

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 18-Mar-13 09:41 PM GMT

A Happy New Year to all

A big thank you to those who posted throughout the winter and brightened up some very dull days

A bit of a catch up before the start of the new season with some pictures from the late autumn and winter

Two different Peacocks both seen locally on the 15 September



And a Speckled Wood from the 22 September



The winter saw a number of Partridges in the local fields which was much better than previous years, on this photo the ones on the left are Red-legged and the ones on the right are Greys, unusual to see them together locally



My local Little Owls showed well on a number of occasions (these shots were only 100m from where the Partridges were photographed)



In January I went to see the three Chiffchaffs that were wintering at Dowley Gap, managed to see one and shot his Pied Wagtail at the sewage works



On the subject of overwintering warblers we were visited by a female Blackcap in February that was mixing with the large group of Siskins in the back gardens (this Siskin flock reached 30+ at one point)



In January the garden also saw a Reed Bunting for a day or two



February was also a good month for Nuthatches



And finally an as yet unidentified family pet? I saw in the wooded part of Prince Of Wales' Park back in October, and it was definitely not the weather for a picnic



### Re: philm63

by David M, 18-Mar-13 09:54 PM GMT

That's the first time I've seen photos of Little Owls on here. Well done for 'capturing' them.

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 18-Mar-13 10:00 PM GMT

Dave thanks for that

I am lucky that I have a family of them living within half a mile of home that like to sit on a wall well within reasonable photograph range so I have quite a few shots on file. In addition another two families of them live within a mile but I see them a lot less frequently. I was out with the wife two weeks ago and we saw three at two different sites (one at the close site [where I have had three in view at once] and two at another site where I have only ever seen one previously). I think they are fantastic birds and brighten up most trips on my local patch

### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 18-Mar-13 10:11 PM GMT

Welcome back after the hibernation 😊 Cracking shots Phil – Little Owls always look psychotic to me, little balls of incadescent rage! 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 23-Mar-13 07:34 PM GMT

Sat 23 March

We are in the middle of a white-out up here. Masses of snow on the back of strong easterlies is causing heavy drifts in many places, and it is so co.....ld!!!

I had to shift some 2 – 3 feet drifts to be able to move my car just so I could access my snow shovel.

I very much doubt we will see a butterfly locally before April at the earliest, however it has driven the birds back onto the feeders.



*Goldfinch, Chaffinch and Siskin*

There was a good group of finches out back this morning, managed to get three on this shot but missed the Bullfinch that was also around. The Siskin flock has reduced to around a dozen from a high of around 30



*Goldcrest*

A very welcome visitor over the past few days has been this Goldcrest, seen 4 - 5 times now, managed to get it on a shot today. I love Goldcrests they look so cute and are so small. A few years ago we had a close relative the Firecrest locally which I managed to see on the same day as the American Robin that was also local. One of those red-letter days, two brilliant birds within a mile and half of home.



*Long-tailed Tit*

Two Long-tailed Tits are, I am sure, nest building near the garden and visit the feeders frequently where they seem to strip out the mealworm feeder as soon as it is refreshed. Hopefully some juveniles in the garden will be a highlight this spring



*Robin*

Another of my garden favourites. Two years ago a juvenile from one local brood spent a few weeks in our garden and would hop around unconcerned within a few feet of us and brightened up that summer as a result

**Re: philm63**

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-13 07:52 PM GMT

Hi Phil, some nice shots there 😊

We have had a few inches of snow in my part of the midlands but nothing like it looks like you have had. I see on the news earlier some parts of Cumbria had 14 feet Drifts 😲

Neil F.

## Re: philm63

by philm63, 29-Mar-13 07:53 PM GMT

Hi Neil. Yes, saw lots of worse affected places on the news, some of the smaller Pennine villages within 5 – 10 miles of here were cut off for a few days till they could be dug access routes through the drifts, the wind was blowing the snow almost horizontally and made a bad situation worse

Sat 29 March

The snow up here still lies deep in places, but most of the main road network is now clear, but it does remain cold. i am hoping to get out a bit over the Easter break and see what is about locally. The garden remains the key area at the moment with lots calling in. The Rooks that were nest building at the small rookery on Lady Lane seemed to have halted with the bad weather, but they are again showing around the site and making lots of noise. A Great Spotted Woodpecker is drumming in Prince of Wales Park sometimes as I pass in the morning. Tomorrow will see how the Lapwings are getting on along Walsh Lane, they were spread around the nesting field but hadn't starting displaying the last time I saw them. The weather had driven a Song Thrush into the garden during the week and the Goldcrest appears most days as do the Siskins which are still hanging about. I think there will be no butterflies locally for at least a few weeks looking at the conditions and the weather forecast.

Pictures below were taken today when we had some nice sunshine at times and a reduction in the wind. The Goldcrest seems to favour the Holly tree out front where I have a few fat feeders, here I also shot the Robin below as well. The Siskins featured are predominantly out the back where both I and my two neighbours run feeding stations, they seem to favour the Sunflower hearts to anything else on offer. I cleared a lot of my lawn today so could top up my station at last



*Goldcrest*



*Male and female Siskin*



*Male and female Siskin*



*Robin*



*Robin*

## **Re: philm63**

by philm63, 30-Mar-13 08:41 PM GMT

30 March

Managed to get out for a few hours this afternoon, so went down to the canal and along to Bingley Bog North. A lot of the snow has now gone locally down in the valley but it stays cold, although the wind has eased. Some decent spells of sunshine today as well. There does not appear to be a lot of growth around, would expect we need a few days of warm weather to kick-start things.

Had taken a few more shots earlier of both the Goldcrest and the Robin frequenting the front of the house (no apologies as I love these birds), have also included a few of the more interesting shots from when I was out. Spotted a few Redwings today so they have yet to all return to their haunts, and the Black-headed Gulls are still hanging around not yet moving to their breeding grounds. Saw three separate Song Thrushes today which must be the most for a long time and clocked a Snipe at Bingley Bog North which was a first at this site for me. The local Rookery is back to being active with a pair building what will be the 11th nest there this year.



*Goldcrest*



*Robin*



*Black-headed Gulls - breeding plumage*





*Song Thrush*

**Re: philm63**

by David M, 30-Mar-13 09:17 PM GMT

Hard to believe it's Easter, Phil. Surely, things must warm up soon, and when they do, we might be treated to all the spring blossom emerging at the same time!

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 01-Apr-13 06:46 PM GMT

Dave it cannot come quick enough to be honest

31 March / 1 April

Yesterday I decided to do my usual circuit, the first time I had been higher up since the snow fell, and there is still a fair bit of snow about on the tops, especially where it had drifted in the wind. The photos show what I mean, these were actually only half a mile from home as the crow flies. Despite this it had a feel of impending Spring with the first lambs I have seen locally this year (but only two), Curlews are now bubbling around the moor edges, Meadow Pipits are gathering at the edges as well pre-breeding. Also saw my first passage Oystercatchers near Eldwick Reservoir and the Lapwings are still in situ on the local breeding site but not yet displaying. With some sunshine and a reduction in the wind, if you shut your eyes you could almost wish....

Today brought me back to earth, the wind was back with a vengeance, and it was very cold. Did nearly the same walk as yesterday but with the wife, and we were both frozen stiff after 10 minutes, and on Heights Lane it was so cold in the wind as to be painful. However, more lambs on show today, and a Cormorant passed over no doubt heading down into the Wharfe valley over the moors.

Looking back at my diaries I actually realise I saw very little of Butterflies till early May last year, although 2011 was better. Last year though, after a promising March, it did turn nasty in April



*Snow still deep in places on Heights Lane*



*The track past Eldwick Reservoir came to an abrupt halt*



*Lapwings gathering near the local breeding site*

Spent part of the day taking shots from the house



*Song Thrush – a very unusual bird in my garden*



*After a few days trying at last a decent shot of the front of the Goldcrest*



*I am sure this Robin is now posing for the camera*

### **Re: philm63**

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

Cracking shot of the Goldcrest Phil – well worth the perseverance 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: philm63**

by philm63, 07-Apr-13 06:55 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, nice to see you are getting a few species now

Sun 7 Apr

A week of lows then highs

Discovered on Wed that a Long-eared Owl had been seen on my patch just a mile from my house on the 28 March, that caused some gnashing of teeth. On Thurs saw a photo taken there of it on the 1 April (I must have actually passed it over the Easter break), but more to the point it was hanging around so on Thurs evening after tea walked up and found no sign of it. Win some, lose some I lied to myself.

Yesterday I went up that way again and had some cracking views down to about 8 feet as we both unexpectedly saw each other, but despite catching up with it on a few occasions as it moved around could only get 1 very poor shot. Went back again after tea but no sighting. Today I went back that way again and lo and behold a few cracking shots as it happily sat there staring at me, not a perfect angle due to the trees but I'm not complaining – a lovely bird on my patch and recorded on disc – life can be great

Yesterday was quite warm here with very little wind and despite the fact we still have snow around in a few places I had three Small Tortoiseshells – two were chasing each other over Lady Lane and disappeared between some trees no chance of a picture but my first for the year. After seeing the owl I checked a few sheltered south facing spots to no avail, however during the evening walk had a brief view of another single as it passed over a wall and hedge in front of me.

Today saw no butterflies at all, it was however more overcast and cooler as the wind was stronger, still pleasant at times

Very little signs of growth but the Lapwings have now started displaying if somewhat half-heartedly, had a singing Skylark today, more Curlews in song; and lots of noise from the more usual residents – Robin, Chaffinch, Blackbird etc. The Siskins are down to around 6 – 10 but still providing a nice bonus in the gardens and the Goldcrest is still showing regular and well



*Long-eared Owl on Heights Lane*



*Siskins on the garden feeders*



*Meadow Pipit in one of two small flocks on Heights Lane*



*Lapwing on edge of breeding site on Saturday*

**Re: philm63**

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

I won't say that was a "poor" shot Phil – it's a belter 🍀🍀🍀 I'm triply envious as I've only ever seen one Long-eared Owl ever and that was in Poland. Hopefully only another week and spring will finally and definitely be here – probably with downpours and gales though 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 14-Apr-13 07:59 PM GMT

Sorry Wurzel, I must have mislead, I didn't post the 'poor' picture but one of the better ones.

Sun 14 April

Well it is at least warmer, but still not ideal up here. Yesterday it was generally overcast with a very fresh wind and later becoming wet; today was warmer but extremely windy and changing from sun to overcast to wet in the space of a few minutes. Since the three tortoiseshells last Sat still no more butterflies seen, however yesterday I saw my first Swallow and today another. Also had a female Sparrowhawk hunting in the garden as I watched the feeders today but it didn't catch on the pass so didn't perch. The Long-eared Owl may have moved on as I failed to locate it yesterday, but compensation in two Little Owls together. It still does not feel like Spring up here yet, and there is still snow lying in places



*Most of the male Pheasants locally are of this gaudy type as opposed to being ring-necks*



*Two Little Owls having a cuddle to keep warm in the wind*

### Re: philm63

by Padfield, 14-Apr-13 08:49 PM GMT

That horse, magpie and little owl picture is just wonderful, Phil!

Guy

### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-13 10:32 PM GMT

Sorry to hear that there are still no butterflies up your way – still they'll be all the sweeter when they do arrive 😊 The final shot is a cracker – it looks like the Horse and the Magpie are squaring up, although my money is on the Little Owl, evil incarnate they are 😊😊

Have a goodun

## Re: philm63

by philm63, 15-Apr-13 08:32 PM GMT

Guy, Wurzel – thanks for the kind comments.

Wurzel I can see what you mean about the expression on Little Owls, but I enjoy them all the same – the pair in the picture are only a 10 minute walk from my front door and the wall they are on is photographable for most of its length so I have come to love them and have lots of shots of them now

Whilst berating the lack of spring at the weekend I did fail to mention I had my first young bird on Saturday – and as expected it was a young Wood Pigeon – I think even its parents would have a problem loving it. But it certainly does seem the larger birds excel at producing ugly youngsters (except for the waders for some reason)

For example –



*The young Wood Pigeon from Saturday*



*Young Little Owl*



*Young Tawny Owl*

However the passerines seem to produce very cute youngsters



*Young Great Tit*



*Young Blue Tit*



*Young Robin*

Although some of the finches can be an acquired taste



*Young Greenfinch*

Back to the present day – if not for the wind it could have been summer today never mind spring – about 16 – 18 in parts of Yorkshire, first signs of Cherry Blossom this morning and more buds appearing by the day. I am in the latter part of using public transport at the moment till I replace my car – one benefit is on good days I can take a diversion on my way home, hence I am carrying my camera in my work bag at all times just in case. I did this tonight and finished the trip home with a walk through Prince of Wales Park. I was rewarded with two more Small Tortoiseshells – one flew away but the other decided to bask in a flattened sun-facing bracken bed, so managed to get a few shots, it was very skittish though so left it in peace. Hopefully this is the start of a good period



*Small Tortoiseshell – my first butterfly picture for 2013*

### **Re: philm63**

by David M, 15-Apr-13 09:27 PM GMT

I'm surprised there are fledglings so early, Phil. There's hardly been a ready buffet of insects/caterpillars to raise them on.

Round where I live, most of the birds seem to still be building nests!

### **Re: philm63**

by philm63, 19-Apr-13 07:50 PM GMT

Dave I think pigeons will nest in every month of the year in some places, and Crossbills will have finished breeding by now as they are very early

starters, as are Grey Herons I believe. Today I saw my first Mallard chicks, two broods in two different places and I saw Blackbird, House Sparrow and Starling today with food so all probably have fledglings. However a lot of resident species seem to be nest building or sitting at the moment

Fri 19 April

Day off work and with tomorrow being on family duties and Sunday forecast as rubbish I decided to have a trip out, thought I would go down into the valley expecting that to present the best opportunities. Light rain to start then dry and overcast with finally some sunshine for the last 20 minutes or so. The trip down provided no unusual sightings and also no butterflies. Along the canal and then turned off to approach Bingley Bog North from the top end, saw a few House Sparrows here, some carrying food (House Sparrows are not common around here at all). The Bog held a Mallard with chicks and two Chiffchaff but also no butterflies. Passed over the by-pass and railway into Bingley and then onto Riverside Walk which leads into Myrtle Park, did the riverside all the way to the allotments and round to Harden Beck before retracing my route and back home. Best bit of the day with a second Mallard family (but only two chicks left), at least 4 Willow Warblers and a few more Chiffchaff and a cracking sighting of three Common Sandpiper pausing on their way upstream. Also had a pair of Goosander and another Swallow – but once again no butterflies. Passing the allotments near 5-rise Locks on my way home saw my only butterfly of the day a Small Tortoiseshell feeding on dandelions. Still the only species I have seen yet.



*One of the shots of today's ST feeding on dandelions*



*One of the Common Sandpipers but on the wrong bank from my point of view*



*A spot of colour with a gaudy male Pheasant in the allotments near Myrtle Park*



*Pair of Goosanders on the River Aire just past Myrtle Park*

### **Re: philm63**

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-13 10:03 PM GMT

Great report again Phil and I really like the Goosander shot 🤩👍 They're cracking birds but down here are more of a winter speciality than a breeding species, the furthest south (in England) I've seen them during the summer months was on the River Avon at Worcester.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: philm63**

by philm63, 29-Apr-13 10:57 AM GMT

Wurzel - Thanks. I expect to see Goosander most months, along with things like Dipper and Red Grouse one of the benefits of living here.

Mon 29

A deep low for me at the moment. The weather is awful and I have suffered a re-occurrence of an old knee problem that means no walks either. I have struggled to work a few times but today I am having off as I am back to the doctor's to see what I can get done.

So all my recent stuff has been from the trip to work or this weekend the garden. In two hours this morning I clocked 27 species including Jay and Sparrowhawk so I am not getting bored at least. Highlight of the weekend has been a male Blackcap which for three days (seen again this morning) now has been around the garden taking fat from the coconuts. Possibly it is from the copse on the main road and is struggling to find enough insects



*Male Blackcap gracing the garden for three days so far*

When I put the mealworms out they are rapidly grabbed by the locals to feed their young, with the usuals - Starlings, Blackbird, Robin, Long-tailed Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Dunnock taking the most; however we are now getting a Mistle Thrush (or both) visiting to stock up. This has led to some real scraps with the Blackbirds and Starlings



*Mistle Thrush stocking up on mealworms*

The finches continue to visit for the sunflower hearts next door with Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin and Bullfinch all seen regularly



*Siskin and Goldfinches, this image was digiscoped*

Lastly I would like to introduce you to an old friend of mine – a Dunnock. I first saw this individual back in early 2011 he (I believe it is a male) was obvious as he had a leg problem and was trailing one foot he wouldn't use. Despite this he sang in the spring, mated and I believe actually raised a brood that year. During 2011 at some point the actual foot itself fell off leaving just a stump. I permanently have two fat coconuts out front of the house in a holly (seen above on the Blackcap) and this is where I see him most often. Then last year I saw him not at all for a long period and presumed his missing leg had left him as easy prey for one of the local cats or the Sparrowhawks that use the gardens here as a take-away. But no, he re-appeared. Now in 2013 he is still around and I took the picture below yesterday in the usual spot I see him. If you look at branch he is on forward of the white mark you can see the stump of his leg hanging down. This shows how remarkably stubborn life can be in adverse conditions I think



*My friend the one-footed Dunnock*

No butterflies seen this week at all

## **Re: philm63**

by Padfield, 29-Apr-13 12:01 PM GMT

I'm very glad you introduced us to Hoppalong Hedge Sparrow. He is an example to us all. Humans all too often waste their energies wishing things were otherwise or regretting they are as they are; but other creatures just seem to make the best of what they have.

Thank you!

Guy

## Re: philm63

by philm63, 06-May-13 08:28 PM GMT

Guy

Glad to oblige. There is a line of some kind crossed when it stops being a Dunnock and becomes a recognizable Dunnock (or any other species), it adds some additional dimension as you see it's life unfold over the months and years.

Mon 6 May

By far the warmest day of the year, but the previous week has not been spectacular. As I am still, to all intents and purposes, home-bound till I get my knee sorted (except for struggling to work) so the entire week has been limited to sightings from the train, bus or the garden. Until yesterday I had not seen a butterfly all week except for a distant view of a vanishing white on Thursday. Yesterday in the garden I had a few sightings of Orange Tip, Small Tortoiseshell and some unidentified whites but nothing was stopping. Today I sat out for a good few hours this afternoon and saw much the same with two male Orange Tips at the same time that clashed over the lawn at one point. However one of the male Orange Tips alighted for a few minutes next door and I managed to lean over the fence and take a few snaps (some below) this was repeated even more briefly by a Small Tortoiseshell later. Orange Tips certainly brighten up a spring day when you get a decent view.

Toady is the first time in over a week and half I haven't seen the Blackcap. The male about four days ago suddenly became a pair; as it started appearing with a female, or each would pop in on its own a few times a day, only ever taking fat. I managed to get a few shots of them together, one of which is below

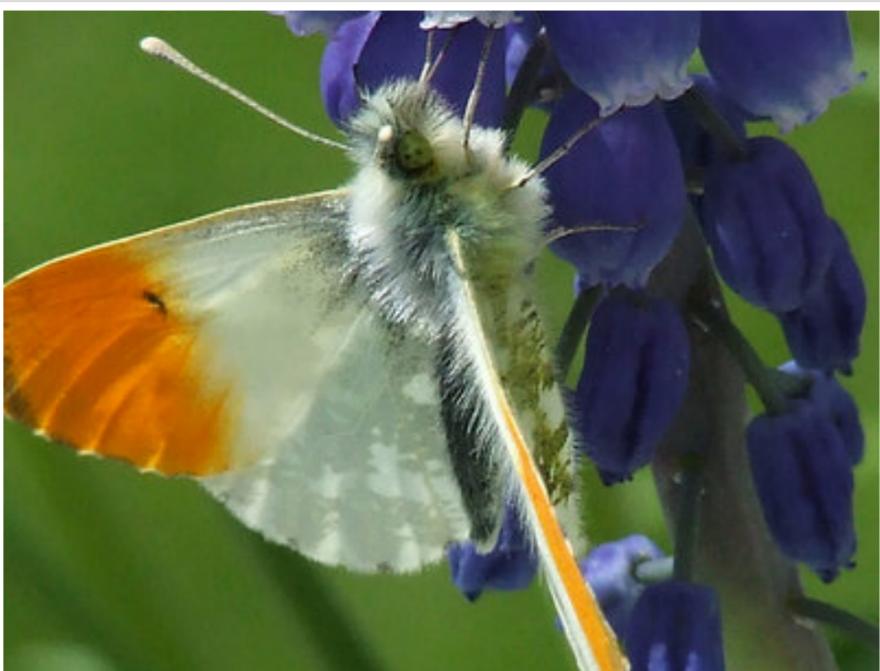
With Swifts appearing locally also over the past few days it appears spring is really here



*The male Orange Tip that paused next door*



*Partial undersides showing*



*I was suprised how hairy these can appear*



*Small Tortoiseshell*



*Male and female Blackcap in the garden*

### **Re: philm63**

by Wurzel, 06-May-13 10:16 PM GMT

Great close up shot of the Orange-tip Phil and a pair of Blackcap in one shot – that is a rarity 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: philm63**

by philm63, 09-May-13 08:24 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel

The Blackcaps are still visiting, have seen them three times this afternoon already; I am sticking with my belief they are a local pair but are visiting the feeder to supplement their food intake, which is actually quite worrying if they cannot find enough insect intake. As both are visiting at the same time on some occasions it is unlikely they have laid eggs yet and after a few nice days we are back to high winds and rain. Watching the bird scramble to bag all the mealworms I put out which are collected and taken away by the beakful I think they are at those times forming a good proportion of some chicks intake – and I have nearly ten species taking them. We also still have a good number of Goldfinch, Siskin, Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Bullfinch on the sunflower hearts and today I had both Jay and Great Spotted Woodpecker feeding in the garden so I am glad I have added to the choices of high energy food I am supplying – I fear this could turn out as a very bad Spring for wildlife all round.

No more butterflies in the garden since Monday but that is due to timing on Tues / Wed as I was back at work and the weather today. On Tuesday I had a very tattered Peacock, my first of the year, feeding on dandelions at work – have a few shots but not considered good enough to post. The journey home on the train only showed a few whites and a single Small Tortoiseshell along the valley rail corridor which was disappointing

My last trip to the park showed the bilberry there was just starting to gain new growth, I have had Green Hairstreak earlier than this on flowering bilberry out on the exposed moors. Locally we are getting to see some decent cover of leaves now on most trees, although some are still only in bud, I just hope it all comes out ok in the end and that the rest of the year is good

### **Re: philm63**

by Pauline, 10-Jun-13 08:23 PM GMT

Evening Phil

How are things with you? I am missing your postings and wondering how the birds are getting on. I still have 2 Blackcaps in the garden – they just love the suet logs as do all the others. Your bird photos are lovely.

## Re: philm63

by philm63, 13-Jun-13 12:00 PM GMT

Hi Pauline I have been very restricted of late with being confined to the garden or very close to home, I hope to hear soon what the prognosis is to get my knee sorted out - the sooner the better from my point of view. The Blackcaps are no longer visiting but that is compensated by a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers that are visiting a couple of times a day. Your recent posts have been fascinating

We had a good emergence of Small Tortoiseshells locally during May with 7 - 8 showing in one spot but they seem to disappear very quickly, otherwise I have been limited to what passes through the garden or what I have seen travelling to and from work. A local birder on the birding group blog reported 26 Green Hairstreak spotted as he crossed Ilkley Moor, I will miss them this year as I cannot get up to the normal spot and by the time I expect to be mobile again it will be too late

A brief catch up since my last post

The Blackcaps stopped visiting around the 11 - 12 May, but that coincided with the start of visits from a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers and an occasional visit by a Jay. Funnily enough the Siskins stopped calling around the same time.



*Jay on the lawn*

On the 19 May I managed to struggle around my usual route, saw around 15 Small Tortoiseshells, 2 Peacocks, a Large White, 4 Green-veined Whites and a single male Orange Tip. The local Lapwings are now accompanied by chicks with 4 - 5 seen



*Small Tortoiseshell*



*Lapwing near the breeding grounds*

The birds visiting the garden later in May reduced but Bullfinch and Nuthatch put in good appearances and the first of the local songbird broods started

showing. I was concerned that the Robins, Blackbirds and Great Tits that appeared were all limited to one youngster each. Has any one else noticed small brood survival this spring?

On the 26 May I managed a visit to Prince of Wales Park which produced a few nice Green-veined Whites and an unexpected Large Red Damselfly (a female of form melanotum or intermedia I think). Back home we had a male Orange Tip visit which I managed to photograph over the fences



*Green-veined White*



*Female Large Red Damselfly*



*Study of a sun-dappled Robin in the garden*



*Male Orange Tip in the garden*

By the last few days of May to early June I was limited to the usual common garden visitors and then in small numbers and sporadic visits except for a few species that appear to be feeding their chicks from what is on offer. On the 2nd June made another brief trip locally and found a small mixed flock of Grey and Red-legged Partridges then in Prince of Wales Park started turning up Speckled Woods. I had passed through the park on Friday evening coming home from work and saw none so expect these emerged on the 1st or 2nd, in addition a few more Green-veined Whites.



*Speckled Wood undersides*



*Uppersides of the same butterfly- damaged but only a few days old*



*Female Green-veined White*



*And a nearby male*

From the 6th onwards I have been trying to get to grips with my new camera. I have stuck with getting another bridge camera but switched to the Canon SX50 which gives me a top magnification of 50 - 100x (35mm equiv of 1200 - 2400mm) which I am hoping will pull in those more distant birds for good shots, make closer ones more detailed and still gives a Macro facility down to zero. All the initial shots are in Auto as I get used to the functions



*Goldfinch*



*Great Spotted Woodpecker on the feeders*



*Greenfinch on the feeders*

On the 8th made a very brief hobble up to see if the Little Owls were at home about a half mile from our house. Spotted a Small Tortoiseshell over a wall, shot from about 10 feet away and also found my Little Owl. It appears to have an unusual or defective right eye pupil.



*Small Tortoiseshell undersides*



*Little Owl*

Back at home tried to get a good shot of the juvenile Blackbird that spends ages in the garden or nearby and also took a nice shot of one of the resident Dunnocks that would have been better without the foliage. The camera seems to be giving decent results so far but I still have lots to learn with it



*Juvenile Blackbird*



*A bit more zoom applied*



*Dunock – pity about the plant*

The day after I wanted to see how big a difference dragging the zoom up made, the shot below has been cropped absolutely minimal and was shot from about 6 yards. The Image Stabilisation system is very good even at the top end of magnification. I made a train journey later down to the Butterfly Conservation reserve at Shipley station not too far from me; hoping to see Common Blue but to no avail, the plaque and info there stated June – July so may try again later. The females here are very blue so it says. The reserve itself is actually a quite small fenced off area sitting between platforms and car parks but still has a list of about a dozen species



*Dunock after upping the zoom a bit more*

I will try and post more frequently depending on what shows up, but the weather looks to be turning back to more unsettled. After struggling back and forth to work during the week I really need to rest my leg at weekends, I never expected to say I would miss my car so much but I do; but it would be unsafe to drive in my current condition

### **Re: philm63**

by Pauline, 13-Jun-13 04:28 PM GMT

Evening Phil

Good to see your post. I hope you get your knee sorted out soon but in the meantime it looks like you have plenty of photo opportunities close by. I don't think my photos are anything special this year Phil as butterflies are thin on the ground and the weather here in Hants is dreadful. Still, your bird photos cheer me up so keep them coming.

PS love your Little Owl.

### **Re: philm63**

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-13 07:53 PM GMT

Great report Phil, it seems that camera is working out well for you with some great shots 😊 Good luck with the knee

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: philm63**

by philm63, 05-Jul-13 09:06 AM GMT

Pauline, Wurzel – thanks for the kind comments

Apologies up front for the lack of butterfly images, have had no opportunities presented recently

I am still mainly on garden watch mode, have made a few observations whenever I have been out such as the trip to work, but few present photo opportunities. There has been very little seen of butterflies except for a few whites travelling about. On the occasions I have come home through Prince of Wales Park have had no sightings of Speckled Wood either. So, one again, I am limited to reporting on the birds in the garden. I have tried out a few new feeders with mixed success, but a suet pellet feeder has proved a great success and has drawn in thrushes, Robin, Jay and even a Jackdaw, some days it is empty by the time I get home. This is mainly due to the larger birds that cannot perch on the edge; they deliberately hit it on a pass, spilling some onto the ground where they can get at it. I have seen Mistle Thrush, Jay, Blackbird, Magpie and Jackdaw doing this now. Apart from the odd day the weather has precluded sitting out; so most of the pictures were shot from the living room through the windows, this adds usually a cast to the colour. Siskins are starting to appear again, and Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Nuthatch are quite frequent; the occasional visit by a Jay is also welcomed.

I have noticed a drop in quality in the images taken inside against those shot sitting out, besides adding another 4 - 5 yards to the range the sharpness decreases but I am still pleased with some of the results, and with the larger images you start to notice things that were not obvious with shots of the same birds with my last camera. I am still waiting for the chance to actually get out in the field and give the new camera a good testing. I have now got my appointment for surgery this month so hope to be mobile again in August



*Dunnock*



*Pheasant - hen with chicks*



*Nuthatch*



*Siskin male*



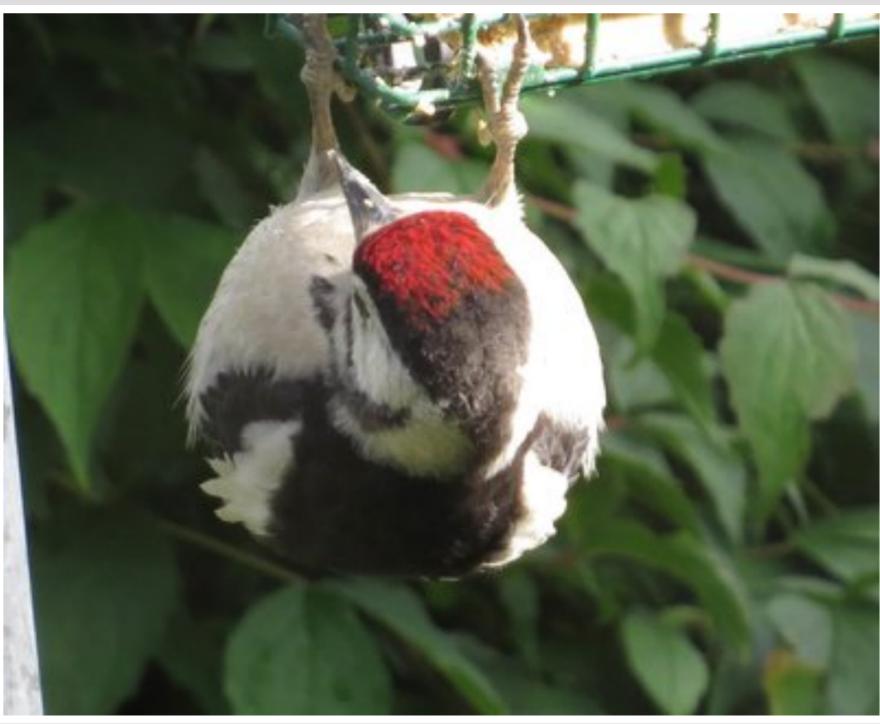
*Jay*



*Jackdaw*



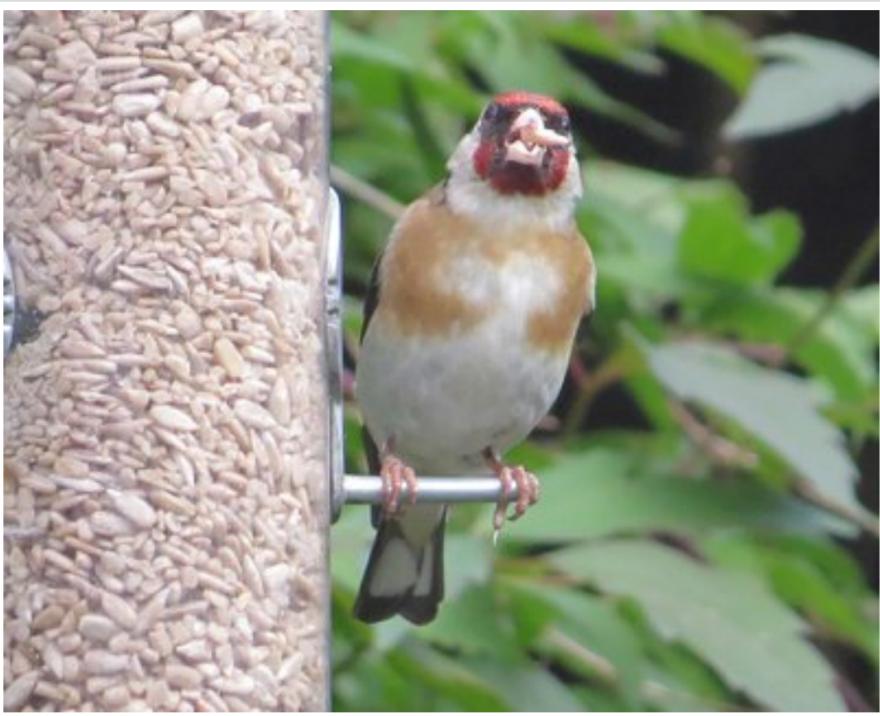
*Mouse sp*



*Great Spotted Woodpecker*



*Greenfinch*



*Goldfinch*



*Song Thrush*



*Mistle Thrush*



*Grey Squirrel*

**Re: philm63**

by Pauline, 05-Jul-13 05:40 PM GMT

I know this is a butterfly site Phil but I love seeing your bird photos which are fantastic. Thanks to the members on this site I am learning a lot about photography but still can't manage shots like those – although mine are taken through glass. How do you get so close?

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 05-Jul-13 11:20 PM GMT

Pauline

Glad you like them, I love most of your butterfly shots as I have indicated on earlier posts, most of subjects I have no chances of seeing locally; making them twice as welcomed

I work with a bridge camera, up to a few weeks ago I used a Fuji S5600 which has served me well since I bought it about 5 years ago – this has a 10x optical zoom. To get some of the better close-ups such as the earlier Goldcrest and Robin shots I would take those from my front porch window looking at some feeding spots I had put in a holly out front about 8 feet away. Even then the key is to still shoot at the maximum magnification possible

to get the maximum image size to reduce cropping required. Other shots would depend on luck and starting from the first view, shoot – move a bit closer, shoot etc till you consider no further without disturbance. Butterflies and Dragonflies as you are aware allow a much closer approach and it is as much about composition, backgrounds etc with these.

However, back to the birds, it was obvious I was not recording decent shots of the more distant birds; record shots yes but not exactly pleasing. So, as the camera needed replacing I read up as much as I could on user views of the newer super-zooms in the bridge range. I had considered going DSLR but I wanted a camera I could take anywhere, use at a moments notice; and shoot a bird then a butterfly without changing equipment. An entry level DSLR with a moderate zoom (say 300mm) would cost enough and still offer no more pulling power than my 10x Fuji. I must stress I am not a photographer, I just like to record the beautiful creatures that I am lucky enough to see, so no to a DSLR and I was back to my super-zooms. I narrowed it down to 3 and the Canon had the best user shots on the various forums. So I now have 50x zoom which at the press of a button becomes 75x then 100x zoom, but still it means being as close as possible, and getting the largest image possible at the minimum zoom necessary. So the Grey Squirrel shot was at around 80x and is not cropped in anyway and shot from around 20 feet, at the same time I shot a number showing the whole squirrel at a lower zoom. I just think the real close-up is a view we seldom see and adds a new dimension; but is not necessarily any better. At 50x I have the equivalent of a 1200mm telephoto and at 100x a 2400mm, so now I can get some decent record shots of more distant objects and on a camera that is standard size with no additional equipment needed. They will never be as good as shots from a DSLR but that is not the important point, it is decent shots across different subjects from a practical perspective for me, so I only shoot in jpeg – though the camera will do RAW and RAW+jpeg, I have no desire at this moment to get into post shooting routines in Photoshop etc either.

My main desire now is to get out there and try it out properly.

Oh dear, on reading it back, it seems very long-winded – hope I have answered your question after all that. Just two more points:

1. These cameras have been heavily field tested by other interested users so the optimum settings have been worked out, tested and posted – I have these and most could be applied to any camera that is either a Bridge or DSLR – if you are interested drop me a PM and I will e-mail you the data. I have been using them and they seem fine
2. There is a web-site run by two Americans showing wildlife (primarily birds) shot on this Canon and its previous version in their gardens. To say the images are stunning is an understatement. If I could get 30% of the quality of them I would be over the moon. The site also gives some background to how they achieve it (all manual settings, RAW and post shooting Photoshop) but it is worth looking at just to savour the images. Let me know if you want the site address

### Re: philm63

by Pauline, 06-Jul-13 06:44 AM GMT

Hi Phil – thanks for such a comprehensive reply. If you could pm me with the name of that site and also the camera details I'd be grateful.

### Re: philm63

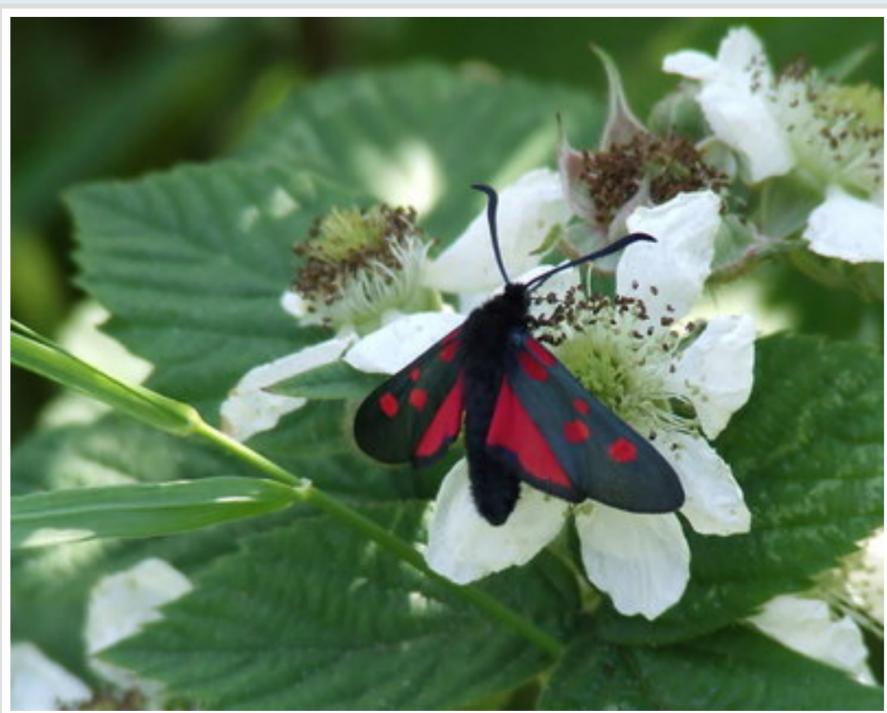
by philm63, 20-Jul-13 02:56 PM GMT

Another catch up

Like most of the country we have had some spectacular weather, but apart from some specific sites this has not led to a major increase in butterflies being seen around generally. The morning/evening trip on the train has produced very few sightings along the railway corridor.

On the 7 July I managed to do a quick transit through Bingley Bog North – 40+ Ringlets, 20+ Large/Small Skippers, 8–10 Peacocks (none new) and a handful of Meadow Brown and Whites made for a pleasurable period there. On the 13 July I did a circuit locally with more ringlets, a few Skippers, nymphalids and Meadow Browns but not much else butterfly wise. Sightings in the garden have been few and far between with the occasional butterfly passing through, a damselfly earlier in the month and today a dragonfly sp that didn't stop, however bees have been plentiful

Knee surgery next week and hopefully fully fit and able to get around a week or so later



*Burnet Moth*



*Small Skipper*



*Ringlet and Cinnabar Moth caterpillar*



*Woodpigeon study*



*Juvenile Blue Tits – appearing as if enjoying a game of leapfrog*



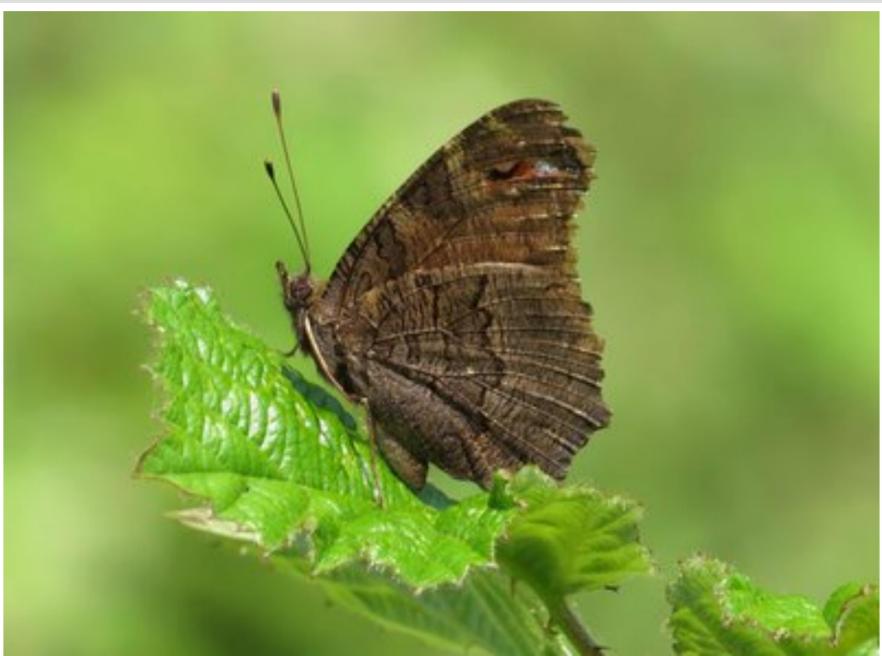
*Bullfinch on my feeders*



*Large Red Damselfly in my garden - seen twice in one day but not since*



*Large Skipper*



*Peacock undersides - upperparts were quite worn*



*Great Tit - showing the cost of raising a family*



*Lapwing chick (one of two) enjoying a mud patch which cattle had created near a seep in a field*



*Two Meadow pipits on a wall nearby*



*Male Pied Wagtail on the same mud as the Lapwing above*



*Mistle Thrush – currently a regular visitor in my garden*



*Bee in the garden*

### **Re: philm63**

by philm63, 12-Aug-13 09:07 AM GMT

Some recent photos that I have taken, most in the garden area but the Comma and Holly Blue were from a local walk I did. The garden has seen a multitude of whites passing through with over 100 sightings a day in the time I was out, mainly Large White but decent numbers of Green-veined and Small as well. In addition there have been sporadic visits from Meadow Brown, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and even a Comma (a garden first for me)



*Large White*





*Small White*



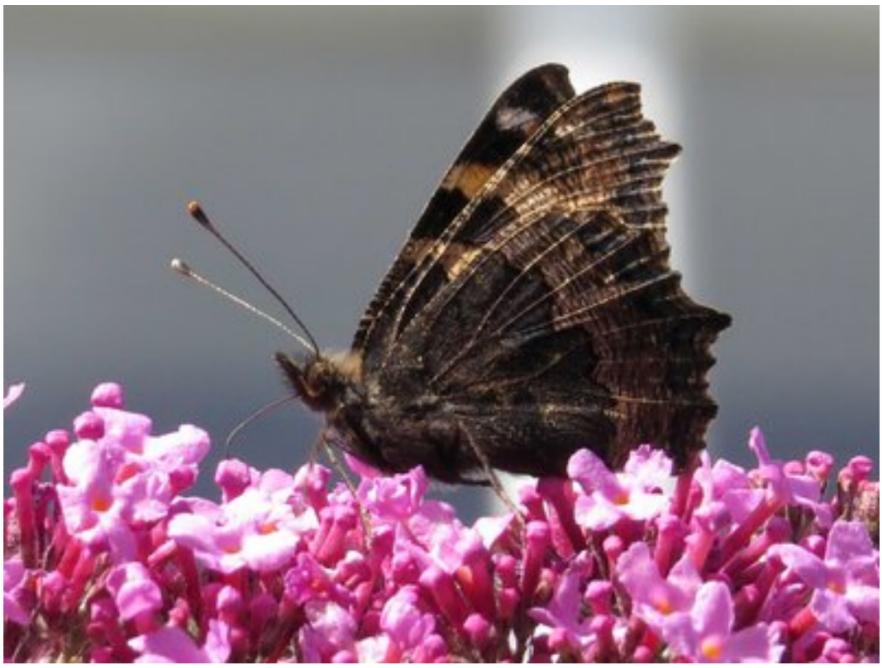
*Mating Small Whites*



*Green-veined White*



*Small Tortoiseshell*



*Red Admiral - it was a rather worn individual*



*Comma*



*Holly Blue*

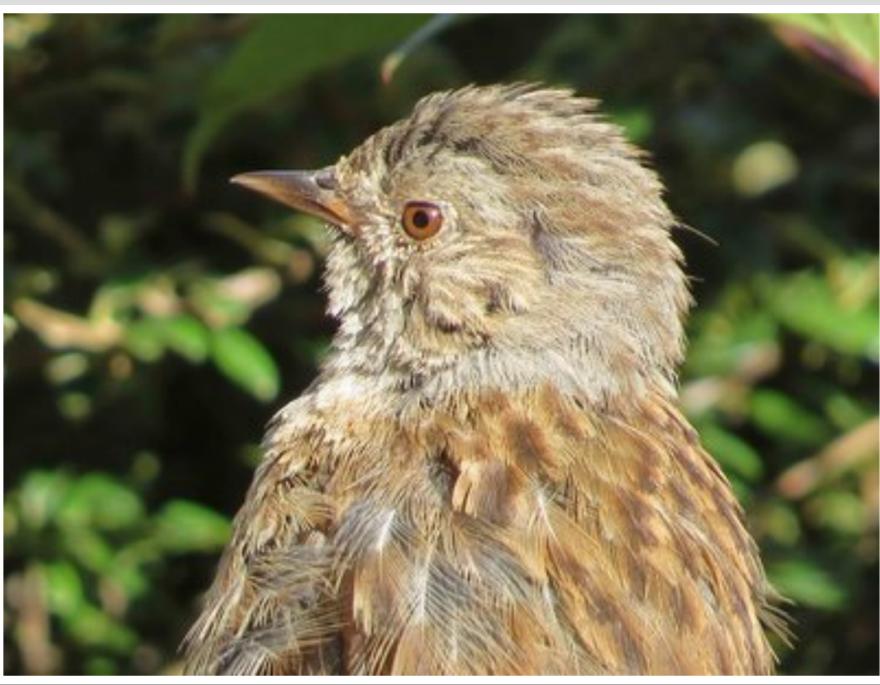




*Juvenile Blue Tit*



*Greenfinch*



*Dunnock*

**Re: philm63**

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-13 09:43 PM GMT

Cracking closed wing shot of the Comma Phil, the rest are pretty great too 😊 It's been a good year for Whites by all accounts.

Have a goodun

Wurzel