

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Jan-14 08:26 PM GMT

### Is it. Isn't it.

Over the Christmas holiday a Yellow Browed Warbler had been found in Ramsgate Cemetery. Birders visited on New Years day to start their year list with this little beauty and most came away happy with the identification. To be fair the weather on that day was appalling. So bad in fact that we decided to stay in. It rained and it rained and the resulting light was very bad. However on Tuesday 07 January a very good visiting birder raised concerns that this bird was perhaps a Humes Leaf warbler, an even rarer species. As we had planned to visit Thanet the next day for the wintering flock of Snow Buntings we decided to call in and see this bird for ourselves. It was immediately obvious that it showed many, if not all, of the features of Humes Leaf Warbler. The clincher would be the call, and although we had to wait an hour we eventually heard it call 3 times. It was my view that this bird called like a Hume Leaf Warbler. There was only two other birders present but they both agreed that the call was identical to Humes. More importantly, earlier that day someone had recorded the call and produced sonograms showing without doubt that this was indeed a Humes.

You can't beat science to take away any subjective argument. There are a very few who still think that this is a Yellow Browed Warbler but science is against them and I am sure that it will be accepted as a Humes Leaf warbler without question. Did we see the Snow Buntings? No, is the answer. The beach was overrun with dog warblers and most of the birds had sought safer refuge.

How had we been so sure of the Humes Leaf Warbler call. Well on the 3rd January we had seen and heard the one present in Dungeness trapping area. Two wintering in Kent is very unusual for this rare warbler from Central Asia. This particular one had been found and identified by the very reliable Dungeness Observatory Warden. It was a classic example and called on a regular basis. The only snag was that the whole area was under two foot of water and it took a bit of effort and a pair of wellingtons to connect with this well appreciated bird.

Incidentally, in nearly 30 years of visiting Dungeness this is the worst flooding of the trapping area that I can remember. Reflecting what many people have suffered in other parts of the country. It is so sad to see so many people and their homes suffer at the hands of the floods, including some areas that have not previously suffered.

So what have we seen during the period 31st December to the 14th January 2014 in addition to the above. Well Dungeness still presents much the same, although on the 5th a Great Northern Diver was on Scotney pits for the day. 8 Whitefronted, 2 Bean Geese and 2 Black Throated Divers have been seen around the area. The Glossy Ibis is often seen coming into roost from about 15.30 hours from the RSPB Visitor Centre. The most Great White Egrets we have seen is seven (9th), the 1st winter Caspian Gull remains around the fishing boats. A visit to Stodmarsh on the 12th produced 2 Glossy Ibis flying over and 2 Bitterns whilst a visit to Camber Sands on the 14th found 5 Snow Buntings.

The lack of visiting scarce ducks such as Smew is noticeable, probably reflecting the mild weather on the near Continent. In the meantime we will keep checking and hoping that thing will improve, including the weather.



*One of a flock of at least 5 Snow Buntings present on Camber Sands.*



*One of a flock of at least 5 Snow Buntings present on Camber Sands.*



*Great Northern Diver present for one day only on Scotney pit.*



*One of many Kittiwakes present on Dungeness at present.*



*This small party of Whitefronted Geese is all that has arrived on Dungeness so far.*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

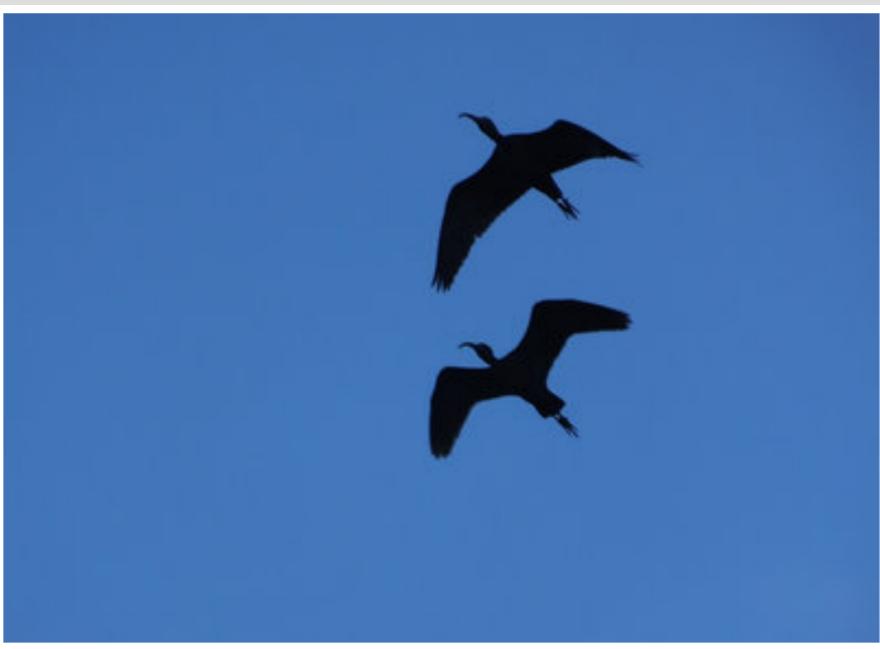
by dave brown, 24-Jan-14 08:38 PM GMT

### **JAMMED IN ON THE TWO GLOSSY'S**

The period 15th January to 23rd January 2014 has generally been very quiet. Our biggest treat was arriving at Oare Marsh on Sunday 19th January as two Glossy Ibis's flew over and away to the east. They had been seen there early in the morning but flew off, so when we arrived early afternoon we were not expecting to see them at all. However, as we drove down the approach road a number of birders present suddenly looked up. Pulling up into the lay by quickly we were pleasantly surprised to see the two flying around the East Flood before departing high to towards Seasalter.

Earlier in the period we had gone back for seconds of the Hume's Leaf Warbler at Ramsgate (16th Jan). A little bit more elusive this time but still good views in the end. More importantly it called quite a few times confirming its identification. It was still very mobile and I have yet to obtain any decent photographs. A tour around the area south of Faversham on the 19th found 6 Common Buzzards, whilst nearby at Graveney we found a Pale Bellied Brent goose in with about 250 Dark Bellied Brents. Visits to Dungeness on the 21st and 23rd found very little new. The 2 Bean Geese were still on Scotney Pit, nearby the 2 Black Throated Divers still grace the New Diggings, with at least 4 Great White Egrets and several Goldeneyes in the general area. The group of 20 Tree Sparrows still visit Bouderswall Farm but otherwise small passerines are noticeable by their absence. The Humes Leaf Warbler is still being seen in Dungeness trapping area but can be very elusive.

Probably the biggest surprise of the week was the Humming Bird Hawkmoth caught by a well known local mother. I have no idea what it was doing out on a cold January day, (it was only 9 degrees), but I am sure a very welcome addition to any January day.



*We were lucky to see these two Glossy Ibis fly high over the East Flood at Oare Marshes.*



*One of the seven (or more) Great White Egrets presently at Dungeness*



*One of many Curlew present on Pett Levels*



*One of the two Black Throated Divers on the New Diggings.*

**Re: Dave Brown**

by maverick, 24-Jan-14 09:27 PM GMT

david i was really interested to read about your bird watching especially the ibis.

I do a lot of fishing and last year i was on a small cheshire mere when i spotted a pair of large wading birds that i had never seen before, ibis in shape and with large chocolate bills and neck, the rest of the body being manly white, it wasnt until the next day that i found out that it was a pair of sacred ibis , the rspb chap told me that they had probably escaped from a collector or a small zoo. i did see them about a month later on another lake, and to this day regret not getting any pictures of them.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 02-Feb-14 08:43 PM GMT

### UP AND RUNNING

Today, in a temperature of 11 degrees, we saw our first butterfly of the year. A Small Tortoiseshell flying around the timber buildings in Stodmarsh Car Park. A most pleasant and unexpected surprise. It was warm enough to bring out a few insects in the more sheltered spots. The down side to the day was finding most of Stodmarsh under water. What footpaths were above water were either very muddy or likely to be flooded after the next rainfall. Bird wise the week, (25th January to 02 February 2014), has had a few treats but numbers of birds remain very low, and those that are present seem to be the same ones from December. The main feature has been the very high numbers of Auks, mainly Guillemots but a few Razorbills, feeding off the the point at Dungeness. On some of our visits there has been literally thousands.

On the 26th we spent the late afternoon at Littlestone Golf Course, not playing golf but waiting for the Short Eared Owls to appear. There has been up to three but not on this occasion. The next day we was to dip on the wintering Pallas's Warbler near Shornecliffe Barracks, Folkestone. It had been seen minutes before we arrived, but it was not seen for the rest of the day. Continuing our theme of missing good birds we missed the 1st winter Glaucous Gull that has arrived at Dungeness, where it spends most of its time between the New Lighthouse and the Lifeboat Station, usually around the fishing boats, although not on the 30th when we visited. On the 31st Jan we found 3 Brambling wintering on the edge of a local wood and a Great White Egret on Conningbrook (Ashford) Gravel Pits.

With the Glaucous being reported yet again at Dungeness we paid a visit on the 1st February and this time we arrived just as it flew over us and away to the Lifeboat Station. At least we have seen it but have yet to photograph it. A Little Gull was a nice bird in amongst the thousands of gulls around the point. Today, Sunday the 2nd Feb, we saw the Small Tortoiseshell mentioned above, plus 7 Marsh Harriers, 2 Cetti's Warblers, a number of Redpoll's and Siskin's and the usual woodland birds. We ended the day finding a nice flock of 17 Common Crossbills in a wood south of Canterbury. In summary, not the best of weeks but a few goodies to keep the senses alert for the coming week.

Maverick. Thanks for your update. We have yet to see Sacred Ibis in Britain. The ones you saw were probably escapes but I have heard that there is a small feral population breeding somewhere in France. Numbers were getting out of control (over 1,000) and a major cull commenced in 2007. They are a big predator of eggs from tern and egret colonies. With regards to your sightings, I am aware that 3 birds escaped from a collection in the North of England in the summer of 2011 and were seen around the Manchester area.

## Re: Dave Brown

by maverick, 03-Feb-14 09:32 PM GMT

That's probably them although it was only two that I spotted on both occasions ,don't even know the difference between the sexes

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Feb-14 01:18 PM GMT

### THE HYTHE HERON

For those of you that follow birds you may be aware of a Heron species in Kent that is slowly causing a bit of excitement. It was first reported in January by a few residents, supported by a couple of distant photographs. Initially it was assumed to be a Squacco Heron, but now one or two experts are querying the identification suggesting that it may be a Chinese Pond Heron. A potential migrant bird that would be a first for Britain if accepted. A previous record in Norfolk in 2004 was ringed, still in summer plumage late in the year, and thus deemed an unacceptable record. The Hythe bird is not ringed, is very wary and in the correct plumage for the time of year. Apparently Chinese Pond Heron is unknown in captivity in Europe. It was re-found by a local birder on Tuesday of this week in a public area and about 10 of us managed to connect on that day. Since then interest has gathered pace but the bird is currently being very elusive. As of today probably only about 100 people have seen it, but that could all change over the weekend if it is found in a public area. In the meantime the local residents seem to be seeing it more on garden ponds and local streams (some big country style houses in the area).

### 3rd February to 14th February 2014.

What can we say about this period other than dire, and to some people, very frightening. We ourselves have not been directly affected by the flooding but the strong winds have certainly buffeted the area. About a mile away there is extensive flooding but luckily not affecting any housing. They are just about to build housing on land that is starting to flood, and we have known be badly flooded in the past. We almost certainly know what will happen sometime in the future.

We have seen no further butterflies despite some days the temperature reaching 10 degrees. Bird wise it has generally been very quiet although we found a Great White Egret and 3 Goosanders on Eastwell lake near Ashford on the 7th. The bird situation at Dungeness is pretty static with the usual Great White Egrets and Little Egrets scattered around the reserve, 2 Black Throated Divers on New Diggings. Yesterday we saw 2 Ravens and a Bittern along the Dengemarsh Road, with a Black Necked Grebe and Long Tailed Duck on Scotney pits. On the 11th was the potential Chinese Pond Heron at Hythe and a group of 10 Little Egrets at Aldington.

With Stodmarsh and Grove Ferry closed due to flooding, Oare Marshes a mud bath and parts of Walland impassable due to flooding it has been a difficult period. However, we are grateful we have been spared the issues obvious in other parts of the country.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Feb-14 08:19 PM GMT

### Almost a Butterfly

Actually a moth, well in fact 5 moths. We were invited to see the seasons first decent catch on the 18th Feb, if you can call 5 moths a decent catch, at our good friends near Ruckinge. To us it was as our garden has produced very little. So what did we see? The answer 3 Small Brindled Beauty, a Pale Brindled Beauty and a March moth. We notice flowers are starting to appear with Snowdrops and Primroses, the garden frogs are mating and a few buds are out on the rose bushes. Spring is on its way and hopefully winter is behind us.

Bird wise its been interesting in parts. The saga of the Chinese Heron at Hythe continues. It's identity is now generally accepted, now the arguments over its origins start. A few still support the escape from a collection theory, but no one can demonstrate any collection in Europe that keeps them so the potential for it being accepted as a genuine wild migrant bird (Category A) increases. Just a pity that the bird remains very difficult to see. It is very wary and flies off at the slightest disturbance and has this annoying habit of visiting locations that are private. Thus only about 200 people have

managed to connect with this potential first for Britain.

On Saturday 15th February we were birding at Dungeness when 2 Penduline Tits were seen in front of Hanson Hide on the ARC pit. They disappeared East for about 20 minutes and we spread the search. Our son decided to go back to the hide and found them back in front. A few phone calls later and about 20 people were watching them perform to the crowd. A week later they are still around but have moved to the area around the ramp on Hookers pit. That was a good day for we also saw the 1st winter Glaucous Gull on the beach, a Black Throated Diver on New Diggings, a Bittern and 2 Ravens along Dengemarsh Road and the usual collection of Great White and Little Egrets.

The next day we again saw the 2 Ravens, the usual collection of Egrets, 2 Egyptian Geese and 2 Adult Little Gulls around the Dungeness area. We also visited Dungeness on the 17th & 18th but added little new. Thursday 20 Feb news broke of a beached whale at Seasalter. About an hour later we were watching a Sperm Whale on the waters edge along the Sheppey coastline. Was it dead? Not really sure but it certainly was a few hours later. We saw the Fin moving about but in all honesty it could have been the wind blowing it rather than the whale moving it. It was about half a mile away so we will never know. Friday the 21st we checked for the Chinese Pond Heron without success before heading to Dungeness.

Despite the warm temperatures we have not seen a butterfly during this period although the bees are now out, so it can't be long.



*One of the two Penduline Tits visiting Dungeness at present. Both are ringed.*



*This Sparrowhawk has become a regular visitor to the garden the last few weeks. One of the dangers of feeding the birds.*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 01-Mar-14 07:23 PM GMT

### **Despite the improving weather little changes on the wildlife front.**

The Chinese Pond Heron remains elusive as ever. 2 visits this week have proved disappointing with no sign on either one. Others are having the same issue with many birders visiting the site quite a few times. 7 attempts before connecting is the most I have heard of so far. We have seen no butterflies or moths despite good periods of sunshine.

SAT 22 FEB 2014. A return visit to Ramsgate Cemetery produced decent views of the wintering Humes Leaf Warbler. It even called a few times to aid the identification. 10 Ringed Necked Parakeets were busy making a racket and chasing each other around the area. Margate Cemetery was next where 2 wintering Firecrest's were ample reward for the long drive. In my view these are a smart bird and one of our British favourite's. On the way home we called in at Seasalter to see the Hooded Crow. A scarce visitor to Kent and really should be much further north in Britain, especially the Highlands, where they are quite common.

SUN 23 FEB 2014. A local day seeing 5 Common Buzzards displaying at Hamstreet and 21 adult Med Gulls at Aldington on flooded fields.

TUES 25 FEB 2014. A visit to Dungeness produced the usual things with 4 Great White Egrets being the best. Dipped on the Chinese Pond Heron at Hythe.

WED 26 FEB 2014. A visit to the Reculver area was very disappointing with nothing of note except a flooded Grove Ferry.

THUR 27 FEB 2014. A trip into East Kent produced 2 Shore Larks at Sandwich Bay (on the beach just south of the Chequers Pub). Nearby we saw 4 Fulmars and 20 Auks at Kingsdown. Again we failed to see the Chinese Pond Heron at Hythe.

Whilst traveling around we have noticed an increase in the wild flowers available with Lesser Celandine and Primroses making an appearance in good numbers. Here in Kent we have missed out on the magnificent night skies of late. However, a birding friend visiting Scotland for the week managed to catch up with the Aurora on his first night. A sight he will surely remember for ever.



*Small Brindle Beauty at Ruckinge*



*Female Smew at Dungeness*



*One of many Pintail in Kent at present*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 10-Mar-14 09:23 PM GMT

### **The Week of the Butterfly**

This is the week that our butterfly season kicked off and what a week it has been for so early in the year. We have seen excellent numbers of Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshell, supported by Comma and Peacock.

SAT 01 MAR 2014.

A Dungeness visit produced Glossy Ibis, 1st winter Glaucous Gull, 4 adult Little Gulls, Great White Egret, 2 Little Egrets, Water Rail, 4 Marsh Harriers, Goldeneye, 4 Cettis Warblers, 6 Tree Sparrows with 8 Redwings and 12 Fieldfares on Walland Marsh.

SUN 02 MAR 2014.

Two visits to Hythe failed to connect with the Chinese Pond Heron. These were either side of a visit to Lade Gravel Pits where we saw the Slavonian Grebe and 8 Goldeneyes.

TUES 04 MARCH 2014.

With Stodmarsh still being flooded we ventured to Reculver but saw very little. On the way home we called in at East Blean woods where a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was calling but little else of note.

WED 05 MARCH 2014.

A visit to Doddington saw 7 Common Buzzards, followed by a visit to Funton Creek where 50 Avocets were still viewable. Next was Elmley Reserve which changed hands last year. It is now managed by the local landowner and a group of like minded people. The result is a marked improvement in wading bird numbers with thousands of Lapwings present. On our visit we also saw 4 Common Buzzards, 4 Marsh Harriers, 2 Peregrines, Sparrowhawk, 11 Little Egrets, 6 Ruff and 4 Small Tortoiseshells.

THUR 06 MAR 2014

A visit to Lade Gravel pits was remarkable for the number of butterflies present. We saw a minimum of 35 Small Tortoiseshells, but believe the actual

figure was over 40, also 1 Peacock. In addition the Slavonian Grebe and 2 Goldeneyes were still present. Around Dungeness we saw a further 8 Small Tortoiseshells, Great White Egret, Glossy Ibis, 3 Little Egrets, 4 Marsh Harriers and a Long Tailed Duck.

FRI 07 MAR 2014.

A lazy day really. We did visit Hythe where we managed 3 brief views, totalling about 5 minutes, of the Chinese Pond Heron.

SAT 08 MAR 2014.

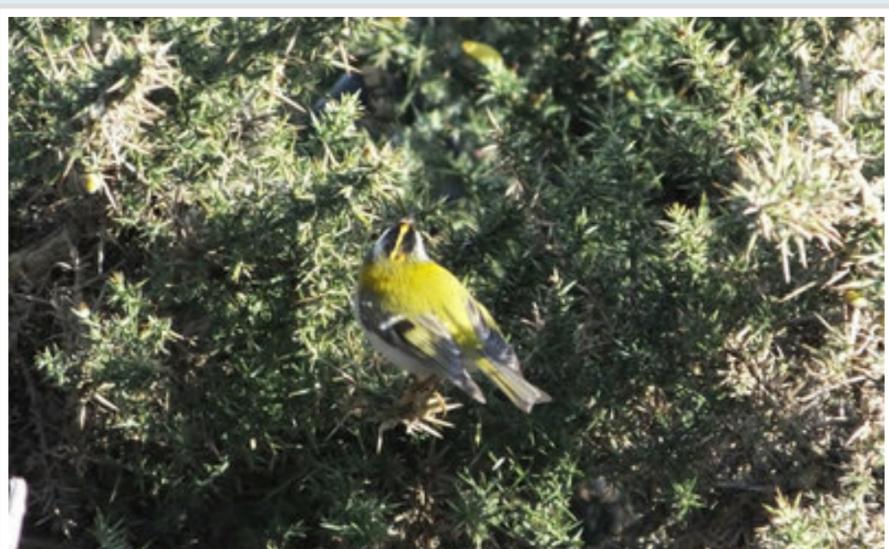
A Pett Level (very quiet) and Dungeness day. Dungeness produced the goods with 3 Firecrests, one of our favourite British birds, Stonechat, Black Necked Grebe, 3 female Scaup, 6 Marsh Harriers, Great White Egret, Raven and 4 Small Tortoiseshells with 1 Peacock. Not sure why but we called in at Hythe on the way home and had only been there 10 minutes when the Chinese Pond Heron flew over the group of us, much to the delight of several birders, one who was on his seventh visit.

To end this period we visited Ashdown Forest on Sunday. We know its a little early in the year but with such high temperatures forecast, and so many early moths on the wing, we thought that it was worth checking for an early Emperor Moth. This is a species high on our to see list, but today we were out of luck We did see 17 Brimstone, Comma, Peacock and 2 Small Tortoiseshells. Bird wise it was quiet with only 1 Woodlark, 2 Ravens and the usual woodland birds. Incidentally, the whole of the South East seemed to have the same idea on such a warm day. Every car park was full. There was a long queue for the ice creams and hundreds of cyclists were exercising their muscles.

For the moment I have not uploaded any of our Small Tortoiseshell photos as everyone else is posting theirs. But the temptation may prove too great before long.



*Firecrest at Dungeness. One of our favourite and colourful British Birds*



*Firecrest at Dungeness. One of our favourite and colourful British Birds*



*One of the two Shorelarks present near Sandwich.*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 13-Mar-14 09:04 PM GMT

### **Large Tortoiseshell at Beckley, East Sussex**

Just a quick update following yesterdays sighting and photograph of a Large Tortoiseshell at Beckley.

(As reported yesterday. *Seen today in Beckley Woods – several Peacocks and Commas flitting back and forth and then, while searching for Adders I discovered a Large Tortoiseshell basking on the bracken. (Stuart Cooper)*)

Today we visited Beckley woods, a site we visit several times a year for butterflies, primary Grizzled Skipper and Silver Washed Fritillary. We had no details or directions but thought that it was worth checking out. We found good numbers of Brimstone, Comma, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell but no sign of the Large Tortoiseshell. Not surprising really as it is a very big area to check and without some idea of directions we had very little expectation. Surprisingly we saw no Red Admirals, nor indeed anyone else checking for the butterfly. There has been much good management over the last couple of years so hopefully this year will bring other results in addition to Large Tortoiseshell.

Dave

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 16-Mar-14 08:26 PM GMT

### Is it March or is it July?

The calender tells me one thing the weather tells me the other. Today was at least 18 degrees around 14.00 hours, the public were out in their droves, luckily the butterflies were also responding, including our first Small White of the year.

MONDAY 10 MARCH 2014.

Today was a moth day with our good friends at Ruckinge providing 2 Oak Beauty, 3 Small Quaker, Common Quaker and Clouded Drab. We had put out our own moth trap but only caught a Chestnut.

TUESDAY 11 MARCH 2014

Dungeness saw 5 Black Redstarts, Great White Egret, 2 Marsh Harriers, Chiffchaff, Little Egret, 4 Goldeneyes and 20 Gannets but no butterflies.

WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2014.

A much better day at Dungeness with at least 9 Small Tortoiseshells and a Peacock. The Observatory held Twin-spotted Quaker and Pale Pinion moths. Around the area we saw a smart male Scaup, Black Necked and Slavonian Grebe, 7 Goldeneye, Little Egret, 5 Pintail, Black Redstart, Firecrest, 3 Skylarks, 2 Stonechats, Marsh Harrier, the 1st winter Glaucous Gull, 3 Chiffchaffs and 2 Black Throated Divers.

THURSDAY 13 MARCH 2014.

Today saw us checking out Beckley Woods for yesterdays Large Tortoiseshell, but without any joy. 9 Brimstones, 4 Comma, 3 Peacock and 10 plus Small Tortoiseshells were the butterfly delights. The best bird was the Woodcock we flushed from beneath our feet. Not sure who was the most surprised but it did not fly far. Other than that it was 7 Common Buzzards and all the usual woodland birds including 2 Marsh Tits. On the way home we called in at Dungeness to see Slavonian Grebe, Firecrest, Black Redstart, 1st winter Glaucous Gull, Great White Egret, 2 Little Egrets, 5 Pintail but not much else as the fog closed in making birding very difficult.

FRIDAY 14 MARCH 2014.

We checked the Doddington area seeing 7 Common Buzzards and 1 Sparrowhawk with 3 Comma, 3 Brimstone, Peacock and 5 Small Tortoiseshells. Next was Oare Marshes where 8 Avocets, 3 Ruff and 4 Small Tortoiseshells were the best on offer.

SATURDAY 15 MARCH 2014.

The forecast was for a dull and cloudy day here in East Kent but in the end it turned out not too bad, with some afternoon sunshine. Dungeness produced all the usual goodies in addition to a lone Pink Footed Goose. A few Small Tortoiseshells kept the butterfly interest going but it was not long before we headed to Hythe to check out the Chinese Pond Heron site. It was not there and has not been reported for a week now so presumably its continued on its way. There was something of a raptor movement going on so we gained high ground to see 10 Common Buzzards all up in the thermals.

SUNDAY 16 MARCH 2014.

Today was hot and I mean hot for March. By early afternoon it was a tee shirt job. Wildlife responded accordingly with a massive raptor movement going on for Kent. I am not sure of the final totals but it must have exceeded 30 Red Kites, with sightings from Dungeness to Thanet. We decided to visit St Margarets to catch up with this movement. On arrival we were told that at least 12 had passed through. Some were hanging around and we managed to see 3 of them. Equally exciting was the presence of 2 Short Eared Owls. We watched one fly out to sea, but after 5 minutes it turned around and came back in. Also seen was a Sparrowhawk, Peregrine, Marsh Harrier and 8 Common Buzzards. Butterflies were in equally good numbers with 8 Brimstones, 2 Peacocks and 15 Small Tortoiseshells. Near Sandwich we saw a further 2 Red Kites and 1 Common Buzzard. This was some day and for all the right reasons.

I have again resisted posting photos of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks as the site is awash with them. As regards the Brimstones, seen many but have yet to manage one photograph of one. They all seem to be rushing from one spot to another.



*Red Kite south of St Margarets (kent).*



*Black Redstart at Dungeness*



*Oak Beauty moth*



*Clouded Drab*



*Small Quaker moth*

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 24-Mar-14 08:43 PM GMT

### A strange sort of week

It started off very warm but gradually got cooler as the week went on. Eventually yesterday there was hailstones, thunder and lightning. Almost back to winter.

Consequently the number of butterflies being seen fell dramatically as the week passed.

We started the week (Tuesday) being shown 2 Lead Coloured Drab moths at Ruckinge and seeing a Crossbill in Hamstreet Woods. Wednesday produced a Pink Footed Goose and a Wheatear at Dungeness in addition to the usual wintering things. For a change we visited Stodmarsh on Thursday following a period when the reserve was closed for a couple of months due to flooding. A really pleasant walk producing 12 Chiffchaffs, 7 Cetti's Warblers, 5 Water Rails, 4 Marsh Harriers, 2 Common Buzzards, 2 Red Admirals, 4 Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshell, Small White but little else. Noted during the day was a good showing of Cuckoo Flower and many Primroses.

Friday had to be Dungeness as Wheatears were now arriving. We saw 8 during the day, with 4 Chiffchaffs, 2 Goldeneye, Common Buzzard, Peregrine and 2 Small Tortoiseshells.

With little changing at Dungeness we started the day at Pett Level. A good move for at 11.35 hours we saw a distant White Stork which appeared to land somewhere near Fairlight. At this time of the year there is a good chance that it was one of the escaped or free flying roaming ones from some collection. Had it been April or May it would have a better chance of being a true migrant bird from the Continent. Otherwise Pett was disappointing with few birds around and certainly no butterflies. We did end the day at Dungeness seeing the regular 1st winter Glaucous Gull and our first Sand Martins of the year. 4 were catching insects over Burrowes Pit. Apart from that a Wheatear was the only other migrant we saw in increasing bitter winds. Sunday (23 March) was going to be a day of leisure until a welcome text sent us to Dungeness where a 1st winter Iceland Gull was on show at the patch, supported by the regular Glaucous Gull. Other goodies included a Wheatear, Black Redstart, Peregrine, Great White Egret, Little Egret, Chiffchaff and Bar Tailed Godwit. Returning home via Walland Marsh we saw 7 Tree Sparrows, 2 Marsh Harriers and a Cettis Warbler.

A mixed bag really. Plenty of wild flowers, but a tailoring off in insects and butterflies as the week passed, but bird life picked up a little. Looking forward to a return of the warm and dry weather.



*One of many Small Tortoiseshells seen in March.*



*The regular 1st winter Glaucous Gull near Dungeness fishing boats.*



*Record photo of the 1st winter Iceland Gull on Dungeness beach*

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-Apr-14 09:00 PM GMT

### Wow. What a day.

And I don't just mean the temperature, which was a staggering 18 degrees in the sun. With little wind it meant a tee shirt and trousers was all that was needed for a pleasant walk. The Wow refers to the insects on offer. Butterflies were everywhere at Dungeness today with good numbers of Peacocks and Brimstones with exceptional numbers of Small Tortoiseshells for the 1st April. I would estimate 40 plus seen throughout the day. Also 1 Small White and 3 Large Whites.

Even better was the species of moths seen. Not so much the numbers but the quality. At Dungeness we saw a Bloxworth Snout, a mega moth for Kent, although last year saw a few costal records for what is normally regarded as a moth from Devon and Cornwall. Also Barred Tooth-stripped, Brindled Beauty, Early Thorn, Blossom Underwing, Silver Y, Northern Drab, Chamomile Shark and Engrailed. That is some catch for early April in Kent. If we add our first sightings of the year for Willow Warbler and Sandwich Tern than its fair to say that today Dungeness delivered the goods.

What else have we seen over the last week. Not a lot of new things until Saturday when a stunning male Garganey was present on Restharrow Scrape at Sandwich Bay. On Sunday we ventured out of the county to see the Baikal Teal at Fen Drayton, just north of Cambridge. For years we have ignored, and so has the BBRC, any records of this species in this country. However, about 5 years ago they changed their minds based on scientific data, and it is now admitted to Category A of the British Bird list. With four previously accepted records we felt it was about time to see the species, so the sighting of one about 100 miles away was too good to ignore. It was strange walking to the hide with buses passing right along side us along the new guided bus route. Even stranger was when we called into the nearby Cambridge Services just off the A14. There appeared to be very few other roads around the area and very few houses yet the services was packed to overflowing. The queue for MacDonalds was unbelievable. The large car park was full and people were just hanging around. Whether Mothers Day had anything to do with the situation I am not sure but it was strange.

With yet more warm weather forecast for the South East hopefully more goodies yet to arrive. A Large Tortoiseshell available for all to see would be nice.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 07-Apr-14 02:50 PM GMT

### The return of the Swallow.

Despite the colder weather yesterday (Sun) we saw our first 3 Swallows of the year around the RSPB Dungeness. Always a good sign as many regard their return as the start of summer. Pity the weather did not match the joyful sight of their return.

Our good moth week continued where Tuesday left off. On Thursday we were shown a Scorched Carpet at Ruckinge and on Friday a **Sloe Carpet**. The latter is very scarce in Kent and was trapped near Biddenden. Other good moths seen during the week have been Angle Shades, Brindled Oak, Brindled Pug, Early Tooth-stripped, Powdered Quaker, Clouded Drab, Red Chestnut and Dotted Chestnut.

We have volunteered to share duties on a Butterfly transect this year and on Wednesday we joined a guided walk of the private area. Although cloudy in parts it remained warm enough to enjoy 18 Peacocks, 1 Comma, 3 Brimstone and a Large White. Birds were represented by Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Nuthatch amongst the more common and expected woodland birds. Our first visit of the year to Wye NNR earlier in the day produced our first Orange Tip of the year, Small White and 5 Peacocks, with just 1 Small Tortoiseshell. We could find no early Green Hairstreaks, but a number of Cowslips were in good flower.

A walk in Hamstreet woods on Thursday produced 2 Crossbills and just 2 Peacocks.

With the weather cooling down we visited Dungeness on Friday where 7 Common Terns and 2 Sandwich Terns were seen on the sea but the various pits were pretty much the same as the last few visits. No butterflies were noted.

On Saturday we toured East Kent hoping to connect with a Red Kite, a few of which had been reported that day. Early afternoon we connected with one passing over Collards Lake, Stodmarsh, which headed towards Sturry and Canterbury. Again, no butterflies were noted.

Sunday was even better as whilst talking to our friends at Ruckinge, and looking at Dotted Chestnut, a shout went up, Red Kite. There above us was the magnificent raptor just gliding along very slowly. With my camera back in the car, and the very poor light anyway, I have no photos to show for this

wonderful moment. Still it made for a very good day followed by a visit to Dungeness where 2 Egyptian Geese, Little Ringed Plover and 4 Avocets were on Scotney and 3 Swallows, Sedge Warbler, Peregrine and Raven were seen around the RSPB. The very warm spell has now ended but has resulted in a very good show of early flowers. We have seen Cuckoo Flower, Cowslip, Wood Anemones, Lesser Celandine, Greater Stitchwort, Violets, Bluebells and many Primroses. Enjoy the week.



*Blossom Underwing at Dungeness Observatory. Almost certainly an early migrant.*



*Bloxworth Snout at Dungeness. A mega moth for the South East. Excuse the poor image but I was not allowed to take it out the tube for photography as many others had yet to view it. Our moth of the year so far.*



*Garganey at Sandwich*



*Distant record photo of the Baikal Teal at Fen Drayton*



*Powdered Quaker at Ruckinge*

## Re: Dave Brown

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

You've certainly had some crackers in the Moth dept...

Was wondering if the fall of Saharan sand had brought any migrants through with it...it obviously has!

Best I can hope for is a Silver Y filtering its way northwards to me!

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 15-Apr-14 08:06 PM GMT

### New Butterflies and Birds for the year.

This is the time of the year when expectations grow to see your first of the year, both in terms of Butterflies and Birds. This week, despite a few poor days, has delivered. I have marked our first sightings of the year with the abbreviation (nfy- new for year).

Tuesday 08 April 2014.

A tour of Doddington and Oare Marshes produced Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and 3 Green Veined Whites (nfy). In total we saw 7 Common Buzzards and 1 Sparrowhawk. Oare was a wash with Black Tailed Godwits, most looking smart in their new summer plumage.

Thursday 10 April 2014.

Today was to be our serious effort for the Emperor Moth, which would be a new moth for us. Our chosen spot for a search was Sandwich Bay and Pegwell Bay. We failed badly on this occasion but still had a enjoyable day. Sandwich yielded Nightingale (nfy), 4 Blackcaps, 3 Chiffchaffs, 4 Swallows, House Martin (nfy), Red Throated Diver, 7 Peacocks, 4 Small Tortoiseshells, Small White and 2 Slow Worms (nfy). Pegwell only produced 2 Whimbrel (nfy) Whitethroat, Yellow Wagtail (nfy), 6 Peacocks, Small White and dozens of screaming kids, all enjoying the release from school. The parents on the other hand looked exhausted and many were sipping tea at the local kiosk.

Friday 11 April 2014.

A trip to Dungeness was uneventful, although Lesser Whitethroat and Reed Warbler were new for the year. Butterflies seen were 3 Peacocks, 2 Small Tortoiseshells and a Small White.

Saturday 12 April 2014.

With reports being received of Grizzled Skippers at some Southern locations today we visited Beckley Woods in the hope of connecting with this species. We failed, but did see 3 Orange Tips, 16 Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshell. We had our fingers crossed for last months sighting of a Large Tortoiseshell but it was not to be.

Sunday 13 April 2014.

Our second serious effort for the Emperor Moth again failed to locate this magnificent creature. We did see 11 Brimstones and 4 Peacocks on the butterfly front. Birds included 3 Woodlarks, 4 Redstarts, Raven, 2 Nuthatch, 5 Willow Warblers, Redpoll, 3 Stonechats and 4 Common Buzzards. A most enjoyable day at a lovely location.

Monday 14 April 2014.

A visit to Wye NNR for the Green Hairstreak (nfy) proved successful with 9 individuals found. 3 Orange Tips, 2 Holly Blue (nfy), Small White, Brimstone and 4 Peacocks. At a small wood near Chilham we encountered 2 Speckled Woods (nfy).

Tuesday 15 April 2014.

Another visit to Dungeness was a bit disappointing due to a cold biting wind but still gave us 2 Small Coppers (nfy) and Speckled Wood. 2 Egyptian Geese flew over our head whilst walking around the ARC pit, together with 3 Green Sandpipers (nfy). A Bittern boomed in the background and birds singing included Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler and Cettis Warbler. 2 Yellow Wagtails were along the Dengemarsh Road and the long staying Long Tailed Duck was on Scotney.

So all in all not a bad week, but as the teacher said, could do better.



*Green Hairstreak at Wye NNR*



*Red Throated Diver on the sea off Sandwich Bay.*



*This Slow Worm was sunning itself in a sheltered spot at Sandwich Bay*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 25-Apr-14 08:40 PM GMT

### **A COLOURFUL WEEK: PURPLE, BLACK, BLUE BUT NO RED.**

I have not updated for a while because, to be honest, not much was changing. The weather was restricting the number of butterflies and people must get bored of reading about yet more Peacocks, Orange Tips and Small Tortoiseshells, despite our love for them. Additional butterflies were slowly appearing, such as Green Veined and Small White. Then the sun appeared and things gradually improved with more Green Hairstreaks (Wye NNR), Speckled Woods (Chilham), then on Wednesday we saw 8 Wall Browns and 6 Dingy Skippers at Samphire Hoe with a Holly Blue. Yesterday we saw several Small Coppers at Dungeness, where I am informed that numbers are good this spring.

Moths started to improve with Silver Ground Carpet and Burnet Companion at Wye NNR. Best of all, thanks to our two moth friends, 2 Buttoned Snouts. Also Lunar Thorn, Poplar Kitten, Coxcomb Prominent and Lesser Swallow Prominent. The Buttoned Snout is a scarce moth in South East England so we were chuffed to be shown two individuals on the same day.

We have seen our first dragonflies of the year. All Hairy Dragonflies, but decent numbers. Orchids are out with Early Purple at Dungeness and nearly

2000 Early Spiders at Samphire Hoe.

Finally to birds and the basis of the title of this update. The Purple refers to the Purple Heron seen at Dungeness on the 22nd April. The Black refers to the Black Winged Stilt seen at Dungeness on the 24th April. We only saw the one but photos taken by a husband and wife visitors proved that 10 birds originally landed on the Hayfields before a Marsh Harrier flushed them all, with only the one bird remaining. The Blue refers to the female Blue Winged Teal we saw today at Sandwich Bay. Finally the Red refers to the fact that we have again failed to find any Red Admirals.

Other good birds have included Bittern (booming), Hobby, Cuckoo (all Dungeness), with Garganey, Little Ringed Plover and 2 Ring Ouzels at Sandwich Bay.

A really good period of wildlife watching. Our only disappoint is the fact that despite four more efforts and many hours in the field we have failed to see any Emperor Moths. This is proving a difficult moth for us to see here in Kent and East Sussex so we may have to extend the search area.

A few photos will follow.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 30-Apr-14 08:58 PM GMT

A few photos to go with my Friday 25th April update.



*Dingy Skipper at Samphire Hoe.*



*Record photo of the distant pair of Black Winged Stilts at Dungeness. Taken in poor weather. (details of occurrence will added on next update).*



*Small Copper at Dungeness*



*One of about 800 Early Spider Orchids present at Samphire Hoe. A well known location.*



*Only our second ever Badger during the daytime. Undisclosed location in South Kent*



*A record photo looking through a fence of a Grey Partridge at Sandwich Bay. Now a very scarce bird in East Kent.*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 08-May-14 09:35 PM GMT

### **The day of the Dukes**

In my last update I posted a photo of 2 Black Winged Stilts to which I will now add a little more detail. It was Saturday 26 April 2014 and not a day for Butterflies. It was cold and windy, more a day for sea watching at Dungeness and that is exactly what we did. In 2.5 hours we had managed to see 1 Great Northern Diver, 6 Red Throated Divers, 250 Arctic Terns, 5 Whimbrel, 5 Little Terns, 3 Black Terns, 3 Black Throated Divers, 6 Great Skuas, 7 Arctic Skuas and lots of other bits and pieces. The nearby ARC pits held 50 Arctic Terns, 75 Common Terns, 30 Black Terns and 2 Little Terns all seeking shelter from the strong winds. As we arrived at the RSPB news broke of 2 Black Winged Stilts on the Hayfields. Were these part of the flock of ten seen a couple of days earlier? Also present on the same field was a Wood Sandpiper, White Wagtail, Greenshank and Little Ringed Plover. What a good day in the field.

The next day, Sunday, was quieter but still enjoyable. It was also warmer with 5 Small Copper, Red Admiral and a Large White noted. A few of the Arctic Terns and Black Terns from Saturday were still present, but best of all was the Bittern booming near the ARC pit. The 2 Black Winged Stilts were still present of the RSPB, with 2 Hobbys and a Raven nearby.

Monday 28 April was nice and warm so a visit to Wye NNR was in order. It was good for butterflies with 18 Brimstone, 5 Green Hairstreak, Small Tortoiseshell, 3 Green Veined Whites, 4 Orange Tips, 5 Dingy Skippers, 3 Peacocks and 4 Small Whites.

Tuesday 29 April entailed another visit to Oare Marshes but yet again we failed to find any Emperor Moths. We did see 4 Green Veined Whites, Small Tortoiseshell and a Hairy Dragonfly.

Wed 29 April into Beckley Woods for another look to see if the Grizzled Skippers were out. None were present but Brimstone, Orange Tip, Peacock and Green Veined White were all seen. There had also been an emergence of the Speckled Yellow moth with 25 counted.

A visit to Ruckinge produced Great Prominent and Chocolate Tip moths.

A visit to Dungeness on Thursday 01 May was a little disappointing with a Reed Dagger moth being the best.

Friday 02 May saw us at Marden Meadow Nature Reserve to see 2,000 plus Green Winged Orchids in full flower. A most enjoyable sight.

Saturday 03 May 2014 found us at Dungeness. We had seen 2 Small Coppers and 14 Blue Tailed Damselflies when news broke of a Hooded Crow on the sea front. We enjoyed views of the scarce bird for 15 minutes before the local Crows took exception to its presence and chased it off North, never to be seen again. Earlier in the day 2 Glossy Ibis had been seen before flying off. Now they were back on the RSPB and enabled many visiting birders to catch up with them.

Sunday 04 May was fairly warm with a light south easterly wind. Whilst all the Dungeness regulars headed to Dungeness for the anticipated early May annual passage of the Pomarine Skua (103 were seen), we headed for Bonsai Bank and the Duke of Burgundy. A really excellent morning with at least 17 seen, most looking very fresh. Also noted was 1 Dingy Skipper, 4 Green Veined Whites, many Lady Orchids, 30 Early Purple Orchids, a purring Turtle Dove and a showy Garden Warbler.



*Duke of Burgundy at Bonsai Bank (Kent).*



*The 2 Glossy Ibis at Dungeness RSPB*



*The 2 Glossy Ibis at Dungeness RSPB*



*Lady Orchid at Bonsai Bank*



*A pink Green Winged Orchid present at Marden Meadows NR*



*This Whimbrel was present on the saltings at Oare.*

### **Re: Dave Brown**

by Buchan Boy, 08-May-14 10:18 PM GMT

Good reports Dave,

I spent a lot time, as a kid, in your area and always wish I could get over that way more, maybe time will be lucky to me in the future.

I'd love to see those Early Spiders on Samphire Hoe, it's quite remarkable how that colony took-off, also I think I read a report of a good Wall Brown colony now established there.

A large Green Winged Orchid display always inspires awe, but to have Lady Orchids close.... 🍷

Brilliant stuff on the birds by the way, it's always intriguing to see what turns up nowadays on the points of land that stick out into the Channel.

A fellow Dave Brown(e) as well!

Thanks

### **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 16-May-14 09:13 PM GMT

### Some highlights and some disappointments

Firstly, thank you to DB with an E, for your comments. You are correct that a population of Wall Browns has become established at Samphire Hoe. Incidentally, the count of Early Spiders this year reached over 7,000. You can't fail to see one if you go at the right time.

Now to the disappointments. The first was only finding one Grizzled Skipper at Beckley wood. The colony has always been small but not this small. It is especially important as many are of the form *taras*. The second was only finding 12 Pearl Bordered Fritillaries at Abbott's Wood. This is well down on our last visit. I think some of this may be down to their favoured area becoming slightly overgrown. I am no expert on their habit requirements but suspect a bit of coppicing would not go amiss. There has even been tree planting in the area that was coppiced for them a few years ago.

The highlights have been Red Kite, Woodlarks, Grasshopper Warbler, Black Winged Stilt, our first Common Blue of the year, and of course the Pearl Borders.

Monday 5th May. Another visit to Ashdown Forest again failed to find any Emperor Moths but we had good numbers of Brimstone, 22 in fact. Also 4 Green Veined White and a Small Tortoiseshell. 8 Large Red Damselflies and 3 Hairy Dragonflies. Bird highlights included 5 Woodlark's, 5 Tree Pipits, 8 Redstarts, Hobby, 2 Crossbills and Raven.

Tuesday 06 May saw us checking Hamstreet Woods but failing to find any Grizzled Skippers. Our moth friends at Ruckinge provided Seraphim, Knot Grass, Lesser Swallow Prominent and several other species.

Wednesday 07 May at Grove Ferry was good for it provided a fly over Red Kite, Grasshopper Warbler, Water Rail and Red Crested Pochard. Nearby Collards Lake saw 5 Hobbys hawking insects but little was seen of any butterflies.

Thursday 08 May saw us at Dungeness but apart from a male Garganey on ARC pit and a Greenshank on the Hayfields little new was seen, and no butterflies.

Friday 09 May 2014 found us again at Dungeness for another Black Winged Stilt. Again very few butterflies were noted.

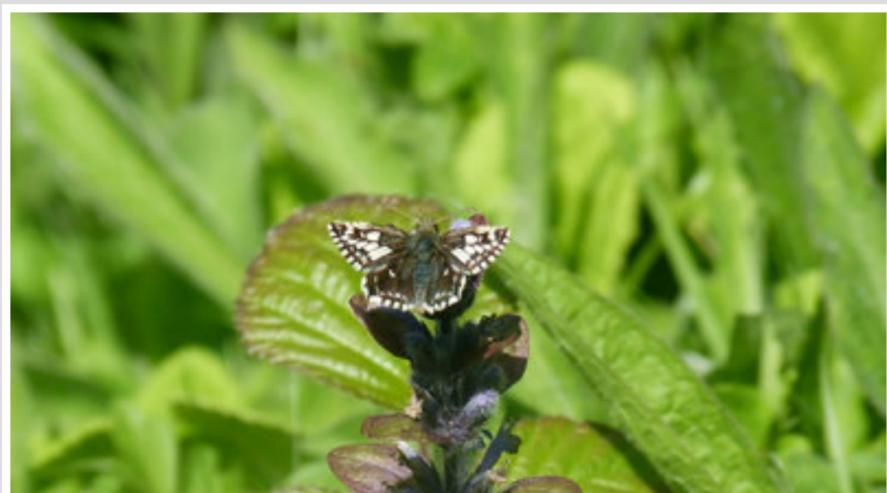
Saturday May 2014 saw us enjoying 10 Lady Orchids and 8 Early Purple Orchids in East Kent. Next was Oare Marshes but by now the winds had reached almost gale force so it was no surprise that no butterflies or Emperor moths were present. Bird life was much the same as previous visits with 2 Whimbrel and a Hobby being the best.

Sunday 11 May was still windy but at least sunny and following a sighting of a Black Kite near Dover we headed that way. We did see a distant Kite that may well have been a Black Kite but we did have 2 Red Kites fly over us and headed towards the Canterbury direction.

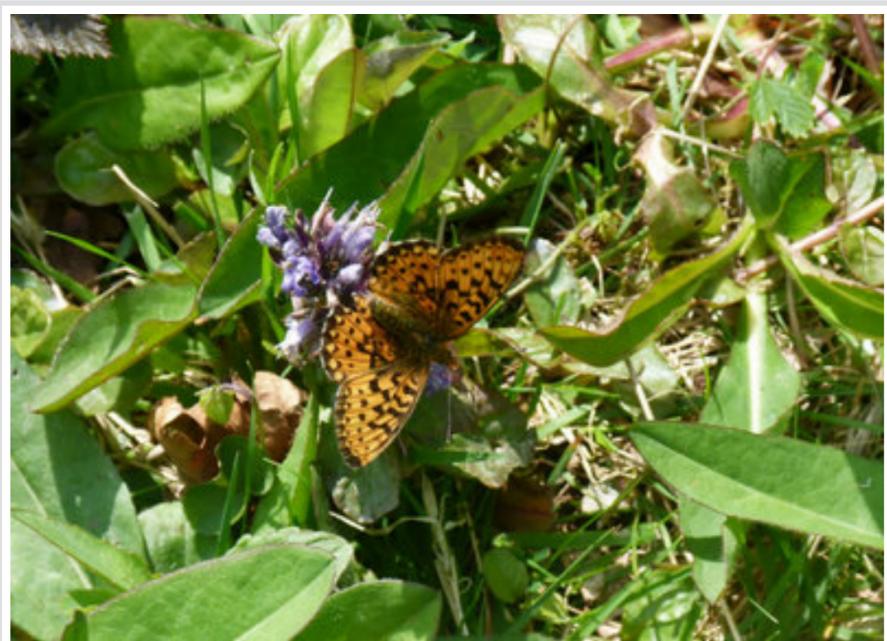
Wednesday 14 May. Another visit to Beckley Woods to look for Grizzled Skipper. Disappointingly we only found one. Not sure what is happening to this colony but hopefully it will recover as at least the habitat is being managed for them. We also saw a Common Blue, 5 Brimstone and 1 Orange Tip.

Dragonflies were emerging and we counted 24 Large Red Damselflies, 2 Broad Bodied Chasers and 2 Black Tailed Skimmers.

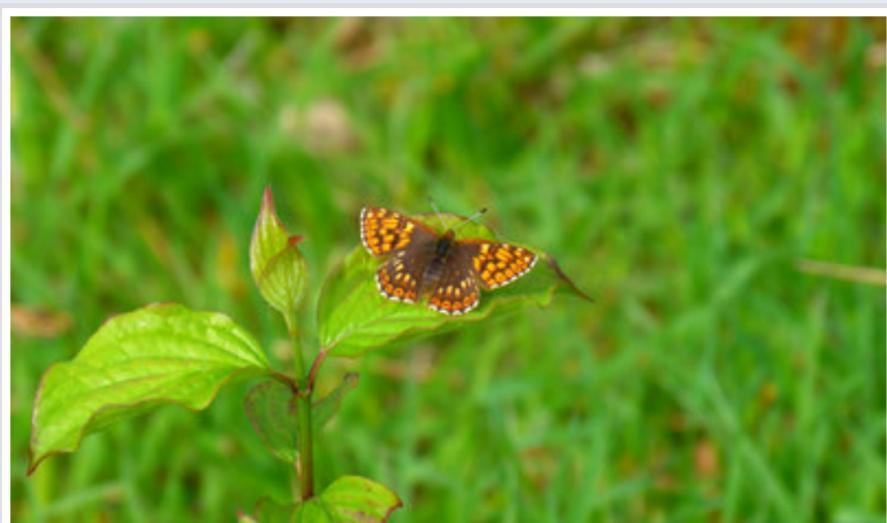
Some more photos to follow when time allows.



*Grizzled Skipper at Beckley Wood. I believe this is of the form taras.*



*Pearl Bordered Fritillary at Abbotts Wood.*





Distant Red Kite near Dover

## Re: Dave Brown

by Lee Hurrell, 16-May-14 10:17 PM GMT

### "dave brown" wrote:

Another visit to Beckley Woods to look for Grizzled Skipper. Disappointingly we only found one... I believe this is of the form *taras*.

Wow...that isn't *taras*, it's even more extreme! What a stunner.

Still really enjoying your reports, Dave.

Best wishes,

Lee

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-May-14 08:23 PM GMT

### Small Blues

Just a quick update to say that we saw 42 Small Blues at a location between Walmer and Kingsdown (Kent) on Sunday. The weather was brilliant (26 degrees) but the crowds meant it was not easy to get around. One item of concern at this site was the amount of Kidney Vetch that had been killed off, presumably by an ingress of salty water, when the storm surge happened in the winter and flooded some of the low laying areas. I will update the diary with more details and photos later in the week.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 03-Jun-14 05:20 PM GMT

### Late update.

Its been a while since I last updated my Diary. Its so time consuming and to be honest I would rather be out in the field. Enough of my excuses.

THURSDAY 15 MAY 2014

We visited Abbots Wood in East Sussex. We was a little disappointed as the site has become a lot more overgrown than on our last visit. I suppose a result of cut backs in funding. The result was a big reduction in Pearl Bordered Fritillaries that we managed to find. Only 12 in a couple of hours. Also present Orange Tip, Brimstone, 35 Speckled Yellow moths, Treble Bar, Black Tailed Skimmer, Common Buzzard, Cuckoo, Garden Warbler and Nightingale.

FRIDAY 16 MAY 2014

A trip to Parkgate Down found 40 Monkey Orchids in flower, 2 Fly Orchids and 20 Early Purple Orchids together with 4 Green Hairstreak and a Common Blue.

SATURDAY 17 MAY 2014

Near Stelling Minnis we would Toothwort, 4 Fly Orchids, 12 Lady Orchids, 8 Early Purple Orchids and Herb Robert. Near Wingham a Red Kite and 2 Common Buzzards flew over. We ended the day at Crundale watching 4 Wall Browns and a Peacock.

SUNDAY 18 MAY 2014.

Today was very hot and the crowds were out in force. We managed to find a parking space and walked to a site at Kingsdown where 42 Small Blues were on show. A stunning little butterfly and one of my favourites. Also present 2 Small Copper, 3 Common Blue and 2 Peacocks.

On the way home we called in at an undisclosed site where 2 Red Kites were flying around. Almost certainly migrants, but I won't say where just in case they stay. The same area held 5 Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, 2 Peacock and 6 Small Whites.

Monday 19 May 2014.

Another warm day and time to undertake our butterfly transect walk at Hamstreet. Very disappointing really despite the warmth. Only 8 Brimstone, 1 Speckled Wood and 2 Large Whites. Moths were White Ermine and 14 Speckled Yellow. Other things noted were 4 Large Red Damselflies, 4 Hairy Dragonflies, Common Buzzard and Garden Warbler.

Our good friends at Ruckinge produced the goods with Waved Umber, Orange Footman, Dusky Hooktip, Scalloped Oak Hooktip, Obscure Wainscot, Ingrailed Clay and White Spotted Pug.

We ended the day at a new site for us near Crundale seeing 1 Duke of Burgundy, 1 Dingy Skipper, 3 Wall Brown and a Tawny Owl in flight during the day, having been mobbed by a couple of Jays.

TUESDAY 20 MAY 2014.

Butterflies at Dungeness were 9 Common Blues, 2 Small Coppers and a Large White. Moths present were Waved Umber, Clay Triple Lines and Lesser Treble-bar.

A call from Ruckinge gave us yet another new moth. This time it was Dingy Shell.

WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 2014.

One of Kent's most respected and well known mother, based near Dungeness, had kept 2 Sand Darts knowing that we needed this coastal moth. Not a striking moth, but a much needed one. Also present, one of Dungeness specialties, White Spot. This moth likes Nottingham Catchfly, of which there is loads around the Dungeness peninsular. Nearby the Observatory team held Broken-barred Carpet, Rivulet, Green Silver-lines, Cream Spot Tiger, White Point and Spruce Carpet.

Nearby 200 plus Sand Catchfly plants were in good flower near Littlestone.

We ended the day at a house in Hythe where a friend from our early birding days had caught a Pale-shoulder Cloud in his moth trap. This is only about the tenth for Britain, with the first being as recent as 2001. A really mega moth and here in Kent. A really enjoyable end to a very good day.

THURSDAY 22 MAY 2014.

A bit of a twitch today at Oare Marshes where a Baillons Crake had showed well a few times early morning. We just missed the best sighting and had to make do with it calling 3 times. We waited 2 hours but no further sign, and it had also stopped calling. It was heard again briefly that night but then disappeared for good.

FRIDAY 23 MAY 2014.

A visit to Crundale found 3 Lady Orchids, 4 Man Orchids, many Common Twayblades and Common Spotted Orchids. 5 Common Blue Butterflies and 2, yes 2, Red Admirals. So far this year we have managed 4 Red Admirals. Not sure what has happened to this species but we hope things improve soon for this much loved species. We ended the day at an undisclosed site watching 4 Honey Buzzards. Two of which were displaying and wing clapping. A fantastic sight. Now the down side. We received a message via the national information service stating that a Immature White Tailed Sea Eagle was present in the Iden area (East Sussex). This was a good record for Sussex, although a bit of a surprise considering the time of the year. However, we thought that it was worth travelling to see it as they are truly impressive. Despite spending some time in the area checking we, and others, failed to locate it. It now appears to have been an hoax. Not sure what the motive was, or the what thrill the hoaxer got, but it was a waste of a good afternoon.

SATURDAY 24TH MAY 2014.

Dungeness was generally very quite although we saw our first Red Eyed Damselfly of the year, and another Red Admiral.

SUNDAY 25 MAY 2014.

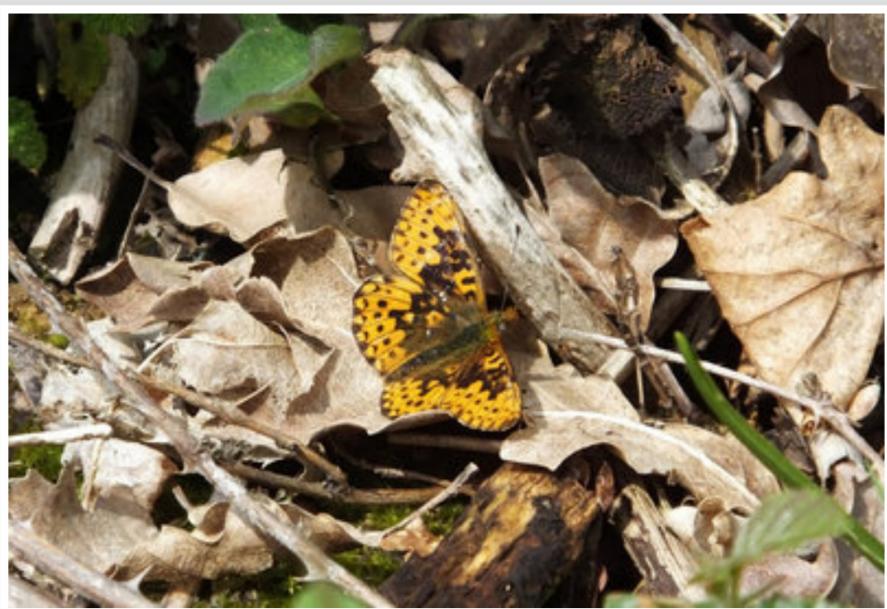
A visit to East Blean woods failed to find any sign of the Heath Fritillary. Nearby Collards Lake found 9 Hobbys hawking for dragonflies.

WEDNESDAY 28 MAY 2014.

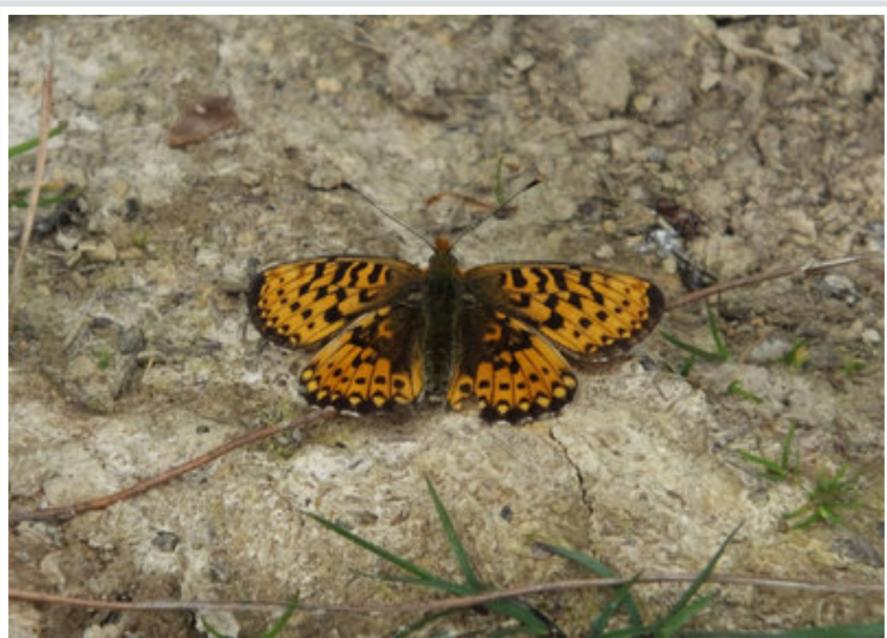
A much appreciated telephone call found us quickly at Dungeness where a BLYTHS REED WARBLER was singing well. A really good find by the ever vigilant Observatory Warden who quickly got the news out. Seeing the skulking bird was another matter. 3 hours later we had managed one brief view and a 5 second flight view. Our second record of one at Dungeness and a much sought after bird by the birding masses. Also in the area was 4 Hobbys, Bearded Tit, Marsh Harrier, 3 Little Egrets, 300 Swifts and a Bittern.

We ended the day at Ruckinge seeing Scalloped Hazel and Dark Arches.

Month of May to be continued.



*Pearl Bordered at Abbotts Wood.*



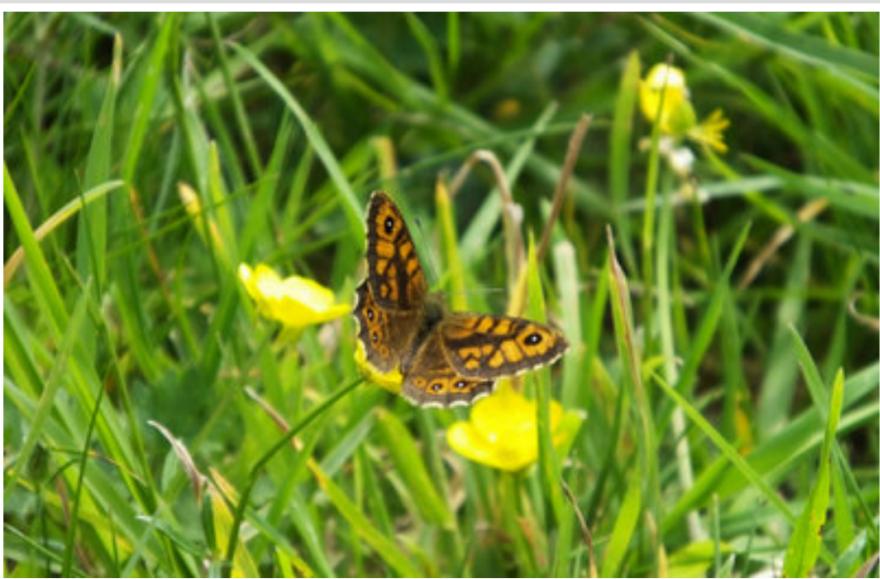
*Pearl Bordered at Abbotts Wood.*



*Small Blue*



*Small Blue*



*Wall Brown*



*Red Admiral. A scarce butterfly here in Kent so far this year.*



*Pale Shoulder Cloud. A mega moth for Britain.*



*Orange Footman*



*Sand Catchfly at Littlestone (Kent).*



*Fly Orchid on edge of woodland in Kent*



*Man Orchid present at Wye.*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 12-Jun-14 03:22 PM GMT

For my last update we should have said that it was very nice to meet False Apollo at East Blean Woods on the 25 May 2014. Sorry the meeting was brief, but we were on our way to check out the skies around Sandwich where a Booted Eagle had been reported earlier. Neither of us was successful in finding Heath Fritillary on that date. In fact we had to wait another 11 days for our first.

*Thursday 29 May 2014.* A local day seeing the moths Alder and Large Yellow Underwing at Ruckinge. Dungeness was slow with only 4 Hobbys and a Cuckoo of any note.

*Friday 30 May 2014.* A Marsh Warbler had been heard singing and seen a few times at Sandwich Bay so that was our destination today. We did not arrive until after mid-day to be told that it had not been heard for a while. Just then one of the ringers returned to say that it was singing again so obviously had not flown off. We had to wait about an hour but then it started singing again for at least 20 minutes, but showed only once. Its song was beautiful, including snippets of a Great Tit and Nightingale song. Also present Cuckoo, 4 House Martins, Peregrine, 3 Grey Partridge, 100 plus Southern Marsh Orchid and the odd looking hybrid known as Leopard Marsh Orchid.

*Saturday 31 May 2014.*

A day long trip to Ashdown Forest was interesting. There was no sign of any Early Marsh Orchids but 5 Heath Spotted present. Birds included 7 Woodlark, 7 Tree Pipits, 5 Redstarts and 2 Cuckoos. Butterflies were thin on the ground with 3 Brimstone being the best. There were many Common and Heath Latticed moths.

On the way home we saw a Red Kite passing over Great Chart.

We were very tired after a full day walking and a long journey. News then broke of Britain's 3rd ever Short Toed Eagle near Wareham (Dorset). We really should have gone over night to ensure connecting with this magical bird at first light. We were much too tired to travel so it was no surprise that when we did travel on Sunday 01 June 2014 we arrived 30 minutes after the bird had flown. Never to return.

We did spend several hours in the Dorset area seeing Hobby, Tree Pipit, Dartford Warbler, 2 Green Hairstreaks, 5 Brimstones and 1 Orange Tip. But although the scenery was great it was not the same having missed a mega bird for Britain.

*Monday 02 June 2014.*

Feeling much refreshed it was off to Dungeness. News broke of 3 Cattle Egrets in the area. A scan from the RSPB entrance track found all 3 in with a group of cattle. Whilst watching these a shout went up and there overhead was a stunning Honey Buzzard. Then 2 Bitterns put in an appearance quite close to the by now growing group of people. We decided to go off and look elsewhere. Finding very little we returned about 45 minutes later to find everyone had gone bar one person. He was looking for the Cattle Egrets when suddenly something above caught my eye. It was a BLACK KITE. I watched the bird fly towards to the Visitor Centre whilst the other gentleman rang one of the locals who happened still to be on the RSPB. In the end at least 8 people managed to connect with the bird before it flew out to sea by the New Lighthouse.

The other goodie of the day was a delightful Cream Spot Tiger moth. They are a stunning moth and worthy of a prolonged view.

*Tuesday 03 June 2014.*

Back to Dungeness where a Glossy Ibis had been found on the ARC pit. Support cast included a Little Gull and a Grass Rivulet (moth).

*Thursday 05 June 2014.*

Today we visited Parkgate Down on behalf of someone travelling from North Wales. He was interested in seeing Musk Orchid amongst other things and Parkgate can hold good numbers. A thorough search by us failed to find any yet so a long journey saved. We did see Greater Butterfly Orchid, 2 Fly Orchids and many Fragrant and Common Spotted Orchids. Most of the Monkey Orchids had however gone over, Another reason for his visit. Again Butterflies were thin on the ground with only 3 Common Blues and 2 Small Tortoiseshells. On the way home we called in at a site near Wye where 3 Bee Orchids, 5 Man Orchids, many Fragrant and Common Spotted Orchids were on display. A few more Butterflies here with our first Meadow Brown of the year, 5 Brimstones, Small Tortoiseshell, 2 Common Blue and a Speckled Wood. A delightful Black-veined moth was also present.

*Friday 06 June 2014.*

Following a tip off from an old birding friend we called in at an undisclosed site near Hythe to find a Four-spotted moth. This is an extremely rare day

flying moth and obviously a new one for us. In the warmth 3 Common Blues and 11 Small Tortoiseshells were enjoying themselves. We then headed to East Blean Woods. The previous day a Norfolk Hawker had been flying around the car park. What was the first thing we saw when we got out of the car? Yes, a Norfolk Hawker. A very rare dragonfly for Kent, although a pair was suspected of breeding last year so there may be a very small local population. We also saw one Heath Fritillary. Numbers appear very much lower this year. The site is a little overgrown and there is a lack of Cow Wheat.

I will add a few photos when time allows. There is so much to do with regards wildlife this month, and the weather is quite decent at the moment.

Dave

## Re: Dave Brown

by Mike Robinson, 13-Jun-14 04:49 PM GMT

I'm new to this Butterfly &c. game. I find these Diaries very interesting.  
With regard to Black-Winged Stilts, there were a couple at Cliffe Pools a while ago.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 22-Jun-14 04:29 PM GMT

### Mega's and other Goodies

Although the weather has been a mixed bag we have been out in the field every single day during what can only be described as a manic situation. Lots of things have been early and caught up with the normal early things, others have been on time, but very little has been late. The consequence has been that late May and June has been very hectic resulting in very few Diary updates. Now I hear that Purple Emperors have been seen in Kent, about a week early.

I will therefore simply headline our highlights.

*Saturday 07 June 2014.*

Checked the White Helleborines at a undisclosed site in Kent to find most had their tops eaten away. By what I am not sure but most likely Deer or possibly Badger.

*Sunday 08 June 2014.*

Took the opportunity to visit the Rex Graham Open Day near Thetford for the Military Orchid. There was 75 plus plants in flower but most were past their best. This year the open day was about a week too late. We also saw our first Red Necked Footman in the nearby plantation. We paid our respects to the reserve on Weeting Heath. Its only £3.50 to enter and they need financial support to manage the area for Stone Curlew, of which we saw two. In the general area we saw 4 Woodlarks, Spotted Flycatcher and Spanish Catchfly.

*Monday 09 June 2014.*

The best thing today was seeing **Banded Pine Carpet** (moth) at an address near Dungeness. With less than a handful of British records this was an exciting record having been caught overnight.

*Tuesday 10 June 2014.*

A day on Wye NNR seeing 3 Black Veined moths, 2 Ringlets, 5 Bee Orchids and a Brown Argus.

*Wednesday 11 June 2014.*

A trip to Sandwich Bay found a lot of Lizard Orchids in flower, together with many Pyramidal and Southern Marsh Orchids. At least 35 Small Tortoiseshells was of note whilst moths included Brussels Lace, Least Carpet and Puss Moth.

*Thursday 12 June 2014.*

A local day seeing 4 Turtle Doves, Cuckoo, 3 Tree Sparrows and 10 Small Tortoiseshells.

*Friday 13 June 2014.*

The sun was shining so it had to be Westbere. Why? Well this is Kent's first (?) breeding site for the **Norfolk Hawker**. 10 had been reported the previous day but today we could only find 7. Only find 7! That is 7 more than a few years ago when they were almost unheard of in Kent. Hopefully a regular breeder of the future. We could only find 1 Scarce Chaser, but 80 Banded Demoiselles. Bodied Bodied Chaser, Four Spotted Chaser, 4 Black Tailed Skimmers and 3 Hairy Hawkers made a great day out.

*Saturday 14 June 2014.*

A day at Dungeness found Bittern and 2 Hobbys amongst the more common fare.

*Sunday 15 June 2014.*

A trip we had been looking forward too for a few weeks was into Norfolk to find Fen Orchid. At an undisclosed location we had an official guide to see us the almost legendary **Fen Orchid**. We saw 12 plants, but hundreds more were out of reach due to the depth of water and unstable walking conditions. We have waited years to see this plant and there it was, right in front of us. The plants themselves are less than 150 mm high, in amongst dense vegetation. Without a guide we would never have found them. Some were just going over but still delightful to see. A smashing area, well managed by a team of dedicated people, but unlikely to open to the general public due to the depth of water.

Could the day get better. Yes it could. Next was Upton Fen. This area is open to the public as it is much dryer. But again we had the wardens assistance to locate yet more Fen Orchids. We saw another 8 plants here although the warden said 20 were available. Plenty of support at both sites with Southern Marsh Orchids, Common Spotted Orchids and several hybrids. 4 Swallowtails and 3 Norfolk Hawkers at Upton Fen. Isn't the Swallowtail a majestic butterfly. Unfortunately none would settle for a photo but it was just nice to watch them flying about. Had it been a few degrees warmer then I am sure many more would have been on the wing.

**Monday 16 June 2014**

Having missed the Short Toed Eagle in Dorset we could not believe our luck when it was refound in Sussex. Today we found ourselves watching the **Short Toed Eagle** from Gills Lap at Ashdown Forest. What a bird and what a pleasure to watch it hunting ( unless you are a snake). It would hang in the air at a great height then suddenly dive down onto its prey. How do they see a snake from that height? We saw it take 3 things, most likely adders, and eat them on the wing. Later it caught a much larger snake and had to land in a tree to eat it.

*Tuesday 17 June 2014.*

A day touring East Kent looking at likely locations for any more Norfolk Hawkers but none found.

*Wednesday 18 June 2014.*

Another day at Dungeness seeing Bittern, 4 Bearded Tits, 7 Hobbys and Raven.

*Thursday 19 June 2014.*

Back to Ashdown Forest. Not just for the Eagle, which we didn't see, but all the other goodies on offer. 3 Silver Studded Blues, 3 Small Red Damselflies, Broad Bodied Chaser, 2 Red Kites, Hobby, Honey Buzzard, Common Buzzard, 4 Woodlarks, 3 Redstarts, 4 Tree Pipits and many common species.

Back in our garden a Hummingbird Hawkmoth made a brief appearance on our Valerian.

That sums up our wildlife watching of late. Can it get better? I doubt it, but we shall give it our best attempt, considering the Purple Emperor is now emerging.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 23-Jun-14 08:46 PM GMT

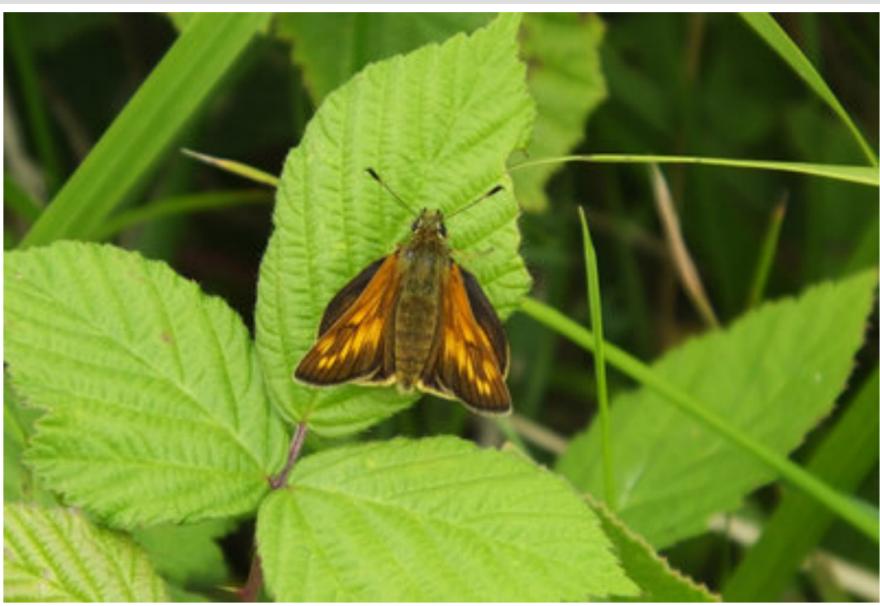
A few photos to add to my last update. I make no excuses for adding 4 photos of the Fen Orchid. Although not the sharpest, they are difficult to photograph at only 75-100mm high and in difficult terrain, we have waited many years before connecting with this plant, so took great joy in seeing them. I am sure that we will feel the same when we finally catch up with the Camberwell Beauty.



*They don't get much better than this colourful Marbled White at Wye NNR.*



*Silver Studded Blue at Ashdown Forest*



*There are many Large Skippers around at present.*



*Fen Orchid in Norfolk*



*Fen Orchid in Norfolk*



*Fen Orchid in Norfolk*



*Fen Orchid in Norfolk*



*Small Red Damselfly in Ashdown Forest. The red legs help identify this from the Large Red.*

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Jul-14 08:11 PM GMT

### Can it get any better?

When writing my update last time I thought that particular entry included our best sightings this year and it would be downhill from then. However, the goodies have just kept coming. The only downside is that it is all happening at once and there is not enough time to visit everything you would like to see.

### **Friday 20 June 2014.**

A slowdown sort of day just seeing 4 Keeled Skimmers and 250 plus Heath Spotted Orchids at Hothfield Common.

### **Saturday 21 June 2014.**

Back to Ashdown Forest. The delights on offer were too good to miss. Throughout the day we had 3 different sightings of the SHORT TOED EAGLE. What a bird and available to be enjoyed by the masses. The locals were very interested, as it had been in the local press, and the Ice Cream man was doing a roaring trade in the hot sunshine.

A day in the area produced Honey Buzzard, Common Buzzard, Hobby, Woodlark, Redstart, Tree Pipit, Nuthatch, Willow Warbler and all the common woodland birds. The Heath and more boggy areas produced 7 Silver Studded Blues, Brimstone, many Meadow Browns, 2 Small Red Damselfly, 2 Brilliant Emeralds, Golden Ringed Dragonfly, Common Blue Damselfly, 4 Four Spotted Chasers, 3 Keeled Skimmers, Broad Bodied Chaser, whilst moths included Grass Wave and the delightful Beautiful Yellow Underwing.

### **Sunday 22 June 2014.**

A long search at Parkgate Down only produced 3 Musk Orchids but hundreds of Pyramidal Orchids looked stunning in the warm sunshine. Most of the Common Spotted and Fragrant Orchids had gone over, so that's it for another year. A late Green Hairstreak was a surprise, as was a Hummingbird Hawkmoth, but the 5 Marbled Whites were more expected. We pointed out the Musk Orchids to another couple before helping them with directions for the Late Spider Orchid. No one else was Orchid hunting so we went home and checked the moth trap. This contained 2 Elephant Hawkmoths, 2 Peppered moths, Waved Umber, Burnished Brass and a variety of more common moths.

### **Monday 23 June 2014.**

A visit to Wye NNR saw a decent number of butterflies with 40 Marbled Whites, 100 plus Ringlets, a late Dingy Skipper, 2 Large Skippers, 2 Small Skippers, Brimstone but only 1 Common Blue. Needless to say Meadow Browns were everywhere and the display of Pyramidal Orchids was most enjoyable.

### **Tuesday 24 June 2014.**

Butterfly transect day and the weather was really good with temperatures reaching 23 degrees. Our particular site near Hamstreet found 16 White Admirals, 7 Ringlets, 38 Meadow Browns, Speckled Wood, 5 Brimstone, Large Skipper and Small Skipper.

Later we visited Iden Moat in East Sussex. Our target was Downy Emerald but we failed to find any this year. We did see 11 White Legged Damselflies, Black Tailed Skimmer, Emperor Dragonfly and many Common Blue damselflies.

### **Wednesday 25 June 2014.**

Today found us at Bishopstone near Herne Bay. Over a two hour period we saw 14 different White Letter Hairstreaks, 3 Comma's, 2 Red Admirals and a number of Meadow Browns. Later we called in at East Blean Woods but only found 7 Heath Fritillary, 5 Ringlets and a Red Admiral. Very disappointing considering the good weather.

The garden moth trap produced 20 species with Poplar Hawkmoth, Waved Umber and Dingy Shell being the best.

### **Thursday 26 June 2014.**

We seemed to be tied to Ashdown Forest with an elastic band at the moment and its lure pulled us back. Again we had 3 different sightings of the Short Toed Eagle, including a prolonged view of it sitting in a tree. At the time of our first sighting we made the numbers up to 10 people watching, but after putting the news out numbers gradually built up, with quite a large crowd being present in the afternoon. This time there was no Ice Cream van in the

car park to take advantage. Again we saw Brilliant Emerald, Golden Ringed Dragonfly and the usual things seen on previous occasions. We also spread the search a little for any more Silver Studded Blues but failed to find any different spots for them.

**Friday 27 June 2014.**

A calm down day. Well actually a shopping day, but our good friends at Ruckinge still managed to lure us out with a Four-dotted Footman (moth).

**Saturday 28 June 2014.**

We had not visited Dungeness for a few days so today was make up day. Having spent some time there seeing all the same old things I have to say that we have missed little.

**Sunday 29 June 2014.**

Back to Wye NNR. Still no Chalkhill Blues but 42 Marbled Whites was nice.

**Tuesday 01 July 2014.**

A welcome message saw us at Dungeness Observatory looking at a stunningly beautiful and rare Silver-stripped Hawkmoth. Only the second one we have ever seen. Much to our surprise a Six-belted Clearwing moth was also on show having been lured locally.

On to Beckley Woods in East Sussex. The Silver Washed Fritillary was out and in what numbers. We only did part of the complex but still found 19 individuals. More expected was the 5 White Admirals with many Meadow Browns. Our first Southern Hawkmoths of the year with 4 number and many Common Darters.

A evening visit to Ruckinge saw our first ever Reddish Light Arches (moth) and a very black looking Dark Arches. A Barn Owl was hunting near the Military Canal.

**Wednesday 02 July 2014.**

Time for the emergence of Willow Emerald Damselfly in Kent, but despite good weather and a prolonged search we failed to find any in the Chislet area.

We then spent a period of time searching the Stodmarsh area for yesterdays reported Short Toed Eagle. Being that there is no suitable habitat we were not hopeful, and not surprised, when we failed to find it. It was not a wasted day this time as we had planned to search for the Willow Emerald anyway.

**Thursday 03 July 2014.**

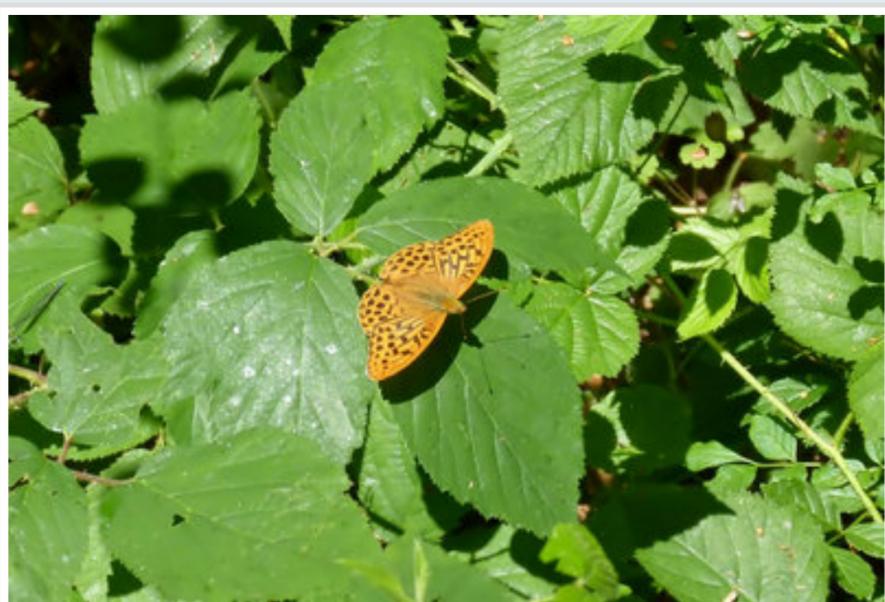
The morning was spent at Oare Marshes looking at 9 Emerald Damselflies. We also visit there hoping to find the much rarer Scarce Emerald Damselfly as one was photographed there a few years ago. Despite many eyes looking that success has not been repeated, but you never know.

Enjoying a relaxing afternoon in the garden we were asked if we would like to join an evenings moth trapping at an undisclosed location in the Hamstreet Woods complex. You bet we would, for July is an excellent month for moth trapping at Hamstreet. Licensees had been arranged and two traps were running.

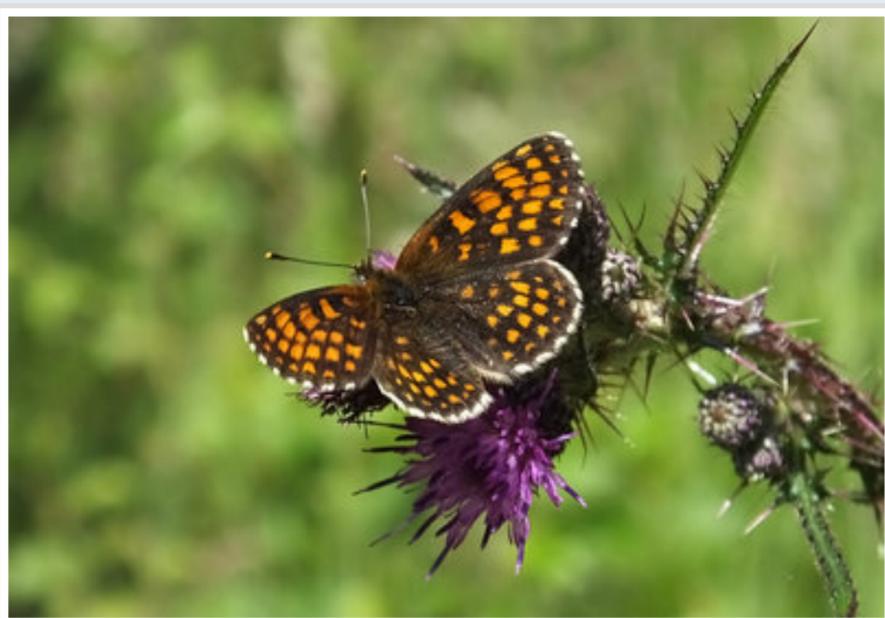
Jackpot, the very rare Clay Fan-foot was caught, the even rarer and Red Date species Olive Crescent, supported by 2 Feathered Beauty and a Scallop Shell.

Other moths were Poplar Lutestring, Small Fan-footed Wave, Pine Hawkmoth, Snout, Coronet, Peach Blossom, Buff Arches, Scorched Wing, Early Thorn and Lobster. Some catch and a few happy bunnies.

Lets hope the good run continues (although we could be worn out by then).



*Silver Washed Fritillary in Beckley Woods.*



*Heath Fritillary at East Blean. These are now past their best.*



*The very rare and migrant Silver-striped Hawkmoth.*



*2 Elephant Hawkmoths in our garden.*

### Re: Dave Brown

by Pauline, 06-Jul-14 09:12 PM GMT

I'm not 'getting into' moths Dave. Really, I'm not 😊 but those moths are simply stunning especially that migrant.

### Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 07-Jul-14 04:02 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline. I said the same many years ago, but like butterflies, it becomes addictive. I have managed to stay away from the Micro moths (really small jobs) so far, but even those can be stunning. Quite how such an attractive and really bright moth as the Elephant Hawk moth can remain hidden from predators is a mystery to me. Even more mystifying is how some small moths, many half the size of butterflies, can migrate across the channel. One of many questions that makes our pastime a hobby of *pleasure and magic*.

Dave

### Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-Jul-14 04:18 PM GMT

#### Saturday 5th July 2014.

A quite local day where the best thing noted was a distant Red Kite flying near Brenzett.

#### Sunday 6th July 2014.

A visit to Dungeness was best remembered for a visit to the Observatory where 2 Sussex Emeralds, Small Emerald, Small Ranunculus and Least Carpet were on display. A walk around the area produced 2 Black Redstarts and decent numbers of Marbled Whites. A walk around Lade Gravel pits was rewarding for butterfly numbers were up with 42 Marbled Whites, 6 Small Skippers, 1 Essex skipper, 5 Ringlets and dozens of Meadow Browns. It was also nice to find the plant Dark Mullein.

#### Monday 7th July 2014.

A visit to Wye NNR yielded many Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Large and Small Whites. A Hobby was the best of the birds. Nearby Godmersham found a family of 4 Spotted Flycatchers, with 4 Banded Demoiselles over the river.

#### Tuesday 8th July 2014.

Today we checked out the Chislet site of Willow Emerald and was pleased to find 5 on the wing. We also saw Emperor Dragonfly, many Common Blues and Azure Damselflies. It was pleasing to see saw many Gatekeepers and Small Skippers on the hedgerow or adjacent roadside vegetation.

#### Thursday 10th July 2014.

A midday visit to Oare Marshes found 2 Wood Sandpipers on the East Flood. Apparently these were the first of the Autumn and much sought after by the locals.

Not sure what it is that signals the return autumn migration but these are one of the indicator species, together with the Greenshank, of which there was also two. A little Ringed Plover, 130 Avocets, Ruff, 7 Little Egrets and a Peregrine all added to the autumnal feel, although its only mid July.

#### Friday 11th July 2014.

A Dungeness day with some sea movement of 25 Gannets, 30 Common Terns and 3 Porpoise. The area produced Black Redstart, Common Sandpiper, 3 Hobbys, 14 Little Egrets, 10 Sand Martins but only 1 Red Admiral.

#### Saturday 12th July 2014.

Back to Oare Marshes as the number of Wood Sandpipers had now swelled to 5. In addition to the regular birds a Hobby, 2 Ruffs and 10 Little Egrets added interest. Butterflies were numerous but nearly all Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, with a few Small and Essex Skippers. A look amongst the

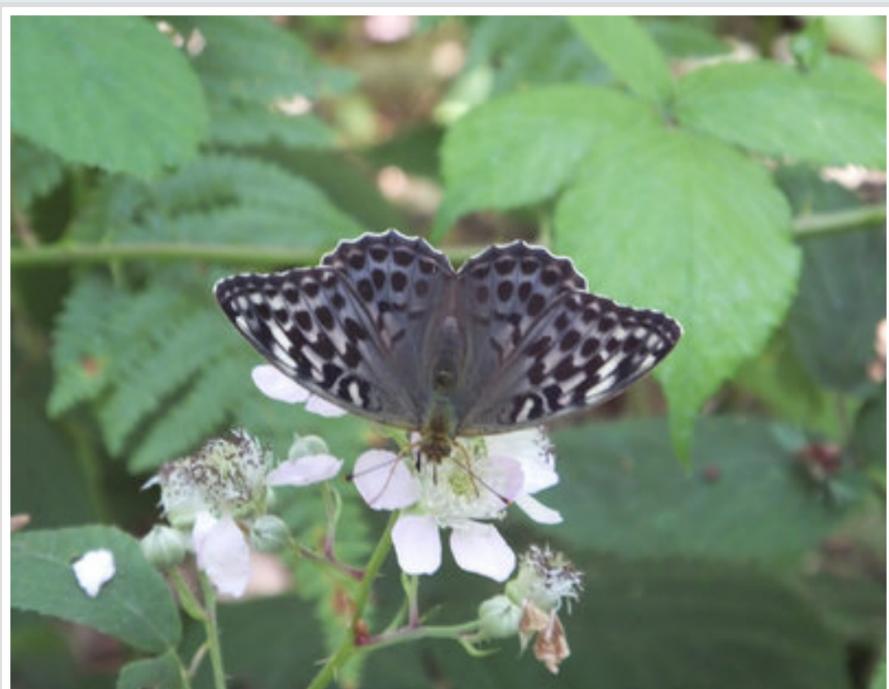
reeds produced a few Emerald Damselflies and Ruddy Darters more in their dozens.

**Sunday 13th July 2014.**

Dungeness and the ever helpful Observatory Warden showed us a fine female Four Spotted Footman, Buff Footman, Birds Wing and one example of the local specialty, the Sussex Emerald. In the moat was a single Marbled White and 4 Small Coppers. The local area was disappointing birdwise but 3 Sand Martins were a sign of some continuing autumn migration.

**Monday 14th July 2014.**

A walk up and down the steep hills of Wye NNR still produced good numbers of Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Small Skippers. A bonus was by way of the moth Red Carpet.



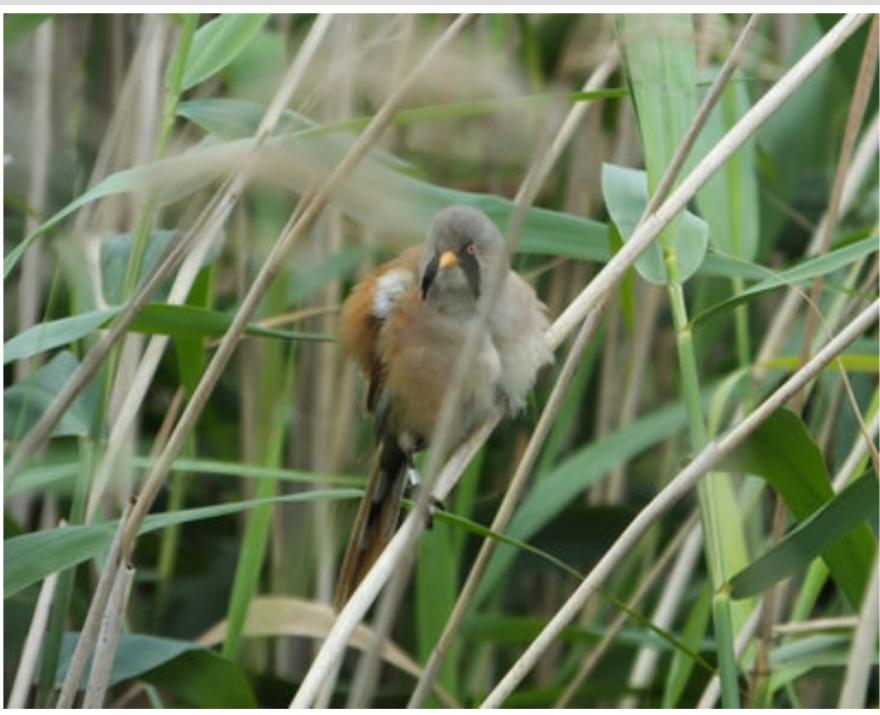
*This stunning Silver Washed Fritillary at Beckley Woods. Yes it really was that grey and was easy to follow, harder to photograph.*



*Willow Emerald Damselfly at Chislet, Kent.*



*Little Egret at Oare Marshes.*



*This Bearded Tit at Oare Marshes was ringed but proved impossible to read.*

### **Re: Dave Brown**

by NickMorgan, 20-Jul-14 04:29 PM GMT

Wow, I love the Silver-washed Fritillary. All very exotic-looking pictures!

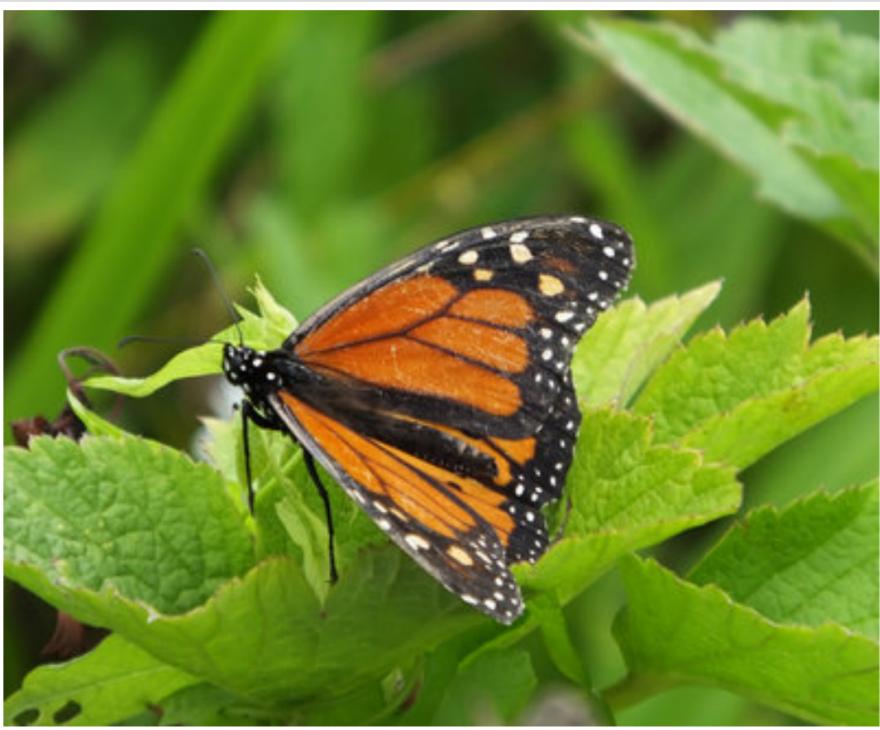
### **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 20-Jul-14 08:14 PM GMT

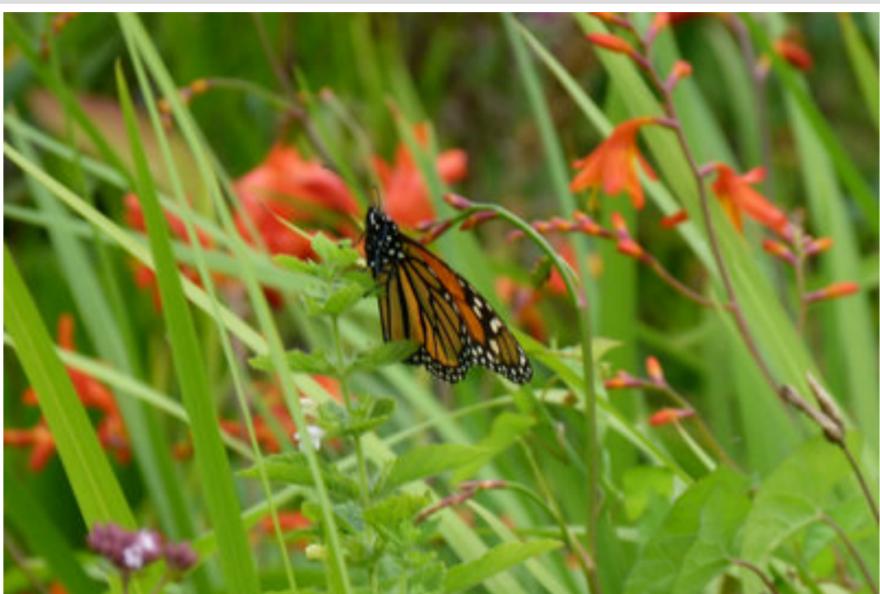
Thanks Nick. And attached are photographs taken today of the even more exotic Monarch Butterfly in a private garden near Hamstreet, Kent. A stunning butterfly to see and watch in flight. There are no bits missing, the underside looks in good condition but the upper side looks a bit worn. Not sure what this indicates as regards its likely origin. Everyone tends to associate Monarchs with September/ October, and from America. However, it is also known from Southern Spain, Portugal and the Canary Islands. It was first noted in the garden on Saturday evening and follows a period of storms, winds and periods of very hot weather from that region. Here in Kent it was 30 degrees on Thursday and 31 degrees on Friday.

There have also been several migrant moths the last few days, suggesting migration is on going. To my knowledge there has been no other local records of other unusual butterflies that could indicate some sort of release.

Whatever its origins it is a stunning butterfly.



*Monarch butterfly in a private garden near Hamstreet.*



*Monarch butterfly in a private garden near Hamstreet.*



*Monarch butterfly in a private garden near Hamstreet.*



*Monarch butterfly in a private garden near Hamstreet.*

### **Re: Dave Brown**

by David M, 20-Jul-14 09:48 PM GMT

Glorious stuff, Dave, but given that this sighting is in the far south east of the country (and no sightings have been made in the west which is where one would expect them if they occurred naturally) I am prone to ask whether this is an escapee from either a butterfly house or from captive breeding stock.

### **Re: Dave Brown**

by Neil Hulme, 20-Jul-14 10:17 PM GMT

Hi Dave and David,

I know of several very dedicated sea-watchers who spend a great many hours on the coast in the Brighton area. They have seen a surprising number of Monarchs coming in over the waves from a south-westerly direction over the years, but are not particularly interested in reporting them. These butterflies are arriving during 'mid' rather than late summer/autumn and their origin must surely be Canaries/Portugal. A Monarch was seen coming off the sea at Shoreham last summer, at about the time Long-tailed Blue and *gorganus* were arriving, long before a traditional trans-Atlantic event would be expected.

Sightings such as this particular one will always be hard to call in the absence of any other data, either for or against, but a genuine voyager certainly can't be ruled out.

BWs, Neil

### **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 21-Jul-14 10:03 AM GMT

Thanks Neil for a very measured response. You will be aware that I spend a great deal of time on the coast myself so I am fully aware of some of the sightings, and often by very experienced people, of all sorts of things out of what is generally considered the right season. These are often dismissed by people who think it can't be because its not the right month or direction. Moth trappers throughout the country have given us an insight into how much migration actually goes on and often from unexpected quarters.

Of course we can not rule out possible releases, but in the meantime I shall just enjoy a stunning butterfly (assuming it stays and we are allowed access).

### **Re: Dave Brown**

by Neil Hulme, 21-Jul-14 10:26 AM GMT

Hi Dave,  
Putting it another way, if I had access to it and it was slightly closer to me (distance would have been no object had I not already seen one in the UK), would I travel to see it? Definitely, as there is currently no data to suggest that it *isn't* a genuine migrant from the south-west.  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 21-Jul-14 02:10 PM GMT

Neil,  
The owners of the house are really nice people with a fantastic wildflower garden, and being into nature they were fully aware of the potential significance of the sighting, contacting 3 or 4 of us immediately. They have since allowed some access so at least a dozen of the locals have seen it. I am sure further access will be allowed if it sticks, although I understand that it has only been since once today. If it remains and you are in the area, (perhaps if a Scarce Tortoiseshell turns up somewhere), access can be arranged (without crossing my palm with silver).  
Dave

## Re: Dave Brown

by Neil Hulme, 21-Jul-14 03:15 PM GMT

Thanks Dave. Please arrange for the Scarce Tortoiseshell/Monarch double whammy. 😊  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 22-Jul-14 07:07 PM GMT

I understand that there has been no further sighting of the Monarch butterfly since late yesterday morning despite suitable weather.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Jul-14 04:48 PM GMT

We seem to have spent all our time since our last update chasing/ checking out reports of possible/ probable/ actual Scarce Tortoiseshell here in Kent. So far it has eluded us and all we seem to find are Small Tortoiseshells, including 6 on our own garden buddleia. With regards the Monarch sighting. So far we have not found any potential local source for an escape, or release, although we are aware that many people regard the sighting as unlikely to be of wild origin. I however remain optimistic that it was from the Iberia area as weather conditions were right with many migrant moths being reported.

### 15th July 2014.

The only decent thing today was an Oak Eggar caught in our garden trap. The first for our garden.

### 16th July 2014.

With predicated wall to wall sunshine it had to be Cliffe RSPB where Southern Emerald damselflies were being reported. There is a very small colony there which seems to cling on without too much evidence of major expansion. The highest count we have heard of this season is ten, although we ourselves only managed to find two. Once you know the right spot (near the second mound) it is easy to connect with the Scarce Emerald Damselfly, which on this occasion found 60 plus in the preferred ditches. Luckily, to aid identification, the more common Emerald damselfly is present in much lower numbers at the same spot. It was also noted a large number of Ruddy Darters had emerged.

Back home in the garden two Painted Ladies were feeding on the buddleia bush. Our first sighting of the year.

### 17th July 2014

Our moth trap provided the usual summer visitors although a White Point was the highlight.

A welcome message by one of the locals stated that an Adult Bonapartes Gull had just arrived on Oare Marshes. Presumably it was last years youngster returning. We arrived to find a massive crowd of four watching the bird on the estuary. A most welcome sight to relieve the mid summer scarcity of good birds.

A adult Med Gull flew over, a Common Sandpiper on the mud and a Whimbrel was along the creek. The numbers of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns was very high but only one Small Tortoiseshell.

### 18th July 2014.

Our good friends at Ruckinge saved the day with a Silky Wainscot and 4 Svensson's Copper Underwing. A tour of the local Hamstreet woods found 3 Purple Hairstreaks (a much under recorded species) and 2 Brown Hawkets.

We were sitting down to our evening tea when a message pushed all the right buttons for an immediate departure. A Scarce Tortoiseshell had been seen several times at Oare Marshes. We were there within 40 minutes to be greeted with the news that it was only an Oak Eggar. In fact 4 of them. Still nice to see, but not the hoped for jackpot. 2 Med Gulls flew over and 22 Whimbrel called as they flew over the East Flood.

### 19 July 2014.

Secretly we hoped that Oak Eggar would turn into a Scarce Tortoiseshell so today we were back at Oare checking anything that moved. The Oak Eggar numbers increased to 6 but none turned into the Scarce T. There was many Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Large Whites, Small Skippers and even 2 Peacocks, but nothing that resembled the star that was being reported in reasonable numbers from East Anglia.

Around tea time I received a phone call from Ruckinge asking where we were. I was taken back by this as we had no reason, or so we thought, to be in that area. I left a message that we have a **Monarch** butterfly in our wildlife garden was the urgent voice. Your joking was my shocked reply, knowing that they really would not do that to us. Followed immediately by we are on our way. We arrived just in time to watch it fly into a tree to roost. Three other people were already there and had seen it well.

There has followed a discussion on its potential origins, with the feeling being that a wild origin could not be ruled out and was probably favourite, based on weather patterns, likely source of origin and time of year. (Less than a week later a Continental Swallowtail was seen near Whitstable, Kent).

### 20 July 2014.

A trip to Dungeness found us looking at Angle-stripped Sallow, another rare moth trapped. Together with Waved Black trapped near Biddenden this was a good morning. Made even better when a phone call said that the Monarch butterfly was back in the garden. This time we managed to get a few photos, (already published in previous dairy updates), before the on set of some of the worst rain we have seen for a long time. Despite this we found it again roosting in the same tree and 4 other people managed to connect with it.

Another Four Spotted Footman, Reed Dagger, Sycamore and Elephant Hawkmoth were on show.

### 21 July 2014.

I understand that the Monarch was seen briefly before it departed not to be seen again.

So ended another very enjoyable period of wildlife watching.



*Southern Emerald Damselfly at Cliffe RSPB.*



*Willow Emerald Damselfly near Marshside (Kent).*

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 06-Aug-14 01:24 PM GMT

### It gets harder

With a change in the weather on some days, becoming cooler and unsettled, butterflies and moths have been harder to come by. Some nights have seen very poor catches of moths here in Kent. However, we still have managed to connect with some good moths and are very grateful to those who invite us to see their goodies.

### 22 July 2014.

A visit to Dungeness found many Common Blues and Peacocks but little else butterfly wise. A Plumed Fan Foot was on show, whilst later in the day we saw Kent Black Arches and Olive at our good friends at Ruckinge.

### 23 July 2014

Following another reported sighting of Scarce Tortoiseshell at Oare Marshes we again scoured any likely spot there, but without success. Interestingly the numbers of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks were much higher than a few days back.

### 24 July 2014.

Again we checked Oare Marshes for any Scarce Tortoiseshells, but again none present. We are destined not to connect with this species, at least in the current influx. Birdwise it was quiet with just a Ruff and Spotted Redshank present in addition to the usual more common waders.

On the way home we called in at a site for Broad Leaved Helleborine and noted over 100 in flower. This year so far they seem to have escaped the attention of the local deer population. Also noted was 9 Brimstone.

### 25 July 2014

Today was a Dungeness day and what a good choice. There was many Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Common Blues on the wing. Also nice to see was 4 Brown Argus. Dragonflies were represented by Emperor Dragonfly, Southern, Brown and Migrant Hawkers. Moths were good too with Jersey Tiger, Tissue, Pigmy Footman, Dusky Hook Tip and Small Phoenix.

### 26 July 2014.

A good night with our garden moth trap with our 3rd White Point of the year, also included a Shaded Broad-bar and 4 Silver Y's, suggesting some migration going on.

### 28 July 2014.

A quiet day saved by our friends at Ruckinge. They had trapped a Marsh Oblique barred Minor. A very rare moth in Kent.

### 29 July 2014.

With little changing at more common sites we decided to visit Pett Level today. There was a good showing of Small Tortoiseshells, also 25 Sand Martins and 15 Little Egrets, but again a little disappointing.

We decided to divert to Dungeness and although there was a good showing of butterflies of the more common species, there was no sign of any scarcer ones.

A Black Tern and 3 Common Sandpipers were suggestive of some migration.

### 30 July 2014.

Back to Oare Marshes but again little change in butterfly numbers or species. Birds included 2 adult Curlew Sandpipers and 5 Ruff.

### 31 July 2014.

The garden moth trap produced a new for the garden in the form of the Ear Moth. We undertook a butterfly transect in the Hamstreet wood complex and noted 2 White Admirals and a number of Ringlets still on the wing. Otherwise it was rather disappointing with regards numbers.

#### **01 August 2014.**

Back into the Hamstreet Wood complex for our second butterfly transect this week, (covering someone whilst they have a operation). This time we connected with a Silver Washed Fritillary, 2 more White Admirals and a Purple Hairstreak. The place was awash with Peacocks with a decent showing of Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones, with a few tatty Ringlets. The Hamstreet complex has great potential for butterflies, with just a little more management by the Forestry Commission or volunteers, it could rise above the already high level its at. Regular Purple Emperor is a possibility and should be a goal. Maybe even the reintroduction of Pearl Bordered Fritillary. Now that's an idea to put forward.

#### **02 August 2014.**

Today was catch up day with the Willow Emerald Damselfly at Chislet. Its early in the season but we only managed to find 7 individuals. This is a location that suffered badly in the winter floods. Whether this will affect the numbers of this rare British Damselfly remains to be seen. Really good numbers of Gatekeepers noted but the numbers of Small Tortoiseshells has fallen off.

A few photos to sort and add at a later date.

Best wishes

Dave

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 11-Aug-14 08:38 PM GMT

With continuing concerns over the possibility of collectors it is unlikely that I will be reporting on a successful visit to the Map butterflies in Dorset. I think the potential for these to be of wild origin is low, but you you never know in this world of climate change. It is a butterfly that is expanding its range and the site is on the south coast, two plus's in their favour. Anyway, for now, they are not available to the masses.

#### **Sunday 03 August 2014.**

With reasonable weather predicated we thought that it was time to catch up with the Black Darters in Ashdown Forest. We did have a brief look for the Short Toed Eagle, just in case it should still be around, but unreported. We had no joy, and since it must be a month since it's last sighting it's presumably back on the continent somewhere. A walk to the pools was pleasant but only revealed Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Large White and a Brimstone. Dragonfly activity at the pools was restricted by the occasional passing clouds but did include 2 male Black Darters, 7 Small Red Damselflies, 2 Keeled Skimmers, Four Spotted Chaser and Emperor Dragonfly. A number of Redstarts and Willow Warblers were seen but no sign of Woodlark and the Tree Pipits had gone quiet.

A detour on the way home saw 25 Green Flowered Helleborine near Eynsford ( I believe Kent's only site) and a Small Rufous (moth) at our friends at Ruckinge.

#### **Monday 04 August 2014.**

An afternoon at Oare Marshes seeing the usual waders although a flock of 15 Whimbrel was nice. Butterflies were mainly Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers. No sign of any Clouded Yellow at what is a fairly reliable spot.

#### **Tuesday 05 August 2014.**

A warm day meant a visit to Dungeness was on the cards. If any Clouded Yellow migration was going on this is as good a spot as any. Our luck was in as we spotted one individual near the sea watching hide, also a Hummingbird Hawkmoth. We also counted 30 Common Blues and 4 Small Tortiseshells. As we continued our walk we received a message that a Rest Harrow (moth) had been trapped overnight by a local and as available for viewing. A little while later was saw this very rare British moth. I believe there are only three or four colonies in Britain, with one being on private land at the Power Station. So it was pleasing to see this little gem following our last sighting some twenty years at Sandwich. Also present were 2 Channel Island Pugs, another fairly scarce, but increasing, British moth.

#### **Thursday 07 August 2014.**

Back to Dungeness, although much quieter today. We did see another Clouded Yellow, this time on the RSPB. Also a few Brown Argus and good numbers of Common Blues and Meadow Browns. Bird wise it was pretty quiet.

#### **Friday 08 August 2014.**

Another Dungeness visit for butterflies. This time finding 2 Clouded Yellows and a very worn Painted Lady. Still many Common Blues, 3 Small Tortiseshells and 2 Brown Argus. A few more birds about today including a Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, 2 Black Tailed Godwits, 2 Garganey, 200 plus Sand Martins, 2 Water Rails (in font of screen hide, ARC pit), and a Yellow Wagtail.

#### **Saturday 09 August 2014.**

Despite the strong winds it was sunny and fairly warm, so we thought that a visit to Lydden NNR was in order. Although most butterflies were keeping their heads down in the strong wind we did locate 43 Chalkhill Blues, 9 Silver Spotted Skippers, 1 Brown Argus, 4 Common Blue and many Meadow Browns. Considering the wind this was not a bad day and the walk over the hillside was embracing.

Hopefully there is still time for a butterfly goodie, in addition to the Map, to arrive.

Best wishes



*Clouded Yellow at Dungeness.*



*Silver Spotted Skipper at Lydden NNR.*



*Silver Spotted Skipper at Lydden NNR.*



*Silver Washed Fritillary on our butterfly transect at Hamstreet*



*Adult Bonapartes Gull at Oare Marshes*



*Adult Bonapartes Gull at Oare Marshes*



*Male Black Darter at Ashdown Forest*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 15-Aug-14 05:28 PM GMT

A really interesting week. Firstly we found a Silver Spotted Skipper on Wye NNR. Despite numerous visits over the years this is our first ever sighting there, although others have seen them. Second was the finding of a Osprey on our local patch. Only our second record there in over 30 years of watching. We even managed a few photos that have turned out to be record shots. I seemed to have had the camera on the wrong settings which has somewhat reduced the quality. We also had a first ever record for Raven on the same patch. So in summary, a really decent week despite variable weather.

### **SUN 10 Aug 2014.**

First very heavy rain, then strong winds and finally both. No chance of any insects so we decided to do a bit of sea watching at Dungeness. Lots of Gannets and Common Terns moving but not much else. Of note was a small movement of Swifts out in the channel, we saw 35 others saw 100 plus, flying into a raging gale. They were also low over the water and only just avoiding the waves. Why they did not head for shore and safety, which was clearly visible, we do not know.

### **TUES 12 Aug 2014.**

It was still very windy but the sun was shining. Not sure why but we decided to check Wye NNR and in a more sheltered spot we saw our first ever Silver Spotted Skipper at this site. Despite a big search we found no more but no doubt will be back when the sun shines again. Also seen 1 Clouded Yellow, 1 Painted Lady, 8 Chalkhill Blues, 5 Common Blues, 1 Brown Argus, a male Brimstone and 50 plus Meadow Browns. A few miles away we saw 20 Violet Helleborines although most had gone over.

### **WED 13 Aug 2014.**

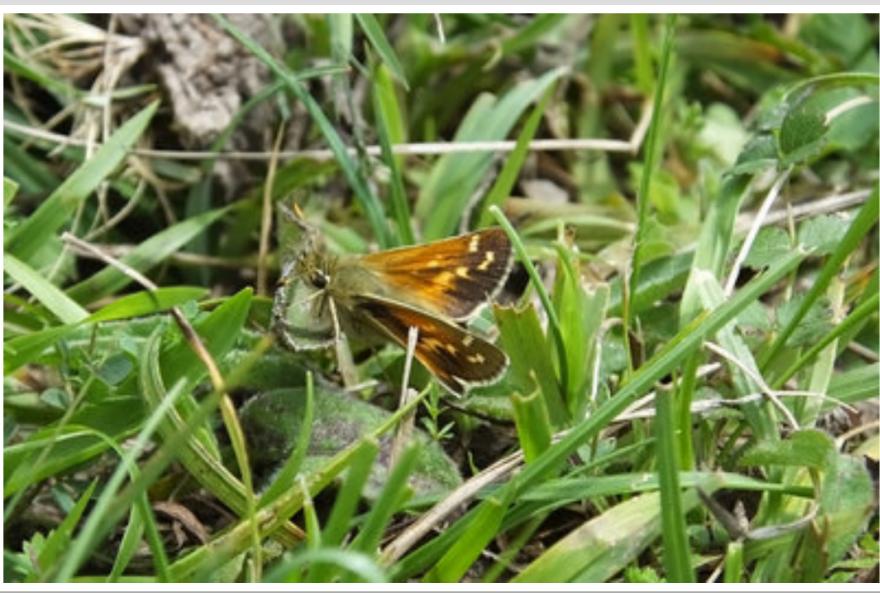
We decided to check Wye NNR again but took a lot longer to arrive than we imagined, for as we drove past Naccolt we suddenly became aware of a Osprey flying and being mobbed by Herring Gulls. It sat on a telegraph post for a while clutching a small fish. After a while it decided it had enough of being mobbed and flew off. It was ringed with a blue ring on the left leg with the initials RJJ in white. We presume that is a Scottish bird. This is only our second ever record in over 30 years of watching this area. Moving on to Wye NNR we were equally surprised to hear and see a Raven flying around the Devils Kneading Bowl area. This is our 1st record for this area. Butterfly wise we refound yesterdays Silver Spotted Skipper, the Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady. Chalkhill Blues numbered 20, with 5 Brown Argus, 8 Common Blues, 40 plus Meadow Browns, 7 Small Tortoiseshells, the male Brimstone and a Peacock. On the way home we were amazed to find the Osprey again, this time on Conningbrook Gravel Pits. The day ended with a Common Buzzard over the house at 16.45 hours.

### **Thur 14 Aug 2014.**

Others had seen the Osprey yesterday evening at Conningbrook so we thought we would check the area again. After a while it reappeared and flew around before landing on a post. Whilst we had been waiting the Raven flew over and away towards Hinxhill. A Clouded Yellow flew through and 3 Common Buzzards were seen plus 2 late Swifts.

We ended the day at Oare Marshes but little new was seen. In fact much the same birds as a week ago.

So ended another period of wildlife watching which we have thoroughly enjoyed.



*Our first ever Silver Spotted Skipper at Wye NNR.*



*Chalkhill Blue at Wye NNR.*



*Record photo of the Osprey. Only our 2nd ever record on our local patch in 30 years of watching.*



*Record photo of the Osprey in flight.*



*Record photo of the Osprey in flight.*

## Re: Dave Brown

by Pauline, 15-Aug-14 06:04 PM GMT

Sounds like an exciting week Dave! For 'record' shots that Osprey isn't half bad – in fact I can just about read the numbers on its ring. You must have been delighted to see it 🍷🍷

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 25-Aug-14 06:42 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline. Yes, the Osprey is always a delight to see, especially here in Kent.

What can we say about the past week. Cold, windy, not August weather at all, and clearly different to June and July when we were treated to glorious sunshine and good insects to match. Its been really hard work seeing butterflies, let alone trying to photograph them.

Friday 15 August 2014.

Saw the Osprey again at Conningbrook but little else of interest.

Saturday 16 August 2014.

Wondering what to do today for a change a text message sent us quickly to Swalecliffe where a **Terek Sandpiper** was on show. Unfortunately it had chosen a popular stretch of beach for its stay and it was not long before first a dog walker, then a kite flyer, flushed the bird, for it to disappear for good. Although it was a very windy day it was surprising crowded with people so we took our leave and called in at Conningbrook. The Osprey was not to be found and presumably had continued on its southerly journey.

Sunday 17 August 2014.

Despite the warm and dry start to the day it was not long before the rain arrived. By that time we had arrived at Dungeness to see 7 Egyptian Geese, 26 Yellow Wagtails, Common Sandpiper, Great White Egret, Black Necked Grebe and 500 plus Sand Martins. Butterflies were few with just a couple of Small Coppers, about a dozen Common Blues and a few Meadow Browns. With black skies all around we headed home before the deluge started only to receive a call as we walked through the front door to say that a Juvenile Montagu's Harrier was showing near Dungeness RSPB reserve entrance. Forty Five minutes later we were watching this magnificent raptor catching dragonflies over the wheat field.

Tuesday 19 August 2014.

Back to Dungeness where the 2 Small Coppers were joined by a Small Heath. Still the Common Blues and Meadow Browns with a decent number of Migrant Hawkers. Birds noted included a Little Ringed Plover, 4 Little Egrets, Common Buzzard, 3 Willow Warblers, Sandwich Tern and 300 Sand Martins.

Wednesday 20 August 2014.

With a hint of warm weather we decided to check East Kent. The Glossy Ibis and 3 Little Egrets showed at Pegwell, together with a few Peacock, Red Admiral and 1 Small Tortoiseshell. 5 Emperor Dragonflies toured the pond fighting each other as they got too close. Then on to Sandwich Bay which was disappointing. We did see a Lesser Whitethroat, Black Cap and 3 Willow Warblers but butterflies were almost non-existent apart from Meadow Browns.

Thursday 21 August 2014.

In strong winds and cloudy weather on Wye NNR we struggled to find butterflies but in the end we were quite pleased with 2 Silver Spotted Skippers, a Clouded Yellow, 20 plus Chalkhill Blues, 9 Brown Argus, many Common Blues and Meadow Blues with 1 Small Tortoiseshell. The cloud came over, the temperature dropped and that was that.

Friday 22 August 2014.

Another day at Dungeness, another day struggling to find insects. A Clouded Yellow and Small Tortoiseshell were the pick of the bunch. Bird wise it was also quiet with Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Garganey, 10 Willow Warblers, Peregrine, Common Sandpiper, Common Buzzard and 2 Little Egrets.

With one or two exceptions the wildlife has not been what you would normally expect for mid August.



*Chalkhill Blue at Wye NNR.*



*A record photo of the distant Montagu's Harrier at Dungeness near the RSPB.*



*Glossy Ibis in flight at Pegwell Bay.*



*Tempted in the open for a snack in the pool this Water Rail was on view for a few minutes at Dungeness RSPB*



*Autumn Ladies Tresses at New Romney (Kent)*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 11-Sep-14 08:15 PM GMT

It has been sometime since I updated this diary. Basically we have been out in the field most days and have had limited time to write up any reports. Have we seen much? Yes we have. Have we taken photos? Yes we have, but had no time to download them. In between all this we had had the Bank Holiday and undertaken a couple of butterfly transects. So since our last update we have tried several times to see Adonis Blue around Wye NNR and failed miserably. The first August/ September period that we can remember not seeing them. We have one more coastal location up our sleeves. Wye NNR has proved disappointing this autumn with numbers of everything appearing well down. On the plus side we have been seeing good numbers of Small Copper at Dungeness. In addition we keep picking out Clouded Yellows, although in small numbers. Wye NNR has also produced the odd Autumn Gentian. A plant always nice to see but with it comes the awareness that Winter is not far away.

Probably our best day this period was Wednesday 27th August, and at Dungeness. We had gone with the intention of seeing the Red Necked Phalarope on the ARC pit, which we duly did. Realising that a small fall of migrants had taken place we searched the area seeing the well camouflaged Wryneck on the ranges. Hearing of news of a Pied Flycatcher in Dengemarsh Gully we arrived to find a small group of the locals also searching when someone called Melodious Warbler. Indeed there was, and showing well. We never did see the Pied Fly that day, but to give a flavour of migration we will list the highlights.

Birds– Melodious Warbler, Wryneck, Red Necked Phalarope, 4 Whimbrel, Redstart, 2 Yellow Wagtails, 2 Black Terns, Arctic Skua, 10 Whinchats, 35 Yellow Wagtails, 6 Wheatears, 300 plus Sand Martins, Lesser Whitethroat, many Whitethroats, 3 Stonechats, 4 Whimbrel, 2 Green Sandpipers, 2 Avocets, 7 Med Gulls, 30 Common Terns and 8 Sandwich Terns.

Insects– Clouded Yellow (along the shore line), a number of Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells also along the shoreline, including one ST that flew out to sea.

Many Migrant Hawkers, in fact hundreds.

One of the best migration days at Dungeness we can remember for some time.

The next day, the 28th August, we checked another migration hotspot call Foreness (near Margate). We had 3 brief views of the Barred Warbler found by one of the hard working locals, but otherwise it was just a few Whinchats and Whitethroats with large numbers of Migrant Hawkers and Large Whites. The next two days were back at Dungeness where the Melodious Warbler and now 2 Wrynecks showed reasonably well but the number of general migrants was reducing each day. We did see a migrant moth called a Cosmoplition, another Clouded Yellow, also a Hummingbird Hawkmoth in our garden.

Catch up to continue over the weekend.

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 12-Sep-14 07:19 PM GMT

Catch up continued.

Sunday 31 August was another good day spent at Dungeness. Still migration going on with a Honey Buzzard, 5 Common Buzzards, 4 Hobbys, Pied

Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 25 Yellow Wagtails, 2 Blackcaps, Garden Warbler, many Willow Warblers, 500 plus Sand Martins, 2 Swifts, the local 2 Ravens and finally a Glossy Ibis flew in over us and landed on Dengemarsh. On the insect front Migrant Hawkers were abundant and at least 10 Red Admirals in the area. Near the sea edge we saw a Turtle Dove, presumably plucking up courage to make the leap into the unknown on the migration challenge. A real scarce bird these days and a much welcome surprise.

The next day, Monday, was much of the same although numbers were down. 2 Spotted Redshank and a Curlew Sandpiper had arrived on the RSPB. The Hummingbird Hawk moth visited our garden again.

Tuesday 02 September saw numbers pick up gain with at least 5 Spotted Flycatchers present along with all the usual migrants. A Great White Egret arrived but best of all the numbers of butterflies had risen. Another Clouded Yellow was seen, as was several Small Coppers, 5 Common Blues, Meadow Browns, Small Tortoiseshells, Small Heaths and a Red Admiral. We called in to see our friends at Ruckinge where they had trapped overnight the Cliffden Nonpareil and 2 Chinese Characters (moths).

Wednesday 03 September we undertook our two butterfly transects. Good numbers of Red Admirals seen, together with Commas, Brimstones, Speckled Woods and some rather tatty looking Meadow Browns. No surprises but then it is a woodland in early September.

Friday 05 September. What a day. Nothing rare but the sort of day we dream about at Dungeness. A big fall of migrants seen by us that included 11 Pied Flycatchers, 16 Spotted Flycatchers, 4 Redstarts, 2 Stonechats, Black Redstart, 3 Blackcaps, 7 Whinchats, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, with many Wheatears, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Sand Martins and Swallows. The sun had brought the insects out with Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Clouded Yellow, 14 Small Copper, 7 Small Heaths, 10 Common Blues, Brown Argus and dozens of Migrant Hawkers. The observatory moth trap included Pale Grass Eggar, Feathered Gothic and Chinese Character. Some day.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Sep-14 03:56 PM GMT

Moving forward.

Saturday 06 Sept 2014 was another Dungeness day. The number of migrant birds had reduced considerably so we concentrated on Butterflies. Although we found good numbers of Small Heath, Small Copper, Common Blue and Red Admiral little else was found.

Sunday 07 Sept 2014. We toured Walland Marsh finding many House Martins and Yellow Wagtails. Despite being only 20 minutes away, when news broke of a Red Backed Shrike found on Dungeness RSPB we arrived to find quite a large group of birders already present. Where do they come from? Anyway, it showed well to all comers during the course of the morning. Later a few of us scanned the skies nearby for raptor movement and clearly some was taking place. Many people stopped and asked us what we were looking at, but on our reply of Common Buzzards they all instantly drove off. Had they stayed they would have seen the Honey Buzzard that passed with 5 Common Buzzards, bringing our total to 19 Common Buzzards. Lack of patience, probably driven by instant news access. If its not on Twitter it can't be there, seems to be the trend. All the common migrants were seen in the area but butterflies were down. Migrant Hawkers however were numerous.

Monday 08 Sept 2014. Probably our last search of Wye NNR of the year. Yet again we saw no Adonis Blue. Meadow Browns hang on with 24 individuals seen, plus 8 Common Blue and a late and very tatty Chalkhill Blue.

Tuesday 09 Sept 2014. Back to Dungeness but things were quiet. 2 Great White Egrets and 2 Ravens present on Dengemarsh. A Merlin passed over the RSPB entrance track. The ARC found 2 Spotted Flycatchers, 10 Blackcaps, Kingfisher and many Willow Warblers.

Thursday 11 Sept 2014. We were on our way to Dungeness when news broke of a Barred Warbler in the desert. It's not really a desert as in sand, but an area of excavated beach that is all pebbles with some vegetation. It showed well with patience to the 10 or so people present. One good thing about the slog around the desert is the fact that butterflies can be found. We saw 15 Small Coppers, 11 Small Heaths, 6 Red Admirals and a Common Blue. Birds seen around the area included the Glossy Ibis, 2 Black Necked Grebes, 2 Whinchats and many Sand Martins, Swallows.

Friday 12 Sept 2014 was a poor day at Dungeness. The brisk easterly wind meant very little new was seen although 2 Whimbrel, 4 Wheatears with many Sand Martins, Yellow Wagtails and Swallows kept us interested.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 28-Sep-14 07:49 PM GMT

A feature of our butterfly watching the last few weeks has been the number of Small Coppers and Clouded Yellows sighted. The downside has been our failure to record Adonis Blue, and Saturday 13 September was no exception, when we visited St Margarets (Kent). We did see 9 Red Admirals, 9 Speckled Woods, a Common Blue and best of all, a Painted Lady. The Autumn Ladies Tresses around the Monument had all but gone over.

Sunday 14 September was to see us back at Dungeness where 15 Small Heaths, 6 Small Coppers, 7 Common Blues, 4 Red Admirals and a Clouded Yellow were on show. At the Observatory was a Dusky Thorn moth and birds seen included Great White Egret, Little Egret, 4 Stonechats, 2 Wheatears and many Sand Martins.

Tuesday 16 September Dungeness delivered only our second ever Pale-shoulder Cloud (moth). Still a mega moth for Britain although a few have been seen the last 5 years between Folkestone and Dungeness. There has been something like 10 records in the last decade so perhaps one to watch for the future. It was hard to follow that act although 4 Clouded Yellows, 15 Small Heaths, 12 Small Coppers and a Glossy Ibis tried their best.

Wednesday 17 September 2014 found us at Pett Level but it was very disappointing with only 2 Bearded Tits and 75 Swallows of interest. On the way home we called in at our Ruckinge friends to see Brown-spot Pinion, Snout and Flounced Rustic.

Thursday 18 September was back to Dungeness for a fine Golden Twin Spot was on show, another scarcity, alongside a Gold Spot for comparison. Both very smart moths in their own right. Also another Dusky Thorn was present. For a change a migrant birds were present with Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Yellow Wagtail all seen, together with hundreds of Swallows and a few Sand and House Martins.

Friday 19 September, for ever the optimist, found us yet again at Dungeness looking at much the same as yesterday although 10 Whinchats were present. Butterflies had been struggling all week so it was no surprise when we only found 5 Red Admirals, a Small Copper and Small Heath.

Nighttime found us in Hamstreet woods watching a moth trapping session. It was slow going but 11 Oak Lutestrings were noteworthy, as was 3 Copper Underwings and 2 Oak Hooktips.

Saturday 20 September. Yes you have guessed. Dungeness again, but the only real change was that Great White Egret numbers had increased to 4 and the Raven was back. A surprise was finding a Meadow Brown butterfly in reasonable condition.

We ended the day on another moth trapping session in Hamstreet Woods. What a evening, with a stunning Cliffden Non Pareil on show supported by the National Scarce B moth called White Line Snout. A new one for us so worth the tired eyes the next morning. For looks the Flame Carpet took some beating.

A good period of wildlife watching tempered by the drastic reduction in butterfly species being seen. It has to happen sometime in September, but its still a shock to the system when it does. Summer is over.



*Small Copper at Dungeness*



*Small Copper at Dungeness*



*Small Copper at Dungeness*



*Meadow Brown at Dungeness . Not bad condition for late September.*



*Melodious Warbler at Dungeness*



*Juvenile Yellow Legged Gull at Dungeness. (Hopefully I have got this right).*



*Juvenile Yellow Legged Gull at Dungeness. (Hopefully I have got this right).*



*Record photo of the Red Backed Shrike*

**Re: Dave Brown**

by David M, 28-Sep-14 10:17 PM GMT

That Meadow Brown **has** to be a recent emergee. The sex brands are noticeable even in a photograph.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 01-Oct-14 03:06 PM GMT

### BLUE IS MY FAVOURITE COLOUR.

Thanks David for your observation. I also came to that conclusion despite the late date of 20 September. We have seen it several more times since but probably unlikely to find a mate.

Its been a strange sort of September with some species in good numbers i.e. Small Copper. One feature that has applied to most areas is the lack of migrant moths. Here in Kent most locations are reporting a large drop in the number of species caught nightly. Occasionally one night or one species bucks that trend. This year in Kent it has been the magnificent Clifden Nonpareil, also nicknamed the Blue Underwing, that has stood out. It is mainly a immigrant species with annually less than 10 records for the whole of Britain. We ourselves had only seen 3 up to this year, but remarkably have seen 4 so far in September. We are aware of a minimum of 23 records this September so far spread over East and Mid Kent. Photographs indicate that most, if not all, are different specimens. This is based on plumage wear and condition, with a few having nicks out of them.

Not only is this important in terms of moths, as it could be breeding locally in addition to some immigration, but previous good numbers have sometimes been associated with the arrival of Camberwell Beauty. So keep them eyes peeled.

I know that we have shown a photo of the Clifden Nonpareil last year but could not help posting more photos from this year. One shows two individuals caught together on Monday night, another shows one in the hand to give an indication on size (they are big and beautiful), the last shows one from the underside as it tries to climb out of the pot. Those who have seen one will know why mothers get excited about this species. Those who have yet to have that privilege have a real treat to look forward too. We are not aware of any claims of Camberwell Beauty accompanying them yet but you never know.

I would like to thank our good friends at Ruckinge and Biddenden for the information on numbers and access for photographs.



*Two Clifden Nonpareils.*



*Clifden Nonpareil in the hand. They are big.*



*The underside of Clifden Nonpareil as it tries to climb out of the pot. This photo does not do justice to its beautiful underside.*



*Pale-shoulder Cloud. A rare immigrant with less than 20 British records ever.*



*Golden Twin-Spot caught at Lydd on Sea. A scarce immigrant.*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 21-Oct-14 03:57 PM GMT

### **Its raining Ouzels.**

Well Ring Ouzels that is. Most years we get a few at Dungeness. If we see ten then we consider that a really good day. However, the 14th October 2014 will long be remembered as the day they fell out of the sky. We ourselves saw well over 400 that day, but the Observatory count was 550. There was still a few around the next day but most moved on during the 14th. It was not 400 in one go but a steady trickle from mid-morning, although one flock did hold 72 birds. Most impressive.

On our last update we mentioned the Clifden Nonpareil. We are aware of at least 3 further sightings but not one sighting of the much hoped for Camberwell Beauty. During this period Clouded Yellows and Red Admirals have been numerous at Dungeness, and at least one out of range Black Darter, but no Beauties.

### **1st October to 15th October 2014.**

Butterflies seen include Clouded Yellow, (maximum of 14 at Oare Marshes on the 10th), Small Copper, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood. Dragonflies include many Migrant Hawkers, Common Darters, Ruddy Darter, Common Blue. Moths have included the scarce Marsh Mallow, Feathered Beauty and Cypress Carpet. Insect wise we have seen Southern Oak Bush Cricket and the Western Conifer Bug.

Bird wise it has been a little disappointing considering the time of the year apart from the Ring Ouzel. Other species seen include Cattle Egret, Red Kite (near Faversham), Curlew Sandpiper, Raven, 3 Yellow Browed Warblers (all at Dungeness), Woodlark and American Golden Plover (Scotney). We have

joined in with the Black Art of sea watching on several occasions, seeing 2 Balearic Shearwater, Great and Arctic Skuas. It seems a decent list but October normally brings many more migrant species.

We resisted the temptation to join the crowds and twitch the long staying Masked Shrike near Kilnsea and the Steppe Grey Shrike in Norfolk, preferring to relax looking for that something special here in Kent. Despite the poor weather on some days we have seen lots of Red Admirals, including some heading out into the Channel. Hopefully there is still time for one good butterfly or moth.

Photo's to follow.

## Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 14-Nov-14 04:35 PM GMT

### 16th October to 12th November 2014.

Its been a while since I updated our sightings but it's not been a very productive period, or at least not as good as we hoped it would be. Moth migration has almost stopped, with birds and butterflies not doing much better. There have been a few surprises and treats, one being our latest ever Painted Lady on 6th November (Reculver, Kent). We also have seen a Clouded Yellow and 2 Large Whites on the 4th November (again Reculver, Kent). We are also still seeing the odd Red Admiral with our last one so far on the 12th November. Other butterflies seen in the above period are Comma and Speckled Wood.

Dragonflies have really tapered off but we have still been seeing Common Darter and Migrant Hawker. Decent moths have been Hummingbird Hawkmoth (21st October) in our garden, Red Sword Grass (17th October) Sandwich Bay, Delicate (30th October) Dungeness, Gem (31st October) Dungeness. Other insects include the Southern Oak Bush Cricket (30th October) Dungeness.

Our bird list for the period is reasonable but for the hours we have put in it could have been better, considering the fine weather and ideal migration conditions.

So where do we start, well the 16th was not bad with 2 Yellow Browed Warblers seen and one Woodlark at Dungeness. Then on the 19th a Cattle Egret arrived at Dungeness, with Yellow Legged Herring Gull and 3 Ring Ouzels. The next good day was the 25th October when we ventured over the border to see a fine male Red Breasted Flycatcher at Beachy Head. This bird was a stunner with a glorious red breast, but we failed to get a photograph. Still worth the long journey to see our first ever fully red breast male. All our other sightings have been females or 1st winter birds.

Next day it was back into East Sussex to see the moulting White Winged Black Tern on Castle Water, Rye. The very long walk was enjoyable, not just for the bird but for the 2 Clouded Yellows seen. Our 3rd visit within a week into East Sussex on the 28th October, (perhaps a season ticket is in order), saw a Cattle Egret on Pett Level. A sea watch at Dungeness on the 30th October was productive with a total movement of 1, 206 Brent Geese, 75 Little Gulls and 3 Great Skuas. Next saw a Grey Phalarope sitting on the sea with 65 Med Gulls and 4 Pomarine Skuas.

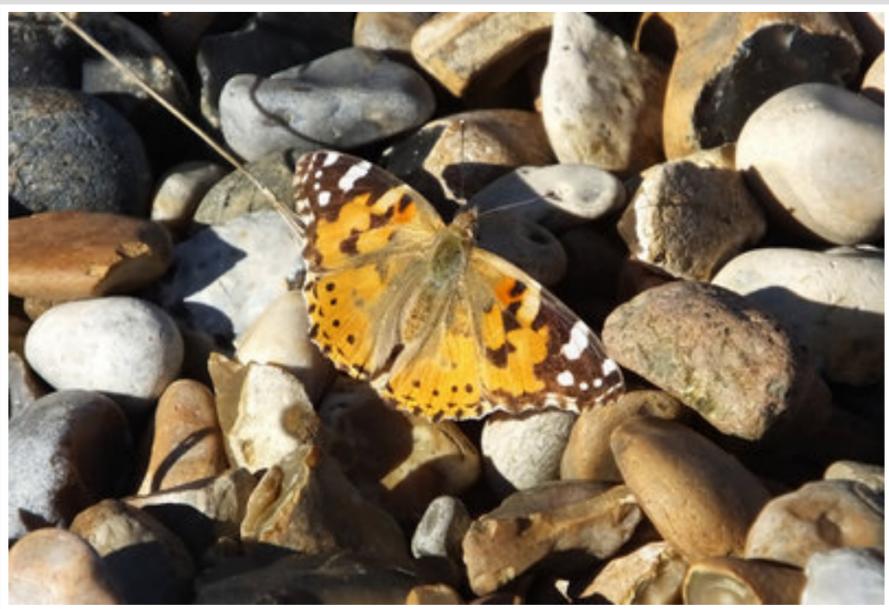
November started with a Dungeness rarity. A fine male Dartford Warbler on the ranges along a public road, with a Long Tailed Duck, 2 Black Necked Grebes and a Bittern on the RSPB. Back to the sea on the 2nd November when a Juvenile Sabine's Gull was on offer for the morning, with a 1st winter Caspian Gull on the RSPB. Tuesday the 4th November saw us watching a fine male Lapland Bunting at Swalecliffe followed next day by 2 Cattle Egrets at Dungeness RSPB.

The 6th November was a fine autumn day enhanced by the sighting of a male DESERT WHEATEAR at Reculver. The next decent day was the 9th November when Dungeness RSPB entertained 6 Great White Egrets and a adult Caspian Gull.

So what should be one of the best periods for bird migration in Kent failed to deliver any Pallas's, Dusky or Raddes Warblers. We also missed the Dungeness Great Grey Shrike and Red Rumped Swallow. Nor was there any Butterfly or moth surprises. Still at least the weather has been mild keeping our energy bills down. There is still time for one last surprise so we will keep looking.

Best wishes.

Dave



*We have seen very few Painted Lady's this year, so this one at Reculver on the 6th Nov was a surprise.*



*A late Clouded Yellow at Dungeness.*



*Yellow Browed Warbler trapped at Dungeness Observatory.*



*Distant record photo of the moulting White Winged Black Tern at Castle Water, Rye.*



*Lapland Bunting seen at Swalecliffe.*



*One of many Ring Ouzels seen at Dungeness this autumn.*



*One of at least 6 Great White Egrets currently at Dungeness.*



*Part of one on the many flocks of Brent Geese that passed Dungeness in October and early November.*



*Little Egret at Pett Level. Now a very common sight in Britain.*



*These Egyptian Geese at Dungeness are now becoming regular in Kent , having spread out of their Norfolk stronghold.*



*Moulting Grey Plover at Oare Marshes.*

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by Goldie M, 15-Nov-14 10:57 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, the Warbler photo is great, I was at Reculver in July and saw my first of the year Painted Lady there so your shot of the PL brought a pleasant memories back to me Goldie 😊

## **Re: Dave Brown**

by dave brown, 25-Dec-14 04:54 PM GMT

### **13th November 2014 to 25th December 2014.**

Firstly, best wishes to everyone for a really happy Christmas. For most people it is a family time of fun and togetherness. We are no exception, but do go out birding on Xmas Day morning (well there are no butterflies out at the moment). To our surprise today we also saw a few other birders out and about. How times have changed. When we first started birding on Xmas Day, about 25 years ago, we would see no one else, so had the chance to experience walking in solitude. Now the roads are busy and others are doing the same.

Well the period in question has been interesting on occasions but repetitive on others. An emergency visit to the dentist on the 16th November proved very interesting. I had an emergency appointment at Canterbury and was driving along the A28 past Chilham when a bird caught my eye. I knew immediately that it was a Great Grey Shrike but could not stop at the time. Following treatment I returned past the same spot and there it was again. This time I confirmed the ID then put the news out. Being so close to the road, and plenty of parking available, this showy bird has proved very popular with a few hundred people visiting during its so far stay of 6 weeks. A really smart bird that has become quite faithful to one particular field. Its been seen to take a wide range of prey, even storing some on thorny bushes.

Dungeness has had its moments, with one of the best being when 3 Cattle Egrets appeared in the same field. Two are still present, although they moved to the Cattle along Dengemarsh road. Despite the nearby factory and scrap car dealer they often move to within 50 metres of the road, affording everyone good views of this former and much sought after mega rarity. A day at Dungeness at present should yield Cattle Egret, up to 6 Great White Egrets, several Little Egrets, up to 4 Black Necked Grebes, a 1st winter Scaup, several Goldeneyes, Smew and Gossanders. Caspian and Yellow Legged Gulls are regular, as are wintering Firecrests. Nearby Walland Marsh marsh is holding 28 Bewick Swans, 1 Whooper Swan and 4 Bean Geese, often in the same field. In summary Dungeness makes a good day at the moment.

Little else is happening in Kent at present, although the American White Ibis present at Sevenoaks KWT reserve provides a talking point. It is probably an escape but the interest waxes and wanes depending on the current view. No one has so far traced an escape origin. No one has owned up to the loss of such a valuable bird. It arrived at the end of the Autumn migration period and following strong winds. Its a juvenile bird, meaning it was born this summer. Juveniles are more likely to get lost and wander due to lack of experience. No trace has been found of a breeding captive pair so far. It has been visited by many of the top twitchers, many of whom probably think its an escape but hope thats its not. So an interesting bird found on a reserve that is nice to visit for a change.

You will have noted that so far that the theme has been about birds. Basically insects have finished for the year but we have been lucky to see the odd Peacock and Red Admiral in periods of warm sunshine, but nothing for 3 weeks. On the 26th November our last moth of the year was a beautiful Mottled Umber.

Hopefully there is still time for one more goodie before the year is out, but if not we have still enjoyed 2014.

Dave

Goldie- Pleased you have happy memories of your visit to Kent. Reculver is an interesting location and provides a nice seaside walk.



*Probably our last Peacock of the year, basking in the sun at Dungeness RSPB.*



*The Chilham (Kent) Great Grey Shrike.*



*The two Cattle Egrets at Dungeness (sorry only one caught in full view).*



*Whooper Swan on Walland Marsh. A scarce Kent bird that has joined the Bewick and Mute Swan flock.*