is it about Southwater Woods?

I suspect that the culprit in this locality is high temperatures rather than low temperatures. Both extremes (ie day/night 'swings') are not required.


High temperatures produce a certain kaleidoscope of aberrations and low temperatures produce others. In some species (white admiral ab. *nigrina* for example) the same aberrations are produced at both ends of the temperature spectrum.

There are plenty of other SWF populations that are more likely to be in late frost pockets than Southwater, and yet do not have a history of spewing out rare 'thermo-abs'.

Light deprivation throughout the larval stage also induces aberrant forms in the adult insect, as does an atmosphere unnaturally rich in oxygen.

Could it be just the relative topography of Southwater Woods that provides the excessively warm microclimate required? or perhaps something to do with the metalled roads within the woodland complex pushing the ambient temperature at ground level within the woodland up just that tiny fraction of a degree that makes all the difference?

Felix.

Ps. Sorry for the 

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Feb-11 08:25 PM GMT

Horsham Natural History Society

On Monday (21st February) I gave a talk to a sizeable audience of Horsham Natural History Society members, about the 'Private Life of the Purple Emperor'. Judging by the avalanche of good questions at the end, I'm pleased to say that most must have stayed awake, while I indulged in one of my favourite topics for an hour. It was nice to see Susie in the crowd, and I received a generous £50 donation towards our conservation 'fighting fund'. I couldn't have asked for a friendlier audience.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Feb-11 08:45 PM GMT

Hi Felix,

I wish I knew the 'secret' of Southwater Woods, but there *must* be something affecting the local microclimate here. The area is relatively 'high' wrt the surrounding landscape, there aren't many metalled tracks through the complex and emergence dates for WA and SWF are not 'early' here, so I suspect it chills. It would make a fascinating study for someone – I wish I had the time! It would be very interesting to track down a local amateur meteorologist and get some hard data.

As you say... it only takes a minor temperature anomaly to do the job. PBF emergence dates within a sloping woodland complex such as Rewell Wood can vary by up to 10 days, dependent upon elevation differences, within 1 Km.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 23-Feb-11 09:04 PM GMT

Marlpost Wood usual entrance the heading east is downhill. Some 600 metres there is a stream. After that stream the ground rises again further east. The stream is some 17 metres lower than the surrounding land. I don't know how dense the forest is in that part of Marlpost, but if sufficiently open, (which old Google Earth images suggests) it would be a classic frost hollow.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 23-Feb-11 09:26 PM GMT

If I remember rightly last year we had some very chilly nights at about the right time. Add that to a frost hollow and I think you've got your cause of last year's fabulous abs. There is a deep ghyll over the other side of the wood from that I usually visit. Perhaps this area needs more examination next year. This habitat isn't isolated though. I can bumble from here through Itchingfield and then into Marlpost Wood through pockets of this type of woodland which must all be chocka with SWF, WA and PEs. I'll try to explore these areas more next year, I think Southwater Woods is getting famous and is going to be far too popular for my liking!

Thanks for the explanations on the Duke aberrations, Kipper and Felix. You both make very good teachers. 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 23-Feb-11 11:31 PM GMT

Not many blokes who wouldn't be! 😂😂

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 25-Feb-11 05:02 AM GMT

First Of The Year

I was delighted to see my first butterfly of the year today; a lovely male Brimstone came wandering through the trees at Rewell Wood, before settling down in some holly. I later dropped in to see veteran Lepidopterist Major Reg Trench, who had also seen a Brimmy in his Amberley garden earlier in the day. A fleeting visit to collect a couple of books he has kindly donated as raffle prizes for our Spring Social inevitably turned into a long chat about butterflies. Despite his 90 years Reg still awaits the start of each season with undiminished anticipation. I'd like to think I'm doing the same in 2051!





Re: Sussex Kipper

by millerd, 25-Feb-11 08:25 AM GMT

Those Brimstones always look so perfect after all those months tucked away. How do they do it? The longest-living of all our butterflies (as imagos anyway), of course.

Dave

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 01-Mar-11 05:45 AM GMT

Rowland Begins To Wake

At a well-attended work party in Rowland Wood on Sunday (27th February) there were signs that Mother Nature is beginning to stir from her long winter sleep. Wood anemones are now pushing through the surface of the recently cleared rides and amphibians are beginning to move around the picturesque pond. Toads are now active and the occasional croaking of frogs could be heard from deep within the bracken. A few of us photographed a Great Crested Newt before it took to the water, where it will soon be joined by its Smooth and Palmate cousins. I always think they have a primeval look about them; the basic body plan has evolved very little since *Eryops* splashed around the Lower Permian swamps about 300 million years ago.



A huge amount of conifer brash was chopped, hauled and burned by our trusty volunteer force, fuelled by Michael Blencowe's tasty jacket potatoes. Caroline Clarke, Sherie New, Barbara Woods, Susan Suleski, Carole and Nigel Kemp, Peter Atkinson, Dave Mitchell, Bob Eade, Richard Roebuck, Keith Alexander and Andrew Burns all 'chipped in'. Thanks must also go to Colin Knight, who had helped Michael and Dave Mitchell on the reserve the day before. The next two Sundays are going to be very busy here, as there's still plenty to do..... then it will be time to sit back and admire.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-Mar-11 03:00 AM GMT

50 Not Out

Thanks to all for the 'Happy Birthday' messages today. I got lots of lovely pressies, but my favourite has to be this canvas print of 'The Butterfly' by Luis R. Falero (1893) from Hannah. I fell in love with this when I visited the excellent Russell Coates museum in Bournemouth.



This afternoon, in beautiful sunshine, Hannah and I took a stroll around a wood near Five Oaks. I've never been here before, but this July I'll be back to find the Purple Emperors which I'm sure will be here in good numbers. I've seldom seen so much honeysuckle, so I'm expecting to find a lot of White Admirals too.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 03-Mar-11 06:17 AM GMT

Near Five Oak? Now I am really curious. Please tell us later in the year how you get on if you go back. I know there are PEs in the Tote Hill area.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 03-Mar-11 04:03 PM GMT

How many "*Number*" Oak(s) are there in southern England?

You mention Five Oak. There is (was) Sevenoaks but I believe that after one tree die, the town had to be re-named called Sixoaks (how the Map Makers and Sat Nav people must have loved that!) Canterbury Cricket Ground used to be "One Lime" but in early 2005 after the old tree died, it was briefly "No Lime". However, a new tree was soon planted to restore the ground's unique status.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 04-Mar-11 09:47 PM GMT

I drive through Five Oaks to get to Kipper Country from Tunbridge Wells. (Male Brimstone spotted from the car on the way down last August).

However, my hometown is Sevenoaks. There have been several sets of seven oak trees over the years, the first supposedly being in Knole Park (a 1000 acre deer park housing Knole House) of which I used to live on the edge. Ah....

Anyway, the most important recently were the 7 oaks planted in 1902 on the edge of The Vine cricket ground near the town centre. It was 6 of these that blew down in the storm of 1987 (you should have seen Knole Park that day 😱). A further 7 were planted, making 8 oaks. Those replanted were vandalised, temporarily leaving only 1 oak. There were 8 when I left but Wikipedia says there are 9 now. I'll check when I'm next there. It's still called Sevenoaks though, and always has been.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sevenoaks>

Susie, I'll have a look at Tote Hill on the map...

Cheers (and sorry Neil)

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 09-Mar-11 06:57 PM GMT

Heyshott Again

On Thursday (3rd March) I joined another group of Murray Downland Trust and BC Sussex volunteers at Heyshott Escarpment, to continue improving the habitat for Duke of Burgundy. John & Trisha Murray, Naomi Barnett, Mike Snelling, Roger Martin, Mike Hadley, Martin Kalaher and Colin Knight (who supplied one of the images) set to work with saws, loppers, brush-cutters and rakes to prepare two areas, including the pit shown below. Leaving just a thin shelter-belt of trees around the crest, the steep bank was cleared of vegetation to further increase the number of suitable egg-laying sites for 'the Duke'. Thanks to all that worked so hard on this increasingly exciting project.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by ChrisC, 10-Mar-11 02:41 AM GMT

hi Neil.

firstly extremely belated hawaian birthday wishes (five 0, bad pun i know but what can you do) 😊
out of curiosity are the larval foodplants already there or has/is extra planting taking place?

Chris

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Mar-11 03:15 AM GMT

Hi Chris,
Thanks for the birthday wishes.
Plenty of cowslip all over the escarpment here – a plant which readily seeds itself where bare, disturbed ground is available. There's no need for the introduction of plants – which would need special permission, this being an SSSI.
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Mar-11 07:41 PM GMT

Tortoiseshell Twitch

I couldn't resist a trip to the Isle of Wight yesterday (16th March), to re-visit the Large Tortoiseshells that have appeared with some regularity over recent years at Woodhouse Copse. The shroud of mist began to clear just as I arrived and it wasn't long before the temperature started to rise. An early sighting of a (obviously male) Large Tortoiseshell high up, tussling with a Comma, raised my expectations for an exciting day ahead. However, despite waiting until 3pm, that was it! But a trip to the Island on a beautiful sunny day is never wasted, and there were plenty of other butterflies to keep me interested. Ian Pratt and Rob (IOW BC group) joined in the hunt. Ten Commas, two Peacocks and a female Brimstone were on the wing here – things are really beginning to wake up in numbers now.



Several bee flies were seen along the woodland ride, which is now blooming with daffs, primroses, and the rare and attractive long-leaved lungwort (below).



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 17-Mar-11 08:42 PM GMT

Well done again Neil.

Have you tried Ashcombe Bottom to the west of Lewes? I seem to recall some sightings of LT there a few years ago. There would appear to be wide tracks and a promising cleared area under the pylons. Large Torties have popped up (as of course you know only too well) in and near the South Downs in recent years and it wouldn't surprise me if there is a remote colony lurking somewhere.

Ashcombe Bottom is certainly remote and being at the top of a steep climb, it might be better re-named Ashcombe Top.

Going back some 40 years, LTs were reported more than once from Houghton Forest (just north of Rewell).

If you can't sniff them out Neil, then nobody will.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 18-Mar-11 07:50 PM GMT

Work Party Season Over

Yesterday (17th March) I tidied up an area on the Downs where some habitat management works had been all-but-completed by contractors. It's already too late to cut into new areas of scrub, as the breeding season for birds has started. It is vital to make sure that there is no evidence of nesting activity or likelihood of disturbance to our feathered friends from the beginning of March onwards – and even worth checking beforehand for some early species.

Looking back over the winter I reckon that more has been achieved than ever before, both on the reserves at Park Corner Heath and Rowland Wood, and across numerous sites on downland and in woods across Sussex. A quick, 'back of a cigarette packet' calculation of the time put in on Lep sites by Butterfly Conservation (including the Rother Guardians), South Downs Joint Committee and local Downland Trust volunteers alone (those working for several other conservation bodies have been beavering away too) gives a figure in excess of 500 man/woman days. Although some heavy duty tasks will always have to be performed by contractors, it's the huge amount of time given so generously by volunteers that makes such a difference to the fortunes of our butterflies and moths. Of course these efforts are being replicated elsewhere across the country – 'hats off' to everyone that gets involved in this way.

On the way home I dropped into another site to assess some recent habitat management work. I couldn't help smiling at this 'notable verge for wildlife' sign, with a cluster of ladybirds enjoying their notable status.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 21-Mar-11 05:13 PM GMT

Spring Social

More than 50 BC Sussex members gathered in Goring-by-Sea for our annual Spring Social on Saturday (19th March). The first talk of the afternoon was given by Sussex Wildlife Trust ecologist and local Moth Group chairman Graeme Lyons, who provided us with an entertaining history of the moths in his life; from childhood moth-trapping, to Death's-head Hawkmoth tattoos, and culminating in his more recent work with the SWT. Graeme's talk was followed by a break, during which the sale of teas, marmalade and a raffle netted us a fantastic £113 for the Branch conservation work fund.



After the break I presented Robin Crane with the 2010 'Colin Pratt Silver Trophy', together with Colin's generous cheque for £100. Many will know Robin from his work chairing the successful South Downs Campaign, which ultimately led to National Park status. However, Colin's award was in recognition of Robin's 20 year study of the Silver-studded Blue populations on Iping and Stedham Commons. An abridged version of his report on the butterfly's autecology, habitat management techniques and taxonomy of the host ants will be published in our forthcoming 2010 Sussex Butterfly Report.



I then gave a talk on 'The Secret Life of the Purple Emperor', before Michael Blencowe updated us on the progress of the Sussex Butterfly Atlas. A few prizes were then awarded for 'services to Brown Hairstreak egg-surveying' and more general recording for our Atlas project. As always it was nice to catch up with such a good bunch of people.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Mar-11 07:36 PM GMT

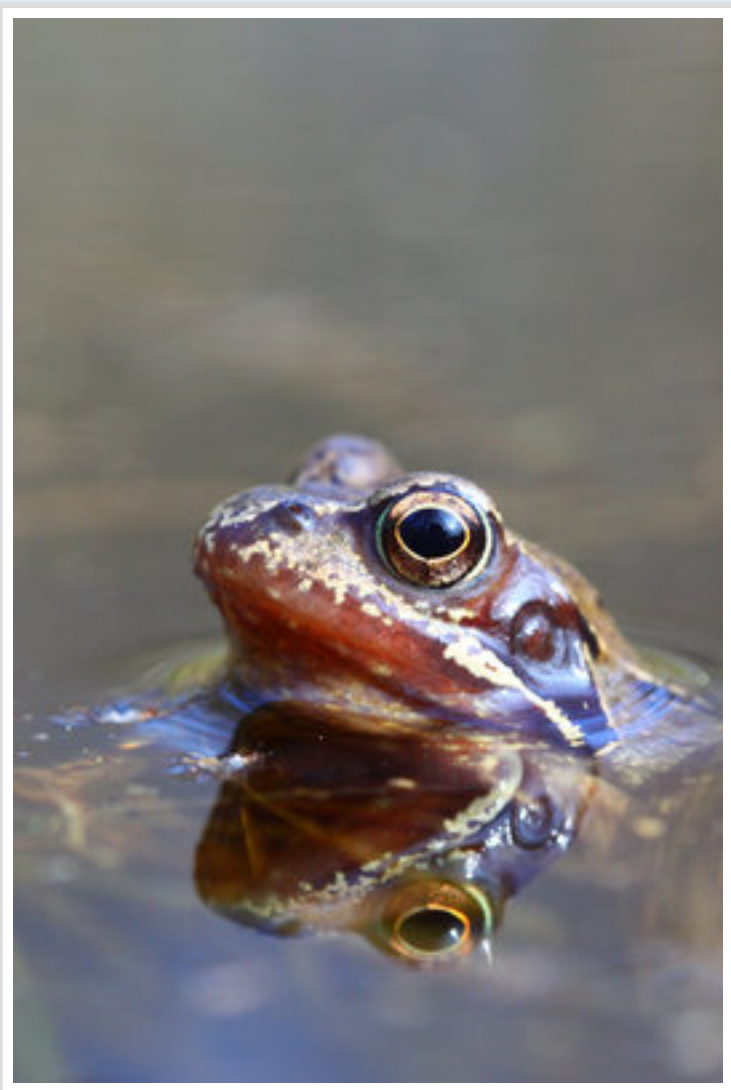
Isle Of Wight

Yesterday (23rd March) I teamed up with Matthew Oates for another bash at the Large Tortoiseshells of Woodhouse Copse. We soon saw one gliding down the straight section, below the first (double) bend in the ride. We then flushed it off the ground before it disappeared for a while. Matthew got a good view of a second individual as it floated around in the ditch towards the far end of the ride, close to where a large sallow has fallen across the track. The first specimen reappeared soon after this, again patrolling the upper straight. Apart from the obvious size difference, the flight pattern of the LT is very different from the Commas which abound here (Woodhouse Copse is stuffed with them); rather than the rapid beating or fluttering of a Comma's wing, the LT adopts a more powerful flap and glide. A few Brimstones and a couple of Peacocks were also making the most of the beautiful weather.



In the early afternoon we moved on to Parkhurst Forest. We saw a male Large White almost immediately, before clocking up 8 Peacocks, 3 Commas, 4 Brimstones and a Small Tortoiseshell. Apparently much of the forest is rather coniferous and grim, but the part we visited had a very pleasant New Forest feel to it. With a temperature of 18 degrees and the rides decorated in yellow primrose and blue lungwort, it really did feel that spring is now underway.

Finally, and for no other reason than I like the shot, here's a portrait of a frog taken by my brother Mark. I assume it's in his Antwerp garden pond.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 26-Mar-11 03:38 AM GMT

Toad Of Toad Ball

Yesterday (24th March) Hannah and I went for a long walk around Rewell Wood near Arundel, in the hope of seeing a few butterflies. In some of the more sheltered areas it felt more like summer than spring and we saw more than 30 in a couple of hours (Commas, Brimstones and Peacocks).

Rather than post yet another image of a Comma, I think the picture below is far more interesting. A friend from Chichester, Brian Henham, sent me this after admiring my brother's photogenic frog. Brian had recently visited some West Country folk, and snapped this amazing tangle of toads in their garden pond. It reminds me of skool days..... "bundle!"



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Mar-11 05:04 PM GMT

LBJ Predicts 'Early' Spring Emergences

It might not be much to look at, and certainly less glamorous than an Orange Tip, but the first appearance of the tiny pyralid moth *Pyrausta despicata* (or one of its more colourful relatives) at Mill Hill (Shoreham) has always provided a good guide to the calendar of subsequent springtime emergences. I saw a couple of these on Tuesday (29th March), together with a very early Small Purple-barred (*Phytometra viridaria*). Based on patterns over previous years, this suggests that the Grizzled Skipper is now imminent (next sunny day) and that Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak will be out before mid April. Things appear to be running more than 2 weeks ahead of the 2010 calendar.



Re: Large Tortoiseshell

by johnrowell, 01-Apr-11 04:17 AM GMT

Dear Sussex Kipper

So pleased you saw my LTs. Several people have visited the Transect since my first sighting on 7.3.2011 and have not seen any. As I have sightings at this location in March or April in 2006, 2008, 2009 and this year, I am confident that there is a small colony close by. Andy Butler remembers his elder brother telling him 50 years ago that if you wanted to see an LT then go to Kings Quay. As Kings Quay is the estuary to the brook that runs through Woodhouse Copse, I am beginning to think that the LT never became extinct at this site and has been here all the time.

Regards

John Rowell
BC Membership No 116966
Tel 01983 281342

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-Apr-11 06:27 AM GMT

Hi John,

They don't give themselves up easily – in view for a couple of minutes every four or five hours appears to be the norm here, making them much trickier than Purple Emperors. The story here is yet to be unravelled. Keep your eyes peeled in July for fresh specimens, which might be some distance from Woodhouse Copse. I would like to see some summer records of fresh specimens on the IOW, at a time when migrant LTs are *not* appearing, strung out along the South Coast.

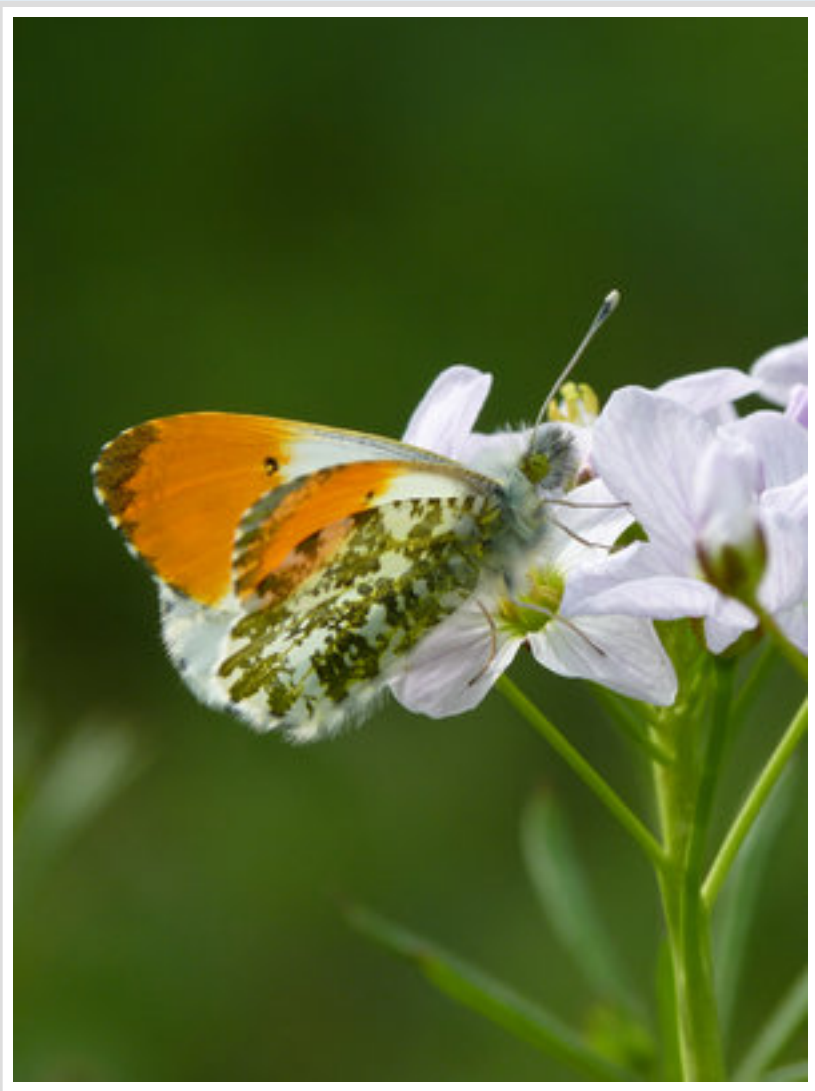
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-Apr-11 03:02 AM GMT

First Tips And Grizzle

The season really got underway for me today, with my first sightings of two spring species. With the sun periodically grinning through the thin grey cloud cover, conditions were just good enough to get things airborne. I started off by driving slowly along a quiet stretch of country lanes near Five Oaks, where the ditches either side of the road are absolutely stuffed with lady's smock. At such an early stage of the flight season the presence of 11 freshly emerged male Orange Tips suggests that this will prove to be a premier site for the species. Also seen were 5 Brimstone, 3 Small Tortoiseshell, 2 Peacock and a Red Admiral.



I then moved on to Mill Hill at Shoreham and found my first Grizzled Skipper of the year at the base of the slope. Despite a thorough search I could only find the one, although it was probably close to their bedtime as I arrived. The only other butterflies seen here were a couple of Peacocks.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 03-Apr-11 03:59 AM GMT

Excellent news and a lovely photograph 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Trev Sawyer, 03-Apr-11 05:12 AM GMT

Yeayyy!

Grizzlies out? That is *great* news Neil.

I noticed that the salad burnet and bramble was appearing on a site near me today, so another week or so and "Little Griz" will be appearing *here* too.

Can't wait. 😊😊😊

Trev

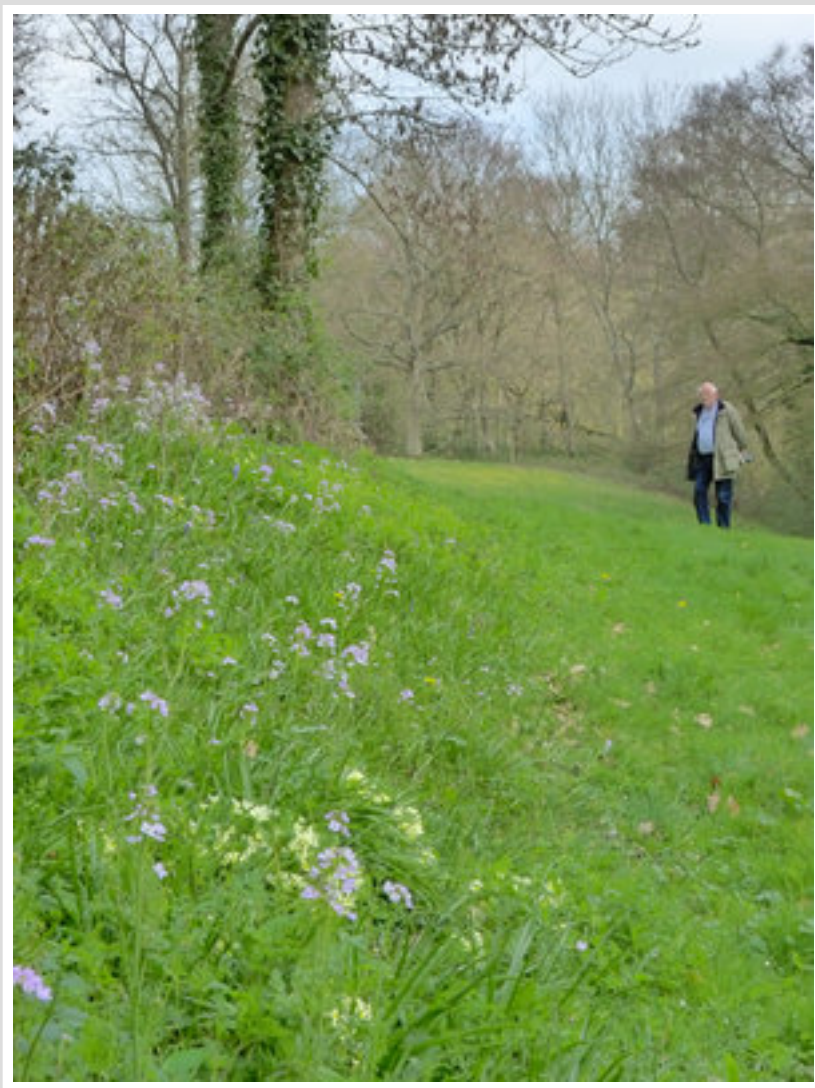
Re: Sussex Kipper

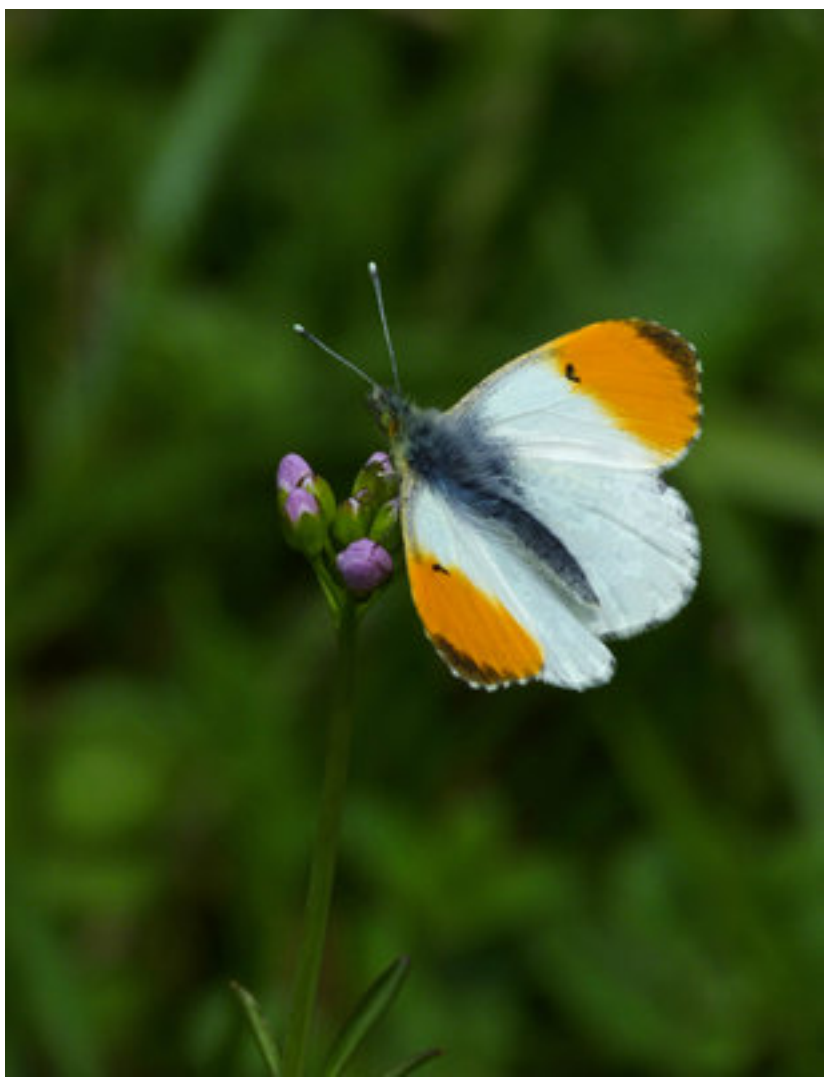
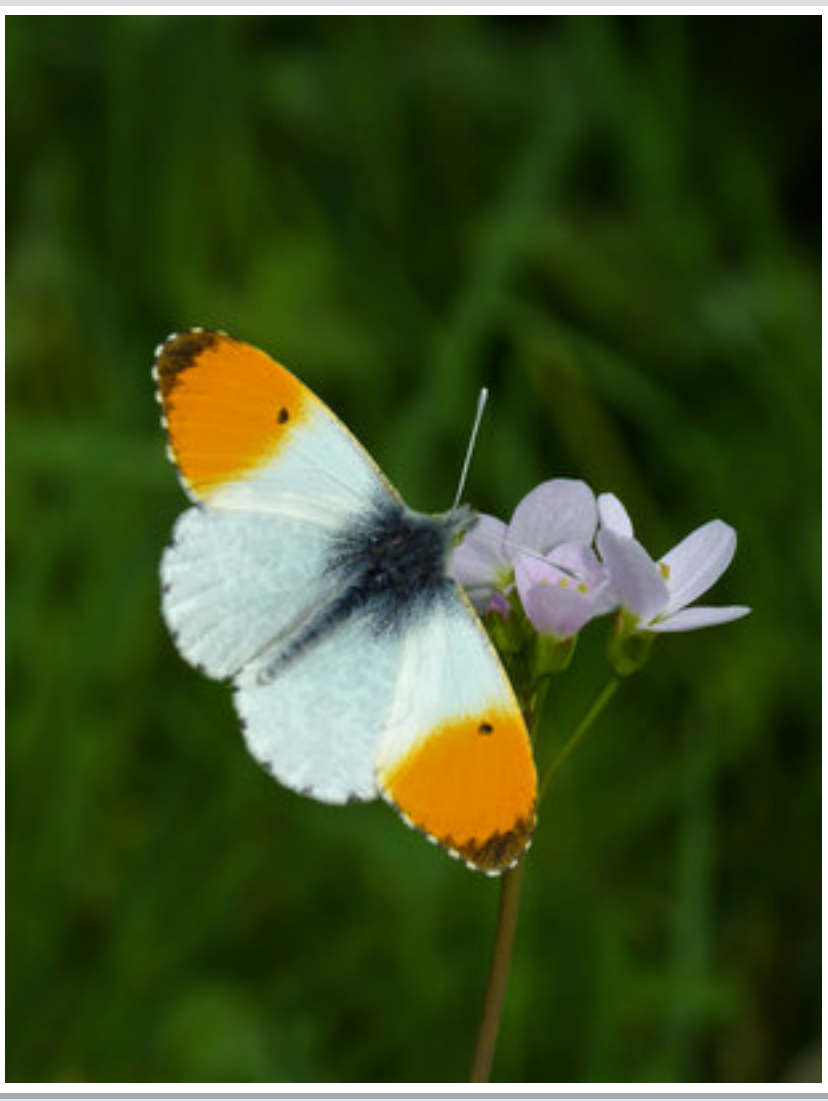
by Neil Hulme, 04-Apr-11 02:48 AM GMT

Mother's Day Orange Tip Trip

Today I met up with my parents for a picnic, followed by a walk around the lanes near Five Oaks to look for Orange Tips. The first image shows my father as he stakes out a flower-rich bank for patrolling males. The weather was perfect for photography and the following sequence is a record of our

very productive and enjoyable day. don't think any other species gives the same feeling of 'happiness' as the Orange Tip always seems to.







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Ian Pratt, 04-Apr-11 07:10 AM GMT

Great photos Neil. I saw my first OT at the National Botanic Garden of Wales yesterday afternoon. Also, I saw my first small tortoiseshell and speckled wood in Pembrokeshire last week. I am at Kew Gardens next Saturday which could be interesting! 😊

Regards
Ian

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Vince Massimo, 04-Apr-11 07:16 AM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

I don't think any other species gives the same feeling of 'happiness' as the Orange Tip always seems to.

Lovely sequence Neil. Orange Tips gladden the heart, as does their habitat. A very good start to hopefully what will be a very good year 😊.

Vince.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Zonda, 04-Apr-11 03:33 PM GMT

Great pics Neil. I suppose i'll have to take the bird lens off now, and get down to my local Lady's Smock field. 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Apr-11 06:10 AM GMT

Colours Of Spring

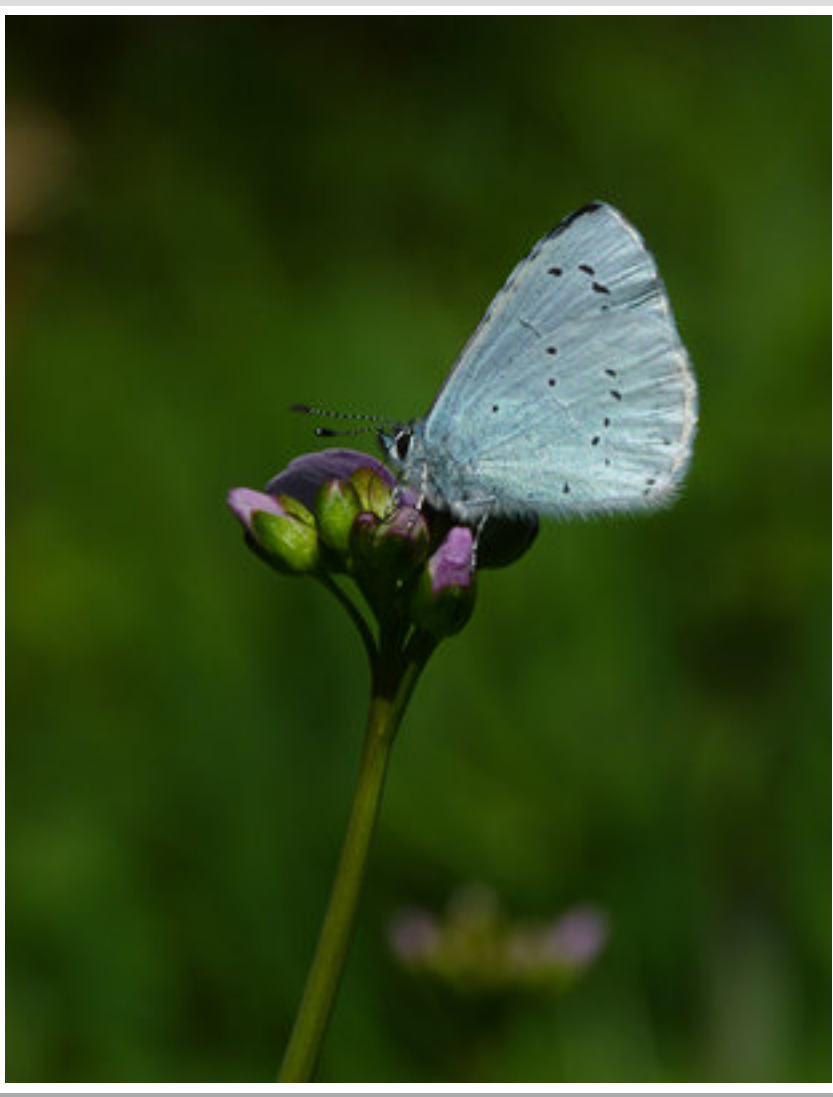
The beautiful country lanes and copses around Five Oaks were awash with Spring butterflies this afternoon. The hedgerows, banks and ditches were covered in lady's smock, primrose, wood anemone, bluebell and dandelion, and the air was filled with orange and yellow butterflies. Days like today more than make up for the long, dark winter.

I counted 32 Orange Tips, 27 of which were male. 5 formed a tight bundle as they jousting with each other, although the happy Orange Tip can't really 'do' aggression – they've got a 'smiley' on each wing tip. By mid afternoon the females were starting to put eggs down everywhere; there's no shortage of food-plants here.



I also counted 20 Brimstone (1 female), 6 Peacock, 5 Small Tortoiseshell, 3 Comma and my first 3 Small White of the year. But the best of the rest was a couple of freshly-emerged male Holly Blue.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Matsukaze, 07-Apr-11 07:27 AM GMT

Looks like the last Holly Blue thinks it is an Orange-tip, settling in among the lady's smock blossoms as though about to start ovipositing.

Re: Sussex Kipper

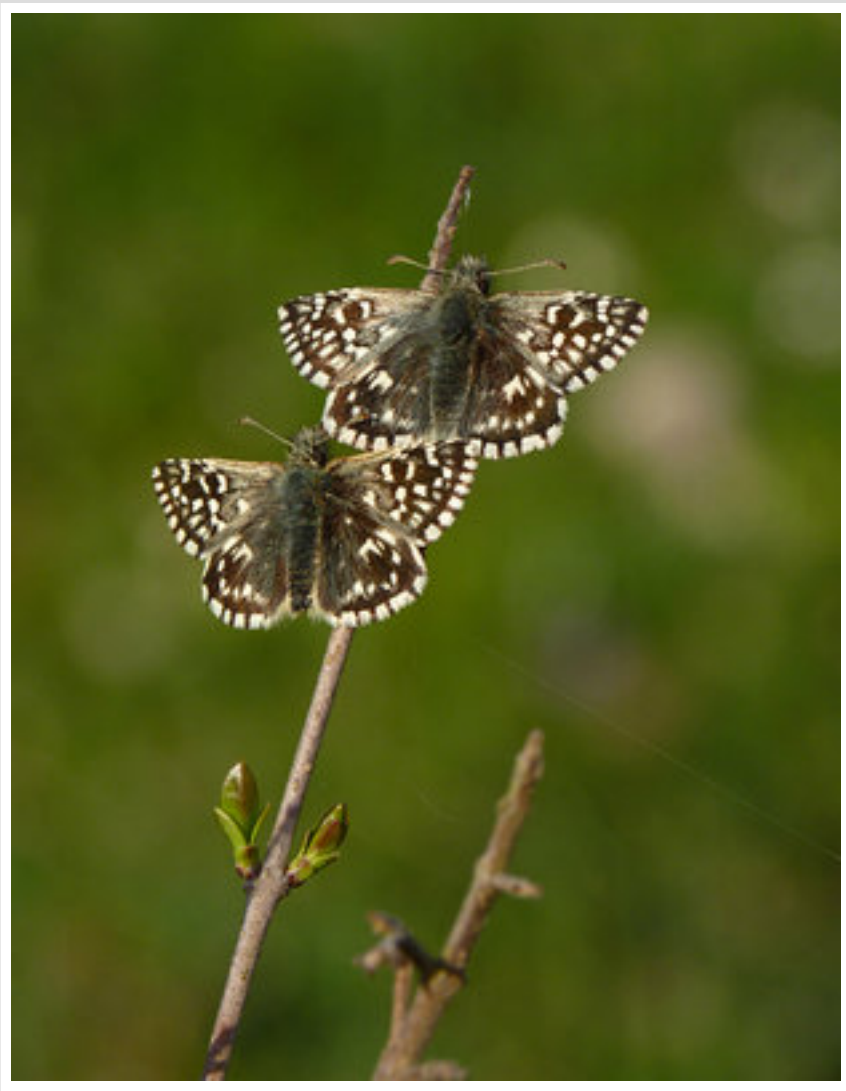
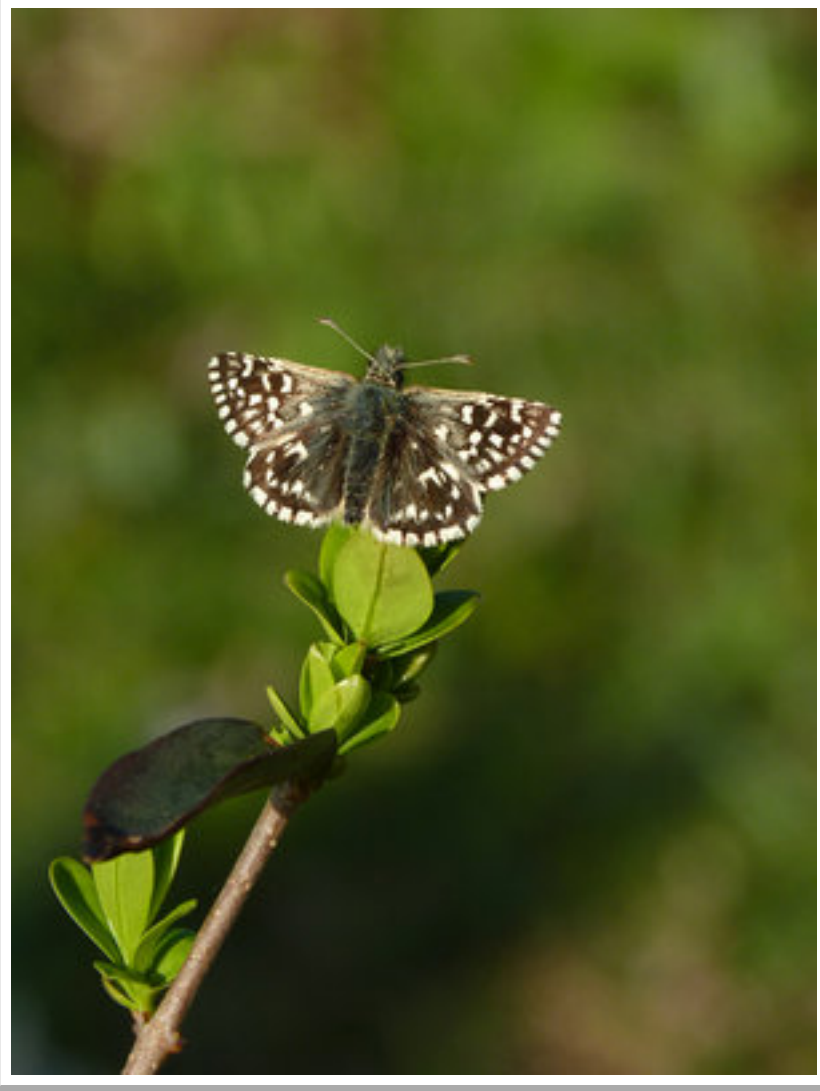
by Neil Hulme, 09-Apr-11 08:38 AM GMT

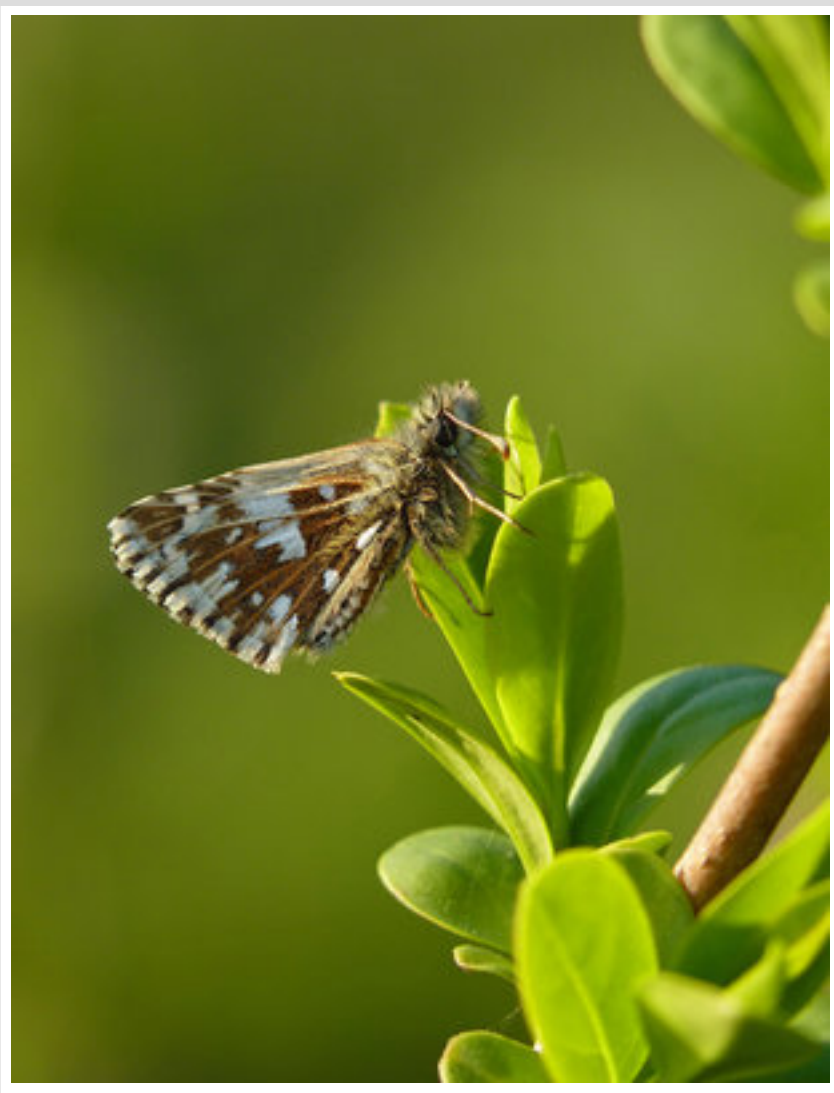
Spring Skippers

Yet another gorgeous spring day (8th April) and plenty of lovely butterflies at every site I visited. The first three stops produced lots of Orange Tips, but neither the Speckled Wood nor Green-veined White I was hoping for. By way of a bonus I did find a couple of nightingales in a wood near Steyning, which were breaking all the rules. At one point both birds were in clear view, flicking their rufous tails as they indulged in the most spectacular vocal battle I've ever heard..... at 2pm! It was while I was lying in the grass listening to them trying to out-do each other, with butterflies momentarily forgotten, that I got a message from Colin Knight at Mill Hill. Colin has recently taken on a Transect here and had just seen an early Dingy Skipper.

It took a while to relocate the Dingy, but in the meantime there were at least half a dozen Grizzled Skippers to enjoy. As the early evening temperature slowly began to drop I decided to 'tail' a Grizzled until it went to roost. A lot of patience was required and a full hour and a half passed before it finally closed its wings for the night. But it was well worth the wait, particularly when a second Skipper appeared from nowhere to join it for a last spell of sunbathing.







Re: Sussex Kipper

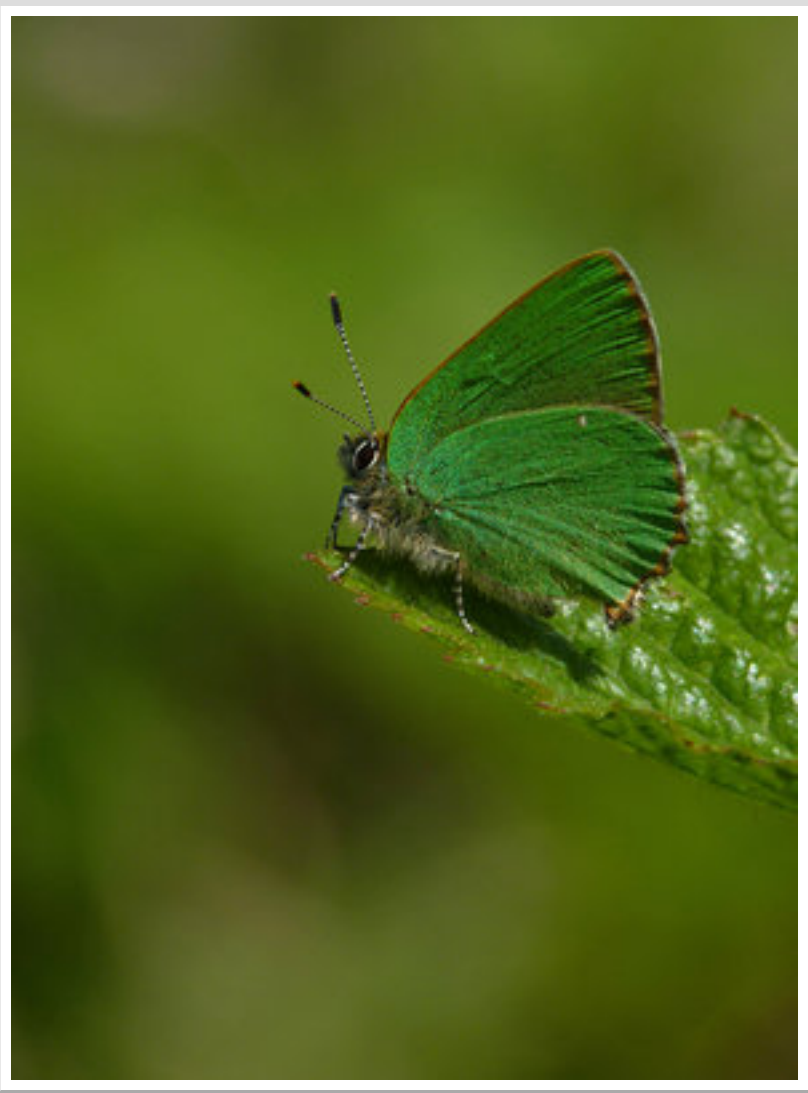
by Neil Hulme, 11-Apr-11 05:35 AM GMT

Denbies Hillside

After seeing Susie's lovely Green Hairstreak shots I thought it was time to pay my first visit to Denbies Hillside. It's unusual for me to travel outside Sussex for species that occur 'at home', but I'm on a mission this season and need to photograph everything as early in the flight season as possible; most Sussex sites for Green Hairstreak are on north-facing slopes, so are a little way behind. Denbies is a favourite haunt of several UKBers and I can see why..... I'll be back.



It didn't take long to locate my quarry and I saw 6 or 7 in a couple of hours. Every season I enjoy the re-discovery of just how beautiful a fresh Green Hairstreak really is.



While walking through the woodland at the top of the ridge I came across about a dozen *Adela reaumurella*, a completely bonkers moth with outrageous antennae. Their characteristic 'dance' around the top of a shrub always reminds me of a pagan fertility ritual.



Returning to Sussex I dropped in to Mill Hill where quite a crowd had assembled to enjoy the increasing number of Grizzled and Dingy Skippers. At least three adders were out sunbathing, and on two occasions we were lucky enough to see this nice black specimen. Thanks to Colin Knight for sending me the image I failed to get myself!



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 11-Apr-11 05:44 AM GMT

Beautiful shots, Neil. The more I get to know Denbies the more I love it. You wait til the chalkhills are out, then Denbies is amazing!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by millerd, 11-Apr-11 06:47 AM GMT

I have to agree about Denbies. A good six or even seven months of interest from the first emergers of March through till the last Small Coppers of October. Glorious views, some stupendous Deadly Nightshade bushes, and there are even regular steam trains too!

Dave

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 11-Apr-11 09:32 PM GMT

'Thirderd' about Denbies. I went 4 or 5 times last year, all good.

We really must all meet up there at some point...

Cheers

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 11-Apr-11 10:06 PM GMT

Now you will be able to put your scientific background to this Neil.

I first visited Denbies about 40 years ago and then it was just a gentle a slope on a small hill. Today, the hill is significantly higher and much steeper than in was in the early 1970s. Plate tectonics is presumably very active along the North Downs - or might it be that this particular observer is less active today?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 12-Apr-11 12:03 AM GMT

I know what you mean, Jack, it is a tad on the steep side.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 12-Apr-11 04:10 AM GMT

Hi Jack,

There's nothing like a good orogeny to push things up 😊

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 12-Apr-11 04:29 AM GMT

Speckled Woods

The few Speckled Woods that I'd seen so far this year had all evaded the camera, but a visit to a wood near Steyning this afternoon (11th April) proved more successful. Fresh males were contesting the best perches in several sunny clearings, so it wasn't too difficult to get into just the right spot for a pleasing shot.



Later I returned to Mill Hill where the adder action is currently fantastic. Horny snakes are regularly chasing each other up and down the scrub line at the base of the slope. Two black adders, one with brown base colour and two in pale grey were showing themselves almost constantly. It's the best snake-watching I've ever experienced.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 13-Apr-11 04:23 AM GMT

No Dukes Yet

The Duke of Burgundy has emerged very early in Kent, Gloucestershire and Hampshire, but a search of Rewell Wood failed to turn up a Sussex first-of-the-year this morning (12th April). There were plenty of Orange Tips on patrol, a few very fresh Speckled Woods, a Holly Blue and this Green-veined White.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Apr-11 06:53 PM GMT

Adonis Cat

Yesterday (14th April) I spent the morning planting out *Primula* 'plugs' in woodland on the Norfolk Estate, in the hope of encouraging the spread of Duke of Burgundy. Martin Kalaher (who kindly supplied the plants) and Simon Mockford's South Downs National Park 'Friday Club' volunteers helped get them in the ground.... and just in time, as I'm expecting the first adults to emerge in Sussex next week. We were accompanied by plenty of Orange Tips and a few freshly emerged Green-veined Whites.



I then moved on to Mill Hill where I met Mark Bunch on his annual Sussex Skipper visit from Essex. While enjoying the Grizzled and Dingy Skippers (Mark also saw a Green Hairstreak) I noticed a full-grown Adonis Blue caterpillar out for an early evening stroll. With no interest in feeding it won't be long now before it pupates.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-Apr-11 06:56 AM GMT

Sussex PBFs Out

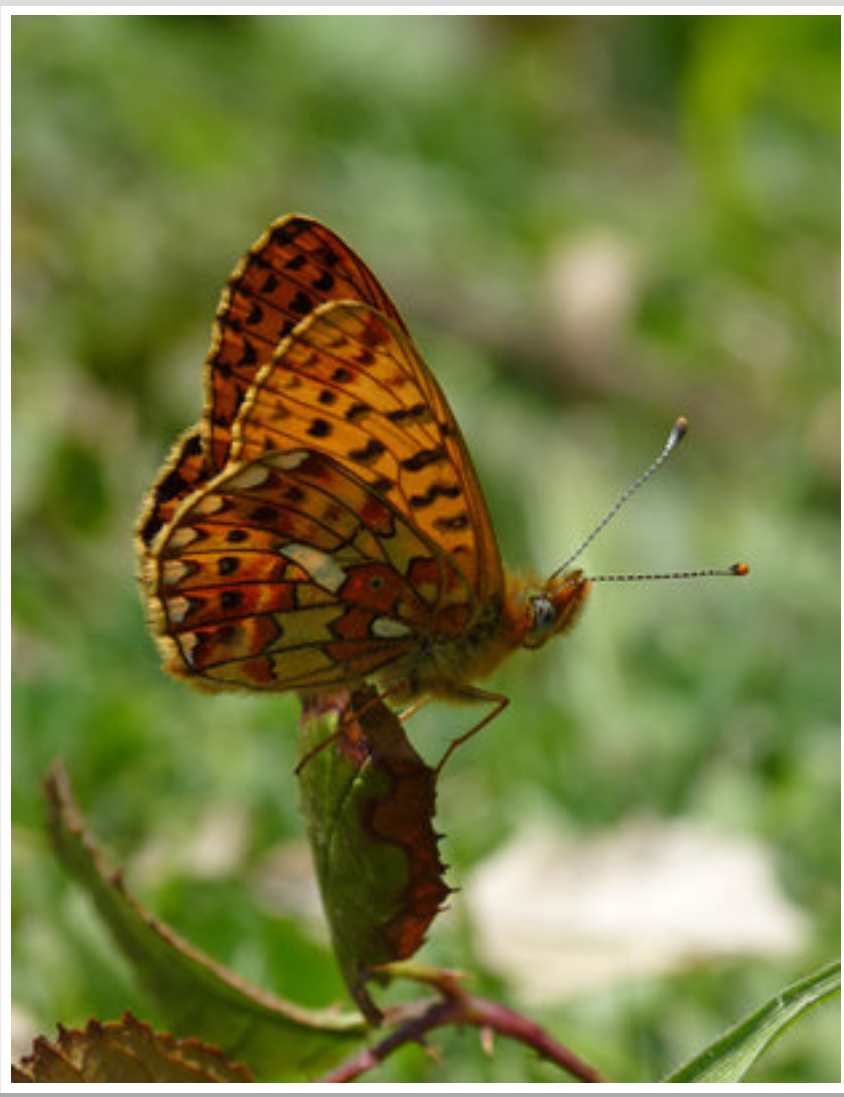
The first 2011 Sussex Pearl-bordered Fritillaries emerged yesterday (17th April), with numbers increasing to 7 during my return visit to Rewell Wood today. Entering from the south (A27) always gives me a feeling of optimism, as the local woodsman's onsite saw-mill gives a clear indication that this is a 'working wood'.



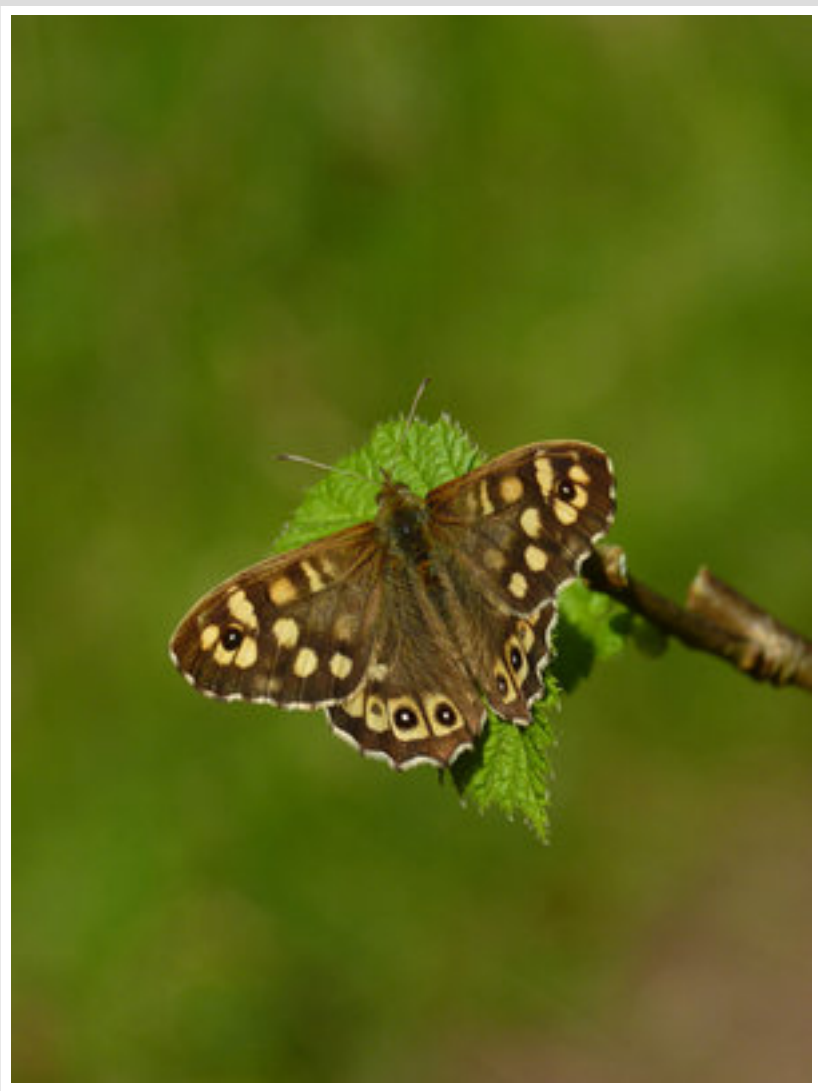


It wasn't long before the male PBFs warmed up and became very difficult to approach. They occasionally put down briefly to nectar on bugle or dandelion, but mate-finding was their main priority.





With plenty of time to return for the PBFs I spent most of the day in another area, observing Speckled Wood behaviour. There had been a large scale emergence during the previous 48 hours and more than 20 males were constantly in dispute over the best perches along one short section of track.



As I reluctantly left the woods after one of those wonderful days when time just melts away, I noticed the largest swarm of the moth *Adela reaumurella* (see 'Denbies Hillside, 10th April) that I've ever seen. Approximately 150 were 'dancing' above one tree, and another 100 over the next.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 19-Apr-11 04:48 PM GMT

Wow! Looking good Neil.

Those moths are amazing aren't they, I've seen a few over the last couple of weeks. You can really see their extremely long antennae glistening in the sun in your photo.

Cheers

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-Apr-11 07:17 AM GMT

Hi Lee,

I find their 'dancing' strangely erotic 😊

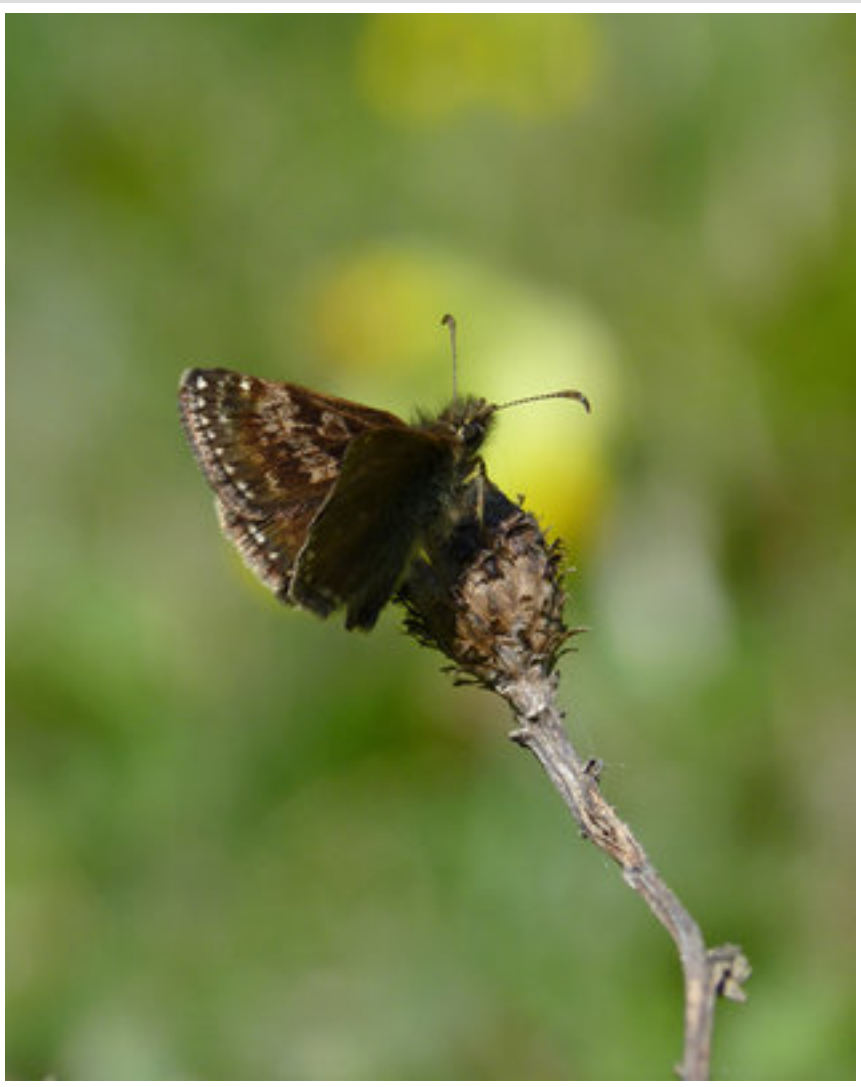
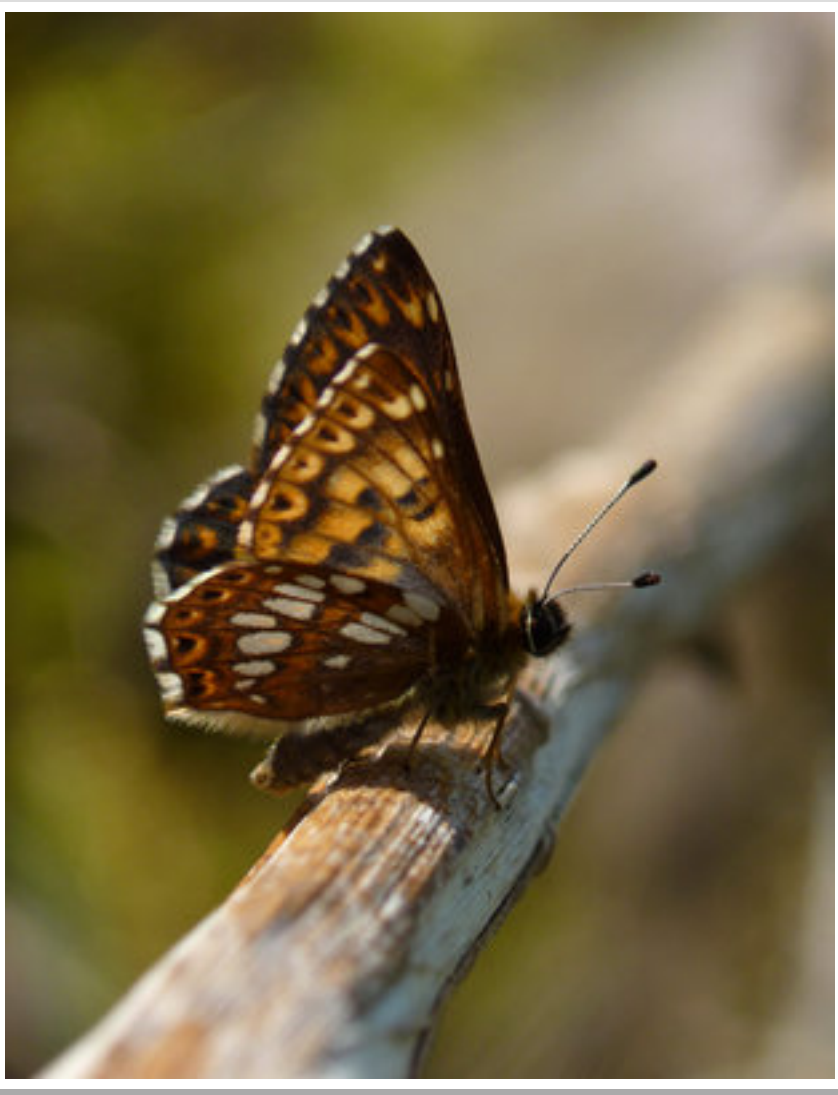
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-Apr-11 07:28 AM GMT

Sussex Dukes Out

I had a nice surprise during a late afternoon visit to the beautiful Heyshott Escarpment today (19th April). This usually 'late' site produced my first Duke of Burgundy (2) of the year, beating a couple of locations where I would have expected one or two to have shown by now. I think this is probably a function of the currently very strong population here, as large, healthy colonies tend to throw out earlier specimens. A few very fresh Grizzled and Dingy Skippers were also on the wing.



by Susie, 21-Apr-11 03:15 AM GMT

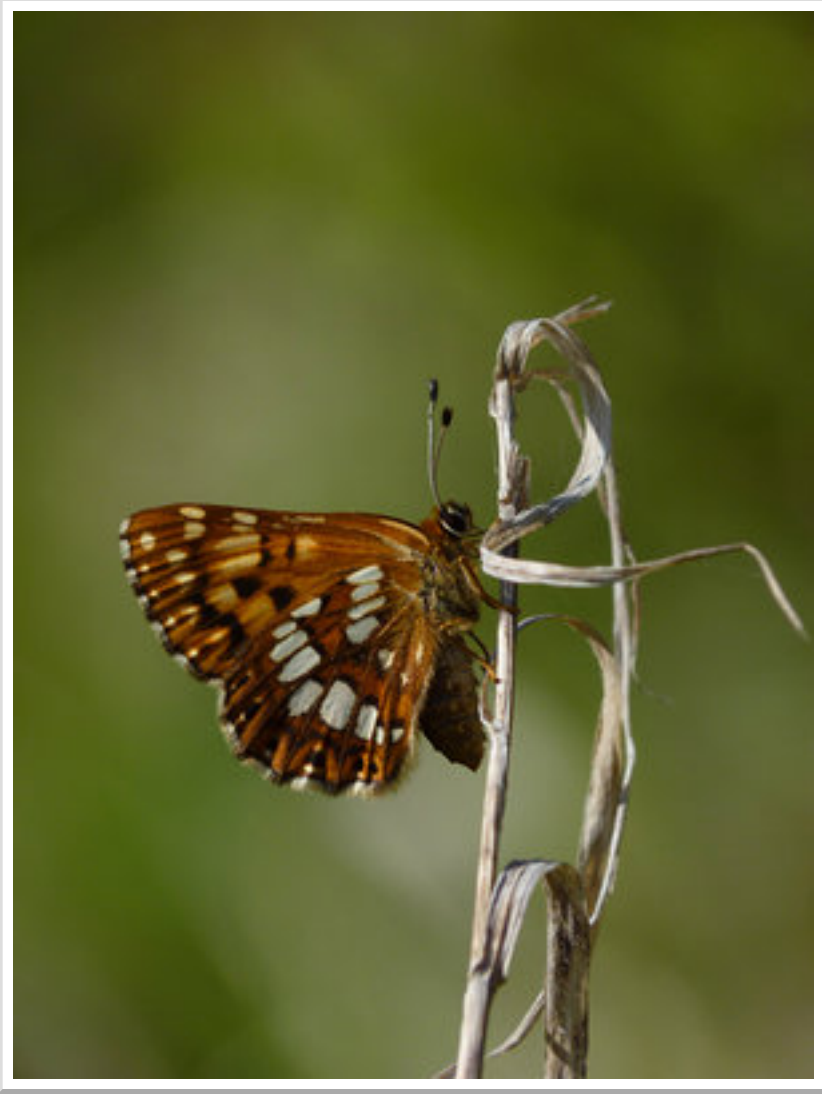
Great photos, Neil, and great news.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Apr-11 08:07 AM GMT

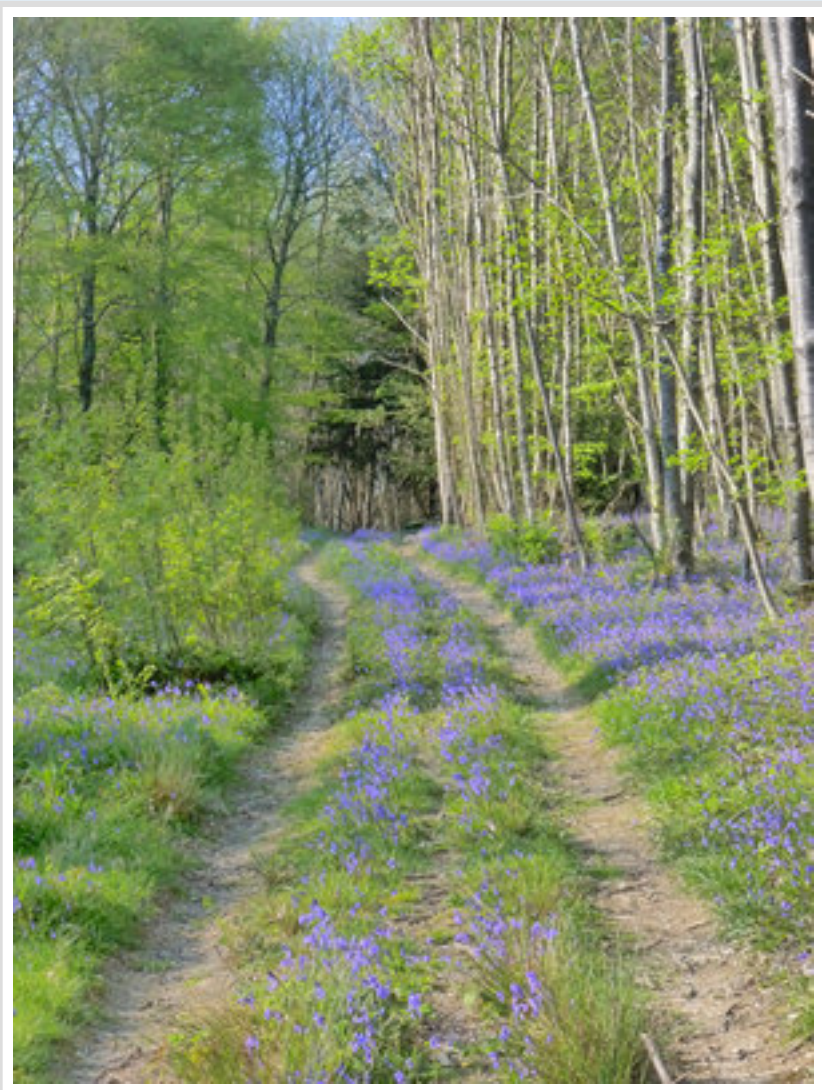
Heyshott Escarpment And Rewell Wood

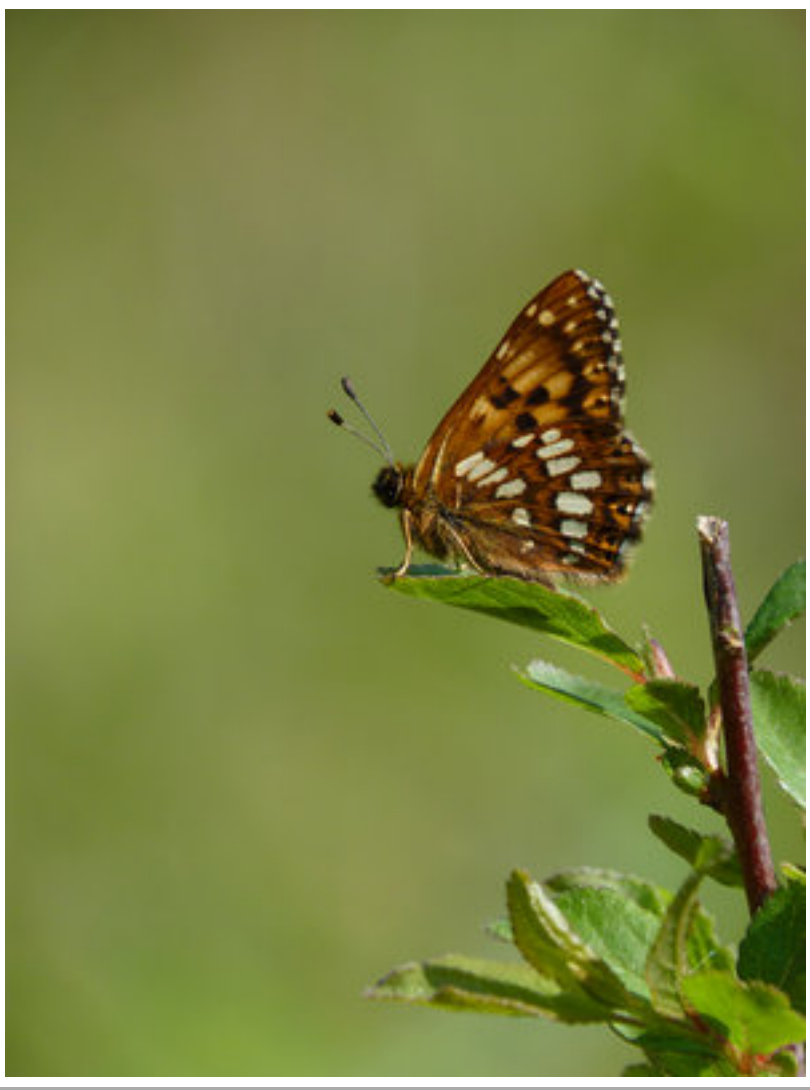
The lovely weather is really beginning to accelerate the emergence of spring butterflies. On Wednesday (20th April) I visited Heyshott Escarpment with Hannah and my brother's family from Antwerp. Duke of Burgundy numbers had risen to 7, including this plump female which we watched laying eggs.

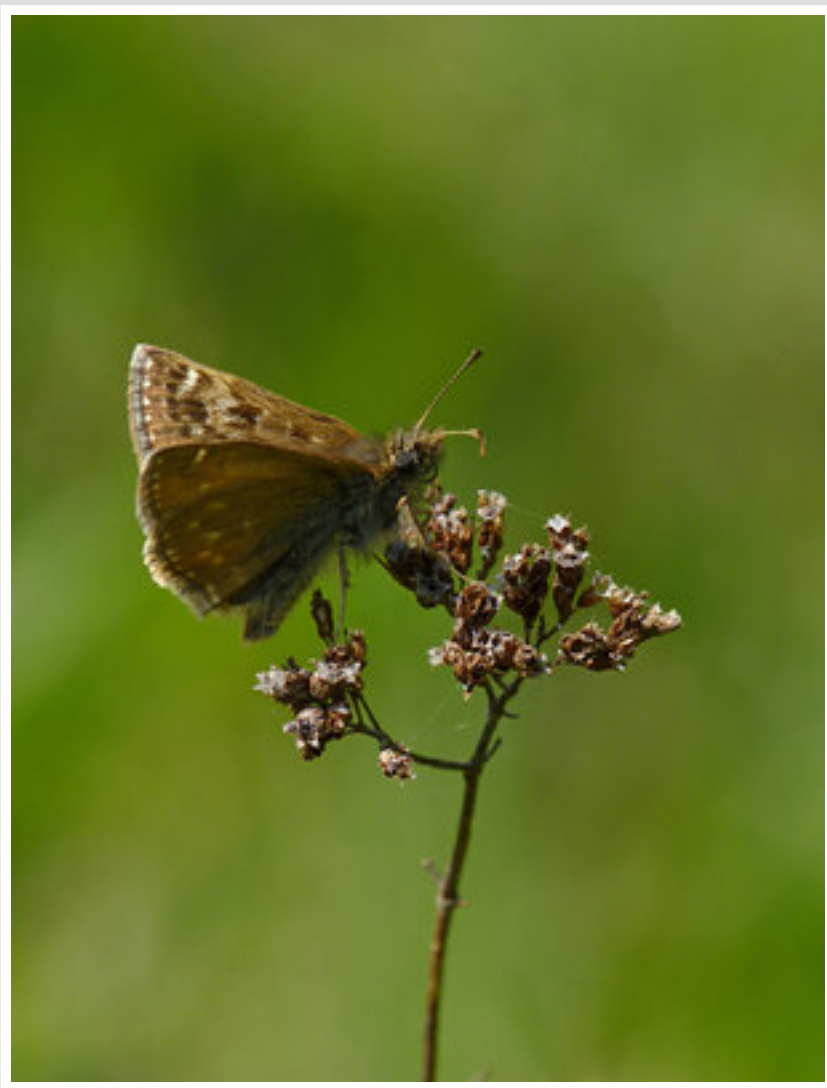
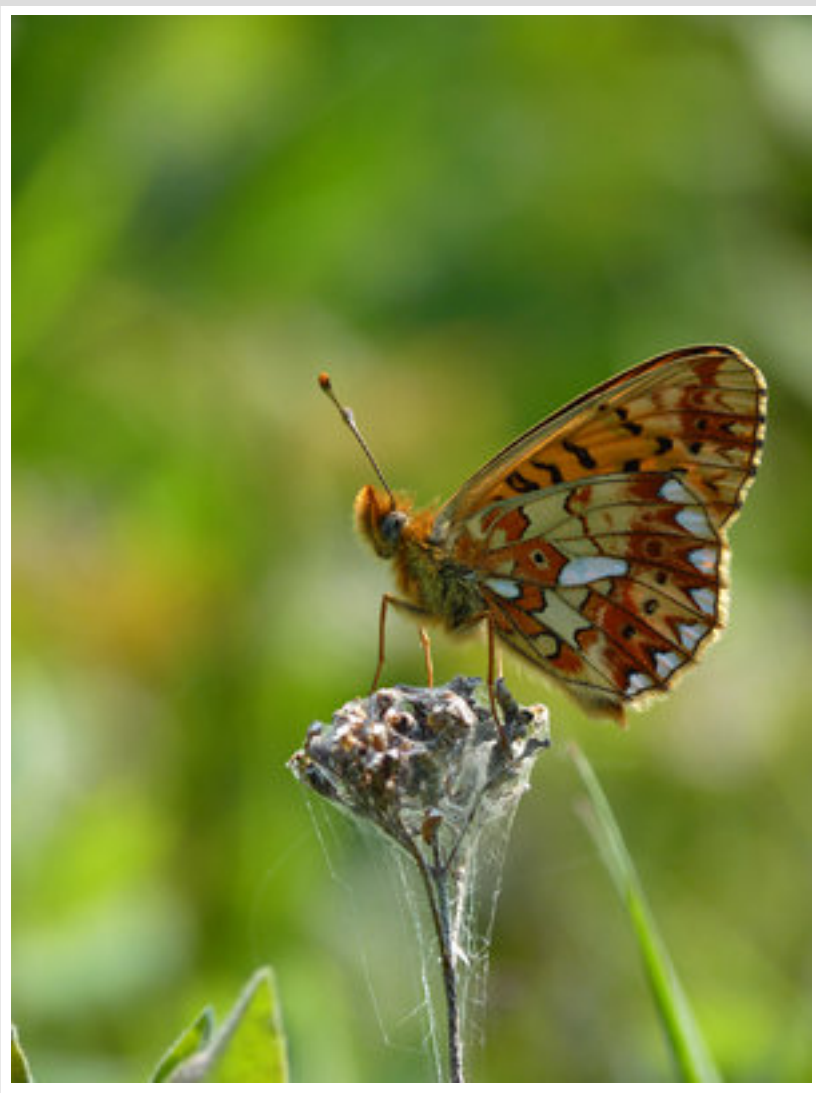


Steve Morgan rang me today (21st April) to let me know that he had seen a dozen up there, and I suspect there will be many more by the weekend. Plenty of Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, a few Green Hairstreaks, and stacks of ovipositing Brimstones are also on the slopes.

This afternoon I visited Rewell Wood, where numbers of Pearl-bordered Fritillary are building fast. I also visited the area where we've been doing a lot of habitat management for Duke of Burgundy in the last couple of years. In addition to the Dukes I was encouraged to see Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and a couple of Green Hairstreaks here. Two of these species are new arrivals on the site.





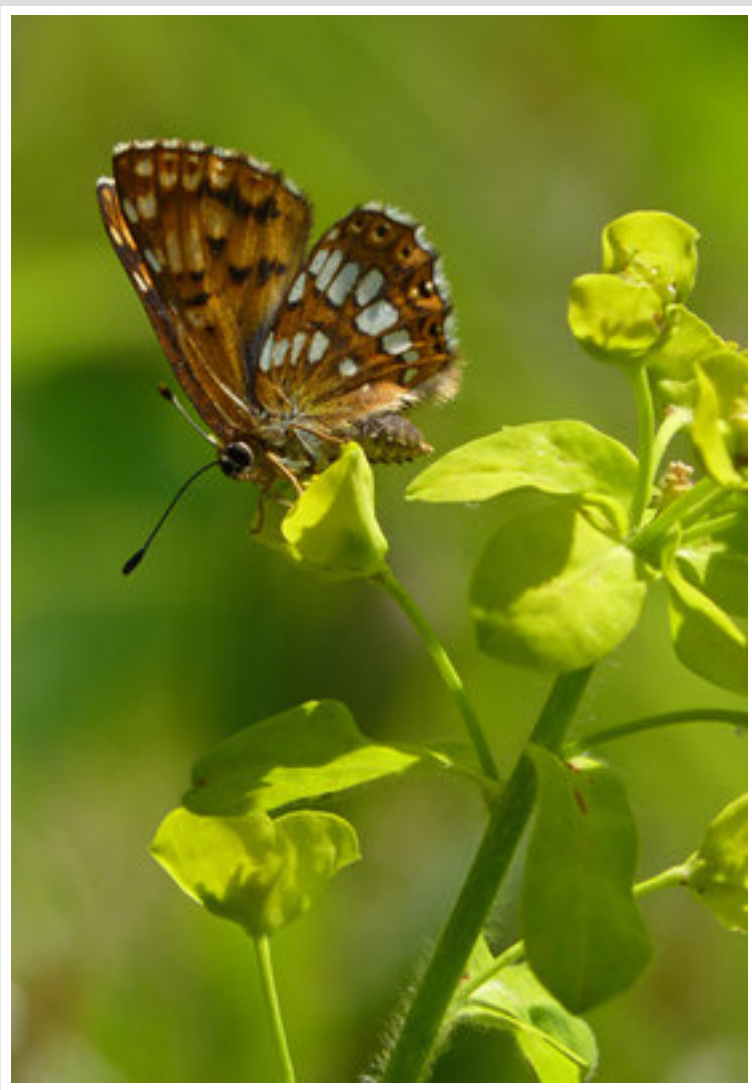


Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Apr-11 03:28 AM GMT

New PBF Colony

I spent a very pleasant day (22 April) trying to count almost uncountable Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. But over-shadowing the impressive tally of 125 (almost all males) was the discovery, credited to Paul Day, of a new colony in Houghton Forest near Arundel. A sizeable clear-fell opened up a couple of years back was obviously visited by a wandering female PBF last spring; she must have threaded her way through glades and rides over a distance of at least 2 Kms. Grizzled Skipper and Small Copper have also set up home here. Earlier in the day I also had an encouraging count of 13 Duke of Burgundy on a small woodland site. This included an amorous couple that retired to a turkey oak for some quality time.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Apr-11 07:00 AM GMT

Strange But True - The Black Orange Tip!

Bred through from caterpillars collected by BC Sussex member Dave Harris (photographed by Steven Teale), here is a weird and wonderful melanistic Orange Tip.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 23-Apr-11 07:08 AM GMT

That's incredible! I've never seen anything like that before! Any more pics available? And thx for sharing this!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Apr-11 07:23 AM GMT

Hi Pete,
I have no knowledge of anything similar! Here is the other image I was sent, taken just prior to release.... and a very uncertain future!
Neil



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Padfield, 23-Apr-11 07:33 AM GMT

I have seen this form illustrated somewhere. It might just have been in T.G. Howarth's *South's British Butterflies* but I haven't got that book here so I can't check.

Fascinating to see one in real life.

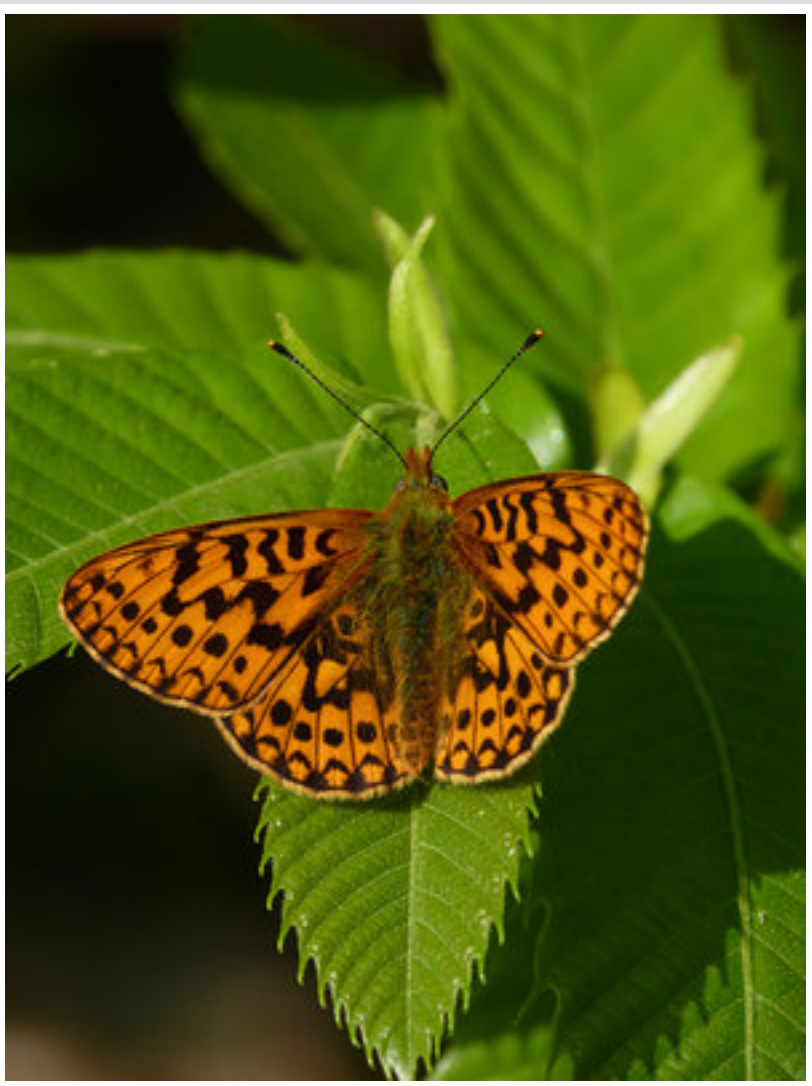
Guy

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Apr-11 04:00 AM GMT

First Common Blue And Small Heath

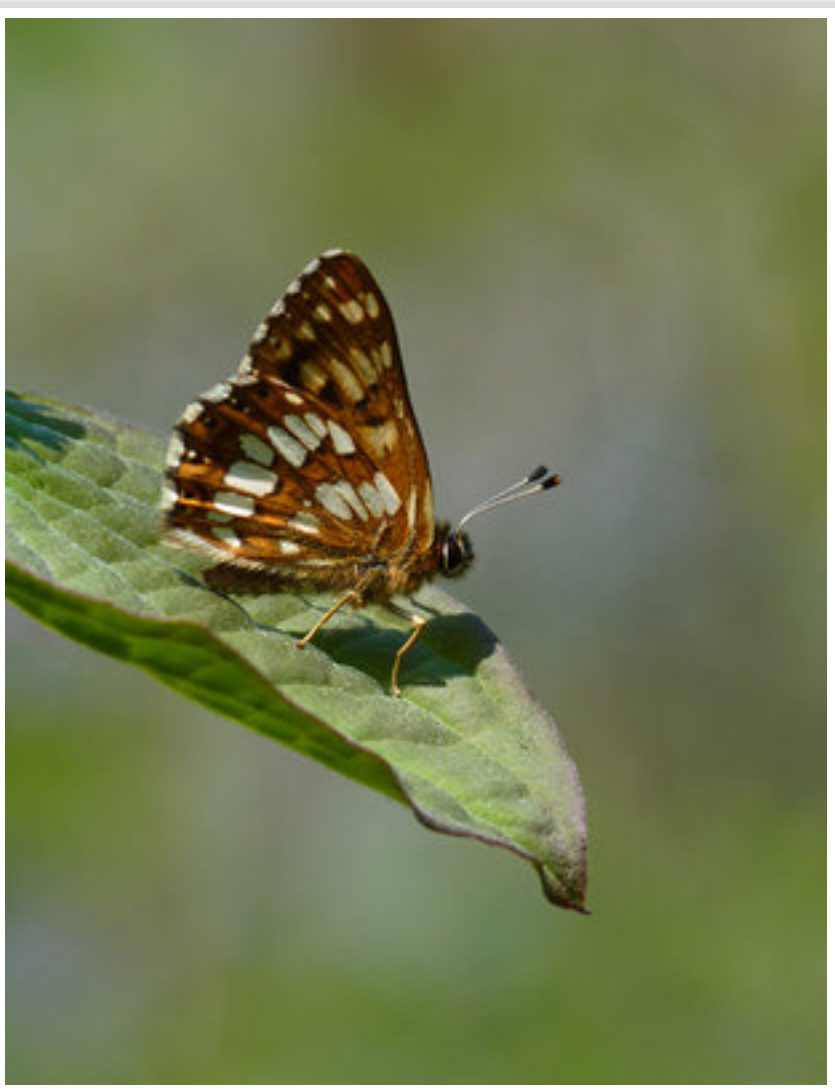
I managed to cram a lot of butterflies into today (23rd April). I started early at Rewell Wood and watched the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries wake up as the first rays of sunshine penetrated the sweet chestnut coppice. Speckled Yellow moths were next on the wing, followed by a few woodland Grizzled Skippers.





Then it was off to Mill Hill to lead my first BC walk of the year. There was no need to descend the steep slope here as I normally do; there were plenty of butterflies, including all of our target species, in the scrubby glades to the north of the upper car park. I've never seen so many Green Hairstreaks here. Other species included Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Holly Blue, Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Brimstone, Large and Small White.

As Susie had come along for the morning walk, I thought I'd show her Kithurst Hill in the afternoon. A male Duke of Burgundy posed nicely for us and I later found a female laying eggs in a hollow that I cleared of scrub a couple of years back – very satisfying. Amongst the other species seen were my first Common Blue and Small Heath of the year, and a handful of Green Hairstreaks including a female ovipositing on dogwood.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 24-Apr-11 04:40 AM GMT

Cracking photos, Neil, just goes to show that it's not the camera but the person behind it that makes a good picture!

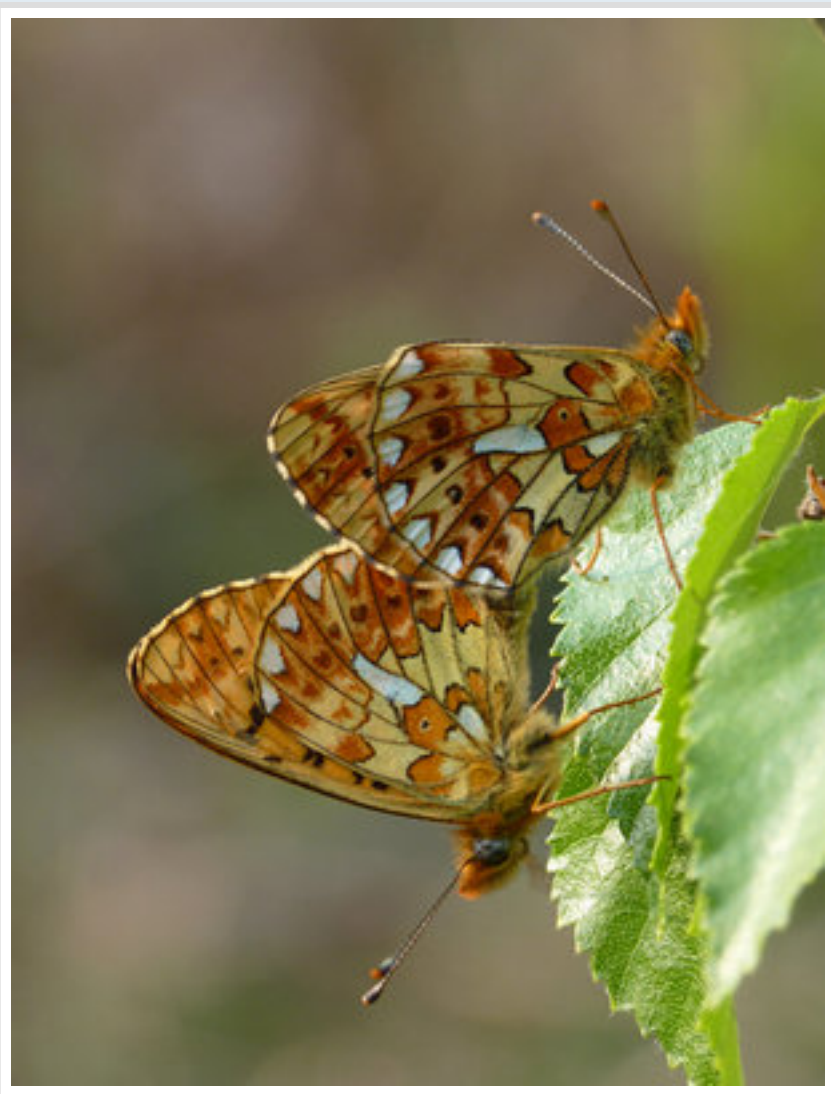
Thanks again for a smashing day. 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

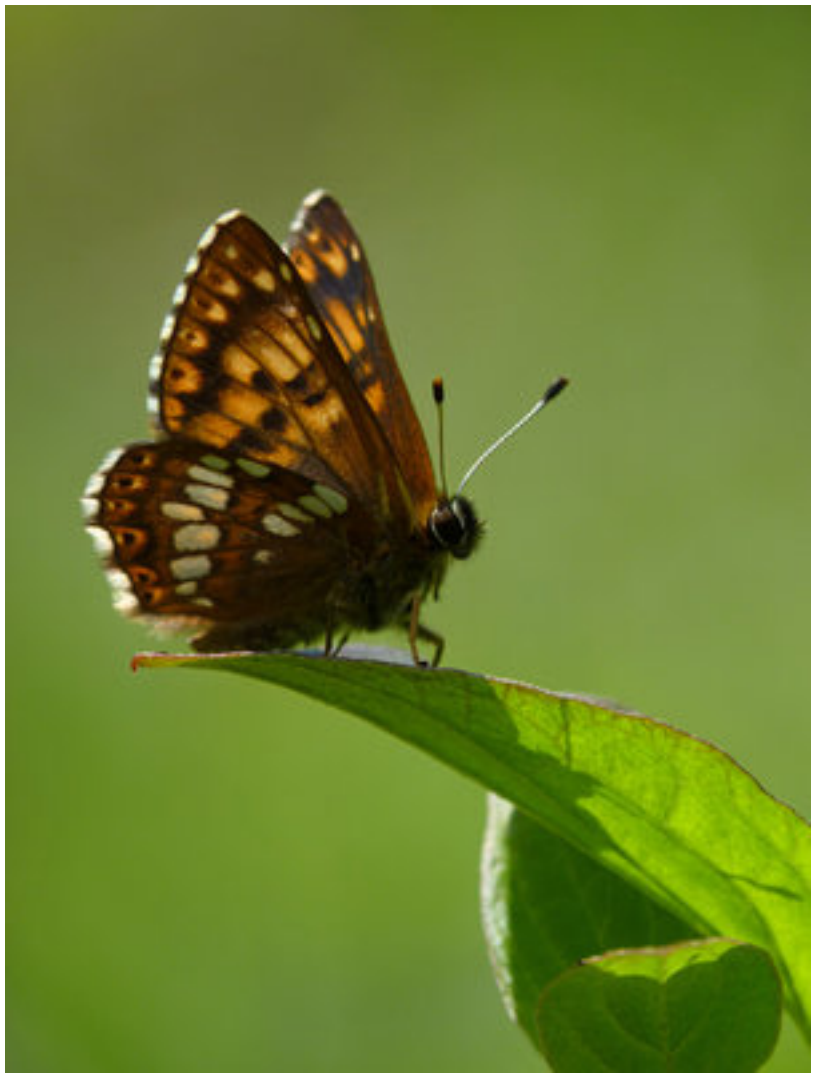
by Neil Hulme, 27-Apr-11 06:26 AM GMT

Bank Holiday Butterflies

Sunday and Monday (24th & 25th April) were both great days to be out and about. On Sunday I met up with UKBer Lee and a couple of BC Sussex friends, for a whirlwind tour of some of the county's finest scenery and loveliest butterflies. Orange Tips and Green-veined Whites patrolled every verge of the country lanes between Rewell Wood and Heyshott Down, but at either end our target was Duke of Burgundy and/or Pearl-bordered Fritillary and we saw a lot of them 😊 . As evening approached Lee spotted a mating pair of PBFs, which finished off a great day out very nicely.



On Monday I surveyed a Duke of Burgundy site in the morning, then headed for the peace and tranquility of Harting Down. There's a small colony of Dukes here that never gets visited, not least because it's on a 40 degree slope, but the view across the West Sussex/Hampshire border from this sheltered coombe is well worth the climb. Even as the afternoon sun began to lose its strength and I started the steep descent, I was still finding Green Hairstreaks on almost every patch of scrub I passed. I don't remember a better bank holiday for butterflies.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 28-Apr-11 02:54 AM GMT

Ab. *taras*

Yesterday (26th April) I performed an ongoing survey of private woodland in East Sussex, where it is hoped that Pearl-bordered Fritillary can be re-introduced when the time is right. I remember an interesting presentation given by Andy Barker (BC Hants & IOW) in which he demonstrated the use of Grizzled Skipper as an 'indicator species', signalling the suitability (or otherwise) of woodland habitat for PBF. Good PBF woods invariably hold good numbers of Grizzled Skipper. I counted 46, so I don't think it will be long before this project progresses further. In one area of the wood an isolated colony of skippers contains some nice aberrant forms and out of 18 counted I saw 3 ab. *taras* (below) and 2 ab. *intermedia*.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Padfield, 28-Apr-11 03:40 AM GMT

What a magnificent individual. And wonderful pictures, Kipper. I don't like to fill up your diary by commenting on all your fantastic photos but that *taras* is special!

Guy

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 28-Apr-11 04:06 AM GMT

Neil said:

.....demonstrated the use of Grizzled Skipper as an 'indicator species', signalling the suitability (or otherwise) of woodland habitat for PBF

Well in my excellent experience with PBFs galore in Haugh Wood today 27th April, I didn't see a single Grizzlie although there was plenty of wild strawberry plants.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Apr-11 06:23 AM GMT

Thanks Guy - I know you have your own area out there for *taras* and *intermedia* and they're always a real treat to see. Usually when I watch an amorous male trying to break up a pair 'in cop' I think "sling yer hook", but when I watched this handsome fellow trying to usurp a standard livery male I was thinking "get in there". Of course the latter could have been carrying the gene as well and I'm confident of seeing these forms annually here.
Neil

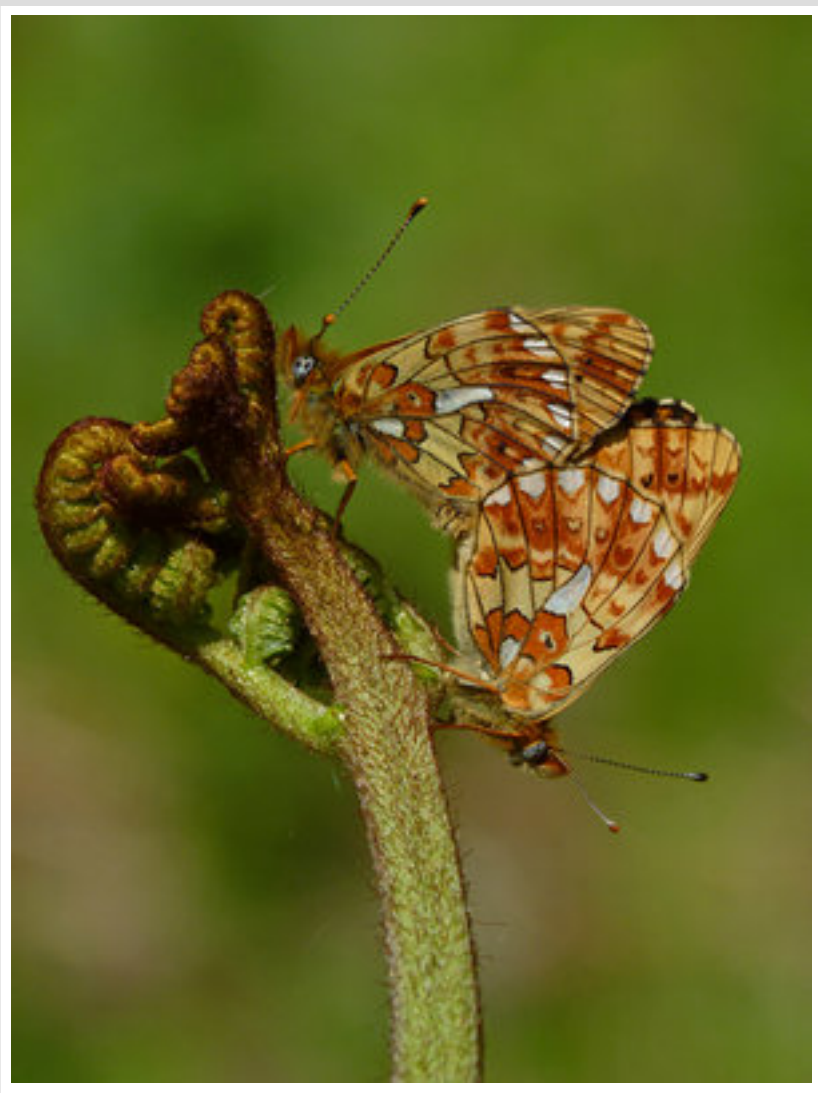
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Apr-11 07:15 AM GMT

More Dukes And Pearls

Yesterday (27th April) I spent another day counting Duke of Burgundy and Pearl-bordered Fritillary. I was particularly pleased to see PBFs flying alongside the Dukes on the Norfolk Estate, as this is the first year that the Pearls have become established in this area. Seeing the two species together has been an ambition of mine for some years now. Of course they don't cohabit peacefully..... and in a dogfight the Dukes always win 😊. In one particular clearing I recorded Dukes, PBF, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak. This is the best reward possible for the volunteers that have worked so hard here for the last few years; this particular patch supported only Speckled Woods prior to 2008.





I again bumped into a very distinctive aberrant female Duke of Burgundy (last seen 24th April), out on an egg-laying run. I tracked her for quite a distance, starting from a point about 300 metres from my previous sighting. I also watched a freshly emerged male taking mineral salts from mud, in a manner similar to Purple Emperor. I've only observed this once before, when I came across a group of 5 'salting' Dukes, all fresh out of the shell.

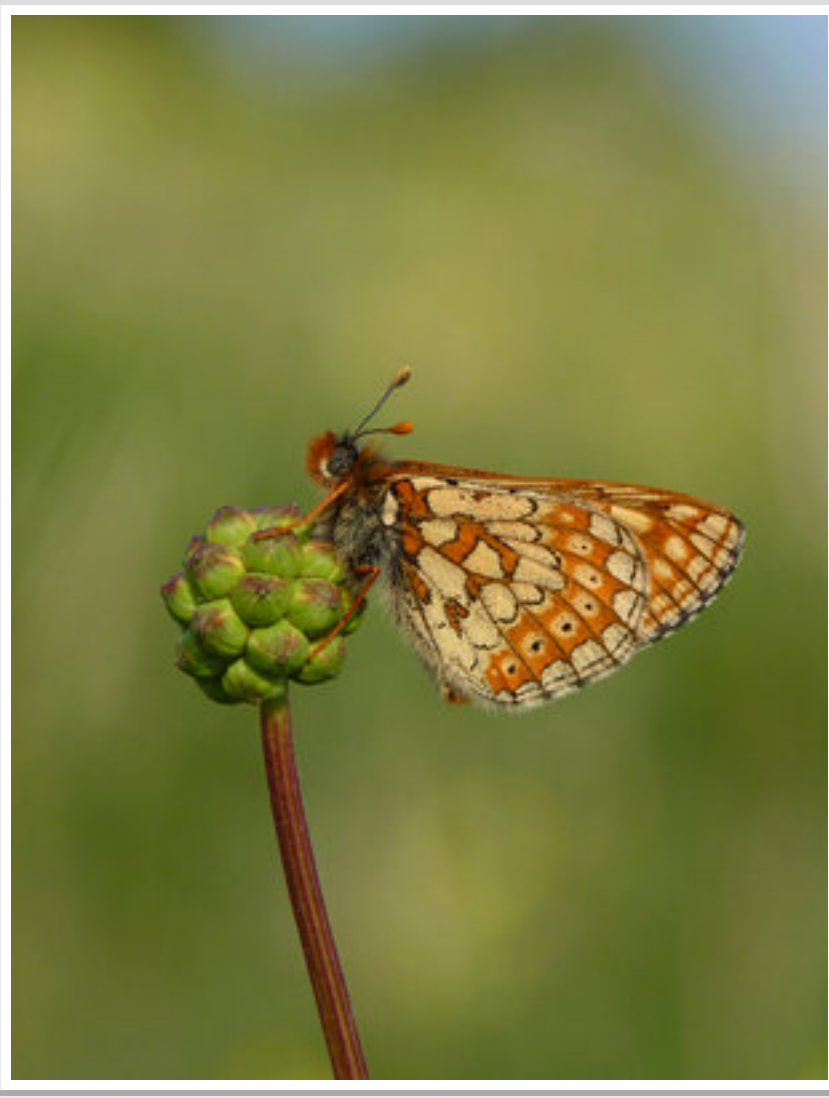
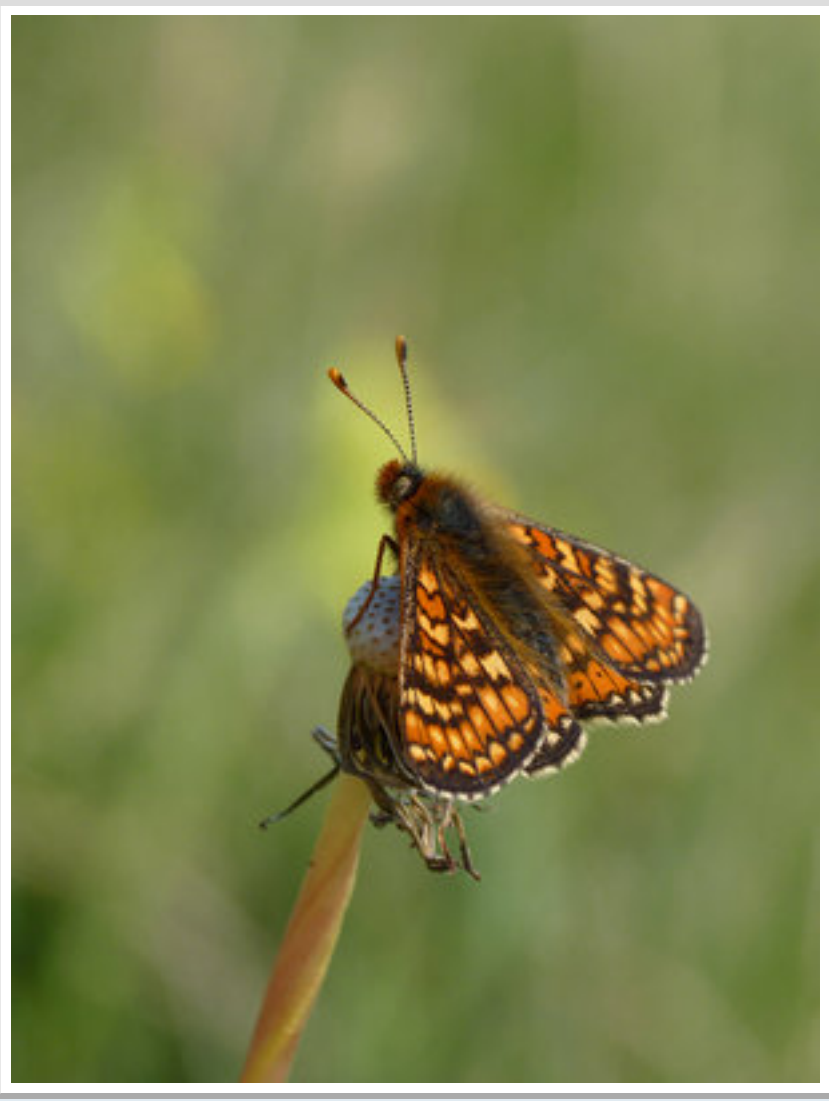


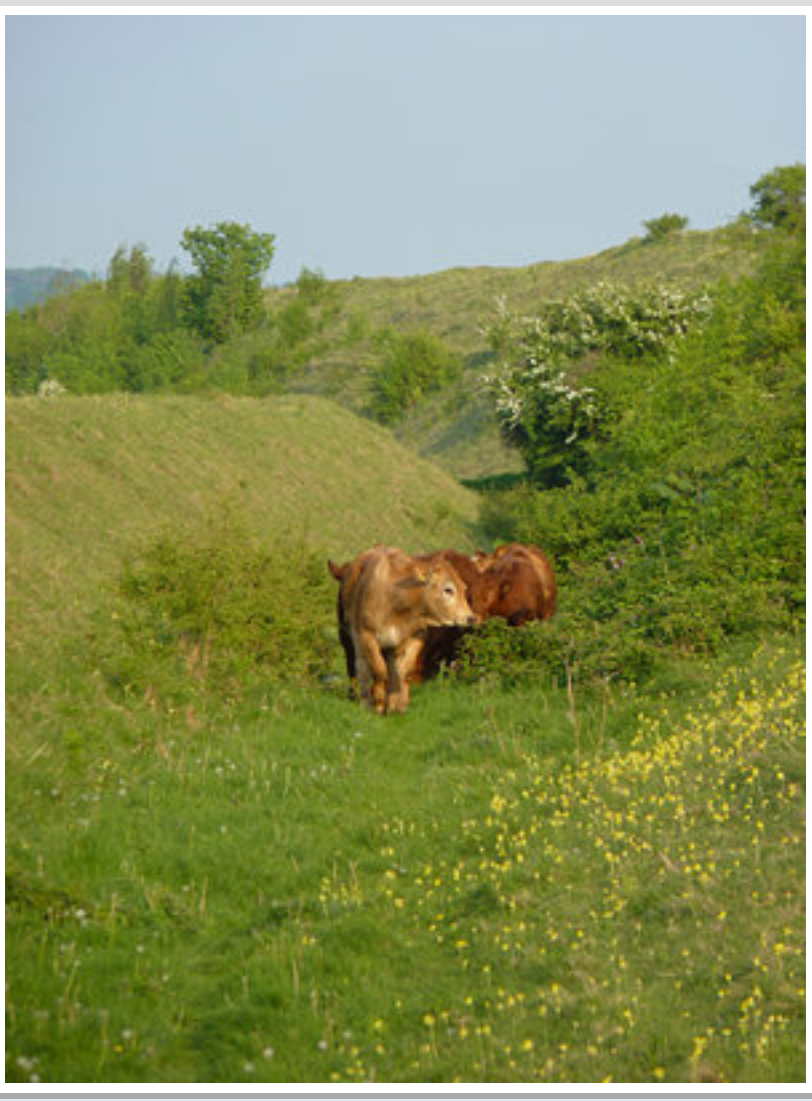
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Apr-11 05:15 PM GMT

Marsh Fritillaries Start To Swarm

Yesterday (28th April) I packed my passport and headed to Dorset. I don't know much about the population of Marsh Fritillary at Hod Hill, but if numbers continue to build as quickly as they clearly are doing, then there's going to be a lot here very soon now. There had clearly been a large emergence throughout the day. Despite the elevation of this very impressive hill-fort, there are plenty of ramparts and ditches to give shelter from the wind. There were stacks of butterflies here and were it not for the fact that I was focused firmly on the Marsh Fritillary, I could have spent ages photographing the beautiful Brown Argus and Small Copper in particular. There are plenty of fresh specimens of both species here. My total list for the day reads: Marsh Fritillary (loads), Dingy Skipper (lots), Grizzled Skipper (good number), Small Copper (good number), Brown Argus (good number), Small Blue, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Green Hairstreak, Orange Tip, Brimstone, Large White, Green-veined White, Peacock, Small Heath and Speckled Wood. Visit soon - highly recommended!





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-Apr-11 02:38 AM GMT

For those with an interest in moths – I forgot to add a Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth to my list of Hod Hill sightings (in the ditch at the top of the access path).

Re: Sussex Kipper

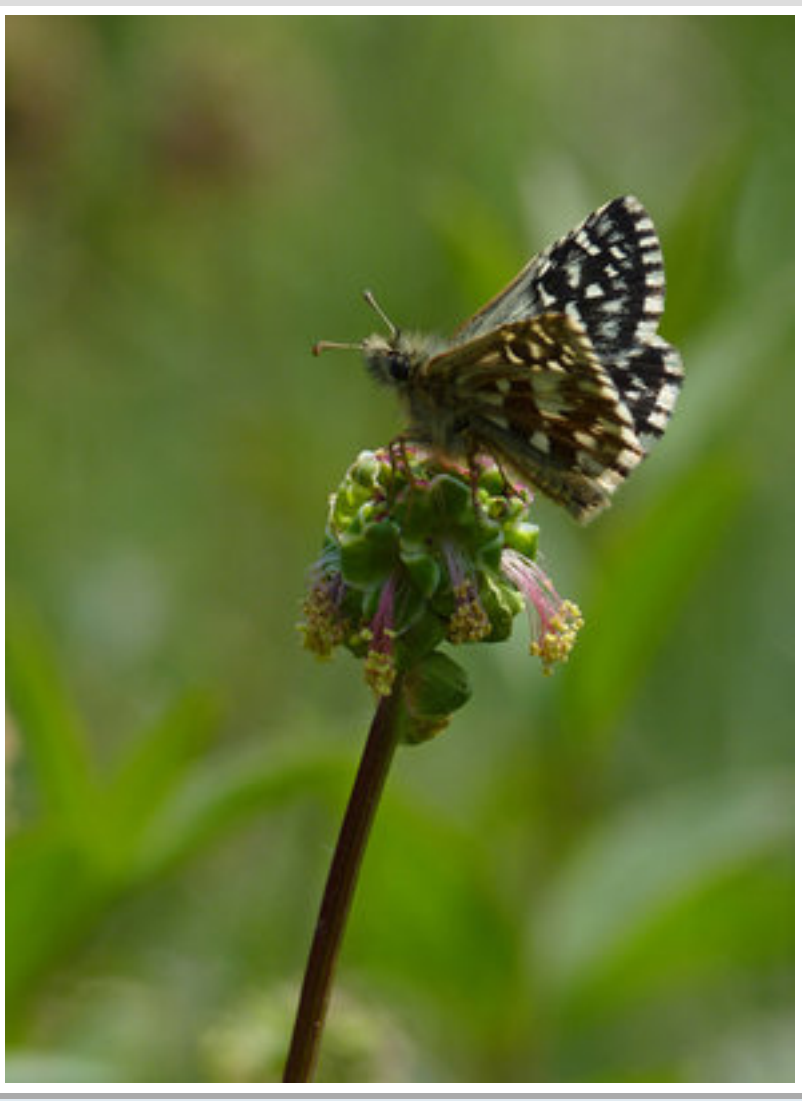
by Neil Hulme, 01-May-11 05:38 PM GMT

2011 UKB Photography Workshop

Many thanks to Pete, Gary, Lisa and all the contributors/speakers for making it another great event. I'm afraid I'm a lost cause with my reliance upon the 'P (numpty) setting' on my camera, but it's the social 'get together' and chance to visit terra nova that keeps me coming back for more.

A few shots from the field session on MHD and a later visit on the way home: Brown Argus, Grizzled Skipper, Brown Argus, Small Heath and Common Blue.







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-May-11 06:41 AM GMT

Favourite Meadow

A small meadow high on the Downs near Amberley has been a favourite venue of mine for many years. The meadow and associated roadbanks might total less than an acre, but I've recorded 38 species of butterfly here in the past. The site seemed to suffer particularly badly after the 2008/2009 summers, but it's back on form now. On Sunday (1st May) I recorded 17 species, which isn't bad for this time of year! Duke of Burgundy, Small Blue, Green Hairstreak, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Small Copper, Small Heath, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Holly Blue, Orange Tip, Green-veined White, Large White, Brimstone, Red Admiral, Peacock and Speckled Wood were all present. I was particularly pleased with the image I took of a Common Blue – a species I've always found hard to do justice to.



Re: Sussex Kipper

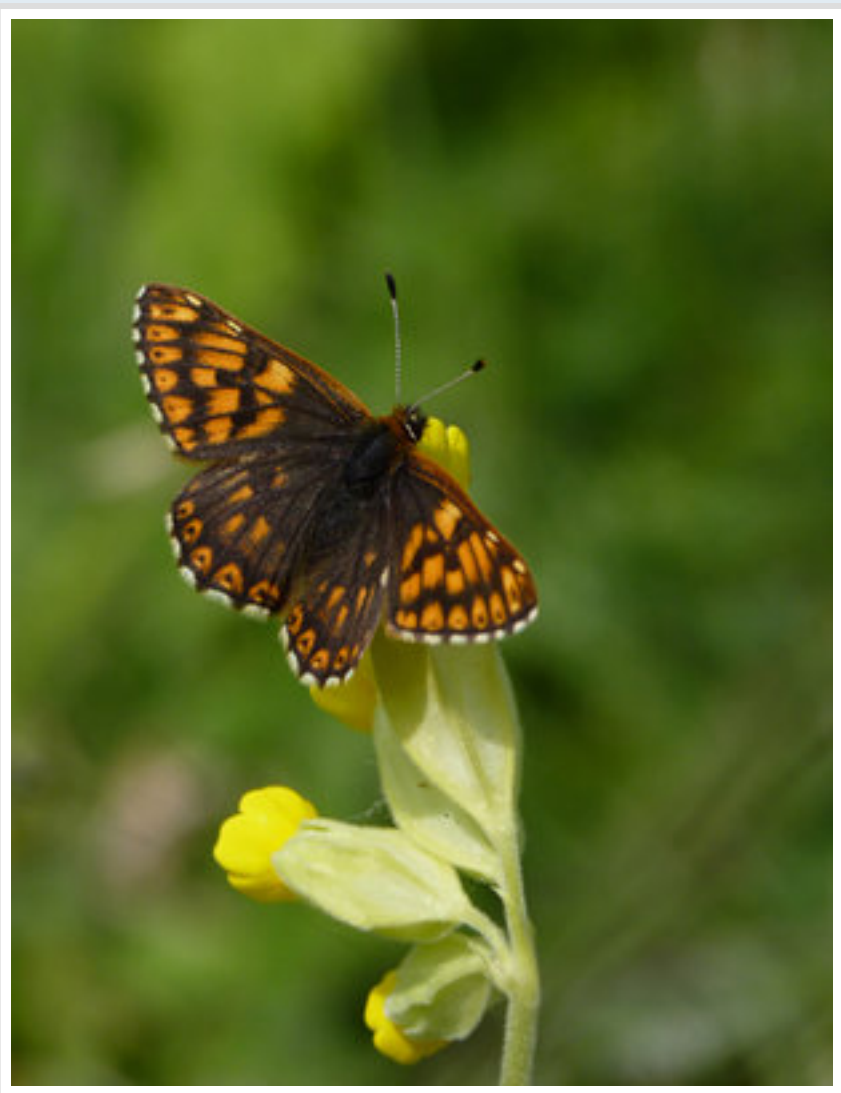
by Neil Hulme, 07-May-11 09:21 PM GMT

Season Of Plenty

2011 is not just an 'early' season – survey data is already indicating that some of our spring rarities are really 'making hay while the sun shines'. On Wednesday (4th May) I joined Dr Dan Hoare, the BC SE Regional Officer, to spend the day looking at Duke of Burgundy and Pearl-bordered Fritillary. We started off by giving a talk to a large group of Royal Forestry Society members at a meeting hosted by the Norfolk Estate in Rewell Wood. This was an ideal venue to demonstrate how commercial forestry operations can be conducted in a manner which is highly beneficial to wildlife, including our precious butterflies and moths. As we talked we were constantly surrounded by butterflies and I found myself in the surreal position of commentating, microphone in hand, on a dogfight between Dukes, Pearls and Grizzled Skippers, while standing in a woodland glade. If I add up my maximum daily counts for PBF on the various sweet chestnut coppice blocks here, I get a total approaching 400. The butterfly has spread to several suitable areas of habitat within a 3 mile radius – and is no doubt now in other areas we don't yet know about. Elsewhere in Sussex the hard work of people like Mike Mullis and Stuart Sutton (FC) has led to a population explosion of PBF they counted 628 in a day at a re-introduction site!



We then moved on to one of my favourite places..... Heyshott Escarpment (run by the excellent Murray Downland Trust). Dan and I spent an hour combing the old chalk workings for Duke of Burgundy. There were stacks of other beautiful butterflies around but we were on a serious 'timed count' mission and remained focused as the ticks mounted up. Despite starting quite late in the day (male Dukes are lazy and start thinking about bed by 3pm) we totalled an incredible 115. I was delighted with a count of 51 here last year – on a site where the population struggled along in '2s and 3s' for many, many years, so this further increase made me very happy 😊 . It just goes to show – give 'em what they want, and with the help of some good weather, we can make a real difference to the fortunes of these species.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 07-May-11 10:22 PM GMT

Neil.

Don't get big headed, but with crowds that big hanging on your every word, you can feel justly proud of your conservation efforts.

Was your friend Eddie the Duke among the crowd? 😊

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 08-May-11 02:08 AM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

We then moved on to one of my favourite places..... Heyshott Escarpment (run by the excellent Murray Downland Trust). Dan and I spent an hour combing the old chalk workings for Duke of Burgundy. There were stacks of other beautiful butterflies around but we were on a serious 'timed count' mission and remained focused as the ticks mounted up. We totalled an incredible 115. I was delighted with a count of 51 here last year – on a site where the population struggled along in '2s and 3s' for many, many years, so this further increase made me very happy 😊

That's an amazing figure Neil, you must be well chuffed. Well done to all involved!

I can vouch for Heyshott, it really is a lovely place.

Cheers

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 08-May-11 05:46 PM GMT

Father's Day

For various reasons it's been quite some while since I've been able to get an entire day out 'butterflying' with my father. However, on Friday (6th May) an opportunity arose and we headed off to an isolated woodland clearing in Wiltshire to look at Marsh Fritillary. It turned out to be one of those magical days when everything goes to plan, and it was certainly one of those days that will define the summer of 2011 for me.

As we arrived the numerous Pearl-bordered Fritillary were already beginning to stir. A particularly brightly-coloured individual caught my eye and its slightly wobbly flight pattern confirmed it was a very freshly emerged Small Pearl-bordered; our first of the year.





Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

It wasn't just beautiful butterflies that kept us entertained until well into the afternoon. We soon started to see Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoths buzzing around at high speed, nine or ten in all, occasionally stopping to sip nectar from a bluebell. But it was already too late in the morning for them to linger long enough for a photo. A female Argent & Sable also appeared, looking very smart in her black and white livery.

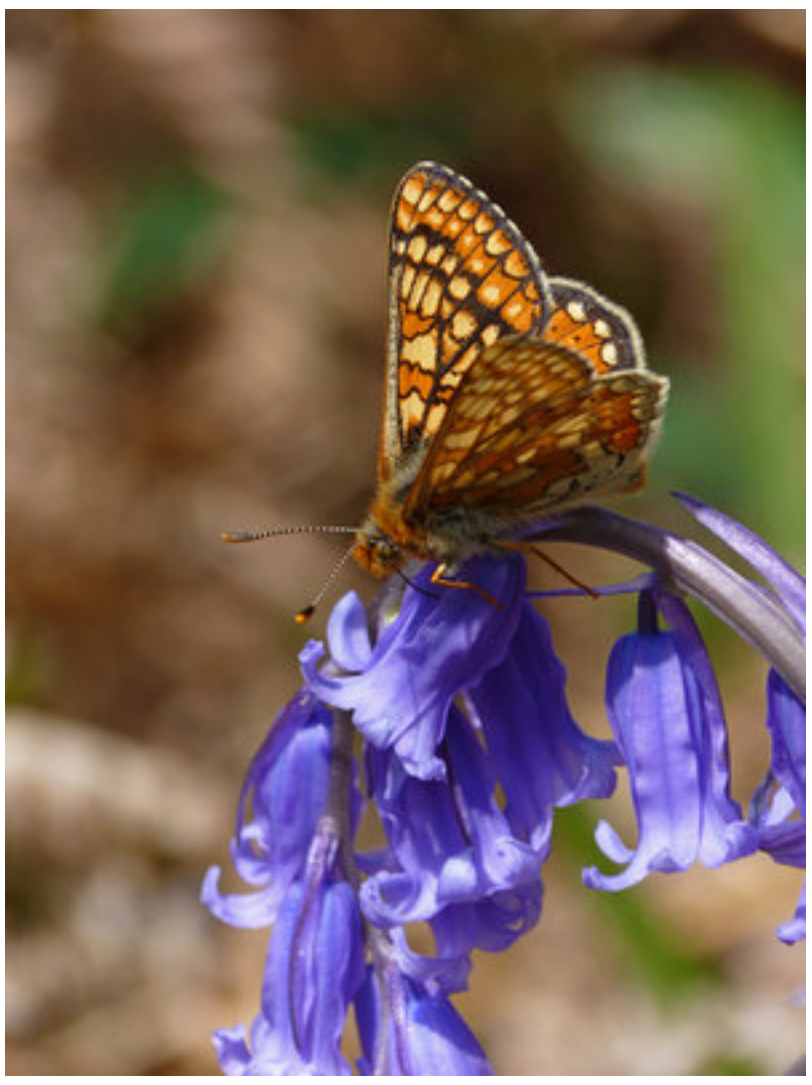


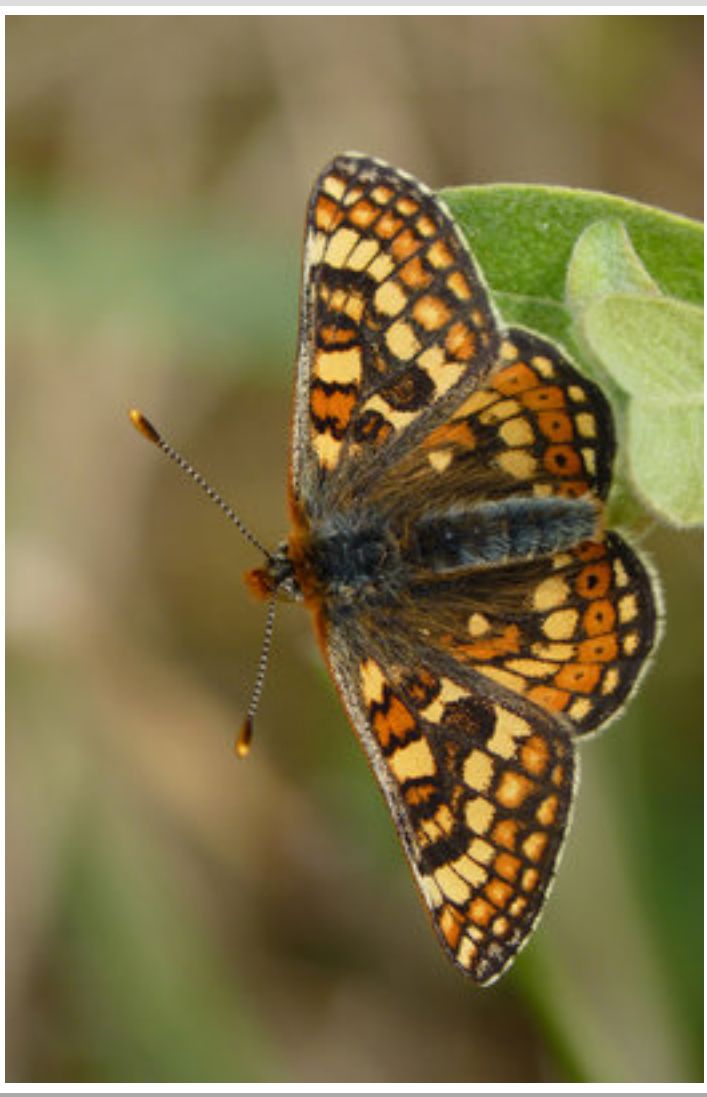
Kipper Senior trying to photograph Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoths



Argent & Sable

Butterfly numbers increased rapidly throughout the morning and the next rarity to show was a Duke of Burgundy. Grizzled Skippers were common and even Brown Argus put in an appearance. But the stars of the show were the Marsh Fritillaries, which were emerging in good numbers that day. Several times I watched freshly-emerged butterflies ejecting red meconium fluid before taking their first tentative flight. Most of them were males, although a couple of pristine females with huge, bulging abdomens full of eggs sat around in the grass and on low scrub.





Marsh Fritillary

Eventually it came time to head home, and we did so reluctantly, leaving the glade to the butterflies, moths, nightingales and cuckoos. Days don't come much better than this one.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-May-11 04:15 PM GMT

Dorothy Stringer High School Butterfly Haven

On Saturday (7th May) I went into the city of Brighton & Hove; but rather than go shopping I was there to survey and photograph the Small Blue. The BC Sussex Biodiversity Officer, Dr Dan Danahar, teaches this subject at the Dorothy Stringer High School and has extended his classroom in the most unusual and spectacular way imaginable. In 2007 he created the DSHS Butterfly Haven on an under-used sloping section of the Surrenden Campus, an area of playing fields shared by six other educational institutions. The organic-rich turf and upper soil layers were stripped away and a series of banks and gullies were created in the chalky subsoil and bedrock. All of the pupils were given the opportunity to plant their own, personal downland flower and the site was fenced and subsequently grazed by sheep. Bonkers but brilliant!

Over the last couple of years there have been a series of natural colonisations by butterflies, ranging from the 'expected' to the 'remarkable'. 21 species have now managed to thread their way across a couple of kilometres of urban landscape to find this small butterfly paradise in the middle of the city. We probably still underestimate the sensory powers built into the design of a butterfly. Small Blue, Adonis Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Common Blue, Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Marbled White and Small Copper all live here. A couple of days back a Large Skipper emerged on site! This project is important on many levels – not least because youngsters that don't have the opportunity to visit the open grasslands of the Downs can come here and get a little taster of what's out there. Dr Dan and Dorothy Stringer are doing a great job.







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Rogerdodge, 10-May-11 06:05 PM GMT

Neil

What a wonderful and heart warming tale.

Thanks

(Oh - an your photos aren't bad either!)

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 10-May-11 07:50 PM GMT

Roger about Neil's efforts:

...your photos aren't bad either!

Shows what a Box Brownie in capable hands can achieve.

1 hand = 4 old inches which equates to 10 cms. So maybe I should have said: "...Box Brownie in capable 10 centimetres".

Sorry for the wind up Roger but I just couldn't resist 😊

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 10-May-11 08:18 PM GMT

Dr Dan was telling me about this the other week when we were out with Dukes and Pearls. There's also a splendid section on it on the 2010 Sussex report (get your copy now!).

Apart from the sheer audacity / genius of the plan and subsequent success, what really warms my heart is the thought of all those school children / older learners (6 educational establishments!) that have this wonderful habitat on their lunchtime door mat. If some develop an interest and carry this though to adult life, there's your next generation of conservationists right there.

PS – cracking photos Neil 😊

Cheers

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Ian Pratt, 11-May-11 04:25 AM GMT

Great to read your blog as always and particularly encouraging. Large skipper seen at Afton chalkpit this afternoon! 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-May-11 06:16 AM GMT

"Thanks" to Roger, Jack, Lee and Ian for such positive comments. The Butterfly Haven school project certainly deserves to get some coverage!
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-May-11 07:47 AM GMT

Last Week

With so much going on at this time of the year it's sometimes difficult to keep the diary up-to-date. Here's a few highlights from last week.

On Monday (9th May) I met up with Reg Trench for a day's butterflying. I don't know anyone more enthusiastic about his butterflies than Reg. He's seen a fair few in his 90 years, but he enthused about the freshly emerged female Duke of Burgundy we found as if it was his first. Sadly, this was the last mint condition specimen that I'll see this year, as the Duke's flight season is fading fast. I hope that Reg's health is good enough to allow a return visit to the woods next spring – he's great company and his mind and eyes are as sharp as ever.

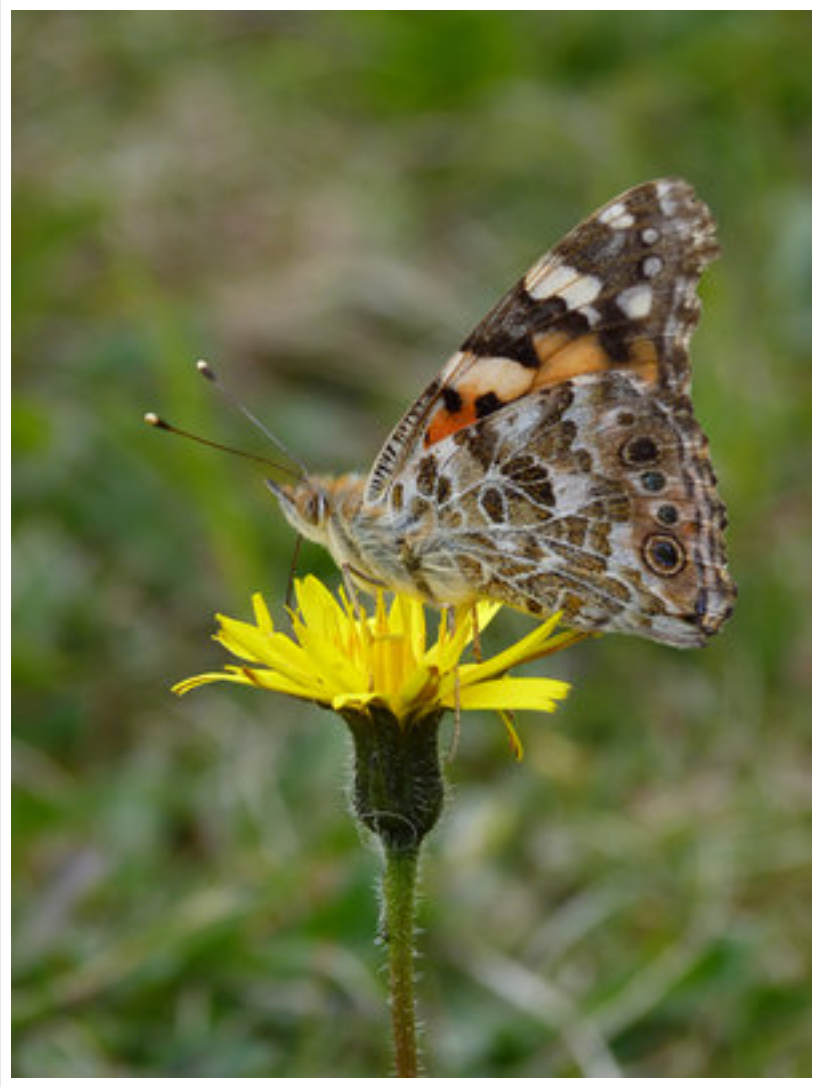


On Tuesday (10th May) I met up with Fiona Scully of the National Trust to have a preliminary look at the Duke of Burgundy habitat at Harting Down, prior to a more official meeting the following day. I'm pleased to say that the scrub management and grazing has improved things considerably here and we saw 30 in a coombe where only a handful have occurred in the past. I photographed this handsome Broad-bodied Chaser at the base of the slope.



The following day we were joined by other National Trust people, including Matthew Oates. As we approached the summit of Beacon Hill we came

across half a dozen Painted Ladies, suggesting a recent influx from mainland Europe. Over the previous few days I had also seen an increasing number of Red Admirals, including a dozen along the Downs at Storrington.



On Thursday (12th May) I joined Dr Dan Danahar at the Dorothy Stringer School Butterfly Haven, who was showing the project to Guardian journalist and author Patrick Barkham. Afterwards Patrick and I headed for Mill Hill, to see if any of the Adonis Blues were suffering the same fate as those at Denbies. All seemed to be OK with the butterflies here.



Finally, on Friday (13th May) I went looking for 'new' Duke of Burgundy colonies on the Downs. I failed to discover any Dukes, but did uncover a population of at least 100 Small Blues at Duncton.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-May-11 05:06 AM GMT

Farewell To The Duke

The BC trip I led on Heyshott Escarpment this morning (21st May) was probably my last outing for the Duke of Burgundy this year. The warm spring and very early emergence dates have made being in the right place at the right time very difficult and our target species was all-but-over. However, our tally of 9 albeit faded Dukes would have been cause for celebration only a couple of years ago, prior to the population explosion here. Similarly the Green Hairstreak, Grizzled and Dingy Skipper, Small Copper and Brown Argus were thin-on-the-ground and looking tired - we are firmly in the 'June Gap'. But there is more to Heyshott than the butterflies and we enjoyed a fine selection of orchids including Fly, Greater Butterfly and White Helleborine. And then there are the views across Sussex, which are second to none on a sunny morning. Most importantly, I would like to think that those who attended enjoyed the walk as much as I did. It might be time to say farewell to the Duke, but as I returned to the car I was happy in the knowledge that it's been another very good year for the species on my patch.



Fly Orchid

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 22-May-11 05:39 AM GMT

Thank you for leading yet another fabulous walk. I am sure I speak for all attendees when I say we had another educational and enjoyable walk

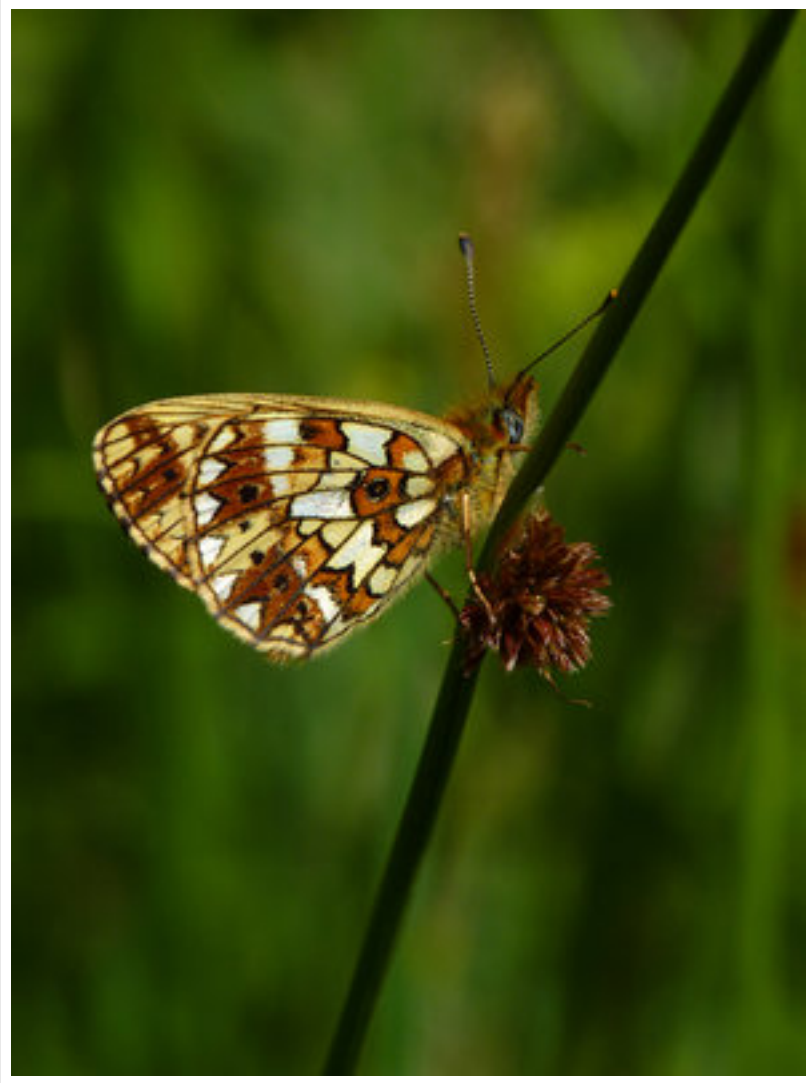
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 26-May-11 08:27 PM GMT

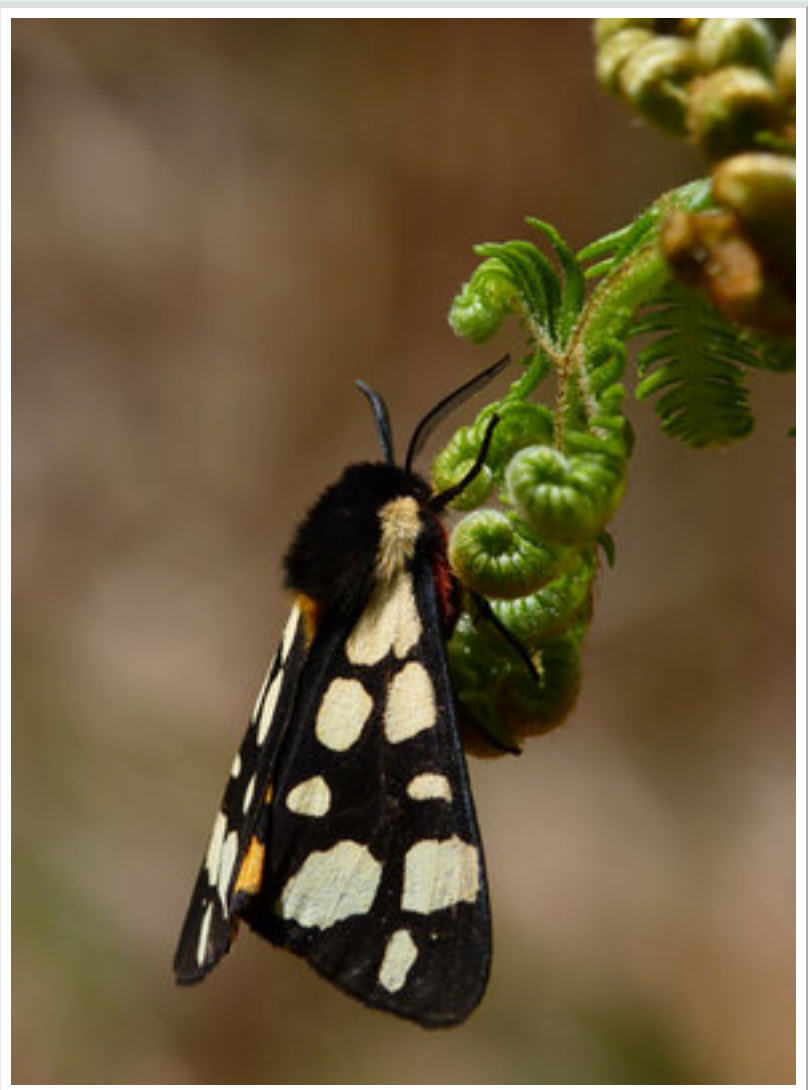
Rowland Update

It's not long now (4th June) before Michael Blencowe leads two walks (11am & 2pm) for BC members around the recently acquired Rowland Wood Reserve. A formal ceremony will take place later in the month, but this is an ideal opportunity for BC members from near and far to come and have a look at what has already been achieved here. I visited with my father on Tuesday (24th May) and it looked stunning. The many hours spent over the winter by our trusty volunteers have already transformed large areas of a dark and unpromising woodland into a paradise for butterflies. In a couple of seasons this will be *seriously* good – the clock will have been turned back and a significant part of the Vert Wood complex will once again become a Mecca for lepidopterists.

We were there primarily to count Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on the adjacent Park Corner Heath Reserve (15, plus 4 in a private ride nearby and 2 on the way there), but once done it was time for a sneak preview of Rowland. The best news was that we found 2 freshly emerged male SPBFs which were still rather unsteady on the wing. Without a doubt, a pioneering female had been in here last spring, suggesting that the species will feel very much at home in its extended accommodation.



We also found a couple of very smart-looking Cream Spot Tigers, a fresh Large Skipper, and watched a dragonfly catch a male Brimstone in flight. Those SPBF need to keep their heads down for a while!



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-May-11 01:26 AM GMT

Spring Giving Way To Summer

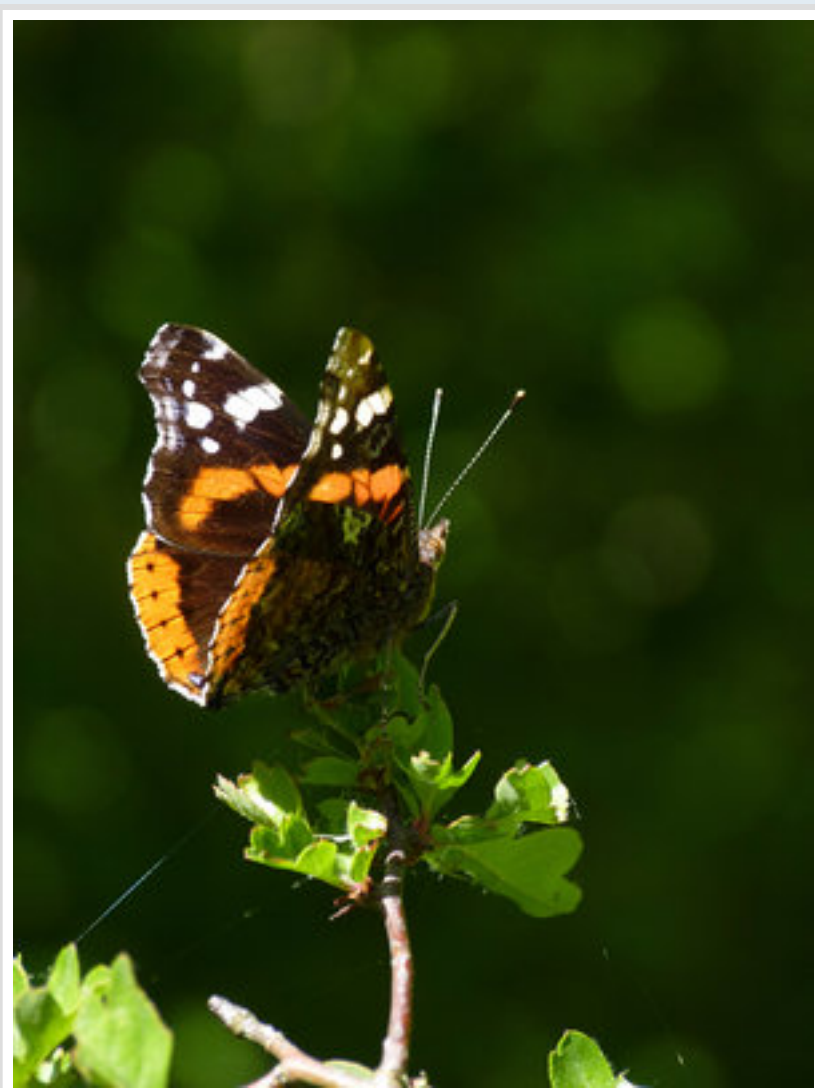
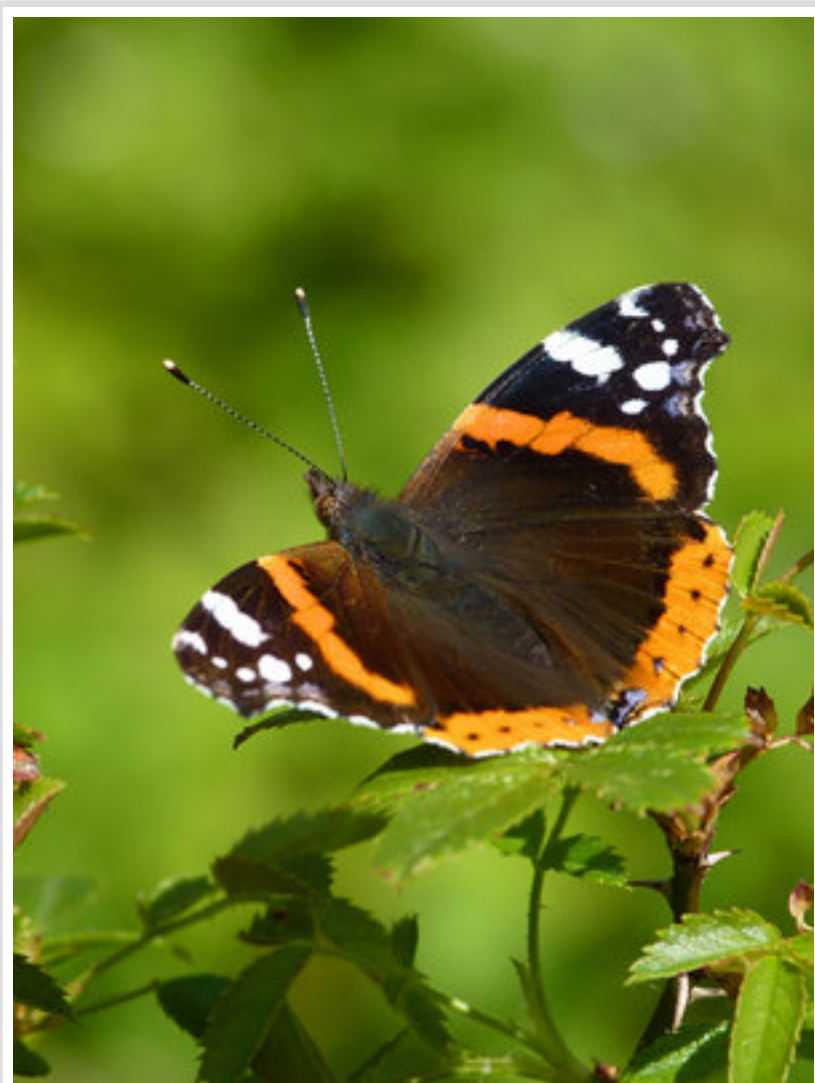
Yesterday (25th May) I visited my favourite stretch of downland between Amberley and Storrington. It soon became evident that spring is all-but-done and only the last, faded Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, Brown Argus and Green Hairstreak were left on guard. The 'new kid on the block' was undoubtedly the Large Skipper, with 5 freshly emerged males shooting around the meadow like orange Exocets. I later found half a dozen more further along the escarpment.

What surprised me most was a newly-emerged female Duke of Burgundy, still drying her wings. I fear she has arrived too late to the party, and will live

out her life as a virgin queen. There are still tattered and torn remnants on some well-populated Duke sites, but here the leks have been empty for some while now.

The sheltered hollow in which I found her was later occupied by a large roost (50+) of Small Blue; a species which is having its best season for many years here – possibly its best ever. Earlier in the month I had seen a male Duke in the hollows and, on two occasions, egg-laying females. These events are particularly gratifying only three years ago these hollows were filled with impenetrable scrub. South Downs Joint Committee volunteers and Hulme Snr. spent a couple of cold, winter Fridays transforming them into what is now one of the very best parts of the site.

Further along the Downs it was a similar story – faded spring butterflies on the wane. But here there were half a dozen Red Admirals at play. I tucked myself into a warm, sheltered embayment between young ash trees on a steep slope and after 15 minutes had become part of a male Admiral's fiercely defended territory. Eventually he started to use my shoulder or head as a perch from which to launch attacks on anything that moved. When he alighted on either the bramble or hawthorn within arm's reach, a nice photographic composition was easy to achieve.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 28-May-11 02:46 AM GMT

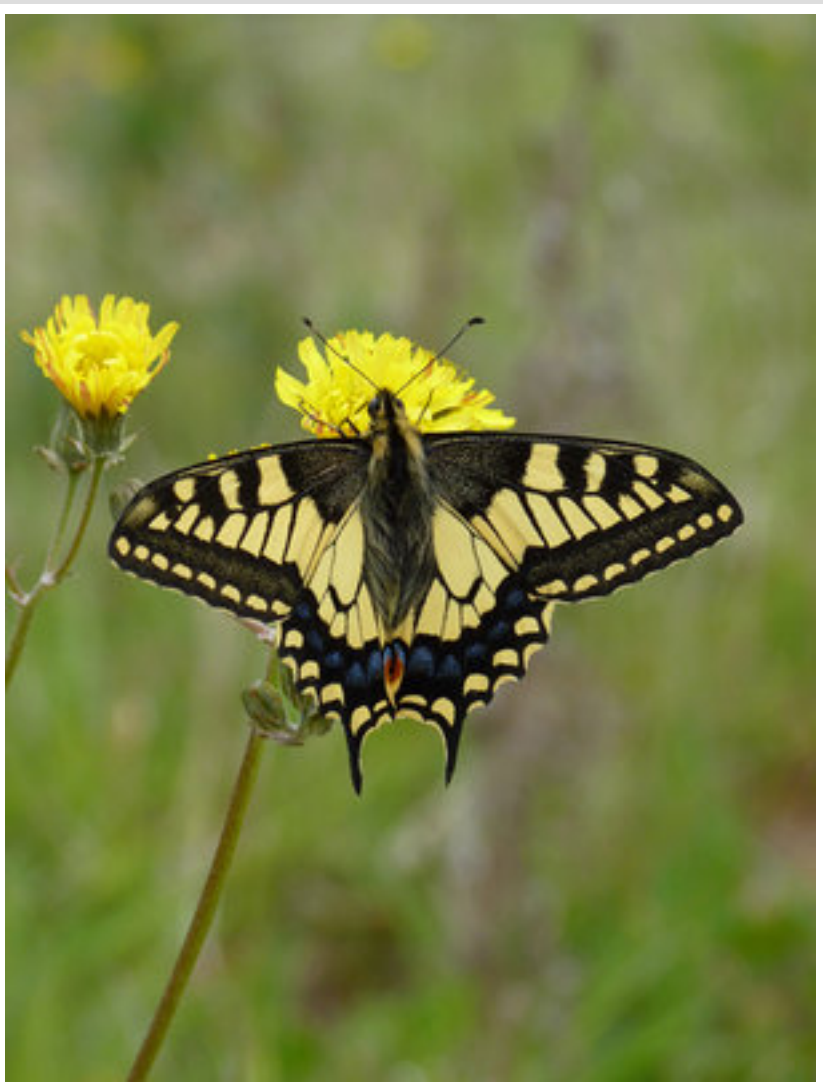
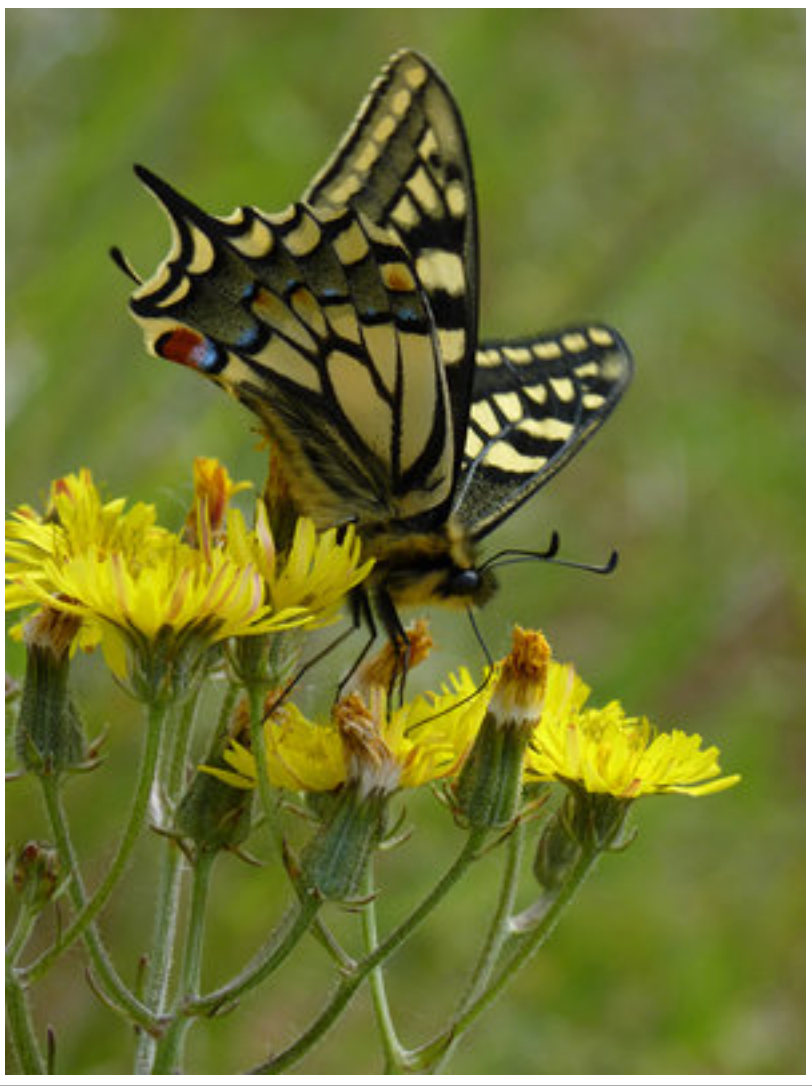
Swallowtails

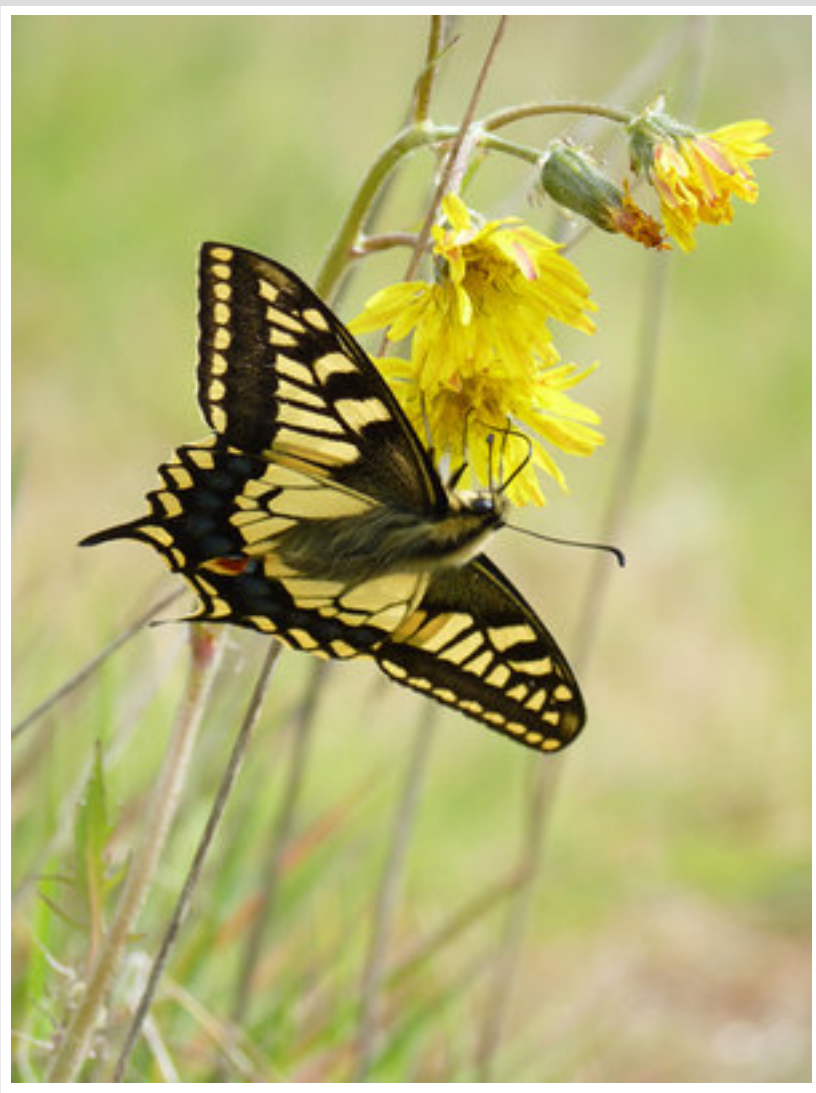
I've finally managed to sift through the several hundred Swallowtail images I took at Strumpshaw Fen, while on holiday for a couple of days with my parents (17th & 18th May). High winds and the butterfly's habit of almost constantly beating its wings to maintain position while nectaring, means that they are usually quite tricky to photograph – and so it proved. But if you take enough shots eventually you get lucky.

We found the most productive area was past the doctor's garden, on the sloping wasteland about 100m beyond. Between 11am and 2pm the Swallowtails come off the fen and nectar on the profuse Rough Hawk's-beard here. The flowers of this yellow 'weed' close up by 2pm and the butterflies soon begin to drift off. As this huge re-fuelling station closed up for the day most would move on to the doctor's flower beds. We watched several females take on nectar for well over an hour before suddenly heading off for an afternoon of egg-laying back in the fen. The Swallowtails are also partial to the Ragged Robin growing in the water-meadows on the other side of the reserve.

Other species included common Green-veined White, a straggler Orange Tip and about half a dozen Brown Argus. A couple of Marsh Harriers put on a spectacular show for us, to the soundtrack of cuckoos and booming bitterns. The long journeys there and back were well worth the effort.





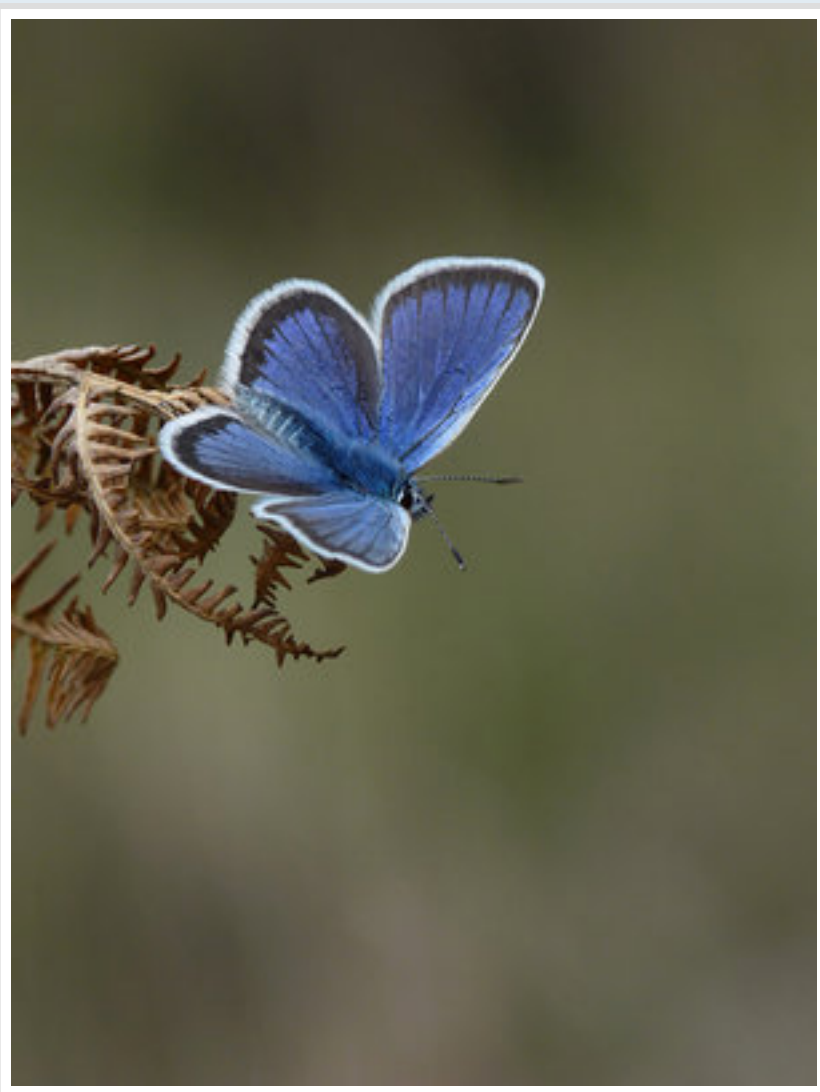
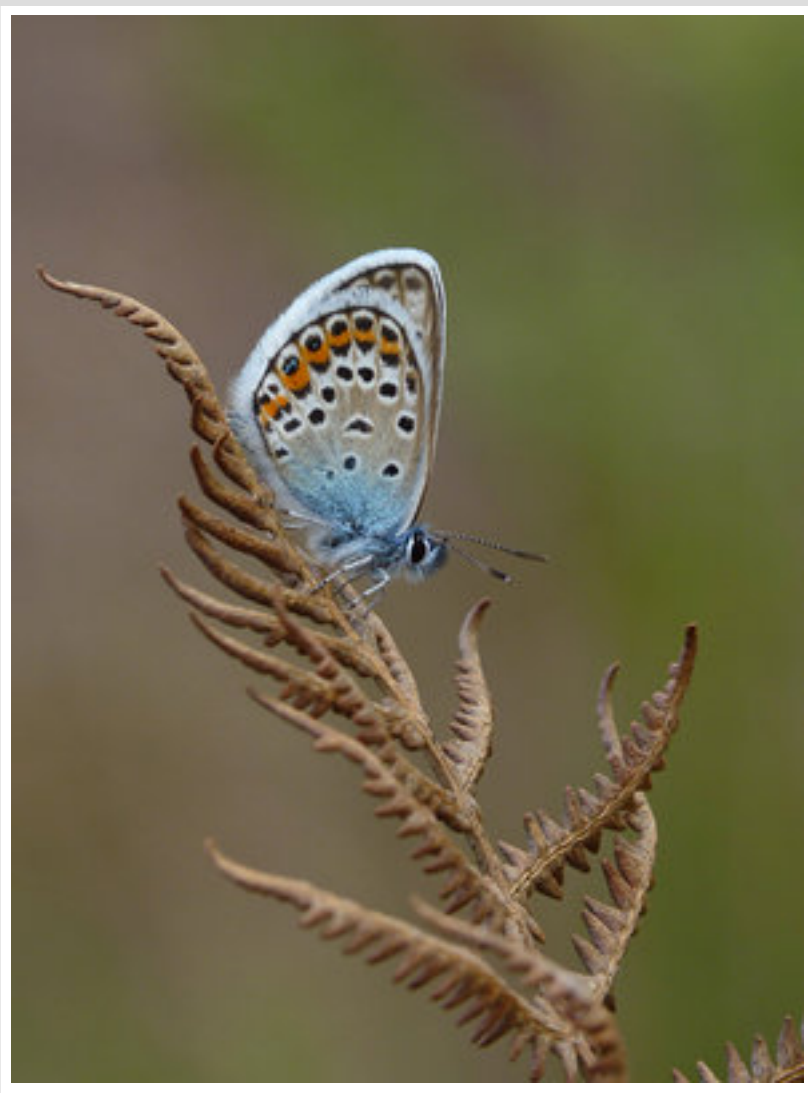


Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-11 03:01 AM GMT

Silver-studded Blues

After being 'grounded' for a few days I was beginning to get restless this morning (29th May), so headed out despite the high winds, grey skies and low temperature. I knew that nothing would be on the wing but was confident of finding a few Silver-studded Blues hunkered down at Iping Common near Midhurst. They have only just started to emerge here, so finding them took the best part of an hour. Eventually I located half a dozen and during a five minute spell when the cloud thinned and the temperature rose a little, one of them opened his wings for me.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 30-May-11 04:21 AM GMT

Beautiful 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-11 07:02 PM GMT

Thanks Susie. I'm still waiting to find one with an entourage of ants though.
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-Jun-11 09:43 PM GMT

Summer Starts At Cissbury

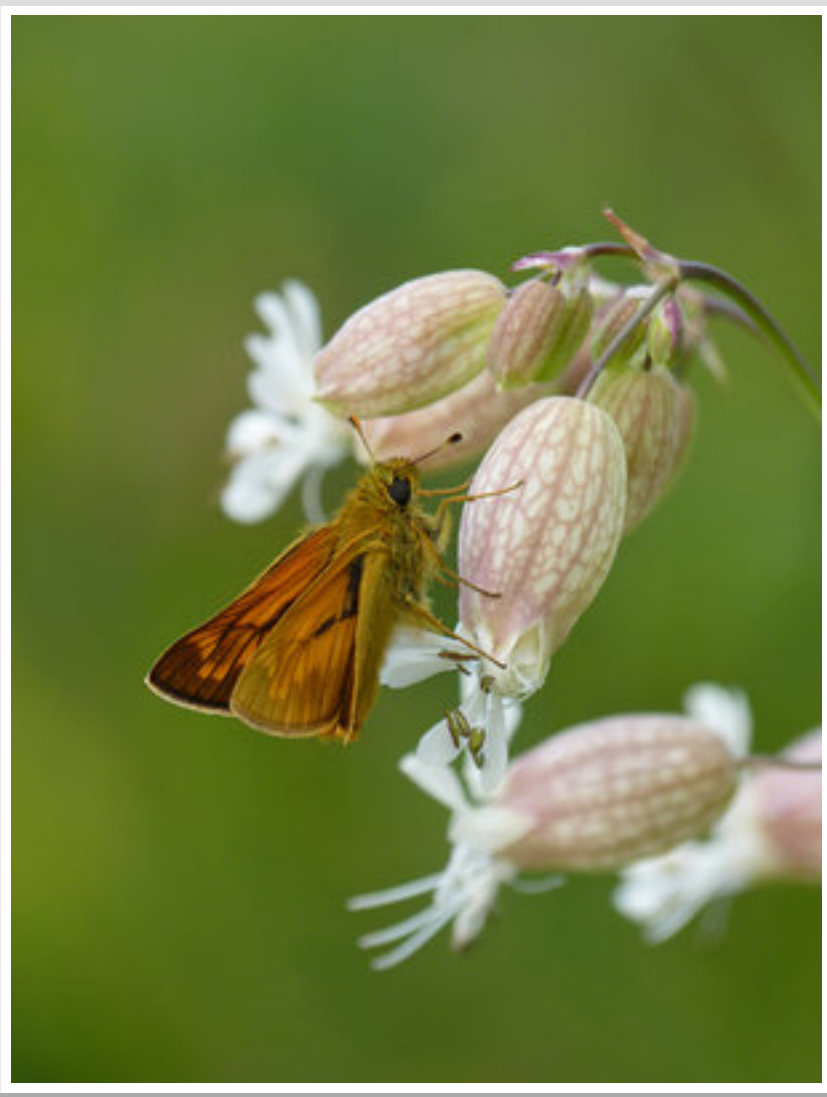
Yesterday (1st June) was the start of my own personal summer, but not because it coincidentally fell on a date conveniently chosen to divide up our year into seasons. In fact I don't remember seeing my first Meadow Brown of the year on the first day of June before. But to me Meadow Browns are the quintessential butterfly of summer. I was pleased to see 16 of them, signalling a strong emergence, which is a much better start for the species than it demonstrated last year, which proved to be a very poor season for the butterfly. Even the countryside around Cissbury Ring was taking on a summery hue and there's now a much louder choir of hoppers and crickets.



Some spring species were still clinging on here and my tally included Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper (including a freshly-emerged female, 54 days after my first 2011 sighting!), Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Small Blue, Adonis Blue, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Small Copper, Small Heath, Wall, Speckled Wood, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Brimstone, Large White, Green-veined White and Large Skipper. 20 species in a day isn't bad for this time of year!

It was the numerous, fresh Large Skippers that I was interested in photographing (and Meadow Browns – but I failed, so won't mention this). So I was very pleased to get this lucky shot of a Skipper doing a spectacular tongue-curl.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Jun-11 04:41 AM GMT

Collard Hill (Part 1)

On Friday (3rd June) I set off on the long journey down to Collard Hill. "You must be mad" said Hannah when I told her I was setting the alarm for 6.00 am. But like a kid at Christmas I was awake and off by 3.30 am.

By 10.30 am I had thoroughly covered the site and was convinced that there were only 4 or 5 specimens on the wing. By the end of the day there were at least 15. Virgin females were coupled very quickly (2 pairings seen) and other newly emerged butterflies were easy to spot by their weak, slow and 'floppy' flight, reminiscent of a dithering Wood White. Other newbies could be distinguished by the colouration at the base of their wings (underside), which is a damp-looking leaden grey for the first few hours after emergence, turning that beautiful powder blue as they dry off. As always there was considerable size variation, and I saw one dwarf specimen. When Matthew (Oates) turned up he came to the same conclusion about one specimen that I had earlier; it didn't sit and open its wings for us, but it appeared to be a very sparsely marked aberrant form.

During the late afternoon I spent well over an hour tailing a female Large Blue, as I was interested in finding out more about their behaviour while egg-laying. I must have burned off a pile of calories as I repeatedly followed her from top to base of the slope and back again. I'll save that stuff (and the best photos) for Part 2.

Other interest was provided by my first Marbled White of the year and a lovely fresh Small Tortoiseshell, while the short turf was positively crawling with tiny brown moths (*Pyrausta despicata*). It was one of those flawless days when the sun shone until it was time to reluctantly leave the hillside at 8.00 pm.

Collard is one of those venues where butterflying is a social event, so it was nice to meet and spend time chatting to Bill (UKB's Willow) and George Cox (whose missus generously supplied me with lunch!) among others.

After staying the night in Street I was back on the slopes before 7.00 am. It isn't often that you meet fellow enthusiasts on site at this hour, but it wasn't long before Paul Kipling and son Andrew came wandering over the brow of the hill! We spent a very productive morning searching out more lovely Large Blues before being joined by Rogerdodge and Rose. It was only an hour or so before Roger had nailed a mating pair (🤪) and an upperside, and I think Paul managed topside shots of three! Eventually patience paid off and I finally got an open wing shot myself at 4.00 pm on Day 2. From what I saw, the emergence was considerably smaller on the Saturday, with perhaps another 5 'new' insects being added to the total.

I met plenty of other good folk over the two days and even managed to find a 'last minute' Large Blue for BC Sussex stalwart Alan, who appeared from behind a bush towards the end of the day. As always it was a pleasure to spend time with the excellent NT wardens; this year Christine and Roger Smith (part of the Collard furniture). And as ever it was a pleasure just being on Collard Hill with those fantastic butterflies and that very special view from the top.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Willow, 06-Jun-11 05:09 AM GMT

Smashing Collard Hill write up Neil, I thoroughly enjoyed the time spent in your company, it was so nice to meet George and his wife too, and also spend a little time chatting to Matthew again. I'm so pleased you managed that hard earned open wing shot on Saturday, I just knew your patience would pay off 😊 Some really tremendous side view images, and now you've whetted my appetite for Collard Hill Part 2...!!!

Bill 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-11 07:37 PM GMT

Some excellent shots 🍷! I wish I'd gone for them this year now!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by George, 08-Jun-11 05:08 AM GMT

Great write up Neil – both myself and Tamsin thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent with you and the others and it is fantastic to know that other people share the same passion for butterflies (and wildlife in general probably). We look forward to seeing some of you again at various sites – Purple Emperor next probably! You had a very long day on Friday and I see persistence paid off when you got that open wing shot!

Great pics by the way!

All the best
George & Tamsin

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-11 08:27 AM GMT

Collard Hill (Part 2)

After taking a siesta for several hours the Large Blues became more active again in the late afternoon of last Friday (3rd June), as is often the case in very warm weather. I followed a female butterfly for 1 hour 20 minutes starting at 16.30 hrs, to find out a little more about their egg-laying habits.

During this period she covered about 75% of the Eastern Glade bank, travelling from top to base of the slope on numerous occasions. She took just three breaks from otherwise constantly testing each thyme inflorescence she came across, or actually laying an egg deep within a suitable flowerhead. There was far more testing than actual laying going on and although it was impossible to always confirm oviposition (difficult when trying to keep on her tail), she probably deposited an egg in fewer than 25% of extended tests. I soon got a good idea of how long a period her abdomen needed to be motionless within the flowerhead to indicate a successful lay, but I could only actually see the ovum when she was perched at a convenient angle or I had time for a rapid search; there is much rotating and fidgeting to be done before a suitable slot is found. She laid approximately seventeen eggs.

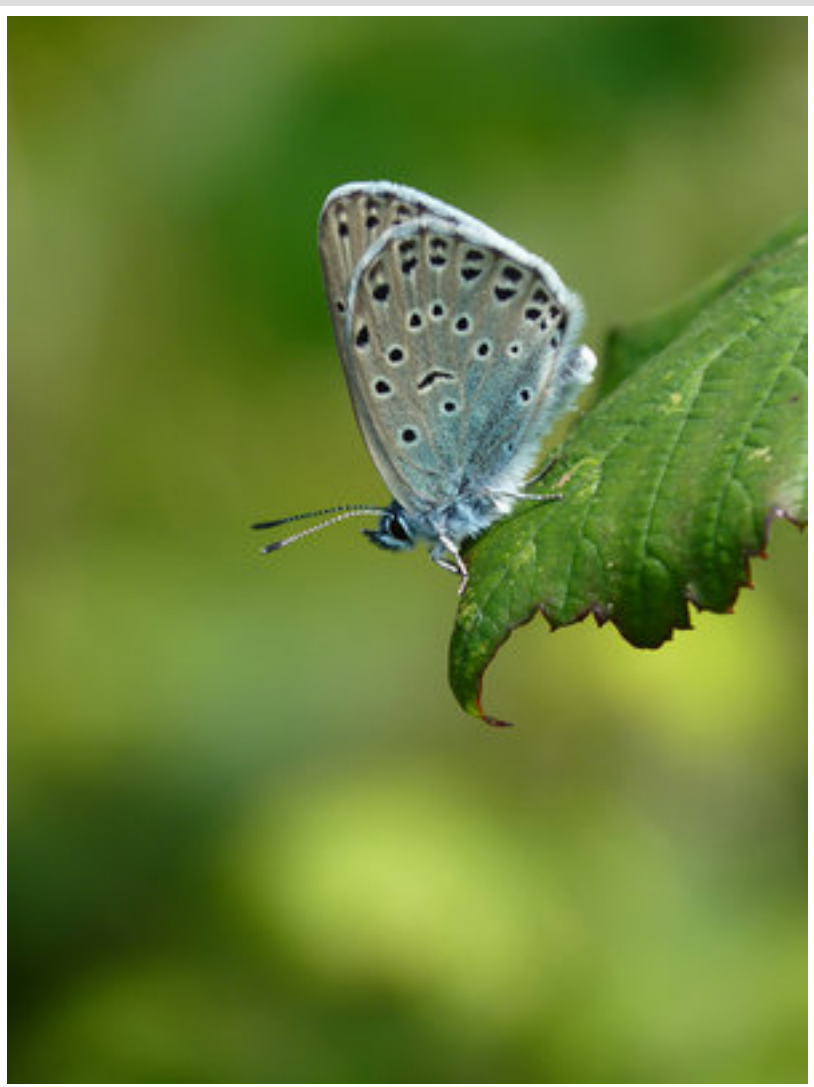
She only laid eggs singly during each visit to a particular plant, but on at least two occasions she returned to the same plant and laid a second egg. Larval cannibalism in the first instar is well documented, as is the limited capacity of single plants and ant nests. So I suspect that at this very early stage in the flight season, the available quantity of flowering thyme was below that necessary to serve even a relatively low number of females. There was certainly much less flowering than I've seen during previous visits. Hopefully the recent rains will have brought a lot more into condition.

Two of the rest periods she took were brief, amounting to less than 5 minutes hung up below a broad herb leaf in the middle of the open grassland. However, she took an extended break of more than 15 minutes soon after 17.00 hrs, retiring to the blackthorn scrub at the top of the slope, where I watched her sit motionless on the other side of the fence through binoculars.

It was when she resumed business, fluttering slowly back through the wire, that I was presented with an unexpected and welcome opportunity. Usually the act of oviposition occurs on thyme flowers sitting amongst taller grass stems, making photography of the act quite difficult. But on this occasion she alighted on a thyme bud within short, threadbare turf on a localised hump in the slope. I only had time to fire off two frames, but luckily I kept a steady hand and made the most of an opportunity that I'd be lucky to ever get again.



Female Ovipositing



Male Taking Siesta

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Vince Massimo, 10-Jun-11 09:41 AM GMT

Lovely photos and great stamina, Neil. I can't recall seeing a better image of an egg-laying female Large Blue 🦋.

Cheers,
Vince

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 10-Jun-11 01:49 PM GMT

Neil.

I've said this before. You are the *F.W.Frohawk* of the 21st Century. When you find it less easy to be able to charge up and down hills and make such detailed observations, you will have time to write and illustrate what I really do believe could be this century's equivalent of the *Natural History of British Butterflies (1924)*

So you've got eleven years to get your tome written for publication in 2024 exactly one hundred years after that earlier great work. I aim to still be around then (I will be 85!) and look forward to a signed copy.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Willow, 10-Jun-11 08:31 PM GMT

As you know, I sat on the hillside above watching you run up and down in the heat (which was in the mid 70's) and your quest for new information about the Large Blue left me full of admiration, if you go to such lengths for every species you invest time in (which I'm sure you do) then Jack may have a most valid point about you writing that book, and I think it only fair that I too have a signed copy for my dutiful effort in pointing out where your lady was when you got a bit too knackered to keep up with her 😊

Another fine photo article Neil, your steady hand on that Panasonic has done you proud again, two truly lovely **Large Blue** portraits (to grace the pages of that book 😊) Thanks for sharing with us. Weather permitting I hope to get back to Collard Hill in the next week or so, can only dream of another days weather like the one we had last friday though...but you never know!

Bill 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 10-Jun-11 09:43 PM GMT

Neil deserves far more regard for his efforts than he receives at the moment. I hope one day his name will be spoken of in the same tones as Heslop. TBh I think he deserves an OBE for his services to conservation and widening the public's knowledge and appreciation of butterflies. You only have to look at how the Sussex BC membership has swelled over the last few years to see the enthusiasm he helps generate.

I want a copy of that book too.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Paul Wetton, 10-Jun-11 10:11 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Excellent report and photos. Very enjoyable to read.

I know those slopes only too well after running up and down them last year with all my video gear.

Great stuff.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 11-Jun-11 03:02 AM GMT

I agree with the sentiments being expressed here. It's a real shame that we don't have the same focus on behaviour and other observations (as expressed by Neil) on the forums as we do on photography. I personally find (along with some others) that taking a deeper interest is much more enjoyable 😊

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

When you find it less easy to be able to charge up and down hills and make such detailed observations, you will have time to write and illustrate what I really do believe could be this century's equivalent of the *Natural History of British Butterflies (1924)*

I think that Thomas and Lewington have done a pretty good job this century 😊 No pressure, Neil 😊

And I'll have a think about how such observations (with full credit) can be added to the main species pages, since I think they would make nice additions

(and also save people time in trying to find such gems of information).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jun-11 04:44 AM GMT

Many thanks for the kind and very generous comments made above – typical of the UKB community 😊. There will indeed be a book, but I certainly wouldn't attempt a re-run of e.g. Thomas & Lewington! It will lack any systematics and will be neither an identification reference nor a site guide – these are well catered for. It will simply be a celebration of our butterflies.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by John W, 16-Jun-11 05:00 AM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

There will indeed be a book, but I certainly wouldn't attempt a re-run of e.g. Thomas & Lewington! It will lack any systematics and will be neither an identification reference nor a site guide – these are well catered for. It will simply be a celebration of our butterflies.

Neil

I think that's the right approach Neil. You have such detailed knowledge of butterflies in the field, and I'm sure you have plenty of stories to tell. I'm looking forward to it already!

Cheers

John

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jun-11 06:43 AM GMT

Big Day For BC Sussex

On Saturday (11th June) I joined many BC staff, Council, Branch Committee, BC volunteers and a few guests to officially open the new Rowland Wood Reserve. I felt more than a little proud to represent the people who have worked so hard to keep the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary from extinction in the SE, by looking after the species so well for so many years on the tiny Park Corner Heath Reserve next door; and proud to represent those behind all the hard work that went into securing this wonderful asset, and then whipping it into such good shape so quickly. I was surrounded by people I have a great deal of admiration for.



Sgt. Blencowe Waxes Lyrical About Rowland Wood

The dodgy weather that persisted until very near the end of the day was simply incapable of putting a damper on things. One of the groups that toured the reserve during the afternoon came across an emerging Silver-washed Fritillary, and a Dark Green Fritillary had been seen the day before. But most visitors will probably come for the Small Pearl-bordered and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, or the ab. *taras* Grizzled Skippers. It will take a few years to really fulfill its potential, but as I've said before, Rowland Wood will become seriously good very quickly.

I asked for the second coach departure to be delayed to allow time for a final walk around Rowland and Park Corner Heath as the sunshine eventually broke through the cloud, hoping to give at least some visitors a view of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. As we passed some immature Puss Moth caterpillars discovered earlier in the day, we found our target. The three or four male SPBF circuiting the reserve were pretty worn and well past their best. But, with only minutes left on the clock, one participant found a beautiful, freshly emerged female. A great finish to a great day.



Puss Moth Caterpillar



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Female)

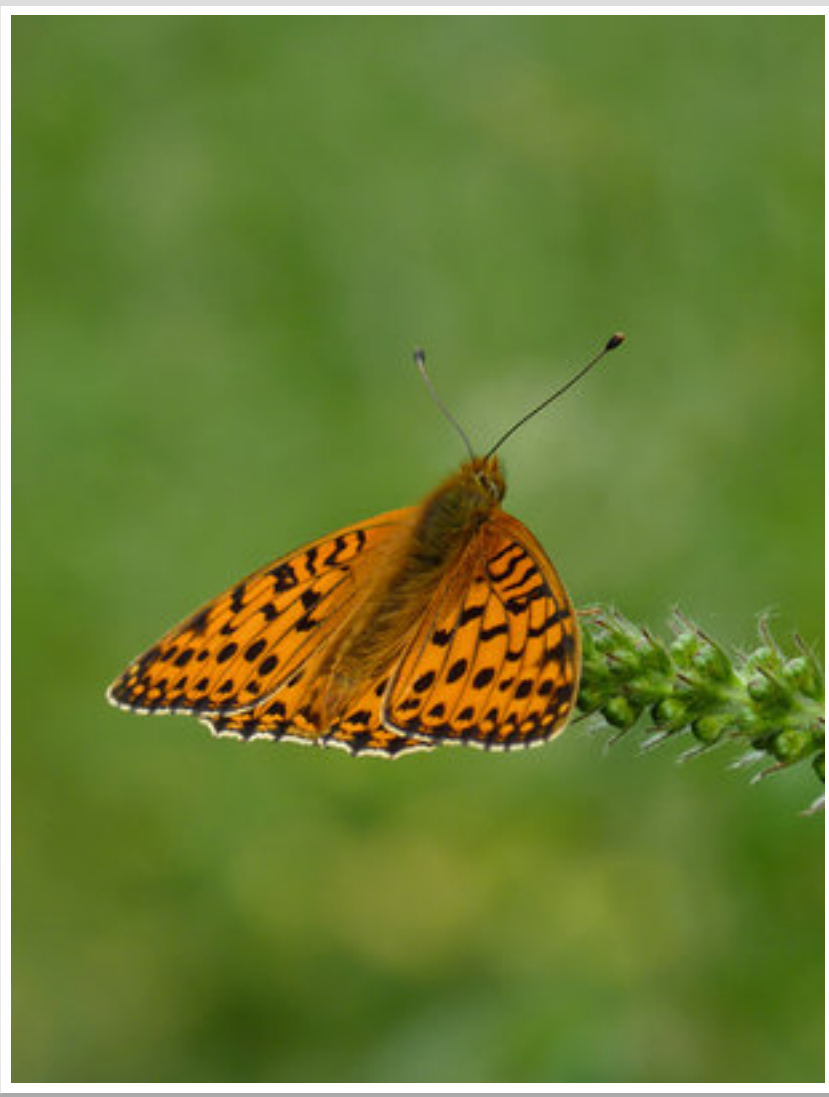
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jun-11 06:56 AM GMT

Dark Green Fritillaries

Dark Green Fritillary numbers are now building nicely at both Friston Forest and Cissbury Ring, which are probably the best sites in East and West Sussex respectively. Below are a couple of shots taken last week at Friston.





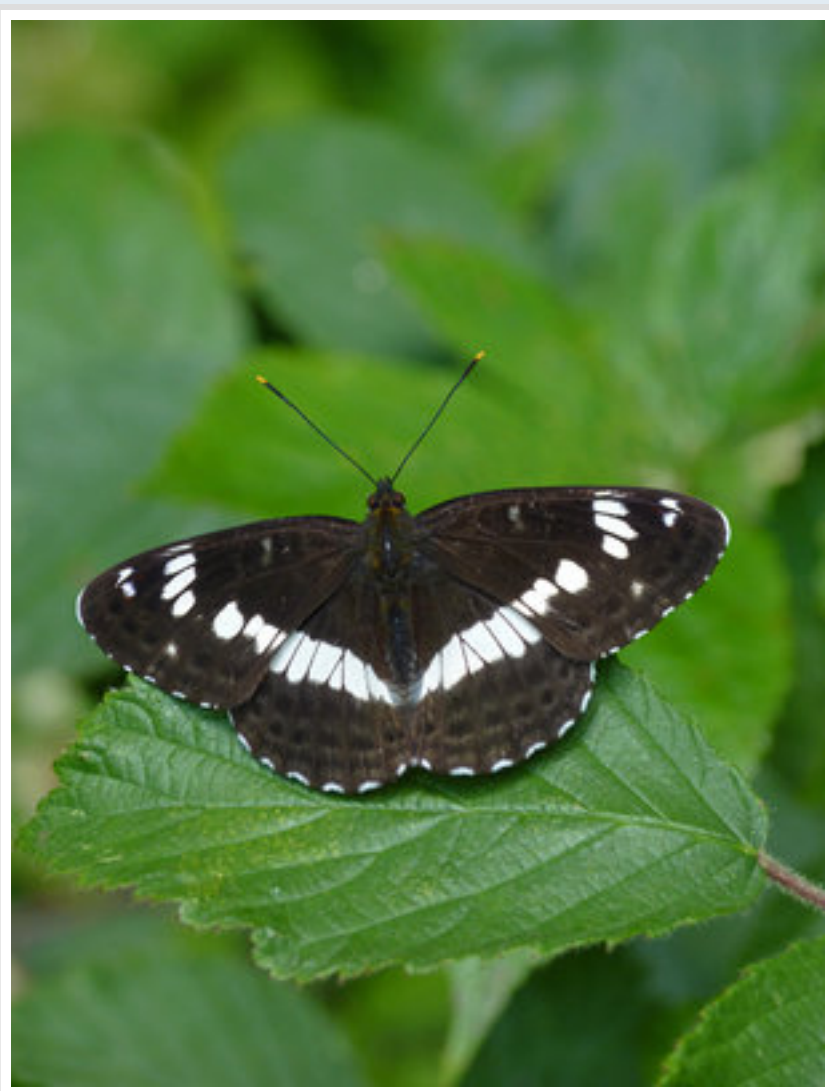
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jun-11 06:54 PM GMT

Southwater Woods

On Tuesday (14th June) I went to Southwater Woods with my father, meeting several other enthusiasts throughout the day. The woods are in that state of high anticipation for the summer woodland species which thrive here. Thinning of the understory by the Dragons Estate over the last two winters will only serve to further increase their numbers. Our list included White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Comma, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Common Blue, Green-veined White, Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown. White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary numbers are still in the 'early build' stage, comprising just male butterflies (just one female SWF seen). Although isolated reports of very early Purple Emperor have come from elsewhere, Southwater still feels to be a few days short of the start of the Silly Season. I didn't sense His presence.

The Small Skippers (9) had clearly emerged that morning and were still very unsteady on the wing. Also fresh out were the first of the second brood Green-veined White and a large number of *hutchinsoni* Comma. But I was most pleased to see the tremendous numbers of Meadow Brown (100+), which has made a spectacular come-back after two poor years.





White Admiral Male



Small Skipper Male



Meadow Brown Male



Large Kippers Mating



Crookhorn Lane, Madgeland Wood, Southwater

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Michaeljf, 16-Jun-11 09:07 PM GMT

Kipper,
all lovely shots – especially of the very new White Admiral – and the Meadow Brown is (surprisingly) beautiful in his new emergence.

I like the inclusion of the landscape shot, of course 😊

Michael

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 16-Jun-11 10:02 PM GMT

Oi, Neil, don't make Southwater look too attractive or everyone will want to do there! 😄

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 16-Jun-11 10:11 PM GMT

...don't make Southwater look too attractive...

I still kick myself. For five years in the late 70s/early 80's I lived about 7 miles from these lovely woods (I could have easily cycled there) yet I never knew about the woods. I used to travel miles to see the woodland goodies.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 17-Jun-11 05:08 AM GMT

I reckon there are an awful lot of sites around here which are equally as good as Southwater, it is just a case of someone being there at the right time. I hope to find some new sites this year for Purple Emperor, even if it is only High Wood.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jun-11 07:49 PM GMT

Hi Susie,
You are right. It's not too difficult to see the beast when you *know* where to seek HIM, so most enthusiasts congregate at known locations year after year for their fix. It *is* hard to forsake guaranteed time with the Emperor to go searching terra nova during that all-too-short magical period of summer; and to make matters worse the butterfly remains sufficiently aloof and elusive to occur undetected in many woods for several decades. These factors conspire to make the species seriously under-recorded. Every wood with sufficient broad-leaved sallow within a 30 mile radius of your home will have them. I'm confident you will find some 'new' ones.
Just to get the juices flowing, here's one I prepared earlier. See you in a Sussex woodland soon!
Neil



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Frying Pan, 18-Jun-11 11:46 PM GMT

Hey Kipper,

I have to agree the image of the White Admiral is quite exceptional. Have you seen any Purple Hairstreaks yet?

FP

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-Jun-11 03:27 AM GMT

Thanks Frying Pan – and welcome to the site. 😊

I saw a freshly emerged Purple Hairstreak (male) at Southwater Woods this morning, on the main W-E ride through Madgeland.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 21-Jun-11 01:38 AM GMT

Summer Soaking

I've seldom been wetter than I was on Saturday (18th June), but after getting thoroughly soaked time after time I finally went home happy, with some nice shots won through stubborn perseverance. I had started early on Cissbury Ring, looking for Dark Green Fritillary, but wave after wave of driving rain finally saw me retreating to the car. Blue sky was always visible on the horizon but the strong WSW wind was just pushing a conveyor-belt of cloud over my head.

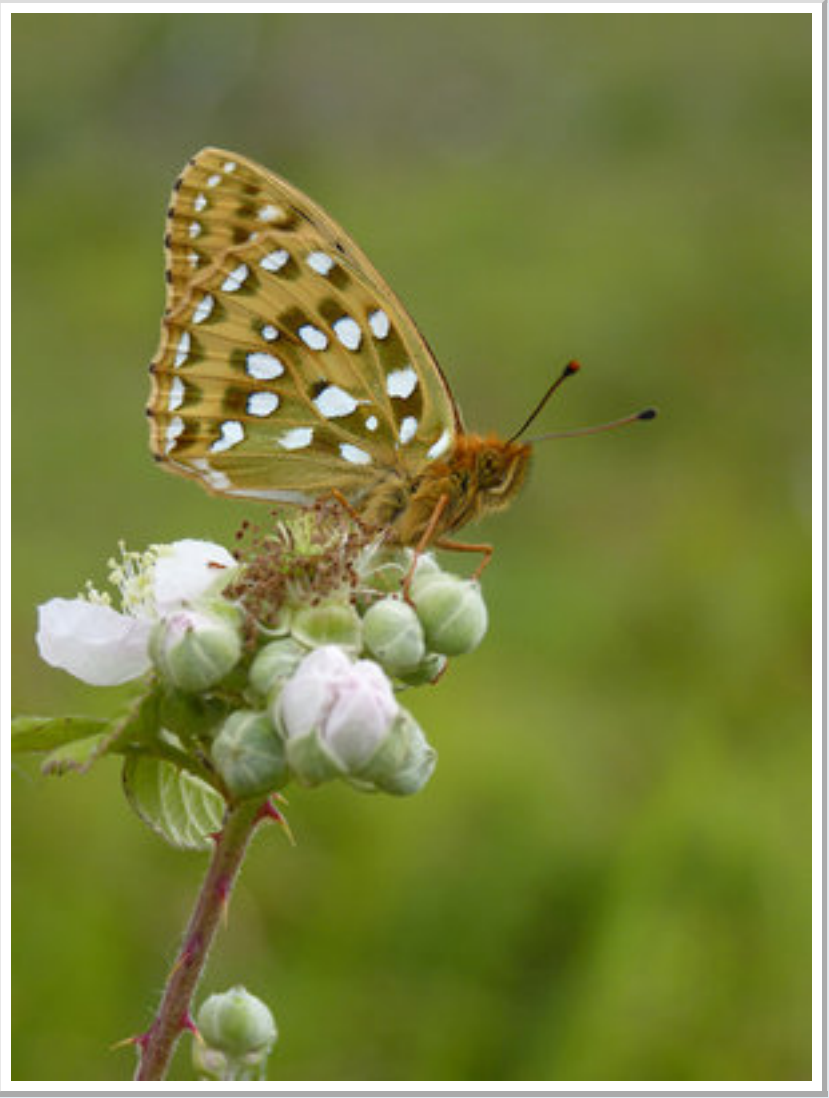
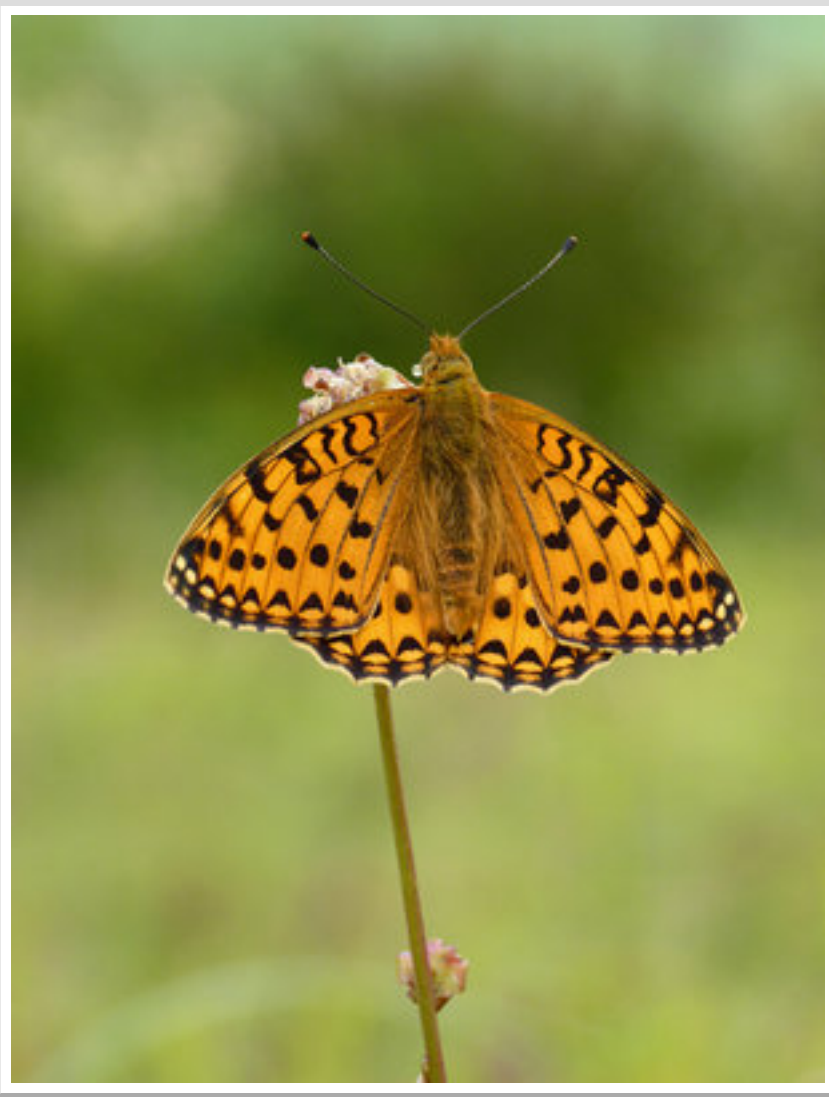


I decided to try Southwater Woods, in the hope of finding a few Silver-washed Fritillary and White Admiral, or even a Purple Emperor. Sunny spells amounted to no more than five minutes between the lengthy periods of grey cloud cover, and the occasional shower to ensure I couldn't dry off. I managed to get a few shots of the male SWF which would occasionally drop down from the canopy. When it appeared that all prospects of sunshine had disappeared I headed for home, but after driving a couple of miles a huge area of clear blue sky appeared. By the time I had performed a U-turn and was back in the woods it had miraculously disappeared.... and I got a thorough soaking.



As I headed back towards Worthing the weather looked decidedly more promising over Cissbury. As I approached 'the ring' I was pleased to see 3 or 4 mint-fresh Dark Green Fritillaries swooping around the meadow. Then the heavens opened and torrential rain had them, and me, seeking shelter in the grass and low scrub. With such an inadequate refuge I just lay there and made like an amphibian. Had anyone seen me through the stair-rods, lying in the grass, dripping wet and laughing, they might justifiably have doubted my sanity.

Then the rain stopped as suddenly as it had started. Even this late in the afternoon the sunshine brought a comforting warmth and gradually, one-by-one, the fritillaries opened their wings and obligingly posed for me as they dried their wings off. After seven hours it felt like I'd finally beaten the weather.



by ChrisC, 21-Jun-11 03:38 AM GMT

lovely contrast in the last 2 Neil. lovely.
Chris

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Ian Pratt, 21-Jun-11 04:54 AM GMT

Great photos generally Neil- not sure why I bother taking any when yours are so clear and descriptive. Great stuff! 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by John W, 21-Jun-11 06:33 AM GMT

Yes fantastic photos! I have the same camera but alas not the same results 😞

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 21-Jun-11 07:16 AM GMT

"John W" wrote:

Yes fantastic photos! I have the same camera but alas not the same results 😞

Likewise!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 21-Jun-11 10:01 AM GMT

John W wrote:Yes fantastic photos! I have the same camera but alas not the same results 😞 Susie: Likewise!

How do the logistics work then? Three people with the same camera must require a lot of planning. Do you have a rota, or is it *ad hoc* who has the use of the camera at any particular time?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Frying Pan, 22-Jun-11 08:33 AM GMT

Hey Kipper,

you are correct, the DGF photo's are remarkable.

Frying Pan

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Willrow, 23-Jun-11 11:38 PM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

John W wrote:Yes fantastic photos! I have the same camera but alas not the same results 😞 Susie: Likewise!

How do the logistics work then? Three people with the same camera must require a lot of planning. Do you have a rota, or is it *ad hoc* who has the use of the camera at any particular time?

Jack

Very droll Jack...you simply could'nt resist!!! 😂

Bill 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Willow, 23-Jun-11 11:43 PM GMT

Great reportage and top notch images Neil. Glad you can still keep your sense of humour in this crazy 'summer' weather 😊

Bill 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 26-Jun-11 07:44 AM GMT

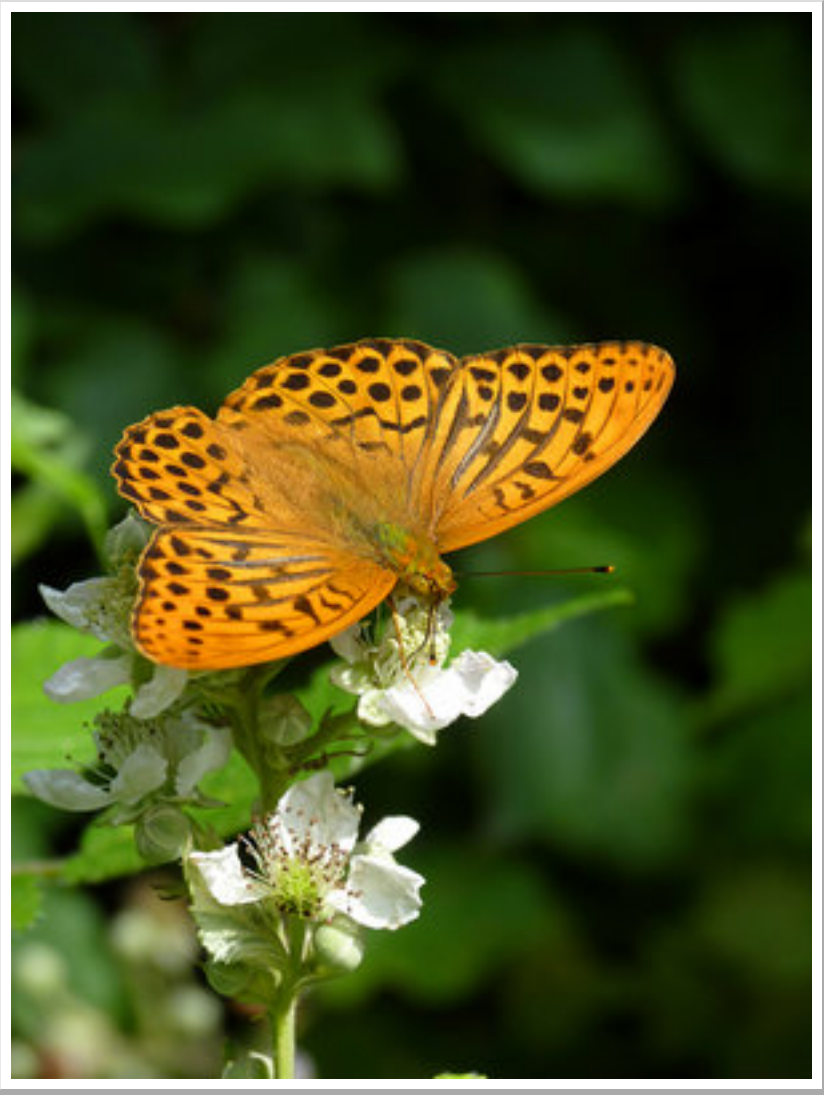
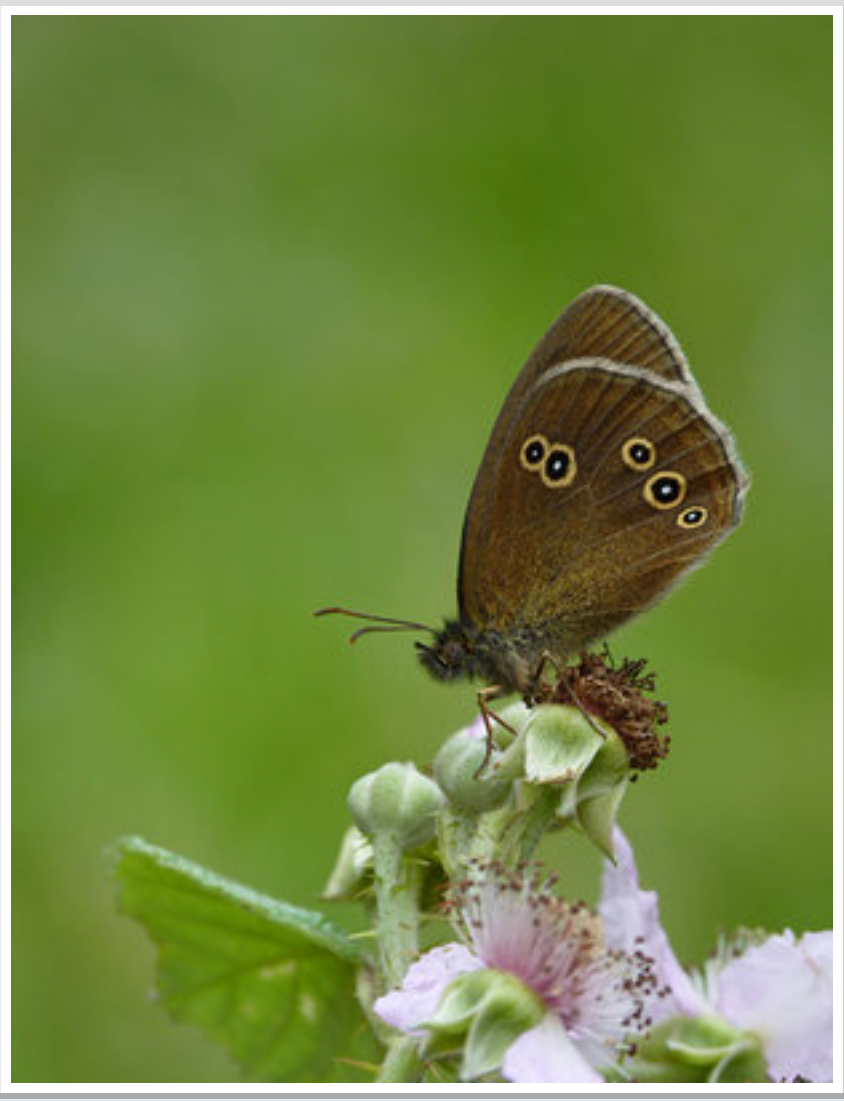
Slow Start For The Emperor

At 11.35 hrs on Thursday (23rd June) I saw my first Purple Emperor of the year. But the single male which made several unopposed circuits of the Madgeland Master Trees remains my only sighting to date. I hope that things pick up spectacularly, but I have a gut feeling that the 2010 mid July gales may have rendered this season very average.

There's little doubt that the cool June conditions have gone a long way towards re-setting the butterfly calendar, bringing it back to a more normal setting. The rapid change from highly accelerated to retarded development seems to have opened up a significant gap between the first appearance of early individuals and the main emergence in several species. White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries have been on the wing for some time now at Southwater, but their numbers currently remain low.

As the woodlands are yet to reach anywhere near their full potential I have spent many more hours than usual wandering through the spectacularly beautiful set-aside meadows in the area. On Friday I bumped into Susie, who's also 'in the know' about some of these hidden gems. Clouds of butterflies fly up from the flower-rich grasslands in numbers which remind me of my youth. Amongst the thousands of Meadow Browns are tens of Marbled Whites, and lesser numbers of Small Copper, Small Skipper, Small Tortoiseshell and Ringlet. The mighty oaks which border these forgotten fields are now home to good numbers of Purple Hairstreak, some of which can be intercepted before they climb into the canopy for the first time. On sunny early mornings or evenings it is hard to imagine a better place to be.







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jun-11 07:30 AM GMT

BC Walk

Twenty five BC members turned up for my Southwater Woods walk on Sunday (26th June), with the sunshine finally breaking through the early mist by midday. I had arrived much earlier than the 10.30 hrs start, in order to photograph some of the grassland species before they woke up.



Species seen included White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary, Ringlet, Marbled White, Purple Hairstreak, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Holly Blue (second brood), Small Tortoiseshell, Small Copper, Green-veined White, Red Admiral, Comma, Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown. But the stars of the show were the three Purple Emperors, two of which were engaging in spectacular aerial battles over the car park.

The numbers of woodland species for which Southwater is so famous remain low, but a walk across the beautiful set-aside meadows more than made up for this shortfall. "Thanks" to Sherie New for the image below.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Jun-11 01:25 AM GMT

Botany Bay Emperors

Yesterday (28th June) I was joined by Matthew Oates in a raid on Botany Bay. But rather than a shed-full of grounded Emperors, ideal conditions brought only 3 males out to play, despite much looking. We are both getting rather concerned that we have a relatively poor *iris* season to contend with. At least those magnificent beasts which did show up performed well, with repeated returns to the forest floor, finger-sitting and prolonged periods of tongue-wiping (on the leaves of low foliage) to remove silt particles from the proboscis after 'salting'.



by P.J.Underwood, 29-Jun-11 02:15 AM GMT

I have often wondered how the Sussex Kipper gets such good photographs. It is obviously all about field craft and having a supple body. Most of us wouldn't be able to get up after these contortions. Here are two examples of the efforts required to get these photo's.
P.J.U.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 29-Jun-11 03:16 AM GMT

Legend.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Colin Knight, 29-Jun-11 05:38 PM GMT

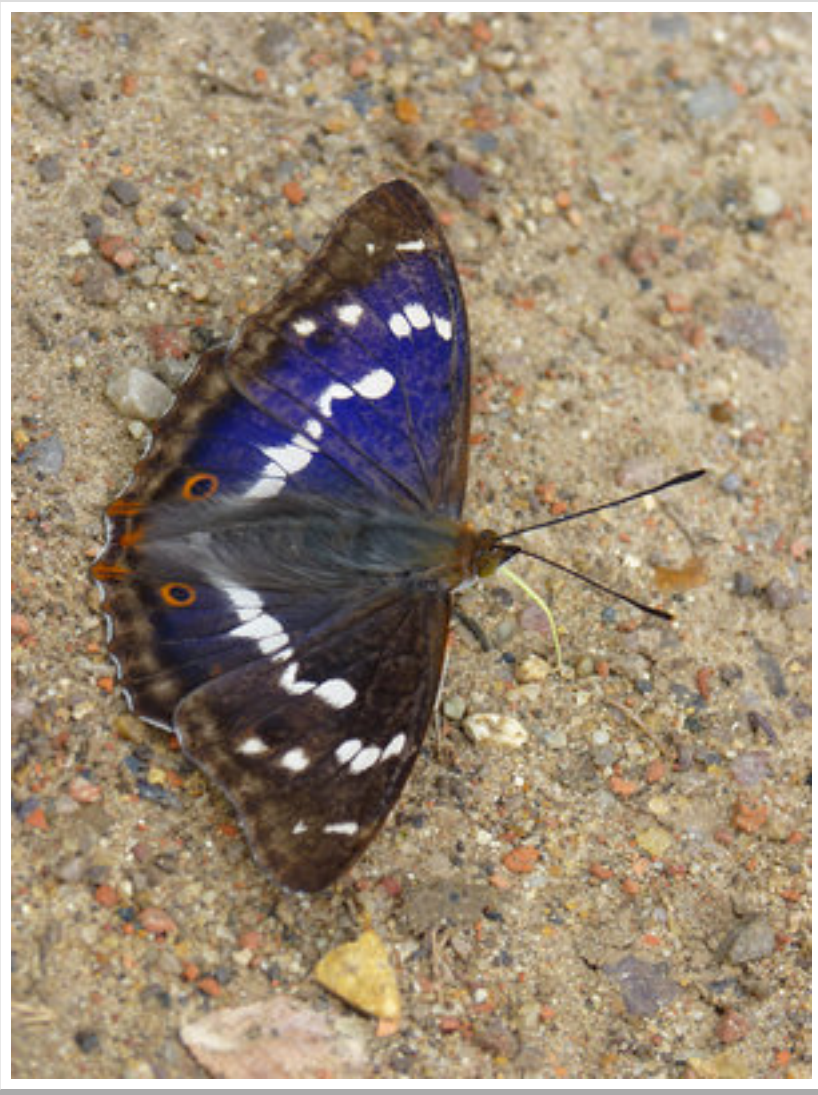
cracking Emperor shots as usual Neil, the dew covered Marbled White is exceptional.
Colin

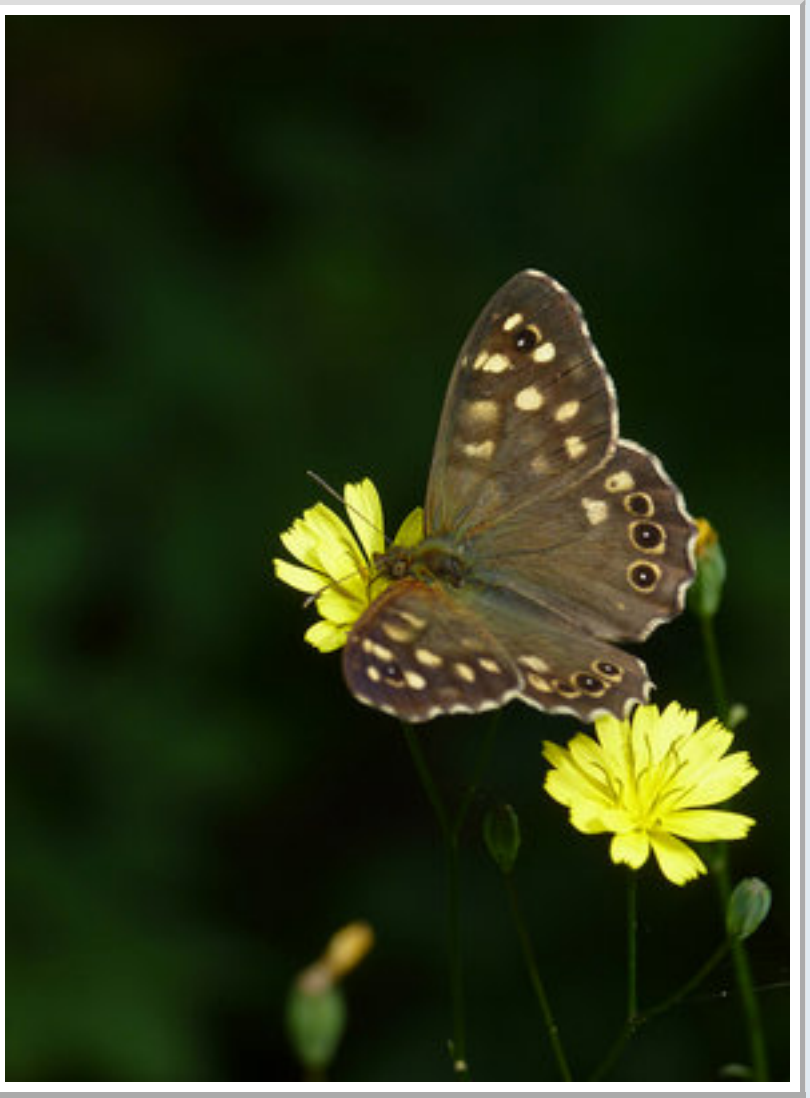
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 01-Jul-11 04:02 PM GMT

In Search Of New Emperor Woods

On Tuesday (28th June) I joined forces with Matthew Oates in a hunt for new Sussex Purple Emperor sites – new for us that is! In a quiet wood near Billingshurst we saw 3 male Emperors, one of which came down to my bait, and then my finger. We may have seen more, but a fierce lightening storm brought a premature end to proceedings. A recently-emerged Speckled Wood patrolled the ride as we waited for HIM.



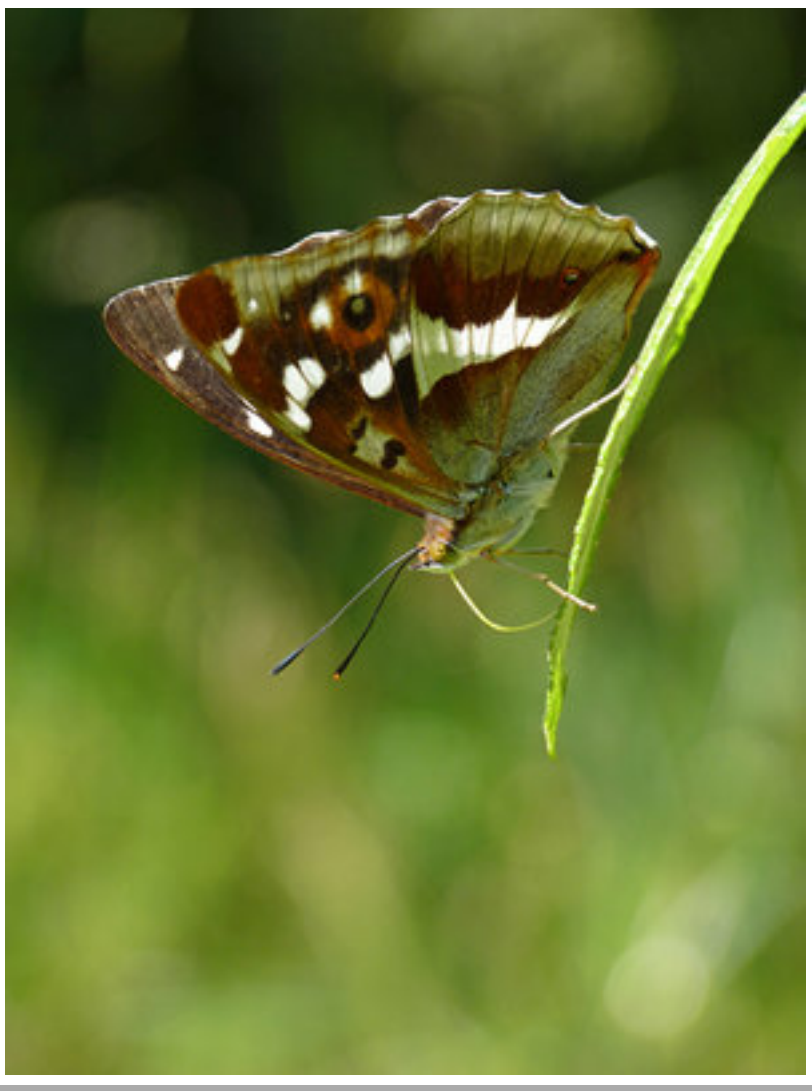


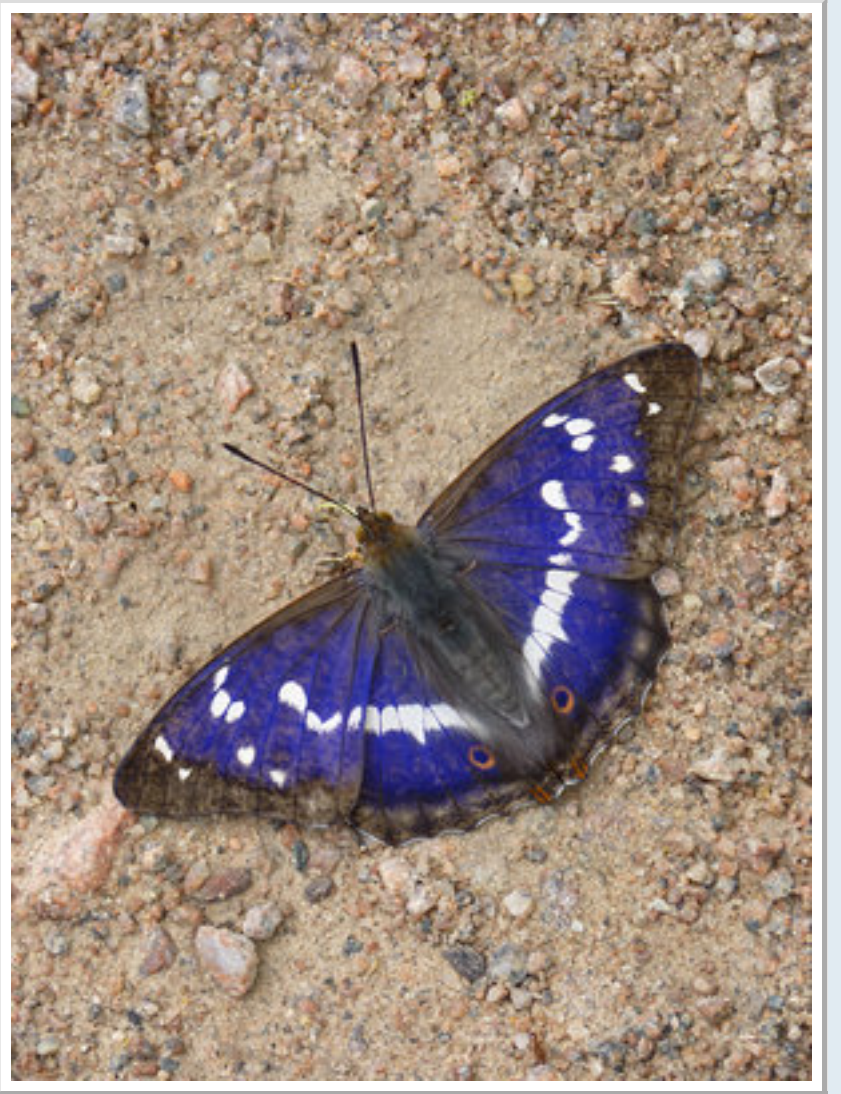
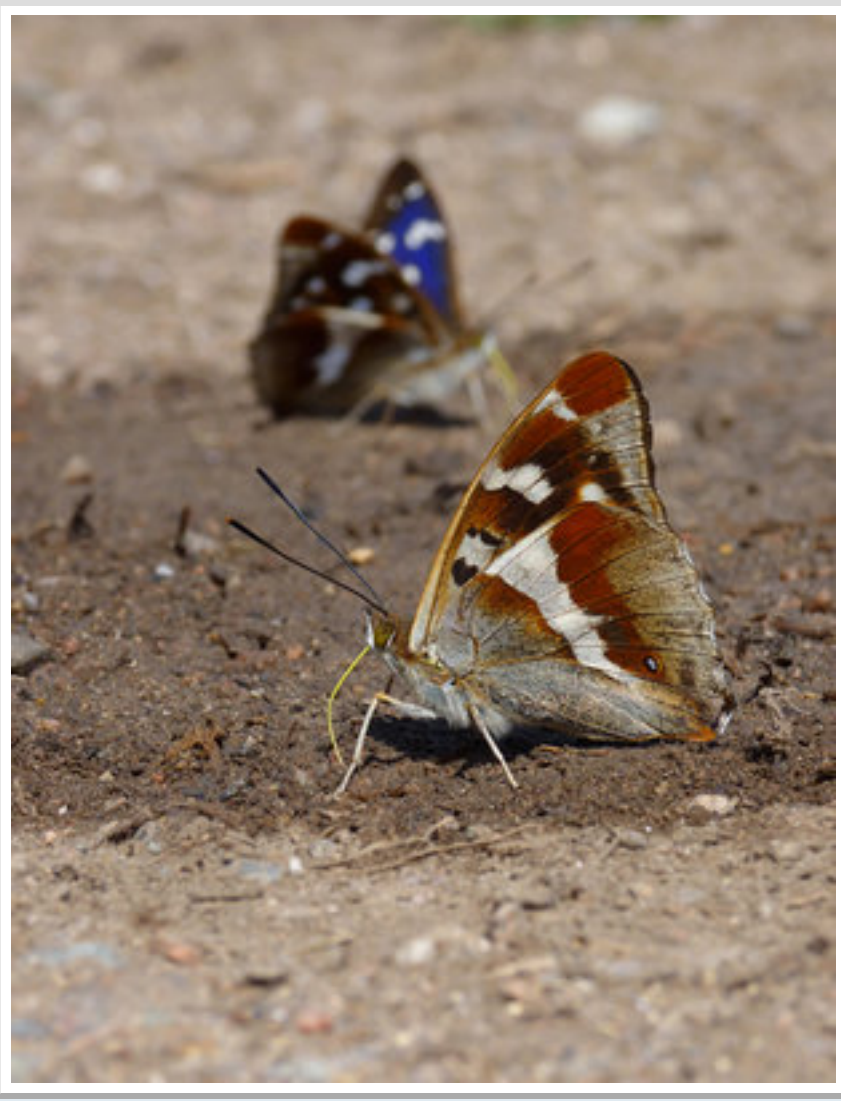
Re: Sussex Kipper

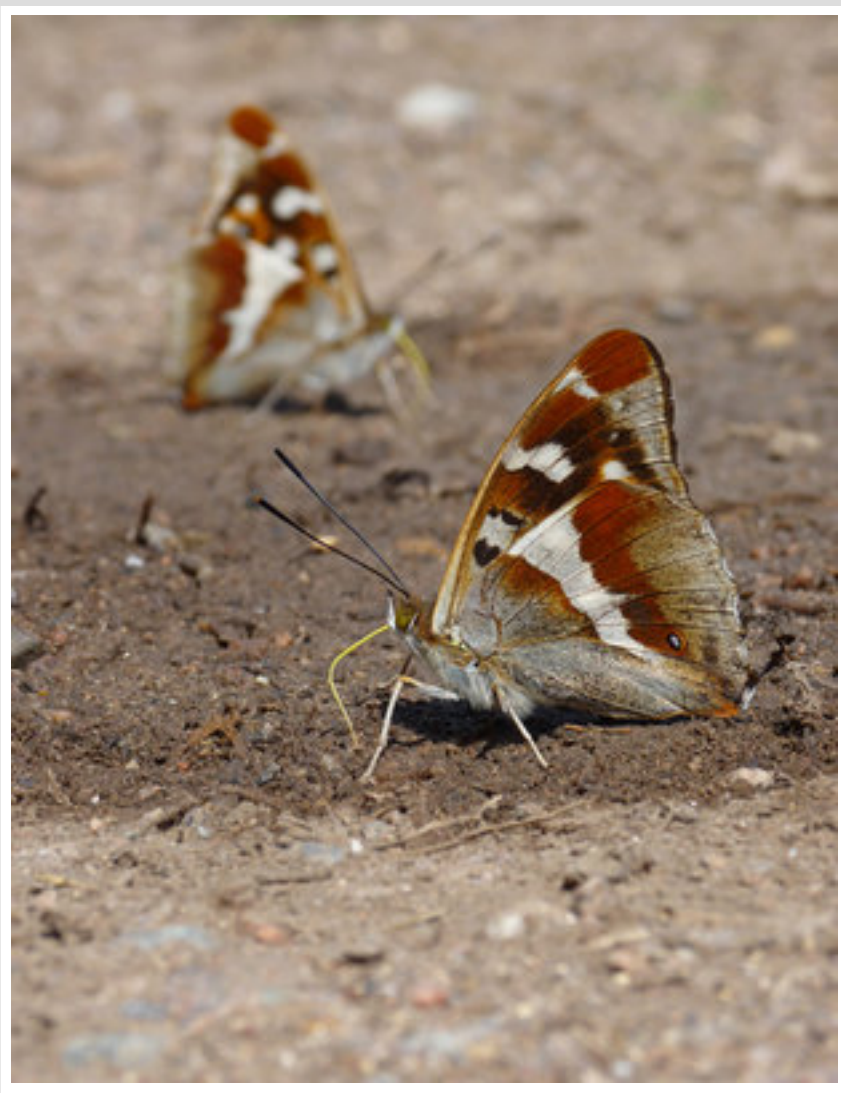
by Neil Hulme, 02-Jul-11 01:57 AM GMT

Fermyn (Part 1) - To The Woods, Without Breakfast! 😊

With a disappointing start to The Season down South the lure of Fermyn was too strong to resist. On Wednesday 29th June I drove North early in the morning, arriving before He had stirred. It turned out to be one of those sublime days which come but once a year. He came down in wave after wave throughout the morning, in numbers I have not experienced before. Having my Japanese folding commuter bicycle always gives me the edge when clocking up numbers and I travelled some distance through the ride system; nevertheless, 35 grounded males is a LOT! At times I could see 5 or 6 quartering a short section of the track. One of my baits played host to 3 Emperors, 4 Red Admirals and a Comma. They landed on my forehead, hand, boots, trousers, rucksack and bicycle - they swarmed. I even managed the open wing, purple shot on foliage as a male cleaned his proboscis. It was a memorable morning, but just around the corner there was an even greater prize awaiting.







Re: Sussex Kipper

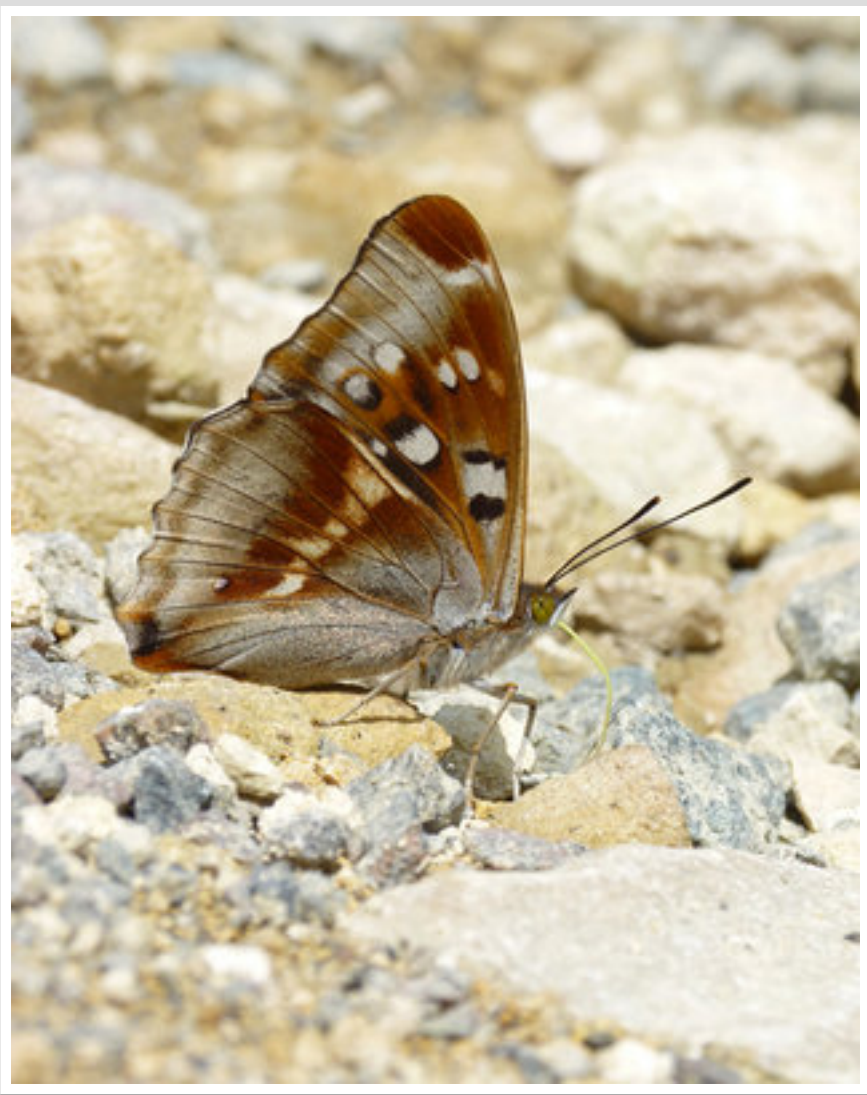
by Neil Hulme, 03-Jul-11 05:06 AM GMT

Fermyn (Part 2) - *afflicta*

I'm very grateful to UKBers Nick Ballard and Phil Bromley for pointing out the Purple Emperor aberrant (later identified as ab. *afflicta* by Piers) which they had already photographed that morning (29th June) in Lady Wood at Fermyn. I had already clocked up 26 grounded males on an adjacent ride, but the day was just getting better by the moment! The butterfly had retired to a low hazel during a dull, cooler period, but was tantalisingly just out of reach of the camera. As we chewed the cud I remained quietly optimistic that it would return to ground and after 10 minutes it did so, thereafter allowing me ample opportunity to photograph this rare and beautiful insect.

On Friday (1st July) I received a text from Matthew, who had just arrived at Fermyn and quickly located the specimen. Apparently it was also giving much pleasure to other lucky butterflyers. Two days in Fermyn is never enough.







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Jul-11 10:11 PM GMT

At 5.35 am on Monday 4th July, despite my lengthy insistence that Mia *Iris* Hulme (italics for *Iris* please - after the Purple Emperor) would NOT be born on American Independence Day she was, at 8lbs 6 ozs. I look forward to spending many happy years dragging her around damp woods and Harvey Nicks. In my eyes Hannah has now achieved goddess status, for producing such a beautiful daughter for us. Emperor hat by 'House of Mrs Hulme'.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 06-Jul-11 10:17 PM GMT

Wonderful news, Neil!

Many congratulations to you and Hannah 😊

All the best,

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Vince Massimo, 06-Jul-11 10:21 PM GMT

Great news Neil, congratulations to you both. Hannah has done you proud, that's the loveliest *iris* photo I have seen this year 😊.

Vince

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 06-Jul-11 10:23 PM GMT

"Vince Massimo" wrote:
that's the loveliest *iris* photo I have seen this year 😊.

Agreed! 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by dilettante, 06-Jul-11 10:27 PM GMT

Amazing pictures. And congratulations on the new arrival.

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

On Friday (1st July) I received a text from Matthew, who had just arrived at Fermyn and quickly located the specimen.

When I met Matthew there on the Saturday, he also showed me pictures of a rather impressive Comma aberrant he'd seen there on Friday. Did you find that one?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Trev Sawyer, 07-Jul-11 12:01 AM GMT

Yeayyyy!!! 😊

Many congratulations to all *three* of you:

To Neil and Hannah for producing such a lovely larva and to Mia for choosing such a nature-loving pair as Mum and Dad. I'm sure you will have a great life together.

NB: As with all babies, remember "to keep the *wet* end *dry* and the *dry* end *wet*!" 😊😂

Trev

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Colvin, 07-Jul-11 12:25 AM GMT

Congratulations.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 07-Jul-11 01:00 AM GMT

Congratulations! 😊

I am thrilled that Mia has safely emerged and hope everyone is well and adjusting to life with the new addition. Sussex Nipper is quite possibly the prettiest baby I have ever seen. Must take after her mum! 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by ChrisC, 07-Jul-11 01:58 AM GMT

Neil. Congrats all round from me too, and if you stray off the "p" into scene there is a baby mode 😊
I'll have to have a drink tonight to wet the babies head..... any excuse 😊

Chris

Re: Sussex Kipper

by John W, 07-Jul-11 02:02 AM GMT

Many many congratulations to you and Hannah! She looks adorable, I wonder who she takes after?!

Re: Sussex Kipper

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

Make the most of her, it may not seem like it when you're doing a feed at 3am, but they grow up before you know it and you're wondering where the years went.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by millerd, 07-Jul-11 02:15 AM GMT

Many Congratulations to all of you, Neil. She's gorgeous.

Dave

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Senior, 07-Jul-11 02:27 AM GMT

Would like to add my congratulations and best wishes to Hannah and Neil on their life bringing and life changing happy event .

Re: Sussex Kipper

by mud-puddling, 07-Jul-11 03:08 AM GMT

She is beautiful Neil, congratulations! No more butterflying for a good while then! 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Ian Pratt, 07-Jul-11 03:45 AM GMT

Many congratulations from a father of 4 adult children who are a great delight if not an expensive "luxury" at times!
My wife Sally and I visited Fermyn Wood on Saturday 25 June en route to the Peak District and saw no sign of the purple emperors, just a couple of white admirals! Must consult you Neil before I go again.
Great photos - well done. 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 07-Jul-11 03:50 AM GMT

A warning for Kipper, right now she might be content with a beautifully knitted hat but before you know it she'll be grown up and wanting a prom dress and saving for uni fees just like my biggest baby before making her way in the big wide world in a few years!



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Hatfullofsky, 07-Jul-11 04:54 AM GMT

Congratulations Neil, I knew there had to be a reason I hadn't seen you in Southwater Woods chasing Purple Emperors – turns out you have an *iris* of your own! I have to admit usually I find babies kind of ugly but she looks pretty cute. Also...I like the hat, are they available to order? Seriously though, major congratulations and best wishes to all three of you 😊
Sherie

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-11 06:25 AM GMT

Congratulations from me too from a father of two grown up lads and a daughter.
It seems only yesterday that they born and here I am spending all day today helping my little girl move into a flat with her own little lad.
Another Neil.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 07-Jul-11 04:00 PM GMT

Neil and Hannah.

I don't need any cheering up; I'm currently on holiday in The Burren area of western Ireland with my new love Stella. But your splendid news has made me even more cheerful.

Congratulations to both of you.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Zonda, 08-Jul-11 12:46 AM GMT

A butterfly man,,,,, and a stud. A rare man indeed. LOL. Many congrats. 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-11 04:02 AM GMT

This feels really wierd as I've never met you, but I feel that I kind of know you so...

Congratulations Neil and Hannah! 😊

I'm sure that you'll get loads of advice – so here's my 2pennies worth – listen to all the advice that everyone gives you, and then do what the hell you want! 😊

Have a goodun (nights sleep that is)

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 08-Jul-11 05:54 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

This feels really wierd as I've never met you, but I feel that I kind of know you so...

Congratulations Neil and Hannah! 😊

I'm sure that you'll get loads of advice – so here's my 2pennies worth – listen to all the advice that everyone gives you, and then do what the hell you want! 😊

Have a goodun (nights sleep that is)

Wurzel

That's the best advice anyone can give! 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 08-Jul-11 06:35 AM GMT

Thanks From Us

Many thanks to all those who have sent such kind messages to the three of us, either via this thread, PM or email. I've passed them all on to Hannah and they are much appreciated, especially while she's still recovering. Happy days. 😊

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jul-11 08:21 AM GMT

Back To Butterflies

After gazing at Sussex Nipper for a week it was time to catch up with a few butterflies yesterday (9th July). There can be few better sights than a flower-filled meadow on a warm summer evening when the Marbled Whites and freshly emerged Chalkhill Blues go to roost.



Male Chalkhill



Female Chalkhill

Re: Sussex Kipper

by ChrisC, 10-Jul-11 10:02 AM GMT

sussex nipper . . . excellent 😊

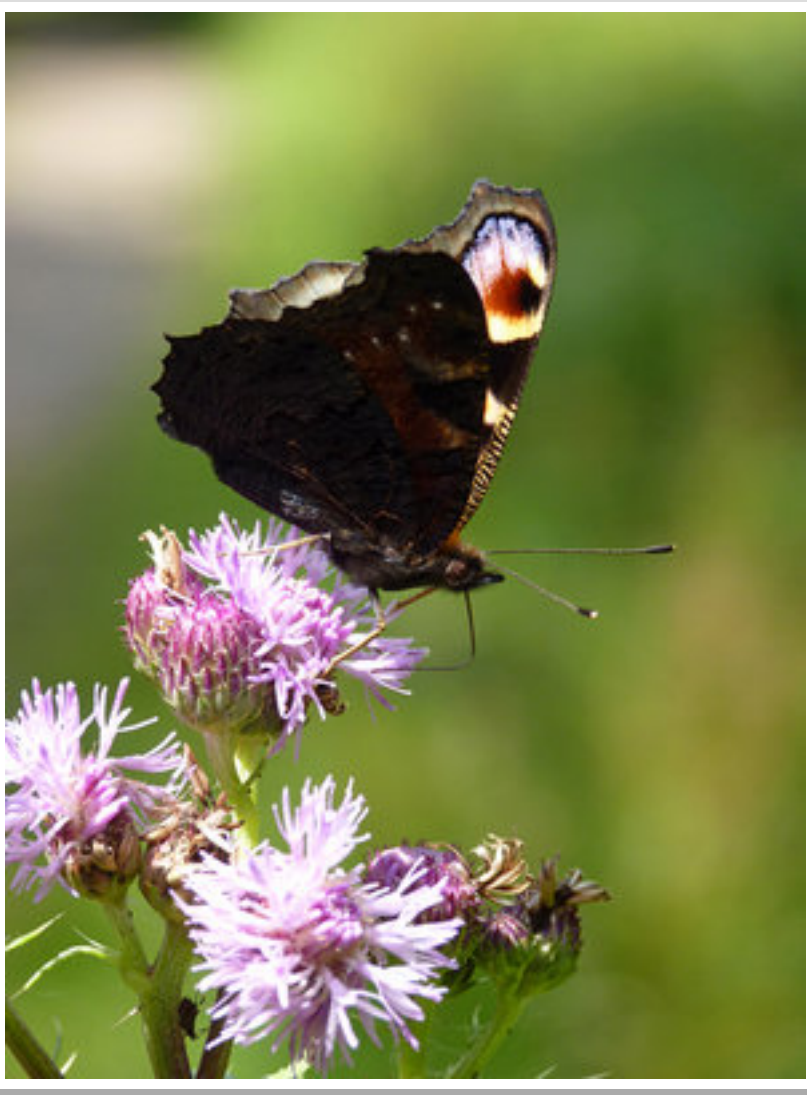
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 11-Jul-11 06:12 AM GMT

Empress Impress

The disappointment of such a poor Purple Emperor season in Sussex was temporarily relieved this afternoon (10th July) when I had two good sightings of different females 'striking' sallows (the traditional term for entering the canopy to lay eggs). These were my first Sussex femmes of the year. Both were observed on high ground in a newly investigated wood near Billingshurst. These girls must do their duty – I need to see more Emperors next year. While waiting for some *iris* action I was happy to snap freshly emerged Peacock and Gatekeeper.



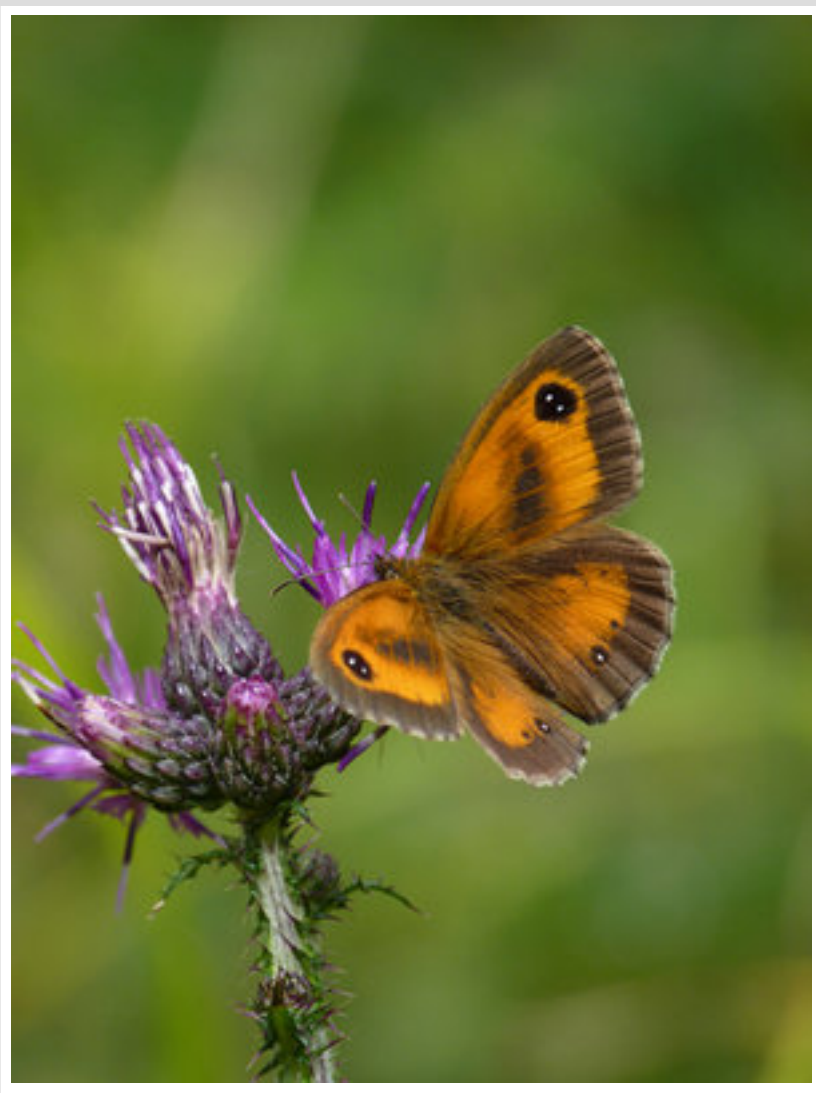


Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 14-Jul-11 04:34 AM GMT

Double Drop

Today (13th July) at Madgeland Wood (Southwater) I watched an Empress busy around the crown of a tall willow near the Trout Lane Master Trees. At 14.45 hrs she strayed too close, immediately catching the attention of the single male on station here. A classic avoidance tumble (as first described by Ken Willmott) failed to shake Him off and they spiralled down to land side-by-side in a pile of brash; so she climbed approximately 10 metres and repeated the process. This time it worked and she made a speedy, low level exit, leaving him to return to his oak perch with a deflated ego. Emperor numbers are so low here this year that I suspect she might have been fertilised by this same male. Prior to this brief outbreak of spectacular activity I had spent more than an hour patiently stalking Gatekeepers with the camera – they can be remarkably tricky!

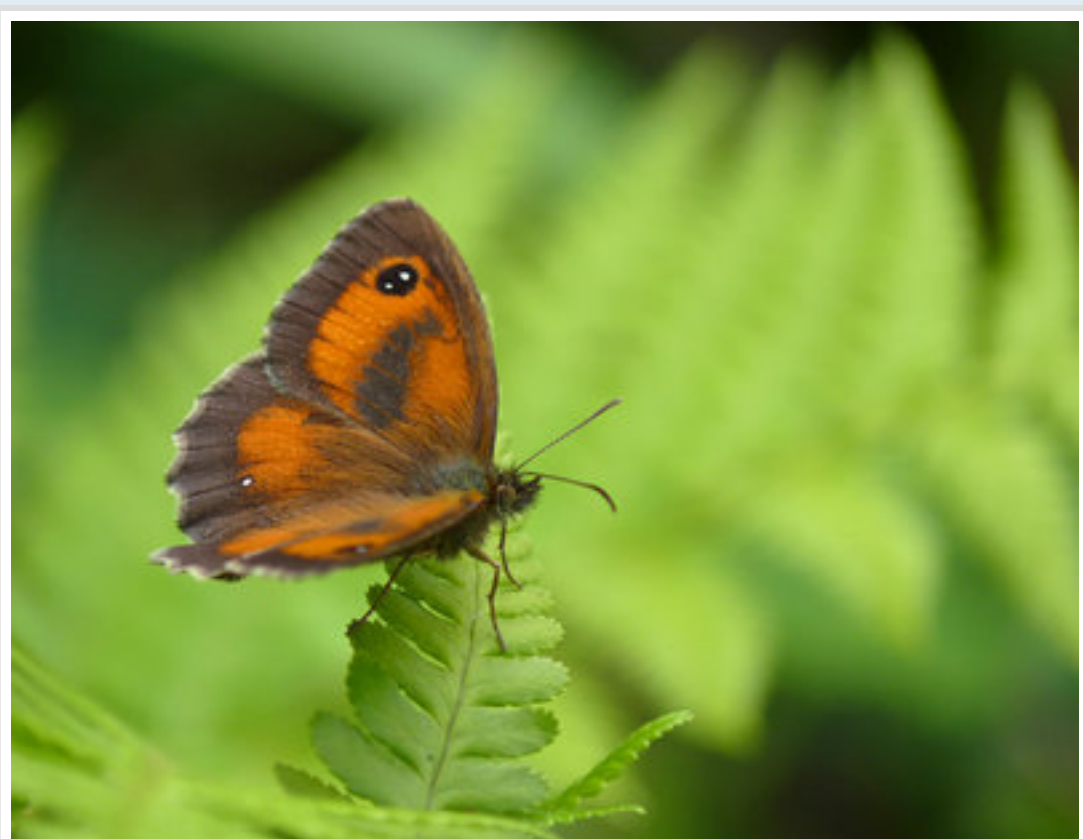


Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Jul-11 05:12 AM GMT

Deja Vu

Waiting for Purple Emperors photographing Gatekeepers (14th July).



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jul-11 06:48 AM GMT

Big Butterfly Count

On Friday (15th July) I joined BC Sussex committee members Dr Dan Danahar (creator of the fabulous Dorothy Stringer School Butterfly Haven mentioned earlier in my diary), Caroline Clarke and Bob Foreman, together with Brighton & Hove City Council ecologists, park rangers and other personnel, to help launch the Big Butterfly Count (16th - 31st July) on our patch. This now national event was spawned in Sussex a few years back and has continued to grow annually.

We were accompanied by TV naturalist and Vice-President of BC, Nick Baker, who turned out to be as thoroughly nice a chap as reputed. Under clear blue skies and warm sun we toured several sites within the Brighton & Hove city limits. We met a party of bug-hunting school children and a local 'friends' group in one of the city's many well-managed green spaces. The first image shows Nick sitting in the canopy of one of The Preston Twins, the world's oldest known English Elm trees, as he was hoisted aloft to look for White-letter Hairstreaks. He's holding the new 'Butterflies of Brighton & Hove' poster designed for the event by Dan and Bob.

With butterfly counting and biodiversity on the menu there was plenty of fun in store as we attempted to see as many species as possible - within a city. Just the sort of challenge I enjoy! With an optimistic target of 22 in mind I was delighted to find a female Dark Green Fritillary on a site where we knew we would clock up Marbled White, Small and Chalkhill Blue. A dash across a golf course in the Council's 4x4 to find Purple Hairstreak came good and Nick found a battered, faded but very welcome Small Heath. But the biggest slice of jam was yet to come. As we entered Hollingbury Park to hunt (successfully) for low-level White-letter Hairstreaks (see image 2) I could scarcely believe my eyes as I saw a Clouded Yellow coming towards us at 30mph, seemingly straight in off the sea. We ended the day with 25 species of butterfly, never having left Brighton & Hove!



Nick In Preston Twin



Nick And Dan Photographing White-letter Hairstreak



White-letter Hairstreak



Brown Argus – Another Valuable 'Tick'

Re: Sussex Kipper

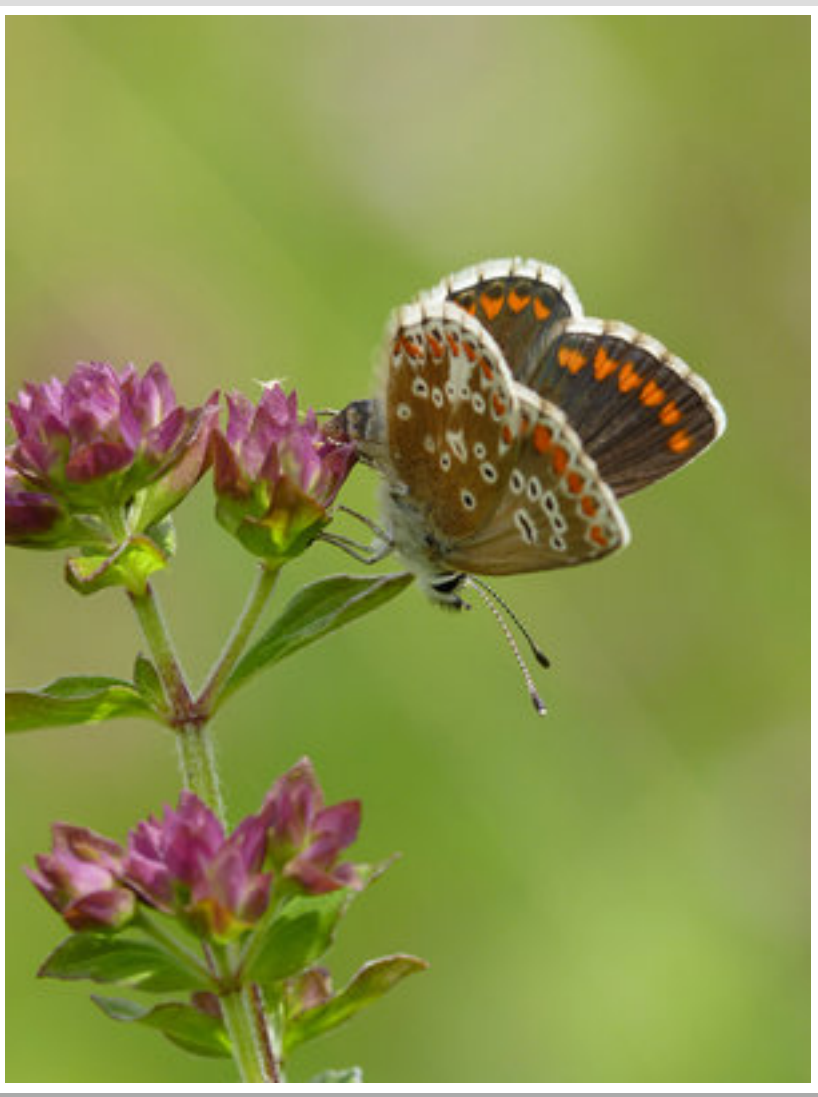
by Neil Hulme, 20-Jul-11 02:09 AM GMT

In Praise Of BA

No not that lot that used to regularly lose my hold baggage between Heathrow and Aberdeen I mean Brown Argus. Summer brood numbers are building rapidly on the Downs and a fleeting visit to Cissbury Ring this morning (19th July) revealed several dozen in isolated, sheltered pockets. I subsequently found a few more at Kithurst Hill.

Brown Argus is probably a 'butterflyers butterfly'; Patrick Barkham's 'little brown job' is easily over-looked by the casual observer. But of course a fresh specimen viewed up close is an exceptionally pretty thing.



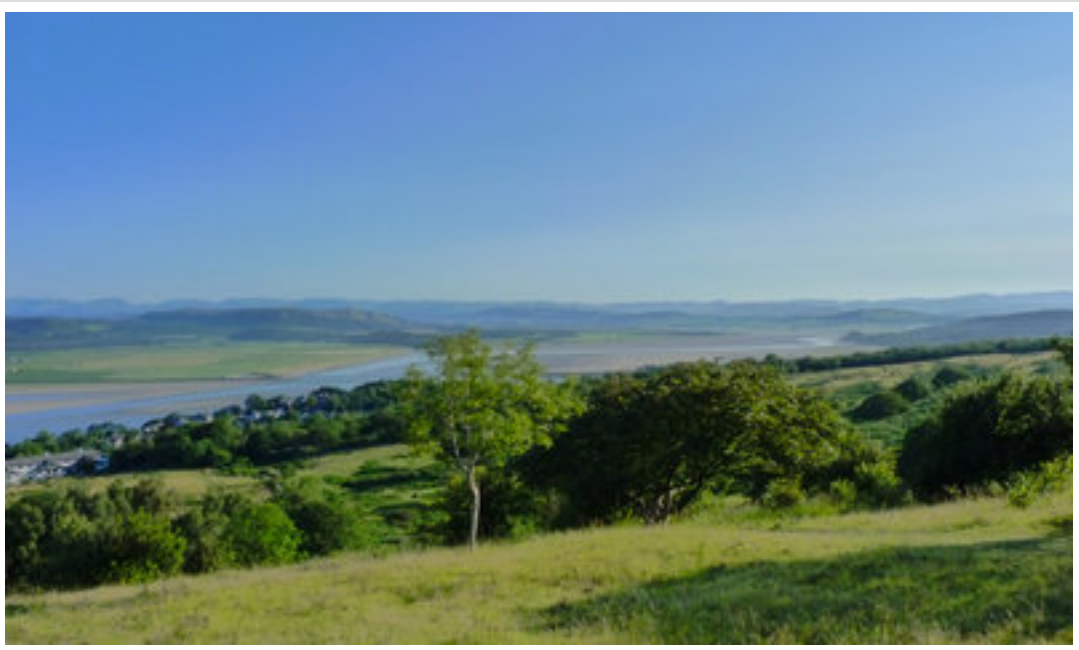


Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jul-11 01:09 AM GMT

Arnside Knott (Part 1)

I have recently returned from a couple of wonderful days (23rd & 24th July) on Arnside Knott. Like many others before me, I fell in love with this butterfly Mecca during my first visit to the site. In fact, over the course of a couple of days, I spent just short of 24 hours on the hill, totally entranced by the panoramic views and changes in light from early morning to dusk; the butterflies weren't bad either! Many thanks to Vince for the information he provided before I set off.



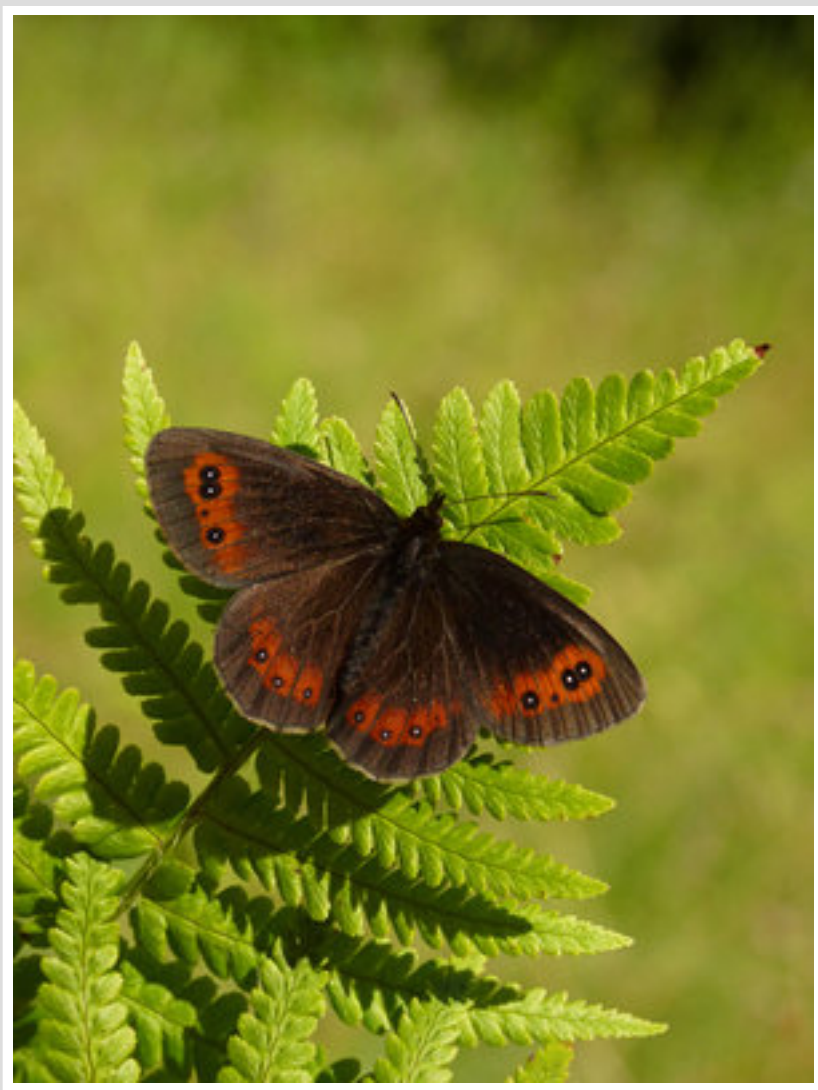
Early Morning On Arnside Knott

Over the two days it was a pleasure to share the experience with a number of other UKBers, including GOLDENORFE, LCPete and friend, PhiliB, Rosalyn and (Mr & Mrs) hosebirder. One word of caution for those intending to visit soon.... tics! I'm no wuss when it comes to these things; I had the disease in 2007 and have had to remove numerous tics after the majority of outings on the West Sussex Downs (an infection 'black spot') over many years - but Hannah and I spent over an hour removing 30+ on my return home. Admittedly most of these were very small, but that's the most I've ever played host to at one sitting. I had flicked about two dozen off my skin throughout the day. To add to this, I had ditched my insect repellent after getting an allergic reaction, so became a sitting duck for the mozzies on the last evening. Hannah reckoned she could count over 50 bites, some of which turned quite nasty. After two days taking Piriton and using antihistamine cream things are a little better... but please go better prepared than I did! Wading through the ferns is probably the best way to attract these critters.

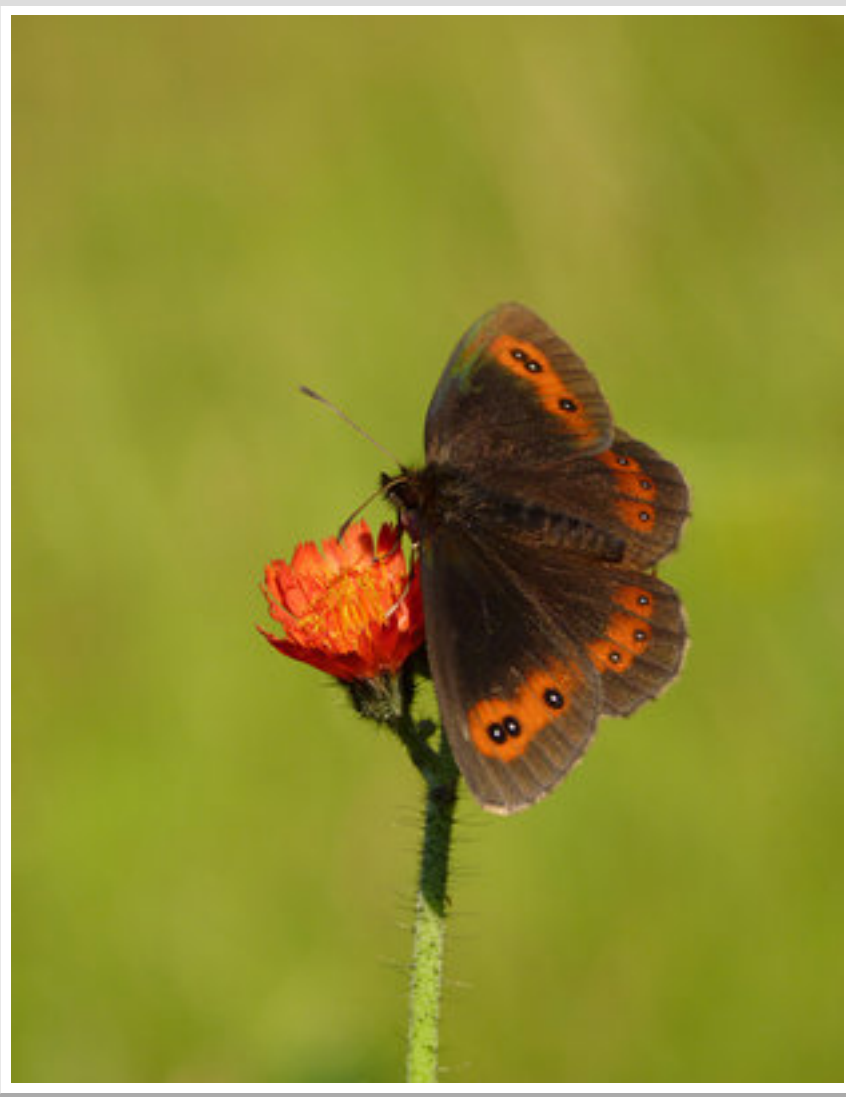


Early Afternoon On Arnside Knott

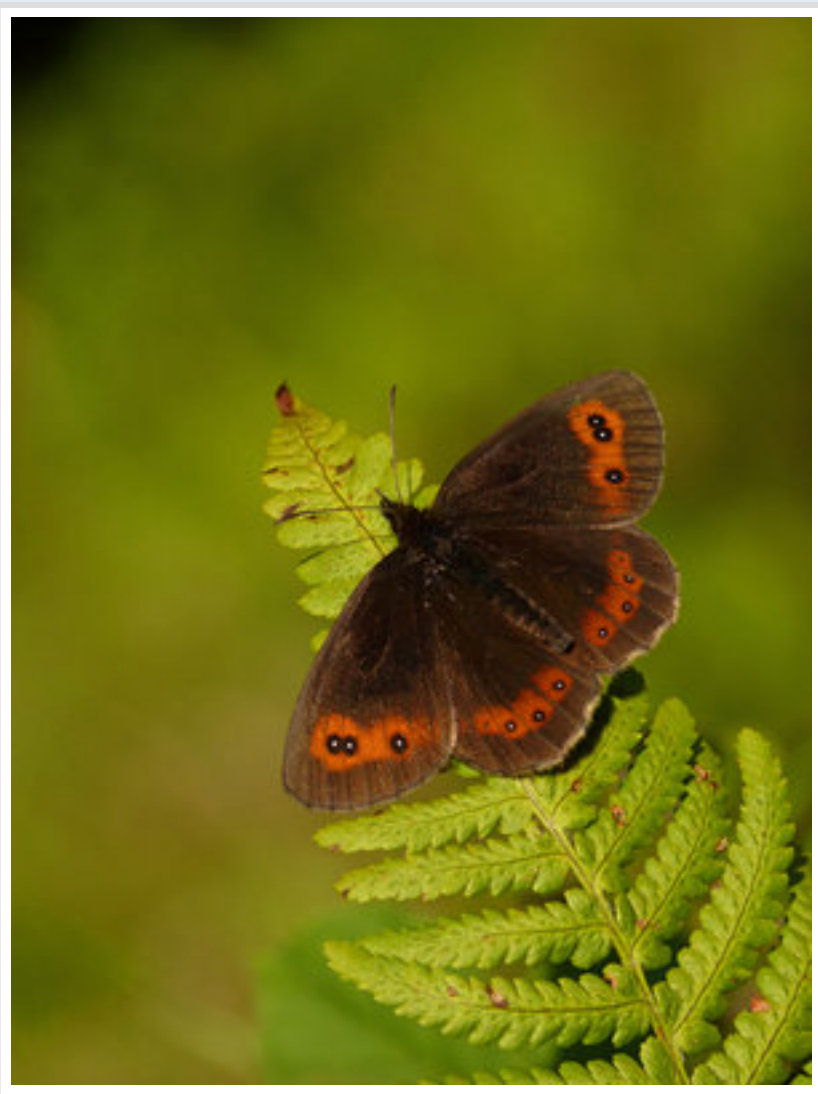
Now back to the butterflies. Over the two days the following species put in an appearance: Scotch Argus, High Brown Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary, Grayling, Northern Brown Argus, Purple Hairstreak, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Peacock, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Brimstone, Green-veined White, Large White, Large Skipper, Small Skipper. Twenty species this far North is good going. Some of the female HBF, DGF and Grayling were still quite fresh – but insufficiently so for fussy photographers such as myself.



Scotch Argus is a species I haven't seen for 20 years, since my days living in exile in Aberdeen.... and it was good to see them again. The weather during my stay was glorious; far too good to suit this species. Sunday dawned clear and sunny and it wasn't long before the temperature rose sufficiently to suppress Scotch Argus activity. Many buried themselves deep in the longer grass or scrub to prevent their chocolate-brown bodies from over-heating. This colouration allows Scotch Argus and Mountain Ringlet to absorb heat very quickly, and operate in typically duller, cooler conditions; but it also counts against them in temperatures sufficiently high to send me back down into Arnside for an ice-cream.



My first day on the hill, Saturday, had started overcast and cooler, so turned out to be far the better for photography, despite becoming sunny and warm after midday. Mid evening was the best time, as the previously fidgety males finally started to sunbathe on ferns or seek nectar from bramble, clover, ragwort and the beautiful, fiery orange-coloured fox-and-cubs (*Hieracium aurantiacum*). On Sunday evening the photographic opportunities were much rarer, as most of the butterflies never re-emerged from their refuges. The previous day it had been easy to count 30–40 Scotch Argus, but they now appeared to be in significantly lower numbers.



By the time I came off The Knott on Saturday night I was already judging the trip a success, but I could never have predicted the large slice of Lady Luck which was waiting for me the following morning.



Mid Evening on Arnside Knott

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jul-11 01:39 AM GMT

Nice report and photos, always a joy to read.

And another cliffhanger at the end 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Rogerdodge, 28-Jul-11 01:50 AM GMT

but I could never have predicted the large slice of Lady Luck which was waiting for me the following morning.

Come on Neil – don't keep us in suspense.....

p.s. That first SA is lovely.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Gibster, 28-Jul-11 03:59 AM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

it wasn't long before the temperature rose sufficiently to suppress Scotch Argus activity. Many buried themselves deep in the longer grass or scrub to prevent their chocolate-brown bodies from over-heating.

An astute (and rather worrying) observation, and something I bet most folks (me included) would overlook. You have to worry about what the future holds for our northern and montane bird, plant and invert species.

Cheers,

Gibster.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by GOLDENORFE, 28-Jul-11 04:15 AM GMT

it was great to meet you neil, it is a fabulous site! 30+ ticks! i only had 3!!!!!!!

great set of shots, love the last pano

PS CANT WAIT TO SEE THE PH SHOTS 😊

phil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 28-Jul-11 04:27 AM GMT

Likewise!

An excellent report and I look forward to reading the next one. 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Colvin, 28-Jul-11 05:04 AM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

but I could never have predicted the large slice of Lady Luck which was waiting for me the following morning.

This is worse than Agatha Christie!

Great shots Neil.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jul-11 06:13 AM GMT

Arnside Knott (Part 2)

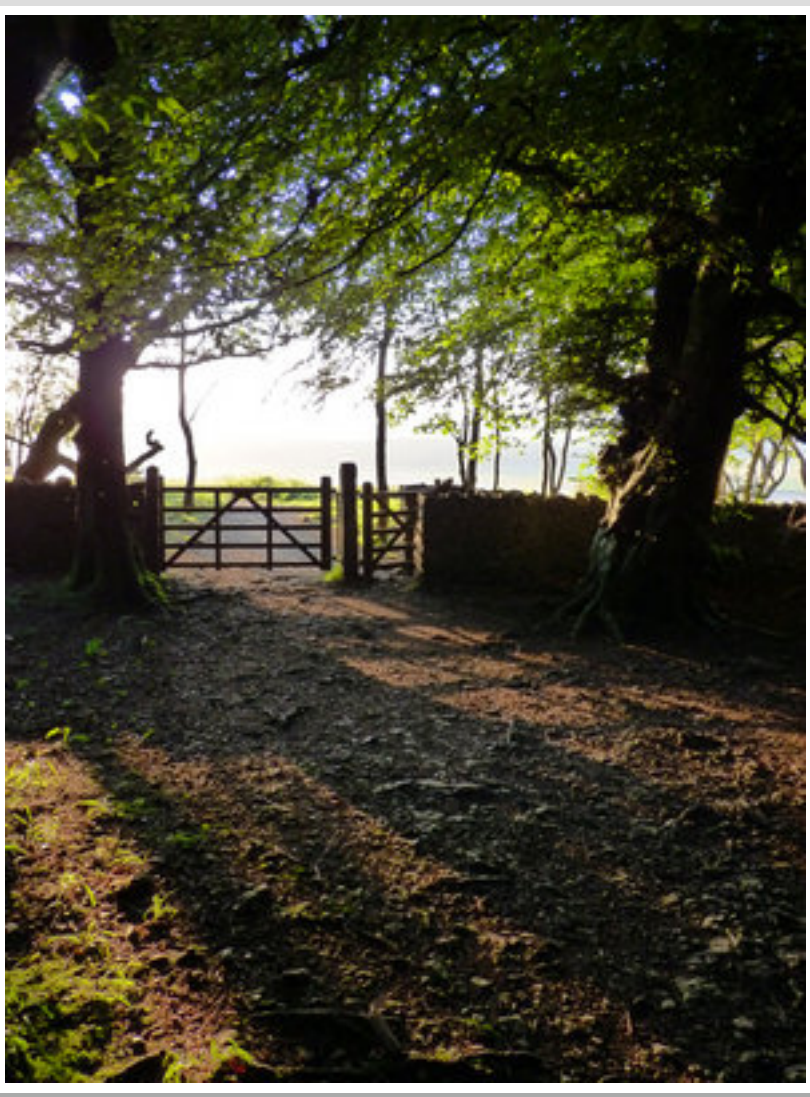
I was back on The Knott by 7am on the second day, simply because I wanted to enjoy the place before I became focused on the butterflies. Initially I had the hill to myself and I stopped a while at the top of the first stage of the climb to drink in the views and listen to the curlews bubbling away down on the estuary below. I lost all track of time, but at some point the first butterfly of the day turned up to photograph the Scotch Argus as they warmed up for the day ahead.

It's always nice to share those magic moments when the unexpected and spectacular occurs, and the other enthusiast lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time that morning was Graham Camage from Newark. As we wandered around chatting about butterflies I noticed a small grey triangle sitting on the fresh green bracken, which caused me to 'double take' as it seemed so incongruous up here. It took a while for the penny to drop that the calendar for Purple Hairstreaks would be significantly behind that down South, where they had been on the wing for well over a month and were all tattered, torn and faded by now. I had given up trying to photograph the species this year. Of course early morning fern-sitting is often performed by recently-emerged hairstreaks and as I took a closer look it became obvious that this was freshly minted, and I suspected female. It seemed such an unlikely event that I started to think 'what if?', recalling Pete's memorable experience and fantastic photos taken back in June.

After we both got shots of the underside I suggested I try to shade it, in an attempt to encourage it to open its wings. It worked, and as the wings flattened we were treated to flashes of rich electric-blue that could match any Emperor. There was just enough time for Graham and I to take turns in shooting from the best angle before she was up and away into an ash tree.... the only Purple Hairstreak I saw during my visit to Arnside Knott! We have both been around long enough to appreciate how seldom such opportunities come along, and I think we both floated around in a trance for the rest of the day.



I was still sitting on The Knott long after the butterflies had gone to bed, and I felt a tinge of sadness that it was time to leave a place that had been so generous to me. Only a tinge though, as I know I'll be back.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by GOLDENORFE, 28-Jul-11 06:17 AM GMT

AWSOME!!!!!! amazing find with open wings 😊

phil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by selbypaul, 28-Jul-11 06:23 AM GMT

It's not often I stop to comment on phot's, but that really is one special picture of the Purple Hairstreak. Truly amazing

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Vince Massimo, 28-Jul-11 09:39 AM GMT

Great images and descriptions Neil. Arnside Knott is a truly epic site for lots of reasons and you made the most of it I would say 🍷 . I'm pleased the trip went so well, although it's not often we see a report of the weather being described as "**too**" good at Arnside 😊 .

Cheers,
Vince

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Colin Knight, 28-Jul-11 03:25 PM GMT

Wonderful story and pics Neil as always, very inspiring. Sue loves the landscapes.

cheers
Colin

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 28-Jul-11 04:49 PM GMT

Oh yeah! Those Ph pics are easily as good as you said they would be. Sublime.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Zonda, 29-Jul-11 12:52 AM GMT

Top work Neil, an unmatched shot. 🍷

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 29-Jul-11 02:02 AM GMT

Great story and great shots, as ever, Neil! So – cameras at 10 paces for the best PH shot of 2012 next year then? 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 29-Jul-11 04:08 AM GMT

Great photo of a mint specimen.

Quite a few people seem to have got open wing shots of Purple Hairstreaks this year. Are they more abundant than usual?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Padfield, 29-Jul-11 04:17 AM GMT

Kipper, I've just posted to say how wonderful THE OTHER purple hairstreak shot is, so I have to add that yours are fantastic too! 😊

Guy

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Jul-11 05:18 AM GMT

Thanks all for the kind comments. Pawpawsaurus, Pete and I are all very fortunate to have been visited by these little gems.

While I'm online it's worth reporting that Dingy Skipper is currently experiencing the strongest second brood that I can recall. In the South of England a partial second brood appears most years, reflected by reports of scattered singletons. At Mill Hill (Shoreham) I counted 12 this afternoon! Worth checking your local Dingy site.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Piers, 31-Jul-11 03:18 AM GMT

Luck? luck isn't the word..! You do realise that they're not supposed to be that vivid blue colour don't you Neil?

Piers 🙄🙄🙄

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 01-Aug-11 06:19 AM GMT

Hi Piers,

I don't really know quite what to make of this colouration – it stunned me when she opened her wings. It was this same shade of electric-blue irrespective of viewing angle. I've only ever seen this once before – in an image taken by BC Sussex member Richard Roebuck. His female Purple Hairstreak, which was blown to the ground by the 2010 mid July gales, showed very similar colouring, again very different from the standard purple. I'm not sure how rare it is, particularly given the difficulties in viewing more than a miniscule percentage of female Purple Hairstreaks. All those I've observed in the canopy through binoculars have been regulation purple.

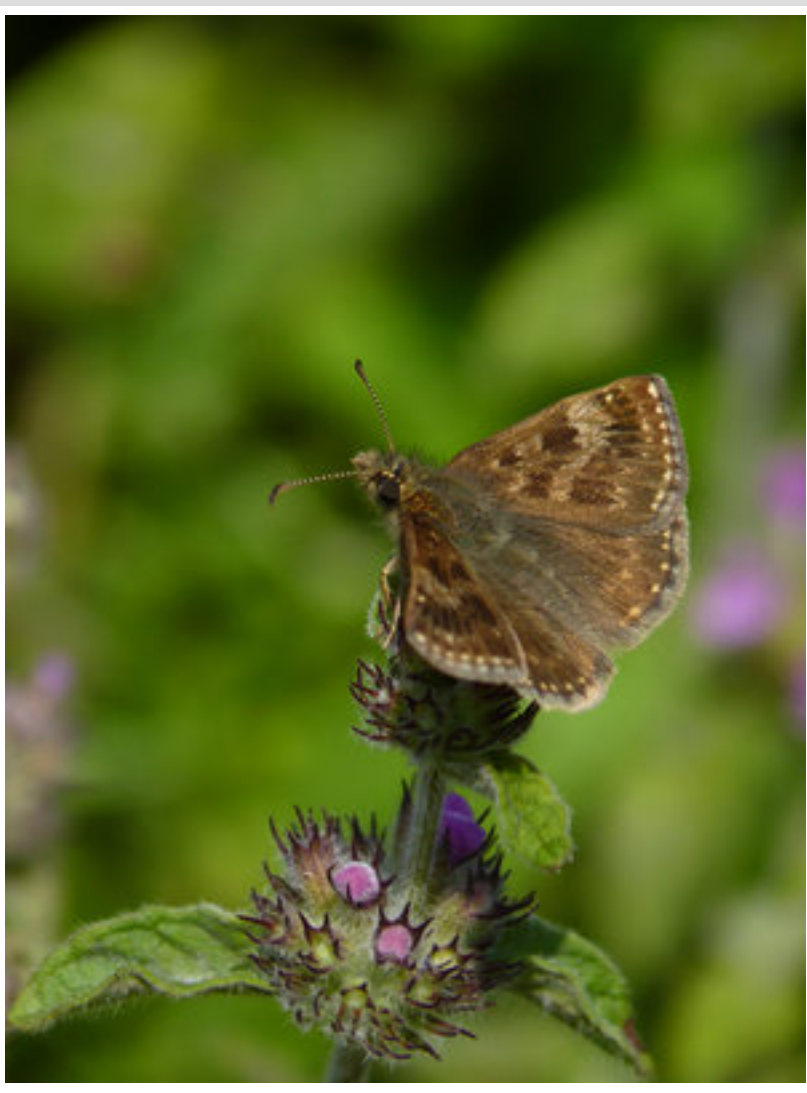
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 01-Aug-11 08:48 AM GMT

Dingy Goes Again

My most recent search for Dingy Skipper (30th July) at Mill Hill produced a tally of 22, which is by far the most I've ever encountered during the second brood. On Sunday afternoon (31st July) Hannah, Mia and I ventured up Heyshott Escarpment and found 2 freshly-emerged Dingies. There may be more to come here over the next week or two. It will be interesting to see whether the species shows strongly elsewhere.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Michaeljf, 04-Aug-11 03:23 AM GMT

Hi Neil,
a bit late – but lovely photographs and a great read regarding Arnside Knott. All the photos are great, but of course, the Purple Hairstreak is extraordinary. I loved your description of the morning and seeing it – it reminded me of Guy seeing his Poplar Admiral earlier in the year. Thanks as always for sharing with us 😊 .

I may be going to Arnside Knott this weekend, car and weather willing 🙏. I just hope the Ticks aren't as bad as you say. Being insulin-dependent diabetic I find that they don't normally go for me – so I'm hoping that will hold true again... 😊🙏
Michael

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Aug-11 05:45 AM GMT

Thanks Michael. I hope the car and weather work for you. By now the place should be crawling with Mc Argus. Have a great trip. You'll love shooting the landscape too.
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Senior, 05-Aug-11 06:25 AM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Dingy Goes Again

My most recent search for Dingy Skipper (30th July) at Mill Hill produced a tally of 22, which is by far the most I've ever encountered during the second brood. On Sunday afternoon (31st July) Hannah, Mia and I ventured up Heyshott Escarpment and found 2 freshly-emerged Dingies. There may be more to come here over the next week or two. It will be interesting to see whether the species shows strongly elsewhere.

[attachment=1:psykxvcx]UKB Second Brood Dingy 1.jpg[/attachment:psykxvcx][attachment=0:psykxvcx]UKB Second Brood Dingy 2.jpg[/attachment:psykxvcx]

Hi Neil

I saw a couple of 2nd brood Dingies at Castle Hill NR Woodingdean when I paid a rare visit there just over 2 weeks ago . I would expect rather more to have emerged since then . That site is certainly also worth searching for Silver Spotted Skippers as it looks in colonisation distance from other known sites . I may try to go back there next week .

Cheers
Mark Senior

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 05-Aug-11 06:49 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

1 second brood Dingy at Windover Hill on Sunday too.

Cheers

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Michaeljf, 05-Aug-11 10:45 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

I hope the car and weather work for you. Neil

Hi Neil,
well the car is ready (the boss's bank balance took a hit for the work though) but the weather doesn't look good so unfortunately we've cancelled our trip to Arnside Knott – at least for this weekend 😞 . I'm just hoping we get half-decent weather by the end of next week. If not, I'll have to be content with looking at your photographs again!! 😊
Michael

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-11 02:20 AM GMT

Hi Mark and Lee,

Thanks for the Dingy Skipper news – they're cropping up widely as second-brooders. At Mill Hill numbers are now very close to the first brood showing. Mark – I *think* Silver-spotted Skipper is already at Castle Hill, but as yet in very low numbers.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-11 04:36 AM GMT

Adonis Blues & Brown Hairstreaks

On Friday (5th August) I dropped into Mill Hill before heading off to meet Brian Henham and UKBer Mark Colvin at Steyning Rifle Range to hunt for Brown Hairstreaks. Following the early appearance of a couple of second brood Adonis two weeks ago there had been no sign of a further emergence... until this morning. This unusual hiatus is probably yet another reflection of the May – June weather pattern, with some larvae getting a considerable lead over the rest of the population before the drop in early summer temperatures. However, this morning there had clearly been a sizeable emergence and stunning Adonis males were strewn over the lower slopes.



Unfortunately, despite perfect conditions, we were less fortunate in our quest at Steyning Rifle Range. Only males are out yet (we saw two) and it seems that this species is going to stick firmly to its traditional calendar here – which suggests we shall have to wait for a few more days. Elsewhere in Sussex there are already a few females on the wing. On Wednesday (3rd August) Richard Roebuck and I located a Master Tree on the Downs Link disused railway track, inhabited by at least four males and a female.

Jeremy Thomas suspects that mated female Brown Hairstreaks might linger for a week or more in the Master Tree, while their eggs mature. I have often pondered the mechanism which allows them to go largely unmolested while they remain in the close company of males. The female we watched on Wednesday, like all others I've seen in Master Trees, was completely ignored by them. The idea of male and mated female Purple Emperors or Orange Tips happily co-habiting is rather fanciful. How do they do that?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Senior, 07-Aug-11 04:51 AM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Hi Mark and Lee,

Thanks for the Dingy Skipper news – they're cropping up widely as second-brooders. At Mill Hill numbers are now very close to the first brood showing.

Mark – I *think* Silver-spotted Skipper is already at Castle Hill, but as yet in very low numbers.

Neil

Hi Neil ,
Although I did not see any on Friday for certain , I did not look at the whole site and perhaps a couple of the Large Skippers I saw only briefly were actually SSP's .

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Colin Knight, 07-Aug-11 05:11 AM GMT

Neil, after you left Friday two of us saw a male fluttering above the tall blackthorn by the lower gate at 3pm.
Colin

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 09-Aug-11 03:39 AM GMT

Brown Hairstreaks At The Rifle Range

This morning (8th August), on an entirely average date for this site, female Brown Hairstreaks showed for the first time at Steyning Rifle Range. Two were seen during the late morning, which seems the most reliable period given good weather. I'm looking forward to tracking down many more of these beauties over the next few weeks. I'm leading a walk here on Sunday 21st August (open to all) – and if the sun shines we should see them in good numbers.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 13-Aug-11 04:19 AM GMT

More Brown Hairstreaks

The weather was considerably better than the forecast suggested this morning (12th August), so Hannah, Mia and I made rapid plans for a picnic, conveniently close to the Steyning Rifle Range Brown Hairstreak Reserve. Although the two mint condition female hairstreaks we saw managed to avoid being photographed, I at least managed a record shot of one of the three additional females we spotted, all of which showed varying degrees of wear and tear. I suspect there are plenty more to emerge here over the next week or two.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Michaeljf, 13-Aug-11 05:28 AM GMT

Hi Neil,
lovely shot of the female Brown Hairstreak on the 8th August. They're real beauties aren't they?

If only the weather was a bit more reliable at the moment. Or rather, the weather is reliable, just a bit too dull! 😊😊
Michael

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Colvin, 13-Aug-11 05:37 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

I knew I went to the wrong spot today! Sadly it will be a week before I can get out again.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Aug-11 03:44 AM GMT

Hi Michael,

"They're real beauties aren't they?"

Like Purple Emperors they are characterised by that winning combination of beauty, rarity and elusiveness. I get excited every time I see a Brown Hairstreak, even late in the season when they are showing the scars of life amongst the thorns.

Today at Steyning Rifle Range they put on a great show for the numerous visitors, with a total of nine females coming to ground. I'm hoping for good weather this weekend so that the large crowd I'm anticipating will get to enjoy these 'real beauties' 😊.

Hi Mark,

They'll still be waiting for you when you get back!

Neil

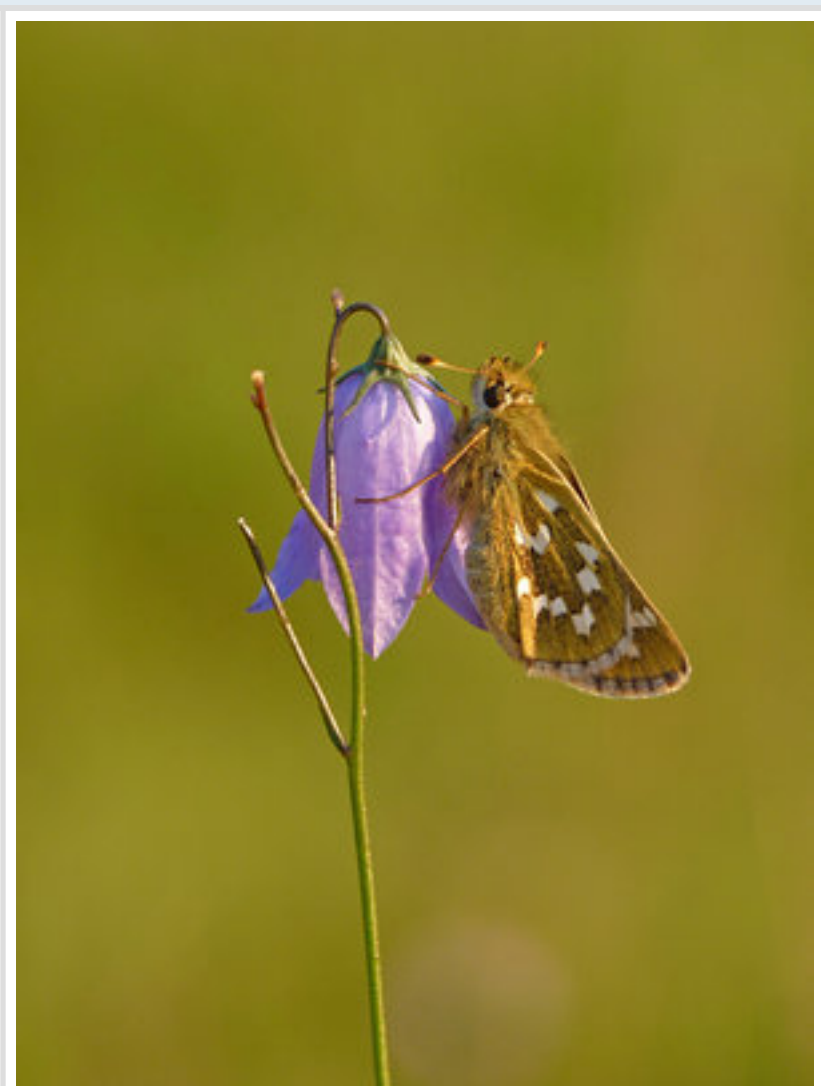
Re: Sussex Kipper

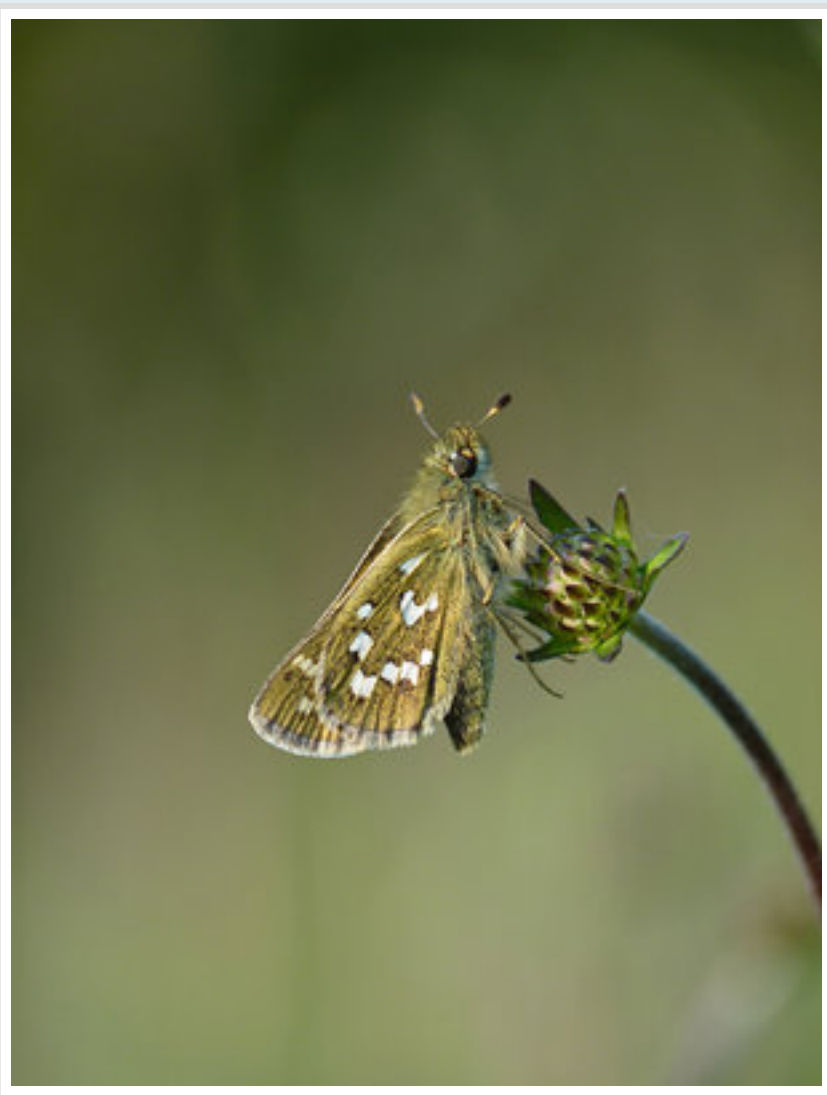
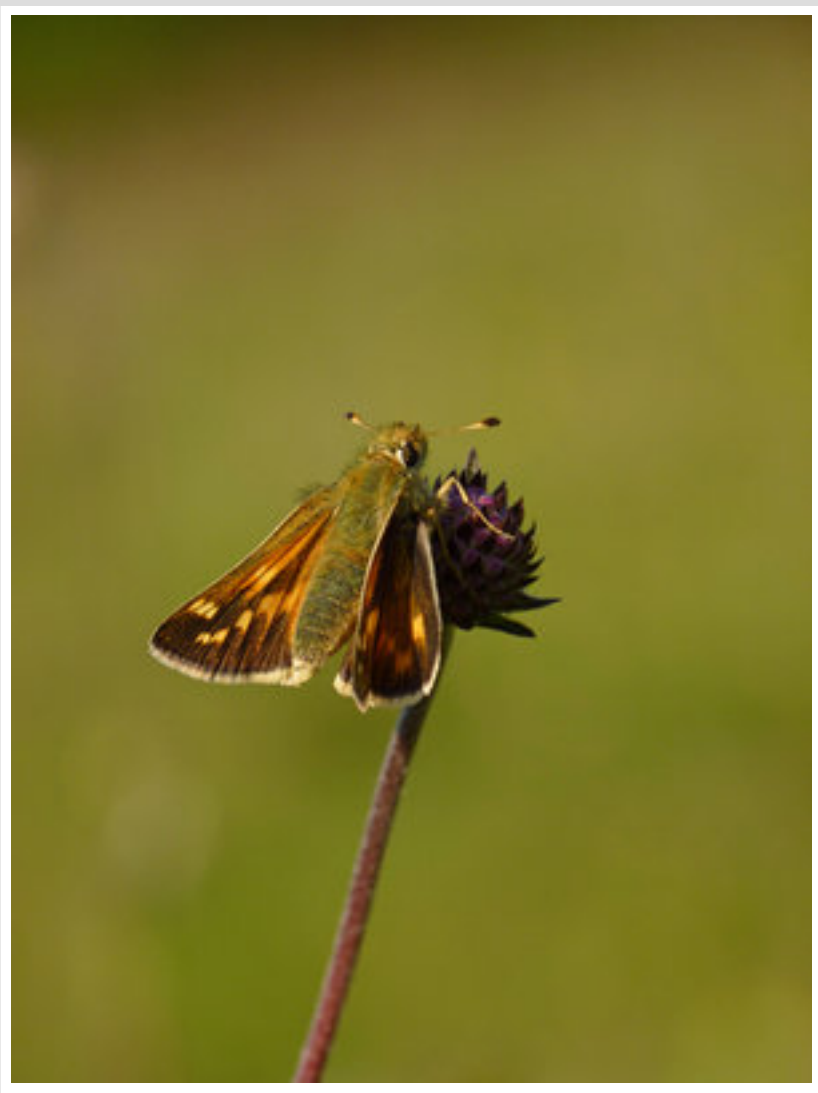
by Neil Hulme, 16-Aug-11 04:53 AM GMT

Silver-spotted Skippers Thriving

On Sunday (14th August) I started off at Steyning Rifle Range, which was surprisingly slow given the good weather conditions. Only single male and female Brown Hairstreaks showed themselves, which had me wondering whether this was going to develop into a very modest season for the species. I'm pleased to say that these concerns were dispelled today, when they came down thick and fast (see next report).

Later in the afternoon I visited the newly established colony of Silver-spotted Skippers on the Downs at Storrington. In just a few years the numbers have built spectacularly, following their epic journey from the distant Newtimber Hill on the West/East Sussex border. The handful first seen in 2007 have multiplied so that the north and west-facing slopes are now home to large numbers of these beautiful little butterflies. I stopped counting at 50, most of which were males. The females are yet to emerge in any numbers, so I'll return next week to more accurately assess the population.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Michaeljf, 16-Aug-11 06:03 AM GMT

Hi Neil,
smashing photos (as per usual!) of the Silver-Spotted Skippers - I especially like the first one. Great to see them in a background of that glowing thing (sometimes known as 'the sun') I'm hoping that it'll still be shining at some time on the weekend! 😊

I bet some great pics are coming in the rest of the report, no doubt I'll be *very* jealous!! 😄
Michael

Re: Sussex Kipper

by GOLDENORFE, 16-Aug-11 06:25 AM GMT

beautifull skipper shots neil 😊
seeing my first ever brown hairstreak on sunday i was totally blown away by their beauty. hopefull see a lot more over the next month.
cant wait!
phil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Colvin, 16-Aug-11 02:23 PM GMT

Hi Neil,
Some nice SSS pictures. Well done as I know how difficult they are to get. I look forward to seeing your Brown Hairstreak shots and hopefully I'll catch up

with a few on my return.

Good hunting.

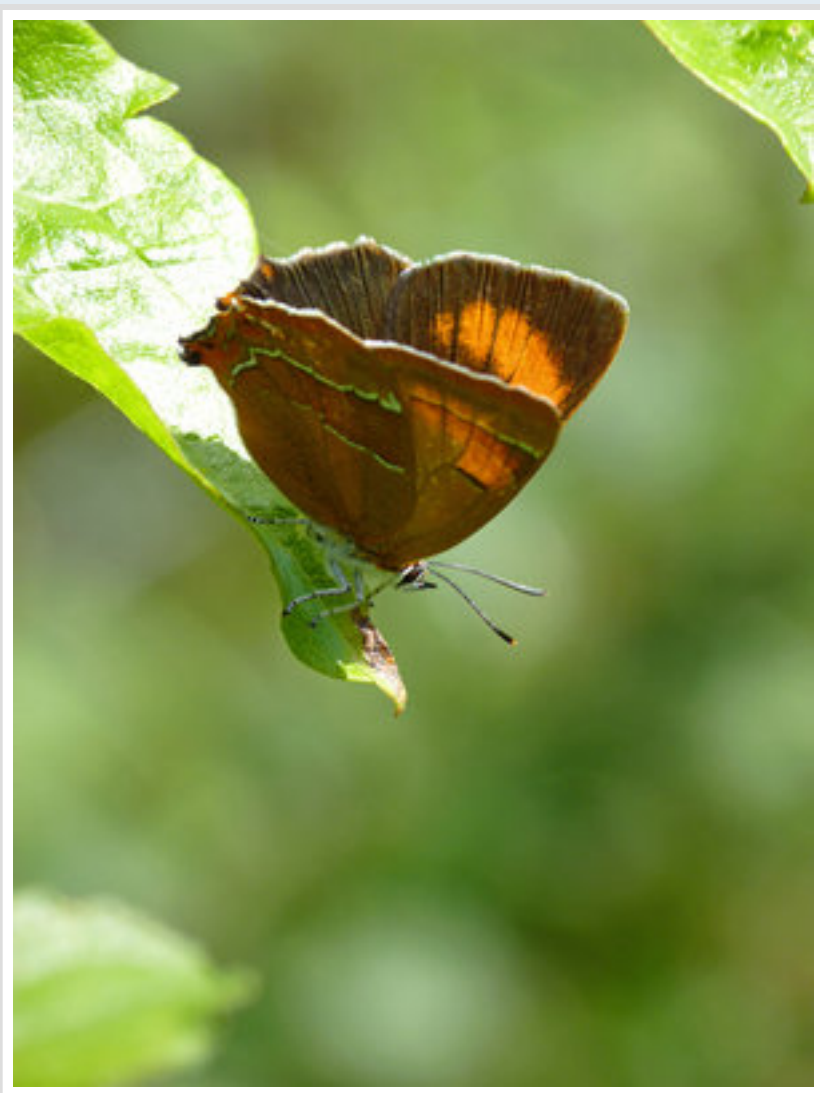
Kind regards. Mark

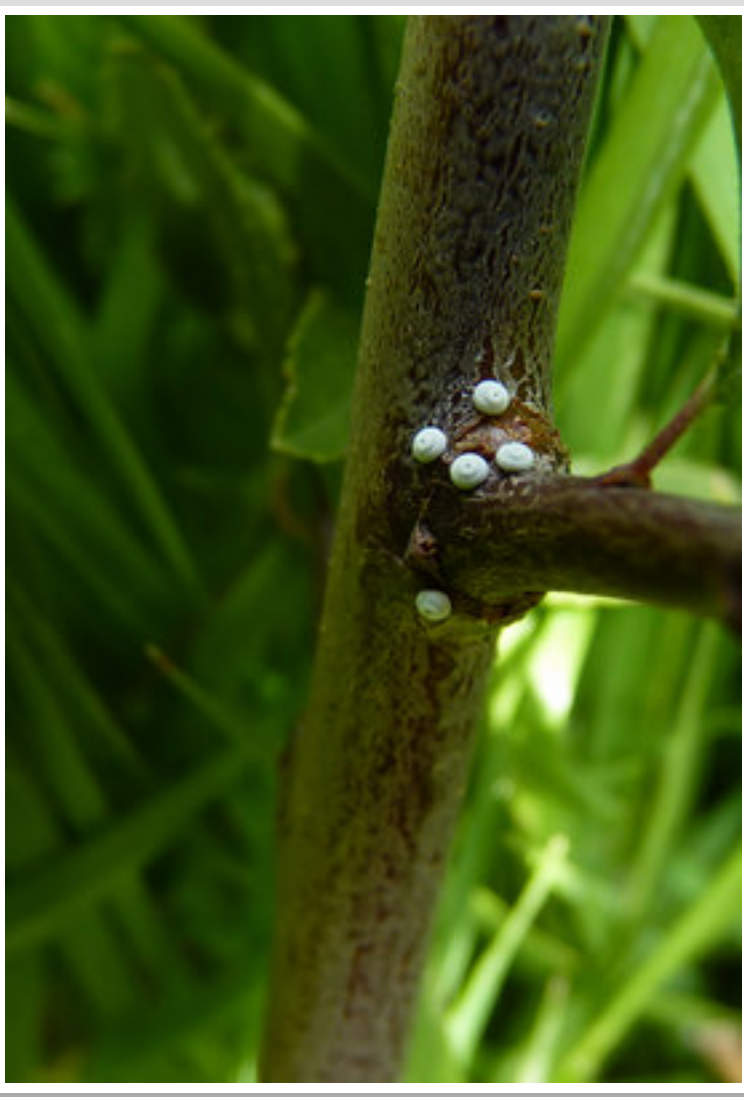
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Aug-11 12:52 AM GMT

Brown Hairstreak Bonanza

On Monday (15th August) I recognised some familiar figures wandering around the Brown Hairstreak Reserve at Steyning Rifle Range as I hurried down the slope to catch the 11.15 am start of the witching hour. UKBers Rosalyn and PhiliB were visiting West Sussex, swelling the already considerable posse of hairstreak-hunters. I'm pleased to say that they chose the right day. At 11.30 am the butterflies started to appear..... and they just kept coming. By 2.30 pm a total of 9 female Brown Hairstreaks had been down to camera level, with several in near-perfect condition. The first hour of activity was frenetic and there were so many observation/photo opportunities that much of the Steyning Downland Scheme area went unwatched, despite the large number of visitors. I'd be interested to know just how many female hairstreaks were active across the site that morning; I would hazard a guess at 20. It was good to see they were so busy ensuring a healthy crop for next season too; one female we were watching laid a pair of eggs, then fluttered to the next blackthorn sucker and laid another 3, just above a further pair!





by Michaeljf, 17-Aug-11 01:26 AM GMT

Sigh... 😞 still, it doesn't beat a day at work 😬

Lovely photographs again Neil, and nice to read that so many of the 'little beauties' were out. 😊

Michael

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Colvin, 17-Aug-11 01:51 AM GMT

Thanks Neil,

Now I'm really fed up with looking at old buildings. I've had enough of Italy and want to come home!!!

Best wishes. Julius

Re: Sussex Kipper

by GOLDENORFE, 17-Aug-11 03:43 AM GMT

looks like you had a great day neil, congrats

im itching to go see them again! 😊

phil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-Aug-11 04:29 AM GMT

Hairstreaks At Peak

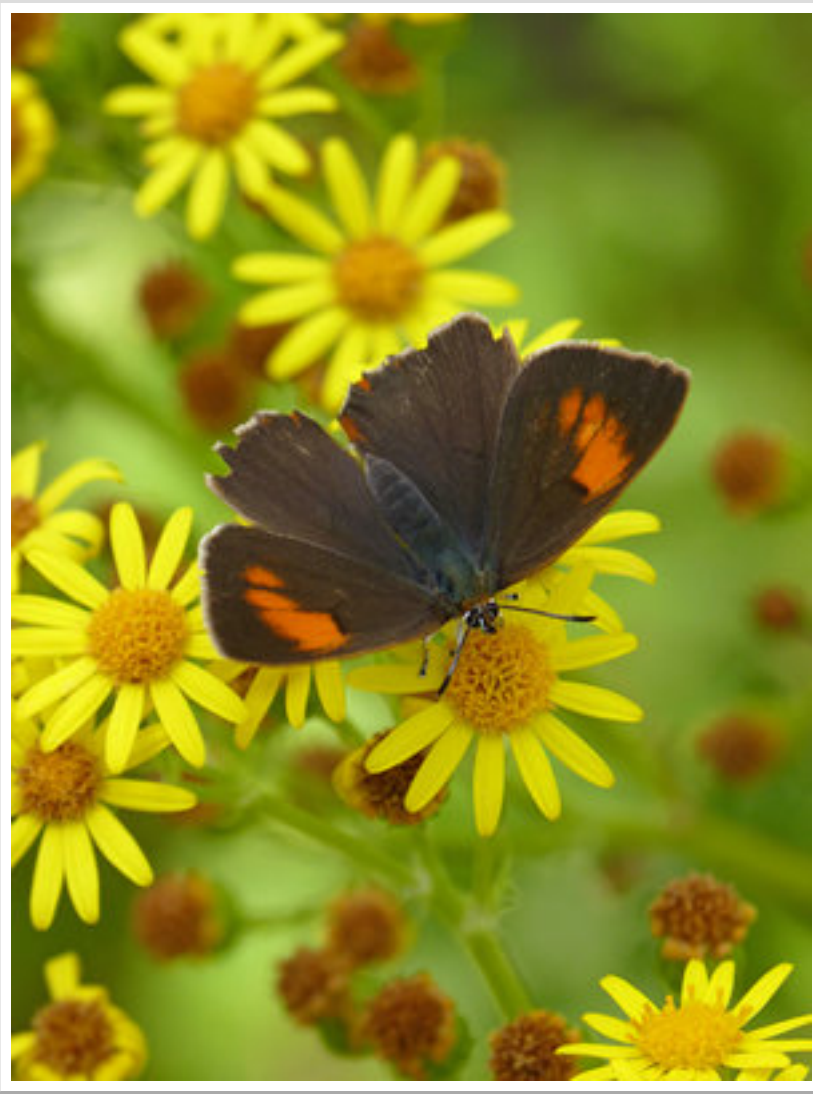
Before heading to Steyning to look for more Brown Hairstreaks (can't get enough of 'em) I started off on the Downs at Storrington this morning (19th August). As the sun began to warm the numerous Silver-spotted Skippers up they quickly attained their default position of being unphotographable. Slightly more obliging were this nice, freshly emerged Essex Skipper and a new batch of Small Heath.





At Steyning Rifle Range the Hairstreaks and Hairstreak-hunters were both out in force. It was difficult to determine how many individual females were active as there were reports of "two above your heads" and "a couple down that end" coming in as we huddled around the best specimen on offer at the time. They are probably now at peak and most are showing significant wear and tear; notably the characteristic semi-circular nicks they pick up when their wings come into contact with cylindrical stems and thorns.





It *is* still possible to find perfect specimens, but they are now few-and-far-between. I moved on to a private woodland site nearby and immediately found a female Brown Hairstreak in immaculate condition, sitting on a thistle. I patiently waited for a lull in the breeze.... but a male Small Copper whizzed in and bounced her. 😡

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-11 05:23 AM GMT

Don't you just hate it when your target gets buzzed! 😡 ? Normally it's Meadow Browns for me – they're definitely on my hit list! Usual cracking standard of photos 😊👍

Have a goodun

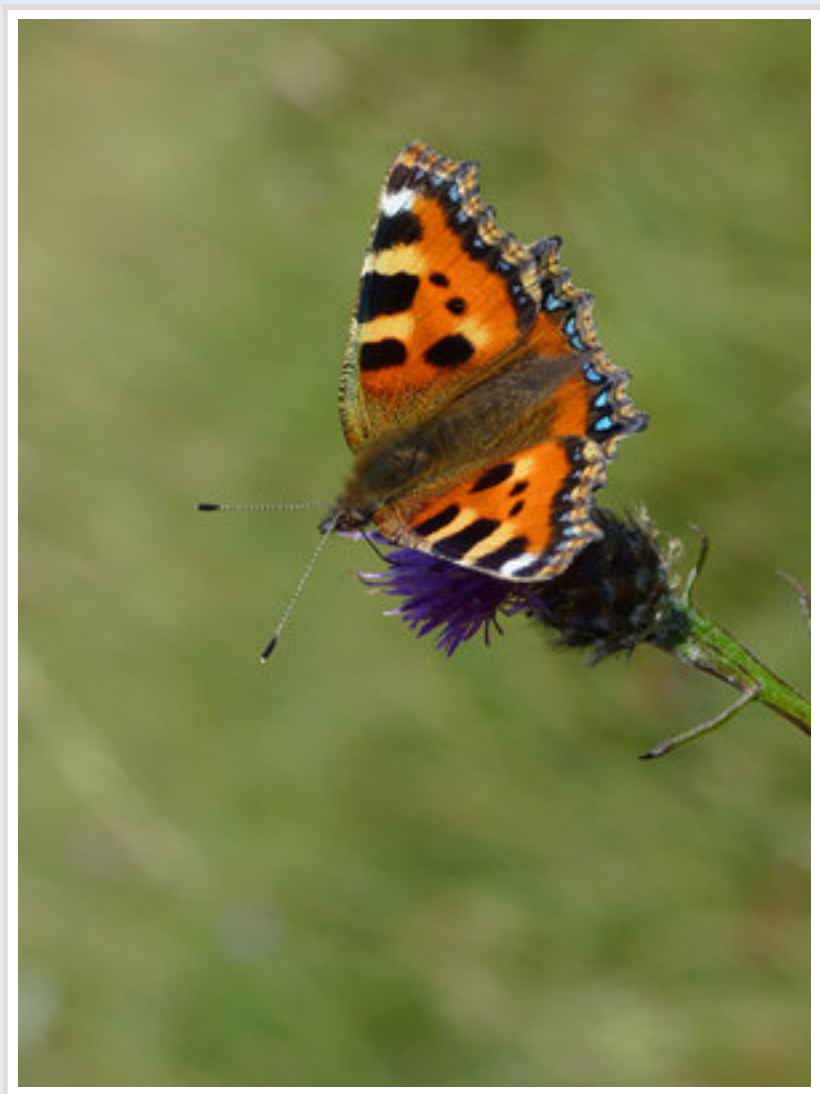
Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Aug-11 04:13 AM GMT

UKB Guests

Yesterday (20th August) was spent in the company of UKB guests Karen and Michael (Michaeljf), who had risked the ever-changing weather forecast to travel all the way to Steyning from South Wales. In the end the sun shone us and we had a great day out. As it's guest's prerogative to write it up I shall add little more than a link to Michael's eloquent and beautifully illustrated story at viewtopic.php?f=8&t=5568&start=80, and the one photo I took that I was really happy with! You are more than welcome to return next spring, for a day of Dukes, Pearls, Green Hairstreaks.....



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Michaeljf, 22-Aug-11 04:36 AM GMT

Hi Neil,
that must be the Small Tortoiseshell that was keen to follow your every command! Beautiful shot – especially nice to see such a streak of blue on the hindwings. I was rather hoping to see the Skipper that you were photographing when I took the photo of you on the downs 😊 Even if it isn't up to your high standards!

Thanks again for all your help and company – and don't worry – we fully expect to return next Spring!!! 🍷🍷

Michael

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Aug-11 08:19 PM GMT

BC Sussex And Blue Peter Record

My annual guided walk at Steyning Rifle Range has always attracted good numbers, but on Sunday (21st August) we broke the BC Sussex and Blue Peter record for attendance, and about equalled the record for Brown Hairstreak sightings! Counting those that went ahead to scout for us, plus a few late-comers, a total of 64 participants enjoyed the fantastic Steyning Downland Scheme area (<http://www.steyningdownland.org>) and all it has to offer. I'm pleased to say that every one of the party, including a good turn-out of youngsters, got eyeball-to-eyeball with at least one of the 8 female Brown Hairstreaks that came down to meet us. The butterflies posed beautifully and everybody went home with close-up photographs. Those that lingered after the end of the walk saw another 4 hairstreaks, either egg-laying or sunbathing on low foliage. They were also fortunate enough to see a Clouded Yellow!

It wasn't just the Brown Hairstreaks that were out in force and our final tally included Wall, Small Skipper, Brimstone, Small White, Green-veined White, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Small Heath, plus a few moths including Hummingbird Hawk.

The Steyning Downland Scheme continues to go from strength to strength and I for one will just keep coming back. As always here, a great crowd of

people, great butterflies and a stunning landscape. It was a very enjoyable way to finish off my 2011 walks calendar.



Some Of The 64! Image by Pete Varkala





Surrounded! Image by John Williams

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Michaeljf, 23-Aug-11 04:53 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Great to see such a good turnout – testament to your enthusiasm, hard work and reputation!! 😊

I'm glad that the weather was good enough for the 'little beauties' to show up (i.e. the butterflies!)...to the untrained eye it looks a bit like a lot of off-day twitchers turned up.... 😊

Michael

p.s. I'm having trouble with my home pc, so I'm just glad to be able to log in at all at the moment!!! 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 23-Aug-11 05:19 AM GMT

I have to say, seeing so many enthusiasts (young and old) attending a BC event has made my day. Kudos to Sussex BC and Neil in particular, who should have been changing nappies at the time 😊

Seriously – keep up the good work. You're setting a high standard for other branches to follow 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 23-Aug-11 05:45 AM GMT

Gutted I missed this. You don't fancy rerunning it next Sunday do you? Gotta be better than changing nappies ! 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Aug-11 06:28 PM GMT

Still Going Strong

Last Saturday (27th August) I met up with a small group of hairstreak-hunters at Steyning Rifle Range, two of which had never seen the Brown Hairstreak before. Bearing in mind the 'iffy' weather (and the long drive that one of them had made) I was very glad of the 10 – 15 minute spell of sunshine we got around midday. That was all we required and three female hairstreaks appeared almost simultaneously along a short section of the reserve compound. One of the three (which escaped the camera) was still in excellent condition. For those wishing to see this species there are still a few weeks left to catch up with it here.

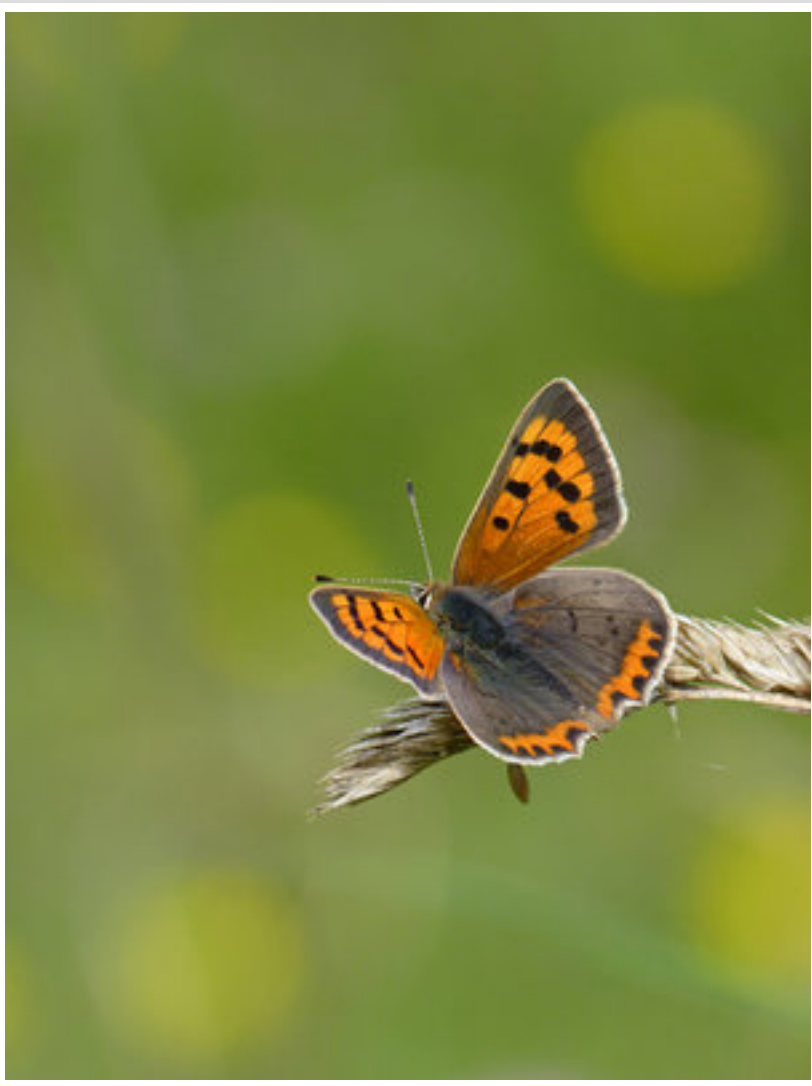


Re: Sussex Kipper

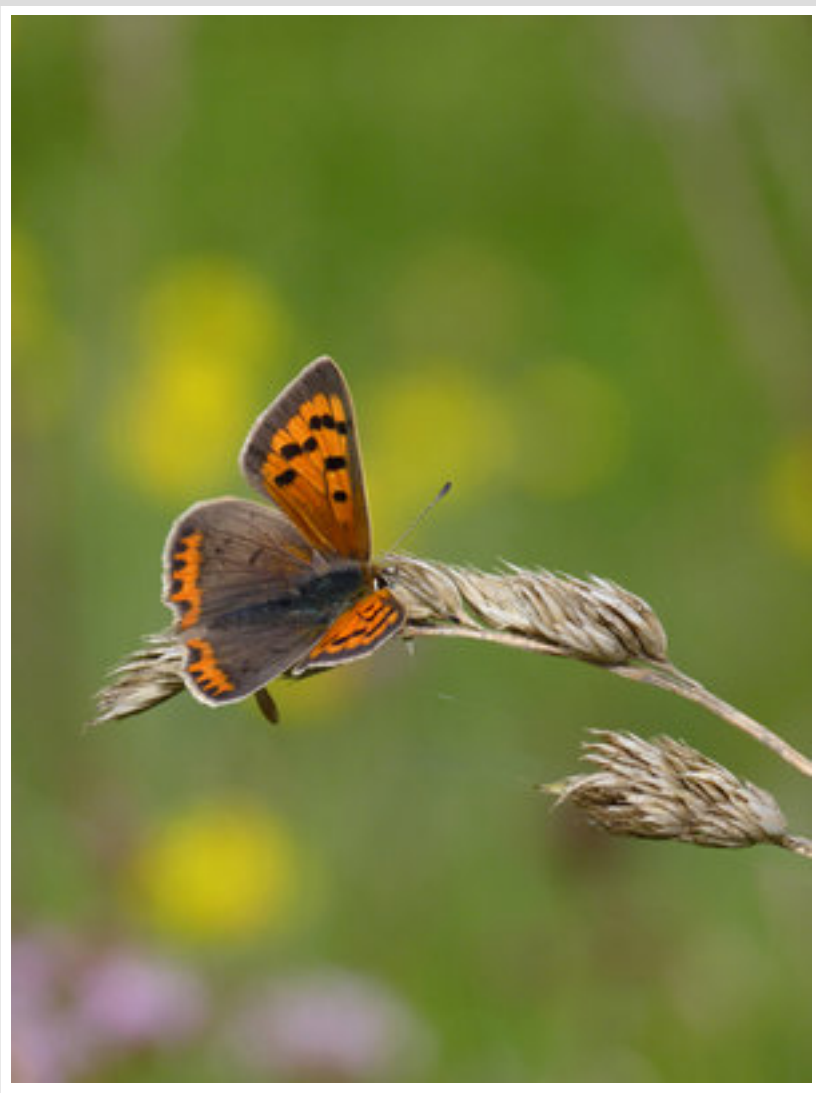
by Neil Hulme, 01-Sep-11 02:14 AM GMT

The Small Copper Walk

On Monday (29th August) I stopped off briefly at Kithurst Hill, mainly because it had been some time since I last visited my favourite downland meadow. One of the commonest species on the wing was Red Admiral and I counted a dozen beautiful, fresh specimens on the Hemp Agrimony. Green-veined Whites were also in good numbers, but it was a couple of Small Coppers that caught my attention. One of them was repeatedly doing what I've previously seen male Small Coppers doing, although I've yet to work out what it is! Every so often he would alight on the head of a grass, then turn around and slowly walk down the entire length of the stem, before flying to another perch and repeating the process 😊. Answers on a postcard please.



Land



Turn



Walk

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-11 04:46 AM GMT

Not sure what they were up to but some absolutely cracking shots of Small Copper 😊, I can never seem to find them with their wings that wide open 🤖 . Would it be possible that they were ovipositing, or maybe checking out possible sites to lay? No clue really...but I thought I'd have a go 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-Sep-11 05:08 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I'm giving no points for your guess though, as it's male butterflies performing this strange ritual.
Neil

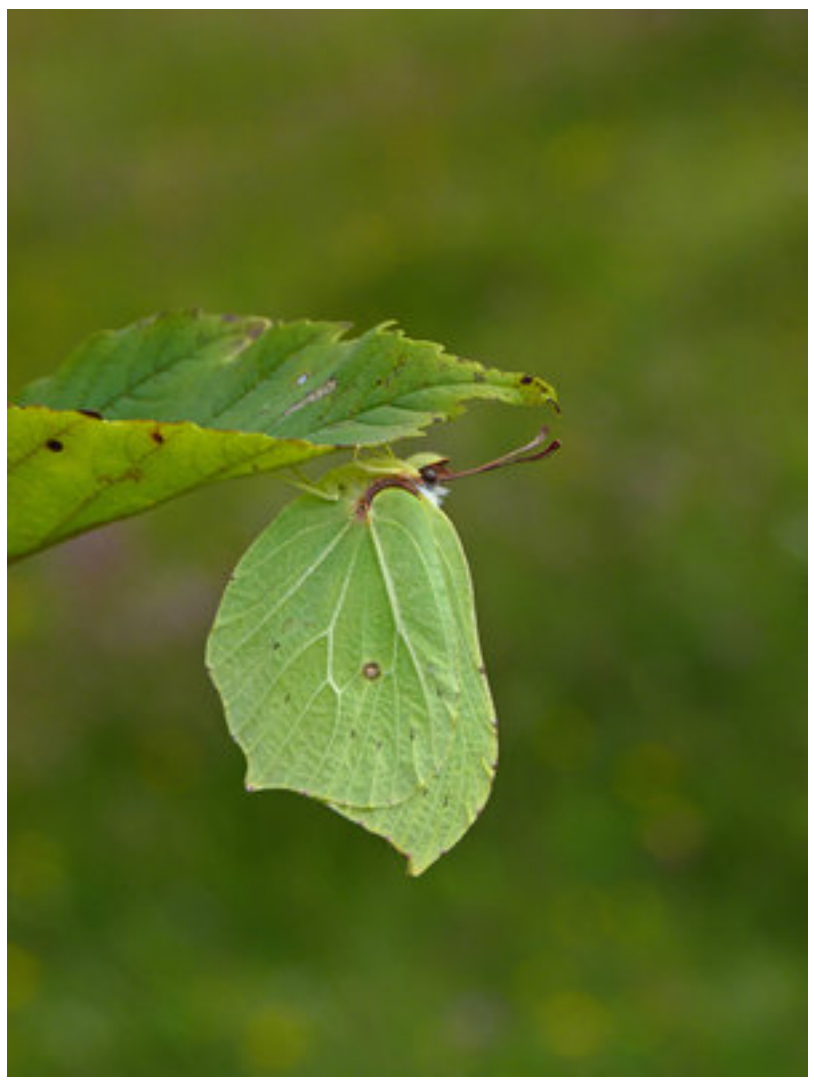
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-Sep-11 05:36 AM GMT

Brimstones

While up at Kithurst Hill recently (29th August) I took the opportunity to photograph male and female Brimstones. They were busily feeding up ready for

hibernation, but retiring to the scrub when the sun disappeared for any length of time. It won't be long before they've tucked themselves away amongst the ivy or under holly leaves or bramble. Their short summer flight often seems to get over-shadowed by other more 'exotic' species such as Brown Hairstreak and Silver-spotted Skipper, so I'm quite glad that they rapidly evaporate from the countryside and save themselves for next year. I reckon I value each Brimstone ten times more when it marks the end of winter, rather than the demise of summer when we've had our fill of butterflies and recently seen all the gold medal species. They're beautiful now, but their real purpose is yet to come.



Male



Female

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Sep-11 06:57 AM GMT

Winter Work Plans

As the butterfly season fades I start to think about how I can go some way towards repaying them for all the pleasure they've given me throughout the year which means hard graft at work parties through the winter. I get even more enjoyment from the butterflies I see each season when I know that the efforts of Butterfly Conservation, South Downs National Park Authority and other volunteers have increased their numbers as the result of the habitat management work performed locally. It's a nice way to give something back, with the considerable added bonus of keeping fit! One of the sites I'll be concentrating on is Heyshott Escarpment, where the Duke of Burgundy population is currently doubling year-on-year.

Another location earmarked for a continuation of last winter's work is Rewell Wood, so I headed up there last week to meet the Norfolk Estate's head forester and a SDNPA ranger. Mark and Simon were somewhat surprised when I turned up with baby Mia strapped to my chest. But she behaved impeccably during the three hours we were either walking around the woods, or planting *Primula* plugs supplied by the friend that joined us. Start 'em young – she's already seen Brown Hairstreak. 😊



Sussex Nipper

It didn't take long before it became obvious that there had been a massive emergence of Speckled Woods and I rapidly clocked up more than 100 very fresh specimens, staying on to photograph them after the others had departed. After a summer racing around after some of the sexier species it was nice just to sit and enjoy these beauties in the peace and solitude of a seldom-visited woodland ride.



Speckled Wood – Female



Speckled Wood – Male

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 05-Sep-11 07:27 PM GMT

Mia's looking as beautiful as ever 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Sep-11 03:19 AM GMT

Cissbury Ring

At this time of year I get up to Cissbury Ring as much as possible on sunny evenings, as the light is particularly beautiful as it bathes the landscape here. Luckily it's only a ten minute journey for me.



There are still plenty of freshly-emerged butterflies up here and it's worth visiting for the numerous Small Coppers and occasional Clouded Yellows and Brown Hairstreaks at the moment. When I visited on Saturday (3rd September) it was the Adonis Blues that caught my eye, with about half a dozen brand new males on the wing.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-11 05:06 AM GMT

Back to the Small Coppers – as they're males (how can you tell the difference by the way?) then perhaps this is the evidence required for territory marking using scent 😊

Great to see you've got your littlun off to a flying start 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Sep-11 05:44 AM GMT

"Mia's looking as beautiful as ever" Thanks Susie she's certainly got me wrapped around her little finger.

"Back to the Small Coppers – as they're males (how can you tell the difference by the way?)"

As with most species where the sexes appear broadly similar, behaviour gives the game away.

Males – territorial, argumentative, sex-mad show-offs.

Females – shy, retiring, fed-up.

Male Small Coppers are also usually a tad smaller, have more elongate abdomens and the spotting pattern is often 'heavier' in appearance.

"perhaps this is the evidence required for territory marking using scent"

I'm giving you points for that Wurzel 😊 Enjoy the rest of the season!

Neil

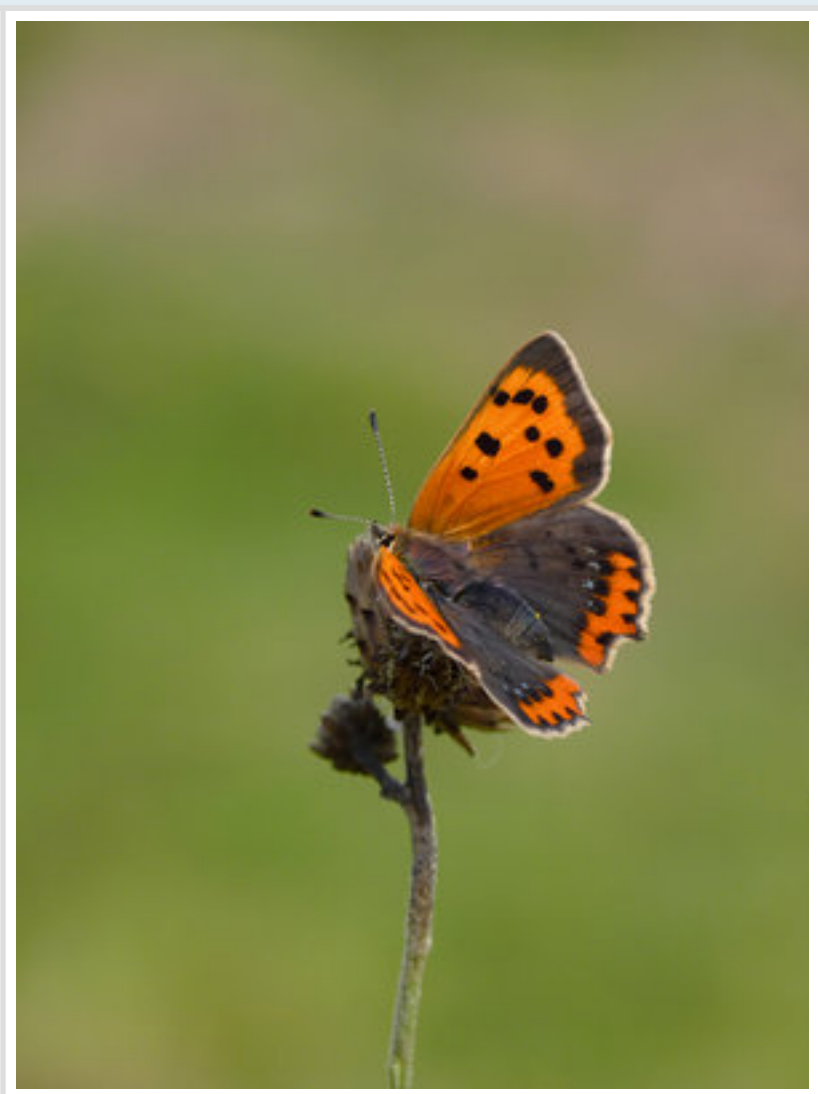
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 12-Sep-11 05:23 AM GMT

Caeruleopunctata

On Friday (9th September) I bumped into Richard Stone in the car park at Cissbury Ring. I'm pleased to say that just an hour beforehand he had successfully completed his quest to see all of the British butterflies in a year. I had given him an eight figure grid reference for the spot where Mark Colvin had last seen a female Clouded Yellow at Kithurst Hill. Following a patient wait for some sunshine (and a period of six weeks since his penultimate species) he finally struck gold as the butterfly reappeared from the precise area described to me by Mark.

As we walked around the ramparts of Cissbury Ring admiring the beautiful Adonis Blues and Small Coppers, I picked out this particularly nice example of ab. *caeruleopunctata*. This aberrant is far from rare, but always a joy to see when the definitive blue studs are well developed.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-11 06:31 AM GMT

Is that a female Small Copper?

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Nick Broomer, 12-Sep-11 07:11 AM GMT

hi neil

lovely picture of male brimstone, the washed-out green background really makes the picture. i have a similar picture [not as good as yours]but the

brimstone i photographed was sheltering from the very hot afternoon sun, i moved it on and it did exactly the same thing again by sheltering under another leaf. i have never seen this behaviour before, or since. i know green-veined whites bury themselves under vegetation when its too hot, and once they have cooled down, off they go again at a hundred mph. is this a common practice with butterflies?

hideandseek

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 13-Sep-11 12:06 AM GMT

Wurzel: Yes, she's definitely a she. The abdomen would be slimmer in a male – and the tip of it would just about reach the inner margin of the rear copper band. She was behaving like a lady and showed no interest in attacking passing insects.

hideandseek: This is common practice, but we notice it less than when butterflies take shelter from inclement weather, largely because we seldom see really hot and sunny conditions in a British summer! But sheltering from intense heat is just as important to butterfly survival as hiding from the rain – dehydration is a potential killer. Purple Emperors become lethargic and then inactive once temperatures reach the top 70s and certainly when they break 80 degs. In such conditions a few summers back I watched Silver-washed Fritillaries congregating on a shaded stream-bed to escape the sun and take a drink. Like your Brimstone they will often hang below a leaf and I've seen them disappear deep inside hazel coppice stools on more than one occasion at midday. In my diary write-up for Arnside Knott I mentioned Scotch Argus burying themselves deep inside tussocks of grass, in order to escape the atypically warm sunshine I enjoyed during my visit.

Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Nick Broomer, 13-Sep-11 04:38 AM GMT

thanks Neil, you`re a mind of information. i had heard of this behaviour before but in much hotter climates around the world, and never expected to see it on our shores with our much milder weather.

thanks again hideandseek

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-11 04:44 AM GMT

Excellent – I got it right – thanks for the pointers in the previous posting they defo worked! 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

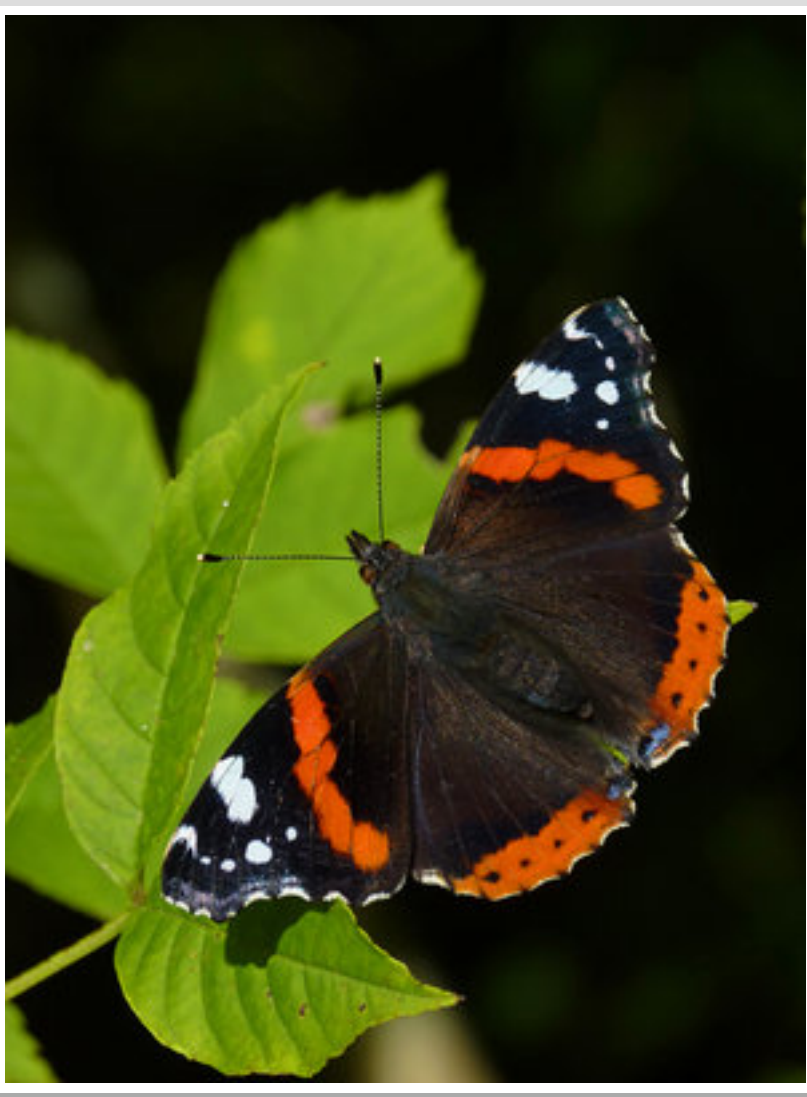
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 14-Sep-11 04:59 AM GMT

High On Hemp

This afternoon (13th September) I joined Mark Colvin for an hour or two at Kithurst Hill near Storrington. He had called me to report a large number of Red Admirals up there, in addition to the Painted Lady he was watching. When I arrived there were at least a couple of dozen Admirals enjoying the Hemp Agrimony. They always become very approachable when they gorge themselves on this flower, and today was no exception. There were other species around in low numbers, including Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Small and Green-veined White, but I only had eyes for the Red Admirals, many of which were in pristine condition. Lined up in their velvety red, black and white livery they reminded me of Coldstream Guardsmen. Certainly on my patch they are having the best year for a long while.





"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Certainly on my patch they are having the best year for a long while.

Agreed. They're far more abundant than they were last year in south Wales too.

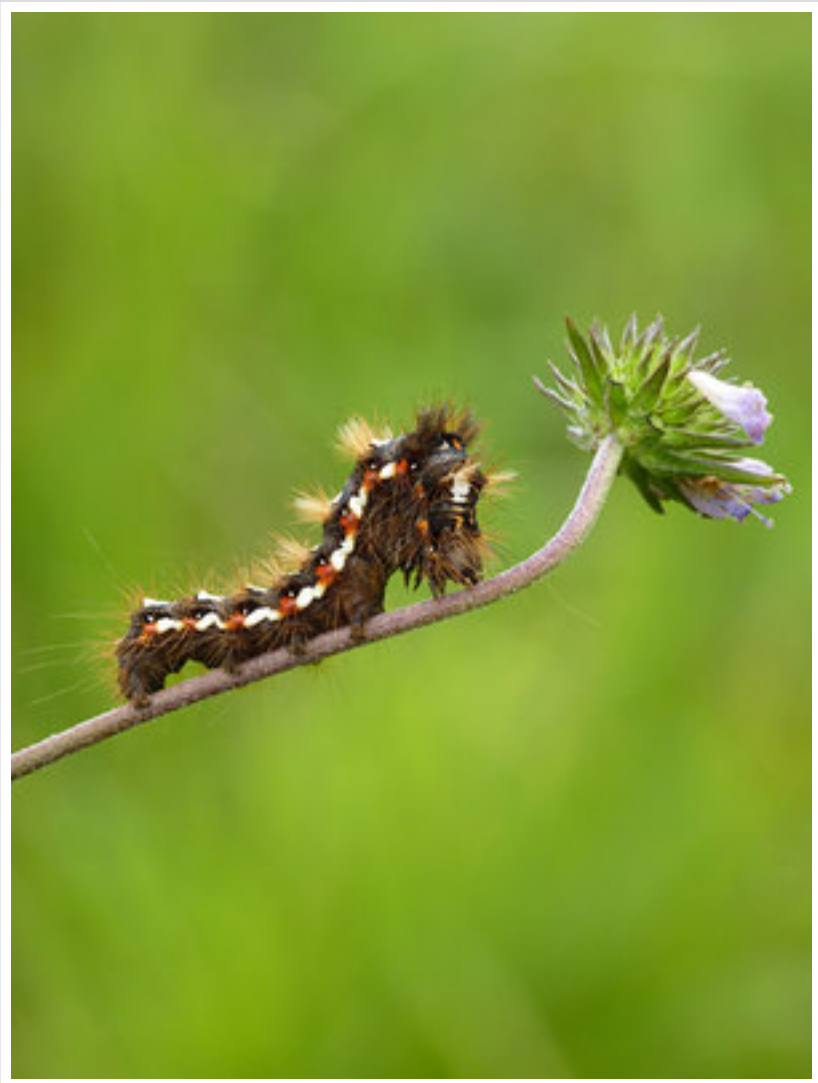
I wonder why this is?

Re: Sussex Kipper

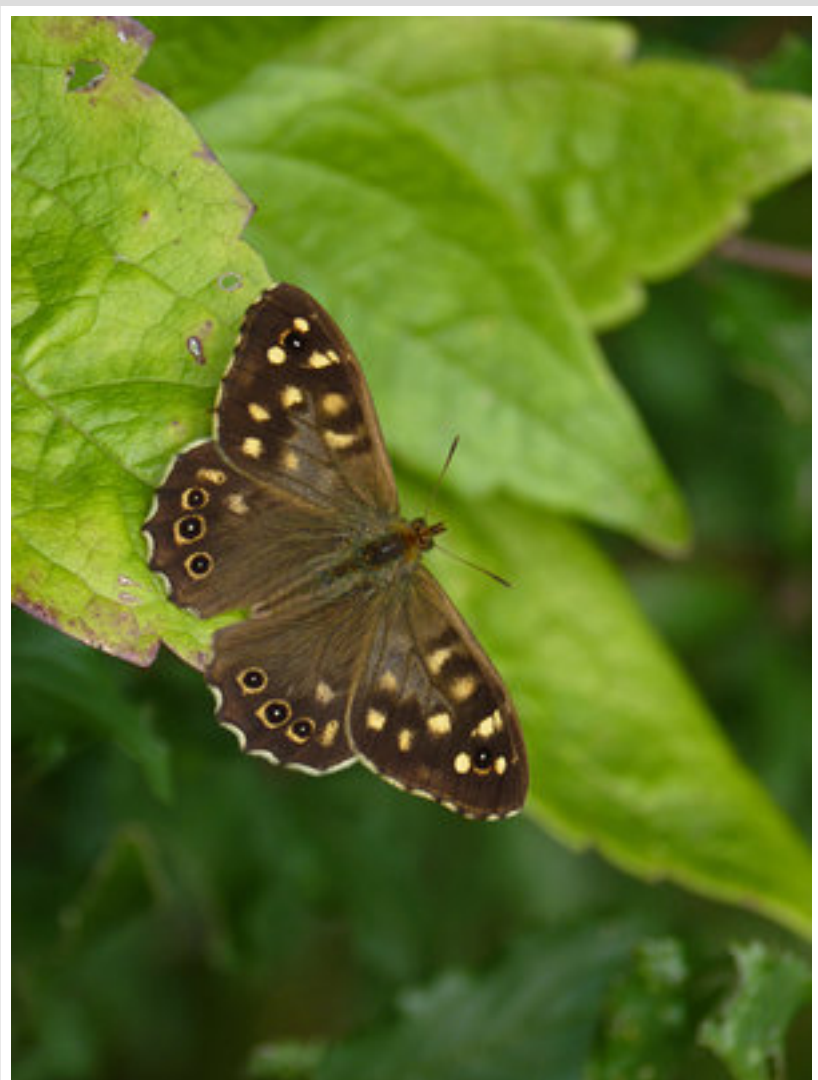
by Neil Hulme, 20-Sep-11 07:28 AM GMT

Hard Going

It's getting harder by the day now to find good numbers of butterflies which aren't on their last legs. That said, my walk on the Downs at Steyning and Storrington with Mark Colvin today (19th September) proved that there are still Speckled Woods emerging. There may yet be fresh batches of Wall and Small Copper to enjoy, and possibly even UK-born Clouded Yellows (the progeny of females seen in low numbers since late July). But I've set my sights much lower now and I'm happy enough just to be out in fine weather and beautiful surroundings. The most interesting find today was a pretty Knot Grass caterpillar at Steyning.



Knot Grass Caterpillar



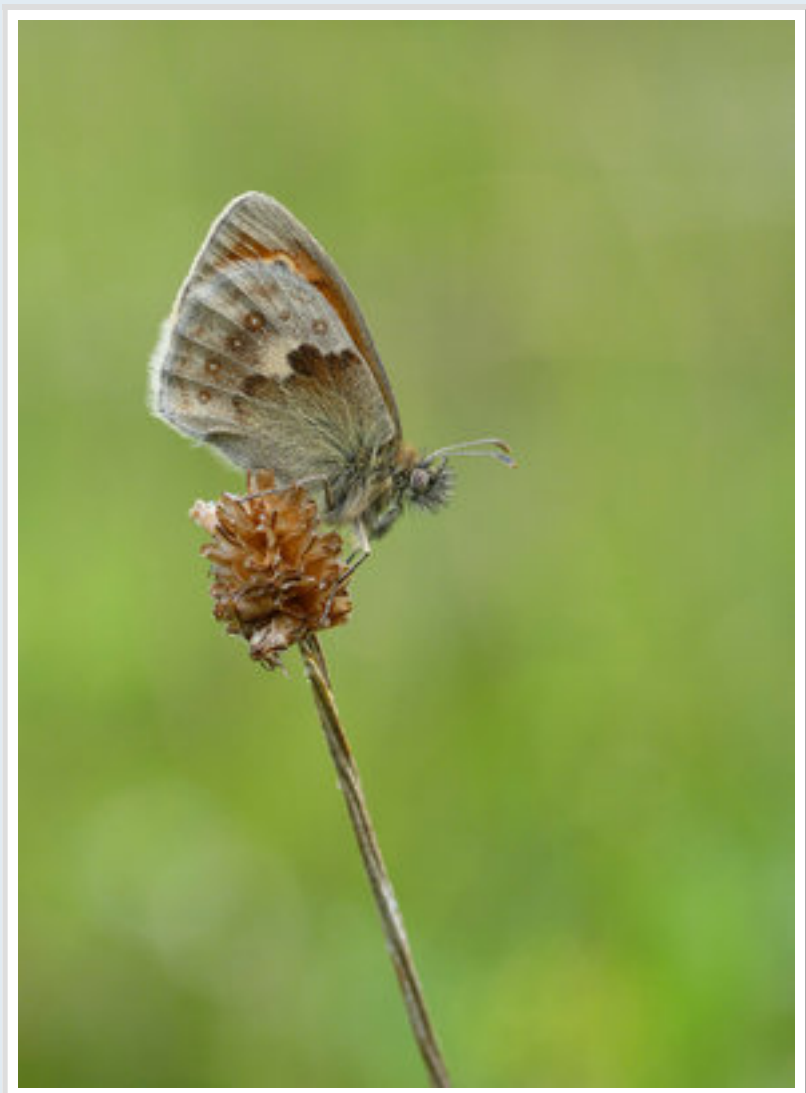
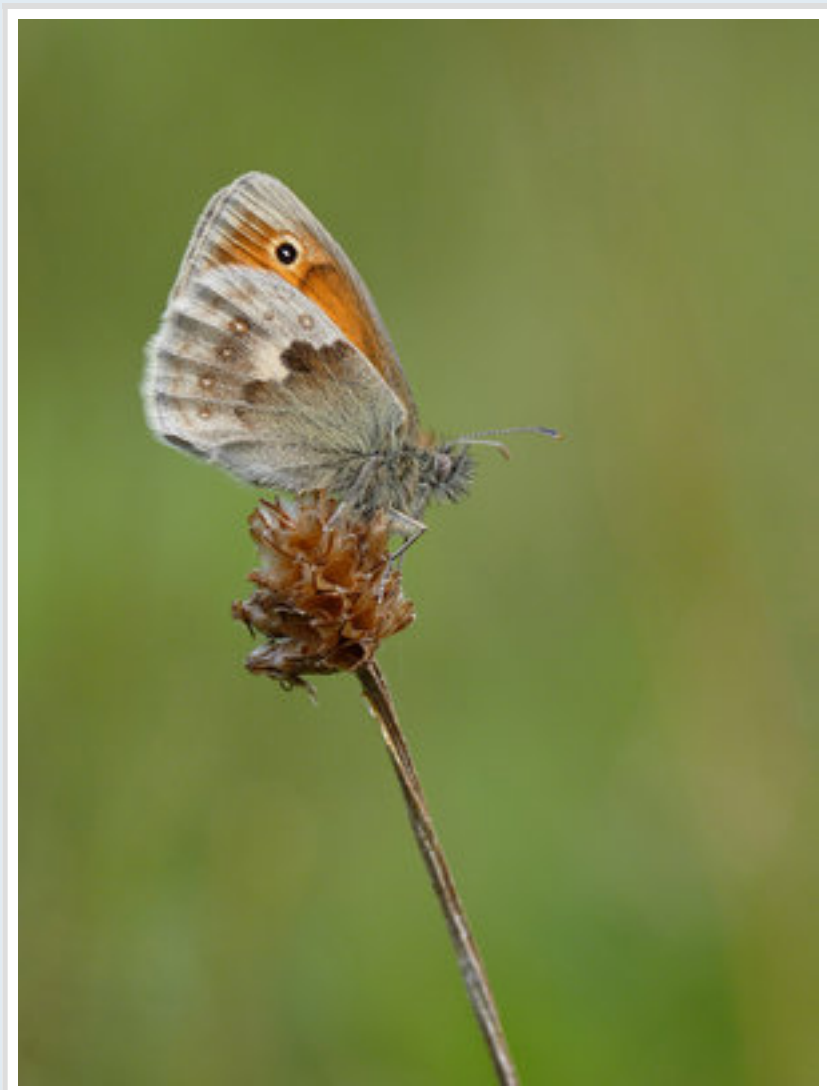
Speckled Wood Male

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Sep-11 06:29 AM GMT

Kingley Vale

This afternoon (22nd September) I met up with Brian Henham to spend a couple of hours on his local Kingley Vale NNR near Chichester. This time last year the slopes were literally crawling with freshly-emerged Small Coppers when we visited, but not today. Following an exceptionally warm spring and then rubbish summer, the timing of the third brood is quite tricky to predict for individual sites; so it may be that they will appear in their usually impressive autumn numbers next week. But as always a thorough scout around turned up something nice to photograph and I was pleased with this unusually photogenic Small Heath. Most are now very tatty and faded, so it would appear she was one of the last to emerge this year.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by EricY, 24-Sep-11 04:06 AM GMT

Last night (22nd) I was surprised at 6pm to look out of my kitchen window & find a Hummingbird Hawkmoth nectering on my *Ceratostigma willmotianum* (also known as shrubby plumbago to some). today it had lots of common large whites & I have seen HHM's on it in previous years. Has a pretty bright blue flower & no trouble at all as I cut it to 1" in early spring & it makes a rounded bush about 2feet high with thin wiry stems. Seems a good bet for the garden to attract HHM's.

Otherwise on my wanders around Norfolk I am only seeing Red admirals, Spec Woods & comma + of course LW's, not a lot about even the birds have not arrived in quantity due to all these south westerly winds we are having. Eric

Re: Sussex Kipper

by EricY, 24-Sep-11 04:09 AM GMT

sorry Neil, my apologies not concentrating & thought I was in the sept sighting thread. Eric

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Sep-11 05:04 AM GMT

No Probs Eric. But that's the first time I've been invaded by shrubby plumbago! 😊
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 26-Sep-11 06:48 AM GMT

Time To Fight Again

Here's a copy of a news item I've just posted to the BC Sussex Branch website. I suspect there will be others within the UKB community who will be equally worried about these developments.

Disproportionate Government Cuts Threaten Butterfly Conservation's Work

Our Chief Executive Dr Martin Warren recently wrote to me with the shocking news that Natural England (NE) is slashing its grant to Butterfly Conservation (BC) by a massively disproportionate 85%, amounting to a reduction of more than £250,000 in funding. We must all shoulder our fair share of the financial difficulties suffered as the economy falters and we appreciate that NE itself has lost staff (and will lose more) as the result of the 30% cuts it faces over the next three years. However, it is the disproportionate nature of the cut in the Species Recovery Grant to BC which causes me so much concern. For sixteen years this grant has funded our species action plans and a hugely diverse array of projects which have been successful in conserving butterflies and moths. This has come just as it appears we are turning the tide in our battle to halt and reverse many declines, as borne out by recent data.

The driving force behind this move appears to be the new England Biodiversity Strategy (EBS), which places far less emphasis on species conservation and far more on habitat conservation and landscape/ecosystem. Landscape scale conservation can be interpreted in more than one way. It is certainly important to continue species conservation on a landscape scale, ensuring that habitats and populations can be linked across large swathes of the countryside; this is something that BC has advocated for many years. It can also mean the more recently adopted holistic approach to the management of 'whole habitats', such as chalk grassland or broad-leaved woodland, and this approach has been widely adopted at the expense of more traditional species conservation. For several years now, based on what I have seen with my own eyes, I have been arguing that both the old and new philosophies must be run hand-in-hand. Where only the modern holistic approach is adopted the majority of fauna and flora will thrive, even the vast majority, but there have already been local casualties amongst those species which are most at risk, and there will be more. Traditional, species-focused conservation must be continued as an equal priority, fully funded, if we are to continue the sort of successes shown by BC Sussex Branch in conserving the Duke of Burgundy butterfly (see histogram). Too great a shift away from one approach to the other will only manage to reduce biodiversity, by shaving off the corners where the 'awkward' species sit. It is a matter of balance and we appear to be losing it. There is much to be commended in the EBS; it is not wrong, it is lacking.

The proposed 85% cut in the grant to BC presents other very significant threats to our work in conserving butterflies, moths and their habitats. BC is an organisation of 17,000 members, with volunteers running the more than thirty regional branches. Many more individuals are actively involved in hands-on conservation work, giving more than 150,000 volunteer days per year with a value of £9.5 million. All of this relies upon a small, central body of professional staff. Such a nucleus is essential in providing the structure, support and guidance to the much larger voluntary sector. This is a good example of where 'Big Society' congregates around smaller organisations such as BC, so it seems strange that the government should promote 'Big Society' on one hand, but pull the rug from beneath its feet with the other.

Volunteers like me and many others I know, who give a huge amount of time every year to this cause, find this all very dispiriting. I very much hope that the Environment Secretary will reconsider these proposals as a matter of extreme urgency.

What can we do?

I have written along these lines to both the Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman and my local MP Peter Bottomley (Worthing West). You may wish to write to your MP. Below is a template letter written by our Chief Executive Dr Martin Warren. If you wish to register your views please either use this template or construct your own letter from the information provided in these two documents.

Template Letter to your MP

Xxxx MP
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA

Dear XX MP

Cuts to volunteer work on the conservation of threatened species

I am writing on behalf of XXXX Branch of Butterfly Conservation to express our deep concern over the recent major cut in our charity's grant from Natural England to save threatened butterflies and moths from extinction. This runs completely counter to the stated Government aim to work in partnership with Civil Society and engage with volunteer groups such as ours. I am asking for your help in raising this matter urgently with the Environment Secretary.

In the foreword to the recently published England Biodiversity Strategy, the Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman, says "*Biodiversity is key to the survival of life on Earth Achieving our aims will be a big challenge. Government will play an important role but can't deliver this strategy alone. Our conservation charities, supported by millions of members of the public and volunteers, already make a vital contribution in protecting biodiversity.*" One of the four key aims of the new strategy is to put people at the heart of biodiversity policy. It states "*It is crucial to engage more people in biodiversity issues so that they personally value biodiversity and know what they can do to help. Civil society organisations play a front line role, directly engaging and enthusing the public about biodiversity. We will work with them to engage more people and empower them to make a difference.*"

Butterfly Conservation has indeed been in partnership with Natural England and its predecessors for the last 16 years and has pioneered recovery projects which are beginning to reverse the decline of many species. This has helped the government to meet its international commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity to halt the loss of biodiversity. However our volunteers have relied on the professional staff employed under this Natural England grant, who have run training courses, provided the professional back-up, evidence and information to target our work; thus making the best use of voluntary time. Butterfly Conservation is proud that this support yields over 150,000 volunteer days / yr, equivalent to £9.5 million of voluntary effort. All this good work is put at risk by the massive cut in our Species Recovery grant, which will discourage local volunteers and plunge

many species back into crisis.

Butterflies are one of the most rapidly declining wildlife groups. Over three-quarters are in decline and almost half (24 species) are on the Government's Priority Species list (section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006). Yet our grant to work on these species has been cut completely, including work on the globally endangered Large Blue which is held as a flagship for conservation around the world. Our grant to work on Priority Moths has also been cut, amounting to an 85% overall cut in our work to save these beautiful and important species.

We regret that the recent disproportionate cuts to our charity will oppose the strategy aims by disempowering local volunteers, thus harming the species that both the Government and our charity are desperately trying to conserve. We are asking for your help by taking this matter up urgently with the Minister, such that she urgently re-instates the Species Recovery Programme grants to the voluntary sector. The amount of money is modest (c £1 million pa) but this levers many times that amount in voluntary efforts such as ours.

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

XXXXX

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 26-Sep-11 07:37 AM GMT

Second Time Around

One area where data is pretty thin on the ground is 'second pairings'. There is evidence that some females in a few of our larger, longer-lived species will mate for a second time, but there is scant or no evidence for many species. This pair of Small Heath I photographed at Cissbury Ring on 23rd September provides strong circumstantial evidence for just this. Female butterflies, particularly those which emerge into tight-knit colonies, do not remain virgin for very long. However, this female (she's on top 😊) is showing clear signs of having been around the block. To me there is little doubt that this is her second mating.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 26-Sep-11 07:38 AM GMT

Well put Neil – especially since most of the BC and UKB membership are unaware of these very worrying cuts. I've summarised the situation for the Hants newsletter due out in the next week or so, and have asked Martin if he wants the troops mobilised given the correspondence he's sent out to the branch chairs. If so, this will be a prominent item on the UKB homepage, the UKB Twitter feed and Facebook page, and newsletter.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 26-Sep-11 04:16 PM GMT

Neil:

this female (she's on top 😊)

Don't quite understand the significance of the smiley 😊

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Colin Knight, 26-Sep-11 05:45 PM GMT

An easy way to write to your MP (or any elected official) is by using this website: <http://www.writetothem.com/>

Colin

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Ian Pratt, 26-Sep-11 09:08 PM GMT

I have sent the letter to the IOW MP Andrew Turner.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by MikeOxon, 26-Sep-11 10:04 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

You may wish to write to your MP.

Also, please note that if you choose to **e-mail** your MP, you must include your postal address, as they will only respond if they know that you are one of their own constituents.

Mike

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Sep-11 04:42 AM GMT

Raptor City

I should mention the Peacock and Red Admirals I saw nectaring in the gardens of Burpham village this afternoon (26th September), as this is meant to be a butterfly diary. But it was the abundance of raptors currently enjoying the farmland on the Norfolk Estate that I was here to see. The Estate is doing a great job of improving the land for the benefit of birds such as the Grey Partridge, Lapwing and Corn Bunting, in addition to being very helpful with some of our butterfly projects. The widespread implementation of uncut field margins, conservation headlands and beetle banks has clearly resulted in a packed larder for birds of prey. I had some fantastic views of the much-twitched juvenile Pallid Harrier, together with Marsh Harrier (male), Red Kite, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Merlin, Hobby and Kestrel. Currently in the area, or recently passed through, are Hen Harrier, Osprey and Peregrine. Thankfully a very different picture to twenty years ago. The Lumix FZ38 is hopelessly inadequate for this sort of work, but I at least managed a few record shots.



Juvenile Pallid Harrier

Re: Sussex Kipper

by dave brown, 27-Sep-11 06:23 PM GMT

Raptor City.

I hope that you don't mind me adding to your personal blog, but it's so nice to hear of an estate doing many things to help wildlife. Friends from Kent who have visited for the Pallid Harrier have all expressed the same view as yours, saying what a good area for wildlife and particularly raptors. All have enjoyed their visit with some saying that it is worthy of a repeat visit despite the distance involved. Like you they saw a good range of birds but good views of the Pallid Harrier was the icing on the cake. Whilst there are other good estates around would be nice to see more follow their example.

Dave

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-Sep-11 04:41 AM GMT

A/A – couldn't agree more Dave. The Norfolk Estate should be proud of what it is achieving across both farmland and woodland. The Estate Manager and foresters have been more than helpful in assisting with projects for Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Duke of Burgundy, with many other species benefiting along the way. Their habitat work for farmland birds has been exemplary.

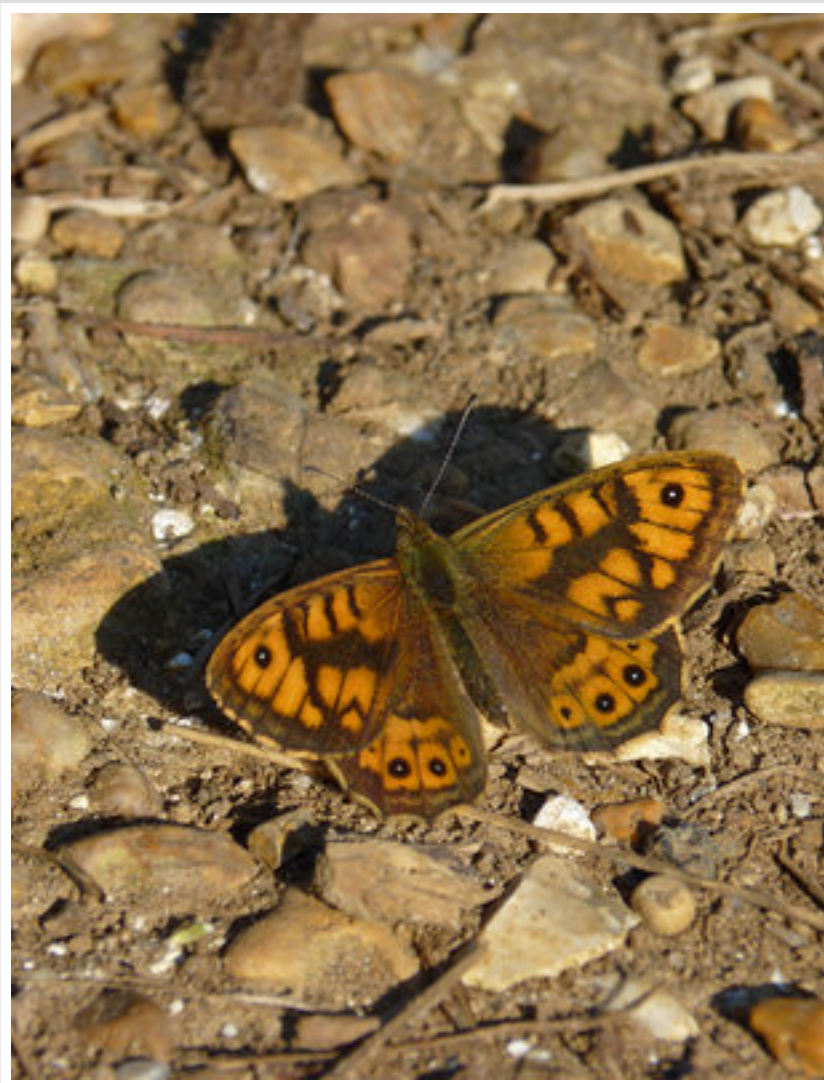
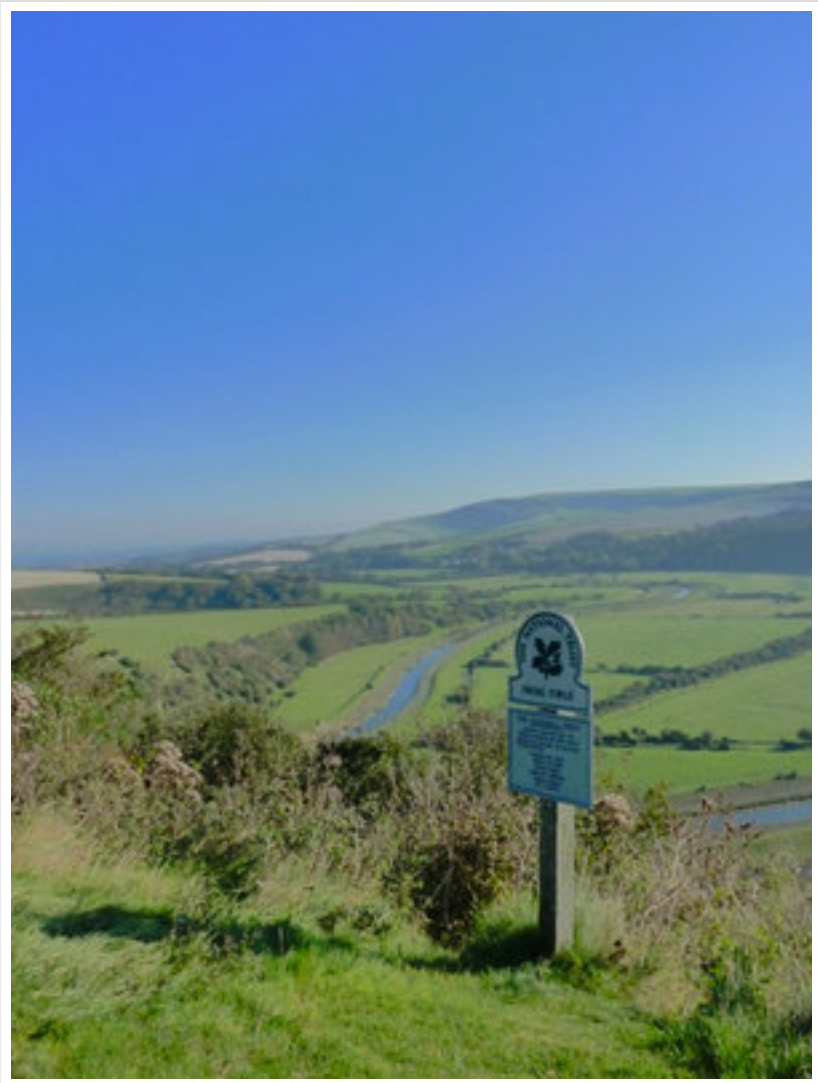
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-Sep-11 05:01 AM GMT

Still Going Strong

It seems the butterfly season may be over in some parts of the country, but that's certainly not the case in Sussex. This morning I joined Bob Eade, our Branch Species Champion for Wall Brown, at his local venue High & Over (Frog Firle) behind Seaford. In the unseasonable heat the third brood Wall were active shortly after 9am and we saw at least 10 around the White Horse viewing point. Other species seen included Brown Argus (some freshly emerged), Common Blue, Small Heath, Meadow Brown, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood and Large White. However, the most common species was Red Admiral, with a steady stream migrating south at a rate of approximately 12 per hour. I dropped in briefly at Hope Gap and Ouse Estuary Project, where Red Admirals were moving seaward at 6 per hour. I also added Clouded Yellow, Small Copper and Small White to my tally, making a total of 13 species.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickB, 30-Sep-11 06:23 AM GMT

Season over in the East, Neil. We've had only 25% of our average rainfall so far this year.... 🤔

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 30-Sep-11 06:27 AM GMT

Right. All round to Kipper's at 8am tomorrow, then 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickB, 30-Sep-11 06:29 AM GMT

Seconded! 🇬🇧

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 30-Sep-11 04:58 PM GMT

Nick:

Season over in the East, Neil. We've had only 25% of our average rainfall so far this year.... 🇬🇧

Don't know where you get that figure Nick. So far to end of September, Cambridge has received 275 mms rain. Annual average for twelve months = 550 mms. Rainfall is pretty evenly distributed throughout year so by end of September (ie first nine months) the average rainfall is approx 410 mms.

So yes, there is indeed a significant shortfall of rain in East Anglia this year having so far received approx 66% of average. But that's a lot more than the 25% you quoted.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickB, 30-Sep-11 06:35 PM GMT

I should have checked my figures Jack; either way – another dry winter and we are really in trouble over here, that is for sure.
N

Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickMorgan, 01-Oct-11 08:25 AM GMT

I'm sure we could come to some sort of arrangement. We have had more than our fair share of rain his year up here!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickB, 02-Oct-11 03:08 AM GMT

"NickMorgan" wrote:

I'm sure we could come to some sort of arrangement. We have had more than our fair share of rain his year up here!

Send it here now I'd swap our record temperatures for a good day of Welsh rain anytime.... 😊
(And I guess, to be fair, I have to include Scottish and Irish rain too!)

Spent today on the edge of an uncut flower meadow at an event in Essex – Roding Valley NR – and all I saw was a couple of fly-by *Nymphths*...
Season pretty-well over there too..

N

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-Oct-11 07:27 AM GMT

Flying South For Winter

It wasn't just the swallows that were moving south when I visited Burpham (Arundel) on Saturday 1st October. I counted Red Admirals passing in a determined manner at a rate of 28 per hour. Today, while Hannah, Mia and I sat on the beach at East Preston, we watched 12 per hour disappear out over the water. They were hurrying past at a more modest 6 per hour during our early evening walk on the Downs behind High Salvington (Worthing). When considering all of the similar reports made to the BC Sussex website last week it's apparent that hundreds of thousands must have passed through the county in a few days. It might not be migration on the scale of Painted Ladies a couple of years back, but it's a very significant movement. Meanwhile an increasing (but still modest) number of Clouded Yellows is coming in the opposite direction. Birling Gap, Thorney Island, Newhaven and Southbourne are all worth a look at the moment.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Gruditch, 03-Oct-11 03:30 PM GMT

Sorry to invade, but don't you find it interesting that the Red Admirals don't seem to use a high altitude return like the Painted Lady. Could it be because the Painted lady needs to reach a more distant destination. 🤔

Regards Gruditch

Re: Sussex Kipper

by selbypaul, 04-Oct-11 04:38 AM GMT

Interesting observation about the Red Admirals. I was at Durlston Head on the 15th September and they were passing me at around 1 per minute for the 4 hours I was there. Never seen so many Red Admirals in all my life. I'd imagined it was a relatively common occurrence, but having read various posts in the intervening two weeks, it seems not.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Vince Massimo, 06-Oct-11 08:09 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

I have just got my copy of the Autumn edition of "Butterfly" magazine. Congratulations on getting your Red Admiral on the front cover 🐛

Cheers,
Vince

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Oct-11 09:25 PM GMT

Thanks Vince. For the benefit of those such as family living abroad, this is the image which Vince refers to. Quite topical with such a large scale southward migration of the species occurring over the last couple of weeks.



Gruditch: You've raised an interesting point Gary. Do the two species actually adopt different southward migration strategies? Recent research indicates that many Painted Ladies make the return journey at significant altitude, where air flow may be in a different direction to that at ground level. But Painted Ladies do occasionally make the return crossing at low altitude, in the same manner in which I watched numerous Red Admirals head off over the water last week. Despite the claims that there was no data available at the time of the 2009 Painted Lady 'event', L H Newman had recorded low level return flights in literature published in the mid C20th. Of course Red Admiral may also sometimes fly south at altitude, undetected by us. But all of the Red Admirals I've watched head out to sea lately have done so during warm, very calm, anticyclonic conditions, so perhaps weather conditions at ground level influence the altitude chosen by both species. I think there are many questions still to be answered, so the short answer is dunno. 😞
Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickB, 06-Oct-11 09:55 PM GMT

Nice pic on Butterfly, Neil 😊

Re: Migrations

Red Admirals going south is very interesting; sightings of numbers migrating back over the water accompany a fall in my own local observations from very high to "normal" numbers. Watching the influx of Painted Ladies in 2009, over land at least, it did seem that they were all at low-level, following the same course (the same gaps through the trees where I sat) heading steadfastly North.

A lot of small birds migrate over sea at just above wave-level, where there is enough turbulence to give them lift; it seems reasonable to assume that for a short distance at least (over the Channel) butterflies could do the same....

N

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 07-Oct-11 12:37 AM GMT

Neil said (re flying heights):

I think there are many questions still to be answered, so the short answer is dunno. 😞

Birds are pretty much proven to migrate at altitudes that give the most favourable (or perhaps the least unfavourable) wind.

Rules of thumb

During the day, the wind at say 2,000 feet is 30 degrees further round to the right than that at the surface and perhaps twice the speed of the surface wind.

At night, that 2,000 foot wind would be roughly the same direction as by day (perhaps just a little further to the right) and does not normally decrease unlike the surface wind which can often fall calm at night.

Remember. In weather terminology, the wind blows FROM not towards. So a north west wind blows FROM the north west.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 07-Oct-11 12:47 AM GMT

Autumn edition of "Butterfly" magazine. Congratulations on getting your Red Admiral on the front cover 🎉

Yes, seconded. Congratulations Neil.

Who needs a DSLR now? 😏

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 13-Oct-11 07:36 AM GMT

Party Season

Today (12th October) was the first work party of the season for me, although my colleagues in East Sussex started knocking the BC Park Corner Heath Reserve into shape at the weekend. I joined John and Tricia Murray, Mike Edwards, Mike Hadley, Greg Wilson and Rebecca of the Murray Downland Trust and UKBer Mark Colvin on the slopes of Heyshott Escarpment, to kick off the winter campaign. It was one of those typical autumn days when the wood smoke hung heavy in the damp air as we set to work with chainsaws, brush-cutters, loppers and my Silky Zubat samurai saw. By next March the place will look very different and I hope to see a further increase in Duke of Burgundy numbers here next May. But this season isn't quite over yet and despite the weather we spotted 4 Red Admirals intent on heading south. The first image shows Mark demonstrating considerable pyromaniac tendencies – a valuable addition to the team! 😊



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Oct-11 03:25 AM GMT

Recent Doings

Yesterday (13th October) I made a short visit to Rewell Wood, seeing 4 Red Admiral, 2 Peacock and single Comma, Brimstone and Speckled Wood. A long walk over the Downs at Burpham this afternoon (14th October) was productive for both butterflies and birds. The mass exodus of Red Admirals through the Arun Valley is still underway, with a southerly movement at the observed rate of 12 per hour. Also seen were 9 Small White and 2 Clouded Yellow. Raptors included ringtail Hen Harrier (2), Red Kite (1), Buzzard (11), Sparrowhawk (2), Merlin (1) and Kestrel (4).

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-Oct-11 06:04 AM GMT

Making Inroads

Today (19th October) I attended the second work party of the season at Heyshott Escarpment, these being a regular Wednesday event from now until March. Initially a small team of five set to work, with John Murray and Mike Hadley (Murray Downland Trust) on chainsaws and BC Sussex members/UKBers Paul Day, Mark Colvin and I doing the follow-up slash and burn. We were later joined by Tricia Murray and Rebecca from the village below.

Over the years I've attended a large number of work parties, but I don't think I've ever seen a small team achieve more than we did today. By 3pm we had worked ourselves to a standstill and the two bonfires had consumed a huge mountain of wood. We succeeded in opening up a highway which I hope will encourage the Duke of Burgundy to spread from the old chalk workings above, down through the wooded slopes and into the lowermost pits. The view through to the illuminated trees in the background didn't exist when we started, and the understory was so dense and dark that only the most adventurous Speckled Wood would have made the journey. Despite the aches and pains I think we all gained a great deal of satisfaction from our handywork.



Re: Sussex Kipper

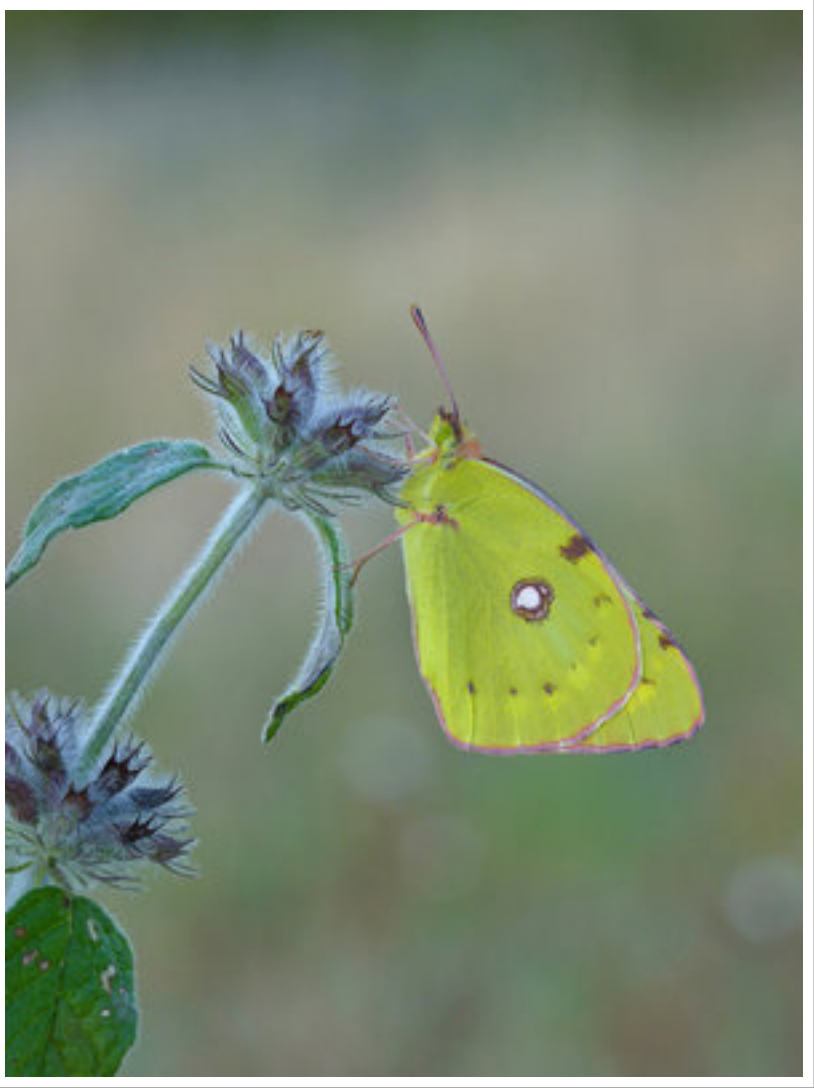
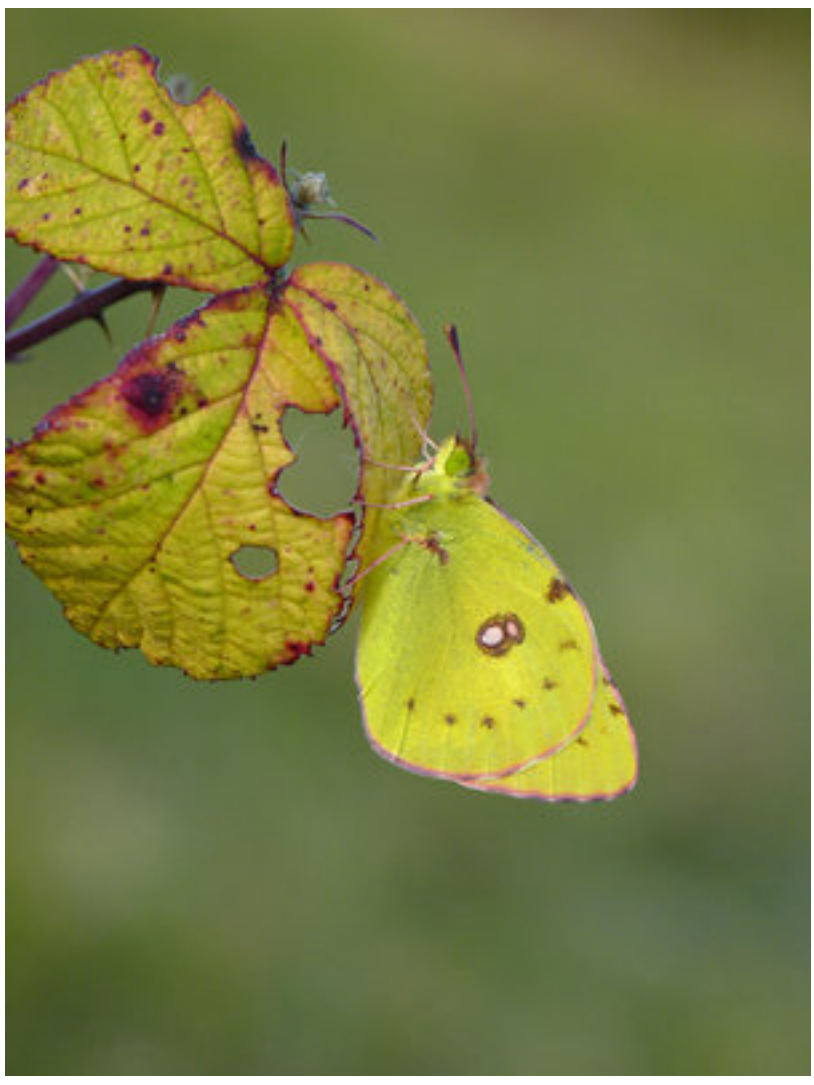
by Neil Hulme, 22-Oct-11 03:55 AM GMT

Autumn Gold

Earlier this week I made several visits to Cissbury Ring where there are still a few Small Copper, Brown Argus, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Peacock and emigrating Red Admiral to be seen. However, it was the Clouded Yellows I was particularly interested in tracking down. Although this species is quite capable of arriving from mainland Europe in excellent condition, my gut feel is that these are the progeny of those butterflies which have been arriving steadily in low numbers since late July. With the recent drop in temperatures the flight window has been restricted to a couple of hours after midday, with the upside being that they can be followed until the weather puts them down. This coming weekend (particularly Sunday) should see them

active if the forecasters are telling the truth.

On Thursday (20th October), while at a meeting on Chantry Hill (Storrington) with rangers from the South Downs National Park Authority, we watched Red Admirals passing on the way to warmer climes at a rate of 6 per hour.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 22-Oct-11 04:05 AM GMT

I particularly like that second photo, Neil, it's beautiful.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickB, 22-Oct-11 04:09 AM GMT

Beautiful and delicate,Neil. 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by millerd, 22-Oct-11 04:30 AM GMT

They are both lovely. I particularly like the first. It's as if the butterfly's markings were designed to hide on an autumnally fading plant of just this type.

Dave

Re: Sussex Kipper

by John W, 22-Oct-11 09:27 AM GMT

Stunning photos Neil! A reward for all the hard work you put in tracking them down...

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 22-Oct-11 03:11 PM GMT

Clouded Yellow!!!! 🍷

The hard search paid off then Neil. Excellent, and the piccies aren't too bad either – well, they're OKish 😊

Norfolk might not be the best county for butterflying, but for birds, it sure takes some beating. Just off to the north coast this fine Saturday morning.

Target for the day: "Seagull" 🍷

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Colin Knight, 22-Oct-11 03:32 PM GMT

Beautiful shots Neil. I think the one on the bramble leaf is one of your best, it encapsulates Autumn.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by 59 SPECIES, 22-Oct-11 04:52 PM GMT

That first picture is an absolute belter. Well done Neil. Butterfly and leaf – a perfect match!

Thanks to your posting of Clouded Yellows down at Southbourne Undercliff, I managed an hastily arranged three day visit to Dorset during the very hot weekend in late September. Dad and I had wonderful weather and a great time. It was another species first for myself. We saw four altogether, a couple of them were a bit worn though. Thanks a lot for flagging them up on the September sightings page. Much appreciated. I am already planning a three to four day break in Sussex for next May. Can't wait. I'll be in touch nearer the time if that's still ok, for best places to view Adonis, DOB, PBF etc. Best regards, Peter.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 25-Oct-11 01:21 AM GMT

Thanks to all for the generous comments. Although the colours in that first image are very nice, unfortunately the high winds made things tricky and the image is a little 'soft' around the rear margins. There are also too many scales missing for it to make the grade IMO – I'm getting very fussy in my old age. The second image is a lot sharper all the way across – and the specimen is unblemished, at least on that side, so that's the one which will ultimately get printed off.

Dave: The ability of butterflies to identify foliage which provides them with the very best possible camouflage never ceases to amaze me. While watching Dinky Skippers going to roost this spring I was astounded by their ability to pick out those individual seed-heads which would provide them with an almost perfect match, while travelling at high speed over thick scrub containing a huge diversity of plants. It's an ability upon which their lives may depend – but hugely impressive nevertheless.

Peter: I'm glad you caught up with the Southbourne Clouded Yellows. I heard reports of up to a dozen along that short stretch, which was probably the best turn-out anywhere in the UK for the species this year. See you in the spring!

Neil