

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jan-13 05:01 PM GMT

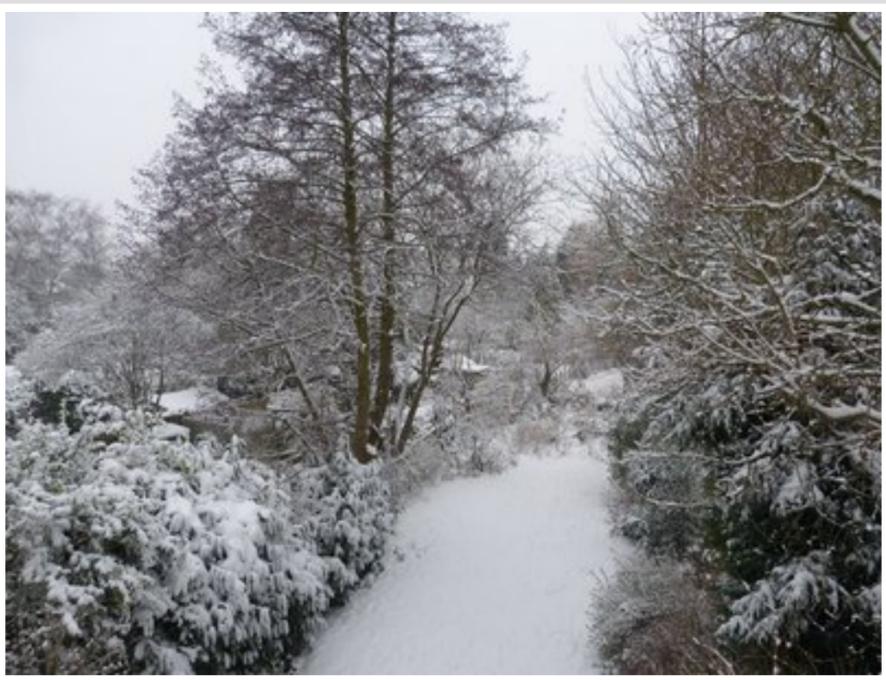
My first entry in 2013 and along with most people throughout the UK we have had a fair bit of snow over the past few days. The main event was Friday with a good few cms falling over most of the midlands.

The snow eased off yesterday but it remained cold and although most of the roads were cleared the snow just stayed where it was elsewhere.

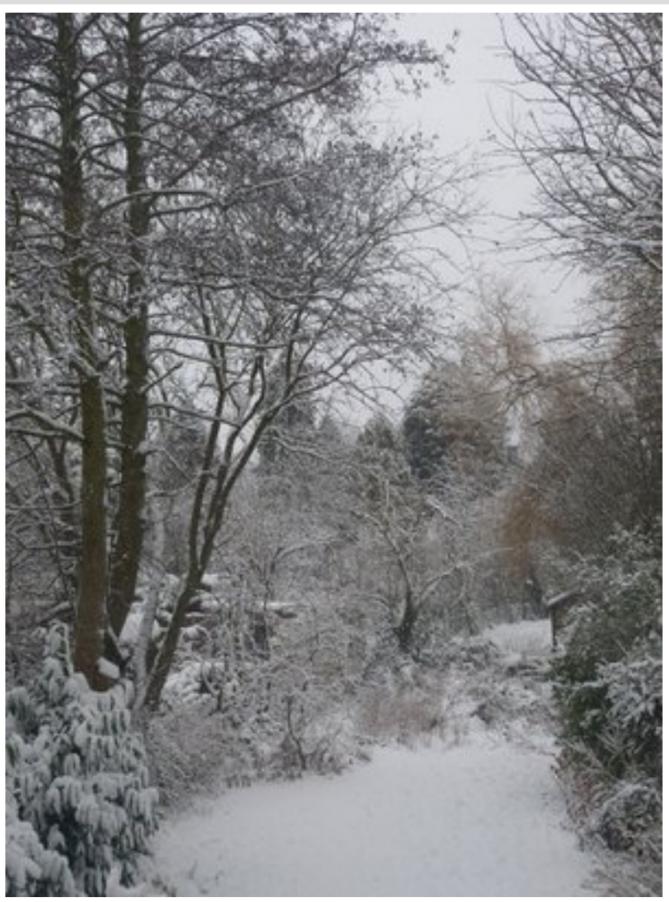
This morning dawned with a fine drizzle of light snow that persisted all morning and got heavier this afternoon. As I write this it has reverted to a fine drizzle again and is forecast to go on for a while yet.



Earlier this morning the road outside my house was clear.



Back Garden.



Back garden

I walked the 3 miles to work on Friday, looks like I'll be doing the same tomorrow.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-Jan-13 06:25 PM GMT

That three mile walk to work – are you starting your training for the season ahead? 😊😄 I'm very jealous of your garden by the way it looks awesome 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jan-13 07:22 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Not so much training as just shuffling along 😊

A couple of quick shots taken on my phone at about 06.00am this morning on my walk to work. It was nice and peaceful and really quite beautiful, the phone photos do not do justice to the way the street lights lit up the snow on the trees. Should have taken my camera but truth be told I am on autopilot at that time of the morning 😊



Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 21-Jan-13 07:57 PM GMT

Wow! You seem to have been hit a lot harder than we have in Swansea.

Most of our snow at road/pavement level is already history.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jan-13 08:28 PM GMT

Hi David,

We had a double whammy, a few inches on Friday, nothing Saturday, then yesterday(Sunday) we had it all day and it didn't stop until around midnight. The temperature is dropping like a stone outside at the moment so looks like an icy one tomorrow morning.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 21-Jan-13 10:05 PM GMT

Freezing fog's the worst thing, Neil. I hope and pray none of us has to put up with that tomorrow!

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Feb-13 06:21 PM GMT

Sunday 17th February.

The weather has been almost pleasant over the past few days after the rain and snow of the preceding couple of weeks. Today actually felt like there was a promise of Spring in the air 😊

I spent a bit of time this morning pottering about in the garden but couldn't really do a lot as most of the lawn and borders are still saturated. Walking on the grass left my footprints as muddy puddles so I kept off it as much as possible.

No Butterflies or other insects to be seen but there were a good number of birds about including Robins, Great, Blue and Long Tailed Tits, Dunnocks, A pair of Blackbirds, a pair of Blackcaps, a Thrush and a Wren.



Robin - Coverdale 17.02.2013



Male Blackcap – Coverdale 17.02.2013



Great Tit and Dunnock – Coverdale 17.02.2013



Long-Tailed Tit – Coverdale 17.02.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 17-Feb-13 06:33 PM GMT

Some great shots there Neil 😊 What lens are you using to get such sharp close-ups – or are you dressed in a Gilly suit and creeping right up to them? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Feb-13 06:38 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Just my standard FZ150 on maximum 24x zoom hand held, sitting still in a corner of the garden on a step with my elbows braced on my knees.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

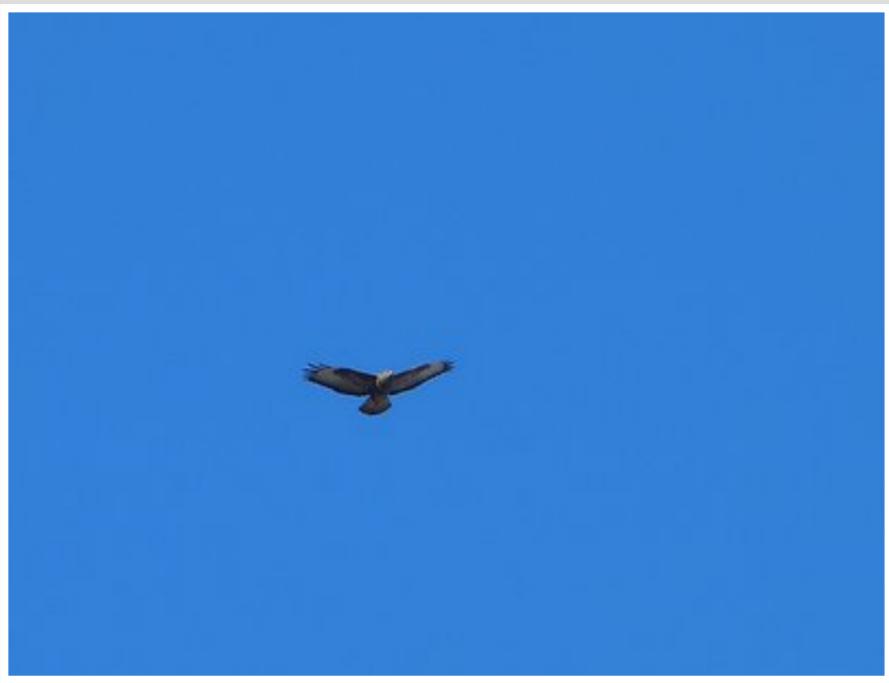
by Neil Freeman, 02-Mar-13 06:59 PM GMT

One of the downsides of working all week is that when the weekend comes along there is 'stuff' to do around the house. So it was that, despite a beautiful early spring day with clear blue skies, I was busy today and didn't manage to get out anywhere.

I did however spend a bit of time tidying up in the garden with a background of birdsong that lifted the spirits a bit. Along with the usual selection of Tits, Dunnocks, Blackbirds and Robins there was a small brownish bird scuttling about that I felt sure was Goldcrest. Grabbing my camera, I managed to get a couple of long distance shots that confirmed it.



For a while there was also a buzzard circling high above the garden against the clear blue sky.



A definite feel of spring in the air today 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 02-Mar-13 07:48 PM GMT

You've done remarkably well to capture that Goldcrest, Neil.

I've seen two during the week just gone but this species moves so quickly that a photograph has been impossible on both occasions.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 02-Mar-13 09:17 PM GMT

I echo what David said and as they're so small as well doubly ace! 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Mar-13 05:52 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments chaps 😊

Sunday 3rd March

Not as nice today as yesterday, more cloud and less sun, and another day of pottering about the house and garden.

Another small brown bird that I have been seeing regularly in the garden is the lovely little 'Jenny Wren'. A secretive little bird that is usually scuttling about in the leaf litter beneath the shrubs. Up until today I had not been able to get a photo but finally managed this morning, albeit through the back window into the garden.



Wren - Coverdale 03.03.2013



Wren - Coverdale 03.03.2013

The pair of Blackcaps were also back again this morning, hiding in the bushes and making quick dashes out to the feeders and back again.

The male kept sitting with his back to me 🙄



Blackcap male - Coverdale 03.03.2012

whilst the female would hide further down in the bushes,



Blackcap female – Coverdale 03.03.2013

Looking back at last years notes, I saw my first butterfly of 2012, a Comma, on March 11th. I will be working all week so fingers crossed for next weekend 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 03-Mar-13 08:50 PM GMT

Great shot of the Redcap Neil 😊

I saw my first butterfly of 2012 in Feb and this year here we are in March and not even a sniff! Still this could be the week – good luck at your end 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by David M, 03-Mar-13 09:34 PM GMT

Tuesday's your best bet, Wurzel. 12c and plenty of sunshine.

Don't waste it!

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Mar-13 07:21 PM GMT

Still no butterflies for me, I was stuck in work the other week when we had a couple of decent days and the last couple of weekends have been a bit damp and gloomy. This weekend has been little better but at least the sun did pop out briefly this afternoon albeit a bit too late to be of much use.

I was looking out of the window into the back garden this morning whilst it was drizzling and thinking about re-filling the bird feeders if it stopped when a small brown blur shot out of one of the shrubs onto the last remaining fatball in one of the feeders. It was a Goldcrest and it remained there just long enough for me to grab my camera and get a couple of shots through the window. There has been one of these delightful little birds in the garden for the past few weeks and this is the first time I have ever seen one stay still for more than a second or two.



Goldcrest - Coverdale 17.03.2012

After last years unusually warm and dry March, this year has returned to more like usual for around here in the midlands. I am keeping my fingers crossed for Easter in a couple of weeks time as I have a week off work then and am hoping to be able to get out a bit.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-13 11:08 PM GMT

Nice shot there I' m really starting to feel "crest envy" 😊😄 Last year we had really warm weather and lots of early sightings but hopefully this more "normal" weather will mean rather than dribs and drabs we get a good load of butterflies all at once – I'm hoping for a good Easter too!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-13 07:34 PM GMT

Easter is creeping closer and the weather shows no sign of improving yet.

I have been looking through my notes and photos from this time last year and am posting these below for comparison.



Back Garden - 25th March 2012

I saw my first 2012 Speckled wood in the garden on 25th March



Newly emerged Speckled Wood – Coverdale 25th March 2012

Also my first Small White on the same day



Small White – Coverdale 25th March 2012

Mind you, despite the unusually warm days last march, the nights were still very cold. The line below is copy and pasted from my 26th March entry on page 3 of this dairy

'It may be bit early still around here despite the weather.....glorious days but I am still scraping ice off my windscreen at 06.30am when I go to work.'

It just shows that we remember the warm sunny days but forget that the nights were still below freezing.

Saturday 23rd March 2013

A few inches of snow on the ground and a day of cold winds and sleet and light snow in the air. As write this it is still snowing albeit lighter now than earlier.



Back garden - Coverdale 23rd March 2013

Among the few visitors to the garden that I spotted today were a Blackbird and Thrush. These photos were taken through the kitchen window, it was too cold and windy to go out without 'kitting up' by which time the birds would have probably flown. I am afraid that I am not clued up enough on birds to tell if the Thrush is a Mistle or Song variety.



Blackbird and Thrush - Coverdale 23.03.2013



Thrush - Coverdale 23.03.2012

There was also a pair of House Sparrows, now there is a bird that I don't see anywhere near as often as I used to. 'Spugs' as my dad always called them used to be the commonest bird around but this pair was the first I have seen this year. The female kept herself hidden in the depths of the bushes but the male nipped out a couple of times.



Sparrow - Coverdale 23.03.2013

Oh well, I suppose March is one of those months in which the weather can go either way but it is some time since I have seen this much snow at this time of year. I do however remember having snow in April more than once when I was younger.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Mar-13 08:37 PM GMT

*The North wind doth blow and we shall have snow,
And what will poor robin do then, poor thing?.....*



Robin - Coverdale 24.03.2012



Robins - Coverdale 25.03.2012

Re: nfreem

by David M, 25-Mar-13 10:07 PM GMT

It's ridiculous isn't it, Neil?

I've just spent a couple of days in Abergavenny and it is totally snow-clad and austere. Hard to believe that this time last year temperatures were edging into the seventies.

Swansea, by comparison, has been almost singularly untouched by this weather event (apart from the cold).

However, it looks like many parts of the UK will have a white Easter, which isn't something that's happened very often in my 45 year lifetime.

Let's grit our teeth for another week or so and hope that, by mid-April at least, things will be back to normal.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-13 12:30 AM GMT

I could handle it if there was an end in sight but the weather reports seem to suggest that it'll get slightly better to then only get worse again. 😞 Still your bird shots warm the cockles as it were 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Apr-13 07:37 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys 😊

With the family stuff over Easter done and dusted and with the rest of the week off work I had to get out to blow the cobwebs off, whatever the weather. As it happened, today proved to be the best day for a long time, clear blue skies and loads of sun albeit with an underlying cold wind. I decided to spend a couple of hours this afternoon checking out some local spots.

First off I nipped around to Shadowbrook Meadows where I had seen a number of Peacocks last summer. Unfortunately the wind was quite strong here and even in the sheltered bits it still felt cold. Not surprisingly I did not see any butterflies but I was surprised with the number of Long Tailed Tits that I saw, easily the most numerous bird here today.



Shadowbrook Meadows - much colder here than it looks

I then continued on round to Elmdon Park Nature Reserve where I had seen Peacocks and Commas in good numbers last March. I checked out the sheltered locations that I know about, again without any butterflies being seen but as with Shadowbrook there were Long Tailed Tits everywhere 😊 😊



Commas and Peacocks here last March, none today.

Many of the paths through the trees were very muddy with standing water that in many places was still iced over in mid afternoon.



Elmdon Park Nature Reserve – note ice still on water on path.

After a few false alarms caused by leaves being blown in the wind, I was circling around to do a second circuit when I disturbed a rather tatty looking Small Tortoiseshell that was basking on the path in front of me. It circled around before vanishing over the shrubs and despite me waiting around for a while, it did not return.

This was my first butterfly of the year 😊 and as it turned out the only one seen today.



Small Tortoiseshell disturbed on path along here.

Apparently the temperature hit the giddy heights of 8 or 9 degrees today, in the sun and out of the wind, although it was still bl**dy cold in the shade as evidenced by the ice still on puddles in mid afternoon. Another frosty night forecast tonight with another sunny (with a cold wind) day tomorrow, hopefully I will be able to get out again. I just need to find the right spot out of the wind 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-13 09:40 PM GMT

Those dead leaves are tricky little blighters I've been caught out by them a few times myself already this year 😞😞 Still it's nice when the other way round and that leaf takes off and lands promptly 😊 Congrats on breaking the 2013 duck 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Apr-13 11:26 PM GMT

Saturday 6th April

Well thats more like it, a lovely but slightly nippy morning turned into a decent afternoon, the first one that actually felt like Spring. The temperature actually reached double figures and with thre cold wind finally dropping it even felt warm 😊

I got all the domestics out of the way this morning and managed to get a couple of hours out this afternoon to trundle around some local spots again. First stop was Castle Hills by Solihull. I checked out some sunny sides of hedgerows but, given that this site is a bit exposed and rises up, there was still a bit of a cool wind in evidence here, I suppose there is a clue in the name 😊

I was just heading back to the car when I disturbed a Small Tortoiseshell that flew high up into an Oak tree and stayed there.



Castle Hills – Small Tortoiseshell flew into Oak to right of shot.

I next went to Elmdon Park Nature Reserve, a site where I saw numerous Commas and Peacocks in March 2012. I came here earlier last week as reported in my last entry but today seemed far more promising, the last vestiges of snow had vanished from beneath the trees and there was no ice on the puddles.

I made my way to a couple of sheltered spots that I know about checking out likely looking basking spots. Sure enough I soon spotted a tell tale splash of orange, a Comma in almost exactly the same spot that I saw one of my first Commas last year.



Elmdon Park LNR – Comma seen in this sheltered corner

I stayed and watched it for a while as it took off and circled around before landing again in the same area. Photos below all of this one individual.



Comma – Elmdon Park 06.04.2013



Comma - Elmdon Park 06.04.2013



Comma - Elmdon Park 06.04.2013

I carried on a bit further and disturbed a Peacock which flashed its eyespots at me before taking off and, like the Small Tortoiseshell at Castle Hills, went up into a tree and stayed there.

All in all, a great couple of hours with single examples of three species seen, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma and Peacock. Although I saw my first butterfly, a Small Tortoiseshell, a few days ago, today felt more like the first day of my season 😊

Bye for now.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-13 10:38 AM GMT

Great stuff Neil 😊 I know what you mean about it feeling like the first day of the season even though it wasn't as for me anyway I went out expecting rather than hoping to see.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by philm63, 07-Apr-13 07:10 PM GMT

Nicely done Neil, saw my first Small Torts on Sat but none hanging around for pictures.

Phil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Apr-13 09:18 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel and Phil 😊

Sunday 7th April

Not as much sun today, more of a hazy overcast. It was still pleasant though and I decided that it was time I did a bit in the garden, something which the weather of late had prevented me doing.

I was immediately struck by how far behind things are this year, nothing in flower and buds only just starting to show some growth on most of the shrubs.

In the couple of hours that I was out there, I did not see a single insect of any kind. By this time last year bees and hoverflies were buzzing around and Speckled Woods and Holly Blues had been fluttering around for a week or so. I reckon the season is running something like four weeks later than last year around here.

Closer inspection of the more 'unkempt' part of the garden revealed a couple of splashes of colour, some Celandines and a Dandelion that yesterdays sun must have brought out. It is amazing how such little things can mean so much sometimes 😊



Last autumn I had bought some dwarf buddleias online. On arrival I had potted these up into 3" pots for the winter and today I potted them up into their final containers. I cannot remember what these are called. I have the labels around somewhere, will have to look for them. I am not sure where these will end up in the garden but being in pots I can move them around.



Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-13 10:21 PM GMT

Weather a bit mixed this week, some sunny spells, high winds on Wednesday and some heavy showers yesterday, at least it felt like spring usually does around here even if it is a few weeks late. I finished work for the week at lunchtime and after doing a bit around the house decided to spend an hour or so in the garden, just pottering about.

In truth, the pottering soon turned into sitting and watching. There is a Sallow to one side of the garden on which the catkins finally decided to start flowering this week and there seemed to be a steady stream of bees bustling back and forth over it. As well as the bees there were a various birds in and around the branches including Great Tits, Blue Tits and Blackcaps.

There were also some visitors that I am not sure of. The first were a pair of either Chiffchaffs or Willow Warblers, they didn't make any sound so I could not hear the distinctive Chiffchaff call. Looking at some online images I am leaning towards Willow Warblers but am happy to be corrected by any bird experts.



Willow Warbler? - Coverdale 19.4.2013



Willow Warbler? - Coverdale 19.4.2013



Willow Warbler? - Coverdale 19.4.2013

The other bird I am not sure of is a new one for me, a bit of googling is making me think Pied Flycatcher but again I am willing to be corrected.



Pied Flycatcher? - Coverdale 19.4.2013



Pied Flycatcher? - Coverdale 19.4.2013

All the above photos are crops from shots taken with the birds about 30 feet away up in the Sallow so not best quality but I am happy with them as record shots.

I only saw one butterfly today, a Comma that passed through the garden but as this was my first garden butterfly this year I was well chuffed 😊

Looks like a bit of sun is forecast for tomorrow, with a bit of luck I should be able to get out for a couple of hours in the afternoon.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-13 10:29 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 Willowchiffs are really tricky – I use time of year and their song to separate them usually and Willow Warbs often appear more yellow/green...I've been burnt IDing birds from photos before so I, loathe to commit myself – sorry 😞

The Pied Flycatcher is exactly that – and a female I reckon hence the more subtle tones rather than the showy stark black and white of the male, cracking shot again! 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Apr-13 10:21 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, still not heard any 'Chiffchaff' calls and they were in the garden again today 😊

Saturday April 20th – Its (nearly)all Peacocks and Commas again

The weather made good with its promised forecast today so I took a trundle around Solihull. Last year I had started noting promising looking public footpaths and decided today to check a couple out but first I stopped off at Castle Hills for a look.

It wasn't long before I spotted a Peacock basking in a sheltered corner, closely followed by a Comma that the Peacock soon chased off.



Peacock – Castle Hills Solihull 20.04.2013

Circling back to the car I saw another Peacock and Comma and my first Brimstone of the year.



Peacock – Castle Hills Solihull 20.04.2013

I watched the Brimstone as it carried on along the hedge line without stopping, I didn't bother following it as I did not expect it to settle with the sun shining like it was today.

Last year I had seen my first Orange Tips here on April 13th but there was no sign today. Given that things around here are usually a good week or two behind the southern parts of the country and it is a late season everywhere I wasn't really that hopeful, but you never know.

I next carried on round to one of the footpaths mentioned earlier. Walking a short way along I soon found a couple of Peacocks.



Peacock – Solihull 20.04.2013

A little further and crossing a field I soon found some more activity. Along one stretch of hedge there were 2 Peacocks and 3 Commas in a sequence of Comma, Peacock, Peacock, Comma, and Comma.



2 Peacocks and 3 Commas along here

These were all basking in the grass and taking off to intercept each other as they intruded into each other's airspace. Getting photos was difficult as they were all flighty and when they did settle it was with grass all around them.



Peacock – Solihull 20.04.2013



Comma - Solihull 20.04.2013

Heading back to the car I was passed by a Small Tortoiseshell that went up and over the hedgerow.

I then continued on to a couple more similar spots seeing a few more Peacocks and Commas, usually moving at high speed along hedges. At the last spot that I stopped at I walked a short way down a footpath alongside a hedge when I spotted another Peacock down in the grass. As it moved over it became apparent that there were in fact two butterflies, a courting couple in fact.



Peacocks - Solihull 20.04.2013



Peacocks - Solihull 20.04.2013

They then flew across to a clump of nettles before taking off together up and over the hedge.

I like the shot below because it shows the contrast between the colourful topside and the underside with its subtle dark shades.



Peacocks – Solihull 20.04.2013

I remember last year saying that it was all Peacocks and Commas for me whilst others were seeing plenty of Brimstones. It was nearly the same for me today but I did see my first Brimstone and a single Small Tortoiseshell to ward off the sense of deja vu.

Oh, and one more thing, I should have worn a hat. My head is glowing a bit this evening 😊

Bye for now.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 21-Apr-13 10:41 AM GMT

Sounds like you had a productive day, Neil.

Must admit, I don't think I've ever seen 'courting' Peacocks. I think I'd have hung around to see if they actually paired as I don't recall ever seeing an image of that before.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-13 06:06 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Neil the courting pair shot is great 📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 21-Apr-13 08:43 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

just seen your Warbler pics, you are right it is a Willow Warbler. You can always tell by the fact that the wings reach further down the tail than that of the Chiffchaff's wings, which normally stop at the rump.

By the way, some lovely photos.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-13 07:43 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Guys 😊

David, I did lurk around for a bit hoping to see if they actually paired but, after changing position a couple of times as mentioned above, they went over a hedge where I could not follow, the male still pursuing the female. To be honest she did not seem that interested, maybe already mated.

I was well chuffed with the courting shots Wurzel, my favourites of the day and it was only a last minute decision to pull up by the footpath where I saw them.

Hi Nick, thanks for the confirmation of the Willow Warblers, much appreciated 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

Probably the best day weather-wise so far this year and I was stuck in work 😞

I arrived back home about 4.00pm grabbed a coffee and went and sat out in the garden for a bit. Almost immediately a Small White flew past me and out the other side of the garden without stopping, my first non-hibernator this year 😊

That was my only butterfly today but looking around the garden there was plenty of other insect activity going on.

Plenty of Bees of various shapes and sizes were buzzing about, most of them too busy to stay still for photos.



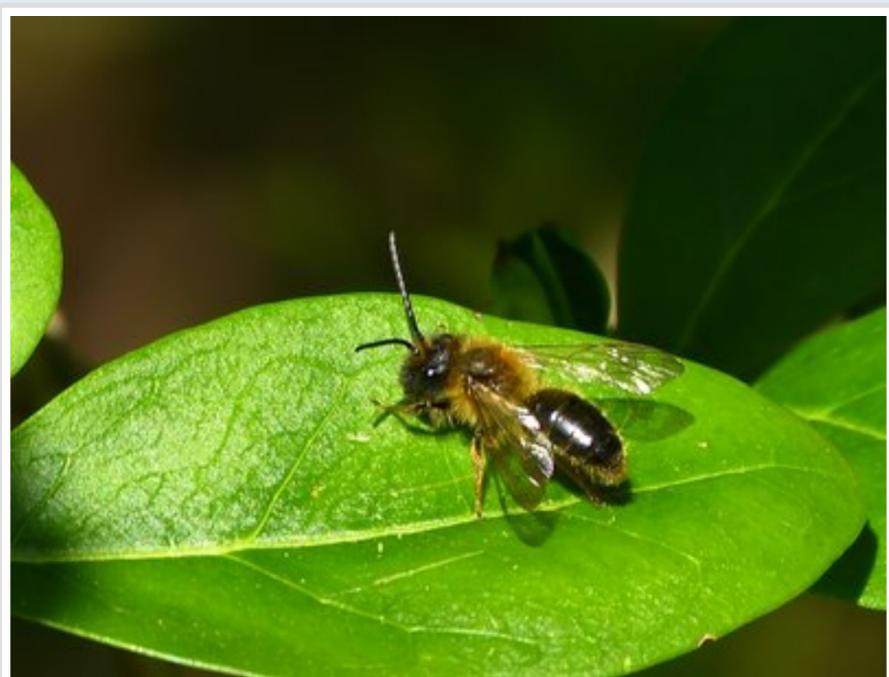
Bee - Coverdale 23.04.2013

Also a number of Bee Flies.



Bee Fly - Coverdale 23.04.2013

There was a little swarm of the critters below around a privet, I remember seeing loads of these last year and never did identify them. Looks like a small bee or wasp but maybe something else ?



Bee or Wasp? - Coverdale 23.04.2012

The sun has brought the cowslips in my lawn into flower, only about 10 days later than last year whereas some other stuff is nearly a month late.



Cowslips - Coverdale 23.04.2013

In previous years I have seen my first Speckled Wood in my garden around a week or so before I see my first Orange Tip. I am curious to see what happens this year, Orange Tips are being reported locally but no Specklies yet.

Colder conditions are being forecast for later in the week, lets see how it turns out, today was a lot better than last nights forecast indicated it would be.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 26-Apr-13 08:38 AM GMT

Happy birthday Neil.

Lets hope the entomological world brings you the presents you deserve ... 😊😊😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-13 09:38 PM GMT

Happy Birthday Neil 😊

Hopefully you'll get plenty of Lepidopteran presents!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

p.s. Your first bee looks like a Carder Bee and the Bee/wasp is probably a Andrena sp.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 26-Apr-13 09:42 PM GMT

Many happy returns, Neil.

Best of luck in the butterflying year ahead.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Apr-13 10:10 PM GMT

Many thanks for the birthday greetings chaps 😊

Thanks for the bee IDs Wurzel. I also posted the Bee/Wasp on twitter and got the response of Andrena sp. but no-one knew which one.

Thanks in large part to the timely post by Tuts in the news thread regarding the Pentax Papilios being reduced on Amazon I became the happy owner of a pair of these today 😊

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Pentax-8-5x21-C...lio+8.5x21>

Gave them a tryout this afternoon in the garden between the showers and am very impressed.

Whilst out in the garden my first Green-veined White of the year came fluttering slowly along the border, unfortunately not settling despite looking like it was going to a couple of times.

I also had a Comma that hung around for about ten minutes where I have some dandelions that have come out this week.



Comma - Coverdale 26.04.2013

It has been a typical April day today, cool breeze with some sun between the showers. The weekend looks like more of the same so hopefully I will get out for a look around, still after my first Orange Tip.

Interesting to see that a couple of people in the midlands have reported seeing female Orange Tips before seeing a male.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 26-Apr-13 10:32 PM GMT

Many happy returns of the day Neil, as a birthday present, i hope you get your first Orange-tip of the year this weekend, good luck.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Apr-13 10:43 PM GMT

Thanks Nick,

I will be out looking at some point, the weather looks mixed but I learnt last year to not let that put me off.

Cheers.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Hulme, 27-Apr-13 07:53 AM GMT

Belated "Happy Birthday" Neil. Hope you got a warm and sunny spring.
Best Wishes, Neil

Re: nfreem

by Mark Tutton, 27-Apr-13 08:55 AM GMT

Happy birthday Neil, mine was the 25th, and my Papilios arrived on the day too 😊 very impressed with them.

I think you would be hard pressed to better them for the money the close focus is superb and whilst I normally carry a full sized pair these are light and easy to carry 'just in case'.

Would be good to bump into each other again this year if the opportunity arises. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-13 11:35 AM GMT

Thanks for the birthday wishes Neil and Mark 😊

And a very belated Many Happy Returns to you Mark.

Saturday 27th April

Not a good day weatherwise, cold wind and thundery showers including a couple with hail. Nevertheless, I decided to continue my scouting of local footpaths and so, with my son Chris, we headed over to the Catherine-de-Barnes/Hampton-in-Arden side of Solihull for a wander about.

A couple of hours, including a bit of sheltering under trees during the heavier showers and we found some likely looking spots that will be worth returning to in better weather.



Public footpath – Solihull 27.04.2013



Public footpath – Solihull 27.04.2013

We did not see any butterflies, in fact apart from a couple of bees there was not much insect life about, not surprising really considering the wind and showers.

There were some birds about including some Pied Wagtails along a stretch of canal towpath. I see these regularly, including around my local Tesco carpark but I think this is the first time I have seen them when I actually had a camera with me.



Pied Wagtail – Solihull 27.04.2013

Other birds seen included Chaffinches, Chiff Chaffs and Various Tits including a couple performing acrobatics amongst some very attractive May blossom.



Chaffinch - Solihull 27.04.2013



Blue Tit - 27.04.2013

The forecast for midweek is looking promising, pity I will be at work.

I will be keeping a close eye on the garden when I get back on the afternoons, I have a feeling the Speckled Woods may be showing up later this week.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

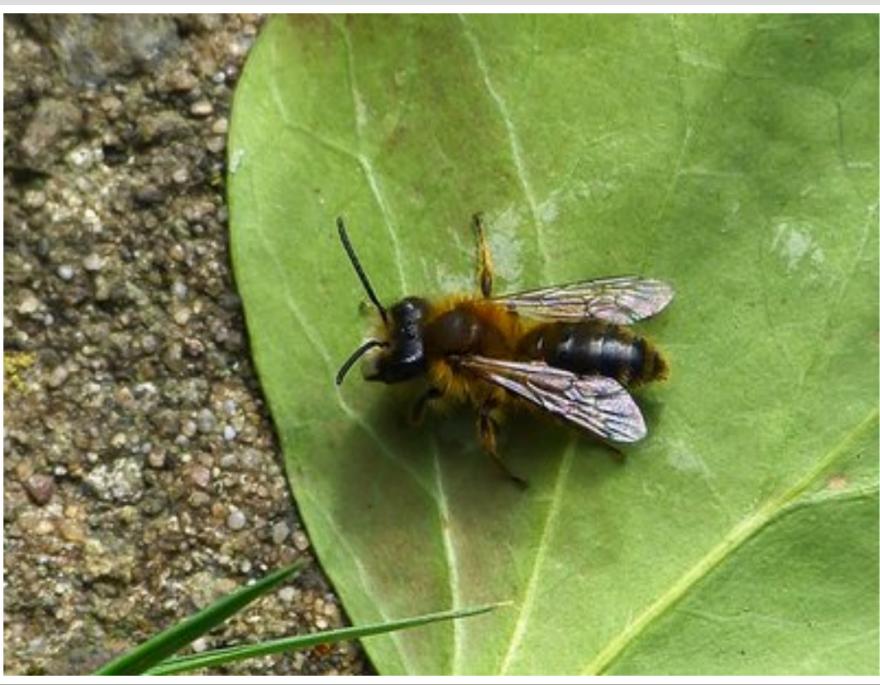
by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-13 09:21 PM GMT

Sunday 28th April

A similar day to yesterday but with a bit more sun in the morning, a little less wind and no rain or hail, just wall to wall grey clouds all afternoon.

The only butterfly seen all day was a White that flew through the garden around midday. It was too far away for a definite ID but going by its flight pattern I would hazard a guess at Small White. I find that Gv Whites have a more delicate 'fluttering' flight whereas Small Whites always seem to be 'going somewhere' with a more purposeful flight. Not sure if I have explained that well but I find there is usually a subtle difference between the flight of the two species.

Did a bit of pottering around in the garden this afternoon and noticed there were more bees about again today including my first Tawny Mining Bees in the garden this year. I could see up to half a dozen females at one time and a couple of what I think are males.



Tawny Mining Bee male (I think) - Coverdale 28.04.2013



Tawny Mining Bee female - Coverdale 28.04.2013

After watching the Country File weather forecast earlier I am feeling more confident that I may get a Speckled Wood in the garden later this week and who knows, maybe even an Orange Tip.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-13 10:38 PM GMT

Tawny mining bees are great aren't they? The females like like they've been Tangoed and the males have crazily big jaws 😊 Good luck with the Secklies and OT's this week 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Apr-13 07:25 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I agree on the Tawny Mining Bees, if the sun catches the females right they seem to glow 😊

Tuesday 30th April

The last day of April and my butterfly species count stands at 5, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Small and Green-veined white. No Speckled Wood, Orange Tip or Holly Blue yet 😞

I got home from work this afternoon and as the sun kept popping out went out into the garden for a look.

Almost immediately I spotted a Comma, the same one from a few days back, identifiable by a patch of wear on its forewing. As before he hung around for a few minutes before flying off over the neighbours.



Comma - Coverdale 30.04.2013

The temperature is set to rise a bit over the next few days and there is a hint of a bit of reasonable weather for the bank holiday weekend, trying not to get too excited as the forecast for more than a day ahead keeps changing but heres hoping.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-13 07:56 PM GMT

Well, it has been a frustrating couple of days stuck in work with hardly a glimpse of outside and not enough time to call in anywhere on my way home, I have however enjoyed reading other peoples diaries and sightings 🍷 😊 .

By the time I have got in and had a chance to chill out in the garden the sun has been getting low and it has been getting chilly. I have however seen a couple of things 😊

Wednesday 1st May.

I was hopeful for a butterfly or two in my garden to mark the first day of May but it had clouded over a bit when I got in and it was not to be 😊

Some Spiders can actually look attractive, even cute in the case of the little jumping spiders. Others however are definitely creepy looking. The one below reminds me of a mini Shelob from The Lord of the Rings and for me is in the creepy class.



Come into my parlour.....

I also saw this handsome looking bee. I have had a look online and think it may be a Tree Bumblebee but am not 100% sure.



Tree Bumblebee - Coverdale 01.05.2013

Thursday 2nd May

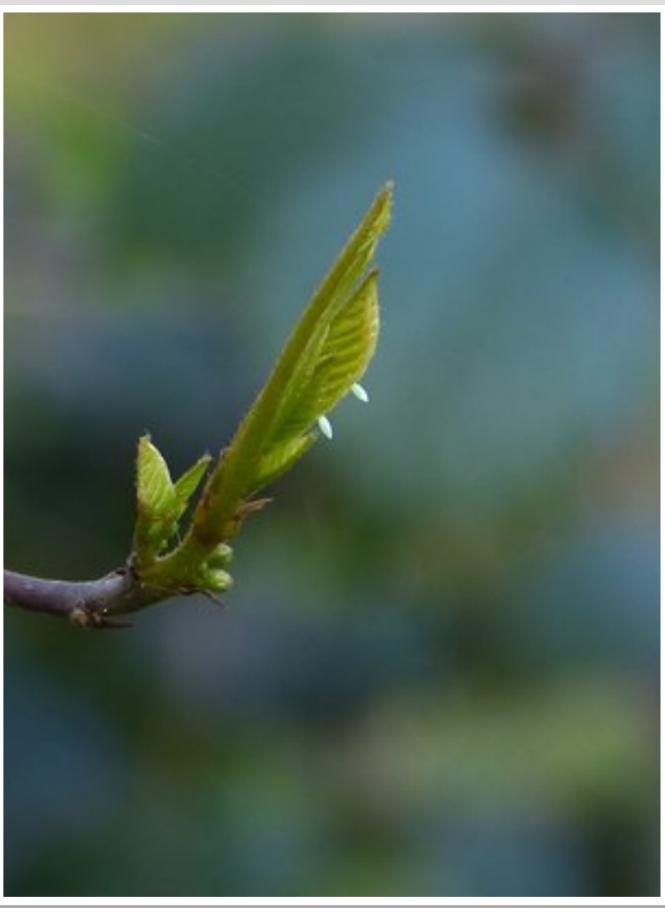
Fortunately I managed to get out of the office today on an errand to a supplier which helped me from going completely stir crazy. I took the scenic route back to work and saw a female Brimstone and my first Orange Tip of the year along the hedgerows 😊

Finally getting in from work this afternoon I was greeted by a couple of whites and my first Holly Blue in the garden 😊

In November 2011 I had planted 10 small Alder Buckthorn plants at the bottom of the garden, about half of which get full sun all morning, the others in the afternoon. Last year they did not get any visits from female Brimstones and I was wondering if the location was any good. Checking them today I was pleased to find some eggs 😊, 23 at a brief count across all the plants, some with 2 eggs to a leaf.



Brimstone ovum - Coverdale 02.05.2013



Brimstone ova - Coverdale 02.05.2013

Still no Speckled Wood in the garden yet, I have my fingers crossed for the weekend, weather looking good so far with a band of rain coming across Friday night/Saturday morning and clearing up behind it.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 02-May-13 08:03 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Super shots of the Brimstone eggs, especially the second image 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-13 08:07 PM GMT

Thanks Mark 😊

Just been looking at your diary, lovely Holly Blue photos.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-13 09:45 PM GMT

Saturday 4th May

The local weather forecast was bang on today with a cloudy morning and some hefty showers giving over to some decent sunny spells this afternoon 😊 I have been feeling pretty lousy the past few days, hayfever I think. It's bl**dy ironic, all winter I have been sound as a pound but as soon as the weather bucks up I am all aches and bunged up head. Even so I was determined to drag myself out to have a look around my local spots.

I first went round to Castle Hills by Solihull where I had photographed my first Orange Tips last year on April 13th. Walking along one of the footpaths across this site, it was not long before I saw a couple of Peacocks, pretty tatty looking they were as well. These were soon followed by a couple of Commas and then an Orange Tip heading towards me along the hedgerow.

This was then followed by a Green-veined White and in the following hour or so I saw a few more Orange Tips and GV Whites. As is the usual case with these they were patrolling almost ceaselessly along the hedges and settling only briefly.

The usual trick of watching one until a cloud came over, marking where it settled and the waiting for the cloud to move to get a photo did not work today due to not having a butterfly in sight at the right time.

Nevertheless, I managed some photos, not my best but fairly happy with them as record shots of the first OTs and GVWs I have photographed this year

😊 .



Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull 04.05.2013



Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull 04.05.2013



Green-veined White - Castle Hills Solihull 04.05.2013



Green-veined White – Castle Hills Solihull 04.05.2013

I then continued on to one of the footpaths I had checked out last week by Catherine-de-Barnes and saw another few Peacocks and Commas plus a couple of Holly Blues.

No Orange Tips or Whites at this site and another day without seeing a Speckled Wood 😞



Comma – Henwood Lane Solihull 04.05.2013



Peacock – Henwood Lane Solihull 04.05.2013

By this time my constant sniffing and sneezing was wearing me out so I headed home to rest up a bit, need to conserve some walking power for the Bank Holiday.

Bye for now,

Re: nfreem

by David M, 04-May-13 09:55 PM GMT

It's crazy how you haven't yet got Speckled Woods, Neil, particularly given that Orange Tips are now emerging.

I'm sure if you find a sheltered, woody path you'll see them, particularly this coming Monday, when conditions are forecast to be ideal.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-13 10:04 PM GMT

Hi David, I am hoping for some Specklies soon.

I have had them in my garden every year since I have lived in this house, some 18 years now. They are usually out by late March or early April, last year first one was March 25th.

Having said that we did have some snow lying on the garden unusually late this year, we have had colder winters and deeper snow in recent years but not had it lying so long and so late as it did this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-13 09:34 PM GMT

Sunday 5th May

A quiet day at home today. The weather was fairly good, warm with early cloud clearing through the day and some nice sun during this afternoon. If I wasn't still feeling so bunged up and lethargic I would have gone out somewhere but instead contented myself with watching what came through the garden.

This afternoon there was a steady procession of Whites passing through, mostly Green-veined but with a couple of Small and one Large mixed in plus a few Holly Blues. None of these stuck around long and the few that settled did so only briefly before carrying on their way.

I also had my first Orange Tips in the garden this year, one of which happened to settle on some Forget-me-not just as a small cloud covered the sun so I grabbed my camera and took a few photos. As usual, when the sun came out again he obligingly opened his wings for a few seconds before taking off again.



Orange Tip - Coverdale 05.05.2013



Orange Tip - Coverdale 05.05.2013

I am hoping to get out somewhere tomorrow, weather is looking good just need to decide where to go.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 05-May-13 09:40 PM GMT

Always looks particularly attractive when a male Orange Tip is shown feeding on a blue flower.

Well done, Neil. Hope you manage to shake off your woes and get out and about tomorrow.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-13 09:55 PM GMT

Thanks David, I am sure that I will manage to get out somewhere tomorrow, the forecast looks too good to miss 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 05-May-13 10:57 PM GMT

If staying in ill meant getting those shots then your suffering is more than worth it! 😊 Good luck tomorrow hope you get onto to something good!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-13 08:51 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, glad you think my suffering is worth it 😊😄

Monday 6th May

I had decided last night that no matter how I felt this morning I was going to go somewhere so I was happy to wake up feeling much less bunged up and achy 😊

My Son Chris was working today and not wanting to leave my wife Jane at home on her own on such a lovely day, I decided to do a bit of a circuit around some sites in South Warwickshire. Since having her stroke a couple of year backs, Jane still has limited use of her right arm and leg and can only walk short distances with a stick or frame. I therefore planned a route around some places that I knew she could manage, taking a couple of collapsible garden chairs so that we could sit down when need be.

First stop was Snitterfield Bushes near Stratford-upon-Avon. Arriving here mid-morning we had a walk through the woods seeing a number of whites, Brimstones, Orange Tips and Peacocks.

Later this month there should be a good display of Bluebells here but they are currently mostly in bud with just a few starting to open up. There were however some lovely expanses of Primroses under the trees, some of them mingling with Violets in a beautiful combination of colour.



Snitterfield Bushes - 06.05.2013



Primroses – Snitterfield Bushes 06.05.2013

Most of the butterflies seen were very mobile in the warm sun and I did not bother trying to get any photos, apart from the Peacocks, which would do the usual thing of take off, fly round a bit and come back to a favourite perch. Peacocks have certainly been about in good numbers all over the midlands this year so for that alone I am posting another picture of one 😊

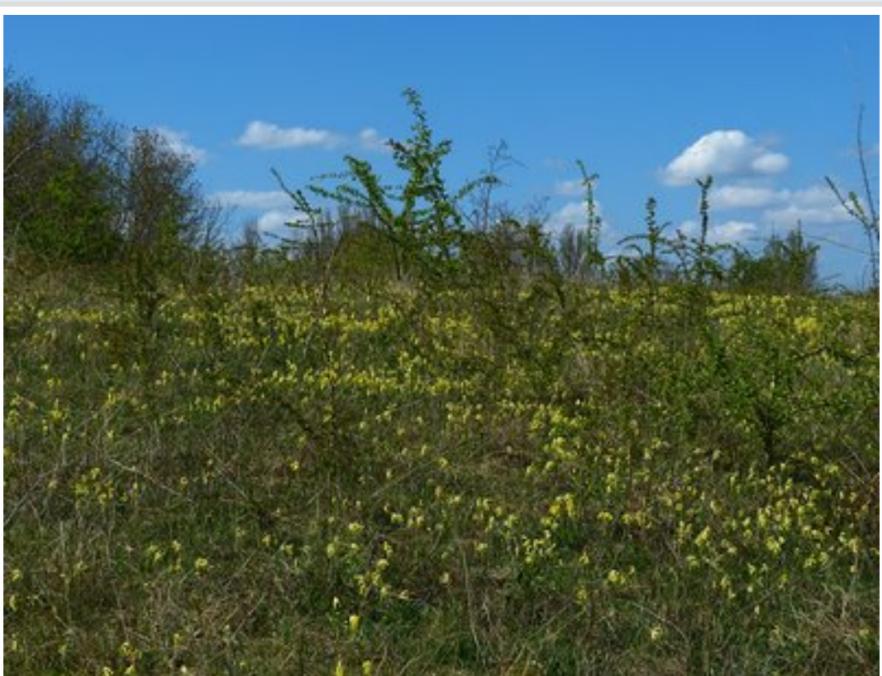


Peacock – Snitterfield Bushes 06.05.2013

I had seen that Grizzled Skippers had been reported from here over the past couple of days but despite careful checking of known spots we drew a blank so decided to carry on to the next stop.

Second stop was a short way down the M40 to Bishops Hill at Bishops Itchington.

Arriving here we walked into the site and met a couple who told us that they had been there a while and not seen any Grizzled or Dingy Skippers, just Peacocks Brimstones and Orange Tips. We carried on into the site and whilst Jane sat on a convenient bench reading her Kindle, I wandered up the hill. I did not find any Skippers but I did see my first Silver-Y Moth of the year and the hillside was covered with an impressive carpet of Cowslips 😊



Cowslips – Bishops Hill 06.05.2013

I wandered back down the hill and was only about 10 feet away from Jane when a little greyish blurr caught my eye. It was a Grizzled Skipper 😊, a male that stuck around and posed on various bits of vegetation for 10 minutes or so before I lost sight of him.



Grizzled Skipper – Bishops Hill 06.05.2013



Grizzled Skipper – Bishops Hill 06.05.2013

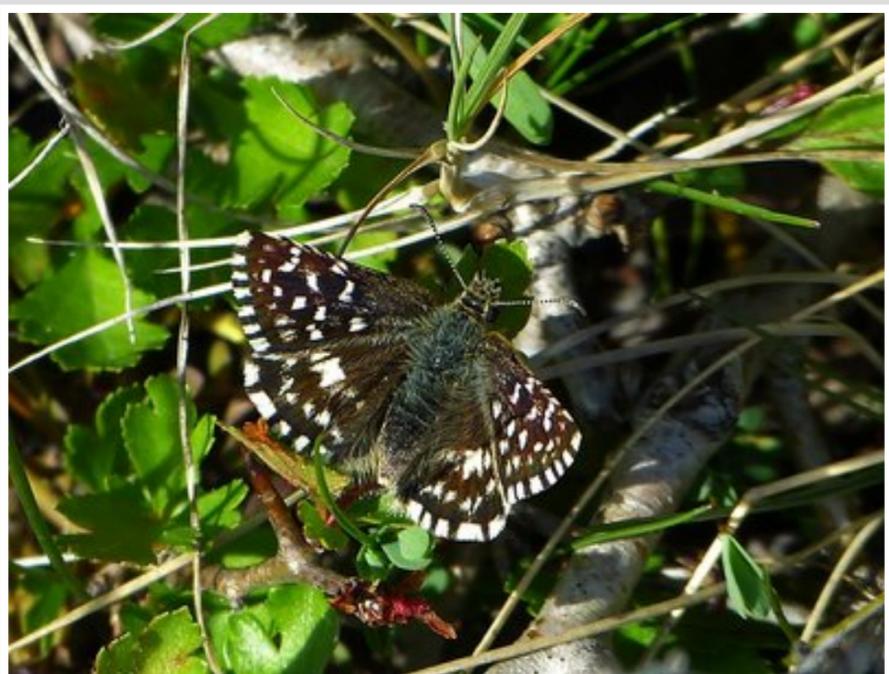
I also had an interesting conversation with a chap who was photographing some bees that have the fascinating habit of carrying off bits of grass and twig through the air. Apparently he is a member of Buglife and is in the process of writing a book on British Bees. He has given me his business card so will I check out his site, could be one of interest to Wurzel.

Edit; It was Red-tailed Mason Bees he was photographing. I have just checked out his flickr page, looks like there is a bit there to look through.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/>

After leaving here, instead of going back up the M40, I decided to go cross country towards Warwick. This would take me past Harbury, another site where Grizzled Skippers have just emerged.

Pulling over by the site at Harbury Jane decided to stay in the car reading her kindle while I had a quick look around the site. A quick circuit of 30 minutes or so came up with 2 Grizzled Skippers, one of them a female I believe by the shape of the abdomen and the fact that she was lurking around lower down in the vegetation.



Grizzled Skipper (female?) – Harbury 06.05.2013

By now it was getting on a bit and Jane was getting tired so we headed back home.

All in all a very enjoyable day with loads of Butterflies seen everywhere, mostly Whites, Brimstones and Orange Tips that wouldn't settle, Peacocks that would, a fair number of Holly Blues that didn't and my first Grizzled Skippers of the year 😊
It was also one of those days when the most enjoyment was from just looking and taking in the day, in fact I only took 30 odd photos all day. Heres hoping for a few more like this.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 06-May-13 09:17 PM GMT

So glad you had a productive day, Neil.

Beautiful days in early May are arguably the most precious of all, given their relative rarity combined with the extent of plant/animal life potentially on display.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-13 10:13 PM GMT

Thanks David, it was certainly a good day, one that felt like a proper Spring day at last 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 06-May-13 10:35 PM GMT

Cheers for the link Neil – I had a look and it was great, I think Chris C might also be interested as he seems to have a range of Arachnids on there. 😊

Glad to see you got your Grizzled Skippers 😊🐝

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by ChrisC, 07-May-13 06:41 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cheers for the link Neil – I had a look and it was great, I think Chris C might also be interested as he seems to have a range of Arachnids on there. 😊

Glad to see you got your Grizzled Skippers 😊🐝

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Mr Falk has been on my contact list for almost a year and the bee book isn't imminent so you have a while to save your pennies 😊 but if it's anything like his hoverfly book it'll be worth waiting for.

Chris

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-May-13 08:24 PM GMT

Tuesday 7th May – The Specklies are back and all is well in the garden

The Speckled Woods have finally shown up in the garden 😊

Returning from work this afternoon and going out into the back garden, the first thing that struck me was the amount of Orange Tips fluttering through, a couple or three at a time and on one occasion I could see four different males at once.



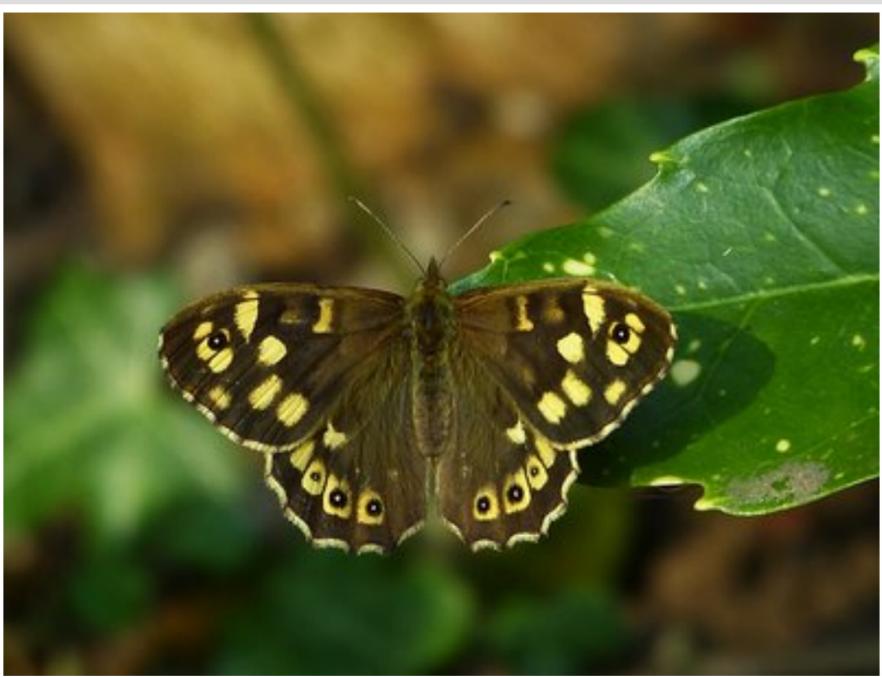
Orange Tip male - Coverdale 07.05.2013

I soon ignored these though as I spotted a brown shape flitting about, a male Speckled Wood that was trying to chase off anything that came near his spot. I grabbed the camera but he was far too full of energy to sit still and I only managed a couple of distant record shots.



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 07.05.2013

About 10 minutes later however I spotted what I at first thought was the same individual but this one settled for longer and a closer look proved it to be a female.



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 07.05.2013

That's two different Specklies within 10 minutes, just 37 days later than my first in the garden last year.

In fact I think I gave them a bit of a talking to like you do with your kids when they are 'at that age' and late home... 'Where do you think you have been 'til now then? I've been worried sick'hmm, that's probably sounding a bit strange 😊😄

Around 6.00pm it clouded over a bit and I spotted a female Orange Tip settle on a plum tree, looking like she was going to settle for the night. The sun popped back out however just enough for her to change her mind and go looking for another spot.



Orange Tip female - Coverdale 07.05.2013



Orange Tip female - Coverdale 07.05.2013

Well, I'm a happy chappy now the Speckled Woods are out at last, the garden just wasn't the same without them 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 07-May-13 10:36 PM GMT

Nice to see the boys are back in...er...your garden 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-13 07:12 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I like the song reference, I saw them (Thin Lizzy) a few times back in the day, an excellent band to see live.

Edit; for the memories http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxioAqOz_hk

Friday 10th May

A wet and windy morning gave over this afternoon to a better afternoon with some sunny spells occasionally breaking through the grey cloud cover. I had a few errands to run but managed to nip out into the garden a few times in between and catch some of the brighter spells.

Orange Tips certainly seem to be doing well after a late start and a number of times this afternoon I could see 3 or 4 males at once flitting about between mine and my neighbour's gardens.

The cooler weather made them a bit less flighty and they settled regularly which gave me some good photo opportunities.



Orange Tip - Coverdale 10.05.2013



Orange Tip - Coverdale 10.05.2013



Orange Tip - Coverdale 10.05.2013

There were also a fair number of whites passing through and I managed to photograph all three common whites this afternoon albeit the shot of the Large White is not that good. This is something that I only managed to do on the same day once last year.



Orange Tip & Green-veined White - Coverdale 10.05.2013



Green-veined White - Coverdale 10.05.2013



Small White - Coverdale 10.05.2013



Large White - Coverdale 10.05.2013

The Speckled Woods were out again this afternoon with 2 different males laying claim to each end of the garden.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 10.05.2013



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 10.05.2013

One of them is a little damaged and finding him a bit later settled on one of my bird feeders I am thinking he lives life dangerously.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 10.05.2013

At one point a male Orange Tip settled on top of a dandelion stem and stayed there whilst a big grey cloud came over. I took the opportunity to pick the stem and held it while my son Chris took some photos. We then swapped over so that I could take a couple of shots myself.



Orange Tip – Coverdale 10.05.2013

Afterward I couldn't resist placing him onto a cowslip growing in my lawn, just in time for the sun to pop back out again.



Orange Tip – Coverdale 10.05.2013

This is actually the first time that I have ever done this, I normally believe in taking photos of butterflies with minimal interference and personally feel

that once you start 'posing' your shots then the natural element is lost. I know that people have differing views on this and I cannot deny that I like the result, it is just something that I do not feel entirely comfortable with.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 10-May-13 07:57 PM GMT

Lovely photos Neil, especially the male Orange-tips, such a delightful butterfly. At lunchtime today i watched a female Orange-tip lay six eggs, in under five minutes, all on Garlic Mustard, wonderful.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 10-May-13 09:17 PM GMT

Your Orange Tip pics are great Neil – I am green with envy. If you had seen me chasing one today (unsuccessfully) you would have laughed.

Cheers

P.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 10-May-13 09:37 PM GMT

Lush photos Neil! 😊🍷 You're really making me miss my garden 🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by David M, 10-May-13 09:48 PM GMT

Great images, Neil.

Just goes to show that inclement conditions can sometimes be advantageous (particularly regarding photography).

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-13 10:38 PM GMT

Thanks all for the great comments, very much appreciated 😊

Nick, no eggs on my garlic mustard yet, I keep looking, maybe soon. Mind you I have Brimstone eggs on Alder Blackthorn to keep an eye on 😊

Pauline, I have given up chasing butterflies, they are far more agile than I am 😊 These days I try and anticipate where they may settle and lurk in wait 😊

Wurzel I feel for you with the garden, even though I didn't go anywhere today I still managed to get my butterfly 'fix' in short bursts.

David, you are quite right, I went out on Bank Holiday Monday in near perfect weather and although seeing loads of butterflies only took 30 odd photos. This afternoon I took 120+ in a few short spells in the garden.

The weekend is looking like a proper mixture of showers and sunny spells, thinking I may go out looking for some more Grizzled and maybe Dingy Skippers and possibly Green Hairstreaks.

Bye for now.

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 11-May-13 09:54 AM GMT

Just to add to everyone else's comments – superb images Neil!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-May-13 10:19 PM GMT

Thanks Pete, much appreciated 😊

Saturday 11th May

Well, the sunshine and showers forecast for today turned out to be showers of rain with some hail thrown in and a few short bits of sun, all against a backdrop of a blustery wind.

Even so I ventured forth on a bit of a circle around starting off by heading down the M40 for the 45 minute drive to Bishops Hill. Arriving there just as the heavens opened, I decided to carry straight on to Harbury, in which direction the clouds looked a lighter grey.

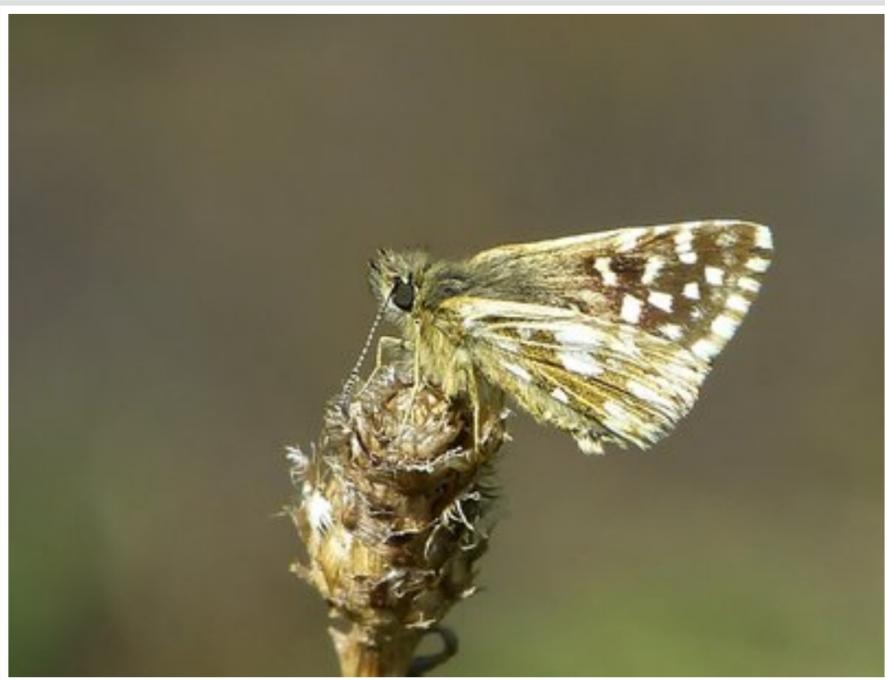
Pulling into the layby at Harbury 10 minutes later, the cloud had thinned a bit and the sun popped out and I immediately saw an Orange Tip as I got out of the car.

Within 10 minutes or so I had found what I was looking for, a Grizzled Skipper buzzing about in a sheltered corner.



Grizzled Skipper – Harbury 11.05.2013

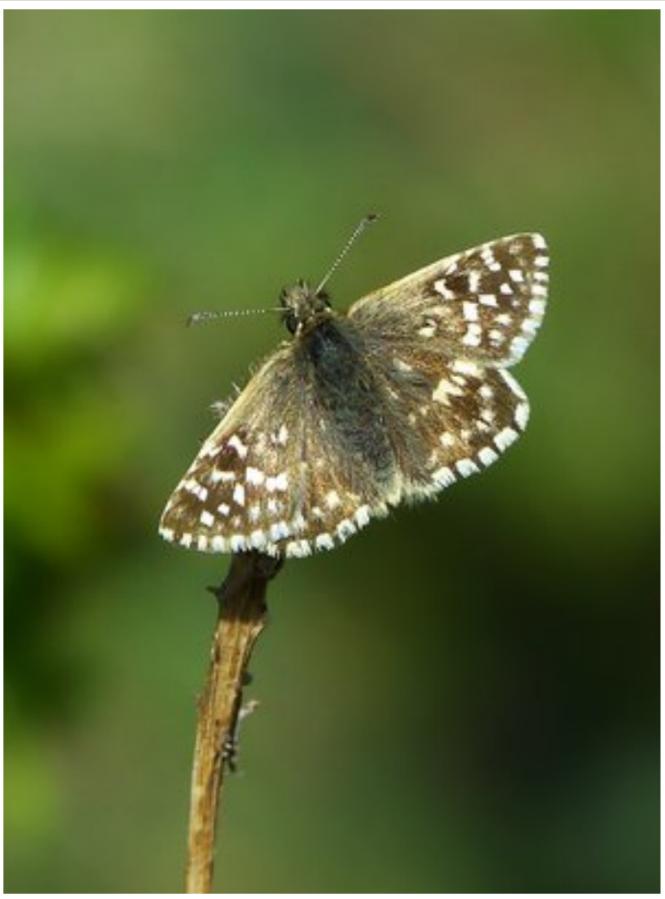
I watched this one individual for a few minutes until it landed on a seed head where it stayed for a while bobbing about in the breeze like it was on a spring. It stayed there for a good 15 minutes while the sun went in and out a few times and I took loads of photos trying to catch it during brief halts in the wind.



Grizzled Skipper – Harbury 11.05.2013



Grizzled Skipper – Harbury 11.05.2013



Grizzled Skipper – Harbury 11.05.2013

After about half an hour or so it clouded over again and started raining so I decided to carry on to Ryton but on arriving there the rain had set in properly and the sky showed no sign of any brightness heading over so I headed home.

No luck with any Dingy Skippers or Green Hairstreaks today, I believe that both species have been reported in Warwickshire over the past few days but I will wait for better weather before having another look.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 11-May-13 10:34 PM GMT

Lovely shots of Grizzlies Neil 😊, I think they're a great species! What was the temperature like when they were flying? I'm hoping to get out tomorrow at some point but it's forecast to just scrape into double figures?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-May-13 10:45 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

It was cool and blustery to be honest, no idea of the exact temperature, it seemed to jump a couple of degrees when the sun popped out albeit that

wasn't for long. I only saw the one Grizzly today and it wasn't keen on flying far, happily for me as it gave me a good photo opportunity, when it stopped bobbing in the wind for a bit that is 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-May-13 07:24 PM GMT

Monday 13th May

It has been decidedly nippy the past couple of days with rain most of yesterday afternoon and some hefty showers today, mind you I was stuck in the office all day today so I didn't see much of it anyway.

Nothing lifts the spirits however like getting in from work and finding a pair of Orange Tips settled in for the night on the Garlic Mustard in the garden 😊



Orange Tip male - Coverdale 13.05.2013



Orange Tip female - Coverdale 13.05.2013

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 14-May-13 09:43 AM GMT

Great shots Neil. Don't know how much more of this orange torment I can take - they seem to be everywhere apart from where I am 😞

Re: nfreem

"Pauline" wrote:

Great shots Neil. Don't know how much more of this orange torment I can take – they seem to be everywhere apart from where I am 😞

oh you're not alone Pauline. i'm orangeless too. but green with envy of flowering garlic mustard let alone the butterflies on them. 😞

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-May-13 10:25 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 I too don't mind the rotten weather – so long as it happens while I'm at work 😊 . I just hope the weekend will be alright but it's not looking good 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-13 09:35 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments all, much appreciated as always 😊

Pauline, I am jealous of your Duke of Burgundy and Green Hairstreak photos, I suppose the grass is always greener..... 😊

Chris, my garlic mustard is a good three weeks later flowering than last year and there is much less of it.

Wurzel, you and me both. The weather for the weekend looks a little warmer but still showery and not much sun. Lets wait and see, every update on the met office site and it changes.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

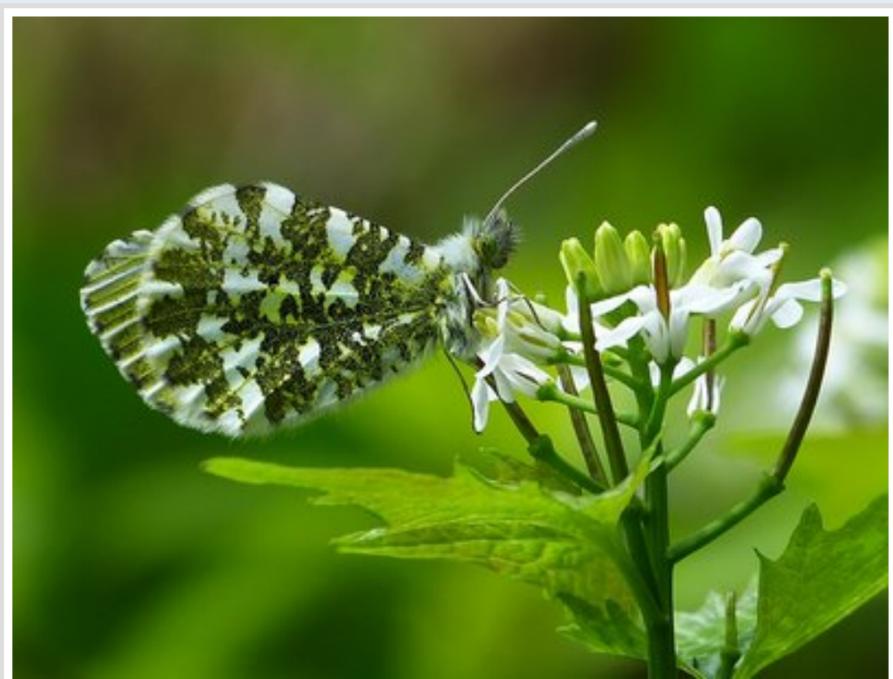
by Neil Freeman, 15-May-13 09:56 PM GMT

Wednesday 15th May

Mid-week and work and family 'stuff' has taken up all my time as usual. The weather has been pretty grotty but at least we missed out on the snow that they had a bit further north in Shropshire 😞 Its all leading to loads of comments on the local TV about the snow in June 1975 that famously stopped a cricket match in Derbyshire.

I checked the garden earlier to see if the two Orange Tips were still there from the other day. The male had moved on sometime in the past two days but the female was still there. It appears that females like it a bit warmer than males before they will move, hmm, seem a bit familiar that does 😊

I took a few more photos and went in for a bit. A little later the sun appeared for a while so I went back out to try and get an open wing shot but she had beaten me to it and carried on her way.



Orange Tip female – Coverdale 15.03.2013



Orange Tip female - Coverdale 15.03.2013

I have been trying different settings and working distances both with and without the close up lens fitted to my lumix. Most of my recent photos, including the two above, have been taken without the lens fitted and from further back from the subject. I am finding that I prefer the results this way with the FZ150, the zoom especially is smoother to use and seems better stabilized.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-May-13 08:24 PM GMT

Thursday 16th May.

For a couple of hours late this afternoon, from about 5.30pm, the clouds rolled back and it was glorious with the sun actually feeling warm on the back of my head as I took the opportunity to potter about a bit in the garden 😊

I was soon treated to a couple each of Green-veined and Small Whites that seemed to be still warming up and landed frequently.



Green-veined White - Coverdale 16.05.2013



Green-veined White - Coverdale 16.05.2013



Small White - Coverdale 16.05.2013



Small White - Coverdale 16.05.2013

As I was taking photos of the Small White above, a flash of Orange alerted me to a Comma that landed and basked for a while before nectaring on Forget-me-not.

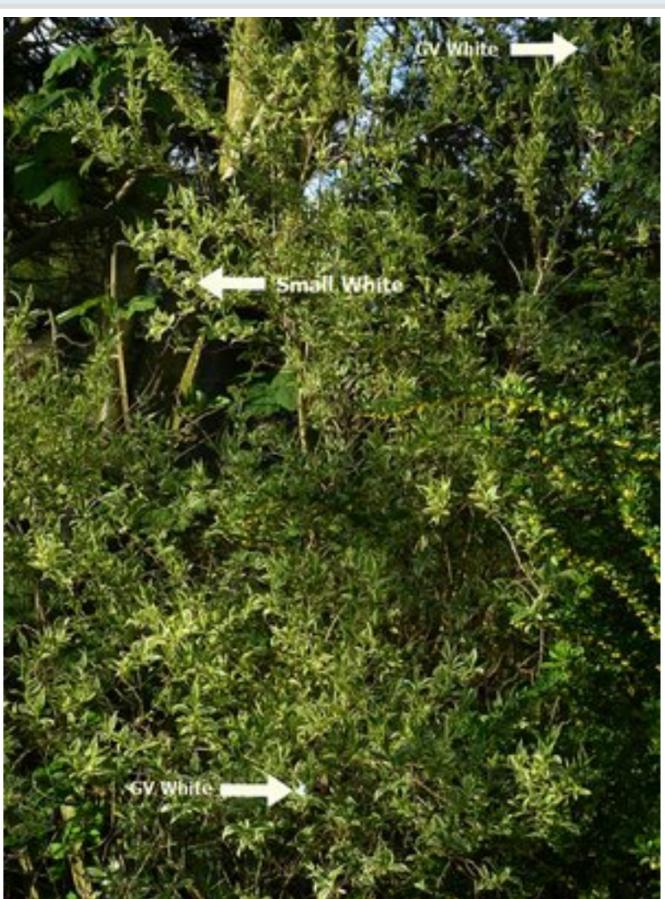


Comma - Coverdale 16.05.2013



Comma - Coverdale 16.05.2013

At around 7.00pm the sun was getting lower and the shadows were lengthening in the garden when I noticed a couple of whites fluttering about a variegated Weigela shrub. They both landed on this shrub and shortly after were joined by another. A close look showed them to be two GV Whites and a Small White that appeared to be settling in for the night. Checking a little later after the sun had gone down all three were still there tucked up for the night.



Whites settled on Weigela



Small White on Weigela



Green-veined White on Weigela



Second Green-veined White on Weigela

I have noticed before that whites seem to be attracted to this shrub and often settle on it but this is the first time that I have seen three on it together. In previous years it would have flowered by now but like most things in the garden it is a good three or four weeks late this year. Other butterflies seen were Speckled Wood, Holly Blue and Orange Tip. Although the HB and OT were both seen a number of times I believe that it was the same one or two individuals that kept coming around on their patrol routes.

All in all a cracking hour or so that helped to lift the spirits after another long day at work 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 16-May-13 09:13 PM GMT

Some lovely images of a much under-rated butterfly there, Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 16-May-13 10:28 PM GMT

Some lush photos Neil 🍷 😊, the yellow on the under wing is lush. I am coming round to the subtle beauty of the whites 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-13 10:09 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David and Wurzel 😊

I have mentioned before that Green-veined Whites are one of my favourites, there is just something about their delicate beauty.

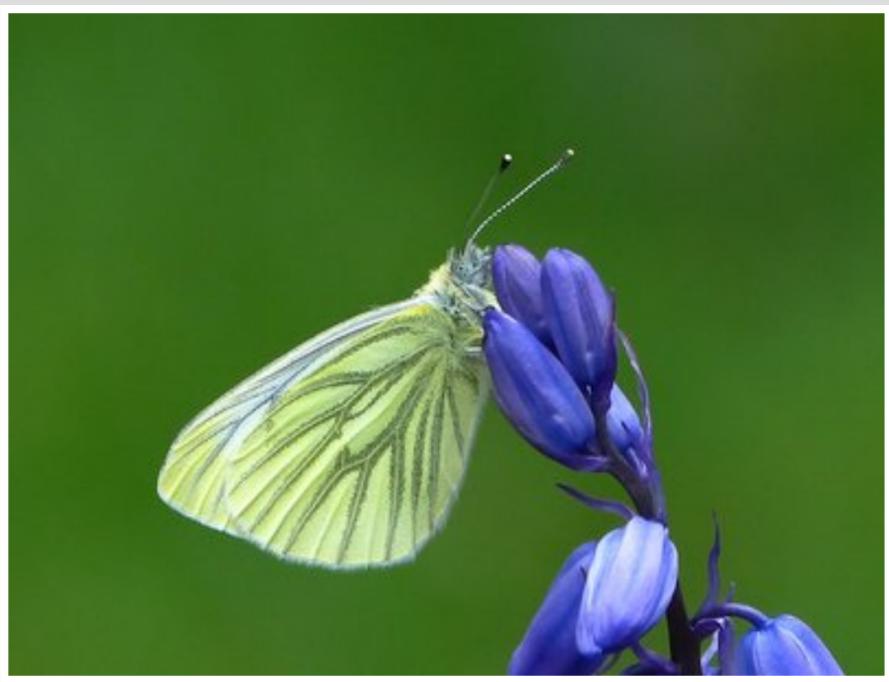
Friday 17th May

I finished work at noon today and as it had been a cool and cloudy morning I figured that the three whites would still be on the Weigela in my back garden. I went out to check and sure enough they were still there. Around 1.00 the sun made a few half hearted attempts to break through the cloud and this proved just enough to stir the whites into movement.

First to take off were the two Green-veined Whites, one of which fluttered feebly over to a patch of Spanish Bluebells and spent about 15 minutes settling on various ones which gave me a few good photo opportunities.



Green-veined White – Coverdale 17.05.2013



Green-veined White - Coverdale 17.05.2013



Green-veined White - Coverdale 17.05.2013

As well as the blue and white flowers there are some mauve ones in this patch and I was hoping that it would settle on one of these as well to give another attractive colour combination but alas it was not to be as he must have decided that he was warm enough and carried on down the garden and over next door.

By this time the Small White had also warmed up and departed.

For the next 30 minutes or so there were a few weak sunny spells during which a couple of Orange Tips passed through including a nice fresh looking female.



Orange Tip female - Coverdale 17.05.2013

There were also two Speckled Wood males doing their usual thing of intercepting each other whenever they strayed into each others airspace.



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 17.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 17.05.2013

The sun then gave up its feeble attempts and for the rest of the afternoon it was wall to wall grey clouds so I went out and did a few Friday afternoon errands.

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-May-13 10:19 PM GMT

Saturday 18th May

Yesterday (Saturday) was the Warwickshire BC open day at Ryton Wood Meadows. Due to some family 'stuff' I did not think I would be able to make it but in the end I managed to get over for a couple of hours in the afternoon.

The weather had been cool and cloudy all day and not much had been seen, some Brimstone and Orange Tip eggs and a single Peacock was the only butterfly 'action' along with a few moths seen before I arrived.

After having a chat and doing a bit of catching up I decided to walk through the woods and look at the Bluebells which had only just started coming into their best.





Ryton Wood - 18.05.2013

Sods Law being what it is, today (Sunday) turned out much better so I decided at the last minute to pop back over to Ryton this afternoon. Loads of photos to sort through from today both from the garden in the morning and Ryton in the afternoon.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-May-13 08:24 PM GMT

Sunday 19th May, Part 1 - Morning.

After the cool and cloudy day on Saturday as described in the previous post, Sunday morning was entirely different with clear blue sky and some proper warmth in the sun.

Making a coffee in the kitchen at about 10.00am I looked out of the window and saw a Holly Blue pass by. Taking my coffee to sit outside I soon saw a procession of butterflies including Orange Tips, Large, Small and Green-veined Whites and Speckled Woods.

Walking down the garden to the nettle patch at the end produced a female Comma flitting about amongst the nettles which gave me a total of seven species all before 11.00am 😊



Orange Tip female - 19.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - 19.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - 19.05.2013



Comma female - 19.05.2013

At one point the male and female Orange Tips below were on separate garlic mustard flower heads just a couple of feet apart.



Orange Tip female - 19.05.2013



Orange Tip male 19.05.2013

The male then spotted the female and flew over to her to try his charms which she rapidly rejected. I took a few quick photos and was pleased when I captured the shots below 😊



Orange Tips in action



Aww, come on then....



Gerroff, leave me....

With the morning getting warmer and the butterflies getting more flighty, I went back in to get on with my domestic duties before I suffered the same fate as the male Orange Tip 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 20-May-13 09:19 PM GMT

Great, clear images of a moving subject, Neil.

How were you able to capture photographs of such clarity?

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-May-13 10:51 PM GMT

Cracking behaviour sequence Neil 🍪 I hope that you earned enough brownie points in the garden to keep you out of the doghouse 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-May-13 09:17 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys 😊

David, the truth is I just pointed the camera and took a few shots, it all happened too quickly to think about what I was doing. Definitely more luck than judgement 😊

Wurzel, I have got a full stock of brownie points due to some recent running about on family stuff, in fact I used some on that very afternoon 😊

Sunday 19th May, Part 2 – Afternoon.

During the afternoon a few clouds bubbled up but it was still nice and warm so I made a last minute decision to go back over to Ryton. I arrived about 3.00pm and walked through the wood towards the meadows, seeing a number of 'whites' and Orange Tips and a couple each of Brimstones, Peacocks and Speckled Wood.

At one point I was watching a female Brimstone when she doubled back towards me and landed on a small buckthorn and promptly started laying 😊



Brimstone female – Ryton Wood 19.05.2013

One of my main reasons for coming back to Ryton was to look for Green Hairstreaks. A few had been seen here before the heavy rain and hail of last week and seeing the reports of good numbers appearing down south and further north I figured that ours were just waiting for a decent bit of weather to show themselves.

Walking through to the meadow I headed straight for the best spot and almost immediately spotted a couple flitting about above a hawthorn. Looking further along the hedge line there were a dozen or more in twos and threes mostly around the tops of hawthorns.

Whilst I was waiting to see if one would come down lower into photo range, I started to look at the seed heads just back from the hedge and was pleased to find a Dingy Skipper posing nicely, my first of the year 😊.



Dingy Skipper – Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013

This coincided with a large cloud coming over and the Dingy Skipper stayed where he was for some time, in fact looking again about an hour later he was still there.



Dingy Skipper – Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013

Getting back to the Hairstreaks, at around 4.30 the sun was out again and they started occasionally coming down a bit lower and presenting some photo opportunities.



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013

It wasn't until I was going through these photos earlier that I realised that there is a second hairstreak in the photo below, just shows how well they blend in with the leaves.....or how bad my eyes are getting 😊



Green Hairstreak(s) – Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013

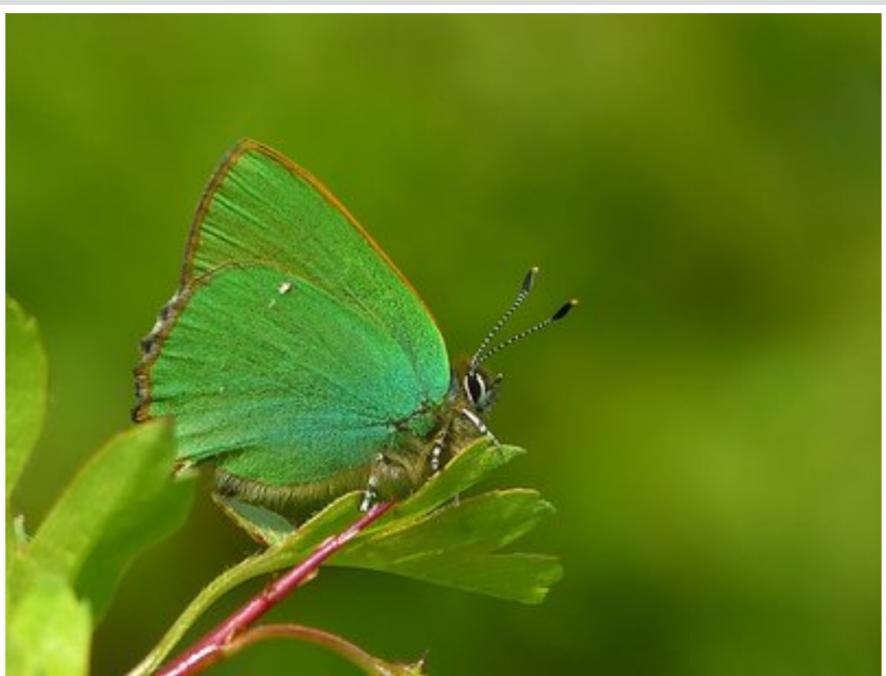
Over the next hour or so I took photos of a number of different individuals including a couple of what I believe are females that were flitting about by the cowslips and birds-foot-trefoil a little further back in the meadow.



Green Hairstreak - Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013



Green Hairstreak - Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013



Green Hairstreak - Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013



Green Hairstreak - Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013



Green Hairstreak - Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013



Green Hairstreak - Ryton Wood Meadows 19.05.2013

I was really glad I made the decision to go back to Ryton, it is just a shame that the weather was not so good the previous day for the Warks BC open day.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 21-May-13 09:59 PM GMT

Hi Neil – great photos!

I'm glad Ryton has a good crop of Hairstreaks again this year. My next chance of getting there will be on 8th June – they will probably still be around in this very late season.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 21-May-13 11:41 PM GMT

You had to go and do it didn't you Neil 😄😄 Cracking shots. 🍷 Perhaps I'll make the journey it could be the only way I get to photograph one this year.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 22-May-13 09:34 AM GMT

Ryton Woods seems a smashing place Neil and you have some great shots. I see you got your Dingy – certainly worth waiting for – but my favourites are your sequence of OT images showing behaviour so clearly. Wish I had taken them 🍷

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-13 06:54 PM GMT

Hee hee 😄, Sorry Wurzel. I did think of you when I was writing the post but couldn't remember if you had seen any this year yet.

Hi Pauline, I was well chuffed with those Orange Tip shots myself 😄

Hi Dave, Sunday was the first day that Green Hairstreaks had been seen in any numbers at Ryton so probably good for while yet. They usually appear here around same time as the Hawthorn(May) blossom is starting to flower, most of the blossom was still in bud on Sunday as shown in the photo below.



Green Hairstreak on Hawthorn – Ryton Meadows 19.05.2013

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 23-May-13 07:14 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

just caught up with your diary, you`re posting a lot of lovely photos. The Orange-tips, Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreaks are beautifully photographed, a joy to see, keep them coming.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-13 09:00 PM GMT

Hi Nick,

Thanks for the comments, very much appreciated 😊

Bye the way, I noticed some of the comments in your diary....I am another Lumix user an FZ150 in my case 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 23-May-13 10:13 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

i had a feeling you used a Lumix, but was `nt 100% sure, you are certainly another photographer on this forum thats a credit to the camera. Your 2nd Dingy Skipper with its softer, lighter colours, and the 5th photo of the Green Hairstreak are two of my favourites taken of these species this year.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

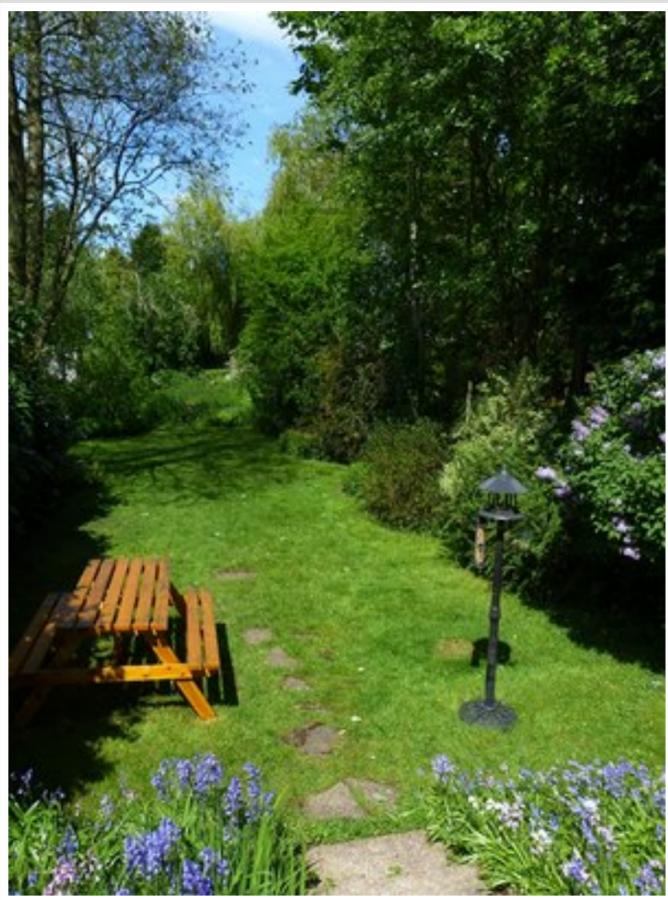
by Neil Freeman, 25-May-13 10:35 PM GMT

Saturday 25th May

A lovely sunny day here in the midlands, I rushed through the usual domestic stuff this morning, popping into the garden occasionally as the usual selection of 'whites' Orange Tips and Specklies fluttered about 😊

Some of the earlier Speckled Woods are getting a bit worse for wear now but there seems to be a steady emergence of fresh ones to replace them. This year the normal emergence of early SWs from pupae followed by the later one from overwintering larvae seems to have merged together more than usual due to the late start.

I am also seeing more variation in markings. Whereas the early spring emergence is usually noticeably brighter than the later ones this year there seems to be a mixture of brighter and darker individuals emerging together, again probably down to the late start.



Saturday morning in the garden



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 25.05.2013



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 25.05.2013

In the afternoon I had a couple of hours free so I decided to have a trundle around my local spots to see what was about. I did my usual circle around Solihull starting at Castle Hills, then stopping off at a couple of public footpaths, then ending up at Shadowbrook Meadows.

At all the spots the butterfly activity was similar, consisting of plenty of whites and Orange Tips plus a few Speckled Wood, Peacocks and Commas, the latter two species mostly looking a bit worn and faded by now.



Green-veined White - Castle Hills Solihull 25.05.2013



Small White ovipositing – Solihull 25.05.2013



Green-veined White – Shadowbrook Meadows Solihull 25.05.2013



Comma – Shadowbrook Meadows Solihull 25.05.2013

One Comma kept returning to a favourite perch on an old bulrush which made for an unusual setting for a photo.



Comma – Shadowbrook Meadows Solihull 25.05.2013

Last August I saw a good number of Peacocks at Shadowbrook and posted some photos of them at the time. It is a strange thought that I may well have seen the individual below at that time when freshly emerged, a good nine months ago.



Peacock – Shadowbrook Meadows 25.05.2013

As well as the butterflies, I saw my first day flying moths this year, singles of Mother Shipton and Cinnabar and a couple of Burnet Companions.



Cinnabar Moth – Solihull 25.05.2013

No rarities like Pearls or Dukes around here and too early still for Small Coppers or Common Blues but it was a good couple of hours noteworthy for the numbers of the usual suspects that were about, indeed Orange Tips especially seem to be doing well around here 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 25-May-13 10:41 PM GMT

Amazing that you're still seeing Commas, Neil. I haven't seen one myself for over a fortnight and don't expect to do so until late July.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-May-13 10:53 PM GMT

I saw two or three Commas and at least one Peacock at every place I stopped this afternoon, also had a Comma in the garden this morning as well but that was a tatty looking individual.

It still feels like early days around here David albeit a nice sunny one today, meadow plants are still very short, hawthorn just starting to flower and leaves on Oak trees just starting to unfurl.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-May-13 10:21 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil, that Comma is a beauty 😊🍷 The Cinnibar ain't too shabby either 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

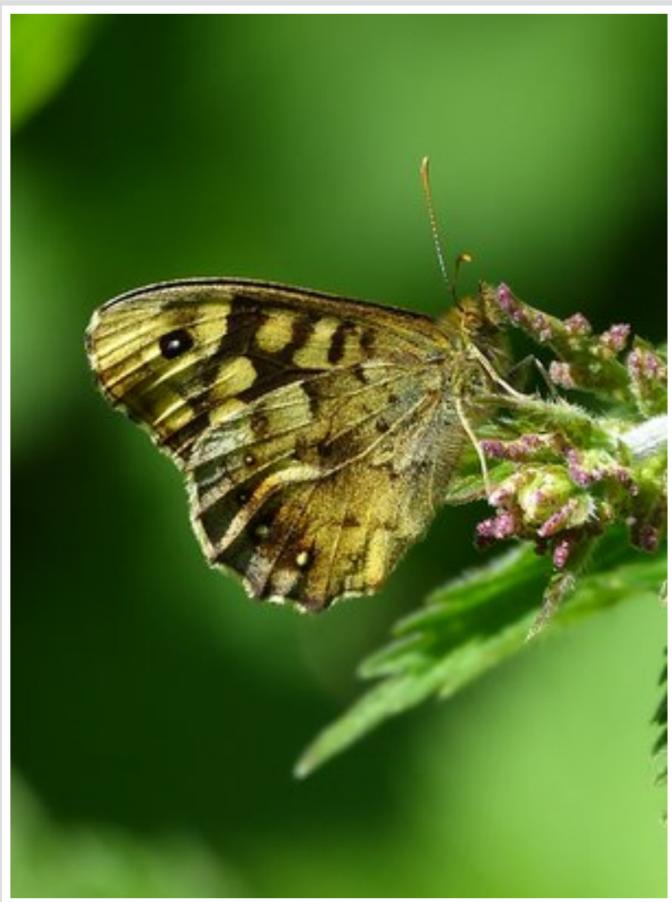
by Neil Freeman, 26-May-13 11:18 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊

Sunday 26th May, Part 1 - Morning

Another day of two halves with me being on domestic duties this morning which started with clear blue skies and as soon as the sun hit the back garden around 09.30am I noticed a couple of Speckled Woods circling about each other above the lawn.

Around mid-morning I went down the garden with my camera to see what photos I could take and noticed a male Specklie posing on a nettle.



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 26.05.2013

As soon as I had taken the photo he launched himself at another Speckled Wood that had flown over the nettles but instead of going into the normal 'dogfight' he just seemed to knock it out of the air and they both fell into the nettles.

Intrigued by what I had just seen I carefully looked under the nettles to find that the other SW had been a female and the pair were now in cop. With all my watching of the Speckled Woods in my garden this is something that I had never seen with this species before. With a few careful contortions and using the articulated screen on my FZ150 I managed to get a few photos.



Speckled Wood pair in cop – Coverdale 26.05.2013



Speckled Wood pair in cop – Coverdale 26.05.2013

Just before going back in a Green-veined White stopped to nectar on the Garlic Mustard and I couldn't resist taking a couple of shots.



Green-veined White – Coverdale 26.05.2013



Green-veined White - Coverdale 26.05.2013

For the rest of the morning the sun continued to shine and it was a repeat of the previous day with a steady procession of whites and Orange Tips passing through. There was also a single Holly Blue. I have noticed that so far this year there are noticeably fewer Holly Blues passing through the garden than last year, I have only seen 3 or 4 so far whereas last year I would see that many in a day.

Due to the hours and shifts that he has been working my son Chris has not been able to get out butterflying so far this year. He finally had a day off today which fell with good weather and so we decided that in the afternoon we would go down to Bishops Hill to look for Small Blues and then over to Ryton to see Green Hairstreaks which would be a first for Chris.

We saw 25+ Small Blues at Bishops Hill and a dozen or so Green Hairstreaks at Ryton plus half a dozen or so Dingy Skippers and a single Grizzled skipper at both places. Next post to follow once I have sorted through the loads of photos taken.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-13 09:23 PM GMT

Sunday 26th May, Part 2 - Afternoon.

With family stuff over the bank holiday and jobs to catch up with around the house, it has taken me until this evening(Tuesday) to get around to finishing off Sundays report.

As mentioned in the last post, with the weather staying good for Sunday afternoon my son Chris and myself decided to take a run down the M40 to Bishops Hill for Small Blues and then loop round to Ryton for Green Hairstreaks which would be a first for Chris.

Arriving at Bishops Hill at about 2.00pm it was very warm with full sun and within a few feet of walking into the site we saw our first Small Blues, about half a dozen fluttering about in one corner. We took a few photos and then carried on looking, spending about an hour and a half here during which time we saw 25+ Small Blues plus half a dozen or so Dingy Skipper and a single Grizzled Skipper as well as 'whites' and a couple each of Brimstone, Orange Tip and Peacock.

In the heat of the afternoon the Small Blues were very active but they don't fly far and did settle regularly, albeit briefly, and it was a case of getting a quick shot before they took off again.



Small Blues - Bishops Hill 26.05.2013



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 26.05.2013



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 26.05.2013



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 26.05.2013



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 26.05.2013



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 26.05.2013



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 26.05.2013



Small Blue – Bishops Hill 26.05.2013

Whilst taking photos of the Small Blues a flash of brighter blue alerted me to my first Common Blue this year 😊



Common Blue – Bishops Hill 26.05.2013

The male Dingy Skippers that we saw were beginning to look a bit worn and 'Dingy' (what else 😊) but there were a couple of fresh looking females that did insist on settling down amongst the vegetation instead of perching up high like the males.



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 26.05.2013

Around 3.30pm we decided to head over to Ryton which is about 20 minutes or so drive from Bishops Hill.

As usual I parked in the Warks Wildlife Trust car park off the A423 and we walked through the wood to the meadows.



Chris walking through Ryton Wood

I wasn't long before we found the first Green Hairstreaks in the same place that I had seen them the weekend before.



Green Hairstreak - RWM 26.05.2013



Green Hairstreak - RWM 26.05.2013



Green Hairstreak - RWM 26.05.2013

Also seen at Ryton were another half dozen or so Dingy Skippers and another single Grizzled Skipper. This seems to be the common ratio of Dingys to Grizzled so far this year with the Grizzled emerging first but in low numbers.

Well, despite me saying the other day that it still felt like early days around here, Sunday felt like things were actually getting going. I also said it was too early for Common Blues and Small Coppers and not only did I see my first Common Blue but a couple of Small Coppers were seen at Ryton, just not by us and in another part of the meadows.

I am off work this week and am taking advantage of the grotty weather to catch up on some jobs around the house, would be tempted to go out otherwise 😊 Hopefully I can get finished for later in the week when the weather is showing signs of improving.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 28-May-13 09:26 PM GMT

Simply love that first shot with the Small Blue mid-air..

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-13 10:11 PM GMT

Thanks David 😊

It was my very first shot of the afternoon, just a few minutes after arriving. I was just lining up on the Small Blue to the left when the other one came into shot so I shifted aim and click....my favourite shot of the day 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 28-May-13 10:41 PM GMT

Great Greenstreak pics as well,love the sequence from last week.

Cheers. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 29-May-13 04:02 PM GMT

You're taking some really lovely photos Neil and even tho they show the butterfly with its environment the composition doesn't suffer and there is no background distractions. In fact I am enjoying your photos so much I have been looking back thru them again and your Greenstreaks of 19th are really lovely. What surprises me most is the variation in colour from very plain individuals to butterflies with a very distinctive white 'streak' and also very dark edges. That definitely looks like a very special place to visit. Have you stopped using your close-up lens?

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 29-May-13 08:21 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, I love your shots of the Green Hair Streaks, infact all your photo's are superb 🍷 I'm put to shame 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 29-May-13 09:52 PM GMT

I agree with David that first Small Blue shot is an absolute belter 😊🍷 Glad to see that Chris found some Greenstreaks 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-May-13 08:56 AM GMT

Thank you all so much for you comments 😊

Pauline, I am not using my close up lens much lately, If I remember rightly the only photos posted here recently taken with it were the second Dingy image Skipper from the 19th May and an Orange Tip underside from a couple of weeks back. I was finding the close up lens a bit too limiting in the style of photo that I was taking and personally looking for more variation in my photos.

That is not to say that I won't use the close up lens, I usually carry it with me and will use it if I feel the circumstances will give me a better photo with it. It is very good for giving me a certain type of photo e.g. the butterfly isolated against a blurred pastel shaded background, it is just that I do not want all my photos to look like that.

Having said that, I am finding that the FZ150 that I now use is better without the close up lens than my old FZ38 was, not really sure why, probably a combination of small improvements such as a smoother and more usable zoom.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by NickMorgan, 30-May-13 09:16 AM GMT

Lovely pictures of beautiful butterflies. I think I am going to have to move down south!! I wonder if the family will mind! 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 31-May-13 09:22 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Nick, I am in the midlands and reading the diaries of those down south proper e.g. Sussex, Hampshire etc. I sometimes feel I am too far north 😊

Friday 31st May.

A Very Sad Week.

After three days of almost continuous rain, today the sun came back out.

The weather this week however had become irrelevant to me because, following a number of years of ill health, my father passed away during Tuesday night. I don't want to go into details but he had heart problems for over twenty years and had an attack a couple of weeks ago and a further one on Tuesday night in hospital.

As is the case in these situations, the past few days have been rather hectic with contacting family and various arrangements to make.

During this time, after some rather stressful days, looking at various threads on these forums has been one of the things that has helped me retain a bit of normality so I would like to express my thanks to everyone who posts on here, whether in personal diaries, sightings or wherever.

Thankfully the sun came back out today and I managed to spend a few short spells in the garden, something else that helped me deal with things. At times like this it often the simple things that help the most.

Whilst out there I observed a female Peacock egg laying on my nettles.



Peacock laying eggs - Coverdale 31.05.2013



Peacock laying eggs - Coverdale 31.05.2013



Peacock eggs on nettle - Coverdale 31.05.2013

Later in the afternoon I managed to take my first Holly Blue photos this year.



Holly Blue - Coverdale 31.05.2013



Holly Blue - Coverdale 31.05.2013

Watching some Speckled Woods also brought back memories of my Dad and the fact that he always called them 'Speckledy Woods'



A 'Speckledy Wood'

The weather looks good for tomorrow so I think that a day out will do me a bit of good after the past few days.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 31-May-13 09:54 PM GMT

Neil, I sympathise with you totally. So sorry to hear of your bad news and be assured that every moment spent at peace in the natural world will help to ease your grief.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 31-May-13 09:58 PM GMT

I am so sorry to hear your sad news Neil. Hope you can take some comfort from time spent in the outdoors at one with nature.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 31-May-13 10:13 PM GMT

My thoughts are with you Neil.

Wishing you much peace and happiness at this difficult time.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Susie, 31-May-13 10:15 PM GMT

I am so sorry for your loss but in time I hope that the memories of your Father bring you comfort.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 31-May-13 10:22 PM GMT

Thank you all so much for your kind words.

As I mentioned above, it is sometimes the simple things, like looking through the excellent postings on here, including those of all of yours, that can help at times like this.

Many thanks,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Willrow, 31-May-13 10:26 PM GMT

Deepest sympathy Neil, words are never really enough to express what we feel in grief. Just hope you find some small comfort with your 'butterflying' interests.

Kindest Regards,

Bill

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 31-May-13 11:24 PM GMT

So sorry to hear of your loss, my thoughts are with you and your family.

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 01-Jun-13 01:01 AM GMT

I am really sorry to hear of your loss Neil, i`m sure all your memories are fond ones.

All the very best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jun-13 07:50 PM GMT

Thank you again for all your kind words and thoughts, they really mean a lot.

I did manage to get out today, spent the day in the Wyre Forest, it was just what I needed.

I have over 400 photos to sort through, mostly of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. I was a bit click happy, I think I managed a few good ones amongst that lot



Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Padfield, 01-Jun-13 08:25 PM GMT

May I add my sincerest sympathy for your loss, Neil. My thoughts are with you.

Guy

Re: nfreem

by dave brown, 01-Jun-13 09:01 PM GMT

Neil,

Its at sad times like this when we realise how much we miss our loved ones when they are no longer around, giving love and valuable words of wisdom. I hope that this great hobby of ours allows you gently to come to terms with your loss.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jun-13 11:37 PM GMT

Saturday 1st June - The Wyre Forest.

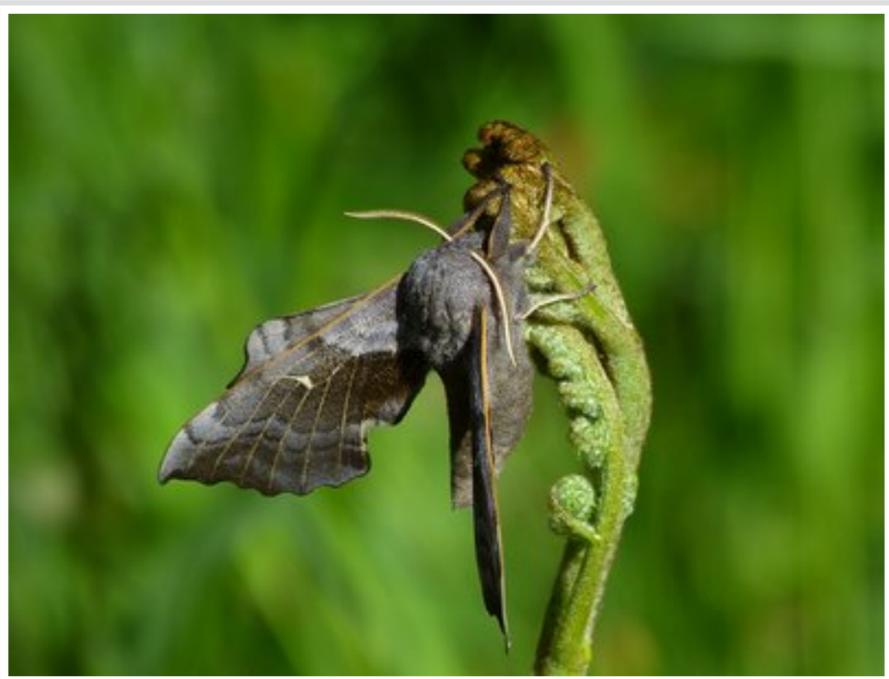
I had promised myself a day out today and after weighing up a couple of options decided to spend it in the Wyre Forest. This is an extensive woodland containing grassland and meadows and at over 500 hectares in area is far too large to cover it all in just one day. This large area also means however that although it is a popular area for visitors it is also very easy to get away from the crowds.

Having been a few times before I headed for the Forestry Commission car park at the end of Dry Mill Lane as I wanted to follow the path along Dowles Brook to look for Peal-bordered Fritillaries in the meadows along there and also in an area along the old railway line which is a good spot for PBFs.

In previous years I had timed my visits here to see fresh Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries which meant that although the PBFs were still flying they were at the end of their flight period and mostly getting a bit tatty. Ironically although my visit today was at roughly the same time, the later season this year meant that the PBFs had not been out so long.

I had aimed to arrive about 10.00am but I forgot what day of the week it was and hit Saturday morning traffic going through Kidderminster and so didn't get there until nearer 10.30.

Parking up, I started off walking down the old railway line and had only gone a few hundred yards when I saw a couple of chaps looking at something in the vegetation to the side of the path. Going over they showed me a nice Poplar Hawk Moth, possibly just emerged the previous night. That made a good start to the day.



Poplar Hawk Moth - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

Carrying on to the area previously mentioned I soon saw a few PBFs but they were already warmed up and very mobile in the warm sun. I took a few record shots when they briefly landed and carried on with my wanderings.

Further along I took the path down to Coopers Mill and had a look in a meadow there where I saw a few more PBFs.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

I then followed a path up the other side of the hill which I had not been up before and came to an area where the scrub had been cleared back a bit from the path. Along a stretch of a hundred yards or so I saw at least a dozen PBFs. Some cloud had built up by now and I found that the best way to get photos was similar to Orange Tips in that if you could keep one in sight when a cloud covered the sun it would soon settle. Unlike Orange Tips the PBFs would keep their wings open giving you chance to get some shots before the sun came back out and the butterfly would immediately take off again.



Wyre Forest – 01.06.2013



PBFs along this stretch.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

I also saw the female below flitting about lower down in the bracken laying eggs.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary female laying - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

There were a number of Green Tiger Beetle along this stretch that seemed to spend as much time flying as on the ground.

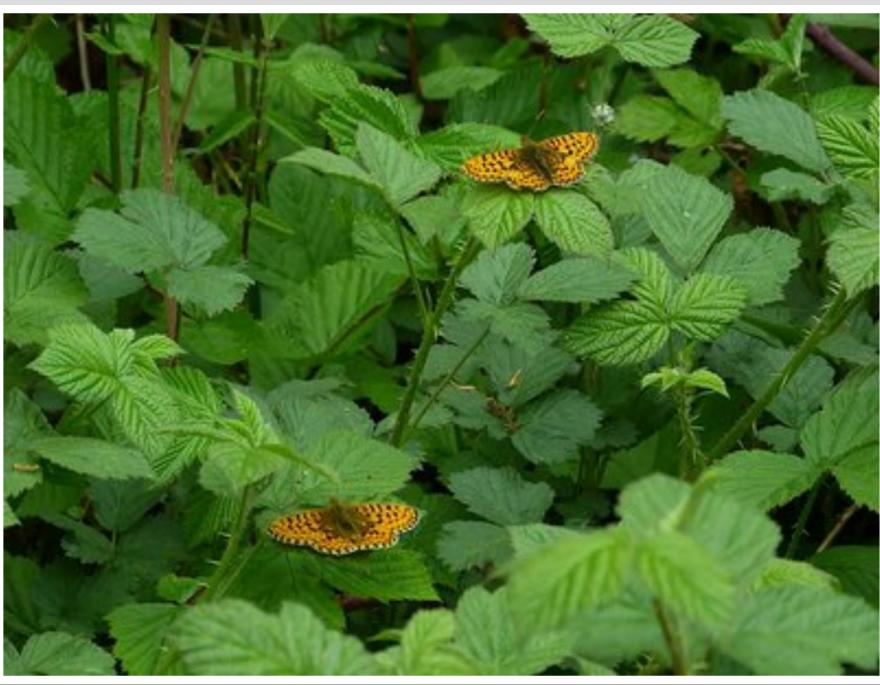


Green Tiger Beetle - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

After spending a little time here I went back down the hill and checked another meadow by Coopers Mill finding some more PBFs and a rather worn Brimstone.



Brimstone - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillaries – Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

I then carried on along Dowles Brook and crossed over by Knowles Mill and followed the path up the slope back to the old railway line.



Dowles Brook – Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

I made my way back to the area where I first started and noticed that there were more PBFs about here than earlier, possibly a dozen or more. By this time it was about 50/50 sun and cloud which gave me chance to get some more photos.



Area for PBFs by old railway line.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, there are 3 in this shot.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillaries - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

As well as the PBFs seen during my wandering about, I also saw 2 Brimstones, 1 Orange Tip, 3 Peacocks(all rather tatty) and 4 Speckled Wood.

There were also a number of Common Heath Moths and lots of Speckled Yellow Moths about, the latter especially being more flighty than the Pearls and harder to approach.



Speckled Yellow Moth - Wyre Forest 01.06.2013

It was a great day that recharged my batteries somewhat 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Vince Massimo, 02-Jun-13 12:31 AM GMT

Another great report and exceptional images Neil 😊 .I'm pleased you had a good day after my PM.

I noticed that the female Pearl-bordered Fritillary has some unusual markings, in that one of the larger dark spots on the front edge of each forewing is quite pale and open.



Compare this with one of your standard males.



Not sure whether it qualifies as an aberration, but it would nonetheless make an interesting addition to the Species-Specific Album. Could you do the honours please.

Many thanks,

Vince

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 02-Jun-13 12:54 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

I`m really pleased you had a great day out. When you step out into the countryside, it is as if mother nature waves her magic wand and, everything is bliss,.....works for me every time. 😊 Lovely photos,.....but i think you might need a new camera, you seemed to have worn yours out 😊

All the best, nick.

Re: nfreem

by Colin Knight, 02-Jun-13 08:28 AM GMT

Neil, so sorry to hear of your loss. Parents are so important to us, fortunately we have our memories to keep them close. The beauty of the natural world and the sharing of it with others is a blessing in difficult times.

Colin

Re: nfreem

by Neil Hulme, 02-Jun-13 09:11 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Just caught up with your sad news. I'm very much in agreement with Colin. Every 'Speckledy Wood' you see from now on will carry a happy memory with

it. Best of wishes to you at a difficult time.
Neil

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 02-Jun-13 11:13 AM GMT

My condolences also Neil.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 02-Jun-13 02:38 PM GMT

Sorry to hear about your loss Neill, I was only 21 when my father died, but time heal's and memories last for ever. Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jun-13 09:39 PM GMT

Once again my heartfelt thanks for all the kind messages.

It just goes to show what a fantastic community there is on this forum to receive so many kind words from people who, for the most part, I have never met in person.

"hideandseek" wrote:

Hi Neil,

.....but i think you might need a new camera, you seemed to have worn yours out 😊

All the best, nick.

Hi Nick, I think the good old Lumix is good for a bit longer yet 😊

My knees however might not be, they suffered a bit on Saturday. The terrain in the Wyre does undulate a bit.



Wyre Forest - 01.06.2013

Vince, I have added the female Pearl to the standard imago folder, my feeling is that she falls within natural variation.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-13 09:35 PM GMT

Monday 3rd June - The next generation in the garden

Arriving home from work this afternoon I did my usual of grabbing a coffee and going to sit in the back garden to chill out for a bit.

There are still a few Orange Tips passing through along with a some Whites and a couple of Holly Blues although the latter have definitely not been as numerous around here as last year.

Checking the Alder Buckthorn where I had found Brimstone eggs a while back I was pleased to find some caterpillars, half a dozen without looking too hard.



Brimstone larva - Coverdale 03.06.2013



Brimstone larva - Coverdale 03.06.2013

Looking further along on the Garlic Mustard I found a couple of newly hatched Orange Tip caterpillars. It is amazing that even though it did not feel like there was any wind in this sheltered part of the garden, as soon as I tried to take some photos the plant stems started bobbing about in a bit of breeze.



Orange Tip larva - Coverdale 03.06.2013

With the Peacock eggs that I watched the female lay the other day this gives me plenty to keep an eye on over the coming weeks to watch them develop.



Peacock egg batch - Coverdale 03.06.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 03-Jun-13 09:55 PM GMT

Excellent work Neil. I rescued a Orange-tip`s egg from the local council`s mower, it is now a third instar larva. I hope you post more photos of all your caterpillars as they progress. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 03-Jun-13 09:57 PM GMT

Great observation, Neil. Hopefully you'll keep us updated with developments regarding these larvae?

Re: nfreem

by NickMorgan, 03-Jun-13 10:29 PM GMT

I am sorry to hear about your Dad Neil. It is always good to have a hobby to immerse yourself into at times like this and chasing butterflies can be very therapeutic.

Lovely pictures as ever. I particularly love that picture of a Brimstone on a Bluebell. A butterfly I still haven't manage to see!!

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jun-13 09:00 PM GMT

Thanks Nick(Morgan), I quite liked that photo myself 😊

Nick, David, I will hopefully update the developments, predators, parasites and weather permitting.

Tuesday 4th June – Prestbury Hill Part 1.

After the events of last week, I went into work yesterday and sorted out some days off, both this week and next, in order to make necessary arrangements and also to give myself some time to unwind a bit.

One of those days was today and with the weather being as good as it is I made a bit of a last minute decision to drive down to the Gloucestershire BC reserve at Prestbury Hill by Cheltenham. My main aim was to see Duke of Burgundy but the reserve is also good for Small Blue, Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak. In fact I had heard that in common with other sites that Small Blue were out in good numbers there this year.

Arriving at around 10.30am, I parked at the top of the Bill Smylie reserve and headed down the Hill to the sheltered lower slopes. Even though the weather was good there was still a stiff breeze at the top of the reserve.



Looking down Prestbury Hill with the Malvern Hills in the distance



Lower slopes of Bill Smylie reserve

Having been here a few times before, I headed straight to one of the spots where I had seen Dukes before and sure enough there was one waiting for me 😊



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013

Over the next couple of hours or so I bimbled about from the little 'valley' at the southern end of the reserve through to the lower slopes of the 'Masts' reserve, seeing well over a dozen different Dukes and a couple of Duchesses.



'Happy Valley' a couple of Dukes and a Duchess seen along here.



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Duchess - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Duchess - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



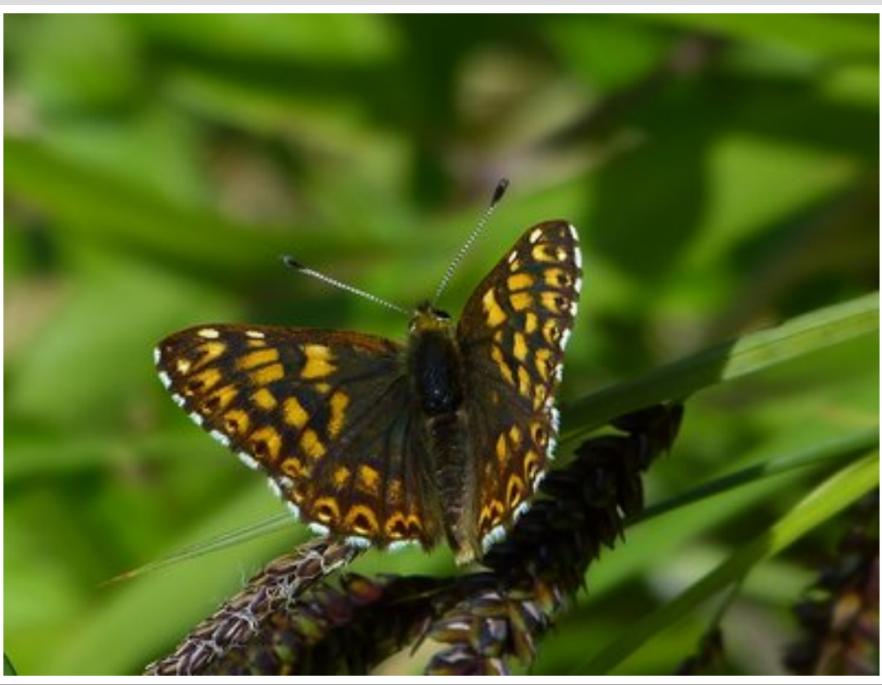
Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



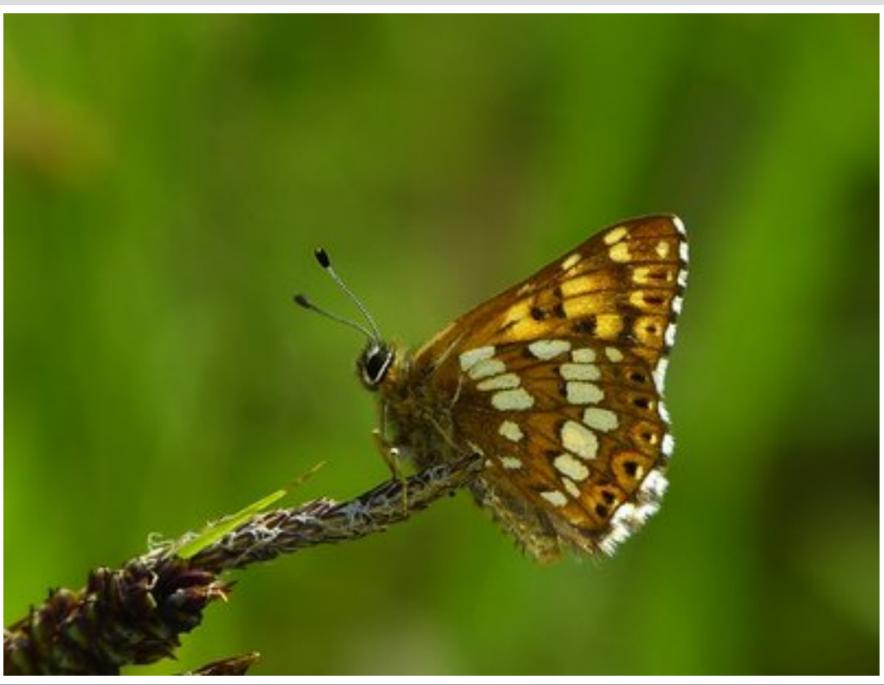
Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Duke of Burgundy - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013

As well as the Dukes there were dozens, if not hundreds of Small Heaths, loads of Small Blues and Dingy Skippers and I saw 3 Green Hairstreaks. These will be in the next post once I have sorted through the rest of my photos.

Bye For now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 04-Jun-13 09:59 PM GMT

That is quite a cathartic experience, Neil.

You invested your time well.

Lovely shots and I'm sure the lift you got today was beyond what words can do justice to.

The cycle of life goes on and you're one of the lucky ones who can appreciate its beauty and resonance.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jun-13 10:12 PM GMT

Thank you for the comments David,

It is a shame I missed you at Rodborough, it would have been great to meet you 😊 . As you can see, I got settled at Prestbury and ran out of time to go any further.

Looking forward to seeing your photos from Rodborough and Swellshill.

All the best.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-13 11:00 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the Dukes Neil, some lovely marked individuals 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Mark Tutton, 04-Jun-13 11:41 PM GMT

Hi Neil

I have just caught up with your news too please accept my condolences. We spent a great day at Fermyn last year and I thoroughly enjoyed our company – my dad also died a couple of years ago in purple emperor season and I took great comfort by disappearing into the woods before his funeral and I had the most magical experience which I wrote about on the purple empire site see ' a special moment' <http://apaturairis.blogspot.co.uk/search?updated-min=2010-01-01T00:00:00-08:00&updated-max=2011-01-01T00:00:00-08:00&max-results=50> who knows why it meant but I know what it meant to me.

Perhaps we will catch up at Fermyn again this year?

Kind regards mark 😊

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 05-Jun-13 09:28 PM GMT

You've got some lovely Duke photos there Neil – think I'm going to have to get myself back to Noar Hill to see how they're doing.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-13 09:41 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, much appreciated as always 😊

Hi Mark, I read your blog. I know exactly what you mean with your comments.

It would be good to meet up again at Fermyn, not sure yet if I will be going this year, it all depends on when His Imperial Majesty decides to show up. I will be looking out for sightings in a few weeks time.

Thanks Pauline, I didn't think that I would be seeing Dukes this year, it was a last minute decision to drive down to Prestbury, which made it all the more special.

Tuesday 4th June – Prestbury Hill Part 2.

As mentioned previously I arrived at the top of the reserve at about 10.30 and started to head down the Hill. I had barely gone ten feet when I saw the first Small Blue, closely followed by another and in fact there were a fair few near the top of the reserve which surprised me a bit as on my previous visits here I had always seen them in the more sheltered areas at the bottom of the slope. Moving further down it soon became apparent that there were good numbers pretty well distributed all over the slopes. It seems that Small Blues are having a good year going by the posts by some other members. I didn't count them but there were certainly more at Prestbury than I have seen on my visits over the past couple of years.



Small Blue – Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Small Blue – Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Small Blue - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013

Slightly further down the slope I spotted a Small Heath, my first of the year, closely followed by a second, then another, then another.....They were everywhere, dozens if not hundreds of them, again all over the slopes. Sometimes I would be watching one fly over the grass and it would get intercepted by others until there were up to half a dozen gamboling along until they split up and went their separate ways. As usual with this species they always seemed to settle in the most unphotogenic positions and I spent ages trying to get a half decent shot of one.



Small Heath - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Small Heath - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013

There were also good numbers of Dingy Skippers, the males often getting involved with the 'furballs' of Small Heaths or indeed anything else that flew past. Some of these were looking well faded and indeed living up to their name but there were also a good number of fresher looking examples.



Dingy Skipper – Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Dingy Skipper – Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013

Around midday things were warming up and the butterflies were getting more flighty so I sat down for a while to eat my sandwiches in a bit of a hollow by the gate that leads through to the Masts reserve. In the few feet around me I could see Small Blues, Small Heaths, Dingy Skippers and a male Duke of Burgundy all competing for their bit of space 😊

To make the moment complete I also spotted a couple of Green Hairstreaks scrapping around a small Hawthorn right in front of me. One of them would return to a perch on the Hawthorn and the other would retire to one or another of the nearby shrubs before taking off for the next round 😊



Small Hawthorn disputed by two Green Hairstreaks



Green Hairstreak - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Green Hairstreak - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Green Hairstreak - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013

Other Butterflies seen were a number of Whites, a couple at least of which were 'Large', a couple of Speckled Woods and a couple of fresh male Common Blues.

I watched one Common Blue try to settle a couple of times and repeatedly get chased off by a rather feisty male Small Blue. He eventually touched down briefly before the Small Blue saw him off for good and he disappeared rapidly across the slope.

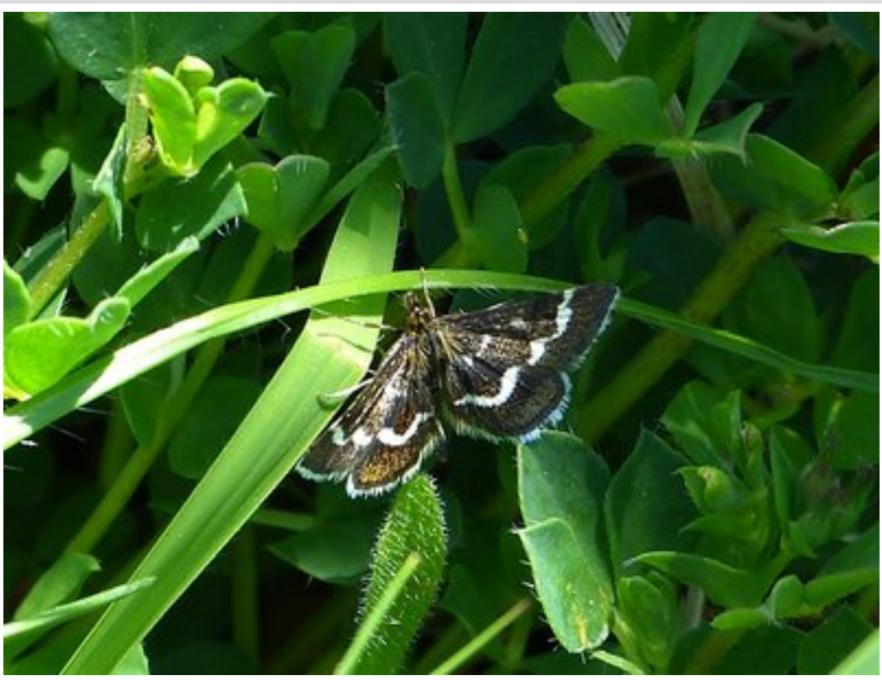


Common Blue having a brief rest.

As well as the butterflies, there were numerous Burnet Companion Moths and Latticed and Common Heaths. I also saw a few Forester Moths and a couple of what I think are *Pyrausta nigrata*



Forester - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013



Pyrausta nigrata - Prestbury Hill 04.06.2013

A cracking few hours at one of my favourite places. On a day like this with butterflies all around and glorious views over Cheltenham and towards the Malvern Hills it can be the perfect place to be 😊

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by legless2007, 05-Jun-13 09:57 PM GMT

Brilliant! great photos and your sightings reflect my experience this week. Good to see the Common Blues, we saw 1 female 10 days ago, I didn't see any on Sunday

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-13 10:08 PM GMT

Hi Jo,

It was your reply to me on twitter the other day that helped my decision to drive down. I was originally thinking of going later this week but at the last minute decided to go yesterday morning. Glad I did 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-13 11:49 PM GMT

Saturday 8th June - A return trip to the Wyre Forest.

Since our trip out a couple of weeks ago my son Chris had been working shifts again and not had a chance to get out until this weekend. As he had yet to see Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and he had never been to the Wyre Forest we decided to take a run over there today.

By the time we arrived at around 10.30am the early cloud was thinning and the rest of the day was quite warm and sunny with just enough cloud to slow things down occasionally to take some photos.

We followed the same basic route that I had followed last week, starting along the old railway line and then following Dowles Brook to Coopers Mill looking in the meadows along the way. It was soon apparent that last weeks good weather had brought out even more Pearl-bordered Fritillaries as there were many more about than last week. I would think that numbers have peaked at the Wyre this week with some of the individuals looking well worn but with quite a few good condition examples mixed in.



Chris stalking PBFs in meadow by Coopers Mill.

I did not think that I would be taking that many photos considering the amount that I took last week but I was wrong 😊

Amongst the earlier examples that I photographed was the one below with a white patch on its hindwing.

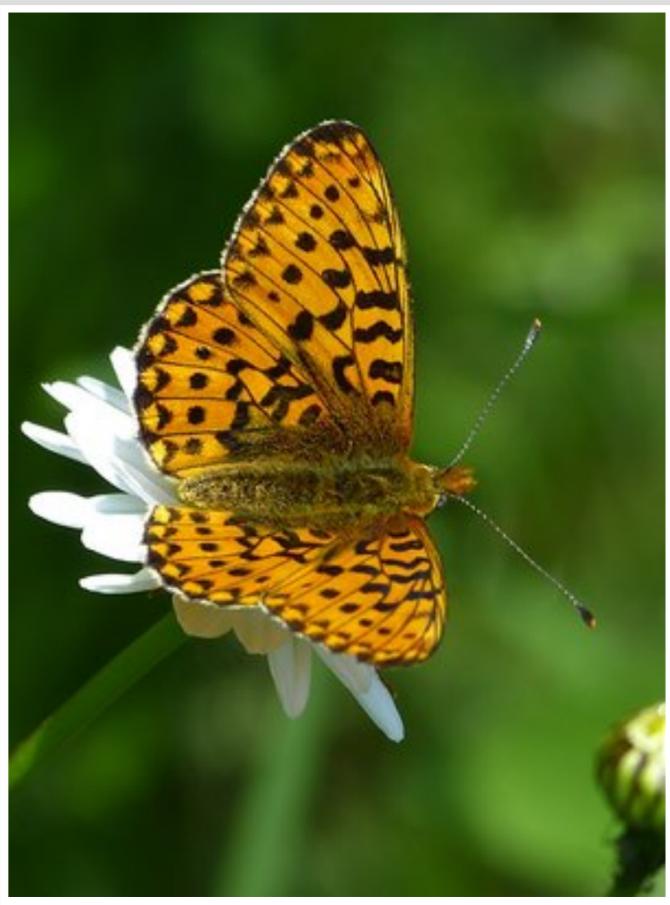


Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013

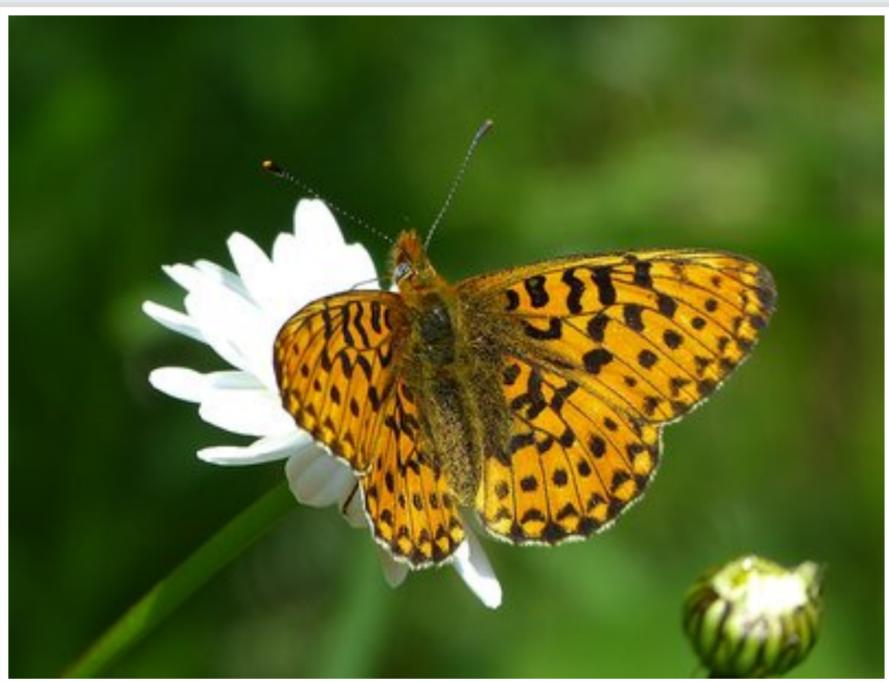
Although fairly mobile in the sun, the PBFs were stopping regularly to nectar from various flowers, an activity that was not always without risk.



The end of a Pearl - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



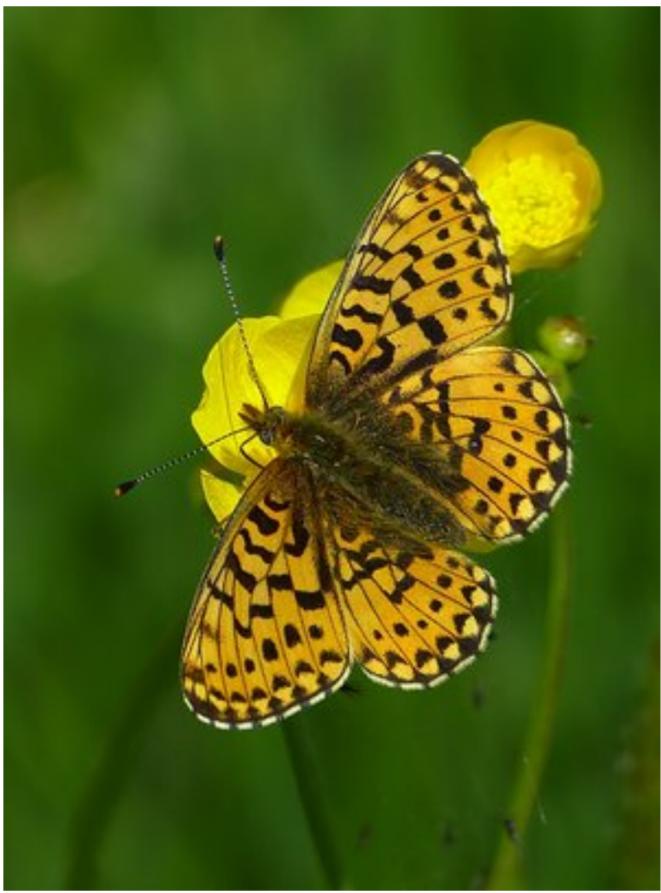
Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



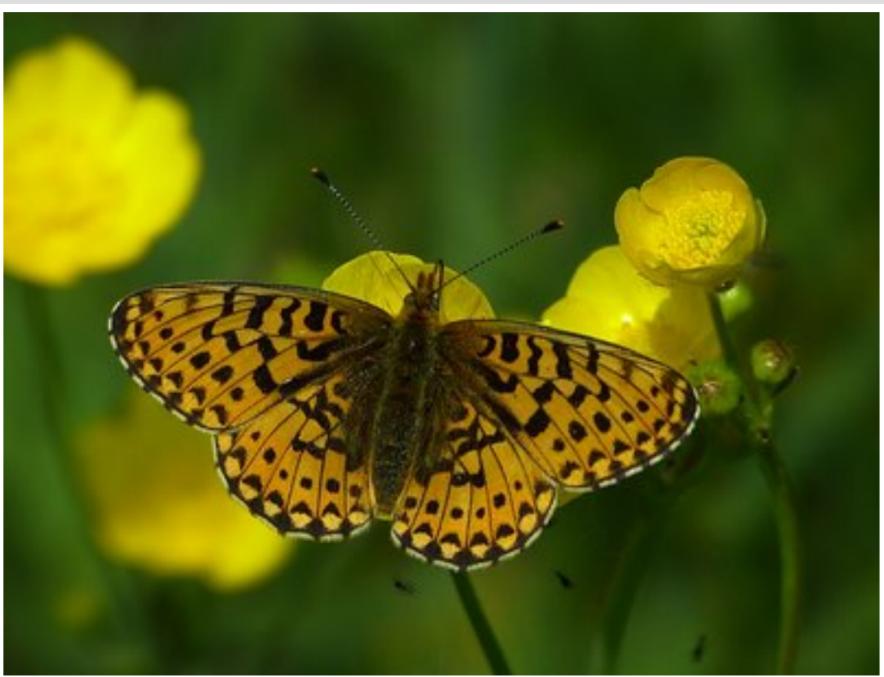
Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013

In one of the meadows by Coopers Mill I saw my first Small Coppers of the year, two males on the same sunny bank that would have a bit of a scrap whenever they met.



Small Copper - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Small Copper - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013

All day I had been looking carefully at every Pearl that we saw, especially the fresher ones, on the lookout for a possible Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. It was not until we had a last look in the meadow by the old railway line on our way back to the car park that I got a glimpse of a brighter orange, a fresh male Small Pearl 😊

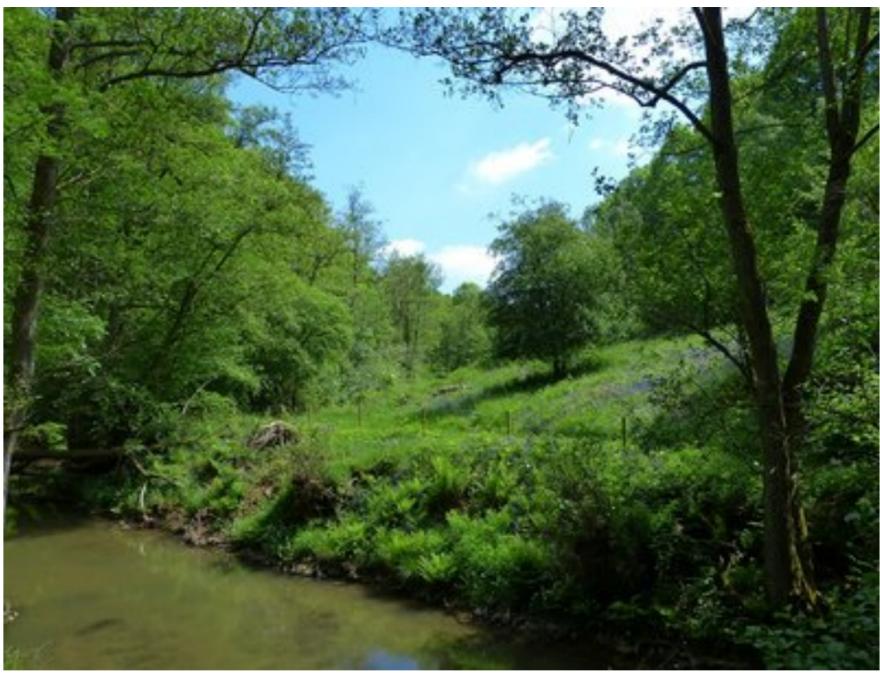


Small Pearl bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Small Pearl bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013

During our wandering along Dowles Brook we had also seen a fair few Beautiful Demoiselles, both the darker winged blue bodied males and the green bodied females.



Dowles Brook - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Beautiful Demoiselle male - Wyre Forest 08.06.2013



Beautiful Demoiselle female – Wyre Forest 08.06.2013

Chris was well pleased with the day, he saw many more PBFs than expected, in fact at one point whilst surrounded by half a dozen, he said "I thought these were supposed to be rare 😊"

With the icing on the cake of the SPBF it was a great day 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by EricY, 09-Jun-13 04:09 PM GMT

Great photo's Neil from Wyre F, wish I had known about all the PBF's a couple of days earlier as I would have come up to see them this w/e. Too far for a day trip (330 miles round trip) know the area well as did a lot of courting there years ago, Wife is from Bewdley & in fact was raised until she was 12 in the cottage up river near Dowles that the Lady was murdered in last year! When I checked weather it looked good for there this w/e, it is cloudy & freezing in Norfolk, a winter coat & gloves job with nothing much to see! Eric

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 09-Jun-13 07:38 PM GMT

Hi Neil, great photos, excellent report, hope all as ok as it can be.
Regards, Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-13 10:40 PM GMT

Great shots Neil of the PB and SPBF's and the Small Coppers are lush 😊🍷 What's next on the list up your way? Down here I'm hoping for Glanvilles, Silver Studs and Large Blue?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jun-13 09:14 AM GMT

Thanks Eric, from the forecast it looks as if you may be getting your turn at the best weather this week.

Thanks Mike, everything is as well as can be expected.

Thanks Wurzel, not sure what will be next up here. I have not found any Small Coppers or Common Blues at my local spots yet. I am off down to North Devon for a week on Friday for a family holiday, not sure what to expect down there with the late season this year. Some species like Marsh Frits which I would normally have thought I would have been too late for don't seem to have been out for long and others like Dark Green and High Brown Frits that would normally be out may not have emerged.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jun-13 08:53 PM GMT

Wednesday 12th June.

A quick shuftie around my local area earlier this afternoon whilst there was a bit of brightness in the sky, not proper sun as such just a slightly brighter

bit of cloud.

First off was Shadowbrook Meadows looking for Small Coppers and Common Blues. The first things that I saw were a number of Burnet Companion and Chimney Sweeper moths that would settle low down in the grass to get out of the stiff wind that was blowing. There were also at least half a dozen Large Whites that were surprisingly mobile given the cloud and wind.



Burnet Companion - Shadowbrook 12.06.2013

I did not find any Small Coppers but was very pleased to find a female Common Blue 😊, especially as I did not see any first brood here last year at all and only a couple of second brood males.



Common Blue female - Shadowbrook 12.06.2013

After 45 minutes or so the sky was looking ominous and there was a feeling of rain in the air so I headed home, stopping off for a quick look in Elmdon Park LNR on my way past. This is a spot that I normally avoid during the summer, particularly at weekends, there being far too many dog walkers for my liking there who are quite happy to let their precious hounds bound up to and slobber all over you. Mid-week however, it can be relatively quiet so I decided to have a quick look.

Heading down to one of the more sheltered meadows I noticed a few Large Whites and quite a few Latticed Heath moths which as usual hunkered low down in the grass when they settled.



Large White - Elmdon 12.06.2013

I had just taken the photo above when the LW took off and within a few feet was intercepted by a male Common Blue which chased it for a while before returning and settling in the grass.



Common Blue - Elmdon 12.06.2013

Shortly after I felt the beginnings of drizzle in the air so headed home.

No Small Coppers today but I was very pleased to find the Common Blues, only one male and one female at two different spots but considering I did not find any first brood around Solihull last year and only a few second brood I was well chuffed 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-13 10:45 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil 😊 I'm only able to pop on for a bit as the OfSTED are back tomorrow but this cheered me up as a break from my lesson planning 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Debbie, 13-Jun-13 10:21 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

As always your pictures are super. I especially love the female common blue. Not see one in Shropshire yet (less anybody knows where they are?)

Debbie 😊

Re: nfreem

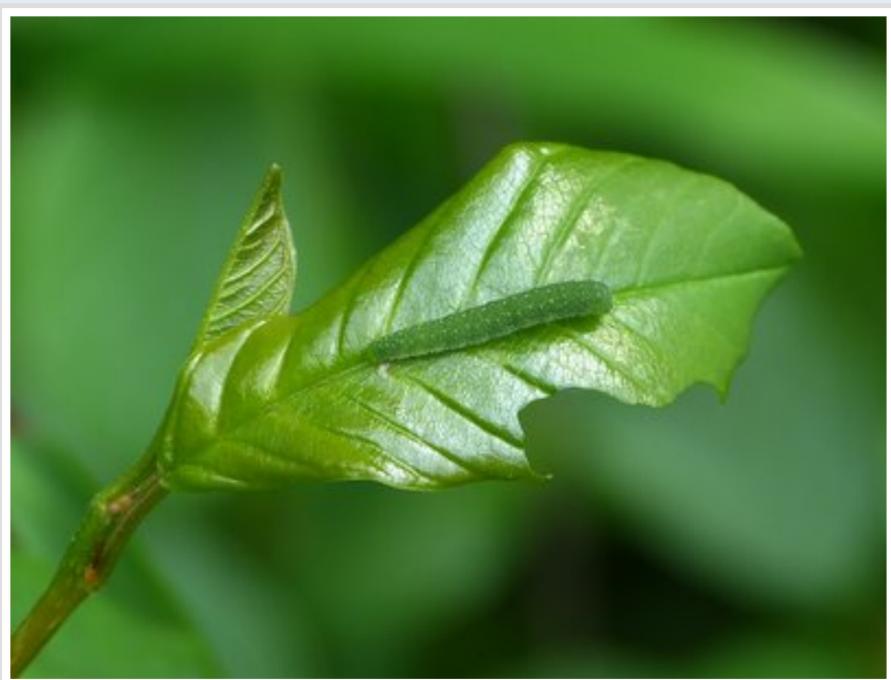
by Neil Freeman, 13-Jun-13 10:30 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, hope the Ofsted thing went ok.

Thanks Debbie, these were the first two Common Blues I have seen locally. According to Jeremy Thomas Common Blue emergence can vary a lot, usually having two broods down south but further north being single brooded depending on local climate. Of course 'further north' can be relative, my brother lives in Newcastle and he regards Manchester as in the midlands whereas to me it is in the north 😊

Thursday 13th June

A reasonable start to the day soon turned to heavy showers but before they arrived I had a quick look in the garden to see how the Brimstone and Orange Tip larvae are getting on. Without looking too hard I found five Brimstone larvae between 10-15mm in length and three Orange Tips, two at about 5-6mm and one at about 10mm.



Brimstone larva - Coverdale 13.06.2013



Brimstone larva - Coverdale 13.06.2013



Orange Tip larva - Coverdale 13.06.2013

The Peacock eggs have not hatched yet, I am off to Devon for a week tomorrow so hoping to see these hatched on my return.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-13 11:43 PM GMT

Cheers Neil - the Head can't tell us the "verdict" for 20 more days but she seemed quite cheerful so fingers crossed. Cracking shots of the cats 😊 - I haven't branched out into this area of butterfly life yet so you've got me thinking...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jun-13 09:41 PM GMT

Back home today after a weeks family holiday at Croyde Bay, North Devon. The weather was mixed as were the butterflying opportunities with my wife, daughter and little grandson to keep happy 😊

Nevertheless, I did manage to get out a couple of times as well as have a few good looks around the local area and managed to see 18 species of butterfly during the week.

Highlights included Marsh Fritillaries which were a life first for me 😊, good numbers of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and a couple of Painted Ladies 😊

A quick summary of species seen in rough order of sighting;

Small White - at least 2 identified, probably more.

Speckled Wood - at least a couple seen at most places.

Wall Brown - 1 at Croyde Bay.

Large Whites - a couple of positive IDs.

Small Tortoiseshell - 2 at Croyde Bay.

Common Blue - seen at most places, some really tatty, some quite fresh.

Brown Argus - 1 at Croyde Bay, my first of the year.

Meadow Brown - 2 fresh males at Croyde Bay, my first of the year.

Green-veined White - Seen at most places.

Marsh Fritillary - 20+ at Volehouse Moor

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - 20+ at Marsland and similar numbers at Heddons Mouth.

Dingy Skipper - 3 seen at Marsland, all looking very 'dingy'

Small Copper - 2 at Heddons Mouth.

Large Skipper - half a dozen males at Heddons Mouth, my first of the year.

Small Heath - Everywhere usually in good numbers.

Green Hairstreak - 3 at Heddons Mouth.

Red Admiral - 1 at Heddons Mouth, my first of the year then 2 at Croyde Bay.

Painted Lady - 2 at Croyde Bay.

I did not see any High Brown or Dark Green Fritillaries, despite going to Heddons Mouth and following directions given to me by UKB member Rogerdodge. Many thanks for the all the info Roger, it is a beautiful place in its own right and I saw plenty of other butterflies including SPBFs as in the list above 😊

I was a bit surprised now that I have seen that Matthew Oates tweeted that he saw about 20 HBF at Heddon, apparently on the same day that I was there. Maybe I was looking in the wrong places or there at the wrong time, between 11.00am and 2.00pm between dropping the women and grandson off at Watermouth Castle family theme park and then going back to meet them. I obviously didn't have time to look everywhere but did spend 3 hours

bimbling around the recommended areas. Oh well, maybe next time, it is certainly a place I would like to visit again.

More details and photos to follow when I get time to sort them out.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 21-Jun-13 10:12 PM GMT

Nice to see you back, Neil, and I'm glad you enjoyed your holiday.

Like Wurzel in the Isle of Wight, you seem to have just missed out on the emergence of your target species. Rather frustratingly, Matthew Oates reported 20 HBFs from Heddon Valley on 19th June 😞

This 'late' year is catching us all by surprise.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jun-13 10:22 PM GMT

Thanks David,

On the positive side, although I did not see HBFs and DGFs this time, I have seen both species before. The Marsh Fritillaries were a life first for me and in another year may well have been finished or nearly so.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 21-Jun-13 10:30 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Thanks David,

On the positive side, although I did not see HBFs and DGFs this time, I have seen both species before. The Marsh Fritillaries were a life first for me and in another year may well have been finished or nearly so.

Yes, you're right, Neil....and there's still plenty of time to track down HBF and DGF. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-13 12:17 PM GMT

North Devon - 14th to 21st June, part 1.

The first report from last week in North Devon, I will be posting these in installments over the next few days as I get time.

I drove down to Croyde Bay in North Devon on Friday 14th for a week long family break with my wife Jane, my daughter Sarah and our little grandson Frankie, who will be 3 years old in August.

Being first and foremost a family break I knew that my butterflying would have to fit around what the others wanted to do, or more accurately, keeping Frankie happy which would keep the women happy 😊

The weather for the first couple of days was a bit dull and showery with a bit of sun on the Saturday but with a strong wind. Over the first weekend I took a couple of short walks around the local area between doing family stuff to check out potential spots. One tatty Small White was the only butterfly seen on the Saturday and nothing on the Sunday which was a wetter day.

Croyde Bay has a nice sandy beach backed up by dunes, and I did see quite a few birds along some paths behind the dunes in some spots out of the worst of the wind including a number of Stonechats.



Stonechat - Croyde Bay 15.06.2013



Stonechat - Croyde Bay 15.06.2013



Stonechat - Croyde Bay 15.06.2013

There were also a number of what I think are Linnets, not being an expert on birds my IDs may well be wrong and I am quite happy to be corrected, in fact would welcome being put right on any I get wrong.



Linnets – Croyde Bay 15.06.2013

Other birds seen here were Whitethroats, Dunnocks, and Pied Wagtails including quite a few juveniles of all these.



Pied Wagtail juvenile – Croyde Bay 15.06.2013

The Sunday proved to be the wettest day that we had and from Monday afternoon the weather improved steadily for a few days and I managed to get out a couple of times and see some butterflies 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-13 10:44 PM GMT

Spot on with the Linnet ID Neil. Looking forward to reading the next installment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Padfield, 22-Jun-13 10:53 PM GMT

I hope I'm not being predictable, but I really love that first shot of a stonechat looking back over its shoulder, set against the open backdrop of what Nick Boles would doubtless describe as a 'boring field'.

Guy

EDIT: And is that another stonechat set set behind, on the left of the picture?

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 22-Jun-13 11:21 PM GMT

Lovely photos Neil, especially the 3rd Stonechat. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-13 11:22 PM GMT

Thanks for the confirmation of the Linnets Wurzel 😊

Thanks for the comments Guy, I actually didn't notice the other bird in the background when I took the photo, it probably is another Stonechat, there were a number of them spaced out like sentries along the hedgerow 😊

Thanks for the comment Nick 😊

North Devon 14th-21st June, part 2.

Monday morning started off dull and cloudy with some light rain showers but the wind had dropped and there was a forecast that hinted at some brightness later in the afternoon.

Jane and Sarah wanted to go and have a look at Woolacombe which is just up the coast in the next bay so we headed there for a look around. Woolacombe is a small town with a long sandy beach backed up by dunes and 'Woolacombe Warren', an area that has had a past history as a military training area and a golf course before being taken over and managed by the National Trust.

Whilst the others had a look around and took little Frankie on some kids attractions, I went for a short walk through part of the 'Warren'. There was still a bit of light rain in the air at this time but even so I saw numerous birds including Meadow Pipits (I think), Stonechats and Whitethroats. I also heard Grasshopper Warblers which according to a sign by one of the paths this is a good site for.

I believe the bird below is a Meadow Pipit but again not absolutely sure on this one. The photo was taken in light rain hence the streaks.



Meadow Pipit? - Woolacombe 17.06.2013

After a bit of lunch (in truth, a huge piece of cod and chips 😊) at a local café we headed back to Croyde as little Frankie was getting tired and Sarah wanted to see if he would have a nap.

By the time we got back it had started to brighten up a bit so whilst the girls chilled out a bit I went for a walk.

Heading through to behind the dunes again there were even more birds around now that the weather was a bit better.



Looking down behind the dunes at Croyde Bay



Pied Wagtail - Croyde Bay 17.06.2013

I think that the 'scruffy herbert' below is juvenile Dunnock, whatever it is there were a number of them around.



Juvenile Dunnock?

A bit of movement on a dandelion caught my eye and looking closer showed it to be immature stage of what is possibly a Great Green Bush Cricket.



Bush Cricket - Croyde Bay 17.06.2013

A little further along I spotted a Small Tortoiseshell, closely followed by a second one. The first one was in quite good condition making me think that it had only been around a short while but the second one was quite worn and faded.



Small Tortoiseshell - Croyde Bay 17.06.2013



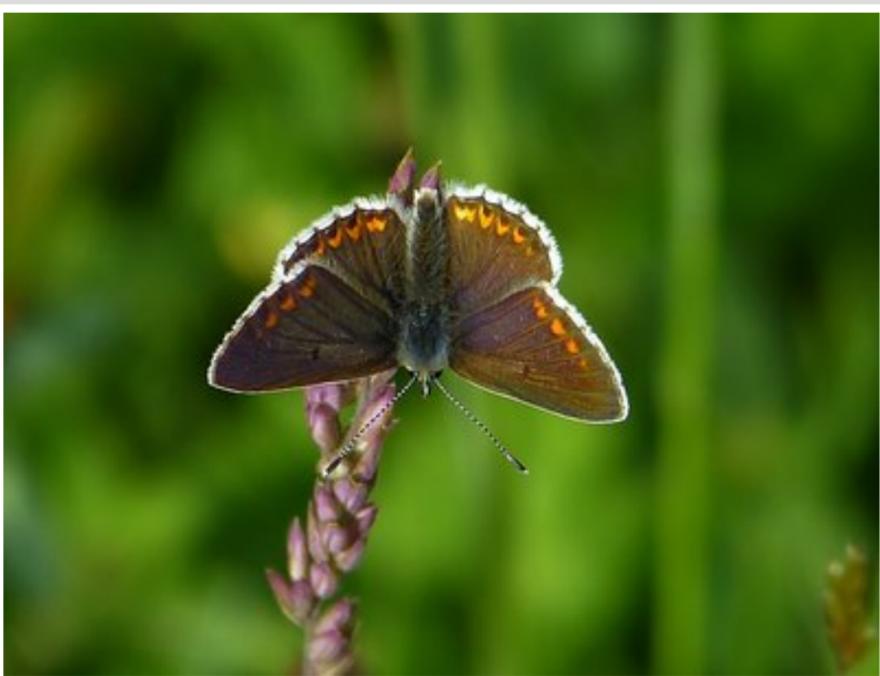
Small Tortoiseshell - Croyde Bay 17.06.2013

This made me wonder if the second one was a late surviving hibernator that was actually still flying. Of course it may have also emerged recently and suffered in the weather, but with Brimstones and Peacocks still flying, I suppose there is no reason why a Small Tortoiseshell couldn't be too.

Circling around back to the site I saw a Wall Brown that in typical fashion I couldn't get close too and a couple of tired and worn looking male Common Blues plus a fresh looking male Speckled Wood.

After a short spell back with the others they were happy to carry on chilling so after making sure that I wouldn't be in the doghouse 😊, I went to have a look in a meadow that I had spotted next to the site.

By this time it was around 6.00pm and it had turned into a nice pleasant early evening which was made even better when I found my first Brown Argus of the year basking in the sun 😊



Brown Argus - Croyde Bay 17.06.2013



Brown Argus - Croyde Bay 17.06.2013

Things were looking up and later, whilst enjoying a couple of bottles of Rattler Pear Cider, the women informed me that there was a local market next to the site the next morning which they wanted to go to followed by an afternoon on the beach which was within walking distance.

This would leave me free to have the day to myself 😊 time to get the map out and make some plans.....

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jun-13 08:23 PM GMT

North Devon 14th-21st June, part 3.

After some overnight rain, Tuesday morning started off cloudy but warm with a promising forecast for brighter conditions later.

As mentioned previously, I was free for the day and had spent a bit of time the evening before looking at the map and planning my day. I had seen Rogerdodges post and photo in the sightings thread of a Marsh Fritillary at Volehouse Moor and also his earlier post with a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Marsland.

Looking at the Map, I figured that I could head for Volehouse Moor in the morning and carry on to Marsland for the afternoon and maybe, if I had time, stop off at Braunton Burrows on my way back to Croyde.

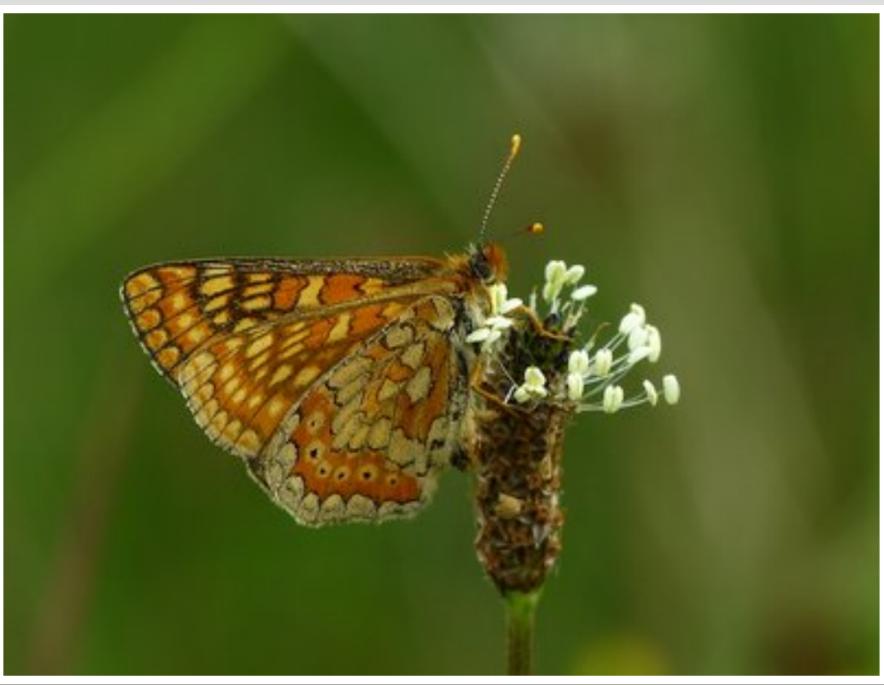
I was keen to try for Marsh Fritillaries as this is a species that I had never seen before and with this late season thought that maybe I would still be in with a good chance.

So it was that I headed off for Volehouse Moor and arrived at the southern section about an hour later at 10.00am under a cloudy sky but with it feeling rather warm and humid.



Volehouse Moor - it was warmer than it looks in this photo.

Within minutes I had seen a couple of Green-veined Whites and continuing down the slope to the second meadow soon found a female Marsh Fritillary. The next four photos are all of this one individual as she lazily fluttered about and settled regularly 😊 .

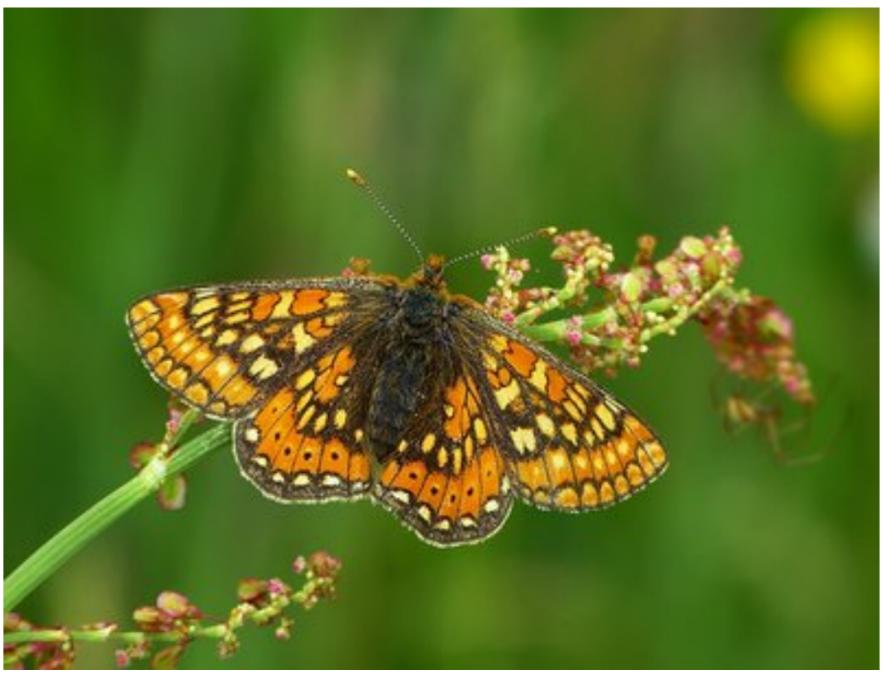


Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013

The next one is my attempt at a 'Padfield' type shot taking full advantage of the articulated screen on my FZ150 to get the camera low enough without lying down in the still wet grass.



Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013



Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013



Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013

After spending a little while taking photos I left her in peace and carried on down to the third meadow where I soon saw more Marsh Fritillaries. During the next hour or so I saw at least 20 in varying conditions from very worn and faded to quite reasonable.

Although it was still cloudy it felt quite warm and although they were fairly mobile, they would settle often, even if it was usually down in the grass 😊. Nevertheless I managed to find a few that settled in positions where I could get some reasonable photos 😊.



Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013



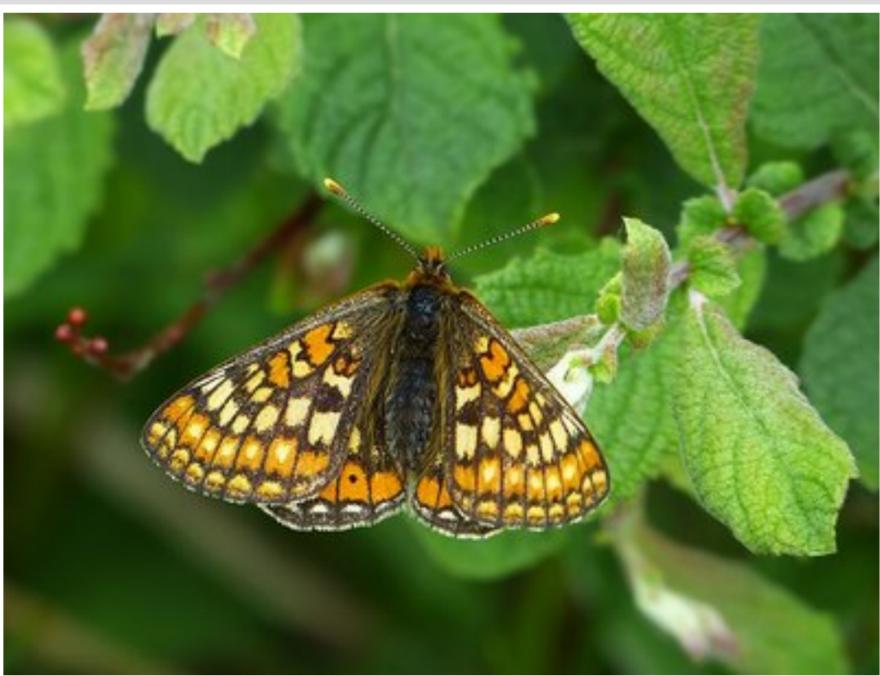
Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013



Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013



Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013



Marsh Fritillary – Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013

After spending a couple of hours here I decided to head back to the car, meeting a chap on my way up the meadows who turned out to be the volunteer warden who I had a pleasant and interesting chat with.

Having had a successful morning and feeling very happy at seeing my first Marsh Fritillaries I left Volehouse Moor at around Midday to continue on to Marsland.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 23-Jun-13 10:22 PM GMT

Lovely pictures, Neil. Looks like one of those bright warm days with just enough sun to make the butterflies wake up – but not too much... 😊

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-13 10:26 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil and congrats on the lifer 😊 Marsh Frits are one of my faves and they seem to be hanging on in there because of the late season.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 24-Jun-13 06:19 AM GMT

Morning Neil, I love your first Marsh Frit shot and that is a stunning Tortoiseshell – something I have struggled to see in recent years. As for your 'Padfield' style, I would say you have captured it almost perfectly with the Stonechat looking back at its mate, presumably.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-13 08:01 PM GMT

Thank you very much for the comments Dave, Wurzel and Pauline, It was a great morning and I still had the rest of the day ahead of me 😊

North Devon 14th–21st June, part 4.

Before coming to Devon I had looked up a number of places on the internet including Marsland and printed off some directions.

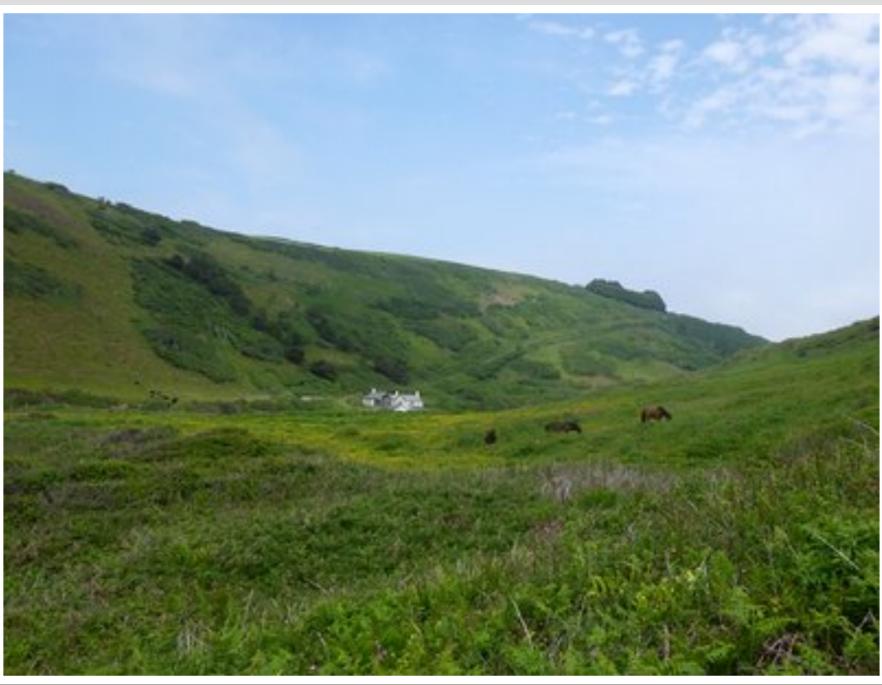
I still managed to take a wrong turn 😊 but eventually managed to find my way to the track where I could park my car, arriving about an hour after leaving Volehouse Moor.

I followed the path down through the woods, noticing a number of Speckled Woods and Green-veined Whites along the way, and continued out onto the more open hillside.



Speckled Wood – Marsland 18.06.2013

I followed the path down towards the sea and saw a few Fritillaries which I think were SPBFs as they looked a fairly bright fulvous orange colour and I would think that any PBFs still around would be faded by now. The cloud had thinned by now and it was getting very warm which meant that these were very active and didn't settle for a positive ID but I am pretty certain that they were Small Pearls.



Marsland – looking back up the valley

Just before reaching the sea there is a wooden bridge where the path crosses a stream and joins the South West Coast Path.



Marsland – Bridge by the South West Coast Path

On the sheltered slopes here I found good numbers of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, the condition of which varied from well faded and tatty to quite fresh looking. These were just as active as those further up the slope but in this area were settling regularly and nectaring on the various flowering plants with up to half a dozen at once on some clumps of what I think is flowering thyme 😊 .



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Marsland 18.06.2013



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Marsland 18.06.2013



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Marsland 18.06.2013



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries – Marsland 18.06.2013



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries - Marsland 18.06.2013



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries - Marsland 18.06.2013

There were also a few Common Blues and rather faded Dingy Skippers around this area.



Common Blue - Marsland 18.06.2013



Dingy Skipper – Marsland 18.06.2013

I spent some time here taking photos and then just sitting enjoying being in a beautiful spot surrounded by butterflies 😊

I then slowly made my way back up the path and spotted a large caterpillar wandering across in front of me which I am fairly sure is an Oak Eggar Moth caterpillar.



Oak Eggar Moth caterpillar – Marsland 18.06.2013

By this time it was around 4.00pm so I decided to head back in the direction of Croyde.

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 24-Jun-13 08:56 PM GMT

Great images, Neil.

Fair wars the heart to see several SPBFs all nectaring from the same bank of flowers.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-13 10:37 PM GMT

Ditto what David said Neil 😊 Those group shots are a fantastic sight to behold 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 25-Jun-13 10:14 AM GMT

Hi Neil, ditto what David and Wurzel said, congrats on your first Marsh Fritillaries.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jun-13 08:31 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys....and the dittos 😊

North Devon 14th-21st June, part 5.

Leaving Marsland I went straight back up the A39 which was a lot quicker than the cross country route that I had taken to Volehouse Moor earlier that morning.

I turned off at Barnstaple and passed through Braunton and took the road to Croyde which passes Braunton Burrows. I took the turning for the Sandy Lane car park in order to spend an hour or so to finish off my day.

The burrows cover a massive area and I only had time to wander a little way but it was not long before I saw a fair number of Common Blues. Some of these were worn and faded as were the ones that I had seen at Croyde and Marsland but there were also a number here in much better condition, including the first females that I had seen in Devon.



Common Blue - Braunton Burrows 18.06.2013



Common Blue - Braunton Burrows 18.06.2013



Common Blue female – Braunton Burrows 18.06.2013

There were a fair number of Small Heaths and numerous Silver-Y moths around plus a few Speckled Woods and Green-veined Whites in the more wooded areas at the back of the burrows.



Speckled Wood – Braunton Burrows 18.06.2013

I also came across my second big hairy caterpillar of the day wandering across the path in front of me, a Drinker moth.



Drinker Moth caterpillar – Braunton Burrows 18.06.2013

As mentioned above, Braunton Burrows covers a large area and really needs more time to look around and I only really had time to have a little taster of the area. I figured that being so close to where we were stopping in Croyde Bay I may get time to come back and spend more time here.

Nevertheless, it made a nice end to my day as I finally made my way back to join the others feeling kn****ed but happy 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 25-Jun-13 10:59 PM GMT

Cracking shots, especially the female Common Blue Neil 😊 Are we expecting to see any Heaths Frits?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-13 08:13 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, sorry no Heath Frits, I ran out of time/opportunity before returning to the midlands.

Looks like I will be paying a return visit to Devon the weekend after next for a couple of days, just me and the wife this time. I may get another chance if there are any still about.

North Devon – An Evening surprise

Later that same evening, my daughter Sarah had put little Frankie to bed and wanted to go out for a walk whilst Jane looked after him. Ever since she was young, whenever we had gone on holiday, Sarah had looked for a nearby hill and wanted to get to the top of it 😊.

So it was that around 8.30pm we found ourselves at the top of a hill that overlooked the NT Baggy Point car park at Croyde Bay.



Hill at Croyde Bay – photo taken the afternoon after the Painted Ladies were seen.

As we just enjoyed the view as the sun got lower in the sky a movement caught my eye and a Painted Lady flew past us and settled briefly. During the next ten minutes or so it circled around us a few times and was joined by a second one before they both flew off down the inland slope of the hill.

This was one of the few times that I did not have my FZ150 with me but I did manage to get a couple of record shots with a small Panasonic compact camera that I usually carry.



Painted Lady – Croyde Bay 18.06.2013

I was really surprised by these Painted Ladies at this time of the evening but they really did make the perfect end to a great day 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-13 09:44 PM GMT

North Devon 14th–21st June, part 6.

Whilst I had been out on my drive around North Devon, Jane and Sarah had picked up a leaflet for Watermouth Castle family theme park which appeared to have attractions geared up towards younger children.

Wednesday morning started off nice and sunny with a forecast for all day sun. Not wanting to push my luck I wasn't going to say anything 😊 but the girls said that they would be happy for me to drop them off at Watermouth Castle and leave them there whilst I took advantage of the weather, as long as I did not leave them for too long.

Looking at the map, I saw that it was between Ilfracombe and Combe Martin which meant that Heddons Mouth was not much further.

So it was that, after dropping the others off and arranging to meet them again by 2.30pm, I arrived at Heddon at around 11.00 and parked up by the Hunters Inn.

This is a good site for Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries along with Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and many other species but I was not sure if any DGFs or HBFs were around yet given the late season.

UK member Rogerdodge had sent me some useful info on the area so I set out down the path towards one of the recommended spots.

I did not find any High Brown or Dark Green Fritillaries but I did find a number of Small Pearls plus a couple of Small Coppers and my first Large Skippers of the year.

During the next three hours I wandered along the paths in glorious sunshine, including the one that leads down to a small stony beach which is a beautiful spot as is indeed the whole area. I saw plenty of Small Pearls and Small Heaths plus Large Skippers and a few Common Blues and Green Hairstreaks and my first Red Admiral this year...but no sign of DGFs or HBFs.



Heddons Mouth - looking back up the valley. Lots of butterflies along here.



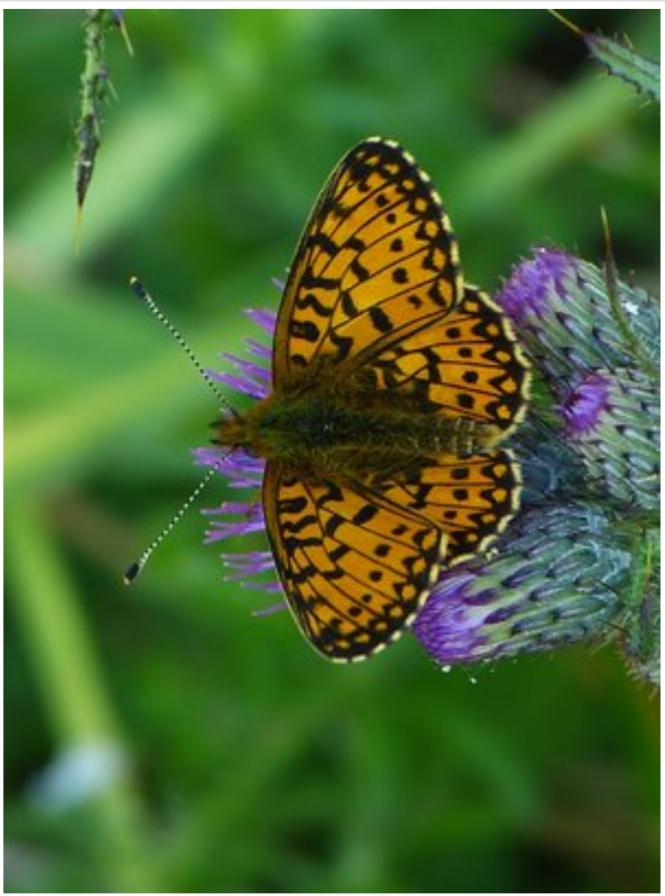
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Heddon 19.06.2013



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Heddon 19.06.2013



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Heddon 19.06.2013



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Heddon 19.06.2013



Large Skipper - Heddon 19.06.2013



Large Skipper - Heddon 19.06.2013



Small Copper - Heddon 19.06.2013



Small Heath - Heddon 19.06.2013



Green Hairstreak - Heddon 19.06.2013



Red Admiral - Heddon 19.06.2013

This is a lovely area with many paths worth exploring which again I did not have time to do proper justice to as I couldn't wander too far in the time I had.

With the time approaching 2.00pm I made my way back to the car to go and meet the others as promised, having really enjoyed my time here, the more so as I originally did not even know I would be here when the day started 😊 .

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-13 10:19 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil – the Greenstreak in particular, it looks in great nick for this stage of the season 😊 The Dark Greens have only just started appearing over our way so that might explain their absence at Heddons Mouth – something for your next visit 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jun-13 09:56 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I saw a couple of other Greenstreaks but they were both in much worse condition.

North Devon 14th–21st June, part 7.

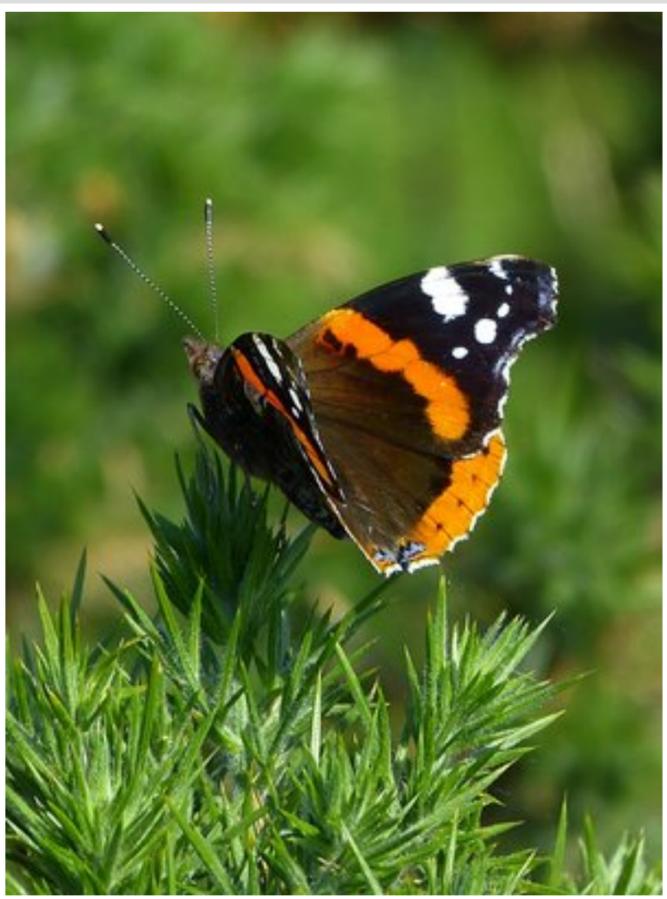
After doing a bit of family stuff we returned to Croyde Bay later in the afternoon. Wanting to make the most of the nice sunny day I went for another walk around the dunes and meadows by the site.

I soon came across another big hairy caterpillar, a Garden Tiger Moth or 'Wooly Bear' of my youth. When I was young I used to find these regularly and take them home to rear through to adults. This one was the first that I have seen for years and seeing it brought back loads of happy memories 😊.



Garden Tiger Moth caterpillar – Croyde Bay 19.06.2013

Continuing on I saw a couple of Red Admirals, one of which was happy to pose for a while.



Red Admiral – Croyde Bay 19.06.2013



Red Admiral - Croyde Bay 19.06.2013

There were also a few more Common Blues basking in the late afternoon sun, some looking very faded but also some looking quite fresh.



Common Blue - Croyde Bay 19.06.2013



Common Blue - Croyde Bay 19.06.2013

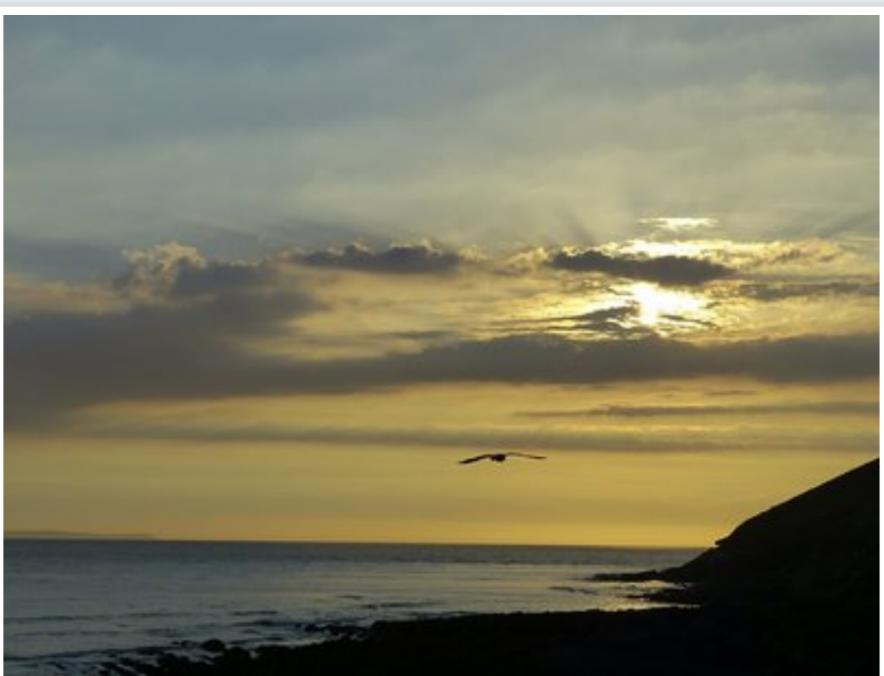


Common Blue - Croyde Bay 19.06.2013



Common Blue - Croyde Bay 19.06.2013

The afternoon turned into a lovely evening so a little later I nipped out again to get a couple of shots of the sun getting lower over Baggy Point.



Looking out to sea past Baggy Point with Lundy Island on the horizon

The next day(Thursday) started off dull and drizzly and stayed cloudy all day although the rain did stop later. No Butterflies but it did mean that I did more family stuff 😊 .



My Grandson Frankie - Croyde Bay 20.06.2013

Friday morning we set out back to the midlands with it again being dull with rain showers.

Going along the A361 towards the M5 I couldn't help but look towards Exmoor which was shrouded with fog. Earlier in the week I had briefly thought about stopping off at Haddon Hill on our way home but with a fully laden car including a young child it wasn't really practical so I kept my thoughts to myself 😊.

Further up the M5 as we approached the junction for Weston-super-Mare the weather had brightened up and again I had brief thoughts of turning off, this time for sand point. Later, seeing Bill(Willow)s report in the sightings thread of the lack of Glanville Fritillaries there made me feel better at wizzing past.

All in all I thoroughly enjoyed my week in North Devon with a couple of great days butterflying 😊

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jun-13 09:58 PM GMT

Friday 28th June

Just a bit of an update on the goings on in the garden to bring me up to date.

After arriving back home last weekend I was keen to see how things were developing in the garden.

I noticed that the garlic mustard had take a bit of a pounding from the wind and rain with some stems lying almost horizontally across others.

Nevertheless I found two larvae, one of which looked of a size to go walkabout any day to pupate

Both photos below were taken last Saturday (22nd)



Orange Tip larva - Coverdale 22.06.2013



Orange Tip larva - Coverdale 22.06.2013

The Alder Buckthorn is still only 18-24 inches high and a lot of vegetation had grown up around it making searching for the Brimstone larvae more difficult. I found one that was a good size but despite a good search couldn't find any more. I do not know if any of the others would have grown enough to pupate yet or whether they have succumbed to predation or parasites or any other fate.



Brimstone larva - Coverdale 22.06.2012

Moving over to the nettles, I was pleased to see that the Peacock eggs had hatched, just a day or two previously by the look and the larvae had moved en-mass onto the upper side of the leaf.



Peacock larvae - Coverdale 22.06.2013

Three days later they had noticeably grown and spread out a bit in the beginnings of a larval web.



Peacock larvae - Coverdale 25.06.2013

Checking on them the day after I found that they had moved higher up the nettle.

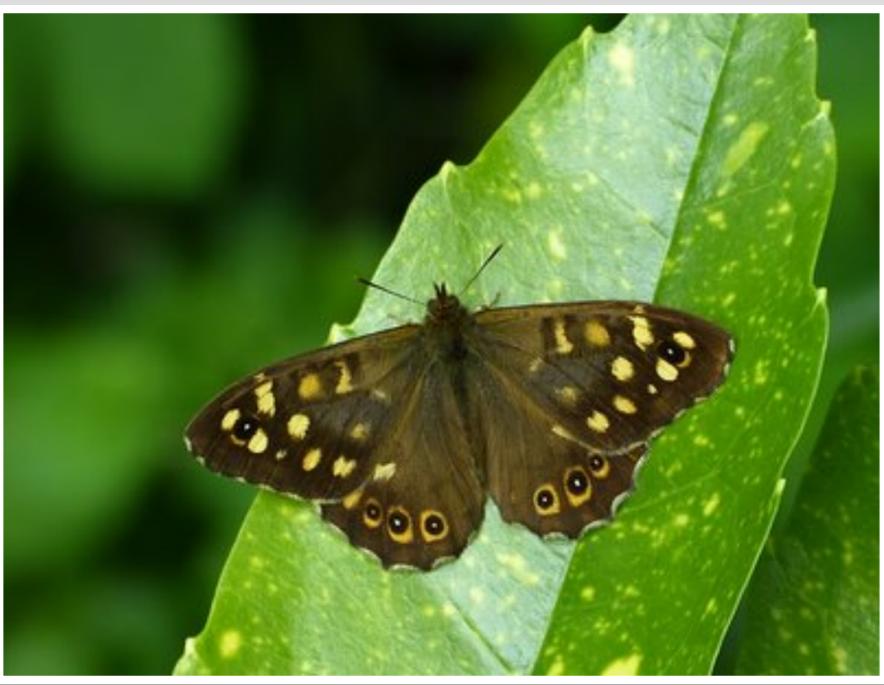


Peacock larvae - Coverdale 26.06.2013

Last weekend I was also pleased to be greeted by a nice new brood male Speckled Wood who was joined a couple of days later by a second one 😊 .



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 22.06.2013



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 25.06.2013



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 26.06.2013

That brings me back up to date now. It was nasty dull and rainy day today, the weekend looks better but I think I may be busy so I am not sure if I will be out anywhere yet.

Bye for now.

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-13 10:36 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Specklies Niel 😊 I've just seen the weather and it looks to be dry and warm over the weekend so it might be alright to get out and about 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jun-13 07:05 PM GMT

You were right about the weather Wurzel 😊

Sunday 30th June.

A busy weekend with most of it spent catching up on jobs in the garden, cutting lawns and getting a bit of control over the jungle that half of it is turning into.

As I potted about I was kept company most of the time by two male Speckled Wood and was also pleased to see a female fluttering about amongst the long grass.

Although it is the males that are most obvious with their territorial antics, I always look out for females in the garden as without them I would not have their almost constant presence from Spring through Summer and into Autumn 😊



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 29.06.2013



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 29.06.2013

Having spent most of the weekend around the house and garden I figured that I had earned a break so this afternoon I popped round to Shadowbrook Meadows to see what was about.

I immediately noticed a number of Meadow Browns with their lazy floppy flight and the more I looked the more saw. It looks like there has been a good sized emergence over the last couple of days, I stopped counting at fifty, all males.



Meadow Brown - Shadowbrook 30.06.2013



Meadow Brown – Shadowbrook 30.06.2013



Meadow Brown – Shadowbrook 30.06.2013

I did a couple of circuits of the site and apart from the Meadow Browns I also saw half a dozen or so Large Whites looking a bit worse for wear, a single faded male Common Blue and a couple of fresh male Large Skippers. I also saw a single Ringlet, my first of the year.



Large White – Shadowbrook 30.06.2013



Large Skipper - Shadowbrook 30.06.2013



Ringlet - Shadowbrook 30.06.2013

For a while I was kept company by a group of Goldfinches that would perch on the Thistles that are just beginning to flower, presumably looking for insects.



Goldfinch - Shadowbrook 30.06.2013

Back home later in the afternoon, I was sitting in the garden with a cup of coffee when I heard a loud screeching and squawking above me. Looking up I spotted a Buzzard that was being 'mobbed' in turn by a Seagull and a Crow (not sure if mobbed is the right word when there are only two assailants). Looking at the photo, the Buzzard has something in its talons, possibly a chick?



Buzzard and 'friend' - Coverdale 30.06.2016

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 30-Jun-13 07:11 PM GMT

Looks to me like that Buzzard has just taken that Gull's youngster Neil. Can you see what it has got in its claws from your original shot?

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jun-13 10:31 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

The original doesn't show it much clearer.

I was thinking it had taken a youngster but the way the Crow and Seagull were going for it I wasn't sure which. I only managed to get the Gull in shot but the Crow was just as persistent. Could be something else entirely though with them all being scavengers.

The whole episode was only above me for a minute or so before they disappeared over the roofline, could still hear the noise for a while longer though



Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-13 11:22 PM GMT

Glad the weather report panned out Neil 😊 Lovely shots especially the open wing shot of the male Meadow Brown. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jul-13 08:51 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, the weather is looking even better for this coming weekend 😊and I have a return trip to Devon sorted, a long weekend at the Heddon Valley 😊

Wednesday 3rd July

Just a quick update on the Peacock larvae in my back garden.

They have moved over to another nettle stem and are starting to darken and look like proper mini Peacock caterpillars. I think that most are still first instar, not sure how long this lasts but would imagine they will start changing soon.



Peacock larvae approx 14 days - Coverdale 03.07.2013

This evening was the first chance that I had to have a proper look around the garden since the weekend. The Orange Tip and Brimstone larvae have all gone, I hope that at least some of them have wandered off to pupate.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 08-Jul-13 01:40 PM GMT

I'm getting behind Neil, as everyone's diary is so interesting. Your little Frankie looks a cutie but I bet he can be a handful!. Sounds like a great holiday - Love your Speckled Woods - they look like velvet.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jul-13 09:32 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Your little Frankie looks a cutie but I bet he can be a handful!.....

Oh yes!!, terrible twos and all that 😊

Thanks for the comments. I have some catching up to do myself, just back today from a weekend away and hundred of photos to sort though....

Friday 5th July - Headin' down to Heddon and stopping off at Haddon.

A couple of weeks back, in one of my reports from North Devon, I described spending a couple of hours at Heddons Mouth and how I felt that I could have spent a lot longer there.

On my return home, thoughts of a re-visit began to grind around in the brain cells and so it was that last Friday myself and Jane found ourselves heading back down the M5 for a long weekend at the Hunters Inn at Heddon Valley 😊

I figured that I may as well make the most of the journey down and make a detour to Haddon Hill on Exmoor to look for Heath Fritillaries which would be a first for me.

At this point I would like to express my thanks to UKB member Rogerdodge who had sent me some information on the best spots both at Haddon Hill and Heddon Valley which I found invaluable in finding my targets.

I parked in the main car park at Haddon as Jane was quite happy to sit in the car reading whilst I wandered off for a while and she felt happier here than

in the lay by further along.

I headed straight for the recommended area at the bottom of the slope along the tree line and met a chap doing the local transect. He told me that he had been seeing around half a dozen on his counts and had just seen 3 or 4 just a few yards along.

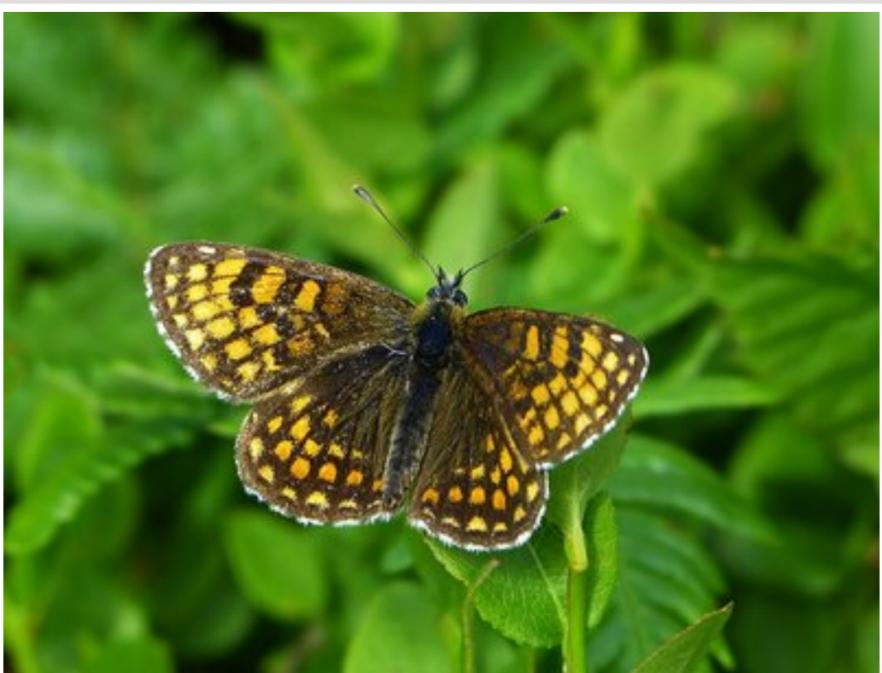
I carried on and sure enough soon spotted my first one. I spent about an hour along this stretch of a hundred yards or so and saw 6 or 7, mostly males I believe, patrolling back and forth at about knee height above the ground. It was early afternoon and getting very warm but there was just enough white cloud about for them to settle occasionally.



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013

I also found a nice fresh looking female that was far less active and posed for a few photos.



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013

I then made my way back up to the car and we carried on our way, arriving at the Hunters Inn at about 3.30pm. After settling in Jane was tired after the journey and said she would have a nap if I wanted to go out for a nose around. I didn't go far, just 30 minutes or so to stretch my legs but soon saw a couple of Dark Green Fritillaries and a single High Brown.



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 05.07.2013

With the weather looking good for the weekend, things were looking promising 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-13 11:07 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 I reckon there could be some HBFs to follow 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jul-13 07:31 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cracking shots Neil 😊 I reckon there could be some HBFs to follow 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Cheers Wurzel, I reckon you could be right 😊

Saturday July 6th – Morning.

As mentioned previously, Rogerdodge had sent me some info on good spots at Heddon Valley, one of which was the wet meadow that he described in his post on the last page of the June sightings thread.

After a good breakfast on Saturday morning I decided to go for a walk and find this meadow and try for some photos before the butterflies became too active in the sun. I soon found the meadow which was exactly as Roger described it, full of head high cow parsley and thistles and also a bank by the path covered with brambles that were just starting to flower.

It was around 10.00am by this time and already getting warm with some early cloud that was rapidly disappearing as the sun got higher. Walking into the meadow I initially saw a couple of Fritillaries that were settling regularly on the cow parsley, both of which proved to be High Browns 😊



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013

After a while I started to see a few more, around half a dozen, mostly High Browns but with a couple of Dark Greens as well. I am always wary of stating numbers because it is so easy to count the same ones more than once and I had noticed that they were moving between the meadow and the brambles on the bank.



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013

I rather like the photo below which to me looks like two fighter jets ready for take-off. The top right hand butterfly is a DGF and the bottom left one a HBF.



HBF and DGF – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013

The photos below are closer shots of the two in the photo above.

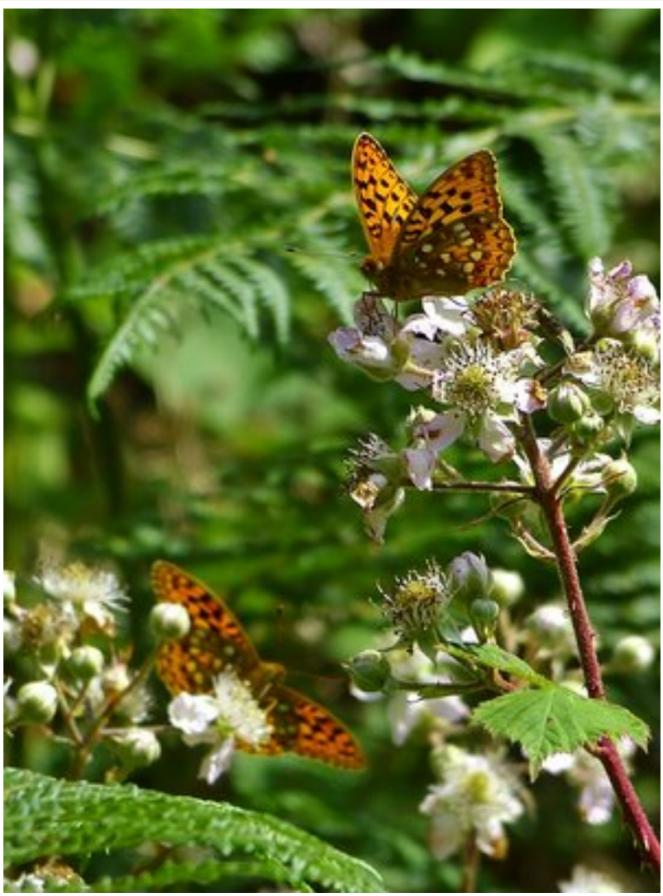


Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013

I spent a further hour or so here during which time more HBFs and DGFs showed up and were joined by a couple of Silver-washed Fritillaries so that eventually there were more than a dozen Fritillaries swooping between the bank and the meadow. Most of them were High Browns which surprised me a bit as I had expected the Dark Greens to outnumber them rather than the other way round.



High Brown Fritillaries – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



Silver-washed Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013

By around 11.30 it had got really warm and the butterflies were far more active so I headed back to the Hunters Inn to meet Jane and have a nice cold drink 😊

I was very happy with the photos that I had taken but I had not managed to get a classic side on underside shot so I figured that I would return later in the afternoon and try again.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 09-Jul-13 09:21 PM GMT

Hi Neil, i'm not surprised you are happy with the photos! Lovely photos of beautiful butterflies.

Regards,

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-13 11:20 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 🍷🍷 That certainly sounds like a great site – perhaps I should head West and not East next year to tick off the Frits?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jul-13 07:19 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys 😊

Saturday 6th July – Afternoon.

After chilling out a bit with a nice cold drink, Jane was keen to attempt the walk down to the cove at Heddon's Mouth.

Since her stroke a couple of years ago Jane still has limited mobility and needs the support of a walking stick, or a folding delta frame for longer distances, but as long as the path is not too rough she can manage a fair distance.

I had previously checked out the paths on both sides of the river and noticed that the one going along the left, although being a slightly longer route, was more level.

We had a slow wander along through the welcome shade of the woods and made our way down to the cove where we just sat for a while enjoying the scenery and watching a number of birds including some young Rock Pipits and a couple of Grey Wagtails that aerobatically swooped along the river catching flies.



Rock Pipit? – Heddon 06.07.2013



Grey Wagtail – Heddon 06.07.2013

A Golden-ringed Dragonfly was also patrolling along the river, the third one of these impressive insects that I had seen during our walk down to the cove.



Golden-ringed Dragonfly – Heddon 06.07.2013

There were also plenty of butterflies along this path including Speckled Woods, Meadow Browns, a couple of Common Blues and a really ancient looking Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary as well as a few DGF/HBFs only one of which came close enough to confirm as a High Brown.



Common Blue – Heddon 06.07.2013

We then made our way back along the path to the Hunters Inn where Jane decided to go and have a quick nap in our room as she was feeling tired after the walk, becoming tired quickly is another legacy of her stroke.

Whilst Jane was resting I figured I would go back to the meadow described in the last report as a lot of butterflies tend to close their wings in the afternoon sun to regulate their temperature and I was hoping that this may give me an opportunity to get some underside shots.

As I approached the bramble covered bank I could see a good number of bright orange butterflies fluttering about and it soon became apparent that there were many more fritillaries than there had been earlier.

As before many of them were flying between the bank and the meadow making an accurate count difficult but there must have been thirty or more,

again mostly High Browns with some Dark Greens mixed in and at least three Silver-washed Fritillaries along with Meadow Browns and a couple of Small Tortoiseshells.



High Brown Fritillaries - Heddon 06.07.2013



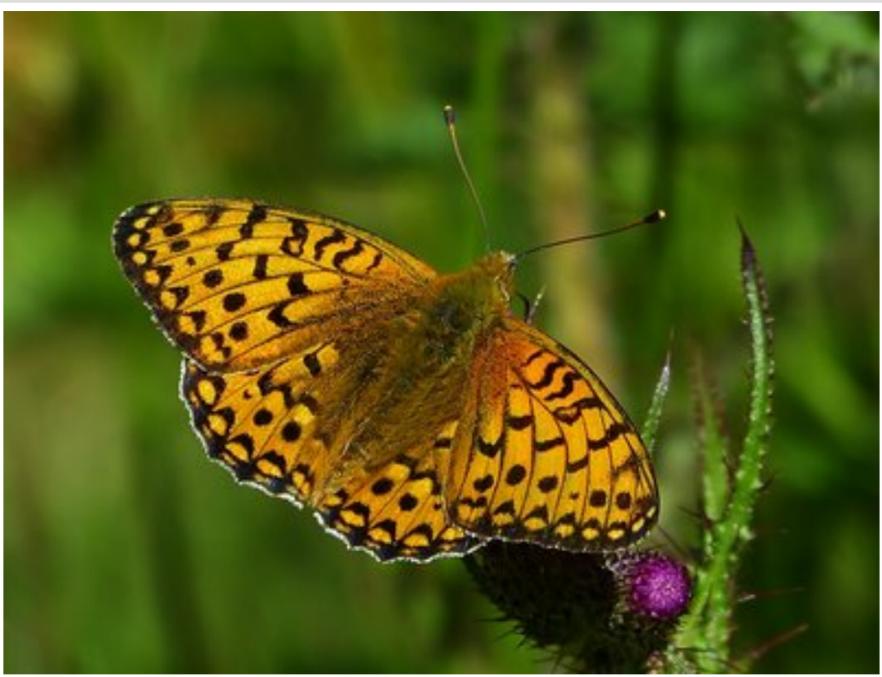
High Brown Fritillary - Heddon 06.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Heddon 06.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Heddon 06.07.2013



Dark Green Fritillary - Heddon 06.07.2013



Silver-washed Fritillary - Heddon 06.07.2013

A great day with loads of Butterflies 😊 I still hadn't managed to get a decent photo of a DGF underside...Oh well, still got another day here, just have to have another look 😊

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 10-Jul-13 07:26 PM GMT

Nice shots Neil - the first HBF underside shot is a corker!

Cheers,
- Pete

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jul-13 07:37 PM GMT

Thanks Pete, I was watching that one for some time as it shuffled about on the brambles hoping it would turn and get a good angle to the sun.

Cheers,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 10-Jul-13 08:27 PM GMT

Impressive stuff, Neil. Nice to see High Browns thriving outside of my local patch. I hope given the perfect flight conditions that a few of them may disperse and colonise other, nearby areas. One can only hope.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-13 11:34 PM GMT

Lush shots of the HBFs especially the first under wing one 😊👍 I really need to sort out seeing those next year...

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jul-13 07:33 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, appreciated as always 😊

David, I met some chaps at Collard Hill on the way home on Monday that told me that High Browns were also out in good numbers at Aish Tor on Dartmoor.

Sunday 7th July

Another glorious morning, we set out for a drive into Exmoor heading for Dunkery Hill and Bin Combe arriving at about 10.30 under a cloudless sky and with it already feeling very warm.

Jane stayed by the car admiring the views and sitting in the sun reading her book whilst I descended into Bin combe to look for Heath Fritillaries. I had seen the report by Bill Willrow last month on his visit to Bin Combe and also read the NT information where the site is described as 'Extreme Butterflying' and from where I quote the following;

'This one is tough, very tough. The habitat is tall, dense bracken on steep slopes where there are no paths'....

Well, they are not kidding 😬....going down is not too much of a problem as long as you watch your footing but coming back out again is a challenge, especially on a such a hot day as this was turning into.
The refreshing breeze up at the top by the car park completely disappeared down in the shelter of the combe and it felt like I was descending into a furnace. I only went about half way down before the gorse and brambles became too thick and overgrown and it became difficult to negotiate the steep slopes.
Nevertheless, I managed to see half a dozen or so Heath Fritillaries flitting and gliding around along a stretch going down from a rocky outcrop for a few hundred yards.
These were very active in the heat and the only times they settled were very brief stops that were usually well out of reach for photos so I only managed a couple of record shots.



Heath Fritillary – Bin Combe 07.07.2013

Other butterflies seen were Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and a couple of rather faded Small Coppers.

After just 30 minutes or so in the combe it was getting too hot (never happy eh!!!) so I made my way back up to meet Jane who greeted me with a big grin and pointed out a Dark Green Fritillary that had been making high speed passes around the car for a while.
With the benefit of hindsight it was probably not such a good idea to visit such a physically challenging site on such a hot day but I did enjoy it and I did see some more Heath Fritillaries, this being only my second time after seeing them for my first time at Haddon Hill the other day 😊.

After a stop off at Exford for a bit of lunch, we made our way back to the Hunters Inn where we sat outside with a drink and chilled out for a while.

Around 4.00pm I went for another walk, this time heading past the wet meadow towards Ladies Mile.

At a spot where the path comes out of the woods onto the bracken covered slopes I saw two faded Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries along with a number of DGF/HBFs that I didn't get close enough to positively ID. I also saw a very active Green Hairstreak that looked to still be in reasonable condition, at least it was still definitely green.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Heddon 07.07.2013

Heading back, I stopped off again at the wet meadow where after taking a couple of photos of HBFs on the brambles I noticed a hat moving about amongst the head high cow parsley 😊. This turned out to be on the head of the first fellow butterflyer that had met along this path and who pointed out to me a mating pair of High Browns.



High Brown Fritillary - Heddon 07.07.2013



High Brown Fritillaries mating pair - Heddon 07.07.2013

There were just as many butterflies here today, if not more than the previous day, so I hung around for a while and took some more photos, finally managing a DGF underside that I was fairly happy with.



High Brown Fritillary - Heddon 07.07.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon 07.07.2013



Silver-washed Fritillary – Heddon 07.07.2013

With the Heath Frits at Haddon Hill and the tatty SPBF the other day along with the DGFs, HBFs, and SWFs, I had already seen five species of Fritillary over the weekend and today I had managed to see all five in one day 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 11-Jul-13 07:49 PM GMT

Great effort, Neil, although I see that you have now joined the numbers of those who have sunk into the abyss known as Bin Combe!!

For sure, this part of the island is the Fritillary capital of Britain.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-13 08:58 PM GMT

Absolutely brill report Neil but if you added Large Blue on the way back I think I might implode with envy 🤩🤩😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jul-13 09:23 PM GMT

Hi David, describing Bin Combe as an abyss certainly sounds about right, you almost get the feeling that you are descending into a lost world. It must be spooky on a misty day.

Ah, sorry Wurzel.....best not read my next posting then 😊

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 11-Jul-13 10:35 PM GMT

That last trio of undersides is just unbelievable. Lovely to compare the differences and similarities.

Brilliant, unforgettable stuff.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jul-13 08:06 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, really appreciate your comments 😊

Monday 8th July

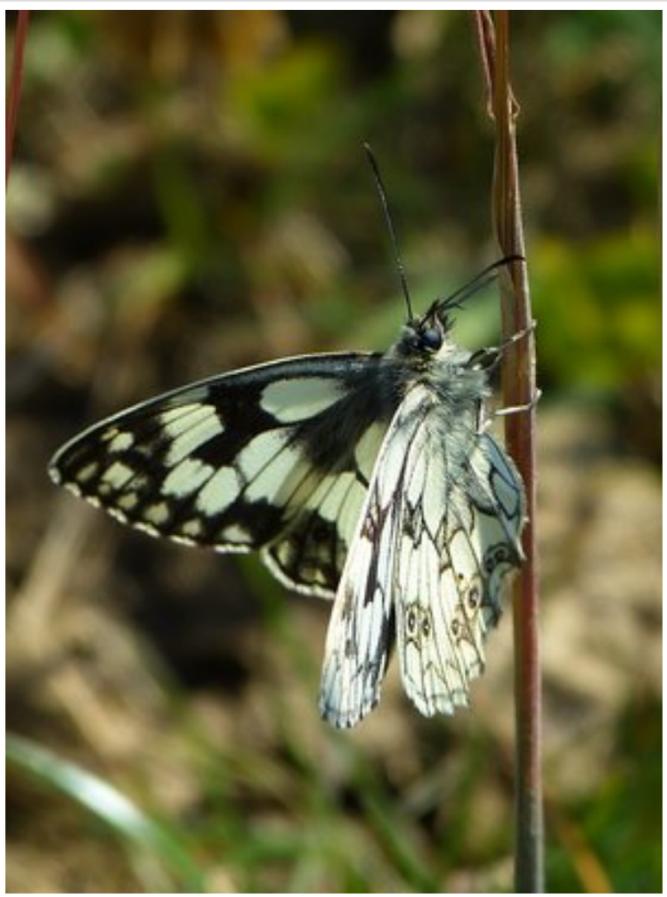
Having spent a glorious few days in the Heddon Valley as described in the previous posts it was time to depart back to the midlands and I figured that as we would be heading back up the M5 it would be remiss of me not to call in at Collard Hill on the way.

After breakfast we threw our stuff into the car and set out, arriving at Collard Hill and parking by the youth hostel at about 11.30am with it already turning into another hot day.

I had never seen Large Blues before and reading up a bit it appears that they do not like to fly if it is too warm and prefer to hide in the shade during the hottest part of the day so I was hoping some would be around before it got too hot for them.

Walking along the path towards the crossroads there were numerous Meadow Browns and a couple of fresh Small Tortoiseshells.

I entered the site and started along the lower path through the trees and out on to the hillside where there were loads of Meadow Browns, my first Marbled Whites of the year and more Small Tortoiseshells. I also saw a couple of fresh male Gatekeepers, again my first this year.



Marbled White - Collard Hill 08.07.2013



Small Tortoiseshell – Collard Hill 08.07.2013

Making my way along to the eastern part of the hill I saw a group of half a dozen or so people clustered around something. Approaching the group a couple of them pointed out to me a mating pair of Large Blue that had apparently been there for some time.



Large Blue mating pair – Collard Hill 08.07.2013

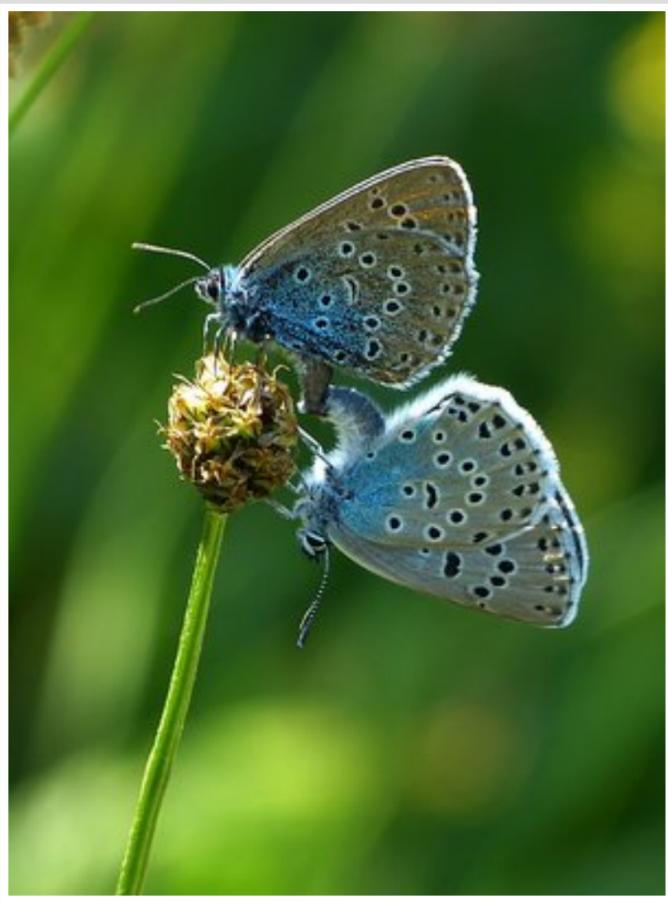


Large Blue mating pair – Collard Hill 08.07.2013

After watching this pair for ten minutes or so they started shuffling about and moved position a couple of times until they separated and the male flew off up the hill.

The female stayed around for a little while and at one point settled in some partial shade where she opened her wings a bit and gave a glimpse of blue

topside.



Large Blue mating pair - Collard Hill 08.07.2013



Large Blue - Collard Hill 08.07.2013



Large Blue - Collard Hill 08.07.2013

I then slowly made my way back along the hill, zig-zagging up and down a bit and saw two more individuals, one of which settled briefly before shooting off again.



Large Blue - Collard Hill 08.07.2013

By this time it was getting very hot and all the butterflies were either very active or taking to the shade so I decided to call it a day and head back to the car and continue on our way home.

I only stopped at Collard Hill for about an hour but it was long enough to see four Large Blues as well as my first Marbled Whites and Gatekeepers this year.

It also made the perfect end to a wonderful weekend during which I had a great time and saw numerous butterflies including my first ever Heath Fritillaries and Large Blues 😊😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 12-Jul-13 09:49 PM GMT

Looks like you had a great time last weekend Neil, a lovely report, and a lot of great photos, 😊 especially the High-brown Fritillaries, a butterfly i have yet to see, but what a beautiful insect.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 12-Jul-13 11:30 PM GMT

Seconded! The High Brown pics in particular are excellent.

And well done for making the most of the good weather.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 13-Jul-13 08:34 PM GMT

Evening Neil

The selection of butterflies you are seeing is certainly enviable and you are taking some great shots – nice to see them in context once in a while. Those High Browns, well, what can I say – would love to see them for myself.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-13 12:09 AM GMT

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh 🙄🙄🙄



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-13 05:27 PM GMT

Thank you all for the comments, very much appreciated 😊

Sorry Wurzel, I hope that wasn't as painful as it sounded 😊😁

What a difference a week had made to the Peacock caterpillars in the garden. The original group had dispersed into four separate groups and then again into six.



Peacock larvae - Coverdale 10.07.2013



Peacock larvae - Coverdale 10.07.2013



Peacock larvae - Coverdale 10.07.2013

I have bought myself a netting cage and am going to put a few in to hopefully rear up to adults, memories of doing this all those year ago have come flooding back 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-13 07:02 PM GMT

Saturday 13th July.

Back at work this week and some domestic stuff to do at home yesterday (Saturday) that I managed to get finished by early afternoon.

Purple Emperors had been showing well at Oversley Wood for the past couple of days so I decided to have a drive over. I realised that it was not the best time, most groundings taking place before 12.30 but figured that I may see some aerial action at the 'congregation area'.

I arrived just turned 3.00 and went straight to the congregation area where within a few minutes I was treated to a pair of male Emperors sparring high up over the trees. During the next 30 minutes or so I must have seen half a dozen males at different spots up in the trees with some furballs with 3 or even 4 males taking part at once 😊

I then went off to do a circuit of the wood to see what else was about. Good numbers of Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals were very active in the hot sun as well as hordes of Meadow Browns and Ringlets with a good scattering of Large Skippers and a few fresh Small Tortoiseshells and Gatekeepers.



Silver-washed Fritillary mating pair hiding from the hot sun. Flash used on this one to fill in shadows.



Large skipper - Oversley 13.07.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Oversley 13.07.2013

I was particularly pleased to see the number of White Admirals as these have not done too well in Warwickshire the past couple of years and I saw more in a couple of hours here than I saw in the whole of last year 😊



White Admiral - Oversley 13.07.2013



White Admiral - Oversley 13.07.2013

There were also a good number of summer brood Commas, every glade and clearing seemed to have one defending its bit of territory.



Comma - Oversley 13.07.2013



Comma - Oversley 13.07.2013

At around 5.00 I went back up to the congregation area and saw that at least 4 male PEs were still having their territorial disputes above the trees.



His Imperial Majesty looking down on his domain.

After watching these for another 30 minutes or so I decided to make my way back to the car park and had not gone far when I came across 2 grounded male Emperors by a muddy puddle. These were very flighty and took to the air at the slightest movement but one of them stayed down just long enough to get a couple of shots.

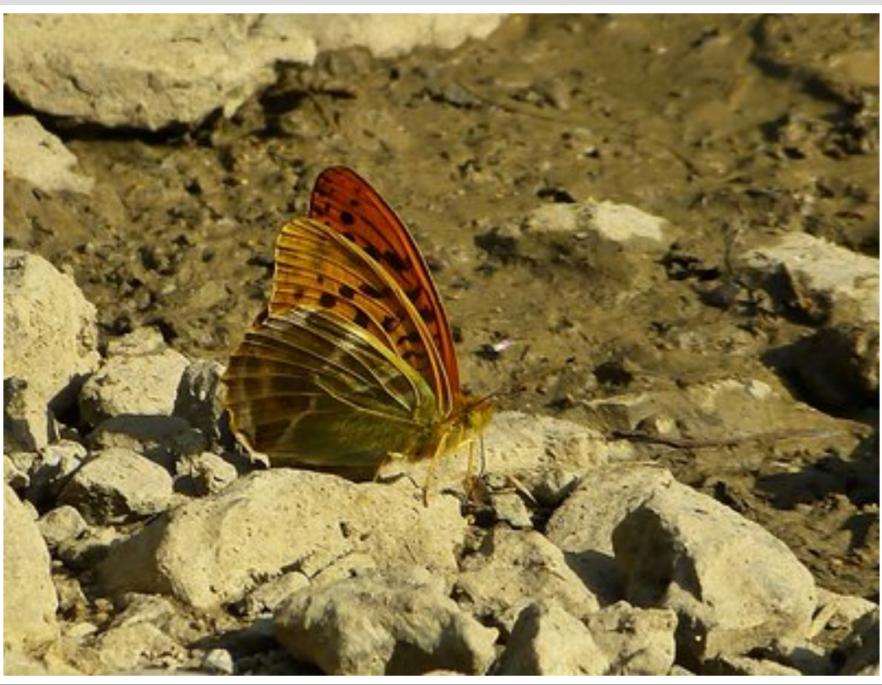


Purple Emperor – Oversley 13.07.2013



Purple Emperor – Oversley 13.07.2013

Earlier I had noticed that in the heat very few butterflies were nectaring on flowers but quite a few were taking minerals from the ground including White Admirals doing mini Emperor impersonations and the Silver-washed Fritillary below.



SWF taking minerals - Oversley 13.07.2013

Work again tomorrow but I have a day off on Thursday, Fermyn is only 90 minutes or so from my house, I reckon I know where I will be going 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-13 10:45 PM GMT

Cracking report Neil - I saw his nibs today but nowhere near as close as that 🍷 Good luck on Thursday.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jul-13 08:37 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, it looks like there is an amazing amount of Imperial Purpleness at Fermyn at the moment 😊

Tuesday 16th July.

The Peacock caterpillars in the garden are all in their final instar now and are no longer in their groups but have dispersed themselves all over the nettle patch, either as single individuals or in twos and threes.



Peacock larvae on nettles - Coverdale 16.07.2013



Peacock larva - Coverdale 16.07.2013

A couple of days ago, just before they dispersed, I put a dozen caterpillars into a netting 'critter cage' to finish their development and hopefully watch them pupate and emerge as adults.

I was also pleased yesterday to see a Ringlet in the garden, I know there are hordes of them around at the moment but this was a garden first for me 😊



Ringlet - Coverdale 15.07.2013

There is not much else in the garden at the moment other than some Large Whites passing through, until this evening that is. When I was outside earlier, just before 8.00pm, I was 'buzzed' by a Red Admiral that circled me a few times before departing over next door. I guess the heat was making it difficult for him to go to sleep as well 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 16-Jul-13 08:49 PM GMT

Lovely reports and great photos as usual Neil. Another one with a magic paint brush hidden within their camera, beautiful Small Tortoiseshell. And the blue on the Purple Emperor, out of this world, brilliant.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 16-Jul-13 09:13 PM GMT

I had to login specially Neil to comment on your mating pair of SWF but all I can think of to say is WOW! I have never seen that before and I have never seen a photo of it. Incredibly well spotted. You are getting some great shots and green is the only colour that comes to mind right now 🍋🍋🍋😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jul-13 09:29 PM GMT

Nick, Pauline,

Thank you for your great comments, I really appreciate them 😊

Nick, I was lucky with the Purple Emperor, he only stayed down for a minute or so and flicked his wings open just the once which I was fortunate to catch.

Pauline, as with the PE, the SWF pair was a bit of luck. One of them flicked its wings and the brief flash of orange attracted my attention otherwise I would have walked past them oblivious to their presence.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 18-Jul-13 05:10 PM GMT

Lovely photos Neil, great shot of the mating pair of SW Fritillaries.

Regards

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jul-13 08:17 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Mike 😊

Thursday 18th July.

My son Chris and myself had both booked a day off work to go to Fermyn Woods today (Thursday), Chris having never been there before and his only previous sighting of a Purple Emperor being a fleeting flypast last year at Oversley Wood.

I had seen the reports and tweets from Mathew Oates and Gillian Thompson and their 100+ PE sightings on Monday and Tuesday and so was hopeful that there would still be a few around.

We arrived and parked up by the gliding club at about 08.15 with about a dozen cars already parked there and set off down the main ride which was still in shadow with the sun lighting up the higher reaches of the trees.

We had only gone a hundred yards when a Purple Emperor took off from the ride right in front of us 😊. We had nearly trodden on it as we were chatting and not expecting to see anything in that first stretch on the ground which was still in the shade.

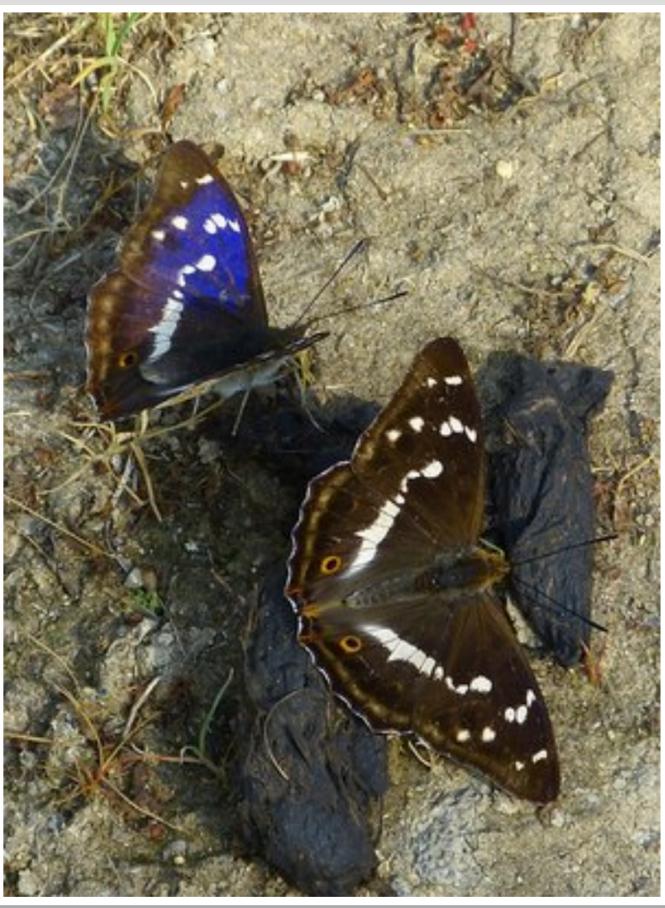
We walked on through Fermyn Wood, seeing a couple more Purple Emperors flying around the sunny upper reaches of the trees and carried on to Lady/Souther Woods.

Gillian Thompson had very kindly e-mailed me the location of some promising animal droppings that had been 'laced' with shrimp bait, including some Fox scat that we first made our way towards. On our way we saw a few more Emperors including some on the ground being photographed by fellow enthusiasts and took some photos ourselves.

We found the fox scat easily thanks to Gills directions and approaching slowly were pleased to see it occupied by three PEs with a fourth one on the ground a few yards away.



Purple Emperors – Fermyn 18.07.2013



Purple Emperors – Fermyn 18.07.2013



Purple Emperor – Fermyn 18.07.2013

We had already taken some photos of Purple Emperors on various 'piles of pooh' but I was keen to get some more shots on different backgrounds if possible, so we carried on, at one point meeting Sussex and UKBs own Neil Hulme on his little bike who stopped for a brief chat, great to finally meet up in such a fantastic place.

We had already noticed a few dried up patches on the paths that looked like they had been baited over the past few days and at one junction towards the southern end of the woods found one such patch occupied by two male Purple Emperors and a Red Admiral.



Emperors and Admiral – Fermyn 18.07.2013

This gave Chris a chance to prostrate himself in worship of HIM, and take a few photos whilst he was down there.

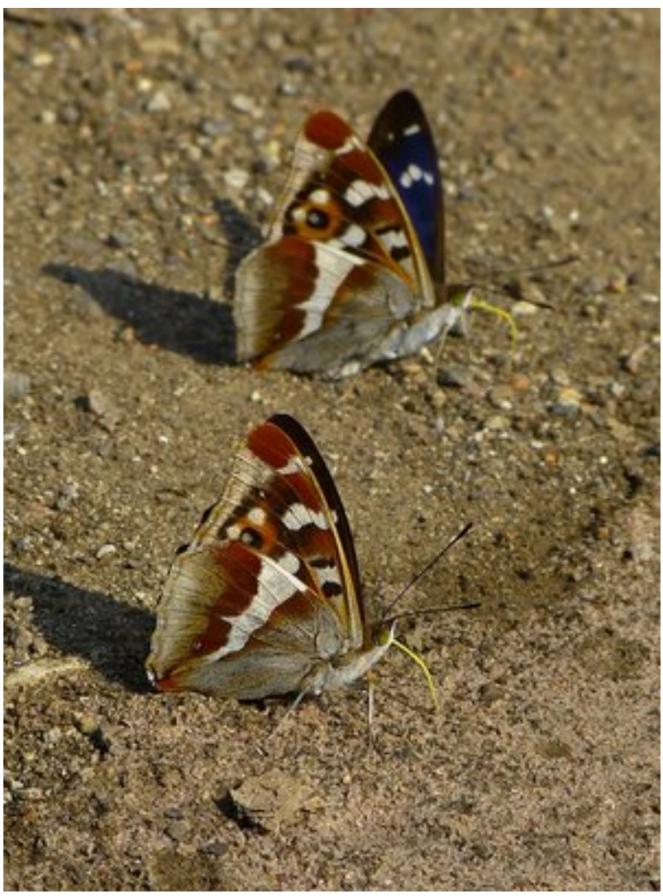


Chris prostrating himself before HIM

I also got down but the articulated screen on my FZ150 made things a little easier for me.



Purple Emperor - Fermyn 18.07.2013



Purple Emperors - Fermyn 18.07.2013



Purple Emperors – Fermyn 18.07.2013

We then retraced our steps back to the Lady/Souther/ Greenside circuit and wandered around there for the rest of the morning seeing loads of PEs, often up to four down within view along the rides at once. By mid-morning they were tending to keep their wings closed in the heat and only briefly flicked them open, even when we put our shadows over them.



One in the foreground, one in front of Chris and another out of shot in the trees to the left.



PE cleaning proboscis on leaves.



Purple Emperor – Fermyn 18.07.2013



Purple Emperor – Fermyn 18.07.2013

We also met Neil Hulme again in Lady Wood where we spent a while enjoying the benefit of his experience.



Demonstration of technique



Purple Emperor – Fermyn 18.07.2013

Around 1.00pm it was getting very hot so we made our way back to the car to have a bit of lunch and get some more water before heading out for a second session.

We wandered back to the Lady/Souther block still seeing plenty of PEs on the way but with most of them now flying higher up although some were still coming to ground, most noticeably in patches of dappled shade rather than full sun.

We did a slow circuit of the rides but after 2.00 things had noticeably quietened down although we did see some good aerial displays, usually of two or three male Emperors swooping and diving around each other. We also still saw a few on the ground, which normally would have been a good result but far fewer compared to the morning.

By 4.00 we felt like we were melting in the heat and we were on our last drops of water so we decided to head back to the car and home.

Whilst it was apparently a quieter day than Monday or Tuesday, both people wise and with fewer Purple Emperors being seen or coming to ground, this is a very relative thing and I still saw more PEs in one morning than I have ever seen in total up until now.

I have no idea how many individuals we actually saw and definitely saw some of the same ones more than once as we wandered about but we spoke to one chap who said he had counted sixty which is probably about the number we saw in total with a couple of dozen of those on the ground.

As well as the Purple Emperors there were also hordes of Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Whites, lots of Commas and Large Skippers and a good scattering of White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries. We also saw a few Purple Hairstreaks flitting about high up around some of the Oaks.

All in all, an excellent day and definitely one of the highlights of my butterfly season this year, one to remember 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 19-Jul-13 09:04 PM GMT

Seems like an amazing day Neil and some really lovely photos there of His Majesty. With such an abundance of PE at Fermyn I feel like the poor relative scratching around in the wastelands in the hope of the odd, lucky shot 😊. Glad Chris enjoyed it too – haven't seen any posts from him recently.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jul-13 09:24 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, thanks for the comments 😊

Chris hasn't been able to get out as much this year due to the hours he has been working, he works for Mencap, lots of unsociable shifts involved. He is also off to America in September to do Route 66 and saving his holiday and money for that.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-13 11:30 PM GMT

You know Neil you can go off people! First there were Heath and High Brown Frits as well as a brief stop-off for Large Blues – and now this 🎁🎁🎁😊😊
Fantastic shots, great report I only wish Fermyn was nearer to me 😞 I hope Bentley produces this weekend – wish me luck 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jul-13 09:55 PM GMT

Hee Hee 😊 Sorry Wurzel 😊

I am indeed fortunate that in living in the Midlands there are sites such as Fermyn just 90 minutes away. I have also been very lucky this year with some of my holidays falling just right for some species and enabled me to make the most of some later than normal flight times.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 20-Jul-13 10:22 PM GMT

Another great report Neil. What a place Fermyn wood is, 60 PE in one day, wow! i would be lucky to see that many in two years on my local patch. Great photos to match a great day.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jul-13 10:34 PM GMT

Thanks Nick 😊

We didn't do an accurate count, the figure of 60 was from someone we were talking to but it sounds about right for what we saw and still only half of the numbers reported on Monday and Tuesday. It was more than I have ever seen in total up until Thursday.

Thursday 18th July – addendum

The amazing numbers of Purple Emperors at Fermyn Woods this week have been the obvious focus but the fact is that this is a great place in its own right with plenty of other butterflies. As mentioned in my previous report from Thursday there were plenty of Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Large Skippers and Commas with White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries putting in regular appearances.

We also saw a few Purple Hairstreaks flitting about high up around some of the Oaks around the rides. With a couple of Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells also being seen, on another day anywhere else, all these butterflies would have counted as a good day.



Large Skipper – Fermyn 18.07.2013





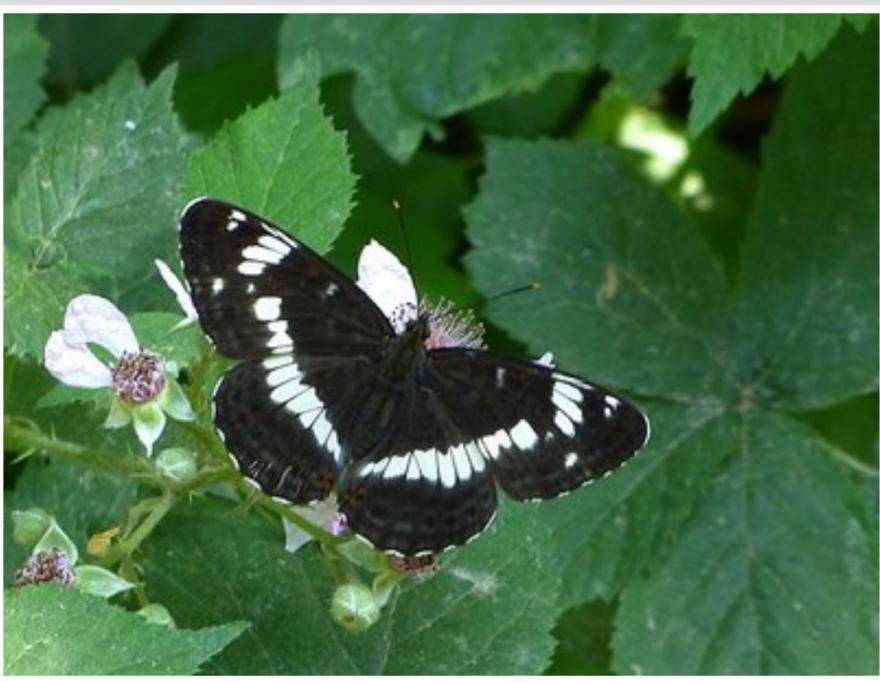
Commoners instead of Royalty on some piles



White Admiral - Fermyn 18.07.2013



White Admiral - Fermyn 18.07.2013



White Admiral – Fermyn 18.07.2013



Silver-washed Fritillary – Fermyn 18.07.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-13 10:53 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil – especially the last Silver Washed that is just lush 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 20-Jul-13 10:58 PM GMT

Missed you by a day,Neil! You're right of course,Fermyn is a fantastic place.Glad you had the chance to go,and it was successful.
As you say,even without the PE,Fermyn would be great for butterflies! But with them–wow!

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jul-13 11:21 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, that SWF was the only one that stopped still for more than a couple of seconds. Another full arm stretch job taking full advantage of the FZ150s articulated screen 😊

Thanks EB, it was certainly a great day 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jul-13 04:33 PM GMT

Saturday 20th July

With my recent trips to Devon and Fermyn Woods taking up most of my available spare time lately, I had not had much chance to check out any of my local spots. Yesterday (Saturday), having done the domestic stuff for the day by early afternoon, I decided to nip round to Castle Hills by Solihull. It was a few degrees cooler than of late with a covering of cloud but still warm and muggy so I was hoping that the butterflies would be a bit less hyperactive than recently.

I walked along a footpath that goes alongside hedgerows between some farm fields and out into some meadows full of long grass and flowers including patches of thistles and knapweed. Along the hedges there were good numbers of Speckled Woods, Ringlets and Gatekeepers and the meadows were swarming with Meadow Browns and Skippers.

I had seen Essex Skippers here in previous years so I began to take photos of as many small golden skippers as I could to try and identify them (and get it right this year 😊). This proved easier said than done as there was a fair bit of a breeze which meant that although they were settling often, it was usually down in amongst the grass so I got lots of photos with grass stems across them. These were good enough for identification purpose however and it soon became apparent that there were good numbers of Essex Skippers as well as hordes of Small and some Large Skippers.



Essex Skipper male - Castle Hills 20.07.2013



Essex Skipper male - Castle Hills 20.07.2013



Essex Skipper male - Castle Hills 20.07.2013



Small Skipper female - Castle Hills 20.07.2013



Small Skipper male - Castle Hills 20.07.2013



Large Skipper male - 20.07.2013

In one meadow there were at least half a dozen Small Tortoiseshells which was good to see as these have been a bit scarce around here in recent years.



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 20.07.2013

I was also pleased to see a good scattering of Marbled Whites, I had found one here last year which was a first for me at this site and it was good to confirm their presence here 😊



Marbled White - Castle Hills 20.07.2013



Marbled White - Castle Hills 20.07.2013

With a single Small Heath, Large and Green-veined Whites plus a couple of Commas, this made a total of thirteen species seen, possibly fourteen if I count a couple of whites that may have been 'Small' but I am not absolutely sure of. Nothing really out of the ordinary but what was impressive was the numbers of butterflies, especially Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Skippers that were about 😊



Gatekeeper - Castle Hills 20.07.2013



Gatekeeper with less Orange on hindwing and reduced spots



Comma - Castle Hills 20.07.2013

A very pleasant couple of hours with outstanding numbers of butterflies 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 21-Jul-13 08:24 PM GMT

Evening Neil

I don't think Mike will mind me saying that we were discussing your photos today (whilst waiting for 1 of the 54 PE's to come down 😊) and what great shots you brought back from Fermyn. What impressed both of us though was how sharp your white butts are in that communal shot. I know how difficult that is having photographed several Wood Whites mud-puddling and probably failing to get a single one in focus whilst they were all facing different directions. I am assuming that to get such a good depth of field you were not using your close-up lens?

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 21-Jul-13 09:10 PM GMT

More lovely photos Neil, and i see you to have a magic paint brush hidden within your camera, brilliant Small Tortoiseshell. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jul-13 10:18 PM GMT

Thanks Nick, I don't know about a magic paint brush, those nice new Small Tortoiseshells don't really need any help 😊

Hi Pauline, Thank you for your, and Mikes, comments 😊

You are correct, I was not using the close up lens. I am finding that for most day to day use I prefer to use the FZ150 without the lens fitted and use the zoom to give me a longer working distance. I find that this works better for me, especially when the butterflies can be harder to approach when warmed up. Most of my photos this year have been taken without the close up lens.

There are times when I will still use the close up lens, usually when I can spend a bit of time with the subject such as with roosting butterflies or early stages like the recent shots of the Peacock larvae in my garden.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-13 10:39 PM GMT

Great shots Neil 😊 I would like the Gatekeeper with the reduced ocelli in my collection 🐛

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jul-13 08:33 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I thought of you when I saw that one 😊

Tuesday 23rd July

Towards the end of last week the Peacock larvae on the nettle patch in the garden started disappearing, hopefully to wander off and pupate. I had a look to see if I could find any pupae without success but wasn't really surprised, Jeremy Thomas says in 'The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland' that he has yet to find a Peacock chrysalis in the wild.

At the same time my captive larvae also began to pupate. Despite a timely message from Vince Massimo to provide twigs for them to pupate on, most of them wandered up to the top of the cage and pupated on the netting 😞, all except one that chose a nettle stem. This has made it difficult to take photos of most of them which are of the dark/brownish form as I suppose the netting resembles bark.



Peacock Pupae - 22.07.2013

The pupa on the nettle stem is the yellow/green form and being able to take the stem out of the cage makes it much easier to photograph.



Peacock Pupa - 22.07.2013



Peacock Pupa - 22.07.2013

When I got home from work this afternoon, I noticed one of the pupa had fallen from its position on the netting and was lying on the floor of the cage. When I gently picked it up the abdomen section wriggled a bit so it was still live. I did not really want to leave it lying loose as I wondered if it would survive like that and if the butterfly would be able to emerge properly.

After giving it a bit of thinking about, I got a small piece of sticky double-sided tape (one of those things that just happens to be lying around a blokes garage 😊) and gently attached it to one of the twigs in the cage. Not sure if this will work but I am hoping it will last long enough to complete its development and emerge properly.



Peacock Pupa - 22.07.2013



Peacock Pupa - 22.07.2013

On a different note, as well as all the butterflies that the recent warm spell brought out, there have been plenty of moths flying around at night and up against our windows, including the nice Swallow-tailed Moth that flew into our back room the other night.



Swallow-tailed Moth - 22.07.2013

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-13 11:28 PM GMT

Nice moth shot 😊 What with having to leave the bathroom light on for the girls and the window open because of the heat we've had a fair few moths in too but not one as nice looking as that one. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jul-13 08:55 PM GMT

Wednesday 24th July

As some other UKB members have noted there are a lot of whites around recently, not least in my garden where they have been quick to reappear during the still warm sunny spells between the storms.

I have mentioned previously that the Green-veined White is a particular favourite of mine but I always seem to overlook Large and Small Whites, or put them down as 'various unidentified whites' when there are all the other butterflies around to attract my attention.

This also means that I have very few decent photos of Large and Small Whites so earlier this evening I went into the back garden and made a special effort to try and get some reasonable shots. This was easier said than done as despite there being plenty around with often half a dozen or more in view they were usually passing through and not stopping. There is one straggly lavender however that did tempt some to briefly stop and give me the chance of some shots 😊



Large White - Coverdale 24.07.2013



Small White - Coverdale 24.07.2013



Small White just taking off - Coverdale 24.07.2013

And to make the trio of common whites complete....



Green-veined Whites - Coverdale 24.07.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 24-Jul-13 10:14 PM GMT

Excellent pictures of overlooked and difficult-to-photograph butterflies, Neil. They do love lavender though, and will return again and again to the same clump. But it can get frustrating : you approach the butterfly and at the very last second up it goes, only to return a few seconds later on a slightly different flower. You recompose the shot and off it goes. And repeat *da capo* 😊

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 24-Jul-13 10:26 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Totally agree with Dave. And that first photo is just superb.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-13 11:10 PM GMT

I agree with the others - great shots 😊 Whites are one of those stand-by species - there when you're having a quiet day - so I must remember to not take them for granted.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-13 10:19 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, very much appreciated as always 😊

Friday 26th July

A couple of hectic days at work before I finished at lunchtime today for two weeks 😊 The weather has been on the change for the past week with some thunder storms and heavy showers but it has still been very warm and sunny in between and looks set to continue being 'changeable' for the next couple of weeks. Next week I have few a jobs to get done around the house but am hoping to get out a bit so I will probably wait and see what the weather does before deciding where to go.

The second week Jane and myself are off up to Arnside for a few days, stopping at the same B&B that we stayed at last year 😊

Getting back to today, after finishing work and doing a bit of running around, I had a couple of hours to spare this afternoon so I nipped round to one of my favourite local spots, Shadowbrook Meadows.

The place was alive with hundreds of Meadow Browns and Whites with numerous Small Skippers and some Gatekeepers mixed in. I was also pleased to see a couple of male Common Blues that were very actively chasing anything that came near, a full time job with the numbers of other butterflies they were sharing the meadow with.



Large White - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013



Gatekeeper female - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013



Small Skipper - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013



Small Skippers - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013

One 'White' attracted my attention as being a bit different and on settling proved to be my first summer brood Brimstone of the year, a female.



Brimstone female - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013

This was one of the few local sites that I had found Small Coppers at last year and sure enough I soon spotted a nice fresh looking male zipping about. Watching him I soon established his 'patrol route' so I could sit in wait for him and get some photos. These are one of the easier species to photograph on a hot sunny afternoon as once you spot their favourite perches they inevitably keep coming back.



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013

Along one side of one of the meadows there is a hedgerow with some bramble patches along which there were at least half a dozen nice fresh Peacocks busy feeding up before tucking themselves away for hibernation. It is an amazing thought that when I return here next spring It will be these same individuals that I will be looking for.



Peacock - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013

As mentioned above, there were numerous Small Skippers darting about all over the meadows and I did my usual thing of taking photos of them from various angles to try and confirm their identity. I had not previously found Essex Skippers here although they are present nearby at Castle Hills. Going through my photos earlier this evening I came across a couple of shots of one individual that looked like 'Essex' so I posted them in the 'Identification' forum where Guy Padfield has confirmed that it is an Essex Skipper: D



Essex Skipper - Shadowbrook 26.07.2013

A great couple of hours when it was fantastic just to be surrounded by hundreds of butterflies: D

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 26-Jul-13 11:24 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

A great couple of hours when it was fantastic just to be surrounded by hundreds of butterflies

Couldn't agree more, Neil.

This time of year is lovely because you have all the fresh vanessids and Pierids joining the still respectable Meadow/Hedge Browns, Ringlets, Small/Essex Skippers. Throw in a few fresh Common Blues and Small Coppers and it is very colourful indeed (nice Small Copper pic, by the way).

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-13 10:14 AM GMT

Great report Neil. I agree that this time of year is great in terms of range and number 😊 A couple of years ago at Alners Gorse I tried for to see a colour

wheel of butterflies (struggled with green unless I could count female Brimstone as lime green?).

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-13 11:08 PM GMT

Cheers David and Wurzel, the past couple of days have been a delight, purely for the sheer number of butterflies about 😊.

Saturday 27th July - Morning

On a Saturday I usually go out early and get some shopping done before the crowds build up and then do a few jobs around the house or garden depending on the weather. As it was a nice warm sunny morning again I potted about in the garden, as usual with my camera close to hand.

I have already commented on the number of Whites passing through the garden and this morning was a repeat of the previous few days with loads of Large, Small and Green-veined, sometimes in numbers that looked like great big snowflakes were dancing around the garden.

This morning I also noticed a fair number of Gatekeepers, I often get the odd one in the garden but this morning there were half a dozen including a couple of females.



Gatekeeper female - Coverdale 27.07.2013



Gatekeeper female - Coverdale 27.07.2013

My dwarf Buddleias are starting to flower and attracted a steady stream of Whites and a single Comma that has been around for the past few days.



Small White - Coverdale 27.07.2013



Comma - Coverdale 27.07.2013

The biggest surprise of the morning however was a Large Skipper, the first I have ever seen in the garden 😊



Large Skipper - Coverdale 27.07.2013

I also saw a couple of fresh looking Peacocks that flew across the garden but didn't settle long enough to get a photo. I reckon these are the first to emerge from the larvae that I had on my nettles recently. My captive pupae are not showing any changes in colour yet, they pupated about 7-9 days ago so the adults should be emerging soon, just in time for some heavy rain over the next couple of days 🙄

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 28-Jul-13 06:31 PM GMT

Some nice photos in your previous postings Neil. There are loads of butterflies around at the moment and Gatekeepers seem to be doing well this year, as we have also had a fair number in the garden.

all the best,

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 28-Jul-13 07:10 PM GMT

Evening Neil

I love your Small Copper wings closed with the complimenting background. Really nice shot. I am still trying to find my Small Copper with blue spots but I'd settle for that 🍷 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jul-13 07:22 PM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊, it is some years since I have had the number of butterflies in the garden that I have this past few days 😊

Thanks Pauline, I quite like that one myself. All that dry grass around at the moment gives some nice background shades 😊

Saturday 27th July - Afternoon

Later in the afternoon, after finishing the 'stuff' around the house, the forecast rain showers hadn't materialised and it was looking to stay dry for a bit longer so I decided to pop out for a bit.

I didn't have time to go far so went to have a look around at Sheldon Country Park, one of my local sites that I hadn't yet visited this year.

As with Shadowbrook Meadows on Friday, the sheer number of Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Whites, and Skippers was amazing with dozens if not hundreds of butterflies in view at times.



Hedge and Meadow - Sheldon CP 27.07.2013

As well as Small Skippers, most of which were looking a bit tired and faded, there were good numbers of Essex Skippers. The Essex Skippers were mostly in much better condition, no doubt due to the fact that they generally emerge a bit later than the 'Smalls' and this helped me pick out which ones to concentrate on to get the photos to confirm their Identity.



Essex Skipper female - Sheldon 27.07.2013

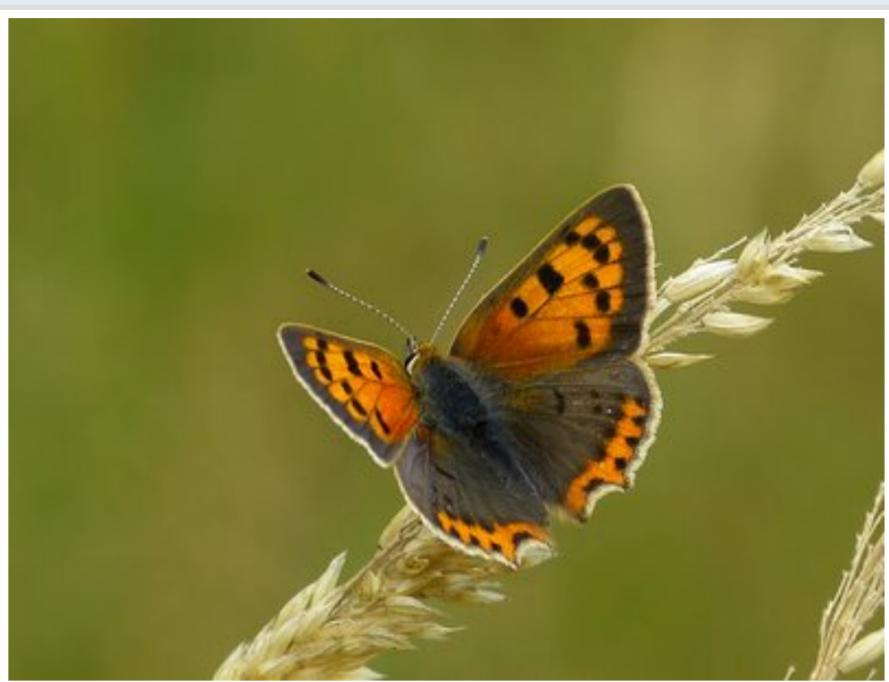


Essex Skipper male – Sheldon CP 27.07.2013



Essex Skipper male – Sheldon CP 27.07.2013

This was one of the sites that I had looked for Small Coppers at last year without success so I was particularly pleased to find a couple of individuals, one of which posed nicely for me.



Small Copper – Sheldon CP 27.07.2013



Small Copper – Sheldon CP 27.07.2013

In the same corner of one field I also found a nice new male Common Blue, another species that I struggled to find locally last year. It is good to see that both Small Coppers and Common Blues are still at their usual local sites, even when I failed to find them last year they must have been there to produce this years descendants.



Blue and Brown – Sheldon CP 27.07.2013



Common Blue – Sheldon CP 27.07.2013



Common Blue – Sheldon CP 27.07.2013



Common Blue – Sheldon CP 27.07.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-13 08:25 PM GMT

Lovely Small Coppers and those metallic Blues – lush 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 28-Jul-13 09:37 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Just been catching up with your recent posts, you have certainly been busy. Lovely reports, and some beautiful photos, especially the Small Copper, [26th,052] and the Male Common Blue, taken today. But, my favourite has to be the Gatekeeper [27th] on the dead piece of wood, i can just imagine it being on a beach somewhere, with a couple of old fishing boats moored-up behind it, with the tide out and, the small waves crashing down on the sand in the distance. An unusual photo, but a brilliant composition, very artistic, and a beautiful piece of photography. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jul-13 10:57 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😊

Thanks Nick, that sounds very poetic 😊

The piece of wood is actually part of my dilapidated garden fence, the background is the neighbours' shed 😊

I have not actually travelled far over the past few days, just a couple of local sites and my garden, speaking of which.....

Sunday 28th July – A surprise visitor

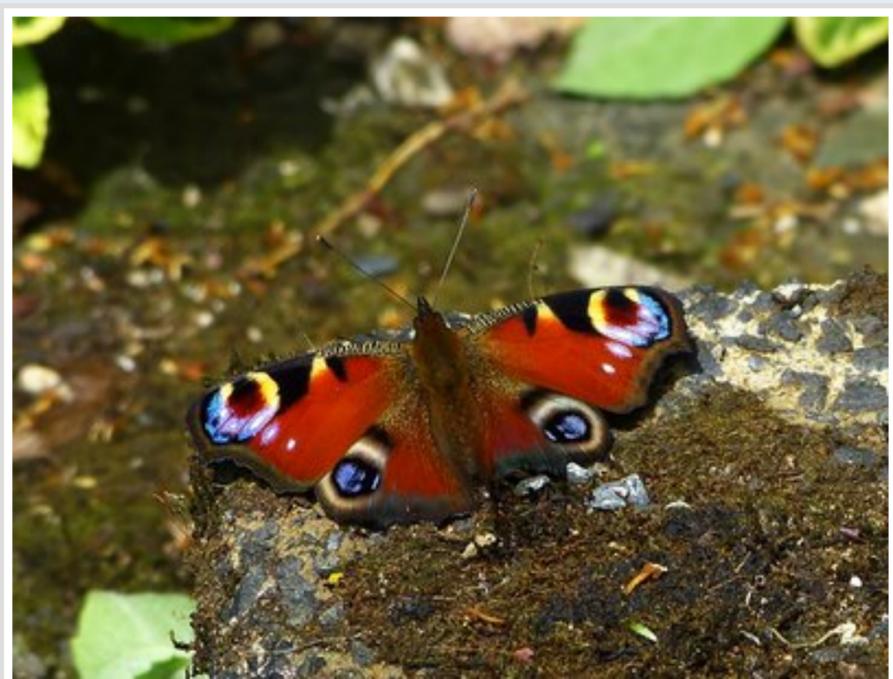
I had invited my Mom round for the day today so obviously wasn't going anywhere but again the forecast rain showers didn't happen so we spent a bit of time sitting in the garden where it was very pleasant if a little breezy.

As well as the usual suspects from the past few days I spotted a couple of summer brood Holly Blues dancing around the shrubs and managed to get a shot of one.



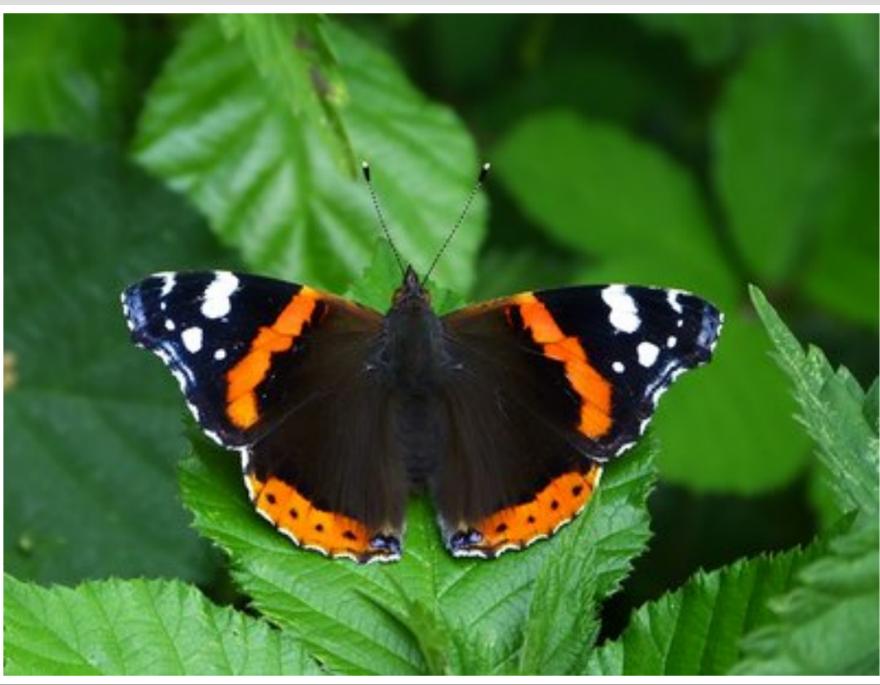
Holly Blue – Coverdale 28.07.2013

A couple of fresh Peacocks were still around albeit very flighty and hard to approach.



Peacock – Coverdale 28.07.2013

A nice fresh looking Red Admiral spent a while circling around the nettle patch and settled a few times, right in the middle of the patch where I suffered a few stings reaching over to get the shots.



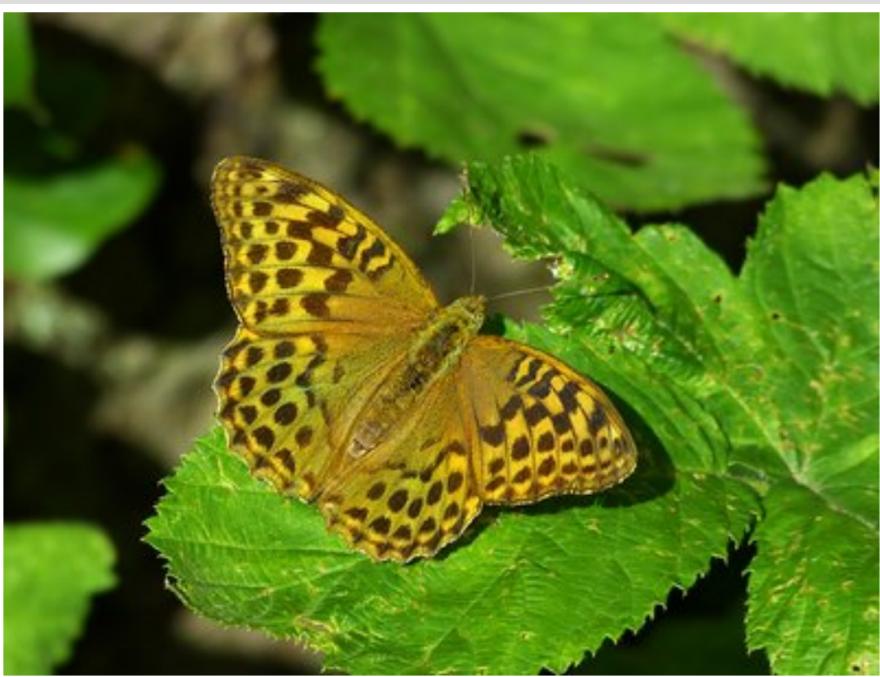
Red Admiral - Coverdale 28.07.2013

The biggest surprise of the day however was when I spotted what at first I thought was a faded Comma that has been around for a few days. I looked again and thought that it looked a bit big for a Comma and then thought 'No, It can't be'.....

...it was, a female Silver-washed Fritillary had come gliding into my back garden, and then proceeded to settle a few times. 😊😊😊



Silver-washed Fritillary female - Coverdale 28.07.2013



Silver-washed Fritillary female - Coverdale 28.07.2013

I have no idea where it may have come from, there are no populations that I am aware of within 15 miles or so from my house which is in a typical sub-urban road. There are good numbers to be found at Snitterfield Bushes and Oversley Wood a bit further south and at Ryton Woods by Coventry but this is the first SWF I have ever seen anywhere around Solihull.

I think that for a garden sighting that will take some beating for me for a long time 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 28-Jul-13 11:15 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Recently for three summers running i had a male Silver-washed Fritillary visit my garden, always on the Buddleia in early to late August, again the nearest site to me that i know of was a 15 minute drive away. Most unusual.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jul-13 09:28 AM GMT

Hi Nick,

Mike Slater from Warwickshire BC tells me that SWFs have been popping up all over the place this year. He has also seen a DGF not far from me, again miles away from where they are usually found.

Monday 29th July.

A day of dramatic changes in the weather with thunderstorms and heavy rain showers but also with some prolonged warm sunny spells in between.

This afternoon we went round to our daughters and whilst Jane and Sarah were busy talking women talk, I nipped out for a bit of a walk. I was lucky to catch a spell of good sun and there were plenty of butterflies still about despite there being some heavy rain shortly before.

I followed a footpath going along hedges across farmland between the M42 and M6 near Coleshill, seeing mostly assorted Whites and Browns but also good numbers of Peacocks with the odd Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral as well.

There was one stretch of hedgerow that had a thick band of Ragwort growing along it that was covered in Peacocks, at least a dozen in view in front of me with more flitting between flower heads to each side.



Peacocks - Coleshill 29.07.2013



Peacock - Coleshill 29.07.2013

After being out for an hour or so, I was watching some dark clouds get closer and a few distant rumbles of thunder started again so I started walking back to my daughters, arriving just as the heavens opened again.

Later in the afternoon, back home, the storm passed over and the sun came out again and butterflies almost immediately re-appeared in the garden. The Red admiral from yesterday was still around and appears to have taken up a territory above the nettle patch in almost exactly the same position that one did last year.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 29.07.2013

Still no sign of my own captive Peacock pupae emerging.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jul-13 09:44 PM GMT

Tuesday 30th July - Counting Coppers

Having found Small Coppers at Shadowbrook Meadows and Sheldon Country Park over the past week and following their poor year locally last year, I was keen to look for them at Castle Hills.

This site lies sort of half way in between the other two, just to the south of where the A45 is being diverted to make room for the extension to the runway at Birmingham Airport and is accessed by a couple of public footpaths that lead across towards Bickenhill.

After a couple of rain showers this morning the weather turned quite nice this afternoon, warm with light cloud and sunny spells so I went to have a look around.

As has become usual recently there were loads of assorted Whites flying and Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Skippers (Essex and Small) were in their hundreds across the site along with dozens of Peacocks.

Even though I had not found any Small Coppers here last year, I had seen them in previous years so I made my way to a corner of a meadow where I had seen them before. As I approached a clump of Ragwort I saw one, not only that but he had a nicely defined row of blue spots of form *caeruleopunctata*.



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013

Moving on I soon found another and along this one edge of the meadow I counted four different individuals defending territories every 10-15 yards or so.



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013

Going into the next field I found a couple more and circling back around, another that made seven between the two fields 😊



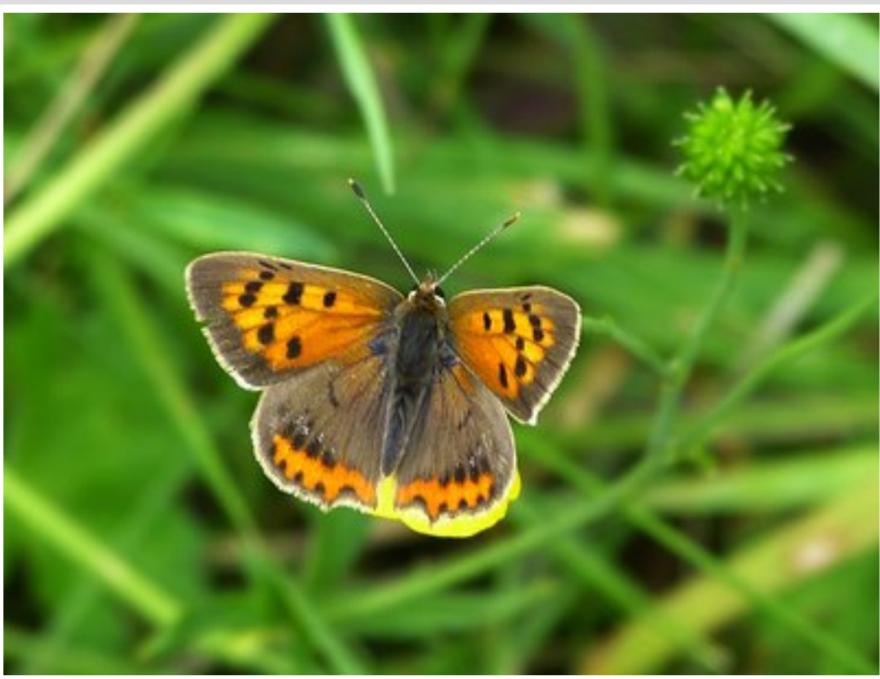
Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013

At one point I was walking past a small shrub sized Oak, only about ten feet high when I saw a small butterfly flying around it. I had often looked up at the Oaks around this site looking for Purple Hairstreaks but despite a few tantalising glimpses had never had a clear enough view to confirm a sighting. This time there was no question as the butterfly settled just above head height a few times and proved its identity beyond doubt, a female Purple Hairstreak. Not only that but she opened her wings enabling me to get my first ever proper open wing PH photo, not the best condition example but I was well chuffed nevertheless 😊



Purple Hairstreak – Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Purple Hairstreak – Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013



Purple Hairstreak – Castle Hills Solihull 30.07.2013

After a couple of hours the clouds were getting heavier and darker and I felt a few spots of rain in the air so I made my way back feeling very happy, not only with the number of Small Coppers seen but also with the unexpected Purple Hairstreak 😊

Also, my Peacock pupae are changing colour now, I have seen a couple of fresh Peacocks in the garden today, presumably from the same original batch of eggs.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 30-Jul-13 10:46 PM GMT

I am immensely envious of that Purple Hairstreak, Neil. The only one that has ever come close to doing that for me was so worn it was hard to say what it was! Excellent shots. 🍷 😊

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 31-Jul-13 04:47 PM GMT

Hi! Neill I've yet to find a Small Copper, 🍷 your photo's are great, I'm off to Southport tomorrow so here's hoping Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 31-Jul-13 06:01 PM GMT

Evening Neil

Is it your intention to spend the rest of the Summer teasing and tormenting me 🤔😂 Not only a Small Copper with blue spots but a Purple Hairstreak too, wings open no less! Well, I despair 🍷🍷😂

Re: nfreem

by David M, 31-Jul-13 06:46 PM GMT

Well done with the Purple Hairstreak open wing shot, Neil. It's one of the UK's most difficult images to capture.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 31-Jul-13 07:46 PM GMT

Many thanks all for the kind comments, they really add the icing on the cake to great days out 😊

Pauline, I am so sorry I am driving you to despair, its totally unintentional. I am not singling you out, I had Wurzel groaning a bit a few weeks back 😊😂

I must admit, I went looking for the Small Coppers but the Purple Hairstreak just happened when I wasn't expecting it 😊

Wednesday 31st July

Yesterday (Tuesday) the Peacock Pupae had started to change colour, in fact one had emerged early in the afternoon.....



Peacock Pupae, dark form



Peacock pupa, green form.

A little later I released the adult into the garden where it posed briefly on my path before taking off over the neighbours garden.



Peacock - Coverdale 30.07.2013

After the past few days of rain showers, some of them heavy and thundery, with warm sunny spells in between, today was miserable and grey with constant rain.....

.....and guess when most of the rest of my Peacocks decided to emerge.

I had been keeping the cage outside when the weather was reasonable but bringing it in to the garage overnight as the pupae were more exposed on the netting than they would be in the wild where I would presume they would be tucked away in sheltered locations.

I got up this morning to find nine recently emerged adults hanging down drying their wings.



Recently emerged Peacocks.

Not wanting to disturb them I left them and went out a couple of times on some errands thinking I would release them into the garden when the rain stopped. Well, it rained all day and it was gone 6.00pm before it finally stopped and the clouds turned a lighter shade of grey and I had a chance to release them.

I put the cage out in the garden and just unzipped the side for them to find their way out and fly off.



Just before release...

There are just four pupae left to emerge, all look healthy enough so maybe tomorrow.

Bye for now

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 31-Jul-13 08:01 PM GMT

Hi Neil.

I've really enjoyed reading about your Peacocks. I'm sure it was a very satisfying moment as they took flight for the very first time ...

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 31-Jul-13 08:10 PM GMT

Thanks Mark,

It was a great moment 😊

This was the first time I have done anything like this for more than 35 years, brought back loads of happy memories 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-13 09:00 PM GMT

Thursday 1st August

The last four Peacocks emerged early this morning, they were hanging there drying their wings when I got up. It was a much better day today so as soon as they started to flutter about inside the cage I released them into the back garden.

Out of fourteen caterpillars collected from the back garden, all fourteen made it through to adults that I released back into the garden. I didn't collect the caterpillars until they were in the last instar which probably meant that any survivors at that stage were probably free from parasites 🤔. I know from Vince Massimo's excellent 'early stages' thread that Peacocks have a parasitic wasp which emerges as a grub as the caterpillars are entering their fourth instar but am not sure if there are any other parasites which would still be effecting them when full grown or as pupae.

The Red Admiral from a few days ago is still around and still looking quite good despite being out in some heavy rain showers. Interestingly I never see him during the day but he always turns up early evening to defend the airspace above the nettle patch until about 7.30pm when the sun goes behind the trees at the bottom of the garden. Tonight a second Red Admiral tried it on a few times but was seen off by the 'owner'



Red Admiral still looking quite good – Coverdale 01.08.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 01-Aug-13 09:09 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Out of fourteen caterpillars collected from the back garden, all fourteen made it through to adults that I released back into the garden.

You can't do better than 100%, Neil.

I'm sure the whole episode has been a great pleasure to you.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-13 09:55 PM GMT

Excellent news about your Peacocks Neil 😊 Are you going to try something similar next year – perhaps with Chequered Skippers or even better Glanvilles – I know a good site where you could release them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-13 10:47 PM GMT

Hee hee, steady on Wurzel 😊

Tempting as that might be, I think there are enough dodgy introductions around already.

I will probably do something again, depends on what chance throws my way. The Peacocks were from eggs laid in my garden so I didn't even have to go looking.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-13 01:04 PM GMT

Friday 2nd August.

I had hoped to get a chance to make it down to Aston Rowant this week to see Chalkhill Blues and Silver-spotted Skippers, my original plan was for Wednesday but with a weather forecast for rain all day, which turned out to be bang on, I decided against it, and with Thursday already 'booked up' with family plans, this left me with Friday.

With a forecast for early showers clearing away through the morning I figured on getting there around mid-morning, hopefully whilst there was still some cloud and the butterflies were still warming up.

So it was that I arrived just after 10.00 under an overcast sky and with just a small hint of drizzle in the air. Nevertheless it was quite warm and starting out over the hill side I soon saw Meadow Browns and some Chalkhill Blues fluttering about. I am used to seeing Meadow Browns flying in quite dull

conditions and even light rain but I was surprised at how many Chalkhills were flying given how dull it still was.

This gave me a chance to get some Chalkhill Blue underside shots but this proved easier said than done as it was a bit breezy and the butterflies were either bobbing about on stems or going lower down in the grass.

I managed to get a few shots which I am not entirely happy with but am still posting as they include a couple of aberrations which I have personally not seen before. Living in the midlands Chalkhill Blues are a species I don't see unless I go further afield such as today (Friday).



Chalkhill Blue typical male - Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Chalkhill Blue male ab. - Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Chalkhill Blue typical female - Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Chalkhill Blue female ab. – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

By mid-day the sun was poking through and the hillsides were alive with butterflies, mostly Meadow Browns and Chalkhill Blues which must have numbered in their hundreds if not thousands.



Chalkhill Blue male – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Chalkhill Blue male – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Chalkhill Blue male - Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Chalkhill Blue female - Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Chalkhill Blue female - Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Chalkhill Blue female – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

I had already seen a few Silver-spotted Skippers on flower heads earlier in the morning but these too became more evident as they warmed up and began zipping about.

I took load of photos so to prevent this post getting too big will keep it for the Chalkhill Blues and save the Silver-spotted Skippers for the next one.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by MikeOxon, 03-Aug-13 01:13 PM GMT

A nice set of Chalkhill aberrations! You did better on the 2nd than I did on the 1st August since, although it was hot and sunny, there was also a strong wind keeping the butterflies down. In addition, the M40 Southbound was at a stand-still for the entire couple of hours I was there (fortunately, I had taken a cross-country route).

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-13 01:22 PM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊

There was a bit of a breeze when I was there but the lower paths were sheltered by the hedges which helped a bit. Also while still warm it was a bit cooler than Thursday so the butterflies weren't too hyperactive.

I had no problems going down the M40 from Solihull in the morning but hit congestion by Warwick on my way back, a car was broken down in the outside lane causing problems for the Friday tea time traffic 😞

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 03-Aug-13 09:29 PM GMT

Nice Chalkhill Blue photos Neil, I know exactly how difficult and frustrating it can be trying to take photos of butterflies on wind-blown flowers! Looking forward to your SSB photos.

Best Regards,

Mike.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-13 10:19 PM GMT

Great Chalkhills Niel – looking forward to the Silver Spots 😊 – hopefully they'll keep me going until I get back from Wales next weekend, and hopefully there will still be some around in good nick for me then too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Aug-13 10:34 AM GMT

Cheers Mike, at least the wind eased off later but then the sun came out and everything went into speedy mode. Never happy are we 😊😄

Thanks Wurzel, I am sure you will find something of interest in Wales. Bye the way, I am going to be a grockle again in a few weeks, going to be in Dorset again first week in September 😊

Friday 2nd August – Silver-spotted Skippers

As mentioned above, the other species that I had had come to Aston Rowant to see was the Silver-spotted Skipper which according to reports was out in good numbers.

I saw the first one just after walking onto the hillside, soon to be followed by a few more, sitting on plants or taking off as I disturbed them along the paths. While it was still cloudy they were not so active but there was a fair breeze which made taking photos a challenge as, like the Chalkhill Blues, they were either bobbing about on flower heads or going down in the grass or on bare patches of ground.

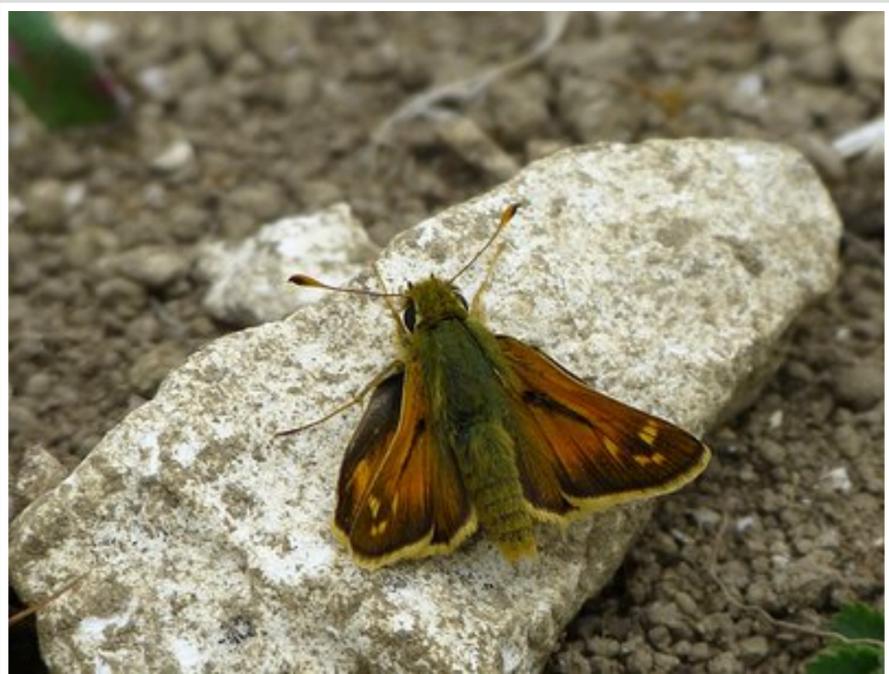
By the time the wind had dropped a bit, the sun was coming out and it was getting quite warm which made the Skippers, along with everything else more active. Mind you, the photography is only part of it for me and the sheer pleasure of a hillside full of butterflies is something to be enjoyed in itself, getting some reasonable photos is the icing on the cake.



Silver-spotted Skipper male – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Silver-spotted Skipper male – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Silver-spotted Skipper male – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Silver-spotted Skipper male – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Silver-spotted Skipper male – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Silver-spotted Skipper female – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Silver-spotted Skipper female – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Silver-spotted Skipper female – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

Walking along the hillside it was evident that although there were good numbers in the areas of longer grass at the start and lower parts of the slopes, the greatest numbers were in the areas of shorter turf where from mid-day onwards with the sun out they were zipping everywhere.

A number of times I saw females being chased by males into the grass where usually the male would be rejected and after a while leave the female alone. I assume this was because the female was already mated.



Silver-spotted Skippers – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

I also saw a few instances of males on the same patch of ground which surprised me as I thought the males were territorial and one would have chased the other off. As it was they went their separate ways quite peacefully.



Silver-spotted Skipper males – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

I have still got a load of photo of other species seen to sort through so will probably do another post with these later.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-13 07:01 PM GMT

Great shots and report Neil 😊 Four days to go til I can get out and start looking for them myself so I'm in the unusual position of having weekdays off but still hoping for good weather at the weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 04-Aug-13 08:16 PM GMT

Hi Neil, excellent SSS photos. Never easy to get in windy conditions!

Regards,

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Aug-13 10:33 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys 😊

A pretty dreary day today with incessant rain, still it gave me chance to catch up on a few things and keep this diary up to date.

Friday 2nd August – The supporting cast.

As well as the large numbers of Chalkhill Blues and Meadow Browns and the numerous Silver-Spotted Skippers, I was also pleased to see half a dozen or so each of Common Blue, Small Copper and Brown Argus 😊

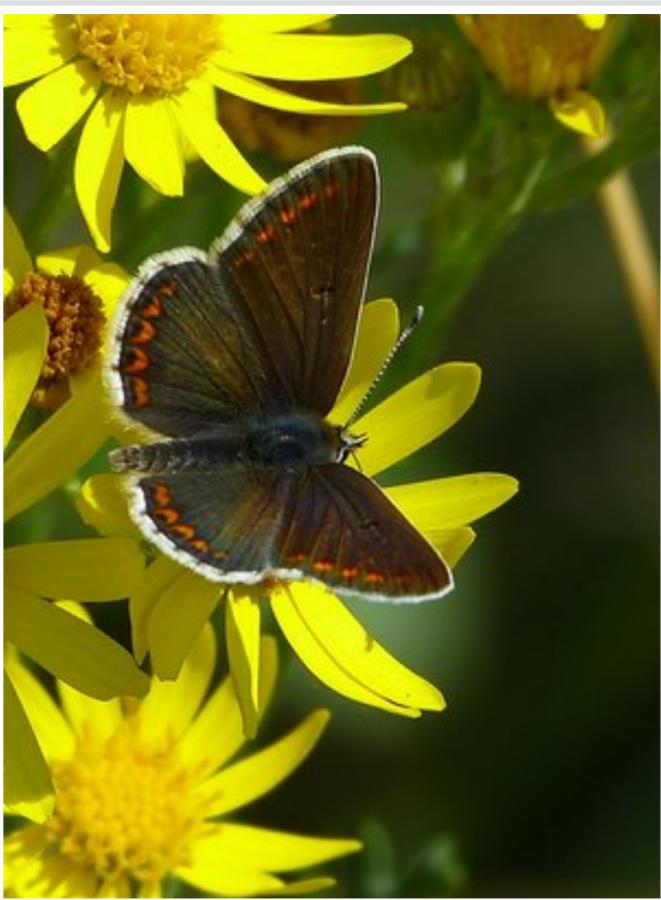
It was when I saw the first Brown Argus that I realised that, up until Friday, I had only seen one so far this year and that was in North Devon back in June.



Common Blue – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013



Small Copper – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

In the areas of longer grass and along the lower slopes there were also a good number of Small and Essex skippers, many of them looking a bit tired and faded.



Essex Skipper – Aston Rowant – 02.08.2013

I also saw two definite Large Skippers, one of which, a female, was in surprisingly good condition and looked much fresher than many of the Small/Essex and even some of the Silver-spotted Skippers.



Large Skipper – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

Other butterflies seen were many assorted Whites, Good numbers of Gatekeepers, Ringlets and Peacocks, a few Speckled Woods and singles of Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral.

Those who have visited Aston Rowant will be familiar with the Red Kites that are often circling around overhead. There were three or four overhead most of the time that I was there with up to a dozen visible over the nearby hills and to the south of the M40. Most of the time these were just silhouettes against the sky but I caught one just in time as it banked to get the shot below.



Red Kite – Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

There seems to be a few Clouded Yellows and Painted Ladies coming in down south.....and I am heading north tomorrow for a few days at Arnside, oh well, can't have everything 😊😄

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 04-Aug-13 10:57 PM GMT

You may find those Painted Ladies have got there first! One of the only two I saw in 2011 was up at Arnside...

I may be there on Wednesday around lunchtime on a detour during a voyage up to York – keeping an eye on the forecast. Watch out for ticks – really troublesome on that last visit.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Aug-13 11:13 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

The weather is looking pretty abysmal for the drive up tomorrow but Tuesday and Wednesday are not looking too bad...so far. Returning home on Thursday, exact time will depend on the weather

We are staying at the same B&B that we stayed at last year at the bottom of Knott Lane so I can walk up to the Knott 😊

I was lucky with the ticks last year, didn't have one (hmmm....shouldn't have said that, I know what will happen now...)

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 04-Aug-13 11:29 PM GMT

Glad you enjoyed Aston Rowant,Neil-a truly great place,the sheer abundance of butterflies there is legendary in some years! 😊

I'm going there this week...

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 05-Aug-13 09:49 AM GMT

That's a great photo of a Red Kite Neil. I haven't seen many so they are very much a novelty to me still and beautiful birds anyway. Naturally, I looked at your camera settings to see how you had managed to get such a fantastic shot, as I am not very good at bird photography. Well done.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-13 10:23 AM GMT

Thanks eb,

I reckon that Aston Rowant is the nearest place I can get to that has the abundance of butterflies that I see reported from some of the downland sites further south, a cracking place and after a while I even blank out the sound of the M40 😊😊

I hope you have a good visit this week.

Hi Pauline, thanks for the comment on the Kite photo, it was pretty much a snap shot as it banked 😊

The photo is cropped a bit to remove some empty sky to the right and improve the balance of the picture but apart from a resize to post on here that is about it.

I don't have Photoshop, just use a free download called PhotoScape for any post processing which other than cropping and re-sizing is usually limited to maybe a bit of brightening or darkening at most. I have found that I usually make my photos worse if I fiddle with them too much 😊 Oh yes, I shoot in jpeg as well.

I usually take my photos on the 'P' setting on the dial, I have max ISO set at 400 to try and keep noise levels to a minimum. Other than that, the only other setting that I fiddle with is exposure, usually going from 0 to -1 depending on the light and subject. For instance I would probably use -1 for a Large White on a bright day and -1/3 for a Peacock.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Aug-13 09:37 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

You may find those Painted Ladies have got there first! One of the only two I saw in 2011 was up at Arnside...

I may be there on Wednesday around lunchtime on a detour during a voyage up to York - keeping an eye on the forecast. Watch out for ticks - really troublesome on that last visit.

Dave

Well anticipated Dave, a Painted Lady up at Arnside today.....and a Clouded Yellow 😊😊😊

Already taken loads of photos and not going home until Thursday, weather looking good for tomorrow 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 06-Aug-13 10:02 PM GMT

Really pleased you're having such success up there Neil and a Clouded Yellow is fantastic news. Just wanted to say thank you for being so open and generous with your camera information which has all been noted 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-13 11:11 PM GMT

Looking forward to the shots 🤔🍷 No I am really 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-13 09:55 PM GMT

Many thanks for the comments Pauline, I really appreciate them 😊,

and yours Wurzel.....I think 😊😂

Monday 5th – Thursday 8th August, part 1.

We returned home today from a fantastic few days at Arnside with over 1200 photos to sort through so I think I will be updating this diary in instalments over the next few days as I have time.

Last year I went up to Arnside for a couple of days, primarily to see Scotch Argus which up until then was a species I had never seen. I saw plenty then but it turned out to be at the beginning of their flight season and when I got home I realised that every photo I had taken was of a male and I don't remember actually seeing a female.

On Monday we made our way back up the M6, driving through some horrendous rain 🤔, on our way to spend three nights in the same wonderful B&B, at the foot of the lane leading up to Arnside Knott that we stayed at last year 😊.

Calendar wise this was a few days later than last year and I was hoping to photograph some female Scotch Argus, although given the way this year has been so far, I realised that this was taking a bit of a flyer.

On our arrival our hosts told us that they had just 'enjoyed' thirty-six hours of incessant rain although it was clearing and the forecast looked good for the next few days.

After settling in, at around 5.00pm, the rain had stopped and it was cloudy but warm so I decided to take a walk up to the Knott to stretch my legs after the journey.

Walking up to one of the areas that I knew to be good for Scotch Argus I was pleased to find a good number flying despite the cloud cover. I soon found a mating pair and was quite amused by the way that the female was dragging the male through the wet grass, possibly to try and find a dry spot to rest up.



Scotch Argus pair – Arnside Knott 05.08.2013



Scotch Argus pair – Arnside Knott 05.08.2013

Soon after with the sun getting lower everything went quiet so I made my way back to get ready to go out for a meal.



Arnside Knott - 05.08.2013

The next morning was dry and warm with some high overcast so after breakfast I decided to go back up the Knott to take some more Scotch Argus photos. I remembered from last year how difficult it could be to get the exposure right with their dark wings if the light was too bright and so wanted to try while the light was softer.

It soon became apparent that there were hundreds of Scotch Argus about and as I wandered through the grassy slopes which are the best spots, more and more took to the wing.

A lot of the males were looking very tired and tatty, not surprising I suppose if they had been out in 36 hours of solid rain, but there were also some fresher looking ones about.



The good, the bad and the ugly.....



Scotch Argus male - Arnside Knott 06.08.2013



Scotch Argus male - Arnside Knott 06.08.2013



Scotch Argus male - Arnside Knott 06.08.2013

I also soon found some nice looking females but there were so many males flying that often, as soon as I got a shot lined up on a female, a male would dive in and accost her. Sometimes this resulted in a pairing, sometimes not. Whatever the result it meant that I had to look for another basking female (hmmm...that sounds familiar 😊)



Scotch Argus pair - Arnside Knott 06.08.2013

In fact the males seemed to be chasing each other almost as much as the females....



Scotch Argus males – Arnside Knott 06.08.2013

In the end I managed to get some shots of females that I was happy with.....



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 06.08.2013



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 06.08.2013



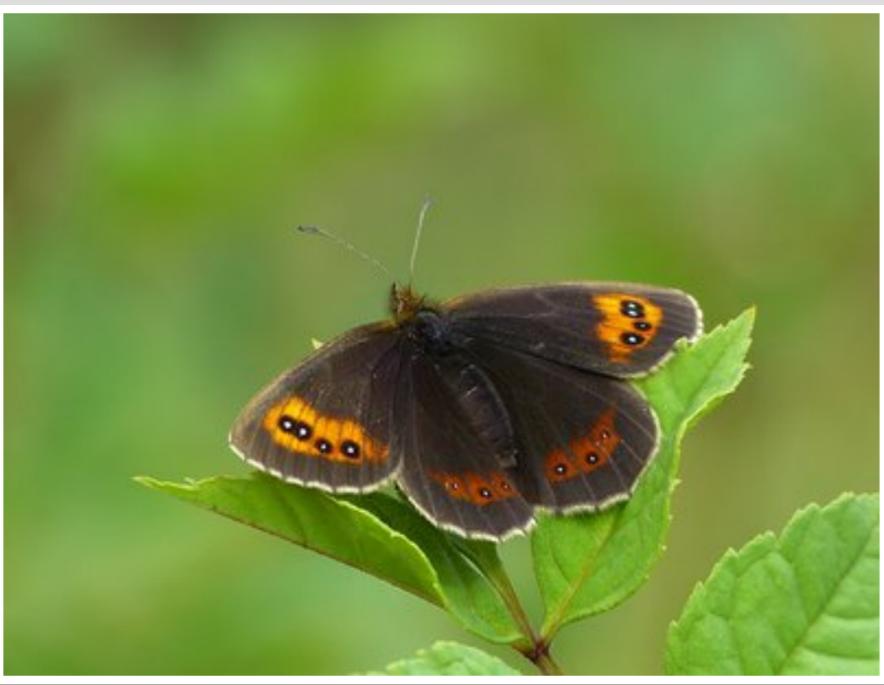
Scotch Argus female - Arnside Knott 06.08.2013



Scotch Argus female - Arnside Knott 06.08.2013



Scotch Argus female - Arnside Knott 06.08.2013



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 06.08.2013

After a couple of hours I went back to meet Jane. I had only just started the first full day here and I had achieved one of my main targets, things were looking good 😊.....

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-13 11:00 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 I'm going to have to stop reading your PD as my envy is debilitating 😊🍷😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-13 11:26 PM GMT

Sorry Wurzel 😞

To be honest, there is loads that I am envious of myself, including your Silver-studded Blues and Marsh Frits to name just a couple off the top of my head. I totally missed SSBs this year, Prees Heath being the nearest site to me, I just didn't get chance to go and the Marsh Frits that I saw in Devon were my first ever.

I think that my main advantage is that living in the midlands I can head in any direction, of course having grown up kids means that I can do trips of a few days such as this one to Arnside 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Mark Colvin, 09-Aug-13 12:06 PM GMT

Nice work, Neil.

It's been some years since I last visited Arnside but I now feel a visit pending for 2014 ...

Keep up the good work

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Aug-13 07:41 PM GMT

Thanks Mark, it really is a special place 😊

Monday 5th – Thursday 8th August, part 2.

Later on Tuesday afternoon I returned to the Knott, this time to look for Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries.

I had already seen some earlier that morning and taken some photos of a couple of very tatty Dark Greens and also got some ropey record shots of a couple of definite High Browns. This time I circled round through the lower meadows and woods and up towards the Knott seeing a number of both HBFs and DGFs, most of which were looking well past their best if not downright tatty.

I then took the path leading down towards Heathwaite and in the meadows alongside I found a couple of each of DGFs and HBFs in more reasonable condition, all females, busy nectaring on knapweed and quite approachable.



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside 06.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 06.08.2013

I was particularly taken by this female DGF which had particularly dark markings.....



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 06.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 06.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 06.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 06.08.2013

The next day (Wednesday) I walked up the Knott again a couple more times and in the afternoon I did a similar circuit to Tuesday afternoon and was interested to find the same individual Fritillaries still here albeit in slightly different parts of the meadows. In fact due to variations in markings and wear I recognised a few Fritillaries around different parts of the Knott area at different times over the two days. This is one reason why I am wary of stating numbers as I could well be double (or more) counting the same individuals. Also some of them had wings that were so worn and tatty that it was impossible to be sure which species they were, although I believe that the worst examples were male DGFS. On the other hand a couple of female DGFS whilst not absolutely fresh still looked quite nice.



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 07.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 07.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 07.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 07.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 06.08.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside 06.08.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Arnside 07.08.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Arnside 07.08.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Arnside 07.08.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Arnside 07.08.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Arnside 07.08.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Arnside 07.08.2013



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside 07.08.2013

Also on Wednesday afternoon I was approached by a friendly chap who turned out to be none other than UKBs Dave(millerd) who it was great to meet up with and to put a face to the name. Apparently it was my accent that gave away who I was 😊😄

I had better stop there as this is turning into a long post. Just to say that on the Tuesday I saw a Clouded Yellow and a Painted Lady 😊

Guess what will be in the next update.....

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 09-Aug-13 08:21 PM GMT

I was going to say the Scotch Argus are great Neil and then you go and post that fantastic HBF with wings closed and the way the light just bounces off it is fantastic. You're posting some great shots which you must be very, very pleased with.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 09-Aug-13 09:49 PM GMT

I agree with Pauline great shots Neil 🍷 See I kept reading I must be a glutton for punishment 😄😄 That DGF does look different to the norm and your underside HBFS is lush 🍷😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 09-Aug-13 11:56 PM GMT

I totally agree Neil, lovely photos. Another worth while break away from it all, i especially like the first photo of the copulating Scotch Argus, 😊 a butterfly i`m yet to see.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Aug-13 11:11 AM GMT

Thanks all for the great comments, really appreciated 😊

I am lucky in that I can do a couple of these 2/3 night breaks a year which give me a chance to really appreciate some fantastic locations 😊

Monday 5th – Thursday 8th August, part 3.

On the Tuesday afternoon, as described above, I had wandered down from the Knott along the path towards Heathwaite. In a large meadow area just before you get to some farm fields there was a large patch of wildflowers, mostly knapweed that was covered with Large and Small Whites and also a good number of fresh looking Common Blue.

As my eyes scanned the flowers looking for a Large White in a classic side on pose my eyes fell on one and I thought ‘that one looks a bit different, hang on that’s not a Large White’

It was a Clouded Yellow happily nectaring in amongst all the whites 😊 . It actually stood out like a sore thumb, it was just that I was not expecting to see one here. I had even commented on the fact that I was heading north just when Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady sightings were increasing down south and Dave(millerd) had said that I may get lucky.

I believe it was a female from the glimpses of topside I had and the yellow spots in the dark margins that show through on the underside views. She stayed around this patch of flowers for well over half an hour whilst I watched her flit from flower to flower and I took numerous photos.



Clouded Yellow - Arnside 06.08.2013



Clouded Yellow - Arnside 06.08.2013



Clouded Yellow - Arnside 06.08.2013

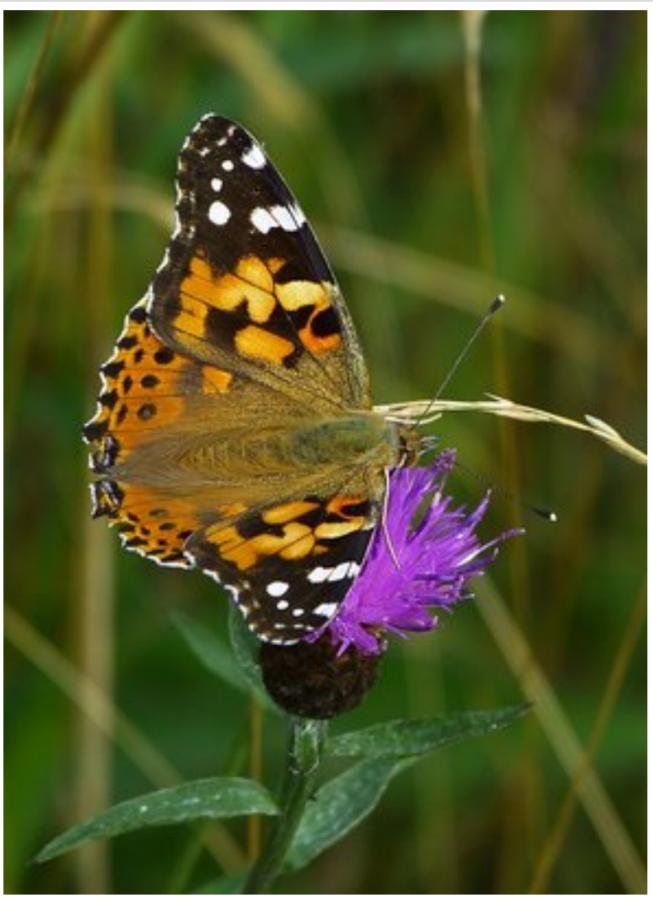


Clouded Yellow - Arnside 06.08.2013

This was the first Clouded Yellow that I had ever taken photos of, I saw a couple in Dorset last year, the first for many years, but they were flypasts.

Eventually she decided to move on and flew over the hedge at the side of the field. After the Scotch Argus in the morning and then the Fritillaries that I had already seen she had made a perfect end to the day so I started to make my way back up the path.

I had not gone far when I spotted a Painted Lady. I managed a couple of shots before she was disturbed by a dog walker 😊 but I was in too much of a good mood to let that bother me too much.



Painted Lady - Arnside 06.08.2013



Painted Lady - Arnside 06.08.2013

The following morning (Wednesday), after breakfast, I went for another walk and headed straight down to where I had seen the Clouded Yellow on the off chance that she was still around. As I approached the same patch of flowers, I could see her from a distance standing out amongst all the whites that were there again.



Clouded Yellow – Arnside 07.08.2013

This time she was far more flighty and after ten minutes or so she took off up the hill and over the woods heading north. I reckon that after stopping here overnight I had just caught her having breakfast before continuing on her way 😊.

As well as all the goodies so far one of my other targets was Grayling, particularly a half decent photo of one which I had not managed on my visit last year.....

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 10-Aug-13 03:32 PM GMT

Hi! Neill, We were up on the Knot on the 6th of August as well.

Your photo's are really good much better than mine 🍷

It was very cloudy that day until later but I was determined to find a Scotch Argus as I'd never seen one, My problem was climbing up the knot 😊 (not as young as I used to be) 😊

You make me very envious of your Clouded Yellow it's lovely and we tried on the day looking for High Brown without any luck so I'm green again 🍷 😊

Looks like I'll have to wait while next year now 😊

We're off to Kent next week , so you never know maybe I'll see a C Y there. Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Aug-13 06:51 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, thank you for your comments 😊

I was glad of the cloud on the Tuesday morning, taking photos of Scotch Argus in bright light can be tricky because of the dark velvety texture to the wings.

Some of those paths up to the top of the knott are a bit tough on the legs, mine are not getting any younger either 😊

Most of the photos of the Fritillaries posted above were taken by the path down towards Heathwaite rather than up on the top of the Knott. I did see some up there but those tended to be more raggedy examples.

I may well have spoken to you without realising it on Tuesday, I was up on the Knott from about 09.30am for a couple of hours and again from about 3.00pm and talked to quite a few people in my wanderings. I was probably wearing a blue baseball type hat.

Good luck in Kent, that is one part of the world I have not visited in some years.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-13 10:11 PM GMT

Great report and shots Neil 🍷 Reading them is making me plot how I can convince my wife that we "really should visit Cumbria and up round that way" – I doubt she'll buy it 😊 😊

Hsve a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 11-Aug-13 10:15 AM GMT

Hi Neil, you certainly got some brilliant photos during your visit to the 'Knott', great report too. Maybe I'll get up there next year!

All the best,

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Aug-13 11:38 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments Wurzel and Mike 😊

It is a fantastic place, I really believe you need a couple of days there to appreciate it fully.

Monday 5th – Thursday 8th August, part 4.

I was also keen to see Grayling at Arnside, having seen a few on my last visit but failing to get a reasonable photo of one. They were easy to find on the scree covered slopes on the sides of the knott, often nectaring on flowers in the company of Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers or Scotch Argus....



Grayling and Scotch Argus – Arnside 07.08.2013

.... or doing their usual thing of playing hide-and-seek on the stony paths such as this one later on the Wednesday afternoon.



Grayling – Arnside 07.08.2013

Finding a good condition example in a more photogenic position however was a bit more of a challenge. After a bit of searching I found a reasonable condition individual on some Ragwort that enabled me to take a few photos that I was happy with.



Grayling - Arnside 07.08.2013



Grayling - Arnside 07.08.2013

In my previous post I briefly mentioned that there were a good number of Common Blues in the area where I saw the Clouded Yellow. In fact they were present in the meadows all along the path towards Heathwaite in greater numbers than I had seen anywhere so far this year. There were plenty of males and a good number of fresh looking females, some of which were very brown.



Common Blue - Arnside 07.08.2013



Common Blue - Arnside 07.08.2013



Common Blue - Arnside 07.08.2013

A few of the females were also very small as well as being very brown and initially I thought that I had found some late Northern Brown Argus which they looked like in flight. It was not until I looked closer at them and saw the scattering of blue scales that I realised they were actually dinky little half sized female Common Blues.



Common Blue - Arnside 07.08.2013



Common Blue - Arnside 07.08.2013

On the Tuesday I also saw a couple of fresh Peacocks and noticed that there were far more on Wednesday. Also Brimstones of which I saw none on Tuesday and then well over a dozen around the knott on Wednesday, particularly on the knapweed in the meadows by the Heathwaite path. Also a single fresh Small Copper on the Wednesday.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-13 12:24 PM GMT

Hi! again Neill , We were on our way up the M6 by the time you were on the Knot. Then we stopped off at Gaits Barrow for a couple hours, nothing much there, Peacocks maybe and Ringlets, whites etc but no High Brown's so it looks like you did the right thing by taking the lower path's to H. We talked to the N Trust guides in the car park first when we got to the Knot, they gave us an idea where to look for the SA that would be about Lunch time, people in Arnside as we passed were well into their Fish and Chip lunches by then 😊 After about a couple of hours we started off for home, we only live an hour a way and felt we'd had enough by then, sorry we missed you we could have compared notes 😊 I was so happy to have got a photo of the SA I just wanted off then, if I'd known the HBF was near by and the CY I'd have pressed on regardless 😊

My 1st Scotch Argus I've sent you a photo Goldie 😊



Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Aug-13 08:01 PM GMT

Glad you got your Scotch Argus Goldie 😊

It is a shame I missed you, I could have shown you where there were a couple of HBFs that were nectaring and sticking around the one spot down the Heathwaite path. The same ones were there both Tuesday and Wednesday, I recognised them by differences in markings and little bits of wear and

damage.

Although I spent a fair amount of time around the lower paths, I did go further up the slopes a few times, for the SAs and looking for Grayling as in my last post. I did see HBFs and DGFs all over the knott but apart from being more worn, the ones higher up were more flighty and harder to approach, particularly on the areas of loose scree.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 12-Aug-13 12:25 PM GMT

Me again Neill, I live so near to the Lake District yet I've only been to the Knot about 3 times, next year I'll make my sure I visit in August are late July and go along the path you took.

I've always fancied Gaits Barrow first but it looks like with the fences going up in there photo's are going to be hit and miss besides which you seem to have got more shots of different species, wish we had seen you though it's nice to put a face to people 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-13 08:01 PM GMT

Thursday 8th August - Warton Crag

Thursday arrived and it was time to head home but before hitting the motorway I decided to make the most of another decent morning and stop off at Warton Crag for an hour or so. I had spoken to a chap at Arnside who had been there the day before and seen a number of Wall Browns, this being a species that I am always keen to see since they have disappeared from most of the midlands.

Arriving around 10.30 there was some high level cloud cover with the sun starting to break through and it was feeling warm. In the grassy areas by the car park there were numerous Common Blue....



Common Blues - Warton Crag 08.08.2013

Including some faded brown females that, like some of those at Arnside, looked very Brown Argus like.



Common Blue female - Warton Crag 08.08.2013

Following a path up towards the higher part of the crag there were a number of Grayling that did the usual trick of disappearing when they settled. A little further along I saw the first Wall Brown, a nice male that settled a few times and actually stayed close enough for me to sneak up on 😊 .



Wall Brown male - Warton Crag 08.08.2013



Wall Brown male - Warton Crag 08.08.2013

He eventually flew out of sight so I carried on along the path and soon found another one, this time a female basking on a dried cow pat.



Wall Brown female - Warton Crag 08.08.2013

As I was taking a photo of her another male arrived, identified as being a different individual by slight differences in markings to the previous one



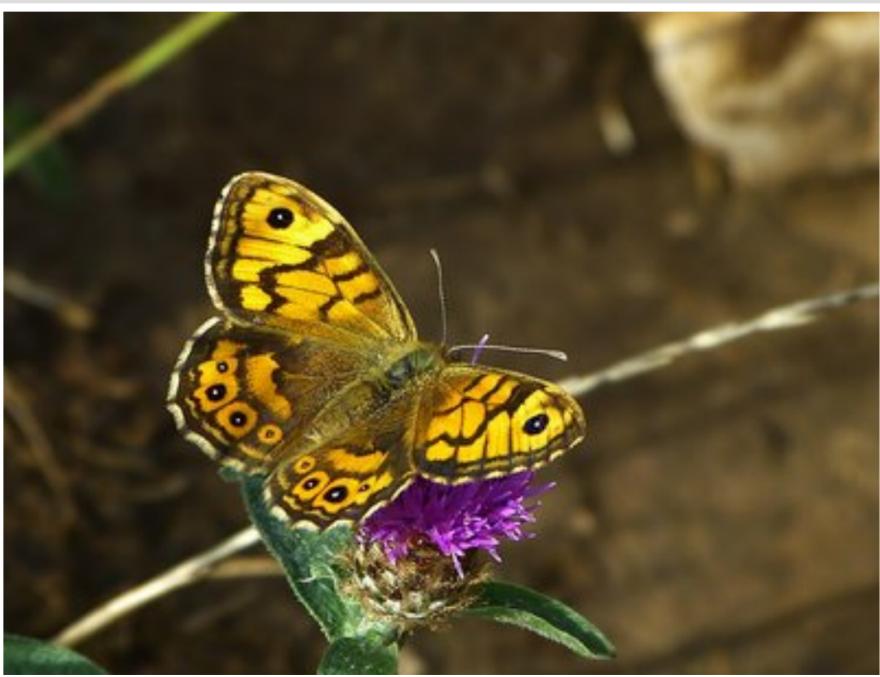
Wall Brown pair - Warton Crag 08.08.2013

They took off together and landed again a few yards away with much wing fluttering from the female.....



Wall Brown pair - Warton Crag 08.08.2013

The female then flew off again into some long grass followed by the male and after another bout of wing fluttering she escaped from him. The male flew off over some shrubs whilst the female nectared for a while on some knapweed before flying off herself.



Wall Brown female - Warton Crag 08.08.2013

I then circled back around to the car park where I found a Small Tortoiseshell which I then realised was the first and only one that I had seen during my time up here.



Small Tortoiseshell – Warton Crag 08.08.2013

It was then time for us to make a move to the M6 and back home having had a great few days in a lovely part of the world, one that I will certainly be returning to again 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-13 09:47 PM GMT

Grata report Neil and stunning shots of the Walls 🇮🇪 I'm trying to work out where our roving butterfly will be heading next 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Hoggars, 13-Aug-13 04:59 PM GMT

Beautiful Wall photographs, Neil. Marvellous. I can never get near the Little Dears!

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Aug-13 08:18 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, my next trip is down to Dorset in a couple of weeks time, stopping at Osmington just outside of Weymouth, a family break for a week with the wife and daughter and taking my Mom with us. I reckon that I should be able to drop the women off at beach/shops a few times and wander off a bit 😊😊

Thanks Hoggars, they do have an annoying habit of managing to maintain a bit of distance from you sometimes.

Saturday 10th – Sunday 11th August

A weekend of family stuff and pottering around the house during which I spent fair bit in the garden. The three dwarf buddleias that I bought as small plants last autumn and potted up into containers in the spring are now about three feet tall and are flowering nicely. They are all being visited regularly by assorted Whites, Peacocks and the occasional Gatekeeper.

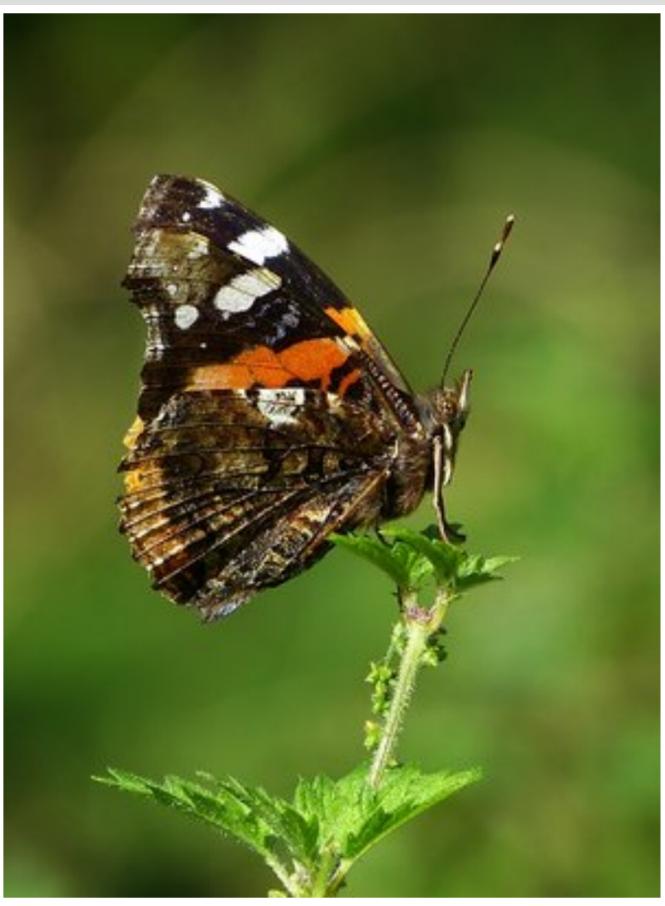


Peacocks - Coverdale 10.08.2013

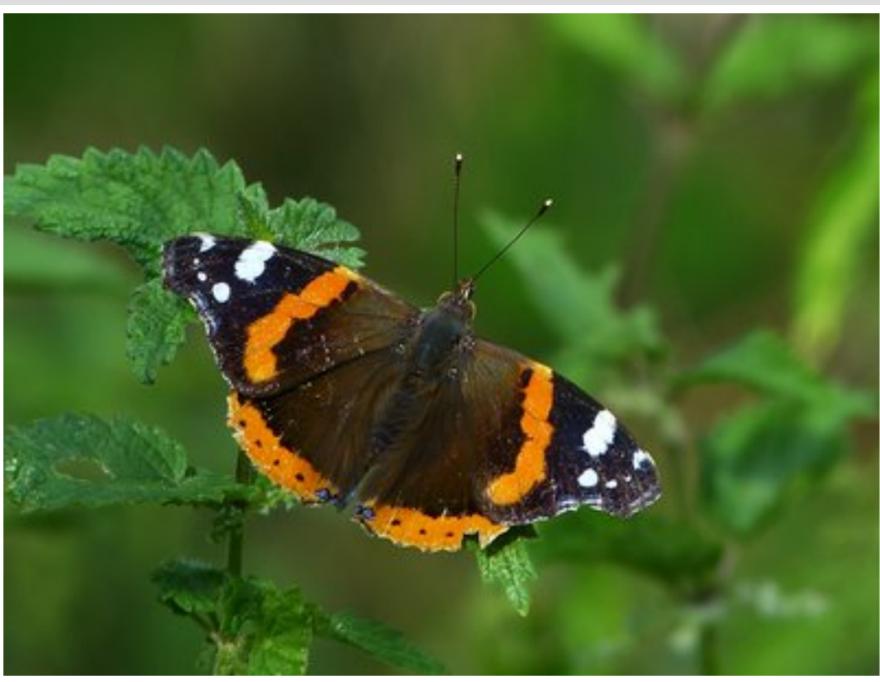


Peacock - Coverdale 10.08.2013

Another Red Admiral has been lurking around the nettle patch for a few days although it does not seem interested in the buddleias. It was looking a bit tired and faded and at first I wondered if it was the same one still around from a couple of weeks back but comparing photos with that one it can be seen to be a different individual by differences in the white markings on the forewings.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 10.08.2013

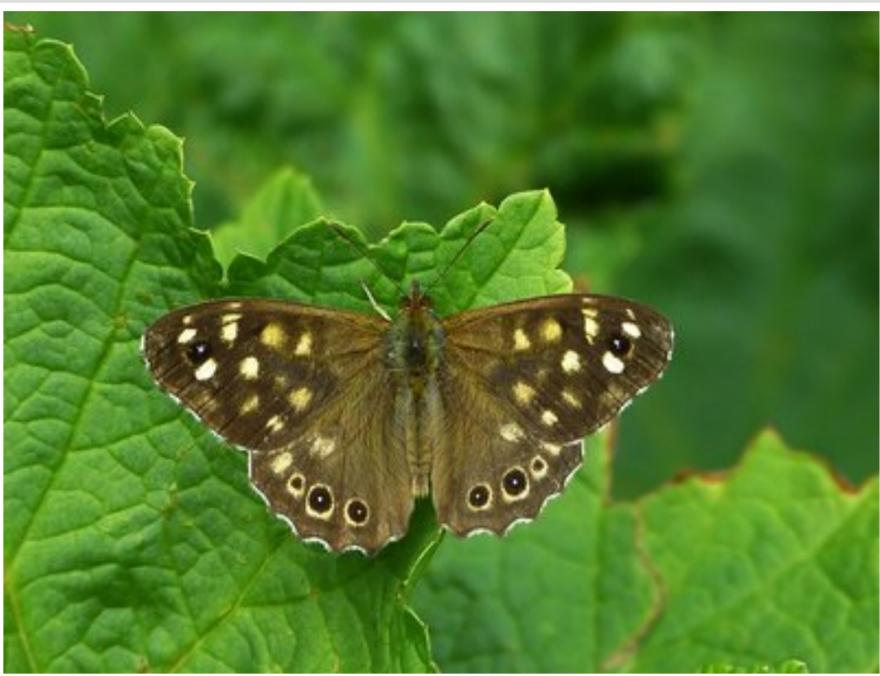


Red Admiral - Coverdale 10.08.2013

The Specklies are still around as well 😊 At one time on Sunday afternoon I watched four males spiraling higher and higher above the garden whilst a female sat in a shrub a few feet away.



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 11.08.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 11.08.2013

It is great to travel and see the butterflies that I do not get locally, but sometimes it is just as good to sit and watch what is happening right under my nose 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by ChrisC, 13-Aug-13 08:41 PM GMT

"It is great to travel and see the butterflies that I do not get locally, but sometimes it is just as good to sit and watch what is happening right under my nose" I agree entirely Neil. My diary is so lacking purely for that reason. I love sitting in the garden watching it all go on. 😊

Re: nfreem

by David M, 13-Aug-13 09:12 PM GMT

Seconded. We butterfly enthusiasts are almost always on the lookout for rare species but it's wonderful to sometimes sit down, relax and take in what's going on locally without any pressure whatsoever.

That's one of the reasons I enjoyed my recent visit to Aston Rowant so much. Silver Spotted and Essex Skippers had been worked over within an hour so for the next four hours I just idled away my time, standing for 5-10 minutes at a stretch in various likely looking places, just watching what fluttered past.

I think it is those moments that prove the most cathartic. It's like the first butterflies you see in spring. You know they're not rarities but it's just such a simple pleasure to see and then watch them over a prolonged period.

This is why I love my annual Brown Hairstreak trips to Pembrokeshire. It gives me the opportunity to observe a particularly beautiful species without ever worrying about where I have to rush to in the next few days. Once you've hit Brown Hairstreak, there's nowhere left to go. It's the last to emerge and the only encounters you may have subsequently are those unplannable ones with late season migrants which, let's be honest, happen so infrequently that few if any of us try to engineer them.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-13 10:04 PM GMT

Great read Neil and a valid philosophy 😊 That's why it's great to have a garden or local patch because where you can just enjoy them 😊 Saying that when you're down this way I'd try a visit to Alners Gorse for Brown Hairstreaks 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Aug-13 08:07 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments chaps, very much appreciated 😊

I may well try to visit Alners Gorse Wurzel, I didn't manage to get there when I was in Dorset last year.

Sunday 11th August

Returning to last Sunday, during one of my spells in the garden later in the afternoon I spotted a female Holly Blue fluttering about by some Ivy that grows up a side fence, the same Ivy that I took photos of Holly Blue caterpillars on last year.

I have not seen many Holly Blues in the garden this year, a handful of Spring Brood and a few Summer Brood, but nowhere near as many as last year. I have also only seen the odd one or two whilst out and about, they don't seem to be having such good a year this year, at least around my bit of the midlands that is.

Anyway, as I watched, this particular female settled on the small developing Ivy flower heads and after a bit of shuffling around proceeded to lay eggs on a few of them 😊 .



Holly Blue female ovipositing - Coverdale 11.08.2013

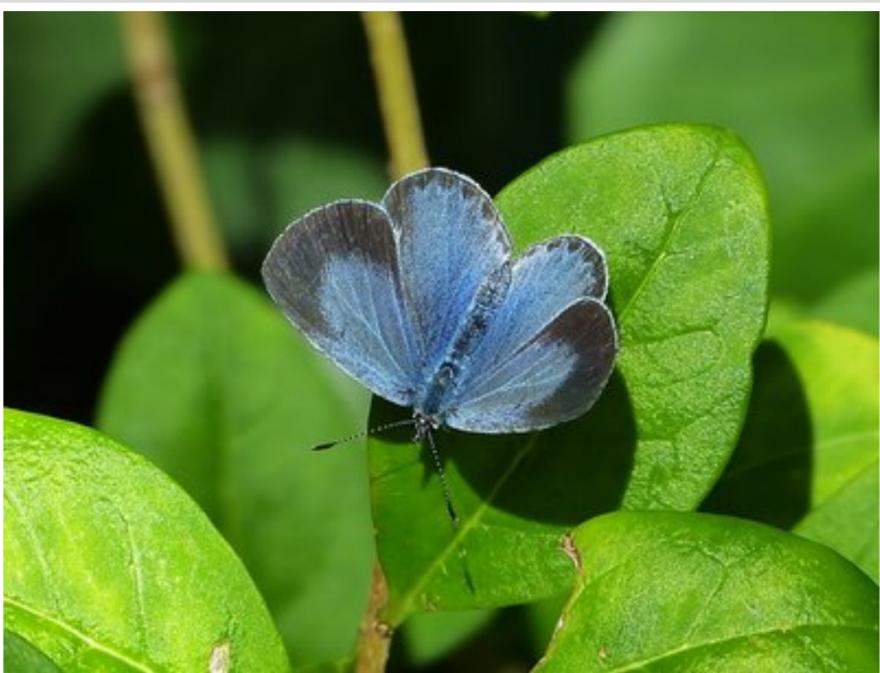


Holly Blue female ovipositing – Coverdale 11.08.2013



Holly Blue female ovipositing – Coverdale 11.08.2013

Between bouts of egg laying she would retire to a leaf, either on the Ivy or on one of the nearby shrubs and bask with her wings part open in the late afternoon sun 😊



Holly Blue female – Coverdale 11.08.2013



Holly Blue female - Coverdale 11.08.2013



Holly Blue female - Coverdale 11.08.2013

I will be looking out for the tell tale little holes in the flower buds in a few weeks time and see if I can spot the caterpillars again.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 14-Aug-13 08:15 PM GMT

Those are really great shots of the Holly Blue Neil, and in your garden too! – seeing their behaviour like that is so much more interesting I think than just a pretty picture. I hope you will keep us updated on progress.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 14-Aug-13 10:18 PM GMT

I totally agree but, i like the pretty ones too. 😊 Lovely photos Neil, your ovipositing Holly Blue is a photo that will always appeal to me. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 14-Aug-13 11:01 PM GMT

You've been blessed with good fortune lately, Neil, but it's no more than you deserve for the effort you've put in.

Lovely shots of the Holly Blue. A real treat.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-13 11:03 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil – you'll definitely have to keep us updated on their progress 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Aug-13 07:16 PM GMT

Thanks all for the great comments 😊

I will keep my eye on the flower buds and look out for the little holes that give away the presence of a caterpillar.

"David M" wrote:

..... but it's no more than you deserve for the effort you've put in.....

I can't really think of it as effort when I am doing something that gives me so much pleasure 😊

Back to work this week and the weather has been a bit 'scabby' for most of it. There are still plenty of Whites and Peacocks visiting the garden plus a few Brimstones. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly butterflies can appear even after some hefty rain showers.

I may see if I can get out around some local spots this coming weekend depending on how the weather turns out. The current forecast is one of those showers and sunny spells ones that could go either way

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 16-Aug-13 08:39 PM GMT

Great photos in your last postings Neil, especially the Wall Browns and Holly Blue females.

Regards,

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 16-Aug-13 10:47 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Anyway, as I watched, this particular female settled on the small developing Ivy flower heads and after a bit of shuffling around proceeded to lay eggs on a few of them 😊 .

The last shot of the ovipositing female is quite superb – nice one Neil! 🍷

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-13 11:19 AM GMT

Mike, Pete, thanks for the comments, very much appreciated as always 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

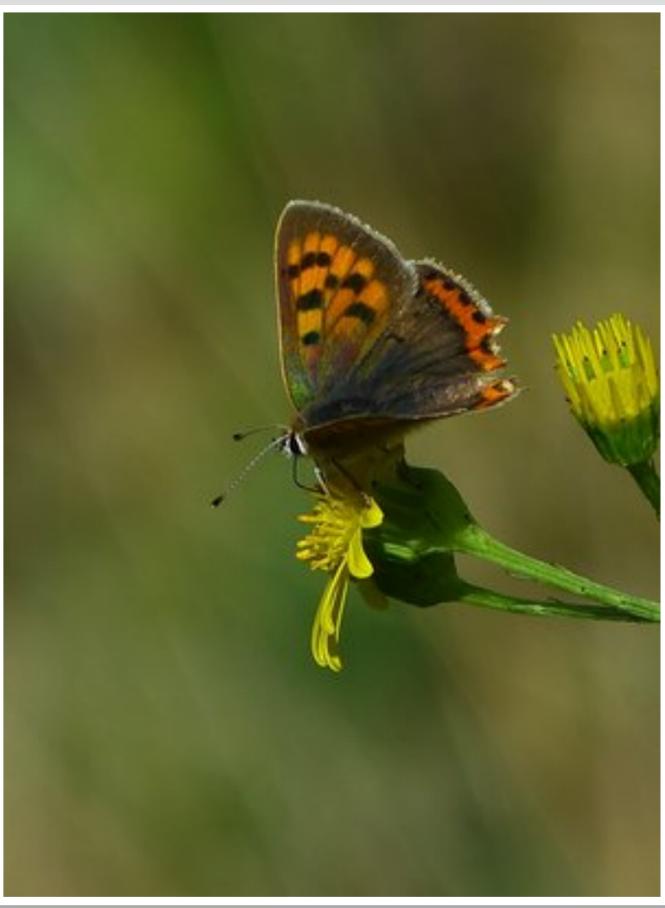
by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-13 09:02 PM GMT

Sunday 18th August

Yesterday (Saturday) was a bit of a washout, dull and showery all day with a strong wind so I caught up on some stuff around the house. Today was much better, a bit cloudy bit with some good sunny spells and the wind although still present was much lighter.

I went out this afternoon for a shuftie around my local spots for a couple of hours starting off at Castle Hills. There are still plenty of all three common Whites about and loads of Meadow Browns, most looking a bit tired and faded now but with a few fairly fresh ones scattered amongst them. Gatekeeper numbers are much lower now and again most of these are looking like they are on their last legs as are the few remaining Small and Essex Skippers.

Small Coppers have certainly bounced back here after last years poor showing. After seeing a good half a dozen or so here a couple of weeks back I saw at least a dozen today scattered about across the site, some looking a bit worn now but some looking fresh.



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 18.08.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 18.08.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 18.08.2013

The female below was the largest Small Copper that I have ever seen, about half as big again as any of the others which I believe were mostly males. She was not much smaller than some of the smaller Gatekeepers that I have seen. It is a pity that the size doesn't come across in photos, she really was an impressive creature 😊



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 18.08.2013



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 18.08.2013

There were also a few Small Heaths about and I was pleased to find a few Common Blues, another species that had a very poor showing around here last year.



Small Heath - Castle Hills Solihull 18.08.2013



Common Blue - Castle Hills Solihull 18.08.2013

As usual at this site there were a number of buzzards circling around, one of which came low enough for me to get a reasonable shot.



Buzzard - Castle Hills Solihull 18.08.2013

After spending an hour or so here I circled around a couple of public footpaths and apart from the usual Whites, Browns and Peacocks I found a couple of Common Blues and small Coppers at each spot 😊



Small Copper - Solihull 18.08.2013

I also noticed a fair number of Southern Hawker and Common Darter Dragonflies flying around at every place I went to this afternoon



Southern Hawker – Solihull 18.08.2013

No migrants or rarities but it was good to see that the Small Coppers are doing well and the Common Blues are recovering after the bad year that both species had around here last year 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 18-Aug-13 09:07 PM GMT

Nice images, Neil, especially the Buzzard shot with the gloriously blue sky background.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-13 11:07 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 😊 Small Coppers always seem to lend themselves to photography well, they're a great stand by species 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 19-Aug-13 05:25 PM GMT

Hi Neil, Small Coppers are beautiful little butterflies and you have captured some lovely shots of them.

Regards,

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 19-Aug-13 06:14 PM GMT

I agree – those are great shots of Small Copper especially the closed wing shot – and is that a hint of blue spots? 🇮🇪 The Buzzard is superb and something I have never managed even on full zoom. good job Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Aug-13 09:05 PM GMT

Many thanks for all the comments, very much appreciated 😊

Small Coppers are fantastic little butterflies, bright and showy and once you spot the males favourite perches you can sit tight and they will keep coming back 😊

I wasn't going to mention the blue spots Pauline 😊 but something like 50% of the ones I am seeing around here have some degree of blue spotting albeit in most cases it is just a hint.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 20-Aug-13 07:14 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the Small Copper Neil, especially the forth picture down, but that Buzzard, absolutely brilliant. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-13 11:03 AM GMT

Thanks Nick, as with the Red Kite the other week, the Buzzard was a lucky snap shot 😊

A hectic week at work this week and a bit kna**ered when I have got home so I have not done much or been anywhere.

I have noticed that the number of Peacocks in the garden has dropped considerably although most afternoons there have still been a couple on the Buddleias. I guess they are filling up their reserves and beginning to tuck themselves away until next spring. It will be interesting to see how many make it to next year.

Still loads of White around, mostly Large and Small. I was watching half a dozen Large Whites the other afternoon when it went a bit dull and they went high up in the trees. When the sun came out a bit later I saw them drop out of the trees, gliding almost halfway to the ground like giant snowflakes. before flapping their wings and continuing on.

I have witnessed this before with individual Large Whites but never seen half a dozen do it together, a fascinating and quite beautiful sight that was over in seconds.

A couple of well worn Speckled Woods have now been joined by a couple of fresh males. It seems that their staggered emergence is back to almost normal after a very late start to the year in my garden.

I was hoping to get over to Grafton Wood where Brown Hairstreaks have been showing well but with thunderstorms forecast today and a family gathering tomorrow it is looking unlikely that I will make it this weekend.

Another week at work and then I am off down to Dorset for a week 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 24-Aug-13 01:16 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

I was watching half a dozen Large Whites the other afternoon when it went a bit dull and they went high up in the trees. When the sun came out a bit later I saw them drop out of the trees, gliding almost halfway to the ground like giant snowflakes. before flapping their wings and continuing on.

I have witnessed this before with individual Large Whites but never seen half a dozen do it together, a fascinating and quite beautiful sight that was over in seconds.

I'm glad you mentioned that, Neil, because I was in the cemetery opposite my house at half past five one day last week and there were quite a few Whites fluttering en masse in the trees as if they were looking for somewhere to roost for the night.

I know many Blues like the grass stems, whilst I've seen Meadow Browns and Ringlets tucking themselves under the leaves of small shrubs, but I never knew what Whites' roosting preferences were. I think I know now.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-13 10:16 PM GMT

H David, I have seen Small and GV Whites roost up in smaller shrubs but have noticed that Large Whites seem to prefer to roost higher up.

Saturday August 24th

Well, I got out today after all 😊

After a gloomy, damp and windy morning the forecast heavy rain didn't materialise and early afternoon I decided to drive over to Grafton Wood. I realised that the conditions were not good for Brown Hairstreaks, being overcast and breezy still, and that by the time I would get there the best late morning/early afternoon time would be over but I was feeling the need to get out for a bit.

Arriving at around 1.30 it was still very overcast and breezy so I decided to head though the wood and have a wander around the eastern side which was a bit more sheltered. Despite the cloud there were a fair number of butterflies flying including Whites and the ever reliable Meadow Browns, some of which were still looking reasonable, females especially often had that soft warm brown look to them.



Meadow Brown male – Grafton Wood 24.08.2013



Meadow Brown female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2013

After a couple of hours of bimbling slowly around, during which I saw more Whites, Meadow Browns, Speckled Woods and a couple of Small Tortoiseshells, I headed towards the 'Orchard' and 'Pond' areas to the west side of the wood.



Small Tortoiseshell – Grafton Wood 24.08.2013



Green-veined White - Grafton Wood 24.08.2013

The cloud was thinning a bit by now and the sun actually popped out briefly a few times which brought a few more Butterflies out. Around the Orchard area there were a few Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Coppers plus a few faded Gatekeepers which gave me a couple of false alarms whilst looking for Brown Hairstreaks.



Common Blue - Grafton Wood 24.08.2013



Common Blue - Grafton Wood 24.08.2013



Brown Argus - Grafton Wood 24.08.2013



Brown Argus - Grafton Wood 24.08.2013



Small Copper - Grafton Wood 24.08.2013

I was also pleased to find a Painted Lady in this area which spent a good few minutes flitting between clumps of Ragwort and Fleabane before flying off into the wood.



Painted Lady – Grafton Wood 24.08.2013



Painted Lady – Grafton Wood 24.08.2013

I didn't find any Brown Hairstreaks in the end today but nevertheless had a good few hours despite it being a mostly dull and windy afternoon.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 24-Aug-13 10:58 PM GMT

That's lovely selection of photos, Neil. An overcast but bright day often makes for better pictures I think. My particular favourite is the Green-veined White – I have several reasonable underside shots, but that open-wing male topside is a classic! 😊

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Aug-13 10:13 AM GMT

Thanks Dave 😊

There were quite a few whites yesterday basking with open wings whilst it was dull, I assume trying to make the most of the weak light.

Just been going through yesterdays photos again and realised I took another photo of another individual 😊



Green-veined White - Grafton Wood 24.08.2013

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-13 06:15 PM GMT

I agree with Dave great shots but both the whites are classics 😊 Good luck with the further Brostreak hunting, I'm sure you're catch up with one or four soon 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-13 09:10 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊 I may try and get to Alners Gorse next week when I am down in Dorset. I won't get another chance to go to Grafton Wood until after I return and may well be too late for Brown Hairstreaks by then.

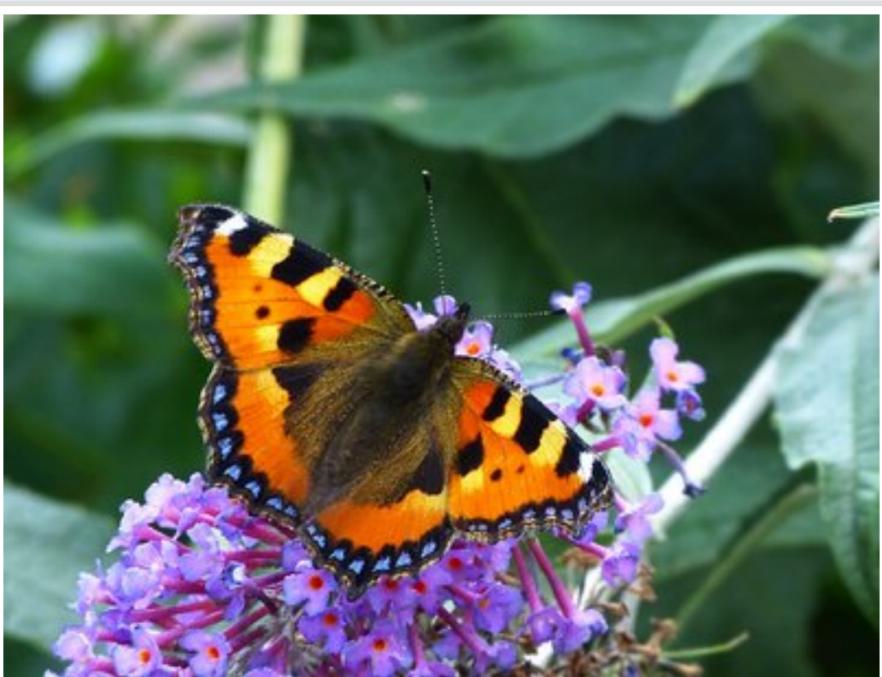
Monday August 26th.

A Bank Holiday Monday with decent weather and guess who was in work today 😞 a price to pay for re-arranging holiday for the trips I have already had this year and for the week in Dorset still to come next week 😊

I got back from work this afternoon and getting out of the car my eyes scanned the large Buddleia in the front garden which has recently had Peacocks on it most days. Over the weekend the numbers of Peacocks had dwindled and there were none there today.

Instead, today there were four Small Tortoiseshells, not as many as I am seeing other people reporting on their Buddleias but nevertheless more than I had in the garden during the whole of last year.

I went in and after getting changed picked up my camera and went back out the front and took a few photos.



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 26.08.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 26.08.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 26.08.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 26.08.2013

As usual there were also a number of Whites, mostly Large, flitting about the Buddleia plus a few Silver-Y moths buzzing about.



Large White - Coverdale 26.08.2013

I then went and sat in the back garden and chilled out for a while with a coffee and watched more Whites passing through and a couple of male Speckled Wood that had territories staked out a few yards apart which they would often chase each other out of.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 26.08.2013



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 26.08.2013

After being stuck in the office most of the day this was a much needed hour or so 😊

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-13 09:51 PM GMT

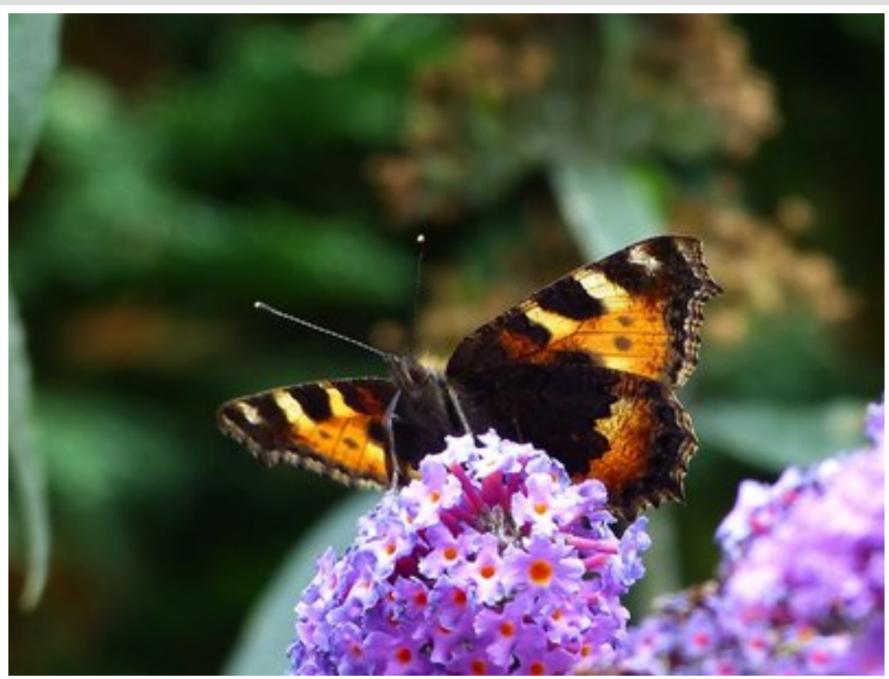
Tuesday August 27th

A repeat of Monday really with Small Tortoiseshells on the Buddleia in the front garden and Speckles in the back to greet me when I arrived home from work 😊

Just another hour or so watching the goings on in the garden but I couldn't resist the temptation to take a few more photos 😊



Small Tortoiseshells - Coverdale 27.08.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 27.08.2013



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 27.08.2013



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 27.08.2013

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 28-Aug-13 09:57 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Tuesday August 27th

... but I couldn't resist the temptation to take a few more photos 😊

Neil

I know what that feels like. When we're into October, and the days are short and a chill is in the air, I'm sure I'll still be taking shots of tatty Meadow Browns, and Red Admirals sucking the last from squishy blackberries...

Dave

Re: nfreem

by David M, 28-Aug-13 10:01 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

"nfreem" wrote:

Tuesday August 27th

... but I couldn't resist the temptation to take a few more photos 😊

Neil

I know what that feels like. When we're into October, and the days are short and a chill is in the air, I'm sure I'll still be taking shots of tatty Meadow Browns, and Red Admirals sucking the last from squishy blackberries...

Dave

I don't wish to contemplate that image just yet, Dave (even though it's bang on!)

I'd prefer an explosion of home grown Clouded Yeellows and a local outbreak of Long Tailed Blues (with maybe a few Monarchs and Camberwell beauties thrown in).

One can but dream!

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 29-Aug-13 12:24 PM GMT

Hi Neil, some very nice photos in you last post(s) 😊 It is starting to feel that the the year is beginning to move forward into autumn now, and the nights are noticeably starting to draw in 😞

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-13 08:27 PM GMT

Liking your second Specklie shot a lot Neil 😊 You used to be able to get transparent holders for Airfix models that they could sit on so they'd be "flying" and that's what that shot reminds me of, it tickled me that did 😊 Good luck down in deepest Dorset 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 29-Aug-13 08:40 PM GMT

Lovely photos as usual Neil, 😊 and i see you still have that magic paint brush within your camera working overtime. 😊 Your Speckled Wood, [26th Aug, 2nd picture down] is an absolute beauty. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-13 09:34 PM GMT

Many thanks all for the comments guys 😊

The nights are certainly drawing in now....as are the mornings, especially at 6.00am when I am getting up for work. At least there are still some spells of warm sun in between. I am just hoping it holds out for another week, looking promising so far 😊

I see what you mean about the Airfix models Wurzel, I remember them well being a young lad in the 1960s when they were at in their heyday although I hung most of mine from the bedroom ceiling 😊

Looking forward to my week in Dorset, heading down to Osmington on Saturday 😊 . I have spent a bit of time the past couple of nights on Google Earth looking at the local area for likely spots to check out.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 29-Aug-13 09:38 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

I have spent a bit of time the past couple of nights on Google Earth looking at the local area for likely spots to check out.

Glad to see it's not just me who does that. 😊

Re: nfreem

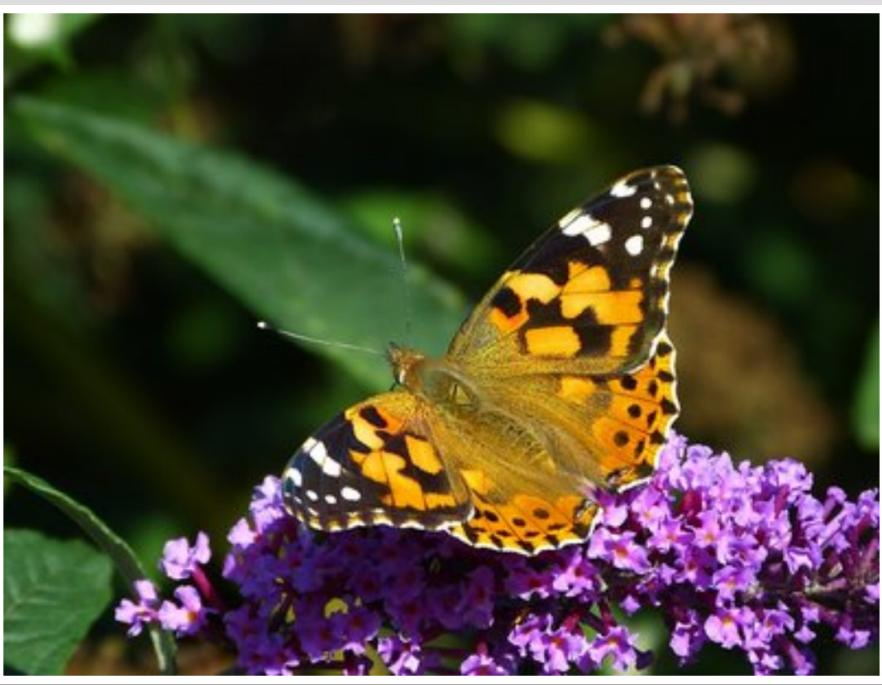
by Neil Freeman, 07-Sep-13 06:45 PM GMT

I returned home earlier today from a cracking week down in Dorset where we stayed at Osmington Holiday Park at Osmington Mills, a couple of miles outside of Weymouth. As usual I managed to get about a bit and see some butterflies and will be posting updates over the next week or so as I sort through the many photos that I took.

To start with.....

Saturday 31st August – Osmington Mills.

After a leisurely drive down we arrived at Osmington Mills just before 4.00 in the afternoon and after unloading and settling in with a much needed cup of coffee I went for a bit of a walk to stretch my legs. Walking out of the main entrance I carried on down the lane towards the Smugglers Inn. I soon noticed a few Buddlieas which were covered with Whites and Small Tortoiseshells and stopping for a closer look I spotted a Painted Lady 😊



Painted Lady – Osmington Mills 31.08.2013



Painted Lady – Osmington Mills 31.08.2013



Small Tortoiseshell – Osmington Mills 31.08.2013

I then carried on to the the end of the lane by the Smugglers Inn where there is a car park at the top of a rocky cove/beach and scrambled down a steep path.



Osmington Mills looking towards Weymouth – this photo taken later in the week.

I was pleased to see a couple of Clouded Yellows patrolling the steep slopes here although they did not come anywhere near close enough for a photo. Never mind, I would get plenty of chances in the week ahead 😊

There were also loads more Whites and Small Tortoiseshells on a couple of straggly Buddleias growing on the slopes plus another Painted Lady, a rather faded one this time. There were also some faded Common Blues in the grassy areas and I spotted a much brighter individual which turned out to be an Adonis Blue. I had read that Adonis Blues could be found not far away and in fact later in the week I would find swarms of them just a little further inland but this would be the only one that I would find here, a straggler perhaps from a nearby colony.



Adonis Blue – Osmington Mills 31.08.2013

Returning back up the lane I stopped off again at the Buddleias and took a few more photos of the Small Tortoiseshells and the Painted Lady that was still there before heading back to get ready for something to eat.



Painted Lady – Osmington Mills 31.08.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Osmington Mills 31.08.2013

Just a brief scout around but already things were looking good and there was some decent weather forecast for the next few days.....

Bye for now.

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 07-Sep-13 06:57 PM GMT

Great shots to start your series of posts Neil 😊 Looking forward to reading more of your exploits as "Neil goes mad in Dorset" 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Sep-13 07:10 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😊

There were only four of us, one short to go properly mad... 😊

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUo4-SwSdyM>

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 07-Sep-13 07:52 PM GMT

I love your last Painted Lady image, Neil. It's beautifully sharp.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 07-Sep-13 10:26 PM GMT

A great start to your holiday Neil, lovely photos. Looking forward to your future posts. 😊 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-13 10:01 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments David and Nick, much appreciated 😊

Sunday 1st September - Morning.

Being the only bloke with three women (wife, daughter and mom), I knew that it would not be long before 'shops' were mentioned. The cunning plan for this morning therefore revolved around me dropping the women off in Weymouth and then wandering off for a bit and meeting up with them later 😊

Whilst doing a bit of nosing around online before coming away, I had spotted Lorton Meadows LNR just outside Weymouth and decided to go and have a mosey around.

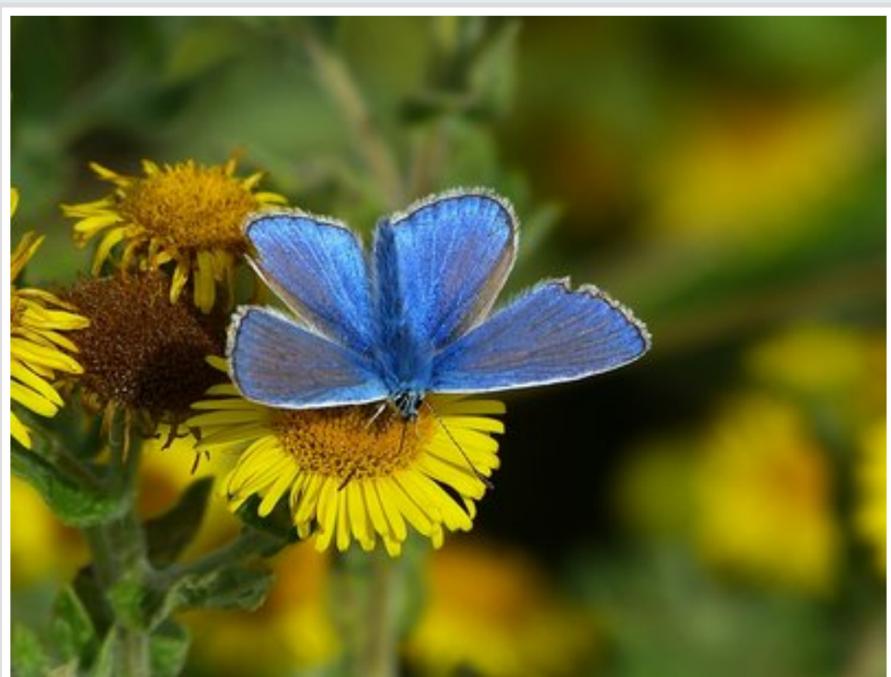
http://www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/l..._2wodj0wADw

After dropping the women off and arranging to meet them later for lunch, I arrived at Lorton Meadows at about 10.30 with the sun rapidly burning off the morning cloud. I walked along a track into the reserve past a wooded area where half a dozen Speckled Wood were spaced out every few yards or so. Coming into a meadow there were large patches of yellow flowers, mostly Fleabane and some ragwort, where in one corner I found some Common

Blues which were looking much fresher than those I had seen so far back in Osmington Mills.



Common Blue female - Lorton Meadows 01.09.2013



Common Blue Male - Lorton Meadows 01.09.2013



Common Blue Male - Lorton Meadows 01.09.2013

Moving further along a path through the meadow there were numerous Whites, some Meadow Browns, more Common Blues and some Brown Argus.



Brown Argus - Lorton Meadows 01.09.2013

There was also a Clouded Yellow, a bit raggedy around the edges but at least this one was settling to nectar regularly which gave me the chance for some photos.



Clouded Yellow - Lorton Meadows 01.09.2013



Clouded Yellow - Lorton Meadows 01.09.2013

A couple of hours soon passed and it was time to head back and meet the others for a bit of lunch.....

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 08-Sep-13 01:42 PM GMT

Lovely pictures from your Dorset trip, Neil. I only ever seem to get there for a day at a time and it's never long enough. I particularly like the female Common Blue – always a favourite with me. Up your way yesterday and even was in Solihull very briefly. Lots of whites around near the station...

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 08-Sep-13 03:10 PM GMT

Hi Neil, great reports and photos from your trip to Dorset, I agree with Dave about the female Common Blue, she's gorgeous 😊 You certainly had a great week weather-wise, if just a little breezy at times.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-13 07:42 PM GMT

Thanks Dave and Mike, I rather like that female Common Blue myself 😊

Sunday 1st September – Afternoon.

After having a bit of lunch in Weymouth the women wanted to go back to the caravan and chill out for a bit so we headed back to Osmington. On the site I had earlier spotted another Buddleia, so after a quick coffee I wandered over to have a look. I had only gone a few yards from our caravan when a yellow shape flew across in front of me and settled on the ground a few feet away. It looked like I didn't have to go looking for Clouded Yellows, they were coming to me 😊😊 I just had time to take a couple of quick shots before it was away again.



Clouded Yellow – Osmington Mills 01.09.2013

I carried on to the Buddleia which had a dozen or so Small Tortoiseshells, a sight which was to become commonplace over the next few days with anything from two or three up to thirty or forty on most Buddleias that I saw 😊



Small Tortoiseshells – Osmington Mills 01.09.2013

There was also a single Red Admiral, the first of only three that I would see during the week. So different to last year when there was a large influx of these, part of which I stumble across at Studland where I saw hundreds on the heather behind the dunes.



Red Admiral – Osmington Mills 01.09.2013

A little later in the afternoon I went for a walk along the South West Coast Path, starting from behind the Smugglers Inn and heading east a little way towards Ringstead Bay.



Smugglers Inn, Osmington Mills with SW Coast Path behind. This photo taken later in the week.



SW Coast Path looking towards car park by Smugglers Inn.

I saw loads of Whites, more Small Tortoiseshells and Common Blues and three more Clouded Yellows along here. Although warm and sunny, there was a fair breeze coming in off the sea so when anything settled it tended to be low down.



Common Blue - Osmington Mills 01.09.2013



Clouded Yellow - Osmington Mills 01.09.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Osmington Mills 01.09.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Osmington Mills 01.09.2013

I also started to see the first Wall Browns of the week along this stretch, half a dozen or so before I turned back. These were mostly looking well past their best with the female below being about the best condition one that I saw.



Wall Brown - Osmington Mills 01.09.2013

Other butterflies seen were a few Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods which I was surprised to see along the more exposed sections of the coast path as well as by the areas with more trees. In fact during the week Specklies would be consistently cropping up everywhere in good numbers.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 08-Sep-13 07:53 PM GMT

Some lovely pictures there Neil. I used to live in that part of the world, Dorset is a lovely county and great for wildlife of all kinds, not to mention the scenery. Your posts are bringing back some fond memories 😊

Best wishes

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-13 10:17 PM GMT

Neil I'm really enjoying these posts as I can almost feel the Dorset soil beneath my feet, ah to be home again 😊 Great shots too 😊 Do you reckon Lorton Meadows was worth a stop as I've driven past it a number of times (though now they've put that new road in I probably won't) and wondered about it?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-13 07:32 PM GMT

Cheers Rex, there are certainly some lovely spots there 😊

I only spent a couple of hours at Lorton Meadows Wurzel but it looked like a site well worth visiting with a good mixture of habitat. Apparently Adonis Blues have been seen on the verges of the relief road this year so they may well spread along to there. You probably already know this but you cannot get to the reserve from the relief road itself, it is reached from the old Dorchester Road and turn off down Lorton Lane.

Monday 2nd September - Lulworth Cove.

I had been in Dorset for a couple of days now and seen good numbers of butterflies and still not visited any of the more well-known sites. As Lulworth Cove was only a short drive away we decided to go there on Monday morning and whilst the women were doing the 'touristy thing' around the cove I would go for a walk up Bindon Hill.

I walked down to the cove from the main car park, noticing various Whites and Small Tortoiseshells plus a couple of Brimstones on the clumps of Valerian growing out of the stone walls, and took the path up through the woods.

Coming out on the hill there were butterflies everywhere, Blues, Browns, and Whites all fluttering about in the warm morning sun 😊 As on the previous afternoon at Osmington there was a steady breeze blowing which meant that the butterflies were mostly settling down in the grass which meant that getting decent photos without grass stems in the way was a bit of a challenge. Nevertheless, just sitting on the hillside enjoying the scenery and being surrounded by butterflies was a pleasure in itself, the fact that I got some photos was just the icing on the cake 😊

There were plenty of Meadow Browns some of which were in fairly good condition still...



Meadow Brown - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013

Adonis Blues were everywhere along with a good number of Chalkhill Blues, some of which were surprisingly fresh looking. I had come here last year on September 5th when the only Chalkhill Blues I had seen were a couple of well faded examples.





Adonis Blue - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013



Chalkhill Blue - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013



Chalkhill Blue - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013



Chalkhill Blue - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013



Chalkhill Blue female - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013



Adonis & Chalkhill Blue females dining together

There were also good numbers of Common Blues, mostly well faded, and Brown Argus, including the individual below with some orange markings missing on the right forewing...



Brown Argus - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013

And this one with well defined forewing spots...



Brown Argus - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013

Other butterflies seen were half a dozen or so each of Marbled Whites, Graylings and Wall Browns as well as the now ubiquitous Speckled Woods along the lower path.



Wall Brown - Bindon Hill 02.09.2013

After a couple of hours, which passed all too quickly, I made my way back down to meet the others, noticing a female Brimstone back in the cove that was still in almost the same spot that I had seen her on the way up.



Brimstone female – Lulworth Cove 02.09.2013

Having spent a couple of hours around the cove, the women were ready to move on, but were not really bothered where to, so I suggested that as we were part way there, we may as well carry on to Durlston Country Park.....

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 09-Sep-13 08:17 PM GMT

Yet more beautiful photos. 😊 Hard to believe this was just one week ago after today's grey wet chilliness...

Dave

Re: nfreem

by David M, 09-Sep-13 08:21 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

Yet more beautiful photos. 😊 Hard to believe this was just one week ago after today's grey wet chilliness...

Dave

Hard also to believe there were fresh looking Meadow Browns around when they were absent in cool, blustery Pembrokeshire a week prior!!

Are we perhaps seeing a 2nd brood?

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 09-Sep-13 08:39 PM GMT

Lovely photos as usual Neil. 😊😊 Great stuff.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-13 08:43 PM GMT

Thanks Nick, glad you like them 😊

Hi Dave, it was certainly hard to believe this morning when I got up to go to work and it was dark 😲, oh the difference a week makes 😞

Hi David, I don't think that the Meadow Browns are a second brood as such, they normally have a long protracted emergence through the summer. Last year in Dorset I was seeing fresh examples during the first week of September and locally around Solihull I photographed some on 15th September that whilst not exactly fresh were not too shabby either.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-13 11:06 PM GMT

Hi Neil, interesting about Bindon Hill, when we were there just before you, there were Chalkhill Blues aplenty, but no Adonis. So they must have emerged just after we left!

Looking forward to the next installment...

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-13 06:54 PM GMT

Cheers Essex, looking at your excellent diary I believe that you were there a couple of weeks before me. Some of the Adonis were getting a bit worn so you probably just missed them.

Looks like you made up for it on Ballard Down though 😊

Monday 2nd September - Durlston Country Park.

We left Lulworth and carried on to Durlston Country Park, arriving in the main car park by the Castle at around 1.30. Whilst the women went into the Castle for a cup of tea, I wandered along the coast path towards the 'gully'.

One thing that I noticed was how dry and brown the hillsides in the gully looked compared to last year when I was here, in fact despite there being only a day or two difference on the calendar, there was a bit of a later 'feel' to everything.



The gully at Durlston CP - 02.09.2013

There were still plenty of butterflies around however including Adonis and Common Blues, Brown Argus, some Marbled Whites, a couple of Wall Browns, and good numbers of Lulworth Skippers although these were looking well past their best by now.

Again there was a steady onshore breeze so that most of the butterflies were hunkering down in the grass when they settled but there were some more sheltered spots between the shrubs along the path up the gully where the breeze was hardly noticeable.



Marbled White - Durlston CP 02.09.2013



Adonis Blue - Durlston CP 02.09.2013



Adonis Blue - Durlston CP 02.09.2013



Adonis Blue - Durlston CP 02.09.2013



Adonis Blue - Durlston CP 02.09.2013



Lulworth Skipper - Durlston CP 02.09.2013



Lulworth Skipper - Durlston CP 02.09.2013



Lulworth Skipper - Durlston CP 02.09.2013

At one point I watched a male Lulworth Skipper buzz around a female down in the grass like a tiny blur for a few minutes before he took the hint and flew off...



Lulworth Skipper pair- Durlston CP 02.09.2013

I also saw my second Red Admiral of the week which flew past at speed as did a Clouded Yellow which would be the only one of these seen today and made me realise that I had not seen any at Lulworth. I know that Clouded Yellows had been seen by a number of people at both Lulworth and Durlston recently and I was to see plenty more in the next few days but it just seemed a bit strange that at the two sites that I would perhaps have expected to see them with this year's influx, I just had the one brief sighting.

Maybe the onshore breeze had something to do with it but I had seen three the previous afternoon in similar conditions along a stretch of coast path at Osmington Mills, just one of those little mysteries I suppose.

I circled back and stopped off briefly at the buddleia by the Castle which was covered with Whites and about a dozen Small Tortoiseshells before meeting back up with the others.

Bye for now.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 10-Sep-13 07:13 PM GMT

Nice reports and great photos Neil 😊 we were there on the 5th Sept.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-13 07:25 PM GMT

Just read your diary Mike, great stuff 😊

Looks like the Clouded Yellows were back in time for you 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 11-Sep-13 05:04 PM GMT

Great photo's Neill, I fancied going to Dorset this October for a week, don't expect too much a round though so thought I might wait until next year.
Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-13 06:31 PM GMT

Great read and photos again Neil 😊 I just read Mikes post about Durlston and asked "where to go" and now you've answered that question – the gully it is 😊 Isn't September a bit late for Marbled White, I haven't seen any for a fair number of weeks now?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-13 07:18 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, from what I saw there may well be another generation of Clouded Yellows around in October, just depends on the weather between now and then I suppose.

Hi Wurzel, I did see some faded Marbled Whites on Bindon Hill last year in early September and this year there were some in surprisingly good nick both at Bindon Hill and Durlston.

Tuesday 3rd September

Ever since she was a little girl my daughter Sarah has always liked 'old stuff' like vintage cars and steam trains and such like. When she came to Dorset with us last year we went into Swanage on the Steam Railway and she was keen to do so again this year. I told her that if she was a good girl and behaved herself (she is 22 😊 😊) we would see about it.

So it was that on Tuesday morning we drove to the Park & Ride at Norden to catch the Steam Train to Swanage for a couple of hours.

Whilst the women had a wander around the town and shops I wandered off for a bit of a walk. I toyed with the idea of making my way to Ballard Down but didn't really have time to make it worthwhile so I wandered up to Peveril Point instead.

On top of the point there is a large area of mown grass with some longer grass around the edges where I saw some Common Blues and a couple of Wall Browns. The constant breeze from the previous couple of days had dropped and there were loads of Whites plus half a dozen or so Clouded Yellows patrolling backwards and forwards across the short turf and occasionally settling to nectar on the stumpy wild flowers in the close cropped grass.



Peveril Point looking across Swanage Bay towards Ballard Down

This was a popular spot with dog walkers and more than once I had an overfriendly hound come bounding up to me so I didn't stay too long. Even so I managed to get a couple of record shots before making my way back.





Clouded Yellow – Swanage 03.09.2013

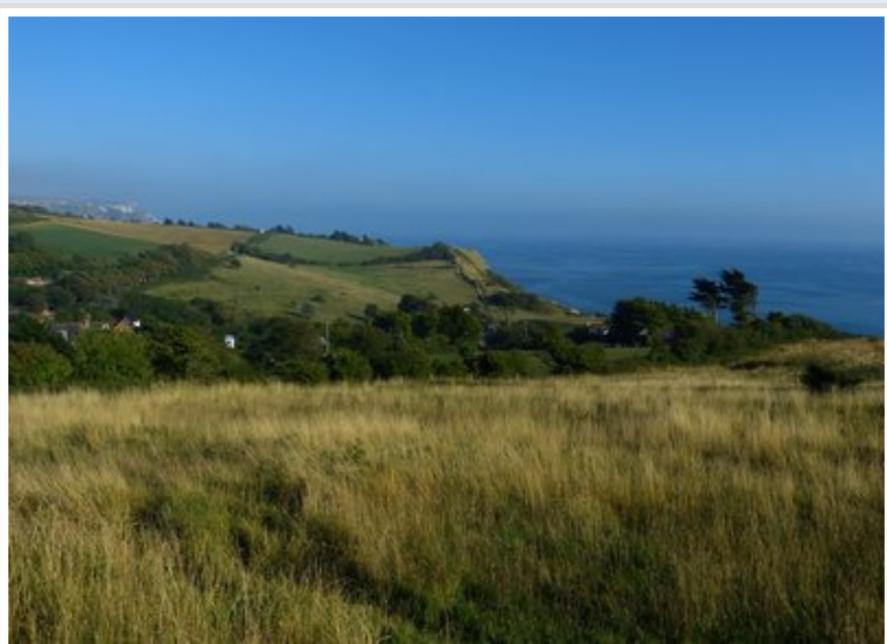
Walking back I went past a couple of Buddleias, one of which had more Small Tortoiseshells on it than have ever seen. I managed to count 40 before giving up but there were many more than that, the trouble was I would get so far across the bush before the fluttering about made me lose my count.



Small Tortoiseshells – Swanage 03.09.2013

Meeting up again with the others we made our way back to the station to catch the train back to Norden.

Back at Osmington Mills later, at around 4.00pm I went off for another walk along the SW Coast Path, this time in the other direction to previously.



Looking past Osmington Mills with Ringstead Bay in the background.

Walking past a couple of farm fields I came to a meadow area that had a couple of large patches of Fleabane where I found Common Blues, Small Tortoiseshells, the usual Whites and a couple of Clouded Yellows fluttering about and nectaring in the afternoon sun. As I made my way slowly around the flowers an odd looking butterfly took off from the grass in front of me and flew towards some shrubs a few yards away. As it lumbered through the air I realised that it was pair of Clouded Yellows in cop and the female was a helice, it was the combination of sunshine yellow and whitish grey that had thrown me for a moment.



Clouded Yellow pair (helice female) – Osmington Mills 03.09.2013



Clouded Yellow pair (helice female) – Osmington Mills 03.09.2013

I took a few photos and backed off to leave them in peace but with one eye constantly on their perch in case they separated which they did about fifteen minutes later. I watched the female helice settle in the grass and approaching slowly managed to get a couple of shots before she took off again on her way.



Clouded Yellow helice female – 03.09.2013

The male went towards the Fleabane where he spent a few minutes nectaring before he too went off on his merry way.



Clouded Yellow male - Osmington Mills 03.09.2013

Returning back down the path and up the lane with the Buddleias there were more Small Tortoiseshells plus another Painted Lady. I did wonder if the Painted Lady may have been the same one that I saw on our first day still lurking about but comparing photos there are slight differences in markings that confirm it is a different individual.



Painted Lady - Osmington Mills 03.09.2013

Another great day, it was still only Tuesday and the weather forecast was looking good for another couple of days yet 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 11-Sep-13 08:07 PM GMT

Great shots and report on the continuation of your Dorset trip Neil, particularly nice find of the Clouded Yellow pair in cop, especially with the female being helice 😊 Yes we were lucky the CY's were back at Durlleston during our visit 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-13 07:48 PM GMT

Cheers Mike, I was quite chuffed with that CY pair myself 😊

Wednesday 4th September

The women fancied another few hours in Weymouth doing the shops and beach thing so we agreed that I would drop them off and do my own thing again for a while 😊. I figured that I could get to Alners Gorse from Weymouth in an hour or less and be able to spend a couple of hours there before returning to meet up again.

I arrived at Alners Gorse just before 11.00am with some morning cloud rapidly being burnt off by the warm sun. Walking down the track to the reserve I noticed a number of Speckled Woods and Whites and at the bottom corner a nice fresh looking Small Copper.



Small Copper - Alners Gorse 04.09.2012

I then followed the hedgeline around to the gate in the corner and continued through, looking out for Brown Hairstreaks. I did a couple of circuits though the more wooded area through the gate and around the outer hedges seeing plenty of Whites and Speckled Woods, a couple of Brimstones and half a dozen or so Small Coppers but unfortunately no Brown Hairstreaks.

I then went into the more open area in the centre of the reserve where there were large patches of yellow Fleabane which were being visited by numerous Whites and 3 Clouded Yellows. The Clouded Yellows were settling frequently which enabled me to take some photos including the first backlit ones that I had managed.



Clouded Yellow - Alners Gorse 04.09.2013



Clouded Yellow - Alners Gorse 04.09.2013



Clouded Yellow - Alners Gorse 04.09.2013



Clouded Yellow - Alners Gorse 04.09.2013

There was also a single Painted Lady which didn't hang around plus a couple of Small Tortoiseshell and a few faded Meadow Browns. I bumped into another couple who had not had any success seeing any Brown Hairstreaks here and who commented how quiet it seemed. In truth I had been thinking myself that the reserve had a bit of a 'winding down' feel to it and that I was really a week or so too late. I did one more circuit and had one possible sighting of a Brown Hairstreak high above the Blackthorn just inside the first gate but not a good enough view to be confident and after little while longer I decided to make a move, the time being just before 2.00pm.

Later that afternoon after meeting the others and returning to Osmington Mills I decided to go out for another walk. I had previously read on the Dorset BC website that there were Adonis Blues up around White Horse Hill so I jumped in the car and drove to the other side of Osmington and found a footpath up towards the hill.

As I went along the path as it went up the hillside I began to see good numbers of Butterflies including Adonis and Common Blues, Meadow and Wall Browns and Small Heaths.



White Horse Hill looking back down the path towards Osmington



Small Heath - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013

There were at least half a dozen clouded yellows along the hillside and as the time approached 5.30pm they began to slow down and settle more often. I watched as one settled on a bit of bramble and approaching slowly to take a photo noticed a second one already settled a few inches above it.



Clouded Yellow - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013



Clouded Yellow - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013



Clouded Yellows - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013

Adonis Blues were plentiful all along the path including some very nice fresh looking females 😊.



Adonis Blue female - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013



Adonis Blue female - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013



Adonis Blue female - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013

As the time approached 6.00pm and I started back down the path I noticed increasing numbers of Adonis until I reached an area of longer grass that was sheltered behind some shrubs and bramble where there must have been hundreds basking with their wings open in the lowering sun. A truly magical sight 😊 and one which sounds similar to that described by Essex Buzzard at Ballard Down. I tried and failed dismally to get a photo that did justice to the spectacle, just managing to get a few shots of individuals that weren't obscured by grass stems or shadows.



Adonis Blue female - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013



Adonis Blue male - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013



Adonis Blue male - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013



Adonis Blue male - White Horse Hill 04.09.2013

By 6.30pm the Adonis were closing their wings and everything else had tucked up for the night so I made my way back.

A bit of a long post but I didn't want to split it up as I still have Thursday and Friday to cover.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Sep-13 07:44 PM GMT

Thursday 5th September

Thursday morning started off with glorious sunshine and we decided to drive round to Ringstead bay. Earlier in the week I had nearly reached here in one of my walks along the coast path and thought that it would be worth a look.

We drove down to the car park by a beach café/shop and walked down a short lane and onto the pebbly beach. I took with us a couple of fold up garden chairs that I carried in the boot of the car and whilst the others sat on the beach enjoying the sun and scenery I had a bit of a wander along for a short way in each direction behind the beach itself.

By now it was mid-morning and getting very warm and the usual Whites were about in large numbers along with at least half a dozen or so Clouded Yellows.



Ringstead Bay looking out to Portland on the horizon



Clouded Yellow – Ringstead Bay 05.09.2013



Clouded Yellow – Ringstead Bay 05.09.2013



Clouded Yellow – Ringstead Bay 05.09.2013



Clouded Yellow – Ringstead Bay 05.09.2013

I make no apologies for posting more Clouded Yellow photos, I figure it is going to be some time before I see them in numbers like this again.

Also seen here were some Small Tortoiseshells, although numbers of these seemed to be dropping as the week went on, a single Red Admiral and some Wall Browns and Common Blues with Speckled Woods around the trees on the walk from the car park.

Around mid-day we went back up to the café and had a bit of lunch before leaving. We then had a bit of a drive around the area, just looking at the scenery, before heading back to Osmington where the women just wanted to chill for a couple of hours before going out for something to eat later.

This gave me another couple of hours free and I decided to go for another walk up White Horse Hill where I had been the previous afternoon at around the same time.

It was another beautiful late afternoon and the butterflies were again around in large numbers, if anything there were more Clouded Yellows along the hillsides. In fact today was to be the day that I saw the most Clouded Yellows all week, possibly 20 or so, including those at Ringstead in the morning and now here with a few in between.



Looking back over Osmington from the top of White Horse Hill

As described in my last post I had seen and photographed two Clouded Yellows settled together on some brambles the previous afternoon and I now had another similar experience only this time there were three close together 😊 .



Clouded Yellows - White Horse Hill 05.09.2013

As I took another photo of these three, another Clouded Yellow flew into shot so I just managed to get a photo of four in the frame at the same time 😊. I don't think I will manage anything like that again for a while, if at all.



Clouded Yellows - White Horse Hill 05.09.2013

The fourth one put the other three up into the air in flurry of golden yellow and they flew off in four different directions. One of them settled again a short distance down the path where I took a few more photos, including a couple that were back lit by the sun and I tried flash to fill in the shadows on the near side.



Clouded Yellow - White Horse Hill 05.09.2013

I also saw another helice female that settled a couple of times before flying further up the hill.



Clouded Yellow helice - White Horse Hill 05.09.2013



Clouded Yellow helice - White Horse Hill 05.09.2013

Adonis Blues were still around in large numbers...



Adonis Blues - White Horse Hill 05.09.2013



Adonis Blue female – 05.09.2013

I hung around until around 6.00pm but although there were large numbers basking in the sun again, the impact was not quite the same as previously, maybe a slight difference in the light but they didn't seem to glow in the grass like they did the previous afternoon. They also seemed to be lower down in the grass, although there wasn't much wind, and the photos that I took had grass stems and shadows getting in the way. Nevertheless, I quite like the colour in the shot below.



Adonis Blue – White Horse Hill 05.09.2013

Another great day with lots of butterflies 😊 but the forecast for the next day (Friday) was not looking so good so we didn't make any plans but decided to wait and see what the weather would do.

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 13-Sep-13 08:26 PM GMT

Four Clouded Yellows in a single frame is something special in this country, Neil.

You've actually managed to eclipse by one the total number I've SEEN at all!

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 13-Sep-13 08:37 PM GMT

David beat me to it Neil, great report and accompanying photos from your Dorset trip 😊 who knows when we will see so many CT's again 🤔

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Sep-13 02:42 PM GMT

Cheers David and Mike, the four Clouded Yellow shot was one of those lucky split second things that I was very fortunate to capture 😊

Friday 6th September

Following some overnight rain, Friday morning started off dull and cloudy so we took our time over breakfast and just relaxed for a while. By mid-morning the clouds had started to break up and bits of blue sky were showing so I went for a little walk along the coast path to see if anything was about.

I soon started to see Whites and Speckled Woods and reaching the meadow area where I had seen the Clouded Yellow pair in cop the other day, Common Blues and Meadow Browns were nectaring on patches of Fleabane and Wild Mint.



Meadow area along SW Coast Path just west of Osmington Mills.



Speckled Wood - Osmington Mills 06.09.2013



Speckled Wood - Osmington Mills 06.09.2013



Meadow Brown - Osmington Mills 06.09.2013

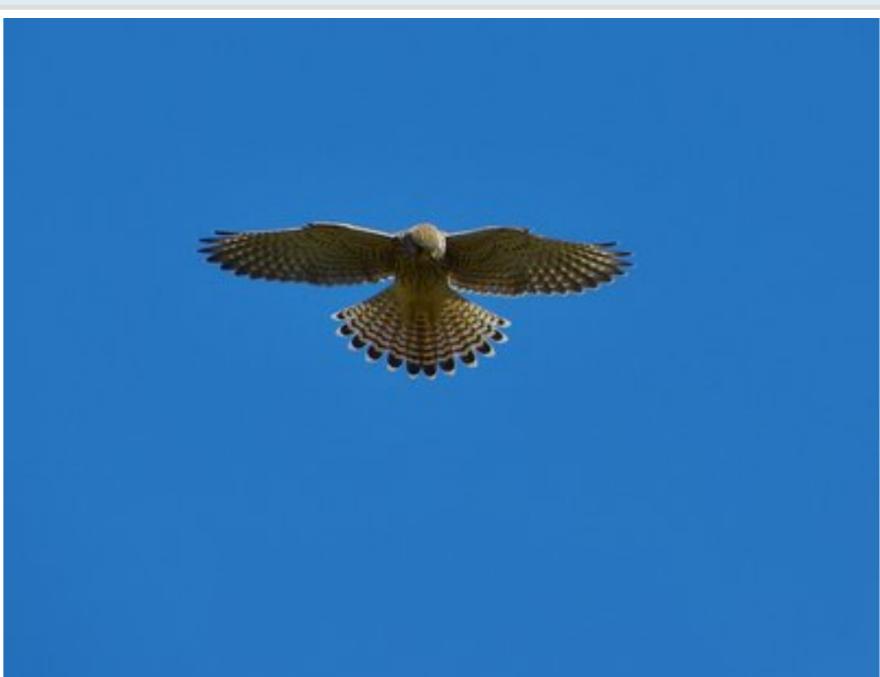
Returning to the caravan, the others had decided that we would have some lunch and then, if it stayed dry, we would nip round to Lulworth Cove again. Well, not only did it stay dry but by early afternoon there was wall to wall blue sky and it had turned into another beautiful day so back to Lulworth Cove we went 😊.

As with earlier in the week there were plenty of Whites on the Valerian growing out of the walls on the way down to the cove along with a couple of Brimstones.



Brimstone - Lulworth Cove 06.09.2013

I left the others tucking into ice creams at the cove and nipped up the path to Bindon Hill for an hour or so. As I came out onto the Hill, along with the same profusion of butterflies that I saw the other day, there were a couple of Kestrels hovering over the slopes, one of which I managed to get a shot of at full zoom.



Kestrel - Bindon Hill 06.09.2013



The slopes of Bindon Hill that were covered in butterflies



Adonis Blue – Bindon Hill 06.09.2013



Adonis Blue – Bindon Hill 06.09.2013



Chalkhill Blue - Bindon Hill 06.09.2013



Chalkhill Blue, well spotted female - 06.09.2013



Marbled White - Bindon Hill 06.09.2013

I spent about an hour up on the hill and then went back down to meet the others back by the heritage centre. Before heading back to the car we went and had a look at the Herb/Wildlife garden where there were loads of Whites on a couple of clumps of Lavender. My daughter, Sarah, called me over and pointed out a butterfly that had settled on her leg that turned out to be a Grayling. I had seen a number of Grayling up on Bindon Hill both on Monday and today but not managed to get any reasonable photos. This one took off from Sarah's leg and settled on a Buddleia that had just about finished flowering where I took some backlit photos before it moved again.



Grayling - Lulworth Cove 06.09.2013



Grayling - Lulworth Cove 06.09.2013

When we had arrived on the Saturday, the first Butterflies I had seen were Small Tortoiseshells and to come full circle the last butterfly photos that I took in Dorset were of some more Small Tortoiseshells.



Small Tortoiseshells - Lulworth Cove 06.09.2013

It had been a fantastic week with the weather being great from the first day right up until the last afternoon. Although a family holiday, the fact that my wife, daughter and mom were company for each other meant that I had loads of chances to get out butterflying 😊 .

Highlights were the numbers of Small Tortoiseshells seen, particularly at the beginning of the week, the Adonis Blues up on White Horse Hill, the numbers of Clouded Yellows, most of them seen around the area where we were staying, and the sheer number of butterflies on Bindon Hill.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 14-Sep-13 05:41 PM GMT

Great photo's again Neill, the Small Tortoise's have had a great year, I've had loads in the garden and just took some more shot's today, not has many Red Admiral's as last year though even down in Kent I only saw 2 or 3 Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 14-Sep-13 05:54 PM GMT

Hi Neil, those Chalkhill Blues on Bindon Hill look in fabulous condition 😊 Nice end to your Dorset report and nice shots, you certainly timed your visit well 😊😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 14-Sep-13 10:17 PM GMT

Hi Neil, sounds like you had a great time down there. Glad the weather held as well, and you got the chance to experience those Adonis Blues ahead of roosting—they are a wonderful sight when seen in numbers, aren't they? 😊

Some great pictures, too.

Sounds like you saw more Clouded Yellows than me, though...

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-13 10:23 PM GMT

Fantastic reports and shots Neil – you've made me feel quite homesick 😊😊😊 Sorry Alners didn't deliver – perhaps it's an early site? Lovely backlit Cloudies 😊 and I notice you managed to fit in some Specklies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-13 08:02 PM GMT

Thanks all for the comments, very much appreciated as always 😊

Hi Goldie, yep, the Small Tortoiseshell have had a great year 😊. I have not seen many Red Admirals anywhere this year, I reckon only about half a dozen so far.

Hi Wurzel, Alners Gorse looked like a very interesting site and although I did not see any Brown Hairstreaks, at least not that I would claim as definite, it did deliver on other butterflies. The Clouded Yellows especially posed nicely for me 😊

It was just that compared with the numbers of butterflies that I was seeing at the coastal sites it seemed a little bit quieter.

I can always manage to fit in some Specklies, especially as they were everywhere all week in good numbers 😊

Hi Mike, I was quite surprised at the good condition of some of the Chalkhill Blues. I was there at the same time last year and only saw a couple of tatty individuals then.

Hi Essex, those Adonis Blues are certainly a sight to remember when the evening sun catches them just right 😊 Strange thing with the Clouded Yellows was that I saw them everywhere except Lulworth and only one at Durlston, most were within a mile or two of where we were staying at Osmington.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Sep-13 09:43 PM GMT

Sunday 22nd September

The past couple of weeks have been pretty dull and cloudy most of the time with a fair bit of rain and drizzle so being stuck in work has not really bothered me that much.

There have been a couple of days when the sun has made a feeble attempt to come through and there has been a couple or three Speckled Wood flitting about in the garden when I have got in from work but that has been about it.

Last weekend was a washout but this weekend has been much better with some warm sun breaking through late yesterday afternoon and again today from about mid-day onwards 😊.

We went to my Mom's for Sunday lunch today and whilst having a nose around her garden noticed a Speckled Wood and a couple of Small Whites pass through. Something a bit larger than circled round and landed at the bottom of the garden...a nice looking Peacock 😊. Most of these tucked themselves away for the winter some weeks ago but I usually see the odd one around here right up until the end of September.



Peacock - Solihull 22.09.2013

The afternoon turned into a nice sunny one so I decided to nip around to Castle Hills and see what was still about. During the couple of hours that I spent there I saw numerous Speckled Woods, half a dozen or so Whites which I believe were all Small and half a dozen Small Tortoiseshells. Three or four each of Small heath, really raggedy Common Blue and Small Copper, a couple of Commas and another Peacock brought it up to eight species seen, not too bad for late September.



Castle Hills Solihull



Comma - Castle Hills 22.09.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 22.09.2013



Small White - Castle Hills 22.09.2013



Small Heath - Castle Hills 22.09.2013



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 22.09.2013



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 22.09.2013



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 22.09.2013

As is usual at this site my visit was accompanied by the calls of Buzzards circling around above me.



Buzzards - Castle Hills 22.09.2013

There is only likely to be another weekend or maybe two left of this season around here so fingers crossed that I will have another chance or two to get out again.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-13 09:58 PM GMT

That Peacock is practically jumping out of my iPod Neil 😲😄 We've still got the Red Admirals to come Neil so there's still something to look forward to (I saw 3 today - my highest count all year), good luck over the next couple of weeks.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Sep-13 10:25 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel,

I noticed today that most of the Ivy around here, including in my garden, is not quite flowering yet. There are a couple of good clumps at Castle Hills that attracted numerous Red Admirals last year, hopefully I will be able to check them next weekend.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 22-Sep-13 11:49 PM GMT

Sunshine, Neil - I'm envious! None to speak of here all day... 🇬🇧

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 24-Sep-13 09:50 PM GMT

Great photos Neil, especially the Speckled Wood on the Blackberries, [last pic] excellent. 😄

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Sep-13 07:47 PM GMT

Thanks Dave and Nick 😄

"millerd" wrote:

Sunshine, Neil – I'm envious! None to speak of here all day... 🌞

Dave

It turned into a cracking afternoon 😊, it has been a bit murky here since though, fairly warm still but mostly dull with a lot of cloud about.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-Sep-13 09:24 PM GMT

Sunday 29th September

Another busy week at work and a dry but dull day yesterday (Saturday) meant that I had not seen any butterflies since last Sunday. After a bit of early cloud, today turned into a cracking early autumn day with plenty of sun breaking through by mid-day. The Ivy in the garden is just starting to flower and early this afternoon attracted a couple of Commas into the garden.



Comma - Coverdale 29.09.2013



Comma - Coverdale 29.09.2013

Feeling the need to get out for a bit but not having the time to venture far I decided to just have a nose around Castle Hills again to see what I could find.

During the course of a very pleasant, albeit a bit breezy, couple of hours I saw Commas, Small Tortoiseshells and Speckled Woods in good numbers plus a few Whites of which I positively identified Small and Green-veined with maybe at least one Large but too far away to be sure.



Comma - Castle Hills 29.09.2013



Comma - Castle Hills 29.09.2013



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 29.09.2013

The stars of the day were the Small Tortoiseshells with probably a dozen or more seen around the meadows.



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 29.09.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 29.09.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 29.09.2013

I also found a couple of male Common Blues that whilst not exactly in good condition, were in better shape than the tatty individuals that I found here last week.



Common Blue – Castle Hills 29.09.2013

There were also a couple of female Meadow Browns still hanging in there both of which looked to have a bit of life left in them. I only managed a pretty rubbish record shot of the one but I got clear enough views of both to tell that they were definitely two different individuals.



Meadow Brown – Castle Hills 29.09.2013

Seeing that others have started seeing a few more Red Admirals around I was on the lookout for these but unfortunately I didn't see any today.

We are into October in a couple of days and with work during the week and the sun getting lower by the time I get home (that is if it is out at all) the season is rapidly drawing to its close. Soon be time to start looking back on the season and putting a retrospective post or two together.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 29-Sep-13 09:36 PM GMT

Odd that you saw no Red Admirals, Neil.

They're very much the dominant species here in south Wales right now, and I expect that to continue right the way up to when all butterflies disappear.

Commas and Brimstones are thin on the ground, but Torts and RAs are positively ubiquitous.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-13 10:42 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil 😊 The first Comma, the underside, is lush! I also got out today but didn't see the variety that you had, I haven't seen a Meadow Brown for a few weeks now, it's getting to that time of year 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 29-Sep-13 10:58 PM GMT

Pleased you are seeing plenty of Small Tortoiseshells,Neil.

I havn't seen any for a while now, hopefully they fed well in August, and have just gone into hibernation early—though second brood Torts were in lower

numbers than i was hoping, considering the number of caterpillars. 😊

Thanks for sharing your lovely images.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 29-Sep-13 11:55 PM GMT

I think the Tortoiseshells and Peacocks are well tucked up round here too, so I'm envious of you seeing them in good numbers still, Neil. One day when I'm up that way with the boys, we'll have to have a look at your local patch. Probably next year now.

And at least we know from David that all the Red Admirals are in South Wales for the Autumn... I've hardly seen any either.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Oct-13 10:17 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David, Wurzel, Essex and Dave, much appreciated as always 😊

Dave, if you head up this way next season you will have to let me know, it would be good to meet up again.

Another week at work so nothing seen again since last weekend. The leaves are well into changing colour around here and are starting to drop in in fair amounts, feeling like we are well into Autumn. The weather for the weekend looks a bit promising so I may have another nose around locally if I get the time, fingers crossed.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 05-Oct-13 12:05 PM GMT

Hi Neil, lovely photos of a nice selection of butterflies in your recent posts 😊 Small Tortoiseshells have been a bit thin on the ground around here of late, however we are finally beginning to see a few Red Admirals.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 06-Oct-13 01:38 PM GMT

Lovely photos as usual Neil, and so late in the year. I particularly like the 3rd Comma, all brown, with no obvious markings. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Oct-13 07:34 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Mike and Nick, very much appreciated as always 😊

Sunday 6th October

Looking back at my diary at this time last year I posted the comment below on 6th October.

The third Saturday in a row with no rain (although there has been plenty in between) and I managed to get out again for a couple of hours.

This year has turned out almost exactly the same, the only difference being that it has been the past three Sundays that have turned out nice after some gloomy weekdays and so-so Saturdays.

I got the domestics done by early afternoon and set out on a trundle around Solihull to see what was still about.

First stop was Shadowbrook Meadows where as soon as I got out of the car I was greeted by a Speckled Wood and a Comma flitting along the hedgerow. A quick circuit of the meadows turned up a couple more Specklies and Commas and half a dozen or so Green-veined Whites in various conditions.



Green-veined White - Shadowbrook Meadows 06.10.2013

I then drove back through Catherine-de-Barnes and headed for a public footpath where I had seen loads of Commas at this time last year. Sure enough, on the very same bramble patches there were around a dozen Commas enjoying the Blackberries 😊 .



Comma - Solihull 06.10.2013



Comma - Solihull 06.10.2013



Comma - Solihull 06.10.2013



Comma - Solihull 06.10.2013

My last stop was at Castle Hills where I have been the past couple of Sundays and where I was interested to see if any of the Small Tortoiseshells were still about.

I followed my usual path, seeing a few Speckled Woods and Commas but it was much quieter than last week, the spots that I had seen the STs at last week were completely devoid of butterflies.

Going through a couple of meadows, I went a bit further than I usually do and came across a couple of large patches of what looked like a type of Michaelmas Daisy, probably a garden escapee.

This was where all the butterflies were, mostly Small Tortoiseshells with a couple of Commas.



Large patch of 'Michaelmas daisies'



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 06.10.2013



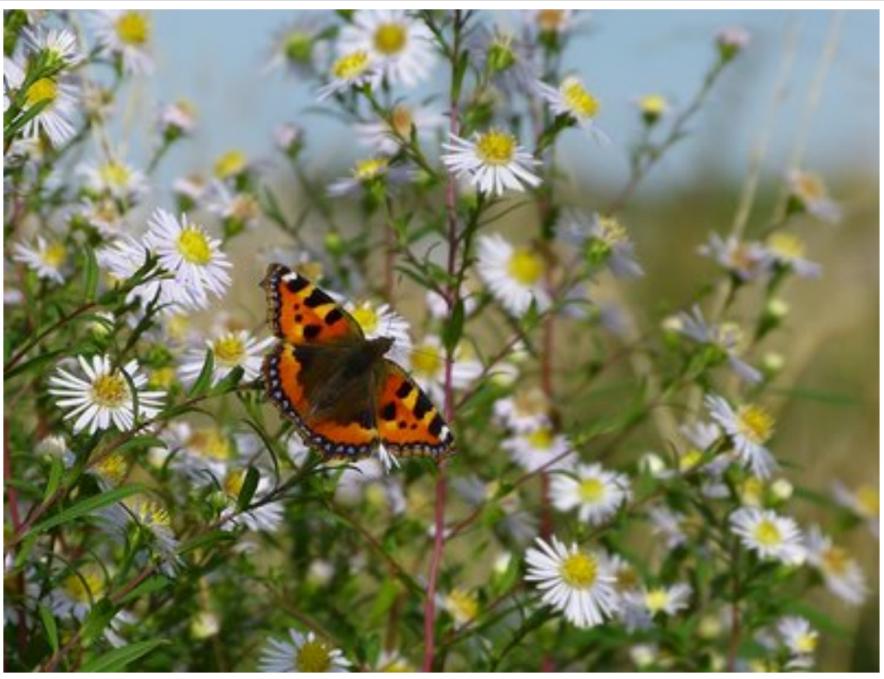
Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 06.10.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 06.10.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 06.10.2013



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 06.10.2013

Surprisingly there were also a couple of Peacocks albeit one very faded one and one with a big chunk out of its hind wing which looked like a bird had gone for the eye-spot and who wouldn't sit still for a photo. I often see the odd one or two around here right up until late September but this is the latest that I have seen them.



Peacock - Castle Hills 06.10.2013

No Red Admirals again this week, maybe the few that have been seen around here are tucked up or heading South again, can't say I blame them looking at the forecast for colder conditions later in the week.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-13 10:44 PM GMT

Nice report Neil and great shots 😊 It's great seeing butterflies into October, but I don't know if that Peacock will make it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Oct-13 05:27 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, those could well be the last butterflies that I see this year 😊 The season always ends around here before it does down south and the weather this weekend has been lousy.

So, it looks like time to start looking back...

The weather around here has turned pretty grotty over the few days and we are now well into autumn with lashings of rain and high winds with the leaves turning and coming down off the trees in ever increasing numbers.

I have started to look back over the past season and sort through the many photos that I took during some fantastic trips around the country which included heading north to Arnside and south to Devon and Dorset as well as great sites in the midlands such as the Wyre Forest and Fermyn Woods.

My species tally for the year is 48. This is 2 short of last year when I managed to see 50 species during what was apparently a worse year for many species, not all though, as some species appeared to do worse this year.

Holly Blue numbers in particular have been well down locally. Ringlets also did not seem to be around in the same numbers but that one is a bit relative as there were still plenty, just not quite the hordes that there were last year.

After a late start to spring, Commas and Peacocks were about in good numbers as were Orange Tips when they finally showed up with me seeing more of the latter in my garden than for a few years.

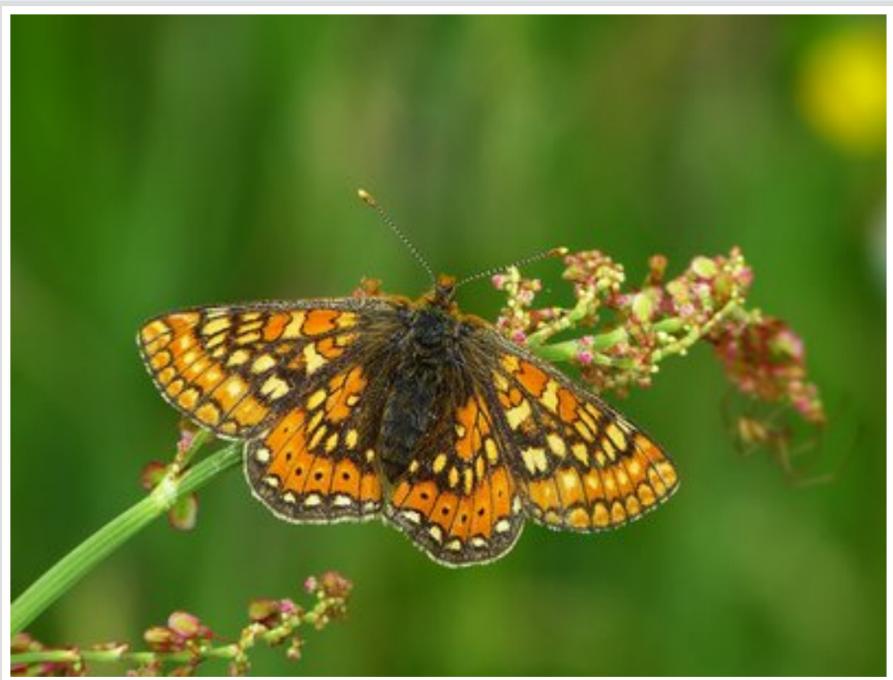
Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Small and Essex Skippers seemed to do well locally but Large Skippers seemed down in numbers a bit although they were around for a while longer than usual.

I was particularly pleased to see Common Blues and Small Coppers bounce back from their poor showing last year, Small Copper numbers particularly were well up in the second brood although, unlike further south, it appears that due to the later start to the season we didn't get time to fit in a third brood.

As with the rest of the country there were amazing numbers of all three common Whites about, particularly Large and Small. I also saw Small Tortoiseshells in the kind of numbers that I haven't seen for years. Red Admirals on the other hand were thin on the ground with only a few seen locally including 2 in my garden.

Despite missing out on a number of species due to just not having the opportunity at the right time, I did add three more firsts to my list this year 😊.

Marsh Fritillary during a family break to North Devon in June,



Marsh Fritillary - Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013



Marsh Fritillary - Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013



Marsh Fritillary - Volehouse Moor 18.06.2013

Heath Fritillary at Haddon Hill on my way to Heddon Valley for a few days later in June,



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 05.07.2013

and Large Blue at Collard Hill when I stopped off on my way home from Heddon Valley.



Large Blues - Collard Hill 08.07.2013



Large Blue – Collard Hill 08.07.2013



Large Blue – Collard Hill 08.07.2013

These brought my total tally of British Butterflies up to 53 species with Glanville Fritillary, Black Hairstreak, Northern Brown Argus, Mountain Ringlet and Chequered Skipper still to be seen, with Cryptic Wood White if I ever go across the sea to Ireland.

Black Hairstreak seemed to have a good year going by the sightings and photos posted on UKB and would have been easy for me to get to, but their short flight period was mostly when I was in Devon. Oh well, can't have everything... one for next year perhaps.

Other highlights of my season as described during the past year in this diary included;

- Good numbers of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries in the Wyre Forest.
- Being surrounded by Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at Marsland.
- The numbers of High Brown Fritillaries in the Heddon Valley.
- The amazing number of Purple Emperors at Fermyn Woods.
- Hundreds if not thousands of Scotch Argus at Arnside Knott as well as HB and DG Fritillaries and my first Clouded Yellow Photo.
- A fantastic early September week in Dorset with loads of Adonis Blues, Small Tortoiseshells and Clouded Yellows among the many butterflies seen.

All in all a great season with butterflies generally seen in very good numbers 😊, in fact even when I was growing up in the 1970s there were years when I didn't see as many butterflies as this year.

As I write this the rain is lashing down again outside and it has gone dark enough for me to put the lights on to see what I am doing. I think I will sort through some more photos to cheer myself up....

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 13-Oct-13 06:58 PM GMT

Lots more fantastic photos Neil, thank you for the eye candy 😊 it may be wet and chilly outside but it's lovely and sunny in here 😊

Best Wishes,

B,saurus

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 13-Oct-13 07:05 PM GMT

Your photo's are lovely Neill and I know what you mean about cheering up looking at your photo's .

You certainly traveled a lot, I'd love to see the Purple E may be I'll start to plan a few places for next year and that will cheer me up. Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 14-Oct-13 07:15 PM GMT

Some more great photos of the commas and Small Tortoiseshells Neil. 😊 The open winged shot of the ST has eluded me this year, so seeing yours in all their glory just shows me what i`m missing, maybe next year.. 😊

A lovely start to your Going Back.... look forward to seeing the rest. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Oct-13 07:21 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments B saurus, Goldie and Nick, very much appreciated 😊

I did do a fair bit of travelling but also managed to make the most of a couple of week long family breaks in Devon and Dorset. I also had a couple of shorter breaks with my wife Jane, 3 days in the Heddon Valley and 3 days at Arnside. Other than those trips, the furthest that I went was to Aston Rowant and Fermyn Woods, both about 90 minutes drive from my house, everywhere else being less than an hour away.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 15-Oct-13 07:53 PM GMT

You've put a great deal of effort in this year, Neil, and I'm glad you got to see so many species.

BTW, that Large Blue part-open winged shot simply **oozes** freshness! I bet that emerged the very morning you saw it.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Oct-13 08:42 PM GMT

Cheers David, although when I enjoy it so much it doesn't feel like effort 😊

The past couple of nights, whilst Jane has been glued to the tele watching some soap or other, I have been going through some more photos. It seems that I took more shots than I realised showing two or more butterflies in the frame together.

So for this next look back I am going to post a selection of shots all with two or more butterflies in that bring back memories of some really great days and for me give a bit of a feeling of the sheer numbers of butterflies that were sometimes around.



SPBFs at Marsland in June.



High Browns in the Heddon Valley.



Emperors and Admiral at Fermyn Woods



Commas and Emperor at Fermyn Woods



Common Blue and Meadow Brown at Sheldon Country Park by Birmingham Airport



Peacocks at Solihull



Scotch Argus at Arnside Knott.



Grayling and Scotch Argus at Arnside, a couple of tatty individuals but I like the photo...



Lots of Common Blues at Arnside and then at Warton Crag



Small Tortoiseshells in Dorset



Adonis Blues in Dorset

and finally, one of the definite highlights of my year,



Clouded Yellows in Dorset

Whilst none of the photos above will ever win any prizes, they are all amongst my favourites because for me they capture the moment, and there were so many fantastic moments this year 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 15-Oct-13 08:51 PM GMT

That's a really interesting sequence, Neil, particularly the SPBFs which I presume are buzzing about a large clump of violets?

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-13 09:19 PM GMT

Amazing set of posts Neil – they sent my envy meter off the chart 🍷 😊 I would love to see Scotch Argus but they seem so far away 😞 Maybe if I win the lottery 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-Oct-13 09:25 PM GMT

A great set of group and combination photos there Neil. 😊 I wish we had those numbers of SPBF's down this way.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Oct-13 02:53 PM GMT

Cheers Guys 😊

Hi David, If I remember correctly think the clumps of flowers were wild Thyme or something similar.

Hi Wurzel, that's one advantage of living in the midlands, going up to Arnside is no further for me than going down to Devon or Dorset. Mind you both are a bit far for a day trip hence the 2 or 3 night stays that I do to get the most out of places.

Hi B rex, I have been wishing that the Long-tailed Blues were closer for me, I suppose the grass is always greener..... 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

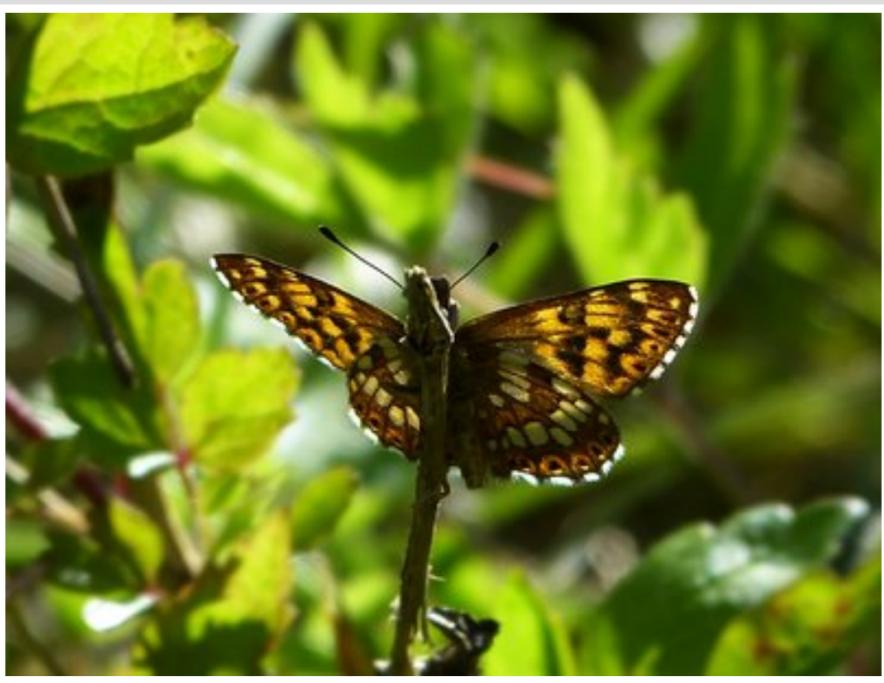
Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Oct-13 05:01 PM GMT

During some of my trips out this year I made some attempts to photograph some butterflies in more unusual poses to add a bit more variety and interest. I had particularly liked some of Wurzel's 'stained glass' type of photos so I had a few tries for something similar as well as side on and head on shots

The results were very mixed but going through my photos it seems that, purely by coincidence, most of my better efforts were of various fritillaries.

The first one though, taken at Prestbury Hill, is not really a fritillary, although it used to go by the name of Duke of Burgundy Fritillary as in my 1971 copy of 'The Observers Book of Butterflies' which I still have from when I was a lad 😊

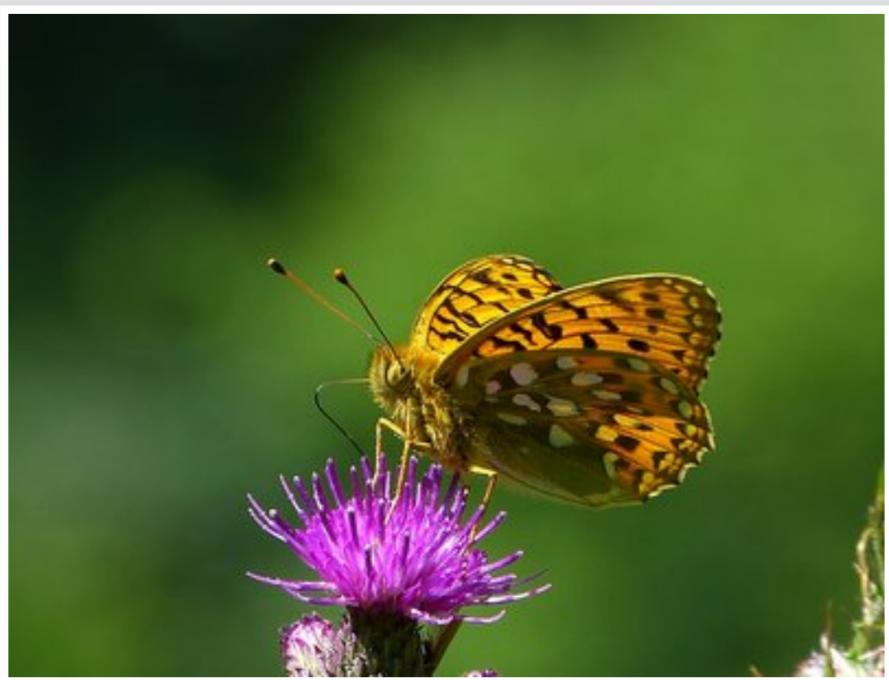
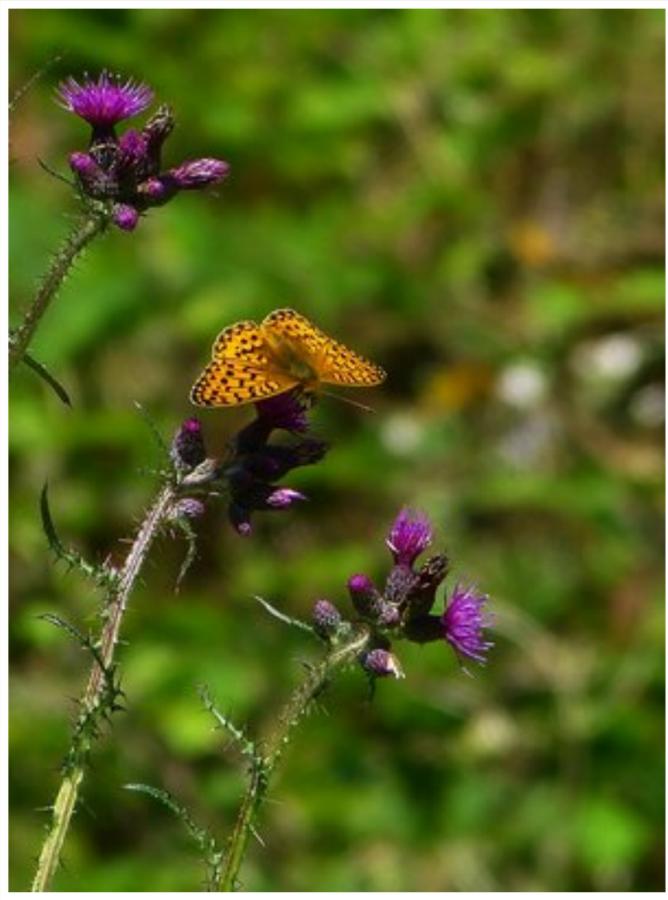


Next up, a couple of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries from the Wyre Forest...



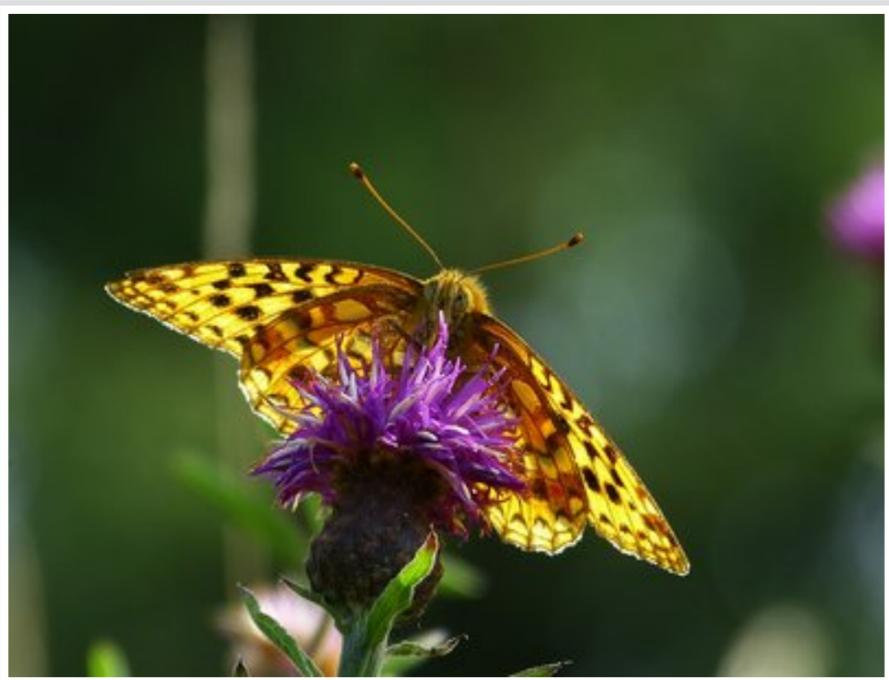


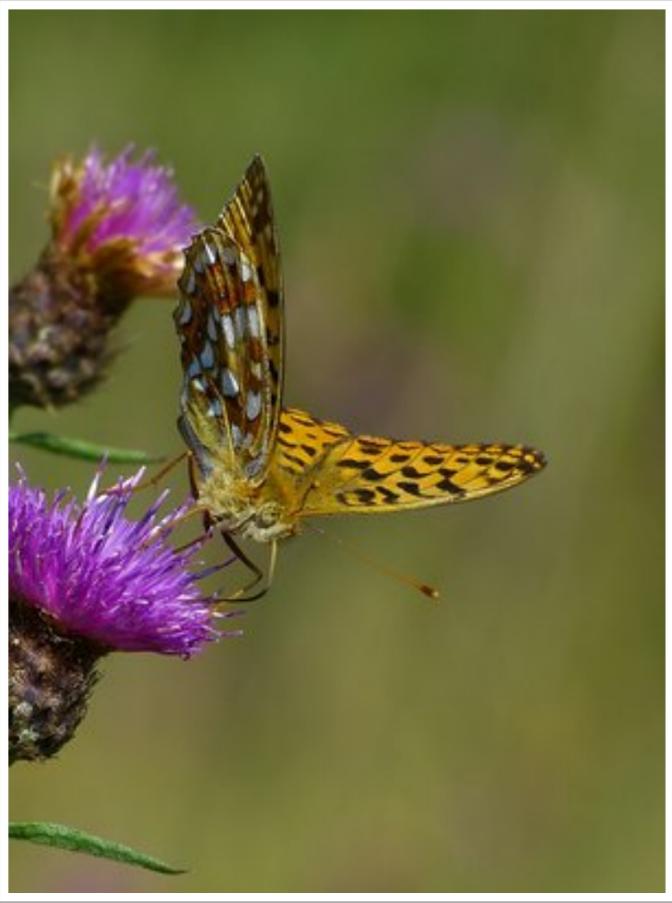
A couple of Dark Greens and High Browns from the Heddon Valley...





Some High Browns from Arnside Knott ...

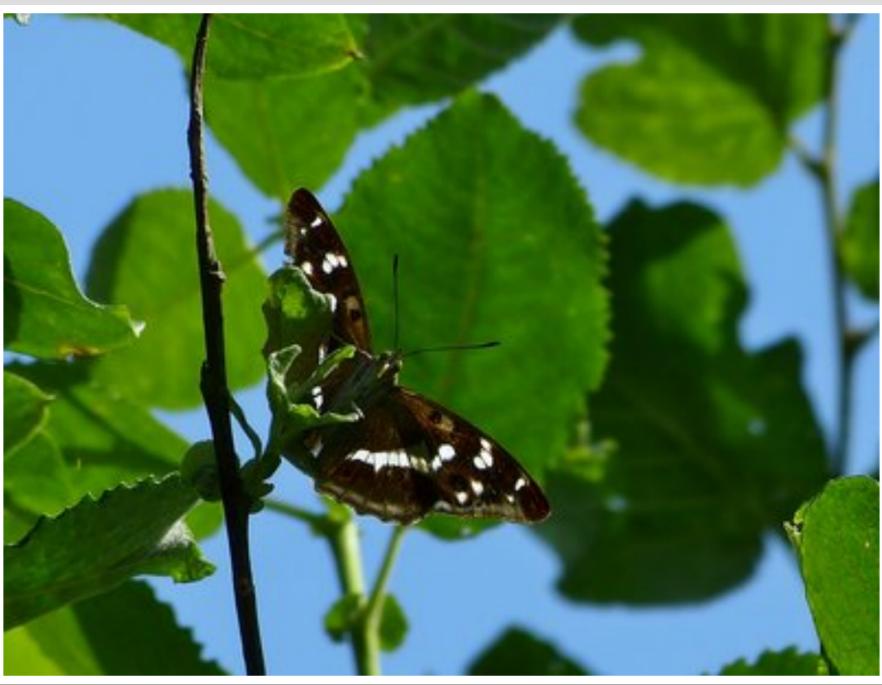




And a Silver-washed Fritillary from Fermyn Woods.



To finish off, one that is definitely not a Fritillary, His Majesty looking down disdainfully in Fermyn Woods.



Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-13 08:48 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil 😊 I'm obviously envious of the HBFs again but the Duke is an absolute cracker, I want one like that in my collection 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 20-Oct-13 12:03 AM GMT

Excellent photography Neil. Its always nice to see something different, and captured so well. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Oct-13 09:11 PM GMT

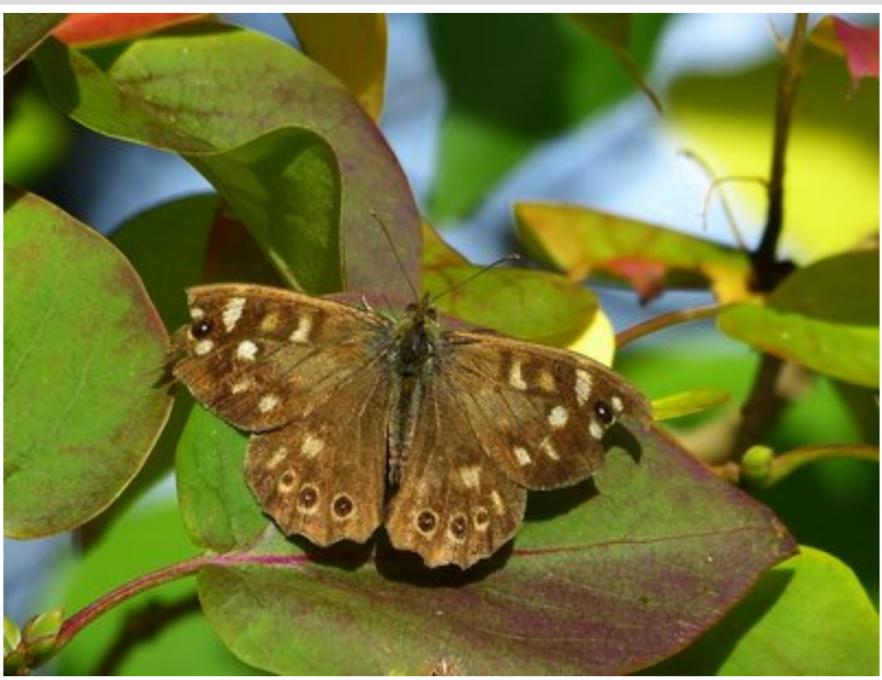
Thanks for the great comments Wurzel and Nick, glad you like them 😊

Sunday 20th October

Between work during the week and some pretty grotty weekend weather I have not seen any butterflies for a couple of weeks now 😞

Yesterday and today there were some brief sunny spells between the cloud, showers and gusty wind and there has been a lone male Speckled Wood valiantly defending his patch against various bees and hoverflies that are still about.

He has definitely seen better days but was putting up a good show although looking at the forecast for the week ahead I think that today was quite possibly his final performance.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 20.10.2013

Just a couple of brief encounters with a single butterfly but they cheered my weekend up no end 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-13 05:31 PM GMT

Snap with the weather, ditto for the single butterfly I saw over the weekend and likewise for the behaviour it was exhibiting. Were you visiting Southampton too perchance 😊 Hope you can squeeze some more butterflies out of the year.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Oct-13 08:51 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, nowhere near Southampton, I just ventured a few yards into my back garden 😊

I am not holding out much hope for many more butterflies around here this year, it has been horrendously wet and windy again today and looks to be the same all week. The trouble is, this time of year, if the sky clears the temperature usually drops with it. If I was further South there maybe more chance but around here, barring the odd occasional hibernator, I think realistically that is about it for this season.

Roll on next Spring....

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 21-Oct-13 09:22 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Roll on next Spring....

Don't give up just yet, Neil. I reckon there's still a bit of life left in the season.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 22-Oct-13 12:09 AM GMT

Hi Neil, a very nice selection of your summer shots, brings it all back 😊 great Scotch Argus photos from the Knott. Last week we had a Speckled Wood and Small Whites nectaring on the Valerian. We also had a brief visit from a Humming-bird Hawk-moth, its not all over, quite yet 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Oct-13 08:18 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David and Mike 😊 and I appreciate your sentiments about there being a bit of life left in the season.

That may well be true around your parts of the country but here in the midlands it is perfectly normal for our season to start a bit later and finish a bit earlier than it does further south, especially nearer the coast where the climate tends to be a bit milder than ours.

To be realistic, the season here has now finished although that is not to say that I might not see the odd hibernator tempted out by a bit of sunshine or maybe even a late Specklie still if any survive the heavy rain and high winds we are currently experiencing.

Here's hoping that I am wrong but in truth, you guys have more chance of seeing something still than I have.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 22-Oct-13 08:50 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Here's hoping that I am wrong but in truth, you guys have more chance of seeing something still than I have.

Find a sheltered spot with a bit of flowering ivy and I'm pretty certain you'll see Red Admirals in early November.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 01-Nov-13 10:31 AM GMT

Frantically trying to catch up on all the diaries Neil and I have to say I love your DGF shots – probably because I know from experience just how hard it is to get a decent shot. Well done.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Nov-13 08:03 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments Pauline, very much appreciated as always 😊

I was very lucky this year with Dark Green Frits, and High Browns, as you will know from my diary posts earlier this year. I had a couple of fantastic trips to the Heddon Valley and later to Arnside when I could spend time with the butterflies both earlier in the day and later in the afternoon when they were less flighty and spending more time nectaring.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Nov-13 09:40 AM GMT

Friday 8th November

The past few weeks have been spent either at work or catching up on stuff around the house that I had put off whilst getting about during the summer, the last butterfly that I saw in the garden was the Specklie on the 20th October.

A cold miserable morning at work on Friday with heavy rain outside was brightened up considerably when I spotted a Peacock fluttering about in one of the workshops. It was far too early, about 08.30 and still practically dark with the rain outside so I reckon it had been disturbed from being tucked up inside. It spent a couple of minutes flying about before disappearing behind the mass of pipework and ducting in the roof.

This workshop can be a cold draughty place but it does get warm when the heating is on so is not really a good spot for hibernation. There are some larger roller shutters opening to the outside where it probably came in sometime back so I am hoping it finds its way back outside to find somewhere more suitable to spend the winter.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Nov-13 09:20 PM GMT

Sunday 10th November

After a cold and frosty night today was nice and sunny with little wind albeit there being an underlying chilliness in the air. After getting the domestics done this morning I was tempted out this afternoon to blow the cobwebs off with a mooch around Castle Hills at Solihull.



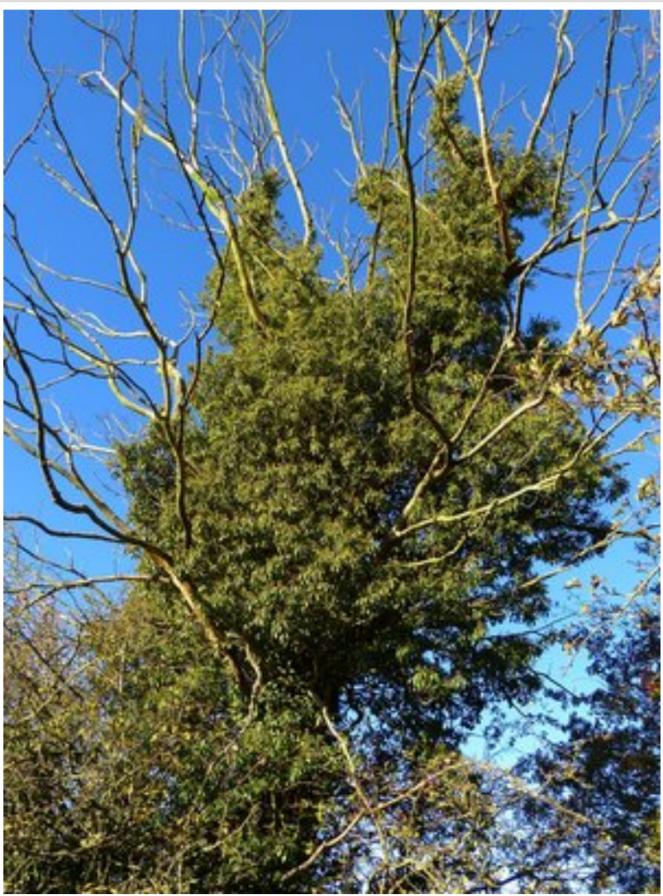
Castle Hills Solihull 10.11.2013



Castle Hills Solihull 10.11.2013

The highlights of the afternoon where a number of little gangs of Long-tailed Tits and Goldfinches that were roving around the hedgerows. They were far too mobile to get any photos but were a joy to watch as they flitted and bounced along the hedges.

There was not much flying insect activity about apart from a few wasps and hoverflies which were mostly around the clumps of Ivy that were just about still in flower.



Castle Hills Solihull 10.11.2013

I did not see any butterflies today but nevertheless it was great to be out after the past couple of weeks when I seem to have been at work on the few good days and when I have been off it has been wind and rain.

Now to carry on sorting through this years photos...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 11-Nov-13 09:52 PM GMT

Looking forward to the outcomes of your endeavours Neil 😊 Looks like it's that time of year to break out the spotting scope... 🙄 At least you have your Large Blues and High Brown memories to keep you going through the winter months 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 12-Nov-13 06:33 PM GMT

Hi Neil, sorting through photos is time consuming but enjoyable, I keep finding ones I'd overlooked at the time I took them 🙄

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Nov-13 07:51 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😊, I am mostly looking through for photos to post in the species-specific favourites threads as they come up each week but will probably find some 'odds and sods' to stick in this dairy as well.

Hi Mike, I know what you mean, I usually post what I think are my best shots in this dairy as I go along but on looking back find others that I like. They may not always be good photos but ones I that I find appealing or interesting for other reasons such as the group photos that I posted a couple a couple of pages back.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Nov-13 08:35 PM GMT

Whilst I am not really a 'birder' I do take an interest in the birds that I see, either in my garden or when out and about looking for butterflies. I have even made attempts to photograph some of them, usually through the window into the garden at home or 'snap shots' whilst out.

Earlier this year I managed three particular photos, all of which were snap shots of which I was particularly pleased with the results. All have been previously posted in this diary but I just thought that I would stick them together here in one place.

A Red Kite from Aston Rowant.



Red Kite - Aston Rowant 02.08.2013

A Buzzard at Castle Hills near Solihull.



Buzzard - Castle Hills 18.08.2013

and a Kestrel on Bindon Hill at Lulworth, Dorset.



Kestrel - Lulworth 06.09.2013

The above photos have all been cropped a bit to remove some empty sky but apart from that I was pleased with how they turned out considering in all cases it was quick point and shoot job with my FZ150.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 13-Nov-13 08:06 AM GMT

They are great shots Neil. I can't tell you how many times I have tried to get shots like that and failed. Even if I manage to get anywhere near close enough as soon as I point the camera they are off and I am left with a little black spot in the middle of the screen. Given that our cameras are similar do you have any tips?

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Nov-13 07:18 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, thanks for the comments 😊

It looks like my reply vanished along with the others in the apparent UKB time warp over the weekend 😊😂oh well.

I can't remember exactly what I wrote before but I think I mentioned that I usually use the viewfinder when trying to take photos of birds in flight as I find it easier to get them in frame as they fly past. Other than that I don't really have any tips, got plenty of little black spots of my own 😊

Friday 15th November

A re-up of the shots of the large and really quite attractive garden spider that was hanging on the ceiling of our bedroom on Thursday night. With neither Jane or myself keen to leave it hanging above us overnight, I put it in a plastic container which I left in the garage until the following afternoon when I released her into the back garden where I took these photos.





I still cannot make up my mind whether she is *Araneus diadematus* or *quadratus*. I have looked at loads of images of both species online and found some of both that look similar to this one.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-13 07:29 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil especially the final one when you can see metallic green eyes 🤩 I'd think I'd "relocate" this one as well 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Nov-13 08:07 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel,

Big wussies really aren't we 😊 Her abdomen was about the size of a 5p coin with a leg spread that would have easily covered a 50p, in the big scheme of things not that much of a monster...

....but on the bedroom ceiling with the shadows cast by a bedside lamp 🤩🤩

Neil.

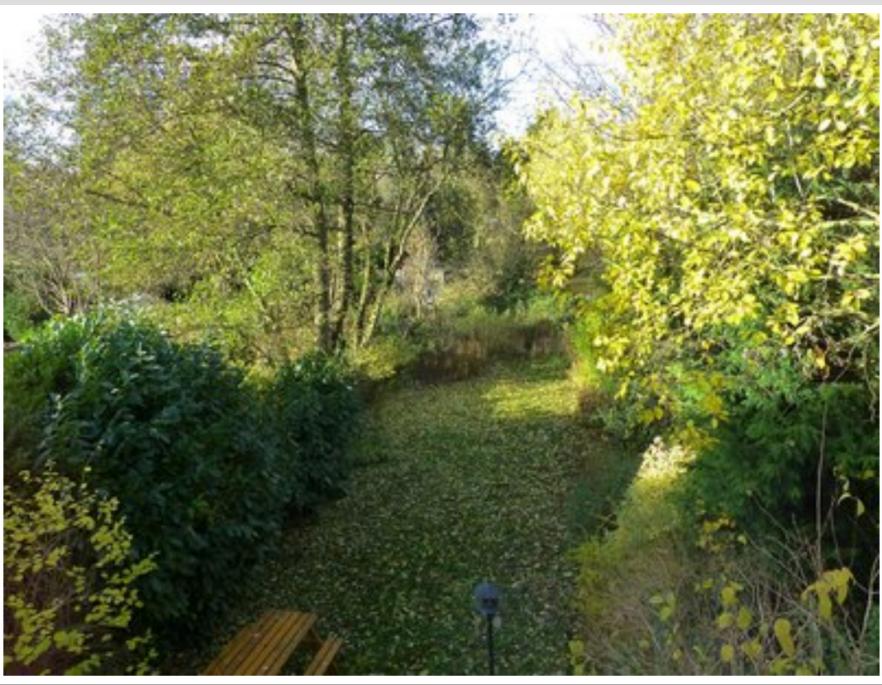
Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Dec-13 10:29 AM GMT

Saturday 30th November

November comes to a close with a lovely sunny day, no wind to speak of but with an underlying slight chilliness in the air that felt quite refreshing after being indoors at work all week.

The sun this (Saturday) afternoon lit up the autumn colours in the garden well and showed some of the yellows off particularly nicely 😊



Back garden - 30.11.2013



Sallow lit up by the afternoon sun - Coverdale 30.11.2013

With no benign micro-climates around here I have not seen a butterfly for weeks now but there have been increasing numbers of birds coming into the garden recently, mostly Great, Blue and Coal Tits with some Blackbirds, Sparrows and Robins.



Great Tit - Coverdale 30.11.2013

One particular Berberis is visited frequently by Blackbirds and Sparrows who hide amongst the spiky branches and feed on the small red berries.



House Sparrow - Coverdale 30.11.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by ChrisC, 01-Dec-13 01:15 PM GMT

Araneus diadematus for me. and a beauty
Chris

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 01-Dec-13 10:05 PM GMT

It's got to that time of year for me too Neil as, Bob aside, I haven't seen a free flying imago in over a month now. Better dust of the bins and Scope ready for some birding. Lovely shot of the Sparrow 😊, I expect that people will really start to appreciate their lovely markings as I do now that they're becoming less common.

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Dec-13 08:24 PM GMT

"ChrisC" wrote:

Araneus diadematus for me. and a beauty

Chris

Thanks for the ID Chris, those are what I usually have in the garden so that was my initial thought. It was just that I have never seen one this particular shade before and the more I looked the less certain I became.

Hi Wurzel, Sparrows have certainly been less common around here in recent years although there seem to have been a few more around again this year. Still nothing like I remember years ago though, when 'Spugs' were everywhere. I suppose the other side of that coin is that I am seeing far more Great Tits, Coal Tits and Long-tailed Tits these days.

Cheers,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Dec-13 09:31 PM GMT

Sunday 8th December

This weekend was mostly spent doing family stuff but this afternoon I was in our kitchen and happened to look out of the window into the garden and there was a Greater Spotted Woodpecker swinging about on one of the feeders.

I quickly went into the back room where my camera was and just managed to get a quick shot through the window before he flew off down the garden.



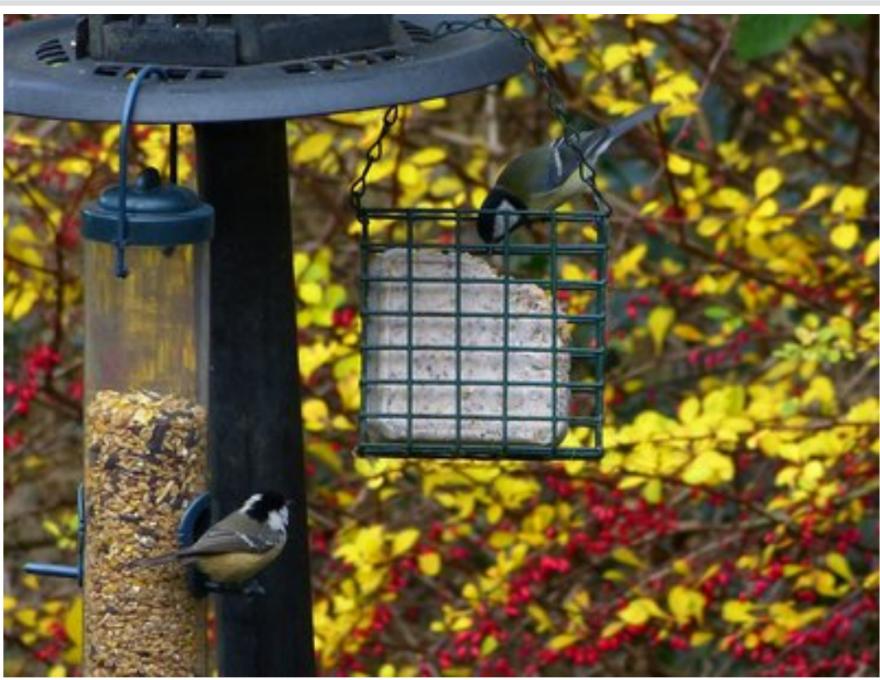
Greater Spotted Woodpecker - Coverdale 08.12.2013

I kept watching for a while in case he came back and spotted him a couple of times flying between some of the larger trees at the end of the garden but that was as close as he came. Whilst I was watching and waiting a Thrush came up the lawn turning the fallen leaves. The camouflage was quite remarkable and a couple of times I lost the bird amongst the leaves until it moved again. I believe this was a Song Thrush but must admit I am not really sure of the differences between this and a Mistle Thrush so I could easily be wrong on this one.



Song Thrush - Coverdale 08.12.2013

There were also the now usual Great, Blue and Coal Tits flitting backwards and forwards between the shrubs and feeders.



Coal and Great Tits - Coverdale 08.12.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 08-Dec-13 10:17 PM GMT

Nice photos Neil. 😊 When i see people like yourself posting pictures of birds, i often think about taking it up again, but never do as i am always so busy. Maybe one day. 😊 By the way, you are right with your ID of the Song Thrush. I always think if its the same size of a Blackbird, its a Song Thrush and, if its the size of a Fieldfare, its a Mistle Thrush. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 08-Dec-13 10:54 PM GMT

Nice shots, Neil. Birds are beautiful creatures but I'm afraid I don't possess the patience required to stalk and photograph them. One normally needs higher quality equipment with long lenses to do them justice.

Maybe I should give it a crack though during winter, as there are a few notable species around here that aren't too tricky to find, e.g., Red Kites, Bullfinches, Dippers...

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Dec-13 09:10 PM GMT

Hi Nick, thanks for the confirmation on the Song Thrush 😊. I haven't actually taken up photographing birds seriously as such, just taking some photos as the opportunities present themselves, usually in the garden and quite often through the window from the back room.

Cheers David, not much patience or stalking involved in my case, or specialist equipment. My trusty FZ150 is usually sitting in its case in the back room and I just grab it when I see something of interest. Helps to tide me over until next Spring.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 10-Dec-13 10:39 PM GMT

More great bird shots Neil, keep em coming! 😊 I especially like the Song Thrush and in the spring their song is great as they'll repeat a riff two or three times before moving onto another riff from their repertoire. Nicks size technique for identifying them is a handy one. I also go by brown = Song, grey = Mistle 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Dec-13 08:47 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, nothing much seen this past week unfortunately. I have been at work in the daylight hours during the week and Chrimbo shopping yesterday and raining most of the day today.

Going back through my piles of photos taken this year looking for favourites to post in the species specific threads, I have been reminded of some of the fabulous locations that I visited. This next lot of photos are of some of these fantastic places.

I had a couple of visits to the Wyre Forest back in early June where there were loads of Pearl Bordered Fritillaries...



Wyre Forest - 01.06.2013



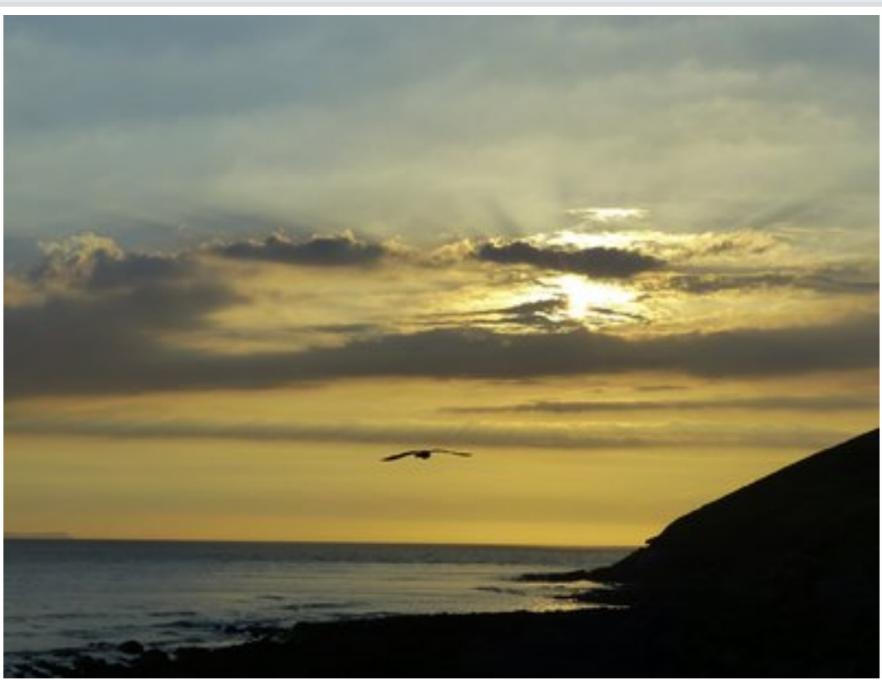
Dowles Brook, Wyre Forest - 01.06.2013

a drive down to Prestbury Hill by Cheltenham for Duke of Burgundies where I was also surprised by the number of Small Blues about...



Prestbury Hill looking towards the Malvern Hills in the distance - 05.06.2013

A family holiday at Croyde Bay, North Devon later in June. I particularly like the shot below with a seagull heading into the sunset past Baggy Point...



Sunset at Baggy Point

A couple of weeks later there was a fantastic three days in the Heddon Valley with good numbers of High Brown Fritillaries...



Heddon Valley, North Devon - 13.07.2013

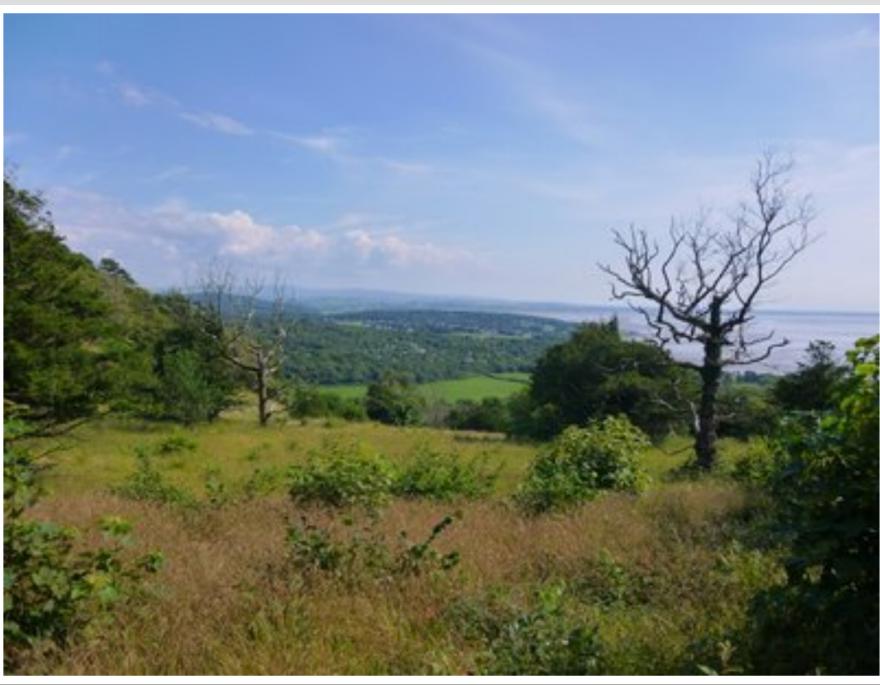


Looking back up the valley from Heddon's Mouth - 13.07.2013

another month later and I was up at Arnside for Scotch Argus and where I was also pleasantly surprised with a Clouded Yellow...



Arnside Knott looking North - 08.08.2013



Arnside Knott looking South - 08.08.2013

and then down to Dorset at the beginning of September for another family holiday where amongst the many butterflies seen were many Clouded Yellows and Adonis Blues.



Looking down on Lulworth Cove - 02.09.2013



The gully at Durlston CP looking much drier than 2012 - 02.09.2013



Looking over Swanage from Peverill Point towards Ballard Down – 03.09.2013



Looking East from White Horse Hill, Osmington 05.09.2013

A brilliant year all in all with more butterflies about in some places than I have seen for many a year 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 16-Dec-13 11:00 PM GMT

Heddon Valley looks fantastic Neil 😊 Though the best shots were obviously the last set as you can't beat Dorset of course, they brought on pangs of home sickness 😞 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 17-Dec-13 06:05 PM GMT

Lovely scenic shots Neil, especially Heddon Valley and Heddons Mouth, two photos that will always appeal to me. 😊 I never think of taking scenic shots when i`m out butterflying, [or anywhere for that matter] but maybe i should. I just might surprise myself next year and take a few, or not. 😞 😞

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 17-Dec-13 07:21 PM GMT

Yes, some beautiful vistas there, Neil. My personal favourite is the one taken above Lulworth Cove with the speedboat heading out to sea...

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Dec-13 09:19 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, very much appreciated 😊

They are all favourites to me, each in their own way, which is why I picked them to post on here. Most of all, they all bring back memories of special days 😊

I am in the habit now of taking a few location shots at most of the places that I go to, even if only to capture the habitat to keep a record of the 'place'. The icing on the cake is that a lot of these spots are beautiful bits of countryside in their own right and very photogenic, even if my photos don't always capture the majesty of the views.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Dec-13 05:40 PM GMT

Look at all that lovely sunshine *sigh*

Thanks for the lovely reminder of last summer Neil 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Dec-13 09:35 PM GMT

Thanks B' Rex, I, have particularly enjoyed looking back over the past few days of wind and rain.

Speaking of which, with this year rapidly drawing to an end and with us all looking forward to next Spring, I thought that I would post a few shots taken during the Spring just gone which was a bit slow in arriving but which made it that much the sweeter when it did.

First off a trip to Snitterfield Bushes in early May where there were plenty of Primroses in flower,



Primroses at Snitterfield - 06.05.2013

then on to Bishops Hill where it was Cowslips,



Cowslips on Bishops Hill - 06.05.2013

then a couple of trips to Ryton Wood later in May when the Bluebells were out,



Bluebells Ryton Wood - 18.05.2013



My son Chris taking photos of the Bluebells in Ryton Wood - 26.05.2013

Just in case I don't post again in the next few days I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and here's looking forward to next year 😊 .

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 23-Dec-13 05:05 PM GMT

Hi Neil, so thats what spring looks like, its hard to imagine with whats going on outside at the moment. Lovely scenic shots, must remember to take more myself 😊

Merry Christmas to you and your family, and roll on spring 2014 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 23-Dec-13 11:20 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, I can almost smell the Bluebells 😊 Have a cracking Christmas 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Dec-13 06:51 PM GMT

Thanks guys, hope you had a great Christmas.

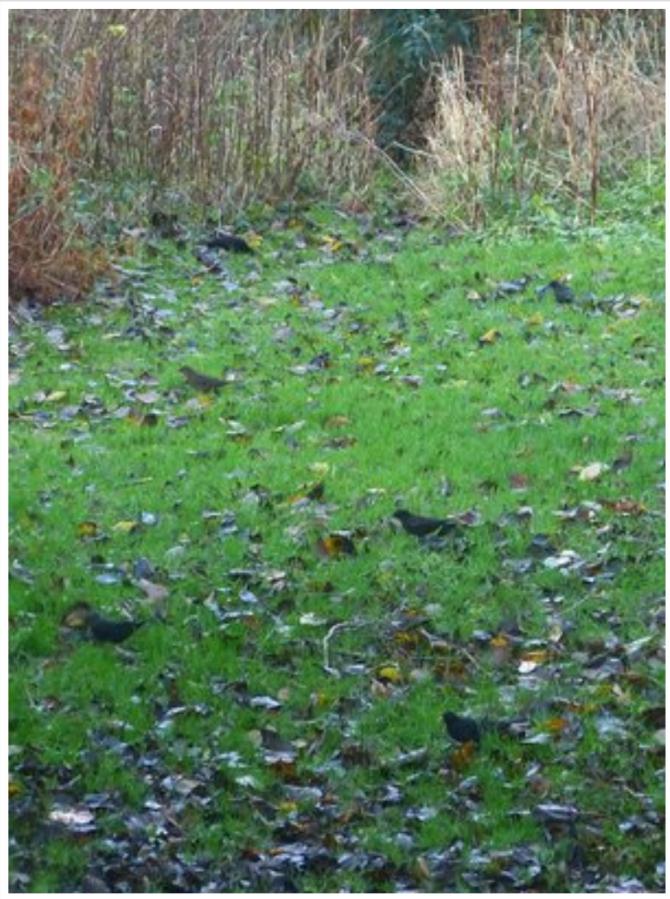
Saturday 28th December

After the high winds and heavy rain during the past week or so, the sun made a few brief attempts to break through yesterday, albeit very briefly. With some intermittent heavy downpours of rain this made for some dramatic looking weather with the sun out against a dark grey sky.



Sun shining on the neighbours Willow against a dark grey sky.

Today was much quieter with not much wind and the sun out for most of the day. This brought the birds out and for most of the day there was a steady stream of visitors including a family of Blackbirds that kept coming back to work over the fallen leaves that are still on my lawn.



Half a dozen Blackbirds...

The Greater Spotted Woodpecker is still around and spent most of the morning around the trees at the bottom of the garden.



GS Woodpecker keeping his distance at the bottom of the garden

The Berberis was also still playing host to various little brown jobs including Sparrows and Blackcaps that were picking at the berries still remaining.



A pair of House Sparrows.



Female Blackcap (Redcap?)

Amongst my Christmas pressies I had a couple of nice books and a bird feeding station 😊 ...



and later this morning decided to set up the feeding station in the garden in place of the old bird table that I had that I was hanging a couple of feeders from. This came complete with new feeders, the only one that I haven't used yet is the peanut feeder because I have no peanuts for it, so I hung one of my old feeders from it as well for the time being. I am guessing that I will probably experiment a bit with the feeders as I see what is most popular with its visitors.



my new bird feeding station

No sooner had I set it up than it had its first inquisitive visitor...



Robin checking out the new station.

...closely followed by the usual Great Tits and Blue Tits that are nearly always around 😊

Bye for now,

Neil