

**William**

by William, 31-Oct-13 10:37 PM GMT

Hi All,

Having just joined UK Butterflies, I thought I'd start a personal diary to share some of my Butterfly sightings and photos. With 2013's season fast drawing to a close, I decided that I, like others would start a retrospective diary, looking back over the highlights of what has been a truly exciting year for me...

**Re: William**

by David M, 31-Oct-13 10:49 PM GMT

Welcome, William.

Feel free to post whatever you wish. You can be assured of an interested audience.

**Re: William**

by Nick Broomer, 31-Oct-13 11:19 PM GMT

Welcome to the forum William. Looking forward to your future posts.

All the best Nick.

**Re: William**

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-13 12:41 AM GMT

Welcome William – looking forward to reading your reports and eying your photos 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: William**

by Pete Eeles, 01-Nov-13 08:24 AM GMT

And a welcome from me too – look forward to seeing your photos!

Cheers,

– Pete

**Re: William**

by Pauline, 01-Nov-13 10:20 AM GMT

A big welcome from me too William.

**Re: William**

by William, 01-Nov-13 03:11 PM GMT

April

Thanks for all the kind words guys, with them in mind, I shall begin...

For me and many others, April was a frustrating Butterflying month, and I found it bereft of the usual first Orange Tips and Holly Blues that make it so exciting. Despite this, I had clocked up Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone, Small White and Large White by the end of the month by which point the cold spell had released its grip, and the exciting possibility of a warm spell in May began to take shape...



*Peacock with a Passenger*

The other highlight of the month was the hatching of a Brown Hairstreak Egg I had found, sadly I lost track of the charming little larva after a week. Brown Hairstreaks aren't common in Somerset, ranging long distances over hedgerows, and being very difficult to track down. Last year I managed to find 3 males, all feeding in an Ash near my home, and in 2011 we actually had an egg on our Blackthorn hedge, but more of that later..



*Brown Hairstreak Ovum*



*Hatching....*



*The Larva*

### Re: William

by Vince Massimo, 01-Nov-13 03:40 PM GMT

That's a good start William 😊

The Brown Hairstreak images are excellent and would be a welcome addition to the Species-Specific Album. They would be used in the **Identification** <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/species...es=betulae> and **Species** pages <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/species...&stage=all> of this website and would remain your copyright.

If you are agreeable you can add them here [gallery/album.php?album\\_id=160](http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/gallery/album.php?album_id=160). Just scroll down to the species and then select the category within the species (ie ovum or larva). It would be helpful if you could add site and date information in the "imagename" box.

Looking forward to seeing the rest of your images for the year.

Regards,

Vince

### Re: William

by Nick Broomer, 01-Nov-13 06:05 PM GMT

Thats a brilliant start to your diary William. The photos of the Brown Hairstreak ovum and larva are just excellent. 😊

All the best, Nick.

### Re: William

by David M, 01-Nov-13 06:07 PM GMT

I've a feeling this is going to be a particularly good personal diary!

### Re: William

by Chris Jackson, 01-Nov-13 06:48 PM GMT

Hi William,

Welcome to UK BFs. My name is Chris, I'm a recent overseas member and I monitor what's going on in the Marseilles region.

Nice photos so far.

Bienvenue !!

CJ

### Re: William

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

Hi William

Welcome 😊 It is always good to see a new diary. That is a superb opener, I look forward seeing more 😊

### Re: William

by Susie, 02-Nov-13 09:49 AM GMT

Welcome William. 😊 Brown hairstreak is my favourite butterfly and those are lovely photos.

## Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 02-Nov-13 07:49 PM GMT

Hi William,

Great start to your diary, looking forward to seeing some more 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

## Re: William

by William, 02-Nov-13 08:46 PM GMT

### May (Part 1)

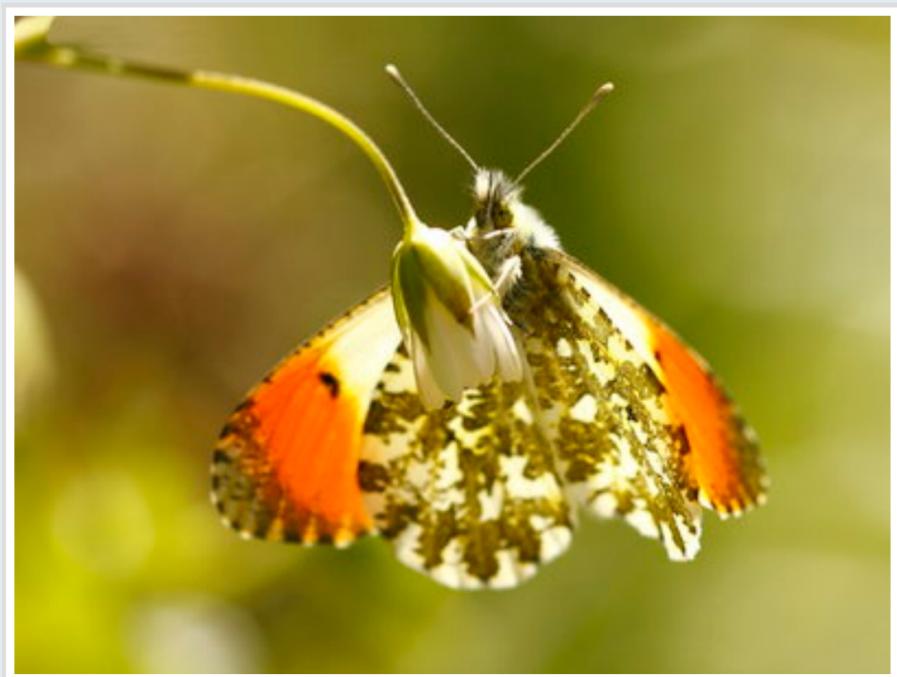
Thank you for the comments everyone – much appreciated 😊!

May was the month that things finally got going, and it started well when I found a pristine Green – Veined White roosting in the garden, my first of the year. Following this, I made a mental note to search for larvae and ova later in the season. The immature stages of Orange Tips have always been something that I look out for, but despite them using many of the same foodplants, Green – Veined Whites have slipped under the radar somewhat.



*Green – Veined White*

This was followed swiftly by my first Orange tips (at last!), two beautiful males patrolling on a bridleway near my home. They're always a joy to watch, flying up and down at great speed when the sun is out, and roosting when it's not – very accommodating!



*Orange Tip – warming up!*

Over the rest of the month, Orange Tips turned up frequently in the garden, roosting, like the Green Veined Whites, on Bluebells. I'm not sure why they do this, as it makes them stick out far more than they might on an unobtrusive grass stem.



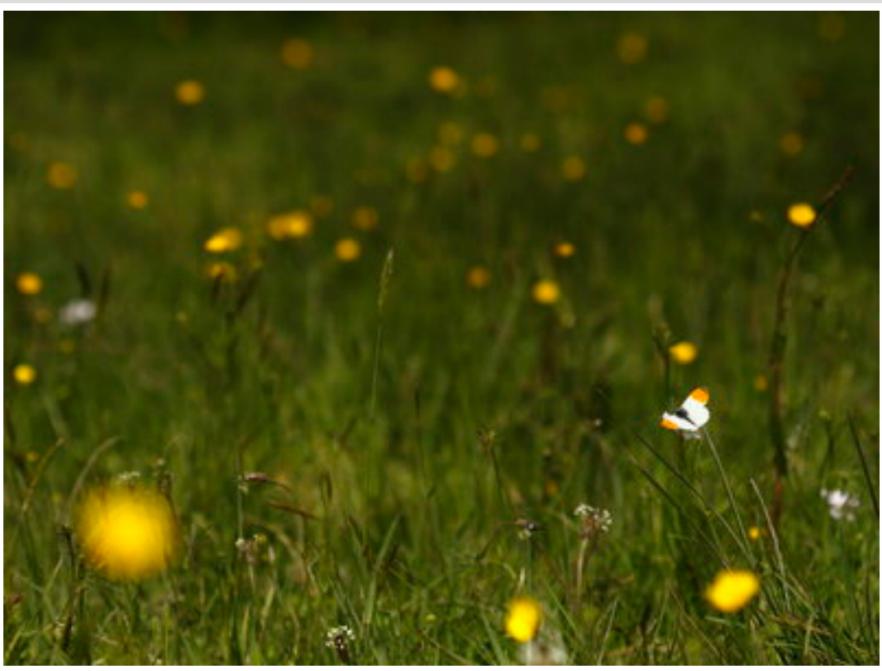
*Orange Tip (Male)*

It was a real joy to start finding their eggs on the Garlic Mustard which I lovingly grew for them – all the hard work paid off!



*A mature Orange Tip egg*

I was delighted to have some larvae to watch over – providing ample entertainment, as Orange Tips seemed to have a rather short flight season in my neck of the woods, over by early June, nevertheless, it was, as always a joy to watch them...



*Orange Tip (Male)*

I thought I'd do one instalment per week in my diary, which will tide me over until early February, when hopefully things will pick up again.

Once again, thanks for the kind comments 😊

## **Re: William**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 02-Nov-13 10:45 PM GMT

An amazing start to your diary William, your photos are so good I can't pick a favourite. I'm really looking forward to seeing the next instalment, no doubt you have many more stunning images to share with us. 😊 It'll be a real treat over the winter months.

Best wishes,

B'saurus

**Re: William**

by William, 03-Nov-13 08:20 AM GMT

Thank you very much B' Saurus, at the end of the day, it's a pleasure to just be out taking them. I'm very lucky too, as I do most of my photography walking from home, so it's all on my doorstep! 😊

BWs

William

**Re: William**

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

Lovely shots William especially the Green Veined White cracking 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: William**

by Maximus, 05-Nov-13 05:51 PM GMT

Lovely start to your diary William, looking forward to the next instalment 😊

Mike

**Re: William**

by William, 06-Nov-13 07:38 AM GMT

Thanks Guys – I really appreciate the kind comments 😊 .

**Re: William**

by NickMorgan, 06-Nov-13 01:14 PM GMT

Sorry to clog up your diary, but I wanted to say that I love your photos. A little different, but great to see the butterflies in context. I look forward to seeing more.

**Re: William**

by William, 06-Nov-13 06:12 PM GMT

Thanks Nick 😊, it's nice to have the butterfly in its habitat to bring back the full experience – helps through the winter months 😊 .

**Re: William**

by William, 09-Nov-13 04:55 PM GMT

May (Part 2)

With the Butterfly season finally getting going, it meant that, having racked up all the usual common species in my area, it was time to look further afield. I don't get many Butterflying trips away from home, so I have to pick carefully to make the most of my limited 'quota'. With an increasing interest in Orchids, this has been made all the harder, but the trips far more enjoyable. Having a new interest always adds a second dimension to a familiar site. Picking my first trip of the year though, is never difficult, one site always comes out on top. It's a small brownfield site which, behind the likes of Collard Hill, I think is the real jewel in Somerset's butterflying crown. BC lost the lease for the site a couple of years ago, and since, scrub has begun to encroach on the pristine close cropped grassland, and much of the hard work has been lost – a great tragedy.

The impact on the butterfly populations has been visible straight away, in 2011, I saw 5 beautiful Green Hairstreaks, in 2012 just 1, and this year, none. Nevertheless, my 2013 visit still proved to be thoroughly enjoyable and productive.

I arrived initially, to blazing sun, and as I entered the site through the adjoining woodland (where White Admiral and Pearl – Bordered Fritillary once flew), I was treated to a wonderful display of stitchwort, woodruff and Bluebells. Above and around me, Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and Garden Warblers were singing.

Sadly though, as I entered the main body of the reserve, it began to cloud over, but not before I had found several Grizzled Skippers, skimming over the Buttercups and Salad Burnet.



*Grizzled Skipper*

I managed to follow one to roost, and spent a short time playing around with the camera. It was great to be able to inspect this charismatic butterfly up close, previously I've only ever visited in hot sun, and never got any underside photos.



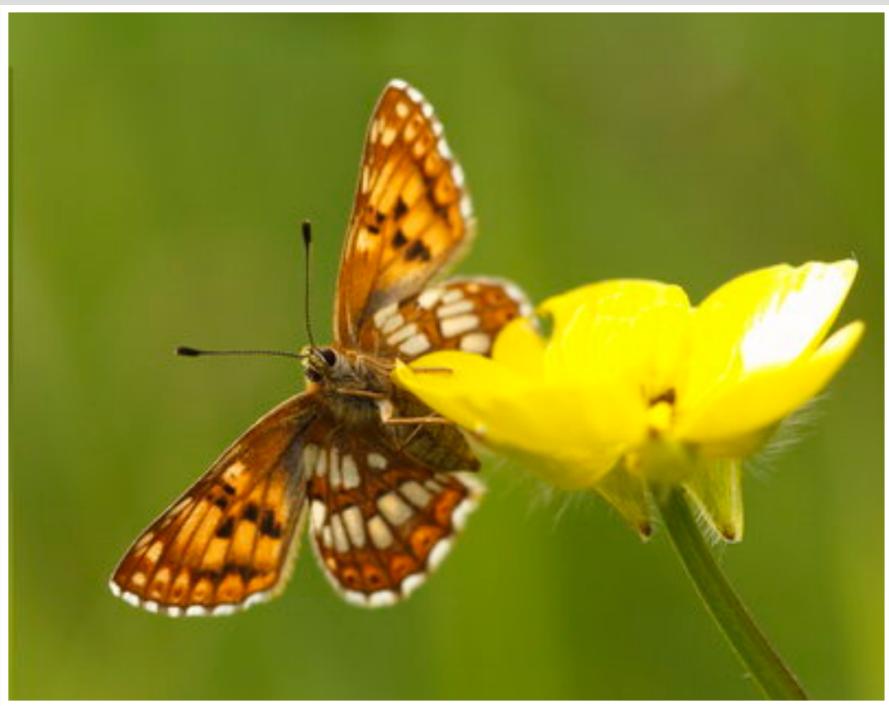
*Grizzled Skipper*

For the rest of the morning, I enjoyed the kind of intermittent sun that is perfect for photography, and managed to catch up with several Dingy Skippers as well.



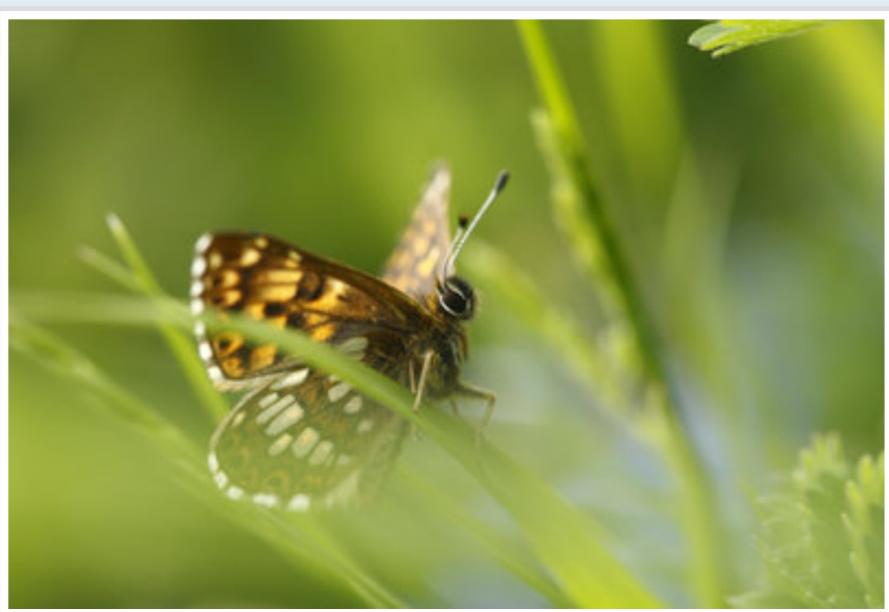
*Dingy Skipper*

I am a huge fan of the two spring skippers, there are few butterflies that are more enjoyable to watch. But it took me the better part of the morning for me to track down my stunning target, undoubtedly one of my favourite species.



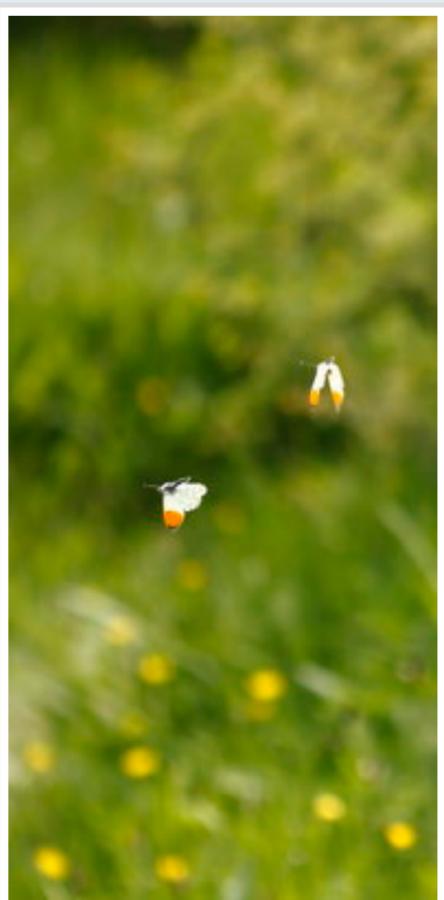
*Duke of Burgundy*

I've never seen more than 5 or 6 Dukes at this site, but they inevitably put on a good show. They normally take some tracking down too, as they fly in discreet hot spots, normally a sheltered indent in the tree line. However, once I've found them, the males will perch happily on grass stems and buttercups – resulting in an enjoyable morning's watching.



*Duke of Burgundy*

After the Duke activity died down a little during a cloudy spell, I decided to explore the rest of the reserve. It was a real delight to do so, serenaded by the Nightingales which love the dense thickets and woodland at this spot. This location is also good for the commoner spring butterflies, and I was pleased to capture to male Orange Tips sparring as they blasted by.



*Orange Tips*

I mentioned earlier my growing interest in Orchids, and as such, I was overjoyed to stumble across a small group of Bird's Nest Orchids. These bizarre orchids were mostly still in Bud, but even so, an amazing sight, growing in the deep shade of a stand of hazels.



*Bird's Nest Orchids*

Finally, having taken my fill of the Orchids, I headed back the way I came (past the Dukes), before heading home, a big smile on my face.



*Duke of Burgundy*

### **Re: William**

by Matsukaze, 10-Nov-13 12:39 AM GMT

Hi William,

Excellent photos – it is a few years since I last saw Dukes (on the Poldens) and I must try and catch up with them again next spring.

I didn't see any Green Hairstreaks either this year but they must surely still be on the Quantocks and Exmoor – in east Somerset they are always thin on the ground and I can never count on seeing them anywhere, though occasionally I find the odd one or two. I think they have struggled with the weather the last couple of years and am hoping they will bounce back 😊

### **Re: William**

by Neil Freeman, 10-Nov-13 09:26 AM GMT

Some really lovely images there William, I love the Orange tips dancing above the meadow 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

### **Re: William**

by William, 10-Nov-13 12:43 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, I was very pleased myself, though it was more luck than judgement. If anything flies past I always try a couple of speculative flight shots, and sometimes they come out nicely 😊.

Matsukaze – Thanks for your kind comments. I guess you know the spot I'm talking about, well worth a visit. I tried Haddon Hill for Green Hairstreak, but the spots where I've seen them in the past had all been given a good swailing, and consequently I saw no hairstreaks. I did however see a nice singing Redstart.

A friend tells me the quantocks are the best place for Green Hairstreaks, so I shall try there in 2014, hopefully we will get another nice spring like 2011 to boost their numbers 😊!

### Re: William

by Wurzel, 11-Nov-13 08:12 PM GMT

More great shots William I really like the hiding Duke and the in flight OT's brings back a sense of spring 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: William

by Maximus, 12-Nov-13 06:36 PM GMT

Very nice photos William, a refreshing approach to them.

Mike

### Re: William

by William, 17-Nov-13 09:57 AM GMT

Thanks Guys – it was a wonderful day with wonderful butterflies! 😊😊

### Re: William

by William, 17-Nov-13 11:13 AM GMT

#### May (Part 3)

Last year, in August and July, we had the best numbers of the 'Cabbage Whites' in the garden for a while (exceeded only by this year), and consequently our Black Kale was on the verge of being utterly destroyed by their offspring. Don't get me wrong, I love Butterflies, but I also love kale on my pasta, so I carefully removed a couple of batches of Small and Large White, and reared them on Nasturtium and some cut kale leaves, with a good degree of success, diligently checking any kale leaves for ova or larvae before they went into the cooking pot, and breeding them.



*Large White Larva and Ova*



*Small White Ovum (Mature)*

The eggs of both species hatched after about 10 days. The small white Ova changed from white to yellow, whilst the Large Whites began a dark yellow, then a dark yellow punctuated by a tiny black dot before going brown when the shape of the larva could be seen through the shell. In August this year, I was surprised to find several batches of Large White larvae on the upper surfaces of some young Garlic Mustard leaves. Despite their apparent

vulnerability, the larvae all survived to shred the Garlic Mustard plants (with the help of some green - veined whites), killing the plants in the process.



*Large White Ova on Garlic Mustard (with a Green Veined White Ovum - top right)*



*Large White Larvae on Garlic Mustard (With a Small White - top right)*

I thought the tiny larva were rather sweet with their bowling-ball heads, and they grew fast to form pupae, the large whites all of the greenish form, with the small whites green, a pale grey-white and one very dark one that failed to form a silken girdle (but did hatch successfully).



*Large White Larvae*



*Large White Pupa*



*Dark Small White Pupa*

They all hatched on a weekend in mid - may, giving me plenty of time to observe the process, though, frustratingly, my back was always turned when one actually pulled itself out of the pupa. Nevertheless, a wonderful experience, and something I shall definitely do again!



*Large White - Close Up*



*Large White*

One of the Small Whites turned out strikingly pale, I thought it could be ab. Alba at the time, it does however, have a small dusting of black scales.



*Small White - Possibly ab. Alba?*

**Re: William**

by David M, 17-Nov-13 01:08 PM GMT

That last *rapae* is most striking, William. It looks like the colour has been bleached out of it. Definitely an aberration.

Excellent pupae shots too; in fact, all of your images are delightful and interesting.

### Re: William

by Goldie M, 17-Nov-13 01:26 PM GMT

I love your images William, the ones of the eggs etc are great also the one's of the Duke 🍷 Goldie 😊

### Re: William

by William, 17-Nov-13 01:27 PM GMT

Thanks David 😊, I can only speculate what caused its colouring, I think possibly heat shock, as I kept the pupae in a cool shed over the winter, and then moved them outside ready for them to hatch in a warmer spot.

### Re: William

by William, 17-Nov-13 01:29 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie – Dukes are one of my favourite butterflies – so full of character. My interest in finding eggs in the wild has grown to, it's immensely satisfying to get a decent photo of something so small! I shall have to combine the two and try and find some Duke eggs next season! 😊

### Re: William

by Nick Broomer, 18-Nov-13 10:43 PM GMT

Great photos William. I especially love your Grizzled Skipper, but more so your photos of the early stages. Just brilliant. 😊

All the best, Nick.

### Re: William

by William, 21-Nov-13 07:28 AM GMT

Thank you Hideandseek – much appreciated 😊😊. At the end of the day it's a joy just to watch the little caterpillars as they wiggle around 😊.

### Re: William

by Chris Jackson, 21-Nov-13 08:38 AM GMT

I particularly like the series of photos of the Large White stages. That close-up view is good.  
Chris

### Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 21-Nov-13 06:03 PM GMT

#### "cjackson" wrote:

I particularly like the series of photos of the Large White stages.

Me too – great stuff!

Cheers,

– Pete

### Re: William

by William, 21-Nov-13 07:24 PM GMT

Thanks Guys – I really appreciate the kind comments. It took me a while to get to grips with extension tubes, but well worth the investment 😊.

### Re: William

by Wurzel, 23-Nov-13 11:44 PM GMT

Great shots William love the close up and the possible alba I'm very interested in 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: William

by William, 24-Nov-13 09:51 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, it was great fun breeding the butterflies and the possible ab. Alba was a lovely suprise 😊😊 .

## Re: William

by William, 24-Nov-13 10:24 AM GMT

### May (Part 4)

As May wore on, the butterfly season, having started late began to get going. I went on regular walks on my patch, trying to find new butterflies in new spots. It was on one such walk – searching for Orange Tips in a small piece of woodland, that I had a fantastic suprise.

I stopped for a while, leaning on a fence post when I saw a butterfly move past very quickly, skimming over the buttercups and sorrel heads in the nearby field. The powder blue uppersides made its identity even more obvious than its hasty searching flight – a male Common Blue.

Common Blues have always been somewhat difficult to track down in my neck of the woods. The system of Agriculture with intensive grazing – often at the wrong times of year can mean that as soon as they get established at a spot, they get disturbed and pushed out, only to turn up at a different spot the next year. They tend to be particularly hard to find in the first brood, and as such I was overjoyed to chance upon five or six of these little beauties – my first of the year.

It was midday at the time of my discovery, and consequently they weren't sticking around for photos, still, not defeated, I vowed to return in the evening, hoping for better photographic opportunities.

I was not disappointed, and over the next few days, I took several walks to photograph these little beauties, paying particular attention to some of the stunning females.



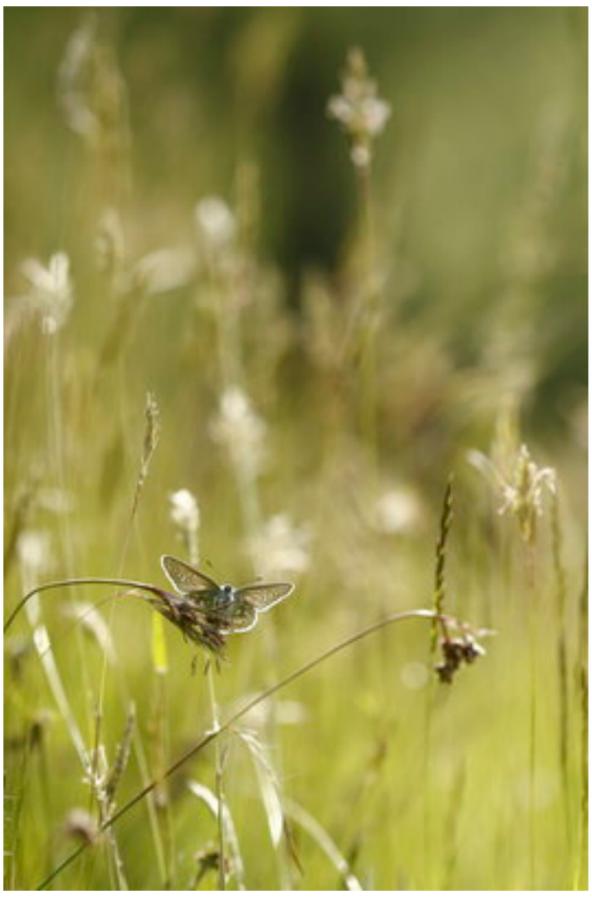
*Common Blue – Female*



*Common Blue – Female*



*Common Blue - Male*



*Common Blue - Male*

At the same spot in 2012, I also saw this male Common Blue. At the time I wondered if it was an aberration, being ghostly pale in its underside colour (its upperside was perfectly normal), at first I thought it was battered, but seeing the fresh white borders, I do wonder if it was in fact very fresh, and unusually pale.



*Common Blue - Male - Possible Aberration*

**Re: William**

by Pauline, 24-Nov-13 05:19 PM GMT

I am enjoying your diary and your photos are refreshingly different – the CB male, second from last, well, I can see that as a framed print on my wall. It's lovely.

### Re: William

by William, 24-Nov-13 05:33 PM GMT

Thanks for your kind comments Pauline 😊😊 it was great to get to know the butterflies' habits – that photo was taken at about 8:30 whilst he was still warming up.

### Re: William

by Butterflysaurus rex, 24-Nov-13 09:14 PM GMT

I'm loving the distance shots William, they're very atmospheric ~ making me reminisce about all of those warm spring and summer days gone by.

### Re: William

by William, 25-Nov-13 04:16 PM GMT

Thanks B'Saurus – the distant male upperside is one of my favourite shots and I just have to look at it for the wildflowers, the warmth and the little blue pin-pricks all to come flooding back to me – wonderful! 😊😊

### Re: William

by Paul Harfield, 25-Nov-13 09:16 PM GMT

Hi William

I also very much like your distance shots of the Common Blue and the Orange Tip 😊😊 Something a little different to the norm 😊 Great

### Re: William

by William, 26-Nov-13 08:55 AM GMT

Thanks Jack – your kind comments are much appreciated 😊😊 .

### Re: William

by William, 01-Dec-13 04:58 PM GMT

#### June (Part 1)

After an enjoyable, but relatively cool May, I was looking forward to getting into the meat of the Butterfly season when June came around, the heat that finally arrived towards the end of the month was welcome indeed, hinting at the possibilities of July and August to come.

Throughout the month I monitored the growth of the Orange Tip larvae on my garlic mustard, and was delighted to watch their progress as they moved from ovum right through to pupation.



*Orange Tip Ovum – About to Hatch*



*Orange Tip - Young Larva*



*Orange Tip - Young Larva*



*Orange Tip - Young Larva*



*Orange Tip - Final Instar Larva*



*Orange Tip Larva - Pupating*



*Orange Tip Pupa*

Orange Tips were not the only immature stages I ended up 'supervising', when, towards the end of the month I found my first ovipositing Small Tortoiseshell and followed her larvae through June and July.



*Small Tortoiseshell Ova*



*Small Tortoiseshell Larvae*

On top of this, I spotted an egg laying female Speckled wood and was able to find the subsequent 'bundles of joy' in a small patch of long grass.



*Speckled Wood Ovum*

**Re: William**

by David M, 01-Dec-13 05:10 PM GMT

Great images again, William.

**Re: William**

by William, 01-Dec-13 06:04 PM GMT

Thanks David 😊

**Re: William**

by Nick Broomer, 01-Dec-13 07:41 PM GMT

I agree with David. Great photos William. 😊

All the best, Nick.

**Re: William**

by Wurzel, 01-Dec-13 10:12 PM GMT

Great stuff William 😊 The difference between the instars of the OT surprised me, they could almost be two different species they're so different 🤪  
Looking forward to the Specklies development shots if you have them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: William**

by Vince Massimo, 01-Dec-13 10:30 PM GMT

Amazing images William 😊

The Orange-tip, Small Tortoiseshell and Speckled Wood eggs are particularly impressive, however the pre-pupation Orange-tip larva is worth a special mention! I have had to quickly brush-up on my caterpillar and butterfly development and anatomy, but, under the skin, it seems to show structures associated with the development of the wings in the second and third thoracic segments.



I still have to do some further research as to what they are called and how they develop, but they are exactly where they are supposed to be and I have never seen these structures showing up so clearly at this stage.

PM to follow.

Vince

EDIT: See this link [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butterfly#Wing\\_development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butterfly#Wing_development) and scroll down to "Wing Development"

**Re: William**

by Pete Eeles, 01-Dec-13 11:10 PM GMT

Just superb, William – the image that Vince has highlighted is something I've never seen before, so many thanks for that! Keep up the good work!

Cheers,

– Pete

## Re: William

by William, 02-Dec-13 07:34 AM GMT

Thank you guys for all your comments – sadly, Wurzel I don't have any more speckled wood shots – the larvae fell victim to the family lawn – mower – much to my dismay! 🙄

Thank you Pete and Vince for your fascinating words 😊, I had no idea what those structures were, and that article made for interesting reading. If it's any help, I think that picture was taken 4 or 5 hours before pupation.

## Re: William

by William, 09-Dec-13 06:36 PM GMT

### June (Part 2)

As the month warmed up, things really got going after the year's slow start. June is always a busy month, and so sadly I didn't get out to see too many butterflies. Nevertheless I caught up with Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries for the first time in a while. Sadly they were very active, and difficult to photograph, but nevertheless a joy to watch – around 20 in all, skimming over the ragged robin and sedges.



*Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary*

The spot I looked for them is a delightful location on the Mendips, and we were lucky enough to watch several Downy Emerald Dragonflies zooming over a peaty pool close to the butterflies. Later in the year, Black Darters and Emerald Damselflies can be found at this site. Nearby, a short drive away I also found my first Bee Orchids (as well as some of the rare variant – var. Trolli, otherwise known as 'Wasp Orchid').

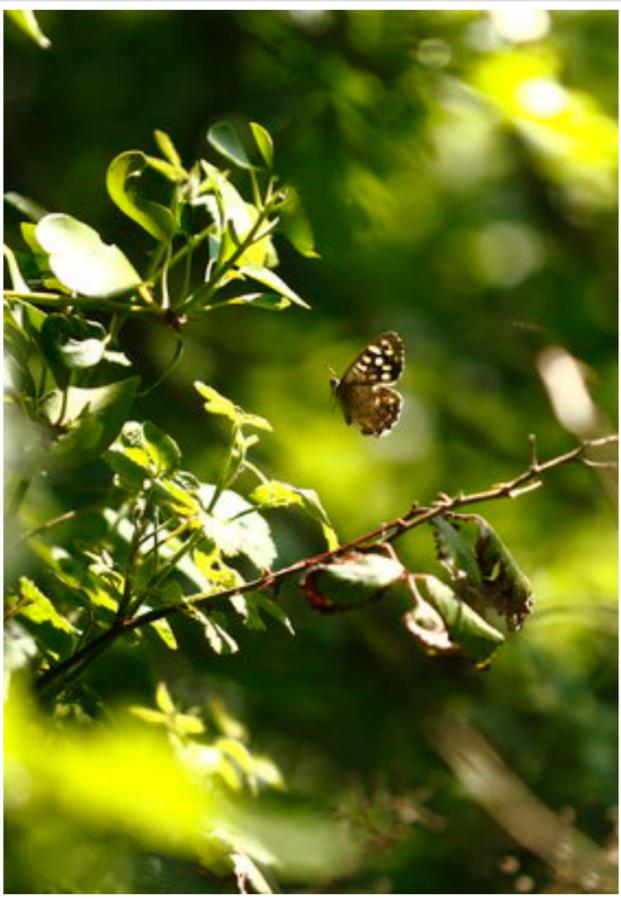


*Bee Orchid*

Throughout the month, numbers of Small Tortoiseshell and Speckled Wood built up – resulting in the ova pictured in my last entry.

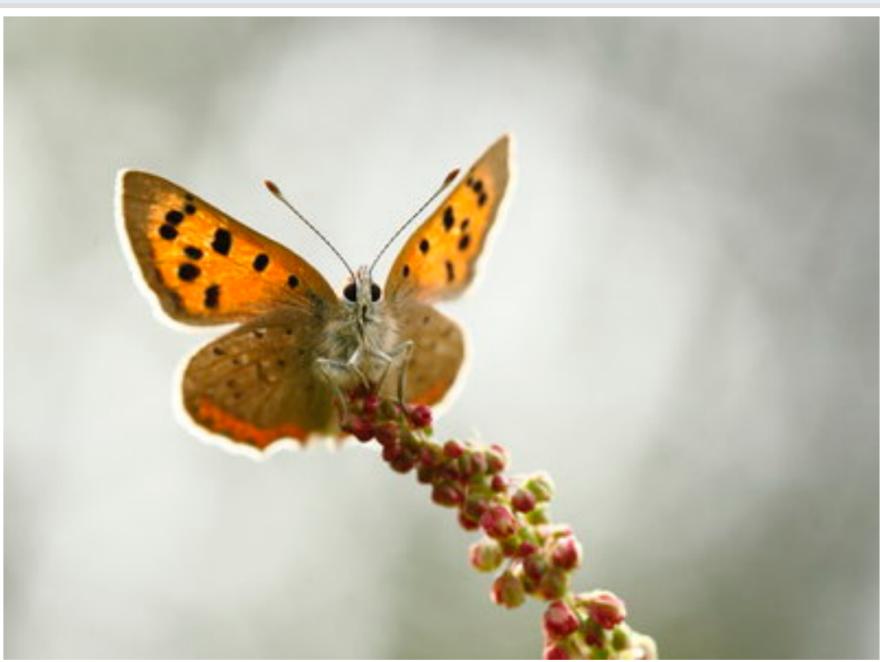


*Small Tortoiseshells Courting*



*Speckled Wood*

I was also delighted to find my first Small Copper of the year – a beautiful butterfly that posed happily for me, perching on Sorrel seed heads in a buttercup filled meadow which I had all to myself – wonderful.



*Small Copper*



*Small Copper*

**Re: William**

by Nick Broomer, 09-Dec-13 09:15 PM GMT

Lovely photos William. But that picture of a Speckled Wood is just beautiful, typifies a walk down a woodland ride in early summer. Shade, sun and,.....up flies a Specked Wood.....need i say more. 😊

All the best, Nick.

**Re: William**

by William, 09-Dec-13 09:29 PM GMT

Thank you very much Nick – it has definitely grown on me over the winter months, it brings back the warmth and dappled shade 😊. If I'm honest it was a bit of a fluke, I was going for a photo of it perched and then it took of as I took the shutter! 😊

**Re: William**

by David M, 09-Dec-13 11:05 PM GMT

**"William" wrote:**

I was going for a photo of it perched and then it took of as I took the shutter!

That's the unintended reason for many of the best images.

**Re: William**

by William, 10-Dec-13 07:35 AM GMT

You're too kind David 😊😊 .

**Re: William**

by William, 15-Dec-13 03:20 PM GMT

Skippers

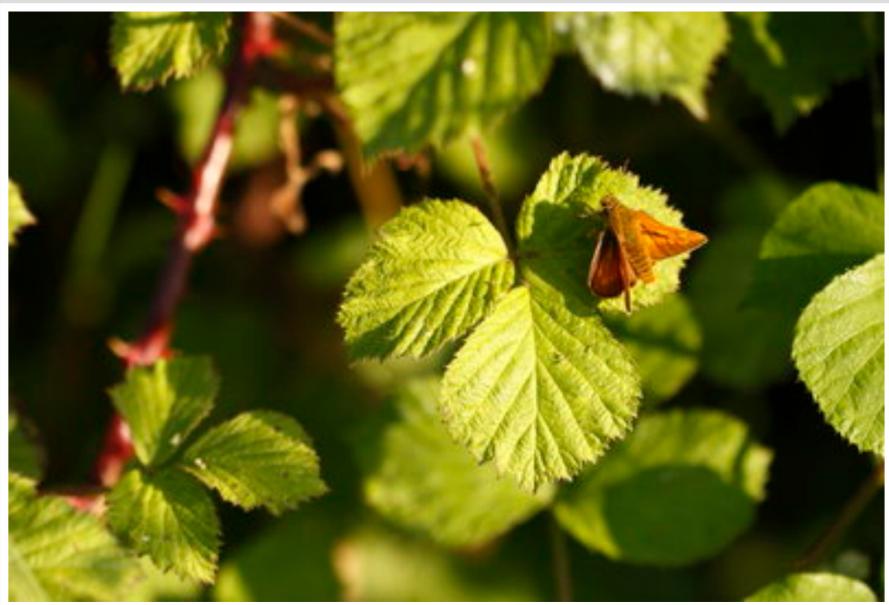
July and August are peak times in my butterflying calendar, and the two tend to blur into one. With this in mind, I'll break from the chronological order and go by species or family from here on in.

I had to wait a while for my first Golden Skippers of the year in 2013. I remember in 2011, I saw my first Large Skipper on the 30th of May, but in 2013 it was the 3rd of July! Nevertheless, once they got going, Large Skippers had a pretty decent season on my patch.



*Large Skipper*

They're by no means common, and a count of 7 is good for me – consequently I was delighted to spot 10 in one evening at a local spot.



*Large Skipper*

I returned early the next morning, in the hope of getting some dew covered photos – and I was not disappointed. As the mist rose off the pond near where I find my local Large Skippers, I spent a happy half hour photographing the butterflies – the first rays of the sun picking them out in all their furry copper – coloured glory.



*Large Skipper*

Small Skippers emerged hot on their heels, and proved equally obliging for the camera, they flew right through the summer to late August, and had the best year on record in my area. 2012's peak count was 11 butterflies at my favoured site compared to 2013's 33 – 3 times as many!



*Small Skipper - Female*



*Small Skipper - Close Up*



*Small Skippers - Courting*



*Small Skipper*

**Re: William**

by Wurzel, 16-Dec-13 10:50 PM GMT

Some fantastic images William 😊 My favourite by a long way is the dew bedecked Large Skipper, one of those "I wish I'd taken that" shots 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: William**

by William, 17-Dec-13 12:20 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel – I had a wonderful time taking it – they are lovely little butterflies. 😊😊

**Re: William**

by Nick Broomer, 17-Dec-13 05:47 PM GMT

Lovely photos William. 😊 I especially like your female Large Skipper, beautiful, and the close-up of the Small Skipper is excellent. Great work. 😊

All the best, Nick.

**Re: William**

by William, 18-Dec-13 08:52 AM GMT

Thanks Neil – much appreciated 😊😊.

**Re: William**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Dec-13 05:35 PM GMT

A really lovely diary you've got going here William, I'm hooked 😊

**Re: William**

by William, 18-Dec-13 05:38 PM GMT

Thanks B'Saurus – the same can be said for your diary – I'm very jealous of the mating dukes 😊.

**Re: William**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Dec-13 05:48 PM GMT

Thanks very much William 😊 I couldn't believe my luck, I'd only been there for 10 minutes or so when I saw the male dancing around a female, a few

moment later and I saw my first ever pair of mating Dukes 😊

### Re: William

by William, 18-Dec-13 06:35 PM GMT

You know what they say 😊 – you make your own luck 😊 .

### Re: William

by Maximus, 22-Dec-13 05:52 PM GMT

Lovely Skipper photos William, the dew covered Large Skipper especially 😊

Mike

### Re: William

by William, 22-Dec-13 05:56 PM GMT

Thanks Mike – it was a wonderful sight 'in the flesh' 😊😊 .

### Re: William

by Matsukaze, 22-Dec-13 06:16 PM GMT

Lovely photos as always – keep an eye open for Essex Skipper locally which flies where the foodplant is allowed to stand uncut over the winter – arable field margins, extensive road verges and perhaps the sea walls. It will not be common in your part of Somerset but I think it does occur here and there.

### Re: William

by William, 22-Dec-13 08:04 PM GMT

Thanks Matsukaze – I've kept my eyes open for them, but had no luck. I saw them for the first time this year on the coast path in Norfolk – in habitat exactly as you described – lovely little butterflies. 😊

### Re: William

by William, 23-Dec-13 06:04 PM GMT

#### Clouded Yellows

With christmas drawing near, and the weather terrible outside, I thought I'd bring forward my Clouded Yellow posting to cheer myself up. Before 2013, Clouded Yellows were one of those near-miss butterflies, whenever I saw them (on holidays abroad) they would be zooming off, hypercharged down some dusty track. Fortunately though, all this was to change in the August of this year.

It started on the 1st of the month, when I made the decision to have a mega, whole day patch walk, taking in some new sites, and hopefully, some new butterflies. This proved to be an excellent decision, and I was treated to multiple Painted Ladies, Small Coppers, Common Blues, Marbled Whites (normally quite rare in my area), a Purple Hairstreak (which came tantalisingly close to the camera), and several Silver – Washed Fritillaries.

These however, were not the highlight of my walk, that prize went to the stunningly fresh male Clouded Yellow that I found feeding on thistles. This was my first patch record, and what a way to do it – the butterfly posed wonderfully, occasionally interacting aggressively with the numerous small whites.

Tragedy later struck, when my memory card malfunctioned, and all my photos of this beautiful insect, and I was left with no record of my encounter.

Undeterred, though somewhat frustrated, I set out two days later, and was delighted to find 3 of males feeding on ragwort in a scrubby local field.



*Clouded Yellow – Male*

After this generous slice of luck, it seemed the flood-gates had been opened, and I found Clouded Yellows wherever I went, on my transect, and even in my garden.

Remembering the propensity of Clouded Yellows to associate with their foodplants, I went and checked out my local clover field (only 5 minutes from my home). Sure enough, there were Clouded Yellows galore, and for the rest of the summer, I had Clouded Yellows 'on tap'. This continued until the field was cut, the acres of bobbing clover heads disappearing along with the Clouded Yellows.



*Clouded Yellow – Female*



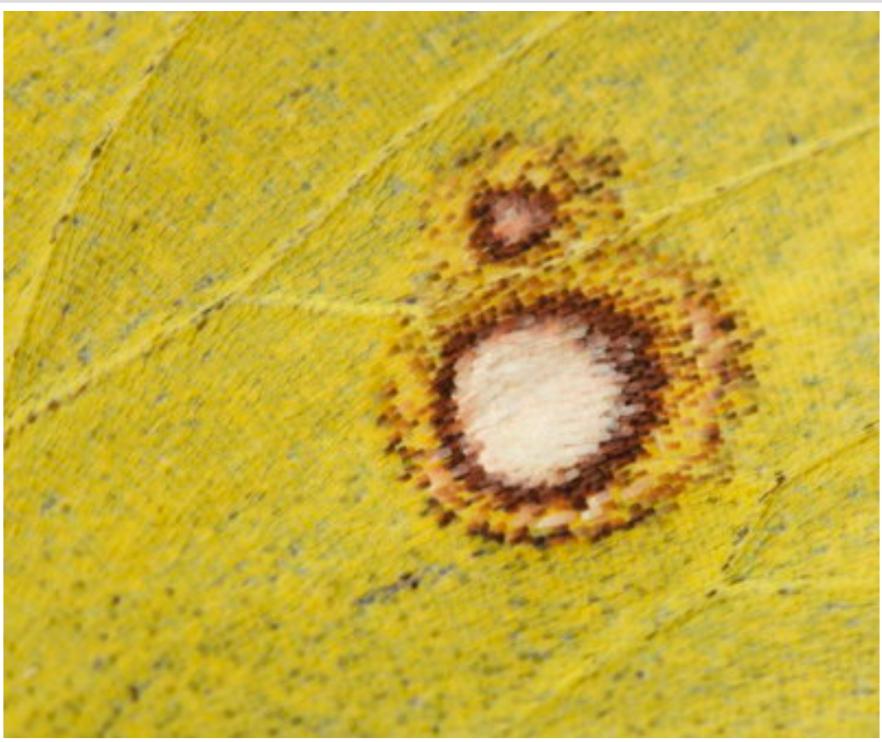
*Clouded Yellow – Female – F. Helice*



*Clouded Yellow - Male*



*Clouded Yellow - Female - F. Helice (and friends)*



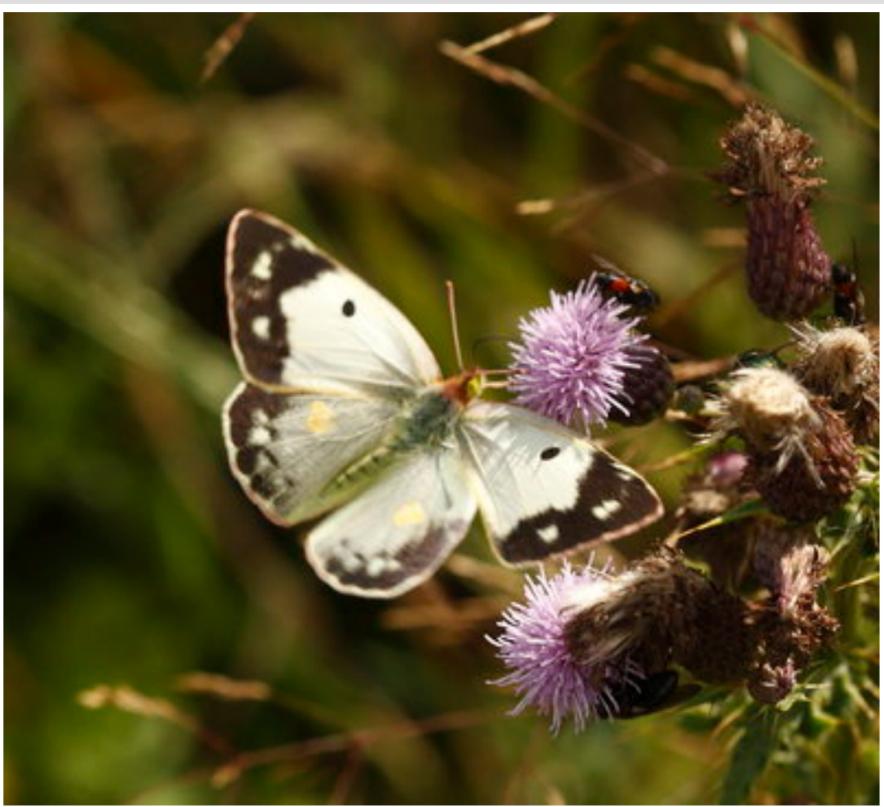
*Clouded Yellow - Close Up*



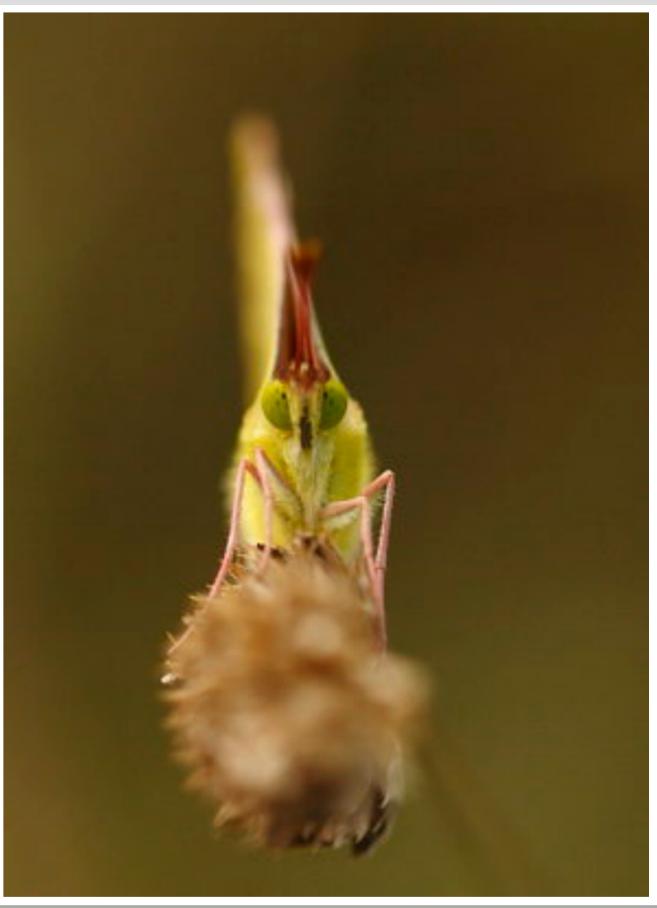
*Clouded Yellow - Female - F. Helice*



*Clouded Yellow - Male*



*Clouded Yellow - Female - F. Helice (dodgy upperside)*



*Clouded Yellow - Female*



*Clouded Yellow - Male*



*Clouded Yellows*

I was very surprised with this photo, I was initially following one Clouded Yellow (the one in the foreground I think), and when it landed, I moved carefully over to it, in the hope of getting some photos, only to find it sat on top of another! Why this happened, I'm not sure, perhaps they were increasing their surface area for basking (it was taken during a cloudy spell). Certainly, it appeared to have nothing to do with courtship, as, when the sun returned, one flew off, showing no interest in its 'bedfellow'.



*Clouded Yellow - Female*



*Clouded Yellow - Female - F. Helice (another dodgy upperside)*



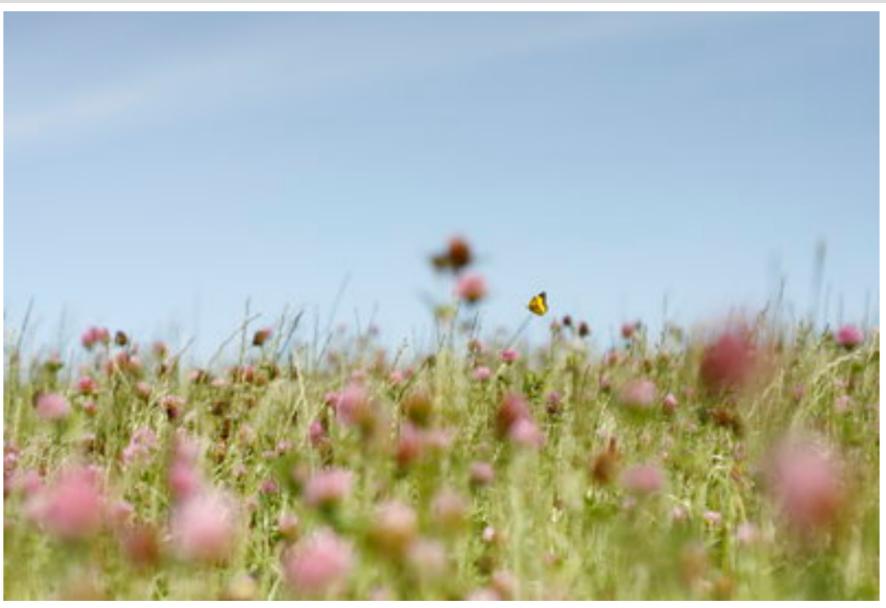
*Clouded Yellow - Female - F. Helice*

I rather like this one for its autumnal feel.



*Clouded Yellow - Male*

And finally, one of my favourite images of the year.



*Clouded Yellow - Male*

Merry Christmas one and all - and my 2014 be filled with Butterflies 😊😊.

### **Re: William**

by Hoggers, 23-Dec-13 07:13 PM GMT

William, I've just got home after a nightmare commute to London in the foulest of weather and seen your Clouded Yellows: you've cheered me up no end!!

Thank you!!

Best wishes

Hoggers

### **Re: William**

by David M, 23-Dec-13 07:18 PM GMT

Fantastic sequence. The warm, yellow colour just adds to the mind's image of lazy summer days.

The two *helice* photos in flight are glorious as well.

### **Re: William**

by Maximus, 23-Dec-13 07:35 PM GMT

Brilliant posting William, summer's here again 😊 and we also have a Christmas feast of Clouded Yellows 😊😊

Merry Christmas to you and your family,

Mike

**Re: William**

by William, 23-Dec-13 08:43 PM GMT

Thanks guys – some of my favourite days this year were spent photographing those beauties 😊 – merry christmas to you both 😊😊.

**Re: William**

by Butterfysaurus rex, 23-Dec-13 09:03 PM GMT

Nothing "dodgy" about those in flight 'Helice' shots William, they are not easy shots to take. I think you've taken some marvellous CY photos there, I would be delighted with all of those if I'd taken them 😊

**Re: William**

by William, 23-Dec-13 09:10 PM GMT

Thank you Butterfysaurus – your kind comments are much appreciated 😊.

**Re: William**

by Wurzel, 23-Dec-13 11:35 PM GMT

I agree with Rex, having never seen a Helice let alone photographed one I'd love all of those in my collection 🍷

Have a great Crimble 😊  
Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: William**

by William, 24-Dec-13 09:00 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel – I hope you one day catch up with a Helice – they are simply stunning. I also found they were much more obliging than their more 'normal' relatives – I don't know why 😊 – hope you have a merry christmas, and many butterflies in 2014 😊.

**Re: William**

by Neil Freeman, 24-Dec-13 09:56 AM GMT

A fantastic series of Clouded Yellow images William 😊

I was fortunate to catch up with loads of Clouded Yellows in Dorset this year and took loads of photos but would dearly love to have captured some images like yours, particularly the open wing helice ones 🍷

Excellent stuff 😊

Hope you have a great Christmas,

Neil

**Re: William**

by William, 24-Dec-13 10:20 AM GMT

Thanks Neil – I was very surprised to find my first helice – from distance I thought it was a yellowy large white – a stunning butterfly 😊. Have a merry christmas 😊.

**Re: William**

by William, 29-Dec-13 09:15 PM GMT

Small Tortoiseshells

Like everyone else, I found Small Tortoiseshells had a really excellent year, and I found them everywhere in larger numbers than ever before. It was really wonderful, to be able to walk my transect (along a rather scrubby field margin next to some maize fields) and find them jostling for places on the flowerheads – on one afternoon in August I counted 101 feeding on the creeping thistle and Purple Loosestrife – an experience that will live long in the memory.



*Small Tortoiseshells – North Norfolk Coast Path*



*Small Tortoiseshells – Somerset*

The larvae I found in June moved quickly through their life cycle, as did the numerous other batches of ova and caterpillars I saw, indeed, seemingly every nettle patch I saw contained a seething mass of black caterpillars – they were everywhere!



*Small Tortoiseshell Larva*



*Small Tortoiseshell Larva*



*Small Tortoiseshell Larvae*

These developed quickly, and I took a few final instar larvae in for observation.



*Small Tortoiseshell Larvae*



*Small Tortoiseshell Larva - Pupating*



*Small Tortoiseshell Pupa*



*Small Tortoiseshell Pupa - About a day before emergence*



*Small Tortoiseshell – Freshly Emerged Adult*

As well as photographing the immature stages, I enjoyed observing the adults in my garden, and on 'the patch'.



*Small Tortoiseshell*

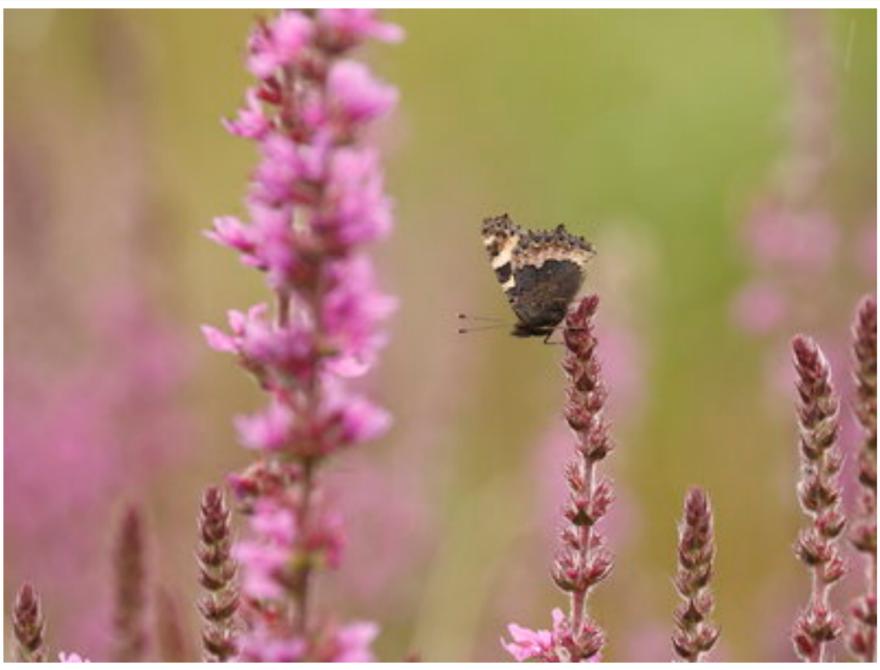


*Small Tortoiseshell*



*Small Tortoiseshell – Pale Form*

I even managed to find one at roost – unusually not in a hole in a tree or a building. There had been nearly 60 feeding on Purple Loosestrife and when the rain came, a few stuck around.



*Small Tortoiseshell Roosting*