

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 05-Jan-13 01:49 PM GMT

It was only last week that I took up Gardening and it has already opened my eyes to some of the things that are going on there, things I would almost certainly have missed. For example, an early sign of Spring: Yesterday I found a Primrose had come into flower by the garden path



And this morning I found this curious specimen had reared its head out of the mud



(I believe it's a Cuckoo Pint)

The Red Clover that I bought is definitely beginning to grow



And so too the Garlic Mustard and Sorrel



All of which is very exciting as the butterflies will not be far behind.

I think I mentioned that buying plants has now become a bit of an addiction for me, so Susie and Essexbuzzard, it was impossible for me to resist ordering the Vebena and Erysium. You guys don't have shares in a certain Garden Centre, by any chance..?!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 05-Jan-13 02:46 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

an early sign of Spring: Yesterday I found a Primrose had come into flower by the garden path!

Just seen one in flower myself today, Hoggers.

I went looking at properties at Langrove on the Gower peninsula and there were two primroses flowering in the shelter by the car park.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-Jan-13 02:35 PM GMT

These days an early finish at work for me means another visit to the Garden Centre with further dents in my credit card. I have come to relish the whole process, from reading about plants that are suitable for a butterfly garden, looking them up on the internet, planning where they might be happy in my garden and finally rooting around the nursery with its lovely damp, peaty smells, until I find the plant I'm after. It's great fun.

Here is an ensemble photograph of my collection so far



Today I added a couple of *Buddleia weyeriana* (Sungold) which has gorgeous golden flowers rather than the usual purple and a *Viburnum bodnantense*. I bought this because I was thinking about Red Admirals and Co and it flowers late into the Autumn.

Also Hebe



Ice Plant (I bought *Sedum spectabile* as I read that some types do not produce nectar)



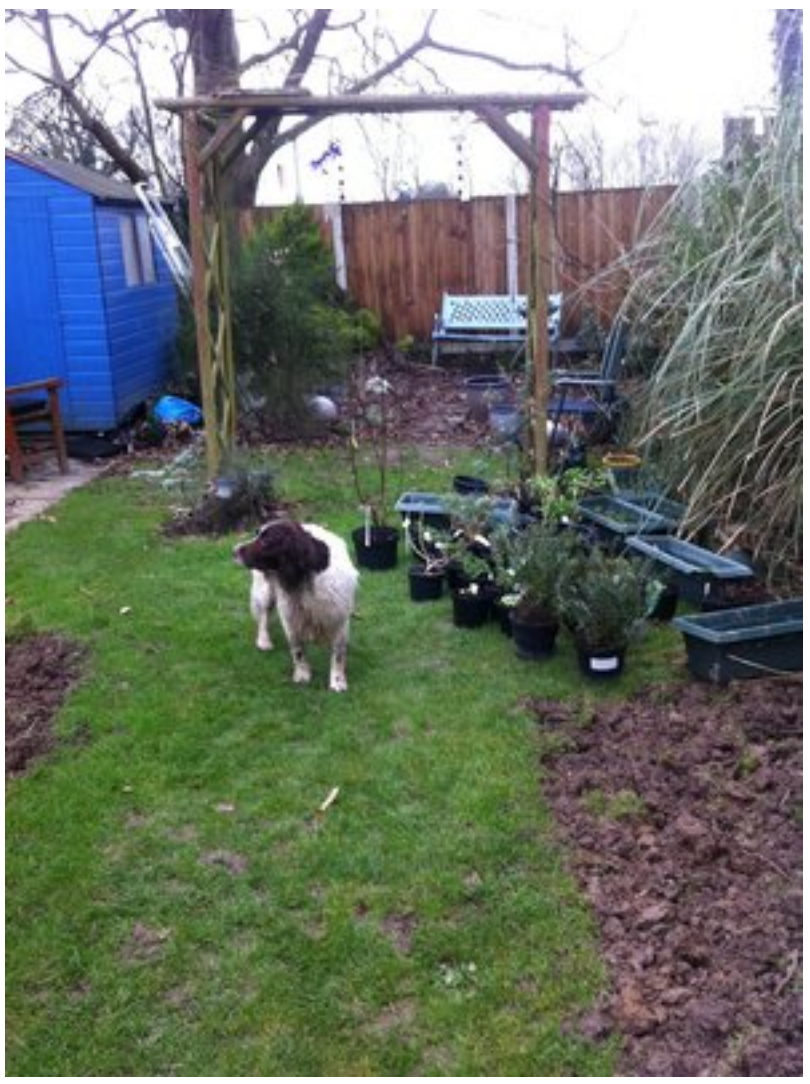
I followed Susie's recommendation and got some *Viburnum*



And also Essexbuzzard's suggestion to buy Erysium



I will be getting some Marjoram, Lavender and Yarrow. Not all of these will fit comfortably in the flowerbeds that I created after Christmas but I've plenty of room around the garden to accommodate them (I hope..)



I said that buying plants is fun and of course, it is. But best of is dreaming about how they will look come Summer.

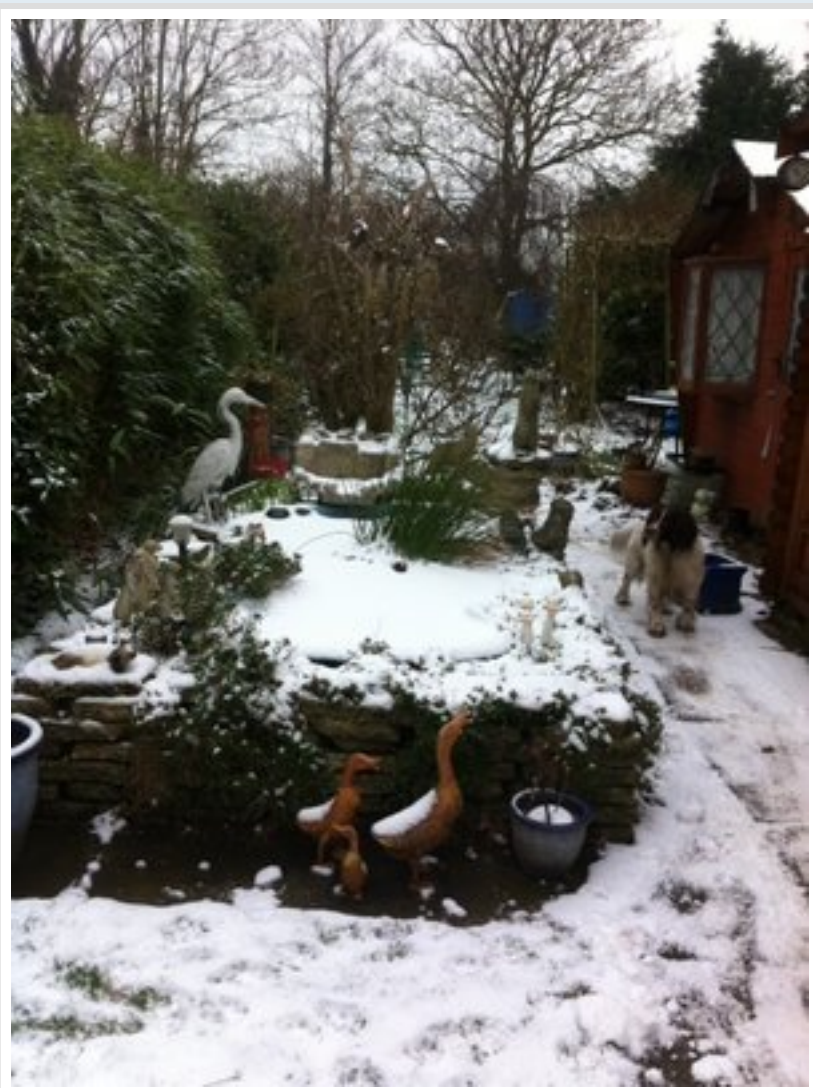
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Jan-13 04:22 PM GMT

In July when I'm sitting in my garden sipping Pimm's, surrounded by fragrant flowers, idly watching Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks and Red Admirals frolicking amongst the blooms, it will be nice to look back to January in my diary and comfort myself with thoughts of how well shot of Winter I am



For this is the sight that awaited me this morning, my plants all iced up, snowed under and transformed into vegetarian popsicles. Only the Valerian in my conservatory look anyway near happy



Brrrrrr!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 20-Jan-13 01:26 PM GMT

I awoke to a chilly view from my bedroom window



My butterfly garden hidden beneath a blanket of snow.

But if the snow does not particularly impress me it was nonetheless sufficient to inspire my Basset Hound to leave his couch for an all too rare gambol



I later took a walk through my usual butterfly patch



Difficult to believe that it's here I see my Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites, Brown Argus, Common Blues, Commas, Speckled Woods and three species of Skipper.

Then on to the river



where I see my Orange Tips and Whites.

But all rather bleak today



Although there were plenty of Winter birds including Redwings, Fieldfares, lots of Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Linnets, a lone Buzzard and twenty Teal on the river. I also saw a Hare and a Fox.

I'd much rather be watching butterflies but it's not long to wait before Spring arrives and I can look back at these icy snaps, shudder, and feel glad that Winter has passed.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 25-Jan-13 05:06 PM GMT

On my drive home from work today I was saddened to see a Hedgehog dead in the road. It was a large one and very recently killed. I expected them all to be hibernating, especially during this cold spell.

Re: Hoggers

by NickMorgan, 25-Jan-13 05:11 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

On my drive home from work today I was saddened to see a Hedgehog dead in the road. It was a large one and very recently killed. I expected them all to be hibernating, especially during this cold spell.

That always makes me mad. It is very easy to avoid hedgehogs as they don't exactly dash out in front of you! I wonder if people deliberately drive at them. Strange to see one at this time of year, though.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Jan-13 01:00 PM GMT

Even before I'd hauled myself out of bed this morning I guessed there'd been an overnight thaw as the garden birds were cheeping away after being very quiet during the cold snap. Sure enough, my garden was all but clear of snow



and I could see my plants again



It was lovely over the fields, such a contrast to last weekend





Plenty of Winter birds including a Green Sandpiper along the river, a Buzzard and a flock of Fieldfares. Of insects I came across some near-invisible gnats but that was all. Still, this sunshine gives me hope that it won't be too long before I see my first butterfly of 2013. Fingers Crossed!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 26-Jan-13 04:43 PM GMT

That's some contrast in the space of just 24 hours! Let's hope we've seen the last of the heavy snowfall for this winter.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 29-Jan-13 04:30 PM GMT

Every morning I read Derwent May's "Nature Notes" in The Times. I think he's a wonderful writer with a deep understanding of the British Countryside (Im sure im not alone in this opinion). Yesterday he wrote about Chaffinches and how they should now start to sing after a long quiet spell. I set off to Canterbury after reading this, parked in the work's car park, opened the car door and was greeted by a Chaffinch singing out, loud and clear, from a near-by tree! Mr May clearly knows his stuff and it was such a delight to hear my first Chaffinch of the year.

A less happy article in today's Times tells me that the Hedgehog is on the verge of extinction, it's decline being comparable to the demise of the world's tiger population. I haven't seen a live Hedgehog for years. They were once common in my garden. I think I will have to see what I can do to encourage them back, if there are any left hereabouts.

The article goes on to say that recent heavy rain has waterlogged their nests, which may explain why the Hedgehog I saw dead in the road last week was not in hibernation.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 31-Jan-13 03:35 PM GMT

Today I'm "working at home" which usually means not doing much work at all, particularly when the sun is shining. When I saw how pleasant a morning it was I convinced myself that a long walk with the dog would set me up for the paperwork that awaited me, so off I went, down to the river which was running high after the recent rain



It really was a lovely morning



Not far from here I often see Barn Owls. On occasions, they hunt perilously close to a busy road, causing my heart to leap into my mouth whenever I see them coming within feet of fast moving lorries.

But as for today, the Fieldfares that have been here for the last few weeks have moved on, although a few Redwings remain in the Hawthorn bushes. My Common Buzzard flapped lazily across to the trees. I say its "My" Buzzard because it seems to have taken up residence here. Buzzards around these parts are now rather common whereas, say ten years ago, they'd have been a rarity.

I also saw a flock of Magpies, some sixteen birds strong, hopping around in the field. I've noticed how at certain times of the year they gang-up into quite large groups. I also spotted a Carrion Crow sitting close to one of last years' nests, perhaps eyeing it up for this year.

My best sighting of the day was a group of Golden Plover which came wheeling overhead, calling and filling the air with their beautiful melodious voices. Over recent years the numbers of Golden Plover and Lapwing that visit these fields has diminished considerably, so they are a welcome sight.

When I got home I decided ,after careful consideration, that to rush into a bout of paperwork would be rash and that a spot of gardening would be my wisest move. I therefore ventured out and gave my flowerbeds a turning over with a fork (forks , I have discovered, are far more "Worm Friendly" than spades)



I'm hoping that by Spring, these beds will be just right to receive my new plants



I saw a few insects in the garden, some glass-like tiny flies and some sluggish Bluebottles, and could hear a Mistle Thrush, Robin and Dunnock singing close by.

A very nice day "working from home"!

Re: Hoggers

by ChrisC, 31-Jan-13 07:08 PM GMT

i just remembered something i meant to mention a while back. one recurring problem i have with my borders is grass, so unless you enjoy weeding (or degrassing) may i suggest a membrane/ barrier/ mulch of some description.

Chris

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Feb-13 04:59 PM GMT

Cheers Chris, I will keep that in mind.

I saw my first Bumblebee of the year today but it was in a most sorry state, flat on it's back on a path in the rain,drenched, legs weakly waving up at me. I carefully moved it to a dry patch under a hedge and hope it recovered.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Feb-13 05:04 PM GMT

On this cold February day, with nothing better to do with myself, I decided to see how many different flowers I could find growing wild where I walk my

dogs. I think I'm just pining for Spring, twiddling my thumbs impatiently and in need of some colour. It seemed like a bit of fun too: had you knocked at my door this morning and asked me "How many flowers do you think you could find growing wild today?" I'd almost certainly have answered "None".

I should say by way of a disclaimer that I'm not a Botanist by any means: I'm about as skilled in identifying wild plants as I am in telling Essex from Small Skippers, so apologies in advance for any errors.

The first flower spotted was a White Dead-Nettle



Followed by quiet a few Red Dead-Nettles



Groundsel



(which I'd never have noticed had I not deliberately set myself the challenge of finding anything in flower)

Common Field Speedwell added a welcome, delicate colour



Daisy



A battered Buttercup



And a single Dandelion



The flower I'd most hoped to find was a Snowdrop. I remembered seeing them last year and have been keeping an eye open for them so far but with no luck. I returned to the spot today and there they were





Lovely!

Lots of Lesser Celandines by the river and I found they'd put up several flower buds but all were closed up tightly, so I didn't count them.

On the drive home I passed a Gorse bush in full flower too, giving me a Grand Total for today of Nine Flowers.

Nine flowers on 2nd February: I'd never have thought it (and I bet I missed some too – perhaps those really tiny ones that you have to lay down flat on the ground to see? Too cold and wet for Hoggers to do that today!)

But Good fun.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 02-Feb-13 05:39 PM GMT

Been doing something similar myself today, Hoggers, though I can't compete with your total.

Lots of daisies in flower here in Swansea, along with copious gorse. I saw 4 dandelions in bloom and a few snowdrops, but the first daffodils and celandines are still probably a fortnight away.

Re: Hoggers

by Susie, 03-Feb-13 09:15 AM GMT

I enjoyed your flower photos, Hoggers. Spring is just around the corner 😊

Poor old bumble, I am pleased you moved it to a place of safety under the bush. I hope it survived.

One of the problems bumbles have in cooler weather is getting enough 'oomph' to achieve lift off. Ideally if you find a bumble it is a good idea to put it somewhere up high so they can 'get the revs up' and then jump off to achieve lift off. The bush should have been okay though because they can climb up something like that 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 03-Feb-13 02:58 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments David and Susie. I must say that it never occurred to me that the Bumblebee might need help with "Lift Off" ! That's something I will remember in future. My heart went out to the poor thing, it was in such a sorry state.

My little Botanic Adventure yesterday sparked a distant memory: I recalled a Winter's day several years ago when I found a beautiful yellow flower growing in a wood close to my home. It's a wood that I hardly ever go to now: last time was many months ago and that was in Summer. I thought it worth going back there today for a look.

To reach the wood I had to cross a boggy field and in doing so disturbed several Snipe.

I then came across this "Thrush's Anvil"



Here's a close up



I haven't tried to count the shells but would guess there's over sixty. I guess this is a sign of just how hard the last cold spell was here (particularly for the local snails!)

Then I came across these young trees all of which showed signs of damage from bark stripping



Lots of rabbit droppings in the area so I guess the damage was caused by hungry rabbits.

Having crossed the field I came across this ferocious looking clump



I've never seen such a profusion of thorns: straight out of a Fairy Tale.

Then some Catkins



Finally I had reached the wood. I clumped about in a vague fashion, surprising a Woodcock into flight, until I found a small group of Snowdrops



And there close by was the flower I was after





Winter Aconite. What a Beauty! And my 10th flower of this February Weekend.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 05-Feb-13 03:54 PM GMT

February, perhaps, is not the best month to go looking for wild flowers, although I've kept myself amused these last few days by doing just that. By Sunday I'd managed to find 10 flowers and if I include the catkins, my total reaches 11.

I got home early today so decided to walk the dog in part of the field that I didn't cover over the weekend. There I found Flower Number 12



Now is this a Scentsless Mayweed? My book shows a picture which appears to match the flower but goes on to say "not aromatic". Yet my experience of this plant is that it has a strong, attractive scent which is most noticeable when walking through it on a hot Summer's day (Ah! Sweet Memories!)

I also came across an interesting-looking plant which I think is some type of fern but I haven't got a book to help me with its identification.



It's the only one in this area, so rather unusual for the location and was living on the far side of a shady water-filled ditch.

I did find an insect. As I arrived back in the garden I saw this chap catching some sun on my living-room window.



It was bitterly cold out there and February is a tough month, so I found myself admiring this hardy fly that somehow has managed to survive through the Winter.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 09-Feb-13 03:36 PM GMT

What a Glorious morning! The harsh, bitter winds of last week had blown themselves out, leaving not a puff behind. The air was warm and friendly. "All's right with the World" I thought, setting off down to the river, my imagination conjuring up an early butterfly or two. It did seem warm enough for butterflies, it was so Spring-like, but they remained in my imagination (and will do for the time being a least).

I was really on the look out for flowers, as last week I'd noticed a Lesser Celandine flower bud and I wanted to see if this morning's sunshine had enticed it to open. Down on the riverbank I discovered that it had, if only a little :



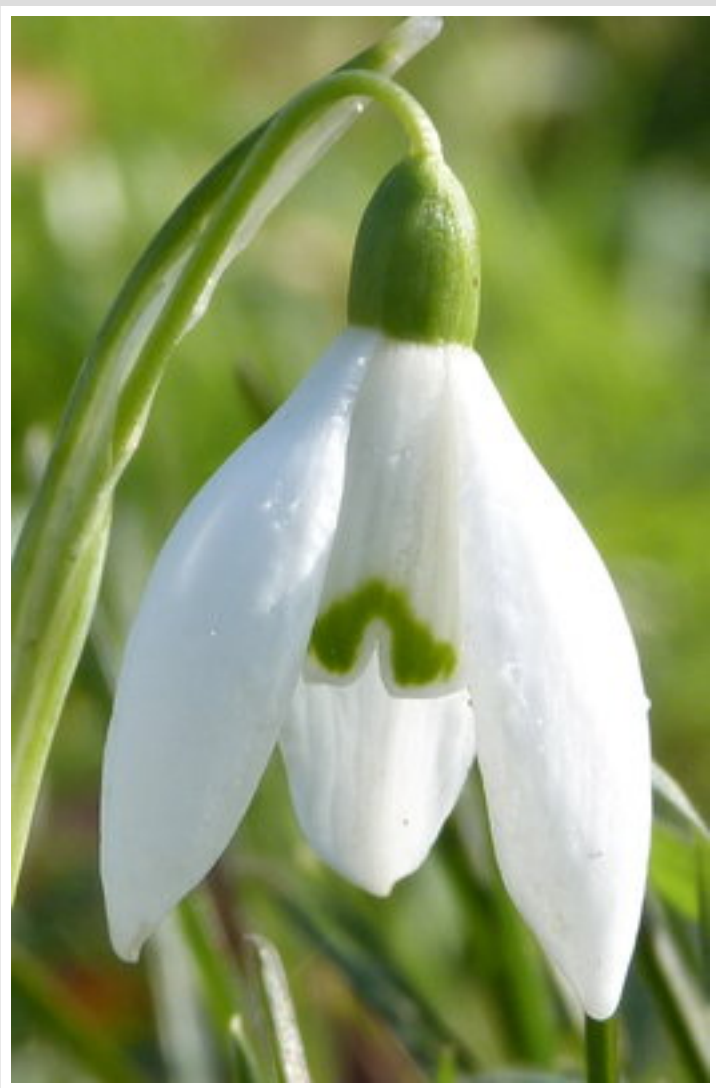
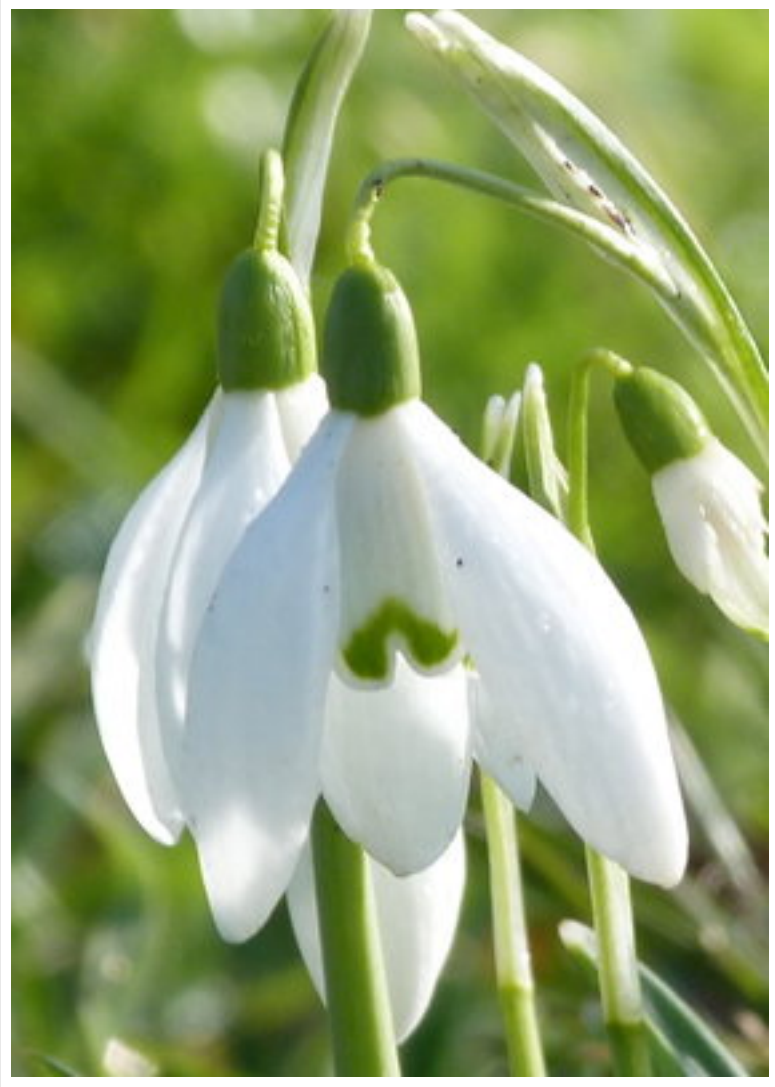


I was very happy to see it, a harbinger of Spring and like the smiling face of an old friend.

Quite a few birds were about : Heron, Reed Bunting, Yellowhammer, Chaffinches, Meadow Pipits, Gold and Bullfinches, Little Egret, Wren, "my" Buzzard, 20 Teal and a singing Greenfinch.

Next, I went in search of Snowdrops and found that they too had taken encouragement from this beautiful morning and opened out:





Wonderful.

My sap is on the rise!

Re: Hoggers

by MikeOxon, 09-Feb-13 04:00 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

The air was warm and friendly.

You were lucky! It was sleeting this morning in Oxon, and dull all day 😞

Mike

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 13-Feb-13 02:39 PM GMT

My luck didn't last long Mike, the very next day Winter returned with a vengeance depositing rain, sleet then snow on us down here in Kent.

I don't know if other UKBers have seen reports in the national newspapers about the decline in the number of Hedgehogs in the UK. There's plenty about it on the internet (the British Hedgehog Preservation Society has a very helpful website.)

I'd frequently see Hedgehogs in my garden but my sightings of them have gradually become rarer until I'm now able to say that I haven't seen one for about four years.

I'm not really one for doing Conservation work at Nature Reserves and the like, along the lines of that carried out by a number of members of this forum (for whom I have enormous respect) but my mind has of late turned to thoughts about what I can do, on a smaller scale, with my garden. My aim is to turn it in to a more Butterfly and Wildlife Friendly place.

So far as Hedgehogs are concerned, I don't use any chemicals at all in the garden, no weed killers, slug pellets or the like; I have a hedge; and my dogs are (alarming) non-territorial. So Hedgehogs shouldn't find it too uncomfortable here.

I've decided to stop mowing the lawn at the top of the garden and let the grass grow. I think letting the grass grow is my kind of gardening. It's low maintenance and fully ecologically justifiable in that it will help with both insects and other creatures (including me and my bad back).

I also decided to buy a HedgeHog House which arrived today:



It has already attracted some attention



A real "des res". I think I may move in myself!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 13-Feb-13 08:03 PM GMT

Laudable stuff, Hoggers. I hope your building soon sees its first resident.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 13-Feb-13 08:18 PM GMT

Looking forward to seeing your garden Hoggers, put some Wall flowers in for Spring the first Butterflies love them.

You'll be able to take the seed heads off the plants at the end of Summer, dry them out in envelopes, then if you need more you've got them. I'm going to plant my seeds in the Green house end of Feb, then put them out after the first frosts have gone, I love Gardening 😊 Goldie 😊

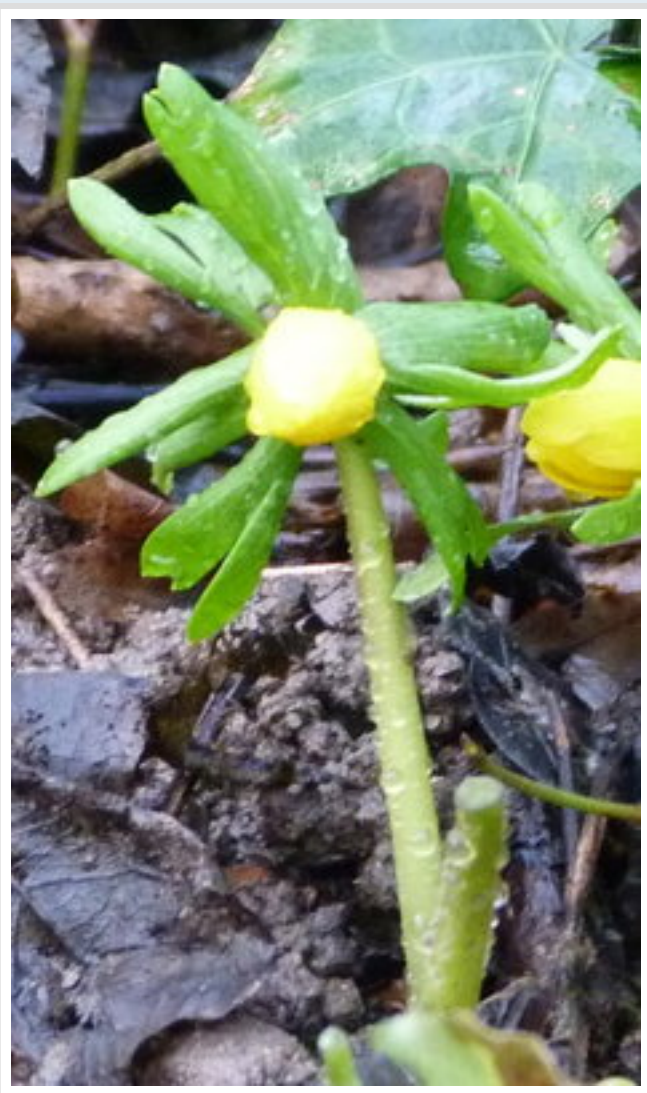
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 14-Feb-13 01:16 PM GMT

Thanks David, but with my luck I'll probably get a big fat Rat : I once made a Dove Cote for the garden which within minutes was invaded by a gang of Starlings, the Collard Doves I'd hoped for didn't get a look in!

Thanks for the tip Goldie. I've got four Wallflowers in pots ready to go into the garden, which have developed tiny flower buds already. I will certainly follow your advice for collecting the seeds later on in the year. The more I can grow of them, the better.

This morning was warm and dry after last night's heavy rain. I took a walk to the wood where the Winter Aconite grows to see if the flowers had opened out yet



Still a tad too early, but the Bluebell leaves are now emerging and I found some more Snowdrops



A patch of bright yellow caught my eye. At first I thought it was a burst children's balloon but looking closer found it to be a fungus of some kind



I haven't the faintest idea what its name is but I'll try to find out.

Plenty of Hazel catkins



And a single Goat Willow just coming out



Which shows that things are on the move.

Walking back to the car I was delighted to come across a Barn Owl hunting over the field. I always remember "Kes" (wonderful film and as "A kestrel for a knave" a super book) when the boy's teacher, seeing Kes for the first time, says how when you watch a bird like that "Everything goes quiet". Well, that's how I feel whenever I'm lucky enough to see a Barn Owl: Everything goes quiet.

I've a pair of them on my Patch, I know where they nest, but I keep well away for fear of disturbing them. Unfortunately, we are surrounded by busy roads which the Owls will cross or hunt alongside. Sometimes I simply cannot look.

Today I had my camera with me so took a few snaps for my diary, but they are truly atrocious





And apologies for this next photograph but what I like about it is what it could have been had I been any sort of half-competent photographer!



A beautiful creature. Nature is a wonderful thing.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 15-Feb-13 02:13 PM GMT

Daffodils in flower on a roundabout on the A28 at Ashford. Not exactly a Wordsworthian location but my first Daffs of the year nonetheless.

Re: Hoggers

by Susie, 15-Feb-13 08:24 PM GMT

Well I liked your owl pics. I saw one on the way home from work tonight too, only the third time I've seen a wild one.

What type of wall flowers do you have?

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 15-Feb-13 08:42 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Daffodils in flower on a roundabout on the A28 at Ashford. Not exactly a Wordsworthian location but my first Daffs of the year nonetheless.

I hope to match that observation over the weekend – the daffs on Clydach high street are about to burst forth!

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 15-Feb-13 08:58 PM GMT

I'm enjoying your diary too, Hoggers.

For the fungus, try *Tremella mesenterica*.

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 16-Feb-13 04:12 PM GMT

Guy, thanks for the identification of my weird-looking fungus : with all these asteroids and meteorites whizzing about the place at the moment I thought it might be the start of an alien invasion.

Susie, the Wallflower I bought is Erysium Bowles Mauve



It is already developing buds, as you can see.

All of the plants that I bought seem to be doing well except the Hebe, which for some reason appears to be suffering



Most of the leaves have died, leaving only a few living green ones. I hope it pulls through and if anybody has any suggestions as to how I can help it, I'd be grateful.

Good luck with the Daff Hunt, David: although the ones I saw in flower are only about 3 miles away from my home, my own are far from ready



Although I saw a lovely photograph in The Times today of a whole field of Daffs in flower, down in Cornwall I think.

I spent a couple of hours the in the garden today, planting out my Dog Violets. I put them in a number of spots underneath deciduous trees (Silver birch, Sycamore etc) where I hope they will be happy.



Mid-morning I was out over the fields and very pleasant it was too. I came across a small group of Siskins in the Alders which I don't see often, while the Barn Owl was out hunting again.

I found some more Speedwell





Red-Dead Nettle



Groundsel



And just the single Lesser Celandine that I found last week



(All the others have put up leaves but as yet no flowers)

I found one other plant making the effort to flower



I've been looking in my book but until the flower opens out I'm going to struggle to identify it (a "Mouse-Ear", perhaps?)

Best of all today was this: as I lay, sprawled out trying to photograph the Speedwells, I heard a Skylark singing. Maybe not its full Spring song just yet, but very close.

Exciting times.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 16-Feb-13 08:04 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Good luck with the Daff Hunt, David: although the ones I saw in flower are only about 3 miles away from my home, my own are far from ready

The daffs I'm referring to are those best placed to flower early, i.e. sheltered and south facing. I'll be out and about tomorrow doing some conservation work so I hope I'll get to see my first of the year if the weather forecast is correct – mainly sunny with 8c maximum temperatures.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Feb-13 05:06 PM GMT

I saw this wild-looking Dandelion and thought it was such a burst of colour on this February day that I'd put it in my diary



The number of Dandelion flowers opening up is rapidly on the increase where I walk my dogs, many more Daisies too.

I also found a Ladybird



I know nothing about these little animals but I suppose they hibernate and this morning's sunshine had stirred this one from its sleep.

A Skylark (perhaps the one from yesterday) was high above the fields singing and when I got home I heard a Chaffinch singing in the garden.

I planted out my Garlic Mustards this afternoon. They had been growing fast, seemingly champing at the bit to get out of their pots and put down some roots. My Cuckoo Flowers have been putting on a growth spurt too, so I've planted them with the Garlic Mustard to provide a bouquet that Orange Tips will find irresistible (I hope).

Re: Hoggers

by Susie, 17-Feb-13 06:22 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

I thought that it might be bowles mauve that you have. This is by far the best wallflower I know for butterflies as it flowers all through the spring/summer and sometimes right into autumn and winter too if it is mild enough. This plant is sterile though and can't be propagated by seeds but you can take cuttings really easily.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 17-Feb-13 06:25 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

I am enjoying reading your diary and really liking those Owl photos.

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Feb-13 09:46 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, much appreciated. I'm just a "Garden and Dog Walk Naturalist" and feared my diary would be rather dull, so I'm glad to hear it's not boring everybody to tears. I certainly enjoy reading all of the diaries on this forum. I've never lost the sense of joy and excitement when finding living things be they animals, insects, birds or plants (I guess everyone else on this forum is just the same) so I still get excited when I find a Ladybird or hear a Skylark singing and want to tell everyone.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Feb-13 01:54 PM GMT

Crossing the footbridge over the River Medway at Maidstone this morning, fighting against a perishing blizzard, I wasn't really expecting to see a sign of Spring but one came anyway, in the shape of a Black-headed Gull which was just getting it's new season's black (or rather, brown) head.

Re: Hoggers

by Paul Wetton, 22-Feb-13 03:48 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers

I've seen Hebes go the way yours has. Have you had any sharp frosts as mine succumbed to frost and even prolonged snow in the past. Normally the small leaved varieties are quite hardy though so it may be a virus.

You can propagate Hebes quite easily from cuttings. Best to pot them first even indoors before putting them out.

With frost bitten specimens the recommendation is to cut them right down almost to the ground.

Good luck.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Feb-13 04:33 PM GMT

Yes, Paul we have had some hard frosts so that's a strong contender – I kept two of my Hebes in the conservatory and both are completely healthy. I'll follow your tip and cut back the two frost-bitten ones. Thanks for your help, much appreciated.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Feb-13 05:22 PM GMT

Cold out there today: a bitter wind with frequent snow flurries. Mind you, for about five minutes around mid-day, the sun came out and it seemed that Winter's hold was weakening: out of the wind I could actually feel warmth from the sun and Spring had the upper hand, although not for long.

I found some White Dead-nettles in bud



It's flowers waiting, like me, for more sunshine.

Red Dead-nettles were out in strength



A single, brave Lesser Celandine



On these harsh dull days , hungry for colour, I go looking for Speedwells



Alder catkins make for an attractive purple haze when seen from a distance



And this lichen made a splash of colour too



Passing an old Willow I caught a glimpse of something out of the corner of my eye, looked and this is what I saw



I froze in my tracks. I'd no idea that a Barn Owl was living here. We gazed at each other for a few seconds then it seemed to go to sleep



I crept away to the far side of the field and when I looked back through my binoculars I could see it still, patiently facing into the cold wind and flurries of snow. It made me think about the wild creatures of this world, out there in the cold, fighting to stay alive.

On my way home I stopped off to see the Snowdrops again



A perfect end to a Winter (dare I say early Spring?) walk.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Mar-13 01:58 PM GMT

Work took me to Oxford this week, where I stayed in a city centre hotel. I didn't have any opportunity to venture out into the countryside but did find the charmingly named Stinking Hellebore in full flower growing on a riverbank close to where I was working. I was also thrilled to see good numbers of Red Kite from the train between Reading and Oxford. I wish we had them down here in Kent.

Back home today I heard a Blackbird singing at around 5.30am. It's the first I've heard in full song this year. Of all our British Songsters the Blackbird is by far my favourite: languid, gentle and subtle, with dreams of long, warm Summer nights in every phrase. It was a good way to begin what the weather forecasters tell me is the first day of Spring, although I didn't stay very long to enjoy the performance as it was 5.30 and I wanted to go back to bed. I have my priorities.

Later on in the morning I set off for a walk around my Patch. I decided to have a rummage around in the wood to see how things were getting on. As you can see, the Bluebells are coming along nicely



So too the Primroses



The beds of Violets are growing well and I found this Wood Anemone which is just about to flower



And the Honeysuckle is waking up



I heard a Song Thrush and Dunnock singing, then a Greater Spotted Woodpecker drumming.

By the river I saw that my lone flowering Celandine had managed to produce a second flower since last weekend



Good effort. The rest cannot be far behind.

Just before returning home the sun came out and within seconds two Skylarks began to sing; enough to put a decided Spring in my step. It's a wonderful time of year.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 01-Mar-13 04:04 PM GMT

Hoggers I love your Barn Owl, you were so lucky to spot it.

Spring seems to have arrived here in the North, yesterday we spent our time tidying up the garden the sun was shining all day and the temperatures were way up, No Butterflies though. The bulbs are coming up quickly now and my Magnolia Stallata(I think that's how you spell it)is nearly ready for flowering also my Wall flowers, roll on. Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Mar-13 04:01 PM GMT

The Barn Owl was a stunner Goldie, more so for being totally unexpected. But that's what I love about walking in the countryside: it's a bit like visiting a secondhand bookshop, you never know what might turn up. It's nice to know it's on my Patch and I hope doing well for mice and voles. Certainly by the look of this anvil (improvised from a discarded metal sign) which I found today, the Thrushes are cutting a swathe through the local snail population



Nearby I came across this Coltsfoot which is just about to bloom



This afternoon I visited my favourite butterfly and flower site, Wye Nature Reserve



Dog's Mercury aplenty, some just coming into flower



And Spurge- Laurel showing clusters of attractive green flowers



A fine show of Mistletoe



Traveller's Joy: literally just that when in flower but as Old Man's Beard (I can't see it without thinking of our great English Poet, Edward Thomas) simply

beautiful



And some friendly locals



Driving home through the village of Brook I saw several Primroses in full flower but all were in front gardens so I've yet to find my first in the wild, but it won't be long now.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 03-Mar-13 04:35 PM GMT

Today I thought I'd go for a puddle around in Hothfield Bog with Brother Hoggles



It's a fascinating habitat of heath and bog that's rarely found in Kent



With lots of fine mosses



and other specialist plants.

We usually visit only in Summer but decided to pop in this morning to see how things were coming along. The Gorse looked handsome indeed





And the Ling although not at its best is still attractive



I was on the look out for Marsh Marigold but although we found the leaves sprouting up, it is clearly still a tad too early for the flowers



But a few Lesser Celandines were out



On the walk back to the car the sun came out, it got warmer and warmer, prompting several birds to start singing (including a Wren and a Nuthatch) but also a Bumblebee to almost fly up my nose. So warm in fact, that I began for the first time this year to entertain not unreasonable expectations of chancing upon a butterfly. We decided to drop into Orlestone Forest before ending our Sunday trip, as it's there that we often see Commas and Brimstones in March.

Alas, despite the charming weather, we had no luck encountering any other aroused hibernators. Still, if the weather continues in this pleasant vein, it shouldn't be too long before I see my first butterfly of the year. Once home, I took a look at my flower beds: I think it's getting close to the time when I can at last start planting my butterfly garden, something my greenish fingers are longing to do.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-Mar-13 07:11 PM GMT

A glorious morning but undeniably Monday. I spent my drive bemoaning the fact that I had to go to work, when I'd much rather have taken a long walk in the countryside. Later, paying a visit to the cells beneath Canterbury Crown Court, I heard a jailor say "There's a Butterfly!" I looked to where he was pointing and sure enough, on the floor, I could see the black triangle of a Peacock settled with wings shut tight. A Peacock doing time on remand. My first butterfly of 2013.

It had to be moved as it was in great danger of being accidentally trodden on, nor is there any easy way out once you are in custody. I decided that it had served its sentence and deserved early release.

I cupped it in my hands. It did not stir but rather seemed to be still half asleep. I then carried it out of the building escorted by the head jailor (who informed me that although this was their first butterfly, they often receive surprise visits from local frogs) and placed it in full sunshine but out of the way of the somewhat chilly breeze.

Fortunately I had my mobile and was able to take a few snaps



It soaked up the sun on the already warm wall then flitted away to roost amongst a nearby Ivy.

When I later looked at the photos I noticed that whilst in my hand it had extended its proboscis, seeming to be taking on some minerals from my sweaty skin.

I hope it fares well after its release and that it does not (as so many do) end up back in the cells.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 04-Mar-13 08:49 PM GMT

Nice little story that, Hoggers.

Pleased to see the Peacock is out on 'bail' 😊

Re: Hoggers

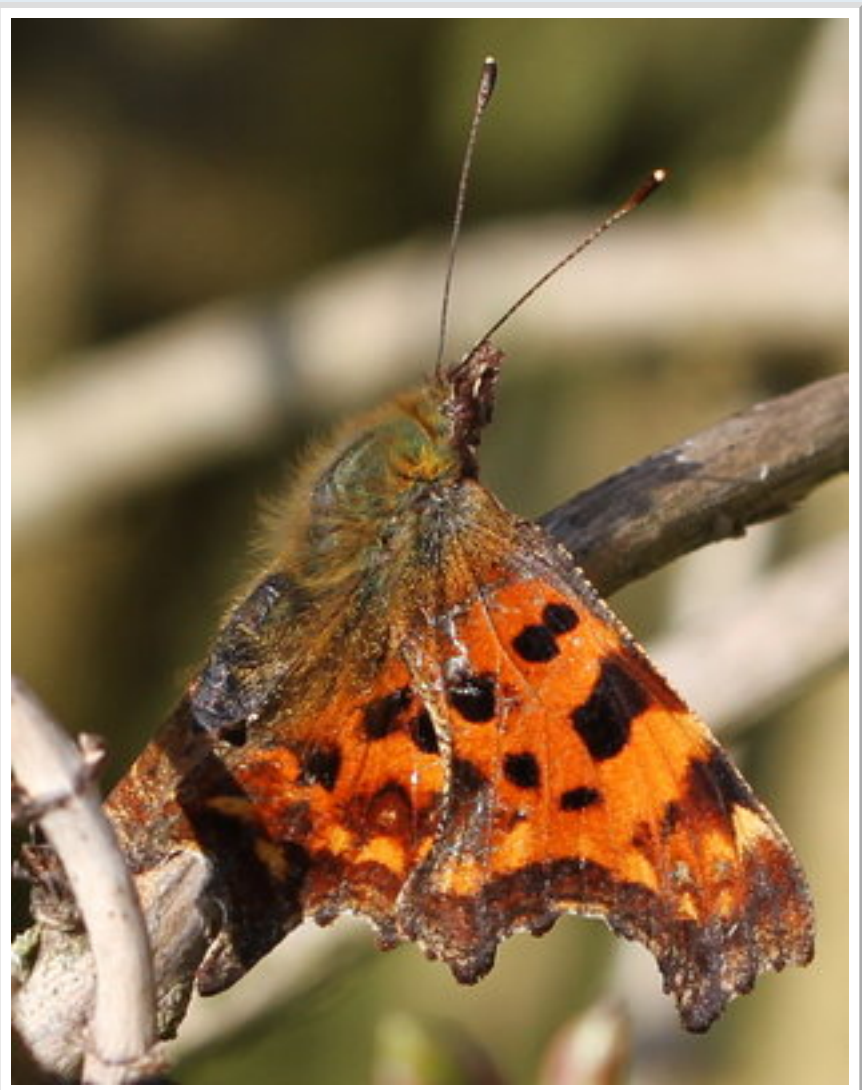
by Hoggers, 05-Mar-13 02:15 PM GMT

I drove to Lewes this morning through village after village, keeping an eye open for Daffodils and Lesser Celandines of which I'm glad to say I saw good numbers, together with the bright sunny faces of many Dandelions. A cheerful sight indeed.

I found this text on my mobile telephone, from my Mother : "First butterfly in the garden - white".

Mum lives in Ashford, Kent too. I spoke to her about this sighting which she was very excited about (more I think because she knew she'd trumped me than for any other reason...) Mum confirmed that it looked "more yellow than white", so I had to give in and allow her the honour of the first Brimstone of the year. I learned long ago never to argue with my Mother.

However, when I got home look what I found in my garden:



Things are hotting up.

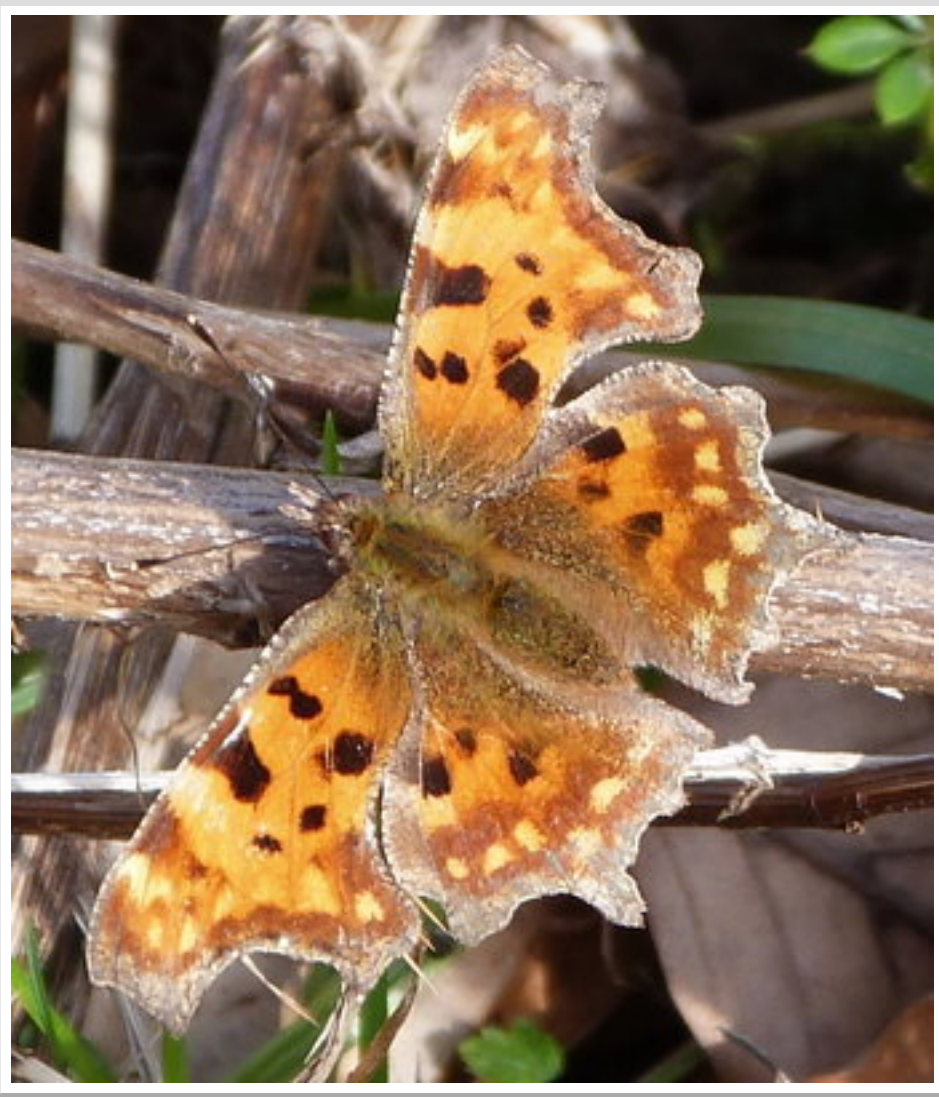
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Mar-13 04:33 PM GMT

A third gorgeous day in a row. On arriving at Canterbury I immediately saw a Small Tortoiseshell flying around the court building. My first of the season. At least it wasn't banged-up like Monday's Peacock. I had my camera in the car but the Tortoiseshell was long gone before I could even think about getting it.

Finishing work early, I dropped in at Denge Wood on my way home where I knew I'd have a chance of finding a Brimstone.

I soon came across a Comma



And later, three more.

Some fine Coltsfoot which was popular with the flies



Very pretty.

And my first Primroses of the year



Finally, on my walk back to the car, a Brimstone appeared, flying up and down the ride, never resting for a moment (but then if I'd been in hibernation for six months I guess I'd want to stretch my wings a bit too). It made for such a wonderful sight as it busily patrolled back and forth. I tried to take a snap of it for my diary but of all the pictures I took this, I'm afraid, is the best of the lot



I think the Brimstone is the yellowish blob in the middle (but I'm not 100% on that!)

It was lovely out there today, Chaffinches singing, Woodpeckers drumming and butterflies back at last after a long Winter's absence. I've missed them.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 06-Mar-13 10:21 PM GMT

Definitely captured the Brimstone I feel, Hoggers.

They're a bugger to photograph at this time of year. Yesterday was the first time I've ever seen a male at rest for more than 5 seconds during spring.

Where do they get their energy from? It's not as if they have a plethora of nectar sources to visit at this time of year.

Re: Hoppers

by essexbuzzard, 07-Mar-13 11:05 PM GMT

I'm with you on that one, David. I am amazed that a Brimstone, for example, can hibernate for five months, from September or October to March, and still have plenty in reserve once emerged in spring, to fly around for days, or even weeks, with absolutely nothing to eat.

I personally am yet to see a butterfly in 2013, which may be a good thing, as it's been so cold this year, any primroses and other nectar sources are still weeks away.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 10-Mar-13 03:53 PM GMT

One of the most eagerly awaited events in the Hoppers' Household happened today: Frogspawn appeared in the garden pond

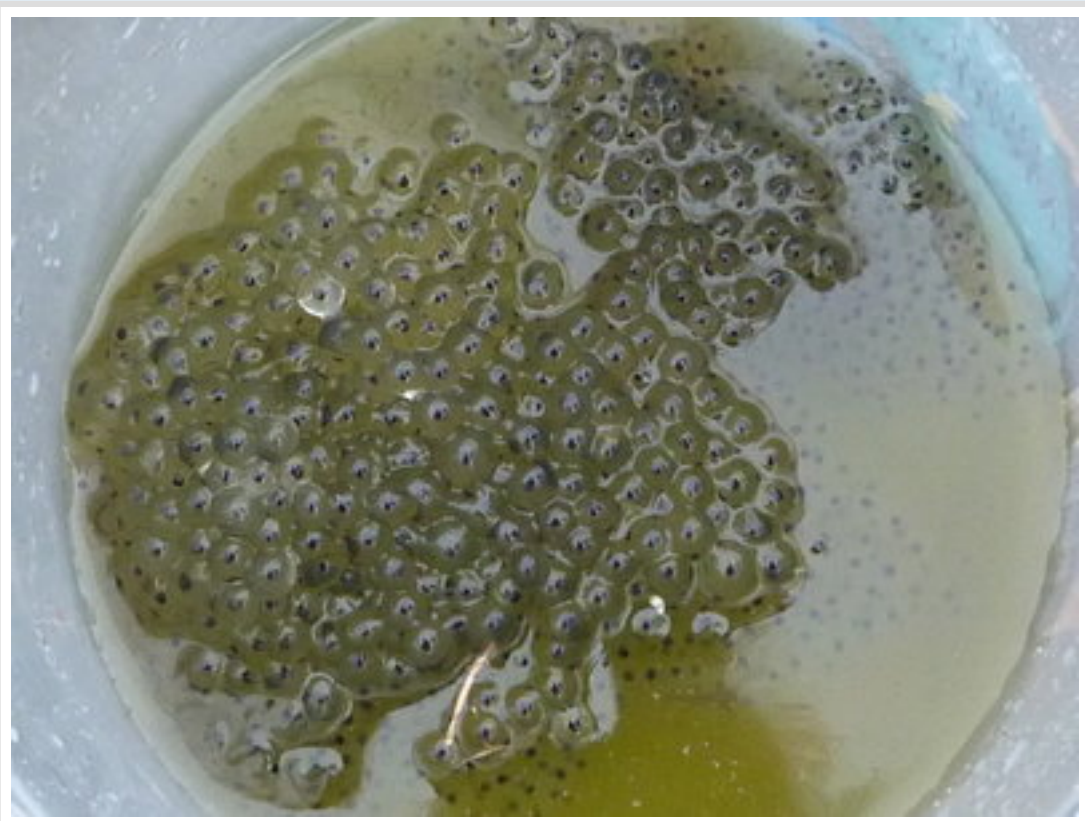


Every year I watch for it, collect it and look after it until all those little black dots are an army of feisty Froglets, which I then return to the garden



Yesterday I read with envy Susie and Mark's report of discovering spawn in their ponds. I was particularly worried as my crop of spawn last year failed: it was sterile and I had fears that it might mean none at all for this year.

On average I end up releasing about 1000 Froglets in this way. It's a lot of work when dealing with so many Taddies but highly rewarding. I've never lost my boyhood fascination with the transformation from Jelly Dot to Frog and take it from me, watching a tank full of Taddies is far more fun than watching anything on the television



Lovely Gloopy Stuff.

I've transferred the spawn to an aquarium and I'll let you know how it gets along.

Jolly cold today. No chance of a butterfly so I went looking for flowers.

Red Dead-Nettles are putting on a fine show



And I was surprised to find these beautiful white flowered individuals growing amongst the usual red variety



They're not White Dead-Nettles (I think)





More like a white version of the red flower.

Also this pretty Field Pansy



Some Chckweed



And this tiny flower which I think is Hairy Bittercress



One flower that I can identify with confidence is a Snowdrop. However, it had never occurred to me until today to turn up one of the flower bells and have a look. What I saw was this



Isn't it beautiful? And I noticed a tiny beetle lodging there. Now that's a nice dream to have: leave the busy world behind and go to sleep in a Snowdrop..

P.s - Clearing out my garden shed I saw these strange tracteries on the wall



Paper-like to the touch. At first I thought it was the root system of some plant but on closer inspection I think that some insect, a bee of some sort perhaps, has left them. Does anyone out there know what they are?

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 14-Mar-13 02:01 PM GMT

This morning I took a walk in the woods near to home. The sunshine had stirred many of the birds into song including Chaffinches, Great Tits and Mistle Thrush. I flushed two Woodcocks as I made my way through the brambles, then saw a Treecreeper at close quarters running upside-down along a branch whilst probing for insects (a very smart little bird indeed.)

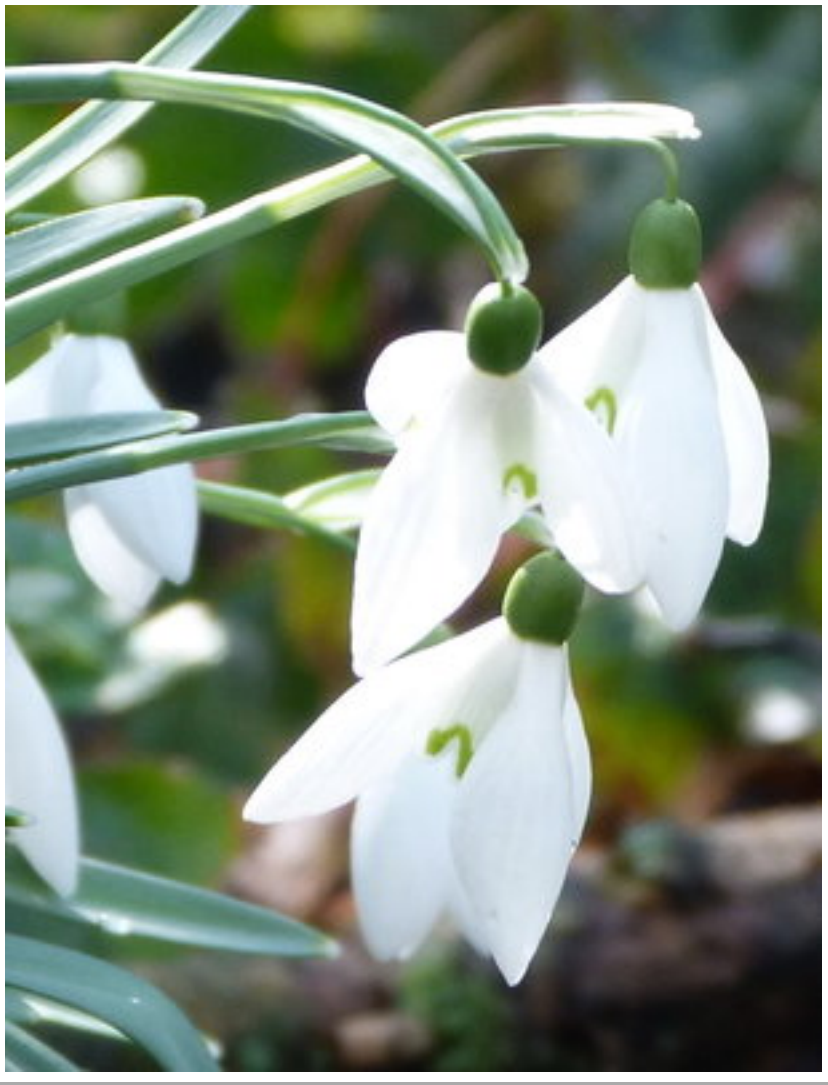
The Dog Violets are growing steadily amongst which I found Primroses



And a few Wood Anemones just about to open



This woodland floor bouquet was completed by Snowdrops



And Winter Aconite





High overhead a Buzzard was mewing. It was all very restful, far away from the hubbub of the working world.

I walked down to the riverbank. The sun had gathered some strength, it felt warm and it crossed my mind that I might see a Tortoiseshell or Red Admiral. No sooner had this thought made its way from one side of my brain to the other when I saw a Small Tortoiseshell flit up from the opposite bank. I must have magic powers.

I watched it through my binoculars. It appeared to be a brightly coloured individual in fine fettle. I attempted to get a photograph but as it was so far away had to use the x24 zoom on my camera to its full extent. Most of the pictures were of my typical "Smudge and Blob" variety but at least in this one you can see something resembling a Small Tortoiseshell butterfly



It was a welcome find. Skylarks singing too. A pleasant walk in early Spring.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 16-Mar-13 03:46 PM GMT

The first thought that popped into my head when I woke up this morning was that I should get myself another pond.

I suppose ponds have been on my mind recently because of frogspawn. I discovered a batch had been laid in my garden pond on 10th March. I collected most of it and now it's in an indoor tank.

Then on 11th March I found a second mass of spawn, which I decided to leave where it is and let Fate have its way.

The pond then froze over until yesterday afternoon. How the frogspawn contends with being frozen in ice I don't know, although I will soon find out. But shortly after the pond had thawed I saw the familiar surface water ripple of a frog in action and Hey Presto, a third voluminous batch of frogspawn had appeared.

My garden pond is inhabited by Goldfish. I have discovered that they are not as innocent as they look. They are in fact voraciously carnivorous and find juicy fat Tadpoles irresistible. That's why I only release Froglets and not Tadpoles.

And I suppose it was all this thinking about the whole Tadpole/Goldfish issue that was fermenting in my mind until I woke this morning with an Idea: why not have another pond, smaller than the one I already have, but one devoted to Wildlife and, most importantly, a Goldfish Free Zone.

So I returned to my local Garden Centre this morning and bought this



It reminds me of the galvanised bath-tub my Mum used to put me in when I were a Lad. Ah, Happy Memories..

I think it will go well at the top of the garden close to the flower beds where I hope to have all my Butterfly attracting flowers, but where it will also get some shade from the Sycamore.

Now all I have to do is come up with some pretext to get my Dad round to help with the digging.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 17-Mar-13 02:50 PM GMT

A much better day than yesterday: as my Dad put it, "Not too hot and not too cold – perfect weather for Digging". Taking the hint I set to work on installing my new pond.

Here's the hole



Into which I placed the polyethylene pre-formed body



Trying unsuccessfully to keep as much mud out of it as I could.

I then had to fill it. Given the weather we're having lately I could have just left it and I'm sure that within a few hours the rain would have filled it up. Instead, I used a water butt full of rain water with some from the other garden pond together with some pond weed and a Yellow Flag





I hope I've located it well. It should get a healthy mix of sunshine and shade in this part of the garden.

I then transplanted a batch of frogspawn from the Goldfish infested waters of my old garden pond to the calmer, safer waters of the new one.

In all it took me about two hours' work to get it in the ground. It's not a water feature that's going to win me a prize at the Chelsea Flower Show and I expect we're all going to get Malaria this year, but if the Tadpoles are happy then so am I.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 20-Mar-13 04:15 PM GMT

A rather chilly morning. The wood near to my home is now lush with Bluebells



I am looking forward to the flowers, they make for a wonderful sight every Spring.

Ahead of the Bluebells come the Wood Anemones. In the last week they have begun to emerge strongly, although the flowers on most have yet to unfurl



I found just one that had opened



More Primroses are now in flower there too



It was quiet in the wood. I listened out for my first Chiffchaff or Blackcap but I guess it's still a tad early for them.

A pleasant walk nonetheless



Back home I planted a mix of Cuckoo Flower, Garlic Mustard, Coltsfoot and Lavender around the edge of my Wildlife Pond



When I was out on my walk this morning I found Garlic Mustard by the river and noticed how much bigger it was compared to the ones in my garden. Perhaps that is because mine have been in pots up until now? I hope now that they've been planted out they will catch up on their wild counterparts.

I have also noticed that a Blackbird has begun to make a nest in my Ivy and that a Wood Pigeon is doing likewise in one of my neighbours conifers.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Mar-13 04:28 PM GMT

I discovered another batch of frogspawn in my garden pond on 21st so it looks as if I'll have a bumper crop of Tadpoles this year, making up for 2012's complete bankruptcy in that department.

The spawn I collected on 10th and placed in a tank in my unheated conservatory is showing distinct signs of developing, each black "Full Stop" now no longer round but becoming elongated. By contrast, the spawn laid on 11th and 15th (which I have left outside) remains at the "Full Stop" stage.

It's a touch on the fresh side out there today but I warmed myself up by installing another pond in the garden



It's smaller than the one I put in last week, positioned right at the top of the garden where I hope it will be a safe harbour for frogs and other creatures.

I haven't seen many signs of Spring over this past week, which, given the weather, comes as no surprise to me. But on my drive to Canterbury along the A28 I've spotted a very few Blackthorns coming into flower, a couple of Cherry trees also and a fine display of 537 Daffodils around the City wall (I get plenty of chance to count them as I sit in the daily traffic jams). I guess the cool conditions will favour the Daffs by extending their season and thus, incidentally, favour Daffodil lovers like me into the bargain.

But that said, O' for some Sunshine and Warmth!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 24-Mar-13 09:06 PM GMT

I did a bit of planting today before frostbite set in, putting some Garlic Mustard and Celandines around the two new ponds





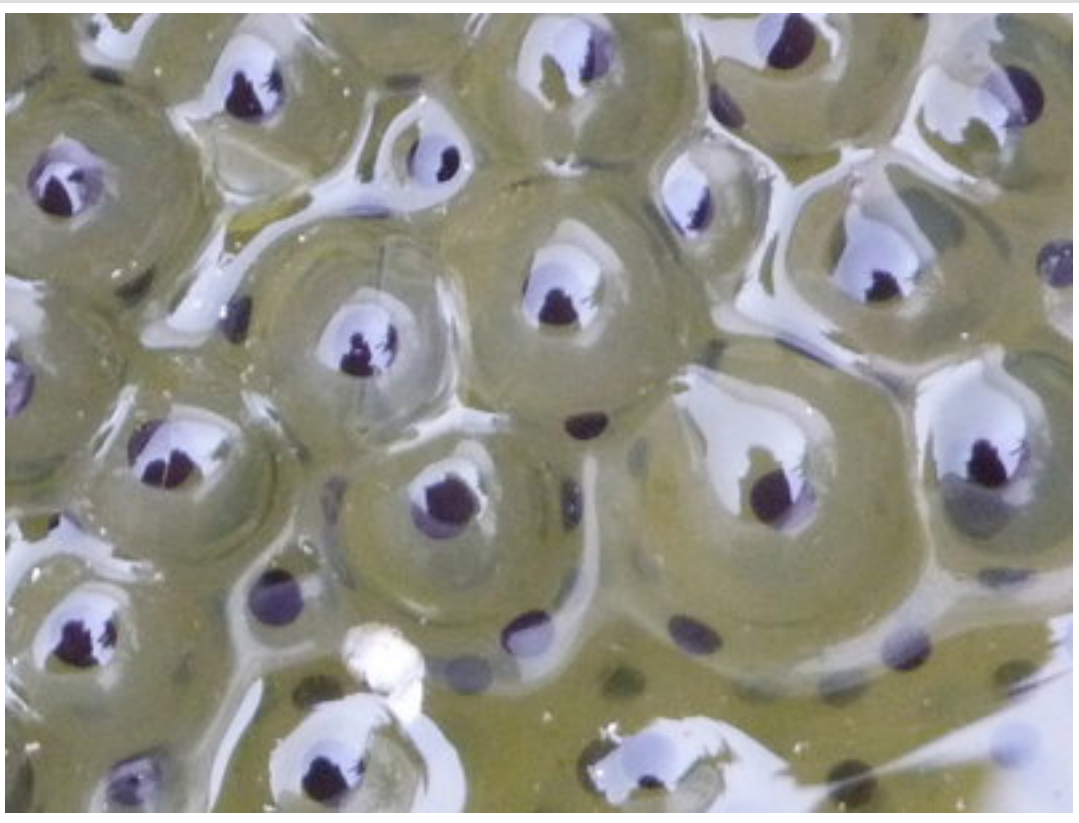
Every year I get Jackdaws nesting in the chimney. They're lively, smart birds, wonderful acrobats (particularly when warding off Crows) and of all the Crow family they have, to my ear, the jolliest voice, so I rather like them but to be honest, I also rather wish they'd find someone-elses chimney. Anyway, a gang of them turned up this morning and I think they're moving in.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 25-Mar-13 04:00 PM GMT

I've tried to get some photographs of my frogspawn to show how it is developing, very nearly dropping the camera in the tank whilst doing so. I really haven't got a clue about any kind of photography, let alone taking snapshots of frog embryos, but hopefully these will give some idea of how things have come along since the spawn was laid on 10th March.

This is how I found it on the 10th



And here are three photographs of how it looks today



Quite a change in just two weeks and enjoying a considerable head-start on the rest of the frogspawn outside, which remains at the "Black Dot" stage.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Mar-13 07:31 PM GMT

About five years ago I bought one of those bird boxes that comes with a video camera inside



It's been in the garden ever since but although we've seen a few Blue Tits size it up as a prospective home, none have ever moved in.

Well, this morning I looked out and saw this



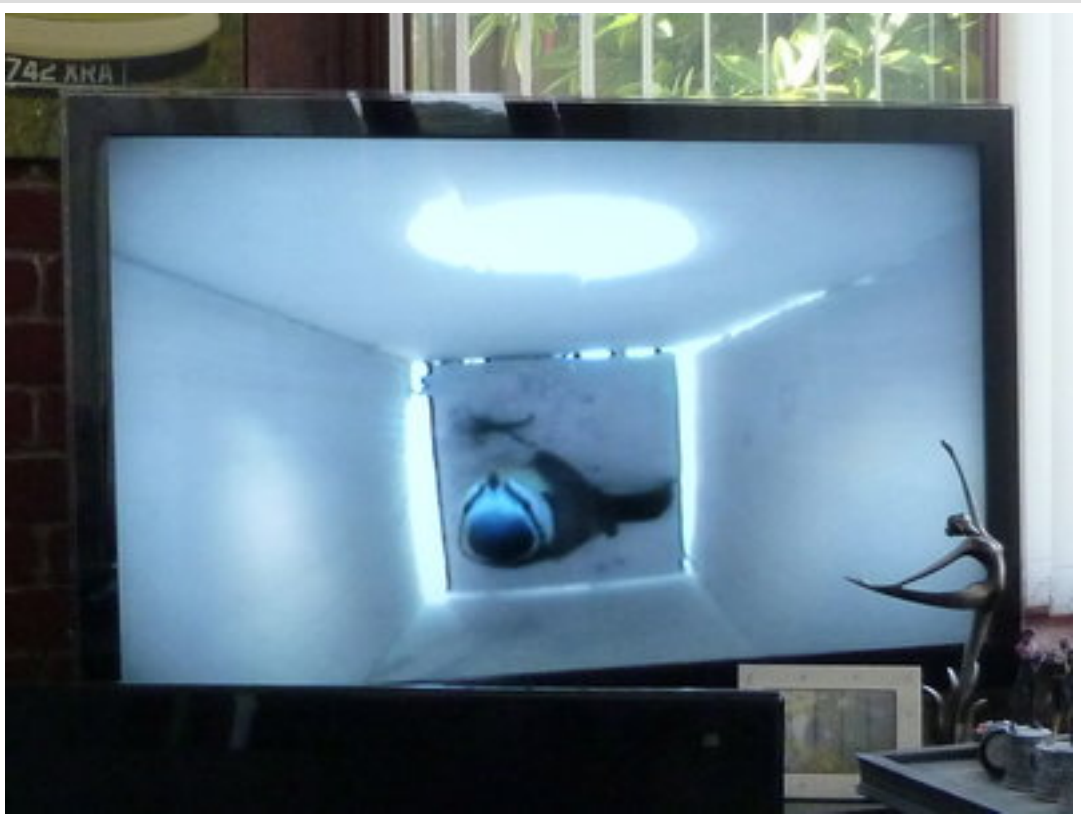
I then noticed that it wasn't just a single bird but that a pair were taking an interest





(Apologies for these photographs, all were taken through the glass conservatory as I didn't want to go outside and perhaps scare them off.)

I plugged in the nest box video lead to my TV to give a covert view of what was going on inside



They were still around the box when I got home mid-afternoon and so my fingers are crossed that this time we will get a nesting pair.

Speaking of birds, I heard my first Blackcap this morning (albeit singing in a rather "It's too cold to be singing my full song" voice). Last year, I heard my first on 23rd March. But I'm still to hear my first Chiffchaff (18th March in 2012).I guess the Spring migrants have been stalled by our cold weather.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 27-Mar-13 08:25 PM GMT

Lovely, uplifting shots there, Hoggers.

Let's hope these Blue Tits move in and provide you with a few weeks of excitement.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Mar-13 04:07 PM GMT

Thanks David. I thought it might be too early for Blue Tits to be nesting, particularly given the cold start to Spring. This morning I couldn't see or hear any of them in the garden but I switched on the TV monitor to discover that something definitely had been going on since yesterday



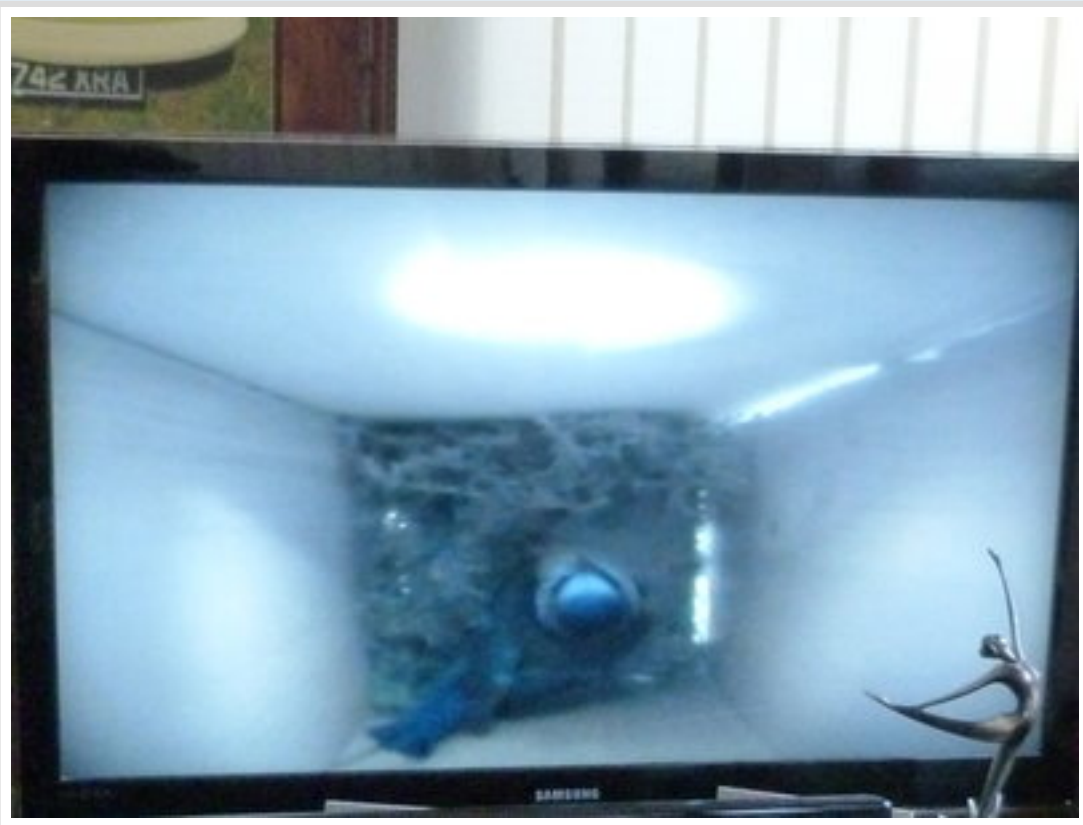
Nest material had appeared at the bottom of the box.

Not long after, I was delighted to see both Blue Tits back at the box. One had a beak full of moss which it then flattened down at the bottom before leaving to collect more



This bird (definitely female as it's the one doing all the housework) vigorously tamps down the moss with its body and then will peck and probe around inside the box as if checking it for cracks or weaknesses.

They've been back and forth throughout the day, so hopefully they mean business



It hasn't been such a bad day down here in Kent, we've enjoyed sunny spells and if you can get out of the chilly breeze, it's rather pleasant.

I decided to get to work on my Butterfly Garden and spent an enjoyable couple of hours planting out some of the plants I've bought over the last few months



There's no real plan or order to what I've done here, It's just a mix of various plants which I hope will grow well together and attract Butterflies and Bees(Bugle, Aster, Valerian,Buddleia, Sedum, Thyme, Rosemary,Michaelmas Daisy, Wall Flower, Verbena etc)

So I've made a fair bit of progress since digging the flower beds back in December and I'm enjoying my garden more and more every day.

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 28-Mar-13 04:40 PM GMT

I'm looking forward to watching your blue tits raise a family, Hoggers! That's a great bit of equipment you have there.

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 29-Mar-13 09:04 PM GMT

It's a clever piece of kit Guy (it's also wired for sound) and certainly robust as it's been in the garden for five years and still works. The Blue Tits have been back today at least three times. We've watched the female scurrying about in the box, flattening down the moss brought in over the last two days. It will be fascinating to watch them rear a brood. All of us in the House of Hoggers have everything crossed for them.

Today we visited Dungeness Beach



Lots of most welcome sunshine but Brrrrr! Cold!

The warmest spot was along by the Power Station wall, so I took a stroll there looking out for flowers. I managed to find only one: Danish Scurvy Grass



But weird place that it is, Dungeness had lots of peculiar things to offer, such as purple Sea-Kale emerging from the shingle



This cactus-like plant (which I think is a Glasswort)



And another succulent-like creation which may or may not be a Stonecrop



(If anyone out there knows exactly what these are I'd love to know!)

That was about it really, apart from a Dandelion and several flowers in the cottage gardens. Although it wouldn't be right to ignore the Gorse which, as everyone who visits Dungeness will know, is almost everywhere. On a day like this it seems to soak up the sun and radiate warmth, together with a delicious Marzipan odour



It made me think of all the Small Coppers that I see around these bushes and along the paths of this estate. Hopefully there's not too much longer to wait.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-Mar-13 08:50 PM GMT

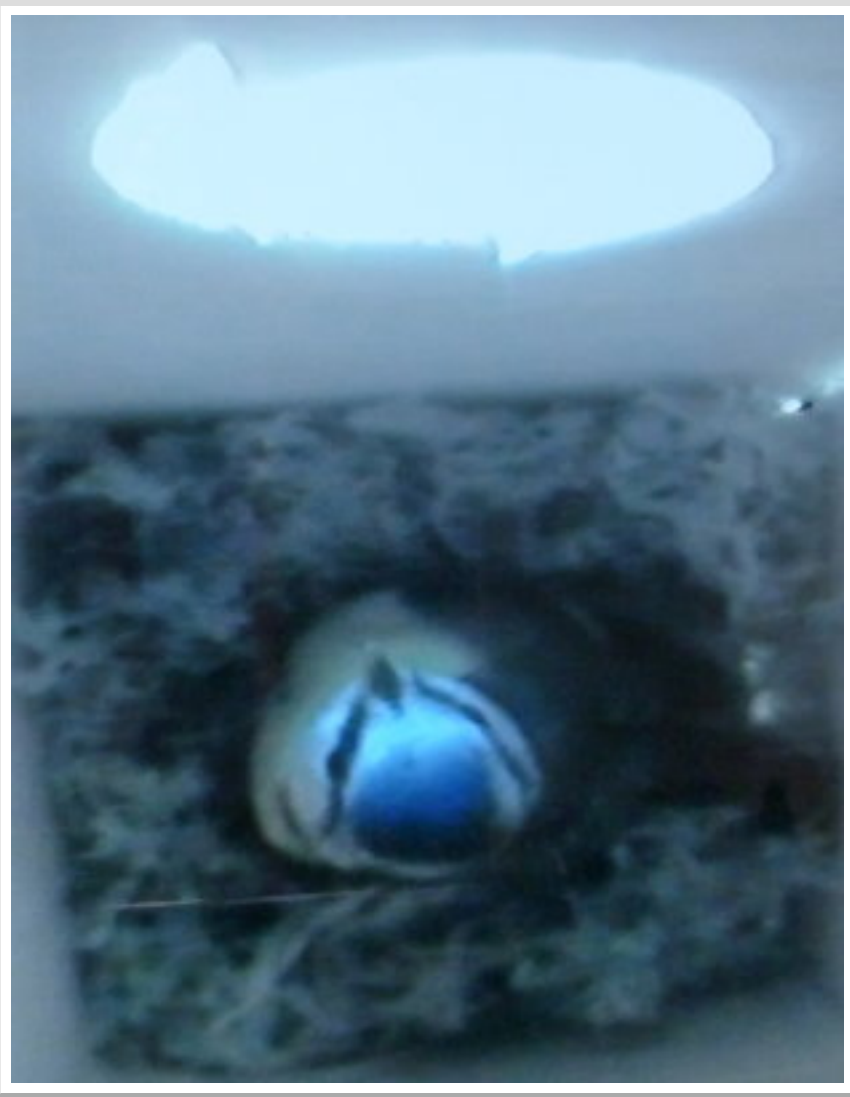
A busy morning for the Blue Tits. I've read that it's the female that makes the nest, so here she is arriving with a beak full of moss



Then into the box



And getting things nice and cosy inside



The male takes a more leisurely approach to home-making, supervising proceedings from a distance



We are obviously rather alike because I spent most of the morning sitting around gazing out of the window while Notable Others in the Household of Hoggers got on with the daily chores.

All did not go quite as smoothly for the Blue Tits as I might have hoped. We had a few seconds of high drama when a burglar appeared



Both Tits were close by and for the 5 or so seconds that this unwanted intruder clung on to the box I feared it would mean the end of their plans to nest here. Fortunately, straight after it had gone the female returned to the box and continued with nest building. Nevertheless, it's a worry, even though the box is sturdy and I don't think there's anyway a Starling could get in.

My Tadpoles had a quieter day. The spawn jelly has almost dissolved while the embryos begin to show definite heads and tails. They are now gathered into groups and although they are generally immobile, I have seen one or two give a slight twitch



It's great fun to be able to watch Nature at work without even having to leave home. I did however take the dogs out and while over the fields I heard and then saw my first Chiffchaff of the year. Edward Thomas said that every note of the Chiffchaff's song is a tiny nail in Winter's coffin. Alleluia to that!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 30-Mar-13 09:20 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

All did not go quite as smoothly for the Blue Tits as I might have hoped. We had a few seconds of high drama when a burglar appeared

Surely, even if that Starling coveted the Blue Tits' nest, it was too big to get through the hole?

I look forward to seeing more images as the birds raise their brood.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Apr-13 05:06 PM GMT

I took the dogs for a long walk this morning. I noticed them both giving me queer looks while we battled against the perishing wind and there came a time when I too began questioning my sanity at choosing to be out there when we could all have been at home by the fire. My goodness it was cold! But there's something rather curious about this extended Winter or Late Spring that I find rather enjoyable. Things are happening, albeit happening slowly and perhaps it's that sense of Slow Motion, of things not rushing past but lingering, that I'm enjoying.

The Lesser Celandines, for example, have yet to come through in strength. Some are battered and on their way out



Which may be a sad sight, but I know there are many more waiting in the wings



And although most of the Snowdrops have finished



I still found many clusters in fine fettle



It feels as if the Celandines and Snowdrops have been around this year for ages. I like that.

Polar though it was this morning, by afternoon the sun had emerged and in sheltered spots it grew pleasantly warm. Out of the wind at the top of my garden I was joined by this Solitary Bee (I think it's an Early Mining Bee) which was making the most both of the sunshine and my own Celandines.



It's the only Bee of any sort that I've seen in about three weeks.

The Blue Tits keep an eye on me as I potter about in the garden. I don't appear to trouble them at all. And I'm happy to report, nor do they seem at all perturbed by attentions of the Gate Crashing Starling. It hasn't put them off nesting here, they have been to-ing and fro-ing all morning.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-Apr-13 11:50 AM GMT

Blackthorn bushes in flower are still few and far between around here so I was happy to find one on my morning walk with the dogs



Most of the flowers have yet to unfurl



But some had plucked up enough courage to face the bitter wind



Certainly brightened up a cold and dreary day.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Apr-13 05:35 PM GMT

This Spring I've seen many more Chiffchaffs than I've heard; it's normally the other way around. I think they haven't the time to sing because as it's been so cold all their energy is being spent in finding what little food they can. It was warmer here today than it has been for weeks. I noticed an increase in

insect numbers on my walk with the dogs, so hopefully the Chiffchaffs larder is on the increase.

I didn't see any butterflies but came across several bees



I was pleased to see more Blackthorn in flower



Some wild growing Daffs



And that the Marsh Marigolds are *almost* coming into flower



I found a fresh batch of frogspawn in my pond this morning which prompted me to take a look at my Tadpoles. As you can see I discovered that they have been busy.

Most are like this one, rather slug-like but with gills



They don't do much, just hang around in the jelly (which has formed a sort of matrix in the tank.)

Others however are much further along the road to Full Frogdom



These characters are active wrigglers, whizzing about like Higgs bosons.

The Blue Tits visit the nest daily although have not been as active with nest building as a week or so ago, but I think they, like the Chiffchaffs, have had to devote all their time to finding food during the cold spell.

I read a lovely quote from Mark Beltaire in today's Times (Weather Eye): "The nicest thing about the promise of Spring is that sooner or later she'll have to keep it."

I can't wait!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Apr-13 04:18 PM GMT

Spring kept her promise: I had the first visitors to my Butterfly Garden, on a glorious warm and sunny afternoon. There I was, on my knees, rooting about in the flowerbeds when a Peacock, hotly pursued by a Comma came winging in at speed. The Peacock didn't attempt to land but flew away quickly. The Comma however, settled on the ground next to one of my Wall Flowers, to bask in the sun. I was armed not with my camera but with my trusty trowel, so I nipped indoors but by the time I'd returned to take its photograph the Comma had gone. Nevertheless, not one but two butterflies in amongst the flowers I've planted specially for them. A Red Letter Day.

I took a couple of pictures of where the butterflies *had* been, just to show how I'm getting on with the planting



I was in Ashford town this morning and saw a Cherry tree in full blossom, so took a picture on my mobile 'phone because it looked so pretty



Conditions looked good for a butterfly hunt this afternoon. I headed down to the river where I thought I'd be in with a chance of a Small Tortoiseshell



Within minutes I had not one but two, gadding about in a sprightly dance. Fortunately for me, they settled



The one in the rear was fluttering his wings whilst getting up close and personal



And all the while this was going on I could hear a Chiffchaff in full song, chiming away in the tree-tops, each and every note "a tiny nail in Winter's

coffin".

I hope all other UKBers have enjoyed as nice a day today as we have down in Kent.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 07-Apr-13 05:06 PM GMT

Lovely to see you've already been rewarded for your work, Hoggers. What have you got for the Whites that'll be emerging soon?

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Apr-13 05:45 PM GMT

I'm glad you mentioned that David: honest answer is Nothing, unless they like Garlic Mustard? But a few weeks ago I thought about Nasturtiums, although I haven't got around to doing anything about them. However, I planned on dropping in to the nursery after work tomorrow, so there's another one for my basket!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 07-Apr-13 07:48 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

I'm glad you mentioned that David: honest answer is Nothing, unless they like Garlic Mustard? But a few weeks ago I thought about Nasturtiums, although I haven't got around to doing anything about them. However, I planned on dropping in to the nursery after work tomorrow, so there's another one for my basket!

How about Honesty? Even if they don't lay eggs on it they seem to be attracted to the flowers.

Perhaps you could 'purloin' a little cuckoo flower growing wild and plant it near to your pond where the grass is that bit boggier?

Nasturtiums are a good idea for later in the year, but if Large Whites spot them the plants will basically be dismembered by the caterpillars.

Re: Hoggers

by ChrisC, 07-Apr-13 08:16 PM GMT

Green veined will lay on the garlic mustard, and honesty is a good call for both orange-tip and have had large white lay eggs on it. you cold always plant a couple of cabbages, I've had moths lay on them too.

Chris

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Apr-13 08:35 PM GMT

Ah! If it's Cuckoo Flowers that they like they're catered for as I have them already (although they look a long way off from flowering.) Cabbages, I'd like to think about but I like the Honesty suggestion - I'll see what I can find in the nursery

Re: Hoggers

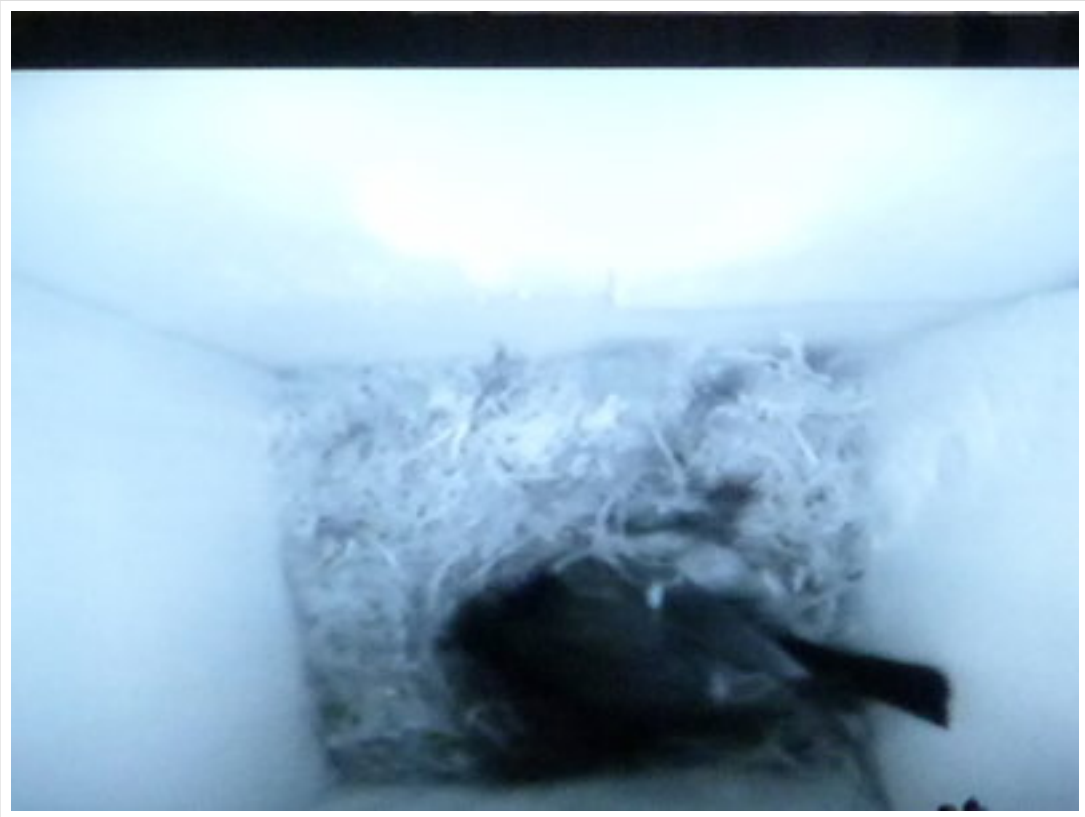
by Hoggers, 11-Apr-13 12:08 PM GMT

A friend who lives on the other side of Ashford mentioned that over the last fortnight Blue Tits had begun to nest in her tit box. This roughly coincides with my own. She also said that she has noticed more green caterpillars in her garden recently.

Nest building continues here



Today I noticed that she is bringing in woolly material, then scuttling about at the bottom to press it down



Before zipping off to get some more



I went up to the wood this morning. It was damp and misty after last night's rain. In all the time I was there I heard only one Chiffchaff but I get the feeling that the the bulk of the migrants will arrive with the promised fine weather over the coming few days.

The woodland floor is now a refreshingly cool green and white mix of Bluebell leaves and Wood Anemones





I also saw a few Hawthorns just coming into leaf as well as some Primroses.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 11-Apr-13 08:16 PM GMT

Uplifting stuff, Hoggers. I do hope your Blue Tits go on to raise a successful brood. So many seem to fall foul of Magpies these days – a real scourge of the garden.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-Apr-13 08:54 PM GMT

They have a lot to contend with here David: Magpies, Jays, Sparrow Hawks , squirrels, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and my neighbour's three cats, to name a few immediate hazards. We have everything crossed for them. So much can go wrong. They've started to nest in "our" box and so naturally enough, they've become "our" Blue Tits. I don't suppose we mean anything to the birds, but that doesn't stop us adopting them, emotionally at least. When we watch them making their brave attempt at raising a family it's impossible not to get emotionally involved. I'll let you know how it goes for them. Cheers.

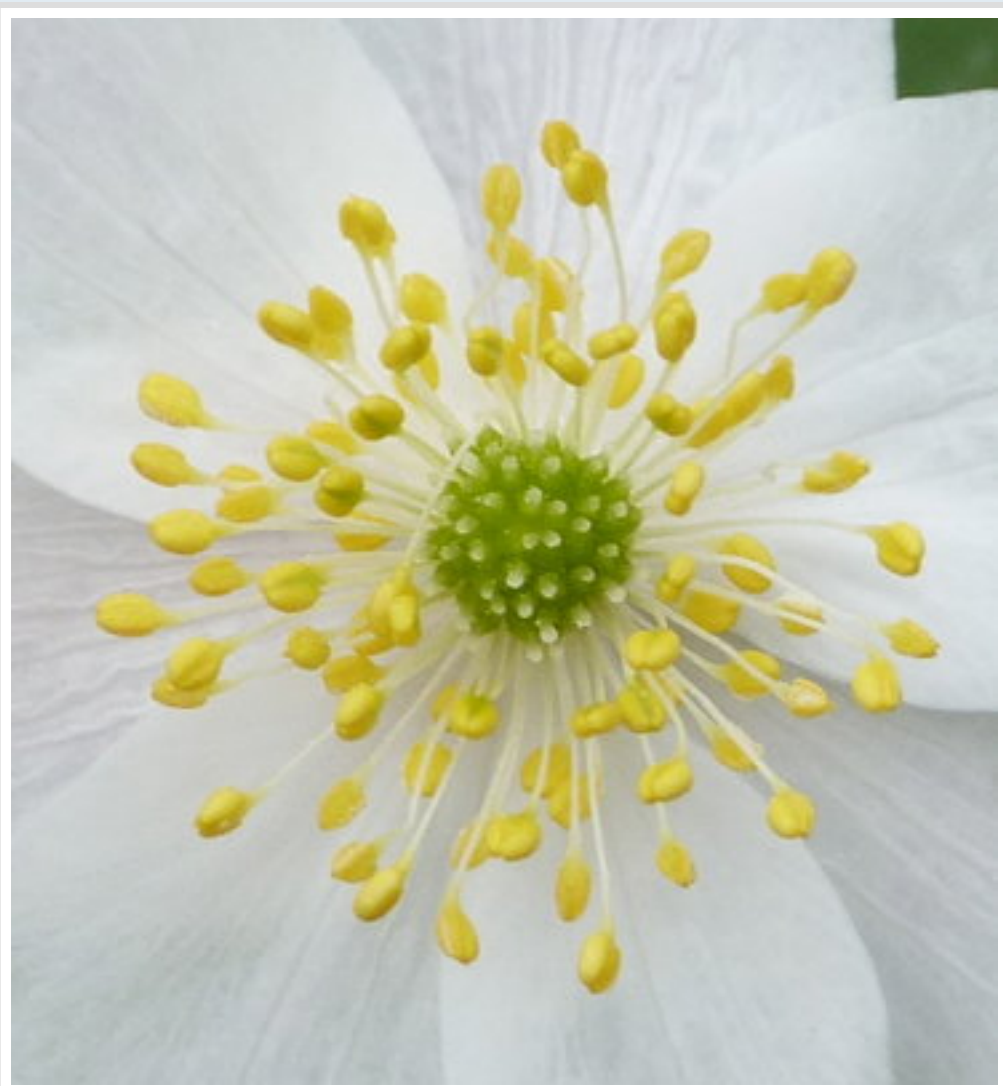
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 13-Apr-13 07:20 PM GMT

The wood near to my home was ringing with the sound of Chiffchaffs this morning, as the arrival of Spring migrants gathers pace. Whilst not able to reproduce their sound for my diary I was able to get a picture of one (well, sort of...) as it sang



Hardly a single tree has yet to show any sign of coming into leaf, but with surprising suddenness, the woodland floor has become a carpet of beautiful white Wood Anemones which hold their heads up to follow the sun



The Anemones are joined by Lesser Celandines and Primroses



And now Ground Ivy too





All of which makes for a stunning Spring bouquet.

Later, as I walked along by the river, I saw my Spaniel do a very good impression of a Pointer: he stopped dead and stared intently at a clump of grass. When I went over to look I saw he'd found a Grass Snake



I had a dog once that was expert at sniffing them out (and their sloughed off skins) so I guess that Grass Snakes must have a distinctive odour. But I never did understand quite why he was so keen on finding them (although he was always mightily pleased with himself when he did.)

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 14-Apr-13 05:38 PM GMT

Although mild this morning it was also wet and windy. I didn't think there was much chance of seeing a butterfly on my walk with the dog but took my camera along anyway. I'm glad I did because settled out of the wind on the riverbank was this Small Tortoiseshell





At around 2pm the sky cleared allowing the sun to get through. Very soon it became gloriously warm. I decided to get back into practice with my deckchair skills (which have been sadly under used since last July). It wasn't long before I'd got myself comfortably ensconced at the top of the garden in full Vitamin D generating sunshine. I'd almost describe it as hot.

The garden is coming along nicely: the Fruits of my Labour!



And I was pleased to see that my first batch of Tadpoles were, like me, taking things easy.



Their content due, no doubt, to the sunny weather and in part at least, to the fact that there are no Killer Goldfish to gobble them up.

I then saw this chap: a Dark-edged Bee-Fly (according to my copy of Richard Lewington's "Guide to Garden Wildlife")

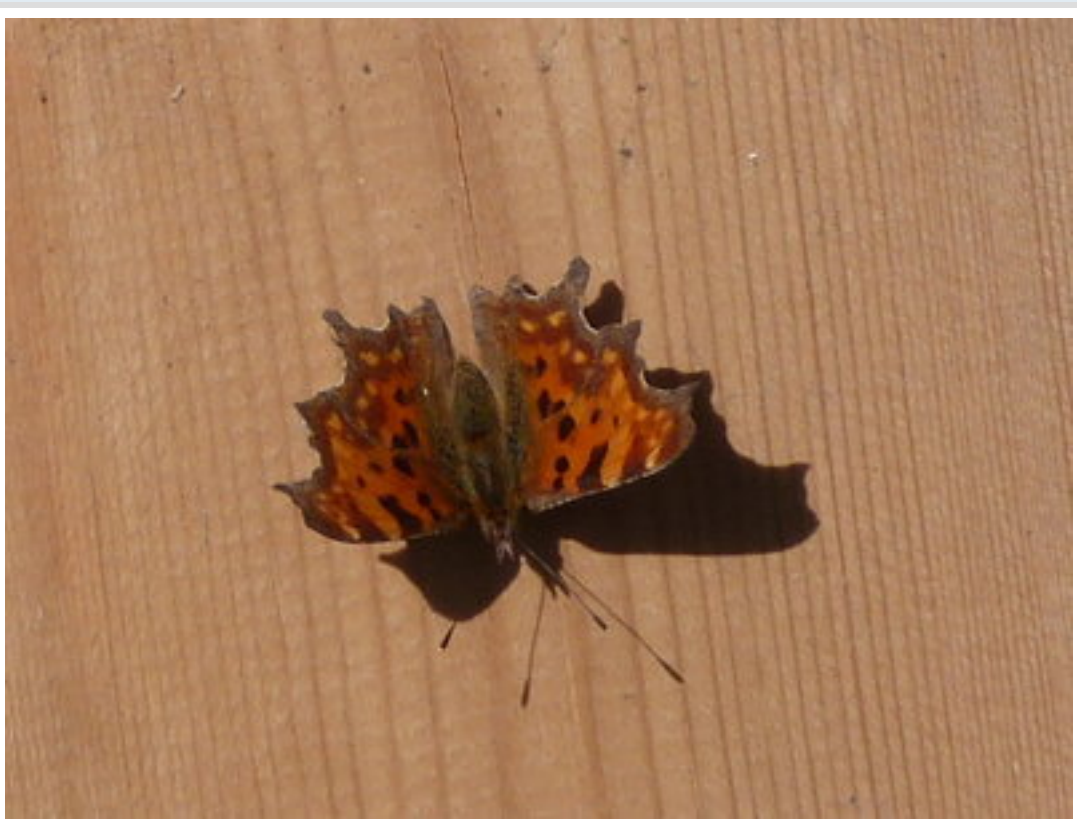


Then to my delight a gorgeous male Brimstone flew the length of my garden before disappearing next-door. Stunning!

As it grew warmer things started to liven up even more. This Peacock landed in the flowerbed



A Brimstone again flew up and down the garden and a Comma paid me a visit too



So that's four species of butterfly for me today, three in my garden. I'm happy with that.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 16-Apr-13 07:41 PM GMT

I heard my first Nightingale of the year this evening on my walk with the dogs. A welcome return.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 16-Apr-13 08:15 PM GMT

There's been a definite change in the behaviour of my Blue Tits this evening. For the first time since she began to build her nest the female visited the box without carrying anything and has stayed inside. She began by settling herself down



There then followed a prolonged preening session



Which ended in her tucking her head in her feathers and nodding off to sleep



This is the first time that she has stayed in the box at night. I think she's getting ready to lay her eggs!

Re: Hoggars

by Hoggars, 17-Apr-13 04:24 PM GMT

The first thing I did on waking this morning was to check on the Blue Tits: the nest was empty, so no eggs yet. The pair have been to-ing and fro-ing this afternoon and I'll be interested to see whether the female spends the night in the box as she did last night.

When I got home from work this afternoon it was very warm and sunny so I grabbed my camera and went for a walk in the woods.

I almost immediately saw my first Red Admiral of the year but he wasn't being sociable enough to let me take his picture. As he flew away I heard a Nightingale and my first Willow Warbler too, along with several Chiffchaffs.

Further along the path I came across a Small Tortoiseshell which had settled on a monumental pile of dog poo



Then as the sun seemed to grow stronger I found not one but three Peacocks



At times all three would chase one another, spiralling up high into the blue sky before breaking off and settling back down on the path

A Comma was flitting about near-by



I then moved to another part of the wood where I came across first one and then three Brimstones, all busily on patrol. I thought I'd attempt to get a photo of one as it flew past





But then to my surprise it landed and allowed me to get up close



My butterfly stalking is notoriously bad; the more careful I try to be the more I blunder about, and so knowing how flighty Brimstones are at this time of year I began to wonder why this one seemed so tolerant

And when I saw a big fly land on it as if it were a dead leaf yet still the Brimstone remained motionless I began to fear that the poor thing had expired right before my eyes.



But that wasn't the case and as I got practically nose to nose with it, it flew up and away. Five species of butterfly in one short walk: I was very pleased indeed.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 17-Apr-13 05:09 PM GMT

Excellent stuff, Hoggers. I've only ever once seen a male Brimstone settle for anything other than a few seconds in springtime.

Looks like things are hotting up in your neck of the woods.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Apr-13 10:06 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Excellent stuff, Hoggers. I've only ever once seen a male Brimstone settle for anything other than a few seconds in springtime.

Looks like things are hotting up in your neck of the woods.

That's my experience too, David:the most I'd hoped for was a blurred photo of one as it flew away;when this one not only settled but stayed put for at least 5 minutes I genuinely thought something was seriously wrong with it and that it might even have died right before my eyes! Happily that wasn't the case.

Just a quick update to say that the female Blue Tit returned to the box at around 7pm and spent the night there again. No eggs but she looks as if she's getting everything prepared.

And a quick note to say that I heard and saw my first Common Whitethroat on my Patch this morning, so another Spring migrant has returned safely.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 20-Apr-13 08:29 PM GMT

On my morning walk with the dogs I came across no less that six Small Tortoiseshells



And one Peacock



By the river I met with this chap



I think it's a Marsh Frog.

After lunch I went for a squelch around Hothfield Bog with Brother Hoggles. It felt like Peacock City. We saw eight in all, often watching them chase each other high into the air. I thought this one in particular was very attractive



We saw several of these beetles (I believe it's a Tiger)

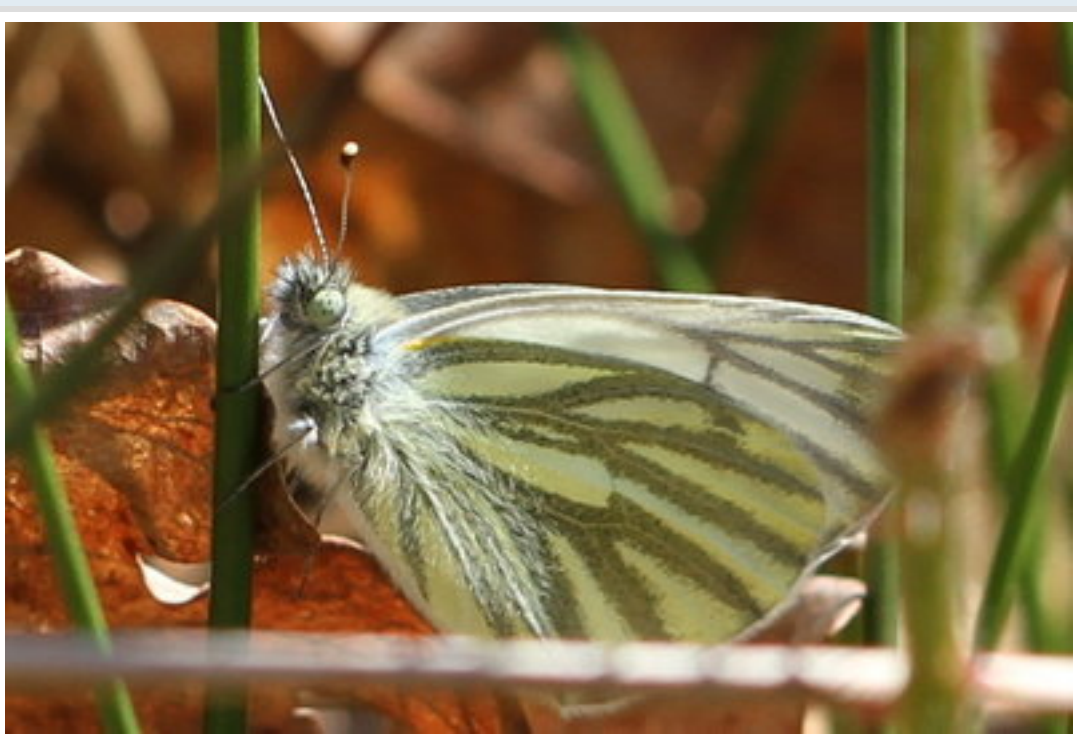


Until I looked at the photo I didn't know they went in for a sort of Disco-Glitter effect on the head and thorax. Rather fetching.

The Marsh Marigolds are out at last



But best of all was coming upon my first Green-veined White of the year





It was rather flighty and difficult to approach so I had to peer at it through the undergrowth to get a picture. A beautiful butterfly and a rather startling sight, being the only white butterfly in that area. I guess this one had emerged only today into our Wonderful World.

This sighting of a GVW is four weeks later than the first I saw in 2012 and it's the only White I've seen thus far.

As for my Blue Tits, the female arrives every evening at about 7.30 to settle down in the box for the night but as yet, no eggs.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 21-Apr-13 03:33 PM GMT

I dusted off my sun hat today for the first (and hopefully not the last) time this year, then set off with the dogs. I saw three Peacocks and five Small Tortoiseshells



I was happy to see that this one had found itself a good source of nectar



The Marsh Frog was sunbathing in exactly the same spot as yesterday



Handsome Devil.

I then did some gardening



I'm pleased with how it has come along since I began work last December. So much better than just a lawn



Every time I see a Bee or Butterfly in the garden it feels like I'm greeting a favoured guest.

While establishing a new flowerbed today I saw both male and female Brimstones and a Comma, as well as this pair of Bee-Flys



The Blackbirds have been busy all day taking worms to the single chick that they've managed to raise. The nest is in the Ivy by our washing-line, so they're very used to seeing us during the day but we all try to leave them in peace as much as possible. I took a quick snap of the chick today as he peered out at me from the shadows



He looks about ready to leave the nest. When I think of all the cats and Magpies that we have hereabouts, the Blackbirds have just about beaten the odds.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Apr-13 04:02 PM GMT

Five Small Tortoiseshells and a Peacock on my morning walk with the dogs. No sign of any Whites yet.

This afternoon I stopped off at Wye Nature Reserve on my way home from work. It was blustery but generally warm with sunny spells. I saw only one butterfly, this Peacock



However, it was well worth the visit for the flowers alone. The chalk hillside near the view point is covered in Violets



With Ground Ivy



Wild Strawberry



And a personal favourite of mine, Cowslip



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Apr-13 10:38 PM GMT

Sorry Guys- that was a Barren Strawberry, not a Wild One. If a plant doesn't have a label on it like the ones at the nursey, I'm stuck.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Apr-13 03:23 PM GMT

Sun hats and shorts are the order down here in Kent today. It's absolutely gorgeous:gardens,hedgerows,fields and woods all coming into leaf and bloom. Wood Anemones in their thousands



Including a bunch of pink ones



With Celandines,Ground Ivy,Primroses,Dog Violets



And at last, a very few Bluebells





This Sun Spurge also caught my eye



As I walked around the wood I listened to Nightingales, Black Caps, Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers all in full song together with Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Robins. I saw a Tree Creeper take a feather to where it is building its nest





I saw three Small Tortoiseshells enjoying the sun



and two Commas and two Peacocks.

I walked along the pathway and saw a male Brimstones heading towards me so I pressed the shutter button on my camera to get a snap of it as it flew past. Nothing happened. The battery was dead. What happened next is a perfect illustration of Sod's Law: rather than fly past and disappear over the hedge, the Brimstone was joined by a second male, they briefly tumbled about each other, then BOTH settled on some Dandelions within five feet of where I was standing and stayed there for a good two minutes! Bugger.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 23-Apr-13 07:57 PM GMT

Great stuff Hoggers, loving all the Wood Anemones 😊

Cheers

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Apr-13 08:55 PM GMT

Thanks Neil – they're putting on a grand show just now. Not to be missed! Cheers.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 23-Apr-13 09:22 PM GMT

Surprised you didn't see more butterflies given the ideal conditions, Hoggers.

Here in S. Wales, things have remained frustrating all day – fine and sunny till 9.30am followed by persistent cloud cover till 6pm whereupon the sun broke through and blue skies took over. 😞

More of the same tomorrow, sadly.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 24-Apr-13 08:40 AM GMT

Those days when the sun only comes out just before it sets are very frustrating David. Yesterday was glorious yet no sign of a Small White let alone an Orange Tip – both long overdue. Hopefully not too much longer to wait.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 24-Apr-13 05:04 PM GMT

I got home to shouts of "There's a little blue butterfly in the garden!" Sure enough when I went to look I saw a Holly Blue bimbbling about along the Ivy hedge. My first sighting for this butterfly in both 2011 and 2012 was 6th April and always in my garden. They behave in exactly the same way, giving me the run around in a game of Hide and Seek, flitting from my neighbours Holly Tree to the Ivy in my garden then to the conifers in the next garden along.

My first Holly Blue of 2013 was no different and led me on a merry dance. He eventually took pity on me and settled, albeit rather inaccessibly, and I managed to get a few photographs before he vanished





If the sun comes out tomorrow I'm sure he'll be back and we'll play our game all over again.

Re: Hoppers

by David M, 24-Apr-13 06:27 PM GMT

They really can be a tease, Holly Blues.

Shame this male wasn't lower down as he seems quite content to bask wings open.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 25-Apr-13 07:16 PM GMT

Another gorgeous hot sunny day. Out with the dogs this morning I came across eight butterflies in total and all were Peacocks



Back home I caught a few glimpses of the Holly Blue flitting along the gardens but he didn't settle. Nonetheless, a lovely thing to watch.

I'm surprised that I haven't seen a Small White yet: the fields where I take the dogs are usually busy with them by now and in past Springs I'll see them and Orange Tips too on my cross-country drive to Canterbury. Yet not a sign today even though the weather seems perfect.

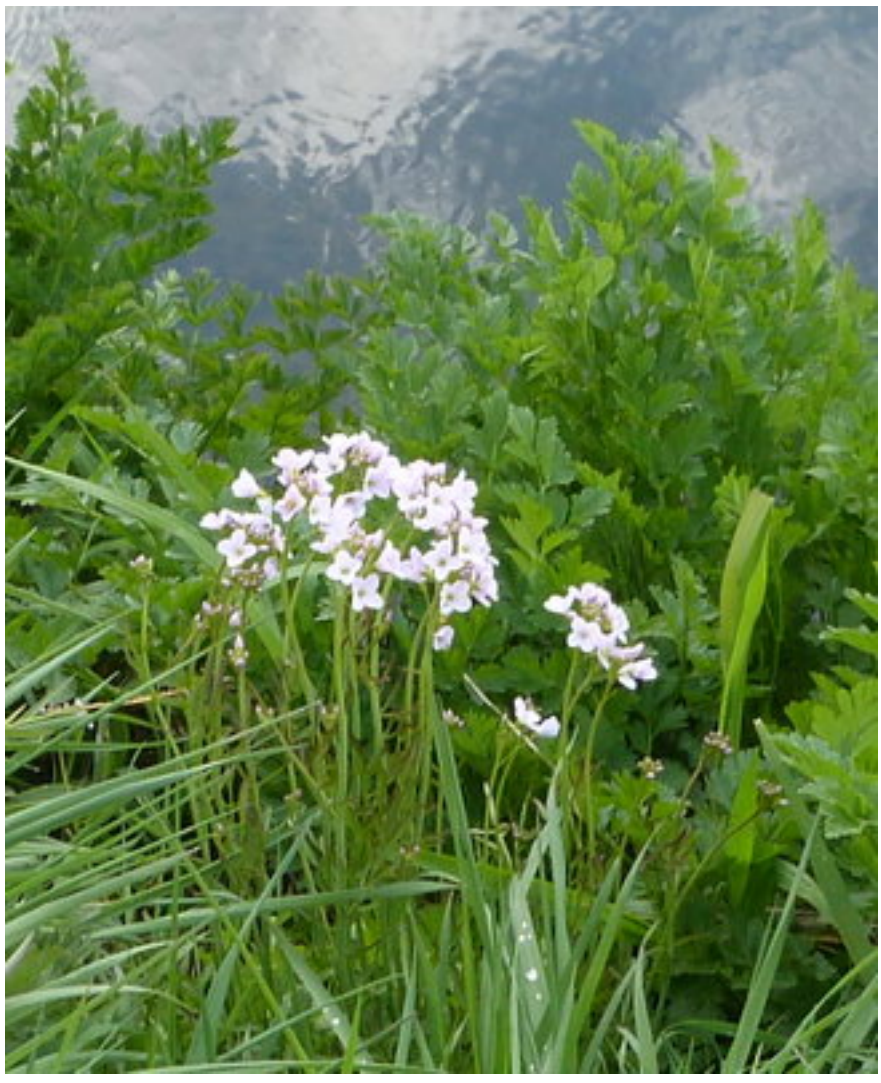
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Apr-13 07:37 PM GMT

Lots of sunshine today down here in Kent but frustratingly cold. On a long walk with the dogs I saw four Small Tortoiseshells along the river



But no other butterflies whatsoever. Although I was pleased to find Cuckoo Flowers on the riverbank



And admired the soft delicacy of its flowers



The absence of Orange Tips was keenly felt.

Up at the wood still no sign of Speckled Woods but there were plenty of Bee-Flys



And growing up amongst the Primroses, Celandines and Dog Violets I found this Green Alkanet



Before leaving the wood I couldn't resist taking another photo of the Wood Anemones which are gracing the woodland floor in their thousands



But of course what I'd most wanted to see were butterflies, of which there next to none: the sun was shining but the temperature remained stubbornly low. Still, there's always tomorrow.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Apr-13 04:47 PM GMT

When I got up this morning the first thing I noticed was that yesterday's chilly breeze had gone. The sun was shining and at the top of my garden at only 9am it felt warm. I thought that maybe today I'd see some butterflies.

Around 10am I saw my first of the day, a Peacock on my Wall Flowers



I can't tell you how much pleasure it gives me to see butterflies and bees enjoying the flowers that I've planted especially for them. It's a wonderful feeling. Planting my Butterfly Garden is the best thing I've done in years.

I'd photographed the Peacock and was turning to go when I just happened to look down and see this chap before I would have trodden on him



My first Speckled Wood of the year





And I could hardly believe my eyes when a second flew by, to be quickly seen off the premises by the first. I really wasn't expecting to see two Speckled Woods in the garden today, let alone that one of them should land by my foot.

I clearly do better letting the butterflies find me rather than the other way around.

However, when out with the dogs this morning my good fortune continued



My first Orange Tip of the season



As for many others, the most eagerly awaited moment of my butterfly year is seeing the first Orange Tip. With just one glimpse of this wonderful creature all suddenly seems right with the world. Pure magic.

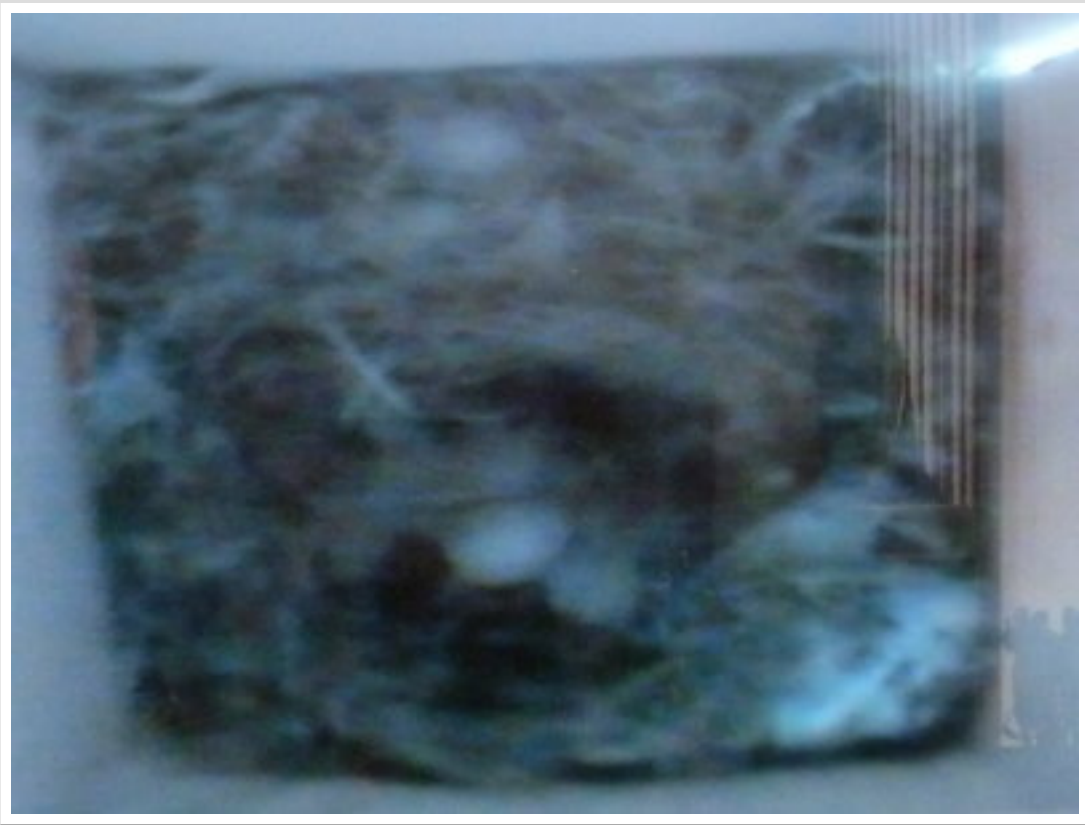
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 29-Apr-13 06:57 PM GMT

A quick update on our Blue Tits.

Every night since 16th April our Blue Tit has returned to the box at around 7.30pm to go to sleep until morning. Early on the 27th April we saw that an egg had appeared in the nest which she then left unattended until evening.

Today when I switched on the "Blue Tit Cam" I counted three eggs



She frequently returns during the day but doesn't stay for more than a few seconds. She sometimes partially covers the eggs before leaving.

I don't know whether it's odd or quite normal for a bird to lay eggs and then leave them for the day. I rather thought she'd lay her clutch and sit on them until they hatched.

But then I've read that they will lay up to ten eggs, which I'd guess would be asking rather a lot of a Blue Tit if it had to be done in one sitting...

Re: Hoggers

by ChrisC, 29-Apr-13 07:03 PM GMT

gardening for wildlife is very rewarding, though come the height of summer you won't want to leave the garden in case you miss anything. also come the summer the plants may get visited by night too. Nature is 24/7 😊

Chris

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-Apr-13 04:39 PM GMT

An early finish at work today so I stopped off at Wye for a couple of hours' butterflying



Lovely place. My Mum and Dad used to bring me here when I was a babe- in- arms and I've been coming back ever since.

This afternoon I quickly came across my first Early Purple Orchid of the year



Then the first of three Green Hairstreaks



Lovely little butterfly. I hadn't noticed the orange on the antenna tip before.

I didn't see any other butterflies there but on the drive home I saw what was probably a Small White in a garden in the village of Brook.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-May-13 04:26 PM GMT

I'm trying to make the most of this spell of fine weather by stopping off on my way home from work to do some butterflying. Today I went to a wood near Wye. In the hour that I had there I came across 7 Peacocks, all of them on Dandelions



One had seen better days but was still going strong



The show of Dandelions this Spring on roadside verges ,roundabouts and such like is quite spectacular and, from the number of Peacocks and Tortoiseshells I've seen on them,something clearly important to the butterflies. I've been admiring them with a degree of trepidation as I don't suppose it will be long before the Council has them mown down.

I saw Primroses,Cuckoo Flower, Garlic Mustard and Greater Stitchwort in flower, together with a few clumps of beautiful Wood Sorrel



A male Orange Tip patrolled the woodland edge



This was one of two that I saw today.

I also enjoyed watching Brimstones



And for a bit of fun tried to photograph one in flight





Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 03-May-13 03:25 PM GMT

Every morning I inspect my flowerbeds and every morning I've noticed that my Asters are slowly disappearing. It doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to solve this mystery: Slugs. Last night I armed myself with a torch and there they were: some were big and some were small but all were well fed and ugly; a host of marauding Slugs. I nabbed as many as I could find, put them in a pot and deposited them over my garden fence into the field. However a friend of mine told me that Slugs Home rather like Pigeons and Prodigal Sons. I don't know if he's pulling my leg but I'll be out there again tonight waiting just in case.

My Blue Tit is sitting on 8 eggs. Yesterday for the first time she arrived at around 2pm and stayed on the nest. She's still there now so it looks as if incubation has begun in earnest, nicely timed to the pleasant weather conditions.

As my garden is being actively consumed by molluscs I thought that I'd better make the most of it while it lasts, especially on such a sunny day.

So today I've seen two Holly Blues, gambolling here and there, never letting me get very near. One at last settled high in my Plum Tree and I got this photo whilst balancing on a deck-chair



And here he is, flitting away



I had fast fly-pasts by a Small White and Speckled Wood and then my first (albeit rather battle-worn) Large White of the year, which spent some time on my as yet uneaten Wall Flowers



Three Peacocks and a single Small Tortoiseshell completes my butterfly tally for today.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 04-May-13 04:23 PM GMT

Leaden skies and a cool, brisk wind greeted me this morning. I checked the Blue Tits. All seems fine: nine eggs with the female on the nest for most of the day. The male pops in now and again or calls her out for a brief foray around the garden





Last night at 10pm I went on a Slug Hunt in my garden. I think this must be a sure sign that I'm getting old or losing my mind (both, probably): Friday night and I'm in the garden looking for Slugs. Welcome to my World. But I don't care what the neighbours think: I caught 20 of the Little Bug**rs. That'll teach 'em to mess with me.

One interesting thing that I discovered on my Nocturnal Mission was that Tadpoles party at night: my ponds looked like mosh pits at a Punk Rock concert with hundreds of Taddies bubbling up at the surface.

With a high, cold wind and the odd shower I didn't expect to see any butterflies today on my walk with the dogs but down by the river I inadvertently startled this Small Tortoiseshell



Then by pure fluke managed to spot a roosting Orange Tip





Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 05-May-13 07:14 PM GMT

Superb weather and the first day this season that I've seen butterflies in appreciable numbers. I got off to a good start this morning in the garden with two Holly Blues and a Speckled Wood





Then out with dogs, a Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, 6 male Orange Tips



And one female, together with 2 Green-veined Whites.

I once met a fellow butterfly enthusiast who said that his favourite butterfly was whatever butterfly he happened to be photographing at the time. I can understand what he meant by this. For me however, the Small Copper holds a very special place in my heart. I have never forgotten the first time I ever saw one: I was about eight years old and sitting on a dry mud track with my dog on a hot Summer's day when a Small Copper landed right in front of me. I thought it was the most gorgeous living thing I'd ever seen and I ran back home to look it up in a book, firmly believing it must be extraordinarily rare.

Yesterday I saw DavidM's excellent diary entry which showed that Small Coppers are back for 2013. So I decided today to visit a good site for them near my home: Samphire Hoe, near Dover. I also thought I might be in with a chance of finding the Early Spider Orchid as Samphire Hoe is one of the very few places on Earth where this orchid can be found.

I got there at around 11.30am and already there were good numbers of Small Whites on the wing



But a notice by the visitor centre came as a bit of a disappointment: "EARLY SPIDER ORCHIDS ARE LATE THIS YEAR"!!!

Nonetheless, I decided to try and find a Late-Running Early Spider Orchid. I was in luck



What a stunner. I found only 4 in flower but I'm sure that numbers will increase very soon.
Then after much searching I finally found what I was really looking for: a lone Small Copper





Good to see the little fellow back.

Before returning home I stopped in at Wye and saw a Brimstone, 2 Orange Tips and one Green Hairstreak. A fine day's butterflying.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 05-May-13 07:55 PM GMT

Delighted you found your Small Copper quarry, Hoggers.

Yes, like you I'm particularly pleased to reacquaint myself with this insect in 2013. I know butterflies are resilient creatures, but I genuinely feared for this species last spring as they emerged early due to the warm March and then got obliterated by the atrocious 6 weeks that followed.

Here's hoping that they thrive in 2013! 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-May-13 05:24 PM GMT

By the time I'd finished work at Canterbury the morning's gloom and drizzle had given way to warm sunshine, so I dropped in at Denge Wood on my way home.

The first butterfly that came my way was a female Orange Tip which appeared to be laying her eggs on Garlic Mustard





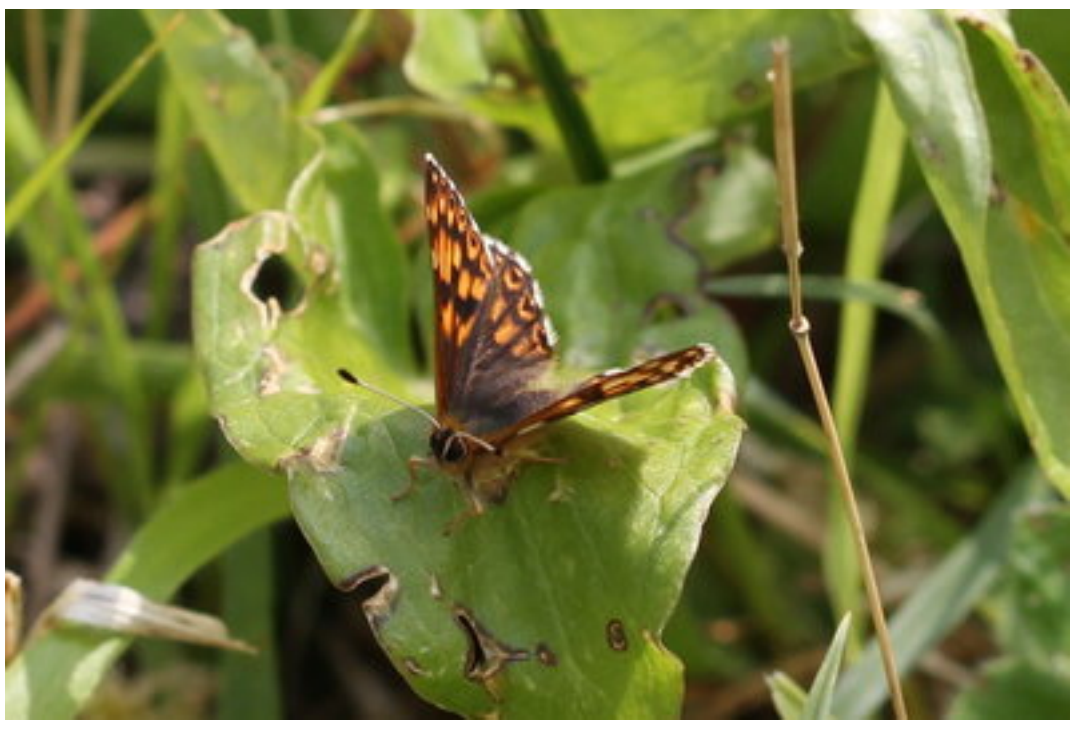
She then parked-up for a rest



Large Whites, Green-veined Whites and male Orange Tips were in busily patrolling up and down the rides, joined by a Speckled Wood and a Peacock.
I made my way to Bonsai Bank where after a bit of a search I found a Duke



Master of his Primrose Kingdom





He was the only one that I found. I spent a good hour in his company. Marvellous.

On the way home I visited Wye and saw two Brimstones, a Large White and five Green Hairstreaks



A great afternoon chasing Butterflies.

On a more mundane note, I've managed to eject 20 slugs each night from my garden. Now a friend of mine did tell me that they "home", and I'm beginning to wonder whether he was pulling my leg after all....

Re: Hoggers

by Pawpawsaurus, 07-May-13 05:46 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

On a more mundane note, I've managed to eject 20 slugs each night from my garden. Now a friend of mine did tell me that they "home", and I'm beginning to wonder whether he was pulling my leg after all....

He may well not have been. Radio 4's *Material World* programme ran an experiment a few years ago to try to determine whether snails had a homing instinct. The [\[url=http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/so-you-want-to-be-a-scientist/experiments/homing-snails/results/:2gcmd3rn\]](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/so-you-want-to-be-a-scientist/experiments/homing-snails/results/:2gcmd3rn) results [\[url:2gcmd3rn\]](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/so-you-want-to-be-a-scientist/experiments/homing-snails/results/:2gcmd3rn) suggested that they did. Who knows whether the same is true for slugs?

Paul

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-May-13 08:42 PM GMT

Thanks for the tip-off, Pawpawsaurus :Any Slugs I catch tonight I'll take with me to Canterbury tomorrow morning and see how their "homing" instinct copes with the one-way traffic system.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 07-May-13 08:45 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Thanks for the tip-off, Pawpawsaurus :Any Slugs I catch tonight I'll take with me to Canterbury tomorrow morning and see how their "homing" instinct copes with the one-way traffic system.

I wish I lived near to you, Hoggers.

Our chickens would be positively DELIGHTED to receive large numbers of slugs.

I'd happily exchange the protein diet for 2 dozen fresh eggs.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-May-13 08:54 PM GMT

I had no idea that Chickens eat Slugs,David! Now that gives me an idea..!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 07-May-13 09:09 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

I had no idea that Chickens eat Slugs,David! Now that gives me an idea..!

Careful now!

There's a downside.

Chickens will devour any slug/earwig/worm, etc that they come into contact with. That's a given.

Sadly they'll also lay waste to your garden greenery at the same time (they adore vegetation almost as much as they adore live animal protein).

You'd figure that some science whizz kid could breed a chicken that turned its beak up at greenery whilst at the same time destroying the insect life.

Not happened yet though, unfortunately. 😞

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-May-13 04:17 PM GMT

Things have changed rapidly from not seeing a butterfly for weeks on end to seeing at least one every day.

We had rain this morning which as a newly fledged "Gardener" I welcomed on behalf of my plants. When I got home from work the sun was out and I had three Small Whites, a Speckled Wood and two Holly Blues in the garden.

I've certainly suffered from the holly blues recently: they've tricked and baffled me as I blunder around the garden after them trying to get a photograph. I've spent most of my time watching them flying away but at least I've come to learn just how active a little butterfly they can be, more often on the move than not and covering a relatively large territory. One at least will roost high in my neighbour's conifers at evening, stir himself on a warm morning at around 9am then zoom around at least five back gardens for the rest of the day.

I've given up chasing them and instead will "stake-out" the garden hedge. This tactic paid off today and I managed to get closer to one than I have done in the past





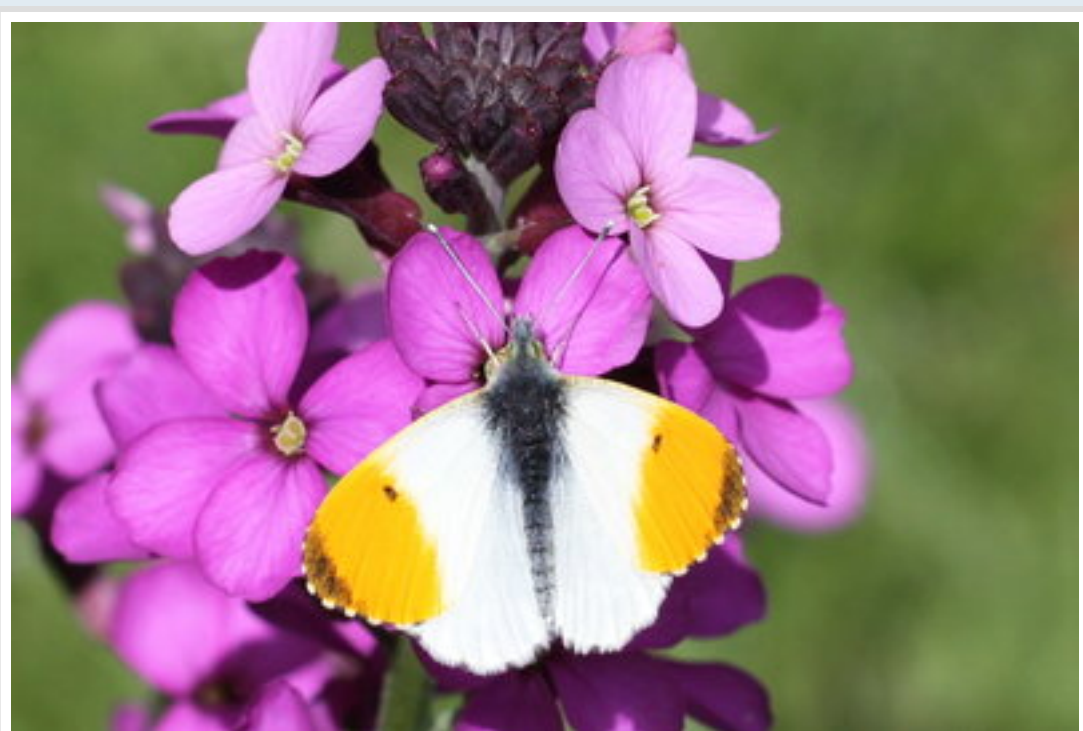
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 09-May-13 03:56 PM GMT

I'm Chuffed to say that I can now add Orange Tip to my Butterfly Garden List



He just happened to catch my eye when I went up the garden this afternoon, roosting against the very blustery and mostly overcast conditions. On the rare occasions when it brightened up he'd go for a fly around but kept to the flowerbeds where I have Garlic Mustard and Wall Flowers



But these spells were all too brief and he soon landed, hanging on tightly against the wind



Certainly brightened up my day.

Re: Hoggers

by ChrisC, 09-May-13 06:37 PM GMT

excellent news and congratulations Hoggers. the hard work has paid off.

Chris

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 09-May-13 06:38 PM GMT

Orange Tip on Wallflower is a delightful colour contrast, Hoggers. Hopefully that won't be the last time you'll see them visiting your flower bed.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 10-May-13 06:45 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments Chris and David. I live in a built-up area and so was thrilled to find an Orange Tip in the garden.

I don't know what the weather was like in your part of the country yesterday but here in Kent we had very strong winds and some rain too. I was interested to see what the Orange Tip did as the afternoon became progressively more cold and blustery so I kept an eye on it.

At about 4pm it settled on one of my Wallflowers, nearly at the top of the flower spike (and so exposed to the wind) and apparently "switched off". It just held on tight. I checked on it again at 7pm and there was no change. At 10pm I was hunting slugs (my total catch per night has diminished from 20-30 of the Little Beasties right down to just 4 last night so maybe I'm winning this particular War..for now...) and there still was the Orange Tip in exactly the same position. It's the first time I've gone looking for butterflies by torchlight! But it certainly was unpleasant out there in the wind and rain, cold too, and seeing it there, so delicate and fragile, in the dark ,hanging on against the elements was quite an eye opener for me. Rough winds do shake the Darling Butterflies of May.

This morning dawned overcast and cool but the high wind of last night had died down. I checked on the Orange Tip at 7am and there he was still clinging on



I had to leave home at 9am but looked in on him before I left. The sun was just starting to peek through the clouds and when I looked at the butterfly I could just see a faint orange glow through his wings



almost as if he was warming up the engine.

I'd have loved to stay with him longer but couldn't. When I got home this afternoon he had gone, but the sun was shining and I've no doubt he had places to be. I hope he has a better night.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-13 07:24 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Great reports and photos 😊

In my diary last year I followed the progress of an Orange Tip that settled up on some Forget-me-not and stayed there for 4 days of gloom and rain in a quite exposed position. After the 4 days the sun came out and he took off and carried on his way looking surprisingly fresh. He certainly gave me an appreciation of how tough these delicate looking creature really are.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 10-May-13 09:18 PM GMT

Hi Neil – Four days! Butterflies never cease to Amaze!

Cheers

Re: Hoggers

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

Yes, I was pretty amazed myself.

More details start near the bottom of page 5 of my diary,

[viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5424&start=80](#)

Cheers.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-May-13 09:15 PM GMT

I managed to see a few butterflies today despite the fickle weather. My morning walk with the hounds yielded only one butterfly, this Small White, which was hunkering down in the grass out of the cold wind



I was glad to see it as,unusually for the location,very few of them have been there this year.

Around lunch time the sun had struggled through the clouds and all of a sudden (although fleetingly) my garden was Butterfly Central: I saw two Holly Blues and a Speckled Wood whizzing about, and a more sedate Large White on my Wall Flowers



Most exciting of all, just as I stepped out of the conservatory I saw this Green-veined White



I don't get many of these in my garden and I wondered if it had been enticed in by the Garlic Mustard that I've planted. I think it's a female (?) so maybe on the look out for somewhere to lay eggs.

Sadly the spell of sunshine was all too brief, it clumped over with thick black clouds and started to rain. Still, it saves me having to water my plants, although I've a feeling that the moist conditions will encourage a small army of hungry Slugs to slither out of their hiding places for a bite of supper. I'll be waiting!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 11-May-13 09:25 PM GMT

Great shot of the GVW, Hoggers. A cool weather image if ever I saw one.

We all hate this kind of weather, but with perseverance you can get far closer to a butterfly than would be possible under normal conditions.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-May-13 10:01 PM GMT

That's very kind of you to say David, thank you. It was a pure fluke. I have no luck photographing Whites, the results are almost invariably over-exposed. I didn't do anything different with this one, just pressed the shutter button. Maybe at that moment the sun went behind a cloud, I don't remember. A lovely butterfly nonetheless.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 11-May-13 10:06 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

I have no luck photographing Whites, the results are almost invariably over-exposed.

Me too, but when the sun is BEHIND clouds then over-exposure is less of an issue.

Much as I love hot, sunny weather, there are times when it simply isn't welcome. For instance, I would never go to the S. Wales High Brown Fritillary site in 25c/full sun. It would be pointless as all the butterflies would be hyperactive and images would be virtually impossible to come by. Better to go on a part cloudy day when the quarry will be forced into occasional torpor.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 12-May-13 03:56 PM GMT

The sun was shining this morning and I thought I'd better make the most of it as the weather forecast for the rest of the week isn't up to much.

Things got off to a good start on the dog walk when I came across two Orange Tips at around 8am



Once home I saw a Speckled Wood and three Holly Blues in the garden, one of which came down for awhile



I then set off to Dungeness. It's the best place I know for Small Coppers and also a butterfly that I haven't managed to see this season, the Grizzled Skipper.

As I walked past the Power Station I soon came upon this little beauty



Then another one



A real gem of a butterfly. I saw only one more but it looks as if their season has finally got off the starting block.

Close by I found a Peacock



And also saw two Large Whites and a Small Tortoiseshell.

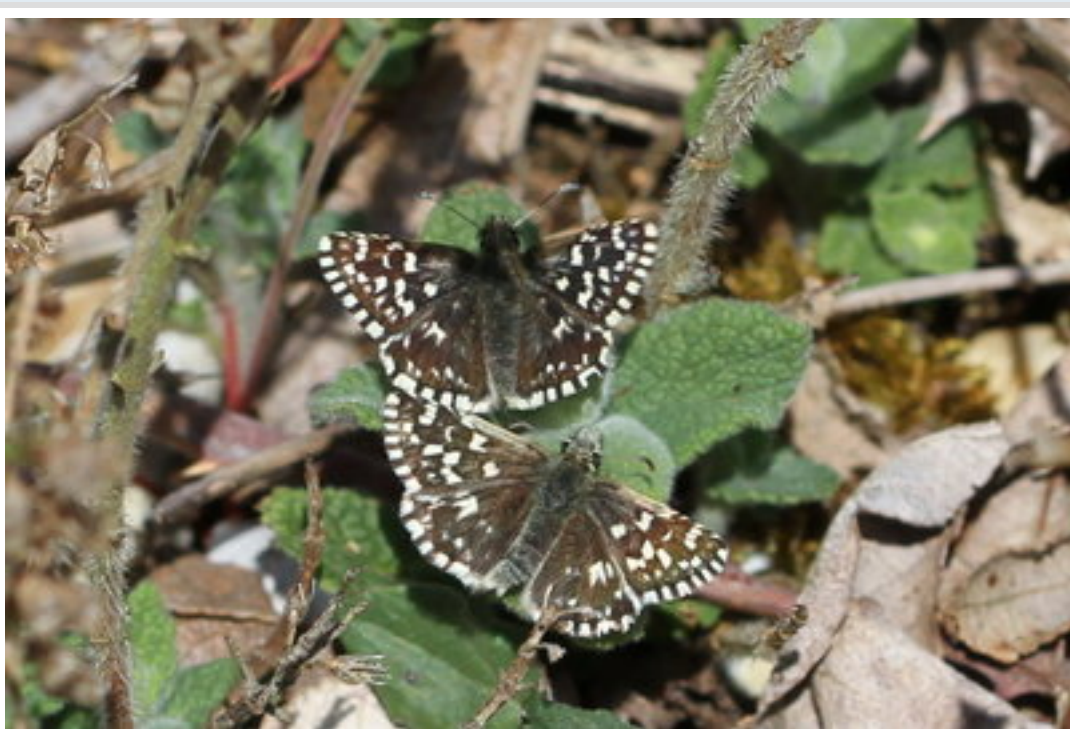
I then walked to the Trapping Area where the Observatory Boffins catch birds in mist nets and ring them.

I very quickly found a sunny spot where no less than five Grizzled Skippers were whizzing around after each other





I sat watching them for over an hour as they put on a lively and fascinating display



Great fun.

It has set me up for the coming week.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 16-May-13 04:01 PM GMT

First thing every morning I check the "Blue Tit Cam" just to see how she's getting on. This morning I was delighted to see that some of the eggs have

hatched



Apologies for the photograph but hopefully you can see some pinkish squiggly things. Mum slips out now and again but for the most part she is on the nest. The male pops in to feed her.

The sun came out today and I had an early finish so I stopped off at Wye on my way home. I wanted to find Dingy Skippers which are usually out in numbers by now and easy to locate at this site.

But initially I was tripping over Green Hairstreaks



In all I saw no less that 12 during the course of a couple of hours and I enjoyed watching them racing out from their perches to challenge all comers.

After a good search and many false alarms caused by moths in the grass I at last found a Dingy Skipper





Unfortunately, this was the only one that I saw. But a real beauty (despite the name that we've given it).
Only two butterflies seen, Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper, but a lovely way to spend the afternoon.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 16-May-13 10:36 PM GMT

Lovely shots Hoggers 🍷 They make me wish I was out there searching for them but this blooming weather needs to settle down a bit to make that possible 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Pauline, 17-May-13 07:56 AM GMT

Seems like you're creating a wildlife haven there Hoggers. Splendid stuff. I'm particularly interested in news of your Bluetits. I have over 2 dozen bird

boxes around the place and they are generally all used EXCEPT for the only one which has a camera in it 😬😬 ..

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-May-13 09:13 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, thanks for your kind comments – I've seen your photographs and think they're stunning, particularly the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries that you posted last week. I hope the sun comes out for you this weekend.

Hi Pauline, I know just how you feel: my camera box has been in the garden for at least five years and it's only this year that anything has shown an interest! But now that we've got a Blue Tit it's absolutely fascinating – we sit and watch it all the time. This morning we've seen that seven chicks have hatched leaving two eggs that are still "cooking".

I just hope that the weather bucks up a bit and that there's plenty of food for them.

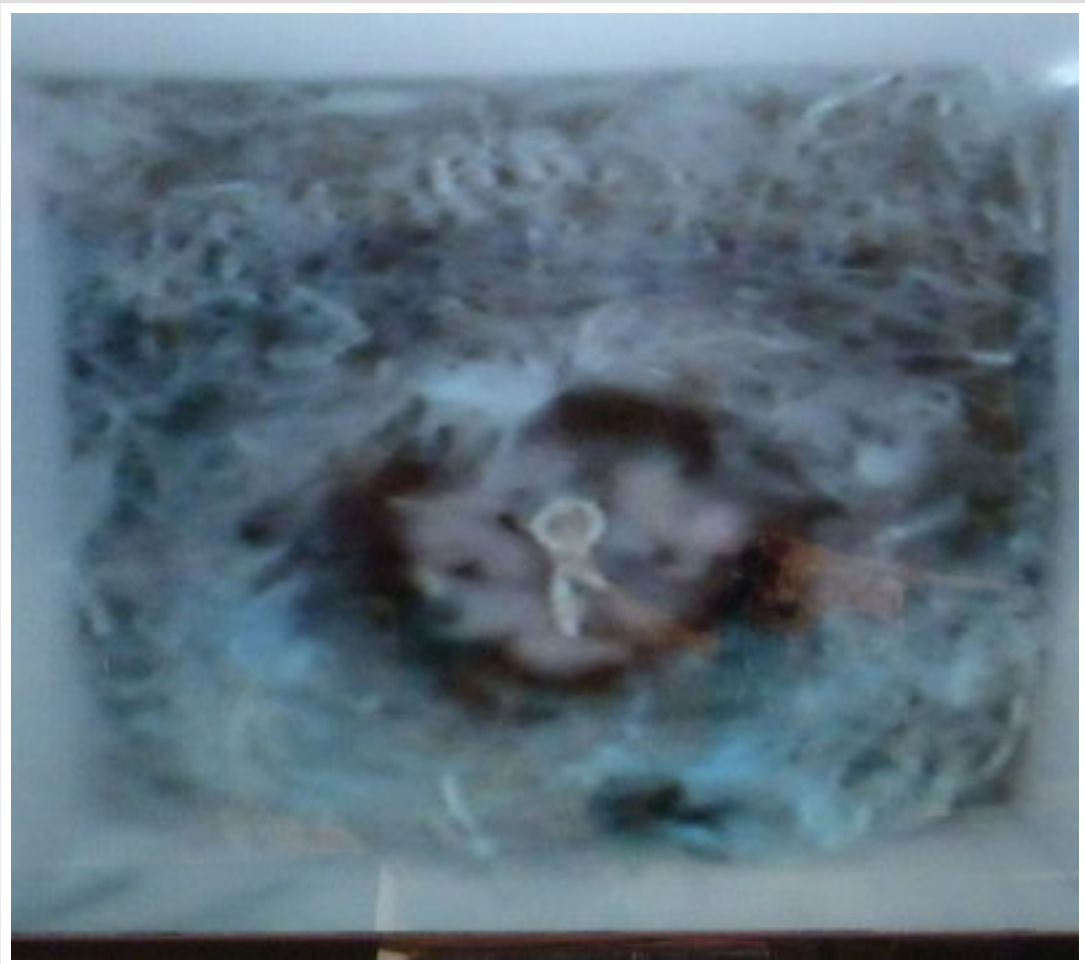
Cheers.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-May-13 04:36 PM GMT

When the female Blue Tit is sitting on the chicks her partner will arrive outside the box and call to her. He uses the typical Blue Tit call which we are all familiar with but she answers from the nest with a call that I've never heard before, a remarkably grasshopper-like high pitched sound that carries well but if I didn't know exactly where it was coming from I'd have great difficulty in locating.

The chicks may be blind at the moment but they respond to sound: if Mum's outside she'll call to them before entering the box and they instantly raise their open beaks in readiness for her arrival



Here's Mum feeding them



And this is both Mum and Dad in the box with the chicks



Talking of eggs, today has been a Curate's egg of a day : good sunny bits and less appealing gloomy cold bits too. First thing this morning I saw a female Holly Blue and then a Speckled Wood in the garden, then with the sun still shining I set off with Brother Hoggles for a walk around Dungeness.

When we arrived it was generally warm and sunny but with a rather cool on-shore breeze blowing. We were looking for Small Coppers and soon came across one close to the Power Station



But apart from another single Copper that's all we saw of them. However, in the Trapping Area we were joined by a Grizzled Skipper which briefly landed on Brother Hoggles' leg



Unfortunately it quickly flitted away and was lost to view (the Skipper that is, not my brother's leg).

We did see two more Grizzles but they were flighty in the increasingly lively breeze and when they move they're jolly hard to follow.

The clouds were gathering thick and fast by now, so we decided to repair to a near-by hostelry for lunch. The weather was disappointing but at least we'd seen some butterflies (and had a good lunch too.)

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 18-May-13 05:16 PM GMT

Great sequence of images, Hoggers. I just hope bloody magpies don't get those chicks when they first venture outside the nest.

I like the Skipper on denim too. Graylings are famously fond of settling on jeans but I'm surprised at seeing a Grizzly do it.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 18-May-13 09:36 PM GMT

Great report Hoggers and a Small Copper too 🦋 There was a bit of sun this afternoon, for once when the weather app was wrong it actually meant good weather 🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-May-13 05:09 PM GMT

We have more than our fair share of Magpies, David: if any of the Blue Tit chicks manage to leave the nest their problems will just be beginning. Fingers crossed for them. By the way, I was impressed with your Small Blue photographs and I hope I can manage to find some this season too.

I love Small Coppers Wurzel. I remember the photograph you posted last August of two Small Coppers side by side on a leaf- marvellous. They are so full of cheekiness I smile every time I think of them. Dungeness is a good site but I haven't seen many so far this year.

Today I visited Lydden Nature Reserve at Temple Ewell, near Dover. There are times during the Summer when it can seem like Butterfly Heaven with hundreds of them amongst the most beautiful wild flowers. I guess with this late running season I shouldn't be too surprised that today it was very quiet there indeed despite the sunny weather. But I did manage to see four Holly Blues



A single Dingy Skipper





And a Green Hairstreak



Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 19-May-13 11:46 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers – I was just down the road in River today but my hosts preferred a walk up the Prince of Wales Pier to a wander over the hillside at Lydden. I also saw Holly Blues in the River area, and a couple of Orange Tips. The sun was a bit unexpected to be honest.

Dave

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 21-May-13 05:29 PM GMT

Hi Dave, it's a lovely area and just marvellous for butterflies. I'll be going back there later this season if the weather ever improves so I'll keep an eye open for you.

Cheers

Re: Hoggers

by Pauline, 21-May-13 06:10 PM GMT

I'm fascinated by your Blue Tit pics Hoggers. A couple of years ago I had a camera in one of my parrot nest boxes and it was addictive. The cock bird fed the chicks from day one contrary to info from books and although he seemed rough with them – picking them up by the neck and swinging them round, much to my dismay – he never did them any harm. Please keep us updated.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 21-May-13 09:16 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, nothing going on here quite so dramatic as with your parrots I'm relieved to say! The male brings in food but rarely feeds the chicks, he always seems to give what he's found to the female first and she passes it on. The chicks are growing rapidly. It's marvellous watching them sticking their heads up and opening their beaks wide, trying to attract Mum's attention. I'll try to get some photos so you can see how they're coming along.

Re: Hoggars

by Hoggars, 25-May-13 07:24 PM GMT

Only a four days ago we had five Blue Tit chicks in the box (with one unhatched egg). They all looked healthy enough. We enjoyed watching them at feeding times and despite the rather cool conditions they seemed to be doing well



But the weather down here in Kent reached a low point on thursday and friday. If, like me ,you read Dave Brown's diary you'll remember him noting that on thursday the temperature got down to 5 C and on friday (yesterday) it did not stop raining.

When I switched on the tit box camera this morning I was shocked to see that only two chicks were left in the nest





Clearly three had died since tuesday and been removed from the box by the parents. That was bad enough, but watching the remaining two I noticed that although one of them looked strong and active, its sibling gave immediate cause for concern. It was almost immobile and when the parents arrived with food it would raise its head but not open its beak. I saw Mum attempting to feed it but the poor thing seemed too far gone to know what was happening and would not, or could not, open its beak. About two hours later it had died and I watched the female remove it from the box.

The whole thing is very distressing. Watching Nature can be hard on the emotions. The thought that this marvellously clever Camera Box might show things that we as a family would prefer not to see crossed my mind when the Blue Tits first arrived. Still, there are important things to learn from "lifting the lid" on Nature's secrets, particularly for children (although in their case there has to be moderation and balance.)

At least one chick left and he'll be getting all the attention now. I do hope however, that what has happened to our Blue Tits isn't representative.

To cheer myself up I thought I'd take a photograph of the garden today and compare it with one I took before I started gardening for butterflies: Here it is before I took up my trowel in anger



And this is after



I think it's a huge improvement. If I, totally clueless about all things Horticultural, can do this I hope it gives confidence to anyone else toying with the idea of planting a butterfly garden.

I didn't see many butterflies today but did come across a Green-veined White and a Holly Blue when I took the dogs out this morning



Re: Hoggers

by Pauline, 25-May-13 07:47 PM GMT

I'm so sorry to hear about your Blue Tits Hoggers and I too hope it is not representative 😞 . I see from your photos that you have a bird table so you obviously feed the birds. There is a food on the market that the birds round here go wild for – it is called suet logs and needs the feeder to put them in. 'My' birds will not touch fat balls but they love these and seem to attract so many species. Your garden is looking lovely by the way – the difference in such a short time is amazing. Great job!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 25-May-13 08:26 PM GMT

Really sad news, but as you say this is nature at work and there's precious little you can do about it.

With any luck, the remaining chick will be better equipped to survive as a result of the demise of his/her siblings.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 27-May-13 05:00 PM GMT

I finally managed to get out today after three days' illness which, apart from a short walk with the dogs, kept me more or less in bed throughout the lovely warm sunshine.

I must say that reading UKBer's diaries and the Sightings page not only acts as consolation for the unwell but also gives a positive spur to recover as quickly as possible!

I wasn't up to driving so my Dad came to the rescue and together with my brother we went down to Folkestone Warren where I'd set my heart on finding Wall and Small Blues.

Well, we had no problem finding Walls because without trying we saw eleven. They were highly active and not coming anywhere near enough for me to get close up but I did manage to take a couple of snaps



Another first for me today was this Common Blue





We saw three in all.

At my favourite spot for Small Blues we saw Green Hairstreaks



Dingy Skippers



Six Small Heaths (another first for me)



And two Small Coppers





But no Little Cupids, so we went back to the car and drove to Kingsdown where there's a fantastic site for them on a bit of shingle waste ground by the Kingsdown to Walmer road.

Just one step in and we were spotting these delightful butterflies literally everywhere. We were surrounded by them





Marvellous!

Re: Hoggers

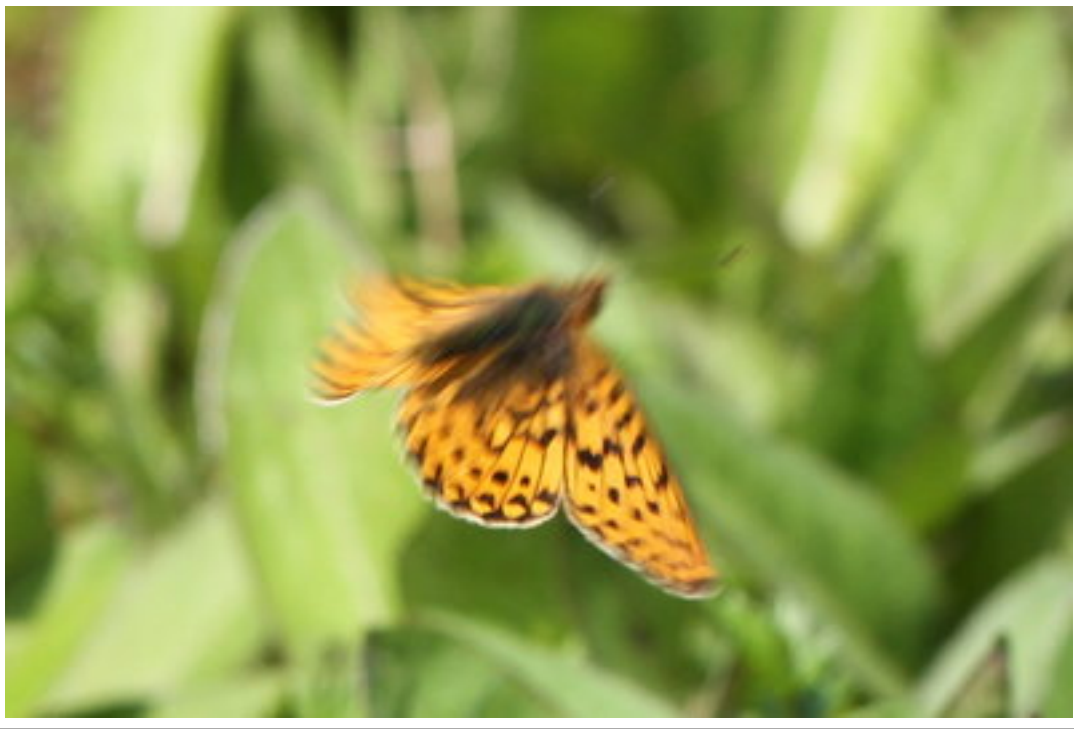
by Hoggers, 31-May-13 04:40 PM GMT

A day off work. All week I've been watching the weather forecasts with the same avidness as my Grand-dad watching the football results come in on a Saturday when he was doing the Pools. I'd long planned to visit Abbot's Wood in East Sussex in the hope of seeing the beautiful Pearl-bordered Fritillary. I've spent weeks drooling over the stunning photographs of this butterfly posted here by UKBers and desperately wanted to see the butterfly for myself.

By the time I'd arrived at Abbot's Wood it was warm and sunny with a slight breeze. The car park has rather stern warnings about being fined and "enforced" at the Magistrates' Court if you don't buy a ticket to park, there was a pink Ice Cream Van doing a lively trade and lots of Little People with Mums and Dads and dogs all having Bar-B-Qs nearby. Undaunted, I wandered in a Northerly direction along wide sunny Bugle-lined lanes and soon left the crowds behind. I saw a Speckled Wood, Green-veined Whites, Brimstones, a Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell.

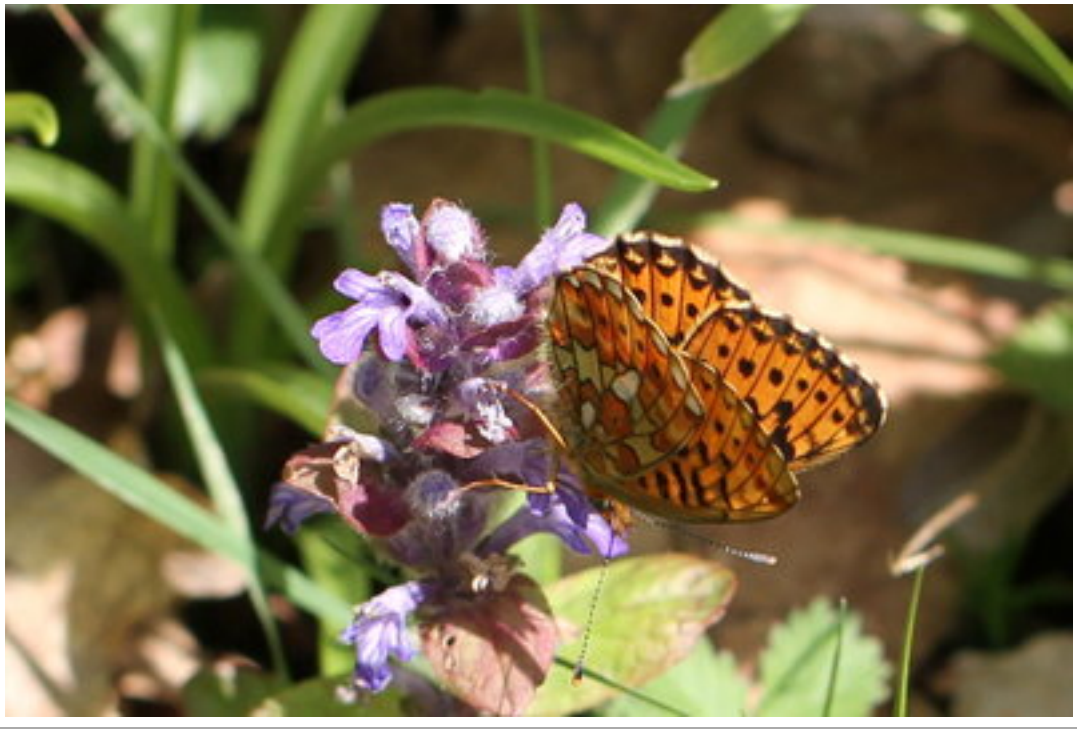
I then reached a very sunny ride close to clearing and jumped for joy at what I thought was a Pearl-bordered Fritillary. But it was a Speckled Yellow moth! And there were lots more of them to confound me before at last a sharp, fast moving butterfly slipped past me at knee height: A Pearl!

My goodness they are hard to follow with the eye as they whiz along! I didn't think I was going to have much luck getting a photograph. Here's a couple of my early efforts



But although they were "juiced up" after many trials I at last managed to get close to a few





I saw one egg-laying amongst the bracken



I think it was this one.

In all I must have seen about 20 of them, which delighted me of course (although I was told by a fellow enthusiast that numbers are significantly down this year).

Many thanks to all the kind UKBer's who sent me help and advice on how to track down this butterfly at Abbot's Wood. I had a grand day out, saw a gorgeous butterfly and even had an Ice Cream to celebrate.

Re: Hoggers

by Susie, 31-May-13 08:03 PM GMT

It's lovely that you achieved your goal and got some nice photos too 😊

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 31-May-13 08:26 PM GMT

Congratulations, Hoggers. Always nice when research and perseverance pays off.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Jun-13 04:58 PM GMT

Thanks Susie and David: seeing the Pearls of Abbots Wood was a great way to spend my day off.

Bitten by the travelling bug, today I ventured out of Kent and into Surrey. Getting me on the M25 takes a lot of doing but Wood Whites are strong enough attractions to do it. I decided to make my annual pilgrimage to the woods at Chiddingfold but this year instead of Botany Bay and Oaken I thought I'd make a change and start at Tugley Wood. I arrived at 9am to sunshine and a blue sky. It wasn't long before I saw my first Wood White fluttering delicately towards me along the ride



I counted 19 in the two hours that I spent there



And for the first time I was able to witness some of the courtship behaviour of this magical butterfly. The butterfly on the left of this photograph (which I suppose to be the male) settled opposite to the one on the right (which I suppose to have been a female) and began tapping her with his antennae in alternate right and left movements of his head



This went on for over a minute with no reaction from her. He then raised his abdomen



And they then both suddenly flew off and went their separate ways.

I also saw 9 Dingy Skippers, 5 Speckled Woods, a Large White, several Green-veined Whites, 9 Brimstones and a Holly Blue



But it was the Wood Whites that stole the show. I like to close my eyes and picture them in my mind's eye daintily fluttering along the woodland paths: it's very restful and better than counting sheep



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Jun-13 06:18 PM GMT

Walking the hounds today I saw two Orange Tips, a Large White



A Peacock and a Green-veined White



No sign of any Brown Argus yet.

Our Blue Tit chick continues to thrive



We've named him Egbert.

The garden is looking nice





I'm just waiting for all my Tadpoles to turn into Slug Eating Frogs.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Jun-13 04:17 PM GMT

I've been stuck in the concrete jungle of the City of London all through this glorious weather. As I walk along the pavements I find I'm gazing about searching in desperation for so much as a blade of grass, anything green and living. Unsurprisingly I haven't seen any butterflies. It's especially frustrating on the train journey because we pass through countryside that in this sunshine looks so inviting yet there's no stopping to have a look. But today work came to an unexpected early finish and I was able to get home to Ashford by 1pm, put on a T-Shirt and go out over the fields with the dogs.

It was warm, sunny and breezy. I saw a few Small Whites, a battle-scarred Small Tortoiseshell, two male Orange Tips, a Small Heath



And five Common Blues (4 males and a female)



I particularly enjoyed watching the Blues either when they were perched or feeding on the Bird's Foot Trefoil or chasing after one another.

Beautiful creatures and a welcome treat for my eyes after four days of looking at concrete.

Back Up the Smoke tomorrow but after seeing some butterflies this afternoon I feel fortified enough to get me through to the weekend.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Jun-13 07:15 PM GMT

Little Egbert isn't so little anymore



I think he'll be flying the nest very soon

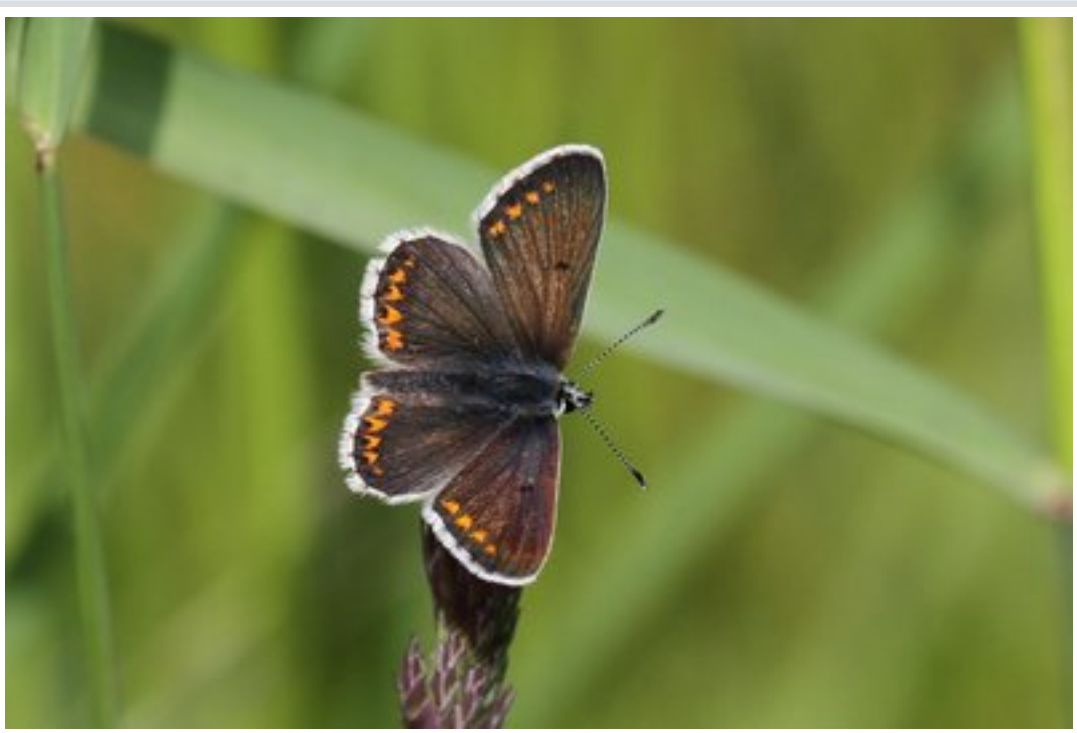


Today I went to Lydden with Brother Hoggles. The first butterfly we came across was a Common Blue in the meadow



(and many more on the hill)

And no less than six Brown Argus (my first of the year)





Moving on to the hillside we quickly found the brilliant Adonis Blue (another first for me this season)





I hadn't noticed the black dots on the hind wing margins before today. What a beauty.

We saw two females and two mating pairs



There were also good numbers of Dingy Skippers, Small Heaths and a couple of camera-shy Walls.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 08-Jun-13 09:02 PM GMT

That chick looks absolutely ready to take its first flight. I sincerely hope he/she comes through unscathed.

Thanks for keeping us updated, Hoggers.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-13 11:05 PM GMT

Sounds like you had a great day, with some great shots to boot 😊 I know what you mean about working – I almost feel trapped – oh if only I could win the lottery! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 14-Jun-13 07:19 PM GMT

Wurzel, If you're a Butterfly Fancier work can feel like a cruel torture on sunny days in Summer! I got home today at around 3.30pm after driving cross-country and every mile wishing I could go butterflying. The sun had come out and it was very pleasant indeed. I wandered up the garden and stood gazing at (and sniffing!) the flowers. The number of bees in my garden has increased noticeably since planting the Wall Flowers & Co which gives me a great deal of satisfaction. I must get myself a Bee Identification book.

Anyway, as I stood watching the bees to-ing and fro-ing look what came fluttering in



I rushed indoors to find my camera





An Orange Tip on 14th June!



And in my garden!



Wonderful!



P.S – Egbert our Blue Tit chick left the nest last sunday, spent the rest of the day in a bush in the garden being tended to by his parents and was gone the next day.

Re: Hoggers

by Pauline, 14-Jun-13 08:16 PM GMT

You must be pleased as punch Hoggers. All that work in the garden has clearly paid off – and quite quickly too. I hope you are feeling very smug as you deserve to be and great shots to top it all off! Thank you for the update on Egbert – let's hope he makes it.

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 14-Jun-13 08:18 PM GMT

I'm delighted Egbert made it through! Perhaps he will be bringing up his own chicks in that same box in the future ...

I fear many broods will have been greatly reduced this year, with insect numbers so low. Round here, black redstarts nest quite conspicuously on and near buildings and in poor springs I have often found dead chicks beneath the nests. My guess was that the parents actively thinned their brood, rather than waiting for any chicks to die. If there was only food for one then in the end they would only try to rear one – I could be wrong. Your blue tits did the right thing by little Egbert.

Guy

Re: Hoggers

I do feel rather proud of my efforts in the garden Pauline although I'm sure dear old Percy Thrower is turning in his grave at all the blunders I'm making. It's very much work in progress. I've surprised myself by how much I enjoy gardening having never before seen any attraction in it. It was only the desire to attract butterflies and other wildlife into the garden that got me out there on my hands and knees wielding a trowel. I now heartily recommend it to others and if they say they don't have any interest gardening I raise my eyebrows at them in silent reproof.

I'm also pleased with my handling of the Gastropod Problem. Somewhat miffed at spending £7.50 on a new Lupin only to watch it being slowly consumed by The Garden Slug (I spend considerably less on feeding myself each afternoon in the work's cafe) I went out each night armed with a torch and a Slug Pot to catch them in the act. All Molluscs that I bagged I deposited in a nearby field and away from my garden. I didn't want to use any chemicals at all in the garden (potentially harmful to other wildlife such as Hedgehogs) nor could I kill the creatures (putting salt on them is absolutely barbaric - they are living things after all.) Well, after about a month of these Nocturnal Expeditions my Gastropod Problem is almost entirely solved and my Lupins and I rest easy at night.

Guy, I'm sure you're right:there were so few insects about when the seven chicks first hatched I could tell they were not thriving. At least One survived.

When finally I got the chance to go out today I headed to Wye Nature Reserve even though it was blowing a gale strong enough to lift my eyelids. And doubtless because it was so very windy it was difficult to find any butterflies but I did my best to squeeze as much out of the trip as possible.

The first thing I noticed were the Lady Orchids



Together with Common Spotted Orchids just coming into flower



And some Common Twayblades too.

My first butterfly in the blustery conditions was this Common Blue



Several Large Whites



(and a few Small Whites.)

This single Brimstone



A Small Heath and this Wall





I also saw a Red Admiral, only the second that I've come across this year, but too flighty for me to get a photograph.

When I got home I walked into the garden and saw what was certainly yesterday's Orange Tip but not looking too good I'm afraid. It was motionless on the grass and appeared quite stricken



I encouraged it onto my finger where it happily sat



Then put it on a Wallflower where it made urgent efforts to take on nectar



I saw it making rather feeble efforts to crawl to other flowers, it wouldn't fly, so I assisted it again and again watched it feeding and there I left it in peace, out of the wind.

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 15-Jun-13 07:09 PM GMT

I'm so glad you don't kill the slugs! I had quietly noted your opposition to them and wondered (without being so rude as to ask) what you did to them. Now I am relieved! 😊

And lovely butterfly pictures too!

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 15-Jun-13 10:31 PM GMT

Great stuff Hoggers 😊 Looks like you had a great day, and the Orange-tip shots from your garden were cracking 📷 They make me miss my garden though... 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 16-Jun-13 03:59 PM GMT

Yes Guy, I'm really quite Slug Friendly (for a gardener!) I remember doing a project on them for my 'O' Level Biology (showing my age here – it was long, long ago!) and when you actually look at them up close, they are beautiful creatures.

Thanks Wurzel, I'm not surprised that you miss your garden but in moving home you did what you had to do at the time. At least you get out and about as much as possible.

The Orange Tip was still in my garden this morning



But had gone by lunch. It was lovely to have one so near at hand but I felt a tinge of sadness at the thought that I'll have to wait until next year before I see another one.

On my walk with the dogs I saw only a couple of Large Whites but this magnificent chap crossed the lane in front of me



Some kind of Moth?

Re: Hoggers

by Pete Eeles, 16-Jun-13 04:17 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:
Some kind of Moth?

Garden Tiger, I reckon.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Hoggers

by ChrisC, 16-Jun-13 06:23 PM GMT

I'll refer you to my comment in December about wildlife gardening 😊

"ChrisC" wrote:
you won't regret it.

Chris

and i'll second Pete's Garden Tiger.

Chris

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Jun-13 04:00 PM GMT

Thanks for the ID Pete and yes Chris, you were spot on!

I stopped off at Lydden Nature Reserve on my way home today to spend some time with the Adonis Blues





I noticed how strikingly different the blue of the wing is depending on how it catches the light



Some lovely females too





Also Common Blues including a female



And Small Heaths.

Good to sit amongst the Fragrant Orchids in such dazzling company



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Jun-13 03:25 PM GMT

There are times of the year when Dungeness can seem to be the most forbidding and desolate of places on Earth, a bare post-apocalyptic wasteland of shingle and withered Gorse bushes with a wicked wind blasting in off the sea. Thank Heavens there's a pub.

But today, although a strong wind was blowing, it was nevertheless warm and more often than not bright and sunny.

What is more, the whole place has blossomed into a riot of colour and perfume



The first butterfly I came across was a Common Blue



I saw several, including this female with very little orange on it



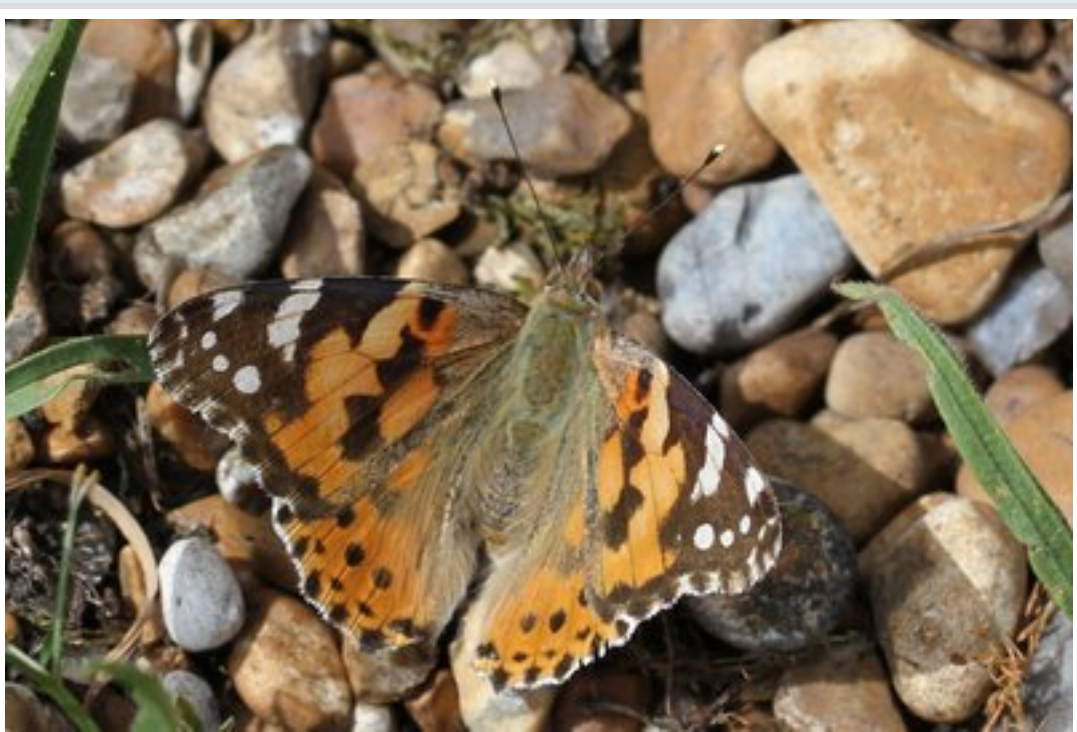


As I walked along something brownish and fast flying (particularly in the strong wind) caught my eye then disappeared. After a lengthy search I managed to track it down



I jumped for Joy: my first Painted Lady of the Year!

Then not much further on I came across my second





I was delighted with my find and hope this is just the start for them this year.

When I got home I stepped out into the garden and saw a flash of blue. Not a Holly Blue at this time of year surely? Yet it was!



What a delightful and surprising day with the butterflies



Re: Hoggers

by David M, 23-Jun-13 04:42 PM GMT

You've done well there, Hoggers. The weather has been filthy in most parts today (awful here in Swansea; 12c and windy and cloudy to boot).

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Jun-13 06:28 PM GMT

Cheers David, I was very surprised to find two Painted Ladies and a Holly Blue, but also very pleased.

I wonder David if you can help me? All things being favourable I will have the 2nd and 3rd of July off work and I'd really like to see Marsh Fritillaries. Do you think it would be too late this year? I'm thinking of either visiting the well known site in South Wales (Aberbargoed) or perhaps equally well known sites in Dorset such as Hod Hill or Cerne Abbas. I really don't know if the butterfly is still going strong in this late running year or if I've left it too late. As you probably know, I live in Kent so I've a long way to travel if I'm going to see this butterfly.

Thanks.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 23-Jun-13 06:40 PM GMT

I think it would be feasible to see a few (albeit faded) Marsh Fritillaries at Aberbargoed Grasslands on that date. I've personally seen them around midsummer's day in a normal year, and given that 2013 is approximately 10 days behind this would put potential sightings in range for very early July.

I'd suggest combining your trip with a visit to Old Castle Down, near Ewenny, where you will certainly see High Brown Fritillaries given reasonable weather conditions.

At worst, you would have that as compensation if, indeed, Marsh Frits were spent by that date.

Re: Hoggers

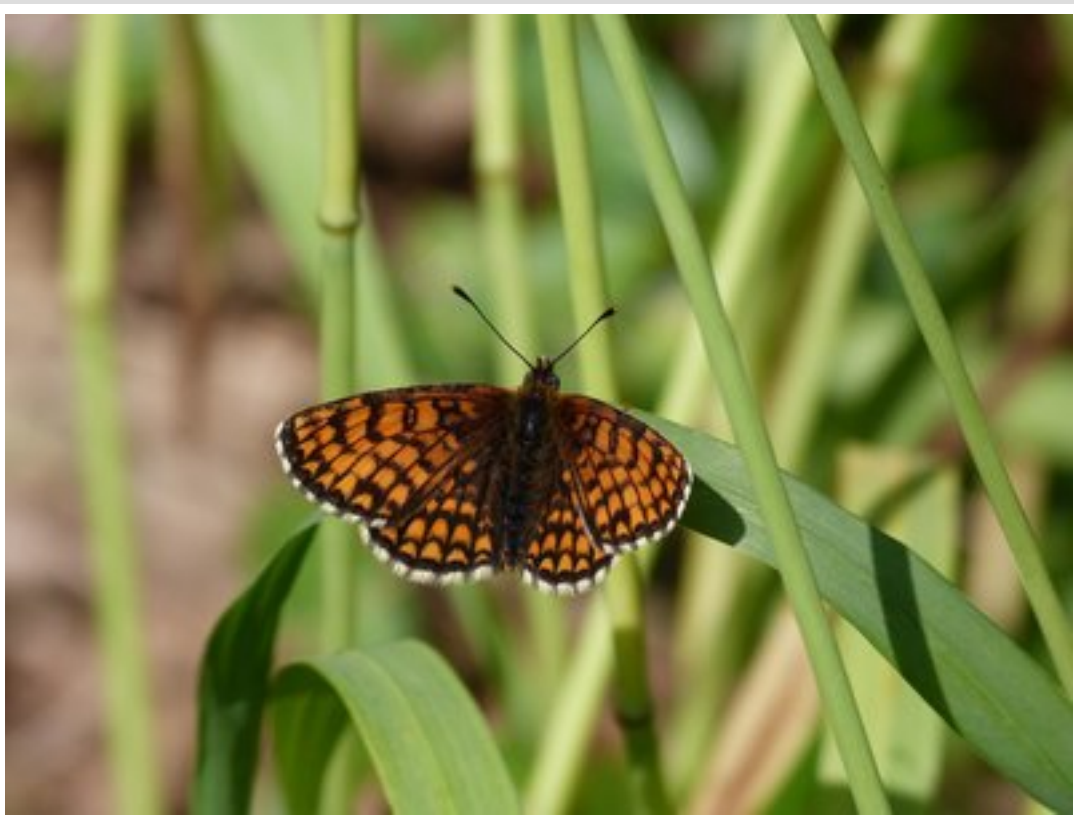
by Hoggers, 25-Jun-13 04:23 PM GMT

Thanks for the advice David, it's much appreciated.

I'm lucky in that when I'm doing a job in Canterbury I'm only 15 minutes' drive from East Blean Wood and so today with the sun shining (at long last) I popped in there to look for Heath Fritillaries. They didn't take much finding



I'd say I saw 6, all of them by the car-park





I'm sure they were emerging around me: I found this one in the process of pumping up its wings



You have to tread very carefully when you visit for fear of stepping on them.

Such a lovely creature





I saw my first on May 28th in 2011, and on 2nd June in 2012: better late than never



Welcome Back!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 25-Jun-13 05:58 PM GMT

Great timing, Hoggers! Lovely shots too.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 25-Jun-13 09:02 PM GMT

Thanks David, it was the first warm day in awhile so I thought it was worth having a look. Hopefully they'll soon be out in their thousands



Re: Hoggers

by David M, 25-Jun-13 09:49 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Hopefully they'll soon be out in their thousands

Yes, me too, although the 'thousands' is why I don't chase this butterfly in the UK.

They are SO common in France that it seems crazy to invest so much time and energy on finding them over here.

Re: Hoggers

by lee3764, 25-Jun-13 11:01 PM GMT

Fantastic species which we are so lucky to still have in Cornwall & has been out for 3 weeks here but still in good numbers. Enjoy the Blean Wood colonies! Cheers.....Lee Slaughter (Cornwall branch Butt Conservation).

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Jun-13 06:26 PM GMT

I was very happy to bump into my first Large Skipper of 2013 this morning when taking the dogs for their walk



Later than last year, so much so that I've felt a bit concerned at their failure to appear



But I saw two today



Their golden colour really catches the eye as they make their way through the long grass. A gorgeous butterfly.

I've still got a good many fat Tadpoles in my Goldfish-free ponds, but now also a growing number of these little critters



The sooner they get out there and start eating my garden slugs the better.

And I've some news : two Blue Tits were seen in the garden today very near to the nest box, fussing over a rather noisy little Blue Tit Chick who was perched on the fence demanding to be fed. Egbert, surely?!?

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Jun-13 01:04 PM GMT

If you were passing through Ashford this fine morning and you happened to see a peculiar-looking man jumping up and down in a field Whooping for Joy, do not worry: it was only Hoggers.

But he had his reasons



He'd struck Gold!



Twice!



Yes, TWO Clouded Yellows flying about a piece of waste ground where I walk my dogs every day. I couldn't believe my eyes. It's two years since I saw one of these fabulous creatures and then it was a fleeting glimpse as it winged past my ear. I've never been lucky enough to get a photo of one. It made the news that my Meadow Browns have emerged today seem rather mundane (I also saw a fresh Small Tortoiseshell.)

Two Clouded Yellows on my Patch in land-locked Ashford: has an invasion begun?



Re: Hoggers

by David M, 27-Jun-13 07:52 PM GMT

Lovely feeling, isn't it?

A Clouded Yellow is absolutely unmistakable in this country and brings a glow to the observer every bit as warm as the ground colour itself. Hopefully we might see strong numbers of this species later in the year given how many have been spotted thus far.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jun-13 08:47 PM GMT

Nice one 😊👍

I have seen more Clouded Yellow photos posted so far this year than I did in the whole of last year. Here's to hoping for a few more.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Jun-13 09:18 PM GMT

Thanks guys: I'm so familiar with these fields, and the "usual" butterflies there, that watching two Clouded Yellows flying around for nearly three hours has given me memories that I will treasure forever.

From now on, the 27th June will go down in my diary as " Clouded Yellow Day"!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Jun-13 01:23 PM GMT

No Clouded Yellows for me today nor very much sunshine either. It's been a case of having to dodge the showers.

But brightness came in a different form





And contrasting with the new vitality of this Small Tortoiseshell, a gentle touch of faded elegance



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 29-Jun-13 04:14 PM GMT

I found a couple of Orchids on my local Patch today



Bee Orchid



Common Spotted Orchid.

The only butterflies that I saw were Common Blues, a Brown Argus and a Speckled Wood.

Back home I came across this Old Campaigner in the garden



I'm glad that the Wall Flowers were providing him with some comfort. He's only the third Red Admiral that I've seen so far this year.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 29-Jun-13 05:54 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

He's only the third Red Admiral that I've seen so far this year.

That's two more than me, Hoggers (and I'm Clouded Yellow bereft as well!) 😡

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 29-Jun-13 07:08 PM GMT

Let's hope 2013 turns out to be a Clouded Yellow Year, David. I hope all UKBers get to see them.

Thursday last was my best Butterflying Day Ever. It was totally unexpected. I was walking my dogs on my usual Patch and suddenly, there they were!

My heart was pounding, my hands were shaking (thank heavens for the image stabiliser) as I scampered after them. I even found myself talking to them : "Please don't fly away! Don't go! That's it, Settle on that flower and have a rest!" etc.

I not only got close enough to take some photographs but I was able at my leisure to stand quietly for over two hours watching them flitting from flower to flower and to relish every second.

I've been boring everyone rigid telling them about it (but they're used to that sort of thing from me) and I keep looking at the pictures to see the wonderful colours again.

The memory will live with me forever



It's just amazing what a Butterfly can do to a (generally) sober and sensible man.

Re: Hoggers

by ChrisC, 29-Jun-13 07:12 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

It's just amazing what a Butterfly can do to a (generally) sober and sensible man.

great sentiments there Hoggers.

Re: Hoggers

by Willow, 29-Jun-13 08:37 PM GMT

I personally think its great to express your delight in the way you did/do Hoggers.

Clouded Yellow are a special summer treat and to have the company and pleasure of two on your local patch is simply wonderful...June 27th is now officially 'Hoggers Clouded Yellow day' on UK Butterflies.

Incidentally I also talk to the butterflies I share my days with...who doesn't 🤪😊

Best Wishes,
Bill 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-13 10:19 PM GMT

"Willrow" wrote:

I personally think its great to express your delight in the way you did/do Hoggers.

Clouded Yellow are a special summer treat and to have the company and pleasure of two on your local patch is simply wonderful...June 27th is now officially 'Hoggers Clouded Yellow day' on UK Butterflies.

Incidentally I also talk to the butterflies I share my days with...who doesn't 🤪😊

Best Wishes,
Bill 😊

Agreed.

It is wonderful to read reports like this that communicate joy and enthusiasm so well 😊

I am so glad that others talk to butterflies as well, not sure if that makes me normal or that we are all barmy together 😊😄

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Nick Broomer, 29-Jun-13 11:08 PM GMT

I agree with the others Hoggers, its great to show ones emotions, and talking to butterflies, well theres nothing wrong with that, quite normal in my book.

You finding these two Clouded Yellows reminded me of the first time i saw these beautiful butterflies for myself, i did `nt even know what they were. I was with a friend who was a keen butterfly photographer at the time and, i was acting as a spotter for him when i found three individuals, two males and a female Helice form of the species. I remember the day as if it were yesterday, i kept telling my friend to stop whatever he was taking pictures of and get over here now, and there they were, all three nectaring,..... with their wings open, what a day..... 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-13 11:17 PM GMT

Clouded Yellows are one of those butterflies that uplift you above and beyond – and then hold you there for a hell of a long time. It's quite true what Nick says the memory of them stays with you. When I found my only ever Clouded Yellow I spent the next 6 weeks telling everyone who would listen (as well as many who didn't want to) about it 😊 And what a shot too 📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Jul-13 02:55 PM GMT

Thanks guys for your comments. Well, would you believe that I've just had another "Clouded Yellow Moment"? Just as my train from London was pulling into Ashford this afternoon I saw a Clouded Yellow flying around Brambles on the embankment!

Marvellous!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 05-Jul-13 02:57 PM GMT

I had an early finish at Canterbury today so dropped in at East Blean Wood to see the Heath Fritillaries again



I didn't stray much further than the car park



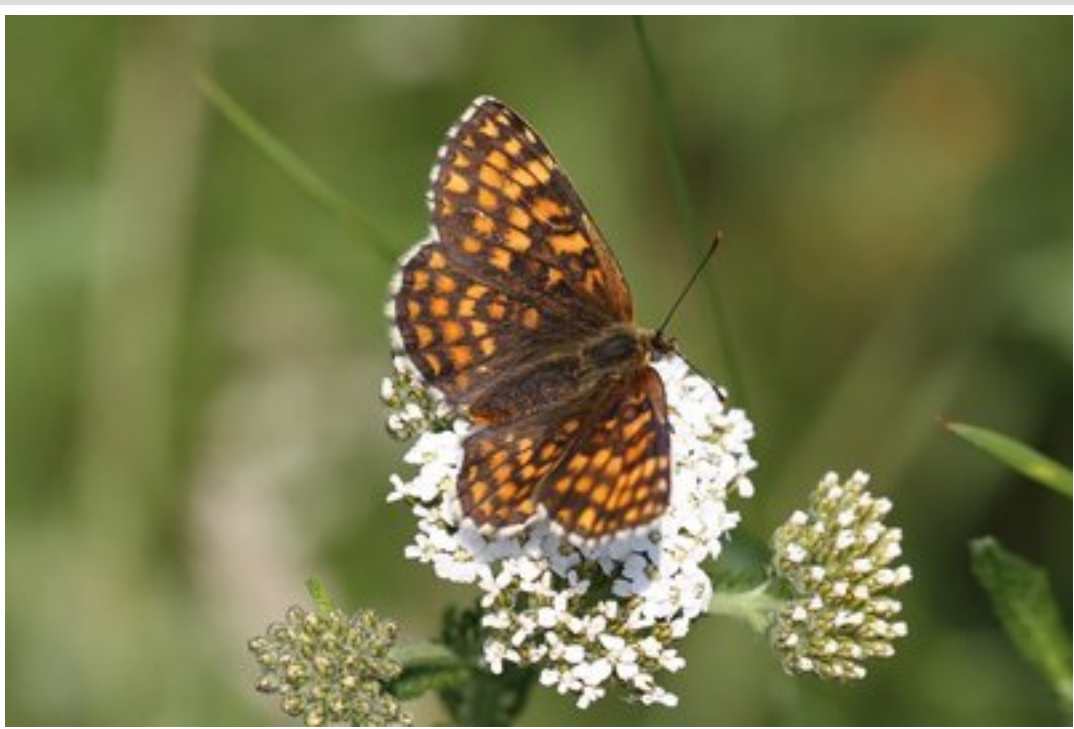
It has become rather overgrown in places with thick entanglements of Bramble but the Fritillaries were enjoying the flowers.
I saw roughly 20 of this charming butterfly



Not quiet in the Biblical numbers one might have hoped for



But plenty enough to entertain and delight



A beautiful butterfly



I also saw a few Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods there.

Back home I saw a fresh Red Admiral in my garden then out with the dogs, a Small Tortoiseshell



And some lovely Pyramidal Orchids



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Jul-13 01:05 PM GMT

I added two new butterflies to my Season's List today. On my walk with the dogs this morning a darting flash of gold in the grass caught my eye



A Small Skipper



Almost a fortnight later than in 2012.

I want to watch the Women's Final at Wimbledon this afternoon so thought I'd do my butterflying before they step out onto Centre Court. I chose to visit near-by Orlestone. It was very quiet there (apart that is from the Biting Flies!) I saw a few Meadow Browns



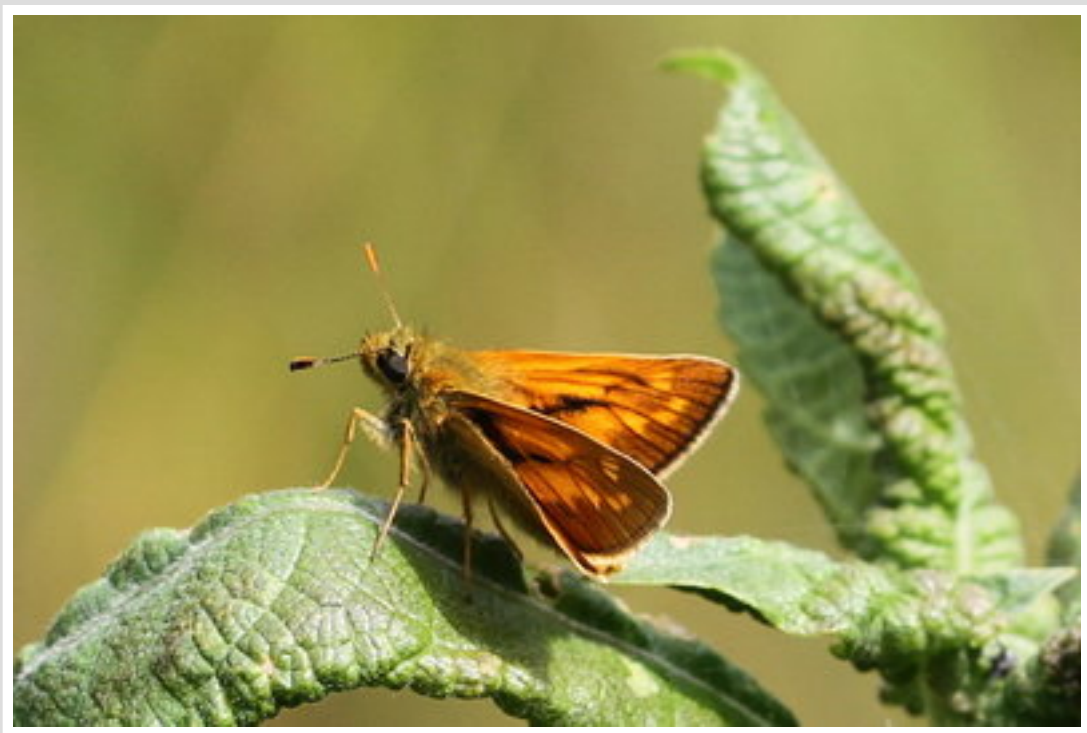
My eyes were peeled for White Admirals but it began to look like all I'd find were hungry Mozzies.

However, while following a grassy path I saw just ahead the jinky flight of a dark little butterfly with soft creamy edging to its wings and then it settled



My first Ringlet, 12 days later than last year. I saw only two others whilst there this morning.

I also came across another Small Skipper and this splendid Large Skipper too



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Jul-13 01:20 PM GMT

I'll be in front of the TV this afternoon watching the Men's Final at Wimbledon so took my daily dose of Butterflies early (another reason for going out early being the fact that it's boiling out there!)

So on my morning stroll with the hounds I saw lots of Meadow Browns, two Small Tortoiseshells, two Common Blues, several Small Skippers



And one Large Skipper



I then had a feeling in my bones that the Marbled Whites on my Patch might well have emerged today so I walked to the "Hot Spot" and sure enough there they were



I saw four in all, all of them "Juiced Up" and in active search for females . I had a difficult job getting close enough for a photograph. I sometimes wonder what people passing by must think seeing me scampering about in the field. No wonder Lady Glanville ran into so much trouble with her relatives.

In 2011 they emerged here on 23rd June and in 2012 on 27th June, so not a lot of difference between the hot 2011 and the wet 2012.

But the cold start to this year certainly does appear to have had a palpable effect on their emergence



But late though they are, I'm mighty glad to see them.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 09-Jul-13 01:02 PM GMT

There's something incongruous about coating oneself in Insect Repellent before going on a Butterfly Hunt but if you visit Orlestone Forest near Ham Street in Kent, as I did this morning, some form of defence against the Mozzies is strongly recommended. The blood suckers in there give Vampires a bad name. And so reeking of Jungle Formula "Maximum" I set off for a ramble hoping to find White Admirals which, because of this run of fine weather, I sort of had a feeling might be out now.

In 2011 I saw my first one in this wood on 7th June and in 2012 it was 26th June. I had a good look there last Saturday with no luck so I hoped things would be different today.

The first thing I noticed was that Ringlets are now out in force



Together with Meadow Browns and Small Skippers



I also saw a couple of Large Skippers and three Speckled Woods (but no Marbled Whites as yet.)

Not long after arriving at my favourite White Admiral spot I saw a white flash near some Brambles: I was in luck



My first White Admiral of the year



I'm not very good at counting butterflies as double counting is so easy to do, but over the next couple of hours I'd say that I saw four White Admirals in total



Including this one which appeared to be taking on nutrients from a bird dropping



Setting aside my camera for awhile I was able to just relax and watch them, admiring their great beauty and gracefulness in the air in this fine woodland setting.

And I owe the manufacturers of Jungle Formula a debt of gratitude for my sense of wellbeing and contentment because if it wasn't for them I'd have spent most of my time nervously jerking about trying to spot the origin of that unmistakable high pitched whine made by the incoming hungry Mosquito.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 09-Jul-13 07:30 PM GMT

Boy, I can't wait for the weekend when I can get out and see these insects. They're SO beautiful when fresh out of the chrysalis.

Well done, Hoggers, and thanks for the images.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 09-Jul-13 08:57 PM GMT

Hi David, many thanks for your comments. I'm lucky in that Orlestone is just a 15 minute drive from my home and so it's easy for me to get there to see the White Admirals. They are so graceful, I love to watch them fly through the green shadowed leafy branches and along the woodland rides. Good luck with seeing them at the weekend.

Tomorrow I'm off to Heddon's Mouth for a short break and have just seen Neil's diary report of his recent visit there: it's certainly got my juices going!

I hope to stop off at Collard Hill too, either on the way there or on the way home.

I've got my fingers crossed for a happy butterflying holiday!

Cheers.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jul-13 10:22 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers, lovely White Admiral photos, I just love the undersides of these beautiful insects 😊

I stopped off at Collard Hill on my way back on Monday, still got a couple of reports to do yet 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-13 11:27 PM GMT

Lovely White Admirals 😊 Good luck with the trips – see some HBF's for me 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by FISHIEE, 10-Jul-13 09:35 AM GMT

Oh I remember those Orelstone mozzies very well. The bites from those come up pretty good!! Not been there since moving to Hampshire 3 years ago. I'm working in Ashford for a few days starting next Friday so might have to make a visit or two as I pass it on the way to my mum's where I'll be staying. Might have to try some of that Maximum!

I used to spend many a fruitless lunch break chasing the white admirals around the rides there at midday when they would never ever settle!!

Had to make a visit to Ashford last Saturday and had a very early visit to East Blean before stopping in Ashford (Also first visit since moving to Hampshire). I discovered they also have the same Mozzies around if you go early!!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 13-Jul-13 01:59 PM GMT

Gorgeous weather, stunning scenery, wonderful butterflies and staying in a pub – Hoggers Heavenly Holiday at the Hunter's Inn, Heddon's Mouth!

I'd originally planned to visit South Wales but "Things Happened" and I had to make different arrangements. I wanted to see Fritillaries so Heddon's Mouth came to mind.

On our way there we stopped off at Collard Hill to see Large Blues. We arrived to begin our search at 3pm. This turned out to be very unwise of us: it was baking hot, so hot that no sensible butterfly would be out and about (apart from Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites) so we didn't see any Large Blues. Never mind: we determined to try again on our way home on Friday morning.

So Wednesday evening we were safely ensconced at the Hunter's Inn carrying out a purely scientific survey of the local ales which set us up perfectly for a whole day's butterflying on Thursday.

We got off to a cracking start with the first of many Silver Washed Fritillaries

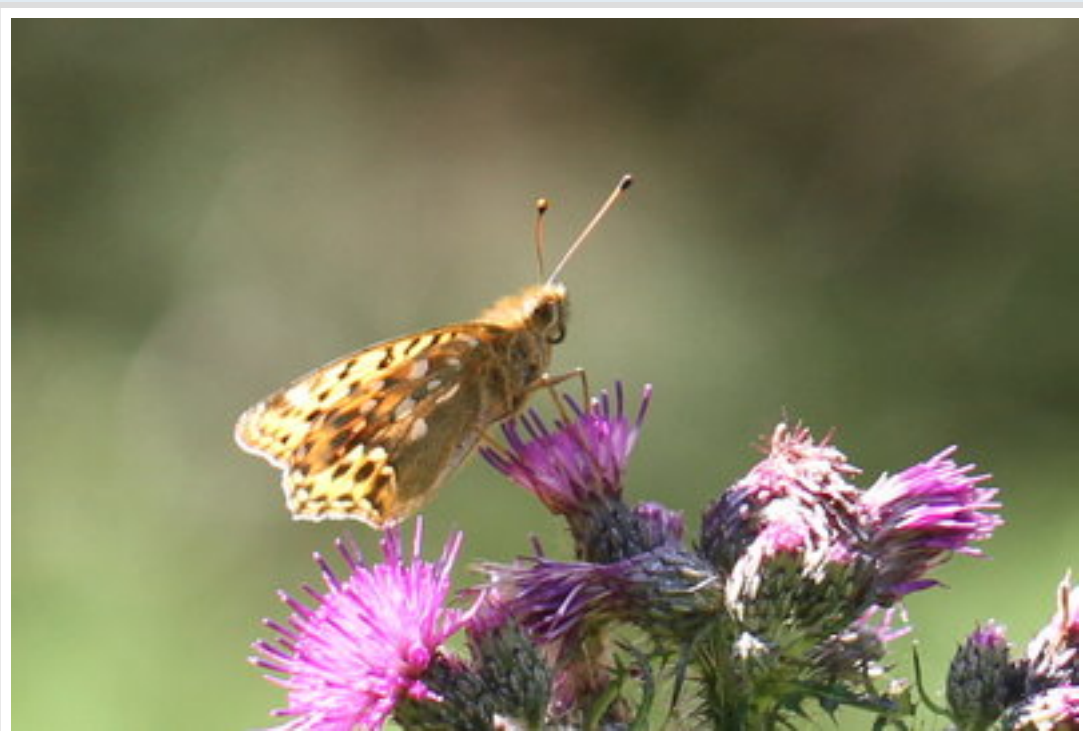


I noticed a Buddleia Bush by the stream close to the pub which was bustling with Fritillaries including the much prized High Brown





We then headed out along the road past the cottages to find the meadow mentioned by NeilF in his diary (Neil had also kindly posted me some directions). I'm not sure that we did find it but nonetheless there were meadows on either side of the road with thistles and Cow Parsley type flowers and in them we found Silver Washed, Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries

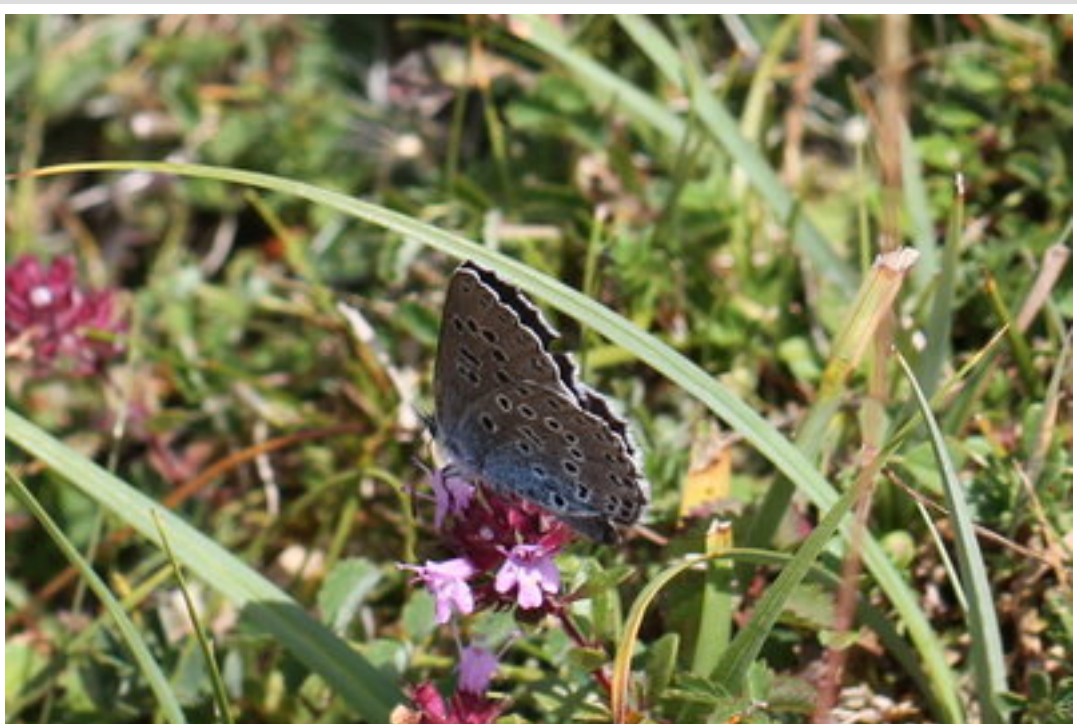




These meadows whilst ornamented by these beautiful insects are also populated by large numbers of big ugly blood-sucking monster flies that seem to be immune to Jungle Formula "Maximum". Fortunately I had my brother with me - they find him to be a tastier meal, so he acts as a diversion. I think I should hire him out.

But biting flies aside, Heddon's Mouth is a fantastic place to see Fritillaries and for me, to see High Browns is a marvellous treat.

We set out early on Friday morning with Large Blues in mind. This time we arrived at Collard Hill at a sensible hour. Within minutes of our arrival we saw our first Large Blue





Though a bit flighty!



We saw 3 or 4 in total



What a debt of gratitude we owe to the marvellous people who saved this butterfly from extinction here. I'd also been sent directions on how to find the Silver Studded Blues at Fairmile so we stopped off there





A Wonderful way to end our short break.

Back home, on my walk with the dogs this morning I believe I've found an Essex Skipper





Black on the antennae and a short straight sex brand – An Essex? Certainly looks different to this Small Skipper



Re: Hoggers

by Debbie, 13-Jul-13 02:40 PM GMT

Beautiful pictures and I love the clouded yellow.

I talk to the butterflies too 😊

Debbie

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-13 12:04 AM GMT

Fantastic report – I need to get to those places next year 😊🇬🇧🇬🇧 I'd go for Essex for your Skipper, the antennae looks like a drum stick which is one method I use, and there is no "kink" in the sex brand.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 14-Jul-13 03:28 PM GMT

Hi Debbie: I walk my dogs every day in the field where I saw the Clouded Yellows and now I just stand there looking across it remembering!

Thanks for the ID Wurzel – I'm always cautious about these Golden Skippers but I agree that one was indeed an Essex.

On my morning walk today I saw no less than 8 Small Tortoiseshells



Several Small Skippers and at least one Essex Skipper



And my first Gatekeeper of the Year





Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-13 05:04 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Glad to see you had a good time at the Hunters Inn/Heddon Valley. I too sampled a few of the local ales, purely out of curiosity of course 😊

I remember those flies now you mention it but fortunately didn't get bitten, just lucky I guess as I don't use any insect repellent, always worried it will keep the butterflies away too.

That Buddleia was not quite in flower when I was there, just shows the difference a few days sun can make.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Jul-13 04:14 PM GMT

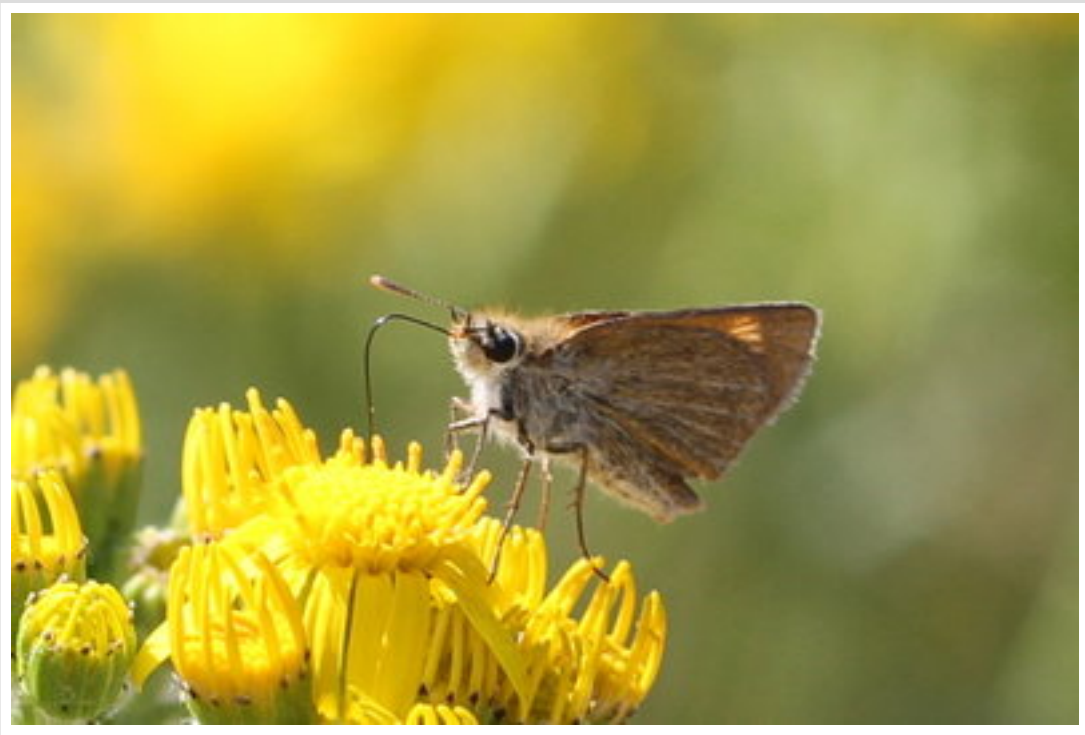
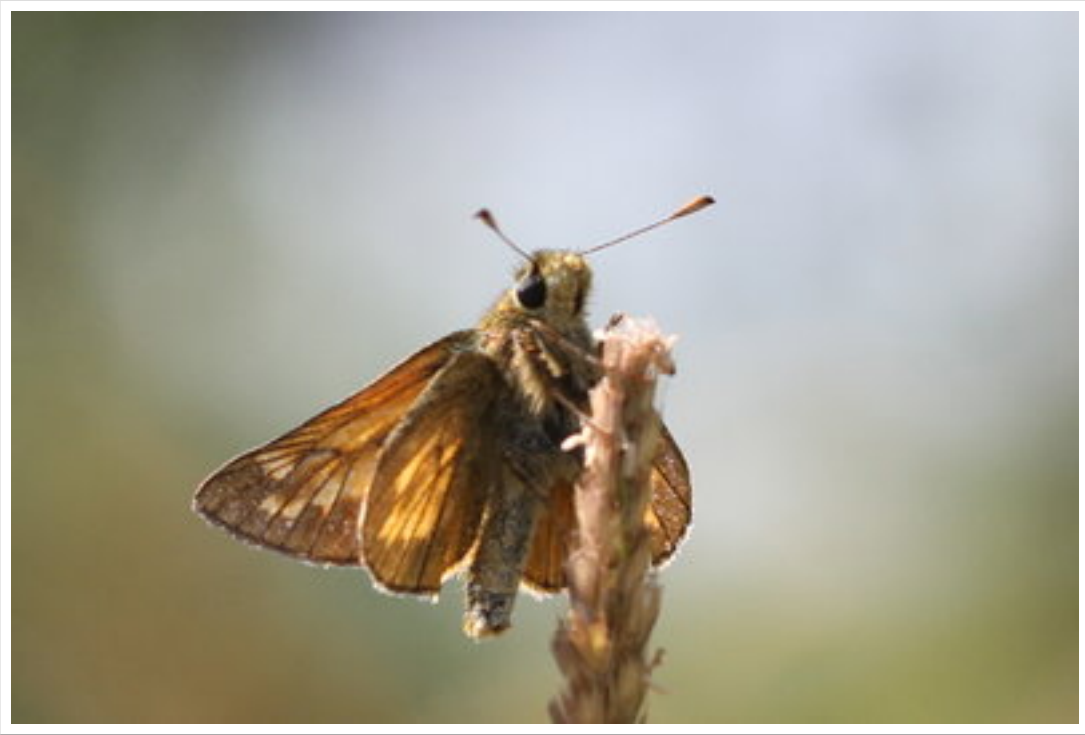
I haven't let myself forget the horrid and protracted Winter so recently endured. Thinking back to those freezing, dispiriting months is an inspiration to me to make the most of the current heat wave.

So when the joint astrological influences of Family and Work came into favourable conjunction on Monday, I jumped at the chance of nipping down to Dorset to see those marvellous little projectiles, Lulworth Skippers



Amongst the numerous Marbled Whites, Small Heaths, Meadow Browns and the graceful Dark Green Fritillaries I quickly came upon some Lullys

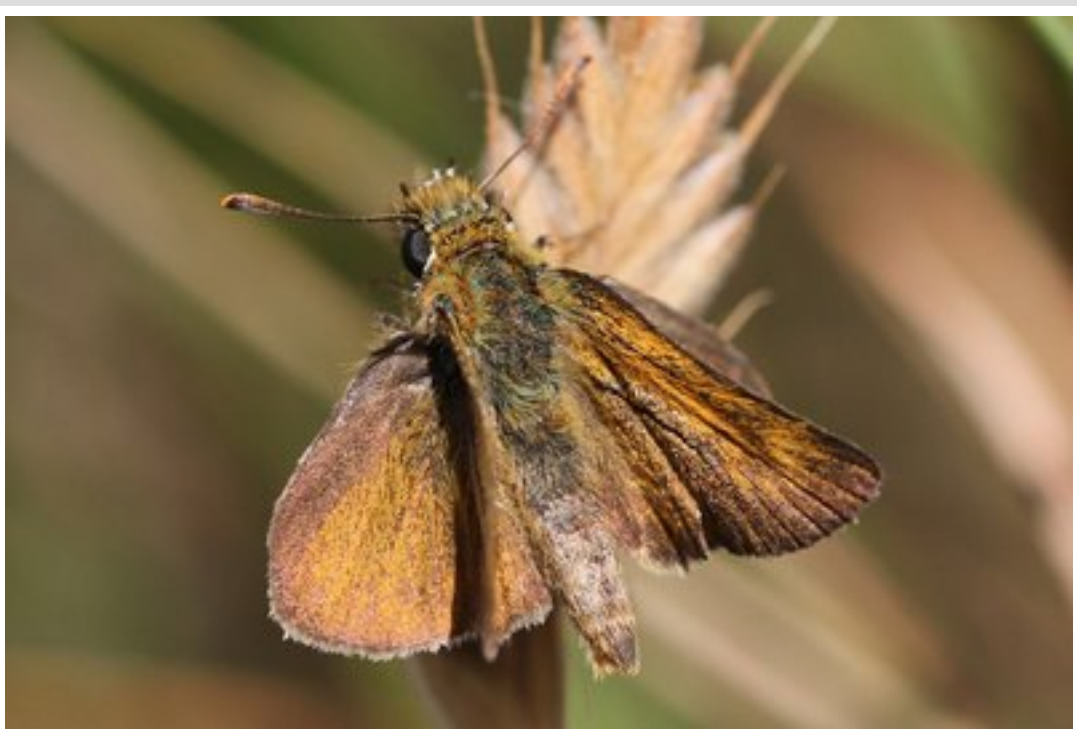




Quite a few were infected with mites



It was sweltering up on the hill so I repaired to the Cove and bought an Ice Cream. Then I went to Durlston Country Park for more Lulworth Skippers



And more Ice Cream!

Before heading home I visited Studland Heath near Swanage in search of Graying



He's there somewhere..Ah! There he is



They've got to be one of my favourite butterflies



Marvellous aren't they?

I stopped in at Bookham Common on my way home, arriving at mid-day. I saw (but couldn't get near enough to photograph) many Purple Hairstreaks and a single Purple Emperor. A fine end to a smashing Butterflying Excursion.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-13 09:25 PM GMT

Another great report – you certainly cover the miles 😊 But the range you see definitely makes it worth while 😊🇬🇧 I'm hoping to get back to my Dorset homeland next week so hopefully I'll haul in a few Skippers and avoid being mistaken for a grockle 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 17-Jul-13 09:29 PM GMT

You've sure been busy, Hoggers.

Good to get around while the weather's like this. Abnormally hot conditions can make butterflies do unpredictable things.

Give it a week and someone will have a Purple Hairstreak puddling shot along with White Letter!

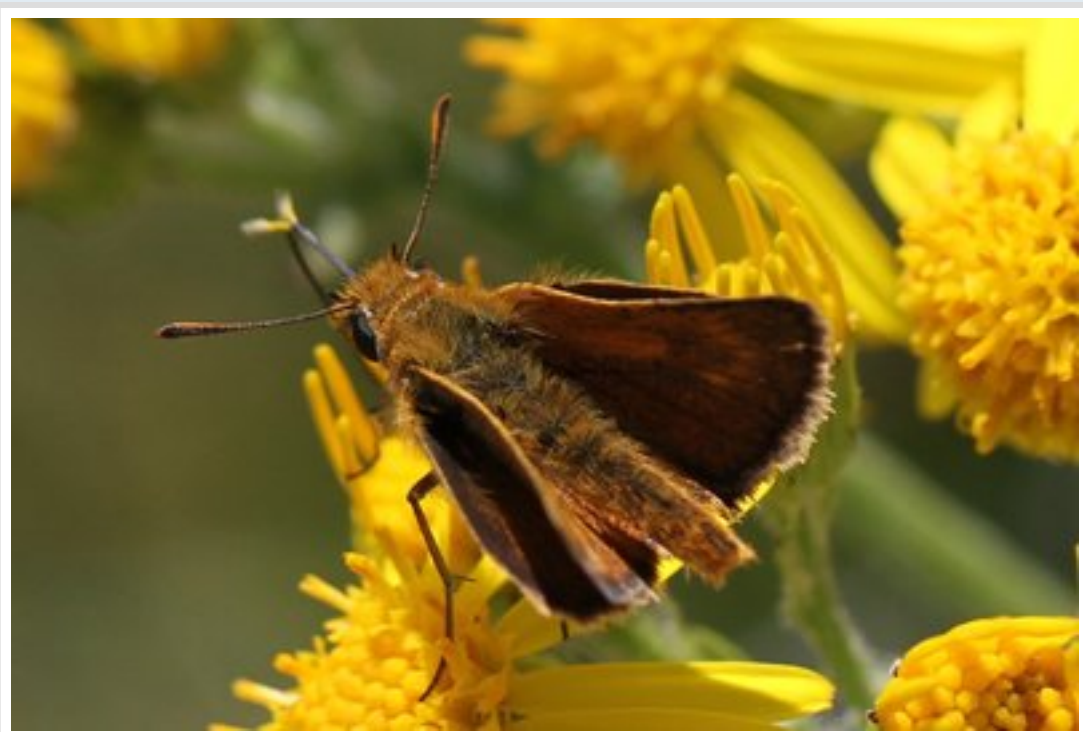
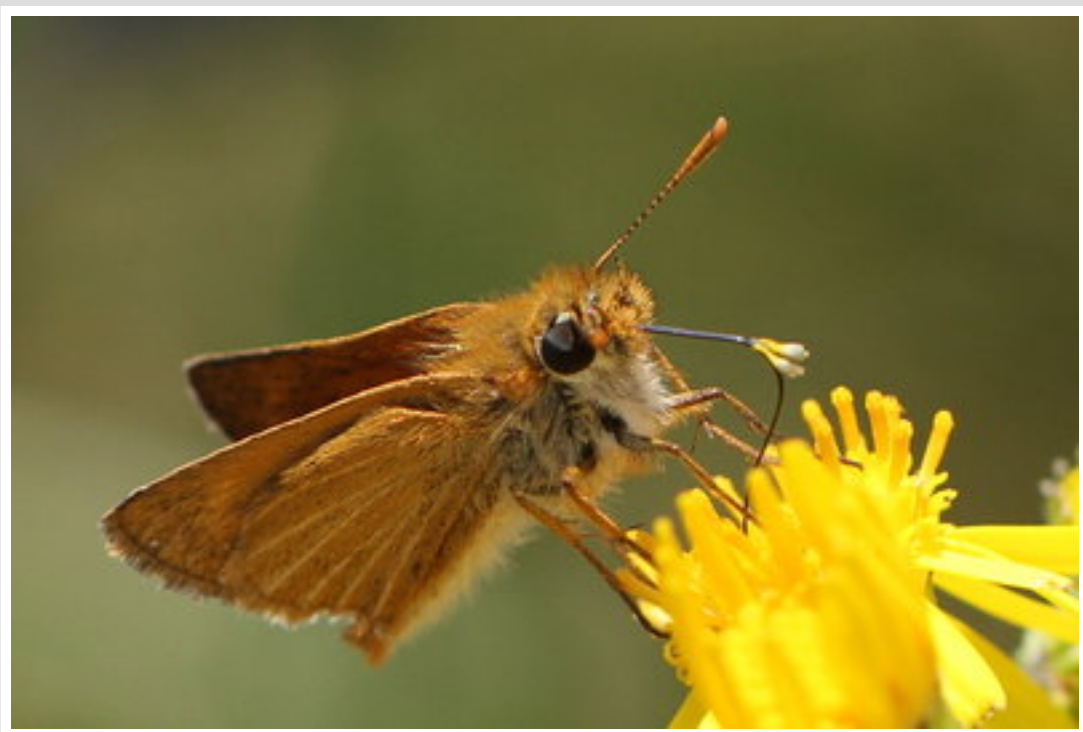
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Jul-13 01:09 PM GMT

North Devon and Somerset last week; Dorset this week: you'd think I'd retired to live a life of leisure..!

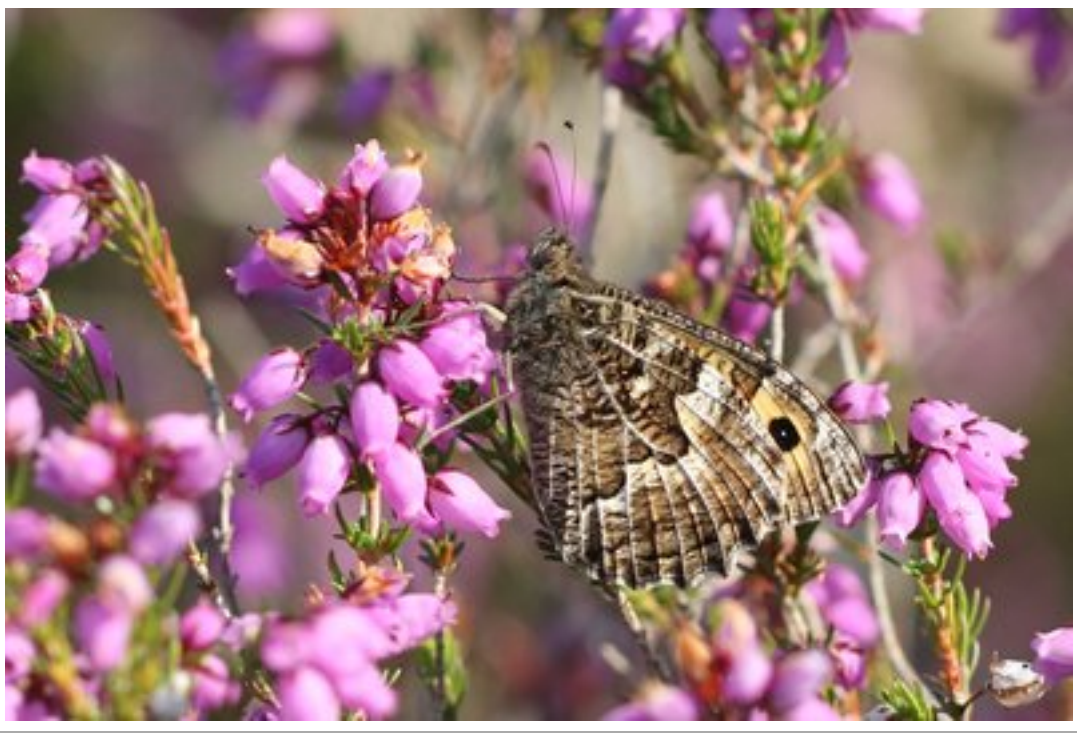
Great fun though: I saw some fantastic countryside and some wonderful butterflies.

I particularly wanted to see Lulworth Skippers again after not having seen them for many years. I'm very fond of Skippers, they have such vim and verve, and the Lulworth is such a distinctive little chap (even without the moustache that this one was sporting)



I've yet to see a Chequered Skipper – that's one for next year!

I've heard that Graylings can be found at Folkestone Warren, which is close to where I live, though I've never been lucky enough to find them there (But then they are masters of disguise!) So I especially wanted to find them at Studland whilst I was on my mini-break in Dorset. I was delighted to see so many of them and thought they looked particularly beautiful amongst the heather



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Jul-13 03:32 PM GMT

On Monday of this week I had a Meadow Brown fluttering around the garden. I can't remember ever having seen one here.

I also watched a Small White lay eggs on the Nasturtiums that I planted in April/May (and which have grown so well). She laid her eggs one at a time on the underside of each leaf. I had a look today



I'll keep an eye on them. I don't mind if all the Nasturtiums get eaten up by hungry caterpillars – I planted them for that very reason. But I haven't relaxed my Nil Tolerance Policy when it comes to Molluscs...So if there are any Slugs reading this, I'm still watching out for you!

Today I found a Gatekeeper in the garden



Another first for my garden.

Re: Hoggers

by ChrisC, 19-Jul-13 04:48 PM GMT

Excellent Hoggers, you know there's no going back now you have been getting butterflies 😊 they add a whole new dimension to the garden.

Chris

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 20-Jul-13 07:05 PM GMT

Chris, I am surprised and delighted by the variety of butterflies I'm getting in such a short time. It's exciting and rewarding.

When I got up this morning at 630 the sky was clear. I thought we were in for another sunny day. On my walk with the dogs I noticed a tiny cloud away in the distance. It looked harmless enough. But within a hour there was complete cloud cover. It reminded me of Chemistry lessons when we'd drop a single crystal of Potassium Permanganate into a beaker of clear water and watch it diffuse to colour the whole container (Mr Elliott, if by some chance you happen to be reading this and just about to mark it with the usual "F-Minus", I hope I've correctly remembered the technical bits: I did pay attention, now and again..)

So today has been overcast and cool, which to be honest has come as a welcome relief from the run of days of unremitting hot sunshine.

To take my Daily Butterflying Medicine I visited Orlestone Forest.

The first thing I noticed was that there were NO MOZZIES!! Extraordinary! They usually know when I'm coming.

The second thing that struck me was the the large number of Ringlets bobbing up and down the rides, including this one which had a lovely Mushroomy texture that I could almost taste



Lots of gorgeous Gatekeepers



Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites



Large and Small Skippers



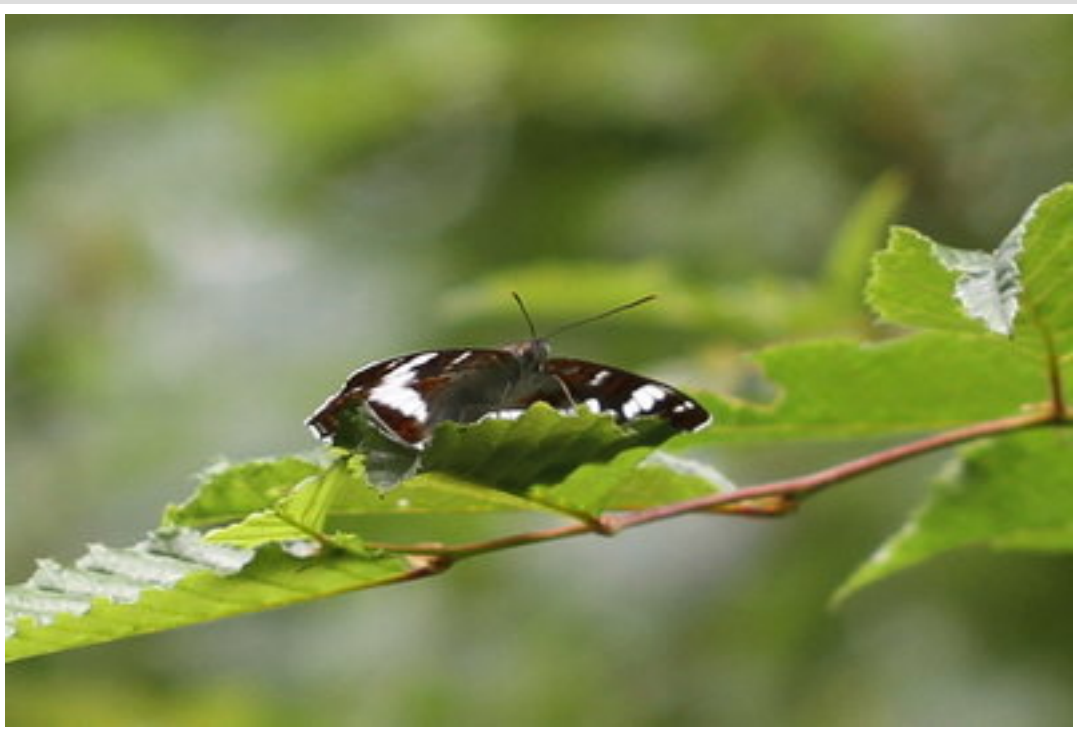
Essex Skippers



Speckled Woods



And despite the gloomy conditions, five White Admirals



Hardly a gloomy day when you can see so many beautiful butterflies!

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 21-Jul-13 01:56 PM GMT

I went to Warehorn today looking for White-letter Hairstreaks. Unfortunately I didn't see any. But my luck wasn't all bad



A lovely Purple Hairstreak made the trip worthwhile



Last year at this same site I managed to see only one WLH. I don't know if any have been seen here at all this year, there's no news on the Kent Butterfly Conservation Site. Dave Brown visited recently and failed to see any. I hope this doesn't mean they've died out here, not least because it's the only place I know for them in Kent. If anyone reading this knows of a good site for them in Kent I'd be grateful if they could let me know. I'll be very sad not to see them again



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Jul-13 02:37 PM GMT

While the sun was shining this morning I returned to Warehorn in search of White letter Hairstreaks but with no luck, so I moved on to Orlestone Forest.

There were many Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Skippers, Gatekeepers



Marbled Whites



A few Commas, Speckled Woods, two Red Admirals, a Purple Hairstreak high in the canopy and I counted five White Admirals before the rain came down





Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 24-Jul-13 02:30 PM GMT

I went to Wonderful Lydden today (Temple Ewell Nature Reserve near Dover). The Chalkhill Blues are out



Mostly males but I did see a few females



Marvellous to see them back – the hill never looks quite the same without its Chalkhill Blues

Marbled Whites



Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers



Small and Essex Skippers



Brown Argus, a Common Blue, a Red Admiral, Large White, Small Heaths



They certainly look after Butterflies at Lydden



Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 25-Jul-13 02:58 PM GMT

The fields where I walk my dogs have become parched and sear. But this morning they had a fresher look

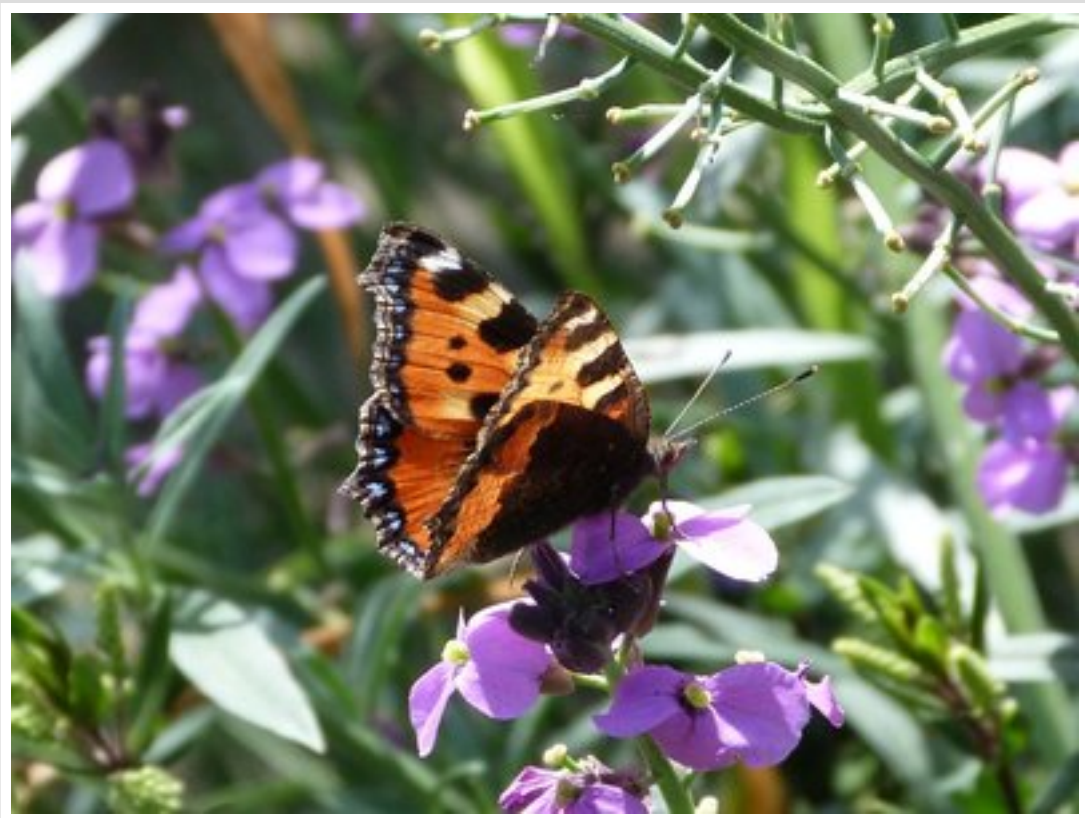




In the garden I had a Speckled Wood



And a Small Tortoiseshell



The Buddleias have yet to bloom so I'm pleased that I've got flowers out now that are attractive to butterflies.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Jul-13 07:04 PM GMT

Peacocks



And Small Tortoiseshells



on my morning walk with the dogs today.

Best of all today was this Brimstone in my garden



I get them here in Spring, restlessly passing through, but I cannot remember ever seeing any here in Summer. This is the first year I've had Wall Flowers, so maybe that's the reason why this is so.

Some of my Buddleia is just starting to bloom but as yet I've seen only one Small Tortoiseshell.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 27-Jul-13 08:17 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

The Buddleias have yet to bloom so I'm pleased that I've got flowers out now that are attractive to butterflies.

I think there's going to be an explosion of vanessids on buddleias within the next 2-3 weeks. Unless the weather turns atrocious, I can see these insects visiting gardens for nectar in significant numbers when the wild flowers start to die back, and given how late even garden plants are this year, we could see almost an epidemic of Tortoiseshells/Peacocks/Commas/Red Admirals visiting suburbia during August.

Re: Hoggers

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

Fantastic reports Hoggers. Glad to see that Dorset delivered 😊 Cracking Chalkhills but my favourite shots are those of the White Admirals, the one basking on the leaf is brill 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-13 11:34 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

The Buddleias have yet to bloom so I'm pleased that I've got flowers out now that are attractive to butterflies.

My dwarf Buddleias in pots are just beginning to flower but I have a large pink one in the front garden that is an early bloomer and is already past its best, not over yet but I am dead-heading the initial large flower spikes. It is remarkable how the past few weeks of good weather have pulled things back after the late start to the year.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Jul-13 04:06 PM GMT

I loved my visit to Dorset,Wurzel: Lulworth Cove, Durlston Country Park and Swanage are beautiful places and I'm looking forward to going back again next year for Marsh Fritillaries, which I haven't seen for years.

I remember the White Admiral that you mention very well (and thanks for the compliment): it settled close by me but tantalisingly out of reach. I wanted to get behind and above it and went on an unsuccessful search for a log to stand on (you'd think you could find a log in a forest, wouldn't you?) So I took the photos standing on tip-toes whilst all the time fending off the Orlestone Mozzies which were coming in thick and fast as I'd run out of Jungle Formula. It's at times like this that you get a flavour of what it must be like to be a War Correspondent.

Some of my Buddleia is now in flower, Neil, and David, if this morning is anything to go by, your forecast may well prove to be accurate





In addition to these I had six Small Whites



A Large White



A Green-veined White



The Brimstone from yesterday



A Holly Blue and this battle-scarred Meadow Brown



Which still managed to fly up to the Buddleia to feed.

I'm looking forward to the Small Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-Jul-13 12:27 PM GMT

Yesterday whilst the sun was shining I was stuck at work. Today, when I'm "working from home" (which I usually contrive to mean a butterfly trip followed by a bit of paper work..) it's all very glum and wet and cloudy. So there'll be no butterflying excursion for me today.

But the dog needs be exercised and even though it was spitting with rain I took my pocket camera with me "just in case" when we went out this morning.

Butterflying with a Dizzy Springer Spaniel isn't easy: they manage to be everywhere at once, tail bashing about knocking everything flying, and that's rather unhelpful when I'm stalking a butterfly to try and get a photograph.

But on a quiet cool day when the field looked to be deserted, it's amazing how many Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Skippers he puts up, even in the rain, when I let him loose.

This Gatekeeper had found some shelter



I saw a quick flash of blue in the long grass and there was a Common Blue flitting away between the rain drops. Further on I chanced to see a large butterfly lift off from the ground and quickly resetttle. I inched closer and up it flew. This time I could see a pinkish colour to it. The rain drops were falling heavier now and the butterfly went to ground but this time it stayed put



A Painted Lady

I managed to take only a couple of photographs before it flew off in the rain. I saw where it landed but I didn't want to disturb it yet again.

But I'm glad I took my camera with me. This was the same field where I saw the Clouded Yellows, so I may have found a Migrant Hot Spot in the heart of Dear Old Concrete Ashford.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 01-Aug-13 02:19 PM GMT

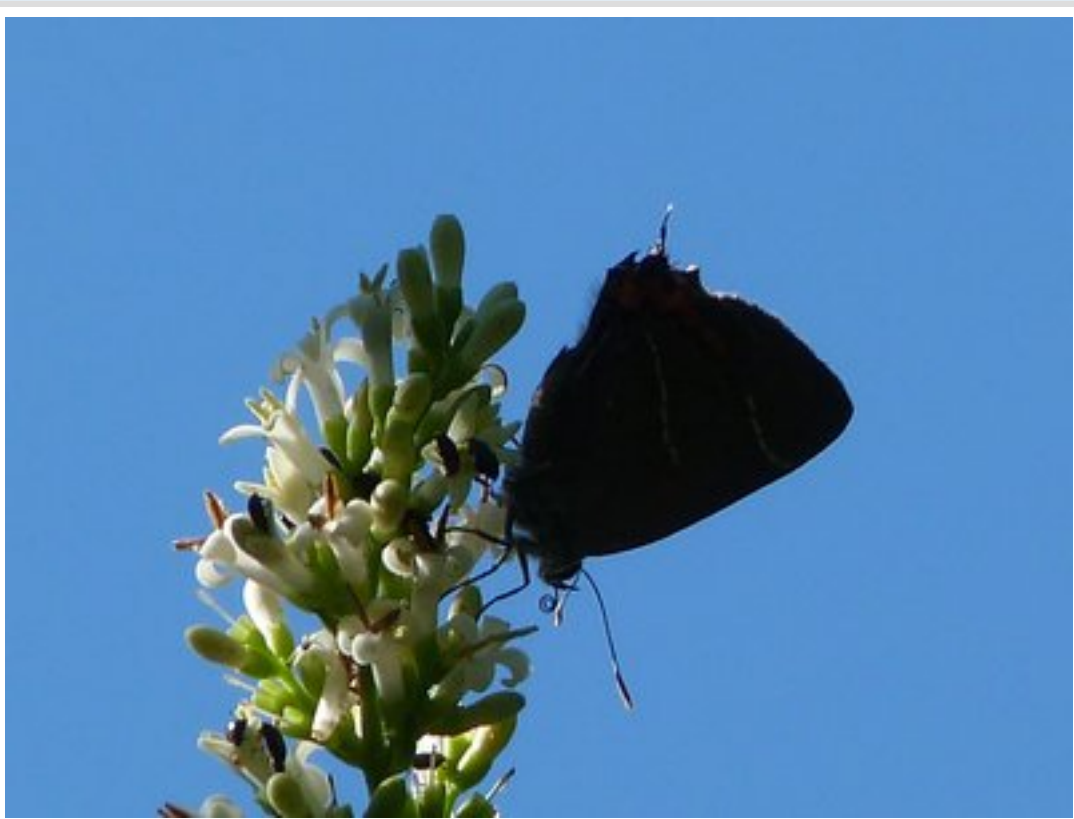
I have visited my only White Letter Hairstreak site (at Warehorn) three times this Summer without any luck. Last year I saw only one. I hope they are still there and I've just missed them.

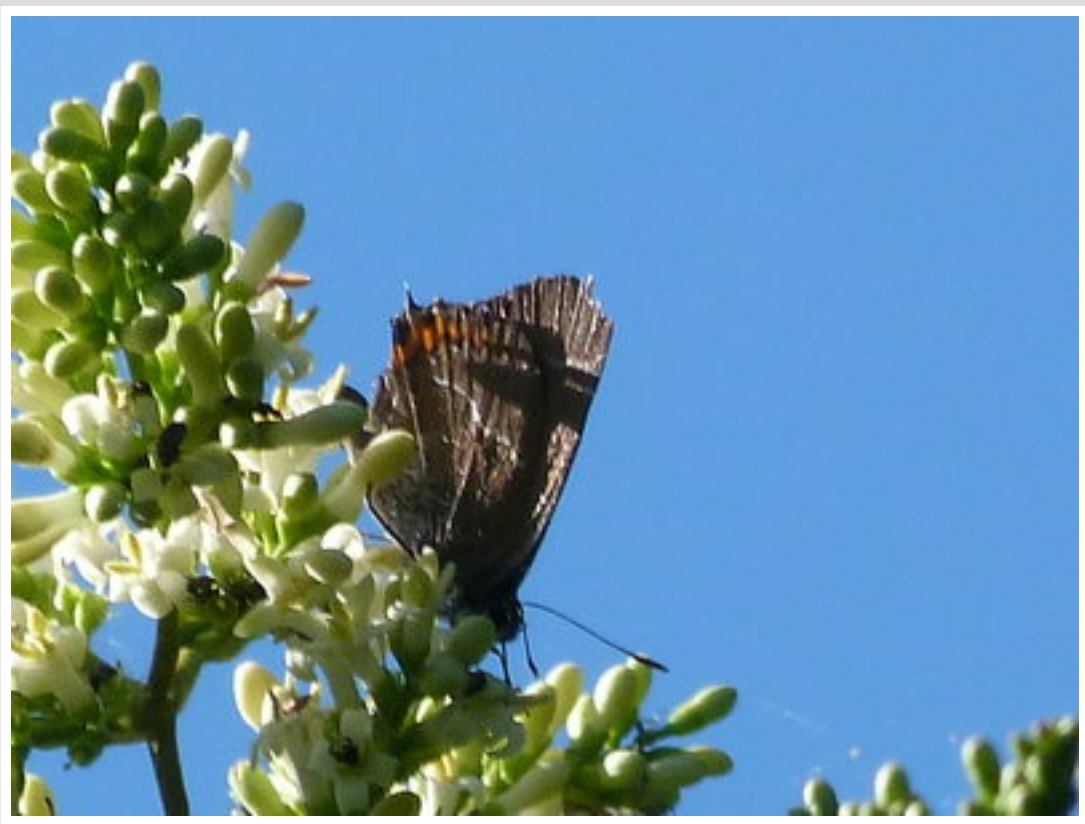
So I got in contact with Dave Brown who suggested that I try another site in Kent at Bishopstone, near Reculver, and gave me full directions as to where I should look.

I got there this morning at around 10. It was already very warm indeed and there were butterflies almost everywhere I looked; lots of Small and Large Whites, Gatekeepers, Peacocks and Commas.

I followed Dave's directions and soon found the Elms together with a large patch of Bramble and a Privet Hedge in flower.

Literally within minutes of my arrival I saw a WLH high up on the Privet flower and then another on the Bramble. Both butterflies were out of reach so I had to use the full x24 zoom on my camera but I at least managed to get a few photographs





While there I bumped into another WLH Hunter who told me that he thinks the population of WLH in that area is around 30.
Thanks Dave, I think I'd have missed seeing this butterfly altogether if you hadn't helped me out.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 01-Aug-13 05:50 PM GMT

I know only too well what you've gone through there, Hoggers. 😡

Only Purple Hairstreaks are more frustrating.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Aug-13 03:13 PM GMT

I had a bad case of "Hairstreak Neck" too, David!

An early finish at Canterbury meant that by 11am I was at Lydden Nature Reserve. Lots of Chalkhill Blues





Many taking an interest in Doggie -Do-Dah



I made my way up onto the hill on the look out for Silver Spotted Skippers. I didn't see any, but as I wandered about my heart stopped at the sight of a gorgeous yellow butterfly that gently lifted off and started to glide downhill where it settled





A Beautiful Clouded Yellow, and this time, a female! Here are some "in flight" shots





I wish i could do justice to this marvellous creature – the sight of it gently drifting down the hill, the gorgeous colours and the broken black of the upper wing margins are simply spectacular



I spent over an hour in her company and it was a complete delight



As if this were not spoiling me, I saw no less than five Painted Ladies





An afternoon with a female Clouded Yellow and five Painted Ladies – No wonder I've got a big smile on my face!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 02-Aug-13 04:10 PM GMT

That's a cracking first image of the open wing Clouded Yellow, Hoggers. It actually looks as if it's at rest.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Aug-13 07:58 PM GMT

Thanks David although I take no credit for it as it was a pure fluke.

I may be spouting pure nonsense but it seemed to me that the female was not flying as fast as the males I saw back in June. It had a more gentle and fluttering manner. In fact, it seemed more like a butterfly looking for somewhere to lay its eggs. Maybe that's just what it was doing. I didn't see any Legumes on the hillside but certainly that's the impression I had as I followed it



This afternoon in my garden I had 6 Peacocks, a Comma and a single Painted Lady but no Red Admirals yet.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-13 08:36 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Not only a Clouded Yellow but in flight shots with open wings too 🍷🍷😊

I have had a couple of Red Admirals in my garden the past couple of days, I'll swap you..... 😊😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-13 10:20 PM GMT

Got back from a visit back home to Dorset so catching up still...You've certainly been busy Hoggers – Painted Lady, White Letters and an open wing sho of Clouded Yellow 🍷🍷🍷 Ace 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 02-Aug-13 11:56 PM GMT

Brilliant Clouded Yellow. Lets hope it was laying eggs and the offspring provide a lovely yellow end to the season come September.

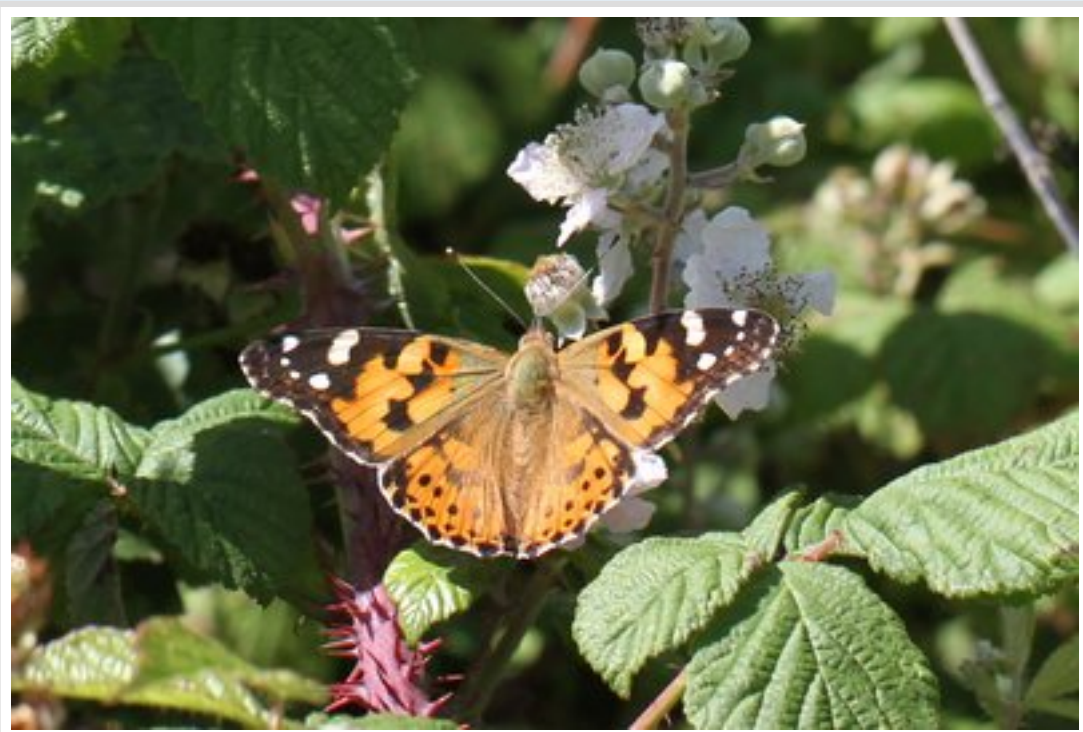
Dave

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 03-Aug-13 03:15 PM GMT

Many thanks for all of the comments everyone – I feel myself t be a Very Lucky UKBer.

The Painted Ladies are here! At Dungeness today I saw over twenty on Brambles in the Observatory moat





And more arriving while I was there.

There were many more of them than Peacocks



And only one each of Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral



I'd made the journey there in the hope of seeing Small Coppers and I'm happy to say they turned out to be numerous





A single Common Blue



Together with one Marbled White, One Small Skipper and many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers.

A lovely surprise for me though, to see so many Painted Ladies



I think last year I saw only two.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-Aug-13 01:45 PM GMT

Out walking the dogs yesterday evening around 8.30pm a Painted Lady went zipping by.

This morning at 730, again out with the hounds, I saw two Painted Ladies fly up when disturbed by my Spaniel.

I decided to visit Folkestone Warren today just to see if more Painted Ladies had arrived. They had



I came across seven in total with numerous Peacocks and a single Red Admiral



I also saw a Large Skipper



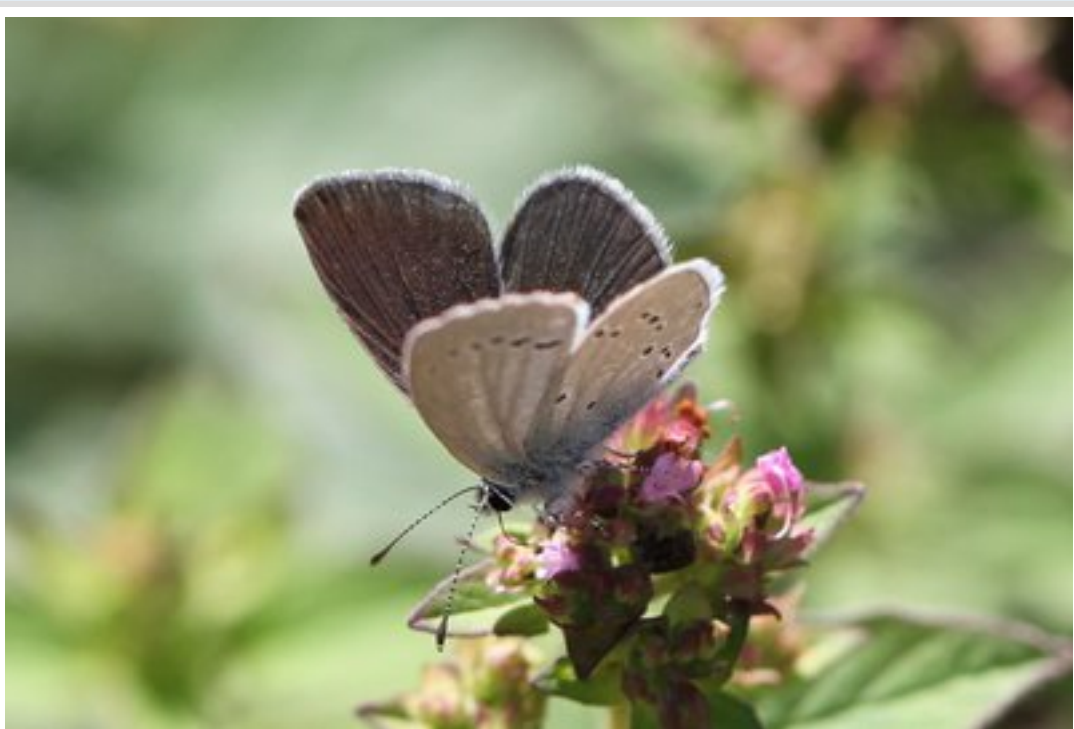
And several Common Blues.

I then dropped in at Lydden which thronged with Chalkhill Blues



Large and Small Whites, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and two Painted Ladies.

While in the area I decided to visit Kingsdown to see if the second brood of Small Blues had emerged. At my favourite site for these dainty little butterflies I found four on the wing



Back home, in the garden I counted twelve Peacocks and four Commas, all enjoying the Buddleias.

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 04-Aug-13 08:03 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers, very nice variety of lovely photos, its great to see the Painted Ladies are around again.

Regards,

Mike

Re: Hoggers

by Pauline, 04-Aug-13 08:43 PM GMT

Just seen your Clouded Yellow shots – fantastic job! You are absolutely right about how stunning they are and it is a real shame that not everyone gets to appreciate them.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-Aug-13 09:17 PM GMT

Hi Mike thanks for that, much appreciated. I've seen your photographs so praise indeed. Last year I saw only 2 Painted Ladies so I'm over the moon to have seen about 30 of them in the last few days. I hope they make their way to everyone soon.

Pauline, Clouded Yellows are SO BEAUTIFUL! Just stunning! The female was very approachable and not on a mission to disappear as quickly as possible, so I had almost an hour gently following her up and down the hill. I took as many photographs as I could but also greatly enjoyed putting the camera aside and just watching her. It was marvellous!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-13 09:42 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Small Blues Hoggers – the sheen on the first male is cracking 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Aug-13 12:44 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, that Magic Dust on a Small Blue's wing is something special.

Today I popped in to Lydden Nature Reserve to look for Silver spotted Skippers.

There's a constant cascade of Chalkhill Blues flowing down the hill that's a sight to see

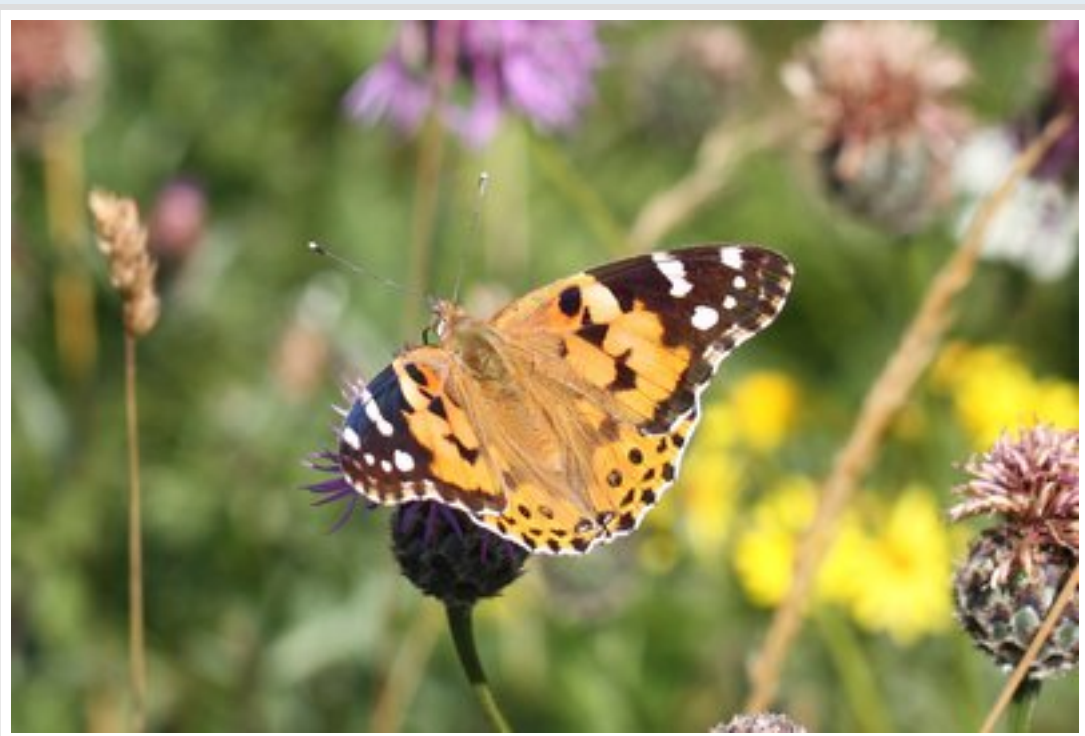




With numerous Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns



Three Painted Ladies



added a touch of exotic glamour.

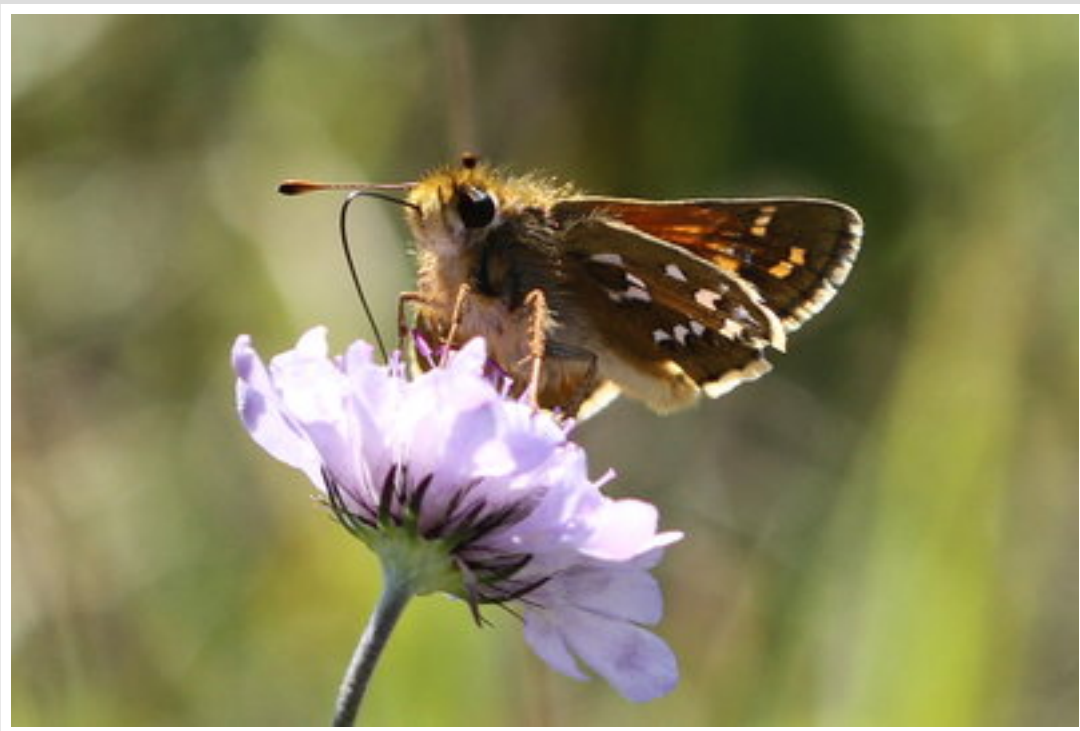
After much slow pacing about I saw my first Silver Spotted Skipper on the path basking in the sun



In my two hours there I saw five SSS's



It's early days yet at this site



And I'm sure numbers will grow rapidly. Good to see them back



Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-13 05:13 PM GMT

Great stuff Hoggers 😊 You've cheered me up as I was worried I might miss out on the SSSk as everyone else seemed to be seeing them weeks ago 😊

Haves goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Aug-13 04:12 PM GMT

I hope you get to see them Wurzel they are real characters. I'm keen go back to Lydden to see some more.

Just a quick note to say that there were two Painted Ladies in my garden before I left for work this morning at 8.30am and when I got home at 3pm no less than 14 Peacocks on the Buddleia with one Small Tortoiseshell and one Comma.

Also, yesterday and for the first time ever, I had a Small Skipper in the garden!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 08-Aug-13 06:32 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

..I had a Small Skipper in the garden!

Impressive, Hoggers. Your hard work earlier this year has really paid off!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 10-Aug-13 04:31 PM GMT

I haven't been able to get out butterfly chasing these last few days, any that I've seen have been on my drive to and from work (lots of Large and Small Whites) and in the garden (sometimes up to 16 Peacocks a day and a sprinkling of Small Tortoiseshells).

In fact I feel rather bad about almost certainly having killed a few Whites recently on the way to work as so many are on the wing and flying across the roads. I own a complete absence of Scientific Brain so I'm not sure whether my car pushes a body of air ahead of it as it proceeds along the road which might act as a cushion for a creature so light as a butterfly, but I guess the ones unlucky enough to be in the region of the front grill are Goners. Not a happy thought.

On a brighter note, whilst walking the dogs today I had a stroke of luck



My fifth Clouded Yellow of the year.

This one was flitting around in the same field where I saw two back in June. Unfortunately, it chose not to linger and was soon disappearing off into the distance but I managed to get close enough to take a few photographs before it left. It really has been a Clouded Yellow Year for me



Even though I've seen five this year I still get a thrill of excitement and wonder whenever I'm luck enough to find one.

The second brood of Common Blues is well underway





I saw at least four males fly up to investigate the Clouded Yellow as it crossed the field.

And I was pleased to see more Brown Argus after really struggling to find them in Spring



Tomorrow I hope to get out and about and see some butterflies. There's a slight but nonetheless distinct tang of Autumn in the air of an evening and morning now. It reminds me that the butterfly season doesn't last forever and that I should try to make the most of what remains.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-13 10:00 PM GMT

Great stuff Hoggers 😊 No need for the "mr green" smilie as I saw two Clouded Yellows today 😎 I've had a few butterflies strike the car but some sermons okay – at least they're still flying when Ixsrch sight of them in the rear view mirror 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-Aug-13 03:40 PM GMT

That is good news Wurzel. I hope every UKBer gets to see this wonderful butterfly. As for me, I'm getting far more than my fair share of Clouded Yellows!

I took the hounds out at 7 this morning, to the usual field, and there I was astonished to see two Clouded Yellows, a male and a female, slowly flitting around in the warming sunshine. I didn't have my camera with me as it hadn't crossed my mind that I might see butterflies so early on. After the walk I took the dog home, fetched my camera and went back. The butterflies were still there



The male was the more active of the two and I saw him nectar several times.



The female either roosted on the ground or in the grass



The male twice found the female for me: I'd be watching him flying around when he'd suddenly duck down onto the ground and up would come the female, brushing him off



then settling down again



So that's five Clouded Yellows that I've seen in this one field alone so far this year, in the heart of Concrete Ashford.

I also saw this little Brown Argus



By 10am I'd arrived at Samphire Hoe, near Dover, with Brother Hoggles. We were on the lookout for second brood Wall.

I've rarely seen so much Buddleia: the path alongside of the railway is lined with beautiful big Buddleia bushes, all in full flower. There we counted 8 Painted Ladies



And would you believe, yet another Clouded Yellow



A couple of tattered Marbled Whites were still on the wing, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Large and Small Skippers



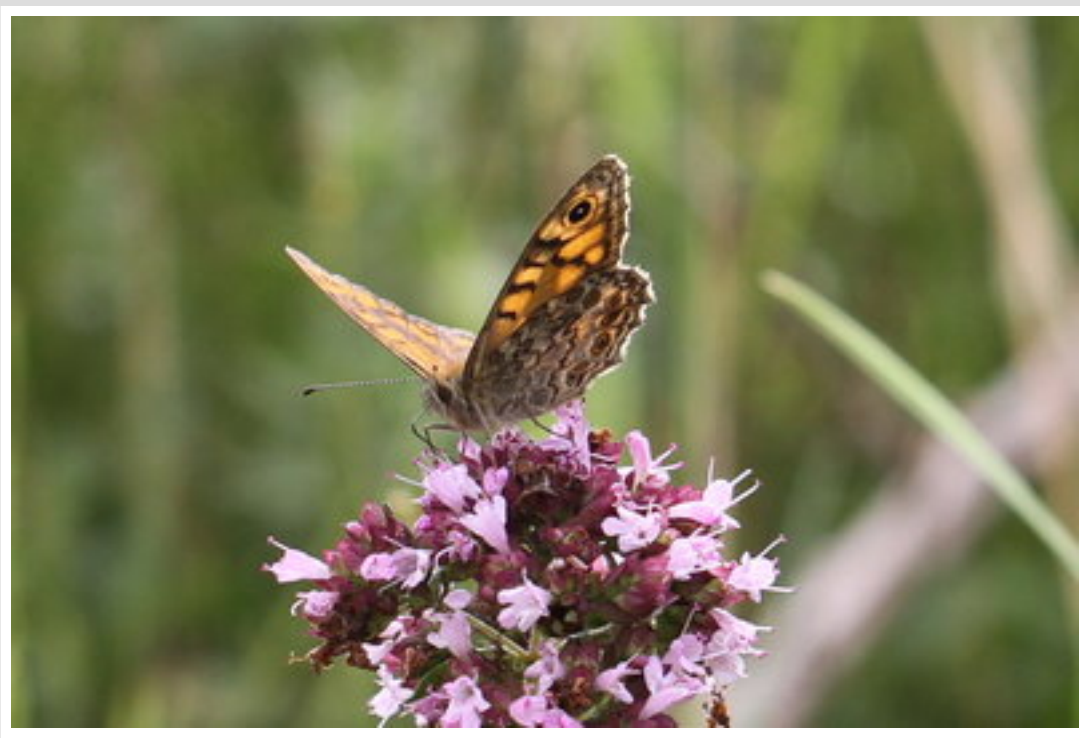
Numerous Large and Small Whites too.

Then we saw our first Wall



The sky had clouded and it had grown quite cool by this time so we had a wait while all the butterflies went to ground until the cloud had passed and it was once more warm and sunny. Common Blues appeared first and then more Wall





We saw 8 of them in total



Another rewarding and enjoyable day chasing butterflies.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-13 09:35 PM GMT

I take it back – my envy had returned 🍷😄 You were certainly lucky during the dog walk but to have one all peaceable on a Buddleia, I need some of your luck Hoggers 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 11-Aug-13 09:43 PM GMT

Right now it seems like a butterfly bonanza for one and all! Clouded Yellows are popping up everywhere and Peacock numbers are truly astonishing. Well done once again with your early morning shots, Hoggers. ALWAYS take your camera, remember?

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 12-Aug-13 08:07 PM GMT

I shall not make the same mistake again, David! And Wurzel, I had some help from the weather with the Samphire Hoe Clouded Yellow because it was

just as the sky became overcast that I spotted it and while the sun was behind the clouds it stayed put.

I've been at work all day so my butterflying was limited to what I could find in the garden this afternoon. Peacocks, mainly, and a Small Tortoiseshell. Where are all the Red Admirals, I wonder? I'd expected them in numbers after last year's bumper crop. Still, there's time yet before Summer's over.

What has interested me in the garden is this: I'm starting to think I've got a little community of Gatekeepers. Before I began gardening for butterflies I'd never seen a Gatekeeper in the garden. They appeared for the first time this year. Now I see them every day and this afternoon I counted three of them, one of which appeared to have set up a little territory for itself, flying out to investigate passing butterflies before returning to the same bush. Of course, they are common in the countryside, but I read in my Thomas and Lewington that "It is very rare for Gatekeepers to appear in city gardens even in counties where the species is abundant".

Ashford is not a city but it's very "built up", so I'm really quite proud of my Gatekeepers.

Re: Hoppers

by David M, 12-Aug-13 08:19 PM GMT

"Hoppers" wrote:

Where are all the Red Admirals, I wonder? I'd expected them in numbers after last year's bumper crop.

Mainly obliterated by the cold spring, Hoppers.

We've largely been reliant on migrants re-populating the numbers over the course of the summer and I suspect that not a great deal will change before autumn arrives.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 13-Aug-13 04:56 PM GMT

I hadn't thought of that, David. How Sad! I hope numbers pick up soon as the sight of Red Admirals getting tipsy on my windfall Plums is something I look forward to! I wonder why Peacocks appear to have fared so much better?

I knew I'd be stuck at work all day today with no chance of an early finish and a butterfly chase before going home, so as I'd had a stroke of luck last Saturday finding Clouded Yellows before 8 O'Clock in the morning I thought I'd take my camera with me on the dog walk at 6.30 (lesson learned, David!) and see what I could see.

And I discovered something that I hadn't realised before: 7am is a really good time to see Common Blues. As I walked through the long grass I saw one, then another, then another until I counted 18 Common Blues all basking in the early morning sunshine with wings wide open





They were just about everywhere, peppering the field with little glowing sparks of blue. Not only were they beautiful to see but being there with them felt a little like stepping into a church whilst the congregation is at prayer.

I wish I had not been in such a rush and that I could have spent longer with them.

Back home I popped into the garden and snapped a photograph of one of my three Gatekeepers



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 14-Aug-13 06:48 PM GMT

Fabulous weather, Long Tailed Blues flapping around Kent and I'm stuck at work all day!! Grrrr!!

But how can I complain when on my morning walk with the hounds I saw no less than FIVE Clouded Yellows?





Who'd have guessed that 2013 would turn out to be a "Clouded Yellow Year" after that dreadful Winter?

I've still got Large White eggs in the garden



A batch of caterpillars emerged a few days ago. I placed them in a protective cage and so well did they appear to be doing that this morning before I went to work I had the bright idea of taking them out of the cage and placing them amongst my Nasturtiums. This I duly did but just before leaving I decided to check on them. I'm glad I did because when I looked I saw a Wasp busily eating them! I shooed it away, saw there were some survivors and returned them to the safety of the cage.

If you look to the middle of this photograph you should be able to see signs of the carnage inflicted by the Killer Wasp



They'd only been out of the cage for about 10 minutes! Life as a caterpillar isn't easy (especially when there's a berk like Hoggers looking after you..!)

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Aug-13 03:51 PM GMT

There were still Clouded Yellows this morning in the field where I walk my dogs



It's now unusual for me NOT to see one!

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 17-Aug-13 06:42 PM GMT

After reading your diary I went out to check 'our' Large White caterpillars and found some appear to be missing! Hopefully they are just hiding from today's weather, I will check tomorrow, but might have to get the nets out.

All the Best

Mike

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Aug-13 02:23 PM GMT

Hi Mike, I was astonished by how quickly my caterpillars came under attack. Ten minutes after releasing them was enough for a Common Wasp to find them and start chomping away. I'd planned to put them on my Nasturtiums but in light of what's happened I think I'll keep them in the cage until they are adults.

Today when out with the dogs I was lucky enough to find a mating pair of Clouded Yellows



Here's a rotated image of them



I limited myself to taking just a few snaps as I didn't want to disturb what they were doing!

Bodes well for the future

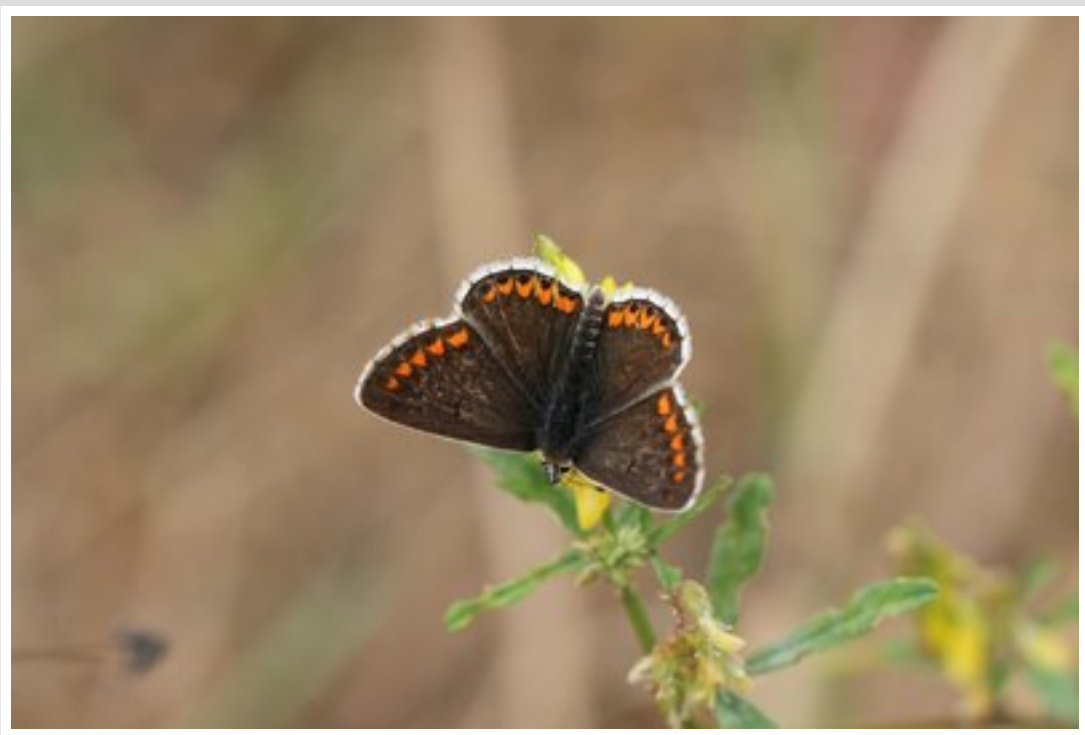


They were two of four that I saw today. I love watching them





Numbers of Small Tortoiseshells and Brown Argus are on the increase



Which is good to see.

Lots of Peacocks still in my garden together with Small Tortoiseshells and a fresh Brimstone.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 18-Aug-13 04:09 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Today when out with the dogs I was lucky enough to find a mating pair of Clouded Yellows

Tremendous find, Hoggers. I guess they were pretty approachable too (for a change)?

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 18-Aug-13 04:56 PM GMT

Very nice shots of the mating Clouded Yellows, in fact all of your shots of Clouded yellows 😊

I've had to net my cabbages today as most of the caterpillars have been predated, just some empty skins left behind. There are however a couple of large batches of eggs almost ready to hatch, will hopefully have better luck with them, now nets in place!

Mike

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Aug-13 05:18 PM GMT

Hi David, you're quite right, they were very approachable but I felt so concerned that I might inadvertently disturb the good work they were both engaged in that I took a few snaps and quickly retired! I guess that all things being favourable the eggs she lays will give rise to a new UK born generation and maybe one that I'll see on my Patch? I wish I'd seen the male afterwards as I see from the photos that he had a very strong Sulphurous colour.

Thanks Mike and good luck with your caterpillars. I don't know whether others are noticing an increase in the numbers of Common Wasps lately? Hardly any of them it seemed this year but I've just evicted three from my living room and almost stood on two in the garden today!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-13 06:14 PM GMT

Great stuff Hoggers 😊🍷 If they are successful you could be enjoying them for a fair while yet too 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Aug-13 06:47 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, it'd be marvellous if I could see Home Grown Clouded Yellows into the Autumn!

Today as I left for work I counted 8 Small Tortoiseshells and a single Painted Lady on the Buddleia in my front garden. When I got home late afternoon the Painted Lady was still there together with several Small Tortoiseshells and a few Peacocks.

It's the first Painted Lady I've seen for over a week. Still no sign of any Red Admirals.

Also late afternoon this Holly Blue on the Brambles in my garden



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 21-Aug-13 04:03 PM GMT

I must confess to having always flicked past the "Long Tailed Blue" entry in my Thomas and Lewington.

But then came all the excitement at Kingsdown Leas!

I turned back to my book and then enjoyed reading Dave Brown's and Neil's heady descriptions of their encounters with this rarity.

Today I finished work early and went straight to St Margaret's for the long walk to the Leas. I was slightly reluctant in that I'd read that flocks of "Twitchers" had descended on the area and I'm not one for large crowds (I get enough of that in London). But luckily when I arrived it was quiet.

Lots of butterflies on the magnificent cliff-top walk including many Small Coppers, wall-to-wall Wall and four Clouded Yellows



Once at the site I headed straight for the Everlasting Peas and this was the first Suspect that I saw



At first I thought I'd found a LTB, particularly as he was in a bush right beside the Peas. But as I looked more closely I saw that it was in fact a rather worn Purple Hairstreak



A number of brown moths also gave me false hope on a number of occasions until finally I stumbled upon The Real McCoy



I took a few snaps before it disappeared from my view chasing a Gatekeeper. I walked up and down the site but did not see anymore and whilst there I bumped into three more butterfly enthusiasts who had yet to see a single one. This was at about 1pm, so perhaps the butterfly goes quiet mid-day. Whatever they do, I hope the other LTB Hunters managed to find them after I headed home



I read that LTB eggs have been found in the area, so hope very much that this little gem becomes a long term resident on Kingsdown Leas.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 21-Aug-13 09:27 PM GMT

That's a headline that doesn't make sense:

'Butterfly enthusiast let down when Long Tailed Blue turns out to be Purple Hairstreak'.

I can think of far worse dilemmas. 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Aug-13 09:46 AM GMT

So can I David! I should have sounded more pleased with the Purple Hairstreak, shouldn't I? And of course I was happy to get up close to the little chap. He certainly fooled me for awhile as despite my research into the Long Tailed Blues I didn't really have a clue what I was looking for and the worn Hairstreak seemed a likely candidate, especially as he was close to the Everlasting Peas.

I see that our experts are running a book on an emergence of LTB's at this site with some money going on late September. I'm certainly going to have another look as I'd love to see a fresh LTB in all its glory.

And the site itself is spectacular. I spent about two hours there and counted 17 species of butterfly (and without the Purple Hairstreak it would only have been 16 !!)

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Aug-13 12:16 PM GMT

I managed to see a few butterflies on my walk with the dogs today, despite the rain.

First came this Clouded Yellow



Then a few Common Blues



Enough to brighten anyone's day.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Aug-13 07:12 PM GMT

I saw no less than Five Clouded Yellows on my walk with the dogs this morning



The field where I see them was stripped of its topsoil some years ago no doubt with the intention of building on it (this is, after all, Ashford!) although the diggers went away and have not (yet!) returned. And so wild flowers, which some would call "weeds", have established themselves. And it's here that the Clouded Yellows have this year settled and found so attractive



I watch the males restlessly quartering back and forth looking for females and every time I see one I feel a thrill of surprise as if I'm seeing them for the first time.

Lots of Common Blues here too, as well as Brown Argus



Butterflies don't need much to get along and thrive even in the midst of us and our ever more housing developments and new road systems built for more and more people and cars.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 24-Aug-13 04:15 PM GMT

Lashings and lashings of rain today. I rather enjoy walking in the rain and so do my dogs. We even managed to see some butterflies. Several Meadow Browns slowly flapped up as we crossed the field and then a single Clouded Yellow flew for a few feet after being knocked off its perch by my dappy Spaniel



A Small Heath



Several Common Blues





And a highly athletic Painted Lady which stayed for a matter of seconds before flying away through the rain drops



It's still raining. My Buddleias seem lonely without the butterflies to ornament their flowers (yesterday I counted 17 Small Tortoiseshells on one bush) but my garden needs a good watering after such a long dry spell.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 25-Aug-13 04:23 PM GMT

I was awakened in the early hours by the sound of a torrential downpour that would have spooked Noah. My, but we've had some rain! It certainly watered the garden and replenished my ponds although I couldn't help fearing that it was so intense it would kill any butterfly that hadn't found itself safe shelter. Many of my Buddleia flowers were shredded so forceful was the rain.

By 11am however, the sun was poking through. On my morning amble with the hounds I counted five Clouded Yellows in the usual field



I had believed that the butterflies I've seen here were in transit, but I'm pretty sure that the Clouded Yellows I'm seeing every day are the same individuals so it seems they rather like it here.

I also saw many Common Blues

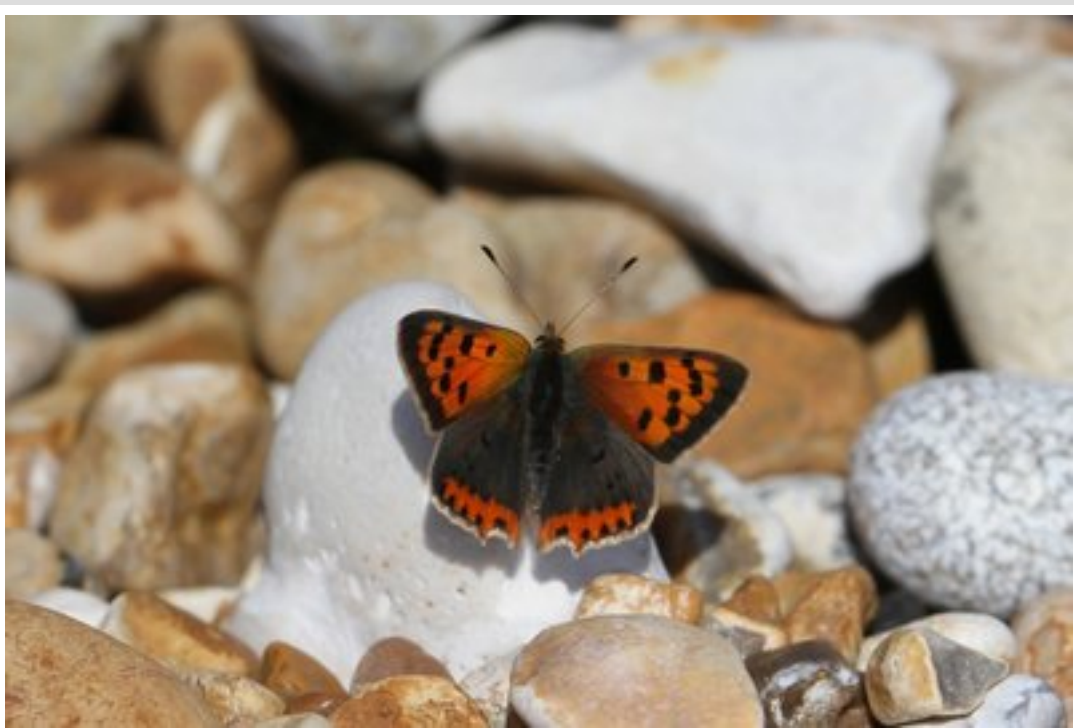


And a ghostly Gatekeeper which in flight was almost transparent



I decided to visit Dungeness this afternoon to look for Small Coppers (perhaps my favourite butterfly and I'm pleased to say one of the ten British Butterflies honoured by the Royal Mail with its very own stamp- First Class, naturally!)

Well, there were plenty of the little beauties





Including two which had blue flashes on the hind wings



Buzzing about in the Brambles





And ready to challenge all-comers



Living amongst the briars must wear hard on their wings and indeed I saw a good many that were very battle-scarred but also some that were still in good condition



Unlike on my last visit to Dungeness, I didn't see any Painted Ladies and nor did I see a Clouded Yellow there today. But I count myself fortunate to have my own private Clouded Yellow Reserve just a few minutes from my home



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Aug-13 02:28 PM GMT

Not MORE photos of Clouded Yellows, Hoggers?!?



I'm afraid so



Make Hay while the sun shines, I say



Difficult to be precise as to how many were in the "Usual Field" this morning as they do so move around...



But I'd say easily 8, maybe more



They won't be around forever and come Winter, when I'm holed up inside feeling miserable, I can look back through my Diary and bask in the glorious warm memories of Summer. They're like bottles of Dandelion Wine



Back home, my Buddleias are laden with Small Tortoiseshells. Numbers of Peacocks have dropped off and although I saw one yesterday, Red Admirals are notable by their absence. Plenty of Whites in the garden though



And this Speckled Wood



Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-13 07:44 PM GMT

"Make hay while the sun shines" definitely! It seems that this is almost a Clouded Yellow year, but perhaps not quite. Great shots again especially the Specklie 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Aug-13 02:25 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Whether it's official or not, 2013 certainly has been a Clouded Yellow Year for me! But as the overwhelming colour of my diary has of late been yellow, I've developed an itch for a bit of variety colour-wise.

I don't start back at work until tomorrow, so this morning I headed out to Lydden Nature Reserve near Dover, to look for Adonis Blues.

There were plenty of Common Blues



And Chalkhill Blues too



Brown Argus



And Small Copper



Several Wall



And two Clouded Yellow, a fly-past and this poor chap who'd seen better days



Peacocks, a lone Red Admiral, Large and Small Whites, and a Brimstone



Silver spotted Skippers were whirring about in good numbers







And at last I came across the Adonis Blues



Including this one: it had its wings closed for ages



But then took pity on me seeing that I'd waited a long time, and did a twirl for me





I saw five of these gems in all. Wonderful.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 28-Aug-13 04:22 PM GMT

We are enjoying glorious weather down here in Kent, far too nice to sit at home after work, so I did a quick turn around and headed out to check on the Clouded Yellows



I saw three, all of them busily quartering the field in search of females



The yellow flowers they favour here have mostly now gone over and so I expect the butterflies will soon be moving on



All the more reason for me to make the most of them while I can



Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-13 09:08 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

You have certainly had a very yellow year 🍷 😊 but there are plenty of other great colours in your photos as well, Blues, Coppers, Browns and some silver all looking good, and not forgetting a bit of purple 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 29-Aug-13 12:43 PM GMT

Sone lovely photos of various species. I don't blame you for making the most of CY's, as who knows how long we will have to wait for another year like this 🤔

Mike

Re: Hoggers

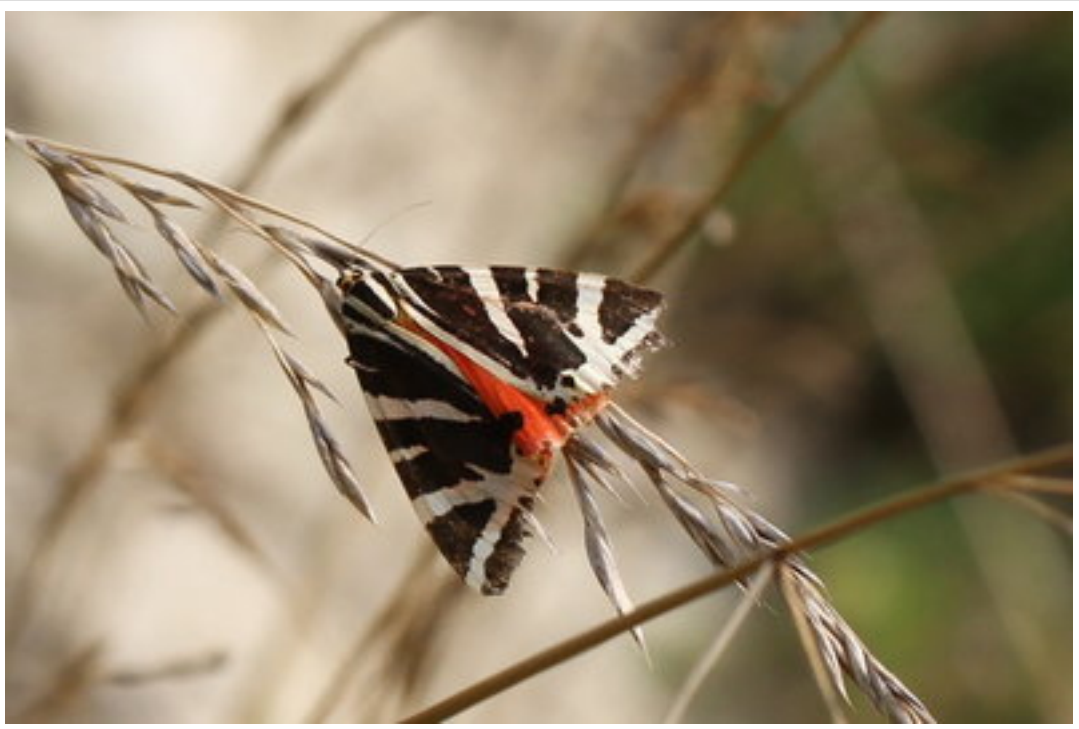
by Hoggers, 29-Aug-13 03:54 PM GMT

Hi Neil, thanks for that, I've certainly felt spoilt for choice this year!

Thanks for your kind comments Mike. I agree with what you say about the Clouded Yellows: last year was a Clouded Yellow-Less Year for me, while in 2011, I saw just one, which zipped past my ear and disappeared!

Apart from the sheer joy of their arrival, what's also struck me about this year is that after two months of seeing them almost every day, I now feel that they are a settled feature of my local butterfly population and not just fleeting visitors. Yet on the other hand, I know they cannot survive our Winter.

Today I went to Folkestone Warren. The first insect that I saw of interest was this colourful moth



I believe it's a Jersey Tiger.

There were many Common Blues indeed. This one was roosting on an Everlasting Pea (which now I can never pass by without checking for a hidden Long Tailed Blue!)



And this one I thought looked very pretty on the Sea Lavender



Just a few feet along from the Blue I was delighted to find a Clouded Yellow at rest



At rest, but not for very long! Soon he was away. I saw three more on my walk, all flying fast and purposefully. A beautiful sight.

I came across a Peacock, two Red Admirals, many Small Tortoiseshells



And three Painted Ladies



There were many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, Large and Small Whites and a single Marbled White too.

All along my walk, almost as a constant companion, there were Walls



I also came across this rather handsome caterpillar



I felt very envious of him if all he has to do all day is loll about in a great big soft yellow flower. Nice work if you can get it.

Re: Hoppers

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-13 09:33 PM GMT

Cracking shots Hoppers 😊 My fave has to be the Wall as I've never really managed to capture an image of a female 🍷 I too was Yellow-less last year but we all seem to be making up for it this time around 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoppers

by David M, 29-Aug-13 09:43 PM GMT

"Hoppers" wrote:

I also came across this rather handsome caterpillar.

I felt very envious of him if all he has to do all day is loll about in a great big soft yellow flower. Nice work if you can get it.

Only enviable if the flower in question doesn't have a resident crab spider!

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 30-Aug-13 03:20 PM GMT

I've often thought that the Crab Spider is the most Shakespearian of Arachnids as the treachery it employs to snare its prey is positively Devilish; not so much the "serpent beneath the flower" but actually setting itself up as a flower! Nasty!

Today I had an early finish at Canterbury and so paid a visit to Oare Nature Reserve near Faversham. It's best known as a Bird Reserve but they let in UKBers too. It's a beautiful location looking across the Swale to the Isle of Sheppey.

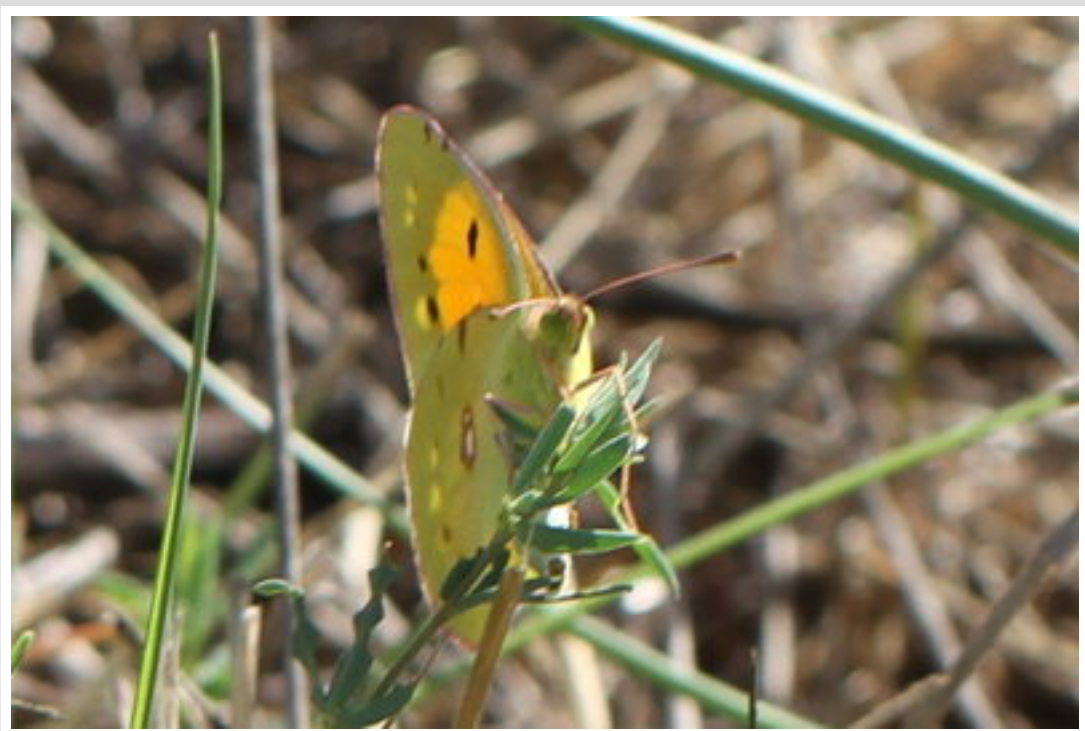
Within minutes I had seen a Clouded Yellow



I saw 6 of them in a couple of hours including one so tattered it was just barely still able to fly



But more excitingly, a female which appeared to be egg-laying (or at least going through the motions) on Bird's Foot Trefoil. I really struggled to keep up with her and managed only this very poor photograph, but it does show her curving her abdomen onto the leaf



There were many Large and Small Whites, Common Blues and a few Brown Argus. I saw several Small Tortoiseshells



And was delighted to come across a little enclave of Essex Skippers



All of the Small and Essex Skippers on my Patch are long gone for the year, so to find 6 of them at Oare was a real pleasure



There was a sprinkling of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths too





I enjoyed visiting Oare. I explored only a small part of the Reserve with a slow amble along the sea wall but the footpath goes on for miles, so lots left to discover.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 31-Aug-13 07:10 PM GMT

A trio of Clouded Yellows in the "usual field" when I took the hounds for their walk this morning



I still have to stop and stare when they fly by.

This afternoon I visited Wye Nature Reserve at the Devil's Kneading Trough. I didn't see a Clouded Yellow, but next best thing, I met a lady who had!

I did however see many Chalkhill Blues



And Common Blues



Several Wall, many Brown Argus, Large and Small Whites with good numbers of the delightful Small Heath



My biggest surprise came whilst gazing at the scenery and chomping on a Marmite and Banana Sandwich : A Skipper landed right next to me



A Silver Spotted Skipper!

This is the first SSS that I have ever seen at Wye. They've certainly been recorded at Wye before (although quite whereabouts on the site I'm not sure) but in all the years I've been visiting the Kneading Trough I've never seen one, until today



Maybe it was the Marmite?

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 31-Aug-13 07:58 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

... Marmite and Banana Sandwich...

Did I hear you right? As a vegan I'm always on the lookout for tasty and nutritious combinations, but ... really?

I will try it, though. I hope I'm pleasantly surprised – and that a silver-spotted skipper drops in to join me for lunch.

The fat cat you envy is notable for being extremely uncamouflaged on that dandelion head. It's really quite strange to see something so incongruous. I wonder if he was actually crawling around looking for a place to pupate and just happened to be passing that way ...

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 31-Aug-13 09:27 PM GMT

Guy – The Marmite and Banana Sandwich: try it. You'll never look back.

Together with Pot Noodles they got me through University and a good few years thereafter.

Hoggers.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 31-Aug-13 09:35 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Guy – The Marmite and Banana Sandwich: try it. You'll never look back.

Together with Pot Noodles they got me through University and a good few years thereafter.

I have no specific antagonism towards either vegetarianism or veganism, but I have to say both the above make me retch.

How about a fistful of pistachios, some dolmados, sun roasted tomatoes, kalamata olives and a good prosecco?

Forget the marmite and Pot Noodle.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Sep-13 01:47 PM GMT

All this talk of food is making me hungry!

But before I get myself some lunch, I saw a single Clouded Yellow on my morning walk with the dogs



It was generally overcast with a cool breeze and apart from a sprinkle of Whites I didn't see any other butterflies



Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-13 05:55 PM GMT

Nicks reports and great shots Hoggers 😊 I'll have to try your sandwich mix, it sounds more interesting than the standard Peanut Butter, Jam and Banana 😊 Try Peanut butter and golden syrup next time you have pancakes 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 03-Sep-13 05:22 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, give the Marmite and Banana Sarnie a try: sometimes I go for the Marmite Sandwich in one hand and a Banana in the other, taking alternate chomps from each. The logistic problems of this are however greater than the All-In-One Sarnie Combo, particularly when a Silver Spotted Skipper suddenly appears and you're in a rush to snap a photo of it!

On another subject, have other UKbers noticed that their Buddleia bushes have gone quiet? All my Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks have vanished although the weather remains hot and sunny. I'm left with only a few Whites while the Buddleias are looking very empty!

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 03-Sep-13 08:42 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

On another subject, have other UKbers noticed that their Buddleia bushes have gone quiet? All my Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks have vanished although the weather remains hot and sunny. I'm left with only a few Whites while the Buddleias are looking very empty!

Yes, exactly the same near me. I imagine they have been able to fill themselves with nectar because of the good weather, and having laid down maximum fat reserves have headed for hibernation.

Dave

Re: Hoggers

"millerd" wrote:

Yes, exactly the same near me. I imagine they have been able to fill themselves with nectar because of the good weather, and having laid down maximum fat reserves have headed for hibernation.

Peacocks have declined seriously in numbers in my vicinity, but Red Admirals are increasing in numbers and Small Tortoiseshells are now king of the castle, with double figure numbers practically everywhere there are buddleias.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 04-Sep-13 02:38 PM GMT

This morning I saw three Clouded Yellows in the field where I take my dogs for a walk



By 1030 I was wandering around Dungeness. The number of Small Coppers is a joy to behold





I managed to find six which had the lovely blue spots on the hind wing





I always seem to find these blue spotted ones in late Summer rather than the Spring



I also came across this one which has much less in the way of black marking on the fore wings than usual





I love watching them, they are so pugnacious. But rather than having a punch-up, these two were on friendlier terms



I also came across four Clouded Yellows



Flying in off the beach





Lots of Small and Large Whites, many Small Tortoiseshells, Common Blues, Small Heaths and a single Red Admiral completed my tally for the morning.

Re: Hoggers

by Butterflysaurus rex, 04-Sep-13 09:33 PM GMT

Some fantastic Small Copper photos there Hoggers 😊 I kind of used to take them for granted..... not anymore!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 05-Sep-13 01:01 PM GMT

Hi B'Saurus, thanks for your message and kind comments. Much appreciated.

I've generally never found Small Coppers in great numbers except at Dungeness where, if the weather's been good, they thrive. Yesterday I must have seen 50-60 of them and that's just in a small area, not the whole site!

I always try to get a close up look at them not only because they're Little Crackers but because you can find the blue spotted ones and other varieties too. I had a look on the Small Copper section of our esteemed UKB site and found photos of one that our equally esteemed Wurzel had found, which had less in the way of black spotting on the fore-wings, so rather like the one I saw yesterday. There are other, sometimes extremely rare, aberrations too. So yes, well worth checking out.

As far as today's concerned, I didn't have long on my dog walk but did manage to see three Clouded Yellows.

P.S I'm still scrutinising EVERY White just in case it's a Helice! As you can easily imagine, my head is Spinning!

Cheers and Happy Butterflying!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 05-Sep-13 04:27 PM GMT

Hoggers, when the Clouded Yellows reach dry land do they come to rest pretty quickly or do they press on inland without stopping?

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 05-Sep-13 05:25 PM GMT

Hi David, the CY's I have seen arriving at the coast have really always seemed on a mission to head inland, just stopping off briefly to re-fuel. About 27 CY's arrived at Dungeness during one day but had dispersed by the next. I watched two males come in off the beach and I got myself puffed out running after them as they continued flying steadily inland!

As you know, "My" CY's are inland and after watching them for a time I'm convinced that some remained on site for a week or two at least, while others headed off without lingering for long.

Re: Hoggers

by Butterflysaurus rex, 06-Sep-13 02:45 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Hi B'Saurus, thanks for your message and kind comments. Much appreciated.

I've generally never found Small Coppers in great numbers except at Dungeness where, if the weather's been good, they thrive. Yesterday I must have seen 50-60 of them and that's just in a small area, not the whole site!

I always try to get a close up look at them not only because they're Little Crackers but because you can find the blue spotted ones and other varieties too. I had a look on the Small Copper section of our esteemed UKB site and found photos of one that our equally esteemed Wurzel had found, which had less in the way of black spotting on the fore-wings, so rather like the one I saw yesterday. There are other, sometimes extremely rare, aberrations too. So yes, well worth checking out.

As far as today's concerned, I didn't have long on my dog walk but did manage to see three Clouded Yellows.

P.S I'm still scrutinising EVERY White just in case it's a Helice! As you can easily imagine, my head is Spinning!

Cheers and Happy Butterflying!

Four or five years back Small Coppers were reasonably plentiful in my area however (possibly due to our string of awful summers since then) numbers appeared to crash through the floor 😞 thankfully they seem to be doing a little bit better this year. I hope that the trend continues, after all the Wall seems to be bouncing back quite well in my area after enduring a lengthy decline.

There used to be a cracking little site for Small Coppers & more close to home (about 4 years ago there were well in excess of 30 Small Coppers there) One day an electricity company came along and completely destroyed the site without the permission of the land owner! I was very upset about this needless destruction, it used to be great for Brown Argus and Common Blue as well. Unfortunately despite my hopes for a 'miraculous recovery' it has remained almost barren ever since.

I've been to Dungeness a couple of times (not for Butterflies) and it's wonderfully weird place to visit I really must get back there again soon.

I think you've still got a good chance of finding a Helice CY, they should be around for a good while yet 😊

Best

J

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 06-Sep-13 07:35 PM GMT

Very nice photos, the Small Coppers especially. The ones with blue spots are stunning 😊 There must still be quite an influx of Clouded Yellows, as we've seen lots of them at every coastal site we have visited recently and quite a few at inland sites too.

Mike

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Sep-13 04:34 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments B'Saurus and Mike. I always look for the blue badged Small Coppers. I usually see them in the later broods, not the first of the year. Maybe that's simply because there are more Small Coppers in the second and third broods if it's a good year (as 2013 seems to be)? It always gives me a thrill when I find one. In a way I'm glad I've never found one of the really rare aberrations, the albino one for example, that Sussex Kipper uses on his posts:if I saw one of those I'd probably have a heart attack!

It's been impossible for me to go chasing butterflies these last few days and when I did manage to get out for awhile today it was overcast, windy and rather cool. Nonetheless, I did see a single male Clouded Yellow in the field where I walk my dogs, so they're still about. Maybe soon I can expect to see some newly emerged UK bred adults? If I do, I wonder if they'll be heading South?!

My garden is looking rather tired after the long hot Summer but I've still got Wallflower,Origanum,Hebe,Aster and Sedum in flower, together with the Buddleia, so I'm getting Large and Small Whites, a Small Tortoiseshell here and there and there's also a Speckled Wood too.

Today I planted some Allium bulbs in pots for next year and collected Garlic Mustard seed from this year's plants ,which I will plant in Spring.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 15-Sep-13 04:18 PM GMT

At last I have some butterflies to put in my diary!

For what feels like weeks the sun has been lost to us down here in Kent. It's been cold,overcast and wet. It seemed that my 2013 Butterfly Season had come to an abrupt end.

But when I pulled back my bedroom curtains this morning I was astonished to see a big blue sky with the sun shining warmly. Very soon afterwards I had seen my first butterfly of the day, sunning itself below the eaves of my house



A Comma.

Walking the hounds in the usual field I found the butterfly that I had most hoped to see (or most hoped that I hadn't seen the last of!): a Clouded Yellow



I have now seen them in this field for three months in a row. As far as I'm concerned, that's pretty good going.

Also enjoying the sunshine was this Brown Argus



And this Common Blue



By noon the rain clouds were gathering. I decided to pop down to Dungeness with Brother Hoggles on the off chance that we might see some Small Coppers before the weather closed in.

It was very dull and windy when we arrived. A couple of Small Whites were being blown around near the Observatory but otherwise there was no butterfly activity whatsoever.

We therefore began rummaging around in the undergrowth looking for roosting butterflies and that's when we started to get lucky



We found 17 Small Coppers all with wings shut tight and hanging on for dear life against the strengthening wind and rain.

This fine chap with the bright orange on the wing margins reminded me of shavings from a coloured pencil



In addition to the Small Coppers we found several woolly Small Heaths



He does look very bedraggled and disconsolate! But I hope he'll take some consolation from the fact that for me at least, he added a ray of sunshine to what was now a cold, grey and wet afternoon.

It's raining again as I write this and tomorrow it's Monday, which means being shut inside at work all week!

Still, I managed to see some butterflies today, so the Season isn't over just yet, and who knows, maybe the weather will turn kinder for the rest of September ("season of mellow fruitfulness" and all that!)

Here's hoping!

Re: Hoggers

by Paul Harfield, 15-Sep-13 10:33 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

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Here's hoping!

Hi Hoggers

Your roosting Small Coppers are delightful and your imaginative comparison with a coloured pencil shaving is very apt 😊 I know how you feel about the weather, it has been raining here all afternoon as well, very autumnal. I am also trying not to think about work, but hoping for some sunshine soon 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-13 07:26 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

That Small Heath does look despondent 😞

You managed to see more than me, the whole weekend was dull, damp and drizzly around here and like you I am stuck indoors at work again for the week. Fingers crossed for next weekend.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Sep-13 07:51 PM GMT

Hello Jack, I'm glad you enjoyed my Small Coppers and thank you for your kind words. Small Coppers are probably my favourite butterfly and there's a large colony of them at Dungeness that this year has absolutely thrived. It's a pleasure to go there on a sunny day and spend an hour or so watching them.

Hi Neil, yes, stuck at work. But the weather's so horrid I'm not missing much. I'm told there's hope for warmer weather at the weekend. I'd certainly like to see more butterflies before Winter!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 17-Sep-13 08:34 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

I'm told there's hope for warmer weather at the weekend. I'd certainly like to see more butterflies before Winter!

Temperatures in the mid 20s being forecast for next week! One more burst of activity hopefully before insect life battens down the hatches!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-13 10:33 PM GMT

Seventeen Small Coppers must have been a delight 🍷 I really hope the promised warmed spell arrives as forecast as like yourself I'm trapped at work and can't even make my stop offs 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

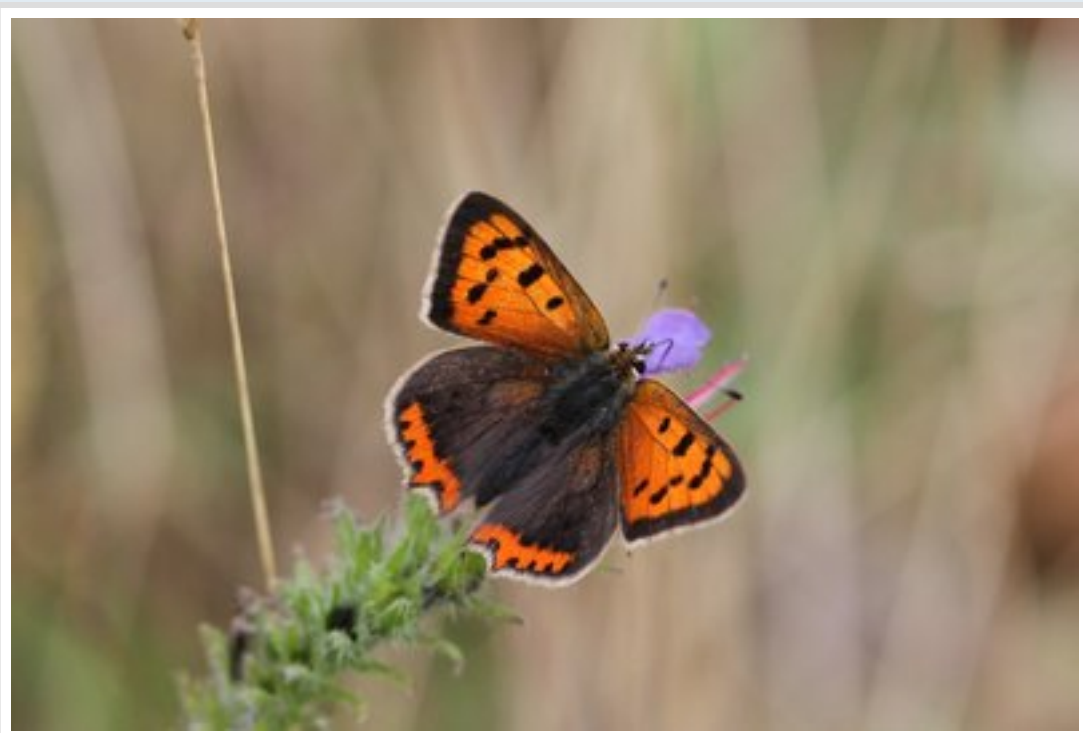
by Hoggers, 22-Sep-13 04:54 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, what with being at work all week I eagerly awaited the warmer weather forecast for this weekend so's I could go out chasing butterflies.

Well, yesterday was mild but overcast. Instead of going out I decided to do some gardening. I spent three hours on my knees planting out bulbs for next year (Alliums, Daffodils and Crocus.) But I did have several Small Whites, a Comma and a Speckled Wood come visit whilst I was there. I couldn't help thinking how quiet the garden was: lots of wind fall plums and not a butterfly on them, when last year I had crowds of drunken Red Admirals reeling around!

Once my chores for today were done I was free to set off for Dungeness. I wanted to see more Small Coppers.

Not so much as a glimpse of the sun as it was totally overcast, but by 11am it was warm and the butterflies were nipping about





I saw at least 40 of these wonderful butterflies

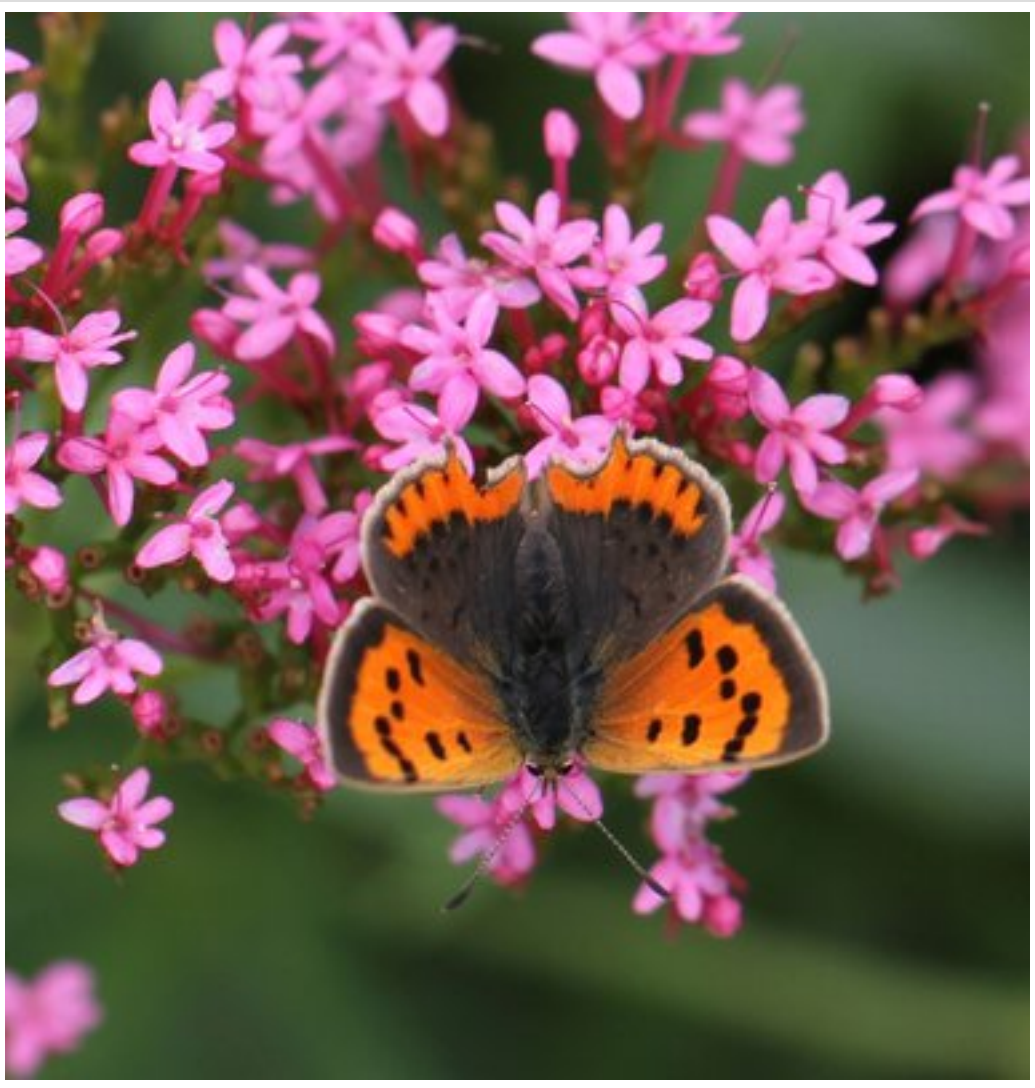


Many in spanking condition, including this cracker resplendent in his bright blue badges



Feeding on a variety of flowers





God Bless 'em, every one!

And like most other UKBer's, I was thrilled with the news of Long Tailed Blues that Sussex Kipper brings us. I saw one of the original migrants and was chuffed enough with that, but when I saw SK's jaw droppingly beautiful photos of the freshly emerged butterflies I felt as if I hadn't really seen the LTBs at all!

Well, St Margaret's is only 30 minutes away from me, so I'm planning to return: and soon!

Good luck to all who make the journey!

Re: Hoppers

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-13 09:53 PM GMT

Cracking Small Coppers Hoppers 😊 Good luck with the LTs 🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoppers

by Butterflysaurus rex, 22-Sep-13 09:57 PM GMT

I agree with Wurzel Hoppers, a great series of Small Coppers there. I also intend to go looking for LTB's if only this miserable weather would give me half a chance!

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 24-Sep-13 04:33 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments guys, much appreciated.

It's a gorgeous day down here in Kent. I got home early and went straight out over the fields with the dogs. I saw a scattering of Small Whites but nothing more until this little chap appeared



He's the first Small Copper I've seen in these fields this year



I wish he'd stayed longer but after a precious minute of his time he was gone.

Back home there were 2 Commas on the Sedum that I planted in Spring and a Hummingbird Hawk Moth paid us a fleeting visit.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Sep-13 06:41 PM GMT

No less than four Commas in my garden today and all of them enjoying the flowers that I planted in Spring.

They were:

On the Sedum





The Golden Buddleia



On the Origanum



And on the Verbena



Very satisfying indeed.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 27-Sep-13 03:21 PM GMT

A day off and the sun shining. I headed off to Dungeness for more Small Coppers (there's somewhat of a Small Copper Bonanza down there at the

moment!)

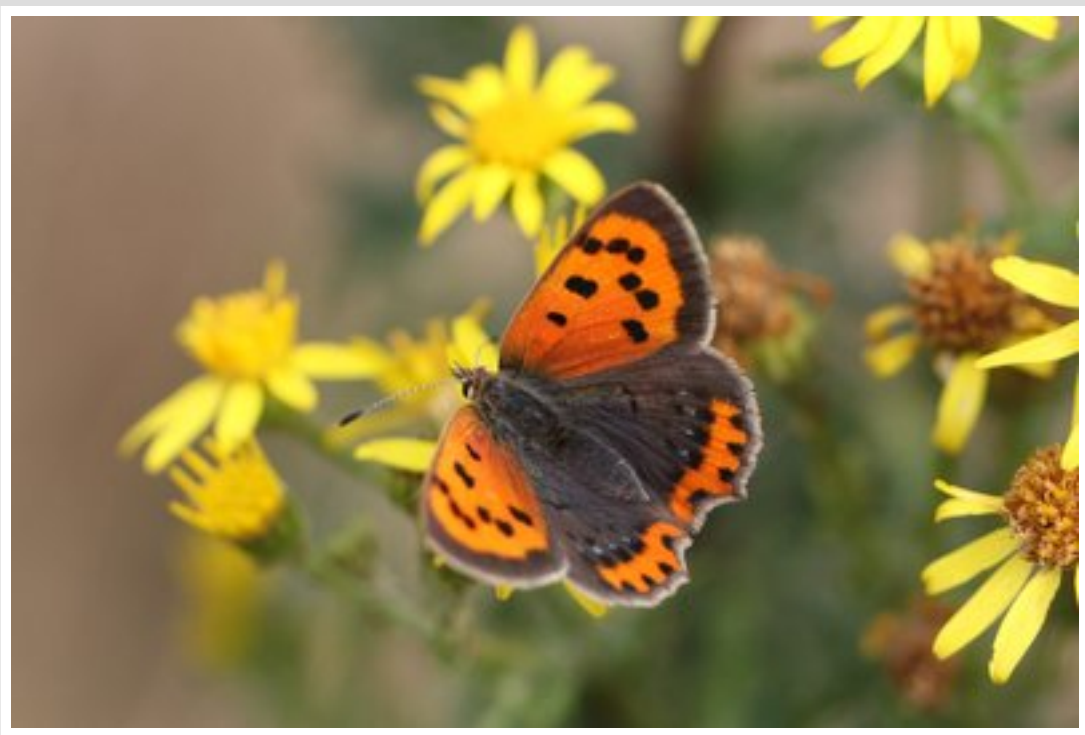
Here they are, just regular guys hanging out



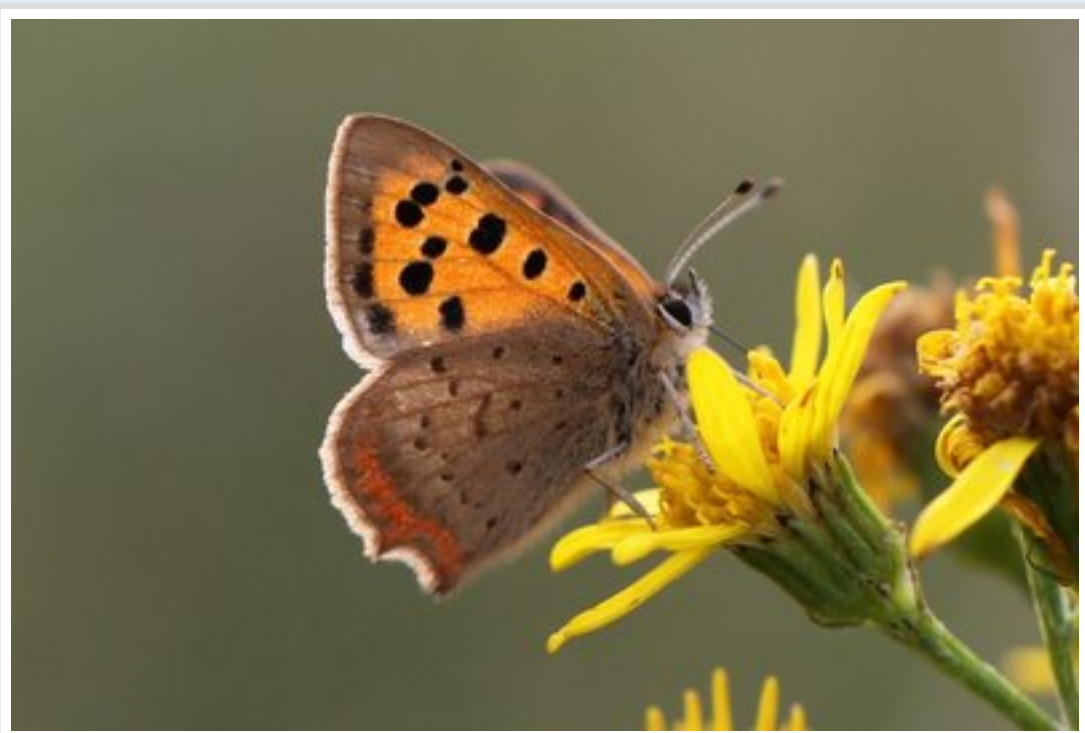
I had to watch my step for fear of treading on them



Still a few flowers out for them



And I was able to get quite close



Just as I was blundering about after the Coppers I flushed up what I immediately thought to be a Small White but quickly realised was something rather more interesting. Luckily for me, it settled



A Clouded Yellow! But so much more pale than usual that I'd mistaken it for a White.

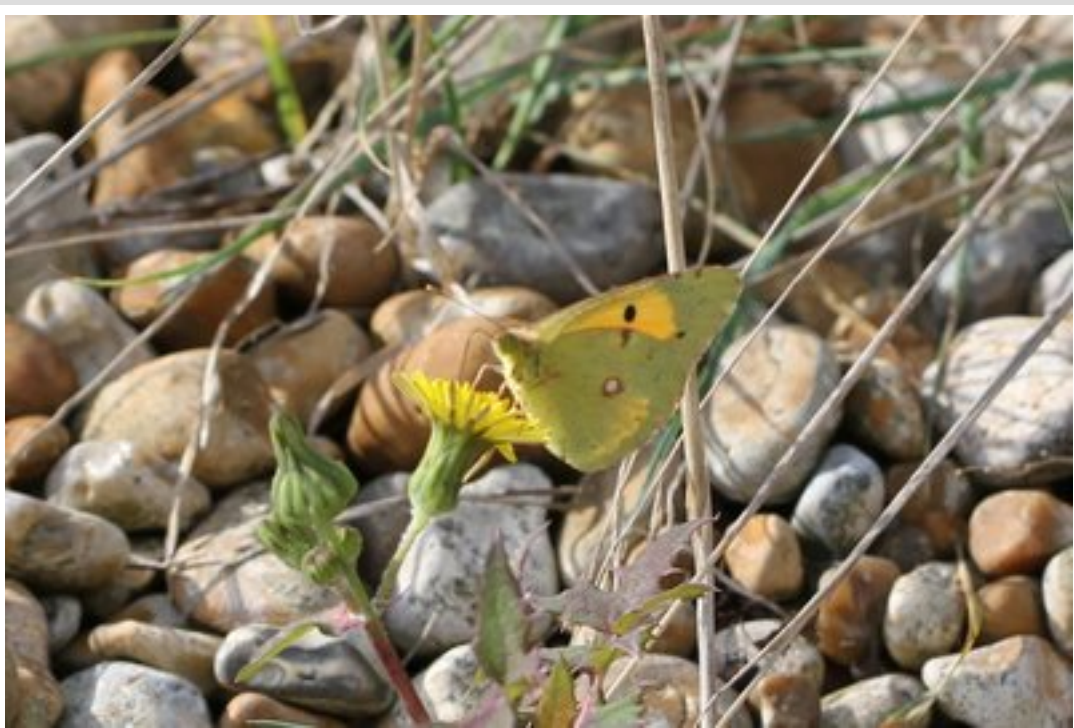
Had I at long last finally stumbled upon a helice?

I waited close by and when it flew I attempted to take some photographs

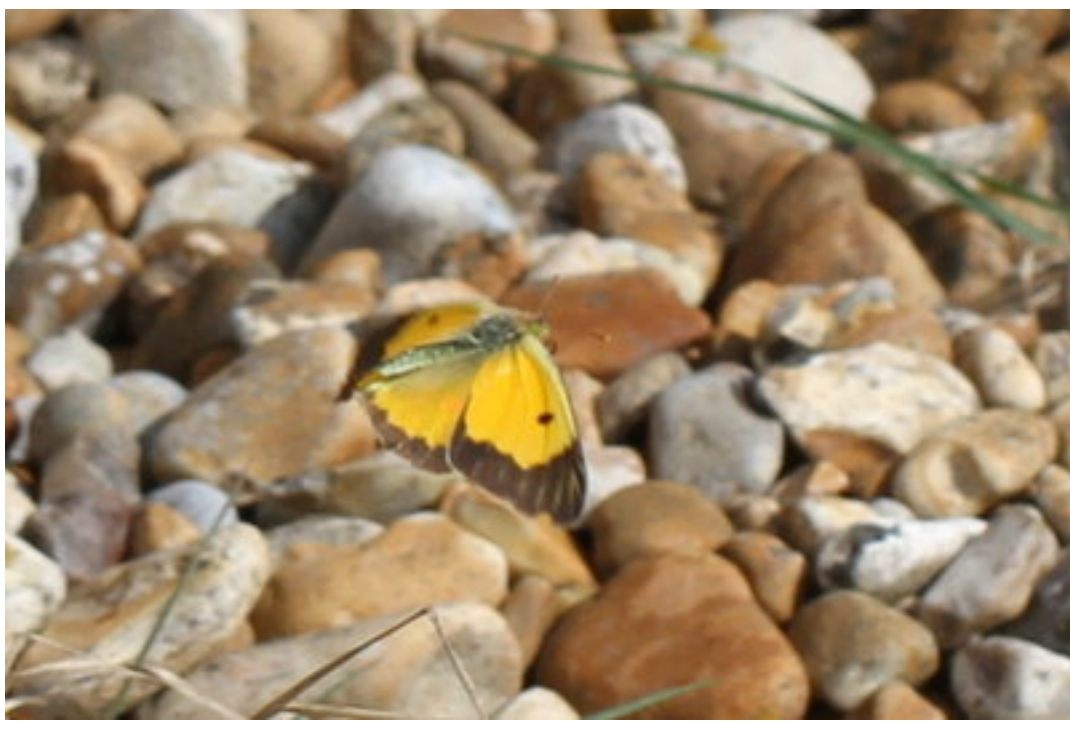


I think it's a helice. I'd be very grateful to anyone out there if they could confirm my identification.

Not long after leaving this butterfly I came across another Clouded Yellow, this time a male



I took some pictures of it flying



But it soon settled again



I'd feared that there'd be no more Clouded Yellows for me this year, so to have come across two this morning was wonderful (and if, as I hope, I've actually seen a helice, I'll be over the moon!)

Walking back to the car I found this handsome Small Heath



He looked so much happier than the rather woebegone chap I found here a couple of weeks ago



It makes all the difference when the sun is shining!

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 27-Sep-13 03:53 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers. I think your female is *helice* too. I must admit I've never seen quite such a yellow individual, but given how fresh she is (from the first picture) if she's not *helice* then she's some rarer aberrant female. She's certainly out of the normal range of variation of female clouded yellows.

Maybe she's an aberrant *helice* ...

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Sep-13 12:56 PM GMT

Many thanks, Guy, that's great news! I've been wanting to see a *Helice* ever since the Clouded Yellows started to arrive so I'm jolly pleased that one was kind enough to come and find me!

Re: Hoggers

by Butterflysaurus rex, 28-Sep-13 01:53 PM GMT

Fantastic Hoggers you found one, well done 😊

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 28-Sep-13 01:57 PM GMT

Great stuff, Hoggers. That really is a most unusual CY.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-13 02:09 PM GMT

Great shots of the Small Coppers Hoggers – they're one of those value for money species 😊 The is it/isn't it *Helice* certainly looks unusual the flight shot shows it as almost grey on the hind wings yet the fore wing looks more pale yellow 😊 Hope you get it identified/categorised.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 29-Sep-13 04:29 PM GMT

Thanks for all your comments guys, it really was a puzzler of a Clouded Yellow. I've been looking for a *helice* particularly after seeing some of the knock-out photographs posted by B'Saurus and Co on this forum. This one in flight gave an overall impression of being a White, yet on settling looked just like any other Clouded Yellow. And it clearly wasn't a tattered or faded individual. Maybe as Guy says, it's an aberrant *helice*? But whatever its classification, if I don't see another, it has rounded off my Clouded Yellow Year!

The weather hasn't been up to much here in Kent. I feel that the County has failed in its duty of hospitality towards all those hopeful souls now scouring Kingsdown for LTB's. But then I read in Sightings of a "Netter". I'd hoped that the digital camera had rendered them extinct. Such cruelty and selfishness beggars description. What would I do if I were so fortunate as to find a rare butterfly: tell or keep it a secret? My instinct would be to let everyone know so that others could share the experience with me. But now I'm having second thoughts.

I've got a stinking cold so haven't been able to get out today but I did see three very beautiful Commas in my garden. I remember reading that for many years these butterflies were all but non-existent in the UK



I'm counting my blessings!

Re: Hoggers

by Butterflysaurus rex, 29-Sep-13 05:25 PM GMT

Get well soon Hoggers. Indeed netting is such a selfish and needless activity WHY! I spent another fruitless day searching for a LTB, I haven't quite given up hope yet but it's getting harder to feel optimistic..... oh well onwards and upwards 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 29-Sep-13 09:30 PM GMT

Loving the colour combination with the Comma Hoggers 😊

Hope you feel better soon,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Oct-13 06:07 PM GMT

I didn't think I'd be going butterflying in a T-Shirt again until next Summer but today was absolutely glorious down here in Kent so I could go in search of butterflies and work on my tan at the same time.

I headed for Dungeness because I wanted to see Small Coppers. This is a typical scene from near the Power Station

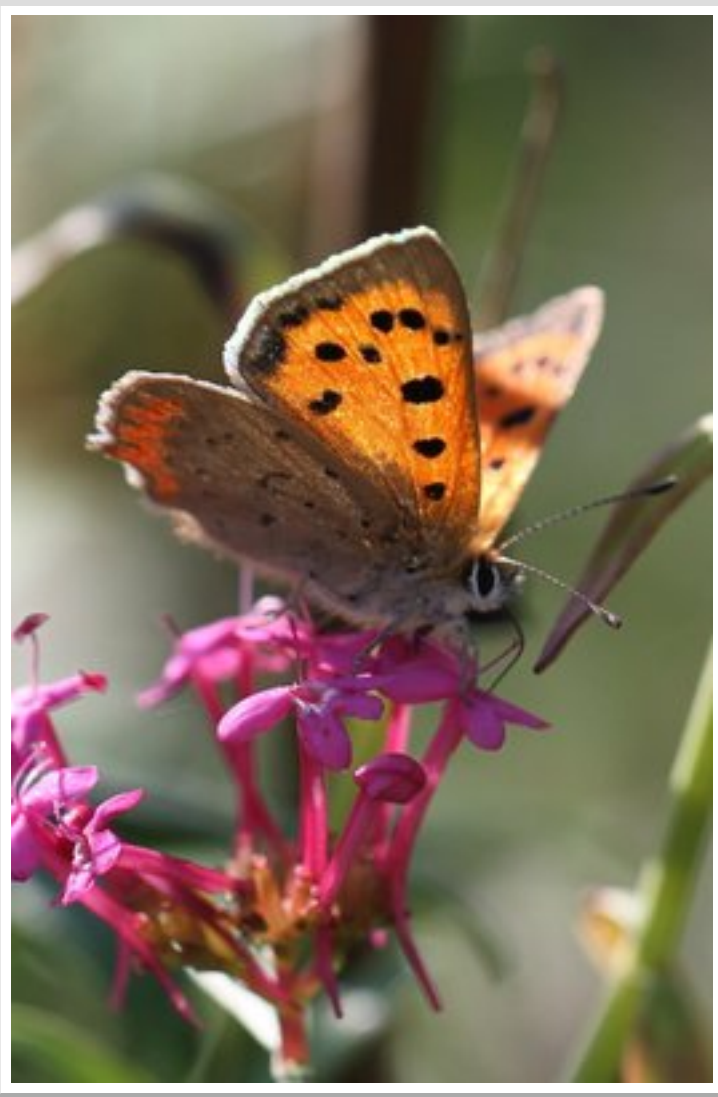


Every source of nectar had at least one of the little darlings and beat up and battered though they may be now, I love 'em!



Not all of them looked as if they'd gone 10 rounds with Mike Tyson

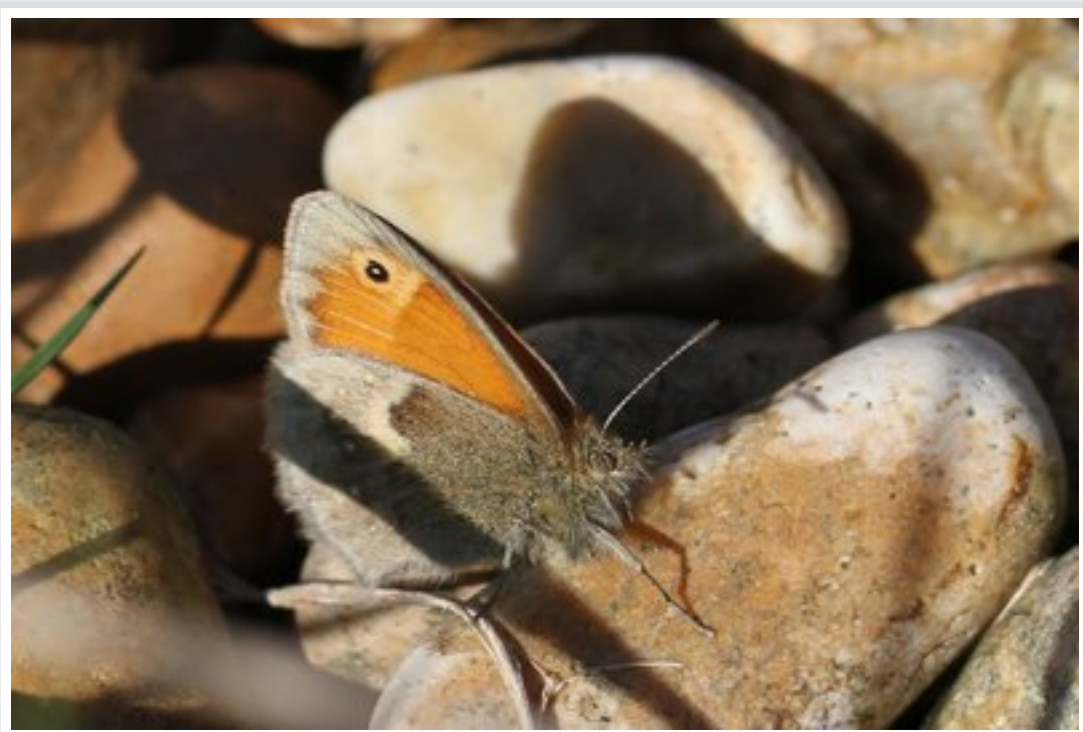




And as you can see, there were a fair number of fully paid up members of the Small Copper Blue Badge Society



Many Large and Small Whites and a few Small Heaths too



Then I glimpsed a male Clouded Yellow skimming over the shingle but not stopping to pose for photographs. But this Painted Lady was more

approachable



As I walked along the Station perimeter fence I came across another Clouded Yellow, this time a female, nectaring



Then a male flew in



and the two zipped away. But not much further on I came across yet another Clouded Yellow



And then another!



By the time I'd walked back to my car I had seen no less than ten Clouded Yellows!

A second Painted Lady also put in an appearance





So I had a smashing morning at Dungeness.

Thanks for all your earlier comments and good wishes for a speedy recovery from my cold! Although I'd been accused of "putting it on" by just about every female of our species that I know, it was a rotter of a bug and I'm glad to say I'm now well shot of the thing!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 06-Oct-13 06:30 PM GMT

Splendid stuff, Hoggers.

Great to see TWO Small Coppers side by side, let alone three!

Large White is a notable species at this time of year, as well as Small Heath.

How many species did you see? Double figures in October would be highly noteworthy.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Oct-13 07:39 PM GMT

Evening David, I saw eight species in all : Small Copper, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Clouded Yellow, Small and Large White, Small Heath and Common Blue. Given the date, a very respectable bouquet of butterflies!

They were in fair numbers too: 10 Clouded Yellows, 2 Painted Ladies, 12 Small Whites, singles of Large White and Common Blue, 3 Small Heaths and 2 Small Tortoiseshells.

I know you've done well for butterflies of late, but in particular I've noticed how you have seen Red Admirals in good numbers, whereas down here in Kent, I've only seen a handful all year. I certainly didn't see any today even though Dungeness is a good place to find them.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 06-Oct-13 07:43 PM GMT

Great report Hoggers and some cracking photos 😊

Red admirals have been thin on the ground around the midlands this year as well, I have only seen a dozen or so all year including on my trips further afield.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Oct-13 07:55 PM GMT

Evening Neil, yes, exactly my experience this year yet other parts have done well. And last year was a Red Admiral Bonanza!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 06-Oct-13 08:46 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

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in Kent, I've only seen a handful all year. I certainly didn't see any today even though Dungeness is a good place to find them.

Eight is remarkable in October.

Should have been 9, since Red Admirals would normally be present.

Sadly, the cold spring killed nearly all of them in 80% of the country. South Wales was one of the few places that avoided the intense cold, so it follows that this is a prime area for late RAs in the autumn.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-13 10:56 PM GMT

That sounds like a blinder of a day Hoggers 🍷 Looks like there's still life in the old year yet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Oct-13 06:54 PM GMT

It was a smashing day Wurzel, the gorgeous weather really brought out the butterflies.

Today was sunny and warm too. I had an early finish at Canterbury and so before going home I drove to Kingsdown to find Long Tailed Blues.

Now I've read the many tales of extraordinary dedication shown by many intrepid fellow UKBers in their pursuit of this butterfly. The tales of success and failure, of netters and strimmers, of the man from the National Trust who wants to remove all the Everlasting Peas, and of the hard work and hours of searching put in to find this little butterfly. It's quite a human story as well as a story about butterflies.

Having said that, I admit to feeling rather guilty in that I live only 30 miles away from Kingsdown and today I found a LTB within 5 minutes of my arrival!

They are difficult to spot when they're in the long grass



But if I'm honest, it wasn't so much my bush craft that yielded such a quick result but rather more the fact that the butterfly was encircled by six fellow butterfly enthusiasts, all snapping away with their cameras.

I joined in





This one was shy of opening its wings and I'm afraid I don't know if it's a male or a female, but whatever it might be, it's a beautiful little butterfly. I'm glad that after seeing the rather tattered individual back in August (one of the first migrants) I went back today to see a fresher one. I particularly like the iridescent half-moon on the hind wing spot, which put me in mind of Silver Studded Blues.

I saw two more LTBs, both males and both in flight. All these butterflies were found just opposite "Moonraker"



Gorgeous!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 07-Oct-13 07:13 PM GMT

Well done, Hoggers. This sure is an exciting October!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 07-Oct-13 09:29 PM GMT

Gorgeous indeed Hoggers you lucky blighter 😊🍷 I'm wondering if this could be the start of an annual occurrence due to climate change – at least I'm hoping so in order to get some Wiltshire or Dorset LTBs 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Butterfysaurus rex, 07-Oct-13 09:37 PM GMT

Nice work Hoggers, a lovely series of shots that suggest your stealthy approach.

First spot the lovely fresh LTB 'click' take a step closer 'click' then another step 'click', getting closer 'click' It's filling the frame and BINGO click click click.....



Re: Hoggers

by Paul Harfield, 07-Oct-13 10:19 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers

I think we must have met today. I was at Kingsdown today, we must have been part of the same group admiring this individual. My only LTB photo is exactly the same as yours 😊, but probably not as good 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Pauline, 08-Oct-13 09:37 AM GMT

Great photo Hoggers. You are so lucky to live so close to what must now be one of the most famous row of houses as we all know the address of almost each and every one 😊 I THINK from the markings that your butterfly is female but I am sure someone will correct me if I'm wrong as I've only seen one female.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Oct-13 04:24 PM GMT

Hi All, thanks so much for your comments. Jack, what a shame that we didn't get to have a chat! I've often wondered if we UKBers should wear a badge of some sort to aid identification! And as for my stealthy bush crafty techniques B'saurus, I spend more time fumbling with my camera lens cover and tripping over my feet than I do taking pictures!

I am lucky to have these butterflies on my doorstep, Pauline. Like yesterday, today I finished work in Canterbury early, so I set out for the "Other" Kent site near Minnis Bay (if you want to visit, just follow Dave Brown's directions in the Sightings section.)

I'm glad I did: I saw at least 8, possibly 10 Long Tailed Blues and they were much easier to find here than at Kingsdown.

I got there at around noon. The sun was shining, not a cloud in the sky, a slight breeze but nothing to trouble anyone.

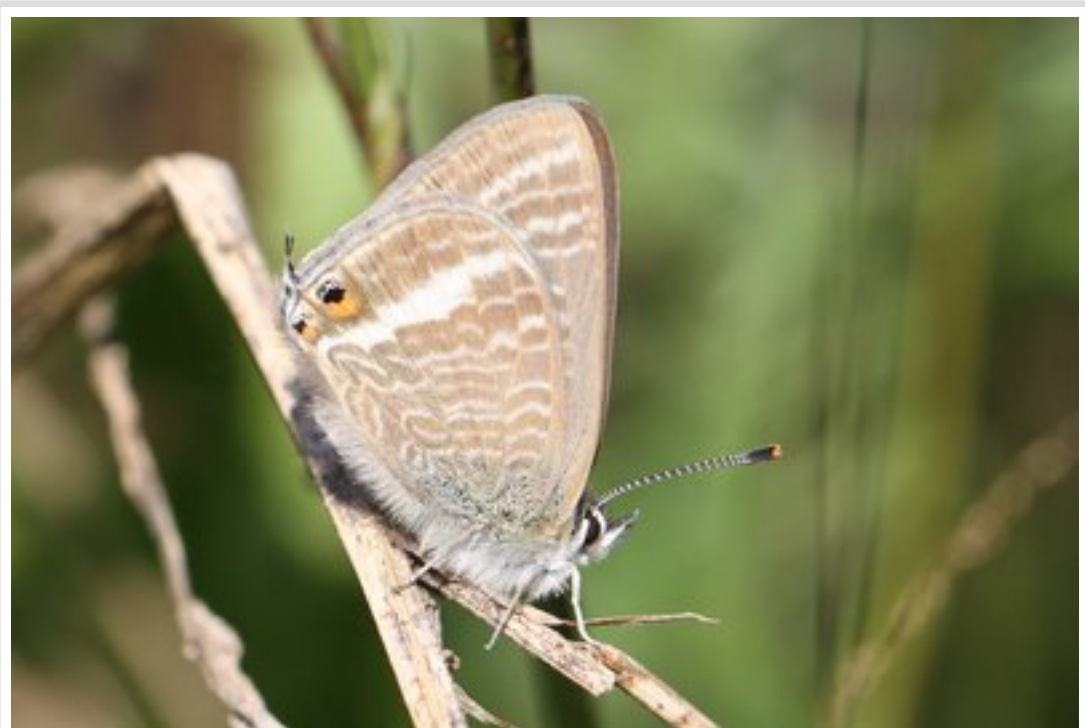
This is what the LTB area looks like



There are Everlasting Peas on both sides of the track (the railway line runs to the left as you look at this photo).

There were only 3 other LTB Hunters but we worked together and to be frank, the LTBs were not being shy!

Here's the first that I came across



But soon I'd found another



With others flying past.

Then I saw these



Marvellous! I waited for at least 45 minutes until they parted: here's the male

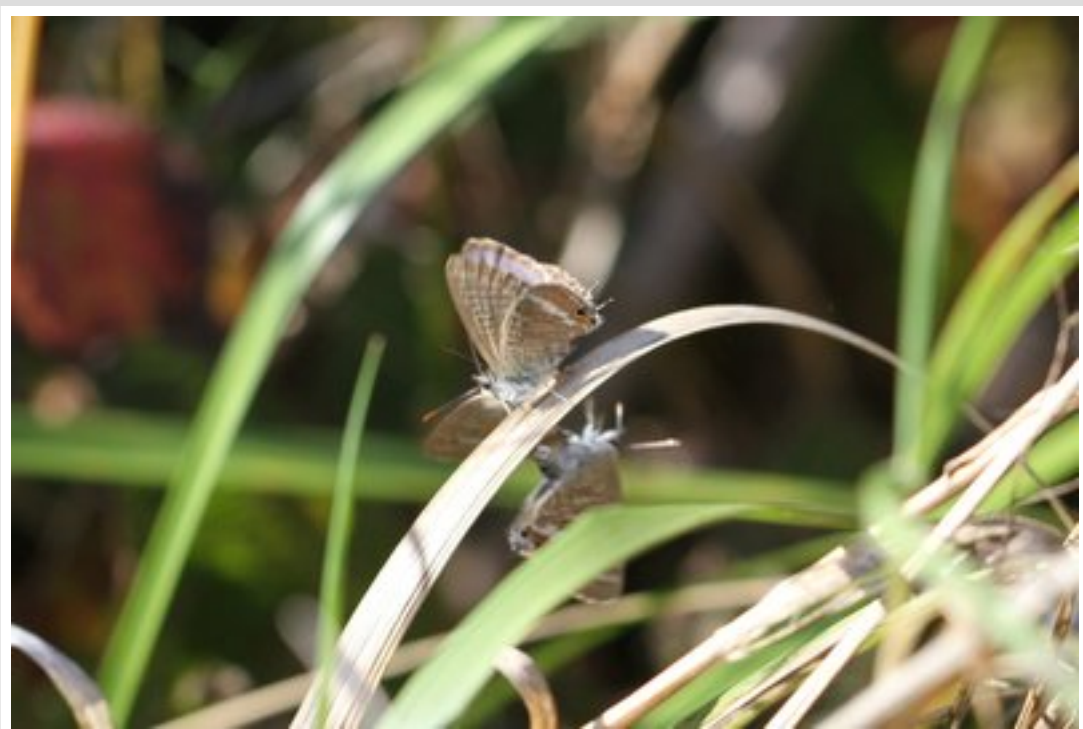


And here's the female (the larger of the two)



So there's hope for the future.

I saw three LTBs in a tussel



One of the males involved then settled close by



So as you can see, I had a great time there with the LTBs. I was on site for only 2 hours at the most and would recommend anyone who wants to see LTBs to visit.

Re: Hoggers

by Vince Massimo, 08-Oct-13 04:38 PM GMT

Amazing photos Paul 🙏

I will be sending you a PM shortly.

Vince

Re: Hoggers

by Butterfliesaurus rex, 08-Oct-13 04:57 PM GMT

🤩 AMAZING!!! what a set of photos Hoggers! What is it now 3 or 4 mating pairs sighted! The action seems to have died off in my locality so I'm pleased to see things are still going strong in Kent.

Just fantastic, well done 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Nick Broomer, 08-Oct-13 05:40 PM GMT

Well done Hoggers. Lovely photos, especially the copulating pair, outstanding. 😊 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Oct-13 07:17 PM GMT

You are all very kind, thank you.

I can't stress enough just how much easier the LTBs are to find at this site compared with Kingsdown. Of course, I had perfect weather today, but maybe it's because there are more of them here than at Kingsdown, or perhaps also that at this site they are more confined. I found all of them literally on the path shown in the photograph or just to each side of it



The mated pair were sitting only 3 foot above the ground. They were perfectly quiet for over 45 minutes but then grew restless as you will see in these photos



They then tumbled down into the grass! But there they disengaged, the male flew up but sat to bask in the sun near-by. The female remained low for a time, then flitted up slightly and remained with her wings open for a time before flying off.

Sometimes I'd see males flitting overhead at about 6 foot above the ground. They move quickly and are difficult to follow with the eye. But just as Guy said in one of his posts, although they seem to be flying away it's a good idea to be patient and just wait because they do often return



Good luck to all who try for these delightful butterflies. I saw only a few Small Whites, a Speckled Wood, a tatty Brown Argus and a single Red Admiral on my walk to the site and so to suddenly be in amongst Long Tailed Blues in my home county was quite magical.

What a year it has been!

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Hulme, 08-Oct-13 07:31 PM GMT

Great stuff. I doubt you'll be forgetting 8th October 2013 very quickly.
BWs, Neil

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 08-Oct-13 07:56 PM GMT

Magnificent stuff, Hoggers. What a day you've had.

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 08-Oct-13 08:07 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff, you've made the most of this possibly, once in a lifetime opportunity 😊

Mike

Re: Hoppers

by NickMorgan, 09-Oct-13 01:31 PM GMT

Really interesting reading. Thanks for posting about your LTB encounters!

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 10-Oct-13 01:15 PM GMT

Many thanks again for all of your comments, you've been most kind.

I will never forget 8th October 2013. My visit to the Minnis Bay site, which I squeezed in to my working day, was truly magical. The weather was so perfect it could have been high Summer and to be there amongst an active population of Long Tailed Blues was a pure delight. I was so elated that I could hardly sleep at all that night and ever since I've had Long Tailed Blues flying around inside my head!

Looking through my Diary I realised that I've forgot to complete a little story that I started when I mentioned the tussle between three LTBs. I first noticed a male flying in hairstreak fashion around 6 feet above the trackway. I managed to keep my eyes on it and watched as it flew down the embankment to a stretch of rough grass and Everlasting Peas close to the railway line (which is fenced off, so no danger to the LTB Enthusiast!) I followed after it and saw there were now three LTBs involved in a kerfuffle



What I omitted to add was that two of them paired



The spare male peeled off from them to settle close by



But then the apparently mated couple broke apart and went their separate ways. As I mentioned, all this happened down the embankment where it was even warmer than up on the path, and more sheltered too.

Also, as another bite sized chunk of behavioural observation, I did see one or two males actually fly across the railway line itself.

I also thought it might help others if I included another photograph of the mating pair to show their general environment



Just a few feet off the ground and actually on the side of the pathway.

Well, the sun is shining down here in Kent today but there's a cold wind blowing. I didn't see any butterflies at all on my walk with the dogs.

Not to worry: I'm still buzzing with my Long Tailed Blue memories!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-13 09:05 PM GMT

Great shots showing an interesting range of behaviour Hoggers 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 12-Oct-13 04:48 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, there was plenty going on!

We've had some atrocious weather since that day, culminating in a veritable deluge over the last 24 hours which, if nothing else, has replenished my garden ponds.

This morning dawned kinder and when the time came for me to walk my dogs it was even fairly warm. I did not expect to see any butterflies, not after all that rain, but I took my camera, just in case!

The fields were flooded. Not so much as a White, let alone a UK born Clouded Yellow which I'd so hoped to see after watching these butterflies here for the previous four months.

As I followed the river (which was almost over its banks) I heard a familiar "Seep Seep" call from high up and when I looked, there they were, a flock of Redwings, my first Winter Thrush.

Winter! Not already?!?

It's too early to be thinking of Winter!

But those thin "Seep Seep" calls felt like the final nails in the coffin of any hopes I might have had of seeing any butterflies today.

However, just as I was about to set off back home a tiny golden spark of movement caught my eye: a butterfly!

I ran over to get a closer look and was delighted to see my favourite butterfly



A Small Copper



He was warming himself in what brief sunshine he could get



Very much alone



The only butterfly that I could find in all those fields. A cloud passed over the sun and with it the temperature promptly dropped: the air feels so thin it can't hold any heat.

I wished the Small Copper good luck and headed home.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-13 08:59 PM GMT

That's one of the advantages of getting behind on your PD - I'm still enjoying the Brown Argus and Common Blues if September 😊 Redwings already? Does that mean I wasn't hearing things the other day when I was sure that I heard a cackle of Fieldfares where has the year gone? 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Oct-13 04:35 PM GMT

Wurzel, It was just my fear of Winter coming in that led me to a) avidly watch the weather forecasts for this week and b) make sure that I had the day off when the sun was forecast to be shining!

I wanted to see some butterflies before the Season ends!

Well, I love it when a plan comes together: No work today and after some early rain the sky cleared, the sun came out and the air was mild.

I headed for Minnis Bay in the hope that the Long Tailed Blues would still be out. Since I saw them there last week, we've had some pretty rotten weather and I feared the worst for them but as you can see, I needn't have worried



The cold and the rain of the last few days doesn't seem to have dampened their ardour one little bit



I wasn't alone in admiring the LTBs today as I quickly joined up with five other enthusiasts, one of whom was our own Lee Hurrell who I hadn't seen for a couple of years so I was delighted to meet up with Lee again and to talk butterflies with the others too.

Rather like the mated pair that I saw here last week, these two were quiet for 30 minutes or so but then grew restless





They then flew a short distance once or twice before uncoupling and going their separate ways



The female looked pristine



I saw four LTBs today (including the pair)



I walked back to the cars with Lee and on the way we saw a few Small Whites, but most surprisingly, two Peacocks as well, doubtlessly tricked out of hibernation by the warm conditions.

I had to pinch myself that it is 17th of October!

Wonderful to be able to get out and see ANY butterflies at all, let alone Long Tailed Blues.

Another unforgettable day's butterflying.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 17-Oct-13 08:48 PM GMT

You really are making hay right now, Hoggers.

I truly wish I lived within a 2 hour drive because I'd be down in a flash if that were the case.

Keep up the good work; your reports are like gold-dust.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 17-Oct-13 10:13 PM GMT

And I thought that I'd done alright seeing a Red Admiral in the centre of town and a Large White out on a drive! 🍷 Cracking shots again.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Nick Broomer, 17-Oct-13 11:29 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

I totally agree with David and Wurzel, absolutely brilliant. 😊 Two copulating pairs of LTB`s must be a record for anyone in Britain. Congratulations. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Oct-13 11:48 AM GMT

I'd feel just the same David, if our positions were reversed. I am so lucky to have had not one but two colonies of Long Tailed Blues no more than 30 miles from home. I'd hoped that you could get down here to see them, you'd have loved it!

By the way, Lee mentioned you yesterday: he said you were looking for Glanvilles at the Wrecclesham site on 21st May 2011, sporting a red T-Shirt. I was there too. That was when I met Lee for the first time. It's a shame I missed you.

But If you were there and in a red T-Shirt, what a T-Shirt it must have been for Lee to remember it over two years later...!

You've been doing much better than me, Wurzel, the weather has been so unpleasant that up until yesterday I hadn't seen so much as a flutter. It's only because of the unique circumstances of having the LTBs so close to home that I've had this opportunity. What with Autumn being in full swing and Winter just around the corner I had a hankering to see some blue butterflies. Thank Goodness they were still there.

Nick, I'm glad you've said that. Yesterday as the whole group stood around the mating LTBs, hardly able to believe what they were seeing, I just so happened to modestly drop into the conversation that I'd seen all this before and am somewhat of an Old Hand at this sort of thing.

One of the guys replied (rather dryly I feel) by observing that I must now be the UK's Leading Authority on Copulating Long Tailed Blues...

I can take a joke. But all the same I think I'll have a T-Shirt made up with my new title emblazoned across the chest and it's something to mention at parties.

Anyway, here are some more photographs from yesterday



The female really did look to be in pristine condition and had perhaps emerged on that very day. I particularly admire the dusting on her wings. It was a wonderful day with both butterflies and their admirers.

Re: Hoggers

by Lee Hurrell, 18-Oct-13 02:11 PM GMT

Fantastic report and photos, Hoggers.

It was a day that will stay in the memory for a long time!

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 18-Oct-13 04:59 PM GMT

Wonderful pictures, Hoggers!

"Hoggers" wrote:

One of the guys replied (rather dryly I feel) by observing that I must now be the UK's Leading Authority on Copulating Long Tailed Blues...

I think you should add a few letters to your name:

Dr Hoggers, M.A., D.Phil., L.boet. (in cop.) would look great!

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 18-Oct-13 05:20 PM GMT

Hi! Hogger's fantastic photo's of the LTB's . 🍷 I was at Minnis Bay in July and August, didn't see a Butterfly 😞

Would these LTB'S have just arrived (hope that's not a silly Question) or will they be the second batch as people have been seeing at ST Margarets ? I'm not too well up on these migrant species I'd to dig through my BF books to look up the various Clouded yellows 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Oct-13 06:37 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, they're the offspring of the original migrants. I'm told they cannot survive our winter but I think we are all hoping otherwise!

Guy, with those letters after my name I will be able to charge more per hour, so that's fine by me!

Great to see you again Lee, hope to bump into you again next season.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 18-Oct-13 07:08 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

By the way, Lee mentioned you yesterday: he said you were looking for Glanvilles at the Wrecclesham site on 21st May 2011, sporting a red T-Shirt. I was there too. That was when I met Lee for the first time. It's a shame I missed you.

But If you were there and in a red T-Shirt, what a T-Shirt it must have been for Lee to remember it over two years later...!

That is true, Hoggers. Yes, shame I didn't get to meet you both (the only guys I spoke to were not UKB members, sadly).

Re: Hoggers

by Butterflysaurs rex, 18-Oct-13 07:48 PM GMT

Wonderful stuff yet again Hoggers, it's interesting to see them still going strong over in Kent while here in Sussex I can't find any LTB's at all. You have some absolutely fantastic photos to go along with some unforgettable memories, just brilliant 😊

B, saurus

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Oct-13 11:03 AM GMT

Thanks B'Saurus you're very kind. Yes, still a few at Minnis Bay and I saw on the Dungeness Observatory website that a single female LTB turned up in the observatory moat on 8th October, so they get about!

No butterflies for me today I fear: it's raining and looks like it's here to stay.

Still, we make the most of the sunny days so we can get through the wet ones!

Best Wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 19-Oct-13 05:08 PM GMT

Some more great reports and photos Hoggers, I have really enjoyed reading about your fantastic experiences with the LTBs 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

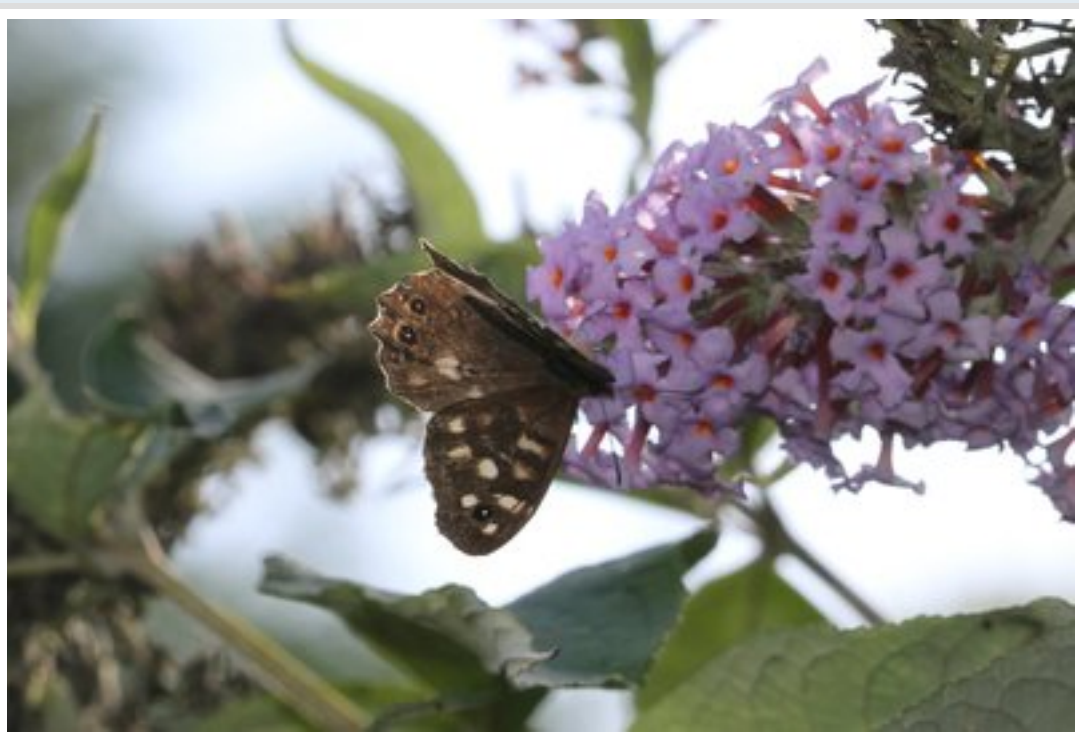
by Hoggers, 23-Oct-13 03:56 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, the Long Tailed Blues have given a lot of people a great deal of pleasure.

Autumn is in full stride and the weather has been typically changeable but with little chance of seeing a butterfly.

Today was blustery with sunny spells. I wandered up the garden this afternoon and was surprised to see a Peacock. I watched it make a couple of circuits of the garden and then saw it fly along the garden hedge. It then began investigating the dark recesses inside the Ivy and after a few attempts disappeared within and did not re-emerge. I suppose the sudden warmth of the sun today lured it out for a bit. It was certainly odd though to see a butterfly actively fly away from the sunshine and into the darkness.

I then saw a Speckled Wood nectaring on one of my few remaining Buddleia flowers



Another one then put in an appearance and began basking in the sun



The two chased each other, spiralling around and around, just as they do in Spring.

While watching the Speckled Woods I caught a glimpse of a Red Admiral. It spent its time high up in the plum tree, at first taking on sugars from some of the rotting plums that still hang there in bunches but then it began sunning itself very high up so this was the best photo I could get



They've been a scarce visitor to my garden this year.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 24-Oct-13 03:01 PM GMT

This morning was bright, sunny and warm. I took the dogs out at around 10am and as it was so pleasant I decided to take along my camera, just in case.

Straight away I saw a Small Copper



And then another (although from the state of him maybe he qualifies as only half a Small Copper!)



He's clearly been through a rough patch but by the way he was whizzing about today, he's come through well enough. A true Warrior.

Further on I saw a Peacock fly a couple of circuits then disappear and a Comma gliding over a thick Bramble patch.

And I was pleased enough with what I'd seen given the time of year, so you can imagine my excitement when a beautiful, fresh Clouded Yellow flew by. I watched it cross the field and to my joy and relief saw it settle



It was in my "Clouded Yellow Field", the field where between June and September I would see them almost daily. It's clearly a very fresh individual and I think not only has it emerged today but also that it's probably the offspring of those I saw here in Summer



So I'm very pleased indeed but only wish that the fine weather had lasted longer for it because within a couple of hours the sky had clouded over swallowing up the sun and leaving the day damp, dull and cool.

Still, the weather window had been just enough to let me see four species of butterfly in one dog walk! Not bad going at all.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 24-Oct-13 05:41 PM GMT

A lovely array of sightings for a late October morning, Hoggers. You were right to take your camera!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-13 09:49 PM GMT

Great stuff Hoggers - 😊 I'd love a Cloudy now 🌧️ but we haven't had the best if the weather.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Oct-13 05:01 PM GMT

Pretty gloomy this morning. I didn't see any butterflies on my walk with the dogs but by mid-day the sun had won a skirmish with the clouds and it brightened up just long enough to lure two Red Admirals into my garden



The flower this one is on is a variety of Buddleia (I think it's called "Golden Buddleia") which I planted this Spring as part of my campaign to convert my garden from predominantly lawn to a more butterfly-friendly environment. It started to flower in the Summer and as you can see is still going strong



As we lost the sun once more I decided to nip down to Dungeness: so often when it's overcast here in Ashford, the sun is shining along the coast.

We got there around 1pm and although very blowy there wasn't a cloud in the sky. I went in search of Small Coppers. Unsurprisingly numbers have diminished dramatically since September but nonetheless I managed to find five of them, three in comparatively good nick



I bumped into a chap from the Bird Observatory who seemed faintly amused at my preoccupation with Small Coppers, but he described them as "the bright ones", which I rather like



He told me that a Clouded Yellow was spotted there yesterday and the day before and that today a Comma had been seen in the Observatory moat. I managed to catch a glimpse of the Comma, it looked in fine condition, but I didn't see any Clouded Yellows today. Still, I was happy enough in the dog days of the butterfly season to have spent a little more time with "The Bright Ones"



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 27-Oct-13 05:49 PM GMT

Fantastic Photo's Hogger's, it's great to see such lovely shots so late in the year, I think we've had it now though with this storm arriving, all the best Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Nov-13 04:01 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, they're a real treat during the season and a huge bonus at this time of the year.

It's been mostly rather cold, windy and overcast today but we had some sunny spells and when the sun did come out it got fairly warm. The Ivy in my garden is in flower and attracting many insects



Including this handsome Hoverfly



As I watched the wasps and flies bustling around the flowers a Speckled Wood appeared and began to bask on a leaf



I hadn't expected to see any butterflies once November arrived, so this came as a pleasant surprise.

Then I spotted a Comma on the single golden Buddleia flower that is still out. I just managed to get a quick snap before it fluttered up weakly into a Silver Birch and disappeared



I saw a Peacock earlier this week in Canterbury so I'm not doing too badly at the end of the butterfly season.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 02-Nov-13 07:47 PM GMT

Nice one Hoggers 😊

Nothing left in flower in my garden now except the Ivy which has almost finished flowering and has been attracting a few bees and hoverflies this past week.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 03-Nov-13 04:03 PM GMT

Cheers Neil, I've still got some Wallflower and a few Asters going but aside from the Ivy that's about it really, although I planted a Viburnum during my

hectic Spring gardening spree and I've just noticed that it's attempting to flower!

Lots of sunshine today. I went down to Dungeness this morning where it was very blowy but not cold. In the hour or so that I had there I saw two Small Coppers. What a surprise! Still hanging on there in a very unforgiving environment.

But I failed miserably to get any photographs: the second I'd stalked them and got in position to press the button they'd lifted up into the wind and been swept away at speed, never to be seen again!

Ah, well, not to worry: two Small Coppers in November isn't bad going.

I wonder if they'll be my last butterflies of 2013?

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 07-Nov-13 03:30 PM GMT

The sun came out briefly this afternoon and it quickly grew pleasantly warm. I saw lots of activity on the Ivy in my garden



As I stood watching these insects to-ing and fro-ing, a dark shape caught my attention as it flew in from overhead then settled close by but quite high up. I had to perch on a chair to get a picture



A beautiful bright Comma! It fed on the flowers but as soon as a cloud passed in front of the sun it shut its wings up tight



And only opened up again when the sun returned



It certainly brightened up my day.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 07-Nov-13 10:19 PM GMT

Lucky get Hoggers 😊🍀 I haven't seen a butterfly for almost a week now aside from Bob who is still hanging on the ceiling 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 10-Nov-13 06:03 PM GMT

I've got my fingers crossed for Bob, Wurzel!

A cold but sunny Sunday down here in Kent. The Hoggers Clan descended on Dungeness this morning for a clatter along the shingle beach. An icy wind was blowing. I saw a few birders gazing through their telescopes at the flocks of gulls feeding offshore and a fisherman or two looking very cold indeed (now I think about it, they might be the same chaps that I saw last week, not budged an inch.) But otherwise, no sign of life. It certainly did not seem to be a day for insects let alone butterflies.

On the walk back we followed the Power Station stone perimeter wall. Much warmer here, sheltered from the wind and in full sunshine. I saw 6 small Dragonflies basking on this wall (those common ones, often red in colour) so I lay my hand on the wall too and found it to be very warm. I'm not glowing green yet, so hopefully it was just the sun, unaided, that had heated the wall enough to be of use to these Dragons.

And then I spotted a butterfly! A gorgeous Red Admiral warming itself alongside the Dragonflies. It waited patiently for me to remove the lens cap from my camera and get myself in position then it quickly lifted off and disappeared over the other side of the wall never to be seen again just before I could press down the shutter button (much to everyone's amusement.)

I saw two Small Coppers here last week but not a one today so I guess their season is over.

Still, good to get some fresh air and to see a butterfly on such a chilly day.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 11-Nov-13 09:30 PM GMT

Don't you hate it when they do that 😊 Looking back over a few of your posts I reckon the lovely Hoverfly is Volucella zonaria the Hornet Hoverfly – nice 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Nov-13 03:09 PM GMT

Something strange has happened to my diary: the entry I posted yesterday appears to have vanished! Unless it was all a dream? Perhaps I'll never know. But I will try again and see if this time it sticks because I had a stroke of good fortune yesterday and don't want to lose all record of it.

Dungeness yesterday was treated to some glorious weather. It was warm, sunny and calm. I'd seen what I guess was a Red Admiral on the drive down, so it looked promising for more. What I didn't expect was to see a beautiful Small Copper



Which as you can see was in excellent condition



A Small Copper on 16th November!

My luck continued because at the same site I found a Clouded Yellow



The poor thing had suffered an injury and couldn't fly. After clumsily fluttering about in the grass it eventually quietened and sat on a pebble in the sunshine





With my luck running so well I'm surprised I didn't see a Long tailed Blue as well!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 17-Nov-13 04:39 PM GMT

I think this is similar to the comment I left on your lost post...Amazing to see Small Coppers this late in the year especially in such good nick 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 17-Nov-13 04:54 PM GMT

It's like Groundhog Day, this!

A Small Copper in mid-November is an amazing sighting.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Nov-13 05:23 PM GMT

Thanks guys, thought I was cracking up! I wonder where my lost post went?!?

But yes, a Small Copper so late! No idea where he's finding nectar. Maybe Dungeness Small Coppers are the toughest in Britain?

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 17-Nov-13 07:11 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

No idea where he's finding nectar.

Maybe he's just absorbing the mineral salts from the tide!

As you say, he's one hardy critter.

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 17-Nov-13 08:30 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

I think this is similar to the comment I left on your lost post...Amazing to see Small Coppers this late in the year especially in such good nick 😊🇬🇧

If I remember correctly, Wurzel, you also added that the Dartford warbler was your favourite sh*t. 😊 It quite brightened my evening!

It's been Groundhoggers day today because Pete inadvertently removed 24hrs worth of posts last night in his unfailing bid to improve UK Butterflies (see <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=7313>). You're not cracking up, Hoggers!

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 08-Dec-13 04:44 PM GMT

I've not seen a butterfly since November 16th and so think it's safe to say that my 2013 butterfly season is now over.

I still think about butterflies; hardly a day passes that a butterfly or two doesn't flit around inside my head and through my dreams carrying happy memories of the summer and hopes and plans for the future.

What a truly wonderful place this UKB website is! All the butterfly wisdom, knowledge and experience it contains, the beauty of the many photographs and the unselfish goodwill of those who set it up and keep it running, and of the many who contribute to its pages. It enhances the quality of life: I don't think you can say that about many websites.

I'm so glad I started my own Personal Diary here, for many reasons, not least of which is that no matter where I am (and at the moment that means being stuck in the concrete heart of London), at the click of a button I can look at photographs of butterflies that I saw and of places that I went to. It can be a considerable benefit though these Winter days.

I've been thinking about my own favourite butterflies and also my favourite butterfly moments of the 2013 season and I thought I'd like to start writing about them here. I hope it will help me while away the Winter months!

The very first butterfly that popped into my mind was an Orange Tip.

Ted Hughes wrote a beautiful poem about Swifts and about how when he sees them for the first time each Spring he knows the World is still turning. Well, that's just how I feel when I see my first Orange Tip: I'm still here, I'm still alive, the World is still turning and Winter's OVER!!

This year they kept me waiting much longer than usual and it wasn't until the 28th April that I saw one, a male, flying along just ahead of me as I walked my dogs. This is him



By early May I was seeing them every day, sometimes 10 or more at a time with females too



I try to get a good photo but I have the same problem with them as I do with Whites in that the results are usually over exposed.

It's so wonderful to see them though, they come at a time of year when everything is fresh and green, full of hope and bursting with life



And this year I've had them in my garden, which has been a great thrill



Some, as you can see, are very friendly



Planting Wall Flowers and Garlic Mustard in the garden was the best thing I've done in ages, the Orange Tips came and some even stayed for a few days



In fact I was seeing Orange Tips right up until mid-June, often in my garden.

So there's my first "Choice" butterfly of 2013, the Orange Tip. It flew into my mind today of its own accord but I'd guess it's my love of Spring and of new growth and new life, which the Orange Tip represents to me, that invited it in.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 08-Dec-13 07:40 PM GMT

A lovely read Hoggers with some cracking photos (I try not to use 'shots' as much now as predictive text on the iPod insists on changing it to 'sh*ts' 😬) 😊 . How long to wait now? I've had enough of this winter lark already! 😡 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Paul Harfield, 08-Dec-13 11:38 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

I still think about butterflies; hardly a day passes that a butterfly or two doesn't flit around inside my head and through my dreams carrying happy memories of the summer and hopes and plans for the future.

What a truly wonderful place this UKB website is! All the butterfly wisdom, knowledge and experience it contains, the beauty of the many photographs and the unselfish goodwill of those who set it up and keep it running, and of the many who contribute to its pages. It enhances the quality of life: I don't think you can say that about many websites.

Hi Hoggers

Yes I know that feeling all too well, I think we are all a little obsessed and/or slightly mad 😊 I agree totally with your comments about UKB, what would we do without it 🤔

Your Orange Tips are fantastic, by the way 😊 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 15-Dec-13 03:29 PM GMT

I've been thinking about the butterflies and the butterfly moments that meant the most to me in 2013.

First came the Orange Tip (and many thanks for the kind comments Wurzel and Jack, much appreciated) a butterfly that for me means new life and the end of Winter.

My second choice butterfly is undeniably the Dingy Skipper. Now before this year started if you'd asked me "What does a Dingy Skipper do for you, Hoggers?" I'd have answered in all honesty "Well, not a lot...they're alright I suppose...they really are butterflies aren't they?"

I come across them easily at Wye Downs Nature Reserve. They're sort of "there": I'll see one, it'll just about register with me and then the rest might as well be invisible because I'm looking for more glamorous fare. They remind me of the black suited city gents making their way to work across Waterloo Bridge every morning: lots of them and they all look rather, well, dingy I suppose.

But this year it was different. I started to notice Dingy Skippers because there weren't any. Or not at first anyway.

I began my usual Spring visits to Wye and to Folkestone Warren too. I was seeing Green Hairstreaks, Orange Tips, Small Coppers, Brimstones, Small and Large Whites (I even saw the Duke) but not a sign of a Dingy Skipper. And I actually became genuinely worried. By May 12th despite a good number of visits to prime sites I hadn't seen a single Dingy Skipper.

I've got a note in my notebook; "16th May - bright sunny and warm - The first decent weather since 12th May". I finished work early and had gone back to Wye, arriving around noon. I easily found 12 Green Hairstreaks, a butterfly I'd usually be over the moon at finding but not on this occasion because I

wanted to find a Dingy Skipper!

And according to my notes "after a long search" I finally managed to find one



By the look of it, freshly emerged



I was delighted



What a relief!



A gorgeous butterfly



It meant a lot to me and it is now a butterfly I'll never take for granted again. So there's my second "Choice Butterfly" of 2013.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 16-Dec-13 10:58 PM GMT

Definitely a gorgeous butterfly Hoggers – I suggest a name change to Carpet Skipper or Mosaic Skipper, much nicer sounding and more in keeping with the butterfly's livery. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 21-Dec-13 07:33 PM GMT

We've been battered by wind and rain all day down here in Kent. It wasn't so much a dog walk as a paddle when I went out this morning with the fields all flooded. Nothing in the way of sunshine of course on this the Shortest Day of the year.

Unsurprising that I should find myself thinking back to the Summer for a little comfort and one of the best days' butterflying I had.

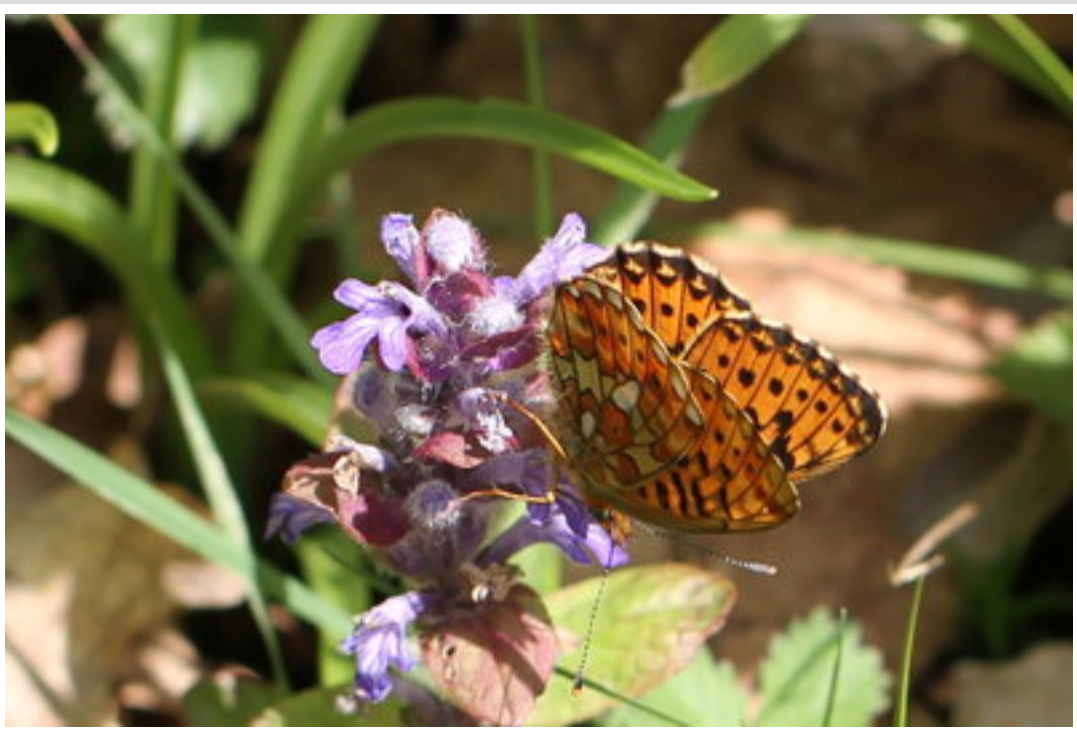
On 31st May I teamed up with my dad and younger brother and headed out to Abbot's Wood in Sussex. I wrote in my notebook "A warm sunny day after 3 days' of rain!!"

I remember a pleasant drive, all three of us full of expectation at the prospect of seeing Pearl bordered Fritillaries.

I'd been given some directions from other UKBers and so once we'd arrived in the car park it took only a short walk before we were in amongst these stunning, athletic butterflies



They were "juiced up" and difficult to get close to for a photograph before they'd raced away to the next Bugle flower but with patience and a lot of luck I got some pictures



I mostly remember them flying fast at knee-height along the woodland rides



Over the course of 2 hours we saw about 20 of them



It was a fantastic day out with my dad and brother and the Peal bordered Fritillaries



Here's to many more days chasing butterflies!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 22-Dec-13 06:27 PM GMT

Great little tale Hoggers with some great photos 😊 As I live really close to Bentley Wood I eagerly await the Pearls every year. If you can get there early in the morning they're much less active and you can catch them still roosting which means you can get the luscious closed under wing shots 😊 It seems too far away after the atrocious weather we've had recently... 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Butterflysaurus rex, 22-Dec-13 08:35 PM GMT

You've brought back some great memories of my time in Abbots wood last spring Hoggers, there are several sites in Abbots and I thought "site A" was by far the best one this year.

I'm looking forward to spending some time there this coming spring 😊

B'saurus

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Dec-13 07:09 PM GMT

Thanks guys, I will remember that tip Wurzel, I really enjoyed watching them zooming about but it'd have been nice to get close to one!

It was my first time there in a few years B'Saurus and very impressive it was too, lots of Bugle and lots of butterflies. I hadn't realised they were reintroduced here. It certainly turned out well!

I've been to Park Corner Heath a couple of times, which is fairly near Abbott's Wood, to see Small P-b's but I don't think they had any this year. Just shows how vulnerable these butterfly populations can be.

Re: Hoggers

by Butterfliesaurus rex, 23-Dec-13 10:57 PM GMT

There is a little bit of good news Hoggers, a few Small Pearl's are still hanging on at Park Corner Heath. I saw a few there but they were so few and so active I didn't even get close this year. You would see one whizz past and not see it again.

It's the first year for several years that I've not managed to get a photo 😞

I hope they can hang on there, it's the only colony in East Sussex that I'm aware of. The volunteers continue to do great work there improving the habitat, with any luck we'll have a good spring and they will bounce back.

I love wondering around Abbots Wood looking for PBF's, there are even a few PBF's at Park Corner now as well!

Come the springtime I will be there once more trying to get some half decent photos 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Dec-13 10:15 AM GMT

A year ago today I made a start with turning my garden into a more butterfly friendly place

Here's how it looked to begin with



By March there were signs of progress



Here's the garden in May



And June



The project turned me in to a gardener (of sorts!!) and opened up a whole new world of bedding plants, perennials and compost. Now I cannot resist visiting nurseries (and sadly for my bank balance there's a garden centre strategically positioned on my route home from work!)

I had Orange Tips, Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Speckled Woods, Brimstones, Commas, Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admirals, Gatekeepers, Holly Blues and Small Skippers all visit, some in numbers, lots of other insects too, and in addition to this, it looks so much better and gives so much more pleasure than when it was just bare lawn.

The project isn't over by a long chalk, I've lots more to do and I'm very much looking forward to it!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-Dec-13 08:06 PM GMT

One of my favourite butterflying trips this year was to Dorset. I went down to Lulworth Cove on 16th July with my Dad and Brother Hoggles. We had gorgeous weather for it, hot, calm and sunny.

A four hour drive from Kent and there we were, Lulworth Cove, standing at the water's edge and practically speechless at the sight of the Cove, so symmetrical you'd think it had been carved out by hand. A stunning place.

Then we were climbing up Bindon Hill in the heat where we found hundreds and hundreds of butterflies: Marbled Whites, Small Heaths, Meadow Browns, graceful Dark Green Fritillaries gliding down the hillside, and also the object of our visit, the Lully

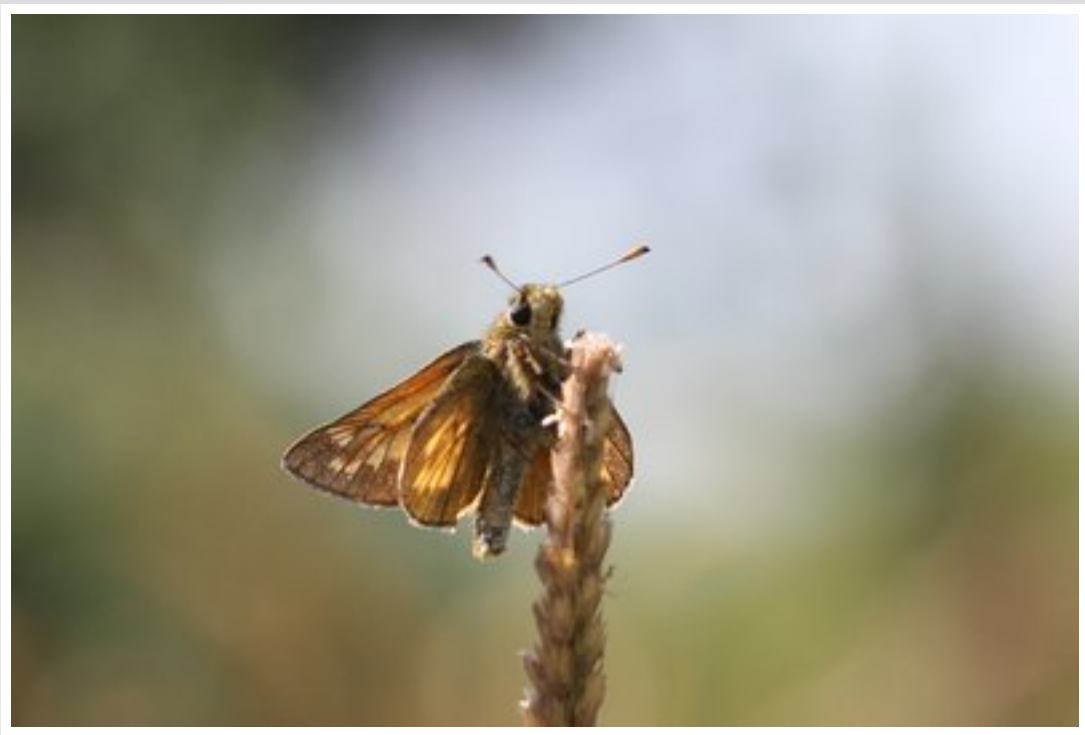




They were in good numbers



Some Golden



Some dark



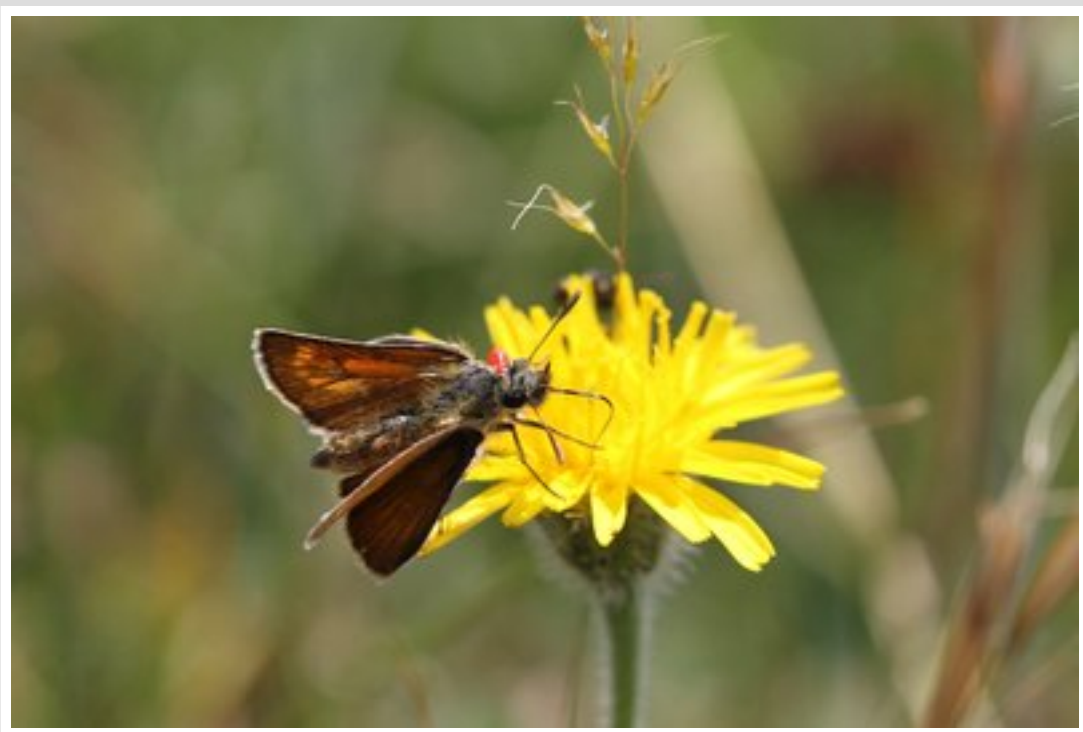
Fast moving



On almost every flower



It was the first time that my brother and Dad had seen Lulworth Skippers



We celebrated with Ice Creams by the Cove.

I loved our time there, the Cove, the view from Bindon Hill and of course the butterflies, but most important for me was that I shared the adventure with my brother and Dad



Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-13 11:29 PM GMT

Lovely report Hoggery and it featured my favourite butterfly 😊 . If you thought the Cove was great you'd be awestruck if you went slightly further west to Durdle Door, my favourite place in the world, ever 😊😎 . Have a great New Year and I hope the garden is even more fruitful in 2014 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel