

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Jan-12 04:20 AM GMT

Tuesday, 3 January 2012

Solitude ...

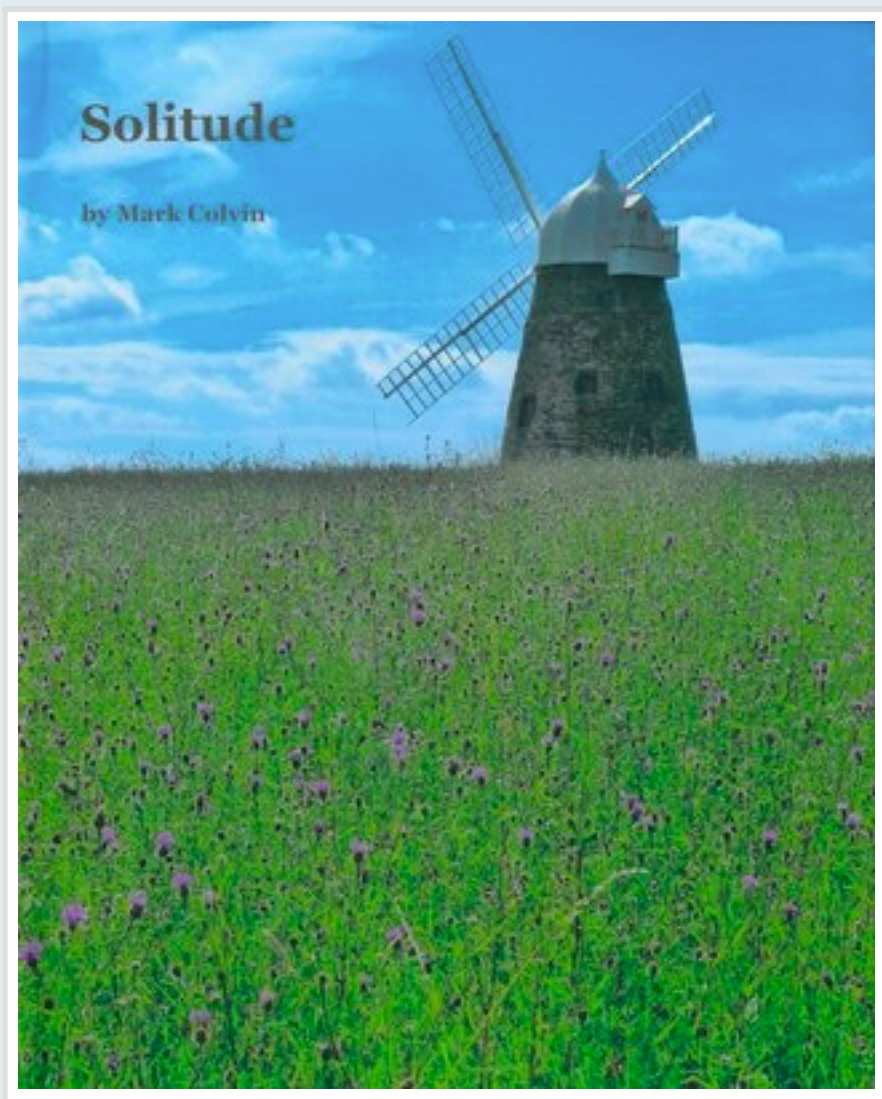
Like a number of other UKBers I have recently been tempted to put words and pictures to print.

<http://www.blurb.com>

2010 and 2011 have been difficult years for me with both marred by family ill health and the passing of two very close friends. I felt a need to put my thoughts into words and my means of escapism from day to day reality, my pictures and passion for natural history, into something that would last and hopefully act as a light at the end of the tunnel in times of difficulty to the reader – my children. The content of the book is for my son and daughter only though the cover I am willing to share.

I decided to post this in my diary as putting the book together has helped me through difficult times and I hope it may inspire others to do the same.

Here's to a good 2012 ...

**Re: Mark Colvin**

by David M, 04-Jan-12 04:54 AM GMT

That's a beautifully evocative image, Mark.

Less is more sometimes, and this is one of those occasions. 'Solitude' sums it up from more than just one perspective.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 04-Jan-12 05:53 AM GMT

I agree, that is beautiful, Mark.

I hope 2012 is a much better year for you and your family.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Jan-12 06:27 AM GMT

Thank you.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Jan-12 05:55 AM GMT

Heyshott, 4 January 2012

In search of Urchins ...

Sadly, due to the very strong winds and heavy rain of yesterday, our first scheduled conservation work party of the 2012 season at Heyshott Escarpment had to be cancelled today, the slopes being far too slippery to work on safely.

Not to be discouraged, I rang Colin Knight and suggested we meet up anyway to hunt for the eggs of the Brown Hairstreak. We met at 10am and having previously spoken to John Murray regarding potentially suitable hedgerows, headed northwest on the footpath adjoining Tupperts Copse in the direction of Hoyle. Crossing a small stream we soon came across our target, a south-facing hedgerow, running in an east-west direction and containing blackthorn.

Our first find was an egg of the Blue-bordered Carpet (*Plemyria rubiginata*), a moth whose larvae will also feed on blackthorn though distinguishable from the white 'urchin-like' Brown Hairstreak eggs by their rather elongated, smooth white appearance. Our search continued and as we approached the end of the hedge I spotted our prize, a single white egg of a Brown Hairstreak. Despite searching other hedgerows in the area, blackthorn appeared in short supply and what was found did not appear suitable. Consequently no further eggs were found.

Another search is planned ...



Blue-bordered Carpet (egg), Heyshott (4 January 2012)



Brown Hairstreak (egg), Heyshott (4 January 2012)



Colin Knight aka Sherlock Holmes (on egg patrol)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-Jan-12 11:45 PM GMT

New Year Bird Race, 6 January 2012

Rendezvous 0645hrs ...

For those who have never participated, a Bird Race is typically a sponsored challenge to locate and identify as many different species of wild bird as possible in one day, whilst raising funds for bird conservation. Our race, organised by the Sussex Ornithological Society, was open to any team of two or more people and had to be completed within the first two weeks of January (when of course daylight hours are at a premium). All birds recorded had to be heard or observed within the county boundary of Sussex and participants must comply with a strict set of rules when competing. Respect for the birds, the countryside and landowners always coming first.

Our intrepid team met up early on a fine, cold morning at Pagham Harbour LNR Information Centre. It was dark and the sky alight with tiny diamonds.

As dawn was breaking on the horizon we headed east along Ferry Pool to view the western side of Pagham Harbour. We picked up a number of expected species on route with several Avocets adding a touch of welcome glamour. Then it was on to Selsey Bill for a sea-watch. Red-throated and Black-throated Divers were logged and a selection of seabirds passed including several nice Med Gulls. A female Black Redstart was spotted on a nearby roof whilst a small group of Turnstones busily searched seaweed on the beach in front of us. Numbers continued to build after a brief stop at Church Norton where we added a female Goldeneye and Grey Plover. We then moved on to West Wittering (Ella Nore and Snow Hill Marsh) where the star birds were a beautiful Spotted Redshank, Greenshank and a lone Jack Snipe flushed from the marsh. After a brief stop for lunch, East Head produced a very showy Great Northern Diver, Slavonian Grebe three Snow Buntings and an immature male Eider.

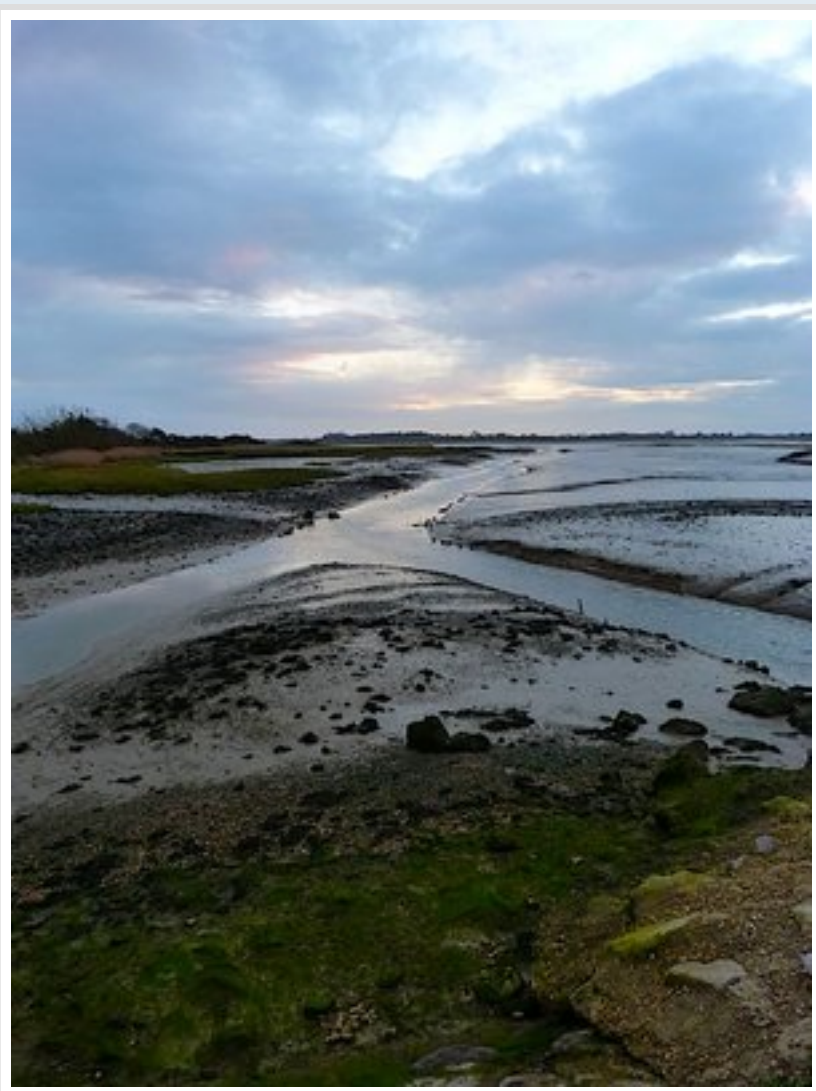
Things were going well ...

We then moved up to Fishbourne Creek and although adding Yellowhammer and Jay things started to slow down and we failed to find the Little Stint that was around yesterday. At least three Stonechats were noted on our route, plus several calling Cetti's Warblers and a Chiffchaff. Short stops at Chichester Gravel Pits (Drayton) produced a few wildfowl mop-ups before our final destination of Pagham North Wall. Our total was now 93 and some hard scanning in the cold conditions slowly added Lesser Black-backed Gull, Golden Plover and Peregrine as the sun slowly disappeared from sight. We finished as we had started in darkness and with a very respectable total of 96 species.

Our team comprised of Peter and Gill Moon, Tom Howard-Jones, David Hall, David Parker, Helen Bryett and myself with Owen Mitchell and Bernie Forbes, having planned the route, leading from the front. For those who have never been involved in a Bird Race I thoroughly recommend them but be warned, you'll soon realise just how uncommon the common species are when trying to find them under the pressure of diminishing light and time!

I look forward to next year's race ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 08-Jan-12 02:32 AM GMT

Happy New Year Mark!

96 is a very respectable tally bagged for a days birding and I'm envious of the Snow Buntings – they are still on my wish list although there is one hanging around at Hengistbury Head so perhaps I'll bag it next weekend.

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-Jan-12 08:10 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Thanks for your message.

I was certainly pleased with 96 although last year we managed 103. Good luck with the Snow Bunting. I think they are a fabulous bird and remember an incident on the Isles of Scilly some years back when my son and daughter actually managed to lie down on a beach and have a pair feeding no more than a metre or so in front of them. Sadly no camera then. A very trusting and approachable species which I suspect is linked to the fact they come across few encounters with man in their summer homeland.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Jan-12 04:12 AM GMT

Plaistow, 9 January 2012

I was pleased to find a nicely marked specimen of the highly variable Spring Usher (*Agriopsis leucophaearia*) in my garden last night.



Re: Mark Colvin

by ChrisC, 11-Jan-12 05:02 AM GMT

It doesn't half look similar to mottled umber 😊

Chris

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Jan-12 10:39 PM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 11 January 2012

Pyromaniacs anonymous ...

We do like our fires at Heyshott, though if the holes in my clothes are anything to go by I think I've either been standing a bit too close or I've got a bad infestation of clothes moth in my wardrobe! Maybe the singed hairs on my arms are the give away ...

Today, along with Colin Knight and Neil Hulme and seven members of the Murray Downland Trust, we recommenced our weekly work party activities at Heyshott Escarpment. After a cold start, we continued to make great progress from where we left off before the seasonal break and were blessed with a beautiful day of pastel blue sky and golden winter sunshine.

It's great to be back ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Jan-12 02:39 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 17 January 2012 - Part 1

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

"Banish the winter blues with the sight of exotic butterflies flitting and floating among the plants in our world-class Glasshouse. See a wide range of colourful butterflies as they settle into the beautiful tropical zone. Wander underneath palms and watch the butterflies as they take part in courtship flights and feed from plant nectar and fruit. New for 2012 - you can also experience the full lifecycle of these fascinating creatures by visiting our collection of giant caterpillars. Suitable for all ages, Butterflies in the Glasshouse is a fun day out for all of the family".

I thought I'd take a closer look ...

The early to mid eighties found me working abroad in West Africa. Time spent in The Gambia and both northern and southern Nigeria, provided me with opportunities to observe and capture the beauty of many tropical species. Sadly, I have few photographic memories of the insects I discovered. Time then was spent in the bush armed with just a net to capture my prize followed by release after observation. I remember those years quite clearly and visits to butterfly houses always reignite my passion for tropical species, first sparked after visiting Worldwide Butterflies in Brighton in the late sixties (my parent's still have that small case of three tropical specimens (*Troides aeacus*, *Papilio horishanus* and the beautiful *Urania ripheus*), though now looking rather sad and somewhat faded. Although many tropical species are undoubtedly quite stunning, in my opinion, you can't beat the magnificence of our own entomological fauna. As Neil says, "Lovely as they are you can't beat an English Purple Emperor, spread-eagled on a woodland ride on a warm July evening".

I'll certainly second that ...

I decided to visit RHS Wisley midweek making the assumption that a weekday would be much quieter, particularly as I was hoping to get some pictures ... WRONG ... it was very busy right from doors opening at 10am which made camera work a little difficult at times. For those that haven't visited I highly recommend a trip, though do allow time for your camera equipment to acclimatize (15–20 minutes in my case). As you would expect, it is very hot and humid in the glasshouse so do take a cold drink with you and dress sensibly if you are planning to stay for any length of time.

I hope to go again so maybe see you there ...



Malay Lacewing (Cethosia biblis)



Blue Morpho (Morpho peleides)



Tree Nymph (Idea leuconoe)



Owl (Caligo memnon)



Pink Rose Swallowtail (Pachliopta kotzebuea)



Great Mormon (Papilio memnon probably ssp. agenor)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 18-Jan-12 03:18 AM GMT

Lovely photos Mark, especially the Blue Morpho.

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 18-Jan-12 03:30 AM GMT

Cracking photos, Mark.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 18-Jan-12 04:11 AM GMT

Nice work. That Malay Lacewing is gorgeous. 😊

Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Lee Hurrell, 18-Jan-12 04:37 AM GMT

Wow – lovely photos, Mark.

I agree with Neil on the Malay Lacewing – stunning!

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 18-Jan-12 04:46 AM GMT

Hope I didn't walk straight past you and ignore you, Mark! I was there between about 12 and 2pm today and managed to get photos of 16 different species. I may post a few photos, with some tips on using the camera in the hot, humid, and crowded conditions, in a separate thread. Certainly, it's a great day out and, if you know someone who is an RHS member, they can take a guest for free – my wife obliged for me!!

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Jan-12 06:38 PM GMT

Dear Nick, Susie, Neil, Lee and Mike,

Thank you for your very kind comments.

I hope my pictures gave you as much pleasure in viewing them as they did me in obtaining them.

"MikeOxon" wrote:

Hope I didn't walk straight past you and ignore you, Mark!

No you didn't ignore me, or indeed me you, as I'd left by the time you had got there.

Good hunting

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Jan-12 04:04 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 19 January 2012 - Part 2

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

Sadly the Indian Leafwing had seen better days though I felt it worthy of inclusion due to its beauty.

I can feel a Part 3 coming ...



Malachite (Siproeta stelenes)



Pink Rose Swallowtail (Pachliopta kotzebuea)



African Swallowtail (Papilio dardanus)



Indian Leafwing (Kallima paralekta)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 20-Jan-12 06:49 AM GMT

Hi Mark,
beautiful photos, and beautiful butterflies,
Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Jan-12 05:53 PM GMT

Thanks Nick,
I always appreciate your comments. 😊

"hideandseek" wrote:
beautiful photos and beautiful butterflies

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jan-12 02:53 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 23 January 2012 - Part 3

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

A quick visit today produced the following.

I can feel a Part 4, 5 and 6 coming ...



Clipper (Parthenos sylvia)



Blue Morpho (Morpho peleides)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 24-Jan-12 03:32 AM GMT

That Blue Morpho photo is perfect, Mark, what a stunner.

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jan-12 04:25 AM GMT

There are some stunning photos Mark, especially the Morpho.

There is a butterfly house at Stratford-Upon-Avon, just 30 minutes drive from my house, I have been before but that was before I had my Lumix.

I am feeling inspired by this thread to pay another visit soon 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

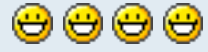
Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jan-12 06:54 AM GMT

"hideandseek" wrote:

That Blue Morpho photo is perfect, Mark, what a stunner.

Thanks.



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jan-12 07:01 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

I'm glad my posts have inspired you ...

"nfreem" wrote:

I am feeling inspired by this thread

Get down to Stratford-Upon-Avon with that Lumix and let's see the pictures ... you won't regret it 😊

I'd suggest a joint visit if it wasn't so far away.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-Jan-12 02:00 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 26 January 2012 - Part 4

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

Festival of exotica ...



Indian Leafwing (Kallima paralekta)



Emerald Swallowtail (Papilio palinurus)



Emerald Swallowtail (Papilio palinurus)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 27-Jan-12 02:15 AM GMT

Love that Swallowtail Mark. Sorry I missed it 😞blummin' M25

Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 27-Jan-12 02:59 AM GMT

Yes, that Emerald Swallowtail is indeed a stunner.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 28-Jan-12 03:22 AM GMT

Sure is a beauty! 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Jan-12 03:53 AM GMT

Dear Vince, David and Susie,

Thank you for your kind comments which are genuinely much appreciated. 😊😊😊

"Vince Massimo" wrote:
Love that Swallowtail Mark.

"David M" wrote:
Yes, that Emerald Swallowtail is indeed a stunner.

"Susie" wrote:
Sure is a beauty!

I too was very pleased with the shot though the one of the Indian Leafwing gave me more pleasure as it was much harder to get.

More to follow ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Jan-12 07:20 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 27 January 2012 - Part 5

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

Time to rest ...



Malachite (Siproeta stelenes)



Indian Leafwing (*Kallima paralekta*)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 30-Jan-12 03:15 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 27 January 2012 - Part 6

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

Papilio memnon ssp.

Papilio memnon is a butterfly from the Australasian and Indo-Malaysian regions. *P. memnon* shows very strong sexual dimorphism and there are numerous subspecies, forms and variations.

During my visit today, I photographed the upperside of a male swallowtail. Unfortunately I did not see the underside. It wasn't until I got home and reviewed the pictures that I realized its identification was not as clear-cut as I thought it might have been, at least not in my opinion. My initial reaction was to identify it as a male Asian Swallowtail (*Papilio lowii*), though I had my doubts. It may well be that this identification is correct though further research into the *Papilio memnon* group would suggest that *Papilio lowii* is in fact a subspecies of *Papilio memnon* i.e. *Papilio memnon lowii*. It would also appear there are many regional subspecies, forms and variations of *memnon* with mimicry also in play, particularly with the females. In addition it is highly likely that all subspecies, forms and variations will interbreed, especially in captivity.

So what is it?

For the record I think it could possibly be a cross between the subspecies *lowii*, the males of which have tails and generally brighter markings and one of the tailless subspecies, probably the nominate *agenor* - though I am by no means sure. It might also be a male Scarlet Mormon (*Papilio rumanzovia*) or a *P. rumanzovia* cross as there is a black and red eye just visible on the hindwing. I doubt if there are many people who could categorically state otherwise.

Further discussion here ...

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?t=4831&start=1000#p55833>

It's not always as simple as it looks ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Feb-12 05:21 PM GMT

Oxford University Museum, 30 January 2012 – Part 1

Behind the scenes ...

I have visited the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH) on numerous occasions and in particular have a long-term association with the Department of Entomology, as my good friend Darren Mann holds the position of Assistant Curator and my friend and work colleague Dr John Ismay, Honorary Associate Curator. I have also donated a number of specimens to the collection, including the social wasp *Dolichovespula saxonica* following my discovery of it breeding at two locations in Britain in 1991.



The Hope Entomological Collections are located within the OUMNH and house over 25,000 types and comprises in excess of 5 million specimens of insects, arachnids and myriapods. This, along with its extensive library and historic archives, form one of the most comprehensive and important entomological resources within the United Kingdom. The collections are second only in size and importance to the national insect collection housed at the Natural History Museum, London.



The entrance to another world and time ...



Darren J Mann (Assistant Curator) - The Gov!

The collection began life with the bequest by the Reverend Frederick William Hope (1797–1862) of his entire collection in 1849. The Hope Professors John Westwood (1805–1893), Edward Poulton (1856–1943), Geoffrey Hale Carpenter (1882–1953) and George Varley (1910–1983) also amassed large amounts of material through both their own research and from donations by some of the most prominent entomologists of the day including Charles Swinhoe (1838–1923), James John Walker (1851–1939), Arthur Wallace Pickard–Cambridge (1873–1952), Albert Harry Hamm (1861–1951), Edward Saunders (1848–1910), Bertram Maurice Hobby (1905–1983), Karl Richard Hanitsch (1860–1940), James Charles Dale (1792–1872) and his son Charles William Dale, John Curtis (1791–1862), John Francillon (1744–1816), Pierre André Latreille (1762–1833), Christian Gottfried Nees von Esenbeck (1776–1858), Henri de Saussure (1829–1905), Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) and Thomas Vernon Wollaston (1822–1878).

Of particular significance are:

- Hope–Westwood collections
- Extensive historic collections
- The Verrall–Collin collection of Diptera
- Comprehensive British collections
- The Wytham Woods collections
- The Pickard–Cambridge and Blackwall arachnid collections



Image capture of Lepidoptera types and historic collections

The C. W. and J. C. Dale collection is probably one of the most impressive single collections of British insects, with over 50,000 specimens. This collection includes specimens used by Curtis, Haliday and Stephens in their published works. The Dale collection also contains the famous Bath White (*Pontia daplidice*), reputedly collected in Cambridge in May 1702, which is believed to be the oldest known pinned entomological specimen in the world.



The historic collections housed in the Huxley Room



Chequered Skipper including many English specimens



The new storage system in the Carpenter Room





Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH)

The Hope Department of Entomology is an energetic and vibrant department of dedicated staff and associates, promoting entomology and the collections under their care. The collections, Library and associated archives are a significant world resource that is accessible for research by appointment. Housed in a Grade 1 listed building, which is renowned for its spectacular neo-Gothic architecture, I highly recommend a visit to this wonderful museum ...

Don't miss it ...

<http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/collect/entom.htm>

Re: Mark Colvin

by Padfield, 01-Feb-12 06:23 PM GMT

What a fool – I never visited during the whole of my time in Oxford. I will certainly make an appointment to spend an afternoon there next time I go back to the city of aspiring dreams. Thanks, Mark.

Guy

Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 01-Feb-12 07:09 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Don't miss it ...

Nice to see a plug for my local museum! I used to go to lectures there in my student days and then it was a rather gloomy, though exciting place. A lot has been done in recent years to make the displays much more attractive and informative, and I must agree that it is a 'must see' place!

Whilst there, do not miss the Pitt Rivers Museum of anthropology (reached through the NHM), which must rate as one of the most extraordinary collections in the world. It still retains its dimly-lit 19th century charm and, during a recent restoration, even the old labels were carefully renovated. For a foretaste, see <http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/>

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 01-Feb-12 09:14 PM GMT

That was a highly entertaining and insightful account, Mark. I had absolutely no idea that such a resource existed outside of the Natural History Museum. I read it through a couple of times.....just in case there's a test later 😊 .

Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Feb-12 03:17 AM GMT

Dear Guy, Mike and Vince,

Thanks.

I'm glad you found my post of interest. 😊

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 02-Feb-12 04:16 AM GMT

A fascinating insight that, Mark.

Less is definitely more in your case. 😊

What other secrets do you have for our delectation?

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Feb-12 02:54 AM GMT

Hi David,

Thanks. I'm glad you found my post of interest.

"David M" wrote:

What other secrets do you have for our delectation?

I wonder indeed ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 03-Feb-12 04:37 AM GMT

Likewise, fascinating and I didn't know it existed.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Matsukaze, 03-Feb-12 04:49 AM GMT

I had the chance to look behind the scenes there a few years ago when the British Dragonfly Society held its AGM there. Well worth seeing if you have the opportunity to do so. I remember seeing some of J.C. Dale's specimens including the type specimen of *Oxygastra curtisii* from Dorset where it is now sadly extinct.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Feb-12 06:00 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 2 February 2012 – Part 7a

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January – 26 February 2012)

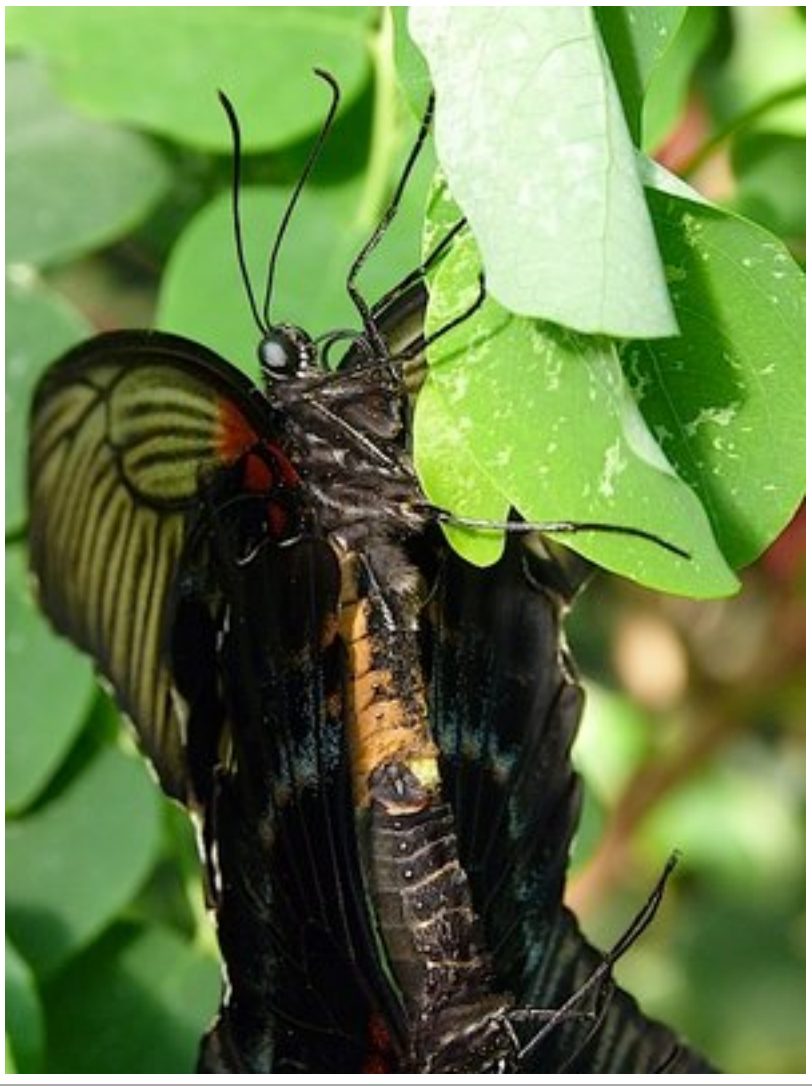
Continued ...

My visit today was targeted at seeing the beautiful Golden Birdwing (*Troides rhadamantus*) as I knew of one that had emerged overnight. Despite searching high and low its resting place was not revealed. Then, just as I was about to leave for home it was discovered, perched high in the tropical foliage, above my head and out of reach. A fabulous sight and one I will remember for some considerable time ...

Today was also about behaviour. During my previous visits, it has been a privilege to observe at close range the courtship and reproductive behaviour of many species. Today was no exception, as I observed at least five different species either joined in copulation or in the act of egg-laying. I was particularly pleased to see a teacher explaining to a small group of captivated young school children what the butterflies were up to, after I had pointed out a pair of mating Asian Swallowtails (*Papilio memnon lowii*) and an egg-laying Owl (*Caligo memnon*) to her. She continued to explain "how lucky they were" to be able to see such behaviour.

How lucky indeed ...

If only I could have experienced this at their age ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Colin Knight, 03-Feb-12 06:58 AM GMT

Mark, it was a privilege to share the experience with you today. Your story about the children demonstrates the value of butterfly houses. By sharing the butterfly story in such a close up and personal way with the next generation we improve our chance of conserving our native species.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Feb-12 07:00 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 2 February 2012 - Part 7b

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

Beauty dressed in black ...



Pink Rose Swallowtail (Pachliopta kotzebuea)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Feb-12 03:39 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 3 February 2012 - Part 8

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

Revelation of colours ...



A rare sight as an Owl (*Caligo memnon*) reveals its colours

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Feb-12 04:52 PM GMT

Oxford University Museum, 30 January 2012 - Part 2

The Aurelian's ...

The first known British specimen of the Bath White (*Pontia daplidice*) was reputedly caught by William Vernon (fl.1660–c1735) at White Wood, near Gamlingay in Cambridgeshire in May 1702. The specimen purporting to be the first, a battered female (pictured below), resides in the Hope Department of Entomology at Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH) through the collections of James Petiver (1663–1718) and James C. Dale (1792–1872). Although 1702 is claimed to be the date of capture of the first specimen (Ford, 1945) and (Howarth, 1973), it would appear that this is in fact incorrect. It is more likely that the specimen in the OUMNH is a specimen subsequently collected. It is nevertheless still believed to be the oldest known pinned entomological specimen in the world.

The most likely date of capture of the first specimen must be before 1699 as Petiver, in the fourth of his *Musei Petiveriani Centuria*, completed on 31st August 1699 and published later the same year, lists *Papilio leucomelanus, subtus viridescens marmoreus*, (black and white butterfly with the underside marbled green) and states "the only one I have seen in England Mr Will Vernon caught in Cambridgeshire". Consequently 1699 is the latest possible date for the capture and there is other evidence to suggest that it may have been in or before 1695.



Bath White (*Pontia daplidice*), Cambridgeshire (circa 1702)

In my opinion it is impossible to separate the history of British butterflies from that of their collectors, as our current knowledge of the butterflies is the result of four hundred years of collection and research by the collectors.

Our attitudes towards collecting butterflies have rightly changed and although this alone, in many circumstances, is unlikely to have caused the loss or decline of treasured species, in other circumstances it may well have been instrumental in the species demise.

Our knowledge of the entomological world continues to grow partly, at least, through responsible collecting, but this often requires specimens to be killed. This is far less likely with our beloved Lepidoptera though essential with many of the other insect groups where accurate identification often requires microscopic examination of a non-moving insect. Inevitably this usually means that the insect will be dead. There is also the requirement for a voucher specimen(s), which can be referred to in cases of future doubt or for further research. This last point requires that the collector make responsible and appropriate arrangements for the preservation of his research efforts after he has ceased to care for them.

Death, like it or not, is an integral element of many aspects of detailed entomological research. Providing it is justified and we learn from our studies in order to better conserve for the benefit of future generations, then I support it. However, if for monetary gain or to seek personal pleasure as a collector of large series of the same insect, in the same way as perhaps a philatelist may with small squares of pristine coloured paper set neatly in rows in an album, it cannot and must not be justified without challenge ...

There will always be winners and losers. Man does play God and this is even reflected in our own conservation efforts where we manage sites to benefit certain species at the inevitable cost of others.

Food for thought ...



Images copyright OUMNH, photographed by Katherine Child.

Further discussion here ...

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=6041&p=56073#p56073>

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-Feb-12 01:03 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 6 February 2012 - Part 9a

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

With the temptation that freshly emerged Golden Birdwings maybe flying, I managed a quick visit to my 'second home' early today and wasn't disappointed. General flight activity was significantly less than usual and I attributed this to the reduction in glasshouse temperature (though it was still hot) and lack of any sunshine on what was a cold and overcast day. Having taken the pictures I was after, my spirits were lifted further after bumping into Susie. As we put the world to right over a coffee the sun slowly started to push through the clouds.

My time was up and I said farewell ...



Golden Birdwing (male), (*Troides rhadamantus*)



Golden Birdwing (male), (Troides rhadamantus)



Golden Birdwing (male), (Troides rhadamantus)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Rogerdodge, 08-Feb-12 01:33 AM GMT

.....and lack of any sunshine on what was a cold and overcast day.

And don't your photos look all the better for it.
No harsh shadows, no shine off leaves, and low contrast.
Lovely photographs Mark
Thanks for sharing.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-Feb-12 04:12 AM GMT

Hi Roger,

Thanks for your message.

"Rogerdodge" wrote:
Lovely photographs Mark

I'm glad you like the pictures and totally agree with your comments. 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-Feb-12 05:55 AM GMT

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

It's a bit difficult to follow pictures of the fabulous Golden Birdwing but here goes anyway.

The best of the rest ...



Hypolimnastis sp. (female)



Zebra Longwing or Zebra Heliconian (Heliconius charithonia)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 08-Feb-12 06:08 AM GMT

Hi Mark.

Lovely photos again, i hope to see more of the same standard in the spring, when the British butterflies start to emerge, [as i`m sure you will deliver]

All the best,

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-Feb-12 08:28 PM GMT

RHS Wisley, 7 February 2012 - Part 10

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Resplendent in all her glory.

A female Golden Birdwing dries her wings and waits ...



Golden Birdwing (female), (Troides rhadamantus)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 09-Feb-12 03:24 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 7 February 2012 - Part 11

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Searching for sapphires.

The magnificent Blue Morpho ...



Peleides Blue Morpho (Morpho peleides)



Peleides Blue Morpho (Morpho peleides)



Achilles Morpho or Blue-banded Morpho (Morpho achilles)





Achilles Morpho or Blue-banded Morpho (*Morpho achilles*)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Feb-12 07:30 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 10 February 2012 - Part 12

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

The *Kallima* (Leafwing) controversy ...

The Leafwing or Oak Leaf butterflies are a genus of butterflies in the family Nymphalidae. They are found in India, Burma, China, Thailand, Java, Sumatra and other areas of southeast Asia. At least five species, including *Kallima inachus*, are found on the Indian subcontinent. There are at least ten different species (subject to taxonomic interpretation) and a number of subspecies. Their common name refers to the dead leaf like appearance of the ventral surface of their wings. Further to a number of queries on the UKB forum regarding the correct identification of the *Kallima* species currently flying at Wisley, I decided to investigate further. During a recent visit to Oxford I examined and requested photographs of the collection in order to provide some clarity. A literature search was also undertaken. Though undoubtedly a little difficult, I personally feel that the following descriptions and images clearly show the differences between these two species.

The following descriptions of *inachis* and *paralekta* are by Frederic Moore, F.Z.S. in *Descriptions of the species of the Lepidopterous genus Kallima. Transactions of the Entomological Society of London, 1879 (1) : 9-15.*

Kallima inachus

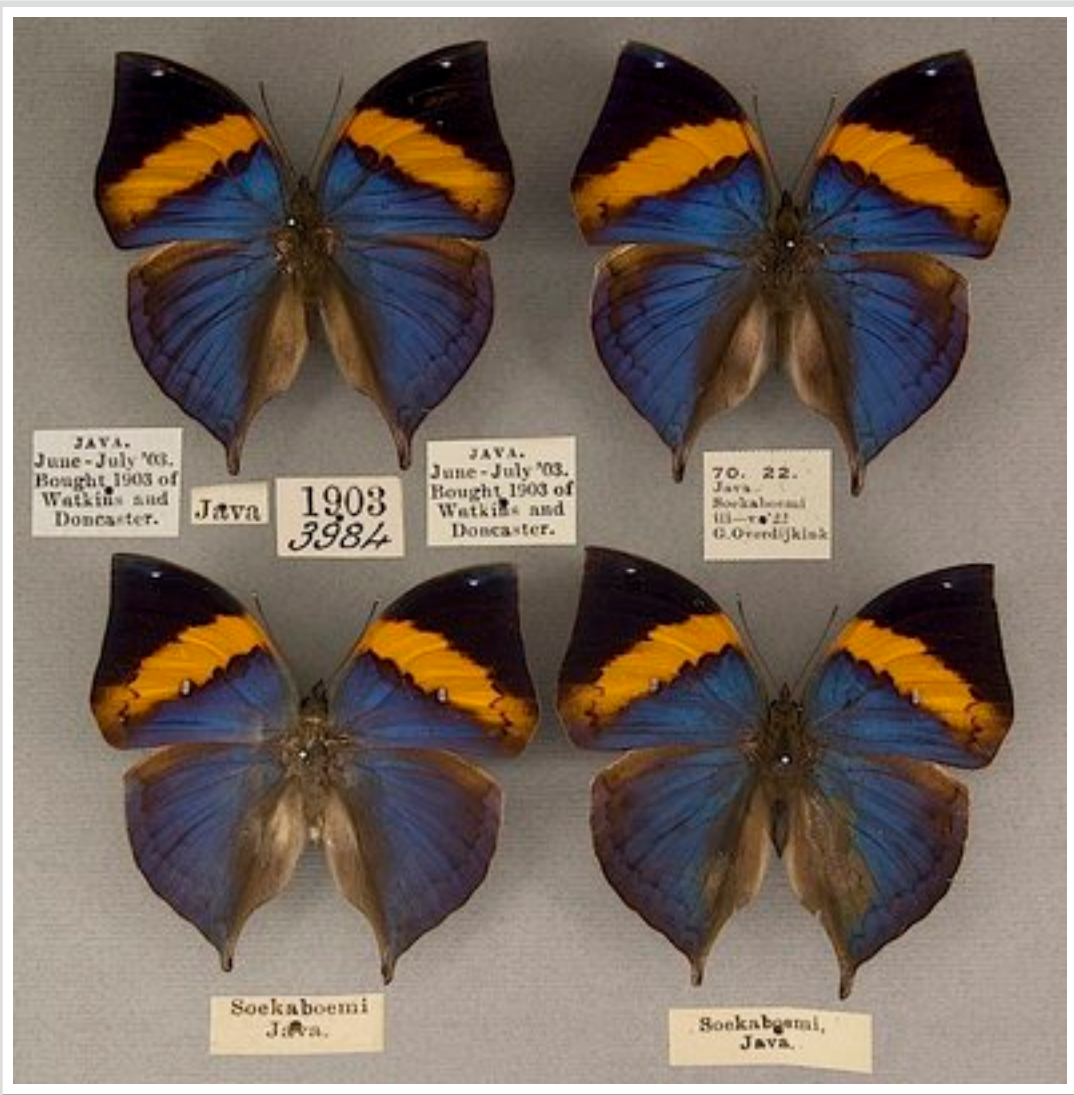
A large, dark, bright violet-blue, prominently-marked species; the forewing with broad fulvous band extending to the outer margin; the outer borders of the hindwing paler and prominently marked with short brown strigae. Forewing with a short apical point in male and a very prolonged one in female; discal hyaline spot larger than in the other species. Underside ochreous-brown, vinous tinted, minutely brown speckled; rib line indistinct.





Kallima paralecta

Male. Forewing with an oblique uniformly narrow fulvous band, its inner border terminating at posterior angle; basal area and hindwing deep blue. Female, with bluish-purple white band, basal area and hindwing dark rufous-brown; discal hyaline spot in both sexes small and oval.





Images copyright OUMNH, photographed by Katherine Child.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Feb-12 04:20 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 10 February 2012 - Part 13

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

The beautiful Scarlet Swallowtail ...



Scarlet Swallowtail (male), (*Papilio rumanzovia*)



Scarlet Swallowtail (female), (*Papilio rumanzovia*)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Feb-12 02:00 AM GMT

Chanctonbury Ring, 12 February 2012

It's only a 40-minute walk ...

The need for fresh air and exercise took me to Chanctonbury Ring in West Sussex early this afternoon. My son, having recently completed a Duke of Edinburgh hike in the area, recommended the route (only 40 minutes he said!). I should have known better ...

The steep track leading through the woodland to the top was ice-covered and very slippery. Snow covered much of the summit. Visibility was poor. A stand of blackthorn just before the main entrance to the ring looked worthy of investigation, as indeed did a good sized south facing block near to the beginning of our decent. However, the cold wind and diminishing light kept us walking leaving closer inspection for another day.

In all fairness you probably could have got round in 40 minutes, if you had been on a mountain bike or ran! An hour and a half later and with much reduced visibility the end of a chilly but very pleasant walk was reached ...

I must check that blackthorn ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 13-Feb-12 03:37 AM GMT

Goodness, that looks bleak! It can be a spooky place at the best of times.

I like Chanctonbury Ring alot. I last was going to go up there a few weeks back but I judged the path too slippery to risk on my own about a third of the way up and turned back. You're braver than me to tackle it in the snow and ice.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Colin Knight, 13-Feb-12 07:21 AM GMT

Agreed, that is a great shot Mark!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 14-Feb-12 12:09 AM GMT

Dear Susie and Colin,

Thank you for your comments.

"Susie" wrote:

Goodness, that looks bleak! It can be a spooky place at the best of times.

In all fairness Susie it wasn't quite that bleak (its amazing what the sepia function can do) but I can see what you mean about it possibly being a little spooky at times.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 14-Feb-12 12:52 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 13 February 2012 - Part 14

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

The Malachite ...



Malachite (Siproeta stelenes)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Colin Knight, 14-Feb-12 01:30 AM GMT

Stunning photo!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Feb-12 03:05 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 13 February 2012 - Part 15

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

The Common Mormon ...



Common Mormon (male), (Papilio polytes ssp.)



Common Mormon (female), (Papilio polytes ssp.)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Gibster, 16-Feb-12 07:22 AM GMT

We had dozens and dozens of Malachites roosting in the mango trees outside our shack in Nicaragua a couple of years ago. The first time I'd witnessed mud-puddling too, although that was of different species. Absolutely stunning, what with Morphos flying along the dry riverbeds and beautiful, big skippers buzzing through the grasslands. Glorious times, we were mostly birdwatching, but it's impossible not to notice the butterflies. And the ants...but that's a different story...

Gibster.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Feb-12 05:54 PM GMT

Hi Seth,

Thank you for your message.

You paint a fabulous picture. It must have been a wonderful experience. Although I've worked in western Africa and travelled throughout India and parts of America on several occasions, I've never visited South America. My son and I are keen to go and we've made a promise to visit after he completes his schooling and exams. Costa Rica is on top of our list at present. Although I've thoroughly enjoyed seeing and photographing the butterflies at Wisley, to encounter them in their natural environment would be a truly great experience. 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Feb-12 06:50 PM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 15 February 2012

Feeling the strain ...

It's been just over four weeks since my last work party attendance at Heyshott Escarpment. A bout of man flu for two weeks (obviously seriously ill) followed by work party cancellations due to unfavourable weather conditions, meant today was hard going though rewarding.

Colin Knight, Carol Mortimer, Tom Parker and my son James Colvin flying the flag for Butterfly Conservation, and three members of the Murray Downland Trust joined me for a serious session of bramble clearance involving sweat, determination and hard work. After a slow start, at least by me, we continued to make good progress and were rewarded with a beautiful day of blue sky and golden winter sunshine.

It's great to be back ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Gibster, 16-Feb-12 08:11 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Colin Knight, Carol Mortimer, Tom Parker and my son James Colvin flying the flag for Butterfly Conservation, and three members of the Murray Downland Trust joined me for a serious session of bramble clearance

Mark, that man-flu obviously took a heavy toll on you...either you've shrunk to about 3 inches in height or that is some seriously BIG bramble you're sawing your way through!!! 😊

(PS - Remember those safety rules - it's skin to bow saw, not glove to bow saw)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Feb-12 04:28 PM GMT

RHS Wisley, 20 February 2012 - Part 16

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

The Clipper ...



Clipper (Parthenos sylvia ssp.)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 22-Feb-12 01:57 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 21 February 2012 - Part 17

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Continued ...

The Orange-banded Shoemaker ...



Orange-banded Shoemaker (male), (Catonephele orites)



Orange-banded Shoemaker (male), (Catonephele orites)



Orange-banded Shoemaker (female), (Catonephele orites)





Orange-banded Shoemaker (female), (Catonephele orites)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-Feb-12 03:23 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 22 February 2012

Blood, sweat but no tears ...

Late as usual, it was good to see Neil return to Heyshott from his tropical hideaway. Having spent the last couple of weeks obviously lying under a sun lamp perfecting his 'Dickinson's Real Deal' tan whilst sipping cheap booze by the pool, he was soon back into conservation overdrive ...

In addition to Neil, Colin Knight and four members of the Murray Downland Trust joined me for another session of bramble and hazel removal, made somewhat more difficult by previous scrub 'clearance' found rotting on the hill. It was a positive sight to see evidence of early primrose growth.

After another slow start we made good progress.

Roll on next week ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 23-Feb-12 05:54 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

just caught up with your post, Butterflies in the glasshouse.

Some more lovely pictures, that Orange-Banded Shoemaker is a stunning butterfly.

All the best,

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 23-Feb-12 06:40 AM GMT

"hideandseek" wrote:

that Orange-Banded Shoemaker is a stunning butterfly.

Isn't it just? I wonder what it looks like in flight. Must be quite a spectacle.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Feb-12 03:03 AM GMT

Dear Nick and David,

Thank you for your messages.

"David M" wrote:

I wonder what it looks like in flight. Must be quite a spectacle.

Spectacle is probably a little grand.

I deliberately made a point of watching a female in flight earlier today. If I was pushed to compare its flight pattern to a British butterfly the Small Tortoiseshell immediately comes to mind. I suppose this is not that surprising as the Orange-banded Shoemaker is also a Nymphalid. The male didn't show today, though I doubt its beautiful dorsal side would be that visible in flight. I'll keep a look out ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Feb-12 03:40 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 23 February 2012 - Part 18

Continued ...

The Malachite (revisited) ...



Malachite (Siproeta stelenes)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 24-Feb-12 03:58 AM GMT

Bl**dy hell. Love that! Perfect 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 24-Feb-12 05:01 AM GMT

Lovely shot. I've never noticed the white lower wing pouches before.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 24-Feb-12 05:16 AM GMT

The background definitely complements the butterfly Mark, a gorgeous photo.

All the best.

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Feb-12 05:27 AM GMT

Dear Susie, David and Nick,

Thank you for your very generous comments.

"Susie" wrote:

Bl**dy hell. Love that! Perfect.

Thanks Susie. I'll make the assumption you liked it then! 😊 😊

"David M" wrote:

Lovely shot. I've never noticed the white lower wing pouches before.

Glad you like the shot. I can't honestly say I've ever noticed the white lower wing pouches before.

"hideandseek" wrote:

The background definitely complements the butterfly Mark, a gorgeous photo.

Thanks Nick. 😊😊

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Feb-12 01:20 AM GMT

RHS Wisley, 23 February 2012 - Part 19

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (14 January - 26 February 2012)

Aberrant Morpho ...

I was rather pleased to receive an email yesterday from Nigel Kemp regarding an aberrant form of the Peleides Blue Morpho (*Morpho peleides*). The eye-spots on the hind wing have blurred and are virtually non-existent on the forewing.

Nigel kindly supplied the following image and I have also posted a picture of a typical underside for comparison.

One I missed ... and there weren't many!



Aberrant Peleides Blue Morpho (*Morpho peleides*)



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-Feb-12 06:54 AM GMT

Blenheim Palace, 26 February 2012

In search of leviathans ...

Home to the 11th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, Blenheim Palace is the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill (1874–1965) and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Palace was a gift from Queen Anne and a grateful nation to John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough following his famous victory at the Battle of Blenheim in 1704. Situated in Woodstock, just 8 miles from Oxford, Blenheim Palace is surrounded by over 2,000 acres of Capability Brown landscaped parkland, the great lake (formed by damming the River Glyme) and beautiful formal gardens. Today my eyes were set firmly on the lake and its predatory inhabitants ...

The journey ahead of us required an early start. My fishing partner, Dave Wilkins, arrived at 4.15am and by 4.20am we were loaded and driving. By 7am, boat launched, we had cast our first line and were waiting in anticipation. Unlike the early morning Kingfisher, which had flown fast and low over the water whilst rewarding us with the beauty of its iridescent plumage, our day had been without capture.

After a long and pleasurable session we arrived back at the boathouse, tired though enriched.

Our day will come ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 27-Feb-12 04:58 PM GMT

A bit of useless information; the title Duke of Marlborough was recycled by Queen Anne. It was held previously by some of my ancestors for a short while until we ran out of male heirs!

Edit: My mistake, my lot were Earls and not Dukes! lol

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-Feb-12 05:17 PM GMT

Does this mean we have to call you Ma'am?

"Susie" wrote:

A bit of useless information; the title Duke of Marlborough was recycled by Queen Anne. It was held previously by **some of my ancestors** for a short while until we ran out of male heirs!

I'd never of guessed! 😊

Sadly no fish hugging pictures today.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 27-Feb-12 08:41 PM GMT

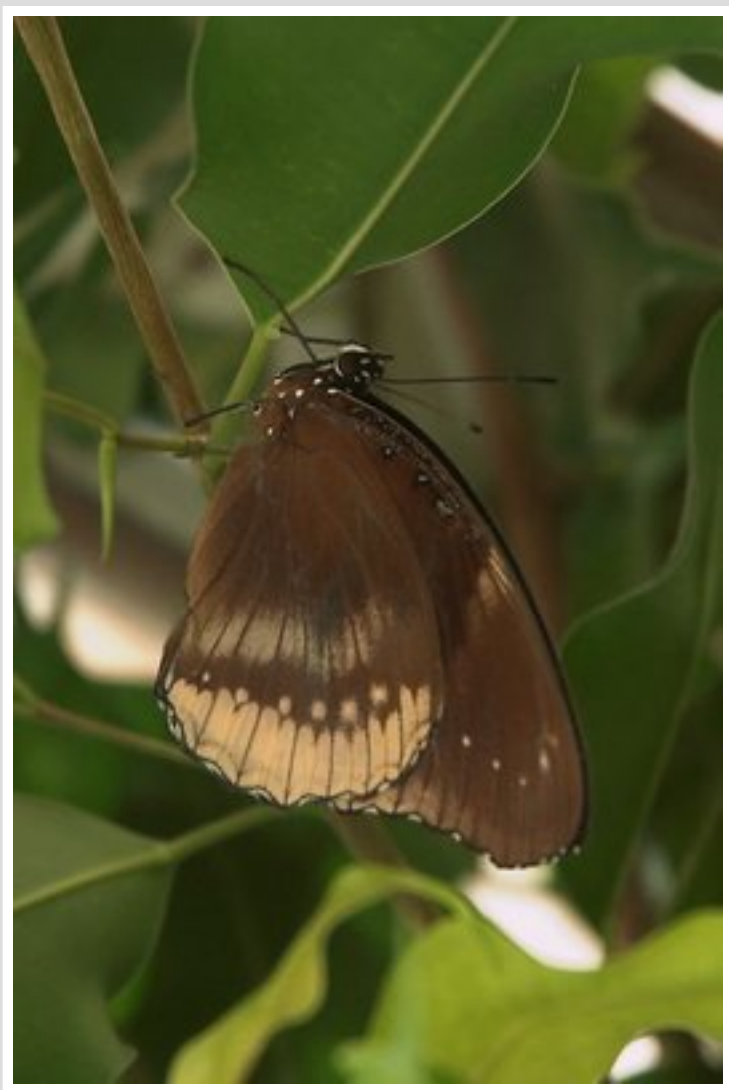
Blenheim Palace

Blenheim also has a small butterfly house at the South end of the miniature railway near the palace. It makes a pleasant warm retreat in Winter, when looking for Hawfinches, which frequent the trees around the formal gardens! The collection contains the usual selection for this type of place:



Blenheim Butterfly House

When I was there, there weren't many species to be seen, although there were several colourful finches – which may account for the shortage of butterflies!



Danaid sp.? Blenheim Palace – 7th March 2011 Nikon D300s with 18–70 lens at 70mm– 1/90s@f/4.5 ISO400

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-Feb-12 09:56 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

"MikeOxon" wrote:

Blenheim also has a small butterfly house at the South end of the miniature railway near the palace.

Already noted ... 😊

Thanks.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by ChrisC, 28-Feb-12 02:36 AM GMT

my old man used to tell me many a story about "woodstock" the clear water and indeed tales of uncaptured leviathans. Bought back good memories. ANd it's one place i'd like to go to see the work of capability brown.

Chris

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Feb-12 10:06 PM GMT

Hi Chris,

Thanks for your message.

"ChrisC" wrote:
tales of uncaptured leviathans

Nothings changed there then ... 😞

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 29-Feb-12 02:20 AM GMT

Pagham Harbour, 28 February 2012

A bird in the bush (or in this case a reed bed) ...

The Paddyfield Warbler (*Acrocephalus agricola*) breeds in temperate central Asia. It is a migratory species, typically wintering in Pakistan east to Assam, in southern Nepal and India. It is a rare vagrant to Western Europe, although there are small breeding populations along the western shores of the Black Sea around the border between Bulgaria and Romania. There have been less than 100 records in the UK since 1925, when a male was recorded from Fair Isle, Shetland on the 26th September. The Pagham Harbour bird is the first known record for West Sussex.

Early this morning, joined by Colin Knight, I headed down to the North Wall at Pagham Harbour in West Sussex in the hope of connecting with the long staying bird that has been showing well over several weeks. We arrived at 9.30am. The weather was overcast with a cool westerly breeze blowing gently across the mudflats. As we walked along the sea wall from Church Lane, Water Rail and Cetti's Warbler were heard calling. On reaching the second bend we met up with other birders, some of whom had seen the bird earlier. We waited and watched ...

At around 11.45 I located our target as it perched, albeit briefly, on a tall *Phragmites* stem. For the next hour we watched as it occasionally flew up out of the reeds to catch an insect and drop back down and out of sight once more. It eventually showed quite well and at one point it even moved through the reeds no more than a few metres away, though it rarely stayed still and kept moving into cover.

For those who drool and get excited over such things, Canon 7Ds and 600mm lenses attached to Gitzo tripods was the 'big gun' weaponry of the day. Not wanting to show anyone up, I kept my Lumix discreetly out of sight ...

<http://www.pbase.com/dophoto/cannaiolajerdon>





Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 29-Feb-12 02:26 AM GMT

A cracking read Mark and a bird I'd love to have on my list 🍷 but after 5 lifers so far this year I mustn't be too greedy 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 29-Feb-12 06:40 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I had a strange feeling I might hear from your good self. 😊

As driving all the way to Gwent was out of the question (obviously not hardcore enough), today was a toss up between the Warbler or popping down to Hampshire for the Spanish Sparrow and the Junco. I decided to go for the LBJ as I felt it would be the harder one to get plus I didn't really fancy the longer drive.

Maybe later this week ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Mar-12 04:22 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 29 February 2012

A fragrant breeze ...

Today, as we climbed the hill leading to our work area, one couldn't help but notice the signs of spring, including the fresh aroma and beauty of the primroses pushing through the previous season's undergrowth. It is wishful thinking to hope, that the large area our small team has cleared this past winter, will be covered in primulas this coming season. In reality, this will probably take several springs but rest assured it will happen and the air above will be filled with insects. In the meantime one can only dream and wait in anticipation.

In addition to Neil, Colin Knight and seven members of the Murray Downland Trust joined me today for another productive work party. After today's session, there are just four remaining dates scheduled for this season. On my way home from Heyshott I popped in to my local wood where the wild daffodils, bluebells and primroses are starting to show. The ground in places scattered with snowdrops ...

Roll on next week ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 09-Mar-12 07:59 AM GMT

Plaistow, 8 March 2012

Amphibious activity ...

Overnight and as if by magic my pond is once again awash with frogspawn. Every year I keep a close watch for returning Common Frogs (*Rana temporaria*), their presence often betrayed by their calling.

Generally emerging from hibernation in late February spawning typically takes place in my pond in early March, though in some seasons the frogs emerge sooner and spawn as early as January. The females are ready to spawn immediately after hibernation and the animals enter into amplexus (the term describing the act of the smaller male clasping the female underneath in a nuptial embrace) very soon after arriving at their breeding sites. The spawn is laid in clumps and typically consists of 300–400 gelatinous eggs containing tiny black embryos. As the female lays her eggs the male expels sperm to fertilize them. The very young tadpoles are black but soon become speckled brown in colouration making them distinguishable from the permanently black tadpoles of the Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*). The tadpoles develop throughout the summer and emerge as tiny froglets in wet weather during August or September.

I recently read an article describing *R. temporaria* activity in the French Alps. I was particularly interested to note that cold-climate frogs grow far more slowly than their relatives in temperate areas, but typically live much longer (12 years, compared to 5 for lowland frogs) and grow somewhat larger. They are also active during the warmer daylight hours unlike their cousins elsewhere. Though egg laying occurs in spring, frog pairs in mountain habitats can begin hibernation in amplexus which may possibly provide a reproductive advantage by allowing mating as quickly as possible once warm weather arrives. Eggs of high-elevation frogs may also be 30% larger than those of lowland females, giving the tadpoles a head start.

Another sign of spring ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Mar-12 03:52 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 12 March 2012

Dukes on the Edge ...

The Duke of Burgundy is one of the UK's fastest declining butterflies, having suffered a population drop of 35% from 1979 to 2008. It has disappeared from at least 153 of its former known sites. Butterfly Conservation's '*The Dukes on the Edge*' project (2011–2014) is targeting an area in the South East of England where the rapidly declining butterfly is clinging to survival.

Heyshott Escarpment, located within a small corner of the South Downs National Park, is one of the Duke's few remaining strongholds. However, this is only being achieved by the continuing conservation efforts of a small group of dedicated individuals under the guidance and leadership of Neil Hulme (Sussex Butterfly Conservation) and ecologist Mike Edwards (The Murray Downland Trust). Work, undertaken by volunteers in both Kent and Sussex, has shown that populations can recover where appropriate habitat management is implemented and this is the trend currently being observed at Heyshott. The Duke of Burgundy is reliant on scrubby calcareous grassland and sunny woodland clearings where its eggs are deposited on cowslip, or primrose in more wooded environments. Changes in the nature of agricultural and forestry practices have led to required habitats becoming overgrown and consequently unsuitable. As the Duke has struggled to find the food plants it needs to breed and prosper, it has sadly become extinct across much of its former range in the UK.

Butterfly Conservation is leading the fight to save this fascinating butterfly and through the *Dukes on the Edge* project aims:

- To assess the status of the Duke of Burgundy and its habitat
- To maintain and enhance existing habitat and create new Duke of Burgundy habitat (e.g. through coppicing, ride management, scrub management)
- Undertake reintroductions on selected sites
- Monitoring the impact of management on habitat condition and the butterfly's population.

Project activities:

- Public events to raise awareness of the conservation importance of the South Downs for the Duke of Burgundy
- The creation of a 'Dukes on the Edge Action Group'.
- Mapping of the locations of managed habitat, together with Duke of Burgundy records on GIS
- Training events for volunteers to enable them to participate in conservation tasks, surveying and monitoring

Please support the Duke in your area ...



Eastern sector (looking north) of Heyshott Escarpment

Re: Mark Colvin

by Gibster, 13-Mar-12 05:00 AM GMT

Wow. That is a very sobering photo you've posted, Mark.

It shows a very small, yet massively isolated habitat with no hope of surviving in it's current state without ongoing human management. A statement which doubtless holds true for many of the plant and invertebrate communities within.

Photos like that just emphasise the importance of maintaining (or failing that, creating) such hugely threatened sites for the continued survival of the species reliant upon them. The Duke is, of course, a perfect flagship species for the cause. I don't generally advocate reintroductions, but lets face it...there really isn't much option in a landscape such as that.

It's a sad scene, I'm just pleased to know that the practical conservationists are out there doing their bit for the environment. A pity there aren't more like-minded, able-bodied people willing to give it a go. And Bravo to all those who do.

Gibster.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 13-Mar-12 05:49 AM GMT

Don't worry too much about this particular case Gibster. We are working with various other parties in the area (FC, Graffham Down Trust, South Downs National Park Authority etc) to create habitat corridors through Charlton Forest immediately south of the improved meadow at the bottom of the frame, connecting to the Graffham Down Trust Reserve a couple of Kms to the east. In conjunction with the recently launched 'Dukes on the Edge' project, the work that's been going on for many years at Branch level will link sites all the way along the Downs from East Hampshire to the far side of West Sussex. If it's not done on this landscape scale it will only delay the inevitable.

Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Gibster, 13-Mar-12 05:55 AM GMT

Aah! Well, why didn't you say so earlier!! 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 14-Mar-12 02:16 AM GMT

Hi Seth,

Many thanks for your considered message. I'm glad my picture provoked a response in you and I hope it generated a similar feeling in others, especially as I was hanging out of a helicopter at around 1000 feet when I took it!

As Neil has already pointed out, the situation here is not as bad as it may first appear from my picture, as this site does not sit in total isolation from others. In addition, Butterfly Conservation, along with a number of other organisations and committed individuals, are working hard to ensure the Duke's survival. It is a sad fact that *"without ongoing human management"* this site, and indeed many others, would not exist in the form it does today. Whether we create scrapes for waders, burn heather for the benefits of red grouse or flood water meadows for wintering wildfowl (one could go on) man does and always will manage the environment for the benefit of some and to the disadvantage of others. We have of course been doing this since man first started to farm the land.

I have only been involved in the conservation efforts at Heyshott Escarpment since last year. I find our work extremely addictive and in my own small way feel I am giving a little something back. I certainly believe that what we are doing is good and right.

Thanks again.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 14-Mar-12 04:23 AM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Hi Seth,

Many thanks for your considered message. I'm glad my picture provoked a response in you and I hope it generated a similar feeling in others, especially as I was hanging out of a helicopter at around 1000 feet when I took it!

I did wonder how you'd managed to attain so much elevation. Fair play, to take that photo yourself demanded courage (and probably more than a few shekels).

Excellent image.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 14-Mar-12 05:52 AM GMT

Hi David,

Many thanks for your kind comments. I'm glad you liked the picture.

"David M" wrote:

Fair play, to take that photo yourself demanded courage (and probably more than a few shekels).

Fortunately not a single shekel, just a good friend with a rather nice toy.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 14-Mar-12 06:01 AM GMT

Thank you Mark for opening my eyes a little wider. It's very easy to enjoy butterflies, and very easy to be fooled by the "multitudes" that we see during the season which does make it difficult sometimes to realise how threatened some species actually are. Your writings have made me think ahead to the new season where I will now watch and observe more, record more and try where possible to tread more lightly.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 14-Mar-12 06:06 AM GMT

Park Corner Heath Reserve, 13 March 2012

Billy no mates ...

Early this afternoon I joined Colin Knight for a stroll around BCs Park Corner Heath Reserve in East Sussex. Spurred on by the Brimstones, Commas and Peacocks recently reported, we had high hopes. Despite 'The Great Awakening' of yesterday we were greeted only with 'The Great Sleep' of today. I do sometimes wonder if Neil takes along his own tame butterflies and then packs them up and takes them home in readiness for another day ...

Despite the lack of butterflies, we enjoyed a very pleasant walk around this super reserve where wonders have been accomplished in opening up the woodland in readiness for the coming season. Our spirits were lifted as we observed at least seven pairs of Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*) in amplexus. Several strings of spawn were noted. A lone specimen, apparently not invited to the party, was found wrapped in dry leaves under a sheet of corrugated iron.

We didn't see the sun on what turned out to be a fairly cool afternoon.

Maybe tomorrow ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 15-Mar-12 05:48 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Thank you for your very kind message.

"Wurzel" wrote:

Thank you Mark for opening my eyes a little wider. It's very easy to enjoy butterflies, and very easy to be fooled by the "multitudes" that we see during the season which does make it difficult sometimes to realise how threatened some species actually are. Your writings have made me think ahead to the new season where I will now watch and observe more, record more and try where possible to tread more lightly.

I can ask no more.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Mar-12 02:58 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 14 March 2012

Antzzzzzzz ...

After a rather cold and overcast morning the sun finally emerged through the clouds at around 1.30pm. This was just the excuse I needed. By 2pm I was walking through Oaken Wood and heading deeper into the Chiddingfold Forest complex. Despite my best efforts, the blue sky and warming sun failed to arouse any butterflies. However, all was not lost, as there is always something to observe and today I was drawn, as often before, to the multitudes of ants going about their business.

Formica rufa is one of four British species of wood ant and is confined to England and Wales. There is some indication that there has been a contraction of its range in recent years especially in northern, central and eastern England and also in areas of Wales. In many parts of its southern range the species is still locally common and even expanding in some regions. The apparent indication of a contraction of the range may be due, in part, to a lack of recording effort in certain areas. There is also a possibility that some historical records for this species in northern and central Britain have arisen through confusion with *Formica lugubris*, due to an overlap of the two species range in northern England. The large nest mounds of *F. rufa* will no doubt be familiar to many people. They are composed of numerous tiny fragments of vegetation collected by the worker caste. There may be up to 400,000 individuals in a single nest. Occasionally, several nests may be interconnected, forming one large mega-colony. Where *F. rufa* is present in any numbers it can have a significant influence on the ecology of its woodland habitat. The ants are major predators and scavengers of woodland insects and feed extensively on aphid honeydew. Their colonies also support a wide range of myrmecophilous arthropods.

It should be pointed out that it can be a risky business getting too close to their nest. Some may even say foolhardy. It is most certainly not an act for the fainthearted as the ants react extremely quickly and aggressively to any intruder in their midst.

They do bite ...

I can vouch for that ...



Formica rufa, Chiddingfold Forest (14 March 2012)

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 16-Mar-12 03:09 AM GMT

They sure look pretty nasty, Mark.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Mar-12 04:43 PM GMT

Sussex BC Spring Social, 17 March 2012

Uncharted territory ...

Passport and visas packed, phrase book at the ready, today started off with a long drive across the border into the darkest depths of East Sussex. Robertsbridge Community Hall was my destination for the Spring Social of Sussex Butterfly Conservation.

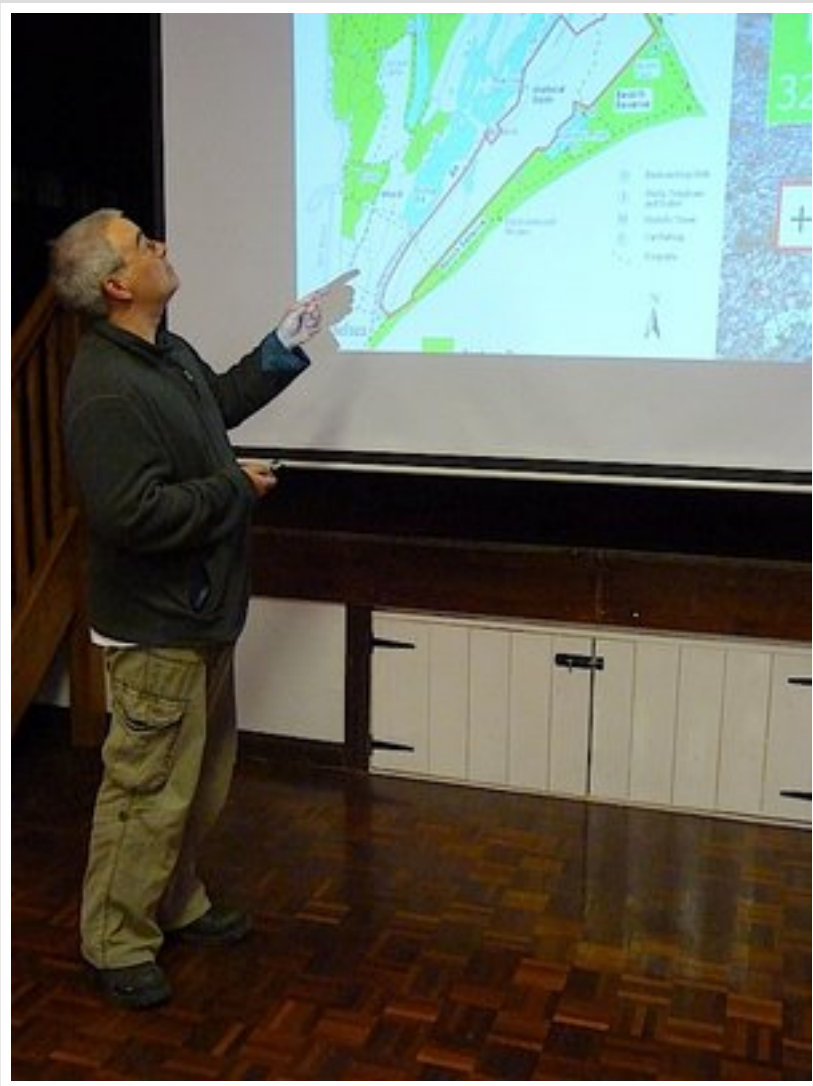
After the usual welcome and announcements Michael Blencowe, our resident speaker, gave a detailed and humorous presentation on progress to date of the Sussex Butterfly Atlas. The Sussex Butterfly Atlas project was launched in 2010. It is the aim of Sussex Butterfly Conservation to map the distribution of the butterflies of Sussex over the five-year period 2010–2014. An incredible 80,000 records have been received and processed to date. After a short break for tea and raffle, Heather Martin, representing the Rother Guardians, gave a brief presentation of activities. Chris Bentley, our guest speaker, then spoke of the lepidoptera and habitat types to be found at the 326 hectare Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, which is one of the most important conservation sites on the Sussex coast. Rye Harbour Nature Reserve has been recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area for birds, a Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive and a candidate Ramsar site that takes account of its importance as a wetland on an international scale. Chris has been Warden on the reserve since 2004.

<http://www.wildrye.info>

A pleasant way to spend a wet afternoon ...



Michael Blencowe discussing the Sussex Butterfly Atlas



Chris Bentley from Rye Harbour Nature Reserve



Re: Mark Colvin

by ChrisC, 18-Mar-12 05:00 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Sussex BC Spring Social, 17 March 2012

Passport and visas packed, phrase book at the ready, today started off with a long drive across the border into the darkest depths of East Sussex. Robertsbridge Community Hall was my destination for the Spring Social of Sussex Butterfly Conservation.

any duty free? 😊 it is cracking reserve, have been there a couple of times. Isaw my first lizard of any description there and if i remember correctly i think i had my first corn bunting there too.

all the best

Chris

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 18-Mar-12 06:33 PM GMT

Great report, Mark. It was lovely to see you and other familiar faces again ready for the new season.

Now I just need to see a butterfly

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Mar-12 04:02 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 19 March 2012 - Part 1

Wisley revisited (well not quite) ...

I awoke to a clear blue sky and golden sunshine. Despite a frosty start, a Red Admiral fluttering against the window of my east facing study bode well for a good day ahead.

I had previously agreed to meet Colin and Susie at Earnley Butterflies near Chichester in West Sussex. After "Butterflies in the Glasshouse" at Wisley, I wasn't expecting too much and to be fair, it would be wrong to compare them. Wisley is blessed with its fabulous cathedral-like glasshouse, equal in size to ten tennis courts and rising some 12 metres (40 feet) in height, with its display exhibited over two levels. Entering the glasshouse is like walking into a jungle - tree ferns, tall palms, lush-leaved creepers and dazzling flower displays give an air of expectation and impending drama. In comparison, Earnley comprises of one very small glasshouse with a selection of nectar sources and feed stations and a small pond located in one corner. However, Earnley provided a selection of species previously unseen and due to their more restricted flight zone, photo opportunities were readily forthcoming.

A rainy day may find me there again ...



Common Olivewing (male), (*Nessaea aglaura*)



Common Olivewing (male), (Nessaea aglaura)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 20-Mar-12 04:53 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

That Common Olivewing is a stunning butterfly, and you have captured its beauty perfectly. A lovely photo.

All the best,

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 20-Mar-12 06:24 AM GMT

Cracking photos, Mark 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Mar-12 07:04 AM GMT

Dear Nick and Susie,

Many thanks for your very kind comments. 😊

More pictures to follow ...

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Mar-12 04:17 PM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 19 March 2012 - Part 2

Continued ...

The Angled Castor (*Ariadne ariadne*).



Angled Castor (Ariadne ariadne)



Angled Castor (Ariadne ariadne)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Lee Hurrell, 20-Mar-12 05:34 PM GMT

Cracking Olivewing, Mark. What a beautiful butterfly, on both sides.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Mark Colvin

by Padfield, 20-Mar-12 11:42 PM GMT

That *Ariadne ariadne* brings back memories, Mark! In 2010 I watched its close cousin, *Ariadne merione*, in the cemetery in Kolkata where my grandfather is buried. It was impossible to get anywhere near and invariably settled in deep shade when it did pause a moment (from this behaviour and its general appearance I wasn't even sure if I wasn't looking at a moth initially), so all my photos were rubbish. It looks as though your (brilliant) pictures were taken out of the direct sun too.

Guy

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Mar-12 03:34 AM GMT

Hi Guy,

Many thanks for your extremely generous comment. 😊

In fairness, there wasn't a great deal of shelter from the sun in the glasshouse though I do recall these two shots were taken in more protected areas away from direct sunlight. I'm not a lover of taking pictures in very bright conditions and feel you generally get a much better picture without it.

I'm glad my pictures of *Ariadne* stimulated the memory bank!

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

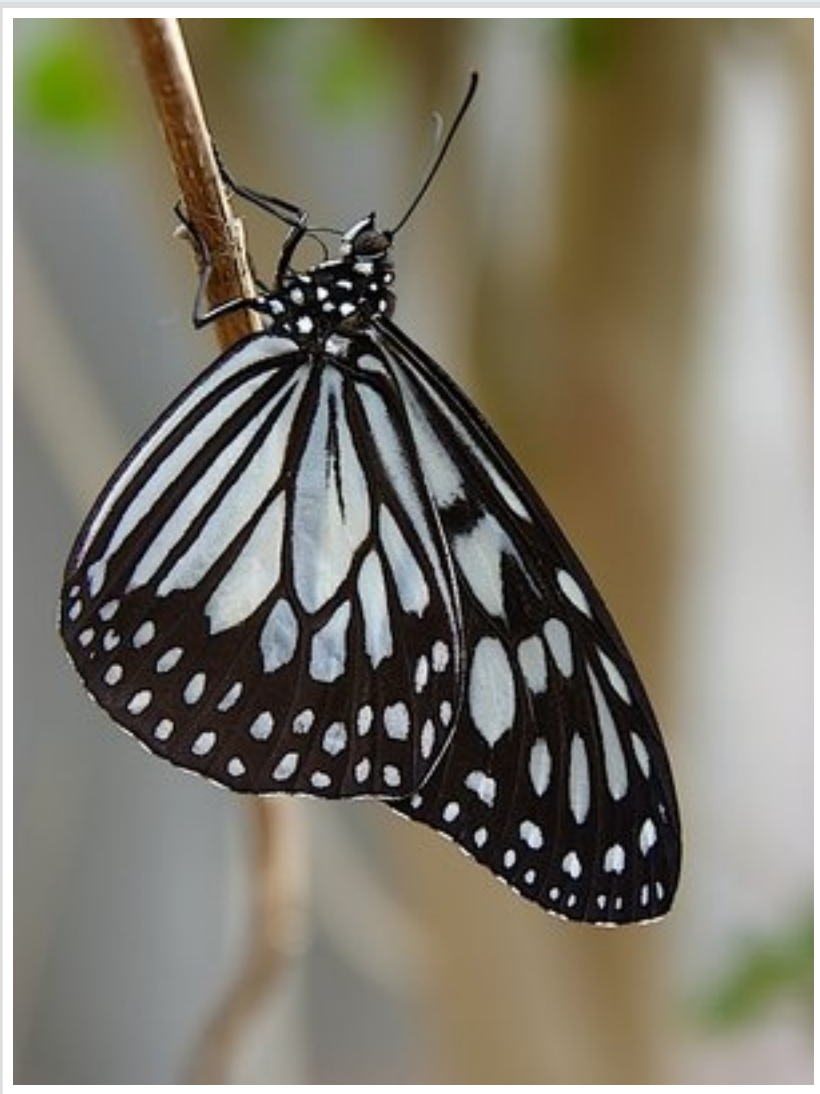
Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Mar-12 03:51 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 19 March 2012 - Part 3

Continued ...

The Wood Nymph or Grey Glassy Tiger (*Ideopsis juvenata*).



Wood Nymph or Grey Glassy Tiger (Ideopsis juvenata)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Mar-12 06:37 AM GMT

Hi Lee,

Many thanks for your kind message.

"Lee Hurrell" wrote:
Cracking Olivewing, Mark.

I'm really glad you like it, as shortly after taking the dorsal shot I dropped my camera on the rocks below narrowly missing the pond! That increased my heart rate somewhat.

Apart from a few minor scratches to the close up lens housing I did no apparent damage ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Lee Hurrell, 21-Mar-12 10:19 PM GMT

Phew! 😲

Lee

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 22-Mar-12 04:20 PM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 21 March 2012

Positive signs ...

Today I joined John Murray for a walk around Heyshott Escarpment.

Climbing the upper slopes we were very pleased to note a single Cowslip in flower, rising above the delicate green leaves of those yet to awaken, our first this season. Several Wild Strawberry plants were also in flower along with numerous Violet. A solitary Whitebeam stood proud though heavily laden with Mistletoe. Three Red Admiral were observed on the reserve and I was very pleased to note several male Brimstone, my first this year, as I left the village of Heyshott on route to Graffham.

It's all starting to happen ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-Mar-12 01:56 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 22 March 2012 - Part 4

Continued ...

The Scarlet Peacock (*Anartia amathea*).



Scarlet Peacock (Anartia amathea)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Mar-12 04:30 PM GMT

Birchfold Copse, 23 March 2012

It's all starting to happen ...

My decision to stay local was the right one, as today was my turn for the 'Great Awakening'.

I arrived at Birchfold Copse, located next to Kings Park Wood in West Sussex, mid morning. The sky was blue and clear, the sun was shining and the temperature was around 17°C upon arrival, though this soon increased to a high of around 20°C.

As soon as I entered the wood a Comma flew past, almost immediately followed by a male Brimstone. My spirits were instantly raised, my senses heightened. Conditions were perfect and I soon added more of both species along with Red Admiral and Peacock. Although the Brimstone and Peacock were not sitting around for anyone, the Comma and Red Admiral were readily sitting and noted feeding on various dung types on more than one occasion. I also observed one Comma feeding on a high level sap run. My totals for the session were 13 Comma, 3 Red Admiral, 2 Peacock and at least 17 Brimstone (possibly more), of which only one was female.

The good weather is said to continue ...

Great news ...



Comma, Birchfold Copse (23 March 2012)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Mar-12 04:33 PM GMT

Warnham LNR, 23 March 2012

Later ...

Well I like it ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 24-Mar-12 06:15 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Well I like it ...

and so you should – a delightful portrait!

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Lee Hurrell, 24-Mar-12 06:46 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Well I like it ...

So do I!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Mar-12 07:58 AM GMT

Thank you. 😊

I'm really glad you both liked it.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 30-Mar-12 07:33 AM GMT

Isle of Wight, 29 March 2012 – Part 1

In search of *polychloros* ...

Today I was pleased to be joined by Nick (hideandseek) for a trip to the Isle of Wight. It was to be a long day, our ferry leaving Portsmouth at 8am with our return journey scheduled for 7pm.

Woodhouse Copse

Woodhouse Copse is a small mixed woodland of approximately 18 hectares located to the northeast on the Isle of Wight. Its key features are the central grass ride, the SSSI marshy wet woodland and a bluebell rich area under the planted beech trees. Three hectares of the wood is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This area is also internationally designated as part of a wider Special Area of Conservation and Ramsar site. The remaining 15 hectares is locally recognised as a Site Important for Nature Conservation (SINC). The whole woodland lies within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The woodland was acquired by the Forestry Commission in 1957 and managed by them until its sale in November 2009.

This was my first visit to the site. With the above description and the knowledge that Large Tortoiseshell have been recorded here, our expectations were running high. What we found in reality was an area of woodland that has suffered abuse at the hand of man.

The following picture tells the story ...

We left and headed for Walter's Copse ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 31-Mar-12 07:39 AM GMT

Isle of Wight, 29 March 2012 - Part 2

In search of *polychloros* ...

Walter's Copse

Walter's Copse is a well manicured and highly welcoming 19 hectare site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is located on the southeast corner and within Newtown Harbour National Nature Reserve (NNR). The reserve is on the northern coast of the Isle of Wight and comprises areas of estuary and foreshore with extensive mudflats and saltmarsh, together with the adjacent meadows and woodland. The area is owned and managed by the National Trust.

On Tuesday, 27 March 2012, Peter Hunt (marmari) was extremely fortunate to find and photograph an overwintered Large Tortoiseshell (probably female) whilst hunting for Orange Tip in this area. Despite spending in the region of five hours there today, in what can only be described as ideal conditions, we were not graced with the similar privilege. It should be said at this point, it's amazing just how large a Comma can look in flight when you are looking for a large orange-brown butterfly, my heart missing a beat on more than one occasion.

Whilst writing this report I notice that another specimen has been seen and photographed today ...

I'll just have to go back ...

Species seen:

Brimstone
Orange Tip
Comma
Peacock
Speckled Wood



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Apr-12 06:58 AM GMT

Ardingly Reservoir, 3 April 2012

Three men, a hosepipe and an empty reservoir ...

Several days ago I took time out to take a stroll around drought ridden Ardingly Reservoir in West Sussex. I know the reservoir well, having fished and bird watched there on many occasions and observed its construction during the late seventies. The reservoir, completed in 1978 due to increasing demands for water supply in the region, serves a dual role of water supply and river regulation. At full capacity, it is designed to hold 5,206 million litres of water. Its maximum depth is around 14 metres. Water is stored here in times of surplus and released at times of shortage via the valve tower into the River Ouse.

The Government has declared that the South East of England is officially in drought as we are currently experiencing the driest two-year period on record. This continuing absence of prolonged rainfall means that water sources are not being replenished by rainfall. The reservoir was holding in the region of 2,551 million litres of water on 12 March 2012, less than 50% of its capacity. Whilst I start to write light rain has started to fall, but how much will we get? I personally hope that sufficient seasonal rain falls soon (preferably overnight) and that any effects the drought may have do not have any significant negative impact on our butterfly fauna ...

Time will undoubtedly tell ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Debbie, 04-Apr-12 08:44 PM GMT

Really lovely pictures 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Apr-12 04:10 AM GMT

Hi DMS,

Thank you for your very kind comments.

"DMS" wrote:

Really lovely pictures.

It makes the effort all worthwhile.

More pictures to follow ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Apr-12 04:32 AM GMT

West Sussex, 4 April 2012

Late to rise early to bed ...

The beautiful male Orange Tip at rest ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by marmari, 05-Apr-12 04:52 AM GMT

Your photos certainly show off the Orange Tip at its best,Mark.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Lee Hurrell, 05-Apr-12 05:00 AM GMT

There is just something about the orange of a Orange Tip on a bluebell. I love it.

Good work, Mark.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 05-Apr-12 05:22 AM GMT

"Lee Hurrell" wrote:

There is just something about the orange of a Orange Tip on a bluebell. I love it.

Totally agree with this. Lovely photos Mark.

Strange to think that people have been seeing orange tips today when this morning I went to work in almost blizzard conditions and we have had snow on and off through the day.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-Apr-12 02:06 AM GMT

Thanks Guys,

It's amazing what you can do with a Box Brownie! 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 06-Apr-12 02:16 AM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

It's amazing what you can do with a Box Brownie!

Ah, the EXIF data on your photos gives away that you used an FZ-45.

They are lovely views of the Orange Tip, though.

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 09-Apr-12 03:01 AM GMT

West Sussex, 8 April 2012

Nothing ventured nothing gained ...

Under a cloud-covered sky and with light rain falling I arrived at the location of dreams, the ground covered with primrose, wood anemone and cuckoo flower; the small brook singing gently nearby. To be fair I wasn't expecting to see much, if anything, though sitting at home would have certainly produced nothing. Walking through the small hanger the sun started to push through the cloud, though was quickly masked by the darkening sky. I mentioned to my son just how hard it can be to spot an Orange Tip at rest, particularly if you haven't seen it land. I must try saying that again, as after just several footsteps I spotted a single male roosting on the ripening buds of its delicate and beautiful food plant.

Heading back to my car I found another, perched in similar fashion and offering further photo opportunities.

The sun emerged once more then dissapeared ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 09-Apr-12 05:14 AM GMT

Hi Mark, were you too in Five Oaks?

Lovely photos.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 10-Apr-12 12:41 AM GMT

Hi Susie,

Many thanks for your message.

"Susie" wrote:

Lovely photos.

Your comments are always appreciated. 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 10-Apr-12 04:57 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 9 April 2012 – Part 5

Continued ...

A wet day, only one thing to do ...

The beautiful Common Sergeant (*Athyma perius*).



Common Sergeant (male), (Athyma perius)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 10-Apr-12 05:25 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

lovely photos of the O.T.s, especially numbers 2 and 5, two of the best i`ve seen.

All the best,

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Apr-12 03:47 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest Complex, 11 April 2012

Sunshine and showers ...

Hoping for an early Wood White was always going to be a long shot, despite a recent Surrey sighting on the 10th April and not least the fact that today was one of occasional sunshine and intermittent heavy showers ...

The first area of forestry visited, on the Sussex side of the county border and probably the best site in Sussex for Wood White, produced nothing in the way of butterflies though this was inspected mid morning when the temperature was still only around 9°C. After a quick lunch my son and I headed off to a more reliable location, over that imaginary line the county boundary, into Surrey. The temperature had increased to around 12°C, though I could still feel a cool breeze on my back as we entered the woodland ride. As the sun shone through the trees into a small clearing a male Brimstone lifted from its resting place. As quickly as he had appeared, the sun disappeared behind one of many grey clouds and he alighted on a bramble leaf allowing a very personal encounter ...

A beautiful experience ...

Heavy rain fell shortly after ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-12 04:58 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Good to see you are having some success despite the weather. I like that Brimstone photo, I have yet to see one this year.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-12 06:30 AM GMT

This post sums up the spring – fleeting glimpses and then due to the coolness, time to sit and just enjoy the butterflies up close and personal at times.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Apr-12 06:38 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Many thanks for your kind comment.

"nfreem" wrote:

I like that Brimstone photo, I have yet to see one this year.

It's hard to believe you haven't had a Brimstone sighting yet as they have certainly been quite regular in Sussex, though this was the first

that would actually sit for a picture.

Whilst taking my shots a tiny psychodid briefly landed on its wing.



Fingers crossed with the weather ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Apr-12 06:42 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Thanks for your message.

"Wurzel" wrote:

time to sit and just enjoy the butterflies up close and personal

I couldn't agree more and I sometimes think that although we may see less we often see more at this time of year.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-12 06:46 AM GMT

Regarding the Brimstones, they have been seen around my area....just not by me 😞 . Wrong place, wrong time syndrome I think.

That psychodid...what a cracking little creature and a wonderful name. Is it a micro moth, a fly or what?

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Apr-12 06:57 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Thanks for your message.

The rather attractive Psychodidae are commonly known as moth flies or drain flies and belong to the order Diptera. They are generally associated with damp and aquatic environments and a number of species occur in vast numbers at water treatment works.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Apr-12 10:49 PM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 12 April 2012 - Part 6

Continued ...

The beautiful Zebra Mosaic (*Colobura dirce*).



Dirce Beauty or Zebra Mosaic (Colobura dirce)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Apr-12 04:43 AM GMT

Lord's Piece, 15 April 2012

Cricket season ...

The Field Cricket (*Gryllus campestris*) is a large, glossy black cricket (in its adult form) with a distinctively large head, particularly in the male. The nymphs exhibit a beautiful golden pubescence. It is one of the rarest insects in the British Isles and is confined to a small area of the South Downs in West Sussex and Hampshire. Its habitat has been destroyed over much of its former range and it now exists in only one native site but has been introduced to a series of other suitable locations. It is now the subject of a Species Recovery Programme, having reached an estimated population low of just fifty pairs in 1991, all in one small area of West Sussex, the second known colony having gone extinct two years previously.

It can be difficult to see *G. campestris* without potentially damaging its habitat and this is not permitted because it is a protected species in the UK. Access to the release sites is very restricted because the populations are still extremely fragile and vulnerable to disturbance. However, their beautiful song can be heard from a distance of more than 100m on warm days during May and early June. If they are present, you will quickly know about them. A search of entomological literature suggests that *G. campestris* has long enjoyed a reputation far outweighing its proven presence in England. This is largely due to the writings of Gilbert White who described part of its life history, as well as that of the secret art of tickling them from their burrows (nymphs and adults will rapidly retreat down their burrows when disturbed but may be induced to come out again by the gentle insertion of a blade of grass).

Today, along with my son James, I joined good friend and fellow entomologist Mike Edwards, who has been leading the *Gryllus* recovery programme for over 20 years. Our task, to find, photograph and capture final instar nymphs for relocation at a nearby partner site.

Please note: Our activities were being carried out in line with current best practice and legislation. It is illegal to disturb or interfere with Field Crickets in any way unless doing so under the conditions of a licence issued by English Nature.

I hope they enjoy their new home ...

I'll be back when the adults are singing ...



Field Cricket (male), (Gryllus campestris)



Field Cricket (male), (Gryllus campestris)





Field Cricket (female), (*Gryllus campestris*)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Colin Knight, 16-Apr-12 04:55 AM GMT

Great story and pics Mark, thanks for sharing.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-12 06:09 AM GMT

Tickling Crickets eh? That's not a piece of knowledge I expected to learn! 😊 I'm also surprised by how big they are, quite stocky looking really, cheers for some more natural history knowledge.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Apr-12 02:20 AM GMT

Hi Colin,

Many thanks for your kind comments.

"Colin Knight" wrote:

Great story and pics Mark, thanks for sharing.

I'm really glad you enjoyed the story and pictures from what was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Apr-12 02:23 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Many thanks for your kind comments.

"Wurzel" wrote:

cheers for some more natural history knowledge

I always try to please. 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Apr-12 06:08 AM GMT

Rewell Wood, 16 April 2012

My first this year ...

The beautiful Pearl-bordered Fritillary.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (male), (Boloria euphrosyne)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-12 06:22 AM GMT

Nice! 😊 Hopefully the weather will pick up in the next week or two and then I might be able to find them in Bentley Wood...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 17-Apr-12 06:38 AM GMT

Lovely photo Mark. The background really compliments the butterfly.

All the best,

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 17-Apr-12 06:46 AM GMT

Exciting times ahead (if ever we get a break from the cold, wet weather).

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Apr-12 04:43 PM GMT

Hi Guys,

Many thanks for your messages.

"Wurzel" wrote:

Nice!

"hideandseek" wrote:

Lovely photo Mark. The background really compliments the butterfly.

And David ...

Thanks for mentioning cold wet weather as that's exactly what I've woken up to this morning ... please try to keep in South Wales! 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Apr-12 05:41 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 17 April 2012 - Part 7

Emergence ...

The beautiful Asian Swallowtail (*Papilio memnon lowii*).



Asian Swallowtail (female), (Papilio memnon lowii)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-Apr-12 05:48 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 17 April 2012 - Part 8

9 carat gold ...

The One-spotted Prepona (*Archaeoprepona demophon*).

The bright turquoise blue bands on the upperside rarely seen at rest.



One-spotted Prepona (Archaeoprepona demophon)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Apr-12 12:29 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 19 April 2012 - Part 9

9 carat gold (revisited) ...

The One-spotted Prepona (*Archaeoprepona demophon*).



One-spotted Prepona (Archaeoprepona demophon centralis)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Apr-12 12:31 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 20 April 2012 - Part 10

Scarlet fever ...

To brighten up a very wet day ...

The luscious Scarlet Swallowtail (*Papilio rumanzovia*).



Scarlet Swallowtail (female), (*Papilio rumanzovia*)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Apr-12 06:20 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 24 April 2012 - Part 11

Butterfly of Death ...

The Lime Swallowtail (*Papilio demoleus*).



Lime Swallowtail or Mariposa del Muerte (*Papilio demoleus*)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Apr-12 10:30 PM GMT

Sussex BC Annual Report

Issue 4 (Spring 2012) of The Sussex Butterfly Report, the annual review of the previous year (2011) by Sussex Butterfly Conservation, was published and distributed to members today. Running to 72 full colour pages, the publication is full of numerous interesting articles including a fascinating insight into the history of Butterfly Conservation's Park Corner Heath and Rowland Wood reserve, located in East Sussex.

Available to non-members for a mere £2 plus postage and packing (no that's not a typo it is ONLY £2), an early purchase is highly recommended. Please visit <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk> for details of how to obtain your copy.

All proceeds go to the conservation of butterflies in Sussex.

It won't be around for long ...

The Sussex
Butterfly Report



Issue 4 Spring 2012

£2.00 (Free to Sussex Branch members)



An Annual Review by
Sussex Butterfly Conservation

2011

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Apr-12 04:27 PM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 25 April 2012 - Part 12

The antidote ...

... to rather inclement weather ...



Lemon Pansy (Junonia lemonias)



Common Sergeant (male), (*Athyma perius*)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Apr-12 06:49 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 27 April 2012 - Part 13

Sheep in wolf's clothing ...

The Common Mime (*Papilio clytia*) belongs to the *Chilasa* group or the Black-bodied Swallowtails. It appears in a number of different forms and is an excellent example of a Batesian mimic i.e. it shares indicators similar to the model (the insect being imitated) but does not possess the attribute(s) that makes it unbeneficial to predators e.g. unpalatability.

The form *dissimilis* mimics the Blue Tiger (*Tirumala limniace*).



Common Mime (*Papilio clytia* form *dissimilis*)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 29-Apr-12 09:39 PM GMT

Conserving the Duke of Burgundy, 28 April 2012

On the edge ...

Yesterday I attended a Duke of Burgundy workshop organised by Butterfly Conservation and held at the Queen Elizabeth Country Park near Petersfield in Hampshire.

The event was billed as "An opportunity to share experience of the ecology and conservation of one of Britain's most threatened butterflies, looking at examples from around the country. An indoor session of talks will be followed by a site visit to Butser Hill, one of the largest Duke colonies in the

country, to look at suitable habitat, management techniques and (weather permitting!) see the butterfly”.

Dr Dan Hoare opened the proceedings giving a detailed and very interesting and informative outline of the Dukes on the Edge Project (conserving the Duke of Burgundy in southeast England). Dan was followed by Neil Hulme, who gave a comprehensive and experienced talk covering the efforts being undertaken to conserve the Duke in Sussex, with particular reference to Heysott Escarpment. The most important message that came across, was that of long-term conservation being about the successful maintenance of numerous metapopulations existing over networks of suitable habitat on a landscape rather than localized scale. Tim Bernhard followed and presented the findings from his research project “*A comparative study of the Duke of Burgundy in woodland and downland in Hampshire*”. Dr Sam Ellis (Butterfly Conservation's Senior Regional Officer) finished the highly thought provoking indoor proceedings explaining the conservation activities being undertaken in northern England at the Duke's most northerly range.

Following a brief interlude for lunch, those of us hard enough (or maybe that should be foolhardy) and with climbing gear at the ready, headed for the beautiful Butser Hill National Nature Reserve in what can only be described as “not the best weather conditions”. The advice of “*bring appropriate clothing and footwear – the field visit involves significant steep slopes and uneven ground*” was well placed as the ground was often slippery under foot and the slopes were extremely steep. Though sheltered in the valley floor, the cold driving wind, rain and low cloud really wasn't welcomed, particularly as we headed back to the car park.

A beautiful site and one I will definitely revisit ...

When the weather improves ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 29-Apr-12 11:00 PM GMT

Apparently there are some attendees still on site 😊

I have to say, this was possibly the best conservation day I've attended, thanks to the depth that all speakers were able to go to in discussing a single species. The dedication of the professionals, highly-knowledgeable amateurs and researchers was very inspiring. I'm determined to start a study of my own – just need to figure out a topic (and species!). I thought that both Neil and Tim Bernhard were absolutely brilliant – and told them so at the time. And Dan and Sam lived up to their usual high standards.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 30-Apr-12 02:36 AM GMT

Thanks Pete and Mark. I'm glad you enjoyed the talks – I certainly enjoyed the other offerings and it is always a pleasure to spend time with such a large group of like-minded enthusiasts.
Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-May-12 06:44 AM GMT

West Sussex, 30 April 2012

Sun drenched Sussex ...

I always enjoy spending time with like-minded individuals and today was no exception when I met up with Neil and Susie in the hunt for the charismatic Sussex Pearls and Dukes. Our first woodland location, a large clear-felled area, was alive with butterflies and we soon recorded our first target of Pearl-bordered Fritillary along with good numbers of Orange Tip, Peacock, Brimstone and Grizzled Skipper. A move to a nearby location produced my first woodland Duke of the year ...

A great day in great company ...

Species seen included:

Grizzled Skipper
Dingy Skipper
Large White
Brimstone
Orange Tip
Green-veined White
Peacock
Comma
Speckled Wood
Duke of Burgundy
Pearl-bordered Fritillary



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-12 04:38 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Good to see that you have been out and seen a good tally of butterflies.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-May-12 05:00 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 1 May 2012

1.30pm ...

The heavy rain falling as I woke did not bode well for the day ahead, though it made my decision to clear my desk and visit a nearby client much easier. Having finished my meeting by midday, fast moving grey clouds still covered the sky; warm, light rain was falling. Arriving home I took lunch and headed to my study. At 1.30pm I noticed the cloud brightening, though it still covered the sky. A bright patch on the distant horizon gave hope so the decision was made.

I live very close to much of the Chiddingfold Forest complex and arrived shortly after making the decision to go. A male Brimstone greeted me as I entered the wood, which was soon followed by a second male and a Green-veined White. A male Speckled Wood was standing his ground nearby. The breezy conditions had all but cleared the cloud and the sun beat down on my back. I was alone except for birdsong. Having done my circuit I decided to go round once more and this proved to be the right decision as shortly after a male Wood White drifted onto the ride in front of me. Feeding frantically on violets I wished for cloud, though this was now in short supply. I managed several quick record shots and said farwell.

My first this season ...

Species seen included:

Wood White
Brimstone
Orange Tip
Green-veined White
Peacock
Speckled Wood



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 02-May-12 05:21 AM GMT

Lovely photo, Mark.

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 02-May-12 05:49 AM GMT

Sometimes, Mark, those last minute decisions turn out to be the best ones.

Glad you had a satisfying afternoon (they've been in short supply lately),

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-May-12 01:54 AM GMT

West Sussex, 2 May 2012

Beauty in miniature ...

If you are a lepidopterist, particularly one who limits their personal interest to butterflies, there will always be days of disappointment, particularly if looking for the adult insect. Term yourself an entomologist and your eyes will be opened to a world of intense beauty, one of mystery and one of intrigue, all played out on a stage in front of your very eyes – providing they are open and receptive.

Today conditions were grey and although my target did not appear, what did was a gem to behold ...

The Green Longhorn (*Adela reaumurella*) is a small day-flying micromoth belonging to the family Adelidae, the fairy longhorn moths. They have a wingspan of approximately 14 to 18 mm. The upper wings of both sexes are a beautiful metallic green, their under wings metallic bronze. The males have extremely long white antenna and have rough black hair on their heads. In comparison, the females have relatively short white-tipped black antenna with shorter and lighter hair on their heads. It is a fairly common species in England, Wales and southern Scotland, though more localised in Ireland. They typically fly from April to June and can often be observed flying in swarms. The larvae feed on leaf-litter and live in portable cases.



Green Longhorn (male), (Adela reaumurella)



Green Longhorn (female), (Adela reaumurella)

Re: Mark Colvin

by ChrisC, 03-May-12 02:46 AM GMT

nice shots Mark, i'm hoping for a dry weekend to get my local wood to see more of the same. it was a phenomenal showing last year. literally thousands around some trees.

all the best
Chris

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 03-May-12 03:47 AM GMT

Cheers again for more education - I saw one of those at Martin Down the other night and was wondering what the hell it was! And now I know 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 03-May-12 04:02 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

I remember seeing swarms of these little moths at a few places last year.

I tried taking some photos of the swarms in flight but didn't manage to capture the spectacle.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-May-12 04:22 AM GMT

Thank you all for your comments. 😊

Be lucky ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-May-12 05:00 AM GMT

West Sussex, 2 May 2012

A different world ...

As I said before there is always something to see ...

The St Mark's Fly (*Bibio marci*) is a large hairy black fly belonging to the family Bibionidae. It is a species which shows strong sexual dimorphism (male pictured). It is common in late April and May in grassy meadows and fields, especially in the south. Swarms of the males can often be seen flying sluggishly up and down in the sunshine with their legs dangling below, looking for the females which are sitting not far below in the grass. When the females take wing they are seized by the males and mating takes place in the air.

You just have to look ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 03-May-12 05:08 AM GMT

Mark, your depth of knowledge is most enviable. How did you get to know so much about insects in general?

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-May-12 05:37 AM GMT

Rewell Hill Wood, 2 May 2012

Pterophorus galactodactyla ...

The delicate Spotted White Plume, *Pterophorus galactodactyla*, is a nationally scarce species. The adult moth, which has a wingspan of around 20–25mm, has a pale forewing with a diagnostic backward-pointing rear lobe. The species is most likely to be recorded in the larval stage, when feeding signs, on the leaves of Lesser and Greater Burdock, are relatively easy to find where they are present. The characteristic evidence of feeding appears as white-rimmed, rounded holes in the leaves, starting at 2mm diameter in April up to around 8mm by the time they mature in May. The larva can often be found nearby, resting along the edge of a vein on the underside of the leaf. The larva pictured was around 7mm long. A shed skin can be seen in the bottom left of the picture.

The adult moth flies in June and July ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 04-May-12 06:39 AM GMT

Darn it you beat me to it Mark! I got some photos yesterday of male and female St Mark's flies and was going to do a post tomorrow. When you look at the male all you can see are its eyes and then when you find a female it looks like something has bitten its head off!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-May-12 06:47 AM GMT

Sorry Wurzel,

You are going to have to move a bit quicker ... 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

Darn it you beat me to it Mark!

Though I didn't get a female ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-May-12 08:35 AM GMT

Rewell Wood, 5 May 2012

Pearls of wisdom ...

Since finding my first 2012 'Sussex' Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Rewell Wood early afternoon on Monday, 16th April, I have found it impossible, due to family commitments, to find time to be around late afternoon when they go to roost - but today was different ...

My thanks today must go to Neil, our very own Sussex Kipper, who today, joined by Dr Dan Hoare, was running the second of his two walks to Rewell Wood - *The Pearls of Rewell Wood (Part 2)*. Despite recent poor weather, including heavy rain overnight and this morning, Neil ventured out yesterday to find five roosting Pearls in advance of today's guided walk, marking their positions in best boy scout fashion. I managed to find one today, though it was very much like looking for a 'needle in a haystack', but perseverance eventually paid off - though I can't help feeling it was probably one that Neil had previously found ...

Thanks Neil ...

Two of the many shots taken ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 06-May-12 07:35 PM GMT

That last photo is an absolute classic, Mark! 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 06-May-12 07:54 PM GMT

I agree. That's a belter. I'm pleased to say that quite a few people managed to get their best ever PBF shots yesterday. Some sunshine would be nice though!

Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-May-12 05:31 AM GMT

Rewell Wood, 5 May 2012

Revisited ...

At rest on sweet chestnut ...



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (male), (Boloria euphrosyne)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 07-May-12 06:06 AM GMT

Thats a beautiful photo of the P.B. hanging from the Chesnut leaf Mark.

All the best,

Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-May-12 06:31 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 7 May 2012

Late clearing sky ...

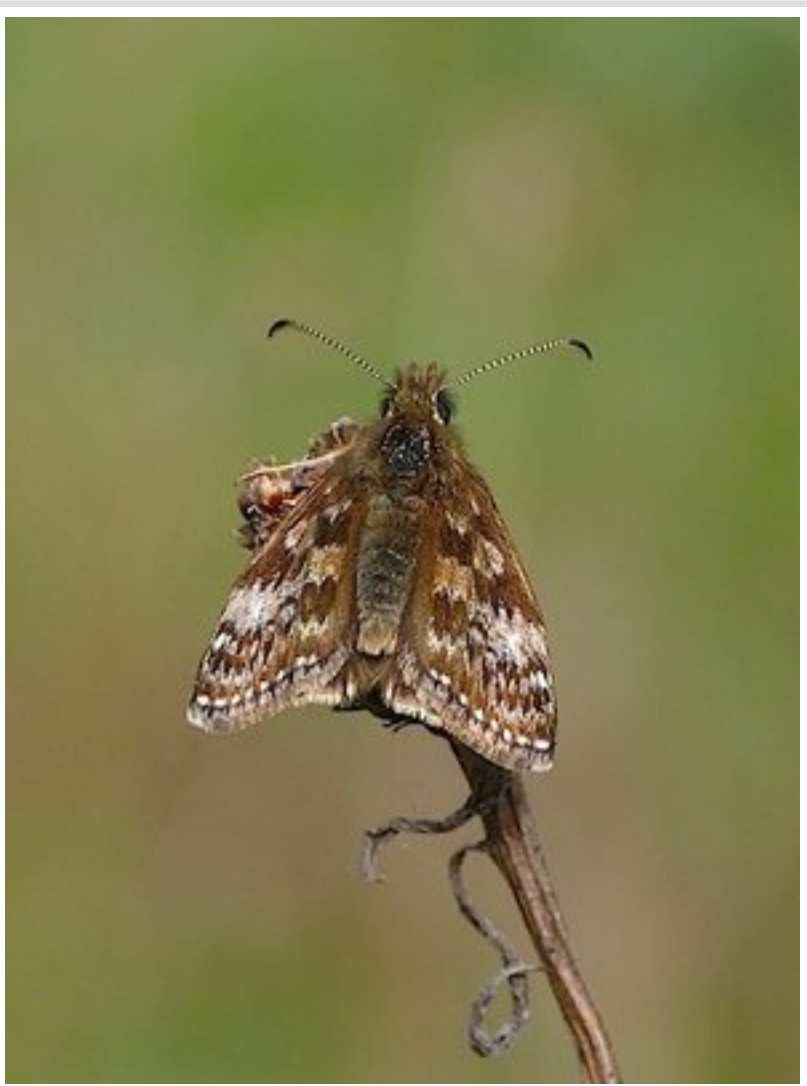
After early heavy rain it was late afternoon before the clouds began to clear and the first evidence of blue sky began to appear. I arrived at my destination at around 4.15pm. With a brisk breeze blowing and much reduced cloud cover, I ventured deep into the wood in search. A male Wood White, the first of several, was the first butterfly to be seen followed shortly after by Grizzled and Dingy Skipper. Although I took several record shots of Wood White, today my focus was set on the Skippers, though getting the shots I wanted proved a little difficult in the windy conditions.

Species seen included:

Wood White

Dingy Skipper

Grizzled Skipper





Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 09-May-12 09:45 PM GMT

Rewell Hill Wood, 7 May 2012

Pole dancing Queen ...

A very wet *Bombus pascuorum*.



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 10-May-12 03:27 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 9 May 2012

Waterproofs a prerequisite ...

The sentence, *"I bet you can't find and photograph a butterfly today"*, concluded a discussion with a good friend earlier this morning. This of course was like red rag to a raging bull. The sky was leaden grey and steady heavy drizzle was falling, but I was up for a challenge. By the time I reached Botany Bay it was mid morning. The weather certainly hadn't improved, in fact it had possibly worsened, and I couldn't help but think I should have been here yesterday afternoon when conditions were somewhat better.

Not to be beaten, and this was not the first time I've searched for butterflies in the rain (mad, obsessed, over enthusiastic call me what you will), I slowly headed into the wood in the hope I might locate a Wood White sheltering from the rather inclement weather, though this was not to be. Having crossed a small stream and reached a Purple Emperor hotspot (well not today), I moved into one of several small meadows and carefully started to inspect the hardheads. The drizzle had now become continuous light rain but I was confident I would find what I was looking for. On my second circuit I spotted my target, a rather wet but welcome male Dingy Skipper. I found three in total, all males, and spent some considerable time trying to keep my lens dry whilst getting that all important picture.

Just look at those eyelashes ...

Wet and point proven I headed home ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-May-12 12:58 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 16 and 17 May 2012

Ready for flight ...

GCSEs, A Levels, revision and numerous family pressures have unfortunately restricted my recent entomological activities. However, over the last two days I have found time to search Heyshott Escarpment in readiness for this weekend's open day, organized by the Murray Downland Trust and Sussex Butterfly Conservation.

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/calendar.php?view=event&calEid=13>

Despite not wearing his best suit, I was quite pleased with the following image, the second of five Dukes found during a short visit this morning. I found fourteen on the lower eastern slopes yesterday and expect to find good numbers this weekend along with a selection of other downland species.

Come along if you're free ...

Species seen included:

Grizzled Skipper
Dingy Skipper
Orange Tip
Small Heath
Brimstone
Brown Argus
Duke of Burgundy
Green-veined White



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 18-May-12 02:09 AM GMT

Lovely photo, Mark, as usual.

I'll hopefully be there on Saturday, weather and family permitting. 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 18-May-12 03:22 AM GMT

Lovely shot, Mark. I sincerely hope the weather will be kind to you this weekend.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-May-12 03:34 AM GMT

Dear Susie and David,

Thank you for your very kind comments. 😊

Hopefully see you tomorrow Susie. It should be a good day.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-May-12 08:55 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 18 May 2012

30 minutes, 45 at a push ...

As I left Twickenham early this afternoon it was 17°C and a little clammy; cloud covered the sky. My route home, as it often does, passed the entrance to Botany Bay. Well it would be rude not to stop ...

As I crossed the threshold and into the main track the air became damp as light drizzle began to fall. The temperature had dropped by at least several degrees and I considered turning back (well only for a second you understand) as time was limited – I needed a result and quick. I had walked no further than 50 metres when I spotted my prize, a male Wood White resting amongst the emerging bracken fronds which was quickly followed by a second nearby. With the temperature and ambient conditions restricting flight, both were very approachable.

One of my favourite butterflies ...

Species seen today:

Brown Argus

Holly Blue

Small White

Wood White

Green-veined White



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-May-12 05:51 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 19 May 2012

Open day ...

Males, females, courtship, mating, egg laying and territorial behaviour – today can only be described as an absolute success as I joined a mixed group of around 58 people on the Duke of Burgundy open day at Heyshott Escarpment, organized jointly by the Murray Downland Trust and Sussex Butterfly Conservation.

Arriving early, to help set up the marquee before the crowds began to arrive for the 10.30 kick off and the first of two guided tours of the reserve, I couldn't help but think that today would be successful. The temperature was good and the weather conditions were perfect for a day of emergence and activity on this site that radiates calm and inspiration. We were not disappointed as a count of 31 Dukes was recorded, along with a small selection of other spring downland species. The Duke of Burgundy far outnumbered any other species. Of particular interest to me, was the sighting of a single female flying from the established Duke colony on the eastern slopes down into the lower slopes cleared this past winter.

Fingers crossed ...

Species seen today:

Grizzled Skipper
Dingy Skipper
Brown Argus
Orange Tip
Brimstone
Small Heath
Duke of Burgundy
Green-veined White



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 20-May-12 06:56 AM GMT

Lovely stuff, Mark.

There can be few finer images than those of Dukes of Burgundy mating within these fair isles.

Hopefully the future of this species is in safe hands.

Re: Mark Colvin

by essexbuzzard, 20-May-12 07:04 AM GMT

Yes, well done Mark! I'm pleased the sun came out at last, and you saw a good number of these fantastic little butterflies. It was nice to see you on wednesday, even if it was a bit cold! I only saw two Dukes then, so it shows what a little sunshine can do. Brilliant!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-May-12 03:02 AM GMT

Thank you both.

"David M" wrote:

There can be few finer images than those of Dukes of Burgundy mating within these fair isles.

I couldn't agree more 😊😊😊

Good hunting.

More to follow ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-May-12 03:16 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 19 May 2012

Open day ...

The Duchess at rest ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 21-May-12 04:08 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

I am liking that Duchess shot, looks to have darker hind wings than I have seen before.

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-May-12 07:21 AM GMT

Westhampnett, 22 May 2012

Stag party ...

I have always been fascinated by the world of beetles. Of the 4300 or so British species (approximately 3000 in Sussex), the male Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) surely stands as the most impressive and most imposing in the native fauna. Last night, whilst walking along the northern perimeter of Westhampnett Gravel pit, I came across a beautiful 6.5cm, 4gm male (pictured below).

L. cervus is Britain's largest terrestrial beetle. Spending at least five years as large white grubs underground in the root-stocks of deciduous tree stumps, they emerge as fully-grown adult insects in the spring when they may be seen flying on warm evenings at dusk. The adult beetle cannot eat solids; their enlarged mandibles being totally useless for eating. They do however imbibe fluids and it is believed they will take sustenance from sweet juicy fruits and fermenting sap runs. The adult beetles have enough fat reserves to keep them going during the short period they spend above ground; these reserves being accumulated by their larvae during the final stage of their long life underground. Today it has become rare in many parts of its range but is still locally common in southern England.

Despite its appearance it is harmless to man ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by millerd, 23-May-12 07:41 AM GMT

What a splendid beast! I have seen them here to the west of Heathrow whirring around like miniature helicopters on sultry evenings at this time of year. Quite disconcerting until you realise what they are.

Terrific photos, better than any I've seen anywhere of this creature.

Dave

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 23-May-12 03:37 PM GMT

'harmless to man' but not to this woman, those antlers can give a very painful nip!

Those are great photos of a fabulous wee beastie and one I hope to see again (i've only ever seen the one).

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-May-12 05:25 AM GMT

Dear Dave and Susie,

Thank you for your very generous comments 😊😊😊

More to follow ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-May-12 05:52 AM GMT

West Sussex, 23 May 2012

Out and about ...

With just 45 minutes to spare before heading off to collect my son, I arrived at a very hot and humid Kithurst Hill at 3pm. A quick scout around produced a number of species including Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Holly Blue, Small Blue and five Duke of Burgundy, including a pristine egg-laying female.

Before dinner I took myself off for a short walk. I headed off through the small copse to the rear of my house and out into the damp meadow known locally as Alder Platt Meadow. I was rather pleased I did, as after only a short time I located several Grizzled Skipper taking in the last of the afternoon sun before going down to roost. I have never seen Grizzled Skipper in this location before, though I expect this is more down to an oversight on my part than a new colony.

With perfect light and calm conditions I set to work ...

Species seen today:

Grizzled Skipper
Dingy Skipper
Peacock
Orange Tip
Brimstone
Small Heath
Holly Blue
Small Blue
Duke of Burgundy
Green-veined White



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 24-May-12 05:54 AM GMT

It looks like she's having a doze as she sunbathes in that first pic. Lovely. 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-May-12 04:23 PM GMT

Kithurst Hill, 24 May 2012

Early evening ...

After a very long hot day ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Jun-12 05:39 AM GMT

Mill Hill, 31 May 2012

An early bird ...

It would be fair to say that I've really been struggling to get out recently, particularly early morning and evening my two favourite times of the day. Today was different and as my alarm woke me at 4am, that tingle of tired excitement gripped me prior to an early session on Shoreham Bank. Arriving shortly after 5am the sun was just breaking the horizon to the far east of the hill, whose sheltered, southwest facing chalk slopes awaited its warming rays of light. Roosting in the long grass and scrub, the Adonis Blue were easy to find in good numbers along with resting Small Heath and Small Copper. Colin Knight joined me shortly after my arrival and between us, following Colin's transect route of the site, we counted 92 male and 22 female Adonis Blue along with 29 Small Heath, 8 Common Blue and a single Small Copper. With roosting photos completed, at 7.45am the first rays of sun began to warm the slopes and the first signs of flight were observed. Just fifteen minutes later and the air above the yellow tinted, vetch covered hill was filled with tiny sapphires.

A beautiful start to the day ...

Species seen:

Adonis Blue
Common Blue
Small Heath
Small Copper



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 01-Jun-12 05:51 AM GMT

Beautiful open wing shot Mark. The just return for a very early start 😊 .
Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 01-Jun-12 05:54 AM GMT

Hi Mark,
Thats a cracking shot of the male Adonis Blue with its wings open.
All the best,
Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by millerd, 01-Jun-12 07:41 AM GMT

That Adonis is stunning. And the description of a hillside studded with tiny sapphires is just spot on.
Dave

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Jun-12 01:35 AM GMT

Thanks.

I really appreciate your kind comments 😊😊😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Jun-12 07:33 AM GMT

Warnham LNR, 3 June 2012

Between the showers ...

A family get together late this afternoon meant having to collect my parents with my son at around 2pm. By the time I left home the worst of the early rain had passed by, though the sky was still grey.

I pass Warnham LNR on a regular basis and today was no exception. The temptation was just too much, so I popped in for a quick look around in the hope I might find the beautiful longhorn moth, *Nemophora degeerella*. It wasn't long before I found several small groups of recently emerged males 'dancing' in the breaking sun. The males can be quite frustrating to photograph and today was no exception, as their antennae can be up to five times their body length and always seem to be accidently cropped out of the shot. Time and patience (and a bit of luck) is required to get a good picture of this beautiful little moth, neither of which I had today. As I left the dancing longhorns and proceeded up through Millpond Plantation, a single male Speckled Wood was found resting on the wet fern.

That brightened my day ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Jun-12 04:20 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 9 and 10 June 2012

A Levels and GCSEs ...

With exam fever continuing to take over our household (hence my lack of recent diary posts), any opportunity to make a dash for fresh air and solitude is grabbed with both hands. A brief chance yesterday afternoon and likewise earlier today was greatly welcomed ...

My reward yesterday, a beautiful female Orange Moth (*Angerona prunaria*). Though pleased, I was rather surprised to see this insect at 3.30 in the afternoon, as the male of this species typically flies at dusk, whilst the rather elusive female, generally much later into the night. It is a widely distributed species and generally only locally common in woodland and heathland across its range. Its larvae feed on a variety of trees and plants including birch, hawthorn, blackthorn and heather. Today as I entered the wood, I was greeted by a small company of the rather enchanting longhorn moth, *Nemophora degeerella*, gracefully dancing along the edge of the track. Numerous specimens of the highly distinctive Speckled Yellow (*Pseudopanthera macularia*) were also present, as indeed were numerous Speckled Wood and two Red Admiral making strategic claims for their territories.

A male Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), the second I've found this year, provided a welcome find to end my visit.

Until next time ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-12 04:55 AM GMT

Alright Mark? Philzoid and I found an Orange Moth at Botany Bay yesterday- could it be the same individual and how can you differentiate between male and female?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Jun-12 06:26 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Thanks for your message.

I'm glad to see you are getting about.

The males of *Angerona prunaria*, in their typical orange form, are generally brighter than the females and usually a bit smaller. The moth usually has a wingspan of between 42-56mm. Other more obvious features, such as abdominal shape and structure of the antennae, are also key indicators of gender. My specimen wasn't seen in Botany Bay so it was not the same insect as yours, which was also a female. When I visited the area today I also found a male resting under sweet chestnut leaves.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

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

Hi Mark,

Nice photos, that Stag Beetle really is an impressive creature.

All the best ,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Jun-12 04:09 AM GMT

Iping and Stedham Commons, 12 June 2012

Desperate times ...

With over a month's rain having fallen over West Sussex in the last 24 hours I was desperate to get out. Continuous rain and serious flooding of many areas yesterday, accounted for several of my local rivers and smaller water courses bursting their banks; the speed and intensity of the rising water quite frightening in some cases ...

After the storm came the calm and this morning I headed for Iping and Stedham Commons to look for the beautiful Silver-studded Blue, which have only recently started to emerge. It took little persuasion to tempt Colin Knight to join me, who was also desperate to be out and about. We headed for a small south facing area of heathland where I discovered good numbers during their peak last year. In the poor light and low ambient temperature, I managed to find just three males in the short time I was there and left Colin in his search for a female. Their emergence this year is some two weeks later than last, with the first individuals of 2011 noted at Iping Common on 26th May. I look forward to watching their peak period of emergence over the next few weeks and getting some pictures in better light.

A butterfly I will never grow bored of watching ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jun-12 04:46 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Lovely photos of a beautiful butterfly.

To my mind this is the most attractive of the blues in this country, the Adonis is brighter but these are more subtle.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Jun-12 06:47 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Thanks for your kind comments, they are very much appreciated.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Jun-12 05:48 AM GMT

Southern England, June 2012

In search of Lady Eleanor ...

I have recently been searching for the Glanville Fritillary (*Melitaea cinxia*) and have made several visits to a number of mainland sites, both traditional, and others of more recent establishment.

I, and indeed many others, have been aware for some time of the presence of an unofficial introduction site for *M. cinxia* in Surrey. This particular colony appears to have survived well in the conditions provided by the location, which in many ways are similar to the undercliff environments found on the Isle of Wight and at the nearby mainland area at Hordle Cliff. Although sand extraction continued over a period of approximately fifty years until 1993, the site currently lies quiet and is filled with an abundance of both aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna. Landfilling of the eastern sector of the site ceased in 1990. A further unauthorised site, at Sand Point in Somerset, probably died out in around 2000 after their introduction in 1983, but this would appear to have been restocked, or the butterfly having survived in very low numbers, as *M. cinxia* has been recorded there in 2012.

So, should they be in Surrey?

Historically, *M. cinxia* has shown a substantial reduction in its range, surviving in any real numbers at traditional locations only on the southern shores of the Isle of Wight, with occasional reports from the nearby mainland. As recently as 1943 it could readily be found at Christchurch in Hampshire and at several places along the Kent and Sussex coast before 1850. With less certainty, it has been recorded from inland localities in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Wiltshire and Bedfordshire, and even from Fifeshire in Scotland. The Surrey *M. cinxia* colony, currently in its 10th year, was originally established from 300 larvae from three batches of wild collected webs, which originated from Whale Chine on the Isle of Wight. After release, no adults were seen for 3 years. However, during a cursory inspection of the site, whilst considering the release of their captive cousins as post hibernation larvae, the originator of the colony discovered 39 larval webs. It has been reported that in 2010 the population was huge, with plenty of larval webs covering the site, though numbers dropped in late August of the same year due to the very wet conditions which prevailed. The winter and spring of 2011 looked very poor though the adults emerged and made a good show. Though numbers are generally being reported as low this season, compared to the high of 2010, reports would suggest they are holding their own.

So to answer my question, should they be in Surrey?

I think the simple answer is probably not though there are numerous arguments that could be made for and against such an introduction, including the personal short term satisfaction they give to the onlooker, including myself, though I feel this view may be overlooking the bigger long term conservation picture. I personally don't have a particular problem with re-introducing *M. cinxia* on the mainland '**providing such releases are approved and backed by appropriate knowledge, research and monitoring**', given that a couple of hundred years ago they were found as far north as Lincolnshire. Man has, after all, been responsible for the extermination of many species, never mind colonies, so any efforts to redress the balance is surely to be encouraged. Others will undoubtedly have a different opinion though I do **not** wish to continue that discussion here ...

Further discussion at: viewtopic.php?f=2&t=6303

I feel this story is sure to continue ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jun-12 06:23 AM GMT

Hi Mark,
The top shot in particular is excellent. Lovely pose Eleanor.
Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 16-Jun-12 06:52 AM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

The Surrey *M. cinxia* colony, currently in its 10th year, was originally established from 300 larvae from three batches of wild collected webs, which originated from Whale Chine on the Isle of Wight. After release, no adults were seen for 3 years. However, during a cursory inspection of the site, whilst considering the release of their captive cousins as post hibernation larvae, the originator of the colony discovered 39 larval webs. It has been reported that in 2010 the population was huge, with plenty of larval webs covering the site, though numbers dropped in late August of the same year due to the very wet conditions which prevailed. The winter and spring of 2011 looked very poor though the adults emerged and made a good show. Though numbers are generally being reported as low this season, compared to the high of 2010, reports would suggest they are holding their own.

Where did you get this information, Mark?

Re: Mark Colvin

by P.J.Underwood, 16-Jun-12 02:20 PM GMT

Mark,
I have been thinking of the way forward with Wrecclesham in light of some good positive suggestions. The first thing is to find who the present owners are and then to contact them. I have no authority to do this for a group, and as an individual would probably fail. If we could get permission during the butterfly season all we would need is a key to the padlock on the gate, held by a responsible key holder (or two). Is there anyone out there who could approach them on behalf of UKB members or BC members. The place is too wonderful to lose and would make an excellent nature reserve.
P.J.U.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Jun-12 05:09 PM GMT

Hi Neil,
Many thanks for your kind comments.

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

The top shot in particular is excellent.

I was rather pleased with that one myself 😊😊😊

Speak soon.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Jun-12 05:16 PM GMT

Hi David,

Regarding your question:

"David M" wrote:

Where did you get this information, Mark?

The information is available on UK Butterflies and has been for some time.

viewtopic.php?f=9&t=5175&p=45291&hilit=wrecclisham+glanville#p45291

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 16-Jun-12 06:49 PM GMT

Thanks, Mark. I'm sure I must have read that last year (given that I posted comments on that very thread!!)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Jun-12 12:50 AM GMT

Dear Philip,

Thanks for your message.

I believe your questions have already been answered under another forum but to reiterate, I believe the site is privately owned and the owner(s), presumably commercial and undoubtedly investment orientated, will quite rightly be looking at some point for a return on their asset. They will inevitably have to consider the conservation implications of any development proposals they put forward, and these will have to be discussed and agreed by the relevant authorities and interested conservation based organisations e.g. the local Wildlife Trust. Any development is likely to be conditional of a number of caveats which, in reality, should take into consideration vulnerable or protected species. Ecological surveys will inevitably need to be undertaken in order to provide such information. Surrey Butterfly Conservation may feel it appropriate for their involvement at some stage but **not** because of the presence of the Glanville Fritillary. Do remember, as Gary quite rightly stated:

"Gruditch" wrote:

Best of luck with that, the moment the developers find out that the area is renowned for the unauthorised introduction of the Glanville. They will pass off all other fauna & flora, endangered or otherwise, as introduced.

I appreciate your comments that the site may well make a very nice nature reserve though this, in my opinion, is extremely unlikely to happen. You'd be totally wasting your time contacting the owners, particularly if you plan to ask permission for access, as the health and safety responsibilities for giving such access will inevitably fall on their shoulders. No company or individual in their right mind would give permission to members of the general public to a former quarry and landfill, no matter how safe you or I may deem it to be.

I know your heart is in the right place but take away the Glanvilles, as they really don't count in the overall equation, and you are left with an old landfill and quarry. Take the site for what it is and enjoy it while you can.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by P.J.Underwood, 17-Jun-12 04:02 AM GMT

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your comments. It is easier for me in our part of Surrey—The Chidd Woods and Hambledon—including Nutbourne Brickworks—, but I used to be involved in the Farnham area. However, I can't be involved in trespass. Yes, I am off hunting to the Brenne in two weeks with a private group. Let's hope the weather is better. There really is a crash in the Swallowtails when I was in Norfolk last week, only one and an egg at Wheaton fen, and myself and a friend drew blanks on different occasions at Strumpshaw fen.

Philip

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Jun-12 01:57 AM GMT

Hogwood, 19 June 2012

Decisions ...

Feeling a little under the weather this morning, I decided to stay close to home and visit Hogwood in West Sussex in the hope of an early Silver-washed Fritillary or White Admiral. Despite ideal weather conditions my two targets would appear to have not yet emerged, at least not in Hogwood, or they were doing a very good job of keeping a low profile.

What did catch my eye were the Large Skippers, the males launching attacks against anything coming in close proximity. A rather nice female in particular caught my eye, and being far less active than the testosterone fuelled males, provided several photographic opportunities. This was the first time I've seriously tried to photograph Large Skippers and I have to say I found it quite difficult to get a shot that was different from the normal images one sees of this species, and more importantly, one that I was happy with. At one point the female was joined by a male showing more than a passing interest. Having watched them for a good 15 minutes I was optimistic of a pairing, though this sadly didn't happen as a passing male broke up the party.

I'll certainly give them a go again but I'd of preferred to have found my targets.

My favourite shot below ...



Large Skipper (female), (Ochlodes faunus)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 22-Jun-12 06:14 AM GMT

East Blean Woods, 20 June 2012

100 miles and 2 hours later ...

... I finally arrived at my destination, East Blean Woods in Kent, my target the beautiful Heath Fritillary (*Melitaea athalia*). I arrived at around 7.45am, much later than planned, though my final decision to visit wasn't made until around 5.15am when I woke after an unsettled night. The temperature, a humid 16°C, had already raised a number of males into flight, the dappled light conditions proved challenging ...

Managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust, East Blean Woods covers 122 hectares of ancient woodland and chestnut coppice situated on a patchwork of differing soils. It holds protected designation as a National Nature Reserve (NNR), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The woods have historically been managed and after the coppice is cut, much of the ground is colonised by Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*), the primary larval food plant of *M. athalia*.

In 1934, the artist and lepidopterist F. W. Frowhawk wrote, "During the past half-century this butterfly has disappeared from many of its haunts where it was formerly abundant, and now occurs only in a few of the southern English counties. Its chief localities are in Kent, Devon and Cornwall; in Sussex it was formerly common, but now exists only in limited numbers." He goes on to say "In Essex, where several females were liberated about ten years ago, it is now abundant." He also claims "Its apparent extermination in certain localities was largely due to over-collecting, combined with extensive rearing of pheasants, as both the young and old of this bird, especially during the breeding season, destroy an enormous number of insects, especially ground-feeding larvae." Fortunately the butterfly still occurs in Kent, Essex, Devon, Somerset and on the Devon-Cornwall border, albeit in much reduced numbers, though it has sadly long been lost from my home county of Sussex. The Exmoor and East Blean colonies are currently recognised as its principal strongholds. This is one of Britain's rarest butterflies, which without carefully targeted conservation efforts, i.e. burning and bracken control on Exmoor and coppicing and ride widening in the Blean Woods complex in Kent, it is inevitable that a rapid decline of this delicate species would be seen.

Long may its presence grace our countryside ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jun-12 06:27 AM GMT

Nice Frit Mark, but I like the Large Skipper shot even more.
BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 22-Jun-12 06:38 AM GMT

Love the quotations, Mark. Frohawk was a genius and my "Natural History of British Butterflies" is one of my most treasured possessions! And another great photo.

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

... though my final decision to visit wasn't made until around 5.15am when I woke after an unsettled night. The temperature, a humid 16°C, had already raised a number of males into flight, the dappled light conditions proved challenging ...

Perhaps you should have opened the bedroom curtains 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 22-Jun-12 06:02 PM GMT

You are maintaining a fantastically high standard Mark 😊 . I shudder to think about the images you reject.

My gut instinct on the Heath Fritillary is that it is a (fe)male. In any event it would make a great addition to the Species-Specific Album when you have time.

Regards,

Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jun-12 04:03 AM GMT

Thanks.

Your comments are genuinely much appreciated 😊😊😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jun-12 04:07 AM GMT

West Sussex, 23 June 2012

Being in the zone (or not) ...

I'm not quite sure what it was about today, but despite having the opportunity to roam at my free will, I really struggled to get motivated and focus on the task in hand this morning i.e. some serious butterfly photography. Whether or not it was because my daughter has finally finished her A Levels and is now set for university and will be leaving home in the not too distant future, or whether it was linked to my son being away from home this weekend on a Duke of Edinburgh expedition, I really don't know, but I certainly couldn't focus (if you excuse the photographic pun) ...

Having dropped my son off nearby, I started the day in woodland just to the south of Horsham where Colin, and later Neil, had also decided to head. I soon found my first Silver-washed Fritillaries of the year, and very welcome they were too, along with a single flyby White Admiral. Having wondered somewhat aimlessly and without any real photographic success for several hours, I left and headed in the direction of home; though I felt a need to try one more location ...

... and I'm glad I did ...

Species seen today:

Silver-washed Fritillary

White Admiral

Red Admiral

Grizzled Skipper

Large Skipper

Meadow Brown

Small Heath

Speckled Wood

Wood White

Common Blue (female)



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-12 05:51 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Regarding the kids leaving home, I know how you feel, my daughter moved out last year and my youngest son is off to university in September. Ironically it is the oldest that is still at home, at least he is developing a healthy interest in insects and particularly butterflies.

That is a good tally of butterflies today, your weather must have been a bit better than ours 🍀

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-12 06:08 AM GMT

Cracking shot of the very blue female—is it just me but I haven't seen any brown females this year(yet)?

WRT kids growing up mine are 4 and 7 already – how did that happen and does it get any easier?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jun-12 07:13 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I haven't seen many Common Blues at all this year and certainly no brown females. I couldn't believe my luck when I found the blue female today. I'm surprised I managed to get a decent picture at all, as the grass was blowing around in the strong wind. I just kept aiming the camera at her and clicked away ...

"Wurzel" wrote:

WRT kids growing up mine are 4 and 7 already – how did that happen and does it get any easier?

Harder and definitely more expensive ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Gothic_dreams, 26-Jun-12 05:23 AM GMT

Hey mark, love the quality you get in your photos, love the Large Skipper shot you got 😊

Chris

Re: Mark Colvin

by Debbie, 26-Jun-12 05:36 PM GMT

Super picture – I am really keen to photograph a female blue one to use in a design for a crewel embroidery project next year and have not seen one this yet. I was very lucky yesterday to see a female ssb briefly. However it is the common blue that will suit my project, so I will keep my fingers crossed. I also saw half a dozen male ssb and half a dozen small heaths and a silver y moth (?).

Debbie 😊😊😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-Jun-12 12:41 AM GMT

Dear Chris and Debbie,

Thank you for your kind comments 😊

I'm really glad to see you are following in your father's footsteps Chris and off the record, I think you've got the better camera. What ever you do don't get rid of it.

You've got some tough acts to follow with the FZ38 😊

Debbie, I really hope you find your female Common Blue as they have been rather scarce on the ground in my part of Sussex.

Good luck.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 29-Jun-12 02:38 AM GMT

Stedham Common, 27 June 2012 – Part 1

In search of silver ...

Earlier today, before heading into local woodland, I paid a brief visit to the beautiful Stedham Common in West Sussex, my target, a female Silver-studded Blue.

It did not take long before I found the first of many males, as they took flight from the heather and birch scrub. Others, roosting amongst the undergrowth, gradually started to stir and as they did so they revealed their wings to the warmth of the new day. A slow walk through the heather finally produced four females; two rather tatty specimens and two very fresh individuals whose tiny gemstone adorned wings glistened in the hazy sun. The mating pair I was hoping for did not transpire, nor for that matter did the freshly emerged male sitting high on a single stem of purple heather with a host of ants in attendance, though perhaps that was being a little hopeful ...

Maybe next time ...

Species seen today:

White Admiral

Large Skipper
Meadow Brown
Small Heath
Ringlet
Speckled Wood
Silver-studded Blue





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-12 03:05 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

All good shots but I really like the middle photo.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 30-Jun-12 04:57 AM GMT

Stedham Common, 27 June 2012 - Part 2

In search of silver ...

Amongst all the gloom and doom of what has undoubtedly been a difficult start to the 2012 butterfly season, I thought I'd share a ray of personal hope.

Despite previous losses of the Silver-studded Blue (*Plebeius argus*) from so many sites across Sussex, the last couple of years have seen Iping and Stedham Commons in West Sussex remain a key stronghold for this charismatic and beautiful butterfly, thanks to the combined management efforts of the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the various organisations and conservation volunteers involved with its management. 2010 proved to be a very positive year for the species in Sussex and show that it is possible to create and sustain ideal habitat conditions to save *P. argus*, at least in West Sussex. In 2011, despite inclement weather conditions at the time of the expected first emergence at Iping Common, adult butterflies were found and still being tended by ants that would have helped them through their early stages. In some areas, such as at Chapel Common on the Sussex / Hampshire border, numbers seen were up by 161% on 2010. In 2012, in a similar manner to 2011, we have seen poor weather follow a warm spring. My personal observations to date, based purely on my own site visits to Stedham Common, indicate a positive season for this beautiful butterfly, at least in this part of West Sussex.

Long may this positive trend continue ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 30-Jun-12 05:02 AM GMT

Lovely photo, Mark.

How do you think numbers compare to previous years? They seem very low to me when i've been there but perhaps i've been spoilt from a couple of good years.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-12 06:50 AM GMT

Great shot Mark! 🍷 The Silver Studs have only just started emerging here in the last day or two so my third trip to Slop Bog might be the lucky one.

Havd a goodun

Wurzel

PS cheers for the info on child care – I better start saving now 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Debbie, 01-Jul-12 12:58 AM GMT

Super picture Mark, how do you get that beautiful blurred background 🤔🤔🤔

Debbie 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Jul-12 02:10 AM GMT

Dear Neil, Susie, Wurzel and Debbie,

Thank you all for your very kind comments.

"Susie" wrote:

How do you think numbers compare to previous years? They seem very low to me when I've been there but perhaps I've been spoilt from a couple of good years.

I think you've hit the nail on the head Susie. 2010 was a very positive year for SSBs in Sussex and I recall seeing good numbers at Stedham Common. I certainly saw less in 2011, though in all fairness also visited the site less frequently. I have made a number of visits in 2012 and feel, from personal observation, that 2012 will be a better year than 2011. I've not reviewed it, though would be interested to know the results of the transect for this area.

"Debbie" wrote:

Super picture Mark, how do you get that beautiful blurred background?

Keep it simple ...

I just use a Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ45. It's a good value bridge camera, very easy to use and produces the results I want. I wouldn't swap it for anything ... well maybe another FZ45! Take a look at Neil's pictures (Sussex Kipper), produced with the earlier FZ38 and you'll soon see why we both use a Lumix. I certainly don't class myself as a photographer in the first instance and don't do anything fancy with the camera; in fact start talking camera terminology and you'll soon put me to sleep ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Debbie, 01-Jul-12 04:55 PM GMT

Mark,
thanks for your comments, I was given a DSLR camera and are therefore committed to that. I agree keep it simple, and thank you for taking your time to reply to my question.
Debbie

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Jul-12 07:19 AM GMT

Pirbright Common, 2 July 2012

Opportunities ...

The Met Office has now confirmed ...

"Provisional Met Office figures for June show double the average amount of rain has fallen, making it the wettest June since records began in 1910. This is the second record-breaking month of rainfall this year, with April also topping the rankings. The period from April to June is also the wettest recorded for the UK. It is also the second dullest June on record with just 119.2 hours of sunshine, narrowly missing out on the record of 115.4 hours set in 1987. To complete the disappointing picture, it has also been the coolest June since 1991 with a mean temperature of 12.3°C".

So that's the good news ...

Hopefully things can only get better, or at least that's what I keep telling myself and particularly with Emperor season upon us. The message that clearly comes across to me, is that although opportunities to get out and see butterflies this season may be few and far between, we need to grab every single opportunity we get. Earlier today, with an 11.30am business meeting rescheduled to 1pm at short notice, and finding myself just outside of Guildford, I decided to pay a brief visit to a very overcast and windy Pirbright Common in Surrey. The last time I visited this small area of heathland was on 25th July 2011, when I visited the site to see the Grayling and Silver-studded Blue colonies that are to be found there. Today, despite far from ideal conditions, it was not hard to find small numbers of male Silver-studded Blue hunkered down in the heather; thermoregulating at every opportunity.

Get out there when you can ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Jul-12 06:09 AM GMT

Cissbury Ring, 3 July 2012

Sussex hardcore ...

Despite conditions that could only really be described as "stay indoors and watch the tennis", though that had already been cancelled due to the rain, I decided to head to Cissbury Ring this afternoon and was pleased to be joined by fellow Sussex hardcore, Colin Knight; who was obviously equally as

mad as me ...

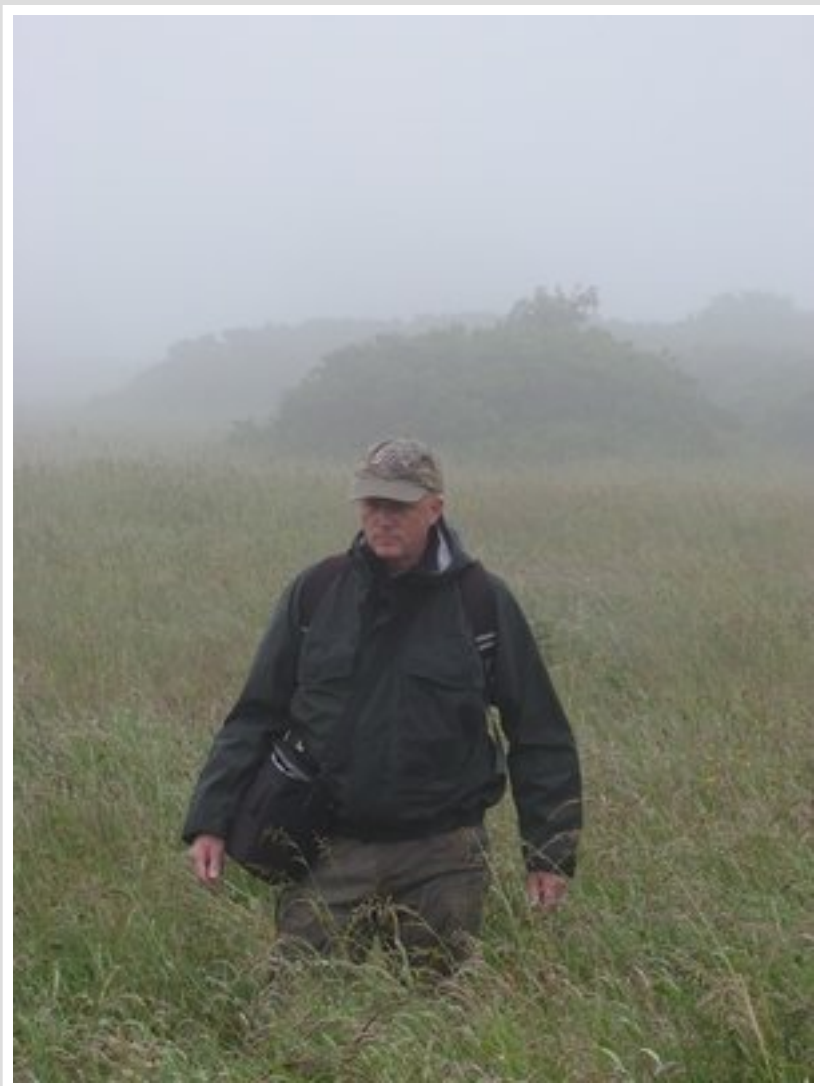
As we approached our destination low cloud covered the now invisible hill; rain had started to fall. As we climbed the ancient hill fort a female Speckled Wood braved the elements and alighted nearby. Heading clockwise around the outer ditch with the ramparts rising to our right, numerous Meadow Brown and Small Heath continually lifted from the wet grass. A single male Common Blue was found roosting nearby. Having completed our walk around the ditch, we headed to higher ground where we hoped that our main target, a Dark Green Fritillary, would be found, though this was sadly not the case. The grass was now sodden and so were we; my trousers drenched to my waist, my walking boots squelched with every step (but hey, its summer and we were having fun). As we descended to slightly lower and more sheltered ground we came across a single pristine male Dark Green Fritillary hunkered down in the grass. Colin managed a couple of shots before it took flight and we lost it to the wind. Several male Marbled White were also seen as they lifted from the grass ...

I have a feeling that this entomological obsession of a need to search no matter what the conditions must run in the Sussex blood, as a certain well known Emperor hunter was captured on film in 2010 searching for hibernating *iris* larvae in freezing conditions and 5" of snow; a rather seasonal fetching red hat and handbag providing a nice touch 😊

Mission accomplished ...

Species seen:

Speckled Wood
Meadow Brown
Common Blue
Ringlet
Small Heath
Marbled White
Dark Green Fritillary



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jul-12 06:22 AM GMT

Glad to see you two were being as equally optimistic/dedicated/stupid as I was today 😊 . But hey, you found a DGF! Thurs and Friday might be better and I've got time off (Hannah and Mia away). Anyone for White-letters?
Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 04-Jul-12 04:11 PM GMT

Hehe, so glad there's a group of us Sussex Nutters that will venture boldly regardless of the conditions! 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-Jul-12 05:16 AM GMT

New Forest, 4 July 2012

lanceolata ...

The words "*I should easily be able to give you 2-3 days notice of emergence*" rang in my mind when 3 minutes later my phone rang and the words "*a female's emerged, how soon can you get down*" changed my plans for today. The reason for the phone call, the emergence of a beautiful female Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus* ab. *lanceolata*). 75 miles and 2 hours later, I arrived at Alec's house on the edge of the New Forest.

My good friend Alec Harmer, author of *Variation in British Butterflies*, has been studying the causes and genetics of variation for many years and possesses a wealth of knowledge on the subject. In 1995, in a small private wood in West Sussex, Alec's attention was drawn to a small colony of Ringlets. He was rewarded with finding, not only one, but several extreme specimens of the very rare and beautiful ab. *lanceolata*, the first a female. It is from this original female that much of Alec's research has been undertaken. For anyone interested in the causes and genetics of butterfly variation, I highly recommend Alec's work. His book, published in 2000 and which runs to a lengthy 294 pages, has been written with the keen amateur lepidopterist very much in mind. It is illustrated throughout and contains 84 coloured plates by Alec's long time friend, the late A D A (Donald) Russwurm. The book is priced at £38.00 including postage and packing.

Alec can be contacted at paphiapublishing@hotmail.com

Aphantopus hyperantus ab. *lanceolata* ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 06-Jul-12 05:27 AM GMT

Superb underside shot. Love it. 😊
Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 06-Jul-12 06:19 AM GMT

WOW! 😊

The book's now on my wish list too.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-12 06:25 AM GMT

Great photos of a really attractive butterfly.
The underside is special but it is also surprising how much the look of the topside is improved.

Another excellent post 😊

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-12 07:13 AM GMT

Cracking shots Mark 🍷 I didn't realise that the aberration was carried through to the upperwing, but then "as above, so below" I suppose.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by John W, 06-Jul-12 09:43 AM GMT

Stunning!

Cheers

John W

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-Jul-12 04:07 PM GMT

Thank you all for your kind comments 😊

She was a beautiful butterfly but so difficult to do justice to in a photo ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-Jul-12 04:32 PM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 5 July 2012

The search continues ...

I managed several visits to various sections within the Chiddingfold Forest complex today, the first, at Oaken Wood mid morning and the last, at the same location this evening. Though I'm sure he was watching from above, his Imperial Majesty did not descend in any of the areas I visited during the day, nor for that matter was I even treated to a high-level aerobatic display; maybe next time ...

When one door closes another opens and I was pleased to see good numbers of Ringlet (though no fancy aberrations) along with numerous freshly emerged Small Skipper. The Marbled White, a butterfly that always enchants me, permitted close contact this evening ...

Species seen today:

Silver-washed Fritillary

White Admiral

Red Admiral

Comma

Small Skipper

Large Skipper

Small Heath

Ringlet

Marbled White

Meadow Brown

Speckled Wood



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-Jul-12 03:20 PM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 7 July 2012

A favourite place ...

I managed two quick visits to one of my favourite sections within the Chiddingfold Forest complex today. The first, at 6am and in very poor light conditions (but at least it wasn't raining), and the second at around 4pm this afternoon; just as the wind was getting up! Roosting butterflies were the order of the morning, and I found a reasonable number of Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Small Heath and both Large and Small Skipper in amongst the long and very wet grass. This afternoon's visit, after a day of family commitments, produced similar species with the added bonus of a freshly emerged and very active male Dark Green Fritillary ...

A male Marbled White at rest below ...

Species seen:

Dark Green Fritillary
Small Skipper
Large Skipper
Ringlet
Small Heath
Marbled White
Meadow Brown



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Jul-12 04:10 AM GMT

Chiddingfold and Chiseldown, 9 and 10 July 2012

A flash of purple ...

It wasn't until late yesterday afternoon, 9th July, that I managed a quick visit to a small section of the Chiddingfold Forest complex. As I headed along the forestry track and into the wood light drizzle began to fall. It was close and humid; the mosquitoes and horseflies were out in force!

As I walked through the long grass, where just three days ago I saw a freshly emerged though very active Dark Green Fritillary, a male Purple Hairstreak suddenly caught my eye as it moved in front of me and immediately rose from its resting place on the bracken and into a nearby oak – if only I'd seen it sooner. Marbled White, Meadow Brown and both Small and Large Skipper were all active, though not venturing too far until the drizzle relented. As I followed the forestry track deeper into the wood a female Small Skipper rather took my fancy, her movements somewhat less hurried compared to the males I also watched ...

After working in the Chichester area today, 10th July, the mounting need for fresh air found me venturing into new territory. I regularly pass an area of mature beech forestry with bramble and bracken sided rides, near to Goodwood Racecourse, known as Chiseldown. Despite the falling rain I managed to find a single Red Admiral and two small areas where Ringlets danced in the occasional interludes of sun. Most were males, though a single freshly emerged female posed nicely along the edge of the track ...

Species seen:

Purple Hairstreak
Small White
Red Admiral
Small Skipper
Large Skipper
Ringlet
Small Heath
Marbled White
Meadow Brown



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Jul-12 06:50 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 11 July 2012

His Majesty ...

Earlier today I joined good friend Nick Broomer in search of the elusive, beautiful and highly seductive Purple Emperor; a species that is several weeks late in showing in prime local territory this season.

Dressed in the very best Emperor hunting fashion (wellies and waterproofs) our day commenced under heavy cloud as we waded through chest high wet grass in search of Dark Green Fritillaries. These we soon found, including a freshly emerged female, though any approach other than for a quick record shot was not forthcoming. After several heavy showers, including a brief spell of thunder and lightening, the sun started to break through the cloud; the air became hot and humid. Although storm clouds still lingered, conditions were more promising for our target.

As we left the Dark Greens to play we slowly headed along the forestry track; eyes focused like that of an owl on the ground ahead. As we passed a small meadow, favoured for Dingy and Grizzled Skipper earlier in the year, we both instinctively froze and waited for the other to give the shout! Gracing us with his presence, a pristine male Purple Emperor was circling the track in front of us. At one point he took chase of a small bird as if saying "this is my territory keep out", before finally landing on the track ahead. We moved with caution allowing him time to settle and commence taking salts, his characteristic yellow proboscis clearly visible. We then approached and took our shots of what I believe to be the first recorded Emperor in this location this season. Pleased with our find and pictures in the bag we headed on and found two further individuals, the first of which and the only one which showed its upperside clearly, carried extensive hindwing damage and wear suggesting emergence some days previous.

A great day in great company ...

Species seen:

Purple Emperor (3)
Red Admiral
White Admiral
Comma
Small Skipper
Large Skipper
Common Blue
Ringlet
Marbled White
Meadow Brown
Dark Green Fritillary
Silver-washed Fritillary



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 12-Jul-12 03:31 PM GMT

Great report and photo, Mark 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 12-Jul-12 03:36 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

I agree, a great day in great company, a great butterfly, and a great photo.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mildheart, 13-Jul-12 12:15 AM GMT

Hi Mark

Whereabouts in Chiddingfold Forest is best for Dark Green Fritillary? I'm planning a visit there at the weekend.

Agreed about the Emperor photo. I wasn't expecting to see any photos this year.

Thanks

Clive

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jul-12 03:18 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Congratulations on the PE, a great photo and the first that I have seen of HIM this year 😊

A good tally of species for the day as well.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Jul-12 04:22 AM GMT

Thank you all for your kind comments 😊

It would be fair to say I was rather happy when we found the Emperors today as I feel we may not see a great deal more this season, though I'd like to be proven wrong. Torrential rain fell over Chiddingfold Forest last night and further is predicted for tonight. To my knowledge there were no Emperor sightings today. Regarding the Dark Green Fritillaries, they can be found throughout the main Chiddingfold Forest complex though are not guaranteed. Park at any of the main entrances and just keep your eyes peeled. If the weather is good this weekend I'd say you stand a reasonable chance of a sighting.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Jul-12 04:43 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 11 July 2012

Ringlet revisited ...

I have recently taken quite a few images of Ringlets. These range from a rare captive bred aberration (ab. *lanceolata*), to a number of specimens in their wild environment. Although I have been relatively happy with the pictures I have produced, in my own mind something was missing i.e. truly showing them in their natural habitat. Yesterday morning whilst heading into Chiddingfold Forest, I came across a small patch of damp sedge and grass alongside the forestry track where several Ringlets had settled. A beautiful female, resting on the wet sedge, caught my eye.

The Ringlet in its natural environment ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-12 06:05 AM GMT

The PE is cracking, I can't decide between your shot of Nicks – so I'll split my envy between you both 🍷 😊
Will the weekends weather be good for PE or will the rain and wind cause them to perish in the tops of the trees?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Jul-12 06:20 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel,

My shot is obviously the better one 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Jul-12 02:59 AM GMT

Alder Platt Meadow, 15 July 2012

The only way is ...

It's amazing what you miss or turns up on your local patch. Despite walking through Alder Platt Meadow for a good number of years, I have never previously encountered an Essex Skipper – at least not until this evening. Sadly the light had all but disappeared when I found this solitary pristine male; the following photograph being taken at 7.45pm. Hopefully I'll get the opportunity to find him and his friends in better light ...

A Sussex Essex at roost ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 18-Jul-12 03:03 AM GMT

Nice shot that, Mark. Really shows the antennal tips off well.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 18-Jul-12 03:34 AM GMT

Hi Mark,
Very nice portrait of an Essex.
Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jul-12 03:37 AM GMT

Excellent photo Mark 😊

Now that is the sort of shot that I should take 😊

Last year I spent a day going around some local spots purposefully looking for Essex Skippers and taking head on shots of every small golden skipper that I found. I was surprised by how many actually turned out to be Essex with good populations at two sites 😊. I now have another site to check out 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-Jul-12 04:18 AM GMT

Springhead Hill, 18 July 2012

Out of the blue ...

A brief visit yesterday afternoon was more than enough to tempt a return visit earlier today to the beautiful Springhead Hill in West Sussex. Initially arriving at 6am, the light was poor and continuous drizzle ruined any chance of a decent photograph. I quickly decided to leave and returned shortly after 8am, by which time the drizzle had almost stopped and a trace of blue was just starting to peep from behind the wind blown covers. As I walked through the small field the ground below me moved, as numerous Meadow Brown, Marbled White and good numbers of freshly emerged Chalkhill Blue lifted from the beautiful herb filled meadow. The scent of marjoram, thyme and numerous other exotic perfumes filled the air around me.

An hour later I had to leave ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 19-Jul-12 04:38 AM GMT

Thats a cracking shot of the male CHB Mark.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Jul-12 04:38 AM GMT

Hi Nick,

Many thanks for your kind comment 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Jul-12 06:30 AM GMT

Springhead Hill, 20 July 2012

Unfinished business ...

Early this morning I paid a repeat visit to Springhead Hill and timed my arrival just prior to the first rays of sun began heating the ground and the numerous Chalkhill Blues roosting in the meadow. My objective, to find and photograph a female warming her wings in readiness for the first flight of the day. Amongst the many males I encountered, I managed to find just two females during the time I was there, the first still roosting and the second positioning her wings towards the rising sun. The latter posed beautifully for around ten minutes, at which point she and her many admirers started to take to the air.

A great way to start the day



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 22-Jul-12 12:44 AM GMT

Hollingbury Park, 20 July 2012

Hairstreak hunting ...

After leaving Springhead Hill I headed east towards Brighton.

The Brighton & Hove City Council website states *"Brighton & Hove has always had a high population of Elm trees and currently has over 17,000. These were originally planted in large numbers by the Victorians and Edwardians. This was because of the trees' tolerance to the thin chalk soil and salty winds. There is a wide variety of Elms around the city, most notably at Preston Park, Shirley Drive and Carden Hill. These include many species such as English, Jersey and Cornish Elms. The 'Preston Twins' are located at Preston Park and are widely considered the largest and oldest surviving English Elms in the world. In the early 1970s the council introduced a new programme to control a highly infectious form of Elm disease which was introduced by imported Rock Elm from North America. The success of the programme to fight the disease is still clear today from the many thousands of Elms throughout the city. In 1998, due to the success of the local Elm disease control programme, the city was granted full National Collection status by Plant Heritage"*.

My destination this morning was Hollingbury Park, which is situated just off Ditchling Road and close to the South Downs National Park boundary; my target, the elusive White-letter Hairstreak (*Satyrrium w-album*). I had never seen this particular species before so was keen for success. After seeking advice from those in the know I slowly paced the western edge of Hollingbury Wood, paying particular attention around the several sheltered bays whilst trying to look skyward at the same time. After about an hour of careful searching my target was spotted, as a single male descended to briefly nectar on a thistle below the canopy ...

My first ever White-letter Hairstreak ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 22-Jul-12 01:05 AM GMT

Congrats Mark – and a cracking shot to boot!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

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

Nice one Mark, well done.

I have not seen a WLH yet this year and only saw 2 last year, both of them from a distance.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 22-Jul-12 07:11 AM GMT

Awkward butterfly to find, so well done, Mark.

Probably one of the more accommodating species when it comes to photography though.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-Jul-12 01:08 AM GMT

Thanks for your kind comments 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-Jul-12 01:15 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 21 July 2012

The end ...

A common pond skater (*Gerris lacustris*) prepares to feast ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jul-12 03:51 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 23 July 2012

Audience with an Empress ...

After a brief visit yesterday, a visit to Chiddingfold Forest this morning produced much better results. Apart from all the expected species an Empress, perched low amongst the branches of a willow and occasionally taking flight around the nearby oaks, gave privileged audience to myself and three other observers below. A second brood Holly Blue, increasing numbers of Wood White and reasonable numbers of Silver-washed Fritillary, including one taking salts from the track, were also observed.

Despite the super weather we are currently experiencing, the Dark Knight was called away to save Gotham City this afternoon. By the time the baddies were safely locked away and law and order was once again returned, it was 6.30pm when I finally returned to the Bat Cave! Although I'd sooner have been wandering around the tracks of Chiddingfold Forest, an afternoon of superhero escapism proved thoroughly enjoyable ...

Species seen today:

Silver-washed Fritillary
Purple Emperor (1)
Red Admiral
White Admiral
Comma
Small Skipper
Large Skipper
Holly Blue
Ringlet
Gatekeeper
Marbled White
Meadow Brown
Wood White
Large White
Green-veined White



Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-12 03:59 AM GMT

Great report and cracking shots per usual 😊 I must confess that I did prefer Spiderman when I was a kid 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jul-12 04:22 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

A good tally of species...and superhero escapism, all in one day 🎉 much better than my day at work 😞

Never mind, a day off tomorrow, glorious sun forecast and Fermyn is only 60 odd miles from my house.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 24-Jul-12 05:43 AM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Never mind, a day off tomorrow, glorious sun forecast and Fermyn is only 60 odd miles from my house.

You've made me real jealous with that comment.

Given recent reports I suspect that Emperors will be into double figures tomorrow!

Prime your camera, Neil.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Jul-12 06:40 AM GMT

Thanks.

I appreciate your comments 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Jul-12 07:02 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 25 July 2012

Emperor hunting ...

With a preference for staying local, today was either a day of Grayling hunting at Windover Hill, or having a day visiting the Chiddingfold Forest hotspots for Wood White and Purple Emperor. I chose the later and was glad I did ...

Arriving shortly after 7am, I took a slow walk into the forest in the hope I might find a roosting second brood Wood White. This did not transpire, though I did find several Small Skipper and Meadow Brown covered in the early morning dew. By the time I reached my main destination the woodland was steaming as the heat from the early morning sun warmed the damp ground below. At shortly after 8.45am I caught sight of an Emperor perched on the leaves of a young sweet chestnut. A bit of careful manoeuvring, including crossing a small ditch, finally got me within 10-12 feet of my first sighting of the day. At 9.30am a second Emperor appeared and I was hopeful of a grounding as it quartered the track in search of a suitable landing point. This particular individual played ball and provided multiple photo opportunities during a period of about an hour. In total five Emperors, all in poor condition, were seen today with the second providing numerous viewing opportunities. Of the five, one was a confirmed Empress in slightly better condition, though despite landing very briefly I was unable to get a picture. By midday it was just far too hot so I called it a day.

The one thing that undoubtedly pleased me most today was the arrival of five fellow hopefuls whilst the second was still grounded, particularly as none had previously seen an Emperor. I was extremely pleased to be able to provide Charlie and Amy with a very close and personal encounter, which I feel sure they will value for a very long time.

As Neil mentioned recently in his diary *"There is little doubt that the start of the 2012 Emperor season has been much later than in recent years; much later than in any season this century. However, although numbers are now building in some counties there is even less doubt that the species has suffered a very significant setback in Sussex"*. Despite my sightings today, this certainly appears to be the case in the traditional Chiddingfold Forest hotspots.

I know (before anyone comments), blue's not my colour ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Jul-12 05:51 PM GMT

Straits Inclosure, 26 July 2012

New pastures ...

Straits Inclosure, located at the extreme southern end of Alice Holt Forest and just off the A325, is a commercially managed, lowland oak forest (*Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*) interspersed with approximately 10% ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Its understorey is comprised of woody shrub and herbs dominated by hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). This was my first visit to the site ...

Arriving at just before 9am I took a slow walk along the main forestry track towards the first of the two observation towers. A Red Admiral, followed shortly after by a Comma, were observed feeding on dog faeces. Silver-washed Fritillaries and small numbers of White Admiral were also observed along with a single Purple Hairstreak. At approximately 10.45am the first Emperor was seen, a male quartering the track in readiness for landing. This particular individual stayed around for some time and although possessing a damaged left forewing, it was a very welcome sight providing photographic opportunities for several observers. Despite pacing the tracks and keeping in contact with the other Emperor hunters, it wasn't until 1.15pm that I observed two battling males above the oaks between the two towers. A flying visit to an extremely hot and humid Tugley Wood on my way home provided little in the way of butterfly action, with the exception of three White Admiral imbibing nutrients from the forestry track ...

Species seen today:

Purple Emperor (3)
White Admiral
Red Admiral
Comma
Silver-washed Fritillary
Wood White
Large White
Small White
Green-veined White
Brimstone
Speckled Wood
Ringlet
Meadow Brown
Small Skipper
Large Skipper
Purple Hairstreak





Re: Mark Colvin

by Lee Hurrell, 09-Aug-12 09:19 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

I've only just caught up with your diary and had to comment – an absolutely stunning collection of images and reports.

Be good to catch up soon.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Aug-12 01:31 AM GMT

Hi Lee,

Thanks for your kind comments 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Aug-12 01:40 AM GMT

Majorca, 29 July to 5 August 2012

Far too hot to handle ...

I have recently returned from a short family break to northern Majorca. Campanet is a small village nestling in the foothills of the Sierra de Tramuntana mountain range. It is located approximately 40km (25 miles) north west of Palma. The village has, for the most part, ignored the extensive tourist developments that have taken place throughout much of the island and is one of the few untouched authentic Mallorcan villages that still exist. Our base was the magnificent Monnaber Nou, a restored manor house set in over 370 acres of the most unspoilt Mallorcan countryside on the outskirts of Campanet.

Venturing locally, the rocky and very arid landscape produced good numbers of Small Copper and several Southern Gatekeeper. Three, very active, Bath White were also found along with small numbers of Southern Brown Argus, a new species for me (a male is pictured below). A visit to the Coves de Campanet produced several Holly Blue feeding and egg laying on an ivy-clad wall and my only Cleopatra of the trip. Several fast flying Swallowtail were seen at the wetland reserve of S'Albufera. A pair of sparring Geranium Bronze provided welcome entertainment whilst I sat rehydrating after climbing and descending the Calvari Steps, an ancient stone staircase (all 365 steps) leading from the central square in Pollença up to a tiny church called the Calvario Chapel.

Trying to have a family holiday and undertake any serious entomology is generally very difficult for me and this trip proved no different. In addition to family commitments the temperature, which generally was averaging an extremely hot 38°C (hitting a scorching 44°C on one occasion in the town of Sóller), made sitting in the shade by the pool with a long cold drink seem a far more sensible option. The addition of very breezy conditions (a very welcome respite from the heat) made photography a little difficult, though not totally impossible when time permitted.

Species seen:

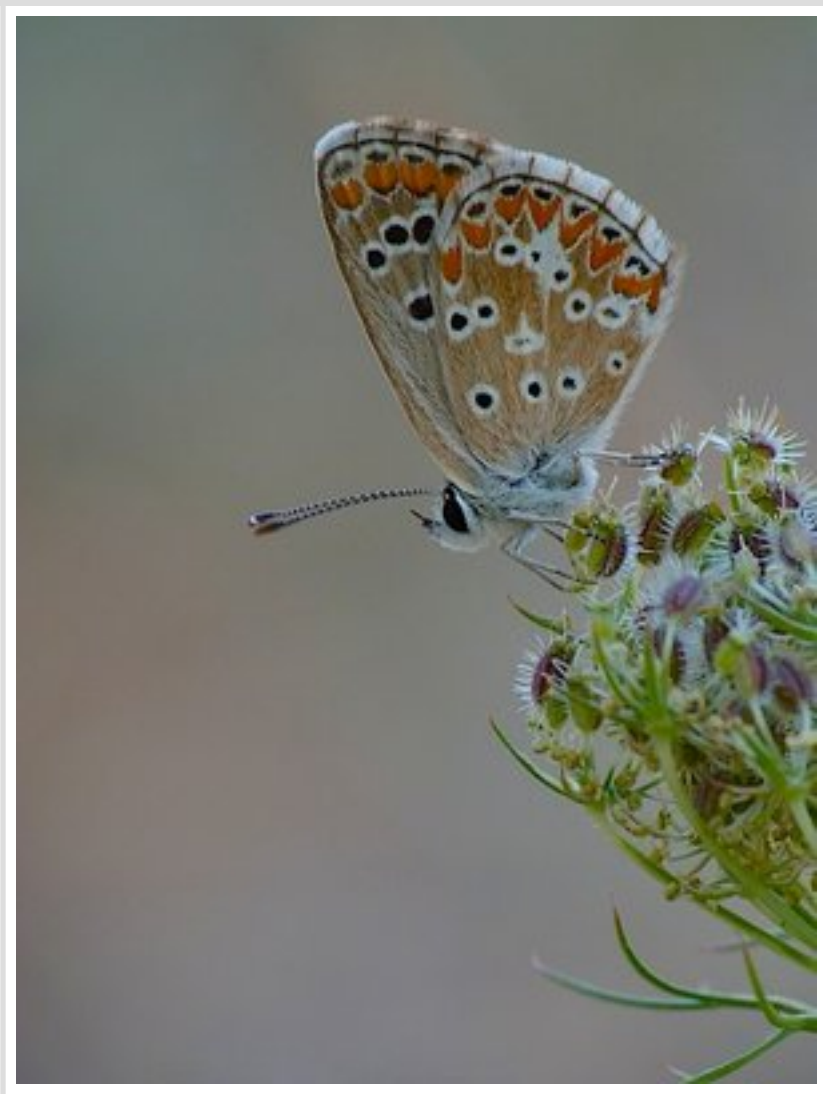
Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*)

Cleopatra (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*)

Southern Brown Argus (*Aricia cramera*)

Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

Bath White (*Pontia daplidice*)
Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon* ssp. *gorganus*)
Geranium Bronze (*Cacyreus marshalli*)
Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria* ssp. *sardoa*)
Southern Gatekeeper (*Pyronia cecilia*)



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Aug-12 08:24 PM GMT

West Sussex (and a tiny bit of Surrey), 11 August 2012

Out and about ...

Earlier today, I decided to have a general look around to see what was about. I started at Steyning Rifle Range in the hope of a Brown Hairstreak. Although I'm sure I was being watched from above they didn't reveal their presence on this occasion. Three male Wall, a species that appears to be doing well in Sussex this season, were found at the top of the reserve along with an ovipositing Brown Argus and numerous pristine Brimstone. After several hours I left and headed towards Springhead Hill. Although the peak of the Chalkhill Blue activity has now passed at this location reasonable numbers were still to be found, including many in good condition. Two Small Copper, a single male Small Blue, three male Common Blue and several Brown Argus were also observed along with an unexpected, though welcome, female Silver-washed Fritillary. A flying visit to Botany Bay concluded my day where a single female Wood White was found.

In reflection, I found it quite interesting to consider that although I had a total species count of twenty-three (23) today, I could quite easily have pushed this to thirty (30) species by adding Green-veined White, Adonis Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Small Tortoiseshell, Grayling, Silver-spotted Skipper and Essex Skipper without travelling too far in Sussex, and maybe as many as thirty-seven (37) if lady luck and time had been on my side and I'd found Brown Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Painted Lady (there's been one at Mill Hill recently), Purple Emperor, White Admiral and Silver-studded Blue (which I gather are still hanging on at Stedham and Iping Commons. Food for thought ...

Forty-five (45) butterfly species are regular breeders in Sussex ...

Species seen today:

Red Admiral
Peacock
Comma
Brimstone
Wood White
Small White
Large White
Large Skipper
Small Skipper
Meadow Brown
Ringlet
Speckled Wood
Wall
Small Heath
Gatekeeper
Marbled White
Common Blue
Small Blue
Holly Blue
Chalkhill Blue
Brown Argus
Small Copper
Silver-washed Fritillary



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 15-Aug-12 02:02 AM GMT

Shillinglee, 13 August 2012

Uncommon blue ...

At least in my neck of the woods ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 15-Aug-12 02:20 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Very nice blue. Now let's see the brownie. 😊

Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 15-Aug-12 02:26 AM GMT

Thanks Neil,

I think a little bird has been talking ... 😊

Blog written, post to follow later this evening (pics still on camera) ... 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 15-Aug-12 04:23 AM GMT

Plaistow, 14 August 2012

A magical moment ...

With school summer holidays very much in full swing, I have been trying to encourage my son James to come out with me for some entomological fun! A local wildlife photographic competition with a £50 first prize finally tempted him from his computer. Despite my preference for getting out early morning, it was 11.30am before we left the house. It was already quite hot and humid. A full sun shone above and the early morning still had been replaced by a refreshing breeze as we ventured to our local patch ...

Meadow Brown were everywhere; too many to count and with good numbers of pristine females nectaring on thistle. Gatekeeper were also in abundance and only second in number to their larger and equally active cousin. These were not for me, as I really couldn't be bothered with a chase of known outcome. A beautiful and very freshly emerged female Speckled Wood showed for a brief time though was sadly soon lost. Several Essex and Small Skipper were also seen along with good numbers of Small Heath. Deciding that enough was enough and that our £50 photographic prize wasn't going to be achieved today, we headed back through the meadow and along a small length of mixed hedgerow interspersed with ash and oak; my vision fixed firmly amongst the young blackthorn shoots ...

... and there she was, a beautiful female Brown Hairstreak.

Calling my son over quickly we both watched her flying and crawling amongst her larval foodplant whilst carefully selecting sites to lay her pearly white, urchin-like eggs. Occasionally she would pause and bask open-winged in the sun. She was extremely approachable and graced us with at least 20 minutes of her time before finally being lost from view ...

Species seen:

Speckled Wood
Meadow Brown
Gatekeeper
Small Heath
Holly Blue
Peacock
Brimstone
Small White
Large White
Essex Skipper
Small Skipper
Brown Hairstreak





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 15-Aug-12 04:39 AM GMT

Gorgeous! First female seen in Sussex this year – unless you were in Surrey of course.
BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 15-Aug-12 04:41 AM GMT

lovely photos of a beautiful butterfly.

Well done Mark.

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 15-Aug-12 04:56 AM GMT

Hi Mark,
Super photos, well done.
All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 15-Aug-12 05:00 AM GMT

Very nice Mark; lovely shots! Love the photo of the egg 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 15-Aug-12 05:27 AM GMT

Great stuff Mark 🍷 As things this way seem to be about a week behind your way I can plan for a visit next week, cheers.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 15-Aug-12 10:46 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

A lovely encounter and great results 😊

Regards,

Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 15-Aug-12 07:13 PM GMT

May I add to the chorus – fabulous BH shots, Mark!

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 15-Aug-12 08:01 PM GMT

Beautiful photos of my favourite butterfly 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Debbie, 15-Aug-12 11:32 PM GMT

What a beautiful butterfly and fabulous picture.

Debbie 😊😊😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Aug-12 03:50 AM GMT

Thank you all for your very kind comments 😊😊😊

Of course setting my own bar high means I've now got to jump over it ... 😲

I can't tell you how pleased I was to find her and to be able to share the experience with my son really was the greatest pleasure 😊

Thanks again.

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by ChrisC, 16-Aug-12 04:24 AM GMT

setting the bar so high means i have plenty of room to go under 😊 great shots Mark.

CHris

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Aug-12 04:02 AM GMT

Pirbright Common, 15 August 2012

Now you see me ...

A female Grayling at rest ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Aug-12 02:36 PM GMT

Plaistow, 16 August 2012

Scouting for girls ...

Early this afternoon I headed back to my local patch in the hope of further 'brownie' action – I wasn't disappointed ...

With the main meadow being buffeted by fairly strong wind I headed into a nearby sheltered copse. This is an area I know well and have frequently listened to the nightingales which nest here, observed barn owls quartering the long grass in search of voles and watched the roe with her fawn in the mist at first light; at dusk it becomes the hunting ground for bats. At the far end of the copse lies a peaceful sheltered area with abundant blackthorn in varying growth stages. This is surrounded by large areas of bramble with numerous stands of oak and ash nearby.

A beautiful Peacock basking on bramble caught my eye early on. This was soon followed by several male Speckled Wood. Meadow Brown, including a mating pair, were once again the most abundant species along with good numbers of Gatekeeper. Several nice Holly Blue were seen nectaring on bramble though my eyes were drawn to the ash where movement on the lower branches caught my eye. This was soon followed by more activity until one of two Brown Hairstreaks descended to the blackthorn below. Whilst she was busy egg-laying a third individual was observed in the ash above. The

first to descend (record shot below) was fairly active and far less content to sit for her portrait compared to her more attractive sister from two days ago. After 10 minutes she was off and up into the bramble before finally flying out of sight. In all, and accounting for at least eight or nine sightings, I believe three individuals were seen; these being two males and the ovipositing female ...

Species seen:

Speckled Wood
Meadow Brown
Gatekeeper
Peacock
Brimstone
Small White
Large White
Holly Blue
Brown Hairstreak (3)



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-Aug-12 05:09 AM GMT

Plaistow, 22 August 2012

A sting in the tail ...

Social wasps are among the most familiar and most feared of British insects. In late spring the over-wintered queens sometimes cause alarm as they search for nest sites around our homes and places of work. From late summer onwards their numerous smaller daughters (the workers) commonly cause nuisance and fear to many people. The continuous comings and goings of wasps from under eaves and other sheltered sites betray the presence of a nest. However, these industrious insects have another, beneficial side to their usual stereotyped image. Both queens and workers provide chewed insects and other invertebrates as food for their larvae. Such prey includes many pest species taken from our gardens and agricultural environments. Wasps also visit flowers for nectar and thus play an important role in pollination.

The eight true species of British social wasps all have a similar life-cycle. Nests are built in sheltered sites e.g. in cavities in the ground, in hollow trees or in lofts and outhouses (most colonies of *Vespa* and *Vespula* species); or suspended, usually among foliage, from the branches of shrubs and trees (most nests of *Dolichovespula* species). Each colony is initiated in the spring by an over-wintered queen. She builds a small golf ball sized nest which contains about two dozen cells forming a single layer. In these her first workers are reared. On emerging from their cells as adults, they take over all of the duties formerly performed by their mother, except for egg laying. They add more cells to the circular comb and will build further combs enlarging the outer shell of the nest to accommodate them.

Mature nests of the Common Wasp (*Vespula vulgaris*) can be very substantial in size: one example recorded by myself had a circumference of just over 2.25m. The population of a colony can often number several thousand in late summer. A nest is constructed from wood fibres (scraped from rotten or weathered timber by the wasp's mandibles) which are mixed with saliva to form a tough paper. The horizontal, circular combs each contain many hexagonal cells, the openings of which face downwards. It is in these that the brood is reared. From mid-summer onwards new queens and males are reared. Once mated, the queens seek out sheltered sites in which to over-winter. The remaining nest population survives until late summer or autumn, depending on the species. Nests are never re-used and those in open sites soon disintegrate. The Hornet (*Vespa crabro*) is the largest European social wasp. The spectacular queens can measure up to 50mm in length; males and workers are smaller.

The queens and workers of all species have the ability to sting. Most stings are painful, but generally harmless, and only affect the area around the sting. However, some people can have an immediate, and more widespread allergic reaction to being stung, such as an anaphylactic shock, which can lead to death in some people. This is fortunately quite rare, affecting approximately 3 people in 100, though this is of little consequence to those who suffer in this way. The destruction of an active wasp nest can therefore be extremely hazardous and should only be attempted by professional pest controllers. In general, if a nest does not pose a threat, it is best left alone.

The Hornet (*Vespa crabro*) at its nest entrance ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-Aug-12 08:52 PM GMT

Steyping Rifle Range, 22 August 2012

Hairstreak central ...

Steyping Rifle Range is located to the west of the village of Steyping in West Sussex. In addition to being farmed, the Rifle Range was originally used to train army volunteers shooting skills from the late nineteenth century onwards. The last shot was fired here sometime in the mid 1980s. At about the same time the area became uneconomical to farm and was allowed to go wild. Local residents began to use it for recreational purposes and in 2007 the owners, The Wiston Estate, in partnership with A Rocha (a Christian conservation organization), decided to turn the land into a community conservation area and the Steyping Downland Scheme was born. The 160 acres of chalk downland, designated to be developed for the benefit of wildlife and the local community, is an area comprising of open grassland, a watercourse and ponds and mixed woodland. Working close by this morning, I decided to pop in and take a look around ...

Some early morning movement in the principal master trees was followed by a period of quiet until just before 12.20pm when two pristine females descended almost simultaneously. The first, by a matter of seconds, glided down from the ash overlooking the main reserve. This was followed by the second, found by Colin Knight, at the top of the site. Despite Colin being on his own, his individual sadly disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. The female in the main reserve area stayed around for longer despite being pursued by the numerous observers; making for anything other than a quick record shot impossible. After 10 minutes or so she ascended back to her perch in the ash and was not seen again. In addition to the two females I'd estimate that at least three further individuals were seen, based on the location and behaviour of the sightings, though these remained at high level.

There is no doubt that this is an excellent site for Brown Hairstreaks, despite their appearance in any numbers being rather late this season. If you don't mind the crowds the site is well worth a visit but if you like doing your own thing in a peaceful environment then it's probably best avoided.

I have a feeling things will pick up very soon ...

Species seen:

Brown Hairstreak

Holly Blue

Meadow Brown

Gatekeeper

Speckled Wood

Peacock

Red Admiral

Brimstone

Small White

Large White

Green-veined White



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Sep-12 01:11 AM GMT

Isles of Scilly, 25 August to 1 September 2012 - Part 1

Revisited ...

Located just 28 miles (45 km) off the southwestern tip of the Cornish peninsula the Isles of Scilly form an archipelago of five inhabited islands and numerous other rocky islets (around 140 in total). An opportunity to take my son and elderly parents on holiday found me venturing back to this beautiful location after an absence of six years. After a five and a half hour car journey and a twenty minute helicopter crossing we finally arrived at St Mary's and the Star Castle Hotel; our base for the week ahead. Our arrival was welcomed by clear blue sky, sunshine and strong westerly winds. I had visions of a rare American vagrant (well you've got to be optimistic) ...

Bags unpacked, a short, late afternoon walk around a small section of The Garrison revealed Large White, Small White, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue, Meadow Brown and a beautiful Red Admiral sheltering from the strong wind.

Sunday

A hearty breakfast (with all the extras) was followed by a circular walk around the outer wall of The Garrison. This produced good numbers of Common Blue, including numerous strongly marked blue females. Scrub ivy grows over much of the more sheltered areas of The Garrison and Holly Blue were seen in greater numbers than I've observed for some time on the mainland. At 1.30pm (after a light lunch) we headed to the high seas for an exhilarating afternoon on board a 225HP RIB in search of the Atlantic Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*). After a detailed search and with the tide dropping in our favour, several small groups were found around the Eastern Isles. Three of numerous (many out of focus) shots below ...

To be continued ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Sep-12 04:50 PM GMT

Isles of Scilly, 25 August to 1 September 2012 - Part 2

Continued ...

Monday

The predicted, heavy rain and strong southwesterly wind arrived overnight with vengeance and forced an urgent rethink of plans this morning. As a sea crossing was inadvisable we headed to the heathland of Halangy Down, located just to the north of Hugh Town; the site of a former Iron Age settlement and Bant's Carn Burial Chamber (c. 5th BC - 1st AD). Here we found some welcome shelter and several adventurous Meadow Brown and a single female Speckled Wood. It wasn't until 6.30pm that the sun finally managed to push through the heavy grey cloud, though the wind was still to relent ...

Tuesday

With the storms of yesterday having subsided and with a brighter though blustery day forecast, the beautiful island of St Agnes was our destination for today. We spent the morning investigating Porth Killier through to Periglis and Lower Town, located to the north of the island; in the afternoon we concentrated our efforts to the south over the beautiful heather coated granite that forms Wingletang Down. The morning produced our first of six Painted Ladies, my first this season, three Small Tortoiseshell and numerous pristine Red Admiral, many seen coming in over the sea. Two Pied Flycatchers and several juvenile White Wagtail were also seen. In addition to those already mentioned, six other species of butterfly were found. These included Large White, Small White, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, a single Holly Blue and numerous Common Blue.



Wednesday

Following an overnight storm, we woke to a leaden sky and strong westerly winds. As island hopping was out of the question, my son and I decided to hire mountain bikes and cycle to some of the less accessible areas of St Mary's; particularly as a glint of blue sky could be seen on the horizon. A female Green-veined White, my first of the trip, was a good start to the day as we headed north towards Telegraph Hill. After stopping for lunch at Carn Vean we headed out towards Porth Hellick Point and its Neolithic / Bronze Age Entrance Graves (c. 25th – 5th BC). Here we found Common Blue, Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood. A visit to Higher Moors and Porth Hellick Pool Nature Trail, managed by The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, provided some welcome shelter from the wind and an opportunity to photograph a pristine male Speckled Wood (ssp. *insula*). Red Admirals were once again seen in very good numbers, including an individual sheltering from the strong wind blowing across Peninnis Head. A single Small Tortoiseshell was seen nectaring on flowering ivy by the roadside at Carn Friars.

At 4pm, as I sit and write my diary, storm force winds and heavy rain are once again hitting St Mary's ...

To be continued ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Sep-12 03:43 AM GMT

Isles of Scilly, 25 August to 1 September 2012 - Part 3

Continued ...

Thursday

A pristine Red Admiral was the first butterfly to greet us as we arrived at Carn Near Quay on Tresco earlier today. Proceeding past Abbey Pool, five Red Admiral and a single Small Tortoiseshell were recorded nectaring nearby. A Hummingbird Hawk-moth was briefly seen. Pool Road, located to the north of Great Pool, proved productive for Speckled Wood and I was able to get several shots of my target. Racket Town Lane provided our first Meadow Brown and a single female Small White; though the small sheltered quarry did not produce the Comma I was hoping for. As we headed along the edge of Castle Down towards Cromwell's and King Charles' Castles good numbers of Common Blue, including a mating pair, were observed; all females, once again, being strongly marked with blue. A male Large White bid us farewell as we left the island late in the afternoon.



Friday

Friday morning, the day before we are due to leave for home, and the winds finally decide to relent. We wake to the best day of the week with gorgeous blue sky and golden sunshine shimmering in the calm, turquoise blue sea below; typical ...

A Red Admiral, that had unwisely ventured into the conservatory where we were having breakfast was, not surprisingly, the first butterfly seen today. Our destination for our final day on Scilly was the beautiful island of St Martin's. Located on the north eastern limit of Scilly, St Martin's could easily hold the title of the most picturesque of all the islands; it is certainly one of my favourites. Arriving in Lower Town and taking a slow walk through the sheltered centre of the island towards Middle Town, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Large White and Common Blue were soon found. Just before the Fire Station and on the approach to Higher Town there is a small quarry on the left of the track and here we found large numbers of Small White egg-laying on nasturtiums.

After a brief stop for refreshments we headed along the track past North Farm where we found a Small Tortoiseshell, further Speckled Wood and a surprisingly obliging female Holly Blue. Heading past Culver Hole towards Chapel Down and its fabulous views, we found a single Painted Lady nectaring

on heather. With time pressing on and our boat (bus) due to depart at 2.30pm, we took a short cut across Carn Wethers towards John Batty's Hill; and I'm glad we did as here we found a small isolated colony of Small Copper.





According to the book "*The State of butterflies in Britain and Ireland*", the Isles of Scilly have sixteen (16) species of butterflies that are regularly recorded. These include, in addition to the eleven species (11) seen this visit, Ringlet, Peacock, Comma, Clouded Yellow and Monarch. Whole groups or families of butterflies are absent from the islands. For example, there are no species of Skipper, Swallowtail, Hairstreak, Metalmark or Fritillary despite conditions being favourable for a number of species.

The following species have also been recorded:

- Large Tortoiseshell
- Small Heath
- Long-tailed Blue
- Brimstone
- Pale Clouded Yellow
- American Painted Lady
- Queen of Spain Fritillary

Recorded this visit:

- Small Tortoiseshell
- Common Blue
- Small Copper
- Holly Blue
- Red Admiral
- Painted Lady
- Small White
- Large White
- Green-veined White
- Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria* ssp. *insula*)
- Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina* ssp. *cassiteridum*)

Useful links:

St Mary's Bicycle Hire – <http://www.stmarysbikehire.co.uk>
Scilly Cart Company – <http://www.scillycart.co.uk>
Island Wildlife Tours – <http://www.islandwildlifetours.co.uk>
Isles of Scilly Bird Group – <http://www.scilly-birding.co.uk>
Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust – <http://www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk>
Archaeological and historical guided walks – <http://www.scillywalks.co.uk>

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 04-Sep-12 06:30 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Lovely photo of the female Holly Blue nectaring, not something you see very often. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-Sep-12 02:43 AM GMT

Hi Nick,

Thanks for your kind comments 😊

Another Scillonian below; this time one of the local ladies of Tresco.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark



Re: Mark Colvin

by Debbie, 07-Sep-12 03:40 AM GMT

What lovely pictures 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-12 03:32 AM GMT

Hi Mark, doing a bit of catching up.

Great reports and photos, I particularly like the Holly Blues and the Isles of Scilly Speckled Wood.

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-Sep-12 08:06 AM GMT

Thank you both for your very kind comments 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 09-Sep-12 05:04 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

I'm just catching up after being away myself.

Great report and photos from your own trip. If there was a Species Album for Seals, I would have no hesitation in asking for your images, but will settle for all of the lovely Speckled Woods instead 🐾

Regards,

Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Sep-12 07:20 AM GMT

West Sussex, 10 September 2012 – Part 1

Size DOES matter ...

Despite leaving it several days before heading down to take a look, the beautiful 2nd calendar year male Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) was still showing well over Nunnery Lake near Chichester early this morning; a lifer for me. I managed to watch it for about an hour, during which time it hawked dragonflies over the reed beds below its vantage point in a large ash nearby. With strong winds and its perch about 100 metres away, my little Lumix really wasn't up to the job; though I gave it a go (record shot below) ...

This really was a case of size DOES matter ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 11-Sep-12 05:11 PM GMT

Hi Mark,
Good effort with the Red-footed Falcon. As you say, trying to photograph something of that size sitting in a tree 100 metres away is way beyond Lumix capabilities. When I attempted it the light was failing, so even getting a record shot was hard work. Fantastic bird and impressively agile while whacking dragonflies. I wonder how much that chap's bazooka cost?
BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Sep-12 03:07 AM GMT

West Sussex, 10 September 2012 - Part 2

Vanessids ...

With the falcon in the bag I hot-footed the short distance over to Rewell Wood in the hope of catching some Nymphalid action; I wasn't disappointed ...

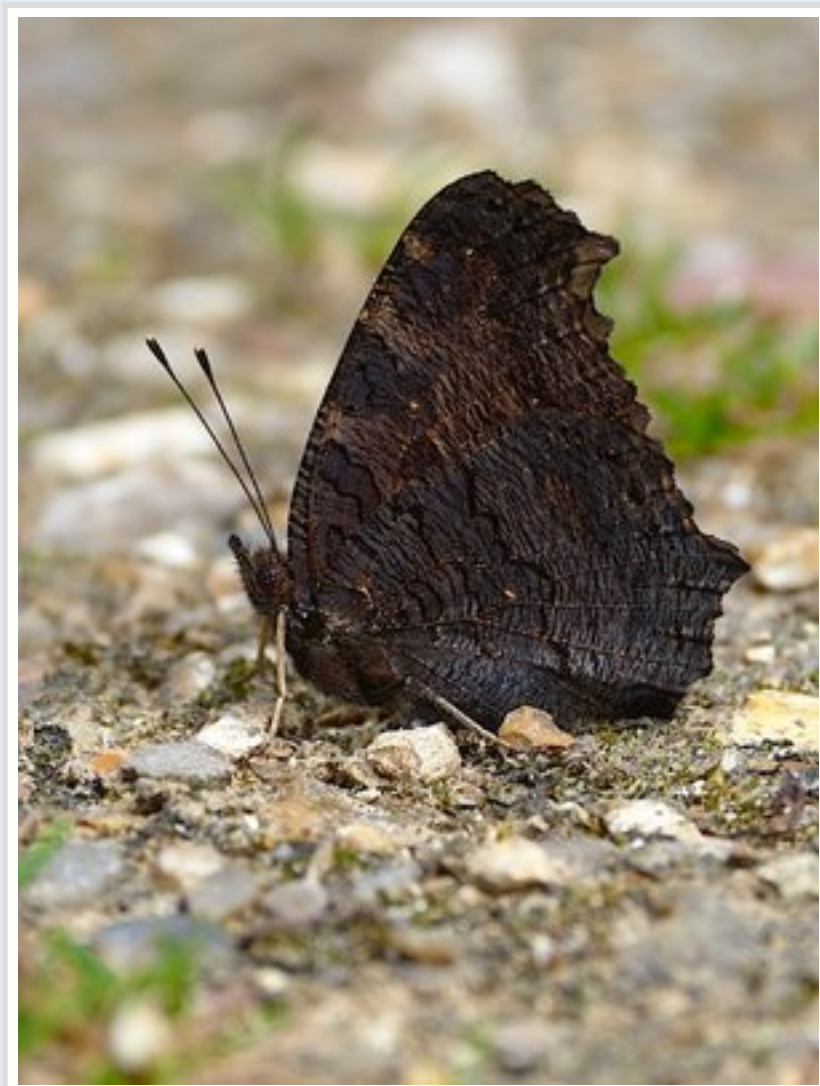
Proceeding up the main gravel track towards the small woodsman's hut, Red Admiral were plentiful. The main block of purple scented buddleia just before the sawmill produced further activity, with good numbers of Red Admiral, a solitary Comma, several Large White, a Green-veined White and two Painted Ladies; one in pristine condition. A short walk along several of the adjoining tracks soon added Small White, Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood. As I returned along the forestry track past the woodman's hut once more it was early afternoon. The two Painted Ladies were still around with the better of the two specimens regularly landing on the track to gain warmth.



It was at about this time that I noticed a Peacock, one of very few I've seen this year, sitting wings closed, in the middle of the track straight ahead of me. Apart from a tiny tear in her right hindwing she was in really nice condition. She allowed an extremely close approach and this very personal

encounter was undoubtedly the highlight of my afternoon. Later in the day I spoke to Neil (Sussex Kipper) who suggested "*she may have gone into hibernation and then popped back out for a feed*".

This would certainly explain her rather sleepy behaviour ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Sep-12 12:52 AM GMT

Common Blue

Variations on a theme ...

The female Irish form of the Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus* ssp. *mariscolore*), which also occurs in the north and west of Scotland (including the Orkneys and Hebrides), is typically extensively marked with blue on the upperside of both its fore and hindwings. In addition, the orange marginal spots are generally larger and brighter than those found on the, also slightly smaller, nominate subspecies.

I mentioned in my recent diary posts that many of the Common Blue females I found on the Isles of Scilly were strongly marked with blue; many to a point that some were almost touching on the blue colour intensity of the Irish subspecies. Although I have seen a small number of the brown form on the mainland this year most have been blue, though not as bright or as beautifully marked as those observed on the Scillies. Female *icarus* can vary greatly in the amount of blue present; this is particularly noticeable geographically to the west and north of their range. There are also many named and unnamed aberrations of this beautiful butterfly.

A blue female from St Mary's ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 17-Sep-12 03:29 AM GMT

Hi Mark,
That's one of the most beautiful CB females I've ever seen.
BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-Sep-12 09:46 PM GMT

Thanks Neil,

She was certainly a bit special ... 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-Sep-12 10:19 PM GMT

Ticehurst, 18 September 2012

Pick your own ...

Further to reports from Tony Lloyd and Malcolm Phillips on the Sussex BC website (12th and 13th September 2012) of 1000+ Red Admiral and numerous Comma observed at Maynards PYO fruit orchards located at Windmill Hill Farm on the outskirts of the East Sussex village of Ticehurst and, more recently, Neil's report confirming the same, I was keen to take a look ...

Arriving late morning I was soon directed to the orchard where the butterflies are continuing to enjoy the decaying 'Brighton Belle' plums, which have gone unharvested due lack of market and discolouration of the skins. With the scent of fermenting fruit filling the air, the first of many hundreds of Red Admiral and numerous Comma were easily soon found; many of which were in pristine condition. As Neil mentioned in his diary *"I've never seen so many in one place in over 40 years of butterfly watching."* I can only agree, a fabulous sight ...

Despite reasonable levels of sunshine, conditions were cold and most definitely autumnal, with a chilling wind continually blowing. I couldn't help but feel that despite the large number of butterflies present, the end of the 2012 butterfly season will soon be upon us ...

Species seen:

Small White

Comma

Red Admiral





Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 19-Sep-12 11:10 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

That final image is of a glorious female which appears to be full of eggs. Although it may appear to be quite late in the season for this species to be laying, I note that an egg-laying female was reported by Richard Roebuck at Goring on 15th November last year. This year they actually started laying as early as 20th March here in Surrey.

Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Sep-12 01:48 AM GMT

Hi Vince,

Thanks for your message.

I agree, she looks extremely gravid; failing that she's eaten far too many plums ... 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 20-Sep-12 06:13 AM GMT

I think it would be amusing to visit this place in late afternoon after these insects have spent the whole day necking fermented fruit juice.

I bet they'd be well over the limit.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Sep-12 02:35 PM GMT

Hi David,

Thanks for your message.

"David M" wrote:

I bet they'd be well over the limit.

I think you'd be right. Certainly by mid afternoon I noticed a change in flight pattern of some individuals ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 22-Sep-12 05:41 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

I love your photo of the female Red Admiral, an unusual pose and heavily laden with eggs as well. Something i have never seen myself, or just never noticed. A wonderful picture capturing the pure essence of nature.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Sep-12 06:18 AM GMT

Thanks Nick,

"hideandseek" wrote:

A wonderful picture capturing the pure essence of nature.

I really appreciate your comment 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Sep-12 03:56 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 24 September 2012

Revisited (on a very wet day) ...

The Owl (*Caligo memnon*) is a large and distinctive butterfly commonly found in butterfly houses throughout the UK. In its natural environment, it is found in the rainforests and secondary forests of Mexico down to the Amazon rainforest of South America. The larvae (early instars and egg cluster pictured below on banana) feed on *Musa* (bananas and plantains) and *Heliconia* species (lobster-claws, wild plantains or false bird-of-paradise) and can be a serious pest in banana cultivation. The adults feed on the fermenting juices of rotting fruit. Inspired by Vince Massimo's super and continuing work on the early stages of British butterflies, I thought I'd take a closer look ...

The Owl (*Caligo memnon*) ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 25-Sep-12 04:24 AM GMT

Bizarre caterpillars! They're almost made to look like part-bruised bananas.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 25-Sep-12 05:44 AM GMT

Marvellous mini beasts! I'll have to make a trip down to Earnley myself soon 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Sep-12 10:38 PM GMT

Dear David and Susie,

Thank you for your comments.

They are certainly bizarre, though I hadn't noticed the very obvious likeness to part-bruised bananas.

"Susie" wrote:

Marvellous mini beasts!

I totally agree. It was things like this that first got me interested in invertebrates many years ago 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 26-Sep-12 10:15 AM GMT

What fantastic little beasties those caterpillars are! In particular, I love the tiny round head on the younger instars and the way they they travel in convoy. Of course you realise you are now on the slippery slope Mark and will have to finish the job. Does Earnley Butterfly House do bed and breakfast? 😊

Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 27-Sep-12 04:46 AM GMT

I think Mark virtually moved in there last year so I am sure he'd be a welcome guest 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Sep-12 03:00 AM GMT

Slippery slope indeed ...

"Susie" wrote:

I think Mark virtually moved in there last year so I am sure he'd be a welcome guest.

You're not far wrong there Susie 😊

I've just heard that 'Butterflies in the Glasshouse' at RHS Wisley will be running from Saturday, 12th January 2013 to Sunday, 24th February 2013 😊 😊

I'd better check out the local B&Bs ... 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 28-Sep-12 04:37 AM GMT

Great news about Wisley, that's earlier than last year I think. Something to look forward to on those dark winter days 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Oct-12 07:36 AM GMT

Earnley Butterflies, 1 October 2012

Metamorphosis ...

The Owl (*Caligo memnon*) ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Oct-12 12:10 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 3 October 2012

Sore feet and fresh air ...

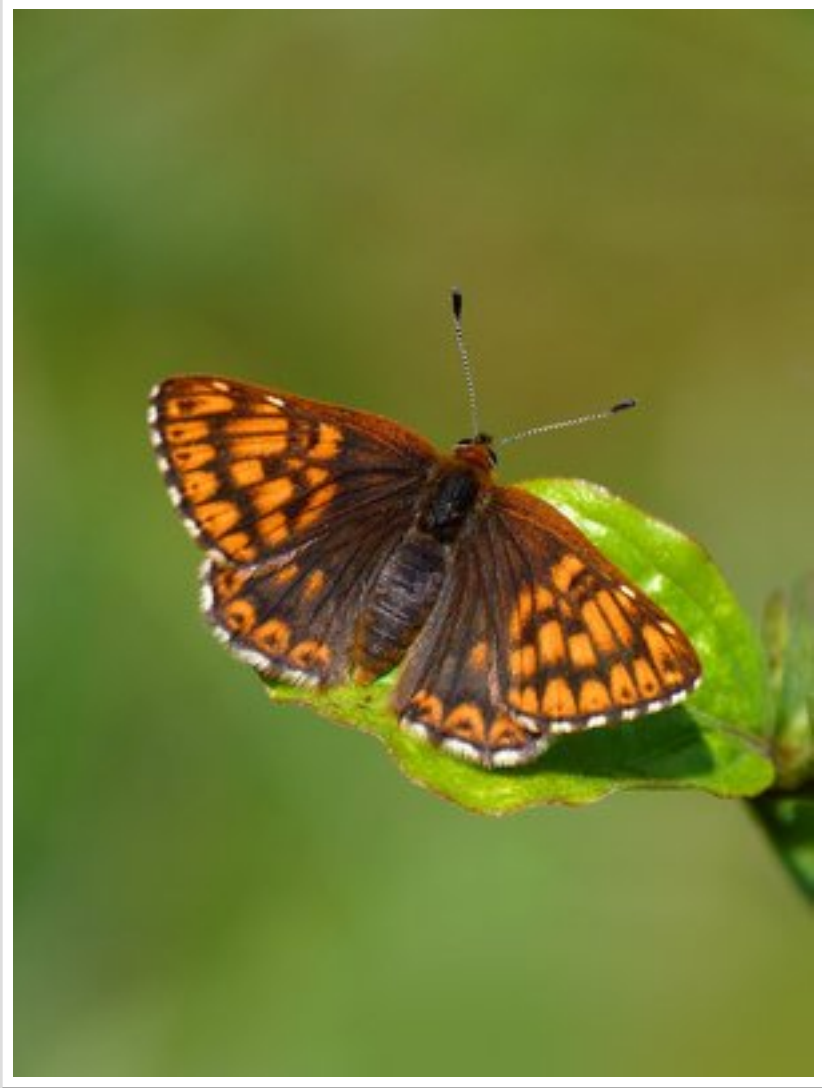
As September draws to a close it heralds the start of the annual conservation work party season.

Today, I joined Sussex BC and UKB member Colin Knight, and several representatives of the Murray Downland Trust, for the first of our weekly habitat management sessions at Heyshott Escarpment; these will run until the end of March next year. As this was the first get together this season, I was

extremely pleased we started on the relatively flat and easy terrain of the lower reserve; as the upper slopes were very slippery due to the recent heavy rain. One of the key aims of this ongoing project is to create and maintain habitat corridors at this nationally important site for the rare Duke of Burgundy. The gorgeous female below was photographed at Heyshott on 22nd May 2012; a beautifully warm and sunny day.

Do we need a better reason to turn up every Wednesday ...

I don't think so ...



This is an extremely exciting project and one where positive management and hard work continues to improve the chalk downland habitat. The extensive scrub clearance achieved during the previous season has now settled and, as it prepares to rest for the coming winter, looks highly promising for primula development in the coming year ...

The bonfire went well ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Oct-12 03:03 AM GMT

Favourites from 2012 - Part 1

A difficult year ...

The following images bring back some very fond memories.

If I can work out which one it is, and that's currently proving difficult, I'll post my favourite shot of 2012 at the end ...

Hesperiidae





Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 16-Oct-12 03:53 AM GMT

Distinct lack of sunlight in all of those images, Mark.

Wholly appropriate for the year as a whole, eh?

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Oct-12 05:53 AM GMT

Hi David,

Thanks for your message.

"David M" wrote:

Distinct lack of sunlight in all of those images, Mark.

A good job too in my opinion and, as a fellow UKBer once posted on my diary:

*"And don't your photos look all the better for it.
No harsh shadows, no shine off leaves, and low contrast".*

Interestingly the first image, the male Dingy, was shot on a day when anyone with any sense would have been indoors. In many of the pictures from that

particular session you can actually see the streaks of rain falling! The second, the female Grizzled Skipper, was taken late afternoon as she was settling down to roost; the temperature had dropped but she was still sitting in full sunlight. The third, the female Large Skipper, was shot in the shade on a beautiful sunny day. The male Small Skipper, was taken during an afternoon session with intermittent sunshine and fairly cool conditions. The male Essex, was taken late afternoon with rapidly diminishing light.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Oct-12 03:03 AM GMT

Church Norton and Pagham Spit, 15 October 2012

Early afternoon looking east ...

Species seen:

Red Admiral
Comma
Small White
Large White



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 17-Oct-12 06:08 AM GMT

Great panoramic image there, Mark. I see from his blog that Colin Knight has some good shots too.

I really like that last skipper shot. They've got such lovely teddy bear faces.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Oct-12 03:21 PM GMT

Thanks Susie,

"Susie" wrote:

Great panoramic image there, Mark.

It's amazing what you can produce on a mobile phone ... 😊

I never used to take much notice of the Skippers but I'm now rather fond of them; I'm somewhat taken by the eyelashes ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by CJB, 17-Oct-12 05:53 PM GMT

It's amazing what you can produce on a mobile phone ...

Hi Mark,
All my photos are taken with a mobile, in my somewhat bizarre quest to photograph all the British species on it. So far I am up to 40, with the hairstreaks proving the most elusive. Once (if) I have completed then I will upgrade to a serious digital number like the growing number of professional amateurs amongst the UKB community.
Flutter on!
CJB

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Oct-12 11:24 PM GMT

Hi CJB,

Many thanks for your message.

Good luck in your quest to photograph all of the British species with your mobile phone; it's a hard enough task with a dedicated camera so to have achieved 40 species already is really good going ...

"CJB" wrote:

Once (if) I have completed then I will upgrade to a serious digital number like the growing number of professional amateurs amongst the UKB community.

When you have completed your task, and I hope you do, I personally wouldn't recommend spending a lot of money on an expensive DSLR. If you complete your challenge with a mobile phone then you'd be a prime candidate, in my opinion, to consider one of the cheap but very effective bridge cameras. I suppose it all depends on what is important to you; the photographic element and the technicalities that go with it, or taking pictures of butterflies. If the latter, a bridge camera set up keeps things simple, lightweight and relatively inexpensive; it also has the potential to produce excellent results. I certainly wouldn't swap my Lumix for a DSLR; for one thing, I wouldn't know what to do with it ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Oct-12 01:29 AM GMT

Favourites from 2012 - Part 2

Continued ...

The messenger of spring ...

Pieridae





Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 18-Oct-12 01:38 AM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

I personally wouldn't recommend spending a lot of money on an expensive DSLR.

Judging by the many excellent photos on this site made with Lumix FZ45 cameras and the like (including yours, of course), I agree with that advice.

I do use a DSLR myself, mainly because it seemed the natural way to go after a string of film SLRs. Some subjects, such as birds-in-flight, are still firmly in DSLR territory. As sensor technology improves, however, the gap between image quality of the two types is narrowing, and reduced size and weight are advantages not to be ignored! As I get older, smaller and lighter gear looks increasingly attractive. 😊

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Oct-12 03:22 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

Thanks for your message and compliment 😊

You are of course correct; whilst the Lumix is an excellent camera choice for butterfly photography, if you want a camera which provides a more broad scope of use, with a potential for wetting your feet in serious bird photography, then a dedicated DSLR is the way to go. Sensor technology is undoubtedly one of the key issues and a subject I know little about. What I can say is that the Lumix performs well in most conditions but if the light is poor, the results are not always to my liking; this may of course be due to my lack of fully understanding the various photographic tricks to get around such issues.

Anyway, that's enough boring techy stuff ...

My best effort below ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark



Re: Mark Colvin

by CJB, 18-Oct-12 06:43 PM GMT

Hi Mark and Mike,

Thank you for your wisdom on cameras.

I have looked at a Lumix and in terms of 'lug-a-bility', it does seem the way to go.

Hopefully by the time I have completed my task (?!), the gap between the DSLR and ordinary digital will have narrowed further!

Flutter on!

CJB

here is my favourite piccy from this year, although somewhat tainted by the food source!



Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 18-Oct-12 07:32 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

if the light is poor, the results are not always to my liking

You could try Neat Image noise-reduction software (there's a free version to try) from <http://www.neatimage.com/win/standalone/download.html>! It gave near-miraculous results on images from an old Ricoh compact that I used to have and I still find it useful on high-ISO images.

That's a nice characterful Bluetit shot 😊

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-Oct-12 01:46 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

Thanks for your advice, which is genuinely much appreciated.

My passion is the entomology, not the photography. Don't get me wrong, I want to take pictures that please me, and hopefully others, but I have no real

interest in the photographic side or the 'black art' of post image capture manipulation software, other than that which allows me to slightly sharpen or carry out other minor adjustments; what you see with my pictures is what I've managed to capture in the field. I use a Mac computer, which comes preloaded with Preview. As the name suggests, this programme allows me to look at my pictures and carry out limited minor editing; should the need arise. The idea of sitting at my computer editing images has absolutely no appeal, though I appreciate that for others it does. My pleasure comes from finding subjects to photograph, primarily entomological, and then producing the best possible pictures I can using my camera and fieldcraft.

If I don't succeed first time I need little excuse to go back and try again ...

Which often happens ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-Oct-12 04:02 AM GMT

Favourites from 2012 - Part 3

Continued ...

Lycaenidae

Festival of femininity ...

I do like those Silver-studded Blues ...







Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-Oct-12 11:10 PM GMT

Favourites from 2012 - Part 4

Continued ...

Lycaenidae

Not to be forgotten (the boys) ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Oct-12 10:00 PM GMT

Favourites from 2012 - Part 5

Continued ...

During 2012, I have thoroughly enjoyed mixing my lifelong passion for entomology and the environment with recording what I observe with a camera. I have continued to keep things simple and remain pleased with what I've achieved. I have learnt a lot this season and look forward to next year with growing anticipation. I'd like to thank all those at UKButterflies who have provided positive comments on my diary ...

Thank you ...

Nymphalidae

What to include, what not to include ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 20-Oct-12 10:12 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Some lovely shots in there and a good collection considering the appalling weather this 'summer'. My favourite is that beautiful female Common Blue from the Scilly Isles.

BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Oct-12 05:48 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Many thanks for your kind message.

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Some lovely shots in there and a good collection considering the appalling weather this 'summer'. My favourite is that beautiful female Common Blue from the Scilly Isles.

I'm not surprised the Common Blue was your favourite as she is certainly one of mine. I've had real difficulty choosing my favourite shot of the year as there were so many possibilities. However, I have now chosen and will post soon; it's not what I expect you think it is ...

Thanks again.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 22-Oct-12 05:34 AM GMT

Favourites from 2012 – Part 6

And finally to my favourite ...

Looking beyond the picture ...

It has not been an easy task selecting my favourite image of 2012; there were many candidates and many special moments. To me, as an entomologist, a picture is not just about the quality of the captured subject but also, and possibly more importantly, the circumstances under which it was achieved. The location, weather conditions, temperature, time of day, the perfumes present in the air (particularly those that appear heightened at dawn), ambient sounds and, not least, if I was not on my own, the company with whom I shared the experience; the detail, the bigger picture. I know this all sounds a little 'airy-fairy' but it is important to me and is all part of my experience of being at one with nature, the environment and myself ...

With over a month's rain having fallen over West Sussex during a 24 hour period in early June 2012, several of my local rivers and smaller water courses had, not suprisingly, burst their banks. Extensive flooding occurred throughout West Sussex. After the storm came the calm and on the morning of 12 June I headed for Iping and Stedham Commons to look for the beautiful Silver-studded Blue, which had only recently started to emerge. It took little persuasion to tempt good friend Colin Knight to join me, who was also desperate to be out and about. We headed for a small south facing area of heathland where I discovered good numbers during their peak last year. In the poor light and low ambient temperature, I managed to find and photograph just three males in the short time I was there. On 27 June I returned, alone, to Stedham Common; my target, a female Silver-studded Blue. It did not take long before I found the first of many males, as they took flight from the purple heather and birch scrub; the smell of damp pine filled the air. Others, roosting amongst the undergrowth, gradually started to stir and as they did so they revealed their wings to the warmth of the new day. A slow walk through the heather finally produced four females; two rather tatty specimens and two very fresh individuals whose tiny gemstone adorned wings glistened in the hazy sun.

Considering all of the above comments, the female Silver-studded Blue below, an image not previously posted, is my favourite shot of 2012; not only because the composition and subtleties of colour please me, and its not the best shot I've ever taken, but more importantly because of the total experience and the memories which are consequently evoked ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 22-Oct-12 05:59 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Excellent and evocative write up on your reasoning behind your choice, and a lovely photo as well, a classic case of less is more 😊

Your comments actually describe the main reason why I keep my own diary on UKB, to capture memories of times and places so that I can re-visit them.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 22-Oct-12 07:44 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

I totally agree with your sentiments, and such lovely photos. What beautiful memories.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 22-Oct-12 06:53 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

a picture is not just about the quality of the captured subject but also, and possibly more importantly, the circumstances under which it was achieved.

I know you are an entomologist first but your photos show that you have an excellent feel for photography as well, and I do agree strongly with your motives for taking them. I have a huge collection of photos, ranging from holiday shots to details of all aspects of the natural world and, because of the associative nature of memory, I can conjure up so much about the events surrounding each one. I believe they are a way of storing up much pleasure for when I am unable to get out and about as easily as now. I hope that you will enjoy that pleasure too.

Your SSBlue is indeed a delightful shot, even without the associated memories that you have. I like the subtle colour and also the attractive diagonal composition.

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-Oct-12 04:24 PM GMT

Dear Neil, Nick and Mike.

Thank you for your very kind comments which are genuinely much appreciated 😊😊😊

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Oct-12 02:39 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 24 October 2012

Making inroads ...

Today, I joined Neil, and nine representatives of the Murray Downland Trust, for the fourth of our weekly conservation work parties at Heyshott Escarpment.



Fabulous results have already been achieved this season, as a large amount of scrub and secondary woodland has successfully been cleared. In addition, records were smashed today as, for the first time in memory, three substantial bonfires were required; the tiny holes that cover my clothing standing testament to the intensity of the heat of their aerial embers. Much of the area we are currently working on is the site of an old rubbish tip; as numerous old metal buckets, fragments of broken glass and barbed wire were found. Nearby, as shown in a map dating from 1874, lies the site of the old limekilns; we are currently working just to the northwest of this area. As I left the reserve shortly after 1pm, a Small White and Comma made the most of the sun, which was just starting to burn through the lifting cloud ...

Roll on next week ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Oct-12 03:55 AM GMT

Worthing, 25 October 2012

Off course ...

A male Desert Wheatear (*Oenanthe deserti*) hunkers down out of the wind ...

Thanks Neil ... 😊



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-Oct-12 06:41 AM GMT

Rewell Wood, 26 October 2012

Autumn work ...

Today, I joined fellow BC Sussex members Neil Hulme, Nigel Symington and Paul Day. We met up with Simon Mockford and several volunteers from the South Downs National Park Authority at Rewell Wood near Arundel.

The woodland here is cut on a rotational basis in order to help create and maintain ideal conditions for the Duke of Burgundy, which resides at this woodland site in growing numbers. Fabulous work has been carried out on this section of the Norfolk Estate in previous seasons, and I know that Neil has quite rightly documented this on more than one occasion in the past. Today's task, was to start opening up new areas of the wood; a challenge we welcomed and set to with some vigour. Our next work party at Rewell Wood is in several weeks time.

I just hope the weather is more welcoming ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 29-Oct-12 05:00 AM GMT

Exciting stuff! 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 30-Oct-12 03:38 AM GMT

Thanks Susie 😊

Exciting and tiring but worth every single bit of effort ...

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Nov-12 04:03 AM GMT

Plaistow, 2 November 2012

D(ice)ing with death ...

At 1.15pm today, whilst working in my office at home, the clouds rapidly darkened, the wind picked up speed, and the skies suddenly opened; heavy hail began to fall. Looking out of my window, and with the autumn leaves being blown from the trees, I suddenly became aware that one of the leaves was in fact a Red Admiral; no doubt disturbed from its resting place by the aerial bombardment. I watched intently as it bravely diced with death and hoped it would find sanctuary under the eaves; though it was swiftly lifted away from the house and out of my line of sight. I almost expected to find its sodden and battered body lying lifeless on my driveway, when I popped out shortly after the downpour; the ice meteors glistening where they littered the ground.

I didn't and hope it found refuge from the storm ...

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Nov-12 01:39 AM GMT

The Murray Downland Trust

As many of you will be aware, nearly every Wednesday, between October and the end of March, I am involved in an ongoing conservation project at Heyshott Escarpment; an extremely important chalk downland reserve lying just to the south of the beautiful village of Heyshott in West Sussex. I, along with several of the regular stalwarts, including Neil Hulme and Colin Knight, fly the flag for Sussex Butterfly Conservation; we work closely alongside the dedicated and indefatigable volunteers of The Murray Downland Trust (MDT)?

In brief, The Murray Downland Trust came into being in 1994. It is named after both Dr K. M. Elisabeth (Betty) Murray (1909-98), former Principal of Bishop Otter College (Chichester), and her brother, Kenneth Murray. The Murrays were pioneers of downland conservation at Heyshott, West Sussex. The objectives of the Trust are to rescue and enhance neglected areas of unimproved chalk downland in the counties of Sussex and Hampshire, revealing their richness in terms of the species of flora and fauna present. Five reserves are currently under their stewardship. These are at Buriton Down (Hampshire), Under Beacon, The Devil's Jumps, Heyshott Down and Heyshott Escarpment (West Sussex). All reserves are within the South Downs National Park.

In the September 2012 MDT newsletter, Sue Edwards wrote the following, wonderfully thought-provoking article on the inspiration behind the Trust: Betty Murray. It inspired me and further compounded my views that the sometimes controversial nature of the work we are undertaking at Heyshott, is indeed the right course of action; consequently I felt it worthy of sharing with a wider audience ...

Betty Murray



An appreciation of a Founder of the MDT ...

Sometimes, as human beings, we become so enmeshed in the immediacy of the present that we tend to forget about the past. With the formation of the South Downs National Park and the changes which it is likely to bring to our very special part of the UK, it is perhaps apposite that we remember – and give thanks for – a very special member of our community whose vision and energy years ago paved the way for so many of the amenities which we enjoy locally today and, perhaps, take for granted. I refer, of course, to K.M. Elisabeth Murray, popularly and respectfully known as Betty Murray.

A woman of tremendous mental and physical strength and determination she was, first and foremost, an intellectual. Although functioning in an age when women still, largely, expected and accepted male dominance, she bucked the trend without a second thought and made her presence felt in numerous parts of the local landscape. Her tenure as Principal of Bishop Otter College, in Chichester (a training establishment for teachers), between 1948 and 1970, led to her recognition as one of the foremost mid-twentieth century figures in education. Under her guidance the College underwent a succession of major changes, progressing from being a genteel – almost boarding school – environment for young ladies to the admission, in 1960, of men. During the 1960s she instigated and oversaw an ambitious building programme for the College, including new student accommodation for which, using her artistic colour sense, she spent considerable effort and time selecting appropriate furnishings and décor. Under her guidance the student numbers almost trebled. A firm believer in the idea of community, she had, early on, instigated the tradition of The Trundle Walk, where all College members gathered together, early in the first term of the year, to climb the hill together. Upon joining this walk in the 1960s, men were advised that the Principal would always get to the top first. Taking this to mean that one was required to be courteous and allow Miss Murray to be the first to reach the hilltop, several of the men were then amazed to find their Principal striding onwards and upwards at a considerable pace and easily outstripping their efforts!

A College chaplain professed to feeling more in awe of her than of any bishop! Intimidation, however, was not her intention nor was it her modus operandi: she simply inspired awe and respect in those who came into contact with her, not least through her devotion to duty (which was paramount) but also through her perception of what was required for a task and her personal efforts to research it; her incisive comments; and her ability to understand people and their lives.

The Downs in all its moods excited and moved her. She possessed a keen eye for the beauty of landscapes and worked assiduously to preserve and protect them. Her strong aesthetic sense did not, however, lead her into promoting an adherence to the status quo and allowing Nature to take its course; rather, taking the avant-garde approach which she applied as much to her work at Bishop Otter College – as well as on numerous other bodies – she strove to keep rampant Nature at bay and to promote the natural attributes of native chalk downland, recognising the potential for the richness of flora and fauna which provides endless delight for the senses.

The Down behind her Heyshott home was a constant source of delight and wonder. However, during the 1939–1945 war years the Downs became forbidden territory, having been taken over by the army for the purpose of military training. Sandpits were used for the development and use of flame-throwers. Many areas of the Downs were ploughed up, consequently grazing declined and, eventually, the production of arable crops took over from the previously traditional practice of sheep-grazing. The Downs at Heyshott were used as ranges, which resulted in some areas becoming threatened by developing tree seedlings, much to the consternation of Betty Murray and her brother, Kenneth (who visited, biennially, from his work as an archaeologist in Nigeria). To ensure that the inevitable was not permitted to happen, the two intrepid countryside rangers would choose propitious moments to venture into temporary army land and wage war on the encroaching trees and scrub!



By the end of the Second World War, natural chalk downland had become an increasingly scarce commodity throughout the long stretch of the South Downs. As an active member of the Society of Sussex Downsmen from 1948 onwards, serving as one of its District Officers for forty years, Betty Murray spent many happy and energetic hours on the Downs, clearing scrub and protecting rights of way. She waymarked country footpaths and worked assiduously to help restore the Downs, particularly those at Heyshott, to their former open glory, ensuring that the habitat was suitable for re-colonisation by the beautiful chalk-loving flora in which she – and others – took such delight. There were many other claims on her intellect and time during this period, often to do with public enquiries; but one senses that she was never happier than when wielding an axe or attacking scrub.

A keen archaeologist, Betty Murray was fascinated by the wealth of material in the area, whether it be appreciating local bronze age barrows or working to ensure that the treasures of the Roman Palace at Fishbourne remained in situ and accessible to the public. Her trail-blazing proclivities provided her with the vision and energy to be a major force behind the creation of the Pallant House Gallery, which houses one of the best collections of 20th Century British art in the world. As a determined advocate of a civilised physical environment, Betty Murray also oversaw the creation of what was to become a significant art collection at Bishop Otter College, collecting works from some of the more modern artists and, at least in the early days of the collection, displaying it around the college for all to enjoy and admire. Chichester District Museum, the Sussex Historic Churches Trust and the Sussex Record Society are just a few of the organisations which also enjoyed her tremendous mental energy and physical determination.

Quiet and thoughtful, with her intelligence shining through in everything with which she became involved, Betty Murray led by example and, by undertaking projects with wholehearted intention and belief, encouraged others to follow suit. The idea of a community working together was an important one to her and, although she was never afraid to court controversy – in her view, anything was preferable to apathy – she valued the feeling of people working together for the good of a common cause and of being willing to experiment as they did so. Her enlightened thinking, within the confines of a positive framework, enabled her to continue to push forward the bounds of civilisation and to observe, with satisfaction, the outcomes.

The Murray Downland Trust came into being in 1994, nearly twenty years after the agreement of a lease with the Cowdray Estate which established the reserves at Heyshott; and also at the Devil's Jumps, leased from the West Dean Estate. Originally, Betty Murray chaired the advisory committee which was set up, under the auspices of the Society of Sussex Downsmen, to manage the reserves. This committee included several individuals who are, today, still involved with the Trust. After the Society decided that it could no longer justify the expense of supporting the Heyshott and Devil's Jumps Reserves, it agreed to provide a sum of money to allow the formation of an independent group to do so, hence The Murray Downland Trust was formed: a fitting tribute to its new Patron and indefatigable champion of chalk downland. Today, the Trust continues to celebrate her vision and enlightened thinking, preserving and managing for a new generation the wonderful first-hand experience of exploring chalk downland, and providing oases of beauty and calm to promote the well-being of mind, body and spirit in our increasingly hectic lives.

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 04-Nov-12 02:08 AM GMT

Lovely piece of writing is that (and how nice to see proper punctuation!)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Gibster, 05-Nov-12 05:55 AM GMT

And yet, just to play Devil's Advocate you understand, without her 'meddling ways', and without the advent of the rabbit into our countryside, all of this could have been so wonderfully different... 🙄

Seriously though, I do wonder how our native fauna and flora will fare in the face of global weather changes, land usage intensification and ongoing chemical adjustments to the atmosphere. I also wonder how certain invasive alien species will fare in the coming decades, and the effect they may have on our indigenous species. Certainly we should all applaud the efforts made by conservation work parties such as the Murray Downland Trust.

Mark, I have to ask, is there no way you are able to chip rather than burn your brash? There are a great many seeds, invertebrates, bryophytes and fungi that are, quite literally, going up in smoke with every bonfire. Chipping gives at least some of them a chance to survive intact. From your pics I see that heavy plant has access to your work sites. Surely a chipper is a viable option?

Cheers,

Gibster.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Nov-12 09:37 PM GMT

Hi Gibster,

Thanks for your message.

It is of course a fact, that all management is unfavourable for something; there will always be winners and losers. Man does play God and this is reflected in our own conservation efforts where we manage sites to benefit certain species at the inevitable cost of others. This is of course the basic stumbling block which gives rise to this sort of query.

It is a sad fact, that without ongoing human management, Heyshott Escarpment, and indeed many other sites, would not exist in the form they do today. Whether we create scrapes for waders, burn heather for the benefits of the red grouse or flood water meadows for wintering waders and wildfowl, man does and always will manage the environment for the benefit of some and to the disadvantage of others. We have of course been doing this since man first started to farm the land.

Spreading chippings, whose volume is likely to be in the region of 1.5 to 2 times that of the original wood, mulches and increases nutrient levels over a wide area; just the things we are trying to reduce in our task to reinstate the beautiful chalk downland environment at Heyshott. I'm not sure how many invertebrates, or indeed large seeds and lichens, would in fact survive a chipper. The resulting mulch is of course not the same thing as the original wood, so this also changes the nature of the resource in any case. Removal off-site, if it were practical to do so, increases the costs of the work, and does nothing for the possible included organisms, as they would end up in a dump or green waste recycling facility - very different from where they started out. It should of course also be pointed out, that there are a variety of species, both flora and fauna, that are highly dependant on sites of burning.

Heavy plant is generally not used at Heyshott, due to the dangers and difficulties of safe access over the majority of the reserve. We are currently working on the lower levels of the site where safe access is generally possible.

And so on ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Gibster, 06-Nov-12 02:23 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

that's a fairly comprehensive response, I shall consider myself newly educated and climb back into my pram! 😊

My own patch is mid-Surrey secondary woodland with scrub invasion the norm. All on thick (and currently very waterlogged) London clay. We used to have bonfires, but now ,where possible, we leave the brash piles to decompose in the undergrowth, allow the log piles to fall slowly into the earth and rarely burn much of anything on most occasions. Apart from gorse, which crackles oh so beautifully! My patch is pretty resilient to most of the abuse hurled at it, including the recent addition of three small herds of conservation cattle. Heyshott is obviously a very different case with a very different management strategy. But I love my little patch for what it is and for what I hope it could become. It's heartening to see Heyshott has it's own enthusiastic and dedicated volunteer work force, but a pity that so many sites would lose their diversity without such volunteers. Countryside management is vastly different nowadays than, say, even 50 years ago.

See you at the social,

all the best,

Gibster.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 09-Nov-12 05:52 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 7 November 2012

No pain, no gain ...

Another Wednesday and another day working on the scarp face at Heyshott. Our location for today's session was the steep bank adjacent to what is known locally as the 'Camel's Humps' - a distinctive grassy mound running alongside a sunken bridleway and a sheltered glade on the lower reserve. Once again, good progress was made until things rapidly slowed down on what can only be described as a very slippery slope. It was hard enough to climb and, bearing in mind we were clearing all the things to hang on to, it wasn't long before the inevitable happened; as I lost my footing and slid down the slope at a fair rate of knots and, to be stopped rather abruptly, straight in my chest, by a tree stump - and yes, it hurt! I certainly don't bounce as well as I used to ...

Soldiering on, at 2pm we headed for Heyshott Down, where local archaeologist Dr Mark Roberts and his team have been surveying the fabulous Bronze Age landscape. Mark gave us a fascinating insight into the site, his work and the thought process and mind set that needs to be adopted in evaluating and interpreting areas of prehistory. Late afternoon, and with the pain from my earlier accident now causing some discomfort in my lower chest, I reluctantly headed for casualty where internal bruising and a possible cracked rib were diagnosed ...

At least I got some pictures first ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Padfield, 09-Nov-12 06:41 AM GMT

Being no stranger to unplanned descents down vertiginous slopes I sympathise with you, Mark. I hope the rib isn't cracked and that you allow yourself some rest so your injuries can heal!

Guy

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 09-Nov-12 07:09 AM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

At least I got some pictures first ...

You're much better looking than I had imagined, Mark. 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 09-Nov-12 08:17 PM GMT

Thanks Guy, appreciated.

"David M" wrote:

You're much better looking than I had imagined, Mark.

Catch me in the right light and I'm quite stunning – it's just finding the right light 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 10-Nov-12 06:51 AM GMT

I hope you're resting up and healing nicely ready for December 8th Mark. I can confirm the healing properties of a nice drop of red wine, have a few glasses and you'll be as good as new...at least until tomorrow morning.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 11-Nov-12 10:20 PM GMT

Hope you are feeling better after your little tumble Mark.

Not sure about the healing properties of red wine, my own preference would be a nice Malt, dulls the pain wonderfully 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Nov-12 04:10 PM GMT

Dear Wurzel and Neil,

Thanks for your kind messages.

I have to say I prefer the grape to the grain and can confirm that appropriate quantities have been consumed ... 😊😊😊

For medicinal purposes only you understand ... 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 15-Nov-12 03:57 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 14 November 2012

Autumn colours ...

My accident last week has still left me firing on only one cylinder; but it was Wednesday, the weather was fabulous, and I couldn't stay away ...

I decided to be sensible, for a change, and avoided the hard graft; just taking a gentle walk around the lower reserve and embracing the season that is autumn. With a beautiful blue sky and the sun beginning to warm the lower reserve, the colours were just breathtaking. I felt rather bad that I couldn't help with the work party this week, particularly as we have now moved further up the reserve and into the area we concluded on last season; though felt that caution was the rational option.

Hopefully I'll be back next week ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 22-Nov-12 12:44 AM GMT

Sussex Butterfly Conservation AGM

Saturday, 24th November 2012 - 1.30-4.30pm

Adastra Hall, Keymer Road, Hassocks, West Sussex BN6 8AH

Agenda (timings approximate)

13:30 AGM

13:50 Dr Dan Hoare - Dukes on the Edge (saving the Duke of Burgundy in Sussex)

14:35 Break and sale of raffle tickets (30 minutes)

15:00 Raffle draw

15:10 Dr Dan Danahar - 50 butterflies for 50 years (a quest to see 50 UK species in a year)

15:50 Michael Blencowe - Of black skies and blue clouds (a review of the 2012 butterfly year in Sussex)

16:20 Close and thank you.

I know that Neil has already mentioned this in his diary but just a reminder with the Agenda ...

Hope to see you there ...

<http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/sightings.html>

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Nov-12 12:32 AM GMT

Sussex Butterfly Conservation AGM

Saturday, 24th November 2012 – 1.30–4.30pm

Adastra Hall, Keymer Road, Hassocks, West Sussex BN6 8AH

Two funeral directors and a bridegroom ..

After the officialdom of the AGM were completed, Nigel Symington, our new branch Chairman, duly opened proceedings in a very efficient manner, leaving the membership with no doubt that the Sussex branch remains in good hands.

In a rather smart little three piece number in black, Dr Dan Hoare kicked off the talks with 'Dukes on the Edge – Saving the Duke of Burgundy in Sussex'; a presentation I have heard on several occasions in the past though one from which I always glean something new. A short break and raffle followed, where I was really pleased to see Phil Everitt win first prize; a series of framed butterfly prints which had been donated to the branch. Phil commented on how butterflies had touched his life, particularly through a period of serious ill health; a lesson to be learnt maybe. Our very own 'Award Winning' and stylishly dressed, Dr Dan Danahar followed, giving an inspirational and warming account of his personal quest to see 50 species of butterfly in the UK in his 50th year; and he did it, just, with a last minute dash to Cumbria where the beautiful Scotch Argus completed his adventure.

An almost unrecognisable Michael Blencowe, our resident speaker, comedian, and all round good bloke, concluded, by talking about the highs and lows of the 2012 butterfly season in Sussex; sadly with far more more lows than highs. Not that inter branch rivalry occurs (that would be childish) but as Michael proudly pointed out, a Chalkhill Blue site count high of 1000 in Hampshire was followed by one of 825,000 in Sussex; one couldn't help a feeling of smugness. You never quite know what coming next with Michael and, with THE END of Michael's speech coming in the middle, everyone was in tears of laughter.

A pleasant way to spend a very wet afternoon ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 26–Nov–12 12:45 AM GMT

Well written. I see you have become Sussex BC's resident photograpaher this year too. 😊

I wonder how they will top the suits next year, maybe top hat and tails 😄

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 30–Nov–12 06:35 PM GMT

West Sussex, 30 November 2012

National disgrace ...

This really BUGS me ...

"Due to the care of past curators, we can (for example) still handle specimens actually from Linnaeus's personal cabinets, as well as others collected and prepared by later giants in the history of biology, Raffles, Darwin and Wallace among them. Ownership of these collections in trust carries an obligation to maintain them in good state and to make them accessible to enquirers and research workers at home and abroad". Earl of Cranbrook, 1991, in Standards in the Museum. Vol. 2. Care of Biological Collections, 1992. Museums & Galleries Commission.



The Tsetse *Glossina morsitans*
 Destroys horses in Westw.
 Central Africa.
 ? The Zimb of Bruce
 ? The species of fly which
 caused one of the
 Plagues of Egypt
 See Huxwood in Proc.
 of Zool. Soc of Lond.

In early November 2012, The Museums Association (MA) recently held their annual Conference and Exhibition at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC). Reported to be the largest gathering of museums and heritage professionals in Europe, it showcases suppliers, hosts workshops and various meetings. Darren Mann of the Hope Entomological Collections (HEC) was there as a speaker to present a talk entitled 'The Elephant in the Room' which tackles some of the difficult questions that are currently being raised about the future of natural history collections in the UK.

What questions are those?
 Well, here is the background in a nutshell:

"Natural history collections are under threat but are vital for taxonomic research, environmental monitoring and education. The number of specialist curators is declining, so should collections be redistributed to centres of excellence or are there other solutions for orphaned collections?"

The main question that is raised by this is – How do we prevent the loss of these collections? and it is one that is very much on the minds of all natural history curators at the moment as we hear of more collections being 'moth-balled' (put away into storage) and the loss of curators through redundancies or down-sizing, leaving many collections without people to care for them, interpret them or make them available for research.

The biggest threat of course, comes to the collections themselves, which may become damaged or lost altogether through poor storage and lack of care. For example, any item with fur, feather or chitin (e.g. taxidermy mounts or insect specimens) are open to attack from a host of pests including the one most reviled by curators, *Anthrenus*, which, whilst being a rather pretty little beetle, views an insect collection as an assemblage of tasty snacks (see image below). In a round up of the problems associated with deciding the future of these collections, Darren Mann pointed out that despite their huge popularity with the general public there has been a movement in the museums sector away from natural history and towards the arts and social sciences. **To put some perspective on this, the Ashmolean Museum recently spent £7.83 million on Edouard Manet's Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus; a single painting! For the same amount of money the entire UK entomological collections held outside the Nationals and University Museums, of over 10 million specimens, could have been re-housed (including salary costs) and systematically arranged in modern pest proof storage.**

One curator recently wrote "There are now more pandas living in Edinburgh than there are natural history curators employed in the whole of East Midlands, West Midlands and South Yorkshire put together".

This surely can't be right?

Someone needs to look at their priorities ...

Further discussion at viewtopic.php?f=2&t=6630&p=66833#p66833



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Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 01-Dec-12 12:13 AM GMT

Very sad, Mark, particularly in view of the passage you quoted:

To put some perspective on this, the Ashmolean Museum recently spent £7.83 million on Edouard Manet's Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus; a single painting! For the same amount of money the entire UK entomological collections held outside the Nationals and University Museums, of over 10 million specimens, could have been re-housed (including salary costs) and systematically arranged in modern pest proof storage.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Dec-12 12:54 AM GMT

Hi David,

Very sad indeed ...

"David M" wrote:

Very sad, Mark, particularly in view of the passage you quoted:

To put some perspective on this, the Ashmolean Museum recently spent £7.83 million on Edouard Manet's Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus; a single painting! For the same amount of money the entire UK entomological collections held outside the Nationals and University Museums, of over 10 million specimens, could have been re-housed (including salary costs) and systematically arranged in modern pest proof storage.

Regarding the quote, this is just a broad statement that is designed to highlight the problem and not condemn the Ashmolean for buying an expensive painting.

The arts deserve their funding also.

Kind regards. Mark

Further discussion at viewtopic.php?t=6630&start=1000

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 01-Dec-12 03:48 PM GMT

Happy birthday, Mark, I see you are 21 again! 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 01-Dec-12 06:44 PM GMT

Happy Birthday Mark 😊

Is it time for pipe and slippers or leathers and a Harley?

Best wishes,

Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Dec-12 12:41 AM GMT

Thank you both 😊

I thought 21 sounded better than 53 😊

Definitely leathers and a Harley, though I'll stick to pipe and slippers until the weather warms up ...

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 02-Dec-12 01:48 AM GMT



Only just noticed that!

Many happy returns, Mark.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 02-Dec-12 02:56 AM GMT

Pah! You're not as old as you're going to be, enjoy your birthday and many happy returns! 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 02-Dec-12 05:32 AM GMT

Just logged on and noticed it was somebodies birthday today.

Many happy returns Mark, hope it was a good one 😊

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Dec-12 06:14 PM GMT

Thanks to you all.

Appreciated 😊😊😊

I'm certainly 21 in my head Susie (probably younger) ... 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Dec-12 03:45 AM GMT

Clifden Nonpareil (*Catocala fraxini*)

The Blue Underwing or Clifden Nonpareil (*Catocala fraxini*) is an immigrant to Sussex and suspected resident since 2001 or 2005. It is generally only found singly and is attracted to sugar, usually at dusk, and occasionally to MV light. Immigrants appear in a wide range of habitats, chiefly in the south of the county; while residents prefer wooded landscapes in the far east. During the middle part of the 20th century it was resident in certain parts of Kent and Norfolk. *C. fraxini* is single-brooded; flying mainly from mid August to mid October. Larvae are not known to have been detected in Sussex but adults have been associated with aspen and poplar. The large greyish caterpillar, which can be as much as 75mm long, feeds mainly on aspen. It overwinters as an egg. Nowadays, only a handful are recorded per year, mainly from the south and south-east of England; September being the most likely month.

On 17th October 2011, my good friend Alec Harmer, took a gravid female at MV light in his garden on the edge of the New Forest in Hampshire. Her forewings were in reasonable condition, but the hindwings were badly torn. She laid 21 eggs and sadly died within a few days of capture. One of her offspring has subsequently laid over 563 ova and it is from her successors that the following larvae were reared. I photographed them on 4th July 2012.

Long may her descendants live on ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Padfield, 03-Dec-12 04:23 AM GMT

Interesting that its name suggests it feeds on ash...

I have always been struck by the apparent care and devotion with which female butterflies and moths lay their eggs, even though they get no maternal reward for their efforts – they just do what is right (there is a moral in there). It is wonderful that your dying female's selfless duty was completed by you and that her offspring's offspring live on.

Oh, and happy birthday for yesterday! 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Dec-12 04:32 AM GMT

Hi Guy,

Many thanks for your message and birthday greetings.

"padfield" wrote:

It is wonderful that your dying female's selfless duty was completed by you and that her offspring's offspring live on.

Just a correction, as maybe my post suggested otherwise. It is my good friend Alec Harmer who has been rearing her progeny not me; though I would loved to of had the opportunity to do so.

Thanks again.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Dec-12 05:15 AM GMT

Dear Guy,

Regarding you comment:

"padfield" wrote:

Interesting that its name suggests it feeds on ash...

I hadn't noticed this but have just checked my copy of *The Scientific Names of the British Lepidoptera – Their History and Meaning* by Lt. Colonel A. Maitland Emmet, MBE (1991). Harley Books. On Page 224 he states, with reference to *Catocala*:

2451 *fraxini* (Linnaeus, 1758) – *Fraxinus excelsior*, the ash-tree: stated wrongly by Linnaeus to be the foodplant.

So there we have it ...

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Padfield, 03-Dec-12 05:35 AM GMT

Thanks Mark. A few other Linnaean species have curious names too – like *Thecla betulae* (brown hairstreak). Interestingly, the French name, *la thécla du bouleau*, repeats the mistake – though I believe birch can be a foodplant for this species so it might not be entirely in error.

Guy

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 07-Dec-12 12:02 AM GMT

Hi Mark,
Belated Happy Birthday. Catch up with you at a work party very soon.
I love those CN cats. I've seen a couple of faded, pre-caught adult specimens but would love to see a fresh one.
BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Dec-12 03:17 AM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 12 December 2012

Hoar frost over Heyshott ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 16-Dec-12 03:21 AM GMT

That first image is particularly good, Mark. Really austere looking.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 16-Dec-12 06:11 PM GMT

Beautiful photos, Mark. I agree that first one in particular is something special. 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Goldie M, 16-Dec-12 09:11 PM GMT

You should make Christmas cards out of those shots Mark there really great Goldie 😊

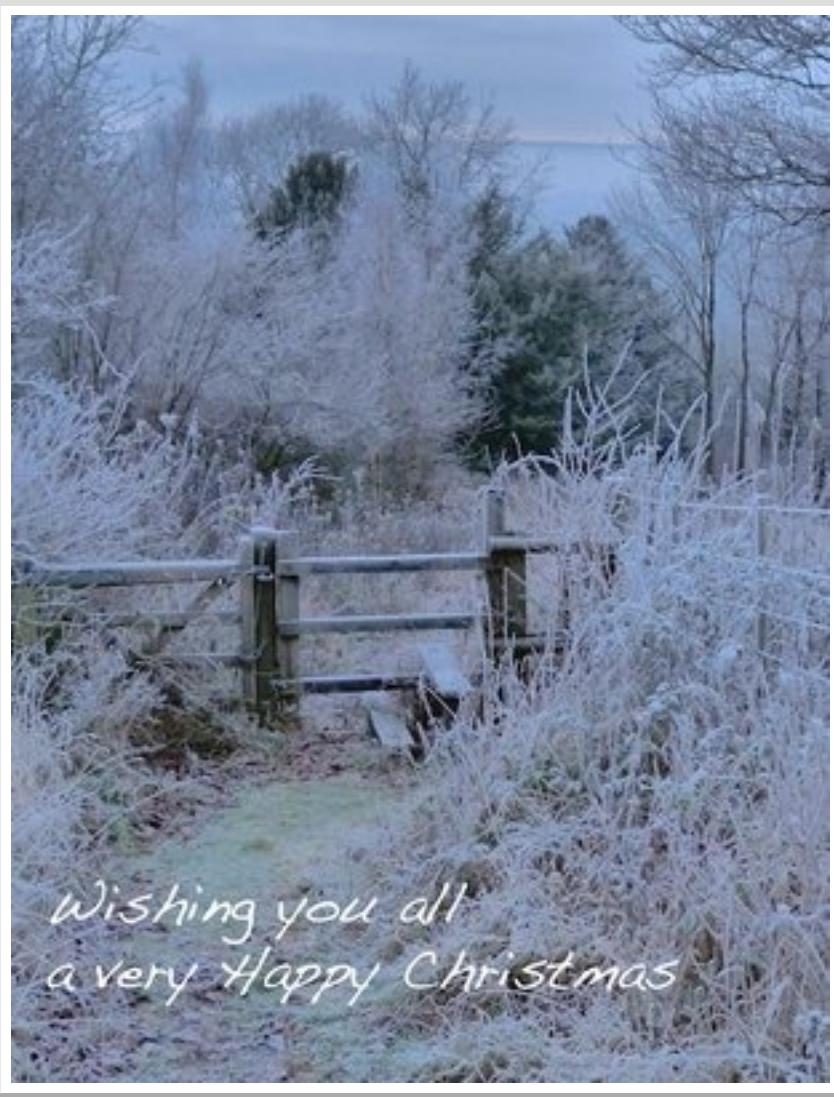
Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-Dec-12 03:35 AM GMT

Dear David, Susie and Goldie,

Thank you for your very kind comments 😊😊😊

Just for you Goldie ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 17-Dec-12 03:37 AM GMT

I'd definitely buy a dozen of those, Mark.

RRP 50p each? 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Dec-12 01:12 AM GMT

Anything to declare?

A touch of exotica on a wet day ...

The Orthoptera is an order of charismatic and abundant insects, which includes the grasshoppers, crickets, weta and locusts. Many members of this order manufacture an audible noise by stridulation (the act of producing sound by rubbing certain body parts together). In the case of the Orthopterans this is typically the wings or legs; these body parts containing rows of corrugated bumps. Their 'song' is one of the many sounds of summer; a time when they can easily be found in meadows, trees or bushes.

The British Isles currently plays host to twenty-seven native species (grasshoppers and crickets) and a number of naturalised, non-native species. In addition to our native fauna, and those species deemed non-native though naturalised, the unexpected Orthopteran occasionally turns up; with modern air travel providing a suitable mechanism for the transportation of the occasional exotic arrival. The following three species, the largest of which, a species of *Tropidacris*, has a wingspan of approximately 20cm and is around 10cm in length, were captured from an international airport located in the south of England, as unexpected arrivals in baggage reclaim ...

The first is *Acanthacris ruficornis* (Fabricius, 1787). It arrived on a flight from Africa on 15 June 2001. The second is *Anacridium melanorhodon* ssp. *melanorhodon* (Walker, 1870); an arrival on a flight from northern Africa (Palestine) on 2 February 2000. The third, the most impressive of the three, is probably *Tropidacris cristata* (Linnaeus, 1758); which arrived on a flight from South America (Costa Rica) on 18 August 2001. Members of the genus *Tropidacris* are the largest known grasshoppers. All three were alive upon arrival. The third, *T. cristata*, had to be handled very carefully as it is a grasshopper with impressive strength. Any attempt to handle it is likely to be repelled with a lightning quick reprisal; its spiny hind legs inflicting damage to the unsuspecting handler ...

My thanks go to Darren Mann (OUMNH) for confirmation of identification.





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