

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 27-Mar-13 12:32 AM GMT

I have not seen a butterfly since the 14.10.2012, so not much to report in my first diary entry of 2013 😞 . This is my second proper year of butterfly watching. This time last year I had already seen Comma, Peacock and Brimstone and we were basking in abnormally high temperatures. No such luck this year. However I AM CONVINCED THAT WE ARE IN FOR A MORE TRADITIONAL weather pattern this year. Though if the current cold snap continues much longer I may have to eat my words.

It took me a while to get going last year. I missed many of the earlier species whilst concentrating on my local patch. Species such as Duke Of Burgundy, Pearl Bordered and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary and Green Hairstreak are some that I hopefully will not miss this year. During the main part of the butterfly season I neglected my local patch, I plan to rectify this too.

At the end of last year I discovered that my wifes cousin manages an area of ancient woodland locally (Swanmore). I think this certainly needs some investigation.

Hopefully I will have a little more to report in my next posting

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-13 11:36 PM GMT

Alright Jack – welcome back!

I reckon you can't go wrong with Bentley Wood for the first three on your hit list – the Eastern Clearing is your best bet. Don't ask me about Green Hairstreaks 😞 if you find anywhere reliable let us know. I've got some relatives in the Swanmore area so if that local wood produces any goods I'd be really interested to hear about them. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Mark Tutton, 28-Mar-13 10:44 PM GMT

Probably not the right place to post this but I know it's quite close to both of you. Try Magdalen hill down at Winchester for Green Hairstreak it's a fantastic site for lots of species and at the UKB photographic workshop in 2011 I saw 20+ greenstreaks but if it's any consolation last year numbers were well down at all of my Hants sites . Good Luck 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 31-Mar-13 11:11 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

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Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel and Tuts

I have read many of your reports from Bentley Wood, it sounds like a wonderful place. I have not yet managed a visit, but hopefully will this year. Though I have heard it described by some as 'a bit of a circus' in Emperor season!

I have never seen those first three on my list. I will probably try and see the Small and Pearl Bordered Fritillary at sites in the New Forest if I can, It is a bit closer and I can occasionally pop in on the way home from work, hopefully. I am planning to try for Duke of Burgundy in the Noar Hill/Beacon Hill/Butser area, fingers crossed.

I will certainly try Magdalen Hill Down for Green Hairstreak, thanks for the pointer Tuts.

FIRST SIGHTING OF THE YEAR

Today, after several days of bright sunshine first thing in the morning, I managed to get out along my local footpath just before lunch. The sun was quite pleasant and a coat was not required. My first butterfly of the year, a Peacock 😊 , appeared briefly but did not settle. Hopefully tomorrow the weather will be similar and tempt out a few more for a flutter 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Mark Tutton, 01-Apr-13 09:47 AM GMT

Hi jack – congratulations on just about the only sighting in March! Bentley wood is very reliable for PB and SPB and there is a chance of a Duke there during the PB season although they are few and far between. The sites in the new forest were fantastic for PBF in 2011 and I saw literally hundreds – but

numbers were very low last year. The site for SPB in the new forest is quite small and again I managed to draw a blank there last year. Noar Hill gets pretty busy in Duke season but is almost a banker with good numbers of a large range of other species Too, not to mention being just a very pleasant site. Bentley Wood does get very busy at weekends in PE season but most people concentrate on the main ride – its a huge site and I have encountered His (and Her) highness well away from the crowds if you are prepared to make the effort 😊
Kind Regards
Mark.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 06-Apr-13 11:46 PM GMT

"Tuts" wrote:

Hi jack – congratulations on just about the only sighting in March! Bentley wood is very reliable for PB and SPB and there is a chance of a Duke there during the PB season although they are few and far between. The sites in the new forest were fantastic for PBF in 2011 and I saw literally hundreds – but numbers were very low last year. The site for SPB in the new forest is quite small and again I managed to draw a blank there last year. Noar Hill gets pretty busy in Duke season but is almost a banker with good numbers of a large range of other species Too, not to mention being just a very pleasant site. Bentley Wood does get very busy at weekends in PE season but most people concentrate on the main ride – its a huge site and I have encountered His (and Her) highness well away from the crowds if you are prepared to make the effort 😊

Kind Regards
Mark.

Hi Mark/Tuts

Thanks for the advice regarding sites. I look forward to meeting the Duke for the first time 😊 Pearl Bordered Fritillary were apparently seen at my local site in Whitely last year, though not by me. They died out there back in the eighties apparently but reappeared there last year, surely this must be an unofficial reintroduction. Maybe I will only have to go just round the corner to see them with a bit of luck 😊

Saturday 6.4.2013 My Local Patch

The weather was thankfully as forecast today, bright warm sunshine all day. This morning I walked for an hour along the Itchen Way whilst my son was football training. I have just enough time to walk from Bishopstoke recreation ground to the edge of Itchen Valley Country Park and back whilst he trains. As long as I do not stop too often to look at anything of course. However, today it was still a little fresh for any butterflies to appear between 9 and 10.30.



Itchen Way footpath near Itchen Valley Country Park



Itchen Way near Itchen Valley Country Park

This afternoon I got out along my favourite local footpath between Hedge End and Botley between 2pm and 3pm today. I was rewarded with my first Brimstone of the year today, in fact 3 or 4 all males, bringing my species count for the year to 2 so far. Also seen briefly a Peacock/Comma which flew over my head, when I looked up at it I was looking straight into the sun so I did not get a proper view. All sightings to date have been in flight, so no photos to show yet.

Last year I did not officially record any of my sightings (naughty, naughty me 😞😞). I was shown the error of my ways by someone I met at a local site towards the end of last year. So this season I will record all sightings properly, today's and last Sunday's are all done. Is it worth me going back over sightings from last year and recording them properly? Can you back date sighting reports to last year? (comments please)

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 21-Apr-13 11:31 PM GMT

EAST SUSSEX TRIP – PART 1

For a while now I have known that I would be stuck down in the Hailsham area of East Sussex for a couple of days in mid April. With little more to do than kill time for 2 days, a bit of butterfly watching was planned. I had been praying for decent weather, but the recent prolonged cold spell meant that I was not expecting much. A request for suggestions on where to go locally recommended High & Over at Seaford, so I had done a little research on this site beforehand.

Wednesday 17.4.2013 A Full House Of Hibernators At Brede High Wood

So early on Wednesday morning I set off toward East Sussex. The forecast was not the best and Thursday looked like the better day so I decided to leave High & Over till then. I arrived in East Sussex to heavy, overcast skies and disappointment 😞, but at least it was not raining – yet. After I had dealt with my commitments I set off to look around and stumbled across Brede High Wood. Brede High Woods is a mixture of habitats covering 647 acres.



Wood Anemone

Primrose and Wood Anemone seemed particularly abundant everywhere I looked. I spent a couple of hours looking around in unfavourable conditions for butterflies ie no sunshine. No butterflies seen but plenty of Bumble Bees emerging from holes in the ground, some of them seemed quite keen on me and insisted on settling on me. The sky did brighten slightly but the sun did not look like it was likely to show its face. So I went and had some lunch, at which point it started to rain. After about half hour of rain I could see the sun starting to come through. By about 1.30 the sky was blue, the sun was shining and not a cloud in the sky 😊. I decided to have another look, I am glad I did. The first butterflies were a Comma and Peacock duelling and fighting for the best spot to bask.



Peacock, Comma and Brimstone seen in this area

I then found an area where there were a couple of Peacocks battling and every now and again a Brimstone would fly through without stopping. Commas were also trying to get in on the action. One of the Peacocks was also not concerned about chasing away massive Bumble Bees which were everywhere. At one point whilst I was standing still, watching all the butterfly activity, I noticed a lizard had decided to use the toe of my welly boot as a basking spot. Unfortunately I was too slow to get my camera into action and missed the opportunity to get a photo.

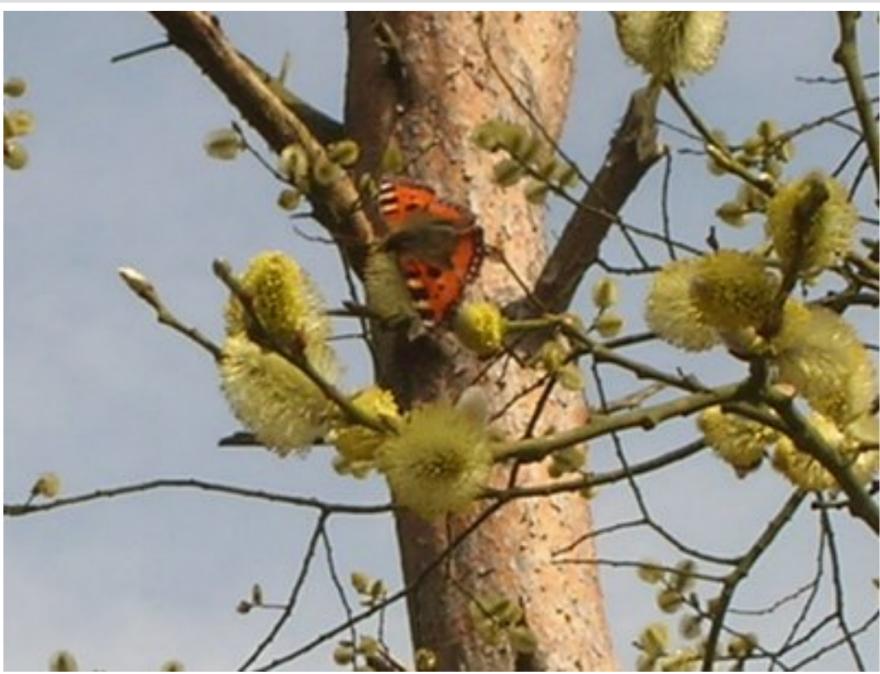


Comma Brede High Wood 17.4.2013



Peacock Brede High Wood 17.4.2013

After having a good count of Peacocks, Commas and Brimstones I decided to move on. I made my way back toward the car encountering more Commas and Peacocks. I then spotted another butterfly in the distance behaving a little differently, this one was feeding high up on Sallow catkins when I got closer I could see this was a Small Tortoiseshell.



Small Tortoiseshell Brede High Wood 17.4.2013

I only saw the one and it was the only butterfly I saw feeding during the whole time I was there. It was now nearly 4pm but I still had a little time to kill so I looked around a different area. Here I saw more Peacocks and a single Red Admiral. Last year I did not see a Red Admiral until the end of June so I was quite pleased with this one individual.

Total count for the day:

Brimstone 6-7

Peacock 11

Comma 9

Small Tortoiseshell 1

Red Admiral 1

I am not sure how I should log my sightings. Hampshire & Isle of Wight BC have an online system but Sussex dont appear to have this? One would think that every branch has the same system, but obviously not.

Re: jackz432r

by badgerbob, 22-Apr-13 09:57 AM GMT

Jack, the e mail address for Sussex sightings is sighting@sussex-butterflies.org.uk
Next time you are up this way let me know and I will show you around if I am free.
Bob.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 24-Apr-13 11:49 PM GMT

Saturday 20.4.2013 My Local Patch

Perfect butterfly weather, the first for quite a while 😊 . A walk to the local shop at lunch time produced several butterflies. none on the way there, but on the way back I took a meandering route, as one does on these occasions 😊 , and was rewarded. The first of which was my first Orange Tip of the year, closely followed by a male Brimstone. By the time I got home I had seen several more male Brimstone, a Peacock and a couple of unidentified buterflies in the distance. Later on in the afternoon I was pleased that my eldest son agreed to accompany me to check out my favourite local footpath. Another male Brimstone was our first encounter then a little further along 2 Commas. Then to round off the day 2 Small Tortoiseshells fluttering around some Nettles. No photos to show for today though.

On the way back home my son was keen to show me his den. We found the spot, an overgrown out of the way area sandwiched between the corners of a couple of fields and the footpath. In the middle of which was a small clearing with a large twin trunked tree. As we left, my son casually dropped into the conversation that when he had found this place back in February, there were loads of butterflies there 😲 'What do you mean, loads of butterflies' I said. He said that there were 100's of Peacocks just sitting on the tree and not moving. As you can imagine my ears pricked up 😲 . I expressed my disbelief that he had not mentioned it before 😊 , knowing my interest. He said it was not that interesting to him and his friend. I asked some carefully chosen questions to make sure he was not winding me up. He answered all with the correct responses 😊 . I could not get this thought out of my head. I even started to plan in my head to return next winter to see if the spectacle would repeat itself. It was not until a couple of hours later that whilst questioning my son again, that he admitted to conning me 😊 . I had forgotten that he had sat and watched the Monarch programme on the tv a few weeks ago 😊 I will get him back 😡

Re: jackz432r

by ChrisC, 25-Apr-13 06:44 PM GMT

😊 nice story 😊

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 25-Apr-13 09:00 PM GMT

What a little tease he is!!

Revenge is a dish best served cold, so I advise you to sow the seeds of revenge right now and let them germinate later on in the year. 😡

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-Apr-13 09:57 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

What a little tease he is!!

Revenge is a dish best served cold, so I advise you to sow the seeds of revenge right now and let them germinate later on in the year. 😡

Sunday 28.4.2013 Botley Wood

I am still trying to think of suitable revenge for my son 😲

In the meantime I managed a visit to my local site, Botley Wood. This is the first time I have visited this year. The weather was not ideal, I missed the best day yesterday. Today it was ok first thing while I watched my youngest play his last football match of the season. But by the time I got out this afternoon it was cool and overcast. In fact the sun remained covered in haze.



The best the sun could offer this afternoon

Needless to say I was not expecting much and that was exactly what I got, no butterflies at all 😞 Sadly, the thing that drew my attention more than anything else was the large amount of litter and rubbish that had been dumped at the entrance to the wood 😞 Some people have no conscience and no respect for the countryside, absolutely disgusting.



Rubbish at Botley Wood today



Rubbish at Botley Wood today

Hopefully the weather next week will prove more enticing.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 29-Apr-13 11:22 PM GMT

EAST SUSSEX TRIP – PART 2

Thursday 18.4.2013 High & Over, Cradle Valley



My second day in East Sussex was spent at High & Over and the Cradle Valley. This site was recommended to me by 'badgerbob' and 'sussex kipper' (thanks again). Situated on the south downs between the village of Alfriston and Seaford. The very steep slopes to the south overlook the Cuckmere River, I believe they are used for hangliding at times.



The View Across The Cuckmere River

To the north Cradle Valley is perhaps less steep and more sheltered and stretches some distance to the west. There are short grazed downland turf, scrubby areas, longer grass and wooded areas here. There is also plenty of bare chalky ground with Cowslips and Violets. Ideal for butterflies I would say 😊 but maybe not today



View looking east along Cradle Valley

I tuned in to the local weather in the morning 'bright sunny start with a strong wind gradually giving way to cloud with heavy showers in the afternoon'. I thought I had better get up there asap. I arrived at the carpark to wind, the strength of which nearly took my car door off and me off my feet. It was also already quite cloudy at 10am. My first thoughts were that it was not going to be a very successful day for butterflies 😞. A quick look out at High & Over over the Cuckmere river and I knew instantly that nothing would be flying here, too windy. I found my way across the road to Cradle Valley walked west along the valley for an hour, where thankfully the wind was much less noticeable. However, I did not see a single butterfly 😞. I did manage to find several Bloody Nosed Beetles, including a group of 5 right next to the track.



Bloody Nosed Beetle

In this sheltered valley there were areas where I could not feel any wind at all. I started back to the car and got nearly as far as the road before I saw my first butterfly of the day, 😊 a Comma. This was in a very sheltered spot just away from the main track. I stayed here to observe for a while and it was joined by another Comma, a Peacock and one Small Tortoiseshell.



Comma Cradle Valley 18.4.2013



Small Tortoiseshell Cradle Valley 18.4.2013



Comma Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock seen in this sheltered spot.

As yesterday only the Small Tortoiseshell was seen feeding, on the abundant Violets in this particular area. Occasionally a battle spiralling skyward would ensue. I returned to the car for some lunch. Despite the forecast, all the while the sky was becoming clearer and perhaps less windy. By mid afternoon there was hardly any cloud. I returned for another look after lunch, this time walking further west and finding another hotspot where Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell were fighting for the best basking spot on a chalky track. One particular Small tortoiseshell was very ragged indeed but still managed to chase away the approaching Peacocks. A little further on and the track became distinctly more wooded in feel. I thought I might be in with a chance of seeing a first Speckled Wood of the year here, but I had to be satisfied with more Commas. Strangely no Brimstone seen today at all.



Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock fought for control of this chalky track



Very Ragged Small Tortoiseshell

Spending so long on site here I saw various unusual characters come and go during the day. There was the well dressed chap who pulled up in the carpark only to pull a skateboard from the boot of his car, he spent 10 mins on his board in the small carpark and then went on his way. Late in the day a campervan pulled in. The occupant then proceeded to dispose of three large bags of rubbish in the small bin in the carpark. He then hung his clothes out around the van to dry or air and then began to empty various unknown items from various containers into the bushes 🤪. Of course he parked right next to the 'No Overnight Stops' sign, he was still there when I left. Then there was the workers in the vineyard opposite Cradle Valley who descended to the small wooded area near the track to do their business as I walked past 🤪, seemingly unaware that they were only a few metres from a walking route, and in full view.

In a couple of weeks this site will be a joy, but I think it will be a while before I get back to have another look. If I get the opportunity I would certainly love to spend some more time here 😊

Total Count for the day:

Small Tortoiseshell 4

Comma 3

Peacock 5

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 05-May-13 11:13 PM GMT

Well, last Sunday I managed to pick the only afternoon for butterfly watching, that had no sunshine at all 😞. It has been sunny and warm nearly every day since, whilst I have been at work. I have seen plenty of Whites and Brimstones out and about this week, all too far off for id though. I am hoping to get out and see some butterflies at least once this weekend. In between family time and kids football training etc. Sunday looks like my only window, unfortunately that looks like the worst day. The forecasts I have seen indicate mostly cloud! 😞

Saturday 4.5.2013 My Local Patch

I manage to get out for an hour at lunch time today around my favourite local footpath. The conditions were perfect with bright warm sunshine 😊. Not far from the house I spotted a white flying up the footpath. This one settled and I was able to get close enough to identify it as a Small White (first confirmed one of the year) Further on, where the footpath is much more wild and less busy, I spotted my first Speckled Wood of the year.



Speckled Wood Hedge End 4.5.2013



Speckled Wood Hedge End 4.5.2013

Speckled Wood are one of my favourites and I was a little concerned that I had seen none so far this year. This one brought a smile to my face 😊. A little further on I found 2 more Speckled Wood. I spent a little time observing this pair. At one point one of them was nectaring from a Dandelion, something I have not seen before. I then checked out the area where last week I had seen Small Tortoiseshells flying around a patch of nettles. No Comma, Peacock or Small Tortoiseshells at all this week 😞.

Monday (the best day of the weekend) I am expected to spend all day at Chessington World of Adventures, so no chance of any butterfly watching there. Tomorrow I hope to get out and maybe see the Duke (I have never met him before) perhaps at Noar Hill or Oxenbourne Down, fingers crossed 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-May-13 12:14 AM GMT

Sunday 5.5.2013 Oxenbourne Down

Today I woke up to overcast skies, this was not a surprise of course. The forecast had already warned me that today was not the best day of the weekend, but I had to make the most of it. I fancied meeting the Duke today for the first time, my best bet probably was to head for Noar Hill, but in an effort to avoid the crowd I thought I would try Oxenbourne Down. I believe there is a colony of Dukes there and after my success with the Silver Spotted Skipper at this site last summer, I thought I would try my luck 😊.

I had told my wife I would be going out midmorning and would return sometime after lunch. Unfortunately our communication had gone wrong somewhere, she went shopping at 10am and did not return till 12.30 😞. Just to rub salt into the wound, the sun came out and stayed out whilst I twiddled my thumbs and waited 😞. I had now missed the best part of the day 😞. On her return I rapidly drove off in the direction of Oxenbourne Down, slightly miffed 😞. I took the quick route down the motorway, rather than the scenic route cross country. The sun was out all along the coast, but by the time I had arrived at Oxenbourne Down the sun had given way to cloud.

A couple of male Brimstone and a male Orange Tip flew by as I walked from the car. The sun briefly showed itself before disappearing again. I was now feeling quite wound up and needed to relax a little. As I entered the site through the area that was alive with butterflies last time I visited last August, I was surprised not to see any butterflies at all. I searched everywhere and found nothing. Through the broken gate at the top, I made my way left

along the track at the top of the ridge. This area too had been alive with butterflies last August but today nothing.



Oxenbourne Down

Thankfully a male Brimstone then appeared over the treeline 😊, he kept me company for some time. Seemingly not interested in feeding, but keen to investigate any light coloured object in the vicinity. Stones, leaves and clumps of dry grass were all fluttered around for a few moments before he moved on in search of his female. I pressed on along the track further than I had explored last summer. The further along the track I got I started to see more and more Cowslips as well as lots of Gorse and Buckthorn. I also came face to face with someones wildlife camera, hopefully they had more luck 🤪



Whos watching Who!



Cowslips at Oxenbourne Down



Female Brimstone Oxenbourne Down 5.5.2013

A female Brimstone then appeared, briefly flying and then sinking down into the undergrowth, where it stayed for some time. I thoroughly searched the area and found Cowslips quite abundant in several locations, but no Dukes. I saw at least one more female Brimstone, a couple of males and another male Orange Tip flew through, but that was all despite lots of searching. What a difference a few months makes 😞. The sun was now starting to make an impression but still hardly any butterflies. Although this is a lovely site, I started to make my way back to the car feeling mildly disappointed 😞. I got almost within site of the exit when something small zoomed in, settled a little way ahead and stayed just long enough for a photo. My first Grizzled Skipper of the year 😊😊.



Grizzled Skipper Oxenbourne Down 5.5.2013

I hunted a while longer but did not see any more. I will perhaps try again in a week or so but think I should probably visit Noar Hill to have any reasonable hope of meeting the Duke.

Tomorrow I have to spend the day at Chessington World Of Adventures, so no chance of any butterfly spotting 😞

Total count for the day:

Orange Tip (male) 2

Grizzled Skipper 1

Brimstone (female) 2 (male) 5

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 11-May-13 11:16 PM GMT

Monday 6.5.2013 Chessington World Of Adventures

Chessington World Of Adventures was not a total loss. The weather was gorgeous and I did spot a few butterflies. Plenty of Orange Tips and other whites seen fluttering around the abundant garlic mustard as we were queuing in traffic to get in. Whilst on our first ride of the day my eldest sons voice rang out 'Dad! Brimstone' he called as he pointed out correctly one of several Brimstones seen. He surprises me at times and obviously has his priorities right 😊 Also seen my first Large White of the year and one Holly Blue flying through the Rameses Revenge ride.

Saturday 11.5.2013 Itchen Way/Itchen Valley Country Park

This week the weather has been reminiscent of June and July last year 😞. Cool with rain and wind, miserable! hopefully it will not last much longer. Today thankfully the weather was not as bad as forecast. I walked my normal Saturday morning route along the Itchen Navigation from Bishopstoke to Itchen Valley Country Park whilst my youngest son did his football training. Some prolonged sunny spells meant there were a few butterflies around 😊.



Speckled Wood Itchen Way 11.5.2013



Green Veined White Itchen Valley Country Park 11.5.2013

Several Speckled Wood seen together with both Small and Green Veined White. Small White in particular seemed very flighty and would only settle briefly. A few male Orange Tips all seen within the country park.



Orange tip Itchen Valley Country Park 11.5.2013



Orange Tip Itchen Valley Country Park 11.5.2013

There are several clumps of Garlic Mustard along this route on which today I found Orange Tip eggs 😊, as I did last year in the same location (butterfly eggs are unfortunately beyond the capabilities of my camera). I found 5 today but I imagine if I had searched for longer I would have found more.



Orange Tip ova Itchen Way 11.5.2013

Last year the Orange Tip eggs here reached the stage of almost fully grown larvae before the growth along the track was hacked down and most were lost 😞. I believe that this particular part of the track is privately owned and provides vehicle access to a private fishing area and farmland. I wonder if the same fate is likely to befall this year's generation 😞, should I attempt a rescue mission 🤔 Any comments on this are appreciated

Total count for the day:

Speckled Wood 3
Small White 1
Green Veined White 2
Orange Tip (male) 5 (ova) 5

This all brings my species count for the year to date to 12:

Comma
Peacock
Small Tortoiseshell
Red Admiral
Brimstone
Orange Tip
Small White
Large White
Green Veined White
Speckled Wood
Holly Blue
Grizzled Skipper

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 16-May-13 11:52 PM GMT

So, in anticipation of some GOOD WEATHER next Friday 😊 I have booked the day off 😊. I suppose that's a sure fire way to get the weather to turn even nastier 😞. Some serious butterfly time is planned, so everything is crossed 😞😞. Rake Bottom, Martin Down and Bentley Wood are all beckoning as I have never visited, but I have not decided where to go yet. Hopefully I can fit in a second site as well.

Nothing much to report so far this week, but yesterday I happened to be working not far from a site in the New Forest known for Pearl Bordered Fritillary. Once the mornings downpours had stopped, I thought I might have time after lunch for a quick look, but as is always the case I was running late 😞. So I had to be satisfied with a 10 minute stop for lunch, in the car park at Wootton Bridge. Luckily a couple of male Brimstone fluttered around the edge of the car park, in the afternoon sunshine 😊.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 18-May-13 11:30 PM GMT

Saturday 18.5.2013 My Local Patch

The weather was unexpectedly good today, cloudy but with plenty of warm sunny spells. My youngest son had a football match in Totton this morning. I watched the match with one eye whilst the other kept an eye on the shrubs along the edge of the playing fields. Lots of whites of all types including Orange Tips, Speckled Wood and Holly blue all seen between 10 and midday.

This afternoon my wife accompanied me for a walk (a rare occurrence) along my local footpaths at around 4pm. She can not do rough ground, but I managed to steer her in the direction of where I had seen Small Tortoiseshells fluttering around a nettle patch a couple of weeks ago 😊 There were again 2 or 3 Small Tortoiseshells fluttering around the same area, though looking a little more tired now.



Small Tortoiseshell Larval Web Hedge End 18.5.2013

Despite looking, I did not find any eggs last time. Today, however, a quick look revealed at least 3 larval webs 😊 I will monitor their progress.

Perhaps somebody reading this could confirm that they are Small Tortoiseshell larvae. I have never found any before today. I am surprised that the eggs were laid in such an exposed position. This Nettle patch is certainly not the lushest or the largest in the vicinity. It is also not the most sheltered Nettle patch and is in full sun pretty much all day. Is this typical? 🤔

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 20-May-13 10:56 PM GMT

Sunday 19.5.2013 My Local Patch

The sun did eventually appear today around 4pm 😊 Just a few Speckled Wood and Green Veined Whites seen along my local footpaths



Green Veined White Hedge End 19.5.2013



Speckled Wood Hedge End 19.5.2013

I also found, what I believe to be, a Magpie Moth larva. It would not keep still and as a result I only managed this rather poor photo 😞



Magpie Moth larva Hedge End 19.5.2013

Also first Large Red Damselfly of the year in the garden and a pair of Beautiful Demoiselles fluttering around a local stream, again first of the year 😊
Hopefully by the end of next weekend I can add a few more species to the list.

Re: jackz432r

by Vince Massimo, 22-May-13 09:51 PM GMT

"jackz432r" wrote:

Today, however, a quick look revealed at least 3 larval webs 😊 I will monitor their progress.

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Hi Paul/Jack,

They certainly look like Small Tortoiseshell larvae and one of the requirements for the female is a plant which is located in full sun. It would be great if you could monitor them and report progress, because they appear to be one of the early batches of the season.

Many thanks,

Vince

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 22-May-13 10:29 PM GMT

Good luck on Friday Jack 😊 I'd recommend Bentley Wood for Pearls there were another 5 reported today and if the weather isn't brill you might be able to find them roosting. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

"Wurzel" wrote:

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Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel

Bentley is certainly a possibility, but I have still not decided where to go. However, the weather is not looking good at all 😞

Hi Vince

I shall be keeping a close eye on the larvae and will post details of their progress 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 24-May-13 10:17 AM GMT

Friday 24.5.2013 Best Laid Plans..... 😞

I was not surprised (disappointed yes) to wake up to heavy skies, cold wind and rain this morning 😞 Not only that but the weather looks set to deteriorate throughout the day 😞 None of this is a surprise of course. I have been studying the weather forecast all week, in hope. So I have decided to abandon my plans for today 😞, bank my 'Brownie points' and try and accumulate a few more 😊

The weather looks to be much warmer, sunnier and drier over the weekend 😊 So with a bit of luck I might be able to get out and use my accumulated 'B points' on Sunday morning 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 24-May-13 11:45 AM GMT

Hi Paul

I'm sorry your plans had to be abandoned due to the weather but I have been out there today and there are some butterflies around. See my post later.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 25-May-13 12:18 AM GMT

Friday 24.5.2013 Beacon Hill, Warnford

Immediately after writing my previous post, I read of 'Paulines' intentions to go after Small Blues today. I imagine that we do our butterfly watching under a similar piece of sky, so I thought if others are prepared to brave the conditions then so can I 😊 I decided than rather than revert to my original plan I would stick to somewhere closer to home. Beacon Hill is only half an hour away so I thought I have nothing to loose. Strangely my previous visit to this site also started under heavy skies and was one of my best days last year, maybe this was a good omen 😊 I have only visited this site once previously, late last summer in search of Silver Spotted Skipper. I am not sure which species I am likely to find there this time of the year. I believe Dukes are present and also Small Blues, Grizzled and Dingy Skipper.

I arrived at midday but to be honest I was not very hopeful, at least it was not raining. I descended the steep slopes to the area that I found so productive last summer. Plenty of cowslips around and it was not long before a flash of orange fluttered out of the undergrowth and settled a few metres away. I went to investigate the spot but could not see anything until it took to the wing again and settled within view, a fresh Small Heath (my first of the year 😊)



Small Heath Beacon Hill 24.5.2013



Roosting Small Heath Beacon Hill 24.5.2013

I searched around for a further half an hour before I spotted another Small Heath roosting in a different area. So just the two Small Heaths had made my visit worthwhile, increasing my species tally for the year to 13. The sky was becoming increasingly black so I decided to call it a day. On the way back to the car the rain started to fall as I spotted a couple of moths, including a longhorn moth with incredibly long antennae and what I think is a Purple Bar moth (*Cosmorhoe ocellata*)



Purple Bar Beacon Hill 24.5.2013



Nematopogon swammerdamella

It was definitely worth the effort to go out looking (thanks for the inspiration Pauline), but I am glad I did not go further afield and spend all day at it, which was my original intention. Early Sunday morning is my next opportunity, thankfully good weather is forecast 😊

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 25-May-13 08:43 PM GMT

Jack,

if Beacon Hill is within 30 mins., have you tried Whiteley Pastures? It's the forest (not pastures!) at Whiteley, just along the M27 – park on the dead-end road, outside the NATS air traffic building; at the end of the road, follow the path through the hedge, and head North along the main track – it's < 50m. to the entrance to the pastures. See [url=http://www.purple-emperor.co.uk/page28.htm:1btwk5qy]Alan Thornbury's page[/url:1btwk5qy] on it.

Regards, Jon (based in sunny Southampton 😊)

Re: jackz432r

by Mark Colvin, 25-May-13 08:56 PM GMT

Hi Paul,

I think you'll find that your unidentified moth is the longhorn, *Nematopogon swammerdamella*.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 26-May-13 10:48 PM GMT

"jonhd" wrote:

Jack,

if Beacon Hill is within 30 mins., have you tried Whiteley Pastures? It's the forest (not pastures!) at Whiteley, just along the M27 – park on the dead-end road, outside the NATS air traffic building; at the end of the road, follow the path through the hedge, and head North along the main track – it's < 50m. to the entrance to the pastures. See [url=http://www.purple-emperor.co.uk/page28.htm:1thh0ej9]Alan Thornbury's page[/url:1thh0ej9] on it.

Regards, Jon (based in sunny Southampton 😊)

Hi Jon and Mark

Thanks for the pointer on Whiteley Pastures. Its actually very close to me as I am in Hedge End, although I have not managed a proper visit yet. I have made quite a few visits to the adjoining Botley Wood but never seem to have enough time to do Whiteley as well. Hopefully soon. I heard reports of Pearl Bordered Fritillary appearing at Whiteley last year. Do you happen to know if they have appeared this year at all 🤔

Thanks for the longhorn id Mark 😊

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 26-May-13 11:29 PM GMT

I didn't find PBF last weekend (weather wasn't exactly conducive, though). Made the mistake of trying this morning, and got caught-up in truly horrible shopping-frenzy-traffic (I'd been completely ignorant that some sort of Whiteley Shopping Village 'jamboree' was taking place, all weekend. Eeeugh!)

Nowhere to park at all, so gave up. 😞

The main path, at Whiteley Pastures, is usually good for Grizzled & Dingy skippers, Comma, Peacock, Silver-Washed and (apparently!) Purple Hairstreak / Emperor. I've not seen the latter 2 there, myself (nor PBF). It's a pleasant site to have, close to Soton, though! I may go looking for SWF in 3-4 weeks.

I don't like travelling far, just to see butterflies (it doesn't seem right to me, driving 60 miles+ round trip, to see an endangered species!), and prefer to try & find stuff locally. For me, it's really great to come across a fresh Speckled Wood on Soton Common (on my doorstep)! Of course, I have seen PBF, Small PBF, Dukes, and so on (Noar Hill, Pignal Inclosure, Wooton Coppice, etc.), but don't want to keep returning to the same few sites, just to do it all over again. That said, I do appreciate that people do that stuff, and that records are kept, of course!

BTW, there must be some pretty good sites around Hedge End, I'd have thought. The patch of land on the West End road (where the new Rose Bowl exit is going to be)? Out on the Botley Road? I suppose a lot of it is farm / private land, though... 😞

Cheers!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 27-May-13 11:32 PM GMT

"jonhd" wrote:

I don't like travelling far, just to see butterflies (it doesn't seem right to me, driving 60 miles+ round trip, to see an endangered species!), and prefer to try & find stuff locally. For me, it's really great to come across a fresh Speckled Wood on Soton Common (on my doorstep)! Of course, I have seen PBF, Small PBF, Dukes, and so on (Noar Hill, Pignal Inclosure, Wooton Coppice, etc.), but don't want to keep returning to the same few sites, just to do it all over again. That said, I do appreciate that people do that stuff, and that records are kept, of course!

BTW, there must be some pretty good sites around Hedge End, I'd have thought. The patch of land on the West End road (where the new Rose Bowl exit is going to be)? Out on the Botley Road? I suppose a lot of it is farm / private land, though... 😞

Cheers!

Hi Jon

I agree entirely 😊 It is very satisfying to explore ones local patch and see what is about. I am quite lucky here in Hedge End being right on the edge of good countryside. I am discovering new places to go locally all the time. My biggest problem is finding the time to do it 😞 For me it is always going to be a compromise between keeping tabs on my local patch whilst also visiting specific sites. I am only in my second year of doing this, so I have still

plenty to see and learn.

If you have not ventured into Botley Wood (next to Whiteley) I would recommend it. However, as well as good populations of butterflies it does seem to have a very high population of ticks 🤩

Monday 27.5.2013 My Local Patch

After returning from a family picnic at Royal Victoria Country Park, I went to check on my local Small Tortoiseshell larvae late this afternoon. Each larval group has now expanded to cover 2 or three plants. Last week each of three groups was confined to its own individual plant. I had a bit more of a look around today and I managed to find 2 more groups, they are all very close together 😊 These latest 2 groups look to be slightly less advanced, but are the wrong side of a barbed wire fence for me to get very close 😞 The largest larvae are 25–30mm long now, perhaps a third bigger than last weekend.



Larval Group 27.5.2013



Small Tortoiseshell Larvae 27.5.2013



Small Tortoiseshell Larvae 27.5.2013



This is the location, at the edge of a farm track/bridleway next to agricultural land.

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 28-May-13 09:27 PM GMT

And did any of those survive today's torrential rain?

Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 31-May-13 12:02 AM GMT

Sunday 26.5.2013 Rake Bottom

After having decided to abandon my plans for a 'full' butterfly day last Friday 😞 Sunday was my rescheduled attempt at a full day in beautiful sunshine 😊 Unfortunately I had some prior commitments so realistically I only had until early afternoon. Keen to make the most of my time, I dropped my two boys up at the local skate ramps at 8.30am leaving my wife in bed 😞 and set off on my way. My targets for the day were Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper. I have never seen Duke of Burgundy or Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak is a species I have only ever seen once when I was a boy, so that would also be like a first sighting. I decided to visit Rake Bottom for the first time. Rake Bottom is a narrow, very steep sided, L shaped valley near to Butser Hill which promised all three species plus a few others hopefully 😊



Rake Bottom

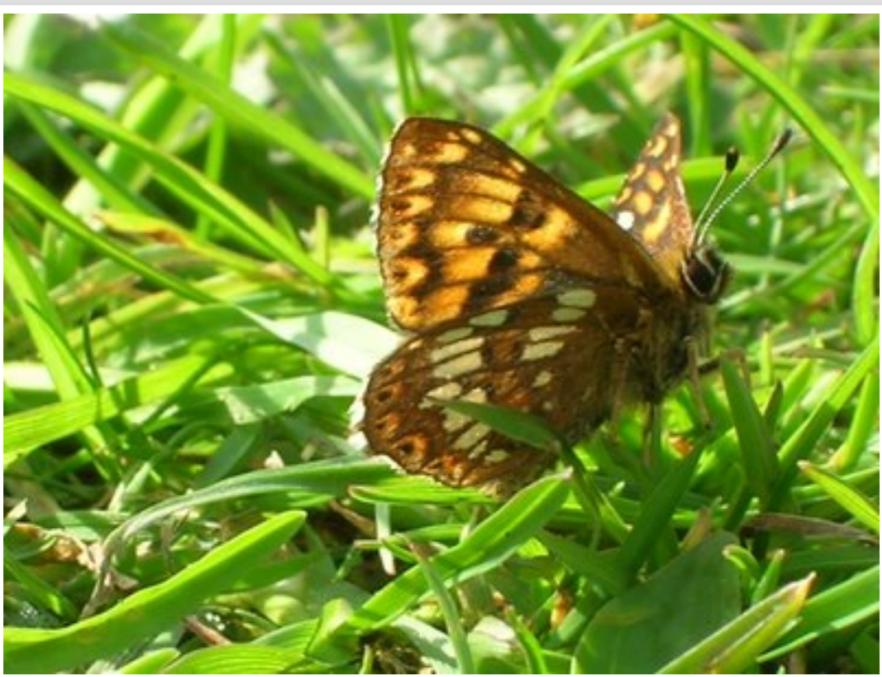


Rake Bottom

I managed to find the Northerly access route without too much difficulty, arriving at about 9.15. This should have led me onto the site via the valley floor avoiding steep ascent and descent. Unfortunately I took a wrong turn along the track and ended up unnecessarily climbing the valley side 😞 A local directed me back down the slope again, but exercise never did anyone any harm did it 😊 Along the track leading to the site my first butterfly of the day was a solitary Speckled Wood closely followed by a couple of Large Whites. Whilst descending the track leading back down the valley a couple of Skippers flashed past me without stopping and I then spotted a Small Heath. I walked almost to the end of the valley before I saw my next butterfly. This one was different and it settled a little way ahead. I went over to investigate. This was my first Duke of Burgundy, a slightly worn specimen, but a beauty none the less 😊



Duke of Burgundy Rake Bottom 26.5.2013



Duke of Burgundy Rake Bottom 26.5.2013



Disfigured Duke at Rake Bottom

There still did not seem to be many butterflies around at this time, but it was still fairly early. I found another Duke in the same area basking in the sun and spent a little time observing. I then thought I would climb to the top at the end of the valley. At the top I found a Peacock gliding around some nettles and a couple of Blues blew past me in the wind too quickly for id. When I went to descend the valley it was certainly much harder work than coming up and required some nifty footwork to avoid going for a tumble 😬 Once down on the valley floor again the action had started to hot up. There were more Dukes on the wing now ranging from fresh to ragged some engaging in aerial combat. Then I spotted my first Grizzled Skipper of the day closely followed by my first ever Dingy Skipper 😊 The more I looked, the more I saw but Dingy Skippers were certainly more numerous on the day. The Dingy Skippers vigorously chased off anything that came too close. At one stage I was confronted by the unusual spectacle of a Dingy Skipper chasing off a fluttery Cinnabar Moth which had flown into the area. I was also surprised at the amount of variation in markings on the Dingy Skippers. I found several 'hotspots' where Dukes, Dingy Skippers and Grizzled Skippers were sharing the habitat. This left me with just the Green Hairstreak to find..... You may be surprised to hear that I am colourblind, with a particular difficulty with green and brown. I can not think of many other pastimes that would be as severely handicapped by colourblindness 😬 So looking for green, brown and even red butterflies, particularly at rest, is not always straightforward. Even several Commas on a Blackberry bush in late Autumn do not stand out to me as perhaps they would to somebody else. Anyway, back to the point, finding Green Hairstreaks at rest in amongst green leaves poses a difficult challenge for me. Rake Bottom has a line of shrubs on either side at the base of the valley sides which seems to be mainly Hawthorn and Elder, on which I had been advised was the best place to find Green Hairstreaks, I went to investigate. Would you believe it, as I approached the first shrub, a small green butterfly flew up and then settled back in almost the same place at about head height. Luck was certainly on my side today, this was my first Green Hairstreak and quite a fresh one 😊😊 . I spent quite a while watching just inches from the bush, my face at the same level as the Green Hairstreaks chosen tier. I found this species quite predictable, basking at a peculiar angle (side on) for a few minutes and then fluttering around only to return to almost the same position. With luck on my side it was not long before I found another fresh looking example. I have to be honest and say that the Hairstreaks gave me the most pleasure today 😊



Green Hairstreak Rake Bottom 26.5.2013



Green Hairstreak Rake Bottom 26.5.2013



Green Hairstreak Rake Bottom 26.5.2013

I started to slowly make my way back along the valley finding several good areas on the way. In one particular area where Dukes, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers were cohabiting, I spotted some yellow fluttering looking very butterfly like about the same size as a Duke of Burgundy. On closer examination they were a couple of beautiful Speckled Yellow moths.



Speckled Yellow Rake Bottom 26.5.2013

At the other end of the valley by the gate I spotted another Duke, the only one seen at this end and a male Orange Tip also flew through. I made my way along the track back to the car feeling very satisfied and having achieved my goals for the day 😊 As always, though, I wished I could have stayed longer. Just for good measure a male Brimstone flew by as I opened the car door, just to finish off the day.

Total count for the day (conservative figures):-

Duke of Burgundy 14+
Dingy Skipper 11+
Grizzled Skipper 7+
Small Heath 2
Green Hairstreak 2
Brimstone (male) 1
Orange Tip (male) 1
Speckled Wood 1
Peacock 1
Large White 2
Cinnabar 2
Speckled Yellow 2

This brings my species tally for the year to 16

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 31-May-13 11:44 PM GMT

"jonhd" wrote:

And did any of those survive today's torrential rain?

Jon

Thursday 30.5.2013 My Local Patch

Yesterday I thought I would check on my local Small Tortoiseshell Larvae. After the heavy rain on Tuesday and Wednesday I am pleased to report that they are thriving. I have now located several more groups including one larval web at a much earlier stage. Some of the more advanced larval groups have now dispersed over several Nettle plants, perhaps 5 or 6 larvae per plant. I noticed that some of these more advanced larvae have made 'tents'

from a nettle leaf stitched together at the edge with silk. Some of these tents contain 2 larvae and from what I could see they looked close to a skin change. It will not be too much longer before the first larvae are looking to pupate. Hopefully I will be able to locate a chrysalis or two to monitor.



Young Larval web Hedge End 30.5.2013



Single Larvae in tent



There are a large number of larvae in this small area. I hesitate to estimate numbers but 1000+ would seem a conservative figure. One wonders how many will reach adulthood. In a few weeks I hope the area will have significant numbers of adults on the wing 😊 I am not sure how many eggs the average female would lay, could one female have produced all these larvae 🤔

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 01-Jun-13 12:39 AM GMT

They certainly are resilient little blighters, aren't they?!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 03-Jun-13 12:15 AM GMT

Saturday 1.6.2013 Weymouth Bay

Yesterday we spent the day with family, holidaying in Weymouth. The day was subject to a fairly predetermined itinerary, so no chance of a dedicated butterfly visit 😞 Our first port of call was the beach, for a picnic lunch. This was walking distance from base, the route taking us through a large, flower filled meadow (certainly worth a closer look later, I thought 😊) Once at the beach, the eroded cliff areas also looked good for some further exploration should the opportunity have presented itself. The weather was beautifully hot and sunny with a breeze blowing off the land toward the sea.

I took the boys off to explore. The eroded cliff area was heavily signed with warnings that it was unstable, but it looked fairly safe to me 😊 so we pushed on. There was plenty of vegetation growing, including a large amount of Vetch. I thought that there may be some blues to be found, but we were disappointed on that score 😞 What we did find surprised me, a Dingy Skipper pretty much on the beach 😊😊 However, we did not see another in this area and in fact saw no other butterflies here at all, just a solitary Cinnabar moth.



Small Copper Weymouth Bay 1.6.2013

Later, after we had left the beach, I managed to get out for an hour or so to explore on my own 😊 I headed straight for the large meadow I had seen earlier. On the way I passed through a small scrubby area where I found my first Small Copper of the year 😊 but I did not see any more. The meadow occupied a gently undulating hill behind the beach and was full of Buttercups, Pink Clover and grasses. If the wind direction had been different it would make a good stopping off point for Clouded Yellows, I thought to my self. However, I found no butterflies at all in the meadow. Just one very faded and ragged Small Tortoiseshell (in fact barely recognisable) basking on the bare earth along the edge. Despite being ragged and faded, It had more than enough energy to thwart my attempts to photograph it 😞 After being disappointed in the meadow I turned my attention to some high cliff areas to the west.



Dingy Skipper Weymouth Bay 1.6.2013



Dingy Skipper Weymouth Bay 1.6.2013

I found my way on to the coastal path which led up the cliffs. I am certainly not an expert, but I had an instinctive feeling that this area might be suitable for Wall Browns, another species that I have only ever seen once when I was about 10 or 11. Plenty of grass but also wide areas of bare rock. The cliffs here were much higher here than the ones we had explored earlier and large areas were fenced off with warnings around. There had certainly been recent subsidence, during the wetter weather earlier in the year I imagine. Between the beach and the uneroded cliff there was a large expanse of collapsed cliff which supported Rabbits, plenty of bird life and plenty of mature vegetation. I found another Dingy Skipper in this area as well as several other whites and skippers? which buzzed passed without stopping for id. Once I reached the top of the cliff I peered over the edge. There was another narrow strip of grassy area which had suffered recent subsidence about 2 metres below the cliff top. This area had buttercups growing in the fracture line. As I looked I saw a reddish brown butterfly fluttering around, I got as close as I could as it settled on a buttercup below me and opened its wings. My instincts had been spot on my first Wall brown for about 35years 😊😊 Despite the warning signs, I made my way down to this lower area and watched for a while. Strangely, there were several hats in this area, no doubt blown form the heads of hill walkers who thought better of venturing to retrieve them. I desperately tried to get a decent photo without success, they seemed determined to settle in the area of bare rock along the fracture line which was awkward for me to get close to without being in danger of getting a leg stuck down the crevasse 😬 Then a second Wall brown joined the party, they fluttered along this small area for a while before disappearing down the cliff to an inaccessible area. I did not see any more positive sightings but saw 2 more likely Wall browns which flew passed without stopping.



Wall Brown Weymouth Bay 1.6.2013



Wall Browns seen here



Wall Browns seen here

So all in all, although was not a dedicated butterfly trip, I was pretty pleased with myself. Increasing my species count for the year to 18 and finding Wall Brown for the first time in thirty odd years. Later when I checked my photos I noticed the Wall Brown has a double eye spot. I have posted the photo although it is not in focus, it was the best I could do. This would seem unusual looking at other pictures, I would appreciate comments on this please

Re: jackz432r

by Nick Broomer, 03-Jun-13 12:48 AM GMT

Hi Jack,

your Wall Brown is an aberration, there is a similar one in the species-specific albums on this site but, i`m afraid i don`t have a specific name for it, not my strong-point, but i`m sure someone on this forum will.

All the best, Nick.

Re: jackz432r

by Pete Eeles, 03-Jun-13 03:35 AM GMT

Although there is an *ab.biocellata*: "Upperside of the forewings with an extra spot below the main apical eye-spot, in cell 4 and clearly separated", I think this is:

ab.alberti: "Upperside of the forewings showing the main large apical eye-spot and an extra small one above it near the apex, also another below it in cell 3, between veins 3 and 4, half the size of the main one and also pupilled with white".

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: jackz432r

by MikeOxon, 03-Jun-13 08:55 AM GMT

For your Wall Brown aberration, I'd go for *ab.quadriocellata* Oberthur.

This form has the double-pupilled eyespot plus additional ocelli, above and below. These extra spots are visible on your photo.

There are illustrations in Emmet & Heath Vol.7 Part 1. According to Russwurm (Aberrations of British Butterflies), aberrations are rare in the Wall Brown, with the exception of the double eyespot, which is "not uncommon"

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Pete Eeles, 03-Jun-13 11:38 AM GMT

Well-spotted (!) Mike:

ab.quadriocellata: Upperside of the forewings with the main apical eye-spot containing two white pupils and showing an extra ocellus above it near the apex, and another below it in cell 3.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: jackz432r

by MikeOxon, 03-Jun-13 12:42 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Well-spotted (!) Mike:

It all goes to confirm my "dottiness" 😊

I think the whole business of Ab-naming is a bit of a game – especially amongst the Victorian collectors, when everybody wanted to attach their name to any slight variation. Of course, it can be useful for distinctive forms that occur consistently.

This one is certainly a very distinctive Wall Brown, Jack 😊

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 03-Jun-13 11:45 PM GMT

Hi Mike, Pete and Nick

Thanks for the info regarding my Wall Brown 😊 It seems like aberration is a very complicated issue 😊 I just wish I had managed to get a decent picture. Unfortunately Wall Brown are few and far between around my local patch.

Sunday 2.6.2013 My local patch and resident Small Tortoiseshell larvae

"jonhd" wrote:

They certainly are resilient little blighters, aren't they?!

Hi Jon

Yes they do seem to be thriving 😊 and thankfully the weather conditions are now much improved. I checked on them again yesterday at around 6pm. Most of the larger larvae have now dispersed even more, perhaps 2 or 3 larvae per plant. They are surprisingly well camouflaged. I think they would escape the attention of most people walking by even though they are right next to a popular bridleway. The largest larvae I believe are now in their final instar, I found a couple that showed evidence of very recent skin change. What really surprised me was that there was still at least 2 adult Small Tortoiseshell patrolling the area, like proud parents guarding their young. These adults are worn, but certainly not the most aged specimens I have seen this year, they were still very active in the late sunshine. It will be interesting to see how much longer they will survive 🤔



Small Tortoiseshell larvae showing recently shed skin and probably in its final instar

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 09-Jun-13 11:13 PM GMT

After logging my sightings from Weymouth on the Dorset BC website, I had a nice email from Bill Shreeves (Dorset Butterfly Records Officer) telling me that my Dingy Skippers were the first recorded from that grid square since the atlas of 1980-94! Chuffed with that 😊😊

Saturday 8.6.2013 My Local Patch

I took my youngest son to check on my local Small Tortoiseshell Larvae today. I had told him there were hundreds to keep his interest up, it has a tendency to wain quite quickly. When we arrived at the spot I was amazed at how much the vegetation had grown in the week since I last checked them. The surrounding grass seemed to have doubled in height. However, after 15 mins unsuccessful searching, my sons enthusiasm had run out so we headed back home 😞 I double checked all the locations as we passed them on the way back. It was only at the point where the youngest of the larvae had been last week that I managed to locate just a couple. These were each tucked up in their own small shelter constructed of a partially rolled nettle leaf secured by silk, some appearing to be ready for skin change, but another looked slightly bloated and possibly parasitised 😞 I hope that most have successfully gone to pupate and that nothing untoward has occurred. The area has now got an abundance of Thistle, looking like it will be in flower in a week or so. When the adults emerge they will seemingly have plenty of nectar sources. I am not sure really what to expect here, but I am quite excited by the prospect of a mass emergence of Small Tortoisehells 😊😊



My next task is to try and find some pupae 'in situ' . Any body reading this could perhaps give me advice on specifically where to look. How far from the ground, how far form the larval foodplant etc etc 🤔



Moth found in the garden 8.6.2013 Common Marbled Carpet?

I found this moth in the garden not sure on species but I think it could be Common Marbled Carpet. Perhaps somebody could confirm this 🤔

Re: jackz432r

by millerd, 09-Jun-13 11:21 PM GMT

Finding Small Tortoiseshell pupae in the wild is not easy. My son found one about three inches from the ground at his school the other day, under an overhanging part of a temporary classroom. The nearest nettles were over 100 metres crawl away, so if this is an example of how far they can disperse, they could end up anywhere.

Dave

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 10-Jun-13 10:41 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

Finding Small Tortoiseshell pupae in the wild is not easy. My son found one about three inches from the ground at his school the other day, under an overhanging part of a temporary classroom. The nearest nettles were over 100 metres crawl away, so if this is an example of how far they can disperse, they could end up anywhere.

Dave

Hi Dave

Thanks for that. I had better make an early start and enrol some helpers 🤔

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 12-Jun-13 12:02 AM GMT

Sunday 9.6.2012 Stephen's Castle Down, Hampshire

My original plan for Sunday was to make an early start and head for Beacon Hill at Warnford in search of roosting Common Blues and Brown Argus. After that I had planned to investigate an area, closer to home, that I can see in the distance as I drive up to Beacon Hill. Unfortunately my wife was not feeling well and asked that I just go out for a couple of hours 😞. I set off at around 8.20 under cloudy skies (as I always do when visiting Beacon Hill). As I drove, I decided at the last minute not to bother with Beacon Hill today and instead just check out this as yet uncharted new site.

Now was the time to test my instincts 😊. Whenever I drive out of Bishops Waltham, across the downs towards Corhampton (a regular route at work) I have become aware of an interesting looking area over in the distance to the left, perhaps 2-3 miles away from the main road. I had checked the satellite view earlier in the week which showed that there was a road adjacent to this site near to the tiny village of Dean. At this point I had no idea if the land was private, or indeed if the area was as good as it appeared from a distance. As is the case with all the best butterfly sites the access was poor and there was hardly any room to park, this was a good omen. I turned off the main road into a very narrow single track road, which seemed to have no passing places at all. I followed the road to the dead end where there were plenty of no parking signs on the verge as it was at a farm entrance. But the site was certainly looking very promising, it was open access land and it had a name, 'Stephen's Castle Down'. I managed to find just enough space to park the car back down the road, and set off on my adventure.



Stephens Castle Down



It was still early and there was more cloud than sun, together with a cool, stiff breeze. There is a narrow stretch of level meadow which one has to walk through before one reaches a gently sloping, east facing stretch of chalk downland. There is areas of scrub, woodland and larger areas of short downland turf but also areas of longer grass with plenty of bare ground. Judging by the information on the sign the site is currently undergoing some active removal of scrub to preserve the downland habitat. Once I got past the meadow area the first butterflies seen were 2 or 3 Small Heath that I disturbed from the longer grass. I made my way further into the site looking carefully as I went, in the hope of finding some roosting butterflies. Next up was a Male Common blue, again disturbed as I walked. It did not fly far before settling down again in the turf out of the wind. At this point there were not many butterflies evident at all and the wind showed no sign of dying away, but it was becoming a little brighter. A Dingy Skipper then flew into view and settled on some bare ground, where it stayed for quite some time.



Common Blue 9.6.2013



Dingy Skipper 9.6.2013

There is plenty of Buckthorn here and it was not long before a female Brimstone fluttered by. I followed this female Brimstone until it settled deep into some undergrowth, it was looking in remarkably good shape considering it was probably getting on for 10 months old. This was one of several female Brimstone seen during my visit all of which seemed in good shape and all settled deep in the undergrowth when they rested.



Female Brimstone 9.6.2013



Small Heath 9.6.2013



Female Common Blue 9.6.2013

As I walked it became apparent that Small Heath seemed to be particularly numerous at this site. At times it seemed as though each step I took disturbed at least one Small Heath. The other thing that was very abundant here was beetles, one particular species, Dune Chafers (*Anomala dubia*) were very active, buzzing around in their thousands. After an hour or so the butterfly action had started to increase. Small heath were still the most numerous but Dingy Skippers and Common Blues were now around in good numbers. The few female Common Blues seen were all very fresh and included one very Blue female. The males seemed to be slightly more active and slightly less fresh. The Dingy Skippers ranged from fresh to very worn examples.



Dingy Skipper 9.6.2013



Female Common Blue 9.6.2012



Grizzled Skipper 9.6.2013



Female Common Blue 9.6.2013

Next up was a Grizzled Skipper this was the only one I saw all day. In the flesh the light markings seemed more yellowy than normal but this is not apparent in the photo I managed, maybe it was an optical illusion caused by the background. As I am still using an old point and shoot camera, perhaps with better equipment I could have captured a better image. There was one particular area where there was almost too much going on. Small heaths taking off at every footstep and being intercepted by Dingy Skippers, whilst Dune Chafers seemed to be flying in every direction. I stopped for a moment around some Buckthorn Bushes and spotted a large attractive looking moth larva whilst lower down in the shade a couple of delightfully fragile longhorn moths danced with each other, one with exceptionally long antennae.



One of many Dune Chafer beetles



Yellow Tail moth larva on Buckthorn



Duke of Burgundy 9.6.2013

Just as I was starting to think about making my way home, it crossed my mind that this would make good habitat for Duke of Burgundy. Almost at that exact moment a butterfly flew past that I at first thought was another Small Heath. It settled a few feet away, as if by magic it was indeed a well worn Duke. It was the only one I saw but it certainly made the day. All this on a site which is 15–20 minutes from home and a site I had found for myself without any recommendation, my instincts had paid off 😊 I did not get to find any roosting butterflies without disturbing them first, but I shall certainly return to this site 😊

Total count for the day:-

Small Heath 31

Common Blue 16 (13 male & 3 female)

Dingy Skipper 8

Grizzled Skipper 1

Brimstone 3 (all female)

Duke of Burgundy 1

This brings my total species tally for the year to 19

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 12-Jun-13 06:13 PM GMT

Lovely account of your discovery – seeing the Duke must have made your day! I suspect that, being somewhat worn, it's possible that you arrived towards the end of the Duke season at that site – so well worth checking in May, next year.

That's exactly the kind of thing (finding local sites) that I like to do, so congratulations. Have tried a few around sunny Southampton (!), without much success – e.g. the edge of Lord's Wood, at SU405165, is supposed to be relatively fruitful... And then there's Peartree Common, and it's elusive White-Letter Hairstreal population. Southampton Common persists in suggesting that (I think) 32 species of butterfly can be found there – I'd love to challenge them on that claim – presumably, they mean in the past 150 years 😊

Keep searching – who knows what you'll find locally!

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 12-Jun-13 06:31 PM GMT

Well done Paul. I bet you were really excited 😊 . I expect this time next year we shall be asking you the best places to visit. I imagine Ashley Whitlock would be interested in your Duke sighting (or will know who the Hants recorder is, might be Mark Tutton) so it might be a good idea to pm him.

Re: jackz432r

by Mark Tutton, 12-Jun-13 07:56 PM GMT

Hi Paul

I think you have recorded your sighting of DOB on the Hants BC sightings page so it will get picked up by Ashley Whitlock who is the county recorder for this species. Good find – it was on my list of places to visit , it will be interesting to visit in peak season next year to see the extent of the colony.

Mark 😊

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 12-Jun-13 08:35 PM GMT

Excellent report. It's always nice to visit a new location and then find something interesting.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 14-Jun-13 11:26 PM GMT

Hi Jon, Pauline, Mark and David

Thanks for the comments.

I have absolutely no idea if this site is known for Duke of Burgundy, but I would be interested to know. I only managed to see half the site as I ran out of time, maybe I could have found more. I would certainly recommend this site if you get the opportunity to visit, Mark. The slopes are much more gentle than the likes of Rake Bottom, Beacon Hill and Oxenbourne Down 😊 I nearly returned today for another look 😊 but decided to go elsewhere

Yes, Mark, my sightings were logged on the Hants BC sightings page.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 17-Jun-13 12:19 AM GMT

Friday 14.6.2013 Wootton Coppice

I intended to go to Martin Down today looking for Adonis Blue, Marsh Fritillary and Small Blue, but heavy morning cloud cover, wind and cool temps put me off 😊 I did not want to waste a 2 hour round trip and find not much flying. So I elected for somewhere closer to home. I have not seen either of the Pearls before so I headed off for Wootton Coppice in the New Forest.

I thought this would also be a good opportunity to try out my new insect repellent, as I have heard ticks are quite numerous here. It seems to me quite an amusing contradiction to wear 'Insect Repellent' whilst going in search of butterflies 😊 Maybe there is a gap in the market for 'Insect Attractant' for those difficult to find species 😊 So I set off smelling like a newly prepared fence panel 😊





Keeled Skimmer



Broad Bodied Chaser

I arrived at around 11.30 the cloud cover was still total and there was a breeze, just occasionally the sun would appear for a second or two before disappearing again. Not really knowing the best places, I walked the main track from near to the carpark for an hour and a half investigating a couple of clearings off the track. In that hour and a half I saw no butterflies at all 😞 just a few fresh Keeled Skimmers and a couple of small moths. I was feeling a little disappointed at this time so I headed back toward the car checking a few of the clearings as I went. At the last clearing near to the car park amongst the now abundant dragonflies I spotted an orangey brown butterfly fluttering along at about waist height. I was pretty sure this was my first 'Pearl' 😊 but which one? 🤔 It did not settle and I found it quite difficult to keep track of it and eventually lost sight without getting a close view. I went over to the area where it was when I lost sight and had a look to see if perhaps it had settled in the grass, but I found nothing. As I stood up I saw flying straight for me, what I thought at first was a Painted Lady. As it flew purposefully passed me just above head height no more than a couple of feet away, I could see it was a very fresh Dark Green Fritillary 😊 This was a total, but very welcome surprise and something I had not expected to see at all. It flew toward a group of Birch trees which I immediately went over to in case it had settled, but I saw no more of this handsome butterfly. My initial disappointment had now turned to renewed optimism and with this the sun appeared to be showing for longer periods 😊



Common Blue Wootton Coppice 14.6.2013



Common Blue Wootton Coppice 14.6.2013



Small Boggy Clearing Wootton Coppice

I decided to investigate the smaller clearings on the other side of the track. These were much wetter than where I had got my initial glimpse. As I jumped the ditch at the side of the track, I could see a couple of these orangey/brown butterflies fluttering around within this very small boggy clearing. I approached and waited for one to settle which seemed to take ages but eventually it settled on some Bugle flowers this was my first confirmed 'Pearl' but I was still not sure which one. I managed some photos of this and another individual, both seemed quite worn specimens. One then flew out of site leaving just one, happy to stay within this small area. It was then joined by a male Common Blue, this was another surprise. This habitat did not seem to me to be Common Blue territory but there it was so I got some photos of that as well.



Pearl Bordered Fritillary Wootton Coppice 14.6.2013

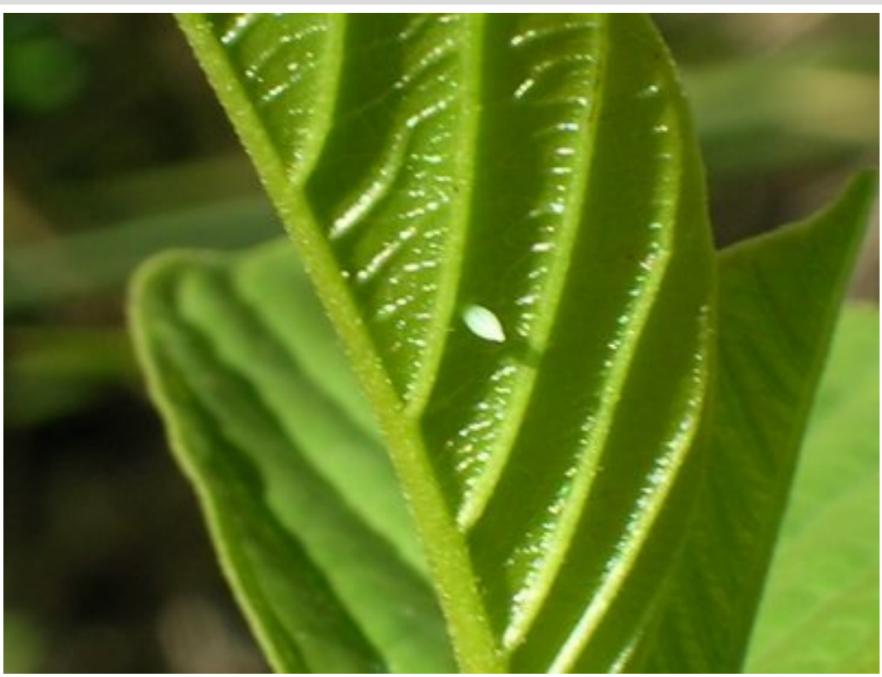


Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary Wootton Coppice 14.6.2013

By now it was quite warm and the sun was out for long spells, but I did not have long before I had to go. I thought I would have another walk down the track. There now seemed to be hundreds of Keeled Skimmers around (mostly immature males) I have never seen so many, as well as a few Broad Bodied Chasers. A Speckled Wood put in an appearance along the track and then a female Large White closely followed by a very fresh Red Admiral all managing to avoid the my camera. It was now time for me to head back to the car.



As I walked back along the track a couple of female Brimstone flew by and then a male. I thought I would have one last look at the area where I got my first glimpse of a 'pearl'. At first I could not see much but as I got further into the clearing I could see several 'Pearls' most did not look like they had any intention of stopping but one looked a little different/fresher and thankfully it settled momentarily not far away. I managed one pretty poor photo. A female Brimstone then flew into view and fluttered low along the ground and settled on a small knee high Buckthorn sapling, where it kindly deposited an egg in front of me to round off my visit 😊



Brimstone Ova

I returned to the car as the butterflies seemed to be at their most active and, of course, there was now hardly a cloud in the sky. I ended my visit feeling quite satisfied that I had at least met one type of 'Pearl' for the first time and although I had not seen great numbers of butterflies, I had seen several species including a couple of surprises. It was not until I looked through my photos later on that I realised, after studying the identification guides, I had in fact seen both Small Pearl Bordered and Pearl Bordered Fritillary 😞 Maybe somebody could confirm that my id is correct 🤔

Total count for the day:-

Speckled Wood 1

Large White 1

Red Admiral 1

Common Blue 1 male

Dark Green Fritillary 1

Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary 1+
Pearl Bordered Fritillary 3+
Brimstone 5 female & 1 male
Ticks 0 😊

This brings my total species count for the year to 22

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 20-Jun-13 11:19 PM GMT

Saturday 15.6.2013 My Local Patch

I thought today I should check on my local Small Tortoiseshell larvae and perhaps see if I could find any pupae. The wind was so strong that the grass and nettles were almost horizontal 😬 No sign at all of any larvae now apart from a couple of long since discarded webs. I was also unable to find any pupae 😞 I would imagine that the first of the new brood will be emerging within the next 2 weeks hopefully 😊 I will check them again in a few days.

Wednesday 19.6.2013 Botley Wood

I had a couple of hours spare today between a hospital appointment and parents evening. I thought I would check out my local site, Botley Wood. I spent a lot of time there last year, but this year I have only been once, having been slightly put off by regularly acquiring ticks 😬 I arrived at 2pm to hot and humid conditions, but the sunshine gradually gave way to more hazy cloud. One well worn Speckled Wood showed itself but surprisingly I did not see another butterfly 😞 This site is generally known as a late site, but I was expecting at least a Brimstone or Small Heath, they are normally a dead cert. Whilst contemplating my disappointment, my day was saved by a few moths 😊 I was pleased to see my first Mother Shipton, initially looking like a Grizzled Skipper. Two Speckled Yellow, a Silver Y and just two ticks 😞, rounded off a disappointing day.



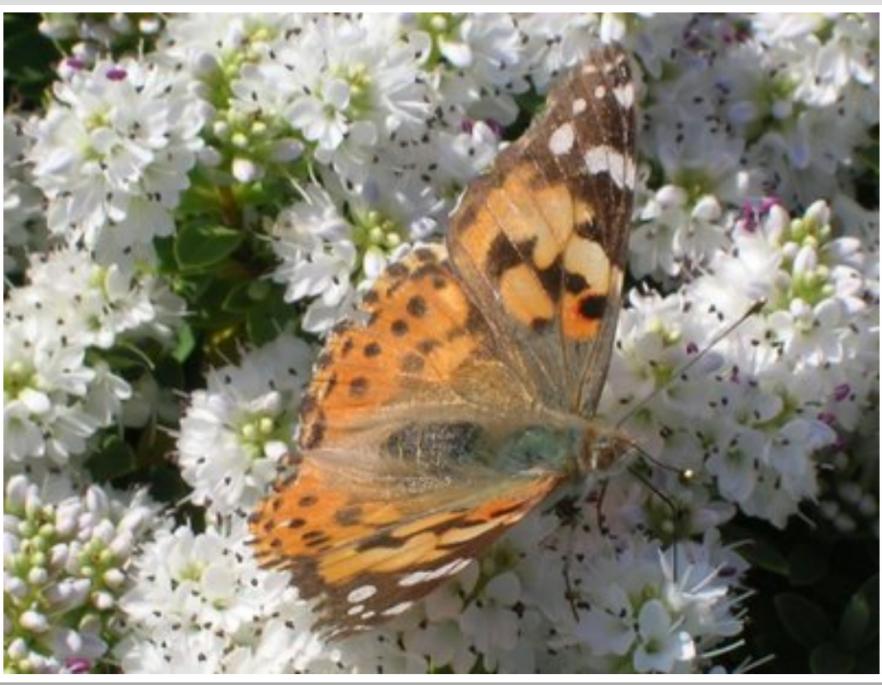
Mother Shipton 19.6.2013 Botley Wood



Speckled Yellow 19.6.2013 Botley Wood

Thursday 20.6.2013 Southampton

Whilst working at Hightown Fire Station in Southampton today, I noticed a worn Painted Lady busy nectaring on a Hebe in the carpark. This is my first for a couple of years and is hopefully a genuine individual and not an artificially released one. It was still there and hour and a half later at 6.15pm when I left. I had my camera so managed a couple of pics. This increases my species tally for the year to 23 😊



Painted Lady 20.6.2013 Southampton

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-13 11:36 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the Mother Shipton Jack 😊 I reckon that your Painted Lady must be the real deal as they've been reported on the coast for the last couple of days quite close to Southampton to.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 22-Jun-13 10:50 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Lovely shot of the Mother Shipton Jack 😊 I reckon that your Painted Lady must be the real deal as they've been reported on the coast for the last couple of days quite close to Southampton to.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel

Thanks, lets hope we see lots more Painted Ladies this year 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 23-Jun-13 11:19 PM GMT

Sunday 23.6.2013 My Local Patch

This morning I thought I should go and check my local Small Tortoiseshell Community. Last weekend there was hardly any signs that there had ever been any larvae at all. Emergence time must surely begin within the next week or so. I set off early, 7am in fact, in the hope that I could spend some time searching for pupae/emerging adults, undisturbed by passers by 😊 The location is a busy footpath/bridleway and I have had some very strange looks recently whilst scrutinising this Nettle Patch 😊

The conditions were cool, windy and overcast so I was not expecting to see much in the way of emergence. I searched as thoroughly as one can and found absolutely nothing 😞 However, I noticed that the large clump of Thistle adjacent to the Nettle patch is now in flower as are the nearby Brambles. Hopefully when the Small Tortoiseshells do emerge they will not need to fly very far for nourishment. I would like to see some freshly emerged examples, so I will try and check everyday for the foreseeable future. Hopefully the abundant nectar sources will keep them from immediately disappearing into the sunset.



Peacock larvae



Nearly fully grown Peacock larvae

After failing to find any evidence of Small Tortoiseshells, I continued walking along the path. My searching was not totally in vain, as a little further on I found a group of Peacock larvae 😊 These looked to be almost fully grown and spread over several Nettle plants. How I had not seen these last weekend I have no idea 😊 As I continued down the path I spotted several more larval webs. The further I got down the path, it seemed the younger the larvae became. Once I got to the end of the path I had a quick, unsuccessful look for roosting Large Skippers, a species I have yet to see this year. I then doubled back and rechecked all of the Peacock larvae locations, finding a couple more on the way. The smallest larvae I found were not the same colouration. I found a total of 7 larval groups 😊 There is a distinct separation between the Small Tortoiseshell and the Peacock area. I am not sure why this would be, perhaps it is coincidence or to do with the territory of the adult butterflies.



Vacated Peacock larval web with shed skins



If only I had a better camera

Not only did I find Peacock larvae, but also several largish clumps of nettle leaves attached together in the form of a shelter with a folded over tip to the Nettle plant. I was pretty sure these were Red Admiral. I carefully opened one of these shelters and sure enough there was a surprisingly large Red Admiral larva inside 😊



I am not sure if these are Peacock or Small Tortoiseshell?



Red Admiral larva

All in all quite a productive hour and a half. Perhaps anybody reading this could advise me on the details of emergence for Small Tortoiseshell. Is there a typical time of day for emergence 🤔 Does it normally happen morning 🤔 nighttime 🤔 afternoon 🤔

Re: jackz432r

by Vince Massimo, 25-Jun-13 12:27 AM GMT

Great observations Paul 😊

I would suggest that the small pale larvae are most likely to be Peacock, because eggs of this species are now starting to hatch, whereas most Small Tortoiseshell larvae should now be at an advanced stage of development (or will have pupated). However their appearance at the next moult will provide an answer.

Factors that can trigger emergence from a pupa include temperature and humidity (but also sometimes light levels in some species). I am presently

waiting for my captive Small Tortoiseshell pupae to hatch, but if my Peacocks from last year are any indication, they may hatch from very early in the morning and then throughout the day if the first two triggers are there.

Vince

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 25-Jun-13 11:27 PM GMT

"Vince Massimo" wrote:

Great observations Paul 😊

I would suggest that the small pale larvae are most likely to be Peacock, because eggs of this species are now starting to hatch, whereas most Small Tortoiseshell larvae should now be at an advanced stage of development (or will have pupated). However their appearance at the next moult will provide an answer.

Vince

Hi Vince

Thanks for the encouragement 😊

I popped out again this evening to see how things are developing. However, 7pm was particularly busy this evening with several dog walkers, groups of joggers, horses with riders, cyclists and parents with young children all making me feel somewhat self-conscious. I still managed to locate what I believe to be the larval group which were paler two days ago. They have now become black, assumingly after a moult, confirming they are in fact Peacock larvae. The larvae that appeared to be almost fully grown on Sunday are still feeding. I have also located a couple more Peacock groups. One right amongst where the Small Tortoiseshell Larvae were situated and another in a more shaded aspect on the other side of the path.



Peacock larval group 23.6.2013



The same larval group 25.6.2013

There was no sign of any Small Tortoiseshell activity. I will try and fit in some early morning visits before work.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 27-Jun-13 11:49 PM GMT

Wednesday 26.6.2013 Pitt Down, Nr Winchester

As I am working in Sparsholt, near Winchester, for a few weeks. I had a look to see what sites were nearby and came up with the Farley Mount Country Park, of which Pitt Down is a part. On Wednesday I could not resist popping in to have a look for an hour after work. The country park seems mainly wooded but has a downland area called Pitt Down. This down is unlike many chalk downland sites as it is not steeply sloping, I would describe it as gently rolling. I arrived quite late at 6pm but it was still sunny and warm 😊 Almost as soon as I walked across the carpark a flash of orange flew across in front of me. I was pretty sure this was my first Large Skipper of the year but it disappeared before I could get close enough for id. Once I got onto the down itself I was greeted by a couple of Small Heath. In the late evening sunshine these seemed much less active than I have seen elsewhere in the last few weeks.



Small Heath 26.6.2013 Pitt Down

There were also plenty of Burnet moths around but I am not sure which type. I then headed off for an area of Thistles I had spotted, where I was hoping to find Dark Green Fritillary, but these did not show themselves. I did, however, find a very worn male Brimstone. A worn Grizzled Skipper appeared next and posed for a while before disappearing at high speed. After a couple more Small Heath I decided to have a look around further along the road. On the way out of this enclosure another flash of orange appeared and settled down just out of sight in the late sunshine, near to the trees at the edge of the down. I managed to locate this individual, definitely my first Large Skipper of the year 😊



Grizzled Skipper 26.6.2013 Pitt Down



Large Skipper 26.6.2013 Pitt Down

I exited this first enclosure and walked up through the carpark and found a separate area of downland, fenced from the first. This area had lots of vetch growing and more long grass, so I was on the look out for Common Blues. By now it was nearly 7pm and I was not expecting to see much more. A couple more Small Heath flew up, disturbed from roost as I walked. Eventually, I came across a solitary, wellworn, female Common Blue roosting in typical head down pose on a grass stem. This is the first time I have managed to find a roosting common blue, but I found no others. Now it was time to head home after a pleasant hour, with my species tally for the year now up to 24 😊

Total count for the day:-

Grizzled Skipper 1
Brimstone 1 male
Large Skipper 2
Small Heath 6
Common Blue 1 female

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 01-Jul-13 11:40 PM GMT

Saturday 29.6.2013 My Local Patch

I thought I should check on my local Peacock larvae and see if there was any sign of Small Tortoiseshell activity. Saturday mornings is full up with football training with my boys, so my eldest son and I made an early visit at 7am. The last few days has seen our hayfever get steadily worse, so we set off with runny noses 😞 The grasses either side of the Bridleway are now almost at head height on my son and it is impossible to avoid brushing the grass releasing clouds of pollen 😞 Needless to say it was not long before we were both the worse for wear and returned home with nothing new to report and itchy eyes 😞 Time for a cup of tea and then off to footy.



Secluded area of Fleming Park



First Meadow Brown of the year 29.6.2013 Fleming Park

A change of venue for my youngest sons football training meant we would be at Fleming Park in Eastleigh. So rather than my normal walk along the Itchen, whilst he does his stuff, I would have to find somewhere else to go for an hour or so. Fleming Park is primarily a sporting facility, but I had often wondered what was the other side of Monks Brook and the tree line which bisects the Park. Under bright sunshine (for a change) I headed off along the edge of Monks Brook and crossed the footbridge at the bottom of Fleming Park. As soon as I crossed the Brook I spotted 2 Peacock larval webs amongst the expanse of Nettles there (it would seem to be a very good year for finding Peacock larvae). I walked back up the other side of the Brook and found my way into an area of the Park I have not been to before. This area of park has been allowed to become wilder in places with large Islands of Meadow intersected by wide mown highways which this morning were full of Saturday Joggers. I managed to dodge the joggers and found a corner which thankfully was not part of the route and was devoid of dog walkers as well. My first butterfly of the day was a pristine Small Tortoiseshell basking on a grass bank 😊 This corner of the park is quite secluded and incorporates a central 'meadow island' with a mown path up each side bounded by an embankment with abundant shrubbery offering shelter to the central meadow. I spent sometime here and found my first Meadow Brown of the year, one of 14 seen in this area and then several Small Tortoiseshells mainly nectaring upon a large Bramble bush in full bloom. After spending a while here I then set off around the rest of this wilder part of the park staying close to the perimeter. A couple more Small Tortoiseshells seen plus a beautiful beetle. There is certainly scope for further investigation of this part of the Park, I think training is back there next week so hopefully weather will still be good.



Small Tortoiseshell 29.6.2013 Fleming Park

Later on I enrolled my eldest son (as I was too busy) to go and check on our local Small Tortoiseshells to see if there was any activity. Bingo! 😊😊😊 he came back reporting at least one Small Tortoiseshell and possibly two Red Admirals nectaring ' on the Thistle patch, as he put it 'they were exactly where you said they would be Dad' 😊😊 I now just needed to decide where to head on Sunday for a proper butterflying visit 🤔

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-13 11:45 PM GMT

Sounds like you've got our sons well trained Jack 😊 It's good to explore new places and find stuff for yourself 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 02-Jul-13 11:08 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Sounds like you've got our sons well trained Jack 😊 It's good to explore new places and find stuff for yourself 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

I would like to think so Wurzel. It is just a shame that at the moment my youngest son does not seem to be able to grasp the basics, like getting home at the right time 😊 Kids..... Are girls any easier Wurzel 🤔

Sunday 30.6.2013 My Local Small Tortoiseshells Emerge

After my son had reported back at least one Small Tortoiseshell on Saturday afternoon, I was itching to go and have a look myself. After my mornings butterflying slightly further afield (details of that in the next post) I returned early afternoon almost satisfied, I just needed a dose of Small Tortoiseshell to round things off 😊 I had a shower, a bite to eat and a drink and announced to my wife that I was just popping out again and would not be long. To which I think I noticed a slight rolling of the eyes and maybe a 'tut', all of which I ignored of course 😊 I cycled the short distance to the spot to save time.



'The' Thistle patch on Saturday morning fully out unlike most Thistles I have seen over the last week
As I approached the Thistle patch I could see a group of three butterflies duelling in the sky above 😊



Small Tortoiseshell 30.6.2013 Hedge End

I counted 5 very fresh and very active Small Tortoiseshells around the Thistles as well as a Meadow Brown that had come to join in. I spent a while observing them nectaring and chasing each other around. I then went down the bridleway a little further to the point where my Peacock larvae are situated. Several more Small Tortoiseshells basked and frolicked in that small area.





Golden Ringed Dragonfly – just out of shot are a group of Peacock larvae

Then I noticed a spectacular Golden Ringed dragonfly cruising up and down the same spot. The dragonfly then settled, by strange coincidence, on Nettles right next to the very group of Peacock larvae that I have been watching. Or perhaps it was not such a coincidence, maybe he had sensed a tasty meal in the offing 😬 I have had a bumper weekend for Small Tortoiseshells, hopefully a sign that this species fortunes, in this neck of the woods, are on the up 😊 Total count for this 15 minute visit 8 Small Tortoiseshells and a couple of Meadow Browns



The group of Peacock larvae shown previously after recent skin change next to where the Dragonfly settled!

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-13 11:21 PM GMT

Not easier – just different Jack 😬 Good to see the Small Torts emerging over your way– I got 17 at Five Rivers Monday 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jul-13 08:25 PM GMT

"jackz432r" wrote:

Kids..... Are girls any easier..... ?

😬😬 I have got two lads and one girl, all grown up now. The two lads were far easier than the one girl, especially when she got to her mid teens 😬😬
😬😬

Just been catching up on your diary, great reports and photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 07-Jul-13 10:30 PM GMT

Hi Neil and Wurzel

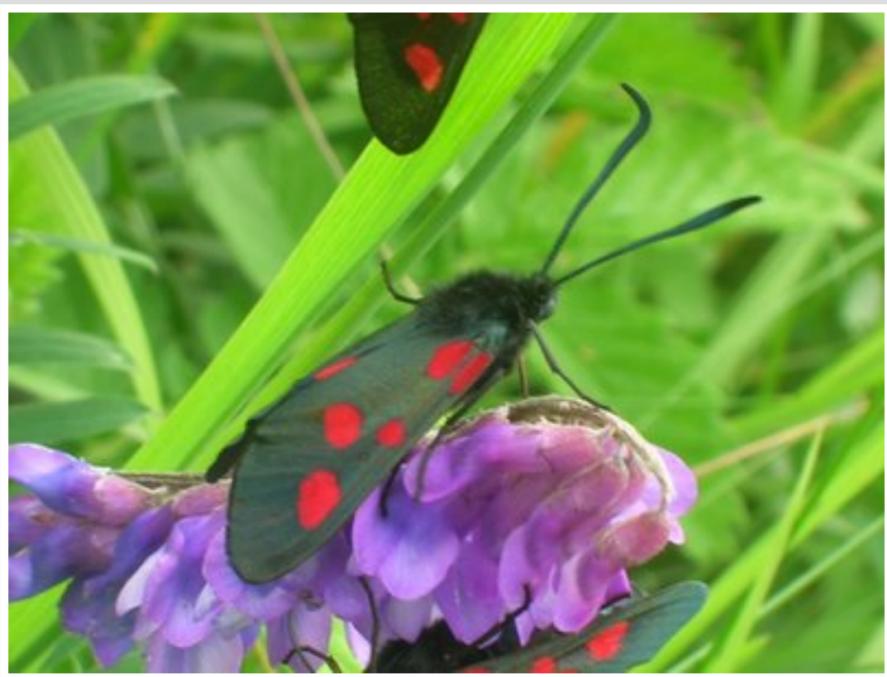
Thanks for the comments. My boys are good boys really (most of the time 😊) and by the sounds of it girls could be a whole different ball game 😊

Sunday 30.6.2013 Stephens Castle Down (last weekend)

I have become slightly indecisive of late. Even as I walked out of the front door, at just gone 8am, I had not really decided exactly where to go. I suppose Dark Green Fritillaries were on my mind. Last year I saw them for the first time, at Beacon Hill near Warnford, but that was right at the end of their season and most were well worn. I saw a surprising glimpse of an early one at Wootton Coppice a couple of weeks ago, but that was very brief. Should I go where I know they are located or should I follow my instincts and find my own spot 😊 I decided to head back to my newly found site, Stephens Castle Down. A couple of weeks on who knows what I was to find. The forecast was hot and sunny, though when I arrived there was still quite a lot of cloud around. This soon burnt off over the next hour. This time I was not under any time restrictions so I could hopefully see what the whole site had to offer 😊



Meadow Brown 30.6.2013 Stephens Castle Down



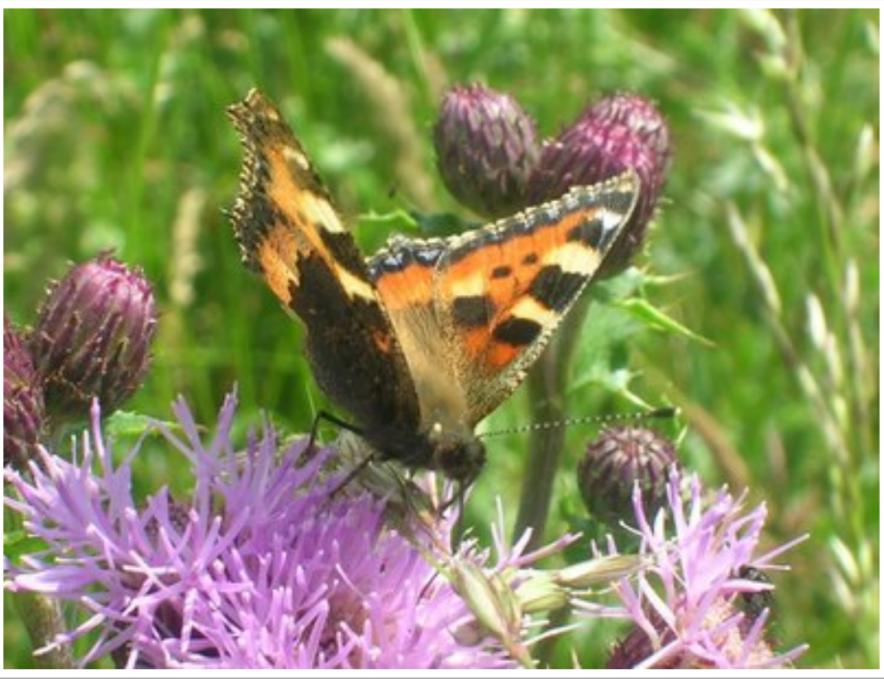
5 Spot Burnet moth 30.6.2013 Stephens Castle Down



6 Spot Burnet larva ?

Since I was there last time a wide mown path has appeared in the meadow area between the road and the down itself and the grass seems to have doubled in height. The first species seen were Meadow Brown, a few flitting around in the meadow area. As I went through the gate from the meadow on to the down I noticed 2 young Peacock larval webs and 3 single Small Tortoiseshell Larvae together amongst the Nettles there. Surely it will be a bumper season for these two species with so many larvae around, I did not see any of either last year. Once on the down itself it was apparent that the Small Heath, that were so numerous last visit, had been displaced from being 'most numerous' by the Meadow Browns and Burnet Moths. Every Burnet moth I inspected was of the 5 spot variety sometimes several to one flower head. The burnets became more numerous as the day drew on and I spotted several that appeared to be recently emerged sitting atop their empty pupal case. I also found several Burnet larvae whilst I was there, but these appear

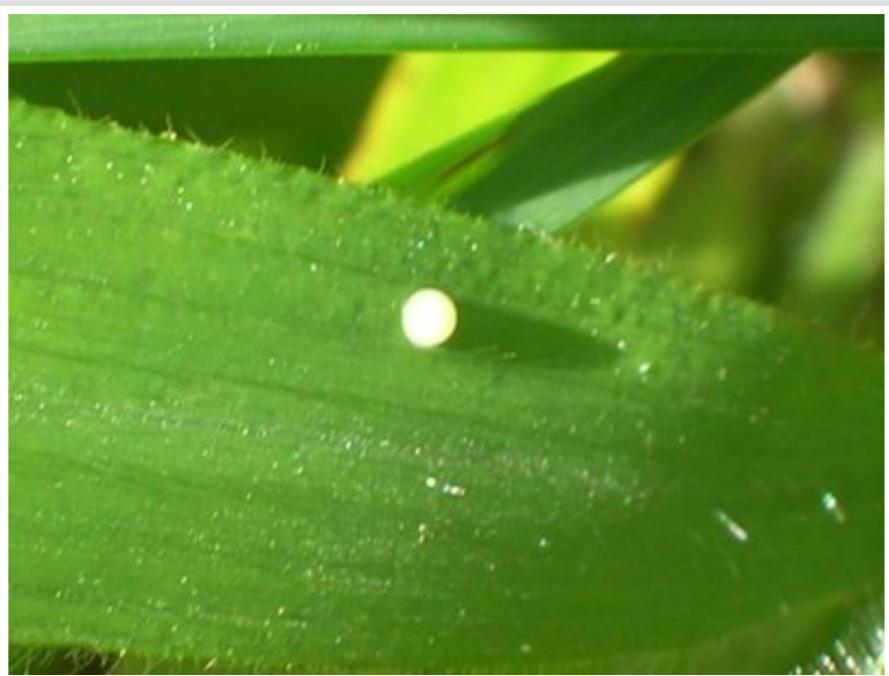
to be of the 6 spotted variety 🤔 (maybe somebody could confirm this) There were still quite a few Small Heath around but most were quite worn.



Small Tortoiseshell 30.6.2013 Stephens Castle Down



I decided first to explore the parts of the site that I did not get to last time. I made my way up to the top of the down and headed along the top towards the most northerly point. A wide strip at the top appears to have been cleared fairly recently, perhaps last year. There was no lush vegetation here apart from the Thistles which were quite abundant on this fairly recently disturbed ground. However, most of the Thistles were not yet fully in flower. The butterfly which immediately caught my eye in this area was Small Tortoiseshells of which several were nectaring on the few open Thistle flowers and basking on the expanses of bare chalky ground. Where the cleared area met the long grass of the down I made the occasional foray into the long grass. It was not long before I started to see Large Skippers some of which were surprisingly fluttery rather than whizzing around. Maybe this is a sign that they have only recently emerged or perhaps they were still warming up. Back up at the Thistle patch something altogether more graceful glided in and perched low down on foliage. As I approached I could see this was a beautifully fresh Dark Green Fritillary 😊, this species could well become one of my favourites I think 😊 Before I could crank my camera into action, it was off toward the Thistles where it nectared for a short time before zooming off again. I think if I manage to get a decent photo of one of these with my old point and shoot, I will be very lucky. I spent a little time trying to find another here but to no avail. The most northerly part of this site would seem to be unspectacular, with signs of recent scrub clearance. I am sure it will develop over the coming years.



Large Skipper egg

I made my way back along the top of the site and explored more areas on the slopes themselves. One particular area had very abundant Orchids growing. I gradually made my way back toward the areas where I had explored at my precious visit. The Large Skippers were now very numerous. One particular female seemed to be much darker than most of the others, I watched her for quite a while trying to get a decent photo, unsuccessfully. Eventually she stopped nectaring and deposited an egg so I left her alone to continue. Amongst the now abundant Large Skippers and Meadow Browns I spotted a single fresh Ringlelet (my first of the year). Every now and again I would catch a glimpse of a Dark Green Fritillary normally flying over my head.

There were surprisingly still quite a few Brimstone around, both male and females, some very ragged indeed. There is a lot of Buckthorn at this site. I examined one particular Buckthorn and located a well advanced Brimstone larva whilst an adult female deposited eggs on the same bush above my head. I was now back in the area where I had spent so much time last visit. The Dingy Skipper count was down to 3 and there was also a Grizzled Skipper flying, but these were all now quite ragged. Common Blues were also still evident but also quite ragged, particularly the females. I managed to find a Green Hairstreak, unusually at ground level, something I did not see last time.



Ringlet 30.6.2013 Stephens Castle Down



Green Hairstreak 30.6.2013 Stephens Castle Down



Ragged female Common Blue with unusual markings

Before leaving the site after several hours I decided to have one last look at the Thistle patch. I got there just in time to see a couple of Dark Green Fritillaries (before they shot off), several Small Tortoiseshells and a solitary Speckled Wood. As I left the site a mating pair of Meadow Browns landed at the side of the path.

I will certainly try and visit this site regularly throughout the season if I can. To see what other surprises it holds. When I arrived home there was a pristine Small Tortoiseshell basking in the sun on my doorstep, surely a good omen 😊

Total count for the day:-

Meadow Brown 35

Small Heath 22

5 spot Burnet 40+

Cinnabar 3

Ringlet 1

Grizzled Skipper 1

Dingy Skipper 3
Brimstone 7 (5 female + 2 male + 1 larva)
Common Blue 13 (6 female + 7 male)
Small Tortoiseshell 9 (+3 single larvae)
Peacock 5 larval webs
Dark Green Fritillary 4
Green Hairstreak 1
Speckled Wood 1
Large Skipper 28

Total species for the year 24

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-13 11:19 PM GMT

Great report Jack 😊 That Common Blue definitely looks different to me, huge black blobs (can't remember the proper term) 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 10-Jul-13 12:17 AM GMT

Saturday 6.7.2013 My Local Patch

On the face of it this weekend did not look too promising from a butterfly point of view. Saturdays are always fairly busy with one thing and another, this one perhaps more so than normal. Sunday was to be spent picnicing in the New Forest with family and friends. 'Our spot' in the New Forest is sadly never very productive butterfly wise, although very good for Dragonflies. There certainly would not be much opportunity to look for White Letter Hairstreaks.

Late in the afternoon an opportunity for a walk around my local patch presented itself. I went for a longer than normal walk covering quite a large area (5.15 till 7.45) and took in a newly found footpath. I do not think this footpath gets used much as I struggled to follow it in places. The final stretch was so overgrown with Nettles, Brambles and Thistles that my legs were ripped to shreds and red raw when I emerged 😞. Nevertheless, it was worth the effort.



Large Skipper 6.7.2013 Hedge End



Small Tortoiseshell 6.7.2013 Botley

My local Large Skippers were very evident as were Lots of Meadow Brown. One Meadow Brown was a very pale example, however I failed to get a picture of it. Along the new stretch of footpath I saw my first summer brood Comma. But it was Small Tortoiseshells that made the walk memorable. They were very numerous in several 'hotspots'. I have to say I saw so many I lost count, probably in excess of 35 covering several 'hotspots'. I returned via 'The Thistle Patch' near to where my local Small Tortoiseshell larvae were, there were still a few Small Tortoiseshells flying at gone 7.30pm 😊 Still plenty of

Peacock larvae in evidence. I also located a couple more moderately sized Elm trees, unfortunately the sunny side was on private land.

Sunday 7.7.2013 Burley/Mill Lawn, New Forest

As a family we always go to the same spot in the New Forest, as most people do. 'Our spot' is near Burley. We call it Mill Lawn, but I think it is also known as Burley Lawn. It is a fairly popular spot with a small meandering river and a large expanse of flat grass suitable for all manner of picnic activities. Today was particularly busy with large groups of which we were one. Most people stay within a couple of hundred yards of the car park/road, us included. However, a 15 minute walk and the noise of the picnic groups fades and you are on your own 😊 I always take a little time out for a wander, today being no exception, but I did not get away for a proper look until 3pm.



I am sure that I have seen Grayling here before. So I thought it would be worth a look, although to see Grayling they would have to be mightily early in this late year, I was not very hopeful. During the day the only butterflies seen were a Small Tortoiseshell, a Brimstone, a couple of Meadow Browns and couple of fleeting glimpses of Fritillary, possibly Silver Washed. At 3pm I headed off roughly in the direction of where I think I have seen Grayling. A few Large Skippers, Meadow Browns and huge numbers of Keeled Skimmers (this is a good site for Dragonflies/Damselflies) The further I got from base the boggy the ground became, in fact it became quite hard going and I was only dressed in picnic attire 😊 The habitat, aside from being boggy, was mainly coarse grass and Gorse but eventually I started to spot the occasional heather/heath. Just as I was thinking of giving up and returning to base I thought I saw a flutter of blue low down a few metres away. I stood for a while and scanned the area, not seeing anything.



Silver Studded Blue 7.7.2013 Burley



Silver Studded Blue 7.7.2013 Burley



Silver Studded Blue 7.7.2013 Burley

Then I spotted blue again and this time I was 100% sure, but it did not look like any 'Blue' I had seen before. I waited an age before it settled and my approach entailed trying to keep one eye on the butterfly and one eye on my footing, not easy. Once I got close I could see this was my first ever Silver Studded Blue 😊😊. What a charmingly beautiful little butterfly this is 😊. I stayed in this area for some time. Once I had got my eye in I saw several more, all seemingly content to stay in quite a small area, mostly very fresh males. I felt I could not leave this spot until I had found a female, which I eventually did. I returned to base feeling quite pleased with myself and with two wet muddy feet 😊

This brings my species tally for the year to 25

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 19-Jul-13 12:21 AM GMT

9-12.7.2013 Sparsholt Nr Winchester (last week)

For the last few weeks I have been working in Sparsholt, Nr. Winchester. The place has close involvement with the environment, countryside, conservation and farming, it also has extensive grounds. I discovered in my last week there that there are areas within its grounds that are havens for butterflies. So my lunch times for the last four days of my visit were spent enjoying the habitat and the hot sunshine 😊

Tuesday was my day of discovery and I was amazed at the numbers of butterflies. However, I was not prepared and did not have my camera handy. The area is a very wide, sheltered grassy band surrounding sports pitches surrounded by farmland and countryside.

Ringlet and my first Marbled Whites of the year were most numerous as were Large Skipper and Meadow Brown. There were also several very fresh Large White, a few Small White and good numbers of Small Tortoiseshell. A Painted Lady also put in an appearance (my 2nd of the year 😊) as did a couple of Red Admirals. In the course of my working day I also spent quite a bit of time working within view of the sunny side of three large, profusely flowering Lime Trees. I must admit to being quite distracted by the constant flow of butterflies that were visiting the trees to feed and bask. Lots of Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admiral, Fresh Large White and Small White as well as a couple of Large Skipper

On **Wednesday** I could hardly wait for lunch time and this time went prepared. This time I managed a few photos. Similar numbers as Tuesday but no Painted Lady and also strangely no Large Whites seen. Marbled Whites seem to have increased in numbers and there were more Small Tortoiseshells about.



Marbled White 10.7.2013 Sparsholt



Large Skipper 10.7.2013 Sparsholt

On the way home I had an hour or so spare so thought I would try and find the BC Yew Hill reserve. It is on my route and not far away. Unfortunately, I forgot my map and had to guess the way. I took a wrong turning along the track and ran out of time. Along the track I saw similar species seen during the day with the addition of Green Veined White, so all was not wasted. Maybe I would try for Yew Hill at the weekend.

On **Thursday** I could not resist spending my lunchtime there again. This time amongst all the Marbled Whites and Ringlets I spotted my first Gatekeeper of the year, just one. Also flying was what at first looked like another Marbled White, but on closer examination was found to be a Ringlet with very pale (almost white) hind wings. Unfortunately my camera batteries gave up just before I spotted it, of course I had no spares to hand 😞. I watched it for a while before it disappeared over the hedgeline.



Gatekeeper 11.7.2013 Sparsholt



Ringlet 12.7.2013 Sparsholt

Friday was to be my last day here so I made the most of it with one last visit to the butterfly area. Hoping to catch a glimpse of the slightly unusual Ringlet and hopefully get a picture this time, I had spare batteries. I had a close look at a Thistle patch which had previously been out of reach. There were now a handy set of vehicle tracks through the long grass right to the spot. I stood in the middle for quite some time and counted 9 Small Tortoiseshell as well as several Marbled Whites, Meadow Brown and Large Skipper. I did find the unusual Ringlet eventually flying in the same location as before, but it would not settle at all and eventually flew out of sight. Today the Gatekeeper count was up to 4.



Small Tortoiseshell 12.7.2013 Sparsholt



Marbled White 10.7.2013 Sparsholt

I have also been told that there are Small Blues within the grounds, but these will have to wait for another visit.

Marbled White and Gatekeeper bring my species count for the year to 27

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 20-Jul-13 12:08 AM GMT

Friday 12.7.2013 Pitt Down Nr Winchester(last Friday)

I managed a late visit to try again for Dark Green Fritillary, this would be my last opportunity to call in after work. I arrived at about 5.45pm and found lots of butterfly activity on the eastern side of the site. Large numbers of Marbled White and Ringlet together with Small Skipper and Meadow Brown. Still plenty of Large Skippers and a few Small Heath. The Dark Green Fritillaries were abundant but inaccessible, most were busy in a Thistle patch which was way off the track.



Marble White 12.7.2013 Pitt Down

I think I saw a couple of Silver Washed Fritillary in flight but I could not be sure. A fresh Comma appeared, challenging the Dark Green Fritillaries for the 'gracefulness' trophy. There were also a few fresh Gatekeeper in evidence. By now time was getting on, the sun was much lower in the sky and things were starting to calm down a little.



Dark Green Fritillary 12.7.2013 Pitt Down



Dark Green Fritillary 12.7.2013 Pitt Down

So I moved round to the western side of the site. Much of the same action going on there with the addition of some Small Tortoiseshells. I had not previously explored as much of this side of the site but a little further on I found 'the spot' 😊😊. The area had several clumps of Privett, profusely flowering and very pungent, all right next to the track. At the first clump I counted 7 Dark Green Fritillaries 😊 including one very fresh female. Most of the males were looking a little worn but some were still quite fresh. They somehow seemed much less active at this time of the evening. I spent quite a while in this particular area. As the path is right next to the bushes here, it was easy to get up close and personal. I managed a few photos (probably the best I can expect with my camera) 😊



Dark Green Fritillary 12.7.2013 Pitt Down



Dark Green Fritillary 12.7.2013 Pitt Down

I am struggling to keep my diary up to date at the moment, this post only brings me up to a week ago 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 21-Jul-13 11:39 PM GMT

My Local Peacock Community

On Saturday 29.6.2013, whilst checking on my locally abundant Peacock larvae, my eldest son asked if we could take some larvae home 🤔 I was initially a little reluctant and explained the reasons to my son. However, once I thought about it, I thought maybe 2 or 3 could be reared at home to help judge the time of emergence for the rest. So I then agreed it might be a good idea to take a couple of nearly fully grown ones and release them again once emerged. Hopefully my son and I could witness the emergence and get an advanced warning of stirrings in the wild.

We took 3 fully grown larvae from the same group. These were the most advanced we could find. Although I have potted Nettle at home, the plants are quite small. So I opted for cut Nettle in water to feed them and contained them within a collapsible netting rearing cylinder. I tried to put them in a position that would be as similar as possible to where they came from, with perhaps a little more shelter. This was Saturday morning, by Monday evening 2 of the larvae had already suspended themselves ready for pupation 😊 By Tuesday morning they were pupae 😊 On Wednesday the third had suspended itself. The strange thing is that all three pupated on the same leaf right next to each other, is this normal? 🤔 There was plenty of space and plenty of other leaves to choose from.



Captive Peacock pupae 5.7.2013 captive



Captive Peacock pupae 5.7.2013



Two empty pupal cases and a third within a day of emergence 16.7.2013

On Tuesday 16.7.2013 I had not checked the pupae for 48 hours. When I did check early in the evening, I was surprised and delighted to find 2 pristine Peacock butterflies 😊😊 The remaining pupa had darkened and the wing patternation was evident. I put a nectar source in for the adults and removed the remaining pupae to photograph indoors as it was now dark outside. By the timing of the others I knew this was likely to be emerging in the next 24 hours. By the time I returned from work the following day the action was over. Needless to say we both missed all three emergences 😞 My son and I released the three adults, 2 of which immediately dispersed in the same direction. The third stopped at my conveniently placed, potted Buddleia allowing me a parting photo, before dispersing in the same direction as the others 😊



Our last Peacock taking refreshments before departing 17.7.2013

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-13 10:34 PM GMT

Sorry you missed the "birth" Jack - you should have announced it on an easel 😊 Great shots of the cases and the finished product 😊 . I know what you

mean about keeping up to date I struggle too – but I look on it as a good sign as it means you're obviously getting out and seeing loads 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Padfield, 22-Jul-13 10:51 PM GMT

Yes, great pictures of your little trio of peacocks!

If you do it again, I wonder if it would be worth leaving a web-cam running while you are at work. There's plenty of good freeware for setting up live feeds and most software that comes with webcams has motion sensitive triggers (I've used this in the past to photograph birds at my bird table, foxes in the garden and even my dog, to see what she got up to when I wasn't there).

Guy

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 26-Jul-13 10:36 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Sorry you missed the "birth" Jack – you should have announced it on an easel 😊 Great shots of the cases and the finished product 😊 . I know what you mean about keeping up to date I struggle too – but I look on it as a good sign as it means you're obviously getting out and seeing loads 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel and Guy

Like you say Wurzel, it is better than having nothing to write about, but I am now nearly 2 weeks behind. I am even considering writing things out of sequence 😊

Thanks for the suggestion Guy 😊 I am currently nurturing a single Green Veined White egg, laid on Garlic Mustard in the garden.

Re: jackz432r

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-13 10:52 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

It is certainly a challenge to keep up to date at the minute. What I have started doing is writing my report in Word, usually a bit at a time, and then copy and paste and add photos later. I find it easier than trying to do the lot in one go. It helps that I don't do much post-processing on my photos, usually just a crop and resize before posting.

Cheers,

Neil F

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 30-Jul-13 11:18 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Thankfully I do not edit my pictures at all other than adjusting the file size for posting, if I did I do not think I would ever get round posting anything. How others find the time I do not know.

I am now completely behind and out of sync with my postings 😊 , so in an effort to catch up here is a few bringing my local patch/garden 'goings on' up to date.

Saturday 20.7.2013 In The Garden

At 9am on Saturday (weekend before last) morning I moved my small potted Buddleia. I moved it from an area which is shaded in the morning and sunny in the afternoon, to an area that gets full sun first thing and is in shade by mid pm. Within 5 minutes there was A Small Tortoiseshell engrossed in feeding together with a Small Skipper (the first time I have seen this species in the garden) 😊 Not only that but a pristine Holly Blue flew in and perched just above it on some Virginia Creeper. All three in view from the kitchen, whilst I enjoyed a cup of tea 😊 Later in the day some fluttering activity from a Green Veined White in the shadier part of the border, prompted me to put some potted Garlic Mustard in the spot. The butterfly continued to flutter around there, occasionally settling.



Green Veined White egg on Garlic Mustard in the garden

A bit later on I made a thorough check of the Garlic Mustard and found one egg which I shall tend over the coming days. A pristine male Brimstone also visited later on. Having got used to the gradually fading yellow of the Brimstones over the last few months, the appearance of a newly emerged individual is a pleasant shock to the system 😊 There seems to be little, if any gap in the cycle between the previous and the next generation.

Sunday 21.7.2013 My Local Patch

During the height of the season last year I managed to neglect my local patch. So in an effort to make amends I took an afternoon walk during very hot and sunny conditions between 3pm and 5pm around my favourite local footpath. This resulted in my best ever species count for the area, with sixteen species seen 😊, including two for the first time here 😊 😊.

After the emergence of captive Peacocks at home, I was keen to see if there was any evidence that they had also emerged along my local footpath. Unlike the Small Tortoiseshells which I found right where the earlier larvae had been, the Peacocks were found in a position away from the site of the larvae. I counted 15 in total, all pristine and most found 'resting' in partially shaded positions with wings firmly shut, almost as if it were too hot for them (as it apparently was for all the other footpath users. Unusually I did not see another sole the whole time I was out). There were still a few Small Tortoiseshells around but now looking fairly worn and also mostly inactive and resting. Two of them seemed to be following each other in flight and then would land close to each other on Nettles and one appearing to chase the other on foot around the nettle plants. I thought a pairing might be imminent, but as I watched they eventually went their separate ways. Lots of whites around mostly flying and unable to stop for id, but at least on of each type seen. Ringlet and Marbled White appeared along the path, the first time I have seen them there. Unfortunately the Meadow that is next to the path at one point has been cut since I last went there, this is where the Marbled Whites have appeared. Small Skippers have now all but taken over from the Large Skippers. Single individuals of Red Admiral, Small Copper and a Holly Blue, but the Star of the day was the Gatekeepers.



Gatekeeper 21.7.2013 Hedge End

I counted 54, but I that is a very conservative count. I tried hard to get a Gatekeeper open wing shot, but failed miserably. It was probably too hot, they seemed to settle in the shade and give one or two brief flashes of upperwing before shutting up shop. I saw several mating pairs including one that had managed to get themselves wedged either side of a fern frond. Caught 'by the bits' so to speak, one above and one below. I considered whether I should try to free them, concerned that I may cause the pairing to fail. I decided to help out and very carefully freed them. Thankfully, they stayed coupled and flew to another perch.



Pair of Gatekeeper after rescuing



Comma 21.7.2103 Hedge End

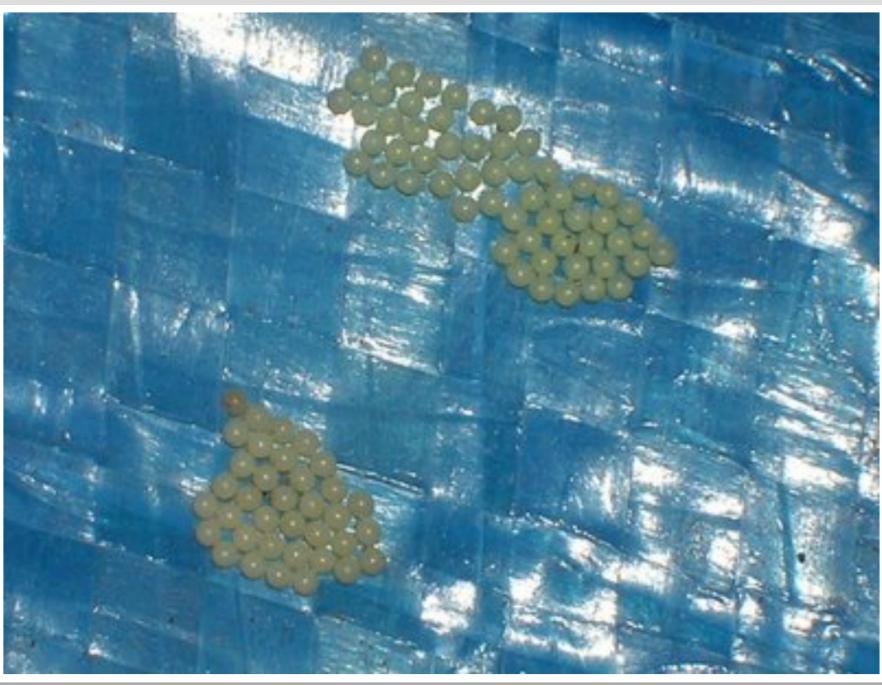
Also seen Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and several Commas.

Total count for the day:-

Gatekeeper 54
Meadow Brown 22
Speckled Wood 8
Marbled White 7
Ringlet 3
Small White 3+
Large White 1+
Green Veined White 1+
Small Skipper 26
Large Skipper 3
Holly Blue 1
Small Tortoiseshell 5
Red Admiral 1
Peacock 15
Comma 6
Small Copper 1

Saturday 27.7.2013 In The Garden

What with all the hot weather we have a paddling pool set up in the garden for the kids. In an effort to avoid having to keep refilling it we have covered it when not in use. The cover was left off on Friday evening and left rolled up alongside the pool. When I covered it back up on Saturday I was surprised to find 2 Buff Ermine moths tucked up inside and even more surprised to find a large batch of eggs. I am assuming these were laid by one of the moths. These have been laid directly on the cover and I can not cut the section from the cover. So I am monitoring them daily to try and catch them hatching so I can transfer them to suitable foodplant and rear some through. I understand they feed on Virginia Creeper of which I have a plentiful supply.



Buff Ermine egg cluster laid on pool cover

Tuesday 30.7.2013 In The Garden

My eldest son has decided to sleep in a tent in the garden for the last few nights. This has necessitated leaving the outside light on overnight. When I came in from work tonight I noticed a handsome moth perched just outside the window 😊 When I went out to investigate I found several more. Obviously attracted by the light overnight. Perhaps I should leave it on every night 😊



One of several of this species



I just need to identify them all now.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-13 09:36 PM GMT

Just catching up after a few days break – great reports and shots especially the penultimate moth 😊 I reckon you should definitely keep that light on 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 05-Aug-13 11:04 PM GMT

Sunday 28.7.2013 Stephens Castle Down

I was considering several different options last Sunday. I could go to Oxenbourne Down for Silver Spotted Skippers and try and repeat my success of last year at this site. Last year I managed, by a complete fluke and beginners luck, to get Silver Spotted Skippers on what seemed to be their best day of the season 😊. Or should I try one last time to find my own White Letter Hairstreaks after several unsuccessful attempts this year. Or maybe I should revisit my newly found local site to see what it has to offer a few weeks on from my last visit. The habitat is certainly similar to Silver Spotted Skipper territory, but I would not know the Sheeps Fescue grass if it came up and slapped me round the face 😊 I chose the latter and headed off at 8.15 to try and get a good few hours in. The conditions were much cooler than that of recent days perhaps 10 degrees cooler than the previous afternoon together with a good helping of cloud and breeze. The first thing I noticed when I arrived was that the meadow at the bottom of the site has been cut. Last time I visited this was full of Meadow Browns. Once I entered the site proper there was not actually much activity at all, even the Meadow Browns were not flying much. A couple of Marbled White took to the air briefly, but it was still only 8.30 and pretty cool, so plenty of time.

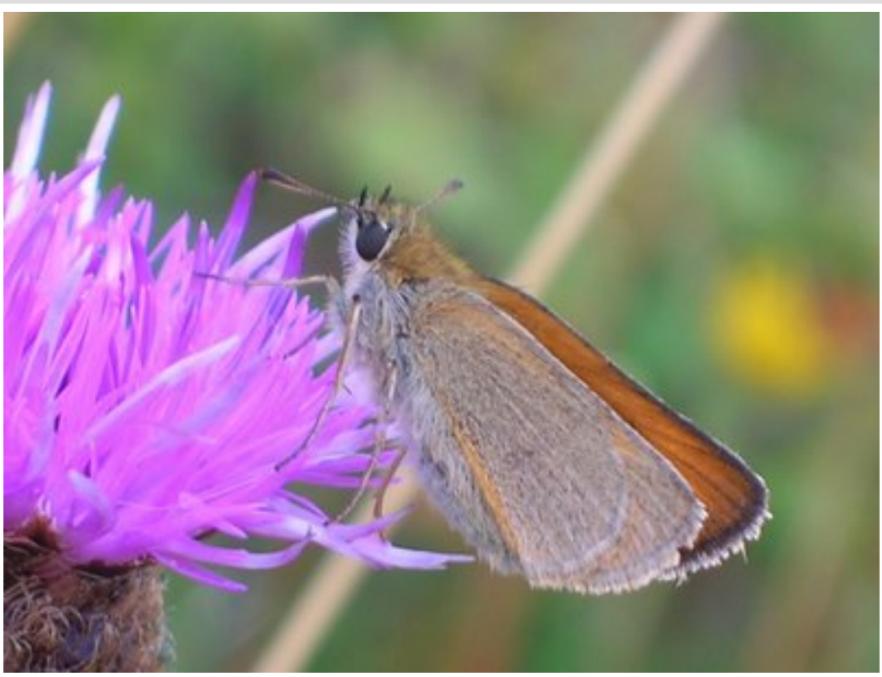
The first noticeable butterfly activity was the Whites, seemingly every bush I walked past would hold several whites (Small and Green Veined variety) all warming in the sun. Many would flutter up for a few moments only to resettle very quickly and resume the warming process. The numerous Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites and Ringlets had a similar idea and many were seen warming at the top of grass stems. I thought this a good opportunity to get close to species that I do not normally get the opportunity to, like Small and maybe Essex Skippers. After about an hour I came across a spot where there seemed to be lots of Small Skippers roosting. Some were mid way up grass stems but most were on flower heads. I managed to get some interesting photos, something I find difficult with this species normally with my basic equipment. I was able to study these roosting butterflies for quite sometime. Even when the sun did come out it was still fairly cool and only a few of the Skippers took to the air but settled again fairly quickly. It was not long before I found my first confirmed Essex Skipper (my first of the year 😊) this was followed by several more during the morning.



Essex Skipper



Roosting Small Skipper



Roosting Small Skipper

By now it was starting to warm up properly and more butterflies were on the wing. A flash of blue in the distance was too brief to get id, but Chalkhill Blues were on my mind and were something I expected to see here by now. In a sheltered area of longish grass a small greyish butterfly caught my eye. I moved in closer to take a look, trying not to take my eye away from its position. What I thought initially to be a blue of somekind was in fact my first Brown Argus of the year 😊 Again not very active in the occasional sun, giving me plenty of time to get a picture. This must be a second brood Brown Argus as it was quite fresh, but it is a species that I did not see here earlier in the year and indeed was the only example I saw on this visit. A few Common Blues started to appear, mostly males, but still no sign of Chalkhill Blues.



Brown Argus



Brown Argus



Common Blue

I thought I should go and check the area where I saw Dark Green Fritillary a few weeks ago. Much lusher growth at the top of the site now and many of the Thistles were now past their best. After quite some time I spotted the unmistakable (by its size) sight of a female Dark Green Fritillary cruising in to take nectar from the Thistles. Further along the top ridge Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshell were much in evidence as well as lots of Whites of all three varieties. Another female Dark Green Fritillary and a male also put in an appearance. One particular Small Tortoiseshell had obviously had a pretty hard time with large chunks of wing missing.



Female Dark Green Fritillary



Ragged Small Tortoiseshell

Knowing that Silver Spotted Skippers like hot temperatures, I had left my search for that species till last. I headed for the areas where I thought there maybe a chance, but after a long time searching and waiting I had to admit defeat. However, a Red Admiral and several Brimstone had now shown their colours. I thought that it was time I should be leaving as I had been there for over 4 hours already. I sat down on the slopes for a while just enjoying the peacefulness. As I sat a rather worn Small Heath came and settled next to me, the only one of the day. Then a Skipper buzzed in and settled just too far away for a good view 😬 My eyes probably lit up and my heart jumped as I moved closer half expecting it to be a Silver Spotted Skipper.....Unfortunately it was not 😞, it was a very worn Large Skipper, the only one of the day. I left feeling slightly disappointed that Chalkhill Blue are obviously absent from this site, but pleased to have found Essex Skipper and Brown Argus increasing my species tally for this site to 23 😊

Total count for the day:-

- Marbled White 22
- Gatekeeper 34
- Meadow Brown 16
- Ringlet 12
- Small Skipper 27+
- Essex Skipper 4+
- Large White 7
- Peacock 8
- Large Skipper 1
- Small Heath 1
- Brown Argus 1
- Red Admiral 1
- Dark Green Fritillary 3 (2 female & 1 male)
- Brimstone 5 (4 male & 1 female)
- Green Veined White 4+
- Small White 8+
- Common Blue 7 (1 female & 6 male)
- Small Tortoiseshell 7

Brown Argus and Essex Skipper together with Chalkhill Blue (seen on visits which I have yet to post) brings my species tally for the year up to 30. However, so far I have managed to completely miss all the summer woodland species 😞 They may have to wait till next year now.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 06-Aug-13 10:04 PM GMT

Saturday 3.8.2013 Eggs In The Garden

When I get in from work my first job is to check on the Buff Ermine eggs which were laid on the pool cover last week. On Thursday I was pleased to find that the first batch had hatched 😊 and there was a cluster of small pale larvae devouring their empty shells. I was concerned I may miss this event and the larvae might go hungry as they are some way away from the nearest food source. Over the weekend several more batches have hatched. I have

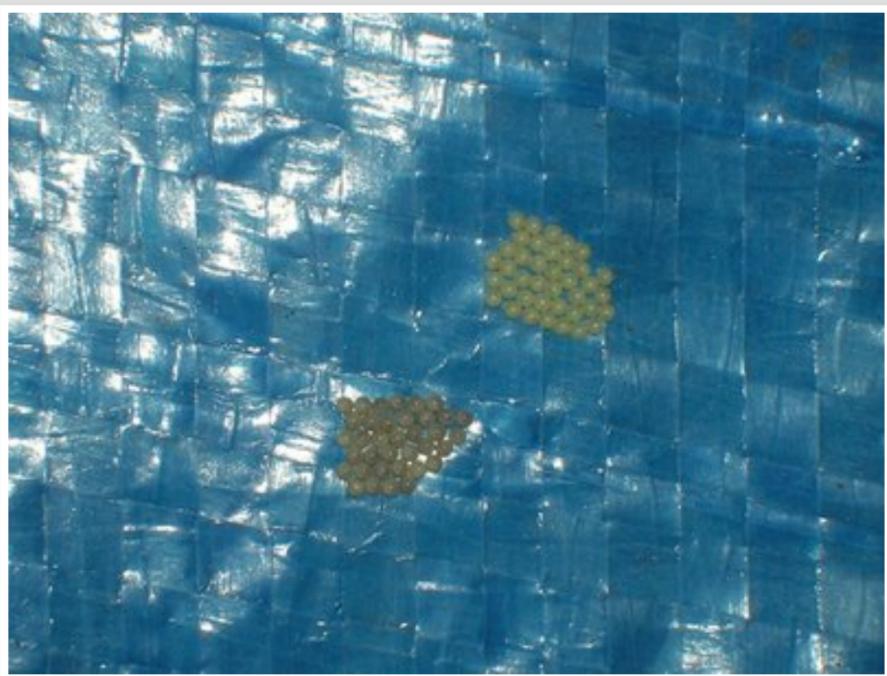
transferred a few of these to containers with fresh Virginia Creeper, but most I have distributed around the garden on various Virginia Creeper in various aspects of the garden. I am not sure if the larvae live in groups or singly, but have distributed them in groups of similar numbers to that in which they were laid.



One batch of Buff Ermine eggs part way through hatching, with some still to hatch. The neighbouring group would hatch the following day.



The largest group hatching



Two groups showing differing appearance prior to hatching

The Green Veined White egg that was laid on Garlic Mustard seems to have disappeared. There are nibble holes in the leaves but I can find no trace of any larvae.

Watch this space

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-Aug-13 12:57 AM GMT

Sunday 4.8.2013 Oxenbourne Down

On Sunday, for once, I was not indecisive at all 😊 In an attempt to repeat my success from last year, I was heading for Oxenbourne Down for Silver Spotted Skippers. As I drove along the coast a clear blue sky was evident over the water, but lots of cloud landward. I started early and was on site by 8.30, at which point it was cool and breezy with no sign of sun. As I entered the site I disturbed a couple of Chalkhill Blues which fluttered briefly but

soon settled back down. Other than that there was nothing flying at all, it was too cool/windy even for the Meadow Browns 🤔 I set about looking for some Roosting butterflies. After disturbing a Painted Lady from his roost I found an area of long grass with several Chalkhill Blues, a Common Blue, a bee of some sort and a Cinnabar Moth larva all almost in the same frame (if I had a better camera of course 😄) I spent a while in this area and found a few more Chalkhill and Common Blues in the vicinity. It was not until gone 9am that the sun briefly appeared and with it the whites came to life. Then at almost exactly 9.30 all of a sudden the roosting blues I had been watching all seemed to open their wings together, a few more brief sunny spells and they were off. The Small and Essex Skippers also took to the air. Time to find some Silver Spotted Skippers I thought to myself 😊

I did not have to wait too long before one buzzed in and settled just to the side of the track 😊 The sun disappeared at almost the same time and with it the wind increased. This was the story of the day with the Silver Spotted Skippers really, short bursts of flight punctuated by long spells sheltering from the wind. The first few I saw were all males but a female appeared on the other side of the track a little later. Last year I found this site good for Small Copper, this year was no different with several seen. Several times during my visit I had Small Copper and Silver Spotted Skipper posing together for the camera. The Silver Spotted Skipper here seem to be pretty much confined to this open short turf area either side of the track. In this area also seen Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Marbled White, Dark Green Fritillary, Common Blue, Gatekeeper, Small Skipper, Large White, Small White, Green Veined White, Small and Essex Skipper. In the area near the entrance, as last year the Chalkhill Blues were very numerous. I felt slightly sorry for the newly emerging females of which I witnessed some being accosted by several males even before their wings had expanded.



Silver Spotted Skipper 4.8.2013 Oxenbourne Down



Silver Spotted Skipper 4.8.2013 Oxenbourne Down



Just as I was about to move out of this area along the ridge I bumped into another butterflyer. He was making his first visit to this site and hoping to find his first Silver Spotted Skippers and was asking me to advise the best areas. I confirmed he had found the spot and gave him the benefit of my small amount of experience. Hi Nick, I am still baffled as to how you knew who I was, but it is always a pleasure to meet others on a similar mission, I hope I was of some help and that you managed to get some decent shots.



Common Blue 4.8.2013 Oxenbourne Down



Small Copper 4.8.2013 Oxenbourne Down

After a while chatting I moved on along the ridge which is slightly different in feel. As I rounded the corner by the broken metal gate I was confronted by a couple of female Silver Spotted Skippers, a Silver Washed Fritillary, a Small Copper and several Gatekeepers all nectaring. I did not see Silver Washed Fritillary here last year and this year this is my first having missed out on all summer woodland species so far. Moving along the ridge I saw a couple more Silver Washed Fritillary and a couple of Red Admirals. Whites were very numerous in this area mainly Small and Large variety, I do not think I have ever seen so many in one small area. Small and Essex Skippers as well as Peacock completed the species count for the day.



Mating Small Whites 4.8.2013 Oxenbourne Down



Gatekeeper 4.8.2013 Oxenbourne Down

On my way back I bumped into two more chaps looking for the Silver Spotted Skippers. One of whom used to manage the site when it had restricted access. 'Pauline' if you are reading this he confirmed to me that the colony was indeed an introduction/reintroduction organised by Mr Oates. Apparently they disappeared after the introduction for several years and then suddenly reappeared. He also informed me that White Letter Hairstreaks have been spotted at this site 😊, something to look out for next year 😊. I managed to increase my species count for the year to 32. Most notable by its absence at this visit was Brimstone. I saw none at all, whereas last year there were plenty 😞

Total count for the day:-

Silver Spotted Skipper 10 (3 females & 7 males)
Chalkhill Blue 150+
Meadow Brown 25+
Small Copper 7
Small Skipper 30+
Common Blue 8
Painted Lady 1
Gatekeeper 30+
Large White 25+
Small White 12
Green Veined White 6
Ringlet 1
Comma 1
Small Heath 3
Red Admiral 3
Silver Washed Fritillary 3
Essex Skipper 1 (confirmed)
Peacock 2
Dark Green Fritillary 2 (1 male & 1 female)
Marble White 8

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 08-Aug-13 01:58 PM GMT

Hi Paul – great to hear that the number of SSS appears to have doubled from last year. The person you refer to is the same one who told me they were introduced – let's just hope they can hang on in there as a few years ago there were dozens of them on the lower slopes of Butser too, but haven't seen any for a while now.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-13 06:03 PM GMT

Great read and shots Jack- especially the up close and personal shot of the Silver Spot - brill that is 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by ChrisC, 08-Aug-13 08:16 PM GMT

nut tree tussock I think, willow beauty, black arches and coronet for your moths

Chris

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-Aug-13 11:14 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel
Thanks for the comments 😊 I have now finally caught up with postings..... well almost 😊 I have had to leave out several unsuccessful visits searching for White Letter Hairstreaks to be able to do it though 😞

Hi Chris
Thanks for the moth ids, I can always rely on you 😊

Here is another one for you, there were loads of these at Oxenbourne Down on Sunday.



Plenty of these at Oxenbourne

I just realised I had not posted any Chalkhill Blue pictures so here are a couple more from Oxenbourne Down 4.8.2013



2 Chalkhill Blues Feeding



2 Chalkhill Blues Roosting



2 Male Silver Spotted Skippers

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 09-Aug-13 10:56 PM GMT

Tuesday 6.8.2013 Steyning Rifle Range

By sheer luck I happened to be working in Steyning, West Sussex this week 😊 I could not have planned it better if I had tried. Right at the start of Brown Hairstreak season, good weather and 10 minute walk from one of the best sites for this species in the country (Sussex Kippers words) Although my job does not normally give me much scope for private entertainment within the working day 😞, this was an opportunity not to be missed 😊 So I managed to get myself an extended lunch break by grovelling to my boss 😊, but this still did not give me very long to do the business.

I got a little advance advice from Neil 'Sussex Kipper', his instructions to me were, 'you MUST be there between 11am and 2pm'. My host, where I was working, was very accommodating and gave me walking directions to the Rifle Range and told me to take as long as I needed, 'Across the roundabout, past the pub, past the police station, up the alley, across the cricket pitch etc etc etc.....' Although it was only a 10 minute walk I needed to ask several other people 'en route' to make sure I was heading in the right direction. I arrived at the site just before 1pm, well within the given time window. On the gate there is a hand crafted sign which reads 'Butterfly Land' and sports a painting of a Brown Hairstreak. I hoped that it was going to live up to this title. I had to be a little careful not to be distracted by other butterfly species as my time was very limited, I needed to focus on the target species. As I walked down the slope toward the special spot I could see there was a couple of other guys already on the same mission. UKBers Leigh 'mud-puddling' who was nursing his sick daughter and Colin Knight up to his waist in Blackthorn bushes. They told me that Neil 'Sussex Kipper' was on site and that a couple of Brown Hairstreak had already been seen a little earlier. I was shown photos taken of the earlier sighting as per Sussex Kippers diary, excellent as they were I felt a little disappointed that I had missed it 😞 Neil then arrived and immediately spotted a Painted Lady a few feet away which we had not noticed. I watched, listened and learned as Neil photographed the Painted Lady. We were then joined by UKBer Mark Colvin. It was a great pleasure meeting you all and putting faces to the names I regularly read on this site. My short time there was spent with eyes glued to the Ash and Blackthorn, trying not to be distracted by the numerous Gatekeepers, and ears focused on Neils informative conversation.

I pushed my lunchbreak to the absolute limit, but unfortunately did not get to see my Brown Hairstreak. I joked that one would appear as soon as I left, I hope that was not the case. In spite of the lack of Brown Hairstreak, I did get to see my first Grass Snake which slithered across the path right in front of us 😊 I also saw 14 other butterfly species, not bad considering I was not really looking. My humble 'point and shoot' stayed firmly in my pocket, being slightly embarrassed in the company of better equipped and more experienced company. A thoroughly enjoyable if unsuccessful hour spent in good company 😊

Total tally for the visit:-

Common Blue 1
Holly Blue several
Small Heath 1
Gatekeeper several
Meadow Brown several
Whites several
Red Admiral 2
Painted Lady 2
Peacock 1
Comma 1

Silver Washed Fritillary 1
Wall Brown 1
Speckled Wood several
Brimstone 2

Re: jackz432r

by mud-puddling, 11-Aug-13 09:22 PM GMT

Nice to meet you; and don't worry I don't think anymore were seen that day 😊

Hopefully you will get a chance to come back and see this stunning butterfly. Not easy but definitely worth it.

Leigh

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-13 09:48 PM GMT

I would have thought that they should be knocking about for another week of two at least so you should get another chance Jack 😊 At least you have all the insider information now 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Neil Hulme, 11-Aug-13 10:15 PM GMT

Plenty of time to fill your boots yet! Egg laying only commenced today, so peak numbers should be last week August and first week September. Hope you can get back for another try, but I would leave it for about another week.

Best Wishes, Neil

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 12-Aug-13 09:56 PM GMT

Hi All

Leigh - I hope your daughter is on the road to recovering from her bout of Chicken Pocks. The youngsters thankfully get over it very quickly in comparison to when I got it in my late 20s 😊

Wurzel - Thanks for the encouragement 😊

Neil - Thanks for all the help and encouragement 😊 All the information has been logged into my memory banks 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 13-Aug-13 10:26 PM GMT

Sunday 11.8.2013 Noar Hill

In Search Of Brown Hairstreak And Clouded Yellow

With all the talk and sightings reports of migrants of late my first thoughts were to try and put myself in a good coastal location on Sunday. However, I could not get Brown Hairstreaks out of my mind, after my unsuccessful visit to Steyning Rifle Range last week. I had also had a tip off that there had been some Clouded Yellows at Noar Hill during the week (thanks Nick) so I decided to head there with the combined possibility of Brown Hairstreak and Clouded Yellow. Although I have seen Clouded Yellow before, a few years ago at Highcliffe, that was before I was actively seeking butterflies. I certainly have not seen one close up and I have yet to see any Brown Hairstreak.

I woke to unexpected rain which persisted until late morning 😞 so I decided to delay my normal early morning start and try an afternoon visit, as the weather looked much better PM. I left home at 1pm only to immediately get stuck in traffic 😞 One of the perils of living near the Rosebowl Cricket Ground 😞 I then managed to get stuck at the petrol station for a while after a camper van managed to collide with another vehicle at the pumps 😞, causing chaos and panic amongst the Sainsburys staff. I eventually got on my way rather later than intended, I was beginning to wish I had gone out in the rain 😞 All I could think of whilst driving up to Noar Hill was Sussex Kippers instructions 'you MUST be there between 11am and 2pm for Brown Hairstreak', it was almost 2pm as I arrived.



Common Blue 11.8.2013 Noar Hill



Green Veined White 11.8.2013 Noar Hill

This is only my second visit to this site, having visited almost exactly a year ago. I can remember being very disappointed this time last year having seen very few butterflies, only 5 species in fact. What a difference a year makes, this time I saw 5 species walking up the track before even entering the site 😊 Once I got into the site proper there seemed to be butterflies everywhere and within a few minutes I also had spotted a Clouded Yellow 😊😊 An unsuccessful attempt at a photo told me I would have to learn this species pretty quick if I was to be successful. It was Peacocks and aged Silver Washed Fritillaries which seemed to be the most numerous species as well as the whites of course. Every head of Hemp Agrimony seemed to be adorned with several of these two species. These were closely followed in numbers by Common Blues, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Brimstones. Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Comma, Small Heath and Small Skipper also made an appearance. The latter being very faded now.



Painted Lady 11.8.2013 Noar Hill



Ragged Female Silver Washed Fritillary 11.8.2013 Noar Hill

At my first of several visits to the so called 'triangle' I spotted a nice Painted Lady as well as several Silver Washed Fritillaries. I also bumped into several other UKbers at the same spot looking for that elusive Brown Hairstreak. Hello to Jim, Nick and Mark 'tuts' Tutton. The hollow at the back of the reserve was filled with Brimstones, Whites, Common Blues, Peacocks, Silver Washed Fritillaries and one Marbled White, but I then spotted another Clouded Yellow on the far side so I descended the bank to try and get a photo. I witnessed several moments when this Clouded Yellow would muscle in on a Brimstones nectaring position, the Clouded Yellow always the victor. The Clouded Yellow seemed a little more determined than the Brimstone which were rather laid back, having plenty of time on their hands I imagine. I managed to get several pictures of this Clouded Yellow once I had got used to its distinctive feeding pattern. It then proceeded to fly into a spiders web 🕸 at which point I was in two minds as to what to do. Should I let nature take its course or should I intervene 😊 Thankfully, after a few seconds frantic flapping of wings, it managed to free itself apparently unscathed. I also managed to get some of the best Brimstone photos I have managed to date. Snapshots to most I imagine, but with my basic camera I am easily pleased 😊



Brimstone 11.8.2013 Noar Hill



Clouded Yellow 11.8.2013 Noar Hill

Feeling quite pleased with my Clouded Yellow 😊 giving me 50% success on my days targets, I decided to have another look at the triangle, just in case. It was well outside of the 11am–2pm window now, in fact nearly 4pm. Again no success, so I wandered through a wooded area and found a clearing behind the Triangle where a large Ash Tree had fallen. At the other side of the clearing was another large Ash tree, the side of which was catching the late sunshine. As I looked up a small brown butterfly caught my eye, gradually working its way up the tree, settling momentarily every now and again, until it disappeared into the foliage near the top. Brown Hairstreak..... 🤔 well who knows, it was too far away to get a good view and of course I had no binoculars 😞 It could have been a speckled Wood of course, but in my mind it was a Brown Hairstreak 😊

Clouded Yellow brings my species tally for the year up to 33.

Total count for the day (approximate):-

Red Admiral 5
Peacock 30
Painted Lady 1
Comma 5
Small Tortoiseshell 5
Silver Washed Fritillary 25
Common Blue 25
Large White 20
Small White 10
Green Veined White 10
Brimstone 20
Clouded Yellow 3
Small Skipper 20
Gatekeeper 25
Meadow Brown 20
Marbled White 1
Small Heath 5
Ringlet 3
Speckled Wood 5

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 14-Aug-13 11:14 PM GMT

Tuesday 13.8.2013 At Home & In The Garden

My wife and the boys are away for a few days down in Selsey. I have given my eldest son strict instructions to be on the lookout for unusual butterflies, I could not have picked a better place to put him 😊 On Monday he informed me that he had seen a Swallowtail and 3 Clouded Yellows 😊 However, in the past he has demonstrated an expert ability to pull the wool over my eyes 😊 So I will reserve judgement on his claims until I can see some evidence. I have not heard anything from him since then.

Buff Ermine Larvae

I have not posted much about these as I am finding them quite difficult to photograph as they are still very small (currently about 7-8mm long). The larvae have just started to shed their skins for the first time. The larvae released into the garden seem to have disappeared, I can not find any sign of them. They are either masters of camouflage and concealment or they have been eaten.



Buff Ermine Larvae 13.8.2013 with recently shed skin

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 22-Aug-13 11:41 PM GMT

Sunday 18.8.2013 Fort Gilkicker, Gosport

In Search of Migrants - Part 1

The migrant season seems to be gathering pace, so I thought I had better 'make hay while the sun shines' and head for the coast 😊 Being lucky enough to live on the South Coast means the world is my oyster when it comes to finding a suitable location at the moment. It is almost exactly a year since I visited Fort Gilkicker in Gosport, hopefully it would deliver what I was in search of. I know that in the past many migrants have been recorded here, including Swallowtail and Long Tailed Blue.



Swallowtail Food!



Small White 18.8.2013 Gilkicker

The weather forecast looked a bit 'touch and go' with sunny spells and showers, but the morning looked to be the best bet. So I headed off and arrived on site at 9.30. My preferred parking spot for this site is along the road by the golfcourse. This necessitates a walk straight across the golfcourse and requiring one to be aware of low flying balls (for ones own safety) and putting golfers off their stroke. As I walked along the path to the fort I could not help but notice several large clumps of Fennel, ideal for passing Swallowtails I thought to myself. There was quite a strong South Westerley breeze blowing meaning that the Eastern side and the area to the north of the fort were the most sheltered. It was here that I encountered my first of several several Meadow Browns and Small Whites. A few Green Veined Whites, the first of many Common Blues and a few Gatekeepers were the next species seen in the area immediately around the Fort.



Ominous looking rain cloud after it had deposited its contents on me

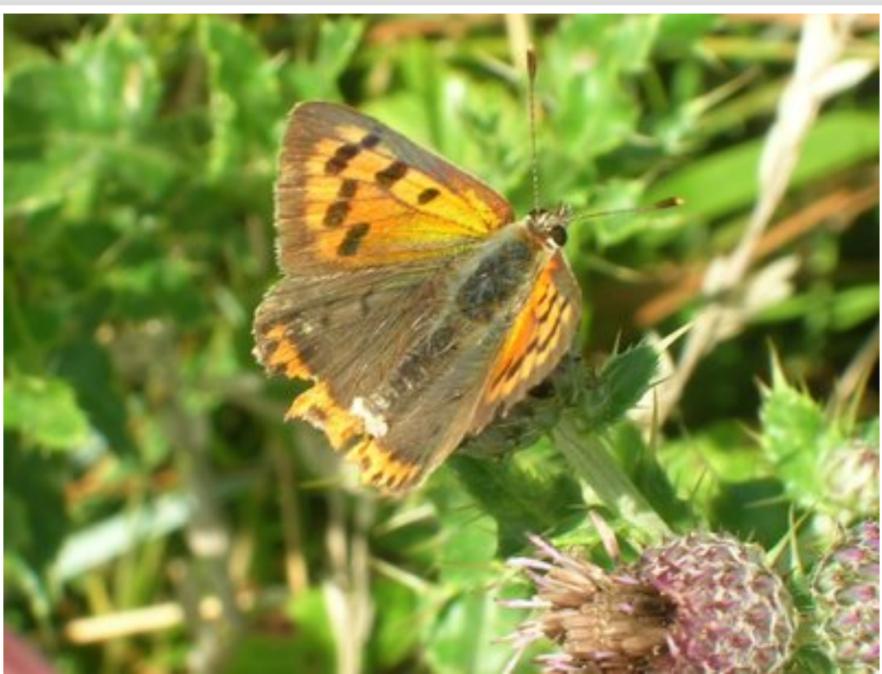


I had to rescue this chap from the path, he became rather attached to my finger.

Others have noted extreme size differences within some species this year, I found examples of this in both Meadow Brown and Common Blue. Once I had done a couple of circuits of the Fort I spotted a very heavy shower over the Isle Of Wight which appeared to coming my way 😬 Within 10 minutes it was right overhead and I was drenched 😞 there is no shelter at all here. I briefly considered calling it a day, but I could see that beyond the downpour was blue sky, this was all the incentive I needed 😊 The shower was soon over and I forgot all about being soaked once the butterflies started to come to life in the sunshine. I took a walk along the scrubby area at the back of the beach towards Strokes Bay. Here I encountered lots of Common Blues each one of which I scrutinised very closely, just to make sure they were not anything exotic. I spotted one fresh male Common Blue in the middle of the path. I felt it necessary to move him to a safer spot, but he was unwilling to leave my finger 😊 Large White, Small Heath and Small Copper increased the days species list. However, still no migrants spotted, not even one of those 'common old' Clouded Yellows.



Female Common Blue 18.8.2013 Gilkicker



Small Copper 18.8.2013 Gilkicker

I made my way back towards the Fort. As I got there at almost exactly midday, I spotted an unmistakable yellow butterfly fluttering around into the stiff breeze towards the sea, settling every now and again. This was a female Clouded Yellow 😊, at times almost invisible when settled on the pebbles. I stayed with it for some time as it crossed the main pathway on to the beach area. As I knelt, trying not to take my eyes off it, a couple of birders stopped to see what I was watching. I was pleased to be able to show them their first ever Clouded Yellow 😊 As we watched, another Clouded Yellow, a male, flew past. Shortly after they had left me to take my photos I bumped into them again and they enthusiastically informed me they had seen 3 more. I confirmed this by the time I left with a total of 5 seen as well as 2 Red Admirals just as I was leaving. No Swallowtails, Long Tailed Blues or Queen Of Spain Fritillary, but I left feeling fairly pleased with Clouded Yellows and the highest count of Common Blues that I have encountered at any site, probably because I was watching them more closely than usual 😊



Female Clouded Yellow 18.8.2013 Gilkicker



Male Clouded Yellow 18.8.2013 Gilkicker

Total count at the Fort:-

Meadow Brown 19
Small White 12
Green Veined White 7
Common Blue 41 (33 male & 8 female)
Gatekeeper 6
Large White 2
Small Heath 6
Small Copper 2
Clouded Yellow 5
Red Admiral 2

But this was not the end of my visit.....Part 2 follows shortly

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 24-Aug-13 12:07 AM GMT

Sunday 18.8.2013 Fort Gilkicker, Gosport

In Search Of Migrants - Part 2

So as I left Fort Gilkicker I text my wife to say I would be back in half an hour and I drove a couple of hundred yards up the road to turn around. The public car park at the entrance to the Golf Club is a convenient turning place. As I pulled in I remembered from last year that there was a large Buddleia bush at the edge of the car park 😊, indeed there was already a couple studying this particular bush as I pulled in. So I parked up and went off to have a look. The Buddleia had plenty of Large Whites busy nectaring and a solitary Small Tortoiseshell, but my attention was drawn further along the edge of the carpark where there was lots of 'white' activity involving all three varieties plus a fair few Common Blues and a Small Copper. Then I spotted something which looked a little different perched on some Bramble. This was a very pale looking female Clouded Yellow with a greenish tinge 😊😊, I thought it was probably my first helice but was not sure. It was cloudy at this point and although the other whites were still very active this individual was not keen to take to the air, giving me plenty of photo opportunity. A male Clouded Yellow then flew over and started nectaring close by.



My first helice female Clouded Yellow 18.8.2013 Gilkicker



Normal female Clouded Yellow



Large White activity !

A group of ladies looking for bees wandered over and asked what I was watching and for the second time in a day I was pleased to point out their first ever Clouded Yellow 😊 Whilst I was chatting my attention was drawn to more Clouded Yellow activity in the middle of the disused area of car park. Half of this carpark is closed off to cars and is overgrown with lots of what I think is Hawkweed. I could see several Clouded Yellows and something smaller that looked different to anything else I had seen. I approached and found this was another 'pale' Clouded Yellow of some description with white upperwings and only a fraction the size of all the others. I was convinced I had found something very exotic and spent some considerable time trying to get photos to make sure I could identify it later. I had read in other recent posts that a backlit shot is vital for identification purposes. This particular individual also seemed to have darker than normal markings particularly on one hind wing. After I had pursued this individual for long enough I had a look around the area and found 2 more pale individuals and several other 'normal' Clouded Yellows. They all seemed to find the Hawkweed irresistible.



helice female Clouded Yellow 18.8.2013 Gilkicker



Lots of Clouded Yellow in this disused area of the car park



helice female Clouded Yellow 18.8.2013 Gilkicker



helice female Clouded Yellow 18.8.2013 Gilkicker

When I checked the time I was shocked to see that I had actually been in the car park for over an hour and was now in big trouble 😱. I beat a hasty retreat passing the Buddleia on the way and adding a Comma to the tally and what I think was a Holly Blue which did not stop for a close look. I left feeling pretty happy with my special Clouded Yellows. I was later to discover that all 4 of the pale versions I saw were helice.

Total tally for the carpark:-
Clouded Yellow 10 (including 4 helice)
Small Tortoiseshell 1
Comma 1
Large White 9+
Small White 8+
Green Veined White 6+
Small Copper 1
Common Blue 10
Holly Blue? 1

Re: jackz432r

by Mark Tutton, 24-Aug-13 08:34 AM GMT

Hi Paul

Seems car parks are the place to be! Although I have to say it has crossed my mind that all sorts of inference could be made about wandering around car parks with a camera 😳

I too have been keeping an eye on a location in Portsmouth which is a car park by the Solent and at THE car park at Hayling, and findings are much the same. It seems the gravel surface is a good medium for Hawkweed and the CY definitely seems more attracted to this than other plants. I saw my first Helice in June this year, in Norfolk bizzarely while looking for Swallowtails, and that too was on Hawkweed on a gravel surface.

Every time I see a Helice (three yesterday at the Pompey site) I make a special effort to give it close scrutiny just in case but to date none have given any more than a passing doubt. I note on the Hants BC that a supposed Pale Clouded Yellow was reported from Noar Hill but the picture that was posted was inconclusive to me.

I think it was Guy who mentioned that Pale and Bergers were more prone to nectar on clover so perhaps that may be a good pointer.

Best Wishes

Mark 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-13 05:47 PM GMT

Great report Jack with useful observations (I'll be checking out stony ground a bit more) and really envious of your Helice – something I've yet to see 🇩🇪
I too know that sinking feeling when you've become absorbed by butterflies and arrive home late 😞😞 Mind you I never learn and I regularly make it!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by jim, 27-Aug-13 03:35 PM GMT

Hello Jack ,Its Jim from Noar Hill ,saw nothing conclusive at spot where we were but went further up sight and met older couple who spotted a brown hairstreak low down on hazel. It was at begining of path towards the last pit at approx 2pm Monday.Have repoerted it on hants and iow site so it might be worth another visit.

Re: jackz432r

by Padfield, 27-Aug-13 04:38 PM GMT

Just catching up with this thread again – and very impressed with the fantastic pictures!

Just a small correction to what I am reported as saying, in case it misleads anyone! Both clouded yellows and pale clouded yellows use red clover as a hostplant. It is Berger's that doesn't – mostly using horseshoe vetch but also crown vetch. My comment about nectaring on red clover was related to separating pale clouded and Berger's. Here in Switzerland, where Berger's is generally commoner, a good way of finding pale clouded is to search clover fields or keep an eye open for a butterfly that seems to have a special interest in clover. A female that is actually laying on red clover is an even bigger giveaway.

Guy

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-Aug-13 10:30 PM GMT

Hi Mark

I know what you mean about loitering and carrying a camera in unusual locations 😊 I am normally very aware of who/what is going on around me especially when in a location where I might look somewhat conspicuous. I have to say that on this occasion I was totally engrossed in the Clouded Yellows 😊

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for the comments and the sympathy 😊

Hi Jim

Well done for getting back to Noar Hill and checking out that location at a better time of day, sorry your efforts were unsuccessful. I might try and squeeze another visit in next weekend 😊

Hi Guy

Thanks for the comments and update on the Clouded Yellow info.

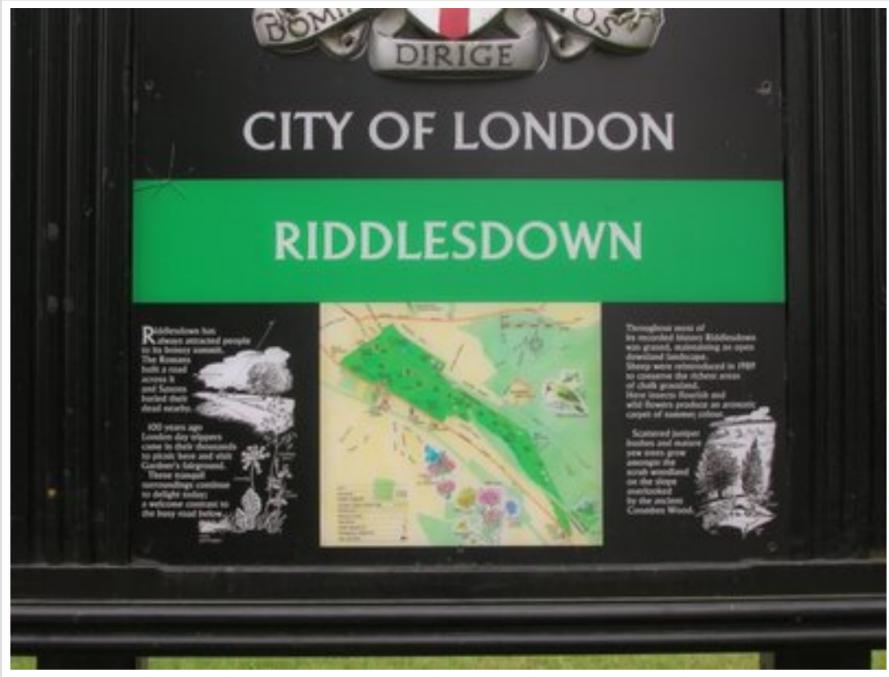
Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 30-Aug-13 12:35 AM GMT

Bits And Bobs

Friday 23.8.2013 Riddlesdown

Last Friday I managed to do a 'Wurzel' 🤪 In other words I did a quick stop off after work for a few minutes to see what was about. Well in fact it was not really a 'Wurzel' because I was actually there for 15 minutes, which is probably 3 times too long for a proper one 😊 I had been working just around the corner from Riddlesdown in Surrey. I make a yearly visit to this location for work and manipulated my working day to allow me to stop off after work before enduring the Friday afternoon M25 for the long journey home.



Chalkhill Blue 23.8.2013 Riddlesdown

Riddlesdown is a steep area of Chalk Downland owned and managed by the City of London, near Purley. Unfortunately, after a lovely sunny day there was now a thick haze blotting out the sun when I arrived just before 5pm. I struggled to get any pictures and there was not a lot flying, but there were several whites and Meadow Browns, a Common Blue and a few Chalkhills. I was quite surprised to find such a site so close to Central London.

Tuesday 27.8.2013 Captive Buff Ermine Larvae

These have come on rapidly over the last week or so. I have now released some more into the garden and kept just a few captive. I have not been able to find any of the previously released ones, they are either very well hidden or have perished. The largest are now third instar.



Third instar Buff Ermine larva 27.8.2013



Tuesday 27.8.2013 Wandering Small Tortoiseshells

On Tuesday I returned home from work to find a Small Tortoiseshell roosting in my kitchen 😊 My kitchen is quite cool and does not receive full sun at all. After work the following day our new house guest was still in the same spot, so I gently moved him outside where it was still warm and sunny to allow him to find a more suitable spot. I think it would have been still there in spring had I left it in situ. This was actually the second one in a week. My wife found the first one in the bathroom earlier in the week. When I asked what sort it had been she said it was 'just an ordinary one' 😊😄, maybe some education is in order 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-13 11:24 AM GMT

It's nice finding a little oasis isn't it 😊 Fifteen minutes is definitely at the upper end of the allowed time frame for a Wurzel stop off but you'll get quicker with practice 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 07-Sep-13 11:37 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

It's nice finding a little oasis isn't it 😊 Fifteen minutes is definitely at the upper end of the allowed time frame for a Wurzel stop off but you'll get quicker with practice 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel

I will try and master it for next season 😊

31.8.2013 - 5.9.2013 At Home

Buff Ermine Larvae

These larvae are growing rapidly and the largest are now in their fourth instar. With this most recent skin change there has also been a significant change in colour. I have released a few more into the garden. Hopefully this gradual release will help to increase the numbers surviving to the adult stage 😊



3rd instar Buff Ermine larva 31.8.2013



3rd instar larva just before skin change and 4th instar larva recently changed 5.9.2013



4th instar Buff Ermine larva 5.9.2013

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-Sep-13 12:19 AM GMT

Saturday 7.9.2013 Stephens Castle Down

With my boys football season due to recommence tomorrow, my opportunities for butterfly watching are likely to diminish somewhat 😞 So today I made a brief Saturday afternoon visit to Stephens Castle Down, my local site. In pursuit of Migrants and Brown Hairstreaks recently, I have managed to completely miss out on August' goings on' here.



Roosting Common Blue



Roosting Small Heath

Unfortunately Saturdays are difficult for me and the earliest I could get to site was 4pm. The weather was not great today anyway and at 4pm I had missed the best of it 😞 Cool, windy and cloudy conditions greeted me with the occasional sunny spell. Needless to say there was not much flying. A couple of Small Whites fluttering around the gate as I entered the site was about it 😊 I spent a while looking around the best areas and just one Small Heath took to the air briefly. So I spent a bit of time looking for roosting butterflies. At previous visits I have found one particular area which the blues find attractive for roosting. Today I found a couple of male Common Blues and another Small Heath. I have been hoping to find Silver Spotted Skippers at this site but I have probably missed them if they are there, I will try again this week if the weather is appropriate.



.....and the clouds rolled in

After an hour or so the skies started to blacken and I felt a few rain spots 😞 I looked in danger of a soaking so I called it a day 😞

Total count for the day:-

Small Heath 2

Small White 2

Common Blue 2 both male

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 08-Sep-13 04:18 PM GMT

Hi Jack, just catching up on your diary, lovely Clouded Yellow shots, especially the helice 😊 If you feel that you saw a Brown Hairstreak at Noar in the Ash, then it probably was 😊

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 13-Sep-13 11:32 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

Hi Jack, just catching up on your diary, lovely Clouded Yellow shots, especially the helice 😊 If you feel that you saw a Brown Hairstreak at Noar in the Ash, then it probably was 😊

Mike

Hi Mike

Thanks for the comments. 3 visits to Noar Hill and 1 to Steyning and still nothing 100% positive 😊 Maybe be next year.

Sunday 8.9.2013 At Home In The Garden

Whilst hanging out the washing first thing on Sunday, I found a very exotic looking larva perched on the peg basket. I think this is a Vapourer Moth larva. I am not sure where it came from but I put it up into the Maple tree above where it was found 😊 It was sunny at that point 😊 My boys first football matches of the season kicked off at 2pm. So obviously the sky went black at about 1.15pm and by kick off we were all completely soaked to the skin 😊 It seems to have been raining ever since 😊



Vapourer Moth larva



Friday 13.9.2013 Buff Ermine Larvae

My captive Buff Ermine Moth larvae are now growing rapidly. I have now released all but a few into the garden. During the week I managed to catch one as it shed its skin, but the light was too low for me to get any pictures. Today the largest are perhaps 40mm long.



4th Instar Buff Ermine larva about 40mm long



Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-13 10:01 PM GMT

That is a fantastic looking caterpillar Jack 😊 If you're after Brown Hairstreaks give Shipton Bellinger a try next year it's delivered the goods for me the last four years 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 21-Sep-13 10:13 PM GMT

Friday 20.9.2013 Stephens Castle Down

A rare Friday afternoon off luckily coincided with some warm sunny weather 😊 Quite a change after the autumnal last couple of weeks. I decided to pay a visit to my local site. I arrived at around 2pm and conditions were warm and sunny with a little cloud. I did not really know what to expect numbers wise. The first thing I noticed when I arrived was that the place had undergone some 'management' since my last visit. There were several areas where scrub had been recently cleared, these areas looking rather barren.



There was certainly not much flying and it was a while before I spotted my first butterfly, a rather worn male Common Blue. A little later a couple of Small Whites showed themselves. I searched around for some time without much success until I was startled by a bird which suddenly emerged from the grass close by making a huge amount of noise and commotion 🤩 I am not particularly interested in birds, but this one certainly got my attention. As I walked through one of the recently cleared areas I was slightly surprised to see a Peacock flying around me and I soon spotted another. I thought these were quite early hibernators, but I suppose the warmth had enticed them out to play. With another Small White and a Large White I had nearly used up my available time. I had one last look around and spotted another Common Blue, this time a female. As there was not much else going on I spent quite a while observing this female. She would nectar, settle and bask for a while. Every now and again she would settle down in the undergrowth clambering around and inspecting every shoot, sometimes even walking backwards. It was fairly obvious she was looking for places to lay eggs. It was not long before I witnessed my first Common Blue egg being laid 😊😊 I struggled to locate the egg even though I watched her lay, such a tiny thing, amazing. I did not think that my camera would capture it very well, it struggles to focus on the adults sometimes. Thankfully it was in full sun and I managed an ok picture. I wonder if the positioning of this egg is typical or random 🤔



I left feeling quite satisfied with my Common Blue egg, but slightly disappointed that I had not seen higher numbers. As the season draws to a close, my attention is drawn further afield to Long Tailed Blues 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-13 09:39 PM GMT

Great report and shots Jack 😊 I too have been eyeing the LT Blues but perhaps they're too far afield for me 😊😞 Good luck if you go for em 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 23-Sep-13 10:57 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for the comments 😊 With regard to Long Tailed Blues, I have now booked a day and now have everything crossed that the weather is reasonable and that I do not miss them. It is a 3 hour drive but I think that is well worth it for an event which may not repeat itself for many years if at all. If I do not make the effort I will probably regret it, but I am sure it will be a long tiring day hopefully with some reward. I will be happy if I have spent all day there and see one individual, anything else is a bonus 😊

Sunday 22.9.2013 Local Patch

My last few captive Buff Ermine larvae are approaching their final stages. This morning I noticed the largest had shed its skin for, what must be, the fourth and last time before pupation. Several of the other remaining larvae also look like they are about to shed their skins. The largest, which must have shed its skin earlier in the day, was demonstrating some behaviour which I have not witnessed before. It was happily munching away on its own shed skin 😊 I am not sure if this is typical behaviour or not, I certainly did not notice them doing this in the earlier instars. I will check tomorrow to see if it has eaten the whole thing, or if it just fancied a snack 😊



Final Instar larvae eating its own skin

This afternoon, after close fought football matches for both my boys, I challenged them to a caterpillar hunt along our local footpath. The prize of 50p to be awarded for each one found 😊 Of course I found the first and only true caterpillar 😊 A near fully grown Comma larva in a location where I can reliably find them every year. My eldest son, who has got to that age where the appeal of caterpillars etc has taken a back seat, impressed me by identifying the species unprompted 😊 My youngest sons only interest in caterpillars was down to the 50p prize money. However, as a consolation, I awarded them prize money for an attractive group of Sawfly larvae found on Hazel.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 29-Sep-13 10:23 PM GMT

Friday 27.9.2013 My Local Patch

Another Friday afternoon off, sadly not enough time for me to get to Long Tailed Blue country, but at least the weather was looking good 😊 I had to be satisfied with an hour along my local footpath. As I left the house the hazy sunshine became noticeably more sunny than haze. However, the first two thirds of my walk was almost butterfly-less 😊 Just one Speckled Wood and a fairly young Red Admiral larva. I had a look for the Comma larva I had spotted with my boys last week, but think it must have gone off to pupate.





Unusual Crane Fly

At this point I had to make do with other things. There were hundreds of crane flies about, several taking to the air with every footstep, their aimless flight causing me to be constantly brushing them away from face. One in particular caught my eye as it landed on a leaf beside me, its colouration entirely different from the usual crane flies. As I approached the final stretch of footpath, where last year there was large numbers of butterflies at this time, I was beginning to wonder where they all were 😞 Conditions were pretty much ideal although the Blackberries seemed to be slightly later with plenty of blossom and unripe berries as well ripe and overripe ones.



Small Copper



Comma

As I was within sight of the end of the path, which is marked by a large Buddleia, the day was saved by a rather ragged Small Copper nectaring on Bramble blossom. And then I noticed a fresh looking Speckled Wood which had found a bunch of overripe blackberries almost hidden by an overhanging leaf. The Buddleia thankfully held several more species in small numbers, Commas, Red Admirals, Small Whites and another Small Copper. These jostled for position on the Buddleia, but nearly all too high and out of sight for photos. Nowhere near the numbers that were in this location last year.



Buff Ermine larva at home



One of 4 Knot Grass larva found in the garden

When I returned home it was feeding time for my remaining few captive Buff Ermine larvae. I released a few more into the garden, now just 4 remaining. It will not be long before they are ready to pupate. Whilst in the garden I noticed 4 Knot Grass larvae, 2 on Ash and 2 on Leycesteria (Pheasant Berry). This is the second year that I have noticed the larval stages of this species in the garden, last year they were on different plants though. They are obviously not fussy what they eat.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 09-Oct-13 11:56 PM GMT

Monday 7.10.2013 Kingsdown Leas, In Search Of The Long Tailed Blue

Despite being something of a novice compared to many on this site, I felt that the rare chance of seeing Long Tailed Blues in the UK was an opportunity that I may not get again. When Neil (Sussex Kipper) generously gave details of finding the offspring of the migrants that arrived earlier in the year, I booked a days leave immediately. Weekends for me are out due to my boys football commitments. Work and home commitments meant the earliest opportunity for a trip to Kent was over 2 weeks away from when I booked it. I had been studying the sightings reports ever since and keeping fingers crossed for good weather. After some cooler, duller and wetter weather recently, the forecast on Monday, miraculously, looked perfect 😊😊

Over the weekend Long Tailed Blues seemed to be being reported from several places. Although my original plan had been to go to Kingsdown in Kent, the place which seemed to offer the best chance of seeing Long Tailed Blues, there now seemed to be several other options. I found myself unable to sleep and as usual, undecided as to where to head for 😞 I was less confident of success at the Sussex sites so stuck with Kent, but a last minute change of mind saw me setting my SatNav for Reculver. This was based on good numbers being reported on the Sunday. However this was a bit of a gamble as I had no grid reference to go by and to just guess where to go from the brief report.

I set off a little later than intended in thick mist which would gradually clear. As I got into Kent there again was a thick covering of low cloud and things looked pretty dull 😞 I stopped at the services for a comfort break and again a change of heart saw me resetting the SatNav for Kingsdown. Without a proper grid reference I decided I could have wasted hours looking in the wrong place. Thankfully, by the time I approached Dover there was hardly a cloud in the sky 😊 A detour at Dover added a bit more time to a journey which had already taken longer than expected 😞 I finally arrived at Kingsdown at 11.30, about an hour later than intended.

After climbing the steps to the cliff top it was very evident that there had been lots of people here. Around every clump of Everlasting Pea the grass was heavily trampled. In fact the grass was heavily trampled nearly everywhere I looked. After only a few minutes a small greyish/blue butterfly flew past me. I could only keep it in view for a short time before I lost sight. I think this must have been my first Long Tailed Blue, but I will never know for sure. After another 10 minutes or so I noticed 3 or 4 people gathered a short distance away who had obviously found our target so I made my way over. Sitting on a grass stem low down, looking slightly smaller than I expected a beautiful Long Tailed Blue 😊😊😊 This one was in pretty good shape with both tails intact 😊 It sat there for quite some time and we all managed to get some photos. After a few minutes it took to the air briefly and settled again a short distance away and this time opened its wings several times allowing some more photos. Of course, being a gentleman, I let everybody get their photos first. When my turn came it had had enough, took to the air, fluttered around for a minute and disappeared over the cliff 😞😞



My only photo of a Long Tailed Blue

I then went on my way and spent a couple more hours searching. I even walked all the way along the cliff to the St Margarets end by the monument, this was probably a waste of time as I did not see much at all. Earlier in the day I had noticed some active clearance of garden shrubs, ivy, brambles etc along the front of one of the large houses. By the time I got back to this main area, a couple of bonfires had been lit along the road burning the garden waste. The thick smoke was blowing right across the main cliff top. As I was thinking to myself that this would probably wipe out any chance of anymore sightings, I spotted a worn looking blue butterfly, wings open, on the grass just in front of me. My excitement was short lived 😞 As I got closer I could see this was not a Long Tailed Blue at all, this was probably a very worn Adonis Blue. After getting a photo or two and still with smoke catching the back of my throat, I moved a few steps on only to find another Blue butterfly open winged in the grass. This time the eye spots on the hind wings confirmed this as a rather ragged looking, tailless Long Tailed Blue 😊 For the second time on the day it took to the air before I could get my camera into action. As I watched it disappear out of sight I realised it would probably be my last ever view of a British born Long Tailed Blue 😞



The area of my final Long Tailed Blue encounter at Kingsdown Leas

I stayed on until 4pm in the vain hope that I might catch another glimpse, but it was not to be. A rather worn Speckled Wood and an equally worn female Adonis Blue rounded off the day. My joy was tempered somewhat, when I returned home at gone 7pm, when I discovered that my wife had been taken to casualty with an injured shoulder/ribs. Not too serious as it turned out but she will be quite sore for a few weeks. Unbeknown to me my phone had frozen earlier in the day and no messages had been coming through since lunch time.



A very worn male Adonis Blue?



A very worn female Adonis Blue?

Other butterflies seen during the day were Red Admiral, Small White, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell as well as Adonis Blue and Speckled Wood Adonis and Long Tailed Blue bringing my total species count for the year to 35.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-13 08:59 PM GMT

Congrats on getting the LTB 🍀 It must have been torturous waiting all that time but it was obviously worth it.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Hoggers, 12-Oct-13 05:17 PM GMT

Lovely diary entry, Jack and I hope your wife has made a speedy recovery. I've really enjoyed all the postings about Long Tailed Blues and our efforts to see them. It's become a story about people just as much a story about butterflies.

Best wishes

Hoggers.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 13-Oct-13 10:53 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel and Hoggers

Thanks for the comments, definitely worth the effort for Long Tailed Blues

Friday 4.10.2013 My Local Patch

Inspired by Hoggers recent posts enthusing about his Small Coppers at Dungeness, I felt I should try and connect with my own Small Coppers. I can reliably find them along my local footpath at one particular hotspot, but never in very high numbers. Today was a little breezy and cloudy along my local footpath, but there was enough sunshine to make a visit worthwhile 😊



Hotspot along my local footpath

To be honest there was not much flying, but as I approached 'the' spot I caught a Small Copper out of the corner of my eye low down on Bramble. As I approached it took to the air and flew across the path to the other side of the fence and settled down in the grass. I managed to locate it and was quite pleased to see it had a degree of blue spotting, the first I have seen with this particular colouration 😊



Small Copper caeruleopunctata sheltering in the grass



Small Copper

I was not sure at the time if this was an example of the form *caeruleopunctata*, but I have been informed that any degree of blue falls into this category. A little further on I spotted another Small Copper again low down on Bramble. This one nectared for a while before following the first over the fence to settle down in the long grass. This one also had a degree of blue scales on its hind wings. This pattern of nectaring on Bramble and then disappearing into the long grass repeated itself several times. All in all I saw perhaps 3 or 4 Small Coppers together with a Speckled Wood and a couple of Small Whites.



Small Copper



Comma disappeared into this Rabbit run



Comma sheltering in a Rabbit run

My final encounter was with a Comma, another regular in this particular spot. It appeared briefly, struggling to fly in the windy conditions and promptly seemed to disappear a few metres away. Where it seemed to have disappeared there was a rabbit trail through the undergrowth. When I peered in to the tunnel in the grass, there was the Comma hanging off a blade of grass.

Saturday 12.10.2013 My Local Patch

What a difference a few days makes, weatherwise. On Monday I could have spent the day in shorts on the cliffs at Kingsdown Leas 😊 On Thursday I was so cold at one point at work I had numb fingers 😬 I was convinced that was the end of any butterfly weather for the year 😞 Today, on the weekly run to Bisopstoke for my youngest sons football training, I left my camera at home and took my umbrella. I was certain it would be more useful. When we arrived at 9am I was very surprised to see the sun coming out 😊 I walked my normal route, south along the Itchen way. This walk is generally unproductive butterfly wise, but there are a couple of hotspots. I headed straight for these areas. Two pristine Red Admirals graced me with their presence 😊 One settling on nettles in the warm sunshine. Two Speckled Wood also were enjoying the sunshine. Later on, I was surprised to see a Peacock fluttering around the garden 😊



The best I could do with my phone

I doubt whether many more opportunities will present themselves for butterfly watching this year 😞 but lets hope 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-13 08:49 PM GMT

Great read and photos Jack 😊 and it just goes to show that you should never leave your camera at home 😊 I've got to go to London tomorrow so I will leave the camera and I just know that I'll see a Camberwell Beauty 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 20-Oct-13 10:42 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for the comments

Friday 18.10.2013 How Long Will This Butterfly Season Continue ?

At the end of my last post I said there probably would not be much more opportunity for butterfly watching..... maybe I spoke too soon 😊 The weather has remained mild, though it seems increasingly Autumnal. Most days there has been a little sunshine in the afternoon and Friday was much the same. After a cloudy start with some rain I hoped that the sun would appear and it did, briefly, later in the afternoon 😊 I was not particularly hopeful, but I need not have worried. I had not walked very far before I spotted quite a fresh looking Speckled Wood and then another 😊

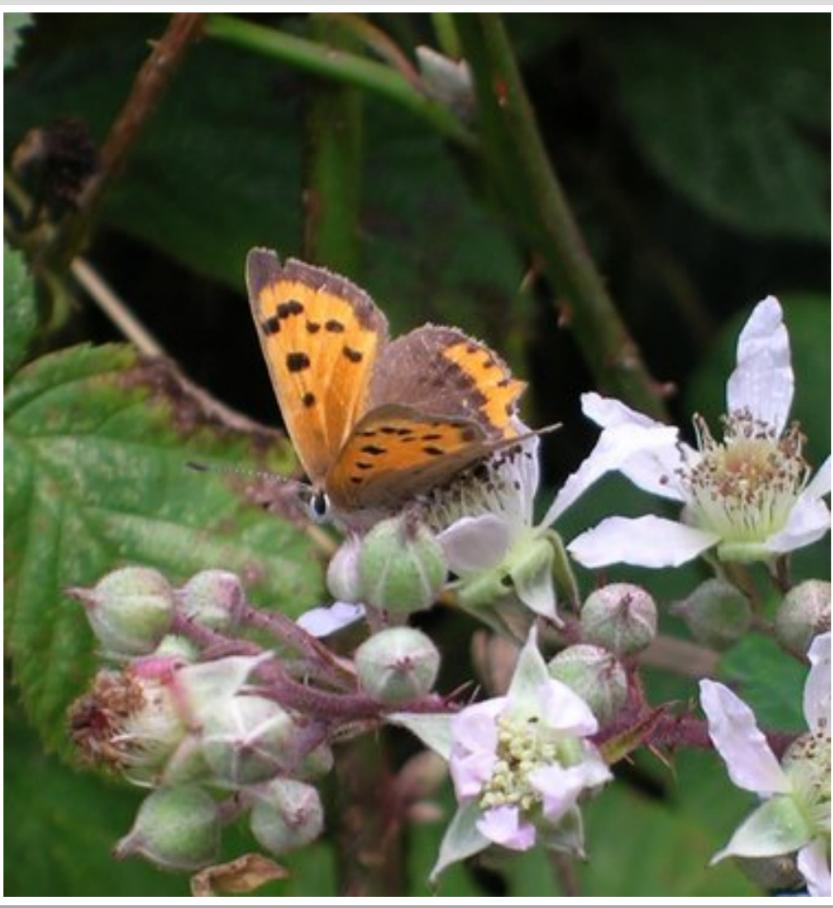


Speckled Wood 18.10.2013 Hedge End

Further along in the more secluded part of the footpath yet another Speckled Wood. This one had a little damage, but was still in pretty good condition. I made my way to the hotspot at the farthest point of this footpath. The conditions, by now, had deteriorated. No sunshine at all and a stiff breeze, but I still managed to find a couple of Small Coppers 😊 Both nectaring on the few remaining Bramble flowers and quite lethargic. Eventually both disappeared over the wire fence into the long grass and did not reappear.



Small Copper 18.10.2013 Hedge End



Small Copper 18.10.2013 Hedge End

No Comma, Red Admiral or Whites today. In fact I have not seen many Comma or Red Admirals at all this autumn 😞 This area was abundant with these two species last Autumn. This season it seems to me that the Ivy flowers are later and the Blackberries do not seem to have stayed around for as long, but maybe that is just my imagination.



Buff Ermine larvae 18.10.2013

At home my last 2 captive Buff Ermine larvae must be near to pupation. I am running out of suitable Virginia Creeper leaves. Most has turned red/fallen. I think I might just release these last two rather than try and keep the pupae through the winter.

I wonder if the season will stretch to another week 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-13 05:38 PM GMT

Here's hoping you can wring a few more visits Jack. I checked for my Small Coppers at Larkhill on Friday and today with no joy but you never know about tomorrow...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 21-Oct-13 07:37 PM GMT

Looks like we might still be butterflying into November!

The latest BBC monthly forecast suggests no frost at all in the southern part of the UK, so all we need is a few sunny periods because with temperatures of 15c upwards, butterflies will certainly still be active.

The flowering ivy's late this year too, so there will be a reliable nectar source until well after Bonfire Night.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 27-Oct-13 11:24 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Looks like we might still be butterflying into November!

Hi David

Lets hope so 😊 However, after what is on its way tonight I am not sure there will be much left 😬

Sunday 27.10.2013 The Final Act?

After torrential rain and strong winds last night and the prospect for worse tonight, a cloudless sky this morning was very appealing. It was warm and sunny ,but with a strong gusty wind. I was not that hopeful and I probably mis-timed the opportunity by 20 minutes. By the time I reached the 'hotspot' it was not very hot and the clouds had started to roll in. I managed just one Red Admiral 😊 flying sideways in the wind.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 02-Nov-13 11:36 PM GMT

Saturday 2.11.2013 My Local Patch

This morning, whilst my youngest was football training, it was very warm and sunny at 9am in Bishopstoke 😊 A walk south along the Itchen Navigation was only disrupted by one short sharp shower and A large fallen Willow tree across the footpath, one of two blown down during the recent storm.



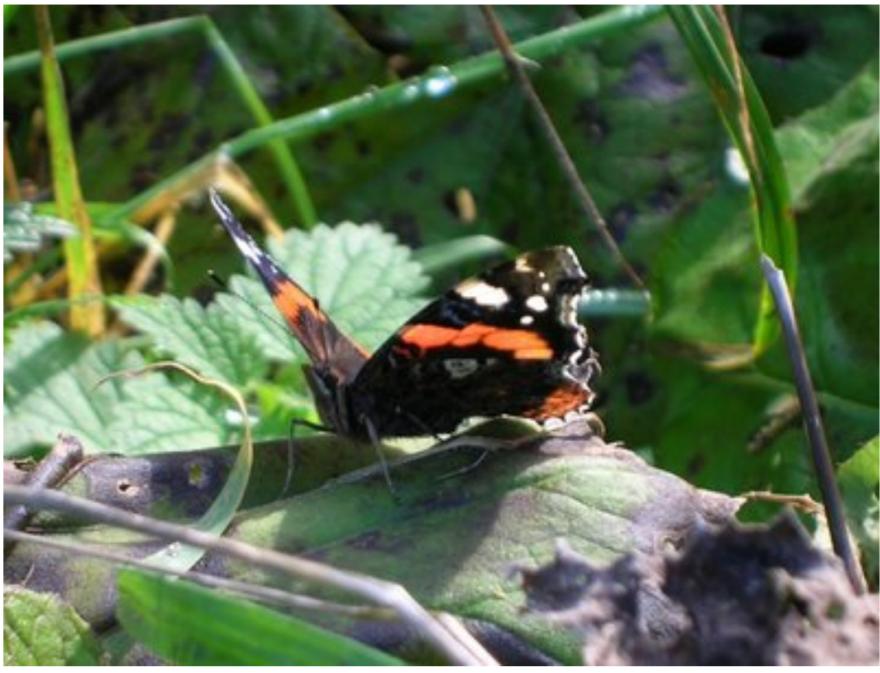
There is one really large clump of Ivy near one of the butterfly hotspots along this path, but most of the Ivy around my neck of the woods has been very late this year, I hoped that it was properly out. After doing a bit of limbo work negotiating the fallen willow 😊 I headed straight for this Ivy clump.



As I got close there were several dragonflies in evidence, Migrant Hawkers and Darters, I hoped for at least one butterfly. When I arrived at the Ivy clump I was pleased to see that it was properly out in flower, albeit a month later than last year.



I counted 5 Red Admirals 😊😊😊😊😊 either nectaring or basking in the warm sunshine close by, but no other species were seen. I spent a while observing the delightful sight of several Red Admirals doing their stuff and made myself a few minutes late for getting back for my son. On the way back I also spotted my second ever Grass Snake, sunning itself by the side of the path 😊 I was a little too slow with my camera to get a picture before it slithered off into the grass. All in all a great November morning, hopefully there will be a few more yet 😊



Re: jackz432r

by David M, 03-Nov-13 12:27 AM GMT

What a result, Jack!

If only it would stop raining in my part of the world I'd be out Red Admiral hunting just like you!!

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-13 10:20 PM GMT

Just catching up Jack - five Red Admirals in November 🍷 😊 Ace stuff!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 17-Nov-13 11:08 PM GMT

Hi David and Wurzel thanks for the comments 😊

Sunday 10.11.2013

Last Sunday the weather was quite generous for November 😊 I searched high and low, but I only saw one butterfly flying through, along my local footpath, completely uninterested in the flowering Ivy nearby. Looking into the sun I could not tell if it was Peacock or Red Admiral. Also seen a Common Darter 😊

Saturday 16.11.2013

After a frosty start, yesterday morning was a beautifully sunny 😊 I thought I would check out some of the local hotspots, hoping for a Red Admiral or two 😊 It was quite warm in the sheltered sunshine, but I saw no butterflies at all 😞 After a few frosty mornings this week and snow apparently on the way 😞 I guess that last Sundays sighting is likely to be my last of the year 😞

Perhaps it is time to revisit some of this years many highlights. What a year it has been 😊 😊 😊

Hopefully this post will not disappear after a few hours like the first attempt did 😞 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 25-Nov-13 09:33 PM GMT

Happiness is as a butterfly which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp, but which if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) American writer

I spotted this other day, whilst looking for a birthday present for my mum. I picked up a book on quotations and sayings and it fell open on this page 😊 It brought a smile to my face 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 01-Dec-13 09:36 PM GMT

Good to meet you yesterday Jack and thank you again for the lift to the station 😊 If you're still up for Marsh Fritillaries next season and you can't track them down in Hampshire then send us a PM as I'm sure Philzoid and I will be visiting the same site we did this year and if you can get to Salisbury then there's room for more in my car.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-Dec-13 12:01 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

No problem with the lift 😊 I am already starting to think about next year and Marsh Fritillaries will be near the top of the list. I may need to take you up on that offer 😊 But for the moment a look back at things in 2013

Highlights 2013

Species

Small Tortoiseshells Galore

The Small Tortoiseshell butterfly, probably more than any other species, reminds me of my childhood butterfly days. They were perhaps the most common species of all when I was growing up. Sometimes I can remember almost ignoring them as if they were somehow not as important as the likes of Red Admirals, Commas and Painted Ladies which were our prized species. Of course I have matured a little since then 😊



Cradle Valley E. Sussex 18.4.2013





Hedge End 30.6.2013 – This was a particularly hot afternoon, many of the butterflies seemed to be taking time out from the heat of the day

In 2012, my first proper butterfly year, I saw perhaps half a dozen or so all year. Even this small total was a joy, as I can recall seeing none at all in the preceding few years. I am sure I would have noticed them if they were there.



Hedge End 21.7.2013 These 2 chased each other around the nettles on foot for a few minutes



Hedge End 30.6.2013

2013 was a whole different story, they seemed to be everywhere 😊 My first were well away from my local patch, in East Sussex. One at Brede High Wood on the 17th April and several at Cradle Valley on the 18th. From that point onwards there seemed to be good numbers of Small Tortoiseshells at every location I visited 😊 It was also the first year I have ever seen the early stages of this species. I saw larvae in several locations during the year and they were particularly abundant on my local patch. My best Count of the year was on 6th July on my local Patch where I saw so many I Lost count. I also saw them flying well into the evening on that particular day. My final Small Tortoiseshells of the year were seen at Kingsdown Leas In Kent on 7th October in the company of Long Tailed Blues. Happy days.....

Hopefully this species will continue to do well.

Delightful Clouded Yellows

The fact that these butterflies are not seen every year makes them all the more special 😊 I can remember seeing clouded yellows for the first time a few years ago at Highcliffe when I was not actively pursuing butterflies. I saw my first of 2013 at Noar Hill after a tip off.



Noar Hill 11.8.2013



Gilkicker 18.8.2013



Gilkicker 18.8.2013

This was the first time I had seen Clouded Yellow and Brimstone flying together. It was quite entertaining watching The clouded Yellows turving the Brimstones off their perches. My best Clouded yellow day was 18th August at Gilkicker Point in Gosport where I saw lots including several helice females 😊 I got so engrossed in them I lost all track of time 😊 Such a delightful butterfly 😊

I hope we do not have to wait too long for the next Clouded Yellow year 😊

Long Tailed Blues

Any 2013 highlights list would not be complete without a mention of long tailed blues. I feel very lucky that I have seen this species in my 2nd year of butterfly watching whereas others, I imagine have waited a lifetime for the opportunity. I took the liberty of retaining a couple of Everlasting Pea seed pods from Kingsdown Leas. Hoping that they may come in handy at some point. I have started early and already have a seedling growing on my kitchen windowsill as a constant reminder of Long Tailed Blues and my day at Kingsdown Leas. My hope, however unlikely it seems, is that in some sheltered and secluded spot Long Tailed Blues can survive over the winter 😊😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 08-Dec-13 07:22 PM GMT

Definite highlights there Jack; Long Tails 🍷🍷, Helice Cloudies 🍷 and bucketfuls of Small Torts 😊 I love the shot from Hedge End 30.06, it looks like

its having to walk on tip-toes as the ground is so hot, I can almost hear it 'ouching!' 😂😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel