

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 28-Jan-12 07:30 PM GMT

I will look out for nibbled leaves on the currant plants this year.

Regarding the Orange tips on Honesty – It must have seeded in preferable spots to the garlic mustard as I found ne eggs on that.

Several of the eggs on Honesty were layed on the base of the petal – so doomed to fall off when the petal dropped before the egg was hatched.

I followed the development of the others in various parts of the garden, along with Mullein moth caterpillars of varying sizes on a mullein plant. But one day I found all the mullein caterpillars gone, except a large one that was in a folded leaf. I checked the orange tips (most of which were of a simalar size) and could only find one. Afraid this would go too, I picked off the shoot it was on and put it in a jar intending to return it in a few days when whatever was getting the caterpillars had forgotten about them but within a day it had turned into a Crysalis. It was green for a couple of days but turned light brown. I think it may be empty which would confirm what you were saying about Orange tips on Honesty, But just in case it is alive I am keeping it (very hard to find a cold but safe place to keep it).

Soon I'm going to put some garlic mustard in the sheltered flower garden – it is just as attractive as any garden plant.

In the mean time I was out looking for some more local spots within 5 miles in which I could indulge my butterfly interest later this year (google earth is very useful in finding likely spots). Yesterday I checked out the foopaths near an SSSI near Crewkerne. It was a beutiful area over steep hilly fields and tracks enclosed with overgrown hedges but what irritated me (enough to commit it to print) was that someone had 'beautified' some of the tracks with garden plants. It must have taken a lot of effort to cart daffodils etc and what look like spanish hyacinthes all that distance, but to me it is just a reminder of the spread of surburbia.

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 29-Feb-12 11:48 PM GMT

This last week has seen the Scarlet Tiger caterpillars up and eating. Think I will have to move some more Forgetmenots up from the veg garden as there are not many in the garden and they have chomped alot of them well down.

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 14-Mar-12 07:53 PM GMT

The Orange Tip crysalis, that I thought I had 'rescued' from wasps last year, and thought was dead because it appeared empty as the light seemed to shine right through it, has started to darken inside at both of the pointed ends. There may be some hope for it! I do hope so because the only caterpillars I could find last year were on Honesty, the Garlic Mustard presumably being not in the right place for them.

The Orange Tips seem to like the ornamental rose garden so I have moved some Garlic Mustard there and hopefully, if the plants survive, the Orange Tips will have a better choice of plants to lay eggs on. Plus the Lady's Smock that I put in the lawn last year is coming on well.

I don't think my efforts are at all necessary for the butterflie's success around this way as there is alot of Garlic Mustard locally, but I do get great satisfaction from being able to check up on their progress in the comfort of my garden!

I caught a glimpse of my first butterfly of the year on the 9th which I think was a Peacock, the next day there was a Peacock in much the same place which made me wonder if they come back to roost in the same place.

Also on the 9th I identified my 1st moth using my new moth guide British Moths and Butterflies by Chris Manley. If I am right it was Acleris notana or ferrugana.



Re: Hilary

by hilary, 31-Mar-12 03:09 AM GMT

Good and bad news; the Orange Tip has hatched but just as the weather is set to get cold.



28th march



at 3pm today



An hour or so later



at 7pm as the temperature drops

I had not seen an Orange Tip this year until this afternoon while having a look in the back garden wondering if it would be better off there, up flew a male Orange Tip. I have been wondering if I should have kept the chrysalis in the fridge until April, and it is some consolation that a wild one also choose the wrong time to emerge, even though it is a male.

But at least it is some evidence that caterpillars that have only fed on Honesty can develop. (After I had encouraged it to sit on some opening Raspberry leaves where I thought it was best camouflaged, it quickly went on a short flight to an Honesty plant!)

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 31-Mar-12 03:25 AM GMT

As I was watching the newly emerged Orange Tip I also found out at least one of the place where a Peacock (who frequently suns its self on the path) spends the night; at 5.20pm it did a quick lap of the greenhouse and straight down to a cavity by a fern made by last years dead leaves.

Re: Hilary

by NickMorgan, 31-Mar-12 03:29 AM GMT

That's fantastic! Great that you witnessed it and managed to get some pictures. I have been looking for orange tip chrysalises all winter with no luck. The green-veined white chrysalis on my garage also emerged today. At least they have had a nice hot day on the first day of their life, rather than emerging on a cooler day.

Re: Hilary

by Lee Hurrell, 01-Apr-12 05:50 PM GMT

Lovely to see, Hilary.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Hilary

by Paul Harfield, 09-Apr-12 07:13 AM GMT

"hilary" wrote:

As I was watching the newly emerged Orange Tip I also found out at least one of the place where a Peacock (who frequently suns its self on the path) spends the night; at 5.20pm it did a quick lap of the greenhouse and straight down to a cavity by a fern made by last years dead leaves.

Lovely that you got to see your Orange Tip hatching. I hope I am as lucky with my Speckled Woods, I missed every one of the 10 or 12 emergences I had over the winter 😞

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 28-Apr-12 09:10 AM GMT

I must stop interfering with the natural order of things. Just before the 'deluge' it clouded over and I saw a female Orange Tip settle on a chive bud . An hour or so later I went out with my broolly to see if she was still there, she was. As I stood there it started hailing and I felt obliged to stay for a while providing cover with the broolly. The hail didn't let up and I was getting wet and feeling foolish so I picked the bud complete with butterfly and moved it to a sheltered spot. Much later I went out and found the wind had changed and my sheltered spot was any thing but, so feeling responsible, decided to put bud and butterfly in a jam jar for the night. The next day at mid-day it stopped raining so much so I put her out on her original Chive clump and went to work. Then the weather came back with a vengeance for the next 18 hours and she must have perished anyway, along with many others.

I was begining to wonder whether any Orange Tips would survive long enough to breed, but today I saw two (very fresh looking) female Orange Tips busy laying eggs. Also saw a Holly Blue and a Peacock. Have yet to see a Green Veined White which is unusual. But most surprising (for me) was a Humming Bird Hawk Moth darting among the Honesty.

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 12-May-12 06:47 AM GMT

A few butterflies out in the garden today despite the cold wind, Orange Tips, Green Veined White and Small White. I saw a smallish female Orange Tip laying eggs on Rocket, which is a bit awkward as I was going to clear that area of the garden. Still I can leave the Rocket and see how they get on. The photos are out of focus but she was very quick laying the eggs, so quick that I thought it was the 'going through the motions' behaviour and was suprised to find eggs. The photo of the egg is head on and looks whiter than it should be.



egg on Rocket



laying eggs on Rocket

Later I went out to Thurlbear. in places it was warm and sheltered but I only saw 1 Orange Tip, but luckily several Grizzled Skippers and a Dingy Skipper (very furry!)



Dingy Skipper

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 13-May-12 04:14 AM GMT

Today was a better day than yesterday; warmer and less wind, but so few butterflies about. It seems only Orange Tips are carrying on as usual. Late in the day a Holly Blue came down and posed so well I had to go and get my camera.



Holly Blue on Iris



Holly Blue

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 26-May-12 11:58 PM GMT

I was expecting vast hordes of butterflies to emerge once the weather warmed up – but so far not very much in my immediate area. Even the Bees seem to have gone elsewhere. The Holly blue is the only one I regularly see.

One that did respond to the heat was a chrysalis that I removed from old shelving that had to be disinfected. I had kept it (just in case it was alive) with a collection of odd moth or beetle pupas that I had dug up last year in the veg garden. I check them every day, and was very surprised to find it suddenly develop from a half imagined darkening one day to a visible wing the next day and emerging the next. I thought it was a Green Veined White and was surprised to find a Small White sitting on the curtain.

I'm glad to see a few Orange Tips about still – I thought they may all be gone already. It's been an odd year but it was interesting that the March ones laid on Honeysuckle which flowers early while my Garlic Mustard was barely in bud. Later when the Garlic Mustard was flowering well and the Honeysuckle nearly over, they used the Garlic Mustard. Today my little patch of Lady's Smock (not well established) has started to flower and I've just seen a GVW and an Orange Tip appear to search for it, and had the wind not been so strong I fancy they would have found it. So hopefully they at least have found food plants despite the bad weather.



small white



rescued crystalis

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 16-Jun-12 08:18 AM GMT

The weather has been so dreadful this year I fear my try at providing more butterfly/moth foodplants will have very few takers this year. Orange Tips are the exception who seem to have weathered the weather and have produced quite a few caterpillars at very different stages on both Garlic Mustard and Honesty. They seem to especially go for parts of the plants that overhang paths and I am impressed by the caterpillars' ability to avoid being scraped off by passing legs, and when the plants are blown about by high winds. One that I'd only just noticed had been subject to probably daily 'leg traffic', seems to cling on front and back and let its middle stretch and be pushed out of the way. (now safely pinned back a bit further)

Saw my first Painted Lady in the garden for a couple of years, blown in on a strong wind.

Also in one of a rare few minutes of sunshine a bedraggled Green Veined White that seemed to be trying to warm up or dry out. Its upper veins seemed very pronounced, but maybe it was because it was wet.



Re: Hilary

by hilary, 03-Jul-12 12:04 AM GMT

The rotten weather continues. Makes me wonder how any non migrant butterflies ever managed to survive in this country. But then a walk in some wild flower meadows at An English Nature reserve at Barrington Hill on cloudy and occasionally drizzly saturday, I was disturbing a Meadow Brown at almost every other step. The Burnet moths were active throughout, and when the sun appeared so did groups of Marbled Whites.

Back on my patch its very different. One at a time and well spread out over the week:

L. Skipper ...1

H.Blue.....1

S.Tortishell..1

R.Admiral....1

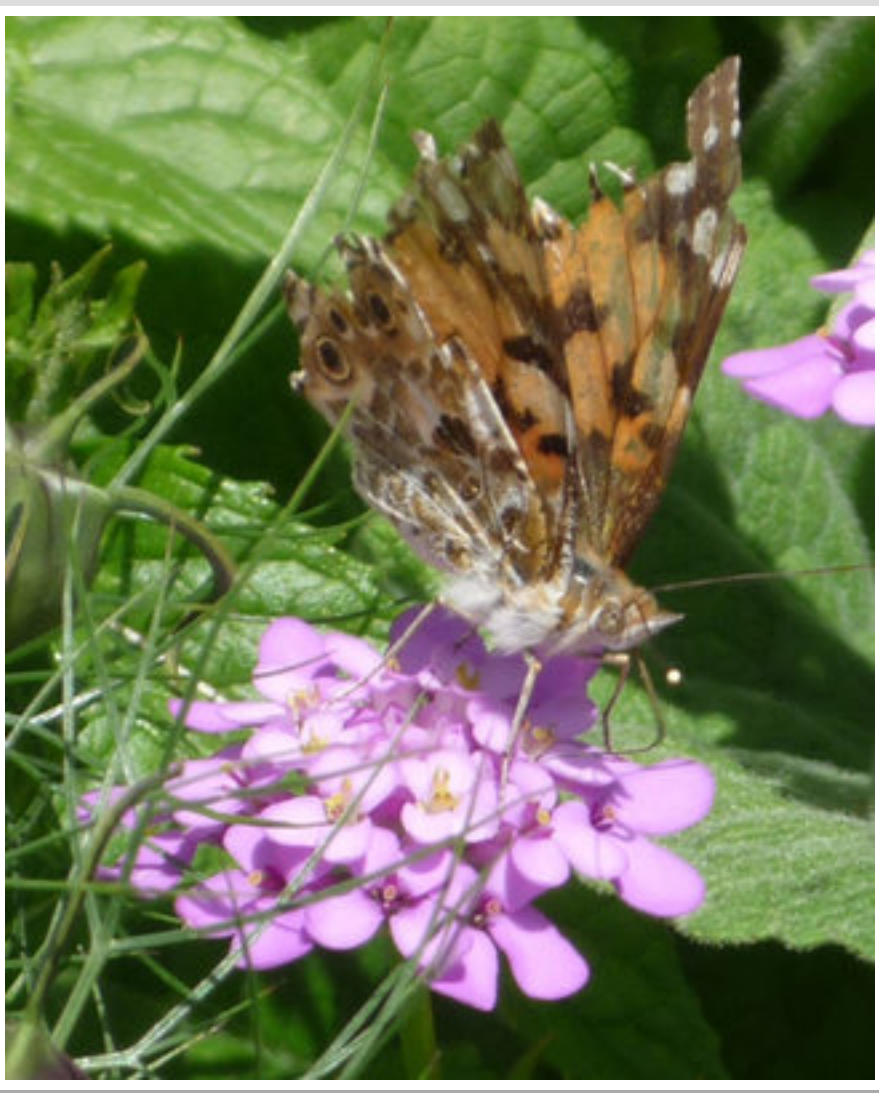
P.Lady.....1

M.Brown.....Possibly 2!

And a few Scarlet Tiger moths over the last couple of weeks.

The Skipper and Tortishell staked out an area for a few days and then disappeared, hopefully to try a new area.

I was glad to see the Painted Lady (even if well weathered)- the last one I saw was an abnormally small one in 2010. It, a Silver Y moth and the Tortishell all nectared on the Iberis that I only planted as it was recommended as a nectar plant by Butterfly Conservation. The Tortishell swapped between Iberis and Astrantia.



painted lady

The Orange Tip caterpillars have mostly gone except a few smaller ones, but more than half disappeared before they reached full size.



S. Tortisshell

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 24-Jul-12 07:48 AM GMT

It seems a great year for Meadow Browns and Ringlets, more than usual. I was chuffed when the Knapweed in my mini meadow flowered and it was well visited. Not so thrilled when the Creeping Thistle flowered and they all went over to that, especially as I was going to pull it out and have felt obliged to leave bits dotted about.

Looking at my earlier 'plan' it all seems a bit optimistic now. The Brimstones were unimpressed with my Buckthorn. It was quite late into leaf and most of the few Brimstones I saw were gone by time the buds burst. I'm just relieved that there are a few GVWs around now. I watched one laying eggs on the Aubrieta and if they can do well on that it must be a great help to them in as every other garden seems to grow it.

The Buddlia is almost devoid of butterflies but at night it is far more populated with moths – I have taken to going out with a torch. Moths are much better behaved on it than butterflies with regard to having their photo taken for later attempts at ID. Last night I saw a lovely large moth that I'm fairly sure is an 'Old Lady'

No gatekeepers as yet but I've seen a few in the area this week so I can still hope! A few Small Skippers and an occasional Comma, Sm. and Large White.



Old Lady moth



comma



Sm Skipper



Ringlets

Re: Hilary

by ChrisC, 25-Jul-12 03:22 AM GMT

certainly is an Old lady, for July my buddleias are deserted at night compared to previous years. i'm quite disappointed 😞 but i warn you Hilary, it gets addictive. you'll probably start to notice a few more spiders which show up better under torchlight than daylight, if you haven't noticed already that is. 😊

Chris

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 08-Sep-12 03:21 AM GMT

I have only just seen the 'addiction' warning, ... too late! I have been busy these last 2 months with moths. As I have not 'mothed' before I can't be dissappointed in the reported low numbers – its all new and totally absorbing. But yes, unfortunately for me, spiders galore.

On the home Butterfly front things are better than expected regards Tortishells, Peacocks, R.Admirals and Whites. In fact last week they were building up well in numbers and of course my Nectar offerings were all but over, with the Asters yet to open. Then one day they were far and few between, but I tracked them down to a nearby row of Buddleas at full bloom. A lovely rare sight 20+ Tortishells and a good scattering of Peacocks, R.Admirals, Whites and a Brimstone all busy fattening up. The Buddleas were facing N.W. which must have delayed flowering much more effectively than my late spring pruning which had absolutly no effect this year against the unpruned one.

On my transects I've seen more S.W.Fritillaries than C.Blues or B.Argus so I was very glad to see one of each in the garden, very late – in the last week of August. With luck there must be some C. Blues nearby as my Bird's Foot Trefoil and Black Medick has only just got going. Which comes back to spiders – the webs are everywhere now and I worry that such small butterflies are easily caught.

The small Tortishell crysalis was found nearby where the caterpillars feed. I think it must have been parasitised as for a start it was easily found! It aslo was particularly beautifully gold (more than the photo shows) and has two little threads hanging from it.



Re: Hilary

by millerd, 08-Sep-12 04:35 AM GMT

Hi Hilary – yes, that looks like the evidence of a parasitic fly. Probably the infamous *Sturmia bella* or one of its relatives. Soon after the caterpillar becomes a chrysalis, the larva of the fly emerges from it, sails down that piece of silk and drops to the ground where it pupates. The flies themselves are unspectacular, looking a bit like ordinary grey houseflies.

Dave

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 08-Sep-12 06:35 AM GMT

Thanks Dave. That explains the little threads!

Re: Hilary

by hilary, 21-Oct-12 11:57 PM GMT

End of year 2012 mostly sad summary;

Brown Argus – only one brief sighting. Doves foot cranesbill and rockrose growing well but probably untouched.

Common blue – ditto. Birdsfoot Trefil and black Medick doing well but no female C.Blue seen!

Holly Blue – not as well as last two years

Small Copper – very occasional (but one with streaked upper hindwings) – sorrel now widely growing but no sign of larvae.

Large Skipper – very few

Green Veined White – comparatively few

Small White – at times seemed to be doing almost OK. Saw one female laying lots of eggs on a hedge mustard that was wilting because the main stem was eaten through at base, ignoring the nearby intact ones.

L. White – only around in ones and twos

Orange Tip – seemed okay but not as many caterpillars seen

Brimstone – Comparatively fewer seen and none took advantage of the Buckthorn I'd planted!

Comma – a few later but only one at a time. yet to spot a caterpillar

Br.Hairstreak – None seen

Gatekeeper – fewer than usual

Speckled Wood – very few seen

Peacock – Probably not too bad but only for a week or two seemed to be good.

The winners;

Meadow Brown – much better than most years

Ringlet – ditto

Small Skipper – more and for a longer period than before.

Painted Lady – occasional which is still better than the last 2 years

Tortishell – in autumn better than for years – perhaps the wind and rain had a worse effect on their parasites.

Red Admiral – definite winner. so many caterpillars seen I had to give up on nettle control, in fact at all times except early spring, the nettles were supporting so many moths in rolled up leaves I did very little nettle control as I was putting cut stems into uncut areas. Not sure what to do next year as the patches expand very rapidly.

Wall – I'm 99.9% sure I spotted one on the wall as I was going out in the car – I'd been watching it about to settle as I was

pulling away, thinking it to be a Comma or Tortishell, then it settled – but by the time I got out (after stalling,

seatbelt tussle, handbrake forgotten and near collision with the above wall) the 'Wall' had gone! I do look forward to next year!

My attempts at wildlife gardening make me appreciate prime butterfly habitat (unfortunatly mostly nature reserves) far more than I used to!