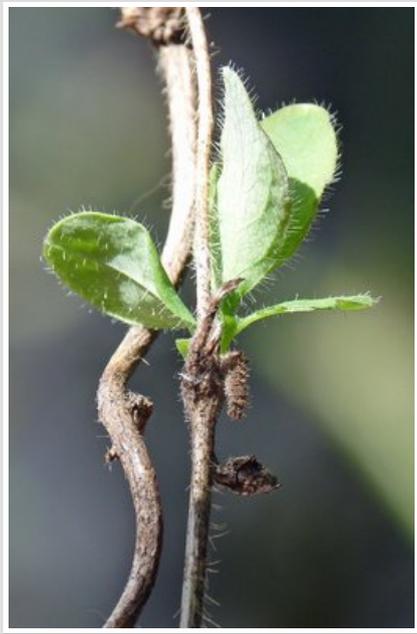


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Apr-15 12:17 AM GMT

Thank you so much guys. It has been a hectic Winter but I have managed to keep in touch from time to time with a few of my favourite diaries. One of these is Guy's diary and when he commented on White Admiral larva in March I thought perhaps I had better check my Honeysuckle plant. I didn't have high hopes of finding anything – in fact, I didn't have any hope. The plant had been largely discarded following the problems at the end of last season – storms and slugs to name a couple. I had become convinced that my cats were doomed and had accepted that Pete was right – they would have been better off in the wild. It was April 1st when I looked and I was stunned to discover one of the cats had survived. It was still really tiny – only about 3mm and so well camouflaged:



The nurturing instincts kicked in and I immediately wanted to 'protect' it but hey, it had survived the Winter all by itself. Trouble is, the slugs were still a problem and now that it was visible the birds were beginning to take an interest, in particular an inquisitive Robin. If I put it in a mesh cage then I would be shutting it in with the slugs but I was given advice to put a lettuce leaf in the cage. This worked a treat as 8 slugs emerged from the potted Honeysuckle and were removed on the lettuce. Over the next week or so the second cat became visible and at the moment I am pleased to report that both are doing well.





I have already learned such a lot about the White Admiral from this and I hope I shall learn more as the cats develop.

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 18-Apr-15 12:33 AM GMT

Good to hear from you again, Pauline – and I'm delighted your white admiral cats have made it through the winter! I was wondering what had become of them ...

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 18-Apr-15 04:43 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Cracking first report and photos for the new season 😊, hope you and all your charges are well.

All the best ,

Neil

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 18-Apr-15 06:29 AM GMT

Brilliant, Pauline. I'm so pleased two of your caterpillars survived fit and healthy. I too have been following Guy's diary, and it amazes me how these tiny creatures get through the depths of winter tucked away in their dead leaf "sleeping bags". I shall now follow the progress of your charges with great interest! 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Apr-15 02:44 PM GMT

Good to be back Guy – thank you for your comment.

Thanks Neil. Pleased to say charges are doing well albeit with large vets bills 😊 You might remember my wild rabbit. Photo below:

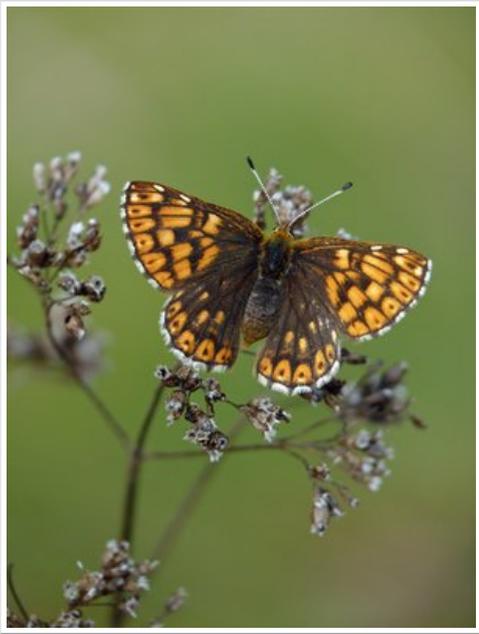


I have managed to find her a friend for company:



Thank you Dave. It is so interesting and I am excited at the prospect of being able to monitor them. I shall certainly keep you informed.

Last year on 13 April I was on Noar Hill taking photos of the Duke. I popped up there this year but it was fairly cool and cloudy and no Dukes were seen. Following Mike's report of the Dukes the following day I decided to return and managed a few shots before it started to rain:





Being so close to this site I am sure to be back to take another look for that gorgeous ab. Mike photographed.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 18-Apr-15 03:02 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Good to see you back after a long winter. You certainly returned with a bang with those exquisite Duke shots. Not too long before i'll see you at Botany Bay.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 18-Apr-15 06:32 PM GMT

Super Duke shots! I especially like the first one. Suddenly, after a slow start, everything is appearing at once.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 18-Apr-15 06:39 PM GMT

Lovely Duke of Burgundy shots, Pauline 😊 It's interesting that your photos show female(s) DOB. We saw only females (4) during our visit last Wednesday! Where are the males??

Mike

Re: Pauline

by David M, 19-Apr-15 08:27 AM GMT

Yes, nice to see you back, Pauline, and thanks for the White Admiral 'cat' update.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 19-Apr-15 06:54 PM GMT

Love the White Ad caterpillar pictures. Knock spots of my attempts the other day! Also very jealous of your Duke pictures, a species I've yet to see, hopefully the next few weeks will change that though.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-15 10:46 PM GMT

Lovely Duke photos Pauline, things seems to be at least two weeks behind here at present which might have done me a favour, I had an eye operation on Friday so I've to rest up for a few days all being well I'll be on the move next week.

Glad you found a friend for your Rabbit , also glad to see you back, look forward to seeing more lovely pic's Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Apr-15 11:26 PM GMT

Hi Trevor, good to hear from you. Wood White will be out any day now at BB weather permitting. See ya there 😊

Thanks Mike – appreciate your comment. Yes, it's all happening now.

Not as good as yours Mike! – and still no ab (collected or eaten?). Bumped into Nick and he reminded me that females were out 1st last year. I'll be taking note next year. Thank you for your comment.

Thank you David and Bugboy. One of the WA cats appears to have just moulted (old skin can be seen just above cat in photo). This one is now about 5mm and the other a couple of mm smaller:



Gosh Goldie, are you OK? Sorry to hear about the op. Hope you're on the mend soon. I appreciate your compliment.

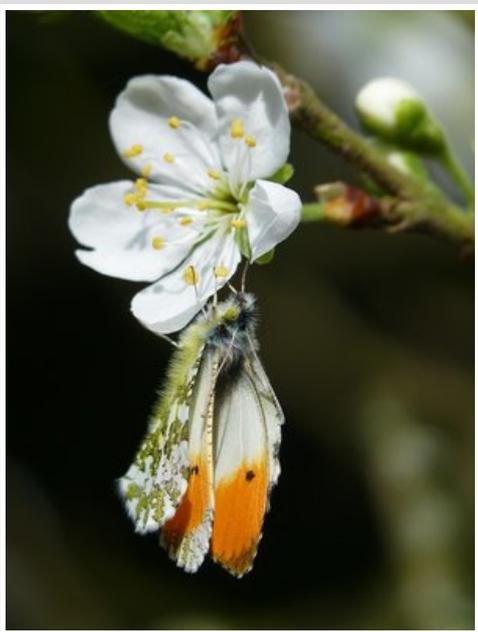
Last year I decided to try to rear a couple of OT cats but when they pupated they did so on the mesh cage instead of the sticks provided which was always going to make photography difficult. I was therefore delighted when quite by chance I found a pupa on the garlic mustard by the poultry shed. I protected this pupa all Winter and kept the hens away, watching with interest as it started to colour up recently, a sure sign that it was close to emerging:



Last Sunday evening a neighbour came round to apologise that one of her cats had caught one of my Doves and it was badly ripped open. The vet prescribed antibiotics before arranging to stitch her up on Wednesday morning. It was a local vet and I was only out 30 mins but when I got back I was greeted by this:



Neither did I see the male emerge in the cage but I managed a few shots afterwards:





Ah well, there's always next year! 😊

(As I type I have been watching a female OT 'roosting' on my Wallflowers for the past couple of hours – can't help wondering if she is 'mine')

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Apr-15 08:06 PM GMT

before I leave the OT's for another season, a quick update on the female from yesterday on the Wallflowers:



Before dusk she was joined by another female and there they spent the night:





As I type at mid-day one of the females has left but the other is still hanging about on a Cuckoo plant enjoying the sun – or perhaps just waiting for a passing male 😊



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 20-Apr-15 10:17 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

You'll have to send some of your Orange Tips over here, they seem to be few and far between in East Sussex at the moment , sightings could be counted on one hand !.

Well done with rearing some 😊 .

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Apr-15 01:07 AM GMT

I'll do my best Trevor – I'm sure they'll be there soon. Thank you for the compliment but these must be the easiest cats to rear as they did it all by themselves 😊 I think more must have pupated round the garden than I realised! I wasn't going to talk about OT's anymore but I feel I must now finish the story.

I was wondering if this particular female was OK as she was showing no sign of wanting to move (in almost 24 hours and it had been sunny for hours) when a Small White came along and started to nectar in the plum tree, quite close to her:



He soon made a beeline for her and she was forced to abandon her Cuckoo plant. Now I am not very good at shots of moving butterflies (here's your chance John if you should happen to be reading 😊) but I will post the shots anyway by way of illustration. For almost 15 mins he pursued her around the garden and it was clear that all she wanted to do was to get back to her plant which she repeatedly tried to do:





Eventually she managed to shake him off and settled back on her plant – she was still there a couple of hours later when I went out. When I returned she was gone so I hope she wasn't picked off by one of the birds.

Back to my WA cats. I am just so thrilled to watch these cats growing and thriving so I hope you will bear with me as I post yet another shot taken today:



They are looking like proper little cats now. I have recently found a couple of cats in the wild and I was reassured to see that they are at about the same level of development as 'my' cats.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-15 03:19 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, great action shots of the Orange-tip and Small white. I also really like the Orange-tip images with the blurred flowers (I presume) in the background 😊

Looking forward to see your little cats develop.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Apr-15 11:48 PM GMT

Thank you Neil. Yes, they are Wallflowers of some sort. I, too, am really excited about the prospect of watching my cats develop but at the same time terrified in case anything goes wrong. They seem to be growing almost daily now.

For completeness I should start at the beginning. My very first outing this year was on 8 April to Pulborough Brooks. I could not resist the possibility of

seeing a Scarce Tortoiseshell so close to me but as luck would have it, the butterfly was there most of the day on the 7th and 9th – case of right place, wrong time. The best shot I got all day was a Blackcap. I get these birds coming into the garden but what was different about this photo was that it wasn't blurred! I seem to have a lot of difficulty with bird photography:



I recently made a trip to Botany Bay but just a little too early for the Wood White. I was lucky enough to get a lift from Philip who stopped the car so I could take this shot of a Red-legged Partridge:



Today I decided to stay close to home and on a local common saw ants whipped into a frenzy. I stopped to see the reason for the commotion and noted several of these grubs were being attended to by the ants. I hadn't realised that ants had 'relationships' with anything other than butterflies – a bit naive I guess. I'd be interested to know what this creature will become if anyone has a clue:



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 22-Apr-15 12:18 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Just reading about your trip to see the Scarce Tortoiseshell. As it was seen on the days either side of your visit I think you were a victim of a well known law. The one that's named after a lump of earth!

I fall victim to it all the time. (Lovely shot of the Partridge).

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 23-Apr-15 12:02 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,
Thanks for the Orange Tips . Now i would like you to make sure there are plenty of PE's at Botany Bay this year , but only the type that display with purple on all four wings !. 😊
Hoping to find some Dukes on the way to work tomorrow.

Best wishes ,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Apr-15 02:19 AM GMT

No worries Trevor. Plenty of Dukes here – I'll send a few over. Can't make any promises about PE tho' – I need all I can get, especially those with purple on all wings 😊

Took a bit of finding but got there eventually:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Apr-15 02:07 PM GMT

..... and another 😊



Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 23-Apr-15 05:39 PM GMT

Hi,
Lovely Silver washed Frit cats there Pauline.
Andy

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 24-Apr-15 05:42 AM GMT

Bet those took some finding, Pauline 😊😊 great stuff, nice pics.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by kevling, 24-Apr-15 04:57 PM GMT

Pauline,

Enjoying your diary. Some fantastic photos. I have a soft spot for Orange Tips and love the photos of the freshly emerged examples.

Regards Kev

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Apr-15 05:55 PM GMT

I wondered what it would take to get you to comment Andy 😊😊 Well done for spotting what they were.

You wouldn't believe how difficult Mike. Their camouflage is the best I have come across. I thought it'd be easy and I'd just walk along and find them sunbathing on leaf litter. It wasn't and I didn't 😊

Thanks Kev, I appreciate the comment.

Yesterday was another hectic day. The chaos started at 6.50am with a loud bang on the window. Looking outside I saw a Woodpecker has crashed into the glass and was lying completely out for the count. I have had this happen before (also a male) and last time it took 8 hours for him to regain consciousness. Thankfully, this one opened his eyes after 4 hours in the hospital cage by which time the painters had arrived. I managed a few shots just seconds before he flew over a 60' hedge:



Once I'd got the painters organised I decided to shoot off to Noar Hill but as luck would have it I got a huge nail in my tyre and had to go and get that sorted out. Time was getting on and I didn't have much of it left so I dashed off at last to Noar Hill where I bumped into Rob S (nice chatting to you again Rob – don't forget to post that Duke shot). I took the opportunity to check out 'Andy's' Brown Hairstreak egg and it has now hatched although the other one on the same plant is still intact:



My attention was caught by a Brimstone egg-laying, a task which she performed swiftly and efficiently. I was surprised at the number of eggs she laid on one plant in a very short time (about 6) all facing different directions. It made me think about the effect of temperature on gender determination. In tortoises males are produced in cool temperatures and females in warm. Tortoises have a good sense of smell and in the wild they can tell how many males and females are in a particular area. They then lay their eggs in the appropriate place to redress any imbalance between males and females. I wondered if butterflies are that smart? 🤔 I know that in some insects it is the female gamete which determines the offspring's sex but I really must do more research into butterflies:



I saw my first few Dingy Skippers of the season but then it was time to come back and check my WA cats. You wouldn't believe how much time I spend actually watching these!!



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 24-Apr-15 08:17 PM GMT

You've been posting loads of fascinating photos recently! Apart from demonstrating your own skills, they are a tribute to the versatility of your FZ-38, ranging from that excellent close-up of the Orange Tip to your Blackcap, which I feel I can hear as I look at the photo 😊 I find in-flight shots much more difficult with a 'bridge' than with a 'true' DSLR, so think you did very well with those Whites – difficult subjects even when stationary!

I was interested to read about your Gt-spotted Woodpecker. Because of their tree-drumming behaviour, their brains are well-protected against shocks, so it must have been quite a blow that put it out cold. Perhaps that also explains why, if they *are* knocked out, they take so long to regain consciousness. I've had Sparrowhawks crash into our windows but they only take a few minutes to 'come round' and then glare at me very fiercely!

You are correct about the butterfly sex-chromosomes being the opposite of mammals. There is a lot that is still not understood about the details but the genes are quite different.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Apr-15 02:52 AM GMT

Thank you for your kind and thought provoking comments Mike. Like you, I am not keen just to re-iterate last years performance. I am keen to learn as much as I can and branch out into areas that enthuse and inspire me whatever they might be, experience new things and just be amazed at the natural world. I can't take any credit for finding this amazing moth but the shots were taken at Stedham Common during an outing with other butterfly/moth enthusiasts:



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 25-Apr-15 03:21 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I am really enjoying your latest reports and photos. Some great images, hard to pick out any favourites but I do like that female Emperor Moth 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 25-Apr-15 03:46 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I'll give you 5 out of 10 for finding that Emperor Moth, And another 5 points for the image.

That's 10 out of 10 😊 .

Fantastic !

TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 25-Apr-15 07:09 AM GMT

Wow! Another Emperor moth. Superb find and even better images!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Apr-15 03:28 AM GMT

Thank you so much Neil, Trevor and David – your comments are very much appreciated.

Folk might remember that last year I accidentally stumbled across a couple of trees where many Silver-washed Frits were egg-laying (including a Valensina). Andy was keen to photograph the larva so last year we did a deal. I would take him to this particular area this year if he found me a Puss moth larva. Well, he did so I had to keep my part of the bargain. When I took my photos last week it took me well over an hour to find a cat but Andy is much better at spotting them and bagged his cat in 11.5 mins (not the 10 mins that he claims in his diary 😊). I took advantage of his find to take a few shots of my own as this is a very attractive cat:





On checking my WA cats today I discovered a male OT had just emerged from a pupa I had thought was no longer viable so I just have to post a few shots:





It was quite breezy today which is my usual excuse for shots that are not all in focus 😊

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 26-Apr-15 04:05 AM GMT

Hi Pauline. I think I'm going to have a look for some silver-washed cats tomorrow, as they do look lovely little creatures. Our woods seem to have lots in common! What time of day are you finding them feeding?

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-15 04:53 AM GMT

Fantastic shots recently Pauline the Emperor Moths are great but I'm most envious of the OTs as I'm finding them really difficult to get onto at the moment 🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Apr-15 03:14 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel and good luck with the OT's.

Morning Guy. I have been to this site 5 times now, mostly between late morning and mid afternoon. A couple of times I didn't find anything so I imagine their activities are temperature/weather dependent, as one might expect. They are still quite tiny (between 3-4mm) so I figured they wouldn't yet have gone very far from their original tree. I therefore concentrated my search on the dog violets that were right at the base of the trees (trying to be very careful of where I was standing) and looked for tiny signs of feeding damage, comparable to that which I am seeing from my WA's. I was alarmed to note that there are dozens (if not hundreds) of quite large spiders running around the leaf litter so I hope the cats are not all predated. On finding feeding damage I would examine the plant very carefully and that is how I found my first cat - wrapped round the base of the plant, very well camouflaged, whilst stretching up to nibble a lower leaf. They certainly are attractive and interesting cats and well worth the time spent searching to see one. I hope you have a great deal of success. Please let us know.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 28-Apr-15 12:12 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, just catching up on posts, My eye is a lot better thanks still having to wear an eye patch because the weathers changed, very cold here at present but I'm out and about 😊 I had the other done two years ago and now i'm looking back at some of the photos I took and thinking ooch 😊

Hope fully I'll improve a bit now no excuses 😊 I should be better when I can get rid of the eye patch 😊

Enjoying your photos once again Pauline, they're lovely Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Apr-15 12:06 AM GMT

Thank you for the compliment Goldie. I am very glad to hear that your eye is improving, but as for the photography, well, there is always an excuse 😊 My usual ones are that it was too breezy, the light was no good, I was knocked over by a boisterous dog etc, etc 😊 . I'll try not to use all of them at once 😊

My only outings recently have been to the vet and the weather here has been rubbish so I was desperate to get out. I wanted to see the Green Hairstreaks at Rake Bottom but I am now a bit hesitant to go there alone after the incident with Mark's car and the lads who intimidated me. I went anyway and I am glad that I did. There are times when it is so much nicer just to stand and watch, rather than race about with a camera, and this was one of them. I have never, ever, at any site before, seen so many Grizzled and Dingy Skippers. They were everywhere. It was like someone had thrown brown confetti around - with every step several flew up and on each flower head there was at least one taking advantage of the brief sunshine to nectar.

There were aerial battles involving all 3 species. I had forgotten how variable in colour the Dingies can be –from almost a beige, thru to a much richer brown.

As for the Green Hairstreaks, well, I was surprised how worn many of them were, although a few seemed in very good condition. I only saw about 12 and did not see any exceptional behaviour (no mating or egg-laying). It was just so cold (I had forgotten how windy that valley gets) that any brief interludes of sunshine were used to warm up and take nectar. They were on anything that was in flower – daisy, dandelion, dog violet, wild strawberry etc. I took a few photos, but only a few – and they were not very good. Perhaps because I was so cold (they were hand held), or perhaps because I was tired (I have been up half the night with a sick fox), or perhaps it was because they were continually moving they way they do, rubbing their wings together and turning around, or perhaps it was just that strong breeze – getting the idea Goldie? 😊😄





Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 29-Apr-15 12:28 AM GMT

Well all I can say is I wish my best pictures were as good as your "not very good" ones 😬 I particularly like that first Greeny feeding on the wild strawberry 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 29-Apr-15 01:20 AM GMT

I'll second that Buggy, your photo's look great to me Pauline, but I'll take the hints given 😊😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 29-Apr-15 01:59 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Thanks for your reply, normally i like Moths i can see 😊,like your Emperor Moth the other day. I could certainly get into Hawk Moths and the like.

Yes the Pearls are beautiful at the moment, fresh and unmarked, mostly if not all males.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 29-Apr-15 08:50 PM GMT

Hi again Pauline,

I've just seen your Green Hairstreak images, I think that the third one down is one of the best i've seen.

The light captures the texture of the wings just right. Hoping to get one like that 🍷 .

Regards,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-May-15 12:46 AM GMT

You are very kind Bugboy. That is also my favourite out of the batch. Today I almost didn't get a shot at all of my 'target' (see below) so I was grateful just for the sighting and long-range shots.

I appreciate your comments and encouragement Goldie – thank you.

Good to hear from you Trevor. I'm looking forward to seeing your GH shots if they're as good as the other shots you're posting 😊.Re moths, I'm mostly with you on liking the 'ones I can see' but as others have commented, some of the tiny ones are quite exquisite (once I've got my magnifying glass out 😊😊).

I was thinking that it really is about time the Wood Whites were out at Chiddingfold for the Bank Hol weekend and today I unexpectedly got a chance to pop over there. On arrival I met a lovely couple who were also looking at butterflies. They were telling me that they had recently lost 30 years worth of butterfly slides in a fire at their flat when I saw something small and white fluttering behind them. It was a Wood White. I drew their attention to it but as I adjusted the settings on my camera, a male OT started to pay some unwanted attention and it flew off into the woods 😬 I searched and searched but to no avail. In my head I was composing my diary entry 'oh yeah, I saw a WW today and I didn't even get a rubbishy photo' 😊 I hung around the area for a while looking for larva on willow and nettles and honeysuckle when the OT male returned. He disturbed the WW again which I must have walked past about 6 times. I was taking no chances this time. I took the close-up lens of and took all the pics from a distance so they have been heavily cropped.

Not the sort of shots I usually take but certainly 'in context' 😊



Can you even see it?? 😊





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 01-May-15 03:42 AM GMT

That last shot is well up to standard in my opinion – the others are over-exposed. You should try using the spot meter setting on whites and pale flowers, like primroses, although you then have to be careful not to under-expose 😊 I'm not sure if your camera has exposure bracketing but that might be worth trying as well.

Butterflies still seem a bit sparse in my part of the world. Perhaps the very cold nights are holding them back.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 01-May-15 04:32 AM GMT

Nice Wood White pics and well found, Pauline 😊 I'd also have taken off my close up lens, given that there was just the one 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-May-15 06:39 AM GMT

I really like the second and third shots Pauline, Wood Whites for me are just that little bit too far. 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 01-May-15 06:43 AM GMT

They're difficult subjects, Wood Whites. They dither and tend only to settle briefly and it's always hard to get the exposure right with them.

You did well to get images of them 'sitting still'.

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 01-May-15 06:58 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Just catching up with your diary. Your Silver Washed Frit larvae are a nice find, I might have a look for some of my own. I love your Green Hairstreaks they are one of my favourites 😊 I failed to find any at all at my local site today.

Re: Pauline

by Nick Broomer, 01-May-15 08:18 AM GMT

Mike, you say Pauline's last photo of the Wood White is up to standard, but half the photograph [wings] is out of focus. So are you saying this is standard for Pauline's photography, or the standard set by members of this forum. I think you are wrong on both accounts, as the standard of photography is excellent on this forum.

Sorry for barging in on your P.D. Pauline, but while i'm here, how are your Small Copper larva doing? I would be very interested to know. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-May-15 02:17 PM GMT

As most will know I welcome, indeed encourage, constructive criticism which, over time, has certainly helped to improve my photography and increase my knowledge a little. I must therefore thank Mike for his comments relating to my 'bleached' images – although I suspect you were being kind to me Mike as it is the start of the season and you know that my performance always slips a bit after the Winter 😞 (you could have said an awful lot worse 😊) . Hopefully it will soon pick up again 😊 . However, it was the exposure compensation that I was trying to adjust when the butterfly 'escaped' the first time so I was taking no chances, just intent on getting some record shots. I could not seem to get past -1 so I am not sure whether there is something wrong with the camera in this respect or whether it is just taking longer than usual to respond. On that basis I was interested to read your report on your early experiences with your new Olympus Mike. I hope you will keep us informed on that one in case I need to acquire a replacement.

I have always found members on this forum to provide helpful, encouraging and balanced comments. However Nick, if you have any queries or issues about comments addressed to me by other members, or if you need any explanation or clarification regarding these, could you please take your discussion outside of my PD.

Paul, I was incredibly envious to see your shot of the Painted Lady 🍷 Let us hope there are many more on their way here 😊 . Good luck in your quest for SWF larva – you might need to spend a little time.

You are very kind David – it was quite windy and I had a few problems trying to change the camera settings but I got the record shot I was after. Hopefully I can do a bit better than this as the season progresses.

It is such a pity you are a distance away Wurzel as I would be delighted to show you round this site. Still, I expect we'll get a chance to 'catch up' before too long 😊

Thank you for your comment Mike. I should be saying this in YOUR diary but your recent photos are incredible – love the PH – great observations.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 02-May-15 04:13 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I was wondering didn't you mention a sick Fox you were looking after ? how's the Fox doing I forgot to ask before? Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-15 04:36 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, nice photos of the Wood Whites, a species that I have missed seeing for the past couple of years. I must try harder this year.

I know what you mean regarding getting back into practice at the start of the season, I too seem to forget half of what I previously knew. On top of that, due to a few bumps and knocks, I have replaced my FZ150 with a FZ200 which despite being very similar takes a 'different' looking photo using the same settings so I am still playing around and finding my feet with it so to speak.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-May-15 02:42 PM GMT

Morning Neil – I'm pleased you liked the Wood White shots. It was good to see them. I hope you get to grips with the new camera soon. Mine is definitely 'playing up', refusing to change some settings and responding to all setting changes (and switching on) very slowly. I am dreading having to replace it as it takes me forever to get used to a new camera. For example, yesterday Mike gave me a much needed 'kick up the backside' to make some improvements to my shots and thanks to his nudge I have only now discovered that the camera does bracketing for exposure compensation 😞😞 – and it's dead easy to do too 😊

Thank you for your interest Goldie. A quick update just for you 😊 . Foxy's epileptic fits are becoming more frequent and sometimes in clusters. I give him diazepam injections but it looks like he might have to go onto more permanent medication. Here he is on the sofa:



His mate Chance had a broken pelvis in his youth and now suffers badly from arthritis so has to have daily injections of metacam, an anti-inflammatory.

Here he is taking some gentle exercise. My wild rabbit Lucky loves him and tries to follow him around 😊



Back to butterflies. After a morning at the dentist yesterday I was in need of some fresh air so although the weather wasn't ideal I set off for Noar Hill as it is nice and close. I was surprised that there were a number of Dukes flying but most had outstretched wings trying to soak up the intermittent weak sun or were hunkered down in the grass out of the wind. Like the Dingies the colour ranged from bright orange individuals to very dark specimens:



(If you look carefully Mike the wing tip is out of focus again 😊😂)

However, the shot I wanted was one with closed wings and I just wasn't getting that until I came across this individual – she looked like she was pole-dancing in the breeze as she spun round and climbed up and down, but once the sun appeared she was off:





I completely forgot to check on the Brimstone eggs but I did check 'Andy's' blackthorn bush and the second egg has now hatched also. Looked like tiny signs of feeding damage but couldn't see any larva:



The weather isn't great here this weekend so I hope it is better where you are. Have a good break 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 02-May-15 07:25 PM GMT

Lovely Duke undersides, Pauline. I never noticed the blurred wingtip, either – I think the important thing is to capture the 'character' of the butterfly (after all, this is a 'butterflies' site and not a photo competition 😊) You remind me that I must visit my local 'Duke' site, to see how they are getting on, but things do seem a bit slower-moving here. I've only had one glimpse of an Orange Tip so far.

I'm sorry to hear your camera is playing up. At my advanced age, I find change is very difficult and I was quite exhausted yesterday, after a day of trying to get to grips with my Olympus (and its software). I like to feel that I am on top of these things, before using them in earnest, but it does take some effort! Now, I need to rest on the sofa, like your delightful fox.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 02-May-15 08:35 PM GMT

Nice photos of the foxes, Pauline. Our dog Max also has a daily dose of metacam to help him stay fit and healthy.

Your closed wing shots of the Dukes, (Duchesses again I believe), are superb 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 02-May-15 09:33 PM GMT

The abdomen suggested 'duchess' to me but there only seem to be four legs (females have six), so I'm thinking Duke. Perhaps those with more expertise can comment?

Mike(O)

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 02-May-15 11:17 PM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

The abdomen suggested 'duchess' to me but there only seem to be four legs (females have six), so I'm thinking Duke. Perhaps those with more expertise can comment?

Mike(O)

The shape of the forewings does also look rather 'male like'

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 02-May-15 11:25 PM GMT

Sounds like you've got a real interest besides the Butterflies Pauline 😊 Foxy looks relaxed and comfortable on the sofa, Your rabbit sounds like he thinks he's a fox 😊 you've got your hands full but if you love animals it's not a chore 😊

Your Duke photos are really nice , when I go to Gaits Barrow the chances are I won't get very close to them, the area is all roped off to protect them and going under the ropes is a no, no, although some people do it, I usually have to zoom in on them so the shots are not always what I want, hope fully one will land with in an arms distance 😊

It's raining and cold today and no one yet as put any thing on Lanc's Butterflies saying they've been seen so I'll have to have patience and hope the weather gets warmer Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-May-15 05:41 PM GMT

Thank you all so much for your comments. It seems I need to improve my observational skills as well as my photography 😊 It was the abdomen that fooled me into thinking this Duke was a Duchess but given the number of legs there can be no doubt that I was mistaken 😊

I really hope it won't be too long before you get to see the Dukes Goldie but if it's any consolation the rain here is very persistent. As a result I shall just post a few recent shots of the WA cats which seem to be progressing well (tho' I don't want to tempt fate by speaking too soon!). I feel that I learned a lot last year from my success and my mistakes and have picked up some more tips from Pete's excellent guidelines so fingers crossed.





What I don't understand is the different rate of development of the 2 cats which have been kept in identical conditions.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 05-May-15 01:48 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I'm afraid I cannot accept 'well spotted' for the ovipositing Orange Tip. After she landed I did notice her hold her wings open much wider than normal, bent forward even. It was only when I went to post the image that it became clear that I had recorded something rather special !.

Thanks anyway 😊
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-15 11:50 PM GMT

It is almost a year since I lost my dear cat Stanleigh and it seems that my fox now also has an uncertain future. It is at these times that I find butterflies to be especially uplifting and although at the moment I can't get out as much, or for as long, as I would like, seeking them out seems to be an essential escapism. This afternoon it has been quite windy but I was determined not to let that put me off as I had a brief window of opportunity. I reminded myself of the Summer of 2012 which was incredibly wet, but by going out in less than ideal conditions, not only did I see many butterflies, but also learned a lot about their behaviour.

I set out for a local site only 10 mins away which I have not visited for 2/3 years. There is a very small colony of PBF there but I was not sure whether they would still exist or even if I would be too early - this tends to be quite a late site. Given the weather I had no high hopes but a few minutes after arriving I spotted one roosting in the trees. This reminded me of a similar situation quite a few years ago when determined to get a shot of a roosting PBF I returned home for a step ladder and carried it through the woods at about 5.00am!!!! 😊

I had to wait a while for the butterfly to come down but it was incredibly difficult to get any sort of shot. I am tempted to post all of the failures - when the butterfly was blown half out of the frame, all the shots that are blurred, taken at a distance etc but eventually patience paid off and I managed a few half decent shots, posted below:







In total I only saw 3 individuals so I hope numbers pick up.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 06-May-15 01:16 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Super Pearl images, i think the Butterfly with the heavy, dark markings might qualify as an ab. I am sure that those in the know will comment on it.

Good luck with your Animals,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by nomad, 06-May-15 04:10 AM GMT

Lovely Pearl-bordered Frits. Yes that's an aberration. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 06-May-15 04:14 AM GMT

Sorry to hear about your Fox Pauline, hope he gets better.

Your PBF's are superb Pauline, I managed to get some Duke photo's yesterday in spite of the lack of Ferns etc , I was surprised at the amount of coppicing that had been done at Gait Barrow , for the first time in going up there I didn't see one Speckled Wood all the bushes they used to be in were chopped to ground level, it's surprising how I missed them dodging along the path in front of me and in and out of the trees, hope fully their still around some where. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-15 04:19 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Blimey! I wish I had some half decent shots like those first 6 PBF photos, absolutely wonderful images of a beautifully marked individual 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-May-15 05:20 AM GMT

Some Neil Hulme-esque standard images there, Pauline, and yes, I'm sure your heavily marked PBF qualifies as an ab.

I've certainly never seen one like that before.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-May-15 09:16 PM GMT

I'm glad you like them Trevor and thank you for pointing out the ab.

Lovely to hear from you Nomad. Thank you for the compliment and your confirmation of the ab.

He's an old boy now Goldie, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed! I'm so pleased you got to see the Duke and got some good shots too I see. They are such a lovely butterfly, aren't they? I couldn't resist another quick look today at my local site.

I really appreciate your comments Neil. I am sure you will remember my lack of confidence from previous years – well, it is still there, I just hide it better 😊

That's certainly some compliment David 😊 – I have even received positive comments from the man himself about a couple of these ones! I'm delighted at the ab confirmation – thank you.

I cannot let the weather dictate when I go out otherwise I would never get anywhere. I have to make the most of the time available so with the animals fed and cleaned and the foxes asleep I set off for Noar Hill. As I drove down the A3 the wind was still strong and the skies overcast – and then the heavens opened! I seriously considered coming off at the next junction and returning home but then I reminded myself of all the other times I had been in this situation and it had turned out reasonably successful.

I didn't see many butterflies – just a few Dukes – and in fact I got more ticks on me bringing my tick count into double figures this year so far!! 😊 I got a few more underside shots:



... and in portrait (not sure which is best)



No sign of the BH larva but the Brimstone eggs are still intact:



Back home I checked my WA larva after last night's inclement weather and I am pleased to report they did not drown or get blown away 😊. A word of caution about those 'pop-up' cages – they are very unstable, even with bricks in the base.





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-15 11:50 PM GMT

Not much to report today but early this morning as I was about to let the poultry out a GVW fluttered weakly across the garden and landed at my feet – my first of the season. I grabbed a few shots as the sun was rising and off he went:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 08-May-15 04:44 AM GMT

Nice Green Hair Streaks Pauline the weather here has been awful, today it was okay after lunch but wouldn't you know I was out shopping Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-May-15 07:08 AM GMT

Great shots Pauline. With the Duke shots I'd go for portrait, landscape looks kinda squashed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 08-May-15 07:10 AM GMT

Love the GV Whites images, Pauline.

I think we should all pay more attention to this understated yet highly beautiful butterfly.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-May-15 05:14 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie – it's always the way isn't it? 😊 Hope you got something nice anyway 😊

Thank you Wurzel. After all this time I'm still having dilemmas over composition 😊 I agree tho, having taken a second look. The landscape one is more cluttered with the leaves too.

I totally agree David. If something is fairly common (and not just butterflies) we tend to value it less, but these are a very photogenic butterfly I think. Thank you.

Today I have a favour to ask. I would really like to know what the following are and I have had only a little response from the identification section. They were all taken yesterday on Bramshott Common:



Some sort of Shield bug?





Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 08-May-15 06:16 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Your bug is a *Corizus hyoscyami*

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-May-15 12:14 AM GMT

Hi Maurice – been meaning to email you, will do that later. Thank you for ID. Why do the names have to be so complicated? I think Vince has got one of the cats nailed too. In the words of the song '2 out of 3 ain't bad' 😊

Today, another trip to Noar Hill which was very enjoyable – but more of that later. What I'd like to know is – are these Duke eggs as I thought they were generally laid singly? More questions 😊



Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 09-May-15 03:35 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Yes, they are Duke eggs. They are often laid singly, sometimes in small batches of 2 – 4, and occasionally up to 10 at a time (usually following a period of prolonged 'no-fly' weather).

BWs, Neil

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-May-15 11:04 PM GMT

Thank you for that confirmation Neil. I am very excited that I found some 😊

Like everyone else I cannot just down tools and dash off into the countryside when the sun starts to shine. There are priorities that must be attended to first. Frequently, by the time the chores have been done, the sun has disappeared, the temperature has dropped and the sky has clouded over such was the case again yesterday, but I decided to proceed with my plan for another trip to Noar Hill. After all, the weather is very changeable, and even if it didn't brighten up I had other things I wanted to do that didn't depend on the sun shining. For a start I had 2 sets of eggs to monitor (the Brimstone and the BH) and I really wanted to try to find some Duke eggs. I have tried and failed on a couple of previous occasions which had taught me that often tiny ticks sit on the underneath of the Cowslip leaves just waiting to pounce, so it is wise to keep checking ones hands.

However, my first stop was at the Brimstone eggs. As I made my way there a cuckoo flew right past me – the closest view I have ever had – but didn't stop until he reached a tree a great distance away. I tried to take a photo – just a record shot – but I am not sure if it is even recognisable as a Cuckoo.



It made me even more impressed by the great shot of one that Mark captured recently. The Cuckoo continued to call to a female at the other end of the site and she repeatedly called back to him as I made my way to the Brimstone eggs. Most of them looked OK but one of them seemed to have collapsed – I was not sure whether this was because it had hatched or whether it had been eaten or parasitized:



I next checked the small Blackthorn bush where I know 2 eggs have hatched and there are signs of feeding damage – but there were still no signs of the larva! It was at this point that I was stopped by a very distressed lady who had lost her old (14.5 years) deaf spaniel. Unfortunately, he also had a retractable lead attached to his harness which was likely to get caught on something. Fortunately the dog was microchipped but for once Noar Hill was devoid of visitors who might have kept an eye open. The owner was from Petersfield and I think she intended to leave her details at Selbourne Post Office. I mention this just in case any locals are planning a visit there this weekend.

It was still overcast and had started to drizzle so I set about looking for some Duke eggs. One of the leaves I turned over had a pretty cat on the ground underneath it ('Oh no, not another one' I can hear Vince saying!). I would be interested to know what it is if anyone has ever come across one.



A few minutes later I turned over a leaf which looked as if it HAD carried an egg but the egg looked clear as if it had either been eaten or hatched.



I worked my way systematically round likely looking leaves in the same area and then BINGO!!!! I had found some eggs. The trouble was, I wasn't sure they were actually Duke eggs as I thought the clutch was too big. Nevertheless, I carefully took a few shots of them, all the while keeping my fingers crossed.



By now the sky had brightened and the temperature was noticeably warmer and with that Dukes started emerging left, right and centre, several spiralling up into the sky together and instigating battle with a couple of Dingies. Pete was certainly right about the numbers building. At one point I had 3 in the frame at once but just as I took the shot one of them disappeared.



I had been able to spend more time here than usual – over 2 hours – but it was now time to return. I was just about to leave the area when a gorgeous Duchess (yes, I counted the legs) caught my eye. Gleaming gold in the weak sunshine, she outshone all the other Dukes. I had to stop for a few shots but I had only managed 2 photos with outstretched wings when the rain started again and I was left with only closed wing shots of her. However, I was very satisfied with all I had seen on what had started as a dull and dreary day. A great couple of hours.



by Pauline, 10-May-15 01:37 AM GMT

I have been grateful for recent assistance on ID's but thought I'd better try to do some research for myself. I've been looking at the details provided by this site and I think the cat I found (photo above) is a Ringlet cat. However, I would appreciate confirmation that I have got that right as I have read they are nocturnal and this one seemed quite active – although perhaps that was due to my disturbance of its environment.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 10-May-15 05:17 AM GMT

I agree, Pauline – and a nice photo too! Please add it to the Ringlet Species-specific Album 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 10-May-15 05:39 AM GMT

Great stuff, Pauline the PB Frit. ab. was a superb find 😊 great shots 😊 Lovely Dukes/Duchesses and cat shots also 😊

Cathy and I have not managed to get out for our butterfly fix recently due to other commitments, and the weather of course 😊 But we did manage to squeeze in a quick outing yesterday, yet to be posted on my personal diary...

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-May-15 12:11 AM GMT

Thank you Pete. I am very pleased to have found/seen it so am enclosing another couple of shots below:



Good to see the two of you back Mike and great shots from your recent outing. Yes, the Pearl ab. was a lucky find and when I checked out the same site today I found the ab had got lucky too 😊

I saw a female which looked very fresh and I initially thought she was egg-laying as she was ferreting about in dead bracken and scraping her abdomen over it repeatedly, taking frequent rests in between:



I was trying to keep an eye on her and at the same time take note of any others around (I saw 5 from where I was standing but on checking later I believe they were all males apart from this individual). Without warning, the ab which I saw last week pounced on her during one of these rest periods and despite her feeble attempt to escape he succeeded in his mating attempt.



I watched (and tried to take photos) over about an hour during changing weather conditions after which I had to leave them to it. It would have been interesting to know how long they would remain like that and how long after that the eggs would be laid. A few of the photos taking great care not to disturb them:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-May-15 01:19 AM GMT

Great photos Pauline of the mating pair , i'm off tomorrow weather permitting looking for the PB, I'll be happy to find just one 😊

I did treat myself whilst shopping, new slacks and top to match 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-May-15 02:22 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie. I've never seem a mating pair of PBF before so I was very pleased to witness it. I shall keep my fingers crossed for you and hope you are just as lucky 😊

Folk might remember that last Summer I attempted to rear a few different species of moth. One of these was a Pebble Prominent which in the larval stage looked like this:



Earlier today I discovered it has at last emerged from its pupal case and the finished article looks like this:





Re: Pauline

by William, 11-May-15 04:26 AM GMT

Great stuff Pauline – the Prominents are a real favourite of mine!

BWs,

William

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-May-15 06:09 AM GMT

You are entering a realm reserved for a tiny few with the images you've been posting lately, Pauline.

Superb reportage supplemented by top quality photos.

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 12-May-15 04:56 AM GMT

I agree wholeheartedly with David's comments above...absolutely superb Pauline!!!

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-15 03:10 PM GMT

I forgot to mention something in my last post which I shall record now for my own benefit. In the hour that I watched the mating Pearls, several males flew past, some quite close, but not once did they try to muscle in on the mating pair. This is in contrast to what I have witnessed in the past (but not with Pearls) where a mating pair is frequently harassed by a male of the same species – or even a different species!

Thank you William – I'm with you on that one. I consider them to be 'proper' moths – they are 'ones that I can see' 😊. This one will be a bit special given that it is the very first moth I reared 😊

You do pay me some of the nicest compliments David although I am not sure they are truly totally deserved. Nevertheless, they are greatly appreciated and much relished 😊

Thank you very much Bill – I appreciate the compliment.

My aim this season has been to try to avoid a total repeat of previous seasons by making an effort to see new things and learn new things, go to some new places and generally try to expand my knowledge of the natural world through new experiences and better observation. I have been hoping for 3 years now to see Green Hairstreaks mating so yesterday I visited Rake Bottom with that in mind. There are a lot of Green Hairstreaks there (3rd shot) and it is very local so it was an obvious choice. Despite the strong wind I was able to watch many Hairstreaks; they seemed quite reluctant to fly in the gale, being content to nectar or shelter low down. The ones which chose to nectar or perch above ground level tended to adopt an almost horizontal pose, presumably to avoid a battering from the wind, but they reminded me of the position the White Letter Hairstreaks adopt when absorbing the sun's rays in the early morning. I tried to capture this but the very position, coupled with the wind, made it difficult (4th shot). A selection of photos below:



I would very much like to know if it is at all possible with my camera to get more than one butterfly at a time in focus, especially when they are not in the same 'plane' or when one is considerably behind the other and the depth of field which I can achieve is limited.



This is the pose adopted in the strong wind by many of the Hairstreaks.



I was pleased to see several 'firsts' for the season - Common Blue, Small Heath and Small Copper. Many Grizzled and Dingies still in evidence, the latter fascinating me as no 2 individuals are the same:





The path towards the gate was much more sheltered and Brimstones were enjoying the Cowslips:



whilst this magnificent bee seemed to be in some trouble 😞



Needless to say, I didn't see a mating pair of Green Hairstreaks so I guess this one will be carried over to another season.

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 13-May-15 12:02 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I have been hoping for 3 years now to see Green Hairstreaks mating so yesterday I visited Rake Bottom with that in mind.

I'm lost for words Pauline...Rake Bottom... 🤔😞..... 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 13-May-15 01:26 AM GMT

Great shots Pauline, I went looking for the pearls (no luck) the wind was awful, just like today 50 mile an hour gusts, I'll have to keep trying. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 13-May-15 02:52 PM GMT

.HI Pauline,

The Holly Blue shots turned out as they did because of bad weather!.

It was very windy, cloudy with occasional sunshine. I spotted the Butterfly from the path, and took some underside shots, every time the sun appeared she began to open up, so I just waited for right moment. Luck and patience got that shot.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 13-May-15 03:21 PM GMT

Stunning pictures as usual Pauline, particularly love the gorgeous Green Hairstreaks 😊

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 13-May-15 05:00 PM GMT

Rake Bottom has an alternative name which is even more amusing - Grandfathers Bottom - which has caused Neil Hume some hilarity - lord knows the origins 😊

Located at SU708205
Kind Regards

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 13-May-15 05:41 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

"which has caused Neil Hume some hilarity"

I was actually laughing about something else, but now you mention it, I'm still determined to have a good poke around in Grandfather's Bottom. It's good to assess as many Duke sites as possible. 😊

BWs, Neil

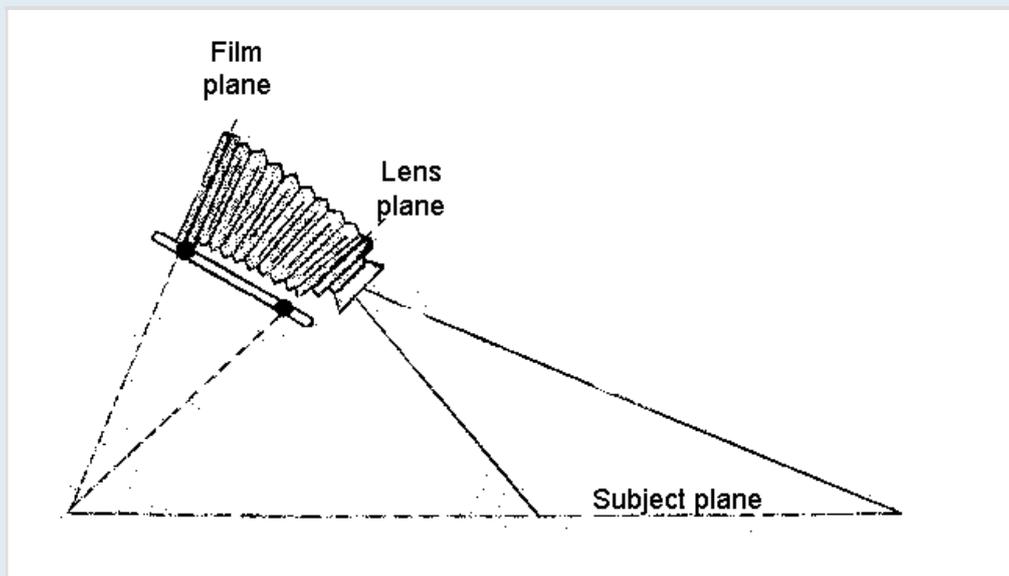
Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 13-May-15 07:03 PM GMT

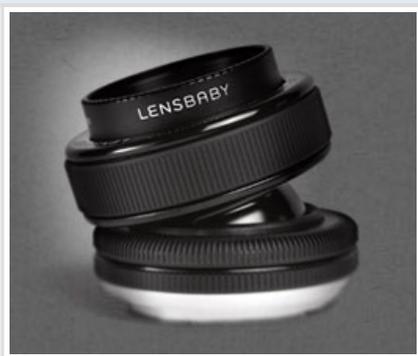
"Pauline" wrote:

I would very much like to know if it is at all possible with my camera to get more than one butterfly at a time in focus, especially when they are not in the same 'plane' or when one is considerably behind the other and the depth of field which I can achieve is limited.

There are several ways of achieving this. The 'classical' method is to use something called the Scheimpflug principle (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scheimpflug_principle), which requires the lens and film to be tilted relative to the plane of the subject:



The old bellows cameras could do this and it is still used for advertising photography, for example to keep items on a table top all in focus together. Some DSLR camera systems offer 'tilt and shift' lenses and there is also something called a 'Lensbaby', which is a lens mounted on a semi-flexible tube:



These systems are not easy to set up and are hardly applicable to active subjects like butterflies in the field! There are, however, several 'work arounds':

If you have two subjects at different distances, try taking two photos, one focused on each of the subjects, without moving the camera. Careful cutting and pasting in a photo editor can achieve a very good result in many cases. I show examples of cloning differently focused images on my website at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/layers.htm> This idea can be extended to combine several images, focused at a whole range of distances, between the nearest and farthest objects, when it is known as 'stacking'. There is software available to combine images made in this way automatically e.g. <http://zerenystems.com/cms/stacker> and it is often used for microscope photography.

I find that the 'two image' method is quite practicable in the field and I think it is perfectly ok to use this method to combine two separate butterflies, purely to overcome limitations of the camera, though not for photo competitions, where images must not be manipulated in this way. The method can also be used, for example, to get both wings of a butterfly in focus. You have to be very careful, if publishing such images, as it is very easy to create artefacts, which falsify the detailed structure of the butterfly and could, therefore, be very mis-leading.

Mike

PS I could also mention the 'split-field' close-up lens, which is basically a close-up lens cut in half. The idea is that you place the near subject in the part of the image covered by the half lens, while the background remains sharp in the rest of the image. I've never used one and I suspect it would be tricky to produce a convincing image in the field.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-May-15 01:01 AM GMT

Hi Goldie, we've had similar problems here. If you make a repeat trip try to seek out the sheltered areas. I'll keep my fingers crossed.

You're being very modest Trevor. Shots like that take more than luck 😊

Thank you Buggy – Hairstreaks (all of them) are a favourite of mine.

I appreciate your comprehensive response Mike. I hadn't realised such gadgets existed but I might give the 'two image' method a go. Thank you.

Well Bill, you've started something now, haven't you! 😊😂 Thank you for your comments Mark, Neil on the site, if not the sightings! 😊😂 I'm pleased my diary is causing folk such amusement and entertainment – job done! 😊😂

Yesterday at that site, after accidentally sitting down in a patch of nettles to get a GH shot, I then fell into a rabbit burrow, landing in a patch of brambles – and not for the first time! 😊😂 So, covered in nettle stings, ripped and torn by brambles, and still picking off ticks from the previous day, I decided to try an 'easier' site and check out Chalton Down today. A lovely site and gorgeous weather but marred by biting flies 😡

My biggest surprise and the cause of some frustration was seeing my first Small Blue of the season and not being able to get a shot. I repeatedly tried to find it, hoping that the many Skippers might flush it, but no! 😊😂 I imagine this means they are out at Paulsgrove now? A lot of very fresh butterflies today, especially amongst the Skippers whose colours and marking seemed very variable and some lovely Grizzled Skippers:





I saw 10 species at this site in a short time one of which was 2 Commas. I had only commented yesterday that I hadn't seen any Commas recently - and there they were! 😊





Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-May-15 04:48 AM GMT

Well done on the Commas, Pauline.

In my experience, May is the month where they usually disappear totally only to return around midsummer's day.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-May-15 03:22 PM GMT

Thank you David. It was quite a surprise to see them.

Just a quick update today on the 'little'uns' as I monitor and chart their development. At one point I thought the small one had had enough of the wind and had decided to go back into hibernation as it seemed he was creating another hibernicum. It will be interesting to discover their eventual gender to see if the late developer is female – as males tend to emerge before the females generally, I am assuming that it is not just in the pupal stage that development is slower/longer?







Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 15-May-15 05:35 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Yesterday at that site, after accidentally sitting down in a patch of nettles to get a GH shot, I then fell into a rabbit burrow, landing in a patch of brambles – and not for the first time! 😊 So, covered in nettle stings, ripped and torn by brambles, and still picking off ticks from the previous day, I decided to try an 'easier' site and check out Chalton Down today. A lovely site and gorgeous weather but marred by biting flies 😡

I think that's an occupational hazard with our chosen pastime. There's many a time when I've endured a sore bum to get that one shot.....I could probably phrase that better 😞. My legs got severely lacerated from brambles yesterday at Abbots Wood!

Re: Pauline

by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-May-15 06:21 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Yesterday at that site, after accidentally sitting down in a patch of nettles to get a GH shot, I then fell into a rabbit burrow, landing in a patch of brambles – and not for the first time! 😊 So, covered in nettle stings, ripped and torn by brambles, and still picking off ticks from the previous day, I decided to try an 'easier' site and check out Chalton Down today. A lovely site and gorgeous weather but marred by biting flies 😡

Ouch that sounds nasty Pauline! I expect "like me" you forgot to take a first aid kit with you. 😞 It can be a bit of a jungle out there sometimes.

B'W's

James

Re: Pauline

by David M, 15-May-15 06:28 AM GMT

Indeed! When the weather gets warm, I wear my sweat band under my cap and cover myself in Deet on my exposed skin as a matter of routine. I also take Deet wipes to 'top up' my protection during the day.

I find the biting insects favour the forehead as well as the webbed parts between the fingers, so I pay particular attention to these areas to repel these unwanted parasites.

I've also ditched the shorts irrespective of temperature as wearing them is merely an invitation for these critters to dine on you!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-May-15 11:57 PM GMT

Hi guys, thank you for the empathy, sympathy and advice. I really must be more careful about where I put my feet as I did exactly the same thing last year only it was a badger sett!! 😬 I must try to get some better protection too – last year I smothered myself in extra strength Jungle formula and it made not a blind bit of difference! Guess I must just taste good 😊

Sick to death of being stuck in with the weather I made a lunchtime trip to Noar Hill to check on 'my' eggs. First stop was the Brimstone which have now changed colour and I am not sure whether this means they have hatched (I couldn't find any larva) or whether it is imminent.



Still no sign of BH larva but the feeding damage is gradually extending to leaves further away from the egg. I have now found several sets of Duke eggs and these all seem to be still intact thankfully. I feared some were at possible greater risk as the leaves they are on have had some huge bites taken out of them and the slugs were very numerous – to be expected after all that rain I suppose.

I only managed to see 2 Dukes today but a couple from Eastleigh had seen 4 and a Green Hairstreak 🦋 which was quite admirable given the cool conditions:



I don't usually like a green background preferring something a little more subtle but I think it works in this instance – and I didn't have a lot of choice.



Before I left I discovered this larva but I imagine it is some sort of moth (Andy? or anyone?)



.... and a brilliant green beetle:



The weather forecast seems to be best for Saturday – make the most of it if you can 😊

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 16-May-15 03:16 AM GMT

Brilliant duke photos Pauline 😊

Re: Pauline

by Willrow, 16-May-15 04:47 AM GMT

Informative and also amusing Pauline...not to mention those stunning images...well worth all that pain methinks 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

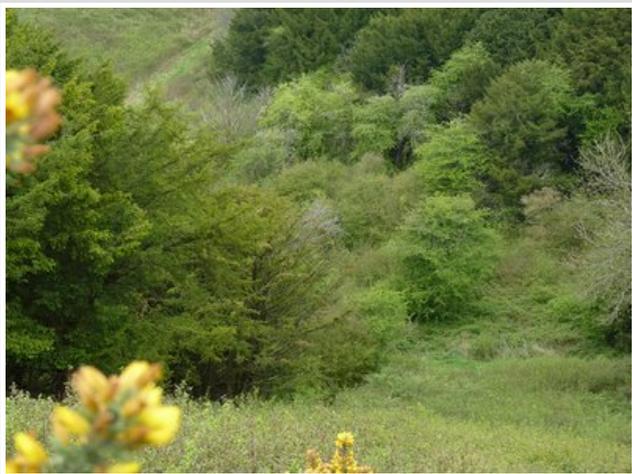
Re: Pauline

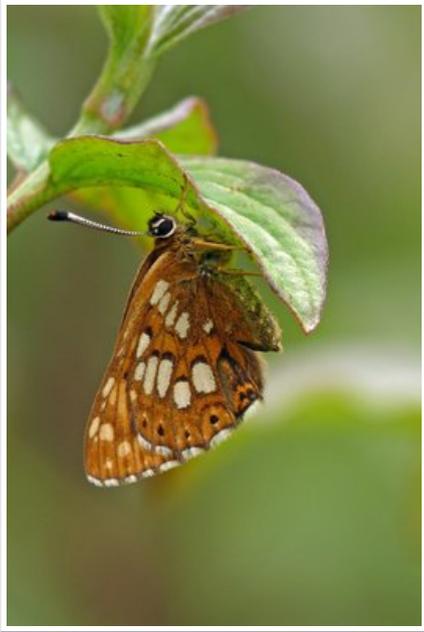
by Pauline, 17-May-15 03:25 AM GMT

It is kind of you to say so Katrina but you are taking some superb shots yourself – and I have never seen mating Coppers 🦋

I can laugh about it afterwards Bill 😊 but you'd think I'd have learned by now. Anyway, thank you for your kind comment – it is much appreciated.

Just a quick update as events here are keeping me 'grounded' for a little while. Some time recently (I can't even remember when) I went to Oxenbourne primarily to check on a colony of Pearls I discovered there 2-3 years back. I had reservations about going mainly because of the number of ticks on that site. For example, last season I was being very careful as I was already aware of this problem but in the time it took to crouch down to get a shot of an egg-laying SSS I had hundreds of ticks on my pale blue shorts (I don't wear shorts any more!!; I had to throw those ones away because even after a hot wash the ticks were still crawling all over them). I really wanted to check out the site tho' and I received some reassuring advice to 'stay to the top path and you'll be OK!!!' – you know who you are 😊😊 Well, I did just that and picked up 8 ticks on the way in and 11 on the way out when it had warmed up!! 😞 To make matters worse, my trainers split and the wet grass meant that my socks were quickly soaked so I ended up squelching along 😞😞. After all that I did not see a single Pearl 😞. However, the upside was that there were lots of other butterflies including 4 Dukes. It seemed strange to see them in such a different environment to that which I am used to on Noar Hill. These were very much woodland Dukes. This is the environment:





It was here that I saw my very first Common Blue of the season, looking as if he was being held captive in a chamber of thorns:



However, what made this visit special for me was my closest encounter ever with a wild fox – a large dog fox. It was shortly after my arrival on the site and I assume I was partially hidden by a gate post when I heard a deer crashing through the bracken. I thought I must have startled it but as it came into view I realised it was running towards me. A split second later I noticed a fox was running in parallel with the deer. The deer veered away and the fox, in his panic, continued to bolt straight towards me, only seeing I was there when he was about 8 foot away and then he quickly swerved. It was all over so quickly I did not even try to take a photo but for me it was a special moment.

On returning home I remembered that in the past I have seen the Pearls quite late at this site, my earliest photos being about 27 May so if any locals feel up to the challenge of the ticks and pay the site a visit I would be really interested to know if any Pearls are spotted. They are usually quite a long way in but feel free to PM me for better directions – I shall not be going back there!!!!

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 17-May-15 03:43 AM GMT

Pauline, we get loads of ticks at Gait Barrow, so far we've been lucky, but the mosquitoes love my husband he gets bitten quite a lot 😊
I'm also looking for PBF so far no luck . I'll swop the Heron for the Fox encounter Pauline 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-May-15 06:26 AM GMT

Great Woodland Duke Pauline 😊 I'm losing 2:1 to the Ticks already this year 😞 Normally they don't go for me so it must be switching to Imperial Leather soap 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 18-May-15 04:55 AM GMT

Lovely Dukes there, and after my encounter yesterday I'm no longer as jealous 😊 Your little green beetle is *Cryptocephalus* sp. probably *C. hypochaeridis*, a type of Leaf Beetle. I got a near identical picture of one yesterday, apparently they are particularly attracted to yellow flowers 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-May-15 02:43 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel - I am still picking ticks off me 3 days later 😞

Thank you too Buggy. I appreciate the id - they seem to be everywhere at the moment but they are very attractive.

I have to post a couple of shots of my noisy, destructive, funny, intelligent, sociable, talkative, mischievous, vibrant, loyal and much-loved parrot, whom I have had the privilege of caring for, for over 20 years, after he was found on the roof of the building where I then worked. Pepper is a fairly rare Slender-billed Conure from Southern Chile and following a series of recent small strokes and subsequent extensive diagnostic tests, this weekend he had to be put to sleep 😞.



I managed to get out into the local countryside late yesterday but my mind really wasn't on the job. I am posting a few snapshots to record my first Brown Argus of the season and a lovely dark female Common Blue who looked almost black in flight. The sight of the many lovely fresh blues provided only a slight and brief distraction.





Brown Argus





Several ragged looking Peacocks were taking advantage of the late afternoon sun. I felt how they looked:

**Re: Pauline**

by Maximus, 18-May-15 03:53 PM GMT

Sorry to hear about Pepper, Pauline, time's a good healer as they say.

Nice to see more Brown Argus and Common Blues are out and about. That female Blue is lovely, will it be another year of the 'blue' female Blues?

Take care,

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 18-May-15 04:05 PM GMT

Pepper was a lucky parrot. It's good that we outlive the animals we look after but it always hurts when they leave us.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 18-May-15 04:33 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Sorry to read of your loss, i've always had Cats, since the age of four, and it's only when they've gone that you realise how much they are missed.

Your images of the Blues are superb in the circumstances.

Best wishes.

TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 18-May-15 08:07 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, sorry to hear about Pepper but think of all the pleasure you gave to him and how he enjoyed your company after you rescued him all those years ago and may be this will help.

I've had three dogs all wonderful in their own way, two of them I had to put to sleep, that was a real killer, the worse experience for me was when Rusty my first dog got run over and killed that was turbulent, I was abroad at the time, at least you know Pepper was peaceful in passing.

On a lighter note your butterfly photos are fantastic and I really like the blues especially the nearly black one it's unusual, (I'm sat here watching the rain Ugh!) Goldie 😊

PS how's the Fox doing 🤔

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-May-15 02:57 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. D'you know, it's almost a year to the day since I lost my dear cat Stanleigh and I still think about her every day.

Thank you Guy. I think I was the lucky, one but you are so right – I would not wish to leave my animals in the care of anyone else. I apologise for recently mis-spelling Asha's name.

I'm glad you like the Blue shots Trevor – as has been the case so many times recently, the strong wind made taking any photos very difficult. Thank you for the comment – wise words indeed. I feel guilty for taking such a special bird a little for granted and the words of an old song come to mind 'you don't know what you've got til it's gone' 😞

Thank you for your comforting comment Goldie – that must have been horrendous with Rusty. I continue to struggle with the 2 old foxes, Chance and Foxy but their quality of life is quite possibly better than mine at the moment 🤔 I wish I could have managed a better shot of that dark female as the

photo doesn't really do her justice.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-May-15 02:22 AM GMT

First off, thank you for your earlier comment Goldie which kinda got overlooked as it slipped off the end of the page 😊 but I won't be swapping my fox encounter for your Heron 😊 However, if you are ever in my area (I am 30 mins away from the Wood Whites) it would be lovely to see you and I could provide you with an up close and personal meet and greet with a fox 😊

What is happening with this weather????!! Today we have had several episodes of hail, lots of wind and the temperature is really quite chilly. It is nearly June and I am still wearing jumpers 😊 I wanted to check on the eggs at Noar Hill – since I found the first batch of Dukes I have found several other batches – and then there's the Brimstones, and the BH. I did my personal 'transect', photos being very difficult because of that strong breeze, but first stop was the Brimstones which have now hatched and a quick look revealed half a dozen 'little'uns' and a lot of feeding damage. Getting 'evidence' was to prove a little more difficult but this is the best I could do:



Next stop was the Blackthorn where feeding damage is very apparent but larva? well, even with a hand lens I couldn't see any. I thought I would be the only one daft enough to be on a hill in these conditions, but no, a walk, birders I think, wrapped up in waterproof clothing with binoculars, were surveying the surroundings. How wise they were! The heavens opened and hailstones the size of golf balls were pelted down, soaking the back of my jumper as I bent over to take a shot of various Duke eggs. The first lot I discovered had not changed:



but the next pair had definitely changed, with one becoming very transparent:



There were some brief periods of sun and it was during these periods that the Dukes came out to play. There were not as many as I expected and most of them were looking very worn. With the conditions in my favour I decided to try to get a few 'stained glass' shots for Wurzel but certainly didn't reach his standard, my excuse (again 😞) being the wind 😊





Just trying to take my mind off stuff really.

A few more Duke shots whilst I had the chance:





With the hailstones pelting down again I made my way off the site, stumbling over this Small Heath as he made a dive for cover:



I was just approaching the car when I almost stepped on this chap:



I was concerned for his safety on such a track and also wanted to ID him so I have brought him home. I originally thought it was some type of moth but he seems to want to pupate and looking at the info on this site I am inclined to think it is a DGF. I cannot recall seeing one in this area so it is very possible I am wrong. Any ID would be appreciated.

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 20-May-15 03:36 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Looks good for DGF to me, great find

Andy

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 20-May-15 04:02 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Just catching up on your diary again, sorry to hear about your Parrot. I know what you mean about the weather, I drove through a nasty hailstorm on my way home from work this afternoon 😞

Great Duke photos and I love that nice fresh female Common Blue in the previous report 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-May-15 08:10 PM GMT

Thanks for the confirmation A. - it's a lovely cat 😊

I appreciate the comment Neil. I actually like the Duke shot with the old, yellow moss/lichen in the background but trying to get a nice composition with

the wind buffeting the butterflies around is nigh impossible 😊

Today started in quite a bizarre way with a young Starling sitting on top of my Gouldian Finch cage, waiting to greet me as I arrived with their breakfasts!!! Having had a walk around the coffee table and a look out of the window he was ready to make his exit. How he got in I have no idea!!



As I fed Chance, Foxy started to fit 😊 so after giving him some valium and settling him down, I resumed the morning feeds. I glanced up to see a local cat pestering my Blue Tit who is recuperating in an aviary from a cat attack which created another interruption. It was therefore rather late when I got round to checking my cats – something I do at least once a day and quite often many more times than that. I am fascinated by their development and take daily photos as a record of any changes. I am therefore very concerned that one of the cats seems to have disappeared (the little one). These cats have not moved very far from the leaf they are currently eating, gradually working their way down the stem of the plant. I am finding it hard to understand how a predator could have got into their cage after they have been in there for so long. I am wondering if it is possible that WA cats are predatory (given the difference in their size) – there is plenty of the food plant available but the larger one seems to have recently developed a voracious appetite. I hope it has just 'fallen off' the plant or something similar as I was really looking forward to seeing them emerge. Photos from the last few days enclosed:







I really hope the other one isn't at risk whatever the cause.

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 21-May-15 05:26 AM GMT

Another wonderful set of images on your recent posts...so unfortunate about that lovely little conure, we get so attached to the pets we share our lives with, Pepper will remain in your memories Pauline (happy ones!).

Kindest Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-May-15 02:09 AM GMT

Thank you Bill on both counts. I certainly have many memories of Pepper, mostly funny ones. For example, I have a very expensive leather swivel chair which he liked to sit under – Conure's like to get into little cubby holes! It took me a couple of months to realise he had stripped the bottom off it, pulled the stuffing out and was sitting INSIDE of it as I swivelled it round 😊. I expect one of these days I shall sit on that chair and go straight down onto the floor!!!!

It is so sad that a patch of local nettles can provide me with so much interest and entertainment 😊 I really need to get out more 😊 Lots of different insects on them – a few below:





I got back from shopping to find my first Large White of the season egg-laying on the greens I have planted for the rabbits!!!! I can see I shall have to check the leaves before I offer them up as rabbit food. I could not get close to her but managed a few shots, all fairly similar:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 22-May-15 06:13 AM GMT

Some great photos Pauline, love the cats. Hope the little one turns up 😊

I tried to rescue a Wood Pigeon that had been attacked by a bird of Prey in our garden, to no avail, the bird got away and we tried to capture it to take it to a wild bird Hospital, we had a box and every thing ready but when we went out to capture it with a towel it flew away 😊 this was Monday, today we saw it in the garden it came and took some bird seed, it was still rather slow with it's wing rather trailing slightly but it's flying okay and eating, also it's got a mate who seems to be watching over it and it's female which we didn't know 😊 I hope it comes back to the garden so I can keep an eye on it. 😊

Thank's for your invite Pauline, we'd love to come your way but I think this year it's going to be FW in North Hampton looking for Purple E, Lakes, in June for Large H and in August Sussex for Brown H in between I've promised to visit my daughter in Kent. Hope fully I'll see some WW's in Sussex . Now I'm out of Breath 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-May-15 06:21 AM GMT

Some great reports and shots recently Pauline 😊 I reckon your third stained glass Duke is a gem, and one that I'd like in my collection 🍷 Look out for the Nettle Moth in a few weeks time, they're a great little moth 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-May-15 01:12 AM GMT

I have replied to your diary Goldie re bird. It sounds like you've got a really busy time lined up, phew!

Thank you Wurzel - you are very kind but you are much better than me at those type of shots. I was just trying to take advantage of the weather and use it in my favour. Reckon I need a bit more practice tho 😊

It has been raining (drizzling) here for most of the day but nothing new there. It certainly was not going to stop me having a quick trip out to look for Small Blues at Paulsgrove but it was the first time I have been accompanied by a pink umbrella 😊



The pink umbrella found the most beautiful female Common Blue, but as usual the weather (wind and rain) got in the way of the photos.



Roosting Blues were plentiful and easy to find and there were several females with upper sides that were more blue than brown tho' catching them with wings open was a challenge.



Whilst searching my companion found a nest of Lackey moth caterpillars – quite a sight.



However, my main target was the Small Blue and eventually we found what I was looking for. They seemed content to pose amongst the raindrops.





Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 23-May-15 02:03 AM GMT

Loving the first small blue photo with the raindrops!

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-15 02:43 AM GMT

Agreed, that first Small Blue is a beautiful image 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-May-15 03:22 AM GMT

Lovely photos once again Pauline, when I track out in the rain I never find a thing 😞 tell me your secret Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by William, 23-May-15 08:57 PM GMT

That first Small Blue is exquisite, Pauline 😊

BWs,

William

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 24-May-15 11:16 PM GMT

Scorpion Flies do have a certain unique 'look' about them for sure! They are quite common amongst nettle beds, looking for dead insects or a spiders web to raid.

Also agree with others, thats first Small Blue is a stunner!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-May-15 02:57 AM GMT

Thank you Katrina – that was my favourite shot with the cliff in the background on a murky day.

I appreciate your comment Neil. It is not often that I admit to liking one of my own shots but I do like that one 😊

I wish I had secrets to reveal Goldie 😊, but I guess it's just practice and I've had plenty of practice looking for butterflies in the rain, I can tell you 😊

Thank you William – that means a lot 😊

I shall have to keep my eyes peeled Buggy whilst scanning the nettles. Thank you for your kind compliment.

I really think this should be in Mike's diary (Maximus) as he discovered a clutch of eggs at Noar Hill and there was some question as to what sort of eggs they were. As I am monitoring several sets of Duke eggs there I suggested to Mike that if he could explain to me where they were then I would keep an eye on them too, to try to solve the mystery. Well, Mike knows I have absolutely no sense of direction so I think it was quite amazing that he emailed me with extremely precise directions to a particular cowslip on Noar Hill – one of many thousands!!! and I found it in about 3 minutes!!!! How did you do that Mike?? The latest check was early evening yesterday and although there was no change to any of the other sets of eggs 'Mike's' eggs had diminished in number and there seemed to be black spots in the centre of the remaining eggs.



I have read on this site that DoB eat their egg shells so perhaps some have hatched – I do hope so. I shall keep an eye on them. Regarding their position of the leaf I have found other eggs which have been laid quite centrally:



I shall be fascinated to follow their development to hopefully find out eventually what they are. I also made a quick check of the Brimstone cats who seem to be doing well:



Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 25-May-15 07:45 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, it's great that you are monitoring the eggs at Noar, I'm glad the directions were precise enough, lets hope they are Duke eggs 😊😊
Lovely photos in your diary recently, and I have to agree with others' comments regarding the Small Blue shot - fabulous 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 26-May-15 12:01 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, at last I saw some Butterflies, I thought I'd never find them 😊 Hope your eggs are Dukes and all goes well with them Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-May-15 02:37 AM GMT

Thank you Mike. I shall continue to keep you informed.

Looks like you saw a great selection there Goldie - I have only seen 1 SC this season.

Well, we knew it was coming 😊 In fact, we have known for a long time 😊 But, seeing it start to happen was very depressing 😞. I am referring to the landfill at Wrecclesham. I thought I'd nip up there as a change from Noar Hill. The first thing of note was a small fence around the entire site and about every 10 paces a piece of roofing felt had been placed next to a small plastic tub sunk into the ground - hundreds of them. Lifting a couple of these revealed several slow worms:



Then there were the goats – about 200 of them – they were everywhere 🤪 Really cute especially the one who persisted in following me around 😊





By now, naively, I was beginning to think/hope that there had been a change of plan and this lovely site was about to be put to a more appropriate use. Spotting a couple of folk checking the slow worms, I made my way over to them. They were from a company which has been employed over the next 2 months to catch up and relocate the slow worms, frogs and toads, following a site survey which had been carried out 2 years ago. The lake is to be mostly filled in! They seemed very sympathetic to the plight of the wildlife and confirmed that there were also bats and dormice on the site together with badgers, deer, foxes etc. We chatted briefly about the butterflies which are resident there.

Making my way across the site it was apparent that preparations for further work are underway:





I saw Green Hairstreaks, Orange Tip, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Dingy Skippers, Small White, Large White, Small Heath, Peacocks, many moths and some beautiful Demoiselles but by now my enthusiasm had disappeared and I could not be motivated to take many shots of them.



I couldn't help thinking what a waste (no pun intended!). I know it used to be a landfill site but we have few places that are as lovely as this, home to a diverse range of species, some of which are protected. I left feeling very heavy of heart 😞

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 26-May-15 04:34 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, your photos showing what's happening at Wreclesham make me feel sad too. We knew it was inevitable, but hoped that it might not happen for some time. I spent many happy hours there, particularly when the Glanvilles were in residence, and it was a lovely place to be. That's exactly why I have made no visits in 2015, fearing I would find exactly what you have illustrated. At least we all had the best of it, and enjoyed it while we could and at least they are trying to save as much of the wildlife as is possible!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-May-15 05:55 AM GMT

Stunning shut of the Beautiful Demoiselle Pauline 😞 Sad time though with the demise of Wreclesham – I only found out about it for the last year the Glannies were present but it was a cracking site 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 26-May-15 06:31 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

I never made it to Wrecchlesham, but it looked and sounded like a great place 😞 I know what you mean about feeling depressed when the developers move in. One of my favourite local spots is set to disappear over the next few years when the new 'Wellbourne' housing development starts near Fareham. Nothing we can do about it, just have to make the most of it whilst it is there and pray that not too many more sites are lost. Even when they retain a 'green' area it tends to be an unnatural creation which might look aesthetically pleasing but only to the layman 😞

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 26-May-15 06:33 AM GMT

Such a shame about that site, I don't know much about it but it seems like it is/was a very nice place. We humans do have such a selfish way of treating our planet sometimes 😞

It's not much of a consolation but the rescued Glanvilles seem to be going from strength to strength at their new site 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 26-May-15 10:09 PM GMT

So Sorry Pauline, Man can be so destructive Goldie 😞

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 27-May-15 11:34 PM GMT

Try not to let it get to you too much Pauline, sadly these things happen, we can only do our own little bit to help conserve what's left...conserve and enjoy what's left!

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-15 02:51 AM GMT

Thank you guys (and Goldie 😊) for your sympathetic comments. That site has provided many special wildlife encounters for me in the past, the memories of which I shall treasure, along with the photos, one of which I am enclosing below, where a Doe allowed me the privilege of watching her feed her Fawn:



Today I decided to visit MHD as I have not been there for quite a while and I hoped I would see something different. My first encounter was with the Small Blues which were plentiful. I have seen plenty Small Blues before but I have never witnessed them egg-laying. Several females were taking advantage of the sunshine – and the Kidney vetch – to do just that:



Once she had moved on I checked the flower head and saw a tiny white egg gleaming in the brilliant sun:



Having 'got my eye in' I looked at other plants and found that many of them contained a similar treasure. The breeze was so strong that I 'marked' one such plant by placing a stone at its base with the intention of returning when the wind dropped to try to get a better shot. However, at that point another enthusiast stopped to chat and I offered to show him the egg on the marked plant. I was surprised to find that in a very short space of time a second egg had been laid close to the first:



It was not until I was uploading these photos that I realised that one of the shots contained both egg and larva 😊😊



I stayed a while longer to enjoy the spectacle, noticing that the usual perils and predators were ever present:





It was time to tear myself away from the Small Blues but one individual decided my legs were irresistible 😊😊. He persisted in drinking in the sweat from behind my knees and despite my efforts to shake him off he landed on my socks and then my trainers, before making his way back up my leg. At one point he was in danger of disappearing up my shorts 😬😬 so I thought a record shot was in order, even if it was a difficult angle to reach:



I eventually managed to shake him off and set off to explore the rest of the site.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 28-May-15 03:39 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I've just been reading about your wonderful day with the Small Blues. Top class images too ! You refer to one taking a liking to your perspiration (ladies don't sweat). If you look at my diary you will see them on my old shoes. Six of them chased me , three landing on my shoe when i stopped !.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 28-May-15 04:36 AM GMT

Really lovely Small Blue photos Pauline 😊🍷 and you also got those brilliant images of the ovipositing females, plus the shots of the eggs too 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-15 05:01 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Sorry to read about Wrecclisham, it is/was not a site I am familiar with apart from reading about it in your, and others, diaries. An unfortunate fact these days that a lot of good sites get developed one way or another.

On a brighter note, I love the photo of the Doe with her Fawn and an excellent series of Small Blue images of the ovipositing females and the eggs 😊

Cheers,
Neil

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 28-May-15 05:12 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Was that Small Blue in the fourth to last photo ovipositing did you see an egg?? The plant looks like something like Chalk Milkwort not Kidney Vetch - very interesting if it was, as as far as I am aware the SB is completely reliant on Kidney Vetch. Perhaps it just made a mistake 😊

Kind Regards
Mark

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 28-May-15 05:31 AM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

Such a shame about that site, I don't know much about it but it seems like it is/was a very nice place. We humans do have such a selfish way of treating our planet sometimes 😞

It's not much of a consolation but the rescued Glanvilles seem to be going from strength to strength at their new site 😊

Their New site is a Nature Reserve so should be a lot more secure for them too. With a Glanville Species Champion nearby, and management for disturbed habitat, scrapes that suits them.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 28-May-15 05:50 AM GMT

Excellent sequence, Pauline.

I'm particularly interested by the specimen with the distinct lack of underside spots. That's highly unusual.

Re: Pauline

by keving, 28-May-15 03:39 PM GMT

Pauline,

I add my compliments too on your Small Blue photos, simply stunning!

Regards Kev

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-15 09:57 PM GMT

Thank you for the compliment Trevor 😊. Where I come from (NE), we call a spade a spade – I was definitely sweating!!!! 😂

Not a patch on your recent shots Mike, but thank you. Having never seen that before I was well pleased 😊

I appreciate that Neil – that shot (deer) is probably one of my all time favourites, not because of the quality but because of the memories 😊

Hi Mark, yes, I was surprised at the behaviour too. It wasn't just once, but 3 or 4 times that butterfly looked to all intents and purposes as though she was egg-laying. Once she had flown I scrutinised that plant but I could find no sign of an egg so I haven't a clue what was going on 😊 I'm sure I would have seen an egg if there had been one.

I wish you could give me similar reassurances regarding the other wildlife being displaced Martin 😊

You are so good at spotting these details David. I had actually noticed the lack of spots but put it down to 'normal' variation. However, having now looked at this web site I am wondering if it was an ab?

Good to hear from you Kev and thank you very much 😊😊

Having eventually shaken off the persistent Small Blue I made my way along the track but was soon distracted by a patch of nettles 😊 (I have learned recently that there is a wealth of interesting creatures to be found there). The first creature that caught my attention was an amazing beast. I really couldn't believe what I was seeing. Face on, it looked like a little deer, or rabbit, or rat – definitely something other than a beetle in the nettles!!! I wondered if I was getting a bit fanciful having recently read 'Seeing Butterflies' about mimicry. As I was taking a few photos Andy Barker approached doing his transect and was able to confirm that it was quite an unusual Longhorn Beetle, and agreed that it looked like an animal's face. I have since done a little research and I believe it is *AGAPANTHIA VILLOVIRIDESCENS* (Golden Bloomed) which was recorded in Hampshire for the first time only a few years ago. (Please feel free to correct or add any details). A few shots before moving on again:





Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 28-May-15 11:05 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Yes a striking beastie. I found one a couple of years ago at Farley Mount. It hasn't reached the New Forest yet.

Full name is Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn beetle,

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 29-May-15 01:24 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Amazing creatures, they look like they should live somewhere exotic 😊 I ran into one for the first time last year. What startled me was the fact that it emitted a loud squeak when disturbed 🤩 By coincidence I ran into a threesome of said creature yesterday, pictures to follow shortly in my diary.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-May-15 07:20 PM GMT

Good to hear from you Maurice and thank you for its full title. My memory seems to be getting worse as I get older but that is one I definitely shall remember 😊

Goodness Paul, if I'd known about the squeak I might have been tempted to disturb it just to hear the sound (except I couldn't reach it as it was in the middle of quite a large patch). Do you know what causes the squeak – is it the rubbing together of legs or is it actually vocal? I'm looking forward to seeing your photos.

Just a quick interruption to give an update on the DGF I picked up recently. It has now pupated. I have managed to get a couple of poor shots but without disturbing it too much this was the best I could do, camera hand held at an awkward angle:



The remaining White Admiral continues to thrive (I still do not know what happened to the other little cat) and I am looking forward to seeing it pupate soon hopefully. The stark black background is the mesh of the cage it is in. I have avoided disturbing it, even to the extent of not moving the pot to a more suitable place for photos, in case it causes any stress.





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 31-May-15 12:33 AM GMT

Love the 'deer face' pic of the Longhorn beetle 😊

Going back a bit, I think those Small Blue pics are delightful – like water-colour paintings. According to Russwurm 'Aberrations of British Butterflies' : "the spotting on the underside varies considerably, and specimens with all spotting absent except the discoidals are not uncommon" (ab. *caeca*). When the spotting is reduced (like yours), it is apparently known as ab. *parvipuncta* Tutt.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-May-15 04:26 AM GMT

It was an exciting find for me Mike 😊 ! Thank you too for that compliment – it is much appreciated. It is also good to know what type of ab it is – I think I might have put it in the wrong SS Album – Vince?

Early evening I did 'my' escorted transit around Noar Hill and to keep things brief I could only find 3 Brimstone cats, although they seem to be growing well (another windy evening).





The first pair of Duke eggs I checked looked exactly the same as they did last week ie. one looked 'full' and the other looked clear and 'empty' so I did not bother to take another photo. I could not find the batch that Andy originally located but I think it is because everything has grown so much. I then went on to locate the other batch of 6 eggs which I originally found. There was no sign of any eggs but there was one very tiny larva. I couldn't see it very well even with my reading specs but I had brought a hand lens too 😊 I really hope this is a Duke cat otherwise I am going to feel really stupid posting 3 shots:





I am hopeful that the id is correct as there were some typical feeding damage to the leaf (should have taken a photo of it 😊).

I next moved on to the batch Mike found. I am sorry to have to say that I found no trace of any eggs whatsoever. It is frustrating as I was hoping to be able to confirm their ID. I shall keep checking this plant as it was early (6.30pm ish and still sunny). I am still hoping that next week there will at least be feeding damage. Whilst scrutinizing this plant I came across another cat. I would be grateful if anyone could give me any clues:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 31-May-15 06:21 AM GMT

Great pictures Pauline, the hatchling Duke being particularly cute. I'm hoping to find some myself when I next visit my closest Duke site. 😊

That last caterpillar is actually a Sawfly larvae, not sure which species but easy to separate them from Lepi cats when you see that they have a few extra sets of prolegs 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 31-May-15 06:45 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

It is also good to know what type of ab it is – I think I might have put it in the wrong SS Album – Vince?

The whole business of aberrations seems to be a minefield. The book I looked at (Russwurm) only seems to list a few possibilities. I have just been reading bits of Tutt's 'British Lepidoptera Vol.10' – he writes at *very* great length and describes lots of individual specimens.

On page 108 he writes "those with the normal number, but very small, and the marginal rings usually lost in the ground colour, we call *ab.parvipuncta*, n. ab." and "The extreme form, i.e., that on which all the spots except the discoidals are wanting, are very rare = *ab. extrema*, n. ab."

Since your specimen seems to have a few spots completely missing, I now don't think either of these descriptions fits 😞.

Later, on p.109, he writes "*ab. obsoleta*, Tutt, "Brit. Butts.," p. 161 (1896) —An underside aberration with the spots almost or quite obsolete (Tutt). Aigner–Abafi gives almost the same description as ourselves, viz., "beneath with only 2, 3, or no eyespots at all."

and then, on p.110 "*ab. semiobsoleta*, n. ab.—With the spots on the underside of the forewings present, but those usually present on the underside of the hindwings entirely absent. A specimen in the Brit. Museum Coll."

After attempting to digest all that, it seems to me that yours fits '*obsoleta*' better than '*semiobsoleta*', where the '*semi*' implies a difference between the wings, with the hindwings **completely** unspotted.

I suspect that the categories in the species gallery may be the wrong way round but I'll let the real experts think about that 😊

Incidentally, **Tutt** can be downloaded as a PDF from <https://archive.org/details/naturalhistoryof10tutt>

Mike

Re: Pauline

by peterc, 31-May-15 03:34 PM GMT

I received *Aberrations of British Butterflies* (Russworm, 1978) book last week and I must admit to being a little disappointed about the apparent lack of aberrations for a number of species. There is also a book '*Variation in British Butterflies*' by A S Harmer which I believe is just about the aforementioned author rather than an authoritative text on the aberrations themselves. Does anyone have this book and is it worth buying?

Mike, thanks for the link for the natural history archive which I will definitely delve into.

ATB

Peter

Re: Pauline

by FISHiEE, 31-May-15 03:42 PM GMT

I think small blues with few or no spots are quite common? I see several most years and assumed this to be just normal variation rather than an aberration? If not then they must be the butterfly with the highest proportion of aberrants ever or I am just very lucky with them! Might have to dig out a few and post, though as they are so common I don't make an effort to photograph these.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 31-May-15 04:38 PM GMT

"peterc" wrote:

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Harmer's book is a classic work and has a great introduction to the mechanics of variation. But it, too, does not contain a comprehensive list of abs. if that's what you're after. For this, the closest I've seen (and have) is "ABERRATIONAL AND SUBSPECIFIC FORMS OF BRITISH LEPIDOPTERA" by A.L. Goodson and D.K. Read. At 465 pages long (with no illustrations, just text), and 10 aberrations (on average) described per page, you're looking at 4000+ named aberrations. It also does a good job at identifying synonyms. The work was never published (it was created while the authors worked at the BMNH) and many copies are photocopies of photocopies etc. so the quality isn't good.

When I last met with Geoff Martin (Lepidoptera collections manager at the BMNH) the question of copyright came up – probably because I'd started to transcribe the definitions for us on UKB – a mammoth task that is still incomplete, as we all know! We never concluded that conversation – but Geoff did suggest that maybe it would make sense for the BMNH to just make a PDF of the work available on their website. I've not discussed this with Geoff since, or seen it emerge.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 01-Jun-15 12:30 AM GMT

Wonderful find with the longhorn Pauline...and not half bad images either come to think about it 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by peterc, 01-Jun-15 01:35 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"peterc" wrote:

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Cheers,

– Pete

Thanks for that, Pete. It will be good to know what transpires out of this. At least, this website has a good selection of aberrations and no doubt will grow.

ATB

Peter

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jun-15 03:28 AM GMT

Appreciate that Buggy – I was particularly pleased at finding the Duke larva (once I had verified that's what it actually was). It was just soooo tiny! Thanks too for explanation re sawfly.

Thank you for that detailed explanation Mike. It is a lot to take in (had to read it a few times 😊😄) but very useful, together with the following discussion.

Hi John, nice to hear from you. I would love to see some of your shots so please feel free to post in my diary (everybody else does 😊😄).

Think a bit harder Bill 😊😄 – they're GREAT images 😄. Seriously Bill, thank you! I was even more delighted at finding a Duke larva – both firsts for me – which is what this year is all about 😊

A few (hopefully better) shots of my pupated DGF and WA larva, both of which I am obsessed with:







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-15 01:38 AM GMT

We have had some very heavy rain here over the last 36 hours. I thought my WA cat was being smart getting under his leaf out of the storm:



... but no, it seems he has decided to pupate:





I hope he makes it through as it will give me a great deal of pleasure to return him from whence he came and set him free.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 02-Jun-15 05:14 AM GMT

Well done finding the Duke larva Pauline, nice shots 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-15 02:47 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. I was excited to find it – at last! I don't often blame my camera but the cat was so tiny that was the best my Lumix could do. I shall keep checking 'your' plant.

A couple of Commas to brighten up a dreary morning:



and a Broad bodied chaser:



... and then it was back to the nettle patch 😊 where a variety of creatures were spotted – some known, most not:



Shield Bugs



Bag moth case



Unknown but lots of these had decimated 2 small Sallows





Cardinal beetle





.. and my first ever Scorpion fly (I think).

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 02-Jun-15 06:14 PM GMT

Great selection of photos Pauline, that is indeed a Scorpion Fly, a female. When you see a male you'll see just how they got their common name! You've also got a rather nice Crab Spider there, a click Beetle (I've had much fun with them as a kid) and a little weevil. Those black things on the willow might be Sawfly larvae...but don't quote me on that!

I also like those DGF pupae pics and your pupating WA cat. I'm looking forward to seeing my first WA so seeing yours pupating means I've only a few weeks before ticking off another lifer 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 02-Jun-15 09:57 PM GMT

Hi! pauline, Your Shield Bugs look just like an African mask I brought back from Haiti, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 03-Jun-15 07:07 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

In answer to your question about the Golden-Bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle and its squeak, as far as I could tell it was able to inflate its abdomen somehow and force the air out somewhere.

I am keenly following the progress of your Dark Green Fritillary pupa, what a curiously shape it is. I think your White Admiral Pupa will be equally as curiously shaped. I look forward to seeing the emergences. Good luck with both 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jun-15 04:29 AM GMT

Thank you Buggy for the compliment and the ID's. I've just been reading about those Click beetles – wish I'd known that when I spotted it 😊. The first time I ever saw a WA it was gliding around my bird table in the front garden. I had no idea what it was but I had never seen a butterfly so graceful in flight. You have that pleasure still to come 😊

Hi Goldie – I agree, there are some quite amazing looking Shield bugs around, the shapes, colours and markings certainly resemble all manner of things 😊

Evening Paul – thanks for that explanation – what fascinating creatures. I have been following the development of my cats very closely and like you I am hoping for a successful conclusion. All being well it shouldn't be long now 😊

This time last year I was on Bramshott Common taking photos of Silver studded Blue. I thought I would nip over there this morning to see if they were out. They weren't! However, there were a handful of Common blues flying, mostly males, but a couple of females too. The females were of the blue variety:



There were quite a few Dingy and Grizzled Skippers around, the temperatures had risen and the sun was shining – in fact, it would have been easy to convince me that it was a Summer's day in early June 😊😊 if it hadn't been for the recent dreadful weather and the thunderstorms that are now forecast 😞



Naturally I had to have a quick look at the nettles on the way out and these caught my eye – male and female I believe? The metallic gleam of the sunburst pattern was quite eye-catching and something the camera has failed to capture:



Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 04-Jun-15 04:31 AM GMT

Fascinated to see your white admiral larva pupating, Pauline. I think my most advanced (in the wild) are just a few days behind yours, though my least advanced have an instar or more to catch up.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-15 06:18 AM GMT

Lovely blue female Common Blue Pauline is it just me or do they seem to be getting bluer year on year? It won't be long until the Silver Studs are out now, they've already been seen in the far South West.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jun-15 04:58 PM GMT

Thank you for your interest Guy. You really shouldn't get me started on these cats as I think I am mildly obsessed with them 😊😌. Like you, I am fascinated – and yes, I still worry about them 😞 I take photos of them almost daily and watch for any slight changes. It is such a shame that the smaller of the 2 disappeared and frustrating that I don't know what has become of him. As you know, they received no protection or attention over the Winter and it was not until your posting in April that I checked the plant and to my surprise found them still alive. My remaining WA is taking his time completing the pupating process. This is him a day or so ago:



I am particularly attached to this one as I was lucky enough to watch the egg hatch and it has been a long process. I so want to see the end result:



Hi Wurzel, I think you could well be right about the blue females. Last year the first really blue female I saw was at Noar Hill and yesterday all the ones I saw there were blue!





There were still a few Dukes around in reasonable condition, lots of Dingies and an explosion of Small Heath:



Of course I had to check the Brimstones – still 3 and growing quite fast now:





A quick glance at the nettles revealed a pair of something:



Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 04-Jun-15 10:04 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

The black and yellow beetles are Wasp beetles

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 04-Jun-15 11:01 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Those ' blue ' Common Blue Females are stunning !. Saw loads last year, none this year yet.

Not long now for H.I.M. at BB. now ! 😊.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jun-15 12:47 AM GMT

Great to hear from you Maurice and that ID is appreciated. I am learning such a lot with help from folk on this site, but me, into bugs and moths! Who would have thought it eh? 😊😊

Thank you Trevor. I am actively looking for a normal 'brown' female without success but more of that later. See ya at BB 😊😊

I have just checked my WA cat and I am just so excited. Why didn't I check him earlier. I only checked him a few hours ago but I guess it must be all this heat and sun. Perhaps he overheard me moaning to Guy that he was taking his time pupating 😊 Anyway, this is him now. I tried to gently rotate the stem to get different angles and the sun was quite bright:





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 05-Jun-15 01:04 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,
Your WA is, I think, on time pupating. Someone knowledgeable once told me to look for White Admirals after 20th June. I've often found this to be true.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by keving, 05-Jun-15 03:47 AM GMT

Pauline,

Great images of the WA pupation. The brightness of the images is stunning.

Regards Kev

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jun-15 04:40 PM GMT

I hope you're right Trevor – it hasn't really had any 'special' treatment apart from protection from predators so it seems I found a good spot for both Honeysuckle and larva 😊

Thank you Kev. I think the sun was a bit harsh but it certainly shows the brilliance and translucent qualities of the pupa. I shall strive to get some better shots in better light when I have time.

This morning I woke to thunder and torrential rain. I went out to check the pupa and noticed the Large White eggs which had been laid a couple of weeks ago were hatching and eating their egg shells:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jun-15 11:35 PM GMT

Good news. The SSB are now out in Hampshire just in time for the weekend – and there's even a good weather forecast 😊😊



Not sure who the little friend is in the top right hand corner





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 06-Jun-15 12:41 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Great to see your SSB.images. So i shall be over Midhurst way for them soon.

One question, you may have the answer. When i was a Boy i saw blue Butterflies at the Devils Punchbowl at Hindhead, they must have been SSBs.Is there a population there ?.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jun-15 02:27 PM GMT

Morning Trevor, now that's a really interesting question and I shall pm you with my response.

Yesterday, whilst looking at the SSB's a small brown shape caught my eye – very unusual amongst all the blue butterflies this was indeed a brown female CB. So rare have they become in this area I followed her to try (unsuccessfully) to get a better photo, ignoring the SSB and my first Large Skipper of the year which zoomed past:



However, I noticed she was egg-laying and successfully managed to find a couple of the eggs, although this was the best the Lumix and I could do:



All too soon it was time to go but I can no longer walk past a patch of nettles without stopping to look – in fact, so strange must it seem to passers-by I have even noticed dog-walkers deliberately avoiding me 😂😅



Within about a metre, right next to the main path, there were 4 such nests – I am assuming they are Small Tortoiseshell. Such a pity that most will perish.

The next find was a Crab spider:



– and another spider which looked quite fluorescent in the sunshine – a dayglow yellow/green:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jun-15 10:54 PM GMT

I wonder if anyone has any idea what is happening here? Is it in the process of shedding its skin? Pupating? What sort of cat is it? I feel I should know but sadly I don't 😊 – and after recent disastrous attempt at ID don't think I would dare try again 😊😞



Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 07-Jun-15 10:57 PM GMT

Hi Pauline – that looks like a Red Admiral larva to me, but it should be surrounded by nettle leaves spun together with silk. Did you find it like this, or did you open the leaf it was in (in which case, it would sew it up again pretty quickly!).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 07-Jun-15 11:29 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I think your second spider is a Green Orb-weaver Spider (*Araniella cucurbitina*).

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-15 01:08 AM GMT

Thanks Pete, yes, I gently opened it – good to know I haven't done any permanent damage. It looked like it had been wrapped in cling-wrap 😊😬

Thank you Mike – I think they must be quite common as I saw another one today but it is the first time I have really looked.

I must thank Nick L for introducing me to Bramshott Common as it is on my doorstep and I didn't even know it existed 😊😬. It is a cracking site and I thought I would have another look at the SSB today. Lots of Common Blue in evidence and the changing weather conditions made photos really easy so I can't blame the weather today 😊😬 Guess any mistakes are mine!



Still only the male SSB around but I'm not complaining – after all, you can't have it all at once!





I also saw my first Meadow Brown of the year but he insisted on tucking himself away amongst the stems; lovely and colourful tho and if they were rare they would be more valued:





Last but not least the nettle patch, and wow!! Reckon I found my first male Scorpion Fly – What an insect!! Wouldn't like to get on the wrong side of it! Luckily, it seemed to be more on the defensive, more intent on avoiding my gaze:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 08-Jun-15 04:13 AM GMT

Those SSB are lovely, may have to visit some heathland in the next couple of weeks to get a fix of them. Only saw my first last year but all very old and faded as I only caught the very end of the season.

You have indeed found a male Scorpion Fly, amazing beasties to look at but completely harmless to us. They don't possess a sting and they can't bite us. Those bits on the tip of the abdomen are just that, his 'bits'. With a hand lense, and a knowledge of what you're looking for, looking at his bits is the best way to identify the species, there are 3 in the UK. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-15 05:50 AM GMT

Lovely Silver Studs Pauline 🍷 – everything is happening now all at once – there's Large Blues, Heaths, Silver Studs, Lulworths – where to go first 🤔😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 08-Jun-15 06:19 AM GMT

Lots of new and exciting species emerging, Pauline, and I hope to be able to pursue one or two within the next week or two. Nice to see the SSBs, which are possibly the most accommodating of all UK species.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-15 06:43 PM GMT

Well Buggy, as it happens I did have a hand lens on me but I can honestly say I have never ever used it to closely examine the 'bits' of a male 😊😞 Amazing insect tho' and thank you for the compliment 😊

That's certainly true Wurzel – I certainly haven't noticed the usual 'June gap' this year as there seems to be so much going on 😊. Given the choice, for me, it would be the Lulworth's every time, possibly because they come in the best surroundings. You were very lucky to grow up in that area 🍷 Thank you for your comment.

You've already seen some new and exciting species David and very nice shots you got of them too 😊 Looking forward to seeing which ones you choose to pursue next 😊

Early Saturday evening I decided to check out the Duke larva at Noar Hill. I have given up on the couple of eggs that I mentioned in my last update as there is still no change. Likewise, all those eggs that Mike discovered appear to have been predated as there are no signs of feeding damage nearby and with so many little mouths I would have thought this would be obvious by now. I then checked my original 6 (where I got the first shot of the larva). There was no sign of any larva but a great deal more evidence of feeding which I took as a good sign, thinking perhaps that I was just too early in the evening. Interestingly, there was an egg on the leaf where I saw the larva which wasn't there last week:



As feeding damage is becoming much more apparent now I decided to try again to locate the eggs that Andy found and sure enough there were a couple of leaves with feeding damage. When I turned over the leaf I was delighted to see this little one chomping away:





Just as I adjusted the angle of the tripod to try to get these shots, it suddenly, literally, fell into 3 bits (it has been on its way out for a while 😊) jarring the camera, which then refused to work. Recently, the camera batteries seem to lose their charge suddenly and rapidly so one is always on charge and I don't have a third. I returned home hoping that it was indeed the battery rather than the camera and this thankfully proved to be the case. So, it was back to Noar Hill where the above shots were finally taken.

Whilst there I checked the Brimstones. I was initially concerned as I couldn't find any of them but all 3 have moved to new leaves and are safe and sound – for now anyway:





The camouflage is incredible!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jun-15 11:40 PM GMT

I had a lovely walk around MHD yesterday and I was very pleased to see how well the Small Blue appear to be doing. Having witnessed some egg-laying earlier I checked out the Kidney Vetch and was delighted to note that virtually every flower head held several eggs (the most I counted on one plant was 5). I seem to remember reading somewhere that eggs were not laid in close proximity but I saw several pairs of eggs although I can't be certain that they were both Small Blue of course.





Today I stayed closer to home and at Bramshott Common the female SSB are now emerging, albeit difficult to find due to the cloud cover and low temperatures (not to mention the wind 😊):



I also saw what I believe is a Common White Wave – a very attractive moth:



A few more shots of the WA pupa, the similarity between the pupa and the leaves on the left quite obvious, enabling it to blend in:



I would be interested to know if there are any signs, eg, colour changes, which indicates imminent emergence in this species?

Re: Pauline

by Willrow, 09-Jun-15 11:43 PM GMT

Green on green – a real challenge for your photo skills Pauline, well done on the good results 😊 and incidentally I loved your super SSB shots.

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jun-15 11:35 PM GMT

You're really very kind Bill but I am rarely satisfied with my results and to that end I am always open to suggestions for improvement. Most of my photography knowledge has been gained as a result of helpful folk on this site. However, I still seem to have trouble with depth of field and I am not sure whether it is me or my camera – I think it only goes up to about F7.6. (Having said that I have just looked at the EXIF data and this was taken at just 3.7 😊) Anyway, I tried again today to get some shots of my DGF pupa and this was the result.



I would be very grateful if anyone could tell me if there are any signs I could look out for as it approaches its time to emerge. This goes for the WA pupa too. It is always difficult to catch them at this time but without any warning it would no doubt be impossible.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-15 02:37 AM GMT

There is absolutely no way onto this site now so I was lucky to find this – just the one – just outside the boundary. I have seen them in the past outside of the site but didn't take much notice of the availability of the food plant. I wonder if there is scope for them to exist outside of the site:





Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jun-15 03:42 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, just catching up on your diary, some fantastic stuff in your recent posts. I particularly like the WA pupa, the Silver-studded Blues and the Glanville images 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 11-Jun-15 04:34 AM GMT

You're doing really well with all those early stages this year, very interesting stuff! 😊

Fingers crossed those Glanvilles can hang on and find somewhere safe to breed.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-Jun-15 05:18 AM GMT

Some great larval images again there, Pauline.

Where did you see those Glanvilles?

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-15 06:39 AM GMT

Beautiful Glannie – is that from Wrecclisham – I thought the site had been scraped clear?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-15 11:29 PM GMT

Thank you so much Neil. I am particularly fond of my WA having had him for so long – how am I ever going to be able to let him go 😊😂 Seriously, I really hope the timing is right and it doesn't emerge too early – or what's the point!?

I appreciate that Buggy. Not sure what has happened to me but I have become absolutely fascinated with the early stages – currently have a few at home but equally interested in monitoring in the wild where possible.

Thank you David. There is a great sense of achievement in finding these tiny creatures in the wild but it is equally frustrating not knowing what has happened to them when they can no longer be found.

Yes Wurzel, the Glanville was from W. but from outside the main boundary. Unless you have a strong pair of wire cutters or the ability to hop over a 7 foot fence (and I possess neither) there is no way in. All the little gaps that the locals used have been wired up and there is much work in progress. I can't imagine that any intrusion would be tolerated. However, I have seen these butterflies in a couple of places, about 10 mins walk away, outside of the main site, but whether I shall have time to check out those areas remains to be seen.

Most will remember my Comma larva of last year which sadly was parasitised:



They are such an interesting and attractive cat that I have wanted to try to rear another one and today I was presented with an opportunity:



I sincerely hope this one will be luckier.

I came across this little Cricket (?) too:



and this wonderful Silver y moth. Having recently read 'seeing butterflies' I am now seeing all manner of creatures in their markings 🤩🤩



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-15 11:42 PM GMT

Today, with the weather being what it is, I couldn't decide whether to visit the SSB's and take photos of the raindrops on their eyelashes and the lightening lighting up their silver studs – or whether to look for cats 🐾 In the end I decided to do a bit of both. My first stop was Broxhead – a late site for SSB so I wasn't expecting much. No SSB but lots – really lots – of moths. Some were quite big, so big I couldn't keep up with them but I managed to catch a few smaller ones:



Quite liked this one as it seemed to have little paw marks on it 😊





This one was sparkly and cheerful – just what I needed on a miserable day. The Burnet Companion was present everywhere:



On the topic of moths, this one was in my poultry shed last night. It goes without saying I have no idea what any of them are:



It was then back to the nettle patch. I am not sure if this is a moth but despite the damaged wing it was a pretty impressive and attractive insect:



I had my first ever experience of a click beetle today and gosh, it did make me jump! 😱 I didn't get a photo – in fact I only got the briefest of glimpses and couldn't find it again! My focus was now back on the cats and I assume this is the dark form of a Red Admiral cat although I was surprised to find it on thistle as I did not think they strayed from the food plant. In the same area there were another 3 cats (the others were all the cream coloured variety) but without exception they were all out in the open:





There were lots and lots of tiny cats and I am not sure how to tell if they are ST or Peacock but these were 2 lots on the same stem:



... and I must include these from a previous visit as I have never seen anything like them before:



Re: Pauline

by kevlng, 13-Jun-15 01:57 AM GMT

Some nice images of the cats Pauline.

As for the beetles, I'd be wildly guessing that the first one was a Hister Unicolor, but more confident of the second as being a Cardinal Beetle.

Kind Regards

Kev

Re: Pauline

by William, 13-Jun-15 02:05 AM GMT

Hello Pauline,

Cracking photos, particularly liked the Glanvilles, I never managed to see the ones at Sand Point!

Your moths are:

Peacock

Common Heath

Common Heath

(Burnet Companion)

Small Magpie

Red-Necked Footman

I think the first set of larvae are all Red Admirals, and the second look like Peacock to me, though I'm not 100% sure 😊

BWs,

William

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 13-Jun-15 04:12 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, always enjoy reading your PD, always filled with lots of interesting stuff 😊. Your caterpillar eating thistle will be a Painted Lady, the podgy pale one on nettle is indeed a Red Admiral and I would guess, based on the time of year, that the larval mass on the nettles will be Peacocks.

As for your beetles, I believe the black one is one of the Carrion Beetles, family Silphidae and the little green and red one is probably *Malachius bipustulatus*, related to the Cardinal and Soldier Beetles 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-15 06:05 AM GMT

Cheers for the info Pauline, hopefully they'll still be around next year 😊 I was going to have a go at a couple of your moth IDs but William beat me to it – mind you I got the same answers as he offered 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 13-Jun-15 06:37 PM GMT

Great detail in your posts Pauline, always makes for interesting and informative reading 😊

Be aware that moths have a way of becoming as addictive as butterflies, as many of us here can tell you...a wonderful way to spend time 😊😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jun-15 03:40 PM GMT

Morning William, Buggy, Kev – thank you for the ID's which are much appreciated; actually knowing what these critters are fuels my enthusiasm to look more carefully in future. I am pleased you find my PD interesting Buggy as I am finding all these new discoveries fascinating.

I'm keeping my fingers crossed Wurzel and if you give me a nudge at the right time of the year I shall check it out and let you know.

Thank you for the compliments Bill – and the warning 😊. I have been trying to avoid being drawn into moths and other stuff for quite some time now but it seems I am fighting a losing battle 😊 especially with so many enthusiasts around me 😊

Yesterday, I made what now seems to be becoming a regular event, an early evening trek up Noar Hill. My first stop, as always, was the Brimstone larva, which have grown significantly in the last week – but I could only find 2 instead of the usual 3 😊. They are very well camouflaged so it could still be there – fingers crossed.





I had not intended to keep checking the 2 Duke eggs which had remained unchanged but this stuff is a little bit compulsive – and they are only a few paces from the Brimstones. They still had not changed but I spotted feeding damage a couple of feet away and when I turned over the leaf, in bright sunshine, I found this little chap having an early supper:





It is a couple of weeks since I checked the Blackthorn where I found the Brown Hairstreak eggs so I thought I would give it another go, although I assumed it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack, as everything now is so overgrown with the warmth and the rain. Last year when I reared these cats I lost a fair few to slugs and spent a considerable number of hours searching my little potted Blackthorn to check and count them. As a result, I had a fair idea of what I was looking for but when I eventually found a cat the light was starting to fade. Nevertheless, I was delighted. This was my first ever Brown Hairstreak cat found in the wild!! 😊😊 . Note how well they are camouflaged:





As I had a bit more time on my hands than usual, I decided to check out the plant where Mike found all of the eggs. Sadly, there was still no sign of eggs or feeding damage. However, about 4 foot away, on a plant on the opposite side of the track, I spotted a fair bit of leaf damage and when I turned it over I saw a much larger cat (which I assume is a Duke, although I have little confidence now in being able to ID these tiny creatures). What a buzz I get from these discoveries – it's like finding you have a winning raffle ticket! 😄😄



Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 14-Jun-15 06:44 PM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

Your caterpillar eating thistle will be a Painted Lady,

I'm not so sure about that – the white spots on the flank are reminiscent of Red Admiral and, if I didn't look at what it was on, would claim it as Red Admiral every time. I can't find any record of Red Admiral larvae using Thistle as the food plant.

Pauline – did you see it feeding? Or, given that you found others nearby and out in the open (I've seen this myself a few times), could it just be a wanderer?

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 14-Jun-15 07:07 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"bugboy" wrote:

Your caterpillar eating thistle will be a Painted Lady,

Pauline – did you see it feeding? Or, given that you found others nearby and out in the open (I've seen this myself a few times), could it just be a wanderer?

Cheers,

– Pete

Good point, I didn't think about that, I just assumed it was eating the thistle. It does look mature so maybe it had wandered off looking for somewhere other than his tent to pupate in...

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jun-15 06:38 PM GMT

I'm afraid I didn't see the cat eating but I recall seeing a moulted skin very close by. In fact, after these comments I returned to the site to search thistles rather than nettles to see if I could find any sign of feeding, frass – or even more cats, tho' sadly I found nothing 😞. I guess we'll have to conclude RA altho' it was an exciting thought whilst it lasted. On the way back from this little trip I had to pass Broxhead Common and it would have been just rude not to stop off to give my regards to the SSB. They had indeed emerged – I saw 4 fresh males and surprisingly, a very worn looking female in that her white fringes were tatty but she still retained that lovely oily sheen. I am wondering if the torrential rain over Friday night was responsible for the wear and tear as I don't think they have been around that long. A couple of the males tried to mate with her but she was having none of it. I watched as she crawled over the heather and it looked like she was egg-laying, the tip of her abdomen dipping ever so slightly as it pointed directly towards the opening of each bud. In between, she would bask in the sun. Once she had left, I carefully examined the blossom but couldn't find an egg. I would have liked to gently unfurl one of the 'bells' to see if there was indeed an egg inside but decided to curb my curiosity as I was concerned I might cause too much disruption. I know roughly where it is so perhaps it might be worth checking for larva at a later stage. Anyway, a few shots from the visit:







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jun-15 02:49 AM GMT

I wasn't planning on going out today but one of the UV bulbs over my tortoise enclosure has stopped working so I had to go to Emsworth Aquaria for a replacement. Now, as far as I can tell, Emsworth Aquaria is not in Emsworth! 🤔 Is it any wonder that I get confused and can't find my way anywhere 😊
😊 Anyway, as I was so near to the forts, and the sun had put in an appearance, I decided I might as well go that bit further and look along that stretch

by the forts. I have never been along that top stretch before but I didn't quite get where I intended as the road I took led into the hospital 😊. I quickly veered off to the left, drove through an estate and parked by a little shop. From here it was quite easy to walk up the hill and along some lovely tracks where there were loads of butterflies including my first marbled Whites of the season:



There were lots of Brimstones ranging from an egg-laying female which I watched for a while



to this poor old chap who looked like he was on his last legs and kept lying down on the tracks:



It is not the first Large Skipper I have seen this year but it was the first that allowed himself to be photographed, too engrossed in nectaring to be bothered:





Other butterflies seen were Common Blue, Brown Argus, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Large White and a worn Holly Blue:



The view wasn't too bad either:



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 16-Jun-15 06:46 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Your first image of the Marbled White is excellent (good job that lamp went !). I visited a site for them today but nothing yet.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 16-Jun-15 06:58 AM GMT

Yes, lovely Marbled White, Pauline! The contrast on the first fresh ones of the season is just wonderful. 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-15 07:23 AM GMT

I agree with the others – cracking Marbled White, I can't wait to start seeing the multitudes of them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-Jun-15 07:52 AM GMT

Few things finer than a 'mint' Marbled White. Lovely specimen.

Re: Pauline

by Willrow, 17-Jun-15 08:38 PM GMT

Don't we all just love **Marbled White** they seem to epitomise our summer, some lovely captures included on your report Pauline.

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 17-Jun-15 11:23 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I'm afraid I didn't see the cat eating but I recall seeing a moulted skin very close by. In fact, after these comments I returned to the site to search thistles rather than nettles to see if I could find any sign of feeding, frass – or even more cats, tho' sadly I found nothing 😞. I guess we'll have to conclude RA altho' it was an exciting thought whilst it lasted.

Painted Lady larvae are very variable and, while flicking through the Millennium Atlas, I came across a PL larva that looks just like yours – on p.198. Given that it looks as if it is feeding, I think I'd now plump for Painted Lady. We live and learn!

Hopefully, we'll all get a chance to study this variability big time this summer ... start planting those Thistles!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 18-Jun-15 02:42 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"Pauline" wrote:

I'm afraid I didn't see the cat eating but I recall seeing a moulted skin very close by. In fact, after these comments I returned to the site to search thistles rather than nettles to see if I could find any sign of feeding, frass – or even more cats, tho' sadly I found nothing 😞. I guess we'll have to conclude RA altho' it was an exciting thought whilst it lasted.

Painted Lady larvae are very variable and, while flicking through the Millennium Atlas, I came across a PL larva that looks just like yours – on p.198. Given that it looks as if it is feeding, I think I'd now plump for Painted Lady. We live and learn!

Hopefully, we'll all get a chance to study this variability big time this summer ... start planting those Thistles!

Cheers,

- Pete

😬 after looking at the picture again I was going to retract my assurance of it being a Painted Lady and go with your instinct **Pete** of it being a Red Admiral. My reasoning being it does seem slightly 'plump' in a red Admiral way and the spines don't look spiny enough to be a Painted lady....

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-15 03:27 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I just love Marbled Whites, your photo's bring back memories of warm sunny days,(Where have they gone! 😞)
When we were in Norfolk the wind was bitter cold although the Sun was hot if you could get a sheltered spot you were okay, we spent a lot of the time dodging the wind by going into the various hides 😊 Luckily the people at Hickling Broad had put willow Screens here and there a long the path this helped enormously to keep the place a little warmer and the Butterflies took advantage of this as well , I think the Thistles and Ragged Robin plus the Yellow Iris's was enough to convince them as well Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jun-15 04:37 AM GMT

Thank you Pete for bringing that to my attention. I really must start looking at some of the many books I have. I have just looked at Page 198 and yes, it is remarkably similar, tho' I must say I didn't notice any silk tent. Having said that I wasn't looking at the undersides of the leaves. I shall definitely be returning there for a better look as I would very much like a definite ID.

Thank you for your input Buggy. I so wish I had some more photos of it. I have one but it is almost identical so not much use. I really just like to know what these things are 😊

Thank you Trevor. I guess there is always a silver lining if you look hard enough but it didn't seem that way as I handed over my £70.00!!! 😞😞 I am sure it won't be too long before you are seeing lots of them.

Thank you also David, Bill, Dave, Wurzel and Goldie - your kind comments and compliments are very much appreciated.

Having been housebound for a couple of days due to minor car repairs and waiting around for an electrician, this afternoon I could hear the SSB's calling to me so I had to pay another brief visit to Bramshott. Many more males have emerged since my last visit (I counted around 30) but I could almost feel their frustration as they searched for those elusive females. I only saw 2 worn specimens so I hope there are many more still to emerge.





The Dainty Skippers were still around – and still fighting fit – although clearly past their best. On the other hand 3 newly emerged Large Skippers spiralled into the heavens before travelling sideways at an incredible speed, only to return to their original positions.



I could not resist a shot of this lovely Speckled Wood – slightly larger than most and with striking markings and it was whilst I was taking this photo that I caught a glimpse of something out of the corner of my eye – it was quite large but definitely not one of the many Meadow Browns, and moving much faster in any case. Another Speckled Wood crossed my mind as I fancied I had seen pale spots on it as it shot past, but this butterfly was circling in a frantic manner and quite unlike a Speckled Wood. I gave it my full attention and quickly realised it was my first Painted Lady of the Season. It was a bit worn and a bit ragged but tearing around the place at a rate of knots. Twice it briefly touched down before disappearing and it was then I managed to grab this one and only shot. Painted Ladies have reached Liphook!



As I watched the blue butterflies I had time to compare the SSB with the Common Blue – both lovely and both so different.



As I was leaving I spotted the Brimstone that I have seen on previous occasions. He is immediately apparent, even from a distance, as he is unable to attain any height, although reasonable speed does not seem to be a problem. As he gets closer the reason is immediately obvious – his wings have been shredded. Not just the usual bird attack. He looks like he has been put through a pasta making machine, his tattered wings streaming out behind him as he flies along. Good luck to him.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 18-Jun-15 05:17 AM GMT

Fantastic photos as usual Pauline. You've got to hand it to Brimstones, they've got some staying power!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jun-15 02:09 PM GMT

Thank you Buggy. I have a soft spot for Brimstones. I must get some Buckthorn as I get a fair few in the garden each year.

I took these shots a little while back and forgot to post them. Thought you might be interested:



Reading about the recent emergence of several DGF I have been keeping a close eye on my pupa which pupated 29 May (could have been a day or 2 earlier as I didn't check it every day). It is very much alive but I haven't noticed any change colour wise. I am assuming it might darken but I don't actually know:



Likewise, I would have thought the WA would be darkening in colour as it pupated on 4 June, but no change there either. On the other hand, the Large White are growing in leaps and bounds and I have found a further 30 cats on the Kale. This was taken about a week ago – I must update it:



I found this cat on the nettles. I am thinking Small Tortoiseshell?



Last but not least I am enjoying watching my Comma cat doing caterpillar things. I really hope this one makes it:





Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 19-Jun-15 12:03 AM GMT

Reading about the recent emergence of several DGF I have been keeping a close eye on my pupa which pupated 29 May (could have been a day or 2 earlier as I didn't check it every day). It is very much alive but I haven't noticed any change colour wise. I am assuming it might darken but I don't actually know:

The DGF pupa could be a female in which case it will be a little later, as mainly males are flying at the moment. You should get an idea when the wings colour up, it will have more white on it if its a female.

Re: Pauline

by kevlng, 19-Jun-15 12:28 AM GMT

Pauline, I love that first photo of the Comma cat in particular and as you surmised the other cat is a Small Tortoiseshell.

Regards Kev

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jun-15 03:01 AM GMT

Thank you for the compliment and the ID Kev – both are greatly appreciated.

Thank you too Martin for that information and the clarification. During today the DGF pupa has started to change colour – it has certainly darkened and moves quite a lot but I'm afraid I'm not experienced enough to be able to say whether it is male or female. I don't even know how long it will be before it emerges now that the colour has started to change. I can't imagine that it will be long. Here are a few more shots taken during the day:



Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 19-Jun-15 03:11 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

The pupa needs to be allowed to hang down, otherwise the butterfly may not emerge properly. It should also be kept out of direct sunlight.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 19-Jun-15 03:20 AM GMT

The DGF should be hatching tomorrow if the weather holds, or Saturday, once they form up, they cannot wait too long before hatching, if there are several days of rain or cold conditions they dont hatch and often die fully formed up inside the pupa.

Orange Tip [male pupae colour up the following order Orange, White, then just before hatching Black spot and tip. females just the White and Black]. The Orange shows 2 to 3 days before hatching.

I expect DGF to do the Orange first, and the Black spotting last, although this is just a guess. I have never seen a DGF pupa, although we have them on Hutchinsons Bank.

its useful to remember that the upperside markings show when the wing cases form, so they can be sexed easier where the upperside markings colours are different.

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 19-Jun-15 03:22 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Hi Pauline,

The pupa needs to be allowed to hang down, otherwise the butterfly may not emerge properly. It should also be kept out of direct sunlight.

Cheers,

- Pete

With enough room underneath for the butterfly to hang on the bottom of the pupa and pump up its wings.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 19-Jun-15 06:20 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Thank you Buggy. I have a soft spot for Brimstones. I must get some Buckthorn as I get a fair few in the garden each year.

I took these shots a little while back and forgot to post them. Thought you might be interested:

haha, you know me too well!

That Beetle looks like some sort of Leaf Beetle, *Chrysomelidae* but I have to say I've never seen one with an abdomen as swollen as in your picture 🤪. I would hazard a guess its either a massively gravid female or it has some sort of huge parasite in there 🤔 Your hairy cat is a Yellow-tail *Euproctis similis*.

I'm enjoying watching your DGF pupae progress. Hope you get some good pics before it takes to the air 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 19-Jun-15 06:41 AM GMT

I'm following the progress of all your early stages with interest, Pauline, especially the DGF and White Admiral! 😊 You have amazing patience.

Dave

Re: Pauline

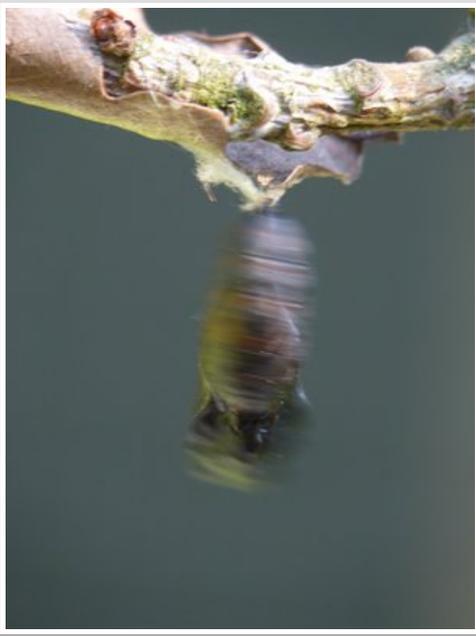
by Pauline, 20-Jun-15 05:37 AM GMT

Thank you Pete and Martin for your advice and guidance. Pete, you would have laughed if you'd seen me today with wood glue and map pins but more of that later. You weren't wrong Martin 😊

Thank you too Buggy. You help with ID's is just encouraging me, you do know that don't you 😊

You and me both Dave - I find the whole process fascinating and different in each case. However, patience is not one of the qualities I am known for as friends would tell you. Having said that I spent 5 hours yesterday and 3 hours today watching that pupa. The last time I did that was years ago when I desperately wanted to see a White Letter Hairstreak. I was told that they could be found at Hollingbury Park so I stood for 5 hours under the trees to the amusement of students and passers by after which time one flew down into the long grass for about 5 seconds and then flew up again. I gave up at that point! Anyway, I hope folk will humour me on this one given the time involved so it will be covered in a few posts.

I tried Pete, I really did, but that pupa did not want to be suspended. When I eventually succeeded in getting it there it continued to spin around and twitch about in a most distressed fashion. I allowed this to continue for about 20 mins but at this time it looked in danger of detaching itself from its leaf and stretching that webbing stuff. I took about 50 photos and they were all like this:



By chance I did manage to get one better shot:

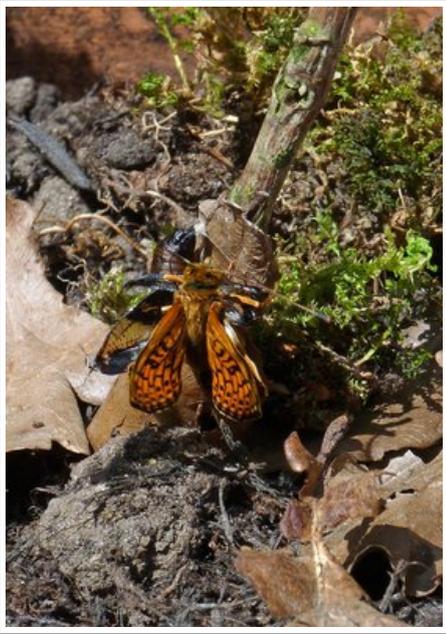


In desperation I decided to revert to yesterday's strategy which was to try to prop up his leaf against a branch and secure it with moss and stones. This seemed to work better and he was much calmer resting against his leaf rather than just being suspended but it did mean that the clearance area for any emergence was a great deal less which was a bit of a worry. I continued to keep him in the shade as advised and continued to take shots at intervals:





By now this constant vigil was beginning to become wearing. I had turned down invitations and had been deprived of food and drink 😊 I was clinging to Martin's reassurance that it would emerge today. I decided to pass the time by doing a crossword and just as I picked up the paper a movement caught my eye. When I have seen butterflies emerge in the past it has been quick, but quite delicate for want of a better word. The pupa usually splits and this little creature, looking like a small alien, emerges, fairly quickly but a bit at a time. Not this time! It was like a mini explosion. The pupal case burst (or was kicked) open and this tiny butterfly emerged amidst a lot of chaos. I was captivated. This is the first image. More later:

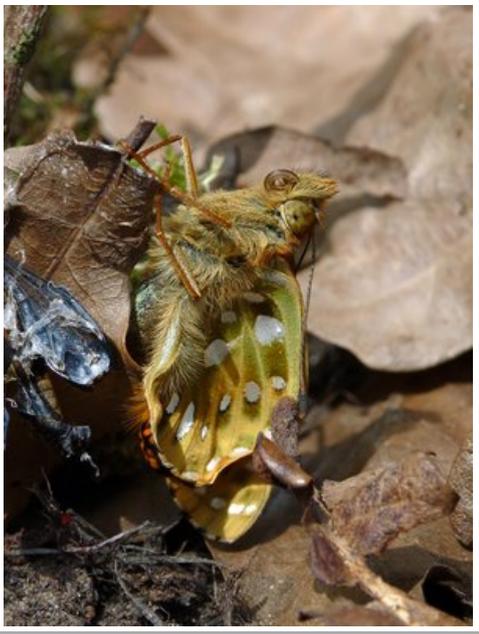


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jun-15 02:38 PM GMT

A few more from yesterday:







It is astonishing to think that from the point when the butterfly erupted from the pupa to this photo was about 90 seconds!

Other news, the Comma cat which I was enjoying so much now appears to be pupating. Whilst that is good news I really don't feel that I've enjoyed his company for long enough. Wish I'd had him earlier:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jun-15 05:28 PM GMT

I shall not apologise for the number of shots posted, nor their similarity. This was a once in a lifetime event for me and I wanted to make the most of it. As the butterfly's wings became fully pumped up and it gained in strength and confidence it made its way gradually to the top of the twig, stopping now and then to rest. The odd gust of wind at times dislodged it and I held my breath as it hung suspended, before getting its grip once again. Over the next hour, as it recovered from its amazing transformation, I had the opportunity for many photos, gently turning the pot it was in to gain advantage from different backgrounds in the garden, still undecided as to my own preference. However, there are some of these shots that I really like and it is not often I say that about my own photos. I think the reason for that is the subject matter as this was quite possibly the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen. After about an hour it ejected some bright pink meconium and started to spread its wings, appearing a little restless and impatient. It was at this point that I carefully transferred it to a cage with a nectar source as I feared it might escape in the Liphook area. Although I get SWF in the garden I have never seen a DGF here and it was my intention to return it from whence it came. A few (lot) more shots before the final installment:







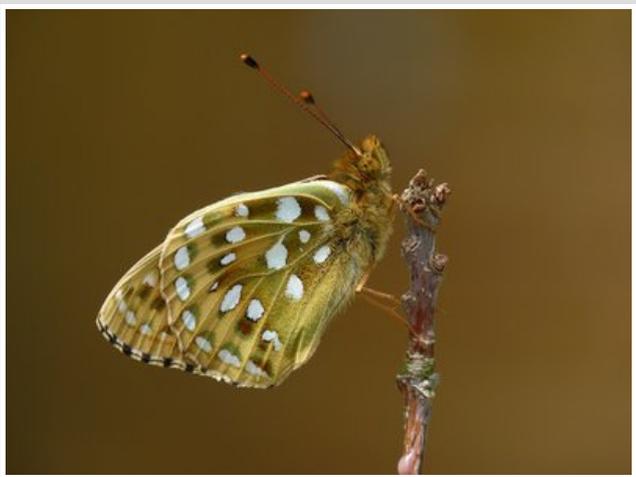




Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jun-15 11:15 PM GMT

A lot going on with the immature stages at the moment so I'd better finish this off:





Whilst the butterfly was in the cage I prepared a container in which to transport him to Noar Hill. It was a short Journey - we were there less than 2 hours after he emerged but it was a lovely day and with a not so good forecast for the weekend I wanted to give him the opportunity to make the most of it. I wanted to be able to settle him in 😊 so he could get the lay of the land and find a good spot in the event of bad weather. I decided to release him inside the reserve which was close enough to where I found him. I stayed with him for about an hour, to make sure that he could look after himself 😊😏. His maiden flights (is that a contradiction in terms?) seemed a little weak which was why I was reluctant to leave but it wasn't too long before his flight became stronger and more confident, visibly gaining height and power. When I was unable to approach him to take a photo without him taking off I felt he was ready to make his own way. The rest of the shots I took:







The last photo before I sadly walked away. He was high up, he was flying well, he looked magnificent 😊



Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Jun-15 11:29 PM GMT

Superb sequence, Pauline. I bet you felt almost bereft once you'd left him?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jun-15 10:20 PM GMT

Thank you David. I really enjoyed the experience and seeing it emerge was just amazing and different to the other species I have watched. I was a little sad to see him go but mostly happy and relieved (that I hadn't done something stupid and messed it up). I have released a lot of different wildlife over the years and know that how the actual release is handled is just as important as caring for the creature. My focus has now returned to my other immature stages and I can report that yesterday my Comma cat pupated:



I am rearing 3 Small Tortoiseshell cats and recently the first of them pupated. I was just blown away by the pupa. It looked like it had been modeled out of pure gold. It gleamed in the sunlight. It is gorgeous and my photos just don't do it justice. I have looked on this website and Vince has taken some

shots which show its true beauty. This was the best I could do:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-15 11:19 PM GMT

Great photos Pauline, when you've looked after something for so long it's hard to see it fly away I know the feeling, I had some Painted Lady caterpillars once and looked after them until they flew the nest, (that's what it felt like) 😊

I know they say "you never know what your buying" but these were bought for me and I raised 4 of them very successfully so I was very proud of myself 😊 I let them out when I was at my daughters in Kent, I thought they'd have a better chance of surviving there, your Dark Green Frit is what I'm hoping to see at Gait Barrow, lucky you to have raised it and well done. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 21-Jun-15 11:54 PM GMT

Its rare for me to be lost for words Pauline, so let me just add...*simply wonderful* 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-15 02:24 AM GMT

You have really excelled yourself with those wonderful images of the Dark Green Fritillary Pauline, both beautiful and interesting to follow the sequence 😊

All the best,
Neil.

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 22-Jun-15 04:24 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

A few more from yesterday:

You can see the tongue is still in two parts in the first picture, and he is joining it together in the second picture, this is the most important stage of its development, if one of the tongues gets caught around a leg, it cannot join it and cant feed. A Purple Emperor found dead at Juniper Hall a few years ago was perfect apart from a forked tongue.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-15 04:29 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie for your comments on my photos but more importantly on a successful outcome. It's good to have a bit of empathy 😊. Well done to you too re the Painted Ladies.

I appreciate your kind words Bill.

I, too, Neil, found it interesting and beautiful. I think I might have been inspired by the subject matter 😊. Something I'll never forget. Thank you so much for your kind comment.

Gosh Martin, that's really interesting. I had no idea 😲 I could see it was in 2 parts but didn't realise that it later fused. Still so much to learn. Thank you.

I seem to be getting a bit behind with my posts (spending too much time watching pupa I expect 😊 - I can see how easily it happens now Wurzel 😊). As a result, just a brief report on my recent visit to Noar Hill which was a little disappointing. There was no trace of the remaining 2 Brimstone cats 😞 and I could not find the Brown Hairstreak cat either 😞. I am not too concerned about the latter as it looked big enough for it to be thinking about pupating (tho' I guess it is still a tad too early), and the Blackthorn is quite dense and impenetrable so it is quite feasible that I could have missed it. On the other hand the Brimstones looked like they still had some growing to do. The plant they were on was not big and a bit isolated so quite easy to search. There was still plenty of food available so I cannot imagine they have wandered away. I am beginning to suspect foul play 😡!

On this visit I saw 3, possibly 5 Duke cats, all in locations I have previously checked and seen cats. There were even 2 cats on the same plant - a first. All the cats I am seeing are small, well tiny really, and they seem content to continue to carry on munching as I carefully turn over the leaf and take a few shots. However, in 2 of the locations, as I turned over the leaf, something dropped off quite quickly and fell to the base of the plant. It was too fast for a definite ID but the impression I was left with was that it was a Duke cat but quite a bit bigger. (There was also significant feeding damage to these leaves which I doubt was made by one of the tiny cats) Of course, once it had dropped down into the moss and roots there was no way of finding it. This has left me wondering whether this is a defence/survival mechanism that the Duke cats employ once they become older and wiser, in the same way that some other species do. I guess I am going to have to take a trip to Noar Hill in the dark to see what is munching on the UPPERSIDE of the leaves to satisfy my curiosity. A few shots of the little'uns below. The first image is uncropped to give some context and an idea of the size given that this is a medium sized leaf:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-15 05:55 AM GMT

Fantastic images Pauline 😊 That definitely seems to be the way to get such great closed wing shots of a DGF, much less hassle than waiting for them to sto tearing around a field 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 22-Jun-15 06:02 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

The last photo before I sadly walked away. He was high up, he was flying well, he looked magnificent 😊

I'd be ecstatic, not sad, Pauline! Returning a "rescue job" from whence it came is surely something to be proud of; at least, that's how I normally feel when releasing critters back where they belong.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by David M, 22-Jun-15 06:05 AM GMT

That 'gold-leaf' Tortoiseshell pupa looks like something Fabergé might well have created.

Truly beautiful.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-15 03:08 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. I couldn't agree more 😊 Seriously, if you ever get the opportunity, go for it, as it's an experience you won't forget!

Thank you Pete for the comment, and the help and advice. As I mentioned earlier I was happy at the successful conclusion but knowing all the perils that lie ahead of him (birds, spiders, etc) I feared for his survival. I also felt privileged to have played a little part in the process which I have found incredibly informative and interesting. Witnessing that moment of transformation is not something I'm going to forget 😊

Well David, I certainly wouldn't mind wearing that round my neck on a gold chain 😊 – not the real thing obviously, but perhaps there's a gap in the market here for an enterprising jeweler to design a range based on this theme 😊 .

On Friday I was informed that there had been something of a mass emergence of female SSB at Bramshott and many fresh females as well as mating pairs had been seen. One of these females included a specimen which had a row of blue studs along the hind wings on the upperside, and having seen the photo, I thought that it was quite unusual. However, it was not until yesterday that I got the chance to pay a visit. As I walked onto the site I almost stood on my first mating pair which flew up and landed on a bit of grass which was clearly not able to take their combined weight in the very strong wind. As a result they landed on several other plants and then decided to settle themselves on my tripod!! As I took a few shots the battery in my camera suddenly failed (again!! 😊) without warning which was a bit frustrating as I looked up and saw a fresh DGF nectaring on red clover quite close to me. He didn't stay long so it is debatable whether I would have got a decent shot. I did not want to disturb the mating pair so I decided to just wander around looking at the female SSB. I had noticed previously, and today, how small some of the females were and had tried to get a shot of one of them with a 'normal' sized butterfly to demonstrate the size difference. It was therefore irritating to find a second mating pair where the female was tiny and the male quite possibly a little larger than normal. Would have made a good photo!! I went on to find a further 3 mating pairs and a mating pair of Meadow Brown. I watched a couple of mating pairs as they split up and went their separate ways but still the pair remained on my tripod. They were there for 2 hours 15 mins before I could retrieve my tripod!!! I never did find the blue studded female but with no camera battery I was strangely pleased about that. A few photos from Bramshott:









PS. I now have 2 brand new camera batteries 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 22-Jun-15 06:29 PM GMT

Wonderful photos, Pauline, that reflect your love of the creatures you see 😊

I can understand your feelings for the future of 'your' DGF but isn't it strange to think that he has to rely entirely on instinct – no childhood and no lessons from Mum. Actually, I think I read somewhere that experiments have shown that some experiences can be 'remembered' from the caterpillar stage so, perhaps, he can take advantage of the care you lavished on him.

I too was enjoying SSBlues, yesterday, but didn't manage to capture any views as good as yours. I've never noticed before how brightly the silver studs can shine in the sun.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 22-Jun-15 08:07 PM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

Wonderful photos, Pauline, that reflect your love of the creatures you see 😊

I can understand your feelings for the future of 'your' DGF but isn't it strange to think that he has to rely entirely on instinct – no childhood and no lessons from Mum. Actually, I think I read somewhere that experiments have shown that some experiences can be 'remembered' from the caterpillar stage so, perhaps, he can take advantage of the care you lavished on him.

Mike

Now that the big fritillaries have been moved into Heliconiinae, their close cousins the Heliconid adult butterflies have been shown to copy each other, and learn from other butterflies, i have seen non pollen feeding heliconids [P. dido and D. phaetusa] copy from H. melpomene [Postman] and start to coil and uncoil their tongue, with pollen and nectar and drink the result, they are not reported to do this in the wild, unless they do this high up in the canopy and it has not been seen.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 23-Jun-15 03:15 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I was wondering if you could do me a huge favour 😊. As you live fairly close to Botany Bay, you may be popping over there in the next few days to see if His Majesty is ready for an audience yet.

If you see or hear of any PEs there could you PM me, and let me know. BB is over a 100 mile round trip for me , so you could save me precious time/petrol.

Last year, the first one's were seen about now, but i have heard that they might be later this year.

Many thanks and best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jun-15 05:18 AM GMT

Hi Trevor – I have replied by PM as requested 😊

Thank you Mike, it is astute of you to recognise that. I have read something somewhere about that. I am pleased you liked my SSB's but I think your

action shots are great 🍷

Hi Martin, I must confess that I only understand some of that, but I get the gist. It does not surprise me tho' as many wildlife rescue centres work on the basis of 'monkey see, monkey do' to encourage sick/orphaned creatures to eat and behave appropriately. Likewise, when I kept horses they would copy behaviour from their stable mates whether good or bad, eg crib-biting. I can see no reason why butterflies etc should be any different. Thank you for your interesting and thought-provoking input.

It is late for me to be here (waiting for the foxes to wake up and get their supper) having been up at 4.15am this morning but just wanted to record a brief trip to Noar Hill today. For the first time I felt I was suffering from the 'June gap' and scratching around to find things. I found another Brimstone cat on a different plant, quite a lot smaller than those which disappeared:

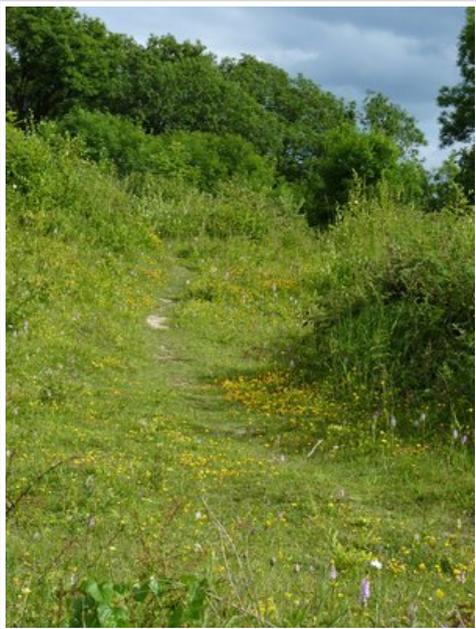


It was a hot and sunny afternoon but I still recorded 2 small DoB larva:





Noar Hill is looking fantastic and I only wish I knew how to compose landscape shots to do it justice:



A couple of orchids, the first I was told was a musk orchid, not sure about the other:



I saw my first female Large Skipper of the season and a dozen or so Marbled White were scattered about:





Unusually for me, I took a shot at one of the Small Heath which seemed to be showing off a little. This is not one of my favourite butterflies as their usual pose in this area is to appear half dead, lying on their side, with wings tucked in 😊😓



The only other butterflies I saw were Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell and Meadow Brown including this poor, crippled specimen who was fluttering around pitifully in the middle of the track. I tried to transfer him carefully to some bramble blossom which he seemed to relish, but just as quickly fell off again:



Nor did I see any sign of 'my' DGF 😞

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 24-Jun-15 05:37 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

A couple of orchids, the first I was told was a musk orchid, not sure about the other:

The first orchid is a Musk Orchid, which is very small.

The second orchid looks like the white form of the Fragrant Orchid.

I have many years experience with British and Tropical Butterflies, so have picked up many tips and observations over the last 50 years or so.

I use wood glue to for hanging pupae, the trick is to lay the stick flat on cardboard, and glue the pupa by dipping the tip in the glue and place it on the stick, while its on the cardboard. When the glue is dry, then hang or peg the stick up and let the pupa hang. They often wriggle a lot when the are placed on the stick, but settle after a while, its better done when they are not due to hatch. Some times we have had them crawl out, just after we have glued the pupa up!!

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 24-Jun-15 06:18 AM GMT

I find myself having to catch up on your diary Pauline 😊 you've posted very prolifically recently, picturing both your reared butterflies and those in the wild. Lovely photos of the DG Fritillary emergence and the recent DOB cat shots from Noar Hill are brilliant 😊 great shots all the way through.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jun-15 03:01 AM GMT

Thank you Martin for the ID's and the tips. Always useful to know stuff like this tho' hope it doesn't happen again and I don't have to put it to good use.

Apologies Mike but I'm sure it won't be long before I tire myself out 😊 Thank you for the compliments – I am trying hard to reach your standard 😊

A brief lunchtime visit saw loads of fresh female SSB at Bramshott – 6 seen egg-laying, on a variety of plants. 3 laid on Birds Foot Trefoil, 1 on Gorse, 1 on a dying Bramble plant in the middle of a well-used track and 1 on a plant that I can't identify. A lot of the shots are pretty rubbish but I was there primarily to observe and learn and the photos were just on the side.





She laid 3 eggs on this plant. A couple of egg-laying shots



The unidentified plant.

So, I saw 6 different females ovi-posting on 4 different plants, but always close to the ground, which made me wonder, does a particular female favour a particular type of plant or will that female lay on any suitable species of plant. I hadn't realised they used Bramble.

I also saw a couple of pairs of mating Meadow Browns, the surprise being that I only saw 2 pairs given the number present:



Re: Pauline

by Willow, 25-Jun-15 04:33 AM GMT

Well captured images Pauline, I'm impressed by your keen observation, your Personal Diary is full of such fascinating life cycle and behavior captures...such inspiring stuff 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 25-Jun-15 07:12 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Bramshott must be a site to behold now, a week on from my visit 😊

I may be wrong but I think when this species lays its eggs it is not always specific about laying on foodplant, just in the general vicinity (somebody please correct me if I am wrong 😞)

Your unknown plant looks to me like it could be a very young Birch sapling.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jun-15 12:07 AM GMT

I am trying Bill (cue for one of your witty remarks 😊) so I'm glad you're enjoying it. Thank you for your kind comment.

Cheers Paul for that info and the id, and yes, Bramshott is looking grand right now and is alive with butterflies 😊

On 16 June last year I saw my first WLH but, as I recall, I didn't manage a photo until 18th. For about the last week I have been intending to make a return visit to that site which is about 25 mins drive away but other stuff has been keeping me close to home. Today was going to be the day, so I rushed through the chores and just as I was preparing to leave a neighbour appeared in the garden with a box. I always dread the appearance of 'the small box', never knowing what it will contain, but knowing that I will be expected to deal with it, whatever it is 😞😞. This time it was a Long-tailed Tit nest, complete with 8 tiny chicks, which had been found in the middle of the road at the bottom of the lane 😞😞.



An absolutely beautiful construction – a work of art. I didn't just refuse. I stopped to consider. But those chicks were tiny, they have a very specialised diet, and they didn't look entirely healthy although they were still warm. My neighbour was not prepared to take them to a wildlife rescue 30 mins away so I directed her to a wildlife friendly vet 5 mins away and continued on my way to Cosham. Sadly, I think their chances are slim but on this occasion I didn't think I was best placed to give them the best chance.

When I arrived at the site there were about 10 males flying, fighting and lying in the sun – all incredibly high up. Everything has grown so much in the last year it is difficult to get into the sort of advantageous position that site used to allow, at the top of that little bank. It was nice to see them in action though and I concluded that they must have been out a few days because of the numbers and because some had signs of wear. I could see that they were taking in honeydew from the leaves in the canopy and had no reason to come down to nectar on the privet (although one did just that for all of 5 seconds). All my shots were taken at full zoom and hand held but I shall include a few anyway:





... and then there was this one 😊



A couple of times I caught sight of a small brown butterfly low down but it was always the same Speckled Wood. Every year there is a Speckled Wood in just that place, just the one, and it always manages to fool me a couple of times 😊😂



Whilst there I was able to get my first shots this season of a Small Skipper, and very lively he was too:



I think a second visit is on the cards before too long to catch up with the females 😊

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 26-Jun-15 04:18 AM GMT

So many wonderful pictures recently Pauline, impossible to comment on them all, I'll just say I'm very jealous of your White-letters and your DGF pictures put mine to shame! Beautiful shot of a Small Skipper to finish your most recent post 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-15 05:51 AM GMT

Great to see you get some Whitters Pauline 😊 Just as I catch up the next wave seems to emerge and still working for a living is seriously getting in the way of my butterflying 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 26-Jun-15 05:56 AM GMT

More splendid photos, Pauline! I am very envious of the WLH especially – I rarely get to see them, let alone get a photo! 😊 Just waiting to see when your White Admiral emerges... If it's anything like the DGF, it'll be amazing.

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-15 04:29 AM GMT

That's a lovely thing to say Buggy – thank you. I know Wurzel will be admiring your 'stained glass' DGF, as am I, but I enjoy *your* diary just because it is so informative, diverse and interesting.

There's plenty at the usual spot Wurzel – and don't forget, you got the mating pair last year 🍷

Thank you Dave – there is news to come soon re WA.

Too much is happening too quick on the butterfly front and stuff is getting out of order, so just a brief report on an enjoyable return visit to Bramshot today in good company. The SSB are still looking superb with many fresh females still around. They have now spread themselves over a much larger area and it is a pleasure to see so many:



There were many Meadow Browns flying but one stood out as being very pale in appearance when in action. Once settled I managed to get a few shots:



Whilst looking at a fresh female SSB that had quite a lot of blue sprinkled over her we came across some cats which I believe are Emperor moth cats.





Whilst I was watching them, one of them began to shed his skin which was fascinating to see. A few shots from the many I took:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-15 09:47 PM GMT

No need to explain where I was Saturday night – just to mention I found what I was looking for, and it was a whopper 😊 . Just need to compare the size of it to the feeding damage relative to earlier shots to see the size difference. It was on the same plant where I saw the two tiny Larvae last week. No sign at all of any little ones this week which I thought was very strange. It was a little later than usual so perhaps they go to bed early 😊



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jun-15 10:47 PM GMT

Who would have thought it, eh?? Me, with a moth trap! 😲 Well, I didn't see that one coming 😊 It's only on loan so I'll either become completely hooked or the novelty will wear off – time will tell!



I didn't know what to expect so early the next morning I was out there, bare feet and dressing gown, to see what it had to offer. I was surprised at the number of micro moths (which were still quite lively) including this one which landed on my specs – whilst I was still wearing them:



But, the micro moths are not really where my interest lies – yet!! 😊 . I was delighted to see several Buff-tip moths. I have wanted to see one for a while having seen the cats and some great photos of them.



The next one that I recognised was a Heart and Dart – well, at least that's what I thought it was:



There were quite a few of these, but with slightly different backgrounds and slightly different shapes on them. I thought they were all variations on a theme but having looked at a book I was recently given I am now not so sure. The biggest moth looked a bit like a Heart and Dart but slightly thinner and much bigger. Unfortunately, before I could get a shot for ID he flew off showing a large expanse of orange on his underwings.

There were a couple of these moths (Great Oak Beauty, I think) but again, they might have been slightly different. I must pay more attention:



A lovely Green Silver Lines stood out from the rest. Perhaps it was the light, or perhaps I was still half asleep but I should have been able to do better than this:



I have no idea what the others were but a few below, just because it was the very first time I ran a moth trap:



Marbled Brown?? I liked this one 😊





and this one from earlier in the week at a local site – a Common Swift:



News of the WA next, now that I have recovered from the trauma – almost!

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 30-Jun-15 12:47 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

1 Is Clouded Border
8 Heart and Club
9 Double Square Spot
10 is Gold Swift (Male)

Others look correct

Andy

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 30-Jun-15 04:00 AM GMT

My word, those SSB have some seriously impressive studs! Great pictures as always and hope you have fun with your moths 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Jun-15 08:19 PM GMT

Thanks A. 😊

Cheers Buggy – I really don't know where this is going to lead me but we'll see 😊

It's now time for the tale of the White Admiral. It will be split into 3 parts which I shall complete as quickly as possible. That way, if I lose it, I won't have quite so much to re-do, and it gives me the opportunity to get a top up of my Pimms 😊 .

Background

I'd like to start with a resume, a bit of background, and go back to almost a year ago when I was lucky enough to see both of my WA eggs hatch on 17 July 2014:



Having eaten their egg shell they wandered off, the very beginning of a brand new butterfly. I learned a lot from watching them – how they make a little platform to rest on to isolate themselves from potential predators, and how they cover themselves in frass to assist with camouflage:





As the Autumn approached the cats started to build their hibernicums – their little shelters where they over-winter:



They were very well camouflaged both inside and outside of this structure, made by folding a honeysuckle leaf round. It is hard to see him in the first shot but he is there. However, following severe storms and torrential and prolonged rain, it appeared that their hibernicums had been destroyed and there was no sign of 'my' little cats. Having had them for almost 5 months I was very disappointed, upset and feeling guilty – after all, I had failed to protect them and look after them properly and deprived them of the opportunity to complete their life cycle. I discarded the pot containing the wild honeysuckle and tried to forget about it, but in late May of this year, Guy posted that in his part of the world WA's were emerging from their hibernicums. I thought that perhaps I should check that pot of honeysuckle, more as a precaution than anything else and to satisfy myself that they hadn't survived. I believe it was April 1st when I got round to doing it – and there was one of the cats!!!! I was delighted and in a state of unbelief. Happily, the other one emerged (from somewhere) shortly afterwards so the journey continued:



Both cats continued to grow but one didn't seem to be thriving for some reason and the size difference between the two became quite marked. One morning I went to check them and the little one was nowhere to be found. I searched and searched to no avail. I am fairly confident there were no predators in the protective cage so I can only assume that during the winter period, when I effectively discarded him in the belief that he had perished, something untoward had happened to him, given that they were both treated exactly the same.



In due course, the remaining cat started to pupate and turned into a very fluorescent pupa:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Jun-15 08:41 PM GMT

Pupation

It was a long wait, and for a long time there was little or no change. The days passed – 22 to be precise – and I was beginning to think by now that this butterfly should be emerging. I had looked at this website which gave an estimate of 3 weeks for the pupation period so I was keeping a close eye on it. I knew it was still alive as it occasionally moved, but then, later that day, the colour started to change and darken.



The speed with which this happened was incredible – much faster than any of the other species I have monitored. I became convinced it was going to emerge that day so my vigil began. I would be embarrassed to admit just how many hours I spent gazing at that pupa (tho' I know some will

understand!) but as the evening approached many questions came to mind. Do they emerge over night? I had Brown Hairstreaks which emerged overnight sure, but they were indoors where it was warmer, an artificial environment. BUT, if it did emerge overnight, and the speed at which it had changed colour indicated to me that it might, I did not want to miss it. For me, part of the pleasure and education of rearing these butterflies is to see the transformations, whether it is shedding skins, pupating, and what has to be the the most spectacular, the emergence of the butterfly. I therefore decided to take the pupa indoors and during the evening experimented with the flash on my camera which wasn't entirely satisfactory.



Come the morning, the pupa was still in it's darkened form, and once out in natural light again I found it surprising how the colours of the pupa changed, depending on the light and the background.



By 5.15pm I decided I would have to get something to eat. I had been indoors about 10 mins when I received a phone call from a friend who asked about the pupa. I went out to check

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-15 04:01 AM GMT

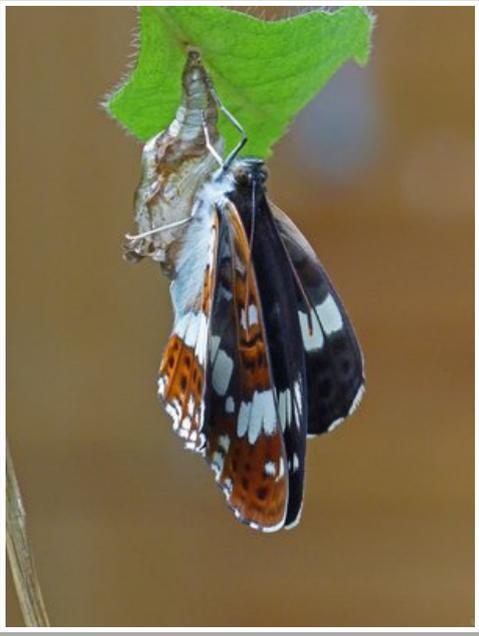
Well, after all those hours watching and waiting, missing only those 10 mins, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when faced with the brand new butterfly all completely 'inflated' 😊. This is the sight that greeted me:

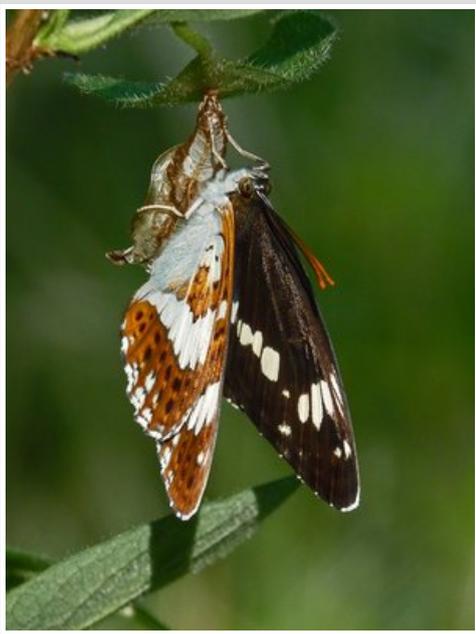


I had really, REALLY, wanted to see this transformation but at least the butterfly was complete and healthy. I was only left with being able to watch the wings dry. After Martin's useful comment about the proboscis I paid particular attention to this and could see that it had fused successfully. The remaining shots:









It was getting a bit late in the day for release so early the following morning (was it really just a couple of days ago ???!!) I took him back to the Straits, hoping to get a few shots in a natural setting before he took off to make his own way in the world. I set up the camera and carefully placed him on a

thistle. He didn't like that and after a few circuits of weak flight he came to rest on the path. I risked the ticks and went deeper into the vegetation to place him on a bramble flower but just as I reached for the camera he took off again, this time flying strongly and quite high, settling in a tall tree well out of reach. I resigned myself to the fact that I was fated not to get any decent shots of this butterfly and decided to check out the track for PE's whilst I was there. Nothing doing! On my way back, just as I approached my release point, a WA landed ever so briefly at my feet, and then took off again into the skies. I would like to think, believe, it was him, because all he has left me with are the smashing memories and this:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 01-Jul-15 04:16 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I've not been too lucky lately with the Butterflies, they've been scarcer a round here than ever they were before. I love your WH he looks so regal, I wondered if the PE were out yet they usually fly at the same time as the Admirals I think, I'm going to head to Fermym Woods as soon as they appear, my luck so far with the Fritillaries is nil, so I hope it picks up and I can see them also the WA like yours. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 01-Jul-15 04:23 AM GMT

Nice stuff Pauline, well reared and lovely shots 😊 I'd like to think that we saw your White Admiral at the straits today. Didn't get a photo though, maybe we weren't meant to 😊

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 01-Jul-15 05:03 AM GMT

Great observations and reporting Pauline 😊.

The photos of the final stages of the pupal development are magical (and are always my favourite part when I am observing and recording a project). I also know what's it like to miss an critical event by just a few minutes, especially after investing so much time in a project, so I share your mixed feelings, but a great result nonetheless.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 01-Jul-15 07:03 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Well, after all those hours watching and waiting, missing only those 10 mins, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when faced with the brand new butterfly all completely 'inflated' 😊 .

You can tell in your photos of the pupa that it was very close to hatching as the pupa went transparent, this is normally about 15 minutes before hatching, and sometimes you notice that the abdomen inside the pupa has started to slide down inside as the butterfly is pushing its way out.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 01-Jul-15 07:43 AM GMT

What a wonderful set of pictures. Sods law you missed the crucial 10 minutes but even so, beautiful 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-15 09:17 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind comment Goldie. Good luck at Fermyn 😊

Cheers Mike – it probably was him (he's very camera shy 😊) 😊

I appreciate the sympathy and empathy Vince and thank you for the compliments. I hope you like the next sequence/saga which is coming soon and I am not referring to this post 😊

That's another really useful lesson Martin – wish I'd known it about a week ago 😊 Now tell me, is there anything else I should know 😊 I seem to be learning from my mistakes and from hindsight – but perhaps that is the best way?

Thank you Buggy – it was frustrating tho! 😊

I have/had a Comma cat – my second, as the first was parasitised. The cat pupated 11 days ago and although I wasn't expecting an emergence for a few days yet, this morning I thought I would check it in the light of Martin's comment, and take some updated photos. I was surprised to see the cat had already coloured up, so despite the harsh sun and the strong wind I decided to take some shots. This cat had wandered away from its food plant and pupated on a small potted Sallow which created further difficulty for photos regarding shade and light and the leaves creating obstacles. As I took the first shot of the pupa I was astounded to see the pupa splitting open and the butterfly starting to emerge. No waiting around this time!!!! Quite the opposite – I was totally unprepared and as the wind swung the little insect around and the leaves got in the way, my attempts to capture the moment were very much thwarted. I should have been able to do it. It wasn't as fast as the DGF but circumstances were stacked against me Lots of shots and no more words 😊











Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-15 03:30 AM GMT

Fantastic shots Pauline, this should have made up for missing your Admiral pupate and your shots look great to me as well Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 02-Jul-15 04:00 AM GMT

Tell you what Pauline, if there was an annual award for best PD then my money would be on yours right now!

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 02-Jul-15 04:01 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

That's another really useful lesson Martin – wish I'd known it about a week ago 😊 Now tell me, is there anything else I should know 😊 I seem to be learning from my mistakes and from hindsight – but perhaps that is the best way?

I have spent many hours watching heliconid pupae emerge, as the butterflies often get stuck in the pupa when they hatch and need to be knocked free with a paintbrush so they can expand their wings, they only have about 5 minutes to expand their wings before they start to harden, so any delay in the pupa can mean bent wings.

the normal process is split pupa in the legs area, eg like your comma, you can see this part of the pupa moving for a minute or so before legs appear, then the head and the wings then plop the 2 forewings first, then the 2 hindwings, then its expanding them, can be in any order, or one side first, but usually the tips of the forewings are last. Then its coiling and un coiling the tongue as it joins it together. Then a rest while the wings harden, and after 30 mins or so it can fly.

I normally give the butterfly a minute or so, if it starts to take longer i then knock it free with the paintbrush. Always check the tongue is not hooked around a leg and has enough room to uncoil in front of the butterfly

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jul-15 12:49 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie, it certainly goes some way to make up for it, but I am still kicking myself 😊😊

As far as I can recall Buggy I have never won anything in my life, so wouldn't that be nice 😊😊 However, there's loads of cracking diaries out there – including yours!

That's really helpful detail Martin. I seem to have had a few problems with pupa recently but thankfully they seemed to resolve themselves. Certainly worth knowing tho. Thank you 😊

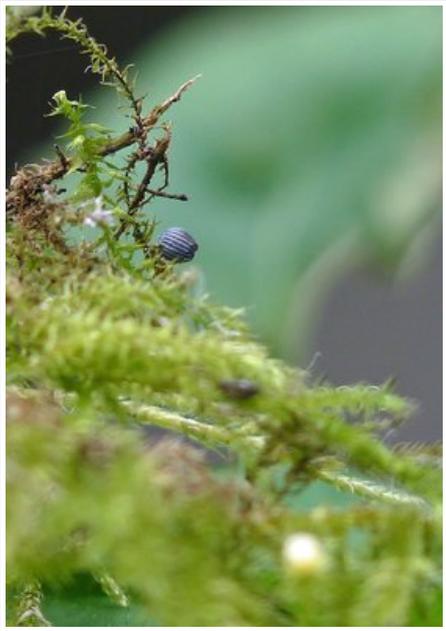
In the beginning

If you have a short attention span, or you are easily bored, then look away now as this post is quite a long one. It all started way back in the Spring of 2014. A friend was keen to find and photograph a SWF larva so we spent the best part of several outings scouring dog violets and leaf litter in the Straits where SWF are reasonably plentiful. Not the same could be said of the dog violets as we struggled to find them in any great numbers in the 'right' location, ie, at the base of moss covered Oak Trees. I resolved to keep my eyes open for egg-laying females that Summer but it was quite by chance that I stumbled upon many ovipositing females in a totally different part of the Alice Holt complex, including my first ever seen Valesina. Up to a dozen butterflies spent the whole of the afternoon egg-laying on the same 3 trees – it was just so surreal watching them all and it was something I never even imagined would ever happen. I resolved to return the following Spring and take some shots of the larva.





(There are 6 eggs in this shot but several trunks were covered in them)



(One of the eggs has already hatched)

I was surprised at the number of larva and the ease with which they could be found and visited several times to try to watch their development and compare it with the White Admiral cats which I had at home.





(This pose is very reminiscent of that adopted by the WA which I was rearing, presumably for the same reason, ie. protection from predators)



However, personal circumstances at that time prevented me from visiting as often as I would like so I decided to rear one at home where comparisons would be easier to make. Given the number of larva present at this site (and also the number of spiders and snails) I did not think one would be missed – and after all, I was only ‘borrowing’ it. I have lots of dog violet at home, so I dug some up and put it in a pot within a mesh cage. When I checked it the following day there was no caterpillar but there were 2 slugs on the inside of the mesh!!!!!! I cursed myself! Would I never learn!!! I’d been here before and should have known there would have been slugs in the soil. 😞

After some thought I decided to return for a second larva but this time I was determined to get it right. I made certain the plants were ‘clean’. I had read about sterilising the soil with boiling water but this just left a sloppy mess. I therefore decided to start with fresh compost and decided to put it on a tray in the oven and ‘bake’ it to kill anything which it contained 😊. About 15 mins later I smelled burning and rushed in from the garden to find I’d almost set the oven on fire – the compost was glowing red and the oven was full of smoke!!! 😡 I eventually got another pot set up with sterilised compost, clean plants and caterpillar installed. I started to dismantle the original pot and as I pulled up the plants, lo and behold, there was the original larva that I thought had been eaten by slugs!!!! So, I now had 2 WA larva and 2 SWF larva (an heir and a spare!!) 😊.

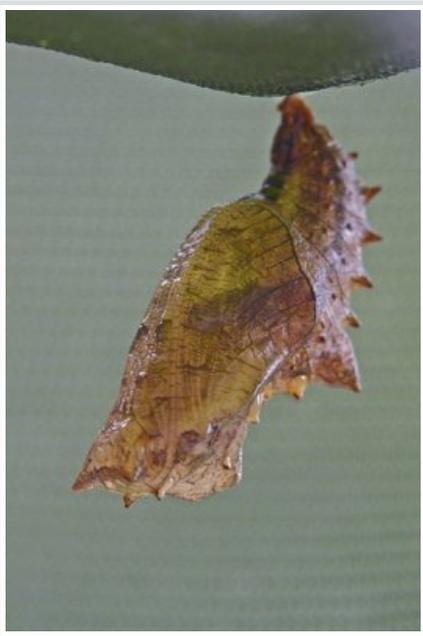






The SWF cats grew well and I gained a lot of interest and pleasure from watching and recording their development. However, just before they were due to pupate, one of them went missing. I was convinced there were no predators in the cage. There was no way anything could get in – or out, so escape was ruled out. The next thought to cross my mind was cannibalism, but there was plenty of food available. I just had to know what was going on so I got an old large sheet and carefully started to take the soil out of the pot. About 4" down I found the cat, safe and well. What a relief, but what was he doing there? Panic over, but 3 days later the same thing happened again. I began to wonder if this cat wanted to pupate in the earth and resolved to leave it if the same thing happened again. Thankfully it didn't but the cat chose to pupate on the mesh of the cage, despite a variety of different branches being provided. How do you even stop them doing that!?!? 😬 About a week later, the second also made several attempts to pupate on the mesh; each time I carefully returned him to a branch. He was determined and I was scared I was interfering too much so in the end he got his own way and pupated on the mesh!!





I resigned myself to that (though not good for later photos) but during some prolonged and severe winds he had been blown about badly and it looked as if the silken threads attaching him to the mesh were stretching, as he was hanging in a much lower position - which in turn caused him to be blown about more. Just as I thought I should move him to a more sheltered location, the threads gave way and the pupa landed on the soil!! What to do now?

I carefully, ever so carefully, glued the pupa to a twig. A little bit of glue found its way onto the pupal case, causing me some concern in case it was absorbed and resulted in the developing butterfly being glued to its pupa! Only time would tell... (to be continued).



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jul-15 02:33 AM GMT

For me, each of the immature stages has their own totally unique set of characteristics that provide interest but if I am totally honest, the pupal phase is my favourite. In my very limited experience, the different sizes, shapes and colours of the pupa provide endless fascination, but within any one pupa I find the remarkable colour changes and transformation that is obviously occurring simply amazing. I shall start with a few early shots, soon after pupation:





The remainder of these shots are taken in the day and hours before emergence. At this point I was convinced that the pupa would emerge that day so the long wait began. As before the pupa seemed to change colour depending on the light and the background and those glass studs reflected a myriad of colours before becoming very metallic looking. For someone who is not known for patience I can become very absorbed in this. At this point I did not have the benefit of Martin's advice so I was relying simply on the darkening of the pupa.

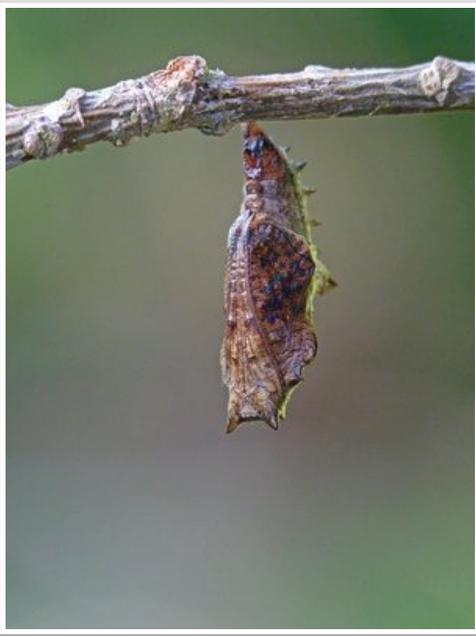




At one point it seemed that the wings within the pupa were crumpled. I could not see how they could be otherwise because of the shape. Naturally, that was something else for me to worry about – perhaps I had been too rough when I glued him to the twig, held him too tightly. On top of my worries about the glue being absorbed through the pupal case I couldn't see how he could be 'normal'. I was imagining a wrinkled butterfly half glued to the pupa trying desperately to get out. Well, as the day went on it became clear that this butterfly was not going to emerge so I would have to live with my worries overnight. Trouble was, I had an electrician booked for 10.00am the next morning. There was nothing else for it – I had to postpone him! There was no way I was going to miss this emergence, having just missed seeing the WA emerge!







Next morning I was up at the crack of dawn and guess what?

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 03-Jul-15 04:52 AM GMT

That certainly is a fair old read Pauline 😊 however it is illustrated with exquisite images, absolutely breathtaking 😊

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 03-Jul-15 09:12 AM GMT

Another Tip of the day.

If you need to remove a nymphalid pupa from where it hangs [at least 3 days after its formed], spray water from a misting spray on the silk pad, wait about a minute and pull the pupa gently, and the whole pad comes away [usually very easily]. This makes it easy to glue up [using the silk pad] onto a stick or wooden clothes peg, [glue pupa to the end you push to open the peg] and then you can change the position of the pupa by using the peg.

this again picked up while harvesting 100s of heliconid pupae from the stems of passion flowers.

Re: Pauline

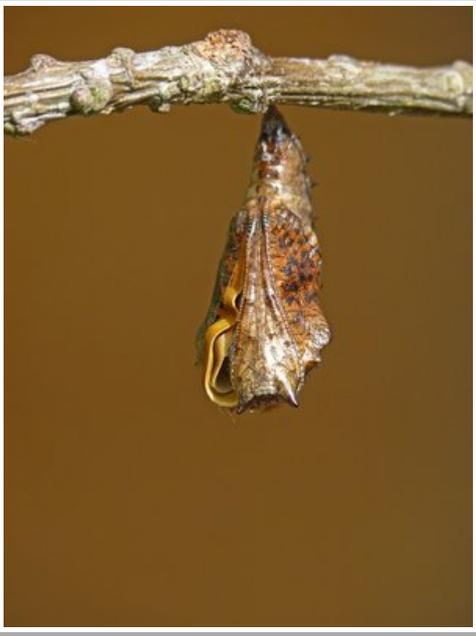
by Pauline, 03-Jul-15 03:17 PM GMT

I'm glad you like the photos Mike but I hope you will like the ones that follow even more. I would have liked to make an animated sequence of them as Mike has done but I'm not sure how to do that yet, In the meantime you will have to put up with lots of photos as this has been a once in a life time event for me 😊

Thank you for that tip Martin. I am doing this on a tiny scale to what you have obviously been involved in which sounds very interesting. I am hoping I won't have to rely on that technique too many times as I would only move them if absolutely necessary (and not just for my photos). It is useful to know tho so thank you again 😊

OK, let us get on with this. I do not have the words to describe the miracle of nature that I witnessed next. I only know my hands started shaking and I could feel my heart thumping as I watched this unfold. All the tedious waiting around was forgotten along with my concerns for the health of the butterfly which turned out to be totally unfounded. This emergence was almost leisurely and I was able to take many, many more shots than I am posting here. A once in a life time event for me:















It is perhaps not obvious from this sequence exactly how the butterfly emerged. After the pupal case split it was gradually stretched open before being allowed to close again; then pushed open a bit further, before falling back to close again. When it was stretched wide enough it was possible to see the

little legs pushing it. Absolutely amazing!!!

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-15 02:58 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, one can tell just how enthralled you are with the whole process of the emergence, gosh, your dedicated 😊 Your patience is remarkable and your photos say it all, I was amazed at your dedication even cancelling the electrician 😊 thank you for showing us some really great interesting shots Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-15 03:27 AM GMT

Some really spectacular series of images recently Pauline with the unfolding events described so well in the accompanying reports, well done.

All the best,

Neil

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 04-Jul-15 05:49 AM GMT

Pauline, your allowing us all the pleasure of seeing the very next best thing to the real thing...just stunning sequence images 😊

Many thanks 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 04-Jul-15 05:57 AM GMT

I can only echo what others have said - superb series of photos - thank you for enabling us to share a little of your experience 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 04-Jul-15 06:22 AM GMT

What they all said! 😊 An amazing series of pictures.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 04-Jul-15 08:36 AM GMT

As everyone else has said Pauline 😊 fantastic series of photos 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jul-15 09:11 PM GMT

Thank you so much to all of you for your really kind comments which are just the icing on the cake after that great experience. Goldie used the perfect word - I was enthralled and perhaps a little enthusiastic in my posts. It only remains now to finish off this episode and post a few shots just prior to release and at the release site. Both SWF emerged safely about 3 days apart and each were taken independently back to the place they originated. This applied also to the Comma but I would just like to record that when I took him back, the huge stretch of nettles where I found him had been mowed down and removed. If he had pupated there it is questionable whether he would have survived. He posed perfectly on his release and I looked forward to getting an open-winged shot but I had mistakenly put one of those old batteries in my camera and it failed!!! (they have now been binned).







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jul-15 09:20 PM GMT

Back in the real world - but only briefly 😊 - couldn't find any female WLH at Cosham, just these:



It doesn't show well in the photos but one of them had a very purple tinge which I assume is because it is very fresh. I seem to have gone brain dead and will need to check which is male and which is female 😞😞

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 04-Jul-15 11:16 PM GMT

"Hi Pauline,

Just been looking at your SWF ' being born ' i bet you shouted out " it's a girl ". 😊
Lovely sequence of images. (Any sign of the Purple one yet ?).

Best wishes ,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jul-15 07:56 PM GMT

Just the opposite Trevor 'It's a boy!' 😊 Thank you for your kind comment.

I resolved that last night would be my final evening trip to Noar Hill. All the Duke larva I am seeing now are really big – one last night was massive – so I assume they are now nearing pupation. Thinking about the possibility of a partial second brood in August (as has been the case in several years recently) made me wonder what causes a second partial brood. If the pupa are all subjected to the same conditions, then why do some emerge and others over-winter?. Probably a stupid question with an obvious answer but I have not considered it before.



I also came across this evil looking fly and a cat of some sort which I am assuming is a Sawfly of some sort?



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jul-15 02:07 AM GMT

This afternoon I thought I would kill 2 birds with 1 stone - check Abbots Wood for PE and have some fun with the Essex Skippers. Still nothing doing round here Trevor but loads of other stuff tho' I focused mainly on the Skippers. Large, Small and Essex all flying together. I appreciate the Essex are identified by their sex brand and antennae but seeing them all together, and not for the first time, the behaviour and flight of the Essex, for me, seems another way to separate these two. A few shots from earlier:







Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 06-Jul-15 02:12 AM GMT

Super photos Pauline. The last one is really fun!

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 06-Jul-15 05:34 AM GMT

no ID problems with that last shot - very clever 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-15 09:40 PM GMT

Lovely shots as usual Pauline, Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jul-15 01:29 AM GMT

Thank you Katrina, Mike and Goldie. I was really just killing time and amusing myself with the Skippers whilst always keeping one eye on the oaks for PE. He was seen in Abbots Wood apparently but earlier in the day. Such was the case at Botany Bay today. An Emperor had been seen before I arrived so I spent some time with this gorgeous fresh Painted Lady who was quite obliging but a bit fidgety and with a tendency to stay down amongst the clover and grass.





I tried Wurzel but it was deep in the canopy and wouldn't turn round so I couldn't get the full monty for you 😊😊





and a close up of the funny little face



As I patrolled the rides, scanning the trees, scanning the ground, I noticed this newly emerged female SWF. As if I didn't have enough shots of them already 🤔 😊



It was nice meeting you all again, Trevor, Doug, John, Pete 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 07-Jul-15 02:41 AM GMT

Good to see your Painted Lady undersides. I always feel that their topsides are a little 'dull', especially when put alongside relatives such as Small Tortoiseshell, but the undersides more than make up for any such shortcomings 😊 I'm glad they are about as I didn't see any last year and haven't managed to get any photos, yet, this year.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 07-Jul-15 10:50 PM GMT

I love the Painted Lady shots Pauline, it's a lovely Butterfly when caught the way you've done. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-15 01:31 AM GMT

Thank you Mike. I've heard a lot about this predicted invasion so hopefully you will see some soon. Me? Well, I'll just settle for that invasion of 1 which was as fresh as a daisy and delightful to watch 😊

Thank you too Goldie – it sure is a lovely butterfly especially when fresh but I do like the underside 😊

The plan today was to spend some time working in the garden – which I did actually do at the same time as keeping an eye on the 2 Emperor moth cats

I 'borrowed' from Bramshott. On 27 June I had seen and photographed one of them shedding its skin and for the last 2 days they had both adopted a 'prayer' position (you will have to consult Guy's diary if you need that clarified 😊). Whilst sheltering from a shower I noticed one of them had virtually shed his skin (again) and by the time I got the camera it was all over. What a spectacular cat! I had now seen him in 3 different coats:



What great camouflage amongst the heather for a brand new cat....



... and what a cracking cat it is 😊

Well, about 10 mins later it was obvious that the 2nd cat was about to do the same thing. I took a load of shots but the wind had picked up, the sun was harsh and I couldn't get in the right position without disturbing the heather. Nevertheless, I did my best to capture the moment whilst watching events unfold. You will know by now that I love this stuff, find it fascinating. I watched as the head emerged first and then there was a load of wriggling and writhing as the back end came out. For quite a little while it seemed the old skin was still attached to the cat, somewhere in the middle. Where is Martin when you need him? Should I try to intervene? In between each struggle to be free from the old skin, both cats took time out to rest, before writhing again to get completely free. After their mammoth struggle they hung motionless, recovering from their ordeal. Amazing!!







The same 'catherine wheel' pose adopted in the earlier moult.



I can't wait for the next version of this cat!

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 09-Jul-15 04:36 AM GMT

Lovely photos of the Small and Essex Skippers Pauline, nice Painted Lady too 😊 but the shots of the moulting Emperor Moth cats you 'borrowed' from Bramshot, are superb 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-15 05:06 AM GMT

Great Painted Lady shots Pauline - they haven't arrived in the numbers hinted at so you've done well to get one 😊🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jul-15 05:20 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, lovely Painted Lady photos 😊

I saw quiet a few down in Cornwall when I was there but they seem to have fizzled out since then.

Love the Emperor cat shots, one of my favourite moths 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-15 11:26 PM GMT

Not a great day for me yesterday Mike but your comment cheered me up no end, so thank you for that. These cats are amazing and I can't wait to see how they look after their next moult.

Wurzel, thank you. You should know that you were being missed, and your photographs praised, by various folk today at BB.

Thank you too Neil. Not many Painted Lady around at the moment so I guess I got lucky 😊. Just the one will do me fine 😊

It was good to see you again Bob (was it really 4 years ago???!!!) and Philip, and great to meet you eventually Katrina (it had to happen sometime 😊). Also nice to meet and chat to the birder from Putney but doubt he will read this as we didn't exchange names.

I guess I was lucky to even see any PE flying today but in the end saw 4 or 5. Mostly reluctant to come down (at least whilst I was there! 😊) One I did see grounded was in an awkward place and was accidentally spooked before any better shots were achieved, so just for the record:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 10-Jul-15 03:10 AM GMT

More great shots pauline, liking your Essex Skipper shots from earlier, playing peek-a-boo with them, fun times 😊

and here's a 🍀 for that Purple One! I'm still waiting to see one grounded and today's tube strike put an end to any possible plans of seeing one today...tomorrow though, up and early, third time lucky! 😊

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 10-Jul-15 06:31 AM GMT

Good to see you today Pauline. It was 21st June 2011 when we met up before!!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-15 11:49 PM GMT

Thanks Buggy – here's wishing you the very best of luck and looking forward to the results.

Wow! Am I really that memorable Bob? 😊😊😊

I just couldn't resist the temptation today with thanks to Katrina 😊







I tried to get the pavilion in the background but the butterfly wasn't playing that game so chimneys was the best it would give me 😊😂



Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 11-Jul-15 12:09 AM GMT

From the age of 7, the idea of seeing a milkweed butterfly (as it was always known, before everyone started talking American) in the UK has been a distant dream for me. You have realised the dream. Your life is now complete.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jul-15 03:27 PM GMT

I hope it isn't Guy! - I still have a lot of things to see and do first 😊😂😂 Seriously, thank you; it was an incredible sight.

Have examined my shots more closely this morning it is clear that I was watching 2 different butterflies! I mentioned yesterday in Katrina's diary that one of the butterflies seemed to have sustained more damage during the day but looking at the shots (and the timings when they were taken) it is clear

that there were 2 individuals present, given the position and shape of the nicks on the wings. A couple of photos for comparison only:



The left fore wing has a nick that wasn't there later in the morning and the nick in the hind wing is a different shape, as well as the amount of general wear and tear. Clearly 2 different butterflies!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jul-15 02:57 AM GMT

On my way back today I thought I'd check Chalton to see if the Chalkhills were out – they were!



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jul-15 03:31 AM GMT

So excited about the Monarch I almost forgot to post some shots of the WLH – more than I have ever seen in any one place and so low down – on thistle, on budleia, on the grass, just about everywhere!!!



Obviously the focus was on the Monarch(s) but the helpful gent with the bicycle pointed one out on the grass. It must have scuttled around various grass stems for the best part of 30 mins, flying short distances only to repeat the behaviour of scraping his abdomen along grass stems. Had it been a female I would have suspected egg-laying but it was clearly male, albeit with quite a large abdomen:



If anyone can throw any light on this behaviour I'd be very interested having only seen them in trees before yesterday.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Jul-15 03:39 AM GMT

They're regular visitors to thistles/bramble/ragwort, Pauline, but I've never seen them on the ground before and can't quite understand what they're doing.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 12-Jul-15 04:56 AM GMT

Looks like you had a similar WLH experience as I had recently, great pics. Never seen them before then in my first ever sighting probably over 20 all over bramble blossom. None came down to ground level though so no idea what that male was up to, maybe he was having an identity crisis and though he was a Green!?! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 12-Jul-15 05:50 AM GMT

Nice WLHs! I agree must have been two Monarchs.

Re: Pauline

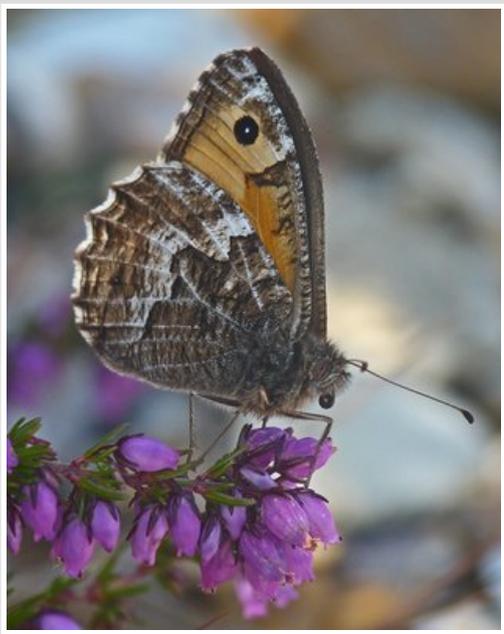
by Pauline, 12-Jul-15 03:31 PM GMT

Thank you David, Buggy, Katrina. The WLH were lovely but to be honest I'm still excited at having seen those Monarchs 😊. Wonder if there's any connection with the 2 Monarchs that were recently seen in the Portsmouth area?

I'm pleased that the Monarchs required me to postpone my planned visit to see the Grayling because when I eventually arrived at the site yesterday there was a notice on the gate stating that due to military activity it had been closed to the public for most of the week! I have a colony of Graylings very close to me but I had chosen this alternative site due to its proximity to the sea and lovely scenery (and no ticks or biting insects 😊). I just love Browndown (even if it hasn't got Monarchs – yet 😊) and one of the bonuses is being able to get really close to Purple Hairstreaks. I had seen them here in previous years on the stunted Oaks but never in the numbers that were around yesterday. I easily saw in excess of a dozen without even trying, all of them lower than eye level and at one point I had 4 in view at one time on adjacent branches. They ranged from very fresh to a bit worn and provided both closed, open and partially open views. The biggest problem was the wind which was so strong that I almost gave up trying to get any shots, most of which were blurred 😊. A few which came out OK:



Hairstreaks are clearly having a good year but it was the Graylings that I had come to see and it was lovely to see them, both male and female, flitting about in sheltered areas, nectaring on the heather or doing what they do best, being camouflaged against the shingle. I've taken all those shots in the past so I was content mainly just to watch them having succeeded in the challenge to actually find them once they had landed!



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jul-15 06:29 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Love the Monarch photos, I saw a few tweets when it(they) first showed up last week. I am sure if I hadn't been working and lived a bit closer I would not have been able to resist the temptation either, irrespective of whether they were releases or not.

However, I must say that I like your hairstreak photos better, both purple and WLH. The latter species especially is one that I rarely see low down.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 12-Jul-15 11:06 PM GMT

Great day with the **Monarch's** Pauline, and very well observed in noticing the markings and consequently two different insects...a real detective you are



BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-15 12:58 AM GMT

Cracking Monarch shots Pauline 😊👍 But I'm more envious of the Purps to be honest 🍷🍷 Where a outs is Browndown.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 13-Jul-15 01:08 AM GMT

I am loving your Purple Hairstreak and Grayling photos. I don't think I have any photos of PHs and the Grayling on heather photos are really pretty. 🍷😊

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 13-Jul-15 06:37 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Your diary seems to be overflowing with interesting stuff at the moment. Great images of all your recent early stages adventures 😊

Well done with the Monarch/Milkweed, there seem to have been quite a few reported recently down our way. Not sure if they are all natural arrivals though.

I must make the time to visit Browndown, it is not far for me and looks like a great site. I drive past regularly but never seem to have the time to pop in. I used to collect empty bullet cases on the firing firing range there when I was a youngster. We used to take them down the local scrap merchants in carrier bags to get a bit of pocket money 😊 I would imagine that if an 11yr old turned up with bags of empty bullet cases today the police would probably be involved 😊 Back then it was just harmless fun 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jul-15 05:51 PM GMT

Thank you Neil. I doubt whether I'll ever see another Monarch (released or not) so it was very exciting and memorable for me 😊😊

If I was a real detective Bill I would have realised that I was looking at 2 different butterflies whilst I was still there, rather than when I was looking at my shots back at home! 😊😊 However, I only had 2 hours with them (due to a 5 hour round trip thanks to using a 'park and ride' scheme!!) and divided my time between watching them glide so gracefully around the gardens and getting a few shots.

Thank you Wurzel. Browndown is between Gosport and Lee-on-Solent just off East Marine Parade - worth a trip providing you check the site is open to the public.

I appreciate that Katrina, thank you. The wind was so strong it was causing the small oaks to sway and it was difficult just to keep the subject in the frame 😊.

I'm glad you think so - thanks for that Paul. It's worth a visit right now but do check that it's open first. I smiled at your tale - when I was 11 yrs old we used to walk along the beach at South Shields of an evening and collect up all the glass bottles that had been washed up or left by holiday-makers. At that time the off-licences gave money back for the return of any glass bottles, the amount depending on the colour of the glass, between 1d and 3d. It meant we could catch the bus home instead of walking the 5 miles! 😊 There was also a rag and bone man would come round weekly via a horse and cart - any old rags would be exchanged for a balloon or even a goldfish and we would follow the horse to collect the droppings in a bucket to put on the leeks and other vegetables 😊 Early forms of recycling eh?!!

I am finding it hard to keep up with the moults of my Emperor moth cats. This surely must be their 4th or 5th and probably final instar, but as before they are stunning and appear to be 2 different varieties:



Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 13-Jul-15 09:04 PM GMT

Hi pauline, lovely shots of the Monarchs and also great photos of WL Hairstreaks, Purple Hairstreaks and Grayling 😊 you've been very busy! The Emperor moth cats are beautiful 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 13-Jul-15 10:35 PM GMT

I'm with you on the Monarch Butterfly Pauline, it's still a Monarch no matter what it's origins 😊
Fantastic shots of the Hair Streaks Pauline 📷📷 I wish I was there day if ever I saw one for me Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 14-Jul-15 01:25 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I doubt whether I'll ever see another Monarch (released or not) so it was very exciting and memorable for me

It's easy enough, if you are prepared to cross the Atlantic 😊 The last one I saw was weaving its way amongst the traffic, as it crossed Michigan Avenue in Chicago, towards the lake shore! I would love to see one here in UK, though, so congratulations!

"Pauline" wrote:

they are stunning and appear to be 2 different varieties

I'm not sure if you are referring to the coloured spots. I have photos of some (taken in the Lake District) with yellow spots and some with purple. I couldn't find much about this in my books, until I turned to my good old 'Observer's Book of Caterpillars', by David Carter, which illustrates both forms and states 'each body segment bears a number of wart-like structures which are usually yellow but are sometimes pink or purple.'

Mike

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 14-Jul-15 05:25 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I am finding it hard to keep up with the moults of my Emperor moth cats. This surely must be their 4th or 5th and probably final instar, but as before they are stunning and appear to be 2 different varieties:

You will notice that the emperor caterpillars have pink or yellow spots, we have wondered if the girls are pink 😊 but havnt seperated the caterpillars to check that out when they hatch.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-15 06:35 AM GMT

Cheers for the info Pauline 😊 It's a bit far for me at the mo, especially as I've used most of my Brownie points for 2015 already 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jul-15 05:11 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. I am taking great care of these cats (as I always do) hoping to be able to see the final stage. I am surprised at how much heather just 2 cats are eating, stripping stalks in no time at all! It is a reminder to myself never to underestimate the amount of food plant that will be needed.

Thank you for your comment Goldie and your kind words. I was sorry to hear you have to postpone your trip to Fermyn.

If only it were that easy Mike - I can't even get as far as Norfolk (even Brighton was a challenge 😊😊) What interests me (as you might imagine) about these cats is that the one with pink spots rests by the pink heather buds and flowers whereas the one with yellow spots tends to hang out in heather which has yellow tips 😊

I understand there is also a rare black colour form of this cat Martin. Wonder what gender that would turn out to be 😊😊

I'm sorry to hear that Wurzel - you are just going to have to get cracking on another wall or ceiling and restock the brownie bank again 😊

Yesterday I thought I would take advantage of the rotten weather and check a local site where Small Skippers hang out. I haven't seen any egg-laying this year but I have done in previous years and it always seems to be on the same clumps of grass. I wasn't surprised at this as I have noted over the last few years that White Admirals seem to lay on the same honeysuckle plants, presumably because they are in an optimum position. I checked the places where they usually lay and sure enough there were loads of eggs. I then checked a few places where I have never found eggs and yet again, no eggs in those areas.



I have marked these stems and hope to be able to monitor them through the winter. One had already been blown over and lay flat against the ground. I am not sure if this makes it more likely to be predated by the many slugs and snails present. In amongst the stems containing the Small Skipper eggs I found some eggs which do not look quite like Small Skipper eggs. I am not sure if they are a different species or just at a different stage of development. Any ideas?



Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 14-Jul-15 08:55 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

What interests me (as you might imagine) about these cats is that the one with pink spots rests by the pink heather buds and flowers whereas the one with yellow spots tends to hang out in heather which has yellow tips 🤔

You still get Yellow and Pink spotted ones when they are fed on Sallow and Hawthorn, so its very interesting, somebody must sort out the two forms, and see what emerges, if they are the sexes will make it much easier than sorting the cocoons, The females are more heavy though in that stage.

The worst ive ever done sorting saturnid pupae was 8 females and 2 males, at least it wasnt the other way around. A 6 to 4 ratio is the best.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jul-15 03:20 AM GMT

Hi Martin, with only 2 cats it will be relatively easy to keep track of them and see which colour results in which gender but because there are only 2 of them it would hardly be conclusive. I am not convinced the colours are the result of a sex-linked gene as I have read that the pink form is a lot less common (although you may wish to correct me on that). It would be nice to think it was that simple tho' 😊

Well A, you certainly know how to shut me up and keep me busy 😊😂. I have run the moth trap 3 times now and I have been astonished at both the numbers and variety of moths that it has revealed. Last night there must have been between 100-200 and I only had time to photograph a very small proportion. I do not know how you guys manage on these exotic holidays with hundreds of butterflies as I am sure I just couldn't cope. Just as well I can't go on one! 😊 Anyway, I am going to try to identify some of them before posting any shots, apart from, what for me was the star of the night. It is at times like these that I wish I was a better photographer as none of these shots do it justice (and there are plenty of them 😊)







Whilst I was taking photographs of some of the moths which I had placed on a piece of bark, I noticed a tiny little larva had shed its skin and was eating it. I assume that this is some sort of moth larva but my concern is that I don't know what it eats and this bit of bark has been moved all around the

garden so the egg could have been laid in a number of positions. Any advice welcome.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jul-15 03:17 PM GMT

A couple of days ago I visited both Abbots Wood and the Straits in search of PE. I was already aware that huge stretches of nettles had been mown down at Abbots Wood (which is where my Comma cat would have been had I not successfully reared him). However, even having read Alan T's blog I was not prepared for what greeted me at the Straits 😱😞. I was aware of the resurfacing but did not expect the verges to have been cut back so brutally:



On the walk along to the towers I am usually accompanied by all manner of insects, in particular many butterflies, with Skippers zooming about amongst the grass and wild flowers, whilst Ringlets and Meadow Brown search up and down at a more leisurely pace. No more! The tall thistles where the Silver washed pose for photos – all gone!! A lot of the bramble has been cut back too forcing the White Admiral further back into the rides for nectar. Even the birds seemed to have disappeared. I am usually accompanied by a Buzzard or even a Red Kite but today there wasn't even any birdsong. It felt ominous and depressing. I am wondering if it is a 'Health and Safety' issue as I notice there is a new notice on the gate warning about ticks and Lyme's disease. In the past I had been told by Forestry Commission staff that Lyme's disease had only got as far as the New Forest and South Downs but it seems that may now not be the case 😞. (or perhaps there have been complaints from dog owners that too many of them are returning home covered in ticks?)



Certainly I have had many ticks on me this year and I seem to be seeing more deer than butterflies, including a doe with 2 little'uns which I have not seen before 😊 :





(found this one on a visit earlier in the year but couldn't resist including it 😊)

Reluctantly I walked further along to the watch tower, dreading what I might find there, but thankfully it was relatively unscathed and here at least there were some butterflies, including Large, Small and Essex Skippers:





Oh yeah, and more deer 😊



I did see a few PE (one at Straits and 2 at Abbots Wood) but they were either in the sky or at the very tops of the trees. It seems that I am not destined to get any 'proper' photos of these creatures grounded – at least not this season 😞



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 16-Jul-15 08:52 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I did see a few PE (one at Straits and 2 at Abbots Wood) but they were either in the sky or at the very tops of the trees. It seems that I am not destined to get any 'proper' photos of these creatures grounded – at least not this season 😞

I feel your pain 😞

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-15 02:18 AM GMT

Thank you Buggy. My pain is even greater as I now know that 6 PE's were seen today in the Straits, one on the ground providing some great shots! Now here is a question for you – or anyone else who knows about bugs/plants/gardening. Having had that fantastic moth in the trap I thought I would check my fuchsia plants just in case there were any cats. I saw what I thought was a tiny cat (but it was the wrong colour) and then I decided it looked more like a Ladybird nymph. On closer examination I changed my mind but I watched it for about 30 mins and the behaviour was very strange – it reminded me of a tiny hedgehog and it seemed to be 'anointing' itself with stuff from the plant (honeydew etc?). This in turn reminded me of the behaviour of the tiny WA cats who cover themselves in frass as a means of camouflage. So, my question is, does anyone know what it is/will turn into? Should I be protecting it or turfing it out? The way my luck is going I expect you are going to tell me it is something perfectly horrid that will decimate every plant in my garden 😞😞 I hope these shots are clear enough for some sort of ID – the greenfly provides a guide to size.





The unidentified little cat from the last post appears to have become the victim of slugs 😞 . I had decided to offer it a selection – nettle, willow, honeysuckle, violets, etc but when I checked it this morning it had gone and there was evidence of slugs 😡

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 17-Jul-15 04:05 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, I think that's the thing with PE. You're either there on the right day or you're not. At least you've got a picture of one which is more than I have!

Sorry about your (presumed) deceased cat. I think the new spikey visitor is a Kidney-spot Ladybird larvae *Chilocorus renipustulatus*
http://www.ladybird-survey.org/species_..._6455+58802

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-15 06:05 AM GMT

Sorry you didn't get your PEs Pauline, or at least the shots that you wanted 😞 I managed a few from Bentley but that's the first time in three years of trying since my last lot, (I reckon Bentley works on a three year cycle) so unless you're at Fermyn where they seem to spend more time on the ground than in the air it just comes down to luck 😞 Mind you your shots next season will be all the sweeter for the wait 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 18-Jul-15 01:06 AM GMT

Moth trap Pauline 🤔 now you've committed yourself to yet another world and lost what little time you had...its addictive be warned 😞 or perhaps you already beyond help 😞

Superb images in all your recent reports...

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jul-15 03:37 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I love the images of the Elephant Hawk Moth, a particular favourite species of mine, not least because they bring back memories of when I used to find the caterpillars when I was much younger and rear them through 😊

I am seriously thinking of turning to the dark side and getting a moth trap for next year. Probably something to look into during the winter in readiness to start next season.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jul-15 02:34 AM GMT

Thank you for the ID Buggy - I initially thought ladybird but was a bit thrown as it was much rounder than previous ones I have seen. Much appreciated and useful link.

I haven't given up quite yet Wurzel but after Buggy's comment I realise I should be thankful for my sightings so I'll shut up and stop whingeing 😊😊 Well done on your sightings, looking forward to seeing them (about October? 😊😊)

Aah Bill, I know!! 😊 What have I done??? 😞 I am already beyond help in so many other ways! 😊😊😊 Thank you for your compliment 😊. I was also interested to see your shot of the final instar of the Emperor moth cat. More below.

Thank you so much Neil - a beautiful insect and quite a surprise. This is quite new to me (the moth trap is on loan) but I was very curious about what sort of moths I might get here. The answer is lots - many more than I have time to deal with properly.

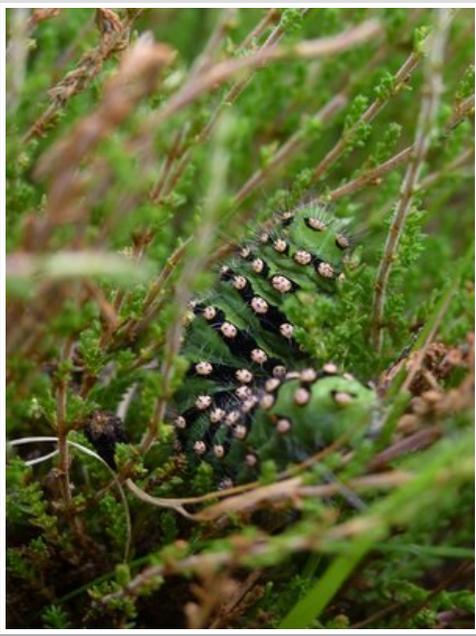
Having shed their skins so many times I was convinced that my Emperor moth cats were in their last instar. Not so! The one with yellow spots shed his skin over Thursday night to become this fine specimen:



I would have liked to get some better shots (and still might) but not at the expense of disturbing them when they are feeding deep in the heather, superbly camouflaged despite their size and colour. The one with pink spots shed his skin early this morning but because they had both chosen the mesh on which to do this, photos this time were impossible. However, I was initially surprised to see that he had left his pink spots behind on the old skin:



However, after a short period of time the spots again started to change colour to pink but to date this is a much more subtle pink than that of the last instar:



On the butterfly front, I have been taking a few snaps to relieve the boredom as I watched and waited. A few of these below. Whilst I have seen Meadow Brown mating several times, the courtship of a lovely new female by a worn male attracted my attention. I was hoping for an open wing shot of her as she was stunning, but as I watched she flew up and landed on my shoulder. A second later the male joined her and before I knew it I had a mating pair on my shoulder. A first for me! I carefully tried to remove them but they initially flew down onto the track where I took this shot:





and these rather interesting 'things' – cricket? grasshopper? shield bug? No idea!





Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 19-Jul-15 03:58 AM GMT

Hi,Pauline,

I think your grasshopper is a woodland grasshopper(*omocestus rufipes*),but I,m not certain,but I,m 99% sure the cricket is a Roesals Bush cricket,a nice find!

Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-15 01:32 AM GMT

Thank you Allan.W. - there were 2 of them so I shall have to pay more attention in future. In fact, I was looking at them all quite closely today when I spotted a Chalkhill which seemed to have some odd markings and a slightly damaged wing. I was rushing to catch Tesco before it shut and the wind was dreadful so I quickly took a few shots before I left:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-15 03:55 PM GMT

The opposite side of the same butterfly which I originally thought was a female:



Several male SSS were showing some signs of wear but no females visible yet:





Still huge numbers of Small Skippers to confuse the issue, both male and female:



It was nice to see several fresh Silver Y moths, including one in the garden:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 20-Jul-15 11:46 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, love the Silver SS, 🍷 I hope to see some in Kent, I hope their still in good nick 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-15 12:24 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie. I'll keep my fingers crossed for you 😊

I know my observation skills are not as strong as they should be and I WAS curious about the colour of that Chalkhill Blue. I decided to return to the site to have a better look at him and hopefully get some better shots as, for once, there was no wind. I assumed he would be easy to find, not having flown far since yesterday evening given the cool temperatures. How wrong can you be! 😞 As I drove past Butser Hill I could see it was shrouded in mist and although it wasn't raining I needed to put the windscreen wipers on to clear the droplets of moisture collecting on them.

By the time I got to Oxenbourne, a mere 10 mins drive away, the mist had become drizzle and the wind had whipped up from no-where! Great!! 😡 Shorts and trainers were not really up to the job so I started off by treading carefully. It was prudent to do this in any event as dozens of butterflies were hunkered down in the grass for some small protection against the weather, including the Chalkhills, which I had expected to find easily, roosting on stems of grass. I realised it might be a little more difficult than I'd anticipated.

One of the first butterflies I encountered was a worn, female, Marbled White, covered in raindrops followed by a Small Skipper tucked away as safely as he could be.....



..... but I was on a mission, and proceeded to carefully check every Chalkhill I could find, scrutinising them for minor differences. Many of the male Chalkhills were very pale but I searched hard for specimens that had a dark colouration, similar to the butterfly from yesterday. The darkest ones I could find were these:





However, none were the same shade or tone of brown as the one from yesterday and their dark colouring did not extend all the way down the hind wing, tending to fade out to be replaced with blue. I found a couple of females and their colouring, although a bit deeper, was very similar to that on

the hind wing of yesterdays butterfly.



I continued to search for him but couldn't resist a few snaps as I did so including this rather attractive moth:



Suddenly, there he was on the grass in front of me – there was no mistaking him because of the damaged wing:





Frustratingly, the wind was now even stronger than yesterday but at least today I had a little more time. The shots are not great but they will do for illustrative purposes. The weather was deterring butterflies from flying so to enable an easier comparison between yesterdays butterfly and one of the darker specimens from today, I carefully placed the 2 of them on the same stem:



I appreciate that aberrations in Chalkhills are very common and variations even more so but I was happy to have confirmed to myself that it wasn't just the spots that were different but also the colouration to quite an extent, although the degree of difference doesn't show up as much in the photos as I would have liked 😊.

On returning home and looking at my photos of my specimen from yesterday I noticed this (what was that about my lack of observation skills? 🤔🙄) Does anyone have any idea what is going on here? I assumed this was meconium but this butterfly was flying round yesterday and I thought that was something that was emitted shortly after emergence? I'm definitely not going back again to check!!!!



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-15 06:01 AM GMT

Lovely sets of Chalkhills and Silver Spots Pauline 🍷, I better get out there this week or they'll be all gone 🤪 Is the substance coming from the abdomen frass (if that's what Butterfly pee/poo is called)? Also that is an interesting ab – almost female on the underwings and male on top 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-15 09:07 PM GMT

Interesting observations Pauline, your shots considering the weather are good I think, I'm not too well up on Chalkhill abs, I thought I had a photo of one last year it's in my diary some where but I got no feed back on it so I'm not sure. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 22-Jul-15 01:21 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, just catching up on your diary. The destruction of the verges at the straits is an unforgivable act. When we when looking for SWF a while back the verges were full of butterflies and we also noted that Sallows were beginning to regrow along the verges, I bet they've all been cut down 😡 another lovely site being ruined!

Lovely photos of the Chalkhill Blues and that's a really 'brown' male Chalkhill *ab* 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jul-15 03:07 AM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. I thought it was an interesting ab not least because of the colour. It doesn't come out as well in the photos but it really looked like a female with wings closed. They say the camera never lies but I was not sure that butterflies produced any sort of 'waste product' but you live and learn 😊

Thank you Goldie – the weather was pretty abysmal and it was testimony to my poor observation that I had to go back a 2nd time to be sure it was really that brown!!!

Don't even bother to visit the Straits Mike as you will be sorely disappointed! 😞😡 Having said that Roy and Richard S plus Colin B had a PE down on the ground so perhaps not all bad 😊

A visit to a vet near Chiddingfold today gave me the opportunity to pop into Chiddingfold Forest. The Botany Bay entrance was completely blocked with cars so I drove round to Oaken Wood and parked there. The short version is there were no PE seen today – not by me or any of the enthusiasts I spoke to. The good news is the second brood Wood White is out in double figures. Getting a good shot was impossible in the time I had but I witnessed what I believe to be courtship behaviour and egg-laying?





Doesn't match up (for me) to shots of them I have taken previously including:



The highlight for me however, was a fresh Holly Blue that just wouldn't leave me alone. 3 times I tried to put him down and each time he flew back to me. (I had just had a bath before I came out – honest!) I just wish he had opened his wings as he was the most gorgeous shade of blue. In the harsh sun it was very difficult to get the exposure right and I tried carrying him into shade and different backgrounds so that might account for the different colours:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 22-Jul-15 03:29 AM GMT

Looks like courtship to me with that tongue out and if that other one isn't laying an egg then my nephew is a very hairy primate! Great shots Pauline, Wood Whites are still on my 'yet to see' list.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-15 04:29 AM GMT

Silver-spotted Skippers!!...this season is flying past far too quickly 😲

Great report and photos Pauline, I especially like the backlit Wood white 😊

Have you been taking lessons in 'Holly Blue whispering' from Dave(Millerd)? 😊😄

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jul-15 04:17 AM GMT

Thank you Buggy – they are a lovely butterfly, small and very delicate looking so I hope you get to see them soon.

Thank you too Neil. Yes, the season seems to be galloping on, far too fast and will be over far too soon 😞

With a fairly strong breeze today, overcast skies and the local weather forecasting heavy showers later in the day, I decided it was more of a 'larva' day than a 'butterfly' day. Having seen all the egg-laying activity and large numbers of eggs I had promised myself I would return later in the year to MHD to see the larva of the Small Blue. Surprisingly (and unusually for me), the skies had brightened by the time I arrived although the temperature was quite cool and I felt a jumper would have been more appropriate than the skimpy t-shirt I was wearing – especially as a group of walkers I encountered were wearing thick coats and carried umbrellas!!!

Undeterred I made my way along the track and was delighted to see a fairly fresh Painted Lady – this is my 5th of the season.



I reached the site of the egg-laying and started my search. Why do I always assume these searches will be easy??!! In the first 15 mins I found several of these bugs along with many predators (spiders, snails, slugs) but no cats 😞 :





I was beginning to think I was too late and they had all crawled away to hibernate and then at last I spotted a cat – but definitely not a Small Blue 😞 .



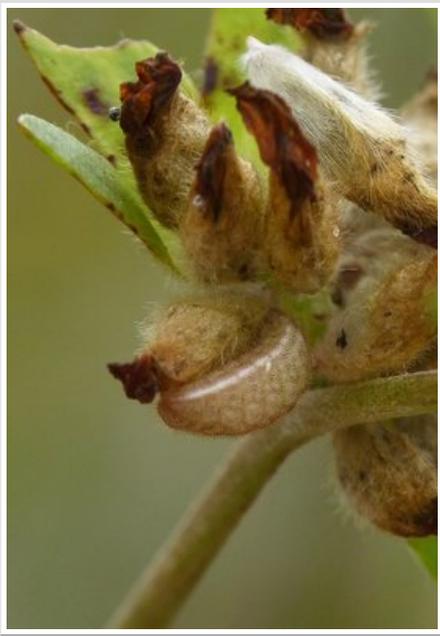
There were a lot of grasshoppers around and now I'm starting to take a bit more notice I was surprised at the different colours and sizes:



At last I spotted what I was looking for, and once I'd found one, it wasn't long before I found several others. I found 4 in an hour which was more than enough for me, and as I won't be doing this again I took quite a few shots. As with most cats they were quite well camouflaged:







I looked up from my camera to see I was being watched by a fresh second brood male. Further along the path there were a few more including females.





As I meandered along I saw a Golden Bloomed Grey Longhorn beetle and this other gorgeous creature:





As I took my last shot of this moth the weather took a turn for the worse and the heavy rain which had been promised actually materialised – they had got it right for once!!! It looked like there was a bit of brightness in the distance but I decided enough was enough and I made my way back to the car, collecting a few everlasting pea seeds on the way (well, you never know! 😊).





Despite the doom and gloom, the wind and the rain, I was surprised to realise I had recorded 12 species of butterfly in the couple of hours I was there.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 23-Jul-15 05:24 AM GMT

Your eye is as good as anybody's on this site, Pauline. Those images are superb, as is your ability to find the larvae in the first place.

Re: Pauline

by William, 23-Jul-15 04:32 PM GMT

Superb Small Blue larvae, Pauline – it takes real skill to find older lycaenid larvae in the wild, and photograph them that well – brilliant 😊

BWs,

William

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-15 05:58 AM GMT

Fantastic news about the Wood White 2nd gen and lovely shots 😊🍷 – hopefully the weather will be okay next week so I can bite the bullet and make a visit for them.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 24-Jul-15 06:52 PM GMT

Let me just echo the comments of many others here Pauline...your reports and lovely images are a joy to behold 😊

Loved your Emperor Moth larva shots, simply superb caterpillars...you can get so attached 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jul-15 01:58 AM GMT

I appreciate that comment David, thank you. Having seen so many eggs earlier in the year I thought there would be loads of cats, but not so. I guess there are just too many predators 😊

Thank you too William – especially as I was holding the camera with one hand trying to keep loads of vegetation out of the way with the other 😊

I might even do the same Wurzel 😊, and if I don't see you there perhaps we might catch up at Shipton? Thank you for the compliment 😊

I am really pleased you think so Bill. Yes, you can get VERY attached to those cats 😊 Sorry, but you've started me off now and I just have to post a few updated images (tho' not as nicely posed as your one):





They are eating me out of house and home so I had to visit my local common to get some more heather for them. Whilst there I saw a single Blue which I assume is either a Common Blue or SSB but probably too worn to tell. I noticed the tips of his antennae were yellow/orange but that doesn't seem to be the case for either of those species so I assume these must have faded too:



An underside shot which doesn't help much:



Whilst there I saw several of these evil looking creatures (Robber fly?):



and lots of Gatekeepers, Meadow Brown and many fresh Large Skippers:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jul-15 03:25 AM GMT

A brief mid afternoon visit today to Oxenbourne was aimed at photographing female SSS but despite two pairs of eyes these proved difficult to locate. Along with masses of Chalkhills and Small Skippers, a couple of DGF in various states of wear sailed around the site. I was able to get reasonably close to one of them but as has been the way this season the wind was a problem:





A Marbled White was hunkered down in the grass trying to avoid the breeze, a sensible move although possibly why it had picked up so many parasites:



Still looking for the female SSS when I caught a glimpse of a male SSS. I managed a shot but he was the one with the frayed wing from earlier in the week. Instead I was distracted by this rather lovely moth. I have not had it in the trap and shall need to find out what it is:





Still looking for SSS when I saw some sort of bee in the middle of the path which seemed to be in some distress. I helped him onto a flower head and took a few shots but his expression just does not show any kind of gratitude 😏



At last i found my target but she didn't hang around for long – only a couple of shots:



Not the shots I was hoping for but it is early days and I shall return. On leaving the site it was nice to see a couple of fresh Common Blue:



Re: Pauline

by William, 26-Jul-15 03:52 AM GMT

Cracking photos as ever, Pauline. The Blue looks like Silver – Studded, and the moth, a Dusky Sallow...

<http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=327>

BWs,

William

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-15 04:52 AM GMT

I agree with William, I'd go for Silver Stud for the blue, it's the shape of the hind wings that made me think SSB.

Cracking Silver-spot Skipper. 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jul-15 09:08 PM GMT

Thank you for the compliment and the ID's William. I was going to ask you how you knew it was SSB but presumably the same way as Wurzel?

Thank you Wurzel - very few SSS around here (7 max counted to date, 5m, 2F) so hope numbers will pick up soon.

Very little to report except that Paul was kind enough to give me precise details of where he found the Painted Lady larva and despite the threatening rain I couldn't resist a quick look. As I arrived on site the heavens literally opened and the wind swept the rain across the fields. More concerned for my camera than myself, my visit was understandably brief. I found a couple of cats but definitely not PL:



This creature (grasshopper nymph?) was only a little less wet than myself 🤦



The closest I got to PL was their larval webs – saw many of these with a concentration in 2 particular areas (both in the second field Paul). I assume that by now they have all either pupated or were sensibly tucked away in a much drier spot – I decided to follow their lead and made a bee line for the car. A smashing little spot tho' and I would have liked a longer look in drier conditions but other priorities are restricting me at the moment.



News from the Straits – lots of WA eggs and little'uns now 😊



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 28-Jul-15 10:00 PM GMT

Sorry to disagree with my colleagues but I go for Common Blue, on account of the distinct double fringes – darker inner, plain white outer. My ID skills are, however, never that reliable 😊

Nice to see the SSS – I must get to Aston Rowant if this dire weather ever improves.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 28-Jul-15 11:45 PM GMT

Fine set of images Pauline, and isn't it great when a '*never seen one before*' moth species crops up...really nice Dusky Sallow bonus 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 29-Jul-15 05:34 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, not browsed your diary for a few days, some very interesting stuff. I'd have to agree with William and Wurzel with that being a decrepid SSB. For me, although it's pretty well beaten up, I think there's enough off a broad black border still visable to confirm a SSB.

Your little 'grasshopper nymph' is a Speckled Bush Cricket nymph, the hairy ginger cat is a Muslin Moth.....no idea about the green one though 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 29-Jul-15 07:40 PM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

I'd have to agree with William and Wurzel with that being a decrepid SSB. For me, although it's pretty well beaten up

We might be at cross-purposes! I was referring to the last pic after the skippers, in Pauline's 2nd post dated 25th July (7.25 pm), which I think is a Common Blue. I agree that the earlier 'beaten up' photo in the previous post (5.58 pm) is SSB.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jul-15 11:41 PM GMT

Well, I'm pleased we're all in agreement that it is a SSB, but I wish I was able to identify these butterflies as well as you guys!

Thank you for the ID's Buggy - by coincidence I was just browsing the moth book that was given to me and thinking what a fine creature that Muslin moth is. Hope it was a male - beautiful grey colouring and a moth I would very much like to see.

Thank you Bill. Speaking of 'one never seen before....' - my activities have been severely restricted of late as they always are when the animals need extra care. Exactly a year ago I was very concerned about Chance (who is still going strong despite his advanced age btw) but Foxy has now started fitting again (usually accompanies the moult for some reason) and has a very upset stomach (need I say more?!). This necessitated a trip to the launderette with his bedding and I found this moth fluttering around in there, crashing against the dryers. I had not seen one before so I brought it back for a couple of photos and ID. The closest I can get is Old Lady?



Yesterday, as I was sitting in the garden with Foxy on my knee trying to give him some comfort and reassurance I caught a glimpse of a white butterfly egg-laying on a plant growing out of the cracks in some paving. I think it was a Small White but I have no idea what the plant is. One thing is certain, if the half dozen eggs are to survive they will have to be moved or the hens/ducks/slugs will have them - if they do not get trodden on first!



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 30-Jul-15 02:26 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, no worries with the ID's, talking of which you are correct with the Old lady ID and your mystery plant is Garlic Mustard, the Orange-tip favourite. It is also one of the GVV's favourites LHP and I would bet you saw one of them rather than a Small White laying 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Jul-15 01:05 AM GMT

Thank you again Buggy. I am sure you are right re White Id as I only got the briefest of glimpses but if I can hopefully protect the eggs, all will be revealed in due course. The Garlic Mustard had me fooled as I thought the leaves were more pointed but you are (as usual 😊) correct 😊😊

I was interested to note that this WA larva has chosen not to use the central vein of the leaf for his platform extension:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Jul-15 06:41 PM GMT

As I went to check on the foxes this morning there was a distinct nip in the air and I got a whiff of wood smoke from a local bonfire. The sun was just rising – not the golden glow of a Summer's day but a harsh white glare throwing the Oak trees towering over the house into stark relief. I realised I hadn't seen any Purple Hairstreaks in them this year! I passed the Emperor moth cats on my way down the garden, both stretched along the length of their heather stems where they would remain until the temperature rose a little. Despite the chilly morning and a warm kennel, Saffron had chosen to fall asleep over a log:



A family of Goldcrest and a few young Siskins had already started on their breakfast and a fine mist was rising from the grass as the dew started to evaporate. The badgers who visit each night had cleared up every morsel of the substantial supper left out for them, needing to put on weight now in preparation for Winter. Although still July, it seemed very Autumnal and reminded me that, for me at least, the butterfly season will be over oh so soon..... but for now, I am trying to squeeze as much as possible out of it.



Foxy is improving ever so slowly and needs lots of company and reassurance at the moment. However, he is sleeping a lot (which is good) and this gives me small windows of opportunity to get out there and see what is happening. Such was the case yesterday when I was able to spend a little over an hour at Oxenbourne – exactly a year to the day when I photographed a mating pair of SSS there. (I am still not sure how you manage to restrict yourself to 5 mins Wurzel as I don't think that is something I could ever do).

Although my target was to see how the SSS are faring, given my limited time I was prepared to take a shot at anything that presented itself – and this came along first!

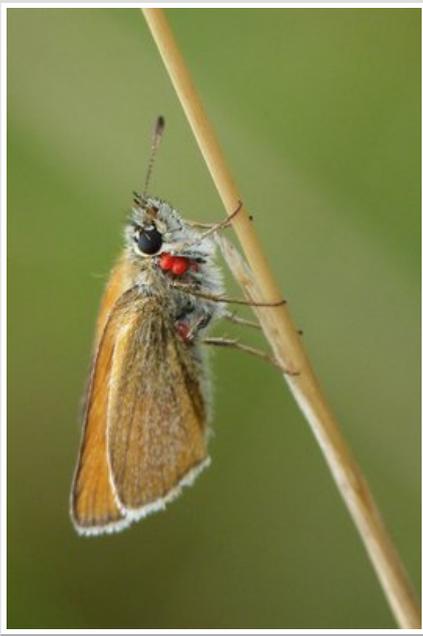


Second up was a Silver Washed Frit. It felt a bit like Deja Vu! I did not want to just repeat myself this year but I found myself watching this female egg-

laying, albeit at a different site, almost a year to the day when I found them ovi-posting en masse at Alice Holt.



Eventually I reached the hotspot for the Skippers. I say 'eventually' but in actual fact it is not far from the entrance – just through the broken gate and up the steep steps, then a very short walk. However, I kept getting distracted by all manner of things:



I was slightly disappointed that there weren't more SSS. I probably saw 5 male and 2 female (and no egg-laying) but fingers crossed this will improve. In their usual fashion, the males tended to stay mostly on the ground, surrounded by loads of vegetation, whilst the females played hide and seek amongst the nectar sources. Some of the males were looking really quite worn.





I was pleased to see 2 mating pairs (that's how I know there were at least 2 females), but the first pair was carried off by the wind. The second pair also, but not before I got a few long distance shots.



It was by far time to get back but as I strolled in the direction of the exit a Meadow Brown egg-laying caught my eye. I have never seen this before – or the eggs, so I was pleased to be able to get this shot before I departed:



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 31-Jul-15 08:43 PM GMT

A very poetic appreciation of the early morning! Saffron looks as though sleeping is a better idea at that time. I went to look for SSS at Aston Rowant, yesterday, but only one 'possible' It was very cool on the slope, but today looks much more promising – not quite Autumn yet!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Aug-15 09:36 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. Just a tiny glimpse into my daily routine. I could have given you the 2.00am version – moonlight, shooting stars, owl, hedgehog, moth trap etc..... but I'm sure folk would rather know that 3 BH were seen at Noar Hill this am.







Re: Pauline

by trevor, 01-Aug-15 11:07 PM GMT

Hi Pauline;

I must award you at least 1,000 mrgreens 🍀 for those Brown Hairstreak images. I was only saying to Doug yesterday that they should be out soon. The site i go to never seems to attract males down from the trees. Maybe this year.(Beautiful Fox by the way).

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-15 06:45 AM GMT

Brill SSS's and Fantastic Brostroke shots Pauline 🍀 My five minute stop-offs are easy to do when they're a necessity 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Aug-15 11:27 PM GMT

Thank you Trevor - however, I think that is slightly less than what I awarded you when I saw your PE and LT images 😊 Saffron is a very feminine little vixen so I shall pass the compliment on to her as I'm sure she'll be delighted 😊

Thank you too Wurzel. Your self-discipline is amazing 😊

I'm sure Nick L. will not mind me saying that today he showed me some fantastic shots he took of both male and female BH at Noar Hill on Tuesday at 7.30am!!! So, they have been out almost a week here. I believe that the 3rd image in my last post was a male as he was very pale compared to the female (almost a beige, creamy colour compared to the brilliant gold female). There was no sign of them this morning but there was some compensation in seeing 16 other species, some worn but many very fresh. Amongst them was this Ringleet which I believe is Ab. arete:



... compared to the norm:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Aug-15 08:33 PM GMT

For those who might be interested (and so as not to clutter up Goldie's diary) I would just like to explain my lack of recent posts. At 10.00pm on Sunday Foxy had a massive fit, necessitating an emergency trip to the vet. Sadly he did not recover from it and I made the decision to pts. So now I have lost both of these dear companions:



My main concern now is his best mate Chance who was like his shadow. They ate together



even if it was the peanuts put out for the birds (partners in crime!)



They shared a drink and then curled up in bed:



In fact, they just generally hung out together; where one was, you would be sure to find the other:





Chance is older than Foxy and is missing him dreadfully. I am struggling to get him to eat and he is on my knee as I type this. Saffron, the vixen carries a soft toy around, crying softly to it, even in her sleep. It is heartbreaking. So, the upshot is butterfly activity is significantly restricted. Hopefully the situation will improve soon.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Aug-15 08:46 PM GMT

Having explained all that I'd now like to post a few shots from a recent trip to Noar Hill. There is an odd looking beetle amongst them (some sort of Longhorn?) and a stripey kind of bee which I thought was very attractive and hard-working (what more can one ask for? 😊):











Well, I guess I'd better stop there 😊😂 but just a fraction of both numbers and species, despite the dreadful weather recently.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 06-Aug-15 02:23 AM GMT

We're so sorry to hear that you have lost Foxy, Pauline. Those are lovely photos you've posted of foxy and Chance and Stanleigh with Foxy. At least he had a good life while he was with you.

All the Best,

Mike

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 06-Aug-15 03:33 AM GMT

Sorry to hear about Foxy but it sounds like he couldn't have had a better life.

On the butterfly front those Brown Hairstreak (why they didn't go with the females old name Golden Hairstreak I'll never know) are absolutely divine, especially that first picture! Really need to end my year with a good encounter with them! And a blind Ringlet 😊

You're right about the beetle being a Longhorn, it's what I used to know as a *Strangalia* sp. but they are now known as *Rutpela*. There's several similar species but the commonest is called *maculata*. I'm not too hot on my Hymenoptera so I can only make a guess at the bee and suggest perhaps *Anthophora* sp.?

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-15 06:57 AM GMT

Struggling to keep up with everything at the moment Pauline so catching up on some of your posts, lush BA and blind Ringlet 😊🇩🇪. Sorry to hear about Foxy 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 06-Aug-15 11:21 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I'm trying to catch up with the postings (I'm having a quiet day), I'm awfully sorry about your Fox Pauline, what can one say at a time like this!!!!!! You know how I feel I'm an animal lover myself . I just hope your other animals start to feel better soon.

Love your photos Pauline, no matter how I try I don't seem to get mine that clear, I'm glad your out and about again taking photos Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Aug-15 02:01 AM GMT

Thank you Mike – I have some great memories and many more photos. There is a link with butterflies as it was Robin Turner who was then the webmaster for Hampshire who found Foxy in a real poor state in his garden eating the moths in his trap. I shall always be grateful to him as I wouldn't have missed the experience for the world.

Thank you too Buggy. I also very much appreciate the ID's. I totally agree that the name Golden Hairstreak is so much more apt.

Cheers Wurzel - have a great break.

I appreciate your comments Goldie. I have only been out once in the last week (Chance has now punctured his foot and is on painkilling injections and antibiotics 😞😞) and that was a quick visit to Noar Hill on the way to collect Foxy's ashes. I managed to find my blind Ringlet again:



and I watched for about 20 mins as this Common Blue appeared to be egg-laying on this daisy type plant:





A couple more from the same visit but no BH



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Aug-15 02:10 AM GMT

So, I have been stuck in for virtually a week – virtually unheard of in the butterfly season 😊😄 However, it has given me a chance to catch up with what is going on in the garden. Yesterday there were 10 species in the garden (not bad when the overall total is only 19), including SWF, Large Skipper and this Holly Blue:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Aug-15 02:30 AM GMT

... and of course I also had the moth trap to keep me occupied and interested. How I manage to get 200 moths one night and a SINGLE moth a few nights later I'm not sure. I was a bit concerned as I saw a few bats flying around and wondered if I was supplying their supper 😬 The camouflage of moths astounds me and I am now beginning to appreciate the beauty of some of the micro moths (although as I start to deal with the macros first I rarely have time to photograph the little'uns. A few from last night which I confess I haven't had time to identify yet but they are quite stunning:







One thing I find frustrating about moths is the way that they quiver to warm themselves up to 'escape' which makes decent photos of some attractive moths impossible as in this case:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-Aug-15 03:54 AM GMT

Your blind Ringlet is amazing, Pauline. I'm pretty sure you'll be required to put that in the species-specific albums!

Re: Pauline

by William, 10-Aug-15 04:02 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Excellent moth photos, now you've started, you'll never look back 😊

They are:

Coxcomb Prominent
September Thorn (August Thorn is very similar, but has white tibiae)
Peppered Moth
Lesser Swallow Prominent
Catoptria pinella
Swallow Prominent
Nut Tree Tussock
Flame Shoulder

BWs,

William

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 10-Aug-15 06:12 AM GMT

The soft colours on your first Holly Blue photo are really attractive. 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 10-Aug-15 08:18 PM GMT

Wow! super moth photos – you are a glutton for punishment, tackling these critters. 58 butterfly species is one thing but 2,500 moths is a challenge on a wholly different scale 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Aug-15 01:43 AM GMT

Thank you David. I expect it will be a while before I see another one like that! Possibly even better than the BH I was looking for 😊

I have been struggling to get decent photos of moths William and the only thing I can come up with is the poor light at that time of the morning. I am getting an enormous number of species and it is quite time consuming to identify them all so I really appreciate you helping me out on that and saving me a bit of time. Thank you.

Thank you for taking the time to comment Katrina. Would you believe that all those colours were just a result of the changing light levels and taking shots from different angles. Amazing the difference it makes, isn't it? I had an old coat hanging out to dry in the background hence the background colours.

I won't argue with you on that one Mike and I am not quite sure I am up for the challenge but I have made a start and finding it interesting 😊 . Thank you for the compliment – taking photos of moths seems like a whole different ball game as I am still not quite sure what they are going to do eg. fly away, play dead, co-operate, quiver, etc. 😊

Yesterday I had reason to travel to Portsmouth so on the way back I made a quick stop off at Oxenbourne (but not as quick as Wurzel 😊) As I walked onto the site I was delighted and relieved to see a couple of SSS egg-laying. I did not have much time for photos and that wind was blowing strongly again but I took a few shots nevertheless:



I watched 4/5 eggs being laid but did not take any shots until she took a break for a rest and some much needed nourishment.



Whilst checking out the eggs I came across this – any ideas?



Re: Pauline

by William, 11-Aug-15 02:26 AM GMT

I think you've been tricked, Pauline – your eggs are Common Blue eggs, laid on Bird's Foot Trefoil 😊

BWs,
William

Re: Pauline

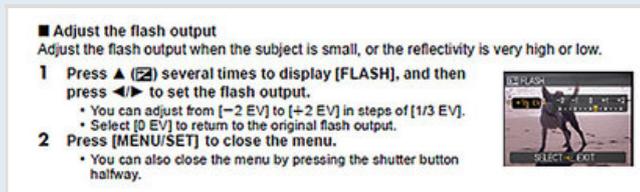
by MikeOxon, 11-Aug-15 02:34 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

.... taking photos of moths seems like a whole different ball game....

I agree but you seem to be handling the new game pretty well. I think you are wise to keep the ISO down, for low noise, but that is forcing you into very slow shutter speeds, in early-morning light.

Perhaps it's time to experiment with flash. I don't think the FZ38 has connections for an external flashgun, so you're stuck with the on-camera flash but, if you experiment with reducing the intensity of the flash (described in the manual), you should be able to get good results. Try also using some sort of diffuser – a single ply of tissue between the flash head and the subject can be very effective for this.



Extract from FZ35 Manual

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Aug-15 03:02 AM GMT

😞😞😞😞😞😞 You are of course correct William! That'll teach me to stay so far back until she has moved on! I've seen the eggs before so I should know better. Can I just put it down to stress or lack of sleep 😊😊😊? They were definitely egg-laying so I shall just have to go back and check out that area again 😊

Thank you for that tip Mike. I shall certainly give it a try before I post any more moth shots. I really haven't explored the use of flash to any degree.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-15 03:35 AM GMT

Love your SSS Pauline, I went looking for those whilst in Kent and on the way home my Husband didn't want to stop in the Midlands just wanted to get home, I fell a sleep any way 😊 so I envy you those shots 🍷🍷
I think some moths by the way can be really colourful, I don't set out to film them but if I see them I like to film them, sorry to hear you've got another casualty, hope he's better soon Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Aug-15 05:35 AM GMT

Thank you so much Goldie. I appreciate your very kind comments.

Today I had some time and the opportunity to get out for a couple of hours. It has been a couple of years since I took a photo of a Wood White ova



and having seen them egg-laying this season I hoped to be able to find a larva which I have never before seen. Sadly, the weather was overcast, dull, drizzly but warm. I debated whether to go as I have been led to believe that Wood White only fly in sunshine..... but then I remembered I had been told that PE don't fly in the rain, and BH don't come down in the afternoon and a few other 'facts' that have not lived up to my experience. When I arrived at Botany Bay there were about a dozen Wood White flying in one short stretch just over the bridge, despite the weather (which was very changeable).









I was lucky enough to come across a mating pair but the wind made photos quite challenging!!!





However, I failed miserably with the larva. Once the rain started to rally come down I find it is almost impossible to search for eggs or larva amongst the rain drops so at that point I decided to call it a day.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-Aug-15 05:43 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I debated whether to go as I have been led to believe that Wood White only fly in sunshine..... but then I remembered I had been told that PE don't fly in the rain, and BH don't come down in the afternoon and a few other 'facts' that have not lived up to my experience.

You were absolutely right to be sceptical of commonly disseminated 'norms'.

Butterflies are unpredictable by nature, and, of course, they pay no attention whatsoever to what is written about them in books. You got your reward with some lovely images.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 11-Aug-15 06:55 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

"Pauline" wrote:

I debated whether to go as I have been led to believe that Wood White only fly in sunshine..... but then I remembered I had been told that PE don't fly in the rain, and BH don't come down in the afternoon and a few other 'facts' that have not lived up to my experience.

You were absolutely right to be sceptical of commonly disseminated 'norms'.

Butterflies are unpredictable by nature, and, of course, they pay no attention whatsoever to what is written about them in books. You got your reward with some lovely images.

I think if all butterflies stuck strictly to what is written about them in books, many would quickly go extinct having to compete with 'British weather', like David says they don't read the books!

Beautiful pictures of those delightful little whites 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 11-Aug-15 06:39 PM GMT

It seems that plants read books even less than do butterflies! In horticulture, books on optimum growing conditions often flatly contradict one another. If one grower succeeds with a particular plant, he/she writes it up as though (s)he has found the ideal conditions, whereas the poor plant had actually struggled through, despite all the mistakes 😊

As Bugboy writes, nature has a way of surviving through all sorts of adverse conditions.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-15 11:20 PM GMT

Beautiful Photos once again Pauline, I love the mating pair 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-15 04:16 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, I am catching up on your diary yet again. Sorry to read about foxy and I hope that Chance is soon on the mend.

Some cracking photos lately but those Wood Whites are beautiful, especially the mating pair 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Aug-15 04:24 PM GMT

Thank you David and Buggy. Wood White is definitely my favourite white butterfly – they look so delicate but are obviously tough little critters and so photogenic.

That's interesting Mike. I wonder if the same applies in other fields, eg. birds.

Thank you Goldie. I saw the mating pair from a distance and at first thought it was just the one WW with its wings open, perhaps being attacked by a spider or some other predator. Happily, it wasn't 😊

Thank you on both accounts Neil – Chance's foot is healing nicely but he is still missing Foxy dreadfully 😞 so I am spending a great deal of time with him right now. When he eventually goes to sleep it is usually for hours so yesterday I took that opportunity to get out and visit a couple of new sites.

Years ago a friend told me that there was a lovely walk from Warblington to Emsworth and I thought it was high time I checked this out. She wasn't wrong. Despite the overcast skies it was very warm and many butterflies were on the wing in fields full of Fleabane. A coastal area but sadly no Clouded Yellows spotted. I did see a very well marked Green-veined White egg-laying and couldn't resist stopping for a few shots:





As I strolled along I passed Warblington Castle which was originally a moated manor but today consists of little more than one turret, part of the old gatehouse. The building has a significant political history dating back to the 1300's and today is Grade II listed



As I approached Emsworth 3 birds (of prey?) were making quite a racket flying back and forth leading me to assume it was parents with a youngster. They flew high above the trees along the water's edge so trying to get a photo as they appeared in a gap in the canopy was nigh on impossible. I managed this single shot, a very poor silhouette which would present an ID challenge to anyone but I would be very interested to know what they were. I asked a couple of locals passing by but, although they were aware of them, they didn't know what they were.



I eventually reached Emsworth and toyed with the idea of calling in to a nice little pub I know there for some lunch but I wanted to press on and have a little look at Thorney Island.



By the time I reached Thorney the weather had worsened but alongside the Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns I spotted a Holly Blue and a couple of Fritillaries, DGF I think. I walked along the track just enjoying the scenery and visiting a new area. I had been to Thorney Island once before but over the other side of the island so this was all quite new:



I was delighted when I stumbled across a Small Copper (well, almost stood on it actually as it was well camouflaged in the middle of the stoney track). This is only the 3rd Small Copper I have seen this season so I was very happy to spend some time with it. Although I wasn't able to get any open-wing shots as the rain was now more than a steady drizzle, I did manage a few closed wing shots:





It was time to head back. No Clouded Yellows today but I was lucky enough to bump into a very nice gentleman, Dick Senior, who described to me the best place to find them (weather permitting) and invited me to join an organised walk around the island at the weekend. An invitation I sadly had to decline due to other commitments.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 12-Aug-15 04:59 PM GMT

Lovely GVW and good to see another Small Copper, I've noticed numbers seem to be recovering now after a very poor first half of their season, I saw 4 or 5 yesterday afternoon.

I think the birds of prey were probably Sparrowhawk (unless they were nearly Buzzard sized in which case they would more likely be Goshawks) 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Aug-15 01:29 AM GMT

Lovely images again, Pauline. The summer brood Green Veined Whites are beautifully marked. They're just emerging round my way and I can't wait till they hit peak numbers in a week or so.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 13-Aug-15 03:52 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

The first two Small Copper images are real crackers 🍷, I've never found them at roost like that.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 13-Aug-15 04:11 AM GMT

Lovely photos of the Wood Whites Pauline 😊 great small Copper too 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Aug-15 05:22 AM GMT

Thank you Buggy. They definitely weren't as big as Buzzards. I thought I would have recognised Sparrowhawks as I get them in the garden regularly but then I was just getting the briefest of glimpses of them thru the trees so you are most likely correct 😊

Thank you too David. She was very worn but so attractive I just had to take a few shots.

You are very kind Trevor and very polite. That last SC shot is out of focus with a cluttered background that is neither one thing or another (I only included it as I have seen so few SC this year) but like the gentleman you are, you chose to focus on the other images which came out OK despite the wind. Thank you.

I appreciate your comment Mike and I'm pleased you like the photos as I thoroughly enjoyed my time with both the Wood Whites and the Small Copper, despite the rain on both occasions.

With fewer (animal) responsibilities I indulged myself today and stayed out a bit longer than usual. I shall post the photos as soon as I have time but I

am pleased to report that I saw not 1, but 5 Clouded Yellow. A little taster but more to follow in the next couple of days:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Aug-15 05:27 AM GMT

Given the impending winds from the continent over the next couple of days, one can only hope it encourages a few immigrants to head our way!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Aug-15 03:12 PM GMT

Please don't mention the weather David - I've just about had all the wind and rain I can take for one season 😞😞

The sun was shining, there was no wind and I had finished my morning chores. Perfect. 21 mins later I was back at Thorney Island, hoping for an encounter with a Clouded Yellow whilst accepting I might have a 3 mile walk to the best spot. Imagine my surprise when I spooked not 1, but 2, only 50 yards up the track.





The wind had picked up again which spoiled a fair few shots (no surprise there) and it was starting to cloud over. In my haste to make the most of the weather I failed to notice my camera was on the wrong settings so early shots had to be binned. One butterfly was in good condition but the other had a nick in its wing.



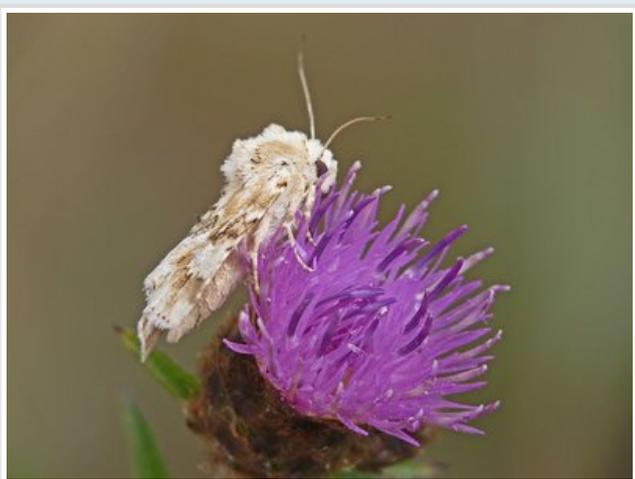
I decided to continue walking along the track and was surprised at the number of butterflies, especially many fresh Common Blues, some of which were really quite tiny and reminded me of those Mark and I found on Hayling Island last year. I reached the point where I saw the Small Copper the previous day but this time 2 were very evident spending most of their time quarrelling (still no blue spots tho).



One of these Blues was perilously close to this spider – I am not sure what type it is but it is a lot better than me at gift wrapping! 😄



Further along the track I spotted this moth making the most of the rapidly disappearing sun to nectar. I believe it is a Dusky sallow, thanks to William. As I took a few shots a pristine Painted Lady flew past giving me a good view but with no intention of stopping for a photoshoot.



This is very much MOD territory and as I reached the end of the first track , a gate with an intercom system required me to request entry but stated I

should only do so if I thought I could comply with the rule not to deviate from the designated path 🤔. What if I saw a mating pair or a Large Tort just off the track????!! 😬😬 Not being sure that I would be able to comply I decided to return as I had already seen my target, the Clouded Yellows. I got all the way back to the entrance – and now the wind was really strong and intermittent sun had been replaced by clouds – when I got chatting to a gentleman who described himself as the ‘ex-warden’. We discussed butterflies (naturally) especially the mass of Clouded Yellows from last year. Apparently there were 141 (he was very precise about this) but the lucerne field where they had been mating and egg-laying had been cut by the farmer. Apparently he had tried to explain the situation to the farmer who had responded along the lines that he had a living to make – understandable I guess. Anyway, during our discussion he mentioned that had I gone thru that gate and further along the sea wall (a lot further as it turned out) it was possible to see seals, providing the tide was out of course. Well, I just had to see the seals so it was all the way back up the track

As I made my way back up I took shots of various butterflies including Small and Essex Skippers.



A total of 16 species surprised me given the weather. Once I was thru the gate it was a relief to find myself in some sheltered nooks and crannies, out of the roar of the wind. The first thing I spotted was a bird – another unidentified one I'm afraid but when it flew short distances it showed off a lovely white rump.





I noticed I was being followed by a dog walker which was unfortunate because shortly afterwards I came across a Clouded Yellow and a Painted Lady on the same flower. Just as I lined myself up for the shot his large black dog bounded towards me, barking loudly, and both butterflies took off. Peggy (the dog) obeyed not one command and continued to 'dog' me for quite some distance 😊 Shortly afterwards I met another couple, also looking for the seals, but they had been unsuccessful. I had come a lot further than I intended so I turned back for the homeward journey. I was pleased and surprised when I found the Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady back in the same location (but not on the same plant). The Painted Lady was not in terribly good condition but like me pleased to be out of the wind and happy to climb onto my finger and pose.





I requested entry back thru the gate and began to search for roosting Clouded Yellows. I found one which wasn't in very good condition and whilst searching came across this very well camouflaged Silver Y moth.





Eventually I made it to the start of the track and watched as a flock of Goldfinches made the most of seeds on Teasel and other flower heads.



It had been a smashing visit – probably over 3 hours and even tho' I didn't get to see the seals it was thoroughly enjoyable.

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 14-Aug-15 03:23 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Glad you found your Clouded Yellows 😊

The White rumped bird looks like a Wheatear to me 😊

Kind Regards

Mark

Re: Pauline

by jens, 14-Aug-15 05:45 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

you`re up early to post your messages ! The photo of the birds of prey... I can`t make out any colours but the bird on the right especially looks to have a tail that is indented at the base, which would indicate Red Kite. Also the wing tips (primary feathers) on the bird on the left show "fingers" and some barring which is consistent with Red Kite. Both Sparrowhawk and Goshawk have rounded wingtips and a long tail with a straight base. However, RK is bigger than Buzzard, although lighter in weight, they are more streamlined and aerodynamic, so if you are certain that what you saw was SMALLER than Buzzard, then I`m stumped. The bird on the rocks is definitely female Wheatear. They are now starting to move down from their breeding grounds to the coast before flying south. Quite early for them, they`ve obviously had enough of our weather ! Great photos by the way and thanks for your reply to my PM.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 14-Aug-15 06:45 PM GMT

Another splendid collection of photos. Last year, I didn't photograph a Clouded Yellow until late October so I guess there's plenty of time left for me yet.

Your bird is a Wheatear and your observation of the white rump is thought by some to be the origin of its name – 'wheat ear' being a corruption of 'white a***' (I'm sure you can manage the blanks!). My identification of birds is always pretty rosey but my instinct was that your birds of prey were a family of kestrels – the wind can easily ruffle the long tail feathers to look like a vee and also spread out the wing tips.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 14-Aug-15 10:12 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, Glad you got the Clouded Yellows, I only managed the one but was so Pleased to do that like you 😊 I think all your photos are great but I particularly like the Gold Finch on the seeds it looks fantastic Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Aug-15 12:22 AM GMT

Thank you for the bird ID Mark and your reply to my email.

Hi Gareth, actually I'm up at some stupid hour to feed my menagerie and it is only then I can sit down at the pc with a coffee 😊😊 I appreciate your help with the bird ID's. I am fairly sure they were smaller than Buzzards but they were at quite a distance which may have distorted my perception of their size. If my observation skills were better, or my photography (or both!!) then I'm sure you and others would easily have cracked it. They were very vocal if that is any sort of clue. Thank you for your comment on my photos.

Another interesting fact Mike which I didn't know (yes, I can fill in the blanks 😊). I'm sure that you will get to see a Clouded Yellow soon as they seem to be cropping up all over now and there is still plenty of time. I am not entirely sure about Kestrels either, having seen them in the past both close up and at a distance but as you say perhaps the wind was ruffling their feathers which may have thrown me. I guess it will have to remain a mystery – unless I go back 😊. Thank you for the much appreciated compliment Mike.

Cheers Goldie – I thought the colours on the Goldfinches complimented the colours of the wild flowers. I am so glad you got to see a Clouded Yellow, and after all, you only need one to get a photo 😊

After the recent dreadful weather I assumed that female BH would be making the most of the sun to get on with their egg-laying. Because of this I just couldn't avoid the temptation to call into Noar Hill briefly on the way to collect some new reading glasses (all the better to see butterfly eggs 😊). Noar Hill did not disappoint but surprisingly it was 3 males rather than females that I encountered, the first being in really good condition. I think I must have forgotten how to take photos in the sun (it has been a long time since we've had any!!!) 😊😊 and I struggled with the glare despite adjusting exposure compensation as much as the camera would allow. Eventually I managed to manouvre myself into a position to get some reasonable shots:





I was surprised to see a BH nectaring on Wild Carrot – I have seen several at Shipton Bellinger nectaring on Wild Parsnip, but never this:





It was whilst I was rushing back down the lane to the car that I saw the other 2 which were both a lot more worn than the original:





I'll be back for the females later 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 16-Aug-15 01:09 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I'm afraid i had to give Wurzel a load of abuse for posting a cracking shot of a male Brown Hairstreak, then clearing off on holiday!! 🍷 . Now i see that you have also had lots of success 🍷 .

My ' local ' site has yet to produce the goods. Today Neil Hulme appeared from over the hill and we thought he might charm some down for us, but nothing! 😞 .

Seriously, if i get lucky and obtain some shots as good as yours it'll be 😊 all the way.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 16-Aug-15 01:32 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, 3 males 🍷 and loads of Cloaded Yellows!!! 🍷🍷, also nice piccies of that juvenile Wheatear. Your unknown spider is a Wasp Spider *Argiope bruinnechi*. The zigzag patterning on the web is enough to identify that species in the UK. I know what you mean about the temptation about straying from the path 😊

I saw Jenks comment re. the birds of prey and I can confidently say they aren't Red Kites even without knowing the size for a number of reasons. Firstly on the bird on the left you can clearly see barring on the wings but no pale 'window' or patch. The tails on both birds seem to be closed so if it were a Kite you would see a deep fork and the primary 'fingers' on the wings tips are not long enough to be a Red kite. All these features do however point towards a Sparrowhawk or Goshawk 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-Aug-15 02:49 AM GMT

Good stuff, Pauline!

I only wish males at our Pembrokeshire site would be so accommodating. Nobody has ever seen them nectaring (and no-one really knows why that is). As a result, they spend all their time in the tree canopy and you need eyes like a hawk to even get a distant record shot. 😞

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Aug-15 04:03 AM GMT

I'm glad you like my BH shots Trevor but I'm pretty confident you will get some to match or better them, especially if you put in as much effort as you did for PE 😊 I shall look forward to seeing them as Steyning is quite a late site.

Thanks Buggy, I'm having a great time at the moment 😊 trying to squeeze in as much as possible as my diary will be drawing to a close soon for the winter. I should have known the Wasp spider as I remember now that I saw one last year and in fact I saw another massive one today. Re bird ID, well, I'm so very tempted to try to get back there for a better description/photo as you've got me curious now.

Thank you David. It seems that at some sites (I believe Steyning Rifle Range is another) males never or rarely come down so I guess I'm lucky to be so close to Noar Hill where they come down readily, and at Shipton too. It may not be consolation but you have some beautiful female shots 😊🍷

I need some more ID's sadly and I am hoping someone can help. This is basically an update on the immatures. The half dozen eggs laid on garlic mustard which Buggy identified and suspected GVW have all gone. I lifted up the paving stone, dug up the little plant, repotted it and put it in the cage. There must have been something on the plant (I could only see a couple of tiny little insects – wish I'd taken a photo). More recently I found another half dozen similar looking eggs on another plant. This plant is growing in a pot near a bird feeder and I did not plant it. I suspect that it is from a seed in the bird mix. It is quite big, some of the leaves about 8-9" across. I have been keeping an eye on the eggs and now they too have all disappeared bar one and I can only find one really tiny larva. I have snapped that leaf off and put it in water in the cage for now as something is eating this plant. Today

around the base of the plant I found several cats about an inch long and this evening they are eating the leaves. So, what is the plant? What is the tiny larva? What are the larger cats?



Re Emperor Moth cats, the one with yellow spots pupated among the heather on 2 August which surprised me as it was the smaller of the 2 cats. The one with pink spots pupated 8 days later on the protective mesh. This also surprised me as during their time with me they have done everything together or within an hour or so of each other. I have been able to gently detach the pupa from the mesh to take a few shots. The other can be seen still embedded in the heather.



I am wondering what the best way would be to keep these safe over the winter months to give them the best chance of emerging?

PS Many kind folk continue to ask after Chance. I have recently bought a large cuddly fox toy for him to cuddle up to and he seems to be gaining some comfort from it:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 17-Aug-15 04:40 AM GMT

Chance looks very content there 😊

So the cats, well your mystery looks like another Garlic Mustard to me so the small cat could well be a Small/GV White (it could also be a number of other things...), the purple coloured one is a Sawfly larvae of some kind 😊

With your Emperor pupae, I know some people overwinter stuff in fridges but I would just be tempted to leave them outside in a sheltered spot where they wont get submerged or predated, they are afterall designed to handle our winters 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-15 06:12 AM GMT

I've got a lot of catching up to do Pauline – and you've been so busy you're not making it any easier for me Pauline 😊 Great Painted Ladies, Cloudies and Brostreaks 🍷 and I agree with the others on the ID of your birds – Sparrowhawks and Whitearses 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 17-Aug-15 06:15 AM GMT

I have to agree with the others – those Clouded Yellows are lovely, and I am even more envious of the Hairstreaks! Great shots. 🍷 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-15 04:25 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, just seen your Clouded Yellow and Brown Hairstreak photos, lovely images 🍷 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 18-Aug-15 05:38 AM GMT

Great shots of CY and BH Pauline, you worked hard for them 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Aug-15 09:20 PM GMT

Thank you Buggy. I shall take your advice re pupa. I hadn't realised Garlic Mustard could get so big – the leaves are huge 😲

Call a spade a spade, why don't you Wurzel 😊😊😊 Whatever they're called they were lovely little birds! 😊 I'm glad you liked the butterfly shots – I had a smashing time finding them, just pity about the wind!

Thank you Neil, Dave and Mike – really appreciate you taking the time to comment. Great to bump into you and Cathy Mike – hope you got lucky. Of course not every visit results in shots of the target species and I notice I am neglecting the more common butterflies although they are so attractive in their own right. A few shots below from recent visits to Noar Hill:





I noticed a mating pair of Meadow Brown where one had a beautiful oily sheen on the upper wings, which were promptly closed on my approach. Despite a long wait the wings remained tightly closed:



I watched a courtship display of a pair of worn and ragged SWF which continued for 6 minutes on a plant before they took to the wing in the usual style:

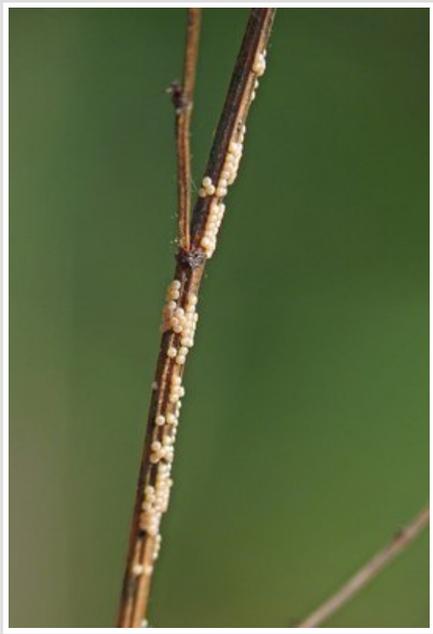


I was delighted to see Small Coppers on both days and was privileged to watch one ovi-posting:





It was while I was watching the Small Copper that I noticed this Sorrel covered from top to bottom with eggs –far more than it is possible to show. Has anyone any idea what they might be?



On the moth front I have now decided to purchase the 'on loan' trap. I am well and truly hooked – and I have even been known to look twice at a micro (if it is a striking individual 😊). My main complaint is that it is very time consuming – at a time of the day when I haven't much of that to spare. However, it is like unwrapping a birthday present – not knowing what delights you will find but always different. Just a few from recently which I have tried to identify but I may be wrong:



Black Arches



Brown or Yellow Tail





Grey Dagger



Pebble Prominent



Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing



Canary-shouldered Thorn



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 18-Aug-15 11:16 PM GMT

Lovely Photos Pauline of the Brown Hair Streaks, I wish I could get a shot of just one like Yours 🍷🍷 Can't help you with the Cat's not my strong point , love the photos of Chance they make you want to hug him, hope the fox helps him Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Aug-15 06:22 AM GMT

Cracking moth shots Pauline, they are very time consuming which is why I only have a passing acquaintance with them 😊 Careful with the brown/yellowtails as they can produce a really irritating noxious substance 🤨

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 19-Aug-15 06:26 AM GMT

The camouflage on that last Thorn moth is superb.

Re: Pauline

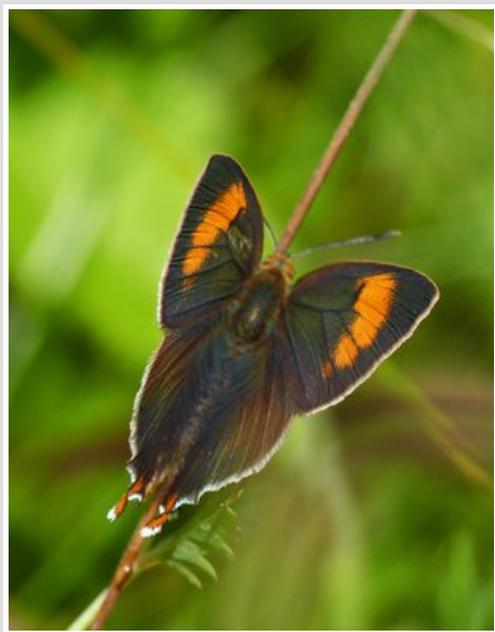
by Pauline, 22-Aug-15 01:39 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie. Chance loves cuddles and you can be sure he is getting plenty of them right now 😊

Thank you too Wurzel – I had no idea about that; I'll be sure to take care if I trap any more 😬

Isn't it just David! For such a brightly coloured moth it certainly blends in well.

Today I was undecided as to where to go. I had 2 places in mind – both for very different reasons. In the end I almost didn't go to either because of the strong wind which I knew would ruin a lot of my shots. I eventually opted for Noar Hill knowing that it might be my last visit here this season. I walked up the lane checking out likely areas on the way without any luck but almost as soon as I went through the gate at the top I spotted my target. At first I thought she was a Gatekeeper as she flew up from the ground, flew a couple of yards and landed low down in the vegetation again, giving plenty of photo opportunities. Unfortunately, a group of about 20+ walkers chose this moment to go past and although they were careful and quiet the butterfly did not like it and took off soon after. I had managed a couple of shots first and almost got my open-winged shot but just as soon as she opened them the wind blew them shut:



She hadn't flown up and I quickly managed to relocate her but she seemed intent on giving me the run-around, going up and down a bank of hemp agrimony:



She then flew across the track and round a couple of bushes onto another patch of Hemp Agrimony. I quickly followed her and that's when it all kicked off. I was just about to take another shot when I realised about 18" away there was not one but 2 more BH nectaring on the plants – a tatty male and another female!!!! 😲 I didn't know which to aim at first 😊 Where was Hazel? Where were Mike and Cathy? I desperately needed another pair of eyes! In my panic and confusion the first female took off in the direction from which she had come, shortly followed by the second female who went in the opposite direction. I could have followed them but 'a bird in the hand' so I took a few shots of the male who was in quite poor condition:



I decided to head in the direction the second female had taken and I was standing by a patch of Hemp Agrimony, scrutinising it to try to spot her when another BH landed on a plant beside me:



Well, this was unreal! 4 BH and I hadn't even reached the Triangle!!! As I watched and wandered around I saw another 3, all of which seemed to be in a bit of a frenzy, quite frantic to get as much nectar as they could. They totally ignored me as they hopped from plant to plant, at times coming so close I had to step back to get a photo. Most were males in various states of wear. I took a number of snaps just to try to capture the moment and illustrate the activity as it is not something I have ever witnessed at Noar Hill.



The wind was certainly hampering the butterfly activity as they were being blown about considerably; however, they didn't seem too bothered by it.





With all the running back and forth, up and down, I was hot and thirsty so decided to call it a day and stop of at the local pub for refreshments. Just before I left I checked the Triangle again and I think those eggs might be starting to hatch. Moths? Surely someone can hazard a guess at what they might be given the sheer numbers?



I did see quite an attractive moth close by:



together with some lovely ST and a gorgeous Clouded Yellow. It didn't stop for a photo but I suspect it was the one seen by Hazel a few days ago as it was the lovely dark colour she described.



As I reached the bottom of the lane I took my car keys out of my pocket and who should walk around the corner but Mike and Cathy!!!! Just as we stopped to say hello another lovely fresh female BH flew over our heads, across the road and landed on some Cow Parsley. I was just about to take a shot when a wasp buzzed her and she flew over the other side of a hedge, bringing my total for the day to 8 – the most I have ever seen down low at Noar Hill in one brief visit.

I guess for now I shall just have to be satisfied with open-winged shots taken in a previous season:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 22-Aug-15 01:49 AM GMT

So you say you're jealous of my Brown hairstreak encounters and then you write this!!!! 🙄🙄🙄

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 22-Aug-15 04:52 AM GMT

Excellent shots of the Brown Hairstreaks Pauline, considering the windy conditions you did really well 😊 BTW we saw no BH in our five hours at Noar 😞 apart from the one we saw near your car 😊

Re: Pauline

by William, 22-Aug-15 06:52 AM GMT

Cracking Brown Hairstreaks, Pauline! For the moths, the second is Yellow Tail (It has the single brown dot on the otherwise white wing, which Brown Tail lacks), and the third is one which generally goes down as a dagger 'aggregate' – the protocol for species that cannot be told apart with out dissection and examination of the genitals (such as Grey and Dark Dagger). Good luck with the moth trap – they're a lot of fun 😊

BWs,

William

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 22-Aug-15 07:10 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Pauline, wish I'd been there 🙄🙄 Nothing but rain here today, Ugh!

Glad to hear Chance is doing well Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 22-Aug-15 07:56 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

My computer is running out of mrgreens ! I think i will be camping out at Noar Hill next year. Lovely stuff ! Lovely images !

OH! i have one mrgreen left and you can have it 🍷😄

TREVOR.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-15 06:58 AM GMT

Fantastic Brostreaks Pauline – just the thing to cheer me up when I'm in Wet...sorry West Wales 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Aug-15 11:24 PM GMT

The photos weren't great Buggy (worn butterflies and a strong wind not a great combination) but that was a first for me. I have never been surrounded by so many BH in such a short space of time and in such a small area (I only covered about 25% of the main area). It is not something I will forget – thank you for your comment. Pleased your wallet was safe and sound 😊

You are very kind Mike and I am really sorry that you didn't see any more. I felt sure that you would after that female flew over our heads and landed near my car (Buggy isn't the only one who can claim the title of BH whisperer 😊😄) Perhaps they were just as fed up with that wind as I was but the drink at the pub was lovely 😊

Thank you William for the compliment, the ID and the information – it is much appreciated. Loads of stuff in the moth trap last night and no doubt at sometime in the near future I shall not be able to resist posting a few shots, but I am getting almost as far behind as Wurzel 😊😄

I always love to hear from you Goldie and I, too, wish you had been there as I could have done with another pair of eyes.

Thank you Trevor and thank you for the pm. I shall be pleased to show you round Noar Hill next season 😊

Cheers Wurzel – raining here too today if that's any consolation 😊

Well, I just had to go – there really wasn't any option. It was just too close – on my patch, so to speak, so I needed to check it out. On recent visits to coastal areas (Thorney Island, Emsworth, Hayling Billy line) I had been keeping my eyes peeled so how could I miss out on a potential opportunity, no matter how slim? Yes, I'm talking about the sighting of LTB at Browndown. (I hope you've got Hayling and Southsea covered Mark 😊😄). The weather wasn't great but no worse than the day when it had been sighted. John Stokes (I think that was the name) was of a similar mind and together we scoured the area where we thought the butterfly had been spotted but directions were vague and referred to 'tight grass' which was something of a puzzle. I felt sure that we must have been in the right ball park as the finder had been looking for Grayling and Purple Hairstreak, but what confused both of us was the fact that Francis (who spotted the LTB) couldn't find any Grayling whereas we were seeing loads. After an hour or so without any success the weather closed in and the rain started and didn't stop for 2 days! 😊

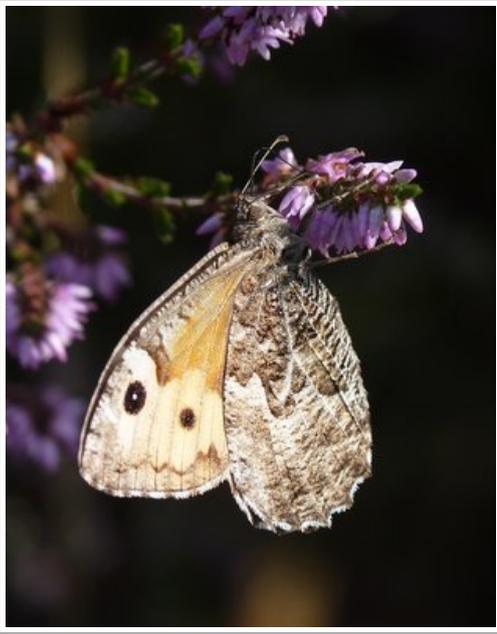
On the next sunny day I decided to pay a return visit (any excuse for a few hours by the the coast 😊) but as there was no sign of the LTB I spent an enjoyable time mostly watching butterflies and boats and taking the odd shot. A selection from both days below:





Another bird ID needed please.







Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-15 12:56 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Some more lovely photos in your recent reports, I particularly like the selection of moths a couple of posts back. I am going to be looking into moth traps over the winter months with a view to getting one for the start of next season, I am really curious as to what is flying about in my garden during the night.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 24-Aug-15 03:40 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, nice Graylings and a 🍷 for the open wing shot! Your mystery bird is a Cormorant 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 24-Aug-15 04:20 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I'm no Bird expert, but as Buggy says it's a Cormorant. As for your Graylings, how they are enhanced when on Heather!. There is colony near me, but they hunker down in the grass making it difficult to get a decent shot.

Many thanks for the PM, and another 🍷 for the Grayling shots.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Aug-15 05:11 AM GMT

Nice open wing Grayling photo, Pauline.

They open up far more than people think!

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 24-Aug-15 05:48 AM GMT

Your shots from the coast bring back good memories of when we lived near Emsworth. The Cormorant on the daymark is very evocative. I remember being so pleased when I got my first shot of an open-winged Brimstone but now they seem quite commonplace. I've not managed an open-wing Grayling though 🍷

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Aug-15 10:54 PM GMT

Thank you Neil - I am definitely hooked! It opens up a whole new world but it is very time consuming. Go for it! 😊

Thank you Buggy and Trevor for the compliment and ID. I shall try to remember for the future.

Thank you too David. I am sure you are right but I reckon I just got lucky this time as it was being continually annoyed by a fly.

I'm pleased about that Mike - you must surely have done the walk that I did the other week from Warblington to Emsworth and you probably know a lot

more about Thorney Island than I do.

With the weather being as it is I cannot resist posting a few shots from a recent moth trapping session. For the first time I got loads of bugs – I mean loads!!!! There were a lot of different sorts of Ladybirds (I wasn't expecting that!) including this striped Ladybird that I didn't even know existed! I have never seen a Ladybird with white spots before!



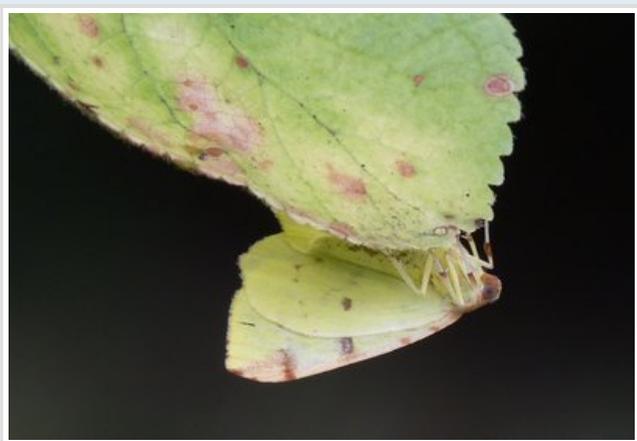
.... and this horrible looking creature:



together with many, many more.

I felt a little upset and a bit guilty because at the bottom of the trap there were a few dead creatures – tiny moths I think – and they were the most beautiful things with wings like multi-coloured filigree 😞

I spend any spare time trying to identify these moths but because of the sheer numbers I only manage to photograph a tiny proportion of them – the ones that captivate me most. I had a few that I recognise including a Black Arches that looked huge compared to the previous ones, and as usual, quite a few I can't yet put a name to. Some that I could recognise included a Dusky Thorn, Flame Shoulder and Rosy Footman but I failed to get photos of these. Sometimes, when they fly off, I watch to see where they come to rest and then take my shots. How do they know what they look like? How do they know where to land and what will provide the best camouflage? David commented on this in a previous post but just look at this Brimstone moth:





Don't know



Scalloped Hook-tip



Rhyacionia Pinicolana (Micro)



Broom moth?



Archers dart





Black Arches



Don't know



Wax moth?



Lesser Broad-bordered yellow underwing

... and there was this one - not sure if the wings are deformed or whether it is meant to be that shape but couldn't find an ID



Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 24-Aug-15 11:31 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Glad to see you are getting hooked on the moth front...

Your moths

- Brimstone
- Shuttle-shaped Dart
- Scalloped Hook-tip
- R. pinicolana
- Beautiful Yellow Underwing
- Archer's Dart
- Black Arches
- Bordered Straw
- Wax Moth
- Flame Shoulder
- Don't know!!

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 24-Aug-15 11:57 PM GMT

I'm catching up Pauline 😊 I love your Graylings on the Heather, they do look to be enjoying it, your moths are very good too, you'll soon be known as the Moth lady 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 25-Aug-15 12:06 AM GMT

To add to the ID's Pauline your 'horrible looking creature' is a Click Beetle. Place one upside down in the palm of your hand next time you find one and you'll find out how it got it's name 😊

Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 25-Aug-15 01:52 AM GMT

Hi again

Forgot to mention the "click" beetle and the ladybird is a Striped Ladybird

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-15 05:37 AM GMT

Great selection of moths Pauline 🍄 I got beaten to the ID of the click beetle, need to speed up a bit, the Tortoise doesn't always win the race 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 25-Aug-15 05:39 AM GMT

I'm amazed at your observation skills, Pauline. Have you just developed an interest in moths or is it just that in the absence of 'new' butterfly species you are paying closer attention to them than normal?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Aug-15 10:06 PM GMT

Lovely to hear from you Maurice – hope things are going well. Thank you so much for the ID's – bit like trying to teach an old dog new tricks 😊
Thought you were referring to my photography with '*beautiful* yellow underwing' – until I looked it up in my book 😊😊😊😊

Thank you too Wurzel and Buggy. I sure wish I knew these things before the event and not after I had released them. I need a mentor 😊

The Graylings were great Goldie – a small compensation for no LTB 🍄 Moths? – well, I'm just learning thanks to a lot of folk on this site but I'm having a great time doing it 😊

Thank you David – that's a really interesting question. I didn't make the leap from butterflies to moths – in fact, I have been a bit put off by moths as they overwhelm me by the sheer numbers and types. However, whilst rearing those butterfly cats last season I developed an interest in immature stages (especially the transitions) and somehow this was transferred to moth caterpillars which I reared (Emperor, Puss moth). I then became really curious about what was flying at night especially in my patch – just like Neil. A few folk who post on this site recognised my interest and encouraged and nurtured it and the rest is history so they say! 😊

To that end I went on a little foraging trip recently with Andy Brown (who sometimes posts and was kind enough to let me borrow a moth trap) and this was the result – if I have got any ID's incorrect please feel free to shout:





Vapourer moth cat





Buff -tip



Wasp spider -shouldn't forget that now Buggy 😊





Pale Tussock???



Eyed Hawk moth cat



Puss moth eggs – look like little Hazlenuts eaten by Dormice 🤔



Nursery spider? I really don't like spiders but there is a sort of morbid fascination about them so I couldn't help taking shots of this but I have no idea what it is:





Don't know



Don't know



Sallow/Poplar kitten?

Apologies for lack of butterflies but it is very, VERY wet out there – more butterflies to come shortly.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-15 10:27 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, fantastic shots of the Moth cat's their just has impressive has the moths they represent, it will be interesting also to see what the cat's are called that you don't know Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Aug-15 06:01 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie - I totally agree!

After a wild and windy night the rain is still coming down like stair rods 😞 so it is time for an update on some of the cats I have been rearing.

A little while ago I had some Comma cats 'donated' to me as they were destroying a recently purchased potted Blackcurrant bush. The words 'insecticide spray' were muttered (but only in jest 😊). In the event, there were 11 cats of different sizes on this small plant, and they had already caused considerable damage to the foliage - so the plant came home with me too! It was obvious that these cats were going to need more food than would be provided by this single small plant but I wasn't too concerned as I had 2 pots full of fresh green nettles. I placed the pots next to each other in the cage and spent some days wondering at how quickly the cats decimated the Blackcurrant, how they grew, shed skins, changed colour. In my opinion they are one of the most attractive butterfly cats and it was a pleasure to see so many at once. However, with the exception of one cat, they steadfastly refused to transfer to the nettles and I was forced to purchase another Blackcurrant plant at great expense 😞😞 Most of these cats have now pupated although I am not sure whether they will emerge this season?







I get Commas in the garden every year so I shall be sure to plant out these Blackcurrants once the cats are finished with them.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 26-Aug-15 06:51 PM GMT

Well you've certainly gone Moth Mad recently haven't you Pauline 😊. All geat shots though. That little Micro moth with the slightly deformed wings from an earlier post is (I think) an Apple Leaf Skeletoniser *Choreutis pariana*. That second spider eating the Soldier Beetle is a male and probably a type of orb spider *Araneus* sp. I've no idea what the two cats on the Sallow are though 😞

I like all the Comma cats which should all emerge in the next few weeks in time to fatten up and go into hibernation. 😊

It's been a dreadful 3 days in my part of the world as well so it's been a bit quiet on my PD. Still hoping to add a Clouded Yellow to the years tally before the season ends though if this unseasonably awful weather hasn't sent them all scurrying back to France 🙄😞

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 26-Aug-15 07:07 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

However, with the exception of one cat, they steadfastly refused to transfer to the nettles and I was forced to purchase another Blackcurrant plant at great expense 😂😞 Most of these cats have now pupated although I am not sure whether they will emerge this season?

I get Commas in the garden every year so I shall be sure to plant out these Blackcurrants once the cats are finished with them.

If you need to swap foodplants for larvae, there are several tricks you can use. Most have an order of favourite foodplants, and you can easily transfer them up to the most favourite foodplant with little trouble, but to get them to eat a less favourite is very difficult.

When in a skin change, they have not eaten for several days, while the new head capsule forms behind the old one, so they can be tricked to eat the new foodplant after the change. They will then eat this for the remaining instars, unless you need to change them again.

another method is you get a few leaves of the old foodplant and liquidize them in water, and spray the other foodplant with the water, the larvae will then get a taste of the old foodplant until they get used to taste of the new one.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-15 10:33 PM GMT

I love to see Comma's Pauline, I love their unusual shape their so different to other Butterflies, I'll enjoy seeing yours when they arrive, looks like MrsSpock's advice for spraying your plants would be could be helpful as well Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by dave brown, 27-Aug-15 01:24 AM GMT

Oh dear! Your hooked on moths now Pauline 😊 Welcome to the club.

Your Bordered Straw is a good one. This species has been arriving off the Continent in large numbers this year. Whilst a lot of sightings are near the coast many are now being seen further inland, with many of the current sightings probably being the offspring of the earlier influx. Another migrant species in good numbers this year is the Small Mottled Willow, so keep that trap running.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Aug-15 02:45 PM GMT

I never do things by halves Buggy 😊😁 Thank you again for help with ID's. I am probably going to need a lot of that in the future – I do try but there are so many moths that are similar I am sure to make a lot of mistakes. I am looking forward to seeing your (eventual) shots of Clouded Yellow and reading about your adventures – I am confident you will see it as there is still plenty of time 😊

As you know Goldie I am really interested in the transitions from one phase to the next but the torrential rain has hampered me in trying to watch the pupation process of the Commas. When I went to check them yesterday this is what I found 😊



Morning Martin – I agree with Goldie; that is another really useful thing to know and as I am likely to continue rearing (albeit on a very small scale) it will no doubt be put to use at some point. Have you ever thought of compiling all this knowledge and useful tips and hints into a document for publication? Or perhaps you already have? I am sure a lot of folk would benefit.

Good to hear from you Dave and glad the traffic situation has improved. Thank you for the info re the Bordered Straw. At the moment, I only recognise a few moths so it is quite likely that something really special would go unnoticed and unphotographed unless it was something that looked quite stunning. Still, I am enjoying it and hopefully I am learning 😊 (PS I have looked up the Small Mottled Willow so that one won't get away! 😊)

One of the little'uns I am rearing this year is a Sallow/Poplar Kitten (I shall be able to tell better as it grows). It is really still quite small at the moment but very cute 😊





At last the rain has stopped (temporarily at least) so hopefully back to butterflies before too long 😊

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 27-Aug-15 05:06 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

One of the little'uns I am rearing this year is a Sallow/Poplar Kitten (I shall be able to tell better as it grows). It is really still quite small at the moment but very cute 😊

I like the Puss/Kittens, another tip when they change colour to pupate, use a broken up egg box, 1 cup for it to make its cocoon, moth trappers have a good supply of egg boxes, it far better than a tree trunk or [3.5 inch computer disks] i had an escapee chew these once in my computer disk box 😞 Put the egg box cup into a plastic box so it cant wander off.

When ive found Kittens as BIOFs they have always been male 😞 so couldnt breed them. We often found more caterpillars than we started out with, when you take 3 or 4 bags of leaves off a local Poplar or Sallow tree you usually get a few BIOFs, Ive never been lucky to get a Purple Emperor cat of the sallow.

BIOF = Brought In On Food

I have done several books in the past, with a few notes.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Aug-15 12:08 AM GMT

I shall remember to do that Martin, thank you. I had one last year on bark but I think it was predated 😞 I like these too – so charismatic. I am enjoying watching this little one grow – don't you think he looks like a proper little cat now (he has even got the ears and looks like he has green eyes 😊😞) I think he has grown a lot in a week:



Now Martin you'll have to give me a few more clues – I've had a little browse around and if it's the same Martin I've found nursery kids with butterflies and orchids and Springwatch and a whole lot more, so you've obviously been busy (unless you have been cloned 😊) – but no books! 😞

Now, I don't like loose ends and it is getting close to the end of the season for me. I therefore went back to Noar Hill to try to find out what those eggs had turned into – y'know, the ones on the Sorrel. Unfortunately the cows had totally trampled that area including all those Sorrel stems, grinding them into the ground, including the ones where the Small Copper had been ovi-posting 😞 I picked out each and every stem I could retrieve and thoroughly checked it, but they had pretty much had it.

I took the opportunity to have a look round but couldn't see any BH so I took a shot of a Small Heath instead – just because he was there and I haven't taken one of them this season:



I also saw what I believe to be a female Scorpion Fly (thank you again Buggy) and a strange caterpillar. Since I found my Alder moth cat I have never looked at bird droppings in the same way – I always give them a second glance – and this definitely wasn't a bird dropping:



It wasn't long before the heavens opened again and having had a much needed breath of fresh air and a bit of exercise after 3 days of rain I made my way back.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Aug-15 01:35 AM GMT

Back to the loose ends, albeit briefly. I thought I would return to Thorney Island and Emsworth again to try to nail the ID of those birds. Well, I failed miserably on that count due to the fact that I lingered over a delicious lunch in the Blue Belle after a smashing walk around Thorney Island, causing me to run out of time 😞😞

Thorney Island didn't disappoint although I was informed by Barry the 'ex-warden' that I had just missed an Osprey – Pity! I haven't seen one before and at least we would have known what the photo was supposed to be 😞 Progress was slow because I had to stop and examine all the Ivy (Holly Blue eggs/larva) and of course I had to check out each and every small Blue butterfly – just in case. I looked up just in time to see a Clouded Yellow zooming past, the first of 2 seen on this visit, but with the sun in my eyes I lost sight of it as it flew low over gravel and then water. I spent some time looking but

couldn't relocate it. This Painted Lady was some compensation tho'. Can you spot her? Almost as good as a Grayling!



As I continued to check the blues I came across this one. I initially thought a very worn Holly Blue as some of my shots seem to show her upperside as a faded blue, but in others it looks brown. Any ideas? I am not much good with wing shape etc.



I saw the Small Coppers at the same spot as last time along with a Brown Argus. Further along there were several Small White busy egg-laying totally ignoring me as I checked the leaves they had visited. Still plenty of Gatekeepers and Meadow Brown around and the odd Speckled Wood put in an appearance:



Whilst checking the Ivy I spotted this moth which I think is a Yellow-barred Brindle – nice and fresh looking:



Well, after my long walk I was feeling a bit peckish and as I missed out on lunch on my previous visit I decided it was time to put that right 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 29-Aug-15 02:27 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

As I continued to check the blues I came across this one. I initially thought a very worn Holly Blue as some of my shots seem to show her upperside as a faded blue, but in others it looks brown. Any ideas? I am not much good with wing shape etc.

It can't be a satyrid, Pauline, as it has 6 legs, and it's body is very much lycaenid-looking.

I think your first instinct was correct regarding Holly Blue. I've seen them 'washed-out' on the undersides before though I admit I've never seen such a tatty example as yours.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 29-Aug-15 03:28 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

"Pauline" wrote:

As I continued to check the blues I came across this one. I initially thought a very worn Holly Blue as some of my shots seem to show her upperside as a faded blue, but in others it looks brown. Any ideas? I am not much good with wing shape etc.

It can't be a satyrid, Pauline, as it has 6 legs, and it's body is very much lycaenid-looking.

I think your first instinct was correct regarding Holly Blue. I've seen them 'washed-out' on the undersides before though I admit I've never seen such a tatty example as yours.

Gut instincts are invariably correct Pauline! I'm with David on this, a very tattered Holly Blue 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Aug-15 01:38 AM GMT

Thank you for your PM Martin – I have replied.

Thank you too David and Buggy. Holly Blue was my first thought but it was so worn it could have been anything.

With the rain tipping down again it is time for another update on my rearing activities. I had a single Common Blue egg which has recently hatched and it has been totally fascinating watching it – with a hand lens mostly as it is TINY! I have been trying to take photos every day to record its growth and development but the limits of both my camera and my photography abilities have been stretched to their limit by this one. Nevertheless, I shall record what I have been able to achieve so far:

21 August – egg hatched, larva just to the right (these leaves are tiny ones and I'm only mentioning this to provide some context as to the size of the larva:



1 day old:



3 days old (taken indoors in poor light as the weather was dreadful):



4 days old – note the typical feeding damage to the leaf:



6 days old – getting a bit bigger now and easier to see/photograph:





First birthday - one week old 🥳🥳





Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 30-Aug-15 04:24 AM GMT

They're great pictures Pauline, much better than anything I could get with my equipment. I must admit though that I can't for the life of me see the cat in the first pic 😞😞

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 30-Aug-15 04:41 AM GMT

Brilliant photos Pauline 😊 but I agree that I also can't see the cat in the first shot – no matter how hard I look 😞😞

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-15 06:40 AM GMT

Brilliant shots Pauline and the cat in the first one is crazy tiny 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 30-Aug-15 06:54 AM GMT

Fascinating photos of the various caterpillars, Pauline. 😊 You are far more adventurous than I've ever been. 🇩🇪

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 30-Aug-15 07:14 AM GMT

Great images, Pauline. I look forward to further instalments.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Aug-15 03:35 PM GMT

Thank you Buggy and Mike, but well, what can I say except 'you should have gone to Specsavers' 😊😊 Seriously, as Wurzel said, it is 'crazy tiny' – well done for spotting it Wurzel – and even now is only a couple of mm long. I was going to take a photo of that leaf beside a coin to demonstrate the size as the leaf was only about 3 mm.

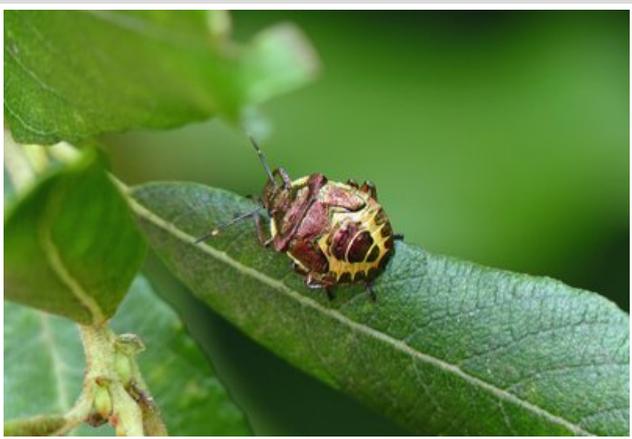
Thank you too Dave – I appreciate your interest.

Thank you also David. I shall continue to monitor and take photos. I am not sure whether it will develop fast enough for this year and may over-winter as a larva. (It may not even survive). Whatever happens, I shall report on the outcome of all the immatures next year. A couple more posts to go after this one and then that's it as I turn my attention to other priorities.

I am not finding much at all out there in the short time provided by gaps in the rain. I did find some more eggs – similar to the one's on Sorrel but this time on a Pine/Spruce/Fir (whatever it is). I guess there are a lot of insects that lay eggs like this but I will try to find out what they are:



A couple of cats and a nice Shield bug:



A few butterflies were spotted including a tattered SWF, a Meadow Brown which landed on my camera, Small Whites and numerous Speckled Wood which I couldn't get close to on account of them perching too high up. I also noticed another horrible spider which had a tiny body but legs that

extended about 5cm in each direction 🤖



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 31-Aug-15 09:48 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I'm catching up on your Cat's 😊 Great photos, I was at Southport yesterday and I saw this rather large Caterpillar , I tried to get a good shot (it'll be in my diary soon) but the weather was very over cast and although I changed my camera to suit the weather it's still not too clear. So I think I'd better stick to Butterflies 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 31-Aug-15 10:15 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Thank you Buggy and Mike, but well, what can I say except 'you should have gone to Specsavers'

as another poor glasses wearer, I can see a few possibilities. Is either of these (ringed) the cat? I've really no idea!



Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Sep-15 12:21 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie – I appreciate that. As for your cat – I haven't got a clue, but I'm sure someone will have 😊

Hi Mike – and Buggy and Mike. I have been a bit unfair as this cat was REALLY tiny when it emerged and the colours don't help as it really blends in. I have tried to mark it and sometimes if you 'click' on the photo it gets a bit bigger. My camera (ie Me 🤖) couldn't do any better I'm afraid 😊



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 01-Sep-15 01:00 AM GMT

Oh - it's *huge* - I was looking for something much smaller 😞😞😞

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 01-Sep-15 01:19 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, thanks for that, I can clearly see your Common Blue cat now 😊, it's almost the same colour as the background which is why I missed it....That's my excuse and I'm sticking to it!

I don't know what your Geomatrid cat eating the Sallow is but the hairy one with the punky look is a Vapourer moth, your Shieldbug nymph looks like a Bronze Shieldbug *Troilus luridus* (they are rather partial the feeding on caterpillars so keep an eye out for one of them sneaking in with one of your charges!) I use this website for identifying any True Bugs I find, it's very comprehensive but easy to use: <http://www.britishbugs.org.uk/gallery.html>

Your spider is actually a Harvestman called *Dicranopalpus ramosus*. That way of resting with all its legs sticking out sideways is diagnostic I believe.

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 01-Sep-15 05:00 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

To that end I went on a little foraging trip recently with Andy Brown (who sometimes posts and was kind enough to let me borrow a moth trap) and this was the result - if I have got any ID's incorrect please feel free to shout:

Don't know [Green Caterpillar]

This is a Herald larva, and boy do they wriggle.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Sep-15 08:22 PM GMT

Well I wouldn't go so far as 'huge' Mike 😊 but I can see how the background colours concealed it. The next lot may well present a similar problem as they are EXACTLY the same colour as their leaves!

Thank you for the ID's Buggy and also that website. It looks incredibly useful and may save me from asking for many basic ID's.

Thank you too Martin - if I had looked up your Christmas Carol moths I would have known that. I did look up Shark but I didn't find it a very inspiring moth (or cat) and I didn't go further. I shall email early next week.

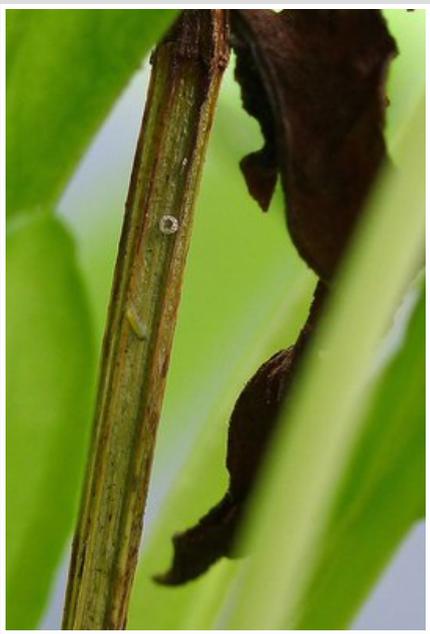
I was in two minds whether to post this lot given my failure last year but a couple of folk have encouraged me. My worry is that I don't know what I did wrong last year. I lost 2 fairly large SC cats and from photos that I sent Pete he suspected that they had become 'diseased'. I don't know how, what caused it, what I should/shouldn't have done differently so I was wary to embark on this again. However, I was pleased to be able to save a couple of Small Copper eggs from the trampling by the cows. I knew that if they hatched I would have some difficulty finding enough suitable food until they pupated/overwintered. As a result of a suggestion from Mike 😊 I sought out a local wholesaler of herbs and purchased enough Sorrel to feed an army of cats 😊 In fact, this led to a different set of problems 😊 Well Paul, I don't think these are as good as your Holly Blue larva but here goes - apart from a couple at the end they were all taken indoors because of the torrential rain.

I noticed one egg had hatched and the other larva was trying to eat its way out so I grabbed the camera and tried to get some shots:





Just as I thought it was about to emerge it would withdraw back inside the safety and protection of the shell. At last it decided to make a bid for freedom:







Now the problem I referred to earlier, the problem with the Sorrel – I had provided so much of it for the little cats that once they disappeared into it I couldn't find them again for 4 days 😬😬 Note the typical feeding damage which helped me to detect their whereabouts:



This next shot is when they were 5 days old. I think it is even harder to spot them now than when they had just emerged as they are a lot more mobile and exactly the same colour as their food plant – which I suppose shouldn't be all that surprising. I am having to rely more and more on the feeding damage to guide me now in this jungle of Sorrel:



These are the latest shots – another birthday 🥳 1 week old! I am sure that these will over-winter as larva given the weather conditions (if they survive!) I know William had some amazing success with them last year so if you have any hints or tips William to get them thru the winter I would be very grateful.



I believe this one has just shed his skin – missed it! 😞



Final post coming shortly.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 02-Sep-15 01:41 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Small Copper larvae Pauline 😊 glad you found some Sorrel for them 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 03-Sep-15 01:03 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, if I went looking for Cats I don't think I'd find them unless they were Huge and your shots are always good much better than mine when it comes to some thing so small Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Sep-15 01:28 AM GMT

Thank you Mike and Goldie – your comments have been a great source of encouragement.

I like to look back over the season – to review what I have learned, what I should do differently next time, and make comparisons with previous seasons.

When I look back at this season I think the thing that I shall remember about it most was the wind – 2012 was the season of the rain when I got soaked almost every day and my camera almost lived under my t-shirt, but 2015 is the year I struggled most to get photos because of the wind; struggled, in fact, many days just to keep the subject in the frame. It was therefore no great surprise (but still disappointing) when I looked back at my photos to find a great many of them blurred and out of focus. I find it is far easier to be objective, less emotive, about my photos when some time has elapsed since they were taken and I am a little bit removed from the whole exciting and enjoyable experience of finding, watching and photographing these insects. It is clear to me that my photography skills need to be further enhanced and refined. I need to expand my technical knowledge and find ways to deal with external factors (such as the weather). I still need to react quicker to get the shots I want but on this point I believe I am hampered a little by my camera.

The second negative factor for me in 2015 has been the very few sightings I have had of Purple Emperors . I would have thought that the leg work I put in across a number of sites would have led to more success, and in comparison to previous years I certainly would have expected to have seen more. I can only conclude that numbers this year must be down on previous years but I am sure there will be some expert opinion expressed on this issue at some point.

The highlight of the season for me has to be seeing those magnificent Monarch butterflies at Brighton – it is something I shall always remember and great to have shared the experience with other enthusiasts. I appreciate that there is some concern regarding their provenance – but there was a sighting of one coming in from the sea. Apart from my trip to Brighton I have stayed quite local this season and have not gone out of my way to chase after various species. Nevertheless, I still managed to see and photograph 47 species.

My interest in rearing has grown, mostly because of my fascination regarding the various transitions. It was therefore a pleasure to rear earlier in the season my DGF, WA, SWF, Comma and Small Tort. I find the process educational and exciting and there is such a sense of satisfaction when a successful outcome is achieved. More lately I am rearing Common Blue, Small Copper and 100 Large Whites (although I didn't realise there were that many when I put them in a cage to save my rabbit food which they were decimating). I now find Bright-line Brown Eye moth larvae are decimating my tomatoes! at least I think that's what they are. One of the larva which is now clearing up the remains of the Blackcurrent – what little there was left after the 11 Commas (sorry Andy):



On the subject of moths I have recently become totally hooked and I am now in the process of purchasing the 'on loan' moth trap. I never expected that my interest would grow in that direction. From being impressed by the larger moths and their larva, such as the Emperor moth and the Puss moth (both of which I have also reared) I have now also been known to photograph the odd micro moth.

My interest in the immature stages has continued to grow and I believe this interest has its roots in the Hairstreaks that I reared last year. I have spent a little time monitoring DoB eggs and their larva in the wild and was fortunate enough to find a Ringlet larva and Small Skipper larva whilst doing this. I have watched a number of species egg-laying in the wild including SSS, Small Copper, Common Blue, Silver-studded Blue, SWF, Small Blue and many more.

For now, for me, the season has drawn to a close but I would like to think I have increased my knowledge and improved my skills. If neither of those things are true then at least I have had a smashing time, had some great experiences with some great people in some fantastic places. I really can't ask for more than that. I shall leave with a few reminders of my season:



Duke of Burgundy



Comma



Kareoke Fritillary



Queen of Spades



Dark Green Fritillary



Forest Anemone Fritillary



Painted Lady



White Admiral



Small Copper



Empress Moth



Pebbly Forewing



Curly Anemone Moth



White and Dull Tortoiseshell



Eyespot Rust moth larvae



Intricate Moth



Yellow Owl moth



Dull Eye larvae



Elephant Rust moth



Stem-crawling Fritillary larvae



Duke of Burgundy larvae



Ringlet larvae



Orange Tip pupa



White Admiral larvae



Small Forest Anemone pupa



Small Blue larvae



Doronicus larvae



Small Skipper larvae



I shall miss this website and contact with others over the winter but it is time to turn my attention to other priorities, not least house and garden maintenance, including animal accommodation. I shall leave you with a couple of shots of Heidi enjoying freshly picked plums and an envious April. See

you soon guys.



Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Sep-15 05:43 AM GMT

Excellent review of your year, Pauline. I DO hope you won't be completely absent from this forum over the winter months.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-15 07:06 AM GMT

I hope you won't be absent either Pauline, plus I hope you'll be able to make it to the Social 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 07-Sep-15 03:20 PM GMT

Pauline,

A great selection of pictures that sum up your year wonderfully and demonstrating your improving skills with the camera and field work. At least with the moth trap you can keep going all year round.

Cheers

Andy

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 07-Sep-15 09:30 PM GMT

Oh wow 😊 What a splendid 'end of term' report. Exquisite pictures – almost every one an individual work of art.

Thank you for taking the time to present these so beautifully and for sharing them all.

I'm holding off a little longer before writing up my own summary – perhaps a Clouded Yellow will yet put in an appearance! I do hope that you might be able to get away for the social – it would be nice to meet you again.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 08-Sep-15 03:20 AM GMT

happy hibernating if we don't see or hear from you until spring 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-15 04:20 AM GMT

A great summary Pauline and accompanied by some lovely images 😊 Its too early yet for me to start summing up my own season, I am hoping there is a bit more yet to come.

I hope your winter activities go well and already looking forward to seeing you post next year.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 08-Sep-15 06:27 AM GMT

Thank you for all the fascinating and beautifully presented stuff you have given us this summer, Pauline – please drop in occasionally with a little update or two! Something interesting is bound to happen... 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 08-Sep-15 03:21 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

You've made the most of this good, but not exceptional year for Butterflies, and prompted me to post many mrgreens on your diary.

Looking forward to a guided tour of Noar Hill next summer.

Very best wishes,

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-15 09:18 PM GMT

Pauline, sorry to see you go, I looked forward to hearing about your animals etc.

I'm not has dedicated to the beginning of Butterflies like you Pauline but it's always interesting to see what you've been up to 😊 I just take photos of anything that happens to be there at the time, talking about photos I don't think you've too much to learn about photography, your photos are always superb. I'm the one with lots to learn yet 😊 I'm more into the fun of it with not too much up between the ear's to get too technical about it 😊 Your end of season summary was brilliant with great photos .

Anyway Pauline, please post in if your not too busy at times Goldie 😊 PS I'll miss you . 😊