

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Jan-14 05:51 PM GMT

### Grey Phalarope

After suffering from both SAD and cabin fever through the recent storms, I headed out under clear blue skies today (6th January), to blow away a few cobwebs. I headed for Hove, where a very confiding Grey Phalarope has been resident for a couple of days, paddling in the children's paddling pool at Hove Lagoon. With Mia in tow I couldn't really lie down at the edge of the pool with the large group of photographers present, but luckily there's a playground next door! So while dashing back and forth between swings and climbing frames, I managed to hang over the fence and grab a few shots. Given the circumstances I was pleased with the images below, but a return match seems inevitable if the bird hangs around ... a real beauty!





by Jack Harrison, 06-Jan-14 06:29 PM GMT

Neil has been:

suffering from both SAD and cabin fever through the recent storms.... headed out under clear blue skies today (6th January), to blow away a few cobwebs..... Hove, where a very confiding Grey Phalarope....

You'd better not live somewhere like Isle of Mull then. In the past five weeks I have recorded in the order of 340 millimetres of rain (and lack of sun to match). That's about six months rain for Worthing. Surprisingly, I haven't found it a big problem. However, I do admit to having just ordered a 150 watt (equivalent - actual drain = 30 watts) daylight colour light bulb for my "office".

Anyway: Phalarope. I **have** seen a Phalarope but can't recall which "brand". It was the one that spins around while floating on the water. Strange bird like a miniature gull.

Jack

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Jan-14 09:25 AM GMT

### Save Our Woodlands Again!

The latest madcap government proposal concerning the environment is to allow offsetting of ancient woodland. This would mean developments could potentially go ahead on ancient woodland sites if enough trees were planted elsewhere in mitigation. I won't insult your intelligence by explaining how that couldn't possibly work. It is probably the single most ridiculous and flawed scheme I have ever heard of. Bearing in mind the complexity of some of the issues back then, I personally consider this proposal a much greater threat to our wildlife than the proposed state-owned forest sell-off a few years back. Please sign and share. [https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/ ... 1388957757](https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/...1388957757)

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 07-Jan-14 09:46 AM GMT

First point is: why does the government so desperately want to sell off ancient woodland? Where is the logic?

Sadly, voting out a political party with crazy views isn't the complete answer. You can NEVER agree with all the policies of any particular party so you vote for the least bad option. That party then claims: "you voted for that; it was in the manifesto" with the implication that you must have agree with everything that party stood for.

At next year's General Election I am more than likely deliberately to spoil my ballot paper; in other words, I will say that I am not in agreement with ALL the policies in any manifesto and my spoiled paper should reflect that - and be counted as such ("none of the above").

*Guy. I believe that the Swiss system makes an attempt to overcome the problem and you vote for what you want, not as we do here: vote for what we dislike least.*

Finally, has any British Government had any scientists in the Cabinet since Thatcher, disliked as she was by many?

Jack

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Jan-14 05:14 PM GMT

### Grey Phalarope Revisited

Following a morning of grey skies and rain, I noticed a large patch of blue sky heading my way soon after midday. I couldn't resist another visit to see the Grey Phalarope at Hove Lagoon and managed to get there just in front of the better weather. Once again it performed brilliantly, zipping around the paddling pool like a clockwork toy. Several of my shots, when enlarged, proved that it was catching bloodworms in this apparently sterile environment.



## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 09-Jan-14 10:57 PM GMT

Lovely shots of my 'bogey' bird Neil 🐦 . I always seem to miss it when I go looking but these shots have spurred me on 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 10-Jan-14 01:19 PM GMT

### "Sussex Kipper" wrote: Save Our Woodlands Again!

The latest madcap government proposal concerning the environment is to allow offsetting of ancient woodland. This would mean developments could potentially go ahead on ancient woodland sites if enough trees were planted elsewhere in mitigation. I won't insult your intelligence by explaining how that couldn't possibly work. It is probably the single most ridiculous and flawed scheme I have ever heard of. Bearing in mind the complexity of some of the issues back then, I personally consider this proposal a much greater threat to our wildlife than the proposed state-owned forest sell-off a few years back. Please sign and share. [https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/...\\_1388957757](https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/..._1388957757)

Here's another petition for the same outcome, from The Woodland Trust. With this one you email the Prime Minister directly.

[http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaig...er\\_jan2014](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaig...er_jan2014)

Best wishes,

Lee

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Jan-14 08:40 AM GMT

### Grey Phalarope (Part III)

My third and, I think, final time with this irresistible bird. Hove Lagoon children's paddling pool was once again surrounded by prostrate twitchers in camouflage with long lenses. Let's hope the bird has gone before the summer!







**Re: Sussex Kipper**

by Jack Harrison, 15-Jan-14 08:52 AM GMT

That's a most attractive bird and nicely photographed.

Jack

**Re: Sussex Kipper**

by Neil Hulme, 15-Jan-14 11:02 AM GMT

Thanks Jack. Here's one for luck.

BWs, Neil



**Re: Sussex Kipper**

by Ian Pratt, 15-Jan-14 11:10 AM GMT

Great photos. Lumix FZ 38? Ian

**Re: Sussex Kipper**

by Neil Hulme, 15-Jan-14 12:44 PM GMT

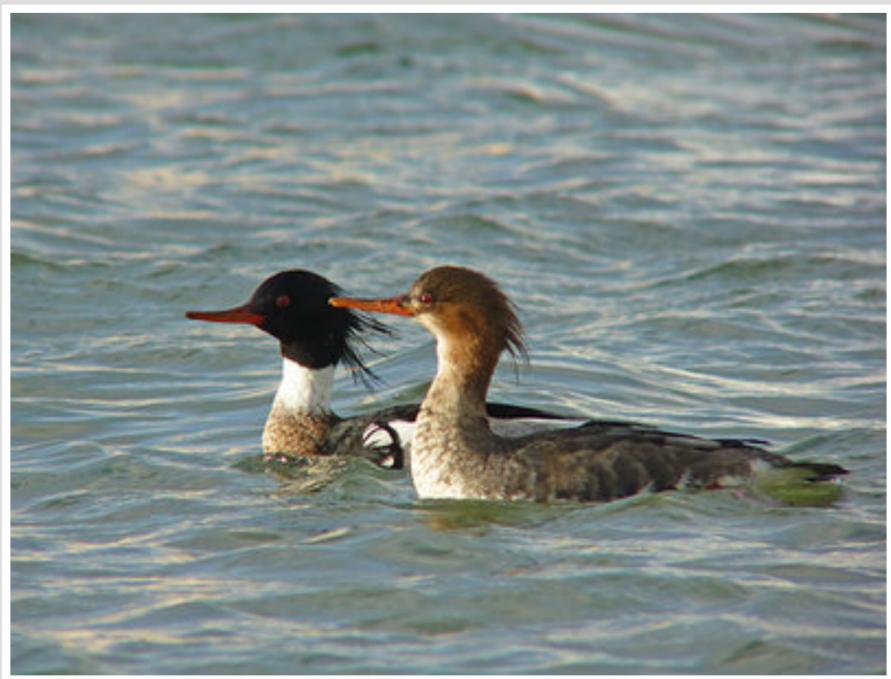
Hi Ian,  
Yes, still using the old FZ38. It can still take a reasonable image if I feed it enough coal and pedal hard enough!  
Would be good to catch up with you on the island for some Large Tort action this spring.  
BWs, Neil

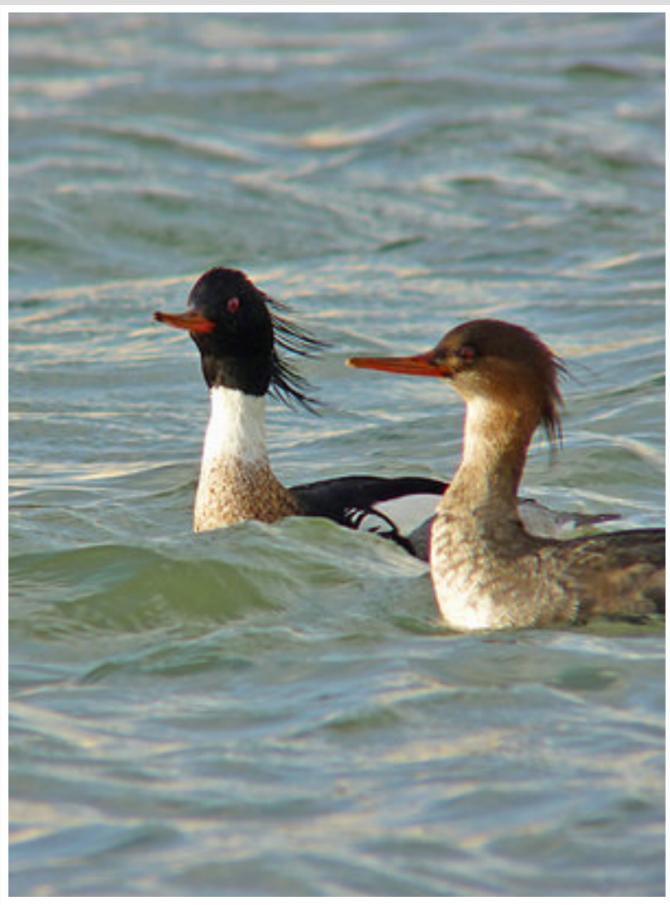
## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jan-14 06:17 PM GMT

### RBM

While waiting for butterflies to reappear, a little more birding. This afternoon (16th January) I visited Widewater Lagoon at Shoreham, where a long-staying group of Red-breasted Mergansers were putting on a good show.





## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jan-14 02:51 PM GMT

### RBM Again

Coincidentally, while I was watching Red-breasted Mergansers at Widewater Lagoon, my brother was finishing an illustration of the same species, while at his home in Antwerp. His efforts in pen & ink are rather better than mine with the camera, so here's his version in all its glory.



## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 17-Jan-14 03:12 PM GMT

Very nice piece of artwork.

It's funny how birds common in one area can be rarities in another. RBMs are relatively common here on Mull but there are no GC Grebes, Coots or Moorhens 🙄 So I was ecstatic when I saw a Moorhen on the river in Oban last Wednesday.

Jack

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 17-Jan-14 08:39 PM GMT

### "Sussex Kipper" wrote:

#### RBM Again

Coincidentally, while I was watching Red-breasted Mergansers at Widewater Lagoon, my brother was finishing an illustration of the same species, while at his home in Antwerp. His efforts in pen & ink are rather better than mine with the camera, so here's his version in all its glory.

[attachment=0:1esea64o]Red-breasted merganser by Mark Hulme.bmp[/attachment:1esea64o]

Lovely. You come from a very talented family 😊

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Jan-14 08:13 PM GMT

### Egging Around West Sussex

I spent last Sunday and Tuesday (19th and 21st January) on the Knepp Castle Estate 'Wildland' project area, where I'm involved in the long-term monitoring of butterfly populations as they react to the process of re-wilding. Some species, such as Purple Emperor, are undergoing a 'population explosion' at Knepp, but, unsurprisingly, there are both winners and losers.

It appears that one of those species which doesn't seem to enjoy re-wilding, at least under the current herbivore stocking densities, is the Brown Hairstreak. From a distance, the Knepp Estate appears to offer a fantastic home for this species, with many miles of blackthorn-rich hedges punctuated by potentially suitable master trees. Short, suckering growth can also be seen widely around the Estate, which appears ideal for the butterfly, until examined more closely.

These short suckers are actually composed of tough, old wood, now invariably caked in lichens. Younger shoots of fresh-looking, purplish-grey blackthorn on which female hairstreaks prefer to lay their eggs are all-but-absent. It appears that the free-ranging herds of Longhorn cattle, Fallow, Red and Roe deer, Exmoor ponies and Tamworth pigs are browsing off almost all the young wood suitable for oviposition.

This innovative re-wilding scheme often causes confusion amongst the public, as it is a project without any defined management outcomes or goals. The project seeks only to observe and measure the effects of a more naturalistic grazing regime, as the land is allowed to largely manage itself. This sort of re-wilding might provide an alternate approach to the use of land which is at best only marginally profitable for more traditional farming. Re-wilding does, however, bring the sort of benefits (Ecosystem Services) which we have traditionally undervalued, such as carbon sequestration and water purification.

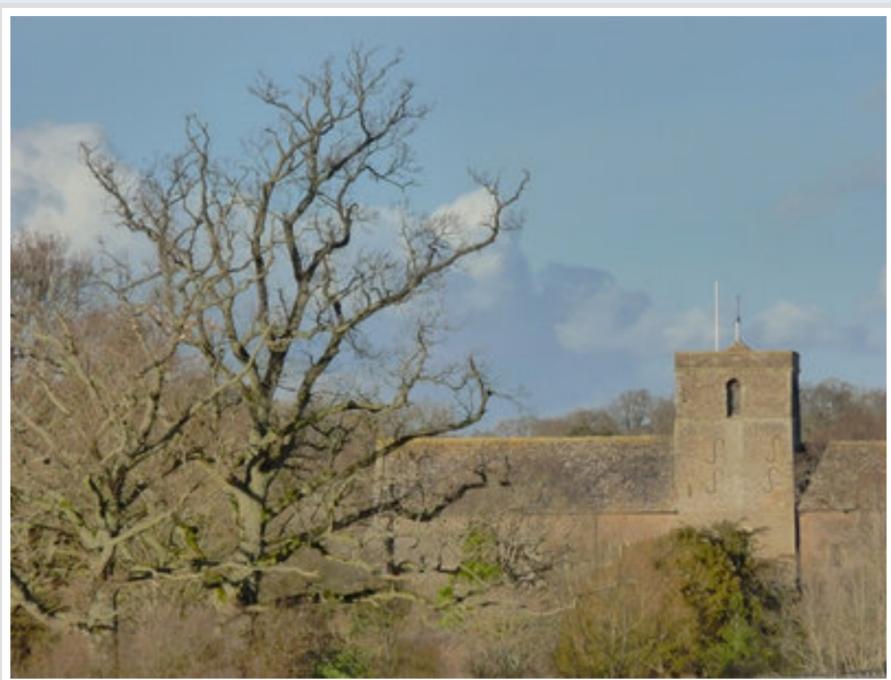
The degree to which the blackthorn at Knepp is currently being browsed may reflect pressures more complex than livestock densities alone. One of the more spectacular (although almost certainly short-term) effects of ceasing to plough and fertilise arable land is the periodic dominance of some invasive plant species. Currently, large areas at Knepp appear to be under a monoculture of fleabane. This will reduce the available grass for herbivores, probably driving a greater reliance on the browsing of shrubs. Although heavier browsing of the blackthorn won't be suiting the Brown Hairstreak, the development of sallow jungles elsewhere is certainly putting a smile on the Emperor's face.

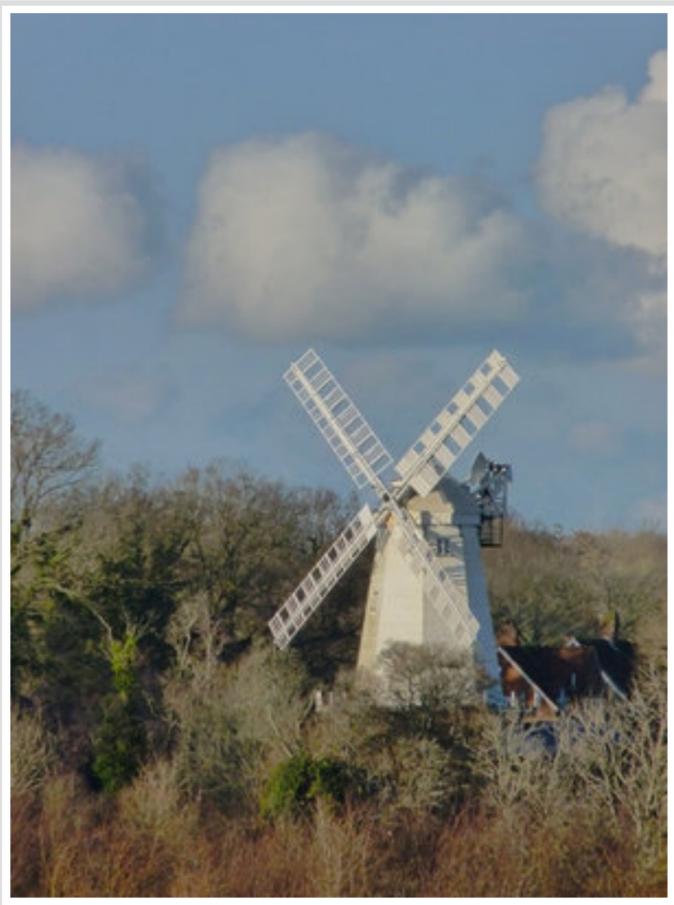
Having discovered last year that Brown Hairstreak egg densities over much of the 'Wildland' area were much lower than initially expected (from e.g. satellite imagery of blackthorn distribution), this winter I am looking at comparable areas of food-plant just outside the fenced boundaries. One stretch of hedgerow within the project area which did yield a good number of eggs (23 per hour) last year, running along the edge of a public 'green lane', will now be surveyed annually as a 'control'; this area produced 19 eggs per hour on Sunday. It would appear that browsing pressure here is much reduced, probably due to the regular passage of walkers and riders nearby. I even managed to see adult hairstreaks along this field margin last August.

Although more research is required to make a water-tight case, some of my results this year have fallen into a clearly developing pattern. A two hour search around the margins of four fields within the project area produced only two eggs, both being on new growth tight against the boundary fence. I subsequently found 20 eggs per hour on the other side of the fence, where the hedge-line runs alongside a road ditch.

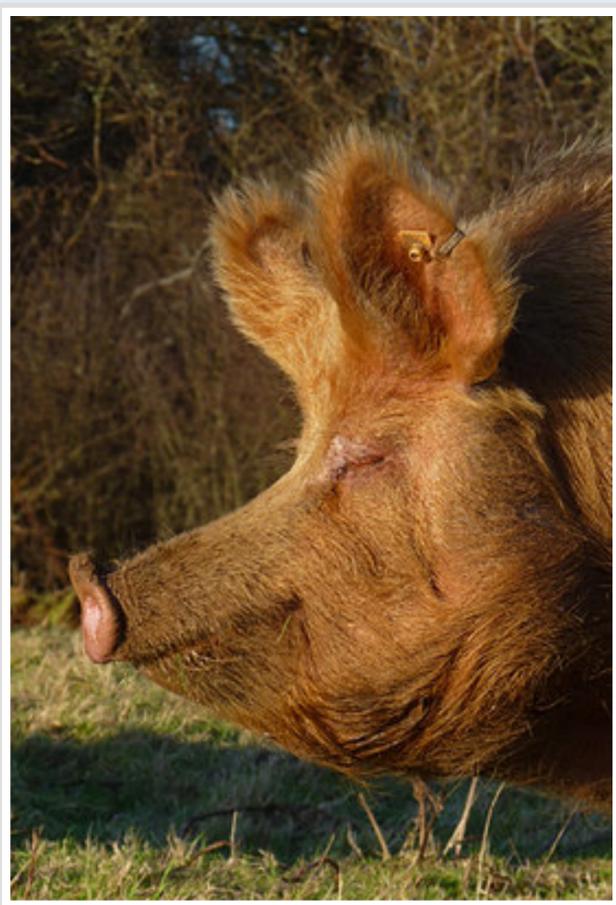
I also surveyed another area of the Knepp Castle Estate lying outside the 'Wildland' project area, finding 16 eggs per hour along the picturesque banks of the upper Adur, where it runs close to Shipley Church and the famous windmill. Sadly, this former home of literary genius and Sussex-lover Hilaire Belloc is no longer open to the public, although its great frame remains an integral part of the very beautiful local landscape.

I fully expect future surveys to confirm this emerging pattern. I shall also be surveying local roadside hedges which have been flailed in an all-too-familiar fashion, to see how surviving egg densities compare with the heavily browsed 'Wildland' area.





Shipleigh Mill



Knepp Castle Estate Tamworth

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Maximus, 24-Jan-14 05:57 PM GMT

Hi Neil, a very interesting posting regarding the mixed fortunes of the Brown Hairstreak on the Knepp Castle Estate.

We recently made a count of 12 eggs per hour at Noar Hill. Perhaps this count would have been higher, but for our inexperienced eyes! We found that eggs were not spread evenly across the site, but were concentrated in certain areas. While we were there we also noticed that a large area of scrub had been cleared on the reserve, (by brushcutter)? and found cuttings of young blackthorn among the debris. Worryingly this cut area was adjacent to an area where we found Brown Hairstreak eggs on young suckering blackthorn growth!

Noar Hill is obviously being managed primarily for the Duke of Burgundy, which has different requirements to the Brown Hairstreak. I guess its difficult to manage the reserve for both species?

We also noticed more hedges in the lanes around the reserve had been flailed, although we understand that this is apparently being carried out on a rotational basis, with the Brown Hairstreak in mind. However, many eggs must be lost by this practice, perhaps we will check these hedges for any remaining eggs at a later date.

Regards,

Mike

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jan-14 07:46 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

It should be possible to manage effectively for both Dukes and Brown Hairstreaks on the same site, although other combinations, such as Dukes and Silver-spotted Skipper are a lot harder! As it happens the management for both Dukes and Brown Hairstreak at Noar Hill was far from ideal when I last visited; populations of both species could potentially be much larger – and have been in the past.

For the benefit of Brown Hairstreak it's a case of having to break a few eggs to make an omelette (see what I did there? 😊). There are only a couple of weeks each year when the thorn can be cut without causing some losses to either egg or caterpillar, but it is very important that the blackthorn stock is actively managed. Rotational cutting is the key ingredient. Ideally no more than 1/3 of the shrub in the area being managed should be cut each year. At Steyning I ask them to cut 1/4 each year. With no growth older than 4 years this means the entire stock of blackthorn (and bullace) is suitable for oviposition each season, giving the best case scenario. If the blackthorn is not managed, it might save a few eggs over a few years, but an increasing percentage of the food-plant will start falling outside the ideal growth-form for this species, and the population will actually decrease before plateauing. Cutting should ideally be done (no more than 1/3 at a time) without fear, taking the plant back to ground zero. If blackthorn is cut like this the regrowth will actually be suitable for egg-laying the following August.

I'm not sure how the management at Noar Hill is looking these days, largely because I would find it impossible to pass Heyshott Escarpment to get there. 12 Brown Hairstreak eggs per hour doesn't sound too bad!

BWs, Neil

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jan-14 08:16 PM GMT

### Weekly Work-Out

On Wednesday (22nd January) I attended the weekly work party at Heyshott Escarpment. Thanks go to the usual suspects for giving up their time, including new UKB member Katrina who has now joined the regulars here. This week we started to cut a 'window' through the trees along the edge of the reserve, to provide both a wildlife corridor connecting adjacent habitat, and a panoramic view over the Weald. We will probably put a bench here, to allow for a welcome break on the way up to the more open grassland area.



## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Jan-14 06:07 PM GMT

### Graffham Down Trust Reserves

This morning (31st January) I joined staff and a volunteer from the South Downs National Park Authority to continue work on one of the Graffham Down Trust's reserves. This area is already looking much improved after recent work parties and today we made preparations to extend the clearing further, by removing an old deer fence. Over the next few weeks there will be a lot of activity on the GDT reserves, as a major new project gets underway. Details of this work, and how it came to be funded by BC Sussex (matched with SDNPA money), will be announced once the project has been completed. If everything goes to plan, we hope to build upon the successes achieved at Heyshott Escarpment, a short distance to the west.



The previous day I made my first visit in many years to the Warnham Local Nature Reserve. It's even longer since I saw a Mealy Redpoll, so I was glad to catch up with the reserve's star visitor.



## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Feb-14 07:05 PM GMT

### Chalk Grassland Restoration

Today (7th February) I joined a couple of contractors at Kithurst Hill (aka Springhead), to finish off this winter's work on the chalk grassland restoration we started a few years back. Removal of secondary woodland and heavy scrub in several stages has revealed some lovely hummocky terrain near the car park bend. The area cleared is now approximately 100 m x 30 m and the hollows cleared out by the first stage of work have already proven a big hit with the butterflies. There are early signs that the green hay strewing performed last autumn has also been successful. This process involves spreading the arisings from the autumn cut & collect of the adjacent meadow over the exposed chalk scree. The 'green hay' contains plenty of seed and this technique is a good way of accelerating the establishment of desirable chalk-loving plants.

Last season we recorded Silver-spotted Skipper here for the first time, bringing the total number of species I've seen in this golden hectare (the meadow and road banks) to 39. It would be hard to beat that anywhere in the UK. As always on these occasions, I spent some time day-dreaming about what the coming season might bring. In only ten weeks time this place will be carpeted in cowslips.



## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 07-Feb-14 08:17 PM GMT

Thank you for doing such super work. It is a smashing place.

## Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 09-Feb-14 10:14 AM GMT

Thanks Susie. You should be able to see a large proportion of your 2014 target species here. It's the sort of place which can always provide a few surprises too. I once watched a male Purple Emperor fluttering around the rear end of a horse, as it was pushed into its box in the gated, private car park.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 09-Feb-14 10:45 PM GMT

Looking forward to seeing the full fruits of your labours later in the year Neil 😊  
39 species is a great number for a single site – I was chuffed with 22 at Larkhill so I'll have to look even harder this year now 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Feb-14 09:20 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,  
I don't know Larkhill, but I bet you could squeeze a couple more species out of it. If my memory serves me correctly, Bentley Wood can do 43 or 44, but that's a lot bigger than a hectare and I'm guessing a lot bigger than Larkhill. A friend of mine once managed to see 31 species in a day in East Sussex, using only a bicycle to get around. I reckon that would be hard to beat in the UK.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 10-Feb-14 09:45 AM GMT

...bet you could squeeze a couple more species out of it.

You are quite right about "squeezing" a patch. When i lived in Cambridgeshire, my very ordinary local patch (five minutes walk from where I lived) produced a total of 26 species in the 22 years I lived there. But I never saw any hairstreaks despite the apparent suitability of the habitat, especially for Green H. I would confess to a little fib. Wall Brown occurred when I first lived there. It soon died out but Marbled White became a new colonist towards the end of my time; the two species never overlapped.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Lee Hurrell, 10-Feb-14 01:10 PM GMT

#### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

A friend of mine once managed to see 31 species in a day in East Sussex, using only a bicycle to get around. I reckon that would be hard to beat in the UK

My record for a day in the UK is 27 species, all in Sussex of course. 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Feb-14 02:02 PM GMT

Hi Lee,

I managed 30 Sussex species in a day on one occasion, with 28 of them being at Newtimber Hill, opposite Devil's Dyke on the East/West Sussex border. However, a car was involved in bagging the other 2. Newtimber Hill (National Trust managed) is a very good venue for ticking off a good number of species and on a sunny day in late July it should be relatively straightforward to get 25. Unsurprisingly, it combines good chalk grassland and woodland habitats. My day was particularly memorable as the tally included a Large Tortoiseshell. 😊

I hope we get to catch up this season. It's been a while!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Lee Hurrell, 10-Feb-14 03:37 PM GMT

#### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

Hi Lee,

I managed 30 Sussex species in a day on one occasion, with 28 of them being at Newtimber Hill, opposite Devil's Dyke on the East/West Sussex border. However, a car was involved in bagging the other 2. Newtimber Hill (National Trust managed) is a very good venue for ticking off a good number of species and on a sunny day in late July it should be relatively straightforward to get 25. Unsurprisingly, it combines good chalk grassland and woodland habitats. My day was particularly memorable as the tally included a Large Tortoiseshell. 😊

I hope we get to catch up this season. It's been a while!

A LT too...nice. There were a few obvious gaps in my tally for that day so I think 30 would be achievable at the sites I visited but 28 at one site; that is good. It sounds like Newtimber Hill will be receiving a visit!

Definitely, I will be in touch.

Best wishes,

Lee

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 10-Feb-14 03:55 PM GMT

It's hardly important but your diary is now called "Neil Hulme" and not "Sussex Kipper".

Did you make the change Neil or did computer software somehow impose it on you?

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Feb-14 06:40 PM GMT

Hi Jack,  
All intentional. I just felt it was time for a change, so the avatar became history along with the Kipper. Fresh start for 2014.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 10-Feb-14 07:30 PM GMT

Maybe I should change mine to the radio callsign I used in my early gliding days. But perhaps not politically acceptable today: "Black Jack" 🙄

I have a friend who still calls me *Black Jack* and his two boys (ages 8 and 10) do the same.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 10-Feb-14 08:26 PM GMT

Hi Neil, just catching up on your diary, some interesting posts and great photos.

I particularly like the expression on the Tamworth 'Sandyback' a few posts back, you can almost hear the sighs of contentment 😊

Living in Solihull, I work with a few people from Tamworth and we have been known to 'affectionately' refer to them as sandybacks 😊

Cheers,

Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Feb-14 09:07 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

You should have seen the expression on the bloke's face! 😊

See you in Fermyn if not before!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-Feb-14 02:09 PM GMT

#### Chasing Gulls

With spring still seemingly a long way off, I've been chasing a few more birds around the block. Yesterday (13th February), in a rare but very welcome spell of sunshine, I spent a couple of hours on Littlehampton beach. Two unusual gulls have been receiving a lot of attention here recently. Both were present during my visit, but I must confess to being a little underwhelmed by the juvenile Kumlien's Gull, despite it being only a second for the county. The Glaucous Gull is, however, a different kettle of fish. Large, imposing and brutish looking, this second winter bird was much more impressive, and much easier to pick out amongst the large and varied flock.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Feb-14 08:13 PM GMT

### Saving Pearls

Today (16th February) I joined an enthusiastic group of eleven volunteers and staff, representing the South Downs National Park Authority, Butterfly Conservation and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. Together we made great progress in opening up the woodland around a junction between several paths through Houghton Forest near Arundel. Following the creation of a large clearfell in 2009, at least one adventurous female Pearl-bordered Fritillary travelled the 2Kms from Rewell Wood the following spring. Since then the butterfly has reappeared annually, although numbers are still very modest. Suitable habitat is currently quite limited, but we are hoping that an ongoing programme of work parties (next on Friday 28th February) will assist the Forestry Commission in establishing a stronger colony here. Thanks to the efforts of Simon, Helena, Karen, Leonie, Ayla, Mike, Tim, Paul, Colin and Dan (BC SE Regional Officer), we left at least one area of the forest looking much more attractive to PBFs and other butterflies. As a bonus, most participants managed to see their first butterfly of the year, when a Red Admiral paid us a visit on this pleasantly warm and sunny morning.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Feb-14 07:33 PM GMT

### Glaucous (Part 2)

This afternoon (18th February) I headed back to the mouth of the Arun at Littlehampton, to have another go at photographing the impressive, second-winter Glaucous Gull. It wasn't long before UKBer Colin Knight appeared, unsurprising given that the sun came out and he only lives a few hundred metres away. We soon discovered the best way to improve upon our previous efforts ... by throwing bread at it! 😊





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 18-Feb-14 07:47 PM GMT

... by throwing bread at it! 😊

An entertaining way to feed gulls bread is with a **catapult**. I bought a powerful catapult on a visit to Wells-next-the-Sea (Norfolk) and soon had an appreciative audience of gulls and humans. Best sport is firing upwards at about 45 degrees with assorted crumbs (equivalent to shotgun pellets) and watch the fun. Gulls are such brilliant aerobatic pilots that it is unusual for any of the bread **NOT** to be caught in flight. Amazingly, there are never any gull-gull collisions, although quite a few "airprox".

*an aviation near miss report is known as an "airprox"*

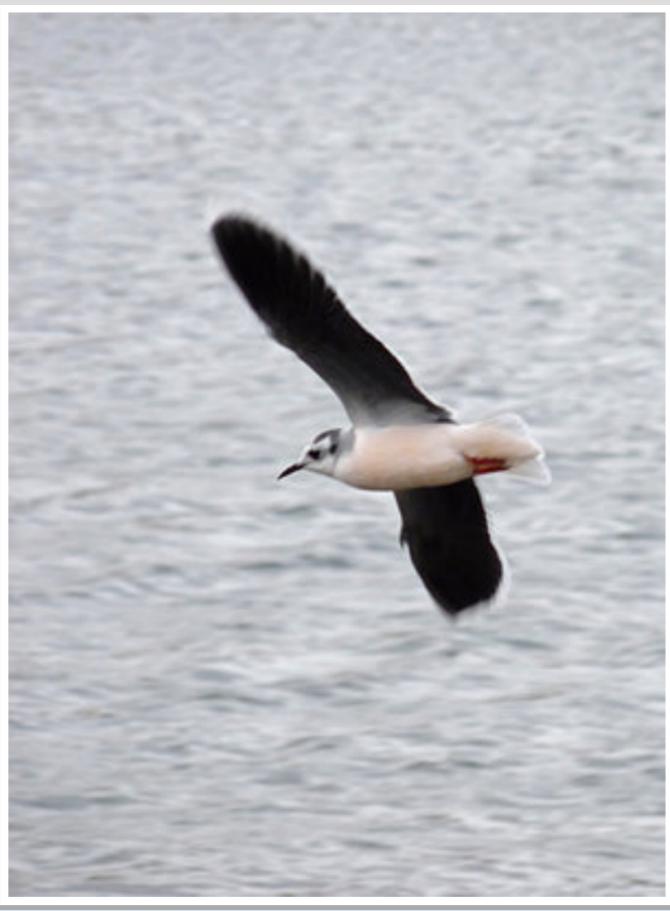
Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Feb-14 07:35 PM GMT

### More Gulls

Just before I unscrew my birding head in readiness for the imminent start to the butterfly season (I've still only managed a single Red Admiral), I thought I'd chase another species of gull which has been showing quite well in my area. It wasn't difficult to find the pair of Little Gull at Brooklands boating lake in East Worthing, and they came in very close, but photographing them was different matter. These small, agile gulls can accelerate and stall with impressive speed, making them very difficult to track with the camera. In the end I got a lucky shot, but a Lumix is always going to struggle when pushed to these limits. This particular bird sported beautiful, rose-tinted under-parts.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Feb-14 07:32 PM GMT

### Heyshott Dozen

This morning (26th February) we had a good turnout at the weekly Heyshott Escarpment work party. Amongst the enthusiastic dozen who turned out to bash more scrub in the sunshine were UKBers Katrina and Colin Knight. As always, we made good progress in turning the clock back and revealing more of the old chalk workings. The reserve is looking better than ever as the new season approaches.



## Re: Neil Hulme

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

Lovely shot of the Roseate/Little Gull Neil – it really shows off the diagnostic dark under wings 😊 Good work at Heyshott, I'd love to visit but I think it would use too much petrol.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Feb-14 08:25 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. If you ever manage to be anywhere near Heyshott (just south of Midhurst) in May, you won't regret squeezing in a visit.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 28-Feb-14 06:05 PM GMT

### Working In Partnership

This morning I joined a workforce of seven, to continue the creation of a substantial woodland glade at the intersection of several paths through Houghton Forest near Arundel. This area will hopefully become home to the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Grizzled Skipper within a few years. I suspect that the Silver-washed Fritillary and White Admiral will show their appreciation this coming summer.

Perhaps the most striking thing about today's gathering was the mix of attendees. We had staff and volunteers representing BC Sussex, South Downs National Park Authority, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (Arundel) and the Forestry Commission. One thing is certain, a huge amount was achieved before the clouds and rain arrived midway through the afternoon. A great team effort!



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 02-Mar-14 08:17 AM GMT

Happy birthday Neil! 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 02-Mar-14 08:21 AM GMT

HB from me too, Neil!

Cheers,

- Pete

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 02-Mar-14 08:29 AM GMT

Many happy returns!

Have a goodun/Birthday

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Freeman, 02-Mar-14 09:07 AM GMT

Happy Birthday Neil,

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Vince Massimo, 02-Mar-14 11:22 AM GMT

.....and Happy Birthday from me as well 😊

Best Wishes

Vince

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Padfield, 02-Mar-14 11:59 AM GMT

Many happy returns!

Guy

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 02-Mar-14 12:58 PM GMT

Many thanks all! Fortunately I feel more 23 than 53. Pleased to report that I received a copy of 'BB's Butterflies', commemorating the life and works of Denys Watkins-Pitchford MBE. Highly recommended.

Best Wishes, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Maximus, 02-Mar-14 01:12 PM GMT

Have a great birthday Neil,

Mike and Cathy

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by John W, 02-Mar-14 06:23 PM GMT

Happy Birthday Neil! Look forward to bumping into you out in the field this coming year...

Cheers

John

p.s. sounds like a fabulous present 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Rosalyn, 02-Mar-14 08:12 PM GMT

Happy Birthday Neil, Thanks for all your help in the past. Looking forward to the new season, I can't wait 😊 Rosalyn & Phil x

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 02-Mar-14 08:15 PM GMT

A very HAPPY BIRTHDAY to you Neil, I hope you have another 'amazing' butterfly filled year 😊

Butterflysaurus rex

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Lee Hurrell, 02-Mar-14 09:19 PM GMT

HB Neil.

Hope you had a great day, looking forward to catching up this spring.

BWs,

Lee

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 02-Mar-14 10:15 PM GMT

Thanks again for all your kind messages. It won't be long now before I start bumping into many of you for another fun-filled season.  
Best Wishes, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 02-Mar-14 11:52 PM GMT

Bit late but Happy Birthday from me too,Neil!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 03-Mar-14 05:08 PM GMT

Wont be long before the country lane are patrolled by orange tips again.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Mar-14 07:35 PM GMT

Thanks Mark (essexbuzzard).

Probably only three weeks to OT time Susie. If we don't get a really cold spell very soon now (and a cold spell is looking unlikely), spring will come on with a mighty rush this year. And possibly very, very early!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 04-Mar-14 07:14 AM GMT

I am sure you are right, Neil. The frogspawn in my pond was early and I am keeping a close eye on the cuckoo flower around the pond as the first OTs usually coincide with the first flowers. It is already in bud 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 04-Mar-14 10:06 PM GMT

#### Back To Houghton Forest

Today (4th March) I joined Colin Knight (UKB and BC Sussex), Rob Thurlow (Forestry Commission) and Simon Mockford (South Downs National Park Authority) to complete the large woodland clearing we have been working on at Houghton Forest near Arundel. A few weeks ago this area was dark, damp and cool, and suitable only for the Speckled Wood. Thanks to the efforts of today's workforce, and all of those who have attended either of the previous work parties, more than 0.5 hectare of prime Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Grizzled Skipper habitat has now been created. The continuation of this sort of work in future years will soon see Houghton Forest improving greatly for butterflies and other wildlife. A battered, but still beautiful Red Admiral paid us a visit during the morning.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-Mar-14 07:36 AM GMT

### Brimming With Optimism

Yesterday (5th March) I joined a party of seven at the combined Murray Downland Trust/BC Sussex work party, held every week from September through March on the slopes of Heyshott Escarpment. Although it will take three or four years for the bare ground created on the far slope (pictured) to develop into useful habitat for the species, the two old pits in the foreground should provide egg-laying sites for female Duke of Burgundy this coming May, with only the strimming-off of several year's dogwood growth being required to bring them back into condition. It is this rolling programme of grassland restoration and maintenance which is so important in creating a habitat mosaic of mixed age structure.

I encountered a beautiful male Brimstone almost as soon as I entered the lowermost pit on the reserve, which was flitting between the numerous patches of flowering primrose. In the warm morning sunshine it painted a picture of real optimism for the season ahead. After the work party had dispersed I relocated the same (?) butterfly, which provided ample opportunities for photography in the now cloudier and cooler conditions.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-Mar-14 07:14 PM GMT

### Small Tortoiseshell Recovery

I'm optimistic that the strong recovery made by the Small Tortoiseshell in Sussex last year will continue into 2014. This morning I counted 16 along the banks of the Ferring Rife, including 3 courting couples. This site is usually quite slow to get going in the spring, as it is only 100 – 500 metres from the beach, and quite exposed. The nettles need to be about another 10 cm above the ground to provide ideal egg laying sites, so I'll be back in a couple of weeks when there should be a lot more butterflies around – I counted 194 here last April!



I later moved on to Rewell Wood, to search for Pearl-bordered Fritillary larvae. By now it was probably too cool and too late in the day to have much chance of success, but I did see my first Common Lizard of the year scrambling through the sweet chestnut leaf litter.



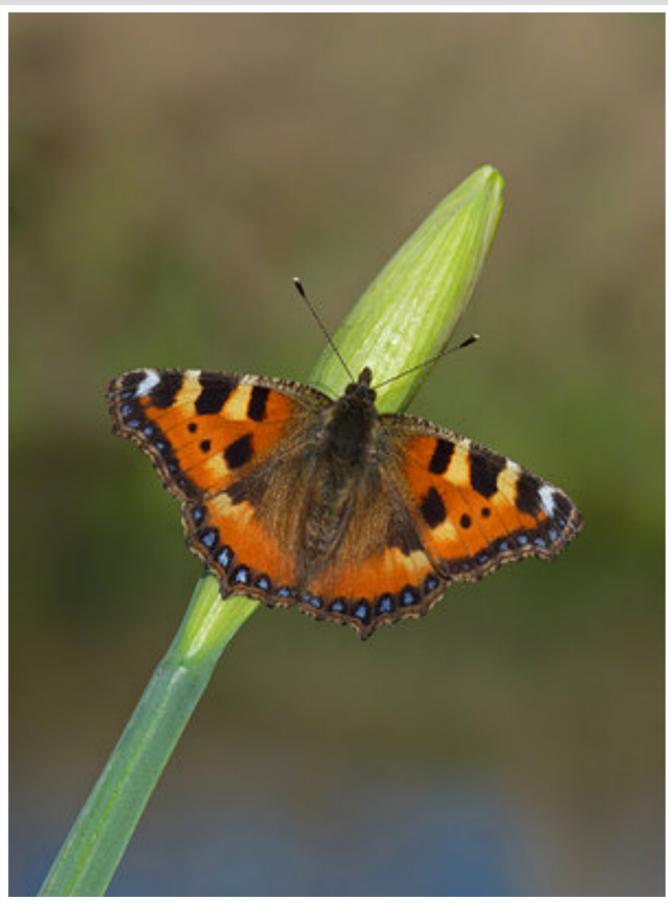
## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Mar-14 10:46 AM GMT

### Small Tortoiseshell Numbers Climb

On a sunny Saturday afternoon (8th March) I took my daughter for a nature walk up Ferring Rife. Although we saw frogs, toads, spawn and plenty of butterflies, it wasn't the time to do an accurate, systematic count. However, there were clearly in excess of 50 Small Tortoiseshell on the wing, with courtship chases occurring both in the air and through the nettle beds. Only one attempt at coupling seemed to be successful while I watched, with the female leading a very excited male deep into a leylandii hedge. We also saw 4 Peacock.

On Sunday morning (9th March) I returned without Mia and managed to photograph some of the butterflies, many of which are in excellent post-hibernation condition. I also performed a count over both the west and east banks of the Rife, south of the foot bridge. I ended up with a total of 59 Small Tortoiseshell, 4 Peacock, 3 Brimstone and 1 Comma. It's wonderful to see the Small Tortoiseshell continue the spectacular recovery it made last year, after so many years in the doldrums. The Environment Agency is to be congratulated for looking after this site so well; it's certainly the best place I know of in West Sussex to see this species. Even on sunny days it takes until about 1 pm for them to really get going, although the few early-risers are easier to photograph at 10.30 am.



by Buchan Boy, 10-Mar-14 11:38 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Excellent news on those Small Tortoiseshells, a trip to Ferring is being planned for the near future. 😊

Thanks

Dave

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Mar-14 12:51 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

An early afternoon visit on a warm sunny day within the next few weeks should provide you with the required swarm. 😊

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 10-Mar-14 05:52 PM GMT

I don't wish to sound too gloomy, but isn't it likely that the large numbers of Small Tortoiseshells in 2013 and again post hibernation is simply an indication of the phase of the host-parasite cycle? In my almost 70 years of butterflying, I have seen Small Tort numbers fluctuate enormously. When I collected around 100 larvae (in Yorkshire some 30 years ago) if my memory serves me correctly no more than three or four WEREN'T parasitised.

Superb photos and reports as always Neil but that is a given. It would be more worthy of comment should you post a POOR picture.

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Mar-14 08:19 PM GMT

Thanks Jack!

There's little doubt that the Small Tortoiseshell has experienced a cyclic ebb and flow in its fortunes over the years, to greater or lesser extent due to parasite loading, and arguably exacerbated to some degree by the arrival of *Sturmia bella*. However, at least in Sussex, these ups and downs have been super-imposed on a larger scale dip in the population over the last three decades.

Local historian Colin R. Pratt F.R.E.S., author of the superbly comprehensive 'A Complete History of the Butterflies and Moths of Sussex', writes in Supplement Number Three (2014) "*Since the late 1990's there have been several noticeable episodes of brief scarcity*" (Pratt, 2011) and in parts of *Sussex - as at Walberton - this Tortoiseshell became a longer-term rarity* (J. T. Radford). However, local recoveries started to take place amongst the number of larvae found elsewhere in the county during the spring of 2012 and in the resultant adults during the autumn (Pratt, 2013). Not only did this trend accelerate during early 2013 - for example, after a two and a half hour count at Ferring Rife, on April 22nd in 2013, 194 adults had been encountered (N. Hulme) - but late summer levels equaled those experienced during "the good old days" during the 1970's. For example, dozens of adults could be seen feeding at the same time from flowering buddleja bushes during August, as at Small Dole (R. Roebuck), Filsham (S. Richardson), Cissbury Ring (M. Snelling), and Peacehaven (C. R. Pratt)."

Of course numbers will dip or even crash again in the future, but for the time being I'm happy to celebrate the return of this childhood favourite.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-Mar-14 11:30 AM GMT

### Isle Of Wight

On Wednesday (12th March) I headed over to the Isle of Wight for my first attempt of the season at tracking down a Large Tortoiseshell. With the weather forecast promising a sunny Thursday, once early fog had cleared, I decided to stay overnight. Both days were bathed in beautiful, warm, spring sunshine. At Walter's Copse it was good to catch up with island experts Andy Butler and Peter Hunt (UKB member Marmari), who were on a similar mission.



This National Trust woodland is very well managed and always a pleasure to visit. Some of the earlier flowering sallows were covered in butterflies. On both days there were 30 - 40 Comma and 10+ Peacock present, along with a few Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral. Late on the Wednesday afternoon a large unidentified butterfly drifted very high through the upper canopy, but the hoped-for adrenaline rush never happened. In the end I was more than happy just to soak up the tranquillity and sort out a few of the better Commas to photograph. On the final afternoon a Red Squirrel put in a welcome appearance.





I also spent some time in the southern part of Parkhurst Forest, where I saw all of the species listed above and my first Orange Underwing moth of the year. The downside was that I was bitten on the thigh by a dog. Only my thick moleskin trousers prevented a more serious wound but the puncture marks and bruising are clear. Had I been at home I would have called the police, but I didn't want to waste a couple of hours of my precious time on the island. Predictably, the \*\*\*\*wit out-of-control dog owner's response was the standard, "he's never done it before, I don't know why he did it", followed eventually by a grudging apology. I get increasingly fed-up with the criminal negligence of some dog owners and last year gave up leading walks for BC, largely due to the fall-out from a dog attack on a party I was leading at Iping Common. These problems seem to be getting worse. Equally negative was the appalling state of Woodhouse Copse, which continues to deteriorate and is no longer worth visiting.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterflysaurus rex, 14-Mar-14 02:23 PM GMT

"I get increasingly fed-up with the criminal negligence of some dog owners"

HEAR HEAR! it's getting worse and worse. It's quite simple if you can't control your dog keep it on a lead. Just common sense really. Also so few people pick up their dog mess, some of them bag it up and then chuck it in the bushes! The mind boggles 🤔

I hope your leg recovers quickly, is your tetanus is up to date?

I'm looking forward to your post reporting that you've successfully found a Large Tort 😊

ATB

B'saurus

### Re: Neil Hulme

by John W, 14-Mar-14 06:38 PM GMT

I'm very sorry to hear about your dog bite Neil. Must have been quite a big dog to have bitten your thigh? Nasty.

Cheers

John

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 14-Mar-14 07:25 PM GMT

So sorry to read that you were attacked, Neil. Quite shocking 😞

I think they should bring back dog licencing, with all owners having to have insurance for their dogs.

Really sad to real that you won't be leading any more walks either. 😞

### Re: Neil Hulme

by False Apollo, 14-Mar-14 07:29 PM GMT

Seems you had a very similar day at Walters Copse as I did Neil, even with the large flyover butterfly which would not give up it's identity! The numbers of Commas here is quite astounding, full marks to the National Trust for managing this wood in a way that is excellent for butterflies. At any time of the day there is a 'sun trap' somewhere in the wood on the walk around (when it's sunny). I hope to visit again sometime so may see you there. I hope the bite gets better soon.

Regards  
Mike

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Matsukaze, 14-Mar-14 09:37 PM GMT

The Ferring Rife site looks quite like many parts of the Somerset Levels, where Small Tortoiseshell usually does well. I imagine the banks get carpeted with nettles later in the year.

We visited Walter's Copse a few years ago, before the Large Tortoiseshells had been discovered there. I wondered how the absence of deer on the island affected its management and what butterflies might be present there.

I have only ever seen Large Tortoiseshells in my dreams, fluttering around the Lyme Regis undercliffs. As one was a highly aberrant specimen coloured like a white tiger I am more than content with that...

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-Mar-14 10:37 PM GMT

Thanks all. Hardly a life-threatening injury, and inflicted by a surprisingly small dog (it had to stand on its hind legs to bite me!), but the whole business makes me see red. I kept thinking about the outcome if I'd been walking with my young daughter. Under those circumstances a very ugly outcome would have been inevitable.

Yes Mike, the number of Commas is remarkable. I don't remember seeing quite so many anywhere before at this time of year. The local NT rangers do a superb job here.

The banks do indeed get covered in vast nettle-beds Matsukaze. The Environment Agency does a great job of cutting them at a favourable time of year too. I imagine the EA are far less popular down on the Levels though!

BWs, Neil

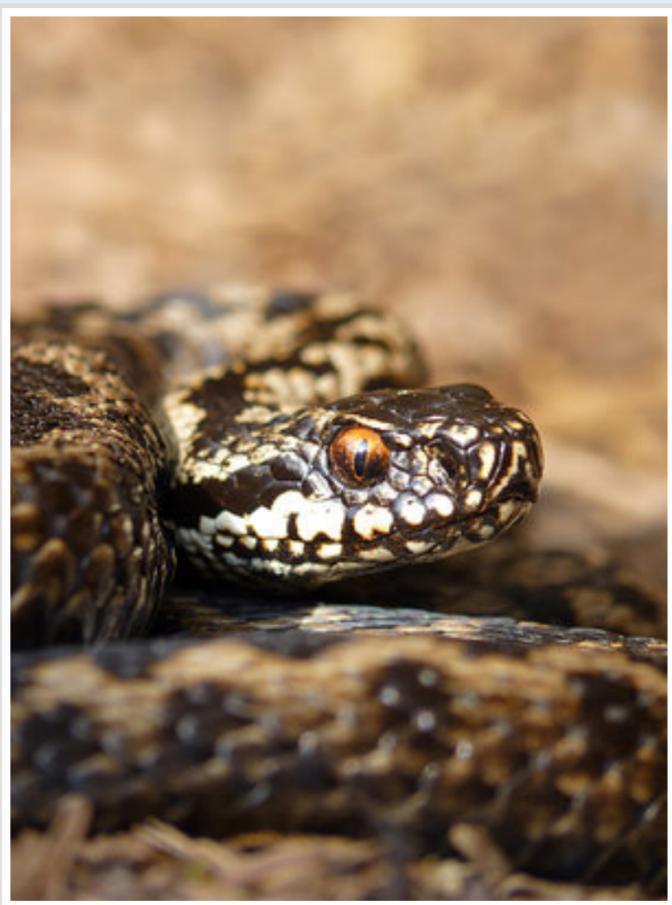
## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-Mar-14 11:03 PM GMT

### Snakes Alive!

With my part of the South Coast shrouded in thick mist today (14th March), I took a gamble and interpreted the Met Office weather map literally, heading east to the Lewes area where sunshine was promised. I visited the BC reserves of Park Corner Heath and Rowland Wood in the hope of finding a few Brimstone, Comma and Peacock. The latter two species were on the wing in low numbers, but the slight mist rendered the sunshine just too ineffective to tempt any Brimstone out.

On my arrival I bumped into David 'Snakeman' Bradford, so soon turned my attention away from the modest showing of butterflies and spent several happy hours looking for adders with him. We were later joined by Mark Tomlins, who had made quite a lengthy journey to photograph reptiles on the reserve. I haven't done much snake photography before, so today provided me with my best results to date.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterfliesaurus rex, 14-Mar-14 11:46 PM GMT

I think I recognise that face, it looks like the same Adder I photographed on the 8th of March 😊 (photo in my PD)  
It's a small world 😊

I should have tried harder, your photo's better than mine. 😎

Best Wishes

B'saurus

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Mar-14 09:17 PM GMT

#### Great Start To Season

The 2014 butterfly season has started in style; it's a long time since I've seen so many post-hibernators around. I've now seen really good numbers of Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Peacock and Brimstone on one or more sites during my travels through Sussex and to the Isle of Wight. Only the Red Admiral is showing poorly, but I don't think many were around at the start of the 13/14 winter.

This morning (16th March) I visited Rewell Wood, and stayed there all day! By the time the sunshine was losing its strength I had covered most of the wood, seeing a fantastic number of butterflies. My tally was 74 Peacock, 56 Brimstone, 13 Comma, 3 Small Tortoiseshell and 1 Red Admiral. At one point, as I sat on the slopes of a primrose strewn valley (private area), I could count 16 male Brimstone. Many of the butterflies were congregating on willow trees, some of which were heavy with flowers (pictured). Also seen were 9 Orange Underwing moths, including 2 females egg-laying on silver birch.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 17-Mar-14 04:09 PM GMT

It sure has been an explosive start to the butterfly season thus far, Neil.

I reckon I'm into 3 figures already (75% of them Small Tortoiseshells which appear to be enjoying a real renaissance).

You going back for another Large Tortoiseshell hunt soon?

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-Mar-14 08:57 PM GMT

Hi David,  
I'm still hoping to hear some positive news from the locals who are keeping a close eye on the main IOW site, and I'll return if even a single sighting is reported. However, I've used up quite a few Brownie Points by doing a two day trip, so probably won't get back unless things liven up. I suspect we will hear of the odd one turning up on the mainland in the next week or two, continuing the recent trend.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-Mar-14 09:38 PM GMT

#### Tortoiseshells Rife

Irrespective of how many Purple Emperor, Brown Hairstreak or rare migrants I see this year, one of the highlights of my season will undoubtedly be the spring crop of Small Tortoiseshell along the banks of Ferring Rife. Today (17th March) I managed to squeeze in another hour and a half there, and was richly rewarded. I only had time to perform a less-than-thorough count over about three quarters of the east bank below the footbridge, but still managed to record 77 Small Tortoiseshell and 2 Peacock.

There are still many specimens around in excellent condition, particularly the females which are now showing strongly. Many of these are being pursued 'Benny Hill style' by numerous amorous males, forming strings of sometimes 5 or 6 butterflies. Egg-laying is now well underway and I watched several females sitting low amongst the bankside vegetation with their abdomens curled tightly below emerging nettle leaves. One of my images shows the untidy pile of fresh green eggs left behind. It is interesting to watch the female butterflies as they test each plant for suitability; after tipping forwards slightly, she will often use her under-developed forelegs to 'drum' on the leaves.



by essexbuzzard, 17-Mar-14 11:19 PM GMT

Hi Neil, we were sorry to hear that you were bitten by that dog. I was having a chat about it with Lee Slaughter in Cornwall on Saturday. When I am in the countryside, I often get dogs that are off the lead jumping up at me. Though it is a nuisance when I have my camera, they generally mean no harm. So to actually get bitten must have been quite shocking.

Loving the Small Tort pictures BTW. They seem to be off to a flyer this year up here as well—long may it continue.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Mar-14 09:12 AM GMT

Thanks Mark (essexbuzzard), but it's the deer ticks that are at it now! All those prone to lying down in the middle of woodlands, moors and meadows in pursuit of butterflies and moths should be aware that **deer ticks are already active this year** – early along with everything else!

I'm hoping to attend one of Lee's events as we will be in Cornwall during the first week of September.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by P.J.Underwood, 18-Mar-14 04:58 PM GMT

Neil,

Reading your diary I wonder if the dog(s) that bit you detected any shrimp paste on your trousers? It does tend to linger and I am sure it could stimulate dogs to bite hard and deep. A bitter apple spray could neutralise it.

Best wishes,

Philip

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-Mar-14 10:00 PM GMT

Hi Philip,

It's an interesting theory, and I know that dogs have an acute sense of smell, but my trusty moleskins have been given about 20 hot washes since July, and the dog launched its attack from 30 – 40 metres away. Sadly this sort of thing isn't uncommon. A female member of this forum was subjected to a frightening attack on your own turf at Botany Bay last Emperor season. One of three large dogs being walked by a local was unleashed and I heard the barking from nearly a quarter of a mile away. Quite rightly she complained to the police, and the owner (who was smirking during the attack) was given some very clear advice by a visiting officer. This was only a week or so after an out-of-control Labrador attacked a member of BC on one of my butterfly walks.

Of course the rise and rise of irresponsible dog ownership doesn't stop here. It's almost impossible to go for a walk in the countryside now without coming across bags of dog excrement hanging from bushes and barbed-wire fences. One only has to read the South Downs National Park Forum to see how many sheep are still suffering sickening attacks by dogs. There was a time when farmers sometimes dealt out on-the-spot justice. That may have been harsh, but I do feel sorry for the farmers who have to deal with yet another sheep with its face ripped off.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-Mar-14 10:26 PM GMT

### Sitting On Top Of The World

The Wednesday work party at Heyshott Escarpment was attended by an impressive 13 people today (19th March), with the usual mix of Murray Downland Trust and BC Sussex volunteers. The initial climb to the giddy heights of the very top of the slope would have been enough to put lesser mortals off, but the views from the top, now much improved, made every step worthwhile. If Carlsberg did nature reserves, they would probably look like this one.





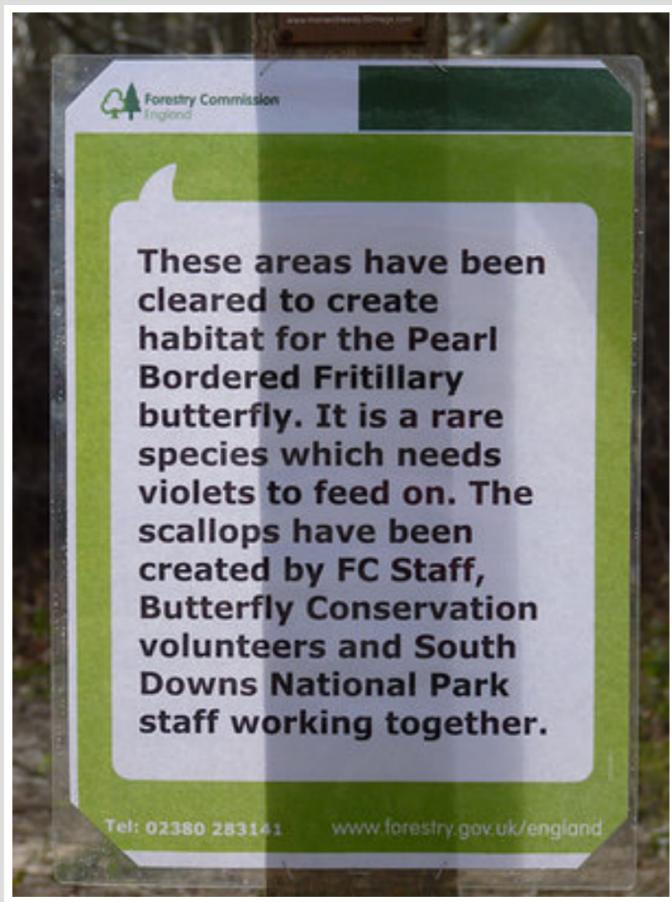
## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Mar-14 08:00 PM GMT

### Pop-up PBF Glade

Today (21st March) I joined a team of a dozen staff and volunteers representing Butterfly Conservation, Forestry Commission and South Downs National Park Authority at Houghton Forest near Arundel. We were there to continue recent habitat management work to benefit Pearl-bordered Fritillary and other species including Grizzled Skipper. Moving about 100m further up the track from where we created the last glade, we completed another sunny opening in a single visit. That's it for work parties until autumn – now bring on the butterflies!





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Mar-14 07:39 PM GMT

### RSPB South Downs Futurescapes

This afternoon (22nd March) I attended the opening of the RSPB South Downs Futurescapes (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/futurescapes/southdowns>) Photographic Exhibition, held at RSPB Pulborough Brooks Nature Reserve. Rachel Whitfield gave a great talk on the project, which is part of a welcome trend towards conservation on a landscape scale and involving close working partnerships with other conservation groups.

After a bit of 'pond-dipping', which kept Mia happy until she was forced to return her Water Boatman to its home, we took a quick tour of the reserve before being served tea and cakes back at the visitor centre.

I was very pleased to pick up first prize in the 'Wildlife' section, with this image of a Duke of Burgundy. BC Sussex member Julie Redford came in second with a lovely shot of a Brimstone, and Kenneth Turner made it a trio of butterflies with a pair of mating Chalkhills. Thanks to Rachel, Steve, Anna and others from the RSPB.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Maximus, 23-Mar-14 12:36 AM GMT

A deserved first prize Neil, great 'Duke' photo.

Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

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

That duke shot is simply stunning Neil 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 24-Mar-14 08:34 AM GMT

Thanks Mike and Wurzel. It was an image I had overlooked at the time of taking, and only resurfaced when I went searching the archives for something a little different. She's certainly carrying plenty of eggs!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 25-Mar-14 12:00 PM GMT

Morning from deepest Ireland (where I am on a shot visit).

Plenty of dogs here too but I put on my best English accent and it scares the daylights out of them. Try something similar Neil. Any German friends who can teach you the appropriate *hund* phrases?

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Mar-14 12:48 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

*"Morning from deepest Ireland (where I am on a **shot** visit)."*

Now, now Jack. We don't want you causing Troubles over there!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Mar-14 09:34 PM GMT

**Fat Cat**

This morning (27th March) I headed to Rewell Wood, determined to find a Pearl-bordered Fritillary caterpillar. These can be tricky to spot and I spent two and a half hours staring at the leaf litter in a sweet chestnut coppice block before finally striking lucky. After such a lengthy search I made the most of my discovery, so followed the fat, full-grown, 5th instar larva for an hour. It gradually warmed itself up by sunbathing, slowly becoming more active. I tracked it across an open area as it scrambled over leaves and brash, until it eventually found what it wanted – a lovely patch of violets. As it gorged

itself on the young, fresh leaves I pondered whether I'll see this insect again in a few weeks time, but after the miracle of metamorphosis has taken place I doubt I'll recognise him/her! At this rate of development the Pearls will be on the wing in the third week of April.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 27-Mar-14 10:02 PM GMT

Well done Neil – took me 3 years to find my first, so know that they're not the easiest of critters to locate in the wild unless you're an old hand at this (e.g. Oatesy). Nice one!

Cheers,

– Pete

### Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 28-Mar-14 08:35 AM GMT

A magnificent beast Neil – and brilliant photos 😊😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 28-Mar-14 11:19 AM GMT

Thanks Pete and William,

The fact I found it when on the point of 'throwing in the towel' made it even more special. I've found 4th instar before, but this was my first with yellow spine bases.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterflysaurus rex, 30-Mar-14 09:35 AM GMT

Brilliant Duke photo Neil! Well deserved first prize, I wonder if you have any more overlooked "award worthy" photos hidden away on your hard drive 😊  
I had a look for some PBF cats in Abbots Wood the other day. After a searching for several hours I had to concede defeat. I hope this was simply down to my lack of skill rather than an indication of a poor year for PBF's. Having said that the areas containing dog violet are huge in Abbots, with any luck they are just spread far and wide.

All the best

B'saurus

## Re: Neil Hulme

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

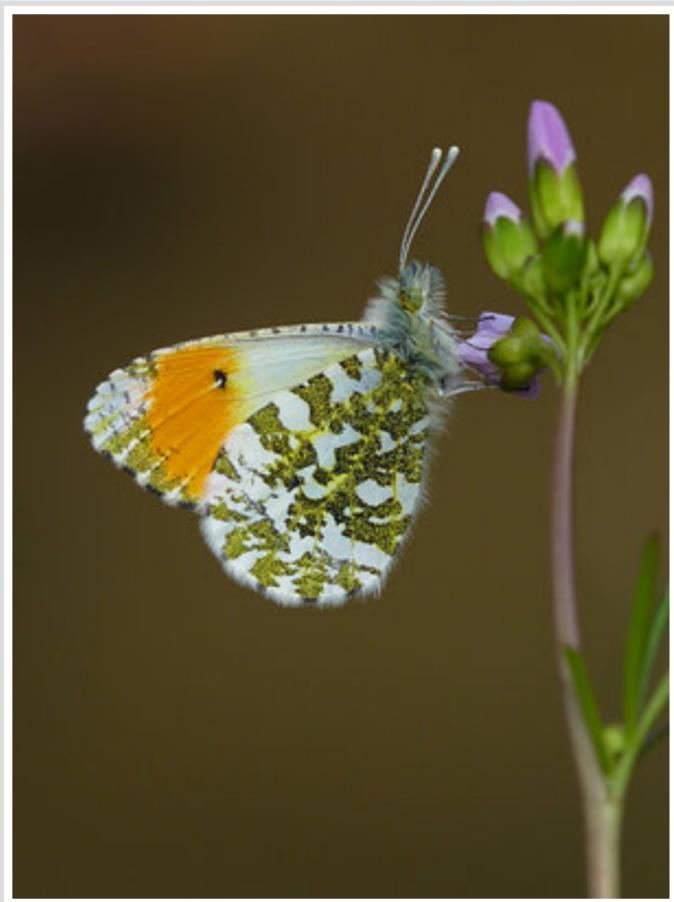
Thanks B. rex. The PBF cats are not easy, but I'm sure they were there ... and watching you!  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-Mar-14 08:43 AM GMT

### Official Start Of Spring

My own definition of spring was finally fulfilled on Saturday (29th March), when a brief tour of the quiet lanes around Billingshurst and Five Oaks produced my first Orange Tip and Green-veined White of the season, together with a few Bee-flies (*B. major*). I returned on Sunday to find both of these spring gems (again one of each), together with a supporting cast of Brimstone (6), Comma (2), Peacock (2), Small Tortoiseshell (1) and Red Admiral (1). The weather was perfect for photography, with the milky sunshine being periodically blocked out, causing a sudden drop in temperature and sending the butterflies to roost. After a Mother's Day picnic with the family, I finished off a fabulous spring day with a visit to see the Hoopoe currently showing well at Clymping beach.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Pauline, 31-Mar-14 02:55 PM GMT

Neil those photos are both stunning but my favourite is the OT. I only wish I could take one like that 🍷🍷 Still, something to aspire to I suppose 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-Mar-14 05:51 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline,

Plenty of time yet to get that shot. Weather conditions are everything – catch them in roosting mode and the impossible suddenly becomes simple. I gave up chasing warm ones around years ago!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Chris Jackson, 31-Mar-14 06:44 PM GMT

Good sighting for the Orange Tip, Neil.

They have only just come out this weekend down in Marseilles, so apparently there is not much South-North time lag.

Cheers, Chris

### Re: Neil Hulme

by John W, 31-Mar-14 07:05 PM GMT

Hi Neil, fabulous photos as ever! When (in the afternoon) do Orange Tips tend to roost (assuming it's sunny)? I have a feeling they tend to stop flying about 3.30pm, is that right?

Cheers

John

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 31-Mar-14 07:28 PM GMT

Beautiful photos, Neil.

Someone kindly advised me that orange tip had been seen but by the time I got there late in the afternoon I didnt see anything flying except a single male brimstone. Still, plenty of time yet to catch up with them over the coming weeks. I may even bump into you 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-Mar-14 08:35 PM GMT

Thanks Chris, John and Susie.

John: They are not quite as lazy as male Brimstones, which knock-off ridiculously early, but it really depends on temperature. At this time of year there can be a very significant difference in temperature on even fully sunny days, and yet only 1 degree within the early spring temperature range can make all the difference. That's why you will see loads of Brimstones flying on one sunny day – then none on the next, despite it being sunny again! Much

better to go out on a day when it will be periodically cloudy and cooler ... and just follow them.

Susie: See you there. You know where!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 01-Apr-14 06:04 PM GMT

Were you there again today, Neil? I think I drove past you on my way there. Catch up with you soon. 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Apr-14 08:15 PM GMT

Hi Susie,  
Yes, I spent a blissful day there! Report coming soon.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Apr-14 08:56 PM GMT

#### Orange Tips Get Fruity

This morning (1st April) I did a U-turn on the way to Billingshurst as a cool, thick mist was shrouding the Weald. Heading back towards the coast I found Mill Hill (Shoreham) bathed in warm sunshine. At 10.30 am I nearly trod on my first Grizzled Skipper of the year. After an hour and a half I had still not relocated this 'needle in a haystack', so headed back to the country lanes around Billingshurst and Five Oaks. I spent a glorious day wandering along the ditches, banks and ghylls which are now thick with Lady's Smock, Primrose and Bluebell. My tally included 8 Orange Tip (incl. 2 females), 2 Green-veined White, 1 Large White, 1 Speckled Wood, 5 Brimstone, 2 Peacock, 2 Comma and 1 Small Tortoiseshell. By the time I arrived in my favourite meadow the butterflies were already very active in the heat, so I spent most of the day just watching them, as attempts at photography appeared futile. However, it was my lucky day and I soon spotted the tiniest sliver of orange wingtip as a mating couple gave their position away. This is the earliest I have ever seen mating Orange Tips.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 01-Apr-14 09:08 PM GMT

That's a superb shot Neil, it seems you are quite a bit further ahead in Sussex than in darkest Somerset. Bluebells aren't putting up buds yet and Cuckoo Flower and Garlic Mustard are similarly far off – very jealous 😊😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 01-Apr-14 09:41 PM GMT

Wonderful 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Apr-14 09:42 PM GMT

Thanks William. It's certainly my best shot of mating O Tips. I'm equally envious of your 'blind' Emperor Moth. I do my best to avoid getting hooked on moths, but I can't resist the tarty ones!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterflysaurus rex, 01-Apr-14 09:52 PM GMT

I am envious of both of you 🍷 such is life 😊 lovely photo Neil, I'm not surprised you're chuffed.

B'saurus

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Lee Hurrell, 01-Apr-14 10:03 PM GMT

Very nice photo, Neil! Good work (as usual).

Best wishes,

Lee

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 01-Apr-14 10:06 PM GMT

Images like this make me yearn for a day off to go and observe these butterflies myself – sadly, I reckon it will be several days before I can indulge so many thanks for providing the incentive at least!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Apr-14 10:22 PM GMT

Thanks Susie, Rex, Lee and David. I just hope they were enjoying themselves as much as I enjoyed watching them.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 02-Apr-14 08:02 AM GMT

#### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

I do my best to avoid getting hooked on moths, but I can't resist the tarty ones!

BWs, Neil

Thanks Neil, there is the added bonus with big dozy Emperor Moths that they will sit still for hours 😊😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Apr-14 08:10 PM GMT

#### 70s Revival

Today (3rd April) I followed up a report from Lindsay Morris to the BC Sussex website, from the area between Steep Down (Sompting) and Lancing Ring. I focused my searches along the paths and tracks around Steep Down (TQ166079) which provide the rather modest strips of habitat sufficient to keep the Small Tortoiseshell happy within this essentially arable landscape. The low banks on one or both sides of these tracks are carpeted in young nettles, many of which are now holding large clusters of lime-green eggs. I only managed to cover about half of the suitable habitat before thickening cloud and plummeting temperatures sent the butterflies scurrying deep within the nettle-beds. However, by this time I had already counted 63 Small Tortoiseshell. It just goes to show that when this species is doing well, it will thrive in the least promising of places. In 2013 and 2014 I've seen more Tortoiseshells than I have since the 1970s, and long may this resurgence continue. The Peacock was also here in good numbers, with 17 seen.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Buchan Boy, 03-Apr-14 08:56 PM GMT

Cool shots Neil, I have to agree with this being a Small Tortoiseshell year, I've never seen anything like it.

Its been a spectacle to behold, long may it continue.

Thanks

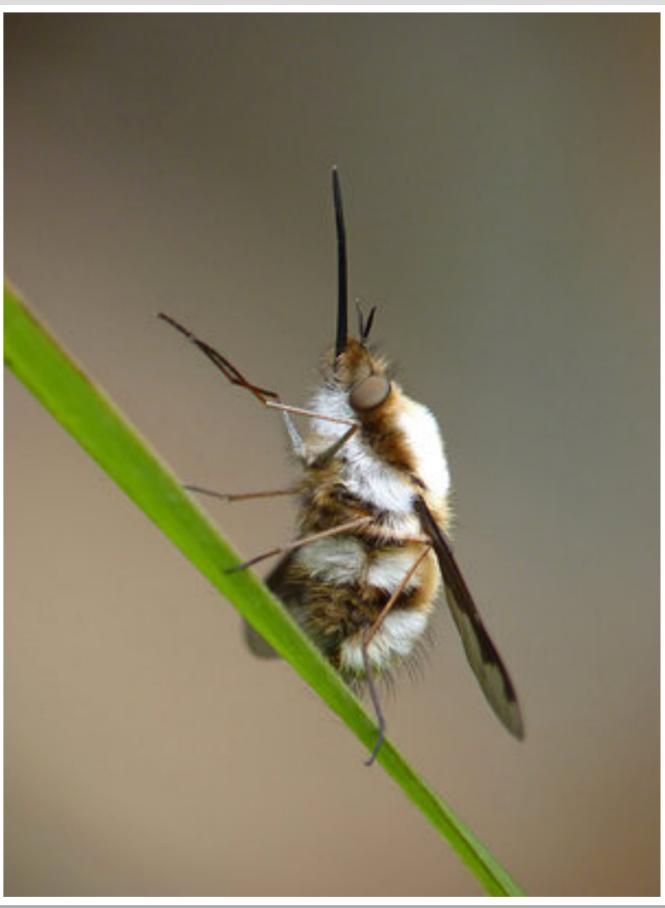
### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-Apr-14 06:11 PM GMT

#### Bee-flies

My own definition of spring is not fulfilled until I see my first Orange Tip of the year, but usually coinciding with this eagerly anticipated event is the first appearance of Bee-flies. I've always been fascinated by these bee mimics, the larvae of which parasitise the grubs of wasps, bees and beetles. The most common of the spring species, *Bombylius major*, is very widespread and almost always encountered whenever I'm out looking for the Orange Tip, Holly Blue or Grizzled Skipper.

I've never previously managed to photograph *B. major* particularly well, either because I'm distracted by other quarry or because they tend to settle on the ground amongst clutter, which makes it hard to do justice to their beautifully patterned wings. I've always found them quite 'skittish' when attempting in-flight shots, as they hover to suck nectar through their long, rigid proboscises. However, today (6th April), when butterfly hunting was postponed due to cool and cloudy conditions, I found a lovely fresh example sitting on an ornamental grass in my back garden. As I would like to think my images show, Bee-flies certainly do not lack character!



### More Spring Magic

With the welcome return of sunshine this morning (8th April) I started the day at Mill Hill (Shoreham), in the hope that the Grizzled Skipper emergence is now well underway. It isn't, and I only saw a single male, along with a Green-veined White, a few Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell, and a beautifully marked Adder.

I then moved on to Billingshurst, via a minor road through the small village of Wiston. I noticed a male Orange Tip flying along the road verge, so pulled over next to a pretty water meadow. It was immediately obvious that there had been a good emergence of Orange Tip earlier that morning, with at least 6 very fresh specimens nectaring on the cuckoo flower, including a couple of females. A Speckled Wood and Green-veined White were also seen here.

I then headed to the quiet lanes around Billingshurst, to meet Jack Harrison who is currently visiting the area from Mull. My favourite early season meadows are now awash with spring flowers and the banks are painted in beautiful shades of lilac, blue, yellow and white. I counted 5 Orange Tip, 3 Green-veined White, 3 Comma and a Red Admiral. My brother and his family are visiting from Antwerp, so I know where we'll be heading tomorrow.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by robpartridge, 09-Apr-14 08:47 AM GMT

Lovely photographs of the Orange Tips and the Bee Fly. It's interesting that you write about an emergence of Orange Tips down in your part of the world. Here in the Cambridgeshire fens I have yet to see one and I notice that there are as yet only 2 or 3 reported on the local BC branch forum; I wonder what the phenological difference is and whether it is consistent from year to year,

Rob

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Apr-14 09:07 AM GMT

Thanks Rob. There is certainly a broad phenological gradient from south to north, with an additional bias towards the west. Cambridgeshire is certainly colder than Sussex, so I expect you are a week behind us. But they're coming! 😊

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by robpartridge, 09-Apr-14 07:40 PM GMT

First Orange Tip and Green-veined Whites today!

Rob

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 09-Apr-14 09:16 PM GMT

Some lovely images in your last few posts Neil.

I particularly like the side on views of the Bee Fly, I never realised what cute and cuddly looking little critters they look from that perspective 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Apr-14 09:29 PM GMT

Thanks Neil. Yes, they are cute – like a cross between Zorro and a teddy bear. 😊  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Apr-14 10:50 PM GMT

Today (9th April) I spent a few more happy hours amongst the butterflies and wild flowers of the meadows and country lanes around Billingshurst and Five Oaks. Orange Tip, Green-veined White, Small White (my first of the year), Speckled Wood, Peacock, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral were all present, with numbers of the first two species now on the increase. There were plenty of butterflies to entertain today's visitors, including my brother's family from Antwerp and Jack Harrison from Mull. UKBer Katrina made the more modest journey from Brighton. During the afternoon, while the butterflies were too active to get anywhere near, I drove slowly around the area surveying the flower-filled roadside ditches, finding an average of 3.5 Orange Tips per mile.

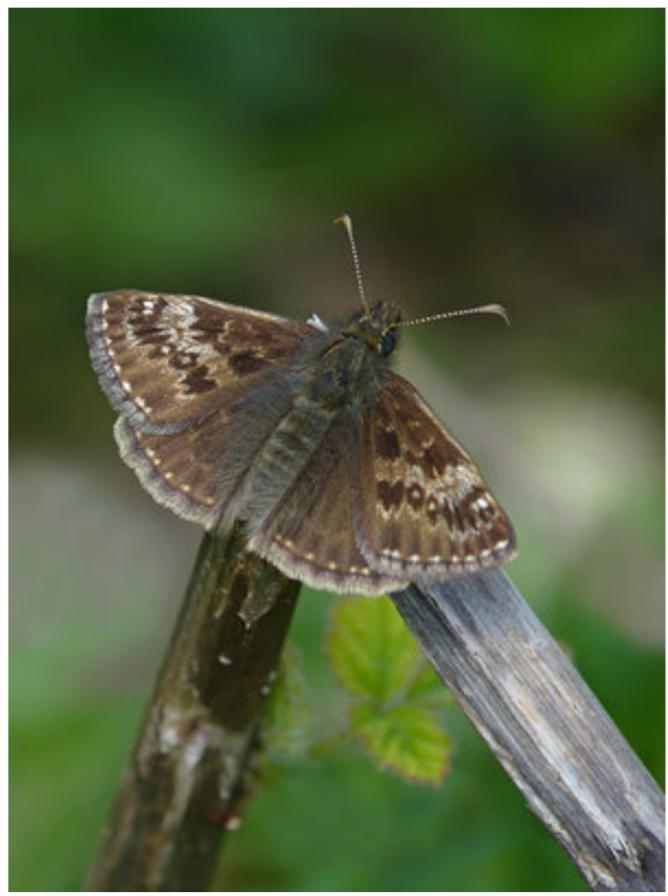




by Neil Hulme, 10-Apr-14 09:27 PM GMT

### **Dingy Out!**

This morning (10th April) I started off at Mill Hill, Shoreham. It wasn't long before I met Dave Potter, who told me he had seen a Dingy Skipper earlier. This surprised me, given that Grizzled Skipper has stalled and refuses to appear in numbers greater than one! However, there was no doubting the impressive image on his camera. Dave is a very experienced birder but fairly new to butterflies, so bagging the UK's first Dingy is an impressive start. Dave soon relocated the Dingy and I subsequently found a second male. Just to prove it wasn't a fluke he then found the single Grizzled Skipper of the morning.



### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Lee Hurrell, 10-Apr-14 10:08 PM GMT

They are so beautiful when fresh. Anything but dingy!

Lovely shot, Neil.

Best wishes,

Lee

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 10-Apr-14 11:11 PM GMT

Wow! I never expected Dingies to be about this early.

I simply must get out over the weekend to see what's about near where I live. There could be a few surprises.

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Maximus, 11-Apr-14 08:49 PM GMT

Very nice stuff in your recent posts Neil the Dingy Skipper is a beautiful butterfly. Also your Bee-Fly photos from earlier are inspirational.

Mike

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 12-Apr-14 07:29 AM GMT

Thanks all. It's proving to be a fruitful spring so far.

BWs, Neil

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 12-Apr-14 08:28 AM GMT

#### **Tipping With Friends**

The last two days (10th & 11th April) have been spent in the company of friends, making the most of this magical time of year and the Orange Tips that come with it. Hopefully, after trips to Billingshurst/Five Oaks and Wiston, Brian, Garry, Leigh, Gary and my father will all have some great shots of

Orange Tips sitting on pretty spring flowers! In addition to our main target, on Thursday we found two pairs of mating Green-veined White.



Image by Brian Henham



Yesterday, I started off at Mill Hill, where I relocated the first two Dingy Skipper of the year and a single Grizzled Skipper. Early indications are that the latter species may have crashed at this site. Better news came in the form of my first Green Hairstreak of the year, at far end of the lower slope amongst the regenerating privet.



It was then more Orange Tipping at a pretty water meadow in the village of Wiston. At one point I had 5 males and a female marked at roost on various flowers, ready for a couple of visitors making a rapid exit from their places of work. Just before their arrival the sun reappeared, sending the butterflies off on their final sorties of the day. Luckily there were sufficient around to ensure success.





The greatest surprise here came in the form of an immature, male Beautiful Demoiselle damselfly. This is my earliest ever sighting of this species by a 'country mile'.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by robpartridge, 12-Apr-14 09:09 AM GMT

Good depth of field on that lovely photo of the Green-veined Whites,

Rob

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by William, 12-Apr-14 04:45 PM GMT

Superb Green Hairstreak Neil, I'm very jealous 😊😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by badgerbob, 12-Apr-14 07:20 PM GMT

Fantastic pictures as always and amazed to see the Beautiful Demoiselle already!!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 13-Apr-14 08:34 PM GMT

I'm sure you'll agree about the style and elegance of the *James Pringle* sleeveless jacket I am wearing.

Neil. Do you mind if I send that picture to Messrs Pringle and offer to do some modelling for the "*Oldies and Fatties*" spring collection? 😊

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by mud-puddling, 13-Apr-14 09:33 PM GMT

Wonderful images Neil, love the Beautiful Demosielle shot!

Thanks again for helping me get my first photograph of an Orange Tip. Much appreciated advice as always.



Leigh

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterflysaurus rex, 13-Apr-14 10:05 PM GMT

Come on then Neil where are you hiding those Duke of Burgundy photos 😊 they've already been out for a couple of days!

Hope to see you soon at the appointed place of Dukedom.

You've put up some wonderful photos lately – my eyes are feeling spoiled 😊

ATB

B'saurus

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 13-Apr-14 11:02 PM GMT

Thanks Rob, William and Bob – the first few weeks of the season have certainly been kind to me.

Jack – I thought that was a little deconstructed number by Vivienne Westwood. You wear it well.

Leigh – Glad you got your shot. Great pic!

Rex – Noar Hill has historically been a good week ahead of Sussex Duke sites. We must wait, but they're nearly cooked!

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-Apr-14 05:07 PM GMT

### Pete's Wood

I have always had mixed feelings about 'Wood Lotting', which is the commercial practice of purchasing large blocks of woodland for subdivision and subsequent sale to multiple owners. Many of these lots are purchased for investment or tax purposes, often becoming completely neglected, increasingly overgrown, dark and poor for wildlife – not least butterflies and moths. Other lots suffer a similar fate because well meaning owners feel it is detrimental to cut down trees and other vegetation, believing this would be damaging to the wildlife in their care.

A lesser number of these purchased woodland blocks become home to damaging recreational activities or inappropriate livestock, while others reduce public access or evade statutory controls. Perhaps the most widespread problem is the vastly increased difficulty in the implementation of a consistent, joined-up approach to the management of the wood, due to multi-ownership and highly variable interest in conservation matters.

To be fair to the organisations which operate such schemes, they do make every attempt at guiding new owners in the right direction, and offer advice on how best to manage woodland for wildlife. Many of the owners who wish to manage their woodlands sympathetically join organisations such as the Small Woodland Owners Group, which shares best practice amongst the more enlightened. Fortunately, a significant number of owners look after their woodlands very well and in Sussex we have shining examples like Nick Lear at Knowlands Wood near Barcombe.

Last Friday (11th April) I returned to look at such a wood in West Sussex, in part owned by Pete Varkala and his partner Sally. I've been here before, both to give advice and to do a little work myself, including the planting of some Dutch Elm Disease resistant saplings (sponsored by BC Sussex Branch). Pete has been steadily chipping away for a number of years now, opening the woodland up to allow more light in.

Pete's part of the wood always had great potential, being on the sunny, southern edge and having the added benefits of a small spring-fed stream and pond. However, having not visited the place for several years, nothing could have prepared me for what I saw last week. Improvement seems to have been almost exponential and it has suddenly developed into one of the most stunningly beautiful areas of woodland I have ever seen – my images get nowhere near to doing it justice.

Unsurprisingly, the flora and fauna are showing their appreciation of Pete's hard work and the entire ecosystem is thriving. Pete has created a little piece of paradise here, not just for him and Sally to enjoy, but for the benefit of wildlife over the surrounding area. If only a few more small woodland owners could achieve something even approaching this. A tour of some of the other lots within the wider woodland showed the all-too-common situation at the opposite end of the scale.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-Apr-14 07:59 PM GMT

### Mill Hill, Shoreham

Mill Hill at Shoreham is gradually livening up, but it's been a slow start to the season here. This is one of the sites which was hit particularly hard by the 2012 wash-out summer and will take a little while longer to fully recover. Even this morning (14th April), two weeks into their season, there were still only 3 Grizzled Skipper on offer. Early indications are that this species might be down in numbers across much of Sussex this year. Equally noticeable is the very low number of *Pyrausta* spp. (small day-flying moths) here since 2012.

Green Hairstreak (5) and Dingy Skipper (6) are now fully underway and faring a little better; they may well go on to do well this year. The former species was seen at both the northern and southern ends of the lower slope, and in the glades between scrub adjacent to the upper car park. Also seen was a male Holly Blue, one Speckled Wood, a few Whites, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock.





## Re: Neil Hulme

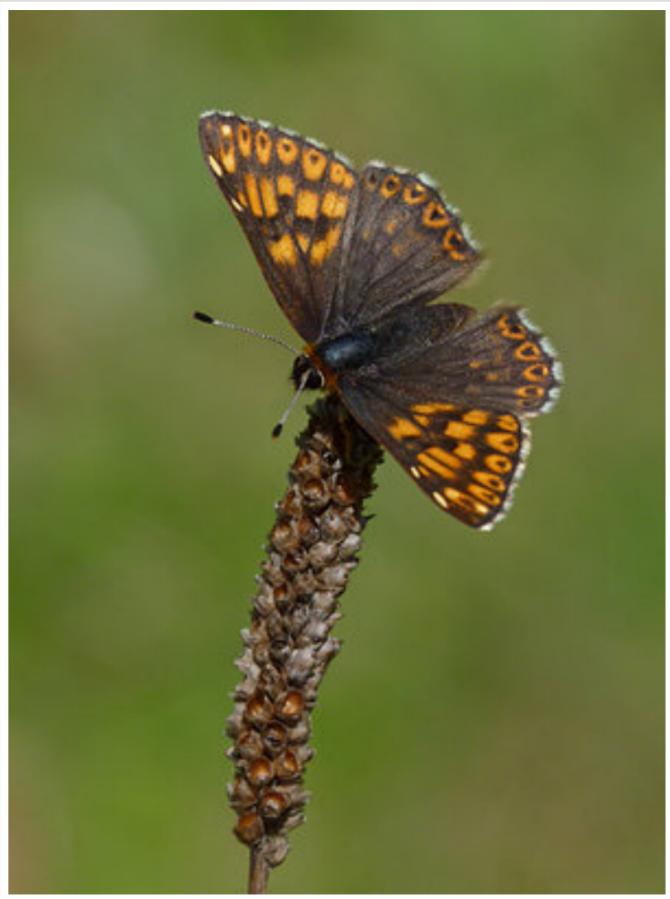
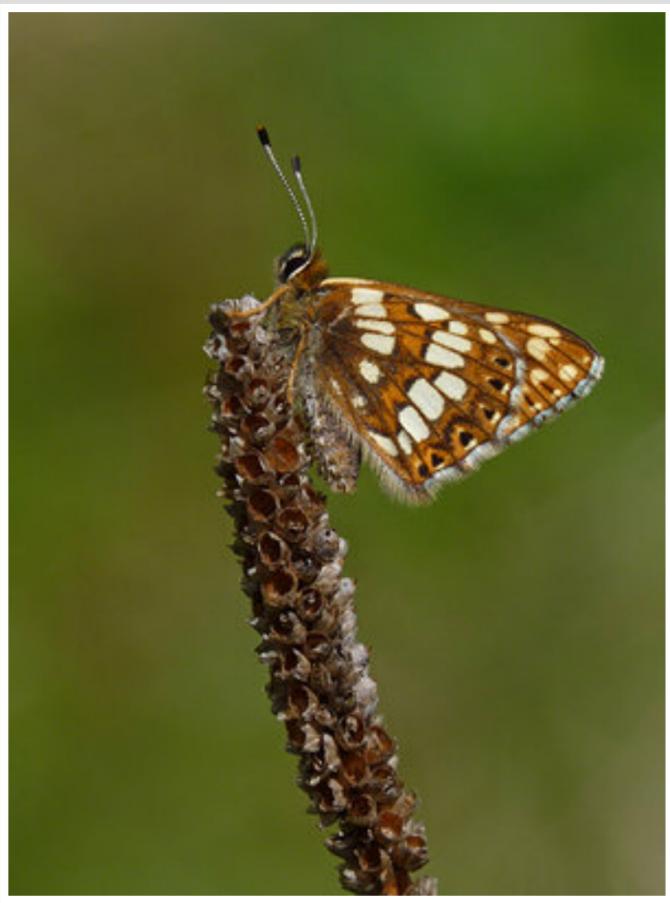
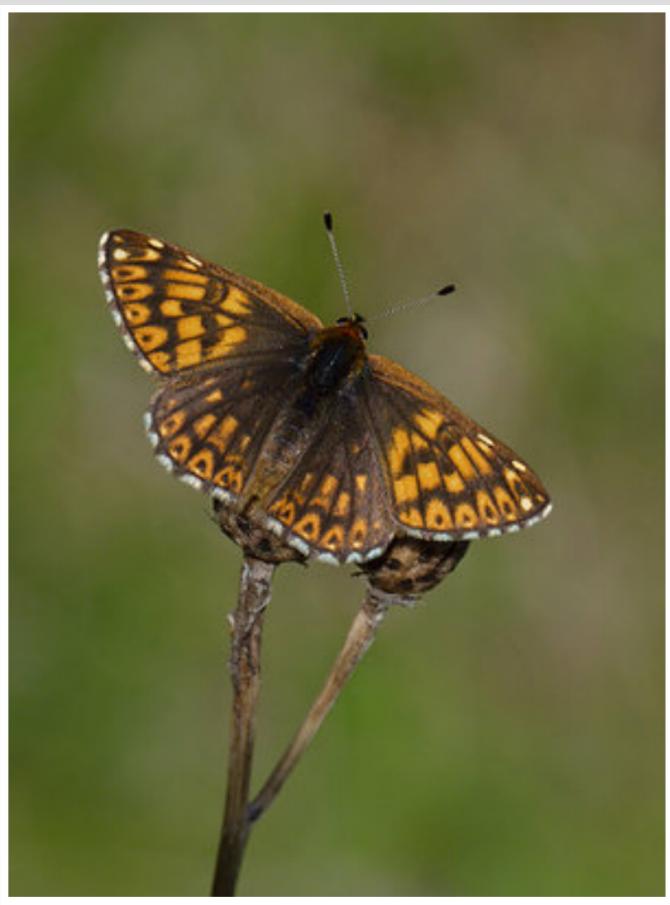
by Neil Hulme, 15-Apr-14 08:57 PM GMT

### *Gorganus* Gone 😞

A small group of hopefuls collected at the beautiful BC Magdalen Hill Down nature reserve this morning, keen to see the European Swallowtail spotted here yesterday. Sadly it didn't show, but there was plenty going on to make the drive from Sussex worthwhile. Fellow Sussexer Colin Knight and I were given a guided tour by Reserves Manager Jayne Chapman, seeing a few Green Hairstreak, Grizzled Skipper, Holly Blue, Green-veined White and a good number of ex-hibernators. Brimstone were plentiful and we watched a female laying eggs on regenerating Buckthorn shoots. I wasn't too disappointed to miss the *gorganus* as I'm confident there will be a few around this spring.



Colin and I then moved on to Noar Hill to have a look for Duke of Burgundy. Being a 'morning butterfly', we didn't see the numbers recently reported from here, but in the end a thorough search turned up 5 males and a female. The other species seen in reasonable numbers was the Orange Tip. As always, it was great to see my first Dukes of the year. Hopefully I won't have to wait too long for them to emerge in Sussex.



by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-Apr-14 09:03 PM GMT

Ah now that's what I've been waiting for. I knew it wouldn't be too long before you posted up some wonderful D of B photo's Neil. I'm really looking forward to seeing you and hopefully some Dukes soon. 😊

All the best

B'saurs

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-Apr-14 09:08 PM GMT

It won't be long now James. I can't wait for the Sussex Dukes to emerge .... slightly more attractive than the Hampshire race to my eye. 😊  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-Apr-14 09:12 PM GMT

Well of course they live in Sussex with us! 😊😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 15-Apr-14 09:40 PM GMT

Super photos Neil. I am so glad someone got to see dukes today 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Mark Tutton, 15-Apr-14 10:31 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Shame we missed gorganus but there is always next time! Glad you caught up with 'his grace' At Noar Hill – have to say Magdalen hill looked great – won't be long before dukes are here too if Jayne has her way 😊 Catch up soon

Mark 😊

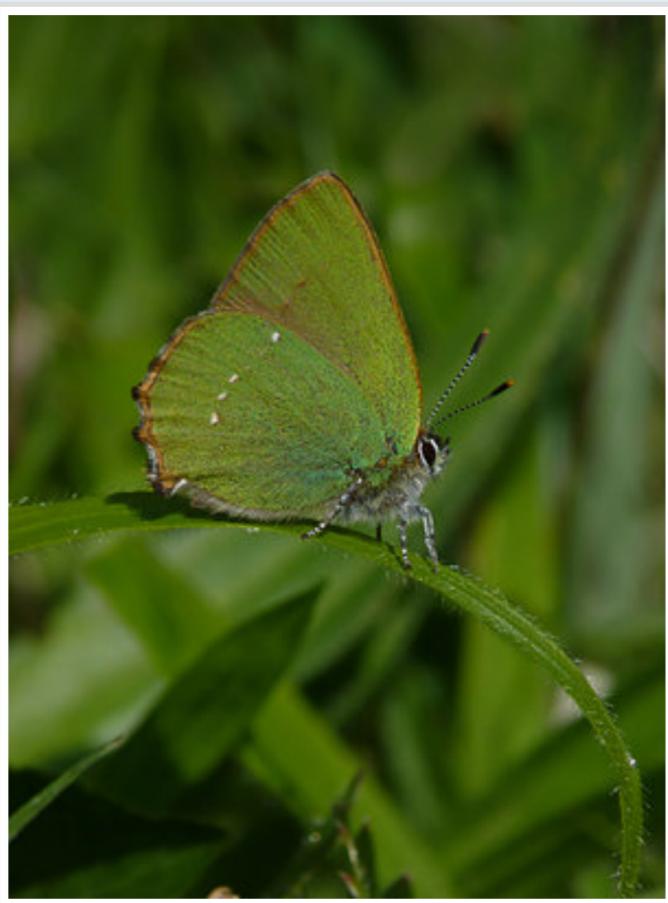
### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-Apr-14 09:30 PM GMT

#### Nature Improvement Area

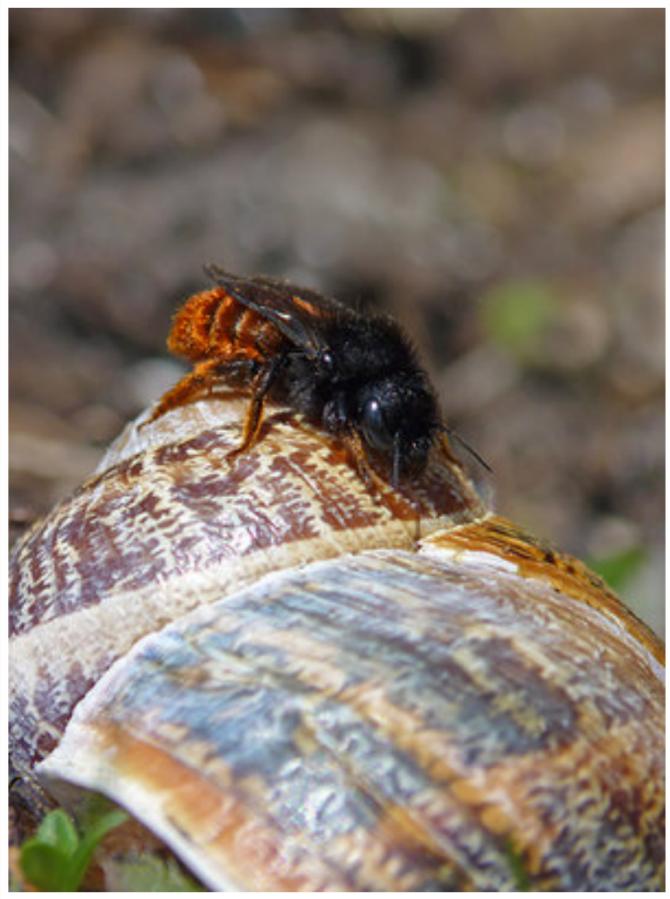
It's great to see such encouraging results so soon in the 'South Downs Way Ahead' Nature Improvement Area (NIA) project, designed and co-ordinated by the South Downs National Park Authority. This project was awarded a £608,000 DEFRA grant in spring 2012, as one of twelve successful bids for NIA status. 'South Downs Way Ahead' aims to link chalk grassland habitat along the South Downs Way between Winchester and Eastbourne, and the grant is being supplemented by other lines of funding to finance a c.£3 million plan to safeguard and enhance this endangered habitat and its associated flora and fauna, including butterflies and moths.

On Wednesday (16th April) I spent four hours surveying butterflies around the Chantry Hill area near Storrington. It took this long for two reasons; some of the slopes are 'mountain goat territory' and, more importantly, there were so many butterflies to count. Several species are reacting remarkably quickly to the habitat management work in the area. The final tally was Green Hairstreak (55), Dingy Skipper (16), Grizzled Skipper (13), Green-veined White (3), Brimstone (2), Speckled Wood (2), Small Tortoiseshell (5) and Peacock (3). Also seen were the day-flying moths *Pyrausta aurata* (10) and *P. despicata* (3).



Butterflies and moths are far from the only beneficiaries of this type of work, but they do provide a very sensitive indicator of the wider health of the ecosystem. Many other creatures are benefitting from the improving habitat, including my favourite Mason Bee *Osmia bicolor*. I saw 4 of these over an area which was cleared of scrub a couple of years ago, all searching for empty snail shells in which to lay their eggs. Once a suitable nursery is chosen,

the bee will then collect dried grasses and drop them to form a wigwam-like structure over the shell in order to camouflage it. I watched several bees checking any block of chalk which resembled a snail shell in size and proportion, crawling around it to determine whether or not it had an opening.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Katrina, 17-Apr-14 09:38 PM GMT

Beautiful photos – especially the Green Hairstreak!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 17-Apr-14 10:36 PM GMT

Excellent images, Neil.

You seem to be several steps ahead of we peasants in S.Wales.

I'm even more eager than before to do justice to these species round my way this weekend.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-Apr-14 10:53 PM GMT

Thanks Katrina and David. They make particularly nice subjects when they're still so fresh. 😊  
BWs, Neil

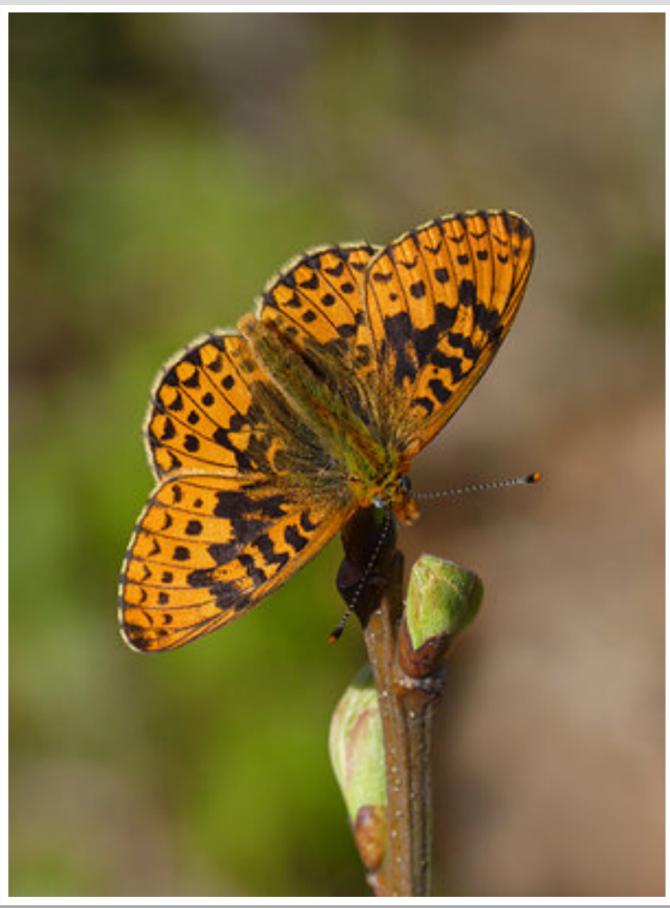
### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-Apr-14 11:34 PM GMT

#### Precious Pearls

On Wednesday afternoon (16th April) I visited Rewell Wood as it seemed about the right time for the first Pearl-bordered Fritillary of the season. I found 4 males almost immediately, as it was that time of day when they abandon the search for females and collect on ride-side Bugle flowers for a meal before bedtime. One or two were slightly 'chipped', so I suspect the first emerged here on 15th April.

Today (17th April) I returned to Rewell Wood and surveyed a large area, finding Pearl-bordered Fritillary (10), Brimstone (25), Peacock (13), Speckled Wood (10), Orange Tip (8), Green-veined White (7), Small Tortoiseshell (3), Holly Blue (2), Comma (1) and my first Speckled Yellow moth of the season. The bluebells were magnificent and are already approaching peak, this year slightly ahead of the beech leaves.



**Access to Rewell Wood:** Due to problems with cars interfering with the passage of timber vehicles, the amount of parking at the southern end of the wood (from the A27) has been reduced to a two car bay on the right-hand side before reaching the gate (SU98280730). From here walk north past the sawmill to the junction at SU984077 and turn left. You should see PBF (when numbers build in a couple of days time) on the edge of the coppice block between 200 and 350 metres along this track. At the furthest point (SU980079) there is a right turn, which you can take and walk uphill until reaching the junction of tracks and paths at SU984087. There are several blocks on the right of this path with PBF. If there is no parking available you can enter Rewell Wood via Fairmile Bottom on the A29, parking at SU983090. From here take the footpath across the open grassland area and up the slope through the trees, arriving at the aforementioned junction of tracks and paths at SU984087. Simply reverse the route described earlier. The Norfolk Estate has requested that visitors stick to this route and other public rights of way, which can be viewed on both online and hard copy maps. As always it is best to see and photograph this species towards the end of a warm, sunny day, when they will emerge from the coppice blocks to feed and sunbathe on rides and tracks. **PBF at Houghton Forest:** This species will emerge in 7 – 10 days time at Houghton Forest, in and around the large clear-fell at SU994115. There are numerous open access tracks and paths around and across this area.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-14 11:59 PM GMT

Brill shots Neil 😊 I see that you're forecasting them emerging at another site in about 7 days time – any ideas on an emergence date for Bentley Wood – was thinking of going next weekend but I'm trying to rack my brain to recall how far behind we are this far west?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Apr-14 12:07 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel,

I believe the weather is set to turn cooler and cloudier, so they *might* be out by next weekend, but I think it depends on the alleged 'warming up' from mid week onwards. I have little faith in these Snake Oil Salesmen ... sorry, I mean meteorological experts.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Apr-14 10:10 AM GMT

😂 Yes I often think it would be a lot more accurate if one of them would just stuck their head out of a window! 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by robpartridge, 18-Apr-14 11:09 AM GMT

Lovely pictures – still with a Lumix?

Rob

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Apr-14 07:09 PM GMT

Hi Rob,

I can't see myself changing from the Lumix FZ38 for a while yet. I bought a 'nearly new' example off eBay last year, so that I have one in reserve for when my original finally claps out. I have great faith in this camera for the specific purpose of butterfly and flower photography.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Apr-14 09:58 PM GMT

### Sussex Dukes Off The Mark

This afternoon (18th April) I visited Heyshott Escarpment to see if the first Duke of Burgundy had emerged, despite believing it to still be a day or two too early. The Pearl-bordered Fritillary has only just started at Rewell Wood, and this event usually precedes the appearance of His Grace by a week or more. On the lower levels of the reserve I saw a Holly Blue, Orange Tip, Brimstone and a couple of Speckled Wood. As I reached the more open grassland area there was little activity in the chill breeze and I counted only a couple of Dingy and a single Grizzled Skipper before reaching the plateau.

However, as I dropped down into some sheltered pits I found a perfect male Duke waiting for me. His lack of agility and mint appearance suggested a very recent emergence. He was sitting within a few metres of where the two or three (at best) males used to congregate at Heyshott when the Duke was teetering on the brink of local extinction, before operations began to save it here in 2007. Bearing in mind the effort I've put into conserving this species on my own patch, it is hardly surprising that this sighting meant much more to me than the half dozen Dukes I saw at Noar Hill on 15th April. Now that their flight season is underway I just hope the weather is as kind to the Duke, PBF and Wood White as it has been to the Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone and Orange Tip.



Grizzled Skipper



The original Duke lek at Heyshott

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 18-Apr-14 10:46 PM GMT

Me too. The weather has been good this spring—so far. But we are now nearing the 'business end' of the spring season, when the weather really matters.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-14 11:29 PM GMT

Cheers for the info Neil – but go steady there – you might wake the Hibernating Harrison with that derision of a weather man 😊 Good to see the Grizzles – I got some myself today. Here's hoping the weather doesn't do a 2012 on us 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by John W, 19-Apr-14 12:25 AM GMT

Hi Neil, presumably the Dukes at Kithurst Hill tend to emerge a bit later due to it being higher up?

Cheers

John

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-Apr-14 07:17 AM GMT

Hi John,  
Yes, Kithurst (Springhead) is a late site. Given 'average' spring weather between now and then, local ETA is c.26th/27th April for this year.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Apr-14 06:00 PM GMT

### Easter Skipper Hunt

On Easter Sunday (20th April) I went out looking for roosting spring Skippers, despite the really atrocious weather. By the time I reached Chantry Hill near Storrington it was raining hard and a thick mist was filling the downland coombes. To make matters worse I'd left my glasses at home! However, I was confident of success; once you get to know the typical locations in which they roost, a systematic search usually locates a few.

It wasn't long before I'd found half a dozen Grizzled Skipper, including a pair sharing a 'hardhead'. Despite providing a beautiful composition it proved almost impossible to get a good image, due to low light levels. The Panasonic Lumix is a brilliant camera for butterfly photography under average or better light conditions, but the small sensor means that image quality falls to pieces on very dull days. In the end I spent the entire day hoping that the sun would appear before we were due to head off to a birthday party at 6.30 pm. At 5 pm the skies started to brighten and I made a mad dash back to the Downs .... they were still there.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Lee Hurrell, 21-Apr-14 10:27 PM GMT

Well worth the return trip, Neil. 😊

They look a bit sad with their droopy antennae. Mind you, so would I if I had been out in the rain all day!

Best wishes,

Lee

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Apr-14 07:48 AM GMT

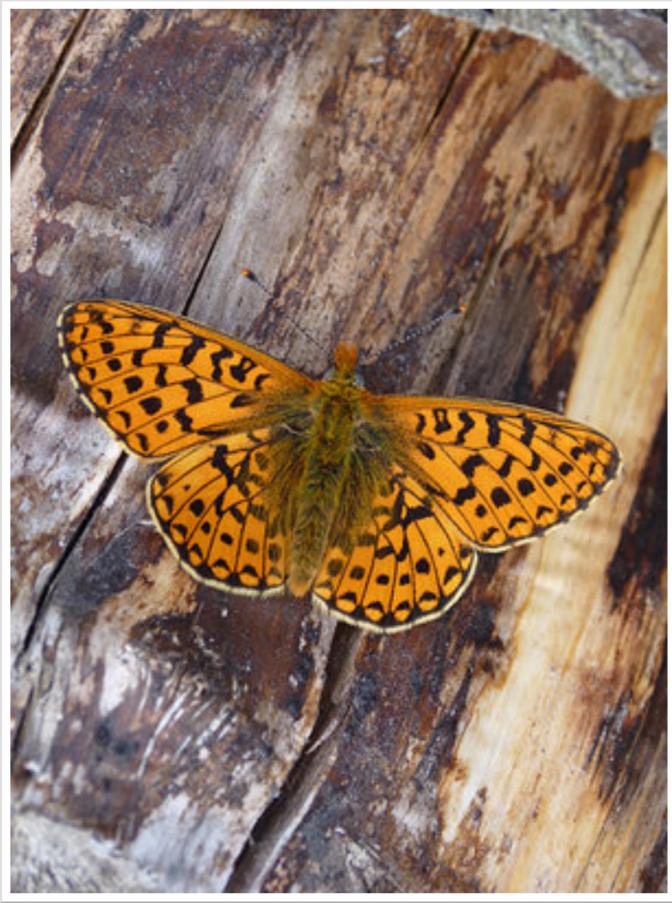
Thanks Lee,  
I managed a few more shots which are better illuminated, taken just before the sun dipped below the crest of the Downs above, but I'll save those for a 'rainy day'.  
Those antennae droop like that as they fall asleep, usually within a minute or two of landing when collecting to roost in poor weather or at bedtime on a sunny evening.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Apr-14 10:48 PM GMT

## Quid Pro Quo

After photographing a female Emperor Moth at Springhead Hill this morning (22nd April) I gave accurate directions to its location to Colin Knight, who had only just started his Transect walk at Mill Hill when I 'phoned him. I then moved on to Rewell Wood to survey for Pearl-bordered Fritillary, seeing a total of 30 males over two areas. Whilst there I received a call from Colin, informing me that he had found the Emperor. The even better news was that it was now being attended by a male! With the nursery run looming I just had time to speed back to Springhead to snap the happy couple!





### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 22-Apr-14 11:05 PM GMT

Neil, you never cease to amaze.

Fantastic shot of the two Emperors.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Apr-14 11:21 PM GMT

Thanks David, but Colin must take credit for alerting me to the sexy saturniids!  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 23-Apr-14 07:25 PM GMT

#### Dukes & Dingies

Today (23rd April) required much patience, as the wayward weather forecast failed to predict the complete lack of sunshine over Heyshott from mid morning to late afternoon, not to mention the sporadic drizzle. Luckily, just enough warmth occasionally bled through the clouds to get a few butterflies airborne, but it was well after 2 pm before things really got going. Earlier in the day I met UKBers Susie (plus Butterfly Hound) and Katrina, both of whom had already located a few Dukes. Fortunately, Katrina had the location of a freshly emerged, roosting male marked (thanks!), so it wasn't long before I had some reasonable shots in the bag.

Later in the afternoon I started to find a few more Duke of Burgundy and many more Dingy Skipper, finishing with counts of 10 and 23 respectively. There is clearly a sizeable hatch of both species underway and it would be well worth a visit this coming weekend if the weather behaves. Other species were in short supply, with just single Grizzled Skipper, Red Admiral, Orange Tip and Speckled Wood seen.

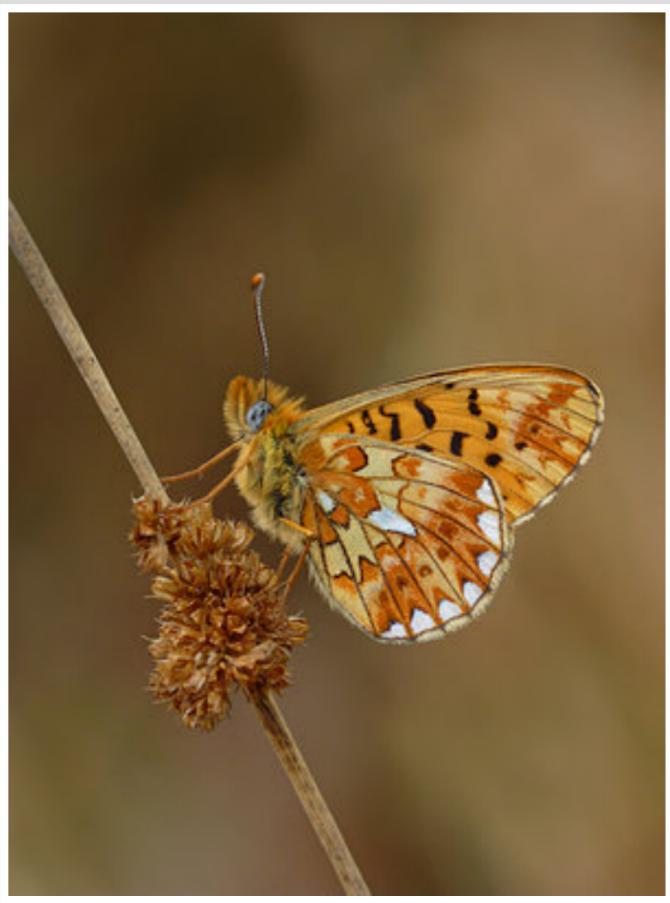


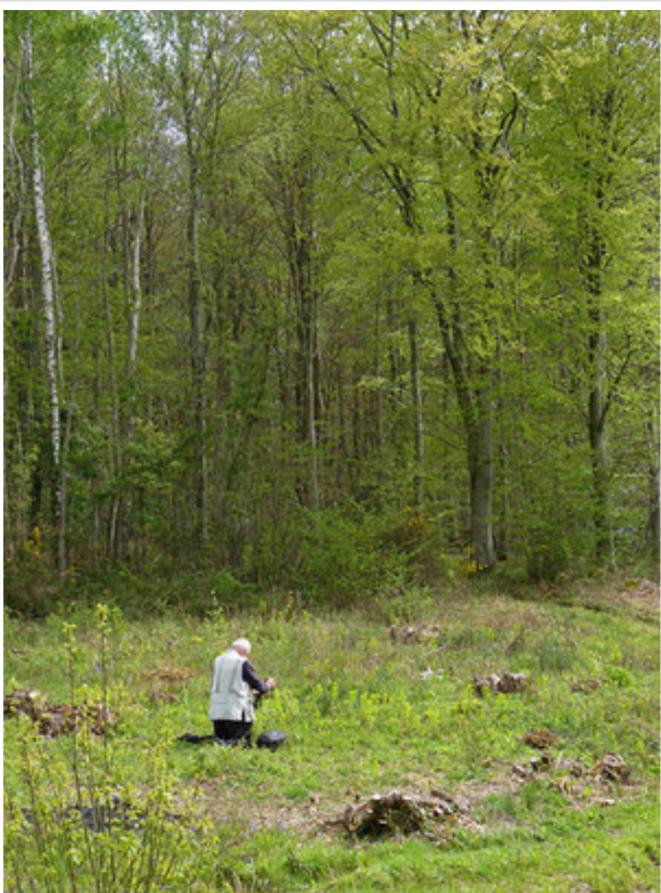
## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Apr-14 08:50 AM GMT

### Plenty Of Pearls

Yesterday (24th April), with the help of my father, I performed a thorough survey of Rewell Wood, recording Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF) over six discrete areas. By returning to finish off with a couple of 'new' coppice blocks in the evening, I ended up with a tally of just over 100 PBF. This is very much in line with counts over recent years, but this total has been achieved significantly earlier in the flight season, with only a single female recorded. This gives some indication that the species is set to do well at Rewell this year. On sunny days (particularly early/mid morning and later in the afternoon) plenty can be seen nectaring on bugle and dandelion beside the tracks, along the route described under my 17th April posting. I suspect there are plenty more yet to emerge. While counting Pearls it was nice to see good numbers of Peacock, Brimstone, Green-veined White and Orange Tip along the way.





'The Old Man' at work

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Apr-14 01:11 PM GMT

### Evening Argus

An early evening (26th April) visit to Chantry Hill at Storrington to look for roosting Grizzled and Dingy Skippers (I found about half a dozen of each) produced my first (2) Brown Argus of the year.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by badgerbob, 27-Apr-14 02:36 PM GMT

Wonderful to see the blues are starting to appear!! Adonis soon. Great stuff.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 28-Apr-14 08:32 PM GMT

### Another Grizzly

I suffered a frustrating wait for the clouds to part during a short, morning visit to Chantry Hill today (28th April). I found plenty of butterflies at roost (mainly Dingy and Grizzled Skipper) and just needed the sun to show its face in order to see a couple of species in their full glory, including freshly emerged Brown Argus and my first Small Copper of the year. With literally a couple of minutes to go before I had to leave, the sun broke through with force and I was suddenly surrounded by squadrons of dog-fighting butterflies, adding Green Hairstreak, Orange Tip, Green-veined White, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock to the list. In the end I only managed to photograph (yet another) Grizzled Skipper, but they're one of my favourite species and I can't get enough of them!



### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 28-Apr-14 09:45 PM GMT

These cool and cloudy conditions seem to play into your hands from a photography perspective, Neil.

Once again, top drawer images.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 28-Apr-14 09:55 PM GMT

Thanks David. Yes, once you 'get your eye in' it's quite straightforward finding butterflies at roost, and then they're sitting ducks! Plenty of time to examine them closely and pick out the really fresh ones, and then just wait for a little sunshine. While waiting, eat sarnies, lie back in the grass and listen to the Cuckoo or Corn Bunting. A lovely time of year, but a little more sunshine would be welcome at the moment.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 28-Apr-14 09:57 PM GMT

I think I understand you, Neil.

I went out yesterday in heavy cloud and got images of Green Hairstreaks I never thought I could obtain.

They were torpid to the point of sleepiness and it was a real lesson – take a chance and venture out when conditions are far less than ideal and you may get richly rewarded.

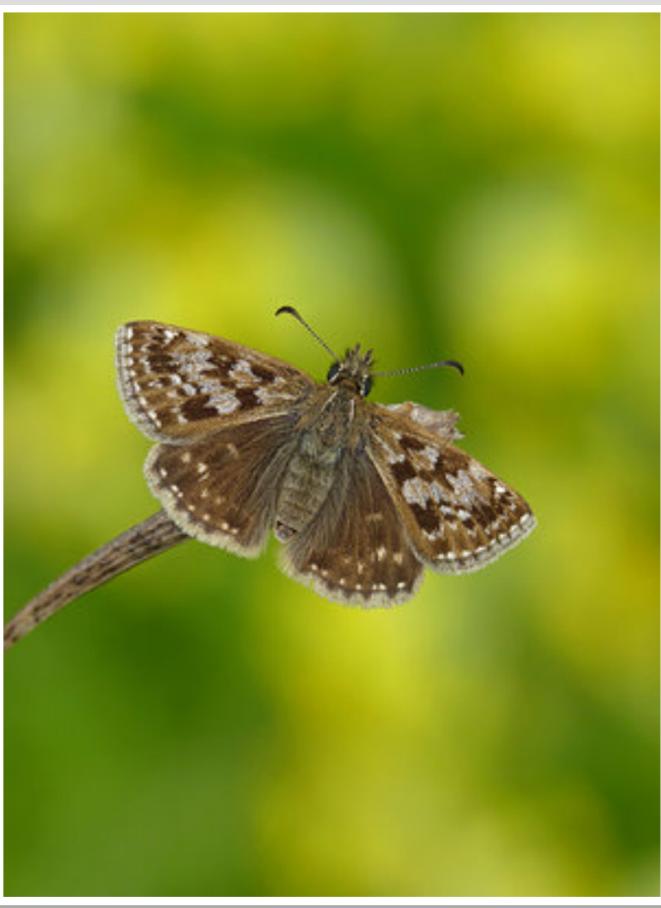
### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Apr-14 11:31 PM GMT

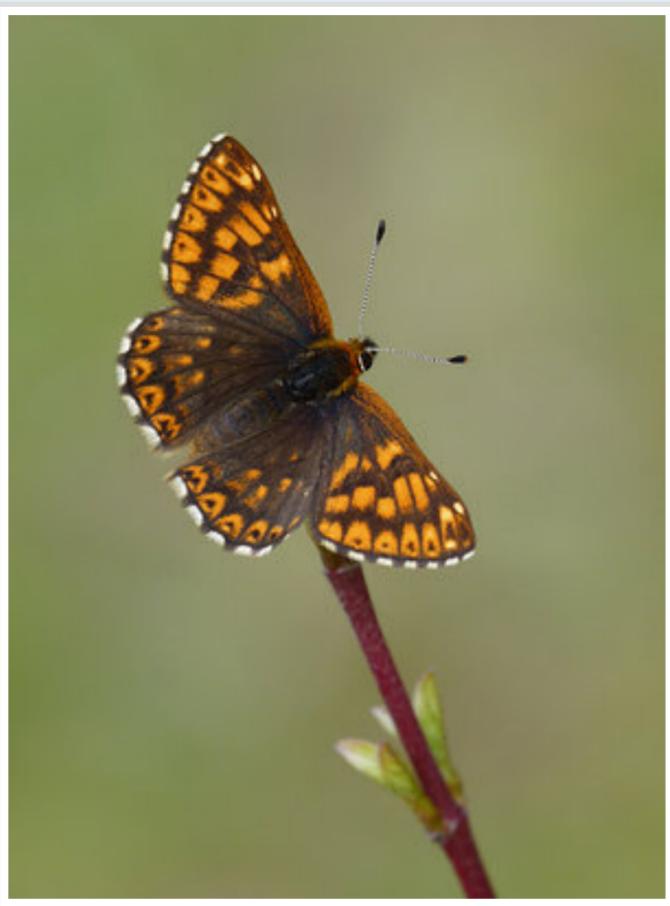
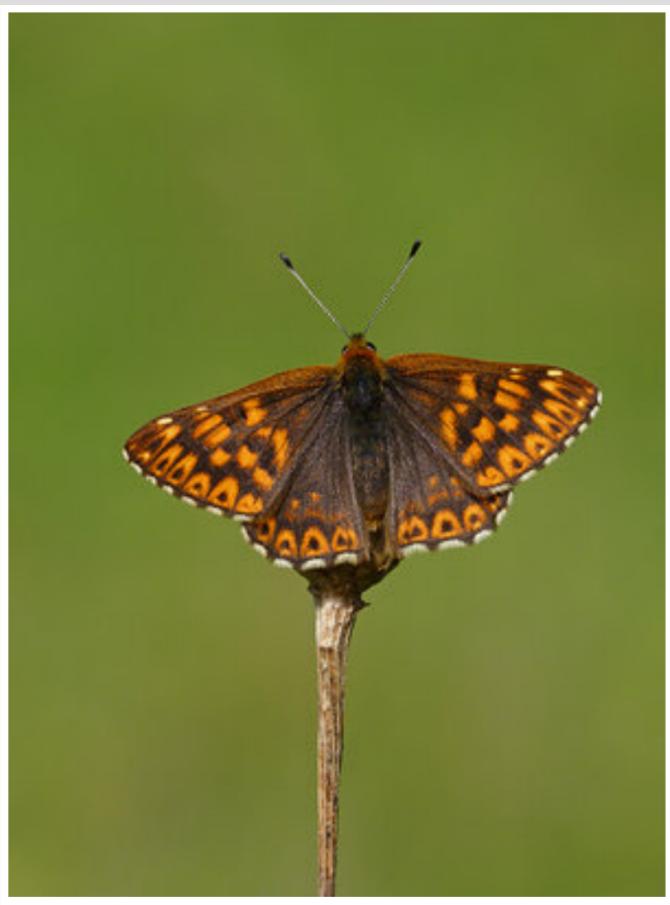
#### Heyshott Magic (Part 1)

Today (29th April) was one of those days when all the hard graft put in throughout the winter at Heyshott was repaid by the bucket load. After a cloudy start things just got better and better, until they just couldn't get any better!

I stopped off in the lowermost pit by the 'Camel's Humps' and old limekilns (hidden under trees) in the hope of seeing a Duke of Burgundy here; their arrival is eagerly anticipated following management work over the last few years. Although I didn't see any Dukes I did find a couple of Dingy Skipper roosting on the hardheads. As the sun started to bleed through the clouds they were encouraged to pose nicely, before I headed further up the slope and onto the open grassland area.



As the clouds parted things really began to happen and Dingy Skippers started to come thick and fast, followed by Dukes. These were by far the most numerous species. Of the 23 Duke of Burgundy I counted, 21 were male. Before the sunshine won through later in the afternoon, periodic cloudy and cool conditions ensured that many of the males became torpid between spells of frenetic activity. Although I spent some time photographing them, I also took the opportunity to marvel at their beauty through my Pentax Papilio close-focus binoculars, from point blank range. This butterfly is every bit as good as the Purple Emperor! But I had come specifically to find a Duchess ....

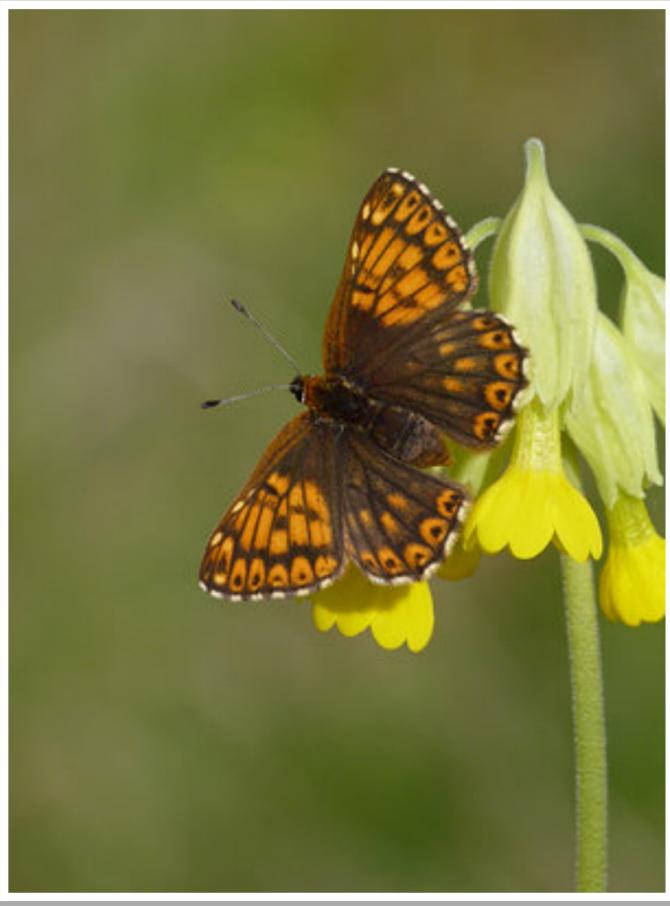


## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-Apr-14 07:52 AM GMT

### Heyshott Magic (Part 2)

After searching the western flank of the reserve, hoping for signs of colonisation, I walked back across to the Duke of Burgundy 'hotspot' and the oldest lek on the slopes. Sitting there waiting for me was precisely what I had hoped for; a lovely pair sitting on a cowslip, as photographed here by Mark Cadey and Gary Faulkner a few days previously. After watching them for about 20 minutes they parted and went their separate ways. I followed the female as I was particularly interested in her behaviour. After a very brief spell of sunbathing she found some thick scrub to lay up in while her eggs mature. It's always great to see the next generation of this rarity in the making.





## Re: Neil Hulme

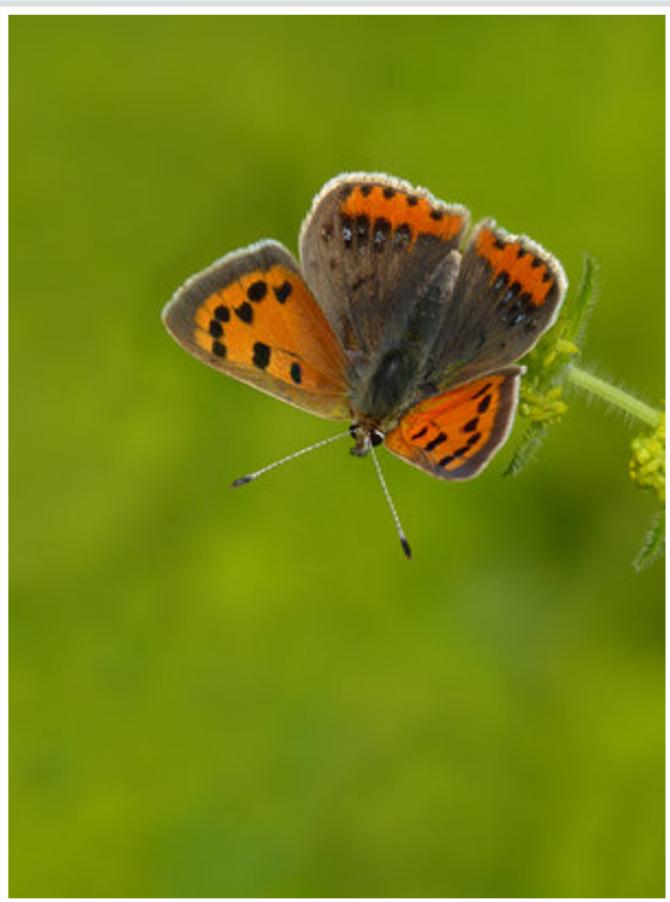
by Neil Hulme, 30-Apr-14 09:00 PM GMT

### Far And Wide

This morning (30th April) I paid a brief visit to woodland near Arundel, before spending the rest of the day surveying butterflies around the Storrington area for the 'South Downs Way Ahead' Nature Improvement Area project.

Highlights at the first site included my first woodland Duke of Burgundy of the year, 6 freshly emerged Grizzled Skipper, a Fox Moth and my first (2) Drab Looper of the season. I then moved on to Springhead (a.k.a. Kithurst) Hill where up to 4 male Duke of Burgundy are currently holding territory in the meadow. Further along the Downs at Chantry Hill there were numerous Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak, and a few very tired looking Red Admiral (3) and Painted Lady (1), suggesting a modest influx from the south. As I finished my count for the day I watched 3 beautiful Small Copper males catching the last rays of sun.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 30-Apr-14 09:09 PM GMT

Neil, if I'm ever fortunate enough to bump into you again like I did in Botany Bay last July I'm going to demand to know how you take such photographs with an identical camera to mine!!!

Magnificent images once again.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 30-Apr-14 09:59 PM GMT

Those Dukes are superb Neil – the duchess is positively swollen with eggs 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-May-14 08:59 AM GMT

Thanks David and William. One of the key elements to getting plenty of good shots is having the luxury of time. Another is making sure you are in the right place at the right time, so I would always rate 'field-craft' as being much more important than technical knowhow, particularly since many cameras (particularly bridge cameras) are virtually idiot proof these days.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Paul Wetton, 01-May-14 04:19 PM GMT

The shots are particularly great Neil as you manage to get the entire foreground crisp and sharp with sufficient depth of field but manage to get a wonderfully coloured and blurred background. I love them.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-May-14 07:50 AM GMT

Thanks Paul. The FZ38 and close-up lens is a great combination specifically for butterflies and plants, assuming average to good light conditions. The only other option I'd personally look at is the FZ200, but the newer model simply provides additional benefits and functions that I don't really require. I doubt that it would give me better images of the type I'm after. I recently bought an unused FZ38 off eBay for £140, which will hopefully serve me long into the future. That's ridiculously cheap for such a piece of kit. As you point out, this set-up seems to give sufficient DOF to allow good focus across antennae and wing-tips, while allowing for soft OOF backgrounds.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-May-14 05:29 PM GMT

### Moths And Bluebells

This morning (3rd May) I only had time for a brief spin around Rewell Wood and a lightening stop at Springhead Hill. I made a quick count of Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Duke of Burgundy but photographed neither, having snapped away at plenty in the last couple of weeks. However, I did stop for this very pretty Clay Triple-lines at Rewell, and took the opportunity to photograph the gorgeous bluebells before they are over.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Buchan Boy, 03-May-14 06:14 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Great shots as always, just wondering if you've had a chance to see how the Pearl-bordered's are progressing at the Houghton Forest site you mentioned a few posts back.

I'm being a tad lazy and should be down there at some point in the coming week, I'm intrigued.

Thanks

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-May-14 06:59 PM GMT

Thanks Dave. If not already out, PBF should emerge tomorrow at Houghton, assuming they have got through ... it's a very small population. BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 04-May-14 10:29 PM GMT

#### Back On Form

Like most Duke of Burgundy sites, Heyshott Escarpment suffered a set-back in the spring of 2012, as the sun barely shone through the flight season. However, this morning (4th May) I was left in no doubt that the population has almost recovered to its 2011 level. I started surveying with John Murray of the Murray Downland Trust, and by the time he left me, after we had only counted through the pits up the eastern margin of the reserve, we had already seen 26 Dukes. After 3.5 hours I finished with a tally of 59, including 5 females, 2 mating pairs and a dead male in a spider's web. I saw a bundle of 6 males in combat on the plateau and estimate that c.30% of the insects were no more than a day old. Many were still unsteady on damp wings. There are probably many more to emerge and it is already looking like a very good year for the site.

It was also gratifying to see a freshly emerged (male) Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF); probably the same individual as spotted here yesterday by B. rex. This species reappeared at Heyshott last year, for the first time since the 1990s. It is quite unusual to see a PBF continually scrapping with Dingy (c.70) and Grizzled Skippers (11)!

It wasn't just Dukes that were hatching this morning. I saw a total of 9 Green Hairstreak on the slopes, the majority of which were scale-perfect. In previous years I've only seen them in twos and threes here.

Other species seen today included Brimstone (6), Green-veined White (3), Peacock (2), Speckled Wood (2) and Orange Tip (1).

Greater Butterfly, White Helleborine and Fly Orchid are all now in bud, while Early Purple Orchid is flowering in good numbers.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Katrina, 04-May-14 11:15 PM GMT

Excellent news Neil ! I am very tempted to go back and have a look at the abundance of Dukes.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 04-May-14 11:23 PM GMT

Hi Katrina,

They're everywhere now - even up on the steepest part of the slope well above the chalk heart plateau. Please let me know if you see any PBF when you next go.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Susie, 05-May-14 08:54 AM GMT

Excellent news. Great photos. And I'll too be back this week if weather holds 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 05-May-14 12:13 PM GMT

Such a shame I missed you at Heyshott Neil, seeing that PBF on Saturday was a very nice surprise, hopefully some more will arrive in due course. If I'm unable to make it back there again this year I hope we can meet there next spring.

All the best

B'saurus

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-May-14 09:48 AM GMT

### A Day In The Woods

On Monday (5th May) I spent a very enjoyable day with my daughter in the woods around Arundel. We didn't see the Grizzly Bear she had hoped for, but did see plenty of Brimstone, Orange Tip, Green-veined White and Peacock in Houghton Forest. No sign of Pearl-bordered Fritillary yet and we are very keen to hear of any sightings here. Along the ride edge at SU993117 we did see an almost black Dingy Skipper, and very extensive larval feeding damage on Greater Burdock, caused by the nationally scarce Spotted White Plume (*Pterophorus galactodactyla*). We saw plenty of the same in Rewell Wood.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-May-14 10:17 AM GMT

### Heyshott Goes Into Overdrive

Yesterday (9th May) I visited Heyshott Escarpment in challenging conditions, with a fierce westerly blowing across the face of the slope. This made for a slow start, as Duke of Burgundy in particular hates the wind. However, with each of the increasingly frequent sunny spells, more appeared, many having only just emerged. In just two of the small hollows I counted a total of 19 Dukes. One of these pits, which contained just 2 males during my last survey, now held 11, although there is likely to be some movement between areas in response to such a strong wind. By mid afternoon there were plenty of fresh females around, under the now clear blue skies. Duke of Burgundy was the most numerous species on site, although it's neck-and-neck with Dingy Skipper.

For the first time this season there was definitely more than just a single Pearl-bordered Fritillary around, with a minimum of 2 male and 1 female. Small Heath and Common Blue both started to appear during the six happy hours I spent on the hill. It wasn't just the butterflies that performed well; Heyshott is also great for downland flowers, and the Fly Orchid I spotted last week is just beginning to bloom. Best of all, with the exception of one visitor during the morning, I had the place to myself.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 10-May-14 12:54 PM GMT

**"Neil Hulme" wrote:**

Duke of Burgundy was the most numerous species on site....

Not a remark seen very often but a highly satisfying one no doubt, Neil?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 12-May-14 10:30 PM GMT

Yes David, very satisfying. We just need to replicate this success on a few more sites now. 😊  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 12-May-14 10:51 PM GMT

**Gimme Shelter**

On Sunday (11th May) it was still blowing a hooley, so I attempted to get out of the wind by dropping into the deep coombes along the Downs near

Storrington. Although there were plenty of butterflies to enjoy, photographing them was near-impossible. Numbers of Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak remain very impressive here, but it was the new arrivals I was keen to get a closer look at. Brown Argus, Common Blue, Small Copper and Small Heath are all beginning to appear more frequently. Just as the butterflies began to settle down to roost the wind occasionally abated, if only for very short periods. Eventually, more by luck than judgement, I managed to get a few reasonable shots.

1,2,4 Brown Argus  
3 Common Blue





## Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 12-May-14 11:23 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil. Storrington downs sound like a great site. With better weather forecast,could be a great place to visit the next few days,though not for me,unfortunately...

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-May-14 10:22 PM GMT

### Butterflies Perform For Visitors

Today (14th May) I joined a few Sussex Branch committee members in showing BC CEO Martin Warren and Senior Regional Officer Dan Hoare around a few sites where conservation work has proven particularly successful in recent years. Our visitors could not have chosen a better day and the Downs and Weald looked stunning in the warm spring sunshine. Heyshott Escarpment was our first port of call and it produced the goods in truly spectacular fashion.

A less-than-thorough survey of the site produced 104 Duke of Burgundy, 6 Pearl-bordered Fritillary (incl. an egg-laying female), c.60 Dingy Skipper, 5 Grizzled Skipper, 4 Green Hairstreak, 8 Common Blue, 4 Brimstone, 2 Green-veined White, 1 Orange Tip, 2 Red Admiral, 2 Peacock, 5 Small Heath and 2 Speckled Wood. Moths included Burnet Companion, Common Heath and Speckled Yellow. Orchids were numerous, topped by Fly (both normal type and green-flowered), Greater Butterfly and White Helleborine.

Further stops included Rewell Wood and Springhead Hill, where more PBF and Duke of Burgundy were seen together with the first Small Blue of the day. We finished the tour at Chantry Hill with plenty of spring skippers, Brown Argus and Small Copper. As we sat on a small plateau, catching our breath after a steep, final ascent, we looked down upon the canopy of an ash tree in which 13 Green Hairstreak were enjoying the late afternoon sun, including a mating pair. Sussex did us proud today.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 14-May-14 10:30 PM GMT

#### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

A less-than-thorough survey of the site produced 104 Duke of Burgundy...

That's an almost unbelievable statistic, Neil.

Is this the best site in the UK for DoB?

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-May-14 10:42 PM GMT

Hi David,  
It really depends on how you assess that. For instance, Butser Hill and Porton Down can claim larger populations, but they are really large metapopulated sites, with several/many population centres spread over a wide area. As a small, compact, discrete, single site I doubt that Heyshott can be beaten. It supports a remarkable population in terms of Dukes per square metre! They are still emerging. The record count for the site of 115 was made here in 2011 by Dan Hoare and me, searching in a more thorough and paced manner. That record will fall this May.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 14-May-14 11:28 PM GMT

#### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

The record count for the site of 115 was made here in 2011 by Dan Hoare and me, searching in a more thorough and paced manner. That record will fall this May.

BWs, Neil

Magnificent stuff, Neil. All that hard work during the winter is seemingly now paying big dividends.

I look forward to hearing about the new record count.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-May-14 10:27 PM GMT

#### Wet Skippers And Orchids

Skipping back to Tuesday 13th May, just before this spell of wonderful sunny weather, I spent most of the day dodging showers. From high ground these could be seen as localised but widespread over much of the Weald and Downs. After getting thoroughly soaked for the second time I headed to Fairmile Bottom (near Rewell Wood) to look at a group of a dozen beautiful Fly Orchids. I then returned to Chantry Hill to photograph more wet skippers. Six weeks into their season Grizzled Skippers are still emerging. The Dingy Skipper is having an excellent year in Sussex and outnumbers all

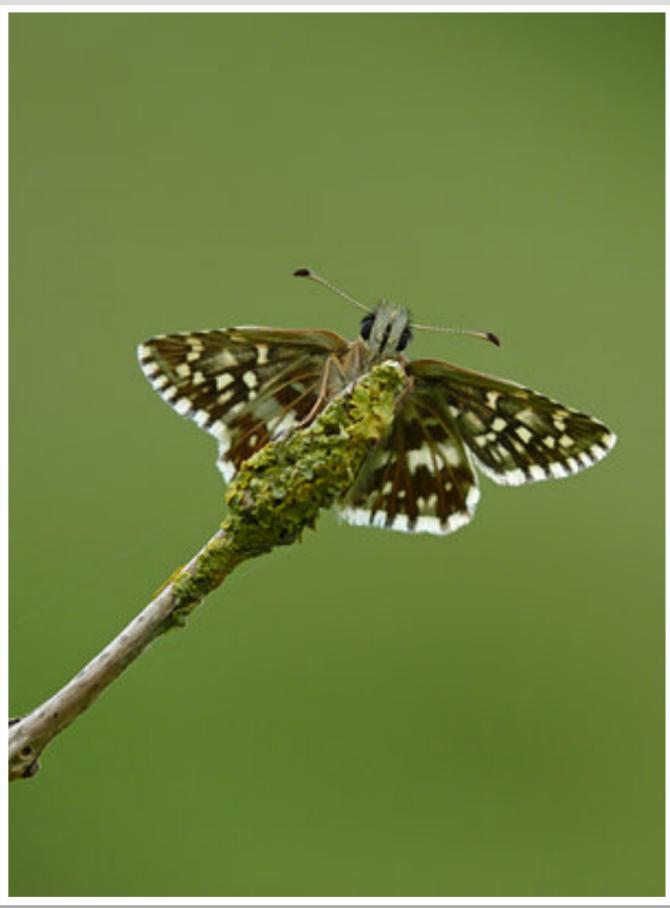
else on most sites.

1 Fly Orchid

2,3,4 Grizzled Skipper

5 Dingy Skipper





by Wurzel, 15-May-14 11:38 PM GMT

That Dingy Skipper shot is absolutely stunning 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-May-14 06:27 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. 😊

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 16-May-14 07:01 AM GMT

That Fly Orchid is great 😊 and lovely rich colours on the first Grizzled 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-May-14 07:45 AM GMT

Thanks William. Yesterday evening I returned to have a look at the Fly Orchids with my father. So here's a different plant, photographed in different light.

BWs, Neil



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-May-14 08:54 AM GMT

#### ***Gorganus* Alert**

Following the April sightings of (IMO) British-born *gorganus* (European) Swallowtail at Magdalen Hill Down (Hants.) and Seabrook (Kent), another was seen a couple of days ago at the ARC Pit, Scotney, on the Kent/East Sussex border. The pupae being monitored in a Chichester garden (no access possible) have apparently started to colour up. Be ready for the big event of the 2014 butterfly season as things hot up over the next few weeks.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Pauline, 16-May-14 09:47 AM GMT

Thanks for early warning Neil. Please continue to keep us informed.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by FISHiEE, 16-May-14 09:55 AM GMT

Just in time for when I fly out to Norway on Wednesday for a week. Doh!

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-May-14 10:56 AM GMT

### The Importance Of Being A Recorder

Although the work party season only lasts for 6 months of the year, the conservation of butterflies is a year-round occupation. It's pretty obvious how we can assist butterflies and moths by helping to control scrub on downland sites, or by clearing open spaces in woodlands, but perhaps less obvious is the important contribution made by recording through the summer months. The value of those records collected while out photographing, or just observing and enjoying butterflies, cannot be over-stated. It is, of course, vital to either submit them to your BC Branch online (if such a system exists in your area), or send them to your local Recording Officer in a more traditional format at the end of the season, otherwise they are of little use. All of this will come as second nature to many, but there are probably many others who don't appreciate the contribution they could be making to the conservation cause.

A good example of this came yesterday (16th May), when I joined Colin Knight, Mike Mullis and Paul Day to cover some very steep and difficult slopes around Harting Down, in the far west of West Sussex. Here, BC Sussex has worked closely with the National Trust to monitor and manage the habitat for the Duke of Burgundy over many years. More recently, the site has been further improved as part of the national BC 'Dukes on the Edge' project led by Dan Hoare.

From the data we collected yesterday, it is clear that the butterfly is now beginning to spread its wings and become more mobile, which is essential if it is to persist on these slopes in the longer term. Of the 24 Dukes we counted, 11 were outside the steep-sided coombe they have traditionally occupied, where targeted habitat management has encouraged the population to expand and become more adventurous.

Now that we know the precise locations to which they have moved, we can target future habitat management to ensure that scrub conditions and food-plant density are suitable on an ongoing basis.

Thanks go to Colin, Mike and Paul for helping with the search, but I suspect that reward enough came with just being in such a beautiful and unspoilt location, far from the crowds and with traffic noise replaced by the magical sound of a nearby cuckoo.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-May-14 07:49 AM GMT

### Gorganus Alert - We're Off The Mark!

The following is an update posted to the BC Sussex website by our dedicated Member for Europe, Michael Blencowe:



Something has survived... Last year's great summer weather encouraged Continental Swallowtails to cross The Channel and visit Sussex. Sussex Butterfly Conservation asked the people of Sussex to look out for these distinctive caterpillars in their gardens. We were amazed to discover that Swallowtails had laid eggs on carrots and fennel and their caterpillars (the first reported in the county since the 1940's) were munching away in gardens and allotments. With the kind co-operation of the gardeners we were able to track the caterpillar's progress and tracked them as they pupated in their chosen habitats - an unprecedented opportunity. We've monitored 13 pupae at sites across the county for the past 9 months. Sussex BC members will

have read the full story in our 2013 Annual Report.

But the question was could we be able to prove that Continental Swallowtails can survive a Sussex winter? This weekend we were privileged to witness the first of these Swallowtails emerging – a truly magnificent sight as they took to the Sussex skies. Could this be the first step in the colonisation of Sussex by Continental Swallowtails? There must be many more pupae out there that we don't know about so keep your eyes peeled over the coming weeks and let us know if you see any of these beautiful butterflies in Sussex. (Michael Blencowe)

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 19-May-14 08:26 AM GMT

Wonderfully exciting news!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 19-May-14 09:12 AM GMT

That sounds fantastic Neil 😊 How do they that they were specifically migrants from the continent and not releases from captive breeders?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-May-14 09:20 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

All of the information which shows very clearly that they're the offspring of bona fide immigrants is spread around the BC Sussex website (Sightings page 2013), the BC Sussex Annual Report (full story), an excellent and detailed account in the latest supplement to Colin Pratt's 'A Complete History of the Butterflies and Moths of Sussex' and accounts in my own UKB diary. There's a huge amount of information out there, but a synthesis of the above is very much a winter job!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 19-May-14 09:28 AM GMT

Cheers Neil – I'll make a note and then settle down for a good read come November, I like to be busy 😊

Have a goodun

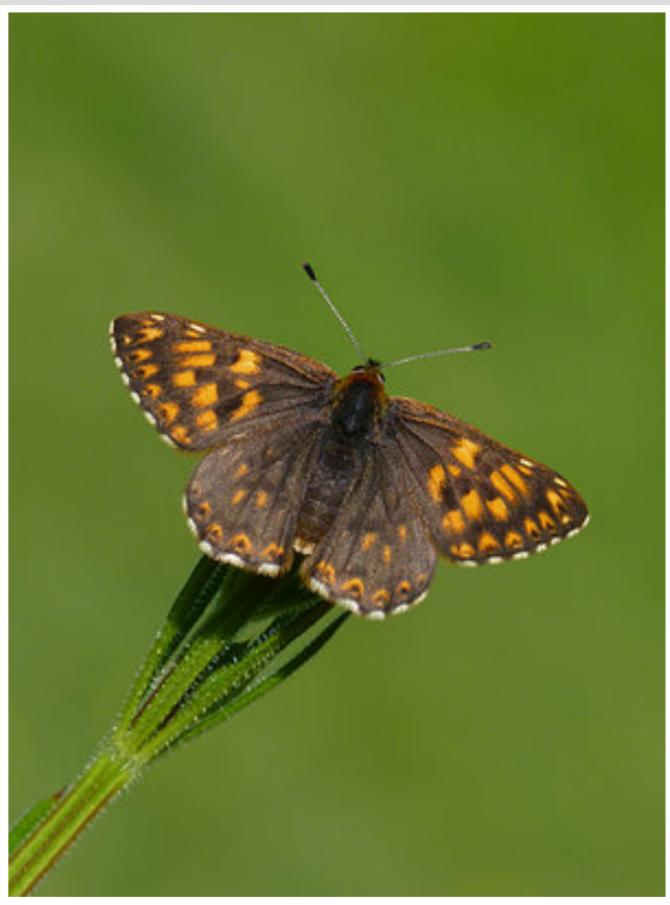
Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-May-14 09:27 PM GMT

#### Dukes Thriving

On Sunday (18th May) I searched numerous sites along the Downs near Storrington, both with public access and on private estates. The news for the Duke of Burgundy is good and my composite count easily beat my best C21st figures for the area, with an encouraging 119 seen. My running Sussex total for the species this year stands at just below 800, which compares very well with the entire 2003 Sussex count of just 8!



Later in the day, when the counting was over, I took a walk through Rewell Wood. Most of the butterflies were already tucked up in bed, but I did notice a dragonfly which wasn't one of the resident Hairys. After carefully stalking it to get a better look, I was surprised to see it was an early Black-tailed Skimmer. I assumed it was a teneral male, but local dragonfly expert John Luck informed me it's a fully mature female. These things are far more confusing than butterflies!



## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 19-May-14 09:45 PM GMT

### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

Something has survived... Last year's great summer weather encouraged Continental Swallowtails to cross The Channel and visit Sussex. Sussex Butterfly Conservation asked the people of Sussex to look out for these distinctive caterpillars in their gardens. We were amazed to discover that Swallowtails had laid eggs on carrots and fennel and their caterpillars (the first reported in the county since the 1940's) were munching away in gardens and allotments. With the kind co-operation of the gardeners we were able to track the caterpillar's progress and tracked them as they pupated in their chosen habitats – an unprecedented opportunity. We've monitored 13 pupae at sites across the county for the past 9 months. Sussex BC members will have read the full story in our 2013 Annual Report.

But the question was could we be able to prove that Continental Swallowtails can survive a Sussex winter? This weekend we were privileged to witness the first of these Swallowtails emerging – a truly magnificent sight as they took to the Sussex skies. Could this be the first step in the colonisation of Sussex by Continental Swallowtails? There must be many more pupae out there that we don't know about so keep your eyes peeled over the coming weeks and let us know if you see any of these beautiful butterflies in Sussex. (Michael Blencowe)

This is a really interesting development.

I've always found it hard to comprehend how Swallowtails can thrive in East Anglia yet the British sub-species' continental cousins (which are far less habitat choosy) struggle to gain a foothold here.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if this glorious species colonised the southern parts of our islands? Even more intriguing would be if they did so and wandered north east to meet their *britannicus* brethren.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by ABerryman, 19-May-14 10:37 PM GMT

On Sunday (18th May) I searched numerous sites along the Downs near Storrington, both with public access and on private estates. The news for the Duke of Burgundy is good and my composite count easily beat my best C21st figures for the area, with an encouraging 119 seen. My running Sussex total for the species this year stands at just below 800, which compares very well with the entire 2003 Sussex count of just 8!

Great stuff Neil, the work you put into these butterflies is very admirable. Let's hope other species fare as well this year...

Wouldn't it be wonderful if this glorious species colonised the southern parts of our islands? Even more intriguing would be if they did so and wandered north east to meet their *britannicus* brethren.

I wonder whether the two sub.sp would be able to hybridise if the opportunity arose?

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 19-May-14 11:45 PM GMT

"ABerryman" wrote:

I wonder whether the two sub.sp would be able to hybridise if the opportunity arose?

One would assume so, but the interesting factor would be how they would reconcile their habitat differences – the British sub-species is an evolutionary work in progress and might well be adversely affected by in-breeding with a wider countryside cousin that seemingly cannot successfully overwinter in the UK.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Andy Wilson, 20-May-14 10:05 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

One would assume so, but the interesting factor would be how they would reconcile their habitat differences – the British sub-species is an evolutionary work in progress and might well be adversely affected by in-breeding with a wider countryside cousin that seemingly cannot successfully overwinter in the UK.

Evolution is a work in progress, by definition 😊. However, this is very interesting speculation. My guess is that, if the European sub-species were able to get a hold in southern Britain (due to climate change or whatever), it would eventually hybridise with the more specialised British sub-species and replace it.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 20-May-14 09:21 PM GMT

### Mill Hill Adonis

The weather wasn't quite good enough to continue my Duke of Burgundy surveys today (20th May), so I took time out to visit Mill Hill (Shoreham) and its beautiful Adonis Blues. There were plenty about and during the short spells of milky sunshine they became very active. Most of the time they just lay around in the grass looking pretty. Whenever the cloud thickened and the temperature dropped they closed up, showing off their equally lovely undersides. The first brood is probably at peak now and plenty of females were present, all keen to get on with the job of laying eggs. It would be advisable to visit this coming weekend if you wish to see any fresh ones.



Male



Female

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-May-14 09:21 PM GMT

### Dukes And Orchids Peak

This morning (21st May) I met South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Biodiversity Lead Emily Brennan, her mother, and SDNPA Ranger Simon Mockford for a tour of Heyshott Escarpment. The SDNPA and their predecessors the South Downs Joint Committee have always been great partners in projects which benefit butterflies and moths in Sussex and the neighbouring counties. Certainly in Sussex we would be lost without them. Simon does a huge amount of work to help the Duke of Burgundy in the Arundel and Storrington areas, but this was his first visit to Heyshott.

As expected here, we saw a huge number of butterflies, along with White Helleborine, Greater Butterfly and Fly Orchid (all now fully in flower) and a large female Adder. Despite the overcast conditions we had already seen 45 Dukes before we completed our walk. I later returned to cover the rest of the ground under slightly improved conditions and ended up with a count of 88 Dukes. It appears that the emergence is all-but-over on this site, with only a few of the female butterflies being in really good condition. They've had a great season here already and, assuming we get some decent weather over the next ten days, there should be sufficient eggs laid to ensure a very bright future.

Amongst the other species seen were Dingy and Grizzled Skipper, Green Hairstreak (including newly emerged females), Common Blue, Small Heath, Small Copper and Red Admiral. I saw half a dozen of the latter, including two laying eggs in the lowermost pit.

- 1 Green Hairstreak female
- 2 Duke of Burgundy female
- 3 Greater Butterfly Orchid
- 4 Fly Orchid
- 5 White Helleborine





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 21-May-14 09:55 PM GMT

**"Neil Hulme" wrote:**

They've had a great season here already and, assuming we get some decent weather over the next ten days, there should be sufficient eggs laid to ensure a very bright future.

EXCELLENT 😊 The forecast says we're in for some rain but it's showery in nature – meaning there will be ample opportunity for some egg laying. I really hope I can go again next year.

My visit there was the highlight of my season so far this year – I doubt I'll top it.

The Greater Fly & butterfly Orchids look lovely.

Cheers Neil

B'saurus

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 24-May-14 08:41 AM GMT

**Dukes In The Rain**

Yesterday (23rd May) the Met Office weather forecast was spectacularly inaccurate. The consecutive three hour periods of either 'full sunshine' or 'sunny

spells with white cloud' predicted for SE England gave no warning of the cold, driving rain and threatening, dark grey clouds which blanketed the landscape as far as the eye could see, extending over the Isle of Wight in one direction and northwards over the entire Weald.

Despite this, by the time I returned to an empty car park, drenched to the skin, I had seen plenty of Duke of Burgundy. A little warmth and early sunshine had been sufficient to tempt them down from their roosts but, like me, they had been caught out by the sudden change in weather. Knowing where they would most likely be sitting, I soon started to find dormant male Dukes in the lekking areas and females on adjacent parts of the slope, where lush cowslips grow. In a short spell during which it seemed that the rain might stop and a little heat bled through the clouds, a few Dukes started to open their wings, keen to get on with their business as their flight season starts to wane.

With a good survey count achieved over three areas, and a few pleasing images in the bag, it was well worth venturing out. The Met Office was almost forgiven.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 24-May-14 11:33 AM GMT

I am sick with jealousy seeing all those Orchids, absolutely stunning stuff, hoping to look for some Somerset Flies in the next few days 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-May-14 09:24 PM GMT

Glad to see that you got your orchids William!  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-May-14 09:42 PM GMT

### Survey Day

Today (25th May) I conducted the first of three annual surveys I now perform at Fairmile Bottom, just to the north of Rewell Wood near Arundel. Nothing spectacular appeared during my search of the mixed habitats here, although it was encouraging to find both Grizzled and Dingy Skippers. Other species included Common Blue, Holly Blue, Small Heath, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Peacock, Brimstone and Green-veined White. Day-flying moths were quite common and I recorded Burnet Companion, Mother Shipton, Speckled Yellow, Silver Y, Fox and *Pyrausta aurata*. By far the most common species on site was the Five-spot Burnet ssp. *palustrella*, of which I counted more than 100. This is also a good area for orchids, supporting Fly, Southern Marsh and hybrids between the latter species and Common Spotted.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-May-14 07:12 PM GMT

### A Two Part Tale Of The Exotic (Part1)

The weather forecasters had promised a brighter afternoon today (29th May), with the suggestion of a long overdue return to at least sunny spells. Eager to get out and about I arranged to visit Ferring Rife with my father in the morning, where earlier in the spring I'd seen good numbers of Small Tortoiseshell. However, today we were keen to see the Early Marsh Orchids which grow here in profusion; there are estimated to be in the region of 30,000 of them in good years! Also present are Common Spotted Orchids and some vigorous hybrids between the two species.

Two very attractive subspecies of Early Marsh Orchid can be found here, namely the rich purple coloured *pulchella* and the more delicate, dusky pink *incarnata*. Some of these orchids are huge, standing over 60 cm tall. Forget the subtle beauty of the petite and slender Fly Orchid, these are in-your-face, garish skyscrapers!









## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-14 08:51 AM GMT

### A Two Part Tale Of The Exotic (Part2)

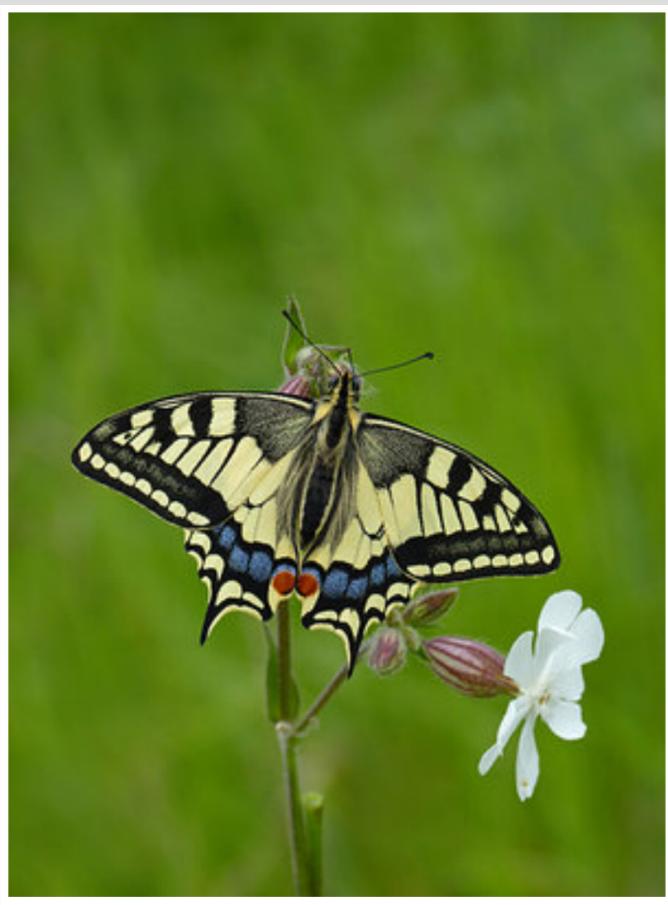
The big story of 2014, which is still developing, is the emergence of *gorganus* (Continental subspecies) Swallowtails on British soil, following an influx of these magnificent insects during the summer of 2013. The discovery of resultant larvae and pupae in Sussex gardens and further afield has been well documented ('Supplement Three to A Complete History of the Butterflies and Moths of Sussex', Pratt (2014); 'The Sussex Butterfly Report 2013', Colvin et al. (2014); UK Butterflies website) and we waited with bated breath to see if *gorganus* would emerge in Sussex for the first time since 1948; it did!

So far this year, Continental Swallowtails have been seen in Hampshire and along the Kent and East Sussex coasts, but most of the observations have focused on 9 pupae being monitored in a Chichester (West Sussex) garden, about half of which have now flown the coop, bringing the total of known adult specimens on the wing to about 10. In order to honour the privacy of the owners, access to these insects has been very restricted, leaving them tantalisingly out of reach. But common sense dictates that these butterflies must represent just 'the tip of the iceberg', and many more must be present in Southern England.

Yesterday afternoon (29th May) I made my third visit to a very promising looking area of semi-urban 'wasteland' (with a public right of way running across it), close to the superstores on the outskirts of Chichester. This was one of several areas around Chichester which I had earmarked using satellite imagery and then followed up on foot, confirming an abundance of food-plants in suitable habitat.

As with the Long-tailed Blues last year, it is a great feeling when a hunch (and a lot of groundwork) pays off, so I was positively euphoric when I spotted this giant within ten minutes of arriving, just as the sun started to break through the cloud. At present I have no way of knowing, and perhaps never will, whether this is one of the insects which has emerged from the monitored garden, which lies just over 1 Km away. My gut feeling is that it isn't, and that more will appear here and elsewhere.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Trev Sawyer, 30-May-14 09:37 AM GMT

*Fantastic* stuff Neil!

Once your antennae get twitching, there really is no hiding place for even the rarest of insects is there? 😊

You have honed your fieldcraft and observational skills to truly awesome levels over the past few years and are deservedly reaping the ultimate rewards.

Well done that man! 😊

Trev

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 30-May-14 10:34 AM GMT

Trev:

Fantastic stuff Neil!

Once your antennae get twitching, there really is no hiding place for even the rarest of insects is there? 😊.

You have honed your fieldcraft and observational skills to truly awesome levels over the past few years and are deservedly reaping the ultimate rewards.

Concur entirely.

Am I right in thinking that *gorganus* is routinely double (or even triple) brooded? Our own Fenland race usually has just one generation each year with only a small second brood. So when might we expect the offspring of these British *gorganus* to be flying?

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 30-May-14 10:57 AM GMT

Superb find – really well done! And fantastic photos to boot!

Cheers,

– Pete

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Vince Massimo, 30-May-14 11:03 AM GMT

A brilliant piece of work, Neil 😊.

This is right up there with your Littlehampton Large Tortoiseshell, Mill Hill "polonus" and Chichester Queen of Spain(s). Superb images too, which do justice to the find 😊

Great stuff!

Vince

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 30-May-14 11:05 AM GMT

Well done! 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-14 11:41 AM GMT

Thanks Trev, Jack, Pete, Vince and Susie. I'm still up here on Cloud Nine, sitting next to Pete and his McSkipper/SPBF combo.

Jack: I suspect that *gorganus* manages to fit in a third brood further south based on an earlier start. I would guess that Guy started seeing this subspecies at the start of April, giving just enough time to potentially go thrice before the season draws to a close. However, the emergence period for Swallowtail seems quite protracted, so I guess many later individuals would fall into the bivoltine category. Given that most of the British *gorganus* seem to be following an approximately *britannicus* timetable, I suspect their progeny (assuming they get to meet the opposite sex!) will be late July and August butterflies, with larvae again pupating just in time for winter (we hope!).

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Padfield, 30-May-14 12:02 PM GMT

I've prepared some humble pie, just in case I need to eat it! 😊 I was quite sure *gorganus* couldn't gain a foothold in the UK, on the grounds that if it could, it would have done so long ago.

Yes, this year *gorganus* was flying at the end of March in North Italy and early April in Switzerland. Last year my latest record (Switzerland) was 25th September. Voltinism is difficult to judge in a species with such altitudinal range – especially as this one is so fond of hilltopping – but I suspect, as you suggest Neil, that the latest ones are the grandchildren, not the children, of the earliest. You never can be sure – Apollos span May–September but are emphatically single-brooded.

Are there any known mating barriers between *gorganus* and *britannicus*?

Guy

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-14 01:20 PM GMT

Hi Guy,

I think it's very premature to even bake Humble Pie just yet, as this 'event' may yet fizzle out. There is a historical precedent for *gorganus* periodically setting up home in the South of England along the Downs between Dorset and Kent, but populations have always (so far) been knocked out due (allegedly) to poor weather years. However, I do think *gorganus* has a better chance of getting both feet through the door than Queen of Spain.

*"Are there any known mating barriers between gorganus and britannicus?"*. That's a very interesting question, and one that I certainly don't have an answer to. I suspect that a butterfly breeder somewhere has tried to pair them, but I believe it's difficult enough to get some species to pair at the best of times, so I'm not sure whether the knowledge is out there.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 30-May-14 02:11 PM GMT

Neil,

Incredible photos – I am on awe of your zen-like ability to locate and photograph rare butterflies, just fantastic! Those orchids aren't half bad either 😊

BWs

William

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 30-May-14 02:48 PM GMT

Neil , What a find I bet your really pleased and your photo's are great Goldie 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Willrow, 30-May-14 03:14 PM GMT

Every **UK Butterflyer** is following this fascinating and interesting development, its so reassuring that we have the right man in the right place...yet again...very well done Neil 😊 cloud nine is a wonderful place!!!

Bill 😊

**"When in doubt...venture out"**

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-14 06:56 PM GMT

Thanks William, Goldie and Bill.

By way of an update – I spoke to Michael Blencowe today, who informed me that, as yet, only 3 out of 9 pupae in the monitored Chichester garden have emerged (not 4/5 as I thought). That suggests there is still plenty of time for numbers to increase significantly in the coastal counties. Action stations!  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 30-May-14 07:19 PM GMT

Tremendous sleuthing, Neil and what a reward! Your perseverance and dedication are peerless.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Lee Hurrell, 30-May-14 09:36 PM GMT

I can only agree with the above comments, Neil and also offer my congratulations! What a stunning find (and photos). Superb stuff, Keep us posted....

I will certainly be keeping my eyes open for any Swallowtails on trips between Surrey, Sussex and Kent.

Best wishes,

Lee

## Re: Neil Hulme

by badgerbob, 31-May-14 11:50 AM GMT

Absolute magic Neil!!

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Ian Pratt, 31-May-14 07:19 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil- well done! Ian

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-May-14 09:04 PM GMT

Thanks David, Lee, Bob and Ian. I'm hoping that there'll be enough of these to go around.

I was unaware until this morning but Michael Blencowe and Ralph Hobbs, who have been monitoring the Sussex garden *gorganus* pupae, have been meticulously photographing the emerging adults. Comparison of wing margin patterns demonstrates beyond any doubt that my Swallowtail is NOT one of their chaps, so almost certainly emerged where I found it.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Maximus, 31-May-14 09:08 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil and brilliant photos of *Gorganus*

Mike

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-May-14 09:20 PM GMT

### Back Down To Earth

Following the excitement of my Chichester *gorganus* on Thursday (29th May), I've been restricted to much more local activities. It will probably be Tuesday before I can get back west to hunt for more Swallowtails.

However, yesterday (30th May) I did manage to get an hour and a half at Springhead Hill, despite the dull conditions. A search for roosting butterflies confirmed my impressions that Small Blue has still got a long way to go before recovering from the 2012 wash-out. This seems to be one of the species which took a real hammering in Sussex.

The most numerous species I found was Common Blue, including a beautifully marked female perched on a Common Spotted Orchid, of which there are hundreds now appearing in the meadow. I also photographed the humble Small Heath. They don't do themselves any favours by being so hard to approach with a lens!





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-May-14 09:21 PM GMT

Thanks Mike. Can't wait to get back there!  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 01-Jun-14 08:42 PM GMT

I'd like to pick the experts brains and I hope no one minds my doing so here.

The swallowtail I saw today was flying strongly south to north, it couldn't have been on a more accurate course if it possessed a compass; is this normal? The one's I've seen abroad used to meander all over the place but this critter was in a hurry.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Padfield, 01-Jun-14 09:10 PM GMT

Neil might want to take this discussion to another thread, in which case I'm sure it can be migrated. But Susie's question prompts me to ask about the time of day and the terrain – though I'm guessing it was flat. 😊 Swallowtails make diurnal movements to favoured leks (frequently local high points) and nectaring areas. Males in particular will head very purposefully to these and sometimes cover quite some distance. I think Susie was wondering if her butterfly was a fresh migrant – but in a way it would be even more exciting if it were part of a small established group, engaging in its daily routine.

Guy

### Re: Neil Hulme

by mud-puddling, 01-Jun-14 10:57 PM GMT

Absolutely superb photos Neil. Well deserved after all the work you put in. Regards, Leigh

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 02-Jun-14 08:10 AM GMT

Admins: please move my posts if suitable/possible 😊

In reply to Guy it was flying up a slight incline at 1pm. There are bigger hills to the south east and south west of us.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jun-14 11:58 AM GMT

#### Out With The RSPB

I spent yesterday afternoon (3rd June) showing 28 ecologists from the RSPB around Rewell Wood on the Norfolk Estate. The Estate has become well known for its wildlife-friendly management, particularly for the benefit of farmland birds (leading to a spectacular winter influx of raptors) and Estate Manager Peter Knight was a runner-up in the 2012 RSPB Telegraph Nature of Farming Award. However, we were here to see the work done by the Estate in improving woodland habitats for butterflies and moths. Of course the RSPB does a lot more than look after birds and this visit was to allow their

ecologists to see whether any of these techniques might be transferred to some of their many reserves.

We started off by looking at the sweet chestnut coppice cycle in the southern part of the wood, which supports a thriving population of Pearl-bordered Fritillary, a few Grizzled Skipper and provides nesting opportunities for Nightjar and Woodcock. We then visited some large clear-fell areas which, when replanted, will retain some relatively small but highly valuable open areas along sunny ride-sides. Finally, we looked at some permanent open glades which have been created, and some significant widening of rides within blocks of now towering beech. Duke of Burgundy, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Grizzled and Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Common Blue and a large number of moths, including the rare Drab Looper, have all benefitted from this work. It was nice to be able to point out a good example of Fly Orchid while on our travels; this species seems to have had a very good season.

Our thanks go to the Norfolk Estate and its Head Forester Mark Aldridge for arranging access.



## Re: Neil Hulme

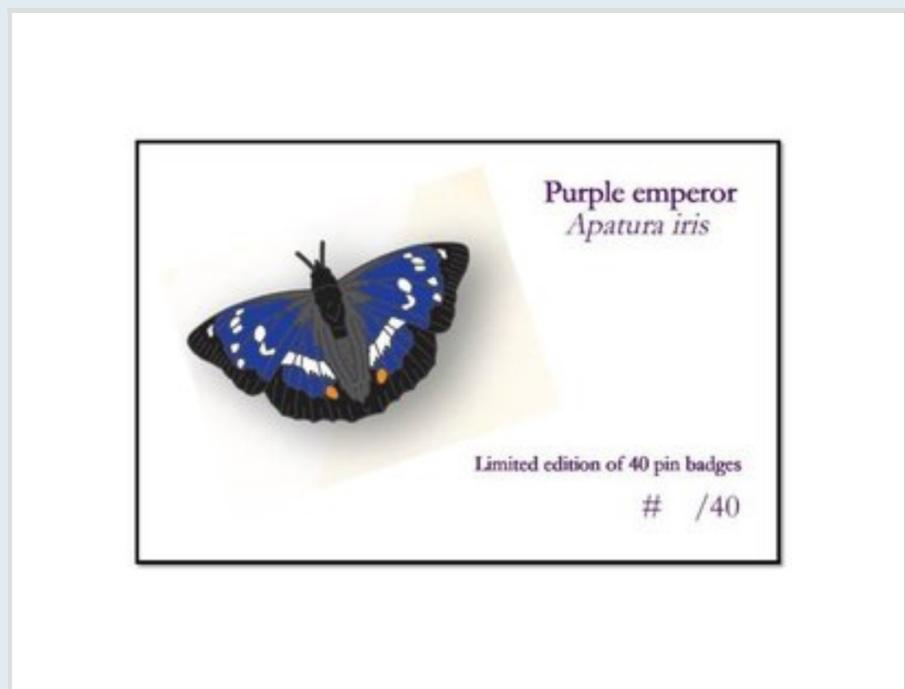
by Neil Hulme, 04-Jun-14 07:30 PM GMT

### Limited Edition Purple Emperor Pin Badge

Announcing the launch of this season's de rigueur, must-have fashion accessory for the lady or gentleman of Purple Persuasion. Impress your friends and rivals with this limited edition (40) Purple Emperor Pin Badge, designed by Paul Fosterjohn.

This timeless piece will be released on c.24th June, shortly after the first flight of His Imperial Majesty. Paul is now taking orders at [apaturairis999@gmail.com](mailto:apaturairis999@gmail.com) – please provide your name and address to receive payment details at a price of £6 per badge (incl. P&P). All profits will be donated to Butterfly Conservation Sussex Branch, who will use the money to make more Purple Emperors.

Hurry, hurry, hurry while stocks last. Wearing this badge will ensure you see more butterflies and have a better life. Vive l'Empereur!



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-Jun-14 11:09 PM GMT

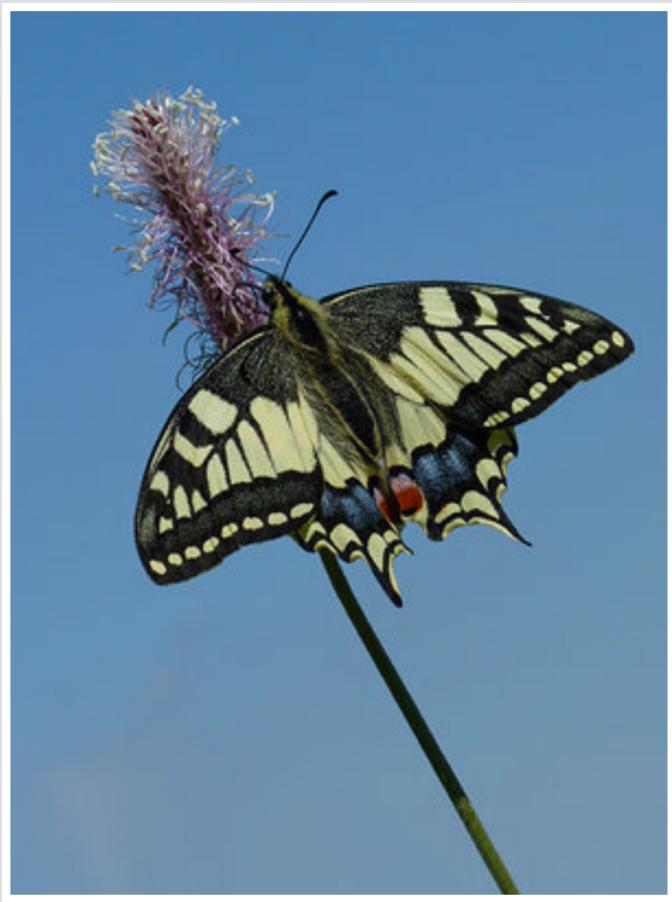
### Gorganus Again!

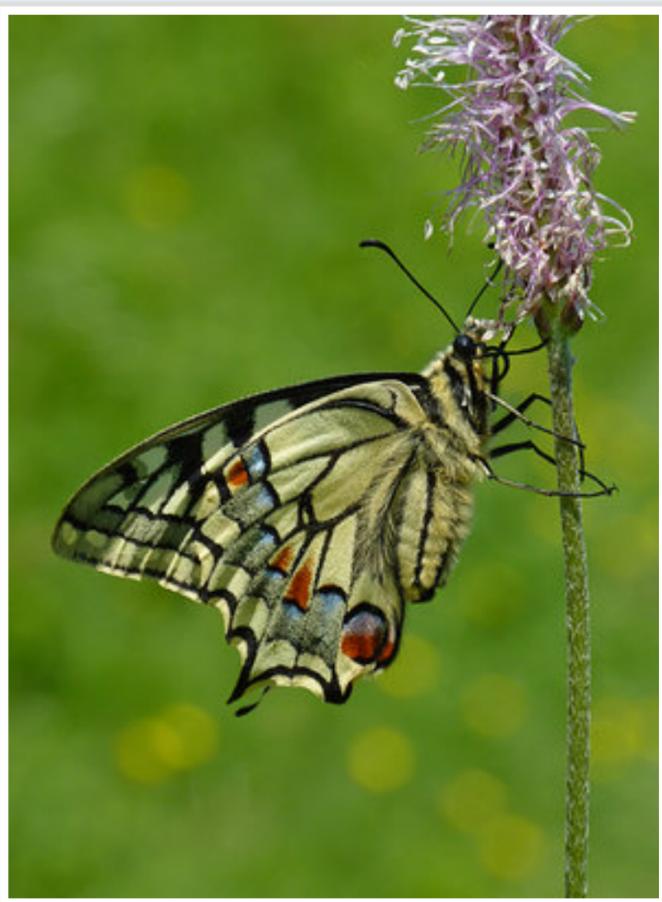
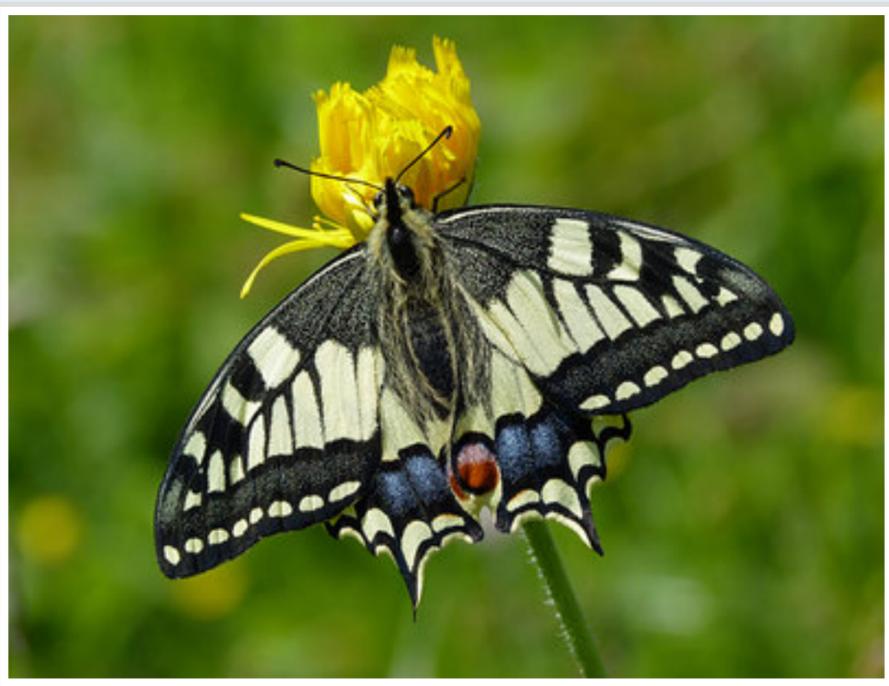
I can't claim anything other than luck this time. Today I was due to meet up with Colin Knight and Brian Henham for a *gorganus* hunt in and around Chichester. With news of yet another emergence in the monitored garden and the prediction of good weather, I was pretty confident we would find one. However, I was going to have to make a late start as I wanted to squeeze in a baseline survey at Steyning Rifle Range (Steyning Downland Scheme), as funding has just been secured for a new project here.

As I was leaving the site, keen to head west, I took a last peek over the edge of the slope on the northern flank of the coombe. The swooping flight was unmistakable – another Swallowtail! I lost sight of it momentarily as I scrambled down the bank, and when I saw it again it was a long distance away. I'm not sure that it would have been possible for the butterfly to move this distance so rapidly, so I remain convinced that there were probably two insects present. However, once I was on this one's tail I didn't spend much time looking over my shoulder. A later search could not confirm a second butterfly.

This was a very hefty looking female and she did very little but feed, taking only short breaks over the couple of hours we tracked her, before she slipped away. I managed to make a few frenetic 'phone calls and a handful of people picked up and then managed to get there in time to join in the fun. UKBers Colin Knight, Katrina and mud-puddling (Leigh), and John Burnham who had been searching in Chichester when Brian directed him our way, all spent time with this beauty. Hopefully there will be a few more to come yet. I believe this is now the 12th *gorganus* known to be flying around Sussex.

I suspect this individual hatched on the allotments nearby and a female was photographed on a garden buddleia bush in Steyning last summer. With the earlier (2014) sighting at Chanctonbury Ring, it looks like we have a second population centre around here.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 05-Jun-14 11:17 PM GMT

You really are putting the hours in, Neil, so you deserve your rewards.

Are these Swallowtails concentrated in a particular area or could one expect to see them virtually anywhere in the far south of England right now?

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-Jun-14 11:31 PM GMT

Hi David,

Although one has been seen at Seaford in East Sussex and another buzzed Susie's garden in Broadbridge Heath, (plus a few further afield outside Sussex), most of the action so far has been centred on two areas – Chichester and Steyning. However, I'm convinced these are just the tip of the iceberg. Bear in mind that the 5 *gorganus* which have flown from the monitored garden in Chichester (plus mine discovered on the outskirts of the city) have not been seen again/recognised/reported yet. They can be expected anywhere between Wiltshire and Kent.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by millerd, 05-Jun-14 11:48 PM GMT

With warm winds generally from a southerly quarter for the next few days, might we expect some more migrants as well?

That is a gorgeous female, by the way, just stunning.

Dave

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Maximus, 05-Jun-14 11:55 PM GMT

Great shots of *Gorganus* Neil, very well deserved considering the effort you are putting in 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 06-Jun-14 12:34 AM GMT

### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

Hi David,

Although one has been seen at Seaford in East Sussex and another buzzed Susie's garden in Broadbridge Heath, (plus a few further afield outside Sussex), most of the action so far has been centred on two areas – Chichester and Steyning. However, I'm convinced these are just the tip of the iceberg. Bear in mind that the 5 *gorganus* which have flown from the monitored garden in Chichester (plus mine discovered on the outskirts of the city) have not been seen again/recognised/reported yet. They can be expected anywhere between Wiltshire and Kent.

BWs, Neil

Thanks, Neil. When I head south (and I'm not sure how soon that'll be) I'll keep an eye out for any potential surprises.

## Re: Neil Hulme

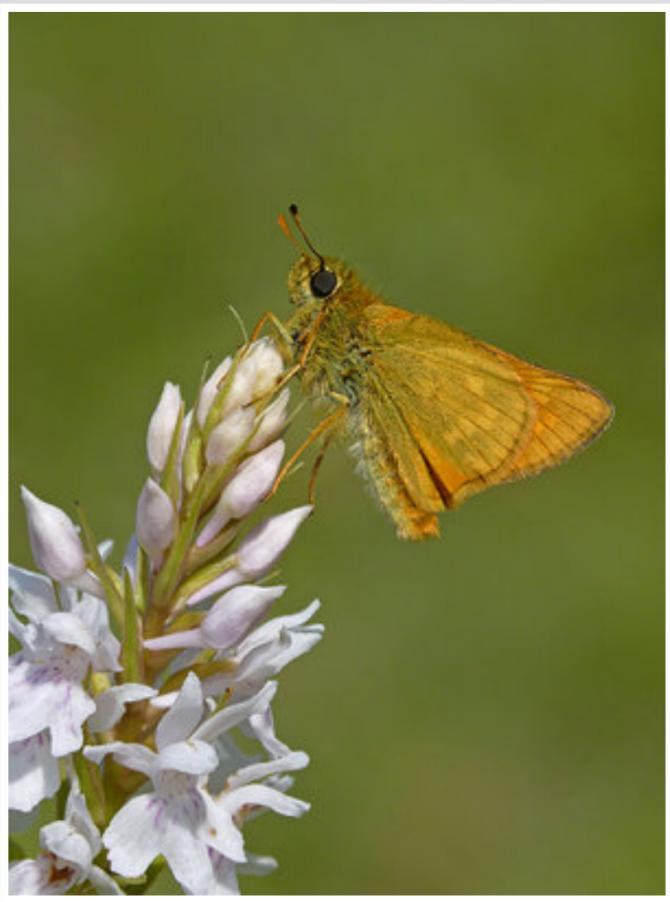
by Neil Hulme, 06-Jun-14 09:04 PM GMT

### Farewell To The Duke

After failing to relocate the *gorganus* Swallowtail at Steyning this morning (6th June), I headed to Heyshott Escarpment to say farewell to the Duke of Burgundy for another year. Over the years I have put so much effort in for this species that I feel quite sad at the end of each flight season. It seems such a long while before we'll be reacquainted again. That said, I feel incredibly proud of what we have achieved in Sussex; this year I have note of 1011 sightings, which is so much better than its nadir in 2003, when the total count for Sussex was just 8. In the end I found just 4 faded but still feisty males. This is one butterfly that always goes down fighting. They have no chance of meeting further females but still want to beat the living daylights out of anything which approaches too closely.



Summer is now officially here by my own personal definition (first Meadow Brown on Thursday 5th June at Knepp) and the other spring species are also fading fast. Dingy Skippers were barely recognisable and I saw only a handful. Green Hairstreaks were hanging on in reasonable numbers, but they've all lost their shine. Despite us now being in the 'June Gap', there were a couple of new kids on the block. There is a good emergence of Small Tortoiseshell underway and their numbers increased significantly throughout the day. The first (5) Large Skipper are now whizzing about over the slopes.



Most of the Fly Orchids here have now gone over, along with the White Helleborine, but a few Greater Butterfly Orchids are still in stunning condition.



On my way home, I noticed a Red Admiral fly across the road. Then another, and another. Although it was now after 7 pm I saw c.30 from the car between Clymping and Rustington. There has clearly been a significant influx today and they were behaving in that typical, frenetic manner that butterflies sometimes exhibit on landfall. It will be interesting to see how localised or otherwise this event is.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Jun-14 09:49 AM GMT

### Nymphalids On Top

Yesterday afternoon (8th June) I took a long walk along the top of the Downs between Chantry Hill and Amberley Mount, in the hope of locating another *gorganus* Swallowtail. I didn't find my target species but it was interesting to see how markedly the butterfly fauna has changed over the last ten days. Spring butterflies, which occurred in impressive numbers along these slopes, have all but disappeared now. I saw a few Common Blue (8), Speckled Wood (4) and a Brimstone, but nymphalids made most of the running. I counted 18 Red Admiral and 6 Painted Lady, all of which have probably arrived on our shores over the last couple of days. Amongst the 15 Small Tortoiseshell seen there were both aged, overwintered parents and their freshly emerged progeny.



At Amberley Mount I took a look at the dewpond restored by the South Downs National Park Authority in 2013. They've made a lovely job of reinstating this watering hole, which appears in a 1930s painting by local artist Felicia Lieven-Bauwens. Large numbers of farmland birds were dropping in for a drink.



I headed back out in the evening to meet Colin Knight at Rewell Wood. As the light faded we were treated to excellent views of roding Woodcock and 4 Nightjar, including 3 churring males. To finish off we found a Glowworm shining brightly, an all-too-rare sight these days.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-14 11:45 PM GMT

### Midhurst Commons

With the June Gap rendering the Downs very quiet for butterflies at the moment, today (10th June) I turned my attention to the heathlands around Midhurst. Silver-studded Blue numbers are building rapidly now, with 17 counted on Stedham Common and 31 over a small part of adjacent Iping Common. There are a few females already laying eggs and eventually I found what I was looking for – a mating pair with both butterflies in perfect condition.





Clouded Buff moths were seen quite regularly, including the less commonly observed female. I also found one of my favourite moth caterpillars, the very beautiful Beautiful Yellow Underwing.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-Jun-14 05:47 PM GMT

### Black Magic

On Thursday and Friday (12th & 13th June) I spent two long, hot days in some of Oxfordshire's best woodlands. Although there was plenty of other wildlife of interest, including the ubiquitous Red Kite, it was that trickiest of butterflies I was really after – the Black Hairstreak.

In recent years I've had most success with this species at the M40 Compensation Area, and on this trip it produced the goods again. It's a long walk through Bernwood Forest (25 minutes at a good pace), but hardly a chore given the stunning surroundings. The evening before leaving Sussex I had checked over that lump of pig iron I laughingly call a bicycle (despite its lack of gears or brakes it does get me along forest tracks at speed) and all seemed in order. However, as I unloaded it I realised that the rear tyre had managed to work its way off the wheel during my journey. I gave it a Basil Fawlty style thrashing with a cane and proceeded on foot.

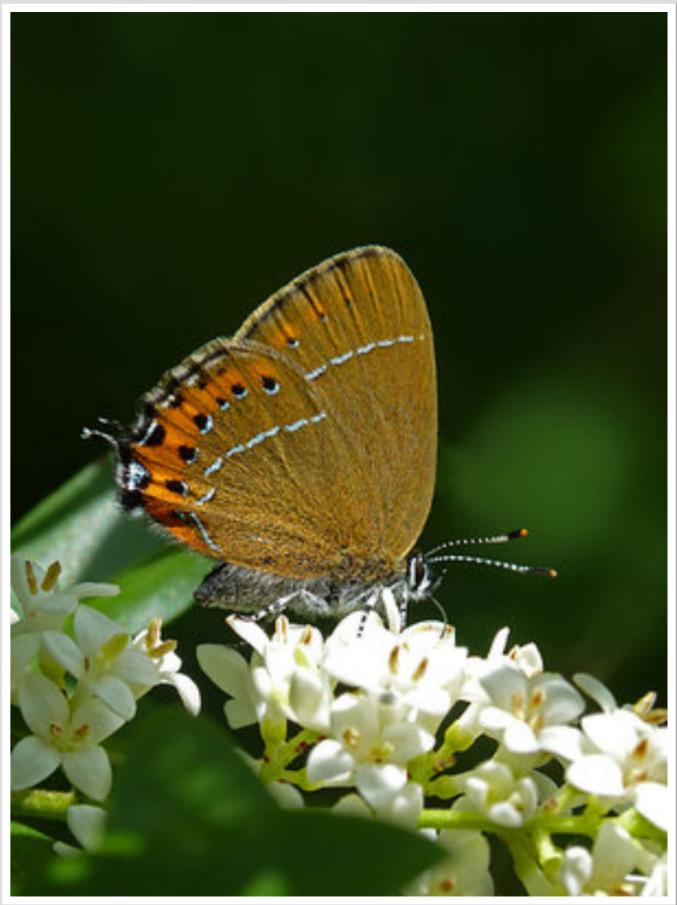
The Black Hairstreak had clearly started to emerge a good while back judging by the very worn state of many males, but there were still a few in good order. The females were all in pristine condition with one exception. A conservative count gave me 20 male and 4 female individuals. They were concentrated in two main areas and, as last year, there were many butterflies visiting the flowering privet at the southern end of the site. The other hotspot was near the northern end, close to where a large, red brick structure stands as a monument to the days when car travel through this part of the country was a much more sedate affair. A line of tall ash and field maple trees supported large numbers of male butterflies, usually well out of reach. At one point I could see 9 individuals sitting, tilted to the sun.

I spent the following day here, but it was very quiet until 3.30 pm as it was just too hot for the butterflies to be active. Being chocolate brown means they warm up quickly. When the action did start it came thick and fast, with plenty of good females at low level.

Late on Thursday afternoon I headed over to Whitecross Green Wood (pictured) and stayed until just before 7 pm. The Black Hairstreak was still flying as I left, as were numerous Large Skipper. This was my first visit to the wood and it is undoubtedly very beautiful. However, there is much less good

habitat (and fewer hairstreaks) than at the M40 Compensation Area, and I imagine it can get quite tight when more than a couple of photographers assemble around the favoured pond area. On the plus side it's a much shorter walk - 'swings and roundabouts'. In all I got the impression there were 10 - 12 individuals on the wing, although counting is difficult here.

This species is far from easy and it took two very long days to get just a handful of good images. At times the butterfly just melts away for long periods. But when a big, beautiful female Black Hairstreak suddenly drops in front of you, it's guaranteed to set the pulse racing.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 14-Jun-14 06:59 PM GMT

Lovely pictures as always Neil. But I wonder why it's called "Black Hairstreak"? It really is anything but black (except on upperside, which can never be seen). White-letter Hairstreak is possibly a shade darker than Blk.H.

But butterfly names follow no logical rules. Marbled White isn't a white. Scotch Argus has nothing to do with whisky nor is it even an "argus" of the same family as Brown Argus.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Willrow, 14-Jun-14 08:57 PM GMT

**Black Magic** indeed Neil, and your report is both informative and funny, I can just imagine a *seemingly* eccentric butterflyer thrashing his untrusty cycle in the middle of an English wood...the mind simply boggles 😂😂😂

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-Jun-14 05:26 PM GMT

Hi Bill,

Two dog-walkers had returned to their cars unnoticed by me; I dread to think what they made of the scene! 😊  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jun-14 12:23 AM GMT

### Best Of The West (Part 1)

On Wednesday (18th June) I spent a very enjoyable day at Collard Hill, searching out the somewhat elusive Large Blue. I don't think the species is going to have its greatest season here, and the going may well remain quite tough compared to some previous years. However, with patience and diligent searching it should still be possible for visitors to find a few, especially with NT Large Blue Ranger Jono on site to help out. I had such a good time here in the company of Jono and a handful of other visitors that I'd love to return next week, but the delayed emergence has made the inevitable clash of late June priorities even worse than usual!

Aside from the Large Blue there were Clouded Yellow (including egg-laying *helice*), Brimstone, Green-veined White, Small Copper, Common Blue, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell (plenty), Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Heath and a few Hummingbird Hawkmoth on the wing. A visit to Collard is more than just about butterflies and I spent plenty of time just gazing at the spectacular landscape within which the site sits. I always think it has a surreal, unique quality and it's hardly surprising that so many people attribute it a mystical significance. I very much enjoyed the company of others throughout the day, but equally appreciated the place to myself late into the evening after the sun had set. The Bee Orchids are well worth tracking down too.

The Large Blue was quite tricky to find, but I had a good start at 10.15 am when I noticed a male enjoying a thyme flower breakfast about half way along the slope. Jono and I both tracked and photographed this individual throughout the day, proving beyond any doubt that a single male will cover the entire site, from west to east. Later in the day I watched a female lay about a dozen eggs, before she retired to thick scrub to take a siesta.

By teatime we still only had firm evidence for two individuals, but the best was yet to come. After taking a break I returned in the evening, hoping to find a Large Blue at roost. With so few present this might seem like hunting a 'needle in a haystack', but once you get a feel for where butterflies are likely to roost the odds become substantially better. After a 30 minute search I found a female, which photographic comparisons showed to be a different specimen to the one seen earlier, giving a new minimum count of three. Even better, after returning to photograph a Marbled White I had watched go to roost earlier, sitting no more than a couple of metres away was another Large Blue!

There are plenty of occasions when I have seen far more Large Blue in a day than this, but any day in the company of such a special butterfly in such a special landscape is a day to remember, and this was one of the more memorable.







**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Ian Pratt, 22-Jun-14 06:03 AM GMT

Great photos as always , Neil. Ian

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jun-14 08:34 AM GMT

Thanks Ian. Plenty of hours invested in getting them!  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Willow, 22-Jun-14 07:53 PM GMT

Such great images of such an iconic butterfly don't come easy, and your 'mid-summer' report from Collard Hill conveys a special feel about the place  
Neil 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

## Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 22-Jun-14 08:30 PM GMT

Lovely photos as ever Neil, I've been helping Jono out on the site the past few days, and he spoke highly of your legendary fieldcraft 😊 – a shame to have missed you! Yesterday was fairly quiet, but today we found a couple of egg – laying females, including a really fresh crowd pleaser that sat on a grass stem for pretty much the whole day – lots of happy faces all around the site.

BWs

William

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jun-14 10:23 PM GMT

Many thanks Bill and William (I'm sure we'll bump into each other eventually!). Despite the modest numbers I'm pleased to hear that the butterfly is performing for at least some visitors.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jun-14 10:46 PM GMT

### Best Of The West (Part 2)

On Thursday (19th June) I departed early from my hotel in Street, having made the decision to swop one of my intended days with the Large Blue with the promise of bucket-loads of High Brown Fritillary in the Heddon Valley. Huge thanks to Matthew Oates for the heads-up and directions to the hotspot. I arrived at this stunningly beautiful location just before 10.00 am and started my campaign on the steep slope where Matthew had made a count of 60 HBF in 20 minutes during the previous day.

By the time I left to make the long journey home, after looking at another site in the area, I was completely satiated with this beautiful rarity, having seen probably close on to 100. Dark Green Fritillary was present in greatly subordinate numbers and a significant number of now very faded and tatty Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary were hanging on, along with other spring species such as Green Hairstreak and Small Copper. Ringlet started to emerge en masse throughout the day.

My only regret was that I had but a single day here, and I had a strong urge to forget my appointment with Goodwood Racecourse and book into the very inviting Hunters Inn which nestles deep in the wooded valley. There's little doubt that I'll be back here to do the place justice.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 23-Jun-14 08:45 AM GMT

### Summer Grassland Hatch

After returning from the West Country, and just before heading to Goodwood for an afternoon/evening race meeting (20th June), I paid a brief visit to some grassland areas tucked away deep within Rewell Wood. With the longest day fast approaching it seemed that Mother Nature was making preparations; midsummer butterflies were hatching all around me. In places the tall grasses were dripping with meconium fluids as Marbled White and Ringlet inflated their wings. As if to emphasise that we are now at the very peak of the butterfly season, several Silver-washed Fritillary swooped past me on my way out of the woods.



## Re: Neil Hulme

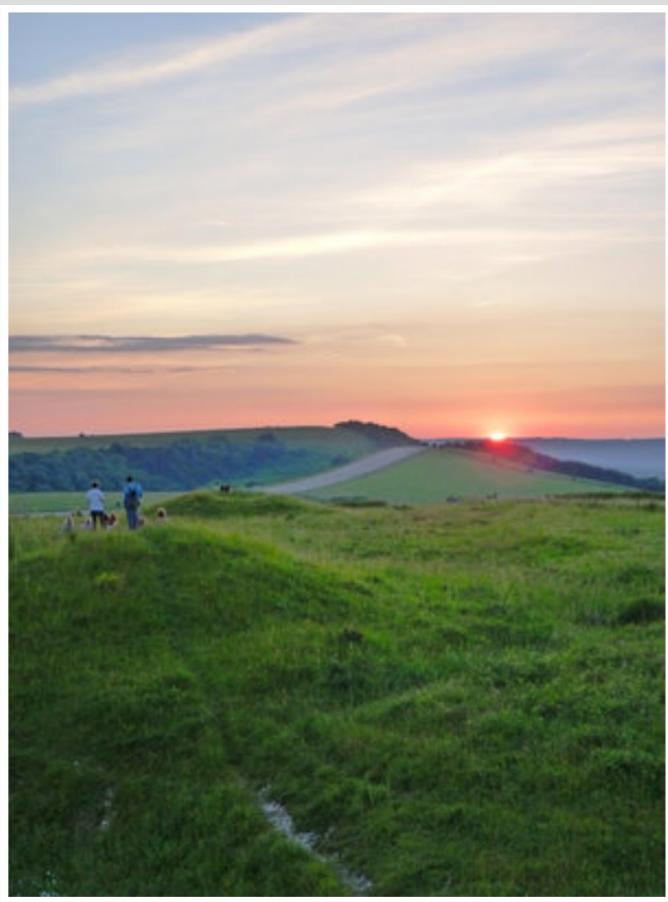
by Neil Hulme, 23-Jun-14 10:26 AM GMT

### Midsummer Celebration

With a good weather forecast for the evening of the longest day (21st June), there was one place in Sussex which I particularly wanted to visit, to enjoy the setting of the midsummer sun. Soon after 9.15 pm it sank below the downland horizon in approximate alignment with the magnificent Bronze Age barrows known as the Devil's Jumps. These ancient monuments lie within an area managed by the Murray Downland Trust near Treyford

<http://www.murraydownlandtrust.blogspot.co.uk>

This is one of those special moments in the calendar which marks a watershed for the wildlife-watcher; the Purple Emperor will always follow closely behind. Approximately 20 others were there to enjoy the spectacle, all with their own personal relationships with the landscape, our ancestors and the time of year. I was encouraged to see so many children making a connection with nature. For me it is a time for celebration, but also tinged with a little sadness for the passing of spring and early summer.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 23-Jun-14 04:27 PM GMT

### Purple Explosion

Last year Matthew Oates and I discovered that the Knepp Castle Estate Rewilding Project (<http://www.knepp.co.uk>) had brought unforeseen benefits in terms of a Purple Emperor population explosion. During the later part of the 2013 flight season we counted 155 individuals over two consecutive mornings, while constantly on the move and covering new ground.

Any thoughts that this might have been a 'flash in the pan', or even a bizarre dream, were quickly dispelled during my recent visit (22nd June). Following the equal first Sussex sighting on the Estate by Charlie Burrell and Amy Nightingale (one of the co-ordinators of Knepp Safaris <http://www.kneppsafaris.co.uk>) during a brief visit on 21st June, it soon became obvious that the species had been on the wing here for a day or two previously. After covering quite a wide area I ended up with a tally of 18 male Purple Emperor – quite impressive bearing in mind that the butterfly hasn't even got going yet! More can be found about attending the guided events (including Purple Emperor walks) or visiting alone, at <http://www.kneppsafaris.co.uk/index.php/safaris>

Other highlights of my day included my first Purple Hairstreak (11) and Small Skipper (6) of the year. Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral were both seen in good numbers and *hutchinsoni* Comma (pale coloured summer brood) are now hatching. As always I had a great day out on the Estate, this time accompanied by the wonderful soundtrack of purring Turtle Doves (minimum 3).

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 23-Jun-14 05:38 PM GMT

My word, Neil, you have been **incredibly** busy these last few days. Your rewards have been hard earned.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jun-14 08:28 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Great reports and some beautiful photos as usual. I particularly enjoyed reading the report from the Heddon Valley, brought back memories of last year when we spent 3 nights at the Hunters Inn which gave me plenty of time to explore this wonderful location 😊. The HBFs were outnumbering the DGFs then as well, they certainly seem to have had a good couple of years there.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Neil Hulme

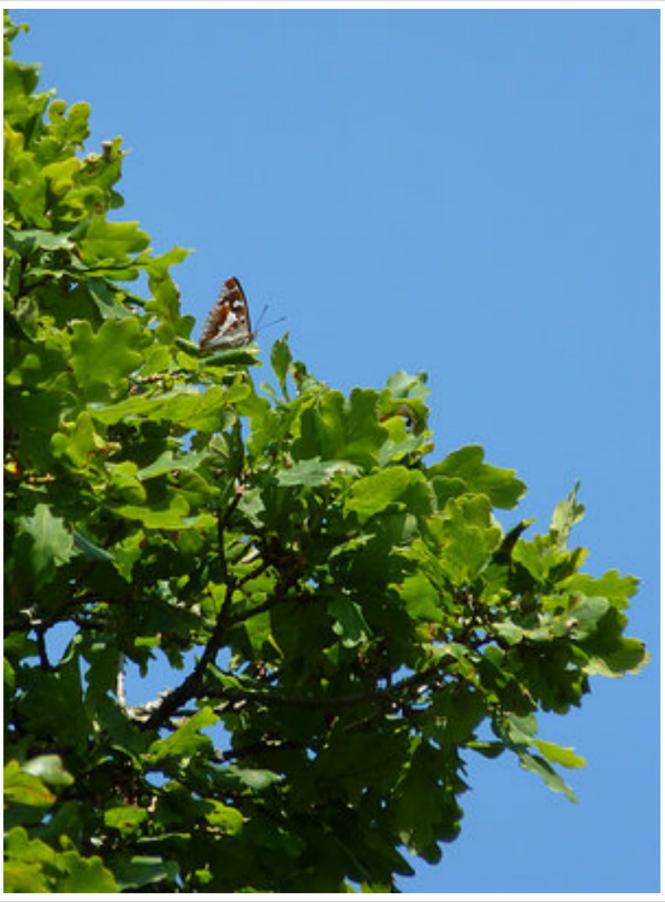
by Neil Hulme, 25-Jun-14 09:17 AM GMT

### Emperor Numbers Building Fast

The Purple Emperor season in Sussex has got off to a 'flyer'. Yesterday (24th June) I met Paul Fosterjohn (inventor of the highly desirable Purple Emperor pin badge) for a tour of the Knepp Castle Estate rewilding project area (Southern Block). By close of play we had counted 45 individual male Emperors. The only species which could compete numerically was the Meadow Brown.

I later visited the Knepp Safaris (<http://www.kneppsafaris.co.uk>) campsite, with a well-appointed kitchen under canvas and accommodation including some very cool Shepherd's Huts. I need to live further away so I can justify a holiday here!

I'm hoping that the weather is kind for the first guided walks this coming weekend. Emperor numbers are likely to be well in excess of 50 by then.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Jun-14 09:19 AM GMT

Thanks David and Neil. A single day in the Heddon Valley is insufficient. I'll be back to do it all at a much more leisurely pace.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-14 11:49 PM GMT

### Marbled White Clouds

On Thursday (26th June) I finished surveying the final compartments of a large mixed woodland and chalk grassland site near Arundel. I had started my counts at the Fairmile Bottom LNR the previous day, but had failed to cover the entire area before I was obliged to head off for a meeting. I invited Colin Knight to join me on the last leg of the survey, as I was already aware that I was seeing one of the best shows of Marbled White I have witnessed in recent times.

The site is managed by West Sussex County Council and there have been some recent changes to the grazing regime. Fairmile Bottom was considered a premier location for butterflies until the mid part of the last century but has held little attraction for butterfly watchers in recent decades, and is now seldom visited for this purpose. However, on the Wednesday evening I had invited my father along to enjoy watching and photographing the Marbled White in its large communal roosts. Great clouds erupted as we walked through areas of longer grass.

When I finished the survey my counts included 720 Marbled White, 158 Ringlet, 67 Meadow Brown, 46 Large Skipper, 38 Small Skipper, 29 Small Heath, 21 Small Tortoiseshell, 19 Dark Green Fritillary, 4 Silver-washed Fritillary, 4 Brimstone, 3 Red Admiral, 3 Speckled Wood, 2 Comma, 1 Common Blue, 1 Brown Argus, 1 Large White and 11 Five-spot Burnet Moth ssp. *palustrella*. I suspect that between 3000 and 4000 Marbled White are flying over the slope here. Meadow Brown is having a noticeably poor year.

Just before leaving the site I noticed that a Crab Spider had just secured itself a meal in the form of an expendable male Marbled White – you will see a dislodged mite larva *Trombidium brevi* and disarticulated leg in my image.

Also of interest was the always impressive Bee Orchid (at least a dozen), including the bleached form *chlorantha* (or *?flavescens*).



Dark Green Fritillary male



Silver-washed Fritillary male



Marbled White pair



Marbled White and Crab Spider



Bee Orchid var. *chlorantha/flavescens*

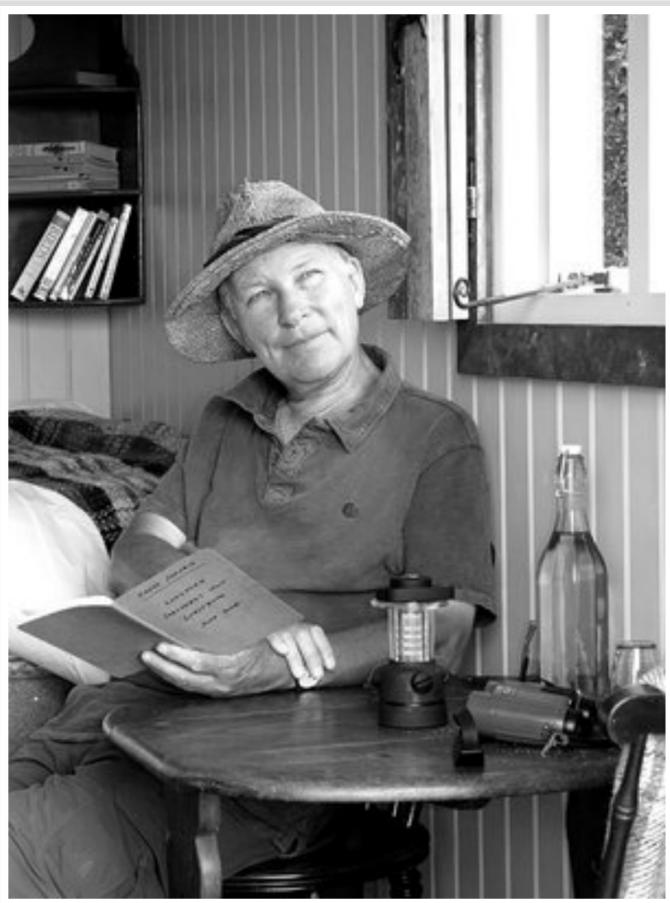
## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jun-14 08:40 AM GMT

### First Empress

I spent Friday afternoon (27th June) on the Knepp Castle Estate with Matthew Oates, Amy Nightingale (Knepp Safaris <http://www.kneppsafaris.co.uk>) and a group of West Sussex County Council rangers and volunteers. The strong, gusty south-westerly undoubtedly suppressed aerial activity, but we still managed to chalk up 40 Emperors, including the first female of the season. The wind tended to cool things down a little earlier than we would have liked and I watched a male deliberately searching out a roost for the night, eventually disappearing deep into a high, leafy ash spray at 5.15 pm.

Matthew had earlier located a few White-letter Hairstreak around a small group of elms near the Knepp Safaris glampsite. By 6 pm they were very active and we counted at least a dozen squabbling around the host trees and adjacent oak. This is a good record for Sussex, with known populations showing a strong bias towards the coastal Dutch Elm Disease control zone. It is, of course, greatly under-recorded.



Matthew retires to his Knepp Shepherd's Hut to contemplate purpleness

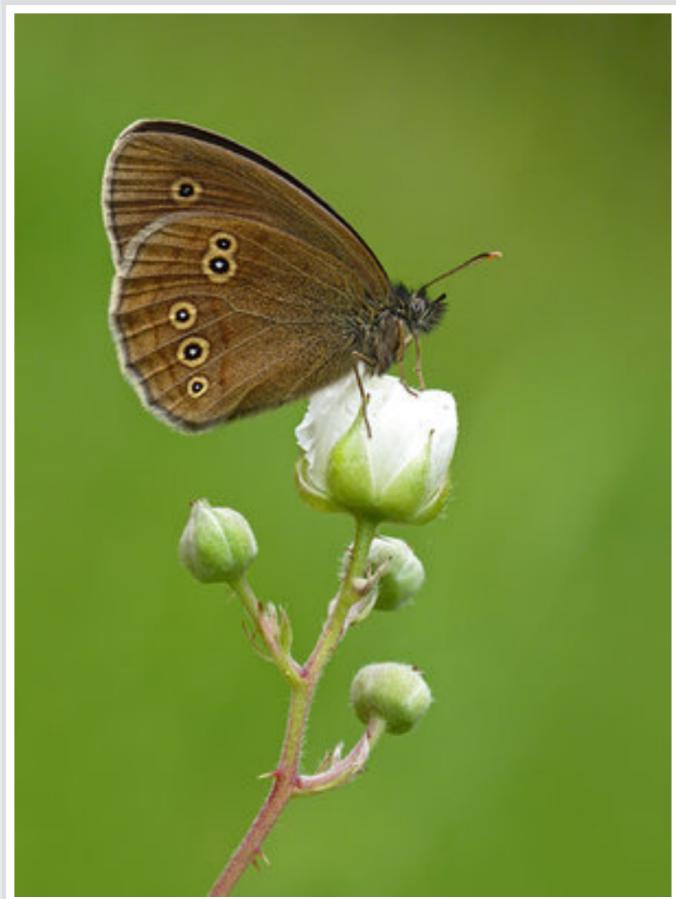
## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jun-14 10:56 PM GMT

### Hit And Miss

Today (28th June) I tried a couple of different venues for Purple Emperor, having spent many hours on the Knepp Castle Estate last week. First port of call was Eartham Woods, which is known to support a population but is seldom visited by butterfly watchers. I found a male searching the crowns of several large willow near the southern gate within ten minutes of arriving. This venue probably warrants much closer attention and I'm confident they can be lured to the deck along the first couple of hundred metres of track.

I then travelled onwards to Botany Bay, hoping to repeat Katrina's success the previous day. Unfortunately the weather forecast was inaccurate and I never saw the sun. However, at this time of year the humble Ringlet is always on hand to entertain in these woods, and they happily flopped along the tracksides in the cool, damp conditions.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 29-Jun-14 05:20 PM GMT

That photo of Matthew is superb. Yes, it was obviously posed but surely Neil there is a career for you as a professional portrait photographer? *Perhaps more accurate to say that you could have found work as a Victorian photographer. Maybe a touch of sepia and curled corners would enhance* 😊

As for weather forecasts, I always look at several sources and draw my own conclusions. I find they are seriously wrong as infrequently as one day in 20.

This is one of the best (and easiest):

[http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weat ... 1404014400](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weat...1404014400)

I've even centred it on Worthing especially for your benefit but that and the other data (eg expected rain) can be customised.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Jun-14 09:28 PM GMT

Thanks Jack. Do take my lambasting of weather forecasters with a pinch of salt 😊. Complaining about forecasts is simply a great British tradition. That said, I do remember standing on Chantry Hill in May, in cold, driving rain, with similar visible over the IOW in one direction and over the entire Weald to the north. Both the BBC and Met. Office showed the full sun symbol over Sussex and beyond for that (3 hours for Met.) forecasting period. It was wrong and they should go to prison for it.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-14 11:42 PM GMT

Fantastic series of reports Neil, my favourite shot is the marbled White and accompanying Crab Spider 😊 WRT weather reports I've found that down my way the MET and BBC are the least reliable whilst the best is actually the built in App on my iPod with the Weather Channel a close second 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

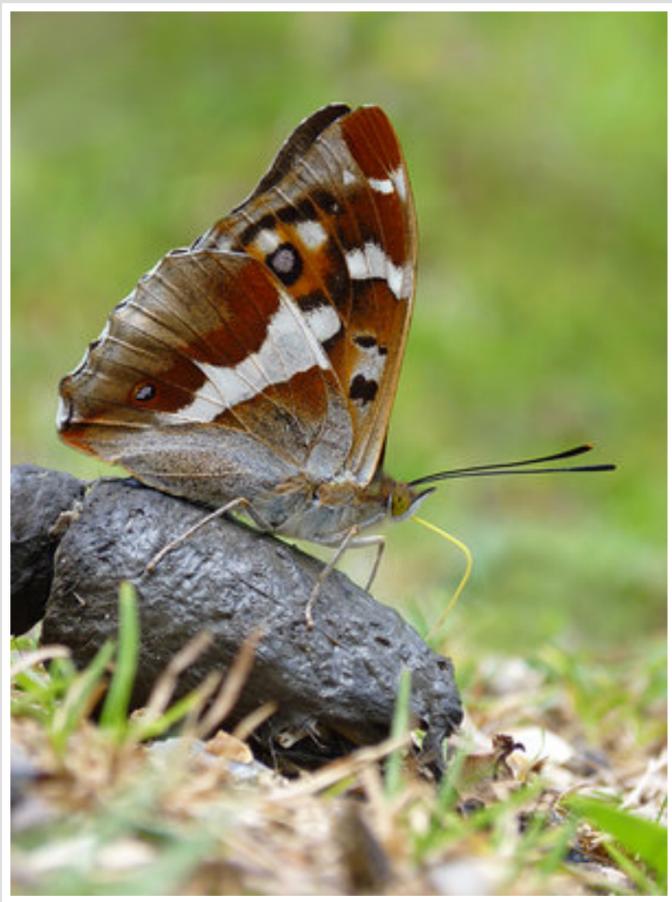
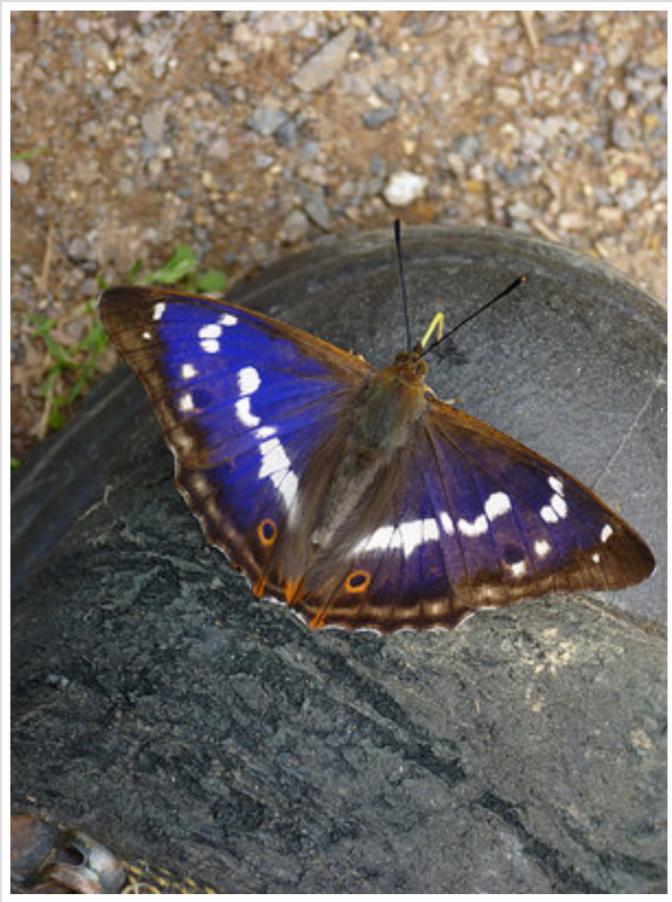
by Neil Hulme, 29-Jun-14 11:43 PM GMT

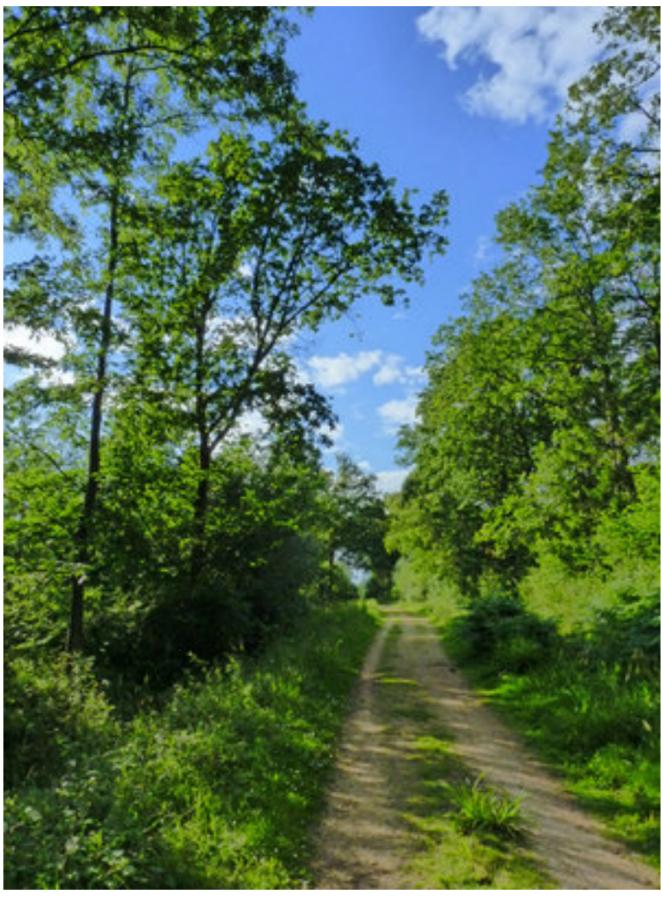
#### Bay Watch

Today (29th June) I managed to squeeze in a last trip to Botany Bay, before heading to Mecca (Fermyn Woods). It was an unprofessionally late start for me, so it came as no surprise to see a huddle of photographers as I climbed the slope above the concrete bridge. A slightly worn male Emperor was deeply engrossed in a particularly large, dark scat. I have my own classification system for these; this one fell into the category 'Gorilla's Finger'. A better example (of *iris*) had been seen earlier in the morning by Dave Miller and others.

After laying some particularly pungent baits (the smell seems to get worse each season) there was little in the way of further action at ground level until well into the afternoon. However, up to 3 males at a time were working their way around the canopy above The Triangle around midday and sporadically throughout the afternoon.

At 4 pm things started to happen and I was paid my first visit of the season, with a male landing on my boots and moleskins. Before 5.45 pm, when it clouded up, I had a further 3 grounded males. A couple of these were unblemished, and probably emerged this morning. For those restricted to weekend visits, you need to be out there next weekend.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Jun-14 11:50 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. These Crab Spiders are very efficient at taking butterflies. I remember Michael Blencowe telling me how many SPBFs he saw in their jaws when he visited Bentley Wood – you don't wanna know! 🤩

BWs Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Katrina, 30-Jun-14 07:01 AM GMT

Great photos Neil, the 2 with the full purple are very pleasing!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by PhilJohnson, 30-Jun-14 04:41 PM GMT

I am Loving your Purple Emperor reports, Neil.

I think I might try not changing my socks for 3 days to see if I can get one landing on my feet! 😊

Best wishes,  
Philip

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-Jun-14 05:11 PM GMT

Thanks Philip. It's most important not to wash your 'outdoors' trousers between June 1st and third week July. They certainly won't be allowed indoors.



BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 30-Jun-14 08:25 PM GMT

100 years ago, butterfly collectors would use nets on absurdly long poles to catch PEs. Today:

It's most important not to wash your 'outdoors' trousers between June 1st and third week July.

Would you venture a guess as to what kit PE enthusiasts will be using in 2114?

Perhaps the equivalent a laser pen (which domestic cats follow with great enthusiasm) might "move" a PE into the ideal spot for the IRD. (IRD = image recording device, the successor to the digital camera)? The "pen" would lay down a scent trail of female PEs (or something like that).

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 01-Jul-14 11:28 AM GMT

Superb Fritillaries Neil 😊, I think you're right about the Bee Orchid (var. *flavescens*), with pale rather than smudged markings on the lip – very jealous



BWs

William

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Jul-14 10:37 PM GMT

Thanks William. Hopefully the Bee Orchids will appear next year and I'll get them before they go over.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Jul-14 11:32 PM GMT

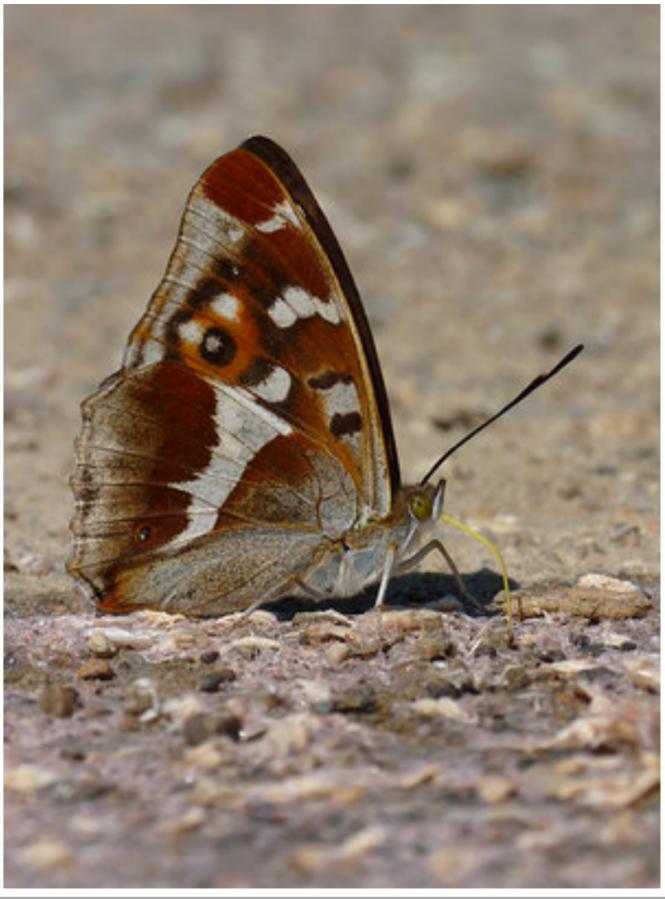
### Fabulous Fermyn (Part 1)

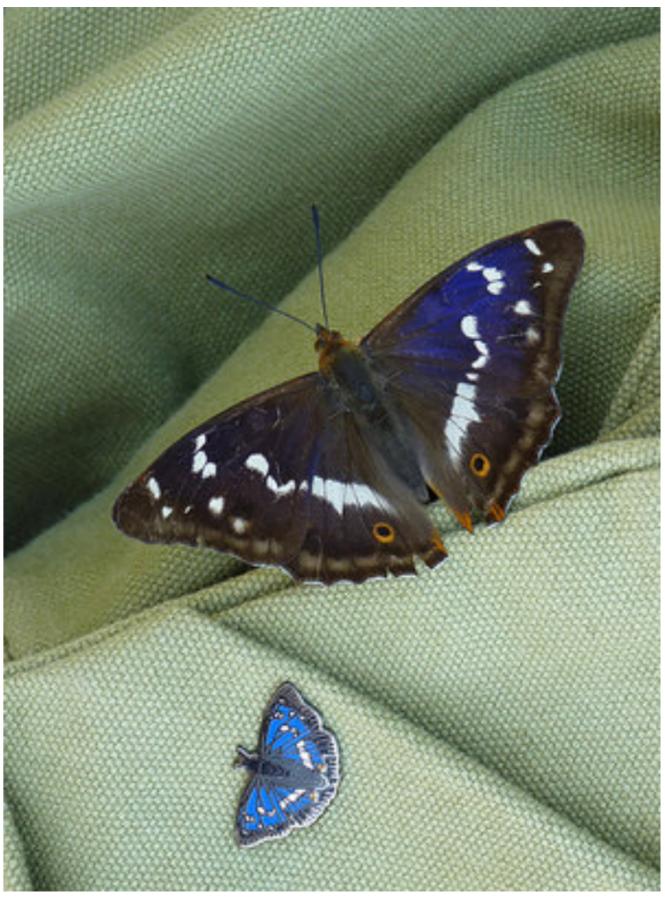
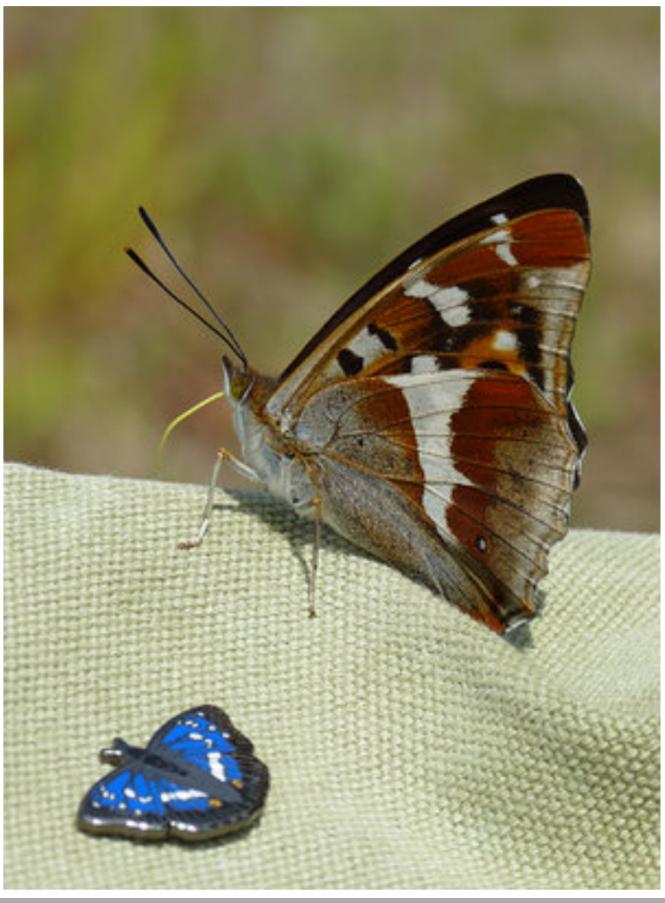
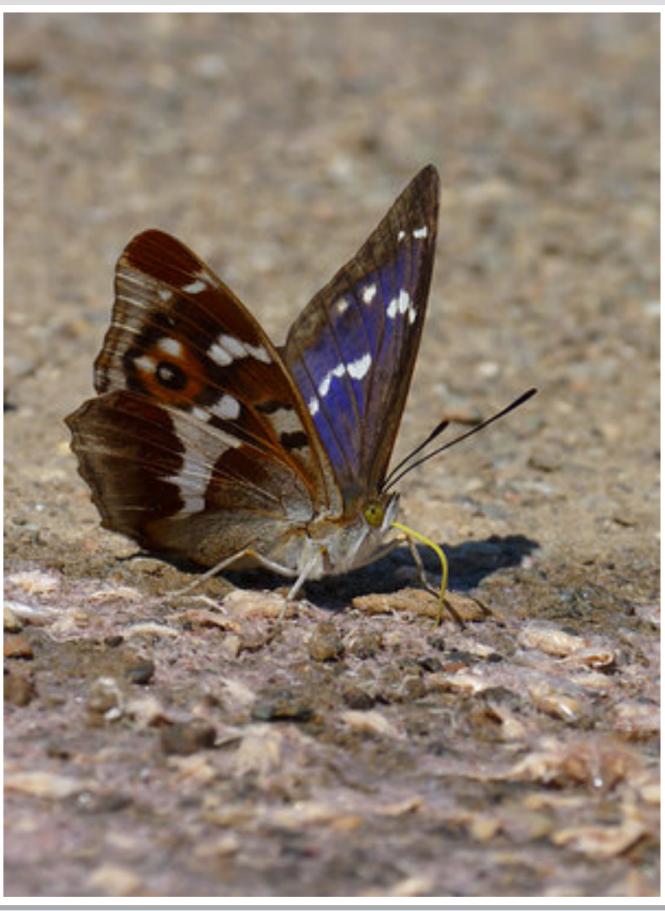
I drove up to Fermyn late on Monday evening (30th June), having been invited by Matthew Oates to stay at a cottage he had rented on the outskirts of the woods. I had two full days ahead of me and the weather forecast was good. All of the reports we had heard suggested that 'Big Bang' day was imminent. As always when visiting this site, I was full of expectation. Given suitable weather Fermyn seldom disappoints.

I was out early the next day and started by cycling several miles through the complex, leaving a smelly trail of shrimp soup on the rides. These baits were to be visited by a great many Purple Emperor over the next 48 hours and things became very exciting very quickly. At 9.15 am *iris* started to descend in numbers, swooping low over the rides and quartering back and forth before dropping down to feast. I made a quick assessment of which were the best specimens. The last bait out of the bucket was quite thick with shrimp pieces, so I soon decided to dilute it in the most natural way possible. I was convinced that the butterfly which was approaching from down-wind was a standard model with a slightly chipped wingtip. As I was fully engaged in the exercise an Emperor suddenly appeared between my legs – a full ab.*lugenda* which looked to be in mint condition! Unsurprisingly it didn't stay long, and quickly retired to sulk at the top of an oak. It never returned and I remained in a state of disappointed shock for well over an hour.

Once I'd come to terms with nearly micturating on Britain's finest aberrant butterfly, I started to enjoy the almost constant Purple Rain. I saw fewer than Matthew on Day 1, refusing to leave the location for the entire morning, in the vain hope that this spectacular beast might give me another chance. Matthew's final tally exceeded 60 Emperors, but better was yet to come. Throughout the course of the two days my moleskin trousers were visited by 11 different specimens, and my boots by 5. 3 landed on my rucksack and presented me with opportunities to enter the Paul Fosterjohn Purple Emperor pin badge challenge. I'll freely admit that my efforts are vastly inferior to Susie Milbank's, although I know that another female photographer managed to get some images which might well be contenders.

Unfortunately the cloud started to build during the afternoon, bringing the action to a premature end. I already had some nice shots in the bag but most had at least a few grazes or fine scratches. I went to bed hoping that the following day would produce some perfect examples, and the return of *lugenda*.







### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 03-Jul-14 11:37 PM GMT

What an effort, Neil. I really must visit Fermyn next year as my tally of grounded Emperors thus far in my life still resides comfortably in single figures. I look forward to your next instalment.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Maximus, 03-Jul-14 11:43 PM GMT

Stunning shots Neil and hope your next instalment features images of *ab.lugenda* 😊

Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

by False Apollo, 03-Jul-14 11:53 PM GMT

I'm on my way this weekend. I have never visited Fermyn before so I am looking forward to seeing the Emperor extravaganza. Any tips on specific places to visit within the wood for best chances of seeing grounded individuals or are they likely to come down anywhere? Anyway cannot wait.

Regards  
Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jul-14 12:00 AM GMT

Thanks David and Mike. Plenty more to come!

Mike (False Apollo) – details in second post here [viewtopic.php?t=7722&start=10000](http://viewtopic.php?t=7722&start=10000)

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by False Apollo, 04-Jul-14 12:11 AM GMT

Many Thanks Neil, much appreciated.

Regards  
Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Willrow, 04-Jul-14 08:34 PM GMT

Fine report and pics Neil...for a change 😊

On Wednesday, Matthew Oates cycled slowly past myself, Phil Bromley and Rosalyn with a plastic bag attached to the handlebars of his bike with the logo HM attached, he said he had 'borrowed' it from the cottage you mention 😊 and had not even noticed the significance of it – in prime **Purple Emperor** territory when I pointed it out 😊😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 04-Jul-14 09:09 PM GMT

Neil, you are completely barking. Fortunately barking in a good butterflying way 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jul-14 10:28 PM GMT

Thanks Bill. It's a shame I missed you, Rosalyn and Phil.

Yes Susie, barking mad and very happy! 😊 I don't think many of the UKB contingent are 'normal' .... thankfully.  
BWs. Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by MikeOxon, 04-Jul-14 11:00 PM GMT

wibble

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jul-14 11:12 PM GMT

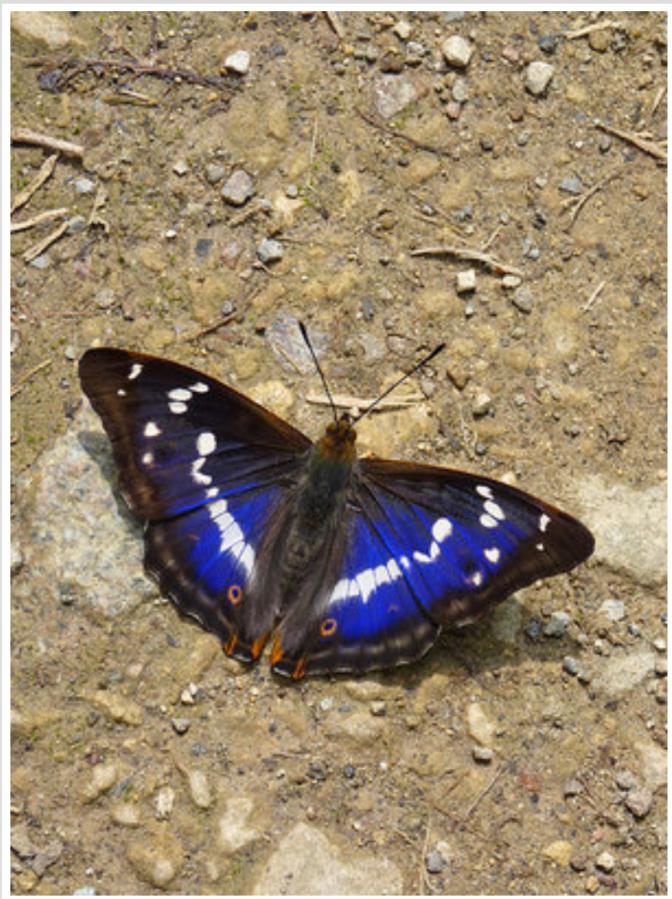
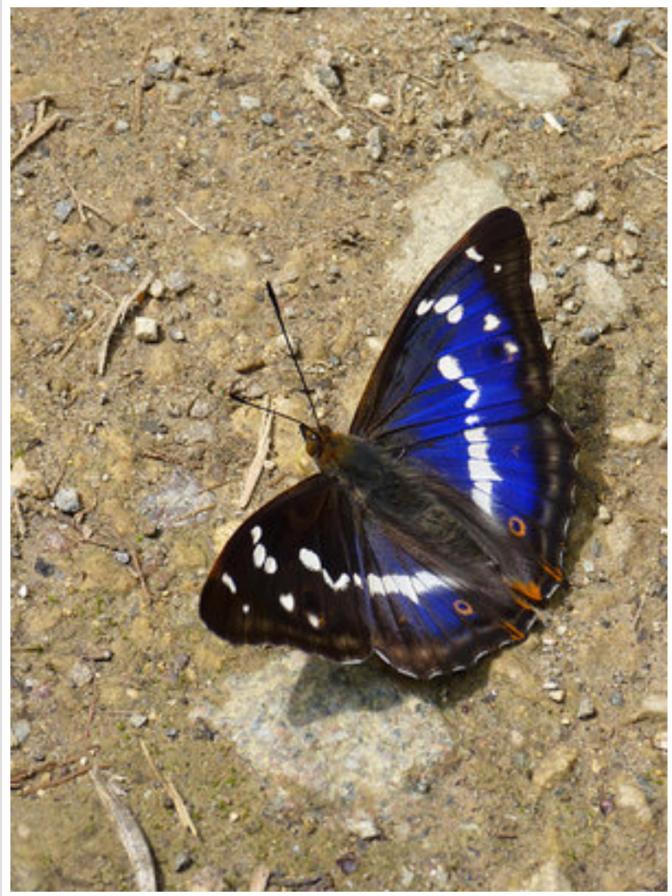
#### Fabulous Fermyn (Part 2)

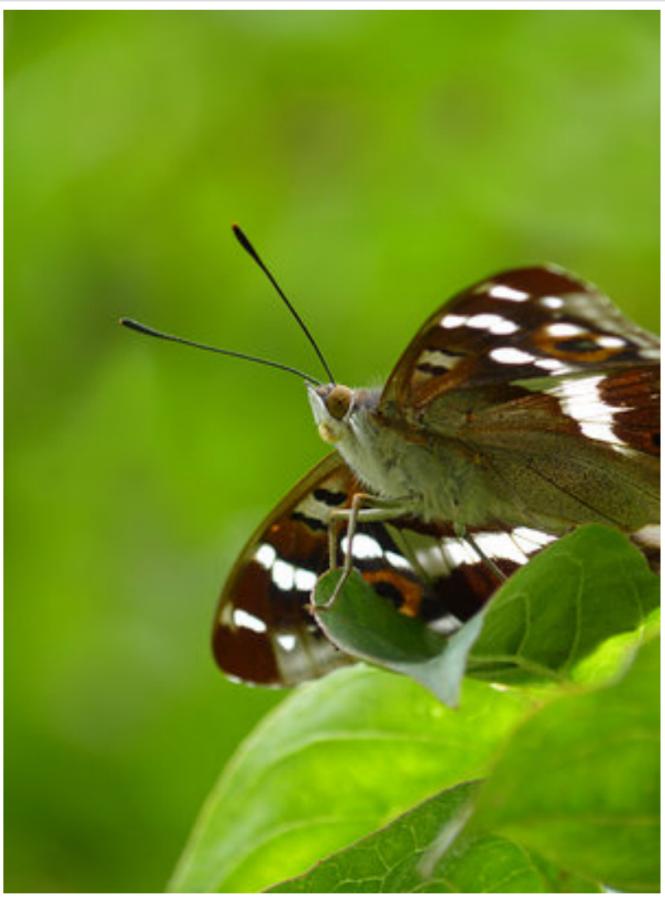
Some things are just not meant to be and *Iugenda* never showed himself again to me; he will probably never grace another human eye. Fortunately my second wish was granted and later on Wednesday (2nd July) it became apparent that a large emergence of fresh males had occurred. Over the years I have become firmly convinced that individuals which emerge early in the morning will not make their first descent to the forest floor until mid afternoon

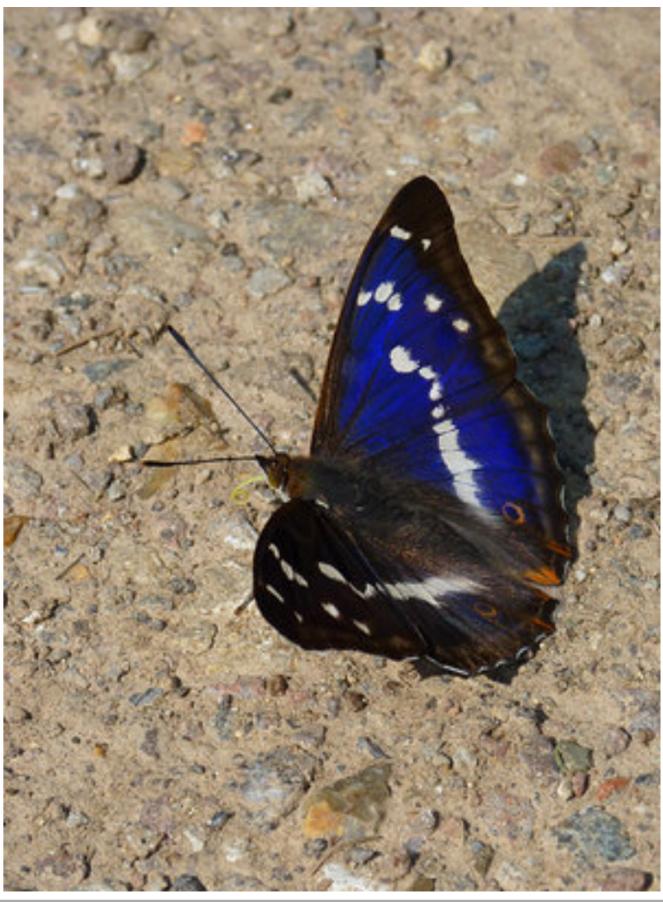
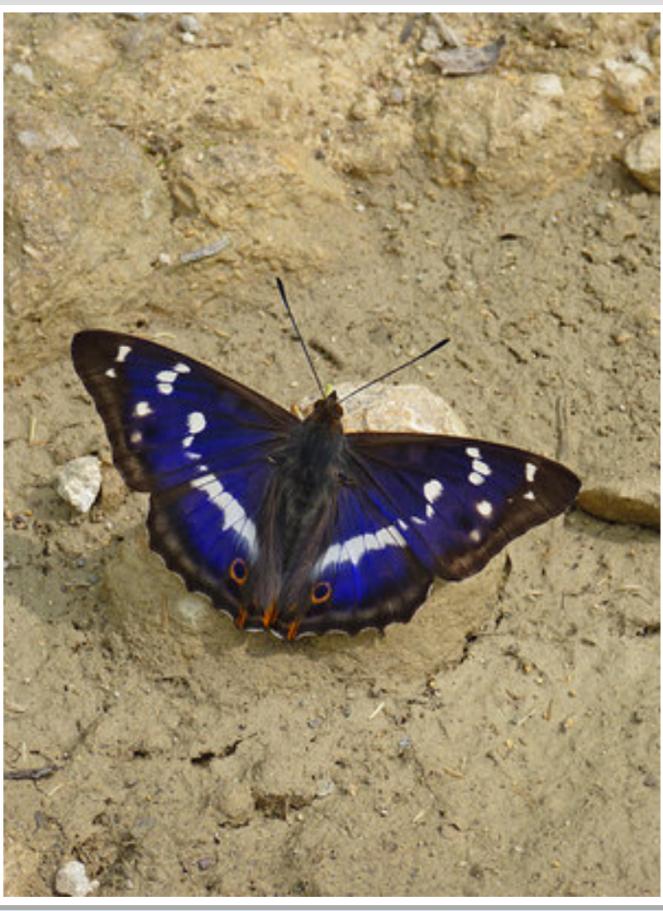
that day. To do so before their wings are fully dry, and they have largely mastered the basics of flight, would put them at too high a risk from predatory Jays and Song Thrushes (I have seen dismembered *iris* on an anvil). Between 3 pm and 4 pm the rides of Fermyn were suddenly dominated by the most perfect, unblemished specimens, all making their first sorties. I'm indebted to Phil Beard for alerting me to the presence of one such insect, shown below. I remember thinking that this must be one of the most beautiful creatures alive on the planet as I clicked away at it.

Matthew's tally for the day exceeded 90 and I saw a similar number, 35 – 40 of which were grounded. Again, it is worth pointing out that this sort of figure can only be achieved with the use of a bicycle, covering several miles of the ride system over a very full day. Several females were seen egg laying, although most of the girls were yet to emerge before I sadly had to depart.

As always it was difficult to leave Fermyn and, like others, I leave a part of me behind there each time I go, balanced out by the happy memories I take away with me. It was great to spend time with one of the local lads, Andy Wyldes (co-author of the brilliant 'Butterflies of Northamptonshire') and to catch up with some familiar faces – all smiling. The cottage I stayed in was basic, but perfect for the setting, with a posse of young Swallows perched outside my bedroom window most evenings. Most of all I appreciated the company, expertise and enthusiasm of Matthew, from whom I continue to learn so much.











### Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 05-Jul-14 07:43 AM GMT

And fabulous photos too Neil 😊. Interesting observation you make about PEs not descending low until mid afternoon after emerging earlier on the same day. I wouldn't have thought it would take them that long to dry out their wings and master the basics of flight. Maybe I'll have a better chance of seeing them low at around 3-4 pm this early in the season?

Peter

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-Jul-14 07:56 AM GMT

Hi Peter,

A clear pattern has emerged over the years and usually persists for about the first ten days of the flight season, after which all the males are out. On many occasions it has been when the vast majority of enthusiasts have headed home, after the morning descent has clearly finished, that I have achieved my best images (of perfect imagos). Between 4 pm and as late as 7.30 pm the males drop down again, this time with a noticeably high proportion of pristine examples.

The time required to fully dry off a wing may simply be a function of its surface area. I was fortunate enough to watch a newly emerged female *gorganus* Swallowtail earlier this year. She was clumsy and pretty hopeless in the air until after 2 pm.

Best Wishes, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 05-Jul-14 08:37 AM GMT

Fabulous photos, fascinating facts of observed behaviour and funny anecdotes. Your posts have it all, Neil. 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 05-Jul-14 08:41 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Excellent! My patience begins to wear thin by around 2pm if I am out searching for PEs in the morning hence probably missing out on some fantastic opportunities late in the day 😊.

Peter

PS I used to live in Hove and when I started 'collecting' butterflies. Before my mother passed away in 2000 we used to go to Houghton Forest regularly near Arundel and remember seeing many Dark Green and Silver-washed Fritillaries as well as White Admirals but never a PE.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-Jul-14 05:40 PM GMT

Hi Peter,

There is little doubt that Emperors can exist for decades in a wood without being spotted. When living at low density they can be remarkably elusive. Even when relatively common they can still do a good job of hiding, particularly for periods later in the flight season and under certain weather

conditions (including very warm and sunny). I've even started to hear grumbles 😞 from people who can't find them on the Knepp Castle Estate (unassisted), and this is easily the second largest population in the UK!  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jul-14 09:04 PM GMT

A brilliant set of reports from Fermyn Neil, superb photos and interesting observations 😊

Unfortunately, I will not have a chance to get there this year before the best is over ( been away for a week and then back to work) but your reports help to ease the longing a bit.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Neil Hulme

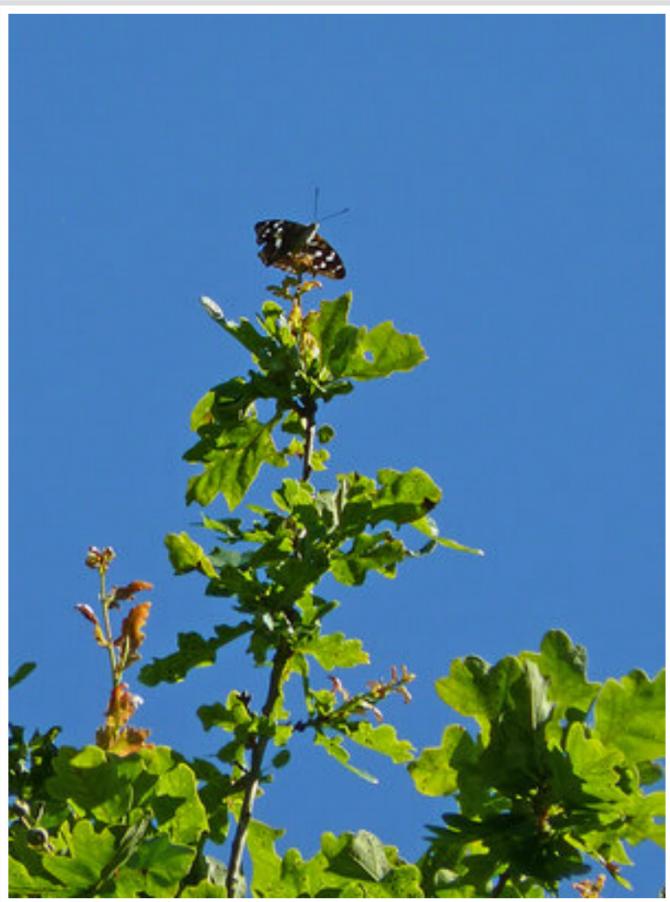
by Neil Hulme, 05-Jul-14 09:06 PM GMT

### More Purple Doings

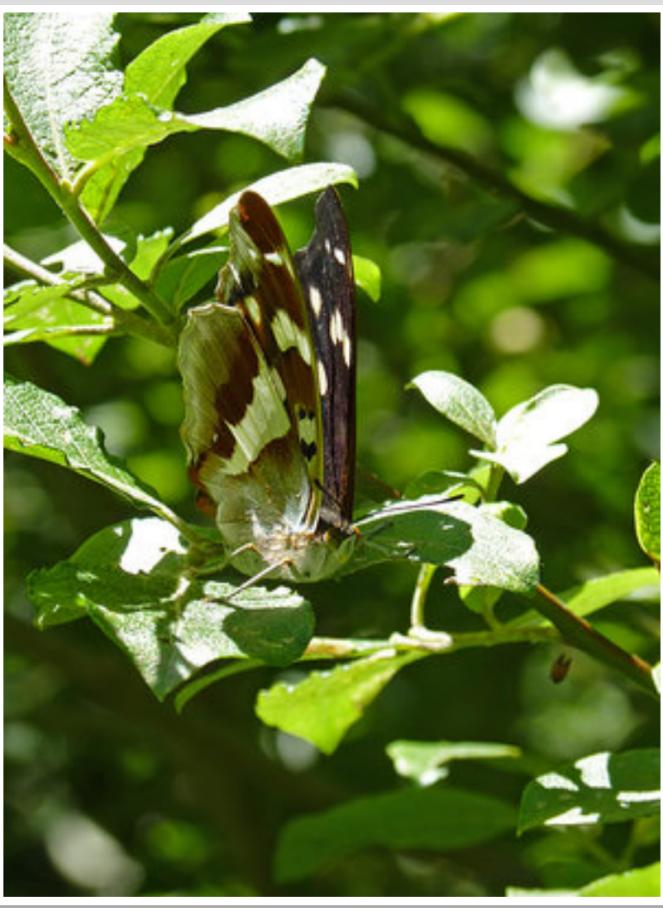
There has been plenty of Purple Emperor action over the last few days, particularly over the Knepp Castle Estate rewilding project area. On 3rd July I visited the site with father and son team Dan and Indi Danahar, and Colin Knight. The weather conditions were perversely too good during our visit, with clear blue skies, little breeze and a rapidly rising temperature. During the middle part of the flight season these conditions can bring out the lethargic side of Emperor behaviour. However, I suspect they may have been much more active before our arrival at 11 am. By the time we went our separate ways we had reached an impressive tally of 34, but that gives a rather false impression as it was very difficult to spot them. Most activity amounted to the briefest flights of restless males, or butterflies which had been irritated by a nearby Purple Hairstreak. Female activity was also minimal. I returned to a different area of the Estate later in the afternoon, but could only add another 8, bringing the day's total to 42 Purple Emperor.

On 4th July I spent a couple of hours in the very beautiful Eartham Woods. This under-recorded site has performed consistently well on the occasions I have visited, and this proved to be my best session yet. 3 males were sawfly-searching around the car park and southern gate when I arrived. I later watched a female ovipositing high in the crown of a willow on the edge of the car park. Best of all were the 2 females seen egg-laying in willow-rich embayments along Stane Street (Roman road), much deeper in the woods. One in particular was gigantic and she flopped down low in a willow, allowing me a very close approach – she appeared to be in mint condition. A tally of 6 Emperors (3m, 3f) in two hours is very good for a wood which is seldom visited. I later received reports from Paul Fosterjohn who had seen 23 individual Emperors back at Knepp, and Major Reg Trench who had seen a further 2 with his wife Sophie at Houghton Forest.

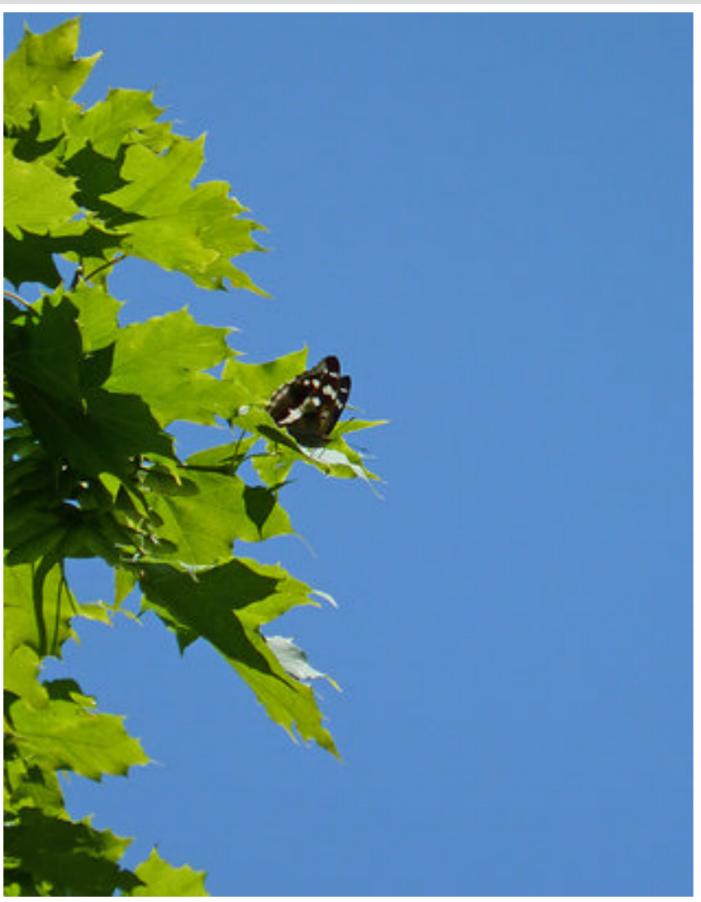
Today (5th July) Matthew Oates led a large group of enthusiasts across the Knepp Castle Estate. They made the best of limited weather breaks, notching up a further 31 Purple Emperor. We are both out there again tomorrow with a group, and if the weather is good we hope to see a lot of male/female interaction.



Knepp male



Eartham female



Eartham female

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-Jul-14 09:08 PM GMT

Thanks Susie and Neil. There's always next season and a year away will make your return even sweeter! 😊  
BW's, Neil

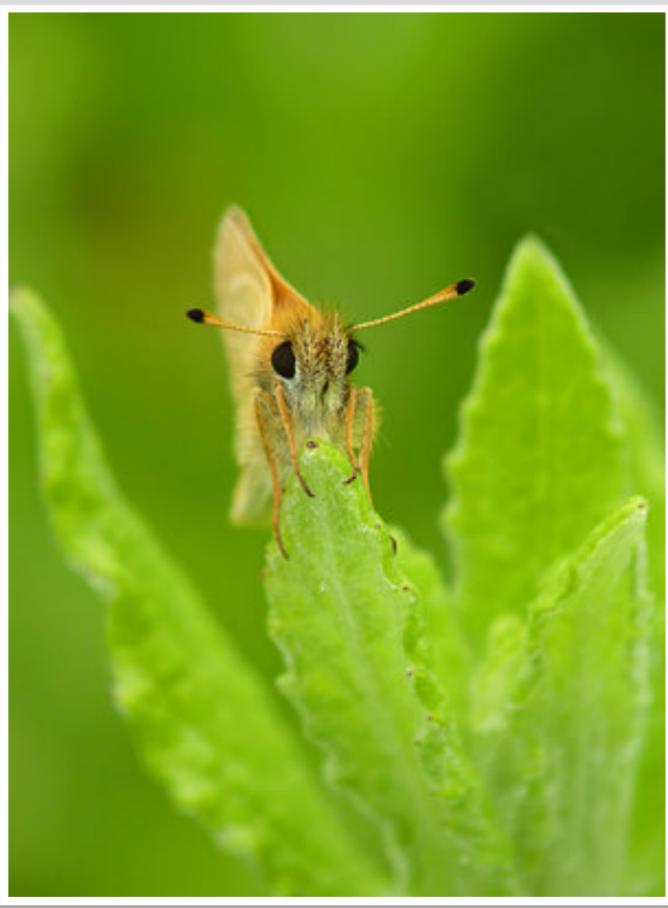
### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-Jul-14 09:48 PM GMT

#### Weald And Downs

This morning (6th July) Matthew Oates and I led a party of visitors around the Knepp Castle Estate, following a brief PowerPoint presentation on the life-cycle of the Purple Emperor. Despite suitable weather for much of the time we struggled to make double figures; the Emperors have become much more difficult lately, suggesting we may be further into the season here than we realised. After our guests had departed we headed back out, but it was only much later in the afternoon that Matthew added sufficient counts to bring us to a respectable total of 22 for the day.

Several species showed here for the first time this summer, including Gatekeeper (large emergence), Essex Skipper and Peacock, the latter suggesting that the butterfly season is still running ahead of average. We also saw 4 White-letter Hairstreak fidgeting around the top of an elm.



On the way home I stopped briefly at Springhead Hill, finding my first Chalkhill Blue of the year, including a lightly spotted aberrant specimen.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 07-Jul-14 10:50 PM GMT

### Six-Spot Burnet

This evening (7th July) I took a mid evening stroll around Cissbury Ring. Although the butterflies and day-flying moths had long gone to bed, they were quite easy to find given their abundance; this is a time of plenty. The Six-Spot Burnet moth is a species that I, and I'm sure many others, tend to take for granted, but hot July days on the Downs just wouldn't be the same without it. It deserves a second look – it's a really rather spectacular looking insect.



## Re: Neil Hulme

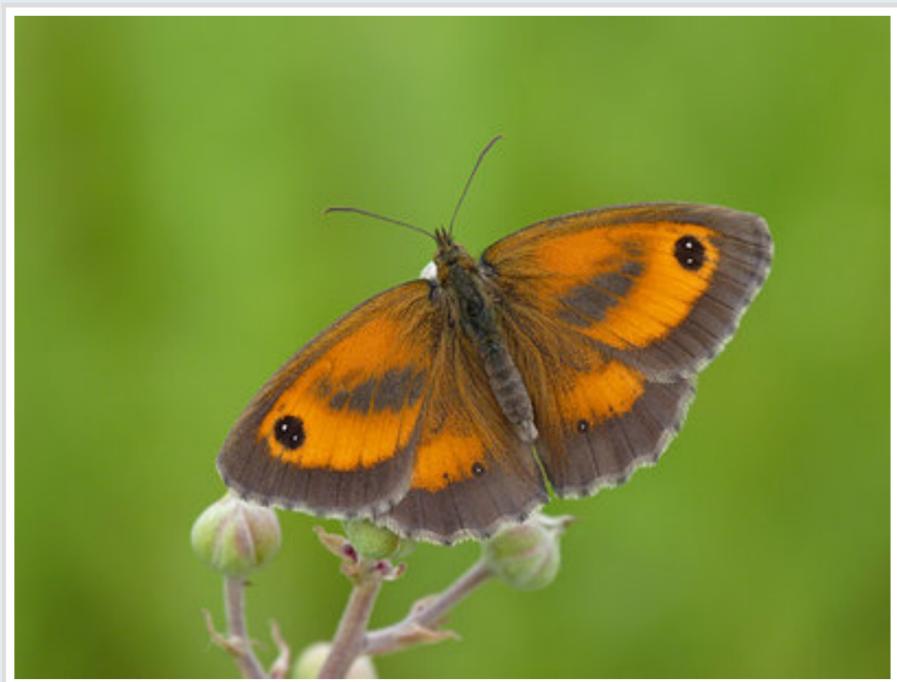
by Neil Hulme, 09-Jul-14 09:23 AM GMT

### Ups And Downs

The fortunes of our various butterfly species have always ebbed and flowed, and always will do. It was only a handful of years ago that the Meadow Brown and Purple Hairstreak were at the top of the abundance table in Sussex, but both have had a run of bad seasons and this is certainly no longer the case, at least over large parts of the county. The Purple Hairstreak has been decimated, by 90% rather than 10%!

Amongst the satyrids there has been a noticeable swing in favour of the Marbled White and Ringlet this season, with Meadow Brown trailing a long way behind on many sites. It looks like the Gatekeeper is similarly set to outperform its ubiquitous cousin, and within days of first appearing it was already overhauling the Meadow Brown when I wandered across the extensive grasslands on the Knepp Castle Estate yesterday (8th July).

Perhaps one of the most welcome features of this ebb and flow is the return of the Small Tortoiseshell. When I cycled across the Downs on 4th July, up through the top of Earham Woods, past Glatting Beacon to Bignor Hill, then back down Stane Street (a superb Roman Road crossing wonderful Sussex countryside), the Small Tortoiseshell jostled for position on every thistle head. 2013 and 2014 have been blessed with the sort of numbers I haven't seen since my youth. Butterflies can do all sorts of things for us; they can even make us feel young again!



Knepp Castle Gatekeeper

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jul-14 11:41 PM GMT

## Less Known Sussex Woods Come Good

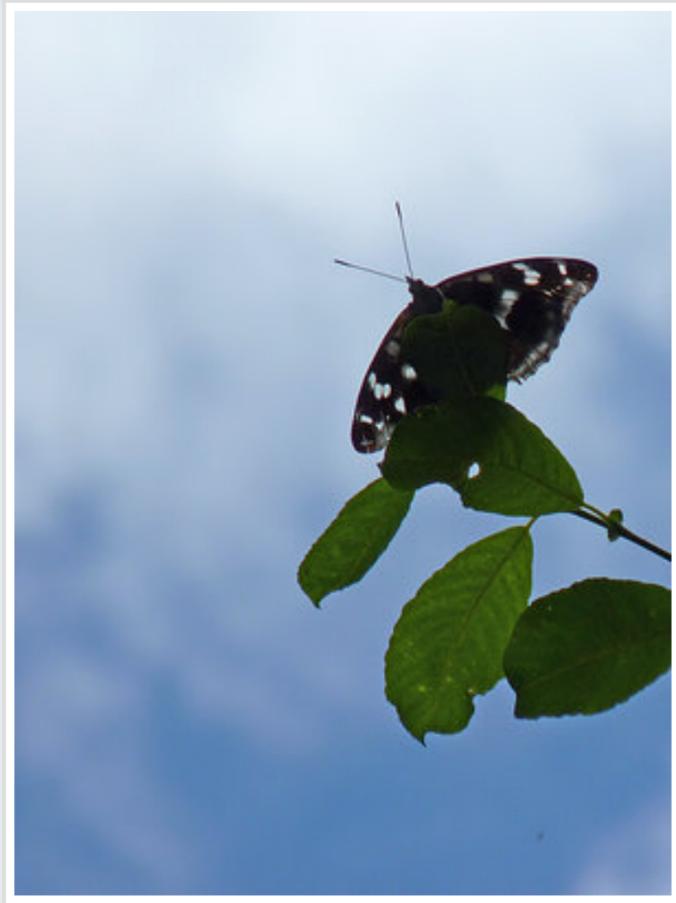
With every visit I become increasingly impressed by the Purple Potential of Eartham Woods. I used to visit this site in my childhood on family walks, but it wasn't much good for butterflies in those days. Things are rather better now, largely due to the sympathetic management by FC Ranger Rob Thurlow and his colleagues (Rob used to look after the Pearl-bordered Fritillary in Rewell Wood at Arundel before it was returned to the castle).

About eight years ago, during a phase of thinning, some large scallops were cut into the margins of the towering beech, and then left to regenerate naturally. Good quality sallow has managed to get a firm foothold in most of these areas, along with ash, hazel and bramble.

My count of 16 White Admiral was the best I've managed in Sussex since the species took a nosedive a few years back. Silver-washed Fritillary and Large Skipper both exceeded 20 and it was nice to see 4 Marbled White trundling along the rides. Other highlights included 7 freshly emerged Peacock.

It was Emperors we were really after and a small group of us (Rob Thurlow, Malcolm and Joyce Hill) managed a combined total of 8, comprising 3 males, 3 females (one pictured) and 2 unsexed. They were still flying well at 6 pm and I'm fairly confident that a new territory has been identified at a high point in the middle of the wood, along Stane Street. This beautiful wood is slowly beginning to give up some of its secrets.

Meanwhile, at Houghton Forest (Arundel), Colin Knight managed to photograph 2 females down on the main ride. One was in mint condition and the other scored 8.5/10. Females are usually very skittish while on the deck (there are exceptions of course), probably because they are just after moisture and don't become as engrossed as the males do in nasty stuff, so he did well to get fantastic images of both.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by False Apollo, 11-Jul-14 12:00 AM GMT

Just read your account and I totally agree about females imbibing moisture as the one I saw down actively searched out a damp area to probe in. I had another female down in the same wood yesterday in almost the same place, she was down for around 5 minutes before she flew off. That female had a bit of hindwing missing though.

Regards  
Mike

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 13-Jul-14 09:51 PM GMT

### Good News For The Duke

The Duke of Burgundy emerged in good numbers at Heyshott Escarpment this spring, with a peak day count of 104 adults. Of course this is only a small part of the story, and the fortunes of each species from year to year depend far more on the success (or otherwise) of the early stages than they do on adult numbers; good flight seasons can easily be followed by population crashes.

I was therefore delighted to see the extent of larval feeding damage to the cowslips on this site when I visited yesterday (12th July). Plants over the entire eastern flank of the reserve were peppered with the characteristic pattern left by mature caterpillars. A diligent search is often required on Duke of Burgundy sites, but on this occasion the evidence was simply everywhere I looked, almost to the very summit of the slope. The majority of larvae have probably pupated by now, given the generally good conditions since May, and are now safely tucked up in their mossy beds. Things look very promising for the Heyshott Duke in 2015.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-14 10:11 PM GMT

Great news about the Dukes at Heyshott Neil 😊 I've been reading the Purple exploits with growing envy as Bentley Wood has only produced fleeting sightings this year. Any chance of you doing a 'Purple Masterclass' at a future UKB event?  
Have a goodun

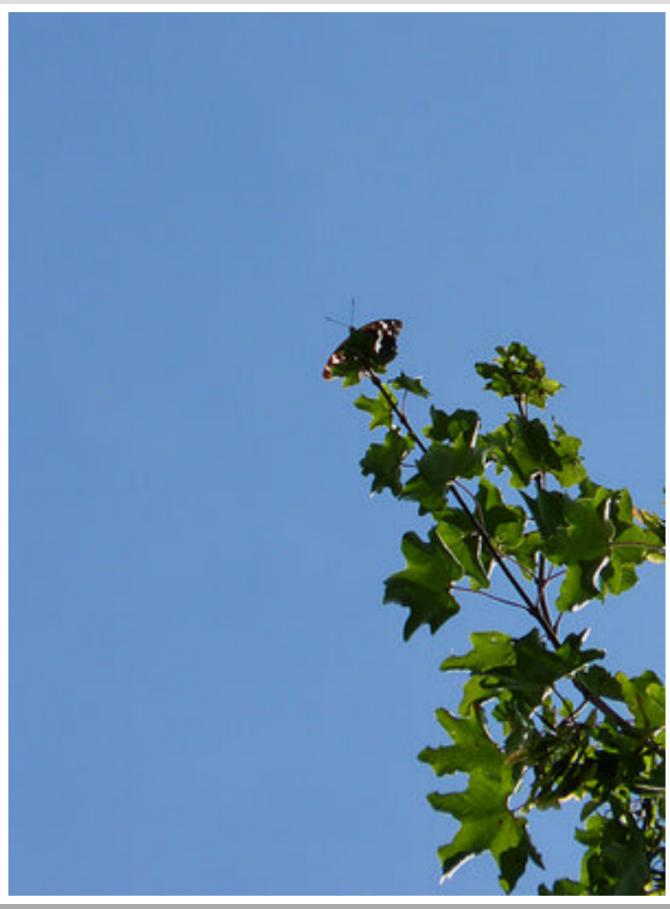
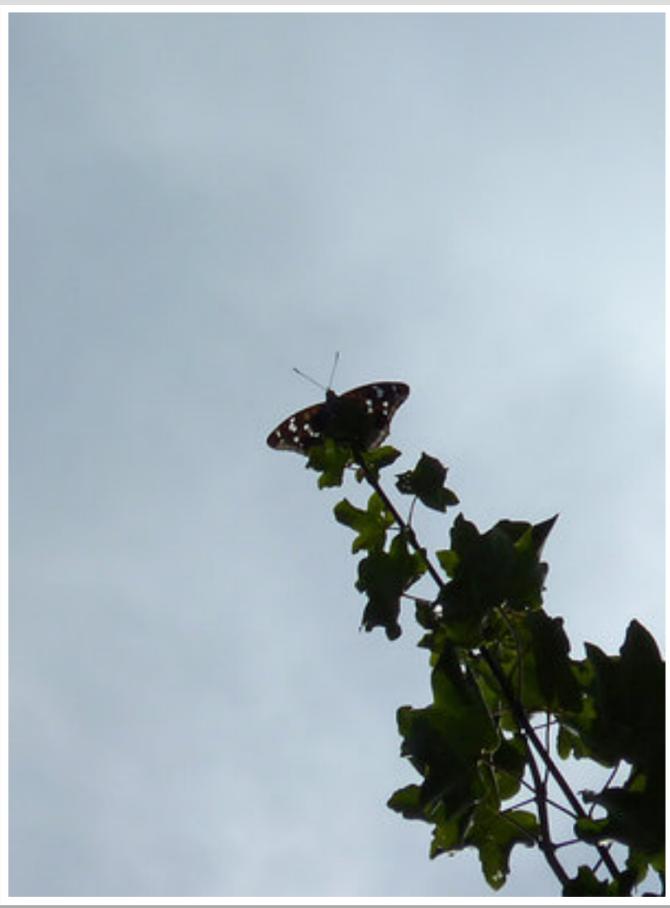
Wurzel

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 13-Jul-14 10:26 PM GMT

### Knepp Emperors Still Performing

Today (13th July) Matthew Oates and I led the last of the Knepp Wildland Safaris to see Purple Emperor this year. Despite being quite late in the season the butterflies put on a good show for us, with 21 individuals seen, including 4 females. We later returned for an early evening walk in a different area, adding a further 9. One particularly violent male attacked 5 passerines in as many minutes, including both Blue and Long-tailed Tit. By 6 pm the main target was Purple Hairstreak and we watched a bundle of 4 get mixed up with a couple of clashing *iris*. Towards the end of the day we saw a chase of 4 males in a vista, which is good by any standards. Numbers at Knepp are certainly down on last year, but 30 individuals on a late season afternoon confirm this site as being second only to Fermyn Woods.



### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 13-Jul-14 10:40 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I must be a real anorak to get so excited about plants with a lot of holes in, but it does look good for the future!

Although Fermyn has been its usual epic self, it seems that the majority of Emperor sites have been rather average at best this year, with many being distinctly below par. I believe that Bentley and Alice Holt have both been hard going at times. We should never forget that this is actually a difficult species to work, unless they make a habit of sticking themselves to your trousers, boots and rucksack as they do in Fermyn. One thing does stand out this season, at least in Sussex; those spending time in under-rated, under-visited woods have done surprisingly well. Fortune favours the brave.

BWs, Neil

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jul-14 08:51 PM GMT

#### **Here And There**

On Tuesday (15th July) I covered four very different sites, all being quite close to home. I started the day at Fairmile Bottom, where large numbers of Small Skipper are being increasingly joined by the Essex. Once I'd got the head-on identification shot I was after, I moved a short distance up the road to Houghton Forest.



At Houghton I was joined by Colin Knight, who had photographed at least four different Purple Emperor females on the ground here, all in the previous couple of days. Given the apparently small size of the population, and the fact that only a couple of males have been seen on the deck here, I was keen to find out what was going on. I still can't explain it! We saw a female on an egg-laying run, but she didn't want to play the game. After discharging the leftover contents of my bait bucket in the parking bay, I was more than pleased to photograph the stunning, newly hatched Red Admiral which seemed to appreciate this smelly offering.



I then joined Matthew Oates at a private wood near Wiston, but we only saw a single male Emperor high above the canopy. He had managed to find three females earlier in the day, but in my experience they tend to take a rest from egg laying before 4 pm.

My last stop was at Springhead Hill. As afternoon turned to evening the Chalkhill Blues started to slow down, opening their beautiful pearly wings to the weakening sunshine. To me this is the quintessential species of hot July days on the Sussex Downs.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-14 10:23 PM GMT

Stunning shots as usual Neil but the pose on the second Red Admiral is brill 😊👍

Have a godun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jul-14 11:38 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I had to get pretty close to (and just downwind of) my rancid shrimp bait, so I really had to suffer for my art. 😊  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by PhilBJohnson, 17-Jul-14 05:49 AM GMT

Hi Neil,  
I also like that second Red Admiral picture. I am assuming you used a tilting LCD screen rather than looking through the view finder with your chin on the ground ! 😊  
Best Wishes,  
Philip

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jul-14 09:36 AM GMT

Hi Philip,  
No, my chin was on the ground and that disgusting smell was taking Route One to my olfactory lobes. This was one occasion when I missed not having the tilt screen! Still using the trusty FZ38.  
Congrats to you and Rosalyn on the Scarce Tortoiseshell. 100% genuine, self-powered visitor.  
BWs, Neil

Edit: Oops. Wrong Philip. You probably don't know a Rosalyn, and I doubt you've seen a Scarce Tortoiseshell either!

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jul-14 10:57 PM GMT

### Magical Knepp

Last week I spent a gruelling three days (16th, 17th, 18th July) surveying butterflies over the Knepp Castle Estate Wildland Project area. Surveying butterflies is usually considered a peaceful and relaxing pursuit, but this was like a military training course. Mile after mile in searing heat, carrying a hefty backpack with enough water to last all day, up and over deer fence stiles and constantly bending down to differentiate between Small and Essex Skippers, of which there were vast numbers.

The results of a Timed Count, Fixed Route survey of the Southern Block (16th July) were remarkably consistent with 2013 data, with an identical species count of 23 (highest to date) and a total of 1145 individuals comparing very closely with last year's 1137.

Single Species surveys (including those of Matthew Oates) for Purple Emperor indicate an approximate halving of last year's incredible numbers. However, a maximum daily count of 45 individuals confirms Knepp as the second largest population in the UK; more than 300 individual records have been logged. This drop in abundance of the Emperor is mirrored on most sites across the country, reflecting the natural ebb and flow of the species' fortunes from year to year.

The traditional Transect technique survey performed across the Northern and Middle Blocks (17th and 18th July) produced very different results to the status quo seen over the southern part of the estate. Again, a total of 23 species were observed, equalling the best (2013) figure since butterfly recording began in 2005. Amongst the 23 species was White-letter Hairstreak, observed for the first time on any of the formal surveys. This brings the total number of species recorded at Knepp (Howarth and Hulme, 2005 - 2014) to 32, amounting to 71% of the Sussex total (45 spp.).

The total abundance of butterflies was significantly up on 2013, itself a good year, with 2499 individuals counted, amounting to an increase of 175.5%. The big winners were the 'golden skippers', with huge increases in both Small Skipper (790; increase of 1174%) and Essex Skipper (159; increase of 960%). Essex Skipper will be under-represented within these figures, as it is impossible to differentiate every individual amongst such large populations. When lumped together these species increased by a combined 1132%.

There seems little doubt that the rewilding process at Knepp continues to bring benefits to wildlife, with butterflies providing an easily monitored and sensitive measure of wider environmental change. While conducting these surveys it has becoming increasingly obvious that other aspects of the fauna and flora are beginning to show their appreciation. My spring survey is now accompanied by the songs of Nightingale, Cuckoo and Turtle Dove. While watching Purple Emperors in the heat of July the Turtle Dove can be heard purring away from almost every point across the Southern Block. The soundtrack of my youth is gradually being restored here.

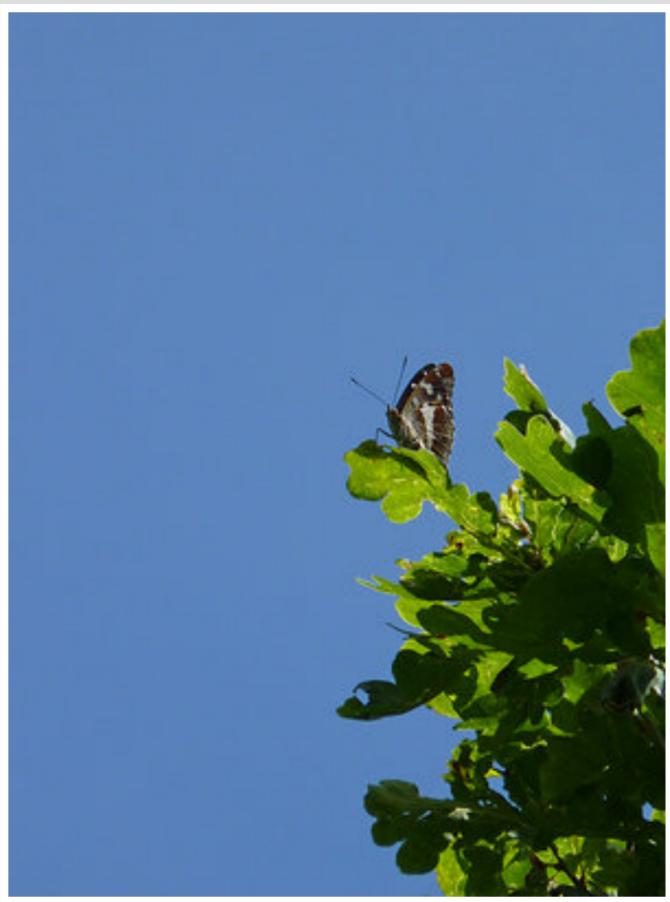
On the Thursday night I stayed at the Knepp Safaris campsite, courtesy of Amy and Paul Nightingale. I spent the night in one of the Shepherd's Huts built by Paul, and enjoyed a few glasses (OK bottles) of wine beside the camp kitchen as the sun slowly sunk below the horizon. A few hours later I was out of the hut again, watching the spectacular electric storms as they passed along the South Coast. Every time I visit Knepp it gets harder to leave. This is a truly magical place.



Common Blue



Essex Skipper



Emperor



Knepp Safaris campsite kitchen



Knepp Shepherd's Hut



Too good for a shepherd

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-14 10:36 AM GMT

Some fantastic and cheering figures there Neil – it's nice to hear of some positive trends in butterfly populations 😊 Those Shepherd huts look fantastic – straight off of 'George Clarke's Amazing Spaces' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 23-Jul-14 03:10 PM GMT

Neil:

stayed at the Knepp Safaris campsite, courtesy of Amy and Paul **Nightingale**

There is a term that escapes me at the moment when the name is so appropriate for what someone does.

You really should have joined the army Neil. Think of all that under-explored Salisbury Plain habitat. I believe (stand to be corrected) that the army appoints a wildlife/conservation officer for the training area of the Plain. (Presumably, he/she stops live firing in the Great Bustard habitat). I had also heard that Porton Down (not strictly army of course) has more butterfly species than any other place in the British Isles

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by selbypaul, 23-Jul-14 09:58 PM GMT

Hi Neil

It sounds like an amazing place. You've sold it to me. I'm going to have to visit next July – Turtle Doves and Purple Emperor – sounds perfect!!!

Paul

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jul-14 03:50 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel: You should come and see them (and various posh tents) yourself. It's a great place for a family holiday – it won't look like a butterfly holiday at all! 😊

Hi Jack: I've been invited to join survey teams at Porton Down before, but can never abandon my own Duke of Burgundy monitoring in Sussex. One day! Apparently it is absolutely stuffed with butterflies, including Dukes.

Hi Paul: You'll love the place. Knepp must be the most exciting thing happening in the British countryside at the moment. Get in there early! Let me know if you come and I'll give you a tour.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jul-14 04:28 PM GMT

### Botany Bay Wood Whites

On Tuesday (22nd July) I met up with Dan Danahar to look for second brood Wood White at Botany Bay, Chiddingfold Forest. There wasn't much "looking for" involved, as I encountered the first within 50 metres of the car park and found half a dozen before reaching the concrete bridge. Numbers are still building and there are very few females out yet; a strong second brood seems inevitable. It took well over an hour before I finally met up with Dan, as my progress through the woods was constantly stalled by mud-puddling Wood Whites, and other delights including a magnificent female Purple Emperor on the track.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jul-14 09:09 PM GMT

### Southern Swallowtails

I would like to thank James Weightman for providing details of the location near Grasse (South of France) where he saw the rare Southern Swallowtail earlier this summer. [viewtopic.php?f=20&t=7703&p=87056&hilit=southern+swallowtail#p87056](#)

My brother Mark and his family live in Antwerp, but regularly holiday in the South of France, so James' directions were gratefully received. Below are a few images recently sent to me by Mark, following a successful trip south. I just love the colours – straight from an Impressionist's palette.



Southern Swallowtail by Mark Hulme



Scarce Swallowtail by Mark Hulme



Silver-washed Fritillary by Mark Hulme



Southern Swallowtail by Mark Hulme



Southern Comma by Mark Hulme

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Jul-14 08:47 AM GMT

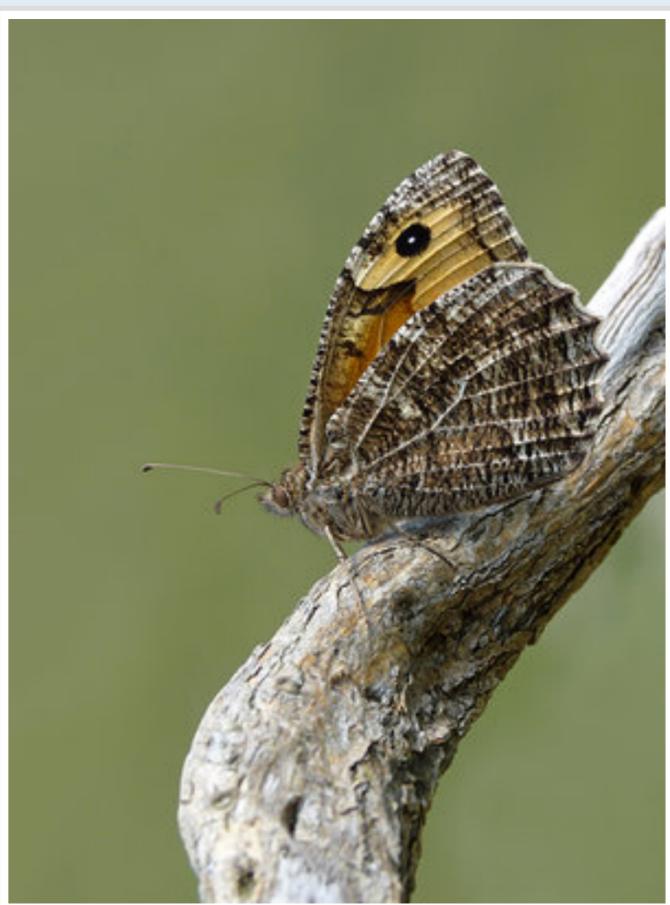
### Grayling Rallies

The Grayling is an endangered species in Sussex and, other than the occasional incursion in the far west from the heaths of Hampshire, it is now restricted to the chalk grassland colony around Windover Hill at Wilmington. In some recent years the population has been worryingly low.

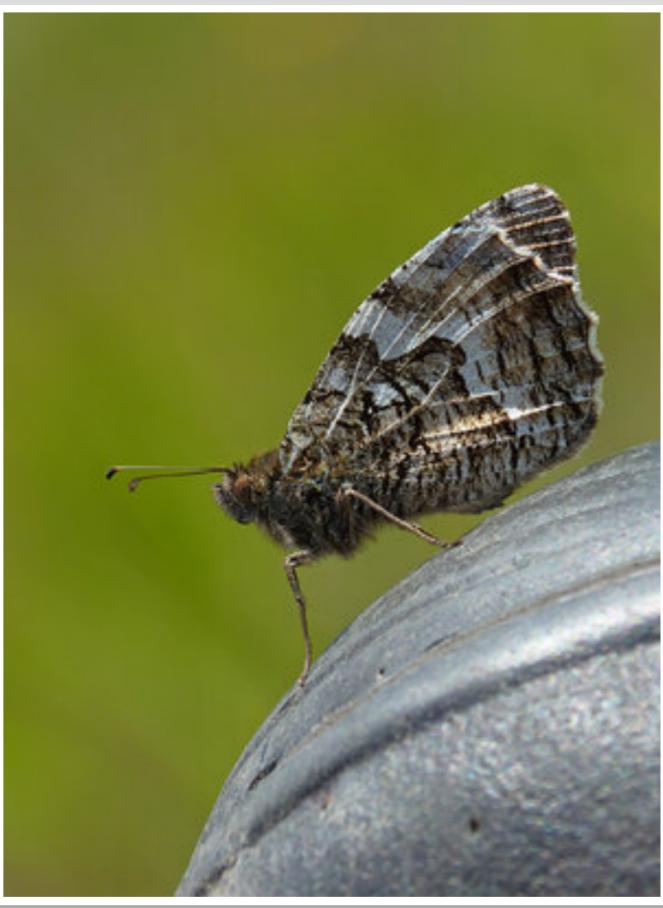
On Wednesday (23rd July) I started the long ascent up the chalk track and it soon became clear that most downland species are having a good year here. Some areas of the track seemed particularly attractive to mineral-hunting Chalkhill Blue males, and clouds of 50 – 100 were regularly flushed from the surface. Throughout the day I made a conservative estimate of 5000 for this species. Other high summer species included numerous Wall, freshly emerged Silver-spotted Skipper and plenty of Dark Green Fritillary, many taking on their late-season faded colours.

However, it was the enigmatic Grayling I was keen to see. The Grayling is having a good season here and males could be found at regular intervals on the track from the reservoir to the summit and beyond. As I dropped into their valley stronghold I was struck by the large proportion of very fresh females, with several already busy laying eggs. They performed all of their usual tricks, sitting on my boots, trousers, shirt and rucksack. In all I counted 145, but there will be many more present than this. It would be nice to think that they might wander and reclaim a little of their loss ground this summer.

As always at this time of year, the slopes were covered in the very local and scarce Yellow Pearl (*Mecyna flavalis*) moth, although numbers seemed lower than in some seasons. In these times when so much is in decline, it is heartening to spend a day surrounded by clouds of butterflies, reminiscent of the long-gone days of wider plenty. Well worth a visit this weekend!



Female Grayling



Male Grayling on Size 11



Silver-spotted Skipper



*Mecyna flavalis*



Female Chalkhill Blue



View from Windover Hill towards Firle Beacon

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 25-Jul-14 09:14 AM GMT

**"Neil Hulme" wrote:**  
**Southern Swallowtails** Below are a few images recently sent to me by Mark

That first shot is just incredible!

Cheers,

- Pete

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Jul-14 09:21 AM GMT

We can't possibly admit a high level of expertise here Pete .... let's just say he must have got lucky! 😊  
I'm sure Mark will appreciate your comment as he's a regular visitor to UKB.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jul-14 08:13 PM GMT

Some great reports and excellent photos as usual Neil.

but...

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"Neil Hulme" wrote:

Southern Swallowtails Below are a few images recently sent to me by Mark

That first shot is just incredible!

Cheers,

- Pete

I just have to agree 😊

Cheers,

Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Jul-14 09:07 AM GMT

Thanks Neil, from both of us. He certainly nailed the in-flight shot. I'll never be able to pull that one off with a bridge camera!  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Jul-14 10:36 AM GMT

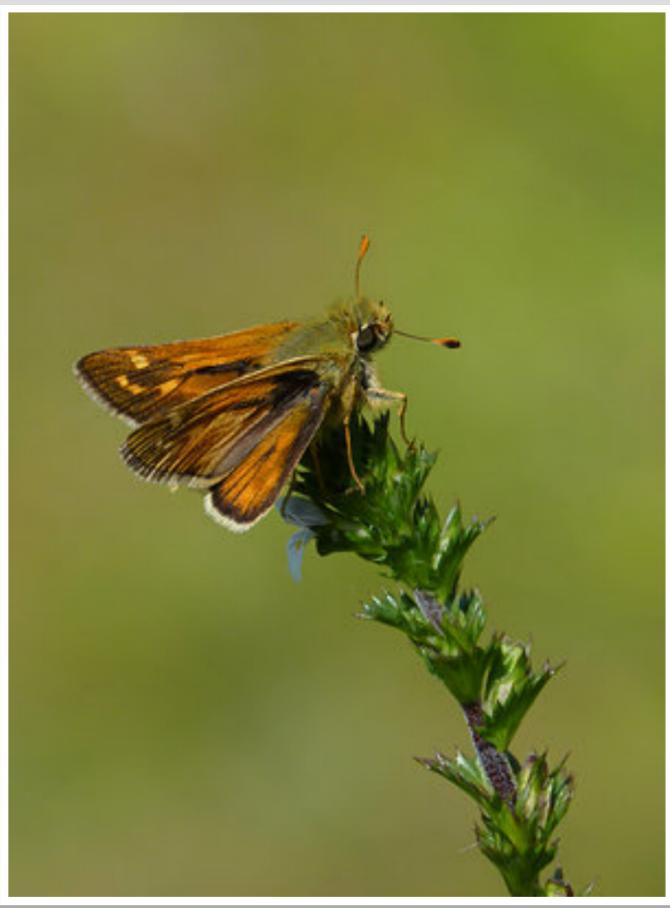
### Joyce Gay (1932 - 2014)

On Thursday (24th July) a service was held for Joyce Gay (1932 - 2014), who was BC Sussex Branch Recorder for many years, from way back in the 1980s until 2004. Despite extensive enquiries I am still trying to find out the year in which Joyce first started to collate Branch records, a task which she performed with energetic rigour. All of those involved with butterfly recording today have the utmost respect for her considerable achievements. Joyce and husband Peter, who campaigned hard for National Park status for the South Downs, published the 'The Atlas of Sussex Butterflies' in 1996.

Just as the service was starting in Guildford, I stopped recording butterflies for a few minutes, whilst stood just below the ramparts of Cissbury Ring. Almost immediately a beautiful, male Silver-spotted Skipper landed in front of me and posed with half open wings. This species was facing extinction in Sussex when Joyce started recording, being restricted to a small area around Windover Hill, where its existence was shrouded in secrecy. How things have changed! The species has moved over 30 miles of downland to get to Cissbury Ring; just the sort of detail that Joyce would have relished recording.

The good news is that throughout the morning and early afternoon freshly emerged specimens kept appearing, initially clinging motionless to grasses and flowers as they dried off. Within an hour or so they became completely unapproachable, whizzing across the turf at characteristic break-neck speed. I counted 16 in total, including 14 male and 2 female. This is an encouraging count so early in the season, particularly as I only discovered this colony in 2013, although the first pioneering female(s) must have arrived during the previous year.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 26-Jul-14 10:54 AM GMT

A fine memorial picture.

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Maximus, 26-Jul-14 02:35 PM GMT

Stunning Silver-spotted Skipper photos Neil 😊 and a lovely memorial.

At this rate they will soon arrive at Steyning, which is only about 3km from Cissbury, (as the SSS flies), just as you said they would, last year 😊

Mike

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by dave brown, 26-Jul-14 05:02 PM GMT

A beautiful memorial picture and words to match.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by selbypaul, 26-Jul-14 08:05 PM GMT

### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

Hi Paul: You'll love the place. Knepp must be the most exciting thing happening in the British countryside at the moment. Get in there early! Let me know if you come and I'll give you a tour.

I may well take you up on that offer next year Neil, thanks for the offer

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-Jul-14 08:39 PM GMT

Thanks all. Some more good news concerning Silver-spotted Skipper is on the way!  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-Jul-14 06:10 PM GMT

#### Last Of The Many

This afternoon (31st July) I did a circuit of the Knepp Castle Estate Wildland Southern Block, with the specific aim of saying goodbye to the Purple Emperor for another year. I think it's highly unlikely that I'll see another adult this season. A thorough search came up with just 4 males and a female, which of course would be a good mid season tally on most sites! However, those who have experienced the magic of Knepp will appreciate that these numbers signal the very end of the flight season here. As always this species will go down fighting and I did see a spirited chase between two very worn males. In retrospect the season in Sussex will go down as "a little better than average". It failed to produce the fireworks of 2013, but I have seen far worse. As always it was a little sad to see the last one head off over the crown of an oak, but hopefully plenty of seed has already been sown for next year. To celebrate the closing of another season, during which many happy memories were made, here's a close-up of a male's wing.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-Jul-14 08:01 PM GMT

#### Silver-spotted Skipper Continues To Spread

I will always remember looking longingly at the naïve illustrations of Silver-spotted Skipper in 'A Butterfly Book for the Pocket' by Edmund Sandars, originally published in 1939. This was my first butterfly book and it still has a place on my bookshelf. The description "locally common on the chalk and limestone downs and hills of south England only" was misleading when I read it in the early 1970s and we couldn't find it anywhere. Later in life I came to know that it was highly restricted in distribution and threatened with extinction. Its location in Sussex was a closely guarded secret. With the passage of time I became increasingly involved in the conservation of butterflies, and increasingly interested in the factors assisting the Silver-spotted Skipper's reclamation of long-lost ground. Over the last ten years I've become ever-more optimistic that it would appear on Cissbury Ring, a location in which I've watched butterflies for most of my life.

I was delighted to discover the Silver-spotted Skipper (up to 5 individuals) on Cissbury Ring in 2013, and at several other sites nearby. It would appear that these discoveries (plus those of others) reflected the first phase of significant population spread since the occupation of Chantry Hill near Storrington in 2007, with adventurous females setting off from this and other established sites in 2012. I was relieved to count 16 at Cissbury on July 24th, indicating that the colony had become well established.

On Tuesday (29th July) I returned, but initially found difficulty in relocating them. After considerable effort I only managed to see 4 in the meadow adjacent to the south gate, where I first discovered them. I feared that the recent violent hailstorm might have knocked them back, as weather conditions of that intensity can kill butterflies on open grassland sites en masse. I was relieved and delighted when I walked into the adjacent meadow

and immediately saw a high speed chase of 6 Silver-spots. A systematic count of an area approximately 70m x 200m gave me a total of 53. This amounts to a remarkable build in population over just two seasons. Perhaps even more remarkable is that it has already outstripped the presumed donor site, Chantry Hill, where I counted 48 later in the day. All indications are that Cissbury Ring is likely to host one of the largest populations of Silver-spotted Skipper in Sussex within a few years, perhaps ranking alongside sites such as Newtimber Hill and Malling Down.

I also visited Washington Chalk Pits, another 2013 discovery, where I found 3 Silver-spotted Skipper. My last stop of the day was Long Furlong, a strip of downland near Findon, where my brothers and I spent long days learning everything we could about wildlife in our school summer holidays. Although I searched this site last year, without luck, I was delighted to find 2 more Silver-spots. Colin Pratt, author of 'A complete History of the Butterflies and Moths of Sussex', assures me that the species hasn't been recorded here since 1939, the year Sandars first published his little gem of a book.



Silver-spotted Skipper country – Chantry Hill looking towards Chanctonbury

### Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 31-Jul-14 08:20 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

I remember seeing Silver-spotted Skippers when I was a wee boy in the mid 60s on rough grassland as it was then near the Greyhound Stadium at Hove. Duke of Burgundy also found here. Also during this period Findon Cricket Ground was a magical place for butterflies. Those were the days ...

Peter

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-Jul-14 08:35 PM GMT

Hi Peter,  
*"Those were the days"*

Indeed they were, although it sounds like you beat me to it by a few years. I know Findon Cricket ground very well. My father played for them for many years (still a damn good village side) and at night I caught Ghost Moths here and collected lobworms for Tench fishing at Patching Pond. Can we turn the clock back?

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by kentishman, 01-Aug-14 07:13 PM GMT

#### **"Neil Hulme" wrote: Silver-spotted Skipper Continues To Spread**

I will always remember looking longingly at the naïve illustrations of Silver-spotted Skipper in 'A Butterfly Book for the Pocket' by Edmund Sandars, originally published in 1939. This was my first butterfly book and it still has a place on my bookshelf.

i was lucky to pick up a 1st ed of this lovely book at a boot fair a few years back. no d/j unfortunately. the illustrations, despite being a tad undersized, are beautiful especially when they have been occasionally enhanced with silver gilt eg undersides of HBF DGF and SWF pgs 128-136.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Aug-14 07:22 PM GMT

Hi kentishman,

I think Guy Padfield once mentioned this too. To my childish eyes the silver-painted markings made the illustrations even more captivating. You did well to get a first edition!

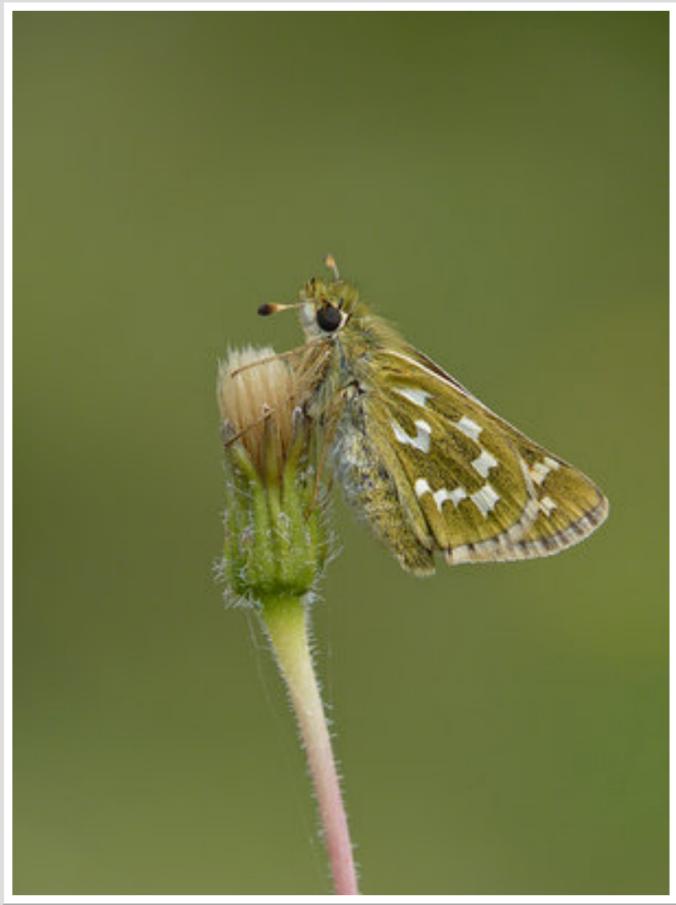
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 02-Aug-14 03:08 PM GMT

### August Already!

On Friday morning it suddenly hit home that August had crept up on me. With Silver-spotted Skipper and Brown Hairstreak on the wing it is always a sobering thought that we are unlikely to see any 'new' species this season, although there should be plenty of good days ahead with second brood Adonis, perhaps an influx of Clouded Yellow, and an autumn finale of Small Copper. Conscious that summer is now passing into its later phase I arranged to meet my father on Cissbury Ring, despite the 'iffy' weather. The forecast improvement didn't come until his curfew expired, but we still managed to locate about 15 Silver-spotted Skipper in the cool, cloudy, 'no-fly' conditions. With most of the more exciting species over for the year I was more than happy to appreciate the subtle beauty of a female Meadow Brown, which seemed keen to warm up and get on with things.



Female Silver-spotted Skipper



Female Meadow Brown

Conditions had improved markedly by the time I arrived at the Steyning Downland Scheme. I'm currently setting up some butterfly survey routes here, for a recently won Heritage Lottery Fund project. While doing so I recorded 30 Wall Brown and a handful of Brown Hairstreak (4m, 1f) in a known master tree. The first females have emerged here and been mated, but it will be a few more days before their eggs are ripe and they drop into the blackthorn to start laying. Perhaps the biggest surprise came when I took my first look at a tiny (30m x 30m) overgrown area, tucked away at the top of Steyning Coombe. 36 Brown Argus were accompanied by numerous Wall, Common Blue and Small Tortoiseshell here. I came away very satisfied, particularly as I managed a good image of a Wall, which all photographers know is impossible.



Female Wall Brown

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-14 11:01 PM GMT

That is a cracking Wall Brown shot Neil what Jedi mind tricks did you use to get it to stay so still? 🙄 Also I'll be in Wales next week so will there still be some Brown Hairstreaks left when I get back – how long is their flight period?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 02-Aug-14 11:06 PM GMT

Hi Neil, great news and a thoroughly interesting read regarding the Silver-spotted Skipper and its expansion in Sussex. This is one of my favorite butterflies, though I am yet to catch up with it this year. Hopefully next week...

More great images, btw.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Aug-14 09:26 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

As you know it's a very difficult species to approach, even when dead. I slithered up to this one during a cloudy spell, then waited for ten minutes until the sun reappeared and she opened up. I'm not sure that I would have managed this with a male – they're far worse even than the girls.

Don't worry about Brown Hairstreak. Even in an early year they won't peak until mid/third week August. I always see a second flush of fresh females towards the end of August each year – they take me by surprise every season, just as the sites start to quieten down as most folk stop chasing them. These are the individuals which will still be around towards the back end of September. I've seen tired old girls in early October.

Hi Mark (essexbuzzard),

A good option would be Malling Down at Lewes next week. This is a SSSk mega-site and by then will also be awash with 100s (possibly 1000s) of fresh Adonis Blue. Hit it right and you'll have one of your top five days this season.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-14 11:20 PM GMT

Brill cheers for the info Neil – just need an improvement in the weather in about a week's time and then it should be all systems go 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 03-Aug-14 11:47 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, yes, I have been to Malling before, and I saw round-headed rampion there, as well as Silver-spotted Skippers by the hundred, would love to

go back!

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 04-Aug-14 10:14 PM GMT

### Big Cats

This evening (4th August) I was late in meeting my father at Mill Hill, where we had intended to photograph male Adonis Blues just before they closed their beautiful wings for the night. Although they had already gone to roost, the trip was far from wasted, particularly when 'the old man' spotted a near full-grown Privet Hawkmoth caterpillar. These beasts are always a joy to see and remind me of the days, more than 40 years past, when we bred large numbers in the back garden.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-Aug-14 07:34 PM GMT

### Beautiful Adonis

Although the season is now waning there are still a few annual highlights to come, not least the peak emergence of second brood Adonis Blue. By the end of this week Malling Down at Lewes and Anchor Bottom near Beeding should be alive with these beauties. I'm usually chasing other spring species during May, so I always look forward to their August flight. With plenty of Chalkhill and Common Blue, Silver-spotted Skipper, Wall and a few Clouded Yellow around, I regard these next few weeks as the grand finale of the butterfly year on the Downs.

This morning (5th August) I watched the maiden flight of several Adonis Blue males at Mill Hill. They perched on the abundant stems of Yellow-wort while drying their wings, occasionally discharging meconium fluid before heading off to patrol the slopes in search of virgin females, the first few of which are now out.



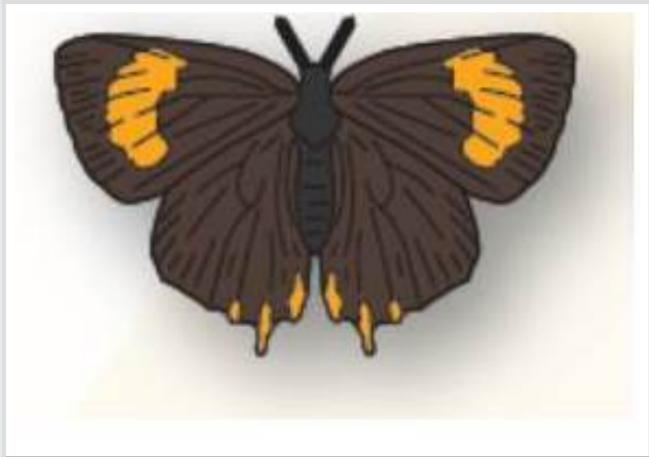


## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-Aug-14 10:28 PM GMT

### Brownie Badge

Butterfly badgemeister Paul Fosterjohn has been at it again, this time producing a highly versatile piece which will complement your lapel on all occasions from the casual to the most formal. The Brown Hairstreak pin-badge is set to become a family heirloom and might one day appear on the Antiques Roadshow. The limited edition run of only 25 will mean that many people can't have it. Details of the badge and how to get hold of it can be found at <http://betulae.blogspot.co.uk/2014/08/b...adges.html> Profits go to Warwickshire and West Midlands branches of BC. Wear it well.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 06-Aug-14 08:35 AM GMT

That lovely Wall Brown posing wings open on a fence reminds me so much of my youth in East Norfolk; they were common then and settled readily, wings open, in early evening sunshine.

But unlike yours, we had *genuine* Wall Browns: they landed on walls.

Maybe they have evolved over the past 60 years and have different habits today. Long live the *Fence Brown*.

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 06-Aug-14 08:58 AM GMT

Already got my brownie badge ordered, with a request for more species! 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Andy Wilson, 06-Aug-14 05:39 PM GMT

I had a quick walk around Malling Down this afternoon. No Adonis Blue yet, but plenty of Common Blue and rather worn Chalkhill Blue. I also managed to get one close-up shot of a Silver-Spotted Skipper.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-Aug-14 06:18 PM GMT

Hi Andy,  
You must have been in the wrong area at Malling for the Adonis Blue – it's a big place! Several reports I've received confirm they are already out in good numbers there.  
BWs, Neil

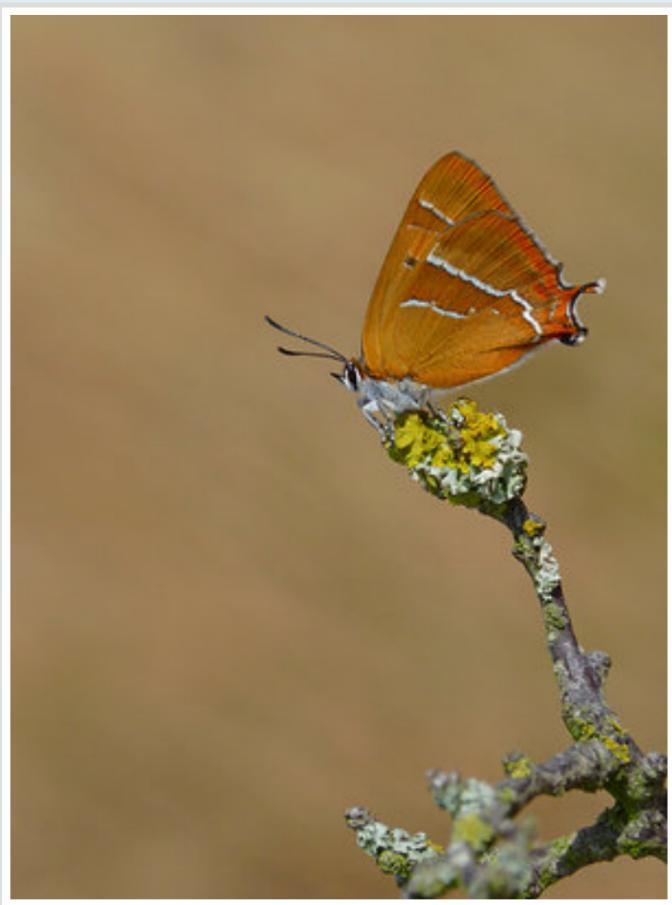
### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-Aug-14 06:53 PM GMT

#### Brown Hairstreaks Get Going

As always the Brown Hairstreak season in Sussex has started slowly, at least in terms of close encounters. The males have been active for several weeks up in the canopy, and this is where the early season females have been lazing about, doing very little while their eggs ripen. Although it is currently only a trickle, females are now beginning to descend to lay their first eggs. It will be another week before multiples are guaranteed.

This morning (6th August) I stopped off at the small chalk pit on Steyning Round Hill, before continuing on to the Rifle Range. I struck gold here and the stunning female I spotted sat motionless for more than 20 minutes under cooling cloud cover. At the Rifle Range I saw a single male flitting around a master ash, but no females in the fenced reserve area. Just before heading home I found a second female in perfect condition, up on the northern (right-hand) flank of the valley. I find this species almost as addictive as the Purple Emperor, so it won't be long before I return.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 06-Aug-14 08:16 PM GMT

Wow! Jaw dropping 😲 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Andy Wilson, 06-Aug-14 11:51 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

It was rather windy this afternoon. As someone once said... I'll be back!

Best wishes,  
Andy.

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-14 09:16 AM GMT

Thanks Susie. I was absolutely elated with this one – probably my best ever Brown Hairstreak underside shot, and I've taken a lot! Right place, right time and complete shelter from the wind in the little quarry here.

Hi Andy. Head for TQ429107 for the maximum Adonis dose.

BWs, Neil

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Andy Wilson, 07-Aug-14 09:53 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Thanks for the tip. I was on the higher slopes to the north of that yesterday afternoon, and there was quite a strong westerly wind funnelling up the valley. The blues and skipper I saw were in the old quarries further to the north, around TQ431112, which were sheltered from the wind.

A location I've found is good earlier in the year for 1st-generation Adonis Blue is Bible Bottom. The south facing slopes around TQ435102 are full of Horseshoe Vetch in May/June. I might also try this area at the weekend, weather permitting.

Regards,  
Andy.

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-14 08:57 PM GMT

#### **Brownie Bonanza**

This morning (7th August) Steyning Rifle Range hosted a social gathering of Brownie fans from near and far. I had arranged to meet my father, Simon Primrose (BC West Midlands), Brian Henham and Paul Fosterjohn, but our number was swelled further by several other Steyning Downland Scheme members and visitors, all eager to see the site's fabulous hairstreaks. Simon and I stayed for the longest period and we eventually clocked up a minimum of 7 different females, all appearing between 11 am and 2 pm. There were also plenty of Wall Brown and a few Clouded Yellow on the northern flank of the valley.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by William, 07-Aug-14 10:03 PM GMT

Superb Stuff Neil - In several years hunting them on the Somerset lanes I have only ever seen them from 20m away high up in Ash trees, I should love to get some photos like those someday 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 08-Aug-14 12:05 PM GMT

Thanks William. I'm not sure of the distances involved, but have you tried Alners Gorse? I would have thought that a couple of visits on warm, sunny days should resolve your shortage, particularly in the golden window between 11 am and 2 pm.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by IainLeach, 08-Aug-14 08:23 PM GMT

some really nice BH photos there Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 12-Aug-14 06:27 PM GMT

Thanks Iain. Much appreciated.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 12-Aug-14 06:42 PM GMT

### Grounded

Having been bed-bound for the last couple of days, with a very unpleasant abscess under a wisdom tooth, I was up and about for just long enough this morning to notice a pair of Holly Blue in the back garden. One of these was an egg-laying female and the other a male which wouldn't stop pestering her. Fortunately our back garden is walled, giving some respite from the strong winds, so I managed to get some reasonably sharp shots of her between gusts.

I'll get back to those who have recently emailed me or left messages once the antibiotics have done their job.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 12-Aug-14 09:05 PM GMT

A fair reward for your suffering, Neil!!

Open-winged female Holly Blue is a delight at any time.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-14 09:31 PM GMT

Brill Holly Blue Neil, it fair jumps out of the screen 🤩 😊 🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 12-Aug-14 10:42 PM GMT

Seems you've gotten the blues in every sense possible; get well soon!

Cheers,

- Pete

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 13-Aug-14 07:22 AM GMT

Thanks all. I look a little less like the Elephant Man this morning .... I think.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 20-Aug-14 05:22 PM GMT

### End Of Season Steyning Downland Scheme Brown Hairstreak Social Group

Today I joined the 'End of Season Steyning Downland Scheme Brown Hairstreak Social Group' at the Rifle Range, where annual gatherings celebrate the passing of another season and members hope to photograph one of our most beautiful and charismatic butterflies. Brown Hairstreak watching here is very much a social event and the more eyes the better! Although it sometimes gets so busy that you will find yourself shoulder-to-shoulder with other participants, business is almost always conducted in a polite and cooperative manner, with most members returning home with close-up views and hopefully some good photographs.

Today was no exception and the butterflies performed well, both for Team A on the northern flank, captained by Colin Knight, and for Team B in the reserve area, captained by Trevor Rapley. Together a total of 12 female Brown Hairstreaks were seen. I spent most of the 11.30 am - 2.00 pm period of activity on the northern flank, where we had at least one specimen in view almost constantly throughout the day. We are now at peak season, so a visit this weekend in warm sunny weather should give every chance of some red hot hairstreaking.



I also spent a few hours here yesterday, but the weather was only sufficiently good to tempt a single female down. However, it was a case of quality over quantity and this near perfect specimen posed with open wings for more than twenty minutes.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 20-Aug-14 05:45 PM GMT

Well done, Neil.

For a second I thought there was an antenna missing on the open-winged Brown Hairstreak 😊 . Is it unusual for the antennae to be that close together?

Peter

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 20-Aug-14 06:22 PM GMT

Hi Peter,  
The parallel and close position of the antennae indicates that the butterfly is actually asleep, or very nearly so, despite the wings being open. The position of antennae in roost mode varies between species. For instance, in Grizzled and Dingy Skipper they droop to about 45 degrees below the horizontal.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 20-Aug-14 06:38 PM GMT

### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

Hi Peter,  
The parallel and close position of the antennae indicates that the butterfly is actually asleep, or very nearly so, despite the wings being open. The position of antennae in roost mode varies between species. For instance, in Grizzled and Dingy Skipper they droop to about 45 degrees below the horizontal.  
BWs, Neil

Thanks Neil,

How fascinating – I hope a sleepy Brown Hairstreak comes my way soon for a photo shot 😊

Peter

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-14 10:06 PM GMT

Stunning Brostreak Neil 😊🍷 Hopefully the weather will improve slightly next week for a quick visit to Shipton for me 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 20-Aug-14 10:21 PM GMT

Great images, Neil. Hopefully the weather will allow me to catch up with this stunning butterfly over the forthcoming weekend in Pembrokeshire.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 20-Aug-14 10:30 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and David. I reckon this weekend and next week will be peak time for Brownies, with a very long tail-off thereafter. I would probably still be chasing them during the first week of September, but I'll be on a family holiday in Cornwall (secretly waiting for the Monarchs to come in).  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 20-Aug-14 10:38 PM GMT

### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

Thanks Wurzel and David. I reckon this weekend and next week will be peak time for Brownies, with a very long tail-off thereafter. I would probably still be chasing them during the first week of September, but I'll be on a family holiday in Cornwall (secretly waiting for the Monarchs to come in).  
BWs, Neil

LOL! Does your missus know the REAL reason why you want to visit Cornwall in September?

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Aug-14 05:56 PM GMT

**More Steyning Brownies**

Returns at Steyning Rifle Range were rather modest today, with only 5 females seen by the numerous visitors. The first was seen at 11.35 am and another 3 descended before 12.30 pm, at which point large banks of cloud appeared and the temperature plummeted. One more dropped into the thorn very briefly before close of play was announced soon after 1.00 pm.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Aug-14 06:05 PM GMT

Hi David,

*"Does your missus know the REAL reason why you want to visit Cornwall in September?"*

Let's just say she's wonderfully tolerant! 😊

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by John W, 21-Aug-14 07:00 PM GMT

#### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

One more dropped into the thorn very briefly before close of play was announced soon after 1.00 pm.

Hi Neil, I saw another at about 1.30pm, at the top corner of the bank.



Cheers  
John W

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Aug-14 07:02 PM GMT

Hi John,  
Excellent! Nice shot too.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 21-Aug-14 10:01 PM GMT

These images are making me extremely restless!!

You don't know how lucky you are to have a BH site in an area with reliable weather conditions.

I'm still spending far too much time working out when (and indeed if) I can see this species in Pembrokeshire this weekend.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Aug-14 11:54 AM GMT

#### Baiting The Emperor

Following a disgraceful lapse in security a YouTube video has been posted on the Purple Emperor website <http://apaturairis.blogspot.co.uk/>, letting every Tom, Dick and Harry in on a secret which has been guarded more closely than Colonel Sanders own recipe.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-14 02:20 PM GMT

Unfortunately for me your secret is still safe as Safari refuses to run it!Grrrrrrrr 😡😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by False Apollo, 22-Aug-14 06:08 PM GMT

Everyone lets go around to Neil's house for a cordon bleu meal now he has shown us his dexterity in the kitchen! Seems he specialises in aromatic fish dishes!!!

Yum Yum

Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Andy Wilson, 22-Aug-14 06:14 PM GMT

Hi Neil, I finally made it this afternoon to the Grid Reference you gave me on Malling Down. Conditions were cloudy at first, but I sat there for 30 minutes waiting for the sun to come out, and then at last I got the full Adonis effect. Here's a nice fresh male nectaring on wild marjoram. Thanks!



### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 22-Aug-14 10:16 PM GMT

#### "False Apollo" wrote:

Everyone lets go around to Neil's house for a cordon bleu meal now he has shown us his dexterity in the kitchen! Seems he

specialises in aromatic fish dishes!!!

Maybe he smears it on his moleskin trousers too given that Purple Emperors find it so irresistible!

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 23-Aug-14 08:35 AM GMT

Ah, I had *smellinet*. I watched the video shortly after I had "enjoyed" an own-brand £2 fish pie from the local supermarket. Risk of libel action deters me from naming the supermarket but if we had Purple Emperors here on Mull, then the fish pies would be the perfect bait.

In Fermyn Woods a few years ago, a dog had been a nuisance charging up and down the rides although sadly I did not witness the subsequent event myself. The dog apparently found some Emperor bait and rolled in it. It was speculated that the dog owners' car would have smelled so disgusting that – hopefully – they never returned to Fermyn.

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

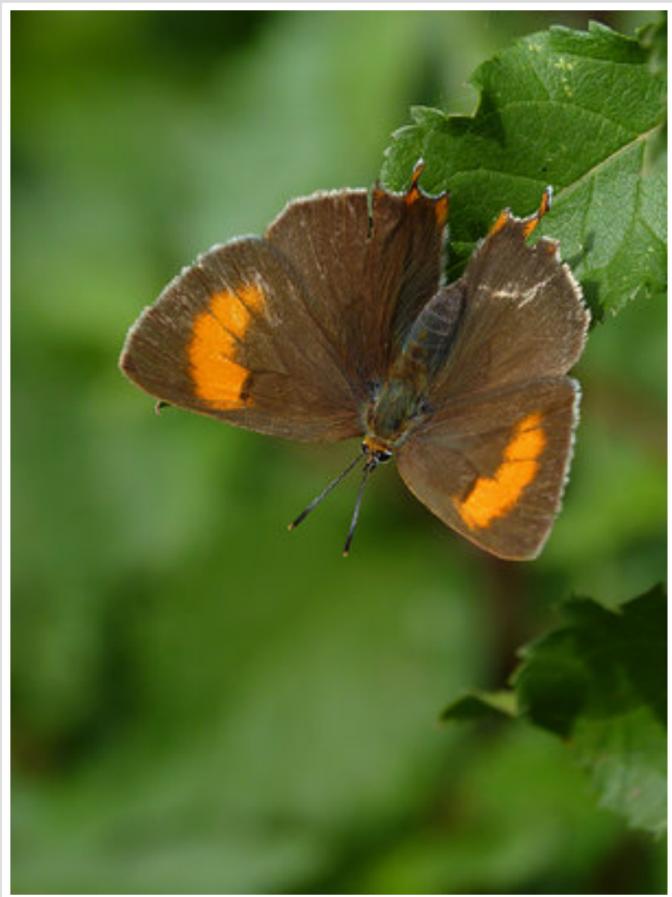
by Neil Hulme, 23-Aug-14 05:10 PM GMT

### Crowd Pleasers

As I was passing close to Steyning Rifle Range this morning (23rd August) I couldn't resist another visit, despite the fact that the cloudy spells outweighed the sunshine. There was quite a crowd already on site and a very faded male had been seen on the ground earlier. After chatting to a few regulars in the reserve area I headed up towards the northern flank with Susie Milbank, speculating that it was probably not quite sunny enough to bring many Brown Hairstreaks out to play.

As I got to the top of the slope a female zipped across the open grassland in front of me and settled on an ash sapling. She stayed here long enough for other enthusiasts to see her, providing at least one person with a 'first'. Almost simultaneously another was spotted 50 metres further up the path. This quickly developed into two females, which at one point were egg-laying less than a metre apart. By now most of the crowd from below had joined us for another Hairstreakfest, with Paul Fosterjohn spotting yet another. This one appeared very fresh, but she refused to come within range of the cameras and remained deep within a blackthorn thicket.

As 2 pm approached the sun reappeared, so I headed back to the reserve area for a last sweep. As soon as I arrived I spotted two more females. Bearing in mind that the weather conditions were far from ideal, a total of six females and a male in two hours demonstrates just how good the Rifle Range is.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 23-Aug-14 06:05 PM GMT

Beautiful photos, Neil. It was good to see the 'butterfly whisperer' in action again! You seem to have a knack of magicking them out of fresh air. At least two people were delighted to see their first brownies and I think the rest of us were equally pleased. It was a very enjoyable few hours.

I'm not giving you all the credit though, my brownie pin badge arrived this morning and I brought it with me. it proved as lucky as the purple emperor badge was. 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Aug-14 09:54 PM GMT

Good to catch up with you Susie. In response to the question you asked me .... I saw a few Essex Skipper when I visited Cissbury Ring on Sunday (SSW corner in the earthworks).

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Aug-14 10:16 PM GMT

#### Autumn

It seems that autumn has come early this year. However, I'm sure there'll be some warm, sunny days ahead when we can appreciate seasonal highlights. I always enjoy seeing dark specimens of the Comma feeding on blackberries, and shiny new Coppers sunbathing on bleached grasses and seed heads. On some sites, particularly those where the population is small, there will still be a few late Adonis Blue to emerge. This is the case at Cissbury Ring and when I visited on Sunday (24th August) I found my first second brood males of the season. Both were in immaculate condition, but unfortunately they decided to shut up shop for the night, before I could capture their stunning upper sides. I'll be making the most of every opportunity that arises now .... winter is a long time.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-14 10:35 PM GMT

Winter is a long time – but I'm sure you'll be able to do some twitching to see you through 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 25-Aug-14 10:44 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I'm hoping for another Grey Phalarope in a children's paddling pool. 😊

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Katrina, 27-Aug-14 09:35 PM GMT

Beautiful photo Neil.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

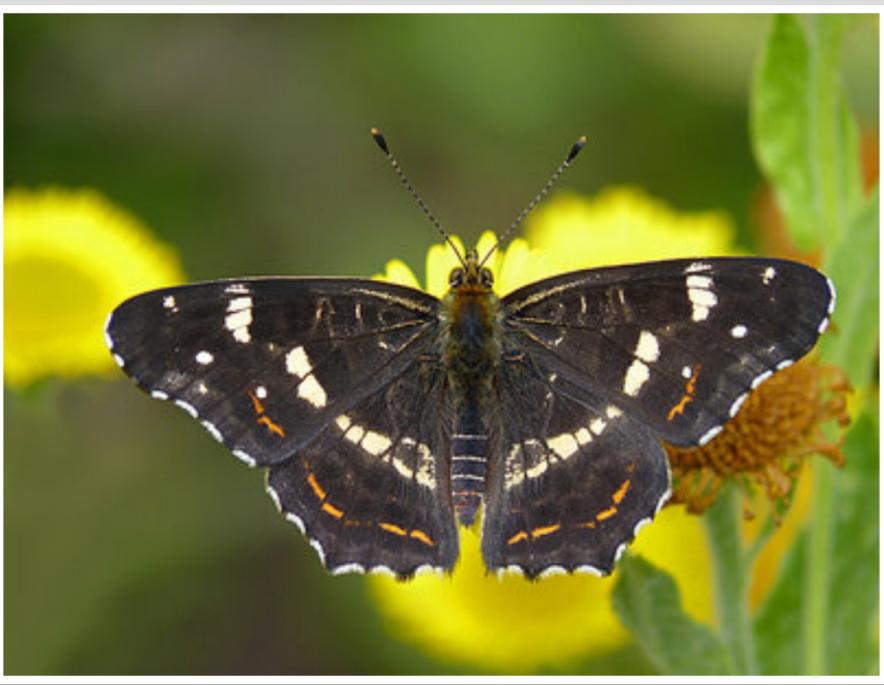
by Neil Hulme, 30-Aug-14 11:17 PM GMT

Thanks Katrina! 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 30-Aug-14 11:53 PM GMT

**Reading The Map**



Male

When I first saw the tweet reporting a Map butterfly in Dorset, linked to finder Steve Smith's excellent blog <http://birdingpooleharbourandbeyond.blogspot.co.uk/>, I immediately became interested in its origin, particularly given the high levels of vagrant activity observed over the last two years. When the next report indicated a sizeable population, interest gave way to excitement and I became optimistic that we might be seeing an attempt at natural colonisation of the UK, which is almost inevitable as the species continues to expand its range in northern Europe.

Steve was criticised in some quarters for first reporting the event, allowing a relatively small group of people (a couple of dozen) in on the secret, before changing tack and suppressing the news, to use a birding term. Steve has already explained this apparent U-turn, which was based on the advice he initially received about the species, ruling out the possibility of a natural arrival, followed by discussions suggesting that this was far from certain.

For the first two days Steve believed that this was most likely a release, having been told that the Map is a non-migratory species and hence a poor candidate for Channel hopping. This is one of the many myths repeated on social media which need to be challenged. Irrespective of the debatable origin of these particular butterflies, the Map will get here under its own steam in the not-too-distant future. If non-migratory species were incapable of making significant gains in terms of their geographic distribution, we would have far fewer species on the planet than we do. I've already commented in another thread about the historical records of some of our more sedentary species on e.g. lightships; even the most unlikely species are on the move when environmental stimuli trigger adventurous dispersal behaviour. In 2011 Chalk Hill Blues ventured nearly 30 Km across the Sussex Weald during a population explosion. The Purple Emperor invaded Sweden in the early 1980s and is now spreading north. In 2006 Silver-spotted Skippers skipped 18 Km across the Sussex Downs. These are not migratory species, and nor are those which have spread from the Midlands to Scotland in just a few years. Matthew Oates' motto is "never underestimate a butterfly (or caterpillar)", but we always do, every time.

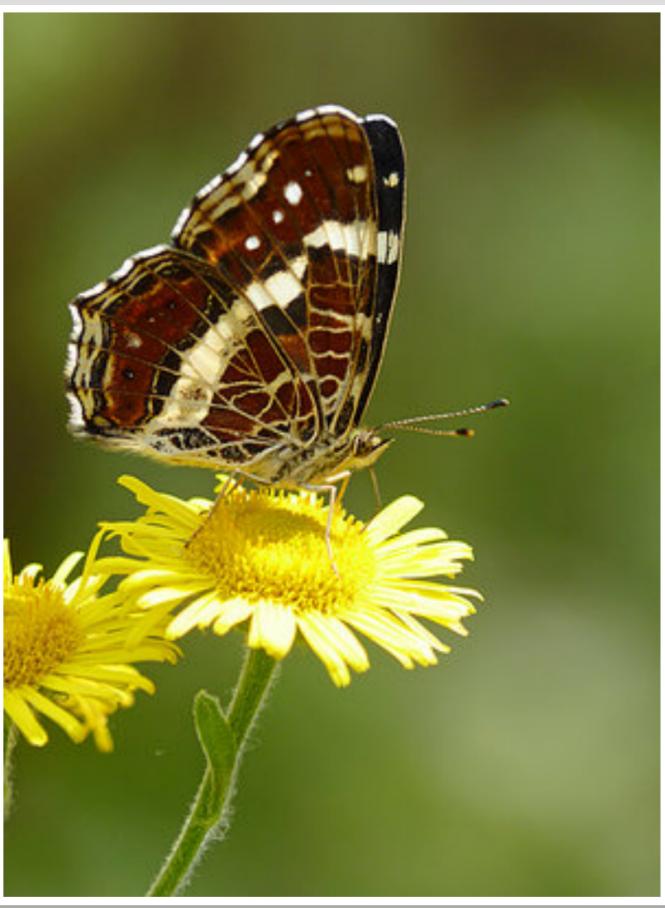
By the evening of 8th August I was planning to investigate the Dorset Maps. At this point I didn't know Steve and wasn't privy to any more information about their whereabouts than anybody else (other than the local birders who had already been alerted). I immediately knew where the site was, given the original wording on Steve's blog, so I set off the following morning. I hadn't realised the traffic congestion problems in this neck of the woods, so it was early afternoon before I introduced myself to Steve and was getting up-to-speed with events. At this point Steve and co-finders Brian Arnold and Derek Haynes were still assuming this to be a release, based on the advice they had been given.

Although I won't be reaching any firm conclusions, it is worth airing the reasons why I suggested to them that this might represent a natural colonisation, not least because the thought processes address some of the misconceptions held about butterflies in general, and particularly the Map.

Before I go on to discuss the evidence for natural colonisation versus captive bred release, I must clearly differentiate my own musings from the official views of Butterfly Conservation. On the evening of 9th August I contacted the scientific staff at BC HQ to report on what I'd seen and my interpretation of the data. A number of staff visited the site and for a while at least it seemed to us that a natural colonisation might have occurred.

However, as widely reported, an individual subsequently came forward to admit an accidental release. The view at BC is that this individual is indeed responsible for the presence of these butterflies, and I agree that this is the most likely explanation. Sadly, these days it is seldom possible to be 100% certain about what is going on with some of these events, and irresponsible releases continue to muddy the water and hamper studies of butterfly distribution and their movements in response to climate change. Please don't do it, not least because the release of alien species is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

#### **Natural Colonisation?**



Female

So what was the evidence, albeit circumstantial, that these Map butterflies might represent a natural colonisation, before the guilty party owned up?

After visiting the site on a number of occasions, and after looking at photographic records in detail with Steve Smith, we know that at least 20 individual Map butterflies were flying here. Examination of their condition and advancing signs of wear and tear indicate an age variation of probably 7 – 10 days between adults. Detailed analysis of individuals versus time and precise location suggest that the emergence was ongoing over several days. Despite some comments made on social media, the presence of more than 20 adults is highly unlikely to be attributable to the progeny of a single pairing. If butterflies habitually produced this many offspring, populations of most species would increase exponentially, and they don't. Sadly, for many species the reverse is true. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as the aforementioned Sussex Chalk Hill Blue population explosion in 2011, does the number of offspring significantly exceed the well documented ratio which generally leads to an approximate status quo. Generally speaking, a pair of butterflies will give rise to a pair, with periodic fluctuations above and below the norm.

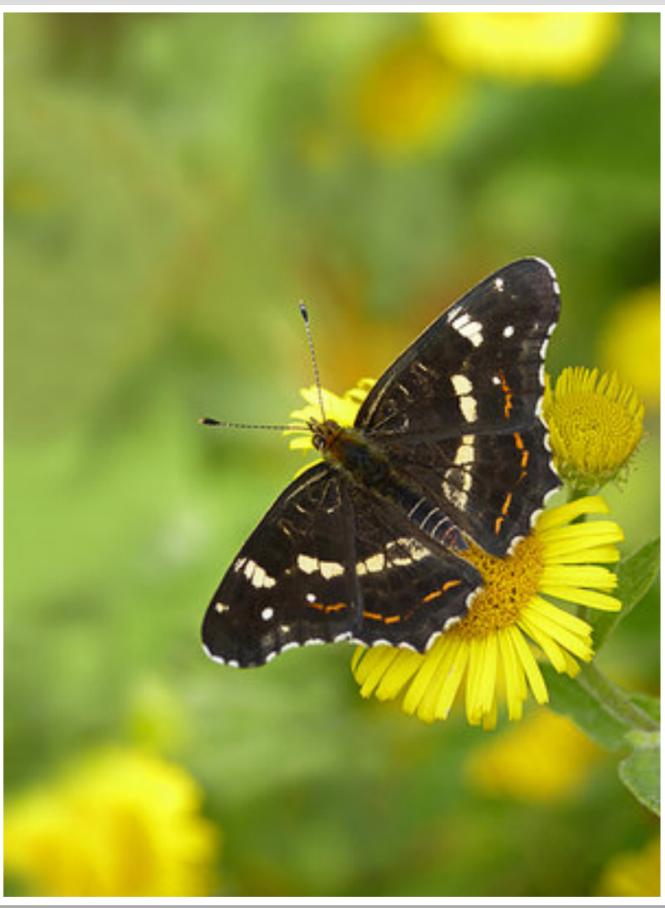
If this was a natural event it was therefore most unlikely that these butterflies were the progeny of a single vagrant female, arriving in the spring of 2014. The potential for a primary, current movement of Map across the Channel was a complete non-starter, given some of the above details. Also arguing strongly against the possibility of a spring vagrant is the different behaviour observed between broods in the Map. Scientific research demonstrates quite clearly that dispersal behaviour is very much a feature of the second brood (note: the species is trivoltine in some areas), aided by a heavier build in thorax and associated musculature, and larger wing area. So it would be necessary to look further back for a rational explanation of events and population structure.

The previous brood would have been on the wing in northern France during the first week of August 2013. When I recalled what was happening during the first week of August 2013 I became more confident that something very exciting might be happening here. It was that week when more than a million butterflies crossed the Channel, including large numbers of Long-tailed Blue and *gorganus* Swallowtail. Around that time other species such as Queen of Spain and Monarch were making cameo appearances, although most voyagers were the more run-of-the-mill Whites. This was one of the biggest such events since 1945 and to me it looked very much like a smoking gun. An August 2013 arrival would certainly account for the population we observed here. It would also mean that the species had already overwintered successfully.

Returning to the oft quoted claim that the Map is a sedentary, non-migratory species that couldn't possibly have made the journey here, let's look at some facts. The highly respected Dutch butterfly scientist Chris van Swaay recently provided figures for the colonisation of new territory by this species in Europe. In 15 years it over-ran the Netherlands at c. 20 Km per year. It is currently moving through Finland at c. 60 Km per year. This is a butterfly on the move, and fast. It will fly over water too, having colonised a number of islands off the mainland European coast, including Jersey. Don't believe claims that this is a weak, puny species. I've watched it battering the living daylights out of Red Admiral and performing some remarkable feats of aerial competence (more in the section on behaviour).

So could the Map have made the journey to Dorset unassisted by Man? In my opinion, yes, without any doubt whatsoever. However, that doesn't mean that it did so on this occasion.

#### **Captive Bred Release?**



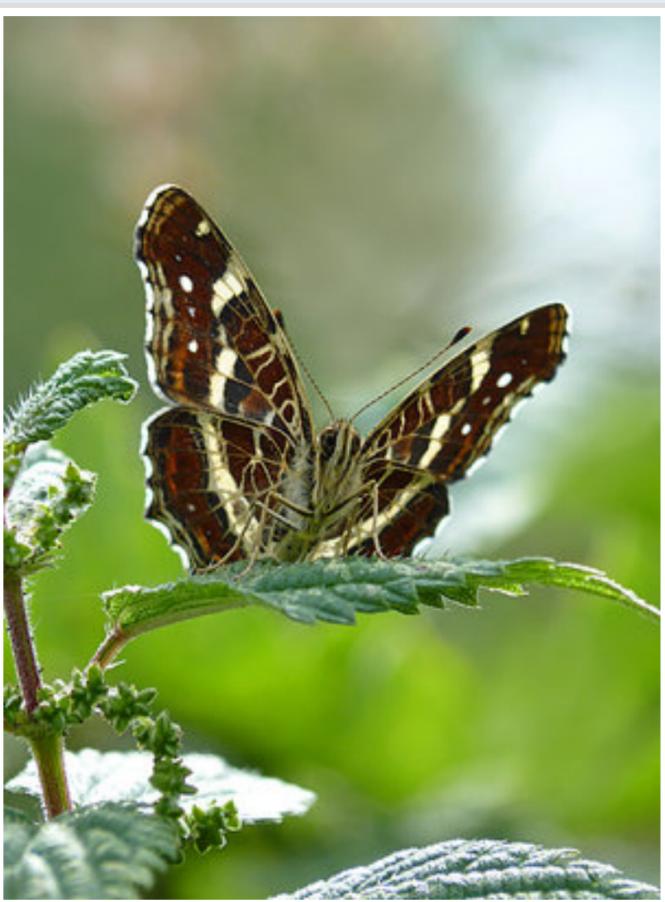
Male

Someone has come forward and admitted to releasing these Map butterflies. That should be the end of the story, but it isn't quite that simple. Assurances of confidentiality were given to this individual, so I can't say too much about this confession, but I'm personally very confident that the details of the story as told are untrue. Others have speculated as to why this might be, and they may well be correct. The thing about this admission which bothers me is that all such events involving vagrant species in recent years have rapidly become surrounded by rumours, silly claims and unverifiable stories. So how reliable is a story admitting to a release when it is clearly not true? When the Queen of Spain set up home briefly at Minsmere we heard "I know the guy who's admitted it, but I can't tell you any more". Well, I know the guy too, and he told me that he admitted it to you just to wind you up. And so things quickly descend into a childish "he said/she said". When the Queen of Spain set up home briefly at Chichester we heard "they've been released deliberately to counter the planning application to develop the site for housing". The problem here was that the planning application was submitted a year after the butterfly had disappeared, requiring that Earth go into a reverse spin cycle to be true. This species doesn't exert any legal influence on a planning application anyway. This sort of nonsense tells us nothing about the ability of butterflies to make incredible journeys for the long-term good of the species. It merely confirms some of the darker sides of human nature. Butterflies will continue to migrate and they will continue to disperse, as they always have done.

My own view is that, yes, this is most likely the work of the individual who came forward, but after doing something irresponsible in the first place, he's then gone on to preclude a definitive judgement by making a complete hash of his admission. At this point all Recording Officers will be pulling their hair out or heading to Beachy Head. To reiterate, the official BC position is that this is an accidental release. My own view is that the butterflies were probably released, but that there remains an element of doubt.

One thing that does come out of this episode very clearly is the damage that is potentially done by releasing non-native species. The perpetrator claims to have been studying the influence of climate change on the Map. Through his actions we are prevented from studying the effects of climate change on the Map. If you know someone who is considering releasing Meadow Fritillary, Marbled Fritillary or European Swallowtail in the UK, please try to dissuade them.

### Behaviour

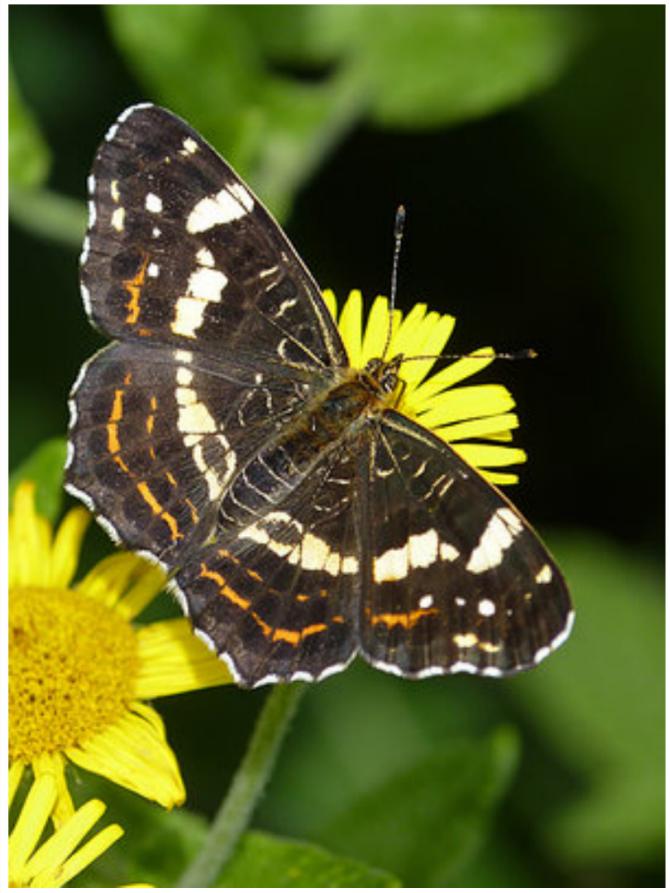


Male

On the three days I visited the site I personally saw 17 individual specimens of the Map. Their condition varied from scale-perfect to well worn and individuals of this species appear to lose their condition very rapidly, rather like Mountain Ringlet, Chequered Skipper and Marsh Fritillary.

The best way of differentiating the sexes is abdomen shape (short and plump in females, long and thin in males) and behaviour, with males being

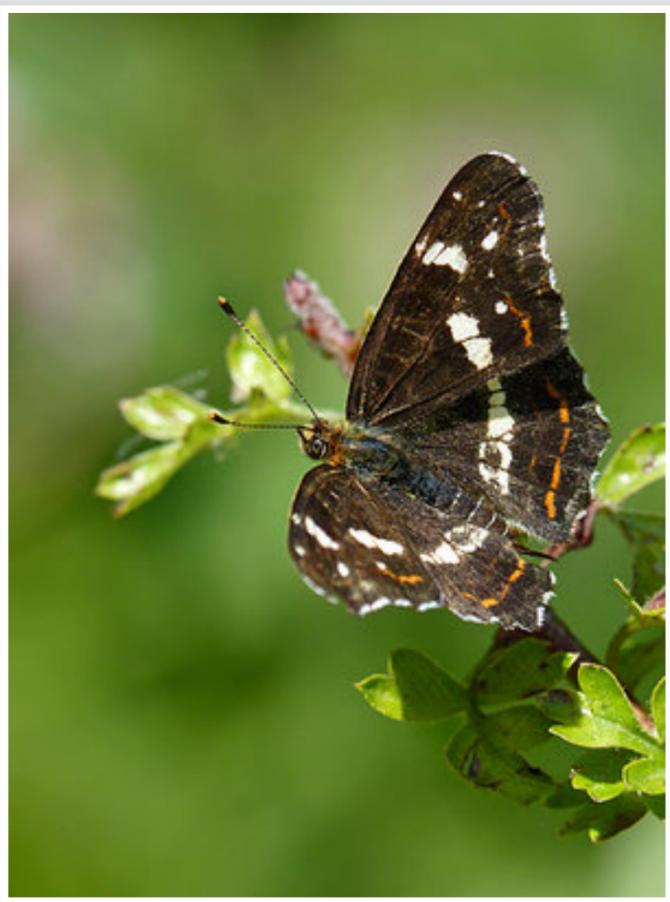
typically aggressive and pugnacious. There is only slight sexual dimorphism, with females being slightly larger and having more broadly rounded wings. The degree to which the orange stripes are developed across the rear wings is also helpful, but not foolproof. Generally females have two such stripes and males just one, or a very weakly developed second stripe. However, it is the overall bolder nature of these stripes which usually signifies a female.



Female

Both sexes seem to spend much of the morning and first hour of the afternoon nectaring, during which time they can be remarkably elusive. Fleabane, Marjoram, Thistle, Cow Parsley and Convolvulus were all used as nectar sources.

At around 1.30 pm the males started to congregate at leks, becoming very visible for the remainder of the afternoon. These leks seemed to move in response to factors such as wind direction and position of the sun. The males are very aggressive and behave in a similar manner to Duke of Burgundy. When two male Maps clash they spiral upwards vertically to heights in excess of 20 metres, before returning to their perches on the sunny side of bushes and small trees. Other species which they attacked vigorously included Red Admiral (which they particularly dislike!), Comma, Holly Blue, Common Blue, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, and Green-veined White. One male took risks by chasing a Southern Hawker.



Male

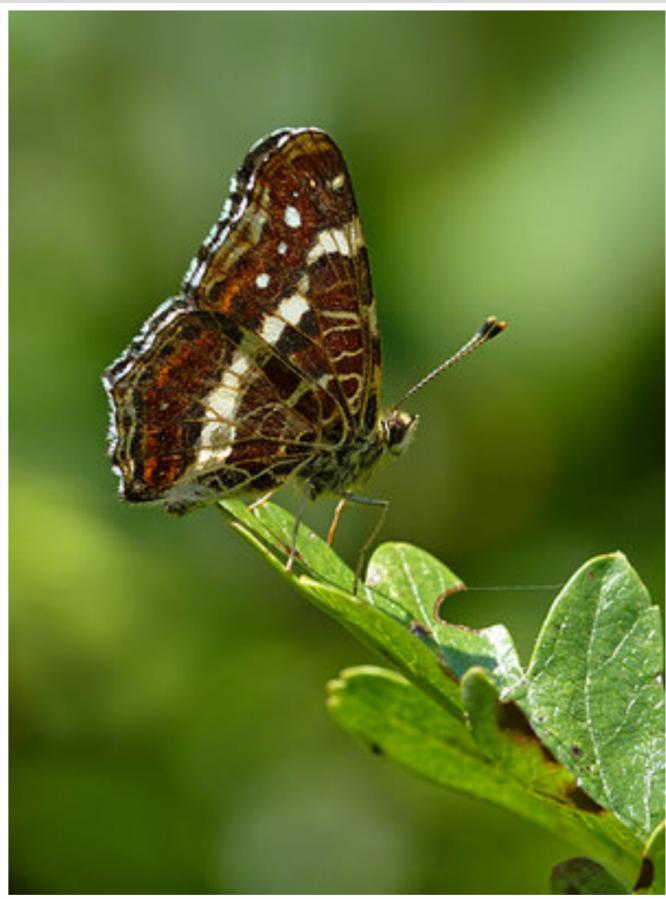
Activity stopped quite early on most days, usually around 4.30 pm, although males were observed as late as 5.45 pm on occasions. Butterflies were seen going to roost in Blackthorn at a height of 3 metres, and in Sycamore at a height of 8 metres. This species requires real warmth to get it going, so becomes inactive before most other species under cloud cover, and similarly reappears after most other species when the sun reappears.

One female was observed egg laying. The bright green eggs are laid in strings attached to the underside of Nettle, mimicking the plant's flowers. The observed batch consisted of five strings comprising 10, 11, 12, 13 and 13 eggs.



Egg strings

### The Future



Male

A number of people have asked me whether the Map will manage to survive the winter and appear in its very different spring livery next year. On balance I would say it is unlikely, although we might see one or two individuals. The news of egg-laying was publicised very quickly, so it was no surprise to see known collectors working the site a couple of days later. Whatever you think of collectors, they are undoubtedly very knowledgeable and well connected people. Although their thorough searches of the local nettle beds for eggs might have been fruitless, the gregarious caterpillars will be easy meat - 'the cat is out of the bag', so I'm not concerned about the now redundant sensitivity of mentioning eggs in my account.

It is inevitably going to be a knife-edge situation when a new species first arrives on a landmass outside its current geographical range, so this is an example of when collecting can potentially play a critical role in determining the outcome. As a general rule the activity of collectors is small beer when compared with the crimes we commit against the countryside. The degradation of sensitive habitats has been the main issue for many decades. Sadly, from a commercial point of view, British Maps will be worth more if the event is short-lived.

### Summary



Image Steve Smith

From a personal perspective I have enjoyed watching this species immensely. The Map has a chequered history in the UK and we should probably treat it with a little more respect. When it does arrive here we should welcome it with open arms. The English Channel presents a real challenge to new colonisers and a number of false starts are likely before a new species becomes established. That might mean that a level of secrecy and suppression is necessary while the species gets a foothold, meaning that everyone will be able to enjoy watching the new arrivals in time. I can fully understand that many have a burning desire to tick a new species, but one only has to look at the habitat damage caused at Stockbridge Down when Black-veined Whites were (almost certainly) released there to appreciate that compromises must sometimes be made. Butterflies are different to birds, so we should take their differing needs into account when these exciting events occur. Butterfly Conservation has just released some guidelines to Branches, to assist with the handling of tricky events such as this. Those guidelines put the needs of the butterflies first.

Not least, I've enjoyed meeting some very interesting and knowledgeable people as the Map story has unfolded. Steve Smith is primarily a birder, but after seeing (admittedly not finding) *gorganus* Swallowtails on his local cliff tops, and the rare and stunningly beautiful Painted Lady ab. *rogeri*, my advice to his local mates is to stand as close to him as possible next summer.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by nomad, 31-Aug-14 04:01 AM GMT

Neil. Great informative post, I thoroughly enjoyed it and superb Map butterfly images. Did it really help keeping this site secret to those that genuinely wanted to go there to photograph the Maps. The collectors found out anyway where they were. You really can't use possible habitat damage as an excuse, because people are permitted at nearly all the other rare butterfly sites. Perhaps if people want to photograph native Maps, a trip to France is in order 😊

Regards Peter.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Paul Harfield, 31-Aug-14 08:57 AM GMT

Hi Neil

We can always rely on you for a proper appraisal. It is such a shame that the actions of a single individual can hinder the efforts of genuine researchers in studying any subject. If this colony does become established we will never know what would have happened in a totally natural event. Social media is great for passing on information but it also increases the speed with which inaccurate rumours spread to the point where inaccuracies almost become considered fact. It takes the likes of people like yourself to weed out the rubbish and provide the truths. Thankyou 😊

Great pictures 😊 and hopefully the colony will survive.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-Aug-14 09:21 AM GMT

Thanks guys.

Peter, I'm just about to leave for a week in Cornwall, so I'll reply to your point about habitat damage (and any other issues I might choose to address) when I return. However, on a more general level please note that this account appears in my Personal Diary, rather than in the more open discussion forum sections of UKB, so I won't necessarily always have time to answer questions, which might be more numerous when contentious issues are covered.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 31-Aug-14 01:43 PM GMT

Great report Neil – nice to see it 'put to bed' for those of us who aren't in the loop 😊 (and some cracking photos to boot!)

BWs

William

### Re: Neil Hulme

by dghukbutterflies, 31-Aug-14 06:29 PM GMT

Hi Neil

I don't think I got to meet you on-site, but I may be mistaken (in that Brian A and myself had left Steve Smith to do some rather sterling and vital co-ordinating Map-related work at the time!).

Yes, yours is a most useful and comprehensive response to the story of the Dorset Maps, a story which started of course (with the best of intentions) on the hard-working Steve Smith's birder blog. On behalf of the Maps, and the rest of us, huge thanks to you both.

Like many others, no doubt, I have very mixed emotions about the event: extreme annoyance at one individual's selfish actions (assuming them to be valid), yet delighted to have witnessed first-hand a most fascinating species of butterfly, on home soil. But, of course, we would all have much preferred the event to have been a natural occurrence. But what really gripes is: what deterrent has the unnamed individual got from repeating his irresponsible actions in the future, given that he (or she?) appears only to have gotten himself a slap on the wrist? ... and appears to have no understanding...

Anyway, looking forwards, I shall be interested to learn what the 'official' stance might be on the validity of the Map assuming naturalised status, if this colony does make it (perhaps against the odds?) in the longer term.

Derek H (co-finder)

### Re: Neil Hulme

by nomad, 31-Aug-14 06:45 PM GMT

Hi Neil. Sorry to ask questions on your diary – have a great holiday.

Regards Peter.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 31-Aug-14 11:27 PM GMT

Absolutely comprehensive account, Neil. Thanks for posting it and giving many of us a better understanding of this event.

Good luck during you holiday in Cornwall (by that, I mean your search for Monarchs). 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-14 11:00 PM GMT

Very interesting and detailed account Neil with some gorgeous photos 😊 – it's just a shame that someone has to go and spoil it all with a less than definitive confession 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by NickMorgan, 02-Sep-14 01:16 PM GMT

Such an interesting post about the Maps. You have answered all of the questions that were whirring around my mind after I first heard about them being found in the UK. I really hope that they are able to make it through the winter.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by selbypaul, 05-Sep-14 11:29 AM GMT

Thanks Neil, a brilliant and comprehensive update as usual.

Like you, I'm never surprised by the feats of nature, so absolutely will not be surprised when Map's do eventually turn up under their own steam. I look forward to that day!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 06-Sep-14 07:16 PM GMT

Such a good summary, that Neil's allowed me to make it a 1st-class citizen 😊 I've seen several other diary entries that warrant an article – so please let me know if you'd like to consider "publishing" in this manner also!

[http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/reports\\_hulme\\_levana.php](http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/reports_hulme_levana.php)

Cheers,

– Pete

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 07-Sep-14 07:54 PM GMT

Thanks William, Derek, David, Wurzel, Nick, Paul and Pete. Fingers crossed for a reappearance – it would be great to see Map on the British list at some

point.

Peter (nomad) – apologies for the delay in replying, but I've only just returned from sunny Cornwall (more of which soon). I think it would be worthwhile to say a few words about habitat damage and how this can be reconciled with our desire to get out into the countryside to watch butterflies on sometimes fragile sites. It's quite a complex issue and I've spent thousands of hours liaising with landowners, farmers, other NGOs, the South Downs National Park Authority (and their SD Joint Committee forerunner), County and local councils over habitat management for butterflies and moths, and sometimes precisely over such issues as this. This occasionally involves adjusting seasonal cutting regimes in response to varying visitor pressure, which almost always means increased footfall. The meadow at Springhead (aka Kithurst) will not get its usual cut & collect this winter, in direct response to the network of paths being cut into the sward as visitor numbers continue to increase.

However, one probably doesn't need to be closely involved with such matters to recognise that there must be a gradation between end members where no footfall results in no habitat damage, and where a large crowd visiting simultaneously has a very negative impact. At some point between these extremes an 'ordinary' level of wear & tear on any given site must become 'extraordinary'. However, that point will vary between sites and between the species of primary conservation concern (and their particular autecology). To look at an example of a popular site with rare butterflies and a lot of visitors (as raised in your comment), we can do no better than look at Noar Hill.

Noar Hill is particularly well known for its Duke of Burgundy colony, and much has been done here in the past with this species in mind. Noar Hill is subjected to a huge amount of visitor pressure, and over the years this steady procession of regular visitors has created a situation where the habitat has become 'tolerant'. People have found their place, keeping very much to the (extensive) well-worn paths, and the Dukes have found theirs, breeding on the individual plants in suitable areas of microhabitat which don't get habitually stomped on. A status quo has therefore been reached, and if we accept that current butterfly population levels are the norm here, then we probably don't think we're doing much damage, or at least only an acceptable amount.

However, if I was managing the site (don't worry, I won't be!), and wished to take the risk of being hung, drawn and quartered (don't worry, I don't!), I would close it to visitors for a few years. If this happened, the areas of suitable microhabitat required to support cowslips in the preferred growth-form for oviposition would soon increase in extent. The Duke population would probably double quite quickly. However, if the site was being managed for Adonis Blue and Silver-spotted Skipper, the impact of such a change would become negative after relatively few years. Horses for courses.

Looking at the Map site – although there is a PROW close by, the area (c. 60 m x 30 m) where most butterflies were concentrated over the initial days is actually privately owned, and has historically been subjected to very minimal footfall. It has therefore developed no 'tolerance' to visitor pressure. Bearing in mind that many of the Maps were perched on nettle, which is the food-plant, or beds of fleabane, a large influx of visitors (as there could have been) would have totally trashed their breeding habitat. By the time I arrived on the afternoon of the 9th August there had already been significant trampling of both nettle and fleabane, despite very modest visitor numbers.

It is therefore too simplistic to say that a comparison can be drawn between an established, managed site for rare butterflies, and a small, rather unassuming piece of land where a highly desirable species has unexpectedly appeared.

As an aside, the private nature of some land (as is the initially occupied ground in this case) can also have a bearing on how visitation is handled. On more than one occasion in the past an owner has simply mown an area in response to a large number of visitors to his land. All such cases have to be treated on an individual basis.

I reckon that Steve took the right decisions based on the changing situation, although I admit that it might have looked odd to anyone who was not in possession of all the facts. In this respect I also believe that the finder has prerogative in deciding how his 'baby' is handled. Steve is primarily a birder and his natural instinct is to get news out quickly. However, if a birder was to find a Honey Buzzard's nest he probably wouldn't think it wise to invite a troupe of Morris Dancers to perform around the base of the tree! Again, horses for courses.

These situations are always going to be difficult and we should probably be more forgiving of decisions which don't help us out as individuals. I really hope that the butterfly gets a foot through the door and that everyone can enjoy watching Maps beat up Red Admirals in the future.

BWs, Neil

P.S. Time to get back to my diary now, so watch this space for a Small Copper explosion.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 07-Sep-14 10:04 PM GMT

### More Steyning Brownies

When I first found a good number of Brown Hairstreak eggs at Steyning Rifle Range in the winter of 2008 I had high hopes that this might prove to be a good site to see the elusive adults. In those days the Downs Link disused railway track was probably considered the best site for this species in Sussex.

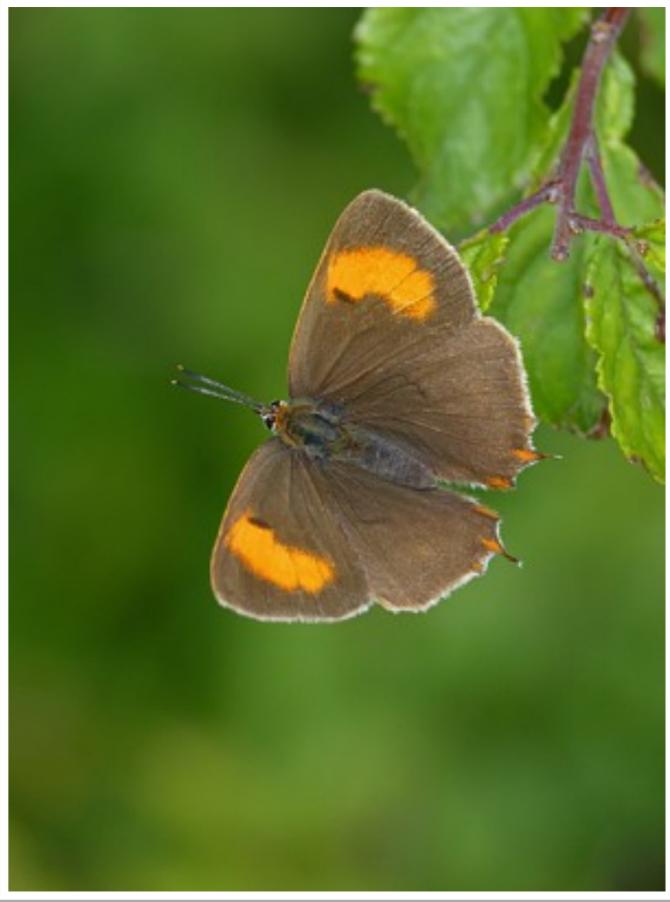
Since 2008 I've worked closely with the Wiston Estate and volunteers at the Steyning Downland Scheme (<http://www.steyningdownland.org/>), to ensure that habitat management on the Rifle Range remains sympathetic to the needs of Britain's most elusive butterfly. We should never forget that Brown Hairstreak adults are very difficult to see on the vast majority of sites.

However, I didn't realise then that this beautiful area at the base of the Downs could become quite as good as it has. The SDS rangers and volunteers do a fantastic job in maintaining the Blackthorn and Bullace in tip-top condition each winter and the site continues to go from strength to strength, attracting a large and increasing number of visitors each season from all over the country.

The four year rotational cutting of the Prunus back to ground level may seem quite drastic immediately post-cut, but by ensuring that all plants around the dedicated reserve area and the northern flank remain firmly within the Brown Hairstreak 'system', the number of female butterflies spotted at low level now outstrips any other site I know of.

Most of the visitors have had their fill by late August and the site becomes much quieter as summer gives way to autumn. However, the Brown Hairstreak is very much an autumn butterfly and even now the females are putting on a good show. My last visits before heading to Cornwall for a family holiday produced 6 different females on 30th August and 14 on the last day of summer, some of which were still in remarkably good condition. I visited the Rifle Range again today (7th September) and although it was after midday before the sun burnt through the mist, I saw another 14 different females before 2.10 pm. A total of 34 females seen in three short visits marks this out as a very special site. Today's tally took my number of Brown Hairstreak sightings here to over the 300 mark.

I'm now involved in a Heritage Lottery Fund project to improve habitat for other species (including Duke of Burgundy) over the wider SDS area, which extends up and over Pepperscombe Bank to the Round Hill. Working alongside partners including the Steyning Downland Scheme, Wiston Estate and South Downs National Park Authority we hope to build on this success and improve the fortunes of a wide variety of flora and fauna. As the 'Steyning Dukes and Downland Project' gets underway I'm optimistic that there will be more good news to report over the next few years.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by mud-puddling, 07-Sep-14 10:20 PM GMT

Some fascinating reports Neil and stunning photography as usual. Cheers, Leigh

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Sep-14 10:37 AM GMT

Thanks Leigh. Plenty to come on my Cornwall trip.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Sep-14 12:12 PM GMT

#### Cornish Copper (Part 1)

I recently returned from a fabulous week in Cornwall, based on the beautiful Lizard Peninsula. The weather, the coastal scenery and vivid turquoise waters, the flower-rich valleys splashed with yellow, orange and lilac, the Cornish Chough and Ann's Pasties all exceeded my expectations. However, I hadn't envisaged such a spectacular show of late season butterflies. The Cornish Small Copper has provided the most spectacular grand finale to a season that I can remember.

One of the venues to which I repeatedly returned was the much-visited stretch of cliff-tops between **Lizard Point and Kynance Cove**. I headed here on the first evening (1st September), arriving just as the last visitors of the day were departing. It was far too late for butterflies, but I did locate a Chough almost immediately, and a very obliging Kestrel.



Kynance Cove, 1.9.14



Kestrel, Kynance Cove, 1.9.14

I was to return here at some point during the day on the 3rd, 4th and 5th September, being constantly drawn back by the magical atmosphere, and not

least the butterflies. I made a count on 3rd August and logged Clouded Yellow (9), Wall (1), Red Admiral (7), Small Tortoiseshell (8), Painted Lady (1), Peacock (1), Common Blue (6), Speckled Wood (22), Small Heath (3), Meadow Brown (2), Small White (10), Green-veined White (4), Large White (1) and Hummingbird Hawkmoth (3). However, the stars of the show were the Cornish Coppers.



Small Copper male, 5.9.14

The best venues for Small Copper that I am aware of in West Sussex, namely Cissbury Ring and Kingley Vale, support populations which can exceed 50 in the late summer brood during favourable years. A thorough survey of the cliff-top paths and valleys running down to the coast between Lizard Point and Kynance Cove gave me a count of 200 in less than 2 hours, at which point I stopped! A high proportion of these were associated with the dry stone walls which run both parallel and perpendicular to the coast. Sorrel plants grow abundantly from the cracks and the stones retain the heat much beloved by this species. These walls support the best population of Small Copper I have ever come across, although I wouldn't know whether this is the case in most years. Chases of 6 and 7 butterflies were common over the beds of fleabane, which provided fuel for their high speed antics. My timing was perfect and I probably encountered the butterflies on the peak day of hatch, with >80% being in perfect or near-perfect condition. Small Coppers were also widely distributed over the flower-rich swards on both seaward and (occasionally) landward sides of the walls, and all the way up the steep-sided valleys.



Dry stone wall habitat, Lizard/Kynance, 3.9.14

Two features of the population struck me immediately. The females in particular are very large, probably being 2–5 mm wider than specimens in most areas of the UK I've visited. This made an always-beautiful species really spectacular, especially when crowned with a set of sapphire blue spots. Although some sites in Sussex support a significant percentage of blue-spotted *caeruleopunctata* specimens, I have never encountered anything like the number I saw in Cornwall. At this particular site these made up well in excess of 60% of the population, being easily the dominant form. I saw literally hundreds of blue-spotted Coppers during my stay.



Small Copper *caeruleopunctata* male, 3.9.14



Small Copper *caeruleopunctata* male at roost, 3.9.14

I could have photographed a great many more Small Coppers than I did, but a large proportion were sitting on the pale coloured stones, making exposure compensation very difficult. For long periods I put the camera away and just enjoyed watching these fascinating butterflies going about their business.

Of course there is far more to appreciate here than the butterflies, and I enjoyed superb views of Chough, Peregrine .... and that breathtaking landscape.





Kynance Cove sunset, 4.9.14

## Re: Neil Hulme

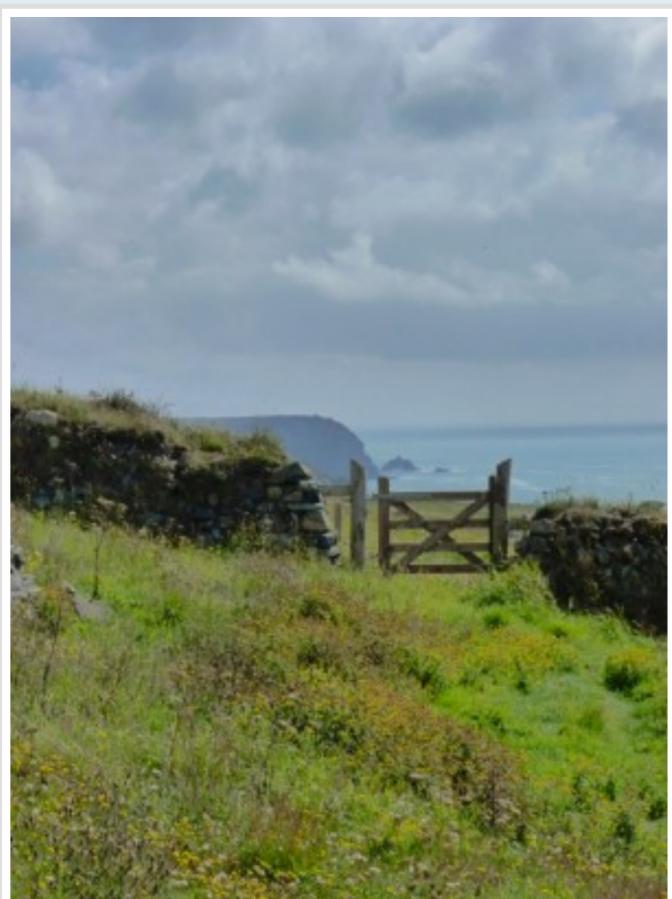
by Neil Hulme, 08-Sep-14 05:44 PM GMT

### Cornish Copper (Part 2)

Rivalling the Lizard Point/Kynance Cove area for beauty is the coastline I walked on 2nd September, from **Mullion Bay, through Predannack Head and onwards east to Ogo-dour Cove**. This stretch of cliff-top was also rich in butterflies, perhaps even more so. My tally included my latest ever Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (1), numerous Clouded Yellow (18) and Red Admiral (17), Small Tortoiseshell (10), Painted Lady (1), Peacock (1), Common Blue (8), Small White (25), Green-veined White (2), Large White (3), Brimstone (1), Small Heath (30), Speckled Wood (12), Meadow Brown (5), Gatekeeper (1) and Hummingbird Hawkmoth (2).



Mullion Cove, 2.9.14



Predannack Head, 2.9.14

However, it was the Small Copper which again stole the limelight and I made another count of 200 within 2.5 hours. They were similarly very large

specimens and the majority were associated with the extensive dry stone wall habitat which stretches out along this coastline.

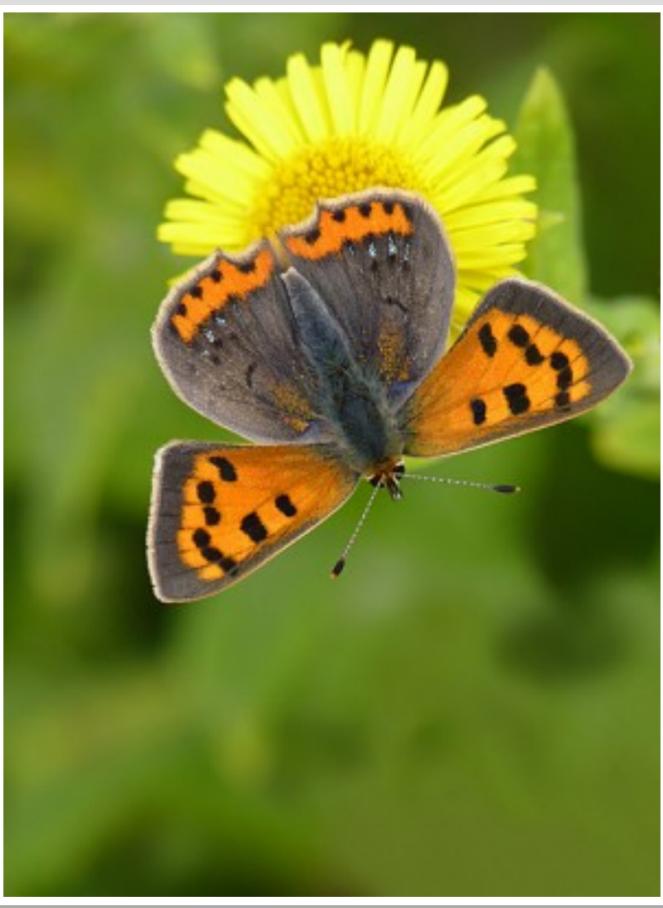


Dry stone wall habitat, Predannack Head, 2.9.14

Blue-spotted *caeruleopunctata* specimens were again very common, but at this location they made up less than 50% of the population. I would dearly love to revisit the Predannack Head meadow in early August, when I imagine it to be home to a good number of fresh Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries.



Small Copper *caeruleopunctata* female, 3.9.14



Small Copper *caeruleopunctata* male, 3.9.14

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 08-Sep-14 09:15 PM GMT

Congrats, Neil, on finding one of my very favorite areas of the country—now you can see why I always visit this area when I am in Cornwall. I can confirm that the coast path between Kynance and Lizard Point in particular, is excellent for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, both in the first generation in late May to June, and in the second brood which emerges in early August in most years. The Brimstone sighting is also notable—I know Cornwall, and have never seen one so far west.

And further congrats on sampling the delights of Ann's Pasties! 😊😊😊🍷

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Sep-14 09:28 PM GMT

Thanks Mark. I've been to both Lizard Point and Kynance before, but had never walked between them. Predannack was a new site for me, as was the next one (Part 3).  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-14 09:55 PM GMT

Fantastic series of shots and excellent reportage Neil 😊 I'm just wondering how long it'll be before Pauline is heading down to Kernow, what with 60% blue spots 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-14 10:03 PM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

... I'm just wondering how long it'll be before Pauline is heading down to Kernow, what with 60% blue spots 😊 Wurzel

Hee hee! ...I was just thinking that myself 😊

Some really fantastic reports recently Neil and accompanied by some superb images. I followed the unfolding story of the Map Butterflies at Swanage with interest and your report does a great job of summing it all up.

It has been some years since I have been to Cornwall but your reports (along with Essexbuzzards earlier in the year) are tempting me to think about a visit next year.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Sep-14 10:28 PM GMT

### Cornish Copper (Part 3)

The final stretch of Cornish coastline which I enjoyed immensely was between the stunningly beautiful **Prussia Cove** and **Cudden Point**, the latter affording wonderful views of St Michael's Mount to the west. This location is well known for its population of Grayling, although this species was over for the year when I visited.

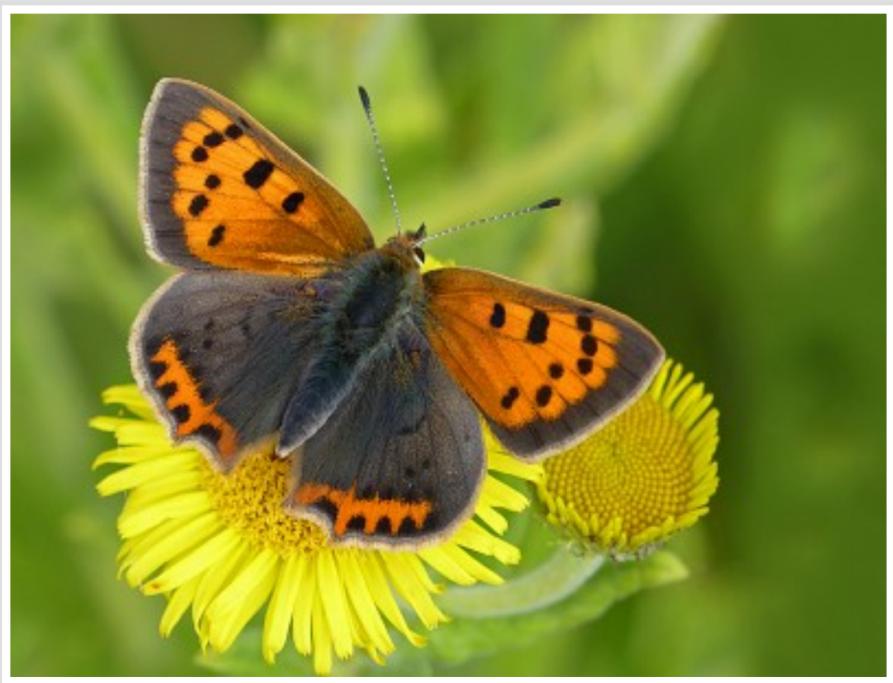


Prussia Cove, 5.9.14



Cudden Point, 5.9.14

It came as almost a surprise to find that this area was *not* dripping with Small Coppers, although I did see 7, including 4 *caeruleopunctata*. Other species seen were Clouded Yellow (7), Painted Lady (2), Small Tortoiseshell (14), Red Admiral (6), Wall (1), Common Blue (4), Small Heath (40), Speckled Wood (6), Small White (4), Large White (1), Green-veined White (1) and Hummingbird Hawkmoth (1).



Small Copper male, 5.9.14

As with the previous sites, I was amazed at how vibrant and colourful the flora still was, bearing in mind the time of year. The delicate lilac flowers of Sheep's-bit caught my eye, nestled amongst the Heather. Together with the delicate pink hues of Thrift these subtle colours provided a contrast with the vivid yellow of Fleabane which is so typical of the Cornish coast in September. Several of the Thrift flowers were providing a meal for hungry caterpillars of the Knot Grass moth.



Sheeps-bit, Cudden Point, 5.9.14



Knot Grass larva on Thrift, Cudden Point, 5.9.14

It was difficult to drive away from The Lizard, particularly with the sun still shining. Part of me was left behind .... until next time.

*Thanks to Lee Slaughter for some pointers. I wish I'd had time to look at Penhale Sands.*

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 08-Sep-14 10:53 PM GMT

Well, what can I say—just wish I could get back down there! Absolutely fantastic images. 🍷🍷🍷

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Sep-14 10:59 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and Neil. Essex knows and loves the area, so we need to keep this between ourselves .... shhh 😊 . The cottages just above Prussia Cove look very inviting and are available for rent – <http://prussiacove.co.uk/houses-cottages/>. I think I've just sold myself a holiday let.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Sep-14 06:23 PM GMT

#### Local Coppers

Just before heading to Cornwall (31st August) and soon after returning home (8th September) I made brief visits to my local Cissbury Ring. The hoped—

for autumn extravaganza of Small Copper hasn't really materialised in Sussex. Not only was my most recent count rather modest (12), but they seemed rather understated in comparison with the Cornwall beasts, being much smaller and less blue. That said, there's no such thing as a bad Small Copper.



Small Copper male, Cissbury Ring, 8.9.14



Small Copper male, Cissbury Ring, 31.8.14

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-14 09:01 PM GMT

Agreed. But those numbers you saw on the Lizard are staggering–i have found them to be common there, but the numbers you saw are something else, certainly something i have never witnessed there, or anywhere. Congratulations (through gritted teeth!). 🍷🍷🍷

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Sep-14 08:53 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

I've certainly seen nothing like this before in Small Copper. Although the numbers should be put into context (spread over a couple of miles and couple of hours), when compared to my previous best hauls of Small Copper this is still at least twice as good.

To see spectacular events like this requires spot-on timing (a.k.a. 'luck'). I've seen similar abundance spikes in Green Hairstreak on the South Downs in recent years. I think the phenomenon is caused when relatively small areas within the species' overall habitat patch become particularly favourable as breeding sites. In the case of these Small Copper it's the combination of dry stone wall and abundant sorrel plants. In the case of Green Hairstreak it's early stage regeneration of food-plants one to two years after extensive scrub clearance. These hotspots must greatly concentrate ovipositing females, leading to a high density of eggs/larvae/pupae. If you're lucky enough to find these areas while a large hatch is underway, then the numbers can be astonishing.

However, from my experience these events are short-lived, and within a couple of days the numbers will have plummeted, as many of the individuals will disperse back out over the wider landscape. Perhaps the most extreme example I've witnessed was the Chalk Hill Blue population explosion at Friston Gallops in 2012. Within a couple of days some of those butterflies were 18 miles away!

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by MikeOxon, 10-Sep-14 12:12 PM GMT

Presumably an abundance 'spike' for one species can also be caused by conditions causing a predator species to do badly?

## Re: Neil Hulme

by lee3764, 10-Sep-14 01:12 PM GMT

Delighted you have a rewarding holiday down here in sunny Cornwall last week. You were really lucky with the weather Neil. The best abundance spike/mass emergence of butterflies I ever had over the past 40 years of butterfly study & watching was a good friend of mine (Barry Ofield) who's now 82 years old & I visited the military part of Penhale Sands in mid-June 2004 & as soon as we got onto the real dunes came across 1000's of Silver-Studded Blues everywhere! There are privet shrubs growing on the dunes and they were in full flower as well as stunted so not more than 2 -3 feet high mostly and there were many 100's if not 1000's nectaring on every big bush in flower. The yellow sedum (Stonecrop) growing in masses & in full flower across certain areas of the dunes were coated with 1000's of these little butterflies & walking put up clouds of them with every step so they resembled confetti blowing about in the breeze! It is a day that neither of us will ever forget & in the now 60+ years Mr Ofield has been interested in Lepidoptera he told me he had never seen a sight quite like that day at Penhale Sands (near Perranporth in North Cornwall). We both agreed that it was impossible to come up with a count of these butterflies but a conservative estimate of maybe 40,000 individual Silver-Studded Blue butterflies were seen by us over a 2 and a half hour visit there. I should add that there is only open access to the non-military part of the dunes. We both had a permit to access the military training part of the dunes.

What a superb day!

Cheers all,

Lee Slaughter (Cornwall). 😊😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 11-Sep-14 03:03 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Yes, particularly if one extends the definition of "predator" to include the parasitoids (rather than parasites) which often target early stages in the butterfly life-cycle. These probably have a larger impact than most true predators (invertebrates, small mammals etc.), as parasitoids are generally more numerous than true predators, at least while at or near the peak of an abundance cycle. That said, predation by passerines during their breeding season probably has a significant influence on butterfly and moth numbers in some years. Matthew Oates has correlated the abundance of woodland tits with Purple Emperor larval survival rates over the winter, with the former possibly being a function of weather conditions. In mild, damp winters the effects of moulds are probably even more influential in determining peaks and troughs. We know too little about the role of pathogens at the moment.

As for adult butterflies, we probably underestimate the impact of predators, such as wasps, hornets, dragonflies and spiders, although the rates of attrition at this stage in their life-cycle will generally be smaller when compared to that in the early stages, when each species is represented by a much higher number of individuals.

Butterflies and moths are certainly up against it, and there so many different factors affecting their adult numbers, often acting in combinations, that it can sometimes be difficult to identify the reason(s) for a sudden peak or trough.

Hi Lee,

Thanks, we had a great time down there on your patch. Your star-spangled Silver-studded Blue day sounds fantastic. I've only ever managed to see the species in the low hundreds at best.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by MikeOxon, 12-Sep-14 12:46 PM GMT

Thank you for your comprehensive response, Neil.

My initial thought had been triggered by the well known 'boom and bust' cycle between the Holly Blue and the wasp *Listrodomus nycthemerus* I hadn't thought about fungi but I guess that must be significant, especially in the pupal stage.

Mike

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 12-Sep-14 07:02 PM GMT

### Cissbury Coppers

I couldn't resist a couple of hours on Cissbury Ring this afternoon (12th September) as we continue to enjoy a succession of warm, sunny September days. Small Copper numbers have built since my last visit, with freshly emerged specimens now mingling with the well-worn. I saw about 25 on the middle slopes of the SW corner, along with a similar number of Small Heath and a few Common Blue and Meadow Brown, the latter including two mating pairs - they're still emerging!



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 12-Sep-14 07:47 PM GMT

#### Last Chance Saloon For Butterfly Pin Badges

Butterfly Badgemeister Paul Fosterjohn will be at Steyning Rifle Range tomorrow (Saturday) morning, with the remaining stock of 2014 pin badges. If, like me, you intend to buy the entire set as a future family heirloom and sound financial investment, then just turn up and look for the man with a badge-laden rucksack. All profits go to various BC Branches. It's probably the last weekend of the year when it's worthwhile visiting the site to see real Brown Hairstreak; although most are becoming a bit tatty, there are still a few specimens which rank 7 on my condition assessment scale. Purple Emperor, Swallowtail and Brown Hairstreak badges available, but going quickly.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Maximus, 12-Sep-14 09:32 PM GMT

Stunning shot of the Small Copper on the Harebell Neil 😊 really illustrates just how small this beautiful little butterfly is.

Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Sep-14 06:45 PM GMT

Thanks Mike. Small but beautifully marked! 😊  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Sep-14 07:00 PM GMT

### Fruits Of Autumn

As the butterfly season wanes it is becoming increasingly difficult to find anything really fresh to admire and photograph. I've made several unsuccessful trips to find second brood White Admiral lately, but it's always a joy to be out in the woods as the leaves begin to turn. On Wednesday (17th September) I only managed to locate faded Speckled Woods and a few, very smart looking Red Admirals in Eartham Woods. However, I did find this very seasonal looking clump of Sulphur Tuft fungi on a decaying stump next to Stane Street, the Roman Road.



Today (21st September), I again drew a blank in my hunt for White Admiral at Houghton Forest, but I knew I was onto a winner by stopping off at Cissbury Ring on the way home. Although most have seen better days, some Small Coppers are still emerging. After sifting through about 20 specimens I finally found a male in mint condition. Coppers are proving to be good value this autumn.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 21-Sep-14 09:44 PM GMT

There has definitely been a resurgence in Coppers recently – I found five this afternoon without really looking at the Devenish 😊 . Lush shot BTW 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 23-Sep-14 04:16 PM GMT

Lovely Copper Shot Neil Goldie 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Sep-14 07:49 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and Goldie. The Small Copper has certainly extended the season for me this year, particularly as many species have ended early. BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Sep-14 08:19 PM GMT

### Third Brood Wall Spectacular

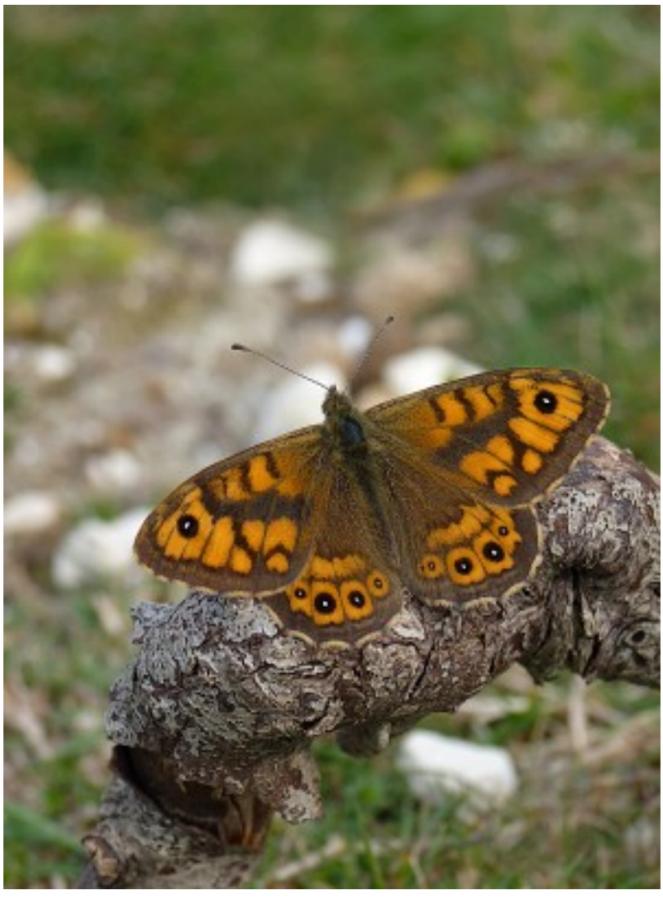
It is now necessary to pick sites very carefully, as many locations are almost devoid of butterflies. This was the case when I dropped in to look at Chantry Hill recently (23rd September), hoping for third brood Brown Argus. A quick change of venue did the trick, but by now Mill Hill was cooling down and I just managed to catch up with a couple of freshly emerged, third brood Wall before they turned in for the night. The following day I headed back there, just as the weather collapsed. However, I flushed a sufficiently large number of Wall from the areas of broken turf to suggest that they are having a very strong third flight here.

This morning (25th September) the weather was perfect, with just enough cloud to induce periods of less frenetic activity. I was just about to give Colin Knight a ring, when he called me from the car park, having just arrived to perform his last transect of the year. His timing was perfect, and we enjoyed a real late season Wall spectacular. A thorough search of the upper, middle and lower levels, including a perilous zigzag across the main slope, produced 34 beautiful Wall Brown, mostly in good condition. Females were busy at work and I watched one deposit her large, off-white, globular egg on a single blade of grass, overhanging a hollow.

Also on show were 4 Clouded Yellow (2 in excellent condition), 5 Common Blue, 6 Small Heath, 1 Brown Argus, 1 Small Copper, 2 Comma, 1 Red Admiral, 8 Meadow Brown, 1 Small White and 1 Large White. Not bad for late September!









### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 25-Sep-14 10:25 PM GMT

Simply stunning Neil – and to make those shots even better they're off such a 'difficult' butterfly 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 25-Sep-14 10:46 PM GMT

Amazing how certain parts of the UK can throw up fresh specimens of species that are absent elsewhere.

I think I'd have a heart attack if I saw Wall Browns in late September in south Wales.

I'm extremely envious.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Sep-14 10:56 PM GMT

Thanks both. Wurzel, the Wall has always been my nemesis as far as photography is concerned, and I've always maintained that life is too short to try and photograph the bug\*er. A lot of hurt has been put to rest over the last couple of days! 😊

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Sep-14 10:12 AM GMT

Some more images of our morning with the Wall Brown on Colin Knight's great blog here <http://colinknight.blogspot.co.uk/>

### Re: Neil Hulme

by badgerbob, 26-Sep-14 02:07 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil. The 3rd brood is having its best year I have known, and not only in their normal 3rd brood sites. The 2nd brood was early enough to make a good 3rd brood a real possibility and anywhere that the Wall Brown is found earlier in the year can produce the 3rd brood this year, including my garden!!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Sep-14 03:13 PM GMT

Thanks Bob. I agree that the early start to the season (helped no doubt by good weather, including this Indian Summer) has encouraged a full-blown and strong third flight, rather than a 'partial' brood, but I'm not seeing them on *all* Wall sites. The third brood still seems to be restricted mainly to the warmer locations (at least in West Sussex), whereas the north-facing, cooler sites lag behind just sufficiently to preclude an autumn emergence. That said, I'm sure you're right in saying that some locations, which sit between these two extremes, are producing autumn Wall, when they usually don't. There are probably more of these 'intermediate' sites on your East Sussex patch than I have over my way, as you have much more open downland with

west and east-facing aspects.

The most striking example in West Sussex is the difference between Mill Hill and Steyning Rifle Range, with second brood Wall on the latter site lagging 10 – 14 days behind the former, despite being only about 8 Km apart. That difference in timing appears to be just enough to discount a third brood at Steyning (I've looked), despite a burgeoning population. It's a case of 'nearly, but not quite'. I'll be interested to read your Species Champion account this year, particularly an analysis of the wider occurrence of these atypical, late Wall.

I'll keep an eye on Steyning, and if it does produce any third brood specimens it will represent a very notable 'first'.

Hope to catch up with you at one of the BC Sussex socials this autumn – it's been a while!

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 26-Sep-14 06:45 PM GMT

As always, a splendid insight into a particular species. Wall Brown epitomizes my own childhood on the Norfolk Coast. A 3rd brood occurred then in some years, eg after the hot summer of 1947!!!! (Seems like just last week!)

Your photos Neil continue to amaze and impress. I recently saw a winner of a wildlife photography contest: a rather mundane shot of a Greylag Goose and thought just how many of the pictures on ukb are far superior. But your Wall Brown:



really takes some beating. A very difficult subject captured to perfection.

Thank you Neil for reminding me of my youth nearly 70 years ago.....

By the way, your recent scenic shots of Kynance Cove weren't too bad either 😊

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 26-Sep-14 10:42 PM GMT

Brilliantly said,Jack! These Wall pictures are simply stunning! 🍷

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Matsukaze, 26-Sep-14 11:10 PM GMT

### "David M" wrote:

Amazing how certain parts of the UK can throw up fresh specimens of species that are absent elsewhere.

I think I'd have a heart attack if I saw Wall Browns in late September in south Wales.

I'm extremely envious.

I saw a relatively fresh Wall Brown on the Gower on the 16th – it wouldn't surprise me if there were a few more about on the south coast.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 27-Sep-14 06:55 AM GMT

Hi Neil

You have stunned us with some of your images in the past,but THAT shot of the Wall brown is something else.

I get the impression that Mr.Harrison is only slowly recovering from seeing it!.

all the best TREVOR

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Sep-14 12:12 PM GMT

Many thanks Jack. Your comments are really appreciated. I think that the Wall, along with the Small Tortoiseshell, hold special memories of youth for many folk, as they were so widespread in 'the good old days'. We probably took them for granted when growing up, but they clearly became entrenched in our hearts.

Thanks also to Mark (essexbuzzard), Matsukaze and Trevor for your comments.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 27-Sep-14 05:25 PM GMT

I've yet to see better shots any where of a wall butterfly Neil, 🍷🍷 come to that I've only seen two Wall all year 😊 and your looking at a third brood as well, fantastic Neil. Goldie 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 29-Sep-14 07:39 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Superb Wall Brown images, I can't get out of the habit of calling them that, just 'Wall' doesn't seem right to me somehow. I totally agree with Jacks comments about that one photo, just the right amount of background to provide interest and context, yet nicely isolated from it.

Cheers,

Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-Sep-14 09:11 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie and Neil. I paid another brief visit to Mill Hill this afternoon (30th September) and although I didn't perform a thorough search, I still saw at least 20 Wall spread over the upper, middle and lower levels, including 6 or 7 egg-laying females. I think the Wall will be 'last man standing' in Sussex this year, apart from the odd hibernators. There were still 3 or 4 Clouded Yellow present too.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 01-Oct-14 01:43 PM GMT

Hi,Neil,

Many thanks for the prompt reply re.Abbots wood.

You mentioned infrequent visits to that location, how about an out of season walk around the site. I am sure you could assess its suitability for His Majesty. Glad to meet you there any time.  
All the best TREVOR.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Oct-14 08:30 PM GMT

Hi Trevor,  
Thanks. I'll let you know if I can get over there, but it's a very busy time of year for work parties and advising on habitat management, so it might be in the late winter/early spring.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Mick Rock, 05-Oct-14 09:19 PM GMT

Still plenty of Walls at Mill Hill. Saw about 20 today.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 07-Oct-14 08:58 AM GMT

Hi Mick,  
I'm pleased to hear that you caught up with the Wall at Mill Hill. I hope you got some good shots of this notoriously tricky species. After filling my boots over a couple of days I failed to get a single, decent image during my next visit – a return to 'business as usual'!  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Oct-14 02:58 PM GMT

#### Back Garden Butterflies

During the brief spells of sunshine between showers this afternoon (8th October), two Red Admirals cavorted around my back garden, occasionally settling on my *Fatsia japonica*. With my ivy still to flower, I'm hoping they will become regular visitors over the next few weeks.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Oct-14 08:07 PM GMT

#### South Downs National Park Forum Blogs

Here are a few links to an ongoing sequence of blogs I've posted on the South Downs National Park Forum. The descriptions of butterflies are designed for a non-specialist audience, but you might enjoy some of the images. Click on them to see a slightly larger file than posted here. They are indexed in calendar order.

<http://southdownsforum.ning.com/profile ... ional-park> <http://southdownsforum.ning.com/profile ... nal-park-1>  
<http://southdownsforum.ning.com/profile ... ths-part-1> <http://southdownsforum.ning.com/profile ... ths-part-2>  
<http://southdownsforum.ning.com/profile ... -the-chalk>

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Oct-14 05:57 PM GMT

### Another South Downs National Park Forum Blog

And another at <http://southdownsforum.ning.com/profile...ional-park>

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Ian Pratt, 10-Oct-14 07:58 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Excellent blog and photos. I am still struggling with temperatures around 30 degrees C here in Zaragoza!!

Hopefully may see some butterflies today as we are going by car into the country to see Goya's birthplace and also to the Laguna de Gallocanta- great for birds I am told including cranes in season.

Congrats re photo!

BWs

Ian

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 10-Oct-14 12:35 PM GMT

Hi! Neil loved your Blogs, very interested in the Purple E and Brown H , South Downs is on my list for next year Goldie 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Oct-14 01:01 PM GMT

Hi Goldie and Ian. Many thanks.

Ian, "*struggling with temperatures around 30 degrees C here in Zaragoza*" is a struggle I wish I was involved with - have a great time out there!

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Ian Pratt, 10-Oct-14 09:06 PM GMT

Weather changed over night with light rain. We had some further showers on the trip and temperatures as low as 13C!

By 18.00 it had risen to 20/21C but by then it was too late for any butterflies. Re- entry to UK is fast approaching on Monday pm. I have my winter clothes ready! :lol :

BWs

Ian

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 11-Oct-14 10:18 AM GMT

Hi Neil, just had a look at your linked blog posts, great stuff with some lovely photos.

### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

...With my ivy still to flower, I'm hoping they will become regular visitors over the next few weeks.

My Ivy has nearly finished flowering now, as has most of it around here in the midlands. I must admit, I'm a bit surprised that yours is still to flower, especially as everything else down there seem to be ahead of here.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 11-Oct-14 10:48 AM GMT

Thanks Neil, and well spotted! Due to a combination of factors, including the Magnolia tree which overhangs my rear garden (pollarding now due again) and the seasonal, lower arc of the sun, my ivy periodically becomes a late-flowerer. It's a good three weeks later than ivy at the front of the house.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Mick Rock, 13-Oct-14 04:06 PM GMT

**"Neil Hulme" wrote:**

Hi Mick,

I'm pleased to hear that you caught up with the Wall at Mill Hill. I hope you got some good shots of this notoriously tricky species. After filling my boots over a couple of days I failed to get a single, decent image during my next visit – a return to 'business as usual'!

BWs, Neil

Hi Neil.

Just the one image that I was happy with – the courting couple. However this certainly made my trip down there worthwhile. A difficult species indeed.

Not sure how you managed to get your pics of them – have been looking for the pins, but can't see any 😊 Best regards.

Mick

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 21-Oct-14 01:52 PM GMT

**Butterflies Through The Window**

Unfortunately I've been confined to bed for a while with pneumonia, so little in the way of activity to report. However, yesterday (20th October) I spotted a very active, third brood Holly Blue male patrolling the back garden hedge. A couple of Red Admiral were also seen feeding on the flowering ivy.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Pete Eeles, 21-Oct-14 03:34 PM GMT

**"Neil Hulme" wrote:**

**Butterflies Through The Window**

Unfortunately I've been confined to bed for a while with pneumonia, so little in the way of activity to report. However, yesterday (20th October) I spotted a very active, third brood Holly Blue male patrolling the back garden hedge. A couple of Red Admiral were also seen feeding on the flowering ivy.

Yikes! Really sorry to hear that, Neil, and get well soon. Just think of spring and pull through!

Cheers,

– Pete

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Mark Tutton, 21-Oct-14 05:42 PM GMT

Oh dear Neil that is not good at all 😞 take it easy and get well soon

Kind Regards

Mark

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by MikeOxon, 21-Oct-14 06:16 PM GMT

From my own experience, it will take some time before you are back to normal fitness, so do take it easy. All the best,

Mike

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Vince Massimo, 21-Oct-14 06:37 PM GMT

Sorry to hear that you are laid-up Neil. Hope you have a speedy recovery.

Best wishes,

Vince

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Freeman, 21-Oct-14 07:52 PM GMT

Sorry to hear about your illness Neil...and you still manage to see more butterflies than I have seen for a couple of weeks now.

All the best for a speedy recovery.

Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 21-Oct-14 08:06 PM GMT

Hi,Neil  
Get well soon !.  
TREVOR.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by lee3764, 21-Oct-14 10:11 PM GMT

**Pnumonia!! Hells teeth Neil! Get well soon and look after yourself well. You need to get yourself better. All the best from Lee Slaughter (Cornwall).**

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 21-Oct-14 10:23 PM GMT

#### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

Unfortunately I've been confined to bed for a while with **pneumonia**, so little in the way of activity to report. **However**, yesterday (20th October) I spotted a very active, third brood Holly Blue male patrolling the back garden hedge. A couple of Red Admiral were also seen feeding on the flowering ivy.

You truly are a legend, Neil. 😊

Sincere best wishes to you and hope you get back to 100% fitness very soon.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by millerd, 21-Oct-14 10:38 PM GMT

All the best from me too, Neil. Nasty thing to get – hope you put it behind you soon.

Dave

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 22-Oct-14 08:14 AM GMT

Get well soon x

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Oct-14 09:01 AM GMT

I very much appreciate your "get well soon" messages, so I'd like to say a big "thank you" to Pete, Mark, Mike, Vince, Neil, Trevor, Lee, David, Dave, Susie and those who have sent PMs or emails. It's the first time I've ever been completely immobilised for ten days. I never realised how debilitating pneumonia can be.

I'm definitely much better today and will even try to get outside for an hour or two. Isolation from the countryside has been a most unpleasant side-effect.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Maximus, 22-Oct-14 08:14 PM GMT

I've just seen this Neil, Cathy and me both wish you a very speedy recovery

Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 22-Oct-14 09:00 PM GMT

I thank God no Monarchs were seen in Sussex during your recuperation, Neil, for I fear you'd have risked your mortal well being! 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 22-Oct-14 11:20 PM GMT

Just catching up Neil – so a belated get well soon.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 23-Oct-14 07:56 AM GMT

Think on the bright side Neil. You might have got this irritating illness at the START of the butterfly season. Now that would have been far more annoying. At least it will be behind you by the time 2015 kicks off.

Hope to see you again in that splendid Billingshurst meadow next April.

Meanwhile, keep that sick-bed butterfly list up to date!

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 23-Oct-14 10:51 AM GMT

So sorry Neil to hear you've been ill, but I second Jack it could have been at the beginning of the season not the end 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Rosalyn, 23-Oct-14 04:03 PM GMT

Hope you are feeling better soon Neil

Rosalyn & Phil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 24-Oct-14 02:33 PM GMT

**Oh Deer**

I really appreciate the further "get well soon" messages I've received over the last few days, so I'd like to say "thank you" to Mike and Cathy, David, Wurzel, Jack, Goldie, Rosalyn and Phil, and others who have emailed me.

I did get out for a few hours last Wednesday (22nd October), and very much enjoyed the sights and sounds of the Fallow rut at Petworth Park, which is now at peak. Unfortunately this proved rather ambitious and I relapsed quite rapidly. This time around I'll be taking things a little slower, but hopefully it will be 'business as usual' quite soon. Even more irresponsible is the Red Admiral flying around my back garden while it's tipping down!





### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 25-Oct-14 09:43 AM GMT

Hi,Neil

Hope you are on the mend,but the word "relapsed" is not good!.

Referring to that Wall Brown image that everyone,including myself,raved about I was wondering what other gems you may have in your portfolio that you might consider to be even superior to that image. Would you care to share your all time top ten with us!. As the clocks go back tonight I for one could do with cheering up.

Speedy recovery,  
TREVOR.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Mark Tutton, 25-Oct-14 12:35 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Glad you are on the mend 😊

Seeing you pictures of the fallow deer at Petworth brought back very fond memories. Ever year I went on an adventure with my grandparents and cousins by train and bus from Portsmouth to see the Fallow and hunt for discarded antlers. Always longed to fish in the lake but never had a chance but

had a great collection of antlers in my bedroom – much to my mums disgust – including a seven pointer if I remember rightly. Thanks for the reminder 😊 Kind Regards  
Mark

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Oct-14 08:39 PM GMT

Trevor and Mark – thanks for your messages. I managed to get outside today, but made sure I didn't have to walk more than 50 m to find my target species!

Trevor: Life is running a month behind schedule after such a long period of inactivity, but I'll try to finish off my photo summary of 2014 highlights. That should contain some of my all-time top ten.

Mark: I'm pleased my account of Petworth rekindled happy memories. I used to fish another of the lakes within the park, bagging up on some nice Tench in the summer, and Pike to a shade under 25 lbs in the winter.

### Red-breasted Flycatcher

This morning (27th October) I visited Beachy Head, where a very pretty Red-breasted Flycatcher has been drawing crowds for a few days now. While driving across the Cuckmere Valley approximately a dozen Red Admirals crossed the road in front of me, all heading south in a determined manner. While waiting for the RBF to show, I watched another 3 Red Admirals and 2 Painted Ladies hurrying along in the same direction. Other butterflies seen included 2 Clouded Yellows (1 *helice*) and a Wall. As I arrived back home in Worthing another *helice* flew across my front garden.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-14 11:52 PM GMT

Cracking report Neil – it seems that you well and truly made up for your time languishing 😊🍷 The only time I've ever seen a Red-breasted Flycatcher

was in Poland but after my first White-backed Woodpecker and European Lynx it fell down the pecking order of most memorable species of the day 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 28-Oct-14 11:08 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Yes, Lynx trumps most stuff.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

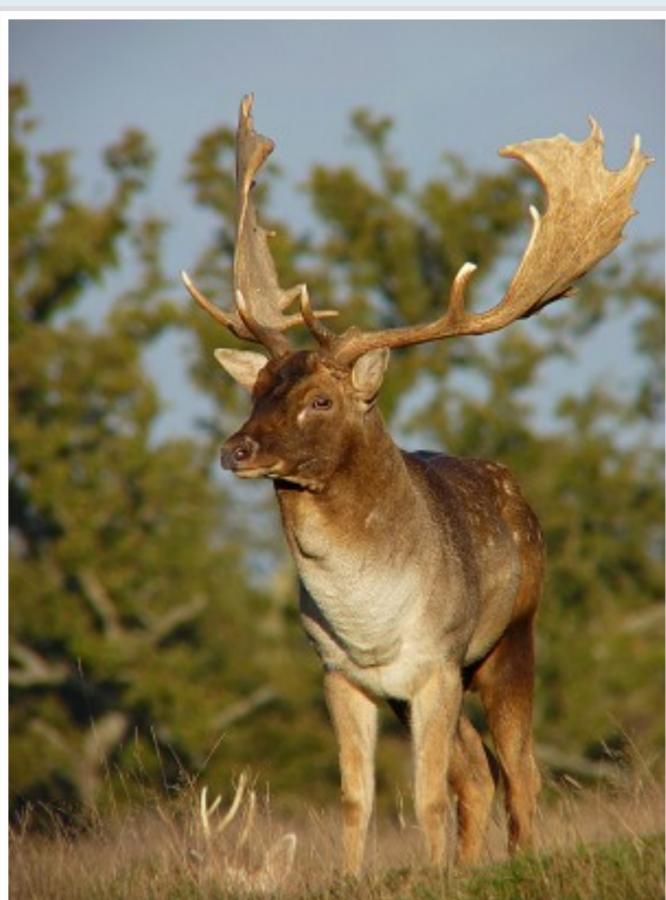
by Neil Hulme, 28-Oct-14 11:33 PM GMT

### Big Bucks

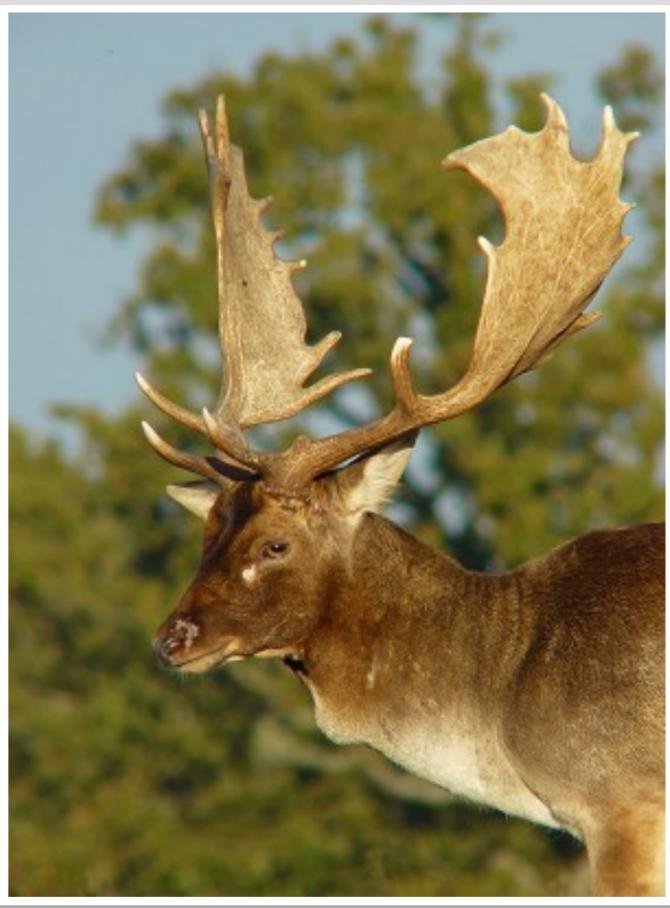
Today (28th October) I met up with Colin Knight, to pay another visit to the Petworth Park Fallow rut. Although the light was perfect, and the park looked magnificent in its autumn colours, I was initially worried that I'd dragged Colin along under false pretenses; there was a distinct lack of activity and none of the belching and groaning that filled the air during my last visit. However, by mid morning things started to hot up and we were treated to some spectacular battles between some of the larger bucks.

The serious nature of these conflicts became all too apparent when we came across an old warrior with a broken leg. Although he seemed to be managing on three, at least for now, I suspect the rangers will be quick to alleviate any suffering. The rut may be nearing its end this year, hence the slow start today, but it's still well worth a visit if you can get there in the next week.

We did see a few butterflies, including 3 Red Admiral and single Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell.







**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Susie, 30-Oct-14 10:05 PM GMT

I was there on Tuesday too with my girls. Couldn't get near the deer because I had the hound with me but we could hear the clash of the deer from a fair distance. Cracking stuff and great to see your photos.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 30-Oct-14 10:48 PM GMT

Good to see you're up and about, Neil.

Lovely shots of the deer.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Nov-14 08:30 PM GMT

### An Aurelian Born

I'm pleased and very proud to announce the birth of Jacob Marcus Hulme on 30th October. Although five weeks early he weighed a respectable 6lbs and was allowed home on Halloween. His homecoming was marked by the appearance of 4 Red Admiral, 1 Holly Blue, 1 Painted Lady, and 1 Comma in our Worthing back garden, the latter two species making their first appearances here this year. The Red Admiral and Comma were still visiting the *Fatsia japonica* and ivy flowers today (1st November).



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Vince Massimo, 01-Nov-14 08:42 PM GMT

Many congratulations, Neil 😊

I hope Hannah and Jacob are both well. Also great news for Mia, who now has a little brother to boss around.

Best wishes,  
Vince

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 01-Nov-14 09:01 PM GMT

Well done Neil (but it isn't all that difficult 😊)

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 01-Nov-14 09:08 PM GMT

### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

I'm pleased and very proud to announce the birth of Jacob Marcus Hulme on 30th October. Although five weeks early he weighed a respectable 6lbs and was allowed home on Halloween. **His homecoming was marked by the appearance of 4 Red Admiral, 1 Holly Blue, 1 Painted Lady, and 1 Comma in our Worthing back garden.....**

Legendary quotation!

Congratulations.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Maximus, 01-Nov-14 09:16 PM GMT

Congratulations Neil 😊 Mike and Cathy.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 01-Nov-14 09:29 PM GMT

Congrats Neil and all the best to Hannah and Mia too 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Padfield, 01-Nov-14 09:43 PM GMT

Congratulations from Switzerland, Neil! And welcome, Jacob Marcus!

Guy

## Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 01-Nov-14 10:11 PM GMT

Congratulations on your new arrival, Neil, and superb Long - Tailed Blue and Chequered Skipper photos in the latest edition of Atropos!

Best Wishes,

William

## Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 02-Nov-14 12:01 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Thats what I call good planning a girl and a boy,one of each !,and better still born in the closed season.

Hope mum and baby are doing well. Hope you're doing well too.

Best wishes

TREVOR.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by John W, 02-Nov-14 01:42 AM GMT

Congratulations Neil! Talk about a spitting image 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 02-Nov-14 08:33 AM GMT

Massive congrats to all I'm the Hulme household on the arrival of a Nipper Kipper 😊 Hope mum and baby are doing well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Susie, 02-Nov-14 08:46 AM GMT

Congratulations!!! Lovely news. I wish you all good health and happiness. 😊. Xx

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by peterc, 02-Nov-14 09:06 AM GMT

Congratulations Neil. Hopefully Jacob will become a butterfly enthusiast like the rest of us.

Peter

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Katrina, 02-Nov-14 03:33 PM GMT

Congratulations - wonderful news!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 02-Nov-14 10:49 PM GMT

Many congratulations from me to!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Freeman, 03-Nov-14 08:15 PM GMT

Congratulations from me also Neil.

All the best to you all,

Neil.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Mark Tutton, 03-Nov-14 09:07 PM GMT

Congratulations Neil - just waiting to see the double backpack in the field next summer 😊

Best Wishes

Mark 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 04-Nov-14 01:19 PM GMT

Congratulations if I'm not too late, surely those Butterflies in your back garden are omens, the coming of a Butterfly Boy all the best to you and your family Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Susie, 04-Nov-14 08:24 PM GMT

Not easy to recuperate with a new addition to the home. I hope you are continuing to improve, Neil.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 07-Nov-14 10:26 AM GMT

Thanks to all who have kindly sent their congratulations - too many to name!

Jacob has proved to be fit and strong and his early arrival doesn't seem to have affected him at all.

I'm pleased to report that Hannah has recovered very quickly and had a much less difficult time of it second time around . I'm still trying to shake off the pneumonia and rarely venture out, but I'm intending to get to the BC Sussex AGM tomorrow. I hope to see one or two of you there.

I don't want to turn my butterfly diary into a family album, but I can't resist posting just one more image of Jacob.

BWs, Neil



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by keving, 07-Nov-14 12:05 PM GMT

Congrats Neil. Young Jacob looks as beautiful as any Butterfly. Look forward to reading his PD in a few years time.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 07-Nov-14 02:08 PM GMT

What a bright eyed little lad! Yes indeed, he is a dead ringer. Give him some spectacles and the likeness to his father would be complete.

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by trevor, 10-Nov-14 04:08 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Hope you are honing your nappy changing skills, you may need them again in about 20/25 years time. 😄

I did !!.

Best wishes,  
TREVOR

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 10-Nov-14 05:51 PM GMT

Hi Trevor,

If I'm changing nappies at 78 (25 years from now) I will have done well 🙄 – better even than Charlie Chaplin! 😄

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Padfield, 10-Nov-14 07:02 PM GMT

I know for a fact that purple emperors come to discarded nappies, because I've seen it in a layby in Spain... Maybe you can add a new flavour to your famous mixture, Neil. 😄

Guy

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 10-Nov-14 08:59 PM GMT

**"Padfield" wrote:**

I know for a fact that purple emperors come to discarded nappies, because I've seen it in a layby in Spain... Maybe you can add a new flavour to your famous mixture, Neil. 😄

Thank God I've just had my dinner.

Shame on you, Guy! 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 10-Nov-14 09:18 PM GMT

Guy, I'm sure it will come as no surprise that this topic has been aired at some length in our household. I suspect the meconium would be particularly attractive to HIM, but Hannah refuses to let me retain these things for 8 months. It's a shame – she's usually very reasonable! 😊  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 11-Nov-14 01:18 PM GMT

I think I'll stick to the Peanut Butter 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-Nov-14 08:21 PM GMT

#### The 2014 Butterfly Season In Pictures (April & May)

Prompted by a request from Trevor, and with time on my hands as I'm still housebound, here is the first instalment of some of my favourite butterfly images of 2014. They appear in the sequence they were taken.



Brimstone



Small Tortoiseshell



Pearl-bordered Fritillary caterpillar



Orange Tip



Dingy Skipper



Grizzled Skipper



Emperor Moth



Pearl-bordered Fritillary



Duke of Burgundy

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 15-Nov-14 08:41 PM GMT

Beautiful images, Neil.

Where did you see the Emperor moth?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 16-Nov-14 10:35 AM GMT

Thanks, David. This was at Springhead Hill near Storrington, West Sussex. The full account appears at the base of page [viewtopic.php?f=29&t=4065&start=1560](http://viewtopic.php?f=29&t=4065&start=1560) BWs, Neil

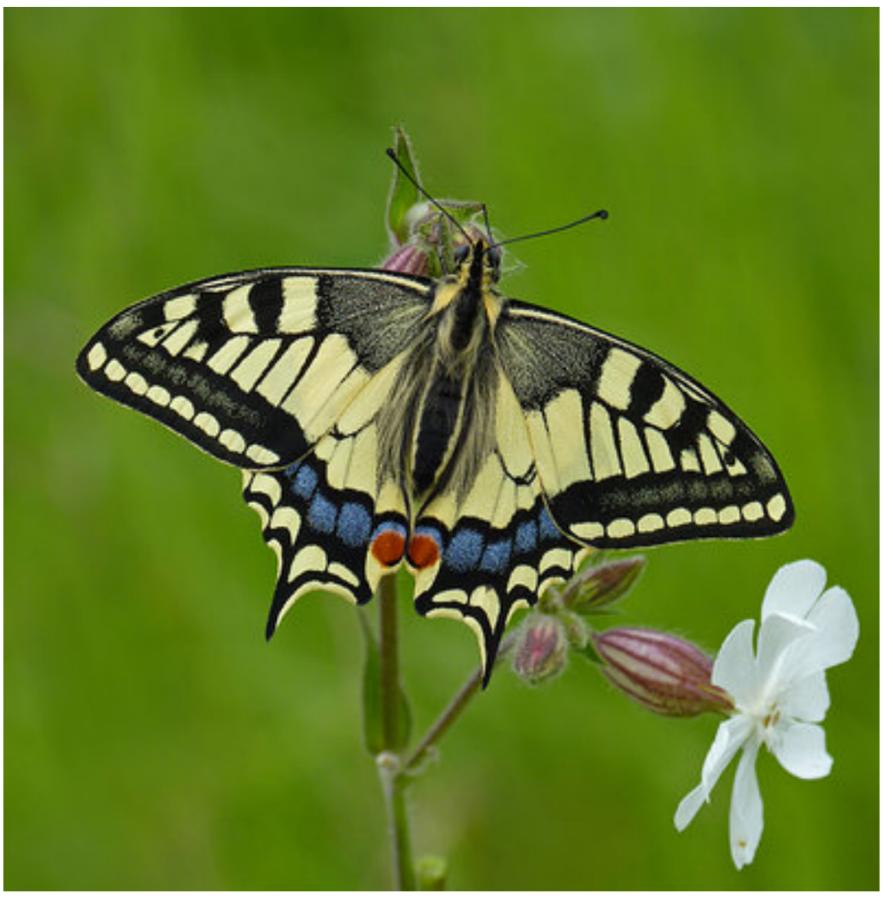
**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 16-Nov-14 11:22 AM GMT

**The 2014 Butterfly Season In Pictures (June)**



Green Hairstreak



European Swallowtail



Small Heath



Silver-studded Blue



Black Hairstreak



Large Blue



High Brown Fritillary



Marbled White



Dark Green Fritillary



Silver-washed Fritillary

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 16-Nov-14 11:52 AM GMT

For goodness sake Neil. Stop p\*\*\*ing us off with your photos 😞

Absolutely superb and most of us are simply jealous.

How's the book coming along?

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 16-Nov-14 12:14 PM GMT

Some fantastic photos there Neil. Taken with your Lumix camera?

Peter

### Re: Neil Hulme

by John W, 16-Nov-14 01:04 PM GMT

I have to say that I agree with Jack 😊

I had the same camera as Neil, a Lumix FZ38, and occasionally I would take a photo that's nearly as good as one of Neil's. Most were a lot worse. 😞 It's not just the camera but who's pointing it that counts. I just don't often find butterflies sitting in the right position to get those uncluttered backgrounds. Neil does because he puts in the hours and has the field craft to take advantage of the opportunities when he finds them. Plus he must have really steady hands to get photos that sharp!

Cheers

John

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Nov-14 02:37 PM GMT

Jack, Peter and John – thanks for your comments.

Jack: Progress on my own project has been slowed by the expanding family and my input into another book – the Sussex Butterfly Atlas will have to take priority.

Peter: Yes, all taken with the Lumix FZ38. I started photography with the Lumix FZ7 in 2007, then upgraded to the FZ38 early in 2010, used together with the Panasonic close-up lens. I've not been tempted to change this set-up yet, as it does exactly what I want of it.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Nov-14 02:55 PM GMT

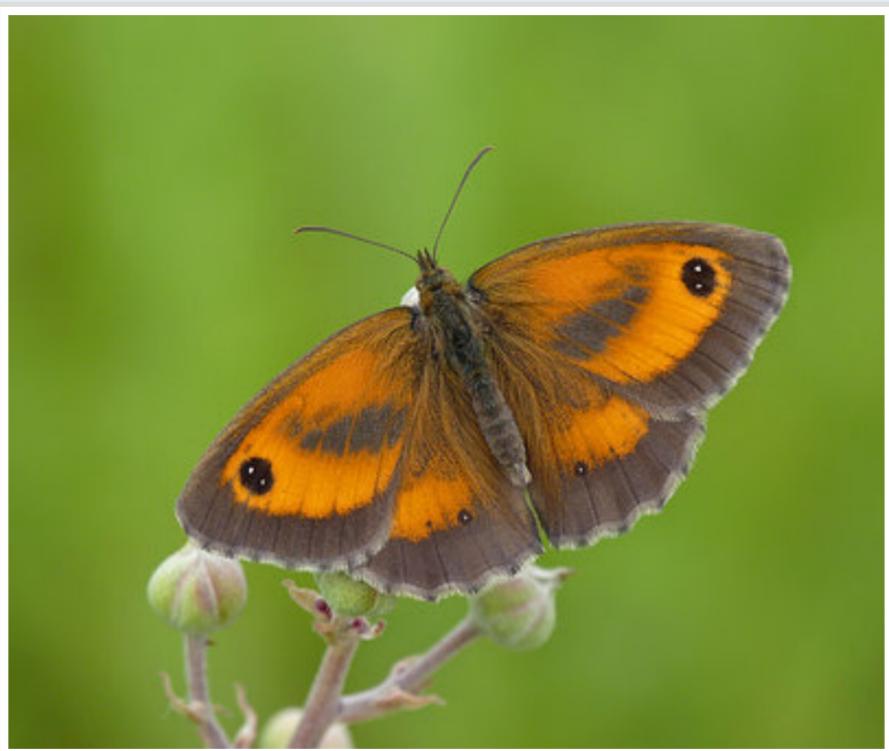
**The 2014 Butterfly Season In Pictures (July)**



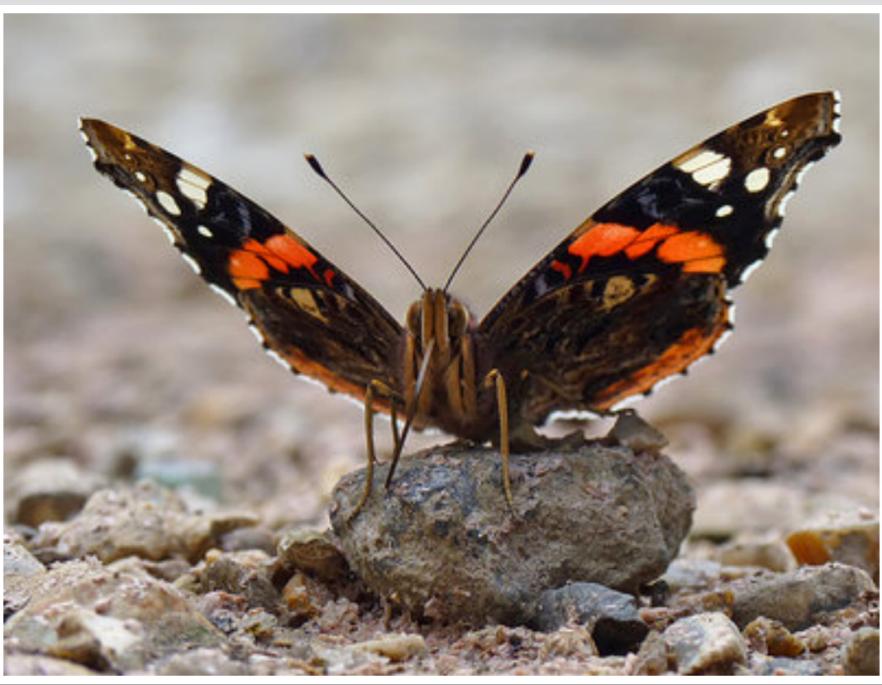
Purple Emperor



Six-spot Burnet



Gatekeeper



Red Admiral



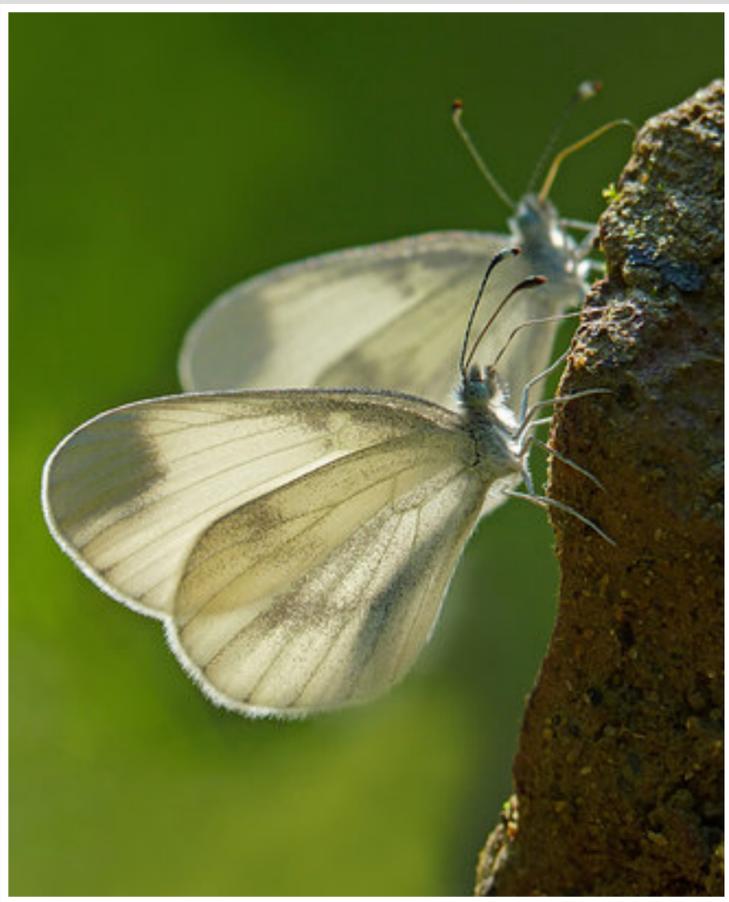
Chalk Hill Blue



Essex Skipper



Common Blue



Wood Whites



Grayling

## Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 16-Nov-14 03:08 PM GMT

John W, I take your point – it's not just the equipment but also the skill and experience of the photographer. I have some way to go to reach Neil's level and I only started taking butterfly photography seriously this year.

Neil, I had also wondered if you had used a close up lens as well because your images are pretty sharp!

Peter

## Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 16-Nov-14 07:10 PM GMT

How have I missed these – superb stuff Neil, favourites would be the Hairstreaks, Dark Green Fritillary and Grayling!

BWs

William

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Nov-14 07:20 PM GMT

**The 2014 Butterfly Season In Pictures (August & September)**



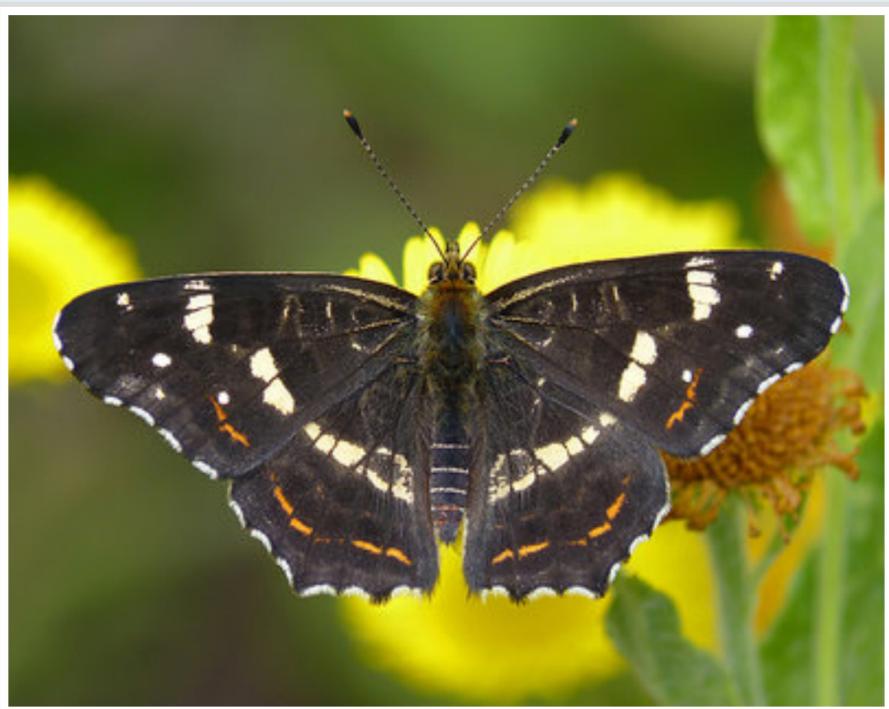
Privet Hawkmoth caterpillar



Adonis Blue



Brown Hairstreak



Map



Small Copper



Wall

Looking back on it, 2014 will go down as a good season, at least by modern standards. Although it didn't quite eclipse the fireworks of 2013, there were certainly some very exciting moments. It's always nice when exotic visitors grace our shores, but we shouldn't forget that many endemic species continue to decline. At least locally, several species still have to pick themselves up off the floor, following the nightmare of 2012. After two great seasons for vagrants and rare migrants I would rather see some of our own species rally in 2015, if I had to choose between the two, so I'd be more than happy with a more run-of-the-mill season, with a lot more White Admirals and Small Blues.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Nov-14 07:22 PM GMT

Thanks William. A few more to round off a generally good season.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 16-Nov-14 08:14 PM GMT

Hi Neil,  
I wish you had fed us your 2014 selection a little more slowly, mental indigestion is my problem!!. Especially as there are species I have never seen. You have put in the effort and reaped the reward. Luck was also on your side with the Swallowtail[s] and the Map must have been a real experience.

Think i'll fit a tracker to your car!. 🍷 😊

Hope you are on the mend.

TREVOR.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 18-Nov-14 09:02 PM GMT

I agree with every one Neil, your photo's are fantastic 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Nov-14 05:35 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie! 😊

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Nov-14 05:51 PM GMT

### Up And Running

This week things started to return to normal, following two months of medical misery! Although I made a very cautious and tentative start, it was great to get back out onto the slopes of Heyshott Escarpment for yesterday's work party (26th November). As always, a dedicated band of Murray Downland Trust and BC Sussex volunteers were bashing the scrub with great enthusiasm. Unfortunately I wasn't able to reacquaint myself with the stunning views across Sussex, due to a thick fog – there's always next week! For anyone wishing to join us, next week's work party has been shifted from the usual Wednesday to Tuesday.

Today I spent several happy hours stalking the stunning male Black Redstart which UKBer Leigh Prevost found at Worthing Splash Point yesterday. I was later joined by Colin Knight, Leigh and a couple of others, all of whom got close-up views of this fabulous bird.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by nomad, 27-Nov-14 08:59 PM GMT

Super bird and image 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 27-Nov-14 09:05 PM GMT

Thanks Peter. As I'm sure you know, most that hang around on the way south seem to be female/juvenile, so it's a real treat to see a male in all his finery.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 27-Nov-14 10:52 PM GMT

Good to see you back to normal, Neil.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 28-Nov-14 09:30 AM GMT

As always Neil, a superb photo [of the Black Redstart] that does the bird justice.

"Black" suggests a dull bird. Far from it. Black Redstart is a real stunner. I once happened across half-a-dozen or so on grass below Sizewell Power Station. My only other self-find was a very brief view on a headland in NE Scotland. These sightings were many years ago before digital cameras so no records, just fine memories.

A challenge Neil. Picture of a Goldcrest *showing the crest*. Hard enough to see let alone photograph. Goldcrests suddenly turned up in numbers here on Mull a month ago. But maybe that has something to do with my new hearing aid 😊

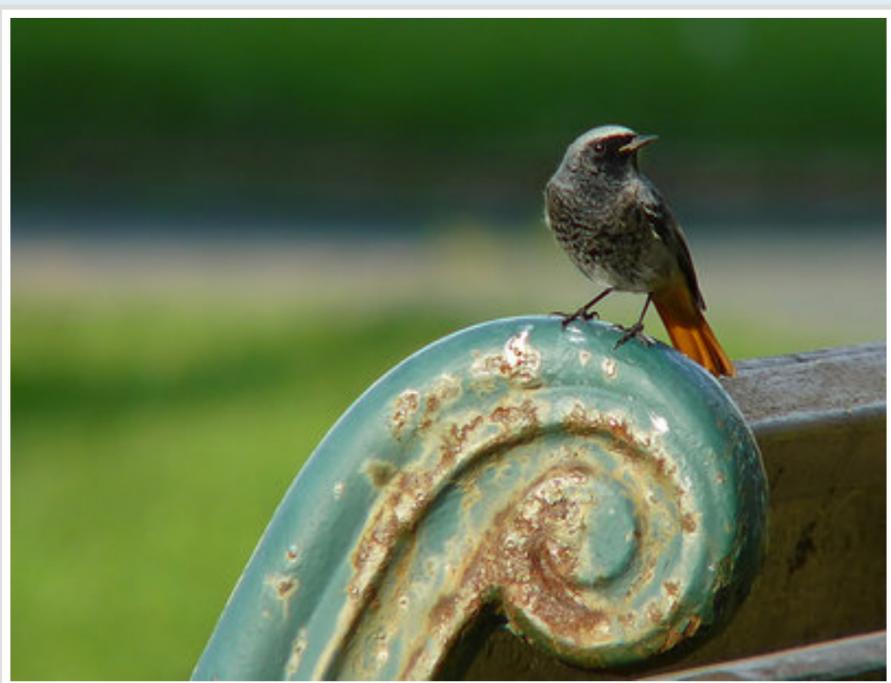
Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 28-Nov-14 05:55 PM GMT

Thanks Jack. I couldn't resist another couple of hours with the Black Redstart this morning (28th November). It looked even more spectacular in the sunshine.

BWs, Neil





### Re: Neil Hulme

by mud-puddling, 28-Nov-14 09:50 PM GMT

Excellent work Neil, despite the sun today I struggled to do it justice. A fine bird.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 29-Nov-14 08:27 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Glad to read that you're up and about again.

There seems to be some frustration, from some UKBers, myself included, about the difficulty of photographing the Purple Hairstreak. I even have a population in an oak at the bottom of my garden, but never within reach of my camera. Could you add to our misery, and maybe provide some inspiration for 2015 by posting some of your shots of this species.

Many thanks for sharing your stunning 2014 selection with us.

All the best,  
TREVOR.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Nov-14 09:48 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor. It feels great to be able to get outside and breathe fresh air again!

I haven't got anything additional to the stuff which has appeared in my diary or resides on the species page. Like most folk, I've struggled to get more than handful of decent shots. Purple Hairstreaks are almost impossible to track down and photograph intentionally – much luck is involved. It never ceases to amaze me how rapidly their numbers build in good years (and they can be *really* numerous), and yet it remains so difficult to ambush them on low foliage early in the morning. Even when timely and thorough searches are made, when thousands must be hatching, it is frustratingly hard to connect. We know that a proportion pupate underground, below the skirt of oak trees, but perhaps there is something we don't fully understand as yet. It is entirely possible that many pupate above ground, on branches and in crevices on trunks. There certainly appears to be a mismatch between the number of newly emerged individuals found at low level and the abundance of the species, particularly in good years.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Nov-14 09:56 PM GMT

#### Still Flying!

In mild and sunny conditions I walked for several miles over the Downs between Burpham and Rackham today, primarily to watch the numerous raptors which congregate here each winter, largely due to the favourable farming policies adopted by the Norfolk Estate. I saw at least 6 different Short-eared Owls and a dozen Red Kites.

Perhaps more surprising was the number of butterflies still flying up here. I personally saw 2 Red Admiral, 2 Peacock and a Comma. I bumped into a couple of friends as I left the site, who reported seeing several Red Admiral, a Small Tortoiseshell and a Large White. Five species in a day at the end of November is rather unusual!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 30-Nov-14 07:52 PM GMT

H Neil,

Many thanks for the info.on the Purple Hairstreak,it seems they have given you some stick as well!.

Last winter I was woken up late at night and just before dawn by an Owl like call consisting of [usually] five rapid hoots. Having never heard this particular call before my curiosity was aroused. But I found a web site giving the calls of various Owls and there it was,a male Short Eared Owl. It's a pretty spooky sound to wake up to.

All the best ,  
TREVOR.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 02-Dec-14 08:49 PM GMT

### Graffham Down On The Up

An impressive 30 volunteers representing the Graffham Down Trust (GDT) and BC Sussex Branch turned out on Sunday (30th November), to open up some woodland glades within one of the GDT reserves high above the village. It was great to see a few youngsters taking part, and one family made the journey from Kent. As is so often the case, a relatively small group of people is going to make a huge difference to the fortunes of butterflies and moths. Inspirational stuff!



After the work was done I walked to the western end of the linear reserves area, to see how a major clearance project undertaken last winter is shaping up. A generous donation made to BC Sussex was match-funded by the South Downs National Park Authority, to create some very large scallops along the sunny side of a habitat corridor, connecting these reserves with the now famous Heyshott Escarpment (Murray Downland Trust). Following stump removal, cut & collect mowing and grazing these areas are looking superb, with violet, cowslip and wild strawberry all becoming rapidly established. I am optimistic that Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Duke of Burgundy and Grizzled Skipper will all show their appreciation in years to come, along with other rarities such as the Drab Looper moth.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by PhilBJohnson, 03-Dec-14 05:51 AM GMT

Hi Neil, great stuff, I like this and would want to encourage those volunteers.

(I am always looking for a "like" button to press like on facebook, then one wouldn't necessarily need to comment. 😊 )

regards,  
Philip

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Dec-14 09:44 AM GMT

Thanks Philip. Yes, it's great to see the next generation taking an interest. They might disappear for a few years to party hard, but hopefully a few will come back and get serious about conservation later in life.

For some time I've been meaning to suggest that you might like to pay the Knepp Castle Estate Purple Emperors a visit next July. I love looking at your aerial sequences filmed at Bookham, but you would get many more opportunities at Knepp and at a much lower level. The Knepp Emperors are crying out to be filmed!

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 03-Dec-14 10:05 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

As you have mentioned HIM. at Knepp, did you find any grounded males there this year?.

It is such a vast area that may be they do come down sometimes,but one would need to be in the right place at the right moment.

Glad you're now alfresco!.

TREVOR

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Dec-14 10:14 AM GMT

Hi Trevor,  
As yet I've only seen one down at Knepp, very briefly. Given the numbers there (second only to Fermyn), it is difficult to fathom why they refuse to descend on a sufficiently regular basis to spot them – even Oates can't work it out! However, it's early days yet and we are still only just beginning to learn about their behaviour there – the habitat (which will influence behaviour) is very different to most Emperor sites.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Dec-14 03:39 PM GMT

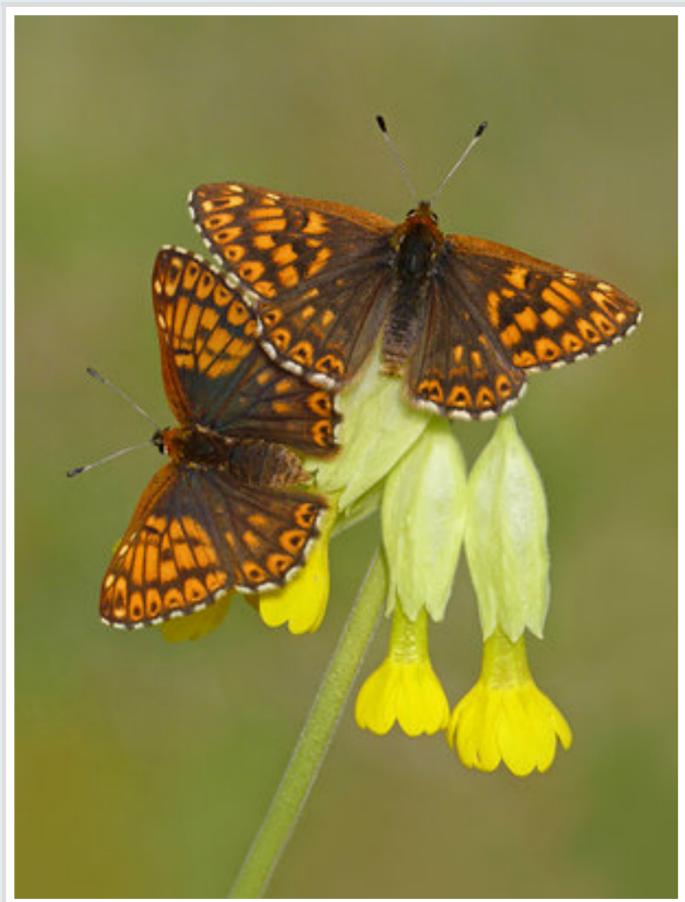
### Sitting Pretty

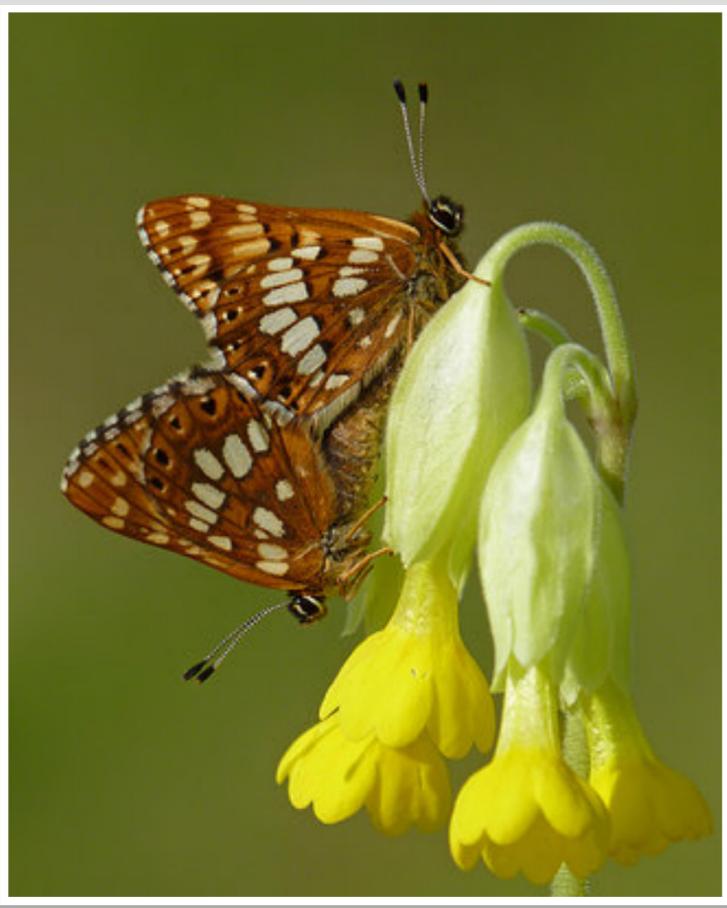
Many thanks to all who have either emailed me or made comments via UKB to say how much they like my image of the Duke of Burgundy pair sitting on a cowslip. I've been asked several times how I managed to get the shot. As has been said many times before, we all need a bit of luck, and that luck often comes as the result of putting the time in; "the more I practice, the luckier I get" is arguably attributed to the golfer Gary Player.

On this occasion (29th April 2014) I had spent most of the day monitoring Duke of Burgundy numbers on Heyshott Escarpment, with the hope of finding and photographing a mating pair. I had almost given up hope when I stumbled across this happy couple on the plateau area. I spent nearly half an hour photographing them in their usual closed wing posture, and had time to very carefully snip away a few blades of offending grass, in order to get a completely clear background. At that point it was a case of 'mission accomplished' and I couldn't really have hoped for more.

After a period of fidgeting, which often precedes uncoupling, they finished their business. In every case I have previously witnessed with Dukes, and with the vast majority of mating pairs of other species, the male butterfly makes a very sharp exit. Such ungallant behaviour is always to be expected of the male Duke of Burgundy. Male butterflies are programmed to rapidly move on in the search for another virgin female. However, female butterflies often pause for a while, before heading off for a feed, or retiring to the cover of scrub while their eggs ripen.

I was very surprised when both insects remained side-by-side, and even more so when they simultaneously opened their wings. For a moment I was convinced that the male would depart, as they both turned to face the late afternoon sun, ending up in the same plane of focus. I would imagine that getting the 8 wings and 4 antennae of a pair of mint condition Dukes in sharp focus, while sitting pretty on a cowslip, is an opportunity which is only likely to present itself once in about five lifetimes. After sitting on the plateau for another hour to enjoy the magnificent views, I floated back down the hill on Cloud Nine. I certainly felt very lucky.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Dec-14 04:32 PM GMT

### Dukes Of Steyning Project

Last night (8th December) I was one of several speakers at the launch of the 'Dukes of Steyning' project. Financed by the Heritage Lorry Fund and with further support from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), this project aims to restore, extend and reconnect areas of fragmented chalk grassland, to benefit the Duke of Burgundy and other wildlife across the Steyning Downland Scheme (Wiston Estate).

Things are now looking much better for this species in Sussex, following nearly ten years of co-operation between BC Sussex (and latterly the BC national 'Dukes on the Edge' project), the SDNPA (and their forerunner, the SD Joint Committee), other local conservation bodies such as the Murray Downland Trust, and numerous landowners and farmers.

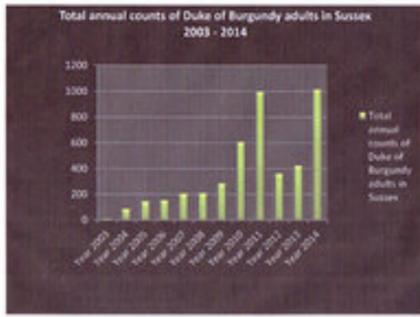
Although, realistically, it will be a few years yet before we can expect to see the Duke flying here, there are likely to be many more beneficiaries of the extensive works planned. The project isn't restricted to improving the habitat and there will be many opportunities for the local community to get involved. Butterfly identification and monitoring workshops will be delivered this spring and we hope that others will get involved in collecting and nurturing cowslip and primrose seeds from a local source.

This particular project will only run for two years, but the wider Steyning Downland Scheme initiative will continue to deliver benefits for the wildlife and people of Steyning for many years to come. Some will be aware of what has already been achieved here for the Brown Hairstreak. Hopefully this is just the start of things.

It was great to see such enthusiasm from the audience, and great to see both new and familiar faces, including UKBer Mark Tutton from across the border!



## THE FIGHT-BACK IN SUSSEX RECENT CONSERVATION SUCCESSES



SOUTH DOWNS JOINT COMMITTEE Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust Murray Downland Trust  
 Springhead Estate Grey Friars Farm (Storrington) NORFOLK ESTATE  
 WISTON ESTATE Graffham Down Trust

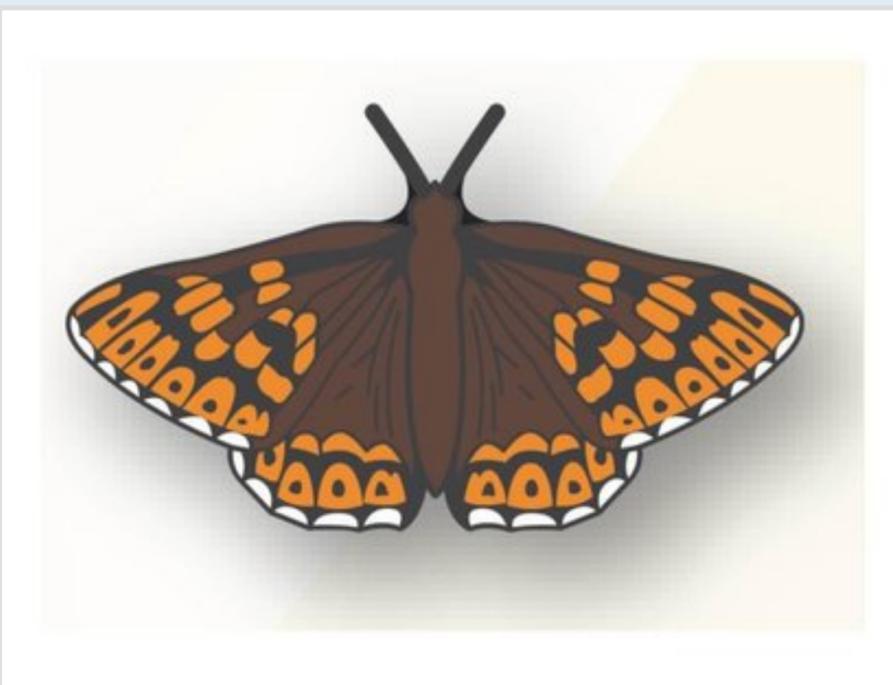
### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Dec-14 05:32 PM GMT

#### Butterfly Badges

My rucksack now hosts almost the entire collection of Paul Fosterjohn's lovely butterfly pin badges, the profits from which have all been generously donated to BC Branches or other worthy projects. To get the last badge it will be necessary to photograph an extreme aberrant Purple Emperor (2015 onwards), awarded at the discretion of Matthew Oates, who holds the entire stock.

Most designs have long sold out, but there are still a few of the Purple Emperor caterpillar badges available. The latest release is the Duke of Burgundy badge, which has been produced in support of the 'Dukes of Steyning' project (see last post). These can be purchased by emailing Paul at [britannicuspinbadges@gmail.com](mailto:britannicuspinbadges@gmail.com), for £5.70 to include p&p. It would be nice to see these snapped up in the near future, providing funds for habitat management work on the Steyning Downland Scheme area.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Dec-14 05:45 PM GMT

### Winter Warbler

On the afternoon of 8th December, before preparing for the launch of the 'Dukes of Steyning' project (see previous diary page), I spent a few hours searching (unsuccessfully) for the Great Grey Shrike which has been resident on Iping Common (Midhurst) for a few weeks now. By way of compensation I managed to photograph a Dartford Warbler, one of my favourite species since childhood. A quick stop at The Burgh (Burpham/Amberley) failed to produce the expected Short-eared Owls. I was later to discover that badgerbob had seen a dozen, at an unusually early time of day. You can't win 'em all!



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 10-Dec-14 08:43 PM GMT

### "Neil Hulme" wrote:

I would imagine that getting the 8 wings and 4 antennae of a pair of mint condition Dukes in sharp focus, while sitting pretty on a cowslip, is an opportunity which is only likely to present itself once in about five lifetimes.

Thanks for sharing the "tale behind the photo", Neil. Like you, I'm a big believer in making your own luck. And this is, indeed, the best Duke photo I've ever seen, for all of the reasons you give, and more! Really ... well done!

Cheers,

- Pete

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 11-Dec-14 10:11 AM GMT

Thanks Pete. Duke of Burgundy is now one of only two species which I'm convinced I'll never get a better shot of - the other being Purple Hairstreak. This is one of those images which I'll always look back at with undiminishing pleasure. You know the sort of thing ... Chequered Skipper sitting next to a SPBF. 😊

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Maximus, 12-Dec-14 12:21 AM GMT

Your Duke shots as always are superb, Neil, and I understand the hard work and patience required to get these photos.

The Dartford Warbler photo is brilliant, the classic Dartford Warbler shot, and it is a favourite bird species of mine also. I shall be searching our local heathland sites this winter, hoping to see one.

Mike.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 12-Dec-14 10:20 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Your private audience with the 'Duke and Duchess of Heyshott 'on their Sussex estate, really was rewarded with some superb images. Stealth, patience, and skill at it's best.

TREVOR.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 31-Dec-14 10:36 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor – and Happy New Year!  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 31-Dec-14 10:39 AM GMT

**Happy New Year!**



Wishing you all an exciting and fruitful 2015 butterfly season.

BWs, Neil