

Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 28-Apr-14 06:34 PM GMT

Just joined this board...

Re: Andy Wilson

by False Apollo, 28-Apr-14 06:42 PM GMT

Welcome Andy,

Looking forward to hearing about your butterfly exploits. What area are you from ? It is always good to hear about different areas of the UK over the course of the butterfly season.

Regards

Mike

Pearls at Abbots Wood

by Andy Wilson, 28-Apr-14 06:45 PM GMT

Went to Abbots Wood this afternoon and with one other enthusiast saw several Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries in the large cleared area at the north end of the wood, which is currently a carpet of bluebells. It was a warmish afternoon and they were quite active, but I did manage to get a few shots, especially of one individual which I think was a female.

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Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 28-Apr-14 06:48 PM GMT

I'm in East Sussex but fairly close to the border with West Sussex, so I roam all over the county.

Dukes at Kithurst Hill

by Andy Wilson, 30-Apr-14 05:21 PM GMT

I climbed up Kithurst Hill from Storrington today, seeing several (10+) Dingy Skippers on the way up, together with 3-4 Green Hairstreaks. I then walked along to Kithurst Meadow, where I found several other enthusiasts observing Dukes of Burgundy. I saw 2, maybe 3, very fresh individuals. They were very torpid, despite the reasonably warm sunshine, so it was easy to get a camera lens to within a few inches of them.

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[album:3gc4qzg8]17815[/album:3gc4qzg8]

I then visited Mill Hill on my way home. A cooler breeze was now blowing up the Adur valley from the sea, but I saw 4-5 Dingy Skippers, one Green Hairstreak and one (maybe 2) Wall Brown.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Butterflysaurus rex, 02-May-14 08:04 PM GMT

Hi Andy, It was really good to meet you and have a chat over at Abbots Wood last Monday afternoon 😊 photographing Pearl Bordered Fritillaries to the sound of a Nightingale – doesn't get much better 'or springlike' than that.

I'm looking forward to reading further entries your diary 😊 I'm hoping to see some Dukes this weekend.

All the best

B'saurus

Abbots Wood again

by Andy Wilson, 03-May-14 06:24 PM GMT

My wife and I went to Abbots Wood again this afternoon for a stroll. Conditions were rather cloudy and the air temperature was cool, so there was hardly any butterfly activity. Fortunately, when we got to the bluebell-filled clearing at the north of the wood, the sun came out for a few minutes, and so did the Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries. I saw 2, maybe 3, individuals on the wing. I followed one which went to roost as the sun went back in again, and managed to get some very close-up shots as it sat there quite unconcerned with my camera lens less than 6 inches away. The upperside shot shows that this individual is getting a little worn now.

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Emperors at Knepp

by Andy Wilson, 26-Jun-14 05:16 PM GMT

Having been out of the country for a month, I came back to quite a flurry about Purple Emperors on the Knepp Estate, so I couldn't wait to go there. My wife and I spent about 5 hours there today. Conditions in the morning were rather cooler than recently and we just saw a glimpse of one Emperor high up. However, there were plenty of Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Small Tortoiseshell on the wing. After an excellent lunch at the nearby Countryman pub (TQ136213), we resumed our search in the afternoon in much warmer conditions. We saw 9-10 individuals, all high up in oak trees and all in the northern part of what is called the "Southern Block" of the estate. This is roughly along the northern edge of the TQ1420 1km square. There is clearly a good population here, and I'm sure there were more up there looking at us than we saw from the ground. For me another interesting feature of this site is how open it is compared with other sites I have visited (e.g. Southwater). It is mainly cleared ground with rough grassland and scrub, together with several willow plantations. The mature oaks tend to be in stands of 3-4 trees at the field margins, and it was on these that we saw the Emperors. There is also a good population of Marbled White in the rough grassland, e.g. around TQ140209.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Willow, 26-Jun-14 10:07 PM GMT

Its just great to know the **Purple Emperor** are appearing in better numbers by the day Andy, some exciting days ahead methinks' 😊 Nice report too!

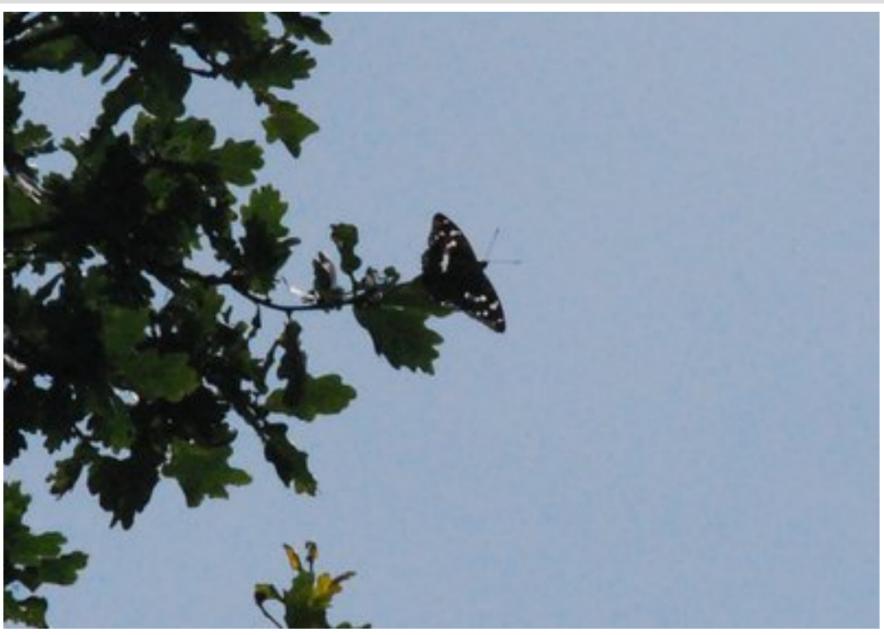
Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 26-Jun-14 11:06 PM GMT

I didn't think any of my pics today would be any good, but here's an enlarged one of an Emperor up an oak tree at Knepp this afternoon.



Butchershole

by Andy Wilson, 01-Jul-14 06:39 PM GMT

I spent about 2 hours walking around the gallops above Butchershole this afternoon. This site saw an explosion of Chalkhill Blue numbers in 2012 and 2013, so I was interested to see if any had emerged yet. The answer is... yes... but only a few. I saw 4 in total, all near the entrance to the gallops just above the car park. However there were very good numbers of Marbled White, Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Small Heath, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper. Also, one female Dark Green Fritillary hunkering down in the grass. I plan to revisit several times over the next few weeks.

Bentley Woods

by Andy Wilson, 02-Jul-14 07:35 PM GMT

On a day trip away from my usual Sussex habitat, I couldn't resist the opportunity to call at Bentley Woods for an hour or so. It was around midday, sunny and warm, so most of the butterflies were very busy and kept on the wing. I saw a dozen or more Silver-Washed Fritillaries, all moving at frantic speed. Also 2 Purple Emperors: one briefly glimpsed high up and another at a crossroads west of the main car park, which briefly buzzed my wife and I, plus another enthusiast, before returning to the canopy. Oddly though, no White Admirals, but it was only a brief visit before family duties called.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-14 07:51 AM GMT

Great stuff Andy, nice to hear that the Purps are starting to appear and increase in number 😊 The White Admirals are pretty mobile and I often find them deeper in the woods.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Marbled White this year

by Andy Wilson, 03-Jul-14 11:04 PM GMT

Is it just me, or is the Marbled White having an exceptionally good year? I went for a walk with a group of friends today near my home in East Sussex, not visiting any particular butterfly hotspots, and every uncut meadow was full of them. Overall, I think I saw more Marbled White than Meadow Brown. Has anyone else had a similar experience this year?

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 03-Jul-14 11:27 PM GMT

Were you the couple I chatted to at this crossroads whereupon the Emperor whizzed about us and ascended to the canopy?

Re: Andy Wilson

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jul-14 12:05 AM GMT

Hi Andy,
Click here viewtopic.php?f=29&t=4065&start=1680 and look at my post for Friday June 27th.
BWs, Neil

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 04-Jul-14 08:44 AM GMT

Yes, David, that was us!

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 04-Jul-14 08:51 AM GMT

Hi Neil, thanks for pointing to me to your post about Marbled Whites. It's not just me then! There were also a lot on the downs at Butchershole last Tuesday -- probably the most common species on the open grassland, although there were very large numbers of skippers at the margins. I plan to go there again today to see how they are doing and whether more Chalkhill Blues have emerged.

Butchershole -- Take 2

by Andy Wilson, 05-Jul-14 12:01 AM GMT

Back to Butchershole this afternoon for another couple of hours and I did the same walk as on Tuesday. Chalkhill Blue numbers have increased very slightly, and I saw 8 in total at the sheltered NE and SW corners of the gallops. Hopefully, it's still early days and a larger emergence will happen over the next couple of weeks. Marbled White are still doing well.



Marbled White on knapweed



Chalkhill Blue on wild thyme

Re: Andy Wilson

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jul-14 09:30 PM GMT

Hi Andy,

Regarding Marbled Whites, I have just returned today from a weeks family holiday near Weymouth and they were all over the place down there in great numbers.

Cheers,

Neil.

Tugley Woods

by Andy Wilson, 07-Jul-14 11:49 PM GMT

This afternoon I went to the Tugley Woods / Botany Bay area for the first time this year. Arriving at the Triangle, I found the familiar face of Peter Farrant and spent a very pleasant couple of hours with him. We saw at least 3 Purple Emperors at altitude in the oak and ash trees at this site, but unfortunately none came to ground. One individual with damage to one wing was quite recognisable and was seen a few times. I also saw a few Silver-Washed Fritillary and White Admiral, but neither of them in great numbers. It seems that both of these species are having a poor year.

Butchershole 3 - Chalkhills start to take off!

by Andy Wilson, 09-Jul-14 05:52 PM GMT

This afternoon, my wife and I visited the gallops above Butchershole, East Sussex, for the 3rd time this season. Conditions were a little cool and cloudy to start with, but we soon started to see butterflies. Immediately, it was apparent that there has been a significant emergence of Chalkhill Blue in the past few days. We spent about an hour in the northern section of the gallops and at a conservative estimate, we saw 200+. In some areas, as the sun came out, we saw one every few metres as we walked along. The vast majority were males, but I did spot my first 4 females of the year. I don't know whether this is still just the beginning of the Chalkhill emergence at this site -- only time will tell!



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue (female)

Several other species were also still present in good numbers: Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Small Skipper and Small Heath. There has also been a large emergence of Six-Spot Burnet moths, which compete with the Marbled White for nectaring perches, chiefly on Knapweed. We also saw Small Blue (1), Small Copper (2) and Dark Green Fritillary (2).



Small Blue



Marbled White on Knapweed



Marbled White and Six-Spot Burnet sharing a Knapweed flower



Gatekeeper on Bramble



Mount Caburn draws a Chalkhill blank

by Andy Wilson, 14-Jul-14 09:40 AM GMT

All good scientists should report negative as well as positive results, so this is one. I covered a large area of the Mount Caburn outlier of the South Downs yesterday afternoon. Conditions were warm and sunny, but with a moderate breeze on the higher slopes. However, it was much warmer down in the sheltered valley of Bible Bottom. I saw several Meadow Brown, a few Marbled White and (what I call) a High Speed Fritillary, but no Chalkhill Blues... not a single one. Normally in breezy conditions they hunker down, but you usually flush up a few as you walk along. The only conclusion I can come to is that they have not started on this site yet, in contrast to Butchershole where they were first seen 2 weeks ago and their emergence is now well under way.

Butchershole 4

by Andy Wilson, 22-Jul-14 10:06 AM GMT

Yesterday afternoon (July 21st), I visited Butchershole for the 4th time this season. Chalkhill Blue were everywhere and I guess they are at, or possibly just past, their peak. I lost count but I saw several hundred. The total population at this site must run well into the thousands. Females were plentiful as well as males, and I would guess the numbers were about 50/50, unlike my previous visit on July 9th when females were only just starting to emerge. Some of the males are now looking rather worn.

Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper were still present in good numbers, as were Small Skipper. However, Marbled White numbers have now tumbled, and I saw only 6, including one on a thistle flower which was "bereft of life" (the butterfly that is, not the thistle). 2nd generation Common Blue are now starting, and I saw about 20. I also saw Small Blue (6) and a couple of very worn-out Dark Green Fritillary.

Itford Hill

by Andy Wilson, 23-Jul-14 04:56 PM GMT

I spent a quick half an hour this afternoon on the lower slopes of Itford Hill, East Sussex. Conditions were very hot -- nearing 30C -- and many of the butterflies seemed to be having a siesta. However, I saw Chalkhill Blue (50+), Common Blue (20+), Meadow Brown (lots) and Gatekeeper (10+). But they weren't what I was looking for...

I finally got lucky and flushed up a single Silver-Spotted Skipper which just flew a few feet and kindly settled on a Scabious flower. Hopefully, there will be more of these to come in the next week or so.



Hemp Agrimony

by Andy Wilson, 26-Jul-14 09:46 AM GMT

I love Hemp Agrimony. Not only has it got a silly name that sounds like it is a dodgy bank for cannabis farmers, but it's also a great nectar source for butterflies at this time of year. This Gatekeeper yesterday afternoon near Isfield, East Sussex, was having a good drink.



Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-14 11:24 PM GMT

Great Silver Spot Andy, Hemp Agrimony is a great butterfly magnet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Essex Skipper?

by Andy Wilson, 27-Jul-14 10:13 AM GMT

I found this little Skipper hanging upside-down on a piece of Bell Heather last Thursday on Black Down. I hope the view of the underside of its antennae confirms that it is an Essex Skipper.



Butchershole 5

by Andy Wilson, 05-Aug-14 10:35 AM GMT

I visited Butchershole yesterday afternoon for the 5th time this season. Conditions were mainly sunny with a temperature of 22 C, but quite breezy in the more exposed places.

I was pleased to see that Chalkhill Blue are still plentiful and I must have seen several hundred. There was frantic courtship activity with every available female being chased by males, often several of them. Many of the males are now looking quite worn, but there was also a lot of quite fresh ones, suggesting that there has been a late emergence of new individuals.

Common Blue were also plentiful, and at one point I had an ardent courting couple buzzing around me at close quarters for about a minute. However, 2nd-generation Adonis Blue were absent, at least so far.

Marbled White are now over and numbers of Small/Essex Skipper are well down on my previous visit. Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper are still numerous. There are also many fresh Small Heath, which must have gone through an entire life-cycle since my first visit on 1st July. I was also pleased to see several Wall (about 10) flitting along the track at the top (west) side of the gallops, together with a few Small Copper (5).

Finally, I was just leaving the gallops when I broke my Clouded Yellow duck for the year -- just one individual which I disturbed and then wouldn't let me get close enough to photograph. However, that's one more than I saw last year!



Mating pair of Chalkhill Blue

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 05-Aug-14 11:22 PM GMT

Congrats on breaking your Cloudy duck Andy 😊 I reckon your little Skipper is pretty good for Essex 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Alfriston, Bo Peep and High & Over

by Andy Wilson, 08-Aug-14 12:40 PM GMT

My wife and I had a nice long walk yesterday, starting along the South Downs Way from Alfriston to Bo Peep, and then back south to High & Over via the Comp. Common Blues were present nearly everywhere we walked, and it was also very nice to see good numbers of Wall along the Comp. There was one every 50 metres or so, often flying along for a while just ahead of us. It was almost as I remember Wall from my teenage days (long ago), when we paid them little attention because they were so common.

I also saw my 2nd Clouded Yellow of the year near High & Over. Just like London buses, you wait ages and then two come along at once! We finished our walk by walking down from High & Over, crossing the Cuckmere to Litlington, where much needed refreshment was obtained at the Plough & Harrow!

Butchershole 6

by Andy Wilson, 21-Aug-14 10:51 AM GMT

Yesterday afternoon I paid my 6th visit this season to Butchershole. Conditions were very cool, only 17 C, with about 50% cloud cover. Little was flying during the cloudy periods but activity picked up in the sunny intervals. There were still a lot of Common Blue and also quite a few Chalkhill Blue. I was surprised to see that some of the latter are still quite fresh. As suggested in my earlier posts from this site, their emergence must be staggered over the 6-7 weeks of the overall flight period.



Chalkhill Blue

After quite a lot of searching, I also found my first 2nd-brood Adonis Blue of the year at the top of the northern end of the gallops (about TQ552000). At first, he was reluctant to show the full beauty of his wings, but he eventually opened up in the sun for several minutes while I and another enthusiast took several pictures.



Adonis Blue

In all, I saw only 3 Adonis Blue on this occasion, but conditions were not very favourable. Hopefully there will be more in a few days time if the weather warms up, but at least it was nice to see three different species of Blue on the wing at the same time.

Brown Hairstreak near Steyning (but not the Rifle Range)

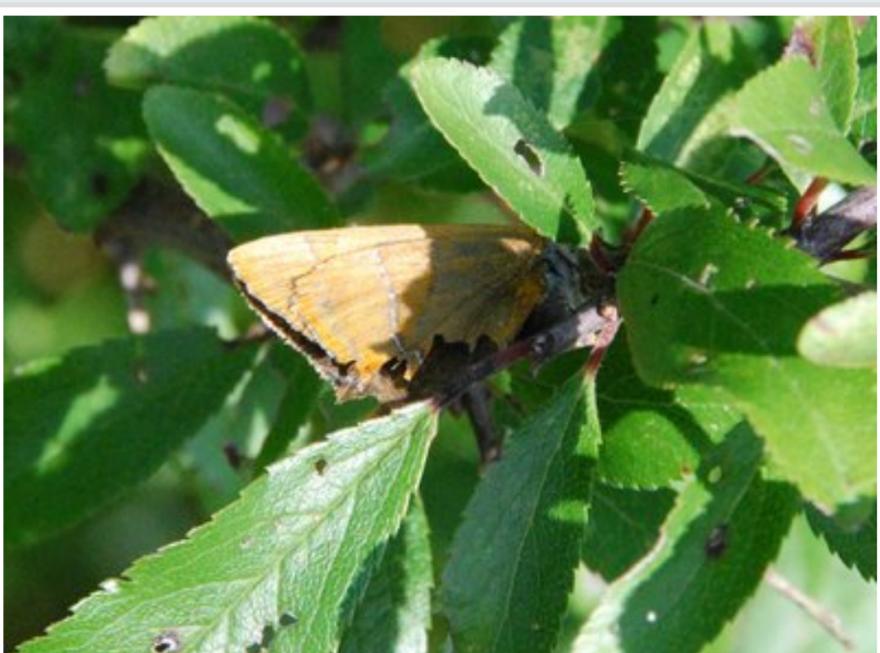
by Andy Wilson, 03-Sep-14 03:59 PM GMT

My wife and I did a nice long walk this morning from Steyning up on to the Downs to Chanctonbury Ring and back. I engineered it so we started by going up past the Rifle Range to spend a few minutes looking for Brown Hairstreak. It was a nice warm morning and we saw a few suspects flying at the top of the Ash trees, but no certain ID. We continued on our walk and about 3 hours later found ourselves on the path that runs roughly along the foot of the Downs on the way back to Steyning. At one point, I said to my wife, "This looks like it could be Brown Hairstreak habitat -- several Ash trees and lots of Blackthorn. Keep your eyes peeled." No sooner than I had said it, I spotted something low down in the Blackthorn out of the corner of my eye. I quickly turned to look at it and said, "Blow me down" (or words to that effect!), "It IS a Brown Hairstreak!"

It was a rather faded and damaged female, and I just managed to get a couple of record shots before she flew up into the trees.



Brown Hairstreak (female)



Brown Hairstreak (female underside)

The location was on the footpath south-east of Wiston House at approximately TQ156121. The habitat seemed ideal and I am sure there must be many more in this area -- proving once again that it's not always necessary to go to the well-known hotspots to see interesting butterflies.