

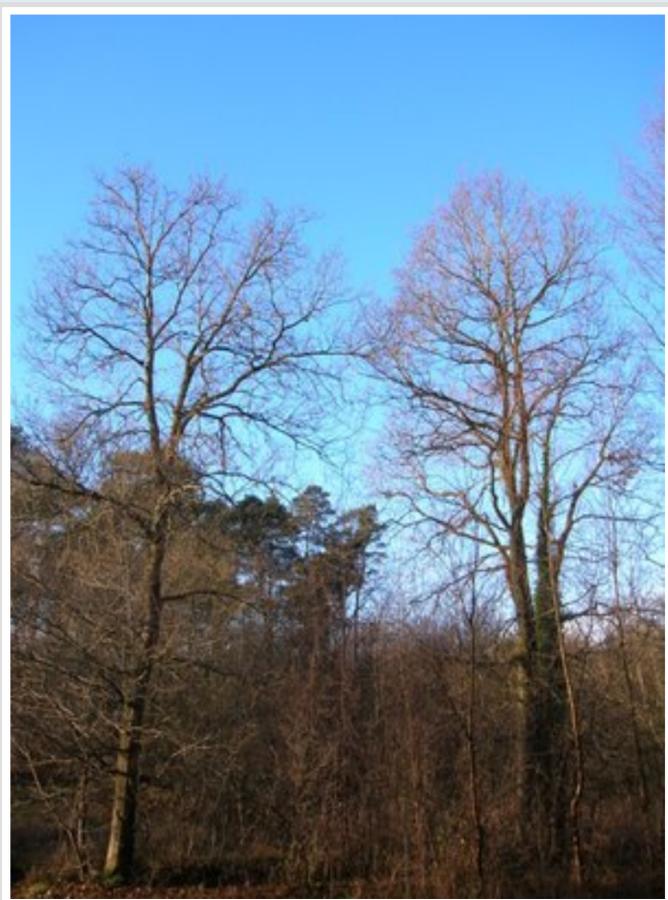
Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 01-Jan-14 10:47 PM GMT

Happy New Year 2014

Almost exactly at the stroke of midnight the heavens opened bringing a sudden deluge of heavy rain 😲 The New Year fireworks rapidly dwindled away and were replaced briefly with thunder and lightning. It seems to have been raining and windy ever since 😞 As I watched it lash my garden this morning, I hoped it was not a taster for our coming Spring.

After being treated to some very windy conditions over the last couple of weeks as well as some pleasantly sunny mornings and suffering withdrawal from butterflies 😞, I ventured out into my local woods a couple of days ago. I thought I would try my hand at finding some windfall butterfly eggs, of the Purple Hairstreak variety. I have not actually had a positive encounter with this species, just tantalising glimpses in the tree tops too far away for positive id. I have also never looked for eggs here before and do not possess a pocket lens, so I was not entirely confident 😞 I collected some twenty or so freshly fallen, likely looking twigs with healthy looking buds. I took these home and examined them closely several times. Not one egg was found but I have kept the twigs for another look just in case I have missed something. Never mind, I will not give up and I must invest in a pocket lens soon.



Botley Wood 28.12.2013 A pair of moderately sized Oak Trees where I failed to find any Purple Hairstreak eggs

With my thoughts drifting ahead to warmer and sunnier days, I am starting to make a few plans for the coming season.....only a few months to wait 😊 I try to confine myself to Hampshire most of the time, except on special occasions (eg for Long Tailed Blues). Even here there are several species which I have yet to see. Enough to keep me going for a couple more seasons before branching out I think.

White Letter and Brown Hairstreak were the only target species on my list for last year which I failed to see, so Hairstreaks will be a priority this coming season. Small Blue and Adonis Blue will also be on the list. I managed to find a couple of very ragged, barely recognisable Adonis Blues at Kingsdown Leas at the end of last season, these were my first. I need to find some fresh Hampshire examples for a proper encounter. Small Blue is a species I have yet to see. I am also keen to see Marsh Fritillary, a species which is only just about resident in Hampshire at a couple of sites, I believe. Then of course there is the Emperor himself. I have still not seen him either

I also have a list a mile long of sites I intend to visit, some local and some a little further away. My newly found local site, Stephens Castle Down, also needs checking out earlier in the season. I only 'discovered' it in May/June time last year. I feel sure it has more to offer than the 23 species already found there 😊 All of this when time permits of course.

Roll on Spring.....Lets hope the coming season is even better than the last 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 03-Jan-14 10:21 PM GMT

Happy New Year Jack 😊 This weather is getting a bit much, a brief respite just long enough to dry out your raincoat before another deluge and gales set in 😞 Still it can't last for another three months and hopefully most of the rain will get used up so we'll have a productive spring and summer 😊 If you're after Brown Hairstreak then Shipton Bellinger is probably your best bet and there's also a pretty good White-letter site near to you as well which I'm sure you're aware of. Purple Hairstreaks are one of those butterflies that you can see more by luck than judgement – but you stand a reasonable chance at Bentley Wood (about 35–40 minutes from Southampton). Hope this info helps with your planning!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 05-Jan-14 10:47 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for the Hairstreak advice 😊

Sunday 5.1.2014 At Home

Yesterday My day was brightened 😊 when my wife showed me a Small Tortoiseshell photo that had appeared on her facebook, posted by someone a few streets away. It was raining all day and pretty dreary so I guess this must have been disturbed from hibernation indoors. Unfortunately I did not see it personally 😞



This chap brought a smile to my face yeaterday

Today it was time for the incredibly tedious job of packing away the Christmas Decorations. Whilst packing away the tree I was surprised when a Moth larva of some sort appeared 😲 The strange thing is that our tree is artificial so I have no idea how it has survived over christmas 😊 It produced a fresh dropping whilst I found somewhere sheltered in the garden, so I guess it must have been eating something. One of Santas mince pies maybe 😊 Can anybody tell me what sort of larva it is 🤔



This larva appeared whilst packing our artificial Christmas tree away



Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-Jan-14 11:26 PM GMT

Sunday 26.1.2014 Straits Inclosure

After an unsuccessful egg collecting mission in my local woods a few weeks ago, I thought I would have another go. I was told a couple of weeks ago that Oak trees were being felled in Alice Holt forest (thanks Nick), an opportunity not to be missed I thought. With recent windy days also creating a lot of debris, this would be as good a chance as any to find some Purple Hairstreak eggs. Eggs on felled trees and wind severed branches are doomed to perish so if I can save a few and have some enjoyment in the process then all the better.

I set off on Sunday morning and encountered much evidence of freshly fallen trees en route, in fact my route was hampered by a road closure at Alton. By the time I arrived at Straits Inclosure it was raining quite heavily 😞 There was much spoil in evidence from forestry operations and perhaps even more in the way of windblown debris. I searched for an hour, in the rain, without finding anything conclusive but I collected a bag of likely looking twigs for later inspection. Once my hour was up I made my way back to the car feeling slightly disappointed and picked up one last small twig and gave it a close inspection as I walked over to the car. EUREKA..... 😊 this one had an egg on it. I could not believe my eyes, success at last. My efforts had not been totally wasted 😊



Purple Hairstreak egg found on the smallest fragment of wind blown Oak twig. The very last twig I picked up on the way back to the car

Once home I set about inspecting the rest of the twigs I had collected. They were mostly pretty sodden and after close inspection I found no more eggs and set them aside to dry for a re check later on. In the evening I gave them another once over. I am glad I did because I found 2 more eggs 😊😊 These had been carefully hidden away under old bud scales that were still attached at the start of last years growth. So a grand total of 3 eggs to rear through. This will be the first time I have reared this species. They will be slightly more challenging than anything I have reared before.

I can not help but wonder how many eggs are lost during these sort of felling operations. I only found 3 but there must be hundreds more doomed to perish 😞 I understand it was a good season last summer for Purple Hairstreak at this site. I wonder how they will fare this year 🤔

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 30-Jan-14 11:05 PM GMT

Good luck with the rearing Jack, I'm looking forward to the photos 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 10-Feb-14 12:44 AM GMT

Hi Jack, after reading your diary, we too paid a visit to Alice Holt. Searching the windblown oak debris we managed to find a number of Purple Hairstreak eggs. Like you we intend to rear them through to adults, even though it will be a challenge for us too. However we have found that there is plenty of good advice available 😊

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 10-Feb-14 11:58 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for the encouragement 😊 Hopefully by the time these larvae emerge I will have acquired a better camera 😊

Hi Maximus

I am glad you have managed to rescue a few more eggs 😊 Good luck, I shall be following yours as well. You have a few more than me, you will have your hands full 😊

I wonder if these Hairstreak eggs are more likely to be predated once they are on the ground 🤔 Being in the treetops must offer some protection

against ground level predators. I also hope that the recent bouts of strong wind have not dessimated the populations of this and other tree dwelling species 😞

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 16-Feb-14 10:53 PM GMT

Sunday 16.2.2014 My Local Patch

I set of early this morning to try and find some fallen trees or flooding to photograph locally. I am grateful that we seem to have avoided anything serious in my local patch. Nothing more than slight inconvenience really. I do feel for those that have had to put up with more serious stuff 😞 It was cold and frosty when I left home but by the time I got back at about 9.30 it was positively springlike 😊 I thought there might even be a chance of some butterfly action. Unfortunately my wife had already commandeered the car for a few days away with my youngest son so I would have to satisfy myself with a little jaunt around some local footpaths.



Anybody fancy a drink????



One of the locals came to see what all the fuss was about!

Before I went out I checked on a few plants in the garden. I have a very small Periwinkle plant in a pot which is currently sporting just one flower. Today it was also providing a basking spot for a plume moth 😊 I am not sure which species it is, I did not realise there were so many. I think it is *Emmilina monodactyla*, maybe somebody could confirm this ?



Plume moth in the garden today



I decided to walk the paths which run close to the railway line to Botley station and back. Close to the station the footpath is seldom used and crosses the line on an old footbridge. It was here looking down into the railway cutting that I spotted a male Brimstone 😊😊 happily fluttering around in the warm sunshine occasionally settling for a minute and then off again inspecting any pale coloured object. It kept to quite a small area of Ivy and Bramble covered bank, too far away for a proper photo. My first butterfly and moth of the year 😊😊 My butterfly season (year 3) started today 😊



Very distant shot of a male Brimstone. It is there honest!

I like to take note of the flora growing in all the locations I visit. Whilst on this footbridge I noticed something which looked very out of place. In amongst the Blackthorn and Bramble was another thorny shrub part of which had fallen across the path. This had more vicious looking thorns than anything I have ever seen before 😲 After looking in a few books and online it would appear to be either Acacia or Locust Tree, maybe somebody could confirm that for me 🤔 How it got to be growing on top of a railway bridge I have no idea 😊



Mystery plant with lethal looking thorns

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 18-Feb-14 11:05 PM GMT

Not sure about the Moth Jack – if in doubt I always ask Philzoid he's my 'in house expert' and if he doesn't know then he knows a man who does 😊 Glad to hear to hear you're not too affected by the storms. 😊 Have a goodun

Wurzel

PS - I'll believe you about the Brimstone 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 04-Mar-14 11:54 PM GMT

Out And About

No more butterflies to report as yet 😞 but spring definitely seems to have sprung 😊 I have noticed over the last week that the Blackthorn is starting to blossom. In fact there is one particular Blackthorn which I noticed last year was out way ahead of all the others locally. This year it seems to have gone the same way having been out for a couple of weeks now. On Friday I noted, whilst travelling up the A3M past Petersfield and Guildford, that there was lots of Sallow out in full bloom. This would seem to be pretty early. I suppose it has been very mild all winter, a fact that seems to have attracted little comment whilst nature throws wind and rain at us. I have also, unbelievably, had a few isolated groups of Oxeye daisies in flower locally up until very recently. The one thing that all these observations have in common is that they are all on sheltered motorway verges. I spend a lot of time gazing at these verges whilst I am driving around at work when I should probably keep my eyes on the road 😊 I have often wondered if these verges have undergone any form of scrutiny with regard to butterfly distribution. I know of a couple where Marbled Whites seem to thrive. They are probably not the sort of place that the average person is able to visit without special permission without the risk of being arrested 😬 My local M27 M3 and A3M verges look to have some very good expanses of habitat.

In my small garden I am trying to build a collection of various plants, trees and shrubs (as most of us probably do) so that I may have foodplants and nectar sources available for all eventualities. I have to try and be creative at times and hide some things away, my wife does not understand the value of nettles in the garden 😊 This is very much a work in progress, patience being the main requirement. I like the challenge of growing all these from scratch without spending lots of money on pregrown plants. I was pleased to note the other day that several of the Blackthorn cuttings I took last year appear to have taken. In a couple of years I will be prepared for Brown Hairstreak should the opportunity arise 😊 Elm has been the biggest challenge, after several unsuccessful attempts I am more determined than ever. My Everlasting Pea plant (a keepsake from Kingsdown Leas) is now reaching the point where I need to put it outside. It is currently on the window sill. It is about 2 feet high and supported with some kebab skewers and just started growing a second stem.

I have waffled on a bit but just seen the weather forecast for the weekend, sunny and temp in the mid teens 😊😊 Hopefully a few butterflies to report next time 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 05-Mar-14 11:56 PM GMT

Good luck with the Blackthorn Jack and good luck this weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 09-Mar-14 11:34 PM GMT

Sunday 9.3.2014 A Most Magnificent March Day

The promise of good weather this weekend had me determined to build on my solitary Brimstone sighting from a couple of weeks ago. Yesterday there were chores to do but I did manage to spot my first Small Tortoiseshell of the year flying through the garden and whilst out and about a couple more Brimstones 😊 Today I was pleased that at least one of my sons football matches was postponed yet again (he has not played a match since mid December) 😊 This meant I had a small window of opportunity to get out along my local footpath to see what was about before a 2pm kick off for my younger son. I was even able to time my walk to the middle of the the day. My first butterfly of the day, and a taster of what was to come, was a male Brimstone flying through. This was quickly followed by my first real photo opportunity of the year, a Small Tortoiseshell nectaring on one of the many Dandelions along the footpath.



The first of many

Every few metres along this first section of tarmac path there seemed to be a Small Tortoiseshell accompanying me 😊 At first I thought this was all the same butterfly but upon later photo examination I pleased to notice that they were all different individuals. By the time I had reached the wilder, less used part of the footpath I had already seen several of both Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshell. Across the middle section of this footpath I have a clear view of the railway cutting to one side and here I was to spot several more male Brimstone, each one pausing to inspect every pale coloured object. In

fact I only saw male Brimstone all day, whether they were successful in finding females I do not know, I certainly did not see one.



As I reached the best area of my local path I spotted yet another Small Tortoiseshell Basking on the grass. As I got my camera into position I was 'buzzed' by a male Brimstone which fluttered for a minute or so around my camera. I put this down to the fact that my camera being elderly is silver and the reflected light must have caught this individuals attention. As it went on its way the Small Tortoiseshell took to the air together with another and a Peacock. For a few moments I was treated to the delightful spectacle of Brimstone, Peacock and a pair of Small Tortoiseshell all involved in aerial combat 😄😄😄😄

I had been hoping for a full set of hibernators. As I approached the end of the path I expected to find a Comma or two in this reliable location, I was disappointed 😞 On the return stretch I decided to take a detour into the bottom, sundrenched corner of a farmers field. Here I was treated to several more Brimstone and at least a couple more Small Tortoiseshell. The final stretch before home provided a second Peacock and a couple more Brimstone.



After lunch It was time to set off for my youngest sons football at Fleming Park about a 10–15 minute drive. I thought it would be fun to see how many Brimstone we could count en route. We counted 8. Whilst watching my son play I counted 5 more Small Tortoiseshell and another Peacock 😄

What a glorious day it has been 😄 All this unprecedented Butterfly activity has certainly put me in a happy and relaxed frame of mind 😄 No Red Admiral or Comma but Small Tortoiseshell and Brimstone are enough to put a big smile on anybodys face. However, I have a niggling feeling at the back of my mind that nature has something nasty (weatherwise) up its sleeve. I hope I am wrong 😬

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-14 11:59 PM GMT

A great report Jack and great shots too 😄 I know what you mean about the weather – 2012 saw a 3 week heat wave in March with Grizzled Skippers and Green Hairstreaks reported and then it went horrible and wet for what felt like an age – let's hope we don't get a repeat of that 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 18-Mar-14 12:38 AM GMT

Sunday 16.3.2014 Bishopstoke to Home along the Itchen Navigation

I set out on Sunday with the hope of finding my first Comma and Red admiral of the year and perhaps some early non hibernators. Luckily the weather was fantastic again and my wife and boys had gone to LEGOLAND with friends for the day, leaving me with the day to myself 😊 The only downside was I had no car so I got them to drop me off on their way out at 9am. I often walk for an hour along the Itchen Way whilst my youngest son has football training. So I had the ambitious idea of starting from there and walking the whole route and continue on to home, on foot. I estimated this to be a three hour walk if I did not stop. Not being in any hurry and expecting plenty of butterflies to enjoy on the way I guessed it would probably take me twice that, I was not far off 😬

As I started along the Itchen Way footpath I noticed the signs warning of flooding along the route. These were rather vague so I pressed on 😊 I had not got very far when I found the pathway underwater 😞 I got as far as I could until the water was almost at the top of my wellies but I had to turn back as it became too deep and quite unsafe. At this point I managed to drop my rucksack in the river complete with camera, phone and shoes 😬😬 Thank goodness I was able to retrieve it immediately before any damage was done. Not a good start 😞 After taking a slight detour to avoid this flooded section, I continued with the risk that I might have to turn back at some point further on.



The Flooded Path which nearly saw me loose my rucksack and its contents!



Comma



Comma

Luckily my early start meant even with my little escapade with the flood I managed to arrive at one of the main hotspots just in time to see my first butterflies of the day at just after 10am. A couple of Peacocks nectaring high up on Sallow 😊😊 It was not long before the first of many Brimstone appeared. These first couple of Brimstone giving me my only Brimstone photo opportunity of the day at about 10.15. I unfortunately was too slow to capitalise on this and missed out 😞 these were the only two I saw stopping for nectar all day. It was not long before I spotted my first Comma of the

year 😊 I spent quite a while here, counting 8 Brimstone, 3 Comma, 4 Peacock and 3 Small Tortoiseshell on my first circuit of the area. From this point on I saw a steady flow of Brimstone and the occasional Peacock for the next hour or so. I was almost at the point where the Itchen Way passes under the M27 when I ran into another stretch of flooded path. Luckily the level here did not rise above my boots and I could continue without having to turn back. Around the corner my reward was an oasis of butterfly activity along the bank of the river. Several Comma, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell all putting on a good show. The action now seemed to be hotting up in the warm afternoon sunshine.



Peacock taking nutrients from the ground



Peacock



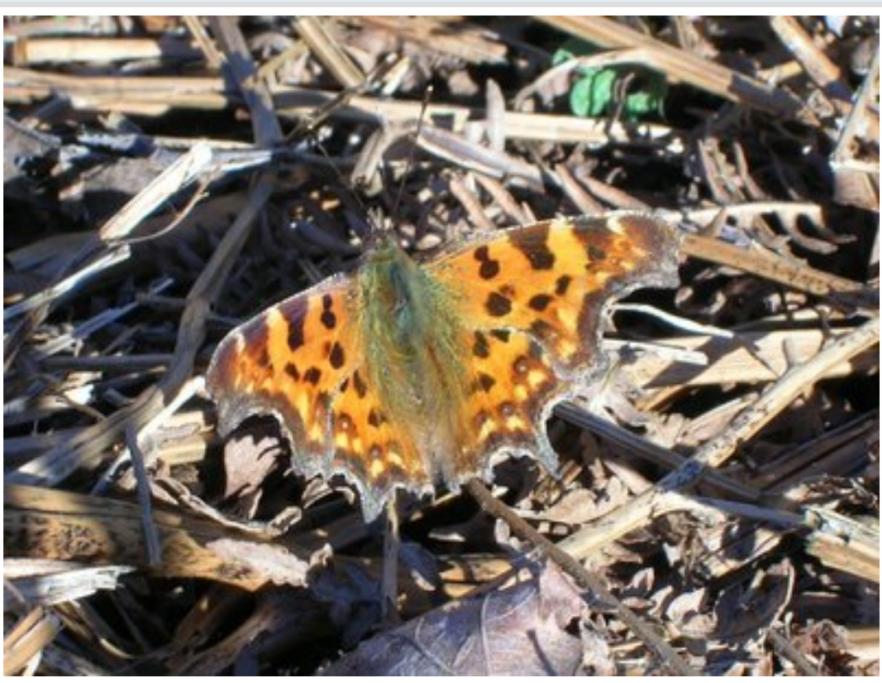
Comma



I was now on the homeward stretch. After a short section on the road, a quick detour to investigate a patch of Elm Trees and a change of footwear (by now my shoes had dried out 😊) I headed cross country around West End. I found a path around the edge of a large field along which there seemed to be Comma, Peacock or Small Tortoiseshell every few feet occasionally spiralling off into the air when they would encroach on another's turf. By now it was mid afternoon and the Brimstones seemed to be dwindling away but there were definitely more Commas around 😊 Close to home and one of the last butterflies of the day was a white one which fluttered across the road in front of me, just too far away for a positive id. I would guess it was Small White but could not be positive. I thought that would be it for the day, but as I was almost within sight of home there were still a couple of Comma and Peacock fighting for territory at gone 3.30pm. One of these Comma had very unusual markings with blueish spots on the hindwings. I will return to try and get a better photo of this as it is only 5 minutes away.



Peacock close to home



Unusually marked Comma close to home

No Red Admirals but very pleased with my Comma and no sign of a female Brimstone yet. A fantastic end to another great (and tiring) day so early in the season.

Total tally for the day

Brimstone 27
Peacock 23
Comma 18
Small Tortoiseshell 17
Small White 1 (possible)

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 18-Mar-14 01:07 AM GMT

Great report and lush photos Jack 😊 It sounds like my kind of perfect March day 🌿 apart from the rucksack drop 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Neil Freeman, 18-Mar-14 09:12 PM GMT

Great report and photos 😊 sounds similar to my Sunday afternoon walk but with more Brimstones and water 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 23-Mar-14 12:04 AM GMT

Hi Neil and Wurzel

Thanks for the comments

Wednesday 19.3.2104 At Home

Today my Purple Hairstreak eggs came out of the fridge. I had the morning off work and had already planned it in. The warning of early hatchings reassured me that time was right. I am planning to use cut Oak in water as my potted Oak is at present not developed enough to support any larvae. I have a nice Oak almost within site of my front door which has branches which hang down close to the ground. An inspection this morning confirmed that buds are starting to swell and a couple of straight twigs with some nice juicy terminal buds were found. One of my eggs appears to have suffered though, possibly through predation 😞 I still have not managed to get hold of a decent camera so am unable at present to get good pics of eggs and small larvae. I am very envious of the superb images captured of the early stages by others on this forum.



Purple Hairstreak eggs just out of the fridge

I also went to see if I could relocate the unusually marked Comma I found at the weekend. The area is only 5 minutes away but lack of time and a sun only just starting to pierce the cloud meant I was unsuccessful with this specific Comma. I did disturb a couple of Small Torts, Comma and peacock 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 23-Mar-14 12:27 AM GMT

Hi Jack, you will enjoy seeing the early stages of these butterflies for yourself. We all just do our own thing in our own way and all are equally as good as each other 😊 look forward to your next instalment 😊

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 23-Mar-14 10:32 AM GMT

Hi Paul

You're one step ahead of me already as I am planning to take a few of my PH eggs out of the fridge today. I have been holding on simply because the Oaks around here are not at the right stage yet but I am getting so impatient I can't wait much longer 😞 . I agree that the images posted recently have been exceptional and certainly something to strive towards but please keep us informed of any developments from your end.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 24-Mar-14 12:10 AM GMT

Close up shots or not still a great report - I'm picking up all kinds of information which I'd like to put into practice one season 😊. Good luck with the cats 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 27-Mar-14 11:58 PM GMT

Hi Pauline and Mike

Thanks for the encouragement. It is great having several people posting about this particular subject and being able to compare notes.

Hi Wurzel

You really should give it a go. Very rewarding and I am sure you will have some willing young helpers 😊

Sunday 23.3.2014 At Home

Last weekend was a full weekend of football, the first for a long time. And the weather was also football weather, a depressing change from that of the previous weekend. Wind, cold, rain, hail, thunder and lightning were all present at some point over the weekend 😞 Not much chance time or weather wise for any butterfly watching 😞

However there were a few very brief spells of bright sunshine. During one of these spells I thought I should try and get the best image I could of my Purple Hairstreak eggs before they hatch. Bright sunshine is essential for anything close up with my decrepit camera. I think I have probably done the best I can, you can even almost make out the surface texture which is quite a miracle 😊



Since I have brought them out of the fridge the weather has turned cooler. They have had some warmish days and also a couple of very cold nights. No signs of any hatching yet though 😞

I think my wife is even happier than me that they are out of the fridge 😊 Hopefully there will be more to report next time.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 01-Apr-14 11:10 PM GMT

Saturday 29.3.2014

What with mothers day, kids football and my wife recovering from an arthroscopy on her knee, there was not much chance of butterfly watching this

weekend 😞 However, I spent a pleasant couple of hours enjoying the sunshine in my parents garden. A Peacock had taken up residence on the steps for the afternoon 😊 It vigorously chased off any intruder that got too close, returning to the same spot time after time.



The resident Peacock in my parents garden



My parents have always lived in the same house so their garden is quite mature and it is where I grew up. When visiting, one of the first things I check on is the Tree Of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) I planted many years ago. It is almost like part of the family or a long lost friend 😊 I bought this from Woolworths when I was about 12 yrs old for £1.99 I think. It was just a 2ft high stick when I planted it and is now a mature 30+ yr old tree. The plan was to use it as food for exotic silkworm larvae but by the time it was big enough I had moved on to other things. The tree occupies quite a prominent position in the garden but it is not in the best of health, unfortunately 😞



My Tree Of Heaven



Another Peacock close to home

Sunday 30.3.2014

During a very quick half hour visit along my local footpath there were still plenty of Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and a Brimstone 😊

Still no sign of my Purple Hairstreak eggs hatching 😞

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-14 11:23 PM GMT

Hope you're wife makes a speedy recovery Jack. Great shots I especially like the first Peacock I love the pose it's making 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 05-Apr-14 12:05 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for the comment. She will be back driving in a couple of days hopefully 😊 This was just an arthroscopy, in a few months a complete knee replacement is on the cards. That will be a whole different ball game 😞 I will be nursemaid and servant for much longer 😞

Friday 4.4.2014 Captive Purple Hairstreak

I have been getting slightly envious over the last week or so after seeing the superb pictures and diary of developing larvae from Pauline and Maximus. I was in fact beginning to wonder if mine would actually hatch. When I removed mine from the fridge they went straight outside. For a couple of days I left them in a plastic tub with netting over the top. On one day we had an unexpected downpour and when I returned from work my twigs were floating in water 😞 I was a little concerned that this may have harmed them 😞 I have continued to keep them outside in the sunniest corner of the garden covered by netting but now attached to suitable Oak twigs in water. Compared to others comments, many of the Oaks near me are well advanced, some already showing leaves and flowers.





After what seems a very long wait, I noticed last night that one of my Purple Hairstreak eggs looked a little different. What appeared to be a very small hole had developed in the centre of the egg. After watching through a lens for a while, I could detect no sign of even the smallest movement. Another check this morning revealed a very slightly larger hole but again no sign of any movement. When I got in from work tonight there was an even larger hole and an obviously empty egg shell 😊 There was no sign of any larva, hopefully he is tucked up nicely in one of the juicy Oak buds close by. A second egg also looks tonight if it is close to hatching.

I think the lateness of my emerging larvae compared to some of the others is probably down to being completely outside and not in a protected environment. I am very surprised at how long the hatching process took (between 10 and 18 hours! altogether)

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 05-Apr-14 12:32 AM GMT

Really good news Paul that your Purple Hairstreak eggs have hatched or are hatching. The hatching process is long winded but at least your eggs will be more in sync with those eggs outside on Oaks. Our eggs and larvae are being reared in a more protected environment, hence their faster development, hopefully this won't prove to be a problem in the long term.

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 05-Apr-14 07:29 AM GMT

Well done Paul! 😊 As Mike points out your larva will have a more natural upbringing. I bet you can't wait to see the larva. Y'know, I had no idea they stayed in the bud for so long and it is a massive surprise when they come out again so much bigger.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 14-Apr-14 11:32 PM GMT

Hi Mike and Pauline

Thanks for your comments. I only have a couple of eggs to look after. You must both have your work cut out looking after so many 😊

Thursday 10.4.2014 Captive Purple Hairstreak

After being very surprised how long my first Purple Hairstreak egg took to hatch, the second one took even longer 😊 I had noticed last Friday (4.4.2014) a second egg was showing the first signs of hatching, a minute hole appearing in the centre of the egg. After that initial sign the weather took a turn for the worse. Saturday was wet and cool all day as was Sunday and Monday. All through this cool wet few days there was no change in the appearance of this egg. It was almost as if the emerging larva had sensed the rain and decided to stay put. I was slightly concerned that something had gone wrong could the larva drown in its eggshell I wondered. On Wednesday (5 days after seeing the initial signs of hatching) and after a day of sunshine I could detect a slightly larger hole and the shiny black head/mandibles of the emerging larva. On Thursday morning the larva had still not exited the egg. It was not until I had returned from work on Thursday evening that I noticed the egg was at last empty but again no sign of this larva or the first to hatch. So this larva has taken almost 6 days to hatch 😊 I can only assume that as my captives are outside in the elements, the larva are able to sense that the conditions are not suitable. I imagine that a raindrop onto an emergent larva is enough to knock it from its branch.



Purple Hairstreak Larva nibbling its way out of the egg

Sunday 13.4.2014 My Local Patch Knowle Village

Yesterday saw a last minute change of plan. My intended visit to my local site, where I found a single Duke of Burgundy last year, will have to wait till next weekend. My brother lives abroad and was home for a few days and this was our only chance to meet up. We decided to go walking in the countryside around Knowle Village which is his base when in the UK. Of course I managed to tie in some butterfly watching as well 😊
I was hoping for my first Orange Tips and Speckled Wood of the year as well as some whites and possibly a Holly Blue. This area is well within my local patch but an area I have not investigated for butterflies as yet. I was not disappointed. Within 10 minutes of setting off I had already ticked off 2 of my targets with a lovely fresh Green Veined White and several Male Orange Tips as well as yet another good showing of Small Tortoiseshell and a couple of Brimstone 😊😊 Unfortunately I failed dismally to get any photo at all of either the Orange Tips or Green Veined White. One particular sheltered area of field margin was positively vibrant with butterfly activity. We walked to Wickham and back and returned to this same 'hotspot' to spend a little longer admiring the butterfly activity.



Peacock Knowle Village 13.4.2014



Several Peacock were now present as well as my first Speckled Wood of the year. We were joined there by Mae my 5 year old niece. It was a joy to share with her the sight of Orange Tips, Brimstone, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell putting on a display in this beautifully sheltered spot, beyond which was a magical wood carpeted with Bluebells, Celandine and Wood Anemone. My brother and his family live in Dubai so this is a rare sight for them.



Speckled Wood Knowle Village 13.4.2014



My First Speckled Wood of the year

I spent 10 minutes off on my own whilst they went off to admire the Bluebells. I found Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell showing signs of egg laying behaviour. Fluttering around low over the nettles settling every now and again. However I did not actually see any eggs being laid. I will definitely revisit this spot as soon as I get the opportunity.

Total count for our 2 hour walk:

Small Tortoiseshell – 9

Brimstone – 5m & 2f

Orange Tip – 5m

Green Veined White – 1

Speckled Wood – 3

Peacock – 6

Meanwhile.....back at home there is still no sign of any of my Purple Hairstreak Larvae 😊 They surely must show themselves soon.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-14 11:01 PM GMT

Great report and shots Jack – especially the second Peacock – that's a cracker 😊 I'm envious of your Specklies – I've still to see one 🎁 God luck with the cats...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 16-Apr-14 06:30 AM GMT

Hi Paul. Hope your PH cats show themselves soon – mine have already pupated 😊 . Glad I'm not the only one concerned about my cats 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 21-Apr-14 10:50 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline & Wurzel

After a difficult week when three quarters of my family (including me) spent all or part of the week in hospital, there have been some highs and lows 😊

😞 A planned stay in hospital for my youngest son accompanied by my wife turned into an unplanned visit to A&E for my wife 😞 and an unplanned stay in hospital for me 😞 The Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester has grounds which I am sure contained plenty of butterflies but my son was quite unwilling to investigate, so we saw none there. I did however spot my first Holly Blue of the year on the most brief of ventures outside 😊

Friday 18.4.2014 At Home

My son and I returned home on Thursday, leaving Mum in the hospital. Advice for anybody planning to be ill, DO NOT BE ILL ON BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND !!!! 😞 there is no staff. I thought that butterfly watching was going to be completely off the menu for this Bank Holiday weekend, but I was able to make a quick walk up my local footpath to get some fresh air on Friday morning 😊 Although on the face of it was nice, it was actually quite cool when the sun disappeared behind a cloud and butterfly activity was at a bare minimum.



Speckled Wood Hedge End 18.4.2014



However, there were several Speckled Wood about and briefly it warmed up enough to encourage a few Small Tortoiseshell and a Peacock to flutter around the local Nettle patch for a while. Later in the afternoon my first garden Speckled Wood caught my eye from the kitchen window. Fluttering around the sunny corner of the garden and basking on the fence. Before I could get a picture it fluttered down on to a clump of grass and deposited an egg 😊



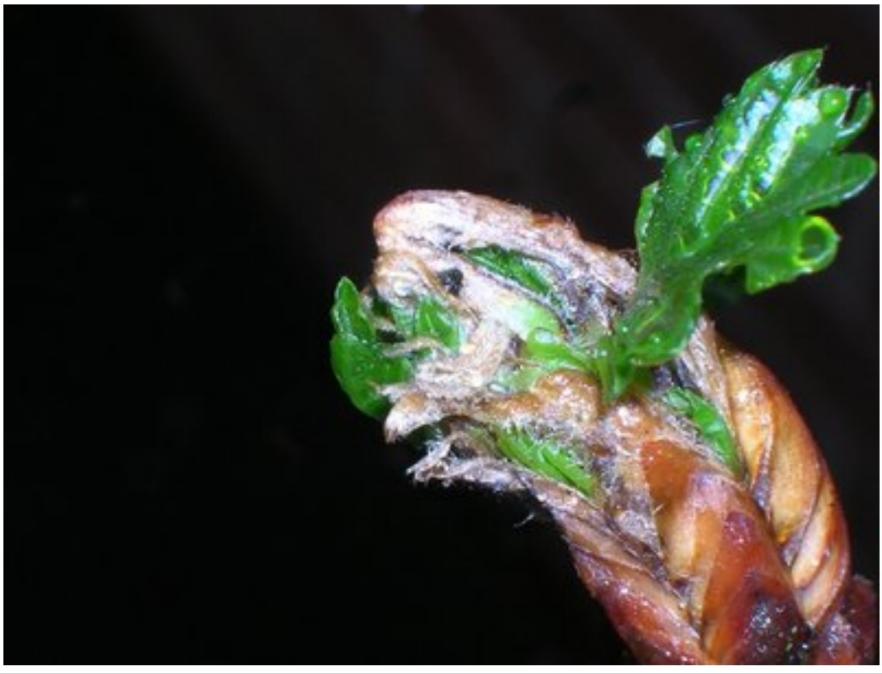
Speckled Wood egg laid in the garden

Speckled Wood is actually the only species that I have found in all stages in the garden. I have found eggs and young larvae on more than one occasion and adults are regular visitors. Early this year whilst clearing up in the garden I found an empty pupa which I believe was A Speckled Wood. I have retrieved this particular egg as the grass upon which it was laid is only a temporary feature. I will rear it through hopefully to adulthood 😊

The unexpected visit to hospital was a rush, but I had the foresight to give my Purple Hairstreak larvae some extra food just in case. Unfortunately I did not think to give my plants some water and they suffered quite badly. My Blackthorn Cuttings, Everlasting Pea and Wild Hop have all shrivelled and I think I will have to start again 😞

Sunday 20.4.2014 Purple Hairstreak Larvae

On Sunday it rained all day, but I finally got to see one of my Purple Hairstreak larvae for the first time 😊 I was beginning to wonder if they were still alive. This one was the second one that hatched on the 10th April. I am sure it has been outside of its bud before, I just had not been around at the right time. It is remarkably well camouflaged and is now about 6–7mm long. I still have not seen the first larva to hatch. The only signs of encouragement being the faintest wisps of silk on some of the outer leaves and the odd piece of frass.



First sight of Purple Hairstreak Larva at home



I am astonished at the difference a little cosseting makes to development. I know some of the larvae in other diaries (Pauline and Maximus) larvae have already pupated in a protected environment. Mine have been out in the elements, unprotected except for netting.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-14 11:30 PM GMT

The camo of that larva is amazing I had to do a triple check before I actually found it. 😲 I hope all of you are recovered or recovering 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 22-Apr-14 06:55 AM GMT

I am so pleased that your larva has finally showed up Paul – great shots. Keep us informed 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 22-Apr-14 11:07 PM GMT

Monday 21.4.2014 Stephens Castle Down

I had planned to go looking for Duke of Burgundy this weekend at my local site where I found one solitary example last year. However, I thought our hospital adventures this week would have put pay to any chance of butterfly watching this weekend. Luckily my wife was feeling well enough to allow me out for a couple of hours 😊 I was hoping for my first Dingy and Grizzled Skippers of the year as well as confirmation that Duke of Burgundy are resident here and my first Green Hairstreaks of the year. Unusually, my eldest son decided to accompany me as a relief from 'end of school holiday boredom' I imagine.



Female Brimstone

We arrived at about 10am a little later than planned. Butterfly activity was 'full on' almost as soon as we got out of the car 😊 A couple of male Orange Tips flew by as well as several female Brimstone actively egg laying on, what seemed, every available shoot. The hedgerow along this road seems to contain almost every shrub known including Buckthorn. Once on the reserve itself Brimstone activity was at a frenzied level which I have not experienced before. Whenever I looked there were always half a dozen in view initially females outnumbering males, for a change. There is a large amount of Buckthorn at this site and it seemed that the females were all at the height of their egg laying at once. Plenty of examples of several Brimstones in an aerial ball and lots of females in full rejection mode, wings open and body upright. It was not long before my first Dingy Skipper of the year flew into view, but it was to be the Grizzled Skippers that were more numerous on the day.



Grizzled Skipper





Dingy Skipper

For a change the Small Tortoiseshells were not as numerous as of late with only one very worn example seen. There were a few Peacocks around including one very unusual one that had very pale wings margins. Unfortunately today I mismanaged my battery supplies and took 2 sets of almost flat batteries 😞😞 After only a few photos I had exhausted all the batteries I had and no amount re shuffling different combinations of AAs would get my camera into action. We spent a couple of hours here checking every part of the reserve, but found no Dukes or Green Hairstreaks 😞 Hopefully they are just late at this site, but I will try again next week.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-14 11:31 PM GMT

Great shots of the skippers 😊 I went looking for Dukes last Friday and didn't have any luck so I think that they're a little later on this side of the country – we seem to be a week or two behind as we haven't the high temps that the South East has had – so I'd definitely try again soon – if you have enough Brownie points banked 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Hoggers, 23-Apr-14 03:09 PM GMT

Lovely Grizzlies, Jack! Your photos show just how attractive these Skippers are

Best Wishes

Hoggers

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 23-Apr-14 07:41 PM GMT

Hi Paul, glad your Purple Hairstreak larvae have hatched and that you have now seen and photographed them outside the Oak buds, great shots, look forward to your further updates. Also see you are going to rear through the Speckled Wood egg from your garden, should be very interesting. Glad you've seen your first Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, I have yet to see them this year.

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 23-Apr-14 09:53 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Lovely Grizzlies, Jack! Your photos show just how attractive these Skippers are

Couldn't agree more.....and the other images are equally noteworthy too!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 27-Apr-14 09:58 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, David, Mike and Hoggers, thanks for all your lovely comments 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-Apr-14 10:50 PM GMT

Despite the weather forecast this weekend I managed to get out on both Saturday and Sunday 😊

Saturday 26.4.2014 Moorgreen Meadows

This site is a short walk from home, but is an area I have not visited much. It is partly wooded and also very wet and boggy for most of the year. It is also the only place close to home where Cuckoo flower grows in any sort of abundance. So I thought I would check it out for Orange Tips.



The only area where Cuckoo Flower grows locally

On Saturday despite poor weather I found a gap in the showers in the afternoon after I had done all the chores. There was a stiff breeze blowing but at least a little sunshine. The area where the Cuckoo flower grows is unfortunately fenced off (I am not sure if that is to keep me or the deer out 😊) but I could see there were at least 4 Orange tips bobbing around on the cuckoo flower when the sun was out but they were too far away for photos. Further along I found a clearing with a large patch of Bluebells where there were 2 Peacocks basking and also the incongruous sight of a fresh Speckled Wood nectaring on a Bluebell 😊 I ventured further into the wooded area than I have before and found a lovely area carpeted with Wood Sorrel.



An area of Bluebells where I found a Speckled Wood nectaring



Wood Sorrel

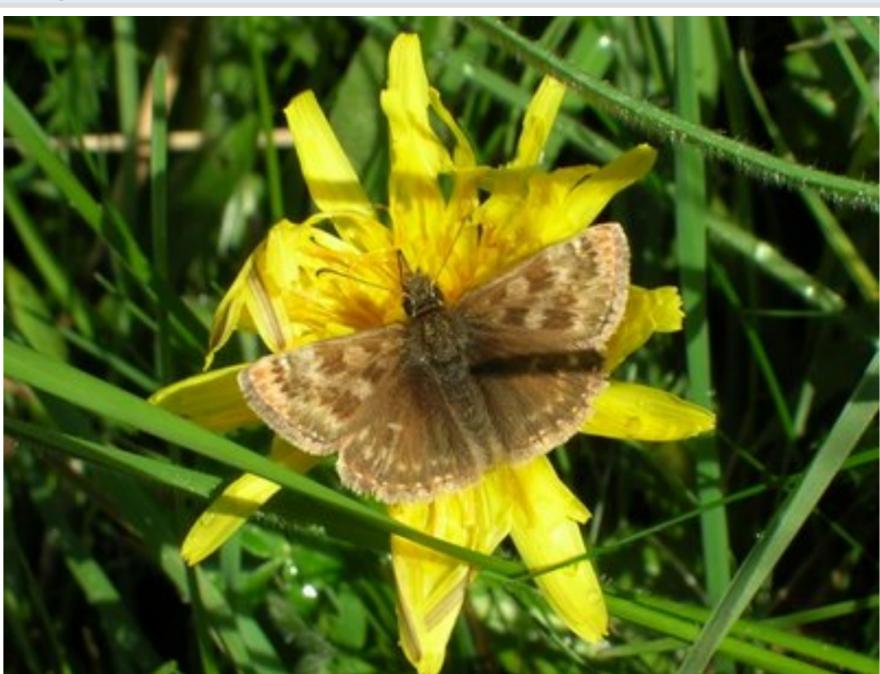


Brimstone settled momentarily whilst the sun disappeared

I kept going and found the track leads into the back of an industrial estate but here I found a couple of male Brimstone. Pausing on foliage the moment the sun disappeared giving me the rare opportunity for a photo. A nice area and one that I shall visit again this year. One particular part looks like it would suit White Admiral, there is certainly honeysuckle in the right sort of locations. White Admiral? within walking distance of home? now wouldn't that be good 😊

Sunday 27.4.2014 Stephens Castle Down

Well the forecast said it would rain and it did, heavily, for most of the day 😞 I waited and waited for the faintest sign of sunshine and eventually it came mid afternoon. I was determined to check my local downland site again to see if there was any sign of Dukes or Green Hairstreaks. I arrived just as a large patch of blue sky approached my destination. I quickly donned wellies and ran up the road so as not to miss out on the gap in the showers, taking my umbrella with me 😄



Dingy Skipper



Clouded Silver Moth



Grizzled Skipper

First up a Green Veined White fluttered into view. Today conditions were totally different to last week and to be honest I was not expecting much. As I entered the site proper a Dingy skipper landed on a dandelion. There was not a lot of butterfly activity but half a dozen each of Dingy and Grizzled skipper was all I could manage. A couple of nice moths showed themselves, but still no Dukes or Green Hairstreaks 😞 Obviously it was not nice enough to entice out any Brimstones which were by far the most numerous species at this site last week. This is the first time I have taken a broolly butterfly watching, but in the end I did not need it. I shall check again next week though the weather does not look likely to improve at all this week.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-14 11:47 PM GMT

Cracking Dingy shot Jack 😊 I know what you mean about taking a broolly butterflying, I never feel right wearing my waterproof jacket when out looking for butterflies. 😊 Hopefully the weather will improve for the weekend but it doesn't look good for the rest of it, just as things were starting to kick off 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 29-Apr-14 03:51 PM GMT

Lovely moth Paul and great shot of the Brimstone 😊

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 29-Apr-14 11:21 PM GMT

I've never seen a Clouded Silver Moth before, Jack. Are they rare?

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 02-May-14 11:17 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for the comments 😊 Hopefully I will not need the broly too often this year 😊

Hi Pauline and David

Thanks for the comments 😊 The moth is a rather nice one and one I had not seen before 😊 Apparently it is a fairly common species.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 05-May-14 10:52 PM GMT

A busy few days with my captive rearing subjects:-

Wednesday 30.4.2014 – Monday 5.5.2014 Purple Hairstreak Larvae

It seems that the best time to get a glimpse of these larvae is at night, after heavy rainfall. Wednesday 30.4.2014 was only the second time I had managed to spot the larva despite hours of looking 😊 Both times were at night after heavy rain. This time the larvae was moving around quite a lot and feeding, things I had not seen much evidence of previously.



30.4.2014 2nd sighting of my Purple Hairstreak larva after rain



2.5.2014 Purple Hairstreak larva enjoying a fresh twig of foliage



5.5.2014 Purple Hairstreak larva with just shed skin and a change of colouration

I started with three Purple Hairstreak eggs of which two hatched. It would seem that I now have only one remaining larvae 😞 I had them in quite close proximity but on separate twigs. I assume that one has either been eaten by the other or met some other form of demise. I have now transferred this remaining larvae (or allowed it to transfer itself 😊) to another larger twig with more foliage. Of course this now makes searching for it more difficult 😞 I had noticed that over this weekend the larvae did not seem to move at all and remained in the same conspicuous position. When I checked this afternoon I noticed that it appeared to be just at the end of shedding its skin. I have no idea what instar it is now in as most of its life it has been hidden from view.

Friday 2.5.2014 – Sunday 4.5.2014 Speckled Wood Ova

This weekend I noticed that the single Speckled Wood ova that I rescued from the garden, had started to change colour. This species I have reared before so hopefully things should be a lot more straightforward than the Purple Hairstreak. This ova was laid on the 18.4.2014. On Friday 2.5.2104 I noticed that the top of the ova had darkened considerably, a sure sign of imminent hatching. On Saturday there was no sign of hatching and on Sunday morning still no sign. After my return from a superb mornings butterfly watching (more of that later) I was pleased to note that the ova had hatched.



2.5.2014 Speckled Wood Ova with distinct darkening at the top



4.5.2014 Freshly hatched Speckled Wood larva

The tiny greenish white larvae has a distinct, shiny black head. The last time I reared this species I used cut Couch Grass as foodplant. I now have potted Cocks Foot but I think I shall experiment with different grass. The grass that the ova was laid on was neither Couch or Cocks foot, in fact I do not know what sort of grass it was 🤔

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 06-May-14 06:17 AM GMT

Great shots of your youngsters Paul – the Speckled Wood is very interesting.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-May-14 12:05 AM GMT

Sunday 4.5.2014 Stephens Castle Down

I was hoping that this would be third time lucky. The third visit I have made to this site in as many weeks. I was hoping for confirmation that the singletons of Duke of Burgundy and Green Hairstreak that I saw here last year were not just wanderers that happened to drift in from elsewhere. After the rain of the previous week I was grateful of some sunshine albeit accompanied by some cloud and a little breeze. My arrival was greeted by the welcome site of a male Orange Tip purposefully flying down the lane 😊 A Peacock, disturbed from the nettles, settled down to bask on the path as I made my way up to the best butterfly area on the site. After only a few minutes and a couple of Dingy Skippers I spotted my first Duke of Burgundy of the year 😊😊 This brought a huge amount of satisfaction and a big smile to my face 😊 Almost immediately that I saw the first there seemed to be a couple more 😊



Duke of Burgundy



Dingy Skipper

I am no expert but think they were all males ranging from fresh to perhaps a week old. It will be interesting to see how numbers increase over the next week or so, I will try check the site regularly. There is a sheltered hollow right in the middle of this site and this is exactly where I found the Dukes. They were, of course, accompanied by Dingy Skippers. Once I had spent some time observing the Dukes I wandered off to some of the other areas soon spotting a few Grizzled Skippers. By now it had started to warm up and all of a sudden there seemed to be lots of Brimstone in the air.



Grizzled Skipper underside



Male Brimstone



Grizzled Skipper

I now set off after my second target. My memorable encounter with Green Hairstreak last year at another site taught me that they like Hawthorn and Elder shrubs particularly and they often sit at head height. I spent an age checking the area where I saw one here in early June last year without success.



The large expanse of Garlic Mustard where I found plenty of Orange Tips as well as Green Hairstreaks



Green Hairstreak

I decided to check out a part of the site that I have not explored yet. I made my way up to the top of the hill where the Monarchs Way passes the site. On the way finding the grisly sight of a decomposing Deer carcass in the long grass 😬 Here I could see quite a number of Orange Tips along the track together with a bit of Garlic Mustard growing along the track. I needed to go outside of the reserve to get to the track. Once along the track I could see the top corner of this site was actually awash with Garlic Mustard but the sun and the Orange Tips had disappeared at that point. This area was freshly cleared when I visited last year and was now showing the benefits. As I walked along the track (outside of the reserve) a small dark butterfly fluttered across my path and flew toward a stand of young ash Saplings (inside the reserve) and settled just too far away to see clearly. Could this be my Green Hairstreak 🤔 I made my way quickly back toward the gate into the reserve. At this point the sun reappeared. As I turned and looked behind me the Orange Tips, which had disappeared from view suddenly came to life 😊 I backtracked to the area of Garlic Mustard at which point another similar small dark butterfly fluttered across and settled on the edge of a Garlic Mustard leaf. Unfortunately it settled at such an angle I could still not confirm it as my Green Hairstreak 😊 I returned into the reserve and although there is no path in this area I made my way to the large swathe of Garlic Mustard. A Holly Blue flew past (a species I have not encountered here before) Plenty of Orange Tips including good numbers of females a couple of which I saw being pestered by an amorous Green Veined White. Then yet another small dark butterfly (the same as the others) fluttered around me and settled on a Garlic Mustard flower right in front of me. At last my Green Hairstreak had arrived 😊 😊



Green Hairstreak



Green Hairstreak

Having confirmed this one then the other two I had seen were most certainly the same species. It gave me plenty of photo opportunity, unlike the

Orange Tips 😞 I do not have a huge amount of experience with this species but maybe higher temps in the middle of the day are necessary to get this species into action. A little further on I found another one 'on Hawthorn at head height' as expected. My day was now complete but to be honest I did not want to leave and could have stayed there all day. I had one last look around and spotted one rather worn Small Tortoiseshell at which point it had become distinctly cooler and cloudier. On returning to the 'Duke area' there strangely did not seem to be any around at all now 😞

My total species for the year is now 12. I now can not wait till next week and perhaps find some Common Blues. My species tally for this site is now up to 25 with some notable exceptions. I have yet to see Comma or Small Copper at this site and I feel it could easily yield a few more yet.

Total Count for the day:

Orange Tip 14 (6 female & 8 male)

Peacock 7

Dingy Skipper 10

Duke of Burgundy 4

Grizzled Skipper 7

Brimstone 20 (9 female & 11 male)

Small Tortoiseshell 1

Green Veined White 1

Green Hairstreak 4

Holly Blue 2

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 12-May-14 11:45 PM GMT

Sunday 11.5.2014 Stephens Castle Down

I could not resist the temptation to visit this site again for the fourth weekend in a row 😊 Although I was a little restricted on time, I was hoping for my first Common Blues of the year as well as an increase in Duke of Burgundy numbers from last week. To be honest the weather conditions were not ideal with a strong gusty wind and lots of cloud mixed in with some sunny spells. I was not at all confident that there would be much to see. I gave myself an hour 😊



The sheltered area where all of today's activity was taking place



Dingy Skipper



Grizzled Skipper

Thankfully in the sheltered hollow in the middle of this site there was plenty of butterfly activity to see. The Dingy Skippers were out in force and did not seem to be too affected by the gusts of wind. The Dukes on the contrary seemed to spend most of their time on the ground making a count quite difficult. I could only confidently say I saw 3 or 4 males but there could equally have been quite a few more than that. I had not really been sure previously of distinguishing between male and female of this species 😊 However, I was pleased today to see what was obviously a female. The slightly larger size, less active nature and nice plump body being a dead giveaway. The Green Hairstreaks were very active today and in good numbers. I only checked a small area but there seemed to be at least 2 chasing each other around every suitable Hawthorn bush. They were a joy to behold 😊, I was quite surprised at the difference in colouration, some being quite golden 😊



Duke of Burgundy





Green Hairstreak

One noticeable absentee from my previous visits to this site has been the Small Copper. Today I added Small Copper to the list with just one seen, my first of the year 😊 Then I spotted a flutter of blue, a beautifully fresh Common Blue, also my first of the year 😊 I watched this individual cavorting with the Dukes, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers for a while before another appeared. Then I spotted a female and then what I at first thought was another male. In fact this was the most beautiful, fresh, 'blue' female. My pictures do not really do justice to just how stunning this butterfly was. This one made my day 😊



My first Small Copper of the year



My first Common Blue of the year



The most beautiful 'blue' female Common Blue

Grizzled Skippers, Brimstones and a solitary male Orange Tip rounded off the days tally. I had managed to stretch my hour to nearly two 😲

This brings my species count for the year to 14 😊

Total count for the day:

Grizzled Skipper 6

Dingy Skipper 15

Common Blue 5 (3 male & 2 female)

Small Copper 1

Green Hairstreak 10

Brimstone 17 (12 male & 5 female)

Orange Tip 1 male

Duke of Burgundy 4 (3 male & 1 female)

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 13-May-14 11:01 PM GMT

Saturday 10.5.2014 - Tuesday 13.5.2014 Speckled Wood Larva

My single Speckled Wood larva is now 9 days old and has taken on a green colour as well as putting on a bit of weight. After offering both Cocks Foot and Couch Grass it seems to have a preference for the later despite Cocks Foot being its primary foodplant. In fact it has not touched any Cocks Foot at all as far as I can tell.



6 day old Speckled Wood larva 10.5.2014



9 day old (4-5mm long) Speckled Wood larva 13.5.2014

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 14-May-14 10:39 AM GMT

Great reports and shots from Stephen's Down – especially like the Small Copper. Which part of Hampshire is Stephen's Down in I'm trying to work out where it's near? Love the Specklie cat 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 14-May-14 11:28 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for your comments 😊 Stephens Castle Down is about 10km southwest of Winchester near Corhampton Golf Club. If you want more detailed directions then PM me 😊

Sorry 😞 that should be South East of Winchester 😊

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 15-May-14 12:24 AM GMT

Hi Paul,

the little site (which I think you know about), adjacent to Stockbridge Down, has been productive over the past 2 weeks for Dukes. I've even seen a couple of PBF – first time ever, there!

Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 16-May-14 11:50 PM GMT

"Jonhd" wrote:

Hi Paul,

the little site (which I think you know about), adjacent to Stockbridge Down, has been productive over the past 2 weeks for Dukes. I've even seen a couple of PBF – first time ever, there!

Jon

Hi Jon

I do not know this site, maybe you could give me a grid reference 📍 PM me if necessary

Thursday 15.5.2014 – Friday 16.5.2014 Speckled Wood Larva

Yesterday I noticed that my Speckled Wood larva had taken on that distinctive 'hunchback appearance' indicating an imminent skin change. When I returned home from work today my 1st instar larva had become a 2nd instar larva. The larval head losing its shiny, black appearance and taking on the same green colouration as the rest of the body. The body itself has now developed a more stripy pattern. The larva is still only 4–5mm long but I expect it to develop quite rapidly now 😊



11 day old Speckled Wood larva just before shedding its skin 15.5.2014



12 day old (2nd instar) Speckled Wood larva shortly after shedding its skin 16.5.2014



Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 17-May-14 10:22 PM GMT

Nice to see the Specklies coming on Jack 😊 Thanks for the info about Stephens Castle I'll dig out my map, it'll be worth a visit next year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 20-May-14 11:32 PM GMT

Saturday 10.5.2014 - Tuesday 20.5.2014 Purple Hairstreak Larva

I have not reported much of late on the goings on with my single remaining Purple Hairstreak larva. Other personal diaries have shown larvae having already apparently gone through the pupal and emergence stage to produce adult butterflies, I did not feel I had much to add. My larva is hopefully more in tune with wild population 😊



The last proper view of my Purple Hairstreak larva 10.5.2014



the larva spent most of its time during the day under the shrivelled leaf in the centre of this picture before it disappeared 11.5.2014

On the 11.5.2014, after my larva has spent all of its life living on cut Oak twigs in water, I thought I should think about providing some environment for pupation. Having not reared this species before and having no idea how large the larva would get I thought I can not leave it any longer.



Freshly prepared arrangement to allow for pupation 11.5.2014



My home made Purple Hairstreak rearing enclosure 11.5.2014

I am not sure how others have achieved this, but I chose to immerse my water container (a small narrow necked bottle) in a pot of compost and leaf litter. I sealed the aperture (flush with the surface of the compost) with tightly packed cotton wool around the cut Oak stem. For a couple of days the larva seemed to choose the same spot to hide during the day (very well hidden), in amongst the drying leaves of the old previous Oak stem tied to the fresh Oak stem. After that the larva which had previously been very difficult to find, suddenly became impossible to find 😊😊 I spent 2 days searching every millimetre of the Oak stem, sure that it was not yet large enough to pupate. Eventually on 17.5.2014 I gave up searching the foliage and had a rummage in the leaf litter. Sure enough there it was, not yet a pupae but close to it, under a twig and thin layer of loose compost. Finally today 20.5.2014 I noticed that the larval skin had been shed. That is 41 days as a larva. Thankfully I only just got the enclosure suitable for pupation in time, if I had left it a couple more days the larva would probably have crawled down into the water and drowned 😊 I now patiently await the emergence of the adult, which will hopefully be successful, as I have never seen the adult of this species before.





The final larval skin was shed sometime in the last 24hrs 20.5.2014

Saturday 17.5.2014 - Tuesday 20.5.2014 Speckled Wood Larva

My Speckled Wood larva seems to be developing very rapidly 😊 Tonight I noticed that it has developed the distinctive 'hunchback' appearance again indicating an imminent skin change. That is just 5 days as a 2nd instar larva. As I write this the larva is perched on a blade of Couch Grass beside me just in case I can catch it 'mid shed' 😊



13 day old 2nd instar Speckled Wood larva 17.5.2014



16 day old (8mm) 2nd instar Speckled Wood larva Imminently about to shed its skin 20.5.2014

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 21-May-14 02:13 PM GMT

Fascinating photos Jack 🌱. The colour changes of the larva to pupa are great and the 'hunchback' Specklie cat is a funny looking thing 😊 Looking

forward to the final emergence.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 23-May-14 11:31 PM GMT

Sunday 18.5.2014 Meon Valley Trail & Knowle Village

The weather forecast was particularly encouraging with warm unbroken sunshine all day 😊 Whenever my brother is over in the UK we try and meet up for a walk, today was such a day. The first half of our walk began at Wickham, we walked the course of the old railway line to its conclusion at knowle. The reality was that although it seemed like perfect butterfly weather there were disappointingly few butterflies around, at least in this particular location 😞 The Meon Valley Trail terminates in a dead end at Knowle Village, but we managed to find a route across river and field to rejoin the footpaths around Knowle Village. At one point we found ourselves inside a locked compound with a high fence, locked gates and security cameras. Luckily the gates had enough gap at the bottom for us to shuffle underneath 😲😞😁 Half a dozen speckled Wood, a couple of Brimstone and a few unidentified whites was all there was to be seen. However, we did see large numbers of Beautiful Demoiselle perhaps as many as 50 in a couple of different locations as well as few Banded Demoiselle.



Beautiful Demoiselle – one of many seen



Speckled Wood



Well developed Red Admiral larva

We stopped for lunch at Knowle Village and started the second half of our walk which was more productive. This was an opportunity to revisit the area which I visited back in mid April when Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock were prominent. Today I was pleased to find several Small Tortoiseshell larval webs at various stages of development as well as one very worn Small Tortoiseshell 'hanging on'. We also located at least two well developed Red Admiral larvae. There were also several peacocks fluttering around the nettles. As well as occupied larval webs I also noticed quite a few vacant larval webs with no larvae evident in close proximity. I hope this is not a sign that too many have been predated.



Small Tortoiseshell larvae



Small Tortoiseshell larvae with a possible predator lurking nearby

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 24-May-14 12:30 AM GMT

Hi Paul,

Glad your Purple Hairstreak larva has now pupated, we have adults emerging, and we will be releasing some tomorrow where we found them, hope the weather report is wrong.

I think your arrangement for pupation was fine, ours were on Oak twigs in small bottles standing in an old washing up bowl with a layer of sphagnum moss in the bottom. The larvae spent all their time in view on the Oak but fed mainly at night. When they were ready they walked down the bottles and pupated in the moss, none went walkabout! Its been a great experience but we would keep them in the fridge for longer next time, now we know how long it takes from the eggs hatching to adult butterflies emerging.

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 24-May-14 12:58 PM GMT

You were lucky not to have shouts of "Oi, Get off me land," which was the sound of my youthful birding days 😊😊 I've sent the PM with the details – good luck 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 27-May-14 10:53 PM GMT

Sunday 25.5.2014 Rain, Deja Vu & Marsh Fritillaries

On Friday I took the day off in advance hoping to spend the whole day butterfly watching in good weather. I had the same plan almost exactly a year ago and again, as last year, the weather was against me 😞 I wondered, as I set off down the motorway in driving rain, whether I was turning into some obsessed nutcase 😞😞 My day out on Friday consisted of a couple of hours in the New Forest with an umbrella in continuous rain looking for Pearl Bordered and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, needless to say I found none. I gave up and returned home with my enthusiasm dampened. Sunday looked to be a better day, but I did not really fancy driving to the heart of the New Forest on the bank holiday weekend. I fear I may now have missed my chance this year of seeing these two species 😞

Having never seen Marsh Fritillary before, this species was near the top of my 'must see', list for this season. Being keen to keep to my home county meant that opportunities for seeing Marsh Fritillary were somewhat limited 😞 I set off on Sunday morning with these two thoughts in mind, but the weather was a little disappointing to start with. I arrived on site to very cloudy, windy and cool conditions and it was at least half an hour before I saw any butterflies at all.



First butterfly of the day a Dingy Skipper



Common Blue



The first sightings of the day was a Dingy Skipper which briefly flew up into the wind and then settled on a flower disturbing a Small Blue in the process, This was very encouraging as this was my first ever Small Blue 😊😊 and a very fresh one as well. For the next half an hour I searched but the sun hardly showed. Another Dingy Skipper a couple of Common Blues and a very worn Green Hairstreak was all that showed. This site covers quite a large area and this was the first time I had visited so I was starting from scratch without any prior knowledge of the site. This is quite an open and exposed site as a whole but has some very sheltered dips and hollows. I pressed on and came across a sheltered area at the intersection of several tracks.



Roosting Green Hairstreak



If had not been for this Small Blue I may not have stopped long enough in this spot and may never have seen Marsh Fritillaries



I spotted a single Grizzled Skipper and another Green Hairstreak both in roosting pose with antennae positively drooping. I then spotted another Small Blue roosting on Kidney Vetch. I knelt down to take some pictures and soon the sun appeared and it opened its wings for a while before fluttering off. As I stood up and turned round all of a sudden in this small sheltered area there seemed to be lots of butterflies suddenly come to life 😲 😊 One of these butterflies was, to my amazement, my first ever Marsh Fritillary 😊 😊 and then there was 2 and then 3. They were all dividing their time between basking, feeding and chasing each other around. There were also several Adonis Blues 😊 and Small Blues 😊



Marsh Fritillary





Adonis Blue I think?

I have seen Adonis Blues before but this was the first time I have seen them in Hampshire. I then became slightly concerned that I may not actually be in Hampshire as I was very close to the county border 😊 It was then that a couple appeared who turned out to be the wardens for the site doing their transect. I spent a while chatting to them and they confirmed that I had found one of the best spots on the reserve and that I was indeed still in Hampshire. Whilst chatting we also spotted a mating pair of Marsh Fritillary which made my day 😊😊 I was amazed at the size of the females abdomen (the butterfly not the warden 😊) I would be surprised if she could actually fly very far with a body that large, full of eggs.



Mating pair of Marsh Fritillaries



The females massive abdomen is very visible in these photos



I had already had the dreaded call from my wife to say she needed the car 😞 so my time with the Marsh Fritillaries would not last much longer. On the way back to the car I saw my first Small Heaths of the year and also a single Small Copper. Although I did not get my full day of butterfly watching, I was very pleased with my Hampshire Marsh Fritillaries, Small Blues and Adonis Blues 😊

This brings my total species for the year to 21 😊

Total Count for the day:

Marsh Fritillary 6 (incl mating pair)
Grizzled Skipper 1
Dingy Skipper 8
Small Blue 6
Green Hairstreak 2
Brimstone 5 (4 male & 1 female)
Adonis Blue 6 (5 male & 1 female)
Small Heath 3
Small Copper 1
Common Blue 3 (2 male & 1 female)

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 27-May-14 11:45 PM GMT

Hi Paul. Like the Marsh Fritillary pics. It's the only butterfly that I've actually left the county for – about 10 miles into Wilts., last year. I honestly felt guilty about doing that (and haven't repeated the journey since).

I did try PM'ing you with (detailed!) directions to the small DoB site, near Stockbridge Down. Message submitted ok, but when I checked back the following day it had completely disappeared... Not going to bother Pete with such trivia at this time of year.

You should still have plenty of time to find Small PBF – Pignall Inclosure being the obvious candidate.

Cheers, Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-May-14 11:01 PM GMT

Hi Jon

Thanks for the comments 😊 I might just be able to get to see Small Pearl Bordered, if I can find the time of course.

Friday 23.5.2014 – Sunday 25.5.2104 Captive Speckled Wood and Purple Hairstreak

After a couple of days of shedding the final larval skin my captive Purple Hairstreak Pupa has now attained what I assume is its normal reddish and dark brown colour scheme.



Purple Hairstreak pupa 25.5.2014



The Speckled Wood larva took a few days to shed for the second time (day 16-19). It is now in its 3rd instar and is growing quite rapidly



19 day old (8mm) 3rd instar Speckled Wood larva shortly after shedding its skin 23.5.2014



Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 28-May-14 11:17 PM GMT

Great to see you got your Marshies 😊 And a mating pair too 😊 Good to see the Specklie is coming on.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 03-Jun-14 10:32 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel

Saturday 31.5.2014 Stephens Castle Down

I have not visited my local downland site for a couple of weeks so I thought I had better check in to see what was about. For a year or so I have had this site pretty much to myself 😊 It is a fantastic site, one which I still think has more to offer, I hope that comes across in my reports. I note that some higher profile local butterfly people have also posted reports on this site recently, I am glad that others are able to enjoy it but hopefully the place will not be overrun. I may have to seek out another site to call my own now 😊

Sunday was already spoken for as it was my youngest sons birthday and Saturdays are always busy, so I had to make a late afternoon visit which is unusual for me. However, visiting at the end of the day puts a different perspective on things. Unfortunately the weather was not perfect as there had been almost complete cloud cover all day and by 4pm it was already quite cool and breezy. I was hoping for my first Brown Argus of the year and possibly a Large Skipper. A fresh Small Heath and a couple of common Blues briefly took to the air and just as rapidly disappeared into the long grass. There was not much going on in the usual areas when I arrived. No Duke of Burgundy, Dingy or Grizzled Skippers no Green Hairstreaks, no whites and not much else. With not much activity I took time to investigate some areas at the bottom of the slope that I had not investigated previously.



Small Heath





One of several fresh Grizzled Skippers

I am glad I did because I found surprisingly good numbers of very fresh Grizzled Skippers as well as some Common Blue and Small Heath. There also seemed to be a lot of moths around. Once it became obvious that I had missed any prolific butterfly activity I set about looking for the spot where some of them roost at the end of the day. I have already found a reliable spot where Small and Essex Skippers roost, I'll check this out later in the year.



Brown Argus





Common Blue

I spent a while searching, every few steps stooping down to look across the areas of long Grass and seed heads to see if there were any little flags flying. Eventually I struck gold where there seemed to be Several Common Blues mostly on seed heads, occasionally one would take to the air flutter around a little and then settle back down. At least I thought they were all common Blues. Upon closer inspection a couple of them were actually my first Brown Argus of the year. One particular individual seemed more active than the others whilst I was in close company with it. Despite the fact that it was now gone 6pm, there was total cloud cover and it was pretty cool this one individual was still keen to display, open winged to me. Could this possibly have been to do with my body heat in close proximity, I do not know. All the others that I could see around me had wings firmly shut for the night. No Large Skippers seen but I did find several Brimstone and Burnet moth larvae as well as Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock larval webs.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-14 11:49 PM GMT

Great stuff Jack and great shots especially the Common Blue 😊 Good luck with the Smessex Skippers – won't be long now hopefully 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 06-Jun-14 11:23 PM GMT

Saturday 31.5.2104 – Thursday 5.6.2014 Speckled Wood Larva

Last night I was a little annoyed with myself when I managed to delete the last series of pictures (2nd June) I took documenting the development of this larva 😞😞 This larva has entered its 4th instar and is now almost 20mm long. Growth has been quite rapid. This latest instar has also seen the larva attain much brighter colouration than previously.



27 day old 3rd instar Speckled Wood larva before shedding its skin 31.5.2014



32 day old (20mm) 4th instar Speckled Wood larva 5.6.2014



Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 09-Jun-14 11:18 PM GMT

Sunday 8.6.2014 Stephens Castle Down

The weather today was hot. I thought I would check out some areas close to my local downland site, in an effort to discover something new. However, I did not find anything noteworthy to report in these areas. I could not resist popping in to my favourite site just to check on latest developments there. For once it was not the butterflies that were the highlights of my visit. I found no Duke of Burgundy at all 😞 I found this quite surprising as this seems to be quite a late emerging site. There were still a few Dingy skippers and one Grizzled Skipper found. Plenty of Green Hairstreaks including several egg laying females. The Brimstones were also still going about their egg laying. I was expecting to see my first Large Skippers of the year and I was not disappointed. I thought there might be a chance of an early Dark Green Fritillary but he did not show. Red admiral, Common Blue, Small Heath, Speckled Wood and several Small Tortoiseshell made up the days tally. Small Tortoiseshell ranged from very ragged to fresh, is it possible for 2 generations adults to be around together 🤔?



Large Skipper



One of several egg-laying Green Hairstreak

As with my last visit there were plenty of day flying moths around including many which had me fooled into thinking they were Dingy or Grizzled Skipper. Mother Shipton and Silver Y Moths were seen as well as many as yet unidentified ones.



Mother Shipton

Whilst I was wandering around the site I heard a buzzing coming straight for me though I could not see what the buzzing was. It landed on the underside of the brim of my cap, too close to my face for me to focus on it 🤪 No amount of brushing away would dislodge my visitor. When I removed my hat to see what it was I was amazed to see a spectacularly beautiful longhorn beetle. My attempts to move it on from my hat were met with a moderately loud squeak. The beetle could make this noise by extending the joint between its thorax and abdomen and then contracting it. The Golden-Bloomed Grey Longhorn beetle (*Agapanthia villosiviridescens*) is apparently fairly common, although I have never seen one before.



Golden-Bloomed Grey Longhorn beetle Agapanthia villosoviridescens



Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-14 11:54 PM GMT

How do you get those Mother Shipton moths to pose so nicely? They are always off on a mission whenever I see them 🍷😬 That long horn beetle is certainly living up to it's name, a cracking looking beastie 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 16-Jun-14 10:09 PM GMT

Saturday 7.6.2014 – Saturday 14.6.2014 Speckled Wood Larva

The last week has been a busy one for my Speckled Wood Larva, completing its larval stage. After attaining a more vivid bright green colour as it entered its 4th instar, at 37 days old (10th June) it became noticeably duller and translucent in appearance. At 38 days old (11th June) the larva hung itself up by the tail on a blade of grass ready to pupate. The following day the last larval skin was shed. The fresh pupa was initially very shiny in appearance, but within a couple of days had attained a less shiny and more colourful look.



34 day old 4th instar Speckled Wood larva 7.6.2014



37 day old 4th instar Speckled Wood larva noticeably less bright and more translucent 10.6.2014



38 day old Speckled Wood larva suspended ready for pupation 11.6.2014



The freshly exposed pupa had a very shiny 'wet look' 12.6.2014



The pupa having attained its true colouration 14.6.2014

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 16-Jun-14 10:59 PM GMT

Great, natural larval/pupal images there, Jack.

Thanks for sharing.

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 24-Jun-14 11:34 PM GMT

Paul, if you haven't already seen it, take a look at Ashley Whitlock's post on the 24th June (on the Hants & IOW BC sightings page <http://www.hantsiow-butterflies.org.uk/news.php>) - Stephens Castle Down is becoming quite the place to be seen 😊

Cheers, Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 26-Jun-14 09:50 PM GMT

Hi David

Thanks for the comments 😊

Hi Jon

Yes I have seen a couple of Ashley Whitlocks Reports from Stephens Castle Down. I notice that Alan Thornbury has reported from there as well. If you have not visited I would definitely recommend it throughout the Spring and Summer. I have visited most weekends since April and I can not get enough of it 😊 I did not visit last weekend but Marbled Whites were out the previous weekend as well as Ringlets. I imagine Dark Green Fritillaries are out there now as well as Small Skippers.

I was hoping to be back working in Sparsholt during August again but that now looks unlikely. I will just be there now and again, I spotted my first Painted Lady there during a brief visit last week.

I have not found much time to post anything over the last couple of weeks so I have some catching up to do 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Willow, 26-Jun-14 10:17 PM GMT

Really good reports Jack, that longhorn beetle is a great find 😊 and your pupa shots are belters...well done 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 26-Jun-14 11:24 PM GMT

I'll be in the Sparsholt area, next week, venturing out from work, in my lunch break. If you'd like any site pointers, PM me, and I'll tell you some places worth checking out.

BTW, my one & only visit to SCD (I guess we can refer to it by an acronym now!), last year, I think I must have entered in the wrong area – few 'flies seen, and a treacherous bit of hillside to negotiate (opposite the Stud Farm).

Cheers, Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 30-Jun-14 11:21 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments Bill and Jon 😊

Over the last couple of weeks I seem to have fallen way behind with my diary 😊 So here goes for a brief catch up.

Tuesday 17.6.2014 Captive Purple Hairstreak

My single Purple Hairstreak pupa finally emerged on the 17 June. Unfortunately the newly hatched butterfly which greeted me when I returned from work had deformed wings and despite the fact that it took nourishment in the way of sugar solution it died within 24 hours. This was the first time I have reared this species. I have learned a lot and although disappointed that it was crippled on emergence, I am pleased that it emerged 'in tune' with its wild counterparts. Despite the concerns raised in the recent 'ethics of captive rearing' thread (to which I did not contribute), I would rear this species again given the opportunity.

Thursday 26.6.2014–Saturday 28.6.2104 Captive Speckled Wood

On Thursday I noticed the first signs of the Pupa darkening which started with the wing cases, head and legs area. On Friday the wing pattern was quite distinctly visible. By Saturday morning the Pupa was uniformly darkened and by lunchtime the first signs of imminent emergence were apparent. The head, legs, proboscis and thoracic areas had lightened as if the butterfly inside had detached itself inside.



Speckled Wood pupa 24hrs prior to emergence 27.6.2014

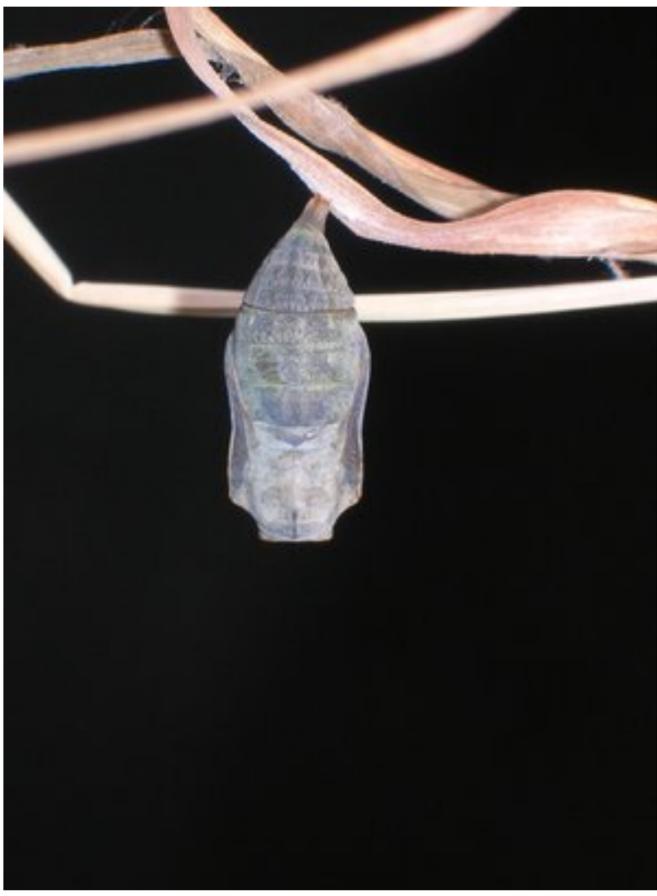


Speckled Wood pupa 5hrs prior to emergence 28.6.2014



Unfortunately I was not in a position to just sit and watch it but just an hour later I happened to glance over and the butterfly was out! It must literally have just emerged as its wings were still crumpled. I hastily gathered my camera and got the emergent butterfly into a more accessible position. This only took a couple of minutes, but by the time I was ready the wings were pretty much 'pumped up', albeit soft and floppy. The whole process from emergence to fully inflated wings must have been about 20 minutes or less.







Life Cycle Overview

The egg was laid on 18.4.2014 and spent 16 days in that stage. The larval stage took 39 days to complete and 16 days were spent in the pupal stage. In total 71 days were taken to develop from the egg being laid to the the adult emergence. Whether these timing are typical I do not know, maybe someone could comment on that. From experience I would imagine that the spring brood is slower in development. I released the adult, which I think was male, into my garden on Sunday 😊

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 30-Jun-14 11:37 PM GMT

Nice sequence, Jack. Shame about the PH. You did your best.

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 01-Jul-14 05:57 AM GMT

Sorry to hear about the PH Paul but well done with the Speckled Wood. The sequence of shots are excellent.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-14 10:08 PM GMT

Great sequence of shots Paul, the Specklies looks in fine fettle and I like the way you've caught a purplish tinge to the hind wings 😊 Sorry to hear about the Purple Hairstreak I'd just put it down as one of those things 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 01-Jul-14 11:28 PM GMT

Hi David, Pauline & Wurzel Thanks for the comments 😊

.....just a bit more catch up from what seems ages ago

Sunday 15.6.2014 Stephens Castle Down, Dundridge & Galley Down

I made an early start with the expectation of good weather. Unfortunately the weather did not 'do what it said on the tin' and there was complete cloud cover accompanied by cool breezy conditions. So I took the opportunity to investigate some other interesting areas close to Stephens Castle Down. Galley Down was much more wooded than had been apparent from the satellite image but is definitely worth another look in better weather. No butterflies seen at all except one struggling to stay on course in the cool breeze. There were plenty of Peacock larvae around covering the whole spectrum of development. As is always the case the sun started to appear as it neared time to leave 😞 Several Speckled Wood being the first appearances of the day. I could not leave without a quick look on the down itself. My first Meadow Browns of the year bobbed in the meadow next to the down. Then the unmistakable site of Marbled Whites. Again, my first of the year with 3 or 4 seen all males. A single Grizzled Skipper and several Large Skippers were around but the Duke of Burgundy and Green Hairstreaks have gone for the year 😞 As I left I had a hopeful look at the Elms in the hedge line along the road for White Letter Hairstreaks, I saw none 😞



My first Marbled White & Meadow Brown of the year 15.6.2014



Saturday 21.6.2014 around my local patch and in the garden

I had not been out along my local footpath near home for a few weeks so I thought I would have a quick look to see what was about. This is a little used path and this time of year it becomes almost impenetrable and overgrown in places. The bracken and Brambles encroach at almost neck height

making going difficult. My first Ringlet 😊, one of very few Commas seen this year, a Red Admiral and plenty of Large Skippers were all that I saw. In the Garden another Vapourer Moth larva appeared on the washing. These are regulars in the garden and this one was returned to the Variegated Maple tree which they seem to enjoy.



Vapourer Moth larva in the garden 21.6.2014

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 07-Jul-14 11:55 PM GMT

22.6.2104 - 6.7.2014 Knowle Village, Ravens Wood & Aytesbury Copse

I visited this particular location back in the spring for the first time and found it a wonderful little haven between farmland and ancient woodland. I have been studying the area over the last few weeks hoping for something interesting to turn up 😊

22.6.2014 For the last couple of weeks there has not been much opportunity for butterfly watching, although the weather has been 'spot on.' I have had to grab opportunities however poorly timed they might have been. This was a very late afternoon visit just catching the last of the afternoon sun. I was not very hopeful, it being so late in the day, but I was surprised to find two firsts for the year, Small Skipper and several White Admiral which were busy on a large clump of Bramble. I managed to miss this species completely last year so they were a very welcome sight 😊 😊



White Admiral 22.6.2104



Small Tortoiseshell courtship behaviour? 22,6,2014

In an area where I had seen lots of Small Tortoiseshell activity in the Spring and lots of larval groups a few weeks later, there was now Small Tortoiseshell activity again. Many were exhibiting what I assume was courtship behaviour. I watched one pair for about 15–20 minutes waiting for something to happen. Down in the vegetation one was motionless with wings firmly shut (I assume the female) the other was lined up astern wings open and quivering constantly and occasionally tapping the other individuals wings with its antennae. They did this for about 20 minutes at which point I had to leave. I hope they did eventually get on with it 😊 There were perhaps 10 or more Small Tortoiseshell in this location as well as a couple of Red Admirals. Plenty of Large Skippers and Meadow Browns as well as some Peacock larvae.

27.6.2014 I made a quick visit today at about 6.30pm and although it was a little late in the day I still recorded my first Ringlet and Marbled White in this location.

29.6.2014 Another week on I counted at least 20 Small Tortoiseshell larva webs with very young larvae in a very small area also my first Summer Green Veined White. I feel that this area has more to offer if I can just get there at a sensible time of day and the weather holds.



Small Skipper 29.6.2014



One of many Small Tortoiseshell larval webs 29.6.2014

6.7.2014 Yesterday I managed to visit this location at a sensible time of day although the weather was indifferent. Cloudy and cool in the morning with sunny intervals and a breeze. I was hoping I might see some evidence of Purple Emperor activity as there is ancient Oak woodland here with lots of Sallow on the periphery. I saw a bit of activity in the treetops through my binoculars but so far away I could not be sure even what species I was seeing. Lots of Marbled White, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper around and a few Large Skipper hanging on.



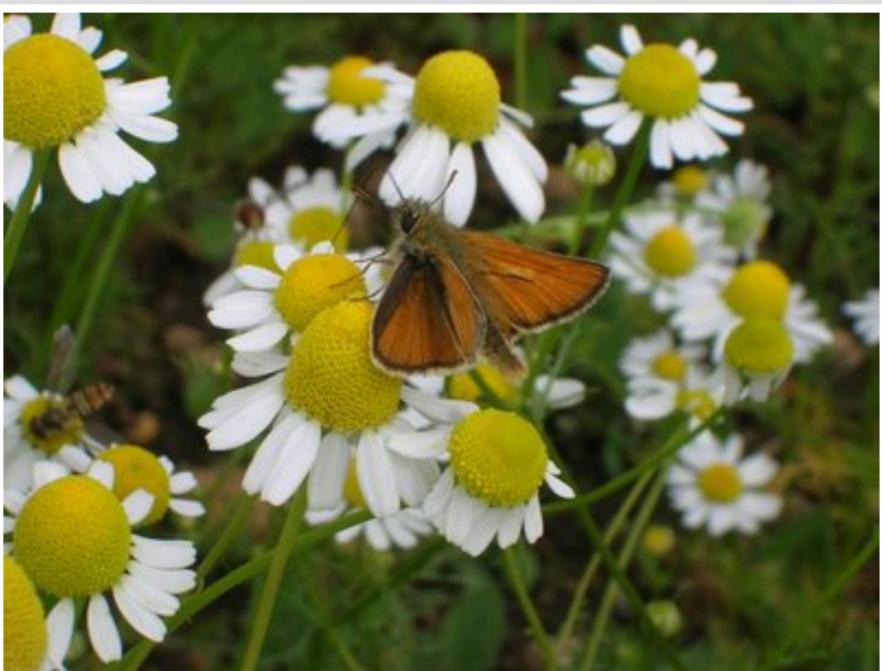
Male Gatekeeper 6.7.2014



Gatekeeper 6.7.2014



Small Tortoiseshell 6.7.2014



One of many Small Skipper on this clump of Mayweed 6.7.2014

I was pleased to find my first Gatekeepers of the year and there were lots of them, all male. In the sheltered corner of a field there was a large expanse of Mayweed, this was proving irresistible to the Small Skippers. I counted 7 all buzzing around this area. Close by I spotted a very fresh (with that just emerged look) Small Skipper. Upon closer inspection this was my first Essex skipper of the year 😊 In this very small sheltered area I found a couple more, again very fresh.



Essex Skipper 6.7.2014



Essex Skipper 6.7.2014

There were still Small Tortoiseshell around some looking in good condition and patrolling the area where there are huge numbers of larval webs. After counting 20 last weekend I found a few more in the same area bringing the total to around 30 webs. There were also still a few Peacock larvae around. The White admirals were still present in the same areas as last week. A couple of Green Veined Whites and a fresh Large White appeared. I think this is only the second Large White I have seen this year, the spring has been rather devoid of all the whites with only a handful seen. Has anybody else noticed this 🤔 A beautiful Golden Ringed Dragonfly also put in an appearance. Hopefully this area still has a few surprises to offer.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-14 10:26 PM GMT

Great to catch up with your doings Paul with some lovely shots – that White Admiral is lush but my favourite is the "three spotter" Gatekeeper 😊 I can sympathize with you about having to squeeze butterflying in but it makes it all the sweeter when you get something good 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Willow, 10-Jul-14 07:42 PM GMT

Very nice latest report Jack...much enjoyed 😊

Bill 😊

When in doubt...venture out"

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 14-Jul-14 11:11 PM GMT

Thanks Bill and Wurzel for your comments 😊

This weekend I made a couple of quick visits to some local spots 😊 But failed dismally with my camera 😞

Saturday 12.7.2014 Moorgreen Meadows

Inbetween dropping the kids off at various places on Saturday, I managed a quick 20 minute stop off at lunchtime just around the corner from home. I was pleased to find my first summer Peacock 😊 as well as singles of Comma, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and a surprisingly fresh Large Skipper. There were also several male Gatekeepers and Speckled Wood. On Returning to the car, which I had parked in the adjacent industrial estate, I had a quick look up at the Oak Trees and saw what I believe were Purple Hairstreaks high up. I returned twice over the weekend to check it out with binoculars only to find this secluded corner of the estate occupied by kids in their cars with loud exhausts and equally loud music 😞 I shall return another day.

Saturday 12.7.2014 Knowle Village/Aytesbury Copse

A late afternoon visit to this location provided a few more Summer peacocks. There were no White Admirals today and the Marbled Whites had reduced to just one. Gatekeepers were the most numerous species seen but still no females and this week more Essex than Small skippers seen. There were still a few Large Skippers around and there was a mixture of Small Tortoiseshells from very worn to very fresh as well as a range of sizes of Small Tortoiseshell larvae. There were a few whites around as well as Meadow Brown And Ringlet.



Where else but on a gatepost! Gatekeepers were the most numerous species at every location this weekend. I still have not seen a female yet this year.

Sunday 13.7.2014 Whiteley Pastures

I had unexpected opportunity and just as unexpected weather on Sunday afternoon. I headed out with my eldest son to Whiteley. This location has been on my list for some time but I had not got around to visiting up until now. There had been rain earlier in the day and there was nobody around. I thought there might be a possibility of Purple Emperor but he was not seen 😞 There were plenty of summer Peacocks around as well as my first summer Brimstones. Albeit a bit late in their season I saw my first Silver Washed Fritillaries of the year also a single White Admiral and Comma. The highlight of my day was making my way into a wooded area toward a clearing off the main track. Whilst standing at the edge of a very small clearing next to a Birch tree a Silver Washed Fritillary settled on the trunk about 2 feet off the ground and laid an egg on the bark. It then fluttered a few inches around the trunk and laid another 😊😊 . This was in almost complete shade, in fact I could have done with a torch and my camera was certainly unable to record the event



Silver Washed Fritillary – my first of the season albeit a bit late

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-14 11:18 PM GMT

There do seem to be large numbers of Hedge Browns around at the moment –which is great news for me 😊 Liking the shot showing the slightly unusual looking pupils 😊 I too saw a female egg laying this weekend, it was unusual seeing a normally sun loving butterfly mooching around under the canopy in the shade.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

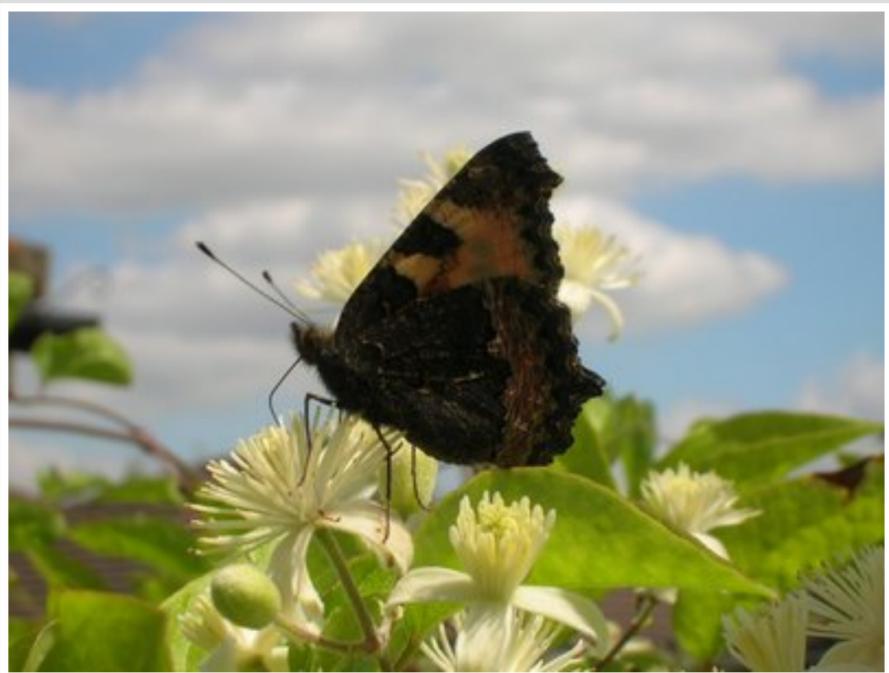
Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 15-Jul-14 11:00 PM GMT

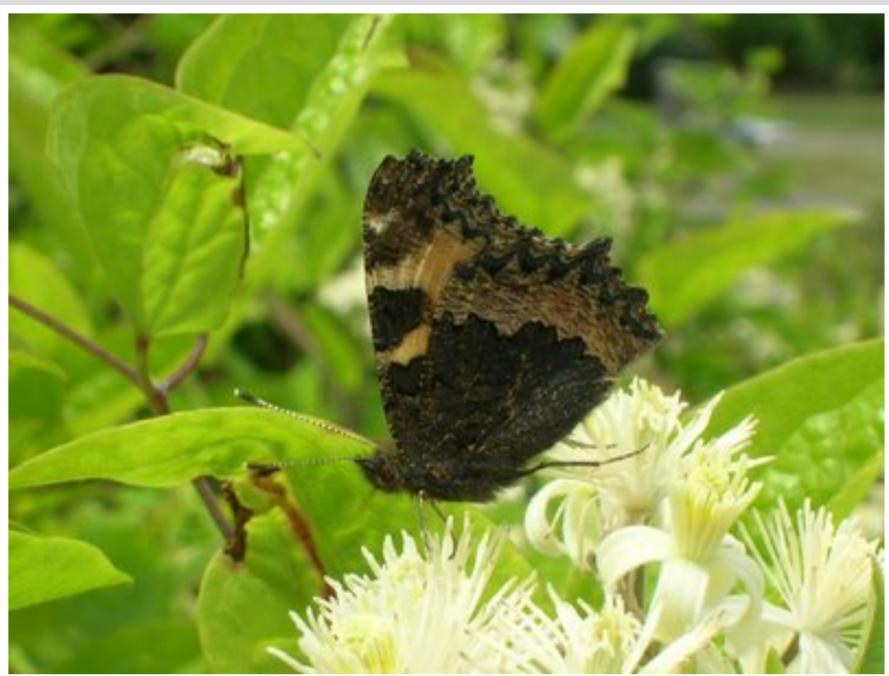
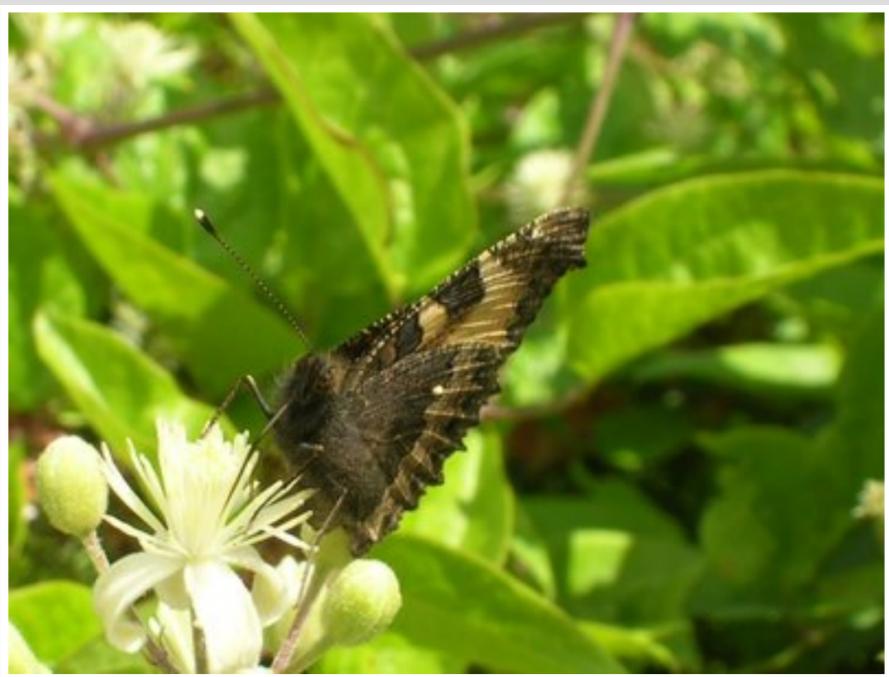
Thanks for the comment Wurzel 😊

Tuesday 15.7.2014 Sparsholt

Whilst working in Sparsholt today I took some time out in the heat at midday to watch a large number of Small Tortoiseshell nectaring on Travellers Joy 😊 This caught my attention because I rarely see any butterflies on this particular plant. A couple of Small Skippers, Large Whites and Meadow Brown also visited for refreshments but did not stay around long, whereas the Tortoiseshells stayed around for several hours. Other species seen at other spots at the same location today were several Brimstone, lots of Whites and Gatekeepers. I have got Friday and Monday off work so I am hoping for at least one good day of butterfly watching 😊



Some of the many Small Tortoiseshells nectaring on this clump of Travellers Joy in Sparsholt today



Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 15-Jul-14 11:22 PM GMT

Particularly like that first pic. – I'd say (with the lovely skyline, behind) that one's a "Padfieldesque" photo!

Cheers, Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-14 09:44 PM GMT

I really like the last shot Paul, there's something about the way the hind legs are trailing behind it that makes me imagine it's got a nice fully belly so it's just stretching out lazily; like I like to do after a big meal 😊😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 22-Jul-14 10:39 PM GMT

Hi Jon & Wurzel

Thanks for the comments 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 23-Jul-14 11:17 PM GMT

Friday 18.7.2014 Stephens Castle Down

First time out with a new camera and very disappointingly got no shots at all 😞 I was there in the seering heat in the early afternoon and everything was far too active. Certainly too active for me with a new toy that I was unfamiliar with 😞 Camera aside, I was pleased to see several fresh male Common Blues vigorously defending territory against each other and the 3 or 4 worn male Dark Green Fritillaries which were cruising up and down the main butterfly highway in the middle of this location. I seem to have missed out on seeing Dark Green Fritillaries freshly emerged this year 😞 Several Fresh Peacocks and singles of Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell as well as the first Comma I have seen at this site made the visit worthwhile. There were of course the usual suspects Marbled whites, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Ringlet a plenty. Still not seen a female Gatekeeper. Also seen several fresh Brimstones both male and female as well the other whites, Small and Essex skippers and Large Skippers. Just as I was leaving a Humming Bird Hawk moth came into view. The thing that really caught my eye was that large areas of the Down had been completely trampled flat including the area that is inhabited by the Duke of Burgundy colony here. It did not become apparent what had caused the trampling until I hit bulls eye with my foot into a large, fairly fresh cowpat which was slightly obscured by vegetation 😊 As I left I spotted the culprits at the far end of the reserve, half a dozen cattle. I know that grazing maintains the downland habitat, but is it possible for damage to be done if the wrong livestock are employed?????

Sunday 20.7.2014 Wickham/Knowle Village

After a bit of practise with my new camera in the garden during Saturday I managed to take a couple of pics whilst out walking with my Brother on Sunday Morning exploring a new path/route. I found my first female Gatekeeper of the year as well as fresh Peacocks, Marbled whites, Meadow Brown, Essex and Small skipper, Ringlet and lots and lots of Small Tortoiseshell larvae. Plenty of room for improvement I think 😊



First female Gatekeeper of the year and first try with new camera Wickam 20.7.2014



Peacock Knowle Village 20.7.2014



Male Gatekeeper Knowle Village 20.7.2014

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-14 10:08 AM GMT

Great reports and shots Jack - you're getting to grips with the camera 😊 I know what you mean about the wrong grazers grazing - one of the reserves near me swapped to sheep and the swards have been a different length and there seem to have been fewer blues 😞 Hopefully the loss of one will be to the benefit another...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-Jul-14 11:37 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel hopefully they will not have done to much damage

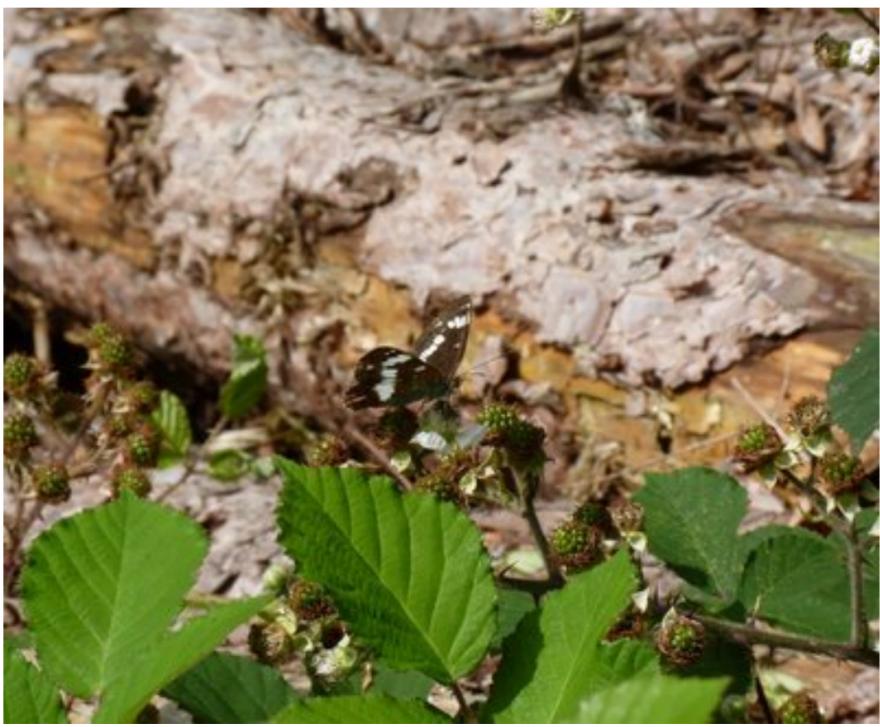
Monday 21.7.2014 Straits Inclosure & Oxenbourne Down

I have always had great difficulty with trying to fit in more than one site in a day. You know how it is, you set yourself a time limit and before you know it 3 hours have elapsed and it is time to go home 😞 In fact I don't think I have ever successfully managed to do it. Last Monday I thought I would make my annual pilgrimage to Oxenbourne Down to see the Silver Spotted Skippers. As I had the whole day off and the weather forecast was good I had the idea of popping into Straits Inclosure for an hour beforehand and perhaps get my first ever sighting of a Purple Emperor. So I set off under a cloudless sky with that plan in mind at just gone 8am.

When I arrived at Straits Enclosure the place was deserted, cool and there was almost complete cloud cover 😞 but I was confident this would lift. This would be my first summer visit to this site. I have never seen a Purple emperor before although I have looked unsuccessfully at my local site. I get the impression from other reports sometimes that finding Purple Emperor requires lots of experience and practice 😎 I have none of this of course but I do retain information well. I was armed with various titbits like 'they tend to come to the ground mid morning', 'they can be attracted to light coloured or shiny objects', and they are also attracted by moisture of various unsavoury types. I have also been advised that when you see one they are unmistakable. Well I was there at the right time of day, I wore my favourite old white T shirt and the ground was moist with various doggy deposits.



Gatekeeper was the only species showing at first



First White Admiral of the day

I walked the length of the main track and saw only a couple of Gatekeepers but this gave me a chance to practise with my new camera whilst keeping one eye on the tree tops and one on the ground. At the end of the main track where the hard surface disappears I made my way a bit further and caught a tantalising glimpse of a large butterfly flying between two Oak trees, it then disappeared without waiting to be identified. The sun did not really start to appear until about 10.15 but once it broke through the cloud rapidly cleared. I returned to the spot where I had seen tree top action just in time to see a Silver Washed fritillary coming down to nectar on Bramble. This would be one of many seen during the day. At this point my camera battery died so I had to resort to my old faithful. It was not long before white Admiral and Peacock were up and about. I had read many reports of Purple Emperor using the two observation platforms as perching points here so every journey I made back and forth along the main track included close scrutiny of these platforms. By 10.30 there was much butterfly action. The Silver Washed Fritillaries, white Admirals and Peacocks had now been joined by whites, Small and Large Skippers, Meadow Browns and Ringlets but not a sign of Purple Emperor.



Whilst taking this I was approached by a Purple Emperor



Red Admiral taking moisture from the track

By now there were many Peacocks taking moisture from the gravel track. At the point where the main track dips I stopped to take a photo of one of these Peacocks, as I stood up I was alerted by the sound of rustling butterfly wings and to my astonishment my first Purple Emperor unmistakably swooped past me and back up to the tree tops. This was my first ever encounter with the Purple Emperor: D 😊😊 By this time I had already been there much longer than planned but I could not resist staying a bit longer to perhaps get another glimpse. I stayed on for quite a while without any sign of the Emperor. A Red Admiral joined the many Peacocks taking moisture/nutrients from the track. I had all but given up and decided to have one last circuit of the main track when I glanced up at the first observation tower. I could not believe my eyes as there was a large female Purple Emperor open winged on the shady side of the tower 😊😊😊 It moved around a bit for a few minutes, wings outstretched and then took to the air, circled a couple of times and then disappeared into the canopy. So I left site feeling quite chuffed. I even still had time to get into see Silver Spotted Skippers at Oxenbourne Down but it would have to be a quick visit, maybe an hour if I was lucky.



First sight of Silver Spotted Skipper this year

I arrived at Oxenbourne Down much later than originally planned and it was now gone midday so butterfly activity was frantic. The Chalk Hill Blues were out in force. Mainly males but a fair few females and several mating pairs. A quick search around the main Silver Spotted Skipper habitat turned up several males in high speed action, but no females. There were still plenty of Small/Essex Skippers around some looking quite fresh. Hopefully I can get back next weekend for another look.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-14 09:46 PM GMT

Great report and shots Paul 😊 An Emperor and Empress in one visit is a mighty fine result 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 03-Aug-14 07:20 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel the Emperors were certainly the highlight of the day unfortunately my camera skills were not up to it so no photos to show for it 😞

Sunday 27.7.2014 Oxenbourne Down

So for the 2nd time in a week I headed off for Oxenbourne Down. I had the day to myself so decided to explore some of the more remote parts of this site, after connecting with the Silver Spotted Skippers of course. As I arrived the sky was still fairly dull and thankfully the butterflies were only just starting to become active. There was already lots of Chalk Hill Blues about. Some looking pretty ragged but there were plenty of fresh emergences around and some slightly aberrant individuals lacking in underside spots. I spent quite a while observing this species. After an initial search I found no sign of Silver Spotted Skipper activity or any roosting, but it was still early and the sun was not really out. There were plenty of fresh Common Blues about including some unusually marked examples. Once the sun got its act together the Silver spotted Skippers began to appear, not many, but several males were observed.



This was one of the first things I saw on arrival a slightly aberrant female in this mating pair.



I spotted this similarly marked aberrant male later in the day



One of many Chalk Hill Blues which looked like they had only emerged within the last few hours

At the top of the down there are several large Buddleia bushes scattered around. I cant help but think observing butterflies on Buddleia in a nature reserve is cheating, but none the less I thought they were worth checking out. Amongst the large numbers of freshly emerged Peacocks adorning each bush were several Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells as well as a couple of Painted Ladies 😊😊



male Silver Spotted Skipper



One of several unusually marked female Common Blues with pale streaks on the hind wing



female Common Blue

Down in the lower valley the habitat is very different, much longer vegetation. As one works further along the valley the species range gradually changes. The Chalk Hill Blues gradually disappear leaving the common Blues and additionally Brown Argus. Then one starts to see the odd Silver Washed Fritillary which seem much fresher here than at other sites I have visited recently. Brimstones also become more numerous and they are so different in character at the moment compared to their post hibernation aliases. At times there were several individuals occupying a single head of Burdock or Thistle and quite content for me to get very close.



I saw Brown Argus at this site for the first time today



Male & female Brimstone sharing the same flower head and showing no interest in each other! I would struggle to get this shot in spring



One of many Peacocks seen. This one posed nicely



A surprisingly fresh Silver Washed Fritillary

At the head of the valley is a large Ash tree which marks the intersection of several routes. The Right hand route climbs steeply to an area of habitat similar to that at the top of the reserve where I found Small Copper in addition to other species already mentioned. The middle route found me wading through shoulder high Buckthorn, Brambles and Thistles there was another large Buddleia bush here which again hosted large numbers of Peacocks as well as some Silver Washed Fritillary and with the addition of a couple of Comma. By now I had been here for several hours and started to make my way back along the valley. I worked my way back along and up toward the Top of the down to make a last check of the Silver Spotted Skippers as I made my way out of the reserve a Holly Blue appeared making a total of 22 species seen for the day, not bad going.



A nice fresh looking Small Tortoiseshell one of a couple seen



Red Admiral making the most of it and not looking bothered whether Buddleia is a native species or not!

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-14 11:13 PM GMT

Anyone would struggle to get a shot like that at any time of the year Paul, it's a cracker 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-Aug-14 11:51 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel Thanks for the comments again 😊

Saturday 2.8.2014 Stephens Castle Down

My wife had taken the boys away for a few days to visit friends, this left me to my own devices but also car- less 😞 I came up with the wonderful idea of making an evening visit to my local downland site, by bicycle 😊😊 It is a 20 minute car journey so why not, I thought although I might end up regretting it. My aim was to find butterflies settling down for the evening to roost. Although I am not a regular cyclist I did the journey in about 45minutes without stopping and arrived on site at about 6.15pm with slightly wobbly legs 😊 This is an east facing site so with the sun rapidly setting some areas were already in shade and butterfly activity was minimal. Just the odd brief flutter of a Common Blue, Brown Argus or Skipper.



Common Blue



Brown Argus



After visiting this site regularly over the last couple of years I have come to learn the best spots for roosting butterflies so I headed straight for these areas. Last time I visited this site I was dismayed to find that large areas of the site had been trampled completely by livestock (I do not know whether this is a good thing or a bad thing). Today the site was much the same but the livestock seemed to have gone. There were small islands of untrampled vegetation consisting mainly of common Knapweed and grasses. It was some of these islands that played host to numbers of roosting butterflies. There were definite hotspots where there were several individuals and species together. Once I had seen one and got my eye in more and more became apparent.



Roosting Common Blues



Once I had exhausted the roosting areas I was familiar with I set about discovering some new ones. In one new area approximately a metre square I counted 15 Common Blues, 1 Brown Argus, 1 Meadow Brown and a Small Skipper 😊 I got slightly carried away again, lost track of time and realised at 7.40 that the light was going fast. I had no lights of course and my route was down narrow country lanes with no footpath 😞 I made a quick exit and cycled as quick as my legs would manage (much slower than the outward journey)



Roosting Common Blues and guest



Evening at Stephens Castle Down

Thursday 7.8.2014 Shipton Bellinger

After several unsuccessful attempts at finding Brown Hairstreak at Noar Hill last year, I decided to head for Shipton Bellinger. A day off work just happened to be well timed and although I should have been decorating I managed to get a couple of hours in 😊 I remembered all the information that Neil Hulme had given me at Steyning last year and arrived on site at 9.45, well before the 'witching hour'. Having never been to this site before it was a bit of a voyage of discovery finding the best spots. The first thing that became apparent was the large number of Speckled Wood along the main track as well as several Holly Blue and lots of Gatekeepers and Green Veined Whites. There are a couple of moderately sized Ash trees along the track and it was at one of these that I was to have my first ever encounter with Brown Hairstreak. This was quite early on, some fluttering around up in the canopy resulted in the butterfly coming to rest well up in the tree but in such a position that I could clearly see the wing shape silhouetted against the sky. At another Ash tree towards the end of the track there were half a dozen or so butterflies chasing each other around the tree top. Some were definitely not Hairstreaks but some certainly could have been. At the end of the track the terrain becomes more open there is scrub as well as a large open meadow/field. Here there were plenty of Blues in action. All those that I studied closely were Common Blues but I am assure there are also Adonis Blues at this site as well. Here I met up with another UKBer 'Craigbirdphotos' who was also on a similar mission looking for his first Brown Hairstreak. We headed over to the far edge of the field and started scouring the trees, bushes, brambles etc. We walked the whole length of the tree line without success but there were good numbers of Blues, Brimstone, Whites, Peacock, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper as well as Small Copper, Brown Argus, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral. As we started back along the treeline I spotted a Brown Hairstreak nectaring high up on one of the few remaining Bramble blossoms where it stayed for some time too far away for me to get a photo. A short while later, after being joined by some others, we spotted another one low down on a Thistle. This time I was too gentlemanly to push my way in for a photo and it flew before I got close. After that I was under pressure to get back to decorating although I could have stayed all day. I added Comma to the tally as we left 😊



First time I have ever managed to photograph a Holly Blue

This site is always highlighted for Brown Hairstreak to the point where I think the other species present tend to get overlooked. This is actually a delightful place with lots of potential considering it is apparently not managed for wildlife. It would be interesting to visit in the spring to see what was on offer. I was quite pleased with a total of 3 Brown Hairstreak. I had been saving my partially drained camera battery for Brown Hairstreak so subsequently took hardly any photos. However, I did manage to get my first ever photo of a Holly Blue which I have posted although it is poor. This site seemed to be particularly blessed with Holly Blues something that I also noticed about Steyning Rifle Range (another Brown Hairstreak site) last year. Maybe the two species share common habitat requirements.

Re: jackz432r

by craigbirdphotos, 12-Aug-14 08:37 PM GMT

It was good to meet you Paul. I went back on Saturday morning and was luck enough to see a female and with the help of Wurzel a male.

Re: jackz432r

by False Apollo, 12-Aug-14 09:24 PM GMT

Yes, never a truer word spoken about this site. Yes many species do get overlooked and it should not be forgotten that it is close of the vast 'Serengeti' of Salisbury Plain. Arguably nearby Porton Down is the best butterfly site in Britain, with the Army doing a fantastic job looking after this great

wilderness. Whilst everyone is watching the Brown Hairstreaks numerous blues, browns, skippers and nymphalids are flying nearby and ignored by many visitors. It is a big site and I agree a spring/early summer visit could be most productive. When I last visited there were guns going off nearby and we ended up driving on a tank track! An exciting place.

Regards
Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-14 09:28 PM GMT

Great to hear that you got your Brostreak at Shipton Paul 😊 think the Ash at the top of the path that you described is the master tree and the Hedge is the best place on the whole site to find them although I've seen them in a lot of places there.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 14-Aug-14 11:00 PM GMT

Hi Craig

Good to meet you too. Great that we both got to see our first Brown Hairstreak. I am also hoping to get back again. Apart from the Hairstreaks my most vivid memory is the call of the two horesriders 'excuse me, have you lost something' As we butterfly watchers gazed up into the bushes 😊😬

Hi Wurzel & Mike (False Apollo)

Yes this is a great site. You are lucky to have it so close. I cant wait to get back there 😊

Bits and Bobs out and about

Saturday 27.7.2014 In The Garden

When I went into the garden today I was surprised to see what I assume to be an almost fully grown Cinnabar Moth larva. Surprised because I have no Ragwort or Groundsel in or near my garden and I thought they were the only foodplants. This larva appeared to be eating Black Meddick which grows profusely here. Comments please.



Cinnabar Moth larva

Saturday 9.8.2014

My Brother has taken a vague interest in Butterflies, the result of walking in the country with me recently. On Saturday he sent me a message/photo saying he had seen a butterfly he did not recognise. Of course I knew what it was straight away and told him it was quite an unusual sight and certainly not common. To this he responded that there were three of them in the garden 😬 My knowledge of moths is perhaps rather lacking and when I read up I discovered that the Jersey Tiger is perhaps not as rare as I had thought. He was on the Isle Of Wight at the time where I now understand there is a thriving colony. Exactly how common or uncommon is this species 🤔



Jersey Tiger moth seen by my brother

The football season looms and whilst my son was at football training I took 15 minutes out to see what was around at Fleming Park in Eastleigh. The answer was not much, a couple of Speckled Wood and a Gatekeeper was all I could find. The weather looks set to deteriorate for the foreseeable future now.



Speckled Wood Fleming Park 9.8.2014

Tuesday 12.8.2014 Leckford

Whilst driving out in the sticks near Leckford I came across what looked like a promising spot. So I stopped for a 'Wurzel stop off' to see what was about 😊 There was plenty of Blackthorn and Ash so I had a good look round in case there was a hitherto undiscovered Brown Hairstreak colony. Of course there were no Brown Hairstreaks but there were a few Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown including one with a hint of double eye spot.



Meadow Brown with a hint of double eye spot Leckford 12.8.2014



Speckled Wood Leckford 12.8.2014

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 15-Aug-14 01:21 AM GMT

Hi Paul – yes, can confirm that I saw a few Jersey Tigers (even managed some photos!), whilst on holiday in the SW corner of the IOW two weeks ago. Also saw a couple of Hummingbird Hawk moths – took lots of photos (they really are a challenge to photograph...).

And Craig told me all about the Brostreak encounter. He's a workmate, and we often venture out at lunchtime to Stockbridge Down. Take a look (if you haven't already) at his online photo streams – very high quality stuff. The lucky blighter lives within walking distance of Bentley Wood.

Cheers, Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 24-Aug-14 11:46 PM GMT

"jonhd" wrote:

And Craig told me all about the Brostreak encounter. He's a workmate, and we often venture out at lunchtime to Stockbridge Down. Take a look (if you haven't already) at his online photo streams – very high quality stuff. The lucky blighter lives within walking distance of Bentley Wood

Hi Jon

Such a small world 😊

Saturday 16.8.2014 Fleming Park

A weekend busy with family stuff meant I had little opportunity for butterfly watching. My sons football training gave me half an hour or so to look around the old disused golf course sandwiched between the M3 motorway and the football pitches. Speckled Wood were the order of the day, in fact for a while I thought that would be the only species I saw with more than 20 individuals seen. Luckily this is one of my favourite species 😊 There were plenty about ranging from fresh to ragged. A single Small White and Meadow Brown made sure the Speckled Wood did not have it all to themselves.



Fresh female Speckled Wood



Male Speckled Wood

Sunday 17.8.2014 Hedge End

A quick half an hour walk along my local footpath near home provided a few more Speckled Wood. There was also a couple of Red Admiral, a single female Gatekeeper and a superb Hover Fly 😊



Volucella inanis



Saturday 23.8.2014 Fleming Park Again

A week on and a warmer, sunnier and less windy Saturday morning made me think there would be more on offer around the old Golf Course. Surprisingly, I was much mistaken. Despite the seemingly better conditions the Speckled Woods seemed to have disappeared bar a couple of stragglers 😊 A few fresh Green Veined and Small Whites were all that showed.



Small White



Female Green Veined White

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-14 09:56 PM GMT

Lovely Specklies Paul 😊 – It was good to meet up the other day – I hope you had more luck than I did in your final 30 minutes. Is it just me or does it feel like the season has just been stopped dead in it's tracks 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 25-Aug-14 10:04 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Is it just me or does it feel like the season has just been stopped dead in it's tracks

Nope. I'm just the same.

The recent inclement weather has ushered in a real autumnal feel. It seems more like early October right now than late August.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 26-Aug-14 10:57 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Lovely Specklies Paul 😊 – It was good to meet up the other day – I hope you had more luck than I did in your final 30 minutes. Is it just me or does it feel like the season has just been stopped dead in it's tracks 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel/David

Yes good to meet up again Wurzel. I managed to stretch my 30 mins to 45 😊 Lots of interesting habitat up the left hand track. Lots of Blackthorn and a lot more nectar sources including more Bramble still in flower. There is also vast clumps of Ivy which looks very promising for a few weeks time as it is covered in flowers, some looking like it will be out imminently. Some bits of track which are so overgrown and cut off they do not look they have been visited very recently. Lots more Speckled Wood and a couple more Red Admirals, but no Brown Hairstreaks 😞 More in my next post.

You are both quite right about the season feeling like it is almost over even though it is still August. In fact I had to double check what was happening this time last year. Well it was still high season this time last year and for several more months. I was in Kingsdown Leas for Long Tailed Blues on the 7th October last year which I remember as a cloudless, sunny and warm late summers day and still had plenty of butterfly action a month on from then. It does not feel at the moment that that is at all likely this year 😞

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Wetton, 27-Aug-14 11:18 AM GMT

Great shots. Especially like the Hoverfly that lloks like *Volucella inanis*.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 31-Aug-14 09:50 AM GMT

Hi Paul

Thanks for the comments 😊

Sunday 24.8.2014 Shipton Bellinger

I ummed and ahed about where to go last Sunday, the weather forecast looked indifferent, but in the end the weather looked more favourable toward the west so I headed toward Shipton Bellinger to try for some late Brown Hairstreaks. Again, I would be time restricted promising to be back just after lunch so probably missing the best time of day. I arrived at about 9.45 well before the witching hour to pleasingly sunny conditions with a little cloud, somewhat better than expected. As I slowly made my way up the main track my ears were greeted with the sound of distant dogs barking. I instantly remembered seeing a post last year from this site mentioning some sort of dog show occupying the main field 😊 I wondered if I had come on the wrong day. As I walked up the main track this noise came and went but it soon became apparent that there was indeed a major 'sled dog event' going on here. It took a while for the butterflies to get going as it was still quite cool early on. I walked up the secondary track that runs parallel to the main track and saw a few Meadow brown first as well as a Common Blue and a couple of Whites.



Female Speckled Wood



Male Speckled Wood

As I approached the crossroads the Speckled Wood were starting to appear. At one point I saw the unusual sight of three Speckled Wood occupying the same flower head, something I have not seen before. However I failed to get a picture. The canine cacophony was now pretty loud and as reached the end of this track and saw into the main field I could see that there were tents and campers all along the back edge right up against the treeline which seems to be the most reliable area here to see brown Hairstreaks. I continued around the track almost into another field next door wher there was some rough ground. Here I found Common Blue, Brown Argus, Meadow Brown and several Small Whites.



Female Brown Argus



Male Common Blue



Female Common Blue

I made a decision to avoid the main field and doubled back along the track at the bottom of the field to investigate the side track again. Speckled Wood now seemed to be the most numerous species. There were very ragged examples as well as ones that looked freshly emerged. After spotting the first Holly Blue of the day nectaring on Bramble I peered along the track just in time to see Wurzel appear from round a corner. As we chatted at the crossroads we saw what could have been Brown Hairstreak which flew toward a large Ash tree close by. As we stood below this tree watching the many Speckled Wood that flitted about the lower branches there were smaller butterflies higher up. We convinced ourselves that these were male Brown Hairstreaks and went on our separate ways.



Lots of Meadow Brown including this bunch



Young Small Tortoiseshell larval web

I headed off up the left hand track at the crossroads for the first time and found perhaps more nectar sources than else where on the site as well as vast swathes of Blackthorn. Lots of Speckled Wood but no Brown Hairstreaks were seen as well as Red Admirals and a couple of Holly Blue and Meadow Browns but no Brown Hairstreaks. There is also large areas of Ivy here which is covered in flower buds which will be out in a few weeks. There were bits of track up this way that were cut off by fallen trees and looked like they had not been visited recently. As I left I spotted a very young Small Tortoiseshell larval web which I imagine is a third brood 😊

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 31-Aug-14 06:28 PM GMT

I wonder if that spider is busy picking off the young larvae in your last image?

Re: jackz432r

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

Lovely Specklies and Brown Argus Paul 😊 Sorry you didn't find any more Brostreaks – I've sorted through my photos from that day and I'm sure that they were Brostreaks – post to follow in about oh four weeks I'm so behind with my PD 😬😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 03-Sep-14 11:16 PM GMT

Hi David

I did not notice the spider at the time. I intend to get back to this location to check on those larvae, if there are any left of course. I may just find one very healthy looking spider 😊

Hi Wurzel

Thanks for the comments 😊 Thankfully I am not too far behind with my own PD.

Thursday 28.8.2014 Gilkicker Point

It dawned on me the other day that I had not seen a clouded yellow this year. Judging by others diaries there are plenty around, though maybe not the numbers of last year. I had a couple of hours free on Thursday morning so I thought I would try my luck at finding some. The question was where

should I go, as they seem to turn up almost anywhere. I decided my best bet would be to head for where I had my best Clouded Yellow encounter last year, Gilkicker at Gosport. I found half a dozen there on the off chance last year including some helice females. The conditions on Thursday were not ideal, cloudy with some sun but also a gusty wind which was likely to be stronger near the sea 😞 I headed straight for the carpark at the entrance to the Golf Club between Haslar and Gilkicker which on arrival looked much the same as it did a year ago. Most of the carpark is overgrown with what I have referred to previously as Hawkweed. The Clouded Yellows seemed to find this irresistible last year but I am now not sure if my identification of this plant is correct (comments please).



Is this the same plant.....



As this.....?



Male Clouded Yellow

Within a couple of minutes of arrival I could not believe my luck as the unmistakable sight of a male Clouded Yellow flew across in front of me 😊 It was so windy that it struggled to fly and struggled to settle. For a while it looked like this would be the only butterfly I would see. I followed this single Clouded Yellow as it managed to fly back and forth across the car park settling for long periods every once and a while before setting off again. Although there was plenty of nectar sources here I did not see it stop to feed at all and I got the impression that it was looking for a female. There was only one Clouded Yellow, but thankfully I did spot three Common Blues one of which seemed to have extra long antennae. It brightened up shortly before I had to leave and with this a single female Small White arrived.



Is it me or has this Common Blue got extra long antennae?



Female Small White



So a grand total of five butterflies, but MISSION ACCOMPLISHED 😊😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-14 11:48 PM GMT

You may have only seen 5 butterflies Paul but I'm pretty sure it says in the rules that a Cloudy counts double 😊 I love it when a plan comes together:D

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 12-Sep-14 12:17 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊

The Last Couple Of Weeks On My Local Patch

The football season is upon us and for me that means very restricted butterfly time 😞 With both my boys training on Saturdays and with matches at various times on Sundays there is not a lot of time left at the weekend. However, I have managed to catch up with my local patch. My local footpath although not overrun with butterflies can provide enough entertainment to keep me sane and it is all within a few minutes walk from my house. I have to grab the opportunity when it arises. Thankfully after a spell of cooler weather it has now warmed up again.

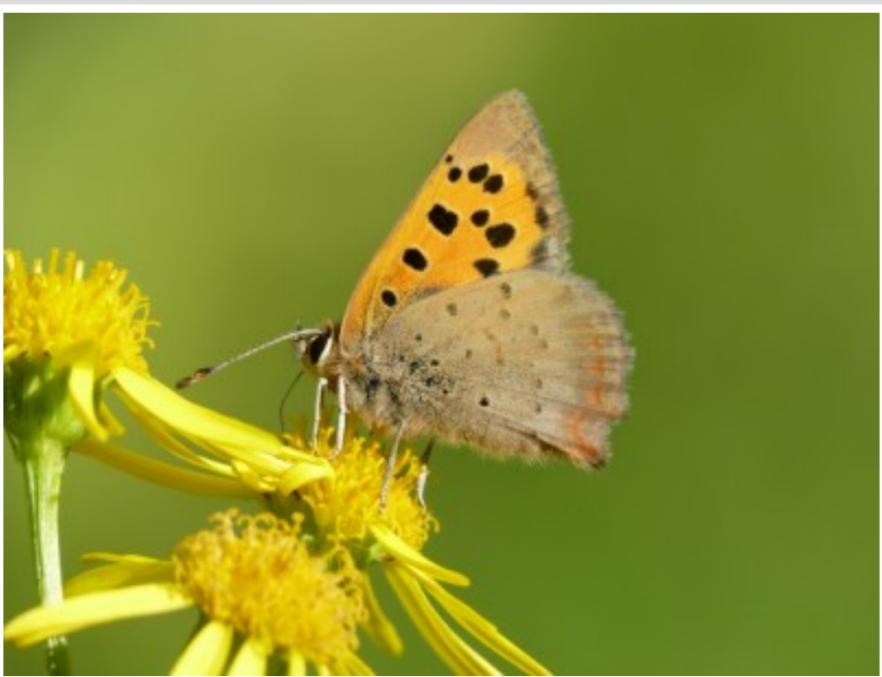
Thursday 28.8.2014 – I spotted a large and interesting larva devouring on of my potted Sallows 😊 It is a very good stick mimick. I think it is a Peppered Moth larva. It was around for a couple of weeks The last time I saw it was the 6.9.2014 after which I assume it has gone to pupate somewhere.



Peppered Moth larva in the Garden

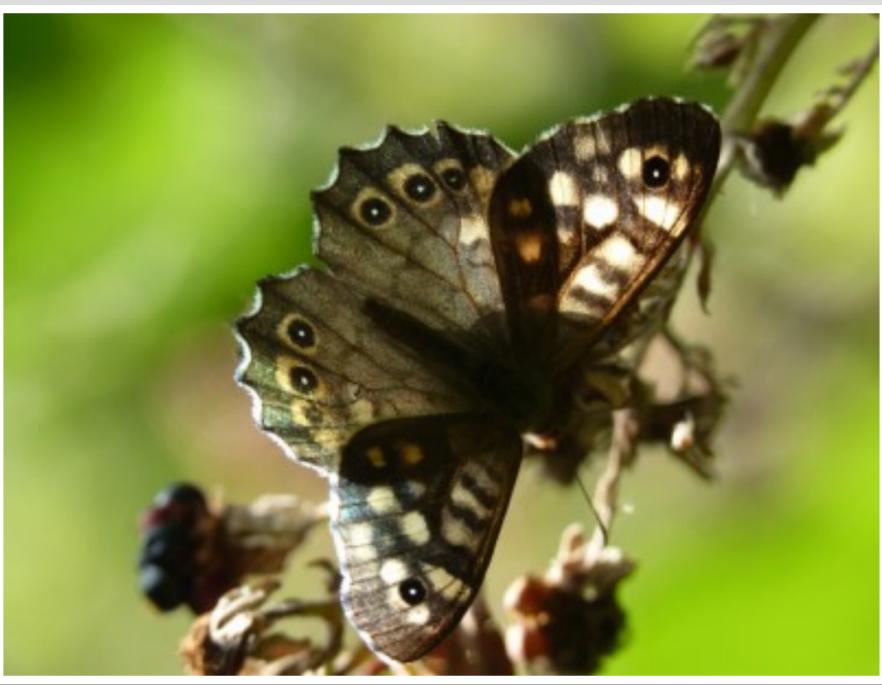


Sunday 31.8.2014 – Today I was treated to some late afternoon sunshine. Speckled Wood are always reliable along this stretch of path and I can almost guarantee where abouts they will appear, there were several today 😊 The large clump of Buddleia at the end of the path is almost finished for this year and all the remaining flowers are high up but I counted 4 Red admirals today including one with deformed wings. Small White and Green Veined White were also there to keep the Red Admirals company. I regularly see Small Coppers here on the Bramble (which has also finished flowering this year) but only in small numbers, 2 or 3 if I am lucky. There is no Sorrel here so up until now I have not been able to find the nucleus of this Small Copper population. Today I checked out an area across the road that I do not visit that often. This is a short section of farm track that is currently bounded on both sides with Corn fields. As I came into the sunny section of track I spotted a single Ragwort plant covered in flowers together with a fresh looking Small Copper 😊 As it opened its wings I was delighted to see it had blue spots 😊 I spent quite a while here observing/photographing this individual. There is lots of Sorrel here but I did not see another Small Copper.



Small Copper

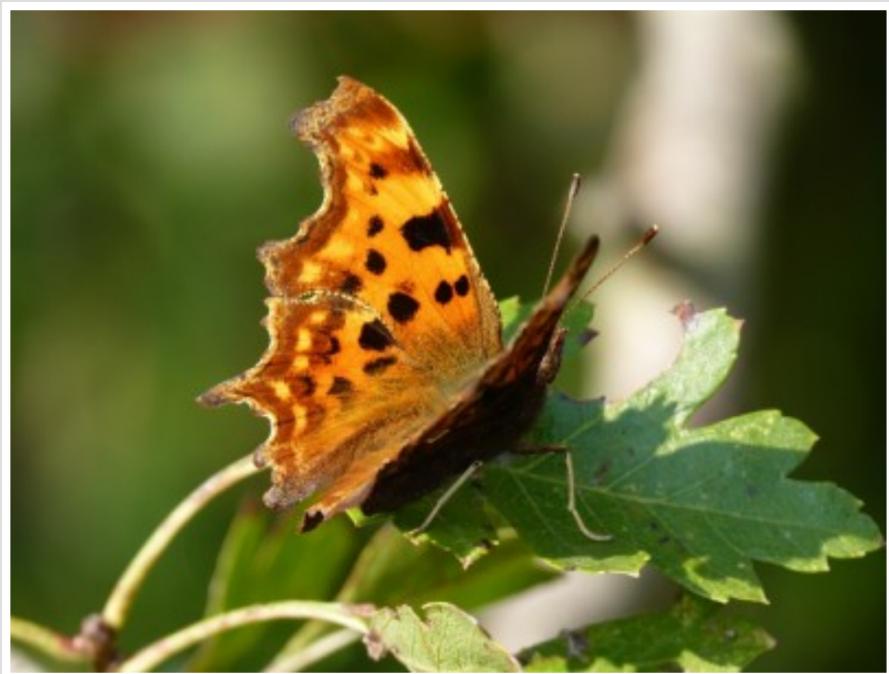
Wednesday 3.9.2014 – With an hour or so spare late afternoon I could not resist checking to see what was happening on the Small Copper front and also to see what else was going on along the way. Several Speckled Wood, three Red Admirals high up on the Buddleia again, and today the appearance of a couple of Commas, something I have seen very few of this year. As I approached the Small Copper spot there it was, the same one as before almost as if it had been there since Sunday. Despite a search, as previously, I found no others.



Speckled Wood



Red Admiral high up



Comma



Small Copper



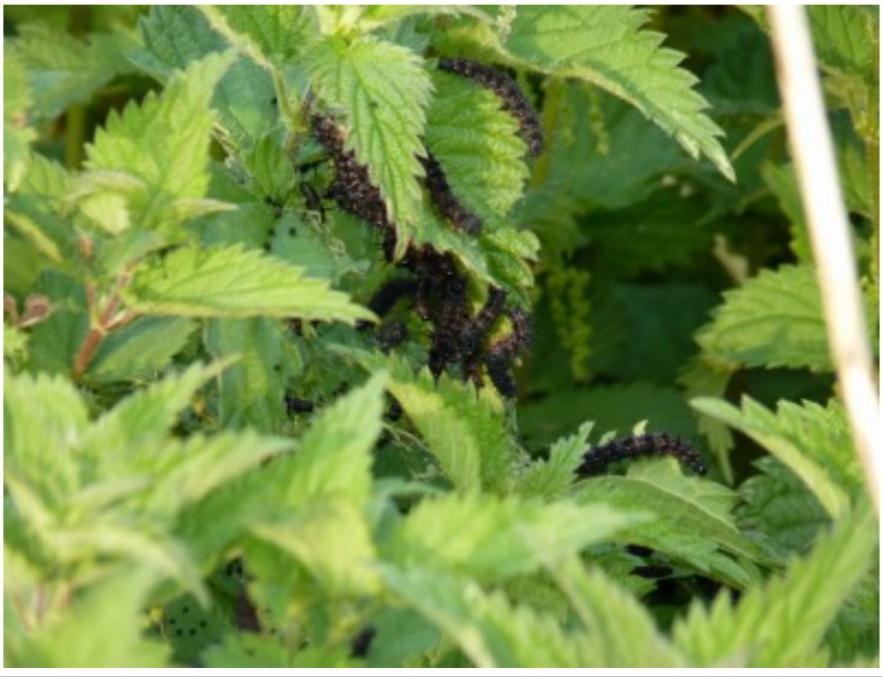
Sunday 7.9.2014 – My most recent visit was slightly later and provided an aged female Gatekeeper, speckled Wood of course and just a couple of Red Admirals at the Buddleia clump. Moving on to check on the Small Copper spot again I found just the one but this time a different individual without blue spots. Being slightly later the Ragwort was in the shade and the Small Copper was found catching the sun further up the track on a leaf of corn. I will keep checking this location to see if the action hots up a bit. There is plenty of Sorrel here. I walked back along a different track which is always good for Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock larvae earlier in the year. I searched the Nettles quite carefully and spotted one Peacock larval web with larvae in their 2nd or 3rd Instar. This must be a second brood which I imagine is fairly unusual



Female Gatekeeper



Small Copper



2nd brood Peacock larvae

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-14 11:03 PM GMT

Great reports and shots Paul 😊 The blue badge Copper is great and the backlit Specklie is absolutely brill 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

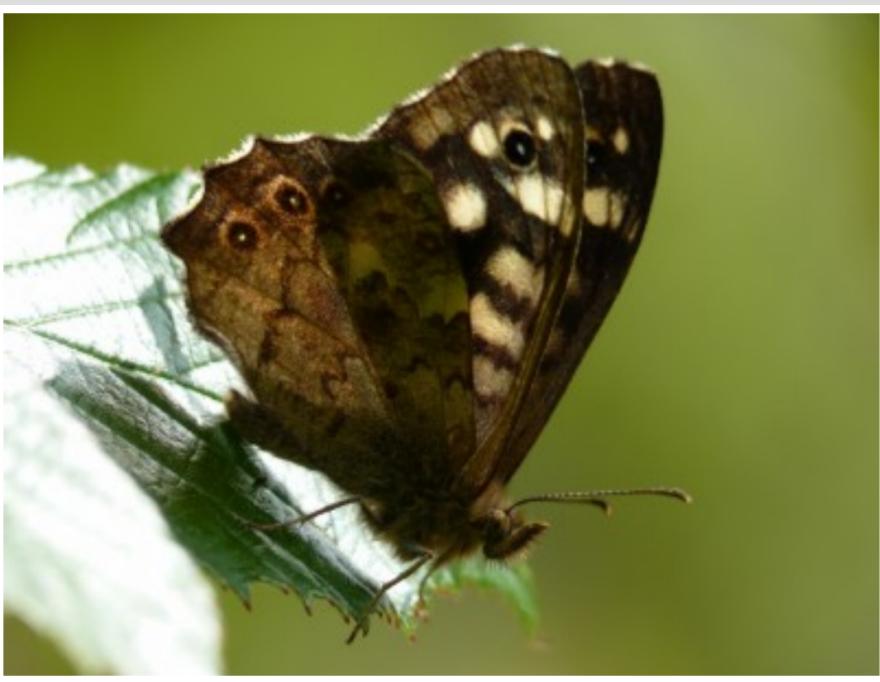
Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 17-Sep-14 11:48 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel 😊

Saturday/Sunday 13/14.9.2014 My Local Patch

Back when I started this diary, I hoped that it would be something of a joint effort with my eldest son. Although he has joined me on a handful of occasions it has not worked out quite as I had planned 😞 I think that chasing around after butterflies with Dad is just not 'street cred' enough 😞 He is now almost 14 and his interests seem to change on a weekly basis. His latest thing is reptiles and he would dearly love a Leopard Gecko. In pursuit of his goal he is spending a lot of time helping out at the local reptile centre, which is conveniently placed almost next door to my local Small Copper colony 😊 At the weekend he asked if I could drop him off there and come in and have a look round. Although my Saturdays generally consist of me being a taxi service for my boys, this was one journey I did not mind at all. So after dropping him off and spending 20 minutes meeting Dave the large Black Throated Monitor and the other residents of the reptile centre, I left my son helping out whilst I popped around the corner to see how things were hotting up along Small Copper alley 😊



One of many Speckled Wood seen on my local patch over the weekend



Small Copper alley



Small Copper 'single spot' nectaring on Spotted Ladys Thumb

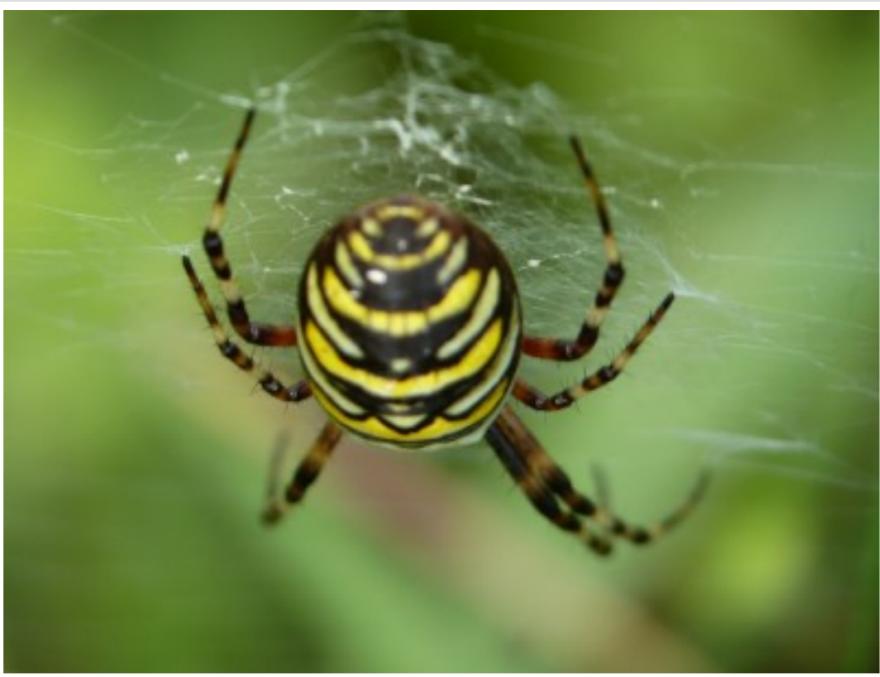
I am glad I made the effort. As well as a few Speckled Wood there were now double the Small Coppers from the previous visit with at least four on the wing 😊 Whilst I was getting shots of one of these Small Coppers I caught a flash of something blue out of the corner of my eye. I was amazed to see a very fresh looking deep blue female Common Blue. This was quite a magical moment as this is the first time I have encountered any Common Blues on my local patch near home 😊😊 No sooner than I had seen the female then a fresh male appeared and then another slightly worn female. I managed to track this female and got some pics on an isolated thistle plant in some longer grass at the edge of the corn before it flew off down the track a short distance. As I glanced down at the ground to check my footing I noticed another 'first' nestling low in the grass. This was my first ever Wasp Spider 😊



The first time I have encountered Common Blues on my local patch



Female Common Blue



My first ever Wasp Spider

I spent a delightful hour pacing up and down this short stretch of farm track tracking the various Small Coppers and Common Blues until I was sure there were no more to be seen. I found myself giving these Small Coppers nicknames in my mind to try and keep track of how many there were. You know the sort of thing Crumplewing, Single Spot, Freshy and Faded Blue Spots 🤪 Am I going mad 😂 well maybe, but what a fantastic afternoon and all just around the corner from home. I enjoyed it so much that I went back for another look on Sunday as well 😊



Common Blue



Small Copper

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 18-Sep-14 10:43 PM GMT

Are you going mad Paul? Well maybe, but in a good way 😊 Actually I think you've stumbled on a useful technique for distinguishing smaller numbers of butterflies...I might give it a try next season 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 23-Sep-14 10:53 PM GMT

Sunday 21.9.2014 My local patch

This weekend football took over. Despite good weather on Sunday I did not get the opportunity to get out until 4.30pm, by which time I had seen almost the last of the days sunshine 😞 I knew I had missed the boat a little bit but I had to check out my local 'Small Copper alley' to see if there was anything about. To start with things did not look too promising, but the sun did appear briefly as I approached the large Ash Tree along my local footpath. As the sun appeared so did three Speckled Wood mostly now looking a little battle weary. Also close by, where there were a few straggly nettles poking up through the Brambles, I spotted what looked like a Red Admiral larval tent. I carefully opened a corner just to confirm what was inside and sure enough a juicy Red Admiral larva was tucked up inside 😊 I checked around the area for more but there are not many Nettles here and no more were found. Up near the Buddleia clump I disturbed an adult Red Admiral down low which promptly disappeared over the hedges and did not return.



Worn male Speckled Wood



Red Admiral larva



My Small Copper area now looks rather desolate

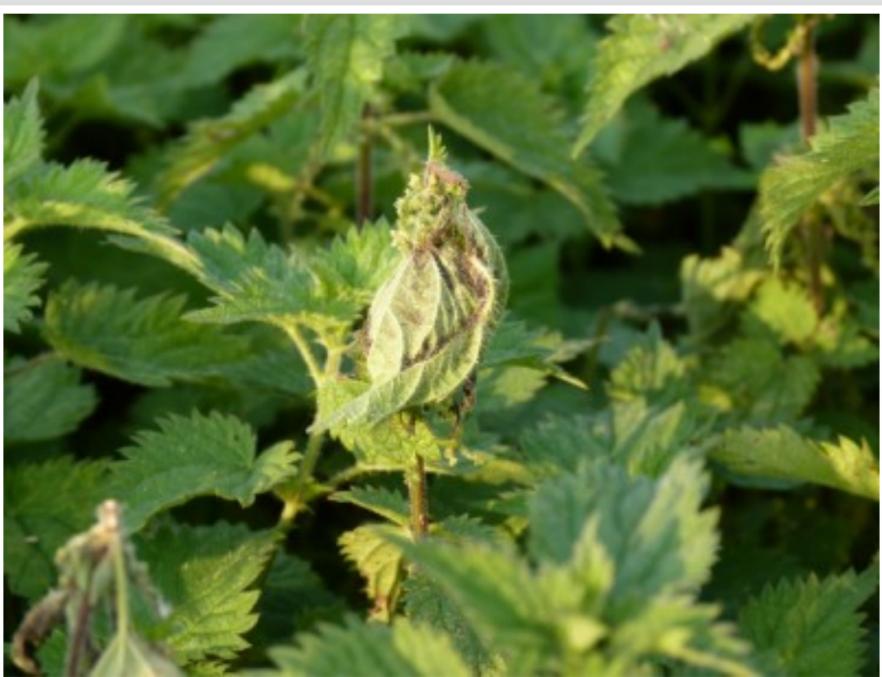
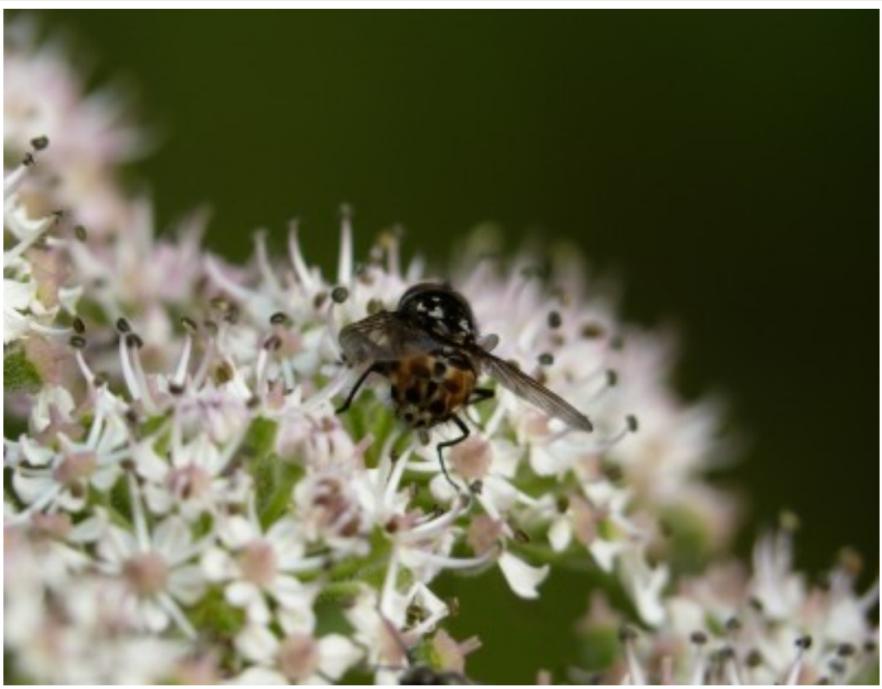
At 'Small Copper Alley' the corn had been harvested since last weekend. The whole area now looks rather desolate 😞 , accentuated by the burned out remains of a vehicle previously hidden from view. Unfortunately the harvesting process has left the area devoid of much of the nectar sources, crushed under the tractors wheels. The Wasp Spider was nowhere to be found and I saw no Small Coppers or Common Blues, hopefully this is down the time of day.



Burned out vehicle near my Small Copper hotspot



With not many butterflies to see, Hoverflies are the next best thing. This one appeared to be cleaning his wings



One of several Red Admiral larval tents

I returned home down another farm track to see if I could relocate the Peacock larval web I found a couple of weeks ago. I was unable to find that but did find another group of Red Admiral larval tents, two of which seemed to be occupied. Hopefully this is a sign of some further fresh emergences over the coming weeks to coincide with the October HEATWAVE that I have heard is on its way 😊😊😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 20-Oct-14 01:38 PM GMT

Out and about during the October Wind Down

For various reasons I have not been able to get out at all over the last few weeks 😞 My wife falling ill, kids football, the rapidly diminishing window of opportunity during the day and the onset of bad weather being the primary reasons. There has also been no sign of that October heatwave I mentioned 😞 Thankfully there have been just enough butterflies around to keep me going. There has also been a surprising number of larvae out and about and in the garden.



9.10.2014 I found these Large White larvae in Brighton the other day in amongst the Nasturtiums outside where I was working. I counted 35 without really looking too hard.

Several weeks ago I discovered that some unknown species had laid a neat cluster of eggs encircling my washing line. I removed these as carefully as I could and waited for them to hatch. Without knowing the species, I offered the newly hatched larvae Bramble and Clover, they chose the latter luckily. I have not managed to record the development of these moth larvae particularly well and as yet as they near what I imagine to be full size, I have no idea what species of moth they are.



27.9.2014 Unknown moth larvae reared from eggs laid on my washing line



20.10.2014 The same larvae today almost fully grown. Still do not know what it is?

With clover as the chosen foodplant it has been necessary over the last couple of weeks to venture into the garden in the dark in the evening to replenish their food. Under torch light the small patch of longer grass in the garden where the clover grows has been found to be a productive area for larvae. The first I spotted were at least three Speckled Wood larvae 😊😊😊 and then possibly 5 or 6 different types of moth larvae. Knot Grass larvae have also been regulars in the garden for the last few years and there have again been several recently.



18.10.2014/20.10.2014 One of several Speckled Wood larvae in the garden



5.10.2014 One of several Knot Grass larvae in the garden recently

As the season dwindles to a close I managed to get out last Saturday between heavy rain showers whilst there was just enough warmth to give me some hope. I was hoping for at least some butterfly activity but for a while it looked like I might be out of luck. The Brambles were devoid of any Red Admirals or Commas after the heavy rain. The buddleia has finished and there was no sign of anything White or Speckled. Just as I had almost given up a Red Admiral flew past without stopping and shortly afterwards another one fluttered around before disappearing across the fields. It was not until I was almost home that I spotted a rather worn looking female Speckled Wood catching the last of the afternoon sun in a sheltered sunny spot at about 4.30pm. Hopefully the season is not finished yet.



11.10.2014 Just this one Speckled Wood close to home in a sheltered sunny spot

Re: jackz432r

by Goldie M, 20-Oct-14 07:32 PM GMT

Hi! Jack, your Knot Grass larvae looks like a miniature Crocodile 😄 I've not seen them before Goldie 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 20-Oct-14 10:40 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Paul – I've only had glimpses of butterflies here and there 🍷 Your first moth larva kinda reminds me of a Grass Snake so I was wondering if it could be an Elephant Hawk Moth larva, although I do recall there is another moth larva with similar markings 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 20-Oct-14 10:53 PM GMT

I'm always envious of October Speckled Woods! As you say, jack, the season is now in complete wind-down. I'm actually wondering if there'll be another opportunity to get out and see a butterfly.

Hopefully after this 'hurricane' things will settle down somewhat.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 21-Oct-14 10:59 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, Wurzel & David

I don't think my wife would be very pleased Goldie, if I told her there were miniature crocodiles in the garden 😊

Thanks for the suggestion Wurzel, but it is not Elephant Hawk. I was over your way on Sunday (report to follow), butterflies were well into double figures 😊 so the season has not quite wound down just yet.

We may well have had the remnants of a hurricane David (perhaps it was not quite as bad down here), but I still managed to find a Red Admiral in a sheltered corner at Bournemouth Town Hall today 😊

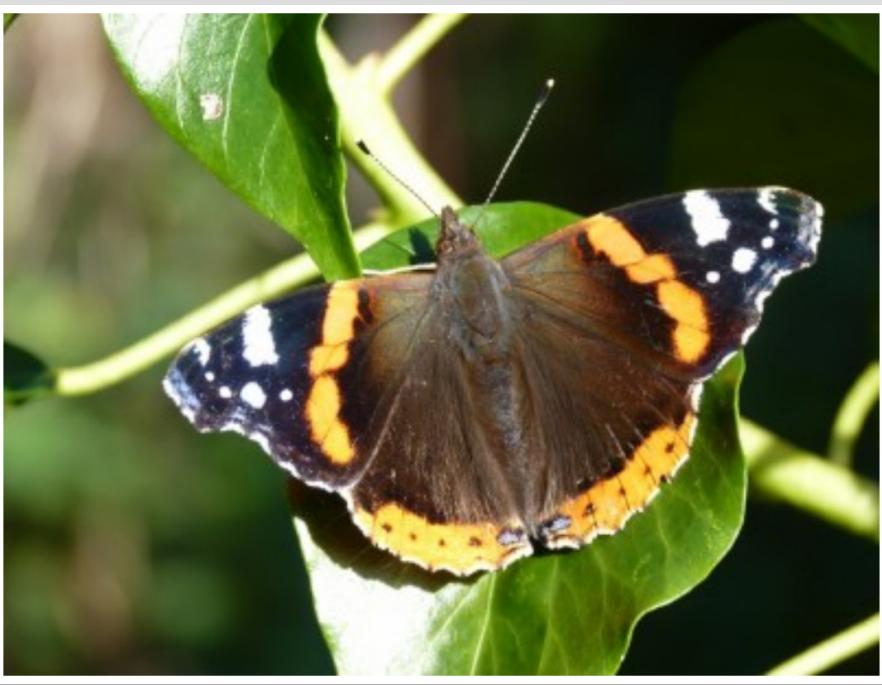
Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 24-Oct-14 03:31 PM GMT

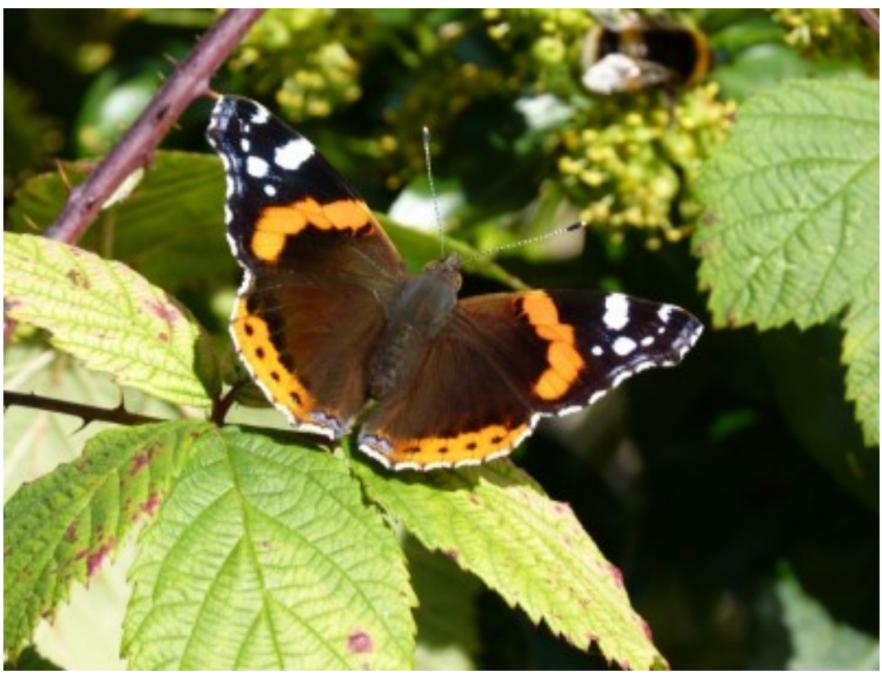
Sunday 19.10.2014 Shipton Bellinger

Shipton Bellinger has been a new site for me this year. I got to see my first Brown Hairstreaks there back in September. The thing that has struck me most about this site is that it has a lot more to offer than just Brown Hairstreaks and I promised myself to revisit at other times. This seems to be an early site and I have noticed that it is very good for Holly Blues and also that there is vast expanses of Ivy here. Reports of third brood Holly Blues at various places elsewhere made me think this would be as good a place as any to see one. On Sunday the weather forecast thankfully looked to be about as good as I could expect for October so I headed off.

For much of the first hour the sun frustratingly stayed hidden behind a band of cloud even though there was plenty of blue sky around and the butterflies stayed equally as hidden. Thankfully, from midday, I was treated to a delightfully warm and sunny afternoon. It was a little breezy but the high hedgeline here keeps the tracks fairly sheltered. The track that turns left at the crossroads and goes back toward the village has the most abundant Ivy. Although much of it has almost finished flowering now I concentrated my efforts in this area.



First Comma of the day was a bit battle weary



It is such a lovely feeling when you have been on site for a while without a sighting and then the first Red Admiral of the day flutters around your head and settles in a sun drenched spot close by 😊 As the afternoon went on more and more Red Admirals appeared I counted 9 down the left hand track. After a while a couple of Commas came down to bask in the warm sunshine. Further up the track Brimstones started to appear first a male spending much of its time fluttering around very close to or within the foliage almost as if it were undecided whether to venture out or stay in hibernation mode. I saw 4 males in total and then a couple of females started to appear they seemed even more indecisive, barely venturing out of the foliage. Fluttering around for a while and then returning to shelter under a leaf or within an Ivy clump. As I walked up the track another butterfly jinked toward me. This one was small and brown and quite ragged. It did not stop and flew up high over the hedge line being buffeted by the breeze before I lost sight of it. I can only assume that this was a late Brown Hairstreak though I could not be sure.



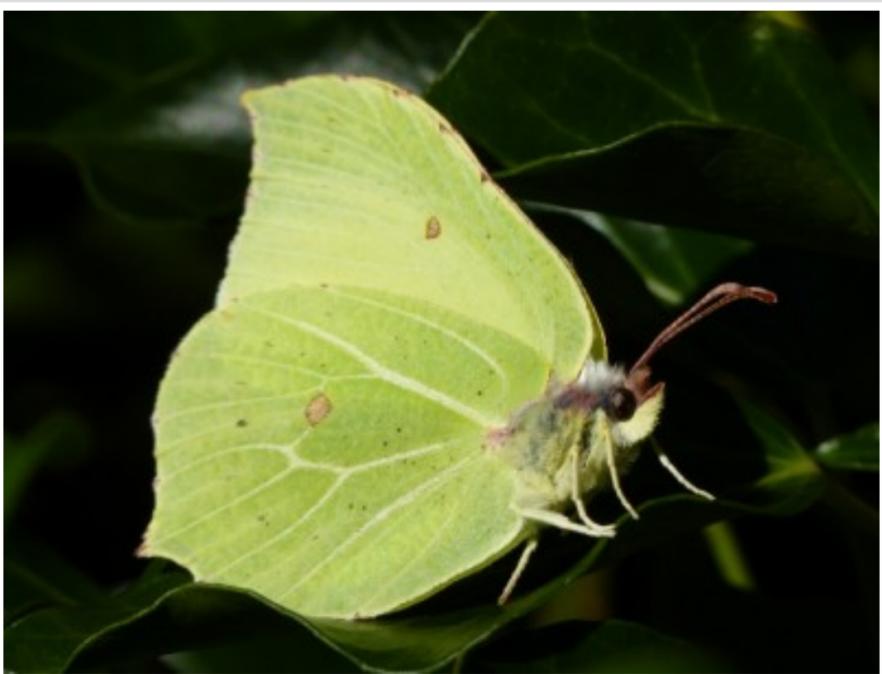
This male Brimstone could not decide what to do with himself



Female Brimstone similarly barely showed herself



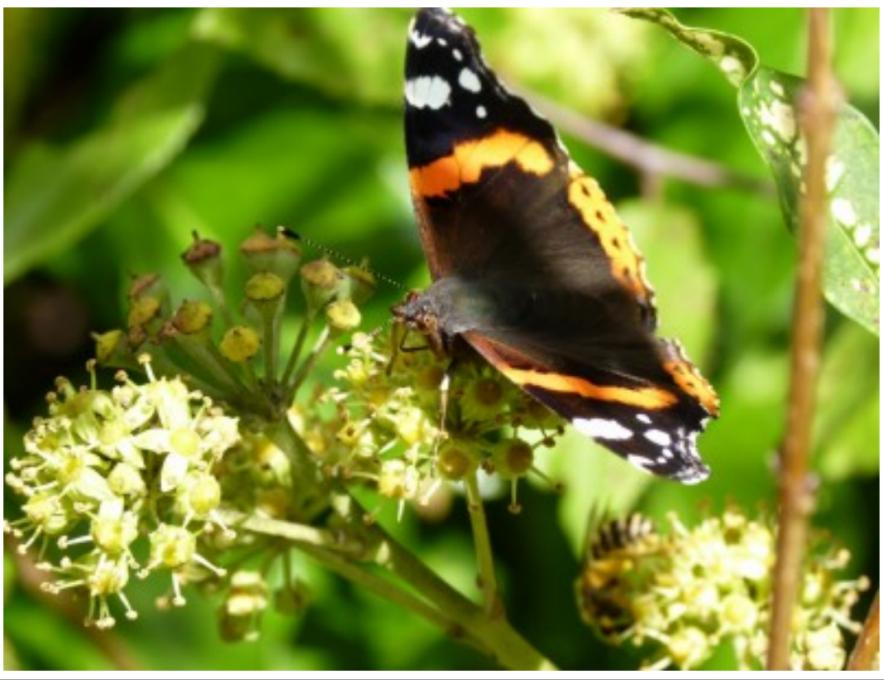
This male Brimstone was a little bolder and came out to bask in the sunshine





One female Brimstone disappeared into this overhanging clump of Ivy whilst the resident Red Admiral nectared

I checked out a couple of the other tracks but none seemed to hold anywhere near the the number of butterflies as my first location. Just a couple more Red admirals was all. Down one of the tracks I came face to face with some discarded rubbish, a pile of old lorry wheels. Do people have no morals 😞
😞 No Holly Blues had shown so once I had had my fill of the Brimstone and Red Admirals I decided to head home satisfied with my days tally. As I walked the track that runs parallel to the main track and approached the point where it rejoins I spotted a flash of orangey yellow coming towards me.



A different shade of yellow for my final sighting of the day



Do people have no morals?

The unmistakable sight of a Clouded Yellow came past me at a rate of knots at about knee high. I could see this was a male. It flew past and did not look like it had any intention of stopping. However it turned around and flew back towards me and by a stroke of luck I was standing close to perhaps one of only a couple of isolated nectar sources along this track. It stopped to refuel almost right at my feet low in the grass. I managed a couple of shots before it carried on out of sight. But as I made my way up the track I spotted it again standing out like a sore thumb settled on the grass. Unlike many Clouded Yellow encounters this one seemed to be giving me ample opportunity to get up close. It moved a little further on to nectar on perhaps the only red clover flower I saw before flying off out of sight. A great end to my visit and perhaps my last butterfly outing this year.

Total Tally for the day:

Red Admiral 12

Comma 2

Brimstone 6 (4 male & 2 female)

Clouded Yellow 1 male

Brown Hairstreak 1? possible

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 26-Oct-14 08:37 PM GMT

Great report Jack with great photos to accompany it 😊 There's another cracking site nearby that I can PM you about – it holds a slightly greater range of species than Shipton 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-Oct-14 01:00 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel

Saturday 25.10.2014 Knowle Village, Aytesbury Copse

I began the day optimistically, but it did not turn out as bright as expected. I had almost given up on any sunshine when a large patch of blue sky loomed in the distance. I arrived at my butterfly hotspot at gone 4pm which for a late October day is obviously well past the window of opportunity. To my unexpected delight, as I walked the wide grassy track at the edge of the copse, I disturbed a female Clouded Yellow from its roosting place and almost simultaneously a Comma also flew up. I managed to lose sight of both as they disappeared over the hedgeline. I climbed the fence to the other side of the hedge approximately where the Clouded Yellow was last seen, not expecting to catch up with it. As I walked along the sunny side of the hedge I was amazed to see the Clouded Yellow settled on a small Oak sapling in the hedgerow. Further on I could also see the Comma fluttering around some Ivy. This was a very pleasing and unexpected result to end the day 😊



Unexpected Clouded Yellow 25.10.2014

In fact I was so enthralled that I returned the following day in even less perfect conditions and was amazed to find what I think is the same butterfly in a

similar position close by, but this time in full roosting mode with antennae clenched tight.



The same butterfly the following day. This time in full roosting mode with antennae clenched 26.10.2014

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-14 09:23 PM GMT

That is a great find Paul – I managed to get out the other day and saw a Cloudy which bombed by so I 🙄🙄 about your shots 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 04-Nov-14 11:45 PM GMT

Saturday 1.11.2014 Stephens Castle Down & Aytesbury Copse

On Saturday I was determined to make the most of my last day of freedom 😊 (my family have been on holiday in Turkey for the last 2 weeks)

Thankfully the weather forecast was favourable and accurate 😊 though perhaps not as good as Friday when I was at work.

I thought I would check out Stephens Castle Down, my local downland site hoping for perhaps a late Holly Blue. I was however perhaps a little too early in the day. After notching up just one Red Admiral by midday, I set off for another site just a few miles down the road.

Aytesbury Copse is rapidly becoming a favourite butterfly spot for me, it has been very productive from early in the year and is still coming up with the goods into November 😊 Slightly disappointingly it had clouded up somewhat and become a little more windy by the time I arrived. I headed straight for the hotspots, a wide grassy track between ancient woodland and farmland and a small slightly abandoned area of rough grass next to a farm equipment shed. The few small clumps of Ivy along the track had no Red Admirals or Commas, but just as my heart was beginning to sink a Clouded Yellow flew up and flew along the grassy track into the distance toward the farm shed.



Clouded Yellow



As I made my way off the track round behind the farm shed I spotted a Clouded Yellow nectaring on the scattered Hawkweed and Ragwort. This one was a male which please me immensely 😊 I hoped in my mind that it had managed to find the female I had found in the same location last weekend. Whilst I took a few photos of this individual I spotted 2 more bombing about across this small grassy area. A large dark cloud then blotted out the sun and all action stopped for what seemed like an age. I paced around in the dingy conditions unable to locate any of these Clouded Yellows waiting for this black cloud to pass by. Eventually the sun did reappear and with it the Clouded Yellows came back to life. I never tire of Clouded Yellows and could watch them forever.



There are also some large patches of Nettle here which are currently lush with regrowth. I spotted a Red Admiral fluttering around the Nettle patch over in the corner of this area so I went over to investigate. There were in fact two Red Admirals here flying quite slowly over the Nettles occasionally settling and basking. This looked like egg laying behaviour and when I watched a bit more closely I could see they were indeed laying eggs and lots of them. When I checked the Nettle tips for evidence I found that many already eggs on them from previous visits. I am not sure if this is unusual or not but I will try and keep tabs on these eggs/larvae over the coming weeks. I have retained 2 eggs to rear through in different conditions.



Two egg-laying females basking and both missing the tip of an antenna



Egg-laying was carried out with wings half closed and half open

I had a prior appointment with a haircut so only had till 2pm. When my time was up I made my way along the track back to the car just in time to watch another Clouded Yellow. This one was a female and I watched as it skipped along the edge of the track laying eggs as it went. Surprisingly these eggs were laid on the smallest Clover leaves along the well trodden grassy track rather than the lush, bushier plants close by.



There were also a couple of Dragonflies which I think were Common Darters, one of which decided my boot would be a good place to settle. A great end to what will probably be my last butterfly outing of the year.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-14 11:45 PM GMT

Great report Paul, with some great shots and that first Cloudy is a cracker 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 16-Nov-14 10:28 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel Thanks for the comments. I have not seen another butterfly since 😞

Saturday 15.11.2014 Red Admiral

In my last post I mentioned that I had retained a couple of those late Red Admiral eggs. In fact my intention had been to just retain one, but when I inspected the Nettle Tip more closely at home there were actually 2 eggs on it. One of these was laid on the 1.11.2014 and I would think the other was laid within a couple of days of this. I am unsure whether these late offspring are expected to survive the winter, I suppose it depends on how bad the winter is.



Freshly hatched Red Admiral larva 15.11.2014



Freshly hatched Red Admiral larva finding its way onto fresh foodplant 15.11.2014



When I unexpectedly found I had 2 eggs I decided to keep one outside, mildly protected but in an outside temperature conditions. The other I kept in a cool garage. I have acquired an accurate digital thermometer for work, but this has come in very useful for recording temperatures for larvae 😊 I noticed that the ova I had kept in a cool garage had become slightly darkened on Friday 14.11.2014. When I returned from football training on Saturday morning this ova had hatched. I had actually inadvertently left it in the kitchen in slightly warmer conditions after checking it on Saturday morning. Whether this increase in temp was the trigger to hatch or whether it was already destined to hatch I am not sure. The ova which is outside is still currently showing now change in colour.



Unhatched Red Admiral ova 15.11.2014

Sunday 16.11.2014 Clouded Yellow Tragedy!

At the same time that I collected the Red Admiral eggs I also collected a single Clouded Yellow ova also laid 1.11.2014. I thought the likelihood was that this would perish over the winter so have kept this in similar conditions in the cool but not outside. When first laid this was yellow but after a couple of days became orange and over the last few days has become much darker. I took some pictures yesterday at the same time my Red Admiral had hatched and noted in the pictures that the egg had a distinctly darker top and could see some shape within though I could not see this with the naked eye. I suspected this was also close to hatching. Yesterday evening my son spotted that this one had hatched before me as it was very difficult to pick out against the old clover leaf on which it was laid. Early this afternoon I tried to get some pictures of the larva. I managed to get a couple of shots before clumsily knocking this tiny larva on the floor 😞😞 This was a tragedy for me, I spent the next hour or so searching with a magnifying glass to no avail 😞 I have learned a valuable lesson here but am truly gutted. Even my wife was quite sympathetic 😞 Better preparation next time is an absolute must.



Clouded Yellow Ova a few hours before hatching 15.11.2014



Clouded Yellow larva the day after hatching 16.11.2014 and shortly before I mislaid it!



Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 17-Nov-14 08:45 PM GMT

Hi Paul,

I know how you feel, but as always what can go wrong does go wrong 😞 However, we all learn from these experiences 😊

Mike

Re: jackz432r

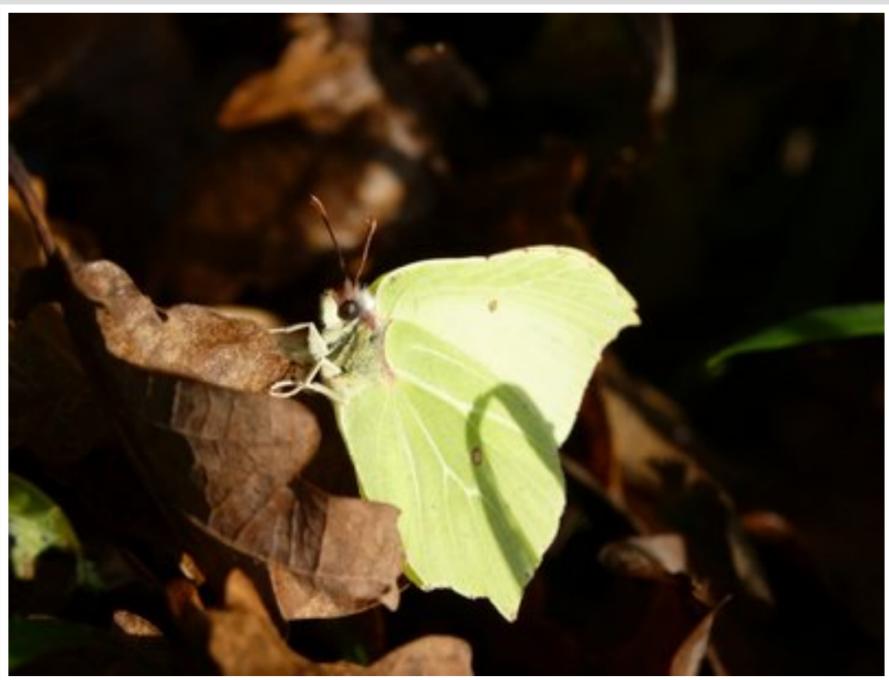
by Paul Harfield, 30-Nov-14 09:31 AM GMT

Thanks Mike. Thankfully I have not been as clumsy with the Red Admiral larvae 😊

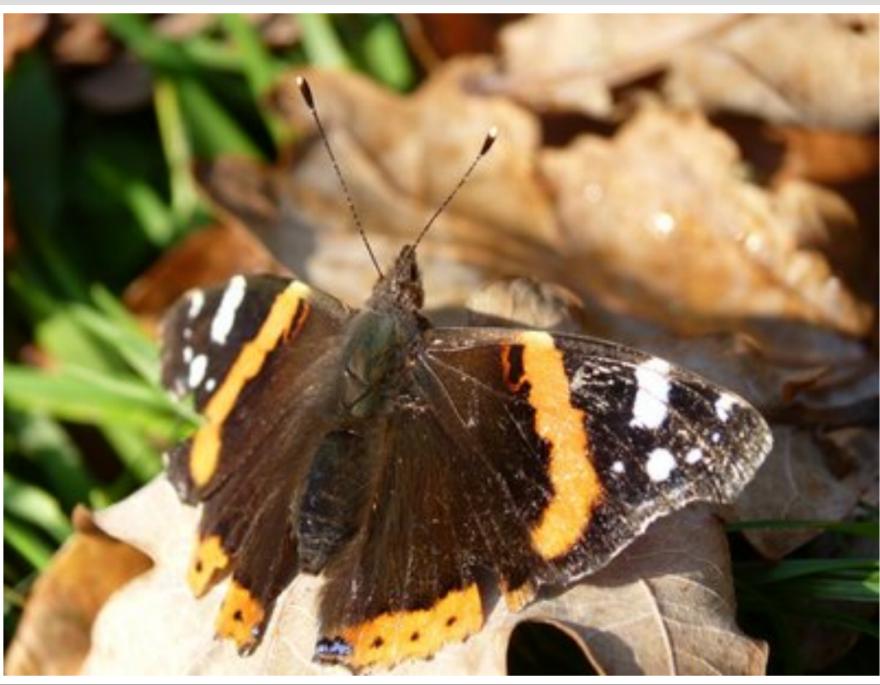
Saturday 29.11.2014 Almost A December Sighting

I was hoping to attend the 'Winter Social' but with a very tight schedule this was starting to look in doubt. My wife was due to come out of hospital, football training, household chores etc. Thankfully it all came together. I even had to get my youngest son to a football party, but this happened to be on a direct route from home to Otterbourne. Drop off at 1.45 and pick up 6 or whenever, perfect 😊

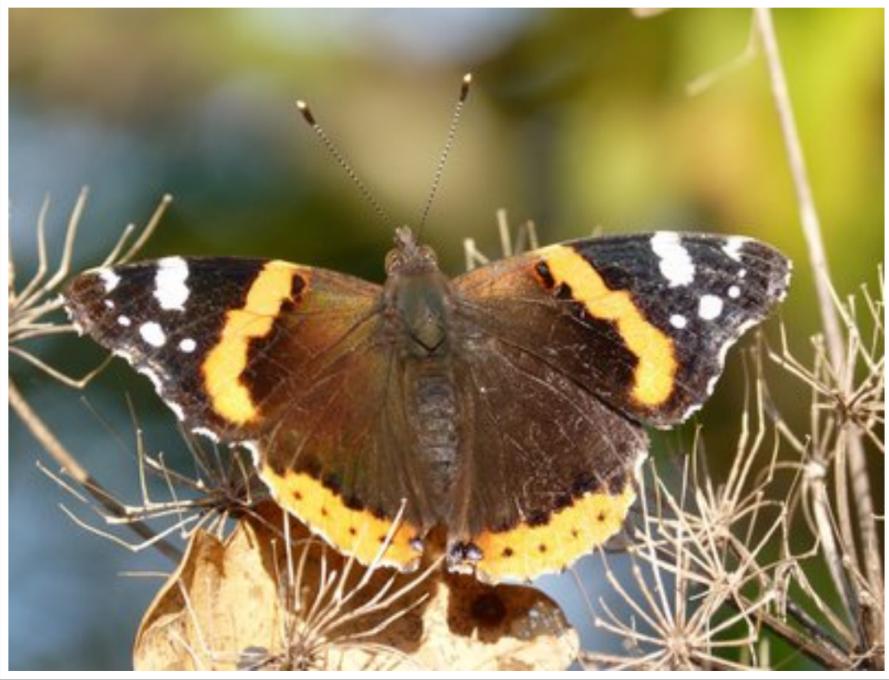
Late morning I popped around the corner for some fresh nettle for my Red Admiral larvae when, to my surprise a Brimstone flew up from the path 😊 This is my latest ever sighting. I legged it home to get my camera but by the time I returned it was nowhere to be seen but then I spotted a Red Admiral fluttering around. Unfortunately I ran out of time and had to go and get my son from football. The weather was warm and sunny so I planned to pop out briefly when I got back for 10 minutes.



One of three Brimstone seen



These 2 Red Admirals had regular airborne tussles between basking for brief periods



I am glad I did because on my return there were now 2 Red Admirals and surprisingly at least 3 Brimstone (2 male & 1 female) 😊 This would give me something to boast about later in the afternoon 😊 Not quite a December sighting but my latest butterflies by some margin. And all 5 minutes round the corner from home 😊

I finished off an enjoyable afternoon at the Forge in Otterbourne catching up with other UKbers at the Winter Social. Looking forward to next year already 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 01-Dec-14 10:14 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Paul and very envy inducing indeed 🍷😊 The Social was great wasn't it I hope there is another one next year.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-Dec-14 10:49 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. By the look of it we might get 2 next year if the spring one gets going. Meanwhile there are still butterflies to be found 😊

Saturday 6.12.2014 My First Ever December Sighting

After walking my son to the reptile centre this morning at 10am I meandered my way home in the bright sunshine. There was still frost on the ground from a cold night, but there were places where there was some warmth. I thought there might be a chance of butterfly. I popped out again at lunch time for half an hour to a sheltered spot close to home. I was pleased to find at least 2 Red Admirals flitting around the sundrenched remains of a fallen Oak Tree under which there is a large expanse of lush Stinging Nettles. I shall revisit this spot over the winter whenever conditions feel right 😊



My first ever December sighting



Fallen Oak tree creating a sheltered location for at least 2 Red Admirals

At home both Red Admiral eggs have hatched. The largest of these larvae is now 21 days old and just 7mm in length. Hopefully these will survive the winter.



21 day old Red Admiral larva

Re: jackz432r

by trevor, 09-Dec-14 12:04 AM GMT

Hi Jackz432r

Good sighting, keep looking, the odd one can be seen in every Winter month, even on rare mild sunny January days!
Good luck.

TREVOR.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 09-Dec-14 10:55 PM GMT

Cracking find Paul – I was hoping for a December Red Admiral as that would have meant a butterfly in every month of 2014 – but with this colder

weather coming in I don't know if this will happen 🍄 On the plus side a cold spell will do the butterflies of 2015 some good 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 14-Dec-14 09:03 PM GMT

Thanks trevor, I will keep looking and hopefully I can be lucky in January as well 😊

Thanks Wurzel, good luck with your December Red Admiral. There are certainly some around as you will see 😊

Saturday 13.12.2014 More December Action

Today was another Bright Sunny Saturday after a frosty night. I could not resist the temptation for a quick look at what seems to be my winter Red Admiral hotspot. At 12.30 there was still frost on the ground in places that had not been touched by the sun. I made the 10 minute walk to the spot I visited last Saturday. This is a sheltered south east facing corner of a field with a horizon which is uninterrupted by buildings or trees. I was pleased to find a single Red Admiral this time, a different individual in better condition to the one I photographed here a week ago 😊



A fresher Red Admiral than last week



Out of curiosity I took some temperature readings in the area. Air temperature in the sun was around 7.5 degrees, but in the spots where the Red Admiral was basking I was surprised to find the temperature was up between 12 and 13 degrees. I noticed that there was a lot of bird activity in this area, I hope the other Red Admirals from last week have not been taken by the birds and that this individual can survive unscathed through the winter. I took many photos of this individual today so hopefully I can identify it again if I am lucky enough to run into it again over the winter.

There were also bees and ladybirds about and something unusual growing in an Oak tree (not sure if it is some sort of fungus or gall 🤔)



This Bee seems to have mites at the joint between leg and thorax. How common is this in Bees?



One of several Seven Spot Ladybirds seen close together



I have no idea what this is growing in an Oak Tree. Maybe a Fungus or a Gall of some kind?

Hopefully the sun will keep shining on Saturdays at least 😊

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 14-Dec-14 09:13 PM GMT

Congratulations on your sighting, Jack.

Adult butterflies within a fortnight of Christmas Day are to be cherished!

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 14-Dec-14 10:22 PM GMT

To sum up my feelings about your December Red Admiral I'd need to quote a line from The Life of Brian..."you, lucky, lucky B...etc" 🍷 😊 That's a great reward for your time 😊 As for the mites on the Bee – they get wherever they can and I assume the keratin at the joints may be thinner and so easier to

puncture for their mouthparts 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 17-Dec-14 10:20 PM GMT

Thanks David

I have got my fingers crossed for next weekend. Seriously though, winter sightings are certainly a pleasure to behold but if they happen too often it is probably not a good thing.

Thanks Wurzel

I will try not to find too many more winter ones 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 24-Dec-14 03:39 PM GMT

CHRISTMAS EVE 2014

I thought I might be in with a chance of a Christmas Eve Red Admiral today after a bright sunny morning. After several passes of my local hotspot after lunch and after all Christmas shopping was done, sadly I saw none 😞



One of several butterflies spotted basking on our Christmas tree this year!

However, I noticed the other day that our Christmas tree is sporting some interesting decorations this year. Not your typical symbol of Christmas, but as winters become warmer it could become one 😊 When I asked my wife where she got them from she informed me they had been on the tree for the last 3-4 years 😊 My powers of observation are incredible, God only knows what I have managed not to notice out in the field this year 😊 😊

MERRY CHRISTMAS and a **HAPPY NEW YEAR** TO ALL on UK Butterflies

Re: jackz432r

by Neil Freeman, 24-Dec-14 07:27 PM GMT

H Jack,

Good sighting but given that there are also some stars out I presume that it is nocturnal and therefore some species of (Winter?) Moth 😊

Have a great Christmas and New Year,

Cheers,

Neil.