

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 21-Jan-14 09:24 PM GMT

As winter is dragging on and the forecast was for sunshine today, we decided that we needed to escape from indoors for a couple of hours and get some fresh air and do something butterfly related. So we headed for Noar Hill with the intention of looking for Brown Hairstreak eggs. We checked many Blackthorn suckers in the lane alongside the reserve but it took a while before we found our first egg, the first we had ever found 😊



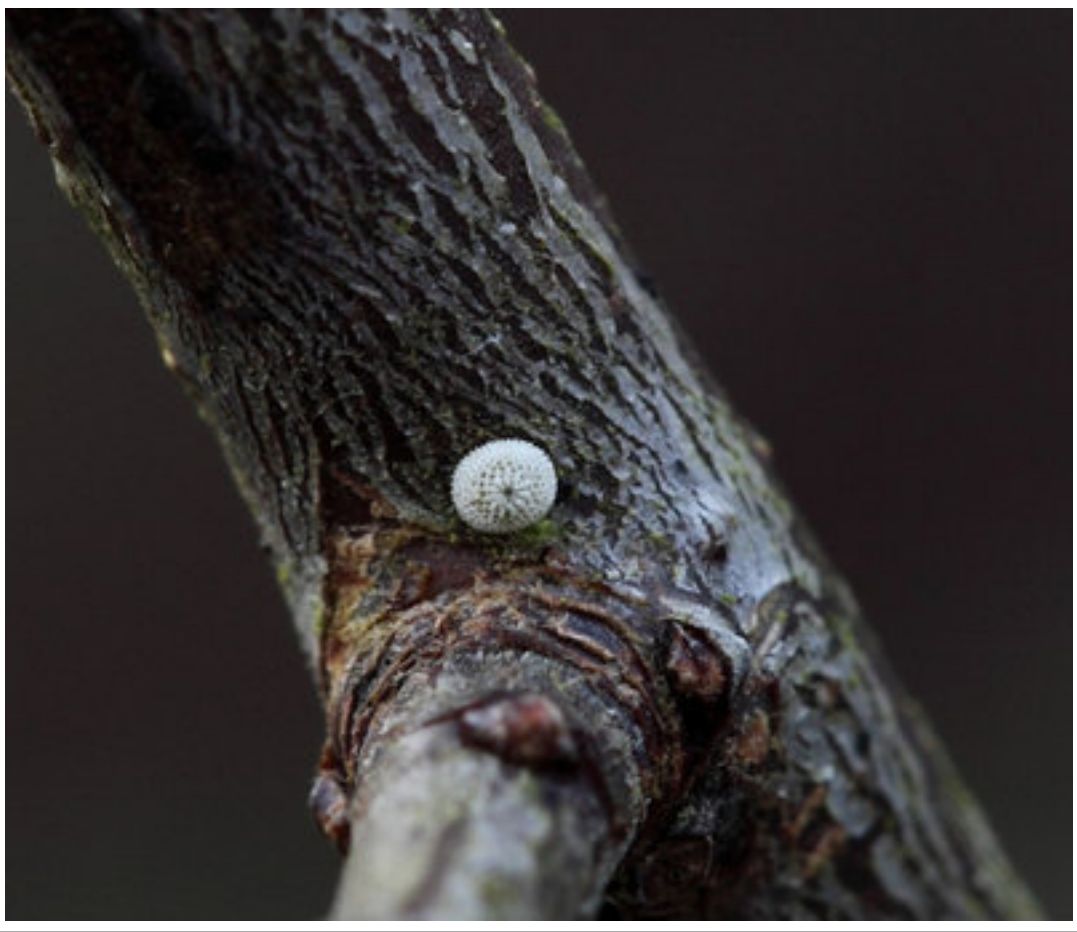
Neatly laid in the crook of the branch was...



..the first egg, which was really pleasing to find.

Once we got our eye in we began to find more, laid in a variety of different positions on the blackthorn..







This egg appeared to have been freshly predated, possibly as it was laid in a more exposed position. Often wondered why the eggs are white and not darker coloured, as they really stand out against the Blackthorn?





All in all we spent a very pleasant afternoon at Noar. Nice to think that these eggs should be hatching in about three months or so 😊 I really must get some extension tubes sometime 😊

Re: Maximus

by Pete Eeles, 21-Jan-14 09:30 PM GMT

Well done Maximus!

I'm not sure if that last shot is of a Brown Hairstreak egg, which are usually laid in fork in a branch, and certainly not at the tip of a thorn. Let's hope it belongs to some other critter 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Maximus

by David M, 21-Jan-14 09:36 PM GMT

Great winter images.

I concur, once you have found a few Brown Hairstreak eggs everything suddenly becomes much easier.

You soon get a 'feel' for where they're likely to be and within a short space of time, they're popping up with indecent regularity!

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 21-Jan-14 10:41 PM GMT

Well done Mike. 😊 It is always great to find something for the first time, as in this case the Brown Hairstreak ovum. Gives one a great sense of achievement.

And photo number six is a lovely shot of the egg. 😊 I went out with a friend of mine at the weekend to look for Brown and Purple Hairstreak eggs and, we managed to find both. The purple Hairstreaks were a first also. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 22-Jan-14 07:47 PM GMT

Thanks Pete, it did look like a Brown Hairstreak egg, but the photo is not very clear, as it was in a very dark spot, let's hope it wasn't 😊

Thanks David, yes I agree that after the first one you do begin to get a 'feel' for where they are likely to be and can then begin spotting them from a metre or so away.

Thanks Nick, it was great to find the Brown Hairstreak ovum for the first time, it gives you a real buzz 😊 Glad you got to see them too, how did you get to find the Purple Hairstreak eggs, given their normal location?

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 25-Jan-14 07:40 PM GMT

There are signs that Spring may be just around the corner, 😊 but one must never underestimate what February may bring 😊



Early Crocuses



Snowdrops in flower



A fat fly (species unknown) basking in the sun

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 26-Jan-14 01:08 PM GMT

Hi Mike, the Purple Hairstreak ovum were found on the lower branches of Oak. One ovum was found on a small Oak no more than about nine feet high, but you have to be careful about which trees you check for eggs as the PH are quite particular on which species of Oak they choose to lay their eggs.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 03-Feb-14 08:23 PM GMT

Inspired by Nick (hideandseek) and Jack (Jackz432r) we decided to visit our local Oak wood to see if we could find some Purple Hairstreak Ova. Once

there we noticed that a large amount of Oak twigs had been blown down from the canopies of the Oaks, during the recent high winds. We decided to search these to see if any contained eggs. After about half an hour we found what we were looking for, tucked up at the base of a bud.



Purple Hairstreak Ovum

Our first ever sighting of Purple Hairstreak eggs 😊 Some time later we found a second, tucked up tightly right in between the Oak buds.





Now all we need to find out is, what is required to rear these to adulthood 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Feb-14 06:39 PM GMT

While going through last years photos I found this one which I have puzzled over a bit. We were photographing Common Blues which were very fresh, both male and female. I remember thinking at the time that this female was different. The lunules are white with only the slightest trace of orange on the hindwings and this was not a faded specimen.



I have found this, which appears to be very similar to 'our' female. Could this be the case?

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/...xonID=8856>

Re: Maximus

by Padfield, 06-Feb-14 08:38 PM GMT

That's an interesting insect, Max. Can you give us any other indications of date and location – not to the grid reference, just whereabouts in the country you saw it?

Guy

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Feb-14 09:09 PM GMT

Guy, we saw this butterfly at Noar Hill in Hampshire on 30th August 2013.

Maximus (Mike)

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 08-Feb-14 01:45 PM GMT

Glad you found your first Purple Hairstreak ovum, Mike. 😊 Now all i have to do is wait for the summer to see the resulting photos.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Feb-14 12:02 AM GMT

Thanks Nick, now we have fourteen eggs 😊 you'll be seeing some photos for sure 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Feb-14 07:00 PM GMT

After our success at finding some Purple Hairstreak ova, we decided to pay a visit to Alice Holt, Straths Inlosure to see if we could find some more. The Forestry Commission have certainly been busy and loads of oaks have been felled, although they appear to have left those bordering the ride! We searched through the cut branches and within a couple of hours had found four eggs and also filled a bin liner with twigs for later inspection at home. While we were searching we realised that we were being watched by two curious Roe Deer who were gradually inching towards us.



We also noticed that the large sallow to the left of the first observation tower (looking from the ride) has a large red 'X' painted on it which can just be seen on the right in the photo. Does this mean it's to be felled or left well alone? We are concerned because we have watched female Purple Emperors ovipositing in this sallow over the last couple of summers!



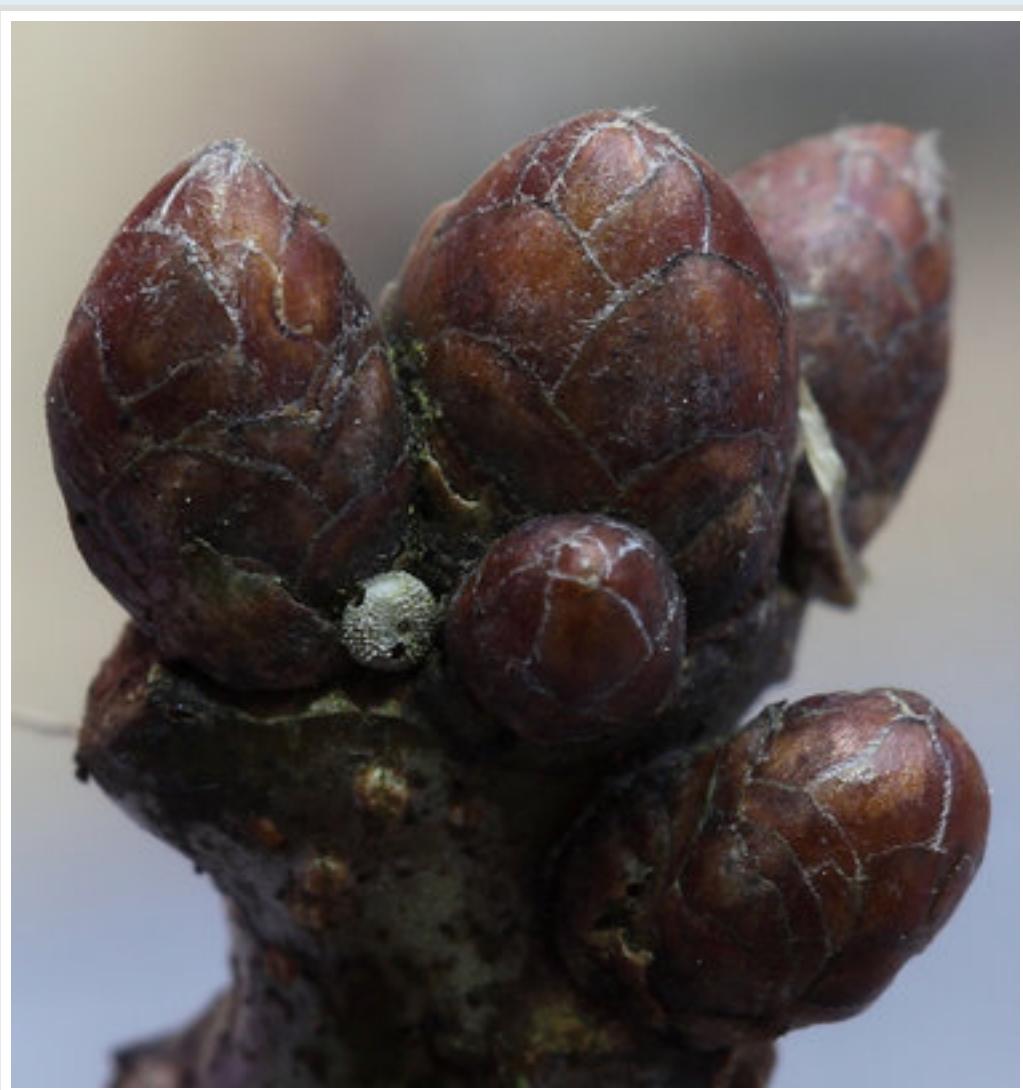
The next day searching through the contents of the bin liner revealed more eggs, although some had been parasitised.



Laid right in between the oak buds



In the crook of the branch



Parasitised egg with several exit holes



Parasitised egg with exit hole at bottom

We now have a grand total of fourteen to rear through 😊

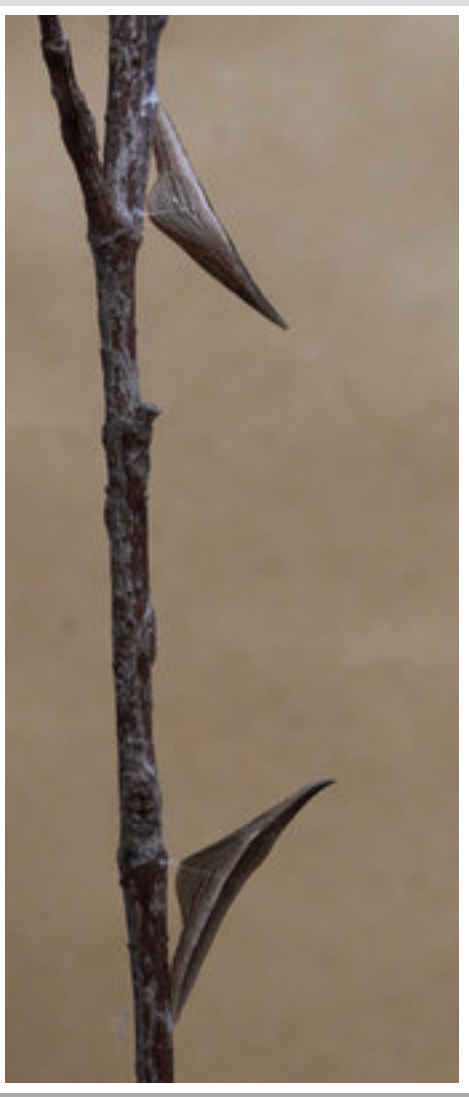
Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-Feb-14 09:17 PM GMT

Whilst taking photos of the Purple Hairstreak ovum I also had a look at the Orange-tip pupae we are rearing, and decided to take some record shots of these too. Its only a couple of months now before their emergence, which is eagerly awaited by ourselves. There seems to be a variation in colour in the pupae, i'm not sure of the reasons for this, maybe just a random occurrence.



This one appears greenish



Of these two, one appears light brown (bottom)

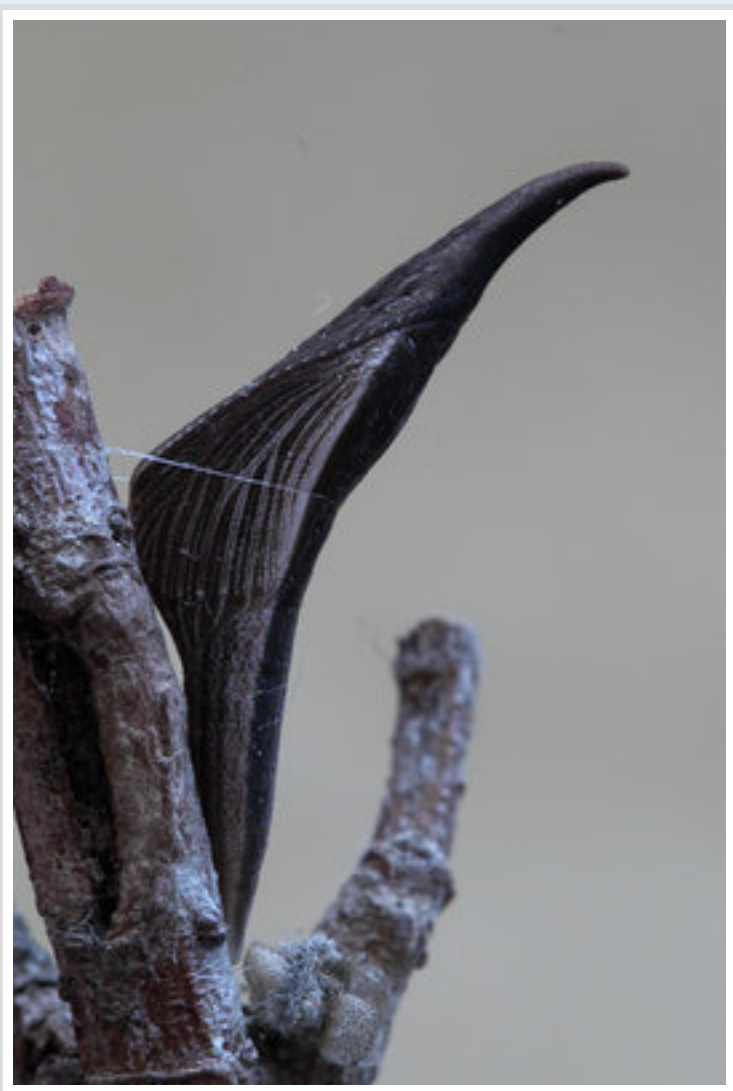


Light brown pupa



While this one is grey (top)

The last one is very dark, almost black



A very dark pupa

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 11-Feb-14 10:12 PM GMT

Very interesting Mike 😊

One of those individuals appears to have pupated upside-down! I have sometimes seen them slip out of their silk slings and come to rest suspended upside-down, but the top one has clearly pupated in that position, because both silken attachment points are still intact. Unless the twig was originally in a horizontal position, or was moved after the first individual pupated, I have no explanation.

Vince

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 12-Feb-14 08:13 PM GMT

Hi Vince, interesting, the twig has always been as near as can be, vertical. That pupa was the third larva to pupate and pupated as seen, (the bottom one was the first), i've looked but unfortunately I haven't any photos of this. I didn't realise that this was unusual, and imagined that they could pupate either way round! Now knowing now that it is unusual, will the emerging adult have any problem, as it will emerge facing downwards? I suppose I could cut the twig in half and turn it around if needed.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Padfield, 12-Feb-14 09:20 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

Guy, we saw this butterfly at Noar Hill in Hampshire on 30th August 2013.

Sorry not to have got back to you about this, Max. I wasn't able to come to any definite conclusions. In the end, I decided it almost certainly was a common blue (I wasn't even sure about that to start with) and quite possibly *flavescens*, as you suggested, but I don't have the description for that to hand. I'm sure someone else will know (Pete?). Unlike the Cockayne specimen, yours has barely a blue scale on the wings, but this is probably independent of the yellow lunules.

I hope someone else can be more helpful!

Guy

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 12-Feb-14 11:20 PM GMT

Really interesting shots of the pupae Mike 😊🍷 I'm going to have to start looking into rearing next year I think - it looks like a great way to get through the winter.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 13-Feb-14 10:46 AM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

.....the twig has always been as near as can be, vertical. That pupa was the third larva to pupate and pupated as seen, (the bottom one was the first).....Now knowing now that it is unusual, will the emerging adult have any problem, as it will emerge facing downwards? I suppose I could cut the twig in half and turn it around if needed.

Hi Mike,

What an interesting record 😊 .

The adult in the upside-down pupa should have no trouble emerging normally.

Could you add both images of this pupa to the Species-Specific Album when you get time please and, if possible, could the resolution be increased to the maximum limit.

Vince

Re: Maximus

by Pete Eeles, 13-Feb-14 04:23 PM GMT

"Padfield" wrote:

"Maximus" wrote:

Guy, we saw this butterfly at Noar Hill in Hampshire on 30th August 2013.

Sorry not to have got back to you about this, Max. I wasn't able to come to any definite conclusions. In the end, I decided it almost certainly was a common blue (I wasn't even sure about that to start with) and quite possibly *flavescens*, as you suggested, but I don't have the description for that to hand. I'm sure someone else will know (Pete?). Unlike the Cockayne specimen, yours has barely a blue scale on the wings, but this is probably independent of the yellow lunules.

I hope someone else can be more helpful!

Guy

Just seen this! Yes – *flavescens* looks good. The original definition is here:

<http://archive.org/stream/naturalhistoryof04tut#page/129/mode/1up>

"The fulvous marginal lunules of the upperside are usually full-coloured, but sometimes they are quite pale yellow (*flavescens*) ...".

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Maximus

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

Thank you Guy, for the time and trouble you have taken, in trying to help confirm the ID of this butterfly, as you always do, when someone has a tricky one.

Wurzel, it really is a great help in getting through the winter, by the way is Bob still in residence?

Tanks Pete, for the confirmation of *flavescens*, any idea of how common or otherwise this female form of *icarus* would be?

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 14-Feb-14 10:24 PM GMT

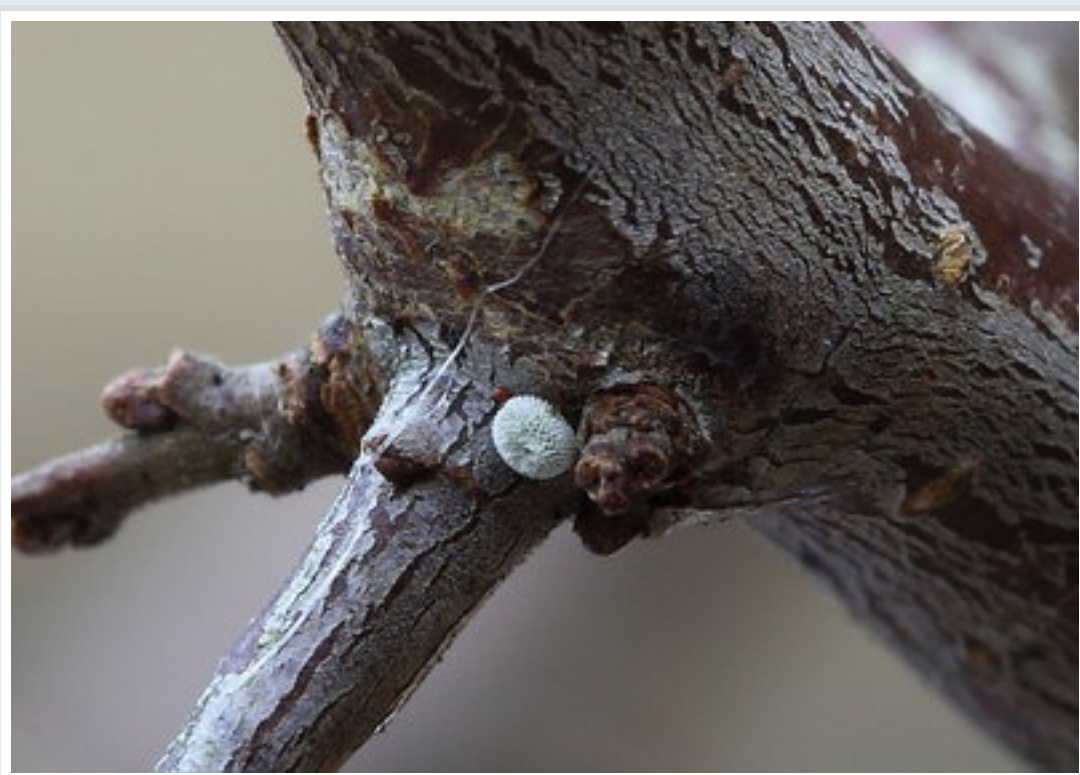
Yesterday, as we had business in Alton, we decided to pay a visit to Noar Hill, taking advantage of the break in the weather. On reflection we wish we hadn't gone there, as what we saw left us both feeling rather distraught. We walked up through the site checking the Brown Hairstreak eggs, which we'd first found on our previous visit on 21st January. In this small, and we believe, possibly, now vulnerable area of suckering blackthorn, we made a count of ten eggs in about thirty minutes. Satisfied, we made our way up to the triangle area, but were not prepared for the sight that greeted us. All of the suckering and self-seeded young blackthorn shoots that had contained so many eggs during our last visit were gone, had been razed to the ground! All that remained of them were two large piles of ash where they had been cut and burnt. Why didn't someone look for BH eggs before cutting, and is this a repeat of what I understand happened at Noar Hill a few years ago? I understand that blackthorn requires cutting, on rotation, to ensure that there is plenty of young growth, which is favoured by ovipositing female Brown Hairstreaks, and I also understand that some eggs will be lost during this cutting process, but what I don't understand is what good can be done by cutting and burning all young blackthorn growth, which potentially contains many BH eggs, without conducting an egg count first?

Even though we were distraught, we set about examining any piece of cut blackthorn twig lying on the ground that hadn't been burnt. After perhaps an hour we found a piece which contained one egg, and as by then it was getting dark we headed for home. When we got home and examined the sucker in the light we found not one, but three eggs, which we now hope to rear through to adults!

We are now concerned for other areas containing Brown Hairstreak eggs at Noar Hill. Will they be cut down too? Surely it's possible to have some form of consultation/co-ordination between those who manage Noar Hill and other interested parties, not just for the Duke of Burgundy, but also for the Brown Hairstreak? Perhaps it would then be possible to come to an arrangement whereby areas containing a concentration of BH eggs is left uncut, or as a last resort, if feasible, let the eggs be collected and reared off site and the adults be returned to the site the following summer. My personal opinion, given what I have seen, is that Brown Hairstreak numbers will continue to decline at Noar under the current management practices unless something changes. Given this, If we manage to successfully rear the three eggs we found, maybe it would be better to release the adults at a site where their progeny will have a better chance of survival.



The burnt blackthorn at Noar Hill



First egg



Second egg



Third egg



Ther blackthorn sucker with three eggs

Re: Maximus

by Padfield, 14-Feb-14 11:30 PM GMT

I feel for you Max – it is very distressing when this sort of thing happens, though sadly it is also something many of us are used to.

It is a good thing you have three eggs. My experience, observing BH eggs in the wild, is that only about 50% actually hatch, for some reason. I look forward to your pictures of them growing up next year.

Personally, I would release the adults where you found them, unless there is total destruction there. If numbers are down because of the egg loss it can only help the remaining few to boost their numbers with your additions. Remember, each caterpillar you rear through and release makes up for about 100 wild eggs lost (on the principle that on average, 1% of eggs laid in the wild make it through to reproductive adulthood).

Guy

Re: Maximus

by Susie, 15-Feb-14 09:34 AM GMT

Well done for searching for and rescuing those three. They stand a chance now 😊

Re: Maximus

by Pete Eeles, 15-Feb-14 06:01 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

Surely it's possible to have some form of consultation/co-ordination between those who manage Noar Hill and other interested parties, not just for the Duke of Burgundy, but also for the Brown Hairstreak? Perhaps it would then be possible to come to an arrangement whereby areas containing a concentration of BH eggs is left uncut, or as a last resort, if feasible, let the eggs be collected and reared off site and the adults be returned to the site the following summer.

Hi Mike – just to let you know that I've raised this with the other members of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight BC main committee, and we'll be discussing this with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust that manage Noar Hill, with a view to potentially getting notice of planned blackthorn thinning, giving the opportunity to search for eggs before cutting commences. I'll let you know of any progress.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 15-Feb-14 08:11 PM GMT

Great news Pete, thank you, that's made our weekend 😊

Thanks, Susie and Guy

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 16-Feb-14 09:03 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Just caught up on your diary, all the best with the Brown Hairstreak eggs.

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Mark Tutton, 16-Feb-14 11:08 PM GMT

Hi Mike

I do despair about the management of Noar Hill for Brown Hairstreak! As it is one of only two population centres in Hampshire it seems bizarre that more care is not taken over the blackthorn management. I thought that it was bad enough that the entirety of the north lane was flailed earlier but took some comfort having recorded good numbers of eggs in the Triangle area – now I find they have probably been cremated

Fortunately I did find reasonable numbers across the whole reserve, and indeed outside, before Christmas, but this is little consolation as what was the best best year for egg laying I have recorded in the last five years now seems to have been thwarted by 'management' of a nature reserve – incredible.

I still have a dozen eggs at home that I saved from the flailed remnants before Christmas but could have saved probably thirty or forty at least had I been given the opportunity..... Very unfortunate.

Hope Petes discussion with HWT – of which I am a member – does not come too late.

Mark 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Feb-14 02:18 PM GMT

Hi Mark, we share your despair regarding the management of Noar Hill for Brown Hairstreak. I don't know when you last visited the site, but a lot of the northern corner has also been cleared, removing the suckering blackthorn there also, (from the first entrance gate in the north east lane). Between this point and the triangle there are some areas of suckering blackthorn which contain reasonable numbers of eggs, and we can only hope that these will remain safe! We didn't look in any other areas at the time, but as you say you have found reasonable numbers across the whole reserve, providing no more new growth blackthorn is cut, the Brown Hairstreak may stand a chance of reaching reasonable numbers this year. We too could have saved more eggs, given the opportunity!

Well, at least Pete's discussion with HWT is a step in the right direction in helping secure the future of Brown Hairstreaks at Noar Hill. We may then be able to see more beautiful females, like this one we watched egg laying in the triangle, last August.

Mike



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Feb-14 04:10 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, we'll do our best 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 18-Feb-14 11:36 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the Brostreaks – I hope that the management issue gets sorted. Is this a conflict of managing the site for one species over another or just non-joined up thinking? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 20-Feb-14 05:52 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, in my view it's both of those reasons, plus aggressive hedge cutting in the landscape surrounding Noar Hill. In addition, the cutting of lots of short, suckering blackthorn containing BH eggs along verges of the lanes and track edges bounding the reserve, must be having a cumulative negative effect.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 20-Feb-14 06:15 PM GMT

At lunchtime today we were on our way to post a parcel. We had just entered a roundabout when my wife began shouting about something yellow. As usual there was someone in close proximity to our rear bumper. I managed to turn around and we parked up and crossed to the roundabout, and there flying in the glorious sunshine, was a fantastic male Brimstone, our first butterfly sighting of 2014, it made our day 😊 We got some strange looks from other drivers, but they didn't see what we did 😊

Re: Maximus

by Paul Harfield, 20-Feb-14 08:28 PM GMT

Hi Maximus

Well done on your Brimstone 😊 I saw my first 2014 butterfly on Sunday, also a lovely male Brimstone.

I am not greatly experienced in Brown Hairstreak matters and indeed failed to get any positive sightings last year at Noar Hill. However, your observations at Noar Hill do concern me greatly. If I am not mistaken it is not the first time this matter has come under discussion.

Last year I had the need to have a moan to HWT about their management of verges along The Itchen way. My specific complaint was at the cutting of large areas of Garlic Mustard which was covered in Orange Tip larvae. I sent an email and had a reply stating that they would alter their cutting regime to avoid the areas of Garlic Mustard. Whether this was ever put into practice I can not confidently say as I was unable to monitor it effectively. I am only a small voice in a big world but I will send them a similar message about Noar Hill. Even if it just backs up other peoples discussions with them it will be a worthwhile thing. Incidentally the Hants and IOW wildlife trusts HQ is only just round the corner from me. So if a personal visit is in order 😊

Good luck with your Purple and Brown Hairstreak eggs. I shall be watching your progress and comparing notes 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 22-Feb-14 09:05 PM GMT

Hi Jack, glad your first butterfly of 2014 was a Brimstone too.

We have been back to Noar Hill, and searching through cut blackthorn twigs in the north-eastern part of the reserve, managed to rescue six more Brown Hairstreak eggs. We now have some young blackthorn planted up in pots ready for the larvae when they hatch. More importantly we had a good few hours at Noar, and the good news is that we found (as Mark Tutton did), that there is plenty of suckering blackthorn containing very good numbers of BH eggs across the whole reserve, and also outside the reserve! Perhaps therefore the losses in the cleared areas will be offset by what was obviously a very good year in 2013 for egg laying female Brown Hairstreaks.

Glad you E-mailed HWT about the effect strimming was having on the Orange-tip larvae on the Itchen way, and if enough small voices are heard, they can add up to a much larger voice, which will be listened to!

Hopefully this potentially will help the Brown Hairstreak butterfly population at Noar hill.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Butterfysaurus rex, 23-Feb-14 07:34 PM GMT

You're doing much better than me Mike I've yet to see a Butterfly this year, hopefully I won't have to wate much longer.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Feb-14 08:06 PM GMT

Thanks B Rex, I hope you see your first butterfly of 2014 soon.

We saw three male Brimstone in this mornings warm sunshine, two were in our garden and one was actually settled!! I could possibly have got a photo, if only I had my camera with me 😞 Once I had it, he was no longer settled 😞 At one point he even flew into the open greenhouse, but I did not have the heart to close the door 😊 Its really brilliant to see these lovely butterflies on the wing once again 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 24-Feb-14 10:45 PM GMT

Congrats on getting off the mark Mike 😊 I reckon that it's almost time to start carrying the camera everywhere just in case 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pete Eeles, 06-Mar-14 05:47 PM GMT

Hi all – here's an official response re: Noar Hill:

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=7451>

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Mar-14 07:32 PM GMT

Hi Pete, thanks for that information and thanks to Dan for giving us the overall picture of ongoing habitat management at Noar Hill. We fully understand the reason behind the management practises carried out at Noar Hill and appreciate a lot of hard work is put into maintaining the habitat for the diversity of wildlife species there. However, we believe it could further benefit the Brown Hairstreak population at Noar Hill if, prior to the necessary scrub management being carried out, there was some form of notice given, perhaps a message on Butterfly Conservation's website? This way, interested persons would be given the chance to collect the eggs that would otherwise be lost, and those that were successfully reared through to adults would be released back onto the site. Not trying to tread on anyone's toes here, but considering only about 1 egg in 100 in the wild will reach adulthood, surely the opportunity to make a difference, albeit a small one, by home-rearing, makes sense.

We have, at present, 15 Brown Hairstreak eggs which we found on cut pieces of blackthorn at Noar Hill, and hope that the odds, in our controlled conditions at home, are going to be far better. We hope, therefore, to release some adults back onto the reserve at Noar Hill this summer. We are also aware that other people are doing the same thing, which can only be a positive step, because these eggs would otherwise have perished.

Cheers,

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-Mar-14 07:57 PM GMT

7th March

This afternoon we went looking for adult butterflies for the first time this year, and we found some. It was warm and sunny in Alice Holt Forest, which had woken some hibernators, which played hard to get before we managed our first butterfly photos of 2014.





An old warrior

These butterflies have survived the wettest winter Great Britain has seen for many years, and we were very pleased they had 😊 In total we saw three fighting Commas, and two Red Admirals.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 07-Mar-14 10:44 PM GMT

Great shots Mike 😊 I read the report from Butterfly Conservation that suggests the flooding hasn't been too much of a concern and that the threat of parasitism was much greater, but never the less the Comma and Red Admiral have done really well to get through the dismal 'winter' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by NickMorgan, 08-Mar-14 11:49 AM GMT

Great to hear that butterflies have come through the recent wet weather. I am sure that it must have drowned a number of chrysalis, caterpillars and hibernating adults.

Re: Maximus

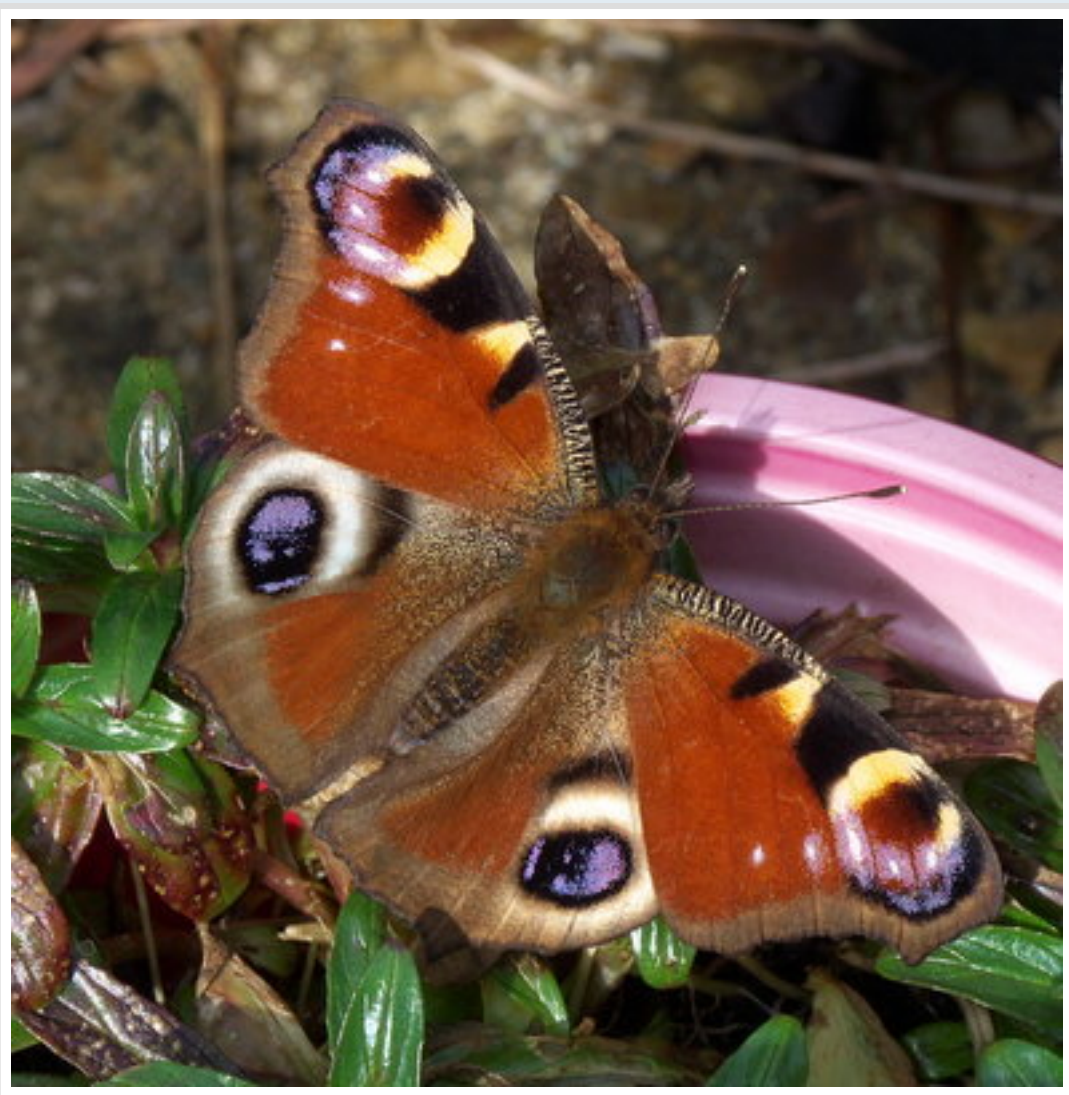
by Maximus, 08-Mar-14 08:53 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I have seen that report too, lets hope that parasitism is not a major problem in 2014.

Hi Nick, I'm sure that overwintering stages have been adversely affected by the wet winter, but its good to see some great survivors 😊

7th March

The continuing good weather brought this welcome visitor into our garden this morning 😊



We also recorded two male Brimstones and four Small Tortoiseshells, though none of these gave us any photo opportunities 😞 there are clearly now lots of hibernators on the wing 😊

Re: Maximus

by Butterflysaurus rex, 08-Mar-14 09:47 PM GMT

Great Peacock shot there Mike 😊 I'm not seeing many down my way yet. I'm hoping that the great season we had last year will compensate a bit for the losses over the winter. I'm sure last summer was a bumper one for egg laying so with my optimists hat on and my fingers crossed it will be another good year..... weather permitting.

B'saurus

Re: Maximus

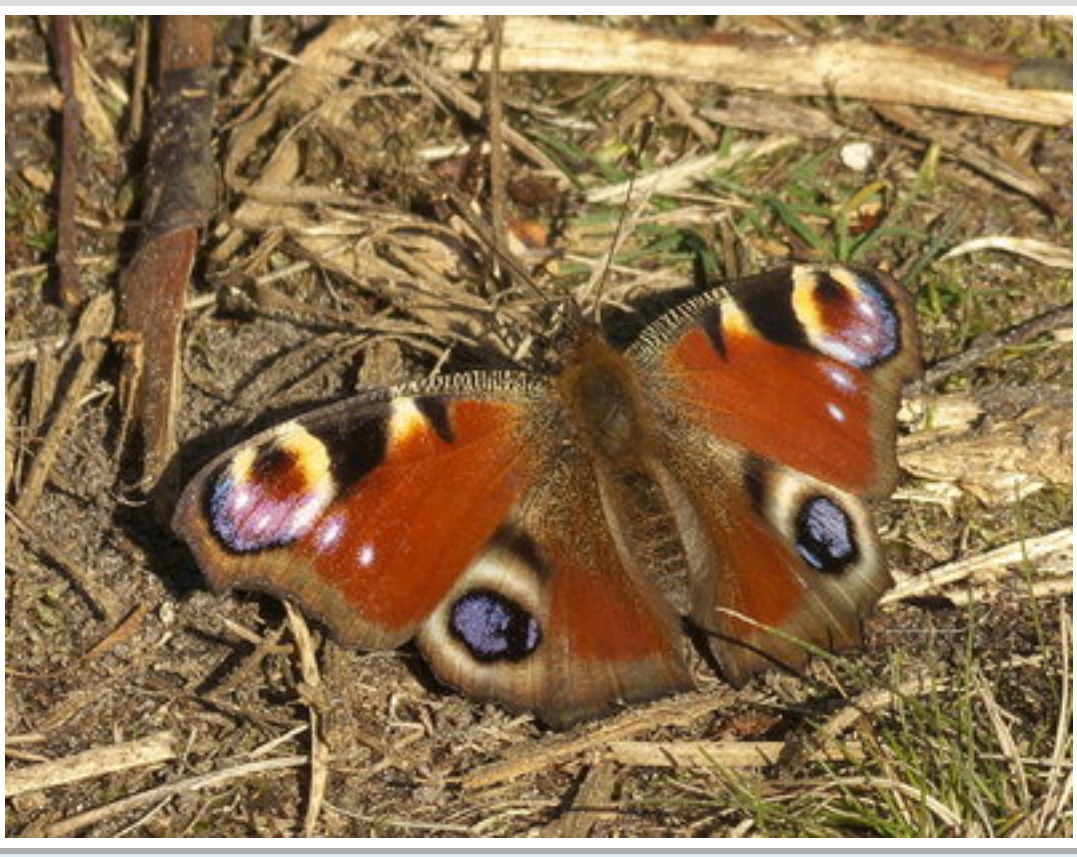
by Maximus, 09-Mar-14 09:30 PM GMT

Thanks B'Rex, I'm sure you will have seen some Peacocks today and hopefully it will be another good year 😊

9th March

What a great start to the season today has been, we have seen butterflies everywhere. In the garden this morning there were Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks and Brimstones. On our trip out around our local area this afternoon we found very good numbers of the hibernators on the wing, the exception being Red Admirals, of which we saw none.







Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 09-Mar-14 09:41 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Nice photos, especially like the Brimstones 😊.

cheers,

Neil

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-14 11:33 PM GMT

Ditto what Neil said 😊 My spring Brimstones are usually distant, blurry flight shots those are brill 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Paul Harfield, 09-Mar-14 11:42 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

9th March

What a great start to the season today has been, we have seen butterflies everywhere.

Hi Mike

I will second that 😊 Like you lots of Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshell and No Red Admiral. Your Brimstones are great. Although I saw many today I do not recall seeing any of them settle at all 😞

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Mar-14 09:28 PM GMT

Cheers Neil, always just luck, being in the right place at the right time 😊

Thanks Wurzel, mine are usually the same, just got lucky 😊

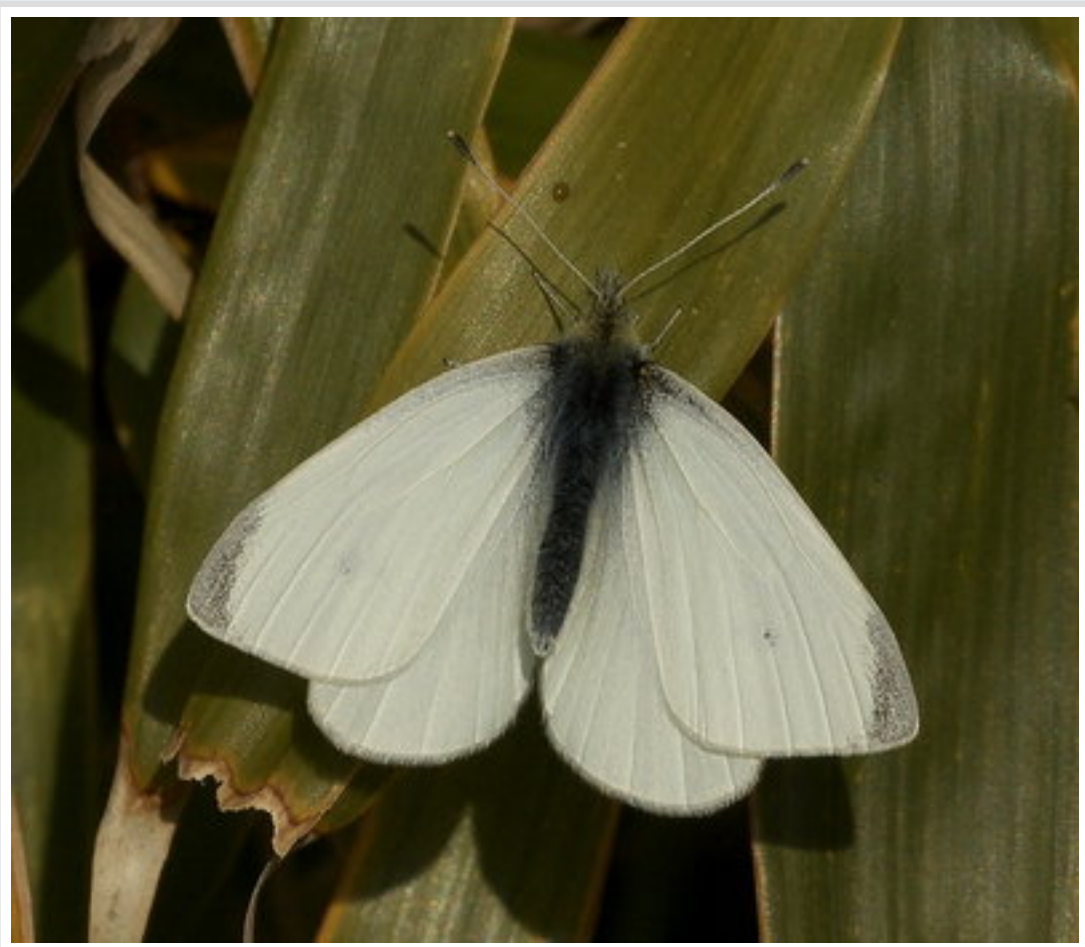
Jack, the Red Admiral is noticable so far by its absence, and just got lucky with some settled nectaring Brimstones 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 12-Mar-14 08:59 PM GMT

12th March 2014

Back to the lovely hot Spring weather today, so we decided to do a bit of digging on the allotment. We got there around 1.30pm and the sun was hot with just a light breeze, but before we got started on the digging we spotted what we thought were two Brimstones chasing each other. On closer inspection we found one of them to be a Small White, in pristine condition. He was quite content basking on some short bamboo growing on the site, and allowed us a few photos before departing. He looked so fresh we think he probably emerged only this morning! We know in a couple of months there'll be an abundance of Large and Small Whites, but to see one so early in the year was a real bonus for us 😊





Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 13-Mar-14 12:24 AM GMT

A real bonus indeed – cracking shots Mike 😊🍷 I'm looking forward to my first Small White too, any day now hopefully.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Mar-14 09:14 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, they're out there, I'm sure you will find one soon 😊😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Mar-14 03:38 PM GMT

Having now seen and photographed the five post-hibernators, plus the Small White, it's obvious that due to the recent good weather, butterflies have got off to a great start. Particularly pleasing are the numbers of Small Tortoiseshell, they really seem to be doing well so far in 2014! During the winter we managed to rescue some Purple Hairstreak eggs from felled Oaks, and some Brown Hairstreak eggs found on cut blackthorn lying on the ground. The Purple Hairstreak eggs are still in the fridge, apart from three we found more recently. When I examined these on 15th March I could see that two of them were showing signs of 'blackening up' prior to hatching, which meant a hurried trip out to find some budding Oak. We managed to find some on a large branch which had been blown from the top of a mature tree, where we found three more eggs (now in the fridge along with the others). We tied the eggs to the Oak twigs, which we placed in water.



Purple Hairstreak egg showing first signs of hatching



The second egg also showing signs of hatching

The black dot in the centre of the egg is the larva's head showing through the shell. By the next morning the eggs had hatched.



The larvae had vacated the eggs, which were on either side of the same bud, and had bored into the nearest Oak bud. Fortunately the two larvae did not meet up in the night, which was evident from the holes we found bored into two separate buds.



Now we shall have to wait and see what unfolds.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 18-Mar-14 03:54 PM GMT

Amazing photos Mike and congratulations! I hope you have cracked open a bottle of something to wet the baby's head 🤗 . I am looking forward to further installments.

Re: Maximus

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

Stunning photos Mike 😊 looking forward to further instalments.

Neil

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Mar-14 09:16 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, we've wet the baby's head with a can of Stella 😊

After a bit of a disaster, when some of our Brown Hairstreak eggs hatched prematurely and were lost, yesterday evening we tied all of our remaining eggs to our potted blackthorn. First thing this morning I took a peek at the eggs, and to my amazement I saw a larva emerging from one of them. By the time I had my camera set up, the larva had moved onto, and was investigating, a blackthorn bud. This was a first for us, so a very special moment 😊



Freshly hatched Brown Hairstreak larva

The larva then moved off of this small bud and up the blackthorn branch where it disappeared from our view. Hopefully it has bored into a fresh bud and we will see it again when it emerges in a week or so.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 18-Mar-14 09:23 PM GMT

It just gets better and better 🍀 I'll be doing well if I can identify some Blackthorn 😊

Re: Maximus

by Padfield, 18-Mar-14 09:40 PM GMT

Great pictures.

Are those leaf buds or flower buds the caterpillar has rejected? I would be amazed to see leaf buds greening up in March, and so far as I know the larvae don't use the flower buds, which typically appear first. It's very strange all these brown hairstreaks coming out to play at this date!

Guy

EDIT - looking at other pictures, and Vince's post to Pauline, I think these must be leaf buds, as you probably knew perfectly well, Max! But it's amazing they're so early.

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 18-Mar-14 09:57 PM GMT

Well done Mike! 😊

I have just made an observation on Pauline's diary about Blackthorn flower buds and leaf buds. Yours looks like a leaf bud because it's pointed. Young plants do not produce flower buds until they have matured sufficiently, which also leads me to believe that this is a leaf bud. This year I have seen plants in all different stages of development in the wild, but the potted plant that I gave to Pauline last year has started to produce leaves.

Vince

Guy, your edit crossed with my post.

Re: Maximus

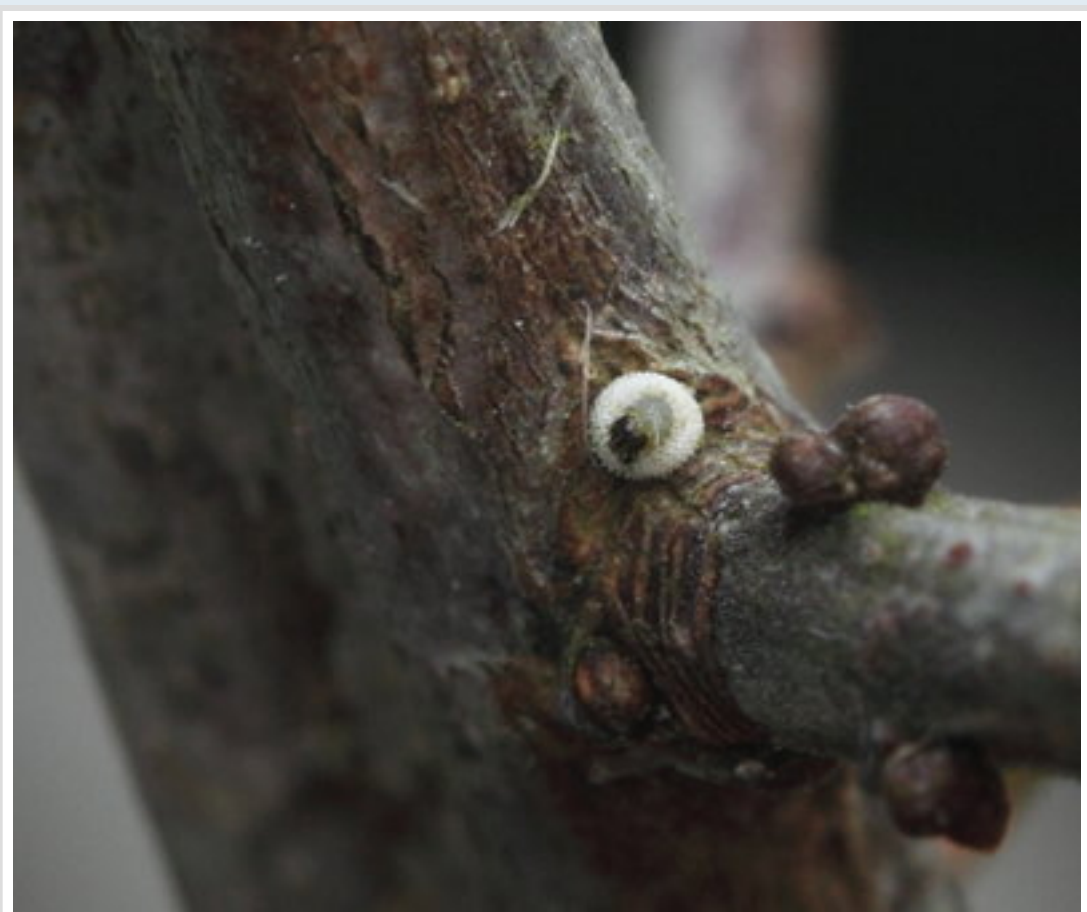
by Maximus, 19-Mar-14 03:11 PM GMT

Cheers Neil, I think our postings crossed 😊

Thanks Guy, yes they are leaf buds, and they are early, as are the hatching eggs 😬😬

Thanks Vince, mature Blackthorn is in flower everywhere now, but as you say, young Blackthorn plants do not produce any flower buds, only leaf buds. Perhaps that's why the female Brown Hairstreak lay on them 🤔

Today we noticed that last night's BH egg we'd been watching closely had hatched some time during the night and the larva had done a disappearing act on us 😬 But fortunately another larva decided to make an appearance and I managed to get several shots of it hatching and making its way to a leaf bud.





Larva beginning to bore into bud



Larva disappearing into bud

We still have a few eggs yet to hatch, then it'll be a while until the next stage in their development and hopefully more photos to follow...

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 19-Mar-14 05:04 PM GMT

Brilliant sequence Mike 😊

Could you add it to the Species-Specific Album (together with the 2 earlier larval images) when you get time please.

Many thanks,
Vince

Re: Maximus

by Pete Eeles, 19-Mar-14 06:23 PM GMT

I agree – great observations 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 20-Mar-14 12:52 AM GMT

Fantastic sequence Mike 😊 and that Cat is so hairy it looks like it's unravelling 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 20-Mar-14 09:53 PM GMT

Cheers Vince, Pete and Wurzel, and yes Wurzel BH larva have amazing long hairs, just like an unravelling jumper 😊

This morning we got our very first glimpse of one of our reared Purple Hairstreak larva 😊 but it pretty quickly disappeared into a tunnel in an Oak bud. We shall have to remain vigilant and patient. It was amazing just how well camouflaged it was on the bud.



Re: Maximus

by Neil Hulme, 20-Mar-14 09:57 PM GMT

Fab pic Mike. Some really good stuff lately.
BWs, Neil

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 23-Mar-14 07:55 PM GMT

Cheers Neil.

After the brief glimpse we caught of our two PH cats basking on either side of an Oak bud on Saturday, today they made another appearance, again on the same bud. This time they spent the whole afternoon basking and feeding in close proximity on the outside, allowing some good photo opportunities.



7 day old Purple Hairstreak larvae



7 day old Purple Hairstreak larvae



7 day old Purple Hairstreak larva

We also had our first glimpse since they hatched of our BH cats.



3 day old Brown Hairstreak larva



5 day old Brown Hairstreak larva



5 day old Brown Hairstreak larva

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 23-Mar-14 08:03 PM GMT

Fantastic photos again Mike 🍀🍀 I see what you mean about the camouflage Cathy. Let's hope they don't become toooo interested in each other.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Mar-14 04:45 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, they must be aware of each other but so far so good 😊😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-14 12:13 AM GMT

Great stuff Mike - looking forward to the next installment - they grow up so quick don't they 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Paul Harfield, 27-Mar-14 11:23 PM GMT

Hi Mike

Your series of pictures tracking the emergence of the Brown Hairstreak larva are superb 😊 As are your Purple Hairstreak larva pics. There are no signs of emergence so far among my captives so it is nice to see what I am missing. I look forward to seeing the next instalment

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 02-Apr-14 08:17 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, they don't hang around, its amazing just how quickly they grow.

Thanks Paul,

I hope that your Purple Hairstreak eggs have now hatched.

The two Purple Hairstreak caterpillars we are rearing have given us hours of pleasure observing their development. They are now in their second instar and spend the day resting/basking and exploring their environment. We sometimes see them feeding, although it would appear that this is mainly carried out at night. During their moult they stayed motionless for 24 hours before shedding the larval skin, some of which they appeared to eat. They have grown considerably over the two weeks since hatching and are well camouflaged when resting between the Oak buds.



First instar Purple Hairstreak larva 12 days old



First instar Purple Hairstreak larvae 12 days old



Post moult with old larval skin



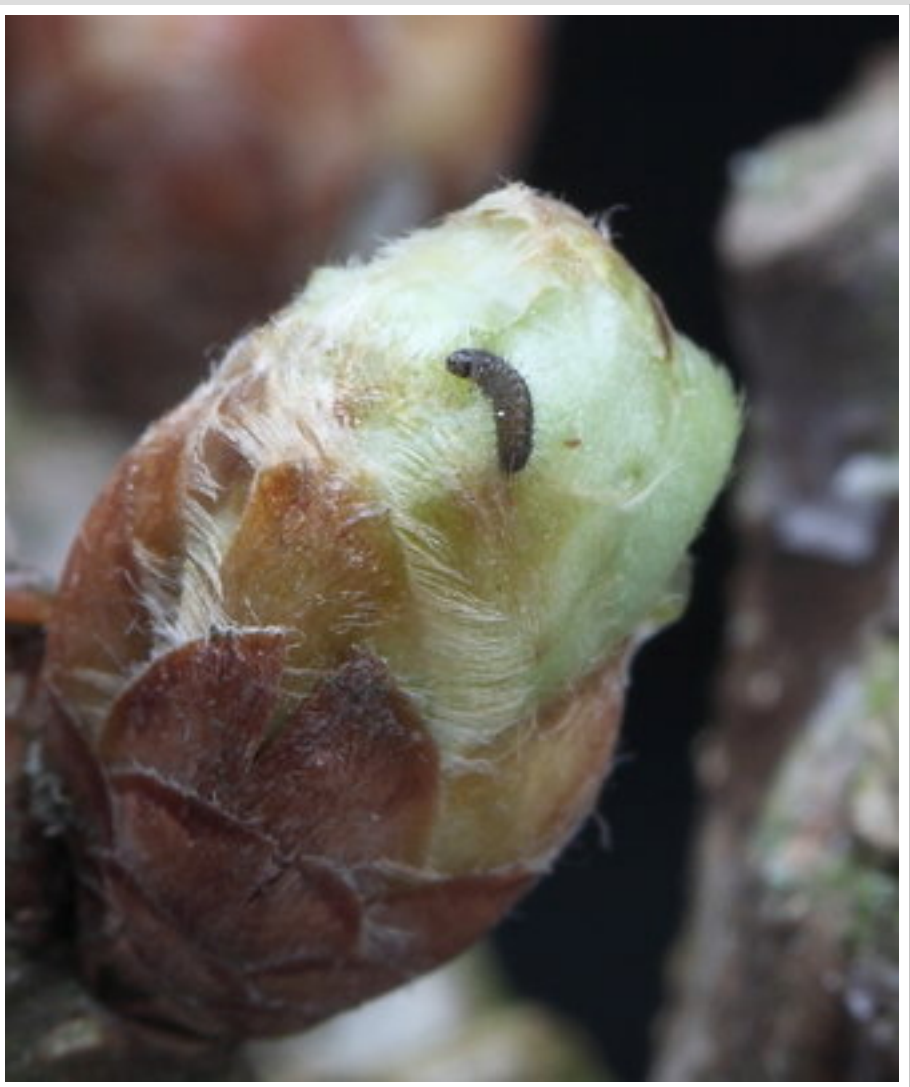
Post moult



After removing our remaining seventeen Purple Hairstreak eggs from the fridge on 31st March, the first two hatched this morning and I was able to capture the following images.



First hatchling





Second hatchling

We have not seen very much of our Brown Hairstreak larvae as they remain well concealed within the Blackthorn buds, but we did manage a quick glimpse of a second instar larva just after moulting.



Brown Hairstreak larva and old larval skin

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 02-Apr-14 08:29 PM GMT

Stunning photos Mike. It certainly is surprising how much time one can spend watching them – and half of that is just trying to find them 😊. Seriously tho', it is fascinating and they are such attractive little creatures with amazing capability for camouflage. I am looking forward to more of your shots as they progress.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 02-Apr-14 10:29 PM GMT

Magnificent stuff, Maximus. I hope you'll provide further images as these larvae develop.

Re: Maximus

by Paul Harfield, 02-Apr-14 10:51 PM GMT

Hi Mike

Fantastic pictures again 😊 I just wondered are the largest Purple Hairstreak larvae inside or outside and in what sort of environment do you have them contained?

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-14 11:23 PM GMT

Brill images Mike 😊 The Brostreak really stands out when not hiding amongst the buds.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 04-Apr-14 09:20 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, we spend hours looking for/at them 😊 but yes it certainly is very fascinating and rewarding pastime 😊

Thanks David, I certainly will give updates on their progress.

Thanks Paul, the largest two Purple Hairstreak larvae are in a draughty utility room with single glazed windows and a plastic roof. Its very cool at night but is warmer in the daytime but the larvae are not subjected to wind or rain.

Thanks Wurzel, they are almost always well hidden but hopefully as they grow they will find it harder to hide 😊 😊

Our first two Purple Hairstreak larvae continue to grow at a great rate and yesterday (3rd April) moulted again. They are now 19 days old and still spend their time resting on the Oak buds or climbing among the Oak leaves. They show no signs at present of spinning a silk web around the expanding buds to form a cocoon to hide in.





More of the Purple Hairstreak eggs that we took out of the fridge on Monday 31st March have hatched. Although most have bored into the buds, several of the hatched larvae surprisingly stayed on the outside, seemingly making no attempt to bore inside. One in particular remained on the outside for 24 hours so must therefore have been feeding on the outer surface of the bud.





We were caught out today when one of our Orange-tips emerged, unfortunately we missed the emergence but found a beautiful female waiting for us when we got home. Eight months since pupation, she is a sight for sore eyes 😊 She is now out in the garden roosting on an Erysimum Bowles Mauve flower and was still there when I looked just before dark. We now also have a male about to emerge, hope he waits until the morning!





Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-14 11:02 PM GMT

Fantastic shots if the OT Mike- you should try a few night time shots - I tried some two years ago setting my camera to "night", pointing in the right direction of the roosting OT and clicking away. I couldn't work out why my shots looked all blurry until I realised I'd taken my contacts out and my glasses were on the top of my head 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 05-Apr-14 07:33 AM GMT

You have succeeded in doing what I have so far failed to do Mike - you have managed to capture that velvety softness that makes you want to gently stroke it. At this stage they really look like a beautiful little cat instead of a little unidentifiable grub. Your OT shot if fab too - just a shame you missed the emergence but hopefully you will catch the next one 😊

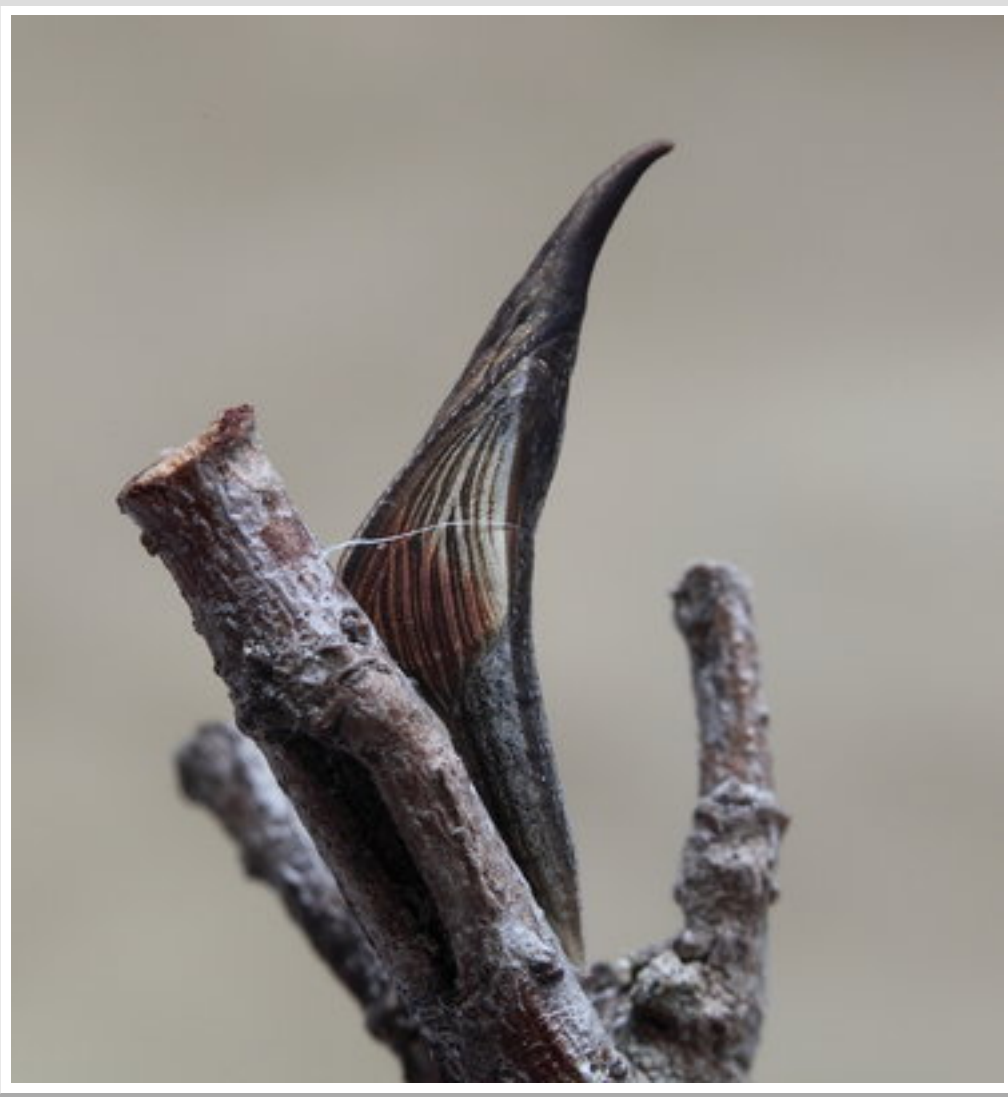
Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Apr-14 06:30 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, maybe taking photos of butterflies at night gives one an edge 😊 as they wont be able to see you coming 😊

I agree Pauline that they are very soft looking when viewed in close up, and are very endearing little critters 😊 As for the OT....

Yesterday we waited cameras at the ready, imminently expecting the emergence of a male Orange-tip we had been rearing. It was at midnight when we took a last look, but he was still there inside the pupal case just as this photo taken earlier shows.



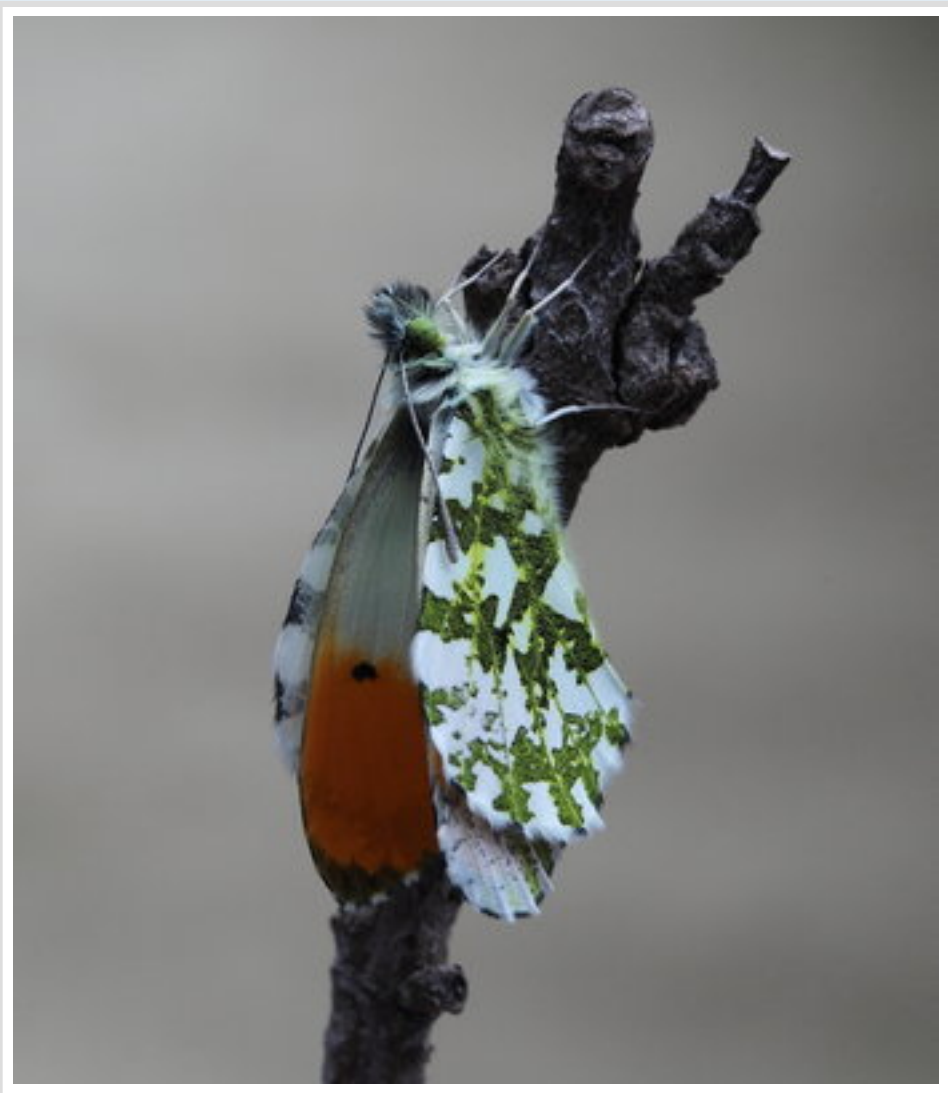
Cathy was awake first the next morning and I was awoken by her frantic shouts as she ran quickly up the stairs. It turned out that she had gone for a quick peek just in time to see a head break through the pupal case. By the time she had called me and I had grabbed my camera he was now fully emerged and busy inflating his wings.



Still inflating wings



Fully inflated



A glimpse of orange



Trying out his proboscis

So I had missed the emergence again 😞 I'll be ready for the next one, which should be in a couple of days. As the weather was very cool, he went straight into roost mode alongside the female, which hatched two days ago. We had placed her on a Bowles Mauve flower in the garden after she emerged, which is where she stayed all that night and all the next day. Last night we made a decision, rightly or not, to bring her back in from the rain and cold, We placed her on some Dandelions in the cool, light room where we reared her. I am keeping regular checks on them and they have both spent today roosting on separate flowers in close proximity to each other. Hopefully we will get some sun tomorrow so we can release them both into the garden.

Re: Maximus

by William, 06-Apr-14 06:50 PM GMT

I'm sorry you missed the emergence Mike, I have experienced this when breeding Large and Small Whites, the Large were particularly frustrating. I spent all day sat by a collection of 3 pupae, and whenever I went to get a cup of tea or a biscuit, one would emerge with almost mathematical precision. Nevertheless, some truly stunning photos there, I particularly like the first one with the male inflating its wings – magnificent 😊😊

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 06-Apr-14 06:57 PM GMT

Some great shots there Mike and you only missed a tiny bit of it – I'd be happy with that, thanks for sharing.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 06-Apr-14 07:31 PM GMT

These are some of the best images I've seen on this site.

More please!!

Re: Maximus

by Paul Harfield, 06-Apr-14 10:38 PM GMT

Hi Mike

Great pics of the 'just emerged' Orange Tip 😊 Sorry you missed the actual moment. I know how frustrating this can be. A couple of years ago I brought t a dozen or so Speckled Wood thorough to emergence. Guess what, I managed to miss every single one 😞😂

Re: Maximus

by Lee Hurrell, 07-Apr-14 09:44 PM GMT

Hello Mike,

I have to agree with David – the images on this page alone are just stunning.

Can't wait for the next emergence!

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-14 10:18 PM GMT

Absolutely brill Mike 😊😊🍷🍷 Looking forward to the next one, perhaps you could send it off this way so I could see my first for the year? 😊 ...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Apr-14 06:41 PM GMT

Thanks William, I know what you mean, wait all day by a pupa and nothing happens, take the dog for a walk and out she pops 😳

Thanks Pauline, yes I was very happy with what I got.

Thanks David, more to follow.....

Thanks Paul, I agree it can be very frustrating but also amazingly rewarding.

Thanks Lee, the next emergence to follow.....

Thanks Wurzel, I've pointed some in the direction of Salisbury, hope they reach you soon 😊

After an eleven hour long vigil on Tuesday waiting for the emergence of our next Orange-tip, she failed to put in an appearance. Before going to bed that night I took a final look and was convinced that she would have emerged before the morning. I set the alarm and early the next morning found that she was still within her pupal case. By 10.15am she still hadn't emerged, and whilst I was waiting I found myself distracted by one of our Brown Hairstreak larvae which was showing rather nicely on a Blackthorn leaf. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye I saw movement and looked down to find her pushing her head out of her pupal case. It was a bit of a panic to get to the camera in time, but I managed to get the following shots..



9 minutes before emergence



emergence at 10.15 AM





Fully inflated at 10.29AM

This was going to be my practise run as I still had one more OT female in it's pupal case, colouring up nicely and looking like it had at least another day to go before emerging. However, when I got back home in the evening I checked on her and found she'd already made an appearance and was hanging upside down merrily on the netting of her container awaiting release 😄

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 10-Apr-14 06:46 PM GMT

Absolutely stunning!

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-14 11:24 PM GMT

Totally agree with Pauline 😄👍 By the way have a word with the OT's, they still haven't got here yet 😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 12-Apr-14 07:17 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline.

Thanks Wurzel, you must have seen them by now 😊

We recently managed a visit to Noar Hill on a glorious spring afternoon. As we walked up the lane the Badger sett had bedding drying outside, a sure sign it was occupied.



As we entered the reserve we were greeted by a Chiffchaff, the first of many. We also heard a Buzzard mew and saw above us a Wake of nine individuals, the most I have ever seen together at once.



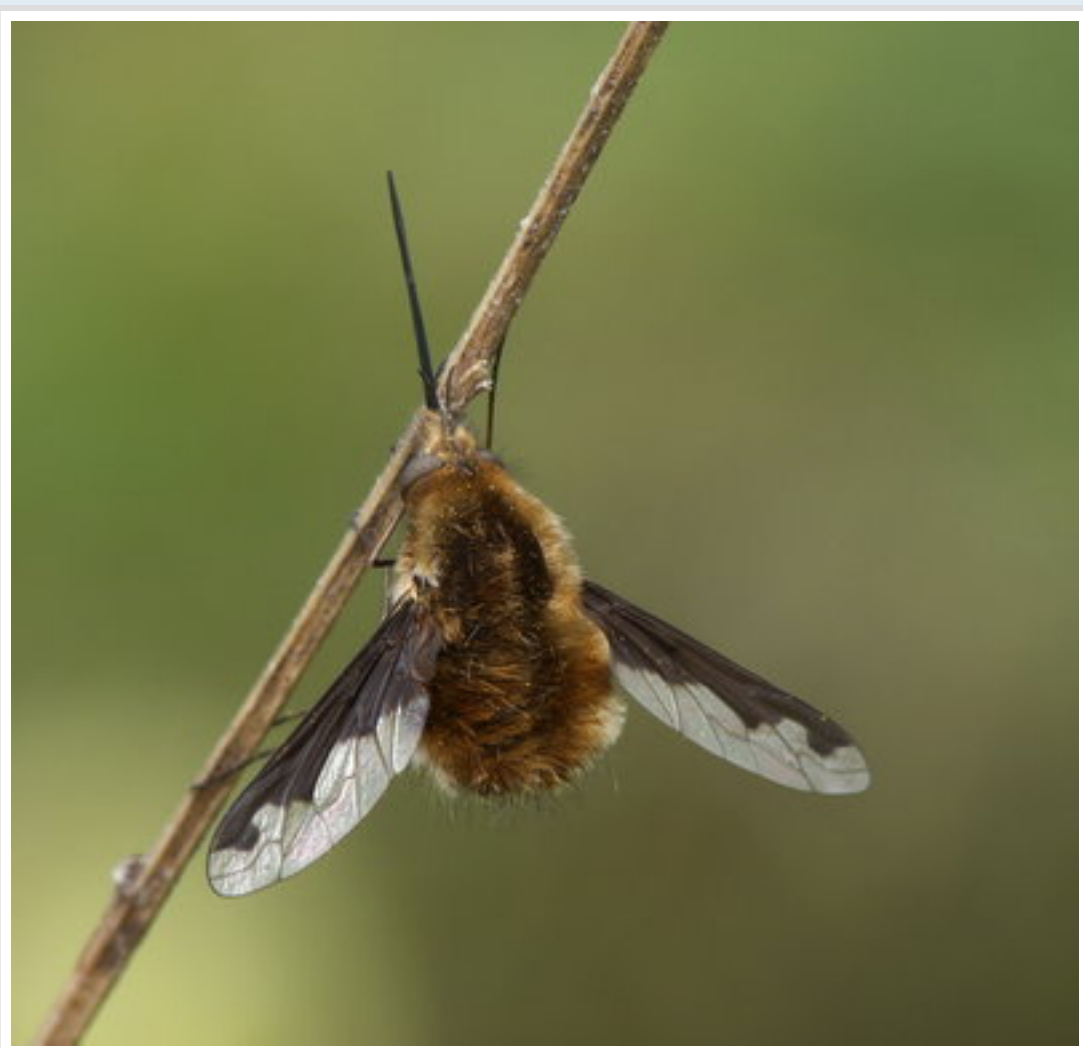


As we walked up through the chalk pits we saw many Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones along with several Commas and one very worn Red Admiral. We were treated to a quick flypast by a male Orange-tip but he wasn't stopping for any decent photos.





We also saw plenty of Bee- Flies (*Bombylius major*) and although it was fairly easy getting a shot of one on the ground it took longer to get the photos we wanted.



No sign of the Duke yet 🤔 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-14 10:14 PM GMT

Yep they got here yesterday 😊 – but didn't show any signs of stopping 😊 Great shots Mike, especially the Bee fly – they're tricky little Bu££ERS 😊 The Dukes can't be far away now...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 12-Apr-14 11:48 PM GMT

Bee flies seem to be everywhere this spring!

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 13-Apr-14 09:29 AM GMT

Some great photos there Mike, especially that last Bee Fly 😊 I have these in my garden but haven't managed a really good photo of one yet.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Apr-14 08:46 PM GMT

The Bee-flies can be tricky, you just need to find a laid-back BF and its easy. I believe the Dukes are now with us 😊😊

Bee-flies are everywhere David, I even saw one today in the garden.

Cheers Neil, if they're in your garden it won't be long before you get some cracking shots.

The last couple of days have been spent catching up on those garden jobs which were on hold due to the wet weather. When in the garden I make sure that my camera is near to hand and sometimes this pays off. The first picture is of our last Orange-tip at the point of release.



Female Orange-tip release

Two male Brimstones paused long enough for a photo.



We also found the following larvae which I have so far been unable to ID, does anyone have any ideas, they were both approx 5cm in length.





1st larva



2nd larva

We also had flying visits from, male Orange-tips, Small Whites and Small Tortoiseshells.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 15-Apr-14 09:23 PM GMT

We paid another visit to Noar Hill, once again in brilliant sunshine, although out of the sheltered areas the cool breeze kept the temperature down. After about twenty minutes of searching we found our first Duke of Burgundy of 2014, and how delightful he was.



Walking up through the reserve we found more Dukes.





While looking for Dukes we also found our first Green Hairstreak of the year, what a glorious butterfly this is.





There were lots of Orange-tips to be seen, but most were not hanging around for long. But I got lucky with this male nectaring on a Dandelion.



During our visit we saw a total of 8 Duke of Burgundy (always two males together in each location), 1 Green Hairstreak, 2 Green Veined Whites (also a first of the year), loads of Orange-tips, 6 Peacocks, 6 Small Tortoiseshells and several male and one female Brimstone. All in all we had a great day out in a really fabulous place, which for us means so much. Three firsts for us of the year in one visit!

Re: Maximus

by ChrisC, 15-Apr-14 09:30 PM GMT

I should know the first, but your second caterpillar I think is Old Lady,

Chris

Re: Maximus

by David M, 15-Apr-14 09:39 PM GMT

Great haul for mid-April. It can't be long before Green Hairstreaks are out down my way.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-14 11:09 PM GMT

Cracking shots Mike 🍷 - looks like you had a great day - hopefully they'll be around my area by Friday 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 16-Apr-14 06:20 AM GMT

Great photos Mike. I particularly like the first Duke and the first OT - striking!! I'm hoping to go back there soon to see the females 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Apr-14 03:50 PM GMT

Thanks Chris, it is Old Lady, as you identified. We googled it to make sure and to see what the adult moth would look like.

We were nowhere near a haul like this at this time last year. Just shows what a proper Spring can do. Hope you are seeing them right now in Wales, David.

Cheers Wurzel, I'm sure you will now have seen your first 😊

Thanks Pauline, hope you get to see the females.

Our first two Purple Hairstreak larvae, (which were not kept in the fridge) pupated 26 days after hatching. These two larvae had a selection of Oak twigs to move around and feed on but were invariably always together, and appeared to follow one another around.



The first two 24 days after hatching



The lighter coloured larva at 24 days



The old larval skin still attached to the pupa



Pupae at 34 days after hatching

The Purple Hairstreak larvae we kept in the fridge are well behind these two. Of the original 17 eggs we collected only 5 hatched, some for reasons unknown although others had probably been parasitised.

Our Brown Hairstreak larvae hatched over a period of a week or so and the oldest are now 29 days. We also kept two back in the fridge longer and these have now hatched and are also well behind the others in their development, in fact they are very difficult to find on the potted Blackthorn plant.





Brown Hairstreak larva 29 days after hatching

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 18-Apr-14 04:13 PM GMT

Great account of the Hairstreaks Mike and smashing photos.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Apr-14 11:58 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, they are fascinating to observe, always something to see, if you can see them 😊

The first of the (fridge) Purple Hairstreaks we are rearing moulted again today at 16 days since hatching, I think that means they are in their third instar!





Purple Hairstreak larva 16 days old, moulting

Re: Maximus

by David M, 19-Apr-14 12:05 AM GMT

This forum is fast becoming a minefield of incredible images.

Superb shots, Mike.

Re: Maximus

by robpartridge, 19-Apr-14 09:27 AM GMT

Agreed, incredible pictures like these recently, and the forum is a great example of how modern technology and communications are taking forward our ancient fascination with the natural world,

Rob

Re: Maximus

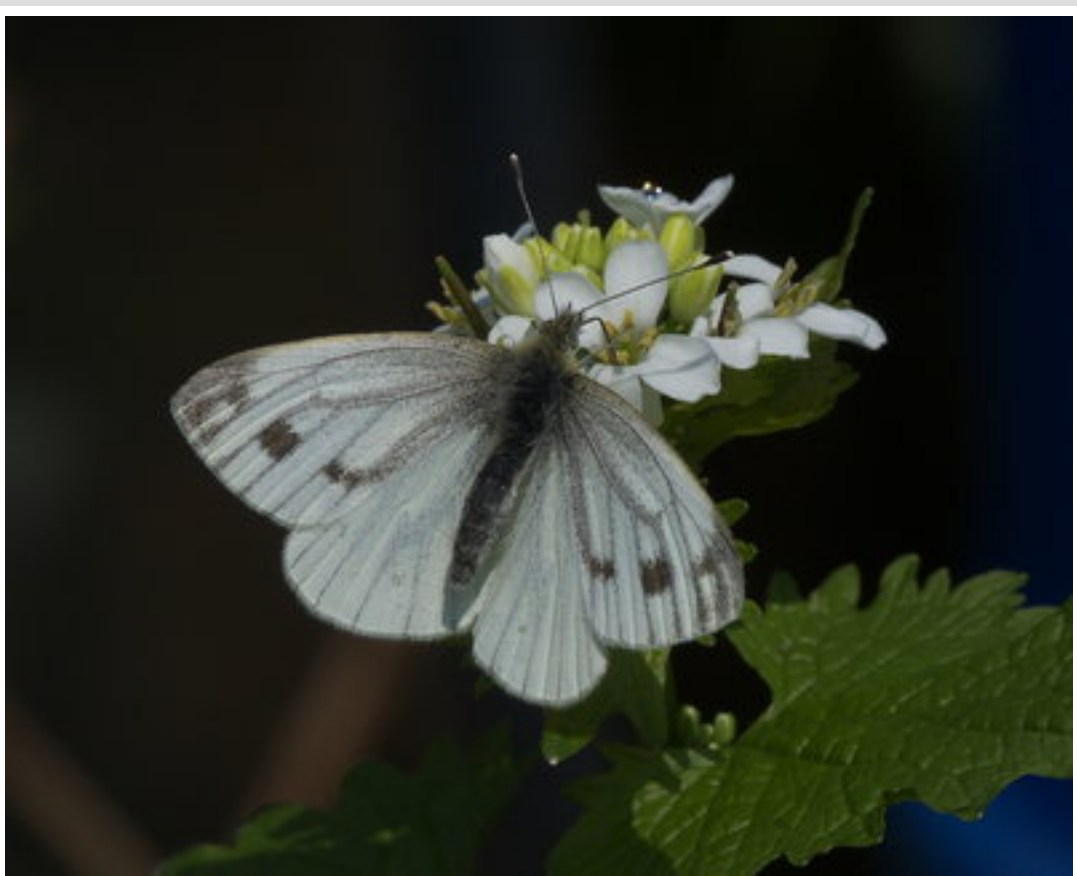
by Maximus, 21-Apr-14 07:14 PM GMT

Thanks David and Rob, I agree the forum is great for displaying images and exchanging information.

The weather for a Bank Holiday Monday was much better than expected today and so we decided on a quick trip out to Wrecclesham to see what was on the wing. Before we left, though, I spotted a female Green-veined White fly into my garden and settle on some Honesty which my mother had given to me yesterday. It was still wilting from the shock of being transplanted into pots, so I was therefore surprised when I took a closer look and found the Green-veined White was ovipositing on the limp Honesty leaves. She laid about half a dozen eggs before departing, which gave me time to grab my camera and take a couple of photos..



The previous egg laid can be seen to the left and below her wing



Nectaring afterwards on Garlic Mustard



We got to Wrecclesham around two o'clock, but by then the cloud cover had increased and, although it was quite muggy, there weren't many butterflies on the wing. We did see a few Orange Tips, mostly males, and a couple of females, a Green-veined White, a couple of Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells and one Speckled Wood, which settled long enough for a photograph, my first of this species this year..



Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-14 07:24 PM GMT

Great Hairstreak reports and Photos Mike, fascinating stuff 😊

Cracking shots of the Gv White and eggs too, I particularly like the open wing photo on Garlic Mustard, great stuff.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by PhilBJohnson, 22-Apr-14 06:43 PM GMT

Hi,

I really like the Green-veined White pictures. Very special I think. 😊

Best wishes,

Philip

Re: Maximus

by David M, 22-Apr-14 07:01 PM GMT

I've just bought some Honesty in the hope of attracting Orange Tips but I'll look out for Green Veined Whites near it too after reading that commentary.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 23-Apr-14 11:46 PM GMT

Thanks Philip, glad you like the Green-veined White pics, they're lovely butterflies.

Just as soon as it was placed in the garden she jumped on it, a wise buy David.

Our recently planned visits to various places in search of butterflies have been pretty much weather dependant, so today, being no exception, we set off for Chiddingfold Wood based entirely on the Met. Office forecast. However, when we got there at 11am we realised they'd got it wrong, and instead of the sun they had promised, it was overcast, grey and cool! We had come to look for Wood Whites, and as they require warm conditions to fly in, things were not looking too promising! We walked right through to Oaken Wood without seeing a single Wood White, so retraced our steps until we arrived at Tugley Wood. Having reached the road at the Tugley Wood entrance we decided to then walk back along the ride, by which time it had brightened up slightly and raised our hopes a little. It was by now about 2pm, and we'd walked approximately 300 yards back up the ride when suddenly I spotted a Wood White sitting on a small bush at the edge.



Our second and third Wood Whites followed shortly afterwards..





In all we saw 5 Wood Whites, lucky in such cool conditions



Chiddingfold ride

We also saw several Orange-tips which were posing very nicely on stichwort..





There were many Nightingales singing along the edges of the rides, which added a tropical sound to the woodland.



Woodland ride

In total we saw 5 Wood Whites, 4 Orange-tips, 3 Speckled Woods and 2 Peacocks. We also saw 4 Buzzards flying over the woodland.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 24-Apr-14 06:52 AM GMT

Great Wood White shots Mike but aren't they making us work for our photos this year 😊 The OT's were really well-spotted too – I likely walked straight past them, too busy looking for Whites in trees 😊😊

Re: Maximus

by Lee Hurrell, 24-Apr-14 01:28 PM GMT

That all looks familiar! I saw 7 at Chiddingfold Forest on Monday.

Perhaps it was a good job it was grey with no sun – lovely photos, Mike.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 25-Apr-14 08:39 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, there certainly was some leg work involved to get those photos and we just tripped over the Orange-tips 😊

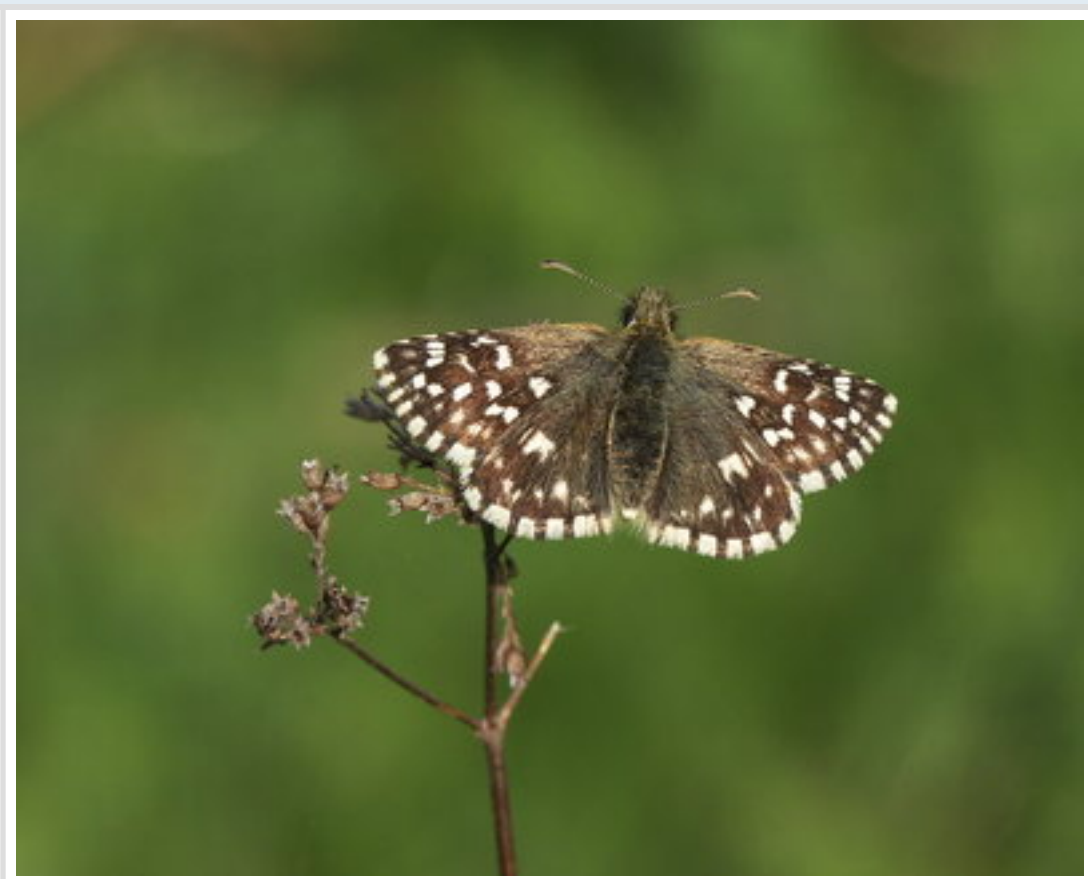
I'm sure you have walked that path many times Lee 😊 glad you saw 7 on the Monday. Sometimes a lack of sun can be of assistance 😊

After checking the BBC weather online at midnight on Wednesday, we decided to visit Rake Bottom at Butser Hill, as the forecast for Thursday was about the best it was going to be weatherwise for a while, and we wanted to see some Grizzled and Dingy Skippers. We got to Butser around midday and, although there were a number of dark clouds threatening rain, it was quite clammy and hardly any breeze, which made a pleasant change.

It was a tricky journey up the path trying to avoid the mud and deep puddles, but we managed it somehow, and were rewarded by the sound of our first Cuckoo of the year. We met a lady coming in the opposite direction who said she'd been looking for butterflies herself, but had only seen one Duke of

Burgundy, a couple of Grizzled Skippers and not a lot else. She blamed the dull weather on the lack of butterflies, but felt sure we would see something if we had the patience to stay long enough for the sun to put in an appearance.

We had a look around the area just inside the entrance gate, but all we saw was the odd Orange-tip and a couple of male Brimstones on the wing. We made our way further into the valley and looked among the tall grasses as we did, eventually spotting a roosting Grizzled Skipper perched on a tall grass stem. It was then that the sun came out and we were treated to the sight of many more Grizzled and a few Dingy Skippers buzzing through the undergrowth, along with a number of Green Hairstreaks nectaring on the Bugle, Violets and Wild Strawberry flowers.





While we had full sun we decided to go back down to the area near the entrance gate and search among the Cowslips for any Dukes that might have materialised. When we got there I spotted a Duke almost immediately, flying rapidly along the grass verge. Fortunately it settled on a blade of grass enabling me to take some photos. On closer inspection I noticed she was a very fresh and vibrant Duchess..



Meanwhile, Cathy had climbed a little way up the bank and found a handsome Duke perched on a grass blade..



A bit later on, at about 6pm, whilst watching for a Dingy Skipper to settle for a photo halfway up the bank, Cathy spotted what she thought was a Duke perched on a bramble. On closer examination she realised that it was not just one, but two Dukes ... A mating pair! Cathy then gave me a shout and I hurried up the hill to join her and managed to get these photos..



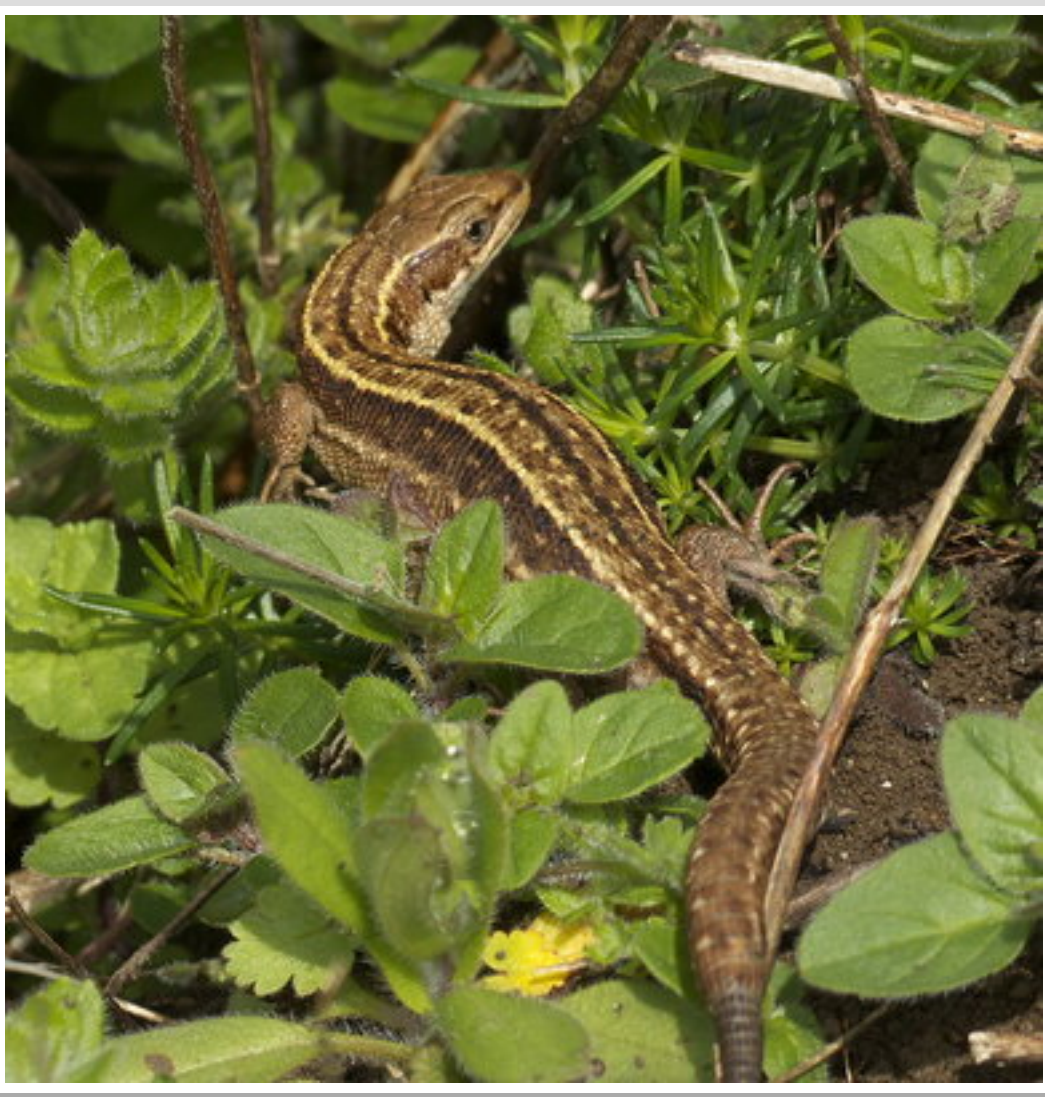
When we left them they were still coupled.

As we made our way back to the gate we could hear two cuckoos calling, one at either end of the valley. We were also surprised by the sighting of these two UFO's flying low across the hilltop 😊



What lengths some people will go to to see mating Dukes

What a fantastic day we had. In total we saw 6 Duke of Burgundy (including the mating pair), dozens of Grizzled Skippers and about half as many Dingy Skippers, 8 Green Hairstreaks, 4 Orange-tips, 2 Green-veined Whites, a few male Brimstones, 1 Peacock, 1 unusually large Small Tortoiseshell (the same size as the Peacock) and 6 Burnet Moths. We also were lucky enough to spot this Common Lizard..



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-14 08:22 AM GMT

Stunning shots Mike – I don't think I've seen such a good looking Duchess 😊 The Wood Whites are a lovely sequence I hope to catch up with them this year – I love the way they fly looking so fragile that they almost dropping out of the sky 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 27-Apr-14 12:37 AM GMT

Thanks for your positive response Wurzel.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 27-Apr-14 07:07 AM GMT

Just catching up with your diary Mike – smashing mating pair, well spotted Cathy. Love the Grizzled Skipper too.

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 27-Apr-14 09:50 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

Some lovely photos in your last couple of posts, love the mating pair of DoB...and the Wood Whites...and all the rest 😊

I am still on 9 species, think I will have to get one of those hang glider thingies and head south 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 27-Apr-14 07:04 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline – Cathy has a good eye for them 😊

Cheers Neil, 9 species you may be on, but you have posted some great photos of of them 😊 I've a feeling you will manage without the flying contraption 😊

We are at present rearing both Purple and Brown Hairstreaks. All of the Purple Hairstreak but one, are in the process of or have already pupated. The Brown Hairstreak larvae are contained on 3 potted Blackthorn plants, 6 one one plant, 5 on another and 2 earlier instar larvae on the last. We decided to put them together after keeping our Purple Hairstreak larvae in pairs, which caused no problems and in fact they were invariably found together even though they had plenty of twigs to choose from.

The Brown Hairstreak larvae also appear to co-exist without problem, even given the number per plant. We have noticed that they also tend to group together, but during the day they rest individually on the underside of their own nearby leaf.



35 days old





35 days old



Three in this photo, one is out of focus in the background



35 days old

The two earlier instar larvae at 15 days old



15 days old

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-14 07:57 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

...I've a feeling you will manage without the flying contraption 😊

Thanks Mike, I'll probably manage ok...but wouldn't it be fun to scout out habitat from one of those things 😊

Interesting stuff following your hairstreaks development and great photos of them 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-14 09:49 AM GMT

Brill images Mike - no wonder I've never seen them 😲 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 29-Apr-14 09:05 PM GMT

It would give a great birds eye view Neil, but we can do without it 😊 glad you like the Hairstreak development and photos.

Thanks Wurzel, its just a question of getting your eye in 😊😊

This morning we noticed that one of our reared Brown Hairstreak larva was making its way down the Blackthorn plant. I took some photos as it was presumably on its way down to commence pupation.





It disappeared under the Oak leaves and we left it to find a suitable place to pupate.

This evening when we returned home Cathy spotted one of our second instar Brown Hairstreak larva sitting on the rim of the pot containing the Blackthorn plant. I gently picked it up on some tissue and placed it back onto a leaf which it immediately climbed underneath and commenced feeding.





Hopefully he'll remain on the plant until it's his time to pupate and not go exploring his environment again 😊

Re: Maximus

by David M, 29-Apr-14 11:04 PM GMT

Great images, Maximus. This forum has really become an important inventory for early stage images over the last year or so.

Fabulous stuff.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-May-14 12:17 AM GMT

Thanks David, I agree that this forum is an important medium for showcasing all stages of butterfly development.

Today in the garden we saw eight species of butterfly, a couple of which I managed to photograph.



Large White



Green-veined White



Orange-tip (female)

We saw Small White, Green-veined White, Orange-tip, Speckled Wood, Peacock, Holly Blue, Brimstone and our first Large White of 2014.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 01-May-14 11:45 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the whites Mike 😊 I sometimes think that the Green-veined White was misnamed – the Smoky White would have been better 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 05-May-14 06:27 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Smoky White would have been a great name 😊

This weekend has been spent in the garden catching up on some of those jobs that have been put on hold. Fortunately we have Garlic Mustard and Honesty which have attracted the attention of female Green-veined Whites and also Orange-tips. The Green-veined White ova are yet to hatch but yesterday several of the Orange-tip ova did.



Orange-tip ovum on underside of Garlic Mustard leaf



Ovum under flower



Ovum under leaf



Ovum on stem

I was quite surprised to see ova on leaves, I thought this was GV-White territory!



Lava inside egg - close to hatching

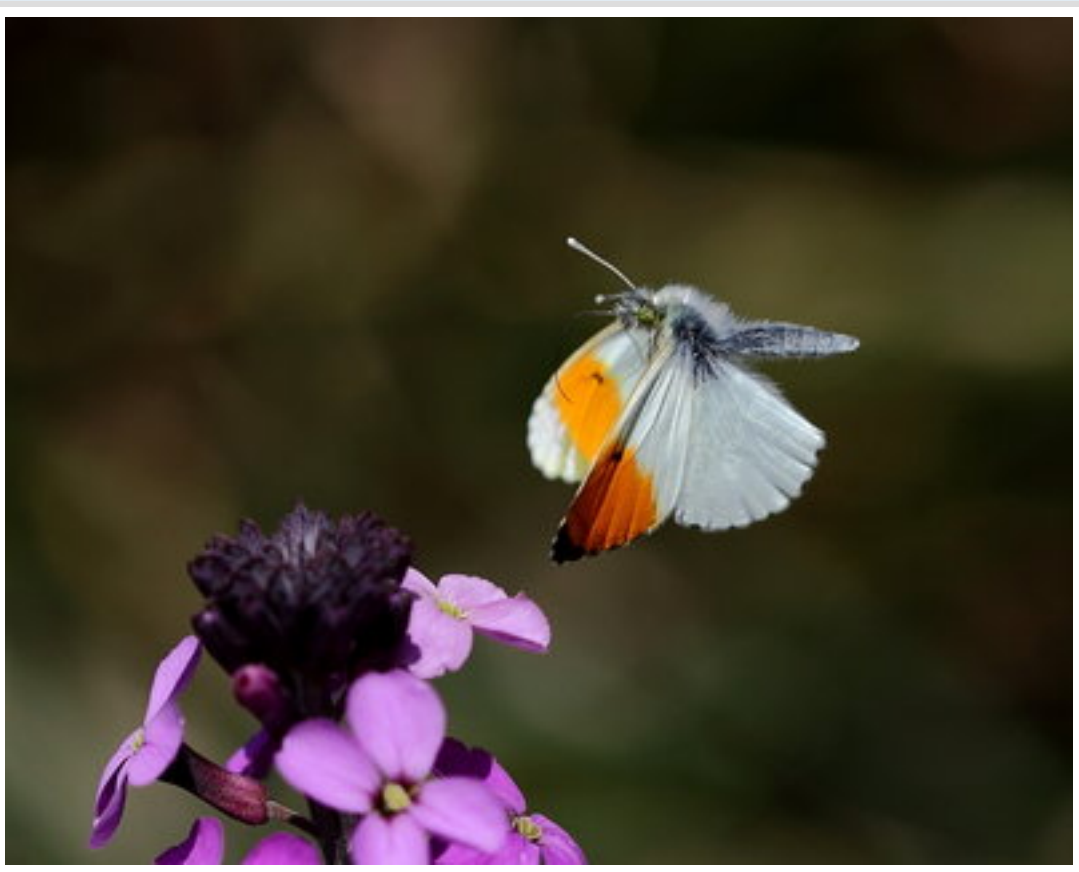
At this point we had to go out and knew what would happen, and so on our return...





Newly hatched larva

Earlier on during the afternoon a male Orange-tip paid a visit to our Bowles-Mauve and spent a while nectaring...



... and I was lucky enough to catch him in flight 😊

Re: Maximus

by Neil Hulme, 05-May-14 06:55 PM GMT

I love that O Tip in flight Mike – great capture!
BWs, Neil

Re: Maximus

by Butterflysaurus rex, 05-May-14 07:01 PM GMT

🤔 I agree with Neil, that one's a real cracker Mike 😊

B'saurus

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-14 07:32 PM GMT

Ditto the OT in flight Mike 😊

The Garlic Mustard in my garden has not done that well this year, just a few scraggly plants which have been ignored so far. It is as if the females OTs know that the plants are not up to scratch.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-May-14 04:43 PM GMT

Glad you like the Orange-tip Neil, its one of those lucky photos that make me smile 😊

Thanks B'rex 😊

Cheers Neil, the Garlic Mustard in our garden is doing great this year, just found another three eggs 😊

Our final reared Purple Hairstreak commenced pupation on 3rd of May, this is it pictured just before and during pupation on 1st and 4th of May.



We now have a total of seven Purple Hairstreak pupae, which includes the two which were not refrigerated and are therefore more advanced. They took about a month from hatching to pupation and moved through their instars quite quickly.



Our Brown Hairstreaks appear to have developed at a slower rate. On the Blackthorn plant which had originally contained five larvae we suddenly found a sixth, we assume that the larva had transferred himself from one plant to the other, which was lucky as he could have gone walkabout! We now have two BH pupae, two in the process of pupation, and three on a Blackthorn plant which are now between 43 and 50 days old. We also have two larvae at 28 days old on another plant, which were found at Noar Hill at a later date. We had been keeping tags on quite a number of BH eggs on suckering Blackthorn in another location outside the reserve, including two laid together. One day we went to check on their progress and to our dismay the whole lot had been cut down. This was long after the work party clearances so we don't know who carried this out! As we began sorting through the debris, to our utter amazement we found the twin eggs, which were somehow the only survivors. They are now on a potted Blackthorn in our lean-to 😊



Brown Hairstreak Pupa freshly emerged



Brown Hairstreak larva pupating

Re: Maximus

by David M, 07-May-14 10:23 PM GMT

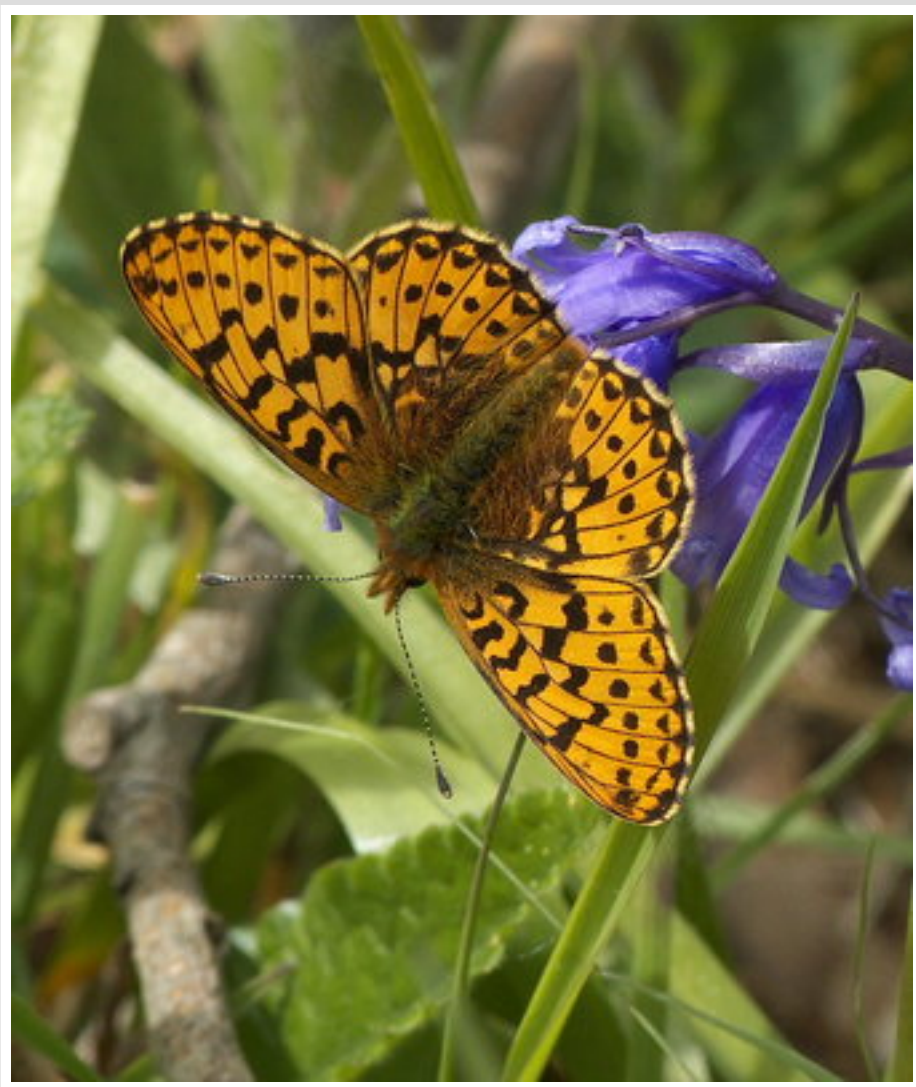
Great images, Maximus. Seems like more and more people are experimenting with rearing butterflies and some of the sequences have been a joy to peruse.

I look forward to seeing yours emerge.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 09-May-14 12:25 AM GMT

With the weather set to be cloudy with sunny periods, we decided that this would provide ideal conditions to see the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at Bentley Wood. Last year we went to Rewell Wood on 12th May to see them, on a walk led by Neil (Hulme) when the weather was cool and they had just emerged. Arriving at Bentley in blazing sunshine we knew it was going to be hard going to get some pics! As we entered the Eastern Clearing we were greeted by a very fresh Duke of Burgundy, a nice start, and then three or four PBF flying like dingbats! There were three people already there busy trying to get some photos, so we made our way through the clearing to the far side. It was just a question of perseverance to get a reasonable open wing shot, as there were plenty flying, nectaring or sunning themselves on the ground.



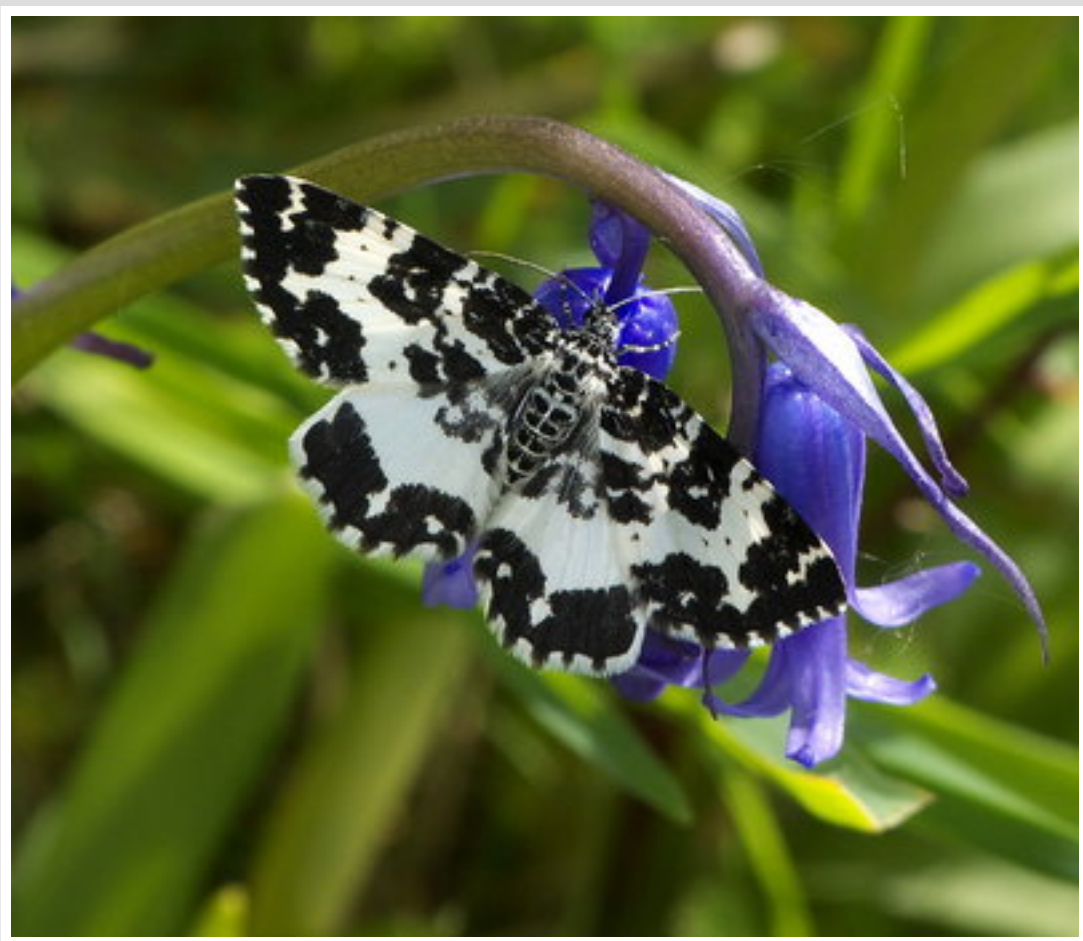


Later in the afternoon we noticed a female Brimstone settling on an Alder Buckthorn and a quick peek revealed that she was ovipositing





We also saw this beautiful Argent and Sable moth...



...and this Common Lizard which appears to have a deer tick attached to its side



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 09-May-14 12:30 AM GMT

Thanks David, you will see photos of our emerging Brown and Purple Hairstreaks, when it happens 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 09-May-14 11:36 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking shots there Mike 😊 Bentley has been good for Pearls this year although they're declining in Wiltshire so hopefully they'll be on an upward trend 😊 Won't be long until the Small Pearls will be at Bentley 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 10-May-14 06:31 AM GMT

That is a reall great sequence of Brimstones Mike. Well done on getting such a smashing shot of that moth too. I can't tell you how long I have spent following one round the Eastern Clearing only to come home with a shot of only one wing or a blurred in flight photo 😊

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 10-May-14 01:46 PM GMT

Smashing photo's of all the Butterflies Mike 🍷 😊 Goldie

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-May-14 08:34 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, Bentley is great and an upward trend of PBF's would be good, and Small PBF's are one of my favourites 😊 , Glad you like the Brimstone Pauline, I know what you mean about Argent and Sable moths, very lively but stunning 😊

Thanks Goldie, I appreciate your kind words 😊

The first of our Purple Hairstreaks hatched today, a beautiful female. She was very lively but eventually settled long enough for us to take these photos.





Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 11-May-14 08:36 AM GMT

Beautiful shots Mike 🍷 My favourite is the one on the glass - you can just make out the reflection 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 11-May-14 02:05 PM GMT

Smashing Photo's Mike I'm really envious 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 11-May-14 02:38 PM GMT

That is my favourite too Wurzel - I love it!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-May-14 08:56 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😊 there's almost a double reflection on the window

Glad you like them Goldie 😊

I'm glad you like that shot Pauline 😊

Just a correction on yesterday's posting, what I originally thought was a female Purple Hairstreak was clearly a male when he opened his wings this morning 😊 The PH that emerged this morning was clearly a female as she opened her wings too 😊



Freshly emerged female



Male feeding on sugar solution



Male



Male top female bottom

Re: Maximus

by Lee Hurrell, 11-May-14 10:15 PM GMT

Lovely Purple Hairstreaks, Mike.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 12-May-14 12:22 PM GMT

Love the open wing shots on the PHS Mark Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-14 08:17 PM GMT

Beautiful PH photos Mike. Hard to pick a favourite but I love the one of the pair together, not something you are likely to see very often 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 13-May-14 06:19 PM GMT

Beautiful shots Mike 😊👍 The way the tails show so well on the male is stunning 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-May-14 03:04 PM GMT

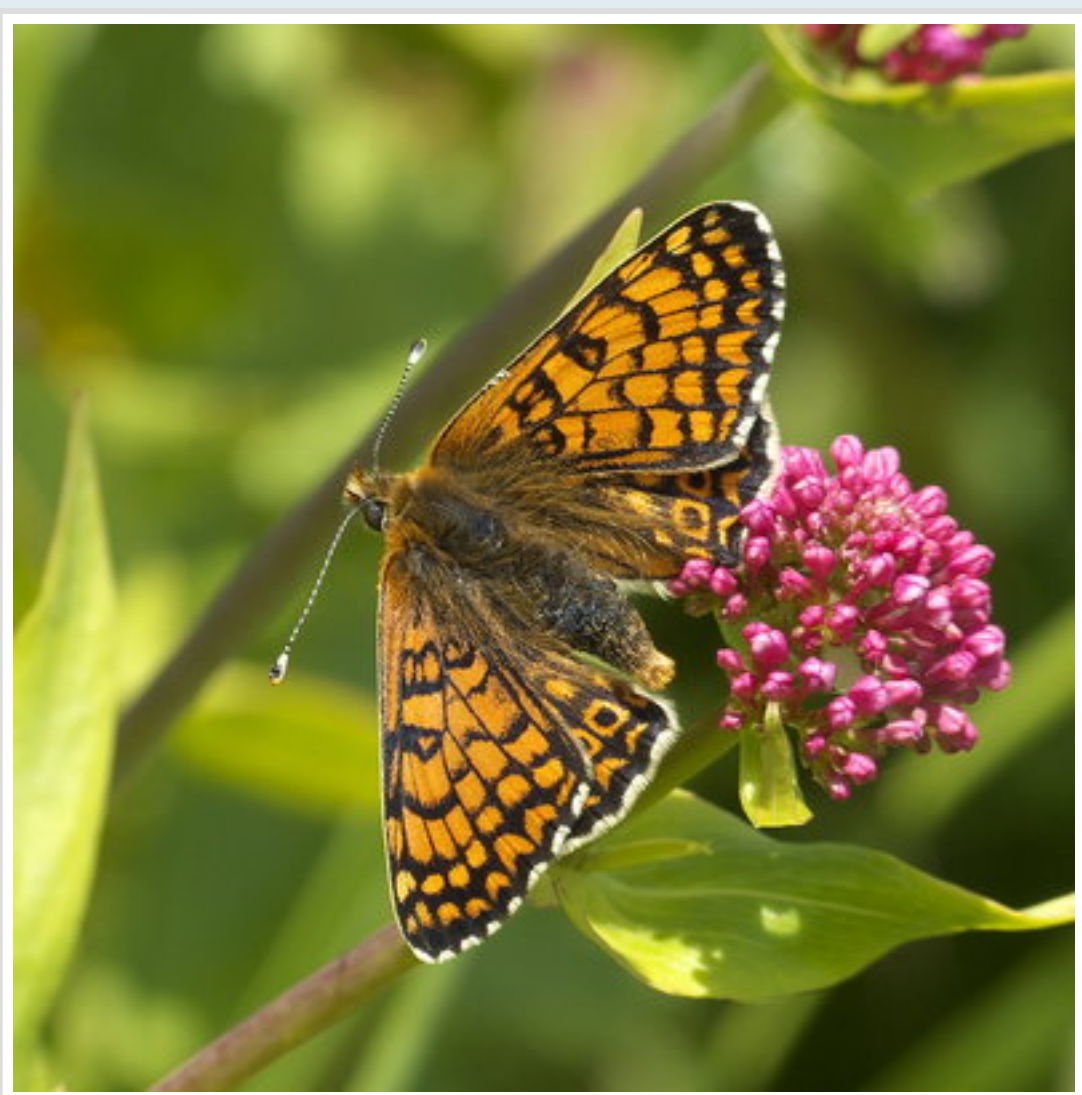
Thanks Lee 😊

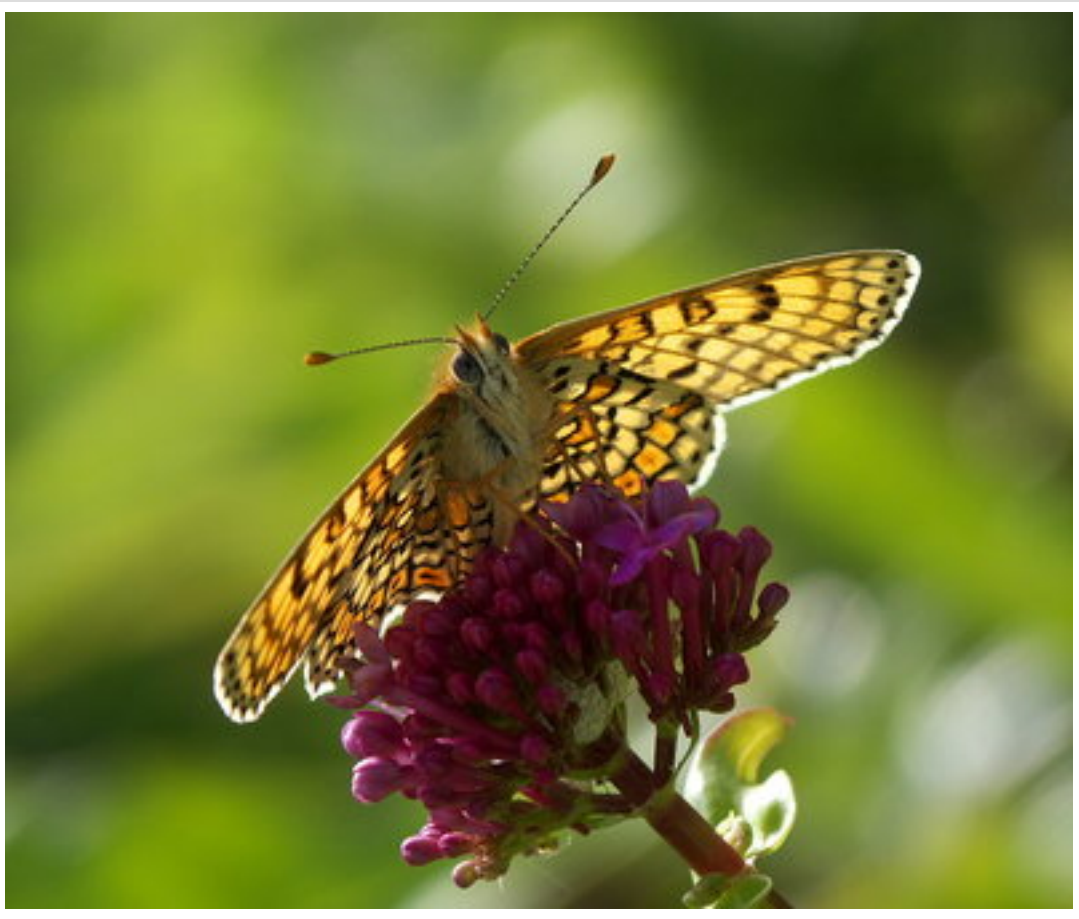
Glad you like the PH shots Goldie 😊

Cheers Neil, we were privileged to have the pair together 😊

Thanks Wurzel, they were both stunning butterflies 😊

We have just returned from a week spent on the Isle of Wight where we hoped to see some Glanville Fritillaries. During our first three days on the island gale force winds and cool temperatures meant that there were not many butterflies to be found. Fortunately for us the weather then improved and we finally found what we had come for..









Glanville Fritillary territory

These were fabulous butterflies and were all in beautiful condition. We counted twelve but believe that we probably saw more than this, but we didn't want to count the same individuals twice. We had a great afternoon wandering along Wheelers Bay and bumped into Peter Hunt (Marmari) and Andy Butler who were also checking out the Glanvilles.

We went back to our cottage very satisfied having found so many Glanvilles. However, the Isle of Wight had plenty more butterflies to offer...

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 17-May-14 10:28 PM GMT

Fantastic images Mike of a stunning butterfly 😊👍 - I missed out on this species last year and it looks like going the same way this year 😞 Oh well I can revel in your cracking shots 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-May-14 09:49 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, its a shame you're going to miss out on the Glanvilles 😞 I think they're possibly our most beautiful fritillary 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 19-May-14 06:46 AM GMT

Some lovely shots of the Glanville there Mike 👍👍 . Nothing doing at Wrecclesham I'm afraid.

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 19-May-14 07:41 PM GMT

Great report and photos of the Glanville Fritillaries Mike 😊

I am heading down there next Monday(Bank holiday) and stopping in Ventnor until the Thursday so I am obviously hoping to see some Glanvilles which would be a first for me.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

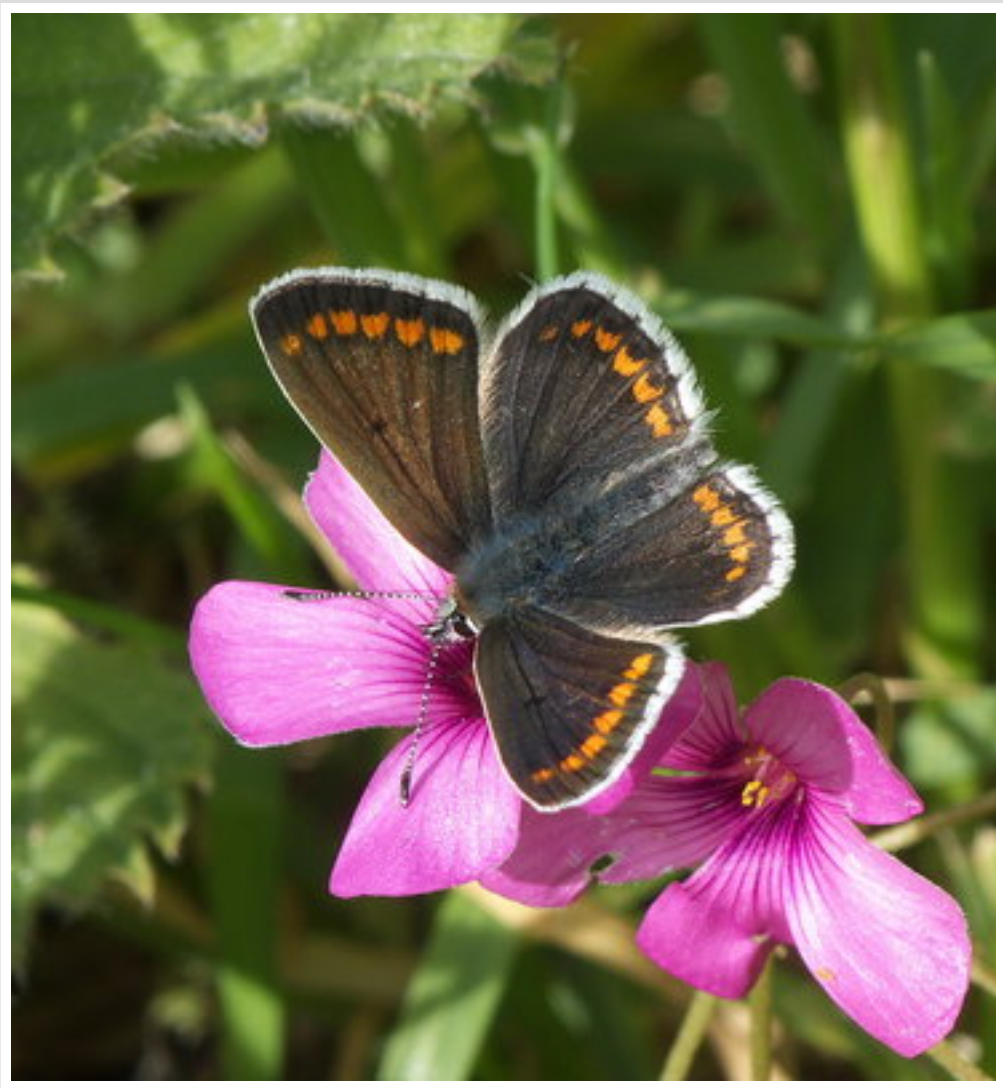
by Maximus, 20-May-14 08:06 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, it would be great to see a Glanville at Wrecclesham again 😊

Cheers Neil, Staying in Ventnor you'll be just a short walk from Wheelers Bay, where we saw the Glanvilles. Hopefully more will now have emerged for you to enjoy 😊

...Isle of Wight Continued

Following our success in finding the Glanville Fritillaries, the next morning we decided to head up onto Bonchurch Down to see what we could find. It was sunny as we entered the down and walked along the path on the hillside. The first butterflies we saw were lovely Brown Argus posing nicely in the grass and on flowers.

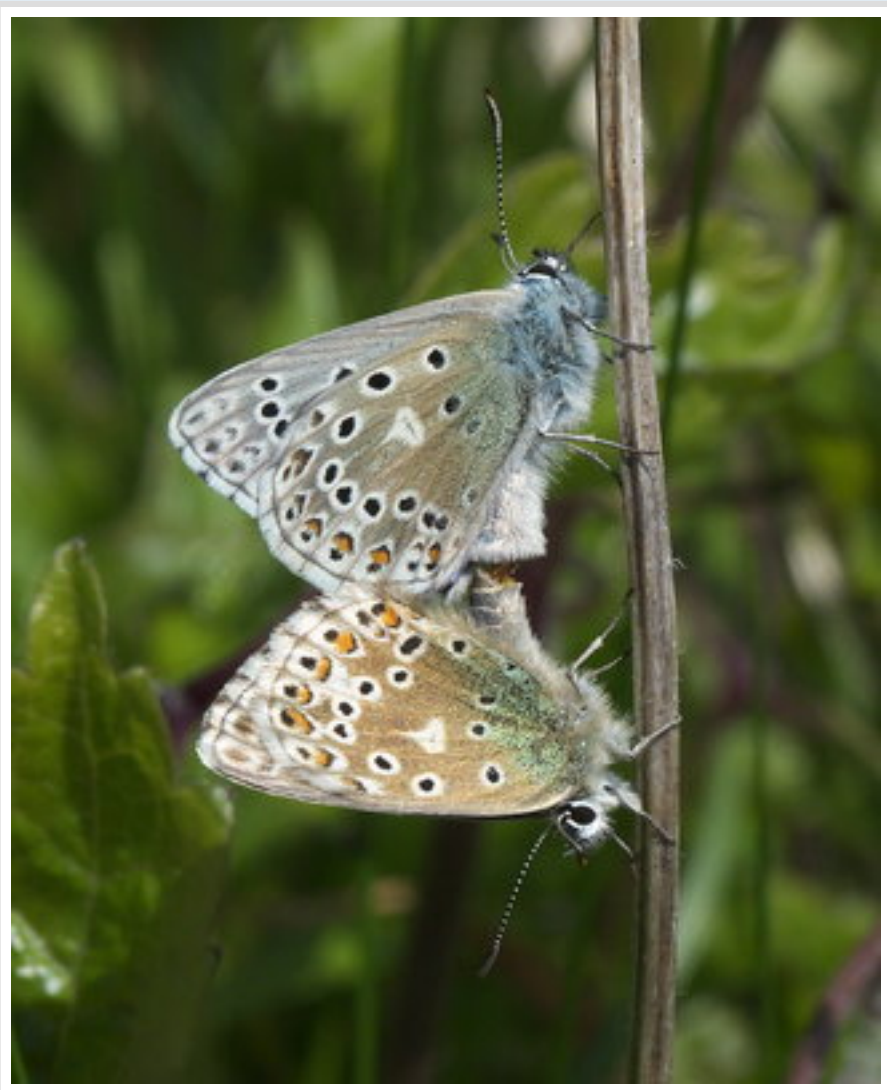


We saw a couple of Wall Browns, but they did not stop for any photos. As we walked further along the down we began to see some fresh Adonis Blues, mainly males but also a couple of females...





...and a mating pair



We also saw a few Common Blues and our first Small Heath of 2014.



Apart from getting caught in a thunderstorm and getting soaked through, we spent a great day on the down. We saw at least fifty Adonis and thirty Brown Argus all of which were very fresh looking. Although we didn't know it then, the Isle of Wight had yet more to offer us...

Re: Maximus

by Lee Hurrell, 20-May-14 10:01 PM GMT

I am really enjoying this report, Mike...what can be next!?

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Maximus

by Paul Harfield, 20-May-14 11:45 PM GMT

Hi Mike

Your female Adonis is beautiful 😊 Very fresh

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 20-May-14 11:54 PM GMT

Thanks Lee, glad you're enjoying it 😊 this is the last instalment.

...Isle of Wight continued

For our last day on the island we decided to head to West Wight and Compton Bay. Although we looked for Glanvilles along the cliff tops we found none, it's amazing how much more of the cliff has subsided during the winter storms, which will probably provide ideal conditions for the Glanvilles food plant. It also appears that the Glanvilles emerge later here than in the more sheltered areas of the island. We found a nice sheltered spot under Afton Down which began to reveal a wealth of butterflies to us. First were the Green Hairstreaks which were particularly numerous..



It soon became apparent that this area also held a colony of Small Blue, once again all very fresh in appearance.



We also found both Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, with the Dingy far outnumbering the Grizzled.





Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 21-May-14 10:06 AM GMT

An omission from my Isle of Wight posting yesterday which I'll now correct, is this rather handsome Western Green Lizard (*Bilineata viridis*) seen in Wheelers Bay while looking for Glanvilles. These are an introduction possibly dating from 1841, but there is no verification for this date.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 21-May-14 02:15 PM GMT

Cracking reports and shots Mike 😊 I'm especially envious of the Adonis Blues as I've still to see them this year – we seem to be well behind over this way, unless I've blinked and missed them 😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 21-May-14 06:21 PM GMT

Wow! That's one hell of an exotic looking lizard for these fair Isles!

Re: Maximus

by Padfield, 21-May-14 06:54 PM GMT

I'm no expert on lizards, but isn't that a wall lizard, *Podarcis muralis*? It certainly doesn't resemble any male or female green lizard I've ever seen.



(Western green lizard, this May, in Switzerland)

Guy

EDIT: I had a look online and found this, which might be of interest: <http://www.surrey-arg.org.uk/SARG/02000-Activities/SurveyAndMonitoring/WallLizard/PMcolony.asp?Site=Ventnor>. It suggests 'there are reports of the colony spreading as far east as Wheeler's Bay'. So probably worth sending in the sighting.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 21-May-14 07:27 PM GMT

Yes Guy you're correct, it's a Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) and not a Western Green lizard 😬 I made a wrong ID based on information, obviously incorrect, from another website.

Re: Maximus

by False Apollo, 21-May-14 08:05 PM GMT

Hi There Maximus,

Of interest at Southbourne Undercliff we get both Wall Lizard and Green Lizard (although I have not seen a Green Lizard for a few years now). Green Lizards are stunning, and masters of camouflage. It took me ages to see one even when it pointed out. We also have good numbers of Common Lizard. Wall Lizards are most frequently seen though.

Regards
Mike

Re: Maximus

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

Great reports and photo from the IOW Mike 😊

I am really looking forward to going down there next week now, just keeping my fingers crossed for the weather.

Cheers,
Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Butterflysaurus rex, 21-May-14 10:01 PM GMT

A highly enjoyable report from the IOW Mike! Some great photos and yes indeed what a handsome Wall Lizard that is. I'm a bit of a fan of Lizards on the quiet.

All the best
B'saurus

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 21-May-14 11:11 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I'm sure that they will begin to emerge in Wilts soon 😊

It's a beautiful Wall Lizard David, very exotic looking and the first time I have ever seen one.

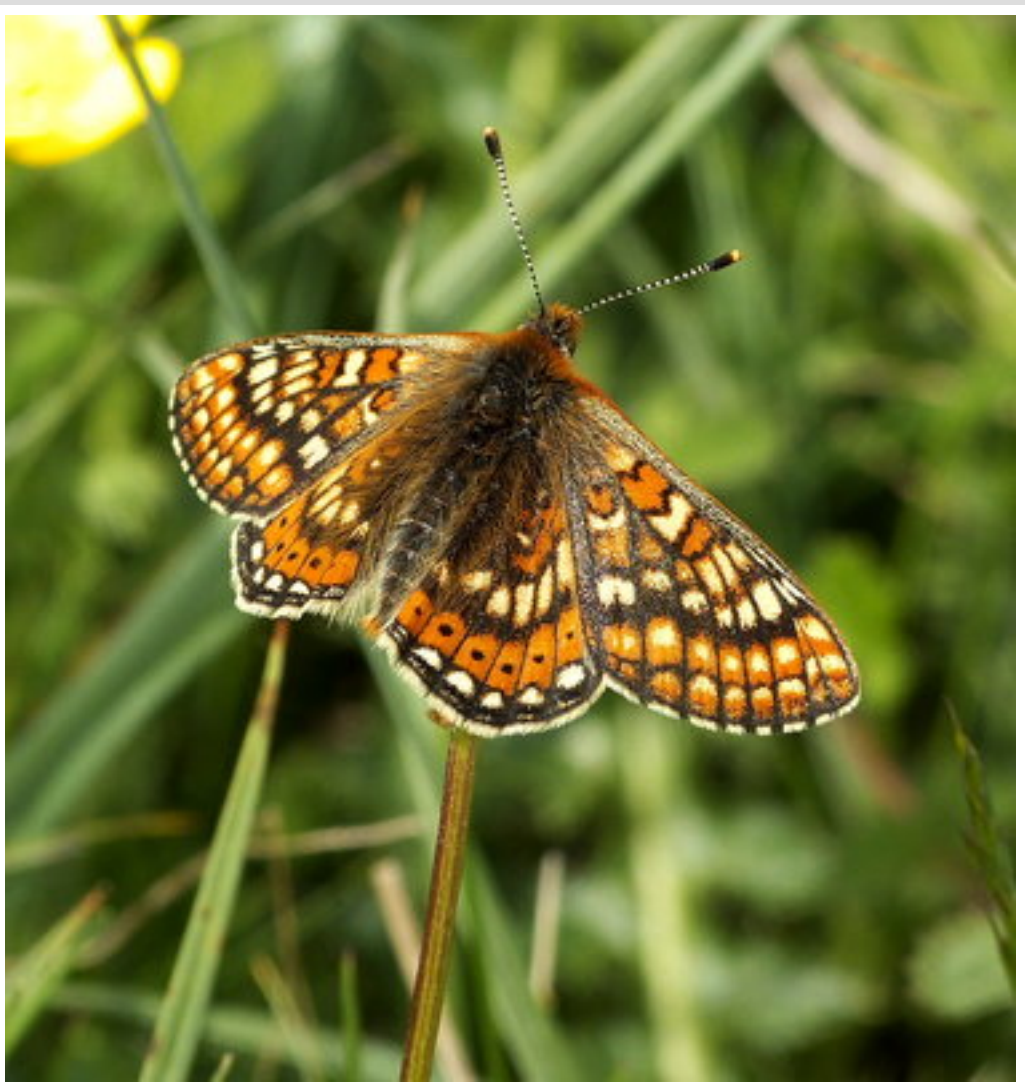
Thanks Guy for the correct ID.

Hi Mike, that's interesting that you have seen both lizards at Southbourne. I believe that both Wall Lizard and Green Lizard were introduced to the Isle of Wight, I'm not sure if the Green is still present however.

Cheers Neil, I'm sure you'll have a great time and see plenty of Glanvilles 😊

Monday 19th May

Today at an early hour we headed into deepest Dorset hoping to find some Marsh Fritillaries. Arriving at our chosen destination in warm sunshine and with a light breeze prevailing, we grabbed our cameras and headed onto the site. Within ten minutes we had seen our first Marsh Fritillaries, and how very fresh they were. The colour variations were striking, with some individuals having white cells while others had much more orange, and some were like tartan.





I managed to capture this female being pursued by an amorous male



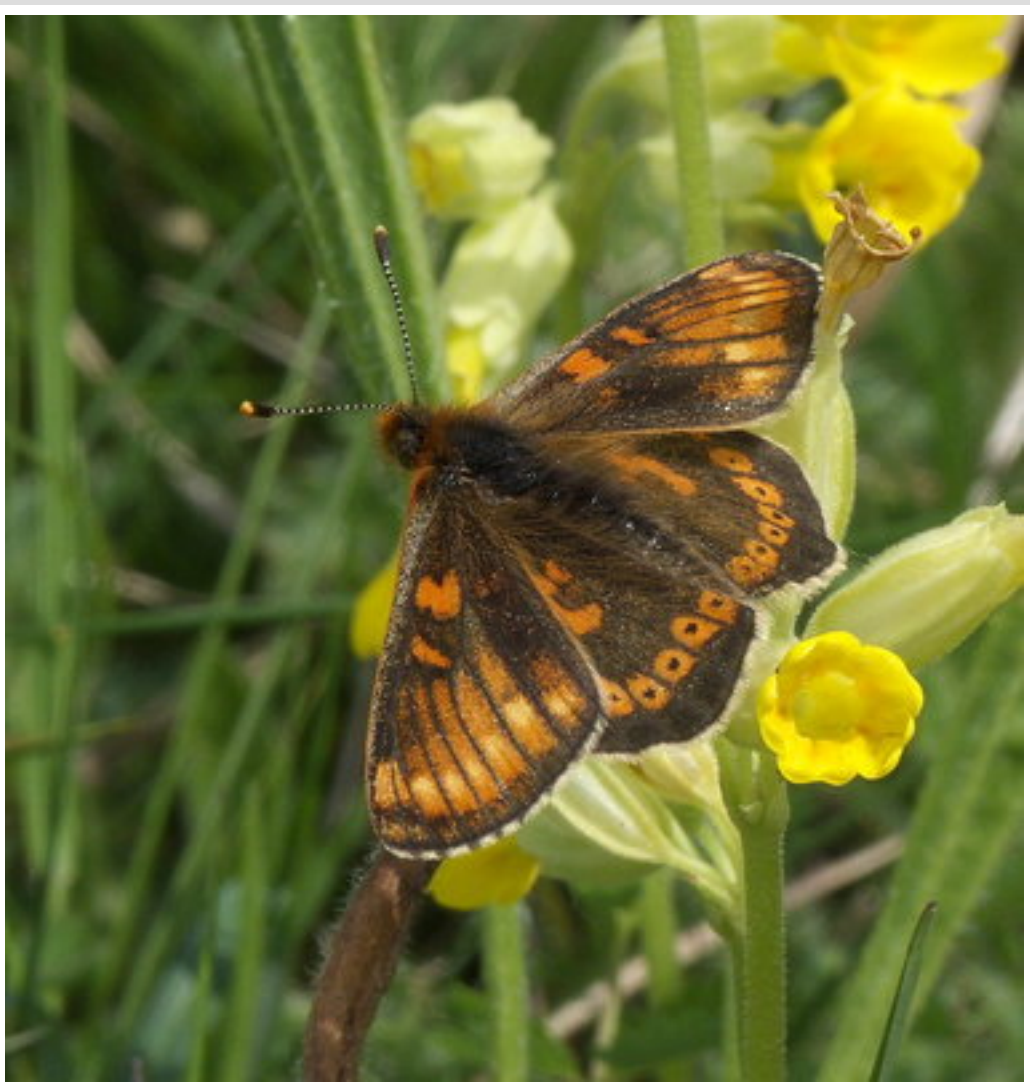
..and we also found this mating pair



It was obvious that a fair number had emerged, and we stopped counting at fifty. It was not always easy to get good shots due to their habit of landing among the grass, much of which made taking photographs difficult. Later in the morning I noticed an individual which was strikingly different. It took me quite a while just to get close enough for a record shot, and I reckoned that any other photos would be a bonus. In the past I have found that aberrant butterflies can be very difficult to approach and can also disappear in the blink of an eye, so I took my time and didn't rush things. I was exceptionally lucky to get really close, and although the butterfly was down amongst the grass most of the time, I managed to get some reasonable photos.

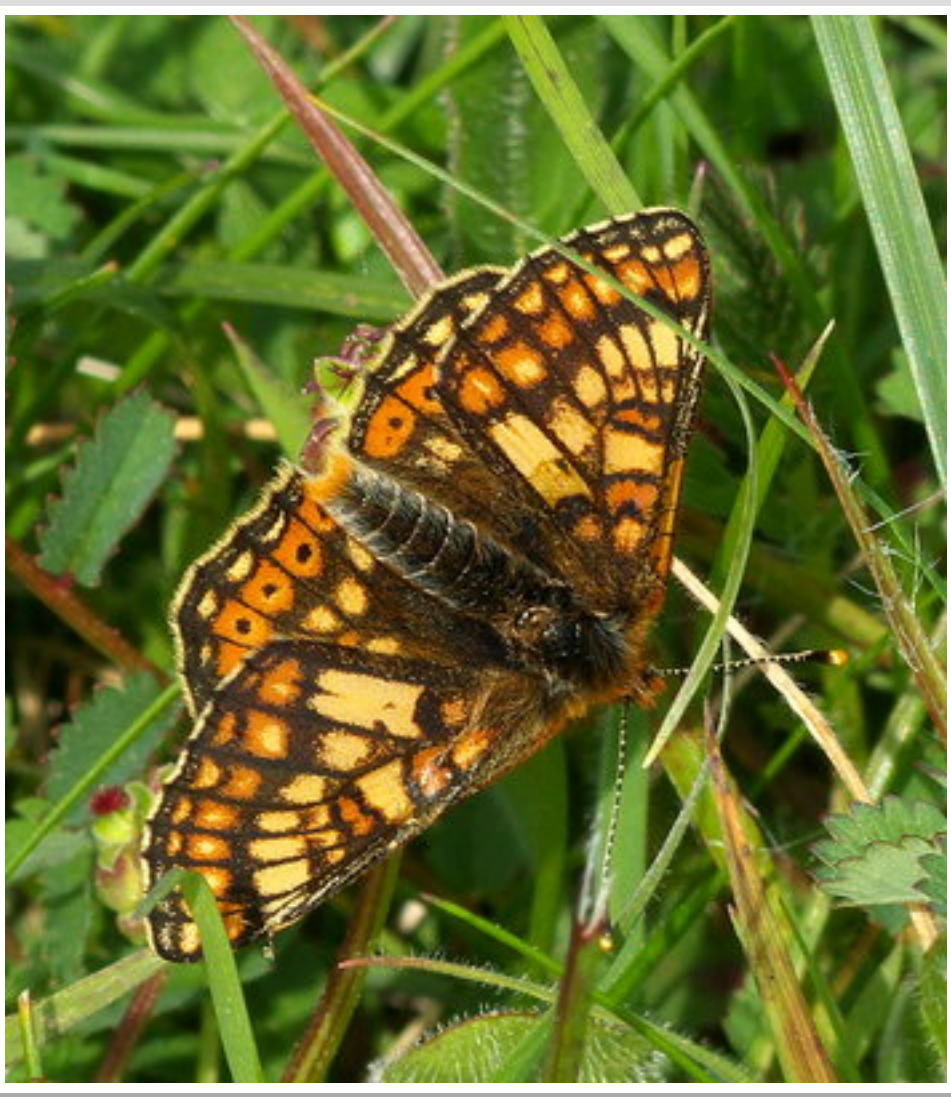


It took flight but I managed to follow it until it settled on a cowslip.



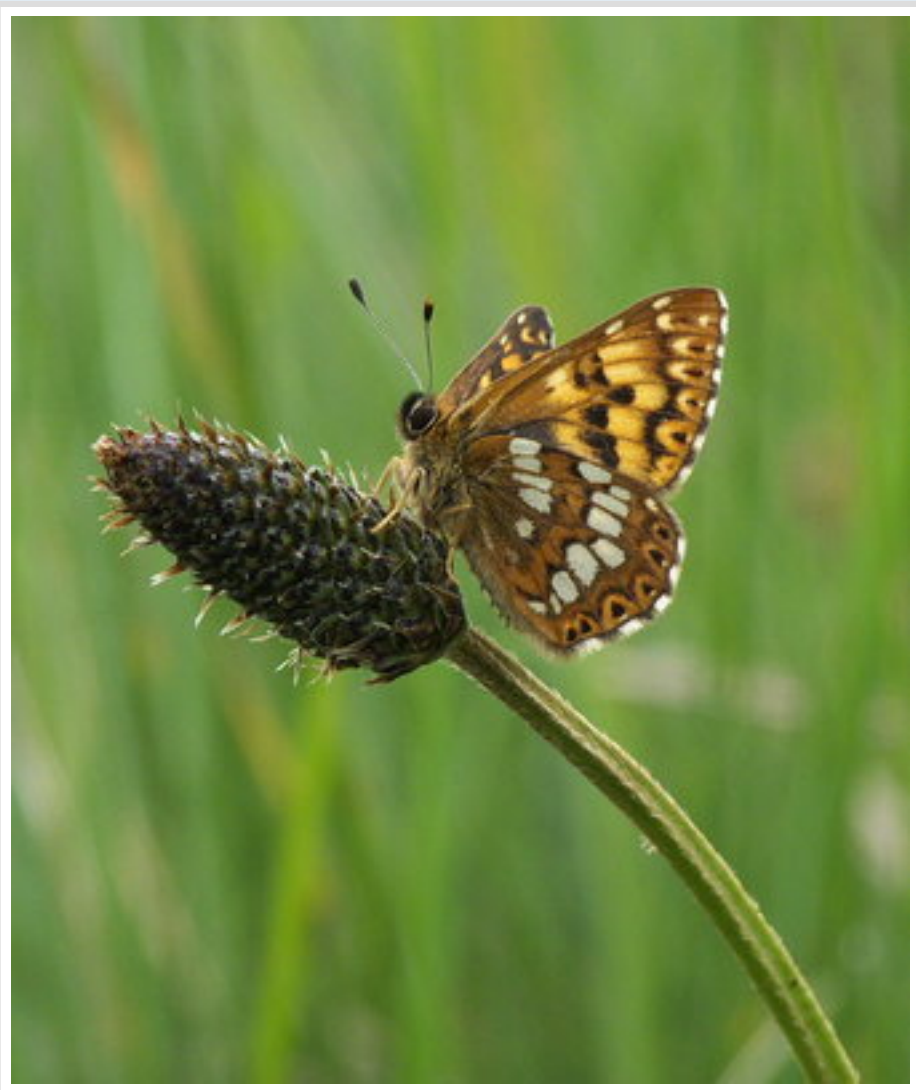
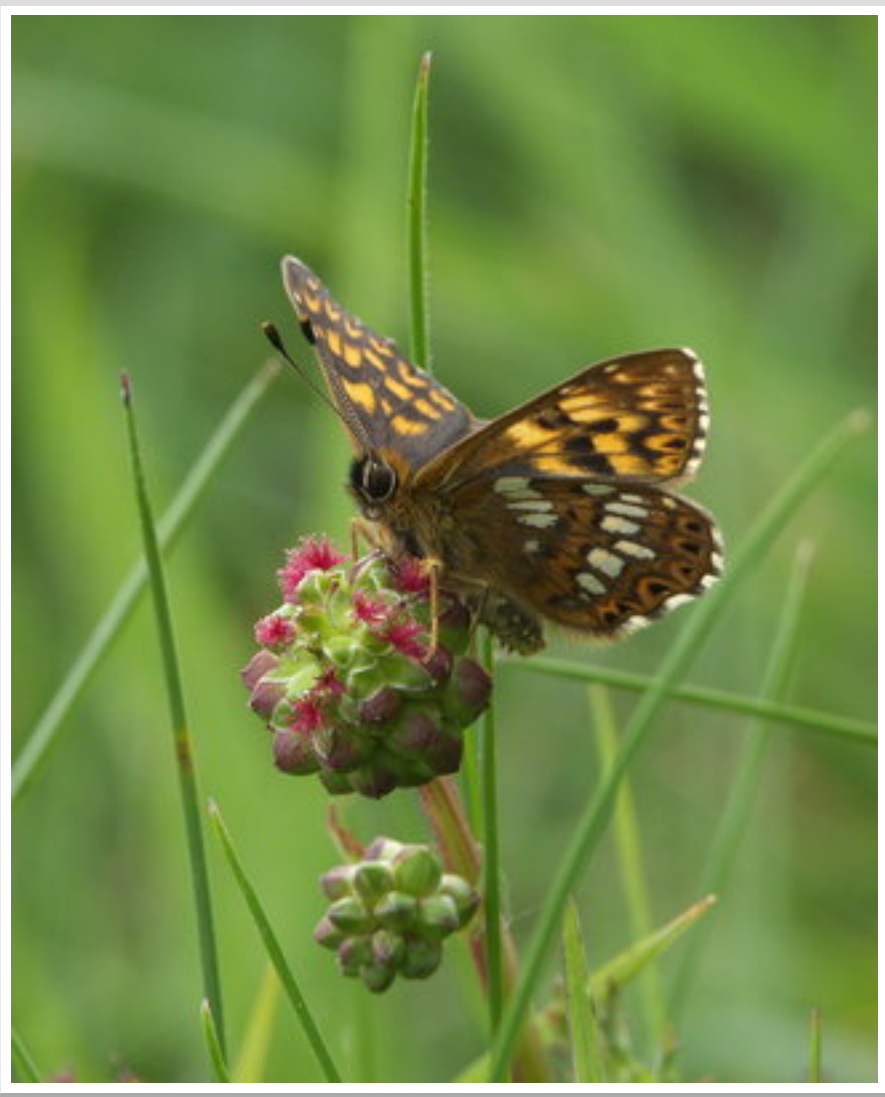
Underside shot

Suddenly without warning it took flight again and I lost sight of it for good, and despite repeated searching of the area I could not locate it. We did get a brief glimpse of another aberrant Marsh Fritillary, but once again it was obscured by grass and we were only able to get one photo.



At this point we retired to the car for refreshment. When we returned to the site the sun was obscured by cloud, and it was clear that the Marsh Fritillaries had gone to ground, probably deep in the grass. But luckily for us they were replaced by some magnificent Duke of Burgundy..





..and we even saw an ovipositing female.



We enjoyed a great day out 😊

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 22-May-14 06:47 AM GMT

Great report and photos Mike – gorgeous ab. well spotted.

Re: Maximus

by William, 22-May-14 07:11 AM GMT

Superb stuff Maximus – particularly the ovipositing Duke and that stunning aberrant 😊😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 22-May-14 12:20 PM GMT

That aberrant is an absolute stunner 😲 I was looking through my photos and thought some were a little darker but nothing anywhere near as spectacular as that Mike 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 22-May-14 11:17 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊

Thank you William 😊

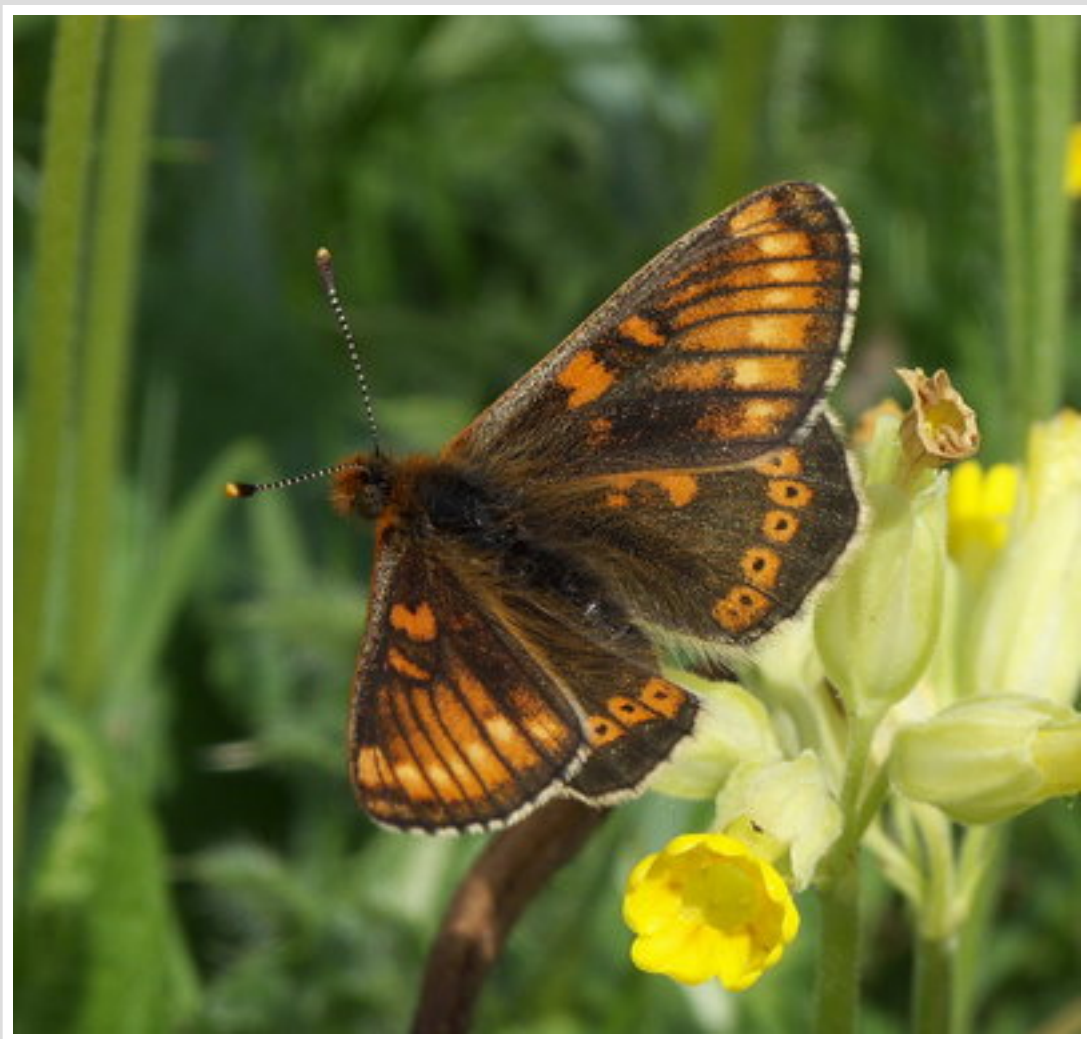
Thanks Wurzel 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 23-May-14 05:40 PM GMT

Thanks B'saurus, sorry I missed you out 😊 I can imagine how big a fan of lizards you are 😊😊

I found another shot of the Marsh Fritillary ab. we saw last Monday with its wing raised showing its markings more clearly. Looking online at the NHM Cockayne collection, it would appear that the closest match to ours is *ab. atricolor* which just has a touch more brown in the middle of the forewing.



Re: Maximus

by ABerryman, 23-May-14 06:44 PM GMT

What a fantastic looking aberration and top shots as well! 😊

Re: Maximus

by Susie, 23-May-14 08:02 PM GMT

Wow, your photos of the ab marsh frit are really stunning! 😊

Re: Maximus

by David M, 23-May-14 11:19 PM GMT

Ditto the earlier remarks – that Marsh Fritillary is incredible.

Re: Maximus

by Lee Hurrell, 24-May-14 03:30 PM GMT

I agree, what a corker. I'm off in search of my own tomorrow 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 25-May-14 05:26 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Some really great Marsh Fritillary photos there, I especially like the pair in flight and as others have said that ab. is a cracker 😊

Cracking Duke photos too. Reckon I will be missing out on both these species this year, just not going to be in the right place at the right time. Mind you, that probably means they will be on my target list next year 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Maximus

by badgerbob, 25-May-14 05:32 PM GMT

That ab. really is a stunner. Great pics as well of both the marshies and the duke!!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-May-14 01:22 AM GMT

Thanks Alex, hope you sort your Green Hairstreak eggs.

Thanks Suzie 😊

Cheers David 😊

Hope you find what you're looking for Lee 😊 😊

Thanks Neil, I really hope you see the Glanvilles 😊

Thanks Bob, your shots are stunning too 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-May-14 08:01 PM GMT

The Green-veined White ova laid on our Honesty on 21st April hatched on 7th/8th of May. Of the five larvae only one survived, with remainder probably falling to predation.



Freshly hatched larva having eaten most of his egg



Freshly hatched larva with another egg below

We protected the remaining larva which then did rather well.





Freshly moulted



4 weeks old

Re: Maximus

by David M, 28-May-14 09:59 PM GMT

Magnificent images, Maximus. I trust you'll continue to keep us updated as to their progress?

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 29-May-14 01:59 PM GMT

Thanks David.

Here's the next stage in the Green-veined White story...





Six hours old pupa on Honesty seed pod

Re: Maximus

by Willow, 29-May-14 03:04 PM GMT

Lovely report and I'm very impressed with your earlier aberrant **Marsh Fritillary** images, well spotted. Never know what's waiting out there to surprise and delight us do we Max 🙄

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 31-May-14 08:32 PM GMT

Thanks Bill, and I agree part of the pleasure is not knowing what we will find, or will find us, when we are out there 😊

This chap emerged this morning, very early I know! However with another about to emerge we will release them together where we found them.



Male Brown Hairstreak

These were from the the first two eggs we found, all our others are well behind them.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 31-May-14 10:10 PM GMT

Great photo Mike 😊 How come it emerged so early, that's almost two months earlier than the earliest? 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Jun-14 12:34 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, through inexperience and lack of indepth information on rearing Brown Hairstreaks, our first two eggs were kept in conditions which protected them against adverse weather and predation which they would have experienced in the wild, therefore they developed at a much faster rate. We now have a better understanding of their requirements and the timescales involved, having reared both Brown and Purple Hairstreaks, so that hopefully this year we will be able to rear any we may find through to adults more in synch with their wild cousins.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 01-Jun-14 06:41 AM GMT

Congratulations on your BH Mike. Some fascinating stuff in your diary recently and great photos recording the events which is not easy especially in the early stages. Good work.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-14 08:19 AM GMT

Cheers for the info Mike – I remember reading something like that – looks like you had the oven on too high 😊 It all seems very complicated so I don't think I'm ready to be looking after cats yet.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pete Eeles, 01-Jun-14 11:43 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

How come it emerged so early, that's almost two months earlier than the earliest? 🤔

I agree Wurzel – as soon as I get a moment I'm going to complete the article on captive rearing to address such easily-avoidable mistakes – since the butterflies themselves are the big losers here. I'll also discuss the justification for captive rearing (so, the ethics side of things).

EDIT: I've started a new thread here to get this out of Maximus' diary! viewtopic.php?t=7628

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Jun-14 01:37 PM GMT

Hi pete, I for one would welcome your articles on captive breeding as there is not that much **in depth** information out there at the moment on this subject.

I would also like to make it clear that the Purple Hairstreak eggs that we collected were on wind blown Oak twigs found on the ground so would have been lost anyway. The Brown Hairstreak eggs were those which missed the bonfires at Noar Hill and were found on small bits of cut Blackthorn lying on the ground, so also would also have been lost anyway! Of course I would have rather they emerged at the correct time, but there's always a learning curve involved with anything new to you, as I am sure anyone trying this for the first time would find. I also imagine that even those with far more experience than us aren't always able to get the timing right and therefore have adults emerging a month or so too early.

Thats why I look forward to your articles, as I find rearing butterflies is amazingly interesting and very rewarding.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Jun-14 02:21 PM GMT

As I was interrupted during my last posting, I wish to add that the welfare of the butterflies I am rearing, and their earlier stages, is of paramount importance to me.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Jun-14 10:59 PM GMT

We enjoyed a brilliant day out on Friday at a favourite site, in search of first brood Adonis Blues. Although it was fairly breezy and overcast we were not disappointed as it was full of Adonis, along with many other species of beautiful butterflies.



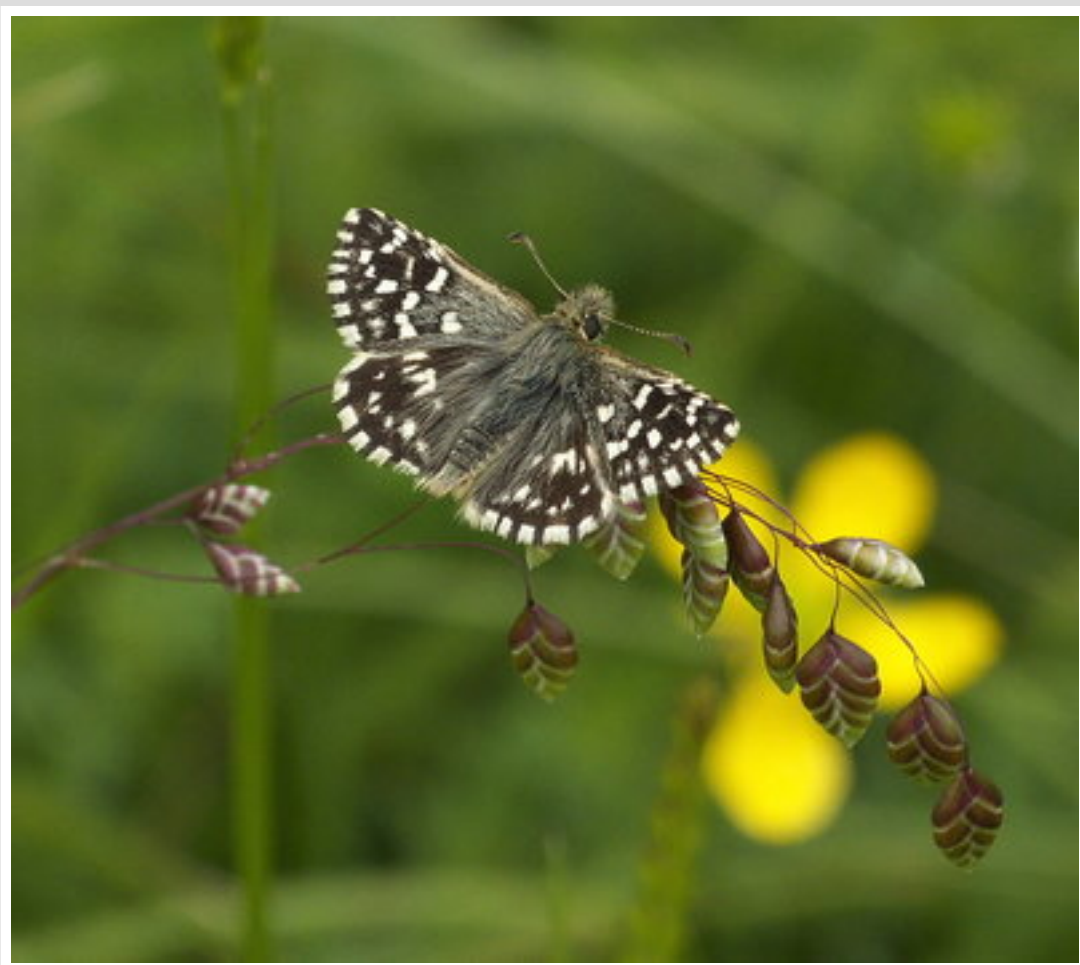
It was the females however which stole the show, in varying shades of blue..







Other butterflies we saw included this beautiful Grizzled Skipper..



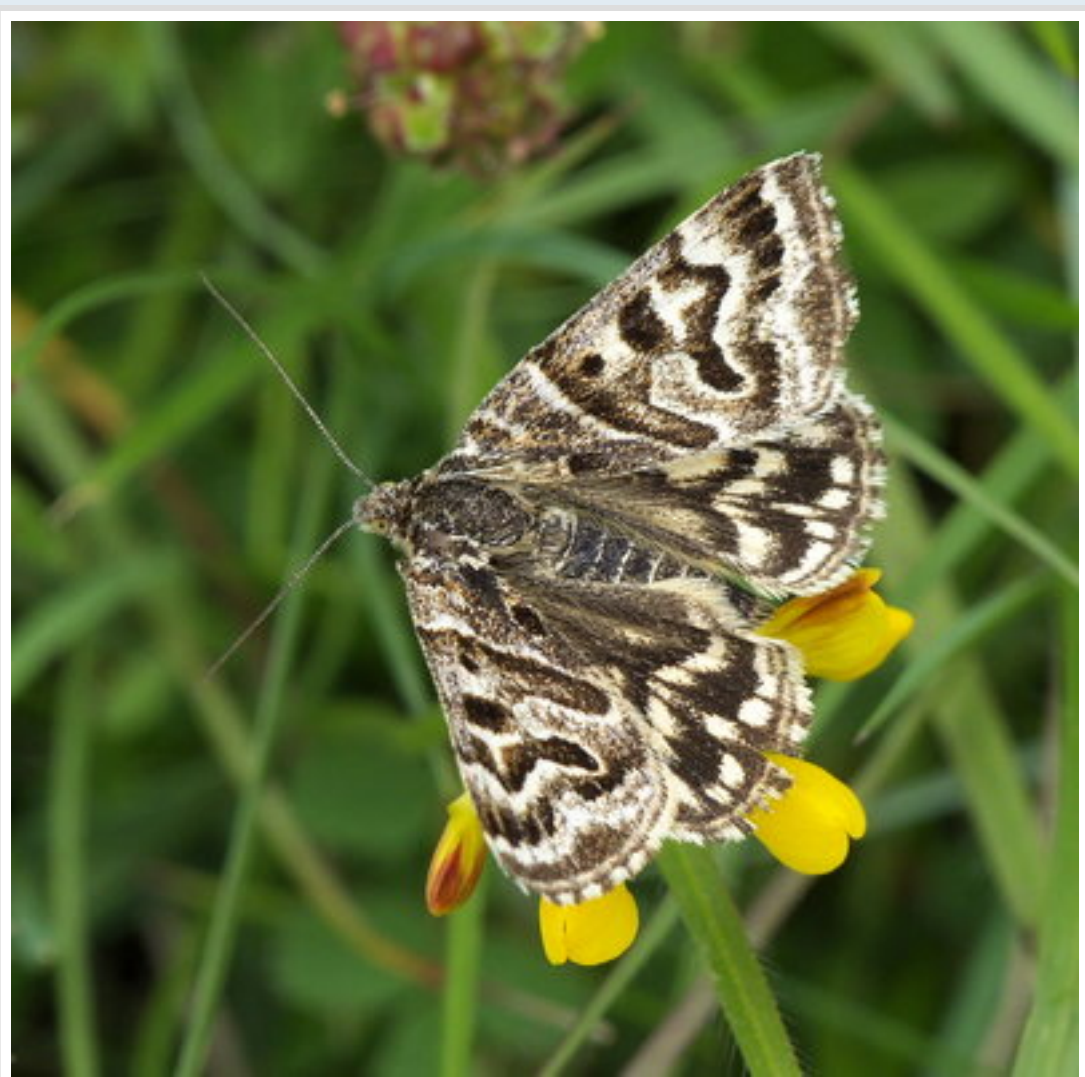
...and this lovely Dingy Skipper..



and two sharing the same roost..



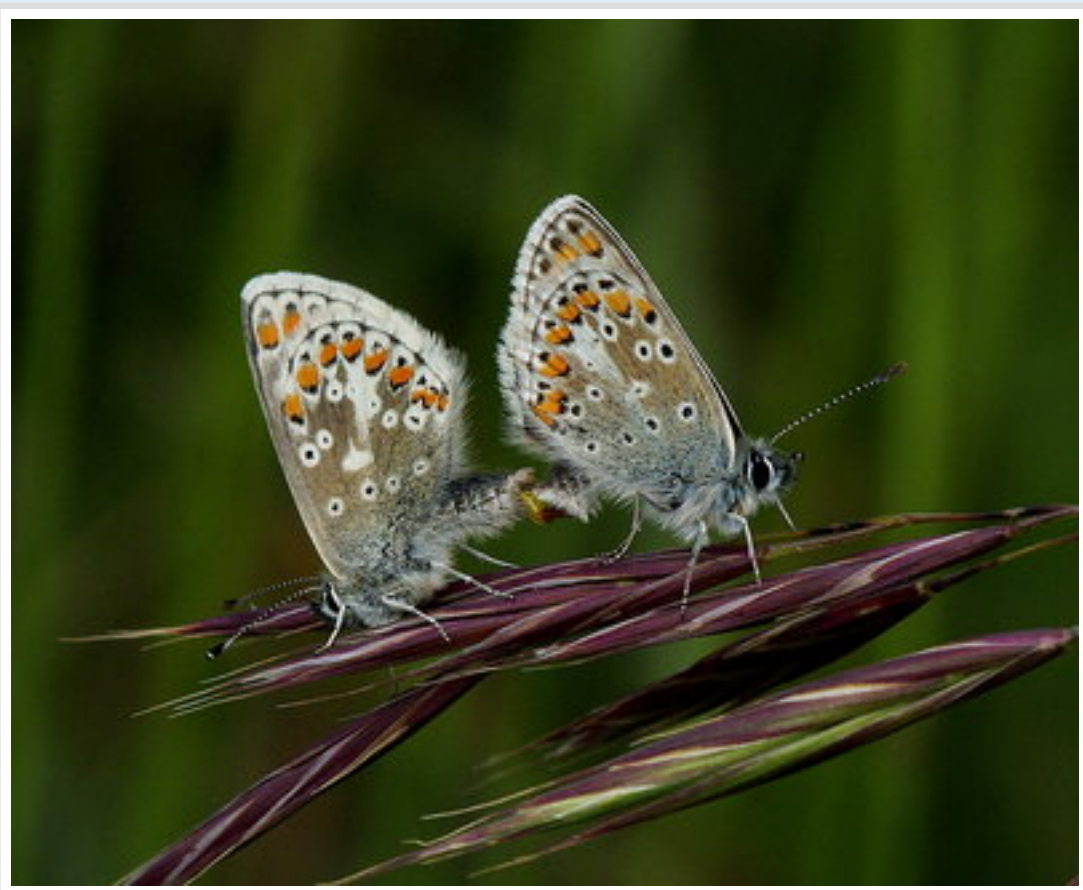
Mother Shipton moth..



Superb male Common Blue..



and a pair of Brown Argus prior to mating and eventually mating..



Re: Maximus

by David M, 01-Jun-14 11:26 PM GMT

Some lovely images there, Maximus.

Overcast days can often turn out unexpectedly well for those wishing to get quality images of the butterflies on site.

Re: Maximus

by Willow, 02-Jun-14 02:37 PM GMT

Ditto on everything David mentions above Mike...lovely stuff 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

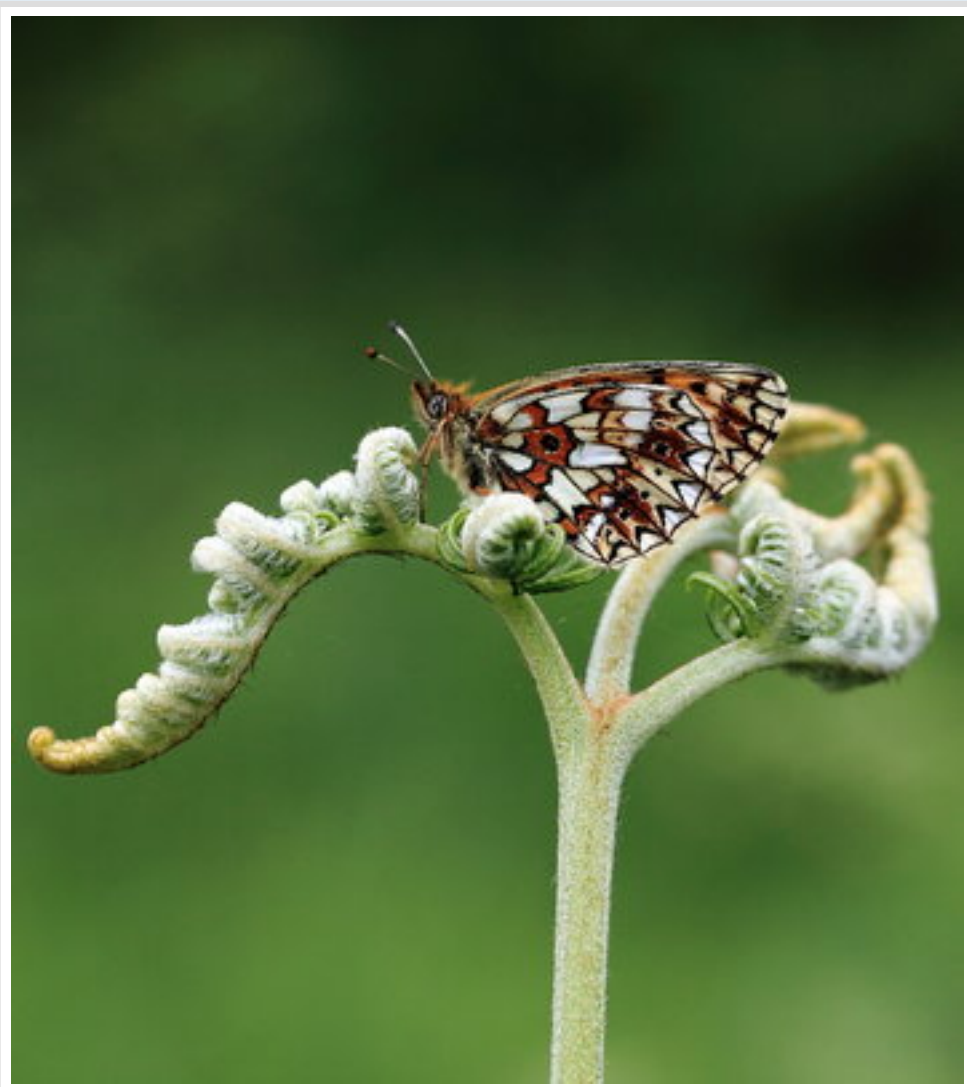
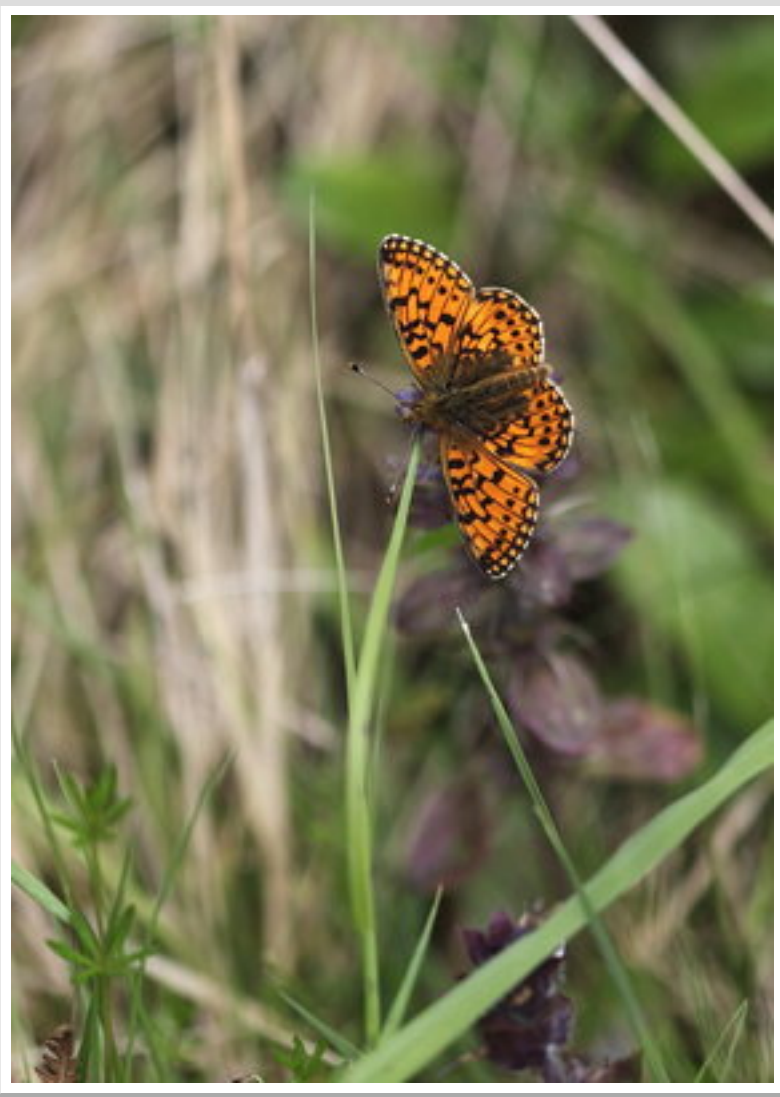
Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 02-Jun-14 08:50 PM GMT

Thanks David and Bill, I agree that overcast days as long as they are reasonably bright, can give a nice even diffused light, which often helps in producing quality images.

We paid an afternoon visit to Bentley which was as usual rather busy, which normally we would try to avoid. However we wanted to see some Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and this would probably be our best opportunity to do so. The entrance to the Eastern clearing was very muddy but once in the first SPBF's appeared. Some were very fresh, and although it was overcast they were nectaring on Bugle..





..while others were beginning to show signs of wear.



We also saw our first Large Skipper of 2014..



Re: Maximus

by Lee Hurrell, 02-Jun-14 11:00 PM GMT

Lovely female Adonis shots, Mike!

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-14 11:39 PM GMT

Great Small Pearls Mike – especially the second shot 📹 Bentley can get busy at this time of year but you can see Small Pearls outside the Eastern Clearing along the rides and not many people venture out of the Clearing 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 04-Jun-14 06:53 PM GMT

Cheers Lee 😊

Cheers Wurzel, next time I visit I'll look along the rides 😊

A couple of 'blue' Common Blue females have visited our garden recently, using the buttercups we left in the lawn for nectar, I'm not sure where these Blues originate from.



Quite a lot of blue



The most blue I've seen on a female Common Blue!

This was her before I spent a quick ten minutes in photoshop, not perfect as can be seen, but I felt she should have the missing part of her hindwing back, shame she was damaged.



I only put back what was missing 😊 she really was that blue 😊 Common Blue females seem to be bluer this year!

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jun-14 07:15 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

... she really was that blue 😊 Common Blue females seem to be bluer this year!

There does seem to be an uncommon number of Blue female Common Blues around this year 😊

Some lovely photos in the last few posts Mike, great stuff.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 05-Jun-14 09:49 PM GMT

Just catching up Mike – you're posting some lovely photos. I really like the last female Adonis with open wings and I particularly like the 3rd SPBF 🇮🇹 I wish I could perform minor miracles with photoshop – she is certainly the bluest female I have seen.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 05-Jun-14 11:07 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

There does seem to be an uncommon number of Blue female Common Blues around this year.

Indeed. I don't know whether it's just that people have suddenly become more 'tuned in' to these insects or if 2014 is the year of the blue female *icarus*. Sadly I haven't seen anything as spectacular in my part of the world but I will keep looking.

Re: Maximus

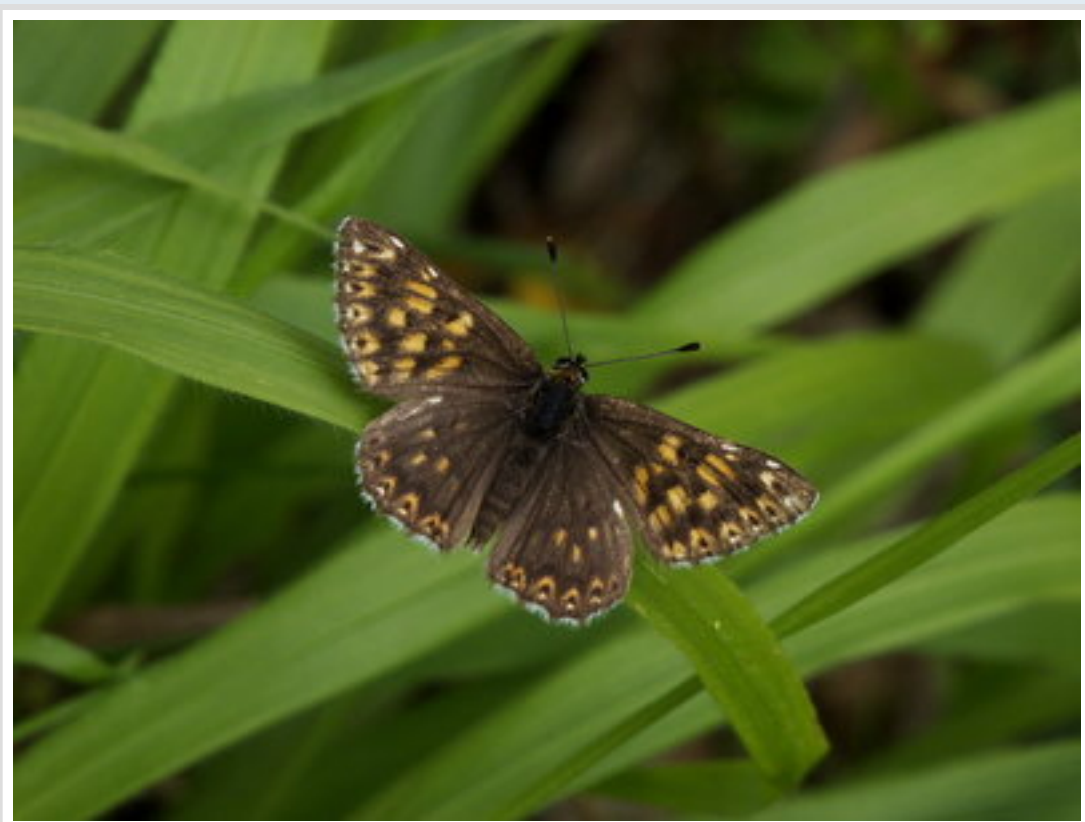
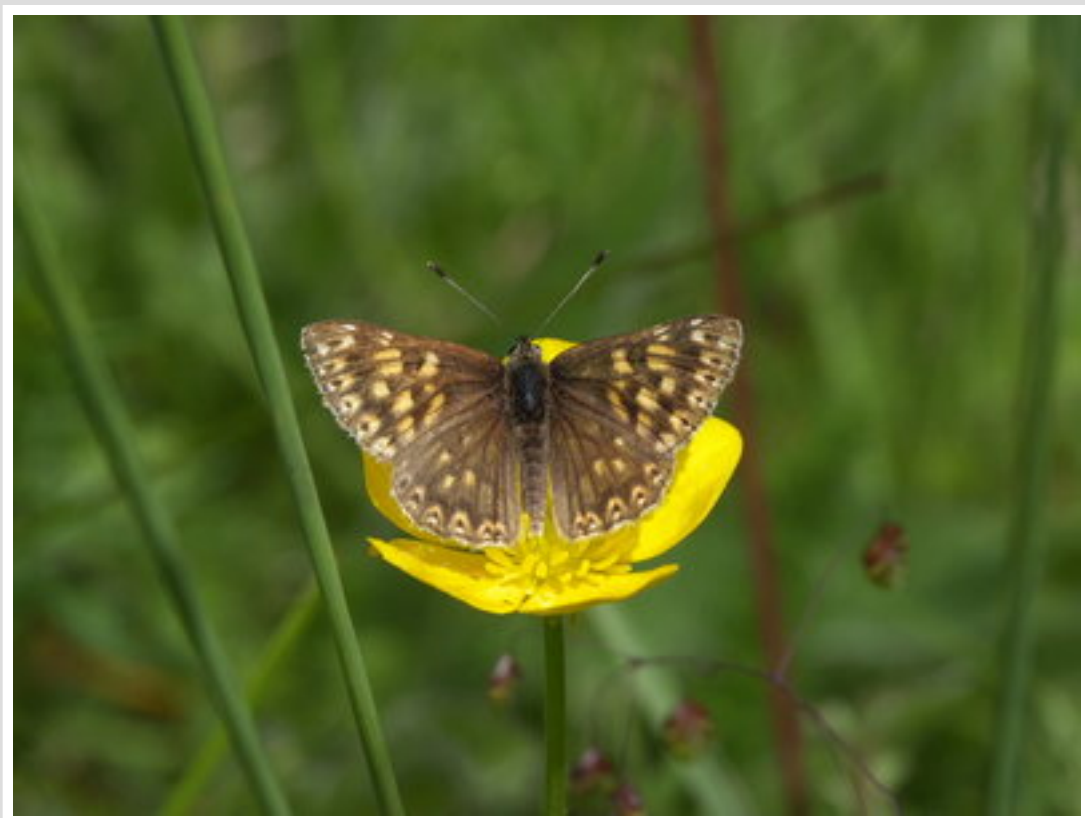
by Maximus, 06-Jun-14 10:15 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, very well put 😊

Thank you Pauline, glad you liked the Adonis and SPFB, photoshop is a powerful tool 😊

David, I think it's the year of blue female *icarus*.

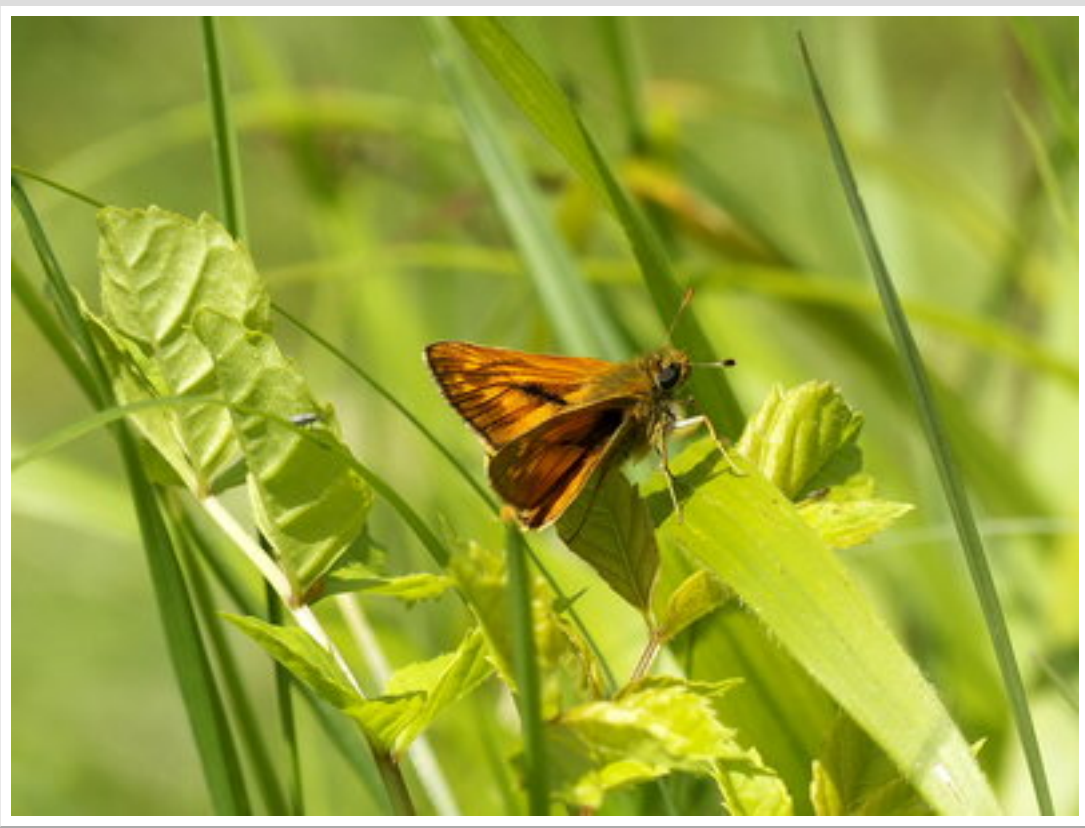
Today we visited a site in Hampshire, but our visit which was squeezed in between our other commitments was between midday and 3pm. We therefore found that all of the butterflies we saw were hyperactive in the hot sun, which made taking photos very difficult. We did however manage to record thirteen species which we were very pleased with. The Dukes were still battling anything which intruded into their territory and were not in bad shape given the date.



The Common Blues were stunning and included a mating pair..



The Large Skippers really fresh..



The Small Heaths were not always easy to photograph off the ground..



But the star of the show was this male Clouded Yellow, but we unfortunately only managed some record shots as it flew around the site at a rate of knots..



Pauline's Clouded Yellow seen at what I believe to be the same site, appears to be a female – so there were at least two, hope this heralds a CY invasion 😊

Re: Maximus

by Willow, 07-Jun-14 03:45 PM GMT

Some lovely shots Mike, and I do believe your being rather modest, you have to get the shot before you do anything at all in Photoshop...and you've got the shots 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-14 11:13 PM GMT

Great report and shots Mike 😊 Great to see the Cloudies 🍄 are making an appearance already which bodes well fingers crossed 😊 Love the first Small Heath shot really makes it look like a grizzled old man on the back porch 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 09-Jun-14 08:40 PM GMT

Thanks Bill 😊

Thanks Wurzel, my fingers are well crossed as regards the CY's 😊 Glad you like the Small grizzled Heath 😊😊

This was our Green-veined White pupa at 10 days old, revealing signs of the butterfly inside..



..and this was the pupa at 9.30 this morning..



..as I gently turned the pot containing the Honesty plant, this beauty was revealed..



..a beautiful female Green-veined White.



Close up of wing detail



Close up

90 minutes later, having already flown to the window indoors she was released into our garden where she flew strongly away and to a great height until she was lost from our view 😊

Re: Maximus

by Katrina, 09-Jun-14 09:28 PM GMT

Wonderful photos – very interesting to see.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 09-Jun-14 09:51 PM GMT

Stunning.

What a beautiful insect.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-14 11:44 PM GMT

Wow fantastic stuff Mike 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Willow, 10-Jun-14 12:46 PM GMT

Simply wonderful Mike!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 11-Jun-14 04:54 PM GMT

Some beautiful and enviable photos there Mike. You should feel proud of yourself 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 14-Jun-14 12:50 AM GMT

Thanks Katrina, she was a beautiful GVW 😊

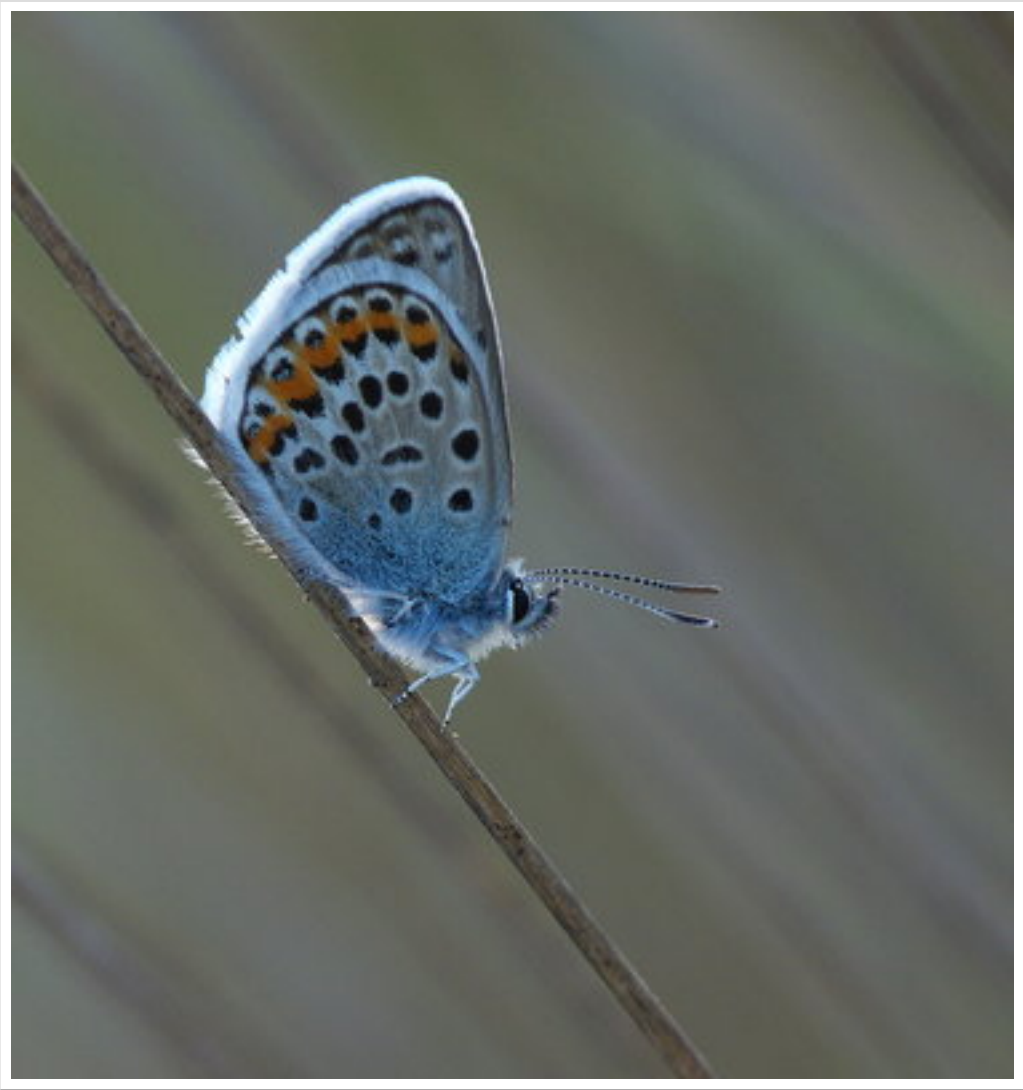
She was a beautiful insect indeed David 😊

Glad you liked her Wurzel 😊

Thanks Bill 😊

Thank you Pauline 😊

A couple of shots of local Silver-studded Blues which are only just beginning to emerge, so far all males..



Re: Maximus

by Mike Robinson, 14-Jun-14 11:35 AM GMT

Lovely pictures &c.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-14 08:17 PM GMT

Beautiful Silver Studs Mike 😊 I'm hopefully going to find a few tomorrow, fingers crossed.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 16-Jun-14 09:58 PM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊

Thanks Wurzel, hope you got to see some SSB's 😊

A quick visit to Alice Holt forest today gave us three new species for 2014.



Beautiful Camilla

Ringlets with varying amounts of spots on the forewing..





Meadow Brown..



..and Speckled Wood..

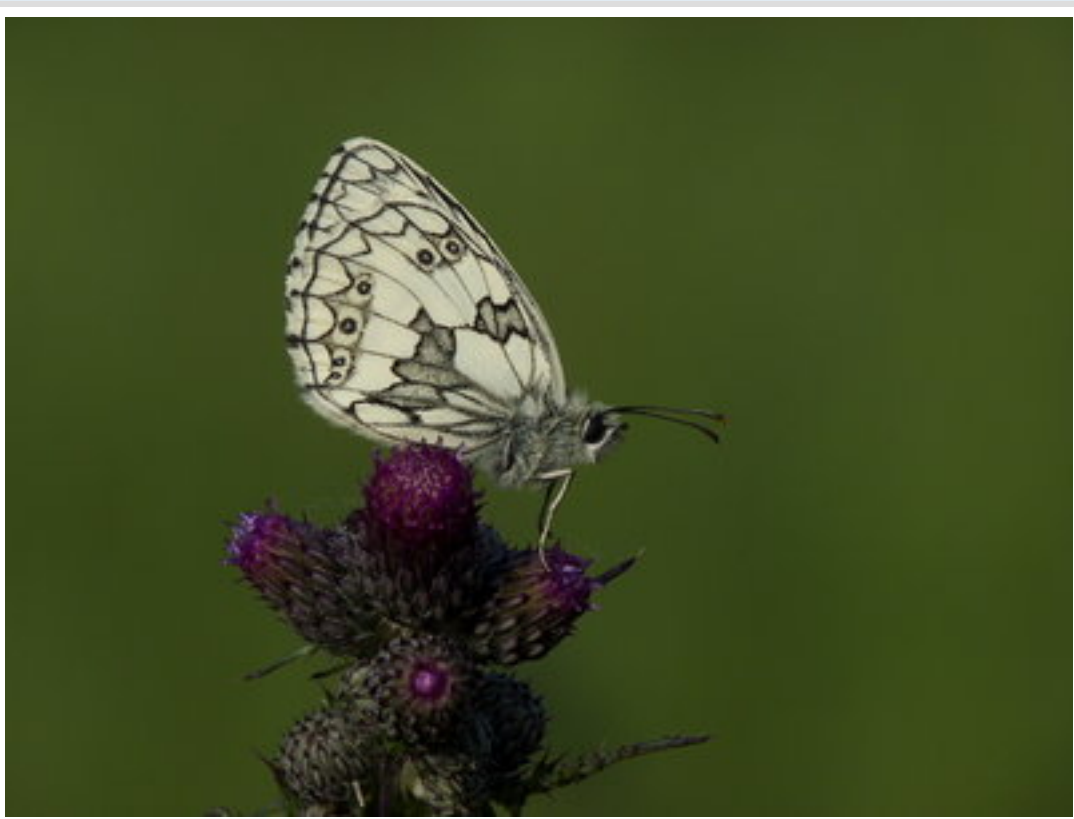


We also saw 2 Silver-washed Fritillaries but did not get a chance of a photo. Our total count was 2 White Admirals, 2 SWF, 4 Ringlets, 5 Speckled Woods, 2 Red Admirals, 1 Large Skipper, 2 Meadow Browns and 1 Small Tortoiseshell.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Jun-14 12:08 AM GMT

Today we saw some local freshly emerged male Marbled Whites, and what stunning butterflies they are. These are the first of this species we have seen in 2014 😊





Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-14 09:33 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

Today we saw some local freshly emerged male Marbled Whites, and what stunning butterflies they are...

Hi Mike,

I agree, There is something about the simplicity of black and white that is really appealing. Marbled Whites are my son Chris's favourite butterfly.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-14 10:09 PM GMT

I too agree Mike – stunning butterflies, and excellent camera fodder 😊 Thanks for the good wishes Mike – they seemed to pay off with my first Marbled Whites, Small Skipper, Ringlets, Silver Studs, DGFs and Lulworth Skippers this weekend – any chance you can do me the same favour for Large Blues and Purple Emperors? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 18-Jun-14 11:04 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

I agree, There is something about the simplicity of black and white that is really appealing. Marbled Whites are my son Chris's favourite butterfly.

Couldn't agree more. Marbled Whites are SO distinctive but at the same time they are highly beautiful and redolent of long, midsummer days when the grass is long and nature is in its prime.

They are ephemeral flying chessboards and I never get tired of seeing them.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 20-Jun-14 12:13 AM GMT

Hi Neil, I'm not surprised they are your son's favourites, simply black and white and gorgeous 😊

Great camera fodder Wurzel, my good wishes extend to Large Blue, to add to your tally 😊

I agree David, i'll never tire of seeing Marbled Whites, midsummer butterflies at thir best 😊

Silver-studded Blues are now beginning to emerge in greater numbers with some beautiful females now to be seen..





..and also some freshly emerged males now on the wing..





Nice to finally meet you Philzoid 😊

Re: Maximus

by Willow, 20-Jun-14 11:33 PM GMT

Some really lovely images on your recent reports Mike 😊 its great to catch up with them.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-14 11:37 PM GMT

Great Silver Studs Mike 😊 I love the oily sheen that you see on the females 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 27-Jun-14 11:30 AM GMT

Thanks Bill, your a real gent 😊

Thanks Wurzel, I love that sheen on the females too 😊

Blue Heaven

We'd been planning a trip to see the Large Blue at either Collard Hill in Somerset or Daneway Bank in Gloucestershire for a while and, spurred on by the reports of others on this forum and the recent spell of good weather, we decided to throw caution to the wind and take our tent with us on a trip to Daneway, situated in a beautiful location in the Cotswold Hills. We arrived early Monday evening, having driven in scorching sunshine and 26 degrees C, only to find it bucketing with rain and a drop in temperature to 16 degrees C, necessitating an hour's wait in the car for the weather to improve enough to erect our tent! The campsite is in a field adjacent to the Daneway Inn, a fantastic 17th Century pub serving a well kept pint of Wadworth's 6X !! After a good night's sleep we were awoken early Tuesday morning by the wonderful dawn chorus. We were then up and outside the tent, cooking breakfast on our camp stove in the early morning sunshine, which we wolfed down in a hurry as we were keen to get onto the reserve. As we entered Daneway Bank through the gate a few yards up the road from the Inn, we found ourselves on the stunning south facing hillside filled with wild flowers, practically each one accommodating a busily nectaring butterfly. There were dozens of Marbled Whites, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, Small Heaths, and the occasional manic Dark Green Fritillary bombing through the landscape at top speed. Although we were surrounded by all these gorgeous butterflies, we'd specifically come to see the Large Blues, and so moved on further into the reserve. It wasn't long before we were rewarded with the sight of our first Large Blue of the day, nectaring on some Wild Thyme on the other side of a wire fence. The scorching sunshine meant conditions for getting a good photograph of the butterflies were challenging, but we eventually managed to find a few obliging individuals...





Female ovipositing on Wild Thyme



Female ovipositing on Wild Marjoram, we found the egg in the floret afterwards



This individual had very much reduced spotting on the forewings!

The second day began as hot as the first, and we found conditions on the bank very similar to the previous day. However, at around 2pm some thin cloud coverage cooled it down a little giving some hazy sunshine. This changed things dramatically, as now the Large Blues began to fully open their wings..





Daneway Bank

Despite being fodder for the numerous resident horseflies at Daneway Bank, we thoroughly enjoyed our two days there, especially having seen the Large Blues, which we hadn't seen since 2012 on a visit to Collard Hill 😊

Re: Maximus

by David M, 27-Jun-14 06:07 PM GMT

There's an interesting degree of variation in those specimens, Mike. The almost 'blind' one is particularly appealing.

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 27-Jun-14 10:32 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

great photos of the Large Blue opened wing shots. Your photography skills has certainly done this beautiful insect justice. Excellent stuff. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-14 11:35 PM GMT

Brill Mike 😊, great sequence of shots and the degree of variation is really interesting I didn't suspect that they'd as much. I need to look into Daneway Banks for next year as Collard seems to have had a bad few years 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jun-14 08:31 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

Some really stunning shots there – you did very well! 😊. That aberrant specimen (ab. *alconides*?) is an exceptional butterfly. Some of the other open wing shots warrant comment in their own right. Brilliant set of pics.

BWs, Neil

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 28-Jun-14 04:56 PM GMT

Hi Cathy, Mike

When your diary went quiet I thought you must be away looking at some very special butterfly and you have managed to get some very special shots which certainly do it justice – I always find the Large Blue a difficult butterfly to get a decent photo of so you must be feeling very pleased and rightly so



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 29-Jun-14 09:43 PM GMT

Yes David the variation is great, and the individual with reduced upper forewing markings I now know to be ab *alconides*

Hi Nick how are you doing? We miss your input into this forum 😊 Thank you for your great comments 😊

Thank you Neil for your very positive feedback, it's much appreciated, and thanks also for the ID of the ab. *alconides*. The photos were taken over two twelve hour days and involved loads of legwork 😊

Thank you Pauline, you are right, we snuck away to see the very special Large Blues and are extremely happy with the photos we got 😊

Having had a chance to sort through the photos, here are a few more of both Large Blue and some of the other butterflies we saw at Daneway..





abalconides

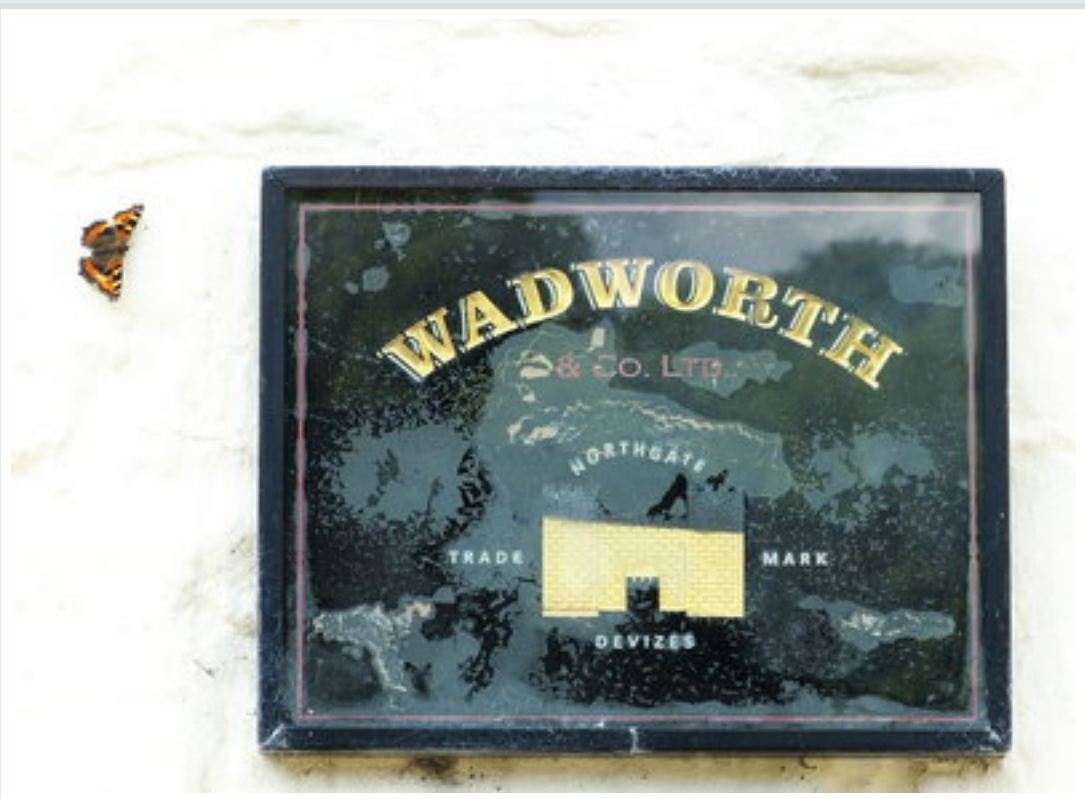


abalconides





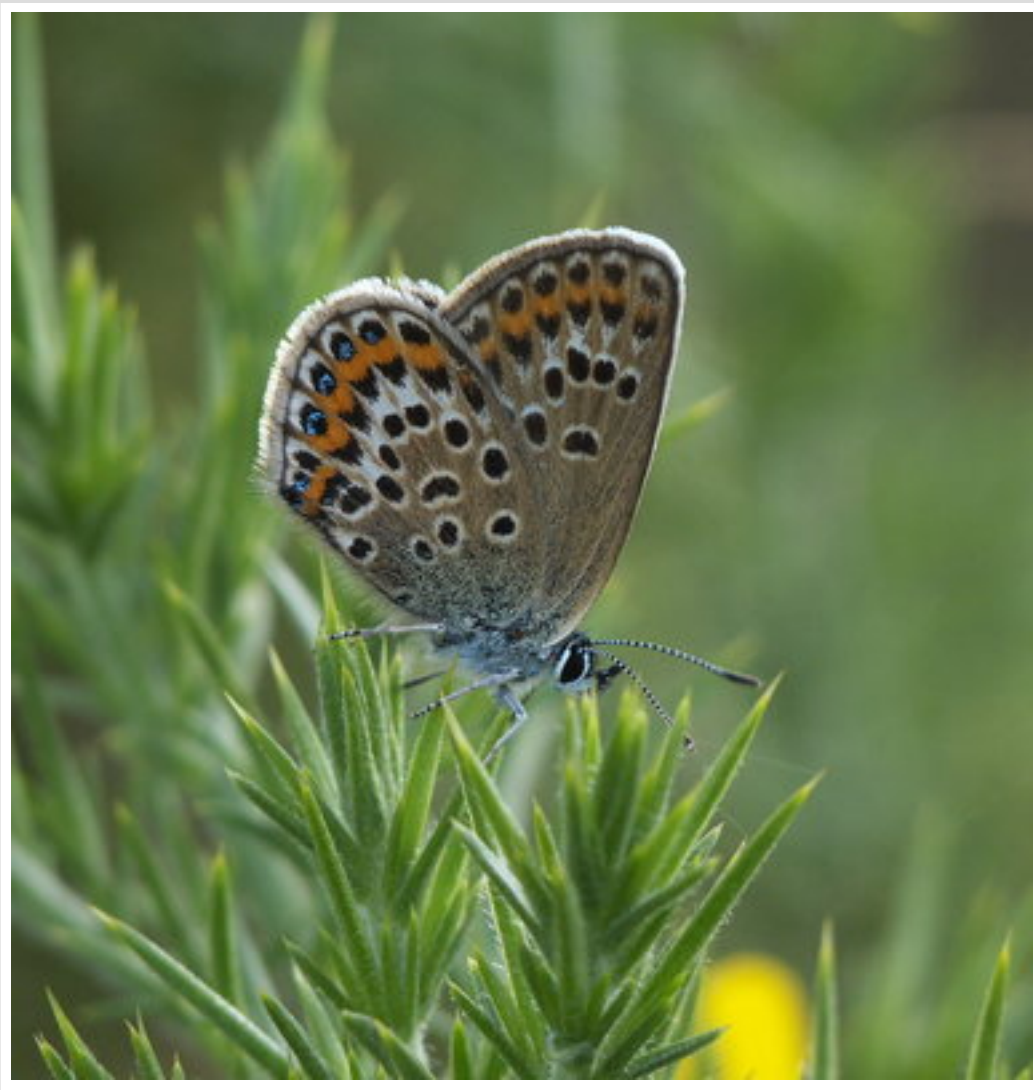




Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 30-Jun-14 01:19 AM GMT

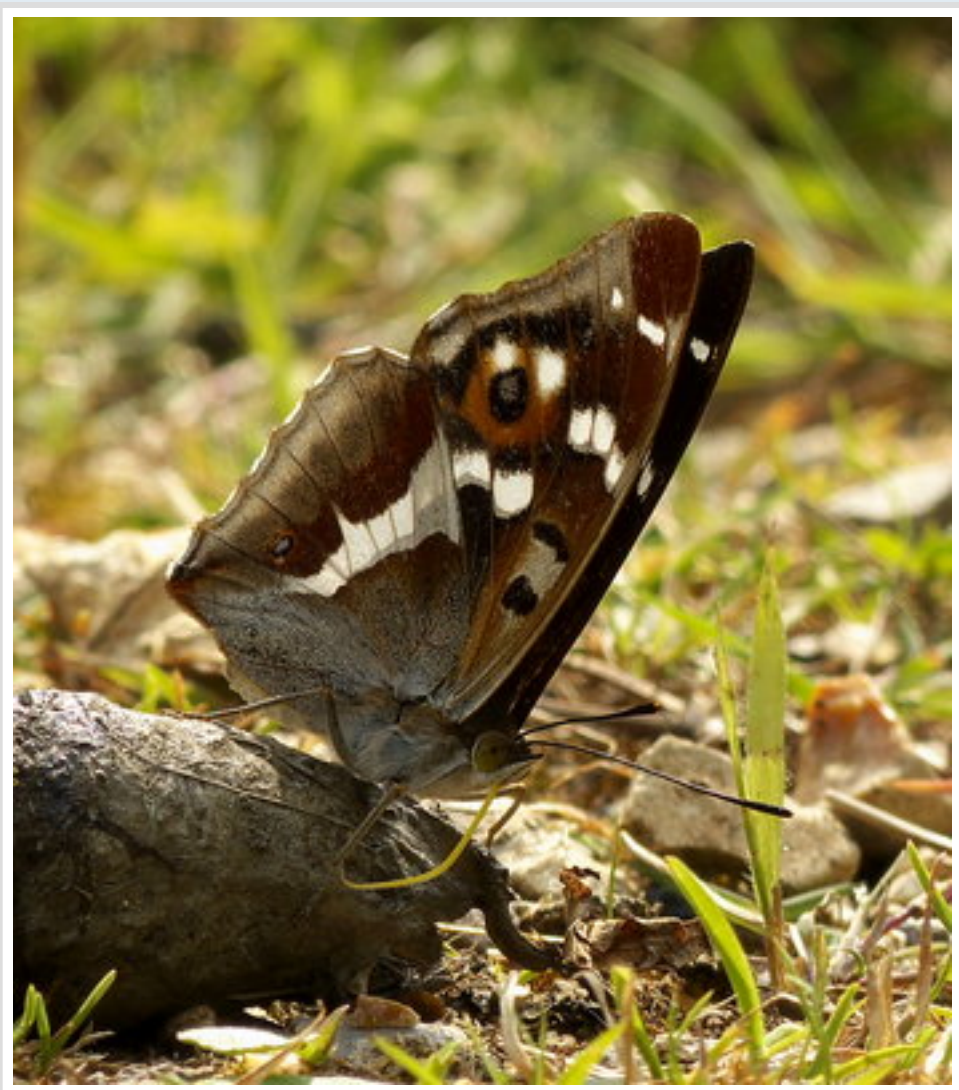
Today we visited a local heathland site where there is a colony of Silver-studded Blues and found some lovely females which had recently emerged. Although it was windy we managed to get a few photos..



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 30-Jun-14 10:57 PM GMT

We decided at the last minute on a trip to Chiddingfold this afternoon to try and break our duck and find a grounded Purple Emperor. Unfortunately the weather was overcast when we arrived at the Botany Bay entrance but we pressed on regardless. A few hours walking the forest rides revealed plenty of Ringlets still flying in the cool conditions, some Large Skippers, our first Small Skippers of 2014 and a couple of White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries. At about 4pm it brightened up so we made our way back to the triangle area where we had met a young chap earlier in the afternoon. He was not there but as I looked down the ride I saw him waving his hands in the air. We made our way quickly along and found him already photographing a grounded male PE. The PE was on the ground for 45 minutes giving us all ample time to take photos, and even a passing dog walker did not disturb him! Eventually, however, he took flight, spiralling up into a nearby Oak, leaving us more than satisfied at our first fully grounded sighting of 'His Imperial Majesty'.





Re: Maximus

by millerd, 30-Jun-14 11:17 PM GMT

Nice photos, Maximus. That's neither of the butterflies I saw there the day before, but the perch on which he is sitting looks very familiar... A popular venue. 😊

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 01-Jul-14 05:49 AM GMT

'All things come to he who waits!' – wish I'd hung on another 30 mins. Great shots that saved you the trip to fermyn 🍷

Re: Maximus

by Pete Eeles, 01-Jul-14 10:18 AM GMT

"Neil Hulme" wrote:

Hi Mike,

Some really stunning shots there – you did very well! 😊. That aberrant specimen (ab. *alconides*?) is an exceptional butterfly. Some of the other open wing shots warrant comment in their own right. Brilliant set of pics.

BWs, Neil

Totally agree with Neil – superb photos and that aberration is something else!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-14 10:19 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Mike 😊😊, I would have been very envious if I hadn't have found my first Hedge Browns of 2014 on the same day 😊 What am I saying whilst I do have a 'thing ' for Hedge Browns they are no comparison for those Hiss Nibbs shots 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Willrow, 03-Jul-14 01:05 PM GMT

Can only concur with all the positive comments you've received Mike, excellent Daneway 'hol' report and your spot on about all the good things mentioned about the inn and the lovely countryside surrounding it, the Stroud Valleys are simply excellent for butterflies 😊 and hardy camping enthusiasts 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Maximus

by Hoggers, 03-Jul-14 03:46 PM GMT

I thoroughly enjoy your diary, Mike, particularly the Daneway Banks expedition under canvass. I haven't chanced camping in over 30 years– all I remember is getting about 30 minutes sleep the whole night and waking up in the morning with a bad back and having been eaten alive by mozzies..! But if I'd seen Large Blues the way you did I'd have been chuffed.

I think Stroud was where Laurie Lee grew up and where he set "Cider with Rosie", so I bet it's a beautiful part of the world.

Best Wishes,

Hoggers.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Jul-14 12:24 AM GMT

Thanks Dave, the 'Gorilla's finger' must be a well used perch and feeding place for Chiddingfolds PE population 😊

Thanks Pauline, glad you got your Emperor in the end 😊

Cheers Pete, it was a great two days, finding the aberration was just a case of being in the right place, at the right time 😊

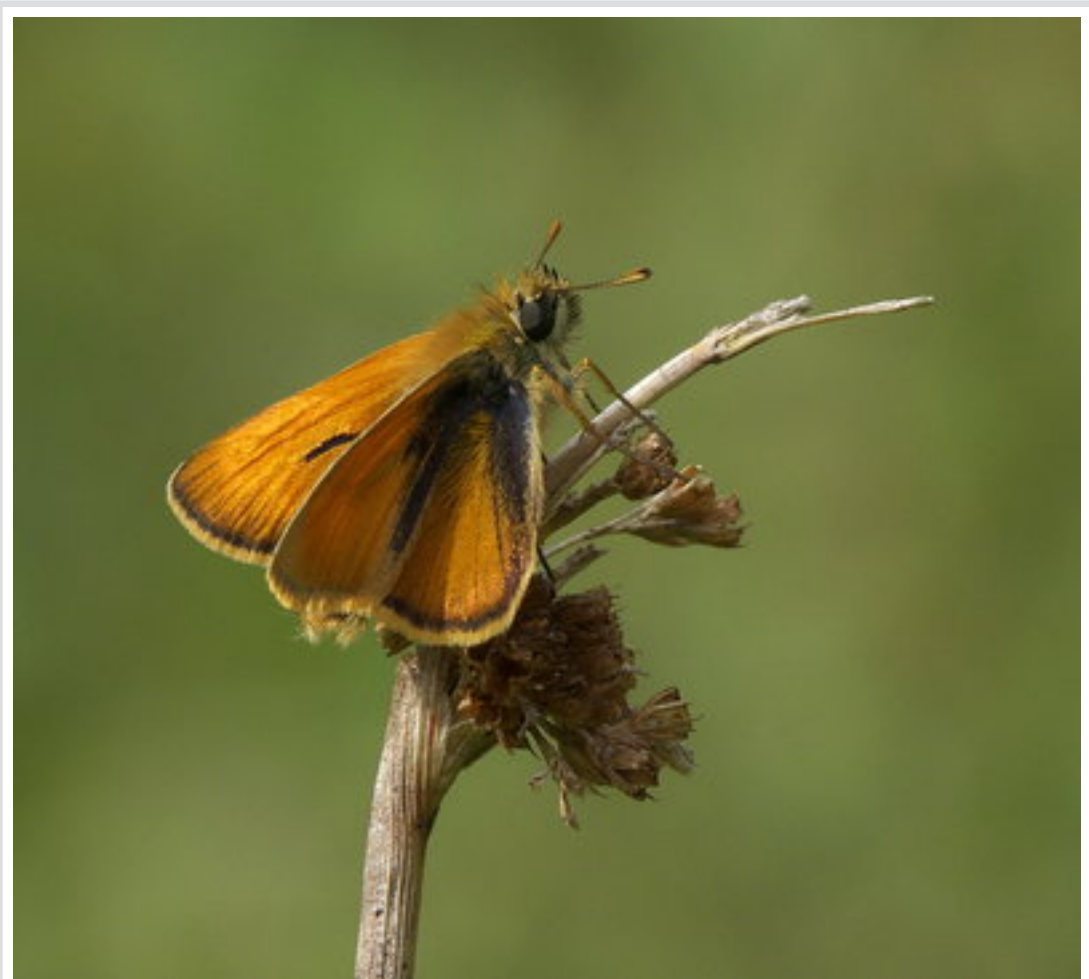
Thanks Wurzel, I think Gatekeepers are brilliant butterflies 😊

Thank you Bill, it's a wonderful area for butterflies, pubs and for sleeping under canvas 😊😊

Thanks Hoggers, glad you enjoy my diary, the Daneway expedition under canvas was brilliant 😊 Yes there's the mozzies and bad backs, but the Large Blues are totally stunning, so more than make up for that 😊

I know that 'Cider with Rosie' was set in the Cotswolds and it is indeed a very beautiful place, even in todays manic world 😊

While we were waiting for the appearance of HIM at Chiddingfold we decided to have a look for Small Skippers. We not only found Small, our first of 2014, but also some Large Skippers in a grassy area at the side of one of the forest rides..





Small Skipper



Large Skipper

We are a present planning another expedition under canvas, in search of a butterfly we have yet to see in the UK...

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-14 10:17 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

Just catching up on your diary, some brilliant reports and superb photos lately 😊🎁 . Really enjoyed the Large Blues from Daneway Banks, that's one to think about for next year 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Jul-14 11:14 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, I'm glad you enjoyed the Large Blues, they were a fantastic sight 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 14-Jul-14 06:35 AM GMT

I am waiting with bated breath for your next report Mike – stop teasing 😊😊 . My imagination is running riot about what you have both been up to 😊😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 14-Jul-14 09:30 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, some great stuff and lovely photos in your PD recently 😊 will post soon and don't mean to be a tease 😊😊😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-14 11:02 PM GMT

Cracking Skipper shots Mike 😊 I'm also wracking my brains as to which species you mean... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Jul-14 12:30 AM GMT

Wrack no more Wurzel 😊 and wait no longer Pauline 😊 this is the species we went looking for, and found....



Report and further pictures to follow....

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-14 09:21 AM GMT

Ah mystery over 😊 Cracking starting shot, looking forward to seeing more...

Have a goodun

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Jul-14 06:15 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I've finally sorted through the photos, so here goes...

Heddon High Browns

Last week we decided to take our trusty tent and head for the hills – the Heddon Valley to be precise. The weather was looking promising so we thought we'd see if we could find the High Brown Fritillaries, a butterfly we had yet to see in the UK. Our only worry was that we may have left it too late, having seen Neil's posting a fortnight before when he reported good numbers of fresh looking High Browns there. We weren't sure if we'd find any in good condition, if at all, but we decided to take our chances anyway. We arrived at the campsite, which was only a couple of miles east of the valley, early Monday evening and set our tent up in a field overlooking the Bristol Channel and Port Talbot. It was a little too late to go looking for butterflies by the time we'd set up and had something to eat, so we relaxed outside the tent and enjoyed the view instead.

Tuesday morning was warm and sunny and so we drove to the Heddon Valley and parked outside the Hunter's Inn. We hadn't a clue where to look for the High Brown Frits really, so started off up the track which runs alongside the river and scoured every Bramble flower and patch of Cow Parsley hoping to see one. There were plenty of Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Silver-washed Fritillaries flying about, but no sign of any High Brown Frits at all. We did, however, see a rather stunning looking Comma along the way..



Having been unsuccessful in our quest so far, we turned back down the path and came to a steep track leading up the side of the valley, which we found difficult to negotiate in the hot afternoon sun. We eventually reached a point above Heddon's Mouth where the track narrowed and curved around the coastline. We realised about halfway along that we were probably heading in the wrong direction, so turned back until we came to a bit of a scree-slope, which appeared to be the quickest way to the top. It was hard going through the dense bracken, but as we neared the top we saw our first High Brown Frits gliding above it, occasionally disappearing to nectar briefly on the low level bramble. They didn't stop long enough for us to get any photos, so we carried on up the slope and reached the path along the top. Although there were lots of nectar sources, we didn't see another High Brown Frit at all. By the time we reached the end of the path it had started to rain slightly, so we climbed back down the slope to the lane leading to the Hunter's Inn and just made it in time as there was then a heavy downpour. Fortunately we found an excellent pint of Exmoor Gold was good consolation for the lack of close encounters with the High Brown Frits. The views from the top of the slope were stunning, and we also had the odd encounter with some of the other wildlife there..





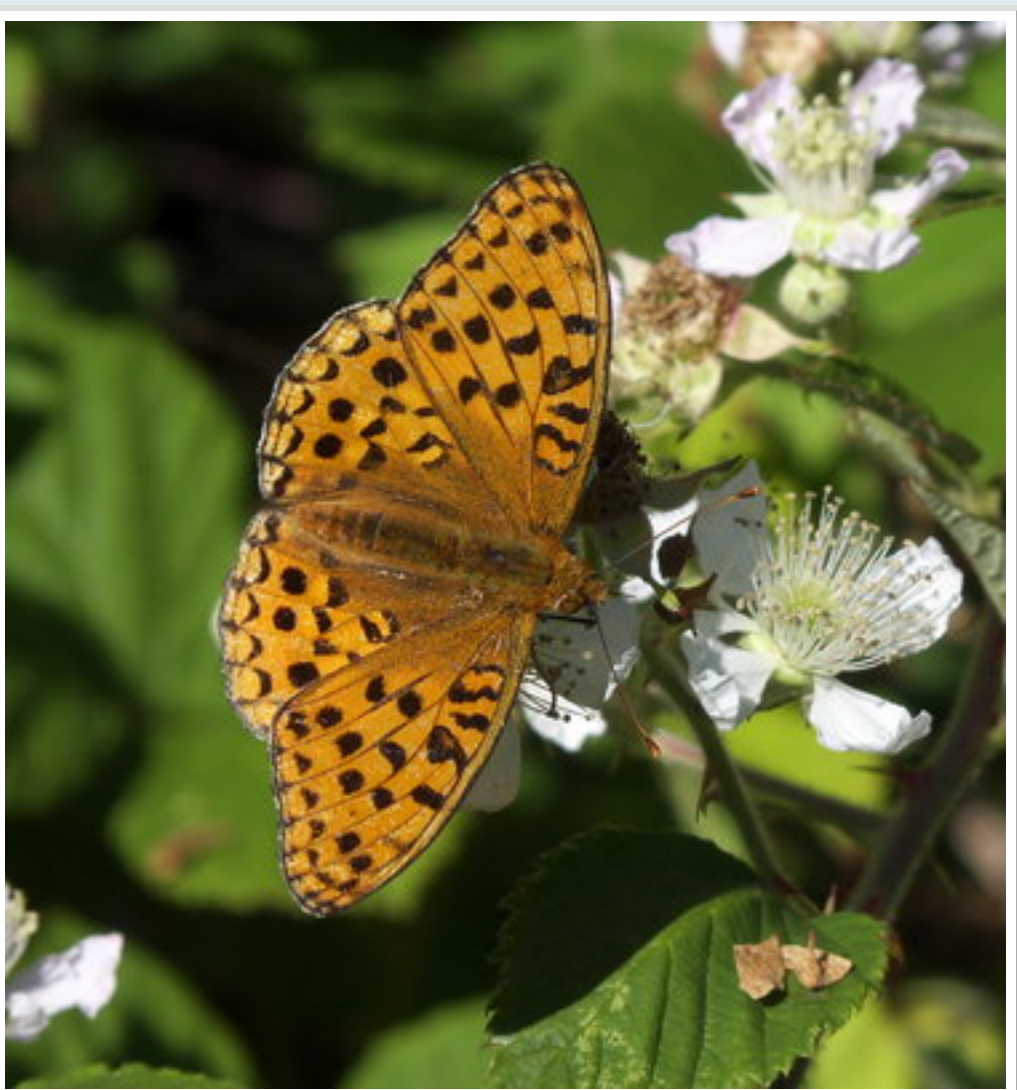
Sitting by the camp fire that evening I had a look at my OS map of the area and found a footpath leading in another direction which looked like it might be promising. So the next morning found us on the woodland path with the river running alongside. Eventually we arrived at a meadow full of tall Cow Parsley and Thistles with lots of Bramble along the path edge. The first butterflies we saw in large numbers were Silver-washed Fritillaries and some Red Admirals, mainly nectaring on the Bramble.







Venturing into the meadow we saw our first High Brown Fritillary of the day, a rather worn specimen jealously guarding his patch of Thistles. Apart from this one individual we saw another three, fresher specimens along with some rather worn Dark Green Fritillaries, but they were only stopping momentarily to nectar on the Bramble and then whizzing off again. We decided to move on after a couple of hours, searching every likely looking spot along the lane, but we only saw one more High Brown Frit and a number of Silver-washed Frits. We decided a change of plan was needed and so set off along another track we found, heading uphill once more. After a half mile steep climb the landscape opened out to a large area covered in bracken where we immediately started finding High Brown Frits nectaring on the abundant Bramble flowers. As it was by now late afternoon and the temperature had dropped a couple of degrees we found them settling long enough for some photo opportunities..









We also saw this handsome Hare along the way

The following day was another scorcher, and so we got off early to the valley and searched the same places again hoping for a repeat of yesterday's success. However, the High Brown Frits weren't having any of it, and probably due to the hot sunshine weren't settling at all. We did, however, manage to find a mating pair of Large Skippers and, rather surprisingly, a worn Green Hairstreak while we were there..





A very dark looking Broad-bodied Chaser, I think

As we realised there was no hope of getting any further photos of the High Brown Frits we thought we would take a drive to Bin Combe in Somerset to see if we could find any Heath Fritillaries instead. We arrived in Dunkery Lane and parked up by the bridge where we walked down the track, through the gate and down into the Combe, a long descent in hot conditions. There were plenty of butterflies along the way which made the walk more bearable, but with the time racing on we didn't stop to take any pictures. When we reached the bottom we entered a beautiful wooded valley with open sunny glades, just the sort of place you'd expect to find a Heath Fritillary, but the only fritillaries we saw were Silver-washed. Once again, we had no idea exactly where to look for the Heath Frits so we searched every open glade, eventually reaching a gate with a promising looking area beyond. While we were scrutinising every Fritillary on the large expanse of Bramble just inside the gate we saw a much smaller Fritillary glide over our heads and fly down the path away from us. We followed it to the gate where it promptly did an about turn and flew back past us where we managed to get a better view of it at closer range, identifying it as a rather worn looking Heath Fritillary. Unfortunately, it didn't remain in the area, taking flight over the bramble and disappearing out of sight, so we weren't even able to get a record shot of it. What surprised us the most was that there didn't seem to be any Cow-wheat in any of the areas we looked, so perhaps we weren't in the correct spot. Anyway, we cooled ourselves down by splashing some ice cold water on our faces from a crystal clear stream, which was full of trout, which ran through the woodland, then made the gruelling climb back up out of the Combe, reaching the road at a point about a mile from where we'd parked our car. We had our final pint of Exmoor Stag in the Hunter's Inn before heading back to camp, our last night there, as we were heading off to Lulworth Cove the following morning...

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jul-14 08:49 PM GMT

Great report and photos from the Heddon Valley Mike, I recognise some of the spots you describe from when I was there last year, particularly the meadow with the tall cow parsley and thistles with brambles along the path. UK member Rodgerdodge pointed me towards that spot which was where I took some of my best photos. If I remember correctly I was there a bit earlier last year, first week in July I think.

We also took a drive out to Bin Combe, not a place to be climbing out of on a hot day 🤔

The other advantage of staying at the Hunters Inn for a few days is that you have plenty of time to sample the different Exmoor Ales, purely for research of course 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-14 11:44 PM GMT

Excellent reportage/shots Mike and really glad that you got your target 😊 I wonder what you found at Lulworth 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Jul-14 11:54 PM GMT

Yes Neil, Bin Combe was a hard slog in and out. I agree that Exmoor Ales are great indeed, for research purposes only of course 😊😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Jul-14 11:57 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, yes Lulworth is a great place, and we certainly found what we were looking for 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 20-Jul-14 12:05 AM GMT

Following our success in finding the High Brown Fritillary at Heddon, we set off early the next morning in order to spend a day at Lulworth on our way home.

Mid morning found us climbing up the steep path and onto Bindon Hill, and as we climbed over the stile at the top of the path we entered a hillside covered with a profusion of wild flowers. We immediatly saw what we initiallly thought were Lulworth Skippers, but on closer inspection found they were Small skippers. Further along the path we saw our first Chalkhill Blues of 2014, the only two we were to see during our visit.





It wasn't until we were at a point right above the cove that we suddenly spotted our first Lulworth Skippers, busy nectaring on Wild Marjoram and Scabious.







A poor photo, but Peregrine Falcons over Lulworth Copve

As we were watching the Lulworths we saw a Dark Green Fritillary go speeding by and on up the hill. We followed it up the hillside and found many more of them flying amongst the tall grass. However, trying to get a photo was almost impossible, but we then spotted a mating pair flying just above the grass and watched as they landed in a small Gorse bush nearby. We gave them time to settle before moving closer for a photograph. What struck us most was their fabulous condition, the male in particular was stunning with ink black markings, how very different to the faded ones we had seen at Heddon. We also saw some fantastic Hedge Browns which were in tip-top condition.





We probably saw about a dozen Lulworth Skippers, certainly a great place to stop off at, Lulworth never seems to disappoint 😊

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 20-Jul-14 06:34 AM GMT

So many great shots in recent posts Mike that it is hard to single any out! Obviously HBF but some nice Skippers (Small and Lulworth), nice DGF Mating pair, great scenery shots and I just love the Hare! Looks like you've been having a smashing time 🍷🍷

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jul-14 10:14 AM GMT

Great report and photos from Lulworth 😊

Those steps are making my legs ache just thinking about them now, mind you I stopped loads of times on the way up to admire the view and look at the butterflies 😊. I actually found more Lulworth Skippers lower down, where the steeper section of steps start, than I did up on the hill.

Looks like I was a few days too early for the Chalkhills, never mind, can't have everything 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

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

Great report and shots of my favourite butterfly the Lulworth Skipper 😊 Hopefully there will still be some around in about a fortnight when I take the family camping back to my old haunts on the Isle of Purbeck, I see you made it up Bindon but I always find it easier to check out the top of the car park. Much less scenic but still delivers the goods butterfly wise. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 23-Jul-14 12:56 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline, glad you like the Hare, it was really curious and actually walked towards us 😊

Thanks Neil, those steps are steep, but, as you say, the Skippers break the trek. 😊 Interesting you saw more lower down

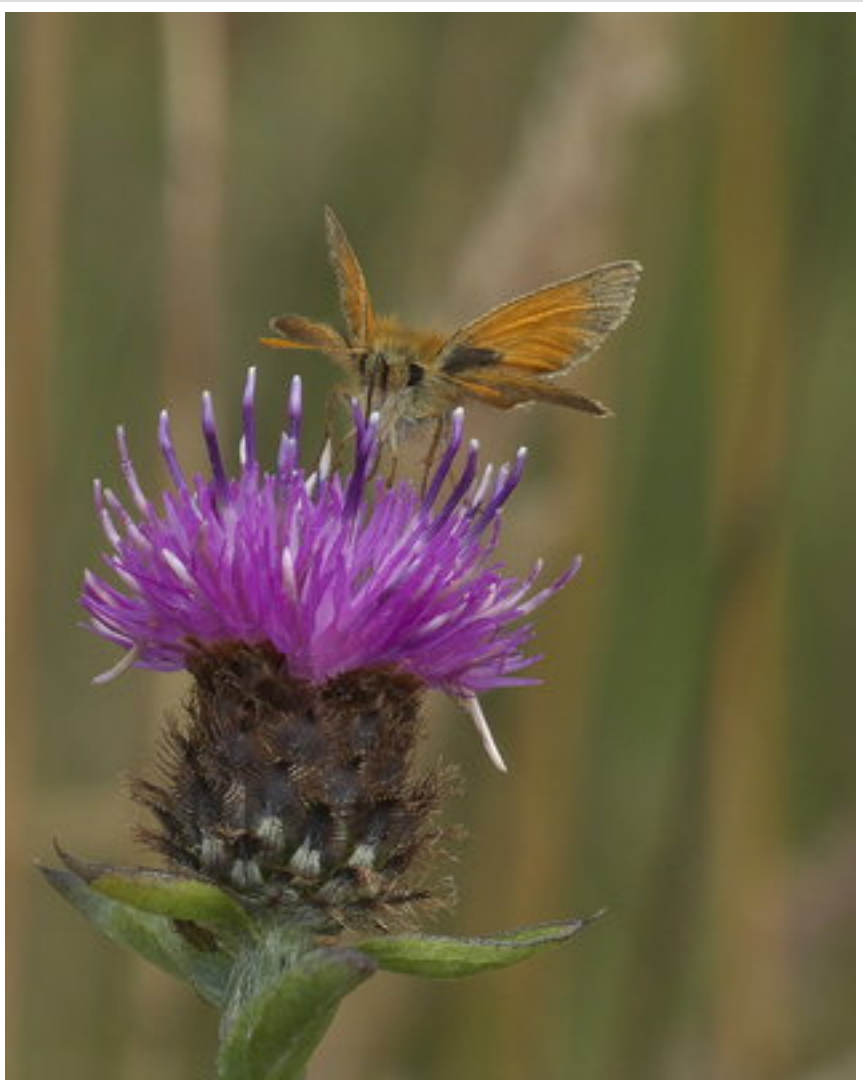
Cheers Wurzel, I'm sure there will be plenty around when you go camping, given their long flight season. 😊

Denbies

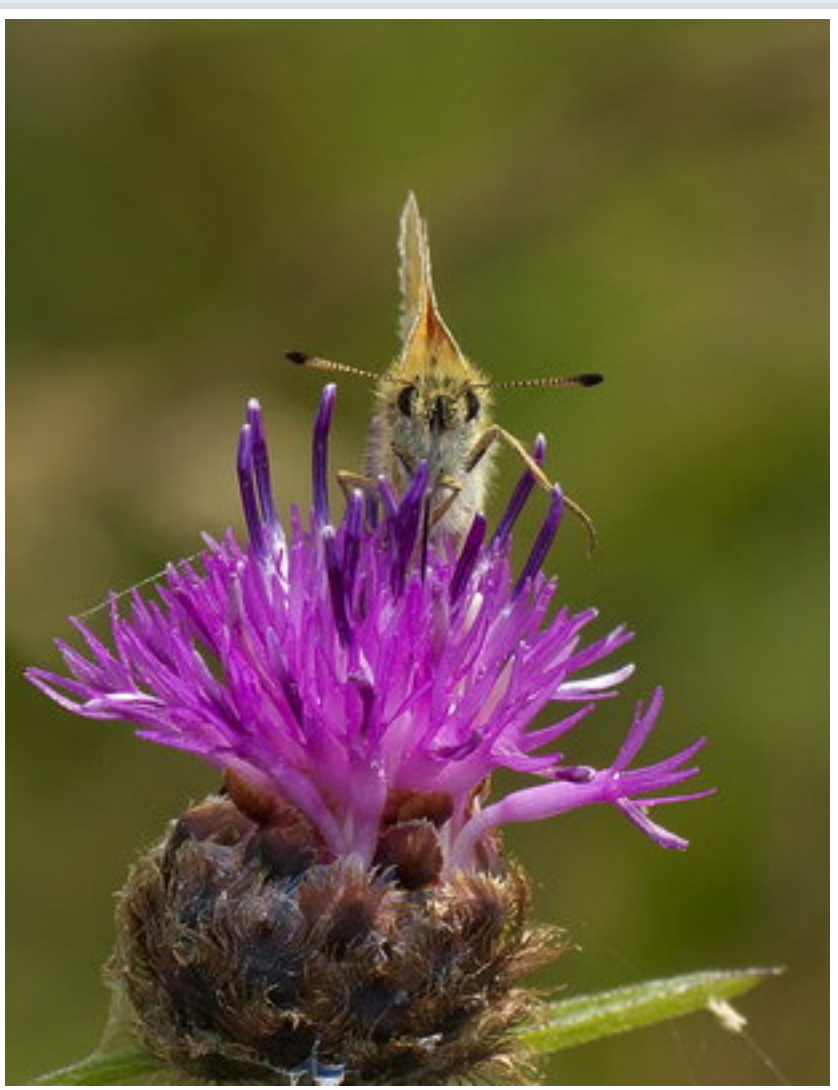
We recently made a trip to Denbies hillside to try to find some Chalkhill Blues. Once through the gate, however, it was all Skippers, both Small and Essex.



Small Skipper



Small Skipper



Essex Skipper



Essex Skipper



Golden Skippers



Essex Skipper

As we walked further down the hillside we began to encounter Chalkhill Blues both male and female.





Well marked females



Roosting males



Conditions were very hot which kept the butterflies very lively apart from occasions when cloud obscured the sun.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-14 10:39 AM GMT

Cracking sequence of shots Mike 😊👍 I'm always amazed at the range of variation in Chalk Hills and also at the understatement of the females 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 26-Jul-14 04:44 PM GMT

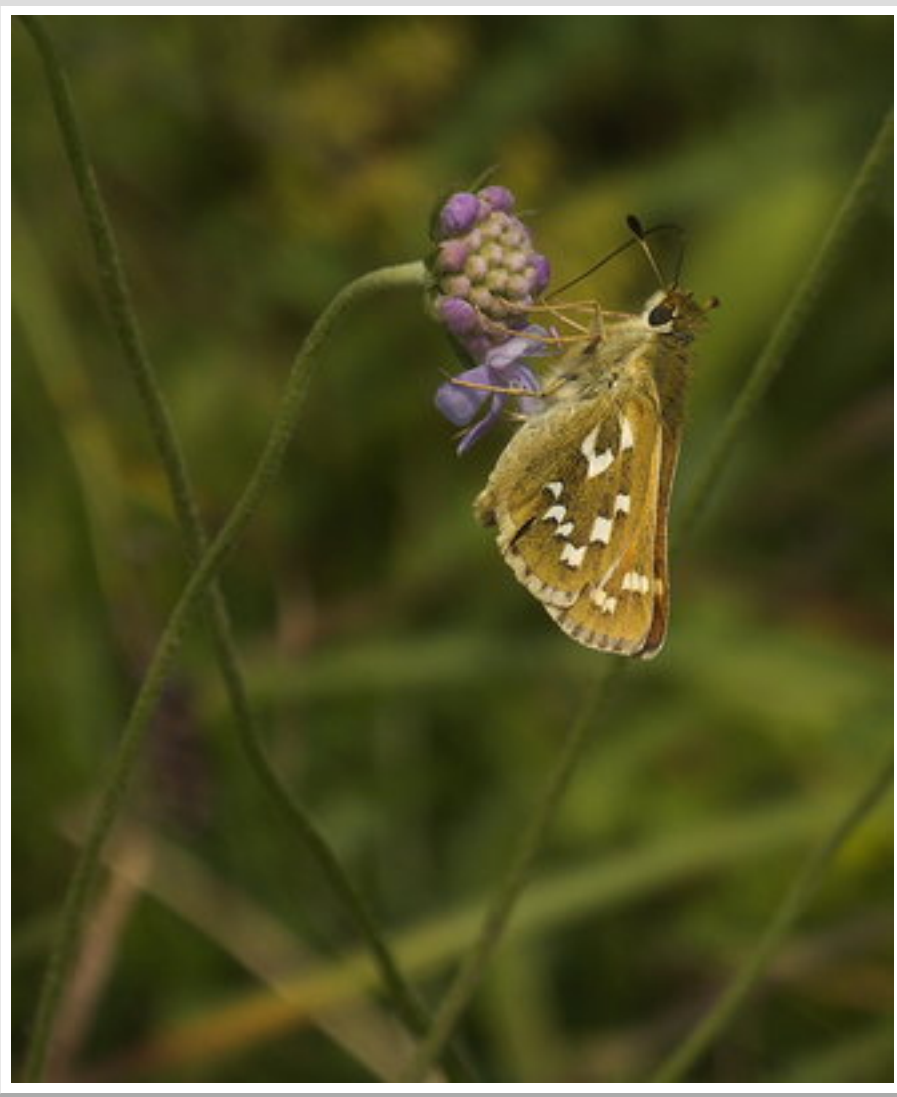
Cheers Wurzel, the range of variation in Chalkhill Blues means that you never know what you may find 😊😊 female Chalkhills are stunners and I agree, understated 😊

Mike

Aston Rowant

On Tuesday last week we spent an afternoon on the hillside to the north of the M40 at Aston Rowant in 30 degrees heat. When we visited last year the hillside was covered with butterflies of various species, with lots of Chalkhill Blues, Brown Argus, Common Blues and Small Coppers among them. This year it is not quite the same, and although Chalkhill Blue numbers are reasonable, other species seem to be down in numbers. We saw very few Brown Argus and Common Blues and no Small Coppers at all! Fortunately the Silver-spotted Skipper numbers are very good, which is what we had primarily gone to see. The temperature combined with a strong breeze made photography challenging. Also the SSS were difficult to get close to, taking flight in a zig-zag course at break-neck speed across the hillside whenever we tried to approach them. However we noticed that some were stopping briefly to nectar on the abundant Scabious growing on the hillside, so it was a case of sit and wait for them to come to you. The other problem was that the breeze was blowing the Scabious all over the place, meaning that once a SSS had landed you had to wait for the split second when both flower and butterfly were stationary between gusts, before pressing the shutter button. There were a lot of 'chuckers' but we did manage a few reasonable shots along with a touch of sunstroke 😊





We saw several females ovipositing..



..and unlike last year, managed to find the egg..

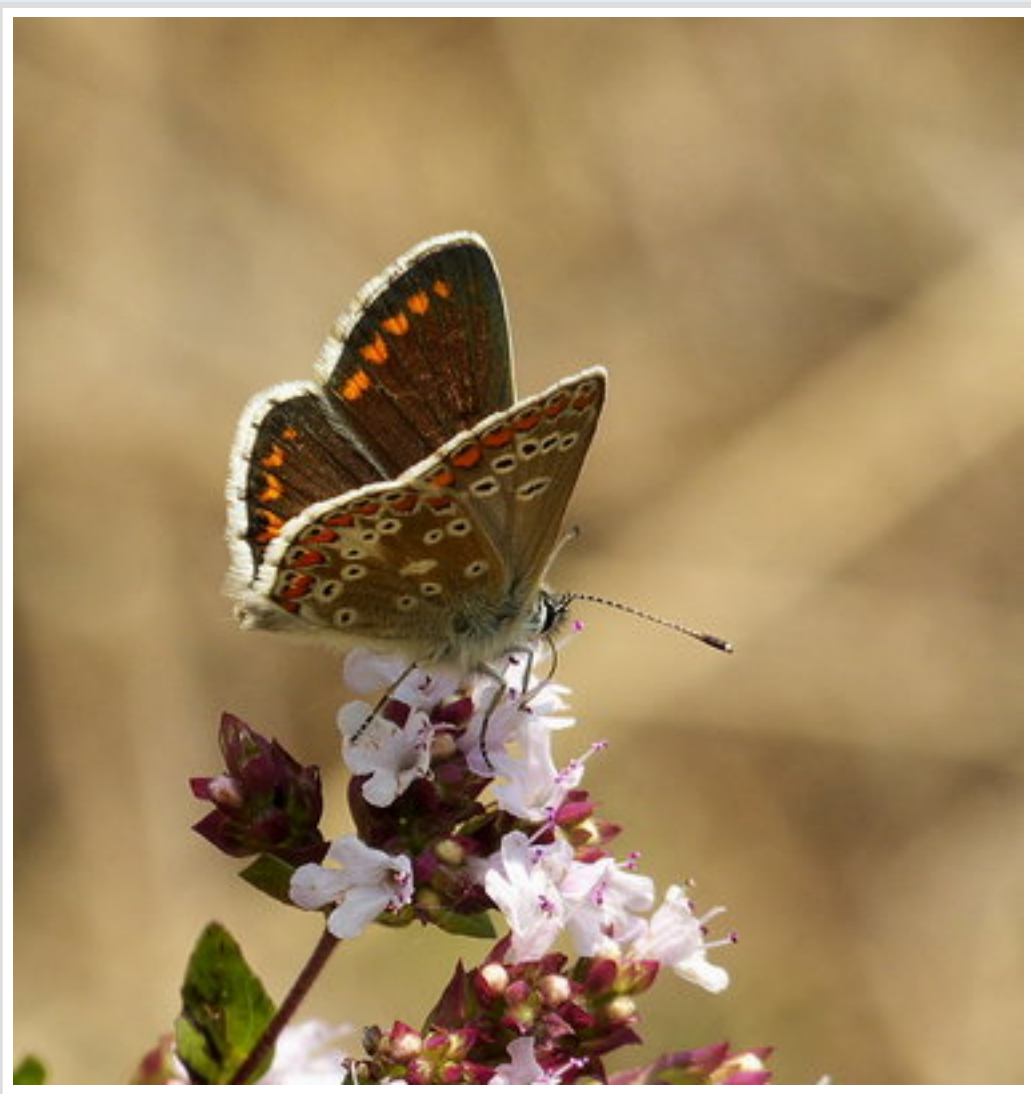


Silver-spotted Skipper ovum

..and some shots of other species seen



Chalkhill Blue



Brown Argus



Large White



Common Blues

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-14 11:35 PM GMT

Brill stuff Mike 😊 I know what you mean about the wind, I experienced the same thing at Stockbridge. They'd be feeding and it would be rocking forward and backward like one of those play park rides. Butterflies eh, they don't make it easy for us do they 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-14 10:06 AM GMT

Nice photos from Aston Rowant Mike 😊

I have a few days off work next week and hoping to make a trip down there myself.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 27-Jul-14 02:11 PM GMT

Totally empathise with you, Mike. I visited yesterday and the heat meant the insects were hyperactive! Although the wind wasn't too bad, it still interfered in the same way it did for you on Tuesday.

I agree about general numbers (particularly Small Copper, which was totally absent), but I think last year was a 'one-off'. Perhaps we need a cold winter every year?

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 30-Jul-14 07:17 AM GMT

Some really nice shots there Mike especially that Essex Skipper and the lovely Chalk Hills. Well done too, on finding that egg as it's not easy, is it!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 03-Aug-14 01:08 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, it's not always easy to photograph butterflies 😊 and many things conspire against us 😊

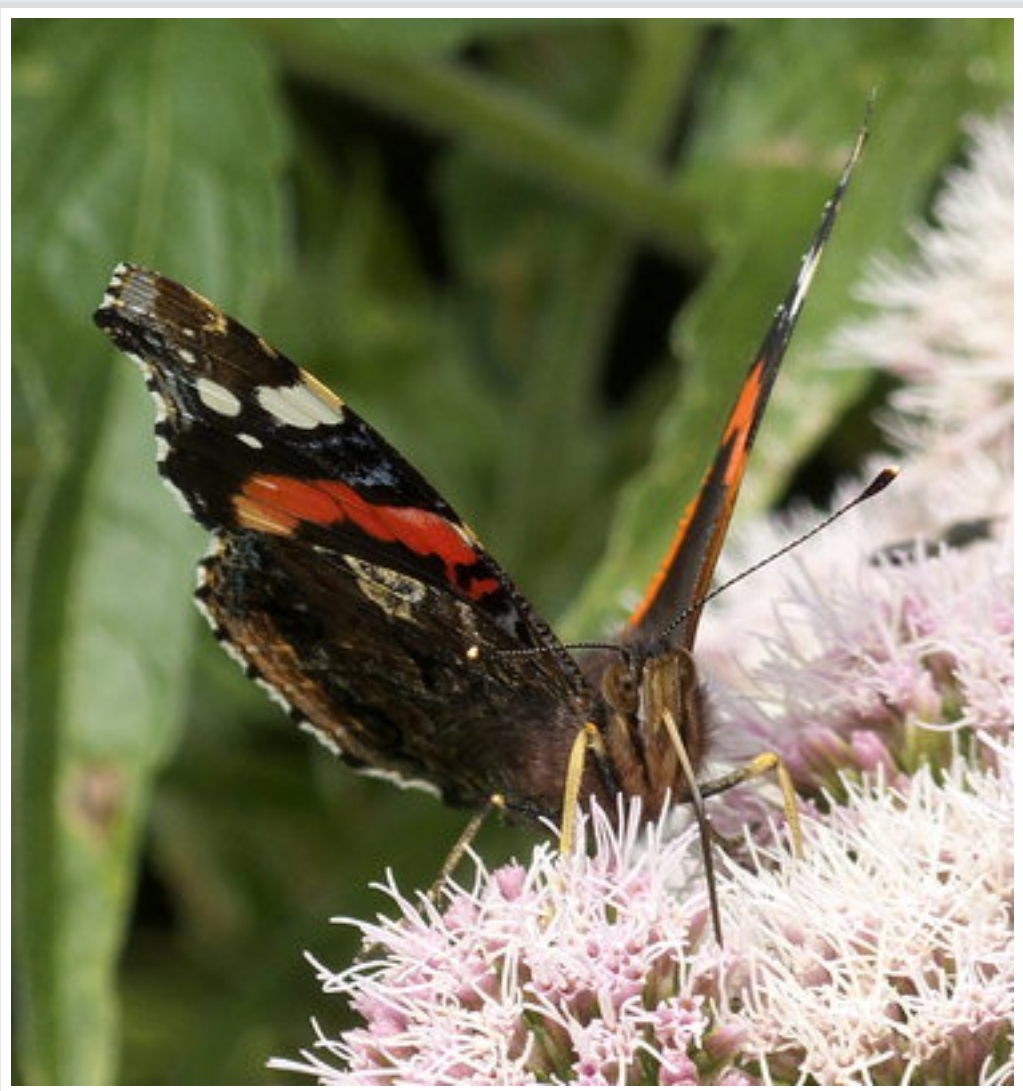
I'm well behind but now, but have now seen the report of your trip to Aston Rowant Neil, great stuff 😊

Hi David, Small Copper numbers appear to be well down compared to last year, and I agree that last year was probably a 'one off'. A cold winter this year may help leps, but will always have a negative affect on other wildlife.

Thanks Pauline, and you're right, finding the eggs is not always that easy!

Noar Hill 27th July

Today on a visit to Noar hill we clocked up a total of 20 species. Although there were plenty of butterflies, it didn't compare to last years spectacular numbers. Peacocks were well reasonably well represented but there were fewer Red Admirals and Commas, although good numbers of Common Blues were very much in evidence, particularly the blue females.





Female Common Blue with Trombidium Breei mite



Female Common Blue



Male Common Blue



Female Common Blue ab



Female Common Blue ab

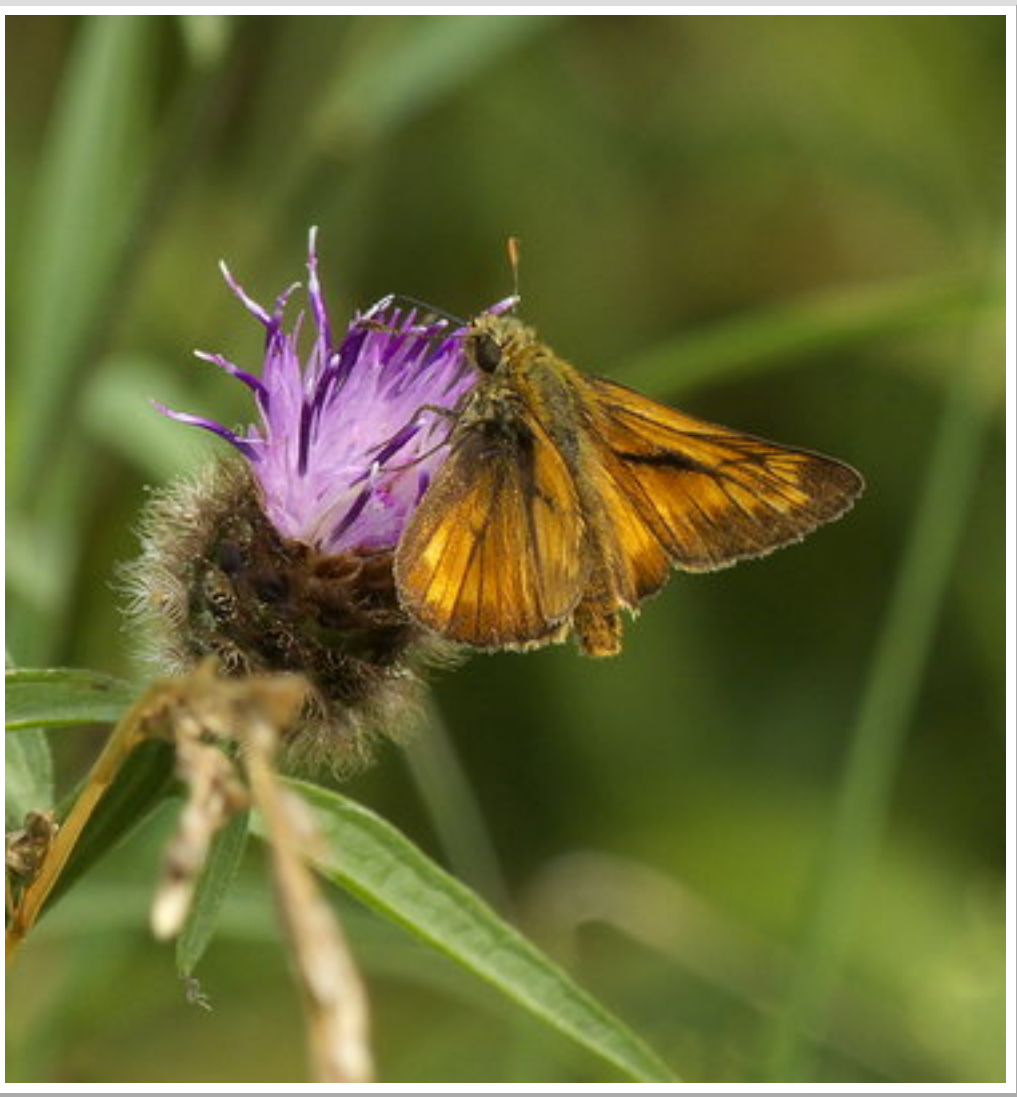




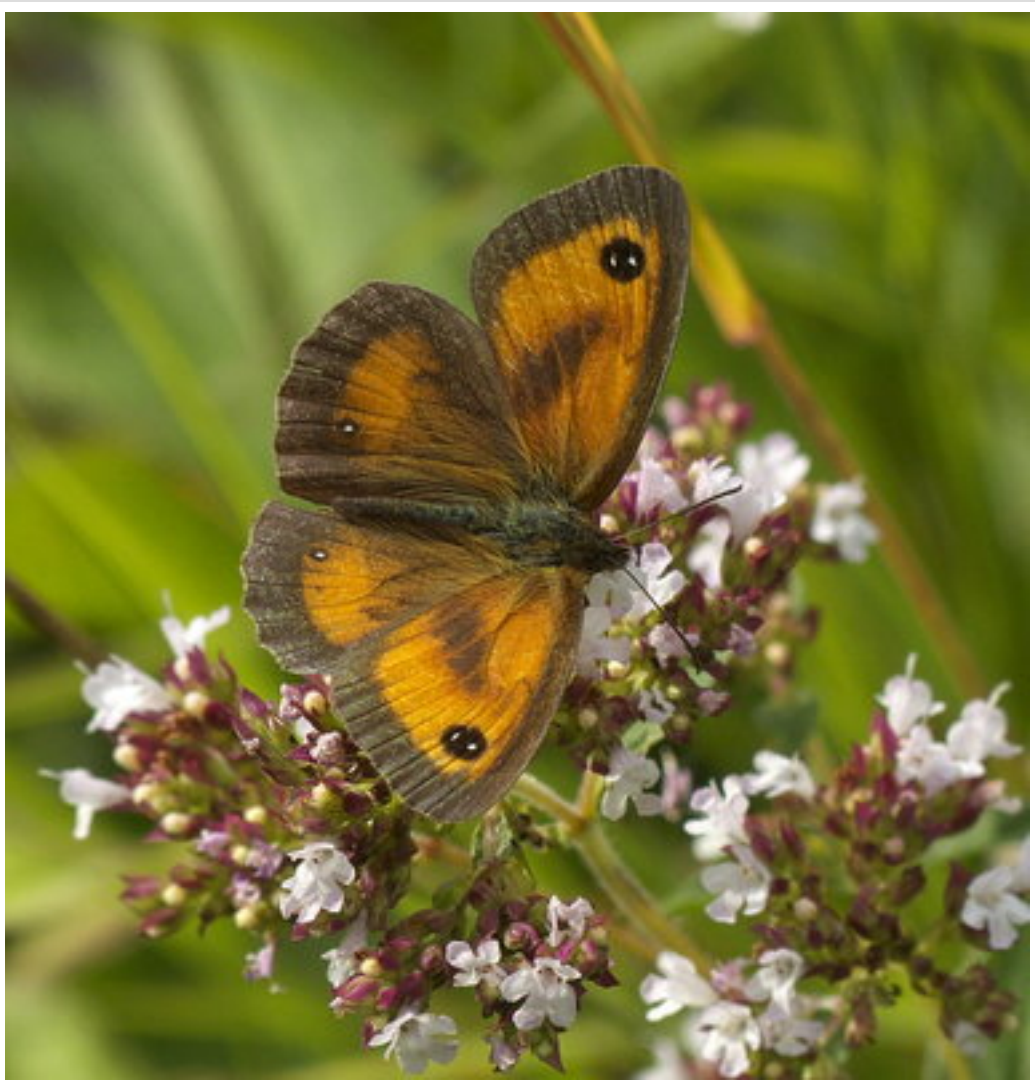
Female Brimstone



Male Brimstone



Large Skipper in good condition



Male Gatekeeper

A great result, but 2013 saw much better Peacock, Red Admiral, Comma numbers than this year, certainly at Noar Hill! Also quite a large percentage appeared to carry the Trombidium mite!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 03-Aug-14 12:28 PM GMT

27th July

A short evening trip to Dawneys which was bathed in glorious golden sunlight, produced these two male Grayling, looking gorgeous among the Bell Heather.



There appears to have been some work carried out here and it now looks a bit bleak, I hope it doesn't affect Grayling numbers.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 05-Aug-14 12:34 AM GMT

A second trip to Denbies, once again in very hot sun, produced lots of Chalkhill Blues, including some fresh individuals..



Female Chalkhill Blue

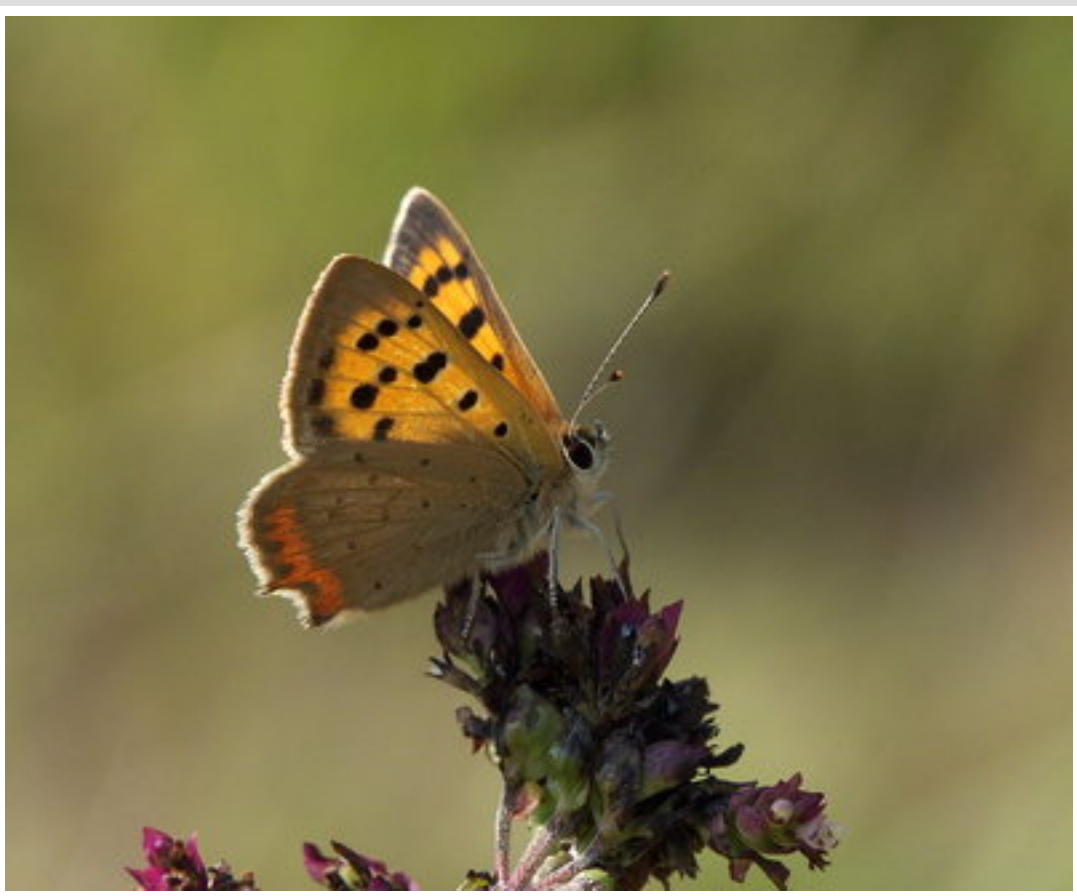


Brown Argus



Male Chalkhill Blue

Also this was one of the few Small Coppers we have seen this year..





A slight hint of blue on the hind-wing!

We also found these freshly emerged, Silver-spotted Skippers, which were not present during our first visit, a week or so ago ..





Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-14 08:17 PM GMT

Hi Mike, just catching up again, some great photos in your last few posts 😊

That female Common blue ab. looks similar to a first brood one I found at one of my local spots.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 05-Aug-14 11:32 PM GMT

Brill shots Mike especially the Silver Spotted male – the sex brands look almost metallic 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

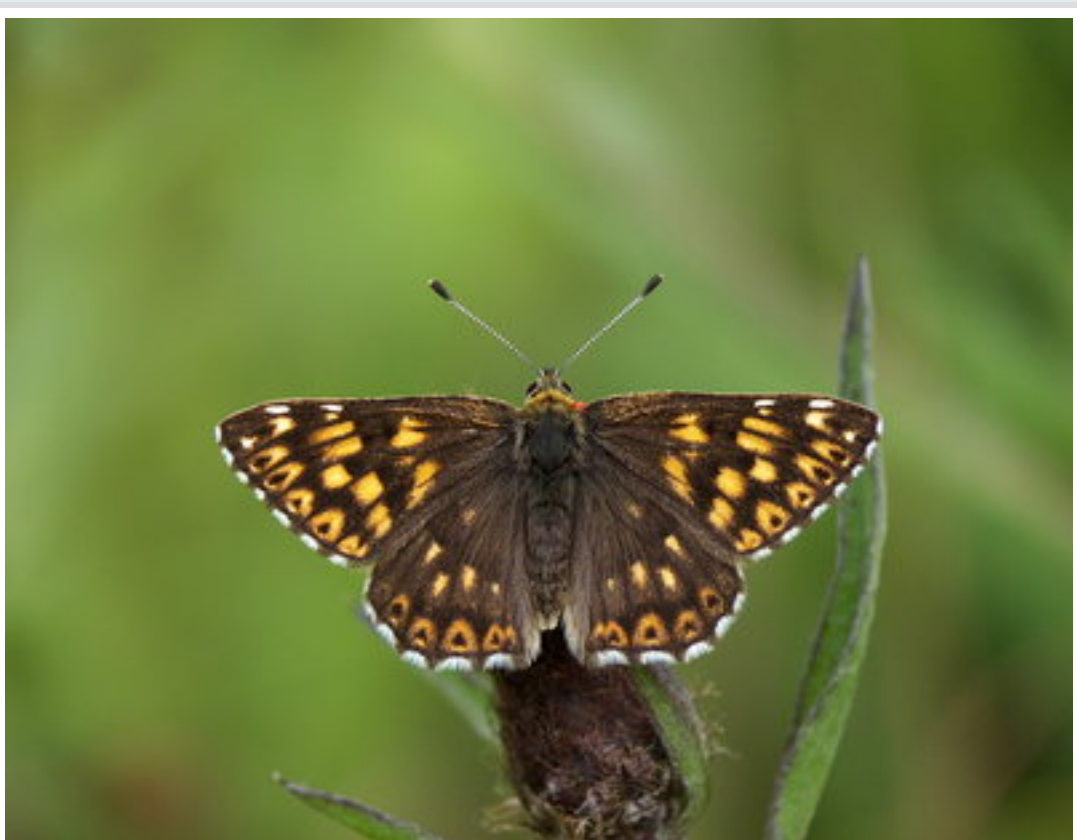
by Maximus, 08-Aug-14 08:35 PM GMT

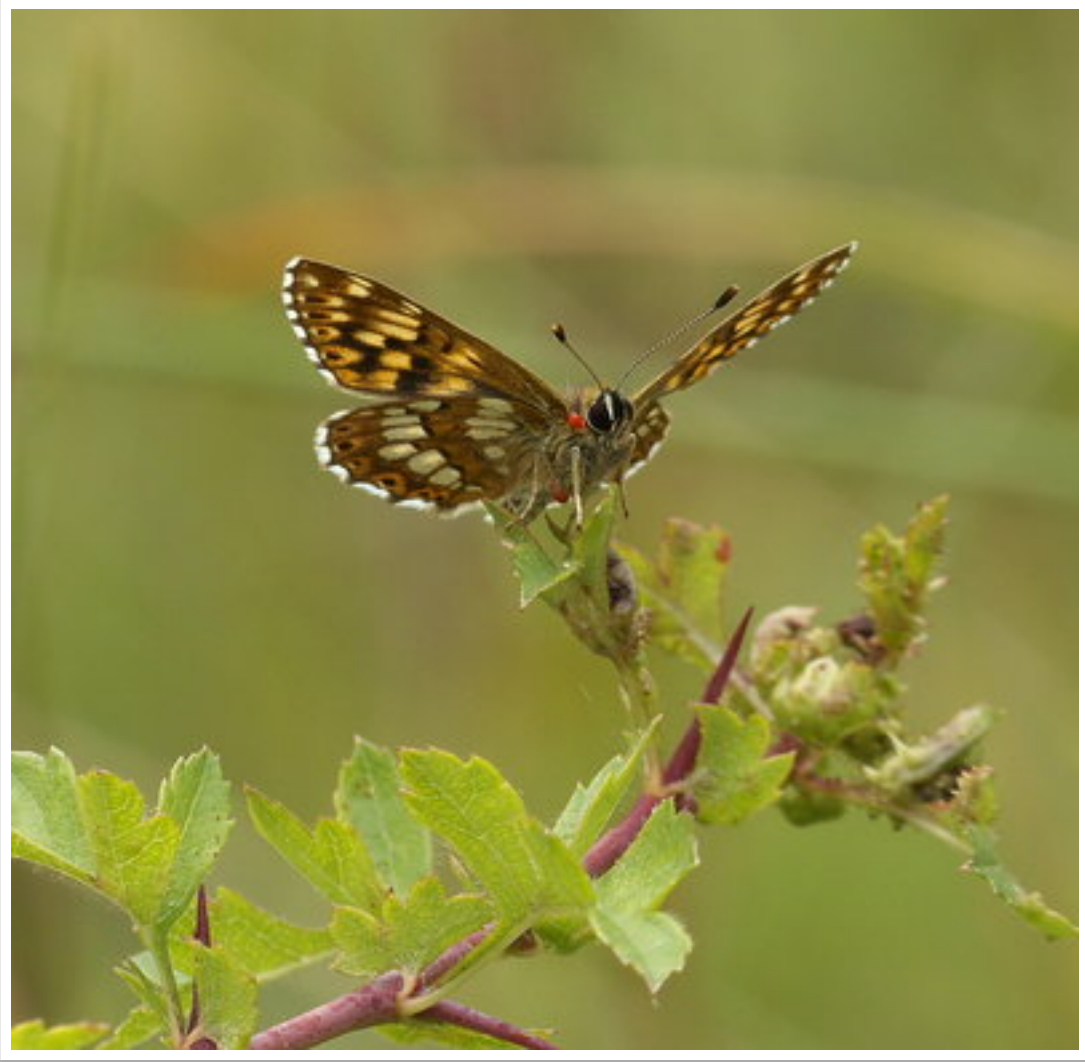
Cheers Neil 😊 female Common Blues seem to vary quite a bit, and it's interesting that you saw a similar one.

Cheers Wurzel, now I look at that shot of the male SSS, I agree that the sex brands do look very metallic 😊

8TH August 2014

I am a bit behind with the postings in my PD. However, I intend to post today's sighting now, while it is still current, and because this is the first time that I have seen this in the UK.







Second brood Duke of Burgundy male

He was host to a couple of Trombidium Breei mites, which I guess the first brood would be too early for? This did not stop him seeing off male Common Blues though. It's really great to see a Duke again, has really made our year 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-14 10:10 PM GMT

Cracking shots Mike 😊👍 Have second brood Dukes been recorded elsewhere or is it only Noar Hill?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 09-Aug-14 02:53 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊 not sure about this year, but I'm aware that in some recent years, a second brood of Dukes have been recorded at Rodborough Common, Gloucestershire. However, I wonder how many people check their local Duke sites at this time of year? If they did, perhaps this would reveal more second brood Duke of Burgundy! 😊😊

Mike

Magdalen Hill Down – First visit, 1st August 2014

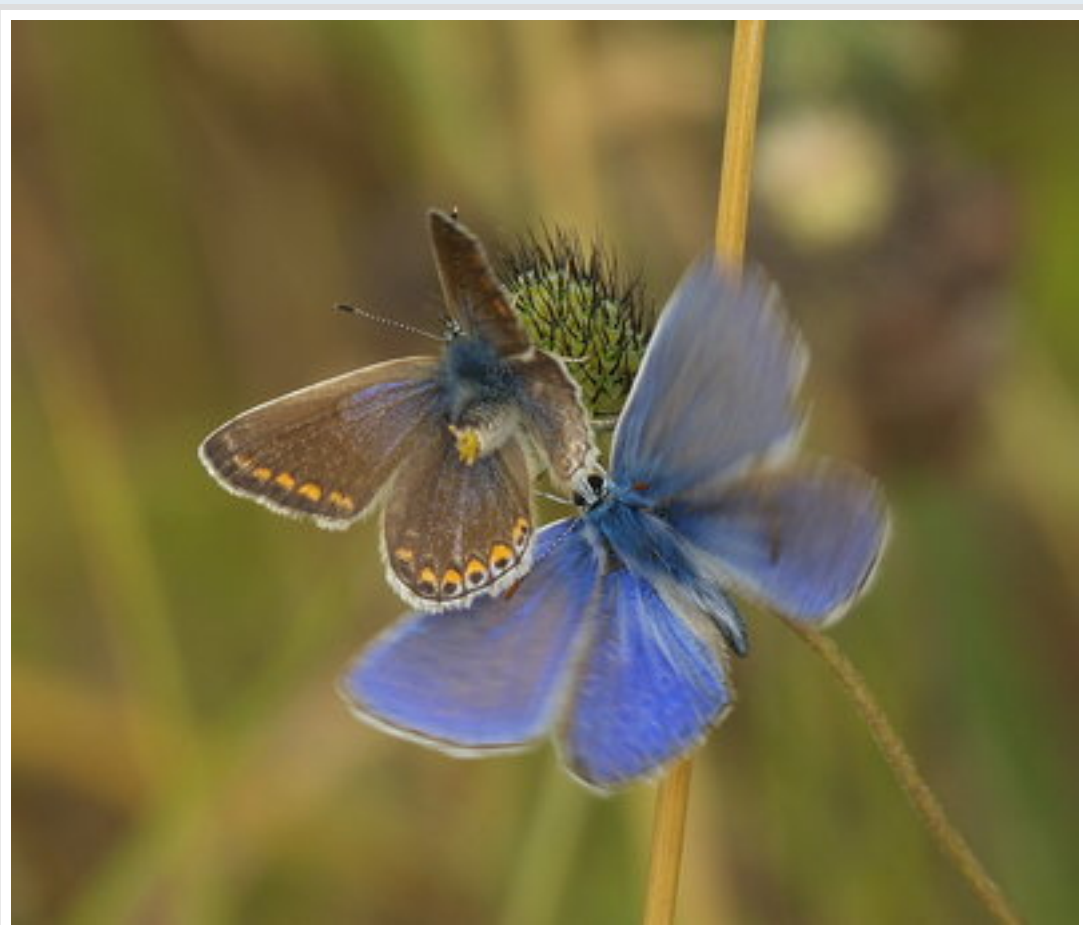
We decided to pay a visit to MHD as we had not been there since 2013, when we had witnessed the fantastic numbers of Chalkhill Blues that had emerged there in that exceptional year for this species. Conditions were ideal, sunny with cloudy periods and a light breeze. The reserve is magnificent and is a credit to its management, and is carpeted with masses of beautiful wild flowers which provide rich nectar sources for the resident (and migrant) butterflies to be found here. The first butterflies we encountered were Chalkhill Blues, and they were in stunning condition.





Common Blues were also very fresh..





He's not taking the hint



It was also nice to find some 2nd brood Small Blues, including a mating pair..





We found plenty of Brown Argus and saw some stunning Brimstones..





We saw a total of 16 species, Chalkhill Blues in very good numbers, Common Blues in good numbers, a few Small Blues, Small Heath, Brimstone – lots, Small White, Large White, Brown Argus, several Holly Blue, Small Tortoiseshell – loads, a couple of Red Admirals and Peacocks, worn Small Skippers, quite a few worn Marbled Whites and a couple of worn Small Coppers. As we were leaving a butterfly landed on the path in front of us. It took flight on our approach, but not before we had identified it as a Painted Lady. We decided then that we would make a return visit, to try to find the lady 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Aug-14 12:48 AM GMT

Can 2nd brood Duke of Burgundy successfully reproduce, (given that both male and female are present). If so can the females find the Cowslip/Primrose leaves to oviposit on? Cowslip leaves at least appear to be plentiful and not too dried up at this time. Has anybody got any ideas regarding this matter?



2nd brood, Duke of Burgundy, male

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-14 10:02 PM GMT

More fantastic shots Mike especially the Small Blues 😊 Cheers for answering my Duke question, and asking the next one that was on my mind too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-Aug-14 09:44 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I believe it is said that great minds think alike 😊😊

Shipton Bellinger – 4th August 2014

Today we were out early to pay a visit to Shipton Bellinger, where one is almost certain to see Brown Hairstreaks during their flight period. We have a site much nearer to us where we should be able to see this species, but it is a very fortunate person who sees just one at this location 😞 At Shipton Bellinger however, we saw 6 males and 2 females during our visit! The males were fully engrossed in nectaring on the remaining bramble, so were easy to photograph, they were also a little bit worn. The females were on egg laying missions, resting up in between and were difficult to get good shots of. I did miss a sitting duck of a female with her wings open in an accessible place about three feet from the ground. As I pressed the shutter release she took flight and all I got was a shot of a leaf, as she disappeared into the tree canopy.





Male Brown Hairstreak



Best shot I could manage of a female

Apart from the BH there were plenty of other species, including..



Small Copper



This Peacocks eye spot seems to have done its job!



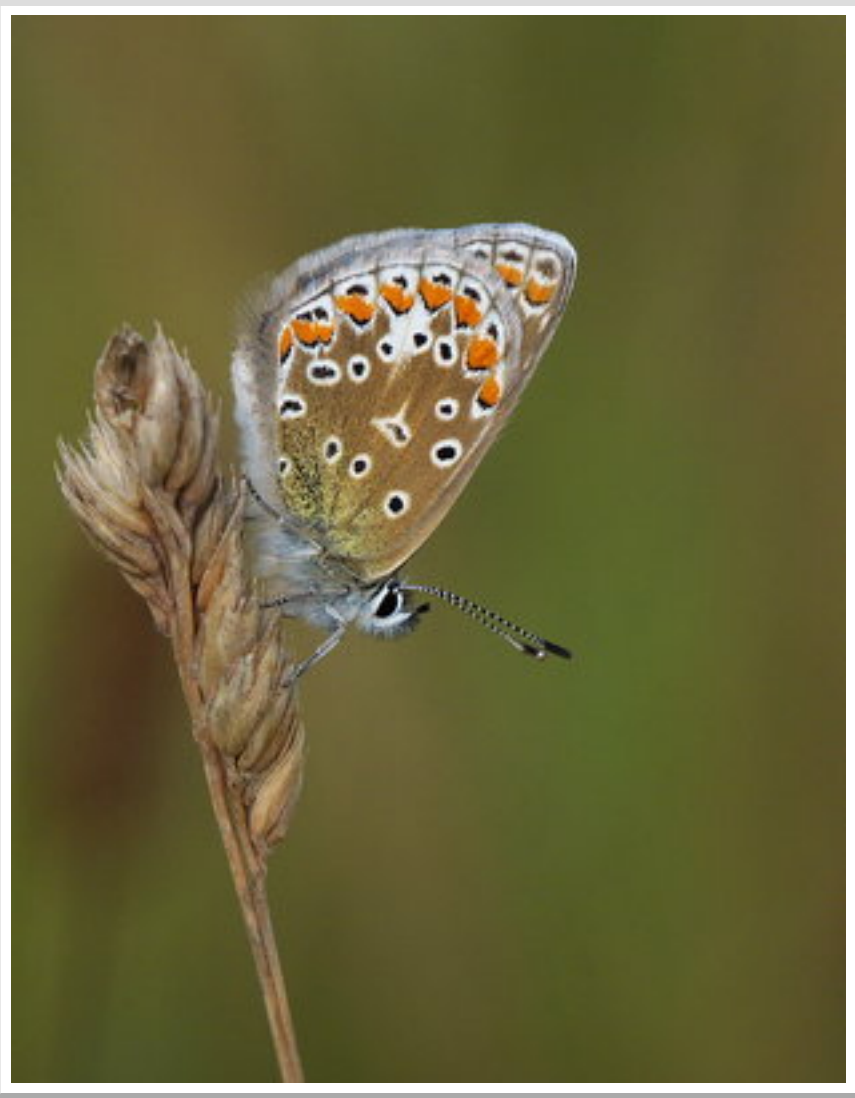
Speckled Wood



Meadow Brown

The final jewel in the crown at Shipton Bellinger were its beautiful Common Blues..





Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 12-Aug-14 06:57 AM GMT

Very nice shots of BH Mike – it's always exciting to see them – but you have excelled with the Common Blue shots 🍷. They look like paintings and just go to show what a good background and composition can do for a picture. I am currently struggling with a sequence of shots with a garish green/yellow background and despite fiddling with [photoshop I can't seem to tone it down 😞

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-14 09:18 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Mike – cracking Blues 😊🍷 Shipton is a great site for Brostreaks, it always delivers something 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

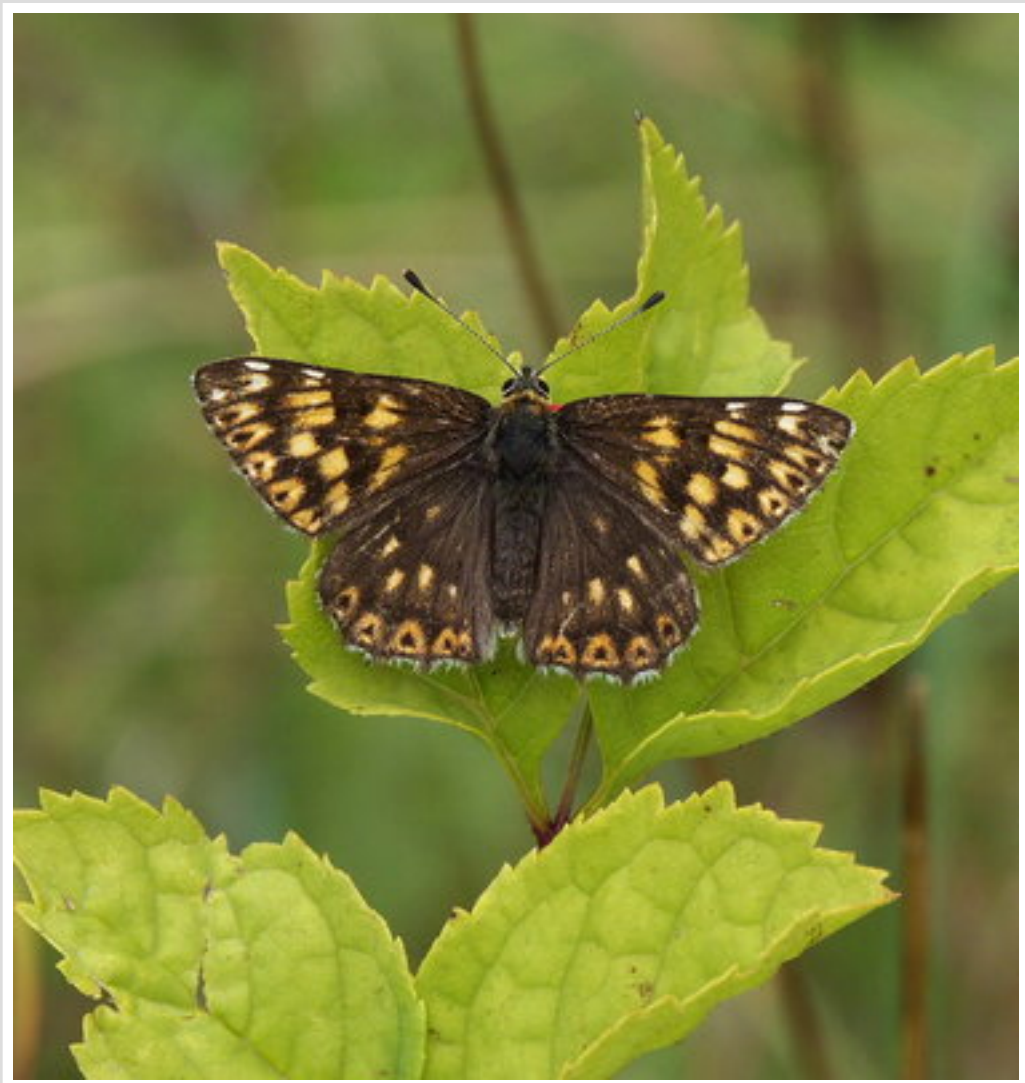
Re: Maximus

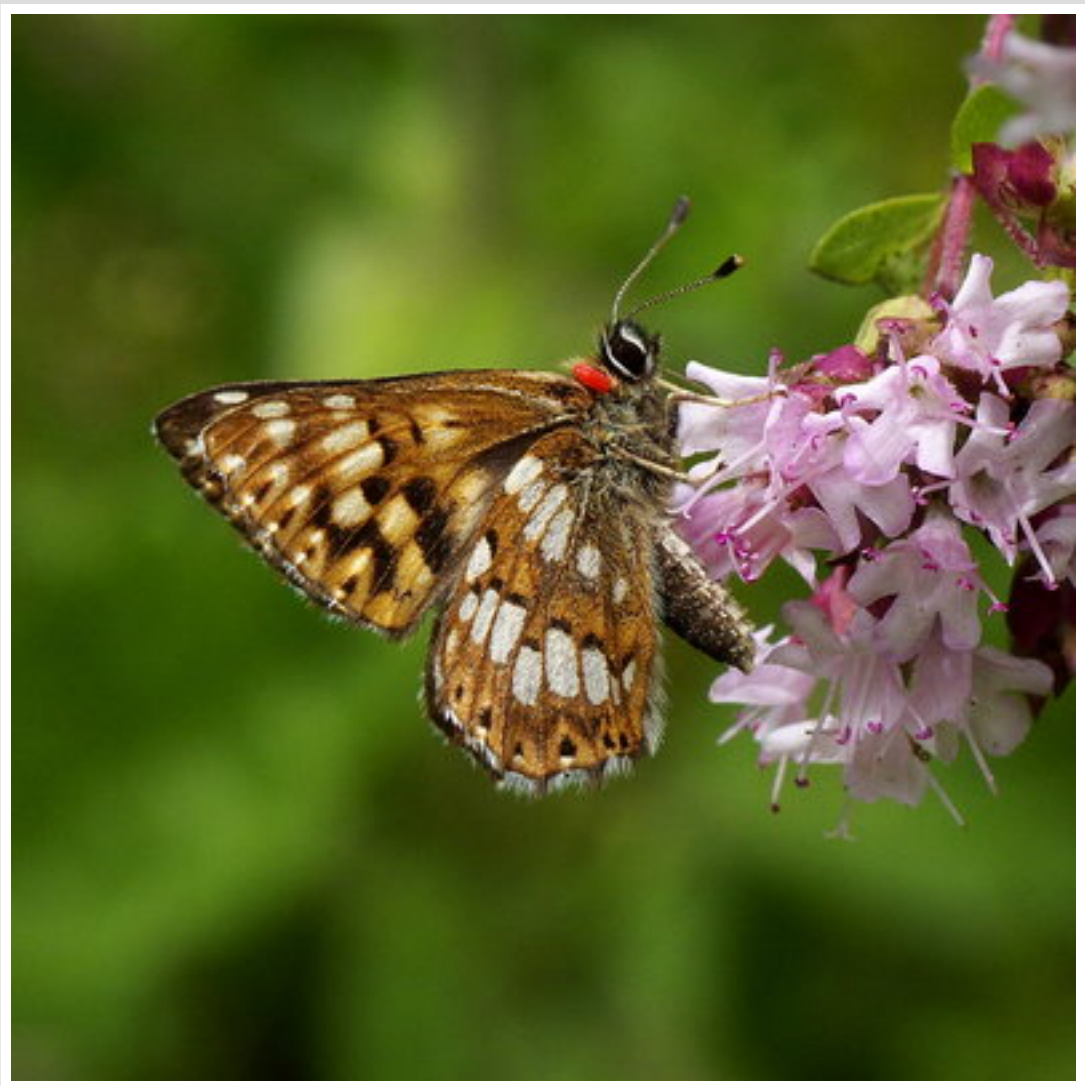
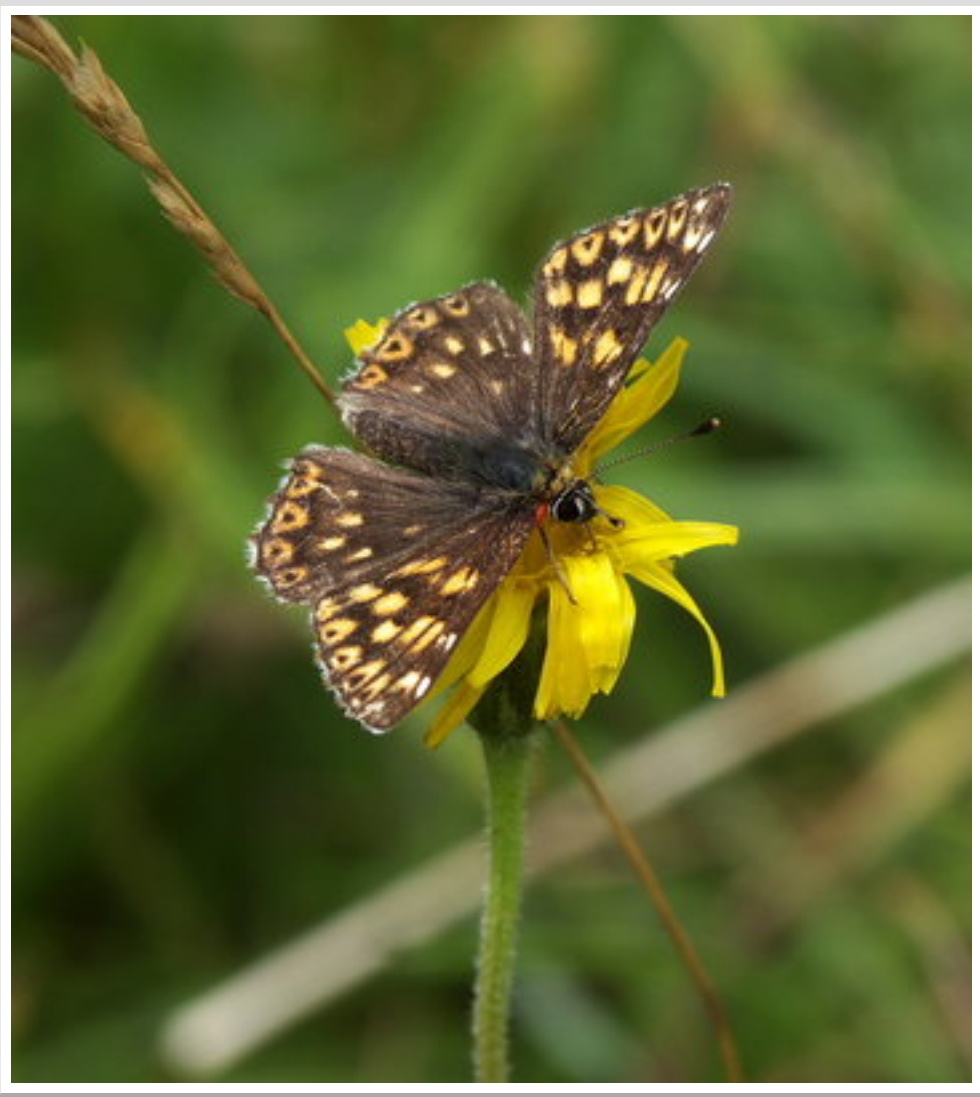
by Maximus, 13-Aug-14 10:05 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Shipton is a great site for Brostreaks, could that be because it's not managed 🤔😊

13th July 2014

Today, in spite of much searching a local site for second brood Dukes, we were only able to relocate the same male we saw five days ago, we saw no others. He was still in the same location, defending the same territory, I wonder if he has encountered any females? He's still in remarkably good condition, and was spending much of his time feeding on various nectar sources.





Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-14 10:18 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking under wing shot Mike, you don't often see it as fully exposed as that so the black streaks contrast nicely 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 13-Aug-14 10:20 PM GMT

I'm still finding it hard to reconcile myself with Dukes in August!!

A noteworthy sighting for sure!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Aug-14 11:59 PM GMT

Obviously the date heading my last posting should have read, 13th August 2014!

Cheers Wurzel 😊

Thanks David, I find seeing Dukes in August is strange, but nice 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 15-Aug-14 06:27 PM GMT

Magdalen Hill Down – Second visit, 7th August 2014

Following the enjoyable visit to MHD on 1st Aug. we decided to make a return trip to try to find the Painted Lady we had seen just as we were leaving the site. This time upon reaching the top of the down where it is more exposed, the breeze was quite strong, so taking photos was going to be more challenging this time! The Buddleia bush by the notice board had a couple of skittish Red Admirals nectaring on it's blooms, and also this male Brimstone, which was beautifully backlit..



As we made our way along the hilltop path, Brimstones appeared to be very numerous, as were Small Tortoiseshells. There were still quite a few Chalkhill Blues and Brown Argus, but the Common Blues were beginning to fade, and this time we only saw one Small Blue. What a difference a week makes!



Chalkhill Blue female



Chalkhill pair



Fresh Brown Argus



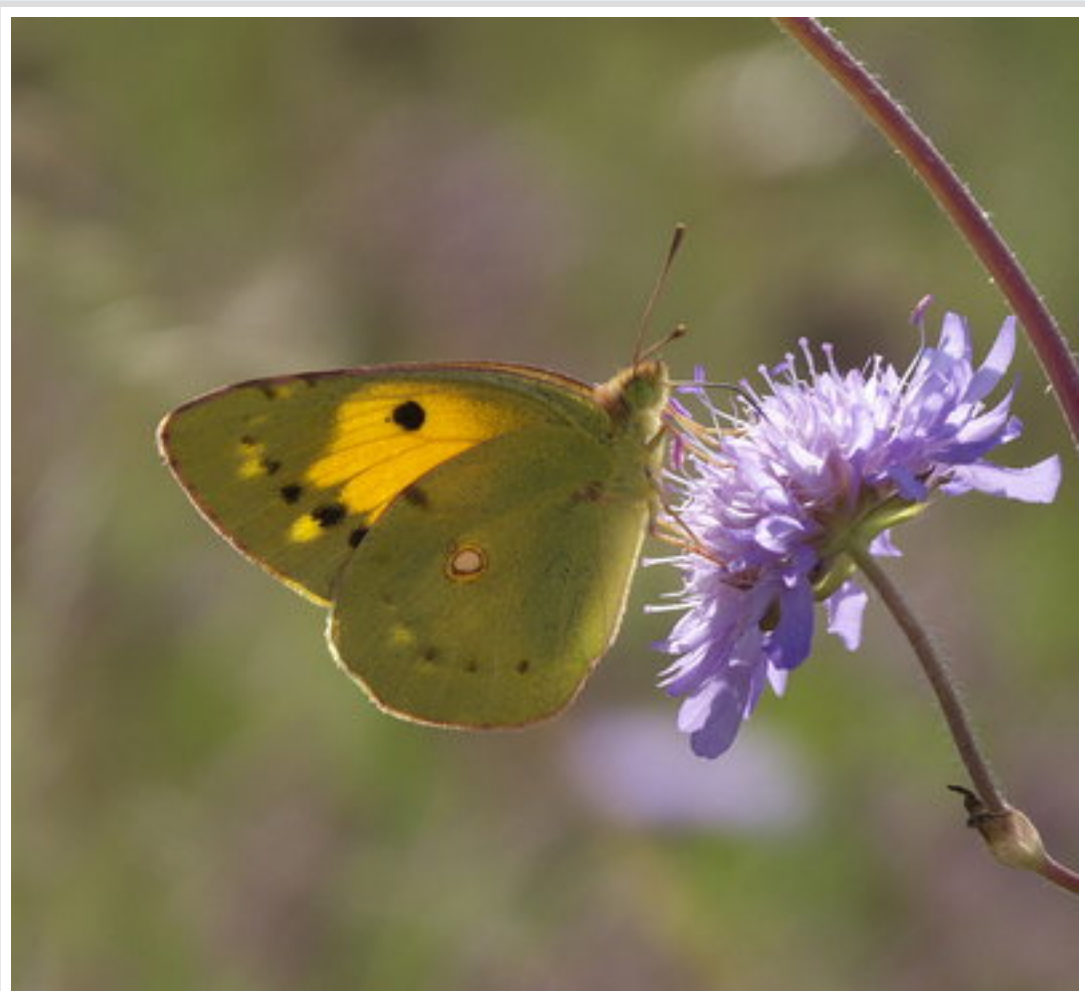
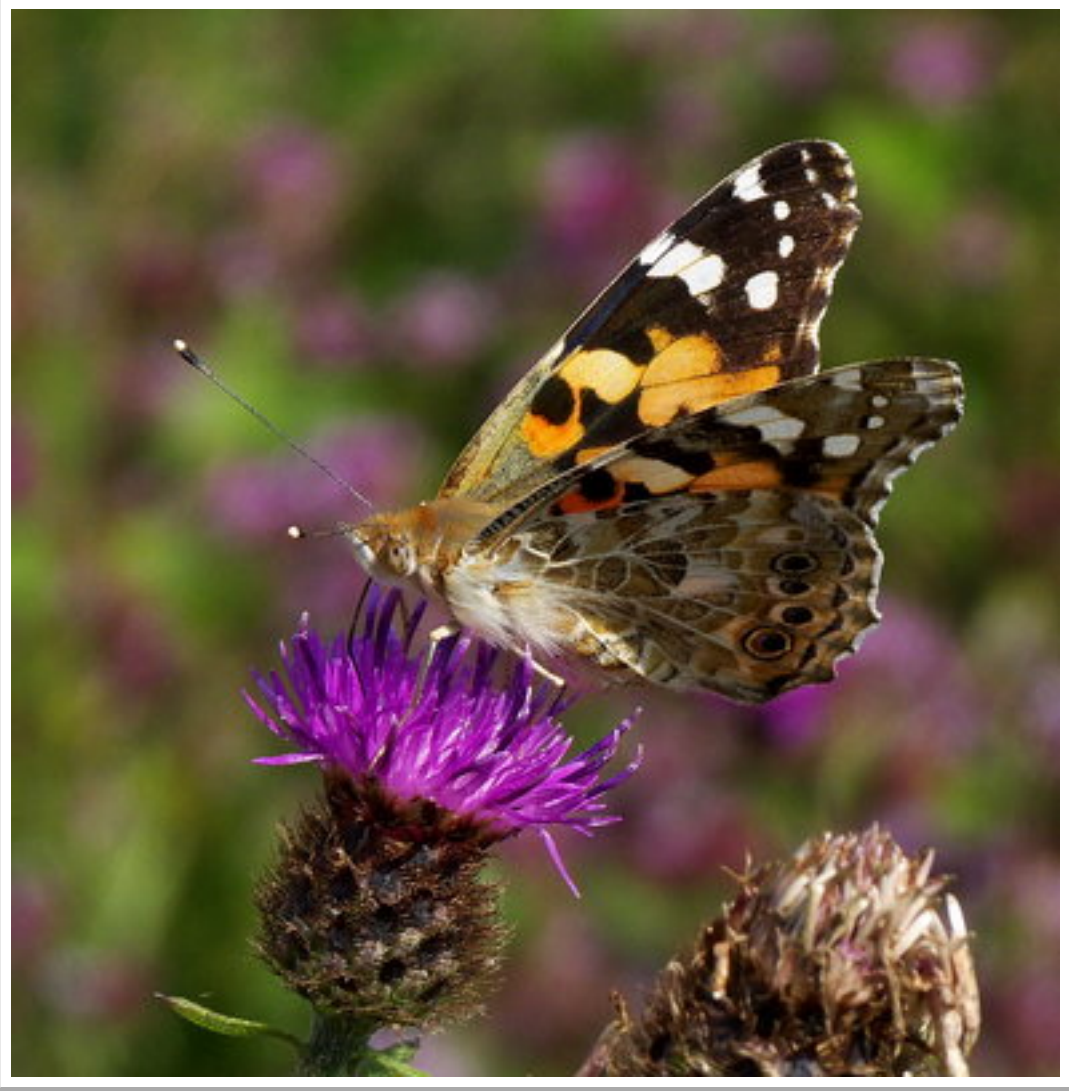
Brown Argus pair



Red Admiral female

Making our way back towards the entrance, we detoured along a path leading downhill which was overgrown with masses of Field Scabious and

Knapweed. We reached a style and were about to climb over it when a Painted Lady flew in and settled on a Scabious right next to us and began to nectar. The only problem was the tall flower was rocking badly in the strong breeze, which unsettled the butterfly, and made getting a photo very difficult. A second Painted Lady appeared near the first and as I followed it and tried to get a shot, I noticed a yellow triangle among the flowers on the other side of the fence, a Clouded Yellow, in fact there were two..





So we found our Lady, in fact we found four, but only got one reasonable shot, because they disappeared while we were following the Clouded Yellows!

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 15-Aug-14 06:34 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Clouded Yellow Mike – you make it look easy! 🍷 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 16-Aug-14 08:23 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, it is 😊 😊

I missed adding this image from the MHD 2nd visit post. I saw the Dragonfly carrying a butterfly, which turned out to be a Meadow Brown. Not sure which species the Dragonfly is, but the Meadow Brown was alive when the DF first settled, but It looks like the DF needs the meal!



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-14 10:25 PM GMT

That final Cloudy shot is awesome Mike 😊👍👍 Did it hold it's wings open for long or was it a one off shot?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Aug-14 08:40 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😊 I'd like to say half an hour 😊 but it was a one off shot 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Aug-14 09:07 PM GMT

On our recent trip to Noar Hill, we also saw two Clouded Yellows, including this male sheltering from the wind, in a Hawthorn bush..



Today we found this larva on one of our potted Blackthorn, on the patio. Online ID confirms it as Grey Dagger moth, amazing colouration..



Larva's posture when I disturbed it, in taking the photo

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 19-Aug-14 08:30 PM GMT

Noar Hill Blues

When checking through my photos following several visits to Noar Hill , I noticed that the female Common Blue butterflies here display a fair degree of variation in their upper wing colouration. These range from the almost uniformly brown females, with just a slight dusting of blue scales on their upper wings, near to their body, to those with increasingly larger amounts of blue on their upper wing surfaces. There also are some outside of this range, perhaps just 'one-offs'.





Brown females





Some blue



More blue





A one-off female Common Blue

Re: Maximus

by jenks, 19-Aug-14 10:35 PM GMT

Maximus said "I missed adding this image from the MHD 2nd visit post. I saw the Dragonfly carrying a butterfly, which turned out to be a Meadow Brown. Not sure which species the Dragonfly is, but the Meadow Brown was alive when the DF first settled, but It looks like the DF needs the meal! ".

Great photos. Nature in the raw ! Meadow Brown being eaten by (I would say) a male Keeled Skimmer.

Jenks

Re: Maximus

by David M, 19-Aug-14 10:40 PM GMT

Are ALL those images of female Common Blues?

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 19-Aug-14 10:54 PM GMT

What a splendidly varied selection of female Common Blues – the last one is an absolute gem. 😊 They are much underrated in my book.

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 20-Aug-14 04:49 PM GMT

I agree – an amazing array of variation in the female Blues but what really astounds me is the Dragonfly with the butterfly. I would love to see that but even if I did I don't think I would get a shot as good as that one Mike 🤩🤩

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-14 10:03 PM GMT

That final Common Blue is anything but common Mike, it's a cracker, more of a Ghostly Blue 😊🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 22-Aug-14 08:33 PM GMT

Thanks for the ID, Jenks, much appreciated 😊

They certainly are, David, nothing common about them 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 and I agree with you, they are very underrated!

Thanks Pauline 😊 I've never seen a Dragonfly with a butterfly before. I've a feeling that should you see see this yourself, you would do ok with the shot



Cheers Wurzel 😊 definitely not common, Ghost Blue sounds great 😊 😊

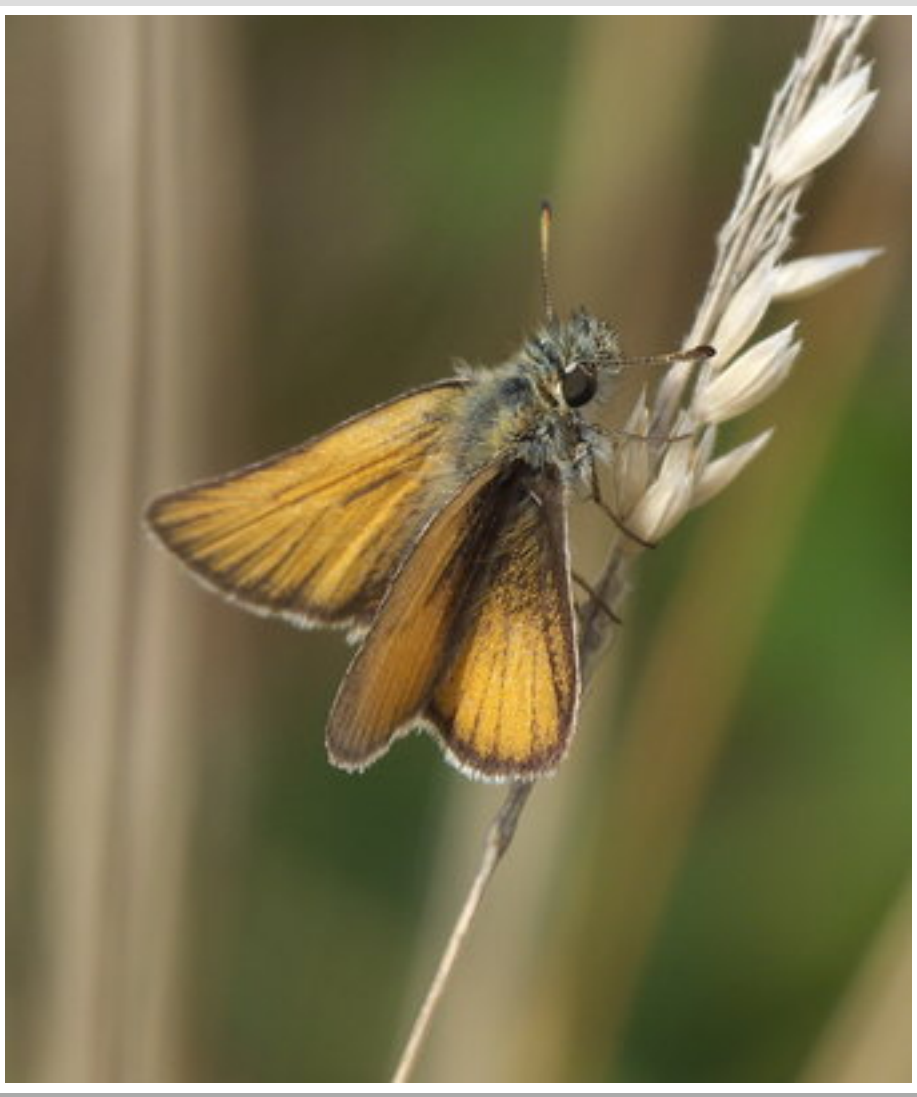
Old Winchester Hill - First visit, 16th August 2014

Having not yet paid a visit to Old Winchester Hill during 2014, we decided to put this right and have a look for second brood Adonis Blues and Silver-spotted Skippers. This site is a late site for SSSkipper, so we hoped that we might find some in good condition. One of the problems at this site is that it is very exposed to the wind, which hit us as we walked out of the shelter of the car park and onto the open down. I have long wanted to get a decent shot of a SSSkipper perched on the top of a Field Scabious, but this was going to be a tricky task today! In spite of the wind there were plenty of butterfly species on the wing, and the first we saw was a Painted Lady with a small nick in her hind wing, nectaring on wild Marjoram..



..followed by a Red Admiral, battle scarred but with an extra white spot in the orange band..

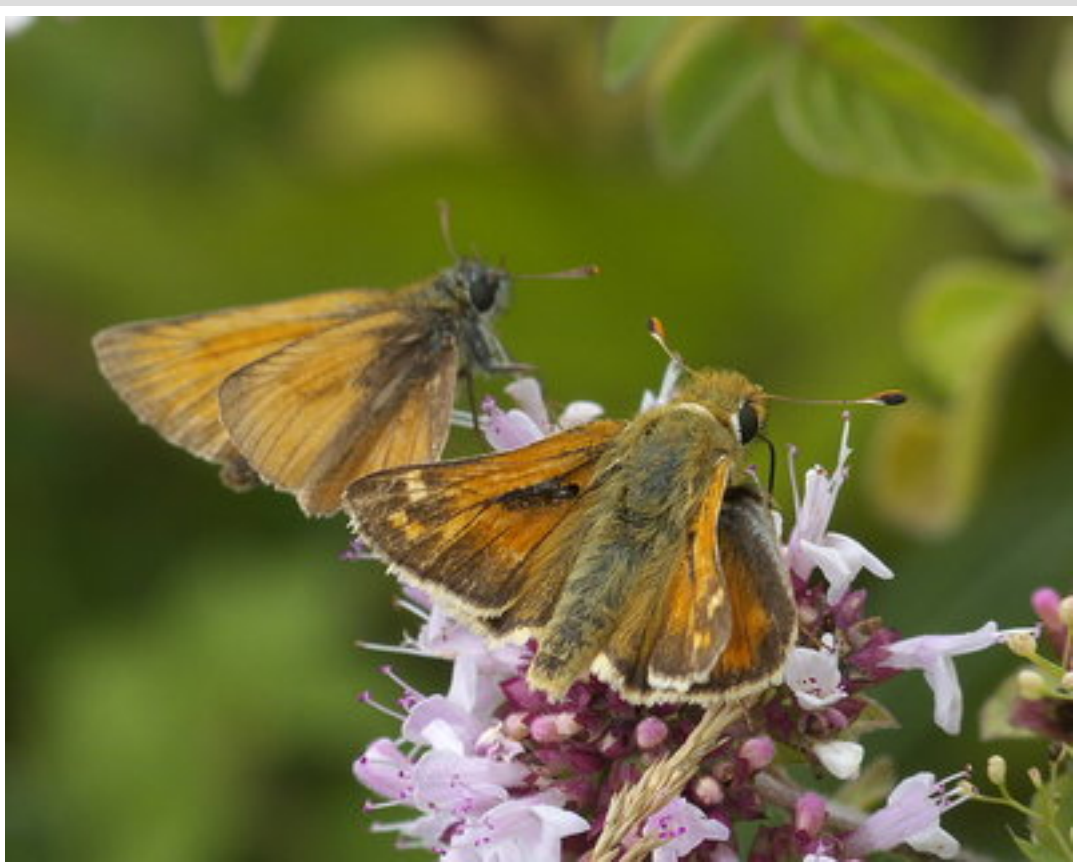




Smessex Skipper in good nick



Brimstones were everywhere, both Male and Female



Worn SSSkipper with a worn Smessex in the background



Best conditioned SSSkipper we saw during our visit

Then there were the Blues..



Male Chalkhill Blue in very good shape



A very bright male Common Blue



Female Common Blue

at last, right under my feet, was a male Adonis Blue, the only one we saw..



Adonis Blue

This Adonis Blue male looked freshly emerged, so we decided we would have to make a return visit soon, as the wind had kept the SSSkippers down in the grass and more Adonis Blues would probably emerge 😊

Re: Maximus

by David M, 22-Aug-14 10:10 PM GMT

Nice to see some very beautiful and fresh looking butterflies at the end of August!

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 23-Aug-14 07:29 AM GMT

I love your cat shots Mike but that Dragonfly with the butterfly is really special. That is something I have long wanted to see but I reckon even if I did I wouldn't get a shot anywhere near as good as that 🍷🍷

Re: Maximus

by Andy Wilson, 23-Aug-14 09:32 AM GMT

Nice Blues! As for the Adonis, here in East Sussex they seem to be emerging slowly, and I think (hope!) the best is yet to come.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-14 10:03 PM GMT

A fantastic smattering of Blues Mike 😊🌱 Now if only the weather would improve slightly so we can make the most of them 😊, still it probably will the very day I start back at work 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 25-Aug-14 03:54 PM GMT

It was great for us to see them too, David.

Glad you like those shots, Pauline 😊😊

Cheers Andy, they're emerging slowly in Hampshire too, we just need some reasonable weather so we can get out to see them.

Cheers Wurzel, I'm with you on the weather 😊 and think you're right about when it will change 😊

Old Winchester Hill – Second visit, 20th August 2014

Having seen one very fresh looking male Adonis Blue at the end of our previous visit, we decided to return four days later, in the hope that more Adonis would have emerged. We would also be on the lookout for female Silver-spotted Skippers, which, should we be able to find them, would hopefully be in much better condition than the males we had encountered during our previous visit. As we reached the bottom of the hill which was more sheltered from the (strong) 😊 breeze, I immediately saw a male Adonis Blue which was being chased by several male Common Blues. I followed it until it settled where it revealed its brilliant blue colouration in the weak sunlight..

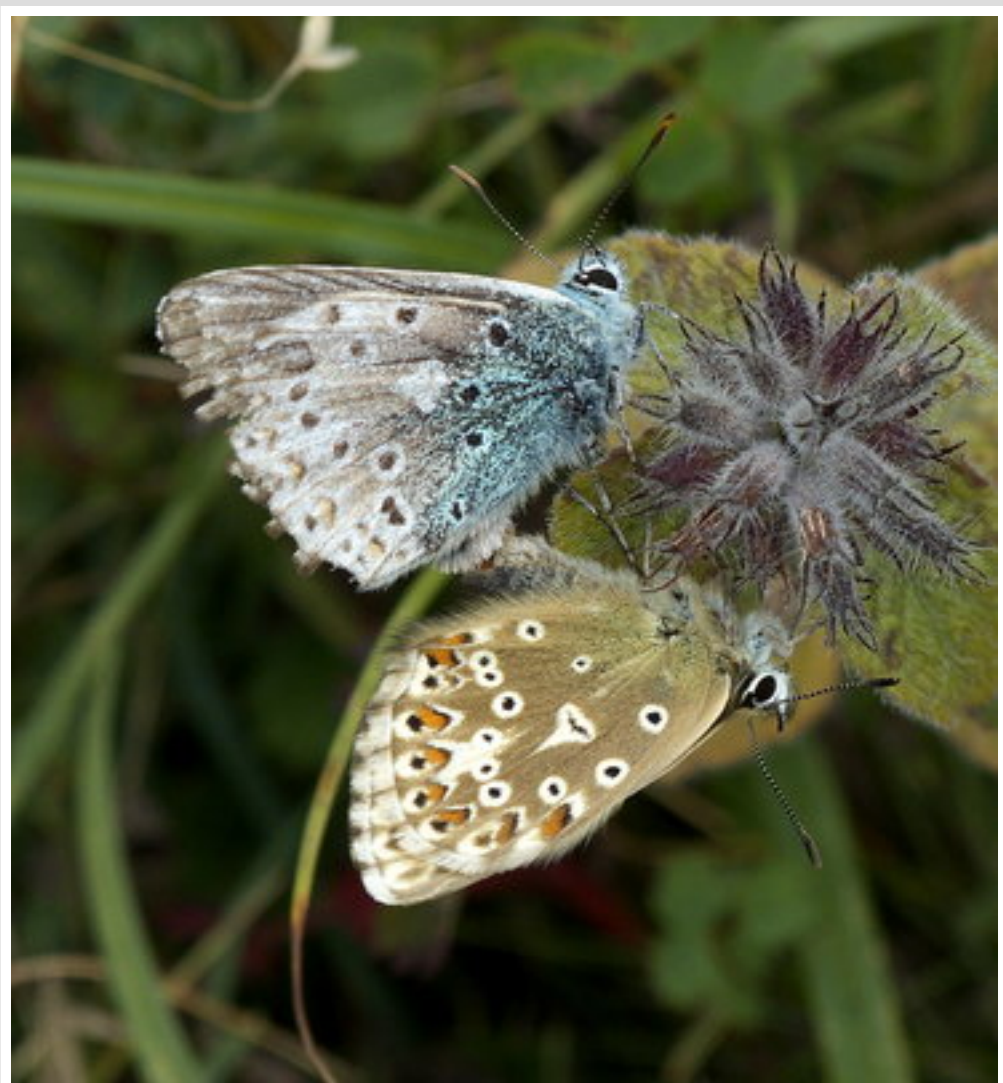


..this was the first of the total of six male Adonis Blues we saw during our visit, no females were seen.





A Chalkhill pair where the male is very worn, and the female very fresh..



..Common Blue Female..



.. and we also got lucky with Silver-spotted Skippers, finding a few good looking individuals. I also managed, at last, to get the shot I wanted of a female on a Field Scabious flower 😊



Male Silver-spotted Skipper



Female Silver-spotted Skipper



Female Silver-spotted Skipper



Female Silver-spotted Skipper

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-14 04:54 PM GMT

Great photo's Maximus, love the Silver Spotted Skipper, Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-14 10:22 PM GMT

Lovely Silver Spots Mike and the colours on those Adonis are awesome 🍷 😊 That is the one good thing about this time of year when we get bad weather – there has been so much going on previously that at least you've got something to look at to keep you going during the inclement weather 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 26-Aug-14 12:19 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, glad you like the SS Skippers 😊

Cheers Wurzel, I'm optimistic of more action yet, this year, but I know what you mean about the weather 😊 😊

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-14 08:21 PM GMT

Hi Mike, a nice selection of Blues in your recent posts, particularly the series of Common Blue females, great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 27-Aug-14 10:07 PM GMT

Thanks Neil 😊

On a recent visit to Noar Hill we saw two female Brown Hairstreaks, but alas they didn't settle at low level! However we found a couple of eggs, one of which seemed to have been laid very recently, as it would appear that the 'adhesive' which attaches it to the Blackthorn, is visible in the first photo



Brown Hairstreak ova

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-Aug-14 12:40 AM GMT

While at Noar, we also saw this moth which was still expanding it's wings, and this caterpillar, both of which we have not yet been able to ID.



Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 28-Aug-14 06:41 AM GMT

Morning Mike

I think the cat is a Buff Tip moth but not sure about the moth – it could be one of the Prominents or I could be way off the mark 😊 . Lovely Adonis shots btw – you've really captured that sheen.

Re: Maximus

by andy brown, 28-Aug-14 10:05 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

Pretty sure the Moth is an Orange Swift

Cheers

Andy

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-Aug-14 09:04 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, for your ID of the Buff Tip cat, you really seem to be gaining a real interest in moths, must be Andys good influence 😊 glad you liked the Adonis shots.

Thank you Andy, for the Orange Swift ID, very much appreciated 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 31-Aug-14 08:43 PM GMT

29th August 2014

Having not visited our local Grayling site near Pirbright for some time, we decided that due to the windy conditions we would pay a visit to see if we could find some females. Our reasoning was that as Grayling are mainly a ground dwelling species, this would give us the best chance of getting a decent photo of one in the blustery conditions. Walking through the gate it was obvious that the heath is beginning to recover from the scrub clearing work carried out during the winter. Gorse is now beginning to re-grow and the Heather is in full bloom, and the two Icelandic ponies on the site appear to be doing a fine job. We saw the first Grayling almost immediately on entering the site, and it turned out to be our first female of the year too..



..the males were playing hard to find using their superb camouflage..



..females and males were about equal in number, with seven females and six males seen..



Re: Maximus

by millerd, 31-Aug-14 09:36 PM GMT

Lovely Graylings, Mike – clearly I should pop back down there for another visit! They have a longer season than I realised, as I saw the first one on 13th July and several in 1st August.

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-14 10:32 PM GMT

Lovely Orange Swift Mike 😊🍷 I too didn't realize that Graylings had such a long season and they look in great nick too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Sep-14 09:07 PM GMT

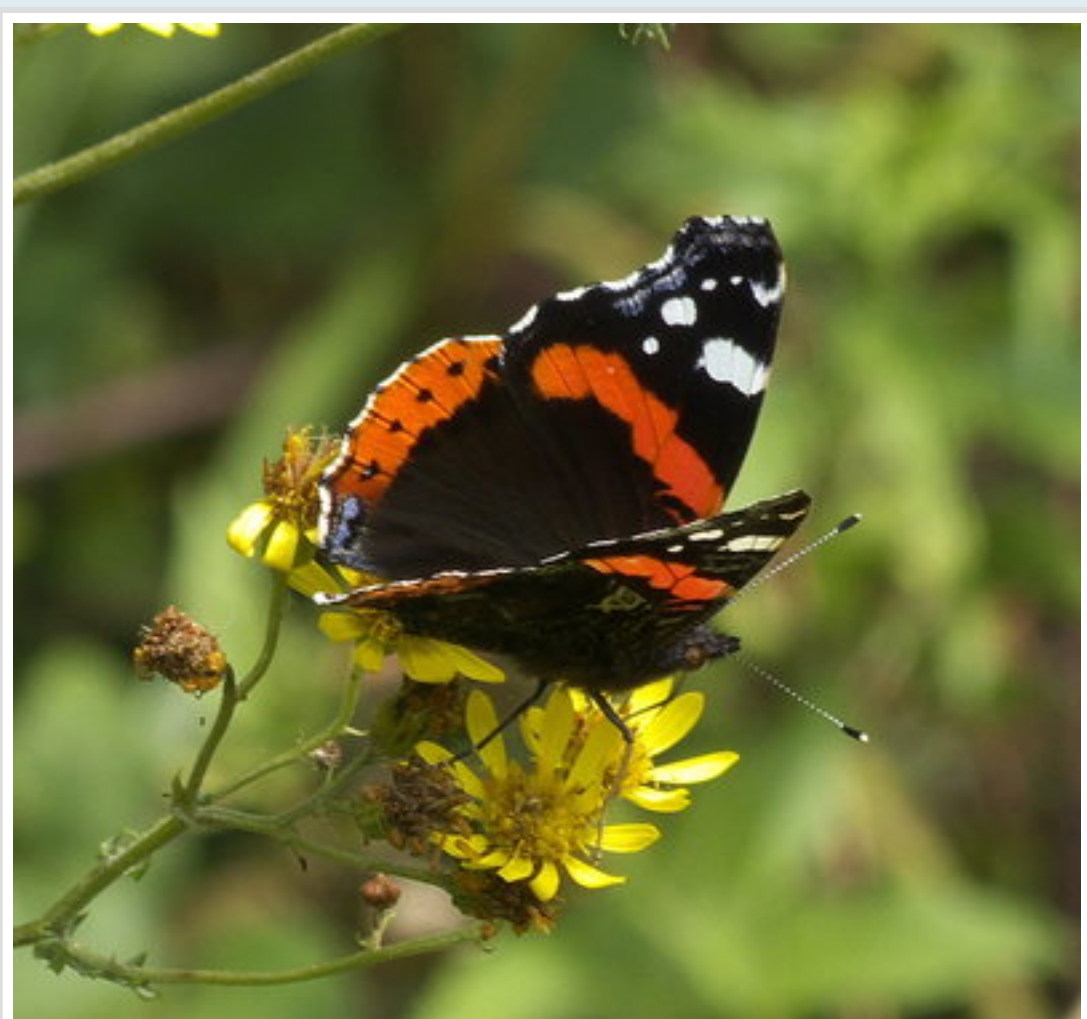
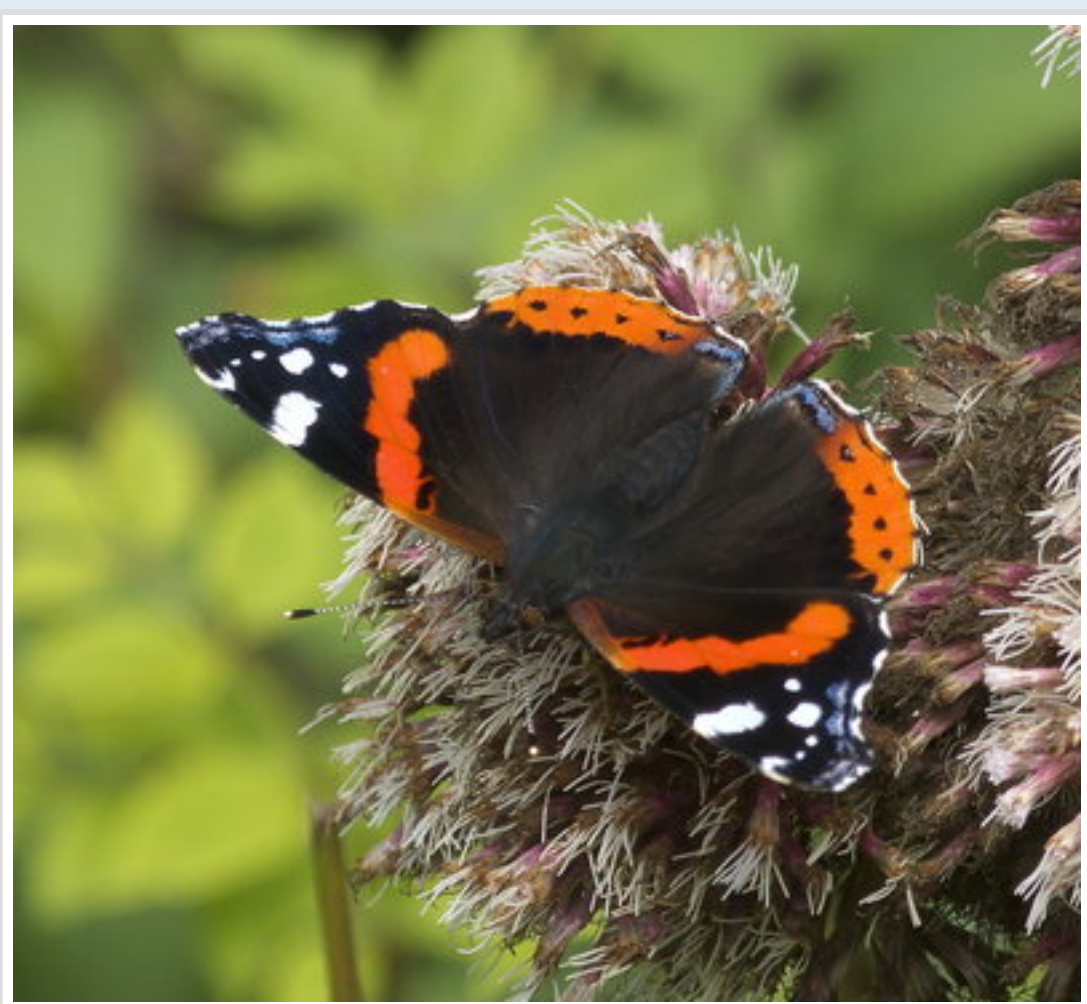
Cheers Dave, we last saw them there on 24th July, so they do have a long season. It would be very worthwhile paying a visit to the site later this week, when the weather improves 😊

Cheers Wurzel, the Graylings are in very good nick and do seem to have a long season 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 03-Sep-14 10:17 PM GMT

Headed for Noar Hill today and arrived in reasonable sunshine, bumped into Pauline and Andy, nice to see you both again 😊 We searched the the really sheltered hollows (wish I knew their names), the the first butterfly we saw was this really gorgeous Red Admiral..



and then this beautiful Comma..



loads of Brimstone on the nectar flowers..



Ladies Autumn Tresses..



..a fresh Small Heath..



..and at last, a female Brown Hairstreak in a difficult spot at the top of a steep bank, I managed a record shot only, she was egg laying on Blackthorn, while I slid down the bank 😊



by Wurzel, 03-Sep-14 10:52 PM GMT

Wow the underside markings on that Comma are lush – I don't think I've ever seen them stand out that well 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 03-Sep-14 10:57 PM GMT

Is it me or is the underside of that Comma abnormally dark?

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 04-Sep-14 04:20 PM GMT

So glad you caught up with one of them Mike/Cathy – nice shot. I know for a fact that females come down in the afternoon to egg-lay at this site as eggs have appeared on Blackthorn that weren't there the previous day when I left at about 2.30ish. Lots of lovely fresh butterflies still around too as evidenced by your gorgeous shots of the Comma.

Re: Maximus

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

Its not a bad looking Comma, Wurzel/David, the best I've seen for a while 😊

Thanks Pauline, I also think that female Brown Hairstreaks egg-lay late in the afternoon 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Sep-14 05:33 PM GMT

Noar Hill 8th September 2014

Today we made what will probably be our final visit of 2014 to Noar Hill to try our luck at finding a September Brown Hairstreak. However despite much searching across the reserve in ideal weather conditions we drew a blank! Fortunately we found good numbers of other species on the wing there, which helped to make up for the lack of BH..





Male and female Brimstone



There were many Speckled Woods



Small Whites



and Many Small Heaths



Meadow Brown female



Common Blue female



A Peacock tempted out of hibernation by the sunshine



Female Comma with a missing antenna



Small Tortoiseshell sitting on last winters Blackthorn ashes

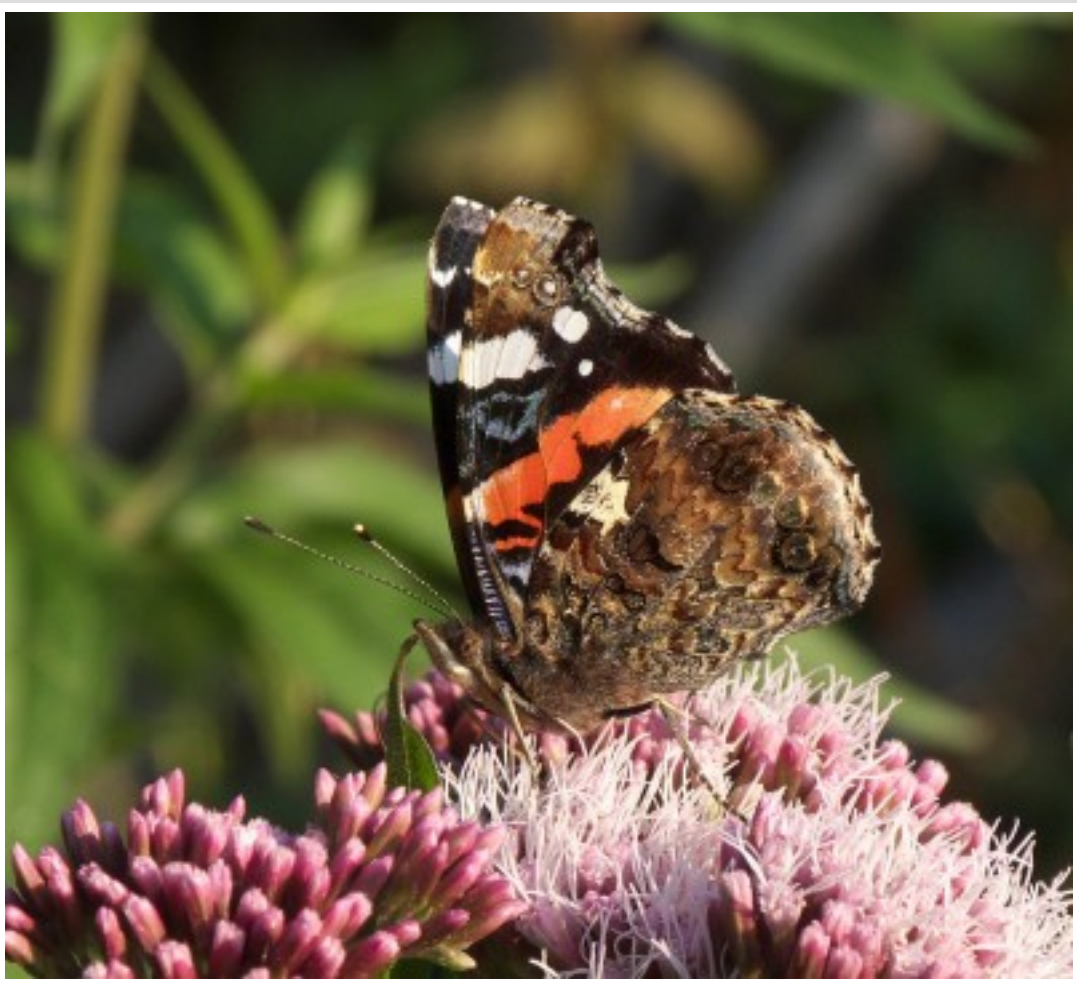
Although there's nothing new here, it was great to see lovely butterflies in such nice condition at the beginning of September. As we set off back to the car very satisfied with what we'd seen, we had no idea that the stars of the day were about to reveal themselves to us 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 14-Sep-14 06:35 PM GMT

...walking down the track on our way back to the car, I spotted the unmistakable outline of a Red Admiral nectaring on some Hemp Agrimony. Moving closer I saw that there were actually four stunning Red Admirals, in close proximity to each other, nectaring on the Hemp Agrimony. The following photos don't do them justice, their superb condition and colouration could only really be appreciated with ones eyes. We watched as they moved from flower to flower, seemingly not too bothered by our presence. Occasionally they would fly up into a nearby Hazel and spend a few minutes basking,

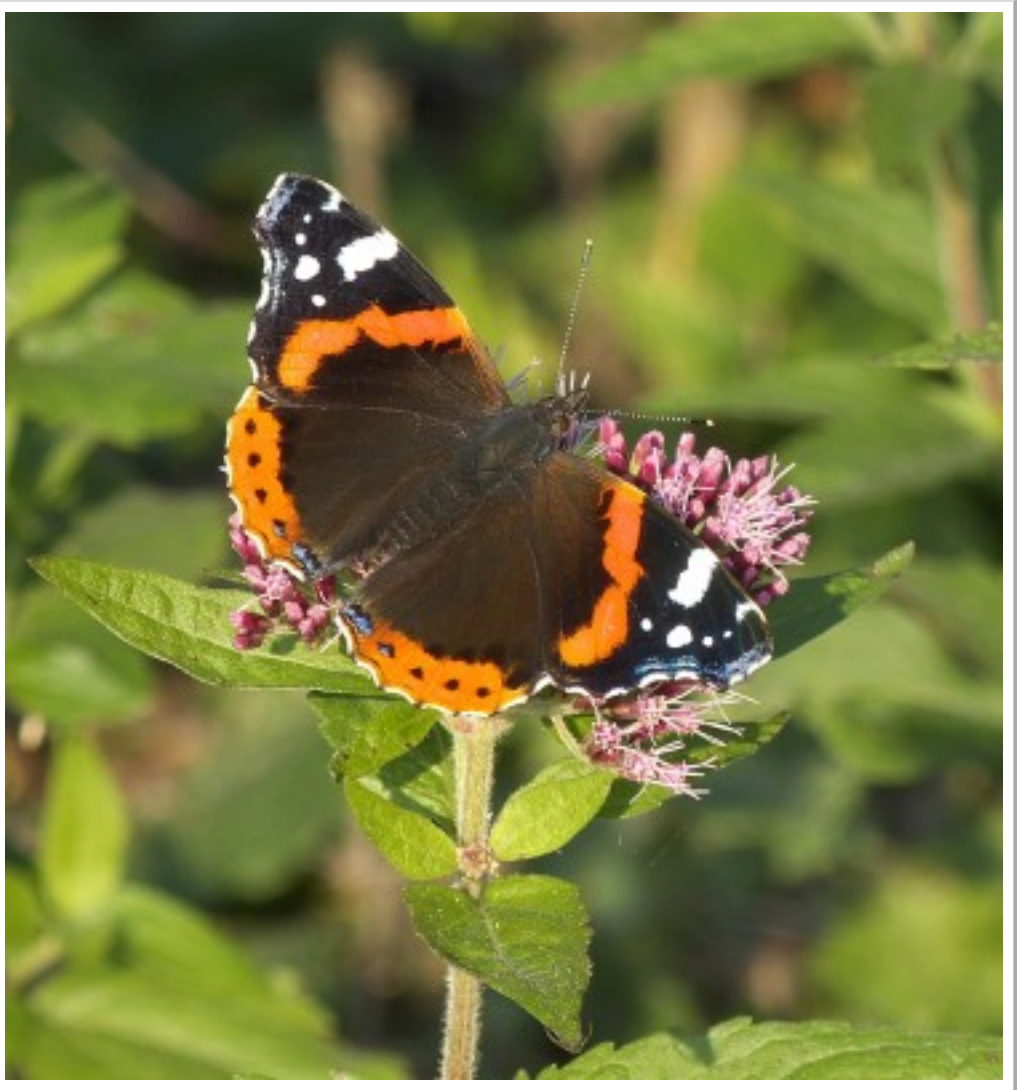
wings fully open to the late afternoon sun, before flying down to resume nectaring. We spent an enjoyable half an hour watching them before heading down to the car, it was a great finale to our afternoon at Noar.



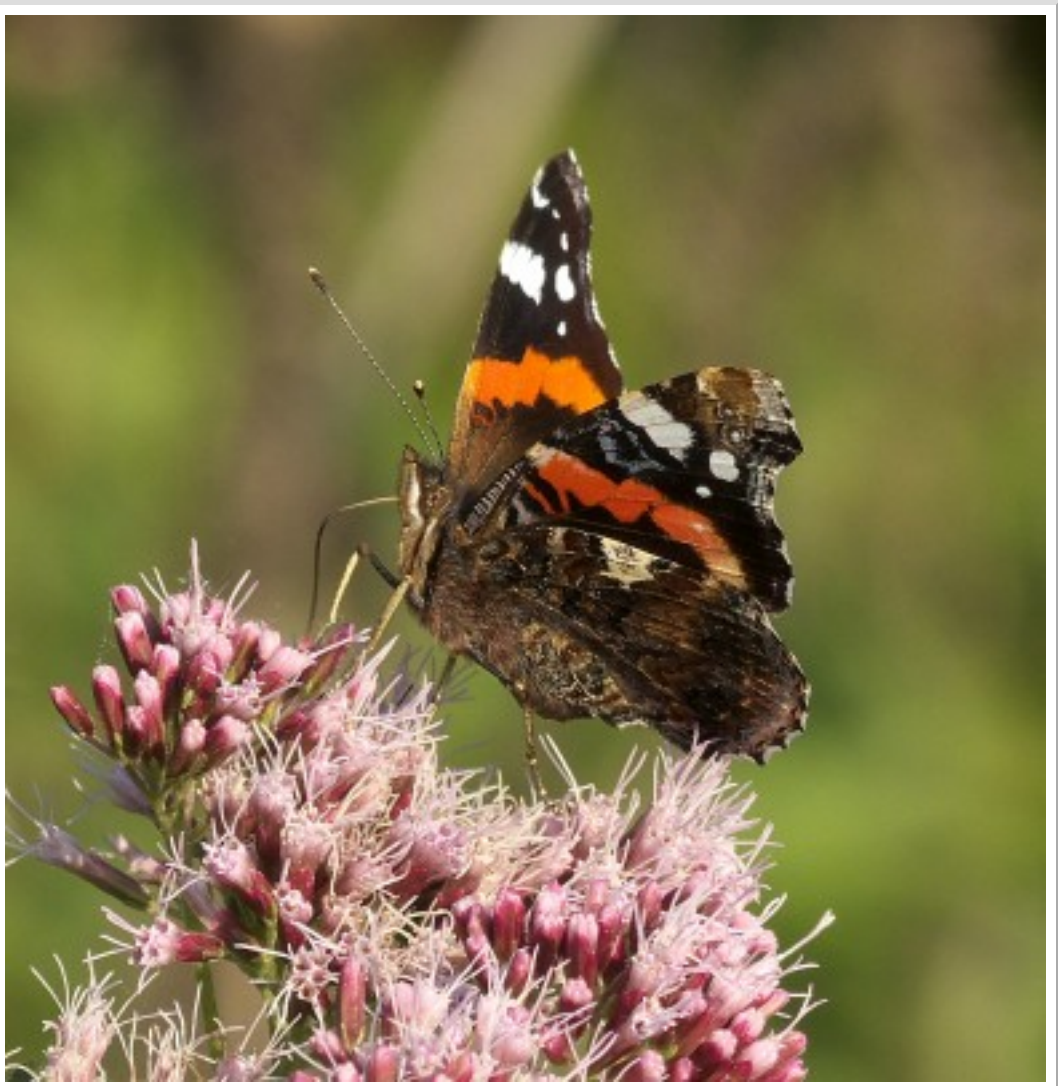
ab bialbata



ab bialbata



different ab bialbata





Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-14 10:27 PM GMT

I read the previous posting and thought that I'd wait and see who the stars were – and they really are stellar – fantastic shots Mike 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 16-Sep-14 05:13 PM GMT

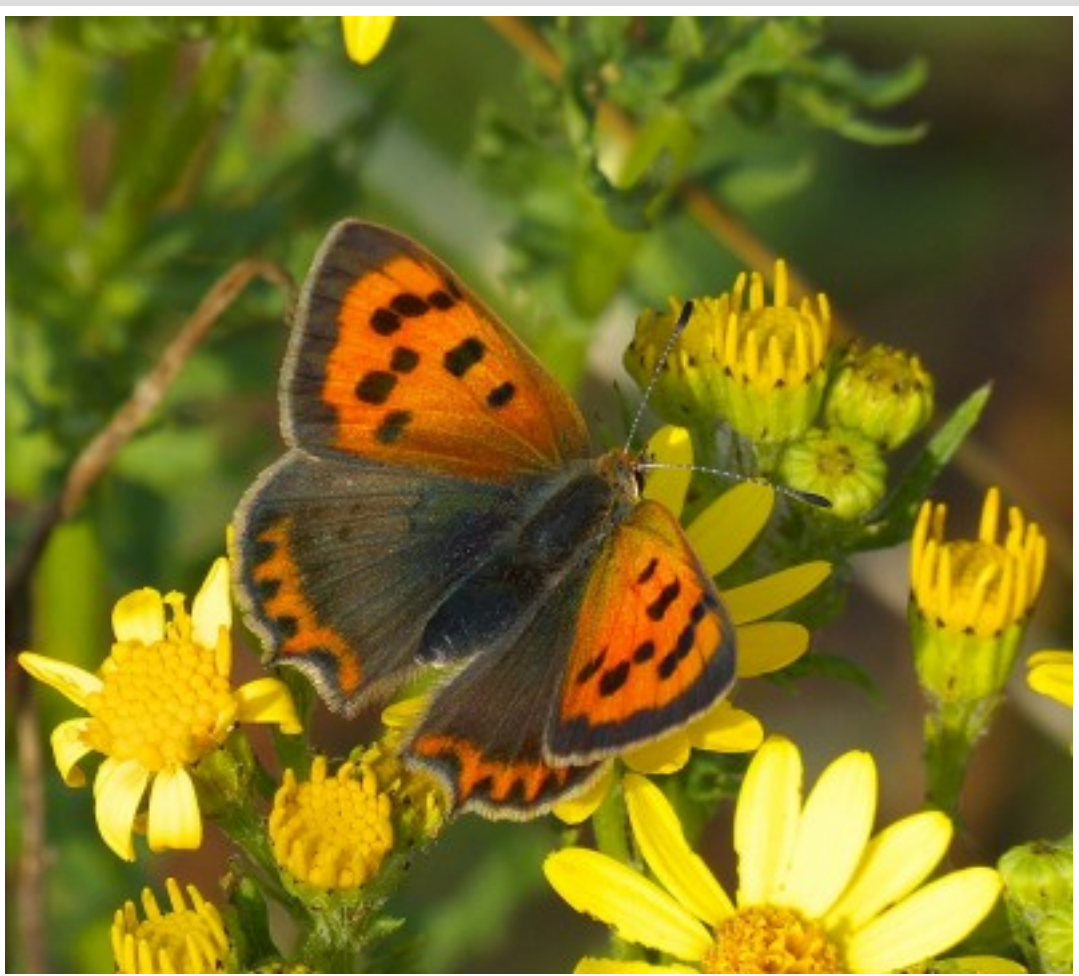
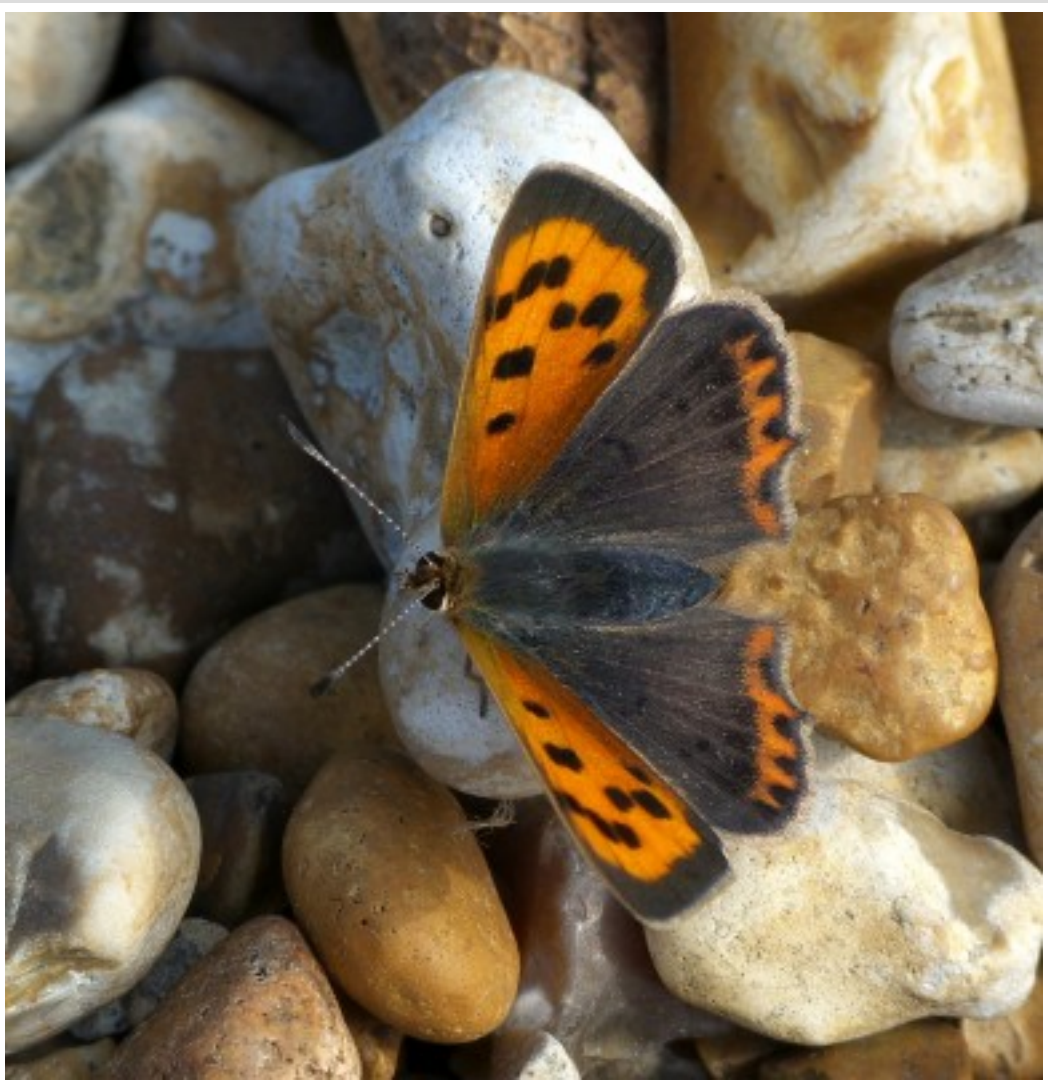
Cheers Wurzel, they were real stunners 😊

Dungeness 10th September 2014

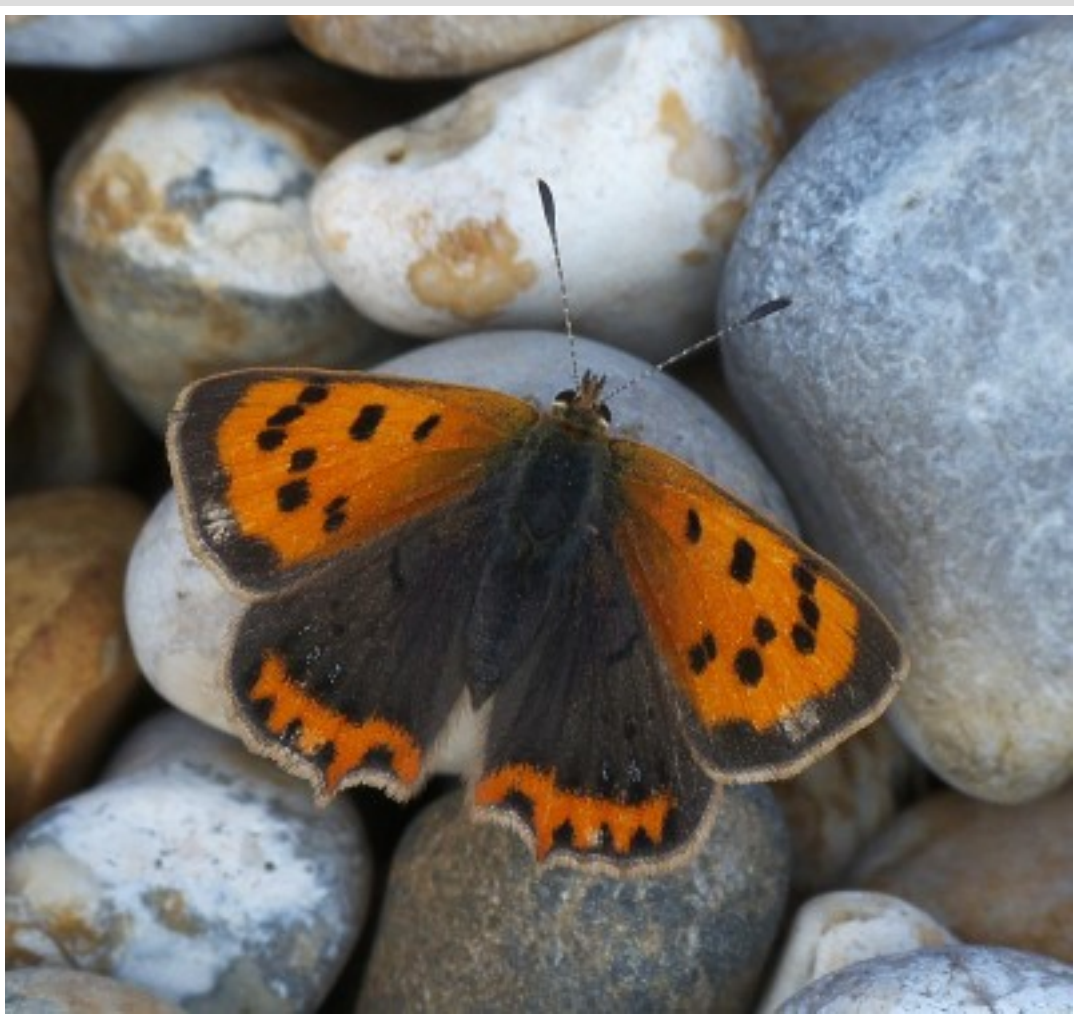
Small Coppers, at least for us, have been a bit thin on the ground this year! This is a real shame as they are a beautiful little butterfly and have always been a particular favourite of mine. Therefore, when a visit to my sister's in Hythe was planned for 9th/10th September we had already decided that a visit to Dungeness was in order on the afternoon of 10th (it was a no-brainer), as it would seem from other PD's, Hoggers 😊, that this is a bit of a Small Copper Mecca 😊 At midday on Thursday we parked up near the Britannia Inn, in overcast conditions with light rain falling. Fortunately the rain stopped as we left the car and headed out into the wilderness. There was a fair breeze so we made our way towards some scrub which was visible in the distance. We were expecting to see Small Coppers with every footfall, but we saw none, in fact we saw no butterflies at all! The breeze was easterly, and looking toward the East some blue sky appeared to be heading our way. We entered an area sheltered by scrub just as the sun appeared and suddenly a Small Copper flew into view, closely followed by another, which was obviously a male defending his territory. We were very happy to see these two and take some photos, and had we seen no more SC's would have driven home quite satisfied. However this was to be one of those 'red letter days' that sometimes happen, usually when you least expect it! I make no apologies for the number of photos that follow, but hopefully they will help illustrate the amazing amount of variation in the Small Coppers found at this site..



The first male we saw, most of those we saw were females

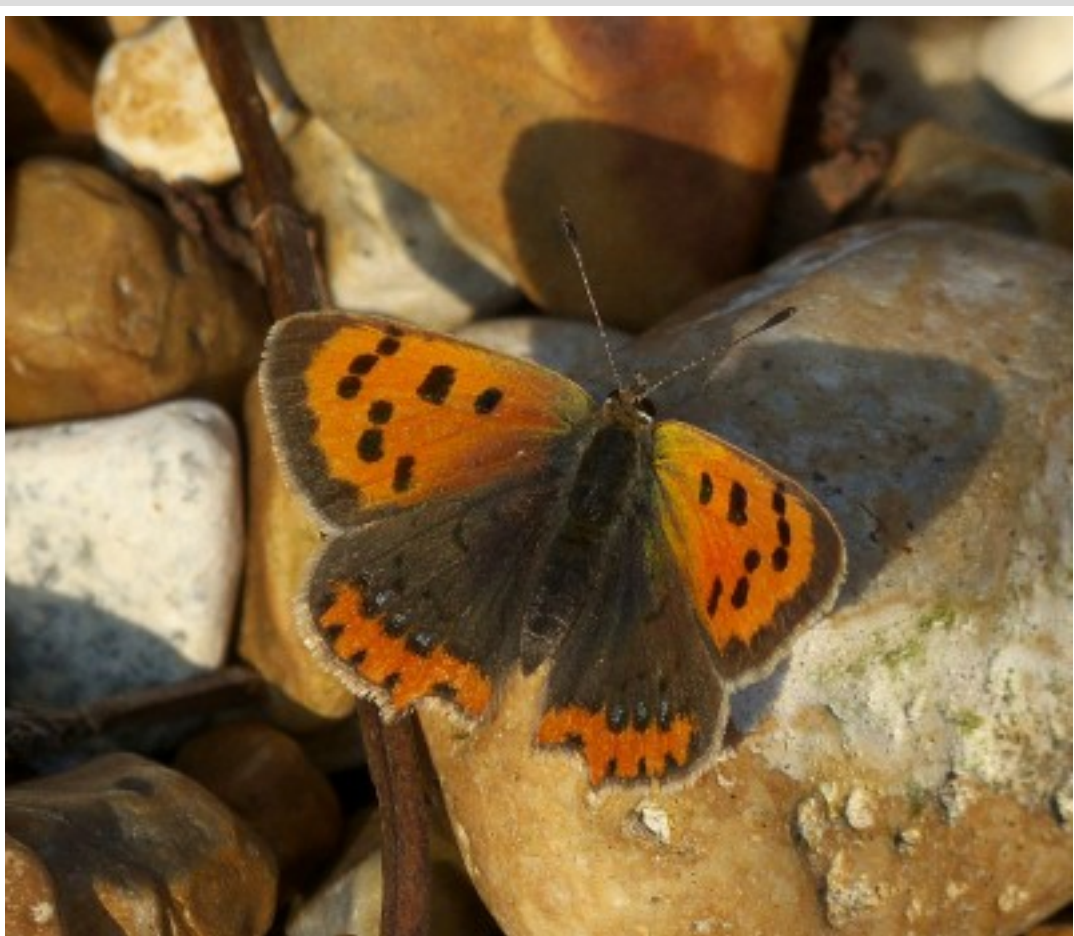


A stunning female



Another stunning female

We also found a couple of the *caeruleopunctata* variety..





caeruleopunctata 1



caeruleopunctata 2

..and also found this Small Copper variation..





An unusually coloured variation

..an interesting butterfly! Most of those we saw were females..



During our afternoon visit we saw a total of 25 different individuals, which more than made up for our lack of sightings of this species through the spring/summer of 2014!

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 16-Sep-14 07:21 PM GMT

Lovely Photo's Mike like always, the Small Copper is a favourite of mine as well. Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-14 07:57 PM GMT

Cracking Red Admirals Mike, they are certainly having a better year this year than last, and great Small Coppers too 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 16-Sep-14 09:34 PM GMT

Indeed. Whilst Small Coppers remain thin on the ground, Red Admirals are noticeably increasing in numbers in south Wales, and given the favourable weather for the next few days, I expect to see quite a few before the first cold winds of autumn blow in.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Sep-14 12:32 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, glad the Small Coppers are your favourites too 😊

Glad you like the Red Admirals, Neil, Small Coppers are superb, when you can find them 😊

I agree David, that there are not that many Small Coppers around this year, the exception being Dungeness or Cornwall! A fair amount of Red Admirals about though, hopefully we should see many more now, given the current good weather!

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Hoggers, 17-Sep-14 05:33 PM GMT

Smashing set of Small Coppers, Maximus! What a treat to see!

I'm glad Dungeness came up trumps!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Sep-14 07:35 PM GMT

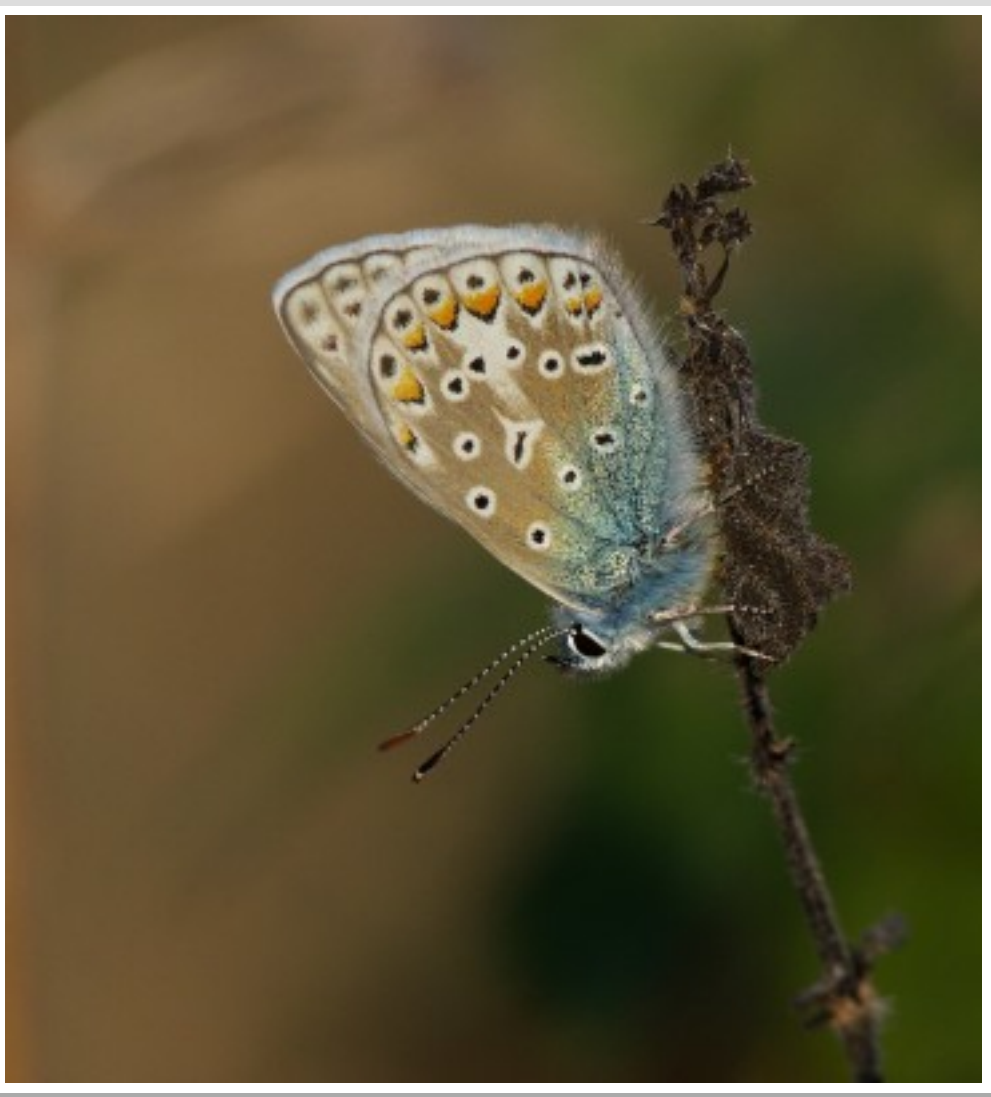
Thanks for your kind comments, Hoggers.

During our visit to Dungeness on 10th September we also saw the following species.



Good numbers of Small Heath





Some very fresh Common Blues



Three Painted Ladies



And a Hummingbird Hawkmoth at rest

There were also a few Brown Argus, mostly quite worn and several Red Admirals, a great visit!

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 18-Sep-14 10:55 PM GMT

Cracking Small Coppers Mike and then more lush shots 😊 . The Hummingbird Hawk Moth is a real gem, I don't think I've ever seen one at rest 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 20-Sep-14 04:36 PM GMT

I love the Painted Lady 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 22-Sep-14 08:09 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I've only seen one other at rest before, normally they're flying around like crazy 😊

Thanks Goldie 😊

Whites

We have a bed of 'sacrificial' cabbages in our garden, and although Large and Small Whites do not appear to be as plentiful as last year, there have still been reasonable numbers of eggs laid. The problem has been the same as last year's, that is, when the larvae have hatched they quickly disappear, probably due to predation from birds, wasps, spiders etc. A while ago a batch of Large White eggs were laid on a cabbage leaf, I kept watch until they hatched and then cut the leaf and brought the larvae inside. They were placed into a container with a net lid, kept well supplied with fresh cabbage and have thrived. There were also several Small Whites and one of these has already pupated.



Larvae with pound coin for size comparison



Large White larvae with one Small White larva



Small White pupa

This morning, taking my customary look into the container I noticed a dead LW larva in the bottom. On taking the cover off to remove it I noticed another larva acting strangely, and as I watched I saw that there were grubs beginning to emerge from it's body. (The following shots are not for the squeemish) 🤪



eight grubs emerging from LW



They quickly formed cocoons beside the larva

I'm not sure what parasite has caused this (wasp or fly?) or if the eggs or larvae were targeted, but I hope that no more succumb! It took roughly one and a half hours from the emergence of the grubs before they pupated beside the larva, which on inspection a little later I noticed had managed to move away from the grubs 😞

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 22-Sep-14 10:35 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Brilliant photos. 😊 I know its not very nice to see, but its nature. Its something i have never seen before and a subject i find fascinating. I have seen a few 3rd/4th instar larva with white cocoons attached to them this year, mainly Red Admirals, but never the actual grubs. Thanks for sharing.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by kevling, 23-Sep-14 02:30 PM GMT

Hi,

I too found your photos interesting. I planted some 'sacrificial' Nasturtiums and struck lucky with Small & Large White larvae. A couple of the larvae crept up the front of my house and pupated under the fascia boards under the guttering. I noticed that one of them seemed de-formed and through a pair of binoculars looked a little similar to what you have photographed. Unfortunatley although I have a good camera, I didn't have a big enough set of ladders to investigate further. (On reflection, it might have raised some dubious glances from the neighbours).

Regards Kev

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 23-Sep-14 02:52 PM GMT

Your photo's are gruesome to say the least, but that's nature for you, it's awful to see though 😞 I wonder to if it's wasp's 🤔 They don't seem to have done to well this year because of the wet weather earlier in the year, great shots though 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by David M, 23-Sep-14 06:46 PM GMT

I think it's a parasitic wasp that's to blame. I noticed a Large White larva on the outside of my kitchen window a couple of weeks ago. At the time I thought it was a strange place for a caterpillar to rest. However, over the next few days precisely the same thing happened – these tiny cocoons appeared beside the prone larva's body.

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 23-Sep-14 10:25 PM GMT

The characteristic pile of yellow cocoons often found accompanying an expired Large White caterpillar (seemingly caught just short of pupation itself) are those of *Cotesia glomerata*, a species of braconid wasp.

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Sep-14 12:31 AM GMT

Thanks for your kind comments Nick, much appreciated, it is nature and I can understand why you find this subject fascinating. I didn't know that Red

Admirals were affected in the same way too.

Hi Kev, thanks for your comments, I can just imagine what your neighbours would be thinking had they seen you up a ladder with your camera in hand!

They are a bit gruesome Goldie, but the natural world never ceases to amaze.

This must be a very common occurrence David, and I agree with you that it's a parasitic wasp that's to blame.

Hi Dave, possibly *Cotesia glomerata* but I have been informed that it is more likely to be *Apanteles glomeratus*

Dave, I believe that both of the above names refer to the same wasp.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3xfGblogG4

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 24-Sep-14 07:47 AM GMT

Excellent observation Mike and well captured on camera. Like many others I have never actually seen the larva before so it is fascinating to see albeit quite gruesome!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Sep-14 11:32 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline, I've also seen your excellent photos showing the parasitised Comma larva in the SSA 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 25-Sep-14 09:02 PM GMT

The parasitised larva which I posted photos of in my diary entry of 22nd September is amazingly still alive and active! Several other larvae from the batch we brought inside have also succumbed to the parasite, but have not survived! Not sure why this one has?



The larva still alive

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 25-Sep-14 10:28 PM GMT

A fascinating sequence of shots Mike, it's Alien all over again and I've only just got over the nightmares from the original film 😱😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 26-Sep-14 05:29 PM GMT

How can that even be possible??!! 😱 Incredible!!! You need to keep an eye on that one – no telling what it might turn into 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 26-Sep-14 08:12 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, Alien has a lot to answer for 😬 😊

Pauline, I think that its a bit down to luck 😬 if you can call that luck 😬 Apparently these grubs feed on the fatty layer of the larva's body so avoiding the vital organs. A parasite would not want to kill it's host, at least not too soon, but I guess that it doesn't always work out this way, accounting for the dead larvae. I have watched the grubs emerging from larva several times now and it would appear that rather than eat their way out, they emerge through the spiracles along the larva's side, which it breathes through. The skin is therefore not punctured so as long as there is no damage to the internal organs, perhaps survival is possible! I'm probably way out on this, but I can only report what I have seen. I still don't know what it might turn into though 😬 😊

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 26-Sep-14 08:32 PM GMT

Excellent observations, Mike 😊

I have not seen a survival story like this and do not have all the answers, but I believe your theory to be sound. It would be very interesting if you could monitor this particular larva to see how it develops. Assuming it survives and pupates, it is now too late in the season for it to develop into an adult, so the final words may have to wait until next May.

Vince

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 26-Sep-14 09:14 PM GMT

Thanks Vince, i'll keep an eye on the larva and see how it goes 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 27-Sep-14 05:34 PM GMT

It will be very interesting to see what happens Mike Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-Sep-14 09:30 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie 😊

I recently saw this female Speckled Bush Cricket on ivy, when I was watching a female Holly Blue ovipositing.



This morning a female Red Admiral settled for a while in our garden on the Pampas Grass, looks like she is full of egg, I wonder if she be migrating south soon?



A Small Copper has been around the garden for several days now, but I have been unable to get a photo!

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 30-Sep-14 04:29 PM GMT

Just catching up on the postings, love your Red Admiral Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 03-Oct-14 12:43 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, Red Admirals are beautiful butterflies and are a real favourite of mine 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 04-Oct-14 03:27 PM GMT

During the recent spell of good weather we have been experiencing, there have been a few butterflies about. Mainly Red Admirals, a few Speckled Woods, some Commas, a couple of Small Tortoiseshells and a single female Holly Blue. We have not purposefully set out to find any, and those that we have seen have all been local to us. The change in the weather today is probably the cue I needed to attempt to reflect on our 2014 butterfly season. Having seen the excellent photo montages by Mike and Pauline, I felt that I would like to try to portray our year in a similar manner. It proved to be a bit more time consuming than I had imagined and brought home to me my lack of in-depth knowledge of Photoshop. However with some perseverance and a bit of web browsing, I got there in the end. The photos of this year's species we have seen are in chronological order. The last two montages of special sightings and our reared butterflies I have put in my order of preference.





10. Green Hairstreak - Hampshire - 19th April 2014



11. Green-veined White - Surrey - 21st April 2014



12. Speckled Wood - Surrey - 21st April 2014



13. Wood White - Surrey - 23rd April 2014



14. Grizzled Skipper - Hampshire - 24th April 2014



15. Orang Skipper - Hampshire - 24th April 2014



16. Large White - 18th April 2014



17. Pearl-bordered Frillfly - Hampshire 9th May 2014



18. Common Blue - Hampshire - 6th May 2014



19. Wall Brown - Isle of Wight - 12th May 2014



20. Small Heath - Isle of Wight - 19th May 2014



21. Brown Argus - Isle of Wight - 19th May 2014



22. Asteris Blue - Isle of Wight - 14th May 2014



23. Small Copper - Isle of Wight - 14th May 2014



24. Small Blue - Isle of Wight - 14th May 2014



25. Glauville Frillfly - Isle of Wight - 14th May 2014



26. Marsh Fritillary - Dorset - 10th May 2014



27. Small Pearl-bordered Frillfly - Hampshire - 30th May 2014



28. Large Skipper - Hampshire - 30th May 2014



29. Clouded Yellow - Hampshire - 6th June 2014



30. Silver-veined Blue - 11th June 2014



31. Mosses Brown - Hampshire - 14th June 2014



32. Ringlet - Hampshire - 14th June 2014



33. White Admiral - Hampshire - 16th June 2014



34. Silver-washed Fritillary - Hampshire - 16th June 2014



35. Black Hairstreak - Oxfordshire - 17th June 2014



36. Marbled White - Oxfordshire - 17th June 2014



37. Large Blue - Gloucestershire - 24th June 2014



38. Dark Green Fritillary - Gloucestershire - 25th June 2014



39. Peacock Lady - Gloucestershire - 25th June 2014



40. Small Skipper - Surrey - 30th June 2014



41. Purple Empress - Surrey - 30th June 2014



42. High Down Fritillary - Devon - 9th July 2014



43. Grayling - Devon - 10th July 2014



44. Lulworth Skipper - Dorset - 12th July 2014



45. Gatekeeper - Dorset - 12th July 2014



The following montage of photos are of sightings of those species or aberrations seen in 2014, which are of special significance to us. We felt very privileged (and lucky) to see a second brood Duke of Burgundy, and witnessing the brilliant grounded Purple Emperor left us on a high for days, if not weeks! The High Brown Fritillary was a first for us in the uk.



The following montage contains photos of those species that we reared in 2014, all apart from the Green-veined White were rescues, which without our intervention would have been lost. We learned a great deal whilst rearing them, and it gave us a real insight and appreciation of just how fascinating the early stages are.



Re: Maximus

by Neil Hulme, 04-Oct-14 03:38 PM GMT

Hi Mike,
Your Marsh Fritillary and Large Blue abs. together make a truly great season, irrespective of the rest! I very much doubt you'll repeat that particular double, at least not in this lifetime.
BWs, Neil

Re: Maximus

by jens, 04-Oct-14 03:57 PM GMT

WOW !! Seeing those butterfly species in one year would be worthy of credit but photographing them to that level of expertise is even more so. Beautiful

images and beautifully presented. I note most of the photos were taken Dorset/Hants/ Surrey. You are lucky to have such a variety of species close to hand. Still, we do have High Brown Fritillary in Glamorgan !

Jenks

Re: Maximus

by David M, 04-Oct-14 08:36 PM GMT

Fantastic array of montages. You've sure had a productive year.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-14 08:32 PM GMT

Fantastic sequence of shots Mike 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Oct-14 12:09 AM GMT

Hi Neil, it was a really great season for us 😊 and I agree, it's highly unlikely we will repeat the Marsh Fritillary/Large Blue ab double in this lifetime 😊

Thanks Jenks, you are very generous with your positive comments 😊 you are very lucky to have the High Brown Fritillary in Wales 😊

Thanks David, and yes it was a very productive year for us 😊

Thank's Wurzel, your comments are much appreciated 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 06-Oct-14 04:20 PM GMT

Just seen your photo's Mike, Fantastic, I can see I'll have to buy Photo Shop, mind you you've got to have lovely photo's like yours to show 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 08-Oct-14 01:18 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, you should get Photoshop, you have some great photos 😊

Attached are a couple of photos illustrating the size difference between our reared Large and Small White butterfly pupae. When comparing Large and Small White butterflies, to me at least, there does not seem to be a massive size difference. The Small White pupa as seen in the photos however, appears to be almost half the size of that of the Large White!





Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-14 11:24 PM GMT

Interesting shots Mike clearly showing the size difference 😊 How far into pupation are they?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 09-Oct-14 12:03 PM GMT

I'm getting so behind with these diaries so please excuse the late response Mike but those set of photos are absolutely stunning and it is quite clear just how much work went into the presentation and indeed the original shots. You must be well pleased with what you have achieved this year.

Re: Maximus

by PhilBJohnson, 10-Oct-14 01:18 AM GMT

Hi Maximus,

I really like the photo montages, particularly your shots of the Purple Emperor. Just so that you know I am paying attention, you have put 3014 under the Purple Emperor instead of 2014 ! 😊 I missed a grounded Purple Emperor this year partly due to me cocking up my holiday dates and the narrow window of opportunity presented. But its all a steep learning curve for me (and I love it). In Surrey I have seen White Admiral on dog faeces, Red Admiral, Holly Blue and Comma on Horse droppings. So it is not like I haven't looked. I was thinking of putting this video footage to music and calling it "Butterflies behaving badly" as a bit of fun. -Shhhh, don't tell anyone else and give them ideas.... 😊 Best wishes, Philip

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 14-Oct-14 08:55 PM GMT

Wurzel, the Small White pupa was 2 weeks old and the Large White 3 days old.

Thank you for your kind comments Pauline, and yes 'well pleased' sums up our season beautifully, a really enjoyable spring/summer 😊

Thanks Philip, you spotted my deliberate mistake, but will PE's still be around in a thousand years? Perhaps woodland will then be a thing of the past and the whole country will be covered in tarmac and concrete, so PE's extinct 😊 Great videos by the way of PE-PH, it's just like being there, much more so than any still photo can convey 😊 By the way I'll keep schtum about your BBB video idea 😊

Orange-tips

Of the seventeen Orange-tip ova and larvae we rescued, (just in time) from a local footpath before the strimmers laid waste to the Garlic Mustard they inhabited, only one pupated the wrong way round! Number 16, the sixteenth larva to pupate!



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 15-Oct-14 08:33 PM GMT

Although most sources suggest that (particularly) first instar Orange-tip larvae can be cannibalistic, we did not witness this behaviour in any of those we reared. We also noted that female Orange-tip butterflies will lay additional eggs on food plants which already contain several eggs! The two larvae in the photo appeared quite happy to be in close proximity to each other, and several times crossed paths without incident, even appearing to be aware of each others presence. Eating as much Garlic Mustard as fast as possible seems to be their main priority!



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Oct-14 12:11 AM GMT

A couple more shots showing our Orange-tip first instar larva, on Garlic Mustard, from Spring 2014..



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Oct-14 08:21 PM GMT

A totally pristine Speckled Wood seen in our garden this morning, no photos as it was six feet up, but watched it basking for quite a while through binoculars. Possibly a third brood individual given it's amazing condition.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 18-Oct-14 09:11 PM GMT

Wow! That really **is** amazing. I just wish I could see any butterfly round my patch right now! 😞

Re: Maximus

by jenks, 18-Oct-14 09:55 PM GMT

David M said "I just wish I could see any butterfly round my patch right now!"

Newport wetlands Goldcliff reserve yesterday, 17 Oct, had 2 Clouded Yellow (though precious little flower for them to nectar on) and 2 Red Admiral on the Ivy at the entrance to the reserve. Looking through my records this is the latest date I`ve seen CY. Several Common Darter and 2 Southern Hawker seen too.

Jenks.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 18-Oct-14 10:06 PM GMT

Thanks for that, Jenks.

Off my Christmas list for sure 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-14 08:38 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the cats Mike especially the 2 pronged attack on the Garlic Mustard 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 31-Oct-14 06:34 PM GMT

We watched male Brimstone fly across the road in front of us today, and stopped to watch it flying along a side road 😊 Our first butterfly of the year was a Brimstone, perhaps it will also be our last!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Nov-14 01:40 AM GMT

The Orange-tip larvae that we rescued earlier this year have again given us a great insight into their behaviour as well as some fine photo opportunities. This pupa is in the process of casting off it's larval skin.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-14 08:54 AM GMT

Interesting shots Mike, I can almost witness the wriggling 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 01-Nov-14 12:03 PM GMT

Fascinating squence, Mike. It must have been a real pleasure to watch.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Nov-14 08:24 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel and David, it did wriggle a lot. In the second shot the pupa is suspended only on the two silk threads in order that it may eject the larval skin, before re-attaching its rear end to the silk pad, shot three. It's a real pleasure to witness, one I will never tire of.

In this shot of the same larva commencing pupation, the embryonic wings are particularly visible. In my experience I have found that this is not always the case.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 03-Nov-14 10:44 PM GMT

That is incredible 😊 – I never realised that they started to develop so quickly, I always imagined that they went in the pupae as a caterpillar and then the change happened.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 04-Nov-14 08:19 PM GMT

I believe it's along these lines Wurzel

Wing development

Last instar wing disk, *Junonia coenia*

Detail of a butterfly wingWings or wing pads are not visible on the outside of the larva, but when larvae are dissected, tiny developing wing disks can be found on the second and third thoracic segments, in place of the spiracles that are apparent on abdominal segments. Wing disks develop in association with a trachea that runs along the base of the wing, and are surrounded by a thin peripodial membrane, which is linked to the outer epidermis of the larva by a tiny duct.

Wing disks are very small until the last larval instar, when they increase dramatically in size, are invaded by branching tracheae from the wing base that precede the formation of the wing veins, and begin to develop patterns associated with several landmarks of the wing.

Near pupation, the wings are forced outside the epidermis under pressure from the hemolymph, and although they are initially quite flexible and fragile, by the time the pupa breaks free of the larval cuticle they have adhered tightly to the outer cuticle of the pupa (in obtect pupae). Within hours, the wings form a cuticle so hard and well-joined to the body that pupae can be picked up and handled without damage to the wings

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-14 11:41 PM GMT

Interesting stuff Mike 😊 I'll have to read up on it even more over the winter 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Nov-14 08:45 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊 I've just started reading my copy of 'Butterflies' by E.B.Ford, which contains loads of information on this very subject (and more). I've had the book *at least* 35 years and have up until now only ever 'flicked' through it 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Nov-14 05:56 PM GMT

In spite of the cool weather of late, two butterflies in our garden today 😊 The first was seen through the kitchen window, I first thought it was a falling leaf until it flew forward and landed near the water butt. Grabbed my camera and legged it down the garden and to my surprise it was a beautiful Peacock, wings open basking in the sun, the first Peacock I have seen since early August! Missed the shot as the sun went in and it took flight 😊 Later when returning from walking the dog I spied a Red Admiral basking in the front garden, next to the Bowles Mauve, in the shelter of the wall. Grabbed the now handy camera and this time got some shots 😊 When the sun made a brief appearance it took flight straight into a spider's web on the window. I effected a quick rescue and as the sun was now out it flew off strongly from my hand and was lost to sight right over the roof of the house 😊



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Nov-14 09:30 PM GMT

Another photo of the superb Red Admiral seen today 😊



Re: Maximus

by trevor, 11-Nov-14 10:39 AM GMT

Hi Maximus,

You'll be in my Christmas competition then! 😊.Lovely Red Admiral,still seeing them around here too.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-Nov-14 07:32 PM GMT

I'm definitely in your Christmas competition Trevor 😊

Re: Maximus

by keving, 13-Nov-14 11:27 AM GMT

Maximus,

A belated look at the personal diaries for me. Love the photos of the Orange Tip larvae/pupa. By far my favourite butterfly and it was nice to look at these unique images.

Good to see the Red Admirals still flying in mid November too.

Regards Kev

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 14-Nov-14 12:12 AM GMT

Thanks Kev, glad you liked the OT larvae/pupa photos. Orange-tips are a real favorite of mine also 😊 and Red Admirals in November are great.

Re: Maximus

by keving, 14-Nov-14 01:04 PM GMT

Maximus,

I've had three or four Large Whites position themselves under the facias outside my windows. The remainder (about 25 or so) were still in first/second instar at the time, which is very late in the season. The foodplants had long since gone over and I noticed a number already starting to perish. I took the decision to house the remainder in my breeding net with good quantities of cabbage. Most are now in position to pupate. The breeding net was being positioned each day by the old foodplant, so they have a choice to escape up the front wall of the house should they choose. However they seem very comfortable where they are. With a bit of luck they will overwinter in the shed and hatch successfully in late spring. I wouldn't normally elect to mess with nature, but I got rather attached to them and it's got to be better than letting them perish.

Regads Kev

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 15-Nov-14 11:04 AM GMT

Well done Mike, It's time some one actually rescued a Butterfly from a Spider, you've made my day and a great photo as well Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 16-Nov-14 06:34 PM GMT

Great shot of the Red Admirals Mike 😊 I finally got my November butterflies – a Red Admiral at work (got some shots on three different cameras but not my 'proper' one 😊) on Friday and one yesterday afternoon flying through Waitrose car park, looks like I'm in the competition too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Nov-14 08:36 PM GMT

Kev, I believe that Large White numbers are well down this year, you've done the right thing 😊

Thanks Goldie, and I'm really glad that the rescue made your day 😊

Well done Wurzel, great that you got your November Red Admiral too 😊

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Dec-14 08:29 PM GMT

With no butterfly activity very likely at the present time I have been sorting through my photos taken in 2014. This is proving to be a very time consuming task, but at least I am beginning to free-up some space on my hard drive!

Whilst going through the photos I've found a few which for one reason or another I didn't get round to posting in my PD.

Therefore I'll post a few them now, and as they say, they're in no particular order.

First up are some reared Purple Hairstreaks which were found on windblown Oak twigs/branches during the latter part of last winter.



Newly emerged pair, Female left - Male right



Male



CU Male



Female

They were released shortly after the photo was taken, where they were found. I was unable to replicate the 'pair shot' in the wild, as did someone else on this forum – Neil (nfreem), great shot.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 10-Dec-14 09:40 PM GMT

Excellent images, Maximus. You absolutely did the right thing with your 'finds'.

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 10-Dec-14 11:43 PM GMT

Beautiful Purple Hairstreak pictures, I love their hairy eyes!

Re: Maximus

by Jamie Burston, 11-Dec-14 11:51 AM GMT

I'm in heaven = stunning Purple Hairstreak photos, which is my favourite species. I might be staring at them all day 😊 and probably not an exaggeration ! Thanks for sharing them.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 12-Dec-14 08:39 PM GMT

Absolutely stunning shots of the Purps Mike 🎁 😊 – if only they'd hang around like that in the wild 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 12-Dec-14 08:43 PM GMT

Thanks David, I believe I did too.

Cheers bugboy, I see what you mean about their eyes.

I'm glad you like the shots Jamie, stare at them all you like 😊 and I'm not surprised they're your favourite species, stunning butterflies.

Cheers Wurzel, if only 😊

Next up – Green-veined White.

Last Spring I dug up some Honesty plants from my mums garden and potted them up. No sooner had I placed the potted plants out in our garden when a female G-v White found them and laid a couple of eggs on a wilting leaf. Only one egg hatched and after the larval and pupal stages this beauty emerged. I posted a picture of her on my PD at the time but not this one, which I have found since. I also include a shot of the pupa shortly before the emergence of the adult butterfly and a shot of the empty pupal case.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 22-Dec-14 10:33 PM GMT

Absolutely stunning Green-veined White – I've never encountered such a 'yellow' white as that 🤩🍀😊
Have a great Christmas and a cracking New Year!

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Dec-14 06:31 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, it's a second brood female which might account for the more yellow colouration.

In my recent Purple Hairstreak post I forgot to include the following photo. It shows a freshly emerged PH which has part of the larval case stuck behind its head, I can't remember if it fell off or not 😬



I'd like to wish everyone on UKB a MERRY CHRISTMAS and a GREAT 2015.

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 24-Dec-14 07:20 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

Cheers Wurzel, it's a second brood female which might account for the more yellow colouration.

I have seen the nice yellow colour on both spring and summer brood examples but only when they are fresh, they soon fade to the more normal colour.

Great Purple Hairstreak photos Mike..and thanks for the mention in your earlier post about my PH double from Bernwood 😊

Hope you have a great Christmas and New Year and here's looking forward to 2015,

Cheers,

Neil.