

dilettante

by dilettante, 19-Apr-15 02:38 AM GMT

18th April 2015

It felt like the butterfly year started properly today, with a visit to Fleam Dyke, Cambs. I had a few target species for the day and ticked them all off eventually!

There were a lot of Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones around. Apart from a few unidentified whites I didn't see much else on the outward journey along the Anglo-Saxon dyke, but at the point where we were going to turn round I poked about in hedges and turned up a single Holly Blue – first target species – which didn't hang around for photos, and a couple of male Orange Tips – target species #2. Shortly afterwards on the way back I found bush housing a colony of Green Hairstreaks – target #3. I'm not sure how I missed them on the way out as they were quite active. Some of these did pose for a photos:



© dilettante



© dilettante

There was also a couple of Red Admirals



© dilettante

On the way back, just before I got to the car, I spotted the last of my target species – a Speckled Wood flitting through the trees.

Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-15 06:01 AM GMT

Fantastic Greenstreak dilettante 🍷 I hope the pact that I made with The Green One last year is still holding 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: dilettante

by David M, 19-Apr-15 06:14 AM GMT

Excellent images, dilettante. Can we expect more from you this year (t'would be most welcome)?

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 19-Apr-15 05:08 PM GMT

Thanks chaps. Hairstreaks are infuriating to photograph I find as they constantly rotate when feeding, and always seem to be angled the wrong way or out of reach when resting!

Re: dilettante

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-15 10:36 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Hair Streaks 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 04-May-15 07:15 AM GMT

It was nice to see Holly Blue, Orange Tip and Brimstone in the garden simultaneously today. Also funny to watch a White of some sort chasing after a bit of white blossom blowing in the wind.

The bluebells are looking good at Gamlingay Wood, with some of these Early Purple orchids amongst them:



© dilettante

dilettante

by dilettante, 17-May-15 02:45 AM GMT

Saturday 16th May 2015

Took a trip to Newmarket to look for Dingies on the Devil's Dyke – it was quite windy, so I wasn't sure I'd have any luck. There were quite a few Brimstones and Orange Tips near the bottom of the dyke, but my first nice surprise was a fresh Brown Argus. The sides of the dyke are very steep, so it's quite a challenge watching your footing and trying to keep an eye on small brown butterflies while holding on to a camera. But I soon found my first Dingy Skipper also, one of several sharing the bank with a few more Brown Arguses.



© dilettante

Brown Argus male



© dilettante

Dingy Skipper female

Re: dilettante

by kevlng, 17-May-15 03:21 AM GMT

Love yours shots from Devil's Dyke. That Brown Argus is beautiful.

dilettante

by dilettante, 31-May-15 11:00 PM GMT

Saturday 30th May 2015

After a freezing cold night's camping near Ivinghoe, we made the short journey to Dunstable Downs parking at the NT visitor centre. The day was brightening up, but it was still pretty cold with a stiff wind, so I wasn't hopeful of butterflies, but I'd come with my family for a walk so we set out along to top of the Down. Shortly after rounding a corner to a more sheltered spot, I saw a lovely bright Common Blue, which raised my hopes of other butterflies being around.



Common Blue male

So keeping my eyes peeled, I soon saw something I hadn't expected for this site – a little colony of Small Blues. All were past their best, but I haven't seen SBs for a few years, so that was a nice surprise. This one had a lucky escape:



© dilettante

Small Blue and spider

A little further on, a patch of low vegetation and flowers produced a Grizzled Skipper and several Dingies



© dilettante

Dingy Skipper

From there it was down the hill and along the Icknield Way at the bottom of the down. A grassy patch turned up another unanticipated sighting – a Small Heath which rested on the path in their usual way



© dilettante

Small Heath

One of several Brimstones seen throughout the day:



© dilettante

Brimstone male

Towards the end of the walk I abandoned my long-suffering family to go looking for Dukes. There are some gullied paths on the down with sheltered sunny banks full of cowslips and other flowers, so I was expecting some good duke activity. There were quite a few Dingy Skipper, and a Grizzled or two



© dilettante

Grizzled Skipper

"Take me to your leader!" - lots of Common Twayblade with its alien-like flowers



© dilettante

Common Twayblade

Eventually I found one sluggish but fairly good-condition Duke of Burgundy who didn't want to come out to be photographed in the open.



© dilettante

Duke of Burgundy

After that it was back to the camper van for lunch, then I went back to the duke site to try again, the weather a little warmer now but still pretty windy and cool. I came across this little chap



© dilettante

Green Hairstreak
and this rather fine Dingy



© dilettante

Dingy Skipper

Eventually I turned up a few more Dukes, but none looking in great shape



© dilettante

Duke of Burgundy



© dilettante

Duke of Burgundy

Considering I hadn't expected to see anything that day, it was pretty good result in the end, and a nice walk with the family and some kite flying made for an excellent day in a beautiful part of the world. It turned very wet and windy in the night and the following day, so we were lucky – unlike the rather miserable cyclists doing the Chiltern 100 ride whom we saw as we made our way home on Sunday morning.

Re: dilettante

by Willow, 31-May-15 11:37 PM GMT

Some nice images to go with your interesting reports dilettante, I shall visit your PD again 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

dilettante

by dilettante, 13-Jun-15 01:11 AM GMT

Thursday 12th June 2015

An after-work visit to Magog Down just outside Cambridge in the gorgeous sunshine. The Down is looking great:



Butterflies were few and far between however. Several Common Blues and Small Heaths, and a Brimstone, but not much else until I got to the top of the hill. There's a small cleared area in the coppice at the top of the hill, and it was here that a good number of Painted Ladies (at least 6, probably more) and a couple of Red Admirals had gathered. Plenty of dogfighting before returning to their favourite basking points. Unfortunately I only had my phone camera, so no photos, but it was a great sight to enjoy.

dilettante

by dilettante, 22-Jun-15 05:33 AM GMT

Sunday 21st June 2015

A breezy and overcast but warm afternoon, so I went to Therfield Heath, near Royston, Herts. This is normally a good site for Marbled White, but it seems their emergence has not started in earnest yet. I did find one. and another later, both of which were distinctly camera shy and soon lost in the wind:



© dilettante

Instead I spent some time with some Large Skippers, which along with Meadow Browns were fairly numerous. Both were firsts-of-the-year for me:



© dilettante

Large Skipper



© dilettante

Large Skipper



© dilettante

Large Skipper

Although they're becoming more familiar, it's still nice to see Red Kites in this part of the world:



© dilettante

Red Kites

Also a good number of Bee Orchids, which I've never seen at this site before. The hillside is often grazed by sheep, but this year appears less so and consequently more flowery. The orchids were much smaller than othe Bee Orchids I've seen.

I was hoping for Dark Green Fritillaries, but no sign of them. I did add Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral to the list.

After that I decided to see if there were better numbers of Marbled Whites at Gamlingay, normally a stronghold, but I didn't see any there. A few Common Blues and Meadow Browns, and in the main wood, a few Speckled Wood:



© dilettante

Speckled Wood

I checked the main ride for Silver-Washed Fritillaries, but still too early for them here I think. Won't be long though I'm sure.

dilettante

by dilettante, 05-Jul-15 12:47 AM GMT

4th July 2015

My wife is never very keen on the nettles growing in the garden. I always say "but the butterflies like them!", partly as an excuse to avoid gardening. In truth though I'd never seen any evidence to support my assertion until this morning, when I saw a Small Tortoiseshell laying eggs at the back of the garden.



© dilettante

Hopefully they'll develop over the coming days and weeks.

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 13-Jul-15 12:05 AM GMT

Saturday 11th July 2015

Another trip to Gamlingay Woods, Cambs, and its neighbouring Sugley Wood. First spot on arrival was a nice fresh Comma



© dilettante

Comma

This was one of many we'd see today – often in twos and threes spiralling around.

We started in Sugley Wood (which is currently ex-arable grassland being managed to allow the neighbouring wood to expand into it). Plenty of bright Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, Small and Large Skippers, a few Marbled Whites, and Large and Small Whites. I was struck by the pale colouring of this female Large Skipper, but I guess she's just a bit worn:

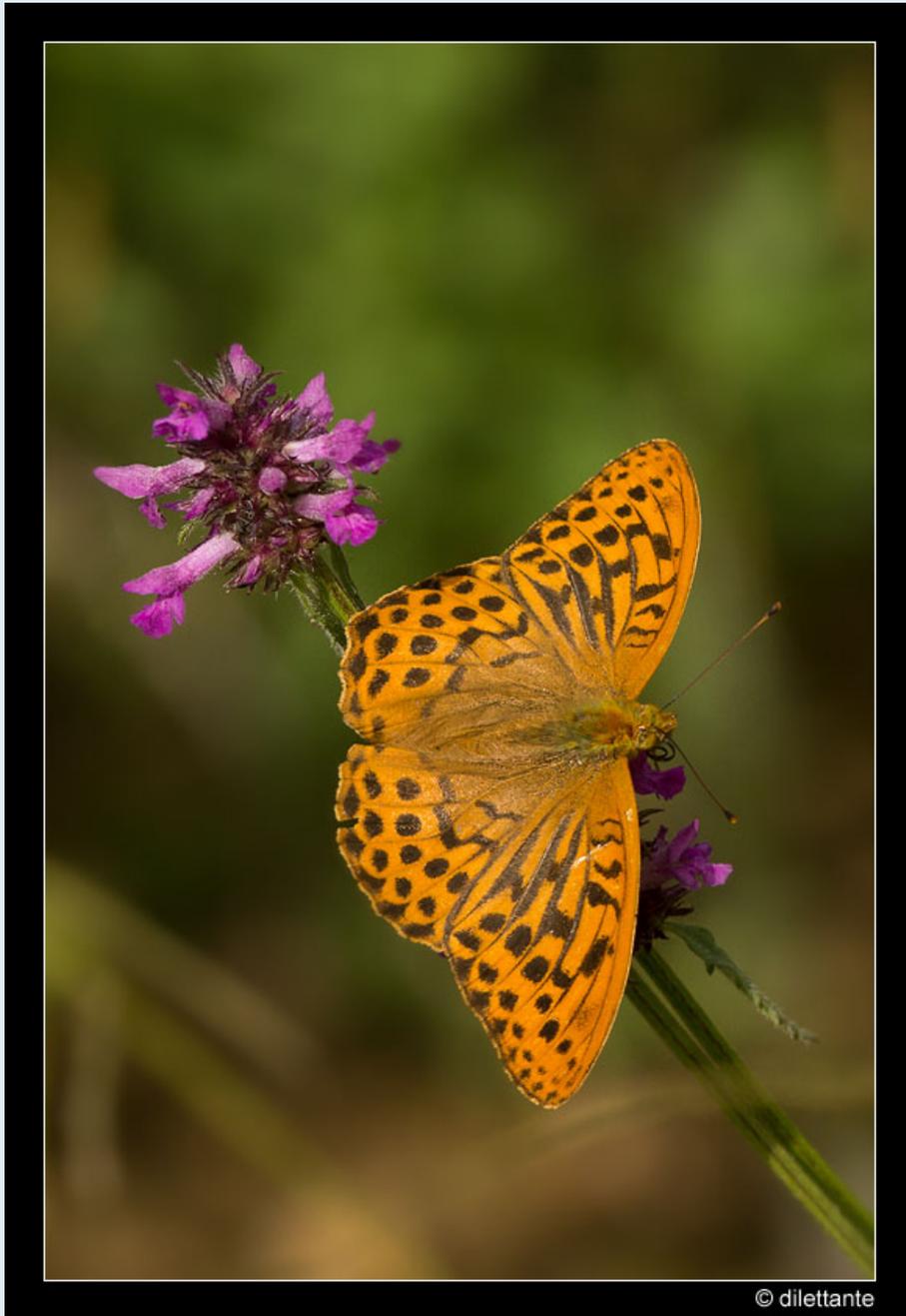


© dilettante

Large Skipper female

On the edge of the wood we got glimpses of the main attraction – Silver-Washed Fritillaries – but they stayed at the back of the largest bramble bushes

out of camera range. However, back in the main wood there were plenty to be seen and they were more obliging. These were the best of the photos I managed:



© dilettante

Silver-Washed Fritillary



© dilettante

Silver-Washed Fritillary



© dilettante

Silver-Washed Fritillary

And for good measure, a Large White, because I rarely bother photographing them.



© dilettante

Large White

dilettante

by dilettante, 21-Jul-15 10:32 PM GMT

Saturday 18th July 2015

On a visit to my parents' home in Hampshire, we took a trip to Noar Hill. Apart from a few Marbled Whites and of course Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Ringlets, there wasn't much of interest butterfly-wise. But the orchids were amazing – thousands of Pyramidals, and some (rather less visually spectacular) Musk Orchids.

I figured it was worth having a look for Brown Hairstreaks, but not surprisingly I didn't see any. It's not a strong site at the best of times as far as I know (I've never seen a Brown Hairstreak 😞), and with it being very early in the season and recent scrub clearance, it was a long shot at best.

Sunday 19th July 2015

I was expecting grey weather, but the rain passed through early, to be replaced with hot sunny weather and deep blue skies. I figured a combination of warm weather and damp ground would make a trip to Straits Enclosure worth a punt. We walked along the main path, with its recently cleared verges, enjoying the Silver-Washed and Commas in good numbers, and the odd White Admiral (which didn't settle for photos). At the end of the path, we disturbed an unseen Purple Emperor which proceeded to buzz us a few times and fly off back down the path. I caught a glimpse of it in the distance so we headed back, and once again disturbed it unseen on the ground. This time it circled round and came back, and settled on the ground for an extended viewing. We probably spent at least twenty minutes with it (but I still didn't get a double-purple wing shot!). This was around 10:30–11:00am.



© dilettante



© dilettante

A great experience!

Re: dilettante

by David M, 22-Jul-15 02:41 AM GMT

Great images, Dilettante, and it's nice to see that Emperor's occasionally **do** come to ground later in the flight season!

Re: dilettante

by dilettante, 26-Jul-15 02:02 AM GMT

Saturday 25th July 2015

A walk in Hatfield Forest, an ancient hunting forest with open grassy areas and ancient oak woods, right next to Stansted Airport. It was quite cool, grey and windy when we arrived, and I wasn't expecting much butterfly activity. But it warmed up, the sun made an appearance and there were good numbers of the usual browns (Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet), skippers Small and Large, and whites Small, Large, and Green-veined, plus several Commas.



© dilettante

Small White (I think)

Although there are some tall oaks, many of them are low like this:



Hatfield Forest oak

and it was as we passed under this tree that I spotted a Purple Hairstreak just above head height. It soon became clear there was a colony on this tree as we saw several flitting about. I've never managed a PH photograph before, in UK at least, and these were still mostly tantalisingly just out of reach, and being blown about in the strong breezes. With a bit of help from my glamorous assistants (wife and daughter) holding branches down, I managed a couple of shots. While far from perfect, I was happy to get anything of this elusive species.



© dilettante

Purple Hairstreak (female)



© dilettante

Purple Hairstreak (female)

Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-15 04:44 AM GMT

I love the final shot Dilettante, the electric blue just peaking out 😊 cracking stuff 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: dilettante

by David M, 27-Jul-15 05:25 AM GMT

Is it me is do females pose wings open far more often than males?

Either way, any Purple Hairstreak close up of the upperwings is a job satisfyingly well done.

dilettante

by dilettante, 03-Aug-15 01:51 AM GMT

Sunday 2nd August 2015

I wasn't planning on a butterfly day today (and didn't have my favourite lens for butterfly photos) but it turned out to be a good one. We went to Royston Heath, Herts to visit a kite festival. There were Chalkhill Blues flying around, so I went looking for more afterwards with a walk around the heath. They were there in the thousands I would estimate, spread throughout the grassy heath. In places there were almost clouds of them, particularly where there were multiple males buzzing round a female. This couple was constantly being pestered by other males



© dilettante

On the way up the heath I'd seen a Dark Green Fritillary, clearly worn and hence pale, but it didn't settle. More of a surprise was a Silver-Washed on the edge of the wood – I haven't seen them here before.



© dilettante

Silver-Washed Fritillary

Also nice to see a fresh Peacock – hopefully their numbers will be building in the next few days.



© dilettante

Peacock

In all, we came up with 15 species:

- Chalkhill Blue
- Holly Blue
- Brown Argus
- Silver-Washed Fritillary

- Dark Green Fritillary
- Comma
- Peacock
- Small Tortoiseshell
- Small White
- Large White
- Brimstone
- Gatekeeper
- Meadow Brown
- Ringlet
- Small Skipper

There were probably Green-veined Whites too. Not a bad haul for an impromptu walk.

dilettante

by dilettante, 30-Aug-15 02:08 AM GMT

29th August 2015

It feels like the end of the season, but there were still a few butterflies around at Royston Heath, Herts this afternoon in fairly warm weather.

I saw one or two Chalk-hill Blues, including this rather sorry-looking female:



© dilettante

Chalk-hill Blue female

Several whites including this Large White:



© dilettante

Large White

This female Common Blue looked in pretty good shape:



© dilettante

Common Blue female

And this was one of just two Meadow Browns seen. It was pretty restless, but seemed in good nick:



© dilettante

Meadow Brown

Re: dilettante

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-15 06:35 AM GMT

I know what you mean about it feeling like the end of the season 😊 Great shots though can cheer you through 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

dilettante

by dilettante, 21-Sep-15 03:17 AM GMT

19th September 2015

While out blackberry picking with my daughter (the crumble's in the oven as I write!), she spotted this Speckled Wood looking in rude health:



© dilettante

and nearby this Comma enjoying the autumn fruit:



© dilettante

20th September 2015

This Red Admiral was enjoying the sun and the ivy flowers in my garden this morning. Here she's warming herself up on my apple tree:



© dilettante

Later we went to RSPB headquarters at Sandy where I saw a few more Commas:



© dilettante

and amazingly my first Small Copper of the year!



© dilettante

Also this rather impressive Wasp Spider, with attendant paparazzi.



© dilettante