

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 09-Apr-14 09:49 AM GMT

Tuesday 8th April 2014

I'm spending a week in Lyme Regis. After three days of fog and rain, yesterday was more Springlike. Sunny but quite chilly in exposed areas as we walked around Golden Cap . But in some sheltered paths and lanes it was quite warm, and I saw my first Orange Tip, Green-veined White and Speckled Woods of the year. The last of those were reasonably numerous. Those plus primroses, early bluebells and other Spring flowers and my first swallow of the year made for a great day. Also a Ruby Tiger moth, which I don't remember seeing before.

dilettante

by dilettante, 14-Apr-14 05:57 PM GMT

Friday 11th April 2014

Returning from Dorset via Hampshire for the weekend, we went to Noar Hill on Friday afternoon. I was half hoping for an early dingy skipper or green hairstreak but no such luck. In fact, there were very few butterflies at all, but I did see my first Holly Blue of the year, and a Red Admiral in good condition, and a single Orange Tip; several Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells in the surrounding fields.

dilettante

by dilettante, 19-Apr-14 06:10 PM GMT

Saturday 19th April 2014

I was out cycling with my family but since this took me past Over Cutting, Cambs (what are the chances?) I stopped briefly to look for Grizzled Skippers. When I passed in the morning it was rather cool and breezy, and the kids were not keen to stop for long – no butterflies seen. On our way back in the afternoon, the weather was sunny and the cutting was sheltered from the cold wind. I'd also bought buns in St Ives, so the kids were happier to stop for a little longer! I spotted a grizzly within a minute or two. I only had my phone for taking pictures, and had left it set to overexpose from an earlier snap, but I got a record shot at least:



© dilettante

I tried to adjust the exposure on the camera but was just too late!:



© dilettante

I met Trevor (and Pauline, I presume) Sawyer there who told me he'd been looking without success for a few days, so it seems we caught them nice 'n' fresh

dilettante

by dilettante, 21-Apr-14 10:44 PM GMT

Monday 21st April 2014

I went in search of Green Hairstreaks at Devil's Dyke, Cambs, and found one fairly quickly. Despite the warm weather, although increasingly windy, that was the only one I saw all afternoon, but probably I wasn't looking hard enough.



© dilettante

There were a surprising number of Peacocks feistily defending their chosen patches of warm earth, lots of Brimstones, a few Tortoiseshells and several Orange Tips.



© dilettante

dilettante

by dilettante, 05-May-14 10:04 PM GMT

5th May 2014

A lovely sunny morning for a Bank Holiday. I put off my plans to get some jobs done around the house, and headed for Fleam Dyke, an Anglo Saxon fortification raised above the surrounding agricultural land and consequently home to a good range of species:



© dilettante

Fleam Dyke, Cambs

Almost immediately we came across Holly Blues and Green Hairstreaks hanging around the same bush, generally annoying each other as they flew too close to those perching. Over the course of the next few hours we saw good numbers of both, particularly the GHs.



© dilettante

Holly Blue female



© dilettante

Green Hairstreak

Orange Tips were common, and Brimstones positively abundant. We watched a female laying, but there were males and females everywhere, often in groups of two or three.



© dilettante

Brimstones in flight

The wind started to pick up so it was time to head home. On my way back to the car through the nearby Fulbourn nature reserve, I saw my first Small Heath of the year



© dilettante

Small Heath

A pretty good couple of hours all told.

All images with Sony A77/Tamron 180/f3.5 macro.

Re: dilettante

by Katrina, 05-May-14 10:45 PM GMT

Lovely photos - I particularly like the Brimstone in flight. Can I ask which settings you used to get the shot? I have the same camera as you.

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 06-May-14 09:32 AM GMT

"Katrina" wrote:

Lovely photos - I particularly like the Brimstone in flight. Can I ask which settings you used to get the shot? I have the same camera as you.

Thanks Katrina. The Brimstones shot was 1/2500s f/8.0, iso400, manual focus. More luck than judgement, and the ISO400 was because I'd forgotten to reset it to my normal ISO200 after the last time I used the camera! That image is fairly heavily cropped too.

Re: dilettante

by Willrow, 06-May-14 12:02 PM GMT

First time I've viewed your personal diary, most impressive butterfly portraits, far beyond the usual 'record shots' and casual image. I shall return occasionally 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: dilettante

by David M, 06-May-14 02:55 PM GMT

Marvellous images. The female Holly Blue is a stunner.

dilettante

by dilettante, 08-Jun-14 07:57 PM GMT

7th/8th June 2014

A two hour walk around my village yesterday in the warm weather drew a fairly disappointing haul: a single Small Tortoiseshell, a couple of Speckled Woods, my first Meadow Brown, and a Common Blue. Only the latter hung around long enough to be photographed



Common Blue (m, uns)

A highlight was a Bee Orchid on the road verge. I went back to it today with a tripod to try to get a better picture:



© dilettante

Bee Orchid detail

I also saw my first Large Skipper of the year today, while out cycling, but still the butterfly numbers were low. We're in the traditional Spring–Summer lull I guess.

Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-14 11:45 PM GMT

Fantastic shots especially the Gnome Orchid 😊 (If I call it that enough times it might lead to a name change 😂) I don't think the lull will last much longer with Marbled White, Black Hairstreak, Meadow Brown and Clouded Yellows all being seen this weekend. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

dilettante

by dilettante, 16-Jun-14 09:29 PM GMT

Saturday 14th June

Despite grey skies I took myself off to Monk's Wood to try to catch (visually/photographically) the Black Hairstreaks. I saw quite a few over the course of the hour or two I was there, but none came within camera range. Nice to see them through binoculars though, and it was also good to meet Rosalyn and (later) Phil. I also saw my first Ringlet of the season, plus Meadow Brown, Large Skipper and lots of Speckled Woods, and this little fella in a bush. Anyone know what particular rodent this is? It appeared to have a short tail, but that might have been due to injury:



© dilettante

Unknown mouse, Monk's Wood

From there I headed over to Wicken Fen to meet up with my family. There's a new (to me) butterfly trail there which was good to see. Nothing very unusual on offer, except a sign claimed there are Walls there, which was a surprise. Can anyone confirm?

This fresh Ringlet cooperated nicely, unlike most of its brethren which sheltered in the long grass:



© dilettante

Ringlet, Wicken Fen

And a Red Admiral basking on a fence closed its wings at my approach, giving a nice view of its intricate underside:



© dilettante

Red Admiral, Wicken Fen

Later on at the other end of the fen there were lots of Small Tortoiseshells basking on the relatively warmer dry reeds:



© dilettante

Small Tortoiseshell, Wicken Fen

Such a shame the Swallowtail reintroductions haven't succeeded there – they would look right at home, but apparently the fen just isn't large enough to sustain the milk parsley reliably.

Re: dilettante

by David M, 16-Jun-14 10:38 PM GMT

Dilettante, unless I've become short-sighted overnight that last Small Tortoiseshell image is unusual in that it is almost bereft of blue within the outer wing margins.

dilettante

by dilettante, 21-Jun-14 08:27 PM GMT

Saturday 21st June 2014

Midsummer's day, and Summer was certainly in full swing. In the warm, still sunshine I visited Gamlingay Woods, South Cambs for Silver-washed Fritillaries, which were not hard to find. As usual they were fairly active patrolling the ride and not stopping for long, so I mostly just decided to enjoy watching. But I did try a few pictures:



© dilettante

Silver-washed Fritillary, Gamlingay Woods, Cambs

There were also Large Skippers zipping about, Speckled Woods spiralling up to the skies, and Meadow Browns and Ringlets bobbing in the grass. This Ringlet was a bit more sedentary:



© dilettante

Ringlet, Gamlingay Woods, Cambs

From there, we ventured to the the adjoining Sugley Wood, currently a meadow but long-term planned to be expansion space for the main wood. This was alive with Summer butterflies, all very active. It was hard to know what to watch with so much activity, so again I mostly just enjoyed the spectacle. Marbled Whites everywhere, plus Large and Small Skippers, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, a few Common Blues, lots of Small Tortoiseshells – just glorious. A fast-flying fritillary passed me, which I think might have been Dark Green, although I did see another Silver-washed nearby later, so maybe

it was just one of those.



© dilettante

Marbled White, Sugley Wood, Cambs

There were some impressive orchids (Common Spotted?) too. Mostly they were past their prime, but this cluster was very nice:



© dilettante

Back home, along the track near my house there was an explosion of Small Tortoiseshells. It's great to see them doing so well.



© dilettante

Small Tortoiseshell

I watched this courting couple for a while. There was much wing-shivering and antenna-flicking from the male before they flew off to a nearby nettle patch. Then inevitably another male flew too close and, like a "Are you looking at my girlfriend?" bar brawl, it all got messy as the males flew off in a spiral leaving the good lady on her own.



© dilettante

Small Tortoiseshell courtship

Re: dilettante

by Willrow, 22-Jun-14 08:04 PM GMT

Superb images to go with your interesting reports Dil 😊 very much enjoyed!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

dilettante

by dilettante, 06-Jul-14 07:01 PM GMT

Sunday 6th July 2014

I had planned to make a trip to Fermyn Woods this morning, but iffy weather and a reluctant son made me reconsider. By the afternoon, the sun was showing itself, so I went instead to Therfield Heath, Herts for the Chalk Hill Blues. There was a stiff breeze which made photography mostly impossible. CHBs were in good-not-great numbers, but mostly swaying on scabious stalks or hunkered down in the grass:



© dilettante

Chalk Hill Blue

When I was here this time last year, I saw a couple of orange streaks as Dark Green Fritillaries zipped past – the first time I'd seen them there. This year there were plenty on show as an unexpected bonus. Again, windy conditions prevented sharp photography, but at least they were settling on the knapweed:



© dilettante

Dark Green Fritillary

Gatekeeper made the third new species of the year for me, plus there were Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Green-veined White, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Large White, Brimstone, Large Skipper. Not bad for an hour's visit.

Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-14 10:40 PM GMT

Brill Chalkhill shot, loving it 😊🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

dilettante

by dilettante, 07-Jul-14 10:32 PM GMT

Monday 7th July 2014

I had the day off work to watch the Tour de France stage from Cambridge, but the good weather persuaded me to head to Fermyn Woods instead. I think I made the right choice. Purple Emperors were quite numerous, but I only saw a couple of groundings, in Lady Wood, and even those not for very long. So although I enjoyed the spectacle of seeing them, photographs were few. That full-purple shot will have to wait for another year!



© dilettante

Purple Emperor, Lady Wood, Northants



© dilettante

Purple Emperor, Lady Wood, Northants



© dilettante

Purple Emperor, Lady Wood, Northants

There were quite a few Silver-washed Fritillaries around, including a mating pair, and a few White Admirals:



© dilettante

White Admiral, Lady Wood, Northants

Lots of fresh Commas and Tortoiseshells, and a couple of Red Admirals:



© dilettante

Comma, Lady Wood, Northants



© dilettante

Small Tortoiseshell, Lady Wood, Northants

A brief glimpse of a Purple Hairstreak at the end of my visit, and a pair of White-letters at the start, neither coming down from their respective trees. Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Large Skipper, Large White, Small White complete the list for the day, I think.

By about 1pm the grey clouds filled in, the PEs had retired to the treetops and the rain started, so I headed home. On the way home I stopped at Fen Drayton nature reserve – the sun now shining and the temperature in the mid-twenties – and added fresh Peacocks and a Small Heath to the daily total.

Re: dilettante

by Paul Wetton, 08-Jul-14 08:43 AM GMT

Great shots.

Your small furry creature could be a Field Vole as it has small eyes and smallish rounded ears indicating it to be a vole. Mice have much bigger bulging eyes. The ears are not really hairy which indicates Field Vole.

Re: dilettante

by Pauline, 08-Jul-14 10:31 AM GMT

Yes, I too would have gone for Field Vole having had a family of them breeding in a 'wild' part of my garden for a period of time:





Hope you don't mind the photos Dilettante. I love your Chalkhill shot by the way – there is something very appealing about it and also a little comical, the way he is peering through the vegetation. Great shot 😊

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 08-Jul-14 01:45 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, and for the vole ID. Cute critters!

dilettante

by dilettante, 13-Jul-14 08:15 PM GMT

Saturday 12th July 2014

We took a walk in the hot humid afternoon around the villages of East Hatley and Hatley St George, South Cambridgeshire arable farmland with good field margins and some large hay / flower meadows. Butterflies were abundant, which is always a delight to see. Nothing particularly unexpected in terms of species, but the numbers were encouraging. On our 3 miles or so route, we saw loads of Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Tortoiseshells, Large White, Small White and Small Skippers (the latter drinking round the edges of puddles on the farm track). Also in lower numbers: Small Heath, Gatekeeper, fresh Peacock, Red Admiral, Comma. A brief foray into Hayley Wood en route added Silver-washed Fritillary (several, all rather tatty) and Speckled Wood. Then on the return journey a single Painted Lady, past its prime but my first of the year I think.

A good total all in all, especially since none of it was in formally protected nature reserves except for the woodland part. The Tortoiseshell numbers continue to be very good in particular. No Common Blues or Brown Arguses though, despite the conditions seeming ideal for them, which seems to be the trend for this year for me.



© dilettante

Painted Lady, Hatley St George, Cambs

dilettante

by dilettante, 17-Jul-14 10:27 AM GMT

Peacock explosion in my South Cambs garden this morning. About 15 on my buddleia, plus a few Small Tortoiseshells in various states and a couple of pristine Red Admirals. Beautiful!

Re: dilettante

by Hoggers, 17-Jul-14 12:20 PM GMT

Same down here in Kent, Dilettante: just counted 12 Peacocks in my garden, a Comma, two Red Admirals and a Meadow Brown (no Small Tortoiseshells for me ..yet!)

Best Wishes,

Hoggers.

dilettante

by dilettante, 22-Jul-14 10:40 PM GMT

Saturday 19th July 2014

I was at Latitude festival near Southwold, just down the road from Minsmere, so keeping an eye out for Scarce Tortoiseshell 😊 No such luck of course, but I did see my first Small Copper of the year braving one of the campsites.

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 23-Jul-14 01:48 PM GMT

"dilettante" wrote:

Saturday 12th July 2014

No Common Blues or Brown Arguses though, despite the conditions seeming ideal for them, which seems to be the trend for this year for me.

Today at my local nature reserve there were plenty (>15) of Common Blues, which is a nice turnaround. All male, plus one probable Brown Argus but maybe a female CB.

dilettante

by dilettante, 28-Jul-14 08:04 PM GMT

Sunday 27th July 2014

I took a late afternoon trip back to Therfield Heath, Herts. The Dark Green Fritillaries were all gone, and the grass around the car park was disappointingly devoid of butterflies apart from the odd Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown. This time last year, the place was alive with Chalk Hill Blues. Eventually though I found a hot spot where I suddenly 'got the Blues': Chalk Hill, Common and Brown Argus. The CHBs were roughly in equal numbers of male and female, and since it was getting late, were quite happy to pose in the early evening sunshine.



© dilettante

Chalk Hill Blue m ups, Therfield Heath, Herts



(c) dilettante

Chalk Hill Blue m ups, Therfield Heath, Herts



(c) dilettante

Common Blue m uns, Therfield Heath, Herts



(c) dilettante

Brown Argus m uns, Therfield Heath, Herts



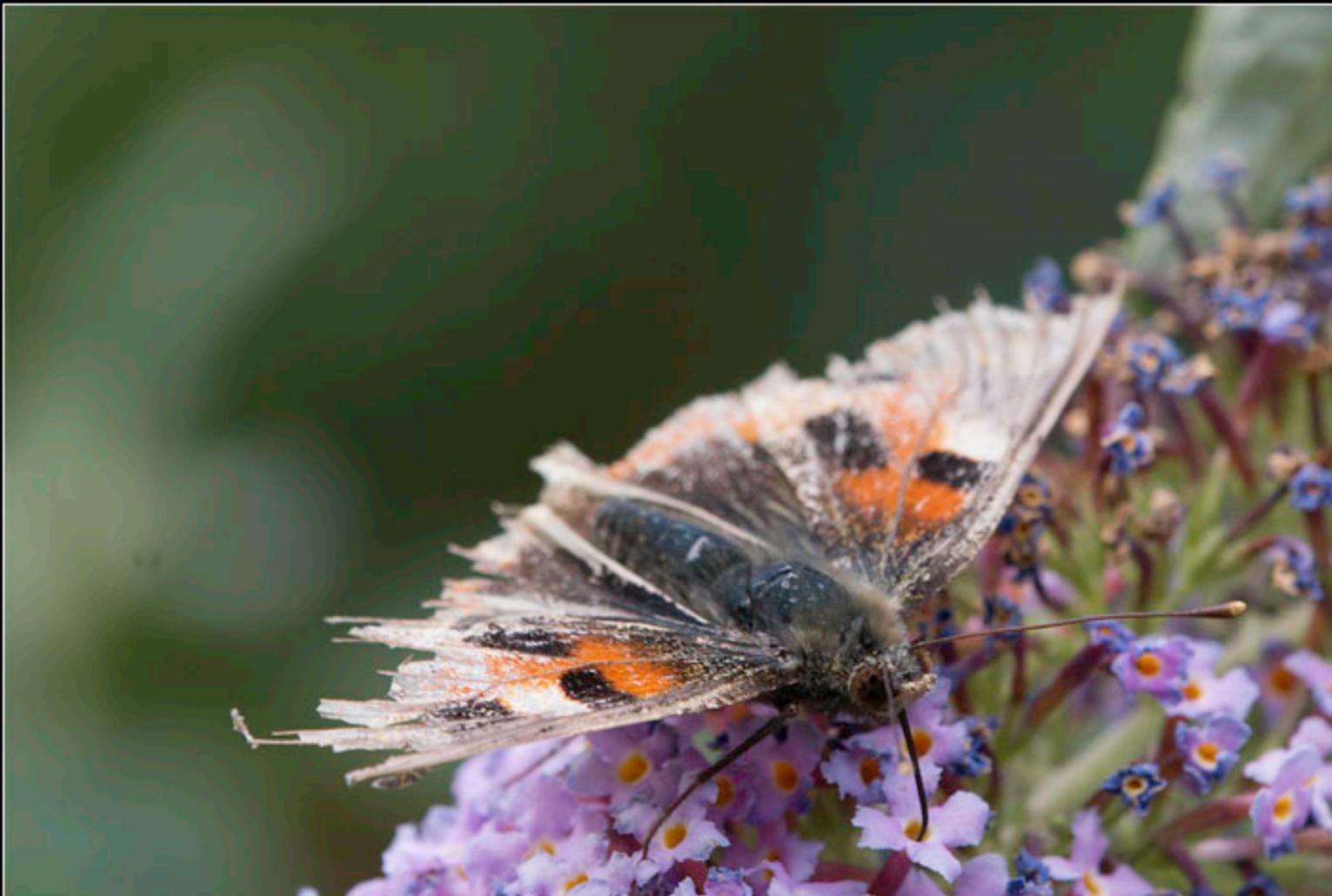
© dilettante

Chalk Hill Blue f uns, Therfield Heath, Herts

dilettante

by dilettante, 29-Jul-14 10:34 PM GMT

This poor chap was on my buddleia at the weekend – unfortunately high up so I couldn't get a steady shot of it. Amazing that it could still fly!



(c) dilettante



(c) dilettante

Re: dilettante

by David M, 29-Jul-14 10:36 PM GMT

Jeez, that Tortie has had one hard life!!

dilettante

by dilettante, 31-Jul-14 02:50 PM GMT

Thursday 31st July 2014

Having read of Clouded Yellows in nearby Cherry Hinton East Pit, I decided to pop in on the way to work. 8:30am it was sunny and warm, but there wasn't a lot of butterfly activity apart from a few male Common Blues. As I headed back towards the car around 9am, I 'white' with heavy black borders flew past. I dashed after it, and as I got close, a 'traditional' Clouded Yellow flew over. Not to be distracted, I followed the presumed helice for a while, with several other sightings of yellow CYs.



(c) dilettante

Clouded Yellow helice form, Cherry Hinton, Cambs



(c) dilettante

Clouded Yellow helice form, Cherry Hinton, Cambs

Unfortunately I was now late for work, so had to dash off but resolved to come back at lunch time.

When I arrived, I saw a chap with a large camera climbing a slope. Aha, I thought, he must be after a Clouded Yellow. But no, it turned out he was taking topless shots of his lady friend. I'm not sure what it says about me that I was disappointed 😊 Anyway, feeling slightly conspicuous, I carried on looking for butterflies, and this time saw only the yellow CYs. I'm not sure how many, but several times I saw two together. I'm guessing from their ceaseless patrolling behaviour that they were males. Eventually when the sun went behind a cloud, one deigned to settle a few times and I moved in for the shot:



(c) dilettante

Clouded Yellow, Cherry Hinton, Cambs

As well as these, there was a great number of Common Blues – I saw a spiral of 5 together at one point.

Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-14 10:18 PM GMT

Stunning stuff 🍷🍷 I still haven't seen a Helice and those shots are making me dearly wish that I had.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: dilettante

by David M, 31-Jul-14 10:43 PM GMT

Lovely, crisp and clear images as always, Dilettante.

What a delight it must be to see such butterflies on UK soil.

dilettante

by dilettante, 21-Aug-14 10:39 AM GMT

3-9th August 2014

The first week of our holiday in France staying in La Clusaz, near Annecy. As it was a family activity holiday I generally didn't have time to look of butterflies, or have a camera on me, but there were a couple of opportunities.

Corrections of any id's would be greatly appreciated!

These first two were taken at 1600m at Beaugard, overlooking La Clusaz

I wasn't sure what this one is – the closest I could find in my book was Titania's or PBF?



(c) dilettante

Unidentified Fritillary.

No doubts about this one – a rather worn, almost transparent Black-veined White, seen on a walk down from the Mer de Glace glacier (of which remarkably little remains compared to my first visit there 25 years ago) outside Chamonix.



(c) dilettante

Black-veined White, Chamonix

This was the highlight of my week butterfly-wise, seeing Apollos. Unfortunately this was the only shot I managed as they rarely settled, and if they did it was on a steep precipitous slope where I couldn't keep up with them.



(c) dilettante

Apollo

This was in the same spot. Is it a Mountain Clouded Yellow?



(c) dilettante

Mountain Clouded Yellow?

Also this fritillary, which I'll take a guess at Heath Fritillary?



(c) dilettante

Heath Fritillary?

dilettante – French ID help please

by dilettante, 23-Aug-14 12:10 PM GMT

[/b]9th–16th August 2014[/b]

For the second week of our holiday we moved South to the Var region, staying in a holiday home in the hills. Almost as soon as we arrived I saw Purple Hairstreaks in the low oaks around the property, but despite frequent searches all week I rarely saw them within camera range. This was about the only usable shot I got all week:



(c) dilettante

Purple Hairstreak

The scrubby woodland of the region had plenty of satyridae species. I'm not confident with my identification of these, so any help would be appreciated. Their preference for shade and their alertness didn't make photography easy:



(c) dilettante

Woodland Grayling



(c) dilettante

Tree Graylings



(c) dilettante

Great Banded Grayling



(c) dilettante

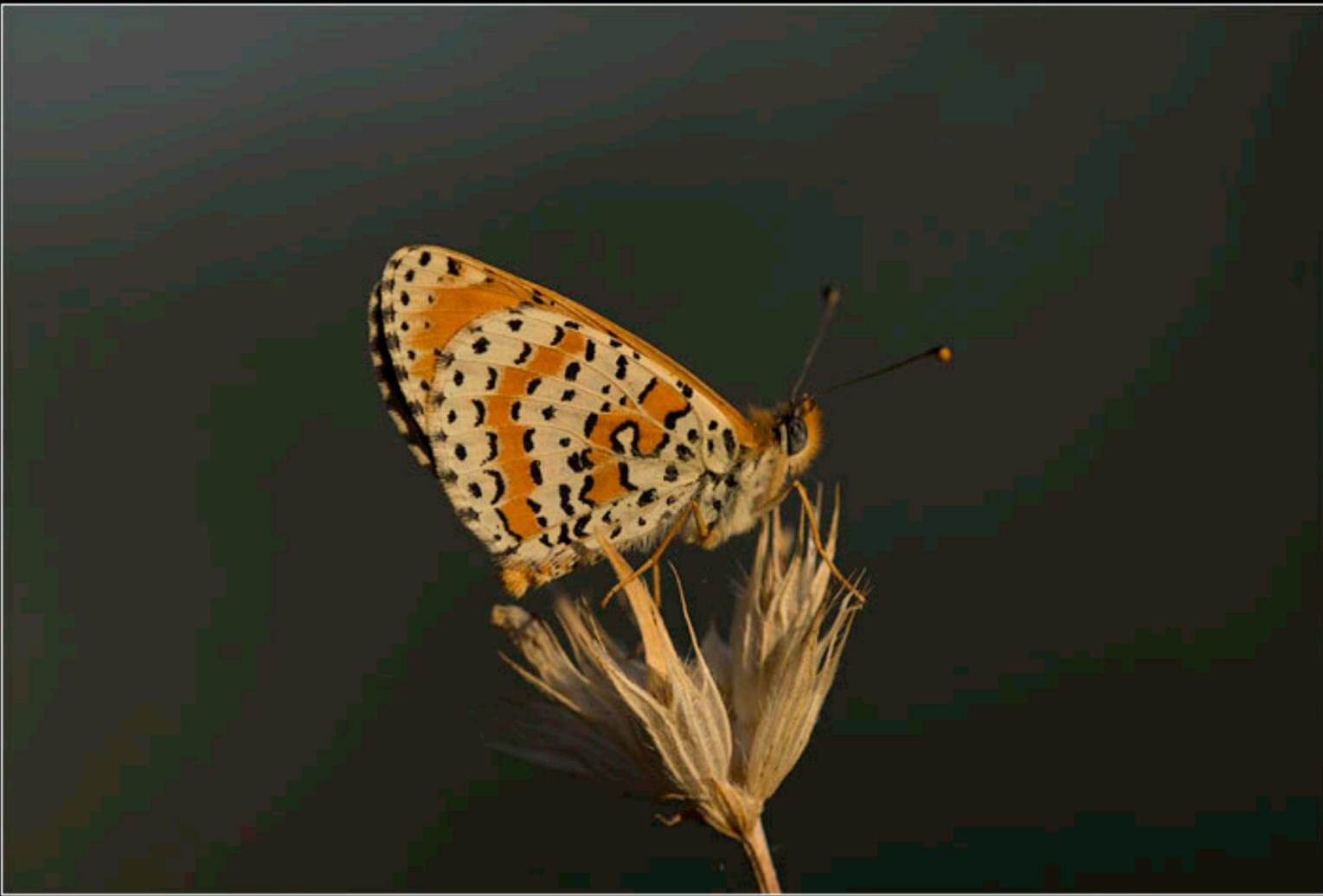
Striped Grayling

Fritillaries also test my identification powers.



(c) dilettante

Spotted Fritillary?



(c) dilettante

Spotted Fritillary?



(c) dilettante

Heath Fritillary?

I think this is a Chalk Hill Blue, but the orange spots confused me:



(c) dilettante

Chalk Hill Blue?

Silver-washed Fritillaries were present in several places we visited, mostly a little past their prime. Halfway up the Sainte Baume I saw this *valezina* (I think) – a first for me. I couldn't get close but here's a cropped shot:



(c) dilettante

Silver-washed Fritillary f. valezina

And I think this is a *helice* Clouded Yellow?



(c) dilettante

Clouded Yellow f. helice?

These seemed tiny, but are probably just plain ol' Brown Argus?



(c) dilettante

Brown Argus?

And finally this Silver-spotted Skipper:



(c) dilettante

silver-spotted Skipper