

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Jan-13 09:50 PM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 9 January 2012

In need of therapy ...

It was with great relief that I finally got back to Heyshott today after the over indulgence that is the festive period. Having missed several work parties early on in the season due to my accident, and then breaking for three weeks over Christmas, I was in need of some serious therapy. The walk to our work area was difficult (am I really that unfit?) and was made worse by the slippery conditions underfoot; though I knew the rewards would be worthwhile – at least that's what I kept telling myself.

Today we were working on the eastern lower section of the main upper reserve. I am always amazed by just how much our small group of committed volunteers achieves – today being no exception. With Neil Hulme and Colin Knight successfully clearing the heavy scrub from the slopes of yet another overgrown pit, I concentrated on the upper bank along with several members of the Murray Downland Trust. With two large fires underway we soon cleared a sizeable area adjoining prime Duke territory. Roll on next week ...

It's good to be back ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Jan-13 07:59 PM GMT

Heyshott, 18 January 2012

Narnia ...

With today's conservation work party at Rewell Wood cancelled, due to several inches of fresh snow already covering the frozen ground, and with a heavy downfall continuing, common sense said stay at home; but that would be boring and the responsible thing to do! So after a cautious and slightly elongated journey I arrived at the base of Heyshott Escarpment; it's beautiful snow covered slopes had a somewhat mystical aura about them as they engulfed me with both visual and mental pleasure; their summit hidden by the low grey cloud and driving snow. I was pleased that John Murray could join me.

Could this possibly be a Duke's Kingdom or did the Snow Queen still rule?

I just love this enchanting location ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 20-Jan-13 10:15 PM GMT

It does indeed look like Narnia 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 20-Jan-13 11:36 PM GMT

It looks absolutely prohibitive for butterflies right now, but in 6–8 weeks time they'll be flying their first sorties over this area (and many others).

Not long to wait.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-Jan-13 08:16 PM GMT

RHS Wisley, 21 January 2013

Butterflies in the Glasshouse (12 January – 24 February 2013)

"Escape winter's chill and set hearts a-flutter with a visit to Butterflies in the Glasshouse. Enjoy the sight of exotic butterflies and the beauty of a world class tropical plant collection in this special experience, guaranteed to banish the winter blues. Wander underneath palms and watch the butterflies take part in courtship flights and feed from plant nectar and fruit. Butterflies in the Glasshouse is perfect for children of all ages. 'Awe-inspiring' and 'spectacular' are just some words used to describe the event by the hundreds of families who visit every year. For children, it's a chance to see these beautiful creatures in their 'natural' surroundings and understand where they come from."

An Asian Swallowtail (*Papilio memnon lowii*) succumbs ...

Life and death in the glasshouse ...



Blue Morpho (*Morpho peleides*).

As I did go to see the butterflies ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 21-Jan-13 10:21 PM GMT

Looking forward to the upcoming shots Mark 😊 There are one or two species that I'm still struggling with from my visit to Bristol Zoo, what sources do you use to make your identifications of the Wisley butterflies – or do they sensibly have a guide available?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Colin Knight, 22-Jan-13 11:05 AM GMT

Wurzel, I have had the pleasure of joining Mark at Wisley and Earnley the past couple of years and finding ids for some of the tropicals has been a challenge! We have managed to id all we have photographed, sometimes after hours of web searching. Wisley has an id chart of many of their species and the attendants are often able to assist, but not all of the butterflies that emerge are known to them as ids do not always accompany the pupae they receive from suppliers. This is what makes regular visits to the same butterfly house so interesting, you never know what you will see.

I find these two websites particularly helpful: <http://wanda.uef.fi/botania/galleria/perhoseet/>
<http://www.learnaboutbutterflies.com/Britain%20-%20Leptidea%20sinapis.htm>

I use these books – some of them are available second hand from Abebooks at low prices: Butterflies of the World by H.L.Lewis; The Dictionary of Butterflies and Moths by Allan Watson & Paul E.S.Whalley; Butterflies by Thomas C. Emmel.

This gallery has 58 tropicals photographed at Wisley and Earnley during the past two years which you might find useful:

<http://www.colinknightimages.com/Nature-Photography-UK/Tropical-butterflies>

Some species are particularly difficult – see Mark's blog comparing *Kallima inachus* with *Kallima paralekta* (RHS Wisley, 10 February 2012 – Part 12). Also *Heliconius melpomene* (Postman) in my gallery – I'm still not certain of my ids here. Polymorphism in females such as *Papilio dardanus* (African Mocker Swallowtail), which can have at least 14 forms, can add to the difficulty of identification.

Good luck!

Colin

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 22-Jan-13 01:39 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Life and death in the glasshouse ...

I bet Mr Frog thinks he is on his holidays 😊 I hope the foreign food doesn't disagree with him.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 22-Jan-13 04:27 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Thanks for your message.

There are a number of resources I use for the identification of tropical species. I am already familiar with most of the more common species found in butterfly houses in the UK. However, sometimes its not so easy. As Colin mentioned in his post "*Some species are particularly difficult – see Mark's blog comparing Kallima inachus with Kallima paralekta (RHS Wisley, 10 February 2012 – Part 12). Also Heliconius melpomene (Postman) in my gallery – I'm still not certain of my ids here. Polymorphism in females such as Papilio dardanus (African Mocker Swallowtail), which can have at least 14 forms, can add to the difficulty of identification*". The *Papilio memnon* group, which are regularly seen in butterfly houses, can also be difficult as hybridisation regularly occurs; the females are also highly polymorphic; etc ...

I use several online resources including the following:

<http://en.butterflycorner.net/Butterflies-from-all-over-the-world.300.0.html>

<http://butterfliesofamerica.com>

<http://www.butterflycircle.com/checklist%20V2/CI/index.php/start-page/startpage> (which contains some pictures to die for)

In addition, there are two main suppliers of pupae to butterfly houses in the UK. Getting hold of a copy of their stock lists will also help as it allows you to rule out many species in the first instance.

<http://www.oxfly.co.uk/index.html>

<http://www.butterflyfarm.co.uk/pupaeshop/index.php>

Of course my pièce de résistance is my regular access to the collections of the Hope Department of Entomology at Oxford.

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 22-Jan-13 04:34 PM GMT

Hi Susie,

"Susie" wrote:

I hope the foreign food doesn't disagree with him.

With the Asian Swallowtail he was mixing a bit of Indian, Chinese and Indonesian all in one!

Definitely a case of 'Delhi Belly' 🤢🤢🤢

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 22-Jan-13 06:10 PM GMT

Cheers for the info Colin and Mark I'll have a good gander at those websites tonight 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Jan-13 09:42 AM GMT

Rewell Wood, 25 January 2013

Work or freeze ...

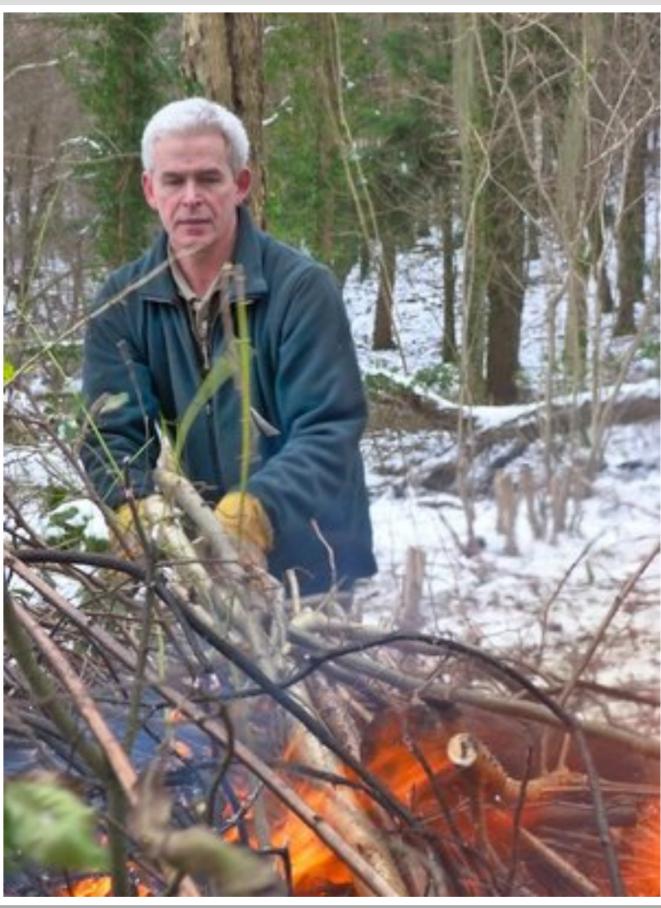
Today, I met up with Neil Hulme and Simon Mockford (SDNPA Ranger), and two volunteers from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) at a grey and extremely cold Rewell Wood near Arundel in West Sussex.

As mentioned in a previous diary entry, the woodland here is cut on a rotational basis in order to help create and maintain ideal conditions for the Duke of Burgundy, which resides at this important woodland site in increasing numbers. The work carried out by the Norfolk Estate, the various partner organisations and individual conservation volunteers, continues to open up this woodland for the benefit of many species.

In addition to the Duke of Burgundy, the nationally declining Pearl-bordered Fritillary can be seen here from late April to early June. The day flying Geometrid, the unfortunately but aptly named Drab Looper (*Minoa murinata*) can also be found here; this being one of its last strongholds in West Sussex; it has not been known from East Sussex since about 1960. Adults are on the wing in two broods from late May through to late June, and again from early July to mid August. Their larvae are associated with wood spurge. Another moth of note, and one of my favourites, is the beautiful and 'fairy-like' Green Long-horn, *Adela reaumurella*. The males have long pale antennae, the females somewhat shorter, darker, and white tipped. The forewings of both sexes are a beautiful metallic bronze-green in colour. The adults, which can be seen on the wing during May and June, sometimes occurring in swarms.

Thanks to Neil for the last picture of a very hard working volunteer 😊

I look forward to our next session ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-Feb-13 10:09 PM GMT

European Water Vole

"Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats"

Rat, Chapter 1 ...

Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*

Captured whilst feasting (no toads in sight) ...



http://markcolvin.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/arvicola-amphibius_7.html

Re: Mark Colvin

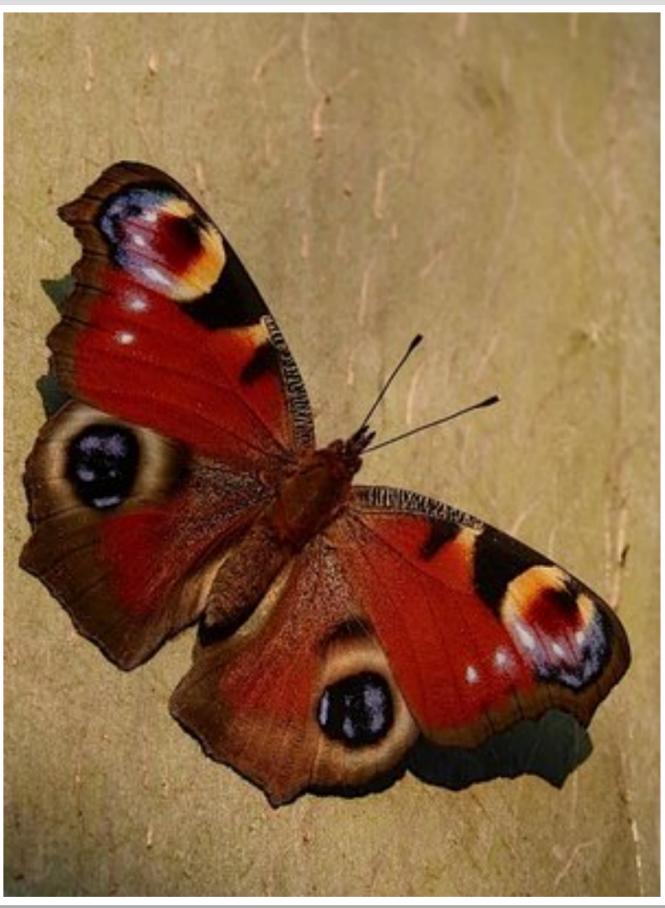
by Mark Colvin, 27-Feb-13 08:03 PM GMT

Plaistow, West Sussex, 27 February 2013

Season's first ...

In the late afternoon sun ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 27-Feb-13 11:11 PM GMT



Cracking start to the year Mark - I've yet to see my first of the year 😞

Is it just me or does it seem browner on the underside than those from later in the year which are almost black?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Feb-13 08:34 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Thanks for your message.

I have to say I was rather pleased to find it myself. I had gone out to my garden shed in order to fill up my bird feeders and happened to glance at a small dark patch on an otherwise sunlit area of fence. It's probably been overwintering in the shed or a nearby log pile.

"Wurzel" wrote:

Is it just me or does it seem browner on the underside than those from later in the year which are almost black?

I can't say I noticed anything unusual about its colour and don't forget this would have been an individual from last season anyway.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 28-Feb-13 10:16 AM GMT

Alright Mark?

"I can't say I noticed anything unusual about its colour and don't forget this would have been an individual from last season anyway"

It seemed browner but it was possibly just the light or more probably my eyes 😏

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-Mar-13 09:01 PM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 6 March 2013

Silky bites the dust ...

I was obviously working far too hard ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 06-Mar-13 10:18 PM GMT

Could it perhaps be that you tried to bisect a trunk far too thick for the tool in hand? 😊

We all do it. Richard Smith broke the brushcutter last weekend during a BC scrub clearance. My shoulders are still sore as a result of the compensatory clipping I had to carry out as a result! 😞

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-Mar-13 10:32 PM GMT

Plaistow, 7 March 2013

Concentrating on the detail ...

Most identification of Lepidoptera does not require the use of a dichotomous key (a means for the identification of organisms based on a series of choices between alternative characters), but relies on pattern recognition and learning the species verbatim from images in books and the internet, the ability growing with experience. However, in most other large orders (e.g. Diptera, Coleoptera and Hymenoptera) even the beginner must learn from keys, or diagnostic characters to be able to distinguish taxa even at the family level. Although there are exceptions, it is generally not until the lepidopterist begins to tackle the microlepidoptera that the use of morphological characters (e.g. genitalia, wing venation and body structure) becomes commonplace, and often a prerequisite, in aiding identification.

Most butterflies and moths have two pairs of overlapping scaled wings. These are comprised of an extremely thin double membrane with rigidity provided by a network of nervures (the hollow 'veins' which radiate from the base of and form the framework of the insect's wing). The pattern of nervures is different for each genus of butterfly and, as such, this is one of the key criteria used by taxonomists when classifying butterflies.

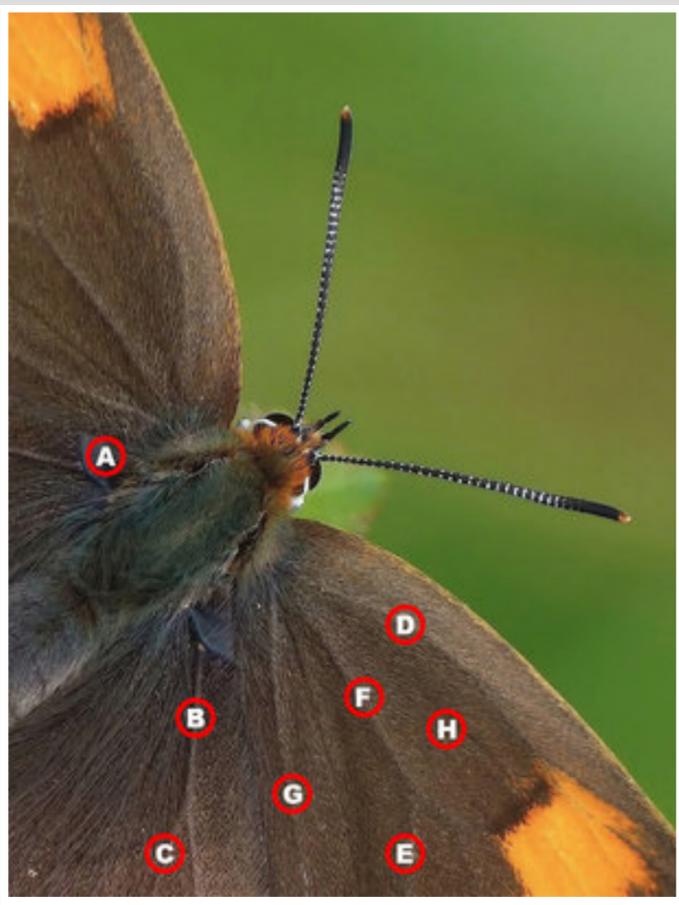
To venture a little deeper, the fore and hindwings of most moths, though not all, are united during flight by a coupling apparatus, the frenulum (a bristly structure on the hindwings that holds the forewings and hindwings together). This particular mechanism is never found in butterflies, in which the wings are held together only because the front pair overlaps the hind to a considerable extent. The amount of this overlap is increased by the humeral lobe, a special projection found only in butterflies, and situated at the basal end of the costa on the hind wings. This type of arrangement is known as amplexiform (clasp-like) wing-coupling.

The image below, of a female Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*), shows the humeral area, close to the rear and either side of the thorax. In addition, key wing venation is visible, including the radial and medial veins on the hindwing and the radial, cubital and anal veins located on the forewing. The discoidal cell of the forewing is also clearly discernable.

- A Humeral area
- B Radial nervure (vein)
- C One of the medial nervules
- D Radial nervure (vein)
- E One of the cubital nervules
- F Cubital nervure (vein)
- G One of the anal nervures (veins)
- H Discoidal cell

I appreciate that this level of detail, which by no means is digging very deep, is not to everyone's interest. However, for those who have the time and the inclination to do so, I thoroughly recommend looking a little closer and you will soon discover a whole new world full of fabulous hidden wonders ...

Try it sometime ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Mar-13 12:44 PM GMT

Hope Department of Entomology, 11 March 2013

My first attempt at photo-micrography ...

Thanks to Darren for providing access and to Katherine for her guidance and patience 😊😊😊

The living ovum of the Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*) ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 12-Mar-13 03:01 PM GMT

Great stuff Mark 🍷.

Could you add it to the Species Album when you get time please.

It would be interesting to know a bit more about the technique involved. Is this a stacked or single image?

Regards,
Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Mar-13 08:12 PM GMT

Hi Vince,

Glad you like the picture, though having seen what can be produced I've got a long way to go ...

When I know more about the system and become familiar with its use I'll try to give a detailed overview of what's involved. What I can tell you is that the Brown Hairstreak picture is made up of around 50 separate images all montaged together. The setting up is the most critical part of the process e.g.

selecting and positioning the specimen below the microscope, adjusting white balance, setting the exposure and accurately focusing on the monitor; this wasn't easy with the egg and I didn't achieve the result I wanted. Once these factors have been set, along with a few other important parameters, its just a case of selecting the two extremes of focus on the stack and hitting the go button – well there's a bit more to it than that really but this should give you a rough idea of what's involved.

My second attempt below.

Watch this space ...

Kindest regards. Mark



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 12-Mar-13 08:53 PM GMT

You are going way beyond the call of duty here, Mark.

I dread to think of the time you've invested thus far.

These images are both fascinating and much appreciated.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Mar-13 09:36 AM GMT

Thanks David.

I appreciate your comments 😊😊😊

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Mar-13 10:36 AM GMT

Hope Department of Entomology, Oxford

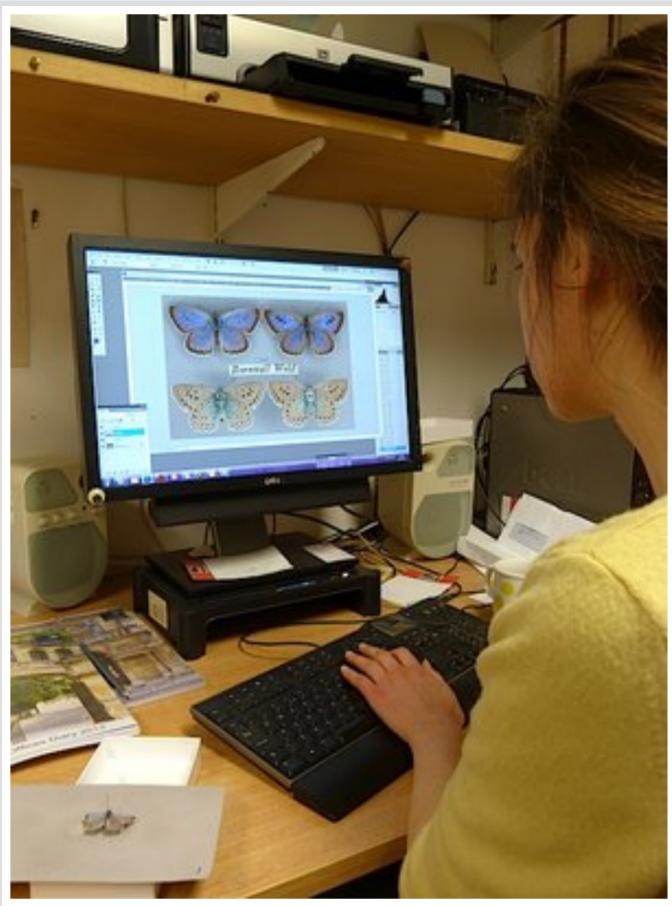
Research ...

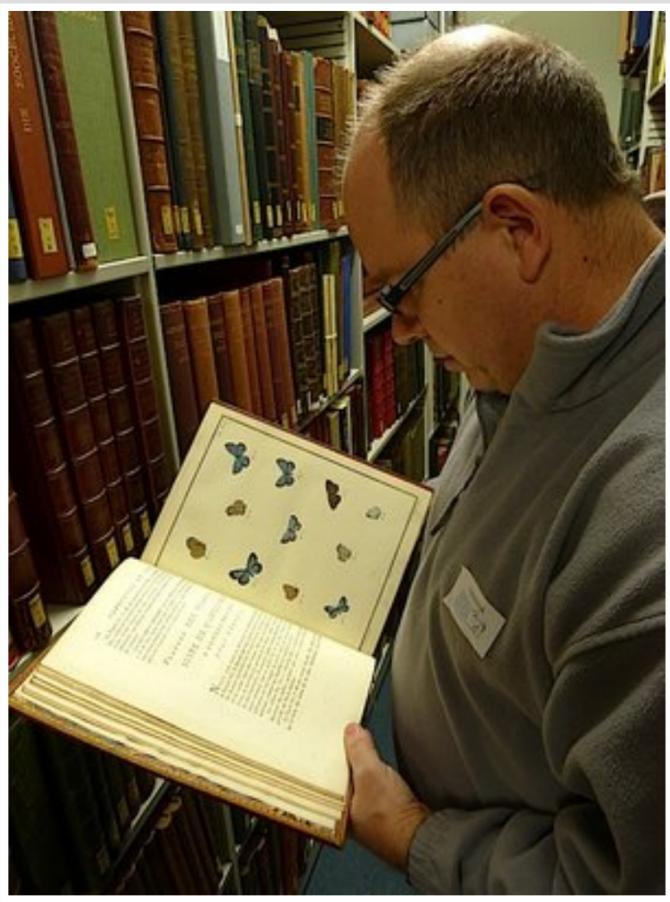
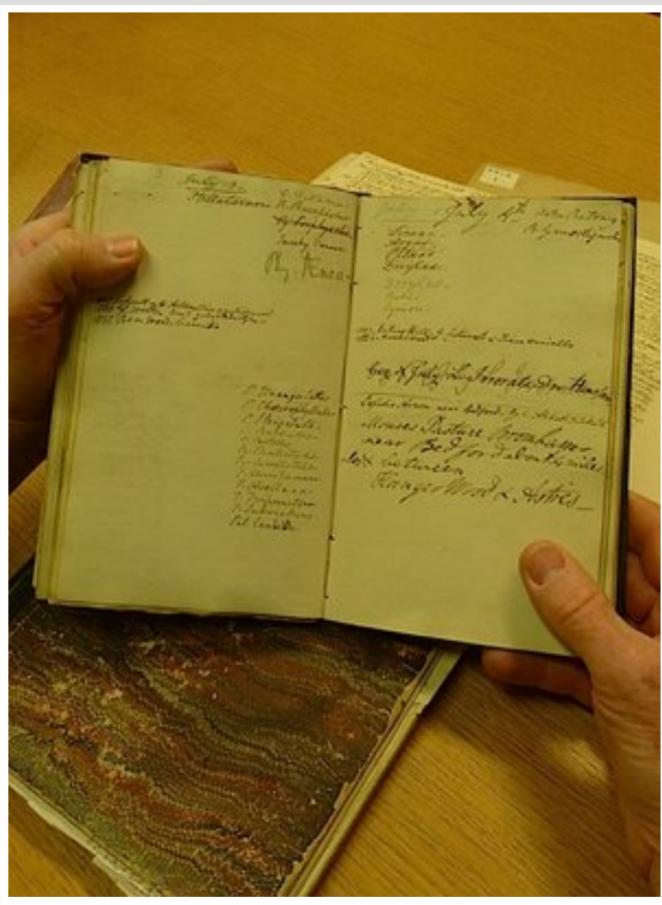
Over the past couple of months I have been fortunate to spend some considerable time in the good company of Pete Eeles at the Hope Department of Entomology at Oxford's University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH). As we all know, Pete has added, and continues to add, considerable value to the UKB website and it has been my pleasure to join him on what can only be described as a mutually rewarding adventure of discovery.

As an example of our earlier and continuing research the Large Blue (*Phengaris (Maculinea) arion*) has played a significant role. Our studies have involved tracking down specimens from lost colonies and reviewing historic literature relating to their final outposts e.g. from areas including North Cornwall, South Devon, Somerset, the Cotswolds and Barnwell Wold in Northamptonshire. The image capture process, expertly undertaken by Katherine Child (OUMNH), has provided an excellent means of better understanding the original descriptions and has provided an excellent graphical means of comparing regional colonies. Some of the specimens we have selected for inclusion are historic in their own right, in that they have been used in past reference works, not least, the Barnwell Wold specimens of *P. arion* from the important Dale collection, which feature on Plate 12, Figures 1 and 2, in *Butterflies* by E. B. Ford (pictured below).



Of the literature, which has been reviewed, the diaries and correspondences of the late James Charles Dale (1792–1872) have transported us to a period when Large Coppers, Mazarine Blues, Swallowtails, Bath Whites and other lepidopteran wonders graced our countryside. The middle image below, showing Dale's log from circa 1835, is of particular interest as it details the capture of *Papilio arion*, now *Phengaris arion*, from Mouses Pasture, Bromham near Bedford. Examination of other diaries in Dale's archive also indicate reference to this location. This is the first time we have seen reference to this locality in any publication. Dale's diaries and communications have sometimes been a challenge to read, but the effort has been worth it, as their contents continue to take flight into our imagination.





The search continues ...

More on Dale and his diaries in the future ...

Re: Mark Colvin

by Matsukaze, 13-Mar-13 09:42 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Absolutely fascinating.

The Mouse's Pasture was referenced as a Large Blue site in the Reverend F.O. Morris' *History of British Butterflies*

<http://archive.org/details/historyofbritish00morr> – as Morris gives somewhat different particulars it appears to have been a well-known site at the time (it is an easy name to remember!). I wonder if anything is left of it now, or if any specimens from there survive?

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Mar-13 10:22 PM GMT

Hi Matsukaze.

Thanks for the information including the link – much appreciated 😊😊😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Matsukaze, 13-Mar-13 10:36 PM GMT

Just had a quick look at the OS map of the area and one thing stands out. Here in the south-west, the Large Blues always seem to cling to steep south(ish) facing slopes. There is no trace of anything similar at Bromham (on the floodplain of the Ouse), and if I remember rightly the same is true of the other eastern England site, Barnwell Wold. Might the Large Blues have been using a different sort of habitat here?

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 14-Mar-13 08:36 AM GMT

Hi Matsukaze.

Thanks for your message.

I've only ever seen *arion* at Collard Hill, on one occasion several years ago, and have not seen it on the continent nor visited any of the historic localities where it once occurred. Geographically I'd imagine its old haunts to be quite different, at least comparing those that occurred to the east of its range in England to a site such as Collard Hill. This does of course pose the question – if they were living in different isolated environments could these 'races' have been genetically different in any way which may suggest more than one subspecies occurring in the British Isles?

I'm probably wrong but food for thought ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Matsukaze, 14-Mar-13 09:17 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

The best thoughts I can come up with are that *M.sabuleti*, and therefore the Large Blue, is sensitive to **temperature** rather than vegetation or landscape, and therefore if temperatures when the ant is active are warmer in Bedfordshire than in Somerset, which wouldn't surprise me, the slopes that are ideal for *M.sabuleti* will have a shallower gradient (something to do with the angle at which the sun's rays hit the ground, if I remember rightly). I do wonder what the habitat was in the south Midlands, but guess we will never know, unless someone invents a time machine and we can beam Jeremy Thomas back to 1808...

If and when the genetic analysis is done, I would be surprised if the Barnwell Wold Large Blues diverged from the nearest western ones before 1600 – I can imagine enough of north-west Oxfordshire, south Warwickshire and east Northamptonshire being broadly suitable at one point, and these areas were hammered by agricultural improvement before the recording/collecting of butterflies really got going, explaining why we have no records.

The other mystery of the Large Blue's distribution is why there are so few records from the south-east, which is where many of the early entomologists were. *M.sabuleti* is common on heathland and chalk downland, so why is the butterfly absent? Were such sites too prone to drought? Does it occur in heathy or chalky places on the near continent?

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 15-Mar-13 02:37 PM GMT

Hi Matsukaze,

Some interesting thoughts for contemplation ...

I am not aware of any plans for genetic mapping but would certainly be interested to see this done and to know the outcome. There is plenty of usable genetic material in well-curated collections which can provide us with extensive data for investigating the effects of climate change, habitat modification and loss and the resulting distributional changes over time. Although many of the historic specimens housed in museums collections will be unsuitable for molecular research; due to their age, methods of preparation or nature of preservation, there are still many that can provide scientists with valuable data. In more recent years, it has also become possible to extract nucleic acids from dry insects without causing external morphological damage; an important consideration with extremely rare or type specimens.

Certainly with regards to the excellent facilities provided by the Hope Department of Entomology, at Oxford's University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH), specimens are made available to researchers for both traditional (morphological studies, data mining) and molecular research (population genetics, barcoding, molecular systematics), providing their methodologies are scientifically robust.

Watch this space ...

Kindest regards. Mark



Images copyright OUMNH. Photographed by Katherine Child, Hope Department of Entomology.

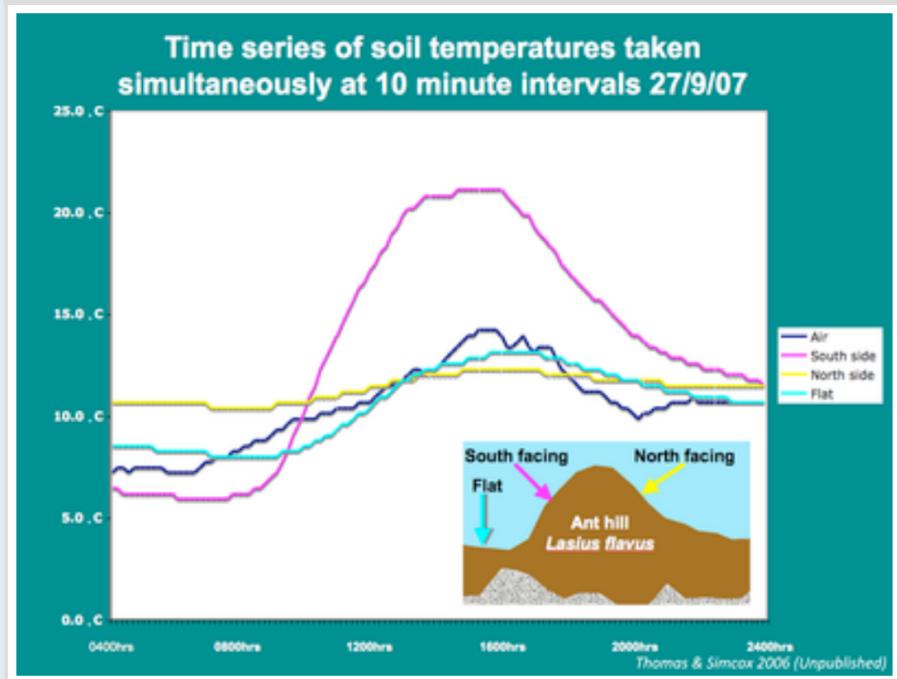
Re: Mark Colvin

by David Simcox, 16-Mar-13 02:13 PM GMT

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading some of the recent discussions regarding the historical distribution of the Large blue and of historical specimens.

With regards to the Barnwell Wold sites I had a chat with Jeremy this morning who I knew had discussed them at length with the late Miriam Rothschild. She described them as boulder clays sitting on top of limestone and that she could remember the sites, (not the butterfly), as a child as being completely dominated by huge anthills created by the Yellow Meadow Ant (*Lasius flavus*). In fact she remembered that it was too dangerous to ride a horse across the fields for fear of them breaking their legs.

Being familiar with similar 'antscapes' in other parts of the country, Jeremy and I have carried detailed temperature recording on the undulating topography and heterogeneous aspects of this habitat, we found that they provide the perfect place for *Myrmica sabuleti* to flourish. Ground temperatures can vary enormously within a few centimetres which is perfect for a thermophilous insect to exploit and it is not surprising that Silver spotted skippers prospered at Barnwell at the same time as Large blues. The Rothschilds were not responsible for introducing Large blues here as the butterfly was present at least 50 years before the family's interest in natural history began or their association with the sites.



Matsukaze is absolutely correct in his observation that Large blues are sensitive to a temperature niche which must also be occupied by *Myrmica sabuleti* and at least one of its foodplants, Wild Thyme or Marjoram. Most former English sites were on steep south facing slopes where the 'angle of incidence' to the sun raised the soil temperature. Flat sites like Barnwell Wold were warm owing to the micro-topography and shelter provided by anthills but were very vulnerable to the plough. Of course grazing is also vital as short turf leads to warmer soils.

Importantly the phenology of the butterfly, the ant and the foodplant must also be tightly synchronised. This is an area where we have been concentrating some of our more recent research as the de-coupling of the synchronicity, triggered by climate change for instance, would be catastrophic to the butterfly.

In southern Europe the butterfly is seldom found on south facing slopes because it is too hot for the ant.

I think there could be a number of reasons as to why there are so few historic records from Chalk downland, particularly from the south east: Chalk is certainly more drought prone than limestone and we know that drought is bad for the butterfly as it impacts badly on both the foodplant and the ants. *Myrmica sabuleti* produces bigger nests on thicker soils that are capable of rearing more Large blues – chalk soils tend to be much thinner than limestone. Historically, much chalk downland was sheep grazed throughout the summer and when pushed hard sheep will eat off Thyme flowers together with eggs and caterpillars. Finally, Thyme on chalk tends to flower earlier and may well be beyond the phenology range of the butterfly.

I am not a taxonomist or geneticist, but welcome the time, in the not too distant future, when old specimens can be used to throw light on the genotype as well as the phenotype of this amazing butterfly. We have already done this using fresh material and I can confirm that populations in the UK are already genetically distinct from each other and from their source populations in Sweden – evolution can be very rapid!

Keep up the good work on this excellent site,
David

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 16-Mar-13 09:01 PM GMT

Hi David,

Many thanks for taking the time to contribute to this discussion. It's good to get confirmation of the currently known facts from someone who has been so instrumental in the Large Blue reintroduction programme. I am also pleased you have enjoyed reading some of the recent dialogue.

I was particularly interested to note your comment:

"David Simcox" wrote:

I am not a taxonomist or geneticist, but welcome the time, in the not too distant future, when old specimens can be used to throw light on the genotype as well as the phenotype of this amazing butterfly. We have already done this using fresh material and I can confirm that **populations in the UK are already genetically distinct from each other and from their source populations in Sweden** – evolution can be very rapid!

Rapid indeed ...

With this being the case, I feel it almost inevitable that if old specimens from regional 'forms' are one-day utilised as part of a molecular systematics exercise, they will almost certainly be genetically distinct from each other ...

I also note your comment from 2008

"The separation into subspecies is generally performed by taxonomists who are looking at morphological features on the adult. They tend not to look at the ecological requirements of the species or their behaviour in each developmental stage, for example. Some of the populations we've introduced are now 18 generations old. In human terms that would take us back to about 1550. As far as I'm concerned, ecologically, these populations are behaving exactly as the British populations. If you're going to look at subspecies, there's a strong argument to say there were 6 regions of Large Blue in this country, and they were each represented by a different subspecies based on the criteria of morphological features".

Keep up the great work.

Thanks again.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Mar-13 09:25 AM GMT

2012 was the worst year on record for UK butterflies

We all knew it, but it's now official ...

"Washout 2012 was the worst year for UK butterflies on record with 52 out of the 56 species monitored suffering declines, a scientific study today revealed. Some of our rarest species, such as the fritillaries, bore the brunt of the second wettest year on record and now face the real threat of extinction in some parts of the UK.



Last year's relentless rain and cold created disastrous conditions for summer species in particular as they struggled to find food, shelter and mating opportunities; butterfly abundance plummeted to a record low as a result and 13 species suffered their worst year on record. The critically endangered High Brown Fritillary fell by 46%, the vulnerable Marsh Fritillary was down 71% and the endangered Heath Fritillary saw its population plummet by 50% in comparison to 2011. Many of our most threatened butterflies were already in a state of long-term decline prior to the 2012 deluge. There are now real fears that these already struggling species could become extinct in some parts of the UK as a result of last year's wet weather.

Hairstreaks did particularly badly last year – the Black Hairstreak, one of the UK's rarest species, saw its population fall by 98%. The Green Hairstreak was down 68%, the White-letter Hairstreak fell by 72% and the Brown Hairstreak, slipped by 34%. Many common species also struggled. The Common Blue plummeted by 60%, the Brown Argus collapsed by 73% and the Large Skipper fell by 55%. The widespread 'Whites', including Green-veined White, Large White and Small White, saw their populations tumble by more than 50%. The Orange-tip fell by 34%. The alarming slide of garden favourite the Small Tortoiseshell continued, with its population slipping 37% from 2011 figures. Only four species saw their populations increase. The grass-feeding Meadow Brown was up 21% and the Scotch Argus, which thrives in damp conditions, rose by 55%.

Dr Tom Brereton, Head of Monitoring at Butterfly Conservation, said: "2012 was a catastrophic year for almost all of our butterflies, halting progress made through our conservation efforts in recent years. Butterflies have proved before that given favourable conditions and the availability of suitable habitat they can recover, but with numbers in almost three-quarters of UK species at a historically low ebb, any tangible recovery will be more difficult than ever.

Data was gathered by the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) jointly led by Butterfly Conservation and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH).

UKBMS has run since 1976 and involves thousands of volunteers collecting data every week throughout the summer from more than 1,000 sites across the UK. CEH butterfly ecologist Dr Marc Botham said: "Despite the horrific weather in 2012 over 1,500 dedicated volunteers still managed to collect data from over a thousand sites across the UK. Their amazing efforts enable us to assess the impacts of wet summers on butterfly diversity." The UKBMS is operated by the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Butterfly Conservation and funded by a multi-agency consortium including the Countryside Council for Wales, Defra, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Natural Environment Research Council and Scottish Natural Heritage. The UKBMS is indebted to all volunteers who contribute data to the scheme."

Dr Tom Brereton
Head of Monitoring at Butterfly Conservation

But it's not too late if we act now ...

In Sussex, last 'summer' checked the upward population trend for the rare Duke of Burgundy. Nevertheless, our conservation efforts over the previous years means that 2012 will have seen a decrease, not an extinction, of this rare and beautiful butterfly. This tells me that we must highly value and protect what we have. It tells me we must continue to research and keep learning – we may only have 59 native species of butterfly in the UK but there is still much we do not know. We must learn from our successes and we must learn from our mistakes. We must educate and we must conserve. We have no control over the weather but we do over our attitudes and actions – we have the ability to change things.

If you have the time and the ability to get involved with a local conservation project, run by your local branch of Butterfly Conservation, then please consider getting involved. You won't regret it, and I can guarantee you will get far more out of it than you put in.

We have a responsibility ...

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 26-Mar-13 09:21 PM GMT

Couldn't agree more, Mark. Butterflies (and the wider world of nature generally) provide me with so much pleasure that I feel duty bound to help out when I can in order to preserve their environments.

Sadly, despite all the conservation work we can undertake there's nothing we can do about the weather. Several UK species are at the northernmost limits of their ranges, and since I've been a member of this forum (August 2009) we've singularly failed to see even an 'average' summer month. We've had remarkable Septembers, Aprils and Marches but May, June, July and August have recently been setting records for all the wrong reasons.

This has been going on since 2006. When are we (butterfly enthusiasts) going to be ready to challenge the establishment mantra of the last decade or more regarding 'global warming'?

It ain't happening as far as I can see. Even worse, we're experiencing warm spells where they don't belong on an all too frequent basis, leading to heavy population losses when conditions subsequently become abnormally wet and cold. Surely, if this warming phenomenon were genuine, then we'd occasionally be seeing its effects during the period between May and September, but we aren't.

So, the weather here is totally screwed up, but one thing's for sure, it ISN'T getting warmer *per se*. Perhaps we need to concentrate on sunspot activity as we did in the past or look at previous periods where the weather in summer was abnormally cool for a few years.

Whatever the reason one thing's for sure, our butterflies are suffering at a critical level right now. It's heartbreaking when you're someone who goes out in the field as often as possible and yet at the end of the year you can only claim mere single figures of 'common' species like Small Copper, Dingy Skipper, Common Blue, Wall Brown, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Brown Argus, etc.

Re: Mark Colvin

by essexbuzzard, 27-Mar-13 12:18 AM GMT

Seconded!

Although we have had isolated weeks—even months on occasion—of good weather, the last sustained spring to autumn of good, sunny weather was ten years ago now—2003!

Surely one good summer every ten years isn't too much to ask?

Global Warming or no, good summers remain such a rarity in GB that people still talk about 1975 and 1976!

This is why we have a mere 59 species. I think our neighbours in France have about 150!

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 27-Mar-13 08:43 PM GMT

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

This is why we have a mere 59 species. I think our neighbours in France have about 150!

Approx. 220 according to my Llafranchis guide, Buzzard.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-13 11:48 PM GMT

Would a period of drought be any better? I saw mention on one of the forums that there was some pretty awful weather in the spring of 1976 so I had a quick google and it turns out that the spring was really cold – in fact there was even snow in the Midlands in June 😲 (this is according to an article by Michael "it won't be a hurricane" Fish 😊) So if a prolonged period of sunny warm weather would benefit the struggling populations lets hope that this is a case of history repeating, though surely a drought would cause different problems? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps sorry for the hi-jack Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Mar-13 12:12 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments.

What I can report is a beautiful spring day in West Sussex today – albeit a little chilly ... 😊😊😊

Heyshott looked wonderful.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

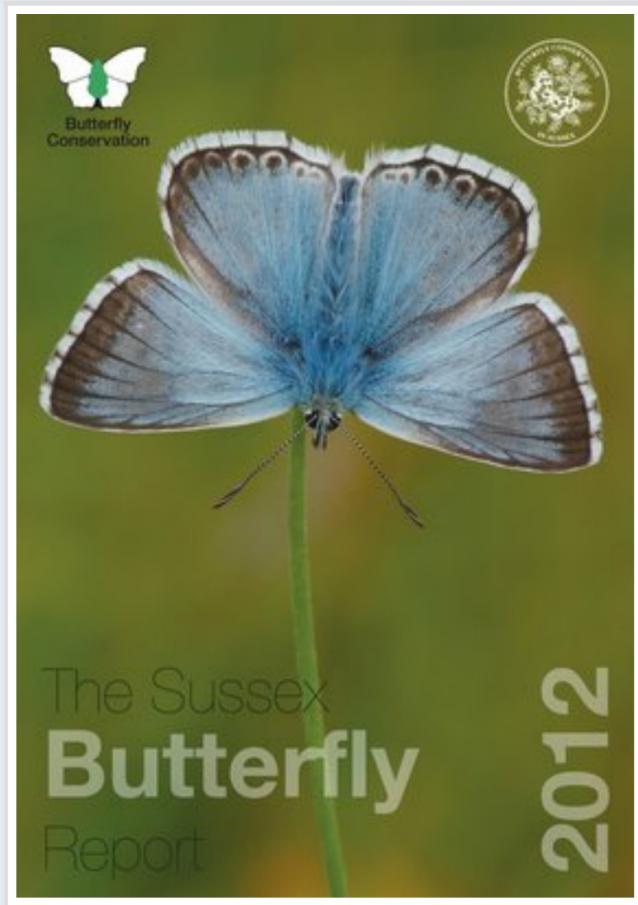
by Mark Colvin, 30-Mar-13 09:48 PM GMT

Sussex BC Annual Report

Issue 5 (Spring 2013) of the Sussex Butterfly Report, the annual review of the previous year (2012) by Sussex Butterfly Conservation, was published on Thursday. In the next few days, all BC Sussex Branch members should receive their copy of the Report in the post (which also contains the 2013 events listing – an incredible 30 in total). Running to 76 full colour pages, the publication is full of numerous interesting articles and reports on the butterflies and moths of Sussex; including a fascinating article by our very own Vince Massimo entitled, The Forgotten 75% – though you'll have to buy a copy if you want to know what that's all about ...

The Report is available to non-members of BC Sussex. We are asking for a minimum donation of £5 per copy, inclusive of postage and packing, with all proceeds going towards the important conservation of butterflies and moths in Sussex; an early purchase is highly recommended. Please email Audrey Kemp at treasurer@sussex-butterflies.org.uk for details.

Please dig deep, it won't be around for long ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 30-Mar-13 10:27 PM GMT

Excellent. It looks fabulous, Mark. I look forward to receiving a copy.

Re: Mark Colvin

by essexbuzzard, 30-Mar-13 10:36 PM GMT

Me too-this report is outstanding.
Even for non-members,a fiver is a bargain!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 30-Mar-13 10:52 PM GMT

It's a beautiful picture on the cover too 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Apr-13 12:12 PM GMT

Thanks ...

I appreciate both of your comments. This is of course the result of the hard work of many people ... 😊😊😊

Mark, you can join our marketing team any day - thanks 😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Apr-13 04:01 PM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 27 March 2013

Reflection ...

With our 2012-13 work party season now at an end it is time to reflect, on what has been achieved this past winter, and upon our hopes and expectations for future seasons.

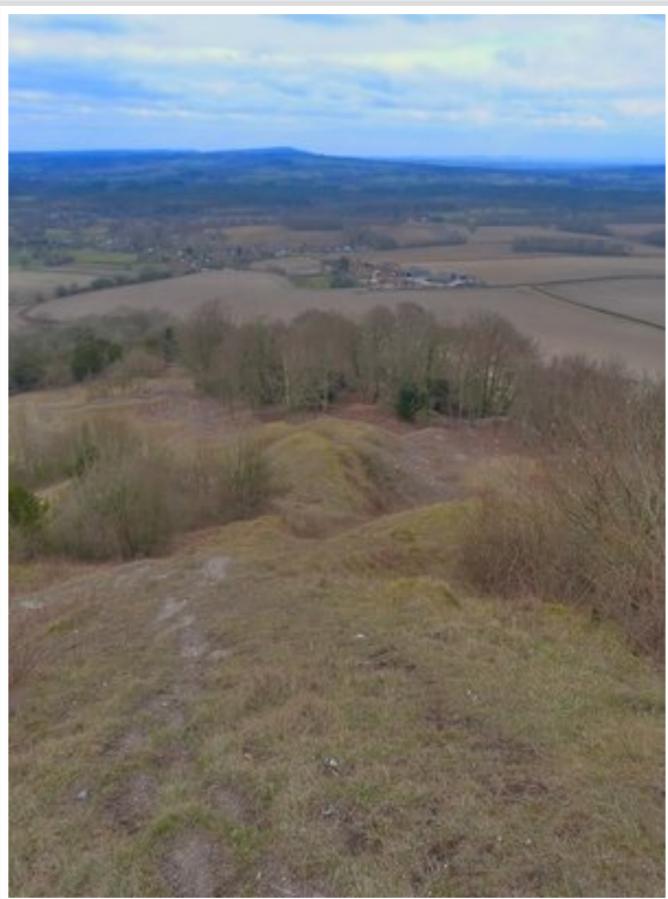
This year we have concentrated much of our clearance efforts on the far eastern sector of the reserve; though others areas have not gone untouched. The clearance of the final few yew trees within the now secure fence boundary, due to their toxicity to livestock, means that mixed rotational grazing (cattle and sheep) of the north-facing scarp can soon commence. This varied grazing, along with selective scrub management, is an essential part of

the overall management plan, though must be undertaken sympathetically and with due care and consideration of its effects.

Over-grazing, particularly by sheep, can, and has historically, had a devastating effect on the Duke of Burgundy, as it produces turf which is far too short and which only sustains unsuitable stunted primulas. Our aim at Heyshott, and indeed at other sites where the Duke of Burgundy occurs in Sussex, is the production of a more structurally diverse sward, and eliminating the build up of 'thatch' which will ultimately shade out the Duke's two principal foodplants, Cowslip (*Primula veris*), and Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*). Primulas growing within or adjacent to the longer sward are then provided a level of protection and are far less likely to become desiccated during hot, dry summers – it is these large, lush, green-leaved plants that the female Duke of Burgundy will ultimately seek out for egg-laying.

Neil will be leading our 'Dukes at Heyshott Escarpment' open day on Saturday, 18 May 2013.

Details can be found in the latest Sussex Butterfly Report and will appear on the Sussex BC website at <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk>



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Apr-13 11:22 PM GMT

Come Dine with Me

The strange behaviour of butterfly food choice ...



As with most insects, butterflies do the majority of their growing and eating during the larval stage. Nevertheless, the adults still require nutrition. This is predominantly obtained in the form of floral nectar, along with tree sap and other sugar-based foods for flight energy, with other micronutrients being required for egg maturation and successful reproduction. It is these that are gained from a number of apparently strange sources including animal dung, bird droppings, urine, human sweat, rotting fruit, fermenting juices from timber, dead fish, animal carcasses, honeydew (sugar-rich excrement produced by aphids) and even dew covered embers from fires.

The term 'puddling', which originates from the tropics, is often used when butterflies visit animal dung and urine-soaked ground. This behaviour can often be observed on patches of damp ground or streamside mud where animals have been drinking and then defecated. In our own quest for finding 'exotic' species in Britain, the magnificent Purple Emperor being a classic example, it is possible to use the equivalent, including human body fluids, to attract such butterflies. Puddling also occurs on seepages, muddy puddles, drying riverbanks and has been observed on roadside verges after heavy rain. The main purpose of this act appears to be the collection of key nutrients, which are otherwise scarce in their regular diets. Evidence suggests that the primary target is sodium, although nitrogen and phosphorous rich compounds may also be essential.





There is still debate as to why butterflies and indeed other insects require these additional nutrients. It has been suggested that sodium plays an important role in a number of physiological processes including assisting amino acid uptake during the digestive process and assisting neuromuscular activity. Another theory suggests that these additional nutrients are important to the male of the species by allowing them to better provision their spermatophores prior to passing to the female during copulation, due to the additional nutrients it contains. Whatever the reason, the act of 'puddling' is undoubtedly a fascinating behaviour. Whether it is for a slightly unusual choice of nuptial gift or the entomological equivalent of drinking a can of Red Bull (other makes of high energy drink are available), many aspects of this behaviour still remain unanswered ...

Red Admiral taking nutrients from a snail reproduced with kind permission of Nick Broomer ©.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 06-Apr-13 08:46 AM GMT

Great article, Mark. 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-Apr-13 04:35 PM GMT

Thanks Susie,

That's kind of you to say ...

I wrote this some time back and was planning to post it earlier but thought I'd hang on to it until the Sussex BC Report was published.

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 06-Apr-13 08:24 PM GMT

That's a most welcome 'short story', Mark. I've often wondered why butterflies are keen to take minerals on board. I daresay it's not dissimilar to pregnant women suddenly craving bizarre things to consume.

Nature always has its way.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 06-Apr-13 09:34 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

its nice to be able to read articles such as this one, on understanding the behaviour of puddling by our butterflies and, why its such an important part of their short lives. So well done.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Colin Knight, 07-Apr-13 10:09 AM GMT

Yes, thanks for a fascinating article Mark. It motivated me to inquire into other ways that Lepidoptera obtain supplementary nutrients:

Vampire moths drink vertebrate blood (including human according to one report). Their proboscis is divided into two halves, a rocking motion drills into the skin and the victim's blood pressure raises hooks on the proboscis to ensure attachment (coming to a screen near you...).

Hemiceratoides hieroglyphica, a moth from Madagascar, visits sleeping birds at night and drinks their tears using a specialized, harpoon-like proboscis:
<http://rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/3/2/117/F1.expansion.html>
<http://rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/3/2/117/F2.expansion.html>

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 07-Apr-13 11:32 AM GMT

Brilliant, Colin 😊. Now if only that stuff was taught in schools I bet the little 'uns would be gripped. A bit like Horrible Histories, but with insects instead!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-Apr-13 08:07 AM GMT

Dear David, Nick and Colin.

Thank you for your kind comments – appreciated ...

I'm glad the article proved informative and stimulated interest.

"Susie" wrote:

Now if only that stuff was taught in schools I bet the little 'uns would be gripped. A bit like Horrible Histories, but with insects instead!

I couldn't agree more ...

Many years ago I remember taking a number of 'creepy crawlies', including giant millipedes, stick insects and hissing cockroaches, into my son and daughter's play school and their local Cub and Brownie packs. The children would all sit round in a semicircle and I would then give each and everyone the chance to touch or hold each 'mini-beast' after I had told them a little bit about each one. My son or daughter would hold them first as they were accustomed to doing so. The children were never forced to touch or hold anything, though encouraged to do so if they showed interest. You could clearly see which of the children had been brought up in an environment where anything with six legs or more was generally bad and to be avoided! I always involved the teaching staff and leaders, generally much to their displeasure, but they usually put on a brave face – at least for a few seconds ...

I'd highly recommend The AES Bug Club to anyone who has young children showing an interest:

<http://www.amentsoc.org/bug-club/>

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-Apr-13 12:52 PM GMT

Marshside Nature Reserve, Lancashire, 10 April 2013

Avocet ...

With things quiet down south I headed north ...



Located on the western edge of the old Martin Mere basin lies the town of Southport, constructed on a complex of sand dunes that once formed a natural obstruction to the drainage of the once vast lake. Here, at the mouth of the estuary, Marshside Nature Reserve sits where the dunes of the Sefton coast meet the salt marshes of the Ribble. Forming part of the internationally important Ribble Estuary, Marshside Nature Reserve, managed by the RSPB, has some of the best lowland wet grassland in the north-west of England. A freshwater marsh adds to a diversity of important habitats that supports enormous numbers of birds. There are Internationally important numbers of Pink-footed Geese, Bar and Black-tailed Godwits and Knot, and nationally important numbers of Grey and Golden Plovers, Oystercatcher, Dunlin, Ruff, Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler and Shelduck. In spring and early summer the area supports important populations of nesting Skylark, Shoveler, Gadwall, Redshank and Lapwing as well as the largest colony of Avocets on the west coast of Britain.



More from my trip on my personal blog at <http://markcolvin.blogspot.co.uk>

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Apr-13 04:45 PM GMT

West Sussex, 19 April 2013

Struggling to find any Orange Tips yesterday (though my luck was in today) my attention was drawn elsewhere ...

Stigmella aurella

The large group of moths known as the Nepticulidae are all extremely small, and because of the manner in which their larvae feed internally within the leaf structure, they are known as leaf-miners. The shape of the pale gallery or blotch created by the larva as it feeds, is usually a much better means of identification than by comparing the adult insect.

Stigmella aurella, pictured below, is probably the commonest and most widespread in the British Isles, its whitish larval mines are a familiar sight on bramble leaves everywhere. In addition to bramble, the larvae will also feed in the leaves of wild strawberry, agrimony, dewberry, water avens, and wood avens. The adults have a wingspan of only 6mm, have a metallic sheen, and fly in May and later in the summer.

Miners are generally restricted to a certain range of food plants, so the identification of a miner is greatly assisted by correctly identifying these plants. The shape of the mines (gallery or irregular blotch) and the patterns of the droppings (frass) within, in addition to the characteristics of the larvae and pupae, can all be key diagnostic features. Lepidoptera tend to construct galleries or blotches with single lines of frass. Diptera characteristically make twin trails of frass. Hymenopteran mines have characteristically more abundant and generally darker frass, particularly when compared to dipterous mines. Several species, including certain Coleoptera, make cut-outs in the leaf and the structure of these can help aid correct identification.

There's always something to see – you just have to look ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Apr-13 07:58 AM GMT

West Sussex, 23 April 2013

Parental responsibility ...

Due to other commitments and interests, entomology, though far from forgotten, has recently taken a bit of a back seat with my outdoor activities significantly reduced. With the Sussex Butterfly Report now published, and my editorial commitments now on the back burner, I hope to spend more time in the field.

Late last season I acquired three Brown Hairstreak eggs; a pair and a single. I had watched and photographed the rather worn female as she laid her tiny white eggs on 16th August 2012. I made a point of marking their location, and when it became apparent that the hedgerow and verge were due to be cut, I checked for their presence and was pleased to find them exactly where I had seen them several months earlier. Having never reared a butterfly from eggs before, or for that matter from any other stage, I was keen to give it a go; having been inspired by the great work of Vince Massimo on this forum and many of my friends in the past.

The eggs were kept in a secure container in my garden shed for the duration of the long winter. I rarely disturbed them other than to occasionally check that they looked OK. Vince had kindly supplied me with several potted blackthorn plants, and my purchase of pot frames and net covers, meant I was ready to go when the time and conditions were right. With the blackthorn buds starting to waken, and with the temperature having finally risen to a more suitable level, on Friday, 19th April the eggs were carefully positioned in their new home.

I now wait and watch like an expectant father ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Goldie M, 24-Apr-13 04:32 PM GMT

Hi! Mark just across the road from the bird reserve in the Dunes I've seen loads of Butterflies Wall, STS ,Peacocks, even Dark Green Fritillaries so you'll have to visit Southport again in the Summer 😊

Good luck with your eggs I'm looking forward to seeing how you get on Goldie 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-13 10:46 PM GMT

Good luck with your bundles of joy 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Apr-13 04:33 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments ...

I definitely intend to visit Lancashire and the adjoining area again as I have some unfinished business with the Red Squirrels at Formby Point. Marshside, Martin Mere and Mere Sands Wood are all sites I'd like to revisit and hopefully next time I'll take better weather with me ...

My 'bundles of joy' haven't hatched yet. Watch this space ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 26-Apr-13 08:40 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 25 April 2013

Aerial antics and amphetamines ...

Arriving at Chiddingfold Forest around 1pm today I had a couple of hours to spare before needing to be back home. Within a short time of arriving the battle commenced, as two Commas competed for territory; which appeared to include a small dry area of ground, a ditch and a small holly. After several unsuccessful attempts to depose him, the victor, an extremely tatty specimen, took his rightful place on the young holly.

As I headed along the forest track in the heat of the afternoon, it was impossible to miss the large numbers of Brimstone on the wing. Most were males, with a couple of females thrown in for good measure. I also stumbled across a mating pair – stumble being the correct term – as whilst I attempted to carefully creep up on them that's exactly what I did – and off they went never to be seen again! I'd estimate I saw in excess of 25 Brimstone in the 2 hours I was there. In true Brimstone fashion, apart from the mating pair, they never stopped still for any length of time and only stopped for the briefest of moments at a nearby nectar bar. I really wasn't in the mood for chasing them and, to be honest, the outcome would have been inevitable, so I just watched and enjoyed their seemingly drug induced hyperactivity.

A pair of Peacocks on the other hand were of more interest, as the pair appeared to be trying to defend the same section of woodland track. One, with a large section of hindwing missing, appeared to be the main aggressor as they spiralled high into the air and chased each other along a section of track.

It was good to be out and I didn't see another soul ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-May-13 07:50 PM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 1 May 2013

Searching ...

Earlier this afternoon I decided to check out several areas of Chiddingfold Forest in the hope of finding a spring brood Wood White; my target obviously had other ideas, as I sadly drew a blank. That said, today really had an air of positivity about it and I was pleased to find seven species including my first Lycaenid of the year, a male Holly Blue (one of several taking nutrients from the forestry track). Despite thinking I had the wood to myself, I was pleased to be joined by UKB's P J Underwood in search of the very same treasure.

The search continues ...

Species seen:

- Holly Blue
- Peacock
- Comma
- Large White
- Brimstone
- Orange Tip
- Green-veined White





Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-May-13 09:21 AM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 3-4 May 2013

Brimstone ...

I spent much of yesterday in Chiddingfold Forest searching for early spring brood Wood White. After an extensive search of all Surrey sectors during the morning, I headed into Sussex sections of the forest in the afternoon, yet still failed to locate any specimens. Apart from several female Orange Tip, which at quick glance fooled me into thinking I'd found one, none were seen. It is my belief that Wood White, at least as of yesterday, are still not flying in Chiddingfold Forest. That said, I was far from beaten and managed to see ten species with Brimstone being by far the most prolific.

Before I left the forest, as I was now running rather short of time and didn't want to lose too many brownie points, I marked the location of several roosting Brimstone and returned early this morning in order to hopefully get some shots.

Species seen yesterday:

- Small Tortoiseshell
- Peacock
- Comma
- Holly Blue
- Green-veined White
- Large White
- Small White
- Brimstone
- Orange Tip
- Speckled Wood





Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 04-May-13 09:31 AM GMT

Lovely shots Mark 😊

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

It is my belief that Wood White, at least as of yesterday, are still not flying in Chiddingfold Forest

Indeed. Even when there is a first sighting, I'm always skeptical that this might be an anomaly or misidentification. I think the date of a first sighting has to be seriously questioned if a second sighting doesn't immediately follow!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 04-May-13 10:11 AM GMT

That top Brimmy pic is a stunner. Nicely done.
BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-May-13 05:27 PM GMT

Thanks ...

You can't beat Blu-Tack and a good blob of Super Glue 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 04-May-13 06:03 PM GMT

Must say, I prefer the second image, since it demonstrates just how effectively a Brimstone is camouflaged. In fact, if you blurred the image slightly, you could be forgiven for thinking that the leaf was the wings of the insect and the stem the antennae.

Nature is wonderful.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-13 07:38 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

...You can't beat Blu-Tack and a good blob of Super Glue 😊

Must admit, I have been wondering how some of you guys get them to sit on the end of sticks 😊

How do you get them to sit still while you dab their feet with super glue 🤔 😊 😊

(Sorry 😊)

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-May-13 08:38 PM GMT

Thanks for your kind comments.

"nfreem" wrote:

Must admit, I have been wondering how some of you guys get them to sit on the end of sticks. How do you get them to sit still while you dab their feet with super glue?

It is of course old Sussex magic past down through the generations from father to son – consequently I am not at liberty to spill the beans!

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

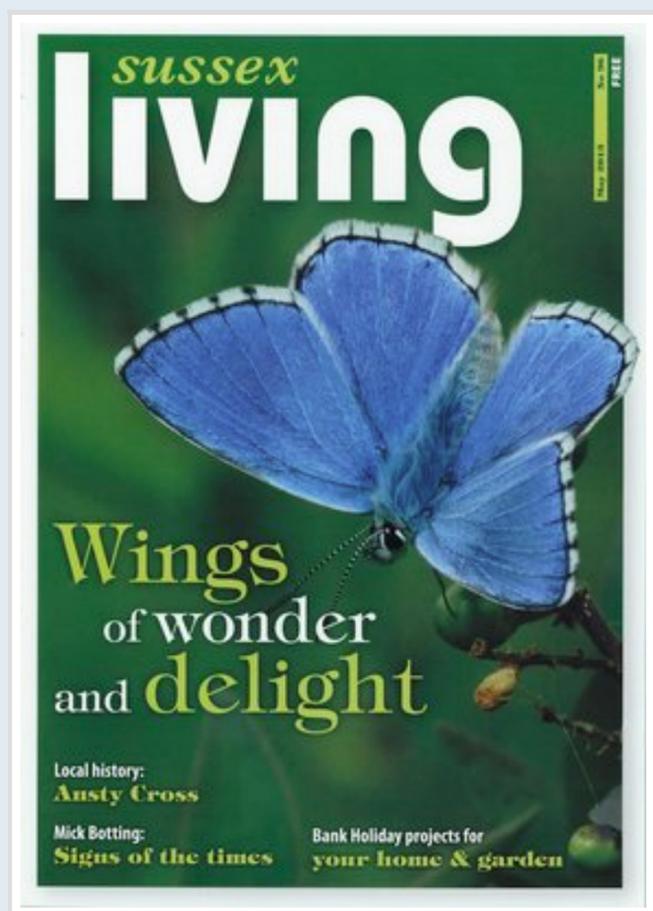
by Mark Colvin, 06-May-13 10:16 AM GMT

Dental Entomology

It's amazing what you find at the dentist.

Front cover AND six pages of images and text by Sussex's very own Michael Blencowe, Neil Hulme and Leigh Prevost.

Nice work ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 06-May-13 08:12 PM GMT

Ashpark Wood, 6 May 2013

Brimstone (revisited) ...

With good numbers of Brimstone currently around, I decided to pay them another visit today.

It wasn't until mid-afternoon that I finally got out, and stayed until around 6.30pm. During this time I watched numerous males and several females going about their daily business. I decided to concentrate my efforts solely on photographing the females; and was more than pleased with one which finally settled for a brief time on its larval food plant, Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*). A second, found much later in the day, kept going to rest and would then move on; undoubtedly having not found a suitable roost site.

Species seen:

Small Tortoiseshell
Peacock
Comma
Holly Blue
Large White
Brimstone
Orange Tip
Green-veined White



Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 06-May-13 10:26 PM GMT

Great photos Mark, well done.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-May-13 06:54 PM GMT

Thanks Nick.

I'm glad you like them ... 😊😊😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-May-13 11:49 PM GMT

Plaistow, West Sussex, 7 May 2013

An early start ...

Almost a year ago, I discovered a small colony of Grizzled Skipper within a short walking distance from my house. What I didn't realise until yesterday evening, was that the area where they occur also contains a reasonable quantity of Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*). Having seen several Orange Tip yesterday, I returned early this morning in the hope of finding one at roost.

A great start to the day ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Pawpawsaurus, 08-May-13 10:09 AM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

An early start ...

Yikes! It certainly was.

I've never been on-site before 7am, nor taken an Orange-tip photo approaching the quality of yours. There may well be a connection.

Wonderful stuff.

Paul

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-May-13 04:38 PM GMT

Hi Paul,

Thanks for your message; I'm glad you like the picture.

Early morning and evenings are a great time for photographing butterflies of many species. Catching them at roost in the early morning and, as they go down to roost late in the afternoon, often allows an approach and opportunities you just wouldn't get throughout the heat of the day. Sitting on a perfumed chalk downland with a meadow full of roosting Chalkhill Blues prior to sunrise, is an event, in my opinion, not to be missed by any butterfly or nature loving enthusiast. As the first rays of sun begin to warm the ground, the butterflies are slowly induced into activity and warm their wings prior to flight. You'd be hard pushed to get a better opportunity for some great shots.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 08-May-13 04:59 PM GMT

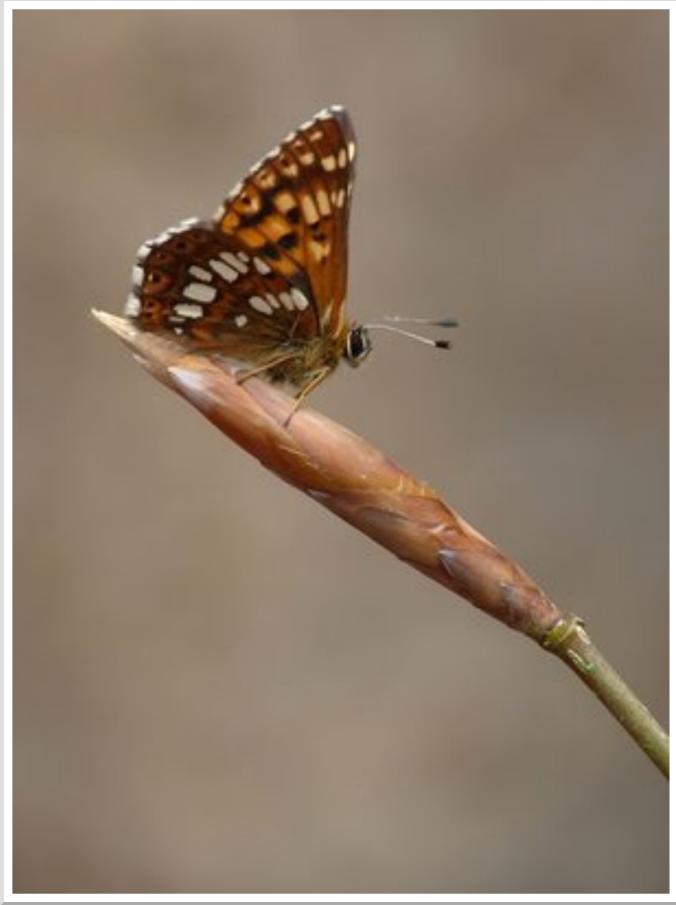
Heyshott Escarpment, 7-8 May 2013

The Duke emerges ...

The first Duke of Burgundy observed in Sussex during 2013, was recorded on Monday, 6th May at Heyshott Escarpment. After my early start yesterday morning, followed by a run down to Blandford Forum in Dorset for an 11am meeting, I headed back to West Sussex and more specifically Heyshott Escarpment. I didn't have a great deal of time on my hands but managed to record seven Dukes along with my first Dingy and Grizzled Skippers of the year. A problem with my camera frustratingly resulted in shots I wasn't happy with ...

Problem rectified, I popped back today.

Fingers crossed for a really great season ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 10-May-13 09:14 AM GMT

Norfolk Estate, Arundel, 9 May 2013

The Duke's Duke ...

To be fair, conditions today were really not very good for getting out and searching for butterflies; but I had the opportunity to do so and decided to head out nevertheless ...

I arrived on the Norfolk Estate at around 9.45am. Despite the strong wind continually gusting through the trees and the small clearing that was to be my destination, there were a few, more sheltered (though still windy) locations that provided some respite. Moving slowly through these areas I spotted a single female Speckled Wood; a pristine specimen and a bonus as I wasn't expecting to find much. As I slowly followed her, I suddenly noticed a small brown insect fly up from the undergrowth and immediately land several feet away. My concentration rapidly diverted from the Speckled Wood, as I immediately realized that it was a male Duke of Burgundy sheltering from the rather inclement conditions.

I knew that Neil was in nearby woodland as an earlier phone call from him announced that he had at last seen a Pearl-bordered Fritillary – the first appearing in Sussex on 16th April in 2012. After a quick phone call in return, Neil arrived. As he mentions in his diary, *“it wasn't keen on flying in the strong, cool breeze”* which gave Neil ample time to drive over and photograph the Duke for himself.

I'm glad I went out ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 10-May-13 08:08 PM GMT

Your photos lately have been simply superb, Mark!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 11-May-13 09:50 AM GMT

"Susie" wrote:

Your photos lately have been simply superb, Mark!

Seconded 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-May-13 07:54 PM GMT

Dear Susie and Pete.

Thank you.

That's really kind of you to say.

I genuinely appreciate your comments 😊😊😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 13-May-13 03:58 PM GMT

Chantry Hill and Chiddingfold Forest, 10–11 May 2013

Streaking ...

Despite conditions being far from perfect, I arrived at Chantry Hill at 11am on Friday and was joined shortly after by good friend Colin Knight. Our target today was the widespread, though local, Green Hairstreak; a butterfly which occurs in many environments including amongst the scrub encrusted slopes and valley bottom at this location. It didn't take too long for the first of around a dozen Hairstreaks to take to the wing; the windy conditions making it all but impossible to follow them as they were quickly blown out of sight. Determined not to be beaten, I headed to an isolated area within Chiddingfold Forest yesterday morning. It was a bit of a long shot, as although Green Hairstreaks occur there – I've seen two in the past two years – they only occur in low numbers. I decided to check out the area where I saw a tattered male late last season and couldn't believe my luck when a single male appeared.

He wasn't wearing his best suit but I was pleased ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-May-13 07:32 AM GMT

West Sussex, 16 May 2013 - Part 1

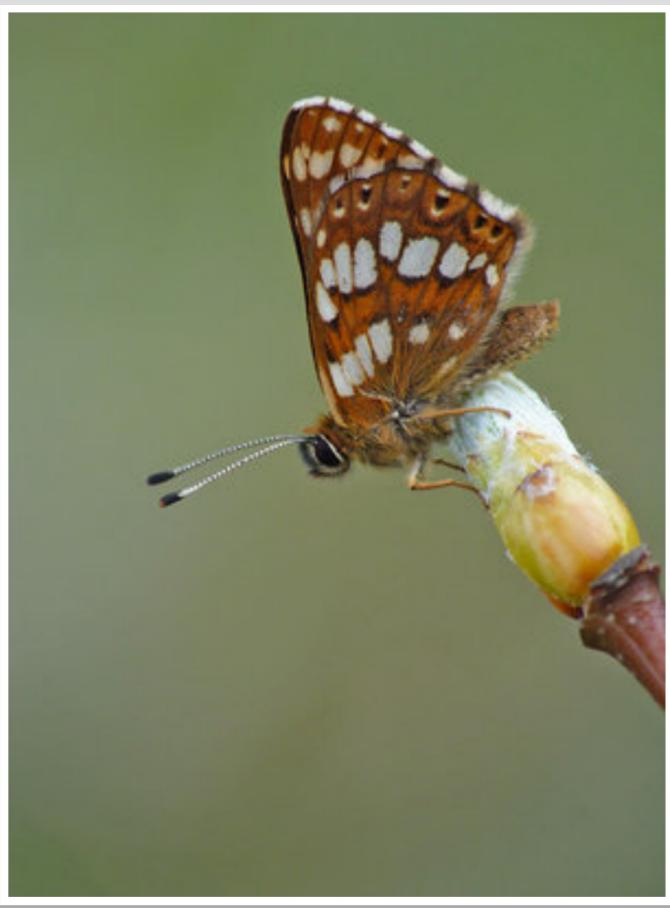
The Dukes of Heyshott ...

I was pleased to be joined by good friend Nick Broomer today as I headed for Heyshott Escarpment in advance of the open day this coming Saturday. I was keen to take note of the Duke's progress and wasn't disappointed by what I found. A conservative estimate produced twenty Dukes and a single Duchess, and these were counted on only a small part of the eastern reserve. Hopefully numbers will continue to grow and we will see the Duke expanding his range into recently managed areas. In addition to His Grace, small numbers of Dingy and Grizzled Skipper were also seen, along with several of the day flying Burnet Companion (*Euclidia glyphica*). I just hope the weather holds for our joint Sussex Butterfly Conservation / Murray Downland Trust event this coming Saturday.

Mission accomplished we then headed for private woodland in West Sussex.

More to follow ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-13 10:12 PM GMT

Nice Photos Mark, I particularly like the second Duke that looks like he is about to launch himself off his perch.

Cheers,

NeilF.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 17-May-13 10:13 PM GMT

West Sussex, 16 May 2013 - Part 2

Pearls ...

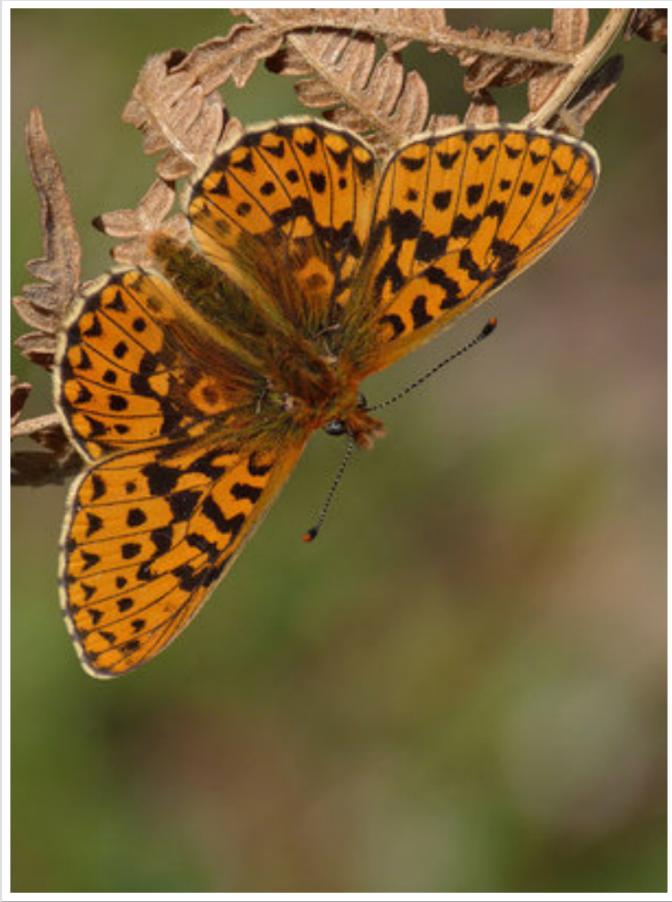


Leaving Heyshott at around 1pm we headed for private woodland in West Sussex. The site we were heading for holds a small, managed population of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. Several visits so far this season have proven unproductive; though today seemed somewhat different and I felt confident that luck would be on our side. The area where the Fritillary occurs is comprised of three small areas of mixed age sweet chestnut coppice, with a classic underlay of violets and bugle. An initial slow walk through produced nothing. Further attempts still proved unproductive; but we weren't beaten - well not quite. As Nick walked along the edge of the clearing whilst I concentrated on the coppice, a single, freshly emerged male appeared in the grass at Nick's feet; this was followed shortly after by a second individual in slow flight amongst the coppice. It is my opinion that we had hit the site at exactly the time of the first emergence this season.

These were the only two Pearl-bordered Fritillaries we saw and it proved a fitting end to what has to be one of my most memorable days out looking for butterflies - perfect weather, perfect company and two of the rarest butterflies in Sussex.

Species seen:

Green-veined White
Small White
Brimstone
Orange-tip
Peacock
Dingy Skipper
Grizzled Skipper
Duke of Burgundy
Pearl-bordered Fritillary



Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 18-May-13 01:12 PM GMT

Hi Mark,
great photos, and must rate as one of our best days out. Those P.B.F. were just brilliant, emerging half an hour after we arrived, what timing.
All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-May-13 07:28 PM GMT

Thanks, Nick.

The day was rather special.

Another Pearl from our outing below ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 18-May-13 07:41 PM GMT

Of all the excellent photos you've posted, Mark, that Pearl-bordered is my favourite – absolutely superb. The way the pearls have caught the light is really quite something, and the colour contrast just amazing. Good stuff!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 19-May-13 09:50 PM GMT

Heyshott Escarpment, 18 May 2013

Open day ...

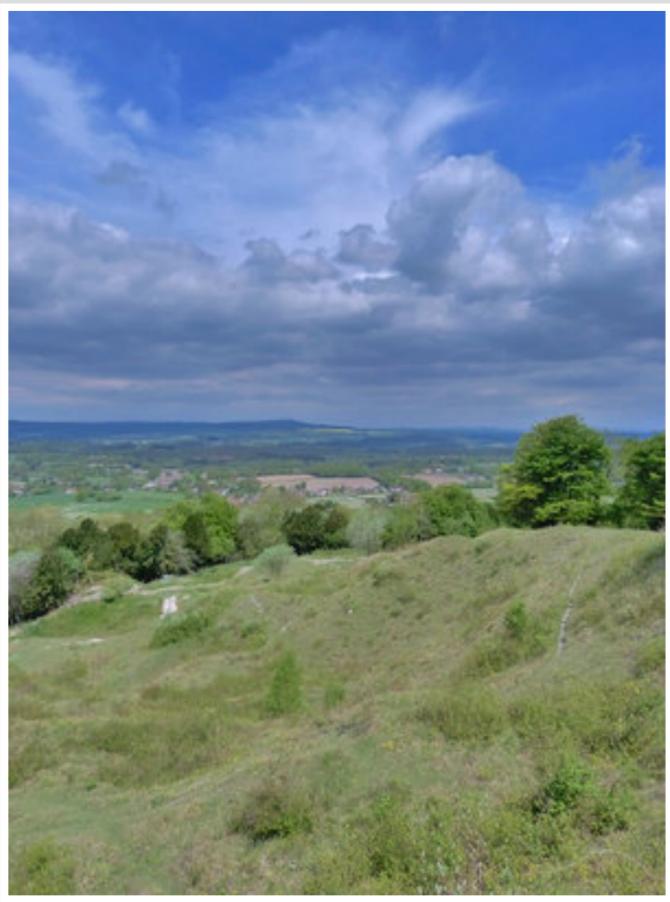
It is difficult not to feel rather possessive, and somewhat sensitive, about the wonderful chalk downland reserve and the inhabitants of Heyshott Escarpment. Being involved with the annual weekly winter conservation management programme, and also acting as a director and trustee of the Murray Downland Trust, it feels a bit like inviting unknown people into your home when there is anyone other than yourself on the reserve. It's not that I don't want people to visit the site, far from it, but I do prefer the solitude of my own or limited like-minded company.

Coinciding with the launch of Save Our Butterflies Week, yesterday saw the joint Sussex Butterfly Conservation / Murray Downland Trust open day on this beautiful reserve.

Informatively led by Neil Hulme (Sussex BC) and Mike Edwards (MDT), the event was attended by 37 people who hopefully enjoyed their visit as much as I always do. The weather was kind to us, and Heyshott provided the butterflies in good number. In addition to The Duke, whom of course was who everyone wished to see, the most exciting surprise of the day came in the appearance of two Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. The first, a male, was seen almost as soon as we entered the main reserve. I saw the same individual (confirmed by photographic evidence) later in the day at higher level. The most exciting occurrence however, had to be the sighting of a freshly emerged female on the lower reserve. It would certainly appear that these two individuals have both emerged on the site and one can only attribute this to the ongoing management works, undertaken in previous winters, having improved and created favourable conditions. The lower reserve certainly has a coppiced woodland appearance and holds a good ground covering of violets.

I can't help thinking that The Duke will be glad we have all gone.

I feel sure he's keeping a look out ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-May-13 10:49 PM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 20 May 2013

At rest ...

After a windy and overcast afternoon ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 20-May-13 10:54 PM GMT

I'm starting to get more than just a little envious Mark as you seem to be able to just pop out for the afternoon to such a fantastic site with such fantastic butterflies 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 21-May-13 04:23 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel.

Thanks for your message. There's no need to be envious, as I often look at the sites you visit and wish, if only ...

That said, I've just got back from another visit to Chiddingfold Forest and I have to agree, it is a rather special site 😊😊😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 21-May-13 07:19 PM GMT

Lovely photo of the Wood White Mark, in my opinion the best you have taken of this species, great find in such poor weather conditions.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 21-May-13 08:52 PM GMT

Wood Whites are always easier to approach in poor weather. I'd hate to have to photograph one in 25c heat and full sunshine (I've seen what they're like in the south of France and you may as well discount them as they never settle!)

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-May-13 10:27 PM GMT

Thanks, Nick.

Appreciated ...

David, I couldn't agree with you more ...

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-May-13 10:36 PM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 22–23 May 2013

Just friends ...

With conditions being almost perfect – despite the wind – for finding and photographing the delicate and charismatic Wood White, I headed into both Surrey and Sussex sectors of the Chiddingfold Forest complex yesterday and earlier today. My visit yesterday produced around a dozen individuals, roosting and settling amongst the verges as the sun disappeared, and showing a previously unnoticed preference for the Greater stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*) located along the edges of the woodland tracks. Today produced just three individuals, of which two were females, amidst more difficult conditions.

My favourite of numerous shots below ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Lee Hurrell, 23-May-13 11:06 PM GMT

Stunning photos, Mark. 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 23-May-13 11:26 PM GMT

Thanks, Lee.

Appreciated ...

Another from the session below ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 24-May-13 12:58 PM GMT

Hi Mark,
you've out done yourself with your last photo of a Wood White, brilliant.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Padfield, 24-May-13 05:01 PM GMT

What happened with your *betulae* eggs, Mark? How many hatched and how are they getting on?

Guy

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-May-13 06:01 PM GMT

Thanks, Nick.

Appreciated 😊😊😊

It was only achieved with your help and advice ...

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-May-13 06:14 PM GMT

Now that's a good question, Guy ...

"padfield" wrote:

What happened with your *betulae* eggs, Mark? How many hatched and how are they getting on?

They haven't hatched yet; at least not as of last night?

They certainly appear to look OK and show no obvious sign of infection/predation, and, when viewed through an eyepiece, they look as intact as the day they were laid. I'm hoping they are just running late like everything else.

I'm pleased to see that your cat is alive and well and look forward to following its progress.

Fingers crossed ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-May-13 07:51 PM GMT

West Sussex, 22 May 2013

Before heading out after more exotic quarry.

A female Speckled Wood at rest ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 25-May-13 09:39 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

You have been posting some beautiful images lately but that Speckled Wood is outstanding 😊

You have probably noticed from my postings that I have a soft spot for Speckled Woods (and Green-veined Whites and blah blah blah... 😊) and your photo is amongst the best I have seen.

Keep it up,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-May-13 03:57 PM GMT

Hi Neil.

Thanks for your very kind comments 😊😊😊

"nfreem" wrote:

You have probably noticed from my postings that I have a soft spot for Speckled Woods.

You'd better have the upperside then ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark



Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-13 10:05 PM GMT

Thank you Mark, especially for me, what can I say... 😊😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Mark Colvin

by essexbuzzard, 28-May-13 11:09 PM GMT

Wow,these are fantastic images,Mark! I still have much to learn...

Re: Mark Colvin

by Goldie M, 29-May-13 09:00 PM GMT

Hi! Mark, your photo's of the PBF are great, I've not been on my computer much lately ,but to come on and find all these great photo's is a real treat 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 30-May-13 08:55 PM GMT

Thank you both.

I really appreciate your comments 😊😊😊

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 30-May-13 09:01 PM GMT

Springhead Hill, 29 May 2013

Small is beautiful ...

To say that I got rather wet yesterday would be an understatement. After a prearranged visit to the 65 acre Arundel Wetland Centre, to commence a survey to determine the habitats and butterfly species present, I headed, with the clouds now darkening in the sky, to one of my favourite locations – the beautiful Springhead Hill. Fortunately, I knew where the Small Blue were likely to be resting prior to the imminent storm, and I was lucky to find two individuals and get a few quick shots before the deluge occurred.

I'll choose better weather next time ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Jun-13 06:09 PM GMT

Springhead Hill, 1 June 2013

Beauty in miniature ...

After much of the day's heat had passed, I paid a brief visit to the beautiful Springhead Hill, with the sole aim of capturing the tiny and charismatic Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*) at roost. I was pleased to be joined by good friend Nick Broomer. When we arrived at around 5pm insects were still on the wing, though it wasn't long before the first of a number of Small Blue were found roosting, as is generally customary at this location, amongst grass tussocks in sheltered areas.

The first image shows a male. The second and third images are both females.

With the light fading we said goodbye ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by nomad, 02-Jun-13 07:05 PM GMT

Superb images of the lovely Small Blue. Peter.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Willow, 02-Jun-13 09:15 PM GMT

Simply delightful Mark!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-13 11:04 PM GMT

Lovely shots of a lovely little gem Mark 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Jun-13 05:39 PM GMT

Dear Peter, Bill and Wurzel.

Just to say a very BIG thank you for your very kind comments 😊😊😊

I hope the pictures gave you as much pleasure as I got from taking them.

Thanks ...

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Jun-13 07:58 PM GMT

West Sussex, 3 June 2013

An early evening stroll.

And I almost didn't take my camera ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 03-Jun-13 08:54 PM GMT

Mark, I'd be very surprised if you went **anywhere** at this time of year without your camera.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 03-Jun-13 09:00 PM GMT

Another lovely photo Mark, the ball of light behind the subject really works well.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-13 09:02 PM GMT

lovely image of a beautifully marked Dingy Skipper Mark 😊

"..almost didn't take my camera".....I can only imagine it was a momentary lapse, not to be repeated 😊

All the best

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Jun-13 03:59 PM GMT

Thank you.

Your comments are appreciated 😊😊😊

"nfreem" wrote:

I can only imagine it was a momentary lapse, not to be repeated.

It won't happen again ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-Jun-13 05:15 PM GMT

West Sussex, 6 June 2013

Before work ...

A male Grizzled Skipper at roost ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by nomad, 07-Jun-13 06:06 PM GMT

Mark, really lovely shots of Skippers. The background really allows the full detail of the butterfly to be shown. The shot of the Dingy is one of the best that I have seen, a perfect capture. Your images certainly help to brighten up ones day after a hard days work. Peter.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-Jun-13 10:11 PM GMT

Thanks, Peter.

That's really kind of you to say 😊😊😊

I don't find Skippers the easiest of subjects – but I like a challenge. The female Dingy is my favourite.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 07-Jun-13 10:17 PM GMT

Your photos are really spectacular, Mark. They imply a great deal of patience and forethought (not to mention 'bushcraft').

What equipment are you using? You make it all seem so easy.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 07-Jun-13 10:59 PM GMT

Hi David.

Thank you for your kind comments 😊😊😊

Thanks to Neil's original recommendation, I just use a Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ45 bridge camera with the dedicated close-up lens (DMW-LC55) and adaptor (DMW-LA5). The camera has its own macro setting but I don't use it. I really like the Lumix as it is light, easy to use, and most importantly produces the type of images that I favour. Bushcraft and patience are obviously very important and I certainly feel that being an entomologist in the first instance provides me with a better understanding of what I set out to photograph. I do possess a Canon 7D and all the extras to go with it, as a future project is to undertake some detailed entomological macro photography – I just have to learn how to use it all.

To date, all my butterfly pictures on UKB were taken with the Lumix.

I know Neil wouldn't swap his and I certainly won't be swapping mine ...

Hope that helps.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 09-Jun-13 02:49 PM GMT

West Sussex, 9 June 2013

A welcome return ...

The not so common Common Blue of last season, appears, at least locally, to be making a comeback this season. Most of my local sites seem to be showing a small, though important population increase over last year. Looking at reports from further afield, this trend appears to be occurring elsewhere.

Long may this continue ...

Undoubtedly one of my favourite species ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 09-Jun-13 04:51 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

I do possess a Canon 7D and all the extras to go with it

Wot 🤔 Including the Canon EF 200-400mm f4 L IS USM? – a snip at only £12,000 🤖

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 09-Jun-13 05:08 PM GMT

Well not all the extras ...

Though knowing your interest in photography Mike, you'd probably need a lie down and a stiff drink if I listed them all 😊

I couldn't do that to you, so I won't 😊😊😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 09-Jun-13 07:25 PM GMT

Thanks, Mark. I expect I would find your macro gear over-exciting 😊

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by greenanrol, 09-Jun-13 11:16 PM GMT

Just looking through your pictures today – absolutely brilliant. Thanks for sharing them with us.

Do you play around with the white balance on pics or do you use the camera supplied settings?

I also have the FZ 45 but my pics are nowhere near the same true colour as yours! Any tips ?

Greenanrol

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 10-Jun-13 08:41 PM GMT

Hi Greenarol.

Thank you for your kind comments 😊😊😊

You don't mention whether you use your FZ45 with the dedicated close-up lens (DMW-LC55) and adaptor (DMW-LA5)? Without these items I wouldn't get the same close-up results and neither will you. I like to keep things as simple as possible with regards to camera settings. I shoot Aperture Priority 100% of the time and tend to generally shoot between f4 and f6.3. In relation to your question about White Balance, I shoot AWB. I normally stop down on the Exposure by either a third or two thirds, though this does vary and can be more depending on the colour of the subject and ambient light conditions.

I hope this helps.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 10-Jun-13 09:35 PM GMT

World Oceans Day, 8 June 2013

An important message ...

In June 1992, over 150 Heads of States signed the Convention on Biological Diversity at Rio de Janeiro. They did so to express a shared belief that action must be taken to halt the worldwide loss of animal and plant species and genetic resources. World Oceans Day was first declared as 8th June at the Earth Summit. Today, the 8th June, I attended the annual Adur World Oceans Day environmental exhibition in Shoreham, West Sussex. The exhibition, along with others around the world, is held as an important reminder of the environmental commitments made at the Summit. At today's event, I joined up with Colin Knight, and my daughter Charlotte, to man a stand on behalf of **Sussex Butterfly Conservation**. Colin had done an outstanding job in both organizing and preparing an excellent display; and also setting up the stand before I arrived. The excellent weather ensured a really good turnout with many people stopping at our exhibit, especially children. This was extremely gratifying as we are keen to promote butterflies and moths to the younger generation in order for them to continue the important conservation work we are so passionate about. In addition to our own stand, there were exhibits by the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Friends of Shoreham Beach, with their important message that 'Beach Litter Kills Wildlife', Widewater Lagoon LNR, Southwick Camera Club and my favourite, Steve Savage's marine conservation exhibit featuring the **Adventures of Ed the Bear**, which puts across an extremely important environmental message. I urge you to visit Ed's blog:

<http://adventuresofedthebear.blogspot.co.uk>



In addition to the environmental exhibitors we shared the marquee with local food and drink producers. Sussex band, Rough Chowder, playing to a backdrop of the River Adur, presented a lively repertoire of traditional and revamped Cajun, Zydeco and Swamp Blues with a heady mix of rockabilly thrown in for good measure. I personally judged the event to be a great success and one to which I would definitely return.

A selection of future BC members below ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-13 09:54 PM GMT

Good stuff Mark. It's great to see the rewards of the hard work that you and Colin put in. It's always difficult to get people to represent us at these events, so it makes a welcome change to see a well presented BC Sussex stall. Nice to see Charlotte helping out too.
BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 11-Jun-13 09:03 AM GMT

Thanks, Neil.

It was a very rewarding day ...

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 12-Jun-13 01:27 PM GMT

West Sussex, 10 June 2013

Topping up the tan.

A male Grizzly takes in the afternoon sun ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jun-13 07:56 PM GMT

West Sussex, 24 June 2013

Family commitments ...

For various reasons that I will not bore you with, I have been rather quiet recently on the personal diary front. This is likely to continue for some time though, rest assured, I will still be popping in from time to time.

In addition to my own, I have been keeping a very close eye on two other families. My visit to West Sussex heathland earlier this morning was made all the more enjoyable as I observed, at close quarters, four Common Redstarts fledging from their nest. The nest, which I originally found due to the alarm call of the adult birds, was located in a deep fissure in a mature silver birch. I watched enchanted as the youngsters took their first steps beyond the relative safety of their fortress home for the past four weeks. In addition, whilst looking for roosting Silver-studded Blues several weeks ago, I discovered the camouflaged nest of a pair of Woodlarks. The three eggs that were present then have now developed into three hungry youngsters, still without any real feathering, but developing well nonetheless. It is unlikely that I will catch them leaving the shelter of their current home but feel privileged to have had this encounter.

Can it get better ...

I left as the sun began to emerge ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-13 10:34 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the Silver Stud Mark 🦋 How long have they been out over your way as you mention "several weeks ago"?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jun-13 11:13 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel.

The first SSBs in Sussex were seen on 19th June this year; nine days later than last season. I've been looking since around the 10th.

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-Jun-13 04:56 PM GMT

Bernwood Meadows, 27 June 2013

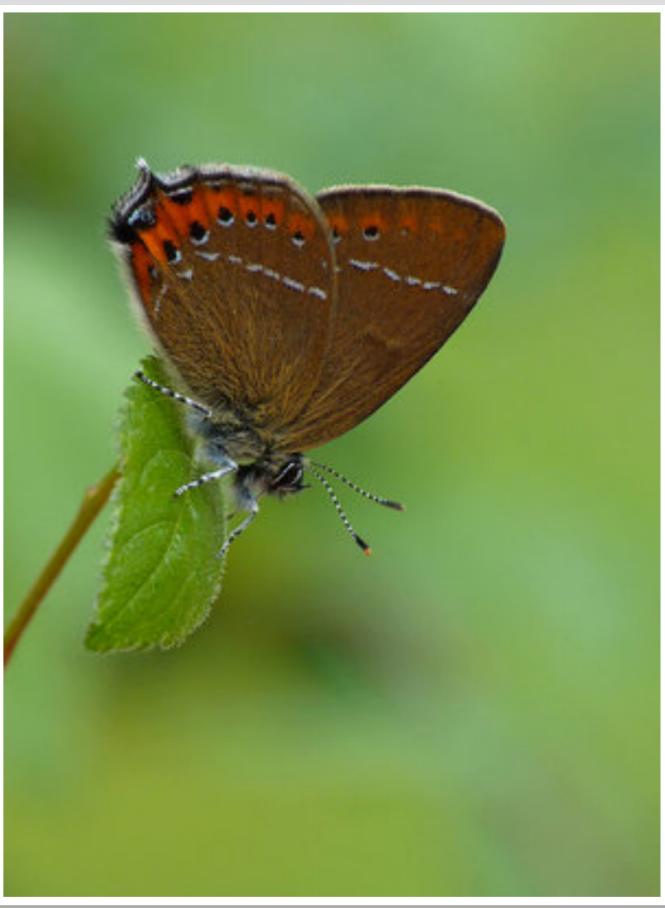
Black magic ...

A short notice business meeting in Buckinghamshire, found me temptingly close to Black Hairstreak territory earlier today. With the first UK sightings of the 2013 season being reported on 21st June, I had to take a quick look.

For those who have never visited, Bernwood Meadows, located close to the city of Oxford and managed by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, "*are a rare survival from yesteryear - traditional hay meadows brimming with wild flowers and insects.*" The best time to visit is from April to July when the meadows are filled with a succession of beautiful wild flowers. It is typically the last two weeks of June and the first week of July when the rare and elusive Black Hairstreak may be seen.

The quick look today turned into an epic search, incorporating a lot of neck ache, but in the end I got lucky, when a single male, one of three (possibly four) individuals sighted, came low enough in near perfect conditions for several pictures. This was only the second time I have seen this species in the wild, the first in southern France many years ago.

An experience not to be forgotten ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 27-Jun-13 05:52 PM GMT

Very nice Mark – good find!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-13 05:53 PM GMT

Hi Mark,
Congratulations on your first UK Black Hairstreak. Simply brilliant!
Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 27-Jun-13 06:13 PM GMT

Well done Mark 🍀, an absolutely classic male! (not you, the butterfly.....).
Could you add it to the Species-Specific Album please.

Many thanks,
Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jun-13 08:43 PM GMT

Great stuff Mark,

That is a beautiful photo of a species that I have yet to see 🍀

Cheers

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 27-Jun-13 10:11 PM GMT

Well done Mark, beautiful photo.

All the best, Nick.

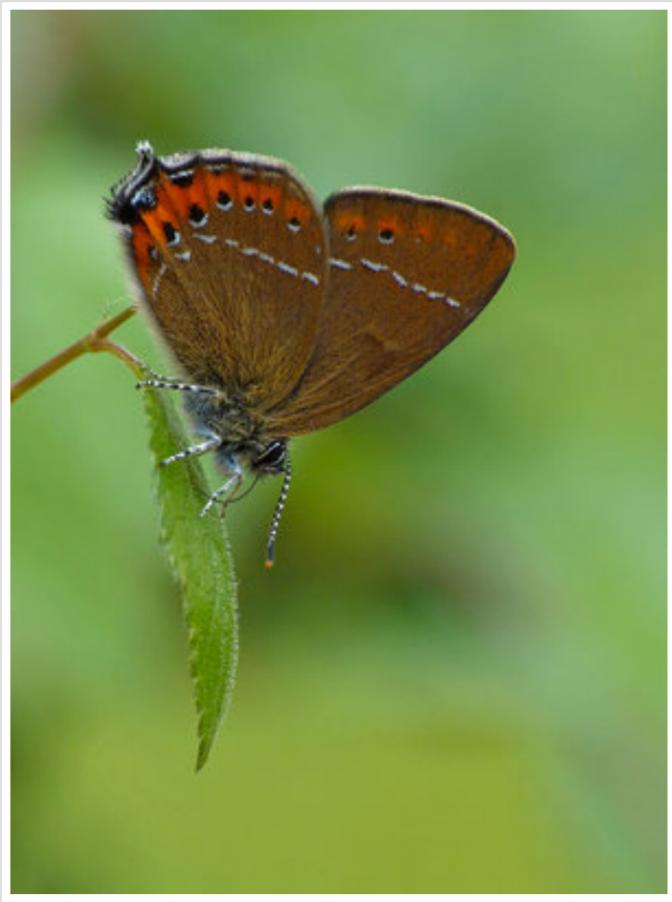
Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 27-Jun-13 10:55 PM GMT

Thank you.

I really appreciate all your comments 😊😊😊

The same male feeding ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by CJB, 28-Jun-13 08:34 AM GMT

Wow, Mark, what a great picture and what a great butterfly!

I am on my quest to photograph all the UK species on my mobile and the hairstreaks are my nemeses!

I am up to 42 species and am hoping to get some of the Scottish specialities at the end of this month.

It would be amazing to get a BHS.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Jun-13 05:54 PM GMT

Thanks, CJB.

Appreciated 😊😊😊

I know what you mean about Hairstreaks as they can seem a little elusive. Providing you are in the right location at the right time, I don't think you'll have too much trouble, at least not with the Brown Hairstreak. The White-letter and Black should also not be too difficult providing you are on a good site with a healthy population and put in the time; providing they come down from their arboreal homes of course. My nemesis is the Purple and that may require some dark arts to get the shot ...

Wishing you every success with your quest.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 28-Jun-13 05:57 PM GMT

Stedham and Iping Commons, 28 June 2013

At rest ...

A quick visit between showers ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Maximus, 28-Jun-13 06:52 PM GMT

Hi Mark, just catching up on your diary, your Black Hairstreak is an absolute stunner, superb stuff, great photo!!

Regards

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 29-Jun-13 12:53 AM GMT

Thanks, Mike.

I really appreciate your comments 😊😊😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 15-Jul-13 09:02 PM GMT

West Sussex, 15 July 2013

Back to normality ...

Since the end of June I have been in southern Florida on a family holiday. When possible, I searched several small areas of the vast Everglades National Park (1,508,538 acres, 610,484 ha) for its various exotica – some more friendly than others; and also managed to cast a line into the crystal clear blue waters of the Keys (more to follow if and when I have time). I was still keeping a close eye on events back home and have been wondering how I managed to book this trip at the same time when everything started emerging back home during the current heatwave (well I know why really, as it was the only time my wife could get two weeks off work). It hopefully won't happen again; though I did earn lots of brownie points ...

A quick therapeutic walk around my local patch this evening produced my first Essex Skippers of the season (a male pictured below).

It's good to be back ...

Now for some catching up ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-13 10:17 PM GMT

Lovely Essex Mark 😊 I reckon you might have timed it just right to still find everything as it's all happened at once.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Jul-13 12:30 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel.

Fingers crossed ...

If my visit to Chiddingfold Forest yesterday was anything to go by then I'm on to a winner 😊😊😊

More to follow ...

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 18-Jul-13 09:37 PM GMT

Chiddingfold Forest, 17 July 2013

Seeing purple ...

An early start was the order of the day yesterday and this produced the results with repeated groundings throughout the morning. I managed to photograph at least five grounded Emperors and an impressive pristine Empress; found mud-puddling in one of few areas of sheltered damp ground. I estimate that I saw at least twenty individual butterflies; though aerial sightings throughout the day were considerably more ...

A great day in excellent company – Chiddingfold Forest is certainly performing well this year.

A few favourites below ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Padfield, 18-Jul-13 09:41 PM GMT

That is a fantastic empress, Mark! Very impressed. I rarely see them coming to ground so early in the season.

Guy

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 18-Jul-13 09:47 PM GMT

Great photos, Mark. What time would you recommend getting to the woods by?

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 18-Jul-13 09:50 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Glad you got back in time to see and photograph this beautiful butterfly, well done for finding a female, excellent photos, especially the queen.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-13 10:42 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Mark- I knew you'd catch up right away 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Hulme, 18-Jul-13 10:52 PM GMT

Congratulations Mark ... that Empress shot is brilliant. The females are usually very difficult to approach when they descend for moisture, as they don't become engrossed in the way males do when in search for minerals. A rare opportunity well taken! 😊

BWs, Neil

Re: Mark Colvin

by Maximus, 18-Jul-13 10:54 PM GMT

Nice one Mark!

All the best,

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 18-Jul-13 10:56 PM GMT

Superb shot of the female *iris*, Mark! 🍷

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Jul-13 08:16 AM GMT

Thank you.

Your comments are really appreciated 😊 😊 😊

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 30-Jul-13 09:56 PM GMT

Surrey Downland, 30 July 2013

Precious metals ...

The beautiful Silver-spotted Skipper ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 31-Jul-13 09:28 AM GMT

3 Brilliant photos Mark, excellent work.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Willow, 31-Jul-13 12:27 PM GMT

Yes indeed, three superb images, I just hope my search for **Silver-spotted Skipper** at Fontmell Down, Doseet tomorrow is even half as productive, very well done Mark 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 31-Jul-13 07:53 PM GMT

Thank you both.

I really appreciate your comments ...

I hope you get lucky tomorrow Bill. I'd suggest a very early start ...

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 31-Jul-13 08:49 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Superb Silver-spotted Skipper photos 😊

I am hoping to get down to Aston Rowant this week to see some, probably Friday now.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Aug-13 06:36 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil.

Good luck on Friday ...

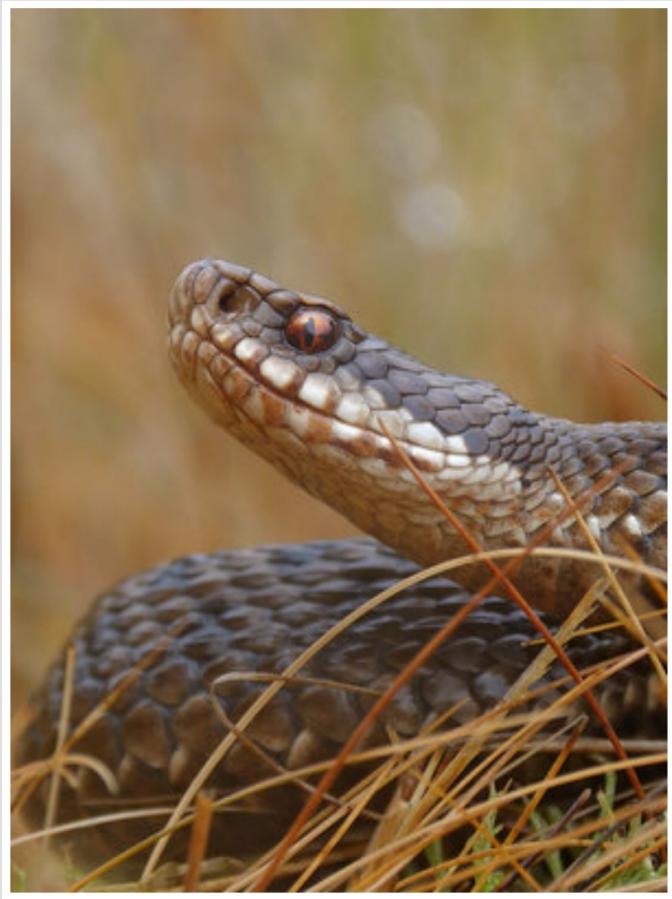
Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 01-Aug-13 06:37 PM GMT

Pirbright Common, 30 July 2013

Close encounters ...

How I didn't get bitten I'll never know ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 01-Aug-13 07:37 PM GMT

Great image, Mark.

That critter sure looks mean.

Re: Mark Colvin

by millerd, 01-Aug-13 09:42 PM GMT

Beautiful photo. I had no idea they had those evil deep orange eyes!

Dave

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Aug-13 07:25 AM GMT

Thanks for your kind comments.

Appreciated ...

I must say, despite her beauty, she did look rather evil when I was lying down face to face with her; it's definitely the eyes and that grin. To be honest though, it was her two friends I was worried about as they had slithered off into the undergrowth close to where I was lying down ...

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Aug-13 12:55 PM GMT

Surrey Downland, 30-31 July 2013

Simply wonderful ...

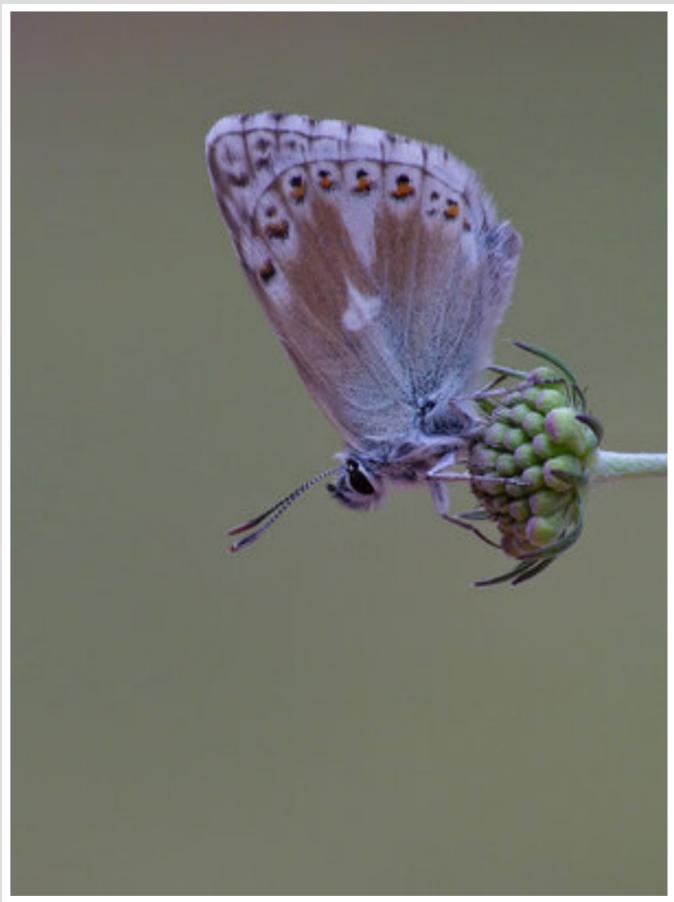
Although I am born and bred in West Sussex, I live very close to both the Surrey and Hampshire county borders; so the occasional venture into foreign territory is often inevitable.

The natives seem quite friendly ...

I recently spent two days searching several areas of chalk grassland on the beautiful Surrey downland, with good friend Nick Broomer; our targets, the beautiful Silver-spotted Skipper and the enchanting Chalkhill Blue. We were not to be disappointed on either count. Although Tuesday was accompanied by persistent rain for much of the day, an early morning arrival provided ideal conditions for searching the grassland for roosting butterflies and photographic opportunities; we were not disappointed and found many hundreds, probably thousands, of roosting Chalkhill Blues over much of the hill. This included a number of nice aberrant specimens including those pictured in the first two images below, referable to *ab. postcaeca*, Bright & Leeds

(1938). The third image shows a particularly well-marked male which we observed from shortly after emergence until its first flight. Wednesday started warm, and by midday large numbers of insects were on the wing. As the sun pushed through the clouds the numbers of Chalkhill Blues increased and we were privileged to witness a magnificent display as the air and ground around us turned blue as if cover in tiny sapphires. It is difficult to estimate actual numbers, though if I were pressed to do so, there were certainly many thousands and probably many tens of thousands on the wing; possibly many more. Although I didn't witness the peak of the Sussex Chalkhill Blue explosion last year, Wednesday's display was an event to remember ...

A privilege to have shared with a good friend ...





Re: Mark Colvin

by Maximus, 02-Aug-13 02:49 PM GMT

Hi Mark, thats a superb study of an Adder you have there. I tried to get a photo of one recently but missed it due to a clumsy approach, and the snake slipped quickly away into some gorse! The Chalkhill Blues are very nice too.

Regards,

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Aug-13 08:28 PM GMT

Thanks, Mike.

I'm particularly pleased you like the Adder; I've been after a shot like that for a while ...

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 02-Aug-13 08:34 PM GMT

Surrey Downland, 31 July 2013

Lady in waiting ...

Before the heat of the day ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Nigel Kiteley, 02-Aug-13 08:36 PM GMT

Hi Mark

Those Chalkhill Blue images are stunning, as is the Adder!

Just seen the Silver Spotted Skipper, you must have uploaded it whilst i was typing, what a cracker!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Susie, 02-Aug-13 08:51 PM GMT

Your photos are alway excellent Mark but I particularly enjoyed looking at the chalkhills 😊

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-13 10:24 PM GMT

I was going to say how good I thought the first set of Silver Spot shots were and then I scrolled down to the last posting and it's even better – brill 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-13 11:03 PM GMT

Some more great images there Mark but I really like that Adder portrait. There is real character in its expression, almost Disneyesque in its evil leer 😊

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 03-Aug-13 05:48 PM GMT

Thank you.

All of your kind comments are genuinely much appreciated 😊 😊 😊

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 04-Aug-13 07:16 PM GMT

4 August 2013

Chasing clouds ...

A female Clouded Yellow takes rest ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Maximus, 04-Aug-13 07:49 PM GMT

Nice colour contrast Mark, a very nice photo indeed, super stuff.

Best Regards,

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 04-Aug-13 09:36 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

It must be two years now since you took up photographing butterflies. Well you have certainly come a long way in that time, and have an excellent eye for a great photo. All the photos on this page are super but, that Clouded Yellow is out of this world, great composition. 😊😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Pauline, 04-Aug-13 09:44 PM GMT

Hi Mark

I am wondering why the EXIF data on your photos seems to have been removed as us novices can learn a lot from stuff like that? Perhaps I am doing something wrong at this end.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-13 09:49 PM GMT

Stunning shot Mark 🍷 I'm in West Wales and it's been raining all day and seeing that particular shot isn't making it any easier or less frustrating 😡😡

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Aug-13 07:17 AM GMT

Dear Mike, Nick and Wurzel,

Thank you for your very kind comments 😊😊😊

They are genuinely much appreciated ...

"Pauline" wrote:

I am wondering why the EXIF data on your photos seems to have been removed as us novices can learn a lot from stuff like that?

I have deliberately not included the EXIF data as I have absolutely no interest in it myself. My passion is the wildlife, particularly entomological subjects, hence the reason I post my pictures on both UKB and my own personal blog as opposed to a dedicated photographic based website. Don't get me wrong, I like to take nice pictures but that's as far as it goes. I still continue to use my Lumix if you were wondering ...

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Pete Eeles, 05-Aug-13 12:46 PM GMT

Hi all - I've just grabbed the EXIF data from one of Mark's earlier posts:

ISO Speed Ratings = AUTO
Original Date/Time = today
Aperture Value (APEX) = AUTO
Exposure Time (1 / Shutter Speed) = AUTO
Shutter Speed (Exposure Time) = AUTO
Exposure Bias (EV) = AUTO
Metering Mode = AUTO
Flash = AUTO
White Balance = AUTO
Field Craft = Impeccable

Excellent pics Mark 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 05-Aug-13 06:05 PM GMT

Thanks, Pete.

There's obviously something very wrong with my camera settings ... 😂😂😂

Re: Mark Colvin

by MikeOxon, 20-Aug-13 06:17 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

I have deliberately not included the EXIF data as I have absolutely no interest in it myself.

As you know Mark, I came from the opposite direction, as a photo fan! Looking at your pics, I feel you have become much more expert at photography than I have at entomology 😊

Mike

Re: Mark Colvin

by Pauline, 20-Aug-13 06:29 PM GMT

First you see it, then you don't! 😂😂 What happened to your last pic Mark? It appeared, then re-appeared with a different date - and now it's gone completely 😞 Perhaps I just imagined it 😂😂

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Aug-13 08:03 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

That's very kind of you, thank you, though I'm sure this is not true ...

"MikeOxon" wrote:

As you know Mark, I came from the opposite direction, as a photo fan! Looking at your pics, I feel you have become much more expert at photography than I have at entomology

Thanks again.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 20-Aug-13 08:20 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

"Pauline" wrote:

First you see it, then you don't! What happened to your last pic Mark? It appeared, then re-appeared with a different date – and now it's gone completely. Perhaps I just imagined it.

No, you weren't seeing things. I did post it twice, having entered the wrong date the first time. I then decided I didn't want to post the picture.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Aug-13 05:29 PM GMT

West Sussex, 23 August 2013

Weather warning ...

"Outbreaks of rain affecting parts of England and northeast Wales during Saturday are likely to be heavy in places, with risk of torrential downpours, lightning and local accumulations in excess of 40mm within just a few hours. The highest probability of heavy rain is considered to be towards the east and southeast of England. The public should be aware of possible localized surface water flooding where this occurs, as well as some disruption in general to summer outdoor activities"

They weren't wrong ...

Clouds continue to build locally ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 24-Aug-13 10:07 PM GMT

Long-tailed Blue

Newhaven, East Sussex

Ovum, shortly after emergence, on *Lathyrus latifolius*.

Some late season adults would be rather nice ...



Re: Mark Colvin

by David M, 24-Aug-13 10:23 PM GMT

This all augurs well, Mark.

After a dismal several years, might we get all our Christmas presents at once?

Once again, the Met Office long range forecast is predicting decent to favourable conditions into the second half of September.

If it lasts till the end of that month, then we could all be witness to a once in a generation event!

Re: Mark Colvin

by Nick Broomer, 24-Aug-13 10:42 PM GMT

Great find Mark, 😊 good work.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Mark Colvin

by Vince Massimo, 24-Aug-13 10:47 PM GMT

Well done Mark, I think it's going to be one of those years 😊
Could you add the image to the Species-Specific Album please.

Regards,
Vince

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 25-Aug-13 09:19 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments.

Much appreciated ...

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Mark Colvin

by Mark Colvin, 31-Aug-13 08:18 AM GMT

Friday, 30 August 2013

Learning curve ...

1st and 2nd instar *iris* larvae ...

