

Pauline

by Pauline, 04-May-12 05:54 PM GMT

It has long been my intention to organise my growing mass of photos and document the events surrounding the shot. To that end this will initially be a historic record starting mostly in 2011. The photos were generally taken using a Lumix FZ38, hand held and without any close up lens.

I shall begin in April last year when I set out to get a photo of a Pearl Bordered Fritillary with the wings closed. I had been reliably informed that these insects roost on bracken and that was the best time to get a shot with the wings closed. Late one afternoon I set out for a little known site fairly close to me where a small colony could be found. It was still warm and sunny and the butterflies were very active so I waited patiently for the sun to go down. As afternoon turned into early evening the Pearl Bordered Fritillaries became more settled but spread their wings to soak up the last rays of sun.



As the last of the sun's rays disappeared the Pearl Bordered Fritillaries promptly flew up into the neighbouring pine trees to roost in a perfect pose, wings closed, just out of reach!! Frustration just didn't come close as I had to leave empty handed so to speak. I was so disappointed I lay awake for a long time that night determined not to be beaten. Undeterred, At 4.00am the next morning I collected the stepladder and fifteen minutes later I was carrying it through the woods. I easily located my butterfly who had not moved and just as the light came up I got the shot I wanted before returning home for a well deserved breakfast.



My next target was to be the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary which I had never seen before. Adrian (Hoskins) had offered to accompany me to Bentley Wood and point me in the right direction for the Pearls. I had tried in the past to get to Bentley Wood on more than one occasion but a series of incidents had always prevented it. The last time I had managed to get half way when a large vehicle ran into the back of me and my car was written off!! Ah well, third time lucky I thought. Adrian is very knowledgeable about butterflies and I am told the butterfly tours he organises to Peru and other far flung places are excellent. His website, Learnaboutbutterflies is definitely worth a look.

By the time we arrived at Bentley Wood we could see that the many photographers who were already there were packing up their equipment as the storm clouds were gathering and the first drops of rain were falling. Undeterred, Adrian led the way to the clearing and with the unsettled weather we were easily able to locate a number of Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries which were very easy to photograph.



My next port of call was Botany Bay at Chiddingfold to see the first brood of the wonderful Wood White, a butterfly which is high on my list of favourites. They are such charming, delicate creatures and look so ethereal.



..... and another. I could continue to take photos of this species and never get bored with them.



During one of my many happy visits to Botany Bay I met up with Susie who highly recommended a visit to Denbies which is one of her regular haunts. Aberrations are frequently reported from this site so off I set. I seem to be unlucky with the weather quite often but I have learnt from experience not to let this deter me. Nevertheless, these storm clouds were quite daunting.



I found very few butterflies that day and below is one of them. Technically, it is probably not a very good photo but I like it and that is good enough reason to include it.



Re: Pauline

by Rogerdodge, 04-May-12 06:18 PM GMT

Pauline

Your photographs are beautiful.

It just goes to illustrate a point often made on here by the more experienced photographers – bright sunny days are not the best for photographing butterflies.

The soft and warm lighting early or late in the day is a joy, and the lack of heavy contrast you get on a dull day gives superb results.

Obviously better fieldcraft is needed to locate the insects, but that is another joy in itself.

I really look forward to more of your pictures.

Thanks

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-May-12 07:03 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind comments Roger– they are greatly appreciated. I do not really consider myself a photographer but go out with enthusiasm, optimism and determination and a good photo is a bonus! BUT, I am keen to learn so if anyone has any constructive comments as my diary progresses they would be very welcome.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 04-May-12 08:10 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Some lovely shots there. Your photography has come on in leaps and bounds over the last couple of years. You're beginning to look quite dangerous with that FZ38 😊 .

Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 04-May-12 09:37 PM GMT

How lovely to see your wonderful pictures 😊

Debbie

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 04-May-12 09:40 PM GMT

Great pictures of some lovely butterflies.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-May-12 10:20 PM GMT

Thank you so much Debbie and Nick for your kind compliments. Neil, I was delighted to read your post as you, possibly more than anyone, have been a source of inspiration and I have tried to put your advice and suggestions to good use – thank you.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-May-12 11:57 PM GMT

Spring 2011 brought with it some lovely weather so I was looking forward to my planned trip to Wheelers Bay, IOW to see the Glanville Fritillaries. I had been there before, several years before, but a combination of my dreadful sense of direction and various traffic hold-ups resulted in the journey taking twice as long as it should have done. As I eventually drove into the car park above the bay, yes you've guessed the leaden skies opened and the rain poured down. Added to that it was cold – really cold. I had a jumper on under my coat and as I sat in the car I debated whether it would not be more appropriate just to head off for some lunch at a country pub with a nice roaring log fire. Still, I'd come all this way so with no expectations at all, down I went, only to be delighted to find at least a dozen Glanvilles. Result!! Being battered by the rain and the sea spray they were reluctant to move so getting close was not difficult – if only I'd had my close up lens then!



After all this effort I was less than amused to return home only to discover there was a thriving colony virtually on my doorstep, albeit an unofficial release dating back many years.



Each year I try to see a couple of species of butterfly that I have not seen before and this year was no exception. One of those was the Heath Fritillary and for that I had to make the long trip to Kent. Long journeys are quite difficult for me to organise as I have a lot of animals to care for, my 'waifs and strays' as Neil calls them. By the time I reached the venue the butterflies were very active so any sort of photo was proving to be quite difficult. At least I managed a record shot!



Yet again I returned home to find that there had been sightings locally among the aforementioned Glanvilles!

This outing was followed by another trip to Botany Bay. My regular visits to this site have a dual purpose as I have a friend who lives on the fringes of Chiddingfold Wood. A visit to her is the perfect opportunity for more butterfly photography.



I was heading back along the track to my car one evening when I almost stood on a pair of mating Wood Whites. Luckily they saw me first and flew up onto this plant. I rather like how the shape of the flower head is mirrored by the butterfly's wings.



Oaken Wood adjoins Botany Bay and at the entrance to this wood is a meadow which is awash with butterflies at the right time of year including these Marbled Whites:





Skippers are also to be found roosting in this meadow.



Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-May-12 12:42 AM GMT

These are excellent images, Pauline. I look forward to seeing many more.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 05-May-12 01:48 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

That shot of mating Wood Whites is exceptionally good – and really quite rare! That's a 10/10 image.

Neil

Re: Pauline

by Susie, 05-May-12 02:28 AM GMT

Pauline, your diary is a joy and your photos are beautiful! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-12 04:30 AM GMT

Thank you David – I can assure you there are plenty more to come.

Susie and Neil you are giving my confidence a massive boost. I have to tell you that you will both be mentioned again in future 'episodes' so watch this space 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-12 05:20 AM GMT

Hello Pauline,

Nice reports and some beautiful photos.

As another FZ38 user I am always interested to see what other users can produce with this camera and your shots are amongst some of the best I have seen. I do not know much about the technical aspects of photography, I just know what I like, and I like your photos a lot.

I have enjoyed this diary and look forward to future instalments.

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-12 05:46 AM GMT

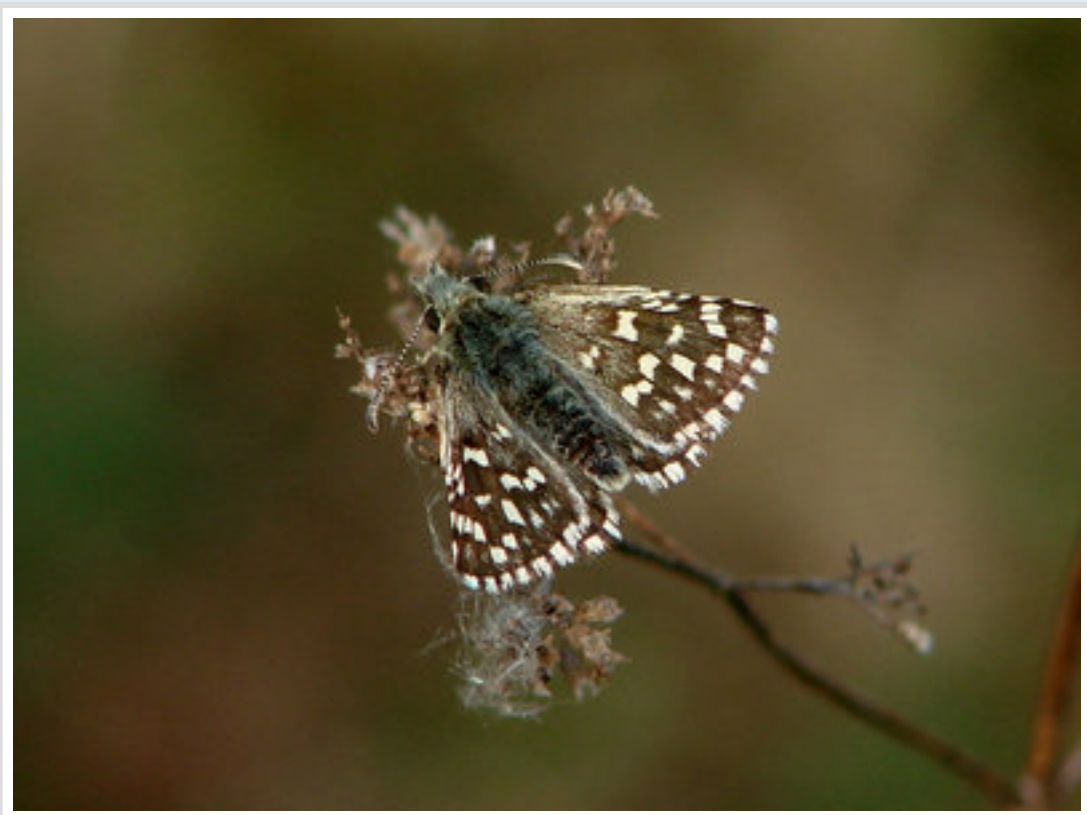
I feel incredibly lucky to be within 10 minutes drive of a number of excellent butterfly sites. Included in these is Oxenbourne Down where I have spent many enjoyable hours watching large numbers of butterflies. I was taking photos of Chalkhill Blues here last year when I realised one looked quite odd – it had silvery blue spots on the hind wings more reminiscent of a Silver Studded Blue but to the best of my knowledge the latter do not occur at this site, the nearest location being Broxhead Common. I took a number of photos but these were accidentally deleted from my camera before being copied to my PC. Thankfully, once again the butterfly was still there the following morning so I was able to take the following photo:



By way of comparison a 'typical' Chalkhill Blue below:



Grizzled and Dingy Skippers are also plentiful at this site – if you can find them. Their camouflage can be amazing.





A Large White from this site also.



Last year was a poor one for the Silver Spotted Skipper at Oxenbourne and I struggled to find only half a dozen. I hope I have more success in 2012.



I was fortunate to find this very pretty Small Copper at Oxenbourne. The photo really does not do it justice as the colours were incredibly vibrant and I have never seen another one quite like it.



I had not long had the FZ38 and had gone to Noar Hill (another nearby site) to try it out, snapping at anything that moved including these Small Coppers. My concentration was on the functionality that the camera provided and I was not paying too much attention to the subjects. When the photos were loaded onto the PC I was quite amused to see that one Small Copper had company!



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-May-12 06:21 AM GMT

Very beautiful photos Pauline, I'm looking forward to seeing more and they're helping me through these dark days!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 05-May-12 06:46 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Lovely photos and great to hear the stories behind them, especially from a fellow Hampshire butterfly watcher.

"Pauline" wrote:

I was so disappointed I lay awake for a long time that night determined not to be beaten. Undeterred, At 4.00am the next morning I collected the stepladder and fifteen minutes later I was carrying it through the woods. I easily located my butterfly who had not moved and just as the light came up I got the shot I wanted before returning home for a well deserved breakfast

Now that is commitment 😊

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 05-May-12 08:56 AM GMT

Those are all superb images Pauline and your diary is a joy. I look forward to seeing what will follow. Could you possibly post some of your photos into the Species-Specific Album please?

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-12 03:06 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind remarks Neil F. I am not technical either but our cameras seem very suitable for either the novice or the more experienced photographer. Having had the camera for a year I have only just built up enough confidence to take it off the automatic setting!!! I have also just acquired a close up lens which has seen very little use so far so I will be interested to discover how well it will perform this season – if this rain ever stops!

Vince if you let me know which of my photos you think are worthy enough to go in the Species-specific albums I will happily put them there.

Jackz432r thank you for the compliment – I think we should all wear name badges out in the field so we are immediately recognisable 😊

Thank you so much Wurzel – with this continuous dreadful weather I think our photos is the closest any of us are getting to butterflies 😊

Re: Pauline

by P.J.Underwood, 05-May-12 03:34 PM GMT

Pauline,

I think your photo's are up with the best, and I mean Nick's. Perhaps I can learn more this year.

I have already raised the idea of using proper names so we can be recognisable in the field. It would make it so much easier when bumping in to someone and not having to keep asking them their name, especially for someone like myself who has great difficulty with remembering names. Perhaps a badge should be the thing of the year.

P.J.U.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-12 07:49 PM GMT

Thank you Philip but I think it's only fair to say that Nick's photography skills far outstrip mine. In fact I am grateful to him for the hints and tips he shared with me on several enjoyable outings together and he has probably been one of my harshest critics which has spurred me on to improve 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-12 09:00 PM GMT

I find Hairstreaks some of the most challenging of all butterflies to photograph yet they are probably my favourite group. In fact it was a Purple Hairstreak which sparked my passionate interest in butterflies. In my front garden I have 2 large Oak Trees with some smaller Hawthorn beneath them. A few years ago I was sitting in the garden and saw a 'strange' butterfly on the Hawthorn. It flew up into the Oak and I subsequently discovered that it was a Purple Hairstreak. It was a revelation to me that some butterflies lived in trees! I have lived here for many years and have never seen these butterflies before, but since that time the colony seems to have increased in size and they can regularly be seen flying around the Oak. When they do descend, which is fairly infrequent, annoyingly it tends to be on a neighbouring property. Nevertheless, it is good to be able to sit and watch them and have them so close, and it is this very worn specimen which has so much to answer for.



Whilst patrolling Botany Bay, looking for Purple Emperors, I walked past a 'Ringlet'. It was a very fresh specimen, low down on the bracken about knee height with wings open. I noticed it didn't have the characteristic markings of a Ringlet and became quite excited at the thought of having found an aberration. As I bent closer I saw the blue sheen on the wings and realised it was in fact a fresh Purple Hairstreak with its wings open. The few photos I managed to take were disappointing as I was so excited I couldn't hold the camera steady!



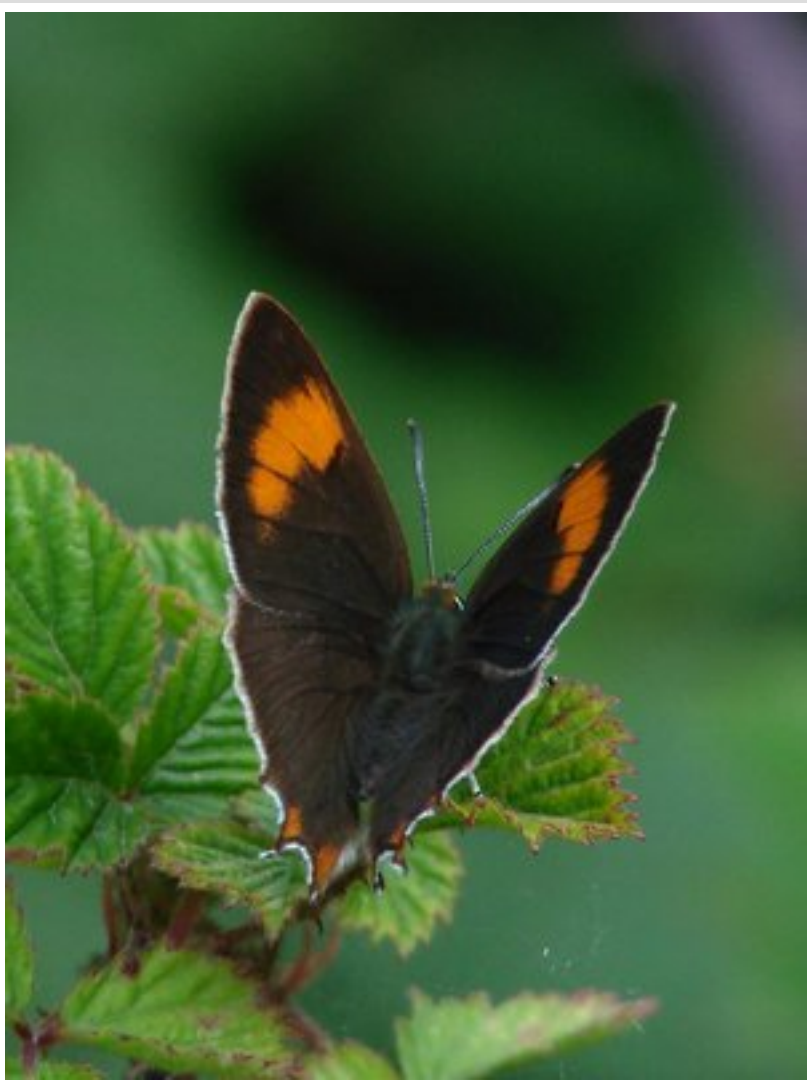
I really wanted a close encounter with a White Letter Hairstreak and had been given directions to a reliable site in Brighton, a 1.5 hour drive away (at least, depending on how many times I got lost!). The venue was a single row of tall trees quite close to the main road and it wasn't long before I spotted several White Letter Hairstreaks flying around the canopy. So, I watched and waited, and waited and waited students came, had lunch on the grass and left again. Still I waited! 4 hours later a WLH flew down from the tree and landed in the grass right next to my foot. A lovely fresh specimen but hidden almost totally by the grass. I stood poised, ready to get the long awaited shot as soon as she emerged but after about 10 seconds she suddenly shot back up into the canopy. Time to call it a day - 3 hours drive and a 4 hour wait for a 10 second sighting and no photo!!!

A fellow butterfly enthusiast took pity on me after hearing of this experience and gave me directions to a 'fragile' site much closer to home but in the centre of a residential area. The amount of time I spent loitering around gardens and houses drew some suspicious looks from local residents but the views of the butterflies were superb, including this mating pair.



For me, the jewel in the crown at Noar Hill just has to be the Brown Hairstreaks – at this site they can be difficult to find but not impossible if armed with enough knowledge about the behaviour and habitat of this butterfly – until last year that is. Despite repeated and extensive searching I could not find a single butterfly and was forced to look further afield at Shipton Bellinger.





Sadly, I have never managed to get a really nice shot with wings open so I am looking forward to another chance this year. These butterflies are so beautiful when newly emerged. I remember Susie saying that 'whoever called them brown hairstreaks should be shot as they are just like little flames'. I couldn't have put it better myself.

I find Green Hairstreaks particularly difficult to photograph as I never seem to be able to do them justice. Try as I might I can't seem to capture that gorgeous blue-green sheen. This photo was taken at Paulsgrove chalk pits which you can see in the background. The rows of hawthorn hedges seem to provide shelter for a number of Green Hairstreaks.



The Black Hairstreak was the second butterfly on my list of 'must sees' last year. Detailed plans were put in place to give me the best chance of seeing this rarity. It was a long, very hot day and I must have seen about 18 Black Hairstreaks but only to admire as they flew past. The only one which stayed

put long enough for a photo was way out of reach. Ah well, something else to aim for in 2012.



Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-May-12 09:36 PM GMT

Lovely stuff, Pauline. I think that's the first time I've seen a single post devoted to (and with photos of) all 5 British Hairstreaks.

Like you say, they can be elusive little blighters but finding them is all the more satisfying for that.

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 06-May-12 04:12 AM GMT

Yet more fantastic pictures, Pauline. I don't know why you are disappointed with the purple hairstreak pictures. I would love to have taken those! Actually, I have never seen a purple hairstreak! Just thinking amongst all of the lovely butterflies you have shown pictures of, only the large white and small copper occur here in East Lothian 😞. It must be fantastic to have so many different species around and particularly having colonies living in your garden!

Re: Pauline

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

As others have said – super pics!!

I agree that Green Hairstreaks are always difficult, and photos never quite catch the shade as one remembers it. I think that is true of most iridescent colours – Adonis Blues are another example, where photos usually disappoint! I am fortunate to live close to Black Hairstreak territory and can recommend Whitecross Green Wood as one of the best Oxfordshire sites for these.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-May-12 03:38 PM GMT

I have been blown away by all the support and encouragement I have had from other members. The next installment will illustrate just how helpful other butterfly enthusiasts are.

Thank you David, Nick and Mike. I am pleased I am not the only one to have problems with the iridescent sheen. Mike, if I can ever get up that way again perhaps I could call on you to point me in the right direction for Black Hairstreaks?

Nick, you have made me really appreciate the diversity of butterflies on my doorstep which I was beginning to take for granted.

David, I am getting better at finding them! I know someone who even goes out looking by moonlight and torchlight!! My stepladder incident pales into insignificance compared to that 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-May-12 05:10 PM GMT

I do not usually join organized butterfly walks, preferring instead to find 'my own' butterfly. However, in my early days of searching for butterflies I was having a great deal of difficulty locating a Purple Emperor. Sussex Kipper (Neil) was soon to be leading a walk in Southwater Woods, primarily with the aim of seeing Purple Emperors so I decided to attend. The day dawned with the now familiar grey and overcast skies so I telephoned Neil who confirmed the walk would still be going ahead.

I have already mentioned my previous unsuccessful attempts to get to Bentley Wood, the last one being aborted when my car was written off en route. Subsequently, when I set off for Southwater Woods that day I was driving a hired car, one which was much larger than my little Golf. As usual I got lost around the country lanes. As I approached the meeting point I was running late and felt a bit anxious as I hate being late – for anything. There were lots of cars lined up by the small layby and a sizeable group of people, none of whom I knew, apart from Neil. I spotted a space to park behind Neil's car but just as I pulled into it there was a loud bang and the hired car listed to one side. I had driven into a hole! A very large hole!! Neil was the first to arrive closely followed by the others. I was quite shocked and embarrassed but the ice was broken with comments such as 'you certainly know how to make an

entrance'. Once it had been established that no damage had been done to me or the car the members set about discussing how to get this large car out of the large hole. In the end about 8 strong men actually lifted the car out of the hole and the car hire firm was never any the wiser!

The only people I can remember from that day are Neil who kept my spirits up with his good humour and Susie who flung her arms round me and told me not to worry. I do not know who the other helpers were but I would like to say a very big thank you via this diary. It is a day I shall certainly never forget (and I'm sure you haven't either) and if you would like to 'reveal' yourselves to me it would be nice to thank you individually.

Just as the walk eventually got underway the heavens opened and we were soaked to the skin. I don't remember seeing any butterflies that morning – in fact Neil called it his 'virtual' tour as he showed us the trees where the butterflies could be found on a dry day! To his credit, I don't think anyone else could have turned such a wash-out into an entertaining, interesting and enjoyable day. Well done Neil and thanks again to both you and Susie for making me feel a whole lot better that day 😊 .

Naturally, as time passed I did go on to see Purple Emperors – lots of Purple Emperors in fact at several different venues. I have even had 2 land on me at the same time which was a real joy. A few photos below.





Re: Pauline

by Nick Broomer, 06-May-12 06:20 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

A lot of beautiful photos, well done.

Nick.

Re: Pauline

by Susie, 06-May-12 06:24 PM GMT

You're very welcome, Pauline. I'm glad it helped. I know it was a shocking experience at the time but it did turn out okay in the end. 😊

Beautiful photos again. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-May-12 06:32 PM GMT

Thank you Nick. I know (from experience 😊😊) that your praise is hard to come by and therefore all the more appreciated. Thank you. Perhaps see you this year?

Susie, I can laugh about it now but thanks to you it was not as traumatic as it might have been. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-12 03:42 PM GMT

Thankfully, not all butterfly outings are so eventful. I have spent many happy hours quietly and peacefully watching butterflies. Below is a random selection from local sites:



Small Blue at Paulsgrove



Silver-studded Blues at Thursley Common



Wood White at Botany Bay



Speckled Wood at Noar Hill



Adonis Blue at Denbies



Orange Tip at Stanstead Forest



Brown Argus at Wrecclesham



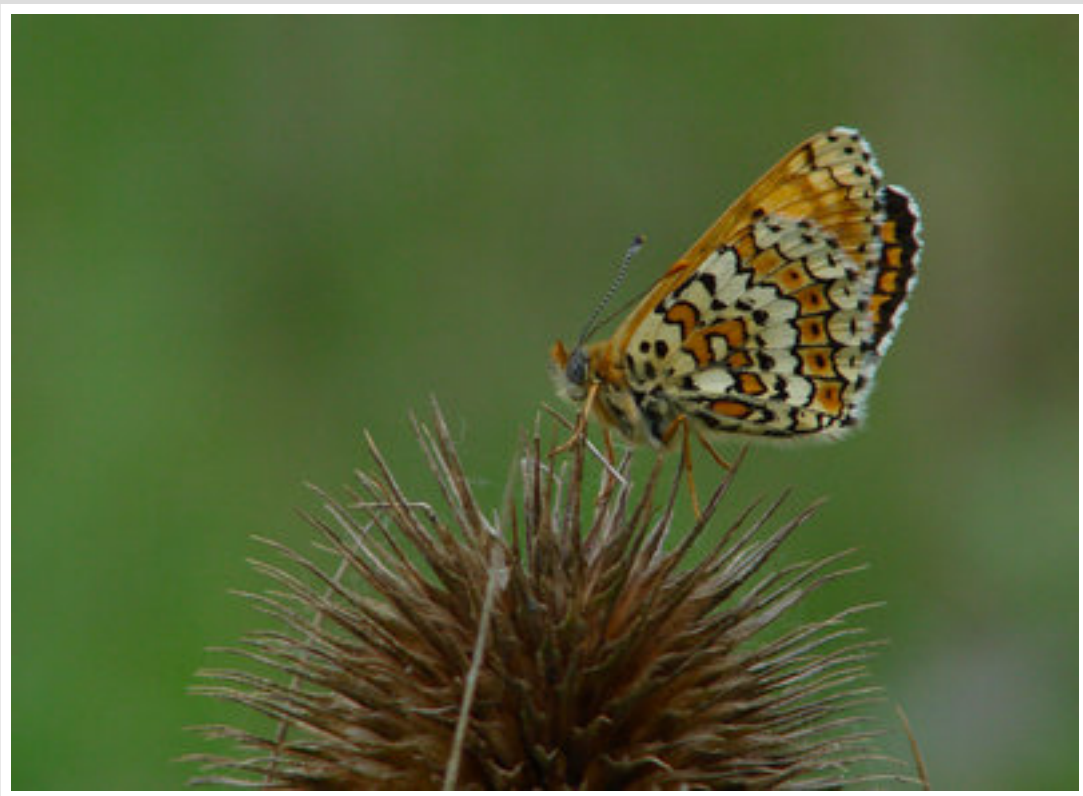
Silver-washed Fritillary at Oaken Wood



Green-veined White at MHD



Glanvilles at Wrecclisham



.... and spotted along the way



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 07-May-12 10:59 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

More lovely photos, keep it up 😊

"Pauline" wrote:

I have spent many happy hours quietly and peacefully watching butterflies

To me that is what it is all about.

It is great to get out and travel further afield to see some rarities and this is something that I do enjoy but I seem to get just as much if not more pleasure from just going out by myself and watching some of the more common species around my local patch.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-May-12 03:13 PM GMT

Good to hear from you again Neil. Yes, I find that there is something almost spiritual about being with butterflies in the lovely environments they so often frequent. I am transported away to another world, far from the worries and cares of everyday life – perhaps it's just a form of escapism 😊

Having taken this opportunity to review some of my past photos I am reminded of how many butterflies use camouflage as a survival strategy. I have recently taken to looking for butterflies in conditions that are far from perfect and this has only served to emphasise how skilled they are in this respect. No doubt this is a theme which I shall be returning to but for now I am enclosing some (old) photos of Graylings to demonstrate this – if you can find them!





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-May-12 03:41 PM GMT

Despite the on-going dreary weather which seems to be across most of the country it is clear that the butterfly season is now well underway. There have been a fair few sightings of a number of species so it is time to get this diary up to date! The next few photos are the last I shall post from previous seasons before embarking on 2012 sightings.



Wall Brown at Lymington



Small White at Alice Holt



Ringlet at The Straits

Last but not least Small Tortoiseshell (still waiting to see a large one!)



Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 09-May-12 08:52 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Love the photo's

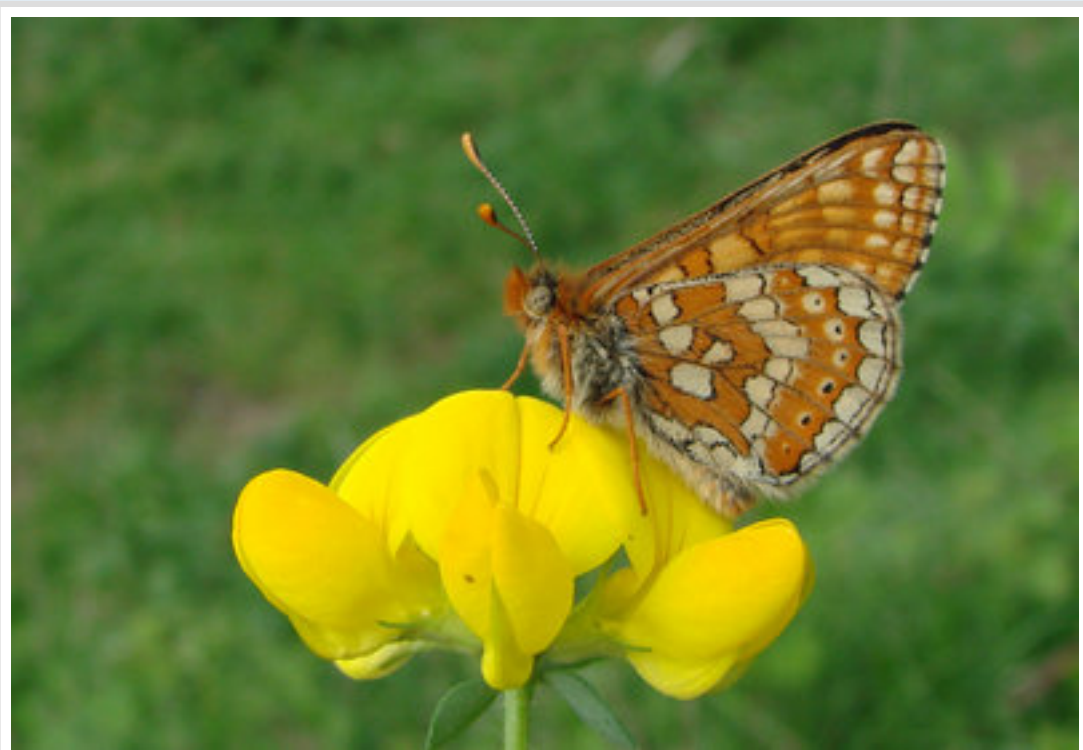
Debbie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-May-12 05:17 AM GMT

Thanks Debbie, glad you like them and nice to hear from you again.

Forgot to include these 2 in the last post – can't bear to leave them out as they were so hard to come by. Anyone who's been up Hod Hill knows you have to be quite fit just to get up there!





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-May-12 05:40 PM GMT

My first butterfly of 2012 😊



The Orange Tip is one of the first butterflies to be seen in the Spring and is such a beautiful insect. On a dull, cloudy day, interspersed with showers I set off with a view to finding and photographing a few examples. The interesting mosaic pattern on the underwings, which to me is even more attractive than the upper wing markings, provides perfect camouflage as depicted in the following photos. I eventually found 3 of these butterflies roosting together in a clump of (unidentified) flowering plant, their markings merging to make spotting them much more difficult.





This Orange Tip (taken last year) is nectaring on a plant which creates a complete contrast as being fully active the insect has less need to be 'invisible'.



I was disappointed to find that this last photo was not as sharp as I had hoped. I tried to disguise this fact together with the rather 'busy' background, but not sure it has worked. Perhaps I should leave the artistic elements to those who are truly creative!



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-12 01:46 AM GMT

Popped over to Botany Bay this morning to try out my close-up lens (for the second time). Bumped into Nick but despite 2 pairs of eyes we failed to spot a roosting Dingy Skipper. There were plenty of spiders intent on securing themselves a tasty breakfast so I used these to practice on:



I wandered off to look for a Wood White but came across this nest which Nick later advised me was the nest of a Nightingale.



The sun broke through, the butterflies appeared and at last I could try out my lens on the real thing 😊



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-May-12 05:57 AM GMT

Stunning photos Pauline 🍷 My little girl was fascinated by an Orange-tip we had in the garden because of it's camo. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-12 03:09 PM GMT

Thank you so much Wurzel. I do appreciate the compliment – It's great that your little girl is also interested in butterflies.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-12 03:18 PM GMT

I still seem to be playing a game of 'catch-up' even though I am now focussing on 2012 photos. It would be remiss of me to leave out these Duke photos taken quite early in the season at Noar Hill on one of those rare days when it didn't rain. It was a good day not least because I met Chris C and Rob S and bumped into Steve whom I had not seen for ages.





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-May-12 05:57 AM GMT

Saturdays are incredibly busy for me and leave little time for butterflies but by 5.00pm I was suffering withdrawal symptoms. The sun was low in the sky and time was running out so I opted for Oxenbourne, one of the closest sites. Despite it being late in the day I saw Brimstone, several Small Heath, Small Copper, brief glimpse of a Green Hairstreak, some sort of white which was too far away to identify and half a dozen Grizzled Skippers. Surprisingly I could find no Dingy Skippers although I have seen them at this site before.

Now, each year I try to improve my photography skills and with the help of members on this site I think I am slowly getting there. I also endeavour to improve my fieldcraft and this is easy to measure by the number of butterflies I am able to find and photograph. Sadly, I am not artistic in any shape or form so improving the composition of my photos is a real uphill struggle. I even attended a lecture specifically on photo composition – the need for a focal point and 'leading the eye in' etc. Unfortunately, the result of this lecture was to increase my dissatisfaction with the composition of photos I had previously been perfectly happy with!

I am struggling tonight to identify the best composition amongst the photos I took of a Grizzled Skipper this evening at Oxenbourne. They are all of the same Grizzled Skipper in fact as he was settling down to roost and show different views taken from varying distances. If anyone reading this has any views or helpful hints to assist with this aspect – good or bad – they would be very welcome.





I suppose it would have been relatively easy to move the butterfly onto a more photogenic plant – one less cluttered and better balanced – but I did not want to risk disturbing him so late in the evening. Perhaps I need to carry some pruning equipment along with my camera to tidy up the plant for a more streamlined look 😊

Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 13-May-12 06:59 AM GMT

all lovely shots pauline, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so i guess it depends on who you are looking to please. 😊
my choice would be the 2nd one.
Chris

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-May-12 07:24 AM GMT

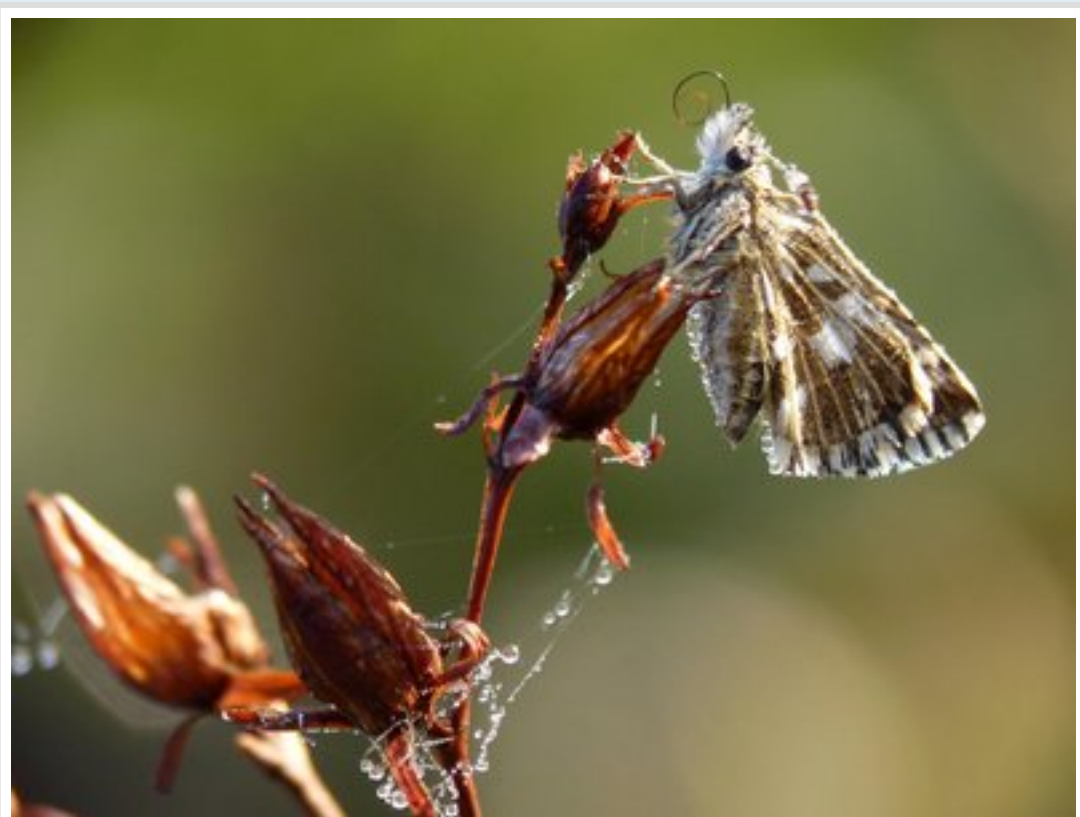
Grizzled Skipper underside shots are always welcome, as this butterfly generally holds its wings open and even when it closes them it's often in the grass making clear shots nigh impossible.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-May-12 12:12 AM GMT

Thank you Chris and David. I really appreciate you having taken the time and trouble to comment – but d'you know what? The more I thought about it the more I thought 'Pauline, you can do better than that'. Well, I knew where it was, and it wasn't far away, and I knew it would still be where I left it. Readers of this diary will know that this is not the first time I have returned to a butterfly for a second crack of the whip. So, 6.00am this morning back to Oxenbourne. The butterfly had re-positioned itself slightly and was now covered in dew. I am still not sure which of these photos I prefer as there are tiny differences in each of them – the probiscus, body position, lighting etc. I am not even sure if they are better than the last batch – perhaps I shall let others be the judge of that?

Raindrops keep falling on my head

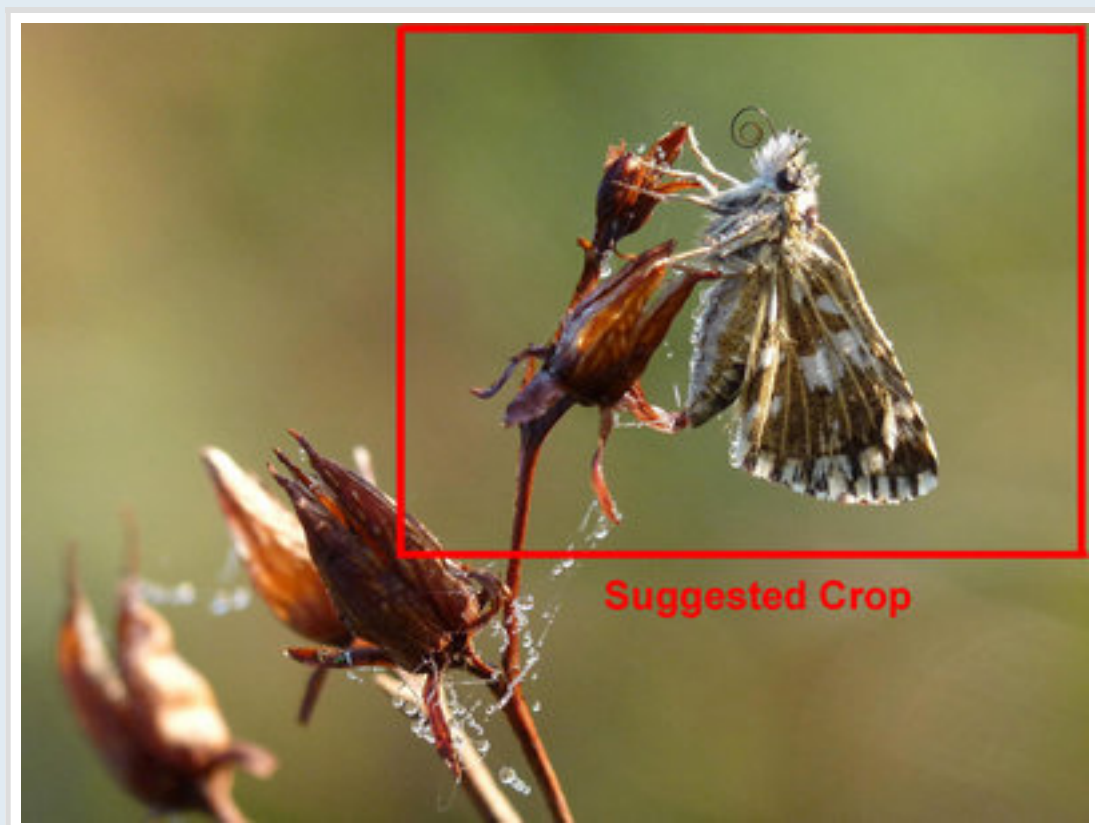




Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 14-May-12 02:07 AM GMT

Personally, I like No.2 best – mainly for the curled proboscis. The next one isn't quite sharp in the head area and the others lack the proboscis, which I like to see. May I suggest that a crop, as indicated below, would help.



While the dew on the spider's web is attractive, it is also a distraction from the butterfly and, I think, it's best to home in on the main subject.

I admire your dedication, and dew in the morning is a marvellous time for butterflies – lovely pics!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-May-12 02:23 AM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

I admire your dedication, and dew in the morning is a marvellous time for butterflies – lovely pics!

Me too. Sometimes cooler conditions can prove better for getting close to your subject. The PBF I found roosting last week was so torpid I was able to get my camera right up to its body.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-May-12 03:03 PM GMT

Thank you Mike and David. I have tried the crop that you suggested Mike and it certainly makes for a better picture – why couldn't I see that for myself?

😞 Perhaps one day it will all come together and I will get a really good photo 😊

I decided to give the Grizzlies a rest and nipped across to Wrecclesham yesterday afternoon (can't waste this precious sunshine) as I haven't been there for quite a while. There were a lot of birds – Crows chasing a Buzzard, Skylarks singing, a Heron flying overhead before landing on the lake, and the sound of a Chiff Chaff to name but a few. Despite the blue skies and bright sunshine the only butterflies visible were a handful of manic male Orange Tips and a solitary GVW. I did get a good view of a fox but he was just too quick and soon as I lifted up my camera he was off. Good job I've got these guys at home, eh!





Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 14-May-12 08:19 PM GMT

Great pictures of the Grizzled Skipper and a lot of dedication there to get the shots. No.2 gets my vote too!

Re: Pauline

by David M, 15-May-12 02:32 AM GMT

What's the story behind the foxes, Pauline?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-May-12 03:23 PM GMT

I'm glad you liked the photos Nick and I am pleased you expressed your preference as all these comments are part of the learning process for me.

The story behind the foxes is a long one David – so long in fact that I am writing a book about them! There is a connection with butterflies tho' as it was a member of the butterfly community who was responsible (in a round about way) for the first one ending up with me. Suffice to say that they all have medical problems which are controlled by medication and they could not therefore be released back to the wild. Saffron suffers from narcolepsy and if she is stressed she just collapses. Foxy has epileptic fits and is not able to control his body temperature so has to wear a coat in the winter and Chance has, at some time in the past, had a broken pelvis which has not healed properly so he is a bit arthritic and can't move too fast or jump very high. There are some folk who would say that in these circumstances the animals should be put to sleep but I believe that they currently enjoy a good quality of life, albeit different to the quality of life they would have were they 'wild'. They are all very easy to handle, have good accommodation, company and a great deal of freedom. I am also very lucky to have a great support network including a fantastic vet and local wildlife organisations. Brian May also expressed interest in them but unfortunately didn't like the colour of Foxy's coat – said green didn't suit him 😊 Whilst I never, ever envisaged keeping foxes they are beautiful and engaging creatures and I feel privileged to care for them. Great photo opportunities also 😊 . A few more photos below which I hope you like:





Re: Pauline

by Willow, 15-May-12 07:37 PM GMT

Absolutely delightful animals and photo's that go a long way to telling the story, good on you Pauline!

Have you considered doing your book via Blurb (the on-line book publisher) with loads of interesting photo's supported by your 'story', I'm sure it would prove of great interest to all lovers of our 'foxy friends' 😊

Keep taking lots of butterfly shots Pauline, I'm certain your skills will improve immensely with practice, just remember, we all had to start somewhere! I'm sure you'll get lots of advice and support if needed from all the members of this friendly forum, there are some very good photographers among the **UK Butterflies** membership.

Bill 😊

Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 15-May-12 09:24 PM GMT

Keep the photos coming.

I agree with you on the Grizzly, leave them where you find them and maybe prune around them. I normally only prune if something is in front of the proposed shot though.

The foxes are brilliant, I saw one watching me in the long grass at Wrecclesham last year but it wasn't in the condition of your foxes. Great job looking after them.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-May-12 12:47 AM GMT

Thanks for the fox info, Pauline. They look a delightful little family (and they obviously get on with the cat, which surprises me a bit).

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 16-May-12 01:28 AM GMT

Love your Pic's Pauline, keep them coming and the Fox's are great , I like the pic in the snow. I like you love animals you've gone one step further with your Fox's though 😊 . Looking forward to seeing more of your pic's. I'm a learner too at photography, your Butterfly pic's are great I think Goldie M 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 16-May-12 04:15 AM GMT

Great photos and background story on the Foxes Pauline.

That reminds me, when I got home from Prestbury Hill on Sunday there was a Fox enjoying the evening sun on my back lawn. I had nearly forgotten but I managed to get a couple of photos, I'll check them over and post in my diary rather than intrude in yours.

Regarding the composition of your photos, you are already posting some lovely images and whilst I agree that we should always strive to improve, you already seem to have an eye for a good photo.

I am sure that you will only get better with practice and look forward to your postings.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-May-12 03:10 PM GMT

Thank you all for your interest and kind comments. You have had a little glimpse into a small part of my life but for now at least it is time to return to the butterflies.

I went out yesterday with the aim of seeing a roosting Dingy. I decided I would try Chalton Down – try to find it that is! On the map it is probably less than 10 mins away and I am embarrassed to admit I have tried to find it before and failed! I am still not sure that I have succeeded as what I found yesterday was simply a narrow footpath. I walked along it for quite some way but it was raining, windy and cold – b****y cold – so I retraced my steps. If anyone local is reading this then perhaps they could put me on the right track so to speak 😊 I didn't find my Dingy here so a change of plan was needed. On the way home I stopped off briefly for a quick look at another site and was rewarded with more of these:



Guess the Dingy will have to wait for another day 😞

Re: Pauline

by Mark Colvin, 16-May-12 03:56 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I've been watching your diary closely and I just wanted to say that viewing your pictures, with the obvious passion and compassion that is behind them, is a very refreshing and positive experience.

Keep up the good work.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-May-12 06:18 PM GMT

It's not often you go looking for Dingy Skippers, find none but see Grizzled Skippers instead!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-May-12 02:49 PM GMT

Ahhhh Mark, thank you. I was feeling a bit low yesterday as one my cats is poorly and your post cheered me up.

David, still looking for a Dingy but check out what else I found instead!

There was no way I was going to be beaten by 'a little brown job'. The illusive Dingy WOULD be found today and I would try Noar Hill. As I reached the venue I was dismayed to count 19 cars parked along the verge and concluded that a guided walk must be taking place. The 'parking area' was so congested I did an about turn and headed off to another local site where both Dingy's and PBF could be found. It was quite cloudy when I arrived so I set about looking for my roosting Dingy along the edge of the track. I was quickly joined by a very friendly ranger who described to me the work that had recently been done to try to extend the scope of this fragile PBF colony. It transpired that he knew both Dan and Neil (is there anyone that Neil doesn't know 😊😊) and they had provided input to the necessary coppicing. He was very concerned that if the site became widely known, the small area could become trampled and the small colony would suffer.

As we were chatting the sun appeared and as if from no-where the PBF appeared - only 2 males who interspersed their nectaring on bugle with amazing territorial displays. The ranger explained that at this site the males had only recently emerged and although he had kept a careful watch the most he had seen was 8. The females were yet to emerge. He was obviously keen to see the result of the clearance work that had been achieved. Last year at their peak a maximum of 20 PBF's had been recorded.

Well, it was the perfect day to take photos of PBF's. The cloud kept coming over which slowed them down for long enough to grab a shot, providing you had managed to keep an eye on their fast flight patterns to be able to locate them in the first place, which was far from easy. Nevertheless, I spent a very happy hour and got some shots - and now the agonising has begun again!!! I have come to the conclusion that I really can't tell a good photo from a bad photo!!!! Is it all in focus??? (perhaps I need new specs 😊) How close to crop??? etc. Well, you can judge the results for yourself and as usual any criticism most welcome. Nick????







And I STILL didn't get my Dingy!! But I shall!!

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 17-May-12 06:10 PM GMT

Having enjoyed several of your posts now, in my opinion you have a natural 'eye' for a good photograph!

Your latest crop of PBFs are all splendid photos, well exposed and well composed. The rule of thumb regarding focus is to 'focus on the eyes' and then use depth of field (DOF) to cover the rest. You have positioned yourself at right-angles to the subject, which helps to keep everything sharp. Your Lumix FZ38 provides a greater DoF than a DSLR and makes this task easier.

The diagonal composition on the bracken fronds is excellent and I think you have made excellent use of the area of the frame. The subject is clearly portrayed and the bracken frond adds context, without being distracting. The diagonal top-surface shot is also nicely composed, with a suitably diffuse background.

You said that there was a mix of sun and cloud. The soft lighting under cloud is much better than direct sunlight, which can be too harsh and lead to confusing hard shadows. I think your lighting was ideal for showing the features of the butterfly in a natural way.

I look forward to seeing many more of your photos!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-May-12 03:03 PM GMT

No pressure then, Mike! 😊😊 Seriously, I can't thank you enough for taking the time to explain this stuff to me and I shall try hard to put it into practice. I guess I shall have to go back to the camera manual as I have no idea how to focus on the eye. At the moment a little green square appears on the area which is focussed but this is much bigger than a butterfly eye. Perhaps other users of this camera could enlighten me? I also tend to use the screen rather than the viewfinder as I find this easier but presumably I should use the latter? I know there are other novices reading this diary so your tuition will undoubtedly be useful to them also. Well, I took the following batch before I read your post so they may not be up to scratch but I shall keep trying.

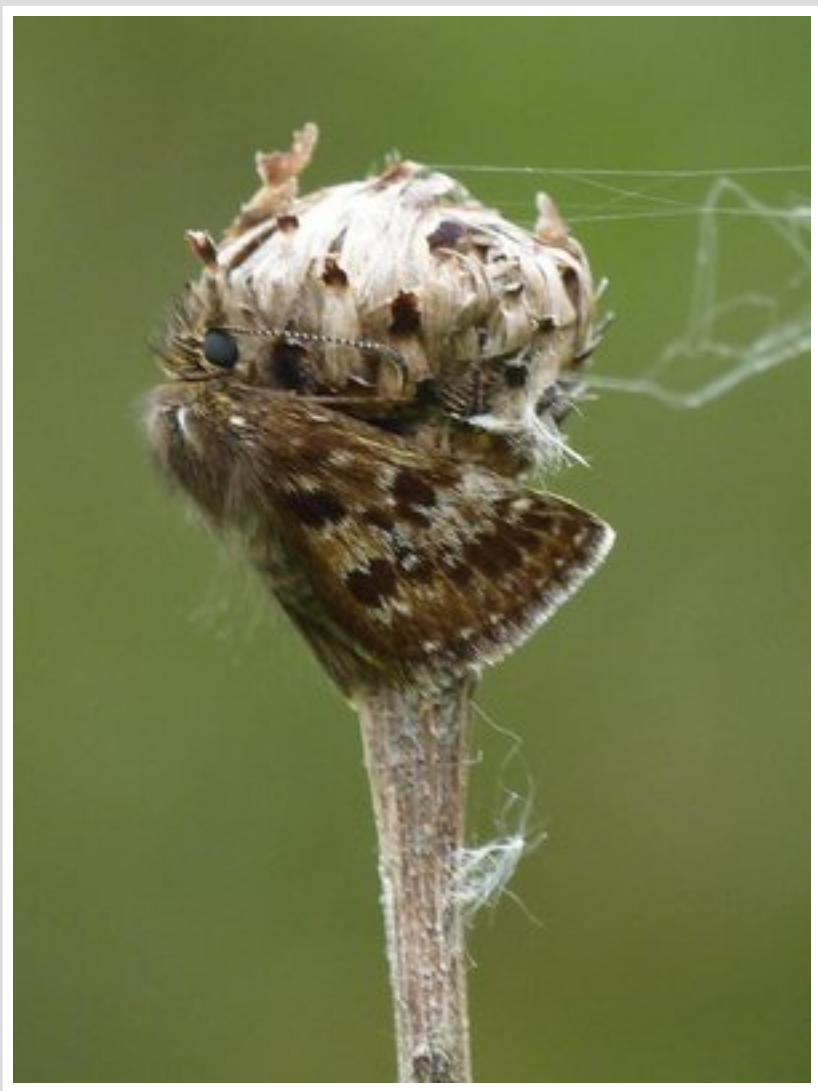
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED! It was third time lucky with the roosting Dingy Skipper but not only did I find 1 I found 6!! I have not been to Butser Hill for many years and it is even longer since I have been down Rake Bottom. In those days I had a Springer Spaniel called Orion after the constellation in which he was born, and he was such a bundle of energy. We would go down into the valley and he would race up and down those incredibly steep slopes without ever seeming to tire. But I am older now and less fit than I used to be and my knees and leg muscles proved this to me as I went down the slope which felt almost vertical. The suffering was worth it tho' because as soon as I got to the bottom I spotted my first roosting Dingy. Result! Well, I was delighted! Frustratingly there was a strong and cutting wind blowing through the valley which hampered photos so I carefully marked the position of my butterfly with the intention to return. No need. As I made my way along the track I discovered one after another making a total of 6. What surprised me most was the variety of dead plants on which they were roosting. One plant in particular was quite spiky but without exception the butterflies were all incredibly well-camouflaged. To get one shot I accidentally sat down in a patch of nettles which was quite uncomfortable for some hours later. It wasn't too long before I had the photos I wanted and as I began the steep ascent this little fellow caught my eye, perched right on top of a teasel. Yes, David, yet another Grizzled Skipper! I am astonished that he chose to roost there as there were so many other opportunities available to him but it was reminiscent of the Glanvilles at Wrecclesham whom I have frequently found roosting on teasel. Perhaps the sharp points provide a measure of protection against predators although I would have thought that spiders could negotiate these easily and the position of the butterfly leaves him fairly vulnerable and open to bird attack. And plenty of birds there were too. A couple of Whitethroat flew past me, skylarks were singing their little hearts out and the regular sound of the cuckoo were the only distractions. I continued slowly up the hill and noticed a small black rabbit sat at the top watching my progress. The views when I arrived at the summit were breath-taking. The fields looked like a patchwork quilt, the yellow rape complimenting the slopes which were littered with cowslips. Not another soul in sight. Magic! I wish I could have captured the whole of the very beautiful and panoramic view but opted instead for the steep slopes leading down to the valley.



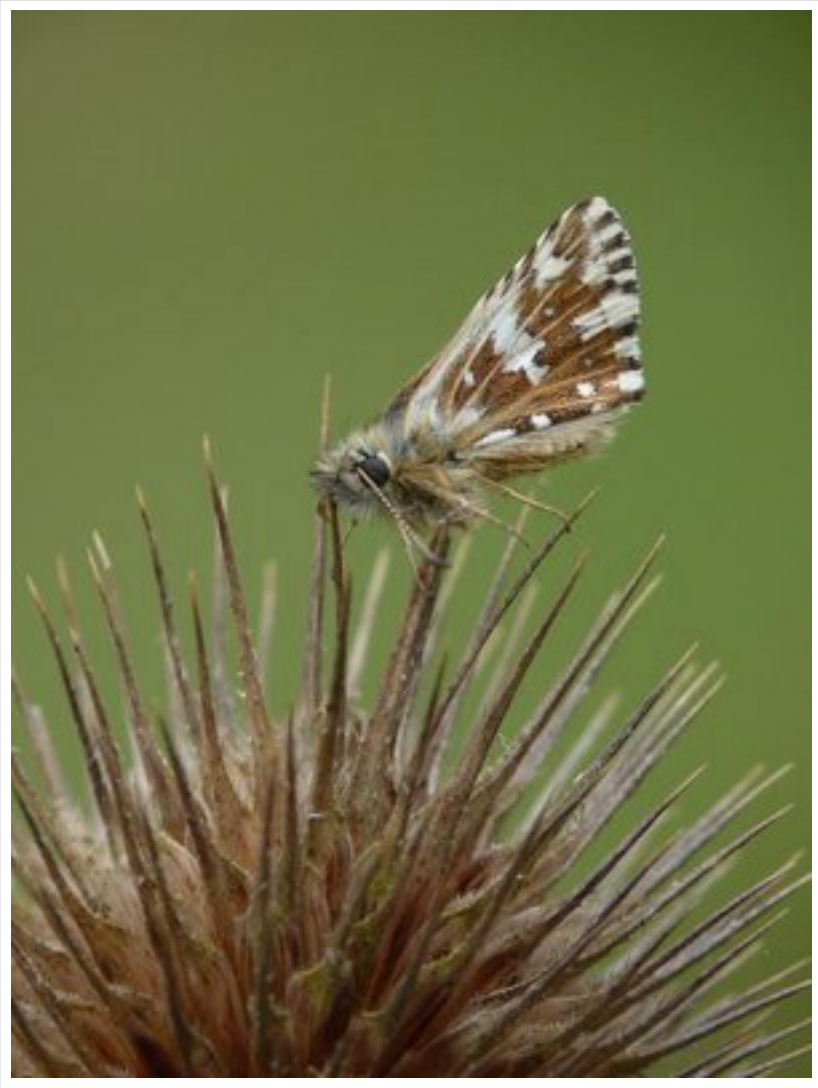
STOP PRESS Whilst I have been typing this I have had a Turtle Dove pottering round the garden (very exciting) and managed to get some photos (albeit through my dirty windows!)- even more exciting. This is the 3rd time they have visited and whilst they have previously come in pairs this one seemed to be alone. Yesterday a family of Goldcrest were taking a bath in the pond. I was surprised at the colour of the stripe on the youngsters which was more of a deep orange rather than the gorgeous gold of the adults. But, I digress



Not sure how the light resulted in the different background colours.



This is the one where I sat in the nettles as I had to get quite low down 😂



Last but not least, the little Grizzled which now seem to be a feature of all my outings!

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 18-May-12 05:16 PM GMT

Lovely photos Pauline, must agree with Mike, you have a natural eye for a good shot, even though in an earlier post you say you have no artistic side! You have captured your chosen subjects very artistically, can only imagine the quality your capable of once you've read the camera manual and got the hang of it 😊

What I'd give to have a **Turtle Dove** in my garden, lucky so n' so, sadly we have completely lost the species from Wales, their last foothold was just outside Monmouth (on the extreme edge of their range) not seen or heard for the last few years though 😞

Keep up the good work, it's very much enjoyed.

Bill 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-May-12 03:04 PM GMT

Thank you for your support and encouragement Bill. These are just for you!



Thursday afternoon I visited my friends Barbara and Paul who live on the edge of Botany Bay. As is the norm when I visit, we walked her dogs and despite the overcast weather I managed to get a few quick snatched shots of the Wood Whites. There weren't too many flying and those that were found themselves buffeted about by the fairly strong breeze. Even the ones clinging to their perch were frequently spun completely round and I think this blustery weather is the reason why the back end of the butterfly is slightly out of focus in many of my photos (excuses, excuses! 😂). One day the weather will be calm, clear and dry, I will get the focus correct and the composition will be perfect – and pigs might fly!!



Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 19-May-12 05:53 PM GMT

Hi Pauline – glad you enjoyed Rake Bottom it's a truly incredible place – one of the few places I'm the south where you have to crane your neck to see the sky when you are in the valley bottom. Even better it's got a great variety and number of butterflies at this time of the year. I was there last weekend and although the Dukes are a bit sparse at the moment – I saw five – there were very good numbers of dingy – I saw 25 in an hour or so. I try and get there two or three times a week if possible. A little tip – you can get to the valley up the track from Ramsdean lane to the north at SU705217 (hope I have got that right!) – there are only one or two car parking spaces but it sure beats the horrendous climb up Butser – surely one of the steepest in Hampshire I reckon you climb some 350ft in about a hundred yard – tough! Hope this helps the knees if bit of a cheat 😊 mark

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-May-12 03:21 AM GMT

Thanks Mark – I shall know better next time and there WILL be a next time now you have told me how to get down there!. If you know how to get to Chalton Down please pm me.

OK. Half the butterfly is out of focus but is this what I think it is????!!



A visit to Paulsgrove today saw numerous Small Blue on the wing. I had organised a 'chaperone' as I have had a couple of unpleasant experiences at this site. The highlight for me was a couple of young girls who were carrying fishing nets. I asked them what they were after and they informed me that on the upper level there was a pond which contained newts. They were going to catch them and identify them and then return them to the pond. They were quite emphatic about this. In their pockets they had wildlife guides and were already aware of the Peregrine Falcons that breed at this site. Sadly, they told me that 'the boys' catch the newts then throw them at people's windows. They couldn't have been more than eleven but seemed knowledgeable and interested in wildlife. This place could be a fantastic wildlife habitat and is calling out for one of these community projects to clear up the rubbish and protect the area from vandals. Today I was very short of time and only had about an hour to get these few shots. I had hoped to stay to see them roost but animal commitments had to come first.



Cross my heart and hope to fly!



Why don't they choose a picturesque stem or colourful flower to land on instead of one with a bit of dandelion clock attached??

Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-May-12 04:28 AM GMT

Looks like that open-winged Small Blue has just emerged from its pupa – there's still fluid emanating from its abdomen.

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 20-May-12 04:52 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline, super images, very well captured, just hope that Foxy and Saffron don't take a fancy to Turtle Doves though...(only jesting as I'm sure their very well behaved foxes!!! 😊)

Bill 😊

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 20-May-12 04:50 PM GMT

Hi Pauline – the paulsgrove site can be a bit daunting but glad you found the small blues. Portsdown hill is the area where I first gained my own interest in all things wild in the late sixties and early seventies. I spent many happy hours searching for slow worms, butterflies, orchids and the like through the school holidays – the slow worms were very often found under discarded paint cans and bits of assorted rubbish! even back then some parts were abused. This same area above the chalk pit teems with chalk hill blues later in the year – nature is very resilient and in areas like this it certainly has to be 😊 I guess on the plus side at least some of the kids who live on the massive estate to the south can actually experience wildlife in the raw unlike those who live in the city centre. Hopefully it may just spark an interest in those two young girls that will go on to last a lifetime – just like it did for me 😊 Interestingly there is another area A couple of miles to the east – in front of Fort Purbrook – where there is a small colony of small blues which i keep an eye on every year – none so far yet though. It is far less intimidating 😊 mark

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-May-12 03:51 PM GMT

There were quite a few emerging that day David, including this little chap:



and I also stumbled across this very pretty little creature though I have no idea what it will turn into (since identified by Chris C as a Garden Tiger Moth) :



and the most enormous snails I have ever seen:



Thank you for the compliments Bill. The Turtle Dove was back again yesterday – it would be so nice if he stayed around. I'll let you know. The garden at the moment is teeming with baby birds. I always find the Woodpeckers amusing, the way the youngsters give their parents the run around. With most species the little'uns seem to follow their parents about but with the Woodpeckers, the youngsters tear around the place with their parents (usually Dad) in hot pursuit. It is also interesting how they hammer peanuts into the bark of trees for the youngsters to find.

The next time I am down that way Mark I shall definitely have a look at Fort Purbrook. Interestingly, I note a Wall was photographed recently at Portsdown Hill – you will know that they have been absent from this site and the forts for some years now – so keep your eyes peeled if you're over that way.

Well, I shall leave you with a few Small Blues and then it's on to something else.



Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 21-May-12 08:50 PM GMT

Lovely pictures 😊

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 22-May-12 12:40 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline – I definately will. Wall was a very common butterfly on 'the hill ' forty years ago and didn't warrant a second look – like an awful lot of other places. I will definately keep my eyes open and it would be wonderful to have this butterfly just a short walk from home – I have had to travel to Dorset and Sussex to see it in previous years. Watch this spece... 😊 Mark

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 22-May-12 07:37 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

A visit to Paulsgrove today saw numerous Small Blue on the wing. I had organised a 'chaperone' as I have had a couple of unpleasant experiences at this site.

Hi Pauline

I hope to find the time to visit this site myself for the first time soon, I drive past most days during my working day. What sort of bad experiences? I assume related to the neighbourhood?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-May-12 02:19 PM GMT

Morning Jackz432r – Have sent you PM.

Thanks Debbie. Your photos of Orange Tips were great too.

A flying visit was made to Botany Bay yesterday to meet up with Mark who had kindly agreed to assist me with some camera issues. We enjoyed a good couple of hours in the sunshine with the butterflies, seeing a fair few species – between us we notched up double figures. The butterflies were quite active in the heat and several female Wood Whites were egg laying. I found the speed at which they were doing this, together with the fact that it was occurring deep within the vegetation, most frustrating as it prevented me from getting a clear photo. Just for the record this is the best I could come up with yesterday but (just like the Dingies) I WILL get my shot even if I have to wait for the second brood 😊

Butterfly deep in vegetation

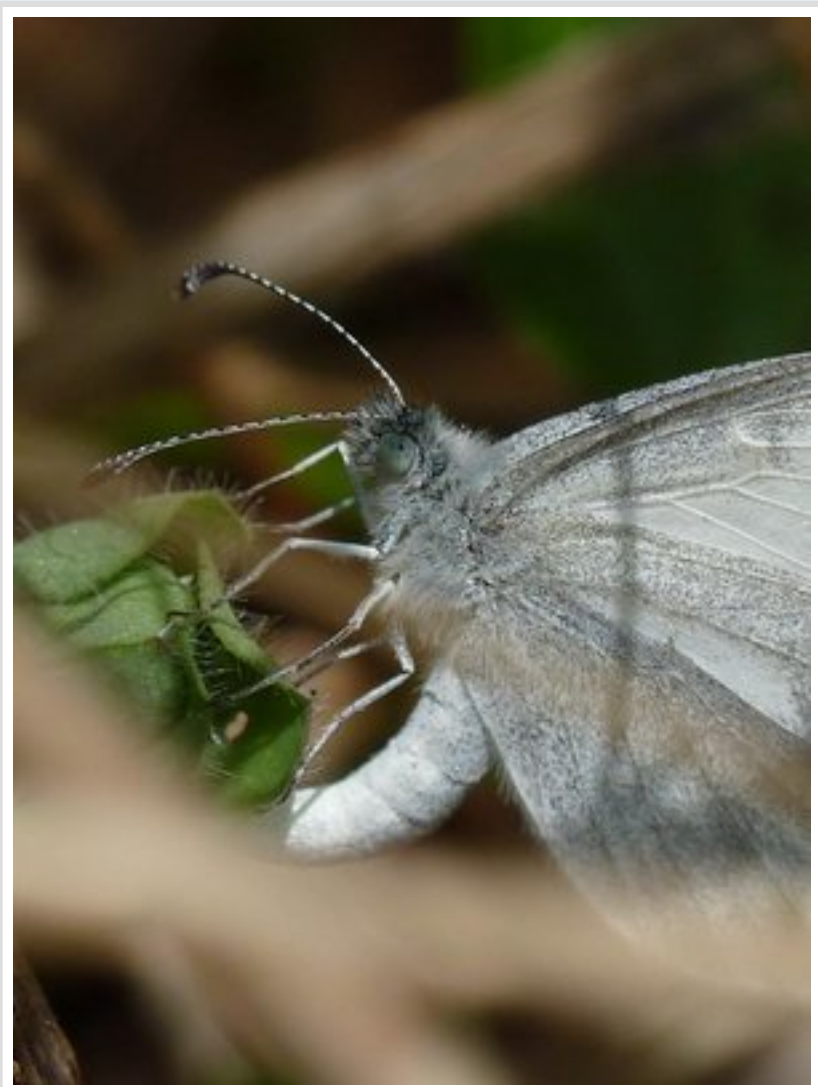


Photo is blurred as I quickly tried to capture the moment



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-May-12 02:28 AM GMT

My target today was Glanville Fritillaries. I had hoped they would be emerging by now. I was at the sand pits by 8.00am and it was already very warm. It was still quite wet underfoot and in the more sheltered areas the flowers were already in bloom. There was no-one else in sight but as I searched for the butterfly I felt I was being watched. I turned and saw this beautiful deer, lying in a clearing, soaking up the sun, and watching me intently from its chosen spot, perfectly camouflaged by the foliage. It didn't stir as I took a photo and went on my way.



It was now 9.30am and very hot indeed. I continued my search for the Glanville without success so had to be content with the Green Hairstreaks instead. I probably saw about 15 of these in total across the site, ranging from very fresh to quite worn.





Just as I was about to leave I noticed the crows chasing this Red Kite – the first one I have seen in the area. It took me a few precious seconds to remove the close-up lens from my camera which cost me a much closer shot.



Back home by 11.30am for refreshments and a change into some cooler, cleaner clothes. It was too hot for gardening so I decided to take a look at the local Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. I was hoping that by now the females might have emerged but the few males that I saw were frantically trying to find a female. They stopped at any small bit of plant or stone that was remotely the same colour, only to realise their error and continue on their way. I saw only 4 males and 2 were looking decidedly worn. I only managed a few snatched shots as they paused for a fraction of a second to briefly imbibe on bugle.



Tomorrow is forecast to be the hottest day of the week so it is time for a day off to recharge the batteries – mine and the camera.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-May-12 10:07 PM GMT

Too hot for me to be out there today so will use this opportunity to post a few shots as yet unseen from recent outings.



If this photo is enlarged there is something strange circling the antennae of the Small Copper – a spiral of tiny hairs perhaps?
I am not referring to the colouration seen clearly on the photo but something else which is not visible on this reduced size photo. If anyone is interested in the full size version I shall be happy to email.





Camera shy Small Heath



I am pleased to report that the Turtle Dove is still here:



.... and has been joined by a Yellow Hammer 😊



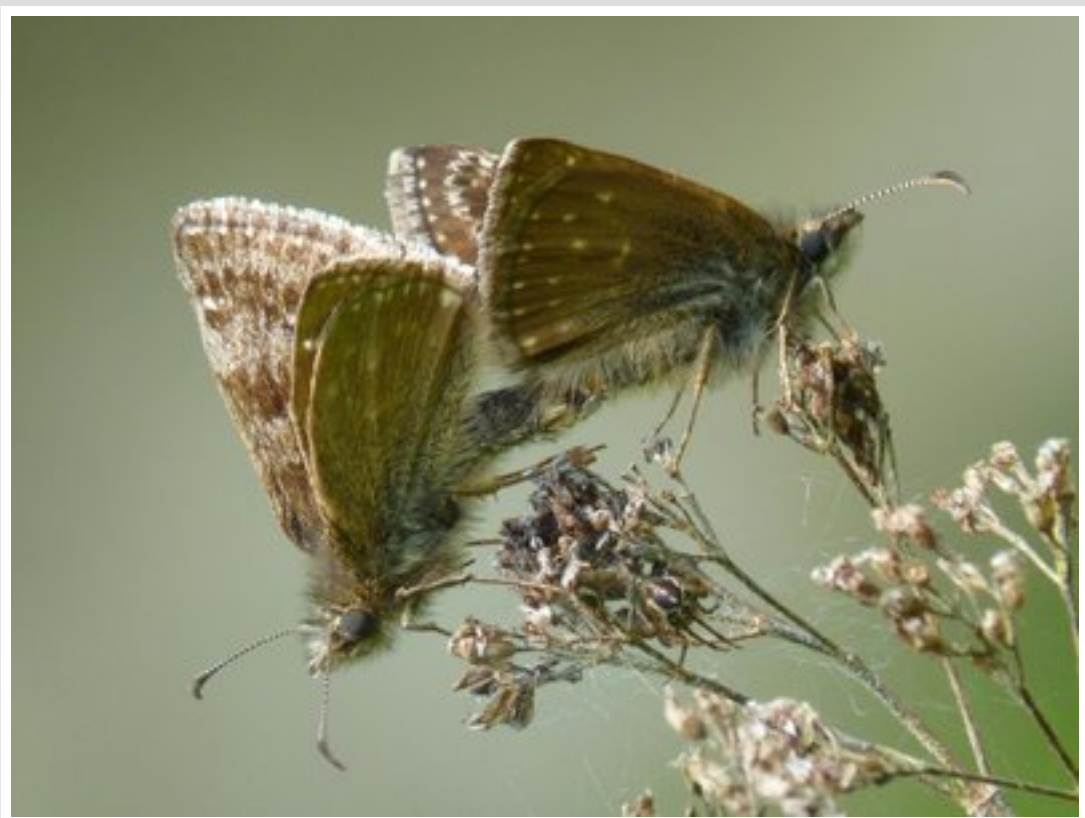
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-12 04:54 AM GMT

Despite my resolve to stay in today, by 5.00pm I was itching to get out, hoping the heat had subsided a little. I had an hour before starting the evening feeds so I headed to Noar Hill hoping to get some shots of Brown Argus. The place was teeming with butterflies which were still very active, the most noticeable being the Dingies and Small Heath, numbers of which the like I have never seen there before. The Dukes I saw were a bit the worse for wear but I didn't get much further than the first chalk pit before finding these Dingies.

Following Mark's helpful advice I have experimented using various settings – and trying to keep a steady hand. On the basis that I might never see this spectacle again (well, I have never seen it in the last 4 years) I took lots of shots using different aperture settings and made use of the changing light. Initially the butterflies were on a blade of grass but when I tried carefully to remove some offending grass from around them I accidentally disturbed them and they flew to a different roosting place hence the different backgrounds. But, which is the best? With or without the spider? Is it a distraction? Which is better focused? Wings open, closed or in between? They are all subtly different and I would appreciate any views.







Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 24-May-12 04:59 AM GMT

spider only a distraction for me as it's one i haven't seen Theridion sisyphium 😊 and first open winged shot for me.
Chris

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-12 02:09 PM GMT

You clearly have a lot of knowledge and interest in spiders Chris. I am wondering if that means this specimen is unusual, given that you haven't seen it before.

Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 24-May-12 06:43 PM GMT

I am only just starting to take pictures myself, so i cannot comment on the technical side; I also try a range of settings when I am taking pictures. But what I can say is I love your pictures 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 24-May-12 07:08 PM GMT

I'm spoilt for choice! I think 40090d is very 'artistic', with its plain background. I also like the diagonal composition of 40029d. 40095d is particularly sharp and, technically, is probably the best shot, but I like them all!

It does seem to be an exceptional year for Dingy Skippers, and Dukes have been having a good year too.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 25-May-12 02:50 AM GMT

interest yes, knowledge.... not so much 😊 have just spent a long time looking at pictures. 😊 and i'm afraid it's actually one of the commonest of the theridion genus.

Chris

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-May-12 02:24 PM GMT

As you have probably gathered from my postings Debbie I have no confidence in my photography skills so it is really good to know that you enjoy my photos. Thank you for taking the time to let me know.

This is just the sort of feedback I need Mike to help me on my way. I am doubting my own judgement of how good (or not) a photo is and if I receive no comments then I just assume that the photo must be fairly mediocre – members on this site are far too nice to say so. I appreciate you taking the trouble to compare the shots and telling me your views. Thank you.

I met up with Maurice yesterday morning on MHD only to be faced with a heavy mist and no butterflies in sight. Undeterred, Maurice suggested I start taking photos of other insects including this, which I believe is a type of Lacewing. I have only ever seen the green ones but this was a very pretty little thing.



Unbeknown to me, Maurice was carefully watching my technique and position and was able to offer some helpful tips and advice to improve my photography. It was not too long before the sun burnt off the mist and the butterflies became active. We saw and photographed a good selection of butterflies including this Brimstone. I am interested in butterfly camouflage and whilst I could easily spot the frenzied activity of the smaller butterflies, Maurice had to point this one out to me and even then I only found it with some difficulty.



There were several Green Hairstreaks patrolling their territory at eye level but never stopped long enough for a photo opportunity. We also failed to see any Small Blue which don't appear to have emerged yet at this site. However, the highlight for me was finding this mating pair of Brown Argus. A couple of photos below. A great morning in fine company and a big thank you to Maurice for your help.



Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 25-May-12 07:04 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,
(Being stuck in the office)

it is such a delight when I stop to enjoy my morning and afternoon tea to see your lovely pictures and todays are really lovely.

Debbie 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 25-May-12 08:08 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

if I receive no comments then I just assume that the photo must be fairly mediocre

Not necessarily – remember that there are loads of excellent butterfly photos on the web, now that so many people have digital cameras! I regard it as a real 'red letter' day if someone makes an unsolicited comment on one of my photos.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-May-12 02:38 AM GMT

I hadn't thought of it like that Mike. Thanks for pointing that out.

Thank you again so much Debbie – I hope you like this next lot.

I was really keen to put into practice what I have been taught recently and decided to visit Old Winchester Hill. There was a welcome breeze up there which provided some relief from the scorching temperatures but made taking sharp photos that bit more difficult – and that is the aspect I was hoping to improve upon. The Common Blues were just beginning to emerge and one female was egg-laying, but too deep in the vegetation.



However, by far the most numerous butterfly there today was the Small Heath. Although it is not one of my favourite butterflies it gave me the opportunity to try out my new skills and try to improve on my focussing.



I also came across this mating pair and noticed that the wing of one of the butterflies is slightly deformed. I have been wondering whether it is in fact a female which has not yet had the opportunity to inflate the wing properly.



Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-May-12 02:43 AM GMT

Nice shot that, Pauline. I guess most of us don't consider Small Heaths to be particularly photogenic. Perhaps that's why we see so few images of them (certainly mating pairs).

They're also a bugger to photograph because they keep realigning themselves meaning that the opportune angle is usually achieved by accident.

Large Heaths are just as troublesome!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-12 02:07 PM GMT

Thank you David. Sadly I have never see a Large heath but I would like to some day. I agree that the Small Heath are tricky but as they are numerous and close to home I have been using them to hone my focussing. The weekend has been uncomfortably hot with a strong breeze which did nothing ease the situation and was not in the least conducive to photography. Nevertheless, at 7.00pm last night I headed for a local site hoping to find Small Copper. I have never seen a Small Copper with those blue markings but keep hoping to.

The first point of interest for me was seeing some large deer. Long after they disappeared I could still hear them calling, a strange noise, a cross between a large dog barking and a roar which seemed to echo round the valley. This reminded me that where there are deer there are lickely to be ticks present and I have already had to remove 6 from me so far this season – they are obviously having as good a year as the Small Heath. A few photos below.





.... and there were lots of these too



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-May-12 03:01 PM GMT

How do I summarise yesterday? Frustrating! Interesting! Irritating! Enjoyable! Tiring! And a whole lot more. The forecast here was for a cooler day with some cloud and possibly a thunderstorm. At 4.30 am it was definitely looking like that. My perfect weather for butterflying so on the spur of the moment I decided to make the long (for me) trip to Bentley Wood to see the SPBF. I left shortly after 7.30am having finished the morning feeds and made good time to West Tytherley - with the help of my sat nav which only works on post codes! I then did the usual thing of getting lost but the local village store helped me out and just before 9.00am I was approaching the Bentley Wood entrance. I was dismayed to be greeted by clear blue skies and in the already considerable warmth the butterflies were already on the wing. I was too late! One glance was enough to convince me that any attempt at a decent photo was doomed to failure as the butterflies zipped from one patch to another, twisting and turning as they nectared on bugle, well-concealed by grass. I have not yet learned how to take photos under these conditions but there were others (from Dorset I think, and Basingstoke) with a similar aim and together we stalked our prey and chatted. They told me about a small colony of MF and having given up on the photography I decided to use the opportunity to explore the wood a bit further and perhaps discover a MF.

Whilst exploring more widely I had the pleasure of meeting a delightful gentleman, Mr Lewis, who informed me he had worked on the estate for 51 years and was now manager. He was pleased to give me a tour of his beautiful garden and we watched the large carp spawning (the water was 20 ft deep) and passed some time watching dragon flies and some SPBF. He said the garden was very good for PE later in the year and they would sometimes land on the wall of his house. He showed me his rare orchids which were carefully marked and protected, his pride obvious. Plants had been grown specifically to encourage wildlife in particular butterflies and it was the sort of place, so peaceful and picturesque, where it would be easy to while away several hours. Mr Lewis was concerned that there had been some proposals and discussion about giving the area national park status but he was strongly against this as Bentley Wood was only 'for them that knows where it is'. He did not want it to become too commercialised.

I decided to have another brief encounter with the SPBF before I left but the only photo I took was of a black and white moth which everyone seemed excited about. It is not a good photo and not worthy of this site. It was now lunchtime and time to return to the animals although I would have loved to stay longer. In the absence of any decent butterfly photos I shall enclose a few photos of a few more of the 'waifs and strays' that are responsible for keeping me from the butterflies. They too all have their stories.

This is Pepper shouting the odds although he isn't always noisy (red and green and comes from Chile - what else would he be called):



And now let me introduce Heidi:



and April:



I think that'll do for now.

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 29-May-12 05:16 PM GMT

Hi Pauline - some cracking shots as usual.

I liked the Bronze Winged Pionus - I used to breed Blue Headed until someone stole my female 😡

Have checked out Fort Purbrook most days but no Wall yet 😞 My little colony of Small Blues is coming on nicely with four spotted yesterday and I found seven eggs in the very limited supply of kidney vetch. Fingers crossed and good hunting.

Mark

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-12 06:03 PM GMT

Thank you Mark. Nice of you to say so and good to hear from you again. Sorry you didn't see the Wall - I was hoping you would so I could nip down

there. At the moment I am not able to nip anywhere as someone has handed me a fledgeling Blue Tit which has neurological damage from its fall and I am struggling to feed it 😞 . I have agreed with my vet to give it 48 hours and if it hasn't improved in that time well, it is just not fair to the little bird to keep going. If you have ever had to hand rear any bird you will know what a commitment that is and how time-consuming. The upshot is that my butterflying will have to be on hold for 48 hours (longer if it survives) but watch this space as I will be back 😊

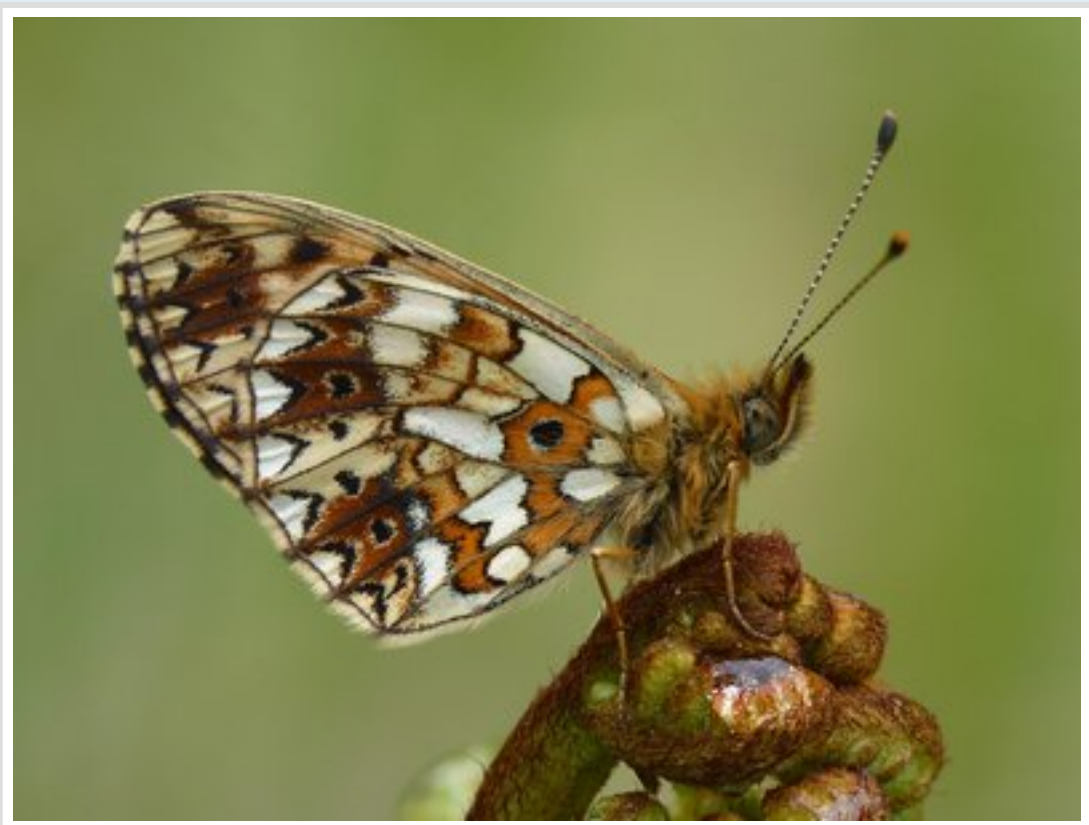
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-12 05:26 AM GMT

Had a rotten few days (the little bird didn't make it, amongst other things) so decided to cheer myself up with a second trip to Bentley Wood. I decided to leave earlier than last time so 7.00am saw me driving down the A3. I hadn't gone many miles when the sun came out and the sky looked beautifully clear. Not wanting a repeat of last time I considered turning back but I have to grasp these opportunities when I can. The weather forecast for Salisbury predicted a mixed bag – showers, cloud, some sun – which suited me fine so I proceeded onto the A272. By the time I reached Winchester the sky was thundery and dark and I considered turning back for the second time. I thought it might be more sensible to take a quick look at MHD (a Hants reserve) and then return home. However, I decided to press on and arrived at Bentley Wood just after 8.00 am as the first drops of rain fell. There was no-one else daft enough to be out looking for butterflies in these conditions so initially I had the place to myself. Before very long my trainers were sodden and the rain from the long vegetation had soaked right through my jeans. I had no chance of stealthily approaching a butterfly as each step I took produced a loud squelshing sound. After some considerable searching I eventually found what I was looking for.



I was so overjoyed I kept trying different settings and different positions:



It wasn't too much longer before the sky brightened and with that the butterflies appeared like magic.



Albeit almost as wet as me.





By now I was wet through, cold and hungry. The weight of my soggy jeans pulled them down and the hard seam of the crotch rubbed against my thighs with each step I took. I must have looked a sorry sight. Despite everything I considered trying to find some MF. I pulled a map out of my back pocket but it was so wet that it disintegrated. Enough! It was time to go. MF would have to wait for another day.

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 02-Jun-12 06:21 AM GMT

Hi Pauline - I sorry I missed your post about hand rearing birds. Have raised many myself including a brood of Goldies Lorikeets that I had to take to work every day to hand feed every two hours - kept them in a cupboard behind my desk and they created a right racket every time I opened the door! Had a lovely trip to both Beacon hill at warnford and noar hill today. Quite a few butterflies in the morning including one greenstreak and dozens of common blues including numbers of females. Also popped in to see my little colony of small blues at fort purbrook which are doing well - saw four and counted some more eggs - still no walls but there were six speckled woods and it's good to the numbers rising. Also encountered a blackbird at noar hill which had captured and unfortunate slow worm. I watched it for about five minutes as the escape strategy worked perfectly. The blackbird spent the entire time trying to 'kill' the tail which had been cast off but was still wriggling vigorously whilst the sloworm played dead. Eventually I walked forward and the blackbird flew off with its prize. The unfortunate juvenile sloworm seemed unharmed but was upside down in a typical 'I'm not alive pose' but I picked it up and put in in a safe location and it slithered off into the undergrowth. Just one very faded DoB at noar hill and the ubiquitous small heaths. Am going to try to get to Bentley wood if the weather is ok over the weekend. 😊 mark.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-12 03:35 PM GMT

Good luck Mark. Don't let the weather put you off. Let me know how you get on.

A few more from yesterday. By now I was thoroughly soaked so had no reservations about lying down on the grass to get this shot (apart from the risk of ticks!). Just a shame I didn't quite focus on the eye as everyone has been advising me to:



Got the eye sorted - now need to focus on the antennae 😊



This one seemed quite a bit darker than the others:



Last but not least, another side view which is my preferred pose for this butterfly. The underside is so very attractive:



Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 02-Jun-12 04:33 PM GMT

some lovely shots Pauline.

Chris

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-Jun-12 07:28 PM GMT

Absolutely. Your attention to detail is admirable.

Dull days are not normally too welcome, but they serve to take the 'sting' out of Fritillary hyperactivity, meaning good shots can be captured.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jun-12 04:43 PM GMT

Ah, thanks Chris – much appreciated but I still have a long way to go to match your stunning close-ups.

Thank you for your kind words David and thank you for taking the time to comment.

I imagine everyone has their own reason for starting a personal diary and they are probably all slightly different. For me, my diary is not just a vehicle to record my outings and what I have seen; nor is it a platform to showcase my photos. My diary is a record of the learning curve I am on – the quest to improve my butterfly photography and my photography knowledge in general. This is the reason I am so keen to solicit views, suggestions and criticism of any sort and I am continually grateful to those of you who are helping me with this. I want to be able to look back next season at the photos I am taking now, and be able to demonstrate to myself that I have improved – that I have moved a step closer to the quality of the photos I aspire to. I take every opportunity to practice and try to put in place the hints and tips I have been given.

I have been on a couple of long trips recently so yesterday decided to stay closer to home and as Mark described an 'easy' way down to Rake Bottom that is where I went. At 7.00pm the place was alive with a variety of beautifully coloured moths. I do not know much about moths as their sheer numbers tend to overwhelm me but these beauties could easily convert me. It was cooler and overcast and the butterflies were roosting as I had expected. Because of this I had brought along a monopod – first time I had used one but needed to see if it would help with sharper photos. Unfortunately, the connection I had brought along was the wrong size for the camera so the following is a selection which are still all hand held (I WILL find the connection Maurice 😊)





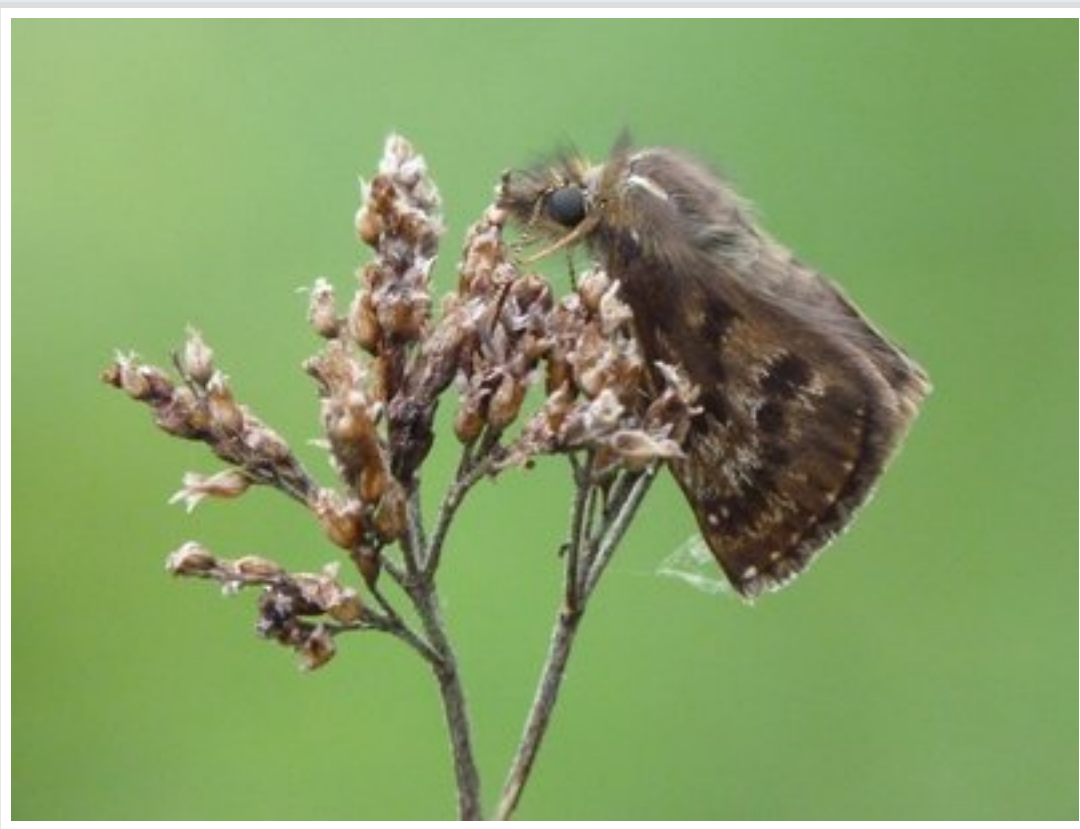
Some lovely caterpillars as well as moths:



and an evil looking fly of some sort:



Now I know that a small aperture (large F number) gives a greater depth of field but a small aperture means a slower shutter speed to allow enough light and with it comes the increased risk of hand shake (hope I've got that right). So, when I found a subject posed with wings shut I increased the aperture (faster shutter speed) to try to get a sharp shot – forgot about the flower which obviously needs more depth of field so is hopelessly out of focus—another lesson to remember!



Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 03-Jun-12 07:06 PM GMT

they're all good but that 2nd blue on the grass is an absolute cracker, lovely subtle markings, and your mean looking fly is a bee fly and garden tiger for your caterpillar.

Chris

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-12 07:11 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Some more good photos there.

Try not to think about it too much and take the photos that you feel to look right, as said before you have a natural eye for a good photo, go with your instincts.

I particularly like the backlit Small Heath. It took me ages last year to get a shot of a SH not tucked down in the grass so well done 😊

cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 03-Jun-12 09:23 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

the connection I had brought along was the wrong size for the camera

There are two common sizes of tripod thread: 1/4 inch and 3/8 inch. If your monopod is a Manfrotto, look carefully, as they have a clever dual thread, where the outer (larger) thread slides down over the smaller inner when you push down on it. Other makes may be similar. The larger thread is often used on the base of tripod heads and I use a ball head on my monopod, as it gives extra flexibility. You can lock the ball solid, for maximum rigidity, or leave it slightly free, for fine adjustment of framing, when on the 'pod, or to tilt the camera for 'portrait'-format pictures.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jun-12 10:16 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments Chris – they are really appreciated – and for the identifications.

Neil, thank you for your kind words and for the advice – I am grateful for it. I am trying to improve the consistency with which I get reasonable photos and it seems the only way to do that is to learn about the fundamentals of photography. I do bin an awful lot of photos but I think I am getting better.

Thanks Mike but the bit I am missing is a little oblong bit that clips onto the monopod. If I don't find it soon I guess it's a trip to a camera shop!

I am getting a little tired of getting soaked (is this really June??!!) but just love to be out there and took these a few days ago:





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 06-Jun-12 10:32 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

the bit I am missing is a little oblong bit that clips onto the monopod

I understand – you have a quick-release plate. I hope you find it!!

mike

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 07-Jun-12 01:09 AM GMT

Hi Pauline – your photos are getting better and better – keep up the good work. Glad you found the easy route into Rake bottom – did you spot the family of foxes in the farmers field opposite the metal gate? There were four cubs there the other evening.

I popped up there last week in the evening and there were large numbers of common blues mostly roosting in some type of Forget me Not. I found 25 in one small patch.

Hope you find your quick release plate 😊 Mark

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jun-12 03:16 PM GMT

Today, I intend to continue the search for the quick release plate Mike (at least I know what it is called now 😊). I hope I can get a replacement if I can't find it as there are not too many places left to look.

Thank you for the complement Mark. I did keep my eyes open for fox cubs but there were a couple of folk down there with dogs and all I saw was a Cuckoo fly right past me –twice. I have never seen a Cuckoo before but this one was calling the whole time (even in flight) so there was no mistaking it.

More of the same enclosed. I actually have a preference for the one with the bit of foliage in the way. I have recently purchased Photoshop Elements and have been assured that the foliage can be removed but I haven't yet had time to read any instructions. Something to do in all this rain.





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 07-Jun-12 06:50 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I have recently purchased Photoshop Elements

Hours of fun there!!! You can learn the basics from books but, after that, it's down to experiment and experience. I've been using PSE for years and still keep discovering new features and new ways of doing things!

I liked the last of your three Glanvilles on the leaves best – it's a bit more unusual and interesting than the one on the bare stem, while I do find the leaf at the side of the middle one a bit of a distraction – very easy to remove with PSE! Please don't forget to tell us where and when your photos were taken.

In an earlier post, you described the difficulty of balancing shutter speed and aperture. That is a major part of the skill of photography – choosing the best settings for any particular situation. With digital cameras, you have another variable : the ISO setting. In film days, one had to use different films for different ISO 'film speeds' but, on digital cameras, it is another control. A higher ISO lets you use a faster shutter speed in poor light or a smaller aperture, while maintaining a reasonable shutter speed. There is a downside, as higher ISO means more grain or 'noise' and this is an important area where cameras with larger sensors (e.g. DSLRs) give better results.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-12 01:41 AM GMT

Eureka! I have found it! I can't wait to get out now with my monopod and see if I can produce sharper pictures. Pity about the weather. Thank you Mike for expressing your preference and for explaining a bit more about photography. It is great to have this information 'drip fed' to me in bite size pieces that I can understand, digest and practice before the next bit is revealed. The more I know the more I am loving the challenge. I have now ordered 'the missing manual' which I am hoping will help me to understand photoshop Elements a bit better (still can't work out how to get rid of that bit of foliage – and it is annoying me 😞)

Being so close to the Wrecclisham site I have been keeping a close eye on it, visiting once or twice weekly to monitor the progress of the Glanvilles. The first one I saw was on the 25 May and it was the only one I saw for over a week. I have still not seen more than 4 in any one visit and that includes the mating pairs. I HAVE seen 2 guys with large nets who claimed to be catching Cinnibar moths for closer examination!! He actually showed me one he had in a container! Now I can tell you that these moths are so common on this site that I almost stand on them and could probably collect several without a net of any sort. After what happened to Neil's car when he challenged guys with nets I decided to play ignorant and asked if they knew anything about butterflies. 'Oh yes' was the reply. I said I was a total beginner and had heard that I might be lucky enough to see some Glanvilles here. I asked if that was true and if they knew where I might possibly see one. Of course they knew!!

Well, this is likely to be the last Glanvilles for this year – onwards and upwards so they say but with rain lashing down and gales forecast I imagine butterflies will be few and far between.



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-12 02:13 AM GMT

Cracking shots of a stunning butterfly Pauline! 😊👍 My favourite is the one on the stone, an unusuL pose, like it! 😎
Hopefully they'll still be one or two around on Saturday when I'll be there...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 08-Jun-12 02:20 AM GMT

Very nice Pauline ... very nice. 😊

Neil

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-12 03:04 AM GMT

Another vote for the one on the stone Pauline, I would be dead chuffed to get a shot like that 😊

And for sequence of three, my favourite is the last one, for the same reason as Mike, it has that extra bit of interest in the composition.

Cheers,

Neil f.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 08-Jun-12 03:10 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

still can't work out how to get rid of that bit of foliage

Try using the 'eye dropper' tool to pick up the background colour close to the edge of the leaf, then use the 'brush' tool to paint this colour over the leaf. Now use the 'Clone' tool, with opacity set to about 50%, to blend the colour in from above and below until the joins don't show. You'll need to experiment with brush sizes for the best effect and to avoid damaging the nearby antenna.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-12 04:50 PM GMT

Thank you Neil. As my very first 'mentor' and one of the few who know how really awful I was 😊 that really does mean a great deal.

Thank you Wurzel, I hope you are successful but I have to tell you that the weather forecast here for the weekend is not great and it is a fair way for you to travel. Mind you, I have never let that stop me 😊

Thank you Neil. I have some similar photos so I shall have to check to see if I have one where she is facing in the right direction. What's with all these camera shy butterflies 😊

Ta-dah! How about this Mike? I followed your instructions (except I couldn't find the Clone tool) and so this is my very first attempt. It is probably clumsy and I dread to think how it will look if magnified but it is a start – and the book arrives today 😊



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 08-Jun-12 08:14 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

How about this Mike?

Looks great to me. Just a tiny hint of 'deception' around the tip of the antenna. Be careful, though, and don't talk about these dark arts above a whisper, or the 'purists' will get cross!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 08-Jun-12 08:44 PM GMT

Lovely pictures.

Debbie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-12 01:18 AM GMT

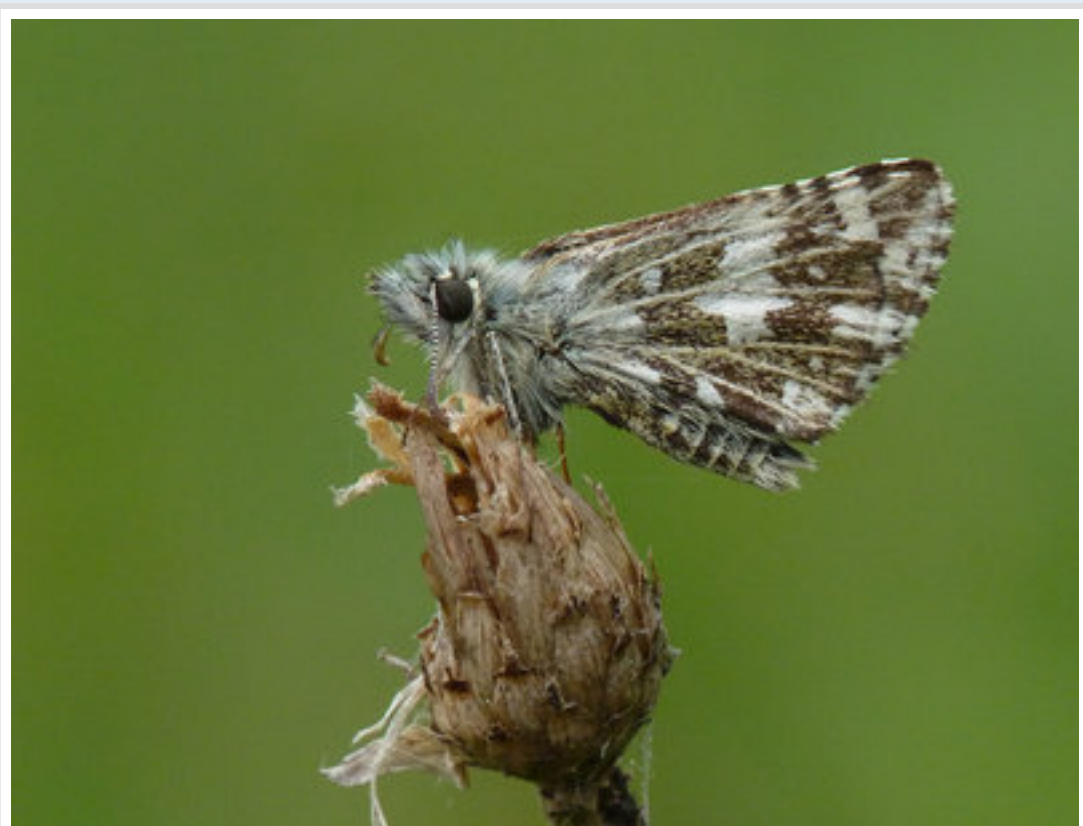
Thank you debbie – you are taking some good ones too.

I am itching to see a couple of the rarer and more far flung species but this awful weather and unpredictable emergence patterns have made me a bit reluctant to put in place somewhat complicated and expensive plans to allow time away. Instead I decided to 'rediscover' local sites which I have not visited for a few years. The first of these was Queen Elizabeth Country Park and the lower slopes of Butser Hill where in the past I have been able to count a fair few Blues. However, on Saturday evening there was a paucity of butterflies at both sites, with the exception of Small Heath, of which there were dozens. I decided to move on to Chalton Down (3rd time lucky?). Following Mark's directions I now believe I have finally found this site but again the butterflies seen were mainly Small Heath, although I did see a worn female Common Blue and one male which had a slightly crumpled wing.



I also tried to take a photo of a Red Admiral, sat on a round, flat cluster of white flowers, wings closed, getting ready to roost. Despite it being after 5.00pm the sun was still quite bright and I did not want the white flower to be 'bleached' so I adjusted the exposure compensation to $-2/3$ (minus two thirds). Although the butterfly was effectively flat with its wings together I was mindful of the dimensions of the flower (trying to learn from last time) and set the aperture to the highest value for my camera F8.0 (forgot to take into account the ISO which I am just learning about as I think a slightly higher setting might have given me more depth of field). The result was not good. I had a flower which was only partially in focus and a really dark butterfly. Rethink. Changed the exposure compensation to a + number, slightly changed my position and the composition and tried again. Butterfly much better now but flower bleached. And so it went on with me trying to resolve this apparent dichotomy between dark butterfly and white flower. I shall need to give this particular combination some further thought.

Today I was tempted to go slightly further afield but the rain moved in again so I decided to take a quick look at Botany Bay. I didn't expect to meet anyone there in the rain but Nick and Mark had also decided that they needed a butterfly 'fix'. Nick had already found a Dingy and Grizzled Skipper and Mark had spotted an impressive male stag beetle. Despite the rain the Wood Whites were flying (only 3 in total) but there was no sign of any DGF which was hardly surprising given the conditions. Nevertheless, an enjoyable couple of hours. A few photos from today:





Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jun-12 02:08 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I am itching to see a couple of the rarer and more far flung species

Hi Pauline,

To me some of the species that you post are rare and far flung 😊

With regard to your camera settings, with my Lumix I tend to leave the exposure set to either $-1/3$ or $-2/3$ depending on the light. I prefer to err on the side of under exposure if anything.

As an example the photo of the male Small Blue on the Daisy that I posted on my diary earlier was taken with my FZ150 at $-2/3$ exposure, top dial set to macro, focus to AFmacro.

Some may not like the result but it works for me 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-12 04:36 AM GMT

Cracking shots as to be expected Pauline 😊 missed you and the others at Botany Bay by a day – we found good numbers of Wood Whites all up the path.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 11-Jun-12 05:19 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

And so it went on with me trying to resolve this apparent dichotomy between dark butterfly and white flower.

Were you shooting JPEG or RAW? It is in situations like these where RAW comes into its own. The key difference is that RAW has many more brightness steps between light and dark than are possible in JPEG. With a RAW image, it is possible to pull detail out of the shadows, without 'blowing' the highlights, but it means more work with Photoshop. If you have the time and patience (which I think you do), then RAW allows much more post-processing than is possible with a JPEG image.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-12 10:38 PM GMT

I take your point Neil about far flung species. I should count myself lucky to be living in Hampshire which is a very butterfly rich county. I have never tried using the macro setting on my camera – perhaps I should be more adventurous as your Small Blue shot was lovely.

Thank you Wurzel – it is very kind of you to say so.

I have always shot in JPEG Mike as I was told RAW takes up a lot of memory. I didn't know the difference between them or what the advantages were but now that you have explained this is something else to experiment with 😊 .

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 13-Jun-12 05:24 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I didn't know the difference between them or what the advantages were

I have recently added a technical note about RAW images to my website at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/usingraw.htm> It's a bit 'techy' but you may find it helpful.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jun-12 01:18 AM GMT

Thank you Mike – haven't had time to look yet but I shall.

Ah well, here we go again – last night a neighbour brought round a fledgling Robin that her cat had brought in! Poor little mite had lost an eye and its balance was a bit iffy and what with the shock I really didn't think it would last the night. I was surprised to find it perching this morning and chirping to the other birds. Unfortunately it doesn't want to feed. I am trying every couple of hours with waxworms etc but the upshot is I can't leave it for too long. So, despite being the best day weatherwise for ages I have only been out briefly to Oxenbourne. It was nice there today with more butterflies than I have seen in a while and some lovely dragonflies. Muntjac and Roe deer also spotted. A few photos below:



... but the Common Blues at this site are looking very worn now



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jun-12 01:58 AM GMT

I was keen to get a few shots of SSB before the really bad weather set in (again) so I decided to head for Iping and Stedham. I have not been to this reserve before although it is only 16 minutes drive (timed it and that included being stuck at a level crossing). I usually go to Broxhead Common for SSB's as it is much closer but Broxhead is a 'late' site, usually about 2 weeks behind the others and today I was feeling impatient. I had no idea where the colonies were to be found and to be honest it was a bit like looking for a needle in a haystack. I was about to call it a day when I bumped into another member of UK butterflies who kindly offered to show me the 'hot spot'. There weren't too many butterflies on the wing and the weather was very changeable – overcast, cool, windy, bit of sunshine. Colin located the first male and although I got some closed wing shots I had to wait a considerable time before he opened his wings. When the time came to leave I realised I was totally disorientated and had no idea which path to take. Luckily, a couple of wildlife trust rangers were on site and pointed me in the right direction. On taking a closer look at my photos it seems that the wing tips are out of focus – yes, it was windy but I can't keep using that as an excuse. The open wing shots are not even worth a second glance. The best one is probably the beautiful Great British White cattle who had begun to lie down in anticipation of the forthcoming rain.





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jun-12 02:51 AM GMT

A lovely couple of hours was spent wondering on Oxenbourne early this morning. The sun was shining and the bird song was only punctuated by the frequent harsh 'barking' of the muntjacs. My first Meadow Brown of the year was soon spotted but try as I might I could not coax him into a more pleasing pose.



This was quickly followed by sightings of a couple of Large Skippers. It is a pity that the tips of the wings of this Skipper are out of focus in the closed wing shot as I like the composition, but I only had time to snatch one photo before the warmth of the sun persuaded him to open his wings. I was shooting with quite a large depth of field so I am assuming that in my haste (and excitement!) I was not properly square on to the butterfly which I believe was rectified in later shots.





A surprising number of Blues were on the wing in varying states of wear and tear but they were not allowing this to temper their territorial squabbles:





In better condition were a couple of Brown Argus, content to pose for the camera as the temperature started to rise. I tried hard to ensure that the white fringe around this very dark butterfly was in focus with varying degrees of success. However, this was an improvement on the SSB shots as the white fringe around them was bleached and lacked any definition. Certainly a tricky combination which I am still not entirely sure how to deal with.



By far the most numerous was the Small Heath which seemed to be everywhere and easily outnumbered the total of all other species seen.



My camera battery was about to run out but I could not resist taking this shot on my way back to the car as the wild flowers at this site are amazing. Back home in time for 'brunch'!



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-12 03:47 AM GMT

Lovely pics Pauline, it rained here early morning, the afternoon was dry but unfortunately didn't see a thing, your very lucky living where you do. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-12 05:43 AM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline! I'm struggling with Large Skippers at the moment, not finding em, getting em into shot—how did you coax him out of the long grass?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

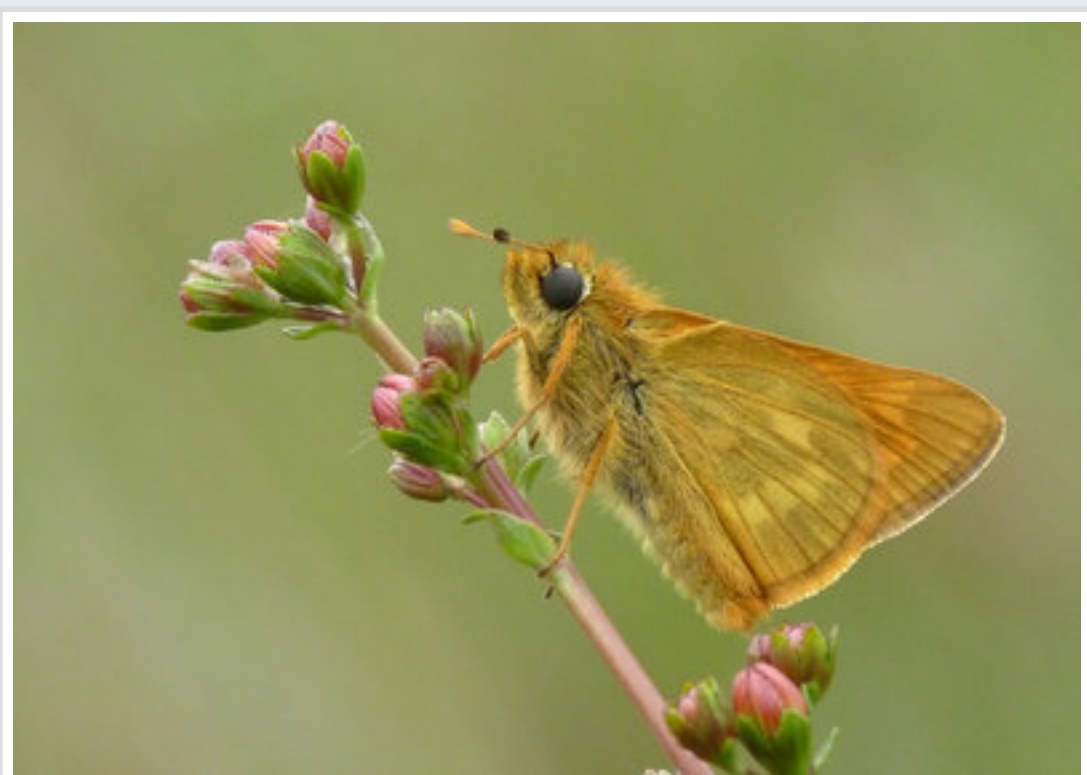
by Pauline, 19-Jun-12 01:06 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie. I was actually brought up in the North East in a very industrial area (shipbuilding, coal mines) so I try to remember to appreciate the wildlife around me now.

Thank you too Wurzel. It actually takes a fair bit of patience and even more luck. The weather was very kind to me – the Skippers were very fresh and in the brief sunshine they glinted gold and were easy to see because they quickly became active. The frequent cloud cover in between calmed them down enough for the photos.

Today was fairly similar weather-wise so I thought I would take a chance and pop over to Oaken Wood to see if any Marbled Whites had emerged (they hadn't!). When the sun briefly emerged the meadow came alive with yes, Small Heath, more than I have ever seen before in one place. No wonder it has been so easy this year to find mating pairs.

I also saw a few more Large Skippers and took the opportunity to try to improve on my shots from yesterday. I am actually quite pleased with this batch of photos. Whilst they may not be perfect in every respect I actually like them and one of them might just be my favourite photo of this year so far.





**Re: Pauline**

by Nick Broomer, 19-Jun-12 01:30 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Excellent pictures,

All the best,

Nick.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jun-12 03:41 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, an excellent set of photos. I think the one at the top just about edges it for my favourite.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jun-12 03:58 AM GMT

Thank you Nick – that means a lot.

Thank you Neil. I like them all but I do have a favourite.

As this diary is a record of the progression of my photography skills not all photos included will be ones that I am pleased with. However, I hope that over time an improvement will become evident as I try to master the fundamentals of photography and put them into practice. I would like to think that through a better understanding it will be possible to make better judgements resulting in the overall trend being upwards. Nevertheless, I shall still record the aspects that I have had difficulty with and some of the less successful photos. I am still working hard to improve my focusing following several constructive comments and helpful hints earlier in the season and I think that this is beginning to pay off. More recently I took some shots of SSB's that I was less than happy with. The exposure was all wrong and the white fringe around the butterfly was completely bleached and lacking in any detail. I decided I needed to experiment a bit in different light and with different exposure compensation settings. I think I have achieved what I set out to do – the detail on the white fringe is certainly visible now. I am not content with the compositions or the background but I had less than an hour and this was the aspect I wanted to concentrate on. I am not finished with the SSB's yet so hopefully there will be better to come.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jun-12 02:45 AM GMT

The different species of butterfly all seem to bring with them their own unique challenges when it comes to taking photographs. Whether this be finding them, having the right weather conditions, dealing with the different colour combinations, etc. it means that there is potential to learn from each experience and every outing and it never gets boring. I have not yet seen a female SSB and although I shall keep checking my local site it is time to move on. It might be Marbled White, Small Skipper, DGF or something else, but whatever it is I am looking forward to it. I shall leave with a few photos taken today. Several are very similar but I think my favourites are the ones with the purple hue of the heather in the background.





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-12 05:16 AM GMT

Cracking shots there Pauline – they cheered me up as I went looking for SSB's at my local site on Monday with no joy and I was ill today 😞 ! Still I'll be all better ready for the weekend...with it's rain and gales and below average temperatures 😞 You've got to 😊 or you'll 😞

I noticed last year that the males of the SSB seem to come out first with the females a week or so later. They also tend to stay lower down in the heather so are harder to find. When you do find one the closed wings are stunning with more really bright and obvious "silver studs" – good luck!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-12 05:36 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Lovely photos, I too like the purple shade to the background to a couple.

Neil F.

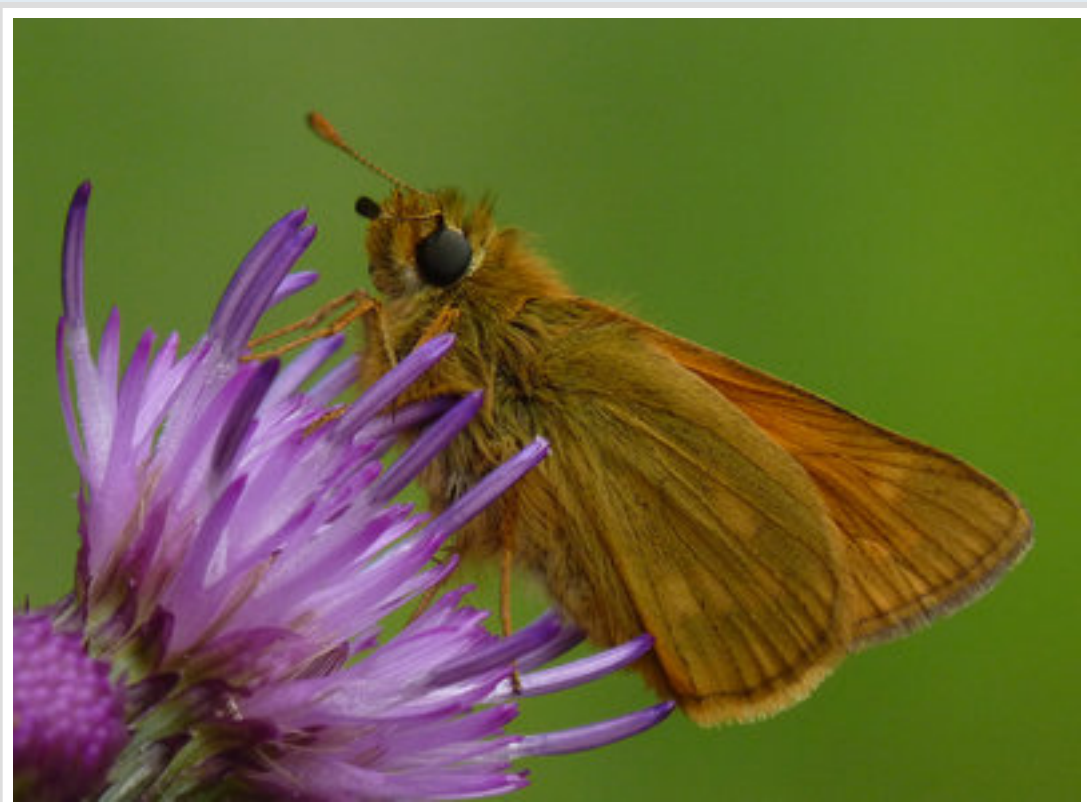
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-12 03:32 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. I hope you are feeling better today tho I fear you are right about the weekend weather. I imagine the closest I'll get to a butterfly is sorting out my photos 😞

Thank you Neil. Wish I could take ones as good as this all the time but sadly that's not the case just yet. You don't want to know how many I bin or the number of great shots I miss cos I'm not quite fast enough!

Had a quick look at The Straits yesterday morning in the brief, watery sunshine. Definitely no SWF or WA yet. Only butterflies seen were Admiral (wrong colour), MB, lots of LS and my first Small Skipper of the year... but he was too quick for a photo. Only took one photo whilst there. Word of warning – anyone visiting this site needs insect repellent. I wasn't there long but badly bitten by all manner of insects, possibly horse flies?



Stopped off at Broxhead Common on the way back but no female SSB evident as yet.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jun-12 01:32 AM GMT

Found my female Wurzel and yes, she had some lovely studs



but it wasn't long before someone else found her also:



The wind was blowing a gale and taking photos today really wasn't easy but this was the best I could do:





Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 24-Jun-12 04:25 AM GMT

What super and lovely pictures.
Debbie

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-12 05:56 AM GMT

A delight to see Pauline—especially I've been on domestic duties all day and tomorrow is loft clearing 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jun-12 05:12 PM GMT

Thank you Debbie – I really appreciate your comments.

Morning Wurzel – it is kind of you to say so. Looking out the window at the November weather I think the best place to be today is actually in the loft!

Re: Pauline

by Colin Knight, 24-Jun-12 05:27 PM GMT

Great photos Pauline!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jun-12 03:54 AM GMT

Thank you Colin. It is very kind of you to say so. I am trying hard and still learning but doing my best.

It had been my intention to go to Sainsbury's today but in the event I went to Tesco instead. Now Tesco is only 5 mins away from the Straits and I just couldn't resist. It was windy, overcast and drizzling but I walked along the main track to the clump of bramble by the watchtower. Fritillaries are often to be seen there but today it was quite cold and I consoled myself that even the flies seemed non-existent so at least I wouldn't get bitten again. Suddenly the sun appeared and with it about half a dozen Large Skippers. What is it with these butterflies and their white flowers! I really must get this combination sorted out.



It was time to leave but just as I turned my attention was caught by these. As usual I am undecided which I prefer so have included a selection:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 25-Jun-12 04:49 AM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline—I'd go with the last two 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Gothic_dreams, 25-Jun-12 04:56 AM GMT

Lovely photos Pauline, i look forward to seeing more you post 😊

Chris

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jun-12 03:20 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel and Chris. Your comments are always appreciated.

A few more that I forgot to include from yesterday:



Don't know what it is but it was very pretty.



A slow worm???? definitely not an adder but I don't know much about snakes.





Once the sun appeared the Skippers seemed to be everywhere.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-12 03:58 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I think your top photo is a female Common blue Damselfly.

Lovely Large Skipper photos in the last couple of posts 😊

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Rosalyn, 26-Jun-12 04:04 AM GMT

You have some very nice pics Pauline 🍷

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jun-12 03:06 AM GMT

Thank you Neil – I really must try to broaden my knowledge but the blue glinted in the sunshine and was quite lovely.

Hi Rosalyn. I have been following your travels and would say the same about you. I am envious of the species that you are seeing and your photos, especially the compositons, are lovely.

Today I decided to look for white butterflies but the ones I found were not my target. I wanted Marbled, I got Wood – I'm not really complaining. I couldn't get away until mid afternoon when the weather was changeable – humid, hot, rainy. I am wondering if this is the second brood of Wood White (Nick????):





I happened to see my first Ringlet of the season:



But it was the Skippers which amused me the most, zipping from thistle to thistle:





Re: Pauline

by Nick Broomer, 27-Jun-12 03:31 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Your Wood White is a late first brood. The second brood should be out the first week of July, normally between the 4th-7th.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-12 12:47 AM GMT

Thanks Nick - thought it was something to do with having pretty legs and I thought these had pretty legs 😊

I am getting a little tired of squelshing through mud or being soaked to the skin and today was no different. There is no need to be specific about my venue today except to say it wasn't the IOW and there were no Heath Frits - not that I could see anyway. There were still a few of these but unsurprisingly looking a little worn and tired - bit like me 😊😊



The Meadow Brown seem to have replaced the Small Heath and given the sheer numbers of male and female I was surprised I didn't stumble upon a mating pair – but I didn't! My photos of this butterfly are particularly uninspiring so won't be posted.

I did manage my first photo of the season of a Small Skipper and although it was overcast it was warm and humid and they were very active indeed.



Another first for the season was the Marbled White who persisted in presenting an asymmetrical pose.



Despite the poor weather conditions there was quite an eclectic mix there today:



and last but not least the Large Skipper



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 28-Jun-12 01:31 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

persisted in presenting an asymmetrical pose.

I like these diagonal compositions! Often with butterfly photos, the angle depends on how you are standing, so it's often worth experimenting with rotating the image for best effect when displayed.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-12 05:26 AM GMT

Cracking shots 😊 And your fare is very similar to mine today – minus the Glannies of course. So no Heaths yet? I reckon another couple if days...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 28-Jun-12 03:09 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

first time I have had chance to catch up with your Diary and you never disapoint with you wonderful pictures.

Debbie

Re: Pauline

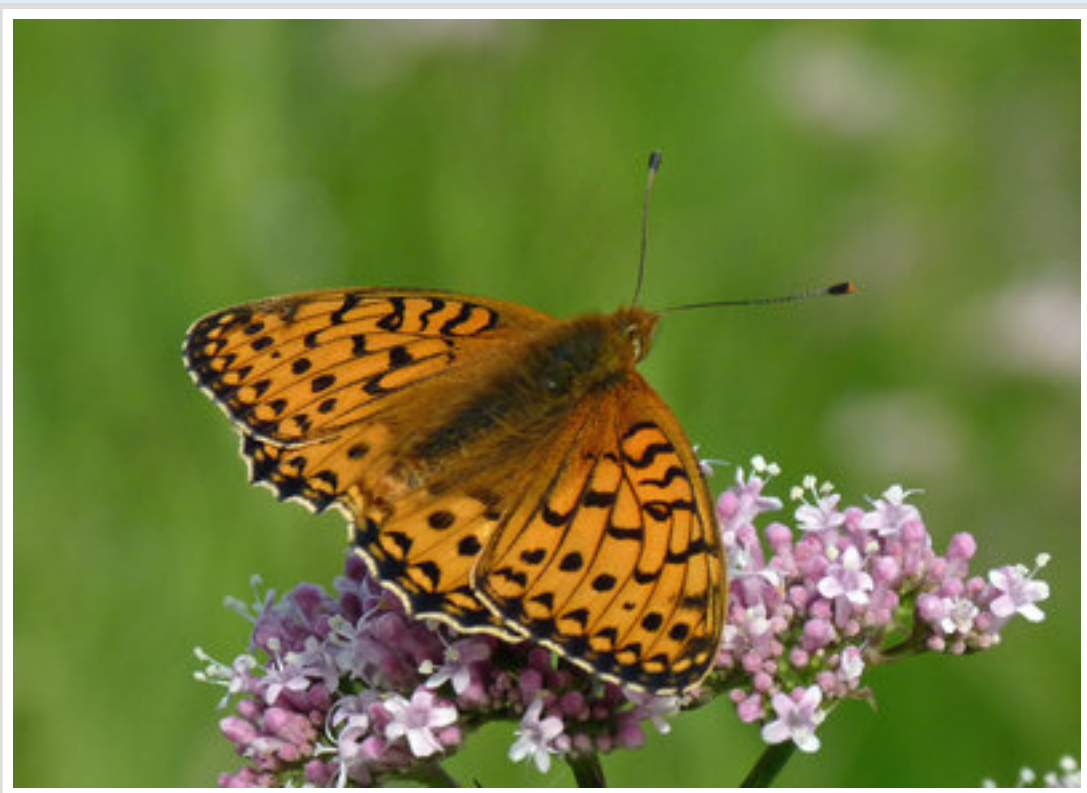
by Pauline, 29-Jun-12 12:04 AM GMT

I am still trying to get to grips with Photoshop Mike (and a lot of other stuff including from your website) but you know how fussy I am about my compositions 😊

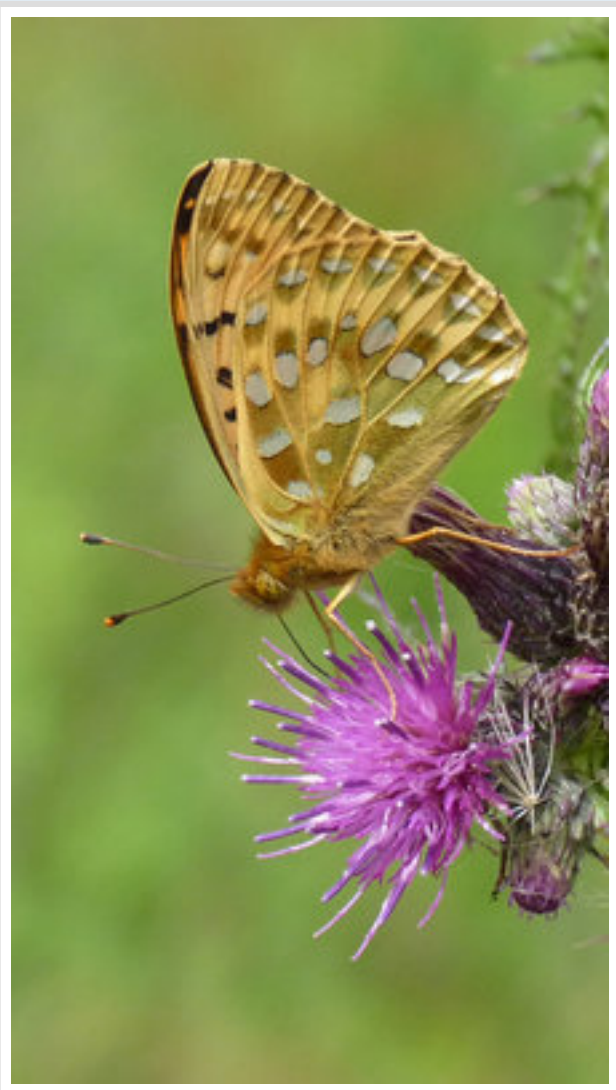
Thank you Wurzel – as always it is lovely to hear from you and we might meet up one day, you never know

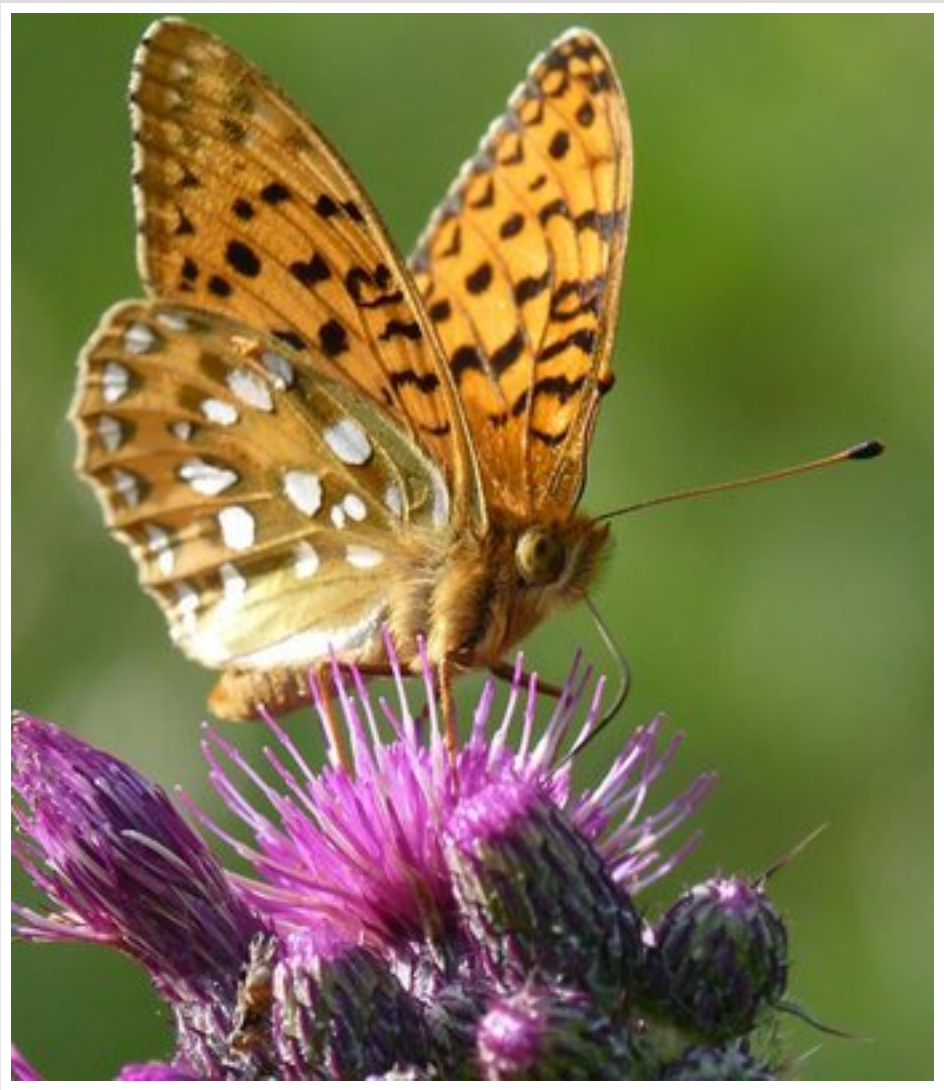
Happy belated anniversary Debbie and thank you for your comments.

I have wanted to visit Pitt Down for a little while now as it is a good site for DGF. Although I have been there before with Alan T. I doubted whether I could find it again (that awful sense of direction) but armed with maps and sat nav I set out early and got as far as Pitt without mishap. Locals again came to the rescue and by 8.30am I was exactly where I had intended to be! Result! On the journey there was quite a heavy downpour but the skies were now clear, it was warm and muggy and within 30 seconds of getting out of the car I had seen and photographed my first DGF. These butterflies are difficult to photograph as they never seem to be still. I was not really sure how to cope with them photographically. It was clear that they needed a fair depth of field but by reducing the aperture I was getting a slower shutter speed which wasn't helpful given all the movement and the odd breeze. I know that increasing the ISO will give a faster shutter speed for the set conditions but wasn't sure what else I could try. In the end I decided just to enjoy the morning which was a beautiful one – you'd think it was the middle of summer!!!! The place was teeming with butterflies. A pair of Brimstones in less than perfect condition were attempting to mate (well, the male was), Meadow Browns were everywhere and both Large and Small Skippers in very good numbers zipped about the site. The odd Marbled White flew past as well as a worn Red Admiral and the beautifully fresh DGF glided around the site. The most I counted at any one time was 5 but I think the true number was probably double that. It was difficult to get any closed wing shots but when they did close their wings (usually due to the wind) the white markings glinted silver in the sun – truly beautiful and something I shall never be able to replicate in a photo. I am including a mixed selection of photos which I hope somehow captures the character and spirit of this lively butterfly.



The first photo I took!







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jun-12 03:24 PM GMT

Whilst wandering around Pitt Down I found a mating pair – not DGF, but Meadow Browns which I had failed to find the previous day.



No sooner had I taken my photo than a male DGF tried to barge in. He was very persistent and despite the Meadow Browns flying off several times he doggedly pursued them. He was quite brutal to the point of knocking over the pair and trampling on them. This behaviour continued for almost 10 minutes and so intent was he on the Meadow Browns I was able to touch him without him flying off. He eventually gave up leaving a couple of battered and bruised Meadow Browns behind him. I have not witnessed quite such extreme behaviour before and I am wondering what triggered his determination – pheromones? Was he trying to mate with the female? kill the male? separate the mating pair? I have seen this type of behaviour before but what surprised me in this instance was the prolonged severity of the attack.

A few pictures taken to illustrate the event:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 30-Jun-12 12:32 AM GMT

Fantastic shots Pauline Goldie 🍷

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 30-Jun-12 02:04 AM GMT

Lovely pictures. Our dark green fritillaries and meadow browns haven't appeared yet! The way the forecast looks I don't think they will be around for some time, either!

Re: Pauline

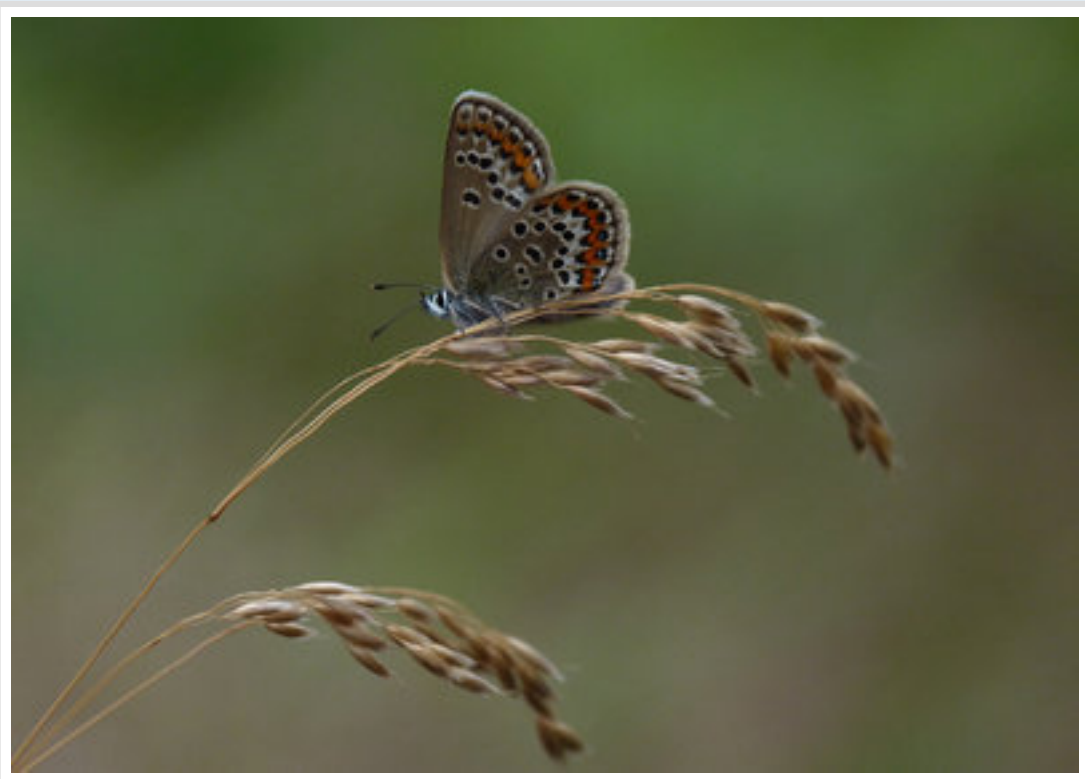
by Pauline, 30-Jun-12 04:17 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie – it was an amazing spectacle to witness and there were times when I feared for the safety of the poor Meadow Browns. They looked a bit the worse for wear at the end of it all.

Thank you for your continued interest Nick. I hope the weather isn't toooo bad where you are.

Today it has been blowing a gale here and there seemed little point in trying to take photos in such conditions. However, after a day of washing, ironing, shopping, hoovering etc etc I was desperate to get out for an hour of fresh air and exercise. I knew I needed a break when I realised I had accidentally put my reading glasses in the washing machine and they had been through 2 complete cycles!!!! Mind, I can see through them much better now 😂😂. I opted to visit the Silver Studded Blues today for no reason other than that they are close by and plentiful. Because of the wind I increased the aperture to give a faster shutter speed knowing that this would lose me some depth of field. I have been thinking about this and I seem to remember being told that using flash will help to 'freeze' any movement in the subject – there is just so much to remember. I have never used the flash on my camera yet so don't really know what effect it will have (on the photos or on the butterflies) but that is something else to try (once I have read the manual!). Anyway, a selection of photos from a blustery late afternoon:







Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jun-12 06:31 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Well done with your Dark Green Fritillary Photos, a butterfly that for me never seems to stay still long enough to get a good shot.

And a really nice series of Silver Studded blue photos, I especially like the soft lighting, it shows that even seemingly bad weather can have its good points.

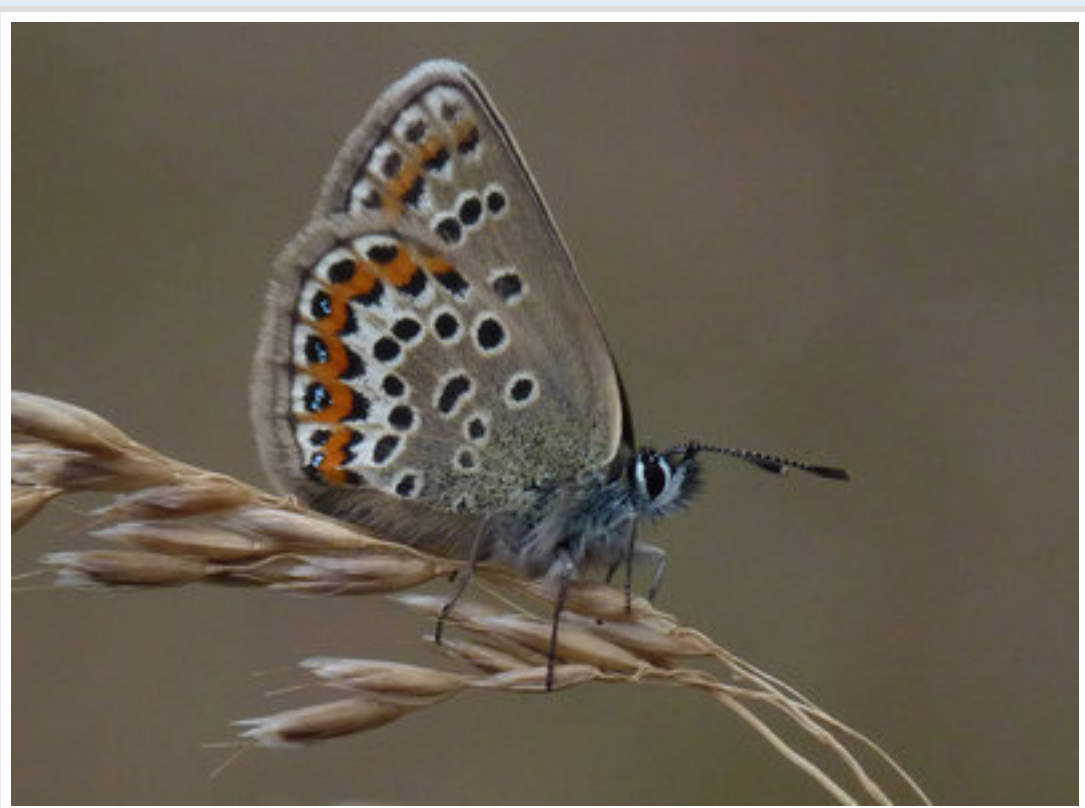
All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-12 02:59 AM GMT

Thank you for your kind comments Neil. I quite like the SSB shots myself and I think that the female is such a beautiful butterfly that she deserves a closer look. To that end I have cropped the photos a lot closer to provide a different perspective.





Re: Pauline

by Gothic_dreams, 01-Jul-12 04:17 AM GMT

Hey Pauline, lovely Silver Studded blue photos, I especially love the last 3 closer shots 😊

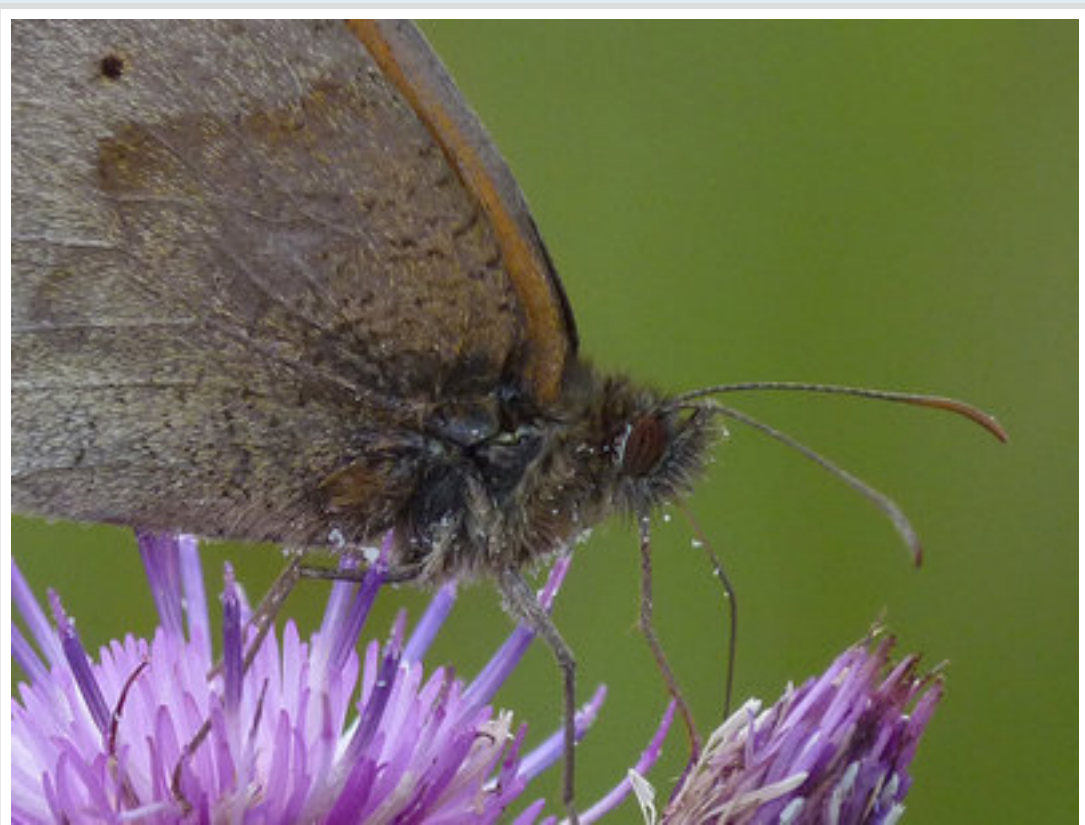
Chris

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jul-12 04:15 AM GMT

Thank you Chris, comment appreciated.

A few offerings from late afternoon. My target was a roosting Marbled White but ever the opportunist I was presented with this rather messy Meadow Brown:



... and then a Small Skipper settling down for the night:



... before finally finding what I was looking for:



It is frustrating that the wing tips of the Marbled White are out of focus so I shall have to venture out again on a calmer evening once the weather settles a bit. The frequent windy conditions that we are experiencing in the South reminds me of when I grew up in the North East and one of my over-riding memories was that it was always windy! Whatever the time of year! Perhaps it was because I lived near the coast but it has led me to wonder how butterfly enthusiasts in the North manage to take good photos under such difficult conditions.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-12 07:04 AM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline 😊👍 The Silver Studs in particular are sublime

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jul-12 04:11 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel – I'm actually beginning to believe I'm improving after my earlier confidence crisis. I had hoped to be taking photos of WLH this week but looking at the weather – and the forecast – it seems unlikely. To fill the gap I decided to look back at my photos from last year and decided to include a few by way of comparison.



Showing the white 'W' quite nicely



Background too busy and composition could be better.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-12 04:57 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I would have been very happy to have taken any of those WLH photos 😊

The last one may have a slightly 'busy' background but it captures the moment....and shows the same number of WLHs that I managed to see all last year 😊

Keep on posting, it helps t brighten these grey days 😊

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jul-12 02:09 AM GMT

Thank you Neil. I appreciate I was very lucky to find a mating pair but I was hoping to try to improve the quality of the photos this year. I think that any opportunity is looking less and less likely given the on-going weather situation.

It is worth recording that at 10.30am this morning in Liphook the rain stopped briefly and the sun shone for 4 minutes. It was enough to send me scurrying for my camera for a quick visit to a local site. Despite a lack of sun I set the exposure compensation to -2 (the most under exposure my camera will allow) given that I wanted some detail from the Small Whites on the light coloured flowers. I had resolved to shoot in RAW from now on having read Mike's informative article on the differences between RAW and JPEG. However, I forgot to change the setting so these are still in JPEG.



On this occasion I did not want the background to be completely blurred as it was just so attractive.





I am not sure whether this gesture was intended for me or the other butterfly that I was just too slow to get in the shot!



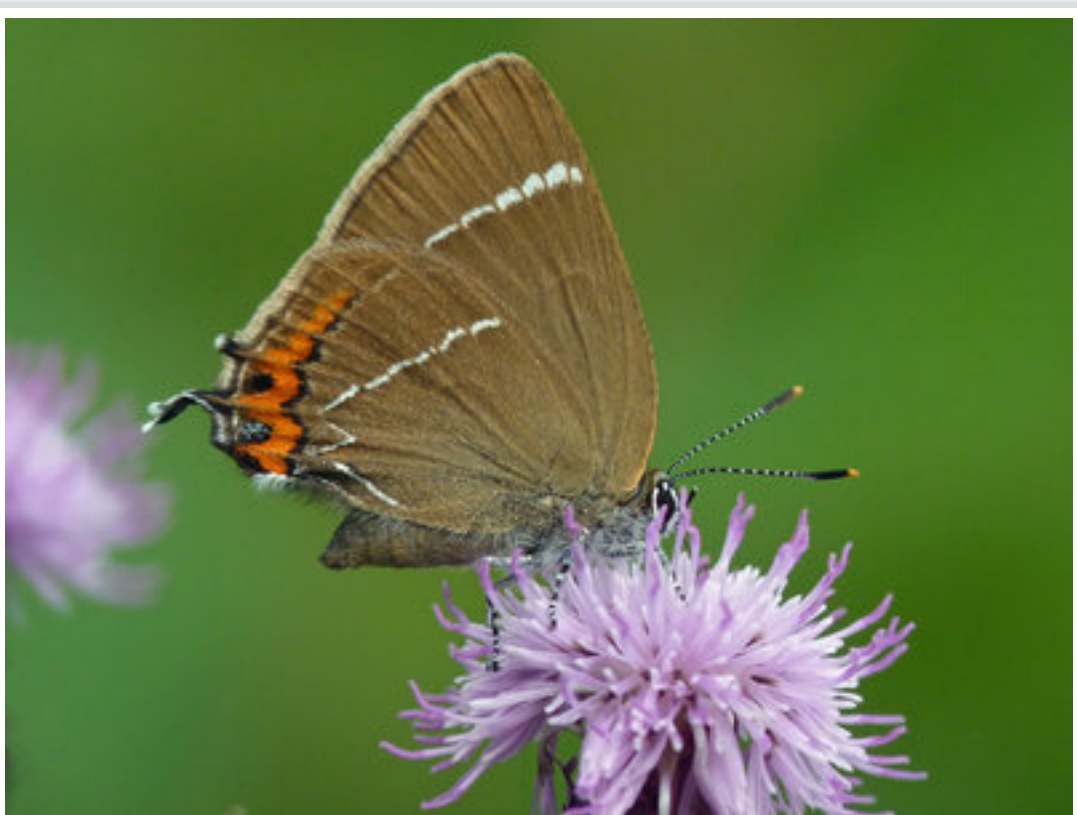
Another messy eater.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jul-12 02:26 AM GMT

I think I might have mentioned that I love Hairstreaks so I make no apologies for including so many photos. I haven't even stopped to look at the dozens of photos I took to decide which is my favourite. Some are not quite all in focus. Some show the butterfly close up; others show it more in the context of its environment. I was surprised to see 2 nectaring on ragwort. The photos may or may not be better than the ones I took last year but most of all I was just delighted to see them as I had almost given up hope this year. I saw a maximum of 6 at any one time, 3 males and 3 females. Two of the females were fresh and one was a bit worn. I had hoped for another mating photo but I fear that window of opportunity has passed for this year – perhaps!

(In my excitement I forgot to use the raw setting!).









Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 06-Jul-12 03:10 AM GMT

Another nice set of Hairstreak photos, Pauline.

If I had to choose, I would pick P1070105d (8th in your series) because it shows the butterfly well but also conveys the environment without too much distraction – very nicely placed subject!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Colin Knight, 06-Jul-12 03:22 AM GMT

good photos as usual Pauline. I gather these WLHs are all from last year. Where were they taken?

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-12 03:22 AM GMT

Agreed, a great series of photos.

I have looked them up and down a few times now and each time I look I pick a different favourite. I think that is how I will leave it, not being limited by picking one, I like them all 😊

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 06-Jul-12 04:30 AM GMT

Great photos – they just get better 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-12 06:52 AM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline, like Neil I'm struggling to pick my fave 😊 . Were these taken at the secret site?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jul-12 02:23 PM GMT

Thank you Mike for taking the trouble to look closely. consider and express a preference.

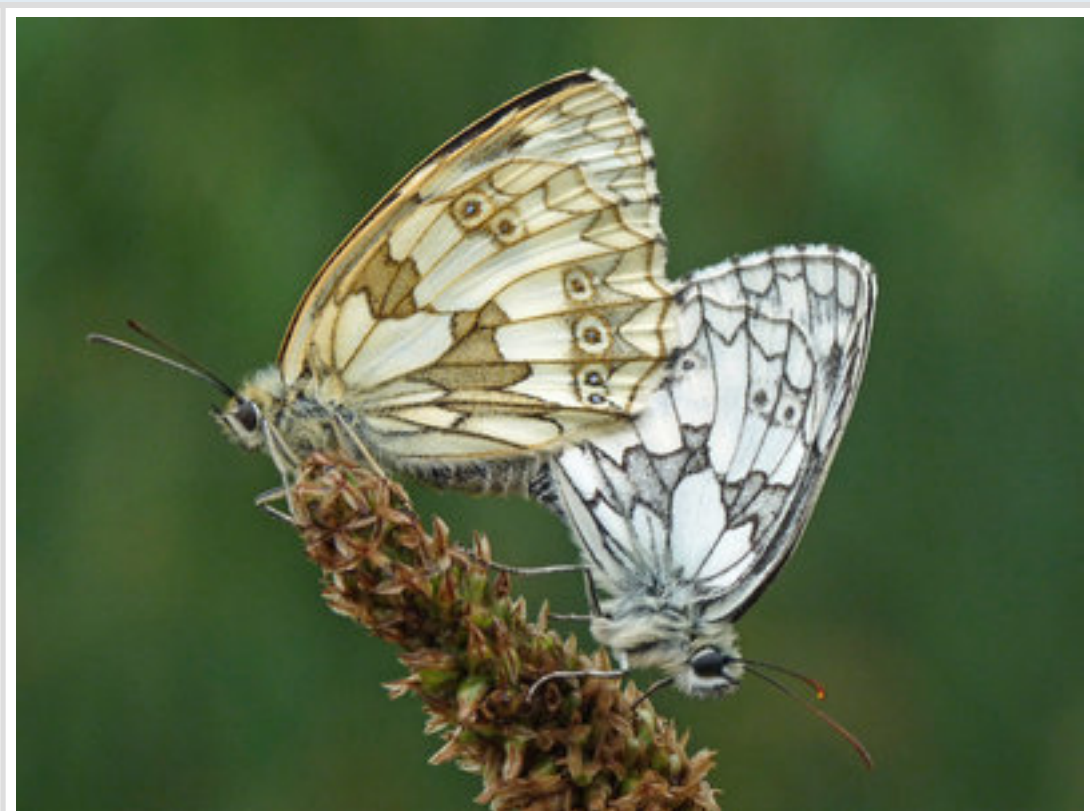
The photos were taken yesterday Colin – thank you for your comment. It is a small, fragile site and as is usual in such situations details of location are not provided. I am mindful of the situation a few years ago when I discovered 2nd brood DoB at Noar Hill, which, although is a much bigger site, was effectively trampled.

Thank you Neil. I know some of these photos are not technically perfect but on this occasion I don't really care as I was just so pleased to see them. I, too, like them all.

Your comments are always appreciated Mark. Looking forward to meeting up with you sometime soon.

Thank you Wurzel – I appreciate your comments and the answer is yes.

Whilst out and about yesterday I took photos of a number of different butterflies and have included a couple below. I think I prefer the background in the first photo as it seems to complement the butterflies and is not such a harsh contrast:



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 06-Jul-12 07:01 PM GMT

Personally, I like the second shot for its 'impact' The butterflies seem to stand out in an almost three-dimensional way! It brings out vividly the difference in colour between the male and female.

There will always be a range of views on photos, as in all art. Sometimes, I find that a photo I don't like much at first becomes a favourite, or *vice versa*. I usually like to wait a while before posting anything on my website, for this reason.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jul-12 05:42 AM GMT

Yes, I can see what you mean now Mike. That is probably why I can never decide which ones I like most and end up posting all of them!!!

With the weather the way it is, it is not a case of deciding where to go and what to photograph but more a case of what is available and visible. Taking photos of species which retreat into trees during bad weather is not really an option (my step ladder is not tall enough!!). Today, between showers, I visited my local SSB site again and I was surprised by the sheer numbers. As the rain fell they were like little flags, very prominent at the top of the heather but as soon as the rain ceased their wings opened in the warm, muggy conditions. Some were looking decidedly worn but this is a 'late' site and there were others still in reasonable condition. Without even moving my feet I was able to count at least a couple of dozen.

One small step for a butterfly



Hanging on by a thread...





I have managed to get SOME detail on the fringes of some of them. I shall blame the light which was poor and bordering on thundery. It is wonderful to be able to blame the weather – the wind, harsh sun, overcast conditions – whatever shall I blame when conditions are perfect? 😂😂

Re: Pauline

by hilary, 08-Jul-12 01:09 AM GMT

Just spending a rainy afternoon looking at and admiring the photos. I can't judge the technicalities (they all look amazing), but I did notice your 3rd down Hairstreak had a perfect 'Disney' pose!

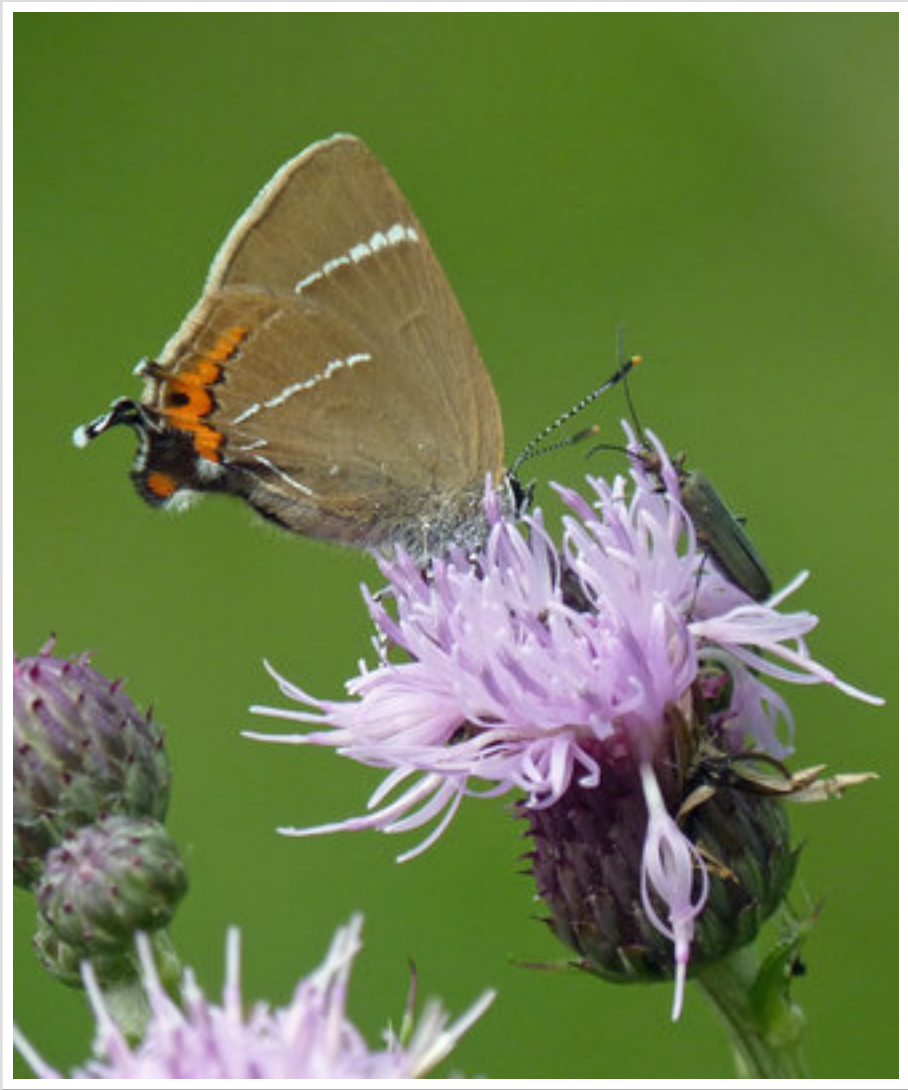
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-12 02:15 AM GMT

Thank you Hilary. I'm glad you enjoy looking at the photos but I applaud what you are doing which is so much more important. You are making a real effort to improve the environment to the benefit of butterflies and other wildlife. Well done. I enjoy reading your reports.

I am now trying to get to grips with concepts such as focal length and the effect it has on depth of field – another parameter/variable to consider. At the moment I am a little out of my comfort zone, and sensors, lenses and the like are like a foreign language to me but I will get there (with a little help from my friends 😊). I have been taking (some) photos in RAW mode and using elements to do some post-processing. There is a lot of new stuff to absorb, but hopefully by next season

Today, between downpours, I just had to have a second bite of the cherry, and in the process got badly bitten myself. I didn't realise mozzies could bite through thick jeans and jumper and I was so engrossed with my camera I didn't realise what was happening until I saw about 6 on me. I have about 3 dozen swollen, painful bites (I have become allergic to them) so I am seriously thinking of asking Jack for some of his kit. Still, it was worth it:





Going for gold:





Little and large:



Probiscus just for you Mike 😊



I struggled today with the rapidly changing weather conditions from very bright sunshine indeed to heavy black cloud and torrential downpours – and the butterflies didn't move throughout. I seemed to be forever having to adjust something – either the exposure compensation (quite radically) or the AP setting to increase the shutter speed to deal with the breeze which seemed to accompany the sun. I really hope I am going to get better/faster at this with practice.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 09-Jul-12 02:31 AM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

It brings out vividly the difference in colour between the male and female.

Absolutely. One of the best shots I've seen showing the difference in "ground colour".

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-12 10:58 PM GMT

Thank you Pete. It is good of you to take the time to say so.

Today I managed to fit in a quick visit to the Straits before a doctor's appointment. There was not even a glimpse of a PE which was hardly surprising. What was surprising, especially given recent reports, was the number of SWF together with a lesser number of White Admiral. I counted at least 11 SWF and 5 WA in 3 different areas along the main track, despite it being very overcast, albeit warm and muggy. They were all very active and when they did rest it was in very inaccessible areas, so all photos are taken with maximum zoom. No classic poses today, just snatched action shots.

Both SWF and WA were being very territorial in manner, adopting a threatening posture, even at rest. They seemed poised for the next aerial battle and quivered in anticipation – judging by their condition it would seem that they had already seen some considerable action. I spent a good hour enjoying the spectacle and then the rain started again!





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 09-Jul-12 11:41 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Today, between downpours, I just had to have a second bite of the cherry,

Please allow me to be a little critical of some of this series! I think there is sometimes a case of 'less is more' and it applies to several of these photo. Including several different critters within one shot can confuse the composition – leading to the question: what is this photo about? Upside-down butterflies never seem to work well, either.

Having said that, the 6th image is a classic WLH shot and I always like to see the uncurled proboscis. The 'going for gold' shot would benefit from a crop – perhaps a vertical format of the butterfly and the flower on which it is feeding. The next one looks as though it is about to be 'clubbed' by a spiked knapweed 🤪

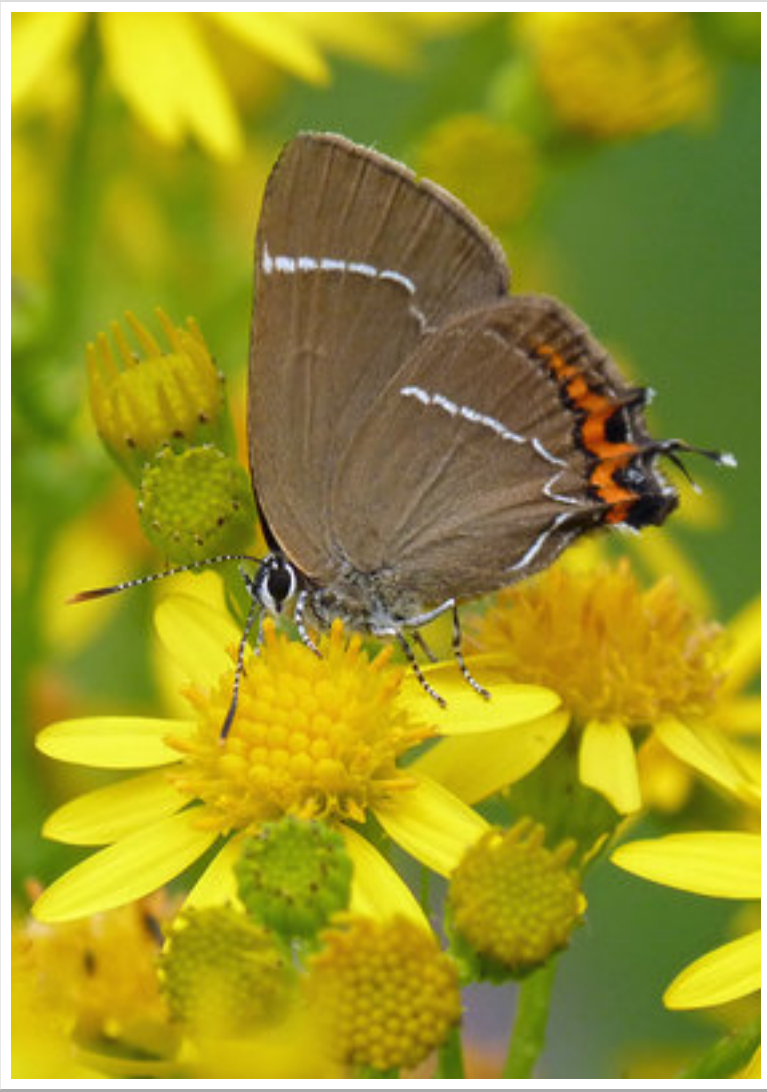
You seem to be seeing quite a lot, despite the downpours – I really should be more adventurous, instead of contemplating rain-streaked windows.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-12 02:04 AM GMT

Thank you Mike for the constructive criticism. I really do appreciate it. In my excitement at seeing ANY butterfly in this weather I am getting a little gung-ho. I totally agree with you on numbers 1 and 2 – they really aren't up to much. I actually like the last one tho' with the wasp thing peeping over the top. I have to say that it was quite difficult to find them on a flower on their own! I have photos where they are with Small White, Marbled White, Comma and of course the many Meadow Browns as well as a massive variety of insects. I have followed your suggestions and amended a couple of them – the 'club' has gone (in a very amateurish style I'm sure) and number 5 has been cropped (although it shows his 'tails' are out of focus 🤔). What d'ya think?



You'd better not look at the last lot Mike (SWF) cos they're pretty mediocre too, but you can be sure of this – if you go out in awful weather you probably won't see much but if you stay in looking at rain streaked windows you definitely won't 😂😂😂 Thanks again for your help.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 10-Jul-12 03:23 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

if you stay in looking at rain streaked windows you definitely won't

Words of wisdom, indeed – and, if I got out, I wouldn't turn into a grumpy critic either 😊

I like your crops and I like most of your SWFs too! I think you could improve some of those with a bit of cropping as well! I'm afraid I'm always fiddling with my photos – vainly trying to make the proverbial silk purse.....

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jul-12 02:12 AM GMT

Thank you Mike. Constructive criticism is always welcome.

Thank you too Pete.

I have learned a few things this week and one of them is that butterflies don't always take shelter up trees at the first hint of bad weather. Take the Hairstreaks earlier – during torrential downpours they carried on nectaring regardless. Similarly today, the SWF – and there are a good number of them at the Straits now, both male and female – totally disregarded the rain. The females stayed low on bramble, wings outstretched. The males stopped nectaring but took up their 'guard' positions at the ends of low branches on bushes. As the rain became heavier I expected they would retreat up into the trees, but no, they stayed put. It got heavier still (in fact I spent more time with my camera under my jacket than at eye level) and at the very least I expected them to close their wings, but no, they just sat it out. The same behaviour was apparent in the White Admirals although there weren't so many

of them, just a handful. Even the Skippers were flying in the rain – both Small and Large. Consequently, in many of my photos the butterflies are covered in raindrops. I don't usually list the number of species seen but I was surprised at the number (both species and butterflies) which included Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Red Admiral, White Admiral, SWF, Comma, Marbled White ... but still no PE!

I shall focus on SWF today and the rest tomorrow:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-12 02:39 AM GMT

Great shots Pauline, the first SWF is a real gem with the coiled proboscis 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jul-12 03:49 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I have learned a few things this week and one of them is that butterflies don't always take shelter up trees at the first hint of bad weather. Take the Hairstreaks earlier – during torrential downpours they carried on nectaring regardless. Similarly today, the SWF – and there are a good number of them at the Straits now, both male and female – totally disregarded the rain. The females stayed low on bramble, wings outstretched. The males stopped nectaring but took up their 'guard' positions at the ends of low branches on bushes. As the rain became heavier I expected they would retreat up into the trees, but no, they stayed put. It got heavier still (in fact I spent more time with my camera under my jacket than at eye level) and at the very least I expected them to close their wings, but no, they just sat it out. The same behaviour was apparent in the White Admirals although there weren't so many of them, just a handful. Even the Skippers were flying in the rain – both Small and Large. Consequently, in many of my photos the butterflies are covered in raindrops.

Excellent observations Pauline and a lesson for many of us.

Just because we are often not out in the bad weather, it doesn't always mean the butterflies are not there.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jul-12 04:21 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. In fact, it is Mike I have to thank for my current obsession with the probiscus and I have to agree that it does make for a better photo as I think this demonstrates:

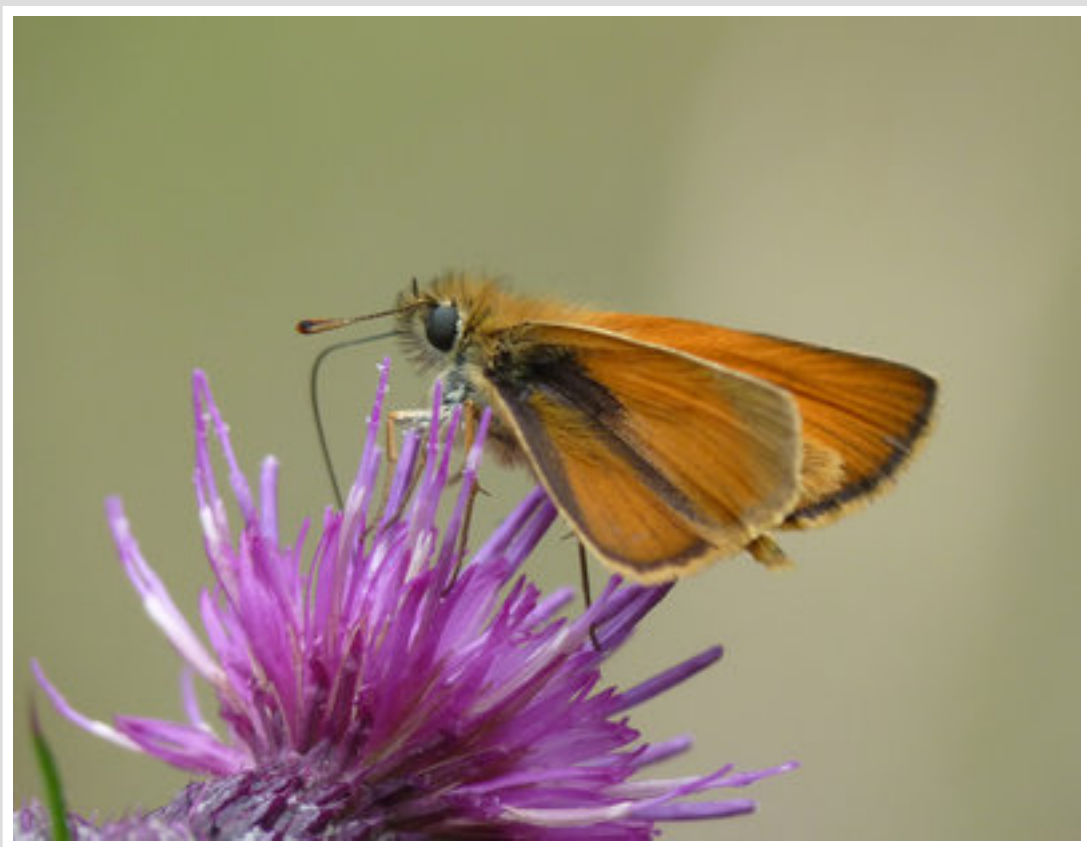


Thank you Neil. I know someone who has confessed to searching for roosting butterflies by moonlight and torch light. Since that time I resolved not to let external conditions (weather etc) get in the way of finding butterflies – just makes it that bit harder sometimes. This little chap is looking particularly damp and covered in rain:



I spent a lovely couple of hours in the Straits yesterday. A female Blackcap kept me company as I watched the butterflies and various deer made sporadic appearances. However, I was treated to a close up view of one of the buzzards which I normally only see at a distance gliding across the track. This is a truly beautiful bird and to my mind was much paler with a lot more cream colouration than I normally note on buzzards. The words 'honey buzzard' sprung to mind but I really wouldn't know the difference.

I was pleased to see the Skippers out in such numbers as I think they are such charismatic little butterflies and very photogenic. However, when they open their wings a large depth of field is needed for both wings to be in focus. My camera was not set to maximum depth of field as I wanted a faster shutter speed to counter the fact that the camera was both hand held (sorry) and I was also standing off a bit and using zoom. I am trying to understand the relationship between zoom, focal length and depth of field and until I do I guess I will continue to have one wing out of focus as seen here:



A couple more before I move on to the Purple Emperor! (In my dreams 😊😊)





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 11-Jul-12 06:46 PM GMT

Love that proboscis in the first Skipper shot!

You might try using a monopod to help with composition and focus (though you seem to do pretty well, hand-held). Much less cumbersome than a tripod and more flexible but surprisingly effective. I use a Manfrotto 694CX with a simple ball head and quick release.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by P.J.Underwood, 12-Jul-12 02:15 AM GMT

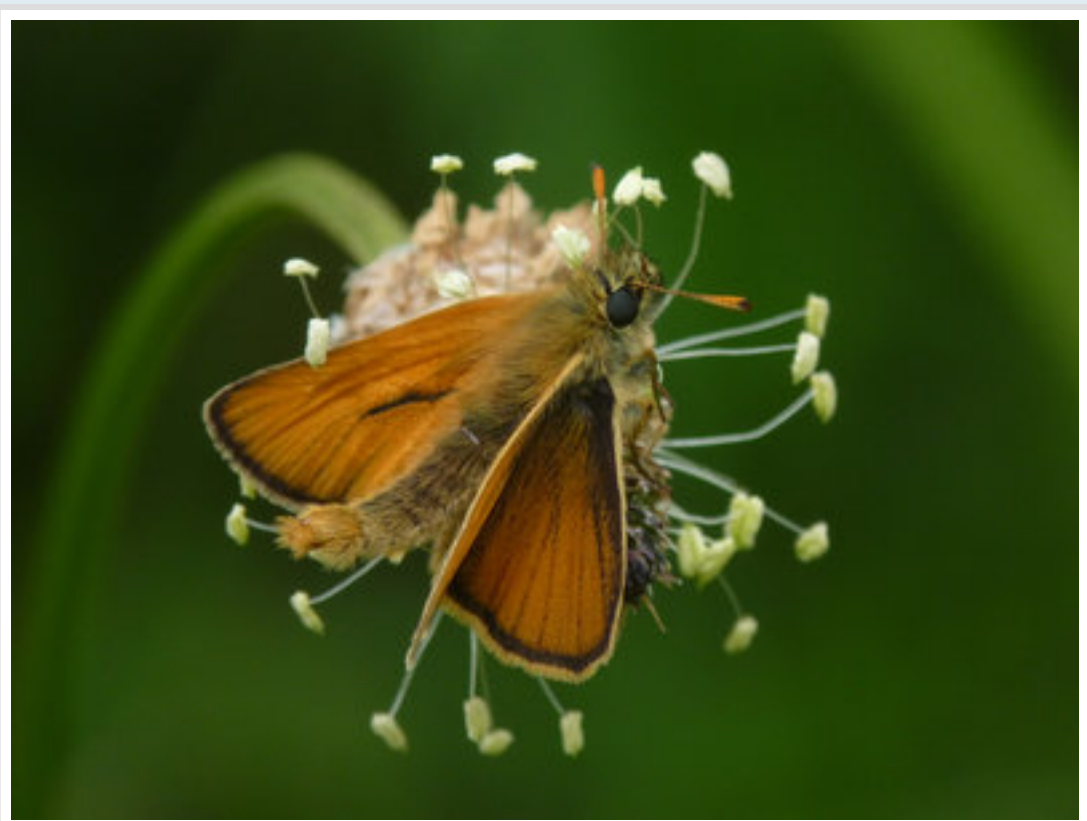
I still havent seen any Purple Emperors in Chidd.Woods.Have you?
P.J.U.

Re: Pauline

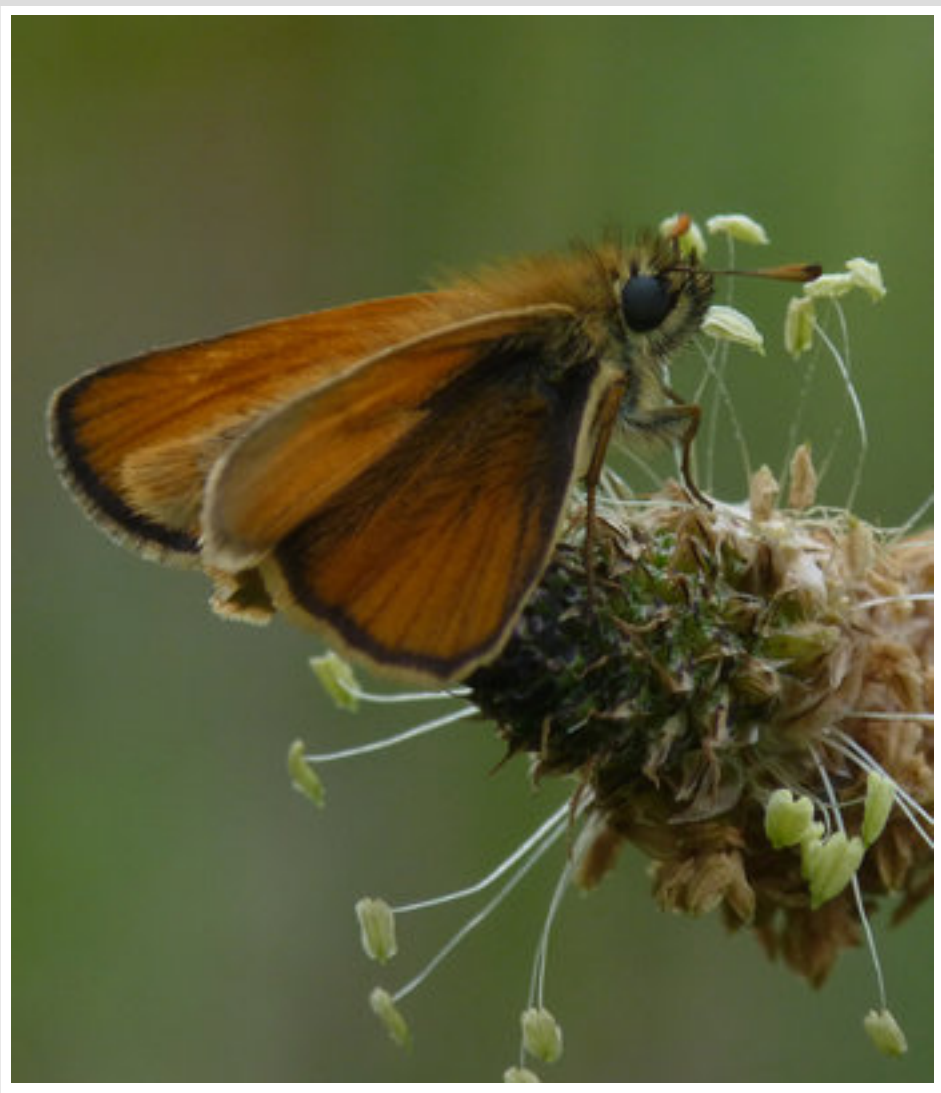
by Pauline, 12-Jul-12 10:50 PM GMT

Thank you Mike – see below.

A quick visit to Goose Green late yesterday afternoon revealed all the same species as the Straits but fewer of them. I have been driving around for weeks now with my monopod in the back of my car – since I found the quick release thingy. I decided it was time to give it a try. I did find it unwieldy and cumbersome, compromising my flexibility and after about 20 mins my back started to ache because I was bending at strange angles to try to get the shot. I put it back into the car but have not entirely given up on it yet – perhaps I just need a bit more practice. So, by way of comparison, here are a couple of shots taken using the monopod. The first shot has had nothing done to it (not cropped or sharpened) apart from re-sizing:



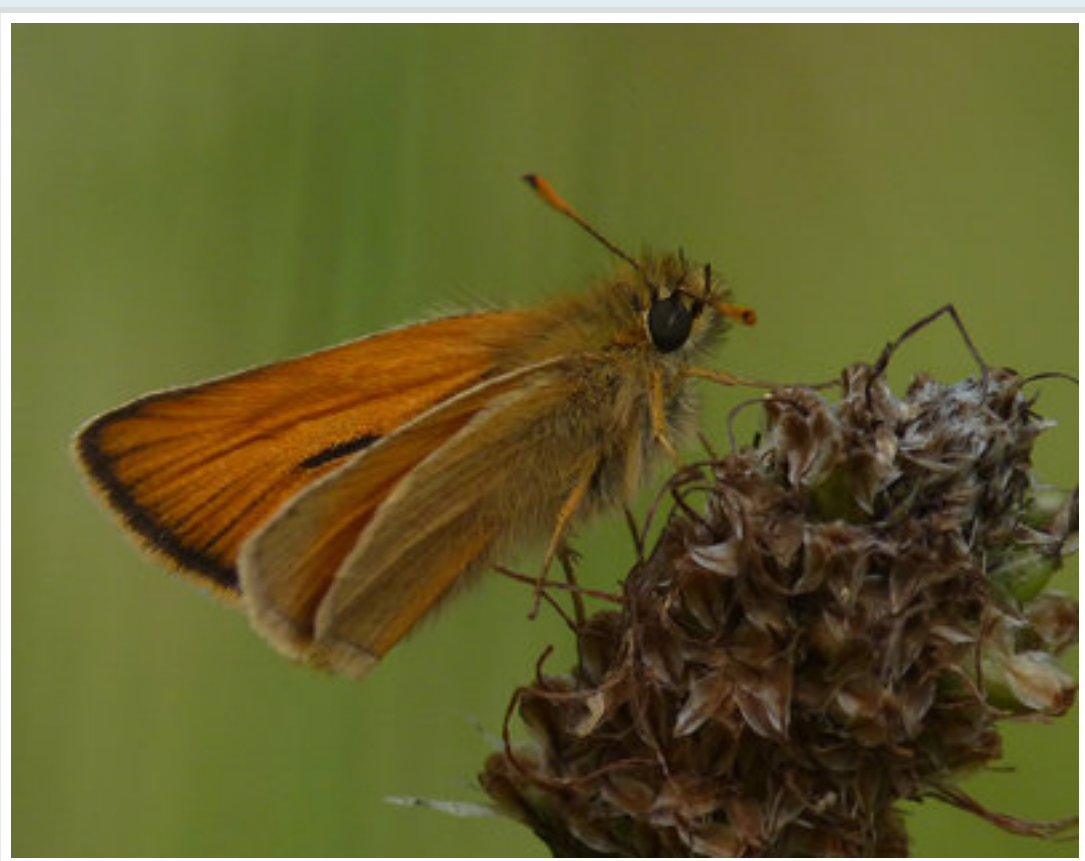
The next one has been cropped:



I then reverted to hand held and took this from quite close up:



To deal with DoF issues I tried to stand off a bit and use the zoom. This example is deliberately closely cropped so that finer details and focusing can be more easily assessed:



Out of all of them I am probably most satisfied with the detail on the last photo although I like the composition of the first, despite the flower being out of focus. I have decided to persevere with the monopod in short bursts to see how I progress with it.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 13-Jul-12 01:27 AM GMT

I'd forgotten that you had mentioned using a monopod earlier in your diary.

I tend to just let the 'pod hang loosely from the camera, as I get into position for a shot, and only then do I let the leg drop to the ground and lock it in

place. This leaves you free to 'find' the photo and the 'pod then applies the extra steadiness when you need it. You shouldn't let the 'pod dictate how you take the photo, especially if it leads you into uncomfortable positions.

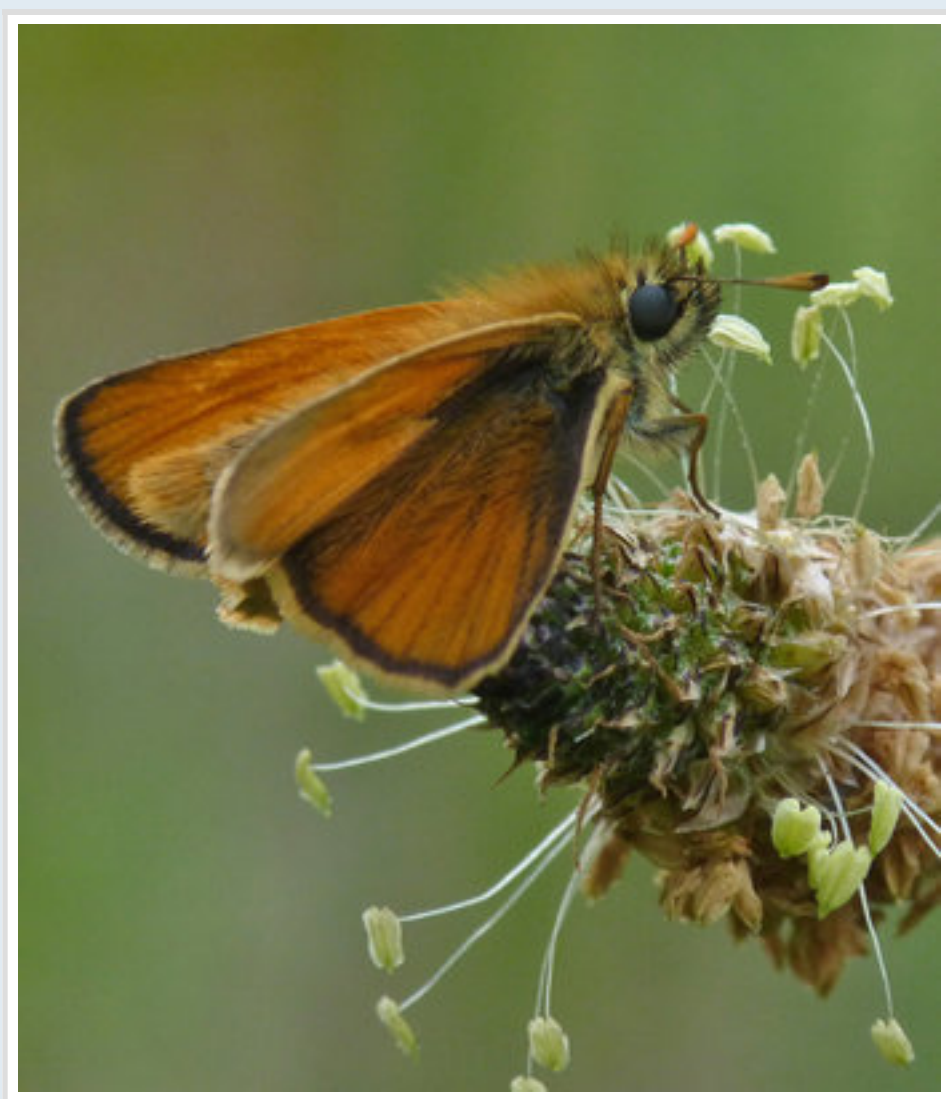
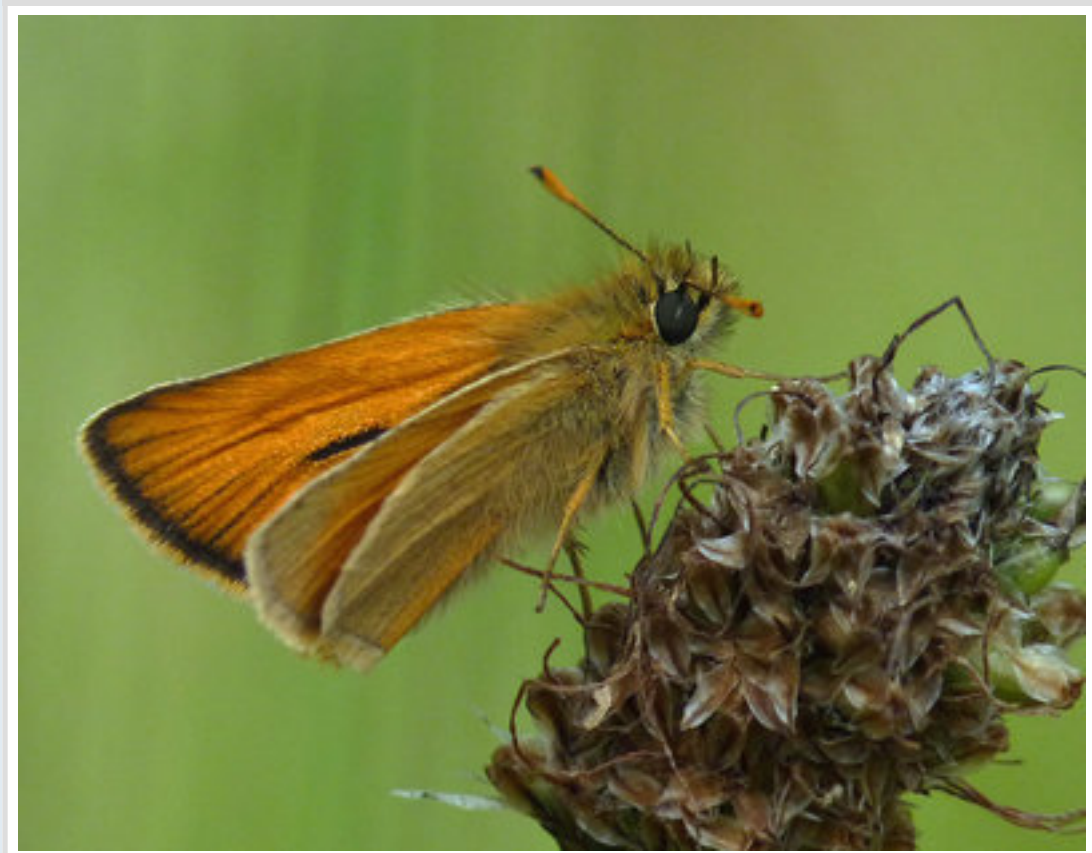
I find the first Skipper photo amusing, with the stamens waving around like some sort of party hat! – I like it 😊 The other two Skipper pics are a little dark – you might like to try playing with brightness and contrast in Photoshop, to see if they improve.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jul-12 03:23 PM GMT

I shall take heed of your advice Mike the next time the 'pod gets an airing. In the meantime I have been playing with elements as you suggested:



Perhaps not perfect but definitely an improvement. I shall need to become more adept at this as I tend to set the exposure compensation to deal with the lightest part of the composition whether it be a butterfly fringe or a flower and that sometimes tends to leave me with an overall dark-ish photo.

Given the sheer numbers of Ringlets and Meadow Browns it is tempting to overlook them in favour of their more rare and exotic cousins but they have a beauty of their own and some considerable variation in markings. A few Ringlets below, including one where 2 of the 'rings' are not properly formed.



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 13-Jul-12 07:08 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

they have a beauty of their own and some considerable variation in markings.

You are right about Ringlets! Some recent shots of **Wurzel**'s had opened my eyes to their subtle beauty and I must try for some better photos too. I had tended to dismiss them as rather dull.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Gothic_dreams, 13-Jul-12 08:12 PM GMT

Some more lovely photos Pauline, i love the last Ringlet shot 😊

Chris

Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-Jul-12 12:00 AM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

You are right about Ringlets! Some recent shots of **Wurzel's** had opened my eyes to their subtle beauty and I must try for some better photos too. I had tended to dismiss them as rather dull.

They get a little ugly once their early lustre wears off, but when fresh I consider them very attractive butterflies.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jul-12 12:19 AM GMT

Thank you for your comment Chris – it is much appreciated.

Not at all dull Mike – look at the lovely contrast in colours and the beautiful markings. I cannot leave the Ringlets without including a mating pair. I have struggled to get a photo of a pair mating as they always seem to be in such awkward positions and if approached tend to fly off. Today was different:



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-12 02:46 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I totally agree with your sentiments regarding Ringlets, something that I also feel towards Green-veined Whites which I feel are often overlooked.

Well done on the mating pair, I have see a few but usually doing the Ringlet thing of being tucked down in the grass.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by philm63, 14-Jul-12 03:55 AM GMT

Pauline

This is a fascinating and beautifully "illustrated" diary, keep it up. Only wish I had the same variety of species to see here, never mind your skill with a camera.

Phil

Re: Pauline

by Gothic_dreams, 14-Jul-12 07:39 AM GMT

Lovely mating pair of Ringlets Pauline, you have captured them great 😊

Chris

Re: Pauline

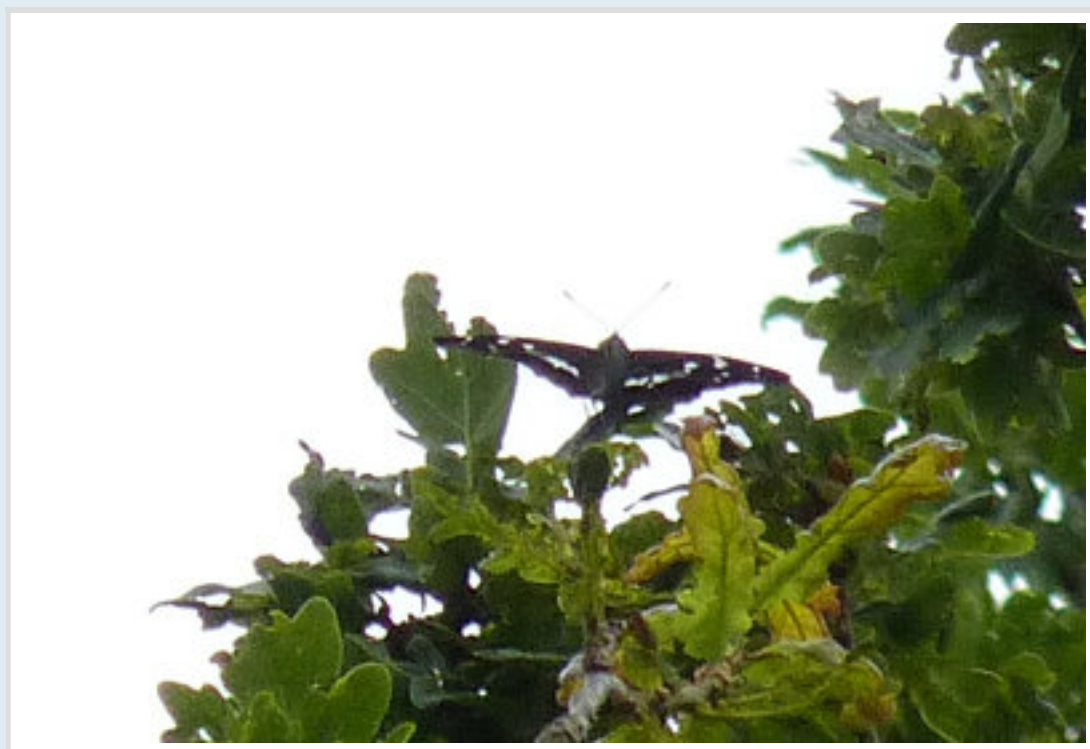
by Pauline, 14-Jul-12 02:32 PM GMT

Thank you Neil. I haven't actually seen many GVW this season (as you can probably tell by lack of photos) but I certainly agree with you. In a nice, sharp photo that has been well composed they can look smashing. A butterfly doesn't need to be rare to be appreciated.

That is a wonderfully worded complement Phil and I shall value it. It has left me pondering on how much of the diary you have read and where you are from.

Thank you Chris – I was lucky to find them in such an obliging position.

Yesterday, at 1.45pm I was very pleased to be able to watch 4 PE's. Their frequent territorial squabbles were no doubt due to the fact that they all seemed to be sharing the same tree. I know that there were at least 4 because 3 were in the air together and I could see one stationed at the end of a branch (I even managed to get what I shall laughingly call a photo of this individual albeit at full zoom – on this occasion I shall not be commenting on my photographic technique 😊). The weather was very changeable with frequent downpours. I watched this individual to see what he would do as the rain became heavier (getting soaked myself in the process), but like the SWF and WA earlier, he just sat with his wings open and weathered the storm. I would have been delighted with a close up photo but in the current climate it felt like a privilege just to be entertained by them. Sadly, at 2.45pm I had to leave them to their activity. I am hoping that their emergence will follow the same pattern as the SWF and that after a slow start there will be more sightings, possibly going on well into August.



Re: Pauline

by P.J.Underwood, 14-Jul-12 03:09 PM GMT

Brilliant,Pauline!That's the type of photo I want with my telephoto lens.

Philip

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 14-Jul-12 08:36 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

a photo of this individual albeit at full zoom – on this occasion I shall not be commenting on my photographic technique

Nevertheless, I shall comment! I looked at the EXIF data and noticed that you appropriately used +0.66 exposure compensation to bring out the detail against the sky. What an advert for the capability of the Lumix FZ38 too! The antennae are resolved quite sharply against the sky. I notice that the 35mm equivalent focal length of the lens was almost 500mm – for comparison a 500mm f/4 lens for a Canon DSLR costs around £8,500 and weighs over 3kg!!!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by jenks, 15-Jul-12 03:09 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

being someone whose photographic capabilities are "point, press, and hope for the best" with a Panasonic digital, I'm incapable of technical analysis but always envious of those who take excellent photos. To me your photo of PE captures the essence of this butterfly; high in the canopy looking down on us looking up at him! You got me drooling, a visit to Bentley Wood is planned for tomorrow! I hope I get as good a sighting as you got today.

Re: Pauline

by jenks, 15-Jul-12 03:10 AM GMT

make that sighting yesterday!

Re: Pauline

by philm63, 15-Jul-12 05:13 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

It has left me pondering on how much of the diary you have read and where you are from.

[attachment=0:1c2iqd61]P1080313d.jpg[/attachment:1c2iqd61]

I enjoyed the story as you continue to try to get more out of your camera images both technically and artistically, but the list of species you have seen and photographed is great. I have now seen a total of 19 species locally and seriously expect I can add possibly four more (Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Brimstone and Common Blue). The last Painted lady I saw locally was in 2009. I live in Bingley which is between Bradford and Keighley in West Yorkshire. From Heights Lane which runs along one of the highest ridges locally, about 500 yards from me, I can just about see the Lancashire border. The local terrain is recovered moorland (very rough pasture) running into moorland proper in one direction, and downhill into the Aire valley in the other. Not too far away can get into the Wharfe valley which is better from a wildlife point of view. Mind you, my garden bird list stands at around 30 species, I have had Red Kite and Buzzard from the garden, and Siskin, Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker are all pretty regular. I run a Fuji S5600 bridge camera, it has sufficed for about four years but I am still learning with it, keep trying different settings and methods, butterflies and dragonflies are much different to take pictures of than birds, which it is almost impossible to regularly take good close-up shots of. The occasional chance does occur and I have some bird shots I am particularly proud of, not necessarily from a technical point of view, more from the enjoyment they gave me seeing the bird and getting a "permanent memory" of the moment; and that is how I am approaching my butterfly and dragonfly shots.

Phil

Re: Pauline

by Nick Broomer, 15-Jul-12 05:58 AM GMT

Your first photo of a Small Skipper on the top of this page is just lovely Pauline.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jul-12 06:21 AM GMT

I love your PE shot Pauline, captures the character of the butterfly and a nice composition across the diagonal.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jul-12 03:04 PM GMT

I would like to say a huge thank you to all of you who are taking time to read my diary. It would be lovely to know who more of you are. I especially appreciate the comments which I am finding immensely helpful and supportive (in fact it is like having a network of good friends that I just haven't met yet!) and I hope my experiences and mistakes might be of help to other novices.

To Philip I would say that with your camera and lens you should be able to get a much better shot than I managed with my PE tho' he was at the top of a very high tree. I tried to take a photo of the tree to put it in context but I just couldn't get it all in the shot.

I love it that you are checking up on me Mike 😄😄 The thought of me having saved all that money (not to mention the weight) with my little £100 camera off Ebay has really cheered me up 😄. Thanks must go to Neil who recommended it to me – and many others (he should be on commission 😄).

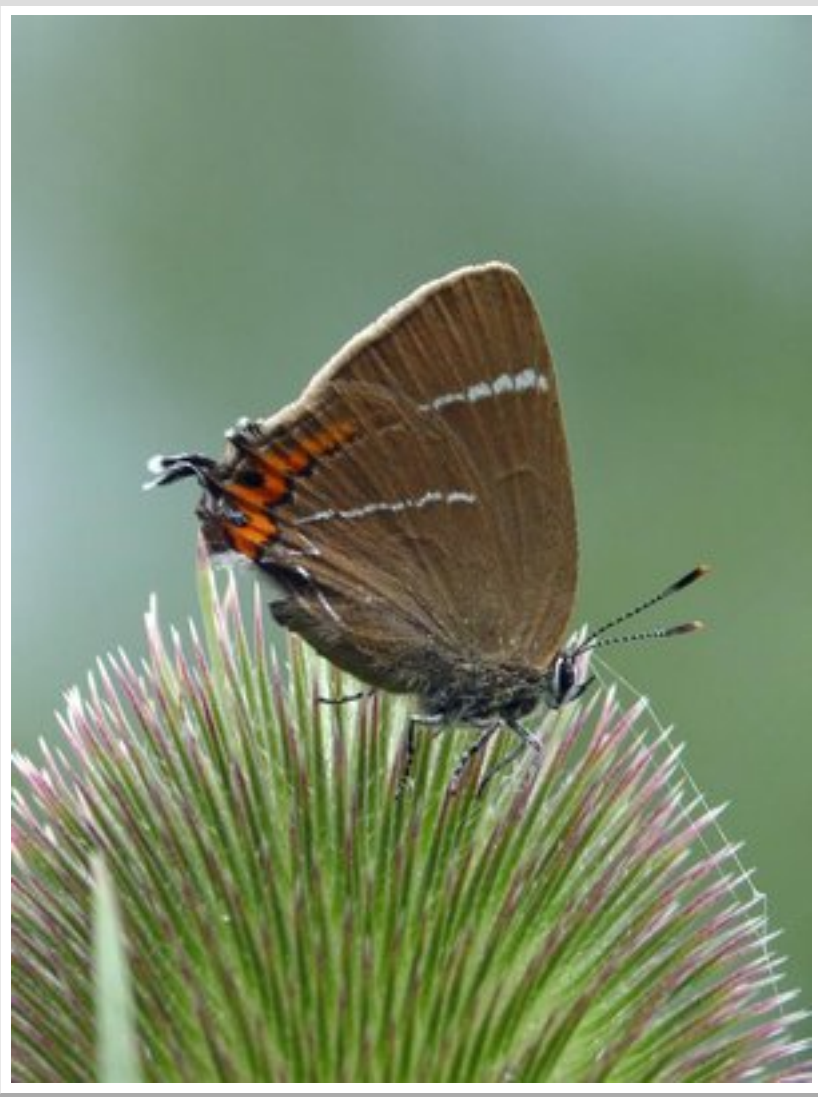
Thank you Jenks. I shall keep my fingers crossed that you find what you want at Bentley Wood. The weather here at the moment isn't great but the forecast for later looks good.

Thank you again Phil. I am enjoying your diary too – it has a very unique quality about it and you have a talent for writing. Just as an aside I have had 57 species of birds in the garden 😄 (including Turtle Dove and Yellowhammer mentioned earlier in diary).

Thank you for the complement Nick – you know I value your opinion.

Thank you too Neil – it is very generous of you to say so as it was impossible for me to get a clearer shot. I am hoping that this week I might be lucky enough to get a bit closer. In the meantime I shall just post a few pics that I have collected over recent days including my first Comma of the season:





Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 15-Jul-12 03:42 PM GMT

Having been a little under the weather, I have not had chance to catch up much lately. But as always a delight and great pictures. I did despite feeling rotten (the fresh air did do me good) take a couple of pictures which I will post in July. Debbie x

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jul-12 04:04 PM GMT

Thank you Debbie. I hope you are feeling right as rain now. I see you have changed your ISO to 400 from 1600 and the resulting Ringlet photos are much better for it. You could probably even use 200 in sunny weather and I think you might be experimenting with the exposure compensation. Well done.

Alice Holt complex certainly seemed to be THE venue to be at yesterday. I spent a lovely morning in the company of Mark (Tuts)- who found me my first ever adder! - and we bumped into Ashley (Whitlock) whom I haven't seen in ages. I met Wurzel for the first time (nice to meet you Wurzel) and was re-acquainted with Phil(zoid), both accompanied by their very well behaved daughters. The highlight of the visit was the sheer numbers of SWF. The Straits was awash with them, each thistle head along the main track being adorned by gold. It would be no overestimate to say that there were at least 150 flanking the main track, including many fresh females, which is more than I have ever seen, even on a good year. A splendid sight! After a couple of hours back at home at lunchtime to attend to the animals I was tempted to return to make the most of the sunshine. I had just arrived when Alan Thornbury turned up and not long after Neil (Kipper) put in a surprise appearance. It is just a pity that there was no sign yet of PE but the excellent company was compensation enough. A few SWF from today.





Re: Pauline

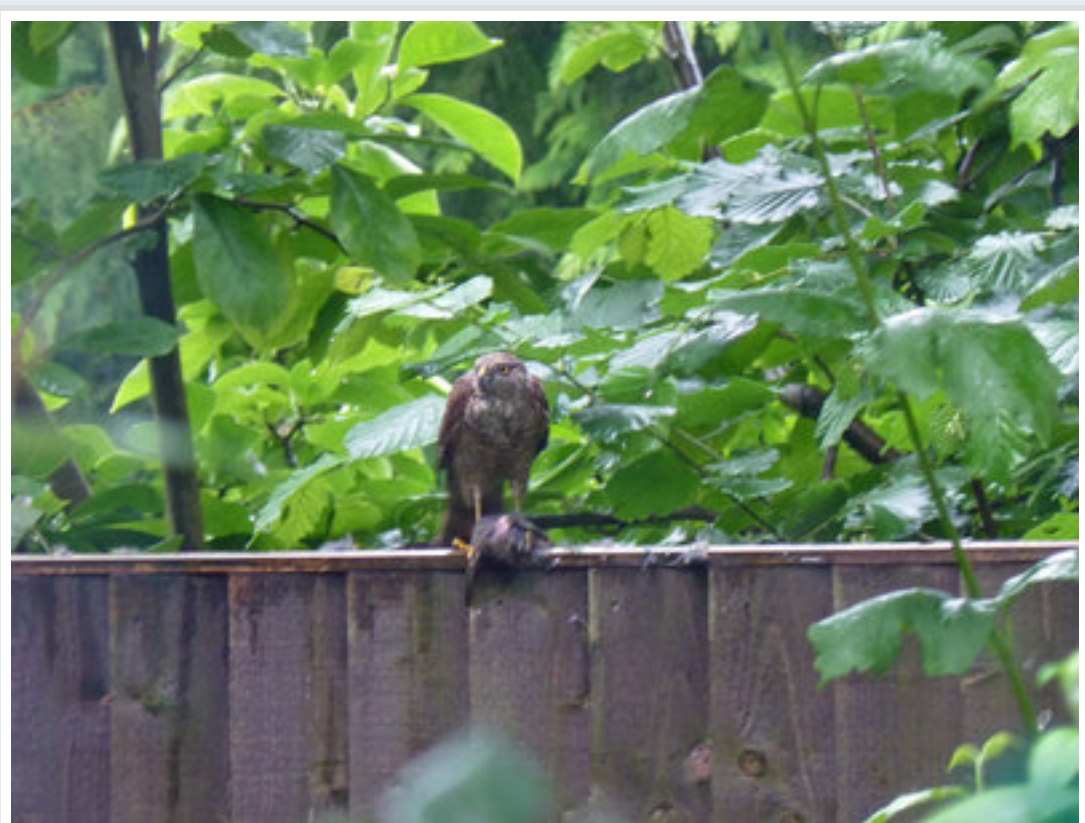
by Pauline, 16-Jul-12 07:18 PM GMT

Apologies to Colin Baker and anyone else whose name I missed off the above list but there was an awful lot of 'regulars' there yesterday (and I was half asleep this morning 😊). Good to see you again Colin.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-12 04:24 PM GMT

The weather defeated me yesterday and it was my turn to stay in and look at rain streaked windows – well, through them actually at the masses of birds which visit the garden. At one point I looked up only to see the Sparrowhawk yet again with a young Great Tit in its talons. A young Greater Spotted Woodpecker was about 18" away on a peanut feeder, completely still and flat against the feeder, terrified. I appreciate that visits by the Sparrowhawk indicate a healthy bird population but these Sparrowhawks come daily and I have seen as many as 8 birds (from Tits to Doves) taken in a single day. I find it traumatic to watch the process as the larger species can take up to 20 minutes to be killed. A few photos from yesterday and some earlier photos, none of which are very good (taken from my kitchen window) but may be of interest to some of the birders in the absence of any butterflies.





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 18-Jul-12 01:42 AM GMT

You have some good Sprawk photos! I expect you have a pair nesting nearby. The much smaller male bird tends to go for the small birds, such as Tits, while the female takes Doves and Pigeons. They can be very approachable when on their prey; I have taken photos of them in my garden using a macro lens! It can be distressing when they don't kill their prey immediately but I have never found a way of shoing them off a squawking Starling – they just take their prey somewhere else if you try.

The increase in the larger birds of prey in recent years has been remarkable. In my Oxfordshire garden, I have regular Sprawks, while Red Kites circle overhead and, when the chafers are flying, Hobbies come hunting in the late evening!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Philzoid, 18-Jul-12 04:32 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Just like to say it was nice meeting up the other day. Twas a great day and here's hoping we get more like it 😊.

I really like the second picture of the female Silver-washed Fritillary on WHITE thistle....was there a lot of patience involved in getting that shot 🤖?

Your birdfeeder is of more benefit to the Sparrowhawks than the garden birds provides the, with a nice little buffet selection to choose from 😊. If you are concerned about decimating your local population of birds you may find this link of some use <http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening...hawks.aspx> (sorry I don't know how to make it live 😞)

BTW I once inadvertently surprised a female sparrowhawk carrying a feral pigeon, or at least trying to carry it. As I tried to take a photo the sparrowhawk flew off leaving its prey behind. I went over to the unfortunate motionless bird, turned it over and it suddenly came round and flew off 😲 I suppose it takes some time to dispatch prey more than half its size?

EDIT: looks like the link is live in preview pane 😊

Phil

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jul-12 03:17 PM GMT

Thanks Mike. They do indeed breed near here and frequently bring their young, one of which landed inadvertently between 2 Woodpigeons on the apple tree last year. I can only describe the look of all 3 of them as pure astonishment and my only regret is I didn't have the camera to hand. Can I swop you for your Red Kites Mike? I have only ever seen them twice and think they are beautiful. And Hobbies! Wow!!

Thank you for the link Phil but the Sparrowhawks have been here for years now and the local cat population has a much worse effect on the bird population. I know your views on animals (both domestic and wild) but I get a great deal of pleasure from my 5 bird tables and see at close hand birds that I would have difficulty seeing otherwise, eg Redpoll, Treecreeper, Goldcrest, Turtle Dove, Yellowhammer, Siskin, Brambling, Marsh Tit etc etc. Likewise in feeding the wild animal population I get to see and photograph creatures on my doorstep (literally) including the beautiful white badger of last year.

Yes, it was a good day on Sunday Phil and you know how many Fritillaries there were! They were on every thistle and getting those shots was easy. Wish I'd gone back there yesterday but chose Oaken Wood instead where by comparison there were few butterflies despite a lovely morning. Managed to get a few Comma shots as several looked very fresh:





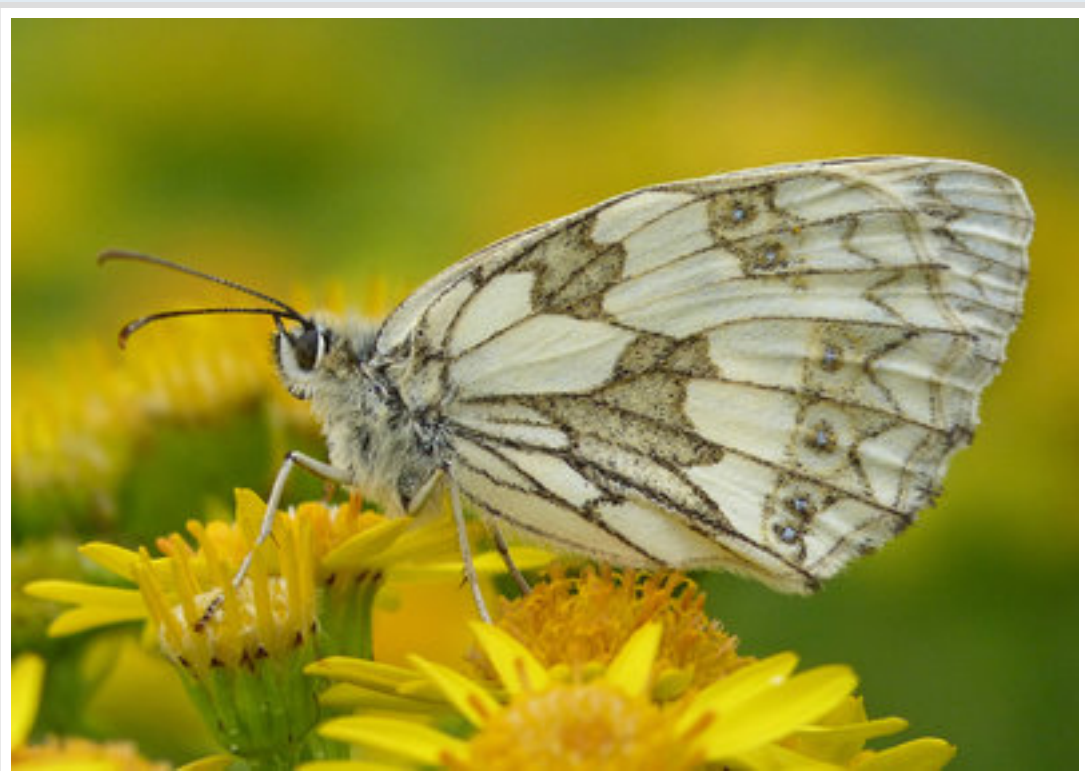
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jul-12 02:44 PM GMT

The more I learn about photography the more it seems as if everything is a compromise, a trade off between different requirements, and the skill is getting the best balance between them for any particular situation, eg increase the ISO to get faster shutter speed but increase the noise. Having had problems with depth of field (the smallest aperture setting on my camera is F8), I set about exploring whether the focal length and zoom facility could give me a greater depth of field. It would seem not. Although I do not fully understand the maths yet I have had diagrams drawn for me to explain this concept and it would appear that the only way I can improve the depth of field is to stand back when taking the photo (which means taking off the close up lens), don't use the zoom and then crop on the computer. The disadvantage of this is that I lose some quality on the photo – and that was the reason I bought the close up lens in the first place! I am beginning to wonder if I have met the first constraint of my little camera.

The other challenge I am facing is changing the way I actually take photos, eg. using a monopod, using the viewfinder (which I now find most helpful and wonder how I ever managed with the screen). Shooting in raw to get a truer, better quality image is something else I forget to do (or choose not to do as it takes so long to download on my very slow pc). I have picked up a lot of tips along the way that I do put into practice and once this butterfly season is over I shall continue to learn and to practice so that hopefully next season

In the meantime a few photos from a very cold, wet and windy Old Winchester Hill:





Re: Pauline

by dilettante, 19-Jul-12 06:21 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I set about exploring whether the focal length and zoom facility could give me a greater depth of field. It would seem not.

Fundamentally, depth of field is a function of (optical) magnification: the greater the magnification, the less the DoF. So if a butterfly fills, say, 50% of the frame, it doesn't matter whether you achieve that by zooming from a long distance, or getting up close – the magnification is the same. (But that choice will affect the field of view, and therefore the nature of the background). This is why compacts can sometimes get better results than DSLRs: their smaller sensors mean the magnification is less, and DoF is greater. (But greater DoF makes it harder to achieve smooth out of focus backgrounds). Standing back and cropping reduces magnification, and also reduces the effect of camera or subject movement, but of course loses resolution.

Shooting in raw to get a truer, better quality image is something else I forget to do (or choose not to as it takes so long to download on my very slow pc).

Raw only gets better quality images if you are skilled at processing them yourself. I like using raw to give me the flexibility, and to recover highlight detail that might otherwise be lost, but often I suspect the camera could do a better job than I manage!

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 19-Jul-12 09:36 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I am beginning to wonder if I have met the first constraint of my little camera.

Dilettante has explained depth of field very well so, in fact, far from being a constraint, your little camera is better in this respect than a large-sensor DSLR! Conversely, it is more difficult to isolate a subject from its background with a compact.

"Pauline" wrote:

Can I swop you for your Red Kites Mike?

Any time for your Redpoll, Treecreeper, Goldcrest, Turtle Dove, Yellowhammer, Siskin, Brambling, or Marsh Tit 😊😊😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Cotswold Cockney, 19-Jul-12 10:09 PM GMT

Enjoyed seeing those Sparrow Hawk pictures. Thanks for putting them up. I occasionally get one in or through our garden and have seen them take Blackbirds now and again. Next day, there's another Blackbird in place of the lost one the previous day..... every time.

Now retired for two years, I spend a lot more time in my small back garden. Sometimes a Hawk would appear from some acute surprise angle at speed right in front of me. Once so close to my face I felt the wind from the wings. It, like me did not expect a very close encounter and I do not know who was the most surprised by this. It or me. Good to see though. I guess for years the bird has had access to my garden without any human presence as the family would be away for much of the day.

One of the most frequent visitors to my back garden are Lesser Black Backed Gulls. They breed on the roofs of local industrial estate units along with Herring Gulls. Hundreds of them across the City and surroundings. I don't think these could be called Sea Gulls now.. I wonder if all those local bred birds have ever seen the sea. It's all here for them in and around the city and surrounding countryside. I sometimes see fully grown young Gulls fresh out of the nest and simply walking about. They appear larger, maybe bulkier than the parent birds. When getting my car MoT-ed at a local industrial estate, a fully fledged young Gull wandered into the building whilst my car was being tested and had a look around... like it owned the place. 😊

Rarely have the camera handy when the Hawks are around. Spotted this one in a close neighbour's tree as I walked by. When it flew off, right towards my face then quickly turned away at the last moment, I clearly saw it was carrying a male Blackbird :~



Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 19-Jul-12 11:56 PM GMT

Super pictures Pauline, and thank you I am much better. (just need a small op – but nothing serious – even better)

Debbie x 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-12 12:51 AM GMT

Thank you Dilettante – that is a very clear explanation and I very much appreciate the fact that you have taken the time and trouble to explain it to me. Thank you – it is now much clearer.

Mike, I'd like to hang on to my birds if you don't mind 😊 but I'll swap you for any one (or more) of the 33 cats in this little lane!!!! (2 families have 7 each!!! 😊).

Lovely to hear from you Cotswold Cockney. I'm glad you liked my photos (might post more in due course) and I appreciate you letting me see your photo.

Hope the op goes well Debbie – keep in touch!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-12 01:13 AM GMT

The Chalkhill Blues emerge much earlier in Sussex than in my area but when I heard from Neil that they were out in considerable numbers at Amberley I knew it was time to check out Oxenbourne Down. I struggled to find more than a couple of freshly emerged males in the short time I had there this afternoon but with the weather set to improve next week I shall return. In the meantime a few pics from today:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-12 02:39 PM GMT

Oops! Forgot to include the open-winged shots from yesterday. Not sure how this background came to be black – others taken at only a slightly different angle were darkish green – but I like it because it is a bit different and complements the colouration of the butterfly whilst at the same time

highlighting the stunning blue:



I'd like to wish everyone who may be searching for PE this weekend the very best of luck and I hope you have more success than I have had recently.

Re: Pauline

by dilettante, 21-Jul-12 04:42 PM GMT

That last one is just stunning. It looks like it was with open wings but not sunshine, so the colours and detail are superb.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 21-Jul-12 07:31 PM GMT

...and I like the first one! As you say, the contrast with the dark background makes the butterfly stand out superbly – super shot. It seems strange that we are into Chalkhill Blue flight time and Summer hasn't started yet – hopefully, it's now just around the corner 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 22-Jul-12 12:43 AM GMT

The last shot is just amazing! Well done Pauline! Every scale is visible and sharp! I'd be interested in knowing your settings (and setup)!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jul-12 04:10 AM GMT

Exactly so, Dilettante. It was very overcast with the threat of rain but I am sure these individuals were very fresh. It was also still very warm. Thank you so much for your kind words.

Thank you too Mike – I also like the first one and I bear in mind your words about everyone preferring something different when it comes to art (if you can call my photos that).

Hi Pete, good to hear from you again. I'm afraid my 'set-up' is just my humble little fz38, hand held as usual on a cloudy day – but the butterfly WAS beautiful. I value your comments Pete and thank you for the praise – much appreciated.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jul-12 04:51 AM GMT

Well, what a morning! I broke my own rule which is never to go out on a Saturday – but I was getting desperate 😊. I decided I would allow myself an hour at Abbots Wood before returning to the chores. I bumped into Mark and Sarah (nice to meet you Sarah) and we spent an enjoyable hour chatting whilst watching for PE of which there wasn't even a glimpse. At 10.00 am I bid them farewell but they decided to accompany me and carry on across to the Straits. We were just approaching the gate when Mark espied a PE low down on Hazel though how he spotted it over 8 foot of bracken is a mystery to me. We fought our way through bracken and nettles (which was right over my head):



To cut a long story short before we could reach the butterfly it flew off, gliding up and down the path, only to come to rest on mark's foot!! Now, this is nothing personal Mark but if anyone knows how I can 'disguise' Mark's foot with Elements I would be very grateful to them!



Mark eventually tried to provide us with a more picturesque background by removing his sandal but once again the butterfly flew off, only to land again on the track. This pattern was repeated several times. By now we had been joined by another couple – friends of Gibster – and as this was their very first sighting ever their awe and excitement added to ours. The butterfly remained with us until a dog walker refused to wait and the PE returned to the canopy:



Although the background is 'busy' what I like about this shot is that it shows the butterfly in its natural surroundings and also shows both sides of the wings at the same time – a shot I have never achieved before.





A few pics from the (very) many that I took in fact I haven't even had a chance to look at them all yet so there may well be more to come!

Re: Pauline

by philm63, 22-Jul-12 05:14 AM GMT

Pauline

Excellent shots of the Purple Emperor, I am green with envy!!!

Phil

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-12 05:27 AM GMT

Cracking shots of the Purple Emperor Pauline 🍷

I also love your Chalkhill Blue photos. I much prefer the upperwing photos to the others which, whilst good, seem a little 'generic' 😊

Edit: I take back the 'generic' comment Pauline, I think it is just the nature of the CB underside which can seem a bit bland compared to some of the other blues.

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 22-Jul-12 05:41 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

nice to bump in to you again today great shots.

Glad you managed to crop out my toes from the 'foot' shot 😊

I have attached the photo I took whilst you were picturing me immersed head high in bracken and nettles. What people won't see is that I had shorts on – and my legs are still throbbing from the stings!!!! 😡 perhaps that explains the poor quality of the shot – my excuse anyway 😊 it is a shame because it would have been great to get an emperor 'on green'. It would appear that he was cleaning his proboscis so he was probably on the track as we approached – good result though.

Will probably see you next week



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-12 05:46 AM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline I'm very jealous 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 22-Jul-12 07:14 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

The last shot is just amazing! Well done Pauline! Every scale is visible and sharp!

Agreed, and what an unusual choice of material upon which to land!

I think I've only ever seen Chalk Hills on grasses/flowers.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jul-12 05:28 AM GMT

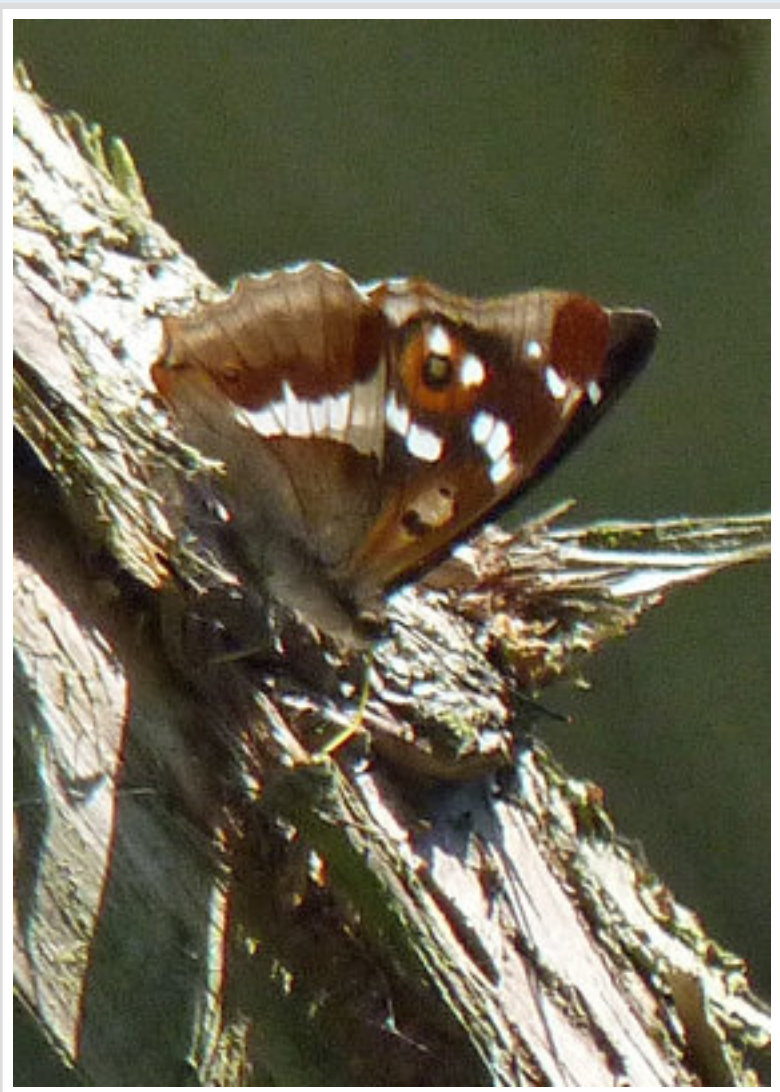
A big thank you to Phil and Wurzel for your kind comments but it really was a combination of luck and Mark's sharp eyesight (not to mention his height in being able to see over the tops of foliage 😊😊).

Thank you too Neil. I have to tell you that when Mark very generously said to me " go on Pauline, get in there and take your close up shots" my hands were shaking so much I couldn't screw my close-up lens on!!!! 😞

I hope your legs have stopped throbbing Mark – bet they haven't cos I can still feel the stings on my arms!! Thank you for your comments and for including that photo because as you say it is a view not often seen. Thanks must also go to Sarah who was very unselfish in leaving the butterfly on the ground to try to intercept the dog-walker so that the rest of us could continue to enjoy it.

I appreciate your comments David on my Chalkhills – thank you for taking the time to post.

A beautiful sunny morning provided another wonderful opportunity to meet up with old friends and familiar faces as well as meeting new folk in the Alice Holt complex, all hoping for a glimpse of the PE. Personally, I saw 2 males but the closest I got was when one landed on the watch tower. I gather that through the day there were quite a few sightings in different areas and a brief 'touch down' but to the best of my knowledge photo opportunities were limited. The following shot was taken when the butterfly landed under the roof of the tower so is heavily cropped.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jul-12 02:37 PM GMT

Whilst pursuing a glimpse of a most coveted butterfly, I cannot ignore the more common but can't decide which crop I prefer 😞



Actually, looking at these photos side by side it is clear the first one is better simply because there is more of the wing visible and the proboscis is out.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 23-Jul-12 08:54 PM GMT

I'm with you on the first one 😊 It's got lovely compositional 'balance' and wonderful soft colours – I think it would look great as a framed picture on the wall.

As Richard Lewington points out in his excellent article in *Atropos* (<http://www.richardlewington.co.uk/pdf/atropos.pdf>), there are many different purposes for photographs (and illustrations). Some will doubtless prefer your second photo because it concentrates more on the butterfly, whereas I prefer the first for its overall artistic effect.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-Jul-12 11:07 PM GMT

Lovely shots Pauline I must come down your way next year the Purple EM is one i've not got yet 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jul-12 03:38 PM GMT

Thank you Mike – it is good of you to say so. I was pleased to see that you too got some shots of PE on the ground which seems to be quite a rare occurrence this year.

Thank you Goldie – until you actually see one for yourself you will probably not appreciate fully what all the fuss is about so I hope you manage it next year.

I have always said that I will enclose both good and less good shots in this diary as I want it to be a complete record of my progress – and yesterday was less good! I stopped off at Chalton Down as I was passing but it happened to be at the hottest part of the day with a bright, harsh, unrelenting sun right overhead. I had only been here once before 'out of season' but now it was very different. Impressive, breathtaking, serene, beautiful, were all words that sprung to mind as I surveyed the multi-coloured patchwork of wild flowers which were teeming with butterflies. The butterflies claimed not just the ground but the air space with multi species chases frequent. It was amusing to watch the Skippers chase the DGF which in turn were chasing the Marbled Whites and Chalkhills. I stood surrounded by butterflies and colour. I lost count of the number of species I saw (including my first Gatekeepers) and also noted a meadow Brown with one very pale wing. I could only get a shot of the underside but when it opened its wings that particular wing was almost white.

Well, back to the photography. I had not been there very many minutes watching dozens of Chalkhills when I spotted a mating pair. I know from experience that the blues are very difficult to photograph as they are very reflective and frequently look 'bleached' so I adjusted the exposure compensation to -2 which is the most extreme setting for my camera. This gave me a reasonable image of the male, but the female, which was freshly emerged and darkish brown, together with the green background, came out very dark. I realised that this was the same scenario as a dark butterfly on a white flower! I remembered that it would have been better if I had been shooting in RAW and I have also learnt that there is a setting on my menu (somewhere) to help deal with these problems of contrast. Given the harsh sun right overhead and the proximity of the site I decided it was probably better just to return at a more sensible time of day (eg 6.00am 😊). I took the opportunity just to enjoy the experience of being literally surrounded by butterflies before returning home. However, a few shots to show the effects of the harsh sun and hopefully the next time they will be better:





I learned over the weekend that under exposing an image (as well as a higher ISO) creates a slightly faster shutter speed and as my camera is hand held this has probably been to my advantage.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-12 02:04 AM GMT

Didn't get out today until 4.00pm so popped up to the Straits just on the off chance. Got to the 1st watch tower and the only person in sight was a guy with a net. Regular readers will know that on such occasions I tend to play ignorant but interested and this was a very interesting encounter. He claimed to be the person who released 300 Glanville cats at an old landfill site near Farnham (where he lives) 10 years ago. He claimed they thrived until this year when 'the conservation people decided they didn't want them there and collected them all up). He looked for webs and imagos this year but couldn't find any. He had no knowledge of the Heath Frits on this site although he told me he has released 100 Black Hairstreak cats in the Alice Holt complex, in 'a secluded and discrete location'. Apparently he has been doing this since he was a boy and knew the background to many of the sites (eg. all the sites you searched in Cranleigh, Susie!). Today he was after female Purple Emperors and Purple Hairstreaks!. He had seen 6 PE in the Straits (in fact we saw 2 whilst we were talking) but all were males. All he had in his bag was 1 White Admiral and 2 SWF!! He said he had 30 PE's at home but had only managed to get 2 pairs (they need to be hand paired apparently). He only visits Straits 2/3 times per year now as his main interest is European and he has recently brought over a Compton Tortoiseshell (I think???) from Serbia where they are moving from Russia. He has a friend in Estonia who collects the butterflies. He said he has discovered a new species in France and has written various papers on butterflies – he was keen to breed through several life cycles to learn from the results without getting into in-breeding. He teaches arts and ceramics at a local school so considers this very much a life long hobby. The conversation went on for over an hour so needless to say no photos were taken this evening (although I do have a car reg no. 😊). I imagine that what he is doing is legal, albeit controversial. He did introduce himself but I shall refer to him as Colin W. as I imagine he might be known to some on this web site. I left as he prepared to do another recce of the site.

Re: Pauline

by P.J.Underwood, 26-Jul-12 01:59 AM GMT

Pauline,
I have a fair knowledge of the Wrecclesham site, including planning issues. It would be very interesting to see the environmental survey, that should have been done as part of the recent planning application. Were Glanvilles, Heaths, orchids and sand lizards included? It could be that in any planning application it might be advantageous to suppress (eliminate) this information! If it was the conservationists, who are they, and what are they trying to prove. Could it not be the eliminationists!
Philip

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jul-12 02:26 AM GMT

Philip, my advice would be to leave well alone tho we can discuss elsewhere if you wish.

I have not seen very many Purple Emperors in my time and I have certainly never seen one landing on Thistle, grass heads, bramble flowers and bracken – until about 2 hours ago!! I spent about 40 minutes with this male and several times just missed getting a photo of this unusual behaviour as he was very skittish only staying in the same place for a few seconds. At one point he landed on me briefly and we were then joined by a female who displayed very furtive behaviour in the shallows. It was just as well she disappeared as Colin suddenly appeared again with his net and asked if I had seen anything! I was actually looking for Purple Hairstreak tonight, but as Mark said 'beggars can't be choosers' 😊😊



Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-Jul-12 02:31 AM GMT

Purple Emperors on nectar sources are rare things indeed!

I wonder whether their emergence into this hot weather blitz may have confused their sensibilities and made them do things they normally wouldn't?

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 26-Jul-12 02:54 AM GMT

Hi Pauline - I too have bumped into this gent on a couple of occasions and he always has the same story about just wanting to collect a couple of females to boost his breeding stock. He normally visits midweek. He is indeed doing something illegal if he does not have the permission of the landowner - pretty obvious really. Additionally one character, who I have bumped into at Alice regularly appears at 'insect fairs' selling PE larvae labeled as 'from british stock' which presumably have come from wild individuals. This could also be construed as illegal under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act which makes it illegal to collect PE for sale. Bearing in mind some of the hearsay I have heard about the forestry commission owning the copyright of all photos taken in their wood I am sure they might have something to say about the removal of the insects themselves! 😏

By all accounts trying to pair captive PE is a pretty gruesome affair which can involve mutilating the insects to get them to stay paired 😡
Unfortunately have come across three 'collectors' this year.

But you are regretting the 'hairstreak incident' now 😊 Mark

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-12 05:01 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, I love your Purple Emperor on the fern fronds 😊

A bit worrying to hear about this guy with the net, I must admit I have only come across one person with a net so far this year. I was in the Wyre Forest in early June when I saw a chap walking towards me carrying a net. As soon as he saw me he 'about turned' and walked off quickly down another ride.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jul-12 02:36 PM GMT

Yes, I am kicking myself David, that I missed those shots. The butterfly looked amazing on the top of a single thistle head with wings outstretched and equally photogenic on a grass head about a foot from the ground! I have to say that in each of these positions he only remained about 3/4 seconds and as I was stood well back to give him time to settle I didn't get the shot 😞 .

I have been regretting the 'hairstreak incident' ever since it happened Mark!! Why didn't I just ask you to lift me up instead 😂😂

Thank you Neil. Unfortunately, this is the 4th time I have encountered nets this year, twice being at Wrecclesham, which does make me wonder whether there was any truth in the other 'netter's' comments that the Glanville's had been collected and removed 🙄🤔

I was never happy with the last batch of Chalkhill photos taken in harsh sun so yesterday morning I was out early and on Chalton Down by 5.40am. By the time I found the Chalkhills roosting the sun was already up and they were starting to open their wings. By 6.00am the whole area was alive with Chalkhills – it looked like a group orgy was taking place with mating pairs in danger of being stood on all over. By 7.00am the sun was once again much too bright so it was home for breakfast. I was pleased to have found one individual covered in dew before the sun came up and dried them out as that was one of my aims in getting there so early.



This butterfly was bathed in a soft, golden glow as the sun came up:







Re: Pauline

by Cotswold Cockney, 26-Jul-12 06:30 PM GMT

"Tuts" wrote:

.

By all accounts trying to pair captive PE is a pretty gruesome affair which can involve mutilating the insects to get them to stay paired 😞

.

Then you have been viewing the wrong accounts. Captive paired Apaturinae stay together for 1.75 to 2.5 hours before separating. Separation before that time is rare and usually results in a failure to the transfer of the male's spermatophore. It is easy to confirm a successful transfer using a x10 hand lens of the type used by antique dealers. Trying to use an immature male with a too freshly emerged female invariably results in failure. There's a reason why most males emerge a week or so before the females.

"Tuts" wrote:

. Additionally one character, who I have bumped into at Alice regularly appears at 'insect fairs' selling PE larvae labeled as 'from British stock' which presumably have come from wild individuals.

.

Almost certainly the same chap who wrote to me over thirty years ago when he was a student asking about my technique for obtaining successful pairings of the Apaturinae in captivity. I do not know if he was able to succeed with what I told him but, he did manage it eventually.

Anyone collecting wild specimens for sale later would have to work extremely hard, spend much time not to mention use lots of fuel to make it worthwhile. I do not think it can be done. Try it, be amazed if you find it profitable and you will soon give up ... 😊

With good husbandry throughout the year in captivity from the egg to the successful pairing ~ twelve months dedication ~ a healthy female can lay probably in excess of 200 ova. Almost certainly that many are laid in the wild by a healthy female too. How many of those wild laid ova produce adults twelve months later? Two or three if they're lucky. In captivity, 200 ova can be 200 adults. Huge amount of time and TLC required though ... for years.

In winter, I have visited areas in the woodlands where I've seen females laying the previous summer. During those visits, large flocks of insectivorous feeding birds systematically work their way through the bare shrubs and trees seeking something to feed on. Maybe a dozen different flocks of birds each day throughout the larvae's months of hibernation. Larvae survival in late summer-autumn is from my observations quite high. Most insect feeding birds have reared their young by that time so do not collect the 1000s of small moth and butterfly larvae to sustain their broods. I strongly suspect, that is where most of those 200 wild hibernating individuals end up... in the hungry stomachs of small birds during the hard winter months. Otherwise we'd be up to our necks in Purple Emperors ... now there's a thought .. 😊

It is possible to see a Purple Emperor any day of the year. If you know where to look.

EDIT to add :~

For the benefit of those sufficiently interested and those doubters I'm adding an image of a captive pairing of *Apatura iris* ~ The Purple Emperor.

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR ACCOUNT TO ENABLE 3RD PARTY HOSTING



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www.photobucket.com/P500

Although I have been to Alice Holt many times years ago, I have never taken a single specimen from that locality. I did kill one though, a female of the largest Horse Fly we have in the former much more greener and pleasant which fancied some of my red stuff... 😊

Those *Apatura* iris could not have come from anywhere farther away from Alice Holt as is possible. They are from the eastern range extremity of this very widespread and common butterfly in the world. They are the South Korean race *A. iris. insularis* almost identical to our butterfly except fresh specimens sometimes have a very noticeable and beautiful mauve or violet sheen on the undersides of the hind wings. I bred several generations of this butterfly back in the 1980s along with a dozen plus species of *Apaturinae* including our own single representative of this fabulous butterfly family. Here are a paired couple of the South Korean species *Apatura* (*Chitoris*) *ulupi* which has the *Celtis* (*Ulmaceae*) as their larval foodplant.

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As can be seen from this picture, the sexes are strongly sexually dimorphic. All the males I bred were of the form which resembles loosely the Gulf Fritillary at first glance. Never seen or bred one but was informed by Oriental contacts that another male form exists with colouring not unlike our own UK representative. All the females on the upperside resemble our butterfly but, as can be seen, the underside colouring is very different but the pattern is similar.

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The earlier stages are colonial prior to hibernation. Here are some ova and young larvae on one of my potted *Celtis*.

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The above fully grown larva and pupa is an example of a second brood. A rare event which also happens with our butterfly. Over the years breeding various butterflies, I'm convinced several univoltine species produce the occasional second brood individual as part of the natural variation and selection process. It may happen in the wild too as my captive rearing closely follows wild conditions except predators are excluded.

Anyone contemplating breeding these more demanding species should be aware of the total care, devotion and attention required 24/7/365. Including 3am inspections and checks for and predators which appear at any time, usually at night. To see a large spider trying to penetrate netting with it's fangs to reach a suspended pupa is always a nasty thing to observe, particularly if it is successful .. 'appens.. 😞

The logistics required to handle large number throughout the year is considerable. Summer holidays and even the occasional field trips are out when your attention is needed elsewhere with the livestock :~

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Finally, reading many of the posts here on UKB, there appears to be a hardcore of enthusiasts who bad mouth or at least view poorly anything that smacks of the dreaded word ... "Collecting" ...

Less than one hundred years ago. Just about every household had a cabinet or display case with wild specimens on display, all obtained either by gun, trap or nets. Even during the late 1940s and early 1950s as a small boy I was encouraged by my elders and schoolmasters to get a net and get out their in a healthy pursuit. Even the late great Peter Scott who shot more wildfowl than most ever had, set up a Nature Reserve at Slimbridge in Gloucestershire. Even the late I.R.P Heslop of "notes and Views of .. " had more wild caught specimens of the Purple Emperor in his collection than most see in their lifetime. However, he was instrumental in setting up a reserve within the Bentley Woods complex for this butterfly. My observations over the past fifty years of the management operations of that woodland indicates that without that reserve, that fine butterfly may not be there today.

Had it not been for those old collectors and the specimens they passed on to museums when they passed on, we would have no idea what a genuine Cotswold Large Blue looks like. Those successful introductions in the west country locations are all fine and very interesting but, they will never be the real McCoy to the purist in me.

Hands up all those who believe the reason indigenous Large Blues no longer fly in their numerous Cotswold haunts was all the doing of collectors...

Hmmmm ... that many... no bloody wonder.

... 😊

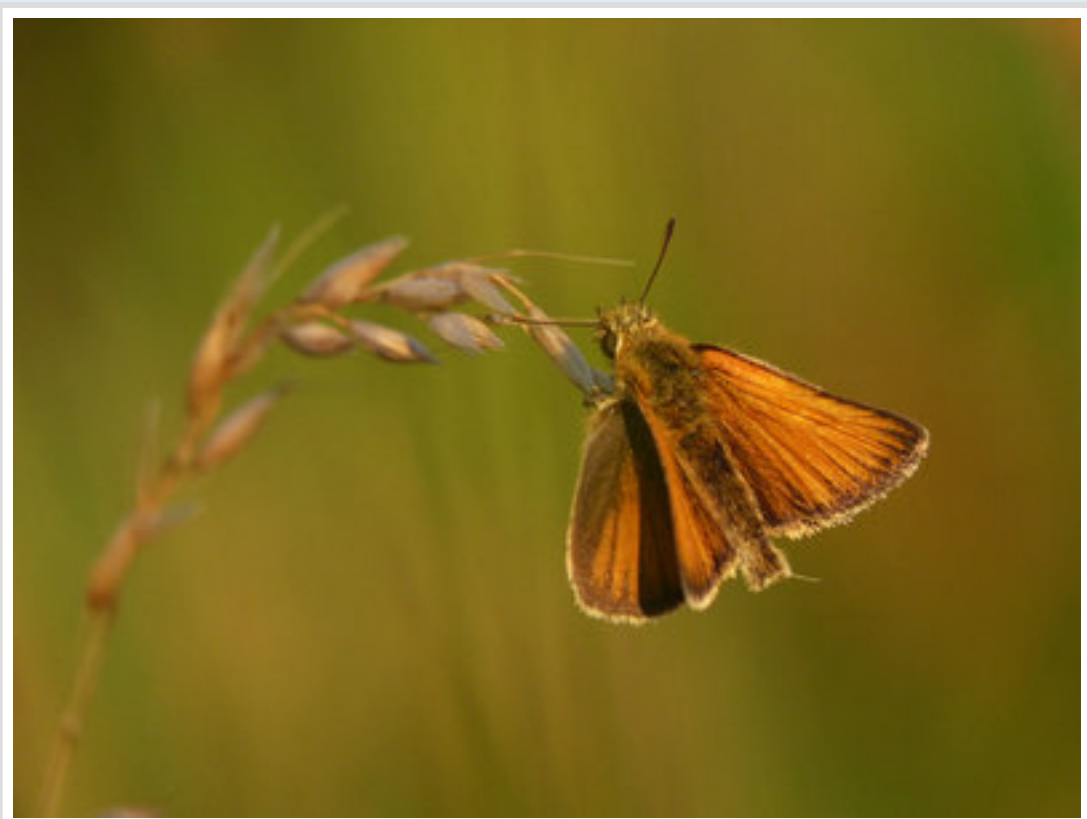
P.S. All the above pictures are digital images of 6" x 4" prints taken with a small compact digital camera. No such technology available back in those distant days. What a boon it would have been had it been ... 😊 .

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jul-12 09:55 PM GMT

Wow Cotswold Cockney! I think that has given us all some food for thought! I believe the point that Mark was making was that there may be others, less scrupulous and less conscientious than yourself; those with little concern for the butterfly (or the law!) – those who have underhand motives! You clearly cared a great deal about your butterflies and looked after them well and it obviously wasn't something you did for financial gain. There will be many different opinions on this topic and we could debate it until the cows come home but I now intend to put this somewhat controversial subject to one side and return to my sightings. (Great pics by the way CC 😊).

Whilst I was enjoying the Chalkhills the other morning I came across what I hope is my first ever Essex Skipper – a bit worn but I would appreciate it if someone could confirm or otherwise 😊. Below is all the same butterfly:





Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-12 04:22 AM GMT

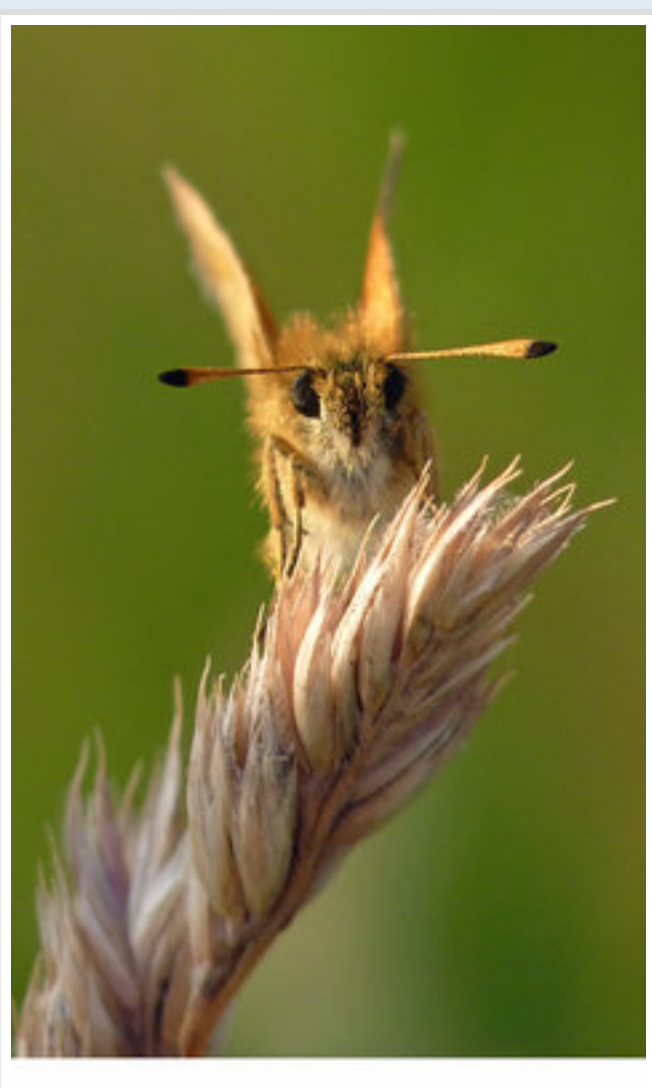
Nice photos Pauline....and a good example of how fine the sex brand can be on the male Essex, you can just make it out on the two topside shots.

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

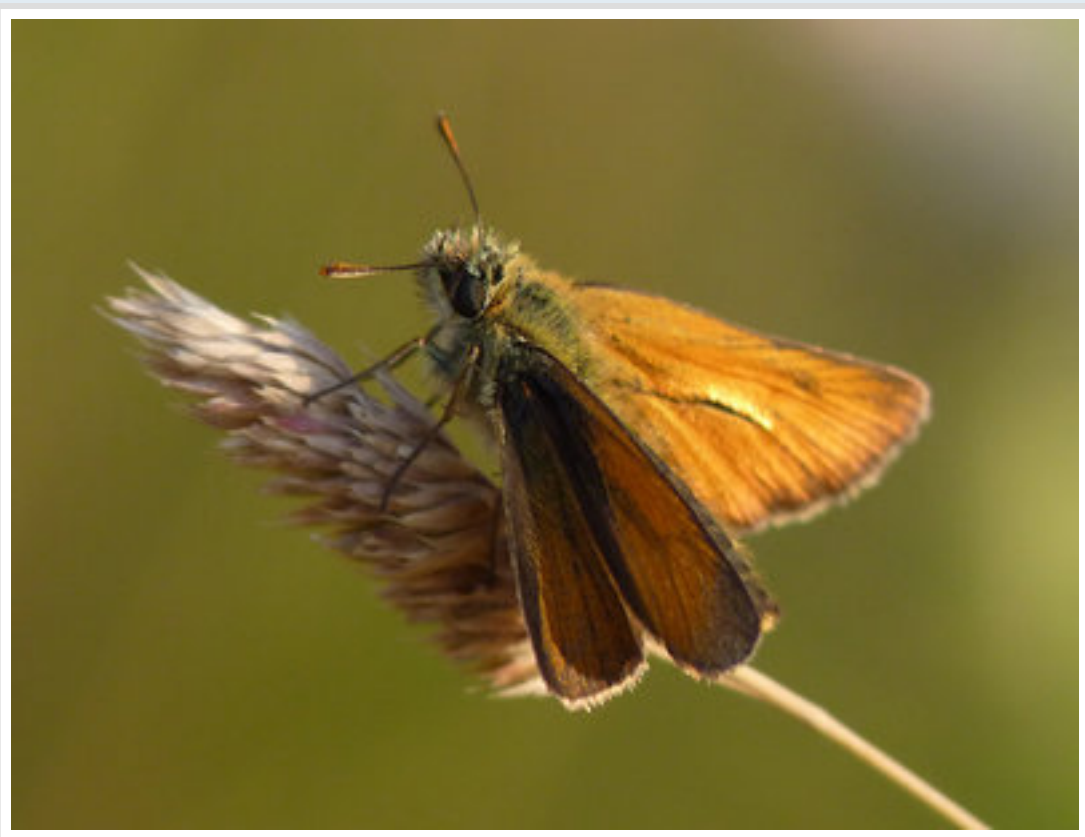
by Pauline, 27-Jul-12 03:11 PM GMT

Thank you so much for your comments and the quick response Neil – much appreciated. I have spent the last couple of days looking closely at Skippers and I do believe I now have it sorted. Even I can see that the following is an Essex Skipper:





as opposed to these Small Skippers:



The great thing is that I have now found quite a little colony of Essex Skippers really close to me and watching them start to roost last night was very enjoyable, not least because of the numbers.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 27-Jul-12 06:29 PM GMT

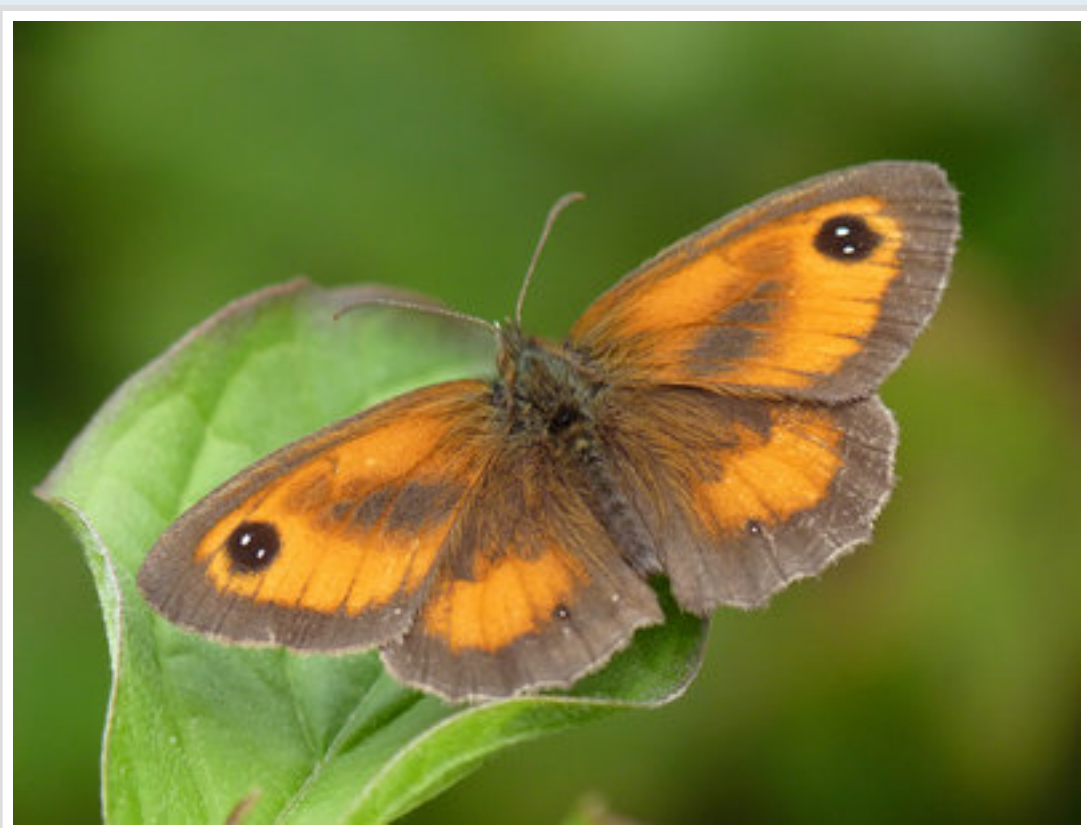
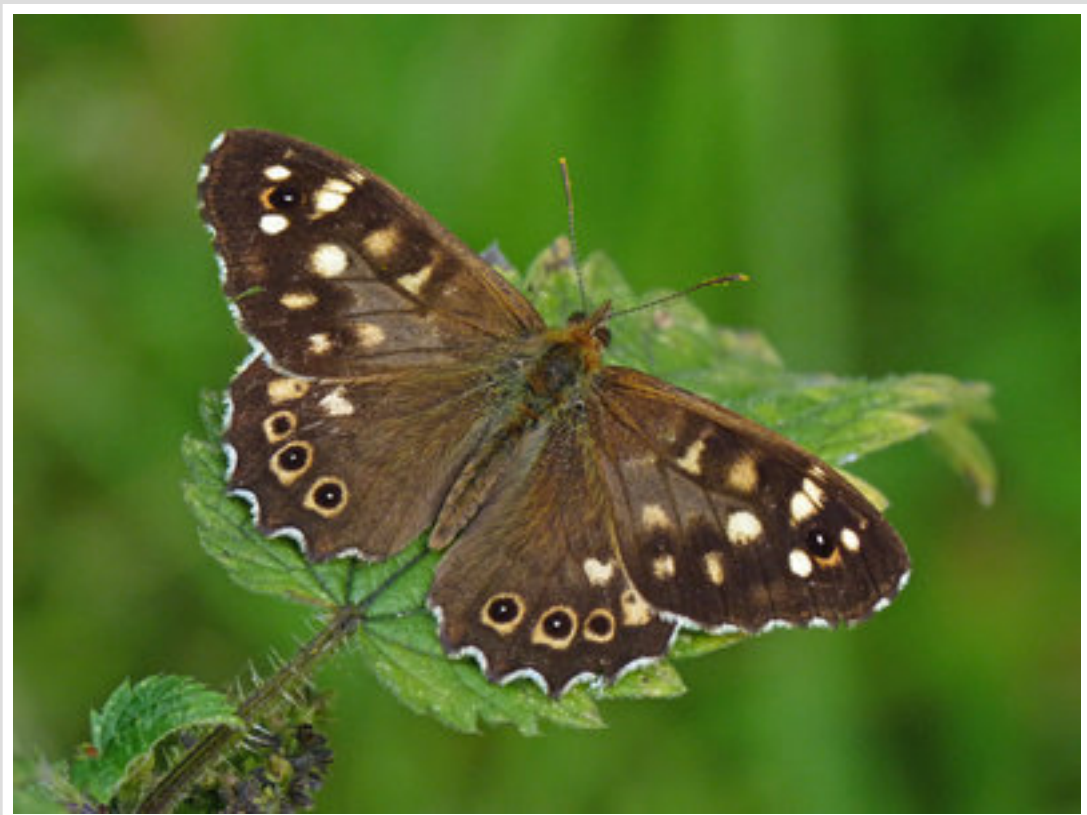
Now you need to go to Dorset to add Lulworth Skipper to your collection! They were abundant at Durlston earlier in the week.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jul-12 02:32 PM GMT

It wouldn't take much to tempt me Mike! I have only been there once and I love it. I grew up 5-6 miles from the sea and after school we would walk to the coast (couldn't afford the bus fare) and walk along the shoreline to see what the tide had brought in. We would collect up glass bottles that folk had discarded and take them back to the shop - in those days any shop gave you money back when you returned the bottles (I think it was 1d for most and 3d for a few). This got us enough money for a chip supper to eat on the trek back home 😊. Ah, them were the days!!!! On Saturdays we would spend the day clambering over cliffs, collecting winkles from rock pools which we would cook and have with bread and butter for tea..... but I digress. Below is a few photos taken recently whilst searching for my elusive Purple Hairstreak including a lovely fresh Speckled Wood.





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jul-12 03:10 PM GMT

Having never seen a Small Copper with those lovely little blue spots I am very keen to find one. However, in the meantime I shall have to make do with this little beauty which I came across whilst I was out and about doing the chores yesterday.





Re: Pauline

by FISHiEE, 29-Jul-12 04:32 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. Glad you got to chalong down to see the chalkhill blues. It's a rather nice little spot! Haven't been in the heat of the day so interesting to hear of the DGF's as I wasn't aware of those there but not surprising really I guess as they are at other nearby sites like butser and old winchester hills. Good to see you found your Essex skipper too!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 30-Jul-12 02:19 AM GMT

Just got back from a camping trip (literally – the tent's airing over the stairwell) and was very pleased to see your cracking shots of Small Copper 😊 I did see a couple of Lulworth Skippers down at Lulworth Cove so they are still about if you're after them?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Jul-12 05:16 AM GMT

Lovely to hear from you FishiEE. How come we haven't met yet – or have we? It was thanks to Mark's (Tuts) directions that I eventually found Chalton Down and it certainly is a fantastic spot. I had struggled to get there for about 5.30am the other morning but once I had arrived I found myself wondering why – where else would you rather be at that time of the morning than Chalton Down??!!! It was simply beautiful.

Another one of Mark's little gems was the Hayling Billy Trail which I was totally unaware of and decided to visit today. It was very windy which limited photo opportunities but that didn't stop me from seeing 17 species!!! In addition, I saw 4 foxes really close up – I think they were this year's youngsters looking to make their own way in life, but a bit early I would have thought? I chatted to the reserve warden and he showed me where Little Owls had bred this year (3 owlets apparently). I commented on the very strange coloured rabbits which ranged from normal agouti, to grey to black and he informed me that they also have a white variety!

Whilst there the skies darkened and ominous rumbles of thunder stopped cyclists and walkers in their tracks, discussing whether to return to their cars:



At this point the only photo I had taken was of the cows:



But as I returned to my car I couldn't resist this little Wagtail:



I decided to move on to Sandy Point as I had been advised that a nature reserve there was home to Graylings. I can't deny that being so close to the sea was an added attraction. It was disappointing to discover that the local nature reserve was fenced with a padlocked gate displaying a notice that any visit would be by appointment only. The thundery skies had followed me and I was not about to challenge the current residents of the reserve:



This posting should be called Cattle and Clouds because, despite the sun, the distant sky was black and the thunder continued to rumble:



In fact, the only butterfly photo taken today was a GVW, a butterfly which I haven't seen much of this year and my biggest disappointment was that I couldn't get 'square on' to the subject because of a large nettle patch so the outer wings are not in focus – shame!



Wurzel I hope you enjoyed your trip and I am flattered that you have not even aired your gear and you are looking at my photos 😊 . Seriously, thank you for your comments but are you by any chance in cahoots with Mike? Is this a master plan to get me into Dorset cos it just might work 😂😂

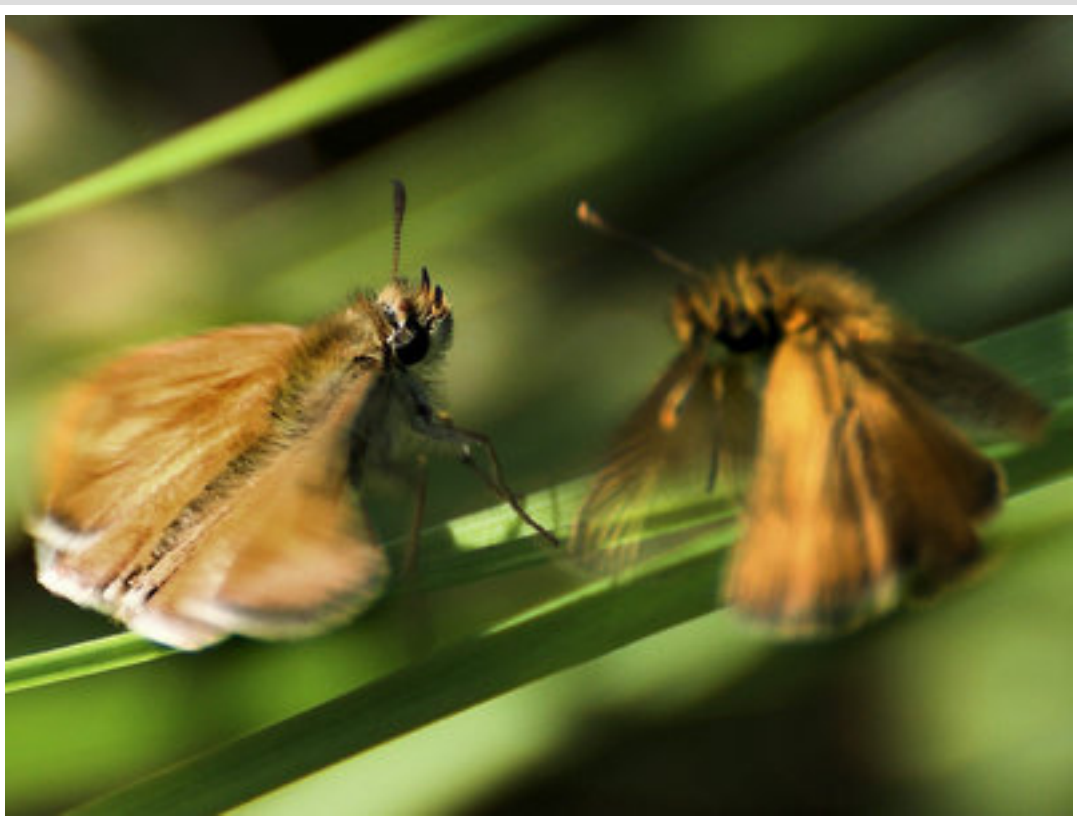
Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 30-Jul-12 07:14 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Is this a master plan to get me into Dorset cos it just might work

Just to keep up the pressure:



Durlston CP, Dorset - 25th July 2012 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR zoom - 1/500s@f/5.6 ISO400

OK, I shouldn't post in your diary 😬 but it's so far below your standard that it might tempt you to do ***much*** better.

Beware the Olympics Weymouth traffic, though!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by FISHiEE, 30-Jul-12 05:38 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Lovely to hear from you FishiEE. How come we haven't met yet - or have we? It was thanks to Mark's (Tuts) directions that I eventually found Chalton Down and it certainly is a fantastic spot. I had struggled to get there for about 5.30am the other morning but once I had arrived I found myself wondering why - where else would you rather be at that time of the morning than Chalton Down??!!! It was simply beautiful.

We have in fact met. Abbots Wood when you were with Maurice Pugh last weekend looking for Purple Emperors. It was me that told you about the Chalton Down Chalkhill Blues 😊

FYI one brief flyby by an Emperor after you left but nothing more than that.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Jul-12 05:57 AM GMT

Mike you can post in my diary any time you like and that is a very good action shot you posted. I have tried and failed to take shots like that. I tried on the largest aperture F2.8 to give the fastest shutter speed; then I switched to Shutter speed priority but the speed I needed from the shutter to 'freeze' the movement did not let enough light in except on a really bright day so the picture was really dark. I have tried to put in place tentative arrangements twice this year to allow me to visit Durlston but with various animal problems it just isn't going to happen so it is lovely to see your photo. Definitely next year!! However, I did get to see the sea today 😊

I am sooo sorry John – when Maurice introduced you I didn't make the connection as I was still quite bemused as to how you knew which car I drove 😊. I have looked at some of your stunning photos since then and it was your 'dewy Glanville' that inspired me to try to create the same effect on the Chalkhill. 'Fraid it's not up to your standard but I'm enjoying learning and practising. Thank you for the info re PE. I have to tell you that I found 'my' colony of Essex Skippers just a few paces from where we were chatting.

Alan T must be one of the few people who can provide me with directions I can follow and so it was today when I set out to find the Grayling colony at Browndown. I have looked recently much closer to home but I fear the small colony on Ludshott Common at Grayshott may no longer exist. However, the colony at Browndown seems to be thriving with dozens on the wing, and what a smashing site – you couldn't get any nearer to the sea without taking your shoes and socks off and if it hadn't been for all the shingle I might well have done just that! The weather was a bit brisk when I arrived at 9.00am and I wondered whether I was too early but the Grayling were up and about in really good numbers. I have always considered this butterfly to be a master of camouflage, hence the next 2 shots which are so typical of this butterfly:



Whilst watching their behaviour I was fortunate enough to witness their courtship ritual which was slow and hesitant in relation to some species. The male approached the female in a very gentle fashion and although there was some flashing of wings it did not appear dominant or aggressive. I did not dare to approach too closely or interfere in any way so the following photos are purely for interest as I might never be lucky enough to see this again:



And last but not least, a couple of pics of the end result:



I rounded off the visit by collecting cuttle fish for the parrots on the way back to the car park 😄

Re: Pauline

by David M, 31-Jul-12 06:04 AM GMT

Jackpot! Graylings with wings open.

Excellent images.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-12 06:20 AM GMT

Cracking shots of the Graylings 🎁 I seem to be playing catch up with everyone else as I've only just got shots of Chalkhill Blues...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 31-Jul-12 06:25 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cracking shots of the Graylings 🎁 I seem to be playing catch up with everyone else as I've only just got shots of Chalkhill Blues...

Not so, Wurzel. **You've** seen Lulworth Skippers, remember? 😏

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 31-Jul-12 07:07 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Jackpot! Graylings with wings open.



Mike

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-12 06:48 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I love your Grayling photos, much better than I have managed of this species 🍷 I have just been to Arnside for a couple of days and the Graylings there were hard to follow on the scree slopes.

Also your Small Copper shots a couple of posts back. The background complements the butterfly beautifully 😊

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Aug-12 03:14 AM GMT

Thank you Mike and David for your comments – I guess I just got lucky that day but I feel quite privileged to have seen their courtship display, rather than just finding a mating pair.

Wurzel, I appreciate your comments also but David is quite right – we are all busy folk and can't be everywhere all at once (if you see what I mean). I, for one, would have loved to see the Lulworth Skippers this year so I am quite envious of yourself and Mike 🍷 .

Thank you Neil. It is kind of you to say so. I would have thought it was virtually impossible to get any photo on a scree slope without risk of injury so well done. The Small Copper was very fresh and the background was some sort of tall grass with reddish seed heads. I found him at Shortheath Common whilst I was looking for Binswood 😂😂 – neither of which I have been to before but as I happened to be passing

Yesterday rain stopped play! It nearly did today too but I took a chance and set off to find some SSSkippers – it wasn't easy in the overcast and showery conditions but I found a few! I imagine over the next week or so as the numbers hopefully increase it will be easier to get photos but a few to be going on with:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Aug-12 08:12 PM GMT

A few photos I took yesterday whilst searching for SSS:

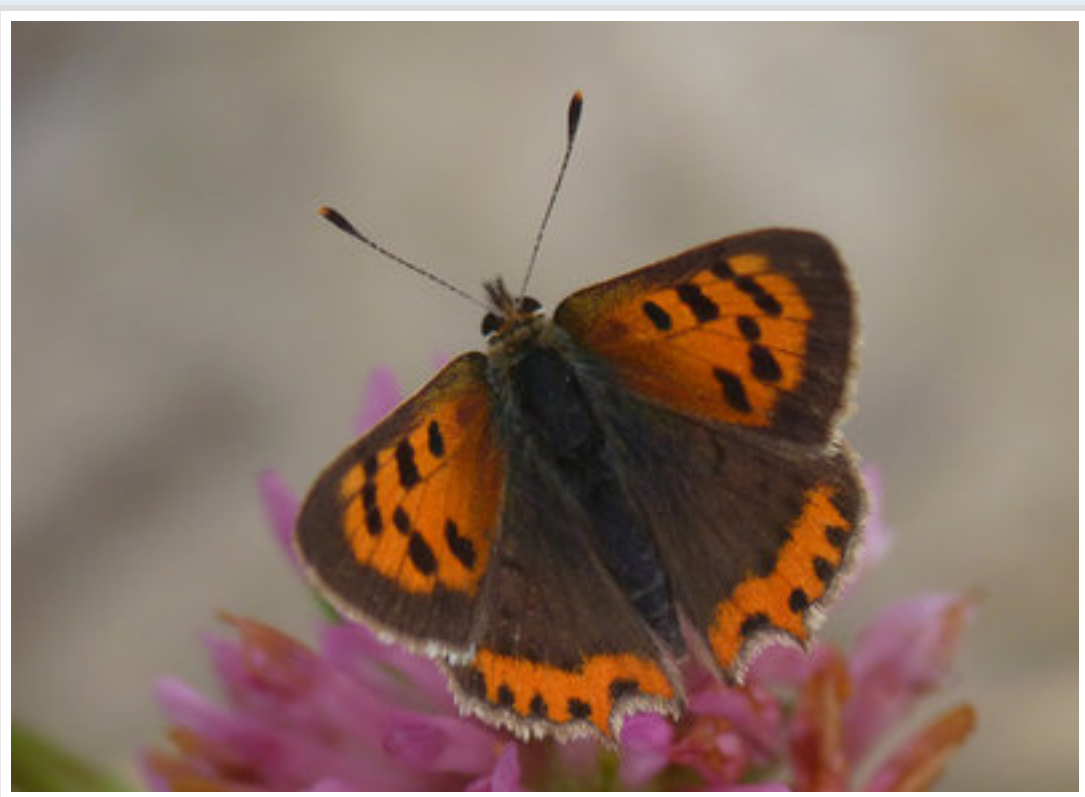
A (slightly) better GVW – with a bit of company!



The usual Chalkhills:



Still no blue spots!!!



So still and so well camouflaged!

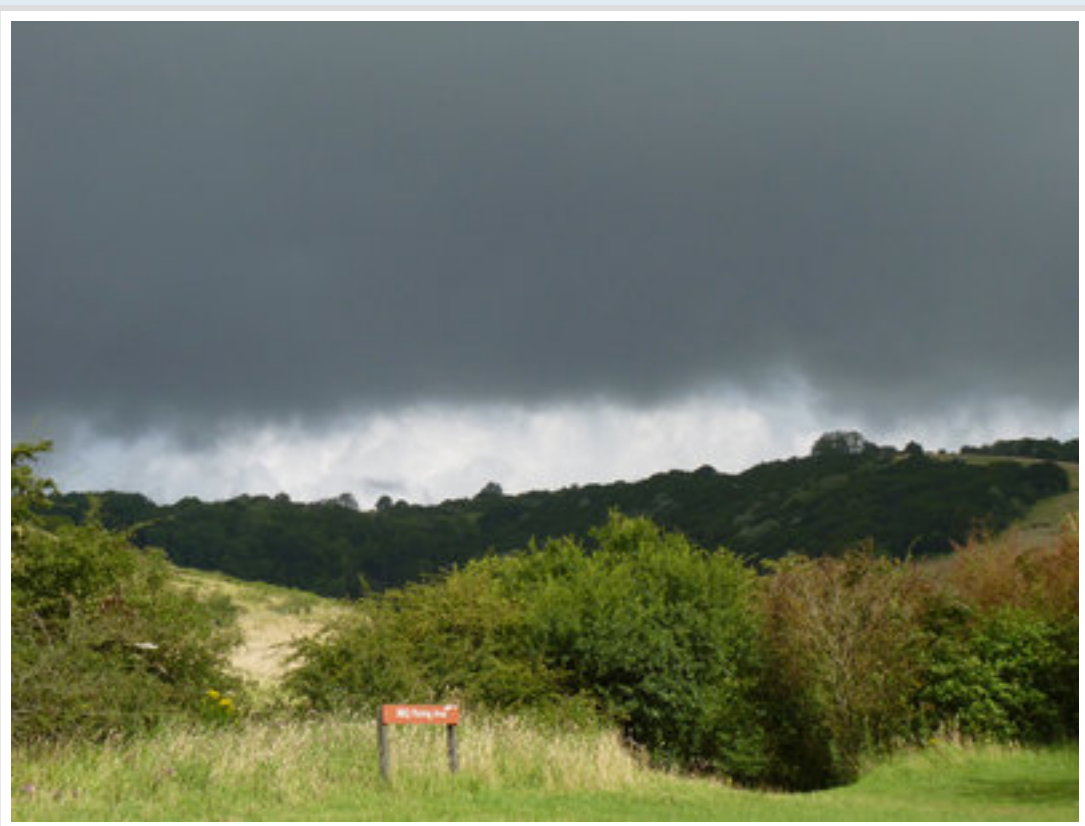


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Aug-12 02:54 AM GMT

First of all, thank you Guy for your complement on my Graylings tho' I guess I should really be putting this in your diary!

Today I decided to pay a brief visit to QECP and the lower slopes of Butser Hill (as it is only 7 miles away - 10 mins) in my search for a Small Copper with blue spots. I failed miserably and am now considering using Elements to paint them on an earlier photo 😂😂. The weather that greeted me when I arrived was:



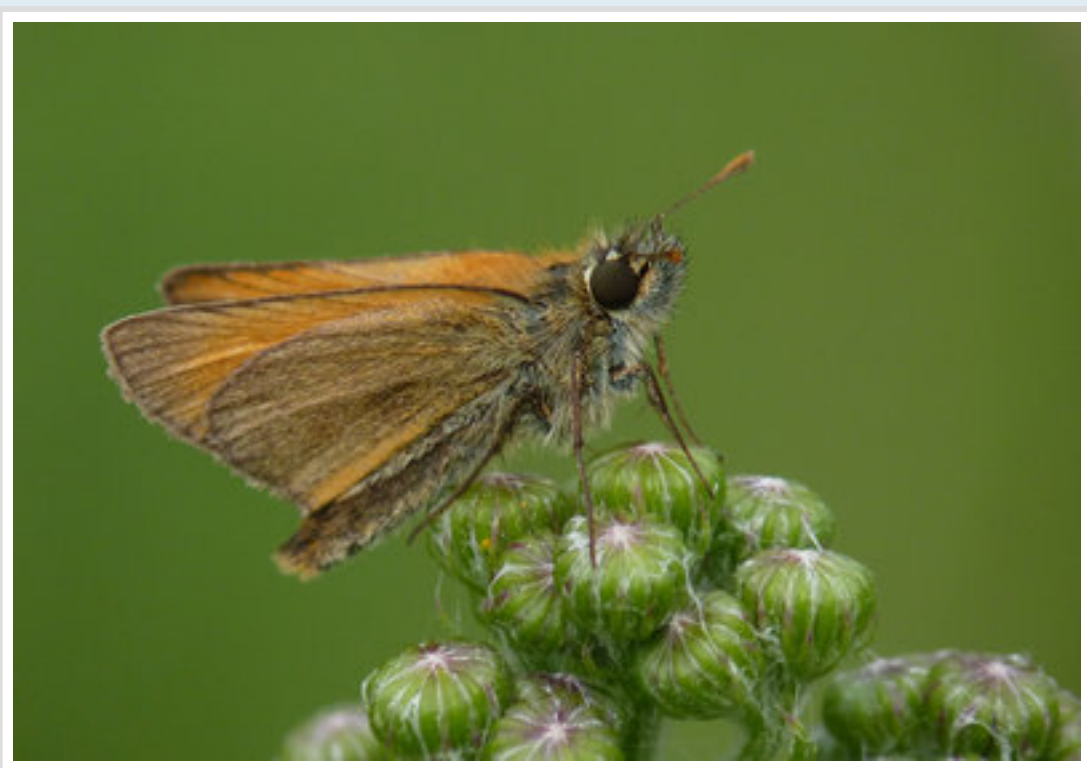
I shall remember this 'Summer' as the one when I took most of my photos in the rain!!

One of the first (or should I say 2 of the first) butterflies I found was a mating pair of Gatekeeper and as I took these photos the heavens opened and I was drenched (t-shirt only!!)





Small Skippers were very much in evidence in varying states of wear and tear:

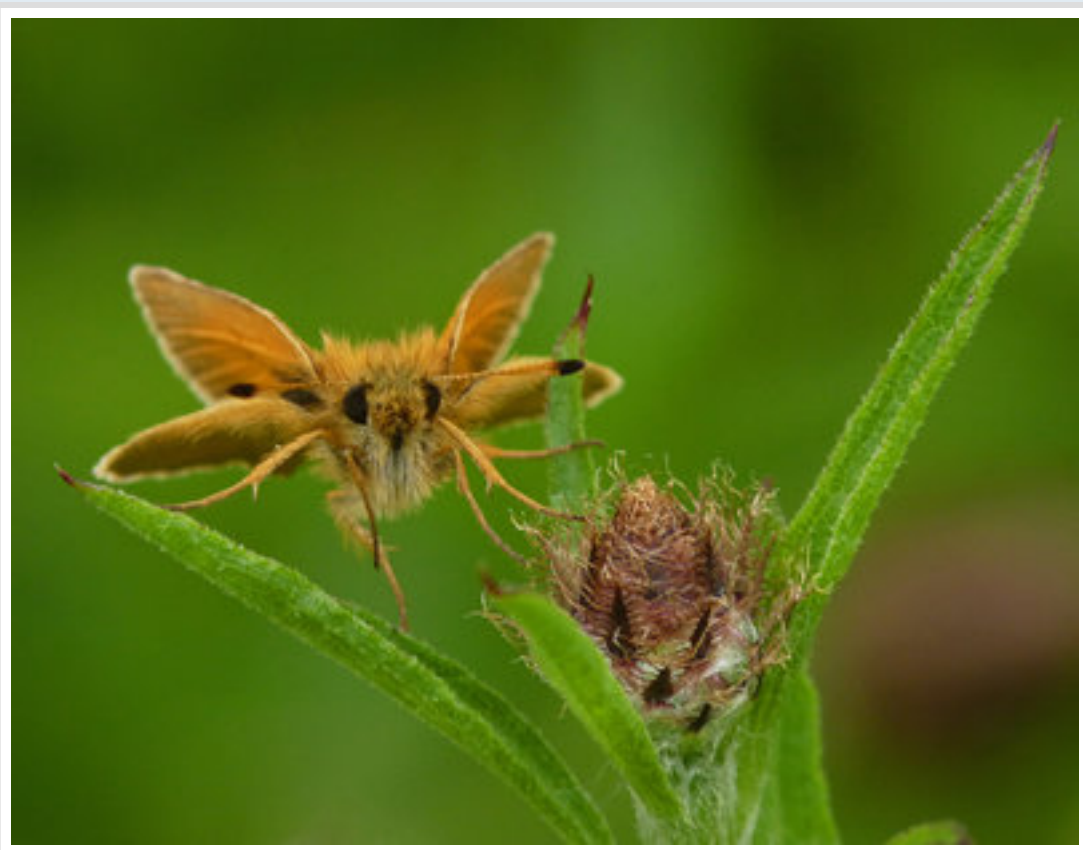




In a short space of time I saw 11 species which considering the weather I was quite happy with. Many Chalkhills as to be expected:



... and an Essex Skipper hanging on for grim death against the strong wind:



... and a Gatekeeper up a tree:



I was about to leave when sirens on the A3 alerted me to the fact that there had been an accident – police cars, ambulances and a fire engine. I debated about having lunch at a local pub (the Red Lion at Chalton) but I really needed to get back. To cut a long story short the A3 Northbound was closed and I was stuck on it for the best part of 2 hours. Emergency services kept arriving and the air ambulance was present. When we were eventually diverted through Petersfield (past the accident site) it was quite harrowing. There were still 8 police cars and 2 motor cycles present. One blue car was on its side by the central barrier and various personal possessions were scattered all over the road – a single trainer, some clothes, a bag etc. It was not a good end to the morning!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Aug-12 03:26 PM GMT

These are also from yesterday but I wanted to be sure that they were indeed slow worms before I posted them. The beautiful metallic colours were stunning – each different – and reminded me of an intricate piece of jewellery. Platinum, gold, silver, bronze, all interwoven and gleaming. I am not yet sure whether they eat ants but being a lizard I would have thought so in which case they had a ready food source to hand. Breakfast in bed eh 🤔😄



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-12 05:26 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I really like your Gatekeepers pairs, especially the second one, think that one looks a bit special 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

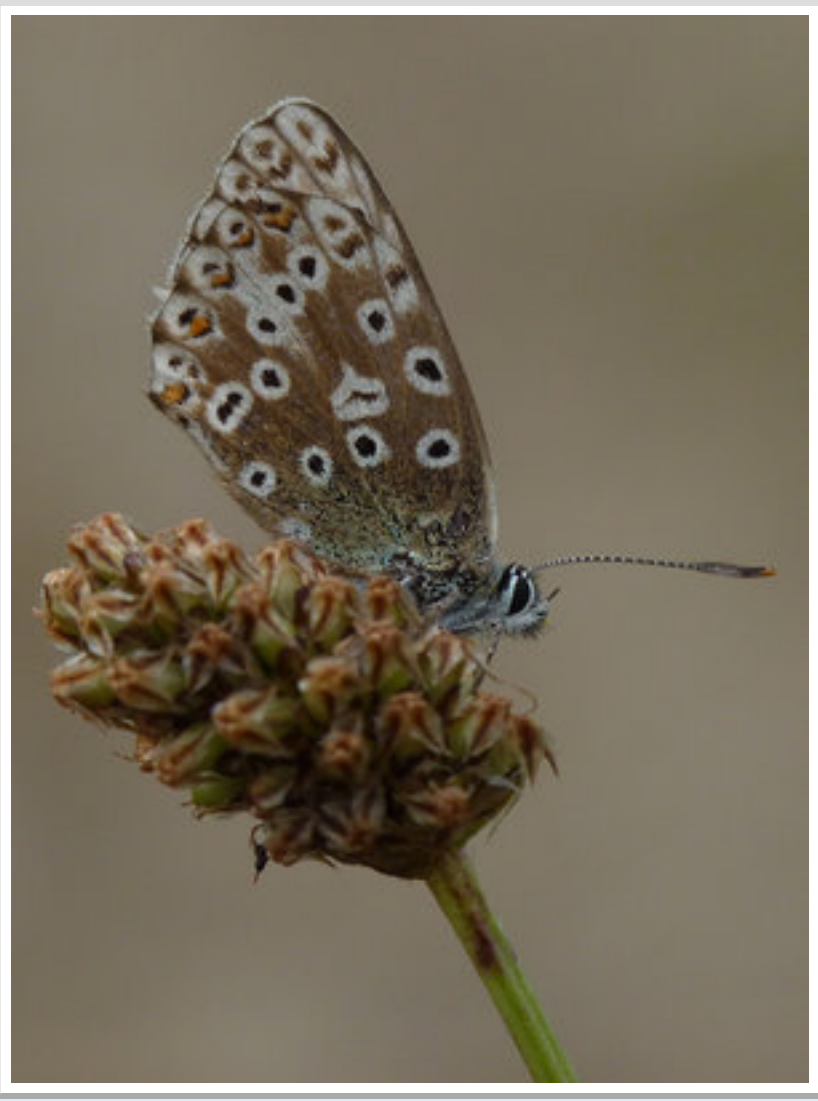
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Aug-12 03:04 PM GMT

Good to hear from you Neil and glad you like my gatekeepers – worth getting a drenching for then 😊.

Chalkhills seem to be doing incredibly well this year according to recent reports and my own personal observations – good news in a year when so many species have struggled. They have provided plenty of photographic opportunities recently and being prepared to pose in a variety of positions they are a very photogenic butterfly. In celebration of Chalkhills:







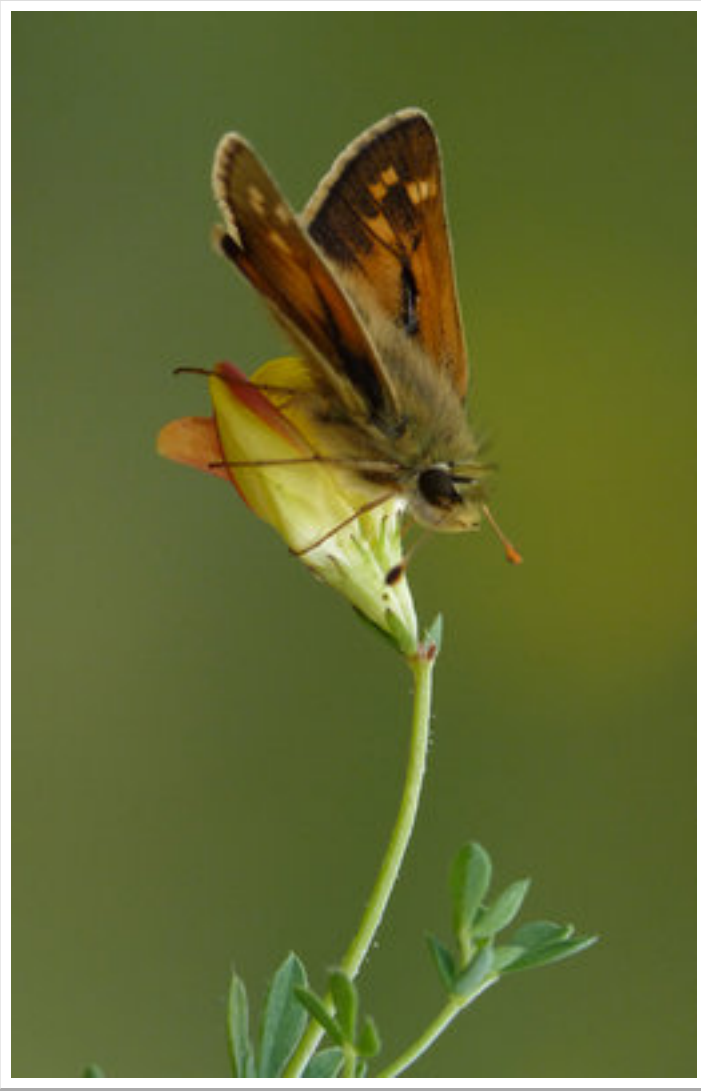
Today, if it ever stops raining, I plan to spend a couple of hours on Noar Hill and around the Selbourne area to see if there is any sign of the Brown Hairstreak. Given the lack of sightings here in the last couple of years since the blackthorn was 'pruned' I am not hopeful.

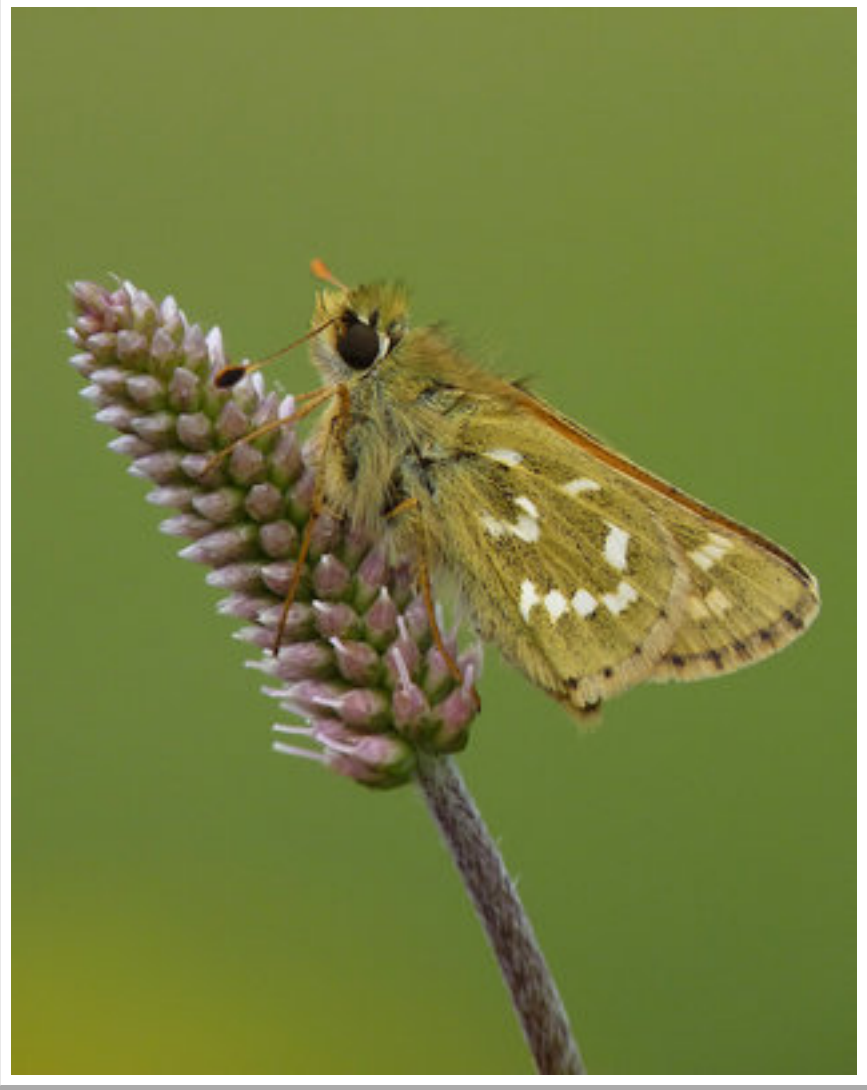
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Aug-12 01:06 AM GMT

No Brown hairstreaks seen as yet but an interesting couple of hours at Oxenbourne this morning. I met a student who was doing some work on behalf of Butterfly Conservation, collecting data on the lava of the rare Striped Lynchnis moth which lives on the Dark Mullen plant, named it would seem after a less scarce moth called the Dark Mullen.... but more of that later. Of possibly more interest is the fact that the SSS are now out at Oxenbourne (although I saw only one female and NO mating pairs 😞) so in true Pauline style a host of photos from the very many that I am still sorting through:









These are definitely not the easiest butterfly to photograph especially the males and the weather today made the task that much more difficult – a combination of sun and wind so they were quite active and when the wind caught them they ended up goodness knows where!!

Edit: I've tried a different crop on the first photo – does it work better I wonder! Ah well, still so much to learn.



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 07-Aug-12 02:53 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I've tried a different crop on the first photo – does it work better I wonder!

I think it does 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 07-Aug-12 04:32 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Some lovely photos there, the 7th one down on the bell flower is a real cracker 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

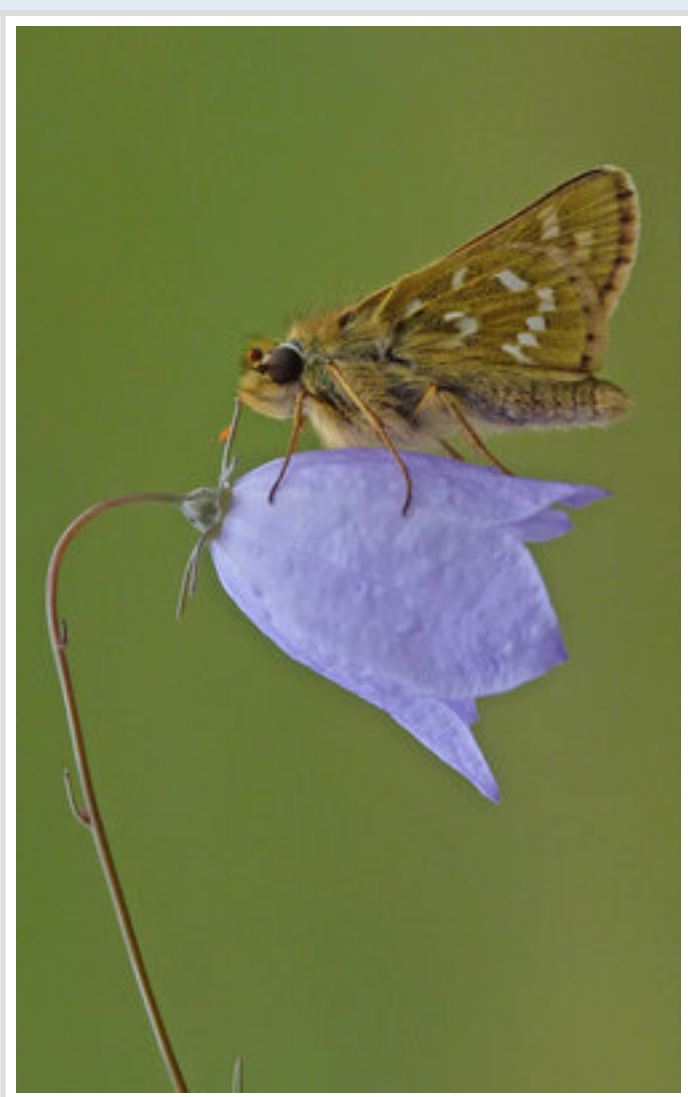
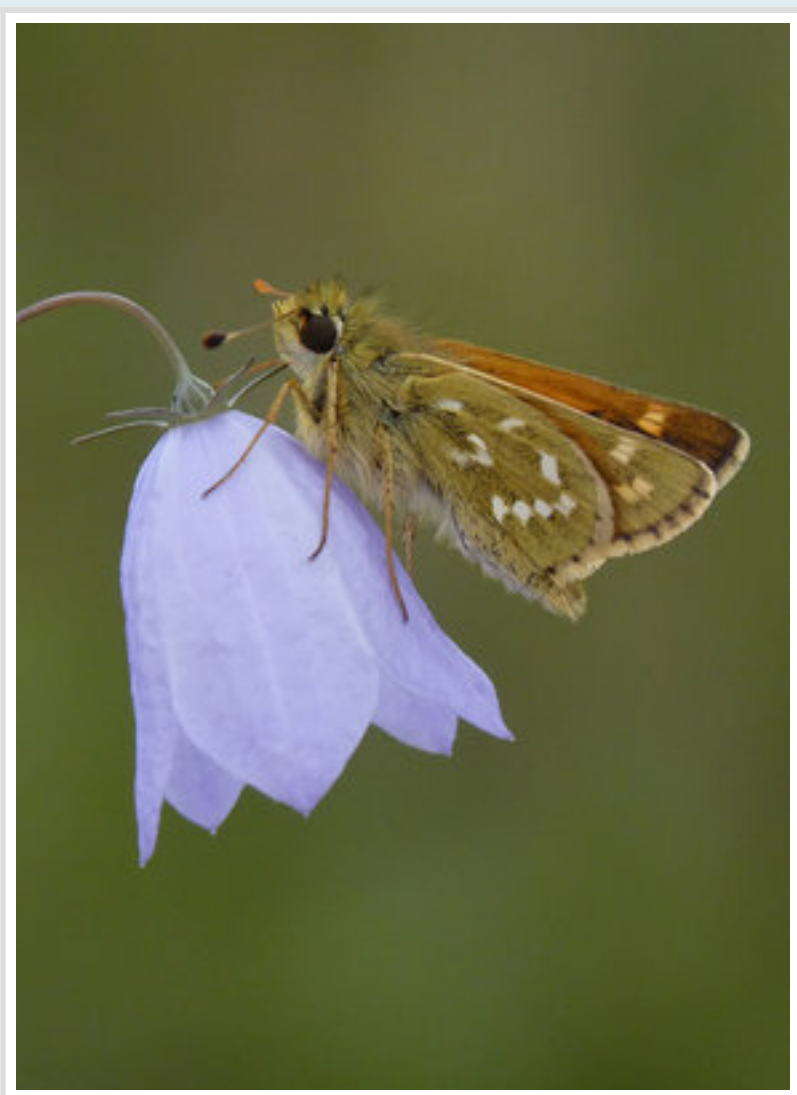
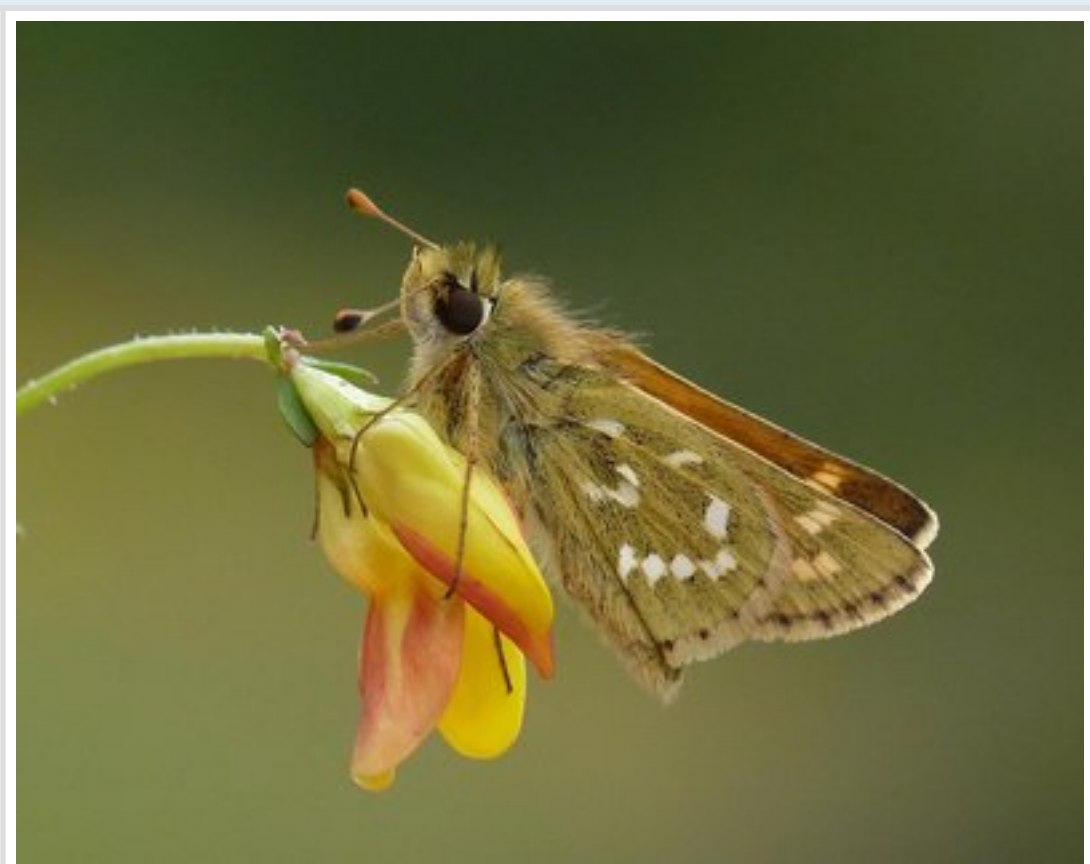
by Pauline, 07-Aug-12 09:24 PM GMT

Thank you Neil. Your compliment is much appreciated and it has got me thinking about what makes one photo better than a similar one – apart from personal preference of course.

Thank you too Mike. You advised me earlier about my cropping and I tried to take note. I realise that the way a photo is cropped can greatly change its

perspective and the way it is viewed. I have not been entirely happy with my photos recently (always striving for better) and to that end I have been looking at a lot of other photographs taken by others, trying to work out what I like about them and why.

There are some very good photographers on this site that provide excellent examples. I thought I might try some different crops on the photos I have already posted by way of comparison – the presentation of my photos is all part of my photography learning curve which is what this diary has always been about. So, the same butterflies, the same photos but different crops:



It is quite dark here although it is midday and it is teeming with rain. However, the forecast for the rest of the week looks good so if it lives up to its promise I think I might venture further afield in my quest for the Brown Hairstreak.

However, before I leave the Chalkhills for this season a couple of photos taken whilst looking for SSS:



Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 08-Aug-12 02:47 AM GMT

your diary has been great viewing Pauline, i may not comment but i always look in. 😊

Re: Pauline

by philm63, 08-Aug-12 04:30 AM GMT

Pauline

You take some fantastic pictures.

Is there any reason you prefer / go for what I would call the more "isolated" shots, where the background and the butterfly's immediate surroundings are out of focus so do not detract?

It can give some excellent results as you so ably exhibit, I tend to lean the other way and like to shoot the subject in context of where and on what it was seen. Potrait wise yours are excellent, I would have real difficulty duplicating it I am sure. Keep up the excellent and very readable work.

Phil

Re: Pauline

"Pauline" wrote:

the way a photo is cropped can greatly change its perspective and the way it is viewed.

I think this is the fascinating thing about photographs (and paintings too).

It is the frame that makes it a 'picture'. Our 'natural' vision seems to have no edges but, by putting up a frame, we direct attention to our chosen 'subject'. I think it was Stanley Spencer who caused considerable comment by allowing his subject matter apparently to 'spill over' the edge of the frame, so implying that the action continued outside his picture.

The old, huge landscape cameras gave the photographer plenty of time to contemplate the image on the ground glass screen but I find it is very hard compose in a tiny viewfinder or lcd screen, so I think it is essential to contemplate the result on a large monitor and then decide the optimum framing.

The many favourable comments you receive demonstrate that you're making your selections in a way that appeals to your viewers.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 08-Aug-12 07:42 AM GMT

"ChrisC" wrote:

your diary has been great viewing Pauline, i may not comment but i always look in. 😊

Hi Pauline

I also rarely comment. I read many of the prolific diaries but yours is always the first I look at. Great photos but also very well written, easy to read and witty. If my own diary were a fraction as good I would be pleased. Keep up the good work 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Aug-12 05:22 PM GMT

Aah, it's really kind of you to say so Chris and good to know you're one of my regular viewers 😊 . I still haven't managed to get any close-up shots to compare with your stunning images.

Thank you Phil, I really appreciate your comments. I guess the 'isolated' shots are something of a personal preference. In general, I think that many shots taken 'in context' include a background that is just too 'busy' and distracts from the beauty of the butterfly. However, not always, as is demonstrated by your lovely Small Tortoiseshell and also Guy's (Padfield) amazing shots which show the incredible background and is worthy of inclusion on its own merit. I tried, unsuccessfully, to replicate this approach the other day when I was on a hillside with the thunder rumbling and lightening crackling. I wasn't really happy with the result tho' :



Thank you for this Mike – that is really interesting. I have seen paintings like you describe – usually wildlife subjects – and they have stopped me in my tracks, as it can be a very effective and eye-catching technique. Perhaps I should try it 😊

Good to hear from you Paul and thank you for your kind words. I always read your diary too. Do you ever get up to Rake Bottom. Oxenbourne, Chalton Down, all just South of Petersfield as they are all very good sites? I have to confess that it has always been my intention (and still is) although not openly declared, to end my diary to coincide with my birthday at beg of September. So, 31 August will be my last posting for this season.

In the next few weeks I hope to see Brown Hairstreak, Wall Brown and Adonis – Small Tortoiseshell would be an added bonus! Whether I succeed remains to be seen. In the meantime, the following is a bit of a 'wash-up' session, including a few pics that have somehow missed out in earlier postings:



Second brood Common Blue.



The (well advanced) larva of the Lychnis moth. I might well try to get a photo of the pupae.



... and the Chalkhills which I can't seem to escape from – taken in the rain as per normal. I am hoping to start a new trend known as the 'drowned rat' look 😂😂.

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 08-Aug-12 06:12 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I tried, unsuccessfully, to replicate this approach the other day when I was on a hillside with the thunder rumbling and lightening crackling. I wasn't really happy with the result tho' :

I think that is a lovely shot, Pauline. For me, a good photograph can be (as that one is) a keyhole into another world – a moment in a narrative that spills not just out of the frame of the picture but forward and backward in time. I say, 'can be' because there are obviously lots of different kinds of good photograph, including the portrait style which you also excel at.

The chief difficulties of scenic shots are firstly that you get less control over the aspect of the butterfly (because you are obliged to shoot horizontally, towards your chosen 'context') and secondly that you need to be very close, so the butterfly represents a wide angle of arc. Re the first: I have sat for long periods by a perfectly photographable butterfly simply waiting for it to raise a photogenic surface into the plane of the picture I want to take. Re the second: getting so close makes these kinds of photo more invasive. I take most of my photos from about 5cm from the butterfly and when I'm alone am confident I can sneak up on any species to this distance without disturbing it (I have a very strict rule that if I accidentally flush an individual three times I will let it be and move on – chasing an individual for a photo is just selfish, as well as missing the point of observing nature). When there are others around, the balletic movements required to get smoothly into position are frankly embarrassing and whenever I see someone coming I stop taking pictures.

Sorry to clutter your diary, but you do seem to invite observations and this is also an opportunity to join the chorus of congratulation on your work.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 08-Aug-12 07:38 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I wasn't really happy with the result tho' :

I agree with Guy – it's a lovely shot, which shows the context well.

If you want to try another technique, this is a shot that could benefit from subtle use of fill-in flash, to balance the foreground and background. I don't know what degree of flash control your camera offers and it will need a lot of practice to get it right. Something to try over the Winter months. 😊 You're not really going to leave us all in September are you? 😏

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 09-Aug-12 03:49 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Just thought I would mention that last year I photographed the last butterfly, a Red Admiral, in my garden and posted it in my diary on October 30th, then just carried on again in March.

No need to finish at the end of August.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 09-Aug-12 06:45 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Good to hear from you Paul and thank you for your kind words. I always read your diary too. Do you ever get up to Rake Bottom. Oxenbourne, Chalton Down, all just South of Petersfield as they are all very good sites? I have to confess that it has always been my intention (and still is) although not openly declared, to end my diary to coincide with my birthday at beg of September. So, 31 August will be my last posting for this season.

In the next few weeks I hope to see Brown Hairstreak, Wall Brown and Adonis – Small Tortoiseshell would be an added bonus! Whether I succeed remains to be seen. In the meantime, the following is a bit of a 'wash-up' session, including a few pics that have somehow missed out in earlier postings:

Hi Pauline

I have not yet made it to any of the sites you mention. I did get up to Beacon Hill at Warnford last Sunday for the first time (I have not written that up in my diary yet). What a wonderful place 😊 I spent 4 hours there and did not see another soul, aside from a couple of dog walkers as I was leaving. I did not see any Silver Spotted Skippers though. Even so probably my best day so far this year 😊 I think I will have lots of places left to visit for the first time next year. Plenty of species still to see for the first time as well.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Aug-12 04:09 AM GMT

You are certainly not cluttering my diary Guy so please don't apologise. I appreciate you explaining your techniques to me tho' you might be surprised to know that I, too, can do that dance to get close to butterflies 😊 . Perhaps we should call it the Butterfly Bolero 😊😊 . It was always my intention to encourage interaction through my diary as I think it is good to embrace different styles and ideas and I have certainly had a lot of help and advice – more than I could have hoped for. Last but not least, thank you for the compliment.

Thank you too Mike – you have helped me such a lot with your advice. My last posting will certainly be 31 August but I shall not be leaving you as I shall keep in touch with the website and be back with my diary on 4 May 2013 (if you can all put up with me for another season 😊😊). I have no idea about the flash capabilities on my camera Mike as I have never used it but I can see that the photo needs something to 'bring it all together'. Amongst other things, over the winter period I shall be trying to consolidate what I have learned and practice some new techniques.

Thank you Neil for all your support and encouragement. It is not so much about the butterflies but other things that I must attend to. Still, I STILL have 3 weeks to go to get those last 3 butterflies I want to see 😊 .

You have some great times ahead of you Paul. Butterflies take you to just the best places and you meet a great bunch of people. Keep in touch.

Well, today, dentist, vet and doctor appointments prevented any butterfly photography so this is yet another chance for a final glimpse at some of the menagerie:

Jaffa – feral kitten living in a squirrels drey in my garden but not any more:



Stanleigh – used to belong to neighbour but left home as she didn't like their dog. Totally trustworthy with every bird. Shown here with poorly pigeon:



Keeping sick bird company:



Millie, found injured on road, showing off her pc skills:



and last but not least Foxy with ducks. He has totally lost his wild instincts and his hunting skills due to the trauma he suffered to his head combined with his epilepsy



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-12 05:50 AM GMT

I thought you were looking after animals- not serving them a la bowl! 🤪 😊

Just in case you haven't heard Brown Hairstreaks were seen a couple of says ago at Shipton Bellinger (2 makes).

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Aug-12 03:16 AM GMT

Thank you Wurzel for bringing that to my attention. As luck would have it, today was one of my 3 annual days out arranged ages ago with Brown hairstreaks in mind. I was beginning to think it was still too early and debated looking for Wall Browns instead but after seeing your posting I set off for Shipton Bellinger. There were a few folk around and it wasn't long before I met up with Alan T. Together we searched the bramble and found not one, but two BH, both on the same thistle! A third came down shortly after. As the number of interested photographers steadily increased the butterflies became more nervous and less approachable but a few shots from this morning. Later, it was on to Oxenbourne to check up on the status of SSS but more of that tomorrow. Well, 1 down, 2 to go



This last one was a bit tricky as I was shooting into the sun against the sky, but I tried:



Just the females to find now 😊

Re: Pauline

by Susie, 11-Aug-12 05:00 AM GMT

Lovely photos of the brown hairstreaks, Pauline. I am very envious.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-12 06:29 AM GMT

Glad to be of service Pauline and some cracking shots 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 12-Aug-12 02:46 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

How lovely to be able to catch up with your diary again and some beautiful shots – Debbie x

Re: Pauline

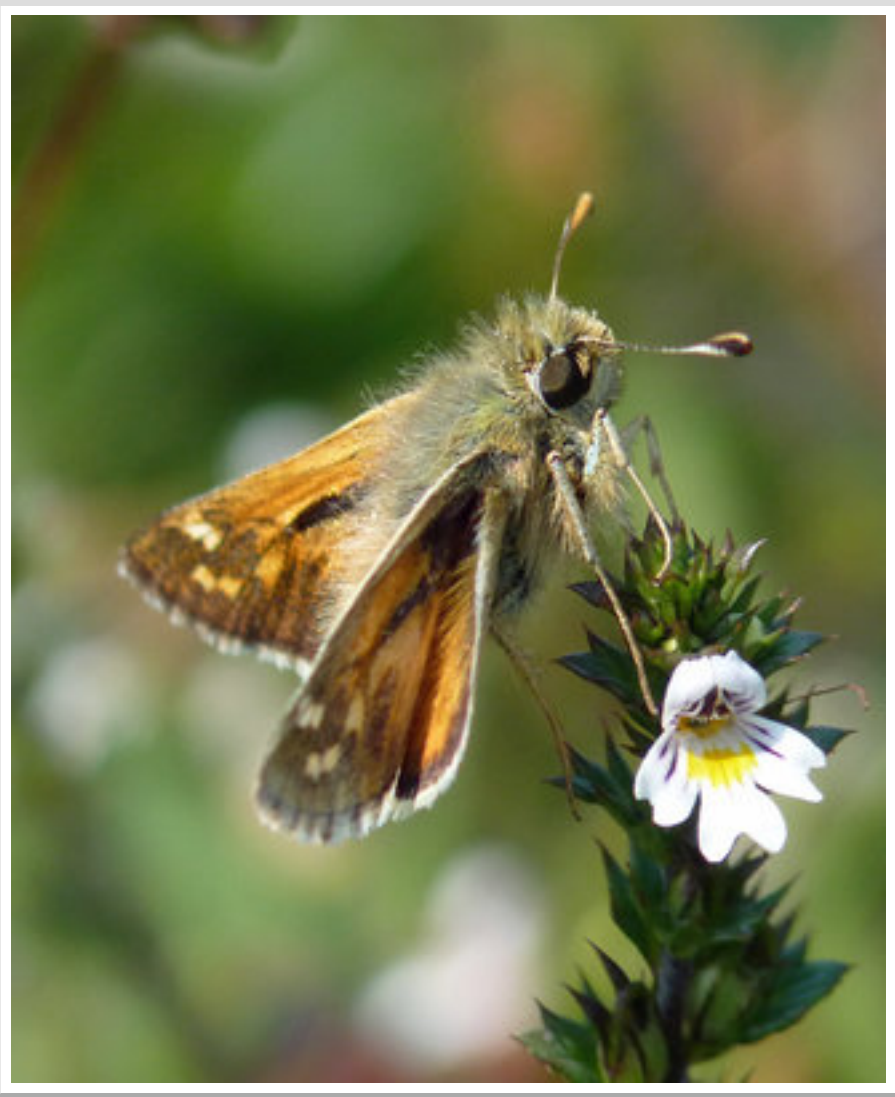
by Pauline, 12-Aug-12 03:37 AM GMT

You really don't need to be envious Susie cos you have taken some smashing photos of BH in the past – including beautiful females too which I shall be lucky to see this year. Thank you for your comment tho' – it is very kind of you to say so.

Thank you Wurzel – have you got any more hot tips for me for tomorrow?? 😊😊

Nice to hear from you again Debbie – thank you for your kind words.

Yesterday afternoon I could not face the long drive to Lymington in the heat – which having seen Alan's photos and report I am now slightly regretting – but determined to make the most of a rare day out, I stopped off on the way back at Oxenbourne to check out the SSS. I had expected more to have emerged by now, especially the odd female, but disappointingly I saw a total of only 3 males (ranging from fresh to slightly worn) and on this visit no females at all. The males were incredibly active and quarrelsome and it was hard to follow them with the eye let alone get a decent photo. I grabbed a few shots shown below, but the numbers so far match the total I saw last season which is slightly worrying. No Graylings at Ludshott, no Brown Hairstreak (at least not yet) at Noar Hill and now only a few SSS at Oxenbourne 😞😞. I had been informed that the SSS were originally introduced to Oxenbourne by Matthew O. (with appropriate approval) but I don't know when this was. Perhaps an injection of new blood is needed before they disappear from this site completely.



I just had to include this lovely fresh little chap in his natural surroundings before he disappeared to somewhere else!



Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 12-Aug-12 03:54 AM GMT

Lovely pictures Pauline 😊😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 12-Aug-12 07:28 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Looks like you were more successful with Silver Spotted Skipper than me. After an unsuccessful search for Silver Spotted Skipper at Beacon Hill last

weekend, I took your recommendation and headed for Oxenbourne Down this afternoon. However, I think I should have paid more attention to the map beforehand as I realised on returning to the car that I had missed Oxenbourne entirely and been on Butser Hill 😊 . I will know for next time. Nevertheless I did manage to find one solitary Silver Spotted Skipper (my first) on Butser despite the breezy conditions. Are they normally found on Butser or is this one likely to be blown across from Oxenbourne 🤔 Is there any particular spot at Oxenbourne for them 🤔

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Aug-12 03:05 PM GMT

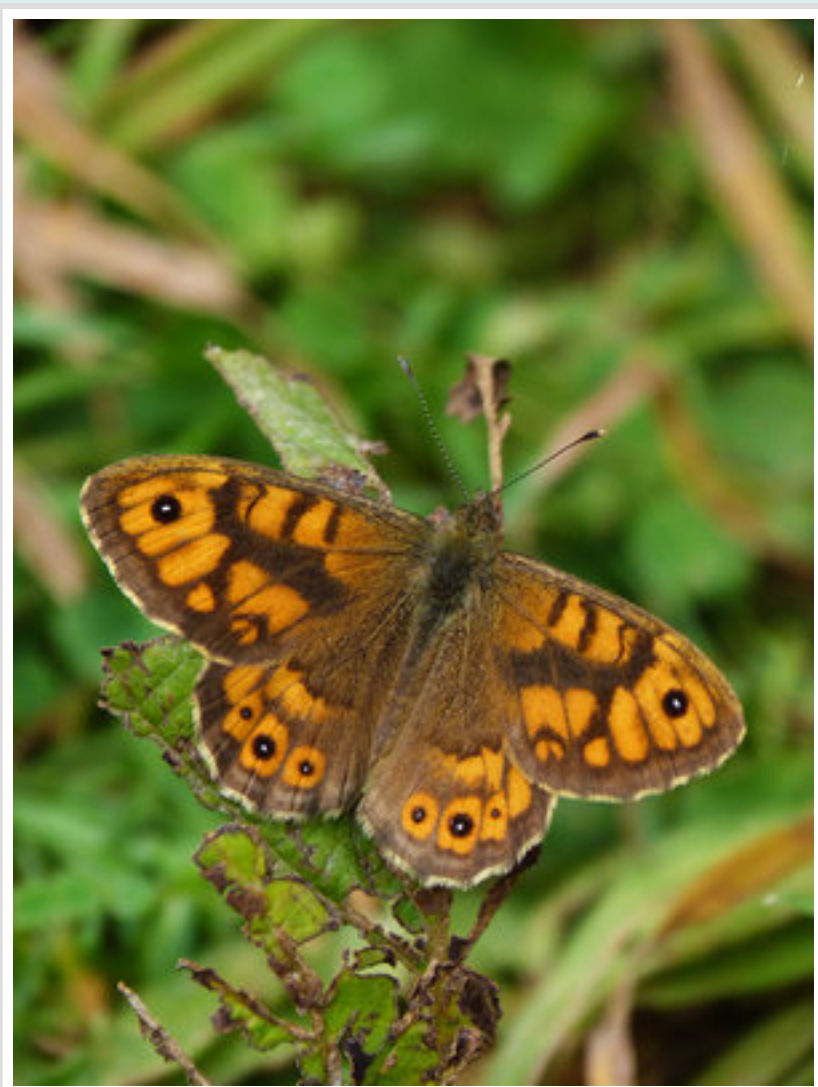
It's very kind of you to say so Debbie 😊

Hi Paul – I am replying quite quickly just in case you want to pop over there today. I shall pm you with directions.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Aug-12 02:56 AM GMT

Today I wanted to see Wall Browns and so I had a choice – Steyning or Lymington???? Steyning is closer but Lymington is prettier (IMO). Lymington is by the sea 😊 but at Steyning there was a chance I might see a female BH. In the end I chose Steyning as I didn't have a lot of time (do I ever 😊) and the area where the Walls are to be found is much smaller and requires less walking. The butterflies ranged from quite fresh to fairly tatty and as might be expected it was the fresher versions which were more active – very active! In addition, their habit of settling on the ground or in vegetation makes for a very busy background to the shot. I really think that they must be one of the MOST difficult butterflies to photograph (OK, I know I say that about every species 😊 but as I mentioned earlier they all present their own unique challenges). I was very lucky to get a photo of one individual nectaring on thistle for about 5 seconds! BTW, during the time I was there, no female BH's were seen but a couple of males were spotted flying about. That makes it 2 down, 1 to go – as well as the Small Tort which I have almost given up on 😞



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-12 05:30 AM GMT

Glad to have offered some assistance Pauline 😊 Cracking shots of Wall and they are the hardest butterfly to photograph I totally agree!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 13-Aug-12 05:32 AM GMT

Nice shots, Pauline.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 13-Aug-12 05:45 AM GMT

Lovely pictures, Pauline. My experience yesterday with the species and its restlessness makes me very envious. Still, you have to have challenges left over for next year, don't you?

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 15-Aug-12 03:51 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Just catching up and seen your Wall Browns, smashing photos 😊

All the best,

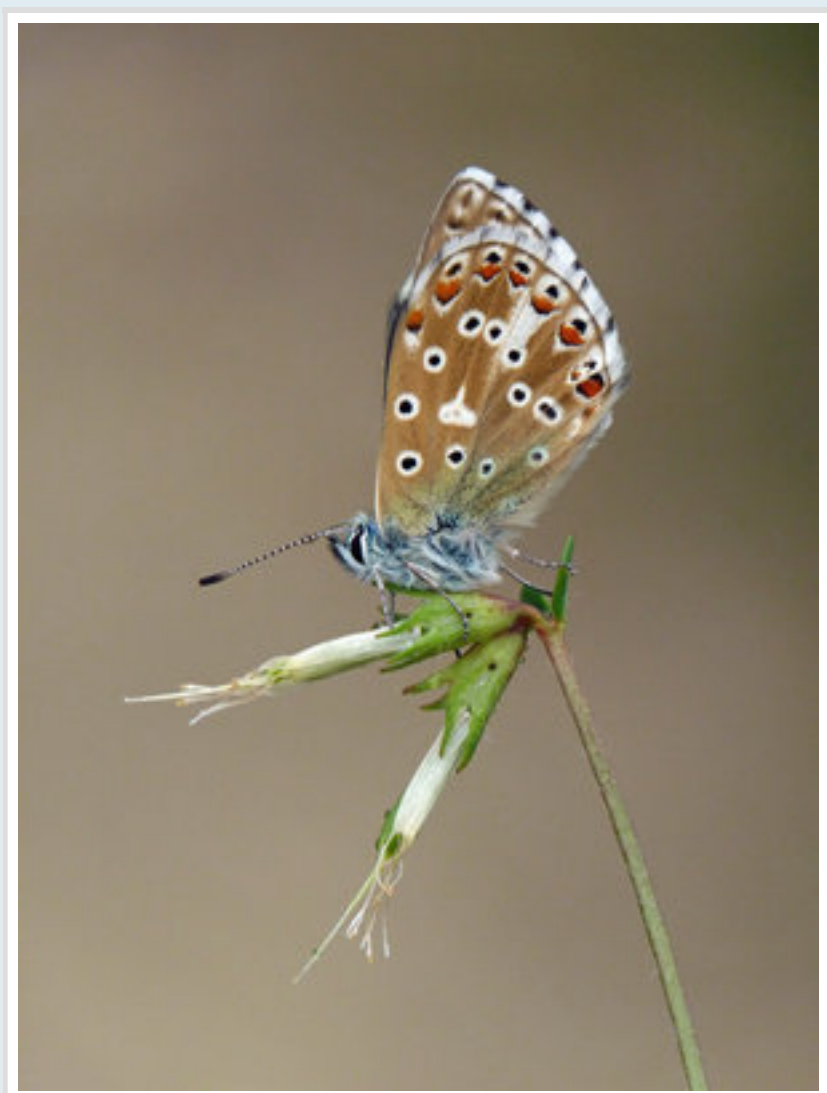
Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Aug-12 04:09 AM GMT

Thank you all for your kind words and encouragement. I am well acquainted with that envious feeling Dave as I have seen some lovely photos on the site this season but as you say ... there is always next year. I have many challenges yet to meet – the Small Copper with blue spots (been looking for 3 years now!!!), White Admiral with wings closed and other modest targets but that is what makes this so enjoyable and interesting – always something to aim for 😊

During the last few days of lovely sunshine I have spent too much time (and money) at the vet so I was determined to get out today whatever the weather. I decided to visit Denbies, my third ever visit, and just like the other visits it was not long before it was bucketing down. I tried (unsuccessfully) to shelter under a bush and found myself chuckling as I remembered a thread on this site about ladies worried that someone might 'jump out of the bushes'. The place was deserted and I was soaked to the skin – I can't imagine anyone else daft enough to be out in those conditions. Thankfully, it wasn't long before there was some respite and I managed to take the following photos:









I now have only 2 weeks before my diary concludes for this season so the pressure is on a bit to see as much as I can – and I still haven't seen a Small Tortoiseshell!

Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 16-Aug-12 04:23 AM GMT

worth getting a soaking if you ask me. lovely.

Chris

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-12 05:38 AM GMT

Great shots of Adonis Blue Pauline 😊 If you're still after *Caeruleo-punctata* I saw one at Stockbridge Down on Friday so you could give there a try – it was on the shorter turf at the western end of the site?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

PS Is there any correlation between the quality of your shots and how soaked you have to get prior to getting them? 😊

Re: Pauline

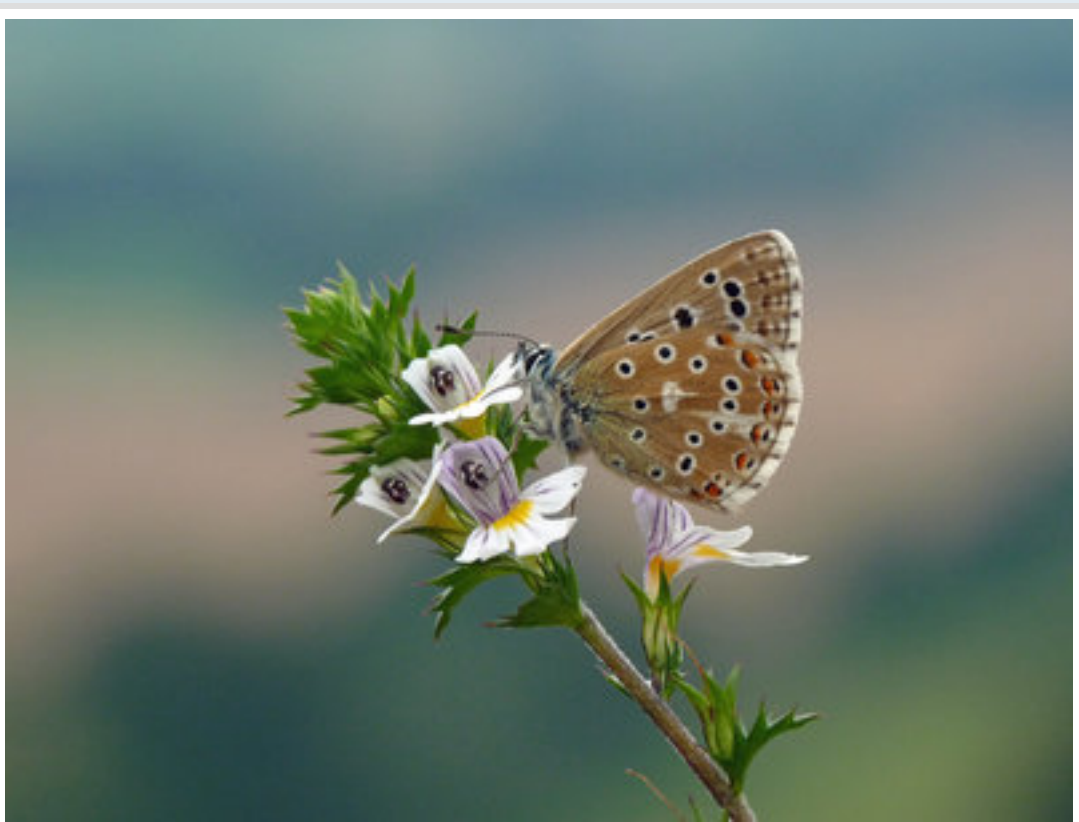
by Pauline, 16-Aug-12 05:03 PM GMT

It's very kind of you to say so Chris – much appreciated.

D'you know Wurzel, you could be on to something there, but until I manage to get some shots in dry weather by way of comparison, we shall never know 😊😊 Thank you for your comment and for the tip off. I have only ever been to Stockbridge once – looking for WLH but found Black-veined White! – but if time allows I might just pay it another visit (tho' I wouldn't have a clue which way is west 😊).

The Adonis were lovely yesterday even tho' I couldn't get many open winged shots – the respite in the rain was brief – but I am enclosing more pics as, although some are similar to previous, I want them to form part of this permanent record. It also gives me the opportunity to compare like with like, examining the effect of different backgrounds, crops, butterfly position etc. I have deliberately close cropped one to show a little of the amazingly delicate blue of the thorax. For several of the shots I was lying in the (wet) grass (but by then it didn't make much difference anyway) and the background colour is actually the sky which was a very strange hue – quite thundery





Next season I shall try to be more selective in what I post – rather than documenting my learning curve I shall post only what I consider to be the best of

what I have achieved on each outing.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 16-Aug-12 07:40 PM GMT

Your shots just keep getting better, Pauline.

I do like 1100656d, with the blue abdomen contrasting so well with the flowers and, as you say, 1100792d has a fascinating sky background well worth getting wet for.

As you will know by now, I do like to fiddle about with Photoshop. I would be inclined to crop a smidgin more off the left and top of 792d, so that the diagonal branch points into the top left corner – see what you think. These things are highly subjective and others will think differently. More radically, I would be very tempted to darken out the green leaf across the top of 1100752d as I find that it distracts from your superb Adonis topside.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Debbie, 16-Aug-12 09:07 PM GMT

Always a joy to see your wonderful pictures.

Debbie 😊😊😊

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 17-Aug-12 03:35 AM GMT

Yes, beautiful pictures Pauline. I'll swap you a Small Tortoiseshell for a Chalkhill Blue, or an Adonis Blue, or a Gatekeeper, or a Marbled White, or any of those skippers or any other butterfly you get down there that doesn't occur up here!!!

Re: Pauline

by Susie, 17-Aug-12 05:01 AM GMT

Pauline your photos are sensation and the way you've improved over the last two years is amazing.

I do hope that you continue to post as many photos as always though and not just what you consider to be the best. I like to see all of them.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 17-Aug-12 05:48 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I totally agree with Susie, I like to see the different backgrounds that you manage to take your photos against.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Aug-12 03:53 PM GMT

Thank you Mike – that means a lot. You more than most know how hard I have been trying to improve my photography skills this season. I shall certainly be trying out your suggestions (soon) and shall post the results.

Thank you for your support Debbie.

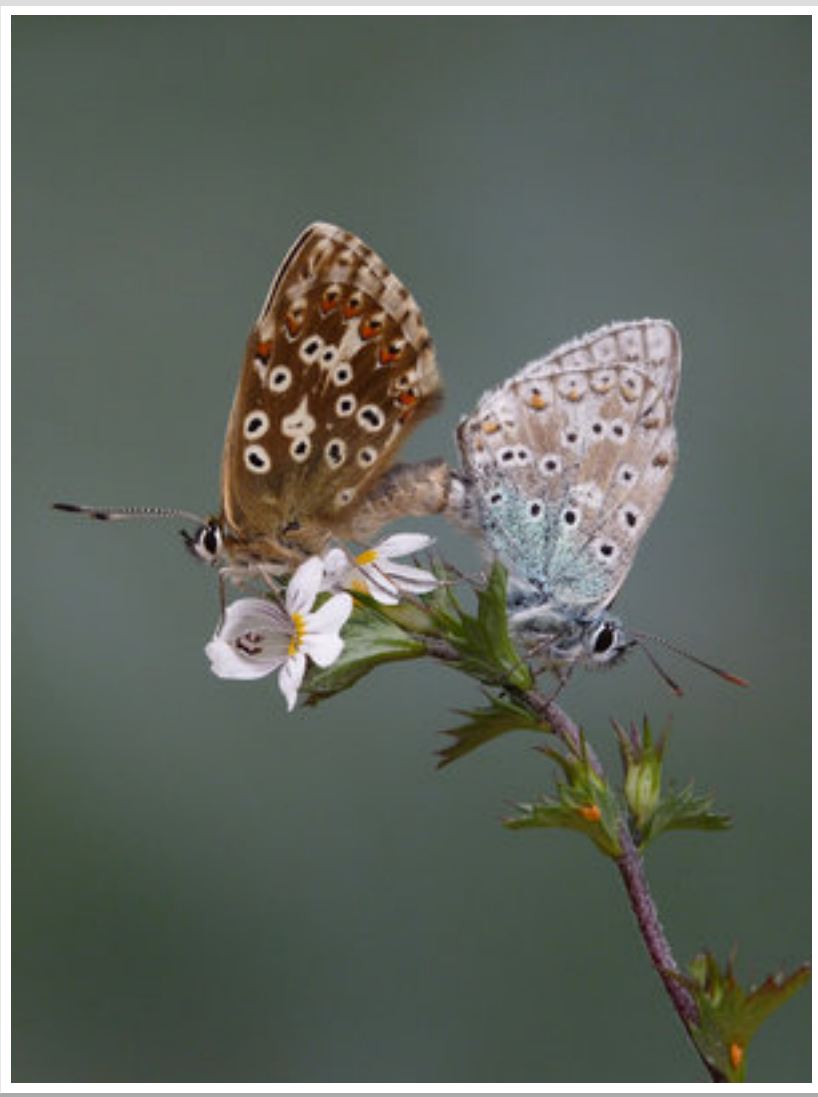
Thank you Nick. Might consider your offer but only if you throw in a few Small Coppers with blue spots (I've seen your lovely photos 🍀🍀😊), oh, and a fresh Purple Hairstreak! 😊😊

Susie, it must be a couple of years now since we last met up 😞 – I'd forgotten that you would have seen at first hand my (lack of) photographic skills to allow comparisons to be made with recent photos, so that praise means a great deal believe me 😊😊😊.

Thank you also Neil. I am always worried that too many similar photos may be boring but if you and Susie would like to see several then I am happy to oblige.

There were still a great number of Chalkhills around when I visited Denbies and although many were looking very worn there were still a considerable number that were very fresh and many mating pairs were still in evidence. I still find it something of a novelty that by slightly changing position the backgrounds can be so different and some obviously complement the butterfly more than others. Some subtle differences in the shots below.





Now, here's the thing – I always thought that I could tell the difference between Adonis and Chalkhill and the fact that they were flying together didn't cause a problem with identification; in fact, it made it easier as it enabled direct comparison between the species and I was very confident that the butterfly I was photographing was a fresh female Adonis – until 2 worn Chalkhills pounced on her and one succeeded in mating! Seems I have even more to learn than I thought 😞😞⚠️



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Aug-12 04:57 AM GMT

Having just looked at Chris' lovely photos I was reminded that I took these the other day. Don't know what the spider is, nor the moth, which sadly was still alive:





Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 18-Aug-12 05:16 AM GMT

nice action shots pauline that is a xysticus species spider and the moth is a chalk carpet.

CHris

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Aug-12 03:35 PM GMT

Just a quick update on Noar Hill - BH seen down low on blackthorn at about 11.00am yesterday - Friday (but not by me).

I have now tried out your suggested crops Mike. I think the first one is slightly improved:



.... but the second one is very much improved:



I don't really have too much of a problem using post processing to enhance an image tho' I still really don't know much about the package. In fact, I now have a confession. The beautiful Small Copper I posted earlier was lacking an antennae so I thought I would make him complete again 😊😊 .

I have been trying different crops on other photos including this one taken a short while ago and again I think it is an improvement:

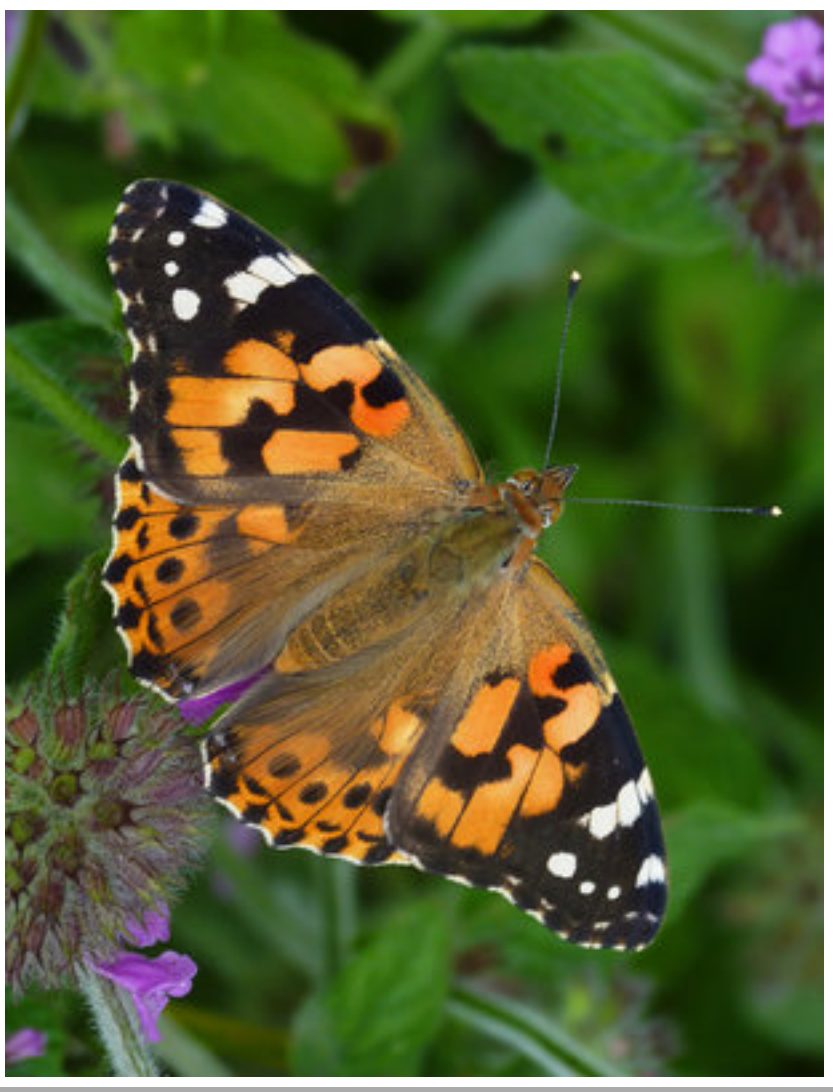


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Aug-12 03:42 AM GMT

Not long now til my diary concludes for the season so I am pulling out all the stops to get out and about, calling in favours and bribing friends to

animal sit 😊 . This gave me the opportunity today to see this beautiful, pristine Painted Lady – a species I haven't seen for a couple of years now:





It was hot out there with no shade, oh so hot and various bugs were biting bits out of me so I decided to call it a day. On the way back I spotted this chap – quite a long way off but a Kestrel I believe:



... and this bush cricket:



... before stopping off at a country pub for a long cool drink, just by the river 😊😊

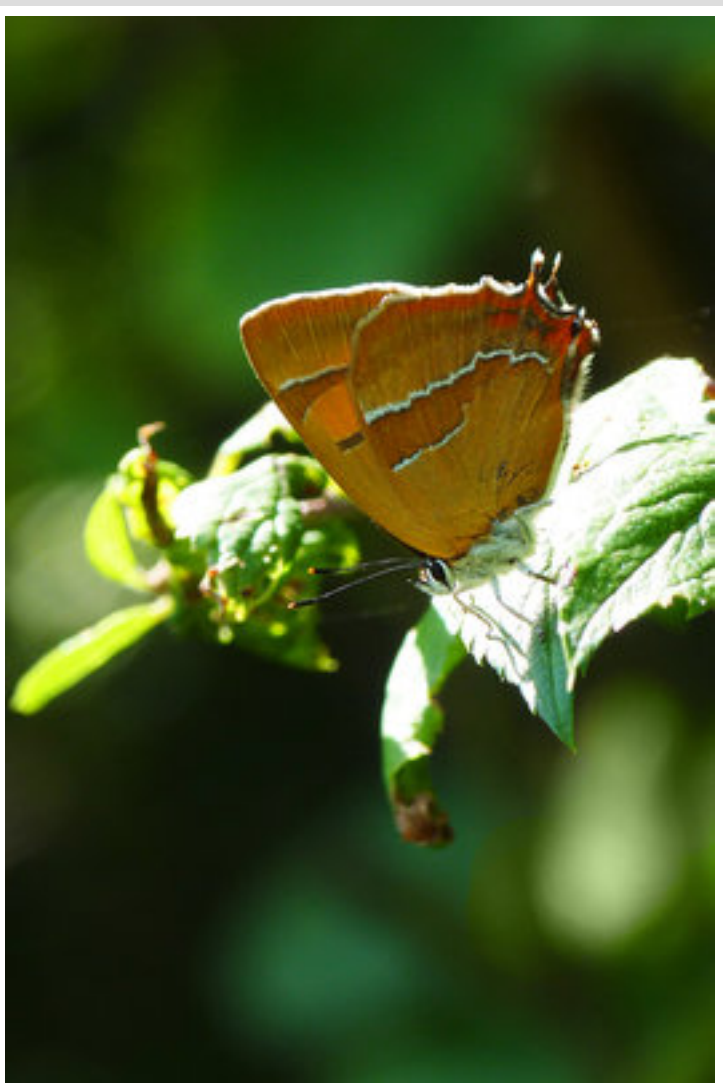


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Aug-12 02:45 PM GMT

I appreciate your comment Chris – thank you for taking the time to provide identifications.

Today I shall be attempting to find a female Brown Hairstreak, beautifully posed with wings open 😊 but having never managed it before I don't have high hopes. Good luck tho' to all those whom I know will be on a similar mission today. The best I could do yesterday was this:



Only one quick, snatched shot before returning to the trees 😞

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 19-Aug-12 07:28 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

The beautiful Small Copper I posted earlier was lacking an antennae so I thought I would make him complete again

I think there is a distinction to be made between photography aimed at producing an attractive and , hopefully, artistic image and photography as a means of illustrating a biological specimen.

On this site, there are many who are much more interested in the characteristics of the butterfly than in the photograph *per se*, so I would be very wary of altering the specimen itself. There may be an expert on butterfly antennae who would get very excited about your 'aberration' – spotting something that the rest of us would never notice. I am exaggerating a little to make a point but I think it is wise to mention any alterations in the accompanying text, when posting photos where the specimen itself has been altered.

I hope this doesn't sound too 'po faced' as I myself am firmly on the 'attractive image' side but I try to be very careful when posting on this site, as I know many (most?) members are much more interested in butterflies than photography. 😊

As usual, you have posted many lovely images and I look forward to your Brown Hairstreak female topside!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 20-Aug-12 04:28 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

That makes it 2 down, 1 to go – as well as the Small Tort which I have almost given up on 😞

Hi Pauline

Before you sign off for the year, and give up on the above. I thought I would let you know I saw a Small Tortoiseshell this morning at Gilkicker Fort in Gosport. Just the one though 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Aug-12 04:34 AM GMT

I feel suitably chastised now Mike as it was never my intention to mislead in any way – just using the opportunity to try out some of the facilities in the software. Nevertheless, I shall heed your words of caution to avoid any misunderstandings in the future. Thank you for your comment on my photos – I hope you like today's efforts.

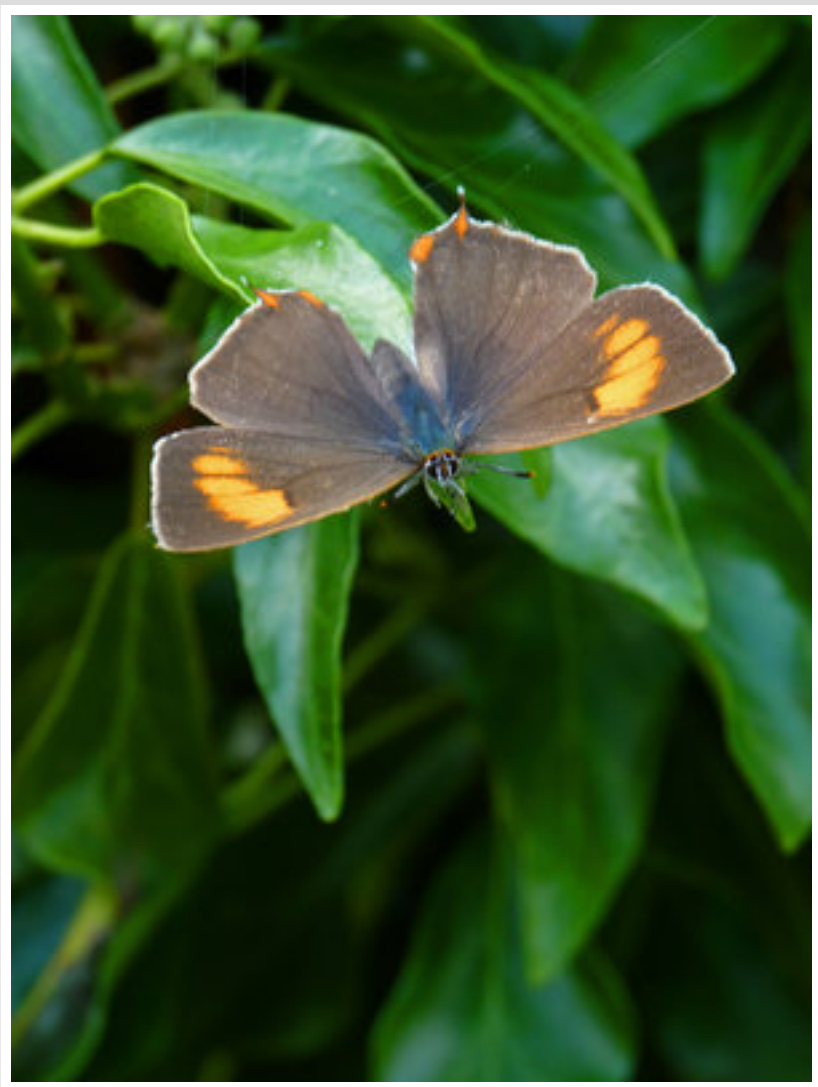
I had a smashing morning out at Shipton Bellinger today. It was nice to see so many familiar faces and enjoy a chat. Matthew started the ball rolling by showing me some BH flying around a tree but as they settled down I moved on to what I consider to be a bit of a hotspot. I was not disappointed. For about 4 hours it seemed as if we were surrounded by BH low down, wings open, wings closed, 3 pairs of mating Holly Blues – we didn't know which way to look 😲 😊 😊 . The 5 males showed varying degrees of wear and tear but the beautiful female was pristine. She spent virtually the whole of the 4 hours I was there nectaring low down on bramble and only occasionally giving us a flash of her upper side. I somewhat reluctantly decided I would have to leave her but as I made my way back to the car I bumped into Wurzel and was able to lead him to where she was still nectaring. I left her in Wurzel's capable hands but I would be interested to know how much longer she stayed down. A lot of photos from the very many that I took and am still sorting through:











Just got that Small Tort to find now 🙄😞

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 20-Aug-12 05:57 AM GMT

Congratulations on your Brown Hairstreak photos and what a beautiful specimen! The 'tails' on the topside photos are particularly striking.

There was no intention to 'chastise', as what you did was perfectly reasonable, but I wanted to make a more general point about image manipulation, which I hope might be useful to others as well.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-12 07:15 AM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline, mine were all a bit distant in the end but I might be able to salvage one or two. She stayed for about another half an hour and then we left her in peace and she wasn't there later. I did find another female and a male later though. I hope the warm weather holds as Alners Gorse should be cracking!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 21-Aug-12 05:51 AM GMT

Beautiful Brown Hairstreak photos Pauline.

I would have been very happy to have taken any one of those 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Aug-12 10:26 PM GMT

Thank you Neil- you have been taking some lovely photos too.

I am looking forward to seeing your photos Wurzel - thank you for the sentiment.

She WAS a lovely lady Mike, thank you - wish my photos could have done her justice.

I was delighted to see so many BH yesterday but it was hard to focus on photography in that heat and the butterfly was continually twisting and turning as she nectared, hardly ever still. The only time that she stopped and opened her wings for a couple of minutes she was out of my reach:



Added to that, 90% of the time she had her face buried in blossom!



When she eventually paused and looked as though she might settle a Holly Blue persistently tried to mate with her which sent her up into the trees, but only briefly. The Holly Blue went on to find his own kind:



By comparison the males looked quite dull and faded so I took few photos but one shown below:



And finally, a couple more shotes of the lady in question:





Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 22-Aug-12 08:42 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

When she eventually paused and looked as though she might settle a Holly Blue persistently tried to mate with her which sent her up into the trees, but only briefly. The Holly Blue went on to find his own kind:

I have to say, Pauline, that your Holly Blue shot is the best I've seen of a mating pair of this species – a sight that not many get to see. Such behaviour isn't something you can go out and expect to see – which is why I really like it – it's just "different" and captures a moment of serendipity!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Gothic_dreams, 22-Aug-12 08:44 AM GMT

Some cracking photos Pauline, love the painted lady and brown hairstreak shots 😊

Chris

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Aug-12 03:53 PM GMT

It's really thoughtful of you Paul to tell me about the Small Tort at Fort G. I do appreciate it but I have had a few longish trips recently so today I shall probably stay closer to home. Part of my 'safety stuff' is never to publish details of where I intend to be in advance so will hopefully report tomorrow.

Thank you Pete. I was astonished to see 3 mating pairs in an hour – 2 pairs visible at once – and a fair few singletons. Together with all the BH it was difficult to know what to point the camera at 😊😊 but, hey, I'm not complaining 😊

Good to hear from you again Chris – glad you like the pics.

I didn't get out yesterday as a neighbour brought me a bird which had flown into his conservatory window 😞. I am assuming it is not a wild bird and my guess would be that it is some kind of aviary finch which has escaped but if anyone reading this has any ideas on identification I would be grateful before I post to a bird forum and then advertise:



Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 22-Aug-12 04:48 PM GMT

Looks like a Canary to me.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Aug-12 06:18 AM GMT

Eureka!!!





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-12 07:03 AM GMT

Congrats on finally getting a SmallTort, cracking shots too 😊 Now I can post my shots from my garden and not feel bad 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Aug-12 05:26 AM GMT

That was my first thought too Pete but the beak doesn't seem right for canary and suggests some sort of foreign finch to me – Gouldian mutation? I am awaiting responses from a couple of breeders – we shall see.

Thank you Wurzel – that was very kind of you.

There are so many lovely places round here to see butterflies and other wildlife that it is not possible for me to visit them all in one season and that was the case with St Catherine's Hill where I found a single Small Tortoiseshell yesterday – as well as a host of other species including a number of very fresh Brown Argus. I had only been there once before and had forgotten how picturesque it is. I notice on the board at the foot of the hill that it is possible to see both Kingfishers and otters here so perhaps another visit is warranted before too long.

One of the first butterflies I encountered was a Silver Spotted Skipper and I hadn't even realised that they inhabited this site. It took me quite by surprise and I managed only a record shot before it disappeared:



A fresh Red Admiral was next to catch my eye. Every time I see this species I think of the beautiful photo taken by Rosalyn on the white flower with the drooping stem which is so memorable for its lovely composition. I have never even come close to finding this species in such a perfect pose photos but as my diary is coming to a close I took a quick shot:



followed by my first Peacock photo of the season (but yours is still the best Neil 😄)



A memory that will always stay with me is my encounter with a fox. I silently moved around a bush and saw the fox which was only about 10 feet away from me (one of the advantages of being alone in an isolated place 😊) The fox was completely unaware of my presence as all its senses were focused elsewhere – it was totally engrossed in catching prey. I stood hardly daring to even breathe as it concentrated on something in the grass. Suddenly it did that characteristic leap up into the air and succeeded in catching the small animal. I have foxes at home both wild and not so wild but the only time I have ever seen this pounce is on TV. To witness it in person and so close was really something special and such a privilege. I only wish I could have recorded it.

It was time to return but I could not resist this Speckled Wood on the way back:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 24-Aug-12 05:57 AM GMT

That is a lovely dusky Speckled Wood – the velvety look is almost tangible.

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 25-Aug-12 03:19 AM GMT

Glad you got your Small Tortoiseshell Pauline 😊

Great photos, I'm liking the ones against wooden backgrounds, especially the Red Admiral.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Aug-12 03:52 PM GMT

Thank you David – they're lovely when they're fresh aren't they.

Thank you Neil – I think they all favoured the wood probably for the warmth and I thought it made an acceptable background.

Despite my intention to continue this diary until the end of August events seem to have overtaken me. My car is off the road until mid-week, I have had an influx of sick animals and the thunderstorms have been impressive but not conducive to finding butterflies. This will therefore be my last posting until next season and any photos I should manage to take will be 'carried over'.

I would just like to thank everyone who has given me so much support, encouragement, help and advice (both publicly and privately) in my efforts to improve my photography skills. I shall continue to work on this and over the winter attempt to consolidate everything I have been taught. I shall certainly still keep in touch with the website and I am already looking forward to next year. Enjoy the rest of the season.

Re: Pauline

by ChrisC, 27-Aug-12 05:30 PM GMT

your diary has made lovely viewing Pauline. good luck with the car and the animals.

all the best til next year.

Chris

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 27-Aug-12 07:03 PM GMT

All the best until next season Pauline.

I am already looking forward to you posting again 😊

Neil F.

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 27-Aug-12 07:27 PM GMT

Many thanks Pauline for sharing your experiences this season and for supplying so many quality images to the Species Albums 😊 .

Cheers,

Vince

Re: Pauline

by philm63, 27-Aug-12 09:42 PM GMT

Pauline

Looking forward already to seeing your resumption next year, it has been a pleasure following your diary

Phil