

Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 09-Mar-14 07:38 PM GMT

Hello to everyone on the forum...first post!

As seems to be all the rage at the moment...courtesy perhaps of Patrick Barkham's "The Butterfly Isles" I'm going to have a try at seeing all of the British Isles Butterflies in 2014...influenced heavily by the fact that I'm far more likely to persuade my wife to come to the Isle of Wight on a sunny June weekend than I ever was to persuade her to join me on a storm lashed Shetland Island in October!

Everyone seems to have been out seeing butterflies this weekend...the sunshine and warmth getting them moving everywhere and so, prompted mainly by jealousy of my parents recording a Comma in their garden today (March 9th) I spent the day out and about locally...accompanied by my faithful dog Freya (good at flushing Butterflies...less good at ID'ing them)

Plant growth still at a bare minimum on my local patch...but lots of butterflies sunning themselves in the rough grass or engaging in high fluttering fights with rivals! A couple of hours bagged me over 20 **Small Tortoiseshell**, 4 **Peacock** and 2 **Comma**

I was surprised at how big and black the Peacocks looked in flight compared to their relatives and by the dainty bedraggled appearance of the Comma...its so early in my year list I haven't even invested in a camera yet...so poor quality photo's courtesy of my iPhone!

Brimstone is my next target if the Sunny weather holds out!



Re: Jasonbirder

by Pete Eeles, 09-Mar-14 07:41 PM GMT

Welcome to UKB, Jason! And good luck with the challenge! I look forward to hearing how you get on.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Jasonbirder

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-14 11:27 PM GMT

Welcome and good luck Jason 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Jasonbirder

by Neil Freeman, 10-Mar-14 09:41 PM GMT

Welcome and good luck from me as well Jason.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Jasonbirder

by Mark Tutton, 10-Mar-14 10:51 PM GMT

Welcome and Good luck Jason - where are you located?

Mark 😊

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 10-Mar-14 11:58 PM GMT

Thanks for all the encouragement...I'm up in Notts...a little too far North to be ideal...so it'll be a challenge indeed to "mop up"

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 11-Mar-14 11:33 PM GMT

Whilst still very sunny today (March 11th) up here in the East Midlands a brisk North Easterly breeze made it feel cooler and kept the temperatures down.

A short lunchtime walk around Attenborough NR only produced a couple of Small Tortoiseshell and a single Peacock, I was hoping to find more butterflies nectaring on willow or Flowering Buckthorn but was sadly disappointed...I was treated to excellent views of a splendid male Bullfinch greedily eating flower buds and a very grey looking Chiffchaff, but my search for Brimstone and Red Admiral before the end of March must go on!

Re: Jasonbirder

by Chris Jackson, 12-Mar-14 10:47 PM GMT

Hi Jason,
Welcome to UK Butterflies. I'm originally from Leicester so I can appreciate the challenge you must face trying to find butterflies in the East Midlands. I'm now living down on the Med. so I'm slightly spoilt in that respect. I'll be keeping an eye on your sightings.
Good luck,
Chris

What have you decided about a camera then ?

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 12-Mar-14 11:38 PM GMT

Not 100% committed...but possibly going to acquire a Panasonic FZ38 – looks alot of bang for very little buck!

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 14-Mar-14 12:19 AM GMT

A sunnier day today without the cool north-easterly breeze of the last couple of days saw the mercury reaching 16 degrees.

A lunchtime butterfly hunt beckoned...still looking for the last two hibernators before the end of March...

A work appointment left me looking unsuccessfully for Rainworth Lakes...which I though might offer a chance...I instead found myself wandering the dry sandy Birch and Conifer stands of **Rainworth Heath LNR** – an interesting looking area of reclaimed colliery tops and sludge settling lagoons...looks like it might be productive for the commoner Blue's and Brown's later in the season...I did spot a very mobile and elusive **Brimstone** amongst the Birch's and grabbed a pic of an Orange Underwing sunning itself on one of the paths



I was amazed to hear the unmistakeable croak of a Raven – which flew overhead and demonstrated by its size and long diamond shaped tail that I wasn't imagining things!

A short drive to another local nature reserve **Dukes Wood** proved no more productive...despite some fantastic habitat it was a Butterfly desert...I'll definitely be back later in the year though, a lovely piece of woodland with plenty of sun-dappled rides and grassy clearings...I look forward to seeing what will emerge as the months go by! A showy Marsh Tit meant it wasn't a completely wasted drive...before it was time to return to the office!

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 03-Apr-14 11:35 PM GMT

After being tied up during the glorious weather over the weekend...with commitments ranging from Mothers Day to Wembley to Meadowhall...the warmth and sunshine co-operated into Tuesday (April Fools Day) enabling me to get an hour or so's butterfly hunting in over lunch and between appointments...

One of the nice things about my new-found interest in Butterflies is that it has introduced me to lots of tiny little local nature reserves that, in the past I would probably have zoomed past on my way to far-flung Islands and Headlands...I've already visited Rainworth Heath, Peter Fiddler LNR and Dukes Wood – todays lunch hour saw me visiting Carr Vale LNR a lovely wetland site belonging to the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust on what was previously old colliery spoil heaps, subsidence flashes and disused railway lines. I believe it has clocked up an impressive site list of butterflies too including some someone dubious releases in past years!

I was lucky enough to encounter good numbers of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks in flight and feeding on Dandelions in the damp grassy meadow area's and a couple of male Brimstones prospecting along the line of Hawthorn and Elder adjacent to the River Doe Lee – including one that was vigorously chased off by an aggressive Small Tort!

The scrubby shaded area's didn't produce to many butterflies – but I was gratified by sightings of Reed Bunting and Yellowhammer and the insistent singing of many ChiffChaff which really is a sign spring has arrived with a vengeance!

Next stop was back over the border in Nottinghamshire at Whitwell Wood LNR – on getting out the car I hadn't even got as far as the wood entrance when a Brimstone whizzed past me following the line of the busy main road – braving the traffic I followed it down the verge...before watching it briefly tussle with another male Brimstone...one disappearing over the brambles...the other crossing the road and commencing a circuit which eventually brought it back to me...despite its regular patrol it never settled...but my eye was drawn to a paler specimen which revealed itself as a Female – while this did perch briefly on the bramble I wasn't able to capture a record shot...

Inside the wood itself I followeed the broad paths, paying attention to the sunlit intersections and cleared areas – again there were good numbers of Small Torts and Peacocks active – and smaller more delicate russet coloured vanessids which could only be Comma. I've not seen enough of them in my brief career as a butterfly watcher to be bored yet...they are a lovely delicate intricately shaped butterfly and a clear favourite of mine! When they weren't being bullied by the more pugnacious Tortoiseshells I was able to capture pictures of them camouflaged perfectly amongst the leaf litter – or sunning themselves on fallen wood.

Plenty of Brimstones were obviously prospecting for mates – flying purposefully among the trees...seen distantly in flight...though they occasionally dropped briefly into the leaf litter, settling with closed wings and allowing a brief record shot.

Finally as just about to leave the wood a pale butterfly caught my eye...while I assumed Brimstone – its weaker flight and more delicate jizz caught my eye and I pursued it until it settled – an very early male **Orange Tip** and my first of the year. A fitting end to my butterfly hunt...

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[url=http://s38.photobucket.com/user/jasonbirder/media/Peacock1-3a.jpg.html:ixwtsjsh] [/url:ixwtsjsh]

[url=http://s38.photobucket.com/user/jasonbirder/media/Comma1-3a.jpg.html:ixwtsjsh] [/url:ixwtsjsh]

[url=http://s38.photobucket.com/user/jasonbirder/media/Brimstone1-3a.jpg.html:ixwtsjsh]  [/url:ixwtsjsh]

[url=http://s38.photobucket.com/user/jasonbirder/media/Orangetip1-3a.jpg.html:ixwtsjsh]  [/url:ixwtsjsh]

Re: Jasonbirder

by Goldie M, 04-Apr-14 03:01 PM GMT

Welcome Jason, you were lucky with the Orange Tip none sighted here yet in the North, Goldie 😊

Re: Jasonbirder

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-14 10:50 PM GMT

Congrats on the OT - 😊 🍷 still not seen one over here, in fact I think only one has been recorded in Wiltshire so far this year, I think the cooler weather is holding them back 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 06-Apr-14 11:35 AM GMT

Warm and overcast here overnight (Newark on Trent, Notts) but despite the good conditions...poor results in my Moth Trap overnight... A couple of **Early Grey** and a **Ruby Tiger**.

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[url=http://s38.photobucket.com/user/jasonbirder/media/rubytiger.jpg.html:w35wj7cv]  [/url:w35wj7cv]

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 06-Apr-14 12:37 PM GMT

Overcast and breezy yesterday – not a productive day for Butterflies, despite getting out and about in some lovely countryside! Headed for the North Yorkshire Moors National park and spent some time enjoying the fantastic carpet of wild Daffodils – perhaps if we'd headed south I might have connected with some *Lepidoptra*!

Still Low Mills at Ferndale is a fantastic place to enjoy a profusion of these bold jolly flowers! Hopefully Monday will enable me to catch up with my first Orchids of the year!

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Re: Jasonbirder

by Goldie M, 06-Apr-14 03:14 PM GMT

Great Photo's again, Goldie 😊

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 12-Apr-14 02:38 PM GMT

A bit behind on my activities...not been in front of the PC much!

Wednesday 9th April

Was grey, chilly and breezy – not conducive to Butterfly hunting at all! Still an hour before a Derbyshire based appointment allowed me a wander up **Cressbrook Dale** I'll be back to look for Brown Argus later in the year!

A fantastic Limestone Landscape and a well known site for **Early Purple Orchid** sadly I was too early for any flowers...but a proliferation of Rosettes hints at a good display in a few weeks time!

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[url=http://s38.photobucket.com/user/jasonbirder/media/orchidrosette.jpg.html:2lg87c5z]  [/url:2lg87c5z]

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 19-May-14 12:14 PM GMT

I've proven singular unable to keep up with my personal diary...obviously the sunshine has meant too much time butterflying and not enough time at the PC!

So I'm going to re-boot it in a slightly simpler format...I'm just going to type the notes from my logbook up direct and add the appropriate pictures from the day/site to the posting...

Hopefully this will be quicker...enabling me to catch up with the backlog...and keep it up to date in real-time!

So starting again from the beginning of April...apologies for any duplication!

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 19-May-14 12:14 PM GMT

Early Spring Butterflies

April 1st 2014 Sunny, Broken Cloud 15 Degrees

Carr Vale LNR <http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/carr-vale-flash>

Good numbers of Small Tortoiseshell and Peacocks in flight, basking in the sunshine and nectaring on early flowering Dandelion in the meadow adjacent to the flash.

At least 2 ♂ **Brimstone** prospecting along the riverside hedgerow of Hawthorn and Elder – one of which was decisively chased off by an aggressive Small Tortoiseshell.

Chiffchaff and Blackcap singing in the spring sunshine. Also confiding Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting showing well at the track-side Feeding Station.



Whitwell Wood Forestry Commission <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/EnglandDerbyshireNoForestWhitwellWoods>

Good numbers of ♂ **Brimstone** obvious immediately upon leaving the car. Showing well on prospecting circuits along the Bramble and Hawthorn hedges adjacent to the edge of the wood and road-side.

♀ **Orange Tip** sunning itself briefly on Bramble – small and delicately marked...much smarter than the oh-so similar Small or Green-Veined White!

Plenty of Primrose and Wood Anemone flowering in the sunlight area's adjacent to the wider rides or in the cleared area's. Good numbers of Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell in these area's too...basking in the sun or making aggressive territorial flights when disturbed by another butterfly! Numbers of **Comma** on show – basking with open wings on fallen wood or dead leaves – less aggressive than their more robust relatives and immediately obvious in flight...their warm fritillary-like russet colouration and more delicate jizz making them stand out.

A single pristine ♂ **Orange Tip** on show near the entrance gate (adjacent to the A57) – identifiable in flight at a distance as it flashed its neon-orange wingtips! Newly emerged not a mark on knock on it!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 19-May-14 12:20 PM GMT

Early Spring Butterflies

April 9th Sunshine, Brisk Wind, Cold 10 Degrees

Cressbrook Dale NNR <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/nnr/1006046.aspx>

No sign of any Butterflies in cold blustery conditions...though this is a good site for Brown Argus later in the year.

A single early Wheatear on territory, showing well on the drystone walling its white rump obvious in flight.

Lots of Early Purple Orchid rosettes, but none in bloom yet!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 19-May-14 12:31 PM GMT

Early Spring Butterflies

April 11th Sunny, Cool Breeze, c16 degrees

Bingham Linear Park <http://www.rushcliffewildlife.co.uk/sites/binghamlp.html>

Early part of the walk is amongst sub-urban gardens shaded in an old railway cutting lines with trees – Hawthorn, Willow and Elder predominating, overgrown with Ivy and Bramble.

Plenty of Orange Tips on show here...flying vigorously around their territories on rapid circling flights high amongst the trees.

After passing under the A52 in a corrugated Iron tunnel the path becomes drier and grassier...initially in a cutting...then opening onto a high embankment amongst arable fields.

Lots of Peacock on show basking with open wings on the warm stones of discarded ballast piles.

By the time I reached the Yellow Rape fields there were plenty of **Green-Veined White** in evidence – smaller than I expected..similar in size to a Small White, only their prominent Underwing markings allowing easy identification.

I walked as far as the River Snape but there was no sign of any Skippers.

More ♂ Brimstone seen prospecting for ♀'s active and mobile!

Returning through the tree-lined area at the start of the walk I managed to get a great shot of a very battered Comma...presumably a hibernator...its not had time to get so tattered if it was newly emerged!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 19-May-14 08:12 PM GMT

Early Spring Butterflies

April 13th Sunny Cooling Breeze c16 Degrees

Local Dog Walk Newark on Trent <http://tinyurl.com/py36zjq>

My local dog walk sometimes proves productive for common butterflies – I had over 30 Small Torts on the wing on a sunny day at the end of March! Its a mix of rough grassland, scrubby trees and shaded bridleways...so with the sun out I hoped for a few species today.

There were plenty of Peacock and Small Torts in evidence in the open field area's, but perhaps because of the wind there was more activity along the sheltered bridleway. Many ♂ Orange Tips active along the sunlit sections searching for mates and tussling with each other when they encountered a rival on their circuits.

Most interesting was a brand new emergence of **Speckled Wood** – lots in sun-dappled area's along the bridleway ride, all very active and mobile!

Green-Veined White on edges of arable field.

First local Swallows of the year seen too!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 19-May-14 10:42 PM GMT

Early Spring Butterflies

April 14th Sunny Brisk Breeze c16 degrees

Ketton Quarry LNR <http://www.lrwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/ketton-quarry/>

Am interesting site visited unsuccessfully for Grizzled Skipper. Old abandoned quarry of short grazed grassland (Rabbits perhaps?) and scrub lots of Cowslips coming into flower...a sure sign of spring!

Plenty of interesting Birds in evidence including a Red Kite over the car park and a very vocal Green Woodpecker heard "yaffling" and seen in flight and perched in dead trees adjacent to the quarry.

No sign of my target species – but some Peacock basking on bare ground in the sheltered area's at the base of the quarry.

Some unidentified day-flying moths in flight, but difficult to view and impossible to ID as they would burrow deep into the base of grass clumps when they landed!

Expanding my search into the verdant, overgrown area's around the dis-used buildings brought views of Small Tortoiseshell, Orange Tip and Green-Veined White.

Returning to the car park resulted in good views of an exceptionally lazy ♂ Brimstone nectaring.



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-May-14 11:02 AM GMT

Early Spring Butterflies

April 16th Sunny, Breezy c16 degrees

Langar Airfield <http://tinyurl.com/lwsrrha>

Searched unsuccessfully for Grizzled Skippers at this local site where they had been recorded in recent years. Headed for scrubby dispersal area's at the South-East corner of the Airfield along the shady bridleway.

Heard my first Whitethroats of the year singing lustily!

Along the shady track there were Orange Tips, Green-Veined White and Speckled Wood on show.

Crossing the arable fields to the dis-used airfield I disturbed a few Small Torts and Peacocks basking on the rutted ground.

Extensive search of the weedy and overgrown dispersal area revealed plenty of suitable habitat but no skippers!



Bingham Linear Park <http://www.rushcliffewildlife.co.uk/sites/binghamlp.html>

Walked as far as the River Smite in my fruitless quest for a Notts Grizzled Skipper. Hampered slightly by the windy conditions...especially along the exposed raised embankment they favour.

Saw my first **Holly Blues** of the year...fluttering high in the sunlit tops of the pathside Hawthorn Trees – like tiny powder blue postage stamps dancing in the breeze. Managed an appalling record shot of one resting on a Hawthorn Leaf – I think a scope/iphone combo would be more appropriate for this type of shot – worth bearing in mind later in the year when i'm hunting Hairstreaks. One came down to ground level for a muddy puddle lick revealing its silver blue underside and diagnostic pattern of small black dots.

There were still plenty of Comma, Orange Tips and Brimstone in the overgrown area's near the bridges over the path. Including a persistent male dogfighting with a female..he just wouldn't take no for an answer!

Plenty of Small Torts and Peacocks along the raised embankment and arable fields...but no skippers!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-May-14 11:30 AM GMT

Early Spring Butterflies

April 23rd Sunny Breezy c16 Degrees

Langar Airfield <http://tinyurl.com/lwsrrha>

Another walk along the South-East edge of this ex-World War II bomber airfield, searching for the elusive Grizzled Skipper...another dip unfortunately...do they exist or are they merely a figment of other Butterflies imagination! Plenty of Brimstone, Peacock and Small Torts around the dispersal area's – lots of Cowslip and Bugle coming into flower...but no sign of any Vetch or Strawberry...so perhaps I'm still a little early. The ever present Speckled Wood and Green-Veined White along the bridleway.

Bingham Linear Park <http://www.rushcliffewildlife.co.uk/sites/binghamlp.html>

Nothing if not persistent I returned to this reputedly reliable site for Grizzled Skipper...with predictably unsuccessful results!

There were plenty of Speckled Wood on show in the shady area's at the start of the walk – also Small White and Green-Veined White...not as easy to split as I envisaged...I needed good views or views of their underside to confirm the ID...not always easy as they were warm, flighty and unapproachable.

Knowing the areas the Holly Blues favoured it was easy to spot a few high in the Hawthorn Trees again – in the areas where sunny treetops were surrounded by ivy clad trunks and fences. Mobile and flighty – pausing only briefly to settle with wings closed tightly above their back. I had forgotten my own digi-scoping advice from my last visit so a poor record shot was the order of the day!

No Comma seen today...are last years hibernators close to finishing? Lots of Orange Tips ♂ and ♀s today...do the females emerge slightly later as I hadn't seen any at this site on my previous visit? Females have subtle delicate markings – its good to see the beautiful jigsaw like patterns on the underwing.

Brimstones still active and obvious everywhere and plenty of the ubiquitous Peacock and Small Tort's. There are so many I resolved to see If I could find any Caterpillars and sure enough after braving the stinging nettles I found one munching merrily away...oblivious of my presence!

No skippers though...aaargh!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-May-14 11:57 AM GMT

A Day with the Duke

April 30th Sunny, Warm 18 degrees plus – warmest day of year so far!

Bison Hill, Dunstable Downs <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1356405630764/>

In bright sunshine and high spirits I set off on my first ever Butterfly Twitch...would I bag my first "Lifer" of the year?

Traveled to a lovely site at the far edge of the Dunstable Downs escarpment – the famous Bison Hill...sadly no herds of Bison to be seen roaming below!

A beautiful area managed sensitively for Butterflies – a patchwork of short-cropped turf with abundant wildflowers and scrubby hillsides...lots of sheltered warm hollows and sunken tracks to give a comfortable micro-climate for warmth-loving Butterflies!

We headed for the recommended area at the base of the hill amidst the sunken lanes and had another first! I met my first ever real life Butterfly...who was doing a monitoring transect...he was a little close lipped...but I guessed he wouldn't have been there if we weren't in the right place!

Our first **Duke of Burgundy** was so easy to spot it was almost an anti-climax! Basking in the centre of the track with its wings wide open absorbing the warm morning sunshine. Absolutely pristine...so probably recently emerged. Smaller than I expected...but beautifully marked with chocolate brown and orange.

Then we spotted a ♂ and ♀ doing what Dukes and Duchesses do on some high vegetation...letting me grab pictures of their shiny spotted underside – making it obvious why they are part of the "metal-mark" family of Butterflies.

Plenty more were seen – all strong fliers and feisty about being disturbed by any rivals – tussling and dog-fighting in fierce rising spiraling flights. Also on show were small groups of **Green Hairstreak** 3 – 4 perching on low hawthorn bushes or the old seed heads of long grasses; their iridescent green underwings held tightly closed above their backs, tilted obliquely to catch the sun – like little sailing yachts! As is ever the way...when you stop trying...things come right to you! 2 **Grizzled Skipper** on our walk back to the car park. Elusive, small fast fliers low to the ground, perching on bare earth or tucking into the scrubby vegetation...a cryptic dark and cream chequered pattern identifying them.



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-May-14 01:57 PM GMT

Devonshire Diversions

May 4th Early Morning, Hazy Overcast, Still

Great Haldon Forest <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/englanddevonnoforesthaldonforestparkhaldongatewaybutterflytrail>

A family break in Devon provided me with ample excuses to indulge my new-found passion for Butterflies – beginning with a search for Pearl-bordered Fritillary in its stronghold at Great Haldon Forest.

Leaving the Car Park and its hordes of Mountain Bikers I noticed good numbers of brightly coloured and boldly marked Siskins on the Bird feeders by the rangers office.

Today was just to be an early morning reconnaissance to find the best area's to search later in the week.

I followed the hard packed tracks to the end of the way-marked Butterfly Trail, where I located the best habitat in the cleared area's under the overhead pylons. There was a patchwork mix of dry and damp grassy area's with bluebells, bracken and gorse bushes that all my information told me was the best place to search.

I was pleasantly surprised to immediately find a **Pearl-Bordered Fritillary** perched on the bare earth of the main track beneath the pylons.

A lovely warm coppery-umber colour with an intricate pattern of black lines and whorls. As it was basking with its wings open I wasn't able to see the diagnostic underwing pattern.

In flight it had a decisive strong flight interspersed with glides on flat wings. at least one or two more were seen in flight around the same area.



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-May-14 02:10 PM GMT

Devonshire Diversions

May 6th Early Morning, Hazy Overcast, SW Breeze, Cool

Great Haldon Forest <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/englanddevonnoforesthaldonforestparkhaldongatewaybutterflytrail>

This morning I re-visited the same area as yesterdays reconnaissance hoping to get some photo's of Pearl-Bordered Fritillary and views of the all important underwing!

Knowing where to go I quickly arrived at the clear-fell Butterfly Conservation area beneath the pylons and walked the main track in the hope of finding my quarry.

Butterfly hunting was difficult in the dull, breezy conditions – but these South-Western Pearl-Bordered are obviously made of robust stuff as it didn't put them off one bit!

I quickly located a Fritillary in flight its bold bright colours making it easy to spot at a distance!

The chill made it lethargic and approachable and easy to get pictures as it bathed in what little sunshine was available.

More were quickly spotted including one that was persuaded to show the underwing and its diagnostic mix of brown chevrons and dots on the hind wing with a single silver panel. A little poking and prodding to get it to fold its wings didn't result in it flushing..but instead it climbed on my finger to take advantage of my body heat...photo opportunity time!

My ever eager Retriever Freya who is normally such a liability when Butterfly hunting proved her worth today as her bounding runs flushed at least 10 more from the grass and path as we walked!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-May-14 02:30 PM GMT

Devonshire Diversions

6th May Sunny, Cooling SW Breeze

Great Haldon Forest <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/englanddevonnoforesthaldonforestparkhaldongatewaybutterflytrail>

Revisited the Butterfly conservation area beneath the Pylons today to see more Pearl-Bordered and search for Skippers.

Its easy to see the favoured habitat of the Fritillarys – the brown dead Bracken fronds must keep the ground beneath them warm...like a foliage duvet and here and there the tiny purple Violets which are the favoured larval food plants could be seen.

More Pearl-Bordered were seen – very easy to spot in flight, they are strong fliers and seem to cruise around confidently about 3 or 4 feet above the ground before settling on low vegetation or the bare earth of the paths to bask.

I found an amorous pair of Pearl-Bordered scuttling along the ground – giving an ideal opportunity to note the differences in the extent of the black upperwing markings between the ♂ and the ♀.

I definately don't have my eye in for spotting Skippers – as extensive searching failed to reveal any Dingy or Grizzled. But on returning through the conifer plantations I did espy a single Spruce Carpet resting itself.



Prawle Point http://www.devonbirds.org/birdwatching/places_to_go/prawle_reserves

Very windy! Plenty of Cirl Bunting evident – perching on overhead wires on the tiny winding approach road and singing in the area's around the dis-used World War II bunkers.

A quick walk along the coastal path in blustery conditions brought this years first sighting of a **Wall** – basking with its wings wide open on the coast path. A lovely warm russet colour with an intricate black pattern overlaid – what a shame this once common Butterfly has suffered such a precipitous decline in recent years. Flushed both on my approach – it seemed to sense the Camera! The high winds meant their flight took them towering up far away from me into the arable fields adjacent to the South-West Coastal Path.

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-May-14 02:54 PM GMT

Devonshire Diversions

May 7th Mixed Sun and Overcast, brisk SW breeze

Dunsford, Teign Valley <http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/reserve/Dunsford/overview/>

A visit to a delightful riverside reserve alongside the River Teign. Beautiful clearings awash with Bluebells provide habitat for many species of Fritillary – but none seen today!

Branscombe Undercliff http://www.discoverbutterflies.com/New_sites/BRANSCOMBE.pdf

The day got much colder and breezier as it got later – so I didn't hold out much hope as I visited this site in search of Wood Whites. It's a classic undercliff area of verdant subtropical vegetation and landslips – beneath a typical seaside mix of beach huts and static caravans. Everything showing much evidence of collapse and damage from this winters record breaking storms.

I was very surprised to see any Butterflies at all – but a single windswept Orange Tip I saw on exiting the car gave me hope!

Scrambling up into area's I couldn't reccomend climbing to was rewarded with views of 2 delicate **Wood White** – their unique flight action making them instantly identifiable. They fly like a Disney impression of a fairy; their bodies bouncing up and down with the effort of every wing beat.

Settling revealed their characteristic teardrop shape and dusky underwing markings as they posed with their wings clamped tightly closed amongst the rushes and grasses.

Also a flash of azure blue picked out a ♂ **Common Blue** basking – dusky blue with white fringes to both wings, then wings closed to show the unique pattern of white and black roundels and orange chevrons beneath.



Re: Jasonbirder

by CJB, 20-May-14 03:45 PM GMT

Hi Jason,

You have been very busy!

Very impressive to see your trips and quests to find species. I am on a quest to photograph all the UK species on my mobile and am up to 48, with some easy targets still to come. It turns out that near to where I live in Gloucs, there is a Large Blue site, so fingers crossed I get them this year. I am jealous of your wood white, which is on my list and last year I travelled all the way to Dover to see the long-tailed blues, which had been seen the day before and were seen the day after; very frustrating! 😡

Good luck with your quest and I look forward to the next update.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 23-May-14 11:41 AM GMT

Local Ramblings

May 12th Late PM Sunny, becoming Overcast, Warm

Stanton Lagoons LNR <http://tinyurl.com/oaham4b>

Another abortive attempt to locate the elusive Dingy Skipper locally. Don't think we located the right area for the small local colony (In hindsight it's nearer the fish pond than the reedbed and lagoons). Walked alongside the Erewash Canal from Stanton Gate LNR in bright sunshine. Explored some promising looking habitat (Dis-used railway sidings) but only saw Peacock, Small Torts and Specked Wood. Walked round the reed beds and lagoons further north with emphasis on searching the grassy area's with Vetch. No further Butterflies seen – but did find a Pebble Hooktip (Day-flying Moth)



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 23-May-14 11:53 AM GMT

Local Ramblings

13th May Sunny, Warm

Peter Fidler LNR http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/countryside/countryside_sites/wildlife_amenity/peter_fidler_reserve/default.asp

A lunchtime visit to this reclaimed brownfield site close to Bolsover. Lovely habitat for an old reclaimed brownfield site; grasslands, meadows, reedbeds and small pool all adjacent to the River Doe Lee.

Lots of insect activity in the warm noon sunshine. Large Red Damselfly on show in a shallow grassy ditch (amazingly my first Odonata of the year) and plenty of the striking looking Bee Fly nectaring vigorously...like tiny hummingbirds!

Brimstones patrolling actively and Speckled Wood, Orange Tip and Green-veined White in abundance.

Managed to finally find 3 **Dingy Skipper** on a grassy bank dotted with Purple Vetch and a few longer dead grass-stalks to the west of the reserve.

Subtly marked brown moth-like Butterfly basking with open wings in the sun. Easily spotted with its distinctive grass-top height flight and jinking rapid changes of direction.

A loud and lustily singing Sedge Warbler in the reedbed provided a suitable musical accompaniment to my success!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 23-May-14 04:32 PM GMT

Local Ramblings

14th May Warm, Broken Cloud, Late Afternoon

Chambers Farm Wood <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/EnglandLincolnshireNoForestChambersFarmWood>

Walked across to the the famous Little Scrubs meadow – a damp cleared area managed for Butterflies at this Forestry Commission Site, conditions warm but overcast. Dressed from work in suit and tie...I managed to get incredibly muddy exploring the meadow and surrounding area's...oops! Searched both meadows hoping for Marsh Fritillary. Initially only found a few Brimstone, Speckled Wood and Green-Veined White – but further searching revealed 2 Lattice Heath Moths...doing their best impression of Skippers!

Habitat seemed very marshy and wet underfoot but did locate 2-3 Dingy Skipper feeding on Bugle, but no sign of any Marsh Fritillary.



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 24-May-14 07:16 PM GMT

A Grand Day Out

15th May Sunshine Warm 21degrees+

Chambers Farm Wood <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/EnglandLincolnshireNoForestChambersFarmWood>

Re-visited the Butterfly Conservation area of Little Scrubs Meadow in bright sunshine to search again. Nice to meet a couple of Butterflies on-site – who had already seen some Marsh Fritillary action.

Tramping around I saw some distant in-flight Fritillaries in the damp and marshy corner of the meadow and headed over to investigate and soon came across good numbers of freshly emerged **Marsh Fritillary**. Hyper-active in the warm sunshine they were making constant short flights in-between

tussling with rivals and basking in the sunshine with open wings. All were very approachable – in contrast to the fierceness with which they defended against any incursions into their space by potential Butterfly rivals! Extremely photogenic – a beautiful, warm coloured, intricately patterned Fritillary – definitely the most gorgeous Butterfly I have seen so far on my travels! Difficult to get underwing shots as all were keen to bask. Plenty of Dingy Skipper on the wing again...I don't know why I was worried about seeing them earlier in the week! No sign of any Grizzled Skipper despite being the right time/location/conditions (are they still resident here) but all the common butterflies as expected (Brimstone, Orange Tip etc)



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 25-May-14 11:59 AM GMT

A Grand Day Out

May 15th Sunshine, Warm 21degrees+

Twyford Wood FC <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/EnglandLincolnshireKestevenForestTwyfordWood>

Pulling into the car park i was surprised and impressed by the sight of a huge (!) Hornet...coming down to a muddy puddle in the car park (was it drinking, salt lick, collecting mud?) it was a vivid amber colour and must have been as big as my thumb! Sadly, it didn't wait till I had unloaded my camera before "buzzing off"

Walked through the forestry commission woods and out onto the old dis-used runways...very hot and dry on the warmest day of the year so far...flanked by plenty of scrubby trees and with grassy and weedy patches of vegetation struggling through the concrete.

Heard my first Cuckoo of the year calling..then briefly in flight over the trees.

Continued onto the area for Skippers at the southern edge of the complex...here the concrete had broken up more substantially to give area's of short grass, wildflowers, young bushes and bare rocks...ideal habitat! Plenty of Vetch (yellow and purple) for nectaring and a literal carpet of tiny wild strawberry flowers.

Large numbers of skippers in the favoured area's – I must have counted over 40 Dingy Skipper and 20+ Grizzled Skipper in only a small area that was literally alive with Butterflies! Everything fast and frenetic having warmed up in the hot sun. Managed to get some pictures of an amorous Grizzled Skipper ♂ chasing a prospective partner...both on the ground and in the air. Also numbers of a tiny Pyrausta moth that looked and behaved like a tiny version of a Skipper!

Lots of Peacock basking on the baking hot concrete of the runways.



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 27-May-14 10:47 AM GMT

A Grand Day Out!

May 15th Warm, Sunshine 20degrees+

Bloody Oaks Quarry LNR <http://www.lrwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/bloody-oaks-quarry/>

Moved onto this lovely little nature reserve – an old limestone quarry hidden away quietly off the beaten track – not sure where it's macabre name comes from tho'! An interesting mix of short cut turf...cleared area's with bare rocky patches and scrub...lots of sheltered hollows to catch the warmth – ideal for Butterflies!

Plenty of both Dingy Skipper and Grizzled Skipper showing well on the stony area's eager to demonstrate their uncanny ability to disappear from sight instantly. Active in the warmth with plenty of low flights close to the ground interspersed with rapid jinking changes of direction. Also eager to "soak up the rays" by basking in the sun with their wings open.

It was nice to get good views of Burnet Companion Moth – often sighted as a common confusion species for Dingy Skipper – when it rests with its colours showing its an attractive *Lepidoptrid* in its own right!





Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 02-Jun-14 02:48 PM GMT

A Grand Day Out

May 15th Warm Sunshine 20 degrees+

Ketton Quarry LNR <http://www.lrwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/ketton-quarry/>

Re-visited this excellent little reserve – possibly the best for Butterflies in Leicestershire and Rutland? Lots of Butterflyers on site...i've never seen so many before...I didn't realise it was quite such a popular hobby! The reserve proper is an old limestone quarry which contains a mix of short cropped turf, patches of bare rock and scrubby area's all on the nutrient poor limestone, with plenty of sheltered hollows to trap the warmth and provide shelter it is an ideal habitat for Butterflies. Coming from the car park I was lucky enough to see one of the resident Adders (♀) basking in a scrubby rubbish pile.

The first field had recently been strimmed but still held plenty of Skippers on the short grass and wildflowers...mainly Dingy Skipper but the occasional Grizzled Skipper for variety – some flighty and full of energy after a day in the sunshine...others more approachable and happy to bask. The Grizzled Skippers definitely appear smaller than their Dingy cousins and their cryptic chequered patterns make them harder to follow in flight.

Joining everyone in the main quarry area I quickly spotted my first **Small Heath** of the year, which eventually co-operated by perching on a dead seed head. Quite small and with a lovely "velvety" appearance – it kept its wings firmly closed above its back showing its underwings – a warm orange forewing with a bold black eyespot and a dull beige hindwing with a cream pattern.

Was very excited to catch up with a **Brown Argus** that had been in the area – a pristine newly emerged ♂. Chocolate brown above with Orange markings all the way along its forewings – even the tiny block dot in the centre of its wing was visible. Underneath the complex pattern of orange chevrons and black and white spots that allow definitive separation from ♀ Common Blues.



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 02-Jun-14 03:02 PM GMT

Butterfly Off Early Tomorrows Saturday!

16th May Sunny Hot 23 degrees

Salcey Forest FC <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/salceyforest>

After my less than satisfactory views and photo's of Wood White on a windy day in Devon – I chose to visit this well known site to grab some better images and spend some more time with this species. A bit daunted by the size of the area but a walk round the Church Path Trail let us escape the crowds and quickly led us to some excellent habitat...an open ride amidst younger trees with lots of grass, flowering vetches and occasional muddy puddles...textbook stuff!

Concerned to see no butterflies on arrival – while warm it was humid and overcast...but when the sun came out so did the butterflies! Soon Orange Tips were out patrolling the ride easily made out with their quicker more robust flight...which seemed to especially enrage the Wood Whites!

Saw at least half a dozen Wood White (presumably ♂s) all actively patrolling along the ride on a circuit...usually low along the vegetation (presumably searching for ♀s) but occasionally circling upwards and high over the trees. Their distinctive fluttering fairy like flight enabled easy ID. One came down to a puddle edge for salt, whilst another was happy to nectar actively "trembling" with its proboscis thrust deep into a vetch flower. Always perched with their wings firmly closed their rounded teardrop shape and delicate subtle pattern was very different from the commoner "Cabbage" Whites.



Re: Jasonbirder

by Willrow, 02-Jun-14 03:11 PM GMT

Comprehensive report and some nice image captures Jason, your certainly getting yourself out and about – have to make every minute of a British summertime count eh!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 02-Jun-14 03:14 PM GMT

Butterfly Off Early Tomorrow's Saturday!

May 16th Sunny, Very Warm, Humid 23 degrees

Tottenham Knolls and Quarry http://www.discoverbutterflies.com/New_sites/TOTTERNHOE_KNOLLS.pdf

Finished the afternoon with a visit to this interesting area I drove past earlier in the year. Fascinating site dominated by huge escarpments of bare chalk – sheltering beneath were managed wildflower meadows and lots of arid old quarry areas.

There were dozens of **Small Blue** in the conservation area by the main path – tiny, tiny blue black butterflies with a fluttering flight amidst the long grass stems – but taking time out to bask in the late afternoon sun with their wings wide open. Smaller than a postage stamp but perfectly formed with a blue black sheen of colour and a perfect fringe of pale cream edging around their wings.

Lots of Dingy Skipper and more Small Blue in the disused workings of the old quarries.

Walked round to the Quarries proper – where there were plenty of Green Hairstreak around the hawthorns but didn't find any Dukes! The whole area was alive with huge turf covered anthills – I wouldn't be surprised if there were more Blues to be seen here later in the year!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 04-Jun-14 11:52 AM GMT

Local Wanderings

18th May Warm, Humid, Hazy Cloud Cover

Bingham Linear Park <http://www.rushcliffewildlife.co.uk/sites/binghamlp.html>

Took advantage of a Sunday afternoon Dog Walk to visit my favorite local spot...in the hope of finally catching up with a Nottinghamshire Grizzled Skipper. Lots of Speckled Wood and Green-veined White showing in the wooded shaded area's at the start of the walk. Also the tattiest looking Peacock I have ever seen...I was surprised it could fly at all!

After passing under the A52 in the first area of the railway cutting found a small colony of Common Blue – at least half a dozen ♂s patrolling actively and tussling with each other in flight as they performed short circuits around the rough grassy slope of the cutting, occasionally pausing to nectar on purple vetch and clover...showing off their intricate underwing pattern. All a lovely sky blue colour which seemed to make them look larger than life in flight...its quite a surprise to see how small they are when they settle! No ♀s...I'll have to revisit to photograph some!

My first **Small Copper** of the year resting nervously on the path...easily flushed!

It was quite breezing and exposed as I walked out onto the embankment area, but my visit wasn't in vain as I found a single Grizzled Skipper flitting about between vetch and some exposed stone area's just past the River Smite bridge.

Also 2 wandering Brown Argus – difficult to pin down in the wind, but their typical warm chocolate brown and orange upperwing on show as they basked on dead seed heads before towering off high in the wind.



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 18-Jun-14 03:31 PM GMT

Local Wanderings

19th May Sunny, Breezy, Very Warm

Bardon Hill <http://www.lros.org.uk/bardon.htm>

One of the very few remaining local sites for Wall – I hadn't got pics of those I'd seen at Prawle Point so was hoping to get some pics...

After a walk through woodlands seeing only a Large White and a few Speckled Wood the route opens out onto a mix of disturbed ground, meadows and gorse scattered moorland. It's Leicesters highest point and there is a spectacular view into the immense scar of the still active quarry.

Walking through the spiky grasses and gorse of the moorland area I found a couple of Small Heath and a single Small Copper – there were also a few Burnet Companion Moths. Croaking overhead were a pair of Raven.

A few Orange Tip were seen along the edges of the Woodland and I disturbed a roosting Tawny Owl – but overall it was a very quiet outing!



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-Jun-14 12:49 PM GMT

Disaster Strikes!

21st May Warm, Overcast Breezy

Compton Bay, Isle of Wight <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/compton-bay-and-downs>

Sunny when I arrived – Parked in the visitor car park and walked across to the Clifftop Footpath – grazed area with abundant wildflowers...Excitement on seeing a brightly coloured butterfly in the distance tinged by disappointment when it was chased down and turned out to be a Small Tort!

A set of steep wooden steps led down to a classic undercliff area above the beach, fertile landslip with area's of wildflowers, grass and green pools mixed with bare earth from recent landslips.

Disaster struck on arrival...after a 4 hour drive and a ferry journey across to the Island..I turned my camera on to find the Lens wouldn't move! No Lens opening...no pictures grrrrr...despite my usual response to technical failure (turning it off and back on again) I couldn't coax any life out of it! The rest of the trip saw me using a 5 year old work Blackberry to capture images...so apologies for the poor quality!

Found my first two **Painted Lady** of the year my favourite *Vanessiid* though had to risk life and limb climbing off the steps halfway down the cliff to view! Always beautiful...peachy coloured and marked cryptically with Black and White...it was nice to think of these fresh arrivals having flown all the way across the Channel to nectar on the sea thrift in front of me...There were also plenty of fluttering Silver Y Moths about...signs of recent immigration I'd guess. Also ♂ and ♀ Common Blue and a Wall Brown on show basking with open wings on a patch of bare earth.

Disappointed to find no Glanville Fritillary as conditions appeared so good and there was so much other Butterfly activity.



Re: Jasonbirder

by jasonbirder, 20-Jun-14 01:07 PM GMT

Disaster Strikes!

21st May Warm, Overcast Breezy

Wheeler Bay, Bonchurch, Isle of Wight <http://tinyurl.com/pxfnryn>

After failure at my prime site I arrived at this rather more unlikely looking spot – a concrete coastal path and chalky wasteland area at the base of cliffs. Fenced off so overgrown with plenty of Thrift and Plantain. The walk down passed a large Glanville Fritillary mural...hopefully it wouldn't be my only sighting of the day!

Conditions had deteriorated by the time I'd arrived the earlier sunshine giving way to a grey overcast. Following the base of the cliffs I turned up some Small Torts, another Painted Lady and finally what today was all about...my first **Glanville Fritillary** !!!

A beautiful, dainty, intricately marked fritillary, smaller and darker than the Pearl-bordered Fritillary I had seen earlier this month. Warm orange overlaid with a black chequerboard pattern...the black dots on the hindwings diagnostic features (not that there is anything else to mistake it with at this site)

The underwings a beautiful cream and buff banded pattern.

Walking along I managed to find 3 or 4 individuals – not at all showy though...perhaps because of the dull and breezy weather; hunkered down in the long grass, sheltering amongst the chalky stones or flying high and away in the breeze when flushed.

Often sat with their hindwings closed above their back and their forewings tucked up completely to create a tiny little triangle – making them look smaller than you'd believe possible!

Finished the day gutted that my Camera failure had meant I couldn't capture any decent images...but elated at seeing my target...another lifer for me!

