

John R

by JohnR, 20-Mar-13 09:46 PM GMT



Winter sunset

I bought this field which borders my garden soon after we moved into our house. About five years ago I got bored looking at the post and rail fence which is the boundary and after reading about corridors for wildlife I planted what I hoped would become a bird friendly hedge with berries and summer cover. On a summer's day about three years later I was walking along the hedgerow when I noticed dozens of little brown butterflies flying out as I passed by. I reached the end of the hedge and re-traced my steps. The hedge is 220 yards long and every couple of paces a Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*) appeared, I'd never seen so many butterflies in my life before. I had to have done something right for wildlife and thus my interest in lepidoptera was born, all thanks to a field hedge and a gang of Hedge Browns.

That autumn I rotavated several patches in the field and sowed about an acre of native wildflowers and last year was the first year for all the perennials to flower. Whilst I normally cut the field in October I left a couple of areas which had a lot of Wild Carrot (*Daucus Carota*) still flowering for the winter to provide cover for the mice and voles because we have various owls hunting along the wood edges. My theory paid off for on about the only sunny day we have had this spring, I cut the whole field again down to about four inches to let the flower plants have enough light to beat the grass and the number of small rodents and pygmy shrews that ran off from the tractor must have equalled the number of butterflies that started me on this project.

The wood behind which the sun is setting belongs to my neighbour and almost in line with the sun there is a new Buzzard's nest which I only spotted today as a pair of Red Kites searched for their own nesting site.

My diary will probably be limited to the butterflies I see on my land and that of my neighbour for I have free run of his farm for recording and conservation.

Re: John R

by essexbuzzard, 20-Mar-13 10:14 PM GMT

Great stuff, John! It will be interesting to see how your field, and the neighbouring farm, develop as the season progresses. I think seeing wildlife on your land in some ways, is even more rewarding than going out looking for it.

Re: John R

by David M, 20-Mar-13 10:19 PM GMT

Wow. That spot has massive potential for experimentation.

I only wish I had one of my own.

Good luck with it.

Re: John R

by Goldie M, 21-Mar-13 05:34 PM GMT

You're so lucky with all that land 🍷 This summer when the wild flowers are out take some photos and post them on here, I'd love to see them. Goldie 😊

Re: John R

by ChrisC, 21-Mar-13 07:13 PM GMT

a first post to make the entire forum jealous well I know I am 🍷 welcome to UKB and look forward to future posts.

Chris

Re: John R

by Wurzel, 21-Mar-13 10:52 PM GMT

👍👍👍 Pretty much sums it up really!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: John R

by JohnR, 21-Apr-13 08:45 PM GMT

Had a meeting today with my neighbour's gamekeeper to discuss where he is going to plant pheasant covers and where to put Environmental Stewardship mixtures and would I like some wildflower mixtures in with the nectar mixtures. The insects get two long field margins where the maize failed to hold any pheasants last year as well as along some of the edges of the maize itself. We talk wild birds as well as bees and butterflies and they all seem to be catered for in this year's planting.

The whole business of attracting insects is not entirely altruistic because game birds like chasing insects and it tends to hold them better for the shooting season but more nectar also means more butterflies (the Whites are catered for with Kale). I counted four Small Tortoiseshells, a Comma and a Brimstone whilst we were talking and there was an impressive number of bumblebees quartering the ground looking for nest sites.



One of the field margins to be given over to insects

and on the way back I passed this Blue Tit who was also enjoying the sun



Sunbathing

Re: John R

by JohnR, 06-May-13 09:48 PM GMT

I was giving up on butterflies, nothing was nectering on my locally grown home produced flowers. The field had a good number of dandelions, cowslips, violets, the plum trees are flowering as are the cherries; the blackthorn and Amelanchier show well in the hedge but only bees turned up. The odd butterfly dashed by, not stopping for a feed, obviously teenagers with one thought on their minds which was not a good meal. When will they learn? Apart from a Brimstone who found my azaleas a couple of weeks back, nothing stayed until two days ago when a Peacock took a liking to dandelions. I have never really noticed the sheen on the front edge of the wings nor at the root of the hindwings, maybe this isn't apparent on the autumn Peacocks gorging on the Michaelmas Daisies? He was buzzed by a Green-veined White who stopped for a snack,



then this morning a male Orange Tip flew around for a while but left in the wrong direction for I could have told him that there were six females 200 yards away down in the valley yesterday. A Peacock was caught in an old spider's web in the window of the potting shed, using a broken straw I managed to clean the web off him but he stayed on my hand until I noticed that a single strand anchored one antenna to a foot, as soon as I broke the strand he was off, sex on the mind again? A few minutes later a Brimstone appeared to be inspecting the hedge, she was ovipositing and I saw her place an egg on a Blackthorn, marking the spot I dashed back to the house for a camera but of course I couldn't find that egg again; what had been the same colour as the butterfly's wings a minute or two before was nowhere to be seen.

For the past few days there has been a tame Kestrel hanging around in the valley and yesterday it came to a piece of meat held in the hand. I have it in a cage whilst I wait for a response from the Independent Bird Register as to its owner, I'm getting quite fond of it.



I'm lost and want to go home

Re: John R

by JohnR, 30-Jun-13 07:23 PM GMT

Until today I had only seen up to four butterflies in a day in my theme park and then only occasionally. Visitor numbers were almost not worth recording, the odd Brimstone came by and a Red Admiral, then a disgruntled Large White but this morning at about 6am I saw a Meadow Brown and by mid-day there were 19 all skulking around the bottom of the grass. Nothing seemed to want the nectar, a couple of Speckled Woods sunbathed on a rhododendron but in the late afternoon I disturbed what could only have been a Common Blue, the first of the year for me, but she flew off to hide below the ox-eye daisies so I couldn't be certain.

The photograph does show a mass of daisies but nearer the camera there many cat's ears but since the flower heads follow the sun they don't show up. The wild flowers are doing well but this year the grass is making up for lost time. Bees are well down on last year, however I am seeing more day flying moths and the grass dwelling micro moths are more numerous than previously.

