

## dilettante

by dilettante, 10-Mar-13 03:42 PM GMT

5 brimstones on Tuesday in bright sunshine, and now it's back to snow and freezing winds. This chap in my garden might be happier with some snow. I fear he's a bit of a fox magnet otherwise



*Leucistic pheasant, Cambs, 10-Mar-13*

## Re: dilettante

by David M, 10-Mar-13 08:55 PM GMT

Good spot, dilettante. I've never even heard of an albino pheasant before (much less seen one).

## dilettante

by dilettante, 22-Mar-13 03:23 PM GMT

Last year on March 24th, I saw [url=http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5167&start=60#p57613:2uhtyrxi]seven species[/url:2uhtyrxi]: comma, peacock, small tortoiseshell, green-veined white, green hairstreak, red admiral, brimstone.

This year, the forecast for the same date: "Snow may extend to much of the region on Saturday. Continuing very cold and windy Sunday and Monday, and with further snow flurries in places" Max 1C. 😞

Still last year's nice Spring was followed by a horrid Summer, so maybe things will be reversed this year. I live in hope!

## Re: dilettante

by MikeOxon, 22-Mar-13 05:35 PM GMT

### "David M" wrote:

I've never even heard of an albino pheasant before (much less seen one)

I think, technically, that this pheasant is not an albino because the eyes (and wattles) seem to be normally pigmented.

This is an example of leucism, which is a genetic defect that causes pigment cells not to develop correctly. I have had a leucistic Starling visiting my garden over several years and breeding successfully in 2011 and 2012. Photos on my website at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/birds2.htm>

Mike

## Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 22-Mar-13 05:51 PM GMT

Thanks Mike. I had a similar comment from an ornithologist friend. Caption now updated

## Re: dilettante

by David M, 22-Mar-13 08:49 PM GMT

### "dilettante" wrote:

Last year on March 24th, I saw [url=http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5167&start=60#p57613:2nos7ghi]seven species[/url:2nos7ghi]: comma, peacock, small tortoiseshell, green-veined white, green hairstreak, red admiral, brimstone.

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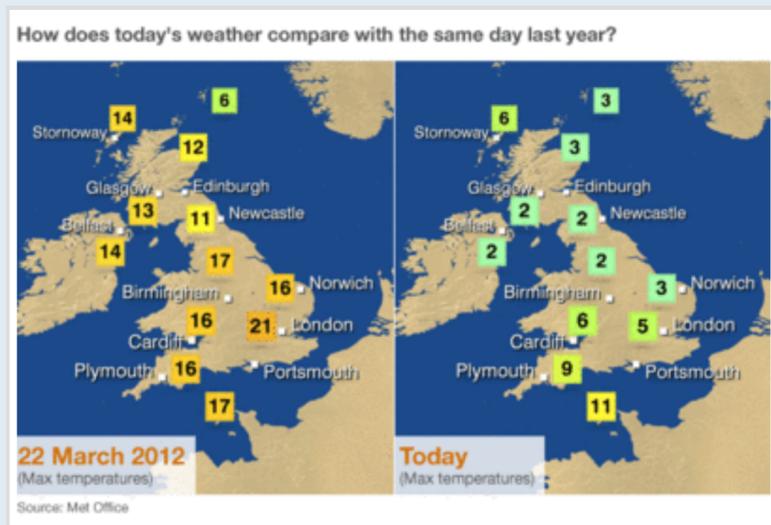
Still last year's nice Spring was followed by a horrid Summer, so maybe things will be reversed this year. I live in hope!

Yes, I've been mindful of this too lately.

Saturday 24th March 2012 saw 20c temperatures and clear, sunny skies in Swansea. Kids were paddling in the river at Cwm Clydach and butterflies were very conspicuous.

The corresponding Saturday of 2013 is likely to see maxima of 4c here (and bear in mind this part of the UK is on the right side of the current 'Magainot' line!!)

The BBC published a very striking graphic today comparing the weather conditions this year to last year:



Although shocking, you may be right regarding how things could ultimately pan out. The last time I remember heavy snowfall in March was 2006, and we went on to have a pretty decent summer if I'm not mistaken; in fact, no summer since has been anything like as good.

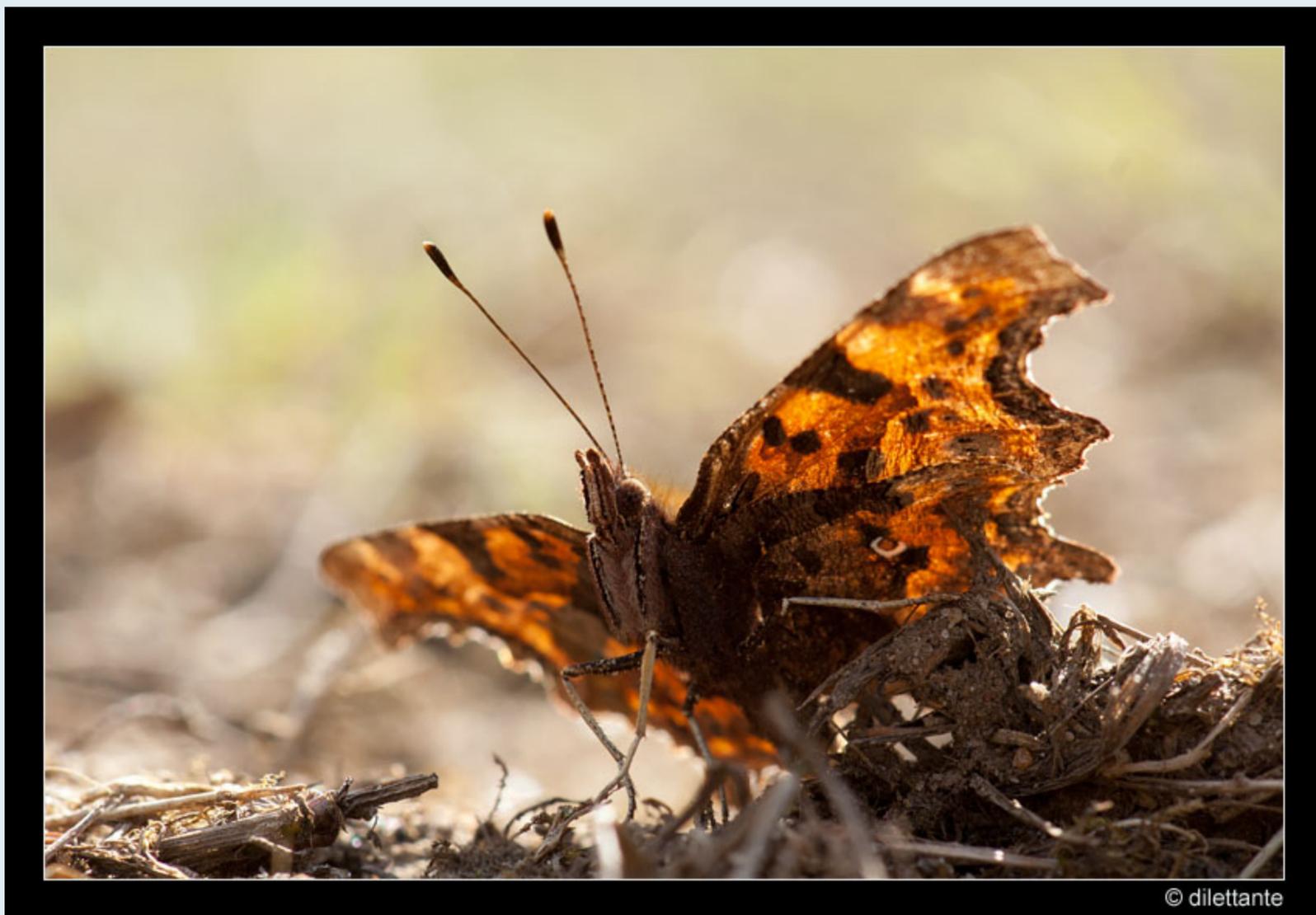
Here's hoping.

## dilettante

by dilettante, 06-Apr-13 06:42 PM GMT

6th April 2013

Some sunshine at last, and temperatures just about into double digits! Decided to go to Gamlingay Woods in the hope of finding some sheltered spots getting warmer than the forecast 9 degrees. We saw two Brimstones from the car on the way there, but none at the wood itself. We did find a couple of Commas basking in a sheltered sunny corner though, using up their scant energy supplies squabbling as usual.



Comma, Gamlingay Woods, Cambs 6-Apr-2013. Sony A700, Sony 100/2.8, 1/80s @ f/8.0

© dilettante



© dilettante

*Comma, Gamlingay Woods, Cambs 6-Apr-2013. Sony A700, Sony 100/2.8, 1/320s @ f/8.0*

### Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-13 09:59 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Dilettante the first one showing the brush feet is brill 😊 – it was so warm today I almost took my jacket off! 😲 I too am hoping that the very long winter will mean a great summer, here's hoping.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 01-May-13 01:40 PM GMT

#### Wednesday 1st May

A lunchtime trip to Cherry Hinton nature reserve and chalk pit – lovely sunshine, but a little cool still. Anyway I achieved 2 out of 3 of my hoped for firsts of the year: Orange Tips and Holly Blues, but no Speckled Wood. Also Peacocks, Whites Small, Green-veined and (I think) Large, and Brimstones, including a female laying rather optimistically on a tiny sprig (blurry phone camera picture below). There were at least 5 eggs on this 'bush'.



*Brimstone ova. (Phone camera)*

### Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 02-May-13 12:59 PM GMT

"dilettante" wrote:  
Wednesday 1st May

but no Speckled Wood.

Better luck today at the same place: a single SW patrolling. Also Comma, Peacock, Brimstones, Orange Tips, Holly Blues, Small Whites. And I had a nice time watching a blackcap at close quarters singing his heart out.

## dilettante – Alpes de Haute Provence

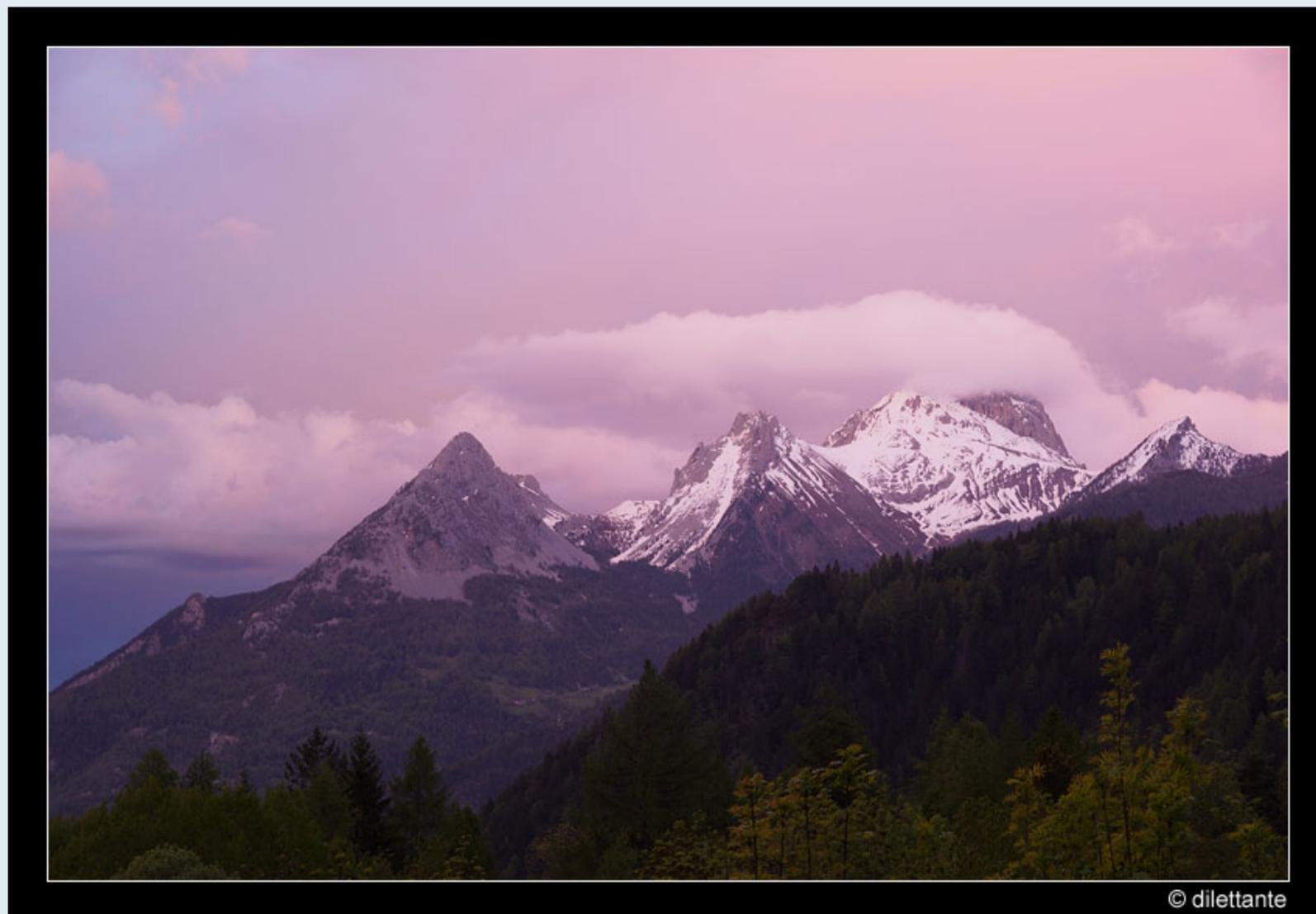
by dilettante, 11-Jun-13 01:45 PM GMT

I've just spent a very pleasant week in the Alpes de Haute Provence with some of my family. I'll do a day-by-day diary in my next few postings. I'll be most grateful for any corrections on id's

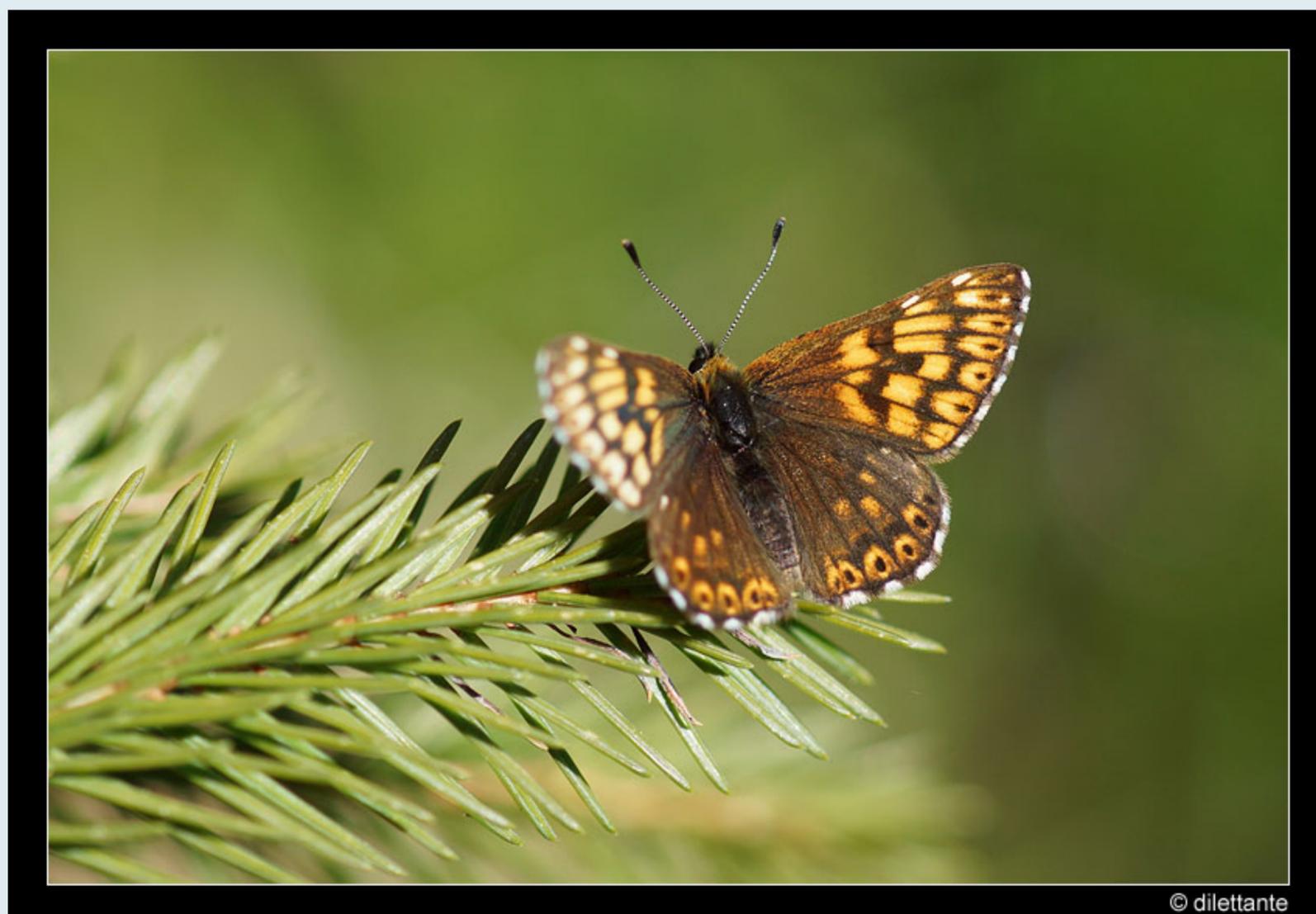
There's GPS info in most of the pictures. Mostly they're around [\[url=https://maps.google.com/maps?q=44.409278,6.435636&z=15:fgunh916\]](https://maps.google.com/maps?q=44.409278,6.435636&z=15:fgunh916)here<sup>[/url:fgunh916]</sup> where we were staying.

**Monday 3rd June 2013**

Here was our view on arrival on Sunday night after a long drive down:



Monday morning was sunny but not particularly warm, and we took a short walk up a track to a nice spot about half an hour away. Dukes of Burgundy were fairly widespread along the banks.



Orange Tips and Wood Whites patrolled the tracks, mostly not stopping. I think this is a Northern Wall Brown, slightly deficient in the antenna department:



© dilettante

At our destination, there were many more dukes, a Green Hairstreak, Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, but I didn't get any photos of any note. Nice views of the valley below (Vallé de l'Ubaye) too:



© dilettante

Returning to our base for lunch, some of our party who had gone on ahead said "Did you see the Purple Emperors?", claiming to have seen two on the way back. More on that later! Back in the garden, we were visited by this fritillary – is it a Meadow Fritillary?



© dilettante

And this Orange Tip, slightly past its prime:



© dilettante

The afternoon was cooler, cloudier and breezier. Another short walk in the opposite direction gave us a view back over where we were staying:



© dilettante

Butterflies were mostly hunkered down in the grass, occasionally flying or sunning themselves when the opportunity arose.

Adonis Blue



© dilettante

Grizzled Skipper



© dilettante

Green-underside Blue?



© dilettante

To be continued...

Re: dilettante

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-13 03:22 PM GMT

If your first shots are any thing to go by your next lot should be great Goldie 😊

### Re: dilettante

by David M, 11-Jun-13 08:32 PM GMT

Fantastic images, Dilettante. You are making me desperate to get to Austria next month!

### Re: dilettante

by Padfield, 11-Jun-13 10:08 PM GMT

Lovely pictures, Dilettante! All the IDs so far are correct. The grizzled skipper is *Pyrgus malvoides* – the southern grizzled skipper – if you recognise the distinction.

Guy

### dilettante

by dilettante, 11-Jun-13 10:46 PM GMT

Thanks Guy (and others) – I was hoping the master would confirm my IDs [:-)]. Can you tell by looking that it's a Southern Grizzled Skipper, or just from knowing the location? My book (Collins Field Guide) implies they look identical apart from male genitalia...

Now the next batch:

**Tuesday 4th June 2013**

A short trip in the morning back to where the reported Purple Emperors had been seen turned up nothing on that front, but a few other photo opportunities, including this better picture of a Northern Wall Brown



© dilettante

and a plain ol' Small Heath in the garden on my return



© dilettante

We then headed off on a circular walk mostly through woods. Dukes were everywhere where the sun got in. This Scare Swallowtail was not very cooperative, but was enjoying gliding in the sun and stopping for a quick drink:



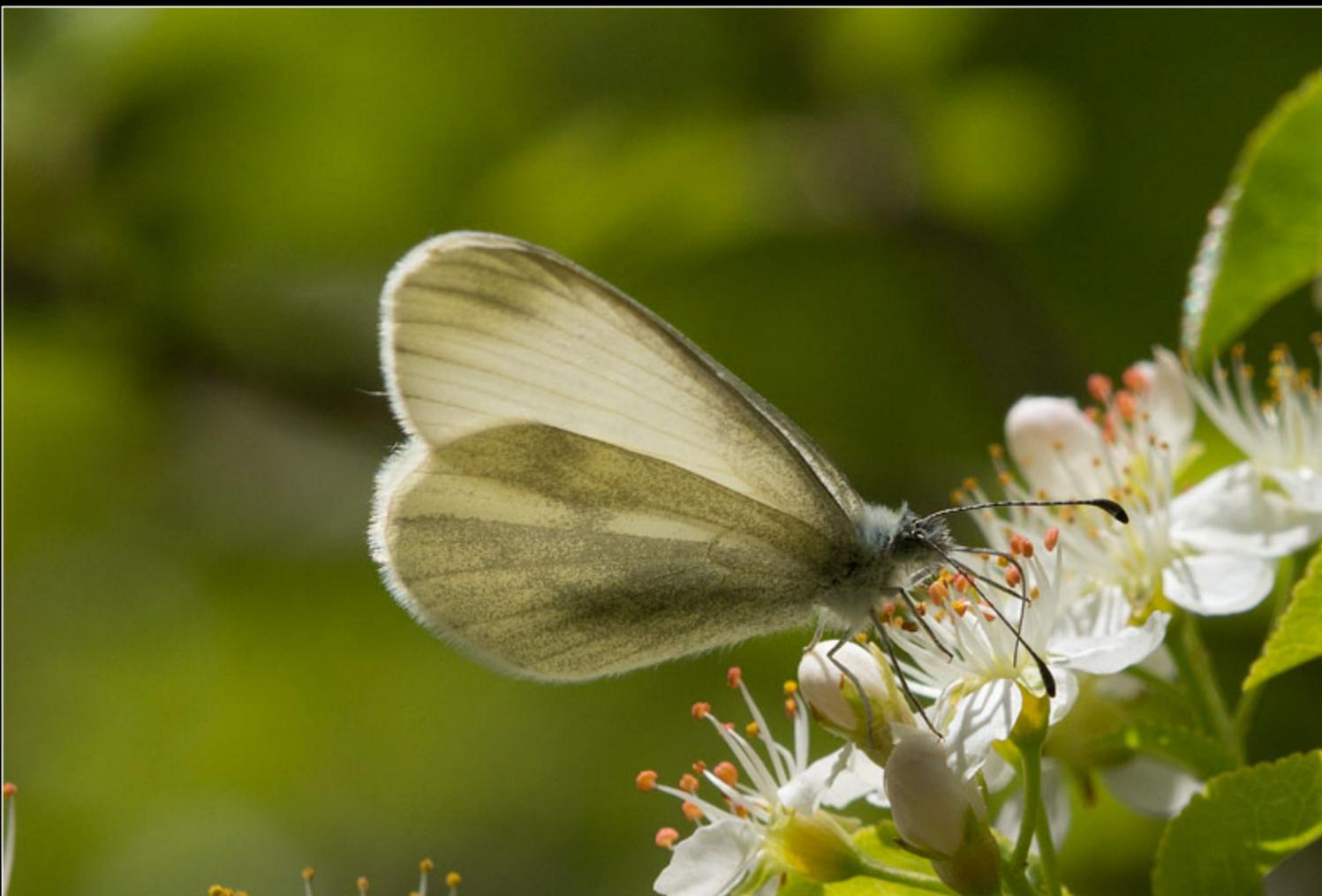
© dilettante

This Green Hairstreak seemed interested in laying, but I didn't see it actually do so



© dilettante

Later on, I stopped in a small glade to try to photograph a Wood White. As ever, they seemed to rarely settle, but I managed this passable shot



© dilettante

As I turned to leave though, I saw something on a nearby branch that made my heart miss a beat. I have recurring dreams of seeing this species and my camera failing to let me take the shot, but I hopefully put that one to rest here. It's not in the best shape, but this was my first ever Camberwell Beauty:



© dilettante

After posing beautifully for a while, it flitted and glided around for a bit, even settling on my finger briefly, before sailing off. Shortly afterwards it returned for another show. What a trouper!



© dilettante

I walked home with a spring in my step after that. The weather turned cooler and threatened rain, but I found this fritillary (Meadow? Heath?) resting in some long grass on an unusual perch:



© dilettante

When I showed the Camberwell pics to the others at home, there was some dispute but most agreed that this was the previously spotted 'Purple Emperor', which were seen some way away meaning there must be more in the area.

A G&T and good meal later, the evening light on the mountain opposite was rather dramatic again:



© dilettante

**Re: dilettante**

by Padfield, 12-Jun-13 07:43 AM GMT

More brilliant pictures! You've really got the colour and texture of the Camberwell beauty.

Southern grizzled skipper is a postcode butterfly - I don't think you can separate it from grizzled from the wing markings.

I wouldn't like to call that *Melitaea*. If forced, I'd probably put my money on female heath fritillary. This is a group where I always like to see both surfaces of the wings.

Guy

**Re: dilettante**

by dilettante, 17-Jun-13 12:49 PM GMT

Continuing my week in the Ubaye valley, Alpes de Haute Provence:

Wednesday and Thursday were more about walking mostly in woods and at higher altitude, so not much in the way of butterflies. I did get this roosting Green-underside Blue on my way home on Wednesday though:



**Friday 7th June 2013**

My last full day, so I took the morning to spend with the butterflies in the same area I'd been on Monday. It was great to have the luxury of pottering and taking my time.

First up, a brief encounter with a Pearl-bordered Fritillary (?)



© dilettante

Then a Wood White which finally settled long enough to be photographed:



© dilettante

Small Blues were common, but I didn't get any better pictures than this:



© dilettante

This was the spot I was headed for:



© dilettante

(A slightly clumsy HDR)

where there were Green Hairstreak, Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and lots of Dukes. The best part was four or five Swallowtails and Scarce Swallowtails, gliding about in the thermals, and duelling and occasionally trielling and quadrelling!) with each other. They'd sit for a little while, long enough for me to get my best shot of the week, I think:

Swallowtail



© dilettante

Scarce Swallowtail



© dilettante

Wall



© dilettante

Dingy Skipper



© dilettante

Time to go, but not without one nice finale. Not one but two Camberwell Beauties on the track home:



© dilettante

For Friday afternoon we drove up to Col de Larche on the Italian border. No butterflies apart from one Small Tortoiseshell (and another Camberwell seen from the car nearer home), but the gentians were amazing:



© dilettante

and the marmots were quite accommodating!:



© dilettante

## dilettante

by dilettante, 30-Jun-13 07:15 PM GMT

Sunday 30th June 2013

A trip to Monks Wood in search of Black Hairstreaks. Conditions were perfect, and recent sightings made me pretty confident of seeing them. Given their short flight period and how terrible the weather was this time last year, I'm amazed they managed to produce this year's generation, but there were quite a few to be seen. Mostly they were around the tops of bushes or flying past and disappearing, but I saw a few at closer quarters. I didn't manage as good photos as others I've seen on this site, but I was happy enough with this one:



© dilettante

Also seen, my first Meadow Browns and Large Skippers of the year, a ton of Speckled Woods, a tatty Comma and Peacock, and one Common Blue.

And could someone identify this dragon for me?:



© dilettante

**Re: dilettante**

by PhilIB, 30-Jun-13 07:24 PM GMT

I'm glad you found the Hairstreaks Paddy.  
The dragonfly looks like a female Broad-bodied Chaser to me.  
All the best  
Phil

**Re: dilettante**

by Robert S J Smith, 30-Jun-13 08:57 PM GMT

Good to meet you today dilettante!  
Glad you got your shots of the Black Hairstreaks. they're truly stunning!  
Rob  
p.s. we scored with our orchids and got a bonus marbled white at devil's dyke.

**Re: dilettante**

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-13 11:17 PM GMT

Lush photos 🍷 It seems that Black Hairstreak are featuring heavily at the moment which is great, as last year they were conspicuous by their absence 😊  
Have a goodun  
Wurzel

**Re: dilettante**

by dilettante, 08-Jul-13 08:01 PM GMT

**Saturday 6th July 2013**

I spent the weekend at my parents' house in Hampshire for a family gathering, but that didn't stop me sneaking off on Saturday afternoon to Broxhead Common to see Silver Studded Blues. The hot sunny weather meant they were active and the light wasn't good for photography, but it was great to see them in good numbers.



© dilettante

*Silver Studded Blue, Broxhead Common, Hants*

Back at my parents', a Marbled White flew over the garden – my first of the year, and the first time I've seen one there.

**Sunday 7th July 2013**

The following morning I headed to Alice Holt forest, hoping for Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral and maybe Purple Emperor. Apart from Meadow Brown and Ringlet, there were generally not a lot of butterflies around compared to how this site usually looks at this time of year, but everything is a little late it seems. A few SWF males were patrolling the rides, rarely stopping but I managed this distant shot:



© dilettante

*Silver-washed Fritillary, Straits Inclosure, Alice Holt, Hants*

We also saw one freshly emerged female take flight and settle under a leaf high in an oak tree to dry.

The only White Admirals were flying high in among the trees, quickly disappearing out of sight; and no sign of H.I.M.

Having taken a long time to get from Cambridgeshire to Hampshire on Saturday, we headed back on Sunday during the tennis match, reasoning traffic would be lighter. We were right, and got home in record time, in time to watch the last set. After that excitement, with the sun still high I headed to Therfield Heath near Royston (Herts) in search of Marbled Whites.

I found one or two on arrival, but they were pretty flighty and only settling occasionally in long grass. A commotion of rooks alerted me to a Red Kite overhead, along with a Peregrine (I think?):



*Red Kite and Peregrine Falcon, Therfield Heath, Herts*

Later as I was watching MWs, I was hearing a lot of rustling in a nearby hedge. At first I thought it might be a dog, or maybe squirrels, but then saw four or five small brown heads pop out. I wasn't quick enough with the camera, but it was a family of stoats:



*Stoats, Therfield Heath, Herts*

I watched / listened to them for a while, only getting fleeting glimpses. Then a dog caught scent of them, bounded up, caught one in its mouth to much squeaking, and tossed it in the air. I shouted to the owner to get the dog, and he took it away on a lead. I didn't see if the victim got away, but I continued to hear the rustling for a while, so at least some of the stoats continued on their way.

Twice during the evening I saw a fast-flying orange butterfly which I'm pretty sure was a fritillary; I've never seen them there before, and wouldn't be sure whether it was a Dark Green or Silver-washed. If anyone has any knowledge or opinions, I'd love to hear them.

As the sun got a little lower, the Marbled White started to settle and be a bit more cooperative for photographing:



© dilettante

*Marbled White, Therfield Heath, Herts*



© dilettante

*Marbled White, Therfield Heath, Herts*

On my way back to the car I nearly tripped over a nice Small Tortoiseshell and a Painted Lady. Also seen during the visit: Meadow Brown, Small Heath, and a small lyceanid which I still can't quite work out what it would have been.

Apart from the furious incident of the dog (sorry!), a lovely evening.

## Re: dilettante

by PhilB, 08-Jul-13 08:52 PM GMT

### "dilettante" wrote:

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A few Dark Green Fritillary were seen on Therfield Heath last year and were certainly resident there back in the 1970's when I lived in Royston. They look as though they're possibly making a comeback, as they are, nearby, at some of our Cambs sites.  
Phil

## Re: dilettante

by MikeOxon, 08-Jul-13 09:08 PM GMT

Love that last Marbled White pic – a classic 😊

It's always distressing when domestic, well fed, pets attack wildlife. My ire is mainly directed towards the cats, which we cannot keep out of the garden and which chase 'our' birds as well as fouling everywhere.

Mike

## Re: dilettante

by Trev Sawyer, 08-Jul-13 09:44 PM GMT

Sorry to intrude on your blog, but your photos of the Red Kite and Peregrine brought to mind an amazing sight I had a couple of weeks ago near Cambridge. An adult Peregrine obviously took umbrance at a Red Kite which was straying a bit too close to his territory and shot off to intercept the intruder. Even though much smaller, there was only going to be one winner and the Peregrine soon achieved his aim. Unfortunately, I was a long way away from the contact, but managed a few quick shots of the brief (but very effective) fracas. Here is a massively cropped and pixelated image of the outcome, just before the upturned Kite decided that discretion was the better part of valour and flapped off from whence it came! 😲



(Click for slightly bigger image).

Trev

## Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 08-Jul-13 11:19 PM GMT

Thanks for the info, Phil. They certainly looked like Dark Greens from the flight behaviour.

Thanks for the compliments on the photo, Mike. I was quite pleased with it myself. I used flash on that one, which brought out some detail but the white balance is a bit off, but nevermind. Here's the unflashed (left) and flashed (right) versions side by side (if your browser window's wide enough):



© dilettante



© dilettante

Great photo, Trev! Peregrines are quite a piece of work.

### dilettante

by dilettante, 27-Jul-13 10:52 PM GMT

**Saturday July 27th 2013**

I had the luxury of a day to myself. Having seen the forecast calling for rain all afternoon, I figured I had time to go to **Fermyn Woods** for a late season hunt for Purple Emperors if I left early. I arrived at 8:30, as butterflies were beginning to stir. This Large White (with a dodgy leg) wasn't quite awake yet



© dilettante

*Large White roosting*

I didn't see any PEs in Fermyn Wood so carried on through to Lady Wood. A couple of tantalising glimpses of gliding PEs, but nothing at ground level. Similarly a White Admiral or two, mostly out of range. There were loads of beautifully fresh Peacocks, so I decided to focus on them for a bit:



© dilettante

*Peacock*



© dilettante

*Peacock and friends*

Returning the way I'd come, I encountered this PE on the ground. There wasn't much to keep him there so I only managed a grab shot before he lost interest and retired to a bush top:



© dilettante

*Purple Emperor*

I hung around for some time, with a few low passes and occasional landings by PEs, but nothing I managed to photograph satisfactorily. It's always an honour being in their company anyway, so it was very enjoyable morning. This White Admiral came down to take some minerals too:



© dilettante

*White Admiral*

A large group of puddling whites was quite impressive:



© dilettante

*Small and Green-veined Whites puddling*

Species seen at Fermyn:

- Meadow Brown
- Ringlet
- Speckled Wood
- Gatekeeper
- Small Skipper
- Large Skipper
- Small White
- Large White
- Green-veined White
- Brimstone
- Purple Emperor
- Comma
- White Admiral
- Red Admiral
- Peacock
- Purple Hairstreak

The promised bad weather didn't look like showing up, so I decided to head to **Bedford Purlieus** hoping for White-letter Hairstreaks. I stopped briefly at Glaphorn Cow Pastures en route as I'd never been there before. I didn't see much there, but it looked like a great site.

At Bedford Purlieus, there were some other butterflyers who said there had been several WLH earlier, but I failed to see any. The Silver-washed Fritillaries were impressive in their numbers and activity though:



© dilettante

*Silver-washed Fritillaries in flight*



© dilettante

*Silver-washed Fritillary female*



© dilettante

*Silver-washed Fritillary*



© dilettante

*Gatekeeper male*

Species seen at Bedford Purlieus:

- Meadow Brown
- Ringlet
- Gatekeeper
- Small Skipper
- Large Skipper
- Small White
- Large White
- Green-veined White
- Brimstone
- Comma
- Red Admiral
- Peacock
- Silver-washed Fritillary
- Brown Argus

While there, I was told that nearby **Barnack Hills and Holes** was alive with Chalk-hill Blues, so I decided to head there. This is a great site which reminds me of Noar Hill – undulating grassy banks on chalk soil, covered in wildflowers and consequently butterflies. CHBs were in good numbers, although not 'swarming':



© dilettante

*Chalk-hill Blue female*



© dilettante

*Chalk-hill Blue male*

Also this nice fresh Brown Argus:



© dilettante

*Brown Argus*

I also saw a couple of Small Coppers – my first of the year – and Common Blues.

Species and Barnack:

- Meadow Brown
- Ringlet
- Gatekeeper
- Marbled White
- Small Skipper
- Large Skipper
- Small White
- Large White
- Brimstone
- Peacock
- Brown Argus
- Common Blue
- Chalk-hill Blue
- Small Copper

Total species count for the day: 20 – not bad. I was butterflied out by the end of the day though!

### Re: dilettante

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-13 11:17 PM GMT

Great reports and lovely photos, I especially like the Peacocks with the out of focus ones in the background and the SWFS in flight, great stuff 😊

Neil F.

### dilettante

by dilettante, 21-Aug-13 02:13 PM GMT

#### 21st August 2013

Envious of all the reports of Clouded Yellows, I thought I'd try my luck at lunchtime with a trip to Cherry Hinton East Pit, just outside Cambridge. I wasn't expecting to be lucky, but soon found one, then another – both egg-yolky males patrolling and not settling despite my following them doggedly for at least 15mins, so no photo unfortunately. I only had my phone camera anyway, and they're beautiful things to just watch! I think it's the first time I've seen them in this country.

Also lots of Common Blues about – good to see after their poor showing last year. Plus several brimstones, peacocks, whites.

### Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 23-Aug-13 09:34 PM GMT

#### 23rd August 2013

I returned to Cherry Hinton chalk pit with my camera this time, hoping to get a CY picture. There were several flying around, and this time they were occasionally 'settling' but generally for a few milliseconds at a time. I mostly wasn't fast enough with my camera, but did get this shot which I'm pretty happy with:



© dilettante

*Clouded Yellow, Cherry Hinton, Cambs. Sony A77 / Tamron 180/3.5*

**Re: dilettante**

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-13 05:37 PM GMT

I'd definitely be happy with that shot 😊👍 Especially as they are so awkward to photograph.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: dilettante**

by dilettante, 01-Sep-13 10:59 AM GMT

**Saturday 31st August**

A family walk on Therfield Heath, Herts in sunshine but a coolish breeze. Plenty of whites, a few Meadow Browns, Common Blues, and one or two Chalkhill Blue females still around. And a Clouded Yellow – I'm sure we're all getting bored with CY photos by now, but we'll miss them when they're gone!



© dilettante

## Re: dilettante

by Butterflysaurus rex, 01-Sep-13 12:20 PM GMT

How could we ever get bored seeing a lovely creature like that 😊 even if next year turns out to be another good one for CY's I'll still be chasing them around with my camera. I might stop for a moment if I come across a continental Swallowtail or LTB though 😊

## Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-13 06:12 PM GMT

Ah how quickly familiarity breeds contempt, those poor clouded yellows come all this way and you're bored of them 😊😊😊 Still it's a cracking shot that and very very far away from boring 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel