

Re: Dave McCormick

by Dave McCormick, 02-Jun-12 11:04 PM GMT

Been forever it seems since I last posted here so time for a new update 🤖

Yesterday I went to a place I have went to for past 21 years, it doesn't change all that much for the exception of gorse that is creeping on some areas. It is called the Lead Mines and is where rare minerals were mined but this has long since stopped, it was also a dump at one point and now wild plants, grasses, trees and scrub have covered those areas. There is a large (the larges in Northern Ireland, I think over 600 acres in size) semi natural woodland there and a large lake near a gold course, quite a few flower grassland meadows (One I think is over 5 acres in size). Became a country park a few years ago and was designated a ASSI in 1998 because of the rare minerals here and the diversity of plant life that grows on the spoil heaps left behind from the mining days and dumping days. Had a good day, spent from 12-4:30pm there yesterday, quite sunny and warm (got bad sun burn on back of my neck).

I started at a long "lonan" (lane) that hasn't changed in years. There is a quarry at one area near the top of the lane, which is quite deep. Peregrine falcons nest on the exposed rocky faces as well as ravens. When I have been here the past few years, I usually went to the other side of the area, which is at the woodland side, so have not seen this side since about 2006, it was nice seeing it again.



Lonan Path with cow parsley

After walking for a few minutes, I reached the first area I have not been to since 2006. It had changed a bit. Gorse has crept into the flower grassland and if not controlled, it will take over and be bad for wildlife of the area. Saw **1 Speckled Wood**, **1 Large White** and a single **Ancylis badiana**



Gorse Scrub

After looking around here I found lots of *English Stonecrop (Sedum anglicum)* growing on rocks at the top edge of the quarry. Then walked into a huge grassland meadow that is still the same as it was 21 years ago when I first saw it. **Ribwort Plantain (Plantago lanceolata)** grows over large areas of the meadow here and found (for some reason) a single bluebell growing here but none anywhere else. There is **hawthorn** and **snowberry** growing along the hedgerow and a mobile phone mast nearby which there was 3 ravens sitting on. Also saw 2 **Mother Shipton** here which was great to see and 2 **Small Heath**





Mobile Phone Mast



Trees and Hedgrow

Next, I went back the way I came and followed a path into a short grassland area with wildflowers and some gorse. I then saw a butterfly. I really wished I had a photo of it as it was unusual, but flew too fast to catch. It was the shape and size of a large white but was light brown (like a small heath) on its upperside with no other markings. Didn't see its underside, so unsure what it was. Couldn't have been a large heath as they don't exist here with no cotton grass, so no idea what it was. Managed to see a Small Heath here and got a photo, not great though. Not had much luck photographing these so far.



Small Heath

After coming here, I moved back into the large meadow and up a path at the far side of it and ended up at an area of short grassland with hawthorn/dog rose hedgerow. Plants here included **field speedwell** (*Veronica persica*), lots of **Yellow Rattle** (*Rhinanthus minor*), **Meadow Buttercup** (*Ranunculus acris*), various grasses and some other plants. Saw 5 small heath and first **Large Red Damselfly** of the year. Managed to get another photo of a small heath sunning itself sideways, again, not to easy to get.



Small Heath Sunning Itself



Yellow Rattle

It was now about 1:30pm, so after stopping for a rest, heard some *long-tailed tits* and saw them in the hawthorn nearby where I was sitting, continued higher up (now at 400ft above sea level) and walked over a stone wall and found a 2 acre or so flower meadow. Here I saw my first *Common Blue* of the year, a male, only got a slightly blurred photo though. Also saw 11 Small Heath as well. One seemed more willing, so took a few photos of it, slowly getting closer each time to see how far I could get to it before it flew away. Took 4 photos then it bolted. Came out alright.



Small Heath 1



Small Heath 2



Small Heath 3

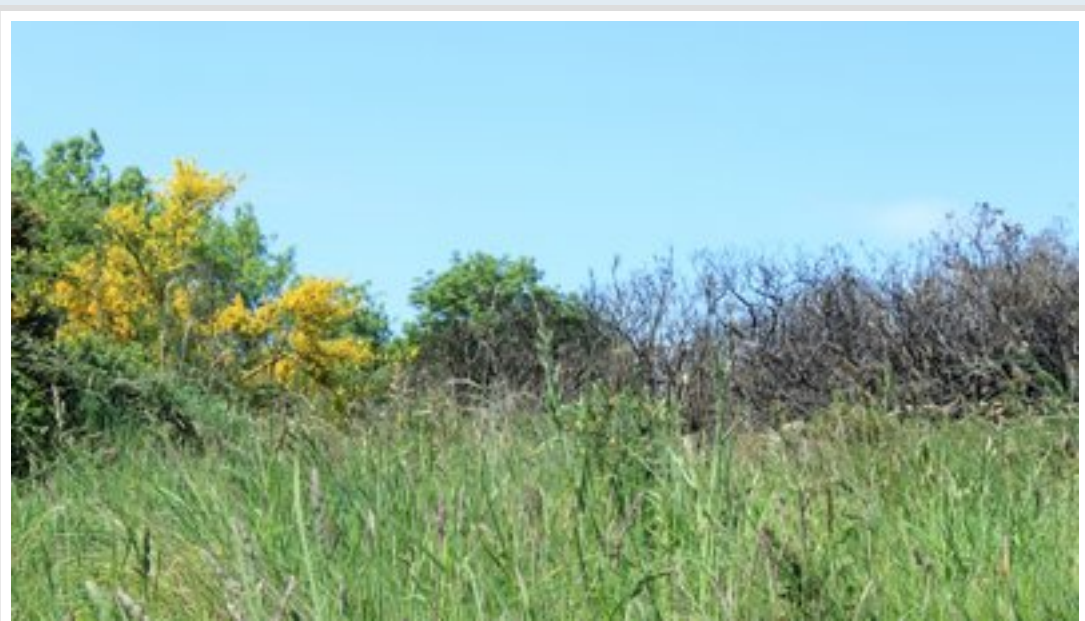


Small Heath 4

However, one side had a large area of gorse that was burned and earlier that morning before I came here, firefighters had to put out the blaze but it was quite bad. There was also some **broom** growing around here.



2 Acre Flower Meadow



Burned Gorse

After walking around here, seeing what was about, I found an exit beside the burned gorse and walked into another larger grassland flower meadow. I walked onto a quite big mound of rocks with moss and grasses growing on them. Little did I know until I removed a rock from the top, I was standing on a quite big, **Black Garden Ant (Lasius niger)** nest, I sure have a knack for finding ant nests without knowing about it! 😊 so before I got ants all over me, managed a few photos of the area and one of a young **Field Grasshopper**.



Flower Meadow 3



Flower Meadow 3 - 2



Young Field Grasshopper

After looking around and trying to find a way out that wasn't the way I came in, I realized I had to go through the burned gorse, so went through them. Lots of bracken growing here. Saw another large red damselfly, 7 **Small Heath** and a **female Speckled Wood** Kept going past a few areas:

Farm with Pond and Horses (always been horses up here that are used to keep the meadows from overgrowing):



Farm

Walked through a path with gorse, birch and rocks and saw a female Speckled Wood and 2 Small Heath here.



Dirt Path

By now it was after 3pm and I was 440ft above sea level and feeling a bit tired from walking up hills and rocky areas, so was trying to find the large meadow I have been looking for, which was 200ft below me. See more in next post.

Re: Dave McCormick

by Dave McCormick, 03-Jun-12 01:45 AM GMT

I started walking downwards towards the large meadow I wanted to visit (I visited here every year and seen all sorts, more than in other areas) and there was one area I also wanted to visit, which gets really boggy and has a large population of Orange-Tips in it, but couldn't remember where it was. Anyway, I started walking and almost walked on a fox! Didn't notice it until it got up and walked in front of me. There was bamboo canes dotted about the rocky slopes here but unsure why, a few had signs with "A+B" or "A-B+C" (I think it may have been a dirt bike trail since people are allowed to ride bikes here but only at certain times and routes)



Rocky hill

I then was looking around and saw several **Common Milkwort** (*Polygala vulgaris*) with pink and purple-blue forms growing side-by-side, the first time I have seen the pink form before.



Common Milkwort (Pink Form)

Then I found where I wanted to be, a hundred feet below where I was, here:



Rocky Scrub Woodland

So I walked down the steep slopes and found a burnt out car (sad to say it wasn't the only bit of mangled car remains here) and found the large meadow, but to get to it, I had to walk over the twisted remains of a bonnet and front of a burnt out car buried in the sandy bank. I was at another flower grassland meadow.

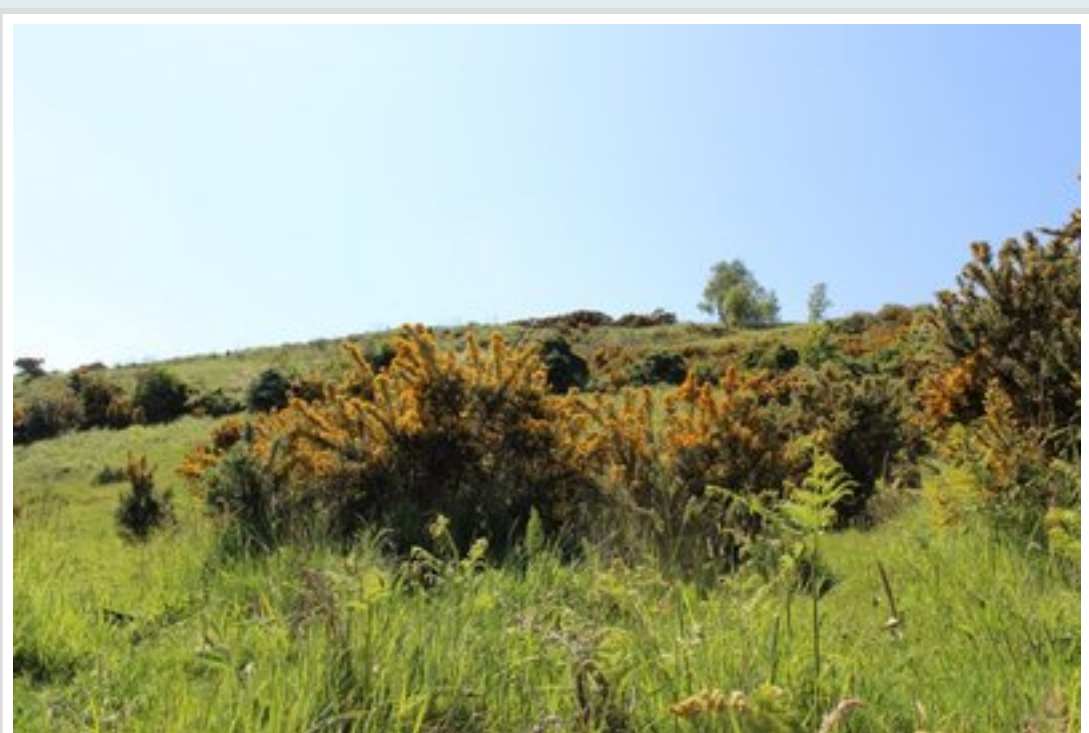
In distance you can see a hill with gorse and a chimney, these were part of the old mine that is disused, at times you can see red deer here that come out of the woodland nearby:



Flower Meadow (Mine in distance)



Last area meadow



Last area meadow 2

When I got in here, I saw more. **1 Small Copper, 1 Silver-Ground Carpet, 1 dead Brindled Pug, 1 Common Blue (male), a mating pair of Common Blue, 1 Speckled Wood, 1 Small White, 1 Large White, 2 Cocks-foot moth, 2 Large Red Damselflies, a [b]Four-Spotted Chaser Dragonfly[/b] and a Variable Damselfly.**

Got a good couple of photos of the mating common blue. They did the "lovers waltz" walking side ways around the plantian head as they, mated:



Common Blue Pair



Common Blue Pair Again

Before leaving here to head home, I found 4 Common Spotted Orchid hybrids *Dactylorhiza fuchsii x purpurella (D. x venusta)* and got a few photos.



Common Spotted Orchid



Common Spotted Orchid 2

Left at 4:30pm and overall walked near 10 miles. On way home, just before leaving here, saw a male *Orange-Tip*. Woke up this morning feeling a bit cramped and sore with a sunburned back of my head, but worth it though.