

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jan-13 09:07 PM GMT

With snow last Monday, Friday and yesterday, Essex now has a five or six inch snow cover, and I have a day off work. In fact, there was much more snow yesterday than on Friday here in eastern England. The snow is dry and powdery, owing to the fact that temperatures remained below freezing during the snowfall.

While I don't agree with all the school closures, it has been great to see all the people (some young, some not so young!) out enjoying the better Essex slopes—the simple things are often the best in life.

Although the media like a good story, the authorities have in fact done a very good job keeping roads clear in this area, and I have had no problems getting around even on the minor routes.

So let's just enjoy the white beauty if we can!



Essex landscape transformed by snow



A fairyland setting for drivers in Epping Forest

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jan-13 10:52 PM GMT

THE FENS

On Thursday 24 Jan, I decided to take a winter's day out in the fens.

Having seen several buzzards and kestrels on the way, I headed for the Welches Dam RSPB reserve where many wetland birds winter on the flood plain. But of more interest to me, on this occasion, was the excellent set of bird feeders there. Lots of house sparrows were present, as well as some much rarer (these days) tree sparrows. Also lots of reed buntings, goldfinches and chaffinches, several fieldfares, a mistle thrush, which was guarding the remaining guelder rose berries against the fieldfares, several blackbirds, starlings, blue and great tits. All close up. Two great-spotted woodpeckers were drumming. As I was leaving, a tiny weasel shot past and a sparrowhawk was lurking nearby.

Then onto Welney wash, a Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve, to see swans and ducks. A marsh harrier was quickly spotted, and a barn owl was hunting in broad daylight. Mute, whooper and bewick's swans easily seen nice and close and, with a heated observatory, visitor centre and cafe, this is birdwatching made easy! With the snow, ice and grey skies, the swans made a lovely evocative sight and sound against this flat, lonely landscape. Plenty of mallards, pochards and coots were present, too. On some evenings, there is a public floodlit swan feed, and this was the case today, rounding off a most enjoyable day out. 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Feb-13 10:17 PM GMT

WINTER RETURNS

Woke up this morning to find several inches of snow creating a fresh white winter wonderland outside. Although forecast, i was surprised how quickly the snow settled,as it rained for several hours on sunday,before turning to snow overnight.

The snow had a high water content,unlike the snow last month,and is typical of snow that falls at temperatures a fraction above freezing.



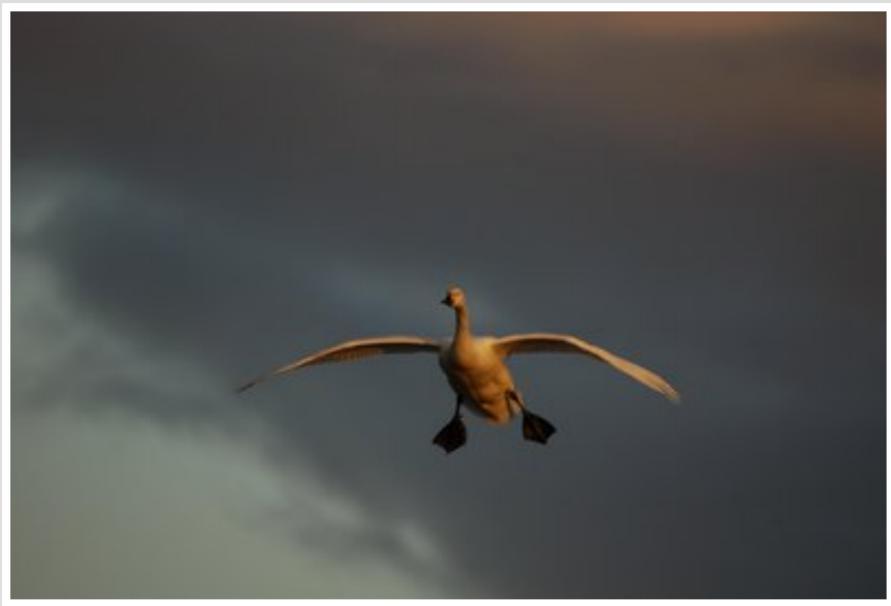
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Feb-13 11:28 PM GMT

SLIMBRIDGE

On Thursday,we went to WWT Slimbridge,in Gloucestershire. If you want to get close to nature,this is one of the best places to go. Not only have they got a huge collection of wetland birds from all over the world, but they also have a big nature reserve,with an excellent set of hides and lots of wintering wildfowl,many up close. This is perhaps the best place to see Bewick's,or Tundra,Swans,the smallest and rarest swan to be seen in Britain,and all just yards away,making great photo opportunities. Getting there early,we watched the swans flying out for the day,and coming back in the evening. Big flocks of Lapwings and Golden Plovers were seen. To put it simply,there were birds everywhere! Far too much to mention them all here.I've been many times,but this place just gets better! And there is a restuarant and shop,so every comfort!

Birds of prey seen during the day were Buzzard,Kite,Kestrel,Peregrine and,while driving home,a ghostly white Barn Owl over the M4.
Wow, a super winters day out!





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Feb-13 11:04 PM GMT

WEDNESDAY 27 FEBRUARY.

Today, i went to Blue House Farm, an Essex Wildlife Trust reserve near the coast. Saw several Kestrels on the journey, and lots of Buzzards. Although common in the west for as long as i remember, i feel so privileged to live at a time when Buzzards are becoming common in eastern England. Much of this farm is marsh land, managed for wildlife. Good numbers of Wigeon were close to the hides, with some Shovelers, Pintails, Shelduck, Mallard and Gadwall. Teal were feeding around the edges of the water, along with many Coot.

Waders included abundant Lapwing, and Curlews and a few Redshank. Three Herons were in the air together, with Little Egret nearby.

Every now and then, everything would fly up in a panic, as a Marsh Harrier sails by. But perhaps the highlight was a male Kestrel, which decided to hover low down at eye level, right next to the hide—the best view i've had of this species.

Meanwhile, on the grazing marsh, hundreds, if not thousands, of Brent Geese were grazing.

A super, if cold day!





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Feb-13 11:15 PM GMT

Fantastic shot of the Kestrel Essex 😊👍

We used to have a reliable flock of Bewicks near to me at a place called Ibsley Bridge (Harbridge now) but the most I've seen in recent years is 6 together 😞, and this year there have been even fewer. Hopefully "my" birds have swelled the ranks at Slimbridge which is a stunning place 😊.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Mar-13 10:03 PM GMT

Agreed,Wurzel!

The general thought seems to be that fewer Bewick's Swans are finding their way to GB these days,because they come from Siberia and some are staying in the Netherlands,as a result of better food supply and shorter migration. A similar thing may be happening with White-fronted Geese.

My bird interest has always been from late Autumn to early Spring, which helps to bridge a gap-winter is otherwise a long time for the butterfly and wild flower enthusiast!

Cheers!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Mar-13 12:02 AM GMT

WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH

On Wednesday,i had the pleasure of spending the Spring Equinox at Heyshott Down,with volunteers from Murray Downland Trust and Sussex BC,including our very own Sussex Kipper. Such great things about Heyshott are on his page, so i won't repeat it here.

The amount of work done here since my last visit is impressive,as the pictures show. The dips and little depressions created should hopefully become great little sun traps for territorial male Dukes in a couple of years time.

While working,we were treated to good views of buzzards,ravens and a peregrine,while woodpeckers were drumming nearby.

Hats off to all who help improve this already excellent site.



great little suntraps for Duke males



upside down yew tree!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Mar-13 11:20 PM GMT

THE WINTER THAT JUST WON'T GIVE UP!

After reports from the Midlands and north,winter returned to Essex,and elsewhere in East Anglia on Saturday,though in truth it never really left! With snow falling most of the day yesterday,and grey skies today,temperatures have stayed below freezing throughout, remarkable for so late in the season.

A cold autumn and late spring then-winter has been very long this year!

Here are some cold Essex pictures...





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Mar-13 11:31 PM GMT

Well i'm sure i don't stand alone when i say i'm absolutely fed-up of this winter,which goes on and on! My page seems to have become more of a weather update than anything more interesting.

Snow has been lying for a week now! Now,there is nothing new about snow in late March,or even April. It's the length of this late cold spell which is so extraordinary. I cannot recall snow lasting more than a day or two in late March.It is unusual enough for snow to last a week in the middle of winter in southern England,nevermind at Easter. 😲

I was working today,so i took the picture below on Friday,when at least the sun came out to play-briefly.

Three displaying Buzzards Friday,and a Peregrine today,were the only wildlife of interest this week.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-13 11:38 PM GMT

It is getting ridiculous isn't it? 😡 I wouldn't mind so much if I could see into the future to see if there is an end to it 😲 Cheer up though it'll soon be April with its little deluges then washout May and soaking June etc etc before it finally gets nice around October time when the final hibernators are bedding down 😞 😡

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Mar-13 12:11 AM GMT

Exactly! 😲

Cheers Wurzel,enjoy the rest of the weekend,whatever it brings...

At least it's not raining,i suppose...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Apr-13 12:18 AM GMT

AT LAST-WE'RE OFF AND RUNNING!

After the coldest and dullest March in East Anglia anyone can remember,the sun at last came out to play today! 😊

In the local woods,the sun was shining,and it felt almost warm! The primroses were coming out,the yaffle was,well,yaffling,the woodpecker was drumming. There was an air of Spring about,and i saw my first 2013 butterfly! 😊
It was a Comma,see picture below. It's been a very long time coming,considering i saw butterfles in every month last year except December!



the primroses are now ready to feed the emerging Brimstones



the first bee-flies are flying



the hairy violets are flowering



my first 2013 butterfly!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Apr-13 12:47 AM GMT

Then,after lunch,off to one of my favorite ancient Essex woods–Shadwell wood,near Saffron Walden.

On the country roads,a buzzard was alarmingly slow to take off from roadkill.

At Shadwell,the wood was full of redwings. Several buff-tailed bumblebees were seen,and a couple more Commas.

Buzzards were performing their spectacular diving display,with much mewling,and on the woodland floor,anemones were starting,the real display will come next week.

Mezereon is in flower here. The first oxlips were seen,and it's only a matter of time before this wood erupts into a riot of colour.

Spring is here! 😊



anemones



mezereon



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Apr-13 10:13 PM GMT

Great shots of the Comma Essex 😊 This Sunday coming looks great over your way so I'm awaiting enviously further posts!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Apr-13 10:22 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments,Wurzel,though i'm not sure about the weather—it now looks like the milder weather is likely to be accompanied by wind and rain,rather than the blue sky and warm spring sunshine predicted earlier in the week.

I'll let you know what happens,i hope i'm just being pessimistic!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Apr-13 10:39 PM GMT

Well,i was too pessimistic,in the event!

It was a glorious warm day in the far east of England,if rather windy.

Unfortunately,i had to work today! However,i thankfully work outside,and i've seen quite a few Swallows flying through on the south winds over the weekend,and i had a couple more Commas today—thank goodness we live at a time when these are so common. It's hard to believe that a hundred years they were excessively rare,their disappearance from Scotland,and most of England and Wales much lamented.

Also saw my second species for 2013,the male Small cabbage White in the picture,below.

After work,at 4PM,went to Birchanger woods,where a brilliant carpet of Wood Anemones,or Windflowers,is nearing its peak:





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-13 10:52 PM GMT

That Small White is an excellent find 🍷 – you'll have to check with Hideandseek to see who got it first 😊 I too was pessimistic about the weather so I think this year I'm going to try a different technique for weather watching – plan to go somewhere and then look out of the window before I go! 😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 14-Apr-13 11:00 PM GMT

If that Small White was down amongst all those lovely anemones, you'd never spot it! 😊

Everything is appearing at once – if the sun carries on, there'll be Orange Tips in no time. Not a bad forecast for the week here, truth be told...

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Apr-13 10:32 PM GMT

ANEMONE DAY!

On Thursday, I took an early trip to Danbury Common, where I had my first singing nightingale, willow warbler and whitethroat of the year.

Later, I also saw several of my third butterfly species for 2013 – Peacocks. 😊

But my main aim was to visit a couple of ancient woods, where the wood anemones are at their peak. I love these simple little flowers, the first real display of the Essex spring. Although the wind was howling, the flowers eventually opened up, giving a cracking display. In the morning, I went to Blakes Wood, near Danbury, and then up to the north of the county, and to Stour Wood, managed by the RSPB. For sheer numbers, and quality of display, these ancient Essex woods put on a show that is as good as anywhere in the country – maybe even the world. Wow! 😊



blakes wood,south essex



stour wood,north essex.what a show!



my first peacock

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Apr-13 10:38 PM GMT

That anemone 'carpet' fair warms the heart.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Apr-13 11:26 PM GMT

Thanks David,aren't they spectacular? Always a great show,they seem even better this year!

Perhaps this is the result of last years wet weather? 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Apr-13 10:20 AM GMT

That is a glorious sight Essex 😊 I'm looking forward to the wild garlic blooming

Have a goodun

Wurzel

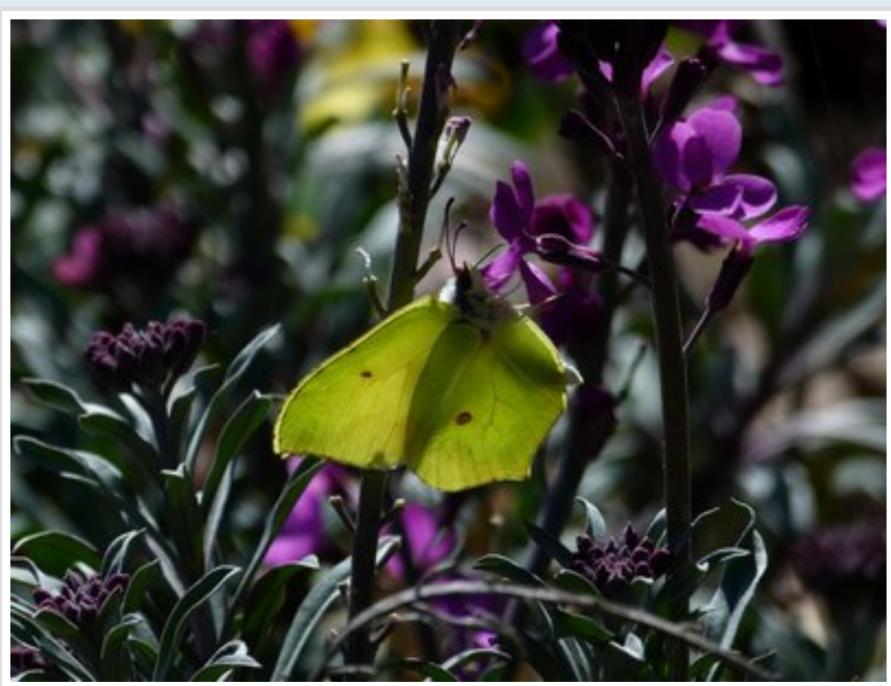
Re: essex buzzard

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

Thanks,Wurzel. These wood anemones must be one of my favorites!

Well,everyone,i hope you all enjoyed the weekend sunshine? 😊

Unfortunately,i was at work,but i did manage to see two new species for 2013- Brimstone Saturday and Small Tortoiseshell today. Not quite as spectacular as Kippers' Large Torts on IOW,but a pleasure anyway.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Apr-13 11:27 PM GMT

CORNWALL

Just back from a mid Spring short break to Cornwall.

The weather wasn't ideal,there was a lot of mist and drizzle at times-classic 'warm-sector' weather-but wasn't too bad. Temperatures were near average,and it didn't rain.

On Tuesday, we took a walk along the coast near Seaton,SW Cornwall. For once the sun shone,and soon,a Small Tortoiseshell was the first butterfly of the day. Then,abundant Speckled Woods started to be seen,my first for the year. Further up,a Peacock was basking,and a Comma flew past and landed. Meanwhile,several buzzards were soaring and at one point,six were in the air,with much mewing and displaying. Eventually,a pair descended to mate on top of a windswept hawthorn.

As we turned to continue the walk,something blue flitted in the nearby ivy. It was a Holly Blue,my first of 2013,soon joined by another male.

By now,the forecast cloud was filling in, so we headed off to Looe for a pasty,having made the best of the mornings weather.

Normally,whites,Orange Tips,Green Hairstreaks and early Pearl-bordered Frits can be expected here by late April,which was the main reason for the trip,but, even when i returned to the site on Friday,my last day,nothing of the sort were seen,evidence of the very late season this year. 😊

So,even though i got 5 species,including a couple of firsts,i couldn't help feeling a little deflated by the end of the week.

😊





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Apr-13 10:29 PM GMT

The middle part of the week was dominated by mild, misty conditions—classic 'warm sector' weather. However, on Thursday night, a cold front went through, sweeping away the fog.

Apart from an unsuccessful walk on the coast, mentioned earlier, we also went to cabilla woods, near Bodmin. A kingfisher was a good start. Several marsh tits were seen. By mid-morning, although a chilly day, it was warming up in the rides and clearings. Again, the late season was evident, but a Peacock was seen, followed by one, then two lovely male Brimstones.

So that was the last of the six species we saw in Cornwall.

Hopefully try again next year.



Cornwall in the fog midweek!



brimstone

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-13 10:35 PM GMT

A few more pics from Cornwall;



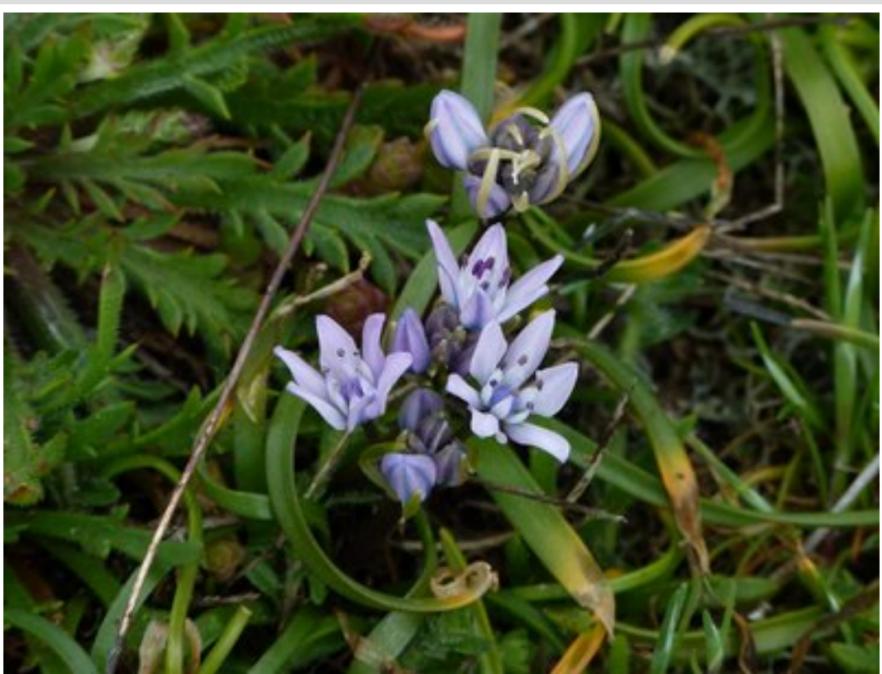
glorious gorse everywhere!



buzzards are truly splendid fliers



Cornish clotted cream tea!



the spring squill were coming out on the coast



whimberel at mounts bay

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-13 11:10 PM GMT

A great start yesterday,when i saw this little cracker in my garden,warming up in the morning sun! 😊 😎



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-13 11:21 PM GMT

A morning walk in my local woods. As well as Orange Tips,i also saw my first Green-veined Whites of the year. Peacocks were common,and several Small Tortoiseshells were seen. A pair of buzzards were soaring over the wood,as well as a sparrowhawk. With the woods full of primroses and violets,and glorious sunshine,this is vintage spring stuff. 😊 😎





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-13 12:07 AM GMT

Early afternoon found me visiting two of my oxlip woods, West Wood and Shadwell Wood. As i said last year,oxlips are very special and much loved in Essex. I have seen them in Suffolk,too,close to the Essex border.Their numbers have declined,and one of the reasons is that the increasing numbers of deer love to nibble the oxlip heads off.

It is interesting,if pointless to wonder if the old East Anglian colonies of Duke of Burgundy would have used them as caterpillar foodplants,in the days when coppicing was common.

Oxlip flowers come in male and female forms,on seperate plants,as the pictures in Shadwell Wood show.

Brimstones,Peacocks,Commas and Green-veined Whites were flying along the rides,but,unlike Cornwall last week,still no Speckled Woods.

Early purple orchids were out in the woods. The first Herb Paris were flowering,a scarce indicator of ancient woodland.Birdsong was everywhere,and with super weather,spring doesn't get any better than this 😊



herb paris



oxlips,shadwell wood



oxlip female



oxlip male



early purple orchid

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-May-13 11:10 PM GMT

BLUEBELL TIME!

Essex is an excellent county for bluebells, and on Friday, we had the pleasure of visiting two of the best woods. I say 'pleasure' - the wind was blowing a near gale and sunshine was hard to come by!

We started at Blakes wood, an ancient wood near Danbury. Coppicing has produced a wide range of flowers, and birdsong, and this continues today. At the moment, a glorious carpet of bluebells is at its peak. Perhaps they benefited from last year's wet weather, they seem even more splendid this year! 😊

Then onto Norsey wood, a local nature reserve near Billericay. Another spectacular carpet of glorious blue awaited us, along with other flowers, including yellow archangel, indicator of ancient woodland. Shame the weather wasn't better but, well, that's Great Britain for you! A carpet of colour like this brightens up any day! 😊

Butterflies seen included my first Essex Speckled Woods (I saw them in Cornwall in April), Brimstone, Small White, Orangetips, G.V. White, Small Tort, Peacock, and Holly Blues.



Blakes wood



Norsey wood





yellow archangel

Re: essex buzzard

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

MORE BLUEBELLS!

Yesterday i awoke to a rare blue sky so,before work i took a walk around Park Wood,near Ongar. We are so lucky in Britain,and especially in Essex,to have such fantastic bluebell woods,and this wood is another splendid one. We all complain about our miserable weather,but bluebells thrive in our cool,damp climate. They are much scarcer in Europe and are a British treasure. So an early walk,before the rain returned...



park wood

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-May-13 11:38 PM GMT

Right come rain or shine I'm heading to Garston this weekend to see my local Bluebell wood 😊 We'll be checking to see if we can smell them as well – got to keep out Johnny foreigner! Lush Holly Blue too 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 14-May-13 06:52 AM GMT

What a smashing diary. Really interesting photos. Count me in as a regular reader from now on.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-May-13 11:39 PM GMT

Thanks very much for the kind comments,folks!

Although this is a butterfly forum,i do like to mix it up a bit,especially when the weather is as dodgy as this year! Often, butterflies are out of the question,and this is perhaps when my love of wild flowers and other wildlife is seen more often.

We all have different characters on ukb! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-May-13 12:31 AM GMT

BLUEBELLS PART THREE!

It's been really cold this week, and the absence of new butterflies emerging gave me a chance to check out some more bluebell woods on Thursday. Unlike the rest of this week, the sun shone, though still only around 12C—the May average is 16C for east Anglia.

Started off at Hillhouse wood, near Colchester, managed by Woodland Trust and local volunteers. The bluebell carpet here was truly spectacular. The Nightingale and Cuckoo sing here, and spring flowers abound. Early purple orchids, including white ones, were at their peak, while, by the stream, wild garlic was abundant. In places, bluebells combine with stitchwort—a lovely sight. As the morning dampness evaporated, the scent of all these bluebells really was something I wish I could capture!

Late morning, and off to a nearby Green Hairstreak site. Despite two and a half hours searching, in sunny, if cool weather, still no sign of them. There is still time, but it is a bit of a worry.

Then on to Weeleyhall wood, an Essex Wildlife Trust reserve, not far from Clacton-on-Sea. This is another Nightingale wood, and a pair of buzzards were soaring effortlessly above. A bluebell carpet here too. These Essex woods, together with the others we have seen, contain some of the greatest densities of bluebells IN THE WORLD! 😊

Butterflies were rather few today, Peacocks, and a few whites, Orange Tips, Speckled Woods and worn Commas.

So, if you have the time, and the weather is reasonable, get out and enjoy your nearby bluebells this weekend, before they are gone!



hillhouse wood



wild garlic or ramsons



early purple white



weeleyhall wood



red tailed bumblebee

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-May-13 11:48 PM GMT

GLOOMY SKIES-AGAIN!

After weeks of dull,cold weather which has felt more like November than May,and hardly any sign of spring or butterflies,i finally gave up on dull,miserable East Anglia on Tuesday,and,with better weather expected further west,set out to try and find some sunshine somewhere. Eventually we found our way to Heyshott Down,in West Sussex. Although skies were leaden here too,it was expected to become brighter and warmer as the day went on.Guess what? It didn't. It was just as cold and miserable here as it was back home! Needless to say,we saw absolutely no butterflies there. Left at 4.30 with skies just as gloomy as when we arrived. 😞

And there went my only chance to see the Duke of Burgundy this year. Not to mention the considerable time and cost it took to get there and back. And all for nothing. 😡

I love Britain,but the lousy weather,it breaks my heart.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-May-13 10:35 PM GMT

With another dull,cold morning,but the promise,at last,of some desperately needed 'long sunny spells' this afternoon, i decided to visit Oxley Meadows,an Essex Wildlife Trust site,this morning,and then go butterflying after lunch.

Oxley meadows are known for their wildflowers,and particularly in May,green-winged orchids,which grow by the thousand here and colour the meadows. A wide range of colour orchids can be seen,from deep blackcurrant purple,through pink, to pure white,all with green veins. With the meadow buttercups opening now,they make a spectacular show!

Also in these meadows,grow large numbers of the strange little plant,the adders tongue,a plant of ancient grassland. Above all these,swallows were hawking the insects over the grassland,and in the shelter of the trees.

And onto this afternoon. Guess what? Those promised warm sunny spells never materialized.So still no butterflies.

How much do we pay these people????



oxley meadows





adders tongue



meadow saxifrage

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-May-13 11:23 PM GMT

THE LATE SPRING BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND

Well, i hope everyone has been able to enjoy the weekend sunshine at last! Unfortunately, i've been at work but, on Saturday i managed to get out at lunchtime. It was lovely to see the wonderful hawthorn and horse-chestnut in bloom in the sunshine! The horse-chestnut has very pretty flowers when viewed close-up, and seems unscathed by the recent cold and wind-remember, this is a tree which comes from Greece!

While out, i was delighted to see three Orange Tips-two males and an egg-laying female. This is a species i have struggled to see at all this spring, which is a great shame. They have seemed virtually absent but in truth, there have been very few days when adults have been able to fly. These sightings made my day! 😊

Large and Small Whites were also seen but, all too soon, time to get back to work.



magnificent horse chestnut



glorious hawthorn



super orange tip!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-13 12:08 AM GMT

Unfortunately, i had to work again today, but i finish at 4 on Sundays, which means on sunny days like this i can get out before the end of the butterfly day.

So this afternoon, i headed for the Langdon Hills. Walking down the wooded country lanes here, full of the scent of flowering hawthorn and the sound of singing song thrushes, chiff-chaffs and blackcaps, i was reminded why i love this time of year so much. May passes all too soon, so every second should be enjoyed.

Soon i found myself in the open meadows, where my first Small Heath of the year was quickly seen. On the nearby hedge, two Commas were involved in territorial behavior, spiraling upwards, over the hedge, never to be seen again! A few more Orange Tip males were seen patrolling the hedges as well. Suddenly, something orange landed nearby. Great! My first Small Copper of the year. Searching the fields in the evening sunlight, several more were seen. 😊

Langdon is home to the very last Essex colony of Grizzled Skipper. Having searched the meadows, none were seen, and it seemed i would go home empty-handed. This is no disaster, as they always emerge later on this flat site than they do on southern downland, and in this, the coldest of springs as well. But then, a grey blur shot past. So i searched again, backwards and forwards. In the weakening sunlight, it wouldn't go far. Suddenly, in shot past again, and this time i managed to follow it until it landed. And there it was, a beauty Grizzled Skipper in Essex! 😊 It was a little battered but, no matter, it was here. It had more extensive white than normal, this form often is seen here.

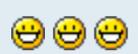
Time was getting on. So, as i walked down this last hedge, i frequently stopped to admire the sight and scent of the hawthorn blossom, grateful for my

splendid evening. And there, in the grass by the hawthorn—another Grizzled Skipper—and i wasn't even looking! This was mint—in fact, it probably emerged today! And it was much nearer to the normal type. Wow—evenings don't get better than this! 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-13 10:23 PM GMT





Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 27-May-13 10:28 PM GMT

Those are great shots of *intermedia*, Buzzard! And a dazzling green hairstreak to boot!

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-13 10:37 PM GMT

Thanks,Guy! Grizzled Skippers are the most endangered butterfly in Essex,i'm sooo pleased to find them. 😊

I've been looking for Green Hairstreaks throughout May,to at last find some has made my day,no,month! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 28-May-13 11:40 AM GMT

Great reading report with cracking shots 😊 It's nice to feel envious of someone else's Greenstreak shots having gotten my own- it makes a nice change rather than being envious about the shot and because of the species 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 28-May-13 03:03 PM GMT

Love your excitement and enthusiasm Buzzard, nice GH shot too, but what I really love is your Small Copper with blue spots – been trying to get one of those for 2 years now 🍀

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-13 08:24 PM GMT

Some great reports and photo 😊

I too really like your Small Copper photo, first ones were seen in Warwickshire at the weekend so hopefully I'll be seeing them soon.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: essex buzzard

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

Wurzel-thanks for your comments. I'm so pleased to finally find my Greenstreak,and get my shots. They are not easy in Essex,with a very patchy range. Even within colonies,they can seem almost absent in some years and with poor spring weather again,i was begining to fear this was one of those years. Pauline,thanks to you too. I also love the Small Copper. These blue-spotted forms are fairly common within its Essex colonies,much to my pleasure! 😊 Neil,i hope the weather improves and you are able to visit your local sites. I will be checking your diary for sightings at the weekend!

LATE SPRING HOLIDAY PART TWO!

I was meant to work Monday,but with rare sunshine on the cards,i somehow managed to get the morning off! Just as well looking at this weeks forecast. So waste no time,off to Grays Gorge chalk pit,an old quarry and great for Essex butterflies-when the sun shines! This is a known site for the Green

Hairstreaks i have been so desperate to see-i've seen them here before. Just need the weather!

On arrival,several Small and Large Whites were already flying,as were several Speckled woods.

This pit is full of Holly Blues,here,they seem to use lucerne as their caterpillar foodplant,several females were laying on it. A Green-veined White female was seen,with Burnet Companion too.

But the highlight of course,were the Greenstreaks. Only two were seen-the one in my last picture and the one below. Interestingly,both were egg-laying females,there must have been males but i couldn't find them. They were laying on birds-foot trefoil and,again,lucerne. The one below has a nick in it-even though Greens only have a tiny,stubby tail,it still seems enough to encourage birds to peck the wrong end-thank goodness!

At the bottom of the quarry,several Brimstones were flying about. Considering how old they now are,they were in surprisingly good condition.

Man orchids ore a feature of this reserve,an were just coming out. Up to 500 spikes are present in good years. Birds nest orchids prefer the overgrown,shady areas. They,too,are just opening.

A hobby shot past,perhaps after the hairy hawker i saw earlier.

All too soon,it was time for work,but wow-what a great morning! 😊😊😊



the other greenstreak



holly blue female



man orchid



burnet companion



brimstone male



brimstone female



birds nest orchid

Re: essex buzzard

by Pete Eeles, 30-May-13 07:12 PM GMT

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

The one below has a nick in it—even though Greens only have a tiny, stubby tail, it still seems enough to encourage birds to peck the wrong end—thank goodness!

And that's why I really like this pic – showing something quite different 😊 Thanks for posting, rather than binning it!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-May-13 08:29 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments, Pete.

You're right, of course. Normally I only keep the best pics, or at least what I think are the best! But Greens have been so hard to come by for me in recent years, and perhaps this one tells its own story—one of survival, in this the coldest of springs.

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 30-May-13 09:14 PM GMT

I agree – a picture should tell a story! Footprints across a beach make a far better picture than virgin sand ...

It's not just that green hairstreak that has a tale to tell, Buzzard. Your whole diary is a lovely record of spring unfolding.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by Lee Hurrell, 30-May-13 09:28 PM GMT

I also agree, lovely diary and photos, EB.

Fantastic Grizzled photos and I love the Green Hairstreak.

Best wishes

Lee

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-13 09:29 PM GMT

"Your whole diary is a lovely record of spring unfolding." Couldn't agree more. One of the best!

BWs, Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jun-13 10:14 PM GMT

Thank-you so much everybody, for all of your comments, they really are most welcome, and I'm pleased you all think I have something worthy to contribute. Thanks again!

CORNWALL!

So here I am, fresh back from my early summer, or late spring, trip to Cornwall.

It was a fantastic trip!

Firstly, I was incredibly lucky with the weather—blue skies and sunshine, and warm too!

Like most of the country, the season is late here, too—May blossom and bluebells still out, and several spring butterflies still flying.

Arriving on Monday morning, the first stop was a valley wood on Bodmin Moor. Here the sun shone through the pale green leaves, and the water tumbled over the rocky stream. Ferns were abundant, and the trees were festooned with mosses and lichens. A glorious carpet of bluebells covered the woodland floor, while ravens and buzzards could be heard above. Fairly quiet for butterflies on this cool morning, though Green-veined White was photographed.

An active nuthatch hole was found, its entrance plastered with mud. Outside the wood, the verges were a riot of colour.

Then onto Chapel Porth, on the north coast near St. Agnes. Here the cliff tops were a sea of flowering kidney vetch, in all different colours—what a sight!

Several Whites, including Large and Green-veined, were seen and below Wheal Coates mine, several Walls were chasing each other around, my first of 2013—these were to prove near constant companions through the week. Several Green Hairstreaks were then seen, including two on one heather bush—I only saw them when they flew up from my feet! Thankfully, they soon settled again, giving me the pleasure of watching their behavior at close quarters. Well, time was getting on, so I had to tear myself away, in order to check-in to my accommodation, down the coast near Hayle, on St. Ives Bay.

What a great start to the week!



kidney vetch at chapel porth



i managed this snapshot of a female wall





wheal coates

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-13 10:53 PM GMT

Great report Essex 😊 Stunning Kidney Vetch, looking forward to the next installment. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Nick Broomer, 09-Jun-13 11:16 PM GMT

Hi essex buzzard,

I always read your diary with great enjoyment and, find your floral photos are quite brilliant. Lovely Green Hairstreak photos.

All the best, Nick.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Jun-13 10:16 PM GMT

Again,thanks for the compliments,Wurzel and Nick. If my diary and picturs can inspire people to get out and enjoy,then i know i have done something positive!

CORNWALL DAY TWO-TUESDAY 4 JUNE

With the continuing good weather,i decided to get up and out early and head for the Lizard. A good colony of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary is found at Kynance Cove,and as i like to photograph them,arriving early,they should be basking in the early sunshine. Sure enough,i soon found several fresh adults perched,almost comatose,as they warmed up-result! Once these have warmed,they stop for no-one,so i contunued to walk towards Lizard point,enjoying a couple of male wheatears,a pair of kestrel and a buzzard. A splendid display of flowers on the cliff-tops included sea pinks,birds-foot trefoil,sea campion and spring squill.Several early purple orchids were present,too,with white burnet roses among the heather. All to a backdrop of spectacular scenery,blue skies and sunshine,and rising temperatures!

Soon,more butterflies started to appear,including Large and Green-veined Whites,Small Coppers,and several Walls. At Lizard lighthouse,the cliff-top flora had changed,with bluebells covering large areas,and some foxgloves.

By time i arrived at Britains most southerly cafe,it was lunch time,so a pasty was consumed and enjoyed,while overhead,several Cornish chough were seen. Chough have been breeding at Lizard point for ten years now,and are a great pleasure to see. There are friendly signs in the area asking people not to approach them too closely because of disturbance but,in reality,they are quite tame,and often land close to people using the south-west coast path,giving good veiws. After eating,i spent some time on the cliffs, simply watching these birds,a great conservation success! While enjoying them,several Common Blues flew nearby-my first of the year. Heading back,many more Walls were seen,flying along the stone walls,looking for mates,and chasing away rivals. Several pipits were doing their attractive parachute display,which i love to see.

Time was getting on when approached Kynance and in some long grass,Small Pearls were begining to settle,including my first female,so ending the day much as it began...



kynance cove



burnet rose





bluebells at Lizard Pt



cornish chough, image is cropped



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-13 11:04 PM GMT

Lovely shots Essex, especially the Wall 😊 Choughs are cracking birds, and if you can get a close enough view the sheen on their feathers is gorgeous. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jun-13 10:54 PM GMT

Thanks,Wurzel. You're right of course—the sheen glows green and purple close to.

CORNWALL DAY THREE.

Today,there was a bit more cloud when i started out—but things improved!

So off to the S.W.coast path,at Gwennap Head. This is one of the windiest places in the country,and at the Coastguard Station,gusts of wind over 100mph are recorded most winters—only a couple of weeks ago,winds reached nearly 70mph!

I was nothing like that today,thank goodness—just a gentle breeze from the NE. Lots of bluebells were again present here—it seems strange seeing them amongst the kidney vetch,sea-pinks and sea campion,with not a tree in sight! Gorgeous little spring squill were especially common here.Once the sun got going,so did the butterflies. Small Pearls were again common—they tend to live in loose,open populations here,rather than tight colonies. Two Greens were chasing each other around a small gorse bush. Every now and then they would settle,but as soon as one took off,the other would start the chase again! Quite a joy to watch. Common Blues were,again,common, as were Small Heaths. There is a Marsh Fritillary colony here,and i found some foodplant,unfortunately,i failed to find any Marsh Frits. A pleasant walk,then,in a new area for me.

Then off to St Just,for a walk to Cape Cornwall,and around to Botallack. Again lots of bluebells here,and quit a few foxgloves,to add to the cliff-top flowers. Again,Small Pearls and Small Heath were easily seen,as were Common Blues. Walls were near the stone walls,as usual,and a Large White was seen. Two Cornish choughs flew over,i think they nest up here as well. Buzzard and kestrel seen. A Small Copper was a late addition. All against a splendid backdrop of scenery,blue sky and blue sea. A couple of fields above Botallack mines were a sea of buttercups. A great end to the day,a delicious Cornish meal followed!



greenstreak at gwennap head



spring squill



botallack



Re: essex buzzard

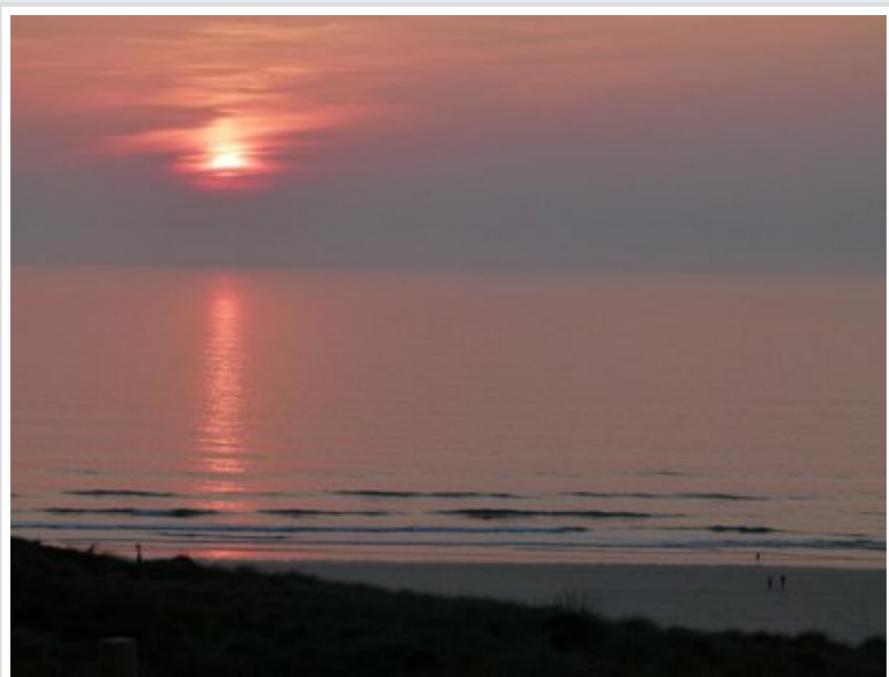
by essexbuzzard, 13-Jun-13 10:20 PM GMT

CORNWALL DAY 4-THURSDAY

Something a little different today-off to the Royal Cornwall Show,near Wadebridge,which was excellent. The fields we used for parking were nice and dry,contrast this to last June,when many cars had to be towed out of a mud bath!

However,on the way back,i had time to drop into the Indian Queens old railway,where there is a colony of Dingy Skippers. Although it is late in their season,several were seen,though all a bit worn. Common Blues,Green-veined white and lots of confusion Burnet Companion moths were present,as well as several fresh Small Pearl-border Fritillaries-i had no idea there was a colony here,i've never seen them before. On the debit side,no Grizzled Skippers were seen,and they seem to have died out at this site. This is a great pity,as,although a small,isolated site,it is managed,and there is plenty of wild strawberry as caterpillar plants. So now just one colony remains in Cornwall.

Arrving back,i was treated to another delicious Cornish meal,with the glorious veiw of the setteng sun behind. 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jun-13 10:40 PM GMT

Great reports with some excellent photos 😊 .

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jun-13 11:59 PM GMT

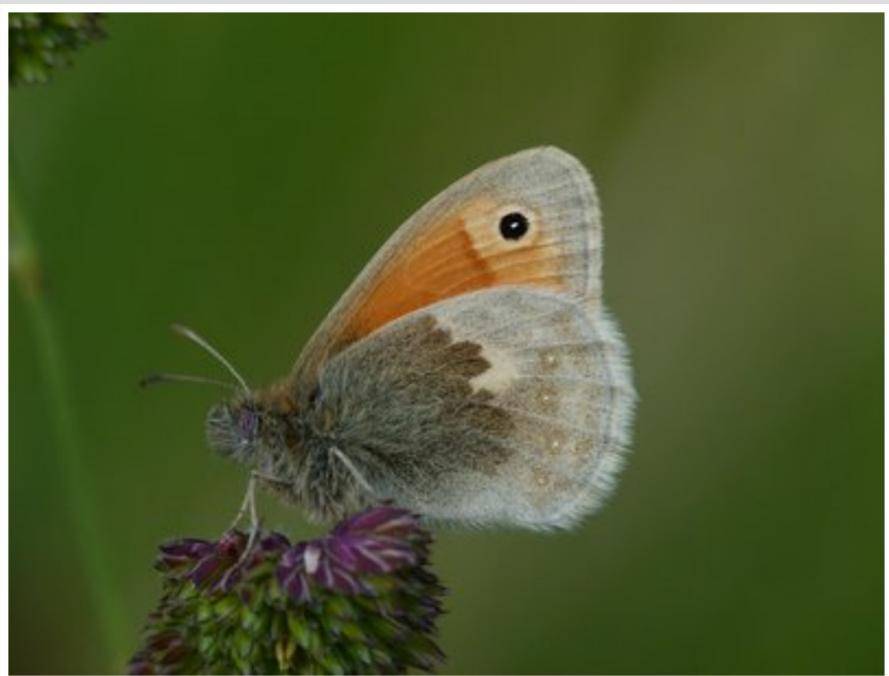
Thanks Neil,much appreciated.

CORNWALL DAY 5,FRIDAY.

Today,with aonther good day forecast,spent the morning at Gwithian Towans,which was within walking distance of where i was staying. These are a large area of sand dunes,which become great for Silver Studded Blues and Dark Green Fritillaries in July. But it's worth a look anytime from spring to autumn,and this was no exception.

First up were a couple of Small Heaths,which are common here. A Common Blue was also soon seen,as were several Cinnabar moths. Several Small Pearl-bordered Frits there then seen,and then a lovely singing male stonechat and whitethroat. As the day heated up,more butterflies appeared. Several Walls were seen,as was a Small Copper. Checking the dips and depressions,i then found a species i was hoping to see—a Brown Argus. Although i saw two more later on,they were a little past their prime,this was best adult i saw.Here they use storksbill os foodplants. Finaly,three Large whites were seen.

Then onto Madron. This is the area where our family come from—it's great to be back! As i walked down Kennel lane,surrounded by Cornish hedges brimming with Mayblossom(or Juneblossom!) campion,bluebells and stitchwort,Several mint Speckled Woods were seen—clearly there had been a fresh emergence of adults,as these were the first of the trip,and represent those that overwintered as caterpillars,not chrysalises. Up at the Carn,several Red Admirals were hilltoping,as usural—my first of the year.Up to three were present,as well as a Painted Lady,again my first of the year. Every now and then,they would all spirial skywards,spinning around the hill top,before breaking away to land back near the ground,untill the next one moved,when they would all start up again. A Wall,meantime,was keeping out of the way. A splendid,soaring buzzard and a verge full of foxgloves,was a great way to end another super day. 😊







Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jun-13 12:12 AM GMT

One more picture from Hayle Towans;



stonechat

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-13 10:09 PM GMT

CORNWALL,SATURDAY 8 JUNE-LAST DAY

THE GRAND FINALE!

Was surprised to wake up to a thunderstorm,which deposited nearly an inch of rain at nearby Culdrose.

One of the reasons i wanted to come to Cornwall in early June was to see the Marsh Fritillary. Living in the east,i don't get the chance very often! I tried a couple of sites earlier in the week,but with no luck. This is no disaster—they like everything else,they are late this year,or i may have even missed the exact breeding area. So i opted for a larger site,which i know from my past visits. Breney Common is in mid Cornwall which,as i am heading east today,fits the bill nicely.

As i arrived,the sun was coming out, nice and warm. I was pleased to hear a cuckoo singing,and also many willow warblers,with their lovely descending song. Soon the butterflies started to show—whites first, but also several Small Heath. Small Pearls were also quick to take flight,speeding around looking for mates. After a bit of searching,i found what i was looking for—Marsh Fritillary. Great! One or two other people were looking for them,too. While i was taking photo's,one of the others was doing a count— 13 Frits in one field,and all males,as far as i could tell,suggesting it was still early in their season. Many were holding territory,darting out at anything that passed. I enjoyed watching them for a while,before heading off to join the Cornwall branch of Butterfly Conservation for the afternoon...

GREENSCOMBE WOODS,LUCKET FIELD TRIP

Arrived at Lucket car park under perfect warm blue skies. It was nice to catch up with a few familiar faces—and some not so familiar ones as well. Soon we were heading into woods, and in a sunny corner,several beautiful demoiselles had assembled. Some were tenerals,some fully mature. A great start! Moving up the hill,the first of several Brimstones was seen by most of the group—what long lives these beauties have! 11 months since they emerged,and still going strong. Then my first Large Skipper of the year was briefly seen. Further up the hill,several Green-veind Whites and a Large White were seen. Then we walked through the hill top meadows,where Small Heath and Burnet Companion were added to the list. Southern marsh and heath spotted orchids were just opening. And then came the shout—Heath Fritillary! The delight on peoples faces,some of whom had never seen one of these rare treasures before! Much management has been done here,and also in the nearby wood,to try to get the colony to spread out. Their efforts have been rewarded,for we we estimate we saw 40 of so perfect adults,nearly all males—and this is only the start of the season! We spent some time here,adding Speckled Wood to our tally. Then it was time for a quick look elsewhere in the wood,seeing more Brimstones in the process,before most of us departed,and i returned to the top,by now,some of the Heath Frits were begining to perch up for the night,making irresistable photo oportunities. Then down the steep hill again,back to the car park,where many beautiful demoiselles were playing by the stream,in the evening sunshine. Sadly,it's time to go,with a heavy heart,as i cross the border,into Devon,and home.

I say again,i was extraordinarily lucky with the weather,and it was a fabulous trip. Had i gone this week,one doubts it would hve been so good.

Photo's to follow.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 15-Jun-13 10:38 PM GMT

Sounds absolutely cracking Essex. Heath Frits are my one of my targets this year (along with Large Blue) so I'm looking forward to seeing your shots. 😊
👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-13 10:55 PM GMT

Coming right up,Wurzel!



beautiful demoisele



heath frit male



heath frit female

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 15-Jun-13 11:32 PM GMT

Lovely Heath Fritillary photos!

I believe they're out in your neck of the Essex woods now (Hockley and Little Haven) as well, so I feel a drive round the whole of the M25 may be in order soon...

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jun-13 12:13 AM GMT

Yes,they're out. Pound Wood is very good,too-just look under the power cables. Probably best to leave it another ten days or so,when greater numbers have emerged.

Heath Fritillaries are very easy to find so if you do come,enjoy!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-13 11:16 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking shots of the Frits, well worth waiting for 🍷 Any idea when this species peaks at East Blean?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-13 12:20 AM GMT

I recon you're looking at the first week of July this year,Wurzel.

ORCHIDS,BUTTERCUPS-OH,AND HEATH FRITILLARY.

On Thursday,visited a few local Essex sites,including a wood where i was delighted to find greater butterfly orchids at their peak. These are scarce in East Anglia,and are a treasure to see. In these same woods,the paths and rides were full of common spotted orchids. Green-veined white was seen,and i was surprised to see a late male Orange Tip.

Meanwhile,the local marshes had early marsh and southern marsh orchids in flower,as well as ragged robin and other interesting things.

At lunchtime,headed off to see the flowering meadows at Willow Park,near Basildon. These fields are yellow with buttercups at the moment-a splendid sight! Yellow rattle is abundant in the meadows. This pretty flower is interesting,as it is semi-parasitic,obtaining nutrients by rooting onto grasses,sucking out the goodness from its host. Trefoils were also abundant,and with them,attendant Common Blues and Burnet Companions. While here,i was pleased to see my first Essex Large Skipper and Painted Lady,the latter speeding through,almost a reminder of that great invasion a few years back. Speckled Woods were near the hedge. Again,common spotted and southern marsh orchids were in the meadows,as well as many other flowers,and tiny crickets.2 Small Heath also seen.

Just up the road is Pound Wood,so with warm,if rather cloudy weather,finished the day watching the Heath Fritillaries here,as they began to slow down for the evening. This is only a small colony,and i only saw half a dozen or so,though it's still early. There are several other sites nearby,alas not enough time today. If anyone is visiting,they are welcome,but can they please try to avoid trampling the cow-wheat plants,where possible? A late Peacock was a surprise, 11 months after it emerged. Lastly,a Holly Blue female seen. 😊



early marsh orchid



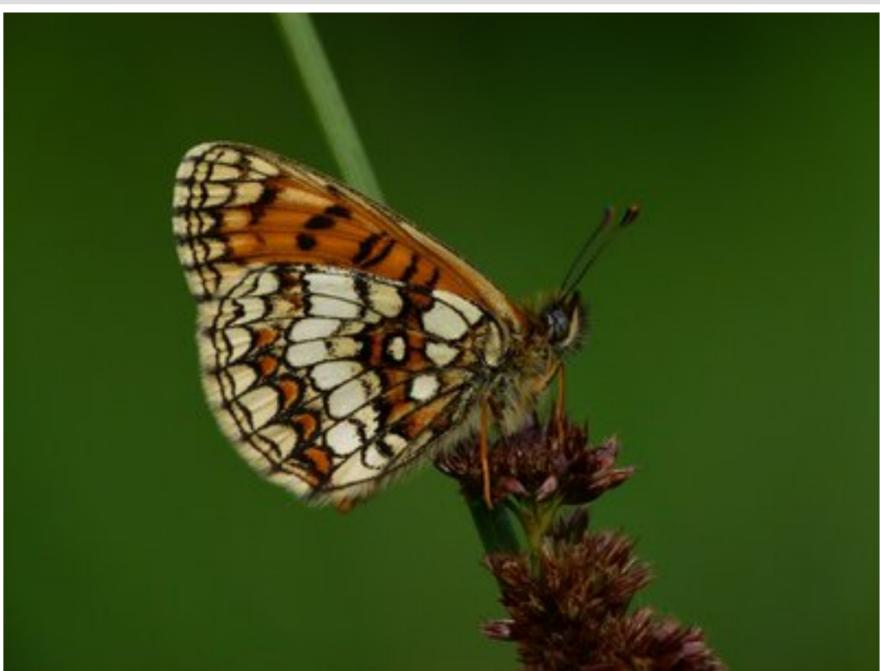
greater butterfly orchid



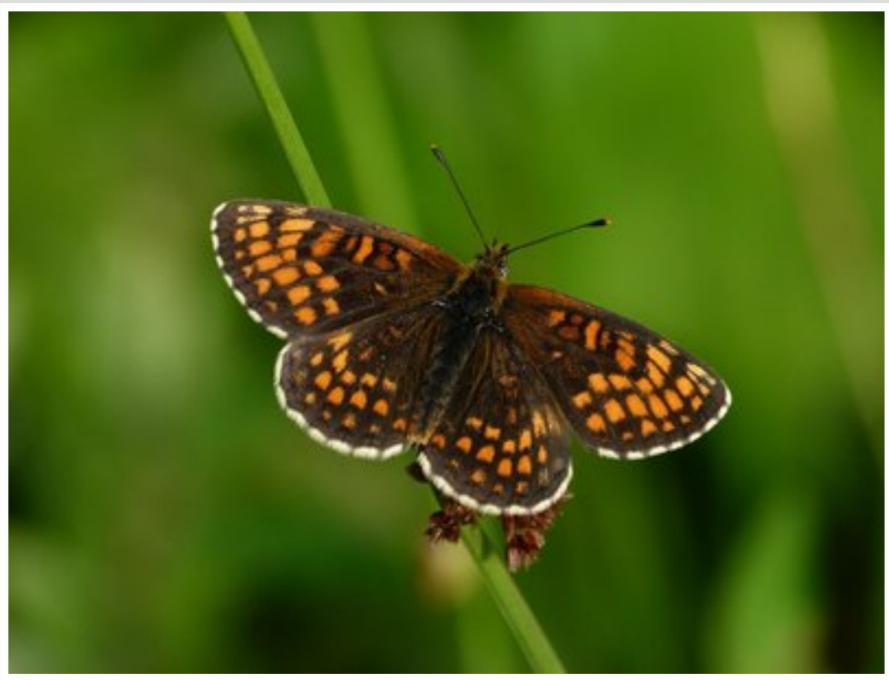
willow park



common spotted



heath fritillary at pound wood



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jul-13 11:10 PM GMT

Hi everyone!

So, here we are, back from our butterfly holiday to Greece with Naturetrek, which was very good.

It is worth reminding ourselves about the Greek climate. Summers, as we know, are reliably hot and sunny! But winters are cold and continental, at least in the hills, and they expect long spells of cold, snowy weather most winters, even on the islands. Autumn to spring brings plenty of rain and, as the weather warms up in spring, it is possible to go skiing in the mountains one day, then drive to the coast and have a beach day the next!

We have all heard about the struggling economy there, and there is plenty of evidence of this to be seen. Half-built houses and developments, and roads full of cones, where little seems to be going on—with no money, I wonder if these improvements will ever get finished? Cards are not accepted in many places, and ATM machines don't like giving out cash!

It seemed strange to find hooded crows common here, at the other end of their range, being also found in Ireland and NW Scotland. In Scotland, their range has been contracting north-westwards, with former hooded crow areas now taken over by carrion crows. Eventually, hooded crows will probably be pushed out completely. I wonder what is happening at the other end of their range, whether carrion crows are expanding there as well? Or whether hoodies are moving northwest there as well?

Perhaps the most disappointing thing about Greece was how tired and brown the vegetation was already. I was hoping that there would be fields full of flowers, with butterflies in attendance, like I see when I go to the Alps. There were plenty of butterflies, but little for them to nectar on in the dusty, tired landscape. I would have expected this at the end of August, but not June. With this and the heat, photography was difficult, and mostly confined to early mornings and evenings.

So, got some photo's to go through, and a few ID's to check, so I'll sign off with a few pics from Starvelarks Wood, Little Haven, which seems to be the best performing Essex wood for Heath Frits this year—there were hundreds in there yesterday! A check at Hadleigh for White Letters was fruitless. I have seen them from 20 June here in some years, shows how late things are this year. Then Grays Gorge, where the last man orchids were still good, normally they are long gone by July. Also saw my first Ringlets and brown hawkers of the year, and the rare round-leaf wintergreen, which is in flower, with many pyramidal orchids. 😊





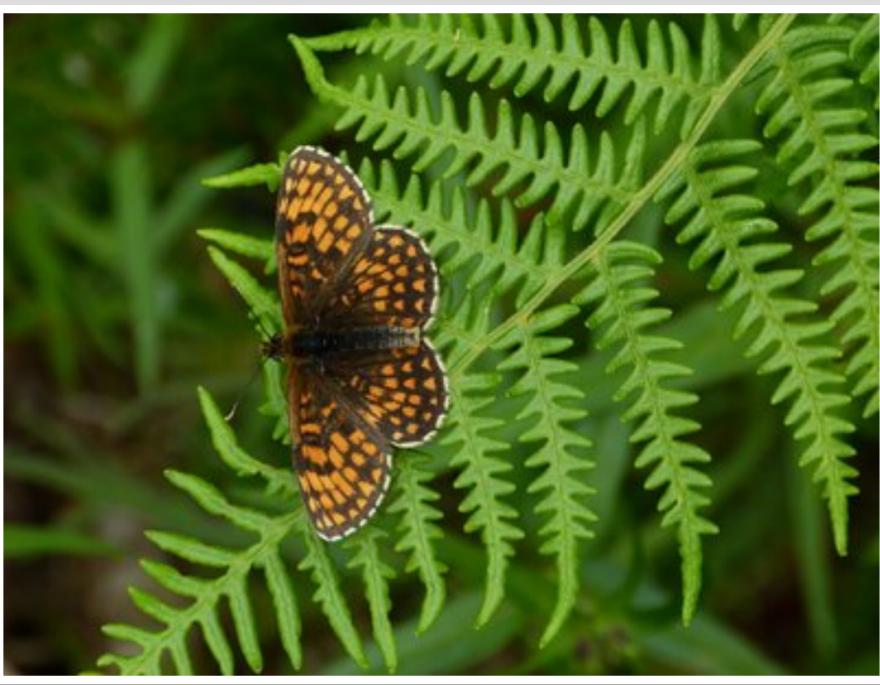
common cow-wheat



man orchid at grays



roud-leaf winergreen



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Jul-13 10:31 PM GMT

Finished work at 4PM today,so off to Devils Dyke,which runs along Newmarket July racecourse. Late this month,this place will explode into life with hundreds of Chalkhill Blues but today,i came to see the lizard orchids. These peculiar plants,which smell of goats,are big and spectacular,rather than beautiful. While enjoying them,my attention was taken by several Dark Green Fritillaries and Marbled Whites. This was a surprise,as well as a pleasure,as they are both new to the Dyke,and i've never seen them here before.

At the bottom of the Dyke,in the nettles,Small Tortoiseshells were abundant,often 4 or 5 together,in a chase for mates of rivals. Also present were Small Heath,Meadow Brown,Ringlet,Large White,Speckled Wood and several five-spot burnet moths.

What a great evening! 😊



devils dyke



dark green fritillary!



lizard orchid



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-13 11:25 PM GMT

Fantastic images of the Heaths Essex 🇬🇧 Sometimes I can't quite see why certain Orchids have a particular name but I can see lizards tails coming out of this Orchid 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Jul-13 11:34 PM GMT

Me too, and you can just about see the back legs of the lizard, too. Have you seen any Heath Frits this year, Wurzel? If not, now is the time!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jul-13 11:43 PM GMT

WEDNESDAY 10 JULY.

This morning,i had a rare chance to relax,enjoy the summer sunshine,and watch the butterflies in my garden. Two male Large Skippers were holding territory. When another butterfly or bee flew over,they would launch themselves in combat at great speed,often vanishing briefly before returning. When a female landed,one of the males was all over her,but she vibrated her wings,meaning she had already mated. I spent several hours watching their comings and goings,and it was most enjoyable watching their behavior. While watching them,several Meadow Browns,Ringlets and Large and Small Whites came into the garden. Not huge in terms of species,but it made a change to see what normally goes on when i'm out!

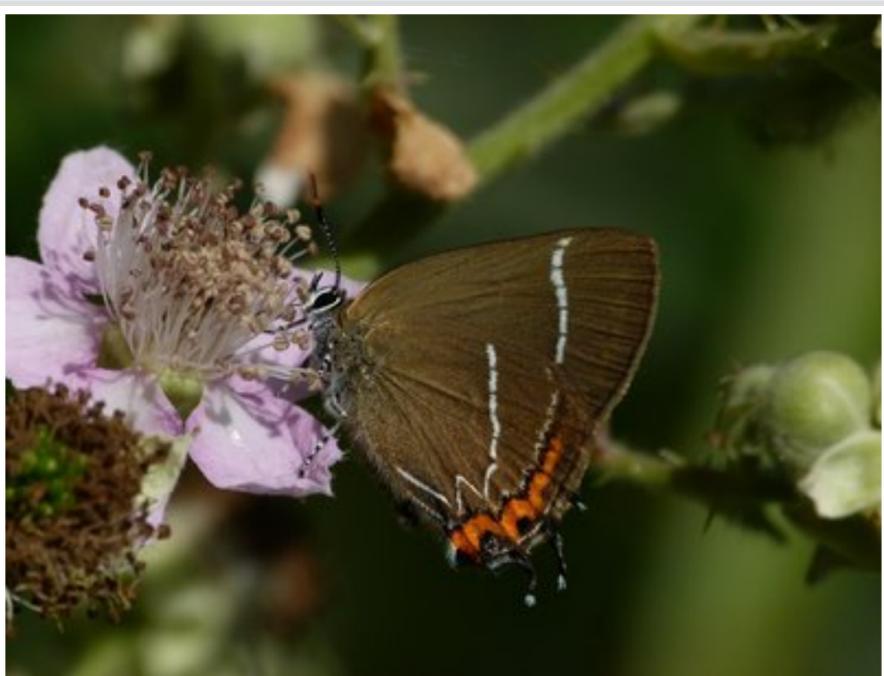
Then,after lunch,off to Hadleigh Castle Country Park,to see if the White-letter Hairstreaks have emerged. They have! Though only in low numbers so far,there should be more to come. Most of them were on bumble blooms,including a couple of nice females,with tails intact. For sheer numbers of butterflies,this is one of the best sites in Essex. A multitude of Essex Skippers,Small Skippers,Marbled Whites, Ringlets and Meadow Browns will continue to emerge in the next week or two, and Hutchinsoni Commas are especially plentiful here. Large Skippers,Large,Small and Green-veined Whites,Small Tortoiseshells and Speckled Woods also seen,as were late first brood Common and Holly Blues.

Benfleet Downs,at the western end of the park,is one of the best areas for butterflies in abundance,and there are some nice flowers there too. Further in,amongst the elm scrub,are the WLH,usually on bramble or thistles.

Happy days! 😊



one of my male garden skippers,hours of free entertainment!





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jul-13 08:38 PM GMT

A GREAT WEEK!

What a wonderful week it's been! I have spent some of my spare time this week simply walking the hedges and wood edges near my Essex home. There are so many more butterflies this year! The grassy areas are alive with bobbing Ringlets and Meadow Browns. On the low shrubs, Large Skippers dart out at anything that moves, often these are Hutchinsoni Commas, especially in the evenings. Large whites are flying up and down the wood edges in good numbers. Everywhere, abundant Small Tortoiseshells flying, nectering, looking out for mates and rivals. I cannot remember a summer with such an abundance of these cracking insects! Smaller numbers of Small Skippers and Green-veined Whites have been seen. Not many photo's this time, just pleasure and meories of glorious weather and abundant butterflies of high summer!



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-13 10:50 PM GMT

Indeed it's been a great week 😊 but I was hoping of a photo of an Essex Skipper in Essex by Essex Buzzard 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-13 12:33 AM GMT

I've seen them Wurzel! Just got to see one in the evening,when they slow down enough for a photo!

Cheers! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jul-13 11:27 PM GMT

At your service,Wurzel!

Yesterday,after work,i took a walk around the area of common land behind my Essex home. Amongst many Large and Small Skippers,were several fresh male Essex Skippers. So,just for you Wurzel,here are Essex Skipper pic's,taken in Essex by Essex Buzzard!

And i saw buzzards,too. 😊



essex male



he thinks i can't see him!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-13 09:30 PM GMT

Cracking 😊 cheers for accommodating me Essex 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 17-Jul-13 09:40 PM GMT

Nailed on Essex, Essex.

Well done!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jul-13 11:09 PM GMT

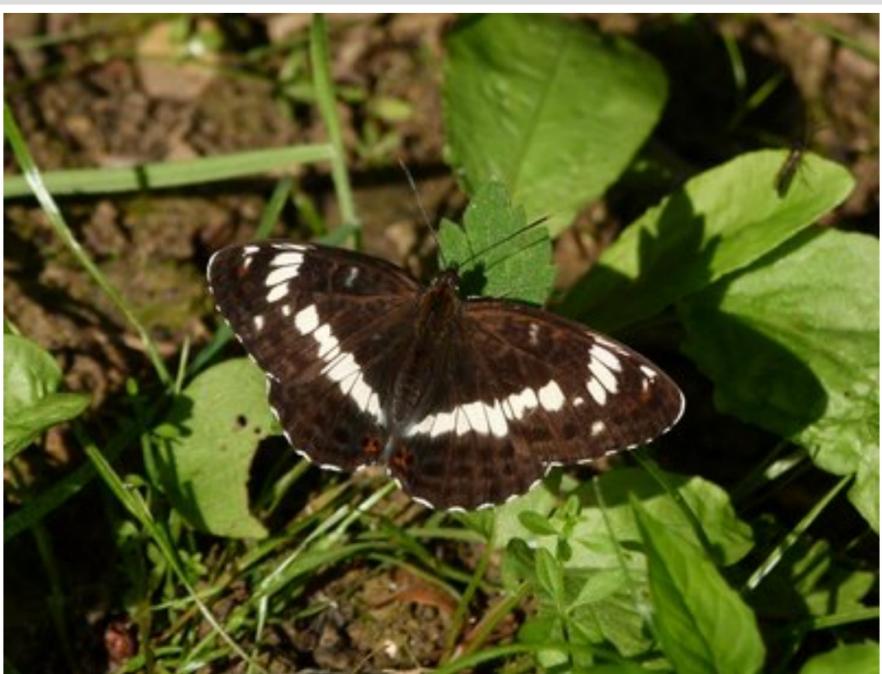
Thanks,you two! The pleasure was all mine,Wurzel!

FERMYN WOOD.

On Wednesday,thanks to advice from Neil Hulme, and after the great pictures coming onto this site,went to Fermyn Woods and Lady Wood,to see his royal purpleness,the Purple Emperor. Never been there before,but found it easily. Arrived 9 am with allready lots of cars outside! A White Admiral near the entrance was a great start. Several Emperors were seen on the entrance track, and soon found several of these magnificent butterflies on the ground. Their attraction to obnoxious,disgusting things is legendary among entermologists. Sure enough,many were feeding on fox dirt,rotten meat and other baits. Met many interesting people including Matthew Oats and Mark 'tuts'. Around lunchtine,in the heat of the day,many flew up to shelter in the tree canopy,reappearing late afternoon early evening. 😊 Silver-washed Fritillaries were present,with many Ringlets and common species. I recon i saw twenty or thirty Emperors low down,and a similar number gliding and soaring in and out of the canopy. There were still some on the ground when i left at 8pm!

I think most people,myself included,went home happy! 😊

Many thanks to our own Neil Sussex Kipper for his help with ths species.



on of several white admiral



feeding on my sweaty finger!



delicious fox dirt!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jul-13 09:44 PM GMT

BUTTERFLIES OF SOUTHERN GREECE

Ok,now for our Greece butterfly holiday with Naturetrek. This is my personal report of my highlights and photo's,a more professional report will appear on their website.

So,on June 22nd we arrived at Heathrow and,after one or two minor problems at the airport,safely arrived at Athina (Athens) 3 and a half hours after take-off. Leaving wet GB and getting off the plane in 35 degree heat in GR was extaordinary!

Loaded the hire minibus and drove for an hour when the bus proptly broke down! Waited two hours in blistering heat for breakdown service,but eventually things were sorted and we arrived at our hotel in Kalavrita,for our first few nights stay.

Was delighted to have lots of swallows,red-rumped swallows,housemartins and swifts flying around our hotel,and a spotted flycatcher nest with chicks in the wall,all visible from our balcony,set to a backdrop of woods and hills. Sleeping with the balcony doors and windows wide open,we heard scops owls at night. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-13 11:34 PM GMT

Looking forward to the report and shots. Check out the street lamps as I've seen Nightjars feeding around them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

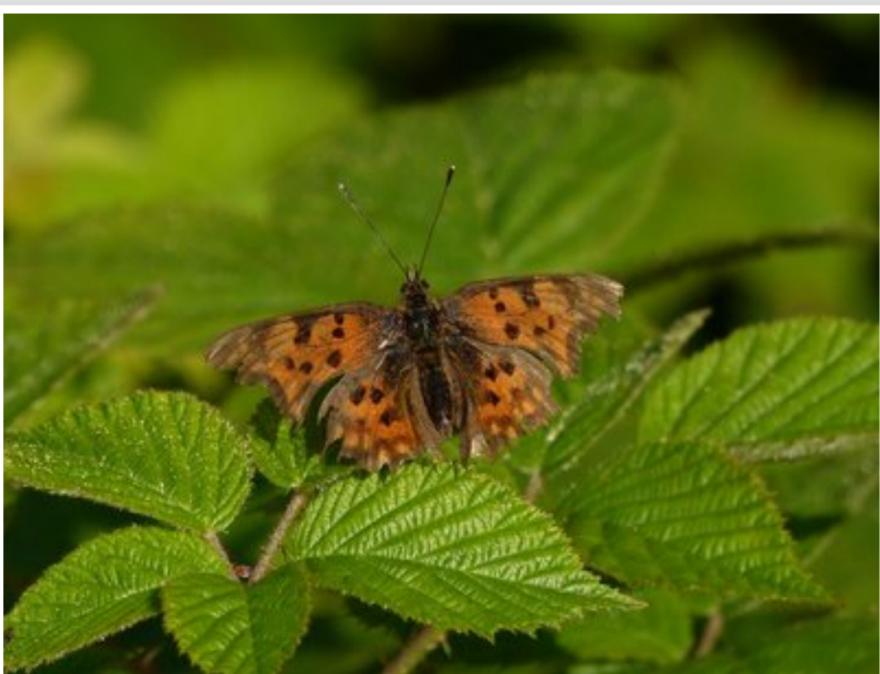
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jul-13 07:58 PM GMT

Coming right up!

However,firstly,in Essex,the new peacocks have emerged,and i've been seeing them in increasing numbers since i saw the first on Sunday. However, this evening after work,i was enjoying the territorial Hutchinsoni Commas,spread out on low brambles etc,when i came across this very tattered Comma,holding territory as well,flying up at anything that passed,including the other Commas. Could it really be a very late Comma that overwintered?! 😊 😊

What do you think-i would be interested to get any opinions on this.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jul-13 10:16 PM GMT

GREECE DAY ONE.

Woke up to glorious blue skies! 😊 After breakfast, me and the Naturetrekers checked out the fields etc within walking distance from the hotel. We soon noticed how dusty and tired the vegetation was already, it being only June, and also how prickly everything was!

A Scarce Swallowtail was a nice start to the day. Over the brown meadows, Great Banded Greylings were everywhere, and Sloe and Ilex Hairstreaks were identified on the riverside brambles. Further up, Mallow Skippers were plentiful, and we saw our first Balkan Marbled Whites and Grecian Coppers. By now, the heat was increasing and photography near impossible as everything was speeding. Overhead, a buzzard was circling, we were hoping it was long-legged but turned out to be common buzzard. So we headed off, to have lunch in the village.

Above the cafe, a swallow's nest had 4 fledglings, almost bursting out of the nest, they were lovely to see.

After enjoying lunch, we drove to the slopes of Chelmos, visible from the village. A couple of leaky goat water troughs had blue butterflies puddling. We got to work on them, eventually identifying them as mostly Zephyr and Silver-studded, with a few Tuequoise and Ripart's Anomalous. A lovely Persian Skipper was also present. Many Large Tortoiseshells were speeding past, alas, none landed. Further on, a grassy slope was home to a colony of tiny Odd-spot Blues, sadly, they wouldn't pose for photo's. We also had our first Greek Clouded Yellows here, and a Nettle-tree Butterfly was nearby. By now it was late afternoon, so time to head back to the hotel. When we got there, I went back to the area we walked earlier, seeing Eastern Bath Whites and Small Heath of the south Europe and north Africa *lyllus* type. With thunder rumbling over the mountains, it was time to call it a day.

A great start to the holiday! 😊

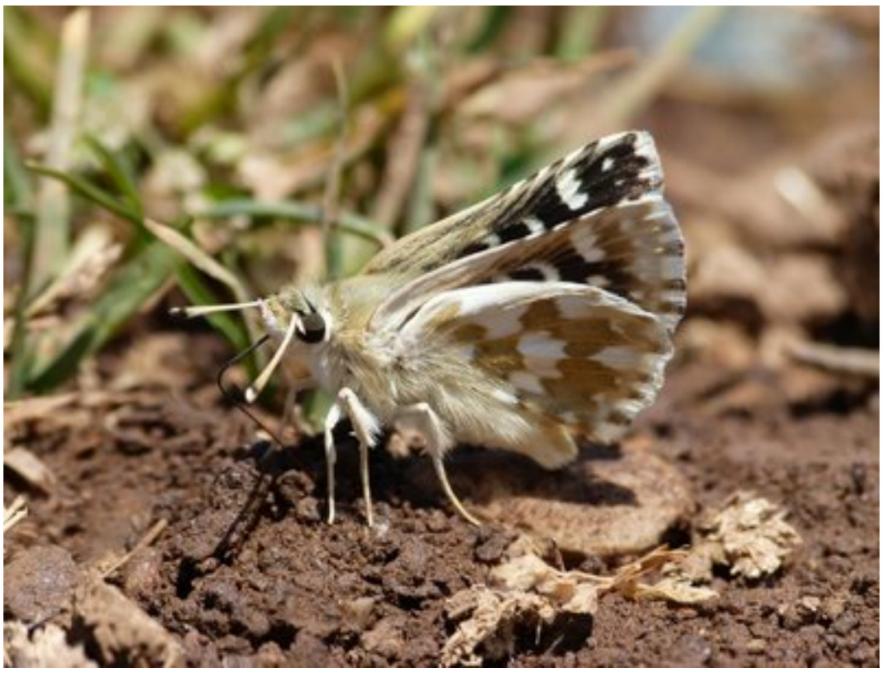


this scarce swallowtail was great start to the day!





zephyr blue



persian skipper



ripart's anomalous blue



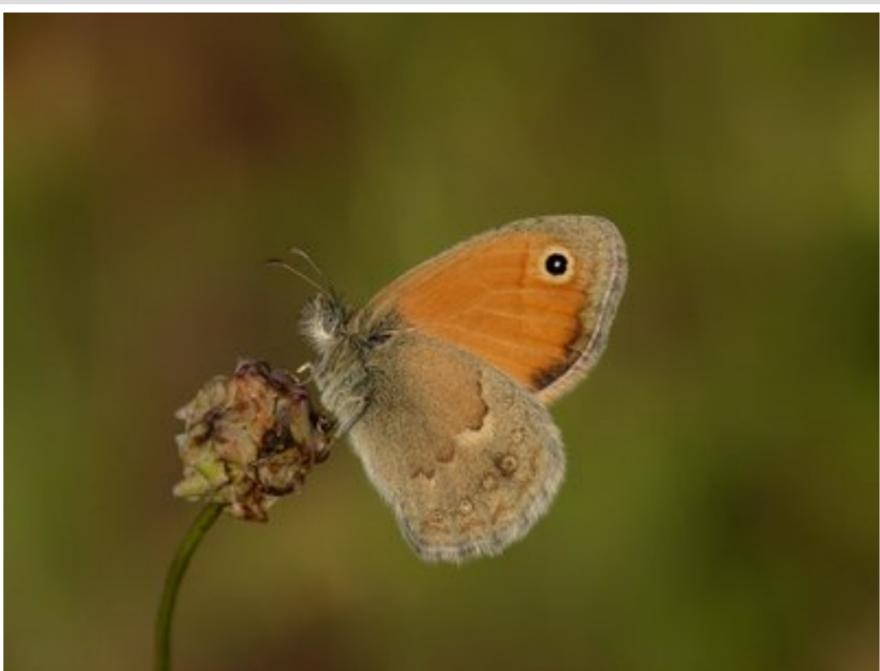
terquoise blue



greek clouded yellow



balkan marbled white



small heath lylus

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Jul-13 10:25 PM GMT

I think I'm going to like this sequence a lot, Buzzard!

Lovely start to proceedings. I look forward to the next *tranches*.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-13 11:17 PM GMT

Wow! 🍷🍷 Fantastic 😊 Need to see more...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 25-Jul-13 11:26 PM GMT

Much envy indeed... Lovely butterflies. 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jul-13 10:45 PM GMT

Thanks Guys!

GREECE DAY TWO

Woke up to blue skies again. 😊

Before breakfast, i took a walk to the area we walked yesterday, about a mile from the hotel, on a hill overlooking Kalavrita. A warming Grecian Copper and lots of Balkan Marbled Whites were highlights.

Today, we went for a short drive, to explore some woodland edge and rocky hillside habitats. We soon came to a promising area where abundant Great-banded Graylings were flying, but we also found the Lattice Brown here, a new one for me!

Further up, we found Purple, Sloe and Ilex Hairstreaks, and a small Copper of the black, southern form, were feeding on old man's beard blooms. Several Silver-washed Fritillaries were present, too, and both Swallowtail and Scarce Swallowtail were seen, in the by now increasing heat.

So we drove to a shady picnic area for lunch. While enjoying it, several Brimstones and Cleopatras were seen, as well as Large Skippers and a Dark Green Fritillary. A golden-ringed dragonfly was present, too.

Then off for a walk here, in a dry, rocky area. Southern White Admiral, Camberwell Beauty and more Ripart's Anomalous Blues were soon added to today's tally, with Black-veined White also here. Throughout the day, Large Tortoiseshells were speeding past, but not stopping. A few Painted Lady and Clouded Yellows were easier to see. A Meleagars Blue was nice to find, as was a mantis.

After our walk, we were making our way down the mountain in the minibus when someone shouted "Tortoise"! We hit the brakes, jumped out to find a Marginated Tortoise by the side of the road! They are present in Southern GR, but what a find!

Went for a short walk when we got back to the hotel, but nothing new was found.

On the bird front, Short-toed Eagle and Cirl Buntings were highlights.



grecian copper



lattice brown



great banded grayling



sothern white admiral



marginated tortoise



mantis



kalavrita

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-13 10:59 PM GMT

My envy is going through the roof here – stunning butterflies and cracking shots. 😊🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 27-Jul-13 11:23 PM GMT

Just clocked onto these before going to bed. Lovely shots of excellent butterflies. The lattice brown is one of those iconic butterflies I really do have to get out and see one day ...

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-13 10:39 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Now you know how i feel every time i read Guy's diary!

You're right Guy,the Lattice Browns were a treat for me to,having never seen one before. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-13 10:48 PM GMT

Everywhere i look at the moment,i am finding Small Tortoiseshell caterpillar nests. I have never seen so many in the 20 years of so i've been looking at butterflies. Some are already large enough to pupate,others have just hatched. Provided parasites don't take a heavy toll,we could be in for a spectacular emergence in late summer. I for one couldn't be happier!



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Jul-13 10:49 PM GMT

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

Lattice Browns were a treat for me to, having never seen one before.

Lovely butterfly. In fact, it looks better suited to the tropics than temperate old Europe!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-13 10:59 PM GMT

However, all is not quite as rosy as it looks. I was watching one nest this evening, when I took this picture. It is not the best quality in the fading light, but what is happening is clear enough. It's a parasitic stinging wasp, and it was laying its eggs on, or in, the caterpillars. Every few seconds, it would thrust its abdomen forward, into the tiny caterpillars. This just happened to occur in the five minutes I was watching, if these larval tents had been visited during the day as well, it could take a heavy toll after all.

Thanks David. More GR tomorrow.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-13 11:14 PM GMT

Fascinating shot Essex 😊 It's the flip side of having a good year I suppose in that there are more caterpillars to parasitise so parasites have a good year too 😊 Seeing the shot made me think that perhaps there should be an area on the Species Specific pages for known parasites as I'd like to find out a bit more about them as they're an integral part of the butterflies fortunes?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jul-13 11:04 PM GMT

What you say is true of course,Wurzel,but i was hoping the parasite numbers would lag behind,like with the Holly Blue,kicking in perhaps next year. This has been a vintage year for Small Torts so far,and i am hoping that will continue for just one more generation. I'm not ready to let go of Small Torts yet!

GR DAY 3

The day again dawned clear,so another pre-breakfast walk produced the lovely Sage Skipper in the photo,as well as more Balkan Marbled Whites.

Today,we headed further up Chelmos. All the way up,were bee hives in every colour imaginable—they sure like their honey in GR! Although the scenery was excellent at the ski station,it was a little quiet—Clouded Yellows,Glanville Fritillary,Adonis Blue and the (not very) Silver-washed Fritillary in the picture were highlights. So,after an hour of two,we headed slightly lower,to visit some of the water troughs again. Silver-studded and Zephyr Blues were again plentiful,but we also saw our first Dingy Skipper and Mountain Small Whites,and a Camberwell Beauty briefly landed.

Lunch was taken in the shade, where lots of fly-by Large Torts,and Greek Clouded Yellows,Brimstones, Commas,and another Southern White Admiral. Then on a bit further,and a search of some rocky grassland produced Scarce Swallowtail and our first White Banded Grayling. Our last stop didn't produce that much,relatively speaking,but the views were superb. Dark Green and Queen of Spain Fritillaries,Black-veined Whites and Swallowtails were seen,as was a Great Sooty Satyr.

Red-backed Shrikes,Corn Buntings and,after dark,calling Scops Owl were among the birds.



balkan marbled white



sage skipper



silver-wash fritillary



silver-studded blue



zephyr blues



white-banded grayling



views at our last stop

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Jul-13 10:21 PM GMT

GREECE DAY 4 26 JUNE.

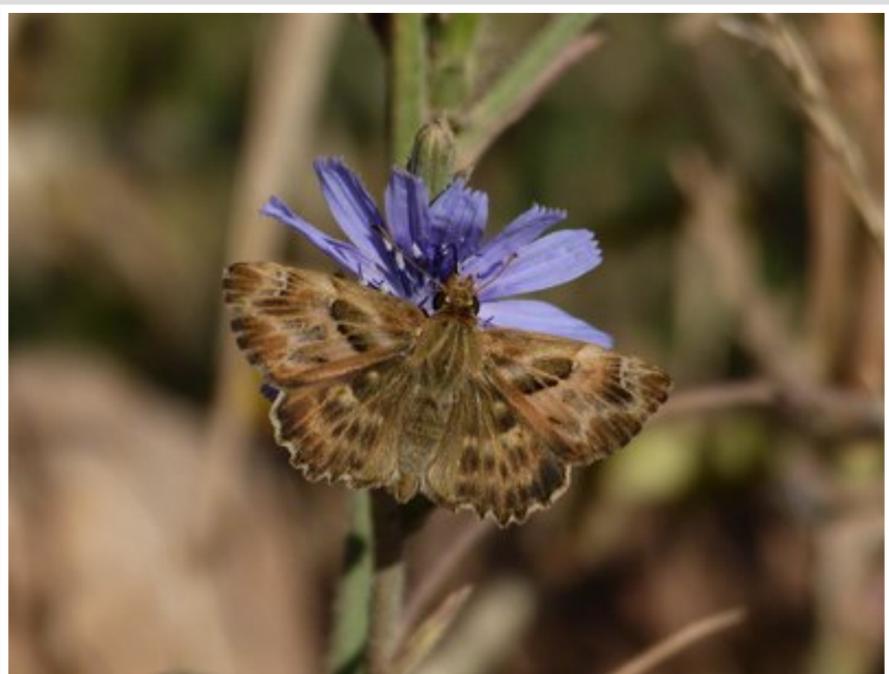
Tody was changeover day,as we leave Chelmos (no Chelmos Blue,sadly),and transfer across to the Parnassos mountain range.

Another blue start(i could get used to this!)and another early walk. Balkan Marbled Whites,a nice Mallow Skipper and two hoopoe together,made this worthwhile,and more red-rump swallows near the hotel.

After breakfast,there was time for another walk before setting off seeing,among other things,another Grecian Copper. 😊

Then on our way,stopping for lunch at Galaxhidi. Even here,butterflies were found,in the hot woods of aleppo pine,with cacti in the understory,our only Freyer's Graylings of the trip. Over the town,more hoopoes and several lesser kestrels were seen. After a very nice lunch,on then to Delphi,arriving late afternoon. We soon noticed it was even drier and hotter here than before,with very few flowers left,but a short walk produced several Swallowtails and Scarce Swallowtails,and a Southern Comma was seen in the town.

Dinner that night was taken in a restuarant with a stupendous view down a deep valley,with swifts and pallid swifts screaming all around. 😊



mallow skipper



red rumped swallow



galaxhidi



scarce swallowtail

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Jul-13 10:38 PM GMT

Forgot to upload the Freyer's Grayling!



Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 31-Jul-13 11:09 PM GMT

Great stuff, Buzzard! The two grayling species must have been thrilling to find!

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by Mikhail, 02-Aug-13 07:50 AM GMT

I add my appreciation of your Greek photos, which are of particular interest to me as I was in the Chelmos area a week earlier than you. As no one else has picked it up, I'd like to point out that the copper in your first picture for day 2 is the Lesser Fiery Copper, not the Grecian.

M.

Re: essex buzzard

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

That Mallow Skipper is absolutely delish Essex – good job it's called what it is then 😊

The shot the Red Rumped Swallow brings back happy memories of lazing by a pool in Kefalonia while they skimmed over the pool taking flies or water



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Aug-13 11:17 PM GMT

Thanks Mikhail, any ident corrections are gratefully recieved!

Thanks Wurzel, I've never seen R.R.S. before, seeing so many so close was a treat—one of many!

GR DAY 5

A pre breakfast walk produced several Walls, a Large Wall and a nice black-eared wheatear, as well as another tortoise.

Today, we headed up to the lower slopes of Parnassos, and then up to the ski station. Our first stop was a bramble patch, where Southern White Admiral, Lattice and Meadow Browns, a Large Tortoiseshell and Ilex and White-letter Hairstreak were seen, with Brown Argus and Essex Skipper on the road verge nearby. At the edge of some gardens, cotton lavender was attracting Anomalous Blues and dark Small Coppers. We spent some time here, then made our way up to a grassy woodland clearing, which was home to good numbers of red hebeborines—such an extreme rarity in GB. Also present were several British butterflies, including Silver-studded and Common Blues, Large Skipper and our first Marbled Whites of the trip.

We ate our pick-nik lunch here, then made our way up to the ski station. It was much cooler up here, and a much better collection of alpine flowers, including various bellflowers, catch-flies and daphne. Butterflies included Zephyr Blues, Clouded Apollos, Olive Skipper and our only Balkan Coppers of the trip.

Birds included alpine chough at the ski station, and black redstart, ortalan bunting and a distant blue rock thrush, with hoopoe and red-back shrike lower down.



ilex hairstreak



anomalous blue



small copper



southern white admiral



red hebeborine



mardled white



zephyr blue



balkan copper



olive skipper



clouded apollo

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 03-Aug-13 07:19 AM GMT

Morning Essex, I have friends who have just moved to Greece and they keep asking me what the various butterflies are that they have spotted. I shall refer them to your lovely diary.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-13 09:52 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of fantastic butterflies Essex 🍷 😊 I'd love to see Southern White Admirals although I don't think the name does them justice 😊 Also your Small Copper doesn't seem to have much orange on the fore wing – is this a regional variant, within usual realms of variation or an aberration?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 04-Aug-13 10:08 PM GMT

More brilliant shots, Buzzard! I don't know if clouded Apollos behave differently in Greece but in the Alps they're one of the hardest butterflies to photograph, as they are very wary, fly quite strongly and don't seem to sit around defending territories. That's a really good picture of this butterfly.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Aug-13 10:49 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline! Your diary isn't too bad either! I'm most impressed with your photography, which has come on leaps and bounds. 😊

Thanks to you to, Wurzel, as always. Yes, these 'black' Small Coppers are a variant, and appear to only occur in the later generations, the spring ones are normal. They are a response to the great heat of southern Europe, I saw them in Croatia last year as well. Another picture coming up in the next batch.

GR DAY 6

Our final full day started with a bit of history,with a visit to the world famous Temple Of Apollo,Delphi. Even here,great wildlife was seen,with rock nuthatch,black-eared wheatear,subalpine warbler and my first ever woodchat shrikes. It can get busy here,so an early start meant we were leaving as most tourists arrived!

A nearby grassy slope,although looking rather tired,is home to a small colony of the tiny Gress Jewel,and guess who spotted the only one? Sadly,as the last of the group arrived,it shot off,never to be seen again.

It was now very hot,so we headed higher,where the vegetation was more green and some flowers were found. Here we made several roadside stops,seeing several kinds of blue,and many more fritillaries than before. Heath,Dark Green,Marbled,Niobe and Silver Washed were all seen here. These verges were so productive that we had lunch right here, by the mountain road. In all the time we spent here,we saw about 3 cars!

Then,on again,to the other side of Parnassos,where we found Wood White, black Small Coppers,Clouded Yellow,Scarce Swallowtail,Great Sooty Satyr,White Banded Grayling and more fritillaries,including Queen Of Spain,many feeding on danewort booms.

Lower still,our last butterfly stop was a hot,dry grassy field with scabious and yellow thistle blooms.Balkan Marbled Whites, Clouded Yellows,Great Banded Grayling and Lesser Spotted Fritillary were among many others. And so concluded our final full day.

Birds of the day included hoopoe,black redstart,wheatear and black-eared wheatear and alpine chough.

Thanks Guy! Clouded apollo are indeed difficult to get near in strong sunshine,but up here it was cooler with patchy cloud. I managed to follow this one until the sun went in. Then,after a couple of minutes,it went to ground,but from a distance,i didn't see exactly where it went,fortunately,i found it. A couple of minutes later,the sun returned and it was off. Bingo!



temple of apollo



eastern bath white



rock nuthatch



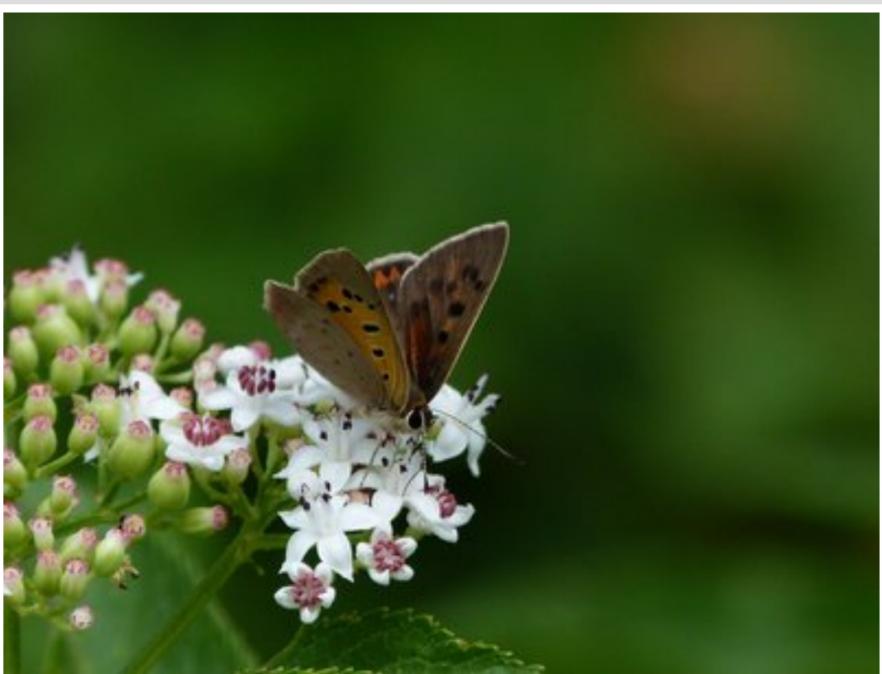
heath fritillary



chapmans blue



niobe fritillary



black small copper



silver-washed fritillary



swallowtail

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Aug-13 10:17 PM GMT

GR DAY 7-LAST DAY!

We were heading home today, but there was still time to get some morning butterflies in, before our late afternoon flight. So we headed back to have another look at the roadside stops we visited yesterday, which we felt held more treats for us—and we were right! On the way, a lovely close little owl on roadside wires gave a great view.

We arrived at the first site, soon clocking up Meleagers Blue, Black-veined White, helice Clouded Yellow, Cleopatra and several fritillaries. In the air, a big flock of alpine swifts flew over. I took a photo of what at the time I thought was another Bath White, but looking back at it when I got home it is, I believe, a Krueper's Small White—the only one of the trip! 😊

Further on, Tuequoise Blue, Small Copper, Brimstones, Southern Comma and a very fast Southern Swallowtail were seen and, at last, having seen them all week, a Cleopatra stopped long enough for photo's! 😊

Before I knew it, it was lunch time, but, with so much going on, I didn't have time to eat! Fortunately they saved me some.

Adonis Blues, Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Southern White Admiral, White Banded Grayling—a steady stream of butterflies continued to cause excitement. But all too soon it was time to tear ourselves away, pack our cameras and binoculars away for the last time, and make our way to Athina for our flight back to good old Blighty!

Special thanks go to Guy, Nikolay and others who have helped with identification of those butterfly pics that were causing me a few problems! And to the rest of you who have been so kind with your comments regarding my photo's. I hope you have enjoyed them, maybe they can inspire one or two of you to sample the delights of Europe yourselves! Thank you. 😊



krueper's small white



tuequoise blue



southern comma



cleopatra



cleopatra

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 05-Aug-13 10:22 PM GMT

That's certainly *krueperi*! Well done!

I'm really impressed with the species you found on this trip, Buzzard. And you've got amazingly good pictures of them too.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Aug-13 10:25 PM GMT

Couple more pics from last day in GR.



southern comma



little owl

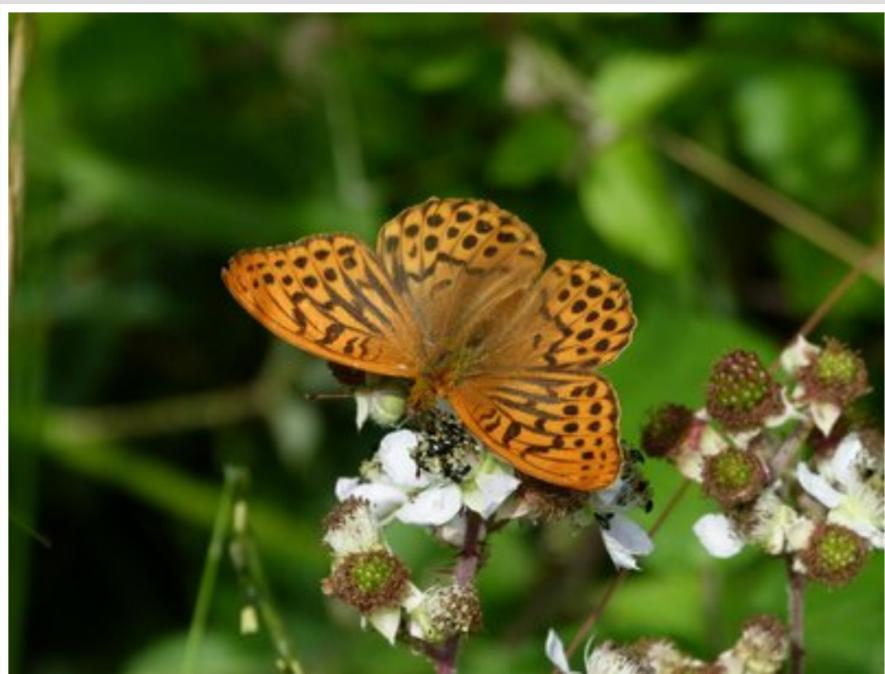
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Aug-13 11:03 PM GMT

Hi everyone,i've been working extra hours/late etc,i'm afraid i have got a bit behind on my diary!

Firstly,thanks Guy,as always,for the confirmation on krueperi,as well as for your kind comments. I can't believe i photographed it without knowing! On 24 July,we went to Hatfield Forest. This is probably the best place in Essex to see Silver-washed Fritillaries,but the sheer number of butterflies of many kinds is impressive in this great summer! We did the big butterfly count here, simply by watching two bramble bushes!

Large,Small and Essex Skippers,Green-veined,Large and Small Whites,Brimstone,White-letter Hairstreak,Comma,Small Tortoiseshell,Peacock,Silver-washed Fritillaries,old Ringlets,Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns all seen easily,many in high numbers.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Aug-13 10:58 PM GMT

Friday 2 August.

Overnight thunderstorms were more vigorous and longer lasting than expected,and we didn't get out until lunchtime. Then we went to Devil's Dyke,a narrow chalk dyke which runs several miles alongside the racecourses at Newmarket. This is one of the sites our BC group,as well as other volunteers,look after-with great success! Before we started,Chalkhill Blues had almost died out,they were hanging on for dear life! Now they can be seen in hundreds,or even thousands,with a supporting cast,at the right time of year,of Dingy Skipper,Brown Argus, Dark Green Fritillary,Marbled White and

Green Hairstreak.

Indeed, we saw many hundreds of Chalkhill Blues on the day, including plenty of females, even though time was limited. Common Blues, Large and Small cabbage Whites, Peacocks, Meadow Brown and Gatekeepers also seen.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-13 11:01 PM GMT

Great shots Essex 😊 and a great turn around in fortunes for this cracking butterfly 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by LancsRover, 16-Aug-13 10:50 AM GMT

Fantastic pics Essex, and all those different varieties, I'm surprised you had time to get any sleep! I've never been to Greece but I'm now thinking about it.

I'm off to the PYRENEES in a couple of weeks, driving through France from Calais, hoping to call in at Temple Ewell again as usual.

Regards Russ.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-13 09:50 PM GMT

Hi everyone,just back from a two-centre holiday in west Cornwall and the Isle of Purbeck,in Dorset. Good food and drink, excellent weather and a truely great show of butterflies combined to make it a trip that will last long in the memory!
More to come on that in due course,but i've got a bit of catching up to do first!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-13 11:03 PM GMT

DENBIES HILLSIDE

On 6 August,i went to Denbies hillside,in Surrey. The numbers of Chalkhill Blues here was truely staggering,a fantastic emergence! The turf shimmering with silver,as the pale blue butterflies hovered over the down. Clouds of blues,rising from clumps of marjoram when disturbed. Although males were the most showy,plenty of brown females were present too.Tens of thousands perching,head down, to roost, catching the last rays of the sun.

Wow,what a sight! 😊



chalkhill male at denbies



chalkhill female at denbies



a Guy type shot. But you can't beat the master!





how many can you spot?

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 25-Aug-13 11:37 PM GMT

One...two...three...er...many...er...LOTS!

Lovely photos, Buzzard!

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-13 07:39 PM GMT

I lost track at 18 😊 Great shots Essex, I'm really looking forward to the Alners post 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 26-Aug-13 08:00 PM GMT

Thank you for the 'Guy-type shot'!

I made a discovery some time ago. If you cover one eye with your hand and stare with the other eye at a picture like this, with a butterfly in sharp focus against a discernible but slightly blurry scene, it soon springs into 3D! It's a very good way of recovering the feeling of 'being there' when you browsing back through your pictures in the depths of winter. I think it happens because in the absence of normal stereoscopic clues that tell you you are looking at a 2D image when both eyes are open, the mind uses other features of the picture to generate depth – in particular, the relative focus of different areas, and of course perspective cues.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-13 09:23 PM GMT

I think I can see 33 CHBs 😊 including a couple of blurry ones in the back that I am not too sure of.

Great report and photos 😊 looking forward to the rest, especially interested in the Dorset report as I will be there myself next week 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Aug-13 11:26 PM GMT

Thanks to you all for the comments,i'm grateful!

If you multiply all those Chalkhills over large sections of the Down,you get some idea of the numbers we are talking about here,i don't think i've seen so many butterflies,of any kind!

You are right again,Guy-i've just tried it! Thanks for sharing your discovery,something i probably would never have thought of. I thought of you when i took this shot,so i'm pleased you think it is worthy!

No preassure then, Neil! 😊 I will do the report just as soon as i can...

What i can say is,given reasonable weather,you're in for a cracking time in Dorset,if you like blues,Walls,coppers, Clouded Yellows...but i'm not giving

any more away!

ASTON ROWANT

Thursday 8 August. Today,we went out for our annual trip to Aston Rowant,in Oxfordshire. Another good days' weather meant we soon saw our target-Silver-spotted Skippers. Hundreds were seen at the best site i know for this species,which is excellent,as they give me great pleasure. Courtship and copulation were observed,too. We enjoyed these for quite a while, as they were most entertaining but,eventually our attention turned to simply enjoying the sheer abundance and variety of butterflies this brilliant summer at this superb site.

Chalkhill Blues were again abundant,and over the more flowery areas,Large Whites filled the air. Clouded Yellows were seen scattered accross the Down,including a Helice female. Ther were so much part of the landscape here,they seemed to belong,they should be present every year.

High numbers of Small Whites,Common Blues,Brimstones,Brown Argus,Meadow Browns,Gatekeepers were enjoyed,with Small Coppers,Small Heaths,Small and Essex Skippers,Peacocks,Small Tortoiseshells and Commas providing the supporting cast. Another super day. 😊😊
Kestrels,buzzards and kites seen throughout the day.

A few of my favorite Silver-spotted Skipper pics below,more to come...





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-13 11:17 PM GMT

A few more pictures from Aston Rowant.



common blue



small white



brown argus



clouded yellow



small heath

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-13 12:05 AM GMT

WELCOME TO CORNWALL!

On Friday 16 August, we went to Cornwall, staying for a few days, before moving on to Dorset. Driving through rain, mist and drizzle on the way, was not a good start. But it was forecast to improve from the west and, sure enough, by time we got to Kynance Cove on the Lizard, the sun was shining!

We enjoyed the spectacular scenery for a while, and then took a slow walk to Lizard Point, Britain's most southerly point. We soon began to see abundant Common Blues, Large and Small Whites, Clouded Yellows, second generation Small Pearl-border Fritillaries, Meadow Browns and Walls, and by the time we had arrived at Lizard Point, we had also seen Small Copper, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Green-veined White, Grayling and Gatekeepers.

Near Lizard Point, a sheltered valley, full of fleabane, was attracting many butterflies, including more Clouded Yellows, Small Coppers, Common Blues, Walls and various vanessids. A worn Dark Green Fritillary was present, too, unusual at this site.

On the coast, the lovely autumn squill was reaching its peak, and several of the Small Pearls and Walls were feeding on it. The Cornish heath, found only here, was in full bloom, as were the other heathers.

On the bird front, Cornish chough were seen as well as several kestrel, buzzard and stonechats.



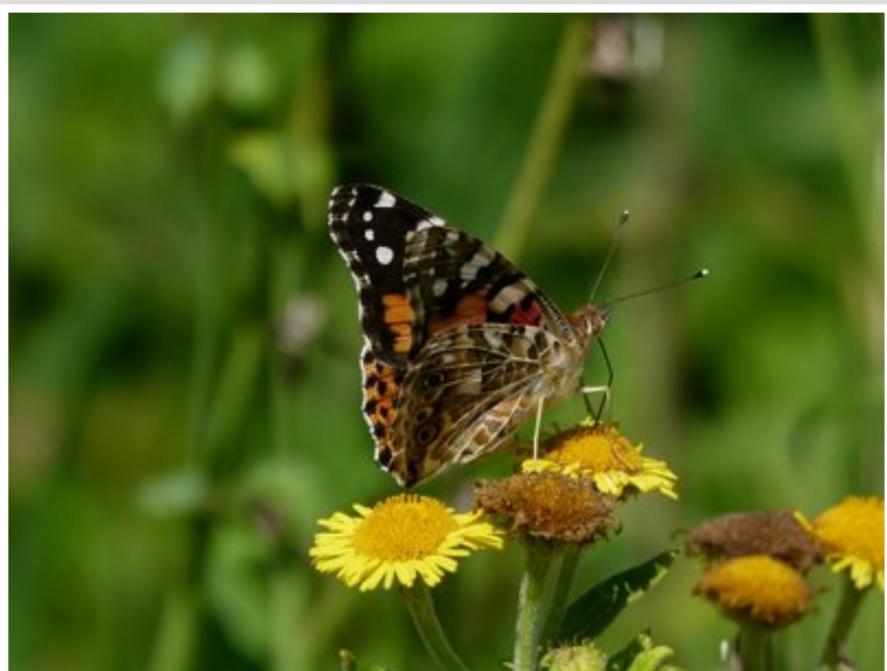
kynance cove



clouded yellow



common blue



painted lady



small pearl bordered fritillary second brood



autumn squill



wall female



small copper



cornish heath

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-13 10:42 PM GMT

Saturday was a wet day, but by Sunday, the weather had improved, so we took a walk across some of the west Cornwall moors. The heather and western gorse were in bloom, but butterflies were thin on the ground at this high level, although Small Copper and Common Blue were seen.

However, a nearby farmyard was home to some butterfly bushes, or Buddleija, and these were attracting all sorts of interesting things. As well as the expected Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Painted Lady, Red Admiral and Large and Small Whites, several Wall Blues were feeding, and also Clouded Yellows—now I would be pretty pleased to find these on my butterfly bush!

After enjoying these butterflies, we took a walk on the coast path from Penzance station to Long Rock, with the splendid St. Michael's Mount to the right. Again, whites were abundant, and several more Clouded Yellows were seen, including *helice*. Common Blues, common around this coast, were noted, as well as Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral.

After, there was time for a late afternoon trip to Chapel Porth. Unfortunately, it had clouded over by then, but we still enjoyed a few hours walk along this spectacular coast path, to St. Agnes and back, seeing ravens, buzzards, kestrels and a family of stonechats.



clouded yellow



painted lady



clouded yellow helice



wall

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-13 11:17 PM GMT

Monday 19 August.

Today was changeover day, as we leave Cornwall, and head up to the Isle of Purbeck, in Dorset. However, on the way, there was time to pop into Greenscombe woods. This is where the Cornish Heath Fritillaries fly in early summer, but now it is good for a variety of common species.

Clouded Yellows, Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Small Coppers, Common Blues, Peacocks, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillaries, Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods were all seen. Though many were present, the Silver-washed Frits were getting a little worn by mid August.



peacock



silver washed fritillary

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 28-Aug-13 11:24 PM GMT

Lovely photos, Buzzard. I particularly like the SPBF on the squill – I always wondered how the second brood managed without any Bugle to feed on!

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Maximus, 29-Aug-13 11:24 AM GMT

Seconded Buzzard, lovely shots and a very nice find in the second brood Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

Mike

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-13 08:16 PM GMT

Great reports Essex 😊 Cheers for reminding me about Greenscombe Wood and it's Heaths 😊 Great shots, my fave is the Helice as I've never seen that form 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-13 09:43 PM GMT

Great report and photos eb, looks like you had a great time in Cornwall 😊

"millerd" wrote:

Lovely photos, Buzzard. I particularly like the SPBF on the squill – I always wondered how the second brood managed without any Bugle to feed on!

Dave

When I was in North Devon back in June I saw loads of SPBFs at Marsland which were nectaring mostly on Buttercup and flowering Thyme, in fact I didn't see any Bugle around the spots where I looked. I have also seen SPBFs nectaring on a variety of flowers in the Wyre Forest although there that did include Bugle.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 29-Aug-13 09:45 PM GMT

Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary SECOND BROOD has to go down as a notable sighting!

Excellent spot!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Aug-13 10:32 PM GMT

Thanks guys for all your kind feedback!

David, while I would like to claim that I am brilliant, and that the second brood SPBF were the result of very hard work, I have to say that it is common for SPBF to fit in a second generation in west Cornwall in most years—why they do here and nowhere else is a mystery to me! But it is to my great pleasure that they do.

Dorset Day One

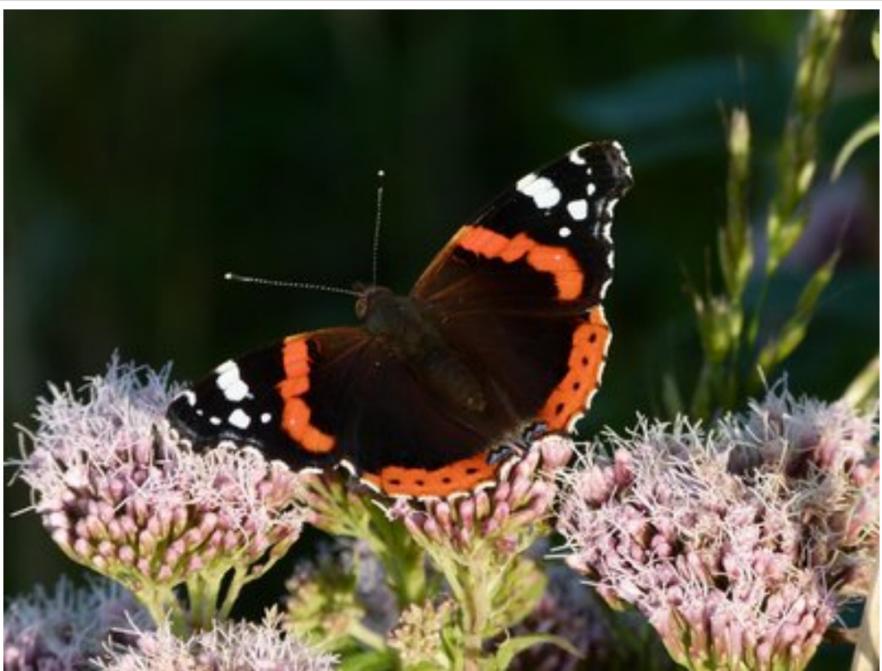
A glorious blue start meant a pre-breakfast walk. Staying at Lulworth Cove itself was a definite advantage, because we had the rather splendid Bindon Hill next to us! Chalkhill Blues were showing nicely, opening up while I watched, to warm in the early morning sun, so there were several Marbled Whites, some a bit worn by mid August. Walls were common and at one point I had 4 males spread out, a few yards apart, in front of me, on the chalk path.

That early walk had been so productive we, in the event, spent the whole day in the area, leaving the car behind. Back on Bindon, things were warming up, and Common Blue and Brown Argus were quickly seen. In the long grass, high over Lulworth Cove itself, was a late Small Skipper and then what we hoped for—some Lulworth Skippers. On the hill, more Walls and a Grayling. As the heat increased, a Brimstone and Clouded Yellow appeared amongst abundant Large and Small Whites. Small Coppers were near the bottom of the hill, with Gatekeepers near the bushes.

Then we walked to Durdle Door and back, which turned up Walls, Marbled Whites and another Greyling. Late afternoon found us back at Bindon, where, near the back of the hill, some hemp agrimony was attracting Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and a Painted Lady.

Ravens were frequently seen. One was doing its upside-down display flight. Several Kestrels and peregrines were on the coast path. A great day, in splendid scenery.





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-13 10:59 PM GMT

Great stuff from my home turf Essex 😊 Did you see any Lulworths in and around Lulworth perhaps it's more of an early area? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Aug-13 12:06 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, yes we did—about a dozen, perhaps—in the long grass on the clifftop right over the cove itself. But they were mostly on their last legs here. At Durlston, on the other hand...

DORSET DAY TWO

Another walk before breakfast produced clumps of Brown Argus and Common Blues in the long grass, with some Chalkhills including a fresh female. Marbled Whites again in evidence, as were Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Walls, with whites already in flight.

Today we made our way to Durlston Country Park, Swanage. We had a very productive time here, with many highlights. However, the numbers of Lulworth Skippers here was excellent, with some very old males together with some nice fresh specimens. We must have seen a hundred which, of course, represents only a tiny percentage of the total colony. Never seen so many, right across the site, great to see!

We walked on to an area where Small Blues can be found, clocking up Walls, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Whites, Common Blues and Clouded Yellow on the way. Sure enough, several very worn adults were found near the bushes, bang on target!

They were a bit fresher last year, though, suggesting that things are now slightly ahead of 2012. They were still active mind—having frequent squermishes with a Brown Argus and Common Blues. Nearby a single Adonis Blue was holding territory. Further on, Small Coppers, Marbled Whites and Small Heath were seen. Several Dark Green Fritillaries were also watched as they sped though, before we left the site mid afternoon.

There was still time for a short outing somewhere else, so we went to nearby Ballard Down, visible from Durlston. However, getting to the other side of Swanage, in peak tourist season, is never quick! We eventually parked in the layby next to the 'welcome to Swanage' sign, and headed onto the lower slopes of the down. Freshly emerged male Adonis Blues were in good numbers, many resting in the long grass, ahead of roosting, at the bottom of the slope, and Common Blues, Brown Argus, Walls, Speckled Woods, Small Torts and Clouded Yellow were seen as well. Some of the Adonis showed nicely, as they opened their wings wide, to catch the dying rays of the sun.

Photo's to follow.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Sep-13 10:32 PM GMT

Photo's from Durlston:



chalkhill female at bindon



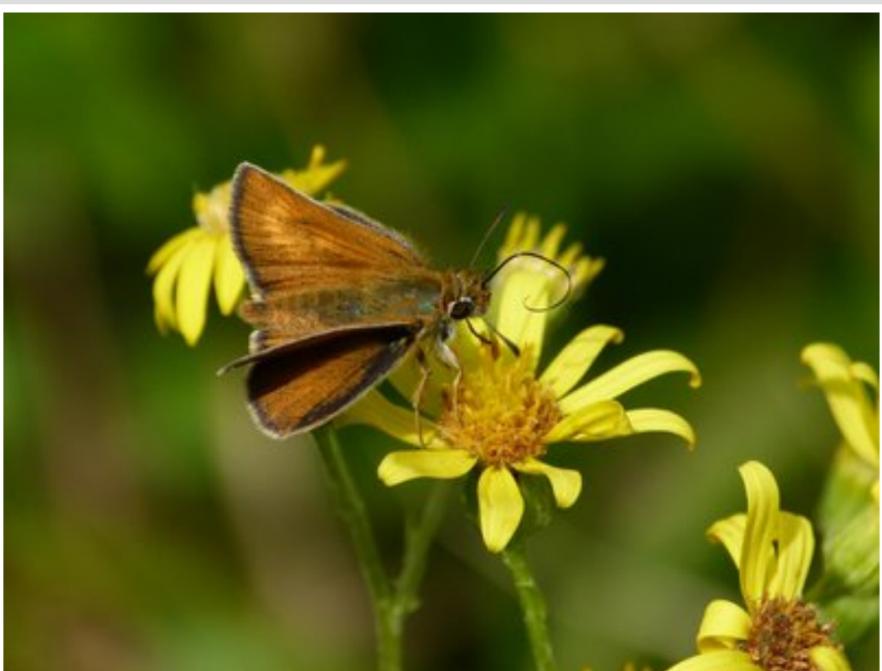
brown argus, durlston



common blue, durlston



durlston country park



lulworth skipper, durlston



adonis blue at ballard down

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Sep-13 11:18 PM GMT

DORSET DAY 3

It was a very warm, sunny day today, so we had a choice, go to the beach and relax, or go to Alners Gorse...we went to Alners Gorse!

We had never been here before, but found it easily. However, we didn't know which areas would give us the best chance to find the Brown Hairstreak. Certainly, they feed on bramble and lay their eggs on young blackthorn, so we searched some suitable looking areas, without success. Then we met a couple of gentlemen who suggested an area near where they had already seen one.

Almost immediately, we found a female, which quickly took off, but we managed to follow it until it landed on a blackthorn, where there were two more—three on the same bush! They were not easy to photograph, though. All were showing signs of wear, and they would not stay still, even for a few seconds, instead they constantly crawled up and down the blackthorn twigs, looking for egg laying places. There have been some great photos of BH coming onto these forums this year. Guys, I don't know how you do it, but well done, the pictures below are the best I could manage.

Moving on a little, we saw Brimstones and Clouded Yellows—and then Wurzel—great to see you again! We enjoyed watching various Nymphalids and Small Coppers feeding on a patch of fleabane, then Wurzel took us to a bramble where he had seen a male Brown Hairstreak much earlier—it was still there!

By now it was 3PM, the end of the BH day, so we said goodbye to Wurzel, and opted to go back to Ballard Down, where the blues were beginning to rest up for the evening. We actually found a large clump of mainly Brown Argus in one area, with a few Common Blues. In other areas, Adonis Blues were dominant, again with a few others, including now a few female Adonis. We took our photos and then left them to settle down for the night in peaceful surroundings. 😊



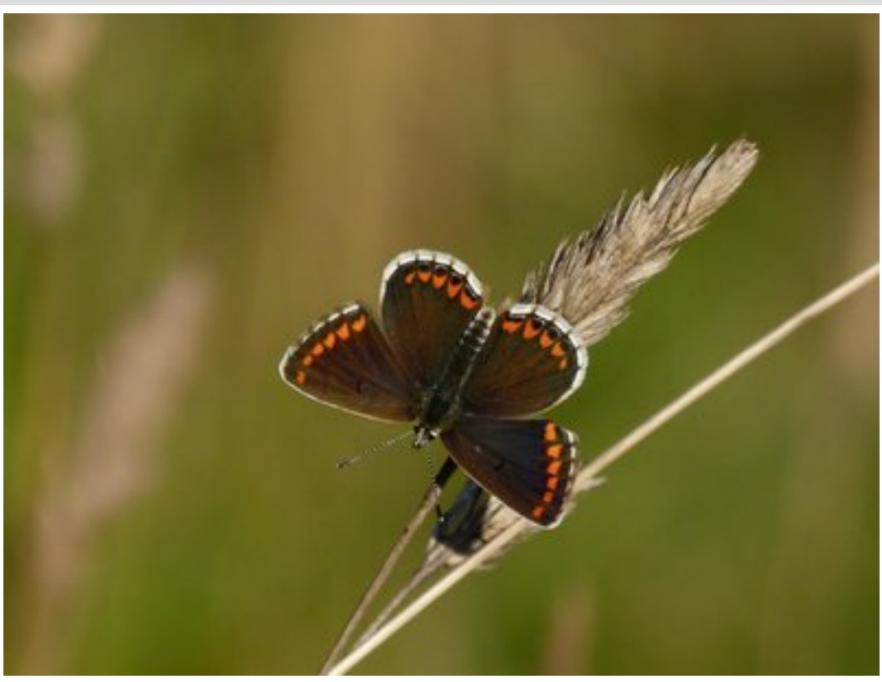
brown hairstreak female



brimstone at alners gorse



brown hairstreak male, alners gorse



brown argus



two adonis males at ballard



adonis female

Re: essex buzzard

by Nick Broomer, 01-Sep-13 11:23 PM GMT

Some nice photos. 😊 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by walpolec, 02-Sep-13 10:10 PM GMT

Hi Essex

I really enjoyed reading about your experiences in Cornwall. We often visit my sister in Penzance (we're in Northants) and it was interesting to know what could be seen if you're in the right place at the right time! We visited Kynance Cove in August a couple of years ago and I got the feeling that it had the potential to be a very productive site. Unfortunately it was cloudy the day we visited so nothing was on the wing.

Maybe next year..

Chris

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-13 09:41 PM GMT

Great report and shots Essex the male Brostreak in particular 😊 I really like the Kung Fu pose 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-13 12:12 AM GMT

Thats the one we saw,wurzel! I've cropped it but,given the distance,i think it's come out quite well. 😊

Hi walpolec,nice to hear from you. There are some great sites for butterflies,and wild flowers near Penzance,especially near the coast out toward the Lizard and Lands End,but also inland. If you need any advice,feel free to drop me a PM-i would be delighted to help.

DORSET DAY 4

This was our last day on the beautiful Isle of Purbeck. With a cold front heading towards us,today was expected to become cloudy. So we decided to walk from Ballard Down to Old Harry Rocks,to make the most of the early warm sunshine. We arrived at Ballard,and imediately lots of sparkling Adonis Blues,and a few Common Blues and Brown Argus were seen. We enjoyed these for a while,then turned right and started to make our way along the bottom of the down. As we progressed,Adonis started to peter out,and other species were seen. A Small Copper,nice and fresh,was holding its place,and then several Lulworth Skippers were seen,together with a very worn Small Skipper. I was pleased with the Lulworths in particular,as i don't always see them here,they were a bonus!

As the vegetation got thicker,more browns appeared. Meadow and Hedge Browns were abundant here,with some Speckled Woods. Green-veined White was also seen. Then the footpath started to go up,back into the open and past some hemp-agrimony,which held blues, Small Torts and a Red Admiral. Near the top of this hill,the path flattens out again,and here several male Walls were basking in the now weakening sun. Small Heath were nearby,too. As we walked toward the rocks,there are great views back towards Swanage on a clear day,unfortunately it was very hazy today. Up here the two cabbage Whites,Large and Small,were abundant,as lots of wild cabbage grows on this coast. On the flat field,just above Old Harry Rocks themselves,several Clouded Yellows were flying around,nearly all males. Plenty of clover and trefoil grows in this field-caterpillar foodplants for CY.

We stayed up here,enjoying the sights and sounds-as were many other people-for an hour or so,before slowly making our way back down. It was cloudy by now,but still warm. But nothing could have prepared us for the spectacle thay awaited us in the long grass at the bottom of Ballard Down. Because now,all the mint condition Adonis Blues had congregated here,wing open,in the grass. The numbers were truely staggering! Hundreds! Thousands! Everywhere we looked,there were blues. In every direction. We were surrounded! Ten there,twenty there,and so-on,all across the site. All just waiting to have their pictures taken! They were here in numbers the day before,but not like this! Still were few females,suggesting they had yet to reach thier peak. I would shudder to think of the extraordinary numbers that may have been here a few days later. Every now and then,the sun would come out again,and all these blues would rise up,in a flurry of blue wings,before settling down again. So we spent our last couple of hours simply enjoying this amazing spectacle before,as thicker cloud at last arrived and,one by one,the Adonis closed their wings,and the spectacular sight came to an end.

But what a sight! And one that will live long in the memory! 😊😊😊

I got a bit carried away with the Adonis pictures,for which i make no apologies!!!







Re: essex buzzard

by NickMorgan, 04-Sep-13 01:15 PM GMT

What amazing pictures. Those Adonis Blues are beautiful. We don't get any of the butterflies in your last couple of posts up here. I feel like our butterfly season is just about finished here. I wonder what the job situation and house prices are like in the south of England!!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-13 11:19 PM GMT

Sorry Nick, as a northern butterfly enthusiast, reports like this must be irritating for you. You really should try to get a break down here in mid to late August some time. It's a bit easier than moving house!

But we don't have the scenery that eastern Scotland has, and I haven't seen a Scotch Argus for years! And you have the white spotted Northern Brown Argus, which is (still!) on my wish list!

Cheers!

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 04-Sep-13 11:52 PM GMT

That is an almost unbelievable spectacle you've described there, Buzzard! Adonis Blues are beautiful individually, but to see such numbers, all shining in the sunshine... 😊 The photos are brilliant too, but I imagine they only capture a tiny bit of what you saw and can remember.

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Sep-13 11:15 PM GMT

Lovely shots of Adonis Blues Essex 😊 They're one of those species that can easily make you trigger happy but no apologies are necessary 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Sep-13 10:57 PM GMT

Thanks for your replies,folks. As you say,photographs cannot do justice to the spectacle. They were a truly brilliant sight,one that will remain with me for a long time—one of those magic moments!

A couple of things i noted,especially in Dorset. Firstly,the abundance of Gatekeepers in late August—they were still virtually everywhere. They have long since finished for the season where i live—i wonder why this is?

Secondly,the relative scarcity of migrants! Although i saw the odd Red Admiral and Painted Lady in Cornwall,they were virtually absent in Dorset—given the good weather in summer this year,i find this surprising. Red Admiral,in particular,were far more common in last years washout summer! Also unexpected was that Clouded Yellows outnumbered the other two,with low to reasonable numbers throughout the area—not exactly a 'Clouded Yellow Year', but outnumbering Red Admiral and Painted Lady put together. 😊

Here are a few more pics from our last day on the Isle of Purbeck;



Lulworth skipper at ballard



old harry rocks



magpie



speckled wood



how many adonis in this picture?

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-13 09:26 AM GMT

Hi eb,

Just doing some catching up after my week in Dorset, great reports and some excellent photos, especially the Adonis Blues 😊
I did not make it to Ballard Down this year but had a similar experience on White Horse Hill at Osmington, hundreds of Adonis Blues basking in the grass on one of the slopes in the early evening sun, absolutely magical 😊 😊

Like you I only saw a handful of Painted Ladies and a couple of Red Admirals but plenty of Clouded Yellows, maybe 50+ throughout the week 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: essex buzzard

by Maximus, 08-Sep-13 03:51 PM GMT

Lovely Adonis shots Buzzard, we were at Ballard Down last Thursday and the Adonis numbers there were amazing.

Mike

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-13 09:57 PM GMT

Great shots of the field of Adonis and Lulworths Essex 😊 I camp on the hill on the other side of Ballard Down every year so you've reminded me that I must try and get up there next time.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-13 10:52 PM GMT

Hi Neil, sounds like you had a good time in Dorset, hope you were able to make the most of the last of the good weather. Looking forward to reading your diary!

Hi Maximus, glad you managed to get to Ballard. It is an amazing place, in sure you will agree.

Wurzel, you really must visit in Adonis season! I'm told the spring emergence was good, too, including lots of blue females. I really must try to get there in late May next year...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-13 11:48 PM GMT

LYDDEN TEMPLE EWELL DOWNS

On the 29 August, the sun was shining, so with a free day, we headed off to Lydden, Temple Ewell Downs, near Dover, for our annual end of season outing there.

Although butterflies have probably caught up, the plants are still showing evidence of the late season this year, and no autumn ladies tresses had emerged yet, which I expect to see here, though autumn gentian were seen and photographed.

Plenty of butterfly interest, though—Meadow Browns were still everywhere, as were the two cabbage Whites.

Even in the car-park, butterfly bushes were alive with Small Tortoiseshells, whites and a single Red Admiral. On the first section of Down, Chalkhill Blues were soon seen, some still quite fresh. Then some Adonis and Common Blues were spotted, resplendent in the sunshine. Even the lovely Common Blues looked dull compared to the Adonis Blues. Then I spied the a Silver-spotted Skipper—the first of many, for there is a strong colony here.

We made our way up the hill, past the trees, and onto the next section. Here more Silver-spotted Skippers were seen, and we had the pleasure of finding some eggs on the sheep's fescue plants—it's amazing that these eggs will be the adults I see here late summer next year. Some females were much darker than others, see photo's. More Adonis Blues were on this side, as well as several Brown Argus. Then a butterfly I was hoping to see came into view, feeding on scabious—a Wall. In the event, several were seen. Several Clouded Yellows were present here, and a Small Copper or two. A Holly Blue was feeding on marjoram— I haven't seen many from the second brood this year.

In the shadier areas, Speckled Woods were noted, but didn't see any Brimstones this year.

On the bird front, buzzards were present, as well as several kestrels—probably a family group. Migrating wheatear were seen on some fence posts, probably my last for the year.

Here are a few pictures, more to come...



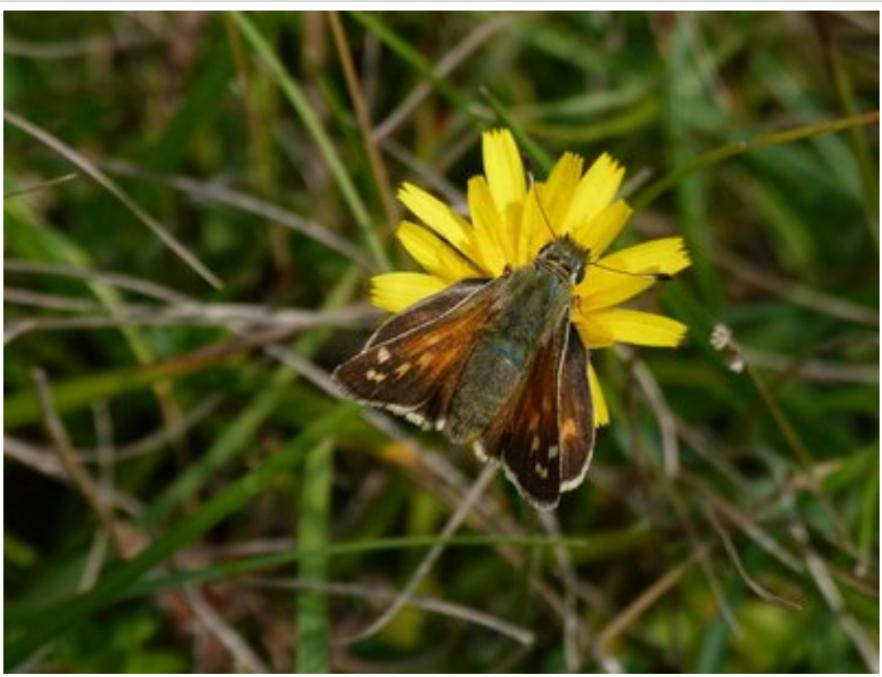
autumn gentian, or felwort



adonis blue



holly blue



dark silver spotted skipper female

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Sep-13 11:51 PM GMT

A few more pictures from east Kent...



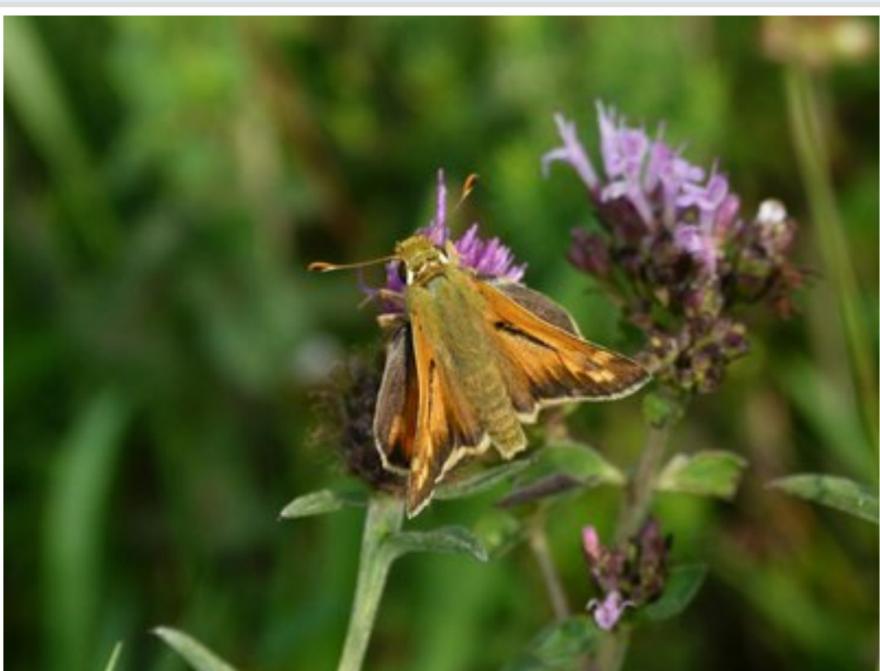
light phase silver spotted female



clouded yellow



chalkhill blue



silver spotted skipper male



common blue

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-13 06:23 PM GMT

Great reports and shots Essex 😊 Really interesting to see the "phases" of the Silver Spots is that related to temperature during their development? The Holly Blue is stunning and falls into the "I wish I'd taken that" category 📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Sep-13 10:02 PM GMT

You may have something on the Silver Spottedds there,Wurzel. But temperatures in August this year were only near average,so i don't know.

Well,it's been soo cold and wet in september so far--there were even blizzards over the Scottish mountains today,i believe!

However,before the weather broke,we managed probably our last butterfly day out this year,going to the Steyning Riffle Range,in Sussex,on the 4 September.

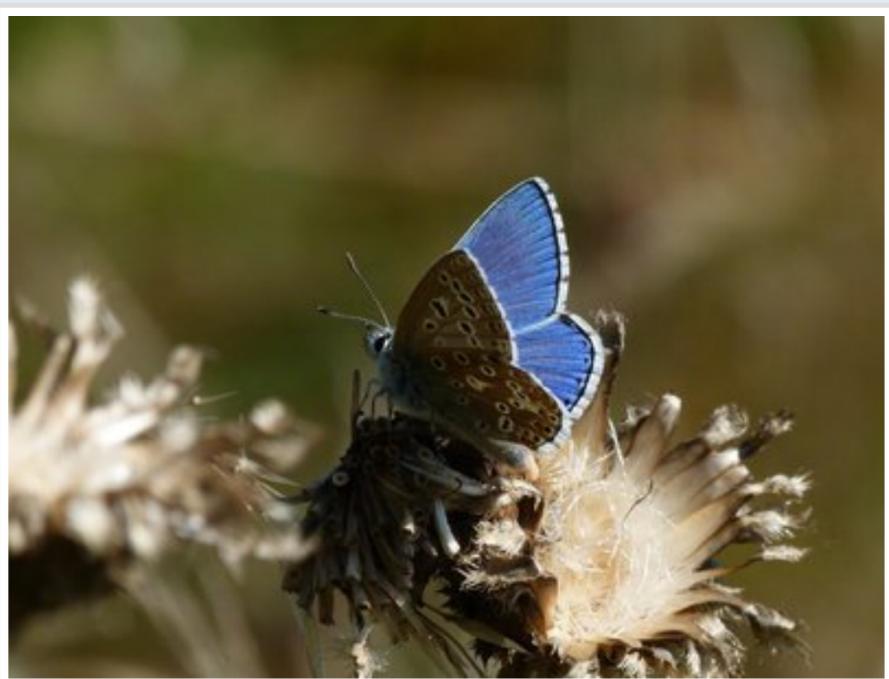
We walked up the path,past the alotments,up the hill to the Range,noting Holly Blue,Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown on the way,as well as the two cabbage Whites,now in lower numbers.

On the south-facing grassy slope,there is small area of short turf and here i was delighted,if a little surprised to find half a dozen Adonis Blues. Surprised because the short turf area is so small! But lovely to see.

The main reason for visiting this site is to see the egg-laying Brown Hairstreaks. We had seen them a couple of weeks earlier in Dorset,but were hungry for more. Steyning didn't disappoint. We saw seven seperate females come down to lay. We also saw a familiar figure in the form of a Sussex Kipper,a lady from Brighton,and another couple. Sometimes,there were calls 'got one here' coming from different directions,and then have to decide which one to follow. Is their one fresher than ours? Is ours posing better for photo's?

The last one came down at about 2.30,after Sussex Kipper had gone. We have our female Brighton friend to thank for finding it. We watched it for a few minutes,then it took off,up the slope,into the trees at the top,and was gone.

All to brief,then,but a great way to end. We also saw Common Blue,Brown Argus and a spotted flycatcher on the Adonis slope. 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-13 10:07 PM GMT

Great report Essex 😊 Seven females Brostreaks 🤩 I thought I was doing well with five 🎁 I'll have to try harder next year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Sep-13 10:07 PM GMT

18 SEPTEMBER

With the changable and unreliable weather,decided not to go too far today. So stayed in Essex,and went to Grays chalk pit. Despite low temperatures and minimal sunshine,quickly spotted a Common Blue male,and soon after,a female. Walked first around the top of the pit,where a few flowers are still present. A few Small White were seen here during any sunny spells, as well as a Comma. A buzzard was soaring,mobbed by four magpies. Then,in the hedge,a tiny silver butterfly—a Holly Blue female.

Once at the bottom of the pit,several Speckled Woods were present,and then a couple of nice third generation Green-veined Whites and another Comma. Here,common and ruddy darters were abundant,oweing to the nearby pond. However,one pair in tandem were overpositing in puddles of rainwater!

Then onto Rainham Marshes RSPB. Too cold for many butterflies by now,though i did see Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell singles when i first arrived,plus a couple of Small Whites. Meanwhile,on the broadwalk,several common lizards with babies were trying in vain to warm up,they were lovely to see.

Rainham is mostly a bird reserve and,although fairly quiet,several migrating hobbies were hawking the dragonflies. They are quite splendid in flight,and were a pleasure to watch. Although i was tempted to try,they are in reality too fast to photograph!



green-veined white at grays



lizard at rainham marshes



young lizards

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-13 09:35 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the GV White Essex 🇬🇧 I missed out on seeing a Hobby this year so double 🇬🇧 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Sep-13 10:16 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Not quite as exciting as goings on on the other side of the river, but a pleasure none the less!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Sep-13 11:59 PM GMT

LONG TAILED BLUES!

As we have seen, Long-tailed Blues at Kinsdown, near Dover, and probably at other places as well. With a fine day forecast on Weds 25 Sept, how could I resist the opportunity to witness this perhaps once in a lifetime event?

Driving through the fog, I arrived 9.30am and, thanks to excellent directions from Neil (Sussex kipper), soon found my way to the site. Several other people soon arrived, and it didn't take long to track down a couple of males—my first ever LTB!, at the southern end of the Leas.

More people were arriving to see this remarkable event—most, if not all, were successful.

We then walked to the northern end where one, possibly two, further males, were found by Rosalyn, one showed well for several minutes. Having several people searching was a definite advantage. Perhaps surprisingly, they were in the grass, not on the broad-leaf everlasting peas. We spent lunchtime at this north end, then headed back to the south section, which seemed to have greater numbers. Here, we eventually found two Adonis Blues chasing another blue which, when settled, turned out to be a nice fresh female LTB, our first of the day! This was fantastic—what a find! I was happy before, and now this!

We quickly grabbed our cameras and took a multitude of pictures but, in the event, she hung around for the rest of this warm, still hazy day. She tended to settle on dead knapweed heads, only occasionally visiting flowers. Sometimes she would take flight, but always turned back when she got to the cliffs, eventually going to roost in the long grass.

Meanwhile, another gentleman reported another male further south toward St Margarets so, between us, we can account for at least five, 4 male 1 female. Also during the day, we saw Brimstone, Small and Large Whites, Small Coppers, Common, Chalkhill and Adonis Blues, Brown Argus, Red Admiral and Speckled Woods. What a day!!! 😊😊😊



chalkhill



long tailed blue male



long tailed blue female



long tailed blue in britain!



long tailed and adonis blue

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 27-Sep-13 12:09 AM GMT

Great photos, Buzzard! The Chalkhill Blue is the same one as I saw today – if only all the others had been there too! I particularly like the LTB + Adonis – that really has to be a once in a lifetime combination.

Dave (distinctly 🍷)

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Oct-13 10:27 PM GMT

Thanks Dave! I promise that LTB and Adonis combination pic was not set up, in any way – just very lucky!

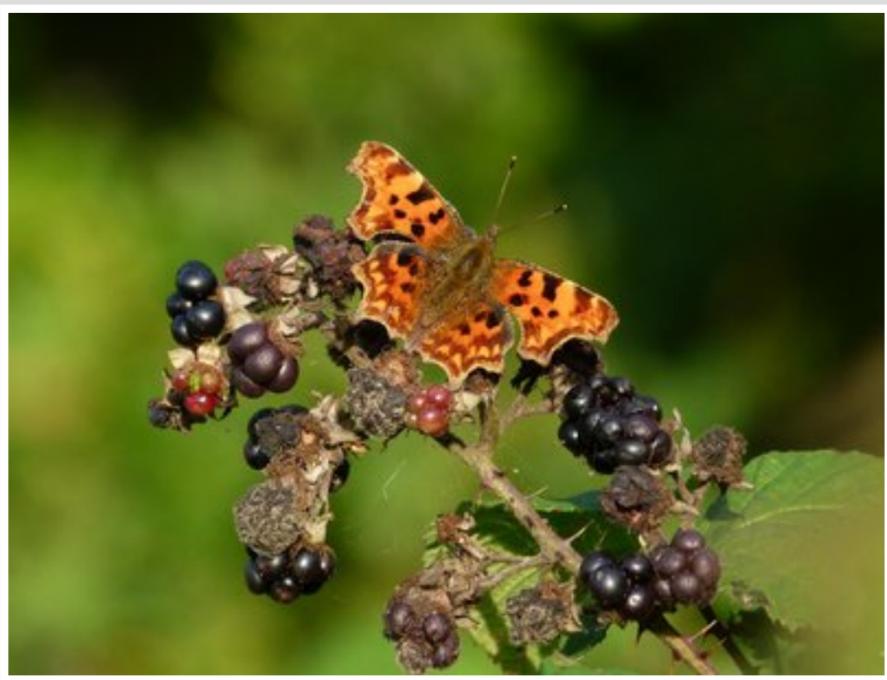
SUNDAY 6 OCTOBER.

Well, after weeks of mainly grey skies, the sun at last returned today – and so did the butterflies! Sadly I was at work, but I managed to get out lunchtime – and found a nice fresh Painted Lady! Most unexpected in what has been another poor year for this species, at least where I live.

Also were several Commas, at least 3 late Peacocks and singles of Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and Large White. Most of these were feeding on the remaining sprigs of butterflybush and Hebe 'Midsummer Beauty'.

Arriving home late afternoon, my local bramble patch had two Comma and a Speckled Wood.

A feel-good day! 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-13 11:02 PM GMT

Great reports Essex and great shots and the LTB and Adonis is a cracker, serendipitous 🍷 The Painted Lady is none too shabby either 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Jack Harrison, 07-Oct-13 08:44 AM GMT

I note from Atropos that LT Blue has been seen at Languard, Felixstowe, not a stone's throw from Essex. Surely you can persuade some LT Blues from North Kent or South Suffolk to cross the border? The likelihood is that they have done so already but haven't been seen (or reported).

Jack

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Oct-13 11:20 PM GMT

You are absolutely right, Jack! There can be little doubt that adults have turned up in the county, undetected, and probably even established temporary colonies here. I even checked a small Bladder-senna bush that grows by a road nearby, alas I saw no sign of adults or of feeding damage by caterpillars. When I lived on the farm, we had a large clump of Broad-leaf Everlastin Pea in the garden, long since destroyed by the current residents. If I still lived there, my, that would be worth checking!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Oct-13 11:37 PM GMT

A few days ago,before the weather broke,i went to Bedfords Park.

With its lake,woods,meadows, deer-enclosure,this is a great place to spend an afternoon. There is even an Essex Wildlife Trust visitor centre and cafe,where you can have a cup of tea with a view towards London.

Migrant and Southern Hawkers and Common and Ruddy Darters can be seen by the lake,and Commas feed on the blackberries. But for me,in mid autumn,i come to see the Small Coppers,which are common here. I saw several,mostly feeding on Devils-bit Scabious,in various stages of wear. This site is good for bumble bees,to,including several kinds of rare Carder bee,and a Red Admiral was seen as well. Here is one of the better Small Coppers;



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-13 09:50 AM GMT

Cracking Small Copper Essex, nice big blue marks 😊 I know what you mean about the weather turning it was practically over night here in Salisbury, sun and sleeves rolled up one day, raincoat and jumper the next 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 13-Oct-13 10:28 AM GMT

Lovely Small Copper Essex 😊

Yep, weather has well land truly turned around here, constant rain for the past two days and dark and gloomy with it 😞

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Oct-13 11:32 PM GMT

THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER

With the much shorter days now,i like to spend as little time as possible traveling,to maximise valuble daylight hours in the field. So today i got an early start,to hopefully beat the traffic. Wrong! With problems on both the M11 and M25,i was well and truely stuck! As the hours wore on,i could see the sun rising higher and higher,and i was stuck in the car! Very frustrating!

I was in two minds what to do today,the Sussex coast to look for Clouded Yellows,or back to Kent,to look for Long-tailed Blues. As there had been no recent LTB sightings,and recently a lot of cold wet weather,i chose Sussex,which i thought may be more reliable.

I eventually arrived at Birling Gap,and spent the rest of the day walking to Beachy Head and back,lingering in any areas sheltered from the strong wind. A worn Meadow Brown put in an appearance,and in the shelter,good numbers of Small Coppers,including a mating pair,were seen.

But still no Clouded Yellows.

Then i bumped into a lady and gentleman from the Sussex branch (forgotten your names,sorry!) who said they had seen a few futher up. Time was getting on by now,so i picked up the pace,and headed in that direction. Sure enough,i then disturbed one from the ground and suddenly 3 were in the air together-none all day then 3 at once! Which one do i follow? Alas i chose the wrong one! While trying to follow it,the wind took it and it was gone! I turned around,no sign of the other two. 😞

Spent another half hour walking around the cliff tops,without success,before returning to the 'hotspot' to see if any had returned. Found one! But it had dead grass and all sorts in front of it,so i waited a while,then slowly picked at the grass,as the CY tried to warm in the weakining sun. Then fired off a few shots. A sigh of relief! At last. So success in the end! 😊

To end the day,watched the sun set over the sea,as the moon rose over the cliffs. A relaxing end to a realy quite stressful day!



clouded yellow, i had to work for this one!



Re: essex buzzard

by Hoggers, 19-Oct-13 10:47 AM GMT

Hi EssexB, congratulations on finding a Clouded Yellow. I admire the rich colours of the one that you found.

I don't know if your experience mirrors my own but after the Summer invasion I just haven't seen much at all of any "Home Grown" Clouded Yellows. I'd rather got my hopes up that the fields would be full of them! But I don't suppose the weather has helped any.

Best Wishes

Hoggers

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-13 08:36 PM GMT

Great shots Essex 😊 That must be one of the few homegrown Cloudies. I don't think I saw any homegrown ones myself, just immigrants 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Oct-13 10:51 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments,Hoggers and Wurzel,i agree with everything you say. Home grown Yellows have been notable by their absence. I think their breeding cycle is a bit slower than,say,the Long Tailed Blue,especially in cold weather,like we had in September.

But a few have been reported on the south coast. Perhaps this is the only place where it has been warm enough long enough for a few to make it. Elsewhere,they may have simply run out of time to fit the autumn generation in.

After the very long winter last time round,i am desperate to keep the butterfly season going as long as possible!

Re: essex buzzard

by Paul Harfield, 20-Oct-13 11:02 PM GMT

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

After the very long winter last time round,i am desperate to keep the butterfly season going as long as possible!

Hi Essex

Just been catching up with your diary 😊 Your last comment echoes my own thoughts and probably many others 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 21-Oct-13 08:54 PM GMT

Hi Essex,

Great report and photos, really liking the Small Copper photo in the previous post as well 😊

Cheers,

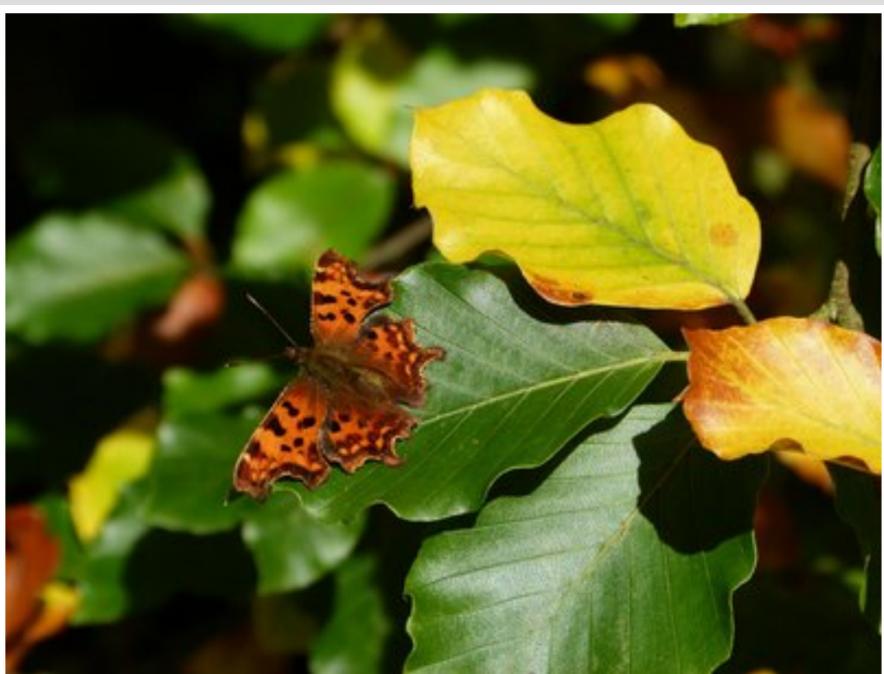
Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Nov-13 11:15 PM GMT

Went for a walk in my local woods on 23 October. It was windy,but temperatures were above average for late October, and i was pleased to see a couple each of Comma and Red Amiral.

The following day,with warm sunshine promised,i headed down to Minnis Bay in Kent. This is one of the sites where Long Tailed Blues have been breeding this year. I didn't see any,in the event,and nor did the couple of other visitors. But we have had a great showing from them this year,with many people,myself included,getting their first ever sightings,so i can hardly complain if they have gone by the end of October. Several late Peacock were seen,plus a male Large White,Comma,Red Admiral and the lovely Small Tortoiseshell in the picture below. Also lots of Common Darter dragonflies,and a few Migrant Hawkers.



comma,local woods



small tort,minnis bay

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Nov-13 11:38 PM GMT

Well,we must have all heard about the storm that swept accross the south of England and East Anglia on Monday morning. Those of you living from the Midands northward must have wondered what all the fuss was about!

The strongest gust was recorded on the Isle of Wight,where winds gusted to 99mph on the very exposed,windswept Needles. Inland,though, winds gusted to 79mph at the weather station at Andrewsfield,Essex,and 76mph at Wattisham in Suffolk. There was plenty of damage,but this was not in the same league as the Great Storm of 16 October 1987,despite the claims by some of the media. The destruction that night was extraordinary,and i never want to see damage like that again.

However,by Wednesday,the sun had come out,and i was delighted to see 4 Red Admirals and a Comma feeding on ivy at work,and later a very late Peacock,regretably,i didn't have my camera with me.



storm damage,a beech



silver birch,Epping Forest



english oak near Ongar

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 02-Nov-13 07:53 PM GMT

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

Well, we must have all heard about the storm that swept across the south of England and East Anglia on Monday morning. Those of you living from the Midlands northward must have wondered what all the fuss was about!

Yep, nothing much happened around here apart from some heavy rain overnight. It's been very blustery ever since though, especially today.

Cheers,

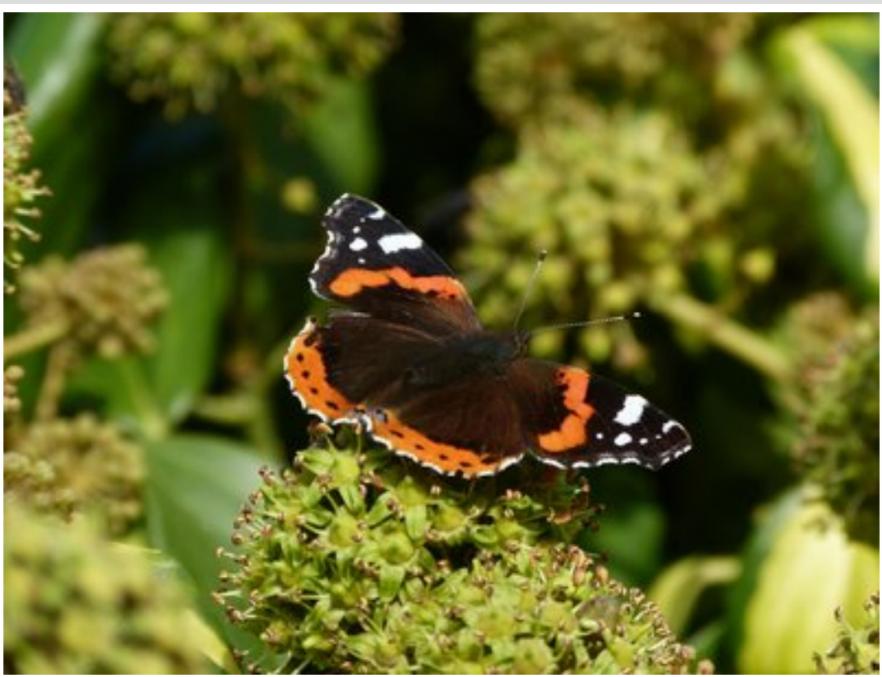
Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Nov-13 10:53 PM GMT

On Sunday 3 November, the sun shone again and I remembered to take the camera to work.

Any November butterfly is always welcome...



Re: essex buzzard

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

Working on a Sunday 🤪 Mind you if it meant finding a November butterfly I'd head in myself 😊 Cracker that you gotta be happy with that Essex 🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Nov-13 11:19 PM GMT

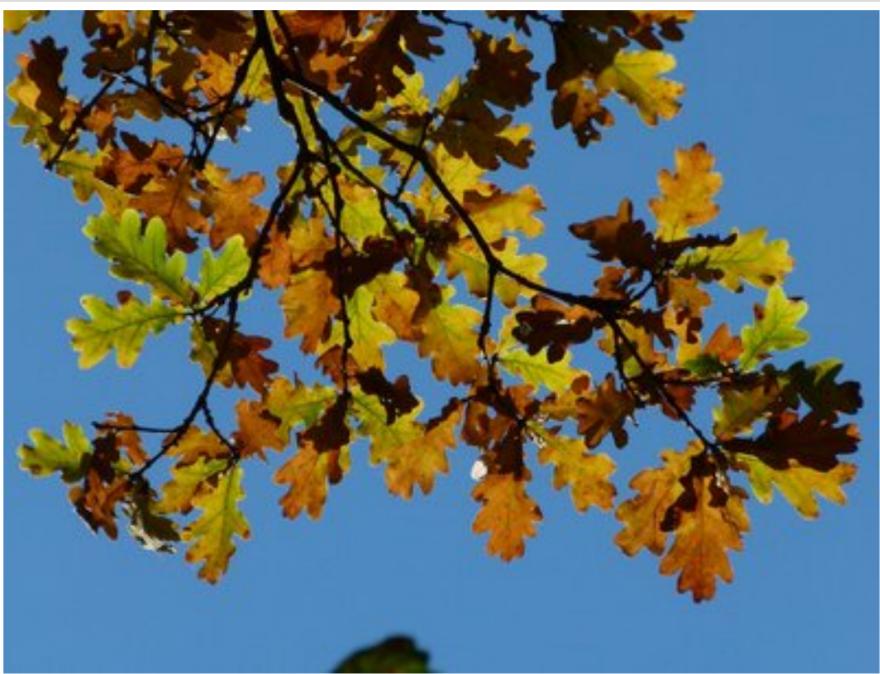
CATCHING UP

There have been several good, sunny November days in the last couple of weeks. Despite temps. of up to 9 or 10C, i haven't seen any butterflies, so i think that's it now for this year.

Another such day occurred last Tuesday (19 November). So, after enjoying the glorious autumn colours in my local woods, i headed off to Epping Forest, where the autumn leaves have reached their peak.

In the lower parts of the forest, Hornbeam and English Oak are dominant, but on the higher ground, Beech takes over, with a few Sessile Oak. When old trees are blown over, clumps of Silver Birch grow up in the clearings. The forest is mostly unmanaged, away from the footpaths, and fallen trees are simply left where they fall. This is as close as we can get, in Britain, to the ancient Wildwood.

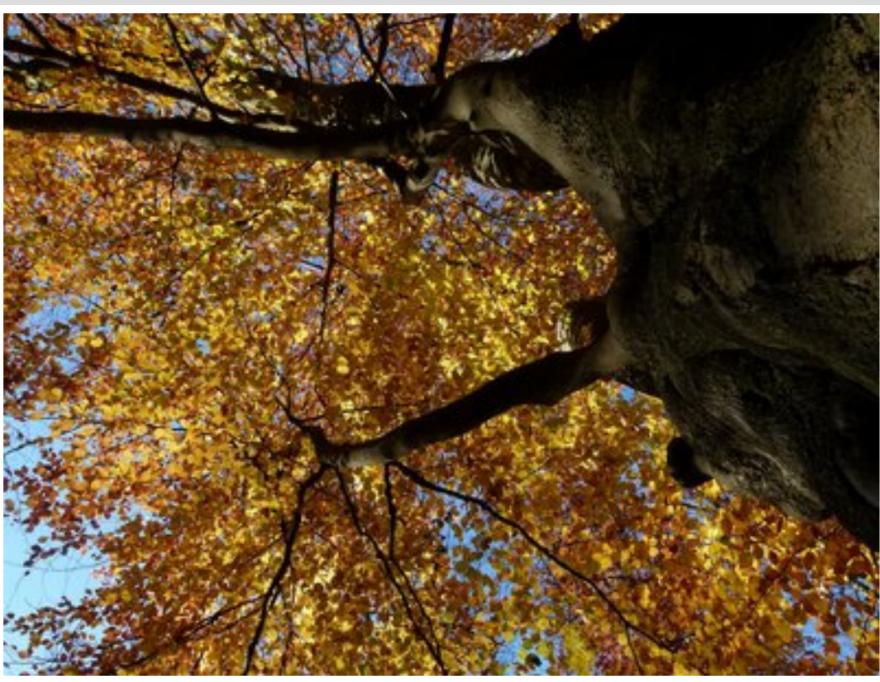
In the early afternoon, i sat under the Beech tree in the picture, and gazed up into its wonderful canopy of golden leaves, with the deep blue November sky above. After a while, i noticed a flight lowering as it came in towards Stansted Airport. I have no idea where it had come from, but at that moment i thought to myself, do you know, there's nowhere on Earth i would rather be right now than right here in Epping Forest.



english oak



beech



the beech i sat under



sessile oak

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Nov-13 11:58 PM GMT

Looking at your shots Essex I wish I was there 🍷 Stunning autumnal scenes 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Nov-13 11:57 PM GMT

Thanks,Wurzel.

Pictures can only hint at the beauty of this stunning place at this time of year. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Dec-13 06:41 PM GMT

FRIDAY 20 DECEMBER

Last friday,with a lovely blue sunny day ahead,we decided to take a break from the Christmas build-up,and head out.

Although butterflies and wild flowers are probably my first love,i have quite a keen interest in birds too,and it is at this time of year that this interest is seen more often-how else would i get through the winter!

So imagine my delight when,while taking a walk looking for waders and plovers near Jaywick,we found a lovely flock of Snow Buntings! There must have been at least 50 there-probably the most i have seen together,and all right here in Essex! I have seen odd ones before in Norfolk in winter,and Ben Nevis and Svalbard in summer-i didn't have to go so far this time! Every now and then,the flock would take off in a blizzard of white wings,circling a few times and then landing again- a splendid sight!

A very nice day was rounded off with a cream tea in the excellent Tiptree Jam Cafe at Tiptree,near Colchester. 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Jack Harrison, 24-Dec-13 06:59 PM GMT

The day I retired – my 60th birthday in 1998 – I went to Holkham, North Norfolk. I have seen plenty of Snow Buntings since, but that day 15 years ago sticks in my memory.

Wonderful birds.

Jack

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Dec-13 10:46 PM GMT

Great shot of the Snow Buntings, I've only seen those once before and that was only one so to see a whole flock would be fantastic 😊👍

Hope you had a great Xmas 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel