

## Nomad

by nomad, 23-Aug-14 07:09 AM GMT

Hi All, I thought I would start a diary. Although it is a bit late in the season to do so. I thought I would go female Brownie again hunting today. Although the temperature dropped to a low of three degrees last night. I wonder how the female Brown Hairstreaks cope with this. The males last weekend were appearing very worn at Sutton Bellinger, however I did find a few nice females last week. There were a few other species around including some pristine Brown Argus and nice Holly Blues. A good spent day among the butterflies.



*Female Brown Hairstreak basking*



*Male Brown Hairstreak*



*Second generation female Holly Blue*



*Second generation male Holly Blue*



*Holly Blue Male underside*



*Brown Argus female*



*Brimstone*



*Red Admiral*

### **Re: Nomad**

by David M, 23-Aug-14 08:24 PM GMT

Nice start, nomad. Your Holly Blues look to be in great nick.

### **Re: Nomad**

by nomad, 23-Aug-14 09:48 PM GMT

Thanks David, I was surprised to find the hollies in that condition at this date. Today, I was a few fields away from the best site at Sutton Bellinger, when I knew I had forgotten a important fact. Wolf like howls seemed to be coming from a very large pack of dogs, this was indeed the Bank holiday weekend husky working dog show. The main boundary hedge where I had such a good time a week ago was inaccessible. I moved of to a nearby area I call the triangle, but no luck. While I was peering at a sloe hedge, a man appeared shook my hand and suggested I join his group of Ash Brownie searchers. I thanked him for his kindness but declined and they moved off in a hurry down a hedge in their quest. This I believe was a BC led field meeting. When I met them again, they had seen several Brown Hairstreaks around the Ashes. I had a good scout around the Sutton Bellinger area, but with the main site out of bounds and the often cool conditions I did not expect many photo opportunities. Walking back to Tidworth in the afternoon to catch my bus home I saw the BC just ahead, soon they were lost to view as they headed uphill. I turned down a old sloe lined drove just on the outskirts of the garrison town and started to search a scrubby area with young sloes. A female landed in the grass and as I approached she flew off and high into a thicket. I returned to the track then after waiting some time, a female flew low and started to egg- lay on a very small sloe in the dense vegetation. She then landed on a leaf and briefly opened her wings and just at that moment there was the roar of off road motor bikes and a trio stopped just behind me, I rushed to get a few not so sharp images with her wings open and passing the vibrations of these super charged off roadsters saw her disappear once more. Still this was a fitting end to perhaps my last Brown Hairstreak trip of the year.



*Last weekend Sutton Bellinger was so peaceful but not today.*



*Female Brown Hairstreak resting after egg-laying*



*The female Brown Hairstreak showing a bit of wear, tear and shadow.*



*Female Speckled Wood*



*Common Blue female.*

## Re: Nomad

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-14 10:14 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Brostreaks Nomad 😊 On reading your report my first thoughts were "Damn it I was going to Shipton tomorrow and with wet weather at the start of next week time seems to be running out" but I'll risk it anyway and see if I can slip in under the fences 😊 Failing that there may be some females egg laying on the footpath up towards the Master tree.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 24-Aug-14 07:56 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel. I am pleased you liked my brownie images 😊 There are no fences at the dog-show. However, the main boundary hedge at Sutton Bellinger has caravans and awnings full of dogs very close to it. I did go along the first bit, but a paddock of around twenty fierce barking dogs at my approach then saw the approach of two huge men, who wondered what I was about. Although they said I could carry on, their pack had set off the others in competition all the way down the line. The noise was truly intense. You also will not get far down that hedge due it being blocked by awnings.. I love peace and thought I better not interfere with the dogs owners enjoyment of their special Bank hoilday weekend, their are plenty of hedges to search in the vicinity. I do hope you have some luck. My find was in Wiltshire along a drove near Tidworth that was uphill northwards from the boundary hedge.

As I started this blog– diary late and as the butterfly season is nearly at a end, I thought that I would also write and post images of my favourite butterfly outings this year. I am also very interested in the former geographical distribution of British butterflies, so when I get permission I sometimes go to museums to study historical collections, so I might do a some posts about these.

Regards Peter.

P.S. On my last two visits to Sutton Bellinger, I have only seen the females low down from 2pm onwards.

## Re: Nomad

by Pauline, 24-Aug-14 03:59 PM GMT

Great start to your diary Peter. I, too, have made the mistake of turning up at Shipton Bellinger on that weekend so I agree that the noise can be considerable – but there are some impressive animals there.

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 24-Aug-14 05:19 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline. Yes I have also make that mistake once before. 😊 I agree with you the Husky and Malamutes are among the most lovely of the dog breeds. 😊 Regards Peter.

## Re: Nomad

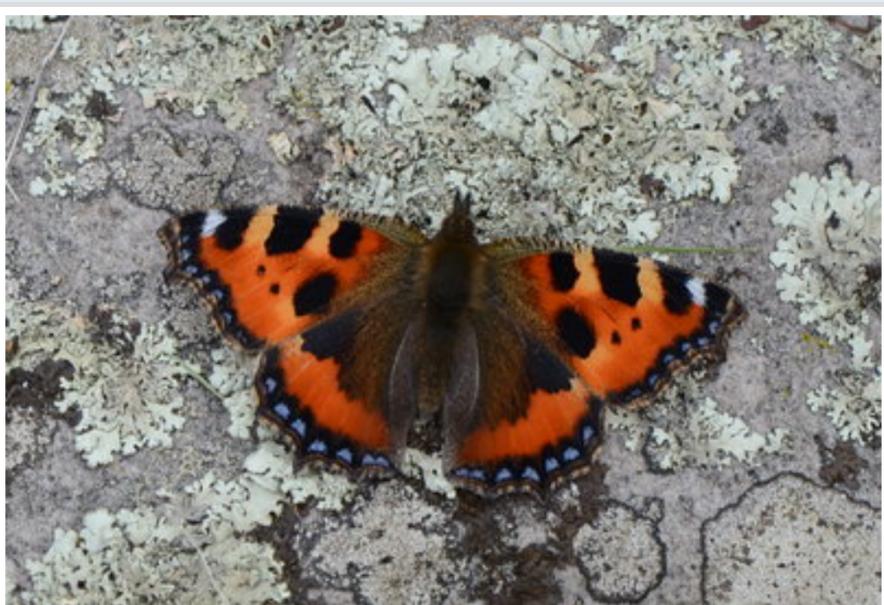
by nomad, 24-Aug-14 05:39 PM GMT

Today I had a walk up from Avebury to Fyfield Down NNR. The reserve is not a noted butterfly site and the primary interest is geological and archaeological. The valley here is strewn with Sarsen stones that are the home to many rare lichens. As was the case exactly a year ago today, the Small Tortoiseshells were warming themselves on the stones that are around 50 million years old. Strangely there were no Small Coppers buzzing passing insects that I had found here last year. Then I had noticed a strange copper feeding at Creeping Thistle that turned out to be an aberration. The forwings showed ab fuscae but the hindwings were very unusual. This image caused quite a debate among some lepidopterists. Some believed that there was scale damage to the hindwings due to natural events. Others pointed to the yellowish hindwings areas with the usual bright sub-marginal band and thought that this was a unique genetic individual. I hope it was the latter. Whatever the case, this unusual copper seems to have survived a bird attack, perhaps from one of the many Meadow Pipits here. Today I sat on the stones and had a bask with the Small Torts, it is so peaceful up here. A Raven was calling from a Pine and Green Woodpeckers were in full Yattle. Still it was time to return to the global throng down in Avebury and buy that Sunday lunch I had promised.

Regards Peter



*Small Tortoiseshell basking on Sarsen stone.*



*Small Tortoiseshell on Sarsen stone*



*Small Copper aberration. 24.8.2013.*



*Small Copper aberration at Fyfield Down.*



*Rain Storm approaching Fyfield Down October 2013.*



*Valley of the stones Fyfield Down October 2013.*

## **Re: Nomad**

by David M, 24-Aug-14 10:02 PM GMT

That's one of the weirdest Small Coppers I've ever seen.

## Re: Nomad

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-14 10:54 PM GMT

Agreed, most unusual. Not totally unlike the black European forms. Great sighting. 😊

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 25-Aug-14 09:05 AM GMT

Yes guys, I was very pleased with that sighting, certainly a strange individual copper. 😊

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 25-Aug-14 11:59 AM GMT

James Charles Dale (1792–1872) is perhaps the most important of the early British Entomologists as regards to the information that he left behind in his diaries and on his data labels of his very early extensive collections of British insects. He was followed by his son Charles William Dale (1851–1906) who we have to thank for donating the entire collection to the Oxford Museum.

While I was examining the famous historic Dale British Butterfly collection in the Hope Department of Entomology, I was surprised to find just above the Large Blue series, a specimen of the Alcon Blue – *Maculinea (Phengaris?) alcon*. This specimen seems to have received scant attention by British lepidopterists. It was mentioned by the Oxford lepidopterist James Walker RN (1851–1939) in his review of the Dale collection in the 'Entomologist' for 1907. *M. alcon* is a rare species that is very local across mainland Europe. The Alcon Blue flies on wet heaths where its foodplant the lovely Marsh Gentian occurs. Walker in his review mentions that in C.W. Dale's register of the collection there is following information for the *M. alcon* specimen: collected in the early part of the 19th century by a Mr. H. Jones at Cliefden in Buckinghamshire'. This specimen was given to Adrian Haworth (1767–1833) and was later bought by C.W. Dale at the great sale of the the Haworth collection. Placed by the specimens side in the Dale collection is the label 'Bedford', but this may have mistakenly been placed there because J.C. Dale collected the Large Blue *M. arion* from that very old locality for that butterfly. A valley in the chalk downs would be a most unsuitable habitat for an old colony of *M. alcon*. It has been suggested to me by a Dutch lepidopterist that as there are coastal populations of this species in Holland, this butterfly might have been blown or flown across the channel. If this was the case you might have thought it would have been found on the Kent coast and not miles inland. I have also had this very interesting letter from a British lepidopterist which gives a very interesting twist to the British Alcon Blue mystery. See below.

"Now, the *M. alcon* / *M. arion* story. I can add quite a bit to this from the manuscript of W.P. Curtis' unpublished work on the Lepidoptera of Dorset. If you pass me your email address I will send you the entire transcript of the *M. arion* entry. In summary, Curtis noted that Tutt had ascribed *M. arion* as being at Parley Heath in Dorset "in plenty" on 5th August. Tutt's source was said to be J.C. Dale. Interesting that Dale crops up again in connection with *M. arion* / *M. alcon*, isn't it?

Curtis notes that an examination of 351 letters (these are in the Hope Collection, according to W.P.C) passing between J.C. Dale and John Curtis found absolutely no reference to *M. arion* being at Parley Heath – a seemingly strange omission. Nor could he personally find any reference to *M. arion* in other personal papers he personally examined that had been annotated by the prolific J.C. Dale. He bluntly remarks "the Parley Heath record I frankly disbelieve"...

However, he was nothing if not an inquisitive and open-minded researcher, and he picks up on the date (5th August) that the '*M. arion*' were abounding at Parley Heath. Late for *M. arion*, but he notes that *M. alcon* is found as near as Brittany – and that it flies in July and August. Furthermore, he notes that *M. arion*'s larval foodplant (thyme) isn't in his experience found on heathland, but *M. alcon*'s larval foodplant of *Gentiana pneumonanthe* was commonly found on the heathlands of Hants and Dorset on which Parley Heath was but one area.

He concludes "The Parley Heath insects if ever they existed might just as well have been *alcon* Fabr. as *arion* Linn. So much for Parley Heath."

He had quite an acid tongue!

Hard to conclude precisely what was going on at Parley Heath. I'd speculate that J.C. Dale almost certainly heard of *M. arion* there secondhand; if at all. If he'd found them there, we'd know about it given his well-preserved collection and prolific papers. There's always the possibility that someone was trying to legitimise fake specimens of either *arion* or *alcon* by latterly claiming some connection to Dale – but in the absence of any such specimens, that's a slender hypothesis. The date and the presence of *M. alcon*'s foodplant in the area are intriguing, but no more than that. It's a rather lovely mystery – and absolutely fascinating to see the Dales' fingerprints all over your fragment of the *M. alcon* in Britain story as well as this one."

This letter to me certainly lit a spark of further interest in this subject. I might add that in the Loudon's Magazine Volume 7 1834, there is an article by J.C. Dale which lists the rare insects that were taken at Parley Heath up to that date. Sadly in this article, there is no mention of any Alcon Blues from one of his favourite collecting localities.

Peter



The British? Alcon Blue in the Oxford Dale collection

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 29-Aug-14 08:12 PM GMT

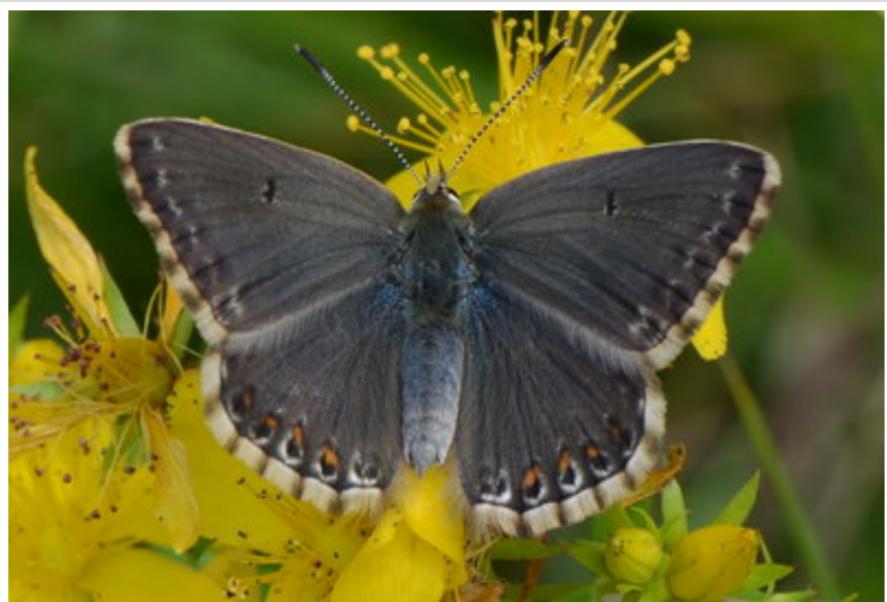
I always enjoy seeing the first lovely Turquoise Chalkhill Blue males. This year we made another special visit to Lardon Chase in Berkshire above the affluent village of Streatley in early July to see these butterflies. Arriving early by train, to a misty morning, we were just in time to find the males roosting and basking. The sun quickly broke through the mist and the Chalkhill blues males were soon busy hugging the turf in their endless search for females and both sexes were also visiting flowers such as Marjoram. Another special insect of this site in the longer grassy areas is the well named Great Green Bush Cricket. At the end of July in the Calstone Coombes in Wiltshire I noted a nice female Chalkhill Blue post-caeca aberration. I spent quite a bit of time on the steep slopes of the coombes searching for the rare Wart-biter Crickets but had no luck. I also, after many unsuccessful attempts, managed to get a decent image of the nationally scarce Chalk Carpet moth which are easily disturbed here from the grass and after a very short flight usually seek dense vegetation to hide in. A visit to Swellshill Bank in Mid August saw large numbers of Chalkhill Blues still on the wing, although most were appearing worn. Some were visiting the tall pink Hemp Agrimony at the bottom of slope. Peter



*A male Chalkhill Blue warms up in the early morning at Lardon Chase.*



*A male Chalkhill Blue roosting at Lardon Chase.*



*Female Chalkhill Blue resting on St John's Wort Lardon Chase.*



*Male Chalkhill Blue.*



*Female Chalkhill Blue basking Lardon Chase.*



*Female Chalkhill Blue on Marjoram.*



*Great Green Bush Cricket Lardon Chase.*



*Female aberration post-caeca Calstone Coombes Wiltshire.*



*Chalk Carpet moth Calstone Coombes Wiltshire.*



*Male Chalkhill Blue visiting Hemp Agrimony – Swellshill Bank Glos.*

### **Re: Nomad**

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-14 09:53 PM GMT

Fantastic chalk land shots Nomad 😊 That Chalk Carpet is brill 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: Nomad**

by nomad, 30-Aug-14 06:39 AM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. I am pleased that you liked them. I am always pleased to find the Chalk Carpet because it is always occurs in such small numbers. Apart from the Wiltshire Downs, the last time I saw this moth was a couple of years ago at Lulworth Cove in Dorset. 😊 Regards Peter,

### **Re: Nomad**

by Pauline, 30-Aug-14 06:54 AM GMT

Very interesting account of the Blues Peter and that is a stunning Small Copper 🍷 🍷

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 30-Aug-14 09:38 PM GMT



*Big skies and big views Salisbury Plain.*

Thank you Pauline, I am pleased that you liked the post 😊 Today I had a pleasant time looking in the Tidworth – Sutton Bellinger area. It was mostly cloudy and windy, but there were variable amounts of sunshine . I wonder if people are still looking for Brown Hairstreak females, although by now perhaps few are because they probably would not be pristine. With the wet windy weather last night in the area I was going to search today, I did not expect to find any BH in good condition. I saw my first female Brownie at 10am along an old drove running alongside the Tidworth garrison golf club in Wiltshire. The sighting was a brief one because she skipped over a hedge into a sloe thicket. A fox in beautiful condition loped down the track while I was searching some scrub, stopping to stare at the strange man peering into the hedgerows. I found some nice Speckled Woods , but having no further luck I moved off down hill into Hampshire. I saw my second female at 11am in the grassland area, west of the master tree. I followed her for some way as she danced along, and although she basked for a while, my photographs were rather poor due to her awkward resting position. She was fully intact, but faded. Moving along the boundary hedge, I saw a female in better condition at 12.30am behind bramble and nettles and she flew over a tall bush. She reappeared where I could just get too and although not fresh, I got some decent photos. It was wonderful to see her basking for a few minutes before she flew high up and disappeared into the trees. Along the boundary hedge the Red Admirals were a delight feeding and basking on and near the bramble fruit. I also saw a nice Comma, I do not think it has been a good year for this species, I have only seen a few. Has anyone else noticed this. In the grassland and scrub area where I saw the first female BH, there were some fresh Small Coppers and one male Adonis blue, probably on a visit from the nearby downland. A Clouded Yellow flew at a amazing speed along and up over the boundary hedgerow. All in all a worthwhile visit. Regards Peter.



Brown Hairstreak female today at Shipton Bellinger



Red Admirals at Shipton Bellinger.



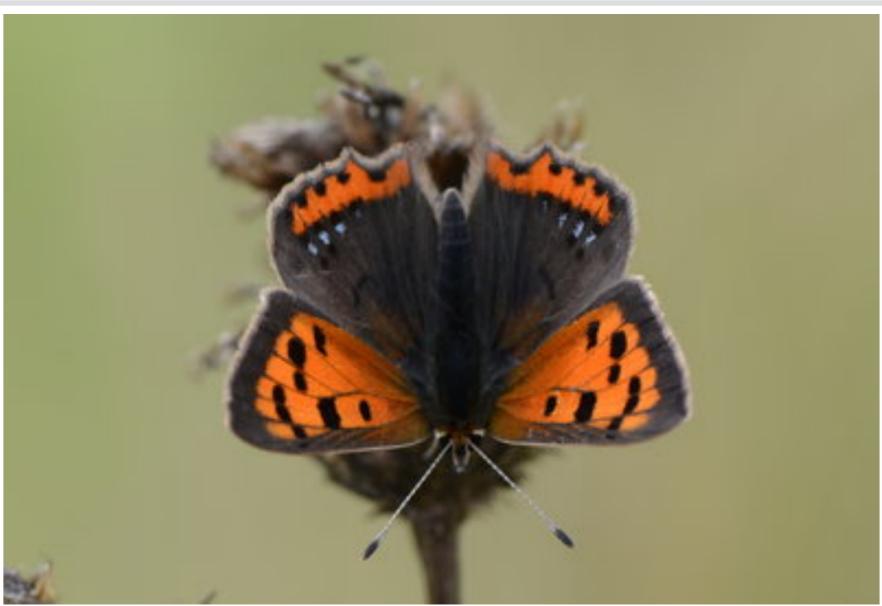
*Comma*



*Speckled Wood Tidworth.*



*Old drove Tidworth where I saw my first BH today.*





Small Copper Shipton Bellinger.

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 31-Aug-14 08:30 PM GMT

Even when the sun is shining not every day produces good butterflies 😞 . I had a visit today to Bernwood Forest concentrating on the meadow and Hell's coppice area. Firstly, I had a look at the M40 Compensation area. I am very concerned about this site, I do not know who manages it and I have mentioned before that the browsing height of the deer all around the Sloe hedges is now up to two meters. Has this decimated the Brown Hairstreak population?? Jeremy Thomas suggest up to meter is the preferred height for egg-laying BH females. After all the hard work in putting this important site together I am truly amazed that it is now being abandoned to the deer. 😲 What's going on 😞 . later searching for BH I had no luck at the meadows or in the adjacent part of Hell's Coppice, but it was nice to see all that young sloe. I think I found that large Ash tree on the corner of the coppice where Brown Hairstreaks were seen a month ago. Adrian Riley has posted that he has no trouble finding BH here, perhaps he means viewing them at that master Ash tree. I wonder if the females return to the Ash tree after egg-laying. There were very few butterflies about. I did see a Hummingbird Hawkmoth feeding at CreepingThistle and a Sparrow Hawk flew low along the hedge. I found some Sneezewort flowers among the sedges, perhaps a relic from when the low fields around the coppice were part of the large Menmarsh. There was a fully grown Large Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar on Willowherb. I found some butterflies along one of the rides in Bernwood that were blue with Devil's Bit Scabious. It is surprising that the Marsh Fritillary has not been reintroduced here, there are miles of the foodplant along the rides, but I expect you would also need clearings. I seem to have made some friends, because a herd of young cows followed me around the meadow's hedgerows 😊 .



Prime BH habitat Bernwood Meadows.



*Green-veined White Hell's Coppice*



*View from Hell's Coppice Oxon.*



*Red Admiral basking Bernwood Forest*



*Brimstone feeding at Fleabane.*



*Large Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar*



*Sneezewort*



*A golden flower of the lovely Corn-sow Thistle*



## Re: Nomad

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-14 10:22 PM GMT

Lovely Green-veined White and stunning Small Coppers Nomad 😊 Shipton was great today with possibly as many as 10 females and a male tagging along too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 01-Sep-14 05:52 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I thought I would give the Oxon woods another go, but Shipton Bellinger seemed the place to be . Any BH photos of your visit.

Regards Peter.

## Re: Nomad

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-14 11:03 PM GMT

Philzoid and I managed a fair few photos – but I'm so far behind with my PD that it'll probably be August next year before I get to post them 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Nomad

by Maximus, 02-Sep-14 12:02 AM GMT

Enjoying your diary nomad, lovely photos of butterflies and their habitat 😊

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 02-Sep-14 06:51 PM GMT

Looking forward to those Brownie photos Wurzel. Thank you Maximus, I am pleased that you are enjoying the images 😊

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 03-Sep-14 06:46 PM GMT

### Large Blue Memories

Well, I am pleased that the Large Blue has had at least a good year at Daneway Banks. This is a very beautiful site above the Golden valley that I first visited many years ago. As a young boy an uncle gave me a copy of Edward Newman's ' British Butterflies ' ( 1871). How I enjoyed that book, especially as it contained a gazetteer of butterfly localities. Then, one locality stood out, Sapperton near Glos, a few miles from Cirencester and not that far to the north of where I lived. I read that M.G. Musgrave had found all the large Fritillaries in the Sapperton woods and Large Blues there and nearby at Daneway. I knew this was a long time ago, but I was determined to go there and see them in the school holidays. I am afraid my father worked away, so being young and adventurous I would get a bus. Indeed I did, I changed buses at the market town of Cirencester and got on one of the few from here to Stroud which stopped at Sapperton. All these years later, I remember it was like stepping into a different world. I alighted by the old church framed by old yews and stone cottages. I walked down hill towards Daneway, stopping to have a look in the woods, which were full of Silver-washed Frits, but there seemed to be no High browns and opposite the old inn was grassland where abundant Dark greens flew at high speed. Today, this patch of grassland is now scrubby woodland. On the bank above I found anthills and searched among them in the very hot sunshine, but where I thought were the Large Blues. I imagined Mr Musgrave searching for and probably chasing Large Blues here , but that was a century ago. In the afternoon I sat in the churchyard waiting for my bus home , very disappointed not to have seen the Large Blue of my dreams. I now know that the Large Blue was still here in the 1930s through specimen data and was probably wiped out along with rest of the Cotswold colonies by the end of the 1950s because of the introduction of that horrible disease ' Myxomatosis '. Within a few years with the loss of all the rabbits, the Large Blue's habitat changed, the grass grew too long and dense for this butterfly to survive. I also came again some years ago when I was older , but then to botanize. In the spring I found some remarkable variation within the colony of Green-winged Orchids, they ranged from white to pink through to dark purple. At the end of July, on one of the steep Daneway banks, there used to be a tiny colony of the very rare pink Cut-leaved Germander on stony bare soil that was covered by wire netting.

So today, for me it is a great thrill to see the Large Blue at Daneway banks and much praise is due to the dedicated team that have made this possible. My last visit here was in the middle of June, then I saw a few males but no females seemed to be on the wing. The few males were active in the periods of sunshine and seem to cover quite an area. I climbed higher up and just managed to get out of the way of a herd of loudly neighing horses led by a stallion that came at speed down the path . At the top , I noticed a pristine male, hanging on to a piece of grass. It had now clouded over and he had his wings firmly closed. From his condition he probably only emerged from one of the many anthills that very morning. I waited by him for around a hour and remembered all those years ago when I searched just below unsuccessfully as a boy . Now there was only joy, the sun at last broke forth and those glorious darkish blue wings opened and then he took a short flight to a small hawthorn to bask once more. Later lower down I found another male resting in the grass with closed wings. Below are some images of that memorable day.



*Short grass and anthills, the habitat of the Large Blue at Daneway.*



*That Large Blue male.*



*At last he opened his wings.*



*Basking.*



*Second Male.*



*Small Blue.*



*Marbled White.*



*June means Dog Roses.*



*Wild Rose.*



*Pyramidal Orchid*



*Daneway Banks in the Cotswolds.*

### Re: Nomad

by Pauline, 03-Sep-14 06:59 PM GMT

Another fascinating account Peter and quite nostalgic too. Lovely photos too 😊

### Re: Nomad

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-14 10:29 PM GMT

Lovely shots and a really interesting read about a site I've yet to visit Nomad 😊 I did see my first Large Blues this year but at Collard which seems to be having a bad run 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Nomad

by David M, 03-Sep-14 11:06 PM GMT

Nice memories for me too, Peter.

Bill (Willow) and I spent a glorious day at Daneway earlier this summer and were so impressed we feel it is deserving of an annual pilgrimage.

### Re: Nomad

by nomad, 04-Sep-14 05:59 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, Pauline and David. I think I may have met Bill on Old Castle Down above the Alun Valley a couple of years ago and also a little later in Bentley Woods looking for Purple Emperors, I believe we photographed the same one. 😊 If it was indeed Bill, he went all the way there by train and that's how I go there too, although I only live in North Wiltshire.

### Re: Nomad

by CJB, 04-Sep-14 10:15 AM GMT

Hi Nomad,

I am lucky enough to live 25 mins from Sapperton and went to Daneway a few times this year when I was lucky enough to see the Large Blue. It is a wonderful site and I have championed it this year when I have had the chance. It is a great site and hardly anyone goes there, which is as good as it gets.

Wurzel kindly pointed me towards Bentley Woods for the SPF's and PF's and I have urged him to make a pilgrimage to Daneway!

Great read.

Flutter on!

CJB

### Re: Nomad

by MikeOxon, 04-Sep-14 03:38 PM GMT

Evocative writing about Daneway – it is a lovely place, although (selfishly, of course) I do hope it does not get too popular 😊

Mike

## Re: Nomad

by Mark Tutton, 04-Sep-14 08:18 PM GMT

What a lovely post about Daneway 😊 my partner was born and brought up in Nailsworth just a mile at two away and has vivid memories of collecting fire wood in Siccaridge Wood over the road from Daneway so we have visited two or three years running – just a lovely place – and a great pub just over the road

Kind Regards

Mark 😊

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 04-Sep-14 08:36 PM GMT

I agree with all. Daneway Banks and the whole of the Golden Valley is a very lovely area. During a few visits here since the Large Blue has made a comeback, I have seen a few photographers and people generally coming here to see this wonderful butterfly, especially as they can get a pint and lunch in the old Daneway inn below. On my last visit here, I also met two entomologists that were using pheromone lures to attract the Six-belted Clearwing moth. If they were successful this would be a new recorded site for this species. I do hope that they were. 😊

Here is an old image of the Daneway Inn from the 1890s. This historic inn used to be called the Bricklayers Arms because of the tradesmen who came here after their hard work building the adjacent Canal. You can see Daneway banks (common) in the background with the open ground below the wooded ridge. Just imagine when this photograph was taken the British Large Blue subspecies *eutyphron* flew there.

Regards Peter.



Daneway Inn – Bricklayers Arms 1890s

## Re: Nomad

by David M, 04-Sep-14 10:51 PM GMT

That is a magnificently evocative image, Peter.

How I wish I could explore those banks at the time the picture was taken. I wonder what surprises would be in store.

To be honest, that must be one of the few images spanning 120+ years where not much has changed (visually at least).

## Re: Nomad

by Maximus, 05-Sep-14 12:06 AM GMT

A lovely post about Daneway Nomad, and what a beautiful place it is! We camped behind the old pub during our visit in June, which is still like some hostelry from a bygone age! Daneway is an amazing place to visit and it is great that Large Blues are flying there again, as they probably were in the 1950's, thanks to the dedication of the of the LB team who have made this possible.

Mike

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 05-Sep-14 07:18 AM GMT

I do believe that when I searched Daneway Common as a boy in July 1966, I was perhaps a decade to late, although I have yet to find the exact year when our British subspecies flew there.

Regards Peter.

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 06-Sep-14 09:57 PM GMT

Arriving at Sutton Bellinger this morning the sun was trying to break through the cloud while light rain fell. Because of this, I saw my first Brown Hairstreak at 1pm as the weather improved, and she was soon followed by two more worn individuals. I observed the first female walking down a sloe stem laying her eggs low down and then she came back up to bask, partly in the shade. I might have stayed here longer, but that Saturday young white

van man had arrived with a trio of youths, who spun around the area on their two quad bikes and off road motor bikes. After their tenth time around the field and well infact the the whole area, the dust and the noise started to get on my nerves and I moved of up hill into a more peaceful area of Wiltshire. There are no boundaries for Brown Hairstreaks, so I searched the scrub and droves in that area. Having no luck for a hour, a female popped down for a few minutes along the track where I had seen females a few weeks ago. Further on I saw another flying over a sloe hedge. There were few fresh Commas about and the Vapourer males were in full spin. Peter.



*Female Brown Hairstreak Sutton Bellinger.*



*Comma.*



*Comma feeding at blackberries.*



*Comma.*



*Small White feeding at Corn sow-Thistle.*



*Salisbury Plain looking towards Bulford.*



*Brimstone male feeding at Viper's Bugloss.*



*Musk Mallow.*



*Female Brown Hairstreak Wiltshire drove Tidworth.*



*The female Brown Hairstreak near Tidworth.*



The old drove near Tidworth where I photographed the female Brown Hairstreak.

## Re: Nomad

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-14 11:51 PM GMT

Cracking shots Peter 😊 The Wiltshire branch, especially Mike Fuller, would be really interested in the Wiltshire Brostreak sighting if you could pass the details on to them that would be much appreciated 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 07-Sep-14 06:07 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I pass the Brownie records on to Mike I am a member. 😊

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 08-Sep-14 06:31 PM GMT

Yesterday, I had a walk across the North Wiltshire downland from Calne to Avebury. Reaching the end of the village of Calstone, it is always interesting to visit the National Trust coombes beyond, which are a haven for butterflies. 😊 There is a large colony of Adonis Blues here, but now most of the males were well past their best and assuming that duller dark blue. They are still not unattractive in their own way. Many of the females were in fine condition, with the dark bright red margin spots and dark brown of the summer generation. The female are pretty uniform in appearance within this colony. I did find a male aberration krodeli where the underside spots are nearly all missing. I also saw two Clouded Yellows flying at speed, briefly stopping to feed at flowers. There were even a few very faded Chalkhill Blues on the wing. This is a very peaceful area and few people frequent the coombes, perhaps because they are not well known, but could it be the present of the large herd of Aberdeen Angus who have a fearsome reputation on these downs. They simply will not give way and are dangerous to approach with their calves, which they had again on this visit. Last year, when I was just about to enter the reserve from the village, the farmer himself warned me to be careful because he had just put the mothers in with their calves. 😲 I thought they were Welsh Blacks but he said they were Aberdeen Angus. I can attest to the fact that the farmer was right and now I stay well clear off them, now having to make detours when the herd has blocked my way. Carrying on regardless is a mistake I will not make again, having just managed to jump that fence in time with the cows followed by their calves and young teenage bulls in hot pursuit 😡. Who said butterfly photography in the U.K was always safe and easy. 😊



*Calstone Coombes Wiltshire.*



*Male Adonis Blue.*



*Female Adonis Blue.*



*Male Adonis Blue.*



*Male Adonis Blue aberration krodeli with mite.*



*The herd, note the notice on the gate by the stile.*



*That notice.*



*Stand-off. I meet a lone young Bull.*



*The way home- Knoll Down and Avebury in the distance.*



*Brimstone male feeding at Devil's-bit scabious below knoll Down.*

My favourite Adonis Blue images of this year were taken at Swellshill Bank in the Cotswolds and I have included a few of these below. I found a very nice blue female here in the Spring. The males in this species are as you might agree are just simply stunning when freshly emerged. Peter.



*Blue female first brood.*



*Female May.*



*Female second brood.*



*Male second brood.*



*Male second brood.*



*Female second brood.*



*View from Swellshill Bank August.*

### **Re: Nomad**

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-14 07:00 PM GMT

Hi Nomad, I am really enjoying your diary, great reports and photos of butterflies and scenery 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### **Re: Nomad**

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-14 10:06 PM GMT

Cows are more dangerous than people give them credit for, especially the over protective mothers 🤪 Lovely brimstone BTW 😊 Your reports flashed up on my iPod and here was me thinking I had Wiltshire pretty much to myself 😊😄, perhaps we'll meet at the next branch meeting?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 09-Sep-14 06:04 AM GMT

Thanks Neil, I am pleased that you are enjoying the diary. I agree, Wurzel, although usually most cows instantly back off at ones approach, some herds especially those that roam the Calstone Coombes do not. So I advise anyone visiting this site to stay well clear of them when they have their calves. Of course the herd are doing a good job of keeping the turf short for those blue colonies.

Best wishes Peter.

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 10-Sep-14 07:52 PM GMT

Earlier in the year, I posted a few images from my trip to Exmoor where I photographed the Heath Fritillary. Now I have written a fuller report, with some further images, that may be of some interest, especially to those that have not yet managed to visit the beautiful Heath Fritillary among the heather clad hills of Exmoor . Perhaps the most accessible and easiest of our rare butterflies to visit or photograph is in fact the Heath Fritillary. Those that arrive at East Blean Woods in Kent by car, literally step from their vehicle into the Fritillary glades. Most of the Heath Fritillary sites on Exmoor require quite a bit more effort. The very lovely Halse combe is easy enough, but most of the other sites for this rare butterfly on Exmoor are in deep sheltered combes that are full of ticks and there are also Adders to watch out for. This year in the middle of June, I finally made a special pilgrimage to see the Heath Fritillaries on Exmoor. I arrived uphill on foot from Wheddon Cross with my tent in my backpack and my first stop was to begin the steep decent into Bin combe. In the upper part of the combe there were a few Heath Fritillaries along the boggy part of the stream. Searching around I met another butterfly enthusiast who pointed out a mating pair resting on bracken. Moving lower, the bracken became taller and the gorse thicker and in among the glades there were a few more butterflies and a couple of Adders. Some of fritillaries here were visiting bramble flowers. You could see the burnt and other dead areas of bracken where the National Trust was creating new clearings for the butterflies. It was really hard going down here, hot and stuffy, and my backpack was heavy. From above came a line of people moving at a fair descent. It was the National Trust warden with his team of volunteers counting the Heath Fritillaries present. The Warden told me that the numbers of Heath Fritillaries were down this year in Bin Combe and it was a constant battle to keep the bracken at bay. Without the proper management, the butterfly simply would not survive here. I asked the warden about his rapid pace and why he and his party did this, I was told that it was so they did not count the same butterfly twice. Once they had reached the bottom, they were going to visit another nearby combe, which they said had an even more difficult terrain. As I watched them disappear into the dense vegetation below, I marvelled at the dedication of some people especially those young volunteers. Climbing up and out again, it was a welcome relief to reach the road below Dunkery Beacon and admire the views. Later I camped just below Halse Combe near Porlock.



*A male HF basking in Bin Combe.*



*A Heath Fritillary visiting Bramble flowers in the lower part of Bin Combe.*



*Bin Combe showing an area with dead bracken created by the N.T.*



*The descent into Bin Combe.*



*Bin Combe.*



*Mating pair of HF Bin Combe.*



*Male HF aberration Bin Combe*



*Dunkery Beacon from the road above .*

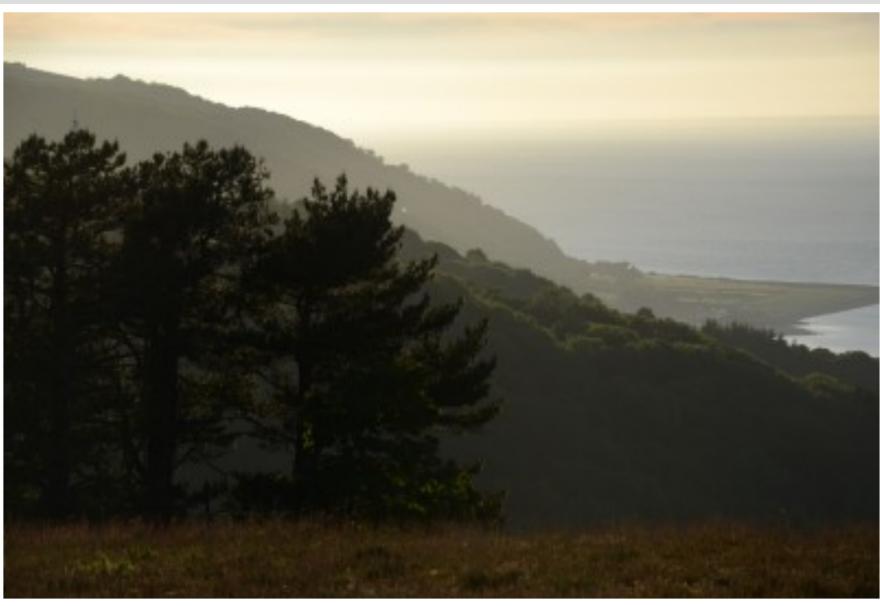
That evening I walked up through the woods to the highest part of Halse combe and sat here and watched the sunset going down beyond the coastal hills . I had come up here on this warm summers evening to hopefully listen to the Nightjars, a bird I have never seen or heard. In the middle part of the combe there is a path with a seat that is set back into the scrub. Although it was now dark there was a full moon. I looked at my watch it was 10pm, a Tawny Owl was calling. Then suddenly lower in the combe, an intense churring noise seemed to be coming from an old dead pine. I listened in fascination and another started up on the other side of the hill. Then for some reason after half an hour there was silence. I moved forward to get a better view and to my intense surprise, a Nightjar hawked just above my head, I heard the passing of those long pointed wings and then something incredible happened. The Nightjar landed a few yards ahead of me on the gravel track. I could clearly see this very strange bird in the moonlight. Why it landed close by me, I have no idea, perhaps it wondered what I was sitting alone in the darkness. Then the bird rose into the air and quickly disappeared into the gloom below. It was now 11 am and I left the head of the coombe with the Nightjars once more in full churr. Many thanks to the NT warden for suggesting I come up here in the evening to hear the Nightjars. The woods were now in full darkness and my little torch came in handy in finding my way to the camp site below. I wanted to be back up in the combe very early in the morning, because it was going to be another scorching hot day and I wanted to catch the Heath Fritillaries warming up and basking before they got too active.



*Small Heath resting in the last of the evening sunshine.*



*View from above Halse Combe , looking towards Dunkery Beacon.*



*The Exmoor coast at Dusk.*



*View from above Halse Combe looking towards Bossington & Hurlstone point.*





*The gloaming, waiting for Nightjars in Halse Combe.*

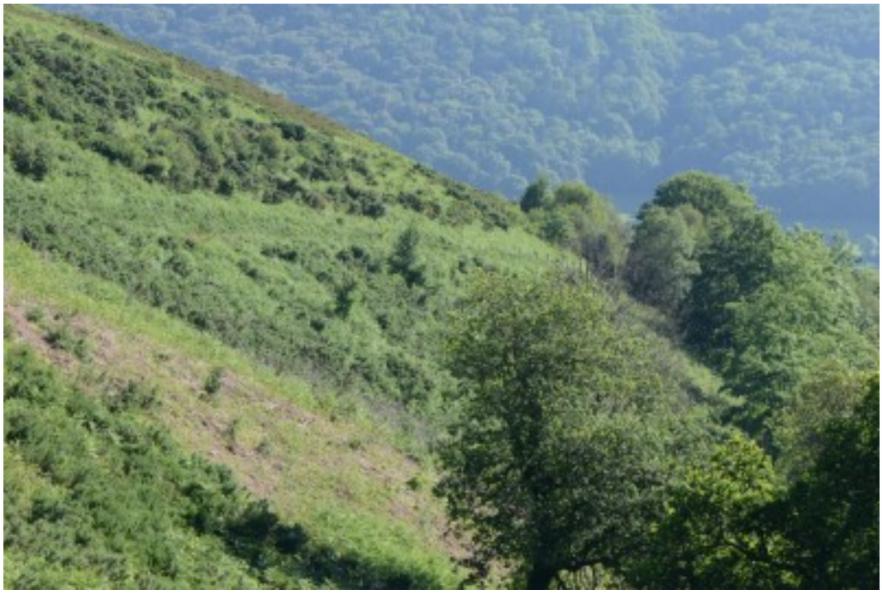
I climbed back up into the combe, as the sun was rising into the sky. By 7.30am the Heath Fritillaries were already active with the males basking on the bracken. There was surprisingly few females, they are certainly much less active than the males. Within an hour the male fritillaries were flying in their slow unhurried flight low over the vegetation in the endless search for females, occasionally stopping to feed at flowers. Here they were joined by a few Green Hairstreaks. I spent a few delightful hours among the butterflies and admiring the tall stands of foxgloves. I then descended, packed up my tent and walked the six miles through the tall hedged lanes and across the fields to Minehead. In one of the pretty villages, I saw my first Painted Lady of the year, she was very tatty from her long flight and was enjoying the nectar with a Hummingbird Hawk Moth at Valerian growing high on a stone wall. A perfect end to my roam around this part of Exmoor. Peter.



*Heath Fritillaries basking in Halse Combe.*



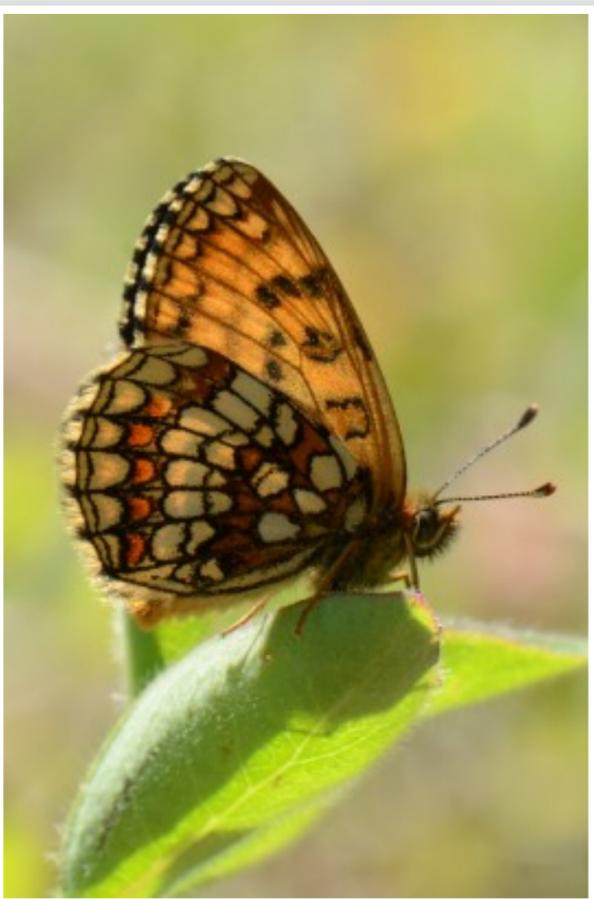




*Halse Combe.*



*Female Heath Fritillary Halse Combe.*



*HF resting Halse Combe.*



*Foxgloves Halse Combe.*

### Re: Nomad

by David M, 10-Sep-14 08:28 PM GMT

Nice reportage, Nomad.

I've twice been to that part of the country to observe Heath Fritillary. The first visit was to Bin Combe, described by Matthew Oates as "extreme butterflying". He is right. That slope is not for the faint hearted, though Heath Fritillaries are nailed on there.

This year, I spent a morning at Haddon Hill which was much easier to navigate and far easier to get to from where I live.

The good thing about this species is that you're practically guaranteed to see them so long as you find the right area in favourable weather conditions.

### Re: Nomad

by nomad, 10-Sep-14 09:04 PM GMT

If you have chosen the right weather conditions you should see Heath Fritillaries in both Bin Combe and Halse Combe. Although, I expected to see the butterfly in more abundance in Bin Combe. It took a lot of effort trying to photograph Heath Frits in Bin Combe, because the sun was up and they were either on the wing or visiting flowers. For Basking butterflies it is best to go early on a hot day, as they soon become very active. They probably bask freely in cloudy conditions. Then again, I was lucky with timing to see really fresh individuals. 😊 All in all a most wonderful walkabout. 😊

Regards Peter.

### Re: Nomad

by keving, 10-Sep-14 09:08 PM GMT

Great photos Nomad. I enjoyed reading your report. It's been some years since my past visit to Exmoor and Bin Combe is not somewhere I was familiar with. Thanks for info.

Regards Kev

### Re: Nomad

by nomad, 11-Sep-14 05:57 PM GMT

Thank you Kev, I am glad that you enjoyed the article and images.

Regards Peter.

### Re: Nomad

by nomad, 11-Sep-14 07:48 PM GMT

I would just like to add that although we may expect to see Heath Fritillaries on Exmoor they have, I believe, have had troubled times there 😞. As the NT Warden mentioned the battle to keep the bracken at bay in Bin Combe is a constant battle and much habitat clearance work is involved. So it seems without mans intervention the butterfly would quickly die out there. It also must be said that the Heath Fritillary did disappear from Halse Combe and was reintroduced there. So we should never take it for granted that butterfly will continue to delight us in those lovely combes. Bin combe is accessible to all those that are reasonably fit, so you should have no trouble in finding this butterfly in the upper parts. As for extreme butterflying, I know of many similar areas in Scotland where the terrain is just as difficult or more difficult to access. 😊

Regards Peter.

### Re: Nomad

by nomad, 13-Sep-14 09:40 PM GMT

Today, I had a tramp around the North Wiltshire Downs. I started from Beckhampton and walked quite a way up along an old sheep drove in the rather

cold mist. This old drove is good for bird life and today there were a couple of Juvenile yellow wagtails feeding up in the stubble fields. As I reached that great ancient monument, the Wansdyke just below one of the highest points in Wilts – Tan Hill, the mist really closed in. I made my way along the Wansdyke and headed for Milk Hill, which is part of the Pewsey Downs NNR. I was going to visit a very steep south-west facing slope to look at the Adonis Blue colony. As I reached my destination the sun finally broke through to reveal the chalk ridges being grazed by sheep and cattle. I had come here today to look at the variation in the second generation Adonis Blues and I was not to be disappointed. I found some nice females with extensive blue scaling. I am not sure if these blue females are regarded as aberrations or are just genetic variation within some colonies. It was quite breezy up here, especially on the other side of the hill. Here I followed a large female Hummingbird Hawk Moth as she visited the late summer flowers, I did not have time to change the ISO, so did not get good hover shots, but then she landed and rested in the grass. I have never seen this before.. It has been a very good year for this immigrant Hawkmoth and I have seen them on most of my field forays. In an old quarry on Walkers Hill, there were more blues, mostly faded and a few Autumn Lady's Tresses. This is without doubt the finest scarpe in Wiltshire and the views across the Vale of Pewsey are truly breathtaking. Now it was time for the long walk to Avebury along a more quiet part of the ancient ridgeway and a welcome pint in the Red Lion. 😊  
Cheers  
Peter.



*Misty Wansdyke.*



*Adonis Blue female showing blue scaling.*



*Adonis Blue female.*



*The steep chalk of Milk Hill, habitat of Adonis Blues.*



*Adonis Blue female resting.*



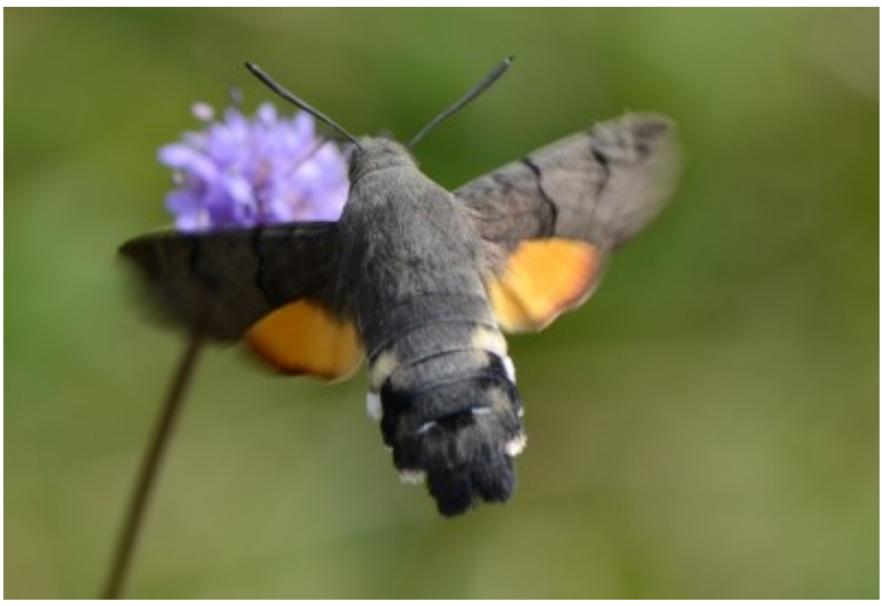
*Adonis Blue females visiting Devil's Bit scabious.*



*Adonis Blue females.*



*View from Milk Hill towards Clifford's Hill.*



*Hummingbird Hawkmoth*



*Hummingbird Hawkmoth resting.*



*Adonis Blue male.*

## **Re: Nomad**

by David M, 13-Sep-14 10:16 PM GMT

Those female Adonis Blues fair warm the heart, Nomad.

Nice shot of the static HBHM too!

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 14-Sep-14 11:59 AM GMT

Thanks Dave, I am pleased that you liked those images. I have just checked out my ADA Russwurm Aberrations of British Butterflies 1978 ( plate 12 ) and those blue females that I posted seem to be the aberration female caeruleascens- lunulata Tutt.

## Re: Nomad

by Goldie M, 14-Sep-14 12:27 PM GMT

Hi! Nomad, love the Heath Fritillaries and glad their doing well there .

I was in Kent earlier in the year and there were very few HF in East Blean Woods and this was early July when they should have been at their best. Seems like they've got a problem there with the Butterflies caterpillar food being over grown by brambles etc.

Usually in the car Park in EBW you had to avoid stepping on them this year you were lucky to see Half a dozen, mind you that was my experience .

Also love your Adonis I've not seen them this year, when I was in Kent the Chalk Hill's were coming out but not the Adonis looks like next year for me now. 😊 Goldie 😊

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 14-Sep-14 12:55 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, I am pleased that you enjoyed the Adonis Blue and Heath Fritillary images. 😊 That's very interesting what you have said about the Heath Fritillary in East Blean Woods this year. 😲 When I visited this site a couple of years ago they were in abundance all around the car park area. Yes, I agree, although bramble -rubus species flowers and fruit are an important food source for our butterflies, I expect it is a real pain to those trying to conserve the Heath Fritillaries at Blean and elsewhere in Eastern England. This plant can grow, as you know, at an incredible speed and shade out the Cow-Wheat in no time. By the way, as I did not arrive by car, I was in Blean for several hours in a different area and only saw one Heath Fritillary. 😞 I remember I was further in the wood, quite away from the car park area and found a large recently cleared clearing with masses of Cow-wheat and though this must be a good spot. In two hours here I only encountered one male Heath, but at least they had started to arrive in this clearing. By now this should have a good colony of this rare butterfly, if the bramble has been kept at bay. It was only when, later in the day that I decided to check out the notice board in the car park to try to find the main colony when I came across a number of people photographing them. As you only saw a few butterflies at Blean, it shows that, as I mentioned, about the Heath Fritillary colonies on Exmoor, we should take nothing for granted as far as British butterflies are concerned. I do hope that you get to see those lovely Adonis Blues next year. 😊 😊

Regards Peter.

## Re: Nomad

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-14 10:07 PM GMT

A very interesting report on the HFs Peter, a species I've yet to see but hopefully one that I might get to next year - it'll cost me a weekend away but I reckon it'll be worth it 😊 Good seeing the Adonis are still in good nick at Pewsey though I can't quite make the trip there and back at lunchtime unfortunately 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 21-Sep-14 06:41 PM GMT

It's getting late in the butterfly season, so I thought that I would have a local cycle today to see if I could join in the Small Copper fun. My first stop was the large Iron Age hill fort of Barbury Castle. It was windy up here. I found a faded Adonis Blue male and nothing much else except for a few Small Torts feeding up on the Devil's - bit Scabious. I stopped again in a tiny unimproved water meadow at the back of Coate Water, a large old reservoir and now a country park and local nature reserve. Coate was beloved by that great countryside writer Richard Jefferies, who was bought up here in a old yew framed farmhouse. I was pleased to find a nice fresh male and female Small Copper here. The colours on this species I find are exceptional. Further on in the Old Town of Swindon in the Goddard estate now a public park, there were some nice Red Admirals nectaring on the Ivy with many flies, Bees and a few wasps.

Regards Peter.



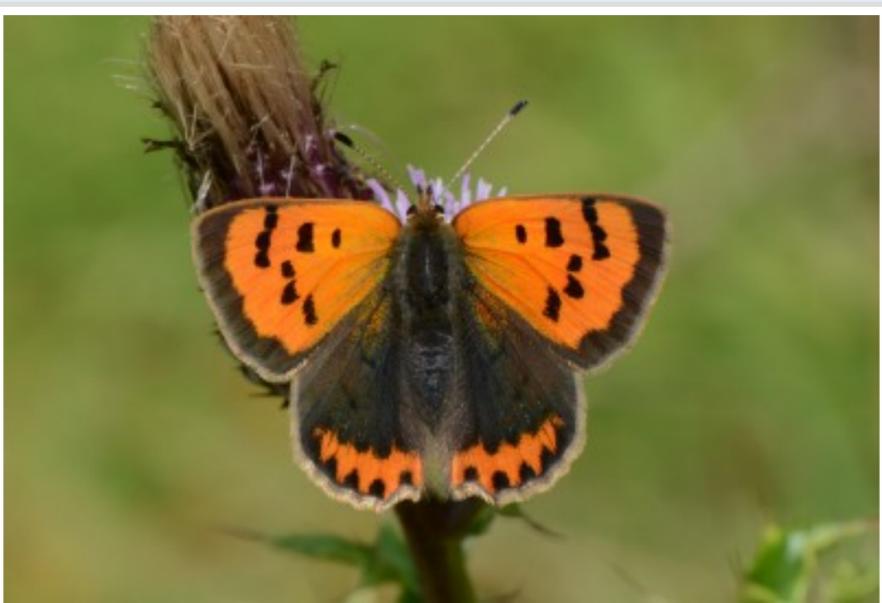
*Small Tortoiseshell feeding at Barbury Castle.*



*Male Small Copper.*



*Male Small Copper.*



*Female Small Copper.*



*Red Admiral on Ivy.*

### **Re: Nomad**

by nomad, 02-Nov-14 09:38 AM GMT

Well its great to see the Nymphalidae still flying, there are still lots of Red Admirals about and a few A Small Tortoiseshells. Yesterday walking through the woods looking at the fungi, a Peacock flew around me, the latest I have seen one on the wing. Last week we saw two commas along with Red Admirals visiting and resting near Ivy.





*My Last Common Blue October.*



*A little Mutjac.*



*Magpie Ink Cap – Coprinopsis picacea*



*Diptera visiting Stinkhorn in a the gloom of a conifer wood.*



*My favourite fungi –Hygrocybe species*



*Red Hygrocybe species- Forest grassland.*



*What a year it has been for this beauty.*

### Re: Nomad

by Wurzel, 03-Nov-14 10:49 PM GMT

Cracking shots Nomad 😊 I know who to ask about identifying the fungi I've photographed recently 😊 It had been a better year for Red Admirals this year 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Nomad

by Goldie M, 04-Nov-14 01:00 PM GMT

You've got some fantastic colours there with the fungi Nomad and your still taking photo's of Butterflies 🍷🍷 I'm jealous Goldie 😊

### Re: Nomad

by nomad, 11-Nov-14 07:08 PM GMT

The butterfly season is not quite over. On Saturday Nov 8th myself and Lesley had a walk up to the Neolithic and Bronze Age site of Windmill Hill in Wiltshire. As we approached the entrance, we found a Red Admiral basking on the gate post and saw another nearby. I cannot remember seeing butterflies on the wing so late. Up there it was only around 8-9 degrees. Was this my last butterfly sighting this year- I wonder.



### Re: Nomad

by David M, 11-Nov-14 10:32 PM GMT

Like it, Nomad. Looks quite wild & windswept down there but Red Admirals can always find a warm spot upon which to bask.

### Re: Nomad

by Wurzel, 13-Nov-14 11:36 PM GMT

That's a great find nomad. 😊 I wish I could get a November butterfly 🦋

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Nomad

by nomad, 23-Nov-14 02:40 PM GMT

On this cold and wet November day, I thought it would be a good idea to take a look back at perhaps my favourite butterfly visit of the year. After an unsuccessful visit to Bentley Woods in Wiltshire to photograph the Purple Emperor, I decided to make my first visit to Fermyn Woods in Northamptonshire. Arriving on the Friday night, I stayed in a lively pub in one of the yellow stone villages within walking distance of Fermyn Wood. I awoke the next day to gloom and light rain but the forecast was for improving weather later. As I began walking along the road along the edge of the wood, I observed that it seemed to consist mainly of younger trees. Arriving at the car park I walked along the hard track through Fermyn where already a large group that had arrived in a mini-bus were peering forlornly at the Oaks and the dark cloudy sky. I walked on through the puddles and past the

cornfields into Lady Wood. I listened to the sweet melody of Blackcaps and Willow Warblers. A few hours later in the morning the sky finally brightened and there were periods of hazy sunshine that was just perfect for photography . Just before mid- day there was suddenly a click of the wings and I was circled by a large male Purple Emperor that descended onto the gravel track to ingest. No other British butterfly seems to command so much excitement. As the butterfly probed the track for minerals with his yellow proboscis those magnificent purple wings flashed in the sunlight. As the Purple Emperor is usually only seen flying around the tops of oaks with the aid of your binoculars you feel privileged when you get a close encounter. The butterfly was joined by another worn male and the first that had arrived soon tired of his company and flew up to investigate me and then landed on my old boots, where the butterfly started to ingest a strange mixture of moisture from the wet grassland and bees wax. In a different area I sat in the sun to watch two males emperors dog-fighting high up in the Oaks, stopping only to chase away a White Admiral. In the afternoon in another part of the wood I saw a couple of males high up in the trees that descended at intervals to fly at speed along the track . At last a very nice male once again landed near where I was standing and I edged closer ; here he spent a hour rarely moving. With the suffused sunshine the light was much better to photograph those glorious purple wings. Another strange incident is worthy of comment just before I had my first sighting of a emperor I was examining the tops of some low Oaks when a forewing of a White Admiral in perfect condition came twirling down. Probably the victim of a bird attack, which was eaten up there. Waking around Lady Wood on the Saturday I had met a few walkers, two horse riders who disturbed a grounded male, and dog owners but not one photographer seemed to have reached here. Perhaps the butterfly photographers in Fermyn Woods were being successful there or with the earlier dull weather others had decided not to make the trip.

Sunday promised to be fine and hot in the afternoon and reaching Lady Wood, today there was a throng of butterfly photographers. The circuit around Lady Wood had an interesting mixture of people all hoping for that treasured image . There was the pawn paste guy that when a large pristine male descended not on his smelly substance but yards away to ingest at a damp spot, declared that as it had descended at his bait , he then had the right to photograph it first. After half an hour and a couple of hundred of clicks later, the other disappointed onlookers slipped away except for a hopeful elderly couple. Then there was the guy on the bike, camera in one hand who sped so fast in his quest down one section of the track that he disturbed a feeding male that was accompanied by two outstretched prone photographers, who then let out a cry of anguish as their subject flew upwards and out of sight. All along one section of track a number of males were flying around and then grounding ; a magical site I have never seen before. They seemed very wary and hard to approach, probably due to the heat and I found the light was too bright to capture much of their purple sheen. As I left Lady Wood I met a young couple with a butterfly hand book. I pointed down the track to the array of male Purple Emperors, they replied to my excited gestures " Oh we have seen those today, there seem to be plenty around "

Passing through Fermyn Woods and more butterfly enthusiasts, I noticed a resting female Purple Emperor on grass heads. I am not really sure why she was resting there, unless she was injured in some way. As I approached the entrance of the wood, that young couples words were still ringing like bells in my ears " oh we have seen those today, there seems to be plenty around ". I thought what a really splendid tribute to " BB " Denys Watkins- Pitchford. Through his grand effort of reintroducing this splendid butterfly to his beloved Northants woods we can all enjoy the fruits of his efforts. I shall certainly be joining the throng next year.

I have posted some of these photographs of my weekend visit before, but here I have added others , they certainly brightened up my Winters day. I have included the time of day when the grounded males were observed and photographed, to add further interest. There were also abundant Ringlets, Large Skippers, Commas, White Admirals and Silver - washed Fritillaries.

Saturday.



*My first male at 11.45 am*



*11.47 am*



*11.48 am, visiting my boot.*



*The Ride in Lady Wood.*



*Comma visiting dung.*



*Ringlet.*



*Another grounded male—the best of the day. 13.59 pm.*



*15.59 pm.*



*16.23 pm.*



*16.37 pm Landing in a Hawthorn bush.*



16.42 pm.

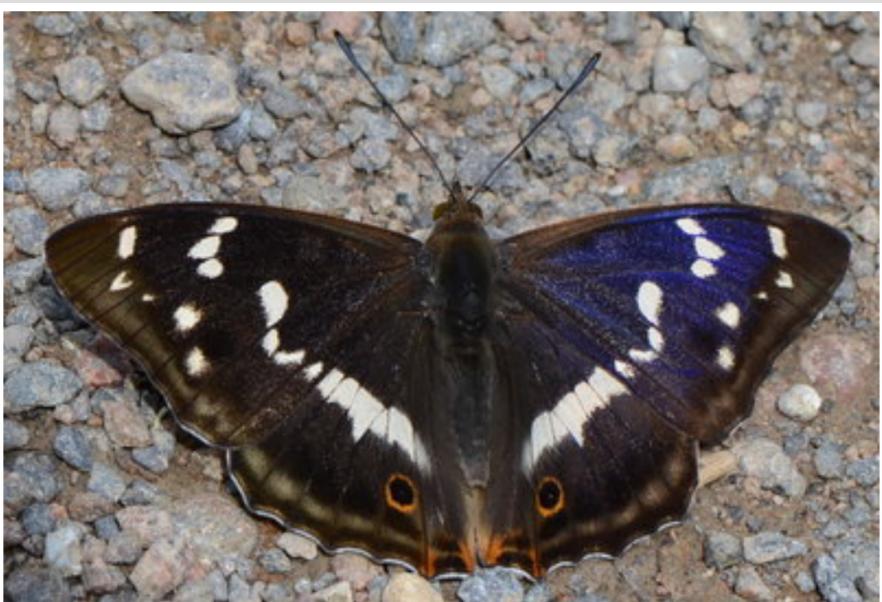
Sunday.



11.19 am My first male today, pays me a visit.



Ringlet.



12.19 pm.



12.20 pm.



12.32 pm.



Lady Wood.



Comma.



*Lady Wood.*



*Female. 12.47 pm Fermyn Woods.*



*Female.*

### **Re: Nomad**

by David M, 23-Nov-14 09:51 PM GMT

That looks close to being a day to beat all days, Nomad.

I've still never seen an Empress, nor have I been to Fermyn Wood (although I hope the latter at least will be recified next year).

### **Re: Nomad**

by keving, 24-Nov-14 12:09 PM GMT

Nomad, Enjoyed reading your trip report to Fermyn Woods and the photographs are stunning too. Just like David, I too haev never visited Fermyn Woods, so looks like we could all be there next summer.

Regards Kev

### **Re: Nomad**

by trevor, 24-Nov-14 12:27 PM GMT

Hi Nomad,

You really know how to cheer a chap up on a cold November morning, with those gorgeous shots of H,I,M.

Your first image is what i would like to achieve, ie. all four wings purple. I nearly got one this year,I arrived at Botany Bay about 8am,to beat the crowds. One came down at 8.35, I let him settle for a while before moving in, whilst focusing through my screen he opened his wings,bright purple,click,click, click I took about twenty shots before he flew off. Checked my shots, all of them three wings purple,he had settled with one wing propped up on a stone!!. such is life. My other efforts are in my diary.

TREVOR

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 24-Nov-14 05:59 PM GMT

Thanks Guys for the nice comments, yes that weekend would be hard to beat, especially the Saturday. My favourite Purple Emperor images were taken on the first day; the two different males with the purple spread entirely over all four wings. I had hoped one day I would get those captures because I had never achieved such a feat before. The first male Emperors that I ever managed to photograph were at Savernake Forest in my home county of Wilts and in the bright sunlight my efforts produced just brown wings without a trace of purple, I was very disappointed. Yes, it would be nice to meet some of you in the woodland next year. 😊 .I shall probably go for a couple of days during the week when might be quieter. I suppose it really depends on the weather. Reading that lovely book by Bryan Holden " BB's Butterflies " has made me really appreciate this woodland with those glorious butterflies much more. I first read BB's accounts of the Purple Emperor many years ago and they remain some of my favourite butterfly stories, he was without doubt a truly remarkable man. I never dreamt one day I would actually walk in BB's woodland – the Chase and be among his passion; the Purple Emperor. 😊

## Re: Nomad

by Neil Freeman, 24-Nov-14 08:33 PM GMT

Hi Nomad,

Great look back from Fermyn, just the thing to brighten up a cold dark night as I sit here getting over a nasty few days of Man-Flu. Although Fermyn Woods are only a 90 minute driver for me, I totally missed out on going there this year due to being elsewhere in the country during the best time to visit. Never mind, I have been a few times in the past and hopefully will be there again next year.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Nomad

by nomad, 24-Nov-14 09:23 PM GMT

Thanks Neil – I hope you get better soon. 😊

## Re: Nomad

by Neil Freeman, 25-Nov-14 09:03 PM GMT

Cheers Peter, much better now 😊

Neil.