

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Jan-13 08:31 PM GMT

Is it January? Is it March? Or is it both?

Well the date is certainly early January, but the temperatures are more like mid March. The moth we saw today is March both by name and nature. The March Moth does not usually appear until late February or early March so today's sighting in the hand is almost 6 weeks early. It must surely be as a result of temperatures around 10-12 degrees over recent days, despite the dull light.

In between Xmas duties and decorating we have squeezed in a little nature watching.

30 DECEMBER 2012

The Great White Egret remained on Conningbrook Gravel pits with 3 Little Egrets and a Peregrine. Next stop was Elmley RSPB where 26 Ruff, 2 Marsh Harriers and a Common Buzzard were along the entrance track. Funton produced 100 Avocets and lots of Pintail and Wigeon. Near Leysdown, at the junction with the Harty Ferry Road, we saw a flock of 13 Waxwings feeding in roadside bushes. Finally we saw 5 Brambling in with 200 Chaffinches feeding on Sunflower seed around Muswell Manor. 25 more Waxwings were at Bobbing near the Jenny Wren pub.

01 JANUARY 2013.

We anticipated that Dungeness would be crowded to overflowing, and by all accounts it was, so we headed to Grove Ferry and only found 4 other birders there.

9 Waxwings were present near the viewing ramp. The reedbeds produced Stonechat, Cettis Warbler, Bearded Tit, Ringtail Hen Harrier, 2 Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzard, Water Pipit, Snipe and Little Egret. There was 4 Bewick Swans on Chislet Marshes and to end the day we watched 4 Hawfinches come into roost at the site near Canterbury.

02 JANUARY 2013.

A Waxwing visited our next door neighbours TV ariel for 5 minutes in the morning. It may have been looking for its mates judging by the numbers appearing in Kent at the moment.

04 JANUARY 2013.

Now that visitor numbers will be lower due to people returning to work it was time to visit Dungeness. What a good day. We started on Walland Marsh seeing the wintering Common Crane, 2 Whooper Swans, 29 Bewick Swans, Merlin, 4 Tree Sparrows, 2 Marsh Harriers and 30 Fieldfares. Next stop was the ARC pit to see a fine male Smew accompanied by 3 females. Then the opposite with 3 male Goldeneyes with 1 female (trouble brewing there). 1 Great White Egret with many Shoveller, Gadwall, Wigeon, Teal and Lapwing. There was 2 Great White Egrets and a Little Egret on New Diggings.

Burrowes Pit produced Goosander, 12 Pintails, 3 Goldeneyes and many Wigeon. 3 Tree Sparrows were present around Boulderwall Farm. The sea was exciting with the Glaucous Gull still present, 24 Gannets, 12 Kittiwakes, 5 Razorbills, many Auks, Red Throated Divers and Great Crested Grebes. We ended the day at Scotney Gravel pits and the place was heaving with birds. The number of Golden Plover must have been 5,000 plus a few thousand Lapwing. Very large numbers of Wigeon, Teal, Gadwall, Mallard and 8 Pintail. Also one Slavonian Grebe, Marsh Harrier and 5 Whitefronts. What a brilliant day.

05 JANUARY 2013.

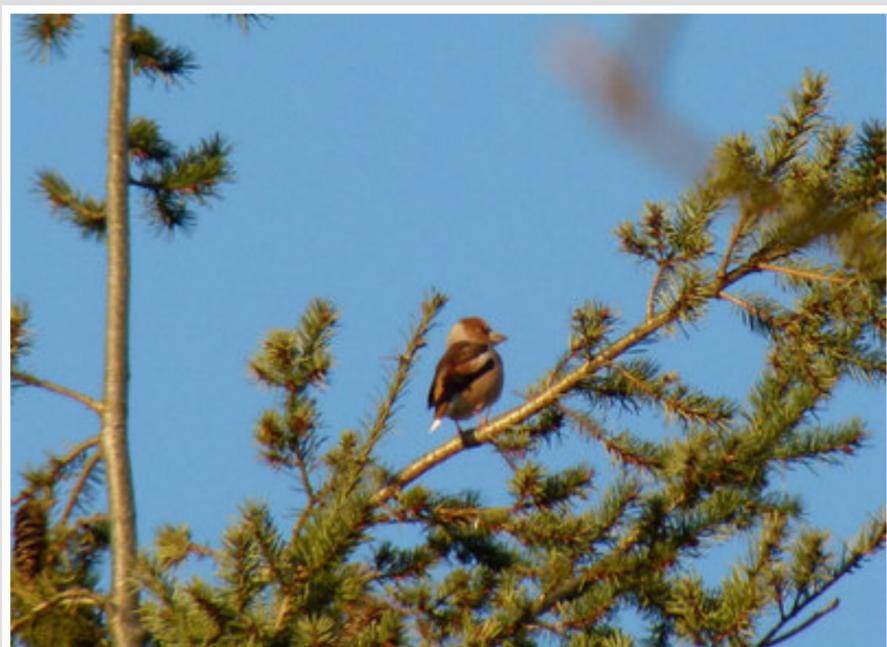
Intending to have a lazy day today a message informing us of a Bean Goose on Scotney soon changed that. We picked up the Tundra Bean Goose almost immediately on arrival, along with 12 Pintail and yesterday's Slavonian Grebe. The large numbers of Golden Plover, Lapwing and Wigeon remained. We again saw the Common Crane near the Woolpack Inn.

We ended the day at our friends house enjoying views of the March Moth, 2 Mottled Umbers, Chestnut and Early Moth. Another good day in the field.

Dave



March Moth on the 5th of January.



A record photo of one of the four Hawfinches coming into their pre roost site.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 12-Jan-13 07:58 PM GMT

One becomes Two.

Not only does our garden Wood Mouse survive the local cats but it has now been joined by another (Mrs?). This second one appears to have whiter cheeks but I have no idea whether its a pair or just two Wood Mice. We have taken to feeding them by leaving hearts, other seeds and the odd piece of cheese. All taken quite quickly as they dart to and fro.

Birding has taken a back seat recently as we catch up on decorating although we have still squeezed in a little watching. On Tuesday a days local birding produced 3 Little Egrets on Conningbrook and a nice male Goosander on Eastwell Lake. On Wednesday (9th Jan) news of 2 Scaup sent us to Oare Marshes where we enjoyed views of a male and female Scaup on the East Flood. Also 6 Pintail, Peregrine, 2 Marsh Harriers and 250 Brent Geese (on the Swale). The light was too poor for photographs of the Scaup, which would have been nice as these are now a scarce bird in Kent.

On Wednesday there had been a mass movement of Auks off the Dungeness coast. At least 30,000 birds, of which 18,000 were Razorbills. This must have been an impressive sight and certainly most unusual for Kent. The next day a further 12,000 were logged, again with the majority being Razorbills. We did not go out until the afternoon (Thursday) by which time the big movement had ceased, although we did see good numbers of both Gullinot and Razorbill. These were joined by Red Throated Divers and at least 20 Kittiwakes. Another feature at present is the large number of Great Crested Grebes in the bay with estimates of at least 2,000.

The ARC pit held a Great White Egret, 3 Goldeneyes, Little Egret, many Wigeon, Gadwall, Shoveller and Teal. Finally 2 Chiffchaffs were at the Dungeness end of the pit. Our first this year.

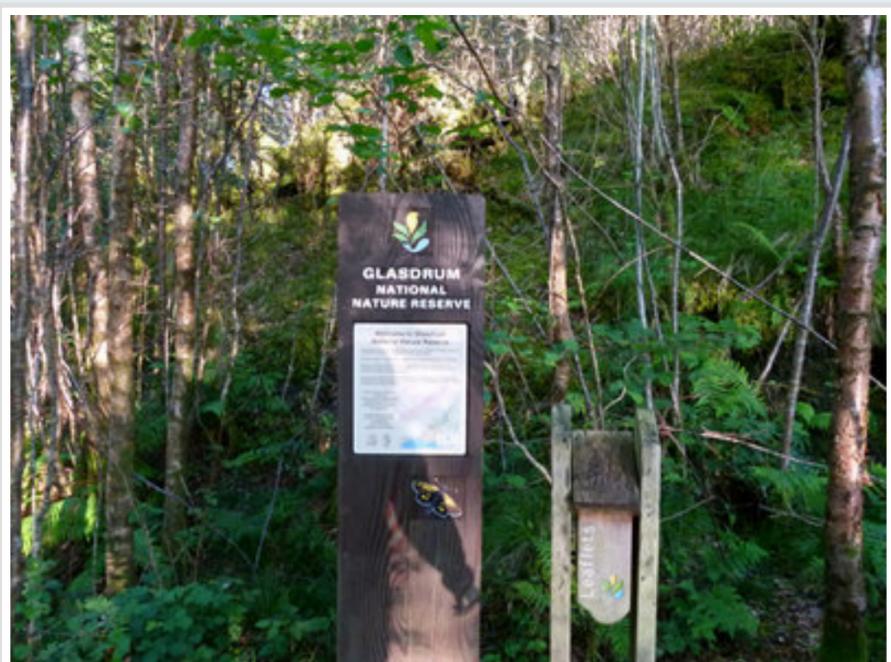
We ended the day checking the waders around the coast between Lade and St Marys Bay but found nothing out of the ordinary, just more auks sitting on the sea.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Jan-13 08:14 PM GMT

With snow falling across quite a few counties today I thought that I would try and cheer you up with a reminder of a real goodie to look forward to. That goodie is the Chequered Skipper. For most UK members that means a very long journey (except for Jack), and possibly as part of a holiday, in what can only be described as a stunning part of the British Isles. Most visitors from the South head for the nearest location, namely Glasdrum, which can be very busy at the peak times. We made such a journey in June 2011 and the attached photo of the entrance welcome sign was taken just before 6am. It was nice and sunny until about 9am when cloud and drizzle arrived. Needless to say we saw none that morning but luckily we caught up with Chequered Skipper later in the week at Strontian. It will be interesting to see how the species, and others, fare this year following the appalling weather of 2012.



The entrance to Glasdrum Wood and the wonderful Chequered Skipper.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 19-Jan-13 03:26 PM GMT

SUNDAY 13 JAN 2013

Today was a mix of family visiting and birding. We stopped by the beach at Seasalter where there was good numbers of common waders, including a big group of Curlew. We then checked the area around the Tesco's and the adjacent estate at Whitstable where a flock of Waxwings had been present, but no sign today. Our final call was Hampton Pier near Herne Bay where 2 Purple Sandpipers were present, along with a adult Med Gull, 14 Brent Geese, 7 Red Throated Divers and 2 Common Scoter. Two geese seen flying very briefly between houses near Swalecliffe were probably Egyptian, but the views were too brief for positive ID. There is not much else that looks like them but this would be an unusual sighting for North Kent. The day was very dull and bitterly cold so it was nice to get home in the warm.

TUESDAY 15 JAN 2013

A visit to Pett Level produced 2 Whitefronted Geese, 2 Common Buzzard and 2 Marsh Harriers. Otherwsie it was just good numbers of Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler, Gadwall, Curlew and Lapwing. There was no sign of the Common Crane on Walland, just Common Buzzard and Marsh Harrier. The ARC pit was very quiet with just 2 Goldeneye and many Shoveler of note. A Firecrest was showing near the Willow Trail and finally a Great White Egret was on New Diggings. Nearby Scotney was really quiet after the excesses of last week. Most of the Geese and Ducks had disappeared and very few Lapwings or Golden Plover were present.

THURSDAY 17JAN 2013.

Scotney was much better today with most of the geese (feral) returning. Good numbers of Wigeon but best of all was 2 Slavonian Grebes showing in the middle bay of the pit. Another visit to the ARC pit produced a female Smew, Redwing and 3 Marsh Harriers, otherwise much the same as the last few visits. 2 Great White Egrets and 1 Little Egret on the New Diggings but still no sign of the Common Crane on Walland. Despite the cold quite a few insects, mainly knats, were on the wing and providing food for the roving Tit flocks.

With the weather we have just had, and that forecast, I think there is little chance of any moths or butterflies here in Kent for the rest of January. Roll on spring.



One of two Purple Sandpipers present at Hampton Pier.



Med Gull present at Hampton Pier. You can tell how dull the day was by the fact that you can hardly see the offshore windfarm.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 21-Jan-13 04:29 PM GMT

Like most people we have stayed indoors the last few days. However, we have still enjoyed some wildlife. The first goodie to visit the garden was a Redwing, followed by Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush and perhaps best of all, a female Blackcap. This species has become more common in winters over the last decade. They could be birds that no longer migrate back to Africa but more likely they have moved off the cold continent. Four Lapwings, 10 Fieldfares and 2 Skylarks flew over yesterday and today a Sparrowhawk passed through the garden looking for a snack. Finally both Wood mice have been showing on and off.

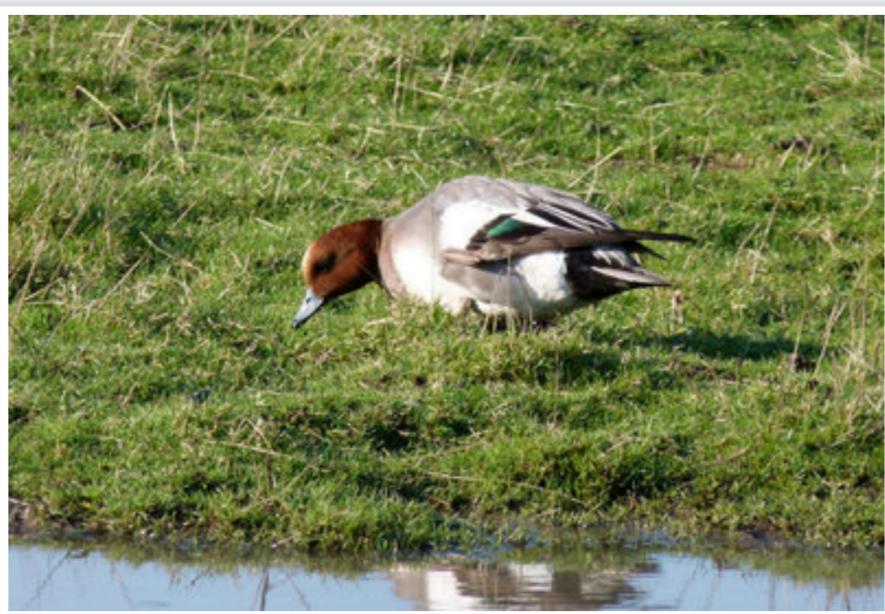
Its interesting to note the increase in numbers visiting the feeders. Chaffinchs are up to seven, Greenfinches five and Blackbirds seventeen. Hopefully this cold snap is just short and we can get back normal soon.



Female Blackcap present in our garden since Sunday.



One of the pair of Slavonian Grebes present on Scotney Gravel Pits (near Lydd).



One of many Wigeon present on Pett Level.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Jan-13 08:30 PM GMT

Despite the cold and snow we have actually enjoyed a few good days of nature watching.

TUESDAY 22 JAN 2013. DUNGENESS AREA

The day started at the ARC pit watching the seemingly resident GREAT WHITE EGRET, along with 3 Goldeneye, 2 Marsh Harriers and a male Merlin. Over the road at New Diggings a male Smew was joined by 5 females. 2 Goldeneye also present. A visit to Scotney pit found the usual birds with an increase in numbers of Wigeon, Redwing and Fieldfare. A look over the sea still found good numbers of Gullimots, Razorbills, Gannets, Kittiwakes and Red Throated Divers. Nearby the sailing club at Littlestone produced 2 very showy Snow Buntings. These were probably the birds seen before Xmas a couple of miles away, although one seemed to have a habit of cocking its tail. A feature not noted on the other two.

WEDNESDAY 23 JAN 2013. PETT LEVEL AND DUNGENESS

Following a period of bad weather we thought a check of Pett Level would be beneficial but it was much as normal except for a flock of 90 Brent Geese feeding at the village end. Numbers of Wigeon had increased here also. Next was Scotney Pit where a Bean Goose and 2 Whitefronted Geese were in with the feral flock of Greylags and Barnacle Geese. The ARC pit held the usual Great White Egret and good numbers of common duck. 2 Marsh Harriers hunted for their lunch. Just as we were leaving a flock of 28 White Fronted Geese flew over the car park and headed towards the Visitor Centre. On New Diggings was 3 Great White Egrets, 1 Little Egret and 14 female Smew, but no sign of the white males. A drive along Dengemarsh found 2 Ravens and 2 more Marsh Harriers. During the day we had also seen a fine male Ruddy Duck (see Fridays notes).

FRIDAY 25 JAN 2013.

The first thing we noticed on arrival at Dungeness was the distinct lack of duck and waders on most of the pits. Someone told us that a Ruddy Duck shoot had occurred the previous day. If true that would explain the absence of duck, in particular the Ruddy Duck. The Great White Egret was still on the ARC pit along with a few Wigeon and Goldeneye. Scotney still held 2 White Fronted Geese and many Wigeon. We spent a little time sea watching near Littlestone where the surprise was a female Smew flying past. A flock of 75 Common Scoter kept flying to and fro but most of the Auks, Gannets and Red Throated Divers were heading West.

SATURDAY 26 JAN 2013.

We started with a sea watch near Littlestone and this time we found a Velvet Scoter in with the Common Scoter flock. Easy to identify when flying with their obvious white flashes in the wings. Large numbers of Auks, Gannets and Red Throated Divers still passing West. Nearby the 2 Snow Buntings were still present and again showing well. The 3 winter Glaucous Gull was showing well by the fishing boats. This time there was 2 Great White Egrets and 3 Marsh Harriers on the ARC/ New Diggings. The RSPB approach track produced 7 Barnacle Geese, these are believed to be the real thing as they were seen arriving with 6 White Fronted Geese of which one was still present. (The feral flock of Barnacle Geese are still present at Scotney and their numbers have remained constant).

Also present here was a Common Buzzard, 2 Marsh Harriers and a Little Egret. At Scotney Gravel pits 16 White Fronted Geese flew over and went south. Nearby the Common Crane showed distantly for the first time in over a week. The day ended with a fine Barn Owl along the Dengemarsh Road.

What a great few days.

Dave



One of the two Snow Buntings at Littlestone.



The regular 3rd winter Glaucous Gull at Dungeness



A distant photo of one of the presumed wild Barnacle Geese. The even more distant Common Buzzard was eyeing them all up.

Re: Dave Brown

by Nick Broomer, 27-Jan-13 10:54 PM GMT

Hi Dave,
i always look forward to reading your posts, just excellent. I just had to comment on your Snow Bunting, a beautiful photo, reminded me of when i saw one in summer plumage on Unst, Shetland. Look forward to reading more.
All the best, Nick.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Jan-13 02:54 PM GMT

Thanks Nick. I agree with you that the Snow Bunting is a stunning looking bird, especially like yours when in full Summer plumage. I am lucky living within 25 miles of the coast, which means that we see Snow Bunting most years. They are very scarce inland, but of course more frequent in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. For anyone visiting Speyside we have seen them around the Cairngorm Ski lift and car park in late Spring and early Summer. We would love to do Unst but my stomach does not approve of that patch of water between the mainland and the island.
SUNDAY 27 JAN 2013.

We were sitting in the living room having a cup of tea when 2 Waxwings descended on our garden feeders and investigated the apples. They only stayed a few moments but I did manage to capture one shot. The numbers around East Kent have fallen off quite quickly so presumably they moved West and South before the onset of the snow. With a fresh bounce in our step we decided to visit Pett Level as the numbers of geese arriving off the Continent have been increasing and Pett is as good as anywhere to see them. We found at least 9 Whitefronts, with a number more tucked behind a ridge. There was many Wigeon, Curlews and Fieldfare but surprising little else other than a Marsh Harrier. As we drove along the road 2 Ravens appeared and landed in a field adjacent to the road.

With a sighting of a Red Necked Grebe near Scotney that proved to be our next destination. Despite us being there within an hour of the sighting we failed to locate it, as did several other birders. Likewise an Egyptian Goose seen with 12 Bewick Swans. We found the Swans but not the Goose. Scotney itself produced 2 Pintail, many Wigeon and Fieldfares with a few Redwings and a Marsh Harrier. We ended the day at Hamstreet seeing a hunting Barn Owl and a stag Fallow Deer escorting 9 females.

A day of mixed fortunes but really enjoyable.

MONDAY 28 JAN 2013.

Today was a local day with good numbers of Fieldfares and Redwings seen, together with a male Goosander and Little Egret on Eastwell lake. We think that the weather was unsuitable for Raptors as no sign of any Buzzards.

Reflecting back on the last week or so of bad weather the bird life has actually been quite good. Other people must have had the same view for Saturday at Dungeness proved to be very crowded at the popular spots. Unlike in the week when sometimes the only other people we saw was the friendly Observatory Warden and a couple of the local regulars. It was nice to see so many people enjoying themselves.

Dave



One of the two Waxwings that visited our Garden on Sunday.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Feb-13 08:10 PM GMT

A bit of a quiet week for us. With so little changing its meant we have been able to catch up on domestic duties.

WED 30 JAN 2013.

We thought that a visit to Samphire Hoe would be of interest due to the recent large movement of Auks off the Kent Coast. Whilst there was movement it was not as good as we expected. A showy Stonechat was on the approach road but only 8 Red Throated Divers and 50 auks in about an hour of watching meant we were soon keen to move on. Next was Folkestone (Copt Point) were 20 adult and 2 1st winter Med Gulls, 75 Auks and 2 Red Throated Divers provided the interest. It was soon back home to the decorating (and the warm).

THURSDAY 31 JAN 2013.

Another cold day near the coast (we never learn). This time our effort was given to Oare Marshes where little was happening except for 2 Red Breasted Mergansers on the sea, a Common Seal and 200 Brents. The East Flood held the usual common waders although the numbers of Snipe have increased with one group of at least 15.

SATURDAY 02 FEB 2013.

Good old Dungeness and this time a few decent birds. The ARC pit and New Diggings held Great White Egret, 2 Bitterns in flight, 1 male and 10 female Smew, Goldeneye, female Red Crested Pochard and Marsh Harrier. Next was Boulderwall Farm area where another Great White Egret was on view, together with 7 Barnacle Geese and Marsh Harrier. 2 more Great White Egrets were on Dengemarsh (thats a minimum of 4 in the area), with 2 Stonechats on Galloways. Scotney still held good numbers of all the common wildfowl and Lapwings.

We stayed in on Sunday but were rewarded by a Waxwing visiting the garden late morning and the regular female Blackcap.

MONDAY 04 FEB 2013.

Dungeness again, but with a slight variation. We visited Lade Gravel Pits to view a Black Throated Diver found by one of the regulars. It was on view when we arrived and supported by 2 Goldeneye, female Smew, Great White Egret and a flushed Woodcock. There was no sign of the Snow Buntings at Littlestone so next was the ARC pit where 2 stunning male Smew were present and sleeping in the the Pochard flock. If only they knew that a flock of female Smew were just over the road on New Diggings, or perhaps the females knew and were keeping out of sight. Boulderwall held the usual 7 Barnacle Geese and the Common Buzzard was back sitting on the fence posts. Apart from half hearted attempts by a Marsh Harrier to catch a Lapwing little else was happening so time for home.

In todays blast from the past I have included a photo for Water Aven. A very scarce plant in Southern England but more common in Northern parts and Scotland, which is where we saw this one. It was beside a small Scottish stream and was noted when we stopped to view a Golden Eagle.



A distant record photo of the Black Throated Diver on Lade Gravel pits.



Water Aven seen on one of our many trips to Scotland.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Feb-13 08:56 PM GMT

COLD AND GREY

That's all I will say about this dismal weather.

WEDNESDAY 6 FEB 2013.

Today saw us at Oare Marshes looking at not much in particular. The highlights being 2 Common Buzzards, Marsh Harrier and 2 Pintails. Nearby Graveney held decent numbers of common waders with 3 Black Tailed Godwits, our first this year.

FRIDAY 8 FEB 2013.

Back to good old Dungeness, but with little change from previous visits. A male Smew was on ARC pits alongside 4 Goldeneye. A Chiffchaff was in roadside bushes. Dengemarsh gave us Great White Egret, 4 Barnacle Geese, 3 Marsh Harriers, and just as we were leaving, a flock of 20 Whitefronted Geese flew in across the ranges and landed by the reed beds. Scotney held many geese with 2 Tundra Beans being the best, also very good numbers of Wigeon. A drive across Walland Marsh found 200 Bewick and 2 Whooper Swans, 6 Yellowhammers and many Fieldfares.

SUNDAY 10 FEB 2013.

A visit to Pett Level saw 23 Brent Geese on the fields but little else in freezing and windy conditions. Snow started to fall and we could not wait to return home.

TUESDAY 12 FEB 2013.

With a male Penduline Tit present at Stodmarsh and showing well for 3 days it was a case of wish we had not bothered. On our arrival the sound of chainsaws operating near its preferred spot meant most birds had taken a holiday to less noisy parts. We can't complain as this reserve needs some loving attention and there has certainly been a big and appreciated effort this winter. The only good birds seen in a 2 hour walk around was 2 Cetti's Warblers and 2 Water Rails.

WEDNESDAY 13 FEB 2013.

Today was sunny, very cold, but best of all quite. So today saw us back at Stodmarsh watching a stunning Penduline Tit on reed mace adjacent to the Alder Wood. They are a beautiful bird, looking rather like a small Red Backed Shrike. In the same part of the reed bed a female Bearded Tit was present, 2 Common Buzzards over, whilst nearby 6 Cetti's Warblers, 4 Marsh Harriers, 50 Siskins and 8 Redpolls were noted. A female Goosander was on the main pit.

Whilst driving home we spotted a Waxwing sitting on the wires outside Shalmsford Street Church. A very good end to the day.

Not the most productive period of bird watching, but considering the raw cold weather we could not expect much. It certainly makes you appreciate the forthcoming days of spring.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 13-Feb-13 09:55 PM GMT

The good news, Dave, is that things look to be turning brighter over the coming days and the long range forecast is for more of the same. Whilst air temperatures might still be suppressed, strong sunshine in the latter half of February (when the sun is much higher in the sky than it is near the winter solstice) should see things start to awaken.

I agree with your "cold and grey" surmisal; Swansea has seemed more like Venus lately regarding persistent cloud cover, whereas temperatures have been more akin to Mars.

We all need a break from this, and I'm happy to trade for 7c maxima with mainly sunny skies.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Feb-13 08:33 PM GMT

FULL TO OVERFLOWING

No, not my beer glass but the car park today at Dungeness RSPB reserve. No one is sure why, other than it was the first warm day for weeks, but on our arrival we met a full car park. It's a big car park and can accommodate 50 vehicles plus. Strange really considering the bird life is much the same as the last few weeks. We were late arriving and so our first birds were along the RSPB entrance track at mid-day. 5 Bean Geese, 7 Barnacle Geese, 2 Great White Egrets, 2 Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzard and many Curlew and Lapwings. A Bittern had been seen from there yesterday but no sign on our visit. Next was Littlestone Sailing Club and the 2 Snow Buntings had increased to 3 and were showing well. These birds are hard to see at first as they remain close to the ground and well hidden. With a little searching they will move and show themselves. Usually a few metres to the seaward side east of the building. Hundreds of Great Crested Grebes remain on the sea but most of the auks and divers appear to have moved on. All the usual common waders can be seen from here at low tide. Next was a look at the sea near the power station, with a beautiful male Black Redstart on the Power Station perimeter wall. The ARC/ New Diggings complex held the usual Smew and Goldeneye with a 3rd Great White Egret and several hunting Marsh Harriers. We again failed to see any Bitterns but it was still a good day in almost spring like conditions (11 degrees). It felt warm enough for a butterfly sighting, but it was not to be.



A poor distant photo of one of the Great White Egrets seen today from the entrance track, Dungeness RSPB.



A record photo of the Penduline Tit at Stodmarsh tucking into his reed mace meal.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 19-Feb-13 07:50 PM GMT

FULL TO OVERFLOWING: PART TWO

SATURDAY 16 FEB 2013.

It had to happen. It was Bittern watch day on the RSPB at Dungeness, together with a visit by a large group from the Sussex Ornithological Society, both the Visitor Centre and the ARC car park were always full until about 15.00 hours when things started to quieten down. The RSPB had staff and volunteers on duty but they always seemed busy. Luckily the SOS tour had their own leaders with them. We tried to help the less experienced visitors pick out the elusive 5 Bean Geese present from the approach track, but you can only stay so long.

Anyway, now to the sightings. Lade Gravel Pit held the Black Throated Diver and 2 Goldeneye on North Pit. The ARC & New Diggings complex held Bittern, 2 male and 2 female Smew, Goldeneye, 2 Marsh Harriers, Water Rail, 2 Chiffchaffs, 2 Goldcrests, Cettis Warblers, 7 Redwings, Great White Egret and Little Egret.

The RSPB entrance track held 8 Tree Sparrows, 5 Bean Geese, 7 Barnacle Geese, Common Buzzard, 2 Marsh Harriers and many Wigeon, Curlew and Lapwings. On Scotney was a female Scaup and a great end to the day was had when a Barn Owl flew across the road north of Lydd at 16.45 hours.

SUNDAY 17 FEB 2013.

With such fine weather it had to be Dungeness again with a view to finding Bittern. We started the day touring Walland to find 8 Tree Sparrows, 2 Corn Buntings, 6 Yellowhammers and 120 plus Bewick Swans (distant). Around the Caldecot area was 400 Fieldfares but no sign of the earlier Grey Partridge. In spring Dengemarsh is always good for Bittern and today was no exception with 4 different individuals seen in flight between midday and 14.00 hours. Also Great White Egret, 4 Marsh Harriers, 18 Curlews and many Lapwings. Next was the RSPB entrance track where the 5 Bean Geese were still present, along with 2 Great White Egrets, 2 Marsh Harriers, 12 Tree Sparrows, another Bittern (5 in one day is our best Kent record), and still many Wigeon, Lapwings and Curlews.

We ended the day on the ARC pit seeing another Great White Egret, 2 Marsh Harriers, Goldeneye, Kingfisher and 2 Chiffchaffs. On the way home we saw a Little Egret at Warehorne.

Over the weekend we continued to see the female Blackcap and at least one Wood Mouse in our garden.

I finish this update by just saying how much I enjoy reading other Personal Forums. I don't like to interfere too much and write replies to them all as it is their personal page, but there is some great stuff at the moment ranging from the Scientific to the scenic photo. From Birthday Wishes (for someone approaching 50 –Guy, best wishes), to those just wishing for Spring to arrive. What a great way to spend an hour or so reading updates from an interesting group of people.

Dave

PS. Do we go to Dungeness on Monday for the 4th day running? We shall see on the next update (once I have down loaded a few photos).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Feb-13 08:12 PM GMT

"dave brown" wrote:

Do we go to Dungeness on Monday for the 4th day running?

Well of course we do. It was warm and sunny and where better to stand a chance of your first butterfly of the year. It was busy, but not like the weekend. After domestic duties we arrived at Dengemarsh to see 4 Bitterns in flight, also 2 Great White Egrets, 3 Marsh Harriers, Sparrowhawk, with many Lapwings and Curlews. Next was the ARC/New Diggings complex where a stunning Firecrest was showing near the Hanson Hide. What a little gem this species is, one of our favourites. Also Chiffchaff, Cettis Warbler, 3 female Smew, 3 Goldeneye, Great White Egret, Little Egret, 2 Marsh Harriers and a beautiful Kingfisher.

Boulderwall Farm produced 5 Bean Geese, 2 Egyptian Geese (new for the year), 2 Marsh Harriers with many Wigeon, Lapwing and Curlew. On the way home we went via Walland and saw the 2 Grey Partridge near Caldecott. This species is getting scarcer in the Dungeness area when compared to 20 years ago so was nice to see. Finally a Kingfisher was hunting along the Military Canal.

TUESDAY 19 FEB 2013.

We started the day at Pett Level which was surprising quite, both bird and people wise. Geese were represented by 4 Pink Feet, 7 Whitefronts and 19 Brents. Also seen was 2 Common Buzzards, Marsh Harrier, Little Egret, Snipe and many Wigeon. All the common waders were along the beach and lots of Great Crested Grebes were on the sea. On the way home we called in at Scotney but there was no sign of the Scaup and very little else to be honest.

Despite a pleasant weekend weather wise, and some good birding, we saw no butterflies. The only insects we noted was a few Bumble Bees and about a dozen honey bees on our heather at home. Neither do we have stunning photos of Alpine Accentor as posted by Padfield. They make our mouth water as they remind us of our only British sighting, which was at St Margaret's (Kent) in the Nineties. On the Continent they are normally found at higher altitude, which of course means beautiful and remote scenery.

The least we say about the weather for the next few days the better. It was cold, raw and bitter. Not a hope for any butterflies.

Dave



Distant photo of a Bittern in flight on Dengemarsh (Dungeness).



Male Goldeneye on the ARC pit at Dungeness.



One of a number of bees finding nectar on our garden heather.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Feb-13 08:57 PM GMT

DIRE.

The title refers to the fact that this cold dull weather just seems to go on and on. Apart from Snow Drops and a micro moth we have seen little sign of spring. In the warm spell over a week ago Dungeness had seen its first Sandwich Terns of the year, but no further sign since. Can you blame them? Still, it will make us appreciate the warmth of Spring all the more when it arrives.

With little changing we have restricted our activities of late. On Friday (22 Feb) we called in at Littlestone but there was no sign of the Snow Buntings in a biting North Easterly. The waders on the beach included 2 Bar Tailed Godwits and 25 Sanderling. We like watching this dainty little wader running in and out of the incoming waves, picking off invertebrates and somehow always remaining dry. Next was Dungeness where the 3W Glaucous Gull remained around the two westerly fishing boats, also 20 Gannets, 30 Auks, 5 Kittiwakes and a Red Throated Diver. A look at the ARC pit only produced 2 Goldeneye, 3 Marsh Harriers and many Shoveler. Boulderwall Farm saw 2 Great White Egrets, 2 Marsh Harriers but no sign of the geese and fewer Wigeon and Lapwings.

SUNDAY 24 FEB 2013.

This was one of those wish we didn't go out days. The temperature said 3 degrees but it felt more like minus 13. It was bitter in a raw strong wind. Walland Marsh produced 6 Tundra Bean Geese, 60 Whitefronted Geese and over 200 Greylags. In the same field was many Fieldfares and a large group of Wigeon and Teal. A few Marsh Harriers made half hearted attempts to hunt but I am sure even they felt cold. Time to be sensible and head home although we did see 2 Common Buzzards near Shadoxhurst.

The Blackcap is still a regular on our feeders and has been joined by 2 Long Tailed Tits.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 03-Mar-13 07:52 PM GMT

IS SPRING REALLY AROUND THE CORNER?

Although the sun shone this afternoon here in Kent the temperature remained around 8 degrees and the cold North Easterly took the edge off. The whole week has been cold, dull and grey. The forecast for the coming week however looks more promising, which hopefully will lead to our first butterfly of the year. One thing we did see today in a sheltered spot was 2 Primroses out in full flower.

TUESDAY 26 FEB 2013.

We checked the Sandling & Hythe area where a Red Kite was seen last week but no sign today. We then checked the sea front at Hythe where 3 Purple Sandpipers were roosting on the groynes in front of Stade Hotel during the high tide. Next was St Botolphs Bridge where a fine male Merlin caused panic amongst the Fieldfares as it sped through, also a Green Sandpiper on the canal. Dungeness RSPB was very quiet with no sign of any Bitterns along Dengemarsh in biting weather. Even 2 hunting Marsh Harriers failed to flush any, just lots of Wigeon, Teal and Lapwings. We ended the day on Walland Marsh looking at 3 Whitefronted Geese, 220 Bewick Swans, (plus a separate group of 5 near Cheney Court), Common Buzzard and 5 Marsh Harriers. Numbers of Lapwings and Fieldfares remained high, but once we had seen 8 Tree Sparrows we gave up as the cold was getting to us.

THURSDAY 28 FEB 2013.

Another cold and dull day. A visit to Pett Level was made hoping to see the Pink Feet again, but this time there was no sign, just 9 White Fronted Geese. The fields contained many common waders, in particular 47 Turnstones, 9 Grey Plover and many Curlew. 20 Red Throated Divers were on the sea but little else. On the way home we called in at Warehorne to see a Nuthatch and 2 Greater Spotted Woodpeckers. We ended the day on Washford Estate, Ashford, watching 21 Waxwings along Langley Drive.

Today the garden female Blackcap was joined by a male bird. Hopefully they will remain in the area to breed.

SUNDAY 03 MARCH 2013.

The started well and ended well, it was the bit in between that was disappointing bird wise. We did however see our first Primroses of the year and lots of Crocus. Sights like this cheer you up when the weather suggests it is still winter. We started with 3 Common Buzzards circling over Conningbrook Gravel pits (Ashford), We did see 4 more Common Buzzards in the Sheldwich area but little else of note. On the way home we called in at Eastwell Park where 6 Common Buzzards were in the air and even better, 2 adult Med Gulls were on the lake. Med Gulls are still scarce in land so are always good to see when you least expect them.

One thing we have noticed here in Kent this winter is an apparent fall off in numbers of Little Egrets. For the last ten years or so we have managed to see at least one or two most days on our travels, even the odd one over the house. This year we have had days when we have seen none at all. Indeed, on some days Great White Egrets have been the more numerous species. Hopefully this is just the effect of the cold freezing the ditches and things will return to normal soon. We have got used to this dainty bird feeding along ditch's and dykes and look forward to its return to its recent status.

Dave



One of three Purple Sandpipers on the seafront at Hythe.



The two distant adult Med Gulls on Eastwell Park Lake.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Mar-13 08:10 PM GMT

UP AND RUNNING

We are on the way with our first butterfly of the year. A Peacock near Grove Ferry yesterday was a fine way to start the butterfly year. A treat we have been looking forward to all winter. To make it even more appreciated was the fact it was accompanied by much birdsong. There was singing Skylarks, Chaffinches, Dunnocks, Mistle Thrush and Robins. A great day in the field.

MONDAY 04 MARCH 2013.

With fine weather forecast we anticipated that Bitterns could be flying around at Dungeness and we were not disappointed with 2 individuals seen on Dengemarsh, along with 4 displaying Marsh Harriers. Also noted in the area was 2 Great White Egrets, 5 Bean Geese, 7 Tree Sparrows, Red Legged Partridge and many Lapwings, Fieldfares and Wigeon. Driving home we saw a Common Buzzard near Brenzett.

TUESDAY 05 MARCH 2013.

We started off in a local wood where 4 Marsh Tits were calling and singing. A Greater Spotted Woodpecker called and a Common Buzzard flew over. We noted several flowering Primroses and Lesser Celandine. Next stop was the Stour Valley and Stodmarsh. Its a bit early for migrants but Marsh Harriers should have been displaying, but none were. We had excellent views of the long staying Penduline Tit in its favourite reed bed by the Alder wood. To photograph it proved almost impossible as it seems to favour the back of the reed bed, which means other reed mace is always in the way and its so difficult to focus on. We met a photographer who was on his fourth attempt, and many hours, to take photos, but without any real success. That's the secret with this particular bird. You need much patience or luck to take its picture. Otherwise just enjoy its beauty with your binoculars. It's normally less than 10 metres away.

WEDNESDAY 06 MARCH 2013.

The third day in row with decent weather so back to Dungeness in case of a early migrant. There was a number of Chiffchaff's, including a singing bird, but we suspect that these were all wintering birds. A Bittern flew across the ARC pit, 6 Reed Buntings, a female Red Crested Pochard, 3 Goldeneye, a male Smew, 4 Water Rails, 5 Cetti's Warblers and a Marsh Harrier was supporting cast. In the Boulderwall/ Dengemarsh area was 1 Great White Egret, Sparrowhawk and 3 Marsh Harriers. The numbers of Lapwing, Golden Plover and Wigeon remains high.

It reached 16 degrees yesterday at Grove Ferry and 15 degrees today at Hamstreet. This really feels like spring.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Mar-13 08:55 PM GMT

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A WEEK MAKES

Its back to winter and freezing conditions. Any normal person would stay home in the warm and enjoy other things, but not us, (not sure what that says about our character), but we really enjoy wildlife watching whatever the conditions. So out we go, head to Dungeness and freeze.

SATURDAY 09 MARCH 2013.

A check of the beaches at New Romney and Littlestone gave us our first Sandwich Tern of the year. 12 Gannets were off the coast but otherwise the waders were much the same. A check of the fishing boats at Dungeness found the regular 3rd winter Glaucous Gull, along with a few auks, Gannets and Kittiwakes. A singing Black Redstart was near the Power Station perimeter wall. A timely phone call gave us the excuse to leave the bitter cold sea and head for the RSPB where the Observatory Warden was watching a Caspian Gull. We arrived a few minutes too late as it had flown off back to the beach, however a Yellow Legged Herring Gull was on show, as was a nice male Red Crested Pochard. He obviously didn't know that a female was across the road on another pit. We also caught a glimpse of a Sand Martin as it tried to catch what few insects were on the wing. Also 2 Great White Egrets, Little Egret, 3 Goldeneye and 2 Marsh Harriers. Numbers of Lapwings and Golden Plovers still remain quite high.

Going back across Walland marsh we were treated to fine views of a Ringtail Hen Harrier and 2 adult Med Gulls.

On arrival at home we were pleased to see 19 Waxwings in our next door neighbour's tree, followed shortly by a flyover Grey Wagtail and 12 Meadow Pipits.

SUNDAY 10 MARCH 2013.

What made us go out on such a cold day we will never know, but we are pleased that we did because as we checked the beach at Littlestone for any Snow Buntings (none) we received a message to say that 2 Penduline Tits were showing at the RSPB. We arrived at the car park where only 5 other cars were present, and it was a Sunday. It was bitter cold as we made the walk to near the ramp and found no other birders present what so ever. Our son soon found the two birds and we enjoyed prolonged, but distant views of both birds. Also seen was a Bittern in flight and 2 Great White Egrets. A Cettis Warbler was singing nearby trying to convince himself that it was not still winter. We also saw another Great White Egret, a Little Egret, 4 Goldeneye, Smew 14 Meadow Pipits, 7 Tree Sparrows, 4 Marsh Harriers and a Sparrowhawk. A White Wagtail was present on the ARC pit and we saw a Bittern in flight on Dengemarsh.

On the way back we saw 3 Little Egrets on the Military Canal at Hamstreet.

We failed to see any of the 4 Sand Martins seen by others around the RSPB. We also saw very few birders all day despite the reasonable showing of wildlife.

Dave



A distant and poor record shot of one of the two Penduline Tits present near the ramp (RSPB reserve).



This Red Crested Pochard was present near the Visitors Centre.



No good hiding your head in the beach the big bad wave will get you. (It actually just missed).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-Mar-13 09:42 PM GMT

COLD, DULL AND CERTAINLY NOT SPRING.

We have been out wildlife watching since our last update but to be honest its been really disappointing. The winter birds are leaving and the summer ones are not arriving, meaning its been really hard work with little reward. Plants are no further forward than a week ago and there's no chance of any

butterflies. To make it worse further snow is forecast. Never ones to be defeated we paid several visits to Dungeness, but even our favourite site has let us down.

WED 13 MARCH 2013.

A good search of Dungeness found all the regular birds in place. 2 Great White Egrets, 2 male and 9 female Smew, 2 Goldeneyes, 4 Marsh Harriers, 5 Cettis Warblers, 2 Water Rail, Little Egret, 7 Reed Buntings, 8 Tree Sparrows, a steady flow of Gannets, Auks and Red Throated Divers at sea, and finally the female Red Crested Pochard on Tower pit. Still reasonable number's of Wigeon and Lapwing around the general area. A Little Egret was on the Military Canal at Hamstreet.

THURSDAY 14 MARCH 2013.

The day started with a Peregrine over the house before we set off for Dungeness. The bird life was much the same as yesterday with the addition of a Common Buzzard near the airport.

SUNDAY 17 MARCH 2013.

We started with the intention of calling in at Dungeness but the day got wetter and colder so we only made Hamstreet and Fairfield. The highlights being Little Egret, 3 Coal Tits, Treecreeper and several flocks of Fieldfares. It was quickly home to a warm cup of tea.

MONDAY 18 MARCH 2013.

A hint of sun, but still only 6 degrees. We thought we would try our luck at Pett Level but this was as quiet as Dungeness. 5 Common Buzzards circled trying to take advantage of the weak sun. Otherwise it was Little Egret, 12 Brent Geese, Snipe, 100 Curlew, Red Throated Diver, many Wigeon and Lapwing.

Arriving home the sun got stronger, reaching the dizzy heights of 8 degrees. Deciding to do a bit of gardening we were rewarded when at 15.25 hours a Common Buzzard flew over followed by a Red Kite at 16.10 hours. It drifted slowly North West and was our first of the year.

TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2013.

Dungeness again, but even fewer birds today, although the sight of at least 2 feeding Harbour Porpoises was enjoyable.



A distant record photo of the Red Kite passing high over our house.



Female Red Crested Pochard on the Tower Pit at Dungeness



One of many of the flocks of Brent Geese passing Dungeness heading north for the summer.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 25-Mar-13 09:28 PM GMT

ONE DEGREE, IT FELT MORE LIKE MINUS 5.

That was the temperature at Dungeness late yesterday morning. We froze in a biting easterly wind that made birding uncomfortable. Even the dog walkers were absent. I am getting on in years and this is the coldest March I can remember in Kent since March 1963. That year I dragged myself to school through snow drifts taller than myself that lasted into April. At least the snow has melted here, but its still very cold. The cold must have numbed the brain for we have been out birding on several days of late.

WED 20 MARCH 2013.

We checked the local areas of Eastwell and Chilham for any sight or sound of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, but failed miserably. We saw all the common woodland birds, including several Marsh Tits, but nothing out of the ordinary. 2 Common Buzzards were displaying near Wye.

THUR 21 MARCH 2013.

We had just arrived at the Sea Watching hide, Dungeness, when 3 Barnacle Geese flew by at sea, followed by flocks of 7 and 14 Brent Geese. The usual sea birds were passing in small numbers. We had arrived too late to see a big movement of over 300 Red Throated Divers moving West (PB), it was now just ones and twos. There was two welcome visitors on the sea front. The first was a handsome male Black Redstart and the second a male Wheatear. The 3rd Winter Glaucous was still around the fishing boats and a few Meadow Pipits were moving north. On the reserve our first Avocets of the year (2 No), Goldeneye, Great White Egret, Little Egret, Marsh Harrier, Chiffchaff and 5 Tree Sparrows. A big surprise was to see 2 Kingfishers fly low across the Visitor Centre car park.

22 Waxwings were still in Hesta Way, Ashford. At 09.40 hours a Common Buzzard had flown over the house and headed North.

SUNDAY 24 MARCH 2013.

As stated above Dungeness was cold, I mean really cold on the sea front. We restricted our time there to about 45 minutes and saw little unusual. Further along the beach at Littlestone numbers of Herring Gulls were high and feeding on things on the sea line. 25 Curlew flew over the road at New Romney being chased by a Peregrine. The RSPB held 2 Great White Egrets, a group of 4 and 3 Avocets, 2 Goldeneye, several female Smew, 3 Snipe, 50 Golden Plovers and 16 Reed Buntings. All the common duck were present as was a small influx of Ringed Plovers. Scotney Gravel pits held a few more waders than of late, including 8 Ringed Plover and 12 Dunlin.

Roll on the real Spring.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Mar-13 09:10 PM GMT

NOT A BUTTERFLY IN SIGHT.

Looking at the weather forecast I think the chances of a butterfly in the next week are non existent. Which is a real shame following a long and cold winter.

TUESDAY 26 MARCH 2013.

Rye Harbour today, and yes it was freezing. The wind chill put the temperature in the negative and made walking an uncomfortable experience. We had gone as yesterday 2 Male Kentish Plovers had been showing in front of Lime Kiln Cottage, (the reserves information centre). No sign today, they must have been sheltering from the cold wind. We did find a migrant in the form of a Wheatear and the sight of 10 Avocets was good. All the usual common waders at this excellent reserve.

We called in at Dungeness on the way home but not much had changed. 2 Black Redstarts were near the Observatory and another male was on the south end of the ARC pit. The Great White Egret was at its usual spot on the New Diggings. The ARC pit held the usual ducks and 3 Marsh Harriers were displaying.

THURSDAY 28 MARCH 2013.

Another go for the Kentish Plover at Rye Harbour. This time we were lucky, although it remained distant and mobile. The number of Avocets had increased to 12, joined by 2 Sandwich Terns and 2 Med Gulls. Still large numbers of common waders and a Rock Pipit was on the adjacent river. Going back through Camber we saw 5 Med Gulls, Chiffchaff and a Little Egret. At Dungeness we were lucky to see 2 Bitterns in flight. One over the RSPB entrance track and the other over Dengemarsh. 6 Marsh Harriers were attempting to display. The Great White Egret on New Diggings, 3 Goldeneye on ARC, and Chiffchaff around the RSPB car park.

Finally we were put onto a Little Ringed Plover along Dengemarsh Road. Our first of the year and a good end to an enjoyable, if somewhat cold, day.
Dave



Little Ringed Plover close to Dengemarsh Road (Dungeness).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Mar-13 09:54 PM GMT

THIS WEATHER IS NOW GETTING BORING.

We no longer need to check the weather forecast. Its the same day after day. Not only is it cold and dull, but we should remember its also mainly dry. We have seen more Primroses this week as the temperatures nudges toward 6 degrees but little else.

FRIDAY 29 MARCH 2013.

Actually not a bad day birding wise. We toured the Dungeness area seeing all the usual birds including 2 Great White Egrets, 2 Bitterns in flight, Smew, Goldeneye and Black Redstart. 4 Marsh Harriers showed some interest in each other and a Common Buzzard was near Lydd. We saw a different Little Ringed Plover down Dengemarsh Road which somehow managed to find and join yesterdays bird. Early afternoon we had a message saying that 2 Penduline tits were showing near Firth Hide on the RSPB. Despite several of us being there within 15 minutes there was no further sign. I was shown a photograph of a male bird that was feeding on the edge of the reed bed just before we arrived. That's the 4th sighting of this pair in the last month and all at different locations, some a mile apart. We then toured Walland Marsh and managed to see the wintering Male Hen Harrier near Cheyne Court. The

male is a delightful bird and its grey colours stand out at distance. 6 Marsh Harriers were flying around and a female Sparrowhawk flew through. Also seen was 2 Common Buzzards and 2 Tree Sparrows.

We ended the day near the Military Canal Warehorne seeing a stunning Barn Owl, 4 Little Egrets, 3 Chiffchaffs, 50 Fieldfares and 2 adult Med Gulls.

SATURDAY 30 MARCH 2013.

We had resisted the urge to go and see the White Spotted Bluethroat which had been present for 3 days at Samphire Hoe, despite most of Kent's birders descending on the site on Good Friday. However today we guessed the number of visitors would be lower and so it proved. On our arrival there was only about 20 other birders so probably a good decision to wait. The bird was quite mobile and elusive as it dodged the snow showers, (yes there was quite a few day but luckily none laid). In the end we had 2 views on the ground and several flight views. Also present Peregrine and 2 Stonechats.

Next was Copt Point which was very quiet. Just 2 adult Med Gulls. Then Warehorne where a distant Kingfisher was sitting on a perch looking for a meal. A Little Egret flew along the Canal and a Common Buzzard passed nearby. We ended the day near Appledore Turkey Farm and was amazed to see a Common Crane with 2 Mute Swans. It was an adult bird and presumably the same bird as the one seen recently on nearby Walland Marsh. Not sure where it has been to the last few weeks, but still very nice to see. Also seen was 3 Little Egrets, 4 Golden Plover and 2 Common Buzzards.

In all two very good days of birding. Just wish it would warm up as we should be seeing butterflies by now.

Dave



Record photo of the Common Crane we found today near Appledore Turkey Farm.



Record photo of the Common Crane we found today near Appledore Turkey Farm.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 02-Apr-13 08:26 PM GMT

THE SUN SHINES (but its still very cold)

Yesterday the sun broke through and shone most of the day, but it made little difference to the very cold temperatures and certainly not enough to encourage any butterflies.

SUNDAY 31 MARCH 2013.

We started the day at Warehorne where 2 Little Egrets and a Med Gull were near the canal. No sign of the Common Crane at Appledore but a Peregrine over chasing a flock of Golden Plover was unexpected. A Common Buzzard was present as was a flock of 50 Fieldfares. Next was Fairfield which was quiet except for a Little Egret. 4 Common Buzzards and 4 Med Gulls were circling over the Woolpack Inn (no, we had not stopped for a pint). Walland Marsh produced 6 Marsh Harriers and 4 Tree Sparrows. Finally we arrived at Dungeness, which was bitterly cold. Again it was much of the same. 2 Black Redstarts were along the Observatory Road. 2 Great White Egrets were on New Diggings. A Raven was seen along Dengemarsh Road and again later over Boulderwall Farm. A Peregrine along Dengemarsh Road. A Common Buzzard was near Lydd and finally the usual things on the sea.

It was so cold on the sea front that many Easter visitors stayed away. It was one of the quietest Easters we have seen at Dungeness and many of the attractions must have suffered badly.

MONDAY 01 APRIL 2013.

Today we chose Stodmarsh for our birding activity. No other reason than we calculated that it may be warmer down in the valley. It was, but only just. On parking we were surprised to be informed that the Penduline Tit was still present from the last month and today it was showing near the Alder Wood. We arrived at the spot and after 30 minutes the bird announced its presence nearby by calling. A few minutes later I see it fly in and put several people onto it, including one passing family of birders who had a nice surprise. Seen during our visit was 7 Marsh Harriers, 3 Common Buzzards, 4 Water Rails, 4 Bearded Tits, 6 Cettis Warblers, Chiffchaff, Redpoll, Sparrowhawk and Greater Spotted Woodpecker in addition to all the common woodland birds.

The other good feature of the day was the increasing numbers of Primroses and Lesser Celandine seen on our journey. Perhaps the real spring is not that far away. For us Easter was actually quite a good weekend of birding. For others the cold weather meant that the weekend was a bit of a let down. Let us hope that temperatures return to normal very soon.



This Penduline Tit has been wintering at Stodmarsh, although it was still a surprise as we had not heard about its presence for two weeks.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Apr-13 04:04 PM GMT

Eye watering cold.

Wednesday 03 April 2013.

On arrival at Dungeness the temperature gauge said 3 degrees but it felt more like minus 3 in a biting North East wind. It was so cold that birders stayed away. We only saw the Observatory Assistant Warden and four other birders all day. Most of the local regulars had gone to France for the day. First for a bit of warmth, and second for Black Woodpecker (failed) and Middle Spotted Woodpecker (saw and photographed 2 pairs). Our day had started really well with 19 Waxwings in our garden for about 20 minutes. The light was rubbish so we only have record photos. Still, very nice to see a stunning and appreciated bird.

Dungeness itself held 2 male and 14 female Smew on ARC pit, along with a Goosander, Merlin, Great White Egret and 3 Bar Tailed Godwits flew over. The general area held Bittern, Common Buzzard, 2 Marsh Harriers, 2 Hares, 9 Snipe and all the usual common duck and waders. The sea was very quiet with just a few Gannets and Red Throated Divers moving. On the way home we saw a Common Buzzard, Marsh Harrier, 5 Redwings and 200 Fieldfares on Walland Marsh, and a Little Egret, Green Sandpiper and Med Gull at Warehorne.

Thursday 04 April 2013.

A tour of Hothfield, Westwell and Eastwell produced 3 Common Buzzards, 10 Siskins, Nuthatch, 35 Redwings and 300 Fieldfares. It was so cold we were glad to get home. We have noted however that the number of Primroses in flower increases every time we go out, so Spring can't be long.

Still only seen one butterfly this year and the weather over the next few days will not increase our chance of any more.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 08-Apr-13 09:08 PM GMT

The sun comes out and so does the Butterflies.

Well two at least. Both Small Tortoiseshells and both together. Despite a long search we found no more.

SATURDAY 6 APRIL 2013.

A day of almost a good bird. We arrived at Dungeness to be told that a male Garganey was showing on the ARC pit. Despite being there fairly quickly it had already moved on. The pit held its usual 2 male and 8 female Smew, Goldeneye and all the common duck. We then received another message to say that a Iceland Gull was present on the patch. Thirty minutes later we were looking at a White Winged Gull but something was not right. It had a bright yellow bill like a Herring Gull, so we assuming that it is just a odd Herring Gull. Whilst there we had a 60 second view of a White Stork as it flew over the Power Station and back inland being mobbed by hundreds of gulls. (The White Stork was seen well over the RSPB on 2 occasions). The sea produced Sandwich Tern, Yellow Legged Herring Gull and 25 Red Throated Divers. A 3rd winter Caspian was found by a friend who was just about to put us all onto it when 2 walkers came along the beach and put everything up. There was about 5,000 gulls and they scattered far and wide. With Dungeness providing much the same as previous occasions we decided to go home and were lucky to see 5 Waxwings fly over the garden, plus a male Blackcap in the garden.

SUNDAY 7 APRIL 2013.

With sun and light winds forecast it had to be Dungeness again. On arriving at the beach a small group of Dung regulars were already sea watching. There was a big movement of birds passing. The day saw over 3,000 Red Throated Divers, a Dungeness day record. We saw 450 of them, together with 2 Black Throated and 1 Great Northern Diver. We also saw 12 Little Gulls, 5 Eider, 1 Whimbrel and 30 Curlew, 320 Brent Geese, 35 Sandwich Terns, 20 Auks, many Common Scoter, Kittiwakes and Gannets, a adult Med Gull and yesterdays odd White Winged Gull. A Common Buzzard flew in off the sea and a Raven over the Power Station. A message informed us that a Spoonbill had landed along Dengemarsh, which we later saw. Also seen was 3 Black Redstarts, Cettis Warbler, Great White and Little Egret, 2 Goldeneye and 6 Smew. Just as we were giving up hope on any butterflies we found 2 Small Tortoiseshells along Dengemarsh Road.

A great end to a very exciting day.

MONDAY 8 APRIL 2013.

Although sunny it was back to the cold winds and so little chance of butterflies. So it proved on our trip to Stodmarsh. There was no no sign of the Penduline Tit

or any other spring migrants. We did see 4 displaying Marsh Marriers, 2 Common Buzzards, 11 singing/ calling Cettis Warblers, 4 Water Rails, Bearded Tit, 100 Redwings and several Treecreepers.

Our journey to and from produced 6 Common Buzzards near Seaton and 3 near Godmersham, otherwise it was quiet.

Dave



These two Small Tortoiseshells were in a ditch along Dengemarsh Road, Dungeness.



The distant Spoonbill on the Hayfield at Dungeness



It proved hard to focus on this well camouflaged and constant moving Tree Creeper.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 09-Apr-13 08:38 PM GMT

One Swallow does not make a summer

But its a start. We were lucky to see a Swallow pass over the garden just after mid-day, and before a shower of rain took place. Hopefully the first of many returning birds. Now we know summer is on the way. Also a male Peregrine passed over late afternoon and a flock of 5 Waxwings landed in our neighbour's tree. Our son saw another 4 nearby whilst on a walk to the town. They are obviously still in the area, although very mobile.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Apr-13 09:02 PM GMT

Warm weather forecast for tomorrow.

Hopefully it, and the butterflies arrive. Today (Saturday) started off reasonable but the rain came in after mid-day and put paid to any further nature watching.

WED 10 APRIL 2013.

Today the weather was bright but coldish. At least it felt cold at Dungeness. The sea was a lot quieter, we only saw 3 Sandwich Terns, 12 Common Scoter and 150 Brent Geese. A tour of the area produced 8 Chiffchaffs, 1 Willow Warbler, 2 Wheatears, 10 Goldcrests, Fieldfare, Sparrowhawk, 2 Little Egrets, 3 Great White Egrets, Spoonbill, male and 10 female Smew, 2 Cetti's Warblers and 5 Marsh Harriers. No butterflies what so ever but our friend at Ruckinge invited us to see his overnight trap of 3 moths. They were, Tawny Pinion, March Moth and the micro Diurnea fagella.

THURSDAY 11 APRIL 2013.

Back to Dungeness in the hope of something. Still mighty cold so butterflies were zero. We saw 4 Med Gulls at New Romney and 2 Med Gulls at Greatstone, there must have been a small movement going on. Dungeness produced cold hands and 2 Wheatears, Black Redstart, 3 Willow Warblers, 3 Blackcaps, 2 Swallows, 15 Red Throated Divers, 2 Fulmars, 14 Brent Geese, 12 Common Terns, 3 Sandwich Terns and 20 Common Scoter. Around the RSPB we saw a oiled Red Throated Diver, 3 Great White Egrets, 2 Little Egrets, 4 Cetti's Warblers, 2 Willow Warblers, Sparrowhawk, Merlin, Water Rail, Whimbrel and two smashing summer plumage Black Necked Grebes.

FRIDAY 12 APRIL 2013.

A quick tour of Eastwell produced very little although it was very nice to see Marsh Marigold in full flower.



At last, a much appreciated moth in the form of Tawny Pinion.



One of many Goldcrests at Dungeness



Recent weeks has seen the presence of many Shovelers around the Dungeness area.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Apr-13 09:30 PM GMT

SATURDAY 13TH APRIL 2013.

We started the day at Dungeness seeing 4 Firecrests, 5 Goldcrests, Blackcap, White Wagtail, 10 Yellow Wagtails, 2 Chiffchaffs, 5 House Martins, 3 Swallows, a very pale Common Buzzard, Great White Egret, Marsh Harrier, Red Throated Diver and 2 Cettis Warblers. Around mid-day the rain came in and all hope of insect activity was gone.

SUNDAY 14TH APRIL 2013.

A better day forecast so it was bucket and spades to Margate. Well actually nature watching around the Margate area which can be surprising good at migration times and away from the holiday crowds. We did see butterflies, in fact 8 Small Tortoiseshells and 2 Peacocks, but none stayed still long enough to photograph.

Bird life was quiet with only 3 Swallows, 2 Tree Pipits, 4 Goldcrests, 4 Ring Neck Parakeets, 1 Yellow Wagtail and Sparrowhawk of note. Returning home we received a text informing us of a male Ringed Neck Duck on Conningbrook lakes (Ashford). So a little later we were enjoying distant views of this American duck. It always stayed on the far side of the lake with a group of 20 Tufted Ducks. 2 Swallows went though and headed West.

MONDAY 15 APRIL 2013.

Another reasonable day, so it had to include butterflies. Unfortunately we only managed to find one Small Tortoiseshell. However, we did see a Clouded

Drab and 2 Setaceous Hebrew Character moths at Dungeness Bird Observatory. Nearby the bird life was not bad. 6 plus Firecrests, Chiffchaff, Black Redstart, 4 Wheatears, 5 Common Terns, 2 Porpoises, Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, 3 Cettis Warblers, 2 Bearded Tits, Yellow Wagtail, Swallow, Great White Egret and Little Egret.

On the way we called in at Hamstreet to listen for early Nightingales but all was quiet. We did see good numbers of Primroses, Lesser Celandine and Wood

Anemones.

A good day out in the field.



Setaceous Hebrew Character at Dungeness



A very mobile Firecrest at Dungeness



This White Wagtail was near Dungeness RSPB Visitor Centre

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 22-Apr-13 03:58 PM GMT

Not a white in sight.

We have been seeing butterflies, but not one white. Red Admirals have also been scarce but Small Tortoiseshells have been in decent numbers. Species seen, Peacock, Comma, Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell.

TUESDAY 16 APRIL 2013.

Today was a local day, actually most of it in the garden. A Beefly visited the garden and 25 Waxwings flew over at 14.45 hours with their distinctive trilling call. The local Sparrowhawk put in two appearances. In the evening we visited Conningbrook Gravel Pits in the hope of seeing the Ringed Necked Duck again but the area and bank sides were full of fishermen. We took the view that too much disturbance was taking place and retreated for home, seeing 5 Sand Martins and 2 Swallows as we left.

WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2013.

The previous day a number of Gargeney had been seen so today we caught up with this delightful summer duck. There was some discussion exactly how many were actually present hiding in the vegetation along Dengemarsh. Certainly two males and we believe 2 females, others thought one female, while some claimed 3 females. At least we all agreed 2 males, which is a little stunner and well worth the visit. A walk of the area produced Yellow Wagtail, 3 Swallows, Marsh Harrier, Bittern in flight, Little Egret, Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler and Cettis Warbler. Another local informed us that on his visit to Conningbrook earlier to see the Ringed Neck Duck two Arctic Terns had flown in. Within a couple of hours we too were enjoying views of the 2 Arctic Terns as they caught insects off the waters surface. The Arctic Tern acts almost Swallow like as it hawks and dips over the waters surface, with its almost pure white wings and long forked tail. A scarce bird on inland waters in Kent. The male Ringed Necked Duck was still present, as was 7 Swallows, 2 Sand Martins, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, 3 Small Tortoiseshells and a mobile Comma.

THURSDAY 18 APRIL 2013.

Today was almost gale like winds so we did not expect too much. A text was to change all that and a diversion to Lade Gravel Pits saw us enjoying prolonged, although too distant for photography, views of a ALPINE SWIFT. A real goodie for Kent and an unexpected treat. We watched it for nearly two hours and was usually accompanied by a Common Swift, our first of the year. Also present was 7 Sand Martins, 3 Swallows and 1 House martin. Surprisingly, considering the strength of the wind, we also saw 4 Small Tortoiseshells. The Great White and Little Egret remained on New Diggings, Dungeness.

SATURDAY 20 APRIL 2013.

We anticipated that Dungeness would be crowded today so opted for St Margarets instead. We enjoyed good views of two Peregrines as they hunted over the area, also saw 2 Common Buzzards and 3 Sparrowhawks. There was very limited migration going on with 4 Coal Tits, 20 Linnets, 3 Siskins and 8 Greenfinches all going north. We decided to get out of the relentless wind by going to the shelter of the Stour Valley at Stodmarsh. We saw our first Cuckoo plants of the year in flower, along with good numbers of Lesser Celandine. The usual birds were present including Bearded Tit and Cettis Warbler. We heard our first Nightingale of the year and enjoyed views of 3 Peacock butterflies.

Not a bad period of wildlife watching.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 25-Apr-13 08:53 PM GMT

Whites at Last.

SUNDAY 21 APRIL 2013.

A local day visiting Chilham and Eastwell did not produce much except for 5 Peacocks and 2 Small Tortoiseshells.

MONDAY 22 APRIL 2013.

It looked good for Dungeness but in the event little new was seen. The usual Great White and Little Egret on ARC pit, with 5 Swallows, Blackcap and many Sedge Warblers being the best. We called in at Hamstreet on the way home and saw 4 Nightingales and the usual woodland birds.

TUESDAY 23 APRIL 2013.

Whites at last. We started at Grove Ferry seeing 2 Common Buzzards, 6 Marsh Harriers, 3 Hobby's, many Sedge with a few Reed Warblers, 2 Black Tailed Godwits, Bearded Tit, 3 Cettis Warblers, Blackcap, Nightingale, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat and 6 Swallows. Butterflies were represented by 7 Peacocks and 2 Small Tortoiseshells. On to Stodmarsh were we saw 2 Large Whites and 1 Green Veined White, together with another Hobby and the same species of birds as at Grove Ferry.

WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL 2013.

Our first visit of the year to Wye NNR and what a surprise. Part of the Devils Kneading Bowl down to Brook has been fenced off, including barbed wire top. Apparently the reason is to graze cattle to remove the encroaching scrub. A good idea on the face of it but the area enclosed also happens to contain the best bit for Chalkhill Blues, Adonis Blue and Autumn Gentian. Not sure if they will put in any stiles to allow access, otherwise it is a case of patience for a year or two. The species will still be viewable from the footpath, but its not the same as walking amongst them. Anyway we still had a good day with our first sighting of the year for Green Hairstreak and Brimstone. We also saw several Peacocks and it was nice to see the Cowslips coming out.

Back to Hamstreet for another go for butterflies. All we could muster was 4 Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell. Nightingale numbers had increased to 7 and 3

Willow Warblers were singing.

THURSDAY 25 APRIL 2013.

Another good day in the field. We started at Grove Ferry where the CATTLE EGRET was showing from Harrision Drove hide, along with 2 Little Egrets. 2 Hobby's were catching insects, 3 Marsh Harriers were displaying and a Common Buzzard kept circling. 2 Greenshank flew in, as did a Green Sandpiper. Other birds seen included Lesser Whitethroat, Nightingale, Blackcap, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Bearded Tit, Swallow and our first Cuckoo of the year kept calling. Surprisingly we only saw 2 Peacocks and a Small Tortoiseshell.

We had been informed that a Wood Sandpiper was showing from the Reedbed Hide at Stodmarsh. A wader looked interesting laying down and well hidden in amongst vegetation, however when it eventually moved it clearly was a Green Sandpiper. The Wood Sand had moved on and we were out of luck. A water Rail called nearby, 2 Nightingales sung their heart out and several Willow Warblers made their presence known. 2 Common Buzzards and 4 Marsh Harriers were displaying. Butterflies were 2 Green Veined Whites, 4 Peacocks and a Small Tortoiseshell.

Going back via Littlebourne we saw many Bluebells in flower and our first 2 Small Whites of the year.

It's getting better.



Green Hairstreak at Wye NNR.



This partially hidden Nightingale was singing its heart out at Hamstreet.



Peacock butterfly at Hamstreet.



This Chaffinch flew into our window and was stunned for about 10 minutes. It then flew off, presumably with a terrific headache.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Apr-13 09:12 PM GMT

What a strange weekend of wildlife watching. Saturday was dull and cold but very exciting. Sunday was warmer and sunnier but a lot quieter. Saturday we saw no butterflies. Sunday just a few. Spring is still a very mixed bag, with everything seeming about 2-3 weeks behind the last few years, which in themselves were a bit early.

SATURDAY 27 APRIL 2013.

Dull and with a cold wind. It had to be Dungeness. We checked a few places on the way down without anything of note and then arrived at the Causeway separating the ARC pit and New Diggings. We noticed a few locals looking skywards, always a good sign. Especially as the group included the Observatory Warden and Team. Within seconds we had received a phone call from one of the watchers, (thank you), to say look towards the Visitor Centre as a RED RUMPED SWALLOW was flying around in with a big group containing Swallows, House Martins, Sand Martins and 5 Swifts. Everything was too high for a positive identification but 15 minutes later saw us at the first hide to join a group of about 12 others looking skywards. A regular visitor suddenly said I have got it in the scope and its flying straight towards us. Indeed it was, and straight over our heads. Over the next hour we saw it on 3 occasions. Most of a visiting Coach load of birders also managed to connect with it. The group of Swallows and Martins stayed in the area for most of the day catching what insects were on the wing and refueling after their long migration ordeal, although the group covered a large area. The Dungeness area produced Peregrine, 2 Ravens, Spotted Redshank, 3 Marsh Harriers, Wood Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Common Tern, Bittern booming, Yellow Wagtail, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, 2 Great White Egrets and Little Egret. Nearby on Scotney we watched a Long Tailed Duck. We failed to see the Greenshank on Dengemarsh, as seen by many others. Considering the excellent bird life on offer it was disappointing not to see any butterflies but the weather was really against it.

SUNDAY 28 APRIL 2013.

Dungeness again, but a complete change in fortunes. The Long Tailed Duck was still present, as was one of the Ravens, otherwise it was back to the normal. However we did start to see several butterflies whose numbers were further enhanced when we called in at Hamstreet on the way home. We ended the day on 2 Peacock, 2 Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and 3 male Brimstones.

The nights have been much too cold to consider putting out our moth trap. Hopefully much warmer and better days ahead.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-May-13 09:10 PM GMT

A mixed week. Some days bright and sunny, other days dull and cloudy.

MONDAY 29 APRIL 2013.

A quick search of Hamstreet in less than ideal conditions did produce 2 Peacocks, Brimstone, Large White and 2 Small Tortoiseshells. Looking good for the days ahead. We then went on to Pett Level but it was very quiet. No butterflies and only Common Buzzard, 10 Swallows, Whimbrel, 2 Med Gulls and a Little Egret of any note.

TUESDAY 30 APRIL 2013.

Sunny, but a cold wind only produced 4 Peacocks at Grove Ferry. Bird wise it was quiet, although it was nice to see our first 2 Turtle Doves of the year. This is quite a scarce bird now in Kent compared to twenty years ago and I can't see the situation improving in the near future. Otherwise it was what you expect at Grove Ferry, namely Reed and Sedge Warblers with a few Cetti's Warblers.

WEDNESDAY 01 MAY 2013.

It was a warm start so straight to Hamstreet where a 2 hour search produced 23 Brimstones, 4 Peacocks, 2 Orange Tips and Holly Blue. The birds were also enjoying the warmth, with 7 Nightingales, 4 Willow Warblers, 4 Nuthatches and many Blackcaps singing.

We then spent the next few hours touring the Appledore/ Rye/ Camber area hoping to bump into yesterdays Black Kite seen South of Appledore. It was to no avail, and only one Common Buzzard was seen. On the way home we called in at Scotney Pit where the Long Tailed Duck was still present, back on its regular place on the bank.

THURSDAY 02 MAY 2013.

We toured the Hamstreet Wood complex but failed to see any butterflies. We did have a Shoulder Strip moth in the garden. A new garden record for us.

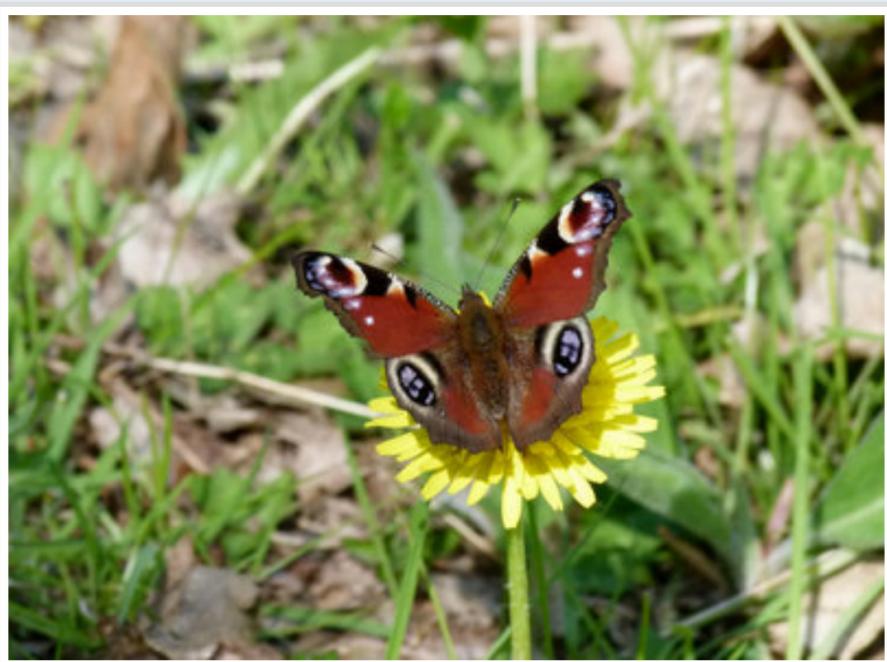
FRIDAY 03 MAY 2013.

A visit to Wye NR in seemingly ideal conditions was disappointing as it only produced 4 Green Hairstreaks, 2 Brimstones, Small White and 2 Peacocks.

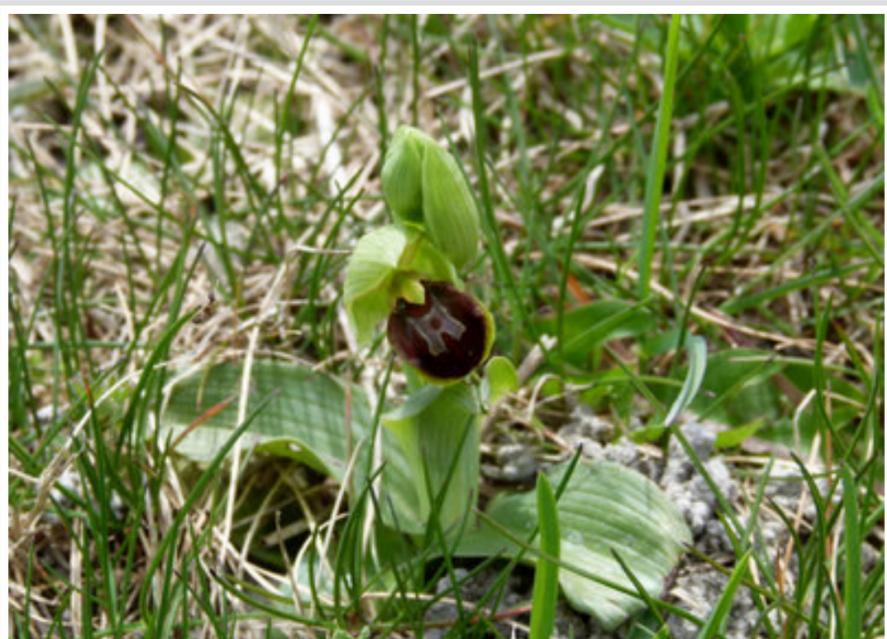
We saw 2 Orange Tips near Godmersham and our first Speckled Woods (4) of the year at Chilham, along with a Holly Blue and 2 Peacocks.

SATURDAY 04 MAY 2013.

The Early Spider Orchids are usually out at Samphire Hoe for the May day Bank Holiday so it was with some enthusiasm that we headed there. What a disappointment. Instead of thousands we only found 4 in some sort of flower, although many more should be flowering by next weekend. We spoke to the warden who believes that number will be low and very late this year. We saw 2 Ravens, a Peregrine almost catching a Pigeon, and one Shag on the sea just off the concrete apron. Not one butterfly before the rain came in early afternoon.



Peacock at Hamstreet Woods.



Early Spider Orchid about to flower at Samphire Hoe. (None in full flower on long stem).



Orange Tip at Hamstreet. (Only photo managed so far this year as they dash around).



A Green Hairstreak (in poor sunlight) at Wye NNR.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 12-May-13 03:42 PM GMT

What a mixed week of weather.

Warm, sunshine, thick fog, rain, cloudy, windy (with a cold chill). The only thing we have missed is Snow, and I won't push my luck.

SUNDAY 05 MAY 2013.

This was a warm day and this was reflected in the butterfly count. We started at Hamstreet woods noting 28 Brimstones, 5 Orange Tips, 6 Peacocks, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell. 5 Nightingales were singing, as was several Blackcaps and Willow Warblers.

We ended the day in the Warehorne / Appledore area noting 3 Orange Tips, 5 Peacocks, Holly Blue and Brimstone. Birds seen included 2 Common Buzzards, 8 Swallows, Cuckoo and 4 Tree Sparrows.

BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY 6TH MAY 2013.

We arrived at Dungeness, well we think it was Dungeness, the sea fog was so thick we struggled to see the sea let alone any birds. Inland the visibility was better and we recorded 3 Bar Tailed Godwits, 1 Whimbrel and 2 Little Egrets on the ARC pit, with 2 Whimbrel along Dengemarsh Road. Appledore was clear and sunny allowing views of 2 Common Buzzards and 8 Yellow Wagtails. Hamstreet Woods was even warmer allowing 32 Brimstones, 8 Orange Tips, 5 Peacocks, Holly Blue and a number of Large and Small Whites to be noted.

TUESDAY 07 MAY 2013.

It was very pleasant as we arrived at Dungeness sea watching hide. A 2 hour sea watch saw one Pomarine Skua (10.15 hours), 2 Black Throated Divers, 5 Diver Sp, 5 Little Terns, 3 Black Terns, 30 Bar Tailed Godwits, 12 Knot, 300 plus Commic Terns, 25 Sandwich Terns, 35 Gannets, 55 Common Scoter, Fulmar and 3 Harbour Porpoise. Also seen in the area was Stonechat, Wheatear, Little Egret and a fine Puss Moth at the observatory.

We had one Holly Blue in the garden and our first returning local Swift over the garden (about a week later than most years).

WEDNESDAY it rained on and off all day so a day of catch up in the garden.

THURSDAY 09 MAY 2013.

A day of strong SW winds. Even Dungeness was struggling. We did see 4 Arctic Skuas, 1 Black Throated Diver, 75 Commic Terns, 5 Sandwich Terns, 50 plus Gannets, 15 Common Scoter, 1 Diver Sp. 1 Black Tern and 4 Auks. The entrance track to the Observatory had a nice showing of Early Purple Orchids. This year most have been protected by cages to prevent the local rabbits from enjoying a tasty snack, with the result that over one hundred have flowered.

Next was Scotney gravel pits where a Bar Tailed Godwit, 6 Common Terns and 5 Ringed PLOvers were in residence. We did see a Small White at Hamstreet, but that was it on the butterfly front.

FRIDAY 10 MAY 2013.

A local day saw 120 Swifts and 75 House Martins on a gravel pit. One Large White and one Lady Orchid at Wye NNR. The sun came out briefly when we visited Eastwell and encouraged 4 Orange Tips and 2 Small Whites to fly. The Cuckoo plants were still in good condition, as was Lesser Celandine and Primrose.

SATURDAY 11 MAY 2013.

A really windy day, but a surprisingly good one thanks to our good friend at Ruckinge and the local team at Dungeness. First we had a text from Ruckinge to inform us that both Swallow Prominent and Lesser Swallow Prominent had been caught overnight. Within an hour we were looking at both, supported by Lunar Brown Marbled. The difference between the Prominents is subtle, but the attached photo shows the white wedge on the wing of Lesser.

Whilst there we had a message to say that a Pectoral Sandpiper was showing on Dengemarsh. A little while later we were watching this North American wader as it feed on Hay field No3. It proved hard to photograph in the very strong, almost gale strength wind. This is almost an annual bird at Dungeness, although spring records are unusual. It was supported by a fine Dunlin, 2 Hobbys, 12 Common Terns, Raven, Yellow Wagtail, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Whitethroat and several Linnets. We ended the day on Walland Marsh seeing 5 Whimbrel and 2 Turtle Doves and just 2 butterflies, both Small Whites.

A really good day but with such a cold strong wind butterflies were hard to come by.



Pectoral Sandpiper at Dungeness



Lesser Swallow Prominent (solid white wedge on wing) alongside Swallow Prominent.



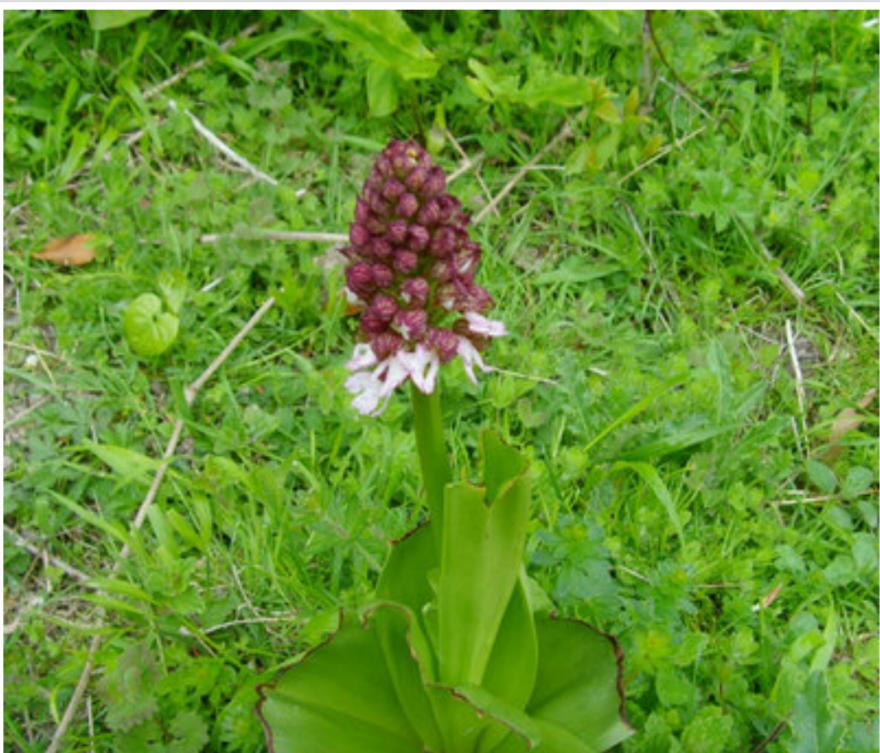
Lesser Prominent moth



Swallow Prominent moth



One of over 100 Early Purple Orchids at Dungeness.



Only one Lady Orchid was present on our walk at Wye NNR, and not yet in full flower.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-May-13 08:40 PM GMT

Yet another week of mixed weather.

The one decent day this week, yesterday, we had already planned something else. So we missed an opportunity to catch up with butterflies, in particular Dingy Skipper. We did see a few in the garden, namely Holly Blue, Orange Tip, 2 Large Whites and a Small White. We also caught a moth in the form of Garden Carpet.

This week has mainly been about going to and from Dungeness. Five times in total, with four being to try and see the very elusive Green Winged Teal. Of course we missed it each time, and to be honest not seeing too much else to compensate. The only butterfly we have seen there is Large White. We have also missed the emergence of Hairy Dragonflies. A few have been seen, but the lack of numbers could be down to the three Hobbys that are patrolling the area. At least one bird has been seen devouring a dragonfly. A few flowers are now emerging, especially Sea Campion.

I won't list all the sightings but the highlights have been, a male Garganey, 2 male and one female Scaup, Raven, 2 Little Egrets, Raven, 3 Hobbys, and very good numbers of Swifts, House Martins and Swallows. It would have been only four visits to Dungeness as today we were checking local areas, when we received several messages (thanks everybody) that a male Red Spotted Bluethroat was showing at the fishing boats. Within the hour we were watching a fine male BLUETHROAT just off the concrete road on the approach to the fishing boats and its collections of nets and baskets. Not our first for Dungeness but still an attractive and sought after bird. A good collection of locals also took this view as many were present to witness the star bird. At sea we saw 1 Arctic Skua, 4 Harbour Porpoise, a good number of Sandwich and Commic Terns, whilst the area produced 2 Wheatears and over 100 Swifts. Sadly not one butterfly, well it was only 11 degrees. Finally, we have noted the return of our winter Coal Tit in the last two days. We have never had a summer record before. Not sure what this means, but I imagine it is not breeding at present, possibly due to the poor weather.



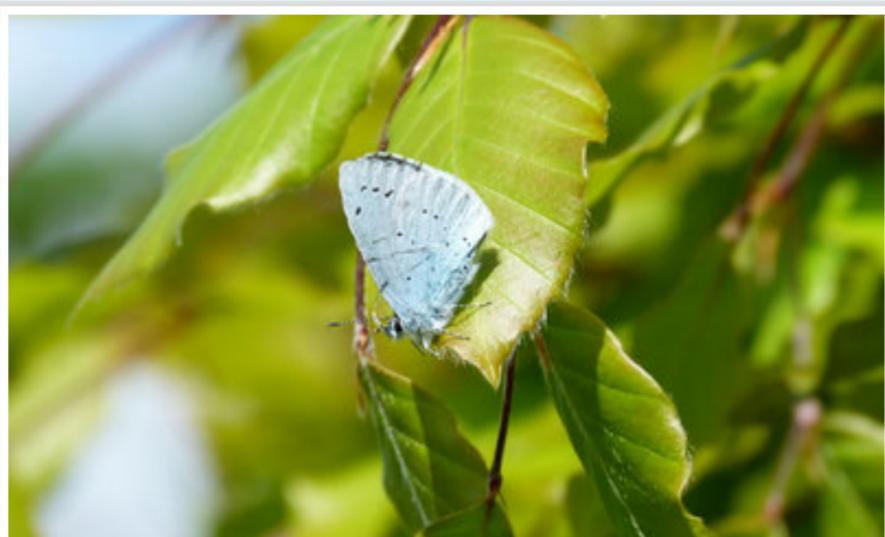
Bluethroat at Dungeness Fishing Boats



Bluethroat at Dungeness Fishing Boats



Holly Blue in garden





Hobby on Dungenes RSPB



Hobby on Dungenes RSPB



Puss Moth at Dungeness Observatory (from last week).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-May-13 03:50 PM GMT

A Weekend of Highs and Lows.

Any member with an interest in Birds will probably be aware that Kent had a Mega on Saturday. We awoke Saturday morning in no hurry and got ready to go out nature watching about 09.00 hours. When working and On Call I used to leave the mobile on 24/07. One of the advantages of retirement is being able to turn the phone off and get a good nights rest. So when turning on the phone and receiving a message to say the Dusky Thrush is still present we were taken aback. There had been no messages when I turned it off at 22.00 hours, but at 23.15 hours news broke of a Female DUSKY THRUSH at Margate. There was no point in panicing now as the hoardes would already be there, parking at a premium, and all the tall people at the front restricting our view. Indeed, by all accounts, there was over 200 people there by 07.00 hours (clearly a lot of birders keep their phone on all the time).

We arrived just after 10.00 hours to find cars all down the road, however, someone had just left as we drove up, so parking taken care off. Next we walked into the old part of the cementry to find hundreds of birders looking into a group of trees. There it was, not the best of views with branches in the way, and certainly no photographs possible, but all the features seen if you moved about for a few metres. A kind birder even that us look through his telescope already set on the bird. A first twitchable one since 1959, so all the top birders needed it and were present, or had been and left. We waited another hour and a half but it never came fully out into the open, or on the ground, during our visit. With one or two exceptions everyone was well behaved, and usually quiet, respecting the place we were in.

Next was Reculver where every one was hoping to see the Ringtail Montagues Harrier. It failed to show in the time we were present but we took the opportunity to look for Dragonflies and Butterflies. Despite the increasing warmth we only saw 4 Peacocks, 11 Large Whites and a Hairy Dragonfly. At a site in East Kent we searched for Man Orchid but without any joy. Perhaps a couple of weeks too early. Arriving home the sun got stronger encouraging a Speckled Wood, Holly Blue and Small White to visit the garden.

SUNDAY 19 May 2013.

We arrived at Dungeness with the intention of looking for Grizzled Skipper, but it was overcast, misty and cold. No chance of insect activity despite the good weather further West. Dungeness was very quiet bird wise, not even a Hobby to be found. A search of the Warehorne area only found Large White, Turtle Dove and a singing Cettis Warbler. Of course as we arrived home the sun broke through, but there was still a cold wind and the only butterflies seen were Large White, Small White and Holly Blue.

The Grizzled Skipper and Dukes will have to wait until the next warm day.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-May-13 08:42 PM GMT

Its the end of May. Its 5 degrees.

Yes, its near the end of May and it really was 5 degrees at 11.30 hours here in our part of Kent. We were on Romney Marsh and as a rain cloud opened we watched the temperature plummet from 10 degrees to 5 degrees over 15 minutes. For a few moments we had some sleet within the rain. Obviously no insect activity today.

TUESDAY 21 MAY 2013.

Dull and cold, dull and cold, need I say more. Not a insect in sight except for St. Mark Flies being cobbled up by the hungry Swifts and Swallows.

Dungeness was really quiet although the CATTLE EGRET was still present along the RSPB entrance track. A Marsh Harrier braved the elements, 100 plus Swifts and Swallows were trying to feed by flying low over vegetation. A Tree Sparrow was singing along the entrance track. Sedge & Reed Warblers were also singing, as was a Cettis Warbler. The only other item of note was 10 House Martins feeding near Lydd and a number of Yellowhammers on Walland Marsh.

WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2013.

Cold again. Today we called in at Marden Meadow. A nature reserve between Marden and Staplehurst famous for its Green Winged Orchids. We were not disappointed with very large numbers in flower spread over the three fields that form the reserve. Too many to count, but at least 5,000. A very welcome sight after such a long and cold winter. We also found one white one and 20 pink ones in amongst the thousands.

We were on our way home when we received the news of a 1st Summer BONAPARTES GULL at Oare Marshes. About an hour later we arrived to find only 3 other people there. This American Gull is still a very scarce bird in Kent so a bit surprising more birders were not present. It had moved to nearby Faversham Creek and was on the far bank so only record photos taken. Clearly a bit smaller than the 5 Black Headed Gulls it seemed to be associating with. Also the dark or black bill was obvious. Had we seen it in flight like the earlier birders a dark trailing edge to the wings would be seen. Also present was 2 Little Egrets, 20 Black Tailed Godwits, 25 Swifts and a Cettis Warbler.

It was still too cold for insect activity, but in the evening the sun came out and a local birder also saw a Male Emperor Moth. We have never seen one and is very much on our like to see list. Every year one of two are seen on the Swale Estuary or Thanet Coast, but in all our years of Nature Watching this species has eluded us. We have even tried Ashdown Forest without luck. Hopefully one day our luck will be in.



Green Winged Orchid at Marden Meadow.



Pink form of Green Winged Orchid at Marden Meadow.



Just a small corner of a field at Marden Meadows showing a group of Green Winged Orchids.



Record photo of First Summer Bonapartes Gull at Oare Marsh.



Record photo of First Summer Bonapartes Gull at Oare Marsh.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-May-13 09:21 PM GMT

A mixed bag.

FRIDAY 24 MAY 2013.

Pouring down today. No chance of anything, or so I thought. It was so bad we actually went shopping and undertook household duties. Just before midday we received a message from friends at Dungeness. The Red Rumped Swallow had been showing on and off, and better still, the Bee-eater had been relocated. That was enough to get us out, rain or no rain. The rain had not really started when we got to Dungeness, and although it was dull and misty we joined the small crowd watching the Bee-eater sitting in a bush. Although the light was poor I managed to get a record photo. Next was the

ARC pit but despite looking for an hour or so we failed to connect with the Red Rumped Swallow. The distant clouds looked black so it was time to get home before the deluge.

SATURDAY 25 MAY 2013.

We checked Dungeness again but no sign of the Swallow this morning. In a sheltered spot we found 16 Blue Tailed Damselflies but little else.

SUNDAY 26 MAY 2013.

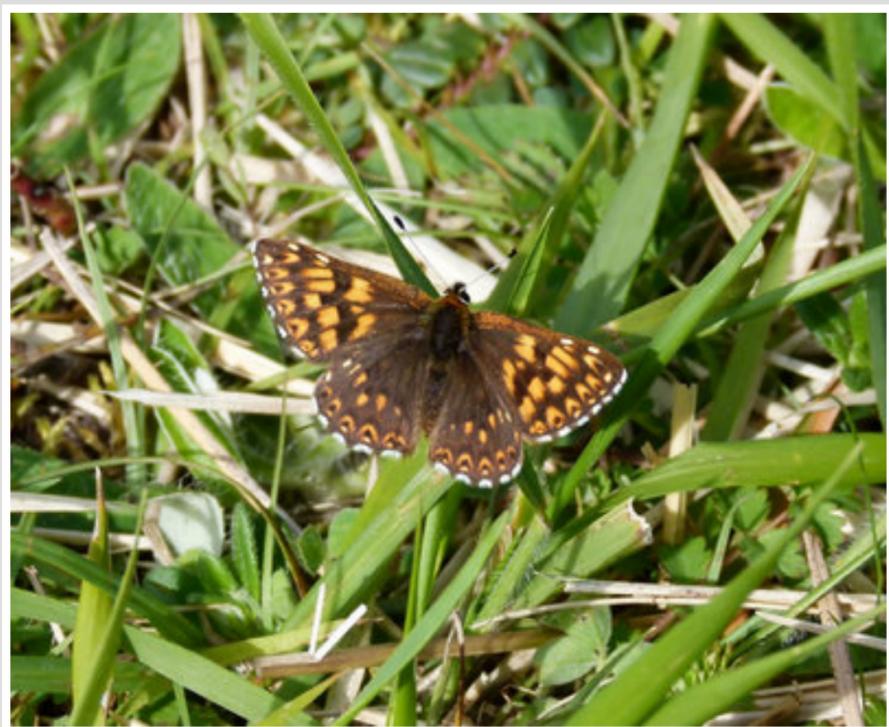
Forecast warm and sunny with a light wind. Time for butterflies. Bonsai Bank was our destination and we were relieved to find 5 Duke of Burgundy and 1 Dingy Skipper. Friends we met there had seen 6 Dukes, but this a low number and not a good reward for all the hard maintenance work that has been undertaken on site. The poor spring seems to have taken its toll. Other butterflies seen, 11 Orange Tips, Speckled Wood, 25 Large Whites, 12 Small Whites and a Speckled Yellow moth. There was a good showing of Lady Orchid and Early Purples plus 1 White Helliborine. It was also nice to hear a Willow Warbler singing, one of our favourite singers.

MONDAY 27 MAY 2013

Not quite so warm as yesterday but following a tip off from a friend we visited Faggs Wood (Hamstreet) to find 2 Grizzled Skippers present. Also 11 Brimstones,

8 Orange Tips and many Large & Small Whites. A Nightingale sang, as did 4 Willow Warblers, and 3 Common Buzzards flew around. A really good end to the Bank Holiday weekend.

Dave



One of only 5 Duke of Burgundy we could find at Bonsai Bank.



Grizzled Skipper at Hamstreet.



Dingy Skipper at Bonsai Bank.



Bee-eater near Dungeness Observatory. A smart and colourful bird.



Life in the Raw. Population of Marsh Frogs at Dungeness reduces by one.



Turtle Doves are scarce this year so it was pleasing to see this one near Warehorne.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-Jun-13 08:40 PM GMT

WARMTH AT LAST.

Yesterday was a really nice day, but before that we endured another cold and damp day. On Wednesday we visited Wye NNR but with little chance of any butterflies (it was only 11 degrees). We did see one Clouded Bordered moth but not a single butterfly. We checked an area where about 7 years ago 3 Burnt Tip Orchids flowered. They have not been seen since, and as far as I am aware none have been reported in Kent during the same period. We worry about losing Butterflies or other animals but plants are also suffering. Its looking increasing likely that Kent has lost Burnt Tip Orchid from its last two locations. We found a group of Broomrape which I have yet to identify. Later we called in at a site near Faversham where many White Helleborines were still at least a week away from flowering.

FRIDAY 31 MAY 2013.

The day started quite dull and grey so we started at Oare Marshes. The 1st Summer Bonapartes Gull was on the East Flood, 2 Med Gulls flew around calling for some time. The flood also held 2 Avocets, 3 Common Terns, 75 Swallows, 100 plus Swifts, 8 Black Tailed Godwits, Cettis Warbler and 2 Marsh Harriers. The only butterfly seen was a Peacock. Then the sun came out. Time to visit Wye NNR for butterflies. Nothing brilliant, but so nice to see butterflies flying in the sun. We ended the afternoon on 3 Dingy Skipper, 4 Brimstones (they are around very late this year), 8 Orange Tips, 2 Common Blues, Holly Blue, Peacock, Speckled Wood, many Large and Small Whites. Most of the 8 Lady Orchids were going over but one was still in good condition.

When we got home a Hobby flew over the garden and circled for about 5 minutes.

SATURDAY 01 JUNE 2013.

It started sunny and quite warm but by mid-day the cloud came over and it dropped to 13 degrees. We started at Yocklets Bank seeing many Lady Orchids and 3 Fly Orchids. A Brimstone and 3 Large Whites were the only butterflies. We bumped into a good friend from Dartford who confirmed that his garden moth trapping was also poor, so its not just East Kent. Whilst together as a group we found a Slow Worm and he also saw a Broad Bodied Chaser.

Next stop was Parkgate where a count of the Monkey Orchid found 110 plants, but very few in flower. Probably another week yet before a good

showing. A Fly Orchid was a good find here, one Lady Orchid looked lonely, but all the Common Spotted Orchids and Common Twayblade were only just coming through. Despite the weather turning for the worse we did see 3 Green Hairstreaks, 3 Dingy Skippers, and nearby, 2 Silver Y's, Speckled Wood and 10 Large Whites.

Our final stop was at an undisclosed site for Man Orchid where 21 plants were still at least a week away from flowering. With little chance of any more butterflies it was time to call it a day. I will add a few photos later in the week.

Incidentally, both Yocklets Bank and Parkgate are well documented, with species details in the public domain. The Wildlife Trust just asks that people watch where they are walking and not to trample vegetation.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 04-Jun-13 07:52 PM GMT

A SMALL BLUE DAY.

SUNDAY 02 JUNE 2013

Following a tip off from Hoggers (many thanks) and a trawl through the old memory brain today we visited 2 sites in East Kent for Small Blue. The first was an old site on the Dover Western Heights overlooking the Railway Station. The butterflies are just across the road from the small car park making this an easy site for those who have dodgy knees or find walking difficult. We saw 8 Small Blues in our 45 minute visit, along with 3 Dingy Skippers and a very small moth called Small Purple-barred. Next was a visit to a site near Kingsdown (Deal) where some building work is taking place next door. This proved good for butterflies with 25 Small Blues, 4 Small Coppers, 3 Dingy Skippers and 5 Common Blues. The journey to and fro also provided 8 Orange Tips with many Large and Small Whites.

Today the weather was warm and it tempted out many folk. Hopefully this warm spell will continue.

I have attached some photos from the last few days.



Small Blue near Kingsdown (Kent).



Dingy Skipper at Dover Western Heights.





Monkey Orchid at Parkgate (Kent).



Fly Orchid at Yocklets Bank



This white form of the Lady Orchid was present at Yocklets Bank.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 08-Jun-13 09:54 PM GMT

Clear Blue Skies.

But that has not helped the temperatures here in East Kent as over the last week we have suffered from very cold North Easterlies. It got to 17 degrees one afternoon but most days its been between 12 and 15 degrees. The wind has not only been cold but its been very strong. Not ideal for insect activity, although by searching sites protected from the wind we have managed a few goodies.

MONDAY 03 JUNE 2013.

Today we went to Oare Marsh to follow up a couple of recent reports of Emperor Moth. Despite much optimism and searching we failed to see this magnificent moth. Another year passes without us seeing one. The 1st Summer Bonaparte's Gull was still present on the East Flood, as was 4 Bearded Tits, 3 Cettis Warblers, 30 Black Tailed Godwits and 10 Little Egrets. No butterflies.

TUESDAY 04 JUNE 2013.

We arrived at Dungeness not expecting too much, and that turned out to be the case. The best being an Adult Med Gull, Marsh Harrier and Cetti's Warbler. We then visited Lade to view the group of 50 Southern Marsh Orchids. They were just starting to go over but a few remained in good condition. On the butterfly front all we could manage was 5 Common Blues and several Large Whites.

THURSDAY 06 JUNE 2013.

Still a strong cold wind although we found a sheltered spot on the Wye NNR and saw our first Wall Brown of the year. 2 Common Blues, Dingy Skipper,

Brimstone, Orange Tip, Small White and Large White made up the butterfly numbers. It seems so strange seeing Brimstone and Orange Tip so well into June.

FRIDAY 07 JUNE 2013.

Today we visited Beckley Wood (East Sussex) to see if any Grizzled Skippers were still out. We failed on this front but we did see 4 Dingy Skippers, Common Blue, Orange Tip, Brimstone and Large White. It was raining Speckled Yellow moths with at least 35 seen. Other insects included a Hornet, 2 Hairy Dragonflies, Large Red Damselfly, Four Spotted Chaser and Broad Bodied Chaser. Birds included Hobby, Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard.

SATURDAY 08 JUNE 2013.

Today we ventured into East Sussex again. This time visiting Iden Moat. On the wing was 2 Downy Emerald, 6 White Legged Damselflies, Large Red Damselfly, 7 Azure Damselflies, Hairy Dragonfly and 2 Four Spotted Chasers. Butterflies were again thin on the ground with only one Common Blue, 2 Small Whites and 4 Large Whites. A Hobby flew over so I hope the Emeralds kept low.

We ended the day checking Hamstreet Woods. Again we found a late Orange Tip, one Grizzled Skipper, 4 Speckled Yellow moths and 3 Common Spotted Orchids. 3 presumed unmated Nightingales were still singing away (at this time of the year mated males usually only sing early morning and evening).

More cold strong winds are forecast in East Kent for tomorrow. It's getting boring.



Dingy Skipper in Beckley Wood (East Sussex).



Broad Bodied Chaser in Beckley Woods (East Sussex).



White Legged Damselfly at Iden (East Sussex). This was difficult to photograph in the long vegetation.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 10-Jun-13 03:42 PM GMT

HEAT WAVE HITS EAST KENT.

Okay, I lied. Its damm cold. The temperature here over the last few days has not risen above 13 degrees. Its mid June so you have to pretend its very hot. Actually needed a coat yesterday it was so cold. Is it really less than two weeks to mid–summers day? Consequently no butterflies or dragonflies seen by us over the last two days.

Yesterday we did try a new location called High Brede Woods (East Sussex). Did not see anything unusual, but it looks like it might have potential. Just as we arrived back home we had a message to inform us that a BLACK KITE was performing well south of Faversham. Indeed it was when we arrived, although it had moved a little more distant. A good bird to see in Southern England and much appreciated by the growing crowd.

Today it was back for seconds of the Black Kite, followed by seconds of the Bonapartes Gull at Oare Marshes. Also present on the East Flood was a male Gargeney and many Swifts. There can't be many days in June when we have gone out not expecting to see any insects. We could not find any even in sheltered spots. Really disappointing when those further south and west are seeing good numbers of Pearl Bordered and Marsh Fritillary.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Jun-13 08:56 PM GMT

Return Treat.

Another day when it was dull and cloudy, with a little drizzle, although about 4 degrees warmer than yesterday. No coat needed today. There was little chance of any good numbers of butterflies today so it was back for another look at the Black Kite, and to look for the Red Kite seen at the same site yesterday.

We actually saw a few butterflies in sheltered spots. 2 Holly Blues, 2 Large Whites and 1 Small White. A really poor total for a June day in here Kent. We did see the Black Kite again, showing on and off for nearly two hours north of Selling, but no sign of any Red Kite. A surprise in the form of a White Wagtail was seen on a local course, a bird better known during Spring migration. We then travelled some distance to an undisclosed site where two Honey Buzzards where seen, one wing clapping, and also 2 Common Buzzards. We ended the day back near Faversham noting the White Helleborines have still not flowered.

A really good day in the field cut short by the onset of heavier rain. We are really struggling for butterflies at present. Hopefully the weekend will be better.

I attach a couple of record photos of the Black Kite and another of the Bonapartes Gull. Sorry about the quality. The light was poor is my excuse.



1st Summer Bonapartes Gull on Oare Marsh (east Flood).





Black Kite north of Selling (Kent)

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Jun-13 02:13 PM GMT

Osprey Delight

WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE 2013.

I think that the Osprey is one of the those birds that delights everybody who watches one. Today we watched one flying and sitting for long periods on a post and not another person in sight. It was a bit far for photos but boy, they are majestic, so it was that we just stood and watched. The location was Stodmarsh NNR on the main lake. It was very windy so butterflies were few, in fact only involving Large White. Other birds seen included 5 Marsh Harriers, 2 Bearded Tits and 4 Cettis Warblers.

FRIDAY 14 JUNE 2013.

Although still a bit windy today the sun shone. We checked Wye NNR and found our first Adonis Blue of the season. We also saw 2 Brown Argus, 3 male Brimstone, Orange Tip, 6 Common Blues and 3 Silver Y moths. Surprising little for a June day with reasonable weather. A Hobby was patrolling overhead and 3 Common Buzzards were in the distance towards Ashford. The 8 Lady Orchids had gone over and the Common Spotted Orchids were yet to flower.

SATURDAY 15 JUNE 2103.

Today we set off into East Kent with the intention of tracking down Birds Nest Orchid. We were aware of a location, but whilst trying to locate the area along some narrow lanes, one of which was closed with a diversion in place, we become lost. Seeing a big batch of Common Twayblade by the side of the road we stopped to checked the wooded area. By luck we had stumbled on a site with 7 Birds Nest Orchid and 7 Lady Orchids, many still in acceptable condition. Pleased with this we then headed to Parkgate Down only to find all the parking spaces taking up with presumably a group visiting. Next we called in at East Blean Wood to find no adult Heath Fritillary on the wing. We did find 32 caterpillars, but this location looks weeks behind where it was last year. Perhaps the warm days forecast at the end of this week will bring things on quickly. We ended the day near Selling where we failed to find any sign of the Black Kite. It had been seen 20 minutes before our arrival, but not in the next 2 hours. It does seem to have got elusive, or possibly moved on, as it was not reported on Sunday.

SUNDAY 16 JUNE 2013.

With just about every birder travelling to Suffolk to see the Pacific Swift we found the only people around were Butterflies or Orchid watchers. We visited Parkgate Down again, finding only one car space left. At least 100 Monkey Orchids present and in flower, also 2 Greater Butterfly Orchid and 1 Fly Orchid. Many Common Spotted Orchids were on the way to flowering, but no sign of any Musk Orchids. Butterflies were surprising hard to find. A few Common Blues and Large Whites, 1 Dingy Skipper, together with 5 Silver Y and 2 Speckled Yellow moths were all that we could. And then along came the showers and that was it.

A really enjoyable few days in the field. If only the weather would act like it should in June (flaming).



Speckled Yellow Moth



Green Veined White butterfly near Stodmarsh



Southern Marsh Orchid near Lade.



Man Orchid in East Kent



White Helleborine at undisclosed site near Faversham.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 21-Jun-13 07:51 PM GMT

Where are the butterflies?

We have really struggled to find any good numbers of butterflies this week. Even when the weather has seemed suitable. Hopefully this is just a result of the annual June lull.

TUESDAY 18 JUNE 2013.

A really nice day found us at Westbere Marshes where we usually see Scarce Chaser at this time of the year. Today was good as we found 4 near the junction where the path meets the river, and a couple of hundred metres either way. Also noted 22 Banded Demoiselle, Hairy Dragonfly, Emperor Dragonfly, many Blue Tailed and Common Blue Damselflies. The only butterflies seen were 1 Orange Tip and 6 Large Whites. Amongst the birds noted were Marsh Harrier and 2 Cettis Warblers.

THURSDAY 20 JUNE 2013.

We spent a few hours checking woods in East Kent for Orchids. We found a groups of 71 and another 2 White Helleborines, together with 4 Man Orchids. Before the heavy rain set in we saw a Common Buzzard, Garden Warbler and several Blackcaps. No butterflies.

FRIDAY 21 JUNE 2013.

The weather seemed suitable for butterflies but all we saw was a Speckled Wood and a Speckled Yellow moth before a much appreciated text from our friend at Ruckinge saved the day. He had a good haul of moths from the overnight trap including PORTLAND RIBBON WAVE. This is believed to be the first ever record for Kent. They breed in small numbers on the east side of Portland and also on Jersey, but are also a very rare migrant and listed as a Red Data Species. A real goodie for Kent. It was supported by Scalloped Oak, Dark Spectacle, Treble Brown Spot, Scorched Wing, Coxcomb Prominent, Pale Tussock, Light Emerald, Oak Hook Tip, Buff Tip, Pale Prominent, White Point, Elephant Hawkmoth, Poplar Hawkmoth, Lime Speck Pug and numerous other common moths. He also had a Speckled Wood in the garden. A really enjoyable morning of moths in good company.



Portland Ribbon Wave (A first for Kent?).



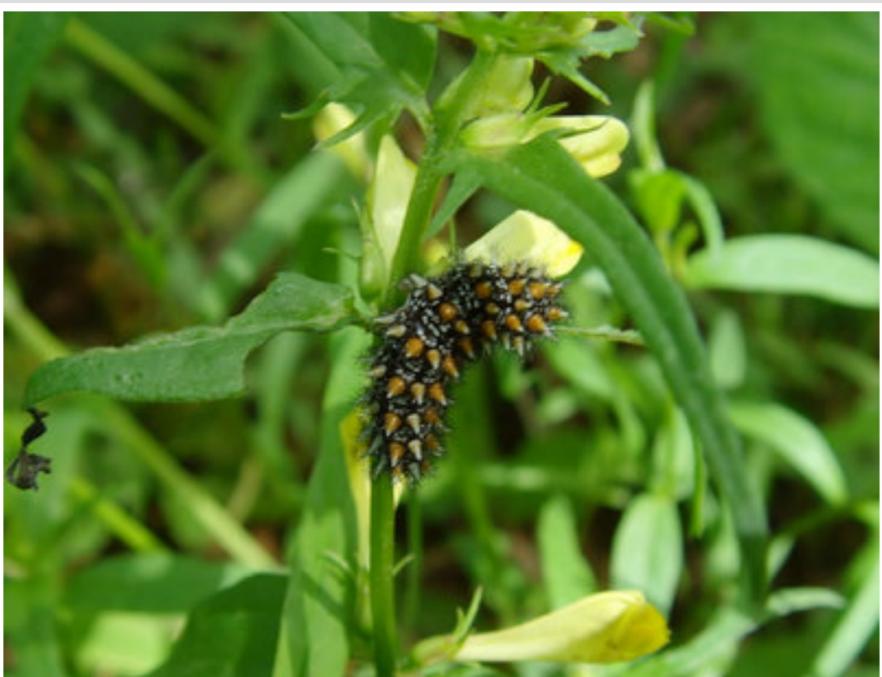
Elephant Hawkmoth



Coxcomb Prominent



Light Emerald



Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Jun-13 02:01 PM GMT

A much better week.

Saturday 22 June 2013.

An overcast with drizzle sort of day. We went checking a location near Faversham and found 71 White Helleborines, 4 Man Orchids and another site with 2 White Helleborines. The only butterfly seen was Large White.

SUNDAY 23 JUNE 2013.

Revisited the same general area and found another colony of 66 White Helleborines. 2 of the 4 Man Orchids had been eaten with their tops chewed off (deer?).

Today was warmer so we travelled around a bit seeing a group of 5 Turtle Doves near Sheldwich, but no sign of any Black Kite near Selling. I think its gone as that's 3 visits we have failed to see it. The seven Birds Nest Orchids in East Kent are now going over. We ended the day by calling in at the secret, (but apparently well known), site near Wye where 25 Late Spider Orchids were on show and most in good condition.

TUESDAY 25 JUNE 2013.

It was warm and sunny. Off we went to Wye NNR (Devils Kneading Bowl area) and found 35 Adonis Blue, 4 Wall Brown, 18 Small Heath, 12 Common Blue, 3 Brown Argus, 7 Dingy Skipper, our first Large Skipper of the year, 5 Brimstone (all appeared fresh) and Small White. Nearby we found 3 Black Veined Moths (National rarity), 3 Burnet Companion, Straw Dot and 6 Common Heath moths. There was a good showing of Orchids with 4 Bee Orchids, 21 Man Orchids, 40 Pyramidal, 400 Fragrant and many Common Spotted and Common Twayblade. We ended the day backing away from an Adder on the return footpath. What a majestic day in the field.

WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE 2013.

Back to the Late Spider Orchid site with two friends. Followed minutes later by three other people from Suffolk who had spent hours looking for them, but had seen us in the distance with our binoculars and cameras and took a chance on what we were looking at. Whilst studying the Orchids first one, then another, Black Veined Moth fly by and settled giving good views. A lot of very happy people at this location.

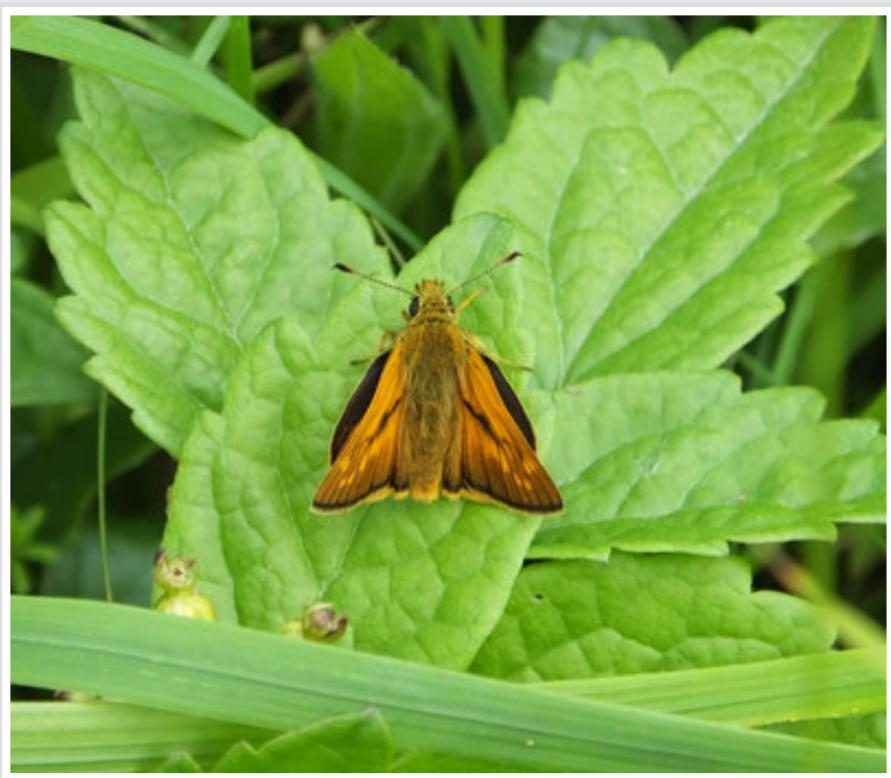
Next we went back to yesterdays second site seeing a further 2 Black Veined moths, enhanced by 3 Brimstone, 2 Orange Tips, Large Skipper, Brown Argus, 3 Common Blue, Adonis Blue, 5 Large White, 2 Burnet Companion and 2 Common Heath. We found further Bee Orchids bringing the tally up to 11, with the 21 man Orchids and the other common orchids. Luckily no Adder seen today (I dislike them for some reason). It was a real shame to go home.

A really good week of all round nature watching.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Jun-13 08:02 PM GMT

Further to my earlier update today. I now add a few photos taken over the last few days.



Our first Large Skipper of the year on Wye NNR.



This Black Veined Moth tries to hide in the long grass, making a photograph difficult.



Late Spider Orchid Wye NNR.



These were part of a group of Bee Orchids on Wye NNR.

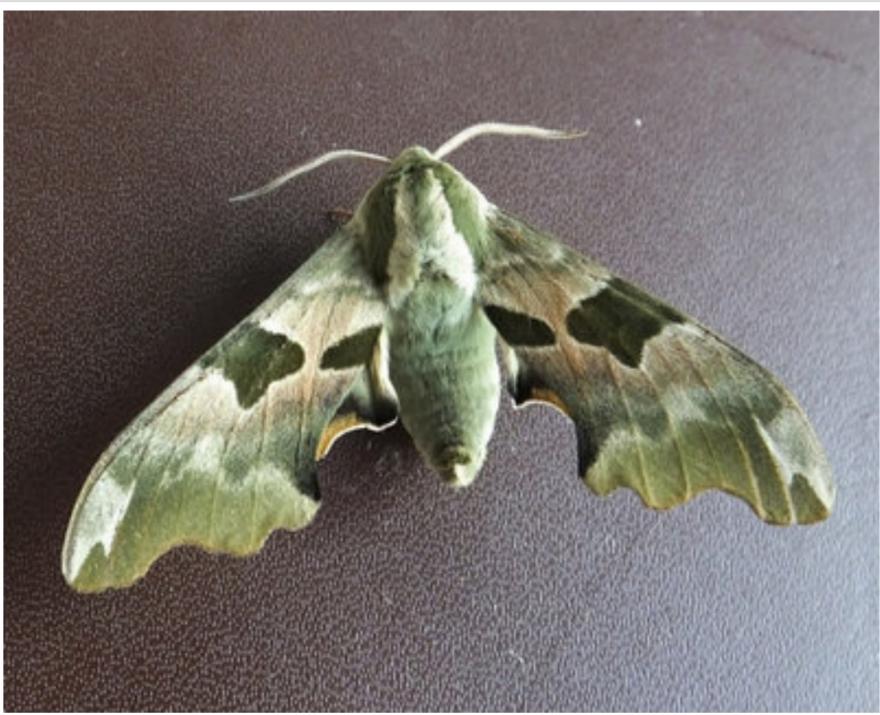
Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 29-Jun-13 02:38 PM GMT

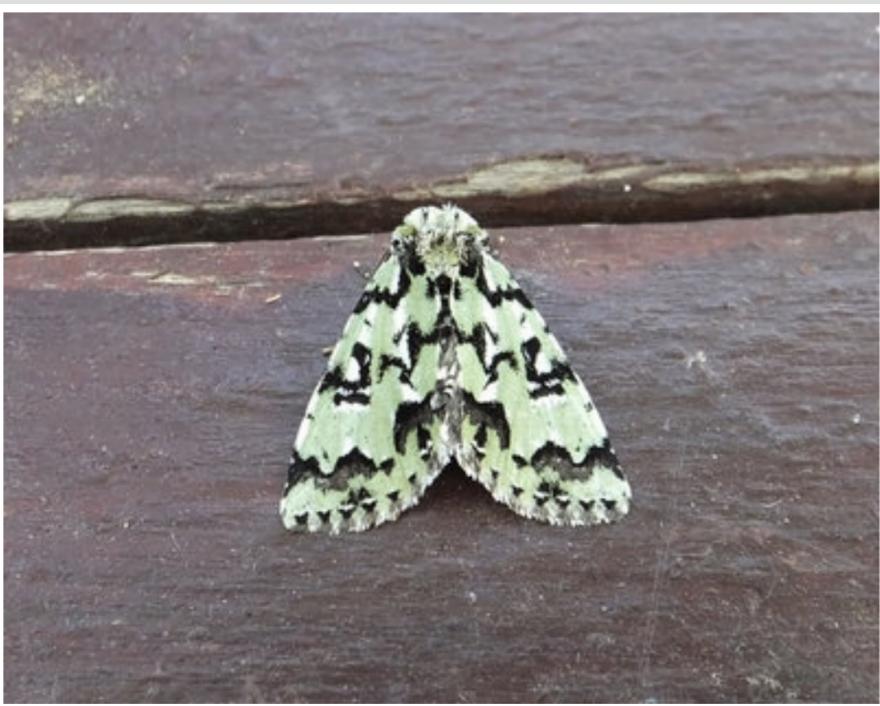
We have had a couple of busy days, unfortunately not nature watching. Today we had an early morning text from our good friends at Ruckinge informing us of a Small Marbled being trapped overnight. This was too good an opportunity to miss, so mid-morning we arrived at the moth house to see the stunning scarce migrant moth, Small Marbled. Considering its a Macro moth it is indeed very small. This was supported by Lime Hawk-moth, Small Elephant Hawk-moth, Elephant Hawk-moth, Scarce Merville de jour, Oak Hook Tip, Snout, Pale Oak Beauty, Small Square Spot, Rustic Shoulder Knot, Diamond Back, Shears, Sycamore, Common Carpet, Dark Arches, Clouded Border and the micro Aurata. A great morning, although the sun was still waiting to break through and deliver the forecast 20 degrees.



Small Marbled. A scarce and less than annual visitor to our shores.



Lime Hawk-moth. A stunning member of the Hawk moth family.



Scarce Melville de jour

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 02-Jul-13 09:33 PM GMT

A pleasant few days in Kent.

At last the temperature is warming up and the sun is breaking through.

SUNDAY 30TH JUNE 2013.

With the sun shining we visited East Blean Woods with high hopes of Heath Fritillary. Sure enough they are now out but numbers are still low. We found 11 in the area adjacent to the North edge of the car park. We then headed to Wye NNR checking suitable areas on the journey. A few Common Buzzards but little else other than the usual woodland birds. On arrival at the secret (but apparently well known) Late Spider Orchid site it was rather crowded, with a steady stream of appreciative visitors. WE decided it was too busy for us and headed for another quieter part of the reserve. The wildlife was

much the same as Wednesday visit expect this time we found no Black Veined moths. However, we were in for a real treat when shortly after our arrival we came across a CLOUDED YELLOW. It was really mobile in the hot weather, never settling for anything other than a record shot.

MONDAY 01ST JULY 2013.

Thanks to our good friends at Ruckinge the day started with the excellent moth ROSY MARBLED. A real Kent goodie. How does he keep pulling in the rare migrants, especially when the day starts so quiet? This moth was supported by Peppered Moth, Figure of Eighty, Privet Hawk-moth, Elephant Hawk-moth, Poplar Hawk-moth and Knot Grass. Our own moth trap was fairly quiet with the Privet Hawk-moth being the best of 16 species.

Following a tip off that Burnt Tip Orchid(s) had flowered this year on Lydden we headed east. Despite good directions we failed to find the orchid(s) in nearly two hours of searching. Another person said at least 10 had flowered this year. It is late in the season for this orchid but apparently it was still in reasonable condition 10 days ago so there should have been a sign of the plant. The Fragrant Orchid display there this year is stunning. At least 2,000 plants in one field alone. We also found 4 Bee Orchids about to flower. The surprise of the day was yet another CLOUDED YELLOW, again very mobile and no photo.

Other butterflies were 4 Brown Argus, 18 Small Heaths, 25 Common Blues and a Meadow Brown. Birds included 2 Spotted Flycatchers and a Common Buzzard.

TUESDAY 02ND JULY 2013.

It was our Moth friend again. Not quite the recent quality, but still very good and much appreciated. Green Silver-lines, Cream Border Green Pea (National Scarce B), Poplar Hawk-moth, Elephant Hawk-moth, 2 Peppered moths, Lime Hawk-moth, Barred Yellow, Freyers Pug. We ended our day checking the area around Kennardington. It was quiet but we did see Four Spotted Chaser, Emperor Dragonfly, 5 Red Eyed Damselflies and a Common Buzzard.

With the promise of a heatwave things are looking promising.



Heath Fritillary at East Blean.



Our only record photo of ClouDED Yellow on Wye NNR.



Rosy Marbled



Lime Hawk-moth



Peppered Moth



Green Silver-lines



The beautiful Barred Yellow moth.

by dave brown, 07-Jul-13 08:44 PM GMT

A strange week really. As the week progressed the weather turned warmer but we were still seeing few butterflies. Luckily that all changed on Saturday when we paid a visit to Sandwich bay.

THURSDAY 04 JULY 2013.

Strangely Hamstreet Woods remained quiet, butterfly wise. With just Meadow Browns, Speckled Wood and Brimstone. Our friends at Ruckinge saved the day yet again with some good moths in the form of Ghost, Light Arches, Orange Moth, Sharp Angle Peacock, Peach Blossom, Coronet, Heart & Club, Engailed and White Point. The female Ghost moth was superb and a new moth for us. Back at home our moth trap contained 17 species but Buff Arches was the only one of note.

SATURDAY 6 JULY 2013.

We headed to Sandwich Bay knowing that the Lizard Orchid was at its best. A walk around the area found 200 plus Southern Marsh Orchids, 2 Leopard Marsh Orchids, 2 Marsh Helleborines, 50 plus Lizard Orchids and 20 plus Sand Catchfly. Best of all though was the sighting of our first Marbled Whites of the year. Eleven in total, supported by 14 Large Skippers, 18 Small Heaths, 9 Common Blues, 3 Small Skippers and 5 Small Tortoiseshells. The sun was now very hot and the butterflies very mobile. It was becoming uncomfortable so we headed inland to find it even warmer. The garden of our friends at Ruckinge was certainly hot as it contained Small Fan Foot, Marbled White Spot, Clouded Brindle, Fan Foot, Foxglove Pug and Light Brocade.

SUNDAY 07 JULY 2013.

Today we decided to head for the Eastbourne area and look for the late form of Burnt Tip Orchid. Unfortunately for us everyone else decided to be out on the road. We came to a standstill near Rye. Gridlock as everyone seemed to be heading for Camber Sands. It took 30 minutes to move 100 yards. Time to abandon our plans and go back the way we came. Mr and Mrs Ruckinge had yet more good moths so all was not lost. Lobster moth was something special. This moth really does look like a lobster. The fine support cast of Miller, Scarce Silverlines, Obscure Wainscott, Scorched Carpet and Common Emerald was some reward for our lost trip.

Next was Hamstreet Woods where we were hoping for Ringlet or White Admiral. Not to be, just 4 Small Skippers, 5 Brimstone, 11 Speckled Woods and 25 Meadow Browns. We left feeling a little disappointed, especially for the date. Next was Hothfield Common. Kent's only bog reserve, and a real gem in an otherwise ocean of wheat and oilseed rape, not to mention housing estates. Its drying out very quick so the 4 male and 2 female Keeled Skimmers we saw were struggling to find somewhere to lay. The males were kept busy defending their territory against the much bigger Broad Bodied Chaser which made a interesting watch. Nearby we found 8 Heath Spotted Orchids and 3 Small Skippers with 15 Meadow Browns. It was now getting warm, around 26 degrees, so home and a cup of tea beckoned.

Hopefully we will find time to check Wye NNR this week as the Ringlet is now emerging. I have not heard of any White Letter Hairstreak or Dark Green Fritillary in Kent yet but it can't be long.

Re: Dave Brown

by CJB, 08-Jul-13 09:32 AM GMT

Good morning Dave,

I always enjoy reading your reports and am mighty impressed by your knowledge of moths; is there a particular book you would recommend? The rate you are going you could compile one of your own!

Yesterday was a new low for traffic; my family and I were stuck in and around Guildford trying to get to the Witterings.....5 hours!! 😡😡

I look forward to reading your next report.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Dave Brown

by MikeOxon, 08-Jul-13 02:25 PM GMT

"CJB" wrote:

moths; is there a particular book you would recommend?

My apologies for using your diary, Dave, but CJB does not seem to allow PMs. If you agree with my choices, they might save you an additional reply 😊

I consider the best Moths books to be the two illustrated by Richard Lewington – they show life poses rather than set specimens:

- (i) Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland – Paul Waring and Martin Townsend
- (ii) Field Guide to the Micro Moths of great Britain and Ireland – Phil Stirling and Mark Parsons

Both are published by British Wildlife Publishing and I would urge you to buy directly from them, as they are worth supporting. 😊

For a photographic guide, I can recommend British Moths and Butterflies – Chris Manley, published by A&C Black

Mike

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 08-Jul-13 09:13 PM GMT

No problem Mike.

With regards the books I agree with all your selections. In particular I like your last mentioned, British Moths and Butterflies: A photographic guide by Chris Manley.

I have a confession to make. I am absolutely hopeless at Micro moths so I use another reference. Its not a book, but a good friend from Ruckinge. In the rare event of him not knowing he uses a Moth expert based near Dungeness. The point being is that in the mothing world I think that its important to not only own good books but also to have a good network of friends who can help with identification. That's probably true for all aspects of our hobby, but with so many moths on the list its good to have the support of others.

CJB. Nice to know that it was not just Camber who had all the cars. Although it felt like it at the time it seems that the traffic jams were spread around

the area.

Can't really understand why Guildford had so much traffic. Last time I went there it never had a beach 😊

Re: Dave Brown

by MikeOxon, 08-Jul-13 11:56 PM GMT

"dave brown" wrote:

in the mothing world I think that its important to not only own good books but also to have a good network of friends who can help with identification.

An excellent point that applies to so many avenues of life 😊

Mike

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 13-Jul-13 08:47 PM GMT

A venture into East Sussex.

TUESDAY 09 July 2013.

After contacting a birder near Seaford, who very kindly supplied some local information, we headed for a location near Seaford to see the late form of Burnt Tip Orchid. His instructions were very good and we found the spot with no trouble at all. There was a total of 25 all still in flower and in pretty good condition. Confusingly some had a numbered label on, one of which was number 32. I know my maths is not so good as it once was but we could not find the other 7. A dainty, but beautiful Orchid and much enjoyed by the family. The same area was awash with Pyramidal Orchids and Meadow Browns. Treat of the day was a fast moving Clouded Yellow that only remained on view for about 4 minutes. Also present 5 Marbled Whites and 4 Speckled Woods.

With more directions we arrived at Ashdown Forest and found the Early Marsh Orchid (8 No) in their fenced off area. Within this area was also Bog Asphode, whilst a small pool held 4 Keeled Skimmers. Next was the small colony of Silver Studded Blues near the Smugglers car park. After an hour or so all we could find was 4 number. Still, a good treat for us as we do not get this species in Kent. Another hour or two in the general area and forest Lodge produced 2 Golden Ringed Dragonflies, Large and Small Red Damselfly, Broad Bodied Chaser, Four Spotted Chaser, 2 Woodlark, Fallow Deer, many Meadow Browns and a Large Skipper.

A really good day in East Sussex, enhanced by excellent directions from ME.

On the way home we saw a wing tagged Red Kite about a mile north of Tonbridge adjacent to the Tonbridge to Hadlow main road. It was drifting slowing North West.

Thursday 11th July 2013.

Its always difficult to follow one good day with another. We gave it our best shot by heading towards Trosley Country Park. It is reported as a good spot for Dark Green Fritillary. Obviously we had the wrong spot for we saw none. We did see at least 15 Ringlets, 5 Large Skippers and 8 Speckled Woods. The place was alive with Meadow Browns and Pyramidal Orchids, but not our target species.

Next stop was Lullingstone Country Park. Here we did find at least 5 different Dark Green Fritillaries, towards the Golf Course side of the meadows. Also many hundreds of Meadow Browns supported by Ringlets, Small Skippers and Large Skipper. We would have liked to have searched longer and adjacent areas, but we had been held up by lengthy road works and was well behind time. Plus we had to go back through them.

Friday 12 July 2013.

Our moth trap has been quiet of late although today we had Peppered Moth and Varied Coronet. But our friend at Ruckinge keeps pulling them out of the bag. Today he had Lackey, Leopard Moth and Garden Tiger. Next stop was the Hamstreet Woods complex. We saw our first White Admirals of the year (3 No), plus lots of Ringlets, Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Essex Skipper and Meadow Browns. 3 Common Buzzards circled overhead.

The weather is getting warmer and this weekend looks like more road chaos as everybody heads to the coast. Also Kent has the big Agriculture Show on at Detllng and another big event at Leeds Castle. Hopefully we can avoid most of it and enjoy the butterflies.



Silver Studded Blue at Ashdown Forest.



A well hidden Lobster Moth



Burnt Tip Orchid near Seaford



Lizard Orchid at Sandwich Bay



Keeled Skimmer Ashdown Forest.



The only shot I could get of this Golden Ringed Dragonfly was looking into the sun. Ashdown Forest.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Jul-13 09:05 PM GMT

Kent has another good day

What is it that makes nature watching so absorbing. We have seen Norfolk Hawkers in Norfolk, just as you would expect, and just casually walked round noting their presence. However, get two reported in your home county, only about 20 miles from home, the adrenalin flows and the heart starts beating a faster pace. Well that's what happened on Monday. Two had been seen and photographed by a fellow UKB member on Sunday evening. News broke later that evening and the next morning a crowd of Kent hopefuls (well eight of us actually) were on site early to witness this rare event. Only 3 previous records in the last hundred years and none available to the masses. After a wait of an hour or so suddenly there they were, and better, we saw them copulate. With one person witnessing egg laying. Kent's first proven instance of breeding in our county. What better way to spend a day, (other than smelling Neils moleskin trousers and watching him pluck Purple Emperors out of the sky).

To keep things in date order,

SATURDAY 13 JULY 2013

A day spent checking the Hamstreet Woods complex for any Purple Emperors (2 were reported last year). Did not find any but we did see our first Silver Washed Fritillaries, 3 No in Bourne Wood. Also 2 White Admirals, 1 Purple Hairstreak, 2 Brimstones, many Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Large and Small Skippers. 4 Common Buzzards circled overhead.

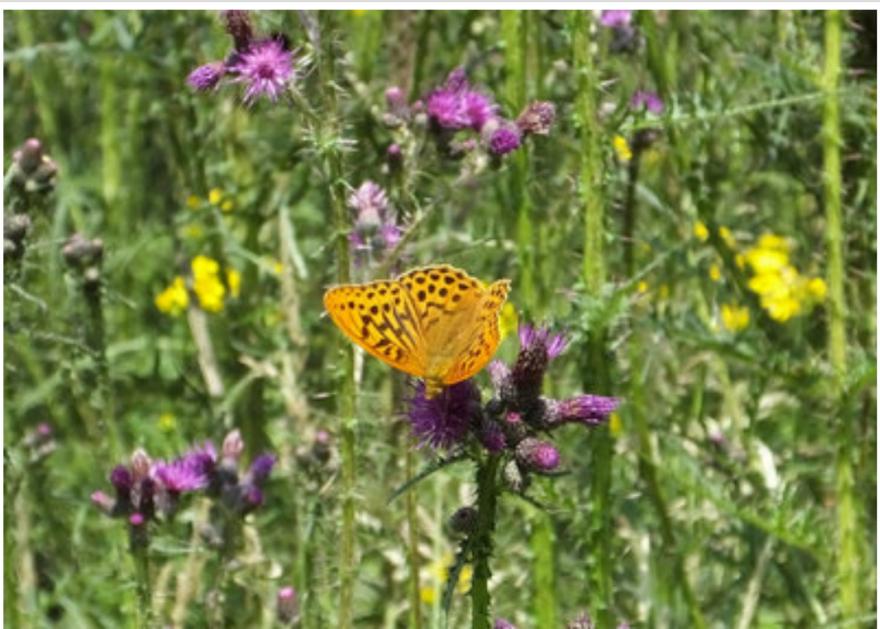
Next was the Military Canal at Warehorne to check for White Hairstreak. Again drew a blank, but did see 2 Marbled Whites, 3 Small Tortoiseshells and 11 Emerald Damselflies.

SUNDAY 14 JULY 2013.

We checked a wood near Chilham for White Admirals but again none were seen. Butterflies seen were 3 Marbled Whites, Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, 4 Large Skippers, many Small Skippers, Ringlets and Meadow Browns.

MONDAY 15 JULY 2013.

As mentioned above we spent all morning and into the early afternoon in the Westbere area seeing 2 NORFOLK HAWKERS, a male Scarce Chaser, 2 Brown Hawkers, Hairy Hawkers, 4 Four Spotted Chasers, Black Tailed Skimmer and 40 plus Banded Demosellies. A good count of 7 Red Admirals and 4 Small Tortoiseshells. What a really good day.



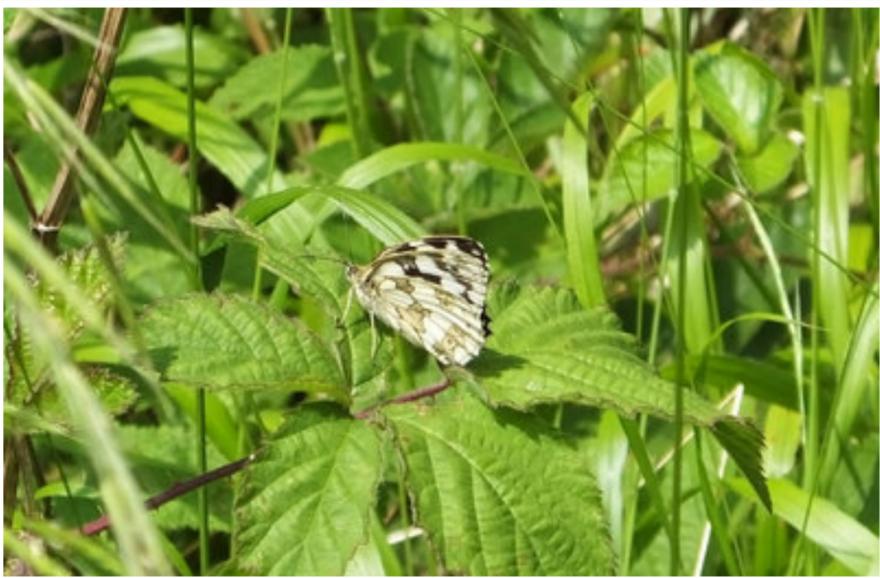
Silver Washed Fritillary in Hamstreet Woods.



Record photo of one of the Norfolk Hawkers at Westbere (Kent)



Record photo of one of the Norfolk Hawkers at Westbere (Kent).



Marbled White



Ringlet at Hamstreet Woods

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 19-Jul-13 08:55 PM GMT

We join in the feast of Purples.

Tuesday 16 July 2013

Following the success of yesterday (Kent's first breeding Norfolk Hawkers) we thought that we would spread the net and see if there was any sign of them at nearby Stodmarsh. What a disappointment. Stodmarsh was really quiet and despite the really good weather we failed to find much at all. We did see a Green Veined White, 10 Commas, 8 Small Tortoiseshell, 10 Red Admirals, 7 Speckled Woods and many Large Whites. But dragonfly wise it was just Blue Tailed Damselflies and Brown Hawker. Bird wise it was 7 Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzard, Hobby, Cettis Warblers, 2 Water Rails and many Reed Warblers.

I think one of the issues is the growth of the reed beds, preventing viewing of some good areas. The other may be the presence of algae in the water caused by the spell of hot weather. It is possible that the dragonflies have sensed this and moved away.

A Banded Demoiselle visited the garden late afternoon.

Wednesday 17 July 2013

A day of mixed fortunes. Following a tip off that a Olive Crescent moth (very rare in Britain) was present at the Kerton Road Cafe near Lydd on Sea (no such cafe really, just a local name for a very friendly moth trapper who welcomes certain of her regular visitors with cups of tea), we visited early in the morning to find it no longer available. She was also exhausted from emptying the trap that morning. Her total was well in excess of 2000 moths that night, with many still on the garage wall. She had 21 Sussex Emeralds on the table as we arrived, but her final total that day was 32. There was Dark Tussocks and Pigmy footman everywhere. What a catch. It had to be seen to be believed.

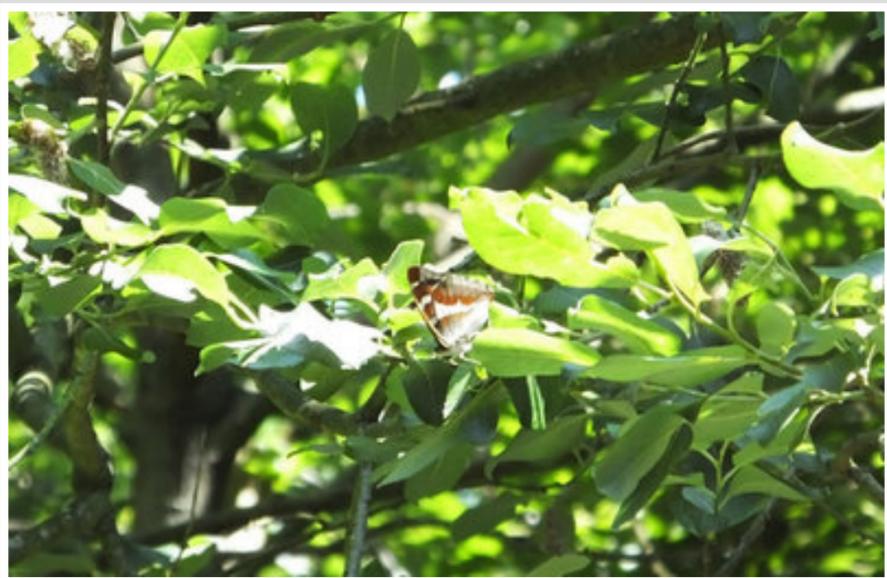
Next was the Observatory where the friendly warden pointed out a Small Marbled moth. This particular one was faded but still a most appreciated sighting. The catch contained Sussex Emerald, Buff Arches, Garden Tiger and Clay. Whilst a search of the local area found 5 Marbled Whites, 4 Small Coppers and many Meadow Browns. Bird wise it was quiet as expected for this time of the year.

Finally we ended up at Ruckinge seeing Small Emerald, Blue Bordered Carpet, Round Winged Muslin, Short Cloaked moth, Small Yellow Wave, Elephant Hawkmoth and Garden Tiger. With a butterfly stop in Hamstreet woods seeing 4 White Admirals but no Purple Emperors. Do they really exist here?

Thursday 18 July 2013.

After hearing of all the reports of Purple Emperors and some excellent photos, including Sussex Kipper laying on the ground surrounded by them, we thought that it was time to see one ourselves. Dene Park near Tonbridge was our destination. What a good move. Within minutes of arriving we had seen our first. By the time we left at 13.00 hours we had seen a minimum of 5, with other people seeing up to 8. It was very hot and they mostly stayed high in the trees. We did see one come to ground for a minute or two only to be flushed by a gentleman dog walker. He was polite, saying good morning, but would not wait whilst I took photos. Thus I have only one ground photo to show. Minutes later we found another high up, but it stayed longed enough for one more distant photo. This place appears to be Kent best Purple Emperor spot, but is very popular with dog walkers (dozens of them spread over our 3 and half hour visit). Most butterfly activity had stopped by late morning. Also seen was 8 White Admirals, 2 Silver Washed Fritillary and 1 Purple Hairstreak.

Although not up to the standards of Botany Bay it was a really enjoyable kent day.



This Purple Emperor was high in the trees along the main track at Dene Park, Tonbridge



Best I could do before a dog walker flushed this Purple Emperor at Dene Park, Tonbridge.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-Jul-13 08:35 PM GMT

The mystery overweight seal

SATURDAY 20 JULY 2013

The day started off with a text from friends at Dungeness. A seal was present on the patch that was causing some head scratching. It was most likely a

Common Seal, but it was overweight and its head looked small. It had a very distinctive pale face, with whiskers that curled in at the tips. The possibility of Bearded Seal had been considered and it was on the agenda until someone with more experience in Bearded Seals ruled it out. Which is what happened later that day. It was nice to see it and learn from the episode as it was not a straight forward id. Whilst near the patch we also saw 2 adult Med Gulls, with a few Gannets at sea. A walk around the area produced 5 Marbled Whites and many Meadow Browns. At the obs was a Peach Blossom and Coronet moth.

There was a lot of birders around the observatory as it was Barbecue time for members and staff from the nineteen fifties and sixties. Whilst I am old I was not into birding in that era so I quietly took my leave, (but not before eyeing up all the lovely food on offer). Someone had clearly taken a lot of time and trouble to lay on a good spread.

Next was Ruckinge and a good selection of moths on offer including Beautiful Golden Y, Scalloped Oak, Large Emerald, Dusky Brocade, the stunning True Lovers Knot, Swallowtail and Small Rivulet.

SUNDAY 21 JULY 2013.

It was time to spread the search at Westbere for more Norfolk Hawkers. We dully arrived to see two other well known Kent birders on site already looking, and with the news that none had been seen so far today. We left them at the site of the last sighting and headed towards Fordwich. Whilst we found no more Norfolk Hawkers the walk proved valuable as we spotted many dragonflies. 4 very worn Scarce Chasers, over 200 Banded Demoiselle, 21 Brown Hawkers, 4 Black Tailed Skimmers, 2 Southern Hawkers, Four Spotted Chaser and many Common Blue Damselies. Butterflies were 11 Comma, 2 Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood, 5 Small Skippers and many Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Large Whites. We had almost arrived back at the start when we received a message to say that both of the Norfolk Hawkers had been seen and one was still showing. So for the second time in a week we was watching Norfolk Hawker in Kent. Brilliant.

On the way home we called in at Wye NNR. An explosion of Marbled Whites had occurred. We counted 140 in just one field. These, together with Red Admiral, Comma, Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Ringlet, Meadow Brown and Large White ensured that we had a enjoyable day out.

MONDAY 22 JULY 2013.

Never one to give up it was back into the Hamstreet Woods complex to look for Purple Emperor. Again we drew a blank, but enjoyed views of 4 Silver Washed Fritillary, 2 White Admirals, Purple Hairstreak, 2 Marbled Whites with many Ringlets and Meadow Browns. A Brown Hawker buzzed the rides looking for insects and a Common Buzzard flew over looking for bigger goodies.

We then walked part of the Military Canal with our friends from Rucking and saw 3 Common Emerald Damselie, Common Darter and many Common Blue and Blue Tailed Damselies. Another good day in the field.

Photos to follow.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Jul-13 09:21 PM GMT

TUESDAY 23 JULY 2013

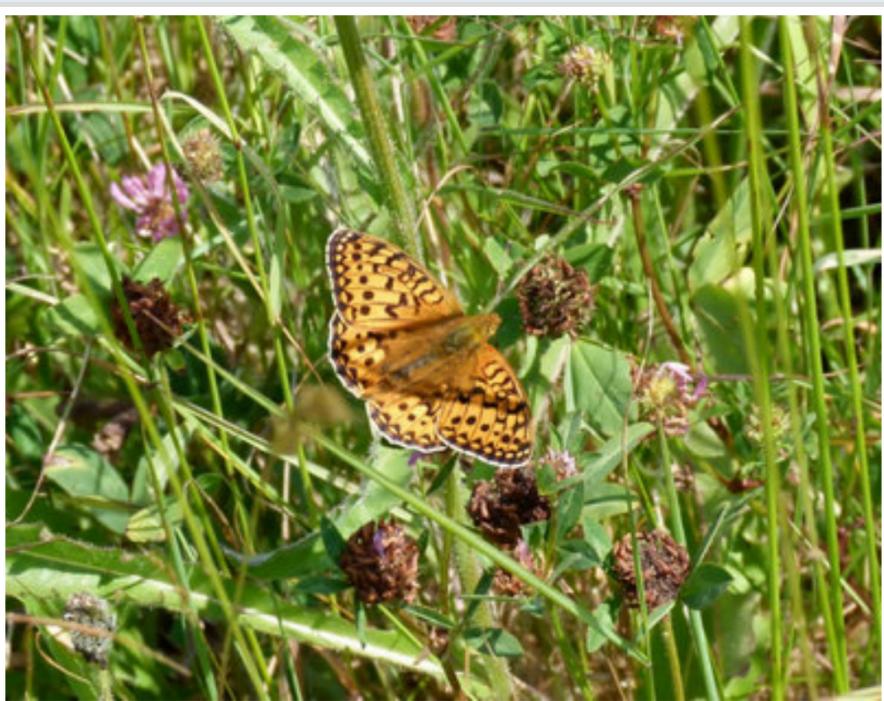
Today we tried the Military Canal at West Hythe with our target being White Letter Hairstreak. It was cloudy but still very hot, and therefore surprising that very few butterflies were on the wing. Ten years ago this location was almost guaranteed for White Letter Harirstreak but lately I am not so sure, and today we certainly drew a blank. We did see 1 White Admiral, 1 Small Tortoiseshell, 5 Gatekeepers, many Meadow Browns, Brown Hawker, Black Tailed Skimmer and Red Eyed Damselie, but that was it in 2 hours of searching.

WEDNESDAY 24 JULY 2013.

After a gap of a couple of weeks it was back to Dungeness. Not much has changed although the first signs of the autumn migration are underway. Scotney held 2 Egyptian Geese, 2 Marsh Harriers, 12 Sand Martins, Curlew and at least 50 Lapwings. Nearby the RSPB held at least 3 Marsh Harriers, Little Egret, good numbers of Swallows and Sand Martins with many moulting Tufted Ducks and Pochard. The Reed and Sedge warblers are still busy feeding young. We also noted 2 Small Tortoiseshells, a Red Admiral and many Common Blue Damselies. On returning through Hamstreet we noted 3 Common Buzzards thermaling.

THURSDAY 25 JULY 2013.

Hot and sunny, back to butterflies. Thanks to fellow UKB member Marc Heath we headed to Bishopstone for another try for WLH. This time we connected with 3 sightings. None were low enough for photos but at least we know they are still in Kent. MH himself had 15 WLH the previous evening so perhaps this colony is thriving. Also seen 2 Marbled Whites, Holly Blue, 6 Comma, Red Admiral with many Gatekeepers and Meadow Brown. On the way home we called in at Marshside where we found a early Willow Emerald Damselie.



Dark Green Fritillary at Lullingstone (Kent).



Beautiful by name and beautiful by appearance. The well named Beautiful Golden Y moth.



The stunning True Lovers Knot



Pebble Prominent



Ghost Moth (female)



Black Tailed Skimmer at Westbere

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Jul-13 08:41 PM GMT

FRIDAY 26 JULY 2013

We started the day at Ruckinge viewing a good selection of exciting moths. These included Nutmeg, Oak Eggar, Maple Prominent, Shark, Bordered Sallow, Beautiful Hook Tip, Small Scallop, Four Spotted Footman, Pigmy Footman, Pebble Prominent and Shaded Broad Bar. The selection at this location never fails to impress. Especially when compared to our own garden (see tomorrow).

Whilst there we received a message stating there was some wader passage at Dungeness. We arrived a little while later to view 2 Wood Sandpipers, 2 Common Sandpipers and 3 Little Ringed Plovers on the islands from Hanson Hide. Good numbers of Common Blue Damselflies along the footpath but very few butterflies. A few Small Skippers and Meadow Browns only noted.

Nearby the point held Marbled White, Small Skipper, Small Copper, Gatekeeper, Small Heath and Meadow Brown.

SATURDAY 27 JULY 2013.

Our own moth trap was very quiet with only 11 species producing 32 moths.

SUNDAY 28 JULY 2013.

We visited two sites in the WYE NNR/Brook area. Marbled White numbers are impressive this year with 45 at the first site and 70 at the second. Much to our surprise we only found 4 Chalkhill Blues, but Small/ Essex Skippers, Commas and Meadow Browns were all in good numbers. Six-spot Burnet moths were everywhere and easily outnumbered the butterflies. Just as we were leaving the first site a magnificent Red Kite flew over and away towards Brook village. It was untagged but we suspect a wanderer from the Chilterns population.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Aug-13 02:59 PM GMT

The bogey man strikes again.

Everyone has a butterfly/ bird/ dragonfly that seems to elude them over a period of time. For us at the present it is the newly arrived to the British Isles, Southern Migrant Hawker. Despite a number of attempts over the last three years we have still to catch up with this attractive species. Several of our attempts have been a case of just missing by an hour or so, or standing in the wrong place at the right time. This last week has been no exception, with yesterday saw us leaving Cliffe half an hour before one was seen, despite us having been there over 3 hours. The good thing about looking for the Hawker at Cliffe is that the area also attracts lots of butterflies so there is always plenty to see.

Anyway, keeping in date order,

WEDNESDAY 31 JULY 2013.

With the chance of some good birds and butterflies we headed to Dungeness. Scotney gravel pits produced our biggest ever flock of Egyptian Geese in Britain, 8 in number by the pull in. Some movement of Sand Martins was going on with at least 150 birds hawking over the water. A Marsh Harrier was hunting over the waters edge but the flock of 25 Lapwings did not seem to be concerned and landed almost immediately it had passed. Next was Dengemarsh where the Sand Martin movement continued with 200 plus birds. Also present 3 Little Egrets, Marsh Harrier, 6 Common Terns and just one Red Admiral.

A sea watch and walk around the observatory produced 30 Common Terns, Grey Seal, Wheatear, 12 Turnstones, lots of Meadow Brown and Gatekeepers. 3 Little Egrets were on the ARC pit as we passed.

We ended the day at Ruckinge viewing a few moths, many 15 Ruby Tigers, many Dark Arches, Common Footman, with a few Common Wainscot and 1 Ear.

THURSDAY 01 AUGUST 2013.

Its getting close to that time of the year when Southern Migrant Hawkets appear in the Thames Estuary. So today it was Cliffe, but despite a 2.5 hour visit we failed to connect. We did see 25 Scarce Emerald Damselflies, supported by very many Common and Ruddy Darters, with Blue Tailed Damselflies numerous. Also Four Spotted Chaser, 2 Black Tailed Skimmers, 2 Migrant Hawkets. Butterflies were everywhere, although many past their best. Marbled White, Red Admiral 2, Comma 4, Small and Essex Skipper many, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers everywhere. Birdlife included 10 Little Egrets and 6 Greenshank.

The best of our own moth trap was Small Dotted Buff amongst the 23 species present.

FRIDAY 02 AUGUST 2013.

A visit to the Ruckinge moth trap was highly productive with Black Arches, Brown-veined Wainscot, Peppered moth, Antler moth, Svenssons Copper Underwing, Dusky Sallow, Double Lobed and Fen Wainscot being the highlights. A tour of the Appledore area produced Peregrine, male Marsh Harrier and 75 Lapwings.

SATURDAY 03 AUGUST 2013.

We arrived at Oare Marshes to find the place heaving with visitors. Not nature watchers or walkers but people with small boats and yachts. Not sure what was going on but it was time to leave early. Not before we had seen 4 Curlew Sandpipers, 11 Little Egrets and 3 Little Ringed Plovers. We did see a few Essex Skippers, many Small Skippers with hundreds of Meadow Browns and gatekeepers. Our own moth trap was again poor with Elephant Hawk moth, Scalloped Oak and Grey Dagger being the best.

SUNDAY 03 AUGUST 2013.

Following up a sighting of Southern Migrant Hawker at Cliffe yesterday we spent over 3 hours searching the ditches near the second viewing mound. We saw none but we are aware that one was seen 30 minutes after we left 😞 Not all bad news because we did see 10 Scarce Emerald Damselflies, 2 Migrant Hawkets with many Small Skippers, a few Essex Skippers and the usual hundreds of Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers. Only a few Peacocks,

Commas and Red Admirals seen as the wind got stronger and insects started hiding. The highlight had to be the biggest flock we have ever seen in Britain of Greenshanks. We saw a minimum of 61, with possibly a further 1 or 2 around the corner calling. An amazing sight and a good end to an enjoyable day.

You will note that I have not listed Large White or Small White in the above entries. We are seeing them everywhere we go at present, in their hundreds. Even our garden has a dozen Large on most days. They certainly seem to be doing well this year.

I am aware that fellow UKB member Marc Heath saw and photographed a Swallowtail in Kent yesterday. Kent is on a roll at the moment, if only we could join in with the Southern Migrant Hawker (and Swallow tail of course).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 07-Aug-13 09:03 PM GMT

We almost joined in

TUESDAY 6 AUG 2013.

I mentioned in my last post that it would be nice to join in on all the Kent goodies at present, in particular the Swallowtail. Little did I know that the opportunity would arise so quickly. We were on our way to Bishpstone to try and photograph the White Letter Hairstreak when I received a message to say that a Swallowtail was showing outside Dennis Hide at Dungeness. A quick change of plans as we have not seen Swallowtail in Kent for about twenty years. We seemed to get stuck behind every lorry and slow moving vehicle on the road that day. However, about an hour later we arrived to see a few locals looking glum. It had apparently flown soon after having its picture taken and not returned. About half a dozen of us spread the search and checked all the teasel and willowherb. Suddenly someone called out flying Swallowtail and five of the six watched it fly across the path and over the Visitor Centre. Guess who was looking the wrong way and failed to connect with it. Yes the wife saw it, me, no. We then spent a further two hours looking but had to concede that it had probably continued its passage.

We did see 2 Clouded Yellows, 9 Painted Ladys, 3 Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshell, Small Copper, Small Skipper, many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, 14 Silver Y's, Brown Hawker and Migrant. From the hide we saw a Black Neck Grebe and Marsh Harrier amongst many birds.

WEDNESDAY 7 AUG 2013.

The weather was not good for insect activity today (cloud and drizzle), but yesterdays sighting of Swallowtail was too good not to follow up, so back we went. Very little butterfly activity with only a few Painted Ladys, Peacock and 5 Silver Y's. We then made a visit to the ARC pit which held lots of moulting ducks including a Garganey, Also present was 300 Sand Martins, Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk, 5 Little Egrets and 4 Little Ringed Plovers. Is the Swallowtail still in the area, only time will tell.



Painted Lady at Dungeness



Comma on Wye NNR



Chalkhill Blue on Wye NNR



Fen Wainscot at Ruckinge



Black Arches at Ruckinge



One of 8 Egyptian Geese on Scotney Gravel pits.



Distant Red Kite over Brook.

Re: Dave Brown

by Hoggers, 08-Aug-13 04:07 PM GMT

Dave, while I'm sorry that you didn't see the Swallowtail, your diary entry about how you alone managed to miss it really made me laugh (in a friendly way you understand!)

I bet many of us have been looking the wrong way and missed the bird or butterfly everyone-else got to see. It hurts!

Hopefully you won't have to wait another 20 years before another one comes along!

Cheers Dave and thanks again for putting me in contact with the White Letter Hairstreaks.

Hoggers.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Aug-13 09:12 PM GMT

I bet many of us have been looking the wrong way and missed the bird or butterfly everyone-else got to see. It hurts

Hoggers,
It was frustrating on the day, but its what inspires us all to keep looking and enjoying.

THURSDAY 8 AUG 2013.

Early morning did not look suitable for insects so we started the day at Oare Marshes. As we stepped out of the car a Clouded Yellow flew slowly past. A good start, further enhanced when we found the long staying Bonapartes Gull on the East Flood, together with 2 Curlew Sandpipers, 11 Little Egrets and over a thousand Black Tailed Godwits. With skies clearing in the distant we made our way to Wye NNR, where on arrival the sun was shining.

We had hardly gone up a few steps on the steep bank when two clouded Yellows appeared. Two hours on this reserve found 3 Wall Browns, 10 Brown Argus, 14 Chalkhill Blues, 30 (faded) Marbled Whites, many Common Blues with a few Red Admirals, Peacocks and a Small Tortoiseshell. A Common Buzzard flew around in the distance. A really good end to a summers day.

SATURDAY 10 AUGUST 2012.

Following directions from 2 friends we visited a wood near Ashford to view 41 Violet Helleborines. This is the most we have ever seen so it was a nice start to the day. Followed immediately by a message from our friend at Ruckinge stating he had trapped a species of Mocha moth overnight. It was tentatively identified as Blair's Mocha but a photo had been sent to an expert for clarification. Back came the message. It was in fact a Jersey Mocha. A very rare moth to Britain with only a dozen or so mainland records. A real goodie, and we didn't have to travel to the Channel Islands to see it. Also present was Small Mottled Willow, Dark Sword Grass, Sallow Kitten, Mullein Wave and Dusky Thorn.

We were on a roll today so into Hamstreet woods we went. The sun came out and so did the butterflies. One Silver Washed Fritillary, 2 White Admirals, at least 2 Painted Ladies, Brimstone, Small Skipper, 5 Purple Hairstreaks, Peacock, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and many Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, Large and Small Whites.

The day got even better when we arrived home as we discovered a Painted Lady on our Buddleia bush. It does not get much better than this.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 12-Aug-13 08:33 PM GMT

Where were you Long Tailed Blue?

Today we received news that a Long Tailed Blue was present for its second day at Kingsdown Kent. Better still, one had become two. We therefore arrived with the view that our chances were better than 50-50 of seeing one. We were wrong however, as the cloud cover came over and butterflies were hard to find. In addition a lady on site said it was last seen flying down the road (north) at just after 11.00 hours. We did spend 2.5 hours on site with two others and spread the search quite wide but alas no sign of any Long Tailed Blue. That's at least four hours without a sighting so maybe they have moved on.

SUNDAY 11 AUGUST 2013.

FUNTON CREEK. Rather windy but we saw lots of Gatekeepers, with a few Small and 4 Essex Skippers. 3 Greenshank, 14 Little Egrets and 2 Marsh Harriers were in the Creek itself.

ELMLEY. Very few birds at this location. The approach fields are very dry, so all the Lapwings have disappeared. The long staying Cattle Egret showed but was distant. 5 Marsh Harriers and a Common Buzzard hunted the ditches. Best of all yet another Clouded Yellow was by Kingshill Farm, along with 2 Peacocks and a Small Tortoiseshell.

OARE MARSH. The Bonapartes Gull was on the East Flood delighting the many visitors (it was really crowded with birders). Also present was a Temmincks Stint, 2 Whimbrel, 2 Curlew Sandpipers, Water Rail, 3 Little Egrets and yes, two more Clouded Yellows.

Our garden moth trap produced 21 species but only 41 moths, with Poplar Hawkmoth and Svenssons Copper Underwing being the best.

MONDAY 12 AUGUST 2013.

Following news of two Long Tailed Blues present near Deal we made our way to the site. As mentioned above we failed to connect with this much sought after rarity. The search did turn up masses of Silver Y moths. We counted 200, then gave up. Every flower head seemed to have one present. The butterfly list was quite good with 15 Marbled Whites, 1 Brown Argus, 2 Small Coppers, 8 Chalkhill Blues, 30 Common Blues, 7 Small Skippers, 75 Gatekeepers and 50 Meadow Browns. There was many more but we were so intent on finding a Long Tailed blue so did not keep accurate numbers.



Clouded Yellow at Elmley Reserve.



Clouded Yellow at Wye NNR.



Brown Argus at Wye NNR



Marbled White at Kingsdown



Stop tickling me Mr Stoat. 2 Stoats along the road at Dengemarsh.



Violet Helleborine near Ashford. Typical location in a dark wood.

Re: Dave Brown

I am singing the blues

Long Tailed Blues that is. After Monday's failure to see one we returned early Tuesday morning and was watching the first of 4 Long Tailed Blues by 09.30 hours. The long tiring walk was put to one side as we approached the site and fellow UKB Marc Heath and two others waved their arms to show they had found one. I reckon Usain Bolt was left in our wake as we dashed the last 100 metres. We need not have worried for 1 of the 3 was on show for most of the next two hours. Once you got your eye in they were quite easy to pick up in flight. There was 3 in front of Ship House, we found another in front of Moonraker House and someone else found another near Sun House. Amazingly the crowd, if you could call it that, never exceeded 8 people in the morning.

Why did we see them Tuesday and not Monday? The obvious answer is that it was sunnier, but the real difference was the lack of any wind compared to Monday.

TUESDAY 13 AUGUST 2013

Kingsdown (Kent). Pride of place goes to the 4 Long Tailed Blues seen. They appeared rather worn suggesting they may have been here a few days. The two males were aggressive to each other and on one occasion were seen to spiral high skywards out over the cliff, but luckily returned to the same area. Also seen was 4 Clouded Yellows, Painted Lady, 6 Wall Browns, 4 Small Coppers, 22 Marbled Whites, Brimstone, 16 Common Blues, 12 Chalkhill Blues, 3 Large Skippers, many Small Skippers, Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns. There was well in excess of 100 Silver Y moths and a Treecreeper added interest.

We then went on to Marshside to look for Willow Emerald Damselflies. We need not have worried for they were every where. In the area 100 metres either side of Little Grays farm we found 104. I would imagine this is currently a Kent record but there will surely be more as they consolidate their hold in the county. Also present 8 Small Red Eyed Damselflies and 2 Migrant Hawkers. A Marsh Harrier flew beside the adjacent A299.

What a brilliant day out, and in our home county.



Long Tailed Blue at Kingsdown Kent



Long Tailed Blue at Kingsdown Kent



Long Tailed Blue at Kingsdown Kent. This is the fourth one we found near the house called Moonraker.



Long Tailed Blue at Kingsdown Kent



Long Tailed Blue at Kingsdown Kent



Wall Brown at Kingsdown Kent



Willow Emerald at Marshside Kent.



Willow Emerald at Marshside Kent.



Great Green Bush Cricket at Kingsdown

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 14-Aug-13 09:30 PM GMT

Breathless stuff, Dave. The last few days have been glorious for you. Clouded Yellows AND Long Tailed Blues on the same day. There can't be more than low hundreds out of our 63m population that can claim that!

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 18-Aug-13 09:20 PM GMT

After the Party.

After the excitement of yesterday today was back to normal, although we are still noting the odd Clouded Yellow.

WEDNESDAY 14 AUG 2013

A winder day so butterflies were always going to be harder to find. We checked Walland Marsh in sheltered spots for any unusual dragonflies or butterflies. It was fairly quiet with a few Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admirals and Peacocks. Large and Small Whites still in good numbers, as was Migrant Hawkers. Next was the ARC pit at Dungeness. This produced Gargeney, 4 Common Sandpipers, 2 Green Sandpipers, Ruff, Black Tailed Godwit, 2 Little Ringed Plovers, 10 Ringed Plovers, 6 Dunlin, 4 Little Egrets, 3 Willow Warblers, a few Common Blue Butterflies and 10 Migrant Hawkers. 75 Sand Martins were hawking over the pit flying close to the water. Nearby Burrows pit held a Wood Sandpiper and another 20 Sand Martins.

THURSDAY 15 AUG 2013.

We started at Bourne Wood, Hamstreet, which was surprising quiet on the butterfly front but very busy on the dog walking aspect. We did see 3 Silver Washed Fritillaries and the usual Gatekeepers. Next we tried the western end of Hamstreet where we found a Clouded Yellow on the edge of a freshly cut corn field. Nearby we found a spot that held 3 Clouded Yellows, Painted Lady, 2 Peacocks, many Large & Small Whites, also Gatekeepers. This hedge line also held 40 Migrant Hawkers and a Southern Hawker.

We ended the day checking the recently cleared ditches near Kenardington. Not surprising numbers of dragonflies were well down, but we did manage to find 5 Common Emeralds and a Southern Hawker.

SATURDAY 16 AUGUST 2013.

A recheck of Thursdays spot near Hamstreet found 2 Clouded Yellows still present, plus the Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock. They had been joined by several Common Blues, a Small Copper and a Purple Hairstreak was in the adjacent Oak tree. A total of 9 Common Buzzards were in the air over the woodland complex. 12 Sand Martins fly over and a Hobby sped through.

We ended the day at Ruckinge noting a few good moths. Chevron, Six-striped Rustic, Peacock, Ear, Turnip and White Spotted Pug being the pick of the bunch.

A warmer week is forecast so could be good for butterflies again.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Aug-13 09:59 PM GMT

I am running a little behind with updating my diary and uploading some photos, but the weather has been good and you just have to be in the field to take advantage (one of the perks of retirement).

SUNDAY 18 AUGUST 2013.

We spent some time checking all the lanes around Walland Marsh. I always feel that this area is suitable for Willow Emerald Damselfly but so far we have failed miserably in our quest. Good numbers of Migrant Hawkers, with a few Southern Hawkers and Common Blue Damselflies, but not the prize. We turned up 4 Peacocks and 6 Small Tortoiseshells, with good numbers of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, but little else except Common Blues. 3 Marsh Harriers toured the area looking for prey. Dungeness was much the same as normal, with 2 Wheatears, 2 Little Egrets and 75 Sand Martins being the only thing of note.

Going back through Hamstreet we found a sunny sheltered spot with many flowers. This was a fantastic area of less than 100 square metres but produced Clouded Yellow, Purple Hairstreak, Brimstone, Small Copper, Green Veined White, 6 Small Whites, 14 Common Blues and many Gatekeepers. Nearby a similar area found another 2 Brimstone, Painted Lady, 3 Purple Hairstreaks (in adjacent oak tree), 2 Peacocks, many Gatekeepers, Southern Hawker and 10 Migrant Hawkers.

MONDAY 19 AUGUST 2013.

Today we visited an area between Winchelsea and Pett Level to see a new plant for us, Prickly Saltwort. This is slowly spreading along the beach, probably as a result of the recent sea defence works, and can now be found near the sea front cafe. We also saw 1 Painted Lady here. Nearby the pools were quiet producing only 3 Avocets and 2 Whimbrel, with 40 Sand Martins and 20 Swallows hawking over the levels. The water level on the roadside pools is high this year and unlikely to produce the waders of other years when they pumped out some of the water. A pity really as this site does attract a lot of visitors, both experienced and new to the hobby, many in the area on holiday. I always thought that this was a good way to bring wildlife to the masses.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-Aug-13 08:54 PM GMT

Wall to Wall Sunshine

This refers both to the weather and the butterfly. The sun has been out for most of the month and so has the Wall Brown. I don't recall seeing so many, and at different locations. From my point of view 2013 could well go down as their best year.

TUESDAY 20 AUGUST 2013.

Following another disappointing night with the moth trap, only 20 species with Knot Grass the best, we visited Bockhill St. Margarets. It was not our intention to visit the Long Tailed Blues again but rather look for butterflies in the Bockhill area. The place was alive with them including 8 Clouded Yellows. Also noted were 5 Painted Ladys, 7 Wall Browns and good numbers of Chalkhill Blue, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns with a few Brown Argus. Silver Y's were everywhere, we gave up counting at 250 with a large area still to cover. The bird front was quiet with just a few Whitethroats and the local Peregrine. We met a lady on her way to see the Long Tailed Blues at Kingsdown having arrived by public transport, with the intention to walk all the way towards Deal to catch another bus. We hope that she was successful and also enjoyed the really warm day.

Next stop was Lydden. We had heard of people seeing low numbers of Silver Spotted Skippers here but we found numbers to be good, with a little bit of searching the step banks. The heat of the day was causing the Silver Spotted skippers to be very active, rarely settling. Our count of 40 sightings probably reflects a true figure of between 25 and 30 actual butterflies. Again, Clouded Yellows in good numbers with 5 seen and at least 3 Wall Browns. Also present was many Chalkhill and Common Blues with 5 Brown Argus. We found a few Autumn Gentian but the real surprise was the lack of Autumn Ladies Tresses. In fact we could not find one. Not sure why but this site normally holds good numbers at this time of the year. Maybe they are just a little late this year.

WEDNESDAY 21 AUGUST 2013.

A trip to Oare Marsh today. It can be a good spot to see Clouded Yellow even in poor years for that species. We were not disappointed with 3 seen from the road and another 2 from the trail to the hide. Having been delighted with the Clouded Yellows we were a little disappointed with the other butterflies on show, with only Common Blues, Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns seen. A Brown Hawker patrolled the dyke with 5 Migrant Hawkers flying up and down the road.

The East Flood was crammed with common waders although it was nice to see over 50 Avocets. There was no sign of the long staying Bonapartes Gull. We ended the day at Wye NNR seeing another 2 Clouded Yellows, 4 Wall Browns, 6 Brimstones. (Its strange seeing Brimstones on the same flower heads as Clouded Yellows, you normally associate one with spring and the other with late summer/ early autumn). Also 2 late and worn Marbled Whites, 9 Brown Argus, 40 Common Blues, 2 Painted Ladys, 34 Chalkhill Blues, 12 Small Tortoiseshells, 15 Peacocks and many Large & Small Whites, Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns. What a really enjoyable two days.



Silver Spotted Skipper at Lydden



One of many Clouded Yellows here in Kent. Photo taken near Hamstreet. Slightly out of focus but the only open wing photo I managed as the male passed by.



This Fox was a worrying sight at Dungeness. Luckily the breeding season is just about over.



This Little Egret was one of six at Oare Marsh.



Silver Spotted Skipper ay Lydden



Sorry, another Clouded Yellow.

Re: Dave Brown

by Pauline, 25-Aug-13 02:11 PM GMT

Some great photos Dave especially the Clouded Yellow and the Fox- why is he a worrying sight tho?

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 25-Aug-13 02:19 PM GMT

Ground nesting birds, I suspect.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 31-Aug-13 09:04 PM GMT

Pauline,

David M is perfectly correct. Foxes can play havoc with ground nesting birds. Dungeness has had to install some electric fencing to help protect Lapwing and Ringed Plover Chicks. Many other species suffer from predation by foxes and stoats. I know its only nature but it still can be upsetting when you see a whole nest wiped out by an hungry fox.

The sun keeps shining and the butterflies keep coming.

Everyone keeps saying to us that there are they are noticing more butterflies this year. They are correct of course and they keep coming. The latest influx in our area seems to be Small Tortoiseshell. Last week the Dungeness regulars noticed hundreds of Small Tortoiseshells flying along the beach and even off the sea. Everywhere we visit seems to have good numbers of this species.

FRIDAY 23 AUGUST 2013.

Another trip to Walland Marsh in search of the Willow Emerald damselfly. Again none found, although we did see 2 Common Emerald Damselflies in a new spot for us. A few more Small Tortoiseshells and Common Blue butterflies noted. We called in at Hamstreet on the way home to find a late Silver Washed Fritillary, 4 Clouded Yellows, Painted Lady, 7 Small Tortoiseshells, 5 Brimstones, Brown Argus and many Common Blues, Meadow Browns, Small Whites and Silver Y's. We are still seeing lots of Gatekeepers but the numbers do seem to be reducing.

SUNDAY 25 AUGUST 2013.

A trip to Dungeness ARC pit produced 15 Small Tortoiseshells, 30 plus Common Blues, 3 Greenshanks, 4 Yellow Wagtails, 25 Sand Martins and 10 Whitethroats. Little Egrets are increasing with at least 10 seen around the pit and roosting in bushes. A check of the RSPB reserve found the 2 long staying Egyptian Geese, 2 Little Gulls, Knot and Dunlin. Galloways found 2 Pied Flycatchers, Whinchat, Stonechat and 28 Small Tortoiseshells. We ended the day at Scotney Gravel Pits seeing 2 more Egyptian Geese and 30 Sand Martins.

MONDAY 26 AUGUST 2013.

Deciding that everywhere would be crowded on the bank holiday Monday we decided that another visit to Dungeness would be in order. There are many quiet spots to watch in peace. The ARC pit gave a Little Stint, Little Ringed Plover, Marsh Harrier, 8 Little Egrets, Sparrowhawk, 12 Brown Hawkers, 3

Southern Hawkers, Clouded Yellow and a delightful Brown Argus. A check of Scotney revealed 2 Ruddy Shelduck. These had first been reported by a visitor in a field on Walland Marsh. Despite checking by several locals we had failed to refind them until the Observatory warden encountered them on his monthly duck count, the previous evening. They are probably from the feral breeding population in Holland, but who knows with ducks and geese these days.

TUESDAY 27 AUGUST 2013.

With good birds being seen in East Kent today we visited Sandwich Bay. Bird wise it was very quiet, but the moths really made up for this. We saw a Three Humped Prominent, only about the twentieth record for Britain. Also a Black Arches and Silver Stripped Hawkmoth. Just as we were leaving the building I noticed a moth resting on the window frame. It turned out to be a Humming Bird Hawkmoth. the first we have seen with its wings folded and resting. It was soon potted by the Field Centre team for others to enjoy.

Next was Grove Ferry where yesterdays Wryneck failed to show. We however did see the Spotted Crake, 3 Greenshanks, 2 Black Tailed Godwits and a absolutely stunning Kingfisher perched on a post catching small fish. Butterflies were thin on the ground with only Common Blue. Dragonflies seen were Brown Hawker, Southern Hawker and Emperor Dragonfly. Near Wingham a Clouded Yellow flew alongside the road.

WEDNESDAY 28 AUGUST 2013.

The sun was really strong today so it was to WYE NNR that we headed. Wow, butterflies everywhere. Clouded Yellow, 3 Wall Brown, 5 Adonis Blue, 40 Chalkhill Blue, 75 plus Common Blues, 6 Brown Argus, 2 Brimstones, 3 Small Tortoiseshells, 2 Speckled Woods, 20 Gatekeepers, many Large & Small Whites and Meadow Browns. We did not check all the area due to the number of visitors, walkers, joggers and people just enjoying the beautiful weather. We moved to a quieter nearby location seeing 4 Wall Browns, 15 Adonis Blues, 25 Chalkhill Blues, 4 Brown Argus, Small Tortoiseshell with again many Large and Small Whites. 2 Common Buzzards flew overhead.

There can be little that betters a day like today.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Sep-13 08:58 PM GMT

A good garden moth

In what has generally been a quiet period for our garden moths we suddenly hit the jackpot on the night of 28th August with White Point. This is a scarce immigrant moth usually found along the south coast, so we are very pleased that one turned up at our inland urban garden. We see them quite regularly at Dungeness but it was still a nice surprise. On the same night we also had our second garden record of Maidens Blush.

THURSDAY 29 AUGUST 2013.

Today found us checking Galloways. This is an area of Lydd firing ranges and is only open to the public on a few days per year. It is a surprisingly good area for migrants considering what goes on there. Because of the very limited access the locals tend to do saturation coverage when its available. Today a Wryneck had been found but despite a wait of a few hours we failed to see this annual migrant to Dungeness. We did see 4 Whinchats, 16 Wheatears, 3 Stonechats, 18 Meadow Pipits and 4 Small Tortoiseshells.

Next was a walk around Dengemarsh where the Great White Egret, 5 Little Egrets, 2 Hobbys, 6 Yellow Wagtails, Black Tailed Skimmer, 2 Emperor Dragonflies, 6 Migrant Hawkers, 3 Ruddy Darters and many Common Darters were on show. The day was made when 4 more Clouded Yellows flew through and 9 Small Tortoiseshells were on bankside vegetation. A walk around the ARC pit found another Clouded Yellow, Water Rail, Black Necked Grebe, 2 Little Egrets and 2 Greenshanks. The Observatory fridge held Rosy Wave, Double Kidney, Treble Bar and Feathered Gothic.

FRIDAY 30 AUGUST 2013.

It was another warm butterfly day and Wye NNR did not disappoint. 4 Clouded Yellows, 5 Wall Browns, 35 Chalkhill Blues, 5 Adonis Blues, 2 Brimstones, 15 Brown Argus, 6 Small Heath, 3 Gatekeepers, Small Tortoiseshell, 20 Meadow Browns and many Common Blues. What an enjoyable few hours.

SATURDAY 31 AUGUST 2013.

Another visit to Galloways. Well you have to make the most of the lack of bullets flying around. This time we connected with the Wryneck although it was a bit distant for photos. Also Hobby, 4 Whinchats, 8 Wheatears and the 3 Stonechats.

Dengemarsh produced the Great White Egret and 2 Hobbys. The ARC pit saw a female Redstart, Marsh Harrier, 3 Little Egrets, Sparrowhawk, Greenshank, 3 Ruff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Cettis Warbler, but again no fall of migrant birds. Another Clouded Yellow, Small Tortoiseshell and 6 Common Blues.

Whilst visiting the Observatory and talking to the Obs team a very large species flew over us and down the road towards the Power Station. This was mid afternoon in bright sunshine so was most unexpected. The moat held 9 Small Coppers, 10 Small Tortoiseshells,

Red Admiral and Common Blue. The fridge again held a few non food goodies in the form of Dusky Thorn, Flame Carpet and Snout.

On the way home we called in at Scotney gravel pits where the 2 Ruddy Shelducks were on show.

Re: Dave Brown

by CJB, 06-Sep-13 09:55 AM GMT

Good morning Dave,

As a long term birder and medium term 'leppy' I just wanted to say how much I enjoy reading your reports.

I am 🍷🍷🍷 of the LTB's and well done for finding them! I sometimes go to the Witterings in Sussex and I am certain that it is a good spot for unusual migrants.

What do you think the 'very large species' was that flew over?

I look forward to the next report.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Sep-13 09:13 PM GMT

What do you think the 'very large species' was that flew over?

Really difficult one based on so limited description. I would fall in the Silver Washed Fritillary camp but accept that habit is probably wrong. It will have to go down as one that got away.

SUNDAY 01 SEPT 2013.

Today was a lazy day. Not exactly doing much, but just plodding around. We called in at a site near Faversham to check that all the Broad leaved Helleborines had gone over. They had, a long time ago. Clearly the long dry weather had curtailed the flowering season. Next was Oare Marsh where surprisingly we did not see a Clouded Yellow, or many people for a Sunday. We even managed to find a free parking space. Everyone must have been at the seaside. We saw 8 Curlew Sandpipers, a juvenile Little Ringed Plover, Ruff, 2 Little Egrets, Marsh Harrier, Peregrine and 85 Avocets. Not to mention the usual hundreds of Black Tailed Godwits.

MONDAY 02 SEPTEMBER 2013.

With the fine weather continuing we could not resist another visit to Dungeness and another look for Clouded Yellows. We only saw 9 but they still hold the special magic. I suppose its the fact that some years we see none at all. Its even more magical when one of them was of the form 'Helice'. The point was covered in butterflies with 2 Painted Ladys, 25 Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admiral (yes, only one), 18 Small Coppers, 8 Common Blues and a number of Meadow Browns. At sea was 4 Porpoise, a Grey Seal, 4 Black Terns and a Little Tern. Dungeness RSPB and ARC pit held Greenshank, Ruff, Green Sandpiper, 3 Little Stints, 20 plus Dunlin, Yellow Wagtail, Little Egret, 2 Black Necked Grebes and many Golden Plover and Lapwings.

The garden moth trap turned up Burnished Brass (1st of the year) and 2 Svenssons Copper Underwing.

And it was warmer than yesterday. The forecast 30 degrees for our part of Kent is on the cards for Thursday (05 Sept).



This Kingfisher was looking for his lunch at Grove Ferry.



Sorry, another Clouded Yellow.



A Hummingbird Hawkmoth in an usual pose. This one was on the window frame of the Field Centre at Sandwich.



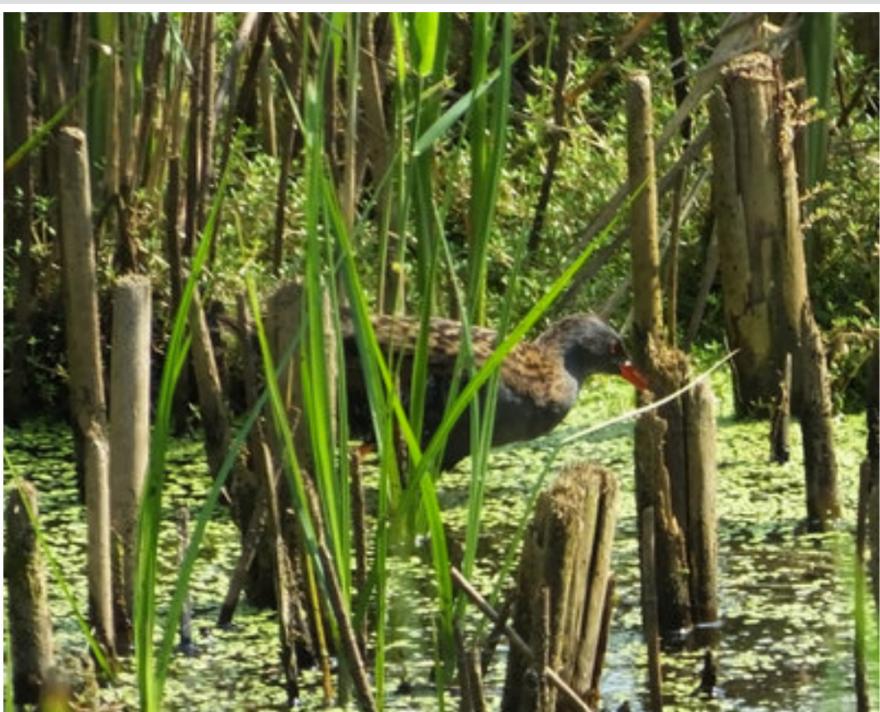
Small Copper at Dungeness



Black Necked Grebe on Dungeness RSPB reserve.



This Red Underwing was well camouflaged at Dungeness.



This Water Rail was well hidden on the ARC Pit (my excuse for a poor photo).

Re: Dave Brown

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-13 11:27 PM GMT

I always enjoy reading your reports Dave 😊 Cracking open wing shot of the Clouded Yellow and a very interesting image of the Hummingbird Hawk Moth among some great images of the natural world 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 07-Sep-13 04:34 PM GMT

Agreed. I've never seen a Hummingbird Hawkmoth at rest before. Excellent spot.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 09-Sep-13 09:17 PM GMT

A Red and Blue Week, although we miss old blue eyes

TUESDAY 03 SEPT 2013

Fellow UKB member Marc Heath had found a Willow Emerald Damselfly at Stodmarsh over the weekend. This is the first known record for the Stour Valley. We had found 2 at a location midway between their stronghold at Marshside and Stodmarsh so it was only a matter of time that they would spread into the Valley itself. Its also a good reward for Marc and Martyn who cover this site wherever work allows. We got off to a brilliant start when pulling over at Collards Lake a Red Kite flew over the road and up the valley towards Canterbury being harassed by corvids. Thirty minutes of further watching only produced 1 Common Buzzard and 1 Marsh Harrier. Next was Stodmarsh which proved a little disappointing with only Speckled Woods and Migrant Hawkers seen insect wise. 4 Water Rail screeched, 2 Bearded Tits flew across the path, a Cettis Warbler and 5 Chiffchaffs called, and finally we located 1 Willow Emerald Damselfly. This was adjacent to the Tower Hide and on the opposite side of the path. Stodmarsh has lots of suitable habitat so it will surely attract large numbers of the Emerald in time.

WEDNESDAY 04 SEPT 2013.

It was hot and sunny, so it had to be Dungeness to look for more Clouded Yellows. We were not disappointed with 3 at the point and 1 outside Firth Hide. We had been talking to the ever friendly observatory warden near the point. He informed us that the number of arriving butterflies had fallen off. Within minutes of him leaving us we found a Hummingbird Hawkmoth flying from flower to flower, our second of the year. The same area held 12 Small Coppers, 15 Small Tortoiseshells, a Red Admiral and 14 Common Blues. The observatory fridge held Dusky Thorn.

Next was the ARC pit where a Red Underwing (moth) was trying to hide on the bark of a tree, also 6 Common Blue Damselflies and 4 Brown Hawkers. From the hide and nearby RSPB we saw Peregrine, Little Stint, 2 Black Tailed Godwits, 2 Greenshanks, 4 Ruff, 15 Dunlin, 3 Snipe and a Great White Egret. The final stop was in New Romney where 50 plus Autumn Ladies Tresses were just coming into flower.

THURSDAY 05 SEPT 2013.

The hottest September day I can remember for a long time. It was 29 degrees as we pulled into Cliffe RSPB. A friend had informed us that he had seen a male Southern Migrant Hawker, (also known as Blue Eyed hawk), on a small pool the previous tea time. It had been seen and photographed by another regular visitor to Cliffe, with a few locals being informed immediately. Because of the time of day only people living local had any chance of seeing it. Hence we were there the next day, together with only one other person. Whether it was too hot or it had just moved on, either way we failed to re-find it in 3 hours of observation. We did see 20 plus Migrant Hawkers, 1 Common Emerald Damselfly, 5 Ruddy Darters and many Common Darters. A Clouded Yellow flew over the pool, 6 Small Tortoiseshells and a Red Admiral were on the pool side bushes. The local pit held 4 Greenshanks, Hobby, Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk, 20 Little Egrets and 50 Avocets.

Despite not seeing the hoped for Hawker we had a good day, unlike the drivers and occupants of the 130 cars that crashed in thick fog on the Kingsferry Bridge.

Luckily our journey on the M2 was not affected by this tragic incident.

SATURDAY 07 SEPTEMBER 2013.

Our friend at Ruckinge struck gold again, or rather blue. His overnight moth trap had caught the very beautiful Clifden Nonpareil, which when it opens its wings shows a stunning blue colour. So in the space of a few days we had seen Red Underwing and (Blue) Clifden Nonpareil. Hence the diary entry title.

Also on show was a Vestal moth, with 4 Common Buzzards and 2 Hobbys over the local woods. Brilliant stuff, and all in, or from, his garden.

We ended the day at Dungeness seeing a Oak Hooktip at the observatory with Black Necked Grebe, Greenshank, 3 Ruff, Common Sandpiper, 4 Little Egrets, Hobby and the pesky Fox on the reserve. A Brief sea watch saw 2 Arctic Skuas, Black Tern and many Common Terns and Gannets.

This has been another good week of nature watching. And yes, Thursday was hot, very hot. Just as predicted by Mr Seaweed.



Small Copper at Dungeness Observatory. One of many at this location.



Migrant Hawker at Dungeness RSPB.



Greenshank at Dungeness RSPB



Ruff at Dungeness RSPB.

Re: Dave Brown

by CJB, 10-Sep-13 11:51 AM GMT

Hi Dave,
Yet more great reports.
I saw a red-underwing at the weekend in Gloucs, which I climbed onto a roof to photograph and, surprise, it took off as I got there!
I found an Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar, which is a remarkable sight and forgot to mention the hummingbird hawkmoth I saw in Cornwall at the end of August.
Flutter on!
CJB

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 11-Sep-13 09:12 PM GMT

The local wag was heard to mutter "we have not heard a peep out of you all morning"
That's what we love about our hobby. You may have a poor day but it is usually followed by a cracker. Monday was a poor day for us, but Tuesday and Wednesday more than made up for it.

SUNDAY 08 SEPT 2013.

Today was warm and sunny, made even better when a Small Copper visited our urban garden. This is a scarce butterfly to our garden, in fact its been at least 5 years since the last, so was much appreciated. On to Dungeness where another Clouded Yellow was near Firth Hide, together with 20 Migrant Hawkers, many Common Darters, 6 Common Blue Damselflies, 5 Small Coppers, 3 Meadow Browns, 7 Common Blues and a Brown Argus. Sadly no sign of the two Lesser Emperor Dragonflies seen on Thursday. Birdlife was good with 3 Black Necked Grebe, Marsh Harrier, Hobby, 3 Dunlin, Little Stint, 3 Little Egrets, Great White Egret, Common Sandpiper, 200 plus Sand Martins, 2 Yellow Wagtails, Cettis Warblers, Curlew Sandpiper and 3 Whinchats. Nearby Scotney held 2 Ruddy Shelduck and 15 Egyptian Geese with another 100 Sand Martins.

MONDAY 09 SEPT 2013.

A poor day for us. It was raining hard and due to time restraints we headed to Oare Marshes. It was even wetter when we arrived so we birded from the car. 8 Little Stints, 7 Curlew Sandpipers, 25 Sand Martins and many Avocets, Black Tailed Godwits, Golden Plovers, Ringed Plovers, Dunlin and Redshanks. We also noticed a hide full of people but concluded that they were also sheltering from the rain. Indeed they were, but on our arrival at home we found out they were also watching a showy Spotted Crake. Normally we would walk around, but today we decided not to get wet and consequently missed the news.

TUESDAY 10 SEPT 2013.

And now for the good day. We had someone coming to see us mid morning so we were taking things easy when a text message from Dungeness said Semi-Palmated Sandpiper on the RSPB reserve (thanks MC). Most modern day birders in Kent needed this for the Kent list so we knew it would be busy. The last twitchable one was in 1984, if we exclude last years bird when photographs of the distant stint at Dungeness proved it was a Semi-P after the bird had left.

Our visitor was cancelled and about an hour later we joined a packed hide to view the Semi-P. It flew off almost immediately but gave distant views over the next three hours. We went off and did other things coming back to a still packed hide, but this time it was a lot closer and allowed a ten minute scope view.

This American wader is known amongst British Birders as a Peep. A generic term for a group of very small waders with many look a likes. Hence the local wag (who shall remain nameless) came up with a series of puns, jokes, wise cracks, to pass the time. Hence my diary entry title.

In the meantime we also saw Clouded Yellow, Small Tortoiseshell, 6 Common Blues, Great White Egret, 7 Little Egrets, 5 Ruff, Black Tern, 2 Greenshanks, 3 Snipe, 8 Dunlin, 3 Marsh Harriers, 200 Sand Martins, Peregrine, 4 Yellow Wagtails and a Little Stint. A brief sea watch provided 3 Arctic Skuas and a few Common Terns.

WEDNESDAY 11 SEPT 2013.

Could we have two good days in a row. Yes we could. We arrived at Oare Marshes in sunshine but cold, so no insects. We had not heard about the Spotted Crake since Monday morning so was surprised when someone said that it was still present. There was only six of us present when after about 45 minutes it wandered into view and showed well for the next 15 minutes. It is in the small ditch adjacent to the East Flood hide and gave us our best ever views of this species. All the usual waders and Egrets were present, as was 14 Common Seals out on the estuary. Earlier we had done a one and half hour sea watch from Swalecliffe seeing 11 Great Skuas and 9 Arctic Skuas, but little else.



Spotted Crake at Oare Marsh (Pity I did not get all the tail in the frame).



Spotted Crake at Oare Marsh



In my view its been the best Small Tortoiseshell year for a decade. This ones at Dungeness



Juvenile Semi-Palmated Sandpiper on Dungeness RSPB.



Juvenile Semi-Palmated Sandpiper on Dungeness RSPB.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Sep-13 08:12 PM GMT

Cold and Confusing

That can sum up the past few days. The weather has definitely turned cold and wet, meaning few butterflies, whilst confusion has reigned at Dungeness over reports and claims of the return of Tuesday's Semi-Palmated Sandpiper. It started on Thursday morning when we booked into the RSPB Visitor Centre with another local. We were greeted with the comment that we must be lucky as the Semi-P has just been reported in front of Firth Hide. We rushed round but despite a long search all we found was a Little Stint. Another regular had been in the hide most of the morning and had not seen any Semi-P, neither had any one mentioned it to the visitors sitting in the hide. Despite searching by a number of experienced people it was not seen that day. The next day, Friday, it was claimed distantly by a number of people. There was even a few record photographs taken, but these only proved that it was a adult Little Stint. The conclusion, supported by photographic evidence is that only the bird seen on the 10th and late on the 11th September was indeed a Semi-Palmated Sandpiper, and that all the other claims relate to a Little Stint.

THURSDAY 12 SEPT 2013

Well it was cold at Dungeness, but at least the sun was shining. This encouraged a Clouded Yellow and 2 Small Tortoiseshells to fly around Firth Hide. A few flying Migrant Hawkers proved that at least some insects were on the wing. The Observatory held the moths Vestal and Dark Spectacle with a few Small Coppers and Large Whites in sheltered spots. A tour around the local pits produced 4 Black Necked Grebes, 4 Little Egrets, 5 Ruff, Greenshank, Little Stint, Dunlin, 2 Yellow Wagtails, 50 Sand Martins and 25 Swallows. The local Marsh Harriers kept flushing all the Golden Plover and Lapwings. Scotney Gravel pits still held the 2 Ruddy Shelduck and 15 Egyptian Geese.

FRIDAY 13 SEPT 2013

As the week has progressed the showy Spotted Crake at Oare Marshes has become more elusive between visits. Today it did not show for over 4 hours

and I must admit that with very little else being seen it was boring. The boredom was only broken when a Great Skua flew over the East Flood, scattering all the waders and gulls, and then landed on the Swale. What we did not realise at the time was that it had downed a Black Headed Gull onto the river and proceeded to feed over the next 30 minutes. It's the first time that we have seen a Great Skua over the reserve although they are regular out into the estuary.

The only thing of note amongst the waders was a Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper. The only insects we noted all day was a few Migrant Hawks.
SATURDAY 14 SEPT 2013.

Strong North Westerly winds had been predicted and this usually means Skuas and Shearwaters, but all we saw from Seasalter was 6 Arctic Skuas. We called in at Oare Marsh to learn that the Spotted Crake had not been seen for over 3 hours. Our luck was in when we noticed a group of birders suddenly move into a huddle. We made our way to the favoured ditch near the East Hide where the Spotted Crake was showing well. On the edge of the ditch we saw a few Migrant Hawks, with a Common Blue and Small Copper.

SUNDAY 15 SEPT 2013.

We had just arrived at Lydd when a text message sent us straight to Dengemarsh Gully. A Ortolan Bunting was showing, at least it had been. After about an hour we had views of less than 2 minutes. The wind was getting stronger, and later reached gale force, so the bird obviously moved on to seek a more sheltered area. Amazingly we did see 3 Small Coppers, 2 Common Blues and a Small Heath in addition to 8 Migrant Hawks. The gully itself held a few migrant birds in the form of Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs and a Blackcap. The local gravel pits and reserve held 2 Little Stints, 3 Little Egrets, female Red Crested Pochard, 2 Hobbys, Marsh Harrier, 100 plus Sand Martins, 30 Swallows and 5 House Martins.

The sea was rough but all we could see was Gannets, Common Terns and Sandwich Terns. With the wind getting stronger we decided that Southampton v West Ham on the telly would be more interesting, but it was not.

We badly need a few warm days to bring the butterflies back out.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 17-Sep-13 09:40 PM GMT

Confused Part Two

Following my comments yesterday I may have to rethink my views. Yesterday a stint/peep was seen distantly at Dungeness. My initial view, based on one photograph, was that it was a Little Stint. Today I saw a few more photographs and these look quite interesting. From some angles the bill looked thicker at the base, and the white lines on the back did not extend that long to form a typical Little Stint vee, and was quite dull in colour. It was not seen today by quite a group of us so in the meantime I will sit on the fence and hope that it reappears. There are 2 definite Juvenile Little Stints present on the ARC pit.

Just in case anyone is wondering why the identity remains unclear, then you only have to sit in Firth and Makepeace hides to realise that some of the islands are some way from the hides, or is it the other way around, and views are often unsatisfactory. Especially when trying to identify very small waders. The islands were probably constructed with Terns in mind and not small passage waders.

We noted no insect activity today at Dungeness other than Migrant Hawks. The day did start sunny, but only 12 degrees, before rain came along at mid-day.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-Sep-13 08:55 PM GMT

Mainly Whites

That has been the theme this week. We are still seeing many Large and Small Whites but little else. 2 Small Coppers today (Friday) and 1 Monday, Red Admiral (Wednesday) and a Clouded Yellow (Monday). Still good numbers of Migrant Hawks and Common Darters but otherwise Insect activity is much reduced. Hopefully the predicted warm spell over the next few days will give one last batch of butterflies that may have to see us through the winter.
MONDAY 16 SEPT 2013.

The Spotted Crake at Oare Marshes has got a lot more elusive of late and a 2 hour observation period today failed to locate it. It can go missing for 3 or 4 hours at a time, but when it shows it still gives close views. Basically, all the usual waders today with 1 Common Buzzard. The Clouded Yellow was the best thing today.

TUESDAY 17 SEPT 2013.

Today at Dungeness we saw reasonable numbers of birds but to be honest they are much the same each day at the moment. Greenshank had increased to 3 and the only new bird was actually another American Wader in the form of a PECTORAL SANDPIPER. It started the day on the RSPB from Firth Hide but late in the afternoon we saw it on the ARC pit from Hansons Hide. In the evening it relocated yet again to the Southern End of the ARC pit, viewable from the road.

WEDNESDAY 18 SEPT 2013.

We had just arrived at Pett Level when we saw a Honey Buzzard come in high from the Rye direction at 11.55 hours, head over Pett and continue south over Fairlight and Hastings. Presumably on its way to Africa. We also saw 7 Common Buzzards, but the way they were hanging around suggests these were local rather than migrants. On the Marsh itself we saw 3 Marsh Harriers, 2 Hobbys, 2 Yellow Wagtails, 8 Sandwich Terns, 4 Little Egrets, Sparrowhawk and 150 Curlew. Two Ravens flew over the pits and landed in with the sheep along the canal.

On the way home we saw a stunning Kingfisher along the Military Canal at Warehorne.

FRIDAY 20 SEPT 2013.

Dungeness again, not sure why but the RSPB car park and hides was full to overflowing, but birdlife was much the same as the last week or so. Willow Warblers have been replaced by Chiffchaffs, of which at least 25 were around the ARC pit. 1 Blackcap near the Screen Hide. The usual waders on the RSPB, with the Pectoral Sandpiper still at the southern end of the ARC pit, along with 3 Ruff, 9 Black Tailed Godwits, a Black Necked Grebe and 1 Hobby. The Great White Egret was still along Dengemarsh.

Over the course of the last week or so we have seen one female Ruddy Duck at an undisclosed location. Despite the vast sums of money spent on trying to eradicate it this species still hangs on in Britain. I just wish the same amount of money and effort was spent on eradicating the American mink, which does far more harm and damage to the native British Wildlife than any other species.



Clifden Nonpareil at Ruckinge a few days ago. The photo does not do this stunning moth justice.



Distant record photo of the Pectoral Sandpiper



Black Tailed Godwit at Dungeness

Re: Dave Brown

by Padfield, 20-Sep-13 09:31 PM GMT

If that picture doesn't do the Clifden nonpareil justice, Dave, it must have been an amazing thing in real life! I've never seen one but they've been on my wishlist since childhood. Excellent find!

Guy

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Sep-13 03:51 PM GMT

A meeting of happy UKB members.

Thanks Guy. Would you believe we have seen another Clifden nonpareil this week. Two in one year is a record for us. Perhaps another photo to follow.

The title refers to the excellent day we had on Tuesday when we saw two of the Kent bred Long Tailed Blues at Kingsdown in the fine company of Neil, Pauline and Trevor Sawyer. It was very nice to meet Pauline and Trevor for the first time. Pauline explained why she stops her own diary early but the temptation of the LTB's was too much to resist the journey.

SATURDAY 21ST SEPT 2013

We decided on a last minute visit to Stodmarsh in the hope of early migrants. There was indeed many Swallows, House Martins and Sand Martins, together with 25 Chiffchaff's. Otherwise it was the usual things with 8 Water Rails, 6 Cetti's Warblers but only 1 Marsh Harrier. The only butterflies were 9 Speckled Woods and many Large and Small Whites. Dragonflies were represented by 40 Migrant Hawkers and 10 Common Darters.

We ended the day near Crundale to see a few late butterflies. 12 Meadow Browns, 1 Common Blue and 1 Small Copper with a few Large Whites.

SUNDAY 22ND SEPT 2013.

The overnight moth catch only produced 6 species with Light Emerald being the best. Next was Dungeness where we viewed Bloodvein and Pinion Streaked Snout moths at the Observatory, with 2 Small Coppers and a Peacock. Birds around the area were Male Redstart, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, Wheatear, 2 Ravens, 4 Black Tailed Godwits, 5 Dunlin, 2 Egyptian Geese, 2 Little Egrets, Cetti's Warbler, Greenshank, 40 Chiffchaff's with many Swallows and Sand Martins passing through.

TUESDAY 24TH SEPT 2013.

What a day. It did not take long to join in with the finding of 2 male Long Tailed Blues, although we saw no further individuals in the 2.5 hours we were present. We left about 13.30 hours and not long after others were found including, I believe, one female. I have mentioned there was a meeting of UKB members but I am also aware that many Dungeness locals visited during the day with at least 6 in addition to ourselves. Despite the very quiet period around mid-day we did see a few Adonis Blues, 3 Chalkhill Blues, Common Blue, Small Copper and a number of Speckled Woods. We missed the Clouded Yellow that flew by but we did see two more when we stopped between Kingsdown and Walmer.

We ended the day at Ruckinge where our good friend had a nice selection of moths including Pale Eggar, Hoary Footman, Bordered Beauty, Brindled Green and Black Rustic. Days in the field do not come much better than this.

WEDNESDAY 25TH SEPT 2013.

Today was a day of domestic duties although we did visit our moth friend at Ruckinge. Our second Clifden Nonpareil of the year was on show. He had also trapped a Red Underwing, which although looks very similar when the wings are closed is only about half the size. The CNP is very big for a moth and is impressive in both size and colour. These were supported by Dusky Lemon Sallow, Range Sallow and Autumnal Rustic, with Common Buzzard and 50 Swallows over the garden and Spotted Flycatcher in the garden, this was another good day.

Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Sep-13 08:12 PM GMT

The day of the Wainscot.

THURSDAY 26 SEPT 2013.

A most welcome text saw us at Ruckinge looking at a good selection of Moths. The best was the migrant Convolvulus Hawkmoth, but a fine support cast of Common Wainscot, Bulrush Wainscot and Webbs Wainscot. A new one for us was Oak Lutestring. Not bad for late September.

Next was a visit to Pett Level where surprisingly we found Canary Shouldered Thorn and 2 Snouts on a building wall. Butterfly wise it was hard work in the brisk wind with only 1 Red Admiral, Comma and Large & Small Whites. There was some bird migration going on with 350 Meadow Pipits, 230 Swallows and 20 Pied Wagtails. Amazingly all heading North rather than the expected southerly direction. Perhaps the strong easterly wind had some bearing on this, preventing a southern course out into the channel. Birds included 9 Common Buzzards, 3 Hobbys, 13 Little Egrets, 4 Brent Geese (our first of the autumn), 2 Ravens, 8 Gadwall, 15 Wigeon and a Sandwich Tern. We arrived home to find a Speckled Wood in the garden.

FRIDAY 27 SEPT 2013.

A trip to Dungeness provided Pectoral Sandpiper, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, 5 Dunlin, 3 Ruff, 2 Little Egrets, with many Wigeon, Teal, Gadwall, Lapwing and Golden Plover. The sun was strong enough to encourage one Small Heath, 2 Speckled Woods and 5 Large Whites. 20 Migrant Hawkers toured the bushes looking for insect prey.

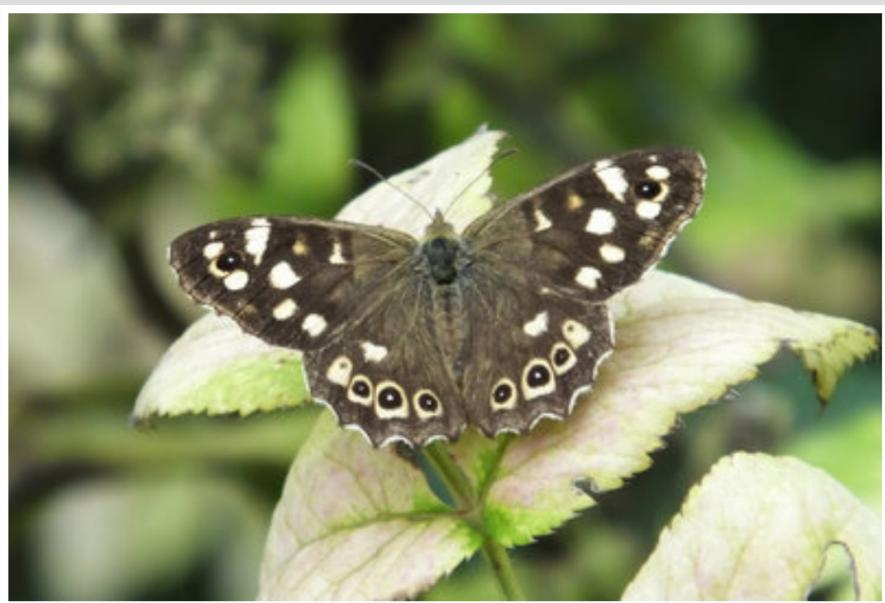
SATURDAY 28 SEPT 2013.

During the week Member Marc Heath and friends had found 3 Long Tailed Blues at Shuart (near Reculver), so today we headed in that direction. On arrival it was clear our chances of seeing them was just about zero with a cold easterly wind keeping everything down. We did see 4 Speckled Woods, 15 Migrant Hawkers and 12 Common Darters but today was not a LTB day. We returned home via Seaton and Crundale seeing a Common Buzzard and Marsh Harrier at Seaton and 5 Common Buzzards, 54 Swallows and 25 House Martins at Crundale. Like Pett Level these birds were all heading North. In a very sheltered spot we found 3 Meadow Browns, a Red Admiral and several Large Whites.

These strong Easterly winds are making wildlife watching hard work.



One of the two Long Tailed Blues seen by us on Tuesday at Kingsdown (Kent).



Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Oct-13 08:17 PM GMT

SUNDAY 29 SEPT 2013

Today was quiet, but with a promise of warmer weather later in the day. Whilst deciding what to do in the circumstances we received a message saying that a Two Barred Crossbill had been seen in Challock Forest. With little hope of any butterflies it was to Challock that we headed. The Forest is a large area and the bird is very small so it is not surprising that we failed to find it. We spent a few hours searching along with about 20 other birders but our only reward was a flock of 8 Common Crossbills. Back home for a late lunch we received an update stating that it had been seen again by 2 more birders. Back into the Forest and this time 10 Common Crossbills but still no Two Barred. By now it was warming up and so it was no surprise to see 4 Speckled Woods and 6 Vapourer moths, with a Hobby hunting the numerous Migrant Hawkers.

MONDAY 30 SEPT 2013

We headed to St Margarets. If news broke of any Long Tailed Blues present at Kingsdown then it was only about a twenty five minute walk away. With no news on our arrival we decided to check the local area. I am not aware of any Everlasting Pea here but the area is always good for butterflies. Today we saw a good condition male Brimstone, a Comma, Red Admiral and 2 Speckled Woods but no Blues of any species. 10 Autumn Ladies Tresses on the grass around the Monument were going over but still nice to see. Bird wise it was very quiet with 300 Swallows, 8 Chiffchaffs and a Sparrowhawk being the best. Just as we were leaving we met a gentleman who had seen one male Long Tailed Blue all morning but that had disappeared just prior to its preferred patch being strimmed. We decided that the long walk would be LTB free so reluctantly headed home via Folkestone where we saw 57 Med Gulls along Crete Road.

TUESDAY 01 OCT 2013.

The day started with 227 Swallows and 4 Meadow Pipits over our garden, all heading North. Hearing that some migrant birds had been seen at Margate the previous day we thought we would check out the area. Where there are birds there may be migrant butterflies and moths. Our optimism quickly faded when all we could find was 1 Firecrest, 5 Goldcrests, 2 Jays and 4 noisy Ringed Necked Parakeets. We saw 2 Comma's, 3 Speckled Woods and 4 Vapourer moths.

Feeling a bit low our friend at Ruckinge saved the day with a decent catch of moths including Four Spotted Footman, Pale Mottled Willow, Canary Shouldered Thorn, Pink Barred Sallow, Grey Pine Carpet and Blair's Shoulder Knot.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 09-Oct-13 09:12 PM GMT

When is Great followed by Less?

When its a bird of the shrike family. On Saturday the 05th we saw a Great Grey Shrike and on Sunday it was followed by a very smart Lesser Grey Shrike. Two shrikes in Kent in one weekend, it can't be bad.

THURSDAY 03 OCT 2013.

Butterflies were always going to be hard today because of the colder weather so we were grateful when our friend at Ruckinge said he had a good selection of moths. Indeed he had, including a very good Convolvulus Hawkmoth. Other moths were Scarce Bordered Straw, Brindled Green, Four Spotted Footman, Noctuella, Dusky Thorn, Large Wainscott, Deep-brown Dart, Yellow-line Quaker, Red-line Quaker, White Point, Black Rustic, Rosy Rustic, Beaded Chestnut, Lunar Underwing and Satellite. A really nice mix of immigrants and locals. Dungeness attracts us like a magnet but today's visit found much the same as the last few weeks. Great White Egrets had increased to 6 number on the RSPB, plus there was a Curlew Sandpiper and a female Ring Ouzel. Otherwise it was the same species, and probably the same birds, as on many previous visits. The only butterfly seen was one Red Admiral.

SATURDAY 05TH OCT 2013.

We started the day checking the St. Margarets area for any sign of migrant birds, butterflies or moths. It turned out to be a little disappointing with only a few Chiffchaffs, Swallows, Meadow Pipits and Skylarks. We also saw 5 Red Admirals, 3 Comma's and 3 Speckled Woods.

Next was Sandwich Bay where a Jack Snipe was in front of Restharrow Hide, obvious by its constant bobbing. It proved impossible to photograph in amongst the reeds. Again migrants were thin on the ground with only a few Chiffchaffs. News came through that the Great Grey Shrike was still present on Thanet so 45 minutes later we found ourselves watching this magnificent bird as it feed along distant bushes. A few Large and Small whites were seen.

SUNDAY 06TH OCT 2013.

A pair of Kent's finest birders had found a Lesser Grey Shrike along Capel Fleet (Isle of Sheppy) late yesterday. The bird was still present this morning when we arrived early morning. A large number of Kent birders were already present proving that many still needed this for their Kent or Life list. We were luckily to see Kent's last record in 1995 at Sandwich. Still a very smart bird and well worth the long walk out to see it. It was never close enough for my bridge camera but other photographers managed record shots. We also saw 4 Bearded Tits, 2 Common Buzzards and 7 Marsh Harriers. We ended the day at Elmley seeing 2 more Common Buzzards, 6 Marsh Harriers, Sparrowhawk, Green Sandpiper, 3 Red Admirals, 3 Commas and many Migrant Hawkers. Although the sun was out the numbers of butterflies was disappointing.



Clancy's Rustic at Dungeness (see next update). Sorry about the glass, but it was too rare to remove from the container and risk early release. First recorded in Britain about 15 years and still a major rarity.



Delicate moth at Ruckinge (see next update).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Oct-13 09:15 PM GMT

Catching up on our sightings.

Really behind at the moment, but our excuse is that we are either out in the field, or in bed with colds.

MONDAY 07 OCT 2013.

Today we visited the area between Minnis Bay and Reculver to look for Long Tailed Blues, as reported by fellow member Marc Heath. We managed to see at least 7 individuals, with our son seeing an additional male. The 7 sightings were made up of 5 males and 2 females. We also encountered a Painted Lady, 4 Comma's, 3 Red Admirals, 10 Large Whites and 3 Speckled Woods. Also noted 3 Vapourer moths, many Migrant Hawkets and Common Darters, with 3 Common Buzzards, 25 plus Chiffchaffs, our first Redwing of the Autumn, 5 Grey Wagtails, 2 Goldcrests, 4 Blackcaps and 4 Siskins. No photos of the LTB, they were too mobile. In addition I put the camera on a wrong setting.

On the way home we visited our friend at Ruckinge to see the following moths. 2 Delicate, 2 Vestal, Satellite, Feathered Ranunculus, Pine Carpet and Chestnut.

A most enjoyable October day in the field and with temperature that touched 21 degrees mid afternoon. Kent at its best.

TUESDAY 08 OCT 2013.

We visited Kingsdown Lees for more Long Tailed Blue, but it was not to be. As mentioned on the forum we failed to find any definite LTB. We had a possible but it flew before confirmation. We therefore suggested to other visitors that perhaps Minnis Bay would be a better option as it seems Kingsdown may no longer hold any numbers. We did see a Clouded Yellow as it flew along the cliff edge.

WEDNESDAY 09 OCT 2013.

A visit to Dungeness Obs found a good selection of moths on offer. Clancys Rustic was the best, with support by Gem and Vestal. There was also a Southern Oak Bush Cricket. The Clancys Rustic is a fairly new moth to Britain with the first being identified as recently as the year 2000. Since then there has been a number of records from Dungeness and East Kent. Given the number of moth traps run in this area it is unlikely to have been missed previously. It is named after a Dungeness resident who runs a trap and caught the first one.

The birdlife was much the same as previous visits with 4 Great White Egrets, 6 Little Egrets, 3 Little Stints and Common Buzzard being the best.

Again we called in at Ruckinge where again another good selection had been trapped overnight. Palpita Vitrealis, Spruce Carpet, Dusky-lemon Sallow, Green Brindled Crescent, Snout, Four Spotted Footman and Vestal.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 19-Oct-13 02:25 PM GMT

RING OUZELS FALL OUT OF THE SKY.

THURSDAY 10 OCT 2013

Today the wind was forecast to be North Westerly and strong. No chance of butterflies today it was off to the seaside to do a bit of sea watching. It can be boring looking at the sea for hours, but when birds move it can be exciting. Today was a mixed day with a late morning spell spent at Tankerton. In 1.5 hours we saw 5 Great Skuas, 1 Arctic Skua, 8 Brent Geese, 20 Common Scoters and 8 Gannets. The prize had to be the Grey Phalarope that flew west at 10.55 hours. With news of better sea movement off Reculver we moved further down the coast to that location. In the next two hours we saw another 3 Great Skuas, 7 Gannets and a Rock Pipit on the rocks in front of the car park.

FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER 2013.

A trip to Dungeness provided 3 Red Admirals and a few Migrant Hawkets but little else insect wise. Around the pits we saw 6 Great White Egrets, 7 Little Egrets, 2 Marsh Harrier, Juvenile Little Gull, 15 Egyptian Geese and best of all, a Bittern that flew close to the road and landed by Boulderwall Farm.

SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER 2013.

Today was the day of the Ring Ouzel. We news of over 200 at Dungeness, 30 at Folkestone, over 200 at Beachy Head and large numbers at other coastal locations it came as no surprise to see 18 when we visited Abbotscliffe (near Dover). This is the upland version of the common Blackbird and is always a welcome sight here in Kent. Most years we only see a few but today was exceptional and most enjoyable. Other migrants included Brambling, 8 Redwings, 5 Song Thrushes, 10 Chiffchaffs and 20 House Martins. Although it was still cold as we drove along a minor road above Folkestone we did see 2 Red Admirals, with 2 more Redwings, 5 Chiffchaffs and a flock of 47 Med Gulls. This Autumn the number of Med Gulls being seen between Folkestone Harbour and Capel has been very high, with several counts of over 500. In the early eighties this area attracted many twitchers to see this delightful gull when numbers reached the dizzy heights of 20 or 30. Now it often outnumbers the Black Headed Gull in its preferred area.

We ended the day looking for migrants at Margate. Again birds were on the move with 12 Redwings, 10 Song Thrushes, 6 Chiffchaffs, Firecrest, 4 Goldcrests but the star bird was a calling Yellow Browed Warbler. It was seen well by several birders but we only managed to hear it calling as it moved through the trees.

Butterflies were few but did include a Comma, 2 Red Admirals and a Speckled Wood.

SUNDAY 13 OCTOBER 2013.

It was pouring down and even flooded a few local roads, but the lure of Dungeness meant that we made the best of a poor day. It actually turned out quite well with GLOSSY IBIS showing in front of Firth Hide. Around the reserve we saw 9 Great White Egrets, yes 9. Actually 10 had been reported but we could not find number 10. 8 Little Egrets, a male Brambling, 3 Chiffchaffs, 4 Marsh Harriers, 6 Snipe, Sparrowhawk, Black Tailed Godwit, Ruff, Dunlin, 25 Redwings and 3 Stonechats.

MONDAY 14 OCTOBER 2013.

A brief visit to Oare Marsh failed to find the Spotted Crake or Spotted Redshank but did reveal a Large White and Red Admiral. We met someone who had seen 3 Clouded Yellows during a brief warm spell when the dark clouds cleared. Otherwise it was much the same as previous Oare visits.

TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2013.

The previous day one of the Dungeness regulars had visited Hempsted Forest (near Cranbrook) and found a stunning male TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL. So today it was no surprise to see about 20 people present to look for this bird. We had to wait about 3 hours but in the end the bird flew in to drink at a local pool and gave distant but reasonable view to all those present. It was a beauty and well worth the long wait. Also 30 Common Crossbills with an amazing array and bill shapes and sizes. Some suggestive of Parrot Crossbill (see later in the week). An even bigger surprise was a male Brimstone that flew up and down the track. It appeared to be in reasonable condition. I will need to check our records, but this could be our latest one ever. Also a Comma and 3 Red Admirals.



Record photo of the male Two-barred Crossbill at Hempsted Forest (Kent).



Ring Ouzel at Abbotscliffe.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 25-Oct-13 08:44 PM GMT

Can this be right?

A little earlier I was sitting in the garden thinking about this update, in a tee shirt and a temperature of **19** degrees, and its very late October. Perhaps Jacks list of predication's for November is realistic for Kent after all. The only down side, despite the warmth I have yet to see a butterfly today. Plenty of bees and hoverflies on the Cosmos but no butterflies. Even the thought of Sunday nights gales does not damper the optimism for November butterflies.

THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2013.

Following a visit to the dreaded dentist we called in at nearby Stodmarsh. Our son had walked in front and when we entered Reedbed Hide he was all smiles and already filming away. There to the side of the hide was a Juvenile GLOSSY IBIS. It had been photographed in flight earlier in the week by one of the local regulars but it came as a bit of a surprise to see it right in front of us. The rest of Stodmarsh was surprisingly quiet but it was nice to see 4 Swallows hawking insects over the main lake.

It was getting warmer so a long journey up to Oare Marshes. The reason, we suspected Clouded Yellows would be on the wing. We were not disappointed with at least 4 individuals on the wing, plus a Red Admiral, with many Migrant Hawkets and Common Darters. For some reason Oare Marshes appears to be a regular spot for Clouded Yellow, even outside irruption years. The best bird on offer was a Spotted Redshank, with two Common Buzzards over Mocketts Hill.

FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2013.

Time to be confused again. Back into Hempsted Forest to see a bewildering array of Crossbill shapes and sizes. First, the easy bit. This time we failed to see the Two-barred Crossbill. Now the slightly harder bit. We saw a female and male Parrot Crossbill and are happy with the shape and size of both bird and bill. Then the confusing bit as we saw two additional flocks of Crossbills. A flock of 15 and one of 12 birds. A well known national birder managed to obtain sound recordings of the flock of 12 as they flew around several times and landed distantly in trees. These recordings were sent to a respected international bird sound recordist who said that the calls were of Parrot Crossbill. Easy, except two of the birds looked smaller. Were they just young birds, or Common Crossbills mixed in the Parrot Crossbill flock and not calling. Whatever the situation it is clear we have a influx of Parrot Crossbills into this part of Kent at the moment. A most welcome additional to many Kent birding lists.

Also seen, Brambling, 6 Siskins, Comma, 2 Red Admiral and seen by several people, another male Brimstone.

SUNDAY 20 OCTOBER 2013.

For the second time in four days we see a Glossy Ibis. This time one sitting in front of Hanson Hide was the reason for our smiles. After that it was hard work with only a Curlew Sandpiper, 2 Greenshank, 2 Pintail and a Chiffchaff of note. A feature though was at least 25 Migrant Hawkets and many Common Darters.

This two species look set to make it into November, despite the predicated forecast of gales.

MONDAY 21 OCTOBER 2013.

No longer confused we headed into Hempsted Forest again. This time we saw 6 Parrot Crossbills (3 male and 3 female) feeding in trees for over an hour. The distance was still too great for my camera but a local managed some digiscoped video which confirmed the identification, and presumably

will be used to support submission to the relevant Rarities committee. Another flock of 18 Crossbills, but these seemed all Common Crossbills. Again, no sign of the Two-barred Crossbill. Also, this time the only butterfly was a Red Admiral.

(A few photos to follow).

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Oct-13 08:37 PM GMT

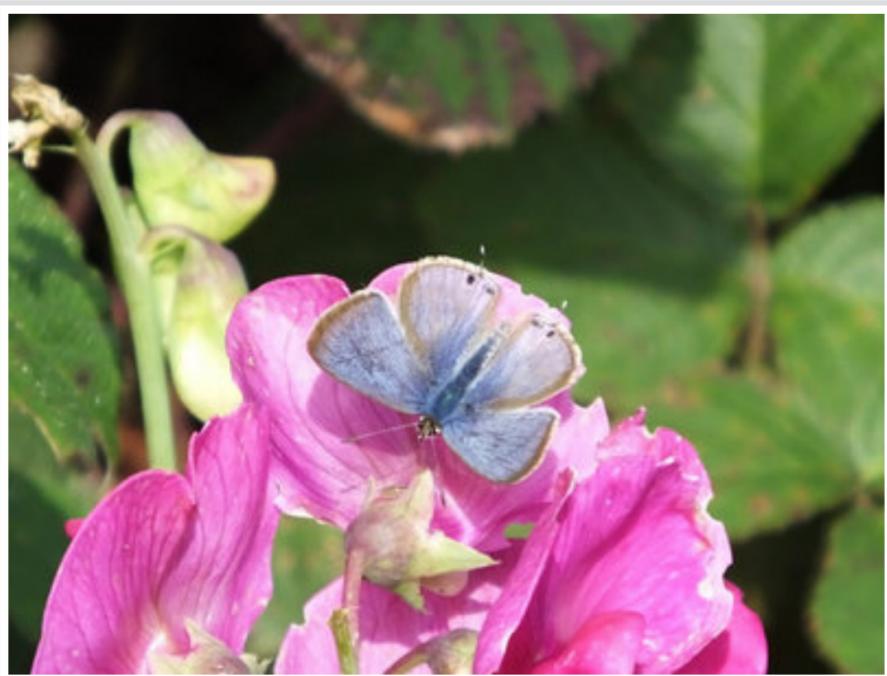
TUESDAY 22 OCT 2013

A trip to Pett Level but very little to report. All the usual waders and ducks with just one Marsh Harrier. A day that would have been better spent at home.

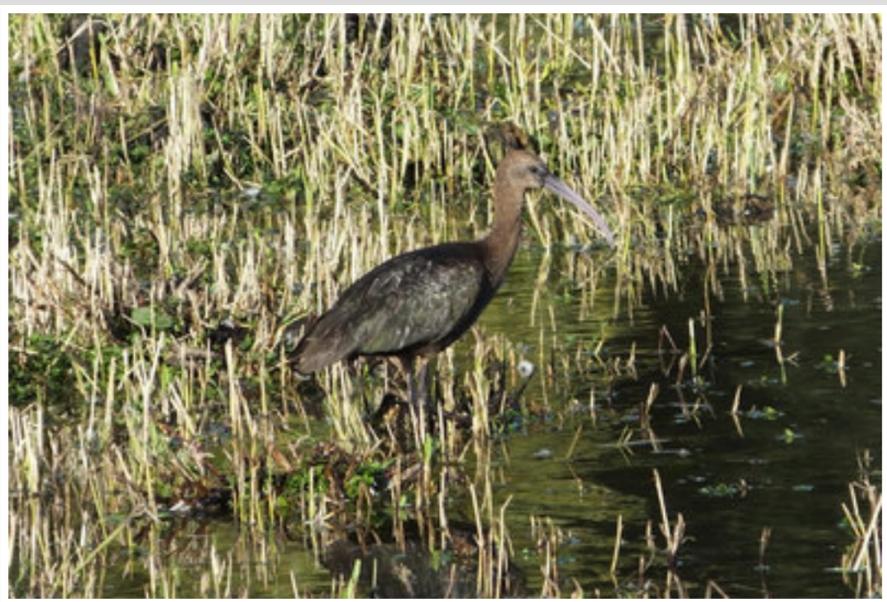
WEDNESDAY 23 OCT 2013.

The sun was shining but the wind was strong. A trip to the Dungeness area found no butterflies but 20 plus Common Darters, 5 Migrant Hawkers and a late Southern Hawker. Birds noted included 14 Sandwich Terns, 2 Greta White Egrets, 3 Snipe, 7 Dunlin, Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Marsh Harrier plus all the regular waders and ducks.

I have gone through a few recent photographs and include one of the Long Tailed Blue. Taken at Kingsdown Lees, its not the best photo I have taken, but it was the last of the Long Tailed Blues that we managed to photograph this year. I have included it to remind me of the great time we have had with this little beauty this year and of all the joy that our sightings of this species has given us. It would be nice to believe that next year will be a repeat but somehow I feel this is unlikely, unless we have a repeat of the prolonged warm Southerly winds that gave the South East a very pleasant summer.



Long Tailed Blue at Kingsdown Lees.



Glossy Ibis in front of Reedbed Hide, Stodmarsh.



Glossy Ibis in front of Reedbed Hide, Stodmarsh.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 03-Nov-13 08:53 PM GMT

Not much to write about

Well that's my excuse for not updating my diary recently. It really has been rather quiet and with it a realisation that the butterfly and dragonfly season has almost reached the very end.

A brief summary of visits since my last update.

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER 2013. A return visit to Hempsted Forest saw the male Two-barred Crossbill, a female Parrot Crossbill and two groups of Common Crossbills, 18 and 21 birds. A quick visit later in the day to Dungeness failed to find the Penduline Tit seen earlier. The long staying Glossy Ibis showed well, as did a Greenshank and a very late Curlew Sandpiper. Still at least 10 Migrant Hawkers on the wing but no butterflies.

SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER 2013.

A visit to Foreness Point (Margate) to see the Pallid Swift, (would have been only our second Kent record in over 25 years), resulted in us missing it by about two minutes. It flew across the road as we parked up and got out of the car. Despite a wait of nearly 3 hours it failed to reappear.

SUNDAY 27 OCTOBER 2013.

A mid-day visit to Dungeness found the Glossy Ibis still on the ARC pit, also the Greenshank and a female Red Crested Pochard. 6 Migrant Hawkers and 9 Common Darters were the only insects noted.

MONDAY 28 OCTOBER 2013.

Because we were at Dungeness yesterday the Pallid Swift at Foreness Point decided to show well for about four hours. In fact at one time it was joined by two other Pallid Swifts. I think they were all photographed. 3 together is probably a British record but we were not there to witness this rare event. So today we visited Foreness Point for another 3 hours, and yet again they or it failed to show. We did see 15 late Swallows and 3 House Martins and a Red Admiral. Other birders present had also seen a Clouded Yellow just before we arrived.

TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2013.

A very enjoyable visit to Dungeness saw us watching the Glossy Ibis, Great White Egret, 2 Greenshanks, 3 Water Rails, 3 Chiffchaffs, 2 Cettis Warblers, 4 Marsh Harriers, Goldeneye, 2 Swallows, and a female Merlin. We also watched a Bittern being attacked by a Marsh Harrier and then being forced down onto the water (ARC pit) before flying off into the reedbeds. Something we have never seen before. Insect wise it was very good with 2 Clouded Yellows, 1 Painted Lady, 10 Red Admirals, 2 Migrant Hawkers and 8 Common Darters.

WEDNESDAY 30 OCTOBER 2013.

A trip to Pett Level produced very little of note. A Snout (moth) resting on a white wall was unusual.

Thus ended a quiet period of wildlife watching for us at what can be a very exciting end to the migration period. All the action seemed to be on Shetland or the South West.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 09-Nov-13 02:32 PM GMT

Not much to write about (part two)

Continuing the theme of poor weather and little change in the wildlife on offer in Kent. We have been out checking our usual locations but its much the same.

SUNDAY 3 NOV 2013

A trip to Oare Marshes saw much the same as last time. The highlights being a female Peregrine terrorising the birds over the reserve. Luckily from their point of view it seemed to miss all the targets, or was it just having fun? A Clouded Yellow was a nice surprise considering how cold it was. Perhaps our last of the season. A Red Admiral was also flying in a sheltered spot.

MON 4 NOV 2013

2 Purple Sandpipers were the highlight of our day at Dungeness. Purple Sandpiper is a very scarce bird at Dungeness with only a few sightings every decade or so, so two wandering around on the beach was something special. A Long Tailed duck was on Scotney gravel pits and a House Martin over the Reserve, otherwise no real change from the last few visits. 2 Peacocks had been seen by the Obs Warden and a Small Tortoiseshell was seen on the RSPB reserve.

THURSDAY 07 NOV 2013.

It was one of those days. We spent the morning checking out Pett Level where 12 Brent Geese and 3 Bearded Tits were the highlights, and Walland Marsh, where there was no highlights. We arrived home to make a cup of tea only to receive a call (thanks MC) to say that they had trapped a ARCTIC REDPOLL at Dungeness Observatory. This would have been a new Dungeness bird for us, and only about our fifth British record. There was no way we could have made the Observatory before its release, but the call was much appreciated because if we had still been around Walland (one hour earlier) we could have made it. The bird itself was a little beauty judging by the photos.

FRIDAY 08 NOV 2013

Another day at Dungeness and another quiet day with the usual sea and land birds. There are still a number of Great White Egrets present with 6 being the usual count. The Glossy Ibis wanders more now but can still be seen around the ARC pit or Boulderwall Farm. One Common Darter seen but no butterflies (well, it was cold and wet).



Record photo of the Clouded Yellow at Dungeness on the 29 Oct 2013.



Hello Mr Turnstone. Don't look now but we are about to get wet. One of the two Purple Sandpipers on Dungeness beach.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-Nov-13 03:20 PM GMT

Is it all over?

The last week or so has been very hard work here in East Kent. We are now only seeing the odd Red Admiral, Common Darter or Migrant Hawker, and with each passing winters day the numbers get lower. We have now put the moth trap away for the winter following a poor season in our garden. We have relied on our good friends at Ruckinge, and Dungeness Observatory, for the majority of our decent moth sightings this year. I would like to say that butterflies are being replaced by some decent birds, but here in East Kent it has been very disappointing, with a few exceptions. The rest of Britain has had some real goodies, but they have mainly bypassed Kent. Even the common birds appear to be down in numbers. For instance, the totals of Goldcrests arriving this autumn at Dungeness has been extremely low. We could count the totals on both hands.

One bird arriving in decent numbers is the Redpoll, both Lesser and Common. The other bird seems to be the Crossbill, or rather the Parrot Crossbill. We have already had decent numbers and we are sure that others are yet to be found.

Well, what have we seen recently. Not much is the answer. We have seen more Common Crossbills and a Red Kite. The Black Kite seen several times in the Dungeness and Rye area has eluded us despite several attempt's to catch up with it. We almost caught up when it was reported near Brookland (on the edge of Walland Marsh), but time we got there it was so misty that we could not even seen the giant windmills let alone a bird of prey. 14 Bewick Swans have arrived on Walland for their winter holiday and the numbers of Fieldfares are raising, otherwise the Dungeness area is much the same as usual.

Hopefully something good is yet to be found. Even better if we are the ones to find it.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 27-Nov-13 02:23 PM GMT

Since our last update we have seen neither a Butterfly or Dragonfly. We now assume that is all for this year, and what a year it has been in the butterfly world. The undoubted highlight is of course the Long Tailed Blue, but of interest was the high numbers of some common species. That us hope that next year is a repeat performance.

The birding world in East Kent has been very quiet. We finally caught up with the Black Kite between Lydd and New Romney on the 24th as it flew towards and over the main A259. It was last seen yesterday at Dungeness (26th) flying out to sea at 08.00 hours. Whether it comes back in somewhere along the coast, or continues into France. remains to be seen. Despite its rarity status in Britain very few birders were noted looking for it. In fact Dungeness has in the main been devoid of birders on most of our recent visits. Perhaps saving petrol and waiting for the real goodie to arrive. Other highlights we have seen include a Bittern in flight, Merlin, Goldeneye, a Woodcock sitting on the sea front rocks at Reculver (really weird record that, with photo to follow) and the first decent numbers of Fieldfares.

The usual Great White Egrets, Little Egrets, Bewick Swans and Tree Sparrows remain around the Dungeness area. Apart from Pintail and Wigeon duck numbers remain low, as do Bitterns.

Finally, we had good views of a Great White Egret flying over the house on the 24th. It had earlier been seen on Conningbrook by another local birder. This being a new bird seen from the house.

Hopefully things will improve shortly.

Re: Dave Brown

by Matsukaze, 27-Nov-13 07:29 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Mention of the Great White Egret prompts me to ask what the status of the various exotic herons is in Kent, since we seem to be knee-deep in them on the Somerset Levels.

Re: Dave Brown

by Pauline, 28-Nov-13 08:52 AM GMT

Morning Dave - I have just been catching up with your diary and it has left me green with envy 🍋 . Despite having recorded 60 species of birds in the garden including breeding Goldcrests, there are many birds I have never seen but have always wanted to, including Firecrest, Ring Ousel and Bearded Tit. Other than the birds which visit my garden I am not great on ID or bird calls and I have come to the conclusion that what I really need is to go out with an experienced birder cos the CD's of bird calls I bought are just not working for me 😞 . I also loved your accounts re LTB because yes, it was just so exciting wasn't it and great to be part of it. In fact, I'm now in danger of even getting interested in moths thanks to your diary 😊

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Nov-13 09:12 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline and Matsukaze for your comments.

Ladies first.

Yes Pauline, you are right. When you are starting the best way to learn about birds is to go out with an experienced birder. Once you are confident on the common birds it becomes much easier to tackle the more difficult and rarer birds. It is also about being aware of the best and likely locations to see particular species, and at what times of the year. I know you are a busy person but maybe you have a local bird club near you. They often run visits to nearby reserves or places of interest, and a leader will help with identification. They will also give you tips on bird calls and how to associate them with something you are familiar with. For instance, the song of the Corn Bunting sounds to most people like the rattling of a bunch of keys. We live too far apart for me to be able to help, but I am sure others may live closer.

As for moths, it is a cheap but satisfying hobby. You can buy a starter moth trap these days for about £100, a decent ID book for about £30, and you are away. It can be done in your own garden, so no time wasted travelling and expense on petrol. There are some really smashing looking moths, but be warned, some moths look very similar to other moths and can be a little frustrating to identify. Some moths even fly during the day so you can combine these whilst looking for butterflies.

Matsukaze. I am aware of how good Somerset Levels is for herons and is a must visit place for anyone birding in that area. In Kent the Little Egret was the first to invade in large numbers and is now a confirmed breeding species. You are unlucky if you do not see Little Egret on day out in Kent in suitable locations.

Great White Egret in Kent, for the moment seems to be visitor from September to April. Numbers do vary but I would guess that 10 plus birds are present during this period. With numbers increasing every year it can only be a matter of time before they breed. The Bittern is a bit more difficult as they are well hidden in Summer so you rely on the booming. They are increasing and do breed in very small numbers. Glossy Ibis has been a regular winter visitor in recent years but I am not aware of any staying to breed. The other well known herons, Little Bittern and Night Heron, remain visitors for the present.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 05-Dec-13 03:39 PM GMT

One of those days

Thursday 28th November 2013.

We looked out of the window to see a thick blanket of mist. The weather forecast said that visibility on the North Kent coast would be poor all day, so when our son suggested Oare Marshes I convinced him that heading south would be a better option as we would see more. That's how it turned out, for by time we got to Pett Level the sun was shining and most of the mist had gone. It felt really pleasant as we began our watch with a fine Black Necked Grebe on the road side pool. Just then a message informed us that a Little Bunting had been found in Kent. This is a really good scarce bird for Kent, and the rest of the country for that matter, and you can guess where it was. That's right, Oare Marsh car park. Our son did not have to say another, (although he certainly did later), the look on his face said it all.

About hour and a half later we arrived at Oare Marshes to be told that the bird had been seen several times up until about 15 minutes before we arrived. 3 Hours later all we had seen was a 30 second flight view as it flew from the bush, where four birders had been watching it for a few minutes before we got onto it as it flew off. Our previous sighting of this smart looking bird in Kent was at Dungeness in 1990. Hopefully its not as long before the next one.

One other aspect of this day was the high number of Snipe present. One flock contained at least 400 birds as it without doubt the largest flock we have seen in Britain. They probably would have remained hidden in the vegetation had it not been for a beautiful male Hen Harrier that flew over the East Flood. All the usual common waders and ducks were present.

Friday 29th November 2013.

Well it had to be a repeat visit to Oare Marsh to look for the Little Bunting. No sign, and amazingly only 5 other birders present looking for it when we arrived.

Birds noted included Peregrine and a Cattle Egret on the other side of the Swale. It had been near the Harty Ferry Inn, but it flew towards Harty Church and then Shellness. Otherwise the usual waders and ducks.

Saturday 30th November 2013.

A visit to Elmley nature reserve was fairly routine with the usual Common Buzzards and Marsh Harriers present, also Barn Owl. This fine nature reserve has recently had a lot of work undertaken and is benefiting with large numbers of ducks and waders present.

Sunday 01st December 2013.

A visit to Dungeness found much the same as recent weeks, although 3 female Smew on ARC pit were new. The 1st winter Caspian Gull was still present around the fishing boats, having first been seen yesterday. There was no sign of the 1st winter Glaucous Gull seen earlier on the day on the RSPB reserve. A female Merlin was out on Walland Marsh.

Not a bad period really, but we do miss those warm summer days with butterflies flying all around us.



The Woodcock on the rocks at Reculver seafront. It really should have been in a wood but presume it was too tired to fly the extra few hundred yards after an exhausting migration.



Some of the group of Pintail present on Oare Marshes.



The Barn Owl at Elmley peering out of his home.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Dec-13 08:44 PM GMT

Little on offer.

I would like to say the last week has been full of wildlife goodies, but in reality it has been dull and quite boring. December can be a very quiet time for wildlife. All the Butterflies and Dragonflies have finished, the summer birds have gone and the winter ones have yet to arrive. Many birders in Kent have tried to relieve the boredom by twitching a Hawk Owl that has been present in Holland for a couple of weeks. We have seen two insects, both moths. Thanks to a local birder we saw a beautiful Scarce Umber, and the other was the Winter moth.

Bird watching visits have been to Pett Level, Oare Marshes (twice), Camber, Dungeness (3 times), Grove Ferry and a wood near Canterbury. The highlights, (if that's what they were), include a fine Ringtail Hen Harrier at Oare Marshes(05/12), Long Tailed Duck on Scotney (10/12), 20 Common Crossbills near Canterbury (14/12), a 1st winter Caspian Gull and a adult Yellow Legged Gull at Dungeness (15/12).

Almost any visit to Dungeness at the moment will produce Great White Egret and Little Egret on the RSPB. The Glossy Ibis remains but has become more elusive. 37 Bewick Swans remain on Walland, usually near Caldecott farm. On the 10th we walked along the beach at Camber Sands hoping to see Snow Bunting. Varying numbers of this species have been seen this winter, but on our visit the dog walkers had put paid to our hopes. There was about twenty people on the sands and all seemed to have at least one dog with them chasing anything and everything. Needless to say the birds had disappeared.

With just over a week before Christmas we should be able to get a few more days wildlife watching in before the inevitable Christmas shopping.
Dave

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-Dec-13 03:51 PM GMT

Why do we do it?

5 days to Christmas and time for a little birding in fairly decent weather. A trip to Dungeness found the 1st winter Caspian Gull back around the fishing boats. Many Auks and Kittiwakes were off shore. 2 Redhead Smew were on the ARC pit, as was 2 Great White Egrets and a Little Egret. The local Marsh Harriers were out in force looking for an easy meal, but again we could not find the Glossy Ibis, nor any Goosander. Two visits to Scotney Pit during the day failed to find yesterdays Caspian and Yellow Legged Gull. There was a few Common Buzzards and Redwings across Walland Marsh but that was it. A quiet day with little changing from previous visits.

3 days to Christmas found us checking out Elmley mature reserve in fairly decent weather. This place is looking really good at present with most of the fields flooded or holding water. The birds were responding well with large numbers of Lapwings, Golden Plovers, Teal and common waders. We saw 10 Ruff amongst all the waders, a very pale (and striking) Common Buzzard, 2 Peregrines and at least 9 Marsh Harriers. A really nice day.

2 days to Christmas. It was time to think of some shopping. Sainsburys had opened at 07.00 hours so we arrived about 08.30 hours, thinking a nice casual stroll around before the crowds appeared. Wrong, the place was packed. We had to drive around until a parking space became available. Speaking to the Sainsbury's Checkout Captain she said that people were queuing from 06.00 hours. What a waste of an hours sleeping time. Why do people queue for an hour in the dark and rain? There was plenty of Turkeys and Vegetables on offer so no shortages to cause the panic. Not the end of our misery. Apart from being unable to move about easily we had to queue for almost 45 minutes at the tills to be served. Some people even had two trollies stacked to the roof. The Cashier told us that the previous day (Sunday) had been even worse, with a queue of cars about 1/2 mile long waiting to get a space.

The silly thing is that Sainsbury's, and I am sure all the other Supermarkets, is only closed for one day.

A final comment. When we paid for our shopping a error message came up saying that we had not spent enough. Our bill was only £70, whilst everyone else seemed to be spending £150 to £250. 😊

Merry Christmas everybody. Have a good and enjoyable time.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Dec-13 09:08 PM GMT

What a fantastic late Christmas present.

Whilst on Christmas Day family duties we did manage a little wildlife watching. We spent a couple of hours checking some woods around Canterbury for Crossbills, but no luck. With all the nationwide reports of Two Barred and Parrot Crossbills, you never know. We saw most of the common woodland birds including 2 Marsh Tits and several Siskin's, but nothing out of the ordinary. Still, a nice break from Christmas food and cooking.

On Boxing day news broke of an absolute mega bird in Weymouth Harbour. A Brunnichs Guillemot, alive and showing well from the Marina area from near the Castle. This is the first mainland record to be twitchable and available to the masses. Most records are from the Scottish Islands, or washed up dead. Just about every birder in Britain needed this. The problem was that when news broke there was only about 5 and a half hours of decent light left, and being Boxing day the roads would be fairly busy. I know a few who left Kent almost immediately but the drive took 5 hours instead of the usual 3.5 hours. Yes, even on Boxing Day the M25 looks more like a car park, especially between Junctions 5 and 12. We decided not to join in the rush but instead carried on with a few Christmas things. Friday came and went with the bird still showing well. We thought that the roads would be chaos on the Saturday, what with traffic for the sales and people returning from Christmas holidays, so again no movement on our part. That evening we had reports from several Kent birders that Saturday had been a good day at Weymouth. The bird even attracted a few Kent birders who never leave the county, such was its rarity status, and the fact that it showed well on occasions.

That was it, we cracked. Sunday late morning saw us arriving in the large car park adjacent to the castle off Mulberry Way. Within two minutes we were at the Marina, and within twenty minutes we were watching the almost legendary **Brunnichs Guillemot**. It was never more than about 100 metres off shore, often much closer, but it was always diving and popping up some 50 metres away. You could never work out where it was going to surface as presumably it just followed where the fish it was chasing went. The crowd never exceeded 100, but presumably most had already seen the bird on earlier days.

The bird had been in the local paper and was the subject of much attention from the locals. Luckily you could see it quite easily with the naked eye, and many folks were trying to photograph it with their smartphone cameras.

The area was alive with birds with a fine winter plumage Black Guillemot, 3 Guillemots, 2 Razorbills, 19 Red Breasted Mergansers, Great Northern Diver, Black Throated Diver, Black Necked Grebe and several Shags. Some had seen Slavonian Grebe and Red Necked Grebe but those eluded us.

The journey to and from Kent had given us 11 Common Buzzards and Little Egret. The roads were very busy from the M27 to Weymouth and back, but the M3 was surprising quiet. The M25 coming home was a different matter, and reminded us why we rarely go out of Kent these days.

A brilliant day out in fine sunny weather and in a lovely part of Britain, with a mega bird at journeys end.

I attach a few record photos of the bird. Although reasonably close to the shore it proved difficult to obtain a really good photo due to its continual habit of diving, rarely on the surface for more than a few seconds, and nearly always looking into the sun.

Dave



Brunnichs Guillemot in Weymouth Harbour, showing between the Marina and Castle. Note the darker head and white line down the bill to separate it from Guillemot.



Brunnichs Guillemot in Weymouth Harbour, showing between the Marina and Castle



Brunnichs Guillemot in Weymouth Harbour, showing between the Marina and Castle



Brunnichs Guillemot in Weymouth Harbour, showing between the Marina and Castle.