

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 03-Jan-14 10:12 PM GMT

In all the revelry somehow I missed your last post Neil 😞 Looks like you had a good haul of Chimble pressies 😊 Good spot of the 'Redcap' they can be pretty skulky at this time of year, have a cracking New Year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jan-14 09:03 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel,

Hope you had a cracking New Year too 😊

Back at work on Thursday which seemed to be the only half way decent day we have had around here so far this year. The weekend arrives and lo and behold, the wind and rain was back, non-stop all bl**dy weekend.

Still, gave me a chance to take the decorations down and put them up in the loft for another year and have a bit of a tidy up after the Christmas break.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

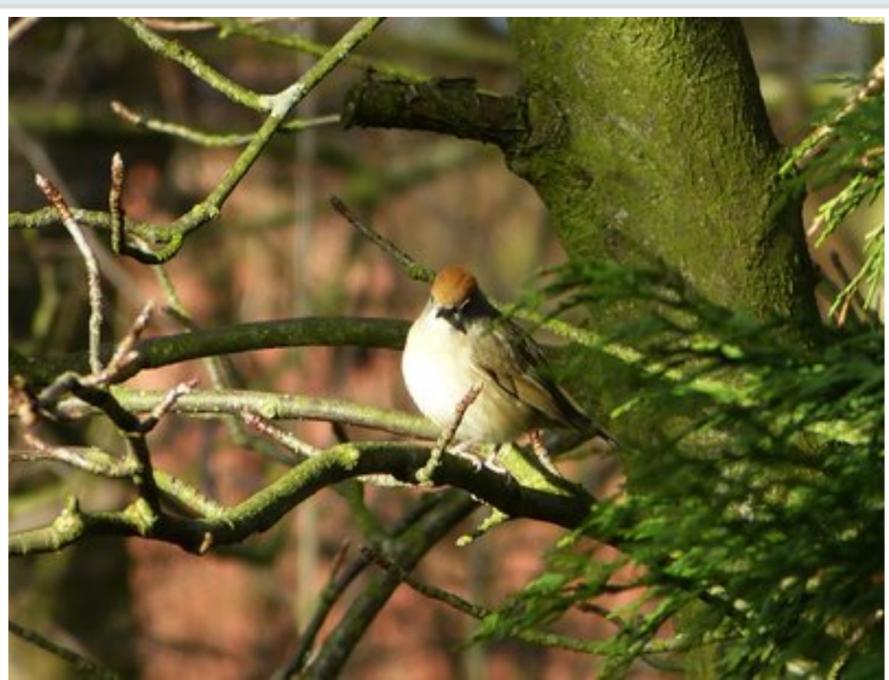
by Neil Freeman, 12-Jan-14 09:41 PM GMT

Sunday 12th January

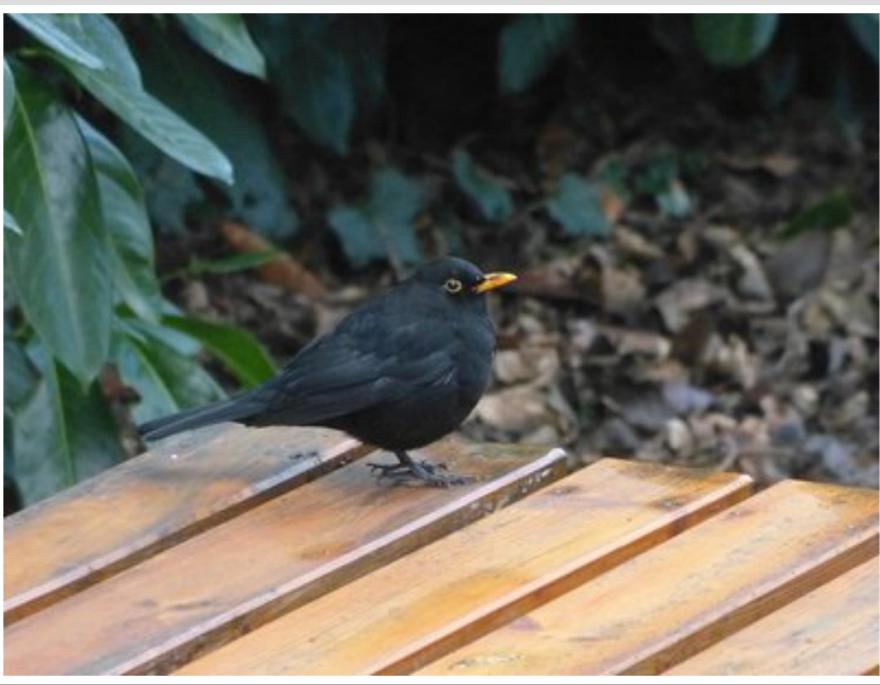
I actually saw my first butterfly of the year last week, a Red Admiral fluttering around inside one of the buildings at work. It had undoubtedly been disturbed from where ever it was settled up for the winter and seemed to be unsuccessfully trying to find a way out. Unfortunately it was too high up to do anything about and the weather outside was pretty grotty anyway.

I must admit that I don't really think of these as sightings as such as I invariably see a couple of hibernators in similar circumstances each year and always feel a little sad that they have been disturbed and are using up their reserves and strength which they are unlikely to replenish. I would much rather not see any at all until the right conditions arrive in Spring for them to go about their normal business.

Yesterday (Saturday 11th), the weather finally calmed down a bit and there was some nice sunny spells although it had gone colder than of later. Today started off with the first proper frost that we have had for some weeks and then got steadily cloudier until the rain started again earlier this evening. Loads of birds in the garden yesterday and this morning including all the usual suspects and whenever I went into the back room I would look out of the window and take the occasional shot through the glass.



'Redcap' - Coverdale 11.01.2014



Blackbird - Coverdale 11.01.2014



Jay - Coverdale 12.01.2014



Robin - Coverdale 12.01.2014



Robin - Coverdale 12.01.2014

Looks like another load of rain heading in over the next couple of days...oh well, I am going to be stuck indoors at work all week anyway. I hope that all on UKB are not too badly affected by the flooding that is happening elsewhere, particularly those in the worst affected areas.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

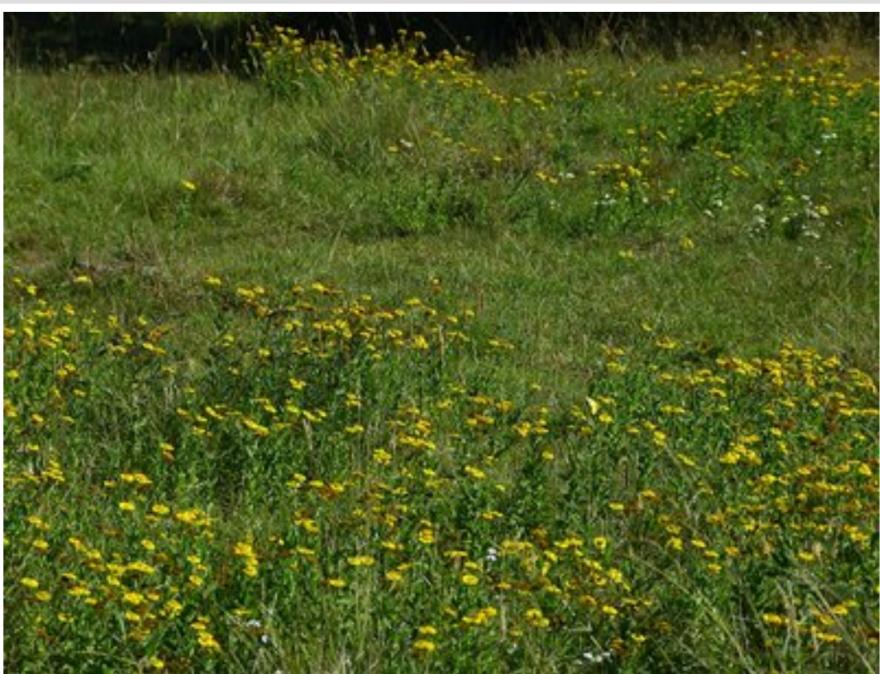
by Neil Freeman, 16-Jan-14 08:52 PM GMT

Whilst going through my photos from last summer, I came across the couple below, both taken in Dorset in early September. For me they bring back fantastic memories of special days when a couple of species in particular, both in different ways and for different reasons, gave me so much pleasure 😊

The first one was taken in Swanage of a Buddleia seen in a garden whilst walking up to Peveril Point and brought back memories of many years ago when I was very much younger...



and the second one taken at Alners Gorse and is an example of a species that, living in the Midlands, I have never seen in the numbers before that I saw in Dorset this year (yes, there are a couple of butterflies in the shot). I reckon that Wurzel will recognise the spot and know what butterflies are in it without even looking for them 😊



Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by William, 16-Jan-14 09:19 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil – they bring it all flooding back 😊. The quantity of butterflies on that Buddleia must be something to remember!

Re: nfreem

by David M, 17-Jan-14 12:01 PM GMT

That buddleia is absolutely **laden** with Tortoiseshells. Lovely image!

Which is the species you are referring to in your second shot, Neil? The only butterfly I think I can see is a male Brimstone.

Re: nfreem

by Lee Hurrell, 17-Jan-14 01:43 PM GMT

Lovely shots, Neil. I make it 13 Small Tortoiseshell, 1 Peacock and 2 Small White in the first image but can also only see one male Brimstone in the second...

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broome, 17-Jan-14 07:04 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Love your last couple of posts. 😊 Keep the photos of the garden birds coming, and now you have received a bird book for Christmas, you won't have a problem with identifying them. 😊

I have never seen so many Small Tortoiseshells on one Buddleia since my childhood, [about 10 years ago 😊😊]. I counted 19 butterflies in total, including the two Whites.

At the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jan-14 08:31 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys 😊

The numbers of Small Tortoiseshells around, not only in Dorset, but also locally and in my garden were certainly amongst the highlights of 2013 for me.

Nick, you were close, it is much easier on the original but I have counted 19 Tortoiseshells plus a couple of Small Whites on the Buddleia.

A couple more Tortoiseshell on Buddleia shots from Dorset...



I suppose the second photo was a bit sneaky really, what looks like a male Brimstone is actually a Clouded Yellow showing its underwing as it comes in to settle (or takes off, I can't remember which). The original shows a bit of topside which can just be seen in this rather extreme crop.



There is also a second Clouded Yellow in flight near the left side of the photo just above half way up as in this other extreme crop...



...hence my comment about a species that I have never before seen in the numbers that I saw in Dorset last year. For the whole week that I was there I saw multiple Clouded Yellows at various sites which again really made 2013 a year to remember 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 17-Jan-14 08:32 PM GMT

Aah! Mystery solved. Thanks, Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-Jan-14 11:03 PM GMT

Great shots of the Tort fest Neil 😊 I saw the Alners shot and the 'obvious' cloudy and memories came flooding back of a great day at a great site with great company and butterflies galore! It left me feeling a little bit down... 😞 Still only about 10 more weeks to go 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jan-14 05:26 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel,

My apologies for making you feel a bit down.....that's the thing with looking back through last years photos, on the one hand I enjoy the memories they bring back 😊 and on the other hand it makes me miss the long evenings and sunny days 😞

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jan-14 10:41 PM GMT

Saturday 25th January

Back to the present and today really was a day of two halves. This morning was actually quite pleasant for a couple of hours as Jane and myself went out and did a bit of shopping and for a minute you could actually believe that spring was not far away 😊

This afternoon turned quite nasty as the clouds turned steadily darker until the heavens opened with some heavy rain at first which then turned into a really heavy hailstorm that rattled loudly of the windows 😲 and made us remember that we still have a way to go yet.

In the hour or so between getting back from the shops and the weather turning grotty I looked out the back a couple of times and spotted most of the usual birds around the garden. Great, Blue and Coal Tits were visiting the feeder as usual plus a little group of Long-tailed Tits.



The female Black-cap is still lurking around and today she was coming out of the bushes more often to visit the feeders, particularly when the Long-tailed Tits were around for some reason.



I have not seen any butterflies on the wing outside so far this year, mind you I have not really had the chance to look around with the best weather being when I have been at work during the week.
I have seen a couple fluttering around inside the workshops at work over the past few weeks, 1 Red Admiral and 1 Peacock, but I don't really count these as they have been disturbed by human activity and should by rights have been tucked away out of sight until the Spring. Indeed in both cases it was early in the morning and still dark outside.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 26-Jan-14 02:01 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Long-tailed Tits on your new feeder Neil. 😊 The LTT is such a cute little bird, and it will not be long now before they start building their very elaborate nests. Apparently they have been known to use 2,000 feathers to insulate their nests, no wonder it takes about two weeks to build.

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

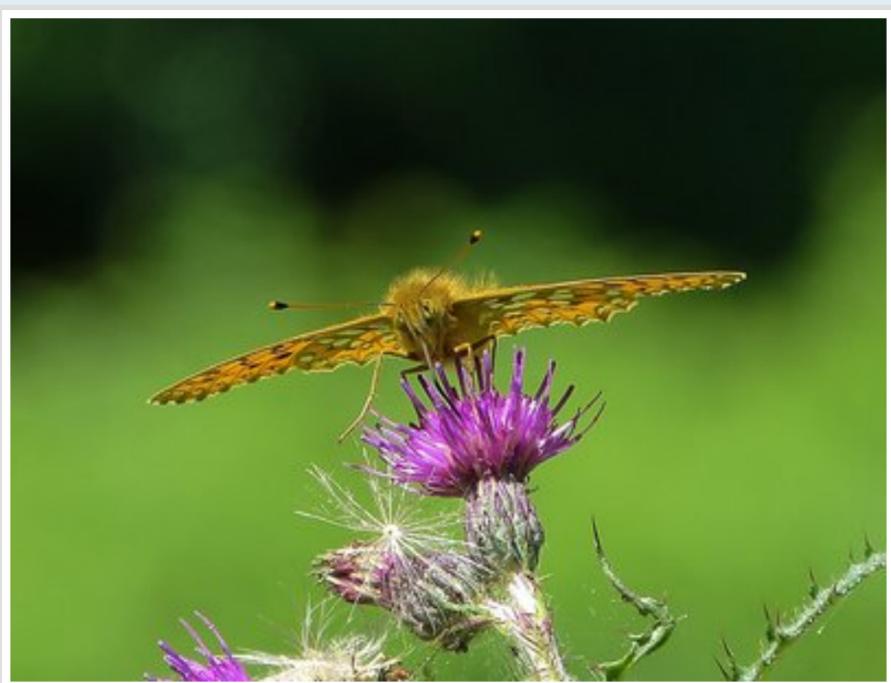
by Neil Freeman, 27-Jan-14 08:43 PM GMT

Thanks Nick, they are lovely little birds and full of character 😊

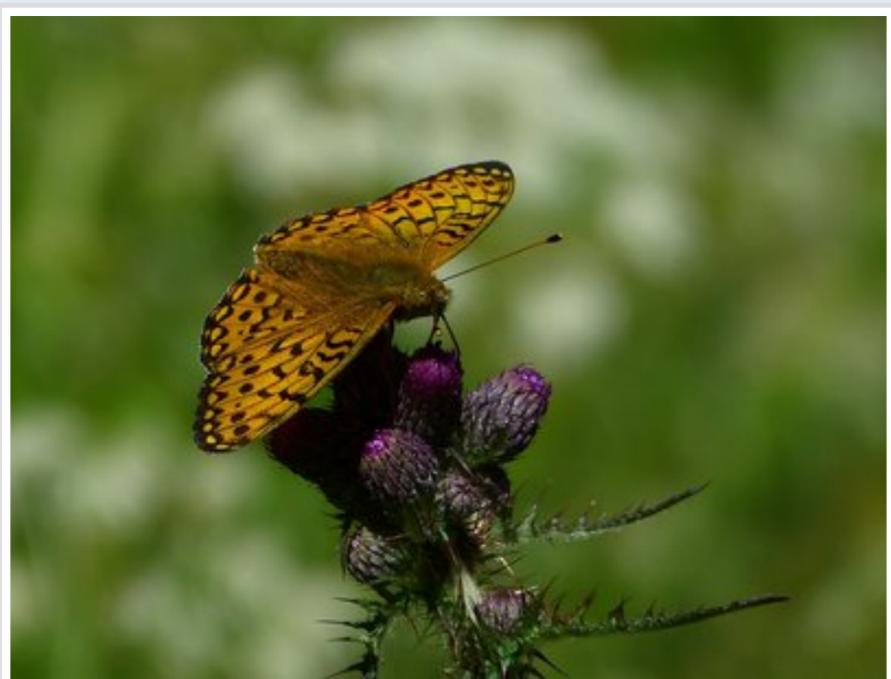
Looking back through last years photos again, this time for Silver-washed Fritillary shots for the favourite photos thread, I went straight to my Heddon Valley Folder, this being the first place that I had seen them.

This brought back all the memories of what a fantastic few days I had had there, especially with Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries, and I also noticed that there were still some photos that I had taken that I liked and that I had not posted yet, albeit some of these were of the same butterflies that I had posted before but from different angles.

So whilst Jane is sitting glued to double Corrie on the telly I have picked a few more to pass away another cold, dark evening 😊



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



Dark Green Fritillary – Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



Dark Green Fritillary - Heddon Valley 07.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Heddon Valley 06.07.2013



High Brown Fritillary - Heddon Valley 06.07.2013

Maybe it is just me but I think that the blurred cow parsley in the foreground of the photo below gives it a bit of the romantic soft focus effect.....maybe it is just me 😊



High Brown Fritillary pair – Heddon Valley 07.07.2013

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Hoggers, 28-Jan-14 05:10 PM GMT

Stunning photos Neil and on a cold, wet dark day in January seeing those Small Tortoiseshells on the Buddleia has cheered me up no end!

Best Wishes

Hoggers

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 30-Jan-14 11:03 PM GMT

I don't know about giving it a "soft focus romantic look" as to be honest the last shot is a bit 'top shelf' 😊😄 Lovely set of photos of a species I've yet to see, perhaps 2014 could be the year?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Feb-14 08:19 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Hoggers, looking back though my photos is certainly helping to get through this miserable weather we are having lately.

Cheers Wurzel, I'll have to take your word on it being 'top shelf', never looked up there myself 😊😄😄

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Feb-14 07:43 PM GMT

I don't need to say anything about the recent weather apart from being glad that at least we have not been flooded around here. My heart goes out to all those affected by the recent floods and I hope that everyone on UKB is all right.

Having said that today (Tuesday 11th Feb) was a particularly wet and blustery day that started off with heavy rain that turned to snow mid-morning which developed into a proper blizzard before clearing and the sun coming out this afternoon.

With the weather not being much good and with me not having much spare time lately, I have not been out anywhere and so have contented myself with watching the usual birds coming and going in the garden. The photos below were all taken over the past couple of weekends and through the back room window on some pretty murky days so are not particularly good but I quite like them nevertheless.

A nice Jay has been hanging around for the past couple of weeks and has now started picking food from the ground under the feeders...



The long-tailed Tits are regular visitors...



as is the female Blackcap...



The male Blackcap has finally come out of hiding in the shrubs and started coming to the feeders...



where he doesn't seem to like any other birds joining him for lunch...



Just seen the weather forecast and it looks like we could have more snow heading in overnight and then clearing and turning icy before the morning...and then more heavy rain 🙄

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 11-Feb-14 08:42 PM GMT

Excellent shots of the Blackcaps Neil, both male and female. Like the way he's telling the Long-tailed Tit that its his fatty block!

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 12-Feb-14 11:18 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the Blackcaps Neil 😄 The penultimate one is great and the in the last one it looks like he's even having a go at you 😄😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Feb-14 09:04 PM GMT

Cheers Mike and Wurzel, he certainly seemed a feisty little fella 😄

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Feb-14 09:18 PM GMT

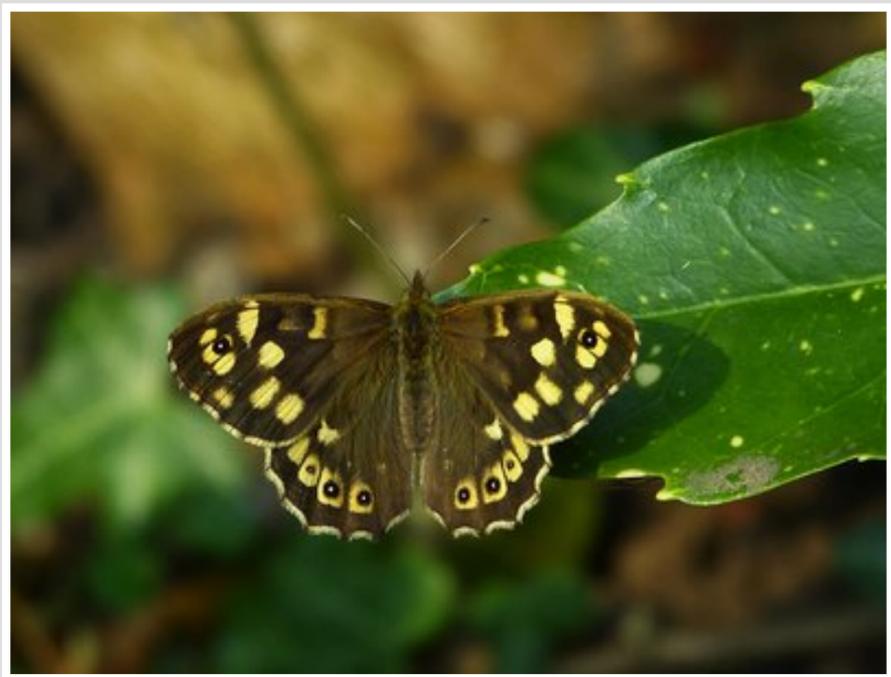
Speckledy Woods

This is probably going to be the last post that I do looking back at 2013 and is going to be one dedicated to a common enough species but one that is close to my heart, the good old Speckledy Wood.

I have mentioned a number of times before that I have a small resident population of Speckled Wood in my garden and because of this probably take more photos of this species than any other. Last year was no exception and as well as a taking a good number of photos of them whilst out and about I also took loads in my garden.

The Speckled Wood season in my garden last year actually turned out to be a bit different to most years, no doubt due to the lingering cold weather with snow still lying on the back lawn in late March when the first Specklies usually appear, the first one seen in 2012 was on March 25th.

I was beginning to get a bit worried last year, especially when I started seeing Orange Tips, GV Whites and Holly Blues in the garden but still no sign of any Speckled Woods. To my immense relief they finally showed up on May 7th when not only did I see a fresh male but also a female, this in itself being a bit unusual with me usually seeing males for a good few days before any females.



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 07.05.2013

After that they appeared regularly through the season with me identifying separate individuals by slight differences in markings and wear or damage to their wings.



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 10.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 17.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 17.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 19.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 19.05.2013



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 25.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 26.05.2013



Speckled Wood pair - Coverdale 26.05.2013



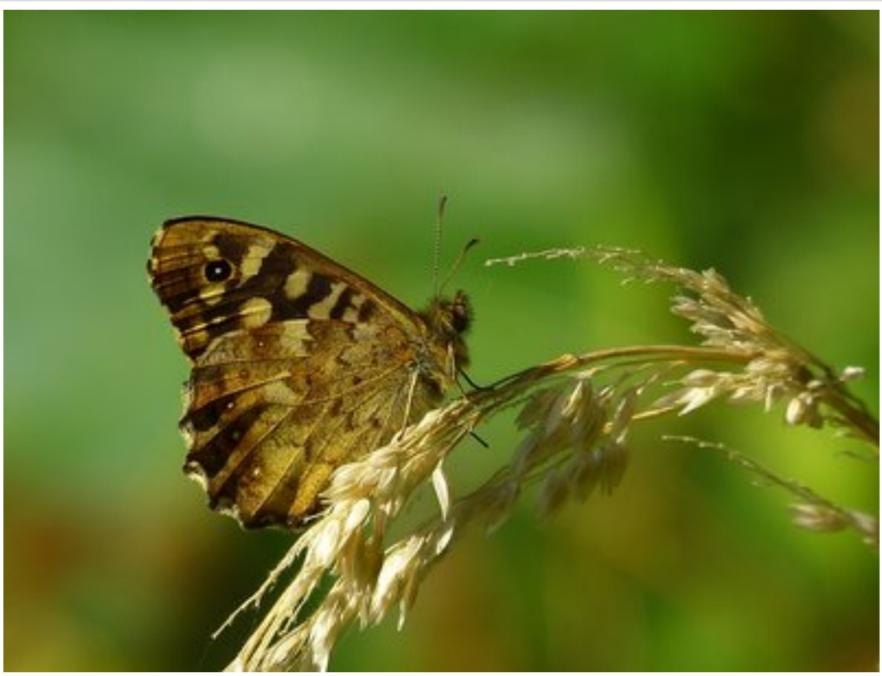
Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 31.05.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 26.06.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 26.06.2013



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 26.08.2013



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 27.08.2013

Speckled Woods are unique amongst our native butterflies in that they can overwinter as either larvae or pupae and this usually gives them a protracted early appearance with the adults emerging from pupae being on the wing first with some of these still being about when the others that spent the winter as larvae emerge.

With the offspring of both sets of adults developing at different rates the following emergences are then spread out over a long period of time. In my garden this means that I usually have adults on the wing from late March or Early April right up until late October with usually a short gap of maybe a week or two in June. Last year there was no gap and I saw Specklies on almost every day that I looked from the first ones on May 7th right through until the last one that I saw on October 20th with there being two peaks during late May/early June and then later in August and into September during which I could have up to half a dozen individuals in the garden at any one time.

I also noticed that whereas Speckled Woods of the early emergences usually tend to have larger yellow markings than those of the later generations, last year this seemed to be less of the case with me seeing darker looking individuals right from the outset. This was most noticeable with the males as the females usually have slightly larger yellow markings anyway.

This situation in my garden seemed typical of the picture for Specklies locally. I cannot speak for how they fared elsewhere in the country although I did find them nearly everywhere that I went, with notable numbers at some spots in Dorset whilst I was there in early September.

Only a few weeks now before hopefully I will be looking out for them again.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-Feb-14 10:59 PM GMT

I hadn't noticed the lack of colour difference between the broods last year, that is I'd seen it but until I read your report I hadn't realized what I was seeing 😊 Great photos Neil 😊 I've seen reports in county of Small Torts, Red Admirals, Comma, Brimstone, Peacocks and today a Speckled Wood – so you might not have to wait much longer 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Feb-14 08:41 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel,

I think Specklies for me are like Hedge Browns are for you 😊😊

It wasn't so much that there was no difference, just that there were darker ones amongst the early brood along with brighter individuals instead of what seems the usual way with early = brighter and later = darker, if that makes sense.

Looking at the photos in my post above, the males in the 3rd 4th and 5th pics down were all taken within a couple of days of each other in May and show a good variation in markings. The butterfly in pic 3 is what I would consider a typical early brood male with the individual in pic 4 looking a bit more like a later season example and pic 5 showing one with even more reduced yellow markings and 'dusky' looking hindwings.

I appreciate that there will always be some variability in markings in all broods and that I am generalising a bit. There will also be regional differences involved, I believe that Specklies from further south tend to be a bit brighter.

Over the past few years I have spent a lot of time watching the Specklies in my garden and am only putting down my observations from there. I would be interested if anyone else has similar observations from anywhere else or indeed any that differ from mine.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 19-Feb-14 09:19 PM GMT

What a way to end 2013 Neil! A lovely series of Speckie shots to finish on. I'm not even going to try and pick a favourite, they are all so good. The rich colour of fresh Speckies always remind me of chocolate and cream.

Re: nfreem

by Lee Hurrell, 20-Feb-14 12:35 PM GMT

A fantastic report and lovely pictures, Neil. Good work!

Best wishes

Lee

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 20-Feb-14 05:35 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the Specklies Neil 😊. I also noted some darker individuals in the first brood last year, here in the south.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by philm63, 20-Feb-14 07:31 PM GMT

Neil

Ah, Speckled Woods – now there is a butterfly I can relate to as it is probably the butterfly I see most of in a year. Outnumbered yes by Ringlets and Meadow Brown in season but I can rely on Speckled Wood over a longer period. Not as common as Whites certainly but Whites are not as exciting. Add the fact that Specklies can be little beauties, are quite photo-friendly and the splendour of seeing them in lovely sun-dappled areas in the best part of the summer; they do bring a lot of pleasure. On top of that they do actually occur locally quite widely, so I can rely on them at a number of sites

Phil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 21-Feb-14 11:20 PM GMT

Alright Neil I was just checking back over posts and 'keeping on top of things' when I read this

"I think Specklies for me are like Hedge Browns are for you 😊😂"...Defo if you mean an obsession:D 😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Feb-14 08:04 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments guys, very much appreciated 😊

Hi Rex, Ah yes! Chocolate and Cream, I like it 😊

Thanks Lee, glad you liked it.

Cheers Mike, glad it wasn't just me.

Hi Phil, I moved into this house about 18 years ago and have had Specklies in the garden every year so for me they are my most reliable species 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Feb-14 08:31 PM GMT

Back to the present and a weekend that started off looking promising with a Saturday morning that was clear and sunny albeit a crisp one with a bit of frost lingering in the shade. The early promise was not to be realised however and by lunchtime a band of grey cloud had moved in along with a steadily increasing wind.

Between the usual domestic stuff around the house I spotted all the usual birds in the garden including Great, Blue, Coal and Log-tailed Tits, Blackcaps, Robins, Dunnocks, House Sparrows and Blackbirds, mostly in the morning with numbers decreasing as the wind picked up through the afternoon.

The Greater Spotted Woodpecker is still lurking about and regularly visiting the fat block on the feeder. I have noticed that there is usually a flurry of activity of smaller birds coming to the fat block after he has been at it, I am guessing that they take advantage of him opening up 'fresher' bits of the block with his beak.

The photo below was taken through the back room window as usual. I have tried taking a sneaky one from the garage door into the garden but usually manage to disturb him, need to practice my sneaky ninja skills a bit more...



Greater Spotted Woodpecker - Coverdale 22.02.2014.

With another weekend passing and me not getting out anywhere, I have started to give some thought to the coming season and been looking at flight times and making plans in my head. There are still some species on the British Butterfly list that I have never seen.....hmmm, how to wangle a bit of time at the right place at the right time ???

Last year I struck lucky with a couple of family holidays and a couple of 3 day breaks away with Jane. Think I need to start thinking about a couple of well timed breaks again 😊

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Feb-14 10:40 PM GMT

Cracking shot Neil - Greater Spotted Woodpeckers always seem like they don't belong here - far too showy plumage 😲😄 Good luck with the planning the away days - I'm busy accruing the Brownie points ready - I think I'm up to three afternoon trips at the moment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Mar-14 10:33 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, they are certainly handsome looking birds and like you say, they seem a bit too exotic somehow to be on a garden feeder 😊

Saturday 1st March

March is here at last and despite being heralded in by another frosty morning first thing there was some decent sunshine throughout the rest of the morning and it actually felt a bit like Spring. Unfortunately, by the time I had a couple of hours spare later in the afternoon it had clouded over and although the sun still broke through a couple of times it wasn't enough to lift the temperature above single figures.

I had already made my mind up however that I was going to go out and have a bit of a look around, as much to blow the cobwebs off than in actual expectation of seeing any butterflies. There have been some sightings of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks not far from me and there have been some nice days during the week when I have been stuck in work so I was feeling the need to get out.

I decided to head round to one of my favourite local sites, Castle Hills near Solihull, and see what it looked like after all the rain we have had. Luckily we have not suffered much from flooding around here but everywhere is still wet and muddy and as soon as I started down the footpath to the site I was glad that I had put my wellies on as the path was literally a muddy running stream as the water drained from the fields to the side.



Castle Hills, Solihull - 01.03.2014

I followed the footpaths around the site for an hour or so during which time I spotted plenty of birds including loads of little gangs of Long-tailed Tits but didn't manage to get close enough to take any photos. I also spotted a couple of Green Woodpeckers which kept a good distance away from me. I often see these here in the summer when their distinctive call usually alerts me to their presence before I see them and it was good to see them here today.

No butterflies for me today but a very pleasant hour or so which made me think that it won't be long now 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Mar-14 09:33 PM GMT

Sunday 9th March

Yesterday (Saturday) was a dry and pleasant day but with a high overcast that didn't really start clearing until too late in the afternoon to really make the most of, so I spent most of the afternoon having a bit of a clear up in the garden.

Today (Sunday) was much better with clear blue sky and plenty of sun all day. I had the usual domestics to do this morning but nipped into the garden a couple of times and was pleased to have my first garden butterfly of the year 😊, a male Brimstone that passed through without stopping.

Not long afterwards I had the second one, a Peacock that hung around for a while basking in the sun...



Peacock - Coverdale 09.03.2014

Anyone who read my diary last year may remember that I collected some Peacock larvae from my nettle patch and reared a dozen or so adults that I released back into the garden. I couldn't help wondering if the Peacock today was one of those that I had released last year, an amazing thought if it was.

A little later another Brimstone, or possibly the same one as earlier, came passing through again.

I had visited Castle Hills near Solihull last weekend without any butterfly success so with a couple of hours spare this afternoon I just had to go back to see what the sun had brought out.

A slow circuit of the footpaths across the site during the next couple of hours produced at least 12 Small Tortoiseshells including a couple of pairs displaying courtship behaviour...



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 09.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshells - Castle Hills 09.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 09.03.2014

...at least 9 Peacocks...



Peacock - Castle Hills 09.03.2014



Peacock - Castle Hills 09.03.2014

...and half a dozen or so Commas,



Comma - Castle Hills 09.03.2014



Comma - Castle Hills 09.03.2014



Comma - Castle Hills 09.03.2014



Comma - Castle Hills 09.03.2014

There may well have been more of each of these but I am always wary of double counting, especially with these species that can patrol backwards and forwards along a stretch of hedgerow giving the impression that there are more individuals than there really are.

I didn't see any more Brimstones after the one, or maybe two, in the garden in the morning and unfortunately no Red Admirals although I was not really expecting any of these considering that I did not see any around here late last year.

A great day which has got my season off to a fantastic start with four species seen in one day, a good four weeks earlier than I saw anything last year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 09-Mar-14 10:17 PM GMT

A great start Neil and some lovely photos, we too saw Small Torts displaying courtship behaviour, but didn't get shots like yours 😊 These butterflies are on the wing much earlier than last year, hope this is a good sign 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-14 11:40 PM GMT

A fantastic day and fantastic shots Neil 😊 I was at my Grandparents 65th Anniversary so didn't get out today but luckily I did yesterday, let's hope this it and the year has started proper 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Mar-14 09:55 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Mike and Wurzel 😊.

The best of the weather didn't quite reach us on Saturday but Sunday was a cracker that certainly felt like the season was here 😊. Just hoping that we don't get too much of a good thing too soon and the weather doesn't turn on us again, plenty of time yet for it to turn nasty again.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Mar-14 10:29 PM GMT

Saturday 15th March

The past week has seen some frosty mornings with me having to clear ice off the car windscreen a couple of times at 6.30am to go to work. Once the morning fog and cloud had burnt off though there were some cracking afternoons which, being at work, I was unable to take advantage of but had me looking forward to this weekend.

A nice pair of Bullfinches have been lurking around the back garden for a few days now, occasionally visiting the feeders but so far I have only managed a couple of quick shots through the back room window as usual.



Female Bullfinch tucking into sunflower hearts.



Male Bullfinch during a quick stop under the feeders.

Today started off looking fairly promising with some decent sun but still feeling cool and with a bit of a breeze and by the time I had some time to spare a layer of cloud had built up which combined with the breeze put the dampers on the day a bit.

Nevertheless I decided to have a quick shifty round to Shadowbrook Meadows for the first time this year, as much to get a bit of fresh air as anything else. I spent about an hour there during which time the sun made a couple of half hearted attempts to break through but nowhere near long enough to raise the temperature. There was also a band of blue sky which frustratingly stayed just above the southern horizon and refused to come anywhere closer.



Shadowbrook meadows under a cloudy sky

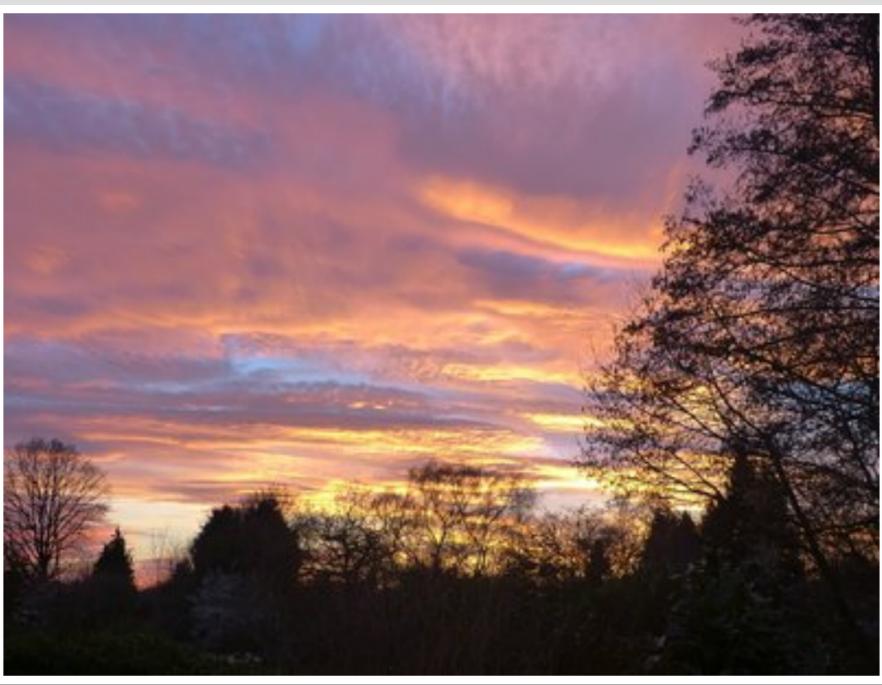
Coming to the conclusion that it was too dull and cool for me to see any butterflies today I made my way back to the car and was nearly there when a Small Tortoiseshell flew out of the hedge to the side of me and settled again a few feet away. I just managed to get a couple of record shots as it sat there vibrating and trying to warm up before it took off again and went over the hedge.



Small Tortoiseshell - Shadowbrook Meadows 15.03.2014

So in the end just the one Small Tortoiseshell today but it got me thinking about last year and how I had a couple of inches of snow on my back lawn during the last week of March and how one ST would have still been a result then as late as early April.

The sky finally started clearing earlier this evening and as if to make up for the afternoon gave a rather nice sunset over the back garden 😊



Sunset over back garden

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 16-Mar-14 12:54 AM GMT

Great shots of the Bullfinches Neil – they're easily spooked 😊 The sunset is lush too – remember Red Sky at night, I'd be out again tomorrow if I was you 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Mar-14 08:11 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Red sky at night indeed... 😊

Sunday 16th March part 1 – Morning in the garden.

After yesterdays cool and cloudy afternoon, today started off much better with wall to wall blue sky and by mid-morning it was starting to warm up nicely. As is usual for me, I had some 'domestics' to do in the morning but managed to mix this in with a bit of pottering about in the garden.

At around 11.00am things started to get going with my first butterfly of the day, a Peacock, which fluttered up to a tall old Sallow that overhangs my garden from next door.



Old tall Sallow

This was soon followed by a Small Tortoiseshell and then by a second example of each of these, all busy nectaring and trying to chase each other away before getting stuck in again. Due to the height of the Sallow getting photos was tricky but I managed a few at full zoom which I have cropped rather tightly for the shots below.



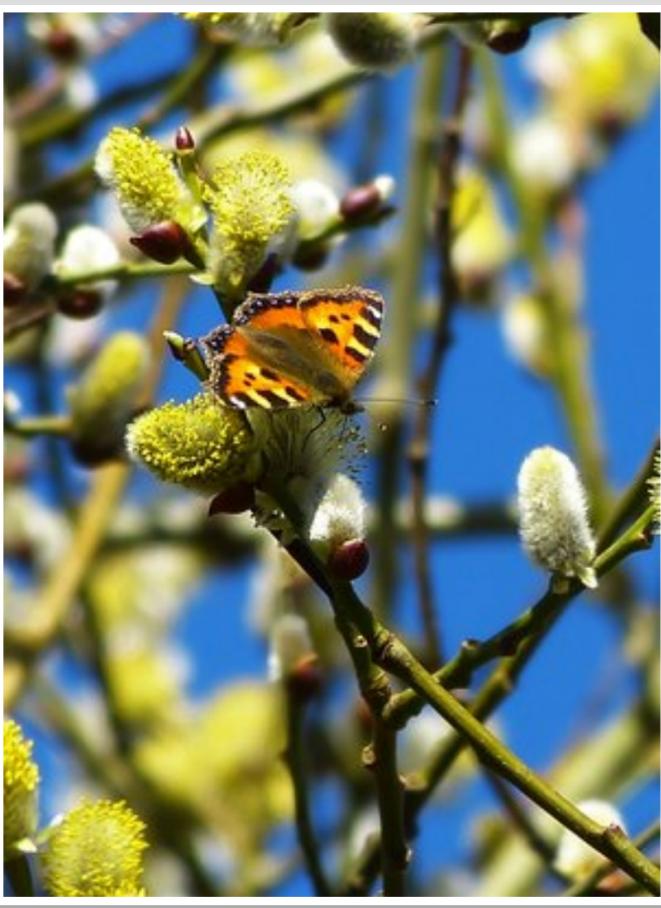
Peacock - Coverdale 16.03.2014



Peacock - Coverdale 16.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 16.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Coverdale 16.03.2014

Occasionally the butterflies would flutter down to the 'wild' end of the garden and bask for a while where taking photos was easier.



Peacock - Coverdale 16.03.2014



Peacock - Coverdale 16.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshell – Coverdale 16.03.2014

All in all during the course of the morning I identified at least three different Peacocks by varying amount of wear plus the same number of Small Tortoiseshells which at one time were all on the Sallow together. There was also a Comma buzzing about which would not settle for long plus a male Brimstone which passed through at least three time. Or maybe that's three different Brimstones which passed through once each 😊 guess I will never know.

The forecast was for cloud moving in during the day but by early afternoon there was still blue sky for as far as the eye could see and I now had a couple of hours free...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 16-Mar-14 11:44 PM GMT

Looks like the old folk wisdom paid off, and then some, lush photos Neil 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by David M, 17-Mar-14 03:52 PM GMT

Nice stuff, Neil. That third Peacock is in remarkably good nick. Must have found the perfect hibernation spot.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Mar-14 09:02 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, it certainly did 😊

Thanks David, it is surprising how fresh some of these post-hibernators look after the wind and rain this past winter, like you say, some must have found well sheltered spots.

Sunday 16th March part 2 – an afternoon walk.

After enjoying the butterflies in the garden on Sunday morning and finishing the 'domestics' I now had the rest of the afternoon free. With unbroken blue sky and good sun still I decided to make the most of it and pop out to one of my local spots.

I figured that wherever I went to I would be seeing more Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks and Commas but couldn't make my mind up whether to go back to Shadowbrook Meadows where I had been on Saturday when it remained stubbornly cloudy, or to Castle Hills where I went last week.

During the past couple of years I had noticed that it was possible to follow a footpath past Castle Hills Farm and continue through to Bickenhill and Shadowbrook Meadows but had not actually walked this all the way through before, usually driving between the sites instead.

Well, I decided in the end to park up and find my along these paths and see how long it would take me to get to Shadowbrook Meadows.

There were numerous Small Tortoiseshells, Commas and Peacocks along the way, each stretch of hedgerow being patrolled by one species or the other who often met up and spiralled up into the air in twos, threes, fours on a couple of occasions and even once in a furball of five Small Tortoiseshells.



Footpath towards Castle Hills Farm Solihull



Looking towards Bickenhill from Castle Hills



Comma on a muddy stretch of path



Peek-a-boo!



Comma - Castle Hills 16.03.2014



Pity this ST was not in better nick, still like the photo though.



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 16.03.2014



Peacock - Castle Hills 16.03.2014

I reached Shadowbrook an hour or so later and then spent about 30 minutes doing a quick circuit of the meadows seeing more of all the above three species. The butterflies here were lively but settling frequently to bask in the sun although, despite the calm conditions, usually low down with grass stems making it difficult to get any good photos so I just took a few record shots of each species.

Whilst here I also saw my first 'white' of the year, almost certainly a 'Small' by its strong flight compared to the weaker more fluttery flight that GV Whites tend to have. It didn't settle but flew close enough past me for me to be 99% certain of its ID before disappearing over the shrubs at the side of the meadow. Checking my notes this is a good 5 weeks earlier than last year but only 1 week earlier than 2012.

I then retraced my route back past Castle Hills Farm to where I started, the whole walk taking around two and a half hours. I did not actually make a count of the butterflies seen but a rough estimate must have been around 2 dozen Small Tortoiseshells, a similar number of Commas, definitely more than last week, and slightly fewer Peacocks plus the single Small White.

No Brimstones this afternoon, in fact the only ones that I have seen so far this year have been males during late morning in my garden both last Sunday and this. Mind you that is more than I have seen by this time in the past couple of years when it has seemed to take me ages for me to see one, I remember commenting about it being all Peacocks and Commas for me in 2012/13.

After the butterflies in the garden in the morning this was a great afternoon which more than made up for the gloomy Saturday.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 17-Mar-14 11:34 PM GMT

Great report there, Neil. I too saw my first Small White on Sunday. I was at work, when a white butterfly fluttered past. I didn't think it would stop for id, but there is an ornamental plum in bloom nearby and, thankfully it landed on it for a feed and, for me, a chance for a good look - Small White.

Aren't you just loving seeing all these Small Torts, Neil?

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-Mar-14 01:02 AM GMT

Loving the shots Neil especially Peek a boo, that's a cracker 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Mar-14 09:47 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, rather like that one myself 😊

Thanks eb, yes, I am certainly loving all the Small Tortoiseshells that are about at the moment. I have seen good numbers of early Commas and Peacocks for the past couple of years and this year there are even more about but the STs are the highlight so far. I don't ever remember seeing so many coming out of hibernation, even back in the 1970s when they were one of the commonest butterflies about.

Sunday 16th March – a nice little finisher.

Having arrived back home after my afternoon walk, I grabbed a mug of coffee and went into the back room to download my photos onto the PC and have a quick shuft through them. As I was doing this I had one eye looking into the back garden and watching the usual procession of Tits, Blackcaps and Robins visiting the feeders as the shadows lengthened from the sinking sun.

As I was watching, the pair of Bullfinches that have been around for the past few days came back again and grabbing the camera I managed a couple of quick shots through the window,



Bullfinch pair – Coverdale 16.03.2014

These were soon spooked by the shadow of an approaching bird which turned out to be a Greater-spotted Woodpecker, a female I believe by the lack of the red patch at the back of the head, instead of the male that usually visits.



Greater-spotted Woodpecker – Coverdale 16.03.2014

After taking a couple of shots, again through the window, I watched her for a while until she departed and I was just going to put the camera down when a couple of Goldfinches arrived, the first of these that I have seen in the garden this year.



Goldfinches - Coverdale 16.03.2014

After such a great day with the butterflies in the garden during the morning and then on my afternoon walk this short period of 15 minutes or so made a nice little finisher to the day just before the sun went down 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 19-Mar-14 08:02 AM GMT

Love your photos of the butterflies on Sallow and blossom Neil. A reminder that Spring is really here despite the grey weather today.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Mar-14 09:06 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊

Back to typical early Spring weather around here the past few days, colder mornings and a cool breeze and some hefty rain showers through the day as well as some sunny spells.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-14 09:53 PM GMT

Sunday 23rd March

Too cool and windy for any butterflies around here lately with frequent showers and sunny spells. The temperature all weekend has been half that reached on the past couple of Sundays, barely reaching 8 or 9 degrees at most.

Mind you, it is still appreciably better than the same date last year when there was still snow on the back garden as in the photo below...



Back garden March 23rd 2013.

I have a *Berberis darwinii* that has started flowering, a good month earlier than last year. This usually begins to flower in my garden about the same time that the Specklies start to appear so finger crossed...



Berberis darwinii in the back garden

No butterflies today but loads of bird activity with more species going around in pairs. The Tits especially are pairing up instead of going around in the loose little gangs made up of different species that they have been.

I ventured out into the garden a couple of times over the weekend to do a bit of tidying up but didn't stay out long, my extremities started feeling the cold wind so I retreated back indoors. Things looked much better from indoors so between the chores I contented myself with watching the coming and going of the birds and taking some shots through the windows.



Goldfinches - Coverdale 23.03.2014



GS Woodpecker - Coverdale 23.03.2014



Coal Tit and Blackcap



Bullfinch pair



Male Bullfinch



Bullfinches and female Blackcap

I watched the Country file weather forecast for the week ahead earlier, looks like a week of mixed weather ahead, so pretty much typical for March around here. I am starting to firm up some plans for later in the year and booking time off work so hoping that things are neither too early or too late, fingers crossed as always.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 23-Mar-14 11:52 PM GMT

Great Bullfinch photos Neil, one of my favourite birds 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Mar-14 12:25 AM GMT

I agree with Mike, great shots of the Bullfinches 😊 Bit of a contrast this spring to last – but it is going to get a bit worse this week – still that's kinda what you'd expect for March. I hope the Specklies arrive soon 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Mar-14 09:28 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Mike and Wurzel 😊

The Bullfinches are cracking birds, I used to get occasional glimpses but this year is the first that they have been regular visitors 😊

Looks like I will have to wait a bit longer for the Specklies to show up, weather has gone all scabby again this week and not stopped raining today. Mind you, I don't mind so much being stuck in work so much.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-Mar-14 09:52 PM GMT

Saturday 29th March

This past week we have had just about everything in the way of weather, cold winds, heavy rain, wintery showers with sleet and hail, frosty mornings and a bit of sun thrown in, but not enough to raise the temperature much above single figures....so, pretty much typical March then 😊

Yesterday (Friday) things started to improve and today has been a cracker with nice sun all day and feeling much warmer even if bit breezy still.

This morning I did the usual early shopping and stuff around the house and from mid-morning started to see butterflies in the garden, with a passing Brimstone being the first, then a couple of Commas high up on the willow.

There was also a passing visit by a 'white' which I am fairly certain was a Green-veined by the way it fluttered low down along the border. A quick walk down to the shops at the end of our road produced a Peacock basking on a stone wall.

Wanting to make the most of the weather, I finished off the household stuff and had an early lunch before heading around to Castle Hills. Starting off along the usual footpaths there was a blustery wind blowing but in the more sheltered stretches of hedgerow it felt pleasantly warm and I soon started to see Commas, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells.

During the next couple of hours I slowly followed one of my usual circular routes finding all three species in very good numbers all over the site. I didn't even try to do a count, the way that these species will patrol backwards and forwards along a hundred yards or more of hedge line makes counting difficult, suffice to say that all three were everywhere with overlapping territories that meant that I often had multiple individuals in sight together.

A selection of photos below from the many taken this afternoon...



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Peacock - Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Peacock - Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Peacock - Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Peacock - Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Comma - Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Comma - Castle Hills 29.03.2014



Comma - Castle Hills 29.03.2014

I also saw a single Brimstone not long after arriving early in the afternoon but none after that, they seem to disappear around here soon after about 1.00pm.

I had wondered if I might see a Speckled Wood today but no such luck. It can't be long now, last week of March or first week of April is when they usually show up in these parts.

After the weather of the past week or so I had wondered how all the post hibernators that were around a couple of weekends back had fared but if anything there were even more around today than then 😊.

A great couple of hours 😊.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 29-Mar-14 10:00 PM GMT

Some lovely shots there Neil. I particularly like the last Comma, the Peacock on Bramble and the ST's on blossom. What with checking on all these cats I haven't had time to get out and see what's outside 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-14 12:16 AM GMT

I too am still Specklie-less 😞 but it won't be long now 😊 Mind you these great shots must serve as ample compensation – the first Peacock is brill, it really stands out 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 30-Mar-14 10:01 AM GMT

A lovely set of photos there Neil, can't be long before we start seeing Orange Tips and Speckies joining in the fun 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Mar-14 08:42 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Pauline 😊, your little PH and BH cats are obviously taking up a fair amount of your time, hope all is well with them. Cheers Wurzel, I was chuffed with that Peacock, there were loads settling and basking but most were either in amongst blossom or down in the grass. B. rex, yep, can't be long now, I see that an Orange Tip was reported from Warwickshire yesterday and I am expecting the first Specklie in my garden any day now.

Sunday 30th March – Mothers Day.

We had my Mom round for Mothers day today plus our daughter has also been stopping for the weekend with our little Grandson, so that's three generations of mothers in the house....and guess who was cooking the Sunday dinner 😊. Mind you, Jane has limited movement in her right hand and arm since having the stroke 3 years back so I am usually the cook in our house anyway.

The weather today was not as good as yesterday, still pleasant enough but with a high cloud cover most of the day that the sun broke through a few times but it was more of a hazy sunshine. Between the family stuff I still managed to nip out into the garden a few times and was rewarded with a passing Brimstone this morning plus a couple each of Comma and Peacock. The Commas stayed high up on the Sallow as they did yesterday but the Peacocks spent more time down the wild end of the garden either on Dandelions or basking in the weak sun.



Peacock – Coverdale 30.03.2014



Peacock - Coverdale 30.03.2014

I also noticed loads of bees about including many large queen bumble bees plus the first bee flies in the garden this year.



Bee Fly - Coverdale 30.03.2014

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-14 10:57 PM GMT

Could have been worse Neil I spent the day in the loft knocking down more lathe and plaster and sweeping up half a ton of 150 year mess - I looked like I'd just come back from "t'pit" once I'd finished. Your shots therefore cheered me up, great Peacocks again and brill Bee fly 😊 Hopefully the weather will hold for a bit longer...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Apr-14 07:36 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, just goes to show that there is always someone deeper in it than yourself 😊 😊

Tuesday 1st April.

For me, the start of British Summer Time is when the season really starts. I may have had a couple of very enjoyable wanders around my local patch during the past few weeks but there is nothing like getting in from work and still having enough daylight left for butterflies to still be flying in the back garden.

Yesterday was cloudy and showery when I got in but this afternoon the sun was out and there were a couple of Peacocks flitting about to greet me 😊

This one is the same individual that kept visiting the Dandelions on Sunday...



Peacock - Coverdale 01.04.2014

and this one kept trying to fly through the window into the back room,



Peacock - Coverdale 01.04.2014

Fingers crossed for some more decent weather and to see what else shows up soon..

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Lee Hurrell, 01-Apr-14 08:39 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

What a lovely Peacock in the second shot - it could have emerged today it is so pristine. Obviously had a safe home over the winter.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-14 11:07 PM GMT

Lovely Peacocks Neil 😊 I too am hoping for the good weather to continue and so am showing early symptoms of METitis 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Apr-14 08:02 PM GMT

Thanks Lee 😊 I guess some of the Peacocks are the same ones I was seeing last summer. It is surprising how good condition some of them are still in.

Cheers Wurzel, I know what you mean about METitis 😊 I too keep checking to see what is heading our way.

We have had all sorts of weather this week again with the addition of all that Sahara sand mixed in as well, finally cleared the air today but only because we had some heavy rain overnight. Grey and drizzly today and the weekend is not looking too promising.

Oh well, only a couple of weeks to Easter when I have a week off work 😊 , fingers crossed for a bit of reasonable weather, not too hot mind, some mixed sun and clouds will do nicely to slow the Orange Tips down a bit.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Apr-14 08:16 PM GMT

Friday 11th April

After a couple of weeks of cool blustery weather it had been improving a bit since yesterday and today was not bad with some decent sunny spells albeit it still felt cool when the sun went in.

This afternoon my car was booked in for its MOT at a garage that I have used for the past couple of years in Hall Green Birmingham and I decided that whilst I left it there for an hour or so I would make the most of the weather and have a little wander to see what I could find.

Walking down to the main A34 Stratford Road into Birmingham by where Hall Green becomes Sparkhill , the River Cole crosses under the road and on both sides there are footpaths. The one side continues on until it eventually runs into the Kingfisher Country Park whilst crossing the road the path follows the river back through Hall Green towards Sarehole Mill, the surroundings of which are said to have inspired JRR Tolkien.



River Cole – Hall Green Birmingham

Within the first few hundred yards I had seen a couple each of Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells and walking a little further the sounds of the busy road were soon replaced by the sounds of the river and of birds singing. I only walked a little way along before turning around and heading back but in less than an hour I saw over a dozen Peacocks and half a dozen each of Small Tortoiseshells and Commas 😊 .



Comma – River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014



Comma - River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014



Small Tortoiseshell – River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014



Peacock – River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014



Peacock – River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014

At one point as I was taking a photo of a Peacock when I noticed a Brimstone lying sideways on a leaf looking lifeless. I took a couple of photos and then gently touched him with a grass stem. He then came to life and lazily fluttered over to the other side of the river. This was the only Brimstone that I saw today and the only one so far that I have seen this late in the afternoon.



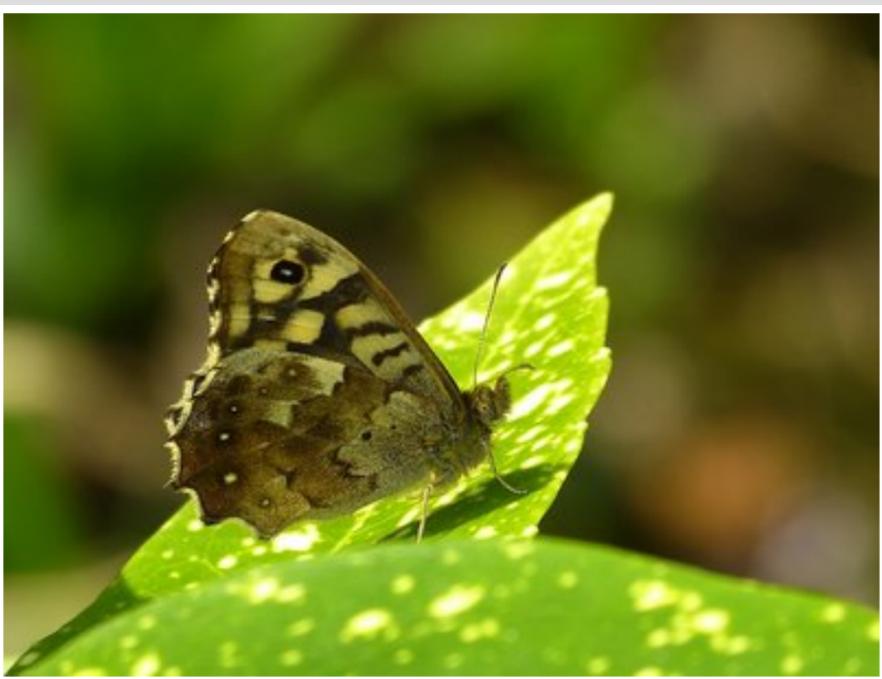
Brimstone - River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014

I was also particularly pleased to see my first Orange Tip this year 😊 as one flew down the path and passed me, although unfortunately it didn't stop. Back home again at about 4.00pm it was still a pleasant afternoon so I grabbed a coffee and sat out in the back garden with my camera to hand in case anything showed up. For a while I was entertained by a couple of rather worn Peacocks that kept spiralling up into the air at the bottom of the garden but I soon ignored those as my first garden Orange Tip flew in from next door 😊 . He circled around a couple of times and then settled just long enough for me to get a couple of quick shots before he was off again.



Orange Tip - Coverdale 11.04.2014

I was still feeling chuffed with the Orange Tip when I noticed a darker shape bobbing along the side of the garden...a Speckled Wood was heading straight towards me 😊 . He set up station in one of the usual corners and stayed there for 15 minutes or so, chasing everything that came close until he chased one of the Peacocks over next door and decided to stay there.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 11.04.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 11.04.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 11.04.2014

Oh yes, the car failed the MOT, going back next week for a new rear spring, but I wasn't really bothered. A nice hour in a surprising location that I found more or less by accident followed by the Orange Tip and Specklie in the garden had put me in too much of a good mood 😊

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 11-Apr-14 08:26 PM GMT

Very nice selection of lovely photos Neil, I especially like the 'dark' Speckled Woods 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Apr-14 09:11 PM GMT

Thanks Mike, I was particularly pleased to see that one in the garden today. The appearance of the Specklies in my garden each year is one of my special 'look forward to' moments.

Cheers,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 11-Apr-14 10:08 PM GMT

A lovely selection of photos, Neil. I'm glad your Specklies are back and looking stunning in the sunshine. The Small Tortoiseshells round your way are still looking pretty fresh too! I'm up in the Rugby area tomorrow, but the forecast doesn't look that good unfortunately, or a visit to Ryton might have been a strong possibility.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by David M, 11-Apr-14 10:27 PM GMT

Some lovely, sharp images of spring there, Neil.

You spent your time wisely.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 11-Apr-14 10:57 PM GMT

Fantastic news that your Specklies are back in residence 😊 I saw my first Orange-tips today but none were really stopping not like your cracker 🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-14 06:30 PM GMT

Hi Dave, I don't know how it turned out over by Rugby today but we had an hour of sun later in the afternoon around Solihull, still fairly breezy though. Cheers David, it was more luck than wisdom really, just went for a bit of a wander without really knowing where I was going.

Thanks Wurzel, I had been looking out for the Specklies all week but until yesterday it had been too cool and cloudy.

Saturday 12th April

Back to cool, cloudy and blustery for most of the day. I spent most of the morning doing the usual household stuff and this afternoon decided to give the back lawn its first cut of the year, up until now it had been too wet still and even this afternoon it was still a bit soft underfoot.

I have a couple of small clumps of Cowslips in the lawn which are now in flower and which I always carefully mow around,



Cowslips in lawn.

Around 3.30pm the clouds cleared and a large patch of blue sky allowed the sun through for about an hour although there was still a cool breeze which was quite blustery at times. During this time a really raggedy looking Peacock kept coming back to the dandelions at the rough end of the garden plus I had flypasts of a single Small White and my first Holly Blue of the year 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by robpartridge, 12-Apr-14 06:46 PM GMT

That garden looks rather similar to mine – creatively untidy?

Rob

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 12-Apr-14 06:49 PM GMT

Just catching up with your diary Neil. Some lovely vibrant colours on the ST and is it just my imagination or are some of the Peacocks a lot larger and more colourful this year? Your Speckled Wood shots are stunning too – none round here yet 😞

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-14 10:11 PM GMT

"robpartridge" wrote:

That garden looks rather similar to mine – creatively untidy?

Rob

Hi Rob, 'creatively untidy'...I like that 😊 I sometimes have a bit of trouble explaining that some stuff is there for a reason...nettles for example 😊

Here is a wider shot of the 'rougher' end taken from about half way down.



Hi Pauline, thanks for your comments 😊 Not sure about the Peacocks being larger but there is certainly a lot of them, in all sorts of conditions. They seem to outnumber Small Tortoiseshells and Commas by about 2-1 at most places around here, and there are loads of Small Torts and Commas 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Apr-14 09:00 PM GMT

Sunday 13th April

What a year the Peacocks are having 😊 A very pleasant morning with mixed sun and clouds and from about 11.00am there were at least 4 different individuals in the back garden. A couple of these were very tatty but there were also a couple of others, a male that kept attempting to court a female that was not interested and who would shake him off but then return to the same patch of brambles to bask. It looked almost as if she was teasing him.



Peacock female – Coverdale 13.04.2014



Peacock male - Coverdale 13.04.2014



Trying it on

As with yesterday there were single flypasts of a Green-veined White and a Holly blue, both of which I saw settle on the opposite side of the neighbours garden, now who's being teased 😏

The male Bullfinch was also coming and going and I finally managed to get a photo without the double glazing in between 😊



Male Bullfinch - Coverdale 13.04.2014

There is also a pair of Robins around most of the time and one of them often keeps me company when I am in the garden 😊



Robin - Coverdale 13.04.2014

This afternoon I went to the Warwickshire BC Spring meeting where a good turnout enjoyed some excellent presentations and lovely home made cake 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-14 09:57 PM GMT

Greta Peacock action Neil 😊 It's been another great year so far for Small Tortoiseshells and it seems that Peacocks are on the up too. I've noticed more and more recently whilst the Small Torts are on the wane between broods.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 13-Apr-14 10:26 PM GMT

I just can't get near any Peacocks at the moment Neil, I think I need to take some lessons from you. Every time I get within range they're off. Some lovely photos there and still in such good condition too!

B'saurus

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Apr-14 08:42 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Peacocks have been all over the place around here for a while now, easily the most numerous species 😊

Thanks Rex, the thing with Peacocks as with all the vanessids, is that they will have a number of favourite basking spots along a path or hedge that they will keep returning to. Once I have pinpointed one of these spots I will wait until the butterfly has been down for a little while before slowly approaching, I find that if I approach too soon they will often be off again. I also use varying degrees of zoom on my Lumix FZ150 and usually take the photo from 4-5 feet away to avoid spooking the butterfly.

Monday 14th April

After being stuck inside at work on what looked to be a nice day I arrived home to find the same male Speckled Wood from the other day bobbing about in the back garden and basking in the late afternoon sun in his favourite spot 😊



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 14.04.2014

It is on days like today that I am envious of those on UKB that seem to be able to flit about the countryside all week looking for Green Hairstreaks and suchlike 🍀 Oh well, roll on Friday when I finish for a week off work, fingers crossed for the weather and the chance to get out to do some looking myself.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 14-Apr-14 09:07 PM GMT

What a fantastic Speckie photo Neil! The peacocks around my neck of the woods seem to prefer basking on bare earth or grass. Not the prettiest setting for a photograph but it doesn't seem to matter, I'm just so thrilled to see more of them than I have for many many years 😊 They are all over the place at the moment. Hopefully we'll have a bumper crop of beautiful fresh ones over the summer.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-14 09:27 PM GMT

Fantastic Specklie Neil 😊🍀 I know what you mean about the suffereing that comes form seeing others shots when you're trapped at work 😞 I hope the weekend is good for you, good luck 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by David M, 14-Apr-14 09:54 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

It is on days like today that I am envious of those on UKB that seem to be able to flit about the countryside all week looking for Green Hairstreaks and suchlike 🍀 Oh well, roll on Friday when I finish for a week off work, fingers crossed for the weather and the chance to get out to do some looking myself.

Oh, how I empathise with those words!!

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 15-Apr-14 01:39 PM GMT

Having worked in an office for almost 40 years I can certainly sympathise with the youngsters amongst you who have not yet reached retirement age – I would like to be able to say your time will come but if the government has its way you might never be able to 😞 . I count myself one of the lucky ones 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Apr-14 07:32 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, very much appreciated 😊

Its been a while since anyone called me a youngster Pauline 😊😄 . Got a few years yet to retirement but there is starting to be a little light at the end of the tunnel, or is that some sod with a torch bringing me more work...

At least when I am stuck in work during the week I have the garden to come home to which helps prevent me going completely stir crazy, speaking of which...

Tuesday 15th April

Another pleasant day so, on getting home from work this afternoon, I did my usual thing and sat in the garden for a bit to chill out and watch whatever turned up. A couple of Peacocks were performing again and between bouts one of them would keep retiring to the side fence. With the Peacock perched with the sun behind him I used flash to light up the shadow on the nearside for the photo below,



Peacock - Coverdale 15.04.2014

Shortly afterwards a male Orange Tip flew in, then out, then back in and settled on some Forget-me-knots at the bottom of the garden 😊



Orange Tip - Coverdale 15.04.2014

With a flying visit from a Holly blue that didn't stop this was a cracking 30 minutes or so before the sun dropped behind the neighbours trees and the temperature started dropping quite quickly.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-14 11:06 PM GMT

Fantastic shot of the OT Neil 🍷 I'm getting closer to them now so hopefully I'll get one as good as that eventually...possibly 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by David M, 15-Apr-14 11:07 PM GMT

Agreed. It's always particularly nice to get a male OT on a blue flower.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Apr-14 09:31 PM GMT

Thanks guys, I have noticed before that the Forget-me-nots in the garden will often tempt a wandering Orange Tip for a brief stop so if I spot one fluttering in that direction I will slowly sneak up with camera poised. I think the neighbours are now used to the mad bloke next door sneaking about the garden with a camera 😊

Wednesday 16th April

This afternoon I took the car back to the garage in Hall Green to have the rear spring fitted and leaving work a bit early got there at about 4.00pm. Determined to make the most of the afternoon sun and leaving the car to have the work done, I walked down to the Stratford road again as I did last Friday and took a short walk along the River Cole, this time in the opposite direction to before. Since Friday I have found that this route along the river is known as Shire Country Park and today I went along the section known as Blackberry Way.

<http://www.shirecountryparkfriends.org...-park.html>

I only went a short distance, as far as Foremans Road, and again saw around a dozen Peacocks but this time no Commas or Small Tortoiseshells. There were around half a dozen Speckled Wood spaced out along the way and for the first time this year I saw numerous 'whites' most of which I believe were Small but with a couple of Green-veined as well.



Speckled Wood – Sparkhill Birmingham 16.04.2014



Green-veined White – Sparkhill Birmingham 16.04.2013

There were also maybe half a dozen Orange Tips patrolling backwards and forwards along here, only one of which settled briefly to let me get a record shot,



Orange Tip – Sparkhill Birmingham 16.04.2013

After saying the other day that I hadn't yet seen a Brimstone flying later than early afternoon I saw a couple today and was pleased when one stopped to nectar from a dandelion right in front of me 😊



Brimstone – Sparkhill Birmingham 16.04.2013

In total I spent less than an hour here before heading back to collect my car but it was good to discover a bit more of this route.

I think that it was Jack Harrison who commented on someone's thread on UKB about the possibility of a Small Heath butterfly in Small Heath in Birmingham. Well, this route leads towards Small Heath and I am tempted to go back and have a look when they are on the wing.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-14 11:12 PM GMT

Great shots as ever Neil 😊 It's great when you 'discover' new little areas and even better when you can investigate them instead of just waiting while mundane things are happening 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Apr-14 08:12 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I had an enjoyable little spell around a re-discovered spot this afternoon 😊

Friday 18th April

Good Friday and I was actually at work this morning, although just for half a day as usual for me on a Friday and finished at lunchtime. After going home and getting changed, myself and Jane went round to see my Mom who lives a couple of miles away from us. She still lives in the same house that I grew up in and just down the road there is an area that, back in the 1970s, was mostly undeveloped waste ground where I used to go looking for butterflies when I was a nipper and first started to develop an interest.

Some years back a school was built here which took up about half of the area and the rest was 'tidied up' and turned into a recreational park. When our own children were growing up, we would often visit Nan & 'Pop-pop' and would take the kids over the park to play around. Since the kids have grown up it has now been some years since I had looked around this park despite visiting my Mom most Friday afternoons.

This afternoon there was some nice sun, although there was an underlying coolness in the air and it felt rather nippy when the sun disappeared behind the odd cloud. Whilst the women were happy nattering I decided to nip out and stretch my legs and have a nose around the park, taking my camera

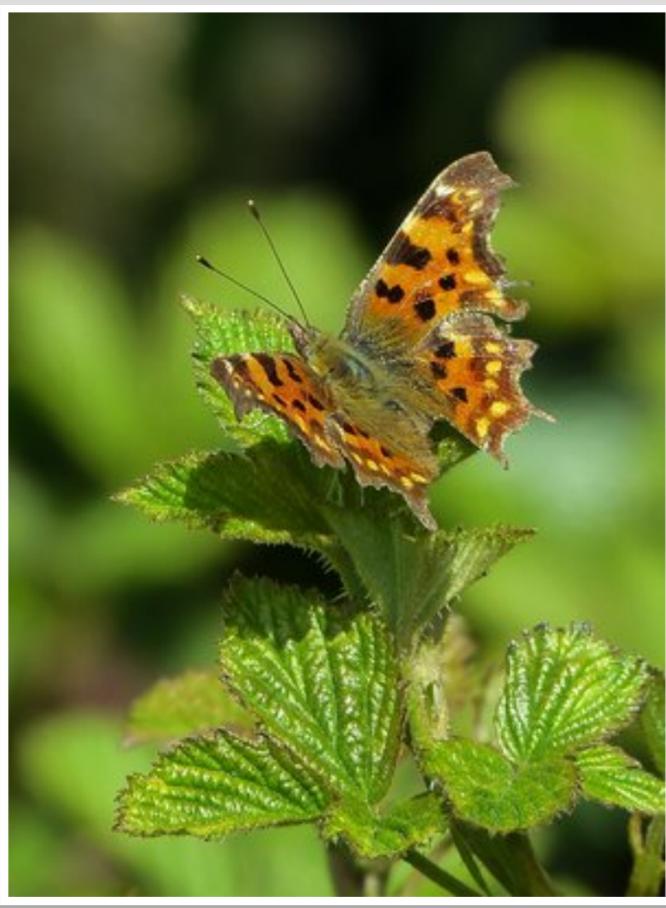
which I had with me just in case such an opportunity arose.

I was pleased to find that, although the main grassy areas were closely mown, there were some good areas that have been allowed to become wild again with large clumps of nettles and brambles amongst the trees and scrub around the edges of the park.



I spent just under an hour walking a slow circle around here and in that time found 10–12 Peacocks, around half a dozen Small Tortoiseshells and at least 3 Commas plus 2 Speckled Wood and singles of Small and Green-veined White.





I found one Small Tortoiseshell that looked paler than the others which at first I thought was just faded, but looking at the photo below I am not so sure if it is faded or actually in reasonable condition and a bit pale.



Back home later in the afternoon and in the garden there were a couple of passing Orange Tips, or the same one going around again, I really don't know how you can be sure which. There were also a couple of Green-veined Whites, confirmed as at least 2 different individuals by the fact that one had a damaged wing, plus a single Small white and a Peacock.



My star of the day however was a male Holly Blue that actually stopped and opened his wings just long enough for me to get a couple of quick photos 😊



I see that the first Warwickshire Grizzled Skipper has been reported but I have not seen any Dingy Skippers or Green Hairstreaks reported in these parts yet. I have next week off work so am hoping that the weather picks up again after what is looking to be a dodgy Sunday/Monday and with a bit of luck I can go looking.

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Apr-14 08:47 PM GMT

What a lovely story Neil, these old places always look so tiny when you re-visit them as an adult don't they. I really like your photo of the Green Veined White. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-14 11:20 PM GMT

Lovely shots and a Holly Blue too 🍷 The weather is supposed to get better by next weekend but I wouldn't hold my breath – I swear they just think "it's April so it should be this temp and with this amount of rain so that's what we'll predict for 10 days time" and then when you finally get there...it's all change 😞

Good luck with it anyway – I'm hoping for good weather too for the weekend; it can do what it likes Monday–Friday! 😊

Have a goddun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-14 10:18 PM GMT

Thanks Rex, there were certainly a lot of memories there, I know what you mean about always remembering places like that as being bigger.

Cheers Wurzel, I still keep checking the MET office website for forecasts but to be honest I am relying more on what I can see coming on the horizon.

Saturday 19th April

Despite a local forecast for full sun this morning there was a complete blanket of grey cloud and it felt rather nippy. That didn't make much difference to me however as I had to do a little run up to Nottingham to fetch my youngest lad Danny back from Uni for Easter. With the run taking about an hour each way plus the time to load his 'stuff' into the car this meant that it was early afternoon before we were back home again.

On the way back down the M42 the sun had made a few half-hearted attempts to break through the cloud but by the time we were back home the clouds had reasserted their dominance and had even turned a darker grey.

I had been toying with the idea of popping out round to Castle Hills if it looked like it was going to brighten up a bit and eventually with it looking like there was some lighter grey clouds heading our way I made my mind up and went out.

To start with it was still cool and grey but with a few patches of blue sky opening up there started to be a few brief spells of sunshine and I started to see the odd Green-veined White and Orange Tip begin to patrol the hedgerows.



Green-veined White – Castle Hills Solihull 19.04.2014

With the spells of sun getting a bit more frequent I began to look out for an Orange tip that I could keep my eye on so that I could watch where it settled when a cloud came over and hopefully get a photo in that brief few seconds when they open their wings when the sun comes out again. The first couple that I saw wouldn't play the game and kept disappearing over the hedges and with a large black cloud heading over I was just thinking of starting back when I saw a male Orange Tip a hundred yards or so away and saw him land as the cloud covered the sun. Keeping my eye on the spot I wandered over and found his perch, Bingo 😊

Taking a few photos of his underside I then waited for the sun to reappear which it did about ten minutes later and he performed as expected and slowly opened his wings before taking off again 😊



Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull 19.04.2014



Orange Tip - Castle Hills Solihull 19.04.2014

I also found a dozen or so Orange Tip eggs on small plants of Ladies Smock dotted about the damper parts of the meadows so there must be some females about although I didn't see any today.

With the forecast for the next few days looking a bit dodgy I was glad that I managed to get out a bit this afternoon. There was not a great number of butterflies about, Green-veined Whites were the most numerous with about half a dozen seen with about 3-4 each of Orange Tip and Small Tortoiseshell and a single Speckled Wood.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Chris Jackson, 19-Apr-14 10:31 PM GMT

Your tactics paid off Neil. Those are 2 perfect shots.
Cheers, Chris

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Apr-14 09:56 AM GMT

Thank you Chris 😊

Orange Tips are one of those butterflies that are easier to photograph with some cloud about...if you can just catch one at the right time. I was fortunate yesterday that the last one that I saw played his role just right 😊

Happy Easter to Everyone 😊

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 20-Apr-14 10:27 AM GMT

That's a lovely shot of the OT Neil and it looks equally good if you view it in landscape or portrait. The pale ST is very attractive also. Happy Easter to you too (it's tipping it down here right now 😊).

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Apr-14 10:52 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊 Very grey here at the moment but no rain yet, it is forecast for later though so we could get anything 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-Apr-14 10:47 PM GMT

That Orange-tip shot is lush and falls into "one I wish I'd taken" 🍷 Hope the weather plays ball tomorrow 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-14 08:15 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I was chuffed with that Orange Tip, don't you just love it when they perform like they are supposed to 😊

The weather today turned out better than expected too 😊

Monday 21st April

Yesterday (Sunday) started off grey and miserable and got steadily gloomier through the morning until it started raining just after midday. Late afternoon and through the evening it absolutely hammered down and as today was forecast to be similar I was expecting the worst this morning. I was pleasantly surprised to wake up to a pleasant morning with high cloud that thinned out enough to let some hazy but warm sunshine through. I knew that I would not be venturing far today as I was picking my Mom up to spend the afternoon with us and figured that I would spend some time in the garden.

The weather settled down to a day of high thin cloud with mostly hazy sun although there were a few spells of proper sunshine and it felt warmer than it has done for a while. Popping in and out of the garden through the day produced a steady flow of Green-veined Whites passing through, a few of which would slow down and settle during the cloudier spells.



Green-veined White - Coverdale 21.04.2014



Green-veined White - Coverdale 21.04.2014

A couple of Small Whites also turned up,



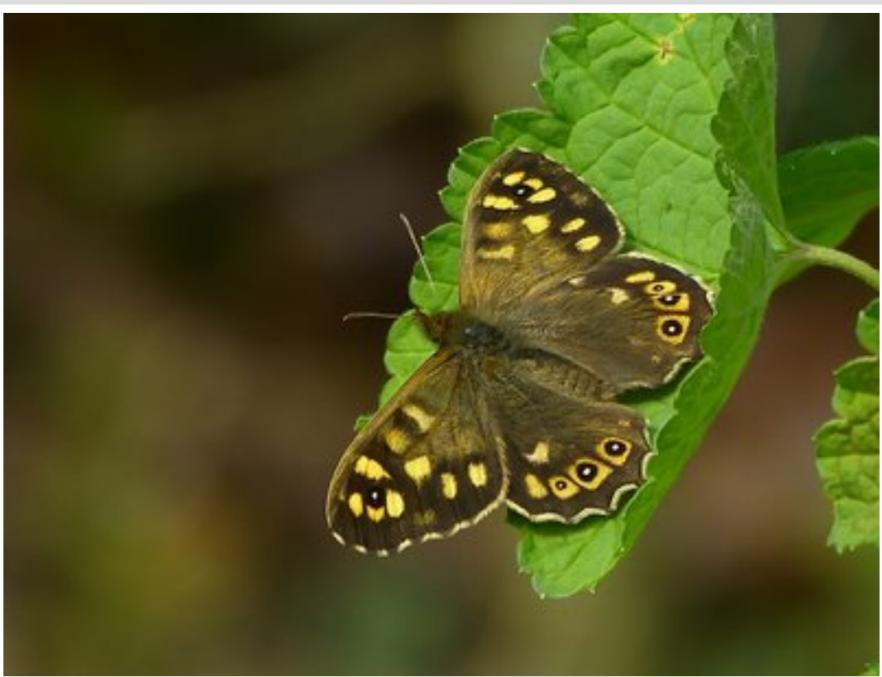
Small White - Coverdale 21.04.2014

I was particularly keen to see if there were any more Speckled Wood about since I had not seen any since last week when there had been a couple of males. I am always on the lookout for females in the garden to hopefully ensure their continued presence.

I was pleased to see a number of Specklies during the afternoon and looking through my photos afterwards I have identified 2 different males and 3 females 😊. This is the first time that I have ever seen more females than males in the garden and hopefully looks promising for the next broods.



Speckled Wood male 1 - Coverdale 21.04.2014



Speckled Wood male 2 - Coverdale 21.04.2014



Speckled Wood female 1 - Coverdale 21.04.2014



Speckled Wood female 2 - Coverdale 21.04.2014



Speckled Wood female 3 - Coverdale 21.04.2014

With passing singles of Peacock and Holly Blue plus a couple of male Orange Tips this gave me 6 species in the garden today on a day that looked like it would be a washout this time yesterday. With the rest of the week off work and the forecast looking wet or mixed for the next few days I think I will be taking each day as it comes and see what happens.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Lee Hurrell, 21-Apr-14 10:38 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Love the first Green Veined White image, wonderful.

Glad to hear your garden Speckled Woods are doing well. About the only thing I miss from Greenford are my garden Speckled Woods! (and the Holly Blues).

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-14 11:10 PM GMT

Great to see the Specklie action Neil 😊 I saw a load in Wales about a week ago but since then I haven't seen any over my sorties in Wiltshire and Dorset. Still they'll turn up soon 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-14 07:19 PM GMT

Thanks Lee, the great thing about having the Specklies in the garden is that you only need a couple of minutes of sun for one to show up 😊

Hi Wurzel, I'm sure you will have them soon, they seem to be doing well around my patch so far 😊

Tuesday 22nd April

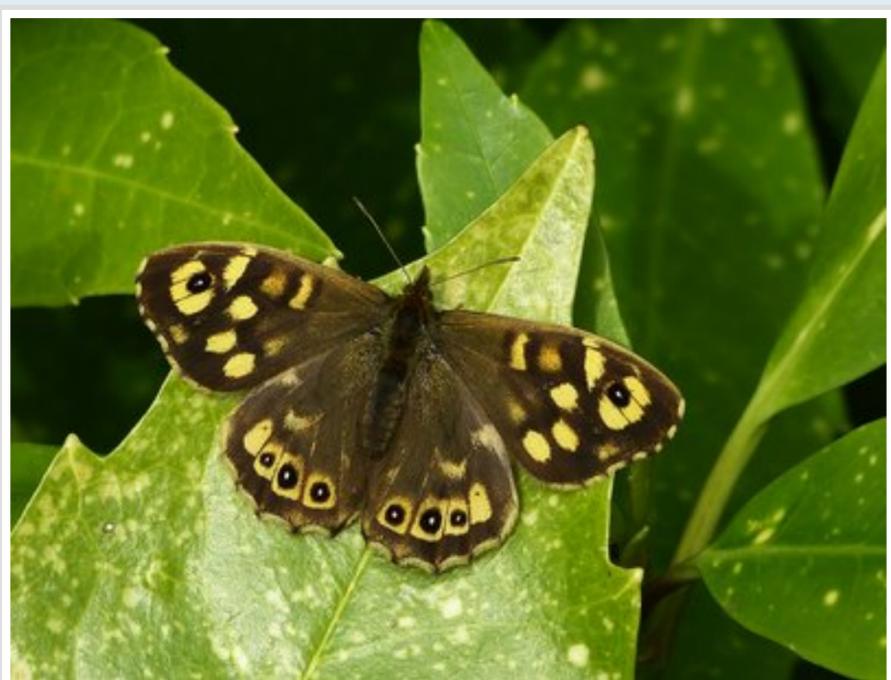
With the forecast for today looking like it was going to be the wettest and gloomiest day of the week I had decided that it was going to be my 'get things done at home' day. For once the MET office's crystal ball seemed to be working well and the forecast was pretty bang on, even to the point of a (very)brief brighter spell later in the afternoon when the clouds thinned just enough for the sun to break through a couple of times for a few minutes.

Having spent most of the day indoors so far I went out into the garden for some fresh air and soon spotted a Holly Blue that dropped down onto the Forget-me-nots at the bottom of the garden and allowed me to get a couple of quick shots before he fluttered off.



Holly Blue male - Coverdale 22.04.2014

Almost immediately afterwards I spotted a Speckled Wood fluttering along the border. It turned out to be a female and a closer examination of her markings show it to be yet another different individual to any of those that I saw yesterday making her the 4th female in the past couple of days 😊



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 22.04.2014

Just a brief spell in what was otherwise a wet and dreary day but it was enough for me to get my 'fix' for today 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 22-Apr-14 07:39 PM GMT

I love the Holly Blue on the forget-me-not Neil. Don't think I've ever seen that before.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-14 11:15 PM GMT

I am getting more and more envious of your garden Neil – it's making me miss my old one – so much so that I stopped off at Larkhill today but it was cold, wet and raining so no fix for me 😞 Still the weekend is fast approaching...here's hoping 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Hoggers, 23-Apr-14 03:12 PM GMT

That's a beautiful photo of the Holly Blue, Neil– stunning!

Best Wishes

Hoggers

Re: nfreem

by David M, 23-Apr-14 07:14 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

That's a beautiful photo of the Holly Blue, Neil– stunning!

Best Wishes

Hoggers

Yes, they're not renowned for nectaring widely, and to be doing so on a blue flower just makes the rarity value go higher.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 23-Apr-14 07:28 PM GMT

Ni Neil, lots of superb photos in your recent postings 😊 great Holly Blues with open wings, they're not always that obliging 😊 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Apr-14 08:27 PM GMT

Many thanks all for the comments 😊

Holly Blues are one of those species that has me reaching for the camera as soon as I see one. Of course, most times I end up putting it down again as the butterfly carries on its way...

...but every now and then 😊

Wednesday 23rd April

At the Warwickshire BC Spring meeting a couple of weeks ago it was requested if some members could fill in some of the gaps on the map with sightings, in readiness for a new Warwickshire Butterfly Atlas in 2015. A couple of days later Keith Warmington, the county recorder, emailed me the tetrads around Solihull to look at.

This morning with a high covering of scattered clouds showing lots of small bits of blue sky I went out to have a look at around a couple of these spots. The first place that I visited was at Bickenhill, just south of Birmingham airport and was a square that had only had one species, Brimstone, recorded so far. I parked up and followed a public footpath to a couple of meadows that I had seen on Google Earth that looked promising.

By 10.30am it was starting to warm up with some nice sunny spells although there was a bit of a blustery wind from the south-west which made taking photos a bit of a challenge.

I spent about one and a half hours here in the end and saw easily twenty plus Small Tortoiseshells, probably about a dozen Orange Tips including a couple of females, and half a dozen or so each of Peacocks and Green-veined Whites.



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 23.04.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 23.04.2014



Peacock - Bickenhill 23.04.2014



Orange tip female - Bickenhill 23.04.2014



Orange tip female - Bickenhill 23.04.2014



Orange tip male - Bickenhill 23.04.2014



Orange tip male - Bickenhill 23.04.2014



Orange tip male - Bickenhill 23.04.2014



Orange tip male - Bickenhill 23.04.2014

It was not until I looked at the photo above afterwards that I noticed the egg.

At one point I watched a male Orange tip trying it on with a female Green-veined White until she gave him the slip and flew off. I managed to get a photo, not that good but an interesting one I think.



Confused male Orange tip – Bickenhill 23.04.2013

Not long afterwards I found a pair of Green-veined Whites as they should be...



Green-veined White pair – Bickenhill 23.04.2014

There were just the four species seen today but a very pleasant morning at a spot which will certainly be worth visiting again later in the summer.

At midday, with some heavier cloud building up I decided to head off to another spot on the other side of Solihull that had not had any butterflies recorded so far. By the time I arrived there was some light rain in the air so I just checked some Cuckoo Flower in a field and found some Orange tip eggs. Walking back to the car in a lull in the rain I spotted a 'white' fluttering along a hedge and settle on some nettles. This proved to be a Green-veined White which at least gave me two species to record in this square despite the now gloomy and wet conditions.

With the recent weather around here slowing the season back to something looking more 'normal', I am still waiting for Green Hairstreaks and Dingy and Grizzled Skippers to get going around the midlands. In the meantime I will continue to admire all the quality photos in other diaries 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-14 10:40 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Neil – quality rather than quantity 😊 I especially like the 'confused shot' – interesting behaviour documented. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Apr-14 09:21 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I quite like the way she is facing off to him, almost as if she is saying 'come on, get a grip' 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Apr-14 08:26 PM GMT

Thursday 24th April

Despite the earlier indications that today would be the best day of the week, it remained stubbornly cool and cloudy all morning. In fact it didn't really look like clouds, more like someone had just painted the sky a uniform dull grey. At least it wasn't raining although everywhere was still wet from the bucket full we had overnight.

We had planned to take our daughter and grandson to Hatton Country Park by Warwick today and set out, picking my mom up on the way. We had earlier agreed that whilst they were there, I could sneak off for a bit, and then return to collect them later.

There are a couple of spots the other side of Warwick at Bishops Itchington and Harbury where Grizzled and Dingy Skippers can be found and I headed for these on the off chance that I might find one. I have seen a couple of Grizzlies reported in Warwickshire but no Dingy Skippers yet so thought my chances were slim but hey ho, you never know.

I spent about 45 minutes at each site during which time the clouds finally started to break up and some sunny spells developed before I had to head back to collect the women and nipper. As it started to warm up a bit I started seeing A few Orange tips and Peacocks and at Harbury a female Brimstone landed right in front of me 😊



Brimstone female – Harbury 24.04.2014

After returning to meet up with the others and on our way home it finally decided to turn into a nice afternoon and on getting back to our house I went to sit out in the garden and found more butterflies there than I had seen so far all day. Some pics in the next post when I have sorted through them.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 24-Apr-14 10:01 PM GMT

Well done getting that shot of a Brimble Neil, I've still not managed to photograph one properly this spring! I've not even seen one land.

Also I love your Orange Tip photos too 😊

All the best,

B'saurus

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Apr-14 07:25 PM GMT

Thanks Rex, I've only seen a couple settle myself, one male a couple of weeks back and now the female. I was lucky to manage to get a photo of each time 😊

Thursday 24th April – back in the garden again

Non-stop rain today (Friday) so a chance to catch up on some more house 'stuff' and to look through my photos from the garden yesterday afternoon.

After returning home yesterday around 3.30pm the sun finally came out properly and it turned into a nice afternoon. I went out into the back garden and immediately saw a couple of whites fluttering around.

One was a Green-veined white that I recognised by a slightly crumpled rear edge to its right forewing and that I had photographed a few days ago on the Forget-me-nots. Despite some heavy rain over the past few days it looked to be in fairly good condition still and just goes to show how tough these delicate looking creatures really are.



The same Green-veined White from a few days ago still hanging around.

The other one was a Small White but I can't say I recognised this one 😊



Small White - Coverdale 24.04.2014

As well as the whites there were a couple of Peacocks and male Speckled Woods hanging around and basking between short flights when they tried to see each other off...



Peacock - Coverdale 24.04.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 24.04.2014

On one occasion I saw a Speckle try and barge onto a leaf with a Peacock and for a few seconds it looked like they were arguing over a prime basking spot...



Oi! gerroff my sunny bit...

Whilst I was watching these butterflies another pair of Peacocks arrived with a male trying unsuccessfully to court a female before she flew off with him in pursuit...



Peacocks - Coverdale 24.04.2014

This meant that for a few minutes I had 4 Peacocks, 3 Speckled Wood, the 2 whites plus an Orange Tip all in view at the same time 😊



Orange Tip - Coverdale 24.04.2014

As well as the Forget-me-nots which had been attracting the butterflies I also have some Spanish Bluebells and a Lilac shrub, both of which have been in the garden since I moved into this house nearly 20 years ago. These have both started flowering this week and have also begun to get attention from the butterflies...



Peacock - Coverdale 24.04.2014



Orange Tip - Coverdale 24.04.2014



Speckled Wood plus Peacock, different Specklie to earlier but not sure about the Peacock.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 24.04.2014

By about 5.00pm things were going quiet with just a couple of Specklies holding their territories against the occasional White or Orange Tip. I was just thinking about going back inside when I noticed an Orange Tip drop down and settle so I crept up slowly and took a couple of photos.



Orange Tip – Coverdale 24.04.2014

After a couple of seconds he snapped his forewings down behind the rear wings and looked like he was going to stop for the night until one of the Specklies noticed him and came to chase him off 😬

My apologies for posting another load of photos of the same species again but to be honest this was an hour or so that just gave me so much enjoyment 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 25-Apr-14 08:34 PM GMT

They may be of the same species, Neil, but a Peacock and Speckled Wood appearing in the same image isn't one I think I've seen before (and you've managed it twice in a single post!)

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-14 08:19 AM GMT

No worries about posting lots of the same species – if we stuck to the post it once we could only have 60 in a year 😊 They're cracking shots and as Dave said a Peacock and Speckle in shot twice is a very unusual sight. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Apr-14 06:11 PM GMT

Many thanks for the comments David and Wurzel 😊

I just couldn't resist adding the shot below from the same session to make it a hat trick 😊



Peacock and Speckled Wood – Coverdale 24.04.2014

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 26-Apr-14 08:54 PM GMT

Great hat trick Neil, nice to see the Speckled Wood and Peacocks together 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Apr-14 11:20 AM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊

Saturday 26th April

Another day of mixed cloud and sunny spells but with an underlying coolness that could be felt whenever the sun went in. I had seen that a couple of Green Hairstreaks had been reported from Ryton a few days ago and so decided to take a drive over to see if I could find any of these or maybe Grizzled Skippers.

I arrived at just after 2.00pm in a light shower of rain and after parking up walked through the wood to the meadows. I spent a couple of hours here wandering along the edge of the wood, paying particular attention to the spots where I have seen Green Hairstreaks in previous years but without success. Most of the time there was a blustery wind blowing and the butterflies that I did see, mostly Brimstones, Orange tips and Peacocks would get

whisked off if they ventured too far from the shelter of the hedges.

This did have its advantages however as it meant that the Brimstones and Orange tips in particular would only fly short distances and then settle again,



Orange tip male - Ryton 26.04.2014

I always find Peacocks easier to take photos of due to their habit of returning to favourite basking spots,



Peacock - Ryton 26.04.2014

No doubt due to the conditions, the Brimstones were behaving more like the later summer ones do and settling often to nectar on dandelions rather than constantly patrolling. One male spent about five minutes settled in a nice position whilst the sun was behind a cloud which enabled me to get my best photos yet of a Spring Brimstone 😊



Brimstone male - Ryton 26.04.2014



Brimstone male - Ryton 26.04.2014

Later I found another different male settled in a similar position 😊



Brimstone male - Ryton 26.04.2014

I also met Steven Falk again, the chap that I met last year at Bishops Hill where he was photographing Red-tailed Mason Bees. He was at Ryton to take more photos for the book on Bees that he is writing and tells me that this book is now about 2/3rd done.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/>

Around 4.00pm a large black cloud came over and the heavens opened with a heavy rain shower, proper stair-rod stuff 🤩. With some more black clouds heading over I decided to make a move for home.

I did not see any Green Hairstreaks or Grizzled Skippers, in truth I think that it was a bit too cool and blustery. I also noticed that the hawthorn flowers were still in bud which is a good indication of where the season is at around here, I usually see the Hairstreaks and Grizzlies here when the hawthorn is starting to blossom. I reckon that, weather permitting, a return visit in a week or so should be about right.

It was however a very pleasant couple of hours and I was well chuffed with my Spring Brimstone photos 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 27-Apr-14 07:18 PM GMT

Some lovely shots there Neil, especially the Brimstones 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-14 08:15 PM GMT

Thanks for your comment Mike, very much appreciated 😊

Monday 28th April

After a dull and drizzly end to the weekend yesterday I was back in work today with a pile of stuff to catch up with after having last week off. One of the disadvantages of having a few days off when everyone else is in is that there is invariably a pile of work waiting for me which today meant that I spent pretty much all day in a windowless office with only a couple glimpses of the outside world 😞 .

By the time that I finished this afternoon and got back home it had turned reasonably warm with some nice spells of sunshine so I did the usual and went out into the back garden to unwind for a bit.

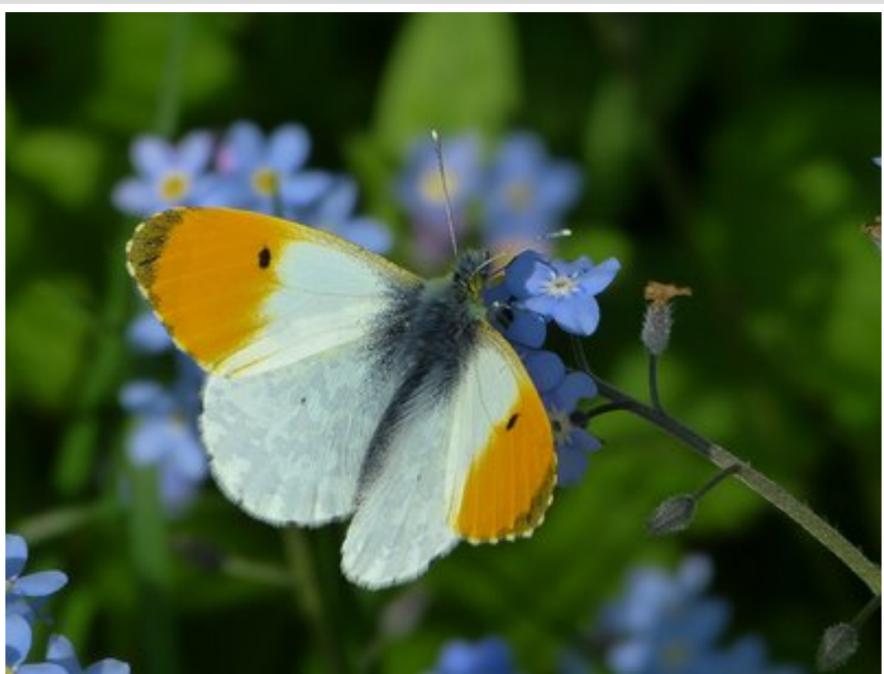
After the dull and blustery weekend, it looks like a bit of warm sunshine today has brought some more fresh Orange tips out with at some points me seeing 3 or 4 at a time 😊 .



Orange tip male - Coverdale 28.04.2014



Orange tip male - Coverdale 28.04.2014



Orange tip male - Coverdale 28.04.2014



Orange tip male - Coverdale 28.04.2014



Orange tip male - Coverdale 28.04.2014

Today was the first time this year that I have seen female Orange tips in the garden and at one time there were 3 different males and 2 females all in view at once including a pair in cop.



Orange tip female - Coverdale 28.04.2014



Orange tip female – Coverdale 28.04.2014



Orange tip pair – Coverdale 28.04.2014

There was also a steady procession of 'whites' mostly Green-veined but with at least one 'Small',



Green-veined White – Coverdale 28.04.2014



Green-veined White - Coverdale 28.04.2014

The Speckled Woods were there again as usual with at least 2 males and a female fluttering about 😊 ,



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 28.04.2014

Another enjoyable hour or so in the garden that was appreciated that much more today after a bit of a 'Monday' at work.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 28-Apr-14 09:52 PM GMT

That fourth Orange Tip image is 'cover shot' worthy, Neil.

Fantastic stuff!

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 28-Apr-14 10:21 PM GMT

Lovely shots indeed, Neil. The other thing about the Orange Tip that David has singled out (apart from it being a stunning image) is that the black forewing spots have white pupils – I would say that seems unusual. Is this an aberration, I wonder?

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-14 11:41 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking shots Neil 🍷 The fourth OT is stunning, and an aberrant to boot 😊 I really am missing my old garden now 😞

Have a goodun

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 29-Apr-14 03:55 PM GMT

Just catching up with your diary Neil – beautiful, beautiful shots of the OT's, (tho the others aren't half bad either 🍷) and the white spots do seem a little unusual. I must learn to be more observant.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-Apr-14 07:37 PM GMT

Thank you all for your comments, very much appreciated as always 😊

I had noticed the white dots in the black forewing spots but to be honest I considered it to be within the range of normal variation. I have recently seen a number of examples with some degree of white in the black spots,

This one from my garden on the 24th April,



...this one from Bickenhill on the 18th April,



...and another one from Bickenhill with a small bit of white in the spots but with extended back margins down the forewings,



Would any of these be classed as an ab?...I don't know, maybe the last one with the extended dark borders, but I am not sure if that one would come under normal variation as well 🤔

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 29-Apr-14 09:17 PM GMT

Very nice Orange-tip photos Neil, the last one *ab.* or not is a real cracker 😊

Re: nfreem

by David M, 29-Apr-14 10:57 PM GMT

Only just noticed the white 'spots'. Amazing how sometimes you can't see the wood for the trees!

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Apr-14 09:05 PM GMT

Thanks Mike, I thought that one was a particularly striking individual.

Cheers David, sometimes these little differences are not too obvious unless you compare images alongside others.

Wednesday 30th April

Another couple of days stuck in the office with hardly a glimpse of outside until finishing. Yesterday afternoon was quite pleasant in the end with some nice warm sun between 4.00 – 5.30pm and today turned out similar if slightly cooler after a bit of light rain on the way home.

On both days I have retreated into the garden with a coffee to unwind as usual and watched the usual suspects coming and going and took a few photos as the opportunity arose 😊

A Peacock and a couple of Specklies from yesterday,



Peacock - Coverdale 29.04.2014



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 29.04.2014



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 29.04.2014

and a Green-veined White and Orange-tip from this afternoon,



Green-veined White – Coverdale 30.04.2014



Green-veined White - Coverdale 30.04.2014



Orange-tip - Coverdale 30.04.2014



Orange-tip - Coverdale 30.04.2014

I think that is now three years running that I taken photos of Orange-tips or Gv Whites on dandelion seed heads, I wonder what it is that attracts these butterflies to settle on them?

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 30-Apr-14 09:10 PM GMT

Perhaps it's camouflage, Neil. I've seen Green Veined Whites doing this regularly too.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 30-Apr-14 11:54 PM GMT

I was watching a Green Veined do exactly this today – it seemed to be examining the seed heads rather than inspecting possible nectar sources? Lush shot Neil, especially the Peacock – it really stands out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-May-14 09:04 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, that Peacock was the first thing that I saw on Tuesday afternoon when I went out into the garden. It still looked to be in fairly good condition and stood out beautifully against the Lilac 😊 . It would be nice to think that it was one of those that I released here last summer, no way of knowing but an intriguing possibility.

Hi David, I wondered about the camouflage against the dandelion seed heads but the butterflies don't blend in at all, I could actually see the butterflies stand out from the other end of the garden. Then again, I believe that bees, and presumably butterflies see light in different wavelengths to us so to them they may well blend in perfectly.

As Wurzel mentions, every time that I see one land on one of these, they flutter around it for a bit as if examining it out before landing. Perhaps they are just looking for a nice soft roost, like we do with a nice comfy bed 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 01-May-14 09:23 PM GMT

Some seriously nice photography going on in here Neil 😊 the butterflies love your garden, my garden seems to have the opposite effect. I did see a female Holly Blue laying some eggs in it the other day though. That will be my garden highlight of the year.

All the best

B'saurus

Re: nfreem

by David M, 01-May-14 10:38 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Hi David, I wondered about the camouflage against the dandelion seed heads but the butterflies don't blend in at all, I could actually see the butterflies stand out from the other end of the garden.

As you say, a butterfly possibly has eyes other than those of a human being in mind when it comes to finding a safe resting spot.

I can spot Wall Browns basking on gravestones in Danygraig Cemetery with ease, but clearly predators lower down the evolutionary ladder cannot see things so easily.

With their wings closed, they are very well concealed, but all it takes to hunt them down is to watch them fly and then settle. Homo Sapiens then has the brainpower to move in slowly, but evidently birds in particular have yet to perfect this technique (thank God, for otherwise we probably wouldn't have butterflies at all!)

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-14 09:12 PM GMT

Thanks Rex 😊 I would recommend Forget-me-nots in any garden for attracting butterflies at this time of year. Even the almost constantly patrolling Orange-tips will pause to visit them and later in the day when they are re-fuelling before roosting they will spend some time on them. Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells, Commas and 'Whites' are all regular visitors and I even took a photo of a male Holly Blue on them the other day 😊 They also get regular visits from Speckled Woods, the females will nectar from them although I suspect the males use them mostly as convenient basking spots.

Hi David, thinking about why butterflies do some of the things they do is part of why I find them such fascinating creatures. Every time you think you know why they are doing something you see something that raises questions 😊

Friday 2nd May

A cloudy and quite cool day but there was still an ever reliable Speckled Wood fluttering around in the garden this afternoon.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 02.05.2014

Plus a Green-veined White that has been lurking around all week, this individual being easily identified by the 'v' shape mark on his left forewing.



Green-veined White – Coverdale 02.05.2014

Purely coincidentally considering my comments above, both butterflies kept returning to the Forget-me-nots 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 03-May-14 09:02 AM GMT

More great reports Neil, I am becoming more and more envious of your garden 😊🌿 I've spent a good while trying to work out whether the mark on the fore wing of the GWV is a bird strike, an if so which bird inflicted it. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 04-May-14 06:22 AM GMT

Your photos are all of such a high quality Neil that I am struggling to single out any particular one to comment on but for personal preference I do love the ones on the forget-me-nots 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-14 10:14 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I wondered whether that mark was from a bird myself but couldn't make my mind up. It didn't seem to look 'damaged' enough.

Thanks Pauline, there is certainly something about the blue of the Forget-me-nots that makes any butterfly look good on them 😊

Saturday 3rd May – part1

A cracking day with loads of sunshine and very little breeze and which actually felt warmer than some recent days which have supposedly been warmer but have had cool winds. I figured that today would be my best chance so far to see my first Green Hairstreaks and also Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, all three of these now having been reported from Warwickshire. This being Saturday, I had my usual domestic stuff to do in the morning and so after getting the chores out of the way and having an early lunch, I set off.

My plan for the afternoon was to start off at Bishops Hill, then stop off at Harbury Spoilbank, and then finish off at Ryton Wood Meadows. It is possible to find all three species at all three of these sites although with past experience I was thinking I would probably get Dingy Skippers at Bishops Hill, Grizzled Skippers at Harbury and Green Hairstreaks at Ryton.

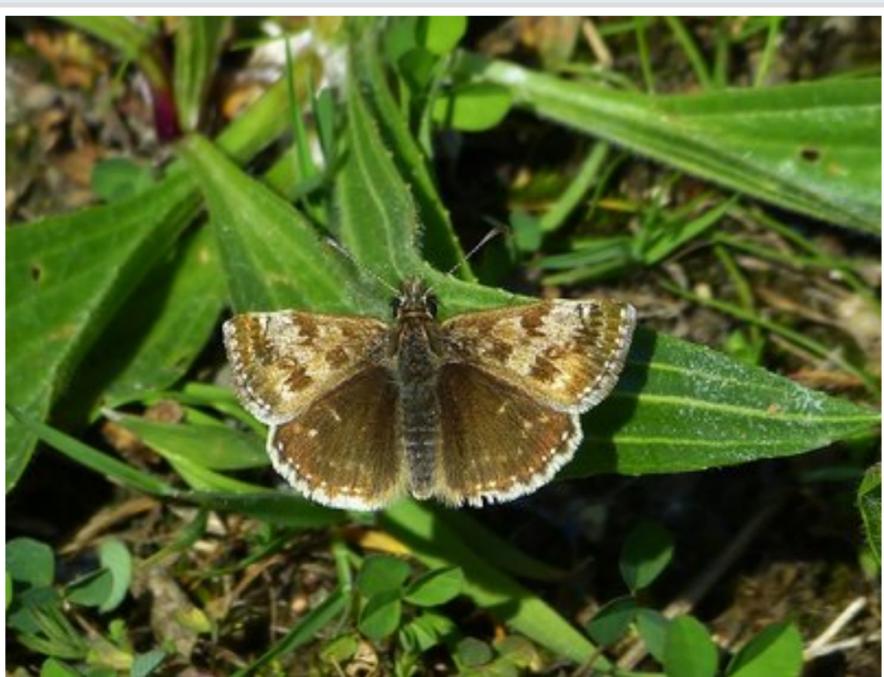
Getting down to Bishops Hill by about 1.00pm I parked up and spotted on Orange-tip, Brimstone and Peacock as I was getting out of the car. About 5 minutes later out on the hill itself I found my first Dingy Skipper, a fresh looking male that had a large piece of hindwing missing. I spent about 40–45 minutes here and saw at least 4 and possibly 5–6 Dingy Skippers before deciding to move on to my next stop.



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 03.05.2014



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 03.05.2014



Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 03.05.2014

At Harbury I walked through the gate into the reserve and almost immediately saw a Dingy Skipper. Moving a little further on there is a sheltered depression where I have seen Grizzled Skippers for the past three years and sure enough there was one waiting for me today.



Grizzled Skipper - Harbury 03.05.2014

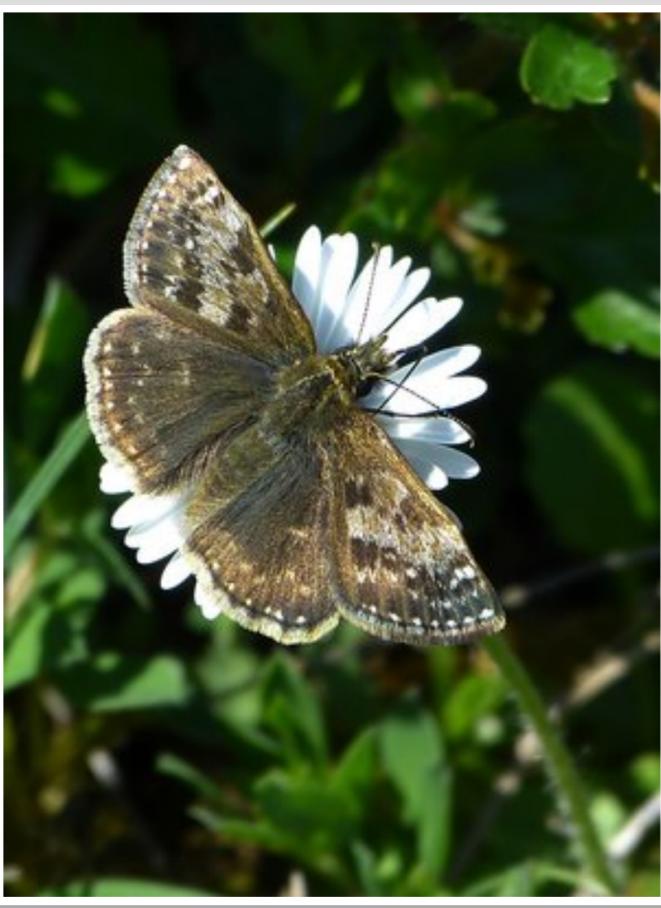
I then did a slow circuit of the reserve and saw at least 2 more Grizzled Skippers along with maybe half a dozen Dingy Skippers.



Grizzled Skipper - Harbury 03.05.2014



Grizzled Skipper - Harbury 03.05.2014



Dingy Skipper – Harbury 03.05.2014

There were numerous Brimstones flying here, at one point I could see 5 in the air at one time and they were also settling regularly.



Brimstones – Harbury 03.05.2014

After 40–45 minutes here and with 2 of my 3 targets for the day seen I figured it was time to head to Ryton.

to be continued...

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-14 06:19 PM GMT

Saturday 3rd May – part 2

From Harbury it is a 15 minute or so drive across to Ryton where I arrived just after 3.00pm, parking in the WWT car park off the A423 and walking through the wood towards the meadows. This time of year there is a lovely display of bluebells and just walking through the wood with various birds singing in the background is quite magical 😊



Ryton Wood – 03.05.2014

Just after taking the photo above, which is looking back along the path I was on, I turned back around to carry on my way and saw a small brownish

looking butterfly flitting across the bluebells in front of me, my first Green Hairstreak this year 😊



Green Hairstreak - Ryton 03.05.2014

I took a couple of photos before it flew off out of sight and carried on towards the meadows, noticing plenty of Peacocks along the way.

Coming out of the wood and along the hedgeline which is the usual best spot for Green Hairstreaks here, it soon became apparent that there were quite a few flitting about the tops of some of the hawthorns.

Most of those that I saw stayed fairly high up but I did manage to see a couple lower down that allowed me to get some photos. I was interested to see that despite earlier comments of mine about usually seeing examples with just a few white spots, the ones that I photographed today all had complete, or nearly so, rows of spots...oh well, just shows what I know 😊 .



Green Hairstreak - Ryton 03.05.2014



Green Hairstreak - Ryton 03.05.2014



Green Hairstreak - Ryton 03.05.2014



Green Hairstreak - Ryton 03.05.2014



Green Hairstreak - Ryton 03.05.2014

Other butterflies seen here were Orange-tips, Brimstones, plenty of Peacocks and a couple of tatty looking Small Tortoiseshells. I also had a good search for Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, this being a good site for both species, but without success, although I did speak to a couple of people who said that a Grizzled Skipper had been seen by the entrance to the meadows earlier in the afternoon.

All in all, a great afternoon with all three target species seen, don't you just love it when a plan comes together 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 04-May-14 09:26 PM GMT

Lovely photos, Neil! Especially the Green Hairstreaks. 😊🍷 With luck and some more sunshine, I may be at Ryton next Saturday, so I hope they'll still be around. Maybe the skippers will be out too.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Willrow, 04-May-14 09:46 PM GMT

Wonderful images Neil, and Ryton Woods is looking delightful, don't you just love this time of year!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by David M, 04-May-14 09:59 PM GMT

Great Hairstreak images, Neil, and that woodland ride is to die for.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 04-May-14 11:29 PM GMT

Great to see you've gotten your Grizzlies, Dingies and Greenstreaks - cracking shots too Neil 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 05-May-14 12:18 PM GMT

Some fantastic Green Hairstreak's there Neil! The last one is a real corker 😊

B'saurus

Re: nfreem

by Neil Hulme, 05-May-14 07:57 PM GMT

Yep, that last shot is one of the best Greenie images posted this year. Lovely!
BWs, Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-14 08:05 PM GMT

Thanks for all the great comments, they are all very much appreciated 😊

Dave, the Green Hairstreaks have only been out for a few days at Ryton and I believe that the first Dingy Skipper was reported there yesterday so you should be good for next weekend if the weather gods are kind.

Monday 5th May

Yesterday (Sunday) was a family day with my daughter and little grandson around for Sunday dinner and with some pleasant hazy sunshine in the afternoon we spent some time in the garden where I saw the usual Orange-tips, GV Whites and Specklies flitting about. I also had my first definite Large White this year, all the 'possibles' that I had seen up until then, on a closer look, had proved to be female Brimstones.

Today I had permission to use some 'brownie points' and go out somewhere and so I decided to head for the Wyre Forest where I had seen reports that Pearl-bordered Fritillaries had been on the wing for a few days.

I arrived at the Forestry Commission car park at Dry Mill Lane just before 10.00 and set off for a wander along Dowles Brook. There was a fair bit of cloud about and a cool breeze but the sun was making some valiant efforts to break through and when it did it felt quite pleasant. I looked in the meadows at Knowles Coppice and by Coopers Mills, seeing a few Speckled Yellow and Common Heath Moths but no butterflies yet.

I did however manage to get a decent photo of a Speckled Yellow Moth; all my previous attempts having grass stems all over the place.



Speckled Yellow Moth - Wyre Forest 05.05.2014

I then carried on up the path past Coopers Mill and started to see a few Orange-tips and Speckled Woods plus, along some stretches of path, plenty of Green Tiger Beetles.



Wyre Forest - loads of Green Tiger Beetles along here.



Green Tiger Beetle - Wyre Forest 05.05.2014

I also found a Glow-worm larva crossing the path in front of me which I watched as it ambled across and into the undergrowth.



Glow-worm - Wyre Forest 05.05.2014

Wandering along a bit further I was pleased to find what I was looking for, a nice male Pearl-bordered Fritillary.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 05.05.2014



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 05.05.2014

With some reasonable spells of sun breaking through I then re-traced my steps back to the meadows along Dowles Brook where I now found plenty of Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites plus a couple of Peacocks, Commas, Speckled Wood and Brimstones. In the meadow by Coopers Mill I was pleased to find my second PBF of the day.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 05.05.2014

From here I then took the path up to the old railway line to check out a couple of spots where I have seen PBFs in the past and found at least 3, possibly 4, more at the one spot.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 05.05.2014



Pearl-bordered Fritillaries – Wyre Forest 05.05.2014



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 05.05.2014

By mid-afternoon the clouds were getting thicker and greyer and with a freshening breeze I decided to wander back to the car and head for home. The PBFs are just getting started here and there were none at all yet in a couple of the best spots. If I get the chance I would like to go back again in a week or two.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 05-May-14 10:52 PM GMT

Great to see you got your PBF's Neil, cracking shots 😊 I too managed to get out a couple of times but now face the task of sorting all the photos 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 05-May-14 11:03 PM GMT

Lovely photos again, Neil. I was discussing this very spot with my eldest son yesterday, though he is more interested in the steam trains on the SVR... I shall pray the forecast changes for next Saturday, but I think we'll go to Ryton anyway – many thanks for the info.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-14 08:59 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I see from a couple of other posts that you had a good day at Bentley Wood, looking forward to your photos.

Hi Dave, I could hear the whistle from the SVR in the distance a few times on my wanderings, that and the various birdsongs, including Garden Warblers and a Cuckoo, made for a great backing sound to the day 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by badgerbob, 06-May-14 09:38 PM GMT

Hi Neil, Just seen that Green Hairstreak shot. Ab. Brilliant!!!!

Re: nfreem

by David M, 06-May-14 10:32 PM GMT

You spent those 'Brownie Points' wisely, Neil.

If all wives and partners have to worry about is their spouses going off to photograph nature's most beautiful insects then I don't think they really have much to complain about.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 07-May-14 06:36 PM GMT

Superb Green Hairstreak photos in your previous post Neil 😊 great Pearl-bordered Fritillaries too 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by EricY, 07-May-14 09:29 PM GMT

Neil your walk to the Mill & meadows was more than I could manage after 350 miles drive from Scotland, had to stick to the railway line on Sunday. I would have liked to see the Tiger beetles & gloworm larvae but did see the Speckled Yellow moth. Eventually saw approx a dozen PBF's around Bugle. Approx. 150yds after where the path from visitor centre crosses the railway line, well worth the long detour on my way back to Norfolk from Scotland. Eric

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 08-May-14 07:04 PM GMT

Lovely Pearl shots Neil but I am more interested in your Glow-worm actually. What a great find - I'd love to see one of them 🐛

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-14 08:54 PM GMT

Many thanks for all the comments from everybody, particularly regarding the Green Hairstreak 😊

Hi Eric, I know the spot you mean along the railway line, past the visitor centre. That is where I saw my last ones on Monday but by the time I was at that spot dark clouds were gathering and the 3 or 4 that I saw there soon disappeared up into the trees. I reckon numbers should build at the Wyre over the next couple of weeks...given a few decent bits of weather in between the rain that is 😊 .

Hi Pauline, that Glow-worm was only the second one that I have ever seen, the first was at Prestbury Hill a couple of years back and I had to look it up to find out what it was 😊

Friday 9th May

Since Monday the weather has been very 'mixed' with heavy showers and blustery winds, until yesterday which was the worse day of the week with almost non-stop rain all day. Today was better and by the time I finished work at lunchtime there were some decent sunny spells although there was still a blustery wind. After running around a bit this afternoon I got back home at about 4.00pm and went into the garden to chill out for a while. During the next hour or so I watched the usual Orange-tips, and Green-veined Whites coming and going, although it must be said that with the blustery wind it seemed sometimes more a case of them being blown in and out of the garden rather than controlled flight. Some of these are now starting to look a bit worse for wear with marks and damage that makes identifying individuals much easier. This has enabled me to confirm that I do in fact often see the same individuals coming around again and again which is something that I had been wondering about. There are still some reasonable looking examples about however which I took a few photos of whenever they managed to find a spot out of the wind.



Orange-tip - Coverdale 09.05.2014



Green-veined White - Coverdale 09.05.2014



Green-veined White - Coverdale 09.05.2014



Green-veined White - Coverdale 09.05.2014

The first wave of Specklies are also looking a bit worn now. The female below spent some time nectaring on the forget-me-nots which are in the more sheltered part of the garden.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 09.05.2014

As if to back up my comments in an earlier post about Forget-me-nots being worth having for attracting butterflies, I had another Holly Blue on them this afternoon 😊



Holly Blue - Coverdale 09.05.2014



Holly Blue - Coverdale 09.05.2014

Shortly followed by a second one, confirmed as a different individual by the damage on the hindwings.



Holly Blue - Coverdale 09.05.2014

This one wouldn't open his wings before he flew off, still, can't have everthing 😊

The forecast for the weekend is for a bit of everything apparently including more heavy rain showers. Guess I will just have to wait and see how it turns out.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 09-May-14 10:03 PM GMT

You did well to see any butterflies today, Neil. Tomorrow looks set to be appalling and the entire weekend is likely to be a write-off.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 09-May-14 11:21 PM GMT

Hi Neil, just catching up with your PD, looks like you've had a great couple of weeks. Some fantastic photo's too. I've had a good fill of Pearls this year, after complete failure last spring, and I've seen many more Orangetips, too. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 09-May-14 11:49 PM GMT

Great garden report Niel – and those Holly Blue shots are brill 😊📷 I'm secretly quite glad that the weather is going to be bad this weekend as I have to rip down yet another ceiling – so I can earn plenty of Brownie points and not miss out on anything 😊 I hope you manage to get out in amongst the showers 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 10-May-14 06:27 AM GMT

That is a great Holly Blue shot Neil (second one down). I just love it 📷 I think they are a difficult species to get a good photo of but you have definitely managed it – and in your own garden too 😊😊

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 10-May-14 01:54 PM GMT

Lovely photo's Neil, the weather here has been awful, but you've managed inspite of it to get some great shots 📷😊 Goldie

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-14 05:17 PM GMT

Hi David, sounds like your forecast was much worse than ours which was on the button with showers, blustery winds and a few sunny spells.

Cheers Essex, just caught up on your diary, looks like you had a great time. I really must try and visit Cornwall in the Spring sometime.

Thanks Wurzel, I did manage a brief foray out to a local spot this afternoon between the showers, very windy though.

Hi Pauline, glad you like the Holly Blue. I have noticed that they seem to follow a set patrol route around the gardens so once I have seen one, sooner or later it will be back.

Sorry to hear you have had such bad weather Goldie, I don't think it has been quite so bad in the midlands.

Cheers all,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-14 06:31 PM GMT

Saturday 10th May

As mentioned in my previous post, todays weather forecast was bang on with some showers of rain and a few sunny spells with a very blustery wind most of the time. Early afternoon there was a bit of a window during which there seemed to be a bit more sun and a little less cloud so I decided to grab my wellies and broley and nip around to Shadowbrook meadows to see if I could find anything.

With the first Small Coppers and Common Blue having been reported in Warwickshire last weekend I was keen to have a look for these although I realised that the conditions today were not the best.

I spent about an hour at Shadowbrook during which time the sun came out briefly a few times and was quickly covered again by rapidly moving clouds. The wetter parts of the meadows were very wet after the rain during the past week and I was glad that I had put my wellies on. Each time the sun appeared a number of Green-veined Whites would take to the wing with 5 or 6 often in view at the same time, these being the only butterflies that I saw in any numbers today.

I found my first Large Red Damselfly of the year and managed to get a record shot as it settled low down in the grass out of the wind,



Large Red Damselfly - Shadowbrook 10.05.2014

This was soon followed by my first Broad-bodied Chaser of the year. Even this normally strong flyer was struggling against the blustery wind and kept settling low down where again I only managed a record shot,



Broad-bodied Chaser - Shadowbrook 10.05.2014

The best however was when I found what I was looking for, my first Small Copper this year, and with blue spots on the hindwings as well 😊. Yet again, the best that I could manage was a couple of record shots before it was whisked away across the meadow in the wind. Never mind, I was happy enough to see it and hopefully I will get plenty of chances for better photos during the year.



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 10.05.2014

There was plenty of Ladies Smock dotted about the meadows, nearly every plant having one or more Orange-tip eggs on it, although I didn't see any adults today. I also found a nest of Small Tortoiseshell larvae bobbing about on a patch of nettles. At least I think they are Small Tort larvae, it wouldn't be the first time I have got these mixed up with Peacocks which usually have longer spines at this size.



Small Tortoiseshell larvae - Shadowbrook 10.05.2014

After about an hour the clouds turned darker grey again and I felt some drops of rain in the air and with no further bits of blue on the horizon I decided to make a move. I got back to the car just before it started raining properly so I didn't need the brolly in the end although the wellies were a necessity in the very wet parts of the meadows. Not a bad hour though with enough seen to make it worth going out 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-14 08:52 PM GMT

Monday 12th May

Yesterday (Sunday) was another grotty day, worse than Saturday with thicker clouds, regular drizzle, and stronger winds. Later in the afternoon there were a few very brief breaks in the cloud, literally just a couple of minutes each time when the sun poked through. Within seconds, a couple of Green-veined whites would appear and flutter feebly about the garden until the sun disappeared again and they went back into shelter. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly some butterflies will take to the wing to take advantage of brief bits of sun on days like this.



Green-veined White female - Coverdale 11.05.2014

Today (Monday) was much better, or at least what I saw of it from inside at work it looked like it was, and late this afternoon back at home, a great big patch of blue sky came over and gave an hour of nice warm sun 😊.

This brought a number of Green-veined Whites out in the garden plus a couple of Orange-tips. The Orange-tips are mostly looking a bit worn and faded now but some of the Green-veined Whites look quite fresh and have probably only emerged recently.



Orange-tip male - Coverdale 12.05.2014



Green-veined White female - Coverdale 12.05.2014



Green-veined White male - Coverdale 12.05.2014



Green-veined White male - Coverdale 12.05.2014

Apart from the 'whites' there was a single faded male Speckled Wood holding territory at the bottom of the garden until about 6.30pm when he went off to roost somewhere.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-May-14 10:15 AM GMT

Love the shots of the Green-Viened Whiute Neil especially the female 😊 I know what you mean about the way butterflies suddenly emerge in the briefest of sunny spells. I've been out and about a few times purely on the off cahnce that there will be a brief break in the cloud and it's paid off most times 😊 . There have of course been occasions when it has cleared up and then rained some more 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-May-14 09:22 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, that's the British weather for you 😊

Wednesday 14th May

My wife Jane has been going out to Bingo lately on Wednesdays with a group of family and friends and gets picked up from our house usually sometime just after 5.00pm. This means that I now have Wednesday evening to myself and with the improvement in the weather today gave me a chance to pop out and catch the last bit of a lovely late afternoon.

Not having the time to go far I decided to nip round to Shadowbrook Meadows and see if I could find the Small Copper that I had briefly seen on Saturday.

Arriving at the reserve the first impression was the number of Green-veined Whites in the air, loads of them all over the meadows. Some of the females this spring seem to be looking particularly attractive with a look that seems a bit more 'dusky' than I remember from previous years.



Green-veined White female - Shadowbrook Meadows 14.05.2014

I rather like this underside of the same individual,



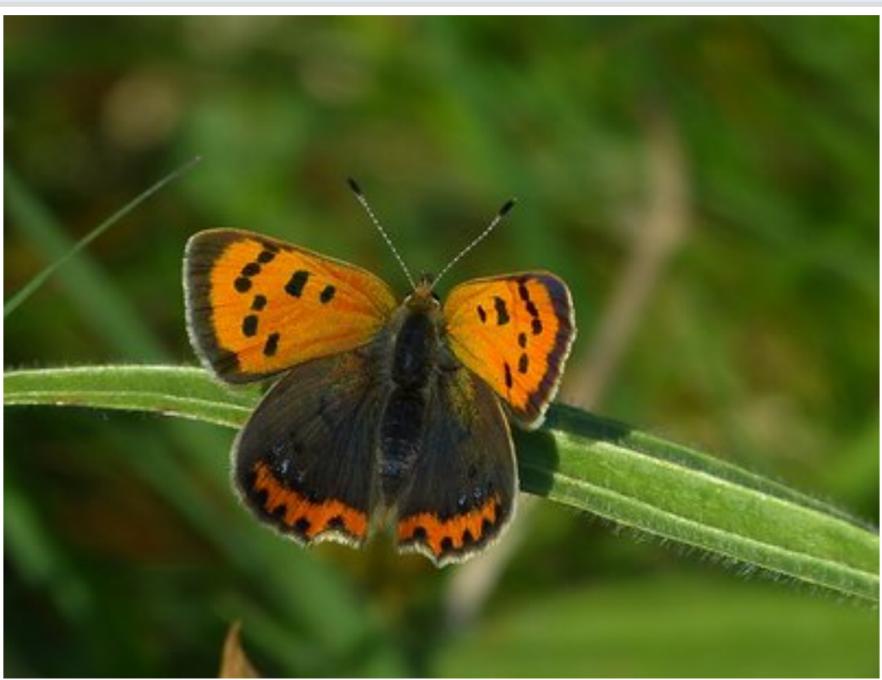
Green-veined White female - Shadowbrook Meadows 14.05.2014

Heading for the same corner of the meadow where I had seen the Small Copper on Saturday, I approached slowly and sure enough there he was, confirmed as the same one by comparing photos back at home afterwards.



Small Copper - Shadowbrook Meadows 14.05.2014

After taking a couple of photos, he took off and I lost sight of him so I slowly wandered up the meadow a little way and then circled back to the same spot. On approaching the corner again I spotted what I thought at the time was the same Small Copper but looking at the photos back home it turns out that I have photographed a second individual.



Small Copper - Shadowbrook Meadows 14.05.2014

I know that this doesn't sound like anything special compared with the numbers that have been seen at some sites down south, but it is still early for this species around here and there have only been a few reported in Warwickshire so far this year.

I spent about an hour and a half before heading back and during that time also saw a couple each of Commas and Peacocks, all of which were looking well tatty now, plus a couple of Speckled Wood.

I also saw a couple of what I think are Silver-ground Carpet Moths. I am fairly sure of the ID of these but am happy to be corrected by any Moth experts.



Silver-ground Carpet - Shadowbrook Meadows 14.05.2014

The weather is looking promising for the weekend, fingers crossed that I may get the chance to look for some Common Blues around here.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 14-May-14 10:15 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

My wife Jane has been going out to Bingo lately on Wednesdays with a group of family and friends and gets picked up from our house usually sometime just after 5.00pm. This means that I now have Wednesday evening to myself and with the improvement in the weather today gave me a chance to pop out and catch the last bit of a lovely late afternoon.

LOL! Small wins are often the most satisfying, Neil. 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-May-14 10:54 PM GMT

Great Small Coppers Neil 😊 – and good to see that you've starting the 'sneaky stop-off's' you'll soon get them down to five minutes 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-May-14 07:24 PM GMT

Thanks David, very true 😊

Cheers, Wurzel, not so much a 'sneaky stop-off', more of a quick in and out again. Now, if I can remember to take my camera to work with me on Wednesdays in future... 😊

Friday 16th May - hibernators hanging on.

Last month I posted in this diary about a place near to my Moms house where I used to look for butterflies back in the 1970s which has since been turned into a 'park' and where I had a wander around for the first time in many years.

This afternoon, after finishing work at mid-day, I picked my wife Jane up from home and then went around to see my Mom as we often do on a Friday afternoon. Leaving the women nattering, I went for a little wander again to see if anything was about.

After a nice sunny morning a thick blanket of cloud had built up with just the occasional brief bit of sun peeking through although it was still warm and quite muggy.

As with last month when I looked around here the most numerous species seen today were Peacocks, with about half a dozen seen in the 45 minutes or so that I spent here. Some of these were looking well tired and tatty but there were also a couple that looked in surprisingly good nick considering how long they have been around now.



Peacock – Langley Hall 16.05.2014



Peacock – Langley Hall 16.05.2014

There was also a Small Tortoiseshell, again looking in remarkably good nick for its age.



Small Tortoiseshell – Langley Hall 16.05.2014

Also seen were a few passing 'whites' and a Holly Blue that kept going up and down one bit of hedgerow without once settling.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 17-May-14 10:19 PM GMT

Another great report and great to see the hibernators hanging in there and looking in such fine fettle 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by False Apollo, 17-May-14 10:23 PM GMT

Stunning Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell.

Regards
Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-14 10:58 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and Mike, I was quite surprised to see how good they looked still considering how long they have been around for.

Saturday 17th May - Bishops Blues

With Small Blues being now reported in Warwickshire and plenty of sun forecast for the day I figured I would take a drive down the M40 to Bishops Hill. I finished the usual morning 'stuff' around the house and set out, with my wife Jane and daughter Sarah who had popped round to see us. This is a good site for Jane with her limited mobility as it is quite compact and there are good paths with a couple of benches where she can sit and read while I have a wander and still stay in sight, plus having Sarah with us today meant that Jane had company whilst I wandered about 😊

It was already quite warm under an almost clear blue sky with just a few white cotton wool type clouds drifting serenely across, in other words a glorious day 😊. It did not take long to find my first Small Blues of the year, within minutes of arriving, quickly followed by my first Common Blues 😊



Common Blue - Bishops Hill 17.05.2014



Common Blue - Bishops Hill 17.05.2014



Common Blue – Bishops Hill 17.05.2014



Common blue – Bishops Hill 17.05.2014



Small Blue – Bishops Hill 17.05.2014



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 17.05.2014



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 17.05.2014

At one point a bit of movement in the grass attracted my eye to a male Small Blue trying to barge in on a mating pair. I watched the antics for a while and took a few photos but everything was happening very fast and most just showed little blue blurs.



Small Blues - Bishops Hill 17.05.2014



Small Blues – Bishops Hill 17.05.2014

There were good numbers of Small Blue flying, easily 25+ probably more, as well as half a dozen or so male Common Blues.

Also seen were around a dozen or so Dingy Skippers and singles of Grizzled Skipper, Green Hairstreak, and Small Tortoiseshell along with a few wandering Brimstones, 'whites' and Orange-tips.

We stayed for about an hour and a half during which time the butterflies became more active as it got warmer until by about 2.00pm they were either very active or settling with their wings closed to regulate their temperature. We then decided to head home taking the more scenic route across country and through Warwick back to Solihull.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 17-May-14 11:02 PM GMT

Fantastic Blue shots Neil – especially the attempted menage 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 17-May-14 11:05 PM GMT

The male Small Blues are lovely, Neil.

They seem to have a tendency to muscle in on mating pairs – I've seen "bundles" of four or five once or twice! Females must be hard to find... 😞

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-May-14 09:57 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys 😊

Saturday 17th May – Nipping out again

After arriving back home from Bishops Hill and re-charging with a cup of coffee, it was still only about 4.00pm which meant that I still had time to nip out somewhere local to take advantage of what was a beautiful afternoon.

Having seen a couple of Small Coppers at Shadowbrook Meadows earlier in the week I was keen to see if there were any out at Castle Hills yet. Walking along one of the footpaths across the site, I saw a number of Green-veined Whites and Orange-tips patrolling the hedges plus a single Speckled Wood. I headed to one of the spots where I usually see Small Coppers and after searching for a few minutes found one, closely followed by a second one that took off to intercept the first. I watched them both for while and it became apparent that they were both males with territories centred about thirty feet apart which meant that they overlapped and were almost constantly intercepting each other.



Small Copper - Castle Hills 17.05.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills 17.05.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills 17.05.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills 17.05.2014

Not having any 'rarities' around Solihull, I am always keen to look for species such as Small Coppers, Common Blues and Small Heaths at my local spots. Having seen the Small Coppers this week, with a bit of luck with the weather I should start seeing the latter two species around here soon.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-May-14 10:38 PM GMT

Lovely Coppers Neil 😊 You may not have many 'rarities' round your way but I seem to recall you saw a very impressive range of species last year 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 19-May-14 06:43 AM GMT

What lovely shots of Small Blues Neil and beautifully fresh too. I am surprised at how quickly the ones on my patch are becoming worn.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-May-14 08:36 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, your recollection would be correct 😊 I think I saw 48 species last year, a couple short of the 50 I saw in the 'washout' season of 2012. I reckon I can see something like 20 species locally, by which I mean within a couple of miles of home. I could then probably add another dozen or so within a 40-45 minute drive which would include Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreak, Small Blue and then later in the summer Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals etc.

A bit further afield, about a 90 minute drive or so would get me up to Shropshire to Prees Heath or a little further to Whixall Moss. If I head south the same distance I have Prestbury Hill or Aston Rowant in reach or I could head east to the Wyre Forest or West to Fermyn Woods.

Then there are the 2 or 3 night breaks that I do with Jane a couple of times a year plus making the most of family holidays to see the species that are further from home.

All possible with a bit of planning to make the most of opportunities and some forbearance from the family 😊

Hi Pauline, I noticed that there were also some worn looking Small Blues amongst the fresher ones at Bishops Hill as well.

Sunday 18th May.

After getting some household and garden stuff done I had a couple of hours spare in the afternoon so decided to make the most of the afternoon and have another look around locally for Common Blues and Small Coppers. I headed for a spot that I had checked out back in April by following a public footpath from Bickenhill across some fields and towards the M42.

There was more of a breeze than the previous day(Saturday) with more cloud about but it still felt warm and quite humid. It wasn't long before I started to see some Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells mostly looking tired and faded by now but as with some of those I saw on Friday by my Moms there were a couple of Small Torts still in quite good condition.



Footpath by M42 Bickenhill – Small Tortoiseshells along here.



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 18.05.2014

I was pleased to find a single male Common Blue that looked quite fresh despite having a small chunk out of his left hindwing. This was the first Common Blue that I have seen around Solihull so far this year and I think that they are only just starting around here.



Common Blue – Bickenhill 18.05.2014

I also found a couple of Small Coppers, it seems that I am finding them two at a time so far this year. I only managed to get a photo of the one, which had a malformed forewing but this didn't slow him down at all as he chased everything with the usual feistiness of the species.



Small Copper - Bickenhill 18.05.2014

I left here and stopped off briefly at Shadowbrook Meadows which is just down the road. No Common Blues to be seen here yet but I did find another couple of Small Coppers, two of them again and a different two in a different part of the meadows to the ones that I saw here in the week. There was a fair bit of breeze blowing at this time so I only managed a couple of record shots before I left to head home.



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 18.05.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 18.05.2014

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-May-14 09:16 AM GMT

Looks like you had a great day - I'm really struggling to find Blues in my neck of the woods with only 1 Common Blue so far this year! 🍷 Interesting way of looking at your sightings I'm going to look into mine like that I reckon I could see most of them within 30 minutes thanks to Bentley Wood 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-May-14 08:44 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, the Common Blues are only just getting going on my local patch, speaking of which 😊

Wednesday 21st May

A nice sunny day between the rainy ones and with it being Wednesday and Jane going off to bingo again this evening I decided to make the most of it after work. I had seen the forecast and remembered to take my camera to work with me, just in case 😊 so I didn't need to pop in home first but went straight round to Shadowbrook Meadows again which is just 10 minutes away.

As mentioned previously I was keen to see if Common Blues were out there yet and I was pleased to see the first one, a nice blue female, within about 10 feet of climbing over the stile into the reserve 😊



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014

There was some high thin cloud which made for some weak sun but it was warm with not much wind and I soon saw a few males basking with their wings open and taking off to chase each other around.



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014

I also saw a few more Small Coppers here today and photographed 4 different individuals with varying amounts of blue spotting, from none at all...



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014

through just a hint...



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014

to a little bit more...



Small Copper - I think I recognise this one from last week

to this nice example,



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 21.05.2014

Also seen were a couple of Large Whites and Orange-tips, about half a dozen Green-veined Whites and 3 or 4 Burnet Companion Moths. I was quite pleased with this shot of a Burnet Companion because I usually find them a real pain to approach for a photo.



Burnet Companion – Shadowbrook 21.05.2014

This Broad-bodied Chaser also allowed me to sneak in close enough to get a nice shot.



Broad-bodied Chaser – Shadowbrook 21.05.2014



Broad-bodied Chaser – Shadowbrook 21.05.2014

Finally there were absolutely loads of small silvery moths all over the meadows which I believe are Grass Rivulets after looking them up in my new Field Guide to Britains Day-Flying Moths. Despite the numbers they were very difficult to get a photo as they just would not stop still. The shot below was about the best that I managed but it is good enough for ID purposes.



Grass Rivulet...I think.

I spent a very enjoyable 90 minutes or so here before heading for home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 21-May-14 09:58 PM GMT

Nice images, Neil. I'm afraid Common Blues in my part of the world were just too frisky in the sunny conditions to obtain a decent photo.

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 21-May-14 10:08 PM GMT

Some cracking shots in your last report Neil! Every single specimen looks to be in wonderfully fresh condition. Dragonflies are another passion of mine and those are really lovely female BBC shots. 😊

Best Wishes

B'saurus

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 25-May-14 08:37 PM GMT

That's a lovely image of the Burnet Companion Neil and you're still tormenting me with images of blue spotted Small Coppers which I have yet to see 😊 How many years have I been searching now 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-May-14 09:06 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David and B'saurus 😊

Sorry about the blue spots Pauline 😊 the truth is that a lot of Small Coppers around here seem to have some degree of blue spotting although I usually see more of it in the second brood.

Not a lot happening here over the past few days. Yesterday (Saturday) was a washout with constant rain, some of it very heavy, most of the day. I haven't seen so much standing water on the back garden since the depths of last winter.

Today was drier but still cloudy most of the day with a few brief sunny spells that lasted just long enough for me to spot a Large White and a female Orange-tip pass through the garden.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 25-May-14 10:21 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil especially the gorgeous blue spotted Small Copper – that's lush that is 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 25-May-14 11:20 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Common Blues and Small Coppers Neil 😊 have a great time on the IOW 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-May-14 09:16 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel and Mike 😊

Returned earlier this evening from the IOW, weather was a bit so-so but apparently much better than it has been back here at home. Happy to say that there was just enough sun at just the right time for me to see some good Glanvilles 😊 😊

Other species seen included Adonis, Common and Small Blues, Brown Argus, Green Hairstreak, Small Heath, Dingy and Large Skippers, Large White, Orange-tip, Red Admiral and Painted Lady.

Loads of photos to sort through before I post some on here over the next few days.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 29-May-14 10:11 PM GMT

Stunning images as usual Neil and I'm with the others on your **Small Blue** shots...WOW!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-May-14 12:13 PM GMT

Thanks for the comment Bill, very much appreciated 😊

A dull and gloomy morning back here in the midlands which has given me time for this...

Tuesday May 27th - Wheelers Bay, Isle of Wight.

With Glanville Fritillaries being one of the species that I had not yet seen, I had decided that this year I was going to make the attempt. To my mind the correct and proper place to see them is on the Isle of Wight and so, a couple of months back, I had taken a bit of a gamble on timing and weather and booked Jane and myself into a B&B in Ventnor for 3 nights.

The journey down on Bank Holiday Monday was in rain most of the way and on arrival in Ventnor there was a steady drizzle and the forecast was not looking promising. Tuesday morning however dawned a bit brighter and with the sun shining through some decent breaks in the clouds I walked down to Wheelers Bay.

From information on the sightings page and in other diaries on UKB I had a good idea of the best places to look and it wasn't long before I spotted my first Glanville Fritillary skimming along just above the ground and settling on the Red Valerian which grows all along here, or on some rocks to soak up the morning sun. This first one was soon joined by others, probably around half a dozen along this first stretch just before a large patch of pebbles. Walking a little further along past the pebbles there were more Glanvilles and on a couple of occasions I watched 2 or 3 males together chasing a female up the cliff face.

I carried on walking as far as Bonchurch before turning around and heading back again and as a rough estimate I think I saw between 15-20 Glanville Fritillaries, in various condition, mostly in the stretch by the pebbles, before the clouds started thickening up again later in the morning.



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014

I had been on the lookout for a good underside shot but in the sun the Glanvilles were either flying or basking with their wings open. With the cloud cover increasing again I managed to find one nicely posed on top of some Valerian.



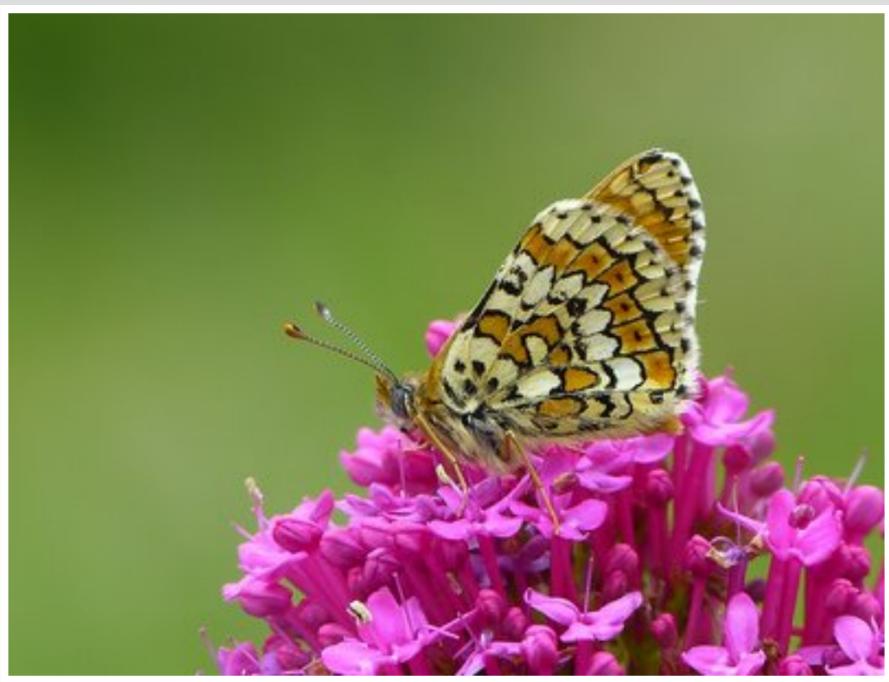
Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary – Wheelers Bay 27.05.2014

We butterflyers are never happy are we, we want the sun to bring the butterflies out and then we want some cloud to slow them down and get the pose we want



I had expected to see more people looking for the Glanville Fritillaries along here but apart from myself there was just one other couple, who had driven down from Edinburgh to see them. This was also their first time of seeing these butterflies and I was particularly pleased for them as apparently they had come down last year at about the same time and missed them by a week.

I also had an interesting conversation with a local chap who lives in Wheelers Bay (my apologies if you read this, I didn't catch your name), about the fortunes of the Glanvilles and other butterflies along here and who also gave me directions to the best way up onto Bonchurch Down.

He also mentioned a local BC branch walk starting from the Afton Down Chalk Pit car park on Thursday morning if I was interested. I would be passing there on the way to catch the ferry back to Lymington on Thursday at 2.00pm so should have time, depending on the weather.

Other butterflies seen during the couple of hours that I spent along here this morning were half a dozen or more of Dingy Skippers and Common Blues, a few Large Whites and a single Orange-tip. There were also a couple of Red Admirals, my first since last September, which flew past without stopping, as did a Painted Lady and a Hummingbird Hawk Moth that briefly visited a few flower heads of Valerian before vanishing up the cliff.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 30-May-14 02:59 PM GMT

Great report Neil, glad you got your species and did them proud with some super images – and your spot on..."we butterflyers are never happy are we"

😊 (but only regards a good photo 😊)

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 31-May-14 06:51 PM GMT

Thanks Bill, truth is I was very happy just seeing them, even more so with the photos that I managed to get 😊

Tuesday 27th May – Up the Down.

Later on Tuesday afternoon it was still cloudy but felt fairly warm so I decided to have a walk up to Bonchurch Down for a look for Adonis Blues. On reflection I had realised that I had seen Adonis Blues during the past few years, either at Rodborough Common/Swelshill Bank or whilst in Dorset on family holidays, but these had always been second brood and I had never seen first brood Adonis before so here was my chance.

Within minutes of walking onto the Down I had seen my firsts of the year of Small Heath, Brown Argus and Large Skipper as well as some Common Blues and plenty of Adonis, both male and female 😊 .

Being higher up here and more exposed there was more of a breeze and most of the butterflies were staying low down and settling amongst the grass.



Small Heath - Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014



Brown Argus - Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014



Adonis Blue female - Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014

There were also a couple of Small Tortoiseshells flitting about that looked to be in nice fresh condition so I reckon that they were recently emerged summer generation.



Small Tortoiseshell – Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014

With the cloud cover most of the butterflies were roosting amongst the grass but every now and then the clouds would be a bit lighter and bright blue spots would appear as if by magic in the grass as the male Adonis would open their wings to take advantage of the slightly brighter light.



Adonis Blue – Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014



Adonis Blue – Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014



Adonis Blue - Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014



Adonis Blue - Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014



Adonis Blue - Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014



Adonis Blue – Bonchurch Down 27.05.2014

After an hour or so with the clouds getting darker again and with a few spots of rain in the air I called it a day and went back to meet Jane.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 31-May-14 08:18 PM GMT

Absolutely fantastic shots of the Glanvilles 🍷 Oh to see them again I'll have to try harder next year 😊 Lovely female Adonis as well, stunning blue colour.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 31-May-14 08:44 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil, great report from your IOW visit and lovely photos, super Glanvilles, brilliant Adonis Blues 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by David M, 31-May-14 09:28 PM GMT

You've been a busy boy, Neil!! 😊

Well done in your quest to track down the Glanvilles in IOW. Lovely images.

Re: nfreem

by Lee Hurrell, 31-May-14 11:59 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff Neil. You've captured those Adonis perfectly.

I think I may have to return to the IOW next year...

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jun-14 10:17 AM GMT

Wurzel, Mike, David and Lee, thanks for all the great comments 😊

Wednesday 28th May – Up the Down again.

Wednesday morning was dull and cloudy with spells of drizzle and light rain but by the afternoon it had cleared a bit with the clouds becoming a lighter grey. I did not think that it was really warm enough to tempt the Glanvilles out so I decided to nip back up to Bonchurch Down again for another look at the Adonis Blues.

It was a very similar afternoon to the previous day with the same cast of butterflies with the addition this time of a couple of Painted Ladies. These were not easy to follow on the slopes of the down and as with the other butterflies tended to settle low down with wings closed. I originally thought that I was seeing the same one but looking at my photos it appears that there were 2 different individuals.



Painted Lady Bonchurch Down 28.05.2014



Painted Lady Bonchurch Down 28.05.2014



Small Heath - Bonchurch Down 28.05.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Bonchurch Down 28.05.2014

I took some more photos of the Adonis Blues when they basked during the spells of lighter cloud before heading back to meet Jane again.



Adonis Blue - Bonchurch Down 28.05.2014



Adonis Blue - Bonchurch Down 28.05.2014



Adonis Blue – Bonchurch Down 28.05.2014



Adonis Blue – Bonchurch Down 28.05.2014

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by William, 01-Jun-14 11:34 AM GMT

Really fantastic Adonis Blues Neil – that female with the blue suffusion is particularly nice, and you've really captured the iridescence on the males – superb 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jun-14 09:06 PM GMT

Thank you for the comments William, very much appreciated 😊

Thursday 29th May

Our last morning on the IOW and with our ferry leaving Yarmouth for Lymington at 2.05pm I figured I would have a couple of hours in hand to join the local BC branch walk that was meeting at the Afton Down chalk pit car park at 10.30am

Arriving at the car park under grey cloudy skies with around a dozen other fellow enthusiasts we set off along the cliff tops to see what we could find.



Compton Bay looking towards Freshwater under grey skies

To start with butterflies were in short supply in the cloudy conditions with a single Large Skipper being seen along with a very blue female Common Blue hiding down in the vegetation.



Common Blue - Compton Bay 29.05.2014

After searching without success for roosting Glanville Fritillaries along the cliff top and in an area down some wooden steps we headed back to the car park. By this time the clouds had thinned a bit and it had warmed up and in the area around the car park butterflies were beginning to fly including Dingy and Large Skippers, Common and Small Blues, Brown Argus and Green Hairstreaks.



Dingy Skipper - Afton Down 29.05.2014



Large Skipper - Afton Down 29.05.2014



Small Blue - Afton Down 29.05.2014



Brown Argus - Afton Down 29.05.2014



Green Hairstreak - Afton Down 29.05.2014



Green Hairstreak - Afton Down 29.05.2014

Best of all was a nice fresh looking Glanville Fritillary just yards from the car park which I felt was a fitting send off to our stay on the IOW 😊.



Glanville Fritillary - Afton Down 29.05.2014



Glanville Fritillary – Afton Down 29.05.2014

Around 1.00pm we left and headed off to catch our ferry back to the mainland. A great few days with me feeling extremely happy with my first ever Glanville Fritillaries plus the Adonis Blues and other butterflies seen despite the less than perfect weather.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 02-Jun-14 02:54 PM GMT

Good stuff Neil, I've not been to the Isle of Wight since Bob Dylan made his comeback there many moons ago 🤪 must return and get some good **Glanville Fritillary** images next year, hopefully somewhere near your excellent quality ones 😊 I've enjoyed your report very much, thanks for sharing.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jun-14 08:15 PM GMT

Many thanks for your great comments Bill, 😊. Hopefully it won't be long before I return there myself.

Thursday 29th May – New Forest Pearls

With the drive back home from Lymington going through the New Forest I had realised that there was the chance of a stop off to look for Pearl-bordered Fritillaries if the weather stayed reasonable. On the ferry back to the mainland I watched a huge black cloud move slowly across the New Forest somewhere to the north of Lymington and hoped that by the time that I was heading that way it would have moved on. Luckily it did exactly that and just past Brockhurst I turned off for the Pignall Inclosure as described in David Newlands 'Discover Butterflies in Britain'.

Parking in the Standing Hat car park it was obvious from the puddles that we had just missed a bit of a downpour and whilst it was still cloudy it was fairly warm. I set off down the left hand ride and had only gone a couple of hundred yards when I spotted a Pearl-bordered Fritillary flitting about in a 'scallop' at the edge of the ride. This first one looked a bit worn and faded but it was soon joined by a few more, including a couple in better condition, until I saw about half a dozen in this little area.

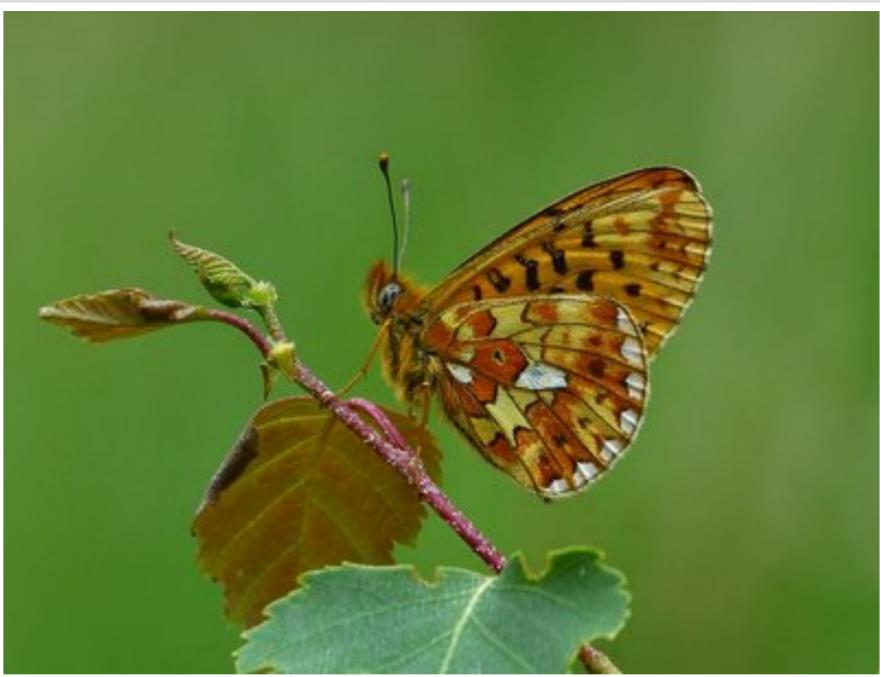
With the warm but cloudy conditions they were only flying short distances and settled regularly which enabled me to get some photos including some of the 'classic' side on shots 😊 .



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – New Forest 29.05.2014



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – New Forest 29.05.2014



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – New Forest 29.05.2014



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - New Forest 29.05.2014



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - New Forest 29.05.2014

The photo below was taken against the background of the path from the shadowed side of the butterfly and I used flash to light it up. I rather like the way the flash has brought out the detail in its eyes 😊



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - New Forest 29.05.2014

I didn't go much further having left Jane at the car reading her Kindle and after taking my photos and watching them for a little while I went back to continue our drive home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 02-Jun-14 09:20 PM GMT

Lovely Pearl-bordered Fritillary shots Neil 😊 you certainly did well to stop off in the New Forest on your way home.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by David M, 02-Jun-14 10:03 PM GMT

Looks like the cloudy weather played into your hands, Neil.

Some excellent images and I'm sure you feel vindicated by your decision to travel.

Re: nfreem

by Lee Hurrell, 02-Jun-14 11:11 PM GMT

Really lovely Pearls, Neil. You certainly had a good trip!

Terrific reports and photos.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-14 11:46 PM GMT

Great shots Neil some of those Pearls are surprisingly fresh looking 😊 It's great to see the 'quick stop-off' being used to such good effect! 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-14 07:48 PM GMT

Thanks all, it definitely added a nice finish to a great few days 😊

Sunday 1st June - Morning

The Speckled Woods in my garden usually appear around the first week of April and are then to be seen through the rest of the year until late September or early October with a couple of weeks gap usually sometime in June.

Last year they were about a month late after the long winter and cold spring which seemed to mess up the usual pattern as I saw them continuously through the rest of the year without the usual gap.

This year they seem to be back to normal again with the first ones seen in the garden in early April and then a good emergence through the rest of the month. At least a couple were seen on most days if the weather was half way reasonable and sometimes 4 or 5 at once until mid-May when they fizzled out.

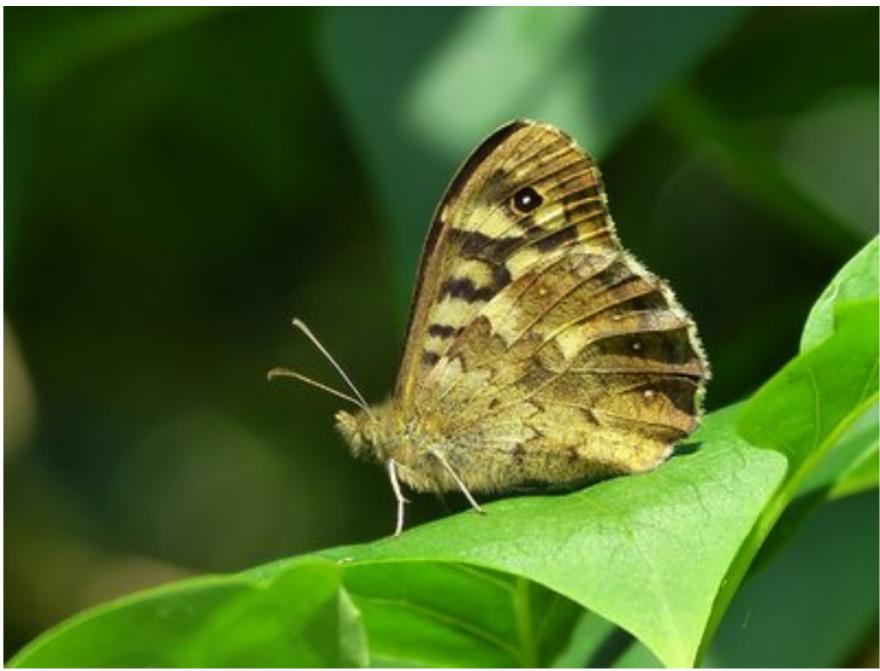
After a cool and cloudy Friday and Saturday, Sunday morning was much better with some good sunny spells and a rise in temperature so I spent a bit of time in the garden. I was pleased to see a couple of nice new looking male Specklies, one at each end of the garden, basking and chasing off anything that flew near 😊 .



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 01.06.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 01.06.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 01.06.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 01.06.2014

This falls in line with most normal years if a little earlier than usual with this years gap falling a couple of weeks earlier than most years. Weather permitting, this should have me seeing Speckled Woods in the garden from now right up until the end of the season.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-14 11:39 PM GMT

Great Specklie shots Neil 😊👍 I've seen very few Specklies this year so I'm hoping their numbers will pick up after the gap 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jun-14 07:39 PM GMT

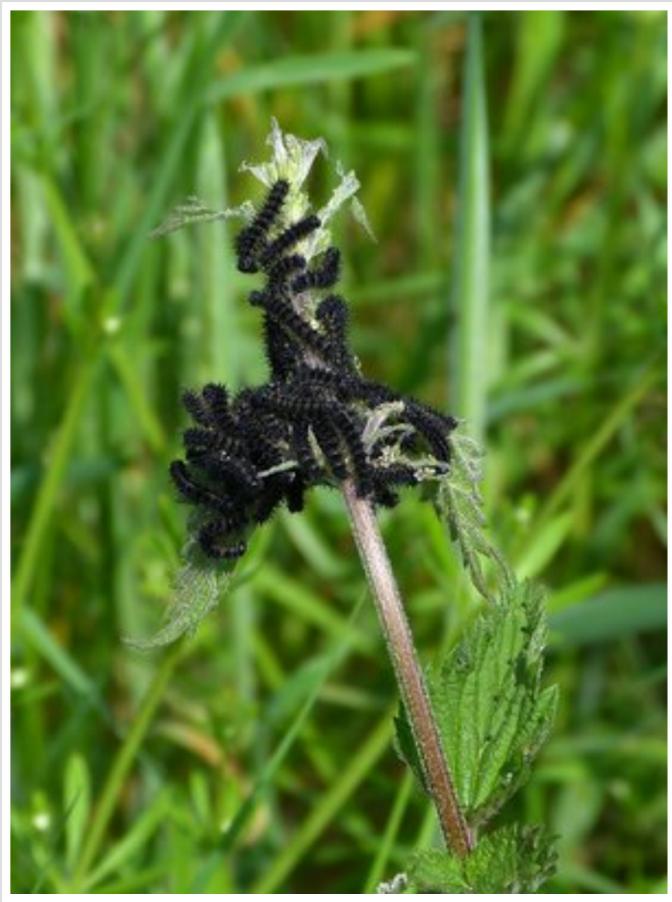
Cheers Wurzel, Speckled Wood numbers seem a bit hit and miss again this year as they did apparently last year. The 2013 Warwickshire BC annual report says that numbers were up on most grassland sites but down in a lot of woodland sites. It seems that sites that had a lot of scrub clearance to benefit other species had large drops in numbers of Specklies.

I wonder if the fact that they have been doing well in my garden reflects a certain lack of 'management' 😊😄

Sunday 1st July - Afternoon, part 1.

With Sunday turning into a nice warm day with some decent sunny spells, I decided later to check out a couple of local spots with my son Chris, this being the first time this year he has managed to come along due to him working most weekends.

First stop was at Bickenhill where we followed a public footpath to a couple of meadows by the M42 that I had visited earlier this year. I had found loads of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks here back in April so I was not surprised to find a number of larval webs scattered across the many patches of nettles here, some were obviously Small Torts and some were obviously Peacocks but there were some that I am not too sure of.



There were also a few worn and tired looking adults of both species still hanging on.

There were loads of Burnet Companion Moths along with a few Mother Shipton and Silver-ground Carpet Moths in the areas of long grass. I took photos of a couple of Mother Shiptons that looked quite different to each other, not sure if this is down to age or male/female or just natural variation in the species. The photos were taken in different light but the difference in colour was just as pronounced in the actual moths.





I am always on the lookout for Common Blues and Small Coppers at my local spots and was pleased to find a couple of each here 😊 .





Also seen was a Broad-bodied Chaser that posed nicely for a few shots.



At one point we were watched by a Fox that allowed us to sneak quite close before shooting off into the bushes.



We spent about an hour here before heading to Shadowbrook Meadows which is just down the road from here.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 04-Jun-14 07:47 PM GMT

Just love the last photo – as you knew I would 😊😊😊 . Very handsome chap; looks like he's moulting out his winter coat and the summer one is just coming through. Unusual to be able to get so close but he seems alert enough so probably fine – just off to feed mine now and will post a few shots later.

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 04-Jun-14 10:03 PM GMT

Very interesting Mother Shipton differences Neil...well spotted and photographed and I also like your foxy friend too 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by David M, 04-Jun-14 10:13 PM GMT

"Willrow" wrote:

Very interesting Mother Shipton differences Neil...

Agreed. I've never 'clocked' those differences before.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-14 07:14 PM GMT

Hi David and Bill, I have never noticed the variation in Mother Shiptons before either, probably because I don't usually see 2 close together.

Cheers Pauline, yes, I thought you would like that shot. We were watching a Small Copper when we looked up and saw him watching us. He let us slowly sneak up to about 30 feet away (the distance the photo was taken with full zoom) before turning round and legging it into the bushes.

Sunday 1st June - Afternoon, part 2.

Moving on to Shadowbrook Meadows, within the first few yards we began to see Common Blues and Burnet Companion Moths, about a dozen of each plus Green-veined and Small Whites.



Burnet Companion - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014

The Common Blues have been out here for a couple of weeks now and I was pleased to see that they are obviously getting back to the kind of numbers that there used to be here before the wet summer of 2012 when I only found a couple of individuals.

As well as some nice fresh looking males there were some nice females...



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014

Including this example which looked a bit unusual because as well as being very blue she also had a lack of orange markings,



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



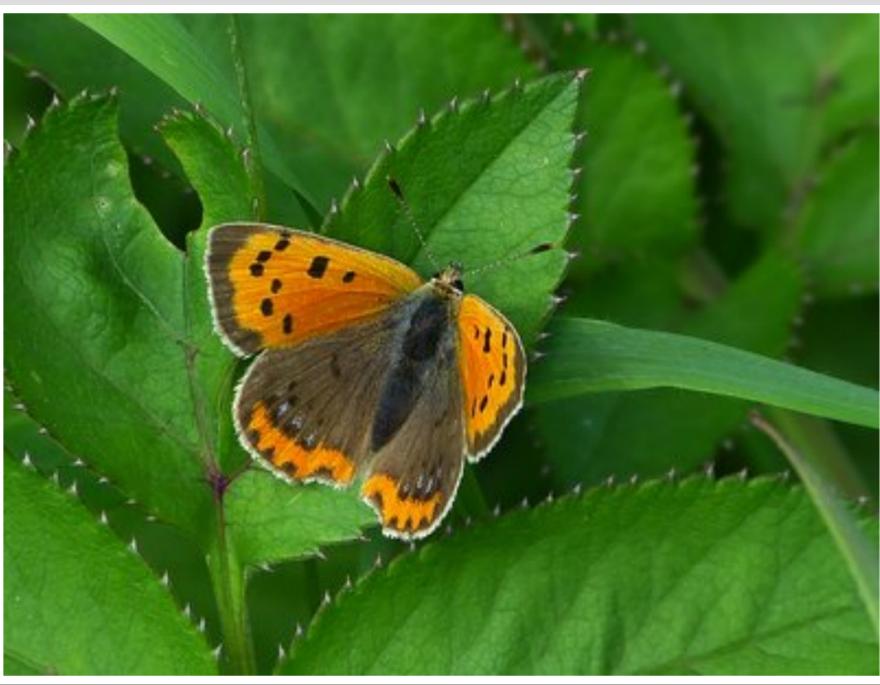
Common Blue - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014

Small Coppers have also recovered well here after a poor showing in 2012 with a good half a dozen or so seen. Some of these were looking a bit tired now but some were in not too bad condition still.

Pauline, my apologies in advance for any blue spots on these 😊



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 01.06.2014

Also seen were a few nice fresh looking Small Tortoiseshells,



Small Tortoiseshell – Shadowbrook 01.06.2014

Plus a Black-tailed Skimmer which was the first of this species of Dragonfly that I have seen around Solihull,



Black-tailed Skimmer – Shadowbrook 01.06.2014

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by William, 05-Jun-14 07:18 PM GMT

That female Common Blue is amazing Neil, great photos too 😊

BWs

William

Re: nfreem

by David M, 05-Jun-14 07:24 PM GMT

I agree, I've never seen anything like it. It must surely be an aberration?

Love the Small Tortoiseshell too. It's positively radiant.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 05-Jun-14 08:55 PM GMT

That female Common Blue is a stunner Neil, I agree with David, it must be an *ab.*! Lovely Small Coppers too, something I've not seen too much of, so far this year!

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 05-Jun-14 09:15 PM GMT

I agree with the others Neil. There are some very blue females around but that just has to be an ab. I accept your apology 😊 but can you please send a

few SC in this direction – even ones without blue spots will do as I've hardly seen any 😞 . Some lovely shots btw but a few almost certainly fall into the category of studio 😊😂

Re: nfreem

by David M, 05-Jun-14 11:02 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I agree with the others Neil. There are some very blue females around but that just has to be an ab.

It almost has the look of a hybrid. It's certainly highly noteworthy.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-14 12:10 PM GMT

Agreed with others that female Common Blue is a stunner and definitely not 'normal' 😊🍷 I would go for a named aberrant (or possibly, and this is just a wild idea an hermaphrodite 😊).

As for the Specklies – I would correct you slightly – the good numbers in your garden show not a 'lack of' but more like 'the appropriate and successful' management 😊😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jun-14 08:34 PM GMT

Thanks all for the great comments William, Mike, Pauline, David and Wurzel 😊

David, there are no other species of Blues around my patch for it to be a hybrid of anything, beautiful butterfly though whatever we decide to call her.

"Wurzel" wrote:

..the good numbers in your garden show not a 'lack of' but more like 'the appropriate and successful' management

Cheers, Wurzel, I think in the case of Specklies they are pretty much the same thing 😊

"Pauline" wrote:

... Some lovely shots btw but a few almost certainly fall into the category of studio 😊😂

Touché 😊,

All photos were taken with my FZ150 on my usual settings ('P' on the dial, -2/3 exposure, max ISO to 400, all else set to auto), various degrees of optical zoom (digital zoom disabled) and no close up lens fitted. The 'studio' type shots are with full (x24) zoom from about 4 feet away against the natural meadow background. I find that this working distance gives me good results without having to get too close to the butterfly, especially at times when they are active.

Friday 6th June

The usual Friday afternoon visit to my Mom today and I had a quick look around the park by her house. Half a dozen Speckled Woods were seen including a couple of nice fresh looking females, no photos from here as I didn't have my camera with me.

Back home later I spent some time In the garden and was accompanied for most of the time by at least 3 male Specklies, all holding their own favourite spots.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 06.06.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 06.06.2014

I also had a visit from a Red Admiral that looked like it had seen better days with the end of one antenna missing. I had seen a couple in the IOW last week but this was the first one that I have seen locally this year.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 06.06.2014

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by David M, 06-Jun-14 10:53 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

David, there are no other species of Blues around my patch for it to be a hybrid of anything, beautiful butterfly though whatever we decide to call her.

Yes, I concur that a hybrid is unrealistic, but that individual is SO bizarrely marked that I'm tempted to say it's unique.

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 07-Jun-14 03:40 PM GMT

Suberb images Neil, lots of interesting details to ponder and your becoming pretty nifty with that FZ150 of yours 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-14 10:07 AM GMT

Thanks Bill 😊. I like the FZ150 because it lets me take various styles of photo without messing about too much.

Saturday 7th June

Yesterday (Saturday) I was woken up by a thunderstorm just after 05.00am which lasted a couple of hours on and off, and then we had loads of rain through the morning as I went out and about on some domestic errands. By mid-afternoon it had cleared up a bit and there were some nice sunny spells so I had a look in my very soggy garden.

The Specklies were soon out as usual and I took a few photos to try and identify different individuals which is how I keep tabs on the numbers in the garden through the year.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 07.06.2014

There was also a Mint Moth, *Pyrausta aurata* I think, that was settled on my kitchen window. The photo below was taken with the reflection of the garden in the window providing the background, you can also see a secondary reflection of the moth in the second pane of glass in the double glazing.



Pyrausta aurata – Coverdale 07.06.2014

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 08-Jun-14 03:08 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Thanks Bill 😊. I like the FZ150 because it lets me take various styles of photo without messing about too much.

Ditto Neil, we sometimes simply don't have time to fiddle about with settings 😊 love your 'ghostly' micro moth shot...bit different 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-14 11:37 PM GMT

Fantastic Specklies Neil and that Mint Moth is brill 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Mike Robinson, 09-Jun-14 05:15 PM GMT

I do like the 'Mint Moth'

Re: nfreem

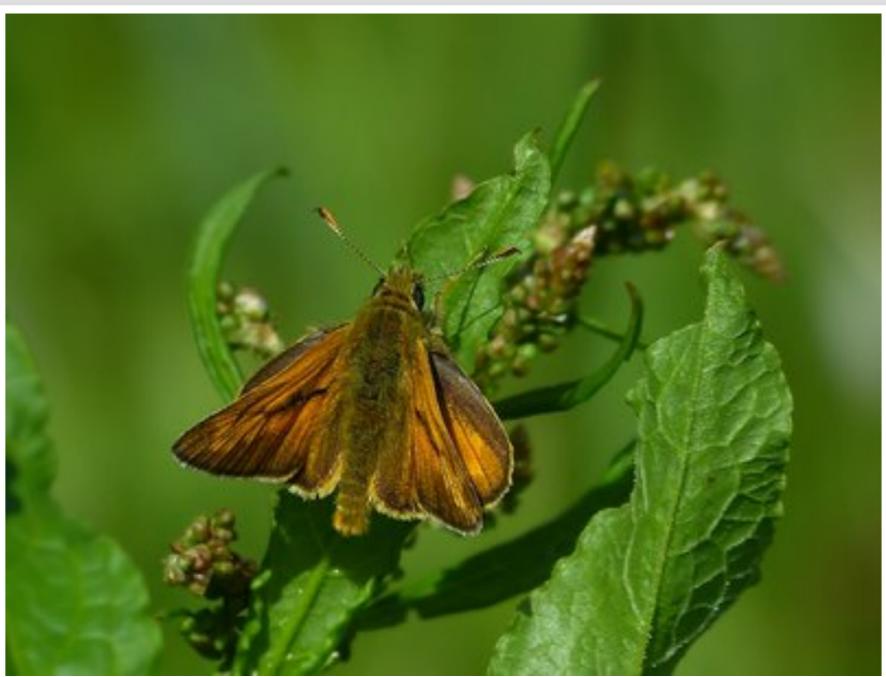
by Neil Freeman, 09-Jun-14 07:10 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys 😊

Sunday 8th June

A couple of hours spent wandering around Castle Hills at Solihull on Sunday afternoon in some nice warm sun, apart from one short spell of 10 minutes or so when a big black cloud came over and I ran for shelter under the trees as it briefly hammered down with rain 😊.

Most of the butterflies today were shades of orange or brown including my first local Large Skippers of the year, of which I saw a dozen or more, all males, zipping about various parts of the site,



Large Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014



Large Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014



Large Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014

A bit slower and a bit less orange were about the same number of Small Heaths, also the first of these that I have seen around here this year,



Small Heath - Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014



Small Heath - Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014



Small Heath - Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014



Small Heath - Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014

A couple of faded Small Coppers were also darting about in their usual corner of one meadow,



Small Copper – Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014

A good number of Burnet Companion Moths added to the orangy brown theme and made it a bit of a challenge to correctly identify what was seeing unless I could watch the individual settle 😊 .

A couple each of Large Whites and Common Blues were also seen to go against the colour theme of the day,



Large White – Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014



Common Blue – Castle Hills Solihull 08.06.2014

This was also the day that I knew that summer had definitely arrived as I got clegged a couple of times 😡

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 09-Jun-14 07:23 PM GMT

Some excellent images of Small Heath there, Neil, which is a butterfly I always find exceedingly difficult to photograph.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jun-14 10:17 PM GMT

Yes SH can be tricky,as they are difficult to get near,even in cool weather. I'm a little surprised Large Skippers are out up there,Neil,as i only saw my first last week.

Enjoying the pictures,btw...

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-14 11:48 PM GMT

Brill stuff Neil – as others have said great Small Heaths and the Large Skippers are pretty great too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 10-Jun-14 12:43 PM GMT

Hiya Neil,

Local sites can often give huge satisfaction...and save you a fortune in travelling expenses 😊

Absolutely lovely images!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jun-14 08:49 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments David, essexbuzzard, Wurzel and Bill 😊

I was quite chuffed with the Small Heath shots 😊 I actually think that this is one butterfly that looks better with a bit of vegetation in the shot (not too much though), which more accurately conveys the character of the species.

Hi Essex, it seems that Large Skippers are out all over the place over the last few days, I have read some sightings from Yorkshire and Cumbria as well.

Cheers, Bill, I totally agree about local sites, especially when some species suffered badly in 2012 and you see them come back with decent numbers like the Small Coppers and Common Blues around here 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Mike Robinson, 13-Jun-14 04:44 PM GMT

Some super pictures &c. I'm new to this game and have developed a fondness for Burnet Companion Moths; you mention them above. I think they are very handsome arrangements.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jun-14 10:05 PM GMT

Thanks for your comment Mike 😊

After a few days stopping up at Arnside and enjoying a number of great sites around the area I have some catching up to do...

Wednesday 11th June.

Earlier this year, whilst doing some thinking about where to go on a couple of short breaks with Jane, I started reading up on flight times of some of the species that I had never seen. The first result of this was our break on the IOW during which I saw my first Glanville Fritillaries 😊 as described in this diary a couple of weeks back.

A couple of other species that I had never seen before were Northern Brown Argus and Mountain Ringlet and with some further research a bit of a cunning plan had started to form in my mind. I realised that with a bit (...or maybe a lot) of luck I could perhaps see the *salmacis* race of NBA at the beginning of their flight season around the Arnside area and also drive up to possibly see Mountain Ringlets at Irton Fell at around the same time.

Having to book time off work in advance meant that I had to take a bit of a gamble with flight times and the weather and so, a few weeks back, I had booked us into the lovely Bed and Breakfast in Arnside at the foot of Knott Lane, that we have been to for the past couple of years when going up there, usually to see Scotch Argus later in the year.

I then nervously watched the weather and sightings pages on the run up to our break.

So it was, that last Wednesday morning we set off up the M6 with a promising weather forecast for the following few days and with me having seen the first sighting reports of both NBA and Mountain Ringlets. The weather for the day was looking good, with a cloudy but dry start which was forecast to turn to sunny spells further north by the afternoon, so I figured on making the most of it and do a stop off for an hour or so at Warton Crag before arriving at Arnside. I had read that Northern Brown Argus could be found here as well as Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries which I had not yet seen this

year.

We arrived at Warton just after mid-day with it still fairly overcast but feeling warm and with some brighter sky heading our way. There were quite a few cars in the car park with a number of bird watchers who were there to see a pair of Peregrines that were nesting on the wall of the Crag, too far away unfortunately for my lumix and close focus binoculars. After polishing off our sandwiches I took a walk up the path which loops around and up the Crag to see what I could find.

As I walked up the sky brightened and the sun started to poke through and I began to see butterflies, a few Common Blues, Large Skippers and Dingy Skippers to start with along with numerous Small Heaths.

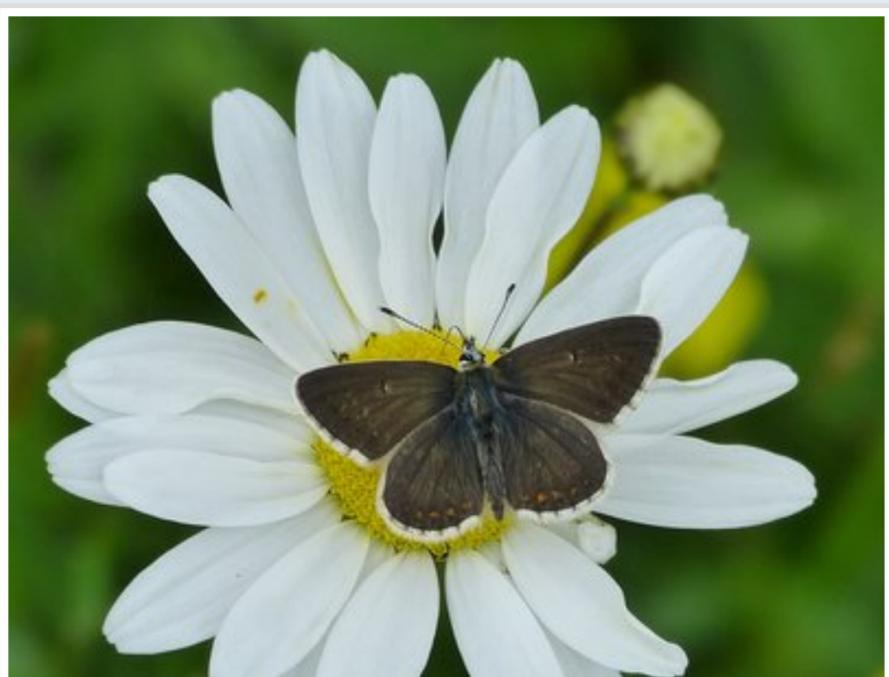


Small Heath - Warton Crag 11.06.2014

About half way up I came to an area with lots of Rock Rose and there flitting about was my first target, a Northern Brown Argus 😊. I took some photos and watched him for a while as he moved from plant to plant, basking and nectaring, until a second one came along and they both disappeared down the slope.



Warton Crag looking North with Arnside Knott in top right hand corner and Lake District in far distance.



Northern Brown Argus - Warton Crag 11.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Warton Crag 11.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Warton Crag 11.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Warton Crag 11.06.2014

I then continued on up and in series of clearings between the trees and scrub found some Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, probably about half a dozen or so...



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Warton Crag 11.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Warton Crag 11.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Warton Crag 11.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Warton Crag 11.06.2014

...before heading back down and continuing on our way to Arnside.

To be continued...

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 15-Jun-14 05:16 PM GMT

I am eventually catching up on some diaries Neil and I, too, think that is a great shot of the Mint moth. I don't think I have ever knowingly seen one but I assume it is quite small. Congrats on finding NBA and that's a great shot of the environment. I even like your shots of Small Heath – a butterfly that for some reason fails to excite me – but you have shown it in a very good light. It is driving me mad Neil that I can't remember what that butterfly was with the dead grass providing such a good background. I have trawled back thru your diary trying to find it – I'd forgotten how good all your shots are – but I have failed. Can you remember? SSB? Small Copper? What time of year would there be dried grass? SSS?

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jun-14 05:27 PM GMT

Wednesday 11th June....continued

After arriving in Arnside and settling in to our B&B, it had turned into a nice warm sunny late afternoon so I decided to go for a walk up the Knott. Circling around through the lower woods and clearings where, a bit later in the year, Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries are usually found, I soon started to see Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries along with a few Common Blues, Large Skippers and Speckled Woods.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Arnside 11.06.2014



Large Skipper - Arnside 11.06.2014



Common Blue - Arnside 11.06.2014

I then wandered down the path towards Heathwaite to look for Northern Brown Argus in the lower meadows on that side of the Knott and found 3, maybe 4, nectaring and basking in the late afternoon sun. As with the ones that I had seen at Warton Crag, these were all males and were either fairly fresh or looked like they had been out for a few days.



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 11.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 11.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 11.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 11.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 11.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 11.06.2014

After watching these for a while and taking some photos I then wandered back, stopping a few times to watch the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries again and taking a few more photos.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Arnside 11.06.2014

I was already well pleased with having seen the NBAs at Warton Crag and now here at Arnside and with the weather forecast for the next day being for another cloudy morning turning into a sunny afternoon it was looking promising for a drive up to Irton Fell.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jun-14 05:34 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, nearly missed your post whilst writing that last update 😞 Thanks for your comments on my photos 😊

I have a feeling that the one with the dried grass providing the background was a Small Copper underside shot from last year, probably second brood so some time in July/August. You have got me wondering now so I will have a look 😄

Edit; have a look on page 30 of this diary, there are a couple of shots against a blurry dried grass background including the Small Copper underside.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 15-Jun-14 07:41 PM GMT

Ah, yes, gorgeous – that's it Neil. Mind you, that Gatekeeper isn't bad either ... or the Large Whites. Seriously, I would have loved to have taken that shot. I think the best images are those that make you feel something, imagine that you are there, remember them, even when there are loads of other great (studio? 😄) shots can I have that framed please? I won't forget it a second time!

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 15-Jun-14 09:59 PM GMT

Fantastic report and shots Neil 😊🍷 Interesting to see how little orange the NBAs have on their wings – is that a diagnostic tool? Looking forward to the next installment – will the Mountie be ticked 😊 I'm hoping it's in the bag...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jun-14 10:15 PM GMT

I thought that was the one Pauline, glad I have put your mind at rest 😊

Cheers Wurzel, I noticed the lack of orange on a number of the NBA that I saw, certainly a lot less on some examples than I am used to with the 'normal' Brown Argus, although having said that they were quite variable with some that would have been impossible to tell apart if they were seen together.

Yep, the Mountain Ringlets will be in the next instalment, my cunning little plan paid off 😊😄 still got the photos of those to sort through so maybe tomorrow.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 15-Jun-14 10:30 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the NBA, Neil, one I have yet to see (I always visit Arnside too late for them!). I can't wait to see the Mountain Ringlets... 😊

Dave

Re: nfreem

by David M, 15-Jun-14 11:32 PM GMT

Nice images, Neil. Northern Brown Argus in England is a very interesting critter, isn't it?

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jun-14 07:31 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

Lovely photos of the NBA, Neil, one I have yet to see (I always visit Arnside too late for them!)... 😊

Dave

Hi Dave, I have been going to Arnside for the past couple of years to see Scotch Argus in late July/early August, like when we met there last year 😊 I have seen reports of NBA at around that time in previous years but having seen some of the very small and brown female Common Blues there last year, well, I'm not so sure. The local view is that they are usually over by then.

If you ever do go there earlier in the year, the place to look is in the meadows down the path to Heathwaite, by where I saw the Clouded Yellow.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jun-14 07:37 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Nice images, Neil. Northern Brown Argus in England is a very interesting critter, isn't it?

Thanks David, it certainly is.

I found it fascinating the way that some individuals look identical to our 'normal' Brown Argus and yet others had a different 'look' to them. Not as obvious as the Scottish race with its white spots on the forewings but a difference nevertheless which doesn't really come across in photos.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jun-14 07:57 PM GMT

Thursday 12th June - Irton Fell

As previously mentioned, earlier in the year I had done some reading up on the flight times of Mountain Ringlets and realised that I may be able to see them by taking a drive up to Irton Fell during a stay in Arnside. Not only is this one of the most accessible sites but due to it being at a lower altitude, emergence here is usually earlier than the higher sites, sometimes apparently as early as mid-May.

I had a limited opportunity of when to book our stay due to work and family commitments and so, after checking up on information on the Cumbria BC website and also looking back at previous years sightings on UKB I took a gamble and booked our stay in Arnside for last week.

During the week or so before driving up I had checked the Cumbria BC sightings page and was pleased to see a couple of reports of Mountain Ringlets being seen at Irton Fell...they were out 😊, now all I needed was a bit of reasonable weather.

Checking the weather forecasts, it seemed that Thursday would give me my best chance with a cloudy morning clearing to sunny spells in the afternoon, so after a good breakfast at our B&B we took a slow drive up. Approaching the area at around mid-day there was still a lot of low cloud obscuring the surrounding peaks so instead of going straight to Irton Fell we went and had a coffee in Santon Bridge first.

We then carried on and parked in the old quarry car park and I headed on up the track towards the fell. Luckily I had previously printed the directions off from the Cumbria BC website as without them I could easily have carried on up the main track instead of sticking to the less obvious right hand track half way up. Coming out onto the fell it was still overcast but the clouds were getting lighter and beginning to clear the peaks and before long I started to see good numbers of Small Heaths and loads of micro(grass) moths.

I carried on along the path to where it dips down and crosses a bit of a stream and just at that time the first bit of blue sky peeked through the clouds and, lo and behold, there was my first Mountain Ringlet skimming along above the grass a few feet away 😊.

I spent the next couple of hours up there during which time the clouds broke up more and more with some good sunny spells and saw increasing numbers of Mountain Ringlets taking to the air around me.



Irton Fell - Mountain Ringlets all along here.



Irton Fell with Wast Water in the distance.

I had read that they can be difficult to photograph with their habit of settling down in amongst the grass and my first few attempts had more grass than butterfly visible but after a while and some careful sneaking up I managed to get some reasonable shots. I found the males were very alert and couldn't help but notice their large, almost spooky looking dark eyes which seemed to spot me from yards away.



Mountain Ringlet male – Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet male – Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet male – Irton Fell 12.06.2014

As well as the males which were fairly active and tended to only settle for brief moments, I also saw a few females who were much slower in their flight and tended to settle for much longer and were also much easier to approach and therefore easier to photograph when I found one in a good position.



Mountain Ringlet female – Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet female – Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet female - Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet female - Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet female - Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet female – Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet female – Irton Fell 12.06.2014

Apart from the Mountain Ringlets, the only other butterflies seen here were the Small Heaths of which there were loads all over the place. Also on the way back down the track to the car park I saw a Red Admiral and a couple of Speckled Woods all of which flew past me back up the track so I didn't bother trying to follow them.

My little gamble with the weather and timing had paid off and I had managed to see the second of my targets so obviously I was pretty well chuffed 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 16-Jun-14 08:48 PM GMT

Brilliant photos, Neil – I am extremely envious. You can see why the females are a bit sluggish – absolutely full of eggs by the size of the abdomen!

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-14 10:38 PM GMT

I'm dead chuffed that your gamble paid off and "Neil got his Mountie" 😊 Fantastic shots 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 17-Jun-14 12:30 AM GMT

Brilliant stuff Neil, great photos of Northern Brown Argus and Mountain Ringlet, you certainly got the timing one hundred percent right 😊 Great report and superb images 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jun-14 10:41 PM GMT

Thanks for the great comments guys, the weather gods certainly seemed to smile on me 😊

Thursday 12th June - Later at Latterbarrow

After leaving Irton Fell mid-afternoon and taking a leisurely drive back through Eskdale, enjoying the glorious scenery on the way, we headed back towards Arnside. Driving along the A590 at around 4.30pm I realised that we would soon be passing the Cumbria Wildlife Trust reserve of Latterbarrow and decided to stop off for a look. This is a small reserve with a mixture of grassland, scrub and woodland with a good variety of wildflowers including orchids.

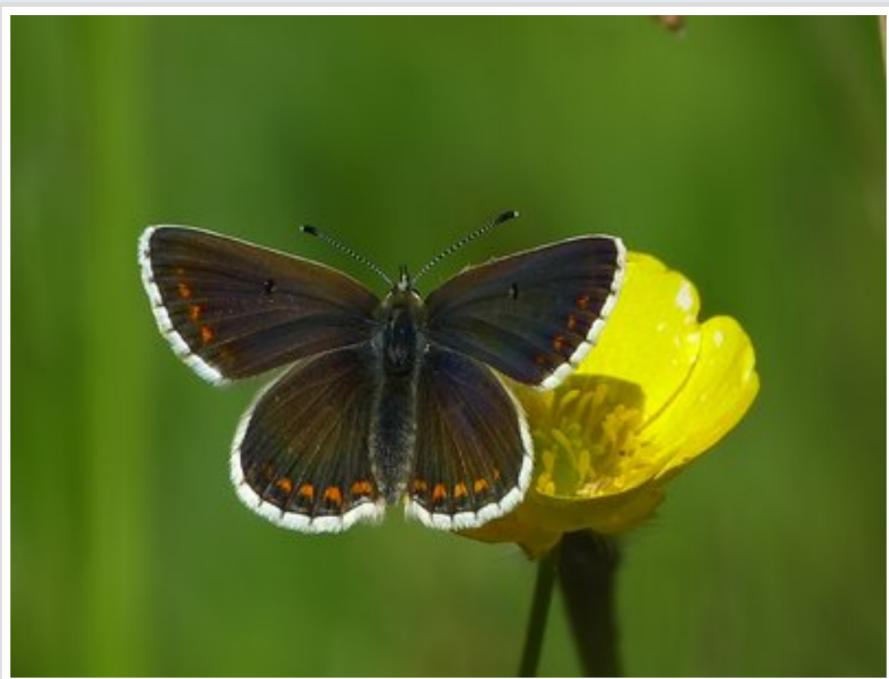
<http://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/...tterbarrow>

Northern Brown Argus can also be found here and as the ones that I had already seen at Warton Crag and Arnside had all been males, I was keen to find a female. I soon saw a couple of Large Skippers and Common Blues plus a couple of male Meadow Browns, my first this year, then a couple of NBAs, again males.

I then saw a NBA that looked fresher than the others which I was pretty sure was a female, followed by another fresh looking individual which again looked like a female. There seems to be a lot of variation in the orange markings of both sexes in this species making it difficult to tell them apart but looking at the photos of both of these individuals, whilst I am not absolutely sure, I reckon that going by the shape of the abdomen, they were both females.



Northern Brown Argus - Latterbarrow 12.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Latterbarrow 12.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Latterbarrow 12.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Latterbarrow 12.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Latterbarrow 12.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Latterbarrow 12.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Latterbarrow 12.06.2014

There were also a number of Four-spotted Chasers quartering back and forth over the grassy areas plus quite a few orchids amongst the grass. I am no expert on the orchids but amongst the 'normal' looking ones I did recognise some Butterfly Orchids.

A very pleasant hour or so to finish off a great day 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 17-Jun-14 10:59 PM GMT

Aah...happy memories!

This truly IS one of the most spectacular places to go butterflying in the UK.

Although it seems implausible, once up on the fell Mountain Ringlets are so common they can be considered a 'default' Meadow Brown.

I think I may make a return visit in 2015.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 17-Jun-14 11:06 PM GMT

Congrats on the Mountain Ringlets Neil, fantastic set of images as well.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-14 04:46 PM GMT

Oh Neil, now I'm really green 🍀 what fantastic, Photo's of the Northern Brown Argus , I managed the two and one flew a way and my other was grass

bound 😊" I'm jealous" 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by jasonbirder, 18-Jun-14 05:02 PM GMT

Awesome images...I shall be following in your footsteps this weekend

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 18-Jun-14 05:25 PM GMT

Stunning shots of the NBA again Neil and great report.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-14 09:15 PM GMT

Many thanks all for the comments, very much appreciated as always 😊

Friday 13th June

A cloudy but reasonably warm day was forecast so we decided to spend the morning at **RSPB Leighton Moss** which was just a 10 minute drive from where we were staying in Arnside. With its level paths and easy to reach hides this is a good place for Jane as she still has mobility problems following her stroke back in 2011.

Behind the visitor centre there were some very friendly Robins that would come right up to you including one that was being fed regularly by another. It looked like a parent feeding a youngster but I always thought that young Robins didn't develop the red until they got a bit older 😊



Robin - Leighton Moss 13.06.2014



Robins - Leighton Moss 13.06.2014

Out on the paths we saw a number of Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings plus from one of the hides we had good views of a Marsh Harrier hunting back and forth over the reed beds. Most of the stuff we saw was either too far away or moving too quickly for photos with my Lumix so it was a morning of watching rather than taking photos and a very enjoyable one at that.

We left Leighton Moss just before mid-day and drove round to **Gait Barrows** which is just a few minutes away. I was keen to have a look there as despite staying in the same area at Arnside for the past couple of years, this was a reserve that I had still not been to. I realised that I would be 'between times' for two of its specialities, too late for Duke of Burgundy and too early for High Browns, but still thought it would be worth a visit.

The forecast had been bang on again with a wall to wall overcast but it was fairly warm and I soon saw a couple of Speckled Woods and SPBFs flitting about. I followed the signs to the Ladies Slipper Orchid area and found a couple still in flower although most had finished.



Ladies Slipper – Gait Barrows 13.06.2014



Ladies Slipper – Gait Barrows 13.06.2014

I then spent about an hour or so wandering about and saw another half a dozen or so Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries...



Gait Barrows looking towards the back of Arnside Knott



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Gait Barrows 13.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Gait Barrows 13.06.2014

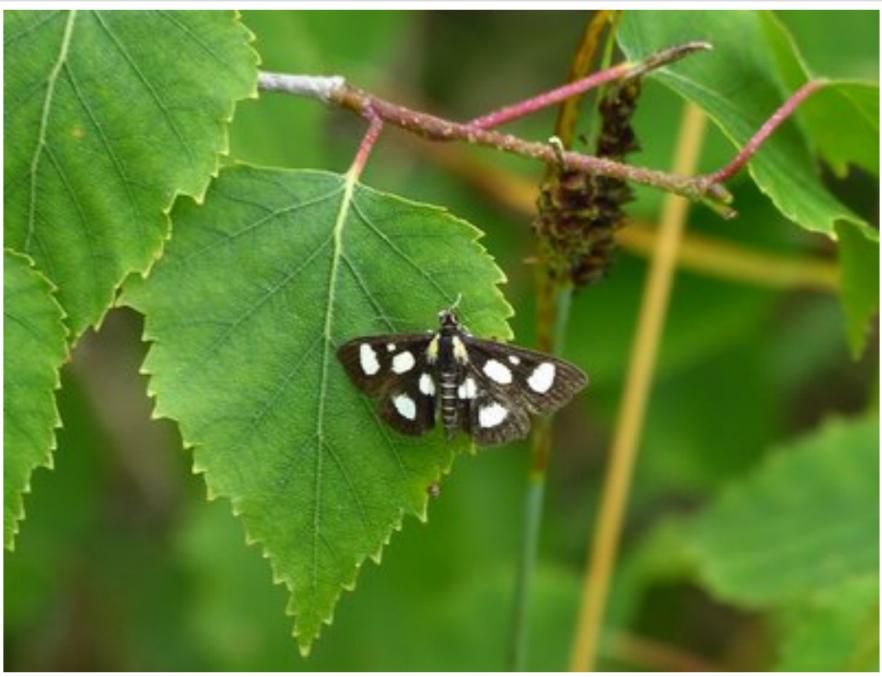


Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Gait Barrows 13.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Gait Barrows 13.06.2014

...and a few White spotted Sable Moths *Anania funebris* which would usually insist on settling on the underside of leaves tucked well out of sight. The record shot below is the only one that I managed to get of one of these,



Anania funebris – Gait Barrows 13.06.2014

Also seen here were a couple of Large Skippers plus a couple of Northern Brown Argus, which made this the fourth site that I had seen NBA at in this area 😊



Northern Brown Argus – Gait Barrows 13.06.2014

I then made my way back to Jane who had stayed in the car reading a book, the earlier spell at Leighton Moss having left her feeling tired. I think I have mentioned before that getting tired quickly is a legacy of her stroke so she will often come out with me but stay in the car and read as long as I don't wander off for too long or go too far.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-14 10:02 PM GMT

Those NBAs and Small Pearls look lush Neil 😊🌿 I really like the look of the habitat there like a proper Limestone pavement – my colleague at work would love that image 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jun-14 07:20 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Gait Barrows is known for its Limestone pavements, a very impressive and unusual place.

Friday 13th June – on the Knott again

After leaving Gait Barrows we headed back to Arnside where we just chilled out for a bit and enjoyed an ice cream. Later I decided to have a wander up the Knott again and get some more photos of the SPBFs and NBAs including hopefully some undersides in the cloudy conditions. There were plenty of SPBFs around again in various lower meadows and clearings and were warmed up just enough to be active, but not too active, and were settling frequently.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Arnside 13.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries – Arnside 13.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Arnside 13.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Arnside 13.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Arnside 13.06.2014

I found a few more NBAs in different parts of the Heathwaite meadows to the other day, again all males. The only females that I had found were the couple at Latterbarrow which ties in with it still being early in their flight season. No doubt the females have started emerging during the past week since I have returned home.



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014

Other butterflies seen were Speckled Woods, Large Skippers and Common Blues.

Around 5.00pm I wandered back to meet Jane and to get cleaned up ready to go out for a meal. Tomorrow (Saturday) we were leaving to return home to the midlands, depending on the weather in the morning there might just be time for a quick visit somewhere 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by MikeOxon, 19-Jun-14 09:42 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

...very friendly Robins that would come right up to you including one that was being fed regularly by another.

What you saw was almost certainly "courtship feeding" Courtship feeding starts a couple of days before the female lays the first egg, and continues through the incubation, which is by the female alone. By helping to support her in this way, the male is making a significant commitment to his mate.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by David M, 19-Jun-14 10:19 PM GMT

You've clearly had a superb trip, Neil. Thanks for sharing the images.

This spot is easily the best butterfly site in the UK north of Birmingham.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jun-14 07:25 PM GMT

Thanks Mike, that makes sense. Still got a lot to learn about birds, I was thinking it was late in the year for courtship but I assume then that some birds raise successive broods in a season.

Cheers David, It was certainly a great few days in a wonderful part of the country.

Saturday 14th June

After a good breakfast we threw our stuff into the car and left our B&B just before 10.00am to start heading home. The morning was shaping up to be a warm one with some good sun and white fluffy clouds building up which was beginning to make it feel a bit 'muggy'.

Whilst we had been up here I had seen a piece on the local news about a captive breeding and re-introduction program with Large Heath at Heysham Moss near Morecambe and this got me wondering if they were out at any other sites around the area. Looking on the map I noticed Meathop Moss and hadn't realised that I had been so close to it when we stopped off at Latterbarrow on the way back from Irton Fell on Thursday, just the other side of the road in fact.

As Meathop Moss was only a short drive around to the other side of the Kent Estuary we decided to go and have a look before hitting the M6 back to the midlands. We arrived shortly after and Jane said she would stay with the car and read a book whilst I went for a look around. This was probably just as well because although the path through some trees towards the moss was level enough it was bit overgrown in places and there were some deep muddy bits along the way making me glad that I had put my wellies on, just in case.

Coming out of the wooded stretch there is a boardwalk out onto the moss which I wandered along to the end of, noticing a lot of Cotton Grass to both side of the boards. Where the boards ended there was a firm looking path so I carried on for a bit, again glad that I had put my wellies on as some bits

were soft and squelchy.



Meathop Moss looking West. The clouds were making it feel quite warm and humid

I had been seeing loads of small moths and the place was absolutely alive with Dragonflies, mostly Broad-bodied and Four-spotted Chasers and Common Darters from what I could see but I wasn't going to follow anything across the moss for a closer look as these areas can be a bit dodgy underfoot.

A few yards past the end of the boards I spotted a butterfly flapping along with the characteristic floppy flight of a 'brown' which I was sure could only be a Large Heath. It settled briefly a few feet away, not for long and not in a position for a photo, but long enough to get a good enough look to confirm it was indeed a fresh looking Large Heath. After this I began to see a few more, mostly too far out on the moss to follow but a couple did come close enough to get some record shots, usually with grass all over the place as is typical with this species, but I did manage a couple that weren't too bad.



Large Heath - Meathop Moss 14.06.2014



Large Heath - Meathop Moss 14.06.2014

After half an hour or so in this spot I slowly made my way back along the boards, seeing more Large Heath which were becoming more active in the now quite warm and humid conditions.

We then set off for the M6 south back home, after a great few days during which I had seen two 'lifers' (NBA and Mountain Ringlet), plenty of SPBFs and now with the Large Heaths as a nice little bonus to finish off with 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-14 11:41 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Neil 😊🍷 Yet another butterfly that I've not seen I'm looking forward to retirement when I'll have more time to make longer trips – only 30 more years to go 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 20-Jun-14 11:48 PM GMT

Your packing some great trips into your butterfly itinery this year Neil and your comprehensive reports are bringing them to life for the rest of us, delightful images too...super stuff 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jun-14 11:29 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, still got a few years to retirement myself, glad its nowhere near 30 though 😊 My kids are grown up though which gives me a lot more freedom 😊

Thanks Bill, I've only really done the two long trips so far this year, the IOW and Arnside, in both cases for three days which allows me to make the most of the surrounding areas 😊

Saturday 21st June

Back to work this week and plenty to do around the house and garden so I have not been out anywhere. The garden has been full of birds in the evening (probably during the day as well but I have not been there to notice) including loads of juveniles, Great, Blue and Coal tits mostly but also a young Great Spotted Woodpecker that has been a regular visitor to the feeders.



GS woodpecker – Coverdale 21.06.2014

This morning I was making a cuppa in the kitchen and looked out of the window and saw that it was there again but this time its Mom was with it as well,



Mother and child, photo taken through the kitchen window

One for Pauline, also taken through the kitchen window this morning was the cheeky chap below. He (she?) was checking below the feeders until he pricked his ears up at a noise from next doors garden, seconds after I took the photo below he was off...



Morning visitor - Coverdale 21.06.2014

Getting back to butterflies, there has been two or three Specklies in the garden every evening this week, usually fluttering about until 7.00pm or later depending on how much sun has been out. The shot below was from this morning and by 10.00am they were already settling with wings closed in the warm morning sun.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 21.06.2014

After busy morning doing some house and garden chores, it looked like it was going to be a nice sunny afternoon so I figured on spending a couple of hours checking a local spot or two...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-14 11:32 PM GMT

Lovely golden glow on the Speckle Neil 😊🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Hoggers, 22-Jun-14 03:16 PM GMT

I really enjoy reading your diary, Neil. The Mountain Ringlets brought back memories of a trip I made to Irton Fell many years ago!

And as for the Ladies Slipper Orchid! Marvellous! I remember reading somewhere that they have to be protected with electrified fences, search-lights and security men to keep the orchid hunters away!

Best Wishes,

Hoggers.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jun-14 09:17 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, a nice bit of mid-morning sun gave me that light 😊

Hi Hoggers, thanks for the comments 😊 Not sure about the security around the Ladies Slippers 🤪, at Gait Barrows there were just some taped off areas, to prevent trampling I assume.

Saturday 21st June - afternoon

After finishing the usual Saturday morning stuff around the house I decided to spend a couple of hours checking out a local spot or two. Starting off at Bickenhill near Solihull, I followed a footpath to a field by the M42 which I have visited a couple of times before. As soon as I got there it was apparent that there had been a mass emergence of Ringlets, they were everywhere, every step along the path would put up a dozen or more from the long grass to either side. Despite their numbers they were not easy to photograph, constantly flapping along or settling in the long grass.



Ringlet - Bickenhill, Solihull - 21.06.2014



Ringlet - Bickenhill, Solihull - 21.06.2014

Also present in large numbers, not quite as many as the Ringlets, were Meadow Browns. These were mostly fresh looking males but I did see a couple of females as well,



Meadow Brown – Bickenhill, Solihull 21.06.2014

Other butterflies seen here were around a dozen Large Skippers, half a dozen Small Tortoiseshells, a single Marbled White, plus a couple each of well faded and worn Small Coppers and Common Blues. There were also large numbers of Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet Moths buzzing about with their distinctive flight and, living up to their name, a fair few Burnet Companions.



Large Skipper – Bickenhill, Solihull 21.06.2014



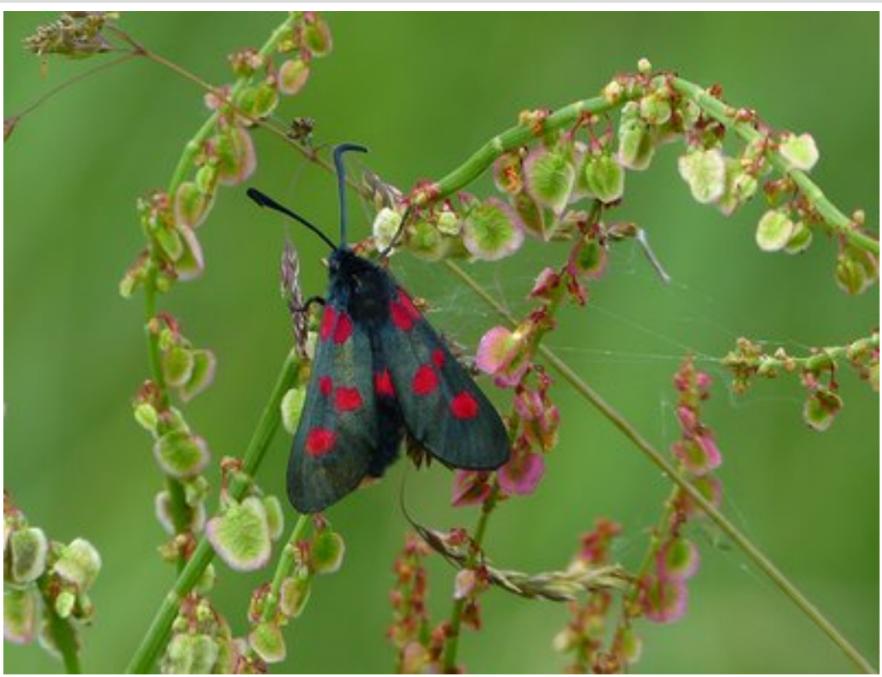
Large Skipper – Bickenhill, Solihull 21.06.2014



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill, Solihull 21.06.2014



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill, Solihull 21.06.2014



Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet Moth – Bickenhill, Solihull 21.06.2014

Considering the numbers of Peacocks that were here earlier in the year I was not surprised to find a number of larval nests in at least eight separate concentrations, some of which were made up of a number of nests spread out over large nettle patches.



Peacock larvae - Bickenhill, Solihull 21.06.2014

I left here and popped round to Shadowbrook Meadows which is just down the road and in a quick circuit of the site saw a load more Meadow Browns and Large Skippers plus a few Ringlets, Small Tortoiseshells and a couple of Common Blues.



Meadow Brown - Shadowbrook 21.06.2014



Meadow Brown - Shadowbrook 21.06.2014

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-14 10:49 PM GMT

Greta report and shots Neil 😊 The open wing Meadow Brown shots at this time of year are at a premium 🍷 I hope you have a good stay in Dorset, if you get to Portland check out for Lulworths behind The Pulpit pub (at least that's what it used to be called). The usual path to Bindon Hill (the one by the ice cream kiosk) has been closed due to a cliff collapse so check at the Heritage Centre to see if there's another way to get up to Bindon Hill. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-14 10:21 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, thanks for the heads up 😊

Sunday 22nd June

Another nice warm day albeit a bit cloudier than the previous day so I decided to make the most of it and nip out to another of my usual local spots, Castle Hills near Solihull.

There were loads of Ringlets and Meadow Browns around, this time with the latter species being the more numerous, but with the Ringlets being a bit easier to take photos of,



Ringlet - Castle Hills 22.06.2014



Ringlet - Castle Hills 22.06.2014



Ringlets - Castle Hills 22.06.2014

Again there was a supporting cast of Large Skippers with more females now in evidence,



Large Skipper - Castle Hills 22.06.2014



Large Skipper - Castle Hills 22.06.2014



Large Skippers - Castle Hills 22.06.2014

I was on the lookout for my first Small Skipper of the year and at one point a slightly smaller orange blur settled and resolved itself into a fresh male, the only one to be seen today so I guess they are just starting here.



Small Skipper - Castle Hills 22.06.2014

A few Small Heath were also flying and one individual looked a bit 'odd' in flight and when settled looked to have its RH wings slightly smaller than the LH. I am not sure if its wings had not developed properly but whatever the cause it gave a glimpse of its topside colour around the edges.



Small Heath - Castle Hills 22.06.2014

Narrow-bordered Five Spot Burnet Moths were again all over the place along with a few Cinnabar Moths with their similar colour scheme,



Narrow-bordered Five Spot Burnet – Castle Hills 22.06.2014



Cinnabar – Castle Hills 22.06.2014

Another couple of hours during which it was just great to be surrounded by loads of our more common butterflies on a nice summer afternoon 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 24-Jun-14 11:17 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Great photos, especially the unusual shot of the Small Heath, the female Large Skipper and the mating pair of the same species. Excellent. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-14 11:34 PM GMT

Indeed, I agree with Nick great stuff 😊 That Small Heath is like both extremes rolled into one 🤩 Brill!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 25-Jun-14 08:35 PM GMT

Some of our more common species can provide hours of fascinating study (and great photo's 😊) without too much travel involved...a real bonus Neil!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 26-Jun-14 06:40 AM GMT

A great shot of the Large Skippers mating Neil – I am still smarting over the one I nearly got 😊😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-14 09:13 PM GMT

Hi Nick, thanks for your comments. I haven't seen you post lately, hope you are well.

Cheers Wurzel, it looked weird in flight which is what attracted my attention.

Thank Bill, I have some great little spots close by, no rare species but on a good day I can be surrounded by hundreds of butterflies 😊

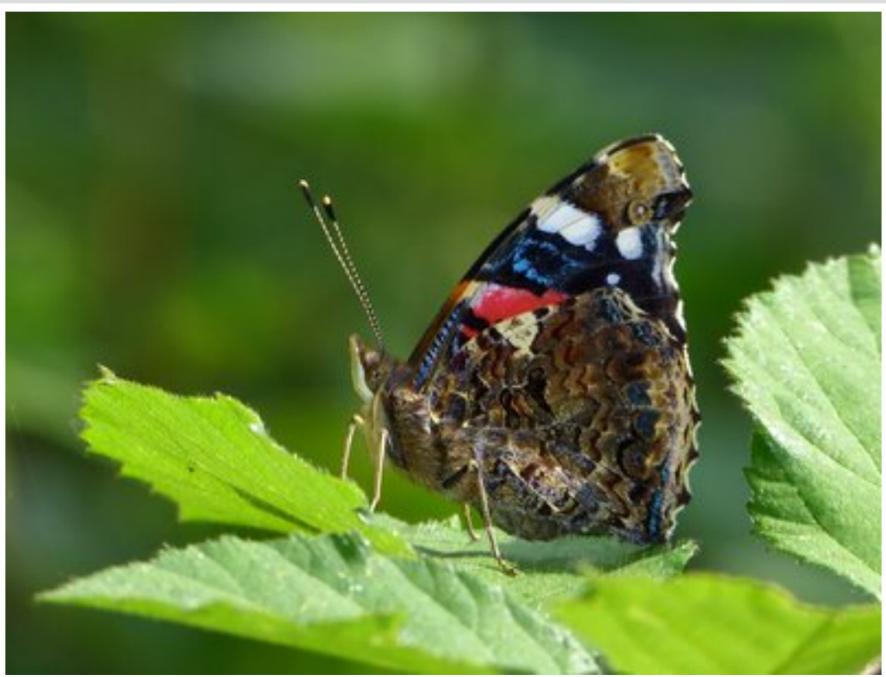
Pauline, you wouldn't believe the number of 'nearly' shots I miss 😊

Thursday 26.06.2014

So far this year I have already seen more Red Admirals than I saw in the whole of last year albeit most of them briefly as they have flown past me. Yesterday afternoon(Wednesday), after work there was one in the garden that stayed around the nettle patch for a while, until the evening shadows from the trees lengthened over that end of the garden around 6.30pm.



Red Admiral – Coverdale 26.06.2014



Red Admiral – Coverdale 26.06.2014

Today there was another one, this time a female that spent some time checking out the nettles and looked like she was ovipositing. Looking carefully afterwards I could not find any eggs so I think she was just going through the motions.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 26.06.2014

A little later a male arrived that at first I thought was the same individual from the previous day but checking the photos confirms that it was a third individual. Like yesterdays, this one hung around the nettle patch until around 6.30pm before departing.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 26.06.2014

There was also my first *hutchinsoni* Comma of the year, a female that looked like she had already been out for a few days,



Comma - Coverdale 26.06.2014

Also, as well as the usual couple of Speckled Woods, there was passing Ringlet, the second in the garden this week. Although there are hordes of these not far away I do not usually get these in the garden, in fact I had the first one there last year.

Looks like the next couple of days are going to be wetter and cooler, fingers crossed that it won't last too long.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 26-Jun-14 09:51 PM GMT

Yet more great images of some of our most beautiful butterfly species Neil...lovely 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by David M, 26-Jun-14 10:16 PM GMT

Must admit, I'm still not seeing many Red Admirals, although I expect numbers to seriously increase over the next fortnight or so.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 29-Jun-14 08:08 PM GMT

Beautiful images from your garden Neil 😊 great to see the Red Admirals, and like David I hope we see greater numbers soon.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-14 11:28 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil 😊 The Red Admirals seem to be increasing in numbers there as here 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jul-14 08:32 PM GMT

Apologies for the belated response guys but thanks for the comments 😊

I have got a bit of catching up to do now, both with this dairy and seeing what other members have been up to recently 😊

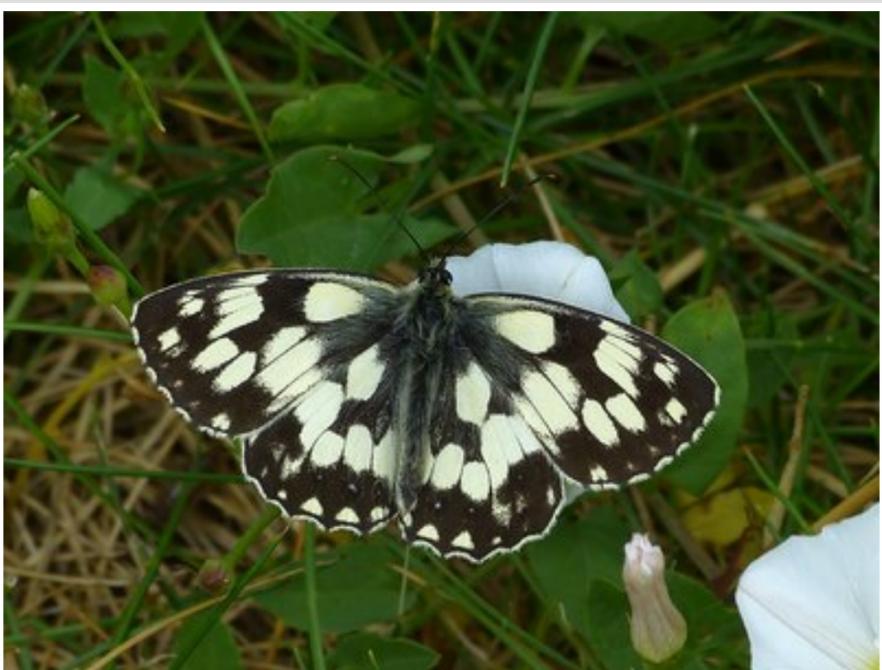
Returned home today (Saturday 5th July) after spending a week on a family holiday with Jane and our daughter Sarah with her 3 year old lad Frankie, staying in a caravan at Bowleaze Cove just outside of Weymouth.

After driving down through some heavy rain last Saturday (28th June), the skies cleared as we arrived and during the week we had weather that varied from cloudy and breezy, through warm and cloudy, to clear blue skies and hot sun. We didn't see any rain until last night when it started about 6.00pm and carried on through the night.

After arriving and settling in and having a bite to eat I went for a little wander around and found some likely looking spots close to the caravan site which looked like they would be worth closer investigation during the week.

Sunday 29th June - Bowleaze Cove

After breakfast, Jane and Sarah wanted to take Frankie to explore the play areas on the site so I took the chance to have a look along the coast path that leads up from the beach eastwards. It wasn't long before I started seeing Meadow Browns, Ringlets, and Marbled Whites in good numbers plus my first Gatekeepers (Hedge Browns) of the year.



Marbled White - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Marbled White - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Marbled White - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Ringlet - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

I noticed one Ringlet that didn't have any 'ringlets' on its underside, just small white dots...



Ringlet - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

There were also half a dozen or so Small Tortoiseshells spaced out along one section with brambles along a fence to one side.



Small Tortoiseshells - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

I had spotted a number of Skippers including some mostly faded 'Large' and some fresh looking 'Small' in areas of long grass by the path...



Looking towards Bowleaze Cove



Small Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

..and buzzing about amongst them a number of Lulworth Skippers.



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

I noticed a trail leading off the path and down the slope into a small sheltered gully and found loads more Lulworth Skippers.



Lots of Lulworth Skippers in this little spot



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

On the whole, the females were in better condition than the males, some of which were getting very worn and faded. I did find a couple of males in quite good condition and during the week finding a fresh male become one of my targets.



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

A great start to my week and so far I had only gone 10 minutes or so from our caravan. During the next few days I checked out this stretch of cliffs and undercliffs and found loads of Lulworth Skippers all along from Bowleaze Cove to Redcliff Point.

I reported the sightings on the Dorset BC website and in a short e-mail exchange with Martin Raper, he has informed me that there have been no records of Lulworth Skippers in this area since 2003. Whether they have been overlooked or have spread into the more accessible areas recently I don't know but there is definitely a large colony here now.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 05-Jul-14 09:05 PM GMT

Just had to log in Neil to say you've got some gorgeous shots there of Lulworth Skipper, 2 in particular 📷 How on earth did you manage it as they wouldn't keep still for me 😊 Well done on finding that colony too. The Ringlet is interesting - is it an ab?

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-14 10:48 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of my favourite butterfly Neil 😊 Cracking find with the Ringlet ab. arete(?) 📷 Hope you had a great holiday down there in Dorset:D .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jul-14 11:10 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I was lucky with the Lulworths, there was just enough cloud around to slow them down a bit. Contrary to what I have read about them only flying in sunshine, I saw loads of them flying in overcast and sometimes quite breezy conditions.

I included the shot of the Ringlet hoping that someone might confirm if it was an ab. 😊 Not the best shot but it was the only one I managed before it flew off out of reach.

Cheers Wurzel, we had a great time, the women and nipper were happy and I squeezed in some great butterflying 😊

Thanks for the ID on the Ringlet ab. 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 05-Jul-14 11:56 PM GMT

Brilliant Lulworths, Neil. 😊 I'm just hoping there will still be plenty come the school holidays and one of our trips down to Swanage! And that's a great Ringlet ab. as well. I looked at dozens today at Ryton, and they were all normal 😞

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 06-Jul-14 12:30 AM GMT

Great Lulworth Skipper shots Neil, they are so fresh looking too 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-14 10:12 AM GMT

Thanks Dave, I am sure that there will be plenty around still, they seem to have a protracted emergence and the past couple of years I have seen them at Durlston in the first week of September albeit they were worn and faded by then. Thanks for the comment on the Ringlet as well, there were loads around and having seen it I started checking all I saw but that was the only one.

Cheers Mike, I was hoping to find some fresh Lulworths this year after seeing them late in the season for the past couple of years.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Willrow, 06-Jul-14 10:46 AM GMT

Fine report + great images = super holiday Neil 😊 Well done that man on the **Lulworth Skipper** record 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-14 07:19 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Bill, very much appreciated 😊

It was definitely satisfying to find the Lulworth Skippers, especially in the numbers that were there and in a place that was not one of the usual well known locations 😊

Sunday 29th June - Later in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon we were having a cuppa back in the caravan when little Frankie announced that he wanted to go and look for 'burraflies' with Granddaddy. In my earlier scouting around I had seen a public footpath that crossed a likely looking meadow just outside the site entrance and knowing that his little legs would only go so far we set off.

The meadow proved to be full of 'Brown ones', 'Black and White ones' and 'Speedy Little Orange ones' which he pretended to take photos of with an old camera that Sarah had given him, probably the safest option currently at his age(3).



Looking for 'burraflies'



A 'Black and White one'

Maybe next year we can let him loose with a proper camera to try out but at the moment it is all part of pretend play

As well as all the butterflies there was a pair of Kestrels in (or over) the meadow, one of which, the female I believe spent most of the time perched on a large post.



Kestrel - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Kestrel – Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

And one that I forgot to put in my earlier post, my first Gatekeeper (Hedge Brown) of the year,



Gatekeeper – Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014

A great first day with a promising forecast for the following day. Even better, Jane and Sarah had said that I could drop them off in Weymouth in the morning and disappear for a few hours 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 06-Jul-14 09:15 PM GMT

I'm so envious of your Kestrel shots Neil – fabulous. I seem to be useless at photographing birds and you have got some great shots in the past. I'm so pleased you don't delete your exif data as I do try to learn from shots I admire.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-14 07:56 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, I was lucky with the Kestrel, I just approached very slowly and took a series of shots at full zoom as she sat there.

Monday 30th June – Portland

With Jane and Sarah wanting to spend the day in Weymouth, doing a bit of shopping before taking Frankie to the beach, I was allowed off the leash for a few hours so I had decided to take a drive over to Portland and have a look around a couple of the old quarry sites.

I was hoping to see some Silver-studded Blues, the Portland race of which are considered by some authorities to be of sub-species *cretaceus* although I believe that this view is challenged by many others. Whatever their status, I had read that the SSBs on the old limestone quarries of Portland tended to fly a little earlier than their heathland counterparts and with this years earlier than usual emergences of many species I was wondering if I may be a bit late.

My first port of call was the Broadcroft Quarry reserve where I arrived at about 10.30am. It was already getting quite warm under a high overcast with occasional sunny spells and there were loads of Marbled Whites and Meadow Browns along with Gatekeepers and Large and Small Skippers flying about.



Marbled White – Broadcroft 30.06.2014

I made my way to the eastern part of the reserve which I had read was the best place for SSBs here and in around an hour saw half a dozen males, all of which were looking rather worn and faded plus a single female which was in better condition.



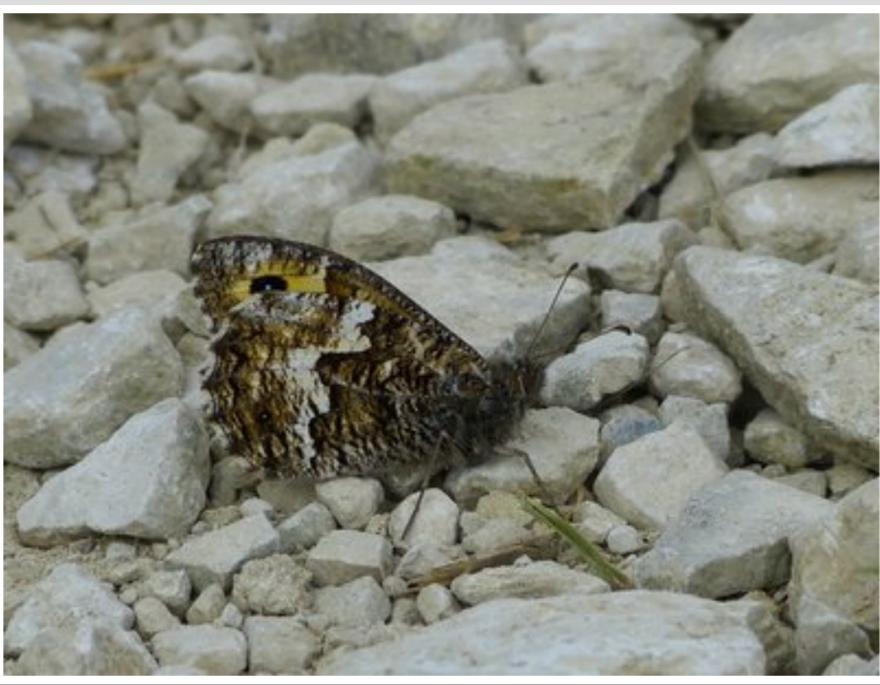
Silver-studded Blue female – Broadcroft 30.06.2014

I then decided to move on to Tout Quarry to see if I could find any better condition males there. I parked up and walked through the first area of stone sculptures and up one of the higher slopes to enjoy the view back down towards Chesil Beach.



Chesil Beach from Tout Quarry

Returning back down the path I disturbed a Grayling, my first this year, which did the usual thing of flying a short distance away to play hide-and-seek. On the light coloured Portland stone it didn't blend in quite as well as they usually do so it was a bit easier to find again.



Grayling - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014

I then followed the path around to the right of the sculpture area and into a likely looking area where I spotted a male SSB. Whilst not exactly fresh, this one was in much better condition than those I had seen earlier at Broadcroft.



Silver-studded Blue habitat



Silver-studded Blue - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014



Silver-studded Blue - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014

I spotted a couple more males in this area in similar condition plus a couple of females that were also a bit faded and who would only settle with their wings closed, unlike the males which were happy to bask with their wings open. I am guessing that the females with their darker colour were heating up quicker in the warm conditions, hence the closed wings.



Silver-studded Blue - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014

I then noticed another male that looked distinctly brighter in flight and which when settled proved to be a nice fresh looking individual 😊



Silver-studded Blue - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014

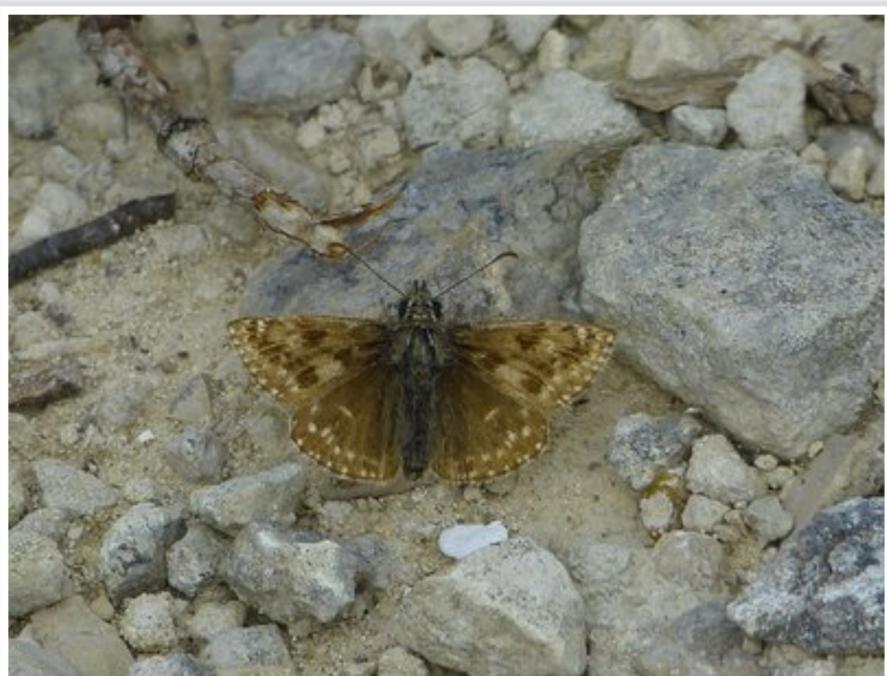


Silver-studded Blue - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014



Silver-studded Blue - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014

In the same area I was surprised to see a faded Dingy Skipper, not expecting to see one of these still flying.



Dingy Skipper - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014

Also, there were a number of Common Lizards amongst the rocks which I managed to get a couple of shots.



Peek-a-boo



Common Lizard - Tout Quarry 30.06.2014

All in all I saw a dozen SSBs at the two sites, 7 males and 1 female at Broadcroft and 4 males and 2 females at Tout Quarry.

It was then time to head back into Weymouth to meet back up with the others.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by nomad, 07-Jul-14 08:18 PM GMT

Nice report Neil, I really enjoyed it. I am pleased that you managed to find two fresh Silver-studded Blues. The views on Portland are wonderful. Early on Sunday June 29th, I walked the coastal path from the Bill where I stayed to Tout Quarry. That Dingy Skipper is very late, I also saw a fresh one during my visit. I expect the Silver-studded Blues on Portland may have started to appear on the wing around mid-June.

Regards Peter.

Re: nfreem

by Willow, 07-Jul-14 08:55 PM GMT

Lovely report and superb images Neil, crisp and sharp 'burraflies' 😊

My wife and I were on Portland in mid-May, the quarries are so full of things to interest the naturalist, we mooched about for a few hours and enjoyed the wonderful views you present in your report 😊

Thanks for sharing.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jul-14 09:11 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, very much appreciated as always 😊

Hi Peter, I am glad you enjoyed the report.

Cheers Bill, Portland certainly merits a bit of exploring, I could have sent much longer there.

Monday 30th June - later in the afternoon

Later that afternoon after returning to the caravan, whilst the others chilled out for a bit, I was still considered to be 'off the leash' 😊 so I grabbed the chance to nip down the road to Osmington and take a walk up the path to White Horse Hill.

Last year, during a week staying at Osmington Mills in early September, I had seen loads of Adonis Blues up there along with a number of Clouded Yellows; in fact this was where I had managed to get four Clouded Yellows in one shot which I posted in this diary on my return home I realised that it was too early for any Adonis Blues but thought that it would be worth a look to see what was about at this earlier time of year, maybe a Clouded Yellow given that it seemed a good spot for them last September.

The first part of the path goes through a section of trees and hedgerow but then carries on diagonally up the open hillside.



Looking back down the path up to White Horse Hill, Osmington

The grassy slopes were full of the usual Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites along with some Small Heaths plus Gatekeepers and Ringlets around the patches of scrub. There were also maybe a dozen or more Small Tortoiseshells along here, mostly basking on the path or patches of bare ground on the slopes, or taking off to intercept each other and spiral off into the sky.



Small Tortoiseshells - White Horse Hill 30.06.2014

Looking up the slope from the path I soon spotted the unmistakable deep buttery colour of a Clouded Yellow skimming rapidly backwards and forwards. After a while I lost sight of it and carried on up the path where a few minutes later I caught sight of another one (or maybe the same one again?)

For the next 40-45 minutes I wandered slowly up and down this section of path and watched as a Clouded Yellow would fly into view and then disappear behind a bit of scrub or higher up the slope.

At one point I had two in view at the same time so I knew that there were at least a couple about and after a while they slowed down a bit and started to settle occasionally. I watched as one settled a few yards away from me and stayed down just long enough for me to sneak up and get a record shot of what proved to be a bit of a worn individual.



Clouded Yellow - White Horse Hill 30.06.2014

A little later I managed to get a couple of shots of another individual that looked a lot fresher..



Clouded Yellow - White Horse Hill 30.06.2014



Clouded Yellow - White Horse Hill 30.06.2014

..and not long after that I photographed another one with slightly darker markings which showed that there were at least three different Clouded Yellows about in the area.



Clouded Yellow – White Horse Hill 30.06.2014

Given that I had seen at least half a dozen Clouded Yellows here last year and that they apparently survived the winter elsewhere, I wonder whether these today are the descendants of last years 🤔

Last year I had seen Clouded Yellows go to roost here under bramble leaves so I hung around a little longer hoping to see one do the same this time. With the lighter mid-summertime evenings they were still fairly active however and I had to leave to return to the others before they (the butterflies) showed any sign of settling down.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 08-Jul-14 10:03 PM GMT

A beautiful Clouded Yellow, Neil! I reckon they could well be a descendants of last year's crop. I would guess there were large stretches of the south coast that did not record an air frost last winter. If it's any measure, I only recorded one morning here near Heathrow where the car told me it was below freezing at 8 in the morning (not very scientific, I know! 😊).

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-14 10:56 PM GMT

Stunning fresh Silver Stud and Cloudies Neil 😊🍷 I'm glad my home county is treating you so well butterfly wise 😊 I've been birding at Portland many, many times but never butterflying there so I'll need to rectify that.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jul-14 08:10 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, we had a few air frosts in the midlands last winter, especially at 6.00am on the way to work, definitely not as many or as cold as most years though.

Thanks Wurzel, your home county has certainly been kind to me these past couple of years, I am seriously tempted to have another visit before the year is out.

Tuesday 1st July

Having spent most of the previous day out butterflying, the first day of July was going to be a day spent doing family stuff. Sarah had said that she wanted to take Frankie on the Swanage Steam Railway (at least that was her excuse, she rather likes steam trains herself) so after breakfast we drove to Norden to park the car and catch the steam train into Swanage.

On the platform at Norden I couldn't help but notice a dozen or so Marbled Whites on the adjacent grassy bank and as the train made its leisurely way towards Swanage there were also large numbers of these visible along some stretches of the embankment.

After having some lunch in Swanage and catching the train back again, Jane and Sarah decided that they fancied stopping off at Lulworth Cove on the way back to Weymouth for an ice cream 😊.

By now there was a fairly thick overcast although it was still reasonably warm and whilst the women and nipper went to get some ice creams, I had a quick look around the grassy area at the top of the car park by where the path heads towards Durdle Door.

In just 15 minutes or so I saw about half a dozen each of Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper plus Large, Small and Lulworth Skippers, the first of the latter that I had actually ever seen at Lulworth, my sightings of these in previous years having been later at Durlston.



Gatekeeper – Lulworth Cove 01.07.2014



Lulworth Skipper – Lulworth Cove 01.07.2014



Large Skipper – Lulworth Cove 01.07.2014

I also saw a worn male Adonis Blue which surprised me a bit as I thought that it was too late for first brood and much too early for second brood,



Adonis Blue – Lulworth Cove 01.07.2014

Ice creams eaten we then carried on our way back to our caravan with me thinking that with a bit of luck I would be back to spend more time at Lulworth sometime in the next day or so 😊

Later in the afternoon Sarah and Jane took Frankie to the play areas on the site and with the cloud thinning and the sun peeking through, I took the chance to stretch my legs and have another wander along the coast path to where I had seen the Lulworth Skippers previously. This time I went a bit further and found them all the way along to Redcliff Point, I wouldn't be surprised if the colony extended even further along here but the likely looking spots on the cliffs looked too dangerous to try and reach.



Lulworth Skipper – Bowleaze Cove 01.07.2014



Looking towards Osmington Mills from Redcliff Point

I did however find the freshest looking male I had seen so far 😊



Lulworth Skipper – Bowleaze Cove 01.07.2014

Also seen along this stretch were the now usual large numbers of Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites, and Ringlets along with increasing numbers of Gatekeepers plus Large and Small Skippers, half a dozen or so Small Tortoiseshells and a couple of Red Admirals, one a bit worn and one getting very tatty.



Looking towards White Horse Hill from the SW Coast Path between Bowleaze Cove and Redcliff Point



Large skipper – Bowleaze Cove 01.07.2014



Red Admiral - Bowleaze Cove 01.07.2014



That's what comes of defending Gorse bushes

Not bad for a day when I wasn't going to do any butterflying 😊😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Willrow, 10-Jul-14 07:11 PM GMT

What a great endorsement for a butterfly holiday, makes for great read...cheers Neil 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jul-14 07:49 PM GMT

Thanks for the great (and very corny 😂) comment Bill 😊, still a couple more posts from Dorset to come 😊

Wednesday 2nd July

My chance to return to Lulworth Cove came the very next day as, after a morning spent in Weymouth, Jane and Sarah wanted to return to the caravan site and take Frankie to the swimming pool. This would leave me free for the rest of the day so I decided to head back to Lulworth and Bindon Hill. I had also been looking at the map and noticed that there were a couple of other spots nearby that might be worth stopping off for a look at before carrying on to Lulworth. The first of these was Tadnoll Heath, off the A352 a few miles to the west of Wool.

I spent about an hour here during which time I saw Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Small Heaths, Small Tortoiseshells and Large and Small Skippers, all in good numbers.

I also found half a dozen or so Silver-studded Blues, most of which were quite worn and faded except one individual that was in better condition albeit not exactly fresh.



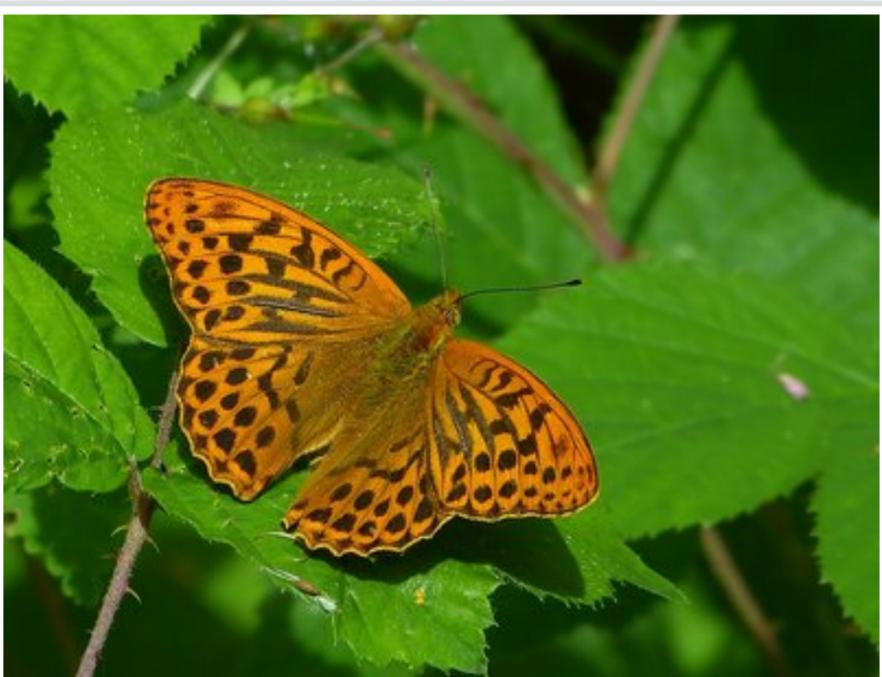
Silver-studded Blue - Tadnoll Heath 02.07.2014



Silver-studded Blue - Tadnoll Heath 02.07.2014

I left here and went down the road to Winfrith Heath which was a more open site with a quite 'desolate' look about it. I only went a few hundred yards down the main track here and found a couple of worn Silver-studded Blues, one male and one female, in a sheltered spot between some trees. At both of the above sites there were also good numbers of Dragonflies, mostly Common Darters but also a couple of Golden-ringed Dragonflies at each.

I then carried on through Wool to Hethfelton Wood for my next stop where again there were loads of Ringlets plus more Gatekeepers at this site. I spent another hour or so here during which time I saw about half a dozen Silver-washed Fritillaries plus a couple of Red Admirals, all of which were very active in the warm mid-afternoon sun.



Silver-washed Fritillary - Hethfelton Wood 02.07.2014



Red Admiral – Hethfelton Wood 02.07.2014

By then it was time to carry on to Lulworth...

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-14 11:08 PM GMT

Brill stuff Neil - I've never tried Tadnoll so I might have to now. We were always told to keep away from Winfrith because of the nuclear Power centre there. When I finally visited it for Nightingales when I was 12 I kept expecting to see five headed locals 🤪😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Mike Robinson, 11-Jul-14 12:34 AM GMT

Some very interesting Commentaries (especially for me, a beginner at Butterflying &c.) and some lovely Pictures.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jul-14 08:08 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, five headed locals in the depths of the Dorset countryside, surely not....I always thought the limit was three heads 😊😂

Thanks Mike, I am glad you like them 😊

Wednesday 2nd July – Lulworth Cove

Arriving at Lulworth I remembered the heads up (hmm...is that the right phrase considering my comment above about the locals 😊) from Wurzel regarding the path by the ice cream kiosk being closed due to a cliff collapse so I was prepared to find another way up onto Bindon hill. Whilst visiting here in previous years I had noticed a path by the fenced off MOD range area that went down some steps towards the far side of the cove so I headed straight around the pebbly beach and found this path.

This way up passes through the grassy slopes which seem to be one of the best spots here for Lulworth Skippers. There were loads of them in sight of the path and steps, which is just as well as the slopes themselves here are quite steep.



Path up the hill from the beach



These steps are pretty steep



Lots of Lulworth Skippers on the way up



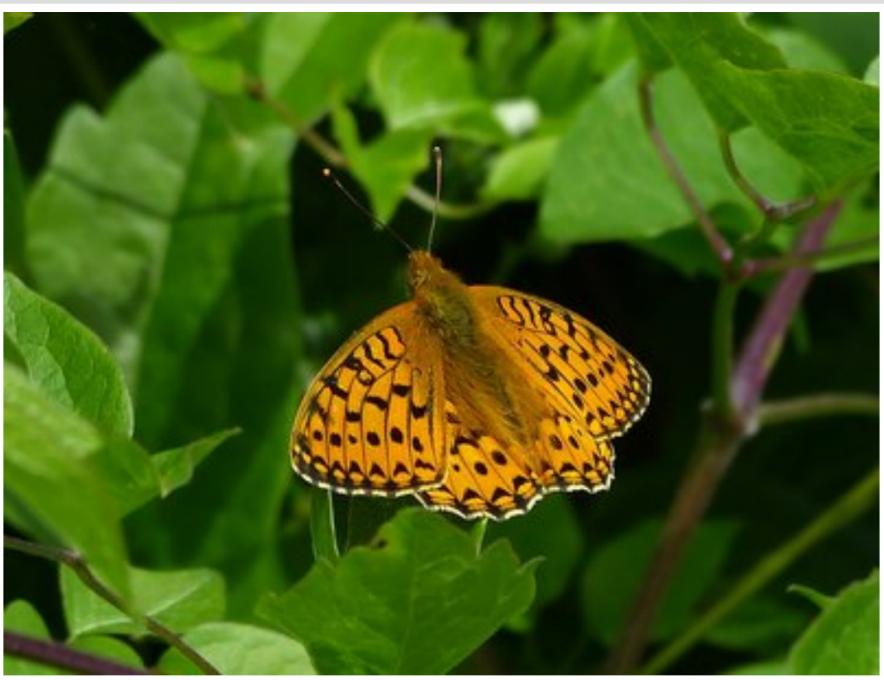
Male Small(left) and female Lulworth(right) Skippers



A pair of Lulworth Skippers (male top, female bottom)

During my ascent of this path I stopped a number of times to admire the view and watch the numerous butterflies which included the usual Marbled Whites, Meadow Brown and Ringlets along with Large and Small Skippers as well as the Lulworths. I also spotted a couple of Dark Green Fritillaries skimming at high speed across the slopes.

Reaching the gate at the top of the steps I turned left along the path towards the area of the hill that I usually go to. I soon saw more Dark Green Fritillaries which I watched in the hope that one might settle long enough for a photo. At first this was a pretty futile exercise in the warm conditions which meant that they were seldom settling and very skittish when they did. I did however manage to eventually sneak up close enough to get shots of a couple of individuals.



Dark Green Fritillary - Bindon Hill 02.07.2014



Dark Green Fritillary – Bindon Hill 02.07.2014

Walking around to the sheltered dip where the closed path comes out onto the hillside, I saw a blue butterfly that at first I took to be a Common Blue but on a second look something seemed a bit different about it. As it settled I took a couple of record shots and was amazed to see that it was a faded male Silver-studded Blue, not a species that I expected to see up here and one that I don't remember seeing any other sightings of in this location.



Silver-studded Blue – Bindon Hill 02.07.2014

Searching this area a bit more turned up a couple more and I took photos of three different males in total plus I also saw a suspected female which disappeared before I could be 100% sure.



Silver-studded Blue – Bindon Hill 02.07.2014



Silver-studded Blue - Bindon Hill 02.07.2014

These are the ones that I reported in the UKB July sightings thread last week and as stated there I reported these sightings to Dorset BC and was informed that apparently a SSB had been sighted on the transect here as well. I cannot help but wonder where these have originated from, one of the heathland colonies perhaps, or could a female have been blown over from Portland at some point?

As the late afternoon/early evening cooled down a bit (but not much) the Marbled Whites started to gather to roost and I watched some bickering going on for the best spots,



Marbled Whites - Bindon Hill 02.07.2014



Looks like the male came out on top



Marble White and Small Heath sharing the bed

I also watched the DGFs to see if they would slow down a bit but their behaviour was different, basically one minute they were still very active and the next they had disappeared. I did see one individual heading into the tree line below the path, maybe that's where they go to roost here?

I had earlier found another path down the hill and around 6.45pm headed down it, coming out by the row of cottages a hundred yards or so up the road from the visitor centre and car park.

Another great day with a fantastic few hours spent up on what is one of my favourite butterfly spots 😊. I have been here for the past couple of years in early September and it was interesting to see the different species here at this earlier time of year. I also noticed how many of the butterflies were carrying the small red mites that a lot carry here, more so than I have noticed before.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-14 07:52 AM GMT

Fantastic stuff Neil – I never knew that there were Silver Studs at Lulworth 😊 If I'd have tried that path I would have saved myself two other visits on my previous "Super Sunday" 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jul-14 10:07 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, the SSBs were a surprise to me, I have never seen any mention of them at Lulworth before this year.

The last two days in Weymouth were mostly spent doing family stuff, although I did go for a couple more wanders along the coast path during which I saw loads more of all the species already seen, mostly Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, increasing numbers of Gatekeepers, Large, Small and Lulworth Skippers and Small Tortoiseshells.

Sunday 6th July

After returning home on Saturday (5th July) through some fairly hefty rain showers, Sunday was another nice warm sunny day so I decided to have a look around one of my local spots to see how things were going along. I plumped for Castle Hills near Solihull where having seen my first 2014 Small Skipper there a couple of weeks ago; I was wondering if the Essex Skippers would be flying there yet.

There were loads of 'small golden skippers' flying and I started doing the usual contortions trying for that head on shot, something that the vari-angle screen on my FZ150 is a great help with. After a few dodgy record shots with grass everywhere, that all proved to be 'Smalls' I found one that was definitely an Essex.



Essex Skipper – Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014



Topside shot of the chap above

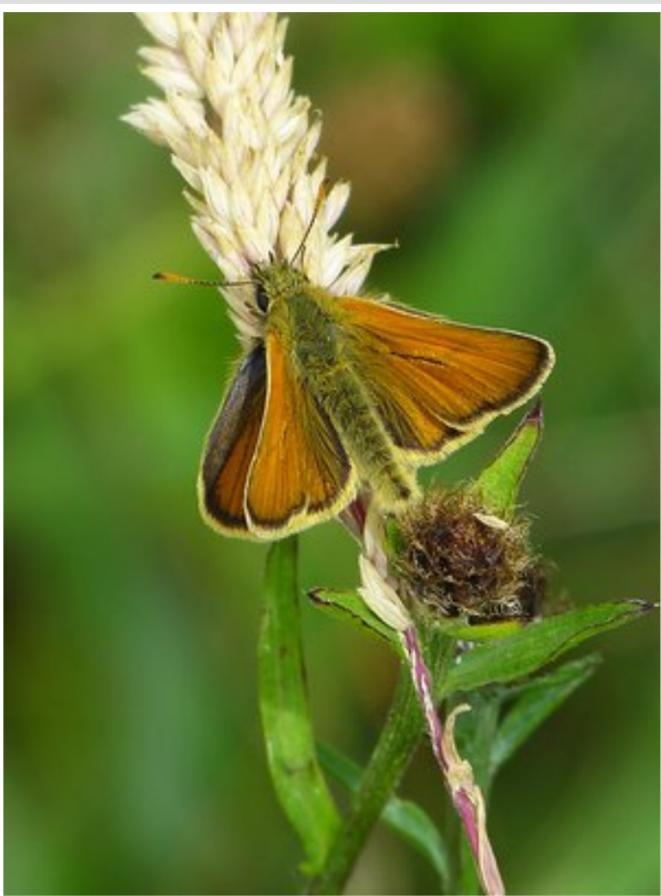
As it turned out, this was the only definite Essex that I found that day. Given how fresh looking some of the Small Skippers still were I am guessing that it was still early days for Essex Skippers around here. In previous years the Essex haven't reached their peak here until a lot of the Smalls are looking quite faded.



Small Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014



Small Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014



Small Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014



Small Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014



Small Skipper - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014

Small Tortoiseshells were about again in increasing numbers with at least a dozen seen around the site plus half a dozen Commas,



Comma - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014



Comma - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014

I was also pleased to see at least 20 or more Marbled Whites, not great numbers compared with the hordes I had seen down south the previous week, but just a few years ago there were none here. This species certainly seems to be consolidating its spread northward across Warwickshire with increased sightings around the Solihull area.



Marbled White - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014

The usual Ringlets and Meadow Browns were flapping about just about everywhere along with Gatekeepers (Hedge Browns) along the hedges and Small Heaths in the grassier meadows.



Gatekeeper - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014



Small Heath - Castle Hills Solihull 06.07.2014

I am still a week behind with my posts, with a bit of luck I should be able to catch up over the next few days...

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-14 10:17 PM GMT

Oh to be a week behind on my postings 😞😏 Lush H.Comma shots and plenty of peek a boo Smessex, nice! 😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-14 08:25 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I suppose one advantage of not going anywhere in the week when I am working is that I get a chance to keep more or less up to date 😊

Friday 11th July

During the past week I have had a couple of sessions in the garden after work in an attempt to keep on top of the rampant growth that is occurring this year. Everything seems to be growing like crazy 😲 and proves the point that even the bits left to grow wild need looking after, in fact even more so than the 'tidier' bits do.

During the week I had noticed a rather tatty Red Admiral visiting regularly and taking up station on the nettle patch until about 6.30pm when the shadows from some trees lengthen over that end of the garden.

There have also been an increasing number of 'whites', mostly Large and Green-veined passing through plus a couple of second brood Holly Blues.

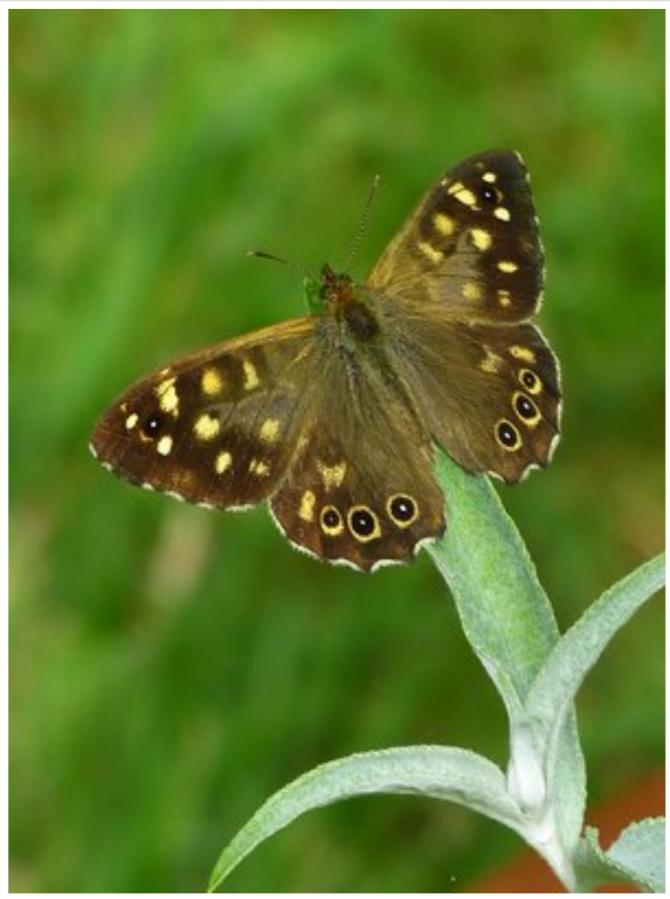


Green-veined White - Coverdale 11.07.2014



Standing on tiptoe with FZ150 held at full stretch above my head using vari-angle screen

The Speckled Wood presence is continuing as usual with a couple of new males to greet me on returning from Weymouth and replacing the faded ones that were there before we went.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 11.07.2014



Same one as above

I finished work on Friday at lunchtime and popped round to see my Mom as usual and before leaving there I had a quick half hour round the park just down the road from her house. There were plenty of the expected Ringlets and Meadow Browns and a few Gatekeepers and Speckled Woods along the line of shrubs around the edge of

the park plus a couple of Commas and Small Tortoiseshells,



Comma – Langley Hall 11.07.2014

I thought that this fresh looking Small Tortoiseshell looked particularly attractive,



Small Tortoiseshell – Langley Hall 11.07.2014

In an area of longer grass that has been left and allowed to grow there were Large and Small Skippers plus I was pleased to find a couple of Essex Skippers.



Essex Skipper – Langley Hall 11.07.2014

The latter are a species that I would never have thought I would ever see when I used to look for butterflies here when I was younger. Mind you, Speckled Woods were not that common around here in the 1970s either and now they are everywhere. It is also good to see Small Tortoiseshells returning to the kind of numbers that I remember from those days. On the other hand Wall Browns used to be common here but they have since disappeared, as they have from large parts of the midlands.

I can't help but wonder what will be the winners and losers in another 40 odd years time, who knows, maybe a Continental Swallowtail will turn up 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-14 10:57 PM GMT

Great catch up posting Neil and that Small Tortoiseshell is particularly stunning 😎😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jul-14 07:48 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I rather liked that ST myself 😊

Saturday 12th July,

Last Saturday afternoon saw me nipping around to my local spot at Bickenhill, mainly to see if I could find any Essex skippers there. This is the first year that I have been visiting this particular spot and I was hoping to add it to the list of local sites for this species.

I soon found good numbers of Small Skippers and, after doing the usual contortions of trying to get the head on shot, managed some confirmation shots of some Essex Skippers 😊



Essex Skipper – Bickenhill 12.07.2014



Well, at least I can confirm the ID...



Small Skipper - Bickenhill 12.07.2014



Small Skipper - Bickenhill 12.07.2014

I have no idea how many individuals of each species were present all told as counting them is nigh on impossible when they are zipping about all over the place, but there were something like 50-60 in total with at least 10 Essex confirmed, probably a lot more.

This meant that, over the past couple of years, I have now confirmed Essex skippers at six of my local spots, all within a couple of miles of Solihull 😊

Meadow Browns and Ringlets were flying again in good numbers, although down a bit from the hordes of these two species that I saw here a couple of weeks back and with a lot of them looking worn and faded now. There were also a few Gatekeepers around with about half a dozen seen, all males.

Small Tortoiseshells seem to be continuing their comeback with a couple of dozen here, all very active in the warm afternoon sun, as were a couple of fresh Peacocks.

There were also a few Commas, one of which was a bit more obliging than the Peacocks or STs as it kept returning to perches where I could get a couple of shots.



Comma - Bickenhill 12.07.2014



Comma - Bickenhill 12.07.2014

I have seen increasing numbers of Whites during the past week and there were a fair few here, mostly flying past without stopping. I was only sure of the ID of a few of these, most seemed to be Large or Green-veined but there were at least a couple of Small amongst them.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-14 09:58 PM GMT

That second shot is just brill 😄 But are you sure that it's an Essex 😊 Lovely H Comma later too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 17-Jul-14 01:26 PM GMT

Great reports and photos in recent posts Neil 😄 lovely Skipper shots. Also great Dorset reports and photos and brilliant finding the SS Blues on Bindon Hill. I recognise the Lulworth steps as we were there recently, pretty gruelling they were too 😊 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jul-14 07:33 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, yep, something about that skipper just made me think Essex 😊

Hi Mike, yeah, those steps can be hard work on a hot day. Mind you I stopped quite a few times to watch all the skippers on the way up 😊

Sunday 13th July

With the weather shaping up into another warm afternoon with some high clouds and plenty of sun, I made a bit of a last minute decision to go to Snitterfield Bushes, a half an hour or so drive down towards Stratford-upon-Avon from my house.

This is usually a reliable site for Silver-washed Fritillaries and as soon as I arrived at the car park I was greeted by one swooping low over the bonnet. Wandering off down one of the tracks I soon spotted half a dozen more, both males and females, along with hordes of Ringlets and Meadow Browns, a few Gatekeepers and Commas and a couple of nice fresh Peacocks.



Comma – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014



SWF male – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014



SWF female – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014

My attention was drawn towards what at first looked like a huge Ringlet fluttering about in a partially shaded clearing which on a closer look proved to be a nice *valesina* female SWF.



SWF valesina – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014



SWF valesina – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014



SWF valesina – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014

Unfortunately I couldn't get a clear shot from the other side to show the beautiful underside at its best, but never mind, I was chuffed enough just to see her 😊

I had co-incidentally received my copy of the latest revision of Thomas & Lewington a couple of days previously and had noticed that the SWF description still states that this form is restricted to the central south of the country with an abrupt cut-off outside of this range. Well, this form has been turning up in Warwickshire woods for a number of years now; I have seen examples, both here and at Oversley Wood during the past four years and I know they have also been recorded in Ryton Wood.

One for the next revision perhaps 😊

This site is split into two parts with a road going through the middle and crossing into the other part I saw more of the same species plus half a dozen White Admirals flitting and gliding above the paths.

One large bramble patch was particularly popular, with half a dozen SWFs, a couple each of Commas, Peacocks and White Admirals and a worn Red Admiral all sharing it.



SWF and Peacock – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014



SWF male and female – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014



SWF and Comma – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014



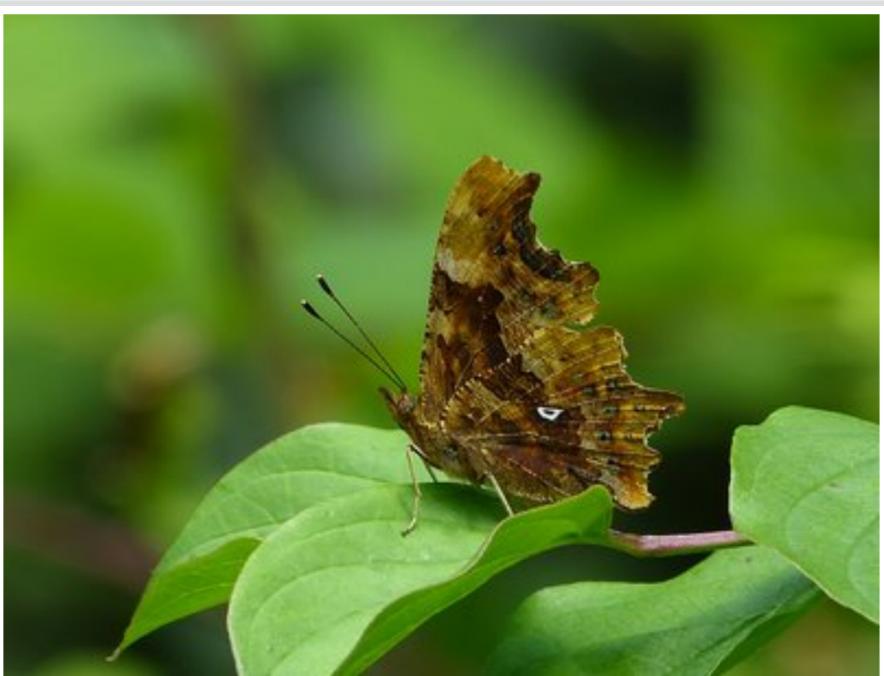
Red Admiral – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014

The White Admirals in particular were showing the signs of a hard life amongst the brambles with all those that I saw being well past their best.



White Admiral – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014

I didn't notice at the time but when going through the photos one of the Commas looks like it probably qualifies as *ab. o-album*,



Comma ab.o-album – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014

I also managed to get good views of the SWF courtship flight with a female flying straight down the track with a male spiralling around her. I have seen this before but never so close and so clearly as today when it happened right in front of me a couple of times and I watched as they flew a hundred

yards or more down the path before disappearing through a gap in the trees.

My original plan for today was to do a bit of pottering around the house and garden and then just chill out for bit...glad I changed my mind 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 17-Jul-14 07:56 PM GMT

What a gorgeous Valesina Neil. Your photos certainly do her justice. Fabulous! I have never seen one before but if I could get a few shots like that I would be thrilled. Well done too for spotting that Comma – great find. What a day! 🍷

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jul-14 08:59 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, it was a great afternoon, so much the better for being spur of the moment 😊

I have just edited the photo order and moved the Comma up which places the normal SWF female closer to the valesina which shows the difference better.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Nick Broomer, 17-Jul-14 10:44 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Great reporting as usual, with lovely photos. I especially like your two in a bush photos and, you have certainly cracked it with your pictures of the Valesina, what a beauty. Also loved the closed wing shot of the Comma, nailed it. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 17-Jul-14 10:55 PM GMT

Neil,you are not allowed Essex Skippers up there,they are not for sharing! Yours are all Small Skippers! 😊

That SWF Valezina is a cracker,congratulations.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 17-Jul-14 11:33 PM GMT

Brilliant shots of the lovely SWF *valesina* Neil 😊😊🍷

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-14 12:04 AM GMT

Cracking shots of the valesina Neil 😊😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jul-14 10:07 PM GMT

Thank all for the great comments, very much appreciated as always 😊

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

Neil,you are not allowed Essex Skippers up there,they are not for sharing! Yours are all Small Skippers! 😊

Sorry Mark, I am afraid they have found their way past me 😊 , there are Essex sightings from Prees Heath and Ludlow, well into Shropshire now and

seem to be doing very well this year 😊 .

Friday 18th July

A spectacular thunderstorm during the early hours of this morning left it feeling uncomfortably warm and humid at work today. By the time I finished at mid-day as usual on a Friday and did my usual errands and domestic stuff, it was turning into a very hot afternoon.

I decided to nip round to Shadowbrook Meadows, thinking that by late afternoon it might start to cool down a bit...well, I was wrong. The bits of cloud that had been around earlier in the afternoon gave way to a clear blue sky with the sun beating down mercilessly and if anything it just seemed to get hotter and hotter 😬

Needless to say, the butterflies, of which there were loads, were extremely active and whilst many of them were stopping at flowers it was only for the briefest moment and usually with wings clamped firmly shut.

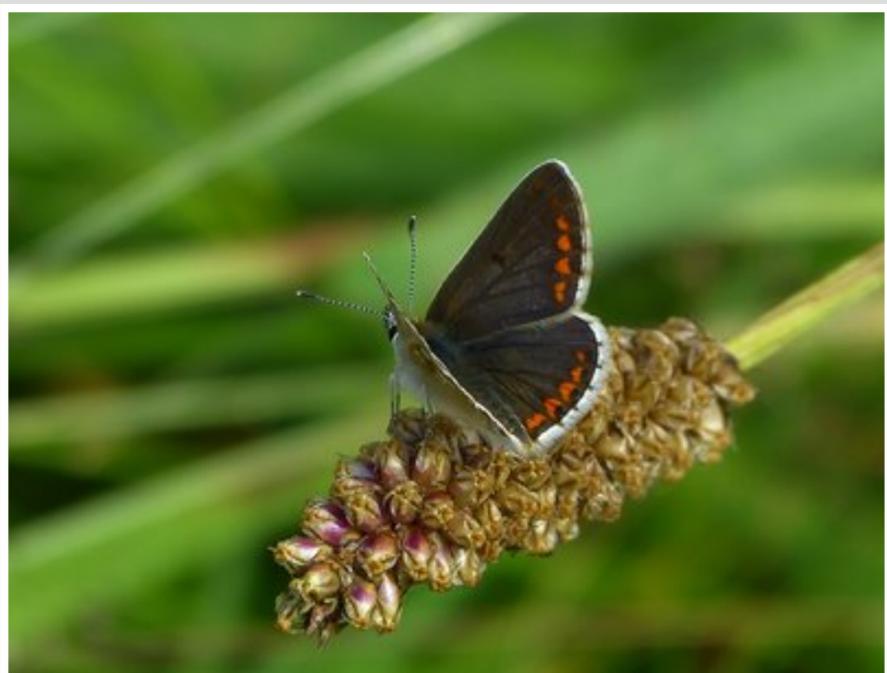
Species seen were Meadow Browns and Small Skippers, both all over the place in large numbers, Gatekeepers and Ringlets in smaller numbers, half a dozen fresh Peacocks, a couple each of Common Blue and Brown Argus plus a single Small Copper.



I only managed a couple of underside shots of these in the heat



Most of my Small Skipper shots were similar to this



Brown Argus male – this was as much as he would open up



Underside of the one above



Common Blue female underside



This was as much topside as I saw of anything



Brown Argus female



Small Copper - first of the second brood here.

By about 5.30pm I was wilting in the heat so called it a day and went back home.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Jack Harrison, 19-Jul-14 08:40 AM GMT

Some evocative pictures there Neil for this "English ex-pat 😊". I love the photos of two species set in context. I miss that high summer in English woodland.

And splendid *valesina* shots. I have only seen *valesina* in a couple of localities: Bentley Wood and a private garden in the Cotswolds. That was many years ago. It really is a spectacular form and I believe it is (I think read in my "South") the dominate form of the female in some areas in the temperate far east.

Jack

Re: nfreem

by MikeOxon, 19-Jul-14 12:41 PM GMT

I agree with Jack - those paired photos are very interesting and useful. I spent ages pursuing a 'SWF' recently, only for it to mutate into a Comma, immediately on landing 😊 I also experienced firmly-closed wings at Lough Down on Thursday.

Our butterflies do not seem to like too much sun whereas, further South, they seem to cope much better. We also don't seem to see the phenomenon of butterflies congregating around pools of water, as often seen in Europe.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jul-14 09:30 AM GMT

Thanks for the great comments guys, very much appreciated 😊

Hi Jack, there is certainly something special about high summer in English woodland. Mind you, that is a beautiful part of the world that you have moved to.

That is interesting about *valesina* being the dominant female form in some parts of the temperate far east.

Hi Mike, I have watched Commas myself in the past thinking that they were male SWFs, especially early in their season before I have got my 'eye in' again on their flight patterns.

A lot of our butterflies do seem to hide away if it gets too hot. Some seem quite happy with it though, it is just that we cannot get near them when they are warmed up in super speedy mode 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jul-14 08:39 PM GMT

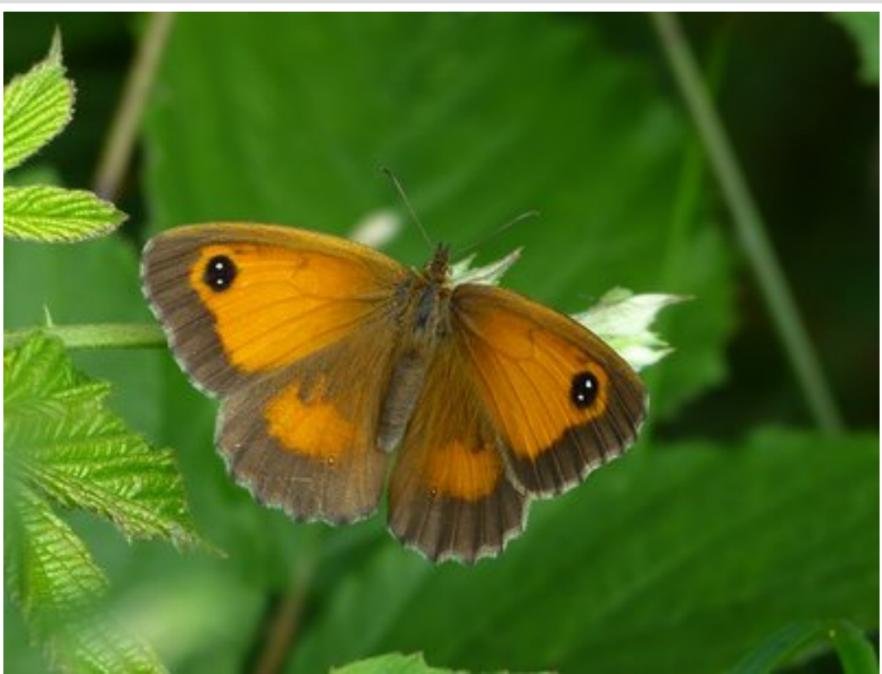
Sunday 20th July

Yesterday we had a couple of nasty thunderstorms 🤪 accompanied by very heavy rain which didn't finally clear until later in the afternoon. Today was a far more pleasant day with a mixture of sun and clouds and a temperature that stayed in the low twenties which felt far more comfortable. With a couple of hours free this afternoon I decided to nip out and pay another visit to Shadowbrook Meadows where I had been on Friday afternoon when it was uncomfortably hot.

Arriving at the reserve, my heart sank to see that the local farmer had started to cut the meadows, with the first meadow completely cut and the second one started on. I went along the hedges around the outside to reach the so far untouched meadows, noticing as I went, a few Meadow Browns fluttering across the cut grass where there had been hordes of them a few days ago. At least the Gatekeepers seemed unaffected with even more in evidence along the hedges than there were the other day with increasing numbers of females now out.



Gatekeeper male - Shadowbrook 20.07.2014



Gatekeeper female - Shadowbrook 20.07.2014



Gatekeeper pair - Shadowbrook 20.07.2014

In the uncut meadows the butterflies were swarming, mostly Meadow Browns and Small Skippers (with a few Essex confirmed amongst them) with a dozen or so Peacocks flitting from flower to flower.



Peacock - Shadowbrook 20.07.2014



Peacock - Shadowbrook 20.07.2014



Essex Skipper female (yes, I have a head on shot to confirm it) - Shadowbrook 20.07.2014



Small Skipper female (yes, I have a etc...) - Shadowbrook 20.07.2014

One particular Meadow Brown looked very pale in flight and when settled proved to be a very light coloured individual, a bit worn and faded but still paler than normal.



Meadow (Light)Brown - Shadowbrook 20.07.2014



Meadow (Light)Brown – Shadowbrook 20.07.2014

The Common Blues, Brown Argus and Small Coppers here had only just begun their summer brood emergences and I cannot help but be a bit concerned for them with the meadows being mown at this time.

After an hour or so I decided to move on and on my way out had a quick chat with the farmer. Apparently he has an agreement with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, who he leases the meadows from, to cut them on or around the 16th July each year. That's as maybe, but looking back on my notes from visiting here previously, he hasn't cut them this early in the past few years. I was photographing second brood Common Blues and Small Coppers here on 26th July last year when the meadows were still uncut.

Oh well, I know that the meadows are cut at some time each year anyway, hopefully my concerns prove to be unjustified.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by badgerbob, 20-Jul-14 09:51 PM GMT

Beautiful Meadow Brown. Also your valezina is something else!! Really 'natural looking' pictures that make a refreshing change!!

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 20-Jul-14 09:54 PM GMT

"badgerbob" wrote:

Also your valezina is something else!! Really 'natural looking' pictures that make a refreshing change!!

I agree – nice shots!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-14 11:36 PM GMT

Great shots Neil 😊 I reckon your first male Gatekeeper is an aberrant as it has much reduced second eye spots. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jul-14 07:21 PM GMT

Thanks Bob, glad you like my photos 😊 I do try and capture the butterflies in a way that reflects their character, with varying degrees of success.

Thanks Pete, much appreciated 😊

Thanks Wurzel, I am not sure anymore what qualifies as an ab. or not with Gatekeepers, there just seems so much variation in the spots (or lack of them) 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-14 08:17 PM GMT

Sunday 20th July – continued

Having spent less time at Shadowbrook Meadows than originally planned I decided to head back down the road to the village of Catherine-de-Barnes which is just a couple of miles away. There is a public footpath here which is usually good for awakening hibernators in spring and where I have found loads of autumn Commas in the past couple of years.

Sure enough, within seconds of parking up and walking down the path I had seen a couple each of Peacocks and Commas. Coming to a more open area with a number of large bramble patches (the best spot for autumn commas) I found more Peacocks and Commas plus some Small Tortoiseshells



Peacock – Solihull 20.07.2014



Peacock – Solihull 20.07.2014



Comma - Solihull 20.07.2014



Comma - Solihull 20.07.2014



Comma - Solihull 20.07.2014



Comma - Solihull 20.07.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Solihull 20.07.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Solihull 20.07.2014

The Small Tortoiseshell below looked a bit odd with its miss-matched forewing tips, not sure if the blue on the RH wing tip is due to damage or to some trauma in the pupa or something else entirely?



Small Tortoiseshell – Solihull 20.07.2014

I was quite pleased with the photo below of the Small Tortoiseshell with the out of focus Peacock in the background



Small Tortoiseshell & Peacock – Solihull 20.07.2014

In about an hour I saw a couple of dozen Peacocks here with half a dozen or more each of Commas and Small Tortoiseshells. Other butterflies seen were numerous passing 'whites', Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers plus a single example each of Common Blue and Small Copper.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-14 10:21 AM GMT

Lush photos Neil 😊🍷 There seems to have been a drastic emergence of Peacocks recently – I'm seeing them in fives and sixes rather than just the ones and twos from the spring 😏

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jul-14 08:26 PM GMT

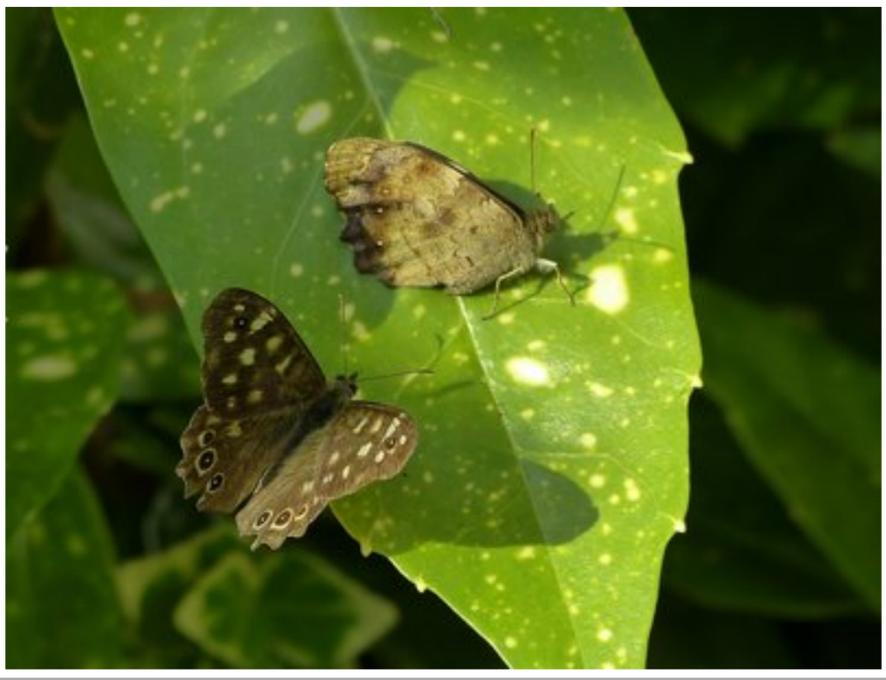
Cheers Wurzel, there has certainly been a good emergence of Peacocks around here, numbers have been building all week 😊

Friday 25th July

With the glorious weather this week I have been greeted on my arrival home from work with growing numbers of butterflies in the garden. I have a couple of Buddleias in the front garden which have been attracting half a dozen or more Peacocks most afternoons, I counted nine on pulling onto the drive on Thursday afternoon, plus a single Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell.

The back garden has had a constant procession of all three common whites plus a few Holly Blues as well as the constantly present Speckled Woods. Quite often all these have been in view at once with up to half a dozen whites and a couple each of Holly Blues, Specklies and maybe a Peacock all visible around the garden at the same time.

On one occasion I watched a male Speckled Wood practically knock a female out of the air and then land close to her. She then did the 'play dead' thing for a few seconds before righting herself and flying off at low level which lost the male. I have seen this a few times over the past few years now and only once have I seen it result in a successful pairing. Not surprising really, after all we are talking about a 'knock her down and jump on her' approach to courtship here, no wonder the females mostly fly off.

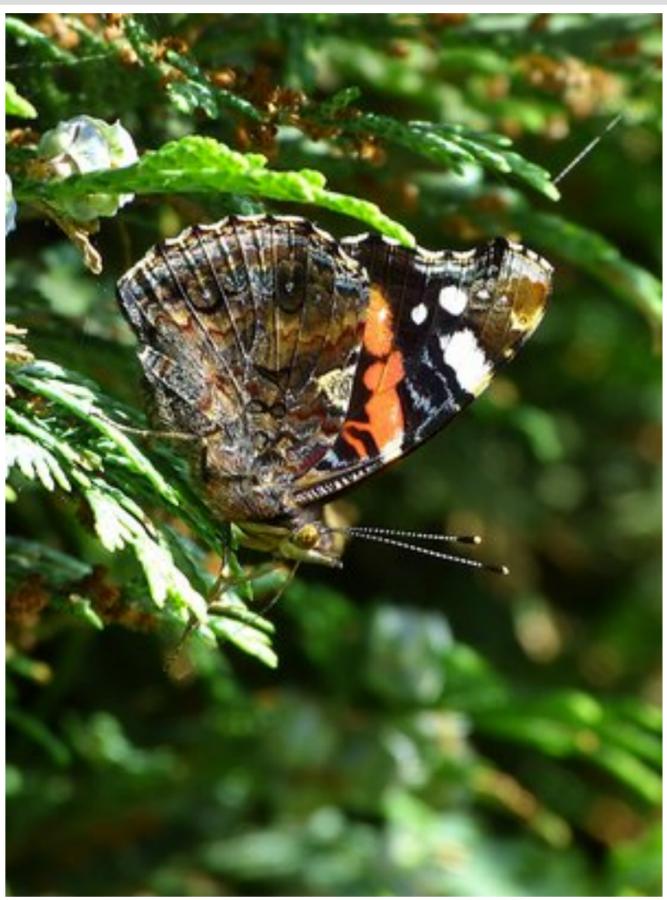


Speckled Wood male and unimpressed female

Despite the profusion of butterflies I have taken very few photos. Mostly they were very active in the heat and the ones that did settle, like on the Buddleias, mostly had their wings closed or just flicked them open occasionally and very briefly.



Peacock - Coverdale 25.07.2014



Red Admiral - Coverdale 25.07.2014

Most evenings there has been a 'Hawker' dragonfly patrolling up and down the garden, I haven't seen it settle yet so not too sure of the species but it looks like either a Southern or Migrant Hawker in flight, I have had both these species in the garden before. Last night it was still swooping back and forth at 9.00pm taking midges and gnats in the last rays of the setting sun.

A garden first for me this afternoon was a Common Darter, although I often see loads of these whilst out and about. This one spent some time perched on top of the washing line prop from where it had a grandstand view of the garden.



Common Darter - Coverdale 25.07.2014

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 25-Jul-14 08:52 PM GMT

Lovely photos, as always, Neil 😊 Peacocks, and also Brimstone appear to be building in numbers now, which is great 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-14 11:22 PM GMT

Cracking shot of the Red Admiral 😊 I love it when they hang on the end of branches in that pose 😊

Have a goodun

Wuzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-14 10:26 AM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊, loads of peacocks around here but not many Brimstones yet. Mind you I never do get as many Brimstones as seem to be about further south.

Cheers Wurzel 😊 that one has been hanging around for a few days now (not in the same place 😊), still not managed an open wing shot 😊

Saturday 26th July

After the heat of the past few days, today (Saturday) was forecast to be a bit cooler. The morning started off warm and sunny again however, and leaving the house just after 8.30 to go and do some shopping, I counted five Peacocks already on the Buddleias in the front garden. They were still there when I returned so after unloading the shopping I took a couple of quick shots.



Peacock - Coverdale 26.07.2014

After lunch I decided to pop around to my local spot at Castle Hills for a bit and do a Big Butterfly Count whilst I was there. Choosing a spot in one of the meadows that was full of Skippers, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Peacocks plus numerous whites, I easily totalled 105 butterflies in 15 minutes for the count. Essex Skipper numbers have increased here with probably equal numbers with the now mostly faded Small Skippers.



Small Skipper - Castle Hills 26.07.2014



Essex Skipper female - Castle Hills 26.07.2014

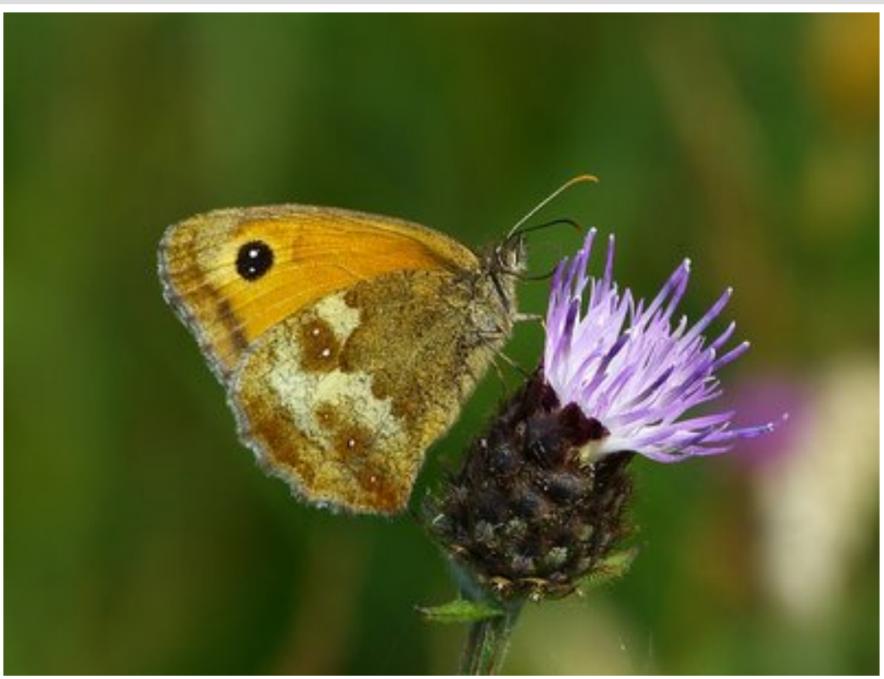
Gatekeeper numbers have also increased substantially over the past week or so with plenty of females on the wing now.



Gatekeeper female - Castle Hills 26.07.2014



Gatekeeper female - Castle Hills 26.07.2014



Gatekeeper female - Castle Hills 26.07.2014

I am also noticing quite few of the males around here have reduced eye spots like the one I posted the other day. I saw a few more like it today, the one below being another typical example,



Gatekeeper male - Castle Hills 26.07.2014

Always being on the lookout for Small Coppers here, I was pleased when I spotted a nice blue spotted example although I only managed the one so-so shot of this one before I lost sight of it.



Small Copper ab. caeruleopunctata - Castle Hills 26.07.2014

I stayed around the same spot and thought that I had found it again and took some more photos but it turned out to be another individual, without the blue spots,



Small Copper - Castle Hills 26.07.2014

A bit further along I found a third Small Copper and with this one doing the typical male behaviour of returning to the same perches I managed to spend a bit of time taking some different shots.



Small Copper - Castle Hills 26.07.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills 26.07.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills 26.07.2014

Circling around to head back I found a single fresh male Common blue...



Common Blue - Castle Hills 26.07.2014

...and a female Holly Blue that settled briefly, just long enough for a quick shot,



Holly Blue - Castle Hills 26.07.2014

Considering that it was supposed to be cooler today, it still felt as warm as it has been, although perhaps not as 'muggy' as of late. The butterflies were still mostly very active although I did manage to take advantage of some passing clouds occasionally to get some of the shots.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jul-14 07:33 PM GMT

Sunday 27th July

Today (Sunday) turned out to be more like the previous day was forecast to be, a couple of degrees cooler with more cloud about. With a couple of hours spare in the afternoon I was tempted to return to Castle Hills to see if I could find the nice blue spotted Small Copper that I had seen there the previous day and hopefully get some better photos.

Returning to the same corner of the meadow I soon saw the normal looking Small Copper that I had seen here on Saturday and managed to get a few open wing shots,



Small Copper - Castle Hills 27.07.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills 27.07.2014

Moving a few yards up the path I then found the blue spotted chap. With the more favourable conditions I managed to get some better photos of him. I have seen the blue spotted ab. *caeruleopunctata* at some local sites quite a few times now but this one is certainly one of the best marked examples that I have seen around here 😊



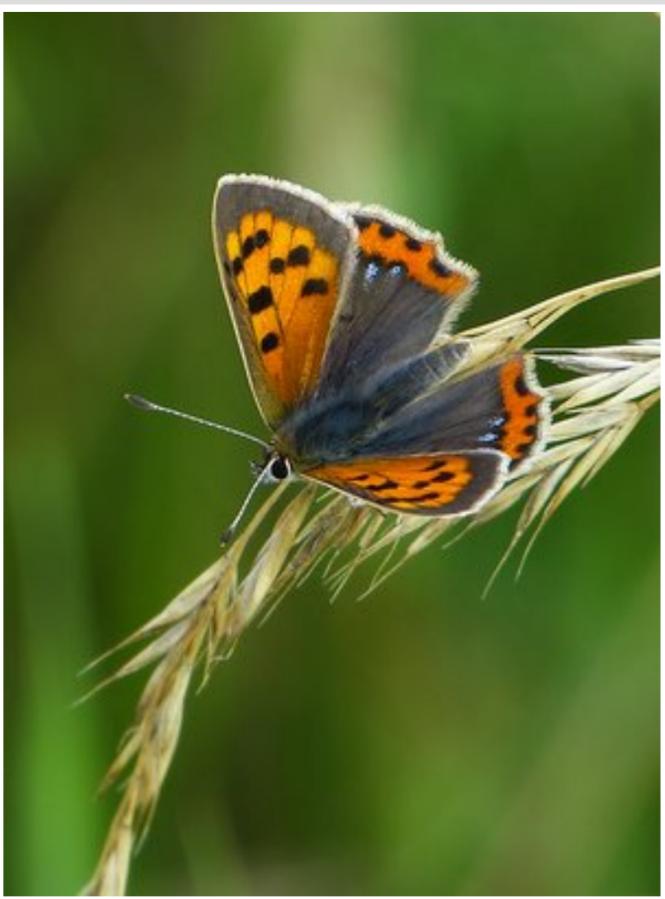
Small Copper ab. caeruleopunctata - Castle Hills 27.07.2014



Small Copper ab. caeruleopunctata - Castle Hills 27.07.2014



Small Copper ab. caeruleopunctata - Castle Hills 27.07.2014



Small Copper ab. caeruleopunctata - Castle Hills 27.07.2014

Mission accomplished, I then left him alone and carried on to check out another field that I had not looked in the previous day. Lo and behold I found another blue spotted Small Copper, the spots not as well defined as the other one but a nice example still.



Small Copper ab. caeruleopunctata – Castle Hills 27.07.2014



Small Copper ab. caeruleopunctata – Castle Hills 27.07.2014

A lot of the Meadow Browns are looking tired and faded now but today I noticed a few better looking condition examples around. This species has a very protracted emergence throughout the summer and I have seen reasonable looking females here in early September the past couple of years.



Meadow Brown male – Castle Hills 27.07.2014

Peacocks are still very much in evidence around here with good numbers being seen just about everywhere with today being no exception.



Peacock – Castle Hills 27.07.2014

I also noticed quite a few Emerald Damselflies today, I just love the way these flutter about amongst the long grass. I can easily imagine some young child seeing these and thinking that they are seeing little green fairies 😊



Emerald Damselfly – Castle Hills 27.07.2014

Bye for now,
Neil

Re: nfreem

by Hoggers, 29-Jul-14 09:33 AM GMT

Hi Neil, your Small Coppers are just superb! Congratulations!

Are they your second brood? I went to Dungeness on Sunday and the second brood is just about over and so seeing your photographs has got me waiting to see the third brood!

Best Wishes,
Hoggers.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-14 08:21 PM GMT

Thanks Hoggers 😊 the second brood are only just getting going around here, mostly males so far. We don't always get a third brood or sometimes only have a partial one depending on the year.

Monday 28th July

I have got this week off work and am planning to do a mix of jobs around the house, family stuff, and of course a bit of butterflying 😊

Monday morning we went round and picked up my daughter Sarah and little Frankie and went round to Babbs Mill Park and LNR which is just a couple of minutes' drive away and is a local spot that I haven't been to yet this year.

Whilst Jane and Sarah took Frankie to play on the swings and slides and stuff I sneaked off for a wander around the nature reserve.

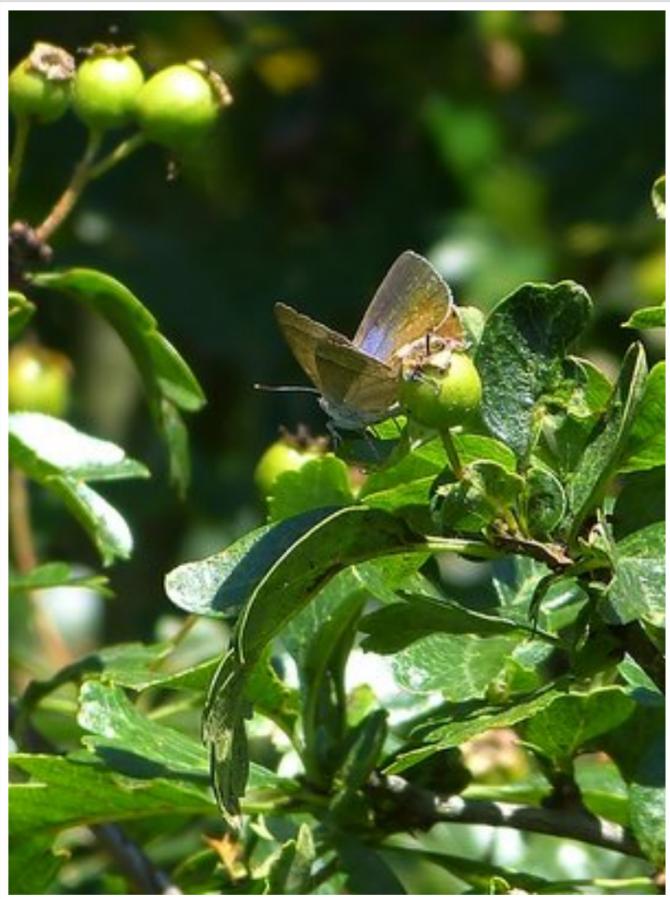
All the usual suspects (Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Small/Essex Skippers and Peacocks) were about in good numbers and in the mid-morning sun were all very active. I took a few record shots of the skippers to confirm the presence of both Small and Essex which seemed to be about in fairly equal numbers with most of the Smalls being more worn and faded now.

There is a large lake in the park with a smaller 'natural pond' to one side and I noticed a number of Emperor Dragonflies constantly patrolling about. I watched these for a while and not once did I see one settle so I had a go at trying to get an in-flight shot of one. After a couple of duff attempts I managed the shot below which I was quite pleased with, not perfect but not too bad with a bridge camera.



Emperor Dragonfly – Babbs Mill 28.07.2014

At one point one of the Emperors veered up to try and catch a silvery looking butterfly that managed to escape into a nearby Hawthorn tree and which on closer inspection turned out to be a Purple Hairstreak. On seeing this one I realised that it was the first one I have seen this year, for some reason I have just not been looking for them. The photo below is a fairly tight crop of a long distance shot but with this species you have to take the shot when you can.



Purple Hairstreak – Babbs Mill 28.07.2014

As always I was looking out for Common Blues and Small Coppers and was pleased to see half a dozen of the former and a single male of the latter.



Common Blue – Babbs Mill 28.07.2014

The highlight of the morning however was a Clouded Yellow, the first that I have ever seen at any of my local spots. Needless to say it didn't settle but after flying past me a couple of times disappeared over the lake.

After going back to our house for a bit, later in the afternoon I took Sarah and Frankie back to theirs and on the way back home afterwards I decided to call in at Sheldon Country Park.

Again all the usual species were present in good numbers including both Small and Essex Skippers and a good couple of dozen Common Blues 😊



Gatekeeper & Common Blue – Sheldon CP 28.07.2014



Common Blue – Sheldon CP 28.07.2014



Common Blue – Sheldon CP 28.07.2014



Common Blue - Sheldon CP 28.07.2014



Small Skipper - Sheldon CP 28.07.2014



Essex Skipper - Sheldon CP 28.07.2014



Essex Skipper – Sheldon CP 28.07.2014

After seeing my first ever local Clouded Yellow in the morning at Babbs Mill, what else did I see here this afternoon? Yep, another Clouded Yellow, this one flew past me and disappeared over the boundary fence for Birmingham Airport. That's none for years and then two on the same day at two different local sites. Reckon I better start looking out for those Yellow-legged Tortoiseshells 😊😄

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 29-Jul-14 08:33 PM GMT

👍👍👍👍 I've just seen your Small Coppers Neil! Not only are they fantastic shots but blue spots to boot!!!! I'm beginning to think you're teasing me and you're just very good with photoshop 😄😄

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jul-14 12:35 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊 no intention to tease 😄, the blue spots just seem to turn up reliably around here. I don't even own Photoshop, just a free download called PhotoScape which I use for resizing, cropping and very limited tweaking. Probably a good job really as I might be tempted to fiddle with my photos too much and when I do that I nearly always make them worse 😊

Tuesday 29th July – Aston Rowant part 1.

For the past few years I have taken a trip down the M40 to Aston Rowant to see Silver-spotted skippers and Chalkhill Blues, this being the closest site for me to see these two species. With me being off work this week it was time to make the trip again and with one eye on the weather forecast I had chosen Tuesday for the trip.

I wanted to be there before 09.00 before things warmed up too much in order to try for some photos and after a good run down I was on the slopes by 08.45am.

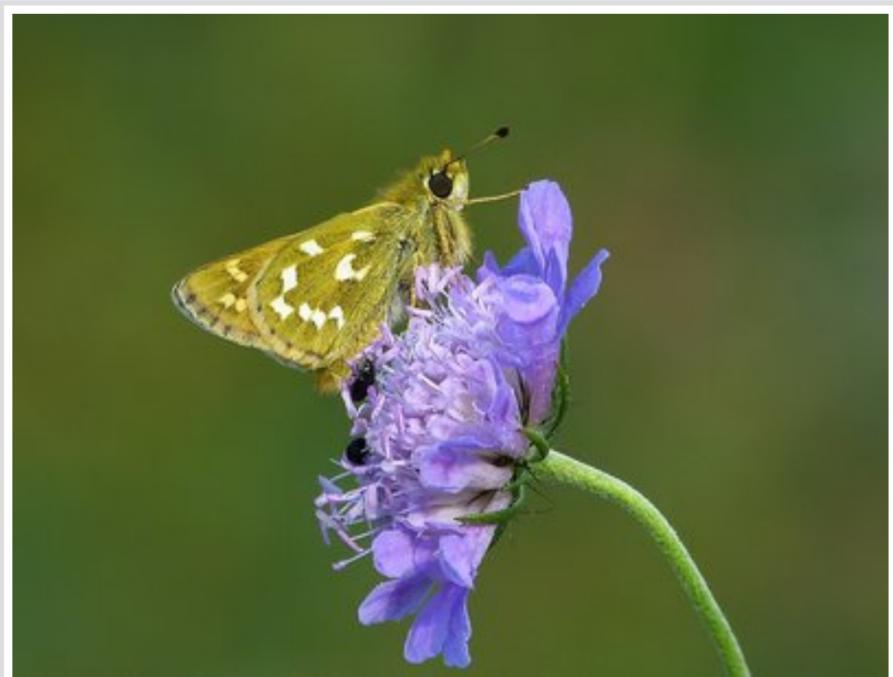


The view across the reserve – this shot taken mid-morning

Things were already getting going with Meadow Browns, Chalkhill blues and Small /Essex and Silver-spotted Skippers along with some Gatekeepers,

Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones all active, but not yet too active.

After a bit of searching I found a Silver-spotted Skipper nicely perched on a Scabious flower and took a few photos.



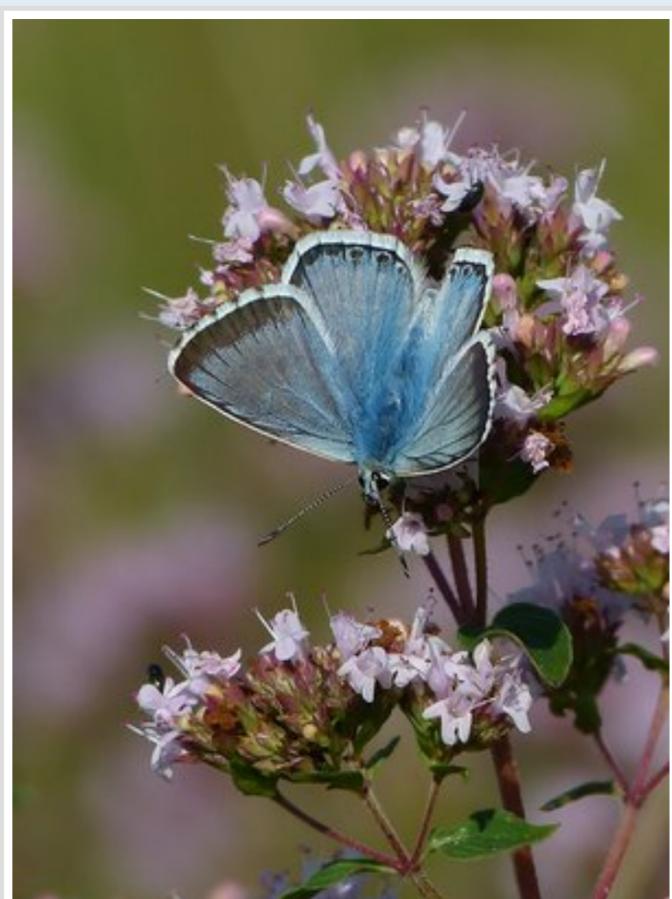
Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014

Once I had got my eye in it was apparent that there were good numbers of Silver-spotted Skippers about although perhaps not so many as I have seen here in previous years.

As it warmed up, more and more Chalkhill Blues were seen, especially on the slopes further from the entrance where there must have been hundreds fluttering about. They were not too obvious at first as they were mostly flying low down, just inches above the ground, but again once I got my eye in they were everywhere, including many nectaring on the clumps of wild marjoram.



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue female - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue female - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue female - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014

Amongst the many female Chalkhills I found a couple that stood out, one with a fair amount of blue scales...



Chalkhill Blue female - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue female – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014

...and this lovely looking female with almost completely blue hindwings which was my highlight of the morning 😊 and which I feel sure must be a named aberration,



Chalkhill Blue female ab? – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue female ab? – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014

Common Blues and Brown Argus were also about, at least a dozen or more of each species, mostly fresh looking males,



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Brown Argus – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Common Blue – Aston Rowant

One notable absentee was Small Copper with none being seen today, in previous years I have usually seen at least a few here at this time.

By about 11.00 it was getting quite hot and the butterflies were getting correspondingly more active and difficult to approach so I took fewer photos and just enjoyed the experience, although I couldn't resist trying for an open wing Brimstone shot as they took off from nectaring. Not entirely successful, my best attempt is below but one to practice I think,



Brimstone on take off...

Before driving down I had realised that although I have been coming here for a number of years now, I had only ever come to the side of the reserve to the north side of the M40 and never visited the south side. With the rest of the day free I decided to remedy this and move on to the other side for a look around...

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 31-Jul-14 09:41 AM GMT

Tuesday 29th July - Aston Rowant part 2.

Moving on to the south side of the reserve I parked up in the Cowleaze Wood car park and walked across the road onto the south-west facing slope of Bald Hill. I took a slow wander along the slope and through a gate at the western end where there is a good view back across the M40 to Beacon Hill on the north side. By now a bit of cloud had built up but it was still warm and the butterflies were as active as ever in the early afternoon heat.



Looking across the M40 to Beacon Hill from Bald Hill

Silver-spotted Skippers were everywhere here in greater numbers than on the north side whereas Chalkhill Blues were in lower numbers, mostly concentrated towards the western end of the slope, just before the gate.



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Silver-spotted Skipper – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Silver-spotted Skipper - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014



Chalkhill Blue - Aston Rowant 29.07.2014

There were also good numbers of Common Blues here including the slightly worn but still very nice looking blue female below,



Common Blue female – Aston Rowant 29.07.2014

The big advantage of this side of the reserve is that, being a bit further from the M40, the constant drone of the traffic is much reduced and it is a more peaceful spot.

At least that would be the case most of the time, but at one point I became aware of an increasing sound that sounded like an approaching helicopter. Looking across towards Oxford I noticed a military helicopter (An RAF Merlin I think) heading towards the hill where it proceeded to circle around and start descending into the valley between Bald Hill and the next hill to the south.

For the next fifteen minutes or so it carried out a series of low altitude hovering and touch and go exercises in the field below where I was standing. I guess it was a training mission but for me it provided a noisy but interesting little episode with me looking down from my vantage point on the hillside.





After spending a couple of hours on this side I decided to head back up the M40 and detour off to Bernwood Meadows on the way...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 31-Jul-14 09:55 AM GMT

Great reports Neil. That female Chalk Hill has to be an ab surely? and great action shot of the Brimstone. I even enjoyed the helicopter – wonder what they thought of being photographed, good job they didn't confiscate your camera 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-14 10:16 PM GMT

Just catching up Neil as I got back from camping in Corfe. You've pulled off some cracking shots in your last few posts, those Silver Spots and lush and those Small Coppers are fantastic even though I've seen a few 'blue spots' they were enough to make me feel "Pauline" with envy 😊 (Pauline if you read this – you'll find them at Shipton Bellinger this year I'm convinced – if you don't I'll buy you a beer at the social – win win 😊).

I agree that that Chalk Hill has to be an ab – I've never seen one that blue before 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-14 10:36 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, I did wonder about photographing the helicopter but figured they are probably used to it, they were in a public place after all 😊
Cheers Wurzel, looking forward to your reports from Dorset. Looks like I may be down there again for another early September break 😊

Tuesday 29th July – Bernwood Meadows

When heading back from Aston Rowant the past few years I usually stop off at Bernwood Meadows to see what is about, maybe a Brown Hairstreak if I am lucky. I had seen that BHs were beginning to be reported from Oxfordshire over the previous few days although I realised that I would be looking a bit late in the day, the best time apparently being late morning until early afternoon. I had however seen a nice female there later in the afternoon a few years ago, so you never know.

I arrived at Bernwood at about 3.00pm noticing immediately that the meadows had been cut, which I was half expecting. It appears that these meadows are usually cut sometime in late July; I have been here at about this time in previous years and most times the meadows have just been cut. I wandered down the long narrow meadow next to the road checking the hedgerows and seeing the usual Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, the latter making me do a double check every so often. There were also a few Marbled Whites and Common blues in the narrow strip of long grass by the hedges.

A few years back, after reading in a post on UKB about a load of Purple Hairstreaks in a straggly hawthorn at the end of this meadow, I had found some there myself and since then had always checked this hawthorn when visiting here, unfortunately without seeing any more Hairstreaks since that year(2011 I think).

Walking up to this hawthorn today I immediately noticed a few silvery shapes fluttering about and on closer inspection counted at least 7/8 Purple Hairstreaks flitting about and wandering around on the branches of the tree. There were also a few in the trees to each side making something like a dozen or more in this small area.

They were not easy to take photos of, sitting amongst the branches a few feet above my head, but in the end with a combination of reaching at full stretch, using the vari-angle screen on my FZ150, and a bit of flash, I managed to get some shots I was quite pleased with.



Purple Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 29.07.2014



Purple Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 29.07.2014



Purple Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 29.07.2014



Two Purple Hairstreaks – Bernwood Meadows 29.07.2014



Purple Hairstreak – Bernwood Meadows 29.07.2014

At one point I watched as two individuals had a bit of a tussle over a disputed bit of branch and the victor literally picked the loser up off the branch and threw her off 🤪. I had never seen anything like this before, but it was interesting and quite amusing to watch.



Eyeing each other up...



heave...



off you go...



enjoying the spoils of victory.

I carried on checking the hedgerows for a while but unfortunately no Brown Hairstreaks today, but it is still early days and I was quite chuffed with the Purple Hairstreaks so it was well worth the stop off 😊 .

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Rosalyn, 01-Aug-14 11:21 AM GMT

Nice informative reports Neil. Your Chalkhill F ab is fab 🍷

Re: nfreem

by William, 01-Aug-14 01:16 PM GMT

Superb Purple Hairstreaks Neil, I was lucky enough to watch some up close in France, and when seen like that they are fascinating, and surprisingly sociable creatures.

BWs

William

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-14 01:40 PM GMT

Great shots Neil and interesting behaviour 😊 – Purple Hairstreaks are a bit hit and miss for me so I definitely need to find a regular spot for them.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by David M, 01-Aug-14 04:39 PM GMT

I know the exact spot, Neil!! I think it was Michael Field who found sizeable numbers of them there three years ago.

It's hard enough getting a shot of a single Purple Hairstreak. Managing two is just plain greedy! 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-14 09:46 AM GMT

Hi Rosalyn, thanks for the comments, much appreciated 😊

Hi William, I spent quite a while just watching their antics, quite entertaining when in a group like that 😊

Hi Wurzel, they are usually more miss than hit for me as well, I only commented the other day in a previous post about taking a record shot of one when I had the chance and then a couple of days later...bingo 😊

Hi David, you have jogged the memory cogs, it was indeed Michael who wrote a report on UKB in 2011 which prompted me to look there when I stopped off on the way back from Aston Rowant that year. I have looked there every year since but this year is the first that I have managed to repeat the experience 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 02-Aug-14 07:53 PM GMT

Just catching up with your activities, Neil. It's high time I tried the southern part of Aston Rowant again and seeing your amazing hairstreaks might tempt me out further into Oxfordshire too. Brilliant pictures! 😊

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-14 10:25 AM GMT

Thanks Dave, that was my first visit to the southern part of the reserve. It was just as good for butterflies as the northern side with the added bonus of being quieter 😊

Wednesday 30th July

After a morning of doing stuff around the house I decided to pop out for an hour or so to my local spot at Bickenhill. During the previous few days I had noticed that Peacock numbers were beginning to diminish as they started to disappear into hibernation, I was only getting 1 or 2 on my Buddleias now instead of the half a dozen or more last week. There were still plenty about at Bickenhill however, within minutes I had counted 23 busy nectaring on a couple of large patches of thistle, along with 7 Small Tortoiseshells.



Peacock - Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Peacock - Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Small Tortoiseshell – Bickenhill 30.07.2014

Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Large and Green-veined Whites were everywhere although I didn't see as many Small Whites, the latter certainly don't seem to be around in the same numbers as the other two whites so far this year, at least not around here.

There was a good scattering of Common Blues around the site and in one corner I was pleased to find a Brown Argus. BAs are not that common around Solihull, I only ever find the odd one each year at most so I was chuffed to find this one here. It was a fairly fresh looking male so I reckon I will do a return visit in a week or so to see if I can find any more.



Common Blue – Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Common Blue – Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Brown Argus – Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Brown Argus – Bickenhill 30.07.2014

A few yards away there was also a feisty little male Small Copper doing his best to chase everything away from his spot. I took a couple of underside shots and then waited for a bit of cloud to come over for him to open his wings and get some topside shots. These revealed that he was yet another blue spotted ab. *caeruleopunctata* (Sorry Pauline, I am not doing this on purpose...no Photoshop involved either 😊😄). This year I am actually seeing more examples with some degree of blue spotting than without, so for me it actually seems that the standard

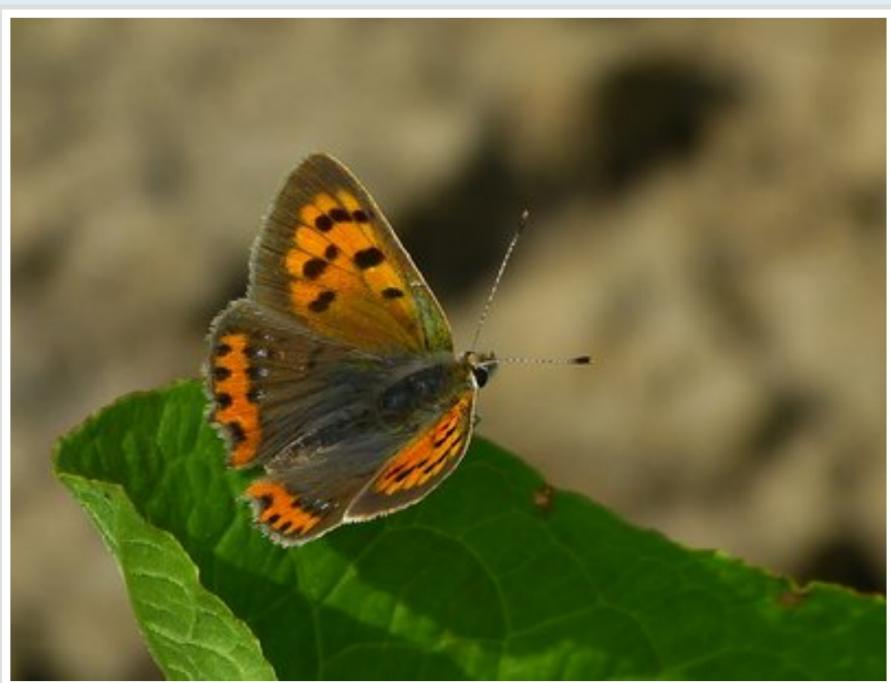
ones are the abs.



Small Copper - Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Small Copper - Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Small Copper - Bickenhill 30.07.2014



Small Copper – Bickenhill 30.07.2014

A good afternoon so far but walking back along the footpath to where I had parked my car I had an incident with an off the lead dog. A half grown Weimaraner came running around a bend in the path alongside the hedgerow and to be honest I think I startled it as much as it startled me. It then ran up to me and jumped up me and as I pushed it down it bent down and nipped me on the back of the calf. I shouted out something along the lines of 'who's is this bl**dy dog' and the owner came into view around the bend in the path. At first he was a bit 'bullish' but when I showed him the bite mark, which luckily was not too bad and had not broken the skin, he became very apologetic, especially so when I mentioned about maybe reporting it (I haven't)

An incident which spoiled the afternoon a bit and one which is unfortunately becoming a bit too common at some sites, in fact there are local spots that I simply won't go to at weekends because of the number of dogs running around and the attitudes of some of the owners. I don't care if they are 'only being friendly', I do not want them jumping up me, or barking and growling at me which has happened a couple of times earlier this year.

Oh well, rant over,

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 03-Aug-14 11:23 AM GMT

Brilliant Small Copper shots at Castle Hills Neil, especially ab caeruleopunctata 😊 I've struggled to see any SC until recently. Great report and photos from Aston Rowant too, very nice 'blue' female Chalkhill shots, the one with the blue hindwings must be an ab 😊 I managed a shot or two of our (reared) Purple Hairstreaks together, but to capture this in the wild takes some doing, great stuff 😊

I'm glad you didn't get bitten too badly by that dog, I am also getting fed up with irresponsible dog owners. On a recent outing to Denbies, a dog cr%ped on the footpath and the owners walked straight past, when I asked the guy if intended to pick it up, he replied bluntly, "no". When I said I would report this he said "go ahead, report it" They were an older couple who should have been more responsible, I'm getting fed up with having to clean the mess from our walking shoes, not easy with all the grooves 😞 This is just one incident from quite a few, OK rant over.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-14 11:06 PM GMT

Cracking Small Copper shots Neil 😊 You are more than entitled to the Dog rant. Whilst there are plenty of responsible owners out there there does seem to be an increasing number of poor dog owners. I'm constantly surprised by how many rabid, snarling, teeth baring dogs are actually "just being friendly" 😡, am I misunderstanding their behaviour 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-14 08:42 PM GMT

Thanks very much for the comments guys 😊

Tuesday 5th August.

I have been pretty tied up since the middle of last week and over the weekend with house and family stuff so have not had chance to get out anywhere. Saturday was pretty wet anyway with rain all morning which didn't stop until well into the afternoon and Sunday, whilst being dry all day was very windy.

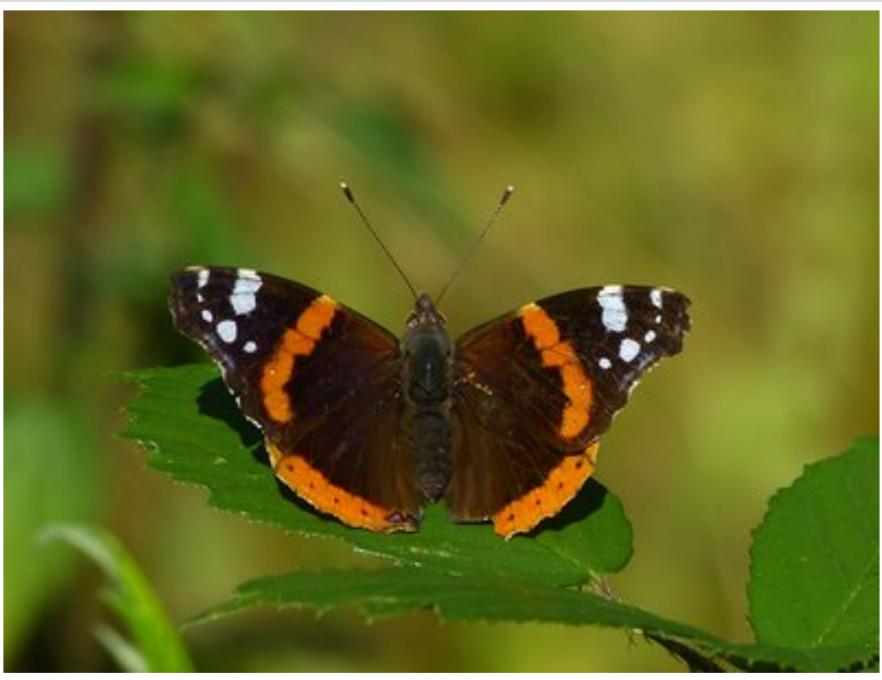
Nevertheless, later on Sunday afternoon, I spent an hour or so in the garden and saw plenty of whites passing through as well as the usual 2 or 3 Speckled Wood taking to the air during lulls in the blustery wind.

There were also a couple of Holly Blues, one of which settled just long enough to get a part open wing shot. I am never sure with these if I am seeing different individuals or the same one coming round again and again 😊



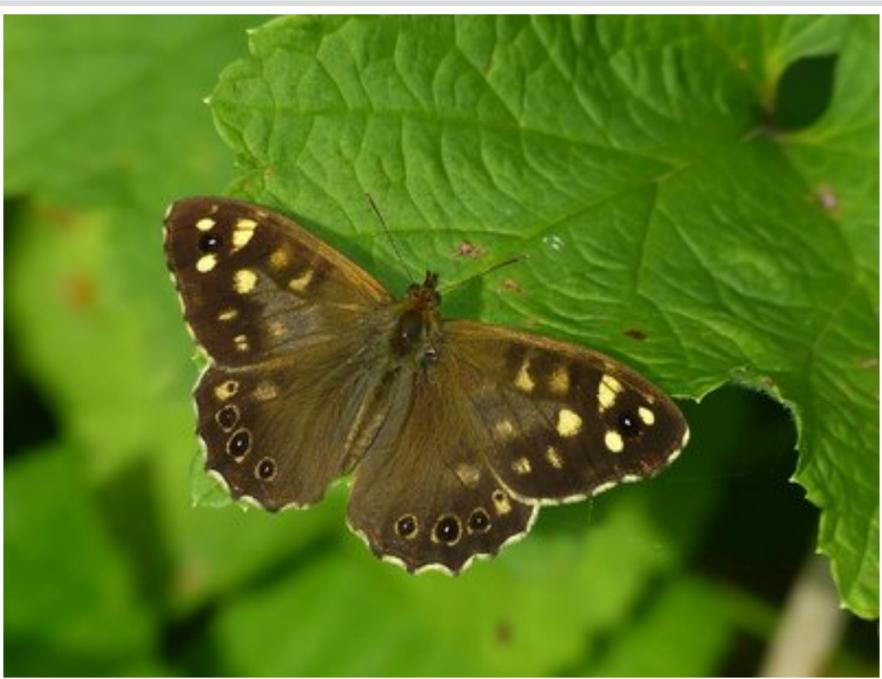
Holly Blue - Coverdale 03.08.2014

A single Red Admiral has also been coming and going for the past few days, the latest in a number of these that have been in the garden this year. I can tell this is the same one by the bits of damage and wear 😊



Red Admiral - Coverdale 03.08.2014

The Speckled Wood presence is still continuing with some new individuals replacing the older worn and faded ones on a regular basis, which is typical for in my garden at this time of year. After some rain today whilst I was at work, it brightened up later and when I got home I counted at least 4 males identified by slight differences in markings. The 3 below were all fairly new plus there was 1 old faded individual that looked like he was on his last legs but was still very actively defending his little patch.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 05.08.2014



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 05.08.2014



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 05.08.2014

Looks like a few more days of unsettled weather is on the way, fingers crossed for it not to last too long.

By for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 05-Aug-14 09:11 PM GMT

More splendid Specklies, Neil. You seem to have an endless supply for half the year – I'm very envious. 🍷😊 Those Holly Blues do often go round and around and back to the same area, and a lot of their behaviour in the tees and shrubs is almost like a Hairstreak.

Like Wurzel, I understand your canine problem, having had several bad experiences and the odd rant myself on the subject. It's sad that so many people do not appear to understand the responsibilities that come with owning a dog and you have to question their motives for having one. 😞

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 05-Aug-14 11:37 PM GMT

Great stuff Niel – Coverdale produces again 😊🍷 Is that the second or third brood of Specklie now?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Aug-14 08:57 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, yes, I am lucky to have a constant presence of Specklies in the garden every year 😊, usually from late March or early April right through to September or sometimes into October with a short gap sometime in June.

Cheers Wurzel, these are second(summer) brood, Specklies don't usually have a proper third brood, at least not in my garden. Due to their unique ability amongst British butterflies to pass the winter as either larvae or pupae they have a drawn out emergence in the spring, which usually has me seeing spring brood in the garden from the beginning of April up until early June. The offspring of these then develop at different rates, which for me

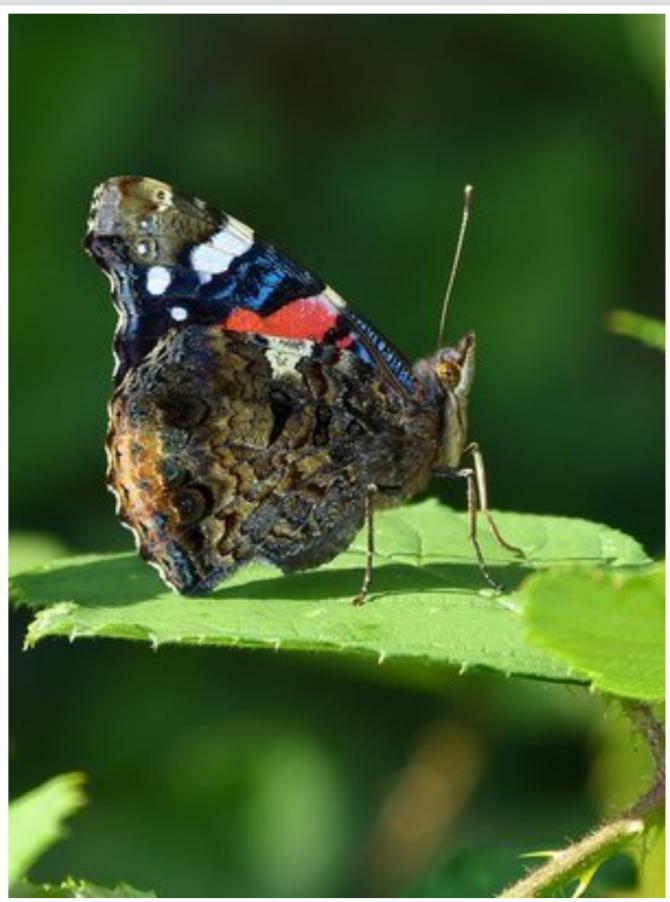
leads to the summer brood usually appearing from later in June and continuing right through to September without a break 😊. This is just my experience of them in my garden in the midlands of course, broods and timings may well vary considerably down south or further north.

Wednesday 6th August

There was a another Red Admiral in the garden this afternoon on my return from work, a different and slightly less worn example to the one that had been lurking about recently. This individual has one antennae missing although this didn't seem to be giving him any problems as he disputed a corner of the nettle patch with anything that came close, usually one of the Specklies or a passing Holly Blue.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 06.08.2014



Red Admiral - Coverdale 06.08.2014

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 06-Aug-14 10:03 PM GMT

Lovely Red Admiral shots Neil, especially the underside shot 😊 We have also seen butterflies with an antennae missing, which, as your observation confirms, does not seem to cause them any problems at all.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-14 09:01 PM GMT

Thanks the comments Mike, appreciated as always 😊

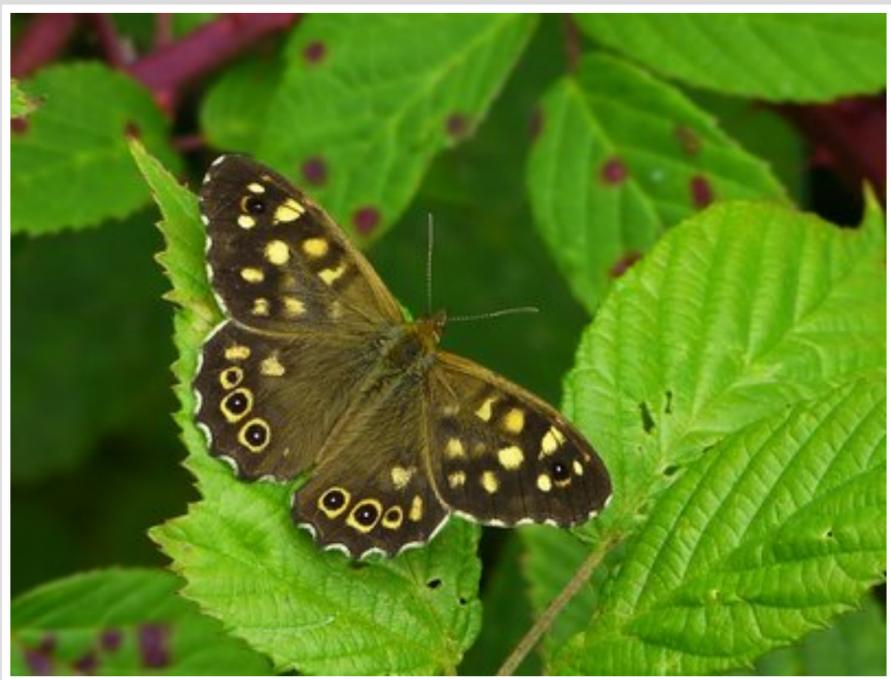
Friday 8th August

Since Wednesday, both of the Red Admirals have been around the garden during late afternoon but never at the same time. It is almost as if they are acting like a tag team with either one or the other guarding the nettle patch. On Thursday it was the more worn one that was there most of the time and then this afternoon the one with the missing antenna was around the most. If I hadn't looked closely and took some record shots I probably wouldn't

have noticed that it was the two individuals and just assumed that it was the same one hanging around all the time.

Earlier in the afternoon, after finishing work at lunchtime, Jane and myself went around to my moms for our usual Friday afternoon visit. Whilst the women were nattering, I made the most of a nice warm afternoon to have a look around the park just down the road.

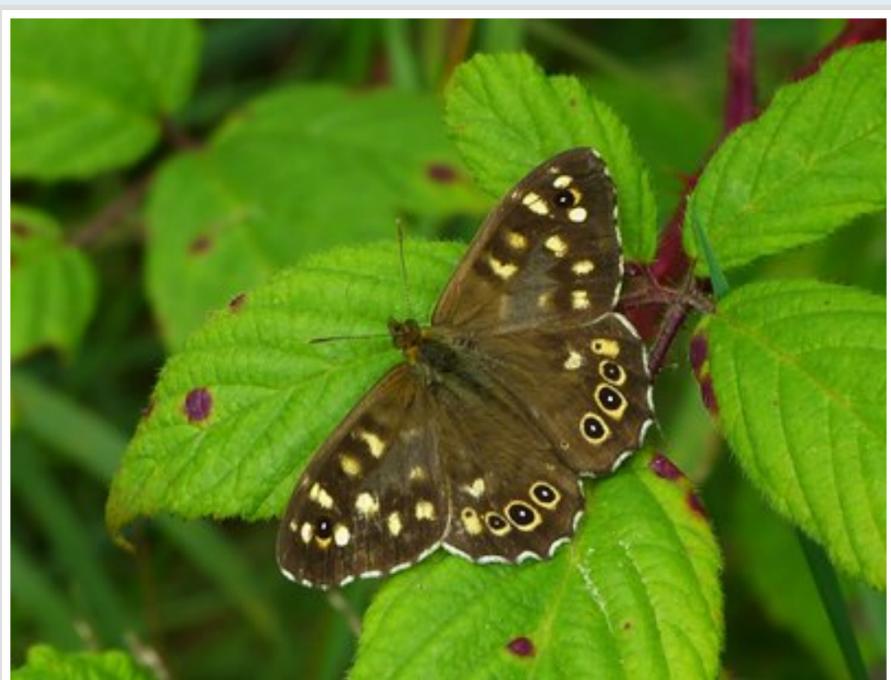
The most numerous species was Speckled Wood with easily a dozen or more being seen, mostly males in varying condition...



Speckled Wood - Langley Hall 08.08.2014



Speckled Wood - Langley Hall 08.08.2014



Speckled Wood - Langley Hall 08.08.2014



Speckled Wood – Langley Hall 08.08.2014

...and at least one female that settled briefly before being accosted by a male and taking off over a large bramble patch,



Speckled Wood female – Langley Hall 08.08.2014

A few Gatekeepers are still around, mostly looking well worn and faded now,



Gatekeeper – Langley Hall 08.08.2014

I was also pleased to see a single Small Copper here, the first I have seen here and which means that I have seen Small Coppers at all of my local spots this year 😊



Small Copper - Langley Hall 08.08.2014



Small Copper - Langley Hall 08.08.2014

There is just a the tiniest hint of blue spots on this one, not much but it does continue the theme of me seeing at least some hint of blue spotting on most of the Small Coppers I have seen locally this year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-14 10:14 PM GMT

That penultimate Specklie is lush Neil 😊 And you had a 'u5sp Hedge brown' 🦋 I should have known about the Specklies - but I'd lost track of them from your garden as they seem to be in boundless supply 😊 🦋

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Aug-14 11:05 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, not sure it is a 'boundless supply' but there is a steady flow of new ones 😊

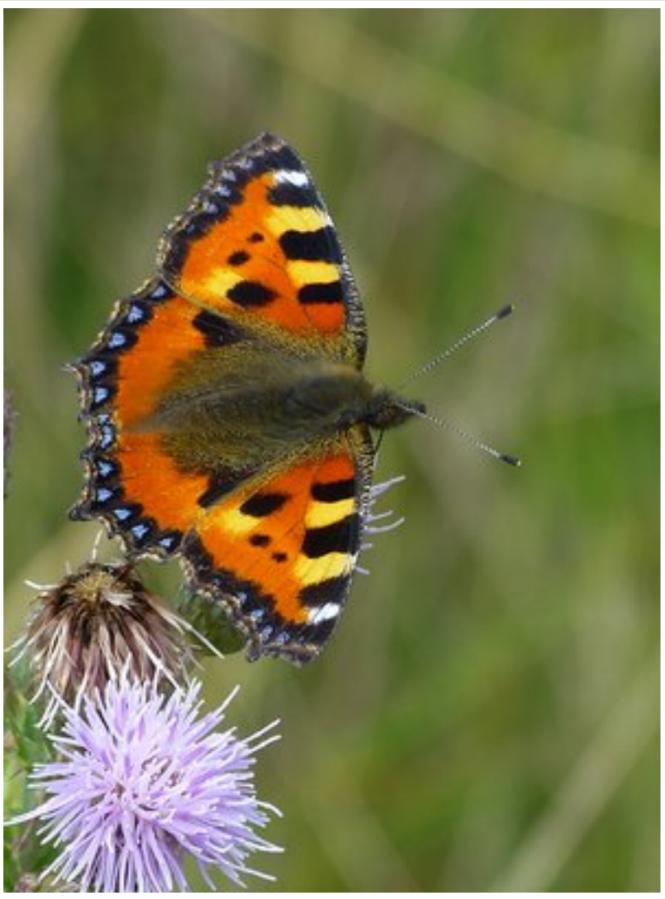
Saturday 9th August

After a busy Saturday morning as usual, I had a couple of hours free in the afternoon and thought I would nip around to a couple of local spots before the remains of Hurricane Bertha arrived. The conditions were warm with good sunny spells although the clouds were building up and there was a blustery wind.

First place I went to was **Bickenhill** where I followed the footpath to the usual meadows and where I wanted to look for Brown Argus after finding a single one here last week. Walking through to the meadows, I noticed that the Peacocks had mostly disappeared now with just a couple still on the thistles where there had been 20+ last week. There were still half a dozen or more Small Tortoiseshells around, bobbing about in the breeze or settling down in the grass which made it a challenge to get any decent photos.



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 09.08.2014



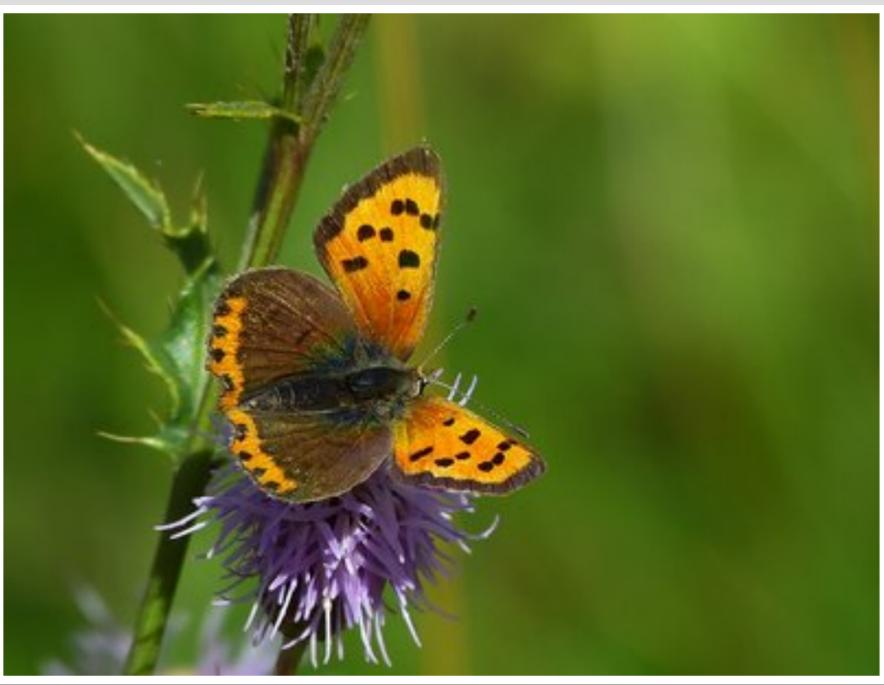
Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 09.08.2014

There was also a good scattering of Common Blues, mostly looking a bit worn and faded now, plus at least three Small Coppers...



Small Copper - Bickenhill 09.08.2014

...including a larger and paler female. I must admit I don't usually see too many females of this species about, it is the males that usually stand out due to their feisty characters 😊



Small Copper female - Bickenhill 09.08.2014

I was pleased to find three Brown Argus in the same corner of the meadow, which doubled the tally I have ever seen around Solihull in total up until now.



Brown Argus - Bickenhill 09.08.2014



Brown Argus - Bickenhill 09.08.2014

Moving on from here I went down the road to **Shadowbrook Meadows**. The two larger meadows here had been cut a few weeks ago and were largely devoid of butterflies except for a few Gatekeepers and Speckled Woods around the outer hedges. There are two lower and damper smaller meadows here which are not cut however but are grazed by cattle from late summer.

When I saw the larger meadows had been cut a few weeks back, just as the second brood Common blues and Small Coppers had started emerging, I was a bit concerned for the fate of these butterflies. I was pleased therefore to find at least a dozen Common Blues in the smaller meadows plus three Small Copper (including another female) and some more Brown Argus 😊 .



Common Blue - Shadowbrook 09.08.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 09.08.2014



Small Copper - Shadowbrook 09.08.2014



Small Copper female - Shadowbrook 09.08.2014



Brown Argus pair - Shadowbrook 09.08.2014



Brown Argus - Shadowbrook 09.08.2014

With the clouds building up and looking darker and the breeze getting fresher I then decided to head home.

The Brown Argus at both sites were my highlights of the day, I had not seen this species around Solihull until a couple of year ago when it started to show up occasionally and now to see half a dozen at two sites shows that this is another species that is slowly spreading around here 😊

With the remains of Hurricane Bertha dumping loads of rain outside as I write this I cannot see me going anywhere today (Sunday).

edit; after a wet morning the afternoon brightened up until it was quite pleasant and sunny but with a very blustery wind...I still didn't go anywhere though, took the chance to catch up on some stuff in the house.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-14 10:06 PM GMT

Great Brown Argus action Neil 😊 I too spent the day catching up with work and looking out the window at the glorious sunshine 😊 Still that's a few Brownie points in the bag 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 13-Aug-14 09:37 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I earned a few brownie points last weekend myself but spent a few today 😊

Wednesday 13th August

With most of my holiday from work for this year now booked up (which now includes another week in Dorset at the end of the month 😊), I had a couple of odd days left which I decided to use to break up this week and next by having the Wednesdays off.

With the weather for today looking to be 'reasonable' I took a drive over to **Grafton Wood** to see if I could find any Brown Hairstreaks.

Arriving at about 10.00am I parked by the church and walked through the farmyard and across the fields toward the wood. It was still quite cloudy with a bit of a breeze to start with but during the next couple of hours the sun came out a few times and it warmed up a bit...but probably not really long enough to tempt any Brown Hairstreaks down.

There has been a fair bit clearance work done at Grafton Wood over the past few years with non-native trees removed and rides opened out and it seems that Common Blues and Brown Argus have taken advantage of this as I saw more of both species within the wood than I usually do. In past years I have often seen both of these species outside of the wood but I was interested to see so many actually inside the wood today, particularly the Brown Argus, two or three of which I saw down nearly every ride and path I went down.



Common Blue - Grafton Wood 13.08.2014



Common Blue - Grafton Wood 13.08.2014



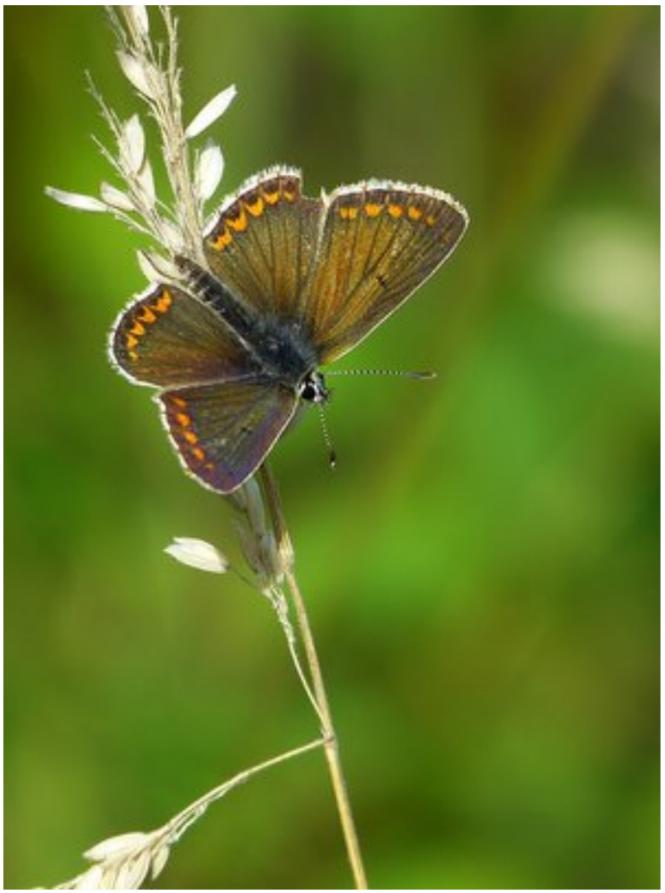
Common Blue - Grafton Wood 13.08.2014



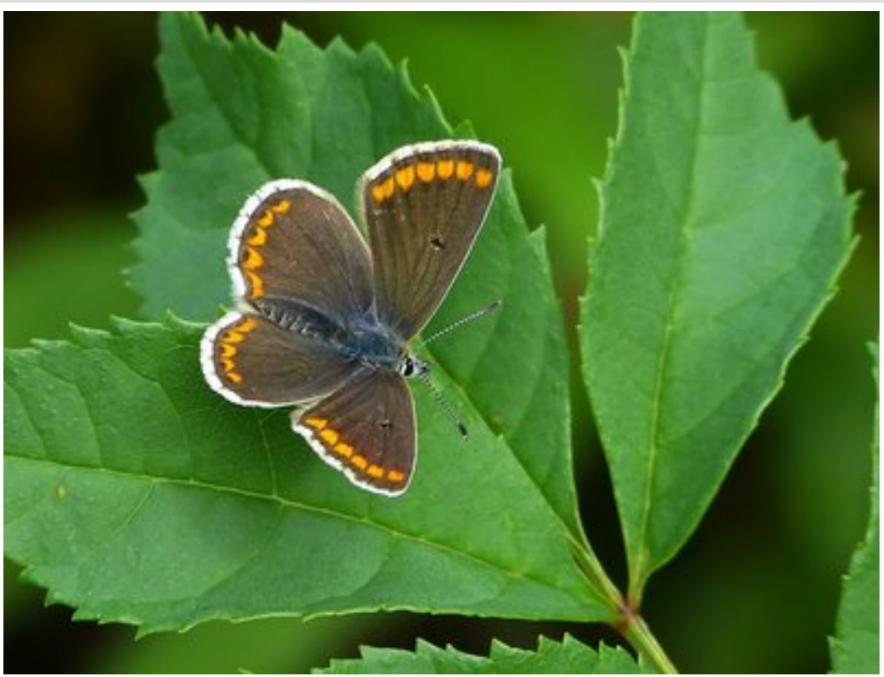
Brown Argus - Grafton Wood 13.08.2014



Brown Argus - Grafton Wood 13.08.2014



Brown Argus - Grafton Wood 13.08.2014



Brown Argus - Grafton Wood 13.08.2014

Other species seen were Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Brimstones, Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood (lots of these), Meadow Brown and Gatekeepers, the latter doing their occasional trick of imitating Brown Hairstreaks, but alas none of the real thing.

Around 1.00pm the clouds thickened up again until it was wall to wall grey sky and then started turning darker so I decided to call it a day and head home, just in time as it started to rain a few minutes after I left.

No luck with Brown Hairstreaks today but there should still be plenty of time, this is actually the earliest I have ever been to Grafton looking for them, and my most successful visits have been right at the end of August or in the first couple of weeks of September.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-14 10:13 PM GMT

Lovely Brown Argus shots Neil, like chocolate oranges 😊 I'm visiting Worcester this weekend – I expect we'll be heading out so any ideas where I could steer my sister in-law towards 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 14-Aug-14 04:21 PM GMT

Lovely shots in your diary, Neil, as always 😊 Especially those gorgeous Brown Argus, they seem to be having a good year!

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 14-Aug-14 08:57 PM GMT

I've got a lot of catching up to do on your diary Neil. Some lovely shots on this page starting with the gorgeous Peacocks and ST, the SC (with blue spots 🦋) all the way through and especially that fantastic Speckled Wood on the Bramble and the Brown Argus. Smashing 😊 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Aug-14 09:13 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Grafton Wood is just a few miles east of Worcester along the A422. If you park at the church at Grafton Flyford follow the signs through the farmyard and across the fields to the wood. It is a bit of a walk and can be quite muddy but is fairly easy going and the wood is a great place on a good day.

<http://graftonwood.files.wordpress.com/...fletmr.pdf>

The Malvern Hills AONB is not far from Worcester, this is a large area and I don't know the best spots, never having been there myself, but my copy of '30 Butterfly Walks in the West Midlands' recommends the car park along North Malvern road at SO771470.

<http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/>

Hi Mike, thanks for your comments. Brown Argus certainly do seem to be having a good year around here, I have definitely seen more in the past few weeks than usual 😊

Hi Pauline, many thanks, I nearly missed your comments as I was just posting my replies above. I have got a lot of catching up on everyone else's diaries to do myself.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-14 09:55 PM GMT

Cheers for the info Neil 😊 I'll do my best to steer the clan in one of those directions 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-14 08:29 PM GMT

Sunday 17th August

A couple of hours around my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull on a reasonably sunny but very blustery afternoon produced the usual suspects, most of which were looking like they had been around for a while.

The wind made taking photos very difficult with most of the butterflies taking shelter low down in the grass or being whisked off as soon as they took to the air.

Most numerous species were Speckled Wood followed by Meadow Brown, although the latter were in far fewer numbers than at their peak a few weeks back.



Meadow Brown - Castle Hills 17.08.2014

Gatekeepers were also well down in numbers now with just a handful of tired and faded looking examples scattered about and the skippers are just about over now with just a couple of geriatric 'smalls' seen.

There were still a handful of summer brood Small Tortoiseshells hanging in there; it will be interesting to see how the next brood does here before hibernating. Last year there were loads, good numbers of which made it through the winter to make for a memorable re-emergence this spring.

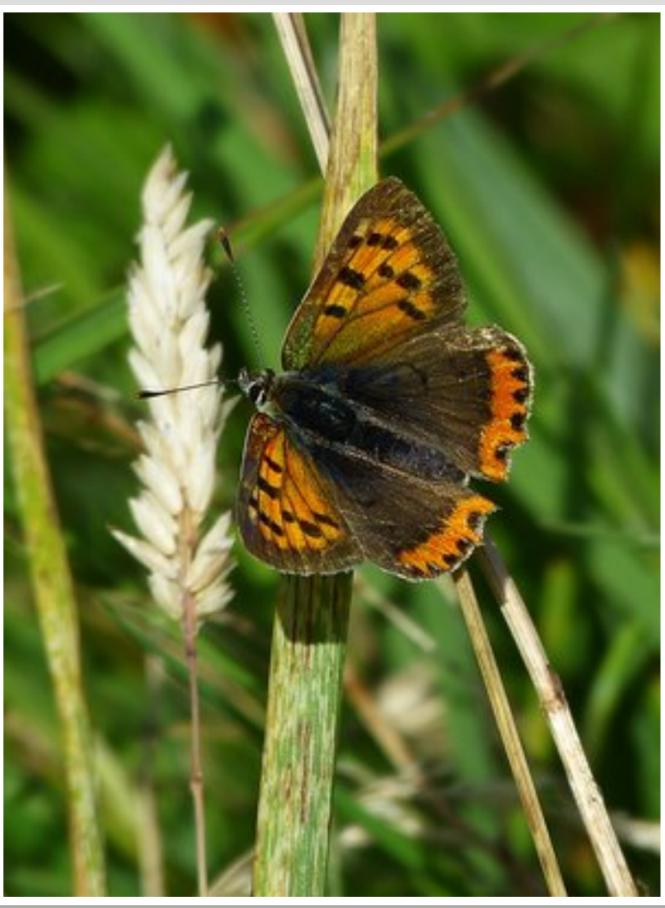


Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 17.08.2014

Half a dozen Common Blues were also seen along with a couple of male Small Coppers valiantly defending their favourite perches, again all looking a bit worn now.



Small Copper - Castle Hills 17.08.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills 17.08.2014

A solitary summer Comma continued the theme of everything seen today(Sunday) being a hanger on from high summer.



Comma - Castle Hills 17.08.2014

Monday 18th August

Back home this afternoon after work I spotted a Red Admiral in the back garden jousting with a couple of Speckled Wood and basking in the sun between bouts.

I went out and took a couple of photos which showed him to be the same individual with a missing antenna that was hanging around a couple of weeks back and which I haven't seen for a while now. Surprisingly he looks to be in almost exactly the same condition that he did two weeks ago.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 18.08.2014

I have compared the photos with the previous ones (taken on 6th August) which confirm that it is indeed the same one.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-14 10:01 PM GMT

Beautiful electric blue showing on that Red Admiral Neil 🤔🍷 I suggested Grafton but didn't get my way – still there's always next years visit 😊 Cheers again fro the info.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 21-Aug-14 06:47 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, hope you managed to see something despite the recent dodgy weather.

Wednesday 20th August

This being the second Wednesday that I had booked off work and with my lack of success in seeing any Brown Hairstreaks at **Grafton Wood** last week I decided to have another attempt today.

I left home about 10.00 and drove over, arriving and parking by the church at Grafton Flyford about an hour later. The morning had started off nice and sunny albeit with a bit of a nip in the air after a cold night, and by the time I arrived at Grafton some more cloud had built up with the sunny spells being warm but not lasting very long. At least the blustery wind of late had dropped with there being very little breeze today.

I walked across the fields and into the wood and then followed the main ride down to the southern end which is quite sheltered and where there has been some management of the blackthorn to encourage new growth. As with last week, Speckled Woods were everywhere along with some Meadow Browns and a few faded Gatekeepers and various whites.

Reaching the southern end of the wood I started scanning the Oaks and Ash and soon saw some Hairstreaks flitting about high up but which through my binoculars proved to be Purples, not Browns.

A few minutes later I was joined by a couple of fellow enthusiasts and together we scanned the trees and blackthorn. During one of the brief warm sunny spells we spotted a butterfly flying across the trees in front of us which we all thought was a Brown Hairstreak. It flew up into the trees before we got a really good look but it flew with the 'jinking' flight of a hairstreak and it was the right colour so on the principle of 'if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it is a duck' we agreed that it probably was one (a Brown Hairstreak that is, not a duck 😊).

Just after that a Holly Blue settled and with a cloud blocking the sun stayed down for a while, not in the best place for photos being well into a large patch of brambles and unfortunately not opening its wings before flying off.



Holly Blue – Grafton Wood 20.08.2014

With another large cloud blocking the sun we then walked back up the main ride towards the pond area before going our separate ways to check out different rides.

Again, as with last week there were a fair few Common Blue and Brown Argus scattered about as well as a couple of worn Small Coppers.



Common Blue - Grafton Wood 20.08.2014



Common Blue - Grafton Wood 20.08.2014



Brown Argus - Grafton Wood 20.08.2014



Brown Argus - Grafton Wood 20.08.2014

A little while later I met up with John Tilt and Dave Williams of West Midlands BC who were with a work party further in the wood and after having a chat we went for a wander back to the pond and the adjacent rides.

Apparently the Brown Hairstreaks are slow to get going at Grafton this year and there is a bit of concern about the low number of sightings, in fact John told me he has only seen one so far, a male. It is possible the recent weather has held them back; August so far has been cool and cloudy and quite blustery after the remnants of Hurricane Bertha passed through and a northerly wind has brought quite cool conditions for the time of year.

John then went back to re-join the work party whilst Dave and myself had another look by the pond. We had already seen a couple of False Brown Hairstreaks (Gatekeepers) when both of us at the same time spotted what at first looked like another one land on a clump of Hemp Agrimony. Happily this one was the real thing 😊, a male Brown Hairstreak that stayed down for a few minutes before taking off and flying up into the Oaks behind us.



Brown Hairstreak - Grafton Wood 20.08.2014



Brown Hairstreak - Grafton Wood 20.08.2014



Brown Hairstreak - Grafton Wood 20.08.2014

It was only as I took photos of this one that I realised that this was the first male Brown Hairstreak that I have ever photographed, all my previous shots have been of females.

I then took a slow walk back through the wood and with more clouds building up I called it a day and headed for home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 21-Aug-14 10:10 PM GMT

Nice to see you got your reward, Neil.

Well done.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-14 09:48 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil - if only I'd managed to have persuaded the family to have made a visit there 🤔🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-14 08:38 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David and Wurzel, much appreciated 😊

I haven't been anywhere since last Wednesday 😊, between work and household/family stuff over the weekend I haven't had chance and then the bank holiday yesterday was miserable with rain all day so I caught up with more stuff around the house. Mind you it gave me a chance to build up some more brownie points which I hope to make use of next week when I will be down in Dorset again for a week and it even looks like the weather might settle down a bit for then, fingers crossed.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 26-Aug-14 11:41 PM GMT

I hope the weather is kind to you next week Neil 😊 looks like it might improve, can't be any worse than it is now 😊😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 30-Aug-14 06:52 AM GMT

Well done with the BH Neil. made me realise I haven't seen a male this year (apart from the reared ones). I'm sure you'll have a great time in Dorset as the weather is set to improve 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 06-Sep-14 10:28 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments Pauline and Mike 😊 My apologies for the late reply, I have been down in Dorset last week with intermittent Wi-Fi and phone signal.

Another week in Dorset

For the past three years I have had a family holiday in Dorset during the first week in September, the timing for this being based partly on good old tradition which usually has it that as soon as the kids go back to school after the summer hols the weather gets better 😊.

So it was this year that last week I was in Dorset again, this time staying at Durdle Door Holiday Park with my wife Jane and my Mom, just the three of us this time. After a cool and cloudy August the weather did indeed improve through the week with most days being a mixture of early cloud with some good sun later in the afternoons and with the temperature getting into the mid-twenties a few times during the week.

Before going I had read a few comments about this year being an early season, and that things were coming to an early close, so I was wondering what species would still be about and in what numbers. I must admit that my own feelings about the season were that things are a bit more complicated than it simply being an early one. During spring and summer things were indeed generally a bit early and then everything seemed to be happening at once during a glorious July. After this however a cooler and cloudy August in the wake of ex-hurricane Bertha seemed to have put the brakes on things somewhat and I had a suspicion that some later emergences may have been held back a bit or become more drawn out, something that seems to be supported by some of my observations in Dorset last week.

Durdle Door is right next to Lulworth Cove and during the week I had a few walks, both to the cove and Bindon Hill, and also along the coast path in the other direction.



Durdle Door in the early evening sun



Looking down on Lulworth Cove and Bindon Hill from the path from Durdle Door.

I also went to Ballard Down and Durlston Country Park a couple of times as well as Osmington and Portland where I saw many of the same species at each place so rather than do daily reports I will probably do a few posts focusing on locations or species to report the highlights once I have sorted through all the photos that I took.

So first off...

As mentioned above I went along the paths past Durdle Door a number of times. As well as the main path leading down to the beaches there are also paths higher up the slopes and I had a good look and found loads of Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and Graylings in all sorts of condition including some looking surprisingly fresh.



Grayling in the grass - Durdle Door 31.08.2014



Meadow Brown male - Durdle Door 05.09.2014

I witnessed Grayling courtship behaviour a number of times and took a number of photos but will put those in another post when I have had chance to sort through them.

In some of the sheltered dips and folds in the ground a few Common Blues and Small Coppers could often be found and in one particular dip in the slope above Durdle Door itself there were a dozen or so Adonis Blues plus a couple of Marbled Whites, again looking remarkably fresh.



Common Blue female - Durdle Door 31.08.2014



Small Copper - Durdle Door 05.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Durdle Door 05.09.2014



Marbled White - Durdle Door 31.08.2014

There were also some Clouded Yellows usually circling around here, at least three individuals as that was how many I saw in the air at the same time on a couple of occasions.



Clouded Yellow - Durdle Door 04.09.2014

Other species seen along here during the week were Large and Small Whites plus a number of Red Admirals and a Painted Lady, mostly seeming to be coming in off the sea and flying past at high speed.



Small White living dangerously, look under her left forewing tip.

On the Tuesday afternoon I also spotted a Kestrel perched on a post and managed to circle slowly around him and take a few shots as he kept his beady eye on me.



Kestrel - Durdle Door 02.09.2014



Kestrel - Durdle Door 02.09.2014

As I said above, I have loads of photos to sort though and some catching up to do over the next few days...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 06-Sep-14 10:47 PM GMT

Lovely bird, Neil. And that Marbled White really is fresh. I wonder if late specimens are a feature of the area, as I saw one like that at Durlston on the same date last year. And the Dorset coast looks glorious as usual. 🇬🇧

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-14 11:59 PM GMT

Looking forward to more of these posts Neil as they are cracking and give me a much needed taster of home 😊🇬🇧 Stunning shots throughout especially the Small Copper and Kes 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Sep-14 06:11 PM GMT

Thanks Dave 😊 This is third year running that I have been in this part of the world in early September and seen Marbled whites so I guess it must be

normal. Jeremy Thomas also comments in 'The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland' about Meadow Browns continuing to emerge throughout September on warm southern chalk sites so this may effect the Marbled Whites in a similar way.

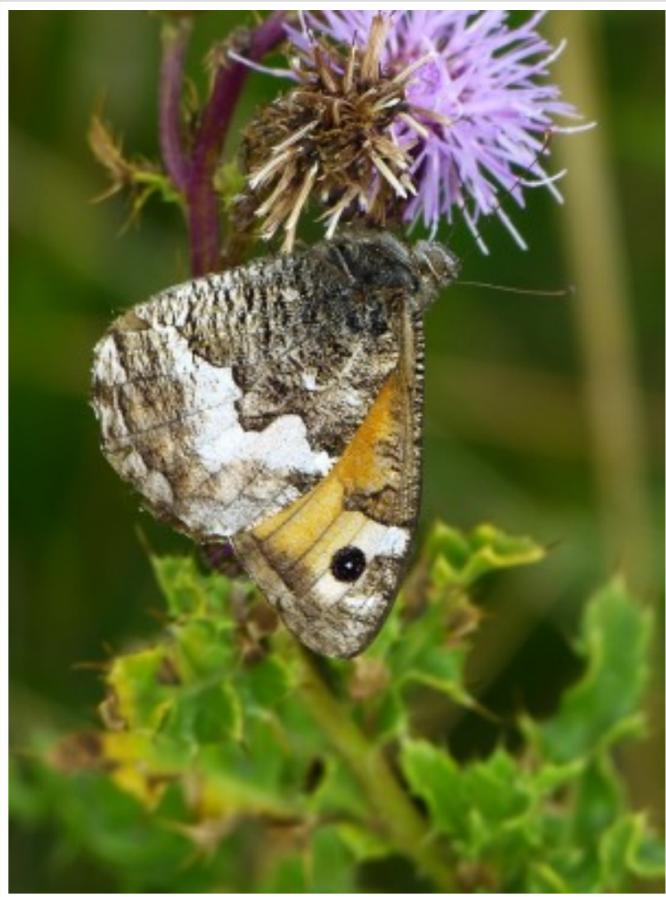
Cheers Wurzel, glad you enjoy the posts 😊

Grayling Action at Durdle Door.

Across the slopes of the downs above Durdle door and along a small valley with the great name of Scratchy Bottom I found loads of Graylings competing with Small Heath and Meadow Brown to be the most numerous species along here.



Grayling - Durdle Door 31.08.14



Grayling - Durdle Door 02.09.14



Grayling - Durdle Door 31.08.14



Grayling - Durdle Door 05.09.14

Some of these looked to be in quite fresh condition and on a number of occasions I watched males circling around females through the air in what was a bit reminiscent of Silver-washed Fritillary courtship flight, albeit a much more untidy and clumsy version of it without the graceful spiralling of the male Fritillary.

On one occasion on the Sunday (31st August) afternoon I watched a pair in cop fly past me being chased by another male and all three landed in the grass a few yards in front of me. The male tried to interrupt the pair and was greeted by what I believe was a rejection display from the female.



Graylings - Durdle Door 31.08.14



Graylings - Durdle Door 31.08.14

After a short while the second male departed and left them in peace.



Graylings - Durdle Door 31.08.14

A little later that same afternoon I saw another female go to ground whilst being chased by a male and again managed to get some shots of her rejecting him.



Graylings - Durdle Door 31.08.14



Graylings - Durdle Door 31.08.14



Graylings - Durdle Door 31.08.14

A few days later, on the Tuesday (2nd September), on another late afternoon walk along the area I saw a similar thing again with a male chasing a female to ground where she gave him the rejection display and after getting the hint he flew off.



Graylings - Durdle Door 02.09.14



Grayling - Durdle Door 02.09.14

I was well chuffed with these shots as not only had I managed to capture the open wings of a Grayling but I had managed to do it on three separate occasions and witness some interesting behaviour 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 07-Sep-14 06:23 PM GMT

Just catching up with your posts Neil and your photos put mine to shame 🍷 - gorgeous Graylings and cracking Kestrel. Lovely sharp images and as you have the same camera I have absolutely no excuse 😊

Re: nfreem

by David M, 08-Sep-14 08:46 AM GMT

Great Grayling images, Neil. They're incredibly interesting butterflies to watch due their behaviour.

I'm also pretty stunned by the continued presence of Marbled Whites in good condition.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-14 07:26 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊 The Graylings in action were pretty much snap shots as they didn't give me much time to think about it. I was also lucky with the Kestrel as he stayed still for a good while as I slowly edged closer.

Hi David, thanks for your comments 😊 . This is the third year on the trot now that I have seen Marbled Whites in early September. Previously I have seen them at Bindon Hill and Durlston but this year didn't find any at either of those sites.

Lulworth Cove and Bindon Hill.

As well as exploring the downs around Durdle Door last week I also walked to Lulworth Cove a few times. This only took about 15 minutes but usually took a bit longer coming back up the path across Hambury Tout, especially after I had spent some time up on Bindon Hill and my poor old legs were getting a bit tired.



Looking down on Lulworth Cove from Bindon hill.



Looking down over West Lulworth from Bindon Hill.

Up on the hill there were the usual Meadow Browns and Small Heaths in good numbers plus Common and Adonis Blues and even some Chalkhill Blues still hanging on, some of the latter still in surprisingly good condition. Mind you I saw some good condition Chalkhill Blues here at the same time last year so maybe not so surprising.

There were also good numbers of Brown Argus, most of which were looking worn and faded, and a few Graylings could be found a little higher up the hill.



Meadow Brown female – Bindon Hill 31.08.2014



Small Heath – Bindon Hill 31.08.2014



Chalkhill Blue male – Bindon Hill – 31.08.2014



Chalkhill Blue male - Bindon Hill - 31.08.2014



Chalkhill Blue female - Bindon Hill - 31.08.2014



Chalkhill Blue female - Bindon Hill - 04.09.2014



Chalkhill Blue female – Bindon Hill – 04.09.2014

The Adonis Blues were in lower numbers here than I have seen in previous years but having said that there were some very fresh ones about and it seemed that there was a steady emergence still going on.



Adonis Blue pair – Bindon Hill



Adonis Blue male – Bindon Hill 04.09.2014



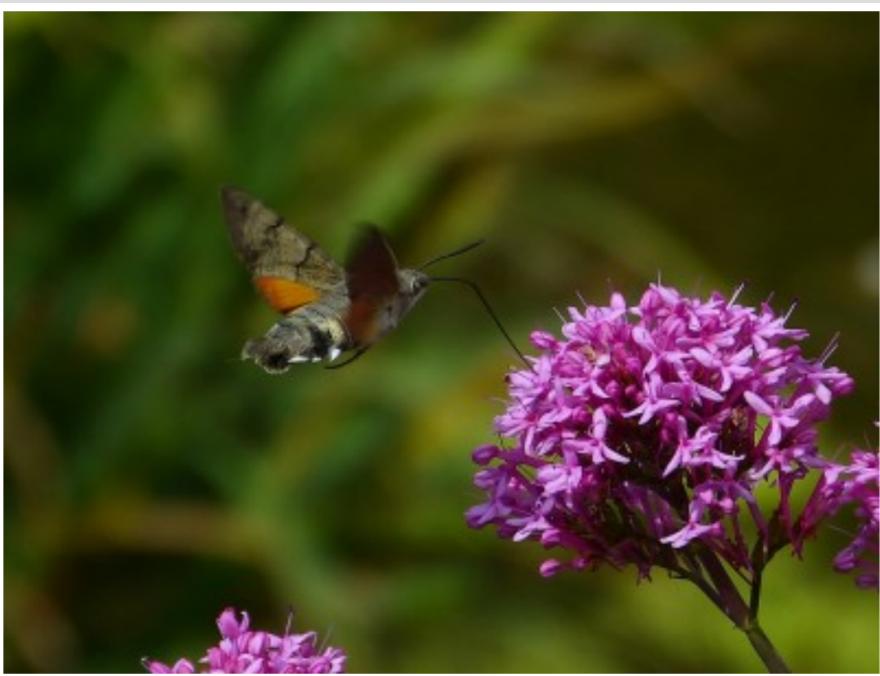
Adonis Blue female - Bindon Hill 04.09.2014

I will come back to the Adonis Blues in another post of their own later, as I ended up seeing these at five separate sites during the week and took loads of photos of both males and females looking nice and fresh.

Down in the cove itself a couple of Hummingbird Hawk moths were seen on clumps of Valerian growing out of the walls, usually accompanied by one or two Small Whites or Small Tortoiseshells.



Hummingbird Hawk Moth - Lulworth Cove 31.08.2014



Hummingbird Hawk Moth - Lulworth Cove 31.08.2014



Small Tortoiseshell – Lulworth Cove 31.08.2014

On the grassy slope around by Stair Hole, Meadow Browns, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Copper were seen plus a Clouded Yellow was seen circling around the steeper parts on a couple of days.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by nomad, 08-Sep-14 07:40 PM GMT

Super reports and photos. I found the series of grayling images very interesting. Nice to see the Chalkhill Blues were still fresh on the last day of August and in early September on the south coast. Those Lulworth images bring back many happy memories, what a beautiful area, my favourite coastal locality. 😊 Those Hummingbird Hawk moth shots are stunners.

Regards Peter.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-14 10:12 PM GMT

Fantastic lush shots Neil 😊 Those Chalk Hills and Adonis are in cracking nick and the open wing Grayling shots well 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-14 07:15 PM GMT

Hi Peter, thanks for your comments, I am glad you like them 😊

Cheers Wurzel, those Graylings were one of my highlights, great to watch and getting the open wing shots was the icing on the cake 😊

Ballard Down and Durlston Country Park

On the Tuesday morning (2nd September) we had a drive into Swanage and after dropping the women off in the town I went off to Ballard Down. It is amazing how some shops and a pot of tea and some cake will keep them happy while I wander off for a bit 😊.

Unfortunately, Tuesday turned out to be the cloudiest day we had all week and on my arrival at the layby at Ulwell there was a rain shower that lasted for about 20 minutes. Walking up onto the down after the rain had stopped, I followed the lower path, seeing a few Meadow Browns and a couple each of Small Heath and Speckled Wood, all that was flying in the dull conditions.



Speckled Wood – Ballard Down 02.09.2014

After a while I made my way back along the path and bumped into Matthew Oates and a couple of his colleagues from the N.T (I think). We had a short chat before I carried on looking to see if I could find any roosting Adonis Blues, of which I eventually found a couple each of males and females in the flat open area near the path to the layby.



Adonis Blue in the wet grass – Ballard Down 02.09.2014

After an hour or so at the Down I went back to meet Jane and my Mom in Swanage and we then decided to carry on up to Durlston Country Park where they were happy to go into the café at the castle (tea and cake again 😊) whilst I had another little wander.

It was still dull and cloudy despite a forecast for it to clear during the afternoon and things here were similar to Ballard Down, a few Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and roosting Adonis Blues and Common Blues. At least here I found one Adonis basking for a short while during a brief spell when the clouds were slightly thinner.



Adonis Blue - Durlston CP 02.09.2014

A couple of days later (Thursday 4th September) we returned to Swanage on a much brighter and warmer day with some nice sunny spells and I grabbed the chance for another look on Ballard Down. This time there were many more butterflies about, although, like at Bindon Hill earlier in the week, numbers seemed generally lower compared with what I have seen here previously.

Again, as at Bindon Hill, some of the Adonis Blues were looking nice and fresh indicating that they were still emerging, in fact whilst talking with Matthew Oates here on Tuesday he had said that he would expect them to last throughout September and into October on chalk sites such as this.



Adonis Blue female - Ballard Down 04.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Ballard Down 04.09.2014



Adonis Blue pair – Ballard Down 04.09.2014



Adonis Blue and Brown Argus – Ballard Down 04.09.2014

Carrying on to Durlston later for another look, I found Adonis and Common Blues, Meadow Browns, Small Heath, Speckled Wood and Large and Small Whites plus a couple of Green-veined Whites but again overall numbers seemed down compared to previous years.



Adonis Blue – Durlston CP 04.09.2014

There were also a number of Red Admirals here which seemed to be flying past me every few minutes coming in off the sea.

Despite having a good search in the areas I have seen them before I failed to find any late Lulworth skippers here this year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-14 09:56 PM GMT

Your observations seem to confirm what i found a couple of weeks ago down there—a pottracted emegece of Adonis Blues in low numbers this year,instead of the spectacular but short emegece we saw in 2013.

Great pictures,love the late Chalkhill Blues.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-14 10:17 PM GMT

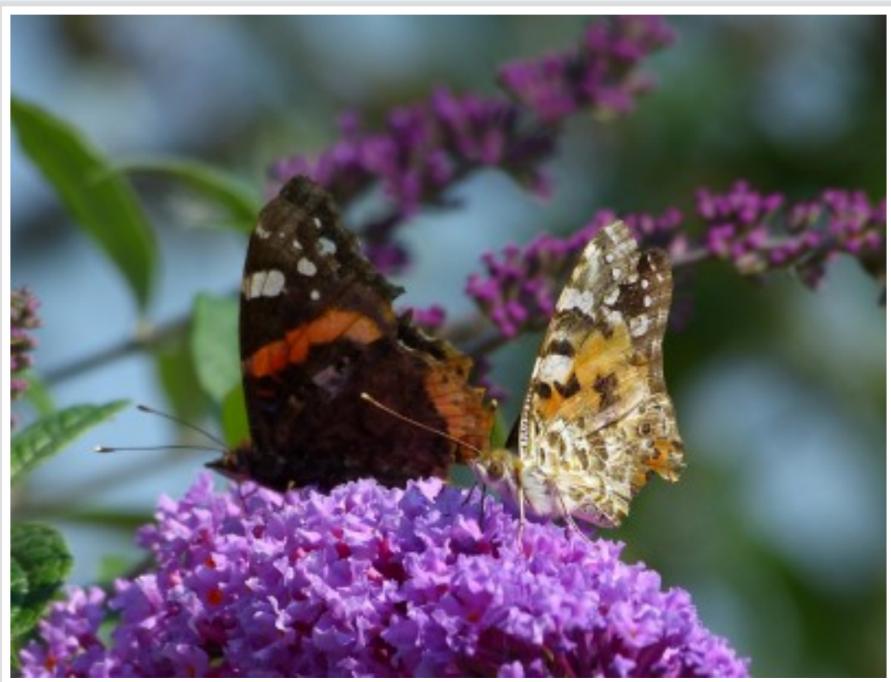
Thanks for the comments Essex 😊 I found the greatest number of Adonis Blues at Osmington on the path up to White Horse Hill, far more than at Ballard, Durlston or Lulworth yet still not as many as last year. Still got a post to come to include those.

Mostly Red Admirals.

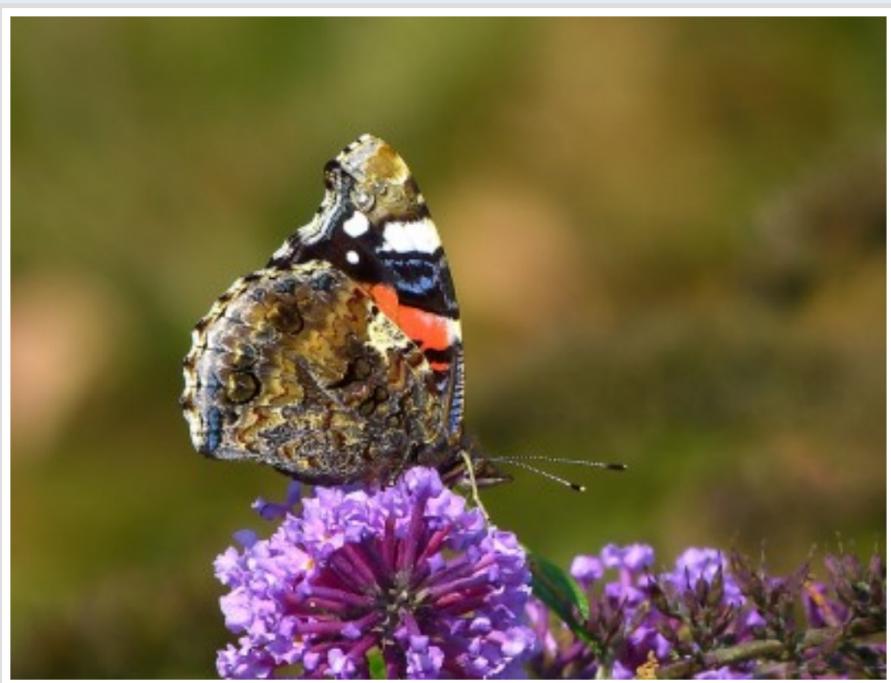
I have mentioned a couple of times in the previous posts that I saw Red Admirals at various places last week in Dorset. In fact they showed up in ones and twos just about everywhere, sometimes half a dozen or more, and often seen flying in off the sea.

On the Wednesday (3rd September) I took a late afternoon drive to Osmington to have a walk up the path to White Horse Hill, one of my favourite spots in this area, but before doing so I went to check out a couple of Buddleias down by the Smugglers Inn.

Last year these shrubs had been covered with Small Tortoiseshells but this year it was Red Admirals that dominated with 11 counted plus a tatty Painted Lady and a Peacock along with Large and Small Whites.



A raggedy pair - Osmington Mills 03.09.2014



Red Admiral - Osmington Mills 03.09.2014



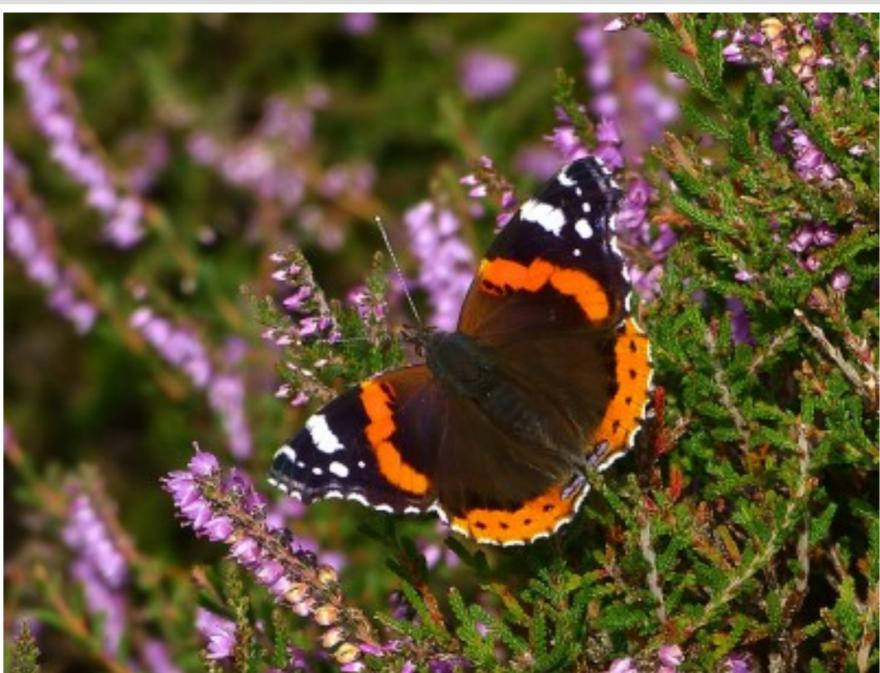
Red Admirals - Osmington Mills 03.09.2014



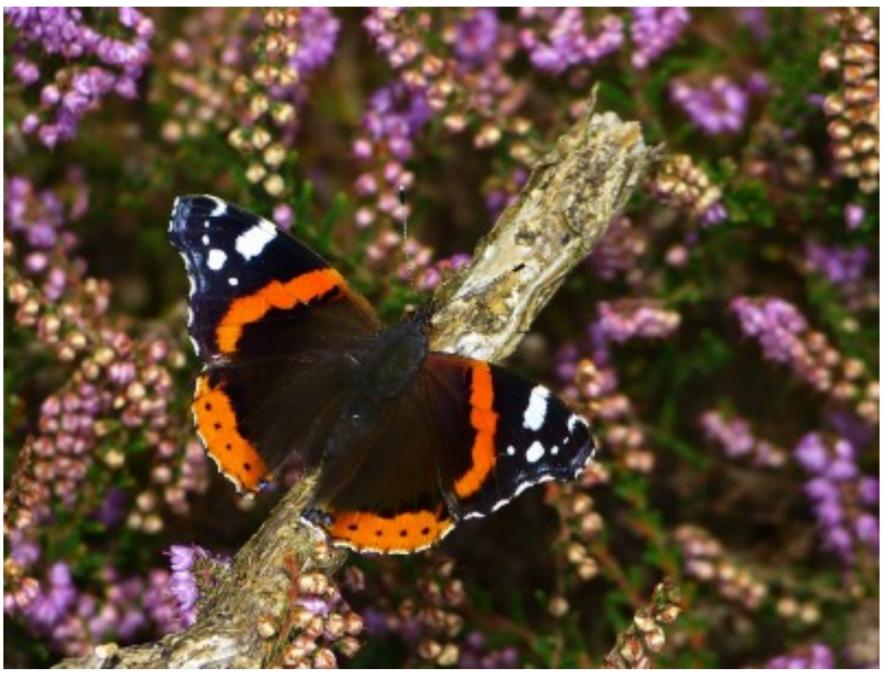
Peacock - Osmington Mills 03.09.2014

Anyone who has been reading my diary for the past couple of years may remember that I saw large numbers of Red Admirals in September 2012 on the heather at Knoll Beach at Studland.

Whilst we were in the Swanage area last Thursday we stopped off at Knoll Beach for a couple of hours and whilst the women just chilled out for a bit I went for a little wander. In the same area that I had seen the Red Admirals in 2012 I again saw good numbers, not as many as before but easily 30+ without going too far (this is not a spot where I want to venture too far into the dunes 😊).



Red Admiral - Studland 04.09.2014

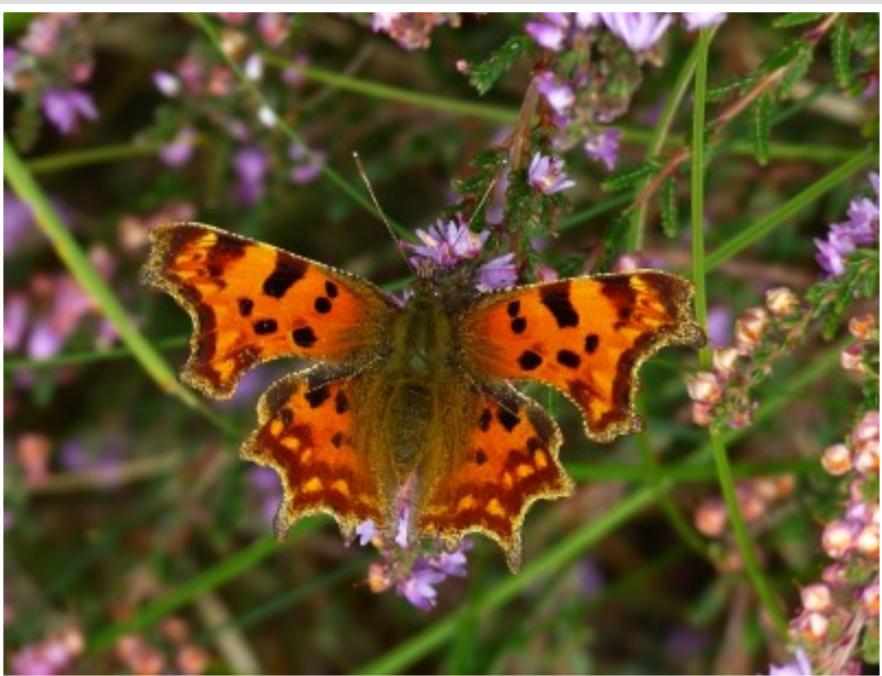


Red Admiral – Studland 04.09.2014



Red Admiral – Studland 04.09.2014

As well as the Red Admirals there was also a single Comma, the first Autumn one that I have seen.



Comma – Studland 04.09.2014

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 09-Sep-14 10:32 PM GMT

More lovely pictures, Neil – splendid Red Admirals and some nice fresh Adonis. To be honest, I've never come across anything unexpected in the dunes at the back of Knoll Beach (maybe everyone buries themselves in sand as we tramp across the dunes 😊). Just butterflies... I believe the unspectacular second brood of Adonis may well be related to the above average height of the grass round the foodplant when the eggs were laid. A chap I spoke to at Denbies the other day said that the very wet winter and subsequent warm weather has led to unprecedented grass growth this year.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 10-Sep-14 06:48 AM GMT

Lovely Adonis Neil especially the female in the wet grass 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-14 08:01 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, so far I have not encountered anything untoward in the dunes at Studland either, I believe they are patrolled regularly by N.T. rangers now so it is probably just me being overly cautious.

You may have a point about the grass growth this year, it is certainly long and lush around here. I am not sure what the Adonis numbers will end up like, they were still emerging in Dorset last week and I believe they may do so for a while yet.

Thanks Pauline, I was pleased with quite a few of my Adonis shots this year, speaking of which...

Adonis Blues

In the past few updates from my latest week in Dorset I have posted some Adonis Blue shots from four separate locations, Durdle Door, Bindon Hill, Ballard Down and Durlston Country Park. The numbers were lowest at Durdle Door where I saw a dozen at most and a bit higher at the other three sites where I saw perhaps 20-30 at each.

There was one other site which I visited and at which Adonis Blues were present in larger numbers and this was along the path up to White Horse Hill at Osmington. I visited here late in the afternoon of the Wednesday (3rd September) and found good numbers on the slopes above the path. Even here the numbers were lower than 2013, dozens rather than the hundreds which I saw in September last year, but easily the most I saw in one place this year.

At all the sites where I saw them I spent some time trying to get the angle to catch that elusive electric blue colour on the fresh males, with varying degrees of success, and having ended up with loads of shots, I thought that some of them deserved a post of their own...



Adonis Blue male - Durdle Door 05.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Bindon Hill 04.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Durlston CP 04. 04.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Osmington 03.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Osmington 03.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Osmington 03.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Osmington 03.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Osmington 03.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Osmington 03.09.2014



Adonis Blue - Osmington 03.09.2014

and a few females...



Adonis Blue female - Durdle Door 05.09.2014



Adonis Blue female - Ballard down 04.09.2014



Adonis Blue female - Osmington 03.09.2014



Adonis Blue female - Osmington 03.09.2014

As mentioned previously, although numbers were generally lower than I have seen in previous years, it looked as if the emergence was still ongoing, so I am hoping that total numbers will turn out to be reasonable over the whole flight period. I reckon that when seen en-masse they make such a spectacle that it is more noticeable when the emergence is more protracted and there are fewer flying at any one time.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by nomad, 10-Sep-14 08:16 PM GMT

Those Adonis Blue images are super 😊

Re: nfreem

by David M, 10-Sep-14 08:17 PM GMT

Lovely to see a species in such good condition during September. These insects have certainly been blessed with good weather these last few days so one hopes they've bred in greater numbers than usual.

Re: nfreem

by keving, 10-Sep-14 09:12 PM GMT

Neil,

What wonderful shots of the Adonis Blue.

Regards Kev

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-14 07:08 PM GMT

Thanks for the great comments Peter, David and Kev, very much appreciated 😊

Clouded Yellows

Whilst it is not exactly a 'Clouded Yellow Year' there seems to have been a steady influx of this species this year. I had earlier seen a few during my earlier week in Dorset and felt sure that I would see a few more on my return last week and sure enough they cropped up at most places during the week.

I saw at least 4 around Durdle Door and a further 6 at Osmington which seems to be a good reliable site for Clouded Yellows (as well as Adonis Blues), this being where I saw about half a dozen last year and at least 3 in July this year. I also saw 1 at Lulworth Cove, 1 on Portland, 1 in Weymouth and a couple whilst tootling about in the car, which made for at least 15 over the week. Most seemed to be males, at least the ones that I got a good look at or took photos of were, and were in varying condition from reasonable to quite worn.



Clouded Yellow - Durdle Door 02.09.2014



Clouded Yellow - Durdle Door 05.09.2014



Clouded Yellow - Osmington 03.09.2014



Clouded Yellow - Osmington 03.09.2014



Clouded Yellow - Osmington 03.09.2014

On one occasion, on the Tuesday afternoon (2nd September) by Durdle Door, I was watching a Clouded Yellow skimming rapidly at low level across the slope when it came to a sudden stop, unlike the 'slow down and flutter about' that they do when they are about to settle. I slowly approached the spot and found the butterfly had flown into a spiders web and was vainly struggling to escape. The spider had already pounced and before long the struggles got weaker and the spider began to wrap up its meal. After a few minutes it was all over and the spider retired up the web and left the Clouded Yellow trussed up for later.





I felt a bit sad watching this but fascinated at the same time. I couldn't help but wonder if he had flown across from the continent only to end up like this. On the other hand he may have been a descendant from arrivals earlier in the year. Either way, there was no point in attempting to free the butterfly from the web, as by the time I had approached, the spider had already bitten it so it would have died anyway.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-14 07:42 PM GMT

Small Coppers

From what I have read on various posts on UKB so far this year, it seems that Small Coppers have had quite a variable season in different parts of the country. Some people have apparently not seen many whereas others have seen very good numbers, particularly Hoggers at Dungeness and Neil Hulme recently in Cornwall, both of whose diaries have excellent reports and photos of this species.

In Dorset last week Small Coppers turned up at a number of sites, usually 2 or 3, and up to half a dozen at most spots. Not great numbers but this is a species that I usually encounter in these sorts of low numbers in any one spot so for me this appeared to be fairly normal.

The males were most obvious as usual with their feisty antics; chasing intruders away from their favourite basking spots, but I also saw equal numbers of females, some of which looked quite large and impressive.

The most that I saw in one spot was half a dozen or so at Durdle Door where the photos below were all taken, usually on my late afternoon walks there,



Small Copper male - Durdle Door 31.08.2014



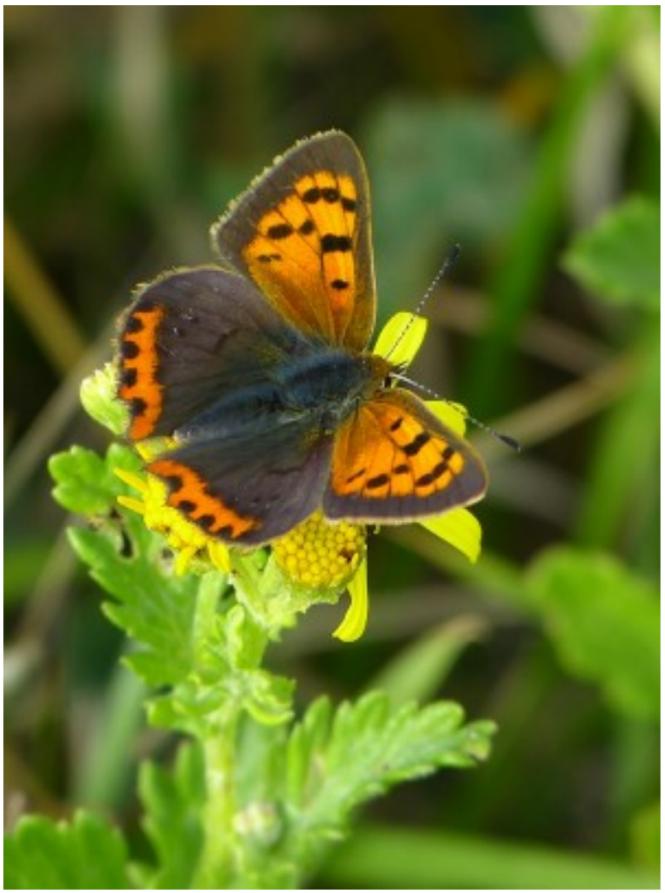
Small Copper female - Durdle Door 31.08.2014



Small Copper female - Durdle Door 31.08.2014



Small Copper male - Durdle Door 02.09.2014



Small Copper male - Durdle Door 02.09.2014



Small Copper male - Durdle Door 05.09.2014

The blue spotted female below was a bit worn but still looked nice and was a good size, something which doesn't come across in the photos. I would love to have seen her when still fresh,



Small Copper female - Durdle Door 02.09.2014



Small Copper female - Durdle Door 02.09.2014

The path to White Horse Hill at Osmington also produced 4 or 5 individuals, mostly fairly worn males and the nice female below (also with blue spots 😊),



Small Copper female - Durdle Door 03.09.2014

I am not sure what brood these all were flight timings seem to vary greatly throughout the country and I remember Hoggers seeing third brood at Dungeness whilst I was still seeing second brood locally around Solihull. Looking at the state of wear of some of them, especially the males, I would think these were probably third brood.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 12-Sep-14 09:06 PM GMT

Hi Neil, just catching up on your diary. Great reports and images from your Dorset trip. The Grayling courtship shots are superb 😊 something I've yet to witness! What I find amazing however, is the fantastic condition of all the butterflies in your photos 😊 incredible for September 😊

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-14 11:12 PM GMT

Fantastic reports Neil 😊 The Small Coppers have been a bit hit or miss this year and I reckon Dave is onto something about the Adonis Blues 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 14-Sep-14 06:23 PM GMT

Thanks Mike, I was well chuffed with those Grayling shots 😊, something I had never seen before either.

Cheers Wurzel, Small Coppers have had an average year at my local spots around Solihull this year, that is, I have seen them in all the places and in the kind of numbers that I would normally expect 😊.

Dorset Round Up

I thought that I would finish off my reports from Dorset with one last one to include a few photos and comments that I have not squeezed into any of the previous ones.

The couple of photos below were taken at Portland Bill on the Wednesday (3rd September) morning, on the patch of grass between the Lighthouse Car Park and the MOD station. During a short 30 minute or so look around here whilst the women went for a coffee, I saw 10/12 each of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, 3 Common Blues, a few Large and Small Whites, and also had flypasts of a Painted Lady, a Clouded Yellow and a couple of Red Admirals.



Small Heath - Portland 0309.2014



Common Blue - Portland 03.09.2014

A little later the same morning we stopped off at Tout Quarry and whilst the women were looking at the stone sculptures I had a little wander about and on some Buddleias a bit further along the path found a couple of Hummingbird Hawkmoths and half a dozen Red Admirals.



Hummingbird Hawkmoth - Portland 03.09.2014



Hummingbird Hawkmoth - Portland 03.09.2014



Hummingbird Hawkmoth - Portland 03.09.2014



Red Admiral - Portland 03.09.2014

I was also pleased to find my first Wall Brown this year, a female that was flying about quite rapidly in the now warm late morning sun, but which stopped just long enough for me to get a record shot.



Wall Brown - Portland 03.09.2014

Later that afternoon I saw my second Wall Brown of the year, another female, on the path to White Horse Hill at Osmington. It was getting on for 6.00pm when I saw this one and it settled under an overhang at the side of the path in a bit of shade. It looked like it was settling in for the night so I took the shot below using flash to fill in the shadow.



Wall Brown - Osmington 03.09.2014

Small Heaths were abundant almost everywhere, particularly around Durdle Door and at Osmington, and in total numbers were probably the most numerous species that I saw all week. Meadow Browns were also abundant at most places and Speckled Woods turned up nearly everywhere with nice fresh examples of both species amongst more worn and faded ones.



Small Heath - Osmington 03.09.2014



Small Heath - Osmington 03.09.2014



Speckled Wood – Portland 03.09.2014

During the week, overall butterfly numbers were not as high as I have seen here in previous years at this time. At the three well known sites of Bindon Hill, Ballard down, and Durlston Country Park, numbers of most species were generally lower, although as previously mentioned; there were fresh individuals of most species about that indicated that they were still emerging. I commented in an earlier post that I suspected that the cool and cloudy August had put the brakes on the season a bit and led to more protracted emergences of some species compared to last year, and my observations during the week seemed to support this

The slopes around Durdle Door and along the path up to White Horse Hill at Osmington were the most productive sites and at both of these there were good numbers of butterflies, highlights being the Graylings at Durdle Door and the Adonis Blues at Osmington, plus Clouded Yellows at both. I saw fewer Small Tortoiseshells around this year, one or two showing up at most places instead of the hordes of last year, but on the other hand, Red Admirals were abundant again where they had been in short supply in 2013.

During the week the total number of butterfly species seen was 20...

- 1 – Large White. Seen nearly everywhere on most days.
- 2 – Small White. As above but in greater numbers.
- 3 – Green-veined White. A few seen at most places.
- 4 – Clouded Yellow. 15+ seen during the week.
- 5 – Common Blue. Seen at most places in varying condition
- 6 – Chalkhill Blue. A few still on Bindon Hill.
- 7 – Adonis Blue. Good numbers Osmington, fewer at other sites.
- 8 – Brown Argus. Lots about still but mostly worn and faded.
- 9 – Small Copper. Seen at a number of sites, usually between 2– 6 at a time.
- 10 – Small Tortoiseshell. A couple or three seen at most places.
- 11 – Peacock. 2 seen at Osmington.
- 12 – Red Admiral. Loads about, seen everywhere.
- 13 – Comma. 1 seen at Studland.
- 14 – Painted Lady. 4 seen, 2 at Osmington, 1 on Portland, 1 at Durdle Door.
- 15 – Speckled Wood. Turned up at most places.
- 16 – Meadow Brown. Loads about, some still fresh looking.
- 17 – Marbled white. 2 seen at Durdle door, remarkably fresh looking still.
- 18 – Wall Brown. 2 seen, 1 on Portland, 1 at Osmington.
- 19 – Grayling. Loads seen, particularly on the slopes above Durdle Door.
- 20 – Small Heath. Loads about at most places.

I didn't find any late Lulworth Skippers at Durlston this year (I have done so in the past couple of years at this time) and I didn't see any Brimstones. If I had seen these two species as well, it would have given me a possible count of 22 species, very respectable for early September.

Half a dozen Hummingbird Hawkmoths were also seen during the week most of which I have already mentioned, and the nice Wasp Spider below was seen at Durlston. I couldn't get a more 'square on' photo of the spider without disturbing her web, which I didn't want to do, but I still quite like the side on shot that I managed.



Wasp Spider – Durlston CP – 02.09.2014

All in all, it was another great week in one of my favourite parts of the country 😊 .

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-14 10:24 PM GMT

A great set of reports Neil 😊 I'm glad that you got your Wall and Dorset delivered again 😊 That final Red Admiral is a stunner 🎁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 15-Sep-14 10:27 PM GMT

I also love the shot of the roosting Wall in a really natural setting. Brilliant. 😊

Dave

Re: nfreem

by Maximus, 16-Sep-14 01:52 PM GMT

Hi Neil, great shots of the Hummingbird Hawkmoth 😊 not the easiest of subjects 😊 Lovely pics from Dorset too, looks like you had a great week.

Mike

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-14 07:54 PM GMT

Thanks for the great comments Wurzel, Dave and Mike. 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by jenks, 16-Sep-14 08:00 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

I just want to echo the comments made by others. The shots of the Hummingbird Hawk moth are great, you`ve really captured the whirring wings !

Jenks

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-14 08:21 PM GMT

Thanks Jenks, it helped that the Hummingbird Hawkmoths tended to hover stationary in the air for a short while, still missed some shots when they shot off to another flower though.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by essexbuzzard, 16-Sep-14 10:45 PM GMT

Congratulations Neil-this is a really good report,and some great photo's in there too. I also saw the hummingbird hawkmoths at Lulworth near the visitor centre,perhaps on the same red valerian clump you saw them on! But only in the evenings,when it wasn't light enough for photo's,yours are great.

I agree,this is one of my favorite areas of the country-behind Essex and Cornwall of course!

Never been to Osmington,must do so next time. I have driven past the white horse on the way to Weymouth,but never thought of stopping there,i will now!

Cheers,Mark.

Re: nfreem

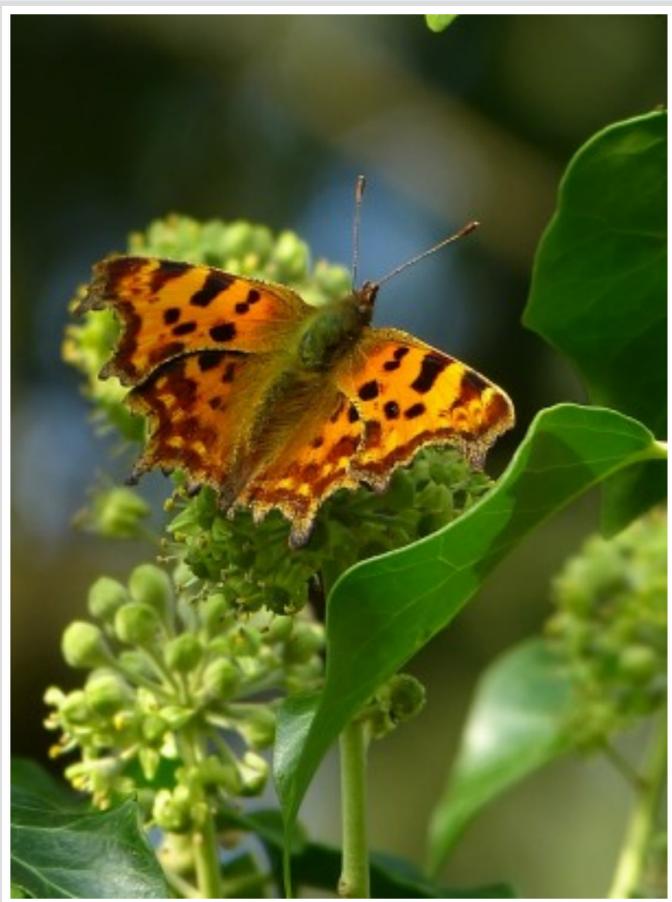
by Neil Freeman, 18-Sep-14 09:13 PM GMT

Thanks for the great comments Mark 😊 I saw the HBHMs at Lulworth on the valerian by the visitor centre and also further down by where the stream opens out into a duck pond. The photos on the previous page were taken on the valerian growing out of the wall there, where it is at a nice convenient height.

The ones taken at Tout Quarry on Portland on the buddleia were a bit trickier, I climbed halfway up a large rock to get them 😊

Wednesday 17th September

Back at work for the past couple of weeks and a busy family weekend has meant that I haven't had chance to get out anywhere since my return from Dorset. Getting in from work yesterday (Wednesday) with it being a glorious sunny afternoon, I spent an hour in the garden and watched a Comma and Red Admiral on the Ivy, which has just started to flower.



Comma - Coverdale 17.09.2014

The Red Admiral also spent some time basking on the rear window frames between bouts of nectaring,



Red Admiral – Coverdale 17.09.2014

The Specklies are also still very much in evidence with between 2 and 4 different individuals being seen on most afternoons.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 17.09.2014

Also Large and Small Whites were passing through without stopping.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 20-Sep-14 04:59 PM GMT

I love the Humming Bird Moth, pictures Neil, I've never seen the Moth but I've seen the Humming Bird in the West Indies and their so alike it's unreal. Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 21-Sep-14 09:28 PM GMT

More lovely shots Neil 😊 Is that Red Admiral the aberrant called fructa – the one with the red band interrupted? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Sep-14 08:30 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, glad you like the Hummingbird Hawkmoth shots, I have seen them a few times before but this year was the first time that I managed to get any photos 😊

Cheers Wurzel, not sure about the Red Admiral being an ab. I will have to look it up. I must admit, I had it down as being within normal variation, but then again I usually do unless there is a an obvious difference.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

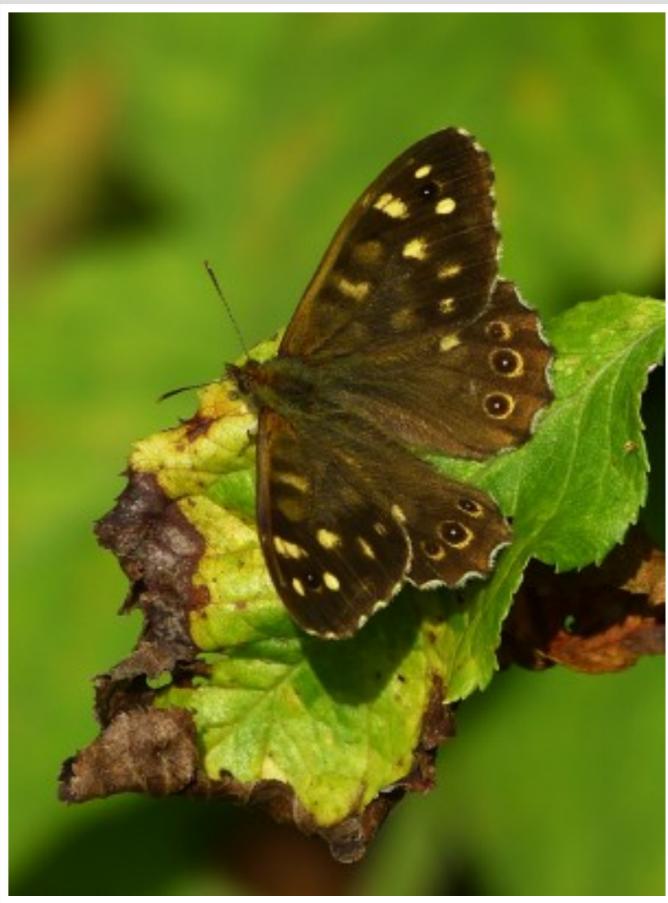
by Neil Freeman, 22-Sep-14 09:18 PM GMT

Sunday 21st September

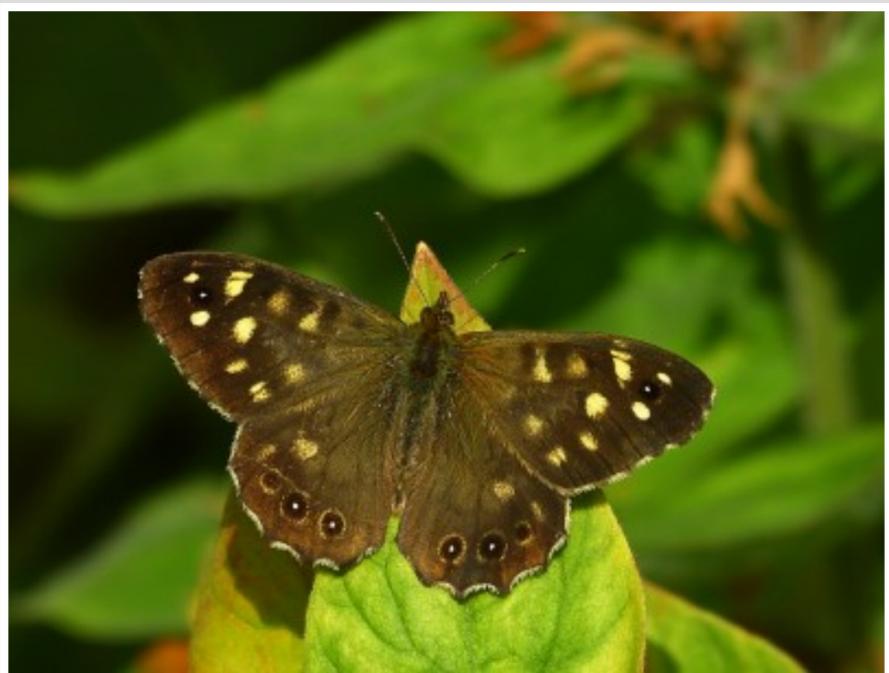
After a dull and dreary Saturday, Sunday was forecast to be much better and after a cold night the morning started off well with some good sun. By mid-morning it had started to warm up nicely with a least 3 different male Specklies dancing about and chasing each other around the garden.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 21.09.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 21.09.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 21.09.2014

By late morning however, clouds had started to build up and by the time I had an hour or so free in the afternoon, it had become mostly overcast with just occasional short sunny spells. As I had not been out to any of my local spots since before my week in Dorset, I decided to nip around to Bickenhill

to see what I could find.

The conditions were far from ideal with the clouds getting thicker and darker and a bit of a breeze that had a cool feel to it but nevertheless I saw half a dozen Speckled Woods, plus a couple of Commas and a single Green-veined White.



Comma - Bickenhill 21.09.2014



Green-veined white - Bickenhill 21.09.2014



Green-veined white - Bickenhill 21.09.2014

In the end, a day that failed to live up to the promise of the forecast, a shame really as at this stage of the season, each time out could potentially be the last. Checking my notes from last year I see that I managed to get out on each of the last weekends in September and into early October so here's fingers crossed for the next few weeks.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Pauline, 24-Sep-14 07:49 AM GMT

Some lovely autumnal shots there Neil and I particularly like the GVW image – lovely 🍁

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 25-Sep-14 10:12 PM GMT

I agree with Pauline Neil – that Green-veined White is a cracker and great to see some of those Specklies in such good nick 😊🍁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

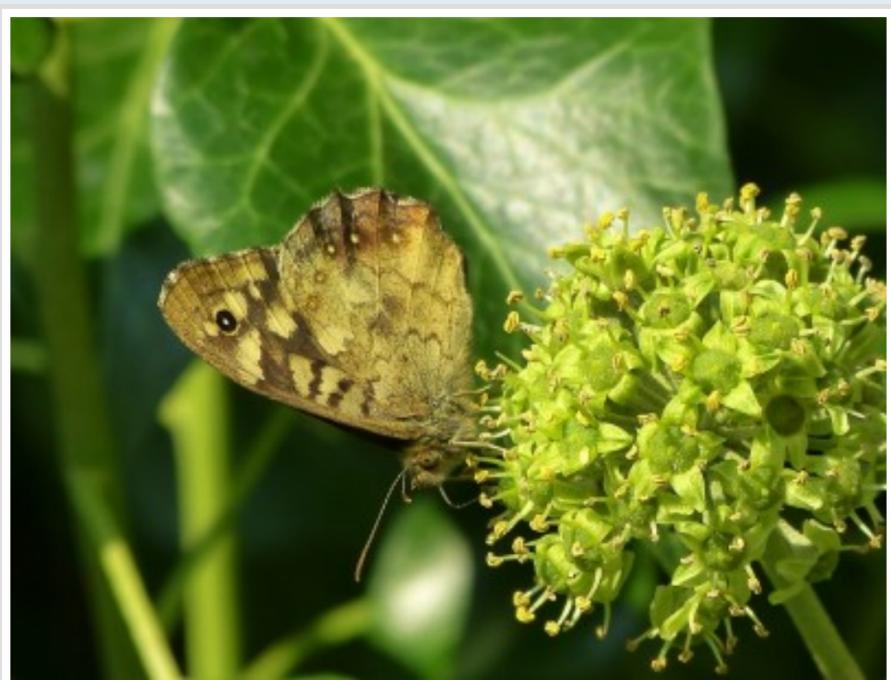
Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 26-Sep-14 07:57 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline and Wurzel for your comments, very much appreciated as always 😊

Friday 26.09.2014

Not a bad week weatherwise it seems, or at least the bits of it I have seen whilst at work seemed rather pleasant for late September. The opportunities to see anything in the garden are diminishing rapidly now with just a short window between getting home from work and the sun getting too low. Nevertheless, most afternoons I have seen something, usually a few Specklies or one or two Red Admirals that have been attracted to the Ivy flowers.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 22.09.2014



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 22.09.2014



Red Admiral - Coverdale 24.09.2014

This week there has been a significant increase in leaves falling from the trees and it is feeling decidedly nippy in the morning on my way to work. Nighttime temperatures earlier in the week were down to low single figures and the word 'frost' was mentioned a couple of times on the local weather forecasts. Since then, there has been more cloud about at night which has kept the temperature up a bit and today there was a warm feel to the slight breeze. The weekend is not looking too bad, warm and dry but possibly a lot of cloud about, fingers crossed.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 26-Sep-14 09:44 PM GMT

As ever, lovely Speckled Woods, Neil. Up in your part of the world tomorrow, not sure where we'll end up.

Dave

Re: nfreem

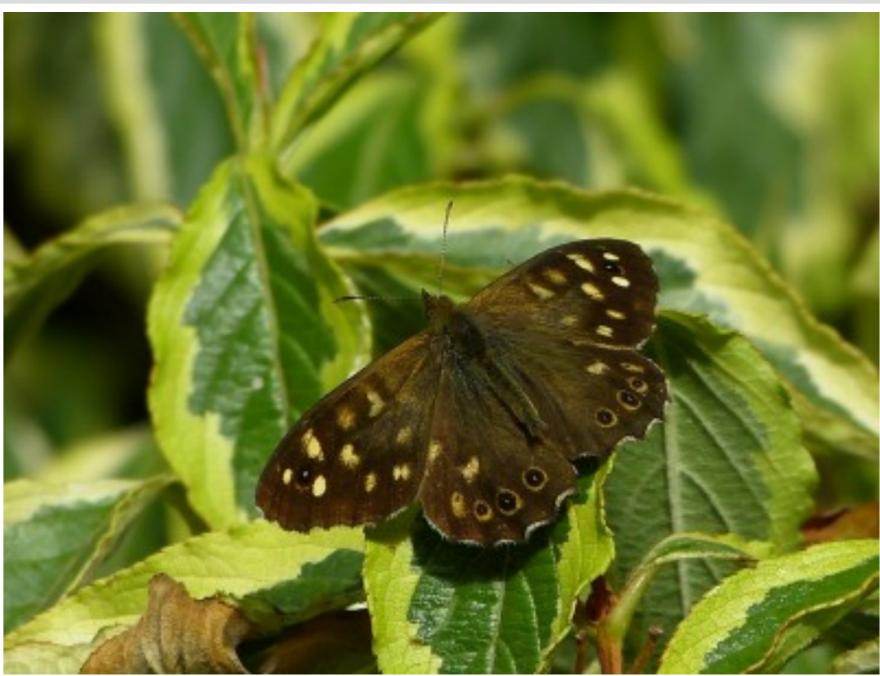
by Neil Freeman, 29-Sep-14 08:05 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, unfortunately Saturday was a dull, gloomy day up here, despite the forecast having it down as the better day, Sunday turned out to be much better....

Sunday 28th September.

After a dull grey Saturday (Sept. 27th) that totally failed to brighten up all day, Sunday started off much more promising with some nice sun that was warming things up nicely by mid-morning.

The Specklies in the garden were soon making the most of it with a male and two different females soaking up the morning sun,



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 28.09.2014



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 28.09.2014



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 28.09.2014

Later in the afternoon it was still very pleasant with some nice sunny spells broken up by occasional fluffy white clouds, and with a couple of hours spare I decided to nip round to my local spot at Castle Hills to see if anything was about.

At first the only butterflies seen were a few Speckled Wood around the hedgerows plus a single Comma basking on some brambles,



Comma - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014

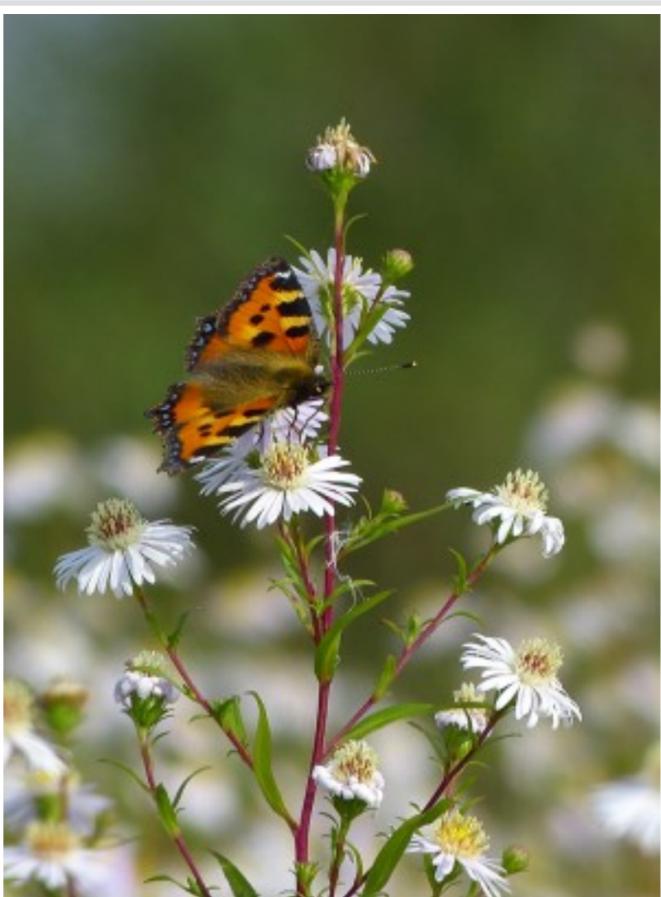
I remembered that last year I had come here at around the same time and found good numbers of Small Tortoiseshells on a couple of large patches of Michaelmas Daisies, so I headed to the same spot and sure enough found three Small Tortoiseshells on the larger of the two patches. This patch is something like thirty feet across with the flowers in the centre being at least five feet tall which made getting photos a bit tricky as the butterflies kept settling down amongst the flower stems in the middle of the patch.



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014

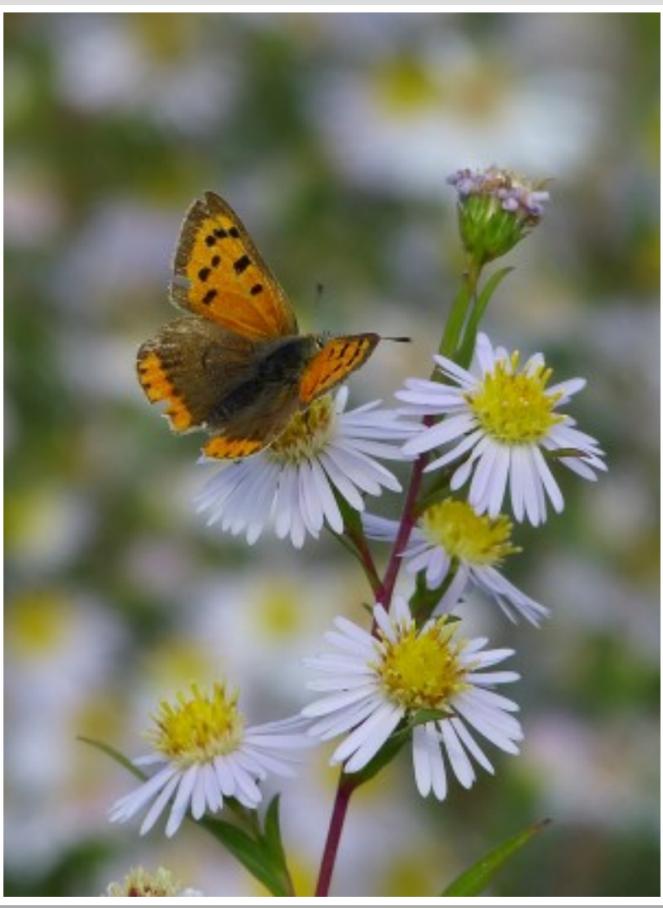


Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014

After a while watching the Small Torts and taking a few photos when they came close enough, I wandered over to the other patch which was a short distance away and was pleased to find a couple of Small Coppers there, both males. One of these was a bit worn and faded but the other one looked to be in quite good condition.



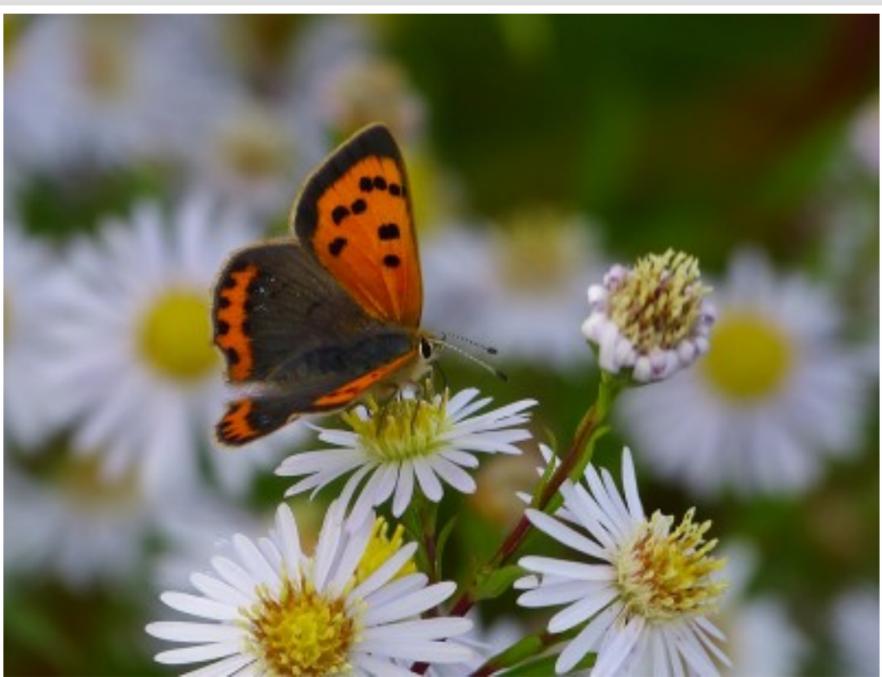
Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014



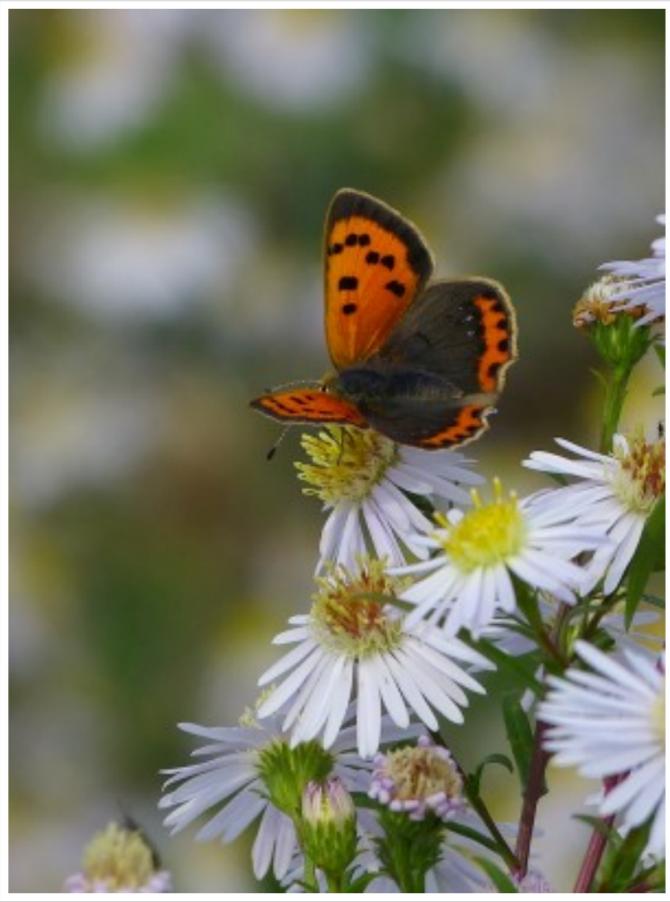
Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014

Both of these were very active and were constantly chasing anything that came close to them, mostly various bees that were all over the daisies.

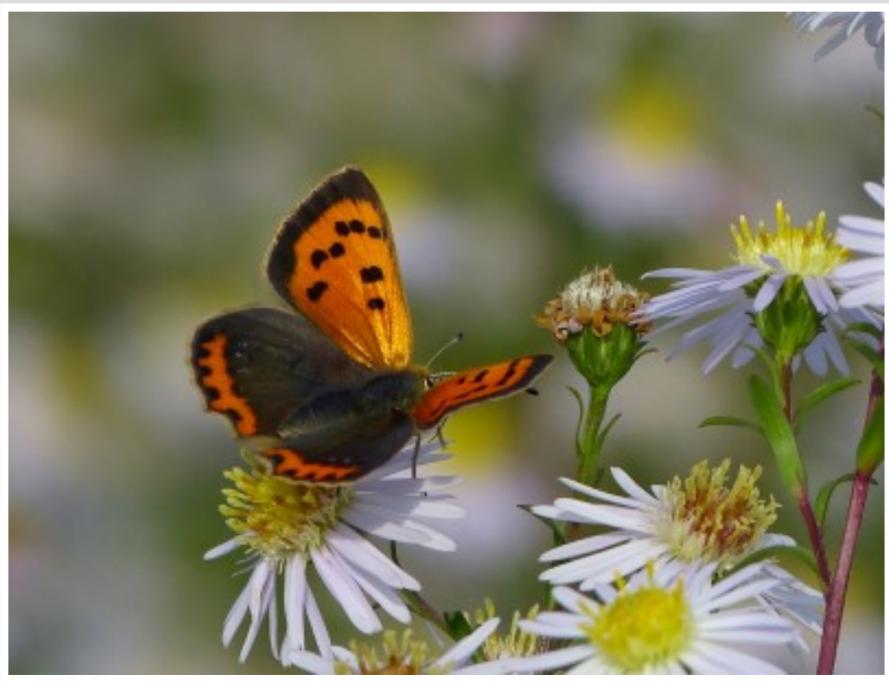
I then spotted another nice looking Small Copper, a female this time by her size and the shape of her wings and abdomen. She was flapping about in a far more relaxed manner amongst the flowers and settling for longer on the flowers to take nectar and posing nicely which gave me the opportunity to take a number of photos,



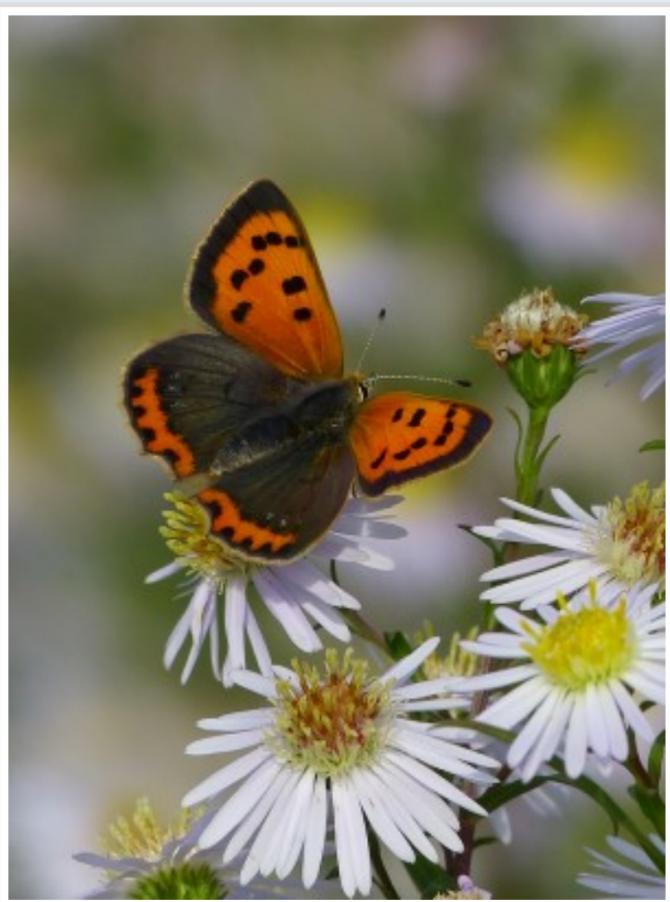
Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014



Small Copper - Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014



Small Copper – Castle Hills Solihull 28.09.2014

After watching her for a good fifteen minutes she flew off over the daisy patch and was lost to view so I started wandering back and spotted another Small Copper on the way. This one, another male, was the most worn and tatty one that I had seen today but nevertheless he made it a total of four Small Coppers seen here this afternoon 😊

Although there were not that many butterflies about in total, there were enough to have made for a very enjoyable couple of hours and I was particularly pleased to see the Small Coppers. This species seems to have had a better than average year around here with me seeing them at all of my local spots, much better than a couple of years ago (2012) when I only found a couple of examples at a couple of sites.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-14 11:16 PM GMT

Great Specklies and lush WPCs Neil 😊👍 Catching up after a hectic 3 weeks at work 😊 so it was great to revel in your shots 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 30-Sep-14 05:10 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, I like how the Copper shows up on the wings of your SC's making them shine, they're really well named Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 03-Oct-14 07:59 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, it has been a bit hectic this week at work for me too, my department is on the move in a few weeks so lots of planning and preparation going on.

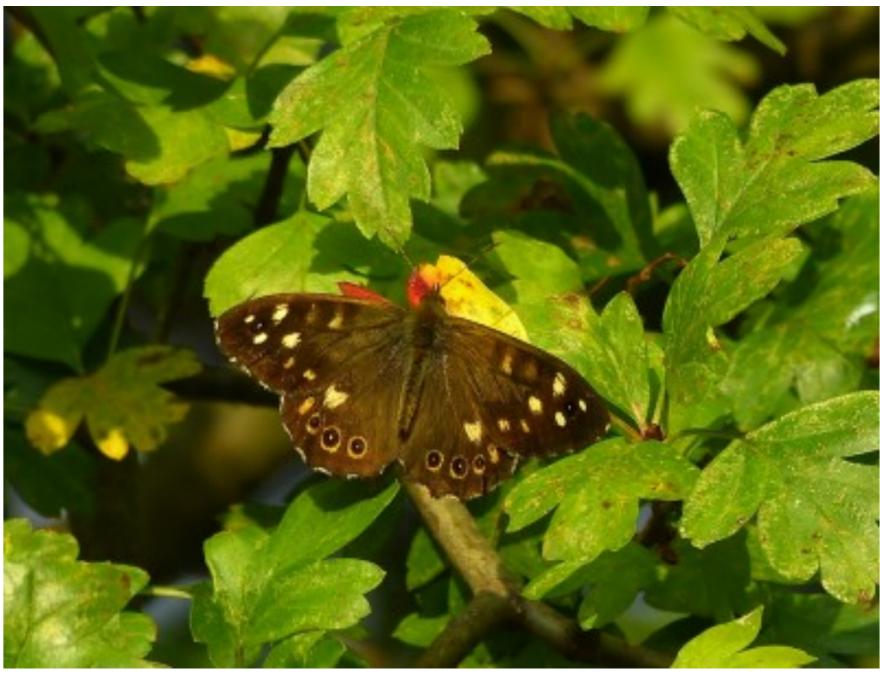
Thanks Goldie, I tried to capture the light reflecting off the Small Coppers wings in a couple of shots but the moments were so fleeting I didn't really do justice to how beautiful it looked in real life.

Friday 3rd October.

With the evenings rapidly drawing in there has been very little opportunity this week to see much in the garden after work. On Monday afternoon there were three Speckled Wood plus a Red Admiral hanging around but since then there has just been an occasional Specklie to greet me on getting in from work.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 29.09.2014



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 29.09.2014

After a cloudy morning it started to brighten up when I finished work today at mid-day and by the time I went around for my usual Friday afternoon visit to my mom, it had turned into a very pleasant afternoon. A quick half hour walk around the park by her house produced a few Speckled Woods, all looking worn and faded now plus a couple of Whites and a single Red Admiral that all passed by without stopping.



Speckled Wood - Langley Hall 03.10.2014



Speckled Wood – Langley Hall 03.10.2014



Speckled Wood – Langley Hall 03.10.2014

With a band of rain forecast to cross the country tomorrow and cooler weather following in its wake, this quite possibly marks the end of the season around here. That is not to say that there will not be some hibernators still around if the weather picks up a bit, but realistically I think that is about it for this year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 03-Oct-14 08:09 PM GMT

Familiar-looking Speckled Woods, Neil – very much like those near me. Is it my imagination, but do the pale spots acquire an almost greenish ("mouldy") tinge when they get worn?

Dave

Re: nfreem

by David M, 03-Oct-14 09:07 PM GMT

Nice to still see a few Specklies in October. With this weekend looking to be a washout, I doubt that there will be many who will see this species again prior to next April.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 05-Oct-14 10:20 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, I know what you mean about faded Speckled Woods having that greenish yellow tinge about them sometimes, almost like a thin layer of moss growing on them.

Hi David, the weekend wasn't a total washout in the end around here. After waking up to heavy rain yesterday morning that lasted until around mid-

day, it cleared up in the afternoon with some sunny spells but also with a stiff cold breeze. Today was dry but with a lot of cloud about which didn't really allow the weak sun to raise the temperature much so it remained a bit nippy all day.

Despite spending a good amount of time in the garden this afternoon, today was the first dry day since June that I have not seen a Speckled Wood there.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-14 10:59 PM GMT

More lovely shots Neil 😊 – somehow I missed this post first time round 😞 I too know what Dave is referring to WRT the Specklies, they end up looking a bit like battered chocolate limes 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 11-Oct-14 10:09 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I love that description of the worn Specklies, like 'battered chocolate limes' 😊

Nothing seen this past week, most of the time its has either been wet and cold or sunny with a cold wind. Time to start going through all the photos I have taken this year for the 'favourite photos' threads and maybe some looking back on my season.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 16-Nov-14 09:54 PM GMT

Saturday 15th November – Butterfly Conservation National AGM and Members Day.

Yesterday, I spent a very enjoyable day at the BC national AGM which this year was held at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire which is only a 30 minute drive from my house. As well as the official AGM stuff, the day was spent listening to some excellent and very interesting talks and presentations including;

Conserving the Wood White in Northamptonshire – Sharon Hearle, Regional Officer, Eastern England

Dukes on the Edge: the successful conservation of the Duke of Burgundy in South East England – Dr Dan Hoare, Senior Regional Officer, South East England

The restoration and creation of habitats to help Warwickshire's rare butterflies – Mike Slater, Warwickshire Branch

Successes for butterflies and moths on Butterfly Conservation's nature reserves – John Davis, Head of Reserves

Butterflies and Moths: the Third Dimension (3D film presentation) – Bob Pryce, Warwickshire Branch

During breaks between the talks and at lunchtime there was plenty of opportunity to mingle and chat and also browse the stalls that were stacked with loads of very tempting stuff. It really was difficult to resist the temptation to spend a fortune, particularly on some of the books that I noticed or on Richard Lewingtons stall with his wonderful paintings.

I was very pleased at last to meet Pete Eeles who was manning the UK Butterflies stand, along with Gary and Lisa, and also fellow UKB members Colin Knight and William during the course of the day 😊.

Although I have attended a few Warwickshire BC AGMs, this was the first national one that I have been to and I must say what an enjoyable day it was, not only for the presentations, but also from just chatting to so many like-minded enthusiasts.

A great day 😊

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 16-Nov-14 10:24 PM GMT

Agreed, Neil. They're great events.

I went to the one at Cheltenham Racecourse a couple of years ago and briefly met Pete and Gary. The whole thing was highly interesting from start to finish.

Sadly, my time right now is taken up with studying for an important work-related exam on December 4th, so I can't justify the indulgence but I'd love to have been there.

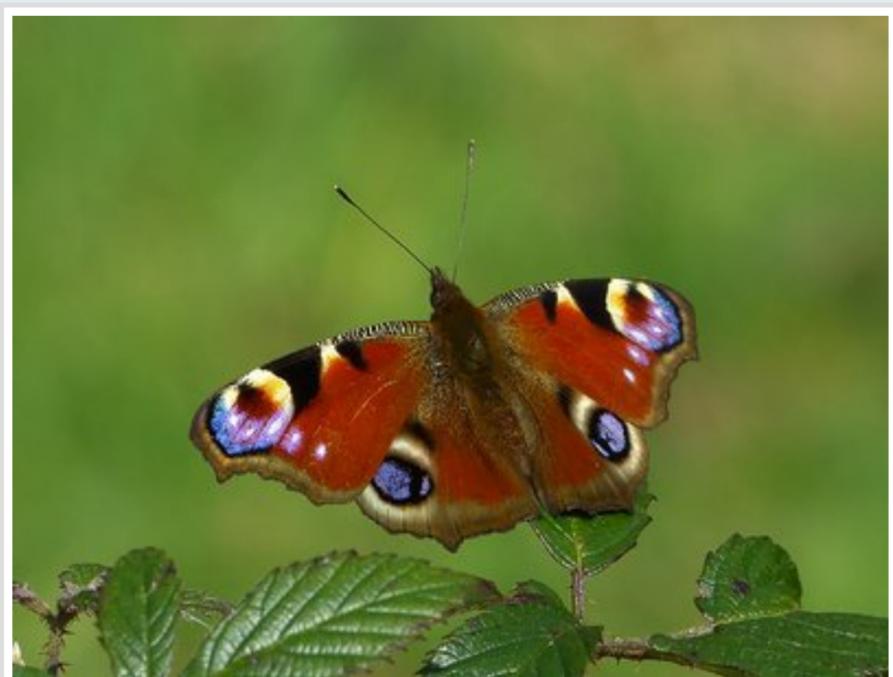
Re: nfreem

Looking back at 2014.

Well, it is about time that I started looking back on my 2014 season, I was going to start last week but a dose of Man-Flu left me feeling like I couldn't be bothered to do anything, but now that I am feeling better I have been cheering myself up by going back through all my photos.

Right at the start of the year I had made my mind up that I was not going to stress myself out with trying to get as many species as possible but instead just try and make the most of my usual family breaks and maybe a couple of 3 night trips with my wife Jane to try for a couple of species that I had yet to see for the first time. I also wanted to spend more time around my local area and maybe check out some new spots.

The season started off really well for me, as it seemed to do everywhere, with loads of Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Commas coming out of hibernation along with Brimstones, although I never do see as many of the latter as are around in other parts of the midlands and further south. These were followed by the emergence of Green-veined whites, Orange Tips and Speckled Woods, all of which were around locally in good numbers and with all these species regularly visiting my garden. On the other hand Holly Blues seemed to be a bit scarce compared to previous years with only a handful seen in the spring and even fewer later in the summer.



Peacock - Castle Hills Solihull 29.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills Solihull 29.03.2014



Comma - Castle Solihull 29.03.2014



Orange Tip - Coverdale 28.04.2014

Through April and May I went a little further around Warwickshire to see Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreaks and Small Blue and also went to the Wyre Forest to see Pearl-bordered Fritillaries.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 05.05.2014

My first trip away from the midlands this year was down to the Isle of Wight for 3 days at the end of May to try for my first ever Glanville Fritillaries. The weather was a bit 'iffy' but there was just enough sun and warmth for me to see not only my first Glanvilles , but also plenty of other butterflies including first brood Adonis Blues plus Dingy Skippers, Brown Argus, Green Hairstreaks, and Small Blues.



Glanville Fritillary - Wheelers Bay IOW 27.05.2014



Adonis Blue - Bonchurch down IOW - 28.05.2014

My other 'firsts' this year were both seen during a 3 day trip up to Arnside and Cumbria. With me having to book time off work in advance, I had done a bit of research into previous years flight times, and took a bit of a chance and booked our stay to try for Northern Brown Argus around Arnside and also hopefully try for Mountain Ringlet at Irton Fell. With a lucky combination of timing and weather, I managed to see both of my targets along with good numbers of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and also managed to see Large Heath at Meathop Moss before coming home.



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014



Mountain Ringlet - Irton Fell 12.06.2014



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Arnside 11.06.2014

With a couple of family breaks in Dorset, first a week in June and then again in September, my final tally for the year was 44 species. Highlights for me during these breaks included loads of Lulworth Skippers by Bowleaze Cove near Weymouth and Silver-studded Blues on Portland, both in June, Graylings at Durdle Door in September and Clouded Yellows during both stays.



Lulworth Skipper - Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Silver-studded Blue - Tout Quarry Portland 30.06.2014

As mentioned earlier, I had decided that I was not going to worry about missing some species and in fact I did indeed miss out on such notables as Purple Emperor, Duke of Burgundy and Wood White, all of which I could potentially see with an hour and a half drive from my house, but I simply chose to use my available time on other species this year. Oh well, plans for next year are already beginning to stir in the cobwebs of my mind. With my three 'firsts' this year, I have now seen 56 mainland British species with just Chequered Skipper and Black Hairstreak left to see. Living in the midlands, there is really not much excuse for not seeing the latter yet other than I have usually been elsewhere in the country when they are the wing. I really must make the effort for this one next year. Then to complete the list it will have to be a trip across the sea to the Emerald Isle at some point, and then there are all the various sub-species...and then I will be wanting better photos of everything... 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 25-Nov-14 11:36 PM GMT

Great look back and shots Neil 😊 Good luck next year with your quest and good news the man-flu has gone 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 26-Nov-14 12:47 PM GMT

Love the Photo's Neil, you took some great photo's 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by David M, 26-Nov-14 05:44 PM GMT

Nice sequence there, Neil. Your photos always cheer me up.

Re: nfreem

by nomad, 26-Nov-14 08:28 PM GMT

Nice to see your favourites of 2014. Super images, the Mountain Ringlet and Portland Silver-studded Blue dazzle. I used to go on holiday at Weymouth - Bowlease Cove as a boy, I never met the Lulworth Skipper there. I knew it occurs not far away at Burning Cliff, although on my visit a few years ago to that locality in July, I failed to see it, although a few were flying at Durdle Door and Lulworth Cove.

Peter.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 30-Nov-14 10:31 AM GMT

Thanks for the great comments Wurzel, Goldie, David and Peter 😊

Twos Company...

Going through my photos from this year it seems that I have again managed to take a few with 2 different species in one shot that I find interesting.

The first of these was a Comma and Peacock soaking up the spring sun back in April,



Comma and Peacock – River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014

In fact Peacocks seemed to get in on the double act with some regularity as these shots show, taken in my garden of a couple of different pairs on the same day...



Peacock and Speckled Wood – Coverdale 24.04.2014



Peacock and Speckled Wood – Coverdale 24.04.2014

...and this one from around Solihull,



Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock – Solihull 20.07.2014

and again from Snitterfield Bushes near Stratford-upon-Avon...



Silver-washed Fritillary – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014

...as was this Comma and SWF,



Silver-washed Fritillary and Comma – Snitterfield Bushes 13.07.2014

Other double acts taken during the season include the confused male Orange Tip below that spent some time hassling the female Green-veined White until she managed to make her escape,



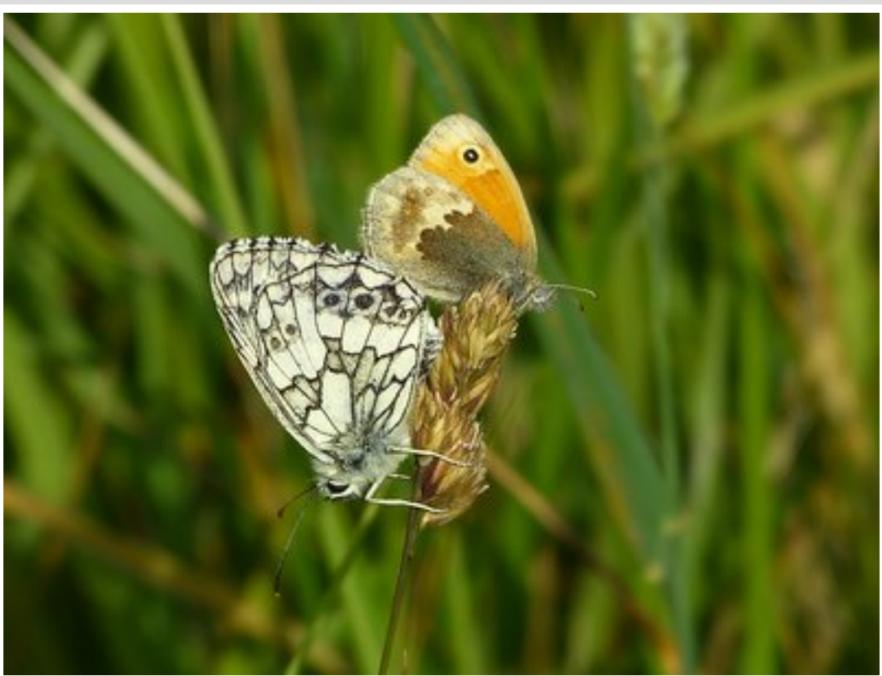
Orange tip and Green-veined white - Bickenhill 18.04.2014

The male Small Skipper and female Lulworth skipper below were seen at Lulworth Cove by the path up to Bindon Hill on the far side of the cove where there were loads of both species in early July, particularly far more Lulworth Skippers than up on the hill itself.



Small and Lulworth Skippers - Lulworth Cove 02.07.2014

From a bit later up on Bindon Hill itself were this Marbled White and Small Heath settling down for the evening,



Marbled White and Small Heath - Bindon Hill 02.07.2014

Back in Dorset in early September I took the following shot of a male Adonis Blue and female Brown Argus on Ballard Down,



Adonis Blue and Brown Argus – Ballard Down 04.09.2014

None of these are particularly great photos in themselves but I find them interesting in that they capture moments in time during my season and as such remind me of the great days that I have had 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: nfreem

by millerd, 30-Nov-14 01:40 PM GMT

They're great shots, Neil. I particularly like the Orange Tip and GWV – there's such a lot going on and it shows off how colourful the spring female GWV is as well.

Dave

Re: nfreem

by nomad, 30-Nov-14 01:50 PM GMT

Nice idea. Interesting captures 😊 Peter.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 30-Nov-14 03:24 PM GMT

I like this, Neil. I may go through my archives to find something similar, though none will beat Pete Eeles' Chequered Skipper/Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary double act.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 02-Dec-14 08:46 PM GMT

Thanks again for the comments Dave, Peter and David 😊

Two of a kind.

Another selection of photos from this season, with a similar theme of two butterflies in one shot but this time with both being the same species.

Pearl-bordered Fritillaries apparently had a good year in the Wyre Forest although when I went there in early May weather was a bit cloudy and drizzly. Even so I managed to see half a dozen or so and I believe that numbers built over the following few weeks.



Pearl-bordered Fritillaries – Wyre forest

Small Tortoiseshells started off well locally with good numbers coming out of hibernation and then later in the summer they appeared at most places that I went to although nowhere in quite the same numbers as in 2013.



Small tortoiseshells – Castle Hills Solihull 09.03.2014



Small Tortoiseshells – Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Small Tortoiseshells - White Horse Hill Osmington 30.06.2014

Peacocks were another species that were around in very good numbers after coming out of hibernation in spring and again with loads around later in the summer.



Peacocks - Coverdale 24.04.2014

Reds Admirals had a much better year this year after a poor showing in 2013 with increasing numbers as the season progressed.



Red Admirals - Osmington Dorset 03.09.2014

During my week in Dorset in early July Marbled whites were everywhere, including this pair on Bindon Hill at Lulworth.



Marbled Whites - Bindon Hill 02.07.2014

And finally, a couple of Purple Hairstreaks, both female I believe, from Bernwood Meadows when I stopped off there on my way back from Aston Rowant in late July.



Purple Hairstreaks - Bernwood Meadows 29.07.2014

Bye for now,
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 02-Dec-14 09:30 PM GMT

Quite an achievement to get two Purple Hairstreaks into the viewfinder at the same time!

Respect!

Re: nfreem

by trevor, 03-Dec-14 04:03 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Posting so many shots of 'duets' might seem a little bit flash for some, but I have a name for the sort of person who posts a shot of TWO Purple Hairstreaks in one image, it is of course unprintable here!. 😂👍

Seriously though, very well done!.

TREVOR.

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 03-Dec-14 11:32 PM GMT

Fantastic series of shots Neil culminating in that amazing shot of 2 Purps 🍷🍷🍷 Also is one of the Bowleaze Small Torts and aberrant as the usual yellow seems to have been replaced with white?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Goldie M, 05-Dec-14 03:24 PM GMT

Love your Purple Hair Streaks Neil, 🍷 all your photo's look great Goldie 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 07-Dec-14 10:13 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David, Trevor, Wurzel and Goldie.

The Purple Hairstreaks were from a stop off at Bernwood Meadows on my way back from Aston Rowant as reported in this diary on page 56 and during which I was entertained by up to a dozen PHs performing, mostly between 8 to 10 feet above my head. The variable angle screen on my FZ150 was invaluable in getting the shots.

More photos in the previous report...if that isn't being too flash Trevor 😊😊

viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5424&start=1100

Hi Wurzel, I see what you mean about the almost white markings on that Small Tortoiseshell. Your comment has prompted me to look back at my Small Tort photos from this season and it appears that there is a surprising amount of variation in this species, more than I for one was previously aware of. It seems that the yellow and black markings can both vary quite a bit as can the degree of orange/red in the ground colour and also the size of the blue crescents at the wing margins. I am not sure how much of the variation in colour is down to wear and fading and how much is genuine differences.

This has given me an excuse to post a series of Small Tortoiseshell photos that show some of this variety.

Small Tortoiseshells 2014

Following a good re-appearance of hibernators in the spring which I saw in good numbers around most of my local spots I continued to see Small Tortoiseshells almost continuously throughout the season with fresh summer examples appearing whilst there were still some ex-hibernators hanging on.

As mentioned above I have been looking back through my shots of this species and notice a fair amount of variation, some of which is undoubtedly age/wear related, but also some in fresher looking examples.

To start with a few 'normal' looking examples from throughout the year which still have slight differences with none of them being identical to each other,



Small Tortoiseshell - River Cole Birmingham 11.04.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Bonchurch Down IOW 27.05.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Bonchurch Down IOW 28.05.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Langley Hall Park Solihull 11.07.2014



Small Tortoiseshell - Solihull 20.07.2014

A couple with very pale yellow, almost white markings,

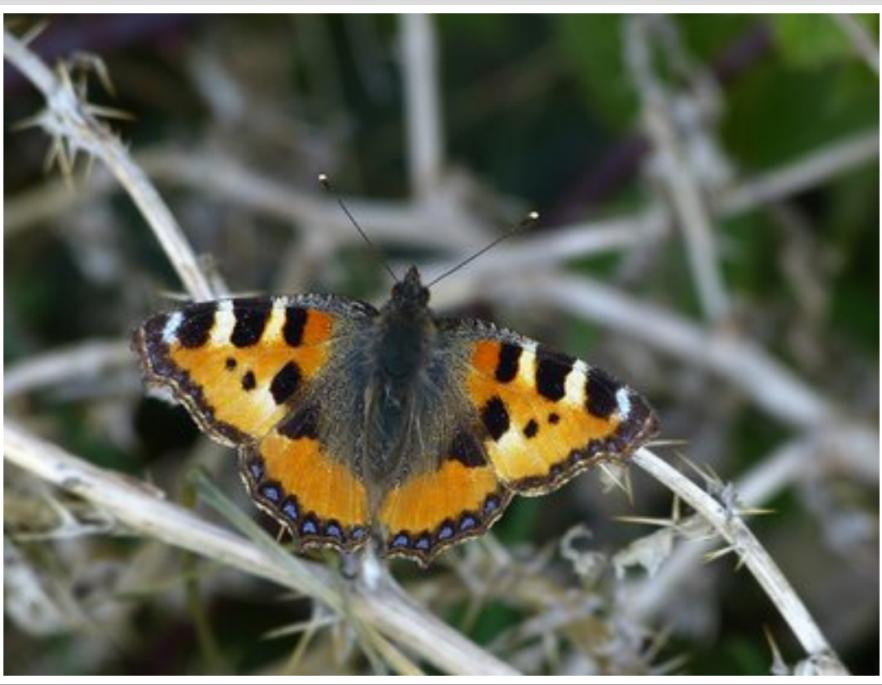


Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill Solihull 23.04.2017



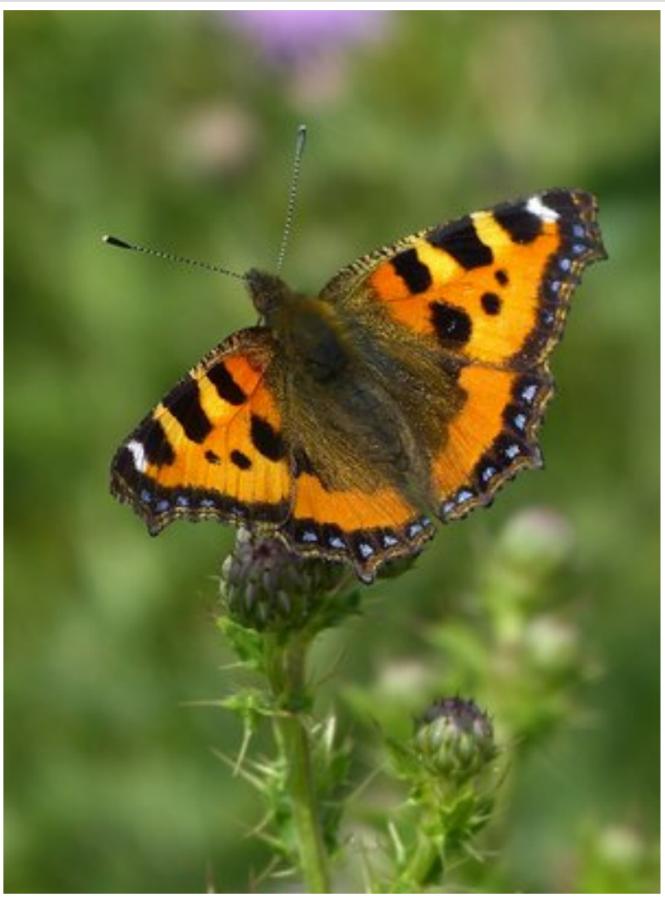
Small Tortoiseshell - Solihull 18.05.2014

A pale looking individual,



Small Tortoiseshell - Langley Hall 18.04.2014

This one in which the yellow markings almost merge into the same shade as the orange ground colour,



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 30.07.2014

And a final one that looks darker with larger black markings on the hindwings,



Small Tortoiseshell - Solihull 20.07.2014

Having done a bit of reading up over the past couple of nights it appears that there are over 100 named aberrations of this species in the UK along with many more unclassified ones, so this is certainly a species that is far more variable than I realised despite it being one of our most familiar ones.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Jamie Burston, 08-Dec-14 02:43 PM GMT

Fantastic series of Small Tortoiseshell photos. The incredible photo showing two Purple Hairstreak together show a male (top) and female (bottom).

Re: nfreem

by Paul Harfield, 08-Dec-14 10:18 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Just catching up with your diary.

Loving your 'twos' theme 😊 I particularly like your Peacock/Speckled Wood combination and the Small Tortoiseshell with Peacock in the background. I am also envious of your other Small Tortoiseshell shots. Your pic from Langley Hall Park 11/7 is particularly vibrant 😊

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 09-Dec-14 08:10 PM GMT

Hi Jamie, thanks for the confirmation of the sex of the Purple Hairstreaks 😊, I wasn't too sure myself.

Thanks Jack, the Small Tortoiseshell with the out of focus Peacock in the background is a particular favourite of mine 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 22-Dec-14 08:48 PM GMT

With lots of stuff going on during the run up to Christmas, time has been a bit limited lately but with Jane glued to Emmerdale and double 'Corrie' on the tele tonight I have a bit of time to myself and so here is another 'looking back' post.

Standing back a bit

Anyone who has read my diary over a period of time will probably have noticed that I will happily post butterfly photos in all sorts of styles depending on the species and circumstances they were taken in, from record shots with grass all over the places to what I sometimes refer to as 'studio' type shots with the butterfly isolated against a plain background. My own personal favourites are often those that show the butterfly in some sort of context or manage to capture the character of the species.

This year, in some other members diaries, most notably Williams as well as Guy Padfields, I have seen some photos taken from some distance back from the butterfly and in which the butterfly has been a small subject against a background showing the habitat and which for me capture both the context and character in a way that I particularly like.

With some of these photos in mind I made some attempts during the season to try and capture something similar and whilst not really succeeding to the same degree, I managed some shots that I quite liked. Some of these have already been posted in this diary throughout the season but looking through them again has brought back some great memories so I thought I would post a few here in one place.

The first couple are of the same Glanville Fritillary at Wheelers Bay on the Isle of Wight, taken from slightly different angles,



Glanville Fritillary – Wheelers Bay IOW 27.05.2014



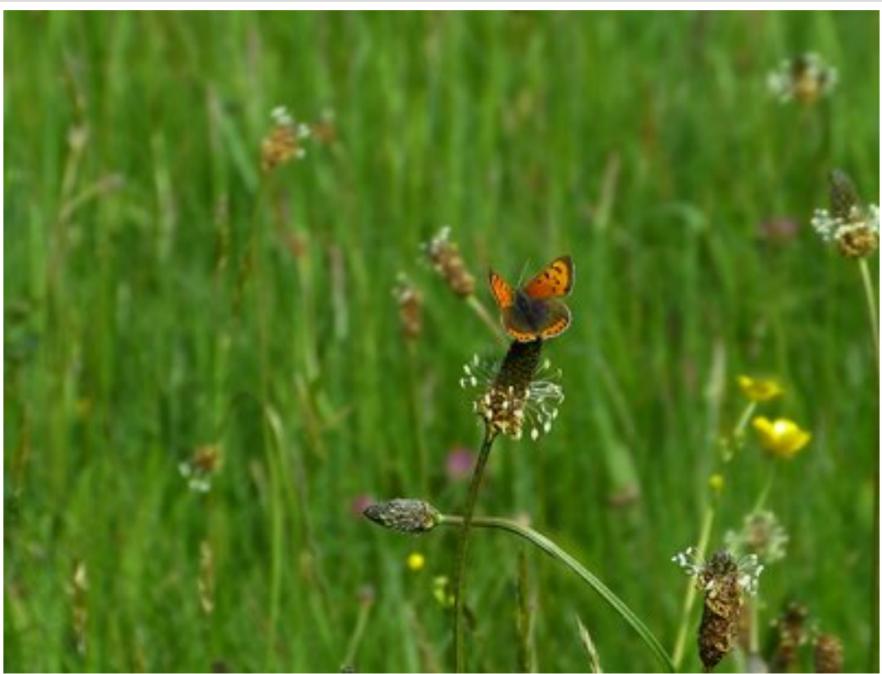
Glanville Fritillary – Wheelers Bay IOW 27.05.2014

On the way back from the IOW we had a short stop off in the New Forest where I saw half a dozen or so Pearl-bordered Fritillaries,



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – New Forest 29.05.2014

Back home the first brood Small Coppers were showing up at my local spots,



Small Copper – Shadowbrook Meadows 01.06.2014

Then I was heading North for a few days at Arnside during which I had a trip a bit further up to Irton Fell for my first ever Mountain Ringlets,



Mountain Ringlet - Irton Fell 12.06.2014

Another first for me was Northern Brown Argus, of which I saw plenty of the *salmacis* race at a number of sites around the Arnside area...



Northern Brown Argus - Arnside 13.06.2014

...along with good numbers of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries,



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Arnside 13.06.2014

The end of June saw me back down South again for a weeks family holiday at Bowleaze Cove by Weymouth where Marbled Whites were plentiful in nearly every meadow,



Marbled White – Bowleaze Cove 29.06.2014



Marbled Whites – Bindon Hill 02.07.2014

Towards the end of July the second brood Small Coppers were out and about at my local spots,



Small Copper – Castle Hills, Solihull 26.07.2014

Early September and I am back in Dorset again for another family holiday during which I saw Adonis Blues at a number of sites, most notably by white Horse Hill at Osmington where I took the shot below of a male basking in the early evening sun just before he closed his wings for the night.



Adonis Blue – Osmington Dorset 03.09.2014

Also seen during this week were a number of Hummingbird Hawk Moths including this one seen on the clumps of valerian growing out of the wall by the stream that flows down through the village at Lulworth Cove,



Hummingbird Hawk Moth – Lulworth Cove 31.08.2014

Not knowing when I will be on here again during the next few days, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very ***Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.***

Neil.

Re: nfreem

by bugboy, 22-Dec-14 09:19 PM GMT

Really like this latest set of pictures particularly the Glanvilles, single Marbled White and Adonis. They really stand out against the background.

Re: nfreem

by David M, 22-Dec-14 09:40 PM GMT

These are the types of images that I derive most pleasure from seeing.

A bit of background 'information' lends real atmosphere and you have captured this very well in those photos you have posted.

Best wishes for the festive period and more of the same in 2015!!

Re: nfreem

by Butterflysaurus rex, 22-Dec-14 09:46 PM GMT

Some great stuff here Neil, I really like your Mountain Ringlet photo and 2 Purple Hairstreaks in one shot! I'd be really happy with just 1 myself. 😊

Merry Christmas to you.

B'saurus

Re: nfreem

by Wurzel, 22-Dec-14 10:37 PM GMT

A fantastic set of photos Neil, something I might have a try at next year 😊

Have a goodun (Christmas and New Year that is!)

Wurzel

Re: nfreem

by Pete Eeles, 23-Dec-14 10:29 PM GMT

Great posts, Neil, for all the reasons that have already been mentioned. I think that seeing the recovery of the Small Tortoiseshell, as so aptly demonstrated in your diary, is a real highlight.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: nfreem

by Paul Harfield, 23-Dec-14 10:52 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

With some of these photos in mind I made some attempts during the season to try and capture something similar and whilst not really succeeding to the same degree

Hi Neil

I think you have succeeded perfectly 😊 I particularly like your first Small Copper and your Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary.

Merry Christmas

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 24-Dec-14 07:30 PM GMT

Than you all for the great comments, really appreciated 😊

I find it interesting that different people pick out different photos as their favourites, just shows how all our tastes differ.

Cheers,

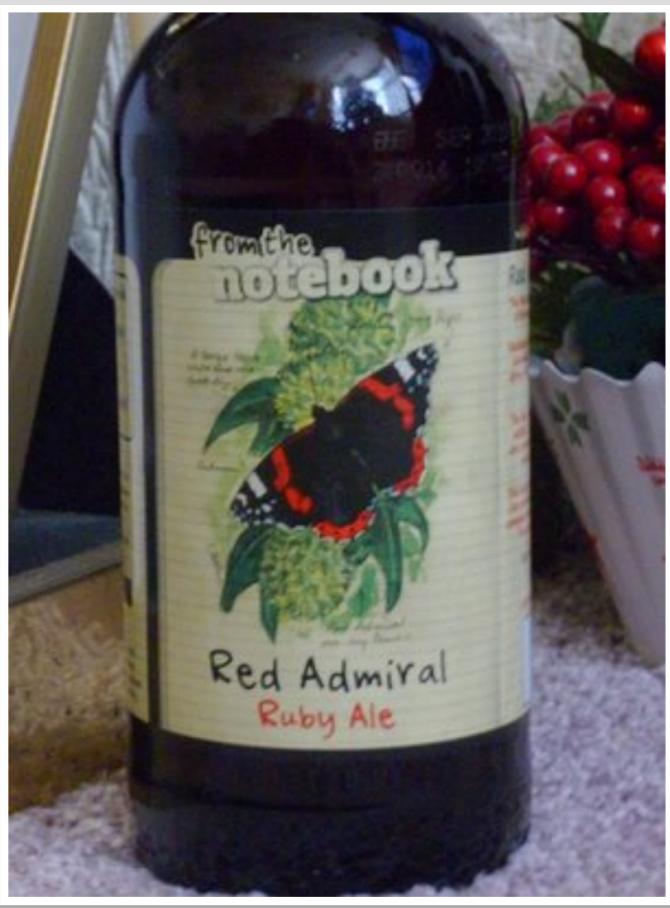
Neil.

Re: nfreem

by Neil Freeman, 25-Dec-14 02:41 PM GMT

Some Christmas day sightings in our living room including a nice looking Red Admiral...looking forward to spending a bit more time with these 😊😊





Hope everyone is having a great Christmas,
Cheers,
Neil.