

## Toads

by millerd, 10-Mar-13 09:43 PM GMT

Well, no butterflies for me yet. The first likely day round here, last Tuesday, had me condemned to the office while 17 degree sunshine beamed down outside. Now winter is again upon us.

However, while the weather was still mild, I had heard that there was a migration of toads along a residential street in Staines which needed assistance because of high kerbs and unsympathetic traffic. I took my eight-year-old son along and we spent a jolly half hour in the drizzle assisting around 30 toads (and frogs) in their journey to the pond to mate. I just hope the sudden descent of temperatures to below freezing doesn't have a detrimental effect.

Dave



## Re: millerd

by Padfield, 10-Mar-13 09:58 PM GMT

Good for you, Dave! I hope people saw you helping the toads and were inspired to help too.

Squashed toads and hedgehogs are so familiar a lot of people don't see them for the individual tragedies they represent.

Guy

## Re: millerd

by David M, 10-Mar-13 10:09 PM GMT

No substitute for butterflies, but an interesting sighting nonetheless.

Sadly, I fear that toads (as well as every other spring-loving creature) will be forced to retreat over the next few days as the a\*\*e end of winter gives us

one last lashing.

Comfort yourselves with the fact that this will be its final punishment. Thereon in, spring will be unconquerable!

### Re: millerd

by Susie, 10-Mar-13 11:24 PM GMT

I wish that were true but they're been having some bad weather in America again lately so in roughly a fortnight we'll have another cold spell. Spring proper may be a tad late this year.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Apr-13 11:16 PM GMT

I saw my first butterflies of 2013 on 3rd April, up in Yorkshire (the village of Wilberfoss to be precise). The sun was shining and the easterly wind had dropped out at last, though warm is probably not the right word, strictly speaking. The honours were taken by a Brimstone, no doubt woken from its slumbers in the copious ivy adorning the trees in my sister's garden. Soon afterwards, a Tortoseshell appeared, and was to make repeat visits over the next few days, though never stopping long enough for a photo. The Brimstone obliged, however.

Dave



### Re: millerd

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

Great to see you're up and running Dave! That Brimstone is lush 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Apr-13 08:35 PM GMT

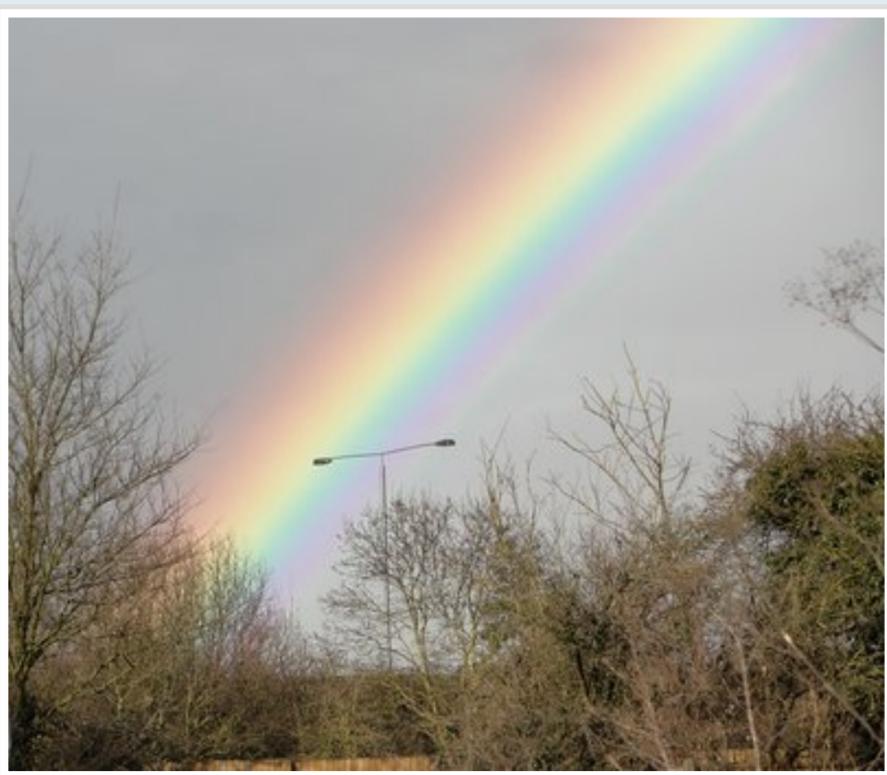
Thanks, Wurzel!

Despite four days now looking around my local patch, and some brief spells of warm sunshine, nothing to report yet...

However, I did see the little egret that has been around throughout the winter, and it has been joined by a second bird. Here they are in the company of a standard grey heron.

Today was also marked by heavy showers, and a splendid rainbow. A second bow can be seen too, and immediately inside the main bow, you can just make out the colours repeating to form a very faint third one. This was much clearer to the naked eye.

Dave



## Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Apr-13 09:07 PM GMT

Well, as promised by the weather forecast the sun shone, and the temperature here at Heathrow reached the dizzy heights of 19.5 degrees. A stroll around my local patch was in order, and I covered a fair part of it in two hours this morning.

The butterflies were out at long last. In all, I counted 21 individuals along the route, with little chance of there being any "repeats". Four species were out and about, and the overall tally was five Brimstones, four Peacocks, four Small Tortoiseshells and no less than eight Commas.

A couple of the Commas were indulging in what I took to be courting behaviour, one following the other through the branches of a flowering pussy willow, alighting regularly: one would sidle up close behind the other before the other flew on to another twig where they would repeat the exercise. Eventually, the chasing male (I assume) gave up and went to bask in the sun, whilst the female disappeared into the trees.

I was pleased to see so many Small Tortoiseshells (especially as two were at the end of the walk on the grass outside my house!). In recent years, to see

one before the summer months around here has been unusual.  
A long-awaited start to the season here, but a good one.

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-13 10:38 PM GMT

😊 Great stuff Dave, I know what you mean about the Tortoiseshells – they seem to be all I'm photographing at the moment 🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by David M, 15-Apr-13 12:25 AM GMT

**"millerd" wrote:**

...the temperature here at Heathrow reached the dizzy heights of 19.5 degrees.

How envious of you I am. It's 15th April tomorrow and I've still not even seen 13c thus far this year!!!

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 15-Apr-13 06:31 PM GMT

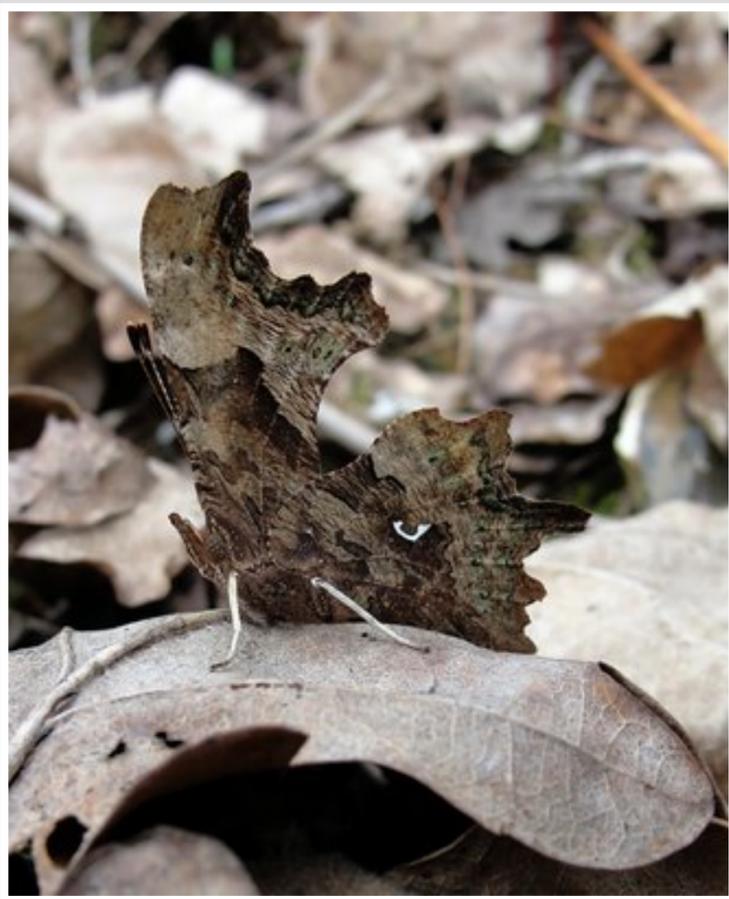
More normal today, David – a high of only 15.5 and not a lot of sun.

However, there were still a few butterflies about in the brighter intervals: I saw a Small Tortoiseshell, three Commas and a Peacock. It seems the sun has to be fully out for the Brimstones to venture forth, but the others were prepared to chance it in bright overcast.

This particular Comma seemed completely intact after its winter sleep – the underside is amazing camouflage for the dead leaves of early spring, noticeably paler than it would have been last Autumn when the need would have been for dark shades to facilitate hiding away in shady places.

The Peacock was in excellent condition too.

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-13 10:28 PM GMT

Lush under-side shot Dave 😊🍷 I'm jealous of the Peacock shot too 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Apr-13 11:15 PM GMT

You should have seen the grovelling on the ground required to get that Comma shot, Wurzel. Not to mention the creaking of knees endured to resume a standing position afterwards... 😊

But I was pleased with the result too. Thank you!

Dave

## Re: millerd

by Colin Knight, 16-Apr-13 08:29 AM GMT

Well done, great shots. I understand the pain of resuming a normal position!

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Apr-13 09:30 PM GMT

Thank you, Colin, for both kind comments and sympathetic knees! 😊

Another warm day (approaching 17 degrees by late afternoon), but I was only able to get out and about at lunchtime, when the sun was rather hazy and it was rather windy.

I saw only two butterflies – a Small Tortoiseshell and a Comma – but I didn't cover much of the usual ground. The former individual was crawling restlessly over the sprouting nettle beds, which I imagine could indicate she was a mated female looking to lay. I will keep my eyes open for caterpillars in due course. The Comma I spotted in profile several feet up above me in a willow, choosing to bask up there rather than nearer ground level as most of the others I've seen have done.

Dave



## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-13 11:23 PM GMT

I really like the underneath shot Dave, I need to get me one of those 😊 . With regards to the knees I had my first creak the other day and then they cracked too – is this a bad sign of things to come? 😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Apr-13 11:28 PM GMT

First step down the slippery slope, Wurzel... Only slippery slopes are best avoided at all costs 😊

Dave

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Apr-13 11:14 PM GMT

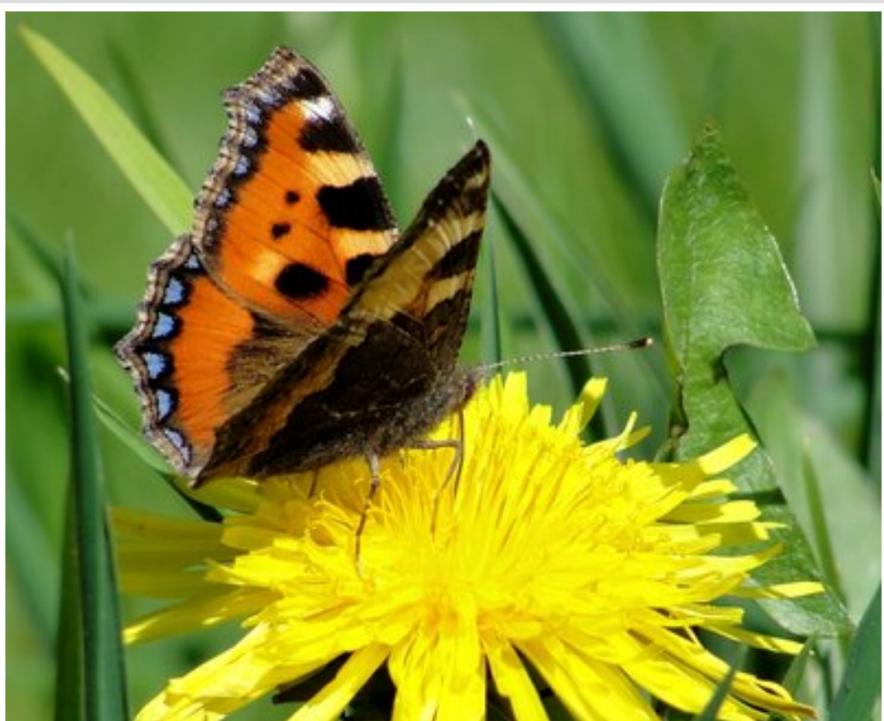
My first trip out for a few days and not as long as I would have liked: just a quick ramble locally and then a brief walk at Runnymede later on. The home patch produced a couple of Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells, plus a Brimstone and an unidentified White seen a bit of a way off. Once again, one of the Small Tortoiseshells was on a dandelion on my front lawn, within a metre of the house. I think I've already seen more than in the whole of last year (which was itself better than 2011). The Brimstone also nectared on a dandelion, and very unusually opened its wings a little whilst doing so.

At Runnymede, a single Peacock was all there was to be seen, though it was nearly six by then.

Dave



*Unusually parting its wings a little*



*Very close to home*



*Down by the Thames*

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Apr-13 11:32 PM GMT

Great shots Dave 😊 That Brimstone is just teasing isn't it, almost opening it's wings...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by David M, 21-Apr-13 11:03 AM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

Great shots Dave 😊 That Brimstone is just teasing isn't it, almost opening it's wings...

I've seen Graylings and Small Heath do this too. I wonder whether it's just certain individuals that do it as it happens too infrequently for it to be a generic habit.

One of the reasons I'm so keen to see a male Brimstone bump into a female is that the male DOES open his wings during courtship, something that would be lovely to observe.

### Re: millerd

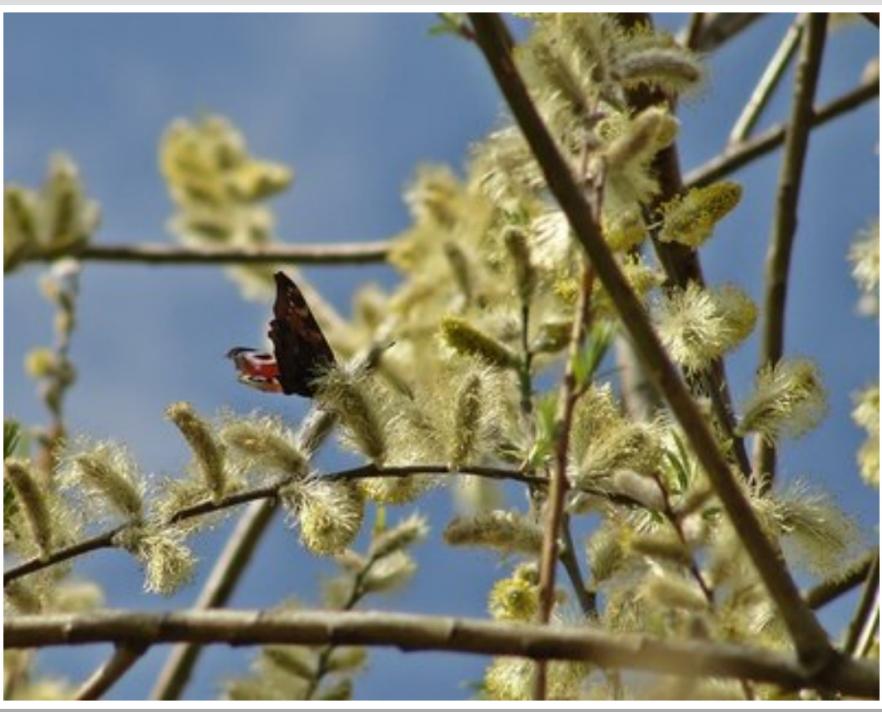
by millerd, 21-Apr-13 09:18 PM GMT

I was able to spend more time ambling around my local patch today. As always, no two days, even consecutive ones with similar weather, ever produce the same results. Today the Peacocks were the most numerous, appearing regularly at intervals all along the route I take. Where territories overlapped, spiralling dogfights ensued, and by the time I returned home I had seen 13 individuals; to this I could add six Commas and five Small Tortoiseshells.

I also saw three Brimstones, including a female, plus three Whites. The only one of these I managed to approach closely was a male Small White with deformed wings – this did not seem to inconvenience him at all. At one point a male Brimstone set off in hot pursuit of a White, and showed no sign of giving up, even forcing it to the ground a couple of times. They normally call it a day quite quickly when they realise the error: I wonder if the White was newly emerged and the pheromones released caused confusion (as sometimes happens in this circumstance, I believe).

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-13 10:52 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 😊 I still haven't seen a "white" so you're one up on me 🙄 I'll have to read up about the confusion caused by pheromones from freshly emerged imagos as I wasn't aware of that.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-13 07:49 PM GMT

Nice reports Dave, good to see you are seeing butterflies. Not seen a White myself yet but hopefully not long now.

Speaking of creaky knees, I have an arthritic left one and this winter has given it more grief than ever before. Hopefully some warmer weather will ease it off a bit. Glad I have an articulated screen on my FZ150 to help with those awkward shots 😊

Neil F.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-13 09:41 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil. I'm looking forward to a trip to your part of the world (Ryton) in May sometime – the best site for Green Hairstreaks I know. Fingers crossed for the right weather then...

I gazed out of the office window at the glorious sunshine here for a large part of today, but at least I had an excuse to escape when I had to pick up my son from school in Staines. In the five minute walk from car to school gate, I saw a Small Tortoiseshell, a White (probably a Small one), two Peacocks and my first Holly Blue. This butterfly was pottering about in the school's ornamental shrubbery, completely oblivious to the raucous hordes of children just inches away.

My son and I then had a bit of a walk around near home and managed to see five or six Peacocks, a Small White, a Comma, and another Holly Blue. This one was more predictably high up around a sizeable holly tree. Elliot managed a photo of a Peacock on his £15 digital camera, but I need to find a way of downloading it off the device. Instead, here are a couple of mine, including one sitting miles away on the mud of the far bank of the River Colne. There's even a bit of the butterfly reflected in the water – not something I think I've ever captured before.

Dave



## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-13 10:39 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 😊 I still haven't had a recognisable white yet here's hoping for the weekend!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Apr-13 09:25 PM GMT

Another very warm and sunny day – 21.8 degrees at Heathrow at five o'clock this afternoon. I escaped from work a little early and went to Harmondsworth Moor, electing to walk along a path near the Wraysbury River, rather than the more frequented routes which were overrun with dog-walkers (does anyone really need six assorted dogs?). I was hoping for some Orange Tips, but annoyingly, the edges outside the two-metre wide path had been mown recently, where in past years I know cuckoo-flower grew in the relatively damp riverside habitat. Unnecessary "tidying". Certainly, there

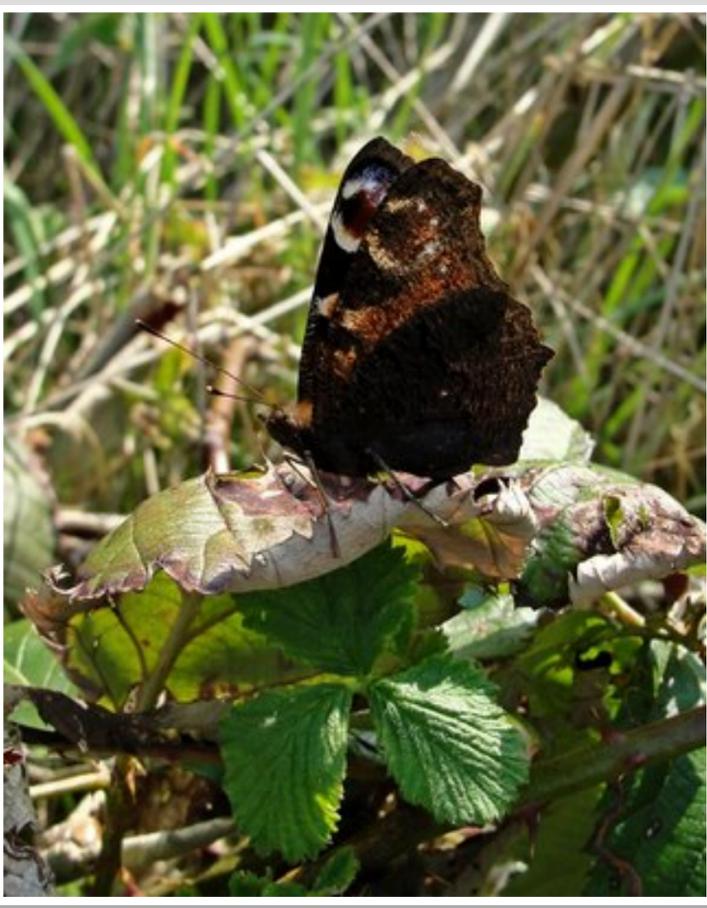
were no flowers left to attract butterflies of any sort.

However, the wide grassy areas were full of dandelions, and I really wonder what the hibernators would do without them! Where the bramble beds grew untouched and tangled, Peacocks and Commas set up their territories, inevitably with a lot of overlapping and consequent border disputes. I must have seen over a dozen of the former and about half that of the latter – plus a solitary male Brimstone.

I am a little concerned not to have seen an Orange Tip over the last week of mostly sunny and increasingly warm days. Still plenty of time yet, however, despite a plummet in temperatures forecast tomorrow: only 11 or 12 at best here. Brrr. 😞

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 26-Apr-13 10:37 PM GMT

**"millerd" wrote:**

Thanks, Neil. I'm looking forward to a trip to your part of the world (Ryton) in May sometime – the best site for Green Hairstreaks I know. Fingers crossed for the right weather then...

Dave

Hi Dave,

Hoping to be there myself sometime, my son Chris has still to see a Green Hairstreak. The Warwickshire BC open day is at Ryton on May 18th, not sure if I can make that one yet, If not then will probably visit sometime around then, depending on weather.

[http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org ... l.asp?id=3](http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org...l.asp?id=3)

Cheers,

Neil F.

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 28-Apr-13 09:14 PM GMT

Looks like I might be at Ryton the week before that (11th) unfortunately.

With half an hour to kill on Friday at Cherwell Vale Services on the M40, I set off for a walk around the big open area at the back. In past years this has been full of Orange Tips, but not today. All I saw was a solitary Comma enjoying the late sunshine.

Saturday was a washout near me, culminating in a hailstorm around seven in the evening and some good rainbows. On Sunday, a walk with all my three boys around the local patch went off under bright skies, but with temperatures just scraping 12 degrees, we didn't expect to see a lot. We certainly didn't – just one Comma, but Toby did manage to spot a Speckled Wood to double the total butterfly count for the day. It was also my first of the year, but it didn't stop for a photo.

The forecast is better for the next few days, so (work permitting) I'll set off once again ever hopeful of Orange Tips.

Dave



### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-13 10:25 PM GMT

I was in your hailstorm at about 3pm on Saturday when it hit Salisbury 😞 Good luck with the Orange-tips in the next couple of days, lovely shot of the Comma too 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Apr-13 09:51 PM GMT

Not a nice storm, was it Wurzel! There was even a white covering for a little while.

A better day today, but spent mostly in the office. I was able to get home in time for a local walk at around five, when it was mostly cloudy, but not entirely. One brief sunny interval enticed a Speckled Wood out but not long enough for it to be photographically immortalised. Another quick burst of sun energized a white butterfly into action in amongst the hawthorns: It eventually stopped, a bit distantly, but close enough to see it was another new species for the year, a Green-veined White. A poor photo recorded the event for posterity.

Dave



### Re: millerd

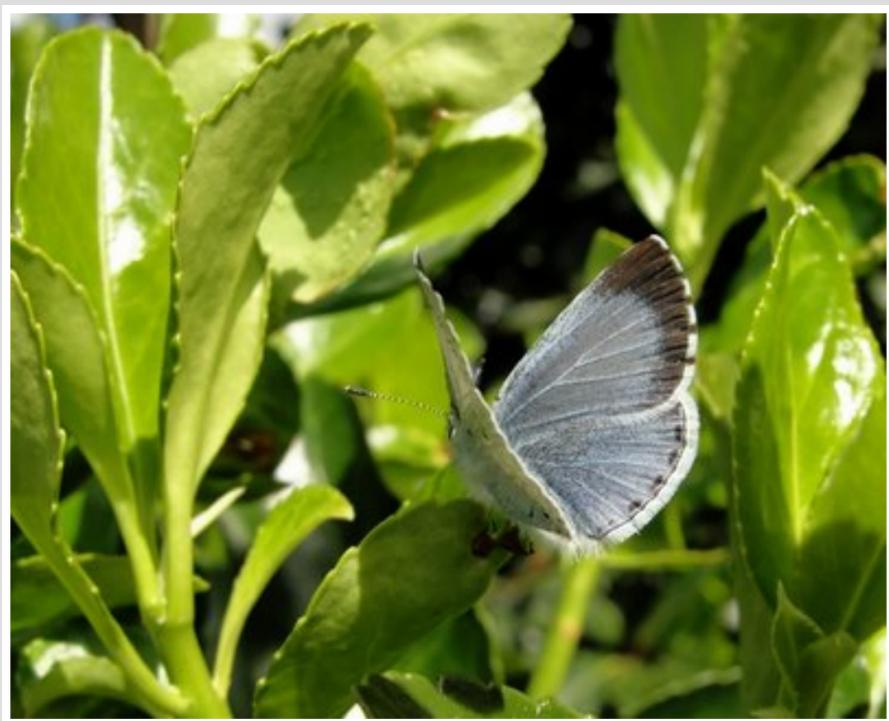
by millerd, 30-Apr-13 08:42 PM GMT

The benefits of that old adage: always take the camera with you.

I went into Staines this afternoon to pick Elliot up from school. Whilst waiting for him to finish playing with a few of his friends, a couple of Whites ambled across the playing field, two Holly Blues flew along different bits of hedge, and a Peacock dashed across the playground at full tilt. Having extracted my son, we returned to the car. As he settled himself inside, I spotted another Holly Blue in the adjacent shrubs, and amazingly it decided to

choose this moment to sit and bask at around head height. My camera was in my coat pocket, so I could hardly pass up the opportunity...

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-May-13 08:59 PM GMT

A simply glorious day.

After work, I popped into Harmondsworth Moor, as I had exactly a week ago. Within five minutes, I had seen five butterflies of five different species: a Peacock, A Comma, an Orange Tip (at long last!), a Brimstone and a White (Small or Green-veined). This boded well: I set off along the same circuit as last week, and saw many of the same butterflies, mostly Peacocks and Commas, tussling with each other over the same stretches of path. However, I also came across two further Brimstones and several Whites, another Orange Tip and a very worn Small Tortoiseshell. At least two of The Whites were definitely of the Green-veined persuasion, and one obligingly settled to "puddle" on a patch of damp mud. Returning to the car along a shadier part of the path, a Speckled Wood passed in the opposite direction, and near the car park, I spotted a Holly Blue over a tall stand of brambles.

Eight species, possibly nine (if one of the Whites was a Small one) – much more like it. 😊

Dave



*Basking*



*Sucking up salts*



*A classic Comma perching position*

### **Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 01-May-13 09:48 PM GMT

I didn't get a chance comment last night Dave as work got in the way – it almost did tonight but I've finished for the night so...

Holly Blue 🍷🍷 Lush photos! 😊 And a great report from today.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 01-May-13 10:55 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel.

A piece of luck as ever – you never expect a butterfly to plonk itself down a metre from your nose and open up like that. But that camera goes

everywhere now... 😊

I've wangled myself a day off tomorrow, and now don't know which way to go – things are springing up everywhere. Maybe Denbies...

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-May-13 09:28 PM GMT

So I tossed imaginary coin, and it came down neatly on the edge: I would go to Denbies, but visit Noar Hill first.

Part One:

I arrived at Noar Hill at about 1000, and for some considerable while saw nothing but a handful of Peacocks. However, almost as if a switch had been flicked, at about 1115 Whites (Green-veined I suspect), Brimstones and Orange Tips appeared along the hedgerows. Finally, at around noon, I encountered a Duke of Burgundy. This individual was happy to hang around for half an hour or so, and whilst it was there, who should appear but Pete Eeles. Really good to meet you properly, Pete! 😊 Eventually, the Duke decided to disappear off beyond my tracking it, and I in turn headed back to the car – passing a Small Tortoiseshell en route.





*Looking cute...*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 02-May-13 09:34 PM GMT

Part Two:

I reached Denbies around 1400, with the main aim of seeing Green Hairstreaks. I was not to be disappointed, as at least three were in their usual haunt. One in particular persistently perched photogenically in between squabbles with the others. I set off across the rest of the hillside, hoping to see Grizzled, even Dingy Skippers. It was not to be, but instead I managed to put up a pale orange butterfly – hot pursuit uphill revealed it to be a Small Heath. I never succeeded in getting close to it, but achieved a rather fuzzy shot for the record. Elsewhere on the hill there were Brimstones (including females looking to lay), Orange Tips and one or two Peacocks.





*For the record*



## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 02-May-13 09:43 PM GMT

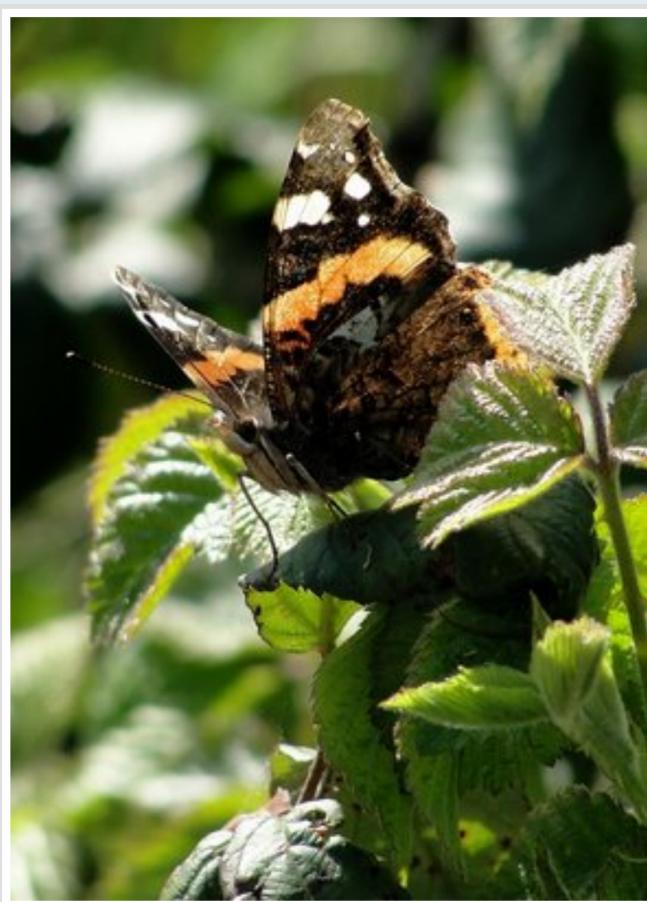
Part Three:

Time to go home – but on getting back, there was still time for a stroll around my local patch. I'm glad I did. The first butterfly I saw was a Red Admiral. I imagine this was a migrant, as any that overwintered would have appeared before now if they hadn't perished in the prolonged cold winter. This was an aggressive insect, repeatedly diving at me as I tried to photograph a Speckled Wood and seeing off a Holly Blue and then an unsuspecting Robin. Moving on, it was clear that there had been a significant emergence of Green-veined Whites and Orange Tips. Two of the latter had wasted no time at all, and I found them in flagrante on a bramble – looking somewhat uncomfortable, it must be said. As the sun lowered, the Orange Tips stopped their patrolling and came to a stand of Garlic Mustard where they basked, nectared and settled down – beautifully camouflaged on the flower heads. A few days back, these flowers were not even open – the Orange Tips must somehow know when to come out. I also watched a Brimstone make its way amongst the leaves of an ivy plant – effectively disappearing so good was the camouflage. On top of all this, I lost count of the Peacocks and Commas.

They were everywhere along the paths, tussling with each other over overlapping territories. Finally, I encountered a Small Tortoiseshell over the nettle beds - looking decidedly worn now.

Quite a day, really. 😊

Dave



*I'm watching you...*





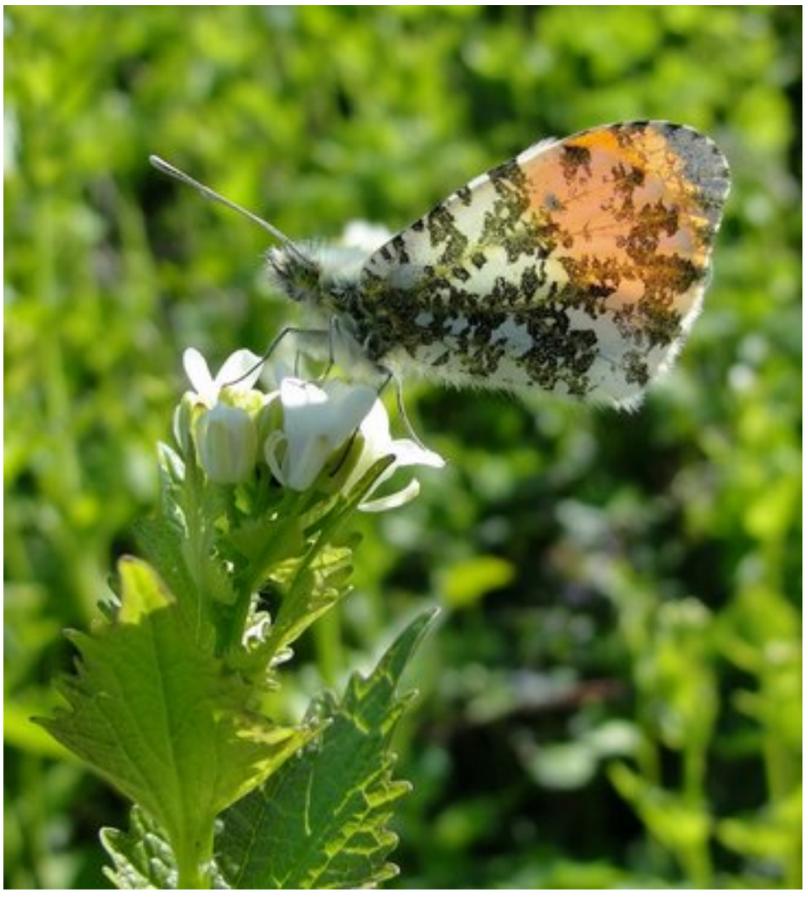
*Now you see it...*



*...now you don't*







### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-May-13 10:08 PM GMT

"Quite a day" 🤩 I'll say! 🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-May-13 10:28 PM GMT

Another brilliant morning, but no chance of a day off work again, so I just had a brief tour of the local patch at just before nine. Yesterday's Speckled Wood was up and about, but apart from four or five Green-veined Whites, an Orange Tip, and a couple of Holly Blues fluttering around a neighbour's box hedge, nothing else was stirring.

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-May-13 10:53 PM GMT

Great shots again Dave – I really am going to have to put some time in to get some Orange-tip shots, though I don't know if I'll be able to match yours



Enjoy the Hen, I'm on Old Peculier tonight 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-13 10:23 PM GMT

#### "millerd" wrote:

... but apart from four or five Green-veined Whites, an Orange Tip, and a couple of Holly Blues fluttering around a neighbour's box hedge, nothing else was stirring.

Dave

That would still be a good count for me Dave, things only just kicking off over the past couple of days here in the Midlands, first Grizzled Skipper reported a couple of days ago, no Green Hairstreaks yet... and the Speckled Woods still haven't shown up in my garden. Plenty of hibernators still about though, mostly Peacocks and Commas for me (as usual).

Hoping the bank holiday will see a few more reports

Cheers,

NeilF.

Edit; I tell a lie, the first Green Hairstreak reported from Ryton a couple of days ago.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-May-13 10:26 PM GMT

It was afternoon before the sun appeared today, and my was it breezy round here, not to mention noticeably cooler. I decided to walk alongside the Thames at Runnymede, followed by a tour round Bedfont Lakes Country Park.

All good exercise, but not many butterflies: a solitary Small Tortoiseshell at Runnymede and a Peacock and a couple of Commas at Bedfont. I therefore returned home and did the usual circuit here, which proved a better idea, as I saw two Speckled Woods (both seemed a bit pale, and one had larger spots than usual), and several Commas and Peacocks. One Speckled Wood proved impossible to get properly in focus as it was vibrating one forewing. I checked a small patch of Cuckoo Flower to find the Orange Tips had got there first: two eggs were in evidence, still quite pale.

Dave



*Out of the wind at Runnymede*



*Pale and with larger spots*



*Constantly vibrating its right forewing*



*Egg one*



*Egg two*



*Egg two close up*

**Re: millerd**

by Susie, 05-May-13 08:49 AM GMT

Just catching up with your diary Dave, it looks like you had a good week. Cracking photos too! 😊

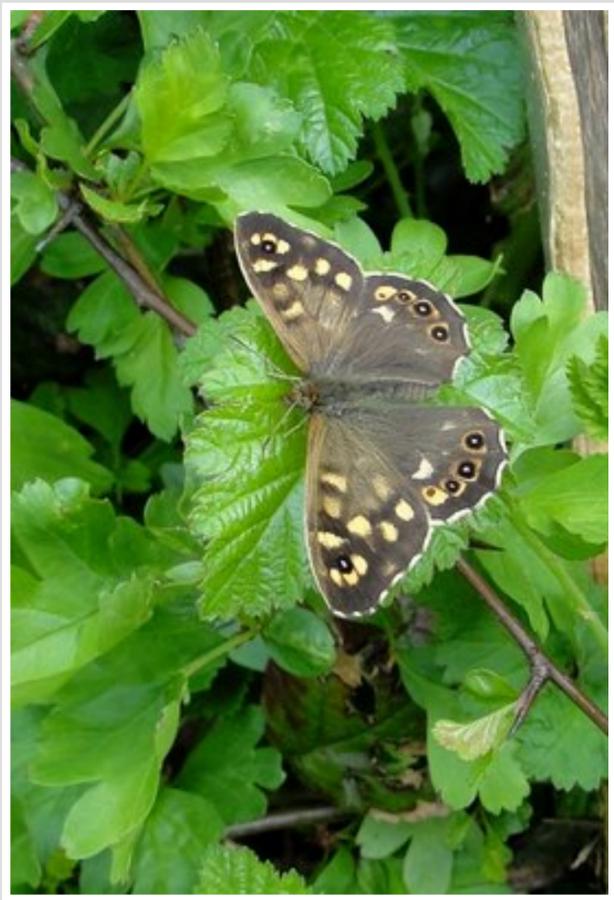
**Re: millerd**

Thank you, Susie – yes, a splendid week, really. 😊

Today was warm, but mostly cloudy. I was free in the afternoon, and not too far away, so I had a walk around the Botany Bay end of the woods at Chiddingfold. Despite a few bursts of sun, I saw not a single butterfly. The only thing was to return home and see if that was any better. It was: within a few metres of the start of the walk, I had seen a Speckled Wood, a Holly Blue, a Green-veined White, a Peacock and a Comma. As I walked, the sun started to break through a little and it became quite muggy. I saw five or six more Green-veined Whites, a couple of Orange Tips (including one basking way up in a hawthorn tree), two more Holly Blues, and more Peacocks and Commas. I also saw another first for the year, a male Large White which I disturbed nectaring on a dandelion. It didn't forgive me, and I didn't manage a photo.

I managed to find another Orange Tip egg, much more orange than yesterday's two, in an adjacent clump of Cuckoo Flower. Close to the spot is a stand of Garlic Mustard, sheltered by trees, but quite open to sunlight. Peering carefully at the flowerheads, I suddenly resolved two of the clusters of buds into a pair of roosting Orange Tips.

Dave





*There are two Orange Tips in this picture...*



### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-May-13 10:46 PM GMT

Cracking shots again Dave 😊 Also a couple of thank yous. First for the date of the end of the Hen offer! 😊 Also for the shots of Cuckoo flower. I've been seeing it here and there but wasn't sure if that was actually the stuff, but your shots have confirmed it for me 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-May-13 09:41 PM GMT

This afternoon, I headed north for a change, to the NT car park at Pitstone Hill on the Chilterns. I walked southwestwards along the northwest edge of the hillside along to the reserve at Aldbury Nowers in Hertfordshire (Pitstone is in Bucks). Aside from a Brimstone or two, all I saw across a mile or so of hill were two Green Hairstreaks. These I took to be females from their behaviour, as they kept low to the ground with no attempt to perch in the nearby scrub.

However, once into the reserve, with its south-facing, sheltered, chalk scree slope (try saying that a few times after a glass of ale), things changed. Within a minute or two, I spotted a Grizzled Skipper, and over the next hour or so I saw at least three more individuals. There were probably more. Brimstones abounded, with both sexes represented, and there were plenty of Orange Tips and Green-veined Whites too. At the bottom of the slope, I found two more Green Hairstreaks, and as I left the reserve later, another passed me, crossing the county boundary from Bucks into Herts. A sighting record for both counties?

As ever, on returning home I did a circuit locally. Every day is different: today Holly Blues were the most numerous species (thirteen seen altogether), and several more Speckled Woods had emerged too (seven seen in all). Brimstones, Orange Tips, GVW and Large Whites, Commas and Peacocks completed the picture. It has been a real joy to see so many Peacocks and Commas in recent weeks, and I shall miss being dive-bombed by the former and hustled by the latter when they disappear, probably fairly soon. The Commas in particular are looking very tired now.

Dave



*Buckinghamshire Green Hairstreak*





*Hertfordshire Green Hairstreak*





*Not so well camouflaged*



*Hanging on in there - quite a dark individual*

**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-13 09:56 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Nice photos, I particularly like the first Grizzled Skipper against the rocks 😊

Is it me, or do Grizzled Skippers have darker markings as you go South 🤔 I started noticing last year that those from Warwickshire seem to show a lighter brown patterning than a lot of photos posted from more southern locations, some of which have markings that look almost black. Its not just my photos either, I have looked at some taken by other people in the midlands which seem to show the same.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by David M, 06-May-13 09:59 PM GMT

That first Grizzled Skipper image is a killer, Dave.

Excellent shot.

### Re: millerd

by Mark Tutton, 06-May-13 10:22 PM GMT

Hi all – regarding he darkness of grizzled skippers I think it is probably more to do with the freshness of the butterfly. From my observations they only appear black for a day or two after emerging – they even appear to have a metallic sheen when they are very fresh. Once they have been out for a few days the 'black' areas become more brown. Grizzled skippers have been out for about a week in Hampshire and quite a few that I saw today already seemed to have a brownish background. 😊 mark.

### Re: millerd

by Nick Broomer, 06-May-13 10:22 PM GMT

I agree, a lovely photo Dave, the Grizzled Skipper looks great on those stones, nice combination.

All the best, Nick.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-May-13 10:26 PM GMT

Thank you all – it was a lovely butterfly, and posed in a textbook spot. 😊

Those chalk pebbles were really hot to the touch as well!

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-13 10:30 PM GMT

#### "Tuts" wrote:

Hi all – regarding he darkness of grizzled skippers I think it is probably more to do with the freshness of the butterfly. From my observations they only appear black for a day or two after emerging – they even appear to have a metallic sheen when they are very fresh. Once they have been out for a few days the 'black' areas become more brown. Grizzled skippers have been out for about a week in Hampshire and quite a few that I saw today already seemed to have a brownish background. 😊 mark.

Hi Mark,

Your probably right, its just the one I saw today in Warks was very fresh, even had that sheen on it a bit, but still looked a bit lighter to me. Probably just my eyes need re-calibrating 😊

Sorry Dave, I will get out of your diary now.

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-May-13 10:35 PM GMT

No problem, Neil! You've got me delving through past photos of Grizzlies from all over the place, looking for trends... 😊

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-May-13 10:42 PM GMT

I agree with everyone else about the Grizzlie shot, but I also think the third was is great as it shows the diminutive scale perfectly 😊 . However I see you also have a few shots of the horrible green thing, the least said about that the better 😬😬😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by David M, 06-May-13 10:44 PM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

However I see you also have a few shots of the horrible green thing, the least said about that the better

This hatred is becoming debilitating, Wurzel. 😬

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-May-13 08:48 PM GMT

No Green Hairstreaks for me today, Wurzel! 😊 Not a great deal of anything, in fact, as work took me up to the Big City for the day. 😬

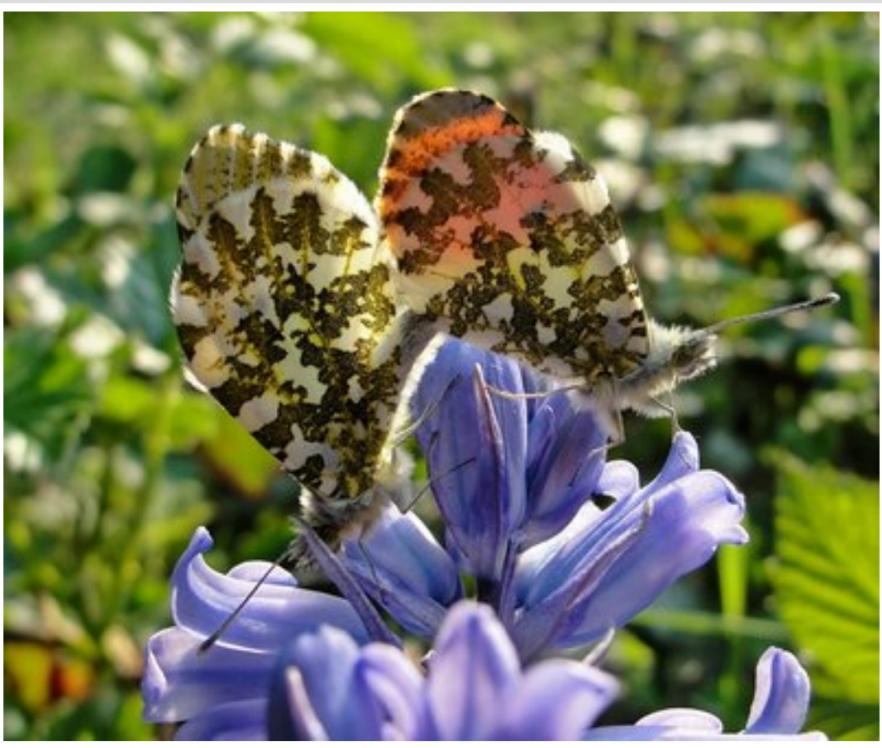
However, as it was still warm at six when I returned home, I had to venture out round my home patch just in case. I soon encountered a Speckled Wood and a Green-veined White, both headed for the trees, presumably to roost. A little further on, I found a couple of Orange Tips on a variety of wild parsley. The male was persistently bothering the female, who was displaying the typical abdomen-in-air rejection attitude. Eventually, she became fed up, and flew off across the river. The thwarted male then fluttered around the spot where she'd been for a good five minutes before he gave in and went up into the trees. I carried on to the patch of garlic mustard where I'd seen roosting Orange Tips a few days ago. Sure enough, there were another pair here. The female was still settling down, but I imagine the male had preceded her as he was oblivious to her presence a few flowerheads away. Moving on again I spotted two more, this time a mating pair settled on a bluebell in the low sunshine.

Oh, and I saw three Peacocks, defending their various bits of path to the end of the day.

It hardly seems possible, looking out on this summer evening, that tomorrow and subsequent days will be cool with showers and strong winds.

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-May-13 10:47 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Dave 🍷 I really am going to have to try and find a regular spot for Orange-tips as I'm just loving the close-up shots you're getting 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Pete Eeles, 11-May-13 09:53 AM GMT

I agree. The backlit mating pair is excellent at showing the difference between the 2 sexes, even when their wings are closed! Must try this myself 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-May-13 10:10 PM GMT

Thanks chaps! The end of a sunny day is definitely the best time to get close to Orange Tips.

I haven't been able to get out in the field since Tuesday - until yesterday, when the weather decided to be thoroughly unkind. 😞 I was able to go to Ryton with my three boys, but with sun virtually non-existent and some hefty showers, all we saw was a single Speckled Wood and some Orange Tip eggs. Even more annoying to get home at half past seven to find it had been dry all day.

Today (Sunday) was better, and an hour or so around my local patch provided a fair bit of interest. Once again, by far the most numerous butterfly was the Holly Blue. There must have been twenty or more altogether, often in groups of two or three, both males and females. They were more inclined than usual to settle lower down for some reason, which was good. In addition, Small and Green-veined Whites were frequent, along with Orange Tips of both

sexes. There was also a solitary male Large White, only just bigger than his cousins. Speckled Woods were also well in evidence, definitely a better showing than last year, but with no Peacocks and only one Comma (a female I suspect, as it was crawling over low-level nettle and hop leaves), they may well have had their time in the sun. Finally, there was one Red Admiral, occupying a riverside glade territory that has attracted his forebears certainly since I started walking this route seven years ago. He had to share it with a couple of Speckled Woods and several Holly Blues – which kept him very busy.

Dave











### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-May-13 10:31 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Holly Blues Dave 😊 The Red Admiral seems to be something of a rarity so far this year so it was great to see you've got a shot 📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 13-May-13 07:09 PM GMT

Sorry to hear your trip to Ryton was a bit of a washout.

I went out myself on Saturday planning to circle around Bishops Hill/Harbury/Ryton as described in my diary. As it happened, the only place that I got out of the car was at Harbury, the rain was just too heavy when I arrived at Ryton later in the afternoon so I carried on home.

Some lovely photos in your past couple of posts, especially the backlit Orange Tips as others have said. I'm jealous of your Holly Blues, I have only seen a couple so far and they have been in full flight.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by David M, 13-May-13 08:47 PM GMT

Some great shots of a beautiful butterfly there, Dave. Not many people can ever say Holly Blues were the most numerous species seen in a site visit!

Looks like they might be enjoying a good year. Perhaps the cold winter put paid to many of their predators?

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-May-13 09:23 PM GMT

Many thanks again for the comments, folks. 😊

I suspect Holly Blues are much overlooked: many of those I saw were well above head height and their behaviour resembled hairstreaks rather than anything else. The number that came down and settled close to me was quite surprising. 😊

Today was a different sort of day: I didn't get out round my local area until three, and it was windy, quite cool, but with longish sunny spells. I saw a few Holly Blues (but not like yesterday's abundance), five or six Speckled Woods, one Peacock, and a selection of Whites. I approached one or two – the first was a female Orange Tip, and all the others identifiable turned out to be Green-veined Whites today. In addition, I saw six or seven male Orange Tips, battling against the wind and settling fairly readily every time the sun dimmed. Photo opportunities increased – but the wind made things very trying!

Dave







### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-May-13 11:31 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the Orange-tips again Dave 😊🍷 I know what you mean about the wind – you almost want to reach out and hold the stem of the plant they're on – but you dare'nt unless the butterfly flies away. On another matter I'm stocked up on Crafty Old Hen but I'm back enjoying Poacher Choice from Badger, it's a different taste but a winner as far as I'm concerned 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-13 12:12 AM GMT

I have that one stashed away as well, Wurzel – another favourite! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Pauline, 14-May-13 06:45 AM GMT

I am green with envy at your lovely Orange Tips shots Dave. I don't think I have ever seen more than one in any one place. I have spent the last couple of weeks trying to search for them even resorting to stopping the car if I come across appropriate patches of plants!!! I know exactly how Wurzel feels

but for me it's orange, not green.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-May-13 11:46 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline – I doubt I'll ever match the lovely pictures you take, mind. I have seen quite a few Orange Tips around here this year, and I've been lucky in the times and conditions in which I've been out, which seem to have hindered them in their usual ceaseless activity in the sunshine.

The sun beckoned today, and I took the risk of driving down to Bentley Wood in the late afternoon. The sun was out, but the Eastern Clearing was very soggy with recent rain and in comparison with other years it looked somewhat barren: the bluebells were only just out, very little bugle was to be seen, and the bracken fronds remained furred. There were butterflies – I saw over a dozen Brimstones, including a number of females laying on the recently opened buckthorn buds, plus several Orange Tips. But... no Pearl-bordered Fritillaries seen in the two hours I was there. I bumped into another chap on a similar, but equally unfulfilled mission – his afternoon was redeemed somewhat by an encounter with a nightjar. I will have to return in a week or two. I imagine the few PBF seen a few days back succumbed to the storminess of Tuesday night.

Driving home, I witnessed the odd phenomena of having brilliant clear blue skies to the south, and dark grey heavy showers to the north. Perhaps I should have gone elsewhere – but you can never predict these things.

Dave



*Brimstone egg, moments after being laid. A distinct blue tinge*



*One of many*

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-May-13 10:19 PM GMT

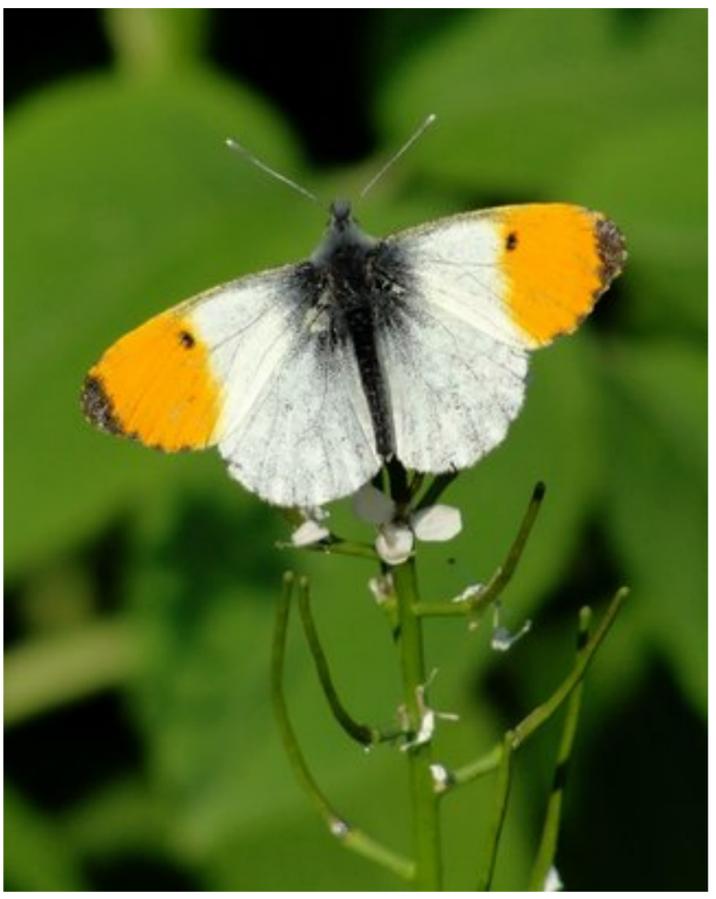
After a very grey day, the sun made a half-hearted appearance at just before six. I set off around my local patch to see if anything had been tempted into activity.

Close to home, I found four or five Green-veined Whites flitting between the wild parsley flowers, along with a solitary Orange Tip. Further along, the Garlic Mustard patches were host to another four or five Orange Tips, all males, and all nectaring while they could before settling back down to roost. Photos were easy to take, but though the butterflies were not very active, the breeze made clear pictures not quite so easy. The Orange Tips are also becoming noticeably worn now.

No other butterflies seen – though it was seven o'clock when I left the Orange Tips.

Dave











### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-May-13 11:43 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave 🎁 You've inspired me so I might try and make an evening visit tomorrow night 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-May-13 08:21 PM GMT

Amazingly, in a day filled with cold winds and sporadic hail, the sun shone for an hour between five and six. The temperature rose to the dizzy heights of around 11 degrees, and I set off around my local walk. Almost immediately, I came across a couple of intrepid Green-veined Whites. One promptly buried itself in the vegetation, but the other basked for a while. Moving on, the only other butterfly I saw was a fresh Small White, soaking up what heat there was amongst the brambles.

And it's going to be much worse weatherwise tomorrow... 😞

(but better over the holiday weekend, allegedly) 😊

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-May-13 10:31 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave 😊 intimate almost 😊 The weathermen don't have a good track record when forecasting good weather so I hope that they get it more accurate than usual 😊 ireally need to get out and find some butterflies!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-May-13 10:41 PM GMT

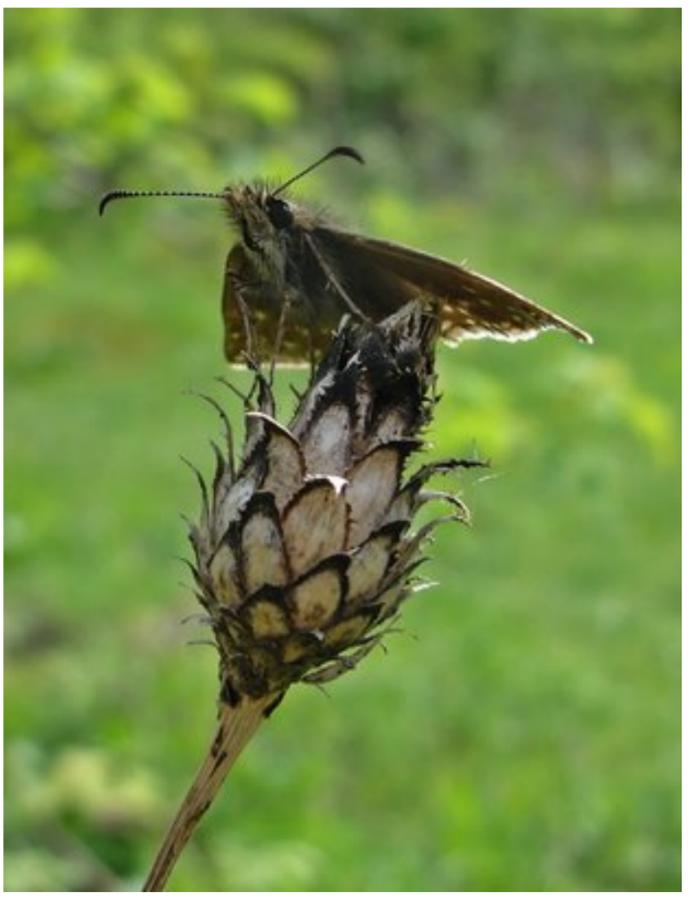
A very different day today to yesterday's flashback to winter. A day out with all the boys took in Amersham for steam trains on the Metropolitan Line, Dunstable Downs for tea and kite-flying, and Totternhoe quarry for whatever might be about.

There were Whites, Orange Tips and Brimstones across the site, plus a couple of Speckled Woods and a Peacock. However, I was pleased to find both of the main target species for the day, Dingy Skippers and Small Blues. The former were frequent when the sun was out, again in all parts of the site – I must have seen more than a dozen. However, I only tracked down two of the latter species, both tucked up in the pathside shrubs and difficult to spot. Finally, in one of the chalk pits, a single Duke of Burgundy took off as we arrived.

Oh, and specially for Wurzel, there was a rather nice Green Hairstreak perching in a hawthorn. 😊

Dave







## Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-May-13 10:12 PM GMT

A glorious day, but I was limited to looking around my local patch. It was a day dominated by white butterflies, with all three species much in evidence, plus several Orange Tips and Brimstones. Completing the picture were ten or so Holly Blues, five rather tatty Peacocks and a couple of Speckled Woods. Still waiting for Small Heaths, Brown Argus and Common Blues to make an appearance.

Today was also the first day I have seen dragonflies and damselflies this year.

Dave



*Female nectaring avidly after a bout of egg-laying*





*female GVW*



*the same individual*



*female Small White*



*male Small White*



*female Large White*



male Large White

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-May-13 10:41 PM GMT

Cracking shots Dave as per usual 😊 I'll forgive you for the Greenstreak 😊 as I have now conquered my nemesis 😊 Just need to find some Duke's now and I'll almost be on track for this time of year.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-13 11:12 PM GMT

Thanks once again, Wurzel. I'm still behind your tally by at least one Fritillary, I think...

Today, I persuaded the boys into a woodland walk at Botany Bay. We saw probably as many as ten Wood Whites, including one quite close to the parking area, plus a few Brimstones, GVW and a couple of Speckled Woods. Most of the Wood Whites appeared to be females, regularly going to ground to lay eggs on a variety of plants. I'm afraid the stream proved too tempting for Elliot, and a certain amount of mud came home with us.

Back at home later, I had my usual tour locally. Nothing new to report – the butterflies were badly affected by the wind, which kept them from flying much despite the strong sunshine.

Dave







*Wood White laying (and not keeping still)...*



*...but not sure what plant she laid on*



*closer...*



*female at Botany Bay*



*home again with the Orange Tips*



*GVW (m)*



*very worn now*



*a distant female*



*becoming a bit tatty*



*somewhat tattier*



*very tatty indeed*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 31-May-13 10:57 PM GMT

### **31st May (Part One)**

Setting off early, I managed to be at Bentley Wood before ten to find the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries still warming up in the hazy intermittent sunshine. During the hour or so I was there, I probably saw a dozen or so in various places in or around the Eastern Clearing – none of them was newly emerged. I also found a pair of mating Small Coppers, which at one point were harrassed by an excited male PBF. He was no doubt affected by whatever pheromones the pair were giving off. There were several Brimstones about, a few Orange Tips, a Speckled Wood and a Grizzled Skipper.

Whilst looking to photograph a butterfly, I disturbed a couple of lizards, one of which froze to the spot and was immortalised instead. A deer on the switchback as I returned to the car park completed a very good morning.

Dave









### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-May-13 11:35 PM GMT

Great read Dave and cracking shots too 😊 Those mating Small Copper 🦋 Did you make it to Hod Hill? I was thinking about heading there on Sunday but wasn't too sure if the Marshies were out in force there yet?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-May-13 11:37 PM GMT

#### 31st May (Part Two)

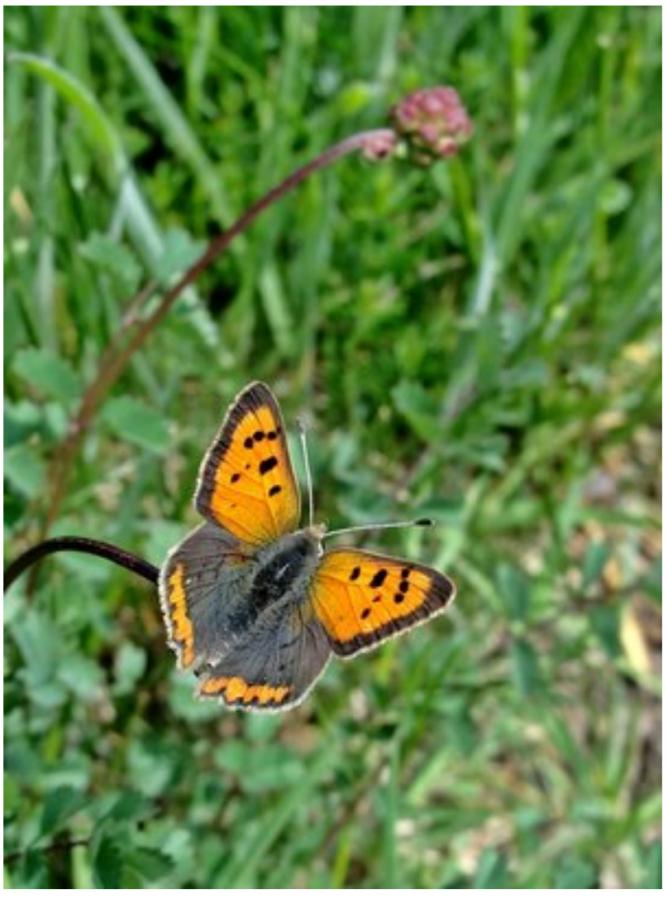
It didn't take too long to drive through Salisbury and on to Martin Down. I walked from Sillens Lane up to Bokerley Ditch and along nearly to the car park on the A354, and then back again. In near perfect conditions, the butterflies were rather sparse. I did encounter Dingy Skippers everywhere along the route, and quite a few Grizzled Skippers as well, but what stood out was the absence of Brown Argus, Common Blue and Adonis Blue, all of which I would have expected to see. I found no Green Hairstreaks either and only one Small Copper, but did find a little colony of Small Blues. There were only four or five: they looked amazingly blue when they flew, considering how few blue scales they have. There were one or two Small Heaths flying too.

I was surprised at the large number of Brimstones still about. The majority were females, most of which were egg-laying on the many small buckthorn shrubs along and near the ditch. I chanced upon a courting couple and watched the female open her wings completely and lie flat and immobile as the male danced around her. I could not freeze him with the camera, but managed clear shots of her open wings – which made my afternoon.

Dave











## Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-May-13 11:55 PM GMT

### 31st May (Part Three)

It's not far from Martin Down to Hod Hill, but the thought of the climb was a bit daunting. Nevertheless...

Up I plodded, hoping for good things at the top. My goodness, was I disappointed. After an hour of walking the ramparts, the ditches, the slopes, all I had seen were a dozen Dingy Skippers, a couple of Grizzled and three Small Heath. There were no Marsh Fritillaries, no Blues, no Brown Argus, no Green Hairstreaks. As I set off for the path back down, a flash of orange caught my eye – could things have changed? But no: it was an unlikely elderly Small Tortoiseshell, which amazingly was promptly joined in combat by another. Unexpected, but not what I came to see.

So Wurzel, I would advise checking that they are definitely out before heading here for Marsh Fritillaries 😞

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by David M, 01-Jun-13 11:14 AM GMT

Sounds like a highly enjoyable day out, Dave.

Excellent images of Brimstone behaviour – I'm still to see this myself as I usually see Brimstones in isolation round here. One day perhaps..

## Re: millerd

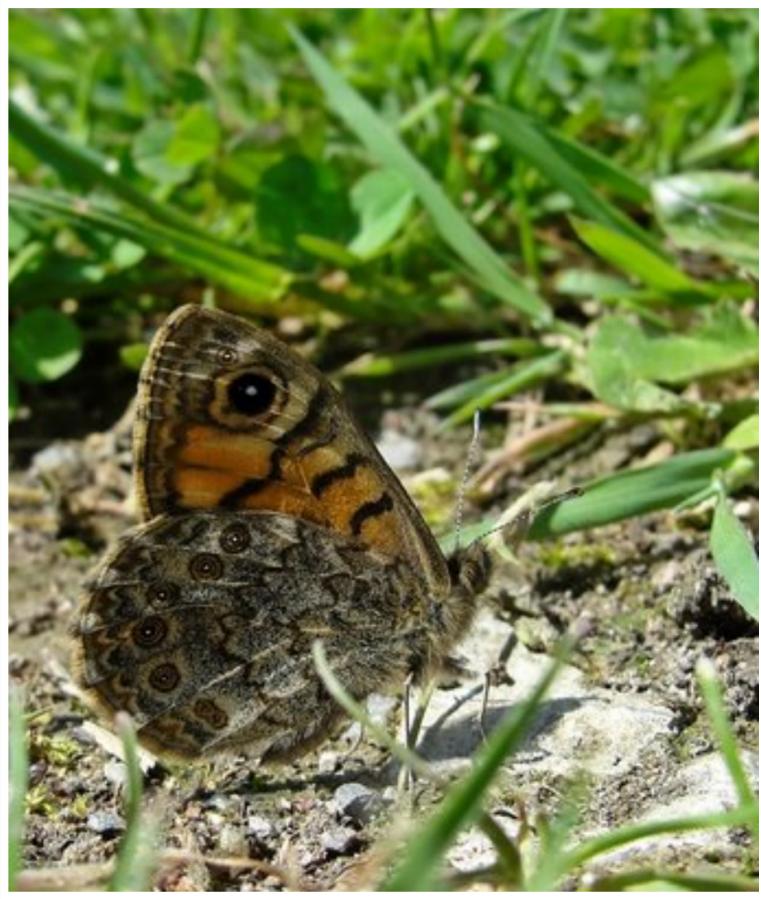
by millerd, 01-Jun-13 10:00 PM GMT

### 1st June (Part One)

Following the weather forecast with fingers crossed, I left a grey and cloudy Heathrow behind. By the time I was passing Gatwick, I had emerged into sunshine, and so it remained all the way down to High & Over, on the Downs behind Seaford. I was here to see Wall Browns – this an area renowned for them – and there were plenty to see. Following the footpath (known as The Comp) westwards, I encountered Walls every few metres once the sheep were left behind. I believe this is an ancient trackway, and it runs mostly between high hedges providing warmth and shelter. As far as I can tell, almost all the Walls I saw were male. Certainly, I failed to photograph a female, and to be fair nearly failed to photograph any males either, despite their numbers. A very lively species, and one my camera frequently pretends isn't there at all and focusses on the surroundings instead. However, I must have seen well over 20 individuals, and many were very fresh with all the rich colour and character of a Fritillary.

As well as the Walls, I saw several Dingy Skippers and Speckled Woods, two Holly Blues, five fresh-looking Red Admirals, a few Orange Tips, Whites and female Brimstones, a Peacock, a Small Tortoiseshell and a Green Hairstreak. This individual was down on the path, apparently sucking up minerals. This is not something I've seen one do before, but of course many species can be seen doing it, so it's probably not unusual. There was also a nest of Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars near the viewpoint at High & Over.

Dave









## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-13 10:06 PM GMT

### 1st June (Part Two)

The sun went in at High & Over, so I headed west to Mill Hill, behind Shoreham, to see some Adonis Blues (and hopefully some Common Blues too). As I emerged from the trees out onto the hillside, the first butterfly I saw was a female Adonis. The sun was coming and going, so the butterflies were not too active, but across the hill, there were reasonable numbers of both Common and Adonis Blues. All were very fresh, with the latter probably in the majority and more scattered across the slopes. Also seen were Dingy Skippers, a single Grizzled Skipper and frequent Small Heaths. On the way back up to the car, a Red Admiral made a sortie at me and then retreated back into the trees.

Dave



*female Adonis*



*male Common Blue – new, but a bit crumpled*



*male Adonis*



*male Adonis*



*a perfect specimen*

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-13 10:13 PM GMT

### 1st June (Part Three)

Again, the sun disappeared, so I needed to move on. Homewards from Shoreham is along the A24, which conveniently goes through Dorking, which conveniently lies below Denbies Hillside. How could I ignore it?

On arrival at Denbies, the sun made a return appearance as if by magic. Once again to greet me was a female Adonis, which boded well. The males were indeed out too, and I saw around a dozen as well as several females. As I had only seen a very small handful during last August's second brood, this seems reassuring. There were Common Blues in reasonable numbers too, several rather threadbare Dingy Skippers and some fresh Small Heaths. There were no Brown Argus as far as I could tell (which was true of both High & Over and Mill Hill, come to think of it). I didn't go far across the slopes, as the butterflies were starting to roost, so I can't really say what overall numbers were like.

Dave



*male Adonis Blue*



*worn Dingy Skipper*



*female Common Blue*



*same individual sunlit*



*same individual roosting*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 01-Jun-13 10:18 PM GMT

### **1st June (Part Four)**

I arrived home with just enough sunshine left to scoot quickly round my local patch. I was immediately buzzed by an energetic Peacock, but after that saw only Orange Tips: three males all looking to settle down for the night, and a solitary female basking in the ebbing sunshine - which has given her a distinct yellow tint in the photos.

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jun-13 09:52 PM GMT

A great series of reports Dave with some cracking photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-13 10:43 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil. it was a great couple of days. 😊

#### 2nd June (Part One)

I decided to stay local today, and walk along the extended version of my usual ramble by the River Colne right up to the road through Colnbrook. I was pleased to see that at long last the Common Blues were out (but only two thus far, a male and a female about half a mile apart unfortunately!), and also the Small Heaths. This is one long colony, or a series of linked colonies, and in full swing can boast butterflies into three figures. Today, I counted 30 or so over quite a wide area, and in some of the hotspots (by the link bridge to Heathrow T5, for example), five or six were jousting together. It is clear they prefer areas where the soil is poor and the grass grows thinly, so what is after all just an enormous spoil heap suits them pretty well. The other species in any numbers seen today was the Peacock. I counted eight in various places, basking, nectaring on buttercups, or just swooping and diving just for the hell of it. Most were rather worn, but others still amazingly bright with life in them still – quite possibly a whole year on from when they were black and spiny, munching the riverside nettle beds.

Also seen: a couple of Holly Blues, a Speckled Wood, a variety of Whites and a Brimstone or two, but not one Orange Tip. I also found a Small Tortoiseshell larval web.

Dave







## Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-13 10:56 PM GMT

### 2nd June (Part Two)

Still local, I had an afternoon wander around Harmondsworth Moor. This can be good for Common Blues and Brown Argus, but none were to be seen today. A few Small Heaths were out, but nothing like the numbers I had seen earlier not that far away. In fact, there really wasn't much to be seen at all – a couple of Peacocks and a few Whites. Most of these appeared to be Large Whites, and as the sun was a bit come-and-go, I tracked a female, then a male down and managed some reasonable pictures of this relatively awkward customer. The female had an amazing underside: the green colour apparent in the photo was exactly how she looked.

Dave



*Large White (female underside)*





### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-13 11:13 PM GMT

Cracking read and shots Dave 😊 Is it just me or in the last couple of days have you seen almost all of this years species tally 😎?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps - Cheers for the info I'll PM properly to reply.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-13 10:24 PM GMT

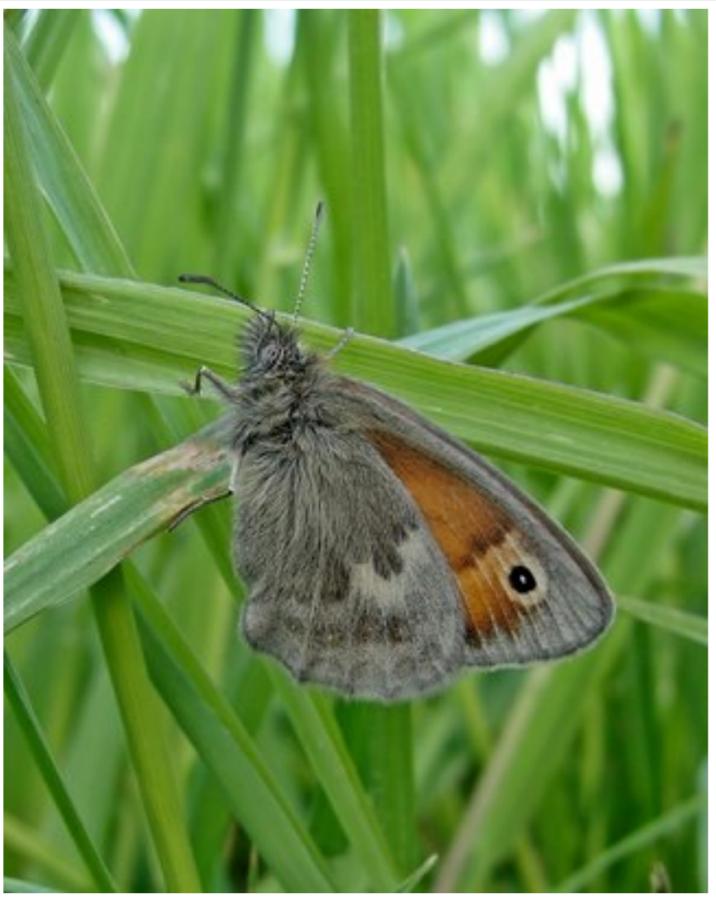
21 out of this year's tally so far of 24, Wurzel - only Wood White, Comma and Duke of Burgundy were missing from the last couple of days. Didn't think till you mentioned it. 😊

#### 3rd June

No such excesses today, just a gentle stroll around the shorter version of my local area. Before long I encountered what I took to be a Holly Blue, flying around and over the nettles, brambles and ivy-entwined shrubs by the river. Just to check, I took a long shot of it when it settled, and discovered that it was in fact a Common Blue some considerable distance from where I normally see them. I can only speculate where the colony actually is...

There were ten or so Small Heaths in the small fraction of their habitat here that today's walk took in, popping up out of the grass each time the sun re-emerged from a cloud, plus an inevitable Peacock still defending the same patch of path that he did yesterday. With sun forecast for some days to come, he could still be around next week. Aside from that there was a *genuine* Holly Blue, and several Whites. These included the whitest male Small White I've ever seen, to the extent that the photos I tried to take were so over-white that no detail showed at all. There was also a very bright white Green-veined male, with which I had (marginally) more success, and a more standard Small White with a lovely delicate lemon underside.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jun-13 10:13 PM GMT

### 6th June (Part One)

I headed north today, initially to Totternhoe to see how the Small Blues were doing. I arrived as the sun was boiling away the cloud, but initially it was still quite cool. Overall, I must have seen 30 - 40 Small Blues in various parts of the site - they really seem to spread out in fine weather. There was a good deal of courtship going on and one encounter I watched led quickly to mating. As well as these miniature gems, I saw reasonable numbers of Common Blues, Dingy Skippers, and Small Heaths, a few Orange Tips, a Peacock and a Green Hairstreak.

Dave









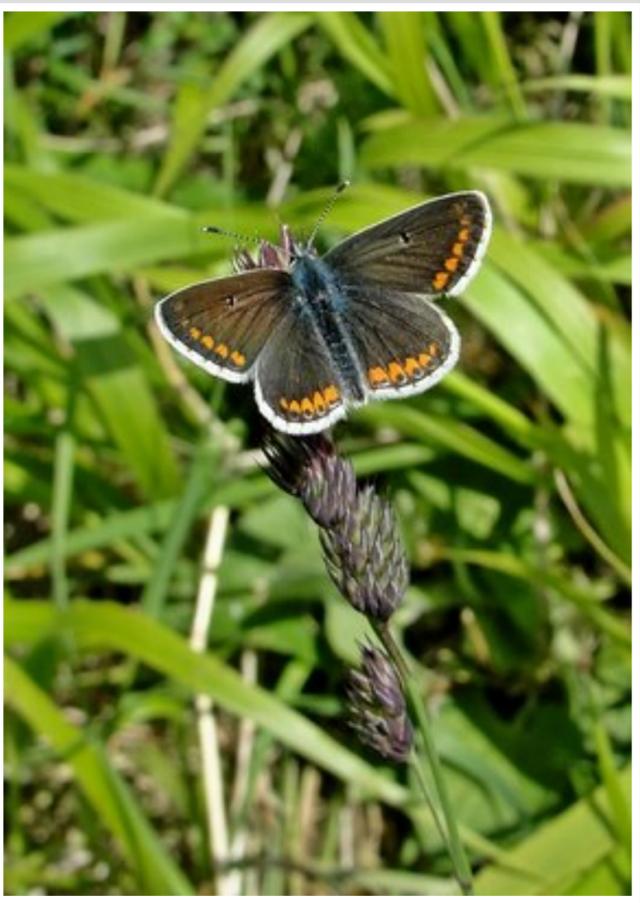
## Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jun-13 10:57 PM GMT

6th June (Part Two)

From Totternhoe, I headed along the bottom of the Chilterns to Ivinghoe Beacon, somewhere I'd not been before. I walked from the car park towards the high point, but was distracted by a series of sheltered ditches or gullies to the left. Following one down, I came into a spot much hotter than the general hillside, and alive with butterflies. There were the first Brown Argus I have seen this year, Common Blues, Small Heaths and Dingy Skippers, all chasing around in hyperactivity. I homed in on what I took to be a faded Dingy Skipper, and discovered it to be an even more faded Duke of Burgundy. This area is a reasonable site for them, but I hadn't researched exactly where to find them, so this was a bit lucky. Elsewhere on the hill, there were Brimstones, a couple of Orange Tips and a few Whites.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jun-13 11:08 PM GMT

### 6th June (Part Three)

Back home and a little time to look around locally as usual. It was pretty warm and not much was flying – a few Speckled Woods in the dappled shade, a Red Admiral in the usual riverside glade, a Common Blue, a Peacock and several Small Heaths. And then, right in the same place as previous years, a flash of orange. None of the brambles are flowering, so I didn't think it could be a Large Skipper yet (they normally coincide), but that's exactly what it was.

Oddly enough, this is the same date and place as I saw my first one last year. In 2011 it was 29th May.

Dave



## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-13 11:35 PM GMT

Cracking report and shots Dave 😊 Is that the first Large Skipper? 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jun-13 11:10 PM GMT

Well Wurzel, according to Richard Fox of BC, yes it's the first reported sighting this year.

Today was unexpectedly wet around here, the sun not coming through properly until after four o'clock. I'd hopefully gone down to Box Hill this morning and ended up getting soaked – at least it wasn't cold – but not surprisingly, no butterflies. Still too early for those wet weather stalwarts, Meadow Browns and Ringlets.

It turned out to be much warmer at home when I got back and the rain had stopped, so I walked a portion of my usual local walk. Two Common Blues were flying under the bright overcast, again in the area new for them this year (I've found some patches of trefoil, so I assume a wandering female did so last year as well!), plus a couple of Large Whites. Moving on, I had a good look around the Garlic Mustard patches for any last Orange Tips that might be sitting out the gloom, but instead of adult butterflies, I found a number of caterpillars. A link already to next spring as the cycle turns again. Other than that, I spied a Speckled Wood lurking deep in a hawthorn, and just the one Small Heath. Unfortunately, I had other things to do when the sun did properly come out, but nevertheless the walk under cloudy skies was interesting – always something different to see.

Dave







### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-13 11:30 PM GMT

Congrats on the "first", another great report again Dave 😊  
Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Jun-13 11:39 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel – just luck really, being at the right place at the right time! 😊

Today was a day with all my children up in Rugby, and as the weather was grey and chilly for much of the morning, we didn't get out anywhere until the afternoon. Their chosen venue, Coombe Abbey Country Park, was despite some sunshine utterly devoid of butterflies. Even the much-vaunted wildflower meadow had nothing at all (except a great number of buttercups).

However...

The route home takes in the A423 around the market town of Southam. Part of the cutting in which the road lies is carpeted at this time of year with kidney vetch and I wondered whether the Small Blue had succeeded in getting a toehold here (I saw one at this spot a few years ago). We parked in a convenient layby, and wandered along the verge, much to the bemusement of passing drivers no doubt who would have wondered what we were peering at. I spotted the first two Small Blues right next to the car, and over the small stretch we examined, we must have seen seven or eight. It was 1830, and the butterflies were basking and going to roost in the shrubs, so there may have been quite a few more. I'm not sure whether this colony has established naturally from the nearby population in Southam Quarry, or whether it has had an "assist" beyond the planting of the vetch. Whichever it is, it seems pretty healthy.

Dave







**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-13 11:59 PM GMT

**"millerd" wrote:**

The route home takes in the A423 around the market town of Southam. Part of the cutting in which the road lies is carpeted at this time of year with kidney vetch and I wondered whether the Small Blue had succeeded in getting a toehold here (I saw one at this spot a few years ago). We parked in a convenient layby, and wandered along the verge, much to the bemusement of passing drivers no doubt who would have wondered what we were peering at. I spotted the first two Small Blues right next to the car, and over the small stretch we examined, we must have seen seven or eight. It was 1830, and the butterflies were basking and going to roost in the shrubs, so there may have been quite a few more. I'm not sure whether this colony has established naturally from the nearby population in Southam Quarry, or whether it has had an "assist" beyond the planting of the vetch. Whichever it is, it seems pretty healthy.

Dave

Hi Dave,

The Southam Bypass and various other spots in that area have been specifically sown with Kidney Vetch to encourage Small Blues to colonise. I understand that the colonies have spread there naturally from nearby sites, including Southam Quarry.

A bit more information on the link below,

<http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org...l-blue.asp>

Cheers,

Neil F.

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 09-Jun-13 10:54 PM GMT

Thanks for the info, Neil. That link has all kinds of interesting stuff about things going on in Warwickshire, including in the Rugby area very close to where my two bigger boys live.

Today was grey and dismal down here by Heathrow, but around lunchtime the Met Office satellite pictures showed that by venturing west beyond about Andover, the sun would be out. I set off with the smallest of the boys and headed for Bentley Wood, where we spent about 90 minutes watching the Pearls and Small Pearls. Elliot has some interest, but unfortunately gets a little bored if I take too many photos. He would have liked to have seen a lizard, or better still a snake, but we failed on both counts. He did however manage to spot this very small spider with colourful patterning, and also his younger eyes found a few more settled butterflies than I did.

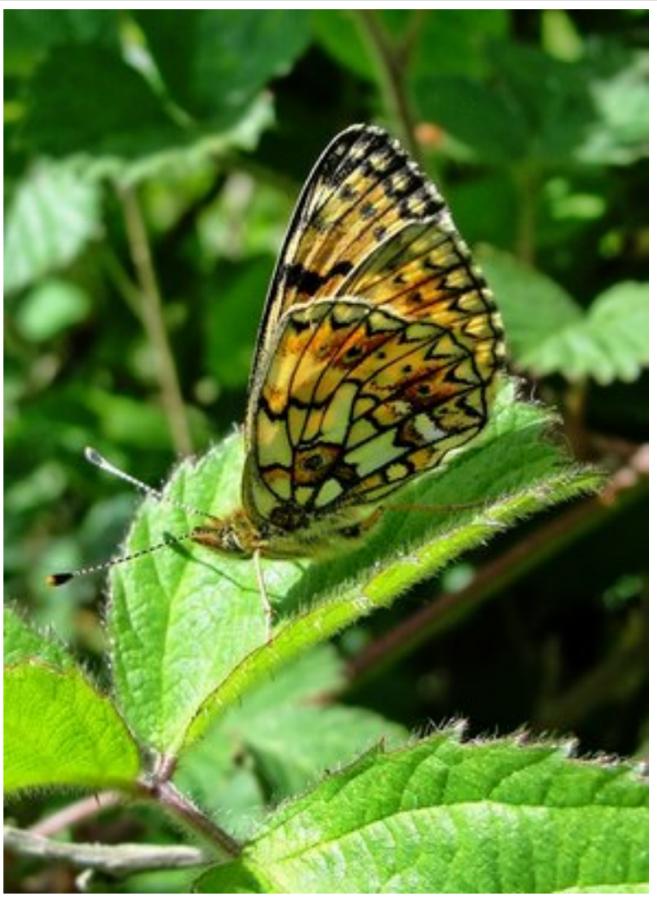
There were a few like-minded folk in the wood, one of whom appears to have been CJB with his amazing mobile phone – quite an achievement! How we failed to bump into Philzoid and Wurzel, I know not – great shame to have missed you chaps. 😞

Anyway, the butterflies: there were a goodly number of Small Pearls out, mostly towards the top of the Eastern Clearing, and still quite a few Pearls, mostly towards the bottom and looking a lot paler as you might expect. Other than that, we saw two or three Brimstones and a Speckled Wood.

Dave









### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-13 11:00 PM GMT

Great shots Dave – the last one in particular is a classic 😊 Sorry to have missed you but I had orders to return by 1:15 at the latest in order to take my younger daughter to a Birthday party. I and my older daughter would have preferred staying 😞 Hopefully we'll meet up somewhere soon – Wrecclesham perhaps should the Glannies appear?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by CJB, 10-Jun-13 07:21 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Glad to see the shots of the PBF we were looking at came out.

Great shots of the SPBF's too. Like you I headed west out of central London and made the right decision!!

I am in Scotland in July and hoping to snap some of the locals, so fingers crossed the weather will be kind.

I hope to see you again soon.

All the best and flutter on!

CJB

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jun-13 11:36 PM GMT

Work and unkind weather have conspired to keep me from going out this week. A quick foray when I thought the sun would come out after five produced very little – I found a few Orange Tip larvae waving around too much on garlic mustard to be photographed, and whilst looking for Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell larvae on nettles, a different sort of feeding damage led me to a small Comma caterpillar underneath a leaf.

I wonder if the late season will mean that the majority of Commas like this one will turn out not to be *hutchinsoni*? I think I read somewhere that the factor determining whether or not this form is produced is related to day length and whether it is increasing or decreasing when the larvae develop.

Dave



### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-13 11:57 PM GMT

Interesting info Dave, might be worth a read up. Hopefully the weather won't be too bad and we'll all be able to get about over the weekend.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jun-13 09:52 PM GMT

Sunshine really was at a premium again, it was windy, and mid-afternoon there was a prolonged downpour. However, I set off round my local patch regardless, knowing there'll always be something.

I started off with the sheltered glade by the River today, where the wind at least couldn't reach. This was occupied by a couple of Speckled Woods and a Red Admiral: as I've commented before there is always one in residence here year in year out.

Moving on to the more open areas, when the sun shone, the Small Heaths appeared – an attempt at counting them reached 25, but they were so wind-blown it was difficult to be sure. I counted ten Common Blues as well, including two females, and two Large Skippers keeping to the more sheltered bits. Other than that, a couple of Green-veined, one Small and one Large White completed the picture. I had seen a group of three Holly Blues close to home yesterday, but none appeared today.

I kept an eye out for Orange Tip caterpillars too, and found them on most clumps of garlic mustard I examined. Oddly, I have yet to find a Green-veined White caterpillar on these plants, though it is certainly one they eat.

Later on, once the rain had stopped, a fit of mad optimism took me down to Denbies. The wind was very strong, and nothing was flying, but there were a handful of roosting butterflies: three Common Blues, two Small Heaths and one female Adonis were all I could see close to the path. No matter – I could look at the view from here for ever. The horseshoe vetch is in full flower over the whole hillside, which is I hope a good sign for the Chalkhills (due at any time in a normal year...) and the second round of Adonis Blues at the end of the summer.

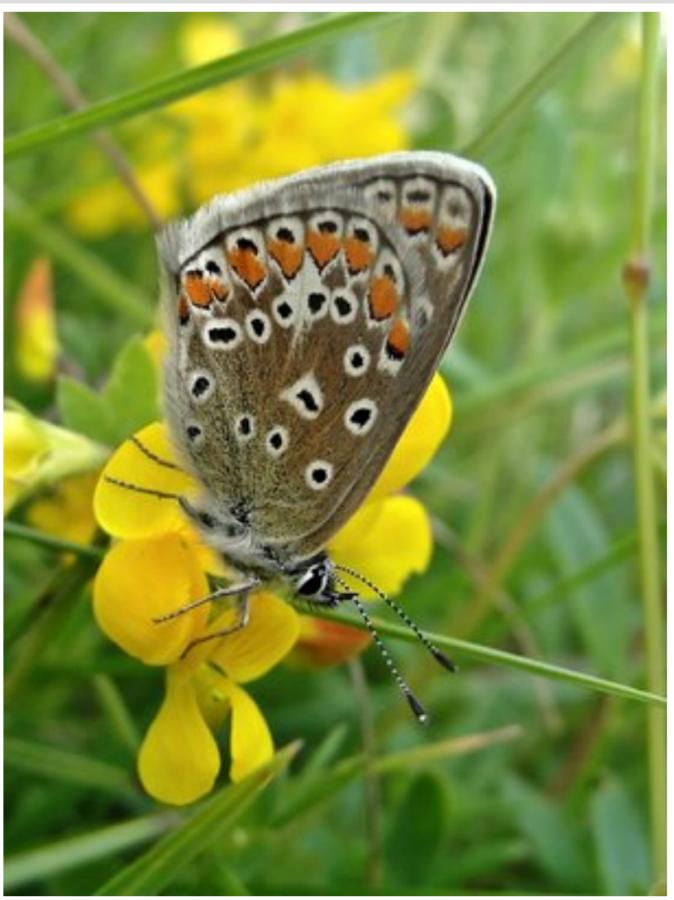
Dave











Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Jun-13 10:42 PM GMT

Great report Dave 😊 I've only seen one Red Admiral so far – are they having a bad year? Lovely shots of the Specklies.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-13 11:53 PM GMT

Great stuff,Dave!

I too,am concerned about Hutchinsonii Commas this year,as you said,if days are getting shorter before the adults emerge,they tend to develop into normal adults.

Having said that,last year was late,too–and Hutchinsonii emerged in reasonable numbers,so hopefully we are worrying about nothing...

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jun-13 10:18 PM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments, chaps! No, not many Red Admirals... I would expect all the overwinterers were killed off by the cold spring, so left no offspring. The same situation prevailed over the whole of Northern Europe, so any migrants would have had to come from further afield. I did see several at once down in Sussex a couple of weeks ago, but the flow is just a trickle – much as it is with Painted Ladies.

Today was another disappointingly cloudy day with no proper sun here until after five, which was too late for me take advantage of. I had a stroll around Harmondsworth Moor, and then around my local patch. At the former site, there were only a handful of Common Blues (three males and a female) and nothing else at all. Closer to home was better, with more than twice as many Blues, and a good number of Small Heaths again. However, the only other butterfly seen was a last lonely Orange Tip sitting on a thistle waiting for the sun to shine a bit more than the feeble attempts it had so far made.

Orange Tip caterpillars were seen in a few new places, including one very tiny one which will have to get a wiggle on if it is to grow before its food pods mature and dry out.

Apologies for all the Blue photos – a difficult choice when the bright overcast encouraged them into open wing positions (but not the Orange Tip).

Dave











### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-13 11:26 PM GMT

Cracking close up of the Orange-tip Dave 😊 They're still hanging on aren't they – this is certainly a late year. I remember a couple of Father's days back seeing Ringlet, Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral, Silver Washed and Dark Green Fritillary at Bentley Wood 😲 This year I managed a quick trip out and saw not one butterfly 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jun-13 07:44 PM GMT

I saw another Orange Tip today, Wurzel – certainly still soldiering on...

Today was another day in parts, with mixed results.

#### June 19th (Part One)

With the hot sunshine defying the weather forecast I had seen last night, I worked out a circular(ish) tour for the day. First up, I thought I would try a visit to Wrecclisham, where all others had failed to uncover a single Glanville Fritillary this year. For one moment, I thought I'd seen one – an orange butterfly flew up a few feet in front of me and over a large stand of brambles. On the other side, I saw it briefly again, but it set off vigorously into the distance. Was it or wasn't it? Reluctantly I decided that it was too large and too fast and high flying and that it was either a new summer Comma, or more likely a Painted Lady. Shortly afterwards, I saw a Red Admiral in the same general area flying purposefully northwards. I spent two hours walking around the site and saw no trace of Glanvilles. I also looked for plantains, the favoured foodplant, but found very few of these compared to the last two years, and what there were seemed overgrown by long grass. Reading about the requirements of this species, the successional growth of new plantains on landslips appears the ideal situation (as on the I.o.W.), and there seems little habitat now at Wrecclisham that mirrors this. Add to this the long cold spring...

Other butterflies were in evidence, notably Common Blues, and I saw Small Heaths, Large Skippers, and the afore-mentioned Orange Tip patrolling the path at the bottom of the pit. There were plenty of day-flying moths of which I could identify Silver Y, Mother Shipton, Burnet Companion and Cinnabar – there were many others.

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 19-Jun-13 08:26 PM GMT

**June 19th (Part Two)**

Next stop was Box Hill, a good alternative to Denbies because of the refreshments available – very welcome bearing in mind it was now up around the 25 degree mark.

First of all, I walked down to the long open slope called The Whites or Burford Spur. This is where Dark Green Fritillaries "hill-top" , and where Marbled Whites abound once the knapweed is flowering. It was still too early for these this year: all I saw were Small Heaths and a couple of Common Blues. (Both species were seen looking very fresh on 30th June in 2012 and 11th June in 2011.)

There were several Brimstones of both sexes still flying near to the café and the viewpoint, but I headed east from here, along the North Downs Way and then onto some of the steep south-facing slopes of the next mile or so of hillside. Common Blues were exactly that – common. I saw both sexes, with more than one female egg-laying towards the top of the slopes. I was on the lookout for Adonis Blues, and at the limit of the walk I had planned, found at least four, including a female. The sunshine made them very mobile, and their constant interaction with the Common Blues made them very difficult targets for the camera. The Adonis Blue males patrolled back and forth across the lower part of the slopes where the Horseshoe vetch was flowering, pausing briefly to nectar on it. In contrast, the Common Blues flew much more randomly, covering a lot more ground. Fascinating.

Here too were more Brimstones, mostly females still looking to lay eggs on the young buckthorn plants. I watched one on an avid nectaring bout, flying from one yellow flower to another (but ignoring buttercups!) so intently that I was able to touch her without any kind of reaction.

On the way back up to the top of the slope, I passed two new Meadow Browns which were far too flighty to be photographed, a selection of Small Heaths and another Red Admiral heading north. Finally, amongst another healthy crop of day-flying moths, I found a very worn Dingy Skipper, the existence of which was clearly too tenuous for the camera to acknowledge. A brown blur was the result.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jun-13 09:19 PM GMT

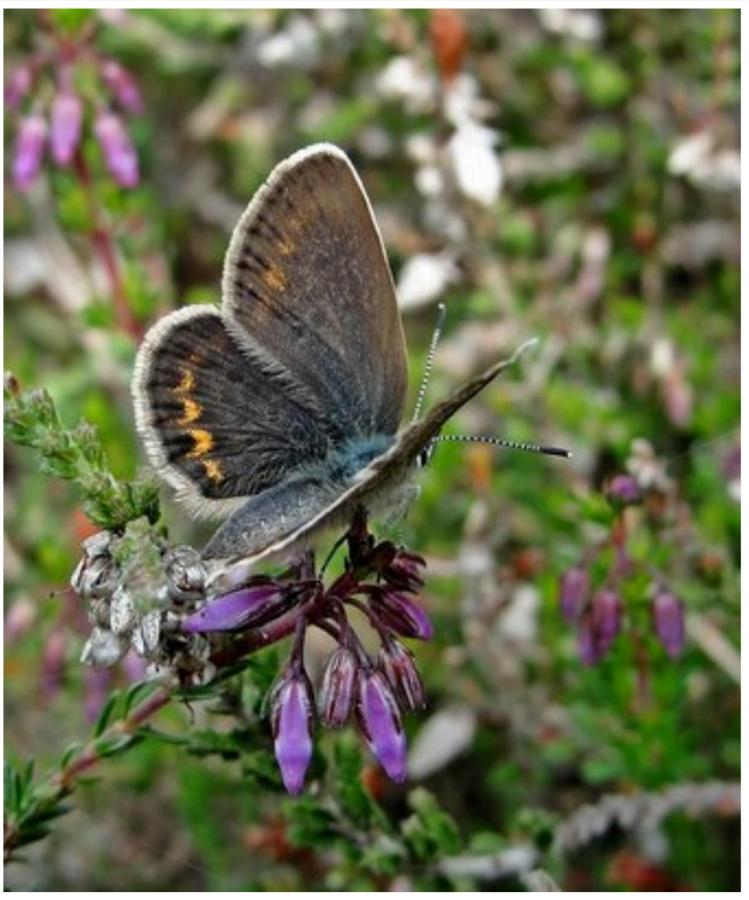
### June 19th (Part Three)

On the way home from Box Hill, it is relatively easy to visit Fairmile Common, just north of Cobham and a few metres from the A3 rushing below. This is a good site for Silver-studded Blues, and I saw the first ones here last year on 20th June (earlier in 2011). It was very hot, but the sun was a bit hazy now. I noticed that the heather was barely flowering and as you might expect this year, the whole area looked "behind". I had pretty well given up looking for that gleam of blue amongst the purple flowers, when a grey-brown flicker caught my eye. Not the flight of a moth, not blue certainly – but small, definitely. Brown Argus did cross my mind, but it turned out to be a female Silver-studded Blue, appearing uncharacteristically in advance of the males.

I imagine the males will not be too far behind, and as long as the weather doesn't become too awful, she will become very popular before very long.

This was a nice surprise to finish off the day out, and as ever, expect the unexpected!

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-13 11:23 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave 😊 And excellent news everything seems to be happening at once – Glannies, Heaths, Large Blues, Dark Greens and now Silver Studs – what to try for first 😊 😊

Have a goodun

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 23-Jun-13 09:47 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Your enthusiasm is much appreciated! When the weather goes back to cloud and chilly winds as it has this weekend, we could all do with a boost.

I did venture out locally a couple of times locally, late on Saturday and lunchtime today. Between the two days, all I saw were Small Heaths, Common Blues, Speckled Woods, Large Skippers and a female Brimstone. The other notable encounter was with this splendid 6cm beetle, which I think could be a female Stag Beetle. I have seen the species round here before, though usually a odd male whirring along on a sultry evening like a miniature helicopter.

Dave







### Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jun-13 09:24 PM GMT

Another cloudy day – after work I dropped into Harmondsworth Moor and in an hour saw one Speckled Wood and this single fresh male Meadow Brown. No Marbled Whites in evidence yet, but hardly the weather for anything, really.

Dave



### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-13 10:43 PM GMT

Won't be long now Dave – I saw my first Ringlet on Sunday and the Marbled Whites are normally pretty close behind 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jun-13 10:26 PM GMT

Not many opportunities to get out, even when the sun has been shining, mostly because of work. However, half an hour at Harmondsworth Moor yesterday produced half a dozen male Meadow Browns, two male Common Blues and a Small Heath. I also saw a fresh-looking Red Admiral close to Elliot's school in Staines.

We have been raising a small number of Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars, and Elliot took a chrysalis to school for show-and-tell yesterday. There was a lot of interest apparently. This morning, we released a number of butterflies. I have done this on and off since I was around the same age as Elliot, but I still marvel at the ability of nature to turn nettles via caterpillars into beautiful, colourful butterflies.

A Comma caterpillar came home with the food supplies one evening, and this individual pupated at the start of the week.

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 28-Jun-13 09:47 PM GMT

There were a few more newly emerged butterflies to release today – despite the cloud and light rain this afternoon it was warm, and they appeared to have emerged during the day. I had a brief trip out to my local patch around six and under the overcast I still managed to see four or five Small Heaths, a Common Blue, two Large Skippers and a Meadow Brown.

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jun-13 10:15 PM GMT

Hi Dave, great photos, loving the freshly emerged Small Tortoiseshell 😊.

I also used to rear all sorts of butterflies and moths when I was a young lad, I haven't done so for years now though. I really must have a go again.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-13 10:38 PM GMT

Great shots Dave 😊 I'll have to have a go at rearing with my girls, my older daughter seems to be really getting into it now.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-13 10:11 PM GMT

All my children have enjoyed rearing caterpillars, and especially the moment when the glorious new butterflies take to the air for the first time.

#### Saturday 29th June

With a sunny weekend in prospect, I went out to see a few things. Saturday started at the Visitor Centre at Alice Holt – one of the rides nearby has always been reliable for White Admiral, SWF and Ringlets. It seems I was still too early – all I saw were a variety of Speckled Woods and Large Skippers, plus a couple of Red Admirals. The bramble was not quite in flower, and I've rarely seen WA and SWF before it opens.

I moved on to Thursley Common, reliable for Silver-studded Blues. On the way, I passed an enticing similar area of heathland near Frensham Pond, but the bright new double yellow lines put out a pretty strong message that roadside parking was not viewed positively. Never mind – Thursley did not disappoint, with several dozen blue gems to be found just within 25 metres of the weather station. Most were very new, and there were a few females flying too. I saw no other butterflies, but did spot a couple of custard-and-jam coloured moths which I have not seen before.

After a very pleasant drive through the Surrey countryside, including some beautiful views, I arrived next at Denbies. I hoped for some Marbled Whites, a Dark Green Fritillary, or even a precocious Chalkhill Blue, but was out of luck on all three counts. Spring broods were still hanging on in small numbers – several Small Heaths, Adonis and Common Blues, a single Dingy Skipper, and even less likely an almost unrecognisable Green Hairstreak. A few female Brimstones remained, and of summer species, only Large Skippers and the odd Meadow Brown were in evidence. A few days of reasonable weather and those slopes, pregnant with hundreds of pupae, will burst forth. (At least I hope they will!)

A short step from here across to Box Hill. It took a little longer than usual because of the endless stream of cyclists struggling up (and zooming madly down) the Zig-Zag Road. It gets quite hazardous at times – it's a tough climb. The reward of tea and home-made flapjack no doubt makes it worth it. However... There were no Marbled Whites out here either, sadly, but I saw a brilliantly new (and very active) Dark Green Fritillary at the top of Burford Spur – too quick for the camera. It tussled for a while with a Small Tortoiseshell, but curiously was ignored by the Large Skippers lurking around on the shrubs. Also out on the slopes here were some Common Blues, Small Heaths and Meadow Browns. Next weekend may well prove more interesting.

The final stop today was another visit to the Silver-studded Blues at Fairmile Common. By now, they were going through the early evening basking and settling down routine and were easy to spot. The females seem to emerge from where they hide in the heather and join the males in little groups of head down butterflies. I investigated the area east of the car park, and at its extreme close to where the A307 crosses the A3 found a small area full of roosting butterflies. The heath continues across the A307, and over the other side of the A3 (Esher Common), so I really ought to investigate further. One Small Heath was the only other butterfly I saw.

I took hundreds of photos of the Blues – choosing any worthy of posting was not easy, but here are a selection.

Dave



*Alice Holt*





*Thursley*







*Denbies*





*Fairmile*





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-13 10:57 PM GMT

Sunday 30th June

Today, the only way was Essex. Having been warned that Hockley Woods on a sunny Sunday was likely to get a bit crowded, I headed instead for Pound Wood just a few miles to the south. I made my way to the recommended clearing under the power lines and met a friendly fellow attempting a count of the Heath Fritillaries. He reckoned that he'd seen 16, but after he had left, I am certain these had been joined by additional freshly emerging females – it was quite windy, and this sex stays grounded at the best of times while the males cruise around searching for them. The area where they were to be found is relatively small, but attempts are being made to clear other areas in successional fashion to keep the species happy here. (I note from other postings that a more productive visit would have been at Little Haven, just a mile to the west, where hundreds were out. I couldn't see an easy place to park, so missed out.) That said, I was able to watch these delightful insects undisturbed for quite a while. Other species – a couple of Holly Blues, and the ubiquitous Large Skipper in good numbers. The male Heath Fritillaries often investigated the latter, attracted no doubt by their colour, but their slow lilting flight seemed to confuse the Skippers, who normally like something they can properly *chase*..

After Essex, Oxfordshire. Undaunted by more of the M25 (it wasn't bad today to be honest), I drove back and up to Whitecross Green Wood – but not in time to meet certain other members, unfortunately. RobS was still there however, and in the company of another gentleman, we spent a while in crick-necked scrutiny of the blackthorn. The late afternoon brought forth a few Black Hairstreaks (more had been seen earlier) but not particularly low or accessible for photos. After Rob had left, one came a little closer, but was simply more interesting to watch than anything else. Renowned for not flying if they can walk, this individual settled briefly on a leaf three metres or up, and then headed back into the heart of the bush, via the underneath of leaves and stems, until it was well nigh invisible. It must have walked half a metre or so. An amazingly fidgety species. Some distant photos were all I could manage, but one at least shows a bit of the character of little butterfly.

Elsewhere in the wood, I saw my first Ringlet of the year, several Common Blues, Speckled Woods and Large Skippers, a Meadow Brown or two, and aged specimens of both Peacock and male Brimstone.

Dave



*Pound Wood*







*Whitecross Green Wood*





*The new...*



*...and the old...*



*...and older*

**Re: millerd**

by ChrisC, 01-Jul-13 11:11 PM GMT

Sorry Dave, just catching up. your moth is clouded buff.

Chris

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-13 11:24 PM GMT

Thanks, Chris. It's a beautiful creature.

Dave

## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-13 11:39 PM GMT

Sounds like a truly fantastic day Dave 🍷 You got two of my target lifers in one day, and cracking shots to boot 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jul-13 08:27 PM GMT

It was a good day, Wurzel. Not a common combination to see on the same day, true enough.

I realise I forgot to mention I ended the day on Sunday with a late amble around my local patch, and was rewarded by the sight of no less than three new Commas. The one that allowed a photo had managed to damage itself already. I also found a roosting Common Blue, a new Small Tortoiseshell and a few Large Skippers, Small Heaths and Meadow Browns.



On Monday, Elliot and I wandered out to the local shop after school. We had gone about 50 metres when he spotted a caterpillar. And then another. And then several more... They were spiky and spiny and looked for all the world like miniature black cactuses with red spots. A quick internet search revealed them to be the larvae of the Vapourer moth (I think!). I don't think I've seen more than one at a time. We also spotted what I took to be the original larval nest, but which reading about it revealed it might actually be the larval cocoon of the female moth that laid the eggs. Bizarrely, the female is flightless, is fertilised immediately by a male on emergence from her cocoon, and lays her eggs right there. Not much of an existence, really...





The rest of the walk produced encounters with a few Speckled Woods and a couple of Red Admirals, but nothing else.





Dave

### Re: millerd

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

Still envious of your great day Dave 🍀 then you see just a couple of Red Admirals – yet I've only seen one all year 😬 Talk about rubbing it in 😊 😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jul-13 08:35 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Great reports of what sounds like a great day out 😊

Your caterpillar is definitely a Vapourer, that is another species that I used to find lots of when I was a nipper. Later in the summer adult males in flight can be mistaken for Brown Hairstreaks, I have seen that happen a few times.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by Nick Broomer, 03-Jul-13 10:48 PM GMT

You`re right Dave, your larva is that of the Vapourer moth, lovely photo.

All the best, Nick.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jul-13 11:45 PM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments, chaps, and for the confirmation on the Vapourer caterpillars.

4th July

Another tour of the leafy bits of Surrey today, and a demonstration of how a bright cloudy warm day (as the majority was) is no bar to finding interesting things.

I had intended going straight to Botany Bay, but for some reason I found myself on the M3 instead of the A3. Never mind, it would be simple to cut across to Guildford, and this route would take me very close to Dawney's Hill, near Pirbright. This area of heathland is home to colonies of both Silver-studded Blues and Graylings, but today only the first were in evidence. They basked and flew readily in the brighter spells, and overall I must have seen 30 to 40 individuals, including five or six females. All were fresh or nearly so. I found a couple of Ringlets along the damper edges of the heath, and a single Small Heath, but the SSBs really had the place to themselves.





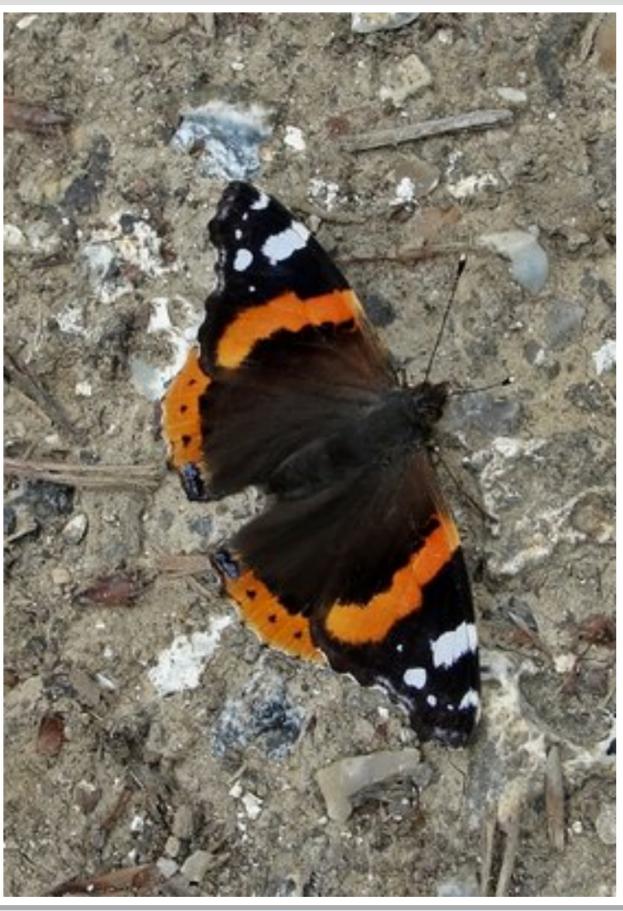
After the unplanned interlude I went on to Botany Bay, hoping that maybe the cloud would break and White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries would be enticed out. None of these things happened, of course. However, the main path was full of Speckled Woods, and on the slope up after the bridge I was back in spring again as in quick succession I found firstly a Grizzled Skipper, and then a worn Wood White. After a short walk further, I returned to the car – in the open area just inside the gate I encountered another elderly Wood White, and confirmation that it really was July came in the form of a very fresh Small Skipper, and a couple of Meadow Browns and Ringlets.

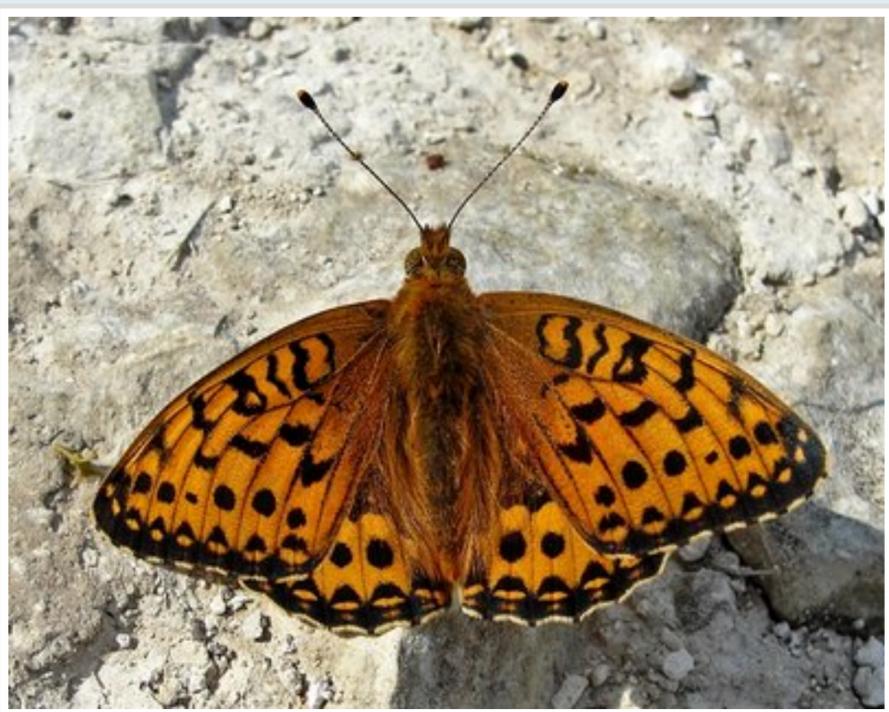






The last stop of the day was to be Box Hill again. As I arrived, the cloud was breaking and the sun was very warm. I made my way out onto Burford Spur, and was greeted by the sight of several Dark Green Fritillaries whizzing across the slopes, stopping every now and again to visit knapweed flowers, and then flying energetically to the top of the ridge and back down again. I twice found individuals on the chalk path sucking up minerals – not something I'd seen this particular species do before. I also saw my first Marbled Whites of the year, probably about ten or so only as yet, competing for the knapweed with the DGF. Interestingly, there were no real squabbles between these two species, but Meadow Browns (that placid, unassuming, nonaggressive insect) seem to really have a grudge against DGFs. They will chase them off flowers and harass them until they are well away. Odd – and something I noted last year too. Also see here were Ringlets, Small Heaths, Common Blues, Large Skippers, Speckled Woods, a Small Tortoiseshell and a beautiful new Red Admiral. Finally, there were still several Brimstones, of both sexes, and even some courtship behaviour. I saw two instances of a male and female spiralling high into the air – in one case with a second male in attendance. I also found a pair on the ground – I assume the female was doing her utmost to put the male off at this stage of the year.









Another good day! 😊

Dave

## Re: millerd

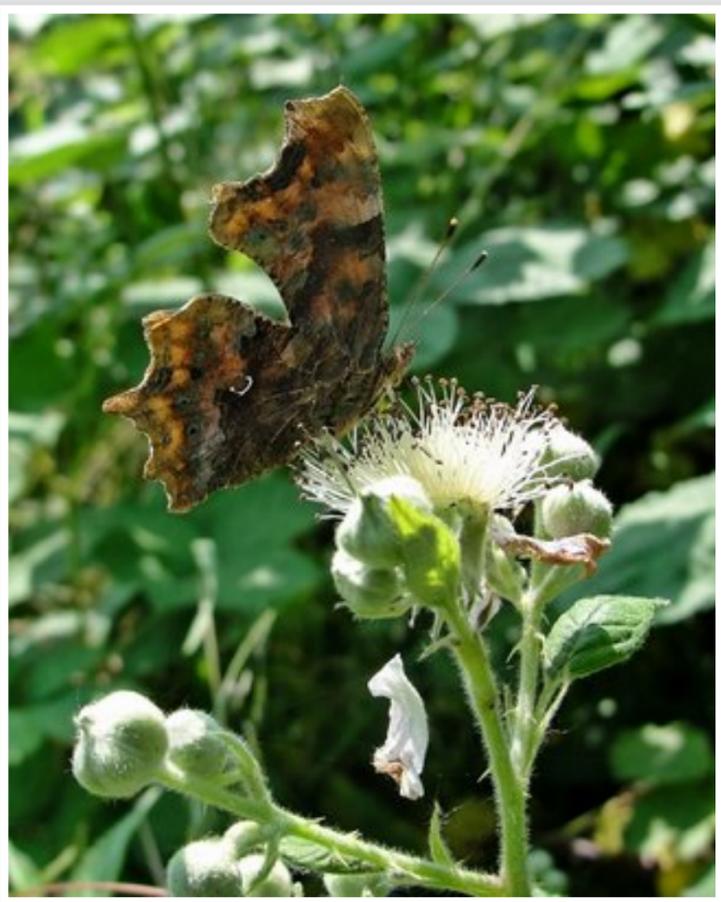
by millerd, 05-Jul-13 10:21 PM GMT

### 5th July

I stayed close to home today, and walked along the River Colne up to Colnbrook and back, through the "Heathrow Biodiversity Site".

The grass was now filling up nicely with good numbers of Meadow Browns, and Small Heaths and Large Skippers were numerous too. Having not seen any around here for a week or so, there were once again White butterflies, with at least one GVW and one Small White identified – though there were several others. I came across a Red Admiral, a Speckled Wood or two, and half a dozen new Commas in various spots, but the most encouraging aspect of the walk was the fact that I counted over 25 Small Tortoiseshells. They were seen nectaring on tall thistles, basking on the paths, and sounding out the lush new growth of nettles at the edges of the beds where the plants had been earlier strimmed off. They were also being chased by Meadow Browns in exactly the way I had seen DGF chased by them at Box Hill yesterday. I saw them in twos and threes and fours – this must surely count as a revival of fortunes. The only downside was that the most favoured area of young nettle growth (I saw five different individuals take an interest in this patch) is mown flat three times every year. It has had the cut once so far, and within a couple of weeks it will happen again – such a shame.

Dave









**Re: millerd**

by Nick Broomer, 05-Jul-13 10:32 PM GMT

Your photo of the Comma with it`s wings closed, [3rd picture] is an absolute beauty Dave.

All the best, Nick.

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-13 11:33 PM GMT

Ditto whatNick said and also the Dark Greens from yesterday ( missed them last night after I posted) 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 06-Jul-13 11:42 PM GMT

Thanks chaps – that Comma was beautifully marked – definitely a *hutchinsoni* I would say.

6th July

Up to Rugby to see my bigger boys. We spent the day at Ryton Country Park, as we did exactly a year ago. Rather different weather. No White Admirals or Silver-washed Fritillaries, unfortunately, and everything was supercharged in the heat.



*Nest of Peacock larvae in Ryton Woods*



*Flying in Ryton Meadows*



*In Ryton Woods – my first female of the year*

On the way back, we stopped at Cherwell Valley services, and had a look at the water meadow round the back. Thought it was seven in the evening, quite a bit was still flying.



*Cherwell Valley*



*Cherwell Valley*



*Cherwell Valley*



*Cherwell Valley*



*Cherwell Valley*

(I have not expanded too much on this, as this is the fifth attempt to upload this post, and it is very hot here still!)

Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 07-Jul-13 09:35 PM GMT

Down at the Alice Holt Visitor Centre with Elliot today. We had a look down the usually very productive ride, but aside from a Red Admiral, Speckled Woods, Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Large Skippers (and none too many of them) we saw nothing.

Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-13 11:15 PM GMT

Cracking shots Dave especially the Small Skippers – the first is a Padfield shot but I really like the second one 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 08-Jul-13 07:32 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Yes, you have me sussed – it was an attempt at a Padfieldesque shot... (I suspect we will have the OED on the line any time to confirm a new term has come into the language 😊)

I have just peeped at the "Purple Empire" website to discover that while we were sitting under a tree at Ryton on Saturday, one of the local rangers saw a Purple Emperor on the ground within about 500 metres of us... 🤔 😞

### 8th July

It was hot, and became quite breezy. I had enough time to pop down to Denbies, and then after that to Juniper Bottom, near Box Hill. Absolutely nothing was standing still: I gave up trying to take pictures almost completely and just watched the various species flying. In fact, the roster for both sites was exactly the same, taking in Large Skippers, Small Tortoiseshells, Ringlets, Small Heaths, Marbled Whites, Speckled Woods, Brimstones, Meadow Browns and Dark Green Fritillaries. And at each site, a single Red Admiral put in an appearance. The Dark Green Frits were particularly energetic, tearing about and getting particularly excited when they encountered each other or a Small Tortoiseshell.

After picking up Elliot from school, we had a short walk locally. Once again, there were a dozen or so Small Tortoiseshells, mostly on or around the doomed nettle field. Elliot told them to try somewhere else, but to no avail, I'm afraid... We also saw Speckled Woods, a selection of Commas and a few Large Skippers. Watching a three-way tussle between one of each of these was most entertaining, with a particularly favoured vantage point occupied in turn for the briefest of moments before one of the others muscled in. One photo that was possible was of a Large Skipper burrowing right into a bindweed flower – where both sustenance and shelter from the sun were on offer. He looked most uncomfortable, but it must have been worth it. Two more Comma undersides – quite beautiful again, with summer camouflage suited to dappled sunlight. Autumn Commas have a much darker colouring designed to resemble dead leaves blown into corners for the winter.

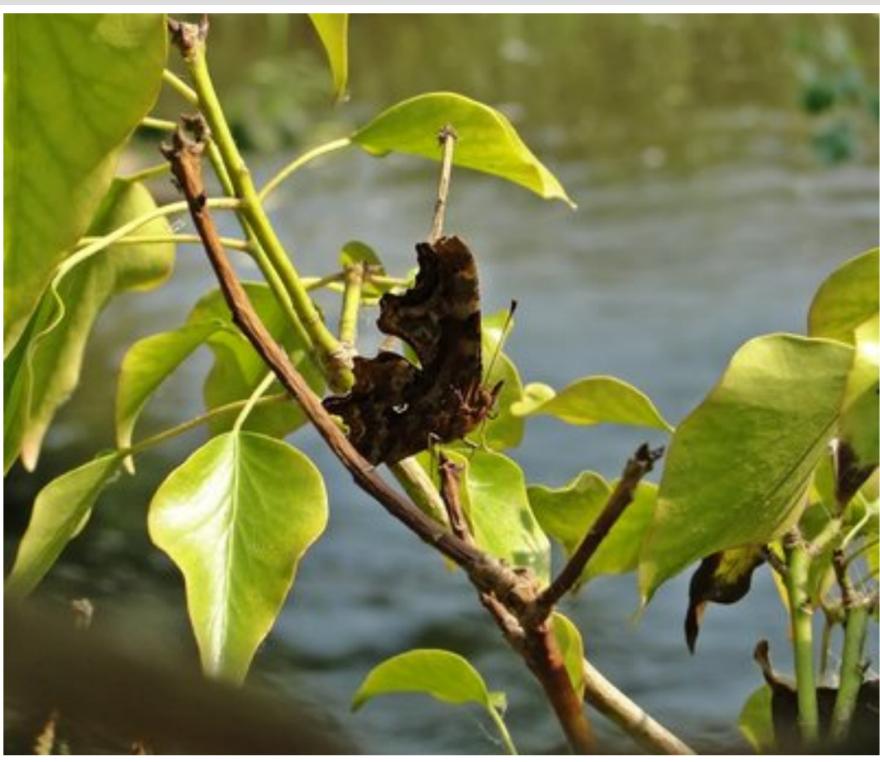
Dave



*As close as I got to a DGF at Juniper Bottom*



*Large Skipper dines indoors*



*Comma with the River Colne in the background*



*Beautiful colouration*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 10-Jul-13 09:39 PM GMT

### **9th July**

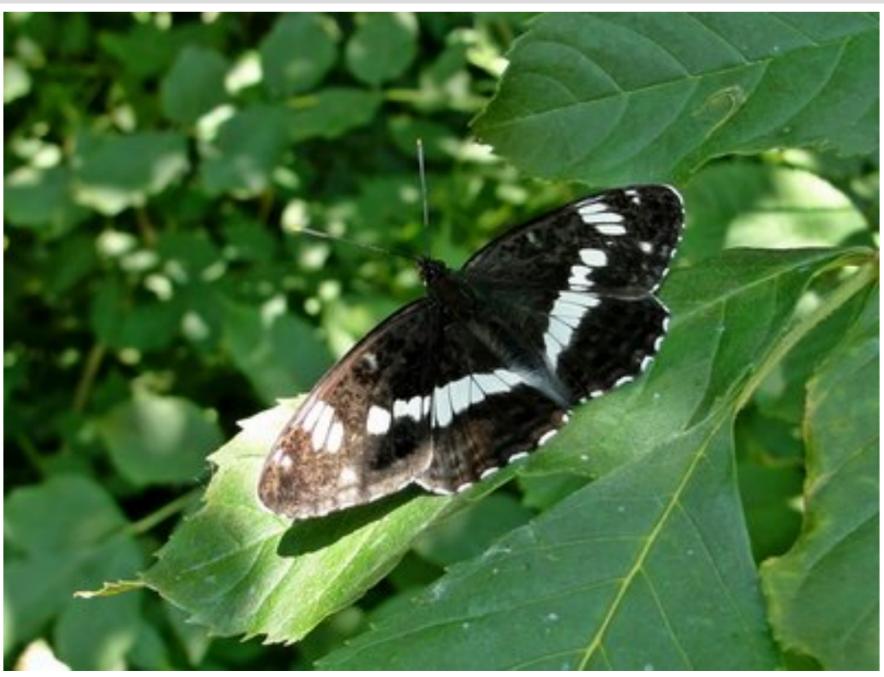
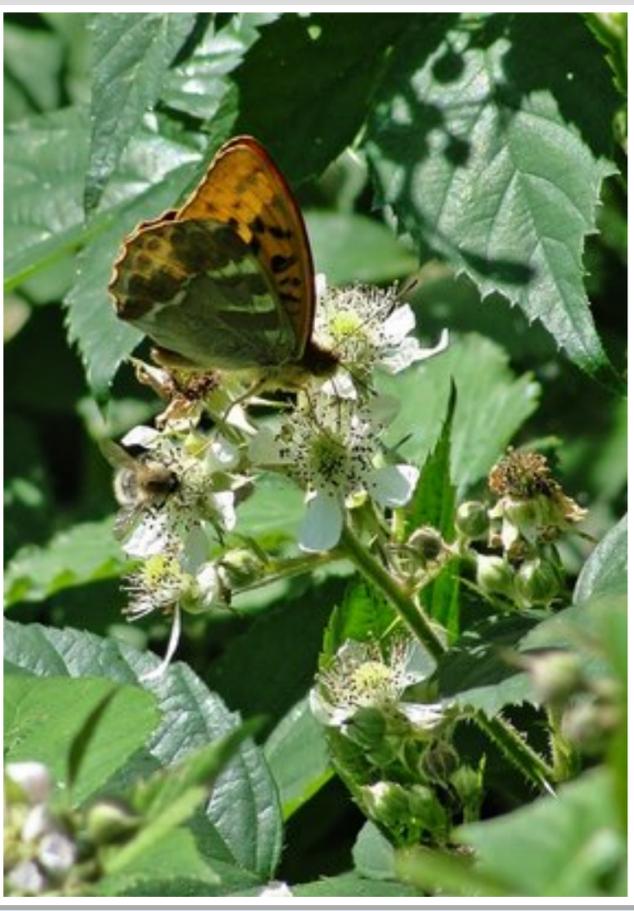
Without a full day to play with, I couldn't stray as far as I would have liked, so I headed off to Strawberry Wood, part of Black Park in Bucks, which is only about 20 minutes away.

Hot and sunny again, and almost nothing was seen flying until I reached the confines of the Wood, a mile from the car park. Immediately, I found a fellow with a similar interest (who I believe may have been UKBer cl-bucks) who was concentrating on a favoured bramble patch. Two White Admirals were paying regular visits to this patch before disappearing off to glide amongst the trees again. I looked around elsewhere, and would estimate a minimum of two, perhaps three more individuals out in the wood. It was a little while before a Silver-washed Fritillary appeared, and there were several false starts as Commas dashed around in orange bursts. However, a SWF did make an appearance, and I believe a second was flying before I left. Interestingly, both these and the White Admirals were largely seeking the shade, even when nectaring, and photography in the chosen dappled conditions was not easy for the likes of me with my simple approach to the subject.

There were many Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Speckled Woods, Large Skippers and the aforementioned Commas. I also saw female Brimstones, a sizeable Large White (which cl-bucks has depicted), a couple of Small Tortoiseshells, and two separate Purple Hairstreaks up in the numerous oak trees hereabouts.

Setting off through the gate into the area where cattle are grazing, the corner nearest the Wood is really a small extension of the wood itself, with small oak and birch trees and low growing brambles – but with quite an open feel as it blended into heathland with gorse. Under the shade of the trees, I watched two White Admirals swoop and glide at low levels: every time they met – which was often – they would chase, each looping over the other in turn before finally spiralling high into the air only to separate, glide off separately and then repeat the whole thing a few minutes later. Very entertaining.

Dave







## Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jul-13 10:08 PM GMT

### 10th July

With even less time to play with today (and seeing that others are out there with the Emperor made the frustration that little bit stronger), I browsed my local patch in slightly different weather. Fresher, windier, some white fluffy things in the sky – but basically warm and sunny. Meadow Browns have spread out to all parts of the route I take now. Hedges, fields, the river banks – all now have one or two and the open wild areas have a great deal more. Small Tortoiseshells remain numerous, and were matched today by Commas, which in their brilliant orange brown colour at this time of year make up for the lack of any Fritillaries hereabouts. There were still some ageing Large Skippers, a continuing abundance of Small Heaths and now increasing numbers of Green-veined Whites.

Highlights today were a freshly-emerged male Meadow Brown in open-wing pose, and a beautifully lemon-hued new GVW. I was led to the Meadow Brown by another male who seemed intent on getting close up and intimate: I thought I might have a potential mating pair until it was evident that the set-upon individual was another male making his way up a grass stalk. The scent-scales on the forewings were as prominent as I think I have ever seen them, and there is only the merest hint of orange. The underside shots are the same individual.

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-13 11:40 PM GMT

Great reports Dave – you've certainly been getting about a bit recently 😊 Fave shots are the 4th and 5th White Admirals and the brill male Meadow Brown, the androconi stand out a mile 🇮🇪

Have a goodun

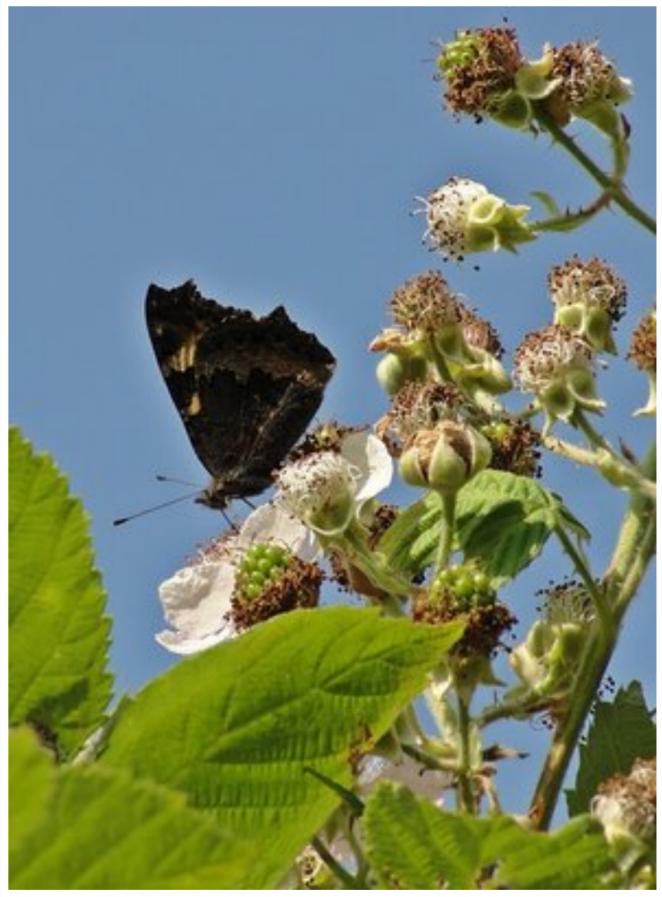
Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-13 10:23 PM GMT

11th July

After work today I visited Harmondsworth Moor, primarily to see how the Marbled Whites were doing. It was around 5, but the heat was keeping them largely down in the grass, and they only appeared if disturbed. However, it became apparent that there were reasonable numbers (I counted into double figures) in a relatively small area, but they were outnumbered five to one at least by Meadow Browns. Having reassured myself that the colony was surviving well, I started to look at what else was flying. There were dozens of Small and Essex Skippers (probably a majority of the former, simply because I found them in more places), but both were clearly identified. The Essex were my first of the year. In amongst the myriad of Meadow Browns I then identified a solitary Gatekeeper – again a first for the year. Finally, I also saw several Small Tortoiseshells, and a Comma and a Large Skipper endlessly tussling over the same bit of path. They were there when I arrived, and still battling it out when I left an hour later.



Essex



*Small*



*Small*







*First Gatekeeper of the year*

During my visit I encountered a fellow enthusiast, who was also relatively local. We both vaguely mentioned going on to Runnymede to seek out WLH, and after going our separate ways it came to pass about an hour later that we both ended up there. I had discovered the location of the relevant elm, and very quickly saw two individuals wheeling together high up and then across the track to an ash tree. One left the other and descended to about 10 feet up, but after briefly considering a stop, headed back up into the elm again. The sun was on the other side of the tree in a private garden by this time and the tempting bramble flowers under the elm were shaded. Nevertheless, the close approach was enough to confirm the ID. Another first for the year, and a really convenient spot for me to get to again. The things you can find almost under your nose...

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-13 10:48 PM GMT

Great news about finding a White Letter site near to you- I'm in the look out for a DGF site on my way to work. Great to see Gatekeepers are about 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jul-13 07:42 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Just catching up a bit, some cracking photos in the last few posts. I really like your male Meadow Brown topside 😊 .

I have also noticed that you seem to get Small Heaths much better posed than I usually find them 🍷

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jul-13 09:53 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind comments, Neil. 😊 If you knew just how many photos of Small Heaths were attempted to produce a reasonable one... Luckily they abound on my local patch throughout the summer and there are plenty of opportunities.

#### 12th July

I went down to Dover for the weekend to visit a friend. I had just enough time to divert to East Blean Woods for half an hour, but as I drove into Kent I found cloud and the temperature dropped. The sun did come through a little, but there were no Fritillaries to be seen (Probably too late now for the Heaths). However, there were dozens of Ringlets, a few Meadow Browns and Large Skippers, and a splendid White Admiral wafted along the path in effortless fashion, never stopping for a moment.





**13th July**

I saw my first Painted Lady of the year on Dover seafront this afternoon, zooming between flowers on the colourful wildflower beds that decorate the promenade. Later on I made my first ever trip up onto Lydden Hill and its renowned reserve where many species fly (the sign says "more than 30 butterflies can be found here" – I assume Kent Wildlife meant more than 30 *species* of butterfly...) Somewhat between broods, the only Blues were a handful of Common ones, but there were plenty of Marbled Whites and Meadow Browns all over the slopes, and Large Skippers and a few Ringlets along the hedges. Singletons of Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Small Heath and Red Admiral were also seen. Yes, my first trip here, despite spending 16 years in Dover a while back and making regular visits since.



Dave

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 16-Jul-13 11:01 PM GMT

16th July

Back to my local patch after work this evening, and I decided to check out the Essex Skipper colony right next to the roundabout between the A3044 and the A3113. There were about a dozen flying, and having checked all I could, took one last photo. Looking now, I find I have a Small Skipper amidst the crowd of Essex.



*Essex*



*Essex (roadside setting!)*



*Essex*



*Small*

Near to this spot, there is a patch of thistle and long grass next to the junction between the A3044 and the road into Stanwell Moor. Ten minutes here produced two Commas, a Small Tortoiseshell, a Gatekeeper, a Holly Blue and my first new Peacock of the summer. Despite a few largish hedgerow elms, I found no WLH.



Back on the riverside part of my walk, I entered the usual glade to find two Red Admirals gliding around in the shade, accompanied by a Speckled Wood and two more Holly Blues. Further on, I came out into the open area north of the A3113 to be surrounded by dozens of Meadow Browns. Along the hedges there were also lots of Gatekeepers; Large Skippers still leapt at anything moving (though they are getting more ragged by the day) and several Commas joined in. There was also a Small Tortoiseshell nectaring on Ragwort: it remained there throughout my whole visit. There is also a colony of Essex Skippers here, and it did not disappoint – and once again there was a Small Skipper in the mix. Finally, only one Small Heath appeared, and there were several Large and Green-veined Whites seeking spots in the shade to nectar.



Essex



Essex



*Small*



Dave

**Re: millerd**

by Nick Broomer, 16-Jul-13 11:17 PM GMT

Great report as always Dave, love the photo of the Peacock, excellent.

All the best, Nick.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jul-13 11:40 PM GMT

Thanks, Nick! Amazing to think it might still be around in nearly a year's time... Tough little creatures, Peacocks.

I realise that my account earlier missed out the Purple Hairstreaks I saw in two out of the three local spots I have for them. They were all high up, and not numerous, but unmistakable.

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jul-13 11:48 PM GMT

I've got a little behind with the diary lately, being rather busy trying to balance butterfly and non-butterfly activity. However, one important excursion was made over the last few days.

### 18th July

Firstly, I did a late tour of my local patch on Thursday evening. The most notable aspect of this was seeing 26 different Commas over about a mile and a half of path. They have been common at this time of year over the last few summers, but this was a record. There were also a couple of new Peacocks and three Red Admirals swooping around in the shade. Out in the more open areas, the Essex Skippers were starting to roost, but were frequently disturbed by Meadow Browns which remained rather more active. There were still a couple of Large Skippers hanging on as well, and Gatekeeper numbers are building well now – mostly males so far. All three varieties of whites were still flying, looking for places to hide for the night in the undergrowth. The heat seems to keep them active, but the time of day tells them to roost. Finally, I spotted a few Purple Hairstreaks high in the line of smallish oaks by J14 of the M25 – numbers are definitely disappointing this year.









19th July

I determined to leave home early, having secured a day off work to join the merry throngs enjoying the wonderful Purple Emperor season. I reached Botany Bay around 9 o'clock after a little adverse M25 traffic, and set off through the woods, encountering several Silver-washed Fritillaries nectaring in the shade. I was informed that an Emperor had been seen on the ground quite early on, and it wasn't long before I was able to watch one particular individual performing a regular circuit of a series of oaks but never coming very far down.



A little later, while chatting at the High Point clearing, I spotted something tumble down from a tree at the edge of the path. I thought it might be a White Admiral, but found instead that it was an Emperor – or rather unmistakably an Empress. She then shut her wings, which meant an adjustment of camera angles (I hadn't managed to get a shot yet) and a change of position. Fatal mistake: my foot turned out to be on one of those hidden bramble runners that seem to be connected to bushes yards away, and the movement put her up. She shot away rapidly at about chest height into a willow on the other side of the clearing. Cursing was kept to a minimum.

I wandered back to the Triangle and then back towards the car, having seen Emperors along here several times in the past. I caught up with PJ Underwood, and had a most enjoyable chat before he left for a luncheon appointment, and I returned for another tour of the woods. Fortune favoured this decision, as I now came upon a group of devotees around a grounded male attracted by fishy bait laid at the triangle much earlier on. Apparently first sighting was by an American visitor who had called out "is this what you're looking for?". It certainly was. I managed some reasonable photos, but the long lenses were in abundance around me, and I could not get close with my little Sony without blocking everyone's view. I did get a video clip which wasn't too bad either. Before I left at around 1, I did see another grounded male, plus one quite low down in a tree. All in all, I would say four males and a female for the morning.





Other butterflies? Silver-washed Fritillaries were everywhere, but not so White Admirals – I think I saw only three, which is very low. Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Skippers Large and Small, and Speckled Woods were all around in numbers, and I also saw a fresh female Brimstone, two Red Admirals and several Commas. I took some shots of a female SWF from a variety of angles to the light – the underside colours change amazingly from silver with

orangey hints to dark green.





Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jul-13 10:40 PM GMT

### 19th July (continued)

I needed to avoid the M25 on the way back from Botany Bay, and the most obvious alternative went right past Dawney's Hill in Pirbright – I decided to see if any Graylings had emerged yet. They had not, but there were still lots of Silver-studded Blues flying. All but a few females were very worn now, but I counted at least 40 butterflies, with an approximate ratio of 25 females to 15 males. It was very hot indeed between the heather and gorse bushes, and the ground was tinder dry. Other species seen included Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Comma.



Early evening, I collected my larger boys from Cherwell Valley services on the M40. Whilst I waited in the queue on the slip road, the verges proved to be full of Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites and Skippers, all oblivious to the heavy traffic inches away.

### 20th July

A trip to the beach at Studland in Dorset. Another hot and sunny day (down there anyway!) and we saw a couple of Small Tortoiseshells patrol the beach. However, the dunes behind were almost devoid of butterflies, except for a few Gatekeepers. No Graylings out here either. I persuaded the boys that they would like to stop for a bit of tea up at the castle tearoom at Durlston, near Swanage. This gave me a brief chance to look for Lulworth Skippers. Just down from the Globe and along the cliff path there is suitable habitat, but frustratingly the Skippers were supercharged in the sun. I managed some truly awful shots of one or two very olive individuals which I took to be the target species, but the photos that came out best were clearly all of Essex Skippers – at least one appeared freshly emerged with limp wings. I didn't even know they were found here. I also saw Large Skippers, Marbled Whites, Ringlets and Meadow Browns.



### 21st July

I made two trips around my local patch today, one while the cloud persisted, and the next soon after it had disappeared. During the first trip, Gatekeepers dominated, with dozens seen all over the place, including two mating pairs. On the later excursion, there were an abundance of newly emerged Peacocks, including ten on a roadside buddleia, plus many Whites of all three types with a predominance of the Large variety. Overall, other species seen were Essex Skippers, Large Skippers, Meadow Browns (with a mating pair), Speckled Woods, Holly Blues, Commas, Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admirals, Small Heaths and one new male Brimstone.

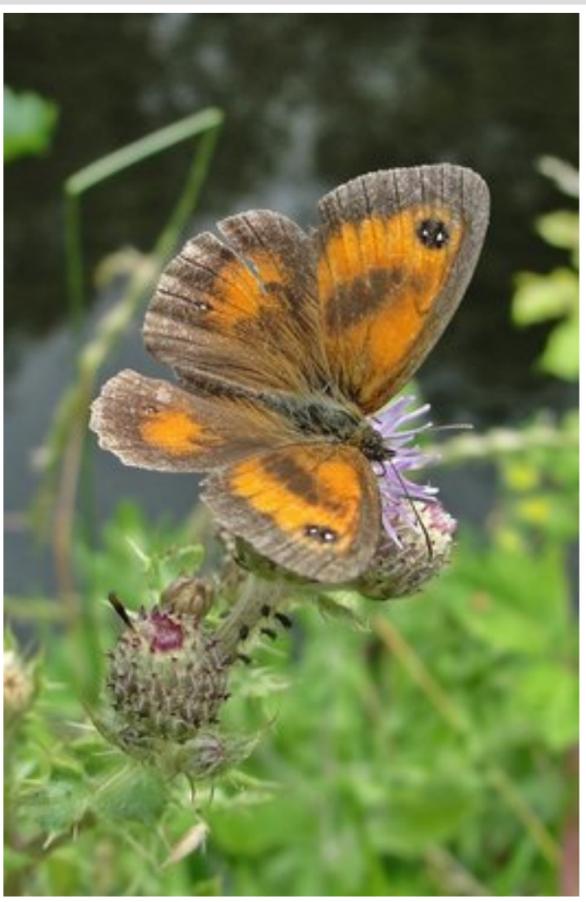




*same pair*



*another pair: big difference in size between sexes*





#### 22nd July

After work, I set off for Denbies to see how this year's emergence of Chalkhill Blues was going, after the tremendous season they had in 2012. It took a very long time to get from J9 of the M25, and by the time I arrived, the majority had gone to roost. However, it was abundantly clear that there are probably thousands of them out on the hill, almost all males at present. Almost every grass stem held one. Add to this good numbers of Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns and Small Skippers, and every footstep sent up a cloud of butterflies. I had trouble getting decent photos, as the light levels had dropped with the arrival of some tropical looking clouds, but I had a go. One of the poorer shots was of the only vaguely aberrant individual I spotted, lacking underside hindwing spotting. On the way back to the car in ever dimmer light, I somehow picked out the silver spotting of a roosting Dark Green Fritillary. I managed one shot before an unruly puppy charged through the grass, disturbing everything in sight. It has to be said the animal was quite cute in its boundless energy on such a hot evening.





*30 or so in this picture*



*an aberrant underside*



*with view across to Leith Hill*





Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-13 10:48 PM GMT

Fantastic report Dave some real corkers in there and a fantastic array of species 😊🇩🇪 The shots of His Nibbs are great my favourite is the one on the leaf where he's looking at the camera, head turned "you looking at me?" style 😊  
I've not tried Durlston for Lulworths but I might be returning to the homeland next week on a camping trip so I might be able to give it a try.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Nick Broomer, 23-Jul-13 12:11 AM GMT

Lovely report and photos Dave. The Chalkhill Blue with the backdrop view towards Leith hill is stunning, 😊 you`re giving Guy a run for his money with that one. 😊

All the best, Nick.

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jul-13 07:39 PM GMT

Agreed, that is a cracking shot Dave 😊

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

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jul-13 10:10 PM GMT

Thank you all for the kind comments: very much appreciated, chaps. I was also pleased with the Chalkhill in front of the view – I may have to tinker with it to remove that stalk across the lower right of the frame. I can do it now without disturbing the butterfly :wink: . It doesn't compare with Guy's mountain views, though Leith Hill is the nearest South East England has to a mountain, being just shy of a thousand feet in height. The tower on the top was built specifically to take it over the magic number!

#### 23rd July

Another late ramble locally (at half six or so) was all I could manage today. Nevertheless, no day is like another, and it's always worth the effort. Several Commas were still flying, as were a few Gatekeepers (mostly females this evening), Speckled Woods, Meadow Browns and assorted Whites.





*The evening light really accentuates the colours of this female Gatekeeper*

There were four Red Admirals – they seem to love the early evening, indulging in fast and furious aerobatics – chasing anything that moved and briefly settling on me more than once.



*More crimson and less scarlet in reality*



*The low light levels contributed to the blurriness of this image*

I came across one fresh Essex Skipper which posed cutely in the teddy bear fashion noted by Wurzel. I discovered another oak tucked away by the River Colne which I had not noticed before, and sure enough four or five Purple Hairstreaks darted around the top and between it and neighbouring ash trees.



Finally, along an open stretch of path there is a shallow ditch, currently full of low-growing and partially mown nettles. A closer look revealed the nettles to be host to a multitude of Small Tortoiseshell larvae – so many that there really cannot be enough food for them all. Small Tortoiseshells seem to prefer the smaller size of nettle, and I am a bit at a loss as to where I might relocate some of them. Most nettles around here are tall, lanky and pretty dried out at present. I assume that this is one of nature's ways of ensuring we are not overrun with Small Tortoiseshells, however pleasant a prospect that might initially seem.



Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-13 11:51 PM GMT

Great shots Dave especially the Gatekeeper – evening sun and butterflies is a cracking combination 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jul-13 10:57 PM GMT

It certainly is, Wurzel – Gatekeepers seem to glow in this light. And this evening there was more late sun...

25th July

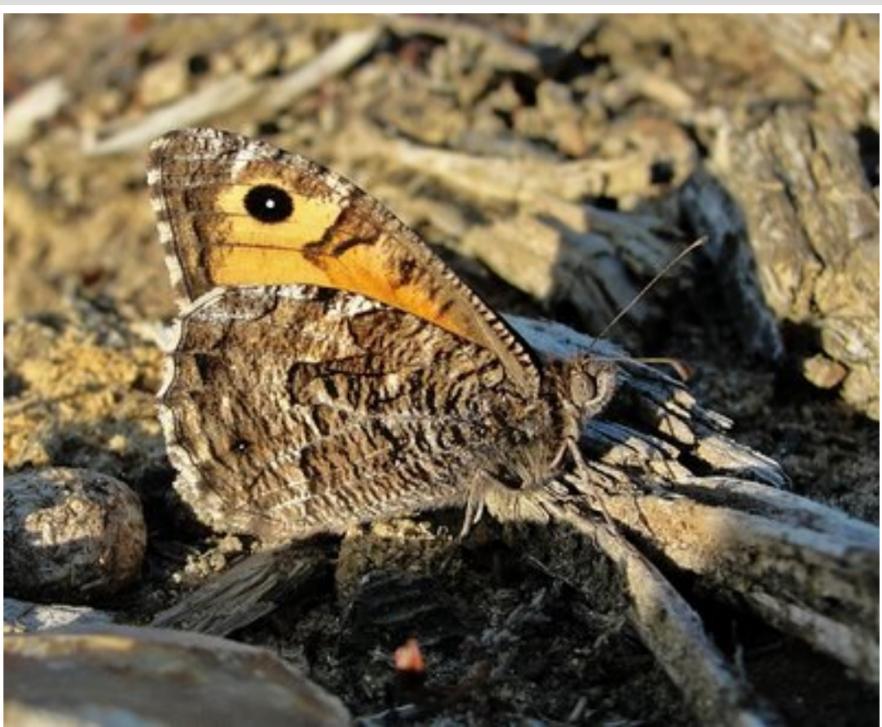
After work again, and I headed for Dawney's Hill this time, only 20 miles away near Pirbright. Interestingly, I've yet to meet another soul here (not even a dog!). The target was Graylings, but to start with, all I saw amongst the heather and gorse were a scattering of female Silver-studded Blues. There were half the numbers I'd seen a week ago, and I only saw one definite male.





Quite a few Gatekeepers were around, and one Meadow Brown bounced up to set off a false alarm. Moving out into a more open area, I finally disturbed my first Grayling. Overall, I saw six or seven, all males I think – certainly there was no interaction between any of them and they were uniformly not much bigger than Meadow Browns, if that. They were as ever a bit tricky to photograph. The usual pattern was to fly on a bit, settle invisibly on the ground, then fly up again just as I was about tread on them. Then, just as I crept just into position, up they'd go and round behind me, more than once settling on the back of my legs. Turning round to follow just made them whizz off into the distance and plummet camouflaged into a hollow on the ground. They are terrific butterflies, and I shall be back when the females are out – some of them can be huge. Patience paid off and I did manage some shots gained at the expense of perforated knees.







You can see the gradual yellowing of the light in the sequence of pictures.

Dave

### Re: millerd

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

Cracking shots Dave of one of my faves 😊 I was hoping to go looking this weekend but the weather has turned just as I start my holiday 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jul-13 10:32 PM GMT

Try Sunday, Wurzel – looks a better day all round than Saturday.

#### 26th July

An early escape from work, which allowed me to head off up the M40 to Aston Rowant. I arrived on the slope to the north of the motorway at around four or so, and was quickly surrounded by butterflies. I don't think I could ever conduct a formal transect count because I'd lose track of them so easily, especially in these numbers. Where to start? The first thing that specifically caught my eye was a Large Skipper chasing a Meadow Brown chasing a Small Tortoiseshell. Then there was a Dark Green Fritillary (one of five or six seen) being hassled by another couple of Meadow Browns. Then I noticed nearly every marjoram flower had either a Chalkhill Blue or a Small/Essex Skipper on it – and the ragwort sported Gatekeepers and the occasional Small Copper. And that doesn't even take account of the Marbled Whites, many other white butterflies, a Brimstone or two, Peacocks, Small Heaths and one or two very tatty Common Blues. Burnet moths abounded, Silver Y moths whizzed about madly, and many other smaller moths were around too.











It was an amazing sight. However, what I came to see was the Silver-spotted Skipper. In recent summers, I've visited on cool days with intermittent sunshine. This makes the SSS easy to find, as they bask on the bare patches of ground: rabbit scrapes and sheep paths, mostly. They are also less likely to burst into flight. Today was different – they were extremely active. I don't think I've ever seen them with quite so many other Skippers around either, and they are very different in the air. They look almost green in the sun, and move in such irregular patterns they are almost impossible to follow in flight. You have to keep your eyes peeled and trust to luck. Fortunately, there were plenty flying – a rough estimate of those I saw would be 30 or more across the whole hillside, including several females. They were sparser in numbers away from the ends of the slope, which curiously is where there were more of the other Skippers.





Dave

**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-13 10:45 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 😊

I am hoping to get down to Aston Rowant one day next week, probably make my mind up depending on the weather nearer the time, the forecast looks a bit 'mixed'

Cheers,

Neil F.

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 27-Jul-13 11:29 PM GMT

I hope you make it, Neil – well worth a trip. In a few more days, the DGF may have gone, but Common Blues and Brown Argus should appear, plus even more SSS.

### 27th July

Hang on – wasn't it supposed to rain all day today? Well, it dawned sunny, and imagining the clouds might roll up at any time, I set off briskly around my local patch. Soon it was far too warm for brisk, so ambling took over. Gatekeepers and Whites were just warming up and more relaxed than later in the day. Similarly, I caught sight of several Peacocks basking high up in trees, but it wasn't long before they were down on thistles, teasels, burdock, knapweed and wild buddleia (anything purple really). The various White butterflies weren't so fussy, and included yellow flowers in their diet – which of course are the preference of Gatekeepers. I also came across many, many Meadow Browns of all ages, sizes and colour variations. A few Essex Skippers remained, a few Small Heaths darted amongst their bigger cousins and a few Speckled Woods tussled in the shadows. As the morning wore on, I also noticed Small Tortoiseshells and Commas here and there, though the numbers of the latter have dwindled a lot, as one might expect. The *hutchinsoni* brood just hasn't the staying power of the overwinterers. Finally, I saw my first second brood male Common Blue, which was far too busy and energetic to consider being photographed. Lunchtime approached, the sun remained resolutely out and the temperature climbed – again.



*A nice fresh female...*



*... and another!*





*Small*



*Small*



*Small - very yellow from this angle (same butterfly as the last one, though)*



*Large*



*Large*

A bit later, just as it clouded over, I popped briefly into Harmondsworth Moor, One or two Marbled Whites were still flying, and I glimpsed a very blue female Common Blue, but otherwise, everything was heading into the bushes and undergrowth as the skies darkened. In the half hour I was there, the temperature dropped by 5 degrees: 29 down to 24. Really quite noticeable.



*Essex - noticeably grey underneath*



*Very worn now*

Just as I was about to leave, I saw a very odd-looking Gatekeeper in the grass. It had pale patches (as Meadow Browns sometimes have) on the hindwings – these were visible from both sides and were the same on both wings. It only flashed the upper wings briefly at rest, but the patches could be seen in flight. My only half-decent picture was from underneath.



*The light shone right through the pale patches on this Gatekeeper*

Finally, I came across this bee, which looks so loaded with pollen that not all its legs seem to be able to function. I have no idea what sort of bee it might be.



*But what Bee might this Bee be?*

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jul-13 07:06 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

If that bee doesn't have a common name I propose 'Baggy Trousers Bee' 😊😊

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-13 08:19 PM GMT

Great report Dave with lush shots especially the "Small Lemon" 😊 Is the bee a heavily laden Ashy Mining Bee?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jul-13 10:40 PM GMT

You could be right about the bee, Wurzel – it looks like photos I've found on the net, though without the baggy trousers...

28th July

The weather seemed not too bad after the storms of yesterday evening, so I went down to Denbies. What I hadn't counted on was that it would be really windy, with a strong gusty breeze blowing pretty well straight up the hillside. The sun was a bit in-and-out too, so all in all I had lots of excuses for taking some really poor butterfly pictures today. 😞 As I wandered down across Steers Field, Chalkhill Blues erupted from the grass on all sides, and this was just a foretaste of the rest of the hill. There were a lot of Chalkhills, many newly emerged, and with good numbers of females around too. They really do keep a low profile in windy weather, and agitated male butterflies were often the best clue to finding them. I came across six mating pairs, and watched several females laying eggs well down in the grass.





There were two accumulations of Chalkhills on dog poo, with over twenty males on each deposit – attracting the interest of passers-by who were at a loss to understand why the expanses of wild flowers weren't proving as popular. To be fair, there was a lot of nectaring going on as well.







In amongst the myriad of male blues, I noticed a few with orange hindwing spots on the upperside, a variety I've seen here before known as ab. *suavis*.





There was also one male with reduced underside spotting – there are always a few of these about too.



The Chalkhills were the main attraction, but not the only one. I saw Small and Essex Skippers (plus a single Large Skipper), large numbers of Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, Ringlets, fading Marbled Whites, three female Dark Green Fritillaries, a glorious new Peacock and Whites of all species. I didn't see any Common Blues, Brown Argus or Small Coppers.



To finish off, I had a walk around the area through the gate to the east of Steers Field. There were plenty more Chalkhills here, but there, sitting atop a Marjoram flower head, was a Silver-spotted Skipper. It soon dived into the grass as the sun went in, but I managed to see that it had not gone far. Good to see – but the only one today in not especially good conditions. There were in fact a few spots of rain shortly afterwards.



Last of all, I managed a shot of a Silver Y moth, which wasn't actually moving – unheard of... 😊



Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-13 11:09 PM GMT

Shots look pretty cracking to me Dave especially the Silver Y and the first mating and solitary female 😊 Cheers for the weather report from earlier in the

week – it was indeed pretty good today and I did manage to get out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jul-13 11:11 PM GMT

Hi Dave, great report and photos as usual 😊

I especially like the female CHB open wing shot, lovely fresh sheen to her. And well done on the Silver-Y, don't think I have ever seen one that wasn't vibrating its wings so I don't usually bother trying to photograph them.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by David M, 28-Jul-13 11:19 PM GMT

I like the Essex Skipper image – I wondered what the hell I was looking at at first but after a couple of seconds I noticed the butterfly top left!

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jul-13 11:26 PM GMT

That's actually the same Silver-spotted Skipper as in the other image, David! They appear to have black undersides to their antennae too. I should have labelled them – it really isn't obvious at all 😊

Dave

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jul-13 09:05 PM GMT

Thanks to all for your encouraging comments – it was worth the battle with the wind yesterday. 😊

29th July

Windy again, if not more so, and I set off round my local patch in hope rather than expectation, particularly as to the northwest ominous clouds were looming ever nearer. I was immediately buzzed once on the path by Two Red Admirals, three Peacocks and four or five Commas. It turned into a walk dominated by Commas, and looking carefully at them, I could see there was clearly a great deal of variation in age, size, colour and patterning. The more recently emerged individuals were darker, with the more characteristic look of those which hibernate – a taste of Autumn already. I must have seen at least 20 different individuals.







I watched two together in what I imagined to be courtship behaviour – I don't think I've ever seen two Commas in such close association before. One of the two was unusually pale, both on top and underneath, with much fainter markings than normal.



*The pale individual above (upperside)*

Other butterflies seen included a selection of Whites again, Speckled Woods, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, more Red Admirals and more Peacocks. Heavy rain and wind clearly disagrees with Gatekeepers – they all looked really the worse for wear compared to only a couple of days ago.



I reached the open meadow area northeast of J14 as the sky darkened ominously. A brief burst of sunshine caused a flash of blue from the grass – a new second brood Common Blue was clinging valiantly to a grass stem. He quickly turned head down and closed up, but presented a lovely fresh underside.



And now the sad part. Sometimes as we go out and enjoy the butterflies in their exuberant soaring and gliding, their delicacy and beauty perched on flowers, we forget that they are also part of the food chain. As I scurried back home to try and beat the rain, I first came across a Gatekeeper that had met its end by way of a spider – and another of the same species was happily nectaring inches away from the corpse.



Then, as I walked through the riverside glades frequented by Red Admirals, I witnessed something much more dramatic. A Red Admiral was indeed present, swooping around in the half dark under the trees, but it was not alone. I became aware of another shadowy shape zigzagging around the small clearing, and suddenly it darted purposefully at the butterfly – and caught it. The dragonfly (as it turned out to be) carried its prey to a point high up in a briar where it proceeded to devour it. I managed by dint of arms-length full zoom and flash to get a shot of this meal. I have once seen a smaller dragonfly catch a Small Heath, but otherwise they seem generally not very good at catching butterflies – or the butterflies are good at evading them.



Before I left the spot, another Red Admiral was already in situ... And I reached home before the rain did.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Nick Broomer, 29-Jul-13 09:28 PM GMT

Some more excellent reports Dave accompanied by some lovely photos, especially the Chalkhill Blues one of my favourite butterflies. 😊

All the best, Nick.

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-13 10:43 PM GMT

That Comma definitely looks paler than usual 😊 Great shots and some very interesting behaviours described in detail. 😊 I've never seen butterflies being predated before, better start peeling my eyes a bit more 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jul-13 08:49 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

I have also noticed that butterflies usually seem quite good at evading dragonflies. I have even seen a male Speckled Wood attempt to chase a large hawk type out of his territory 😊

Mind you the other side of that coin is when I read an article in Warks BC magazine a couple of years ago about an Emperor Dragonfly seen taking a female Purple Emperor out of the air at Ryton Wood 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Jul-13 09:18 PM GMT

I suppose the bigger the target, the easier it is for the dragonflies, Neil. And though many butterflies show aggression to each other and to potential predators, it has to be largely bluff, as they have no weaponry at their disposal. It's amazing what Purple Emperors get away with, to be honest. 😊

#### 30th July

Not back from work until 1830, but the sun was shining so I found it impossible to resist a walk before it went down completely. As I had seen last night, the niche occupied by the recently eaten Red Admiral had been filled by another individual. I passed by and at this late hour, with only a few hours of sunshine earlier, not much was flying. I saw a single Gatekeeper, two more Red Admirals, a Small White, a Peacock and just the one Comma (instead of 20).



There were plenty of Meadow Browns in the long grass, and I was quite surprised to find three Essex Skippers still up and about when I'd seen none at all yesterday in the same spot.



I found two male Common Blues, basking in the rays of the lowering sun, which I hope is the vanguard of a bigger emergence.



*Common Blue with fat Cinnabar moth caterpillar*



On the return home, the first Red Admiral was still there. He was not happy at my intrusion into his bit of path, and repeatedly dived at me until I moved. Eventually, by keeping still, I persuaded him to settle on a suitable vantage point and watch me closely. This allowed me to take his portrait, with flash being necessary as it was pretty dark down there under the trees. I left him swooping and diving, running the gauntlet of several dragonflies that were also patrolling the area.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 31-Jul-13 08:45 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Cracking Common Blues in the evening sun 😊

As with a few things this year, I am seeing loads of Cinnabar caterpillars around here, almost every bit of Ragwort seems to have some on.

Cheers,

Neil F.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-13 09:34 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil. Yes – loads of ragwort and loads of Cinnabar caterpillars. In some places, I suspect they ate themselves into starvation, though they will crawl a fair way to a fresh plant if they chomp one down to the ground.

### 1st August

Hot. I left work near Heathrow at about four and headed for Box Hill. The car thermometer read 34 degrees near the airport, and 36 on the slow crawl down the M25. In the shade going up the zigzag to the top of hill, it was a fresher 32 degrees... 😲

I made for the scrubby slopes to the east of the main viewpoint hill, down from the North Downs Way. A strong hot wind was blowing straight up the hill, and most of the butterflies were towards the bottom of the slope. One of the first I saw was a Silver-spotted Skipper, sitting in customary fashion on a madly waving scabious flower. I had ten individual sightings of this species, but can't discount seeing the same one more than once. The odd thing was that they seemed to prefer the windswept flowers to those in sheltered spots. They also pointedly avoided flowers with Burnet moths on them and were not at all happy if any other insect joined them on a scabious.



I saw about equal numbers of Chalkhill and Common Blues (over a dozen of each), and good numbers of Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish these in flight, as some of the female Gatekeepers were very large. There were also three or four aged Marbled Whites, struggling to fly at all and gamely trying to *walk* up flower stems to find nectar. I spotted a couple of Small Skippers too.



*new individual, but a bit crumpled*

While trying to follow another Silver-spotted Skipper in flight, I failed to watch my feet, and stumbled over a female Dark Green Fritillary basking on the ground. It took off alarmingly quickly and let itself be carried miles away by the wind. I saw two more later on, but got no closer. Frustratingly, the angle of the sun started to cause the Blues to go into roosting mode, but the heat meant that they clearly didn't feel the need to bask open-winged before doing so. This is something I've observed before on hot evenings. I managed one shot of a Chalkhill male and another of a dark Common Blue female, but that was about it. Most of the female Common Blues were much bluer than this one.



*female Chalkhill Blue, ignoring the Burnet moth*



*male Chalkhill Blue*



*very dark female Common Blue*



*male Common Blue*

Back at the car, a couple of Large Skippers were squabbling over the brambles, putting up a few Gatekeepers that were attempting to settle down.



Dave

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-13 10:05 PM GMT

Great report Dave and I'm jealous of the Silver Spots 😊🍷 - I still haven't been able to get out for them and with a trip to the in-laws in Wales next week I'm hoping that I haven't missed them 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Aug-13 12:21 AM GMT

They should be around a little while yet, Wurzel. Fingers crossed you'll get to see them.

2nd August

I had only the chance of a brief walk around my local patch today - the sun was out when I left work at five, but within an hour it had disappeared. I felt conspired against! Interesting - today there were more Whites than anything else, and far fewer Commas and Gatekeepers - in fact I only saw half a dozen of each.



*A summer Comma, looking faded*



*And another*



*A new one, in winter colours*

Meadow Browns were widespread again, but the Essex Skippers have come to end, sad to say. I only found a few Common Blues again – two females and a male.



*Female Common Blue*



*A second female Common Blue*

One female was very dark, and very small, but was definitely not a Brown Argus – a shame really as my patch has been bereft of these this year. There were Peacocks here and there, and the final offering was a new brood Small Heath.



*A shiny new Peacock*



*New brood Small Heath*

Dave

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 05-Aug-13 11:53 PM GMT

I seem to have got a bit behind with this – a brief catchup is in order.

### **3rd August**

I visited Cherwell Valley Services on the M40, and found the water meadow round the back carpeted with water mint. This creates a lovely smell as you walk across it and attracts butterflies no end. There were lots of Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Whites of all types, Small and Essex Skippers, Common Blues, Peacocks, a Comma and a Small Tortoiseshell. It's good to see a piece of meadow like this left to its own devices.



*Essex – the proboscis must be longer than the butterfly by some margin*



*Small*

On returning home, the local patch was alive with White butterflies, and as it was late afternoon, Red Admirals and other Nymphalids were much in evidence too. Nothing else of note, really, just good to see so many individuals of several species flying this year.





**4th August**

Another local walk, and one which shows the real value in doing the same thing regularly – no two days have the same highlights. Today, as well as the good showing of White butterflies and common Nymphalids, I found several Common Blues, including a mating pair where both partners were fresh –

so often one or other is a bit worn and they look ill-matched.



*Female GVW*





However, the real bonus today was to find a Clouded Yellow. I disturbed this individual from the ground, patch of Bird's-foot Trefoil in fact, and it landed close by on another, before then flying just a little way further on. The sun had gone in, so the flights were very short, and I was able to get close for a picture or two. I believed the butterfly to be a female, and optimistically feel it might just have been laying eggs when I initially disturbed it.



*Clouded Yellow where originally seen - on BFT*



Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 11-Aug-13 09:56 PM GMT

Just back from a stay near York with quite a few photos to sift. The journey up took in a detour via Arnside, where I had the pleasure of meeting Neil (nfreem) and hearing first hand all about his brilliant sojourn in the area. And I did get to see the odd butterfly too... Reports to follow - eventually!

Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 11-Aug-13 10:21 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

It was a great pleasure to meet you too, and your lads 😊.

Looking forward to seeing your photos.

All the best,

Neil.

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-13 10:27 PM GMT

Welcome back Dave – I was starting to worry 😞 😊 Looking forward to the reports!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Aug-13 11:38 PM GMT

#### 5th August

Another brief walk locally today. My spare eyes at eight-year-old level announced the presence of a caterpillar again, and investigation of the hedge revealed not one but at least eight Comma caterpillars of various sizes. However, this was not nettle, nor hop, but unusually a bushy hedge composed of elm. This is the first time I have seen Commas on elm (not surprisingly, really, since in most cases they would be up and out of sight).



Otherwise, there was nothing much of note, the Clouded Yellow having moved on since yesterday, though I did achieve my first photo of a Holly Blue since the spring.



#### 6th August (am)

Local again, though a bit further and longer. The highlight was the good number of Common Blues now out, including several new females. These were all dark, barely a hint of blue for the most part and quite a contrast to the spring brood. Does warmer weather equal darker females?





There were still a few Essex Skippers around too, and rising numbers of Small Heaths again. A Silver Y moth kept still again, well-camouflaged on a twig, but spotted nevertheless!



**6th August (pm)**

The weather stayed fine, and I took the boys off to Box Hill for a picnic. We stayed on the viewpoint slopes for most of the time, and in the longer grass towards the lower part of the slope, there were good numbers of Common Blues, plus a few Chalkhills, and a fair sprinkling of Silver-spotted Skippers darting between the scabious flowers.





One Common Blue settled on Elliot's ear, drinking sweat, but by the time I had the camera ready, it had moved onto the ball he was holding.



We moved on to Denbies next (you can't visit one without the other in my book), stopping off at the vineyard en route to pick up some English sparkling wine to take up to my sister in York. Denbies was a sea of Chalkhill Blues, with hundreds, probably thousands, in all directions, including high numbers in Steers Field above the main slopes. In the short time there, I didn't notice any other species at all, the Chalkhills were so overwhelming.





*The customary aberrant underside*



*What was so attractive about this particular flower?*



Tomorrow would be the long trip north, including Arnside...

Dave

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 14-Aug-13 11:23 PM GMT

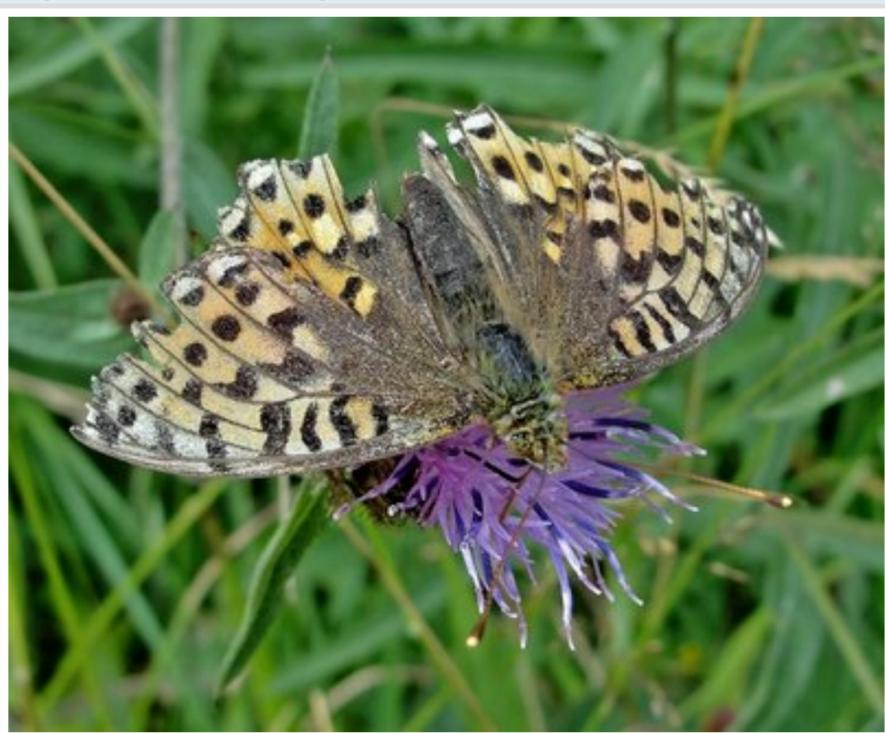
**7th August**

An early start and we managed to reach Arnside in time for a picnic lunch at the top of the scree path up from the car park. Suitably refreshed, we set

off through the woods and out onto the open bracken and heather covered scrubby slopes. Just on the edge of the wood, in semi-shade, a marjoram patch was playing host to several Scotch Argus – but with a few Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns too, just to make life interesting. Gatekeepers proved to be everywhere on the Knott, much fresher than those at home, too. I believe that not so long ago they were a real rarity up here.



Moving on, several very worn Dark Green Fritillaries wafted by while more Scotch Argus kept low amongst the brambles, basking a little but mostly with wings closed in the strong sun.



*I only noticed the second butterfly when looked at the photo later*

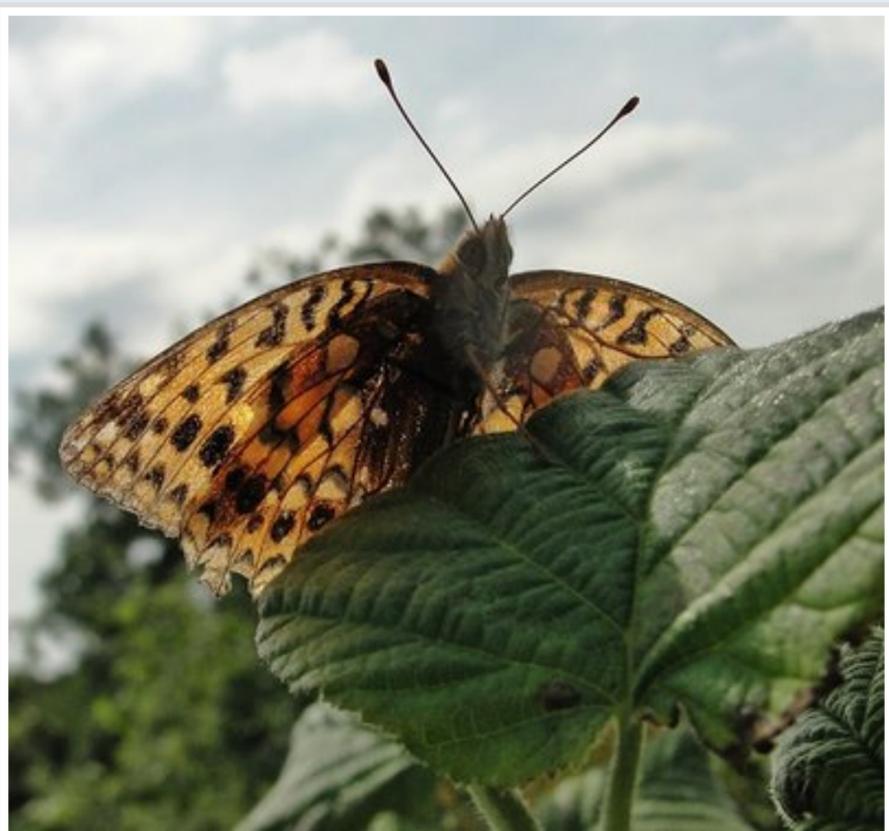


We made it up to the trig point, where there was a nearby largish patch of hemp agrimony. This tempting source of nectar had attracted a variety of customers: a Small Tortoiseshell, a Peacock, a Small Copper, a couple more faded DGF, Meadow Browns and a few Whites.





A little way off, I spotted a knapweed plant which had also proved interesting to a couple of fritillaries. One was another tired DGF, but the other was in better condition and looked to me very much like a High Brown. This individual was almost impossible to disturb, flying off only briefly to return to the same flower again. A brief glimpse or two of the underside was conclusive – High Brown it was, and having added Scotch Argus earlier it became my 50th species seen in 2013. I felt pretty chuffed with that! 😊





We set off down the hill, but chose the path towards the meadow near Heathwaite. My eldest son Toby pointed out a small butterfly about three metres up in a small oak tree and said he thought it was a Holly Blue. It turned out to be a Purple Hairstreak, but set off for higher branches before the camera was brought to bear. The next spot was down on the ground: having seen none on the way up the hill, I was pleased to find a Grayling doing its best to hide on the gravel on the way down.



Finally we were down at the bottom, and into the meadow. The first thing of note was a figure with a camera looking at the butterflies (of which there were many). Engaging him in conversation, the soft Midlands accent told me this had to be Neil (nfreem) who I knew was in the area. He described his amazing couple of days up there, and showed me where the Clouded Yellow had been seen amongst other things. The meadow was full of Common Blues, but I quite forgot to photograph any at all. A fortuitous, but very pleasant conclusion to our trip to Arnside and the Knott. 😊

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Aug-13 09:23 PM GMT

### 8th & 9th August

We were now up near York, staying with my sister. She has a lovely garden with a mix of wild and semi-tamed, with a few soft fruits and vegetables thrown in. What she does have is a traditional self-sown pale purple buddleia, which was an absolute magnet for butterflies. Nothing unusual, but the quantity was astonishing. Early in the day, white butterflies abounded, with 20-30 on the plant at once. They were mostly Large Whites, with almost all the rest Small Whites - only one or two GVW paid a visit. Down the garden were thistles and flowering crucifers (including flowering bolted lettuces) which were favoured by Small Whites and a few Commas.



*Green-veined White*



*Large White. Compare black markings with...*



*...Small White: the wingtips especially differ noticeably*

As the mornings progressed, the Peacocks appeared, building up to equal the Whites in numbers on the buddleia, and also on the thistles not far away. I have never seen so many Peacocks in one place, not even when releasing captive-bred specimens. Apparently, the nettle beds left to grow in the garden had hosted a nest of caterpillars – if just the one, the survival rate must have been high.





The buddleia also attracted a few Small Tortoiseshells, plus one Red Admiral and one Painted Lady.



One morning, there was a Small Copper sitting on a thistle, and a few Meadow Browns made their bumbling way through at low level.





Finally, there were the Brimstones. As in previous years in this garden, these butterflies were most interested in the runner bean flowers.



*female*



*female*

I also saw a male nectaring on a (unknown to me) garden flower, one I have never even seen a bee visit.



*male*

The female Brimstones were repeatedly bothered and chased by male Large Whites, whose eyesight must have been poor.

It was just lovely to see so many butterflies in a garden setting again. 😊

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Aug-13 10:13 PM GMT

### 10th August

A family outing trip to the York Maize Maze was not one I would have thought would hold much butterfly interest. However, the site is bounded by medium-sized oak trees, and one a patch of unkempt ground near the crazy golf I spotted a small grey butterfly fluttering close to the ground. I thought it was a Common Blue, but surprisingly it turned out to be a Purple Hairstreak. Less surprisingly, turning the camera on it caused it first to turn frustratingly edge on, and then to whizz off in the strong wind to who knows where. I looked out for others, but conditions were not exactly ideal for hairstreak hunting.

Later in the day, I repeated last year's walk on Allerthorpe Common. It was mostly cloudy now, and not much was flying, but the site reassuringly produced Small Coppers in several different spots as it had done last year.



*Quite pronounced tails on this one*



*The same individual from below*



*Glowing under the clouds almost as if it was internally lit*

Also seen were Small Skippers (no Essex up here yet), a Ringlet, a Peacock, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and various Whites.



*Small Skipper*

Not as good as last year's 14 species, but dare I say the weather was actually better on the day in August 2012!

We travelled back down south on 11th with poorer weather in tow, and there has been little opportunity to venture forth since then. Hopefully, the coming week will change all that...

Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 15-Aug-13 10:55 PM GMT

Cracking reports and shots Dave 😊 HBFS and Scorch Argus are both in my wish list but it could be a fair few years before they get ticked off 🙄 I too have noticed that Small Coppers seem to have more pronounced tails this year could be the heat affecting development:? Hope you get out again soon, the weathers looking to be back on track next week 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 16-Aug-13 02:50 PM GMT

Hi Dave, great reports and photos 😊

It was really great to meet you up at Arnside 😊, amazing to think that a chap from Heathrow can meet a chap from the midlands up in Cumbria and guess correctly who he is 😊

I recognise the description of the Hemp Agrimony, there was a Small Copper around there when I was up there earlier that day but no Small Tortoiseshell. The only ST I saw during my 3 days was when we stopped off at Warton Crag on the Thursday morning before hitting the M6.

Cheers,

Neil

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Aug-13 11:55 PM GMT

### "nfreem" wrote:

amazing to think that a chap from Heathrow can meet a chap from the midlands up in Cumbria and guess correctly who he is



I left there thinking the same thing, Neil! 😊 But that's the beauty of the UKB community – you can roam the whole country with a good chance of meeting someone you know or at least feel you know a bit. The world is smaller than it used to be.

### 18th August

I was down in Dover this weekend, but knew the chances of a sidetrip to Kingsdown were slim even though it's pretty close. Saturday was mostly cloudy, and increasingly breezy and activity was limited to a buddleia in the garden where I was staying which attracted all the usual suspects in reasonable numbers, including a new Painted Lady. Nothing kept still, so no pictures of note were taken. Sunday was a better day, but my only opportunity for getting out was an hour up on the down behind Temple Ewell and along towards Lydden. It was very windy on the hill, and the sun came and went, but I managed to see good numbers of Chalkhill Blues and Common Blues, a handful of Silver-spotted Skippers, a Small Copper, a Brown Argus, a Marbled White (very late to see one of these I'd say), Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and assorted Whites. I bumped into a chap who had seen a Clouded Yellow, but I failed on that score. Only a few photos – the SSS in particular were very lively in the wind. So... no visit to Kingsdown and no Long-tailed Blues. 😞 Maybe they'll breed on the peas and produce lots of offspring at the end of September...





Dave

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Aug-13 10:35 PM GMT

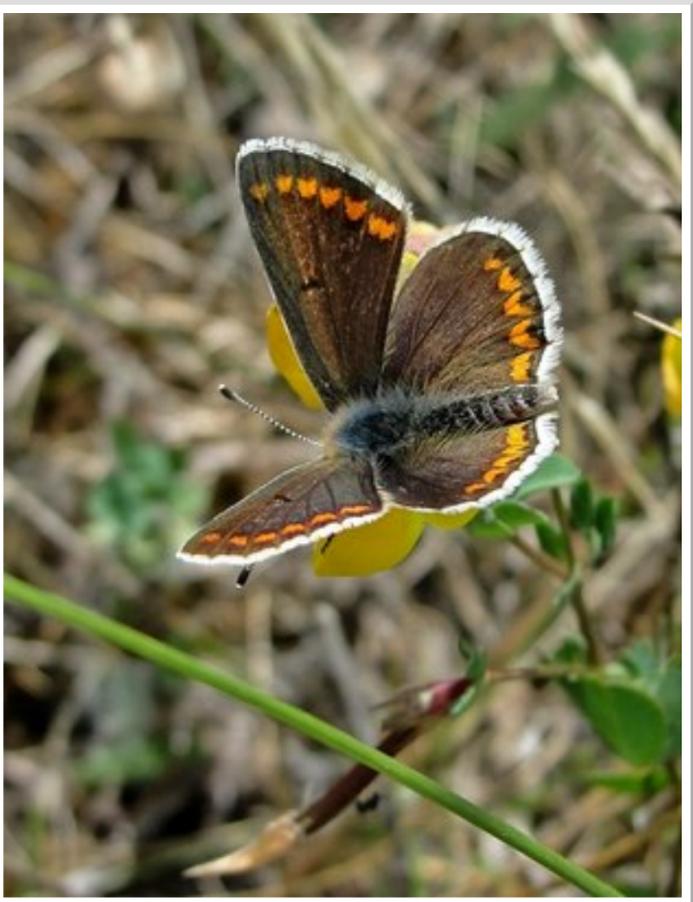
20th August

I have recently moved office location to a site close to Bedfont Lakes Country Park in what I would still call Middlesex. I actually had the chance today to pop out for an hour at lunchtime and have a look around. Away from the sterile expanses of tidily mown grass, there are reasonable patches of unkempt growth, with brambles and wildflowers, and in particular a long straight border along the boundary between the Park and the railway line. Thistles, marjoram, trefoil and yellow spiky dandelion-like flowers predominate and attract a good number of butterflies.

Firstly, I noticed Common Blues, and then almost immediately the silvery flash of Brown Argus.









As I concentrated on a pretty new and almost unblemished Brown Argus, I was interrupted by a fluttering of yellow wings – two Clouded Yellows chased each other right under my nose and away. However, the sun went in and they parted, with one of them settling on the ground not far away. Their camouflage is pretty good against dried up vegetation, but I spotted its just-that-bit-too-yellow shade.



The sun came out again within seconds of the photo and it was away again. Moving on a bit, there were more Common Blues and then two darker-looking butterflies spiralled up from the ground. As they returned, it became clear they were two new Small Coppers, and one came to settle right in front of me. It seemed noticeably darker than those I'd seen recently further north – I believe in southern climes they are darker, and I suppose this year's hot weather may have produced the same effect.



Heading back to work with some reluctance, I came across another pair of Clouded Yellows. I'm pretty sure they were not the same two individuals as earlier, as the two sets of sightings were some way away from each other and on the second occasion, one of the butterflies was somewhat worn.



Other species seen included Meadow Browns, a few Gatekeepers and Large and Small Whites. Despite large quantities of wild buddleia in the Park, I saw not one Nymphalid. I was back at work one hour to the minute after leaving – and with a bit of luck may well get further chances to repeat the exercise.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-13 10:45 PM GMT

Great report Dave 😊 Those shots of the Clouded Yellows are great and I really like the Brown Argus 😊 Those stolen lunch breaks are great and often lead to increased productivity in the afternoon too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Aug-13 09:41 PM GMT

#### 21st August

Taking your sound advice Wurzel, about increasing my work output, I grabbed half an hour in the Park at lunchtime today too. I saw a very similar selection of butterflies to yesterday, but it was warmer and sunnier, and windier too, so photos were hard to come by. I saw four more Clouded Yellows in four different spots, but the general impression was that they were heading through from south-west to north-east with the wind, and not lingering much. One particularly large female (almost Large White size) stopped to nectar on Birds-Foot Trefoil, but didn't stay long enough on any one flower to make a photo possible. From what I've seen, this is typical of Clouded Yellows in sunny weather: long powerful flights with occasional pauses to nectar from several different flowers in quick succession. Just as you think you're going to get that perfect shot, off they go again. If the sun goes in, they quickly plummet to the ground, often hiding in plain sight in Grayling fashion. Should the sun go in whilst one is nectaring, that is your best chance at a picture, as they tend to stay put. Regardless of the frustration attached, it is wonderful to see Yellow so frequently amongst the Whites at the moment – if only every year could be the same... At the end of the break from work, I had managed to snap a mating pair of Meadow Browns, and one obliging Brown Argus.



Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Aug-13 12:53 AM GMT

### 23rd August

I spent the morning at Bekonscot Model Village with Elliot, and the proximity to the M40 drew us afterwards further out to Aston Rowant. We arrived around one, as sunshine gave way to bright and very warm overcast, and set out across the top of the hillside on the northern side, returning along the bottom. The first point of interest was a large area of rampant ragwort and marjoram just below the viewpoint – it was full of Small Tortoiseshells (with a couple of Peacocks too). A splendid sight.





There were lots of butterflies over the whole slope, as there were on my last visit four weeks ago, but the mix had changed somewhat. Not many male Chalkhill Blues were in evidence, although there were still plenty of females, and I find I didn't take a single photo of either. On the other hand, Brown Argus and Common Blues were everywhere, particularly the former.





There were also very healthy numbers of Silver-spotted Skippers, mostly females (with some fresh examples) and mostly on the ground rather than on flowers. One other skipper was seen - I think it was a Small one, but it was very worn, including the underside of the antennae!



*Small Skipper (?)*

The first Silver-spotted Skipper I saw was crawling through the grass, curving its abdomen around periodically, but as far as I could tell not actually laying. It was only when I looked at the photos later that in the very first one there is clearly an egg next to the butterfly.



*Silver-spotted Skipper with newly-laid egg*



*Looking to lay another*





The highlight of the afternoon though was coming across a fresh shining Adonis Blue, basking wide open under the bright sky. I have never seen Adonis at Aston Rowant before, despite visiting here every year since 2008 at the right sort of time. The contrast with the Common Blues was so clear, it is hard to imagine the two being confused.



*Adonis (male underside)*



Anything else? There were plenty of Meadow Browns, but no Gatekeepers now, a sprinkling of Small Heaths, and Elliot spotted a Small Copper on the path being stalked by a harvestman (unsuccessfully it turned out).



There were male and female Brimstones, and all three Whites. Fifteen species in all on the slopes, and Speckled Woods along the path back to the car made it sixteen.

At eleven o'clock this evening, a Small Tortoiseshell came in the kitchen window and circled the room like a moth, before briefly settling next to the Painted Lady on the UK Butterflies calendar. I managed to liberate the poor thing, and it didn't return. How very odd! 😊

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Pete Eeles, 24-Aug-13 09:14 AM GMT

Great shots of the ovipositing SSS, Dave! Probably the best I've seen of this critter!

Cheers,

- Pete

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-13 10:26 AM GMT

Great stuff Dave 😊

I must admit I have only ever visited Aston Rowant around Late July/early August to try to catch the Chalkhills and SS Skippers in fairly good condition, I really must make the effort to visit at other times.

Cheers,

Neil F.

## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-13 05:55 PM GMT

Cracking shots Dave 😊 The egg laying female is great and to have an egg in shot too finishes off the story brilliantly 😊 The Adonis looks great it's made me realise that I need to pay them a bit more attention next year.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by Nick Broomer, 24-Aug-13 06:29 PM GMT

I agree with Wurzel your photo depicting the Silver-spotted Skipper ovipositing whilst capturing an egg in the same picture is brilliant Dave, and it just shows you how big the SSS ovum is for such a small butterfly compared to other eggs of butterflies whether large or small. Great work.

All the best, Nick.

## Re: millerd

by David M, 24-Aug-13 08:37 PM GMT

Excellent stuff, Dave. We've really had an explosion of early stages images lately, and that one is up near the top!

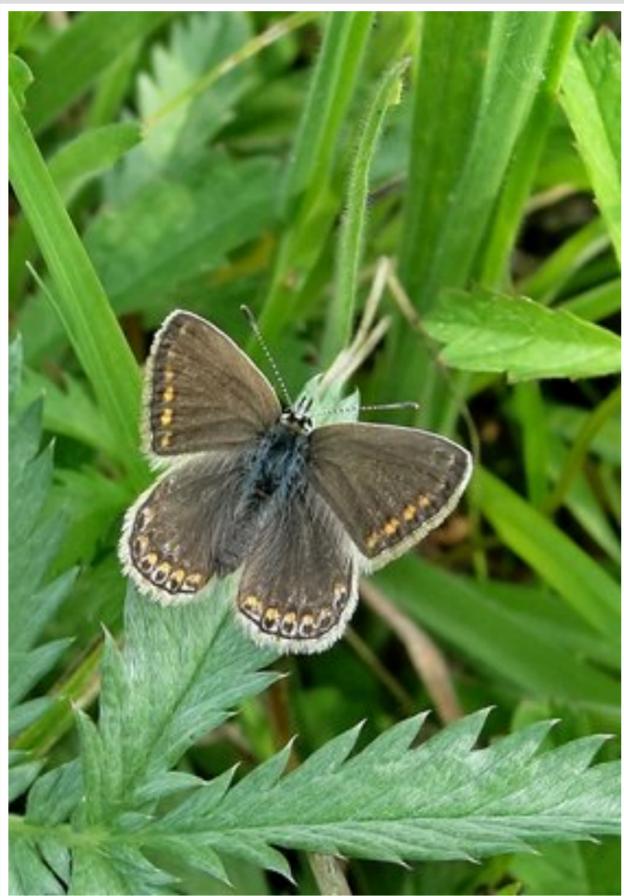
## Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Aug-13 11:18 PM GMT

Wow – thank you all for the lovely comments about the Silver-spotted Skipper and her egg. 😊 As always, it was pure luck – I didn't realise there was an egg in the shot until I looked at the photos later. I was far more excited by the Adonis Blue!

### 25th August

I realised that with work and weather and other commitments, I hadn't had a good look at my local patch for nearly three weeks, and decided to make good the omission this afternoon. After a selection of Whites in the front garden on the dandelions, the walk started as it often does, with a territorial Red Admiral and a couple of Commas, and several Speckled Woods fluttering about in the shade. However, the next sighting was a bit of a surprise, with a Small Heath seen a considerable distance (a good km or so) from the usual area. Progressing along the edge of the river, there were more Commas (all quite worn ones), and several Common Blues appeared, male and female, and far more than I've seen before in this particular part of the walk. One of the females was entirely brown, not a blue scale to be seen, and I had to make sure it wasn't a Brown Argus.



*Completely brown female Common Blue*



*Male Common Blue underside*

Another was found wandering amongst the trefoil plants, and after she'd flown off, I found a tiny white dot on top of a leaf – a single egg.



*Another dark female Common Blue wandering on Birds-foot Trefoil*



*Common Blue egg on BFT*

No doubt there were more if I'd looked, but they are very small and only by taking a photo and zooming in could I be sure it definitely was an egg. My

attention was then grabbed by a small butterfly with a different type of flight altogether – a worn Small Copper. This was the first I've seen on my patch this year (though I had to wait until October for one in 2012...).



Just before moving on to the open field north of the A 3113, a bright new Comma appeared, intensely orange and brown, and such a contrast to its faded cousins seen earlier.



In the field area itself, I was greeted by a basking Small Tortoiseshell that looked to be freshly emerged.



The abundance of Meadow Browns had now dwindled to a few very dull individuals, and there were fewer of these than there were of Small Heaths –

though there were not as many of the latter as I expected. Common Blues were all along the path at regular intervals, and having seen so many small ones this year, and so many dark females, I very nearly ignored the Brown Argus that jinked across in front of me. Again, this was the first of these I've seen here this year, and I'm glad to say the second and third followed quickly afterwards.



Returning the way I'd come, I had a different perspective on a "wild" buddleia. There were several Whites and a couple of Peacocks enjoying the purple bloom, but my eye was drawn to a pinky-brown butterfly that periodically sailed off in great arcing flights before coming back to the same spray of flowers. It was a Painted Lady, and yet another species I'd not seen here this year.





That brought the local tally for the year to 23, with only Ringlets being absent this time round from my all time local list. A good afternoon!

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-13 06:39 PM GMT

Great shots and an enjoyable read Dave- a lot of it echoed with me as I recognised Painted Lady from your accurate description and I've also been thinking where are the Meadow Browns?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

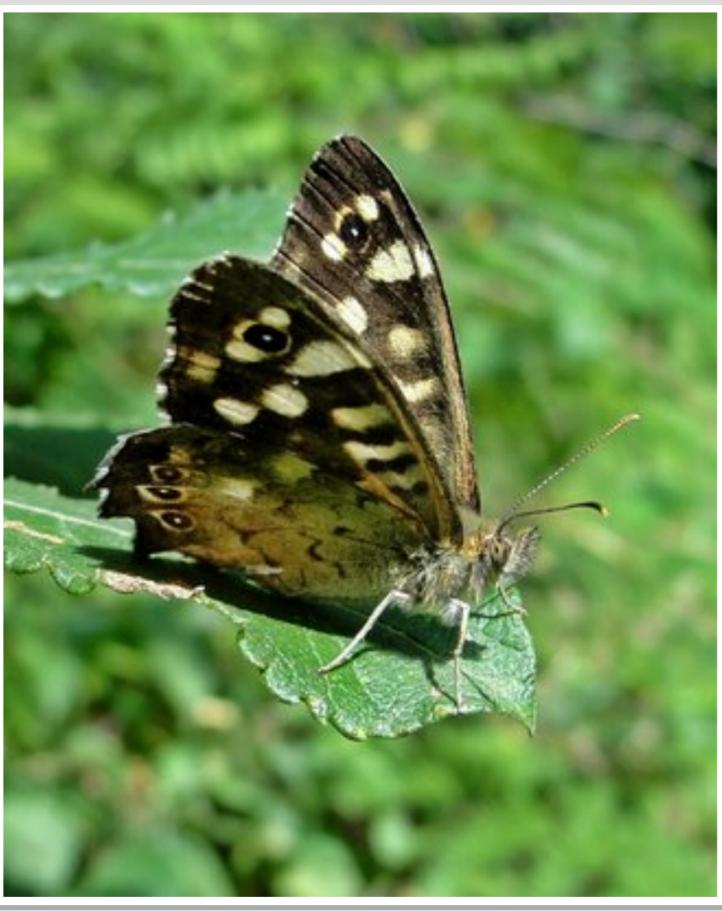
by millerd, 27-Aug-13 08:15 PM GMT

Good numbers of Meadow Browns still flying at Denbies today, Wurzel, some quite fresh too. But first...

#### 27th August *part one...*

I was later setting off today than intended and decided to go less far and look at an area of Bookham Common recommended by Philzoid (which I have visited during both 2011 and 2012 at this time of year). The sun burnt off the cloud cover almost as soon as I arrived, and it quickly warmed up. I followed the path through the trees to where it runs alongside a field, keeping an eye open all the way on the blackthorn on either side. Yes - this is Brown Hairstreak country. However, all I saw for some while were numerous Small Coppers, Meadow Browns, Common Blues and Speckled Woods, plus a couple of Commas, a Brown Argus, a few Green-veined Whites and one or two very worn Gatekeepers.









After about an hour of hedge scrutiny, I wandered back the way I'd come. I spotted a couple of Meadow Browns sharing a thistle, and approached, wondering if I might get a decent photo of the twosome. Unsurprisingly, they both lifted off, but in doing so disturbed another butterfly that superficially at least looked similar. It settled again onto a bracken frond, and turned out to be a rather splendid female Brown Hairstreak. I always forget how large these butterflies are – this one was nearly as big as the Meadow Browns that had disturbed it. I managed a distant shot before the butterfly took off – but instead of disappearing as I expected it to do, it actually came closer, until it was almost under my nose. It found a blackthorn branch and started walking along underneath it, in and out of the leafy twigs in a very animated fashion. Whether it laid, I cannot say, because I couldn't find the branch later to check. After this side trip, it emerged and basked on the bracken again, this time about waist height, and after allowing a few open wing shots fluttered off at low level for a while before climbing up towards a small ash tree, where I lost sight of it.





A splendid bit of luck, and my 51st species of the year (a personal best). I felt decidedly chuffed. 😊 After the excitement, I didn't see much else, except for an unusually large Speckled Wood sucking up blackberry juice and a female Brimstone tightly wedged into a bindweed flower.





After the runner beans in York, this species will clearly try anything. 😊

*...part two*

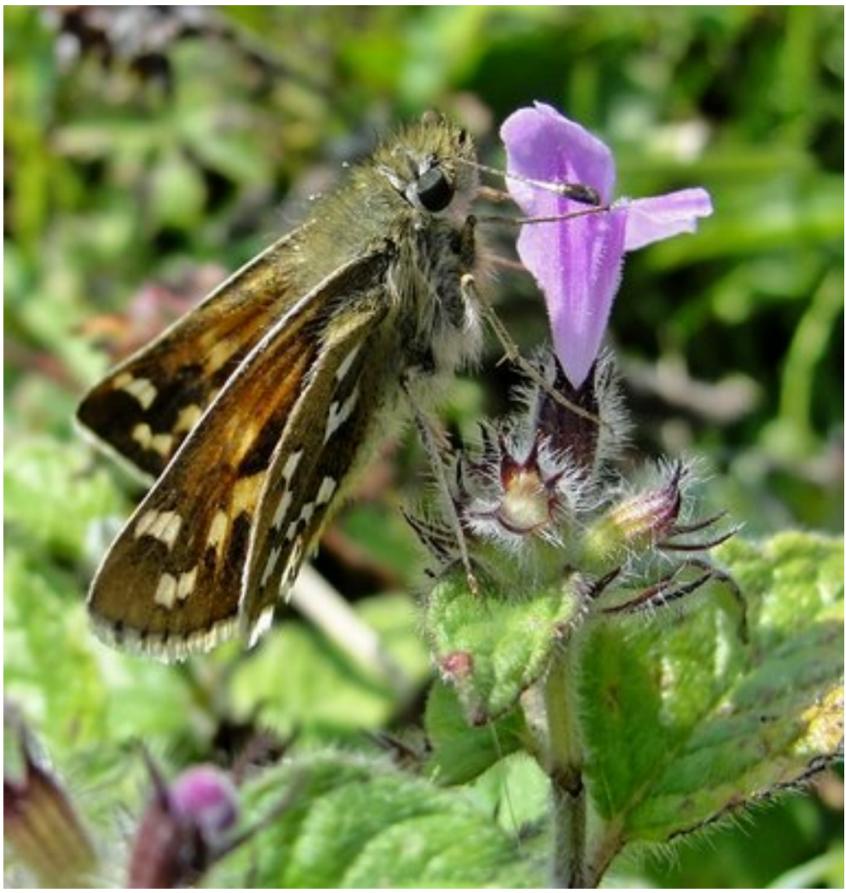
It's not far to Denbies from Bookham, so that was the second stop of the day. It's been three weeks since my last visit, and the scintillating clouds of Chalkhill Blues have gone. Well, the males are much fewer in number, certainly, but there were hundreds and hundreds of females. Their retiring habits and less prominent colouring don't attract the eye, but if a patch of marjoram is disturbed, they fly up in clouds.



There were one or two fresh males still, demonstrating what a relatively prolonged emergence this species has.



However, nothing (except perhaps Lulworth Skippers) competes with Meadow Browns on this front. Unlike other sites, there were still lots of this particular species about, with fresh individuals and mating pairs. I noted good numbers of Small Heaths across the whole slope, plus a few Common Blues and Brown Argus here and there. There were also Silver-spotted Skippers spread out over the hillside – a much lower density than prevails at Aston Rowant, but I still saw a dozen or so, including a reasonably fresh male.



Last, but by no means least, were the Adonis Blues. Again, I must have seen at least a dozen (no obvious females yet), all still new and shining like

Jewels in the grass and such a contrast to the silvery Chalkhills with which they tussled from time to time.



A very good day.

Dave

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-13 10:50 PM GMT

"A good day! - I'll say - looks like you definitely had a "goodun" Dave, I told you it wouldn't be long until you were all Brostreaked up 😊

Have a goodun (again)

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-13 09:21 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave, it certainly sounds like a great day.

I particularly like the last male Adonis Blue photo 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

**Re: millerd**

28th August

Thank you, Neil and Wurzel! more Adonis coming up... 😊

Another lovely day, so I had to spend my time off work and unusually free of children out in the countryside again. I started with a quick walk around my local patch before lunch, which produced nothing unusual: Speckled Woods becoming more frequent, Common Blues, Small Heaths and Meadow Browns all still soldiering on, plus all three varieties of Whites.



After lunch, I decided to go back to Aston Rowant. Having visited Denbies yesterday, it is interesting to make the comparison. Aston Rowant seems so much more concentrated: a smaller area, denser patches of wildflowers, more paths, and much greater concentrations of butterflies – though the species are largely the same. At Aston, the Chalkhill Blues have declined a bit more, with no fresh males and fewer females. However, to make up for this, I saw many more Brown Argus, Common Blues and Silver-spotted Skippers. I don't know anywhere else where you can see Brown Argus so widespread across a big area, rather than in pockets. They really were everywhere.



*Strongly marked underside*



*A lovely deep-coloured fresh Common Blue female*



*Same individual*



*Down in the grass where they like to be*

There were lots of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, again spread over the whole slope, and large numbers of Whites.



At one point, I watched a group of four whites fly up together, only for them to be joined by more and more others until about a dozen became briefly embroiled in a white tornado until they sorted themselves out and dispersed. Along the bottom of the slope were numerous Brimstones of both sexes, busy building up reserves of energy for the long winter ahead, and a couple of Small Coppers.



Small Tortoiseshells were around, but not in the numbers I saw last week, and there were no Peacocks. I imagine they have already started to hide themselves away until next spring.



After the solitary Adonis Blue I saw last week, today was more fruitful, and I must have come across at least half a dozen individual males, all towards the lower part of the hillside.





Finally, throughout the two or three hours I spent here today, I had more than a dozen encounters with various Clouded Yellows. I am sure some were repeats, but there were both males and females amongst them and at least half a dozen different individuals at a guess. They hardly settled, and then not for long, so photographs were all at a distance unfortunately. 😞





Another good day! 😊

### Re: millerd

by Maximus, 29-Aug-13 12:36 PM GMT

A very good day and some lovely Adonis Blue shots, there are some beautiful fresh Adonis about at the moment. I know what hard work the Clouded Yellows can be, hardly settling for any time at all to nectar!

Mike

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-13 08:40 PM GMT

I agree with Mike about the Clouded Yellows 😊 Great Adonis and the second Cloudy shot shows the fore wing spots off to a tee, cracking 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Aug-13 12:08 AM GMT

Thanks again, chaps – you can never see too many Adonis Blues in my book (or Clouded Yellows either: and the two together, sometimes squabbling – now there's a thing!).

#### 29th August

An hour on my local patch was all I had the opportunity for. Speckled Woods dominated today, and they were concentrating on the huge supply of ever more rotten blackberries.



I also saw Common Blues (scruffier than ever), Meadow Browns, Small Heaths, and Lots of Whites.



Not a Nymphalid in sight.

### 30th August

The boys voted for the seaside again, so we drove down to Studland. The cloud cover was thin and patchy, and it was pretty warm – the sea was millpond calm, crystal clear and looked just like the Med. A *bit* cooler, perhaps, but very pleasant to swim in none the less. After holes were dug, brothers buried, and sand inefficiently washed off, we headed back to the car with the intention of a walk over at Durlston on the other side of Swanage. Plodding through the dunes, Toby spotted a Clouded Yellow. For once, it decided that now would be a good time to make a stop for nectar, and it hopped from yellow flower to yellow flower (ignoring the abundance of flowering heather), and eventually paused long enough for me to get a decent photo.



Toby had lagged behind, and when I returned to show him the Yellow pictures, he countered with a Grayling I had apparently disturbed when stalking the Clouded Yellow.



*Toby's photo*

Other than these two, we saw lots of Small Whites over the dunes, and a gaggle of Small Tortoiseshells on a buddleia by the car park. Over at Durlston, the headland was sitting under low cloud, so little was flying to start with. However, it burned off while we walked, and along the path down the valley to the lighthouse the Blues started opening their wings. Little bursts of violet-blue and then more eye-catching electric-blue signalled the appearance of dozens of Common and Adonis Blues.

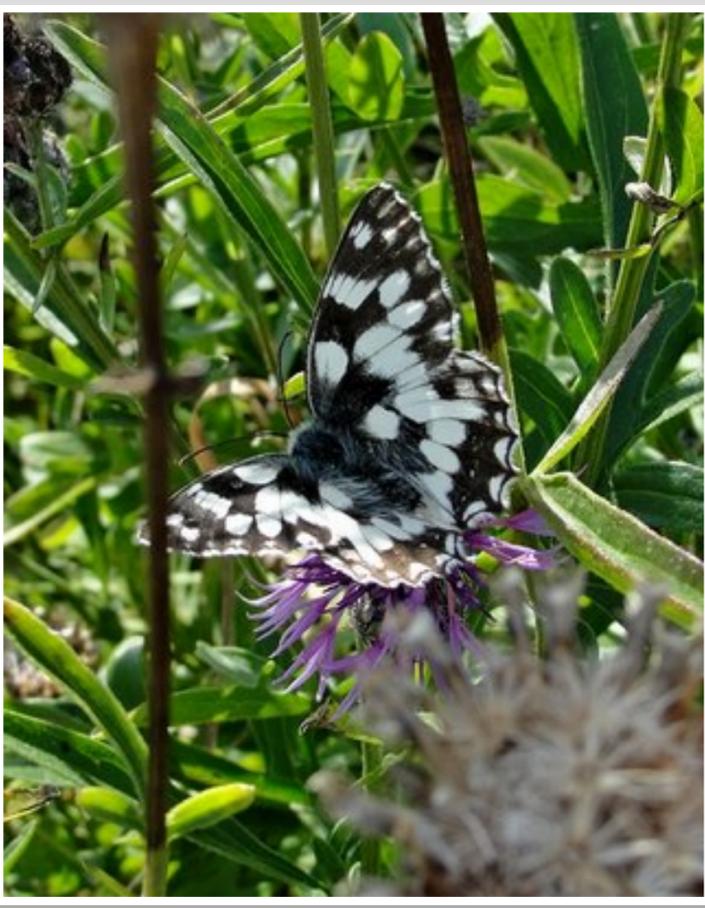


Small brown shapes were buzzing about in between then, which turned out to be numbers of rather worn Lulworth Skippers, so small as to be almost invisible when settled, and hard to photograph on the waving grass and flower heads.





I was amazed to see a couple of really late Marbled Whites, one not even particularly worn, and to complete the picture out on the slopes there were Meadow Browns and Small Heaths.



*Having dived into the undergrowth*



Returning to the visitor centre car park, we encountered Speckled Woods in the "tunnel" under the trees, and the buddleia next to the building itself was host to a dozen Small Tortoiseshells and a Jersey Tiger Moth.



*None of these insects wanted to pose: the one at the bottom is a Jersey Tiger*

A Wall basked briefly on the wall, paused for a very quick sip of nectar from the buddleia, and disappeared away back down the path.

A long day by the time we got back, but another good one.

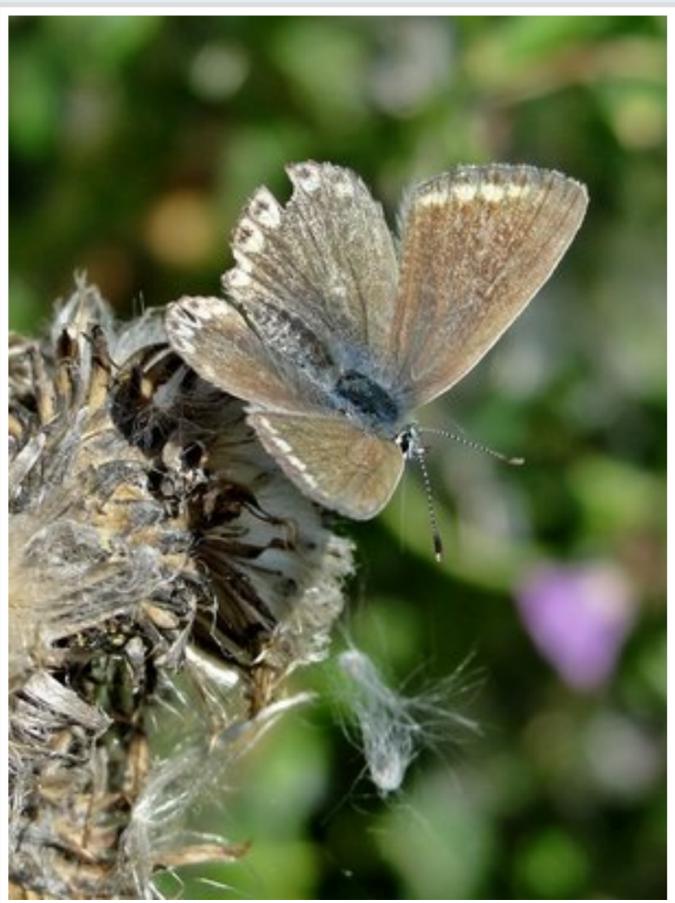
Dave

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 31-Aug-13 09:54 PM GMT

**31st August**

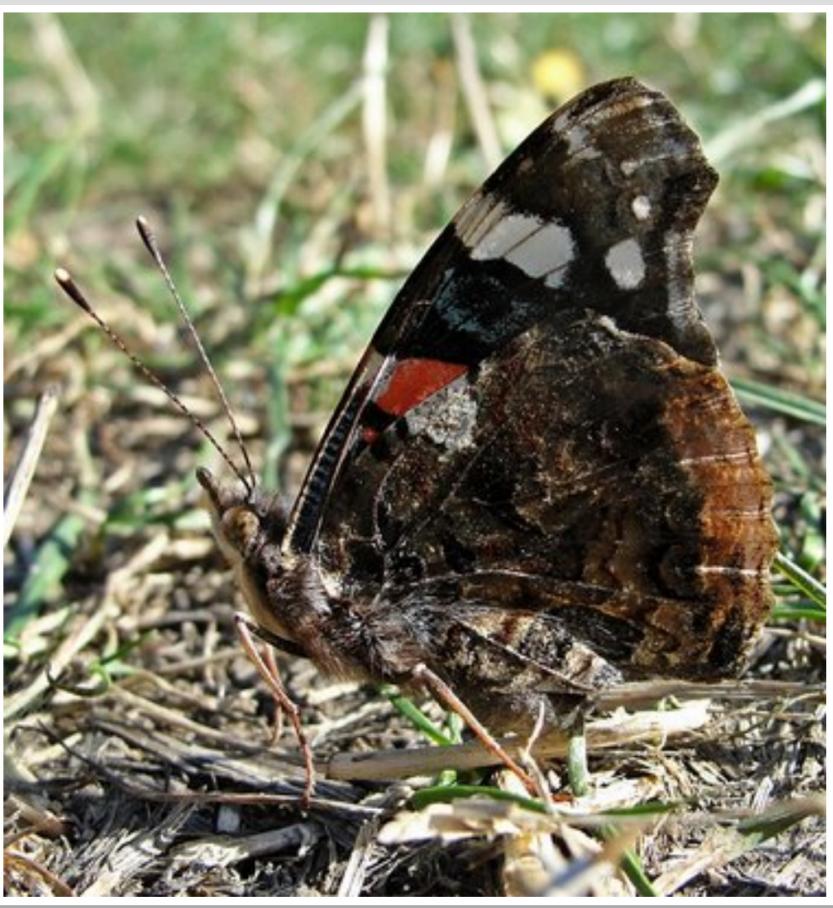
Back to the local patch today, a day of almost unbroken sunshine. Nothing remarkable to report, just the same as the last few days here, with various Whites, Common Blues, Speckled Woods, Small Heaths, Meadow Browns and a couple of Commas being present. There were at least three equally worn-looking female Blues:





At the end of my walk, I was buzzed by a Red Admiral, the first for a while. I hope a few more appear soon – September's and October's ivy flowers wouldn't be the same without them.





Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-13 06:02 PM GMT

I love the composition of the second Specklie from a post or two ago, that should be on a greetings card 😊🍷 Great array of species over the last couple of posts Dave, nice to see the Graylings and Lulworths still going and I too am hoping for some Red Admirals to see me through the autumn 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-13 10:06 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. I like to get shots of natural behaviour when I can as it brings back more memories of the day when I look at the pictures on cold December evenings. If they turn out attractively artistic as well, it's a bit of a bonus. There are lots of Speckled Woods around near me at the moment – many of them are after the blackberries, so maybe there is a shortage of honeydew at the moment. Here's another, in a more common pose.



### 1st September

More of the same as yesterday around the local patch in sunshine again today (Sunday) – with the addition of a female Holly Blue that posed beautifully until the autofocus on the camera sent it up into the trees. 😊 There haven't been many of the second brood around, considering that the first brood was pretty reasonable given the weather at the time. I noted two more Common Blue females that were not seen yesterday – very little blue again on one of these, though the other did sport some blue scales.



There continue to be plenty of fresh-looking Whites everywhere, with Small ones in the majority.



*female GVW*



*male Small White*



*male GVW*

One notable point of interest: on a mown piece of communal grass (I think the council cut it) near my house, I spotted a yellow patch on a "weed" of some sort. Closer examination showed this to be a clutch of Large White eggs, laid on the top of the leaf in full sunshine. I assume the plant to be a wild brassica of some sort, but given the location, it's difficult to imagine any surviving to become butterflies.





Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Sep-13 09:35 PM GMT

### 4th September

I left work at four and headed straight for Bedfont Lakes Country Park, a mere five minutes walk away, on what has been another really hot and sunny day. Everywhere was looking distinctly arid, and flowers for nectaring butterflies were few and far between now. I made for the path next to the railway, where some marjoram was still blooming and there were a sprinkling of scabious as well. Initially, everything I saw was in energetic flight, but towards five o'clock what butterflies there were started to settle and nectar. Meadow Browns sought out the scabious flowers, whereas Common Blues and the odd Brown Argus preferred the marjoram, or settled on birds-foot trefoil plants.





Small Heaths were more in evidence than a fortnight ago, the only species seen for which this was true. Most of the day this butterfly will only settle on the ground, or low in vegetation, and the best you can hope for is that it will perch on a dead stem.



However, come the end of the day before they disappear to roost, they will spend a while nectaring. Having watched them last year and again this, I have noticed that some individuals (not all) will fidget and flick their wings open and shut whilst they are on a flower, and a glimpse of the upperside can be had. I spotted one today doing exactly this, and by taking multiple shots managed to get a couple of blurred images of the Far Side of a Small Heath. The flicking of the wings is obviously pretty quick.





There were all three White butterflies around, and a bit of a kerfuffle amongst some of these resolved itself into a mating pair of Green-veined Whites being hassled by another male and a male Small White. The interlopers cleared off, leaving the couple resting on a bramble. The contrast in colour between the two was quite stark: the female was bright lemon-yellow underneath, the male plain white: both with grey veins.



Finally, a couple of Clouded Yellows bowled by at speed and disappeared towards the sun and I lost track of them.

Dave

## Re: millerd

by CJB, 05-Sep-13 09:24 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

I have been away for a bit and have been catching up on all the reports; you have seen some amazing things and captured some amazing pictures.

A splendid bit of luck, and my 51st species of the year (a personal best)

I don't mind admitting that I was seriously jealous and dumbstruck when I read that!!! 🍀🍀🍀🍀🍀

I have managed to get to 45 (photographed) in my species count, but 51 is unbelievable, especially in one year! Well done you. Did you get any of the rare migrants?

Flutter on!

CJB

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Sep-13 12:27 PM GMT

Thank you for your comments about the photos, CJB - I'm glad you find the observations interesting too. I always find the behaviour noted in others' diaries particularly fascinating.

There has been a lot of luck involved in clocking up 51 species to be honest, and for some I have only seen one or two at most. I have missed out on four of the northern ones (Mountain Ringlet, Chequered Skipper, Northern Brown Argus and Large Heath), plus the Cryptic Wood White in Northern Ireland, and of those within closer reach, I haven't seen Swallowtails (either subspecies!), Large Blues or Glanville Fritillaries. These three I have seen in other years, and by all accounts a big effort in the form of driving to Norfolk might still notch up the Swallowtail this year, but to be honest, I can't see it happening. Of the 51, I think I have a photo of some sort of 50 of them, dipping out on the White-letter Hairstreak which I almost always find elusive. On the subject of migrants, being in Dover when the LTBs were just a few miles away, and being unable to get over there, was a tad frustrating! Still, there are a lot of UKB fingers crossed that a new brood will emerge in October, and it would be great to see them.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by CJB, 05-Sep-13 12:37 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

I was up in Scotland at the end of July and missed out on all the local species which I was hoping to add to my tally of 45. However there are some easy ones to add next year like SSB's, DGF, HBF, WW and then it becomes a case of driving around to specific sites! Glasdrum here I come...

I am becoming more and more convinced that the bizarre Frit I saw in Cornwall was a Cardinal, but sadly without photographic proof I am on a thin wicket!

A great effort of yours though and I hope you notch up LTB before the year is out.

Flutter on!

CJB

### Re: millerd

by David M, 05-Sep-13 04:15 PM GMT

Good Small Heath shot there, Dave.

I've seen one or two hold their wings slightly open momentarily but have never got an image.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Sep-13 09:20 PM GMT

#### 5th September

I had to MOT the car today and had hoped for a happy outcome that would not dent the pocket and would allow a quick trip somewhere before I had to pick up Elliot from school on this last day of sunshine before the forecast deluge tomorrow. Alas, it was not to be - something complicated needed fixing, so I was restricted to local buses and my legs on this glorious day. I ended up walking down the old railway track that used to run from Colnbrook to Staines alongside Staines Moor. Butterfly sightings consisted of good numbers of assorted Whites;



Speckled Woods and a few Commas in the shade.



The Moor itself was very brown and parched, and a few Small Heaths had it to themselves. During a pause for a drink, I spotted a dragonfly settled close by so I took the opportunity to get a record of it.



It is now a very warm summer's evening outside, soft and aromatic. 😊 Hard to imagine the change to come with the morning! 😞

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Sep-13 11:27 PM GMT

Great shots Dave 😊, that Small Heath is tantalising 😊 It was lovely here today too and I can't believe that it's all set to change overnight - hopefully

it'll cheer up for a bit next week to give the Cloudies a chance.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-13 08:03 PM GMT

Hi Dave, it has taken me all week to catch up on everyones diaries and read them properly, great reports and photos as usual 😊

Interesting that you saw a Jersey Tiger Moth on the Buddleia at Durlston, I saw one on what I believe is the same Buddleia last year, although I did not see any this year.

Cheers,

Neil F.

## Last of the Summer Wine...?

by millerd, 16-Sep-13 12:26 AM GMT

The weather has been so poor recently that any kind of opportunist excursion has been just not worth planning around work and other things. Butterfly sightings recently have been very limited.

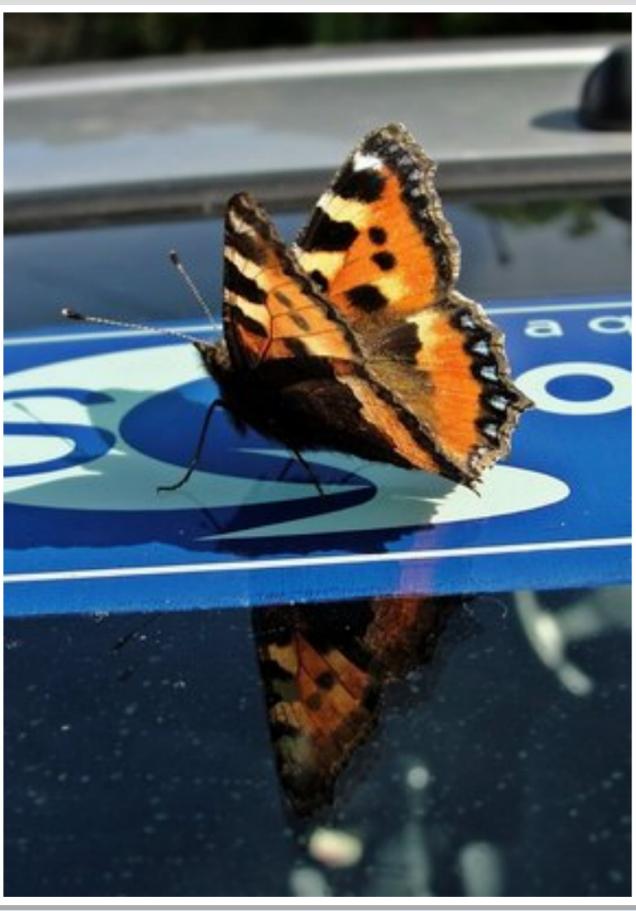
**7th September:** A trip into Birmingham with all the boys was notable for quite a few white butterflies seen from the train on trackside buddleias, notably between Moor Street and Solihull. There was also this Small White spotted right in the City Centre near the Library where some ornamental beds have been planted with wildflowers.



**12th September:** My local patch at 4pm with some unexpected sunshine conjured some more whites, mostly high up around the trees. There was also one Red Admiral, but the pathsides had been rather unnecessarily mown taking away many of the last nectar sources for the remaining Common Blues in the process (none were seen).

**14th September:** My friend from Dover has just moved to Holmfirth in Yorkshire, and I went up to visit. On Saturday morning the sun shone though it was very chilly until nearly noon. However, one buddleia was continuing to flower, and had attracted a dozen Small Tortoiseshells. One repeatedly settled on her car.





Dave

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-13 07:19 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Good to see you are managing to see some butterflies 😊 This last weekend was a washout around here and it seems that the few sunny spells have been when I am at work.

I remember those wildflower beds in Birmingham being on the T.V. a while back, good to see they are still there.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-13 10:00 PM GMT

It's certainly hard work finding butterflies at the moment 😞 so great news about your latest haul 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Sep-13 11:57 PM GMT

#### 20th September

The sun shone today and at last it became quite warm. I found myself able to go out of the office for an hour and used the time to have a walk in Bedfont Lakes Country Park. On the first bit of wild ground I came across, I spotted a flash of orange, and soon tracked down a Small Heath, and then a second.



There was a third very drab-looking butterfly with them, which turned out to be the most worn Small Copper I think I've ever seen.



I wandered on a bit, and several whites appeared, none of which were close enough to identify for certain. A Meadow Brown erupted from the path and flew up into a tree, and then I glimpsed a flash of blue amongst the predominantly yellow flowers. This proved to be a very fresh-appearing male Common Blue. Whether this is a late emerging second brood individual or one from a new third brood, I couldn't say.





I also found a very worn member of the same species, with barely a blue scale left.



After a bit more walking, I turned around and headed back to the office. I encountered another two Meadow Browns and one more Small Heath away from where I'd seen the others earlier, and managed to spot a nectaring Green-veined White without disturbing it first.





After such a spell without seeing anything much, it was good to find five, probably six or seven, different species still flying (in some cases, only just!). However, it was disappointing not to see a single Red Admiral on the masses of flowering ivy present, nor any Commas either.

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Sep-13 10:01 PM GMT

### 21st September

An afternoon walk across Denbies hillside today didn't produce many butterflies. It was warm but almost entirely overcast, which probably didn't help. There were maybe a dozen Meadow Browns, a male Chalkhill Blue and a couple of female blues.



The one below I would say is a Common Blue – the other I think was an Adonis.



I think if the sun had come out a bit more, I might have seen one or two others.

I watched one Meadow Brown meet its end in a spider's web – the spider was a very attractive yellow, fairly large and parcelled up the butterfly in no time...



Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-13 09:31 PM GMT

A grisly shot to end the post with Dave but the Meadow Brown looks pretty faded and on it's last legs anyway I suppose 😞 I was watching a tattered old white this afternoon that just just dropped from a flower if was feeding on, it literally fell of its perch 😬 I suppose it's getting to that time of year 😞

Have a goodun

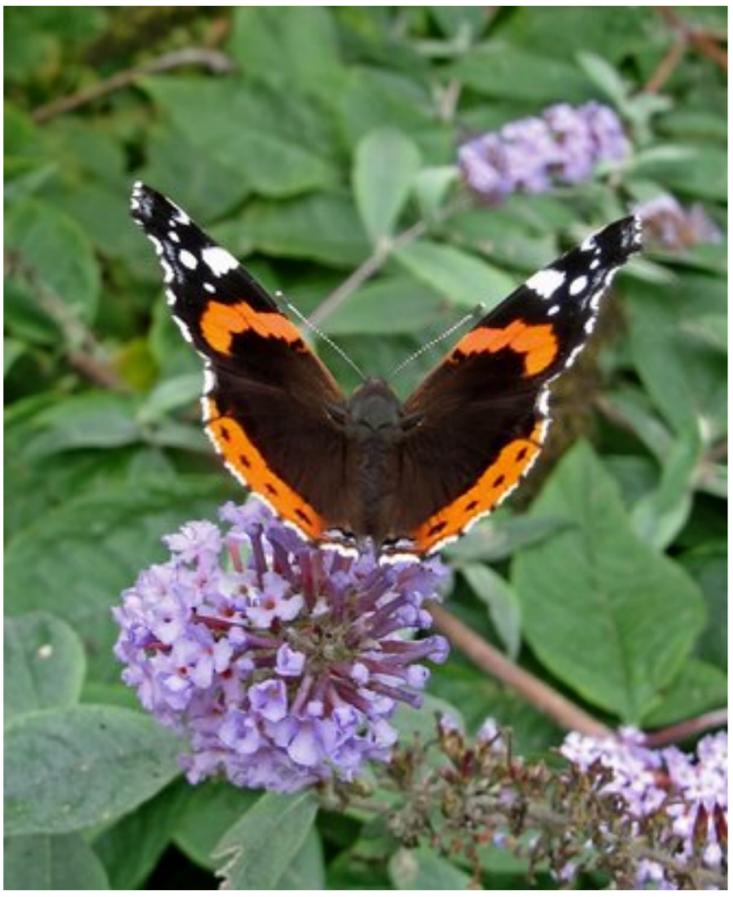
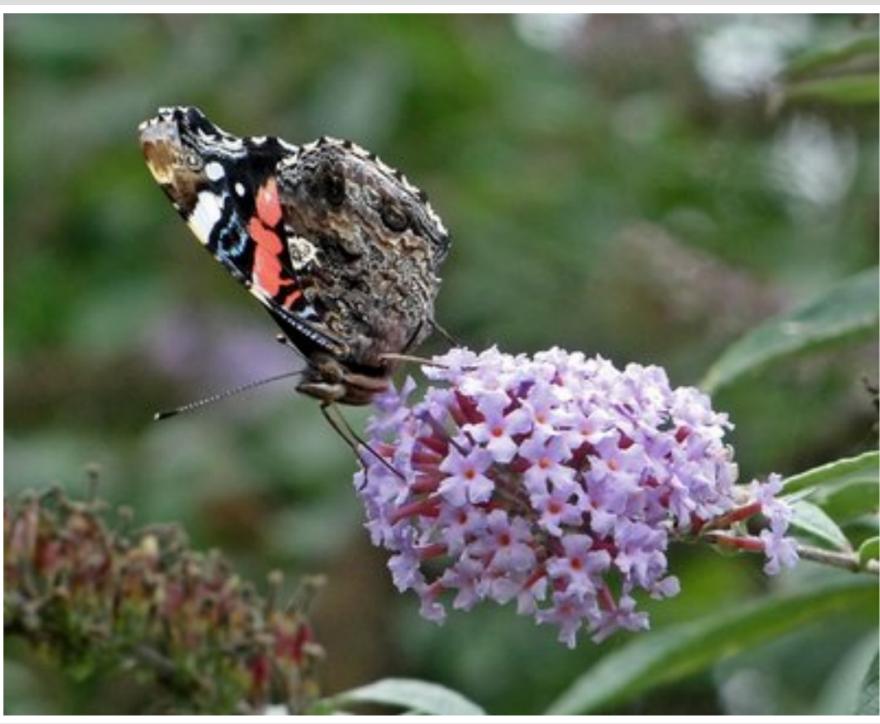
Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Sep-13 09:33 PM GMT

#### 22nd September

More overcast until the sun came out half an hour before sunset... Nevertheless, it was warm again, and certainly enough so for a solitary new Red Admiral to be enjoying the second flush of flowers on a buddleia round the corner from me. Though there have been far fewer of this species around here this year (in common with most places I think), I have rarely been without at least one.



There were one or two whites about too during the day.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Sep-13 09:40 PM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

A grisly shot to end the post with Dave but the Meadow Brown looks pretty faded and on it's last legs anyway I suppose 😞 I was watching a tattered old white this afternoon that just just dropped from a flower if was feeding on, it literally fell of its perch 😲 I suppose it's getting to that time of year 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

It did rather flop into the web, and made very little attempt to break free. Your comment about the white above reminded me of the photo I posted earlier of the individual in the middle of Birmingham – it could barely fly and lacked at least a couple of legs... I suppose we don't notice these things when lots of fresh new butterflies are there to replace them.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 22-Sep-13 09:49 PM GMT

#### "millerd" wrote:

.... Though there have been far fewer of this species around here this year (in common with most places I think), I have rarely been without at least one...

Hi Dave,

I have only seen a handful of Red Admirals this year, no more than maybe a dozen in total. So different to last year when must have seen hundreds.

Cheers,

Neil F.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Sep-13 09:29 PM GMT

### 24th September

Nothing ventured...

Though it was five o'clock, the sun still shone after I finished work, so I decided a walk round part of my local patch couldn't hurt. I hoped there might be the odd Speckled Wood or Red Admiral, but the shadows were right down over the ivy, the buddleia and the pathside verges and shrubs, and aside from two or three whites still flying at high level, I saw nothing.

Nothing, that is, until I walked randomly across the middle of the last piece of meadow just before getting back home. This at least was fully lit by the lowering sun. Suddenly, right in front of me near the ground I saw a Clouded Yellow. Too late, I let my shadow fall on it, but amazingly, it flew only a little way before settling again. It proved to be a brand spanking new male, which I was then able to admire from both sides at close range: absolutely beautiful in the strong golden light which enhanced its colour noticeably.



*Backlit*



*In full evening sun*



*A bit of context*



*Close-up*

On 4th August I saw my first Clouded Yellow of the year not far from this spot – a female which I suspected was laying eggs (though I couldn't find any in a brief search afterwards). Could this pristine male butterfly be the offspring of that female? The timing is pretty well spot on, the location close enough to the earlier sighting, the distance from the coast far enough to make a recent immigrant not very likely. Despite sunshine elsewhere, this is the first sun here since last Friday, so the conditions were probably just right for a butterfly in waiting to emerge.

Who knows? Suffice it to say, I was pleased to see it and appreciated the luck involved in coming across it. 😊

Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by Nick Broomer, 24-Sep-13 09:36 PM GMT

Great find Dave and lovely photos. Well done.

All the best, Nick.

### **Re: millerd**

by David M, 24-Sep-13 09:39 PM GMT

So, the new home-grown brood has started to emerge?

### **Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 24-Sep-13 10:01 PM GMT

Great news Dave, 😊 my area is a couple of days behind yours so this weekend I might be able to find some local ones. Lovely shots especially the backlit one:D

Have a goodun

**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 25-Sep-13 07:52 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 😊

My turn to be jealous, its been dull here this week when I have finished work so I have not seen anything since the weekend

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: millerd**

by essexbuzzard, 25-Sep-13 11:07 PM GMT

Lets hope this signals the start of a new emergence of CY. If so,it would be a great way to end the season.

Great pictures,too. 😊

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 26-Sep-13 10:37 PM GMT

Thank you all for the kind remarks about the Clouded Yellow – very much appreciated. 😊 It was one of those special moments of the butterflying year that happen with no planning whatsoever.

**26th September**

This instead was one of those days with rather more planning and a target involved – which didn't work out quite as well as hoped. I went down to Kingsdown Leas to see the Long-tailed Blues – I certainly saw one, just the one, but came away without a photograph. The LTB bit of the venture I have posted in the specific thread for LTBs in Kent, so I'll not repeat it: [viewtopic.php?t=7099&start=10000](http://viewtopic.php?t=7099&start=10000) I did see a number of other butterflies whilst ambling back and forth or gazing hopefully at the foliage.

The commonest butterfly at the site was the Adonis Blue – I saw at least five males and three females with different degrees of wear – none were new, but one male at least was in reasonable condition. It is notable how their colour darkens and intensifies with wear despite the scales becoming increasingly patchy.





The females had worn fringes, but their overall impression is different from that of a Common Blue – difficult to pinpoint. I think these four are all Adonis except the last, which may be a Chalkhill.





I saw only two Common Blues, one of each sex: the female was a markedly blue specimen.



I came across two Chalkhill Blues as well, again one of each sex – the male was surprisingly fresh for the end of September, though far from new.



There were a couple of Small Coppers – one very worn and the other much brighter, and several Speckled Woods that looked very pale to my eye. It seemed odd to see them on an open clifftop path rather than along woodland tracks and rides in semi-shade as I'm used to.





One Red Admiral flew across at high speed, and at one point I followed a Wall down the path for a while as it landed, waited for me to get within twenty metres, and then flew on a bit further. I never did catch up. It was strikingly orange and fritillary-like from the distance it insisted on keeping, so may have been a third brood individual. Finally, I did count two each of Small and Green-veined Whites, but didn't see any Large Whites – or Clouded Yellows for that matter.

Not a bad day, but I confess to some disappointment after seeing how things were more exciting and productive on the LTB front earlier in the week. Oh well – you can't be lucky every day. 😊

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Sep-13 10:03 PM GMT

### 28th September

Up in the Rugby area today with all the boys, so with a quite warm and fairly sunny day in prospect we spent several hours at Ryton Country Park. We almost immediately came across the first of several Speckled Woods, which were meandering along the wooded paths and seeking out the generous portions of squished and fermenting blackberries on offer.



One particular area with lots of bramble near the gate from the Park into Ryton Wood had attracted two or three, but more especially was playing host to perhaps as many as a dozen Commas – I had six in view at one time and was aware of others.





One individual demonstrated the variability of the comma mark on the underside, displaying little more than a straight line – more like an "I" than anything.



Whilst here enjoying the sight of these lovely late season butterflies, we also spotted a Small Tortoiseshell, a Peacock (heading into the woodland), a couple of Green-veined Whites and a male Brimstone. This latter butterfly settled in the yellowing autumn foliage, camouflaging itself sufficiently for a large fly to land on it apparently unaware that it wasn't a leaf.



Close to here, there was also some established bushy blackthorn (and some new plantings, which didn't seem to be doing particularly well, sadly). Knowing that Brown Hairstreaks are found in the Park, I had a quick scan of the bushes for eggs, and for the first time in my life actually found one! One of the boys then pointed out that the branch had an unobtrusive marker tied to it, as did another one nearby. Lo and behold there was an egg on this one too.



We picked out about a dozen markers in various places around the Park after that, and each flagged the existence of a Brown Hairstreak egg – I assume Warwickshire BC have been surveying the area.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Padfield, 28-Sep-13 11:58 PM GMT

Nice egg pictures – now you've got your eye in you'll be finding them all over the place! I've found eggs in far more places than I've seen adults.

Your aberrant comma looks like *iota-album*:

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/scientific-resources/biodiversity/uk-biodiversity/cockayne/database/image.dsmi?filename=500244X&includeInfraSubspecific=on&nametype=scientific&searchtype=taxon&sort=taxon-euro&taxonname=Polygonia+c-album&sex=%25&side=under&provenance=all&recLimit=20&format=gallery&taxonID=8458>

One for *the species-specific-album*?

Guy

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-13 02:33 PM GMT

Great reports Dave 😊 I like the world weary blues and at least you got to see the LTB – if Climate Change progresses at predicted you might have more luck next year on the photo side of things 😊 I love the autumnal colours of the Comma and an ab too 🍁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by Pete Eeles, 29-Sep-13 02:56 PM GMT

### "padfield" wrote:

One for *the species-specific-album*?

Definitely 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

## Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 29-Sep-13 10:06 PM GMT

Hi Dave, I nearly went to Ryton myself this afternoon but didn't really have time. Its 30 minutes or so each way and as I only had a couple of hours spare I spent them closer to home rather than spend half of the time in the car.

### "millerd" wrote:

[b]

.... I assume Warwickshire BC have been surveying the area.

Dave

Yep, both Ryton Country Park and the adjacent Ryton Wood Meadows reserve are being monitored.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-13 06:58 PM GMT

Thank you for the comments, chaps – the Comma is now sitting in the ab. section of the species-specific album as suggested. Another interesting one not spotted until after the event.

It was great to find the Brown Hairstreak eggs too, and to picture the butterfly that must have laid them fluttering around the blackthorn with the many visitors to Ryton probably walking past oblivious to its presence. People miss out on so much...

### 30th September

I left work at half past four with just enough time to pop into Bedfont Lakes Country Park. The sun had come out (though very low now) and despite a breeze it was quite warm. I saw three butterflies: a male Green-veined White that was impossible to approach, a female Meadow Brown nectaring on a scabious (one of the few flowers left), and a very new male Common Blue. The colour was almost worthy of an Adonis Blue in hue, but Common Blues just never match the Adonis in intensity.





I would judge this to be a third brood individual: the second brood were out here at the end of July/early August, giving enough time for the cycle to go round again I think.

Dave

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 07-Oct-13 08:55 PM GMT

6th October

As luck would have it, with everyone gazing upon LTBs along the south coast, I was in Yorkshire for the weekend. Sunday's weather was glorious, and I saw five Small Tortoiseshells, two Small Whites and a Speckled Wood all enjoying it in and around the middle of Holmfirth.



Dave

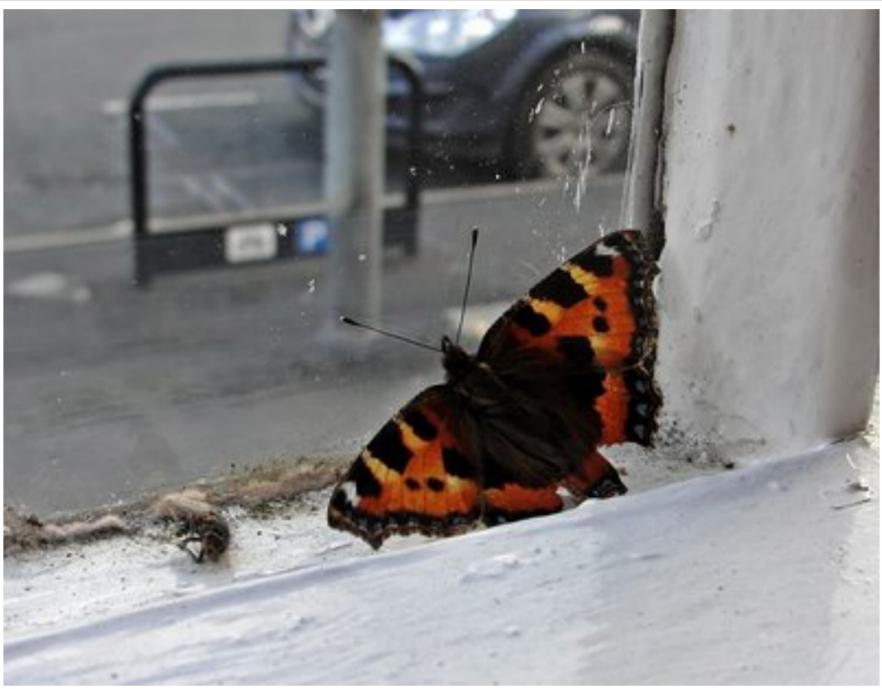
### Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Oct-13 10:40 PM GMT

I spent the weekend in a different part of Yorkshire this time. Arriving on Saturday, I found a selection of Large White chrysalids under the eaves of my sister's house, including some from previous years. I think this is a new one, but I'm not 100% sure. They apparently stripped the nasturtiums bare this year.



On Sunday, we were having a drink at lunchtime in a pub in Pocklington, when a Small Tortoiseshell crossed the bar and fluttered against the window. I managed to get it to the door and the pleasantly warm sunshine – hopefully it will have found somewhere else to hibernate.



Today, with sun again, but barely ten degrees instead of Sunday's fifteen, I spotted a Red Admiral high up on ivy in Wilberfoss village. It then flew off strongly southwards.

Dave

## Re: millerd

by Nick Broomer, 29-Oct-13 10:53 PM GMT

Your Large White Chrysalis certainly looks fresh to me Dave, nice find. 😊

All the best, Nick.

## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-13 12:56 AM GMT

Great stuff with the Large Whites Dave 😊 I'm trying to work out whether that Small Tortoiseshell is looking to get out or somewhere to bed done for a few months? My mate Bob (Small Tort) attached himself to my ceiling in September and hasn't moved since so hopefully Bob will see me through the winter, expect a November sighting 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Nov-13 02:24 PM GMT

Both, probably, Wurzel. It was very active and would have exhausted itself fluttering against the window if I hadn't popped it outside. It's always worth looking for Large and Small White chrysalids under the eaves of outhouses and sheds when you've had your cabbages or nasturtiums shredded earlier in the year. I always found them as a kid growing up in North London – but never got to see one hatch out.

Around lunchtime today (2nd), I took advantage of a burst of warm sunshine to look around my local patch for the first time in ages. Very few flowers of any type are left, just the last of the ivy, which was attracting good numbers of bees. I had pretty well given up on seeing a butterfly, but right at the completion of my loop a Red Admiral buzzed me at high speed. I watched it set off after a large bumble bee before it curved back round again to settle ahead of me on the grass. I managed a couple of distant shots, and was gradually approaching it when a gaggle of four unruly dogs annoyingly disturbed both butterfly and myself.



Dave

## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Nov-13 12:42 PM GMT

Blooming Dogs 😡 Still to cheer you up get over to Tescos four beers for a fiver including Crafty Old Hen 🤪 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Nov-13 12:48 PM GMT

Four for £5?! I shall indeed – stocks are running low... Thanks, Wurzel! 😊

### 3rd November

A different kind of day – clear blue sky, windy, and the temperature a few degrees cooler, though contrarily the sun felt a bit stronger. I walked my local route again, and spotted some kind of dragon/damselfly alight on a bramble by the path. I assume seeing these in November is about as likely as seeing a butterfly at this time of year – I really ought to find out more about these attractive creatures.



Coming to the end of the circuit, in exactly the same spot as yesterday, I disturbed a Red Admiral. This one was much more worn than the one I saw on the 2nd, and was definitely not the same insect. This piece of grass, narrow and sheltered between bramble, hedges and trees festooned with ivy, is a reliable hotspot for Red Admirals throughout the year, and its peculiar attraction obviously remains right until the end of the season.



Dave

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 03-Nov-13 09:30 PM GMT

Hi Dave, congratulations with your Red Admirals 😊

Nice bit of sun around here today as well but some fearsome gusts of wind with it that even kept the bees and hoverflies grounded most of the time.

Your Dragonfly looks like a Common Darter, they can often still be seen quite late in the year.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Nov-13 09:51 PM GMT

10th November

This would be monotonous if it wasn't so good to keep seeing them! I walked around my local patch today – chilly (nine degrees, maybe ten at a stretch), but very sunny. In the usual place there was a Red Admiral, sunning itself on the grass.

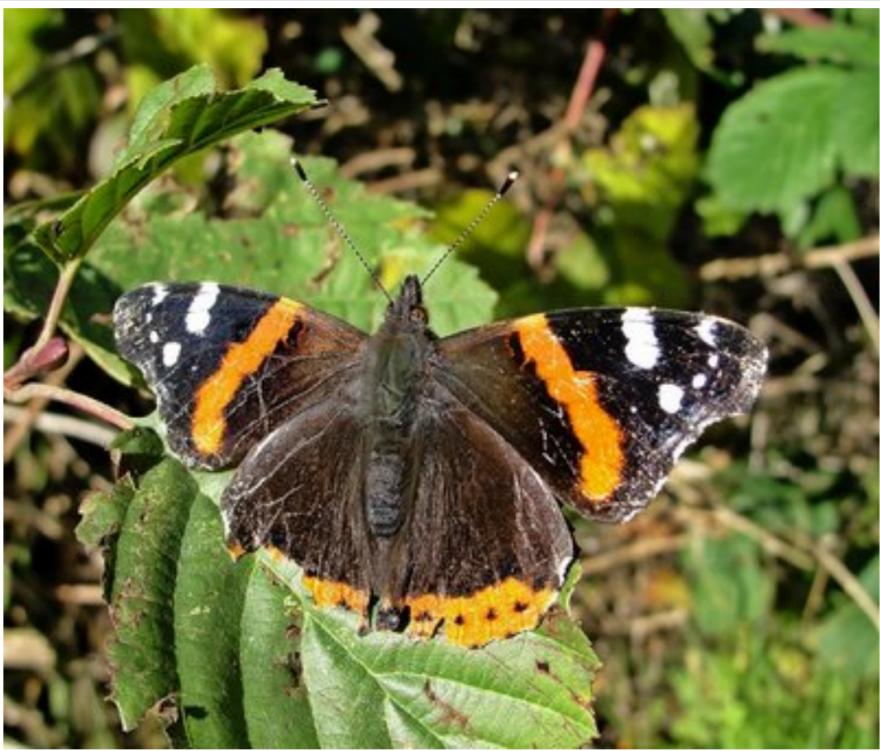


After a few reasonable poses for me it took off like a rocket, excited by that best of all targets, another Red Admiral. The two sparred for a while and then disappeared high over the hedge.



*November sky with duelling Red Admirals*

After a few minutes, a butterfly returned and settled on the brambles: it was the other one.



Considering the weather lately, with wind, heavy rain, cold and very little sun, they must tuck themselves away pretty well. And it doesn't take a great deal to rouse them, either.

Difficult to say for certain, but I think at least one of these two is not either of those seen last weekend. Maybe neither are!

Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by Goldie M, 11-Nov-13 04:39 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, good to know the RA are still here, I always thought they took off for abroad in October, looks like these have decided to stay Goldie 😊