

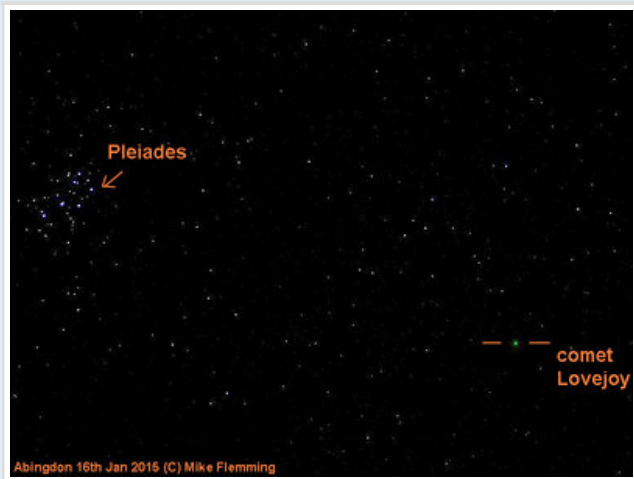
Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 17-Jan-15 05:58 AM GMT

Far too cold for butterflies but clearing skies have led to a bright frosty night with beautiful things to see above!

Guy **Padfield** drew my attention to Comet Lovejoy (C/2014 Q2), which is just about at its peak now and very easy to find, since it is close to the star cluster known as the 'Pleiades' (or, sometimes, the 'Jewel Box', which is an apt description when seen through binoculars) Tonight it was just over a binocular field width to the right of the 'Pleiades' and can be seen as a small fuzzy blob. A photograph is needed to bring out the green colour, which is apparently due to gases such as cyanogen evaporating as the comet approaches the Sun. It is moving Northward from night to night and is expected to start fading from now on.

My first photo was taken with my 90mm macro lens. It might seem strange but this lens is pretty good for night sky photography, as it has a good aperture (f/2.8) and includes a reasonable amount of sky in the frame, so that aiming is not too critical.



Abingdon, Oxon - 16th January 2015 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1.5 secs@f/2.8 ISO 400

Once I had located the comet, I tried using my 300mm f/4 lens, although it is quite tricky to get this aligned onto the target. There is too much light-pollution locally for the 'tail' of the comet to show - it should be streaming out to the left of the picture from the head of the comet.



Abingdon, Oxon - 16th January 2015 Nikon D300s with Nikon 300mm f/4 AFS lens - 1.5 secs@f/4 ISO 1000

Apart from the comet, the great Winter constellation of Orion is now at its best in the early to mid evening. My photo shows the Sword nebula, as seen with my 300mm lens. The red colour from the starlight shining through these vast hydrogen clouds shows up well.



Abingdon 16th January 2015 (C) Mike Fleming

Abingdon, Oxon - 16th January 2015 Nikon D300s with Nikon 300mm f/4 AFS lens - 1.5 secs@f/4 ISO 1000

Mike

Edited to correct exposure details with macro lens

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 17-Jan-15 05:11 PM GMT

Amazing pictures, Mike. With a tenth of the exposure time that I use and obviously much more light-collecting ability you have produced really good images, rather than mere proofs of concept (which mine were). If the sky clears again I might try with a shorter exposure and higher ISO.

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 17-Jan-15 06:00 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Mike, I watched a program the other night about the Milky Way and they said the best time to see it was about the 24th of January, I'll look forward to that but I don't think I'll be taking photo's 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

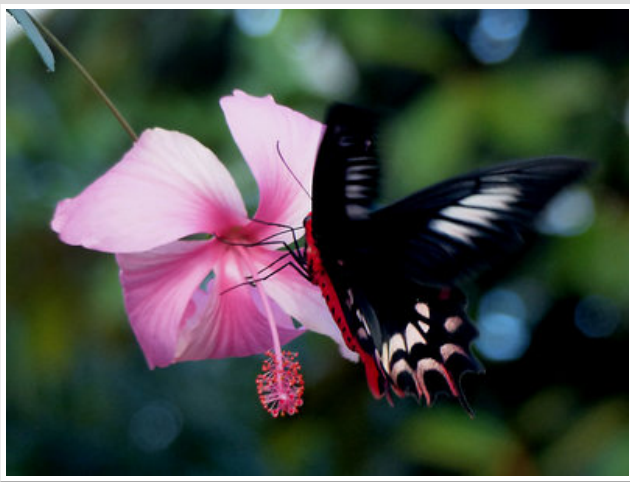
by MikeOxon, 30-Jan-15 09:04 PM GMT

Yesterday (29th January) I visited the **RHS garden at Wisley** for my annual Winter 'fix' of tropical warmth and butterflies, at their '**Butterflies in the Glasshouse**' event (17 January - 8 March).

Along the path leading to the glasshouse, there were several butterfly and caterpillar sculptures - yours for only £385.



It's the fifth time that I've visited this event; my first time was in 2010, when the butterflies were not looking very happy, but later visits have improved year on year. I was fortunate that it was a sunny morning yesterday, and the butterflies were all very active and enjoying the many flowers in bloom.



RHS Wisley - 29th January 2015 Lumix FZ200 (fl=37mm) - 1/160s@f/2.8 ISO200

There was a good diversity of species to be seen and they are re-stocked daily. I doubt whether I saw everything that was there and some species, such as this 'Indian Leafwing' (*Kallima paralekta*) were rather difficult to spot - until they showed their vivid blue and orange upper surfaces.



RHS Wisley - 29th January 2015 Lumix FZ200 (fl=56mm) - 1/200s@f/2.8 ISO200

The following 'composite' (*click image to enlarge*) shows some of the species I photographed. For identification, I recommend **Guy Padfield's** pdf guide at <http://www.guypadfield.com/butterflyhouse.html>:



In previous years, I took my Nikon DSLR camera but found it rather unwieldy and I was reluctant to change lenses in the very humid atmosphere. This time, I 'travelled light', with the Lumix FZ200 that I bought last year. It proved very versatile and made it easy to get shots over the shoulders of the other visitors and to take both 'macro' and 'tele' shots, where the f/2.8 aperture at full zoom proved extremely useful. Most of the time, I set 'aperture priority' at f/2.8 and only reduced the aperture when the light was very good. On the whole, I was very pleased with the results, though a few attempts at 'in flight' shots were unsuccessful.

In the display area, there were a few species that I did not recognise 😊



Mike

Edited to re-name 'Indian Leafwing' after further reading

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 30-Jan-15 11:41 PM GMT

Lovely Photo's Mike, I bet the warmth of the place felt really good, it would to me after the weather we've just had Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-Jan-15 01:33 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie. Yes, it is very nice to go to this tropical retreat at this time of year! It was sunny while we were there but very cold outside, with some snow lying on the Berkshire Downs as we drove past.

It is important to wear outer layers that can be easily shed, once inside the glasshouse – I wear a warm jacket that I can tie around my waist and then wander around in shirt-sleeves 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 31-Jan-15 03:46 AM GMT

I'm glad you found my guide useful, Mike. It obviously doesn't have everything but should serve as a pointer at least. I'm glad too that the butterflies have been looking happier at Wisley these last years.

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 31-Jan-15 06:29 AM GMT

Lovely shots especially the Swallowtail/Cattleheart (?) 😊 Only a month or so and you'll be snapping wild species Mike 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-Jan-15 07:21 AM GMT

Thank you for commenting, Guy and Wurzel. I find that tropical species are difficult to identify because there are many similar species and females are often very different from males. I've changed my ID of the leafwing after reading more information from Stratford Butterflies(who supply the butterflies shown at Wisley)

One thing that surprised me was that several people seemed rather afraid of the butterflies coming near them, even though they had chosen to visit the event!

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 31-Jan-15 05:47 PM GMT

Male *Kallima inachus* and *paralekta* don't seem to be reliably separable, Mike. But *paralekta* is sexually dimorphic, as I'm sure you've gleaned, and the female is readily identified. I have yet to see a female *paralekta* at the Papiliorama so the males I've tentatively identified as this, based on subtle wing characters, are a bit dodgy. Both species are found in butterfly houses generally. In real life, of course, *paralekta* is endemic to Java and Sumatra, where I don't believe *inachus* flies, so the similarity doesn't pose a problem! I've only recently learnt how to tell *Papilio demoleus* and *demodocus* apart – another tropical house pair that would be unlikely to meet in real life.

It's difficult to imagine being scared of a butterfly!

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-Jan-15 10:04 PM GMT

Thanks again, Guy. I decided to go with the species that is claimed to be present at Wisley. The lists provided at the event have not been particularly accurate in previous years and your comment about both species being common in butterfly houses may be significant.

A web search indicated that 'Lepidopterophobia' is not uncommon! I know one person who won't even look at my photos of them.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by bugboy, 01-Feb-15 01:19 AM GMT

Nice pics Mike, I made a similar comment about people being scared of butterflies in my PD when I posted pics from London Zoos butterfly house. I find it's normally the Caligo's and Morpho's that puts the fear of God in people 😊. I suspect a lot of these people don't realise they will be in with the butterflies before they enter, assuming they will be behind glass or something.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 03-Feb-15 08:43 PM GMT

Thanks for the comment, **bugboy**. I like to keep my hand in with the photos, so the RHS display provides good winter practice. The 'bridge' camera was very easy to use in the glasshouse and gave some good results.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 07-Feb-15 11:17 PM GMT

Hi! Mike, just completed looking at your photos from the post you sent me and they are fantastic, the birds I was extremely taken with, some of the action shots were super, the one that landed in front of you for instance when you taking shots of wild flowers was great, hope I can get a shot like that some time, what luck that was. Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

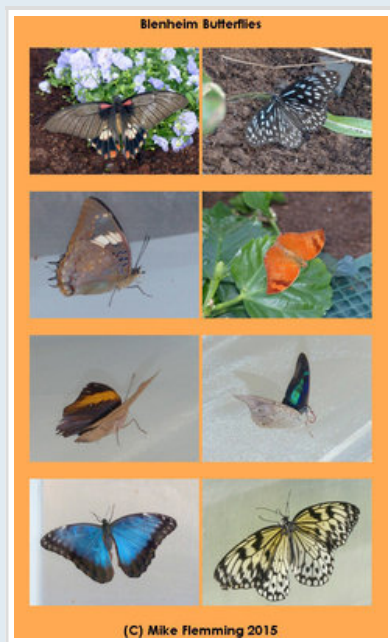
by MikeOxon, 18-Feb-15 10:22 PM GMT

I visited Blenheim Palace gardens yesterday (17th Feb.), partly in the hope of seeing Hawfinches (no luck). On arrival, it was clear that it was a popular choice for an outing on a beautiful Spring-like day. There were several clumps of Snowdrops in flower and I have never before noticed these flowers receiving so much attention from bees – buzzing around in numbers.



BlenheimPalace – 17th February 2015 Lumix FZ200 – 1/400s@f/4 ISO160

I also looked into the butterfly house, located in the 'Pleasure garden'. There were species that I do not recall seeing at Wisley recently but, whereas the butterflies there were flying around and behaving 'normally', these were all looking very listless and I saw none feeding, although a dead one was sat in a bowl of rather tired-looking fruit. Most were clinging motionless to the netting over the windows, while a few were just sitting on the ground. Only one Tree Nymph was flying around. in addition.most individuals had extensive wing damage. So, overall, not a very good impression.



Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 19-Feb-15 06:12 AM GMT

That's very sad, Mike. I wonder if they were skimping on energy bills by keeping the temperature below optimal for these tropical species. If it's of any interest, for comparison, I have posted a video of inside the Papiliorama on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=945Aw8YGFhs> - taken yesterday). There, the butterflies are always very active. I visited the Blenheim butterfly house a couple of times when I was a student and as I remember it was rather smaller and more linear.

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 07-Mar-15 07:42 AM GMT

Today (6th March), I took my first walk on **Otmoor** in this year.

Otmoor is a strange place – a reedy wetland in the middle of rural Oxfordshire, surrounded by a fringe of ancient villages, including Islip, birthplace of Edward the Confessor, one of the last Anglo-Saxon kings of England. The central part of the moor is now an RSPB reserve and I set out on my walk with birds in mind rather than butterflies.



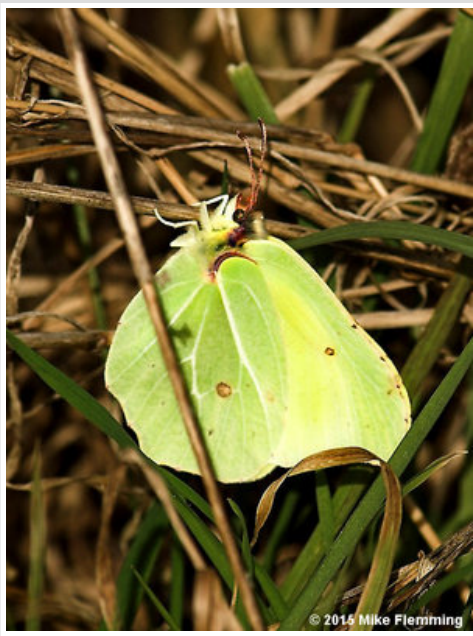
Herons over Otmoor – 6th March 2015

One of my first sightings was of a pair of Brown Hares, motionless in the grass not far from the bridleway. I was surprised that they did not flee at first sight of a human being!



Brown Hares – Otmoor – 6th March 2015

And then, even more of a surprise, when a **Brimstone** butterfly appeared fluttering rather weakly along the bridleway. It soon paused to bask in the sun, though I could see that it was continuously trembling, presumably trying to maintain an adequate body temperature in the chilly March air. I only had time for a few photos and then accidentally cast my shadow over the butterfly, which prompted him to seek shelter deep amongst the long grasses that border the path.



Otmoor, Oxon - 6th March 2015 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens + 1.4x TC - 1/500s@f/11 ISO400

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 07-Mar-15 11:43 PM GMT

Hi! Mike nice shot of the Brimstone, that was a nice surprise for you 😊

It's unusual to see two hares, normally there's only one and it's usually chasing across the fields or Sand Dunes, (that's where I've seen them) Southport Dunes. 😊

I've not got my first shot of a Butterfly yet but I did see one today Small T so things are looking up Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 08-Mar-15 12:44 AM GMT

Thank you for commenting, Goldie. thigs are certainly looking up, with longer days giving the sun a chance to warm things up.

Following my walk on Otmoor yesterday, I decided to look at my local reserve: **Dry Sandford Pit** today (7th March), especially as there was 'wall to wall' sunshine, unlike the forecast, which was for high cloud.

Dry Sandford Pit is quite a small BBOWT reserve that has, at its core, the rare habitat of a calcareous fen. This is host to many unusual plants, especially in Summer, when large numbers of the beautiful Marsh Helleborine are in flower. The fen is surrounded by old quarry workings and the sandstone faces are peppered with holes that are homes to many species of solitary wasps and bees.



Dry Sandford Pit - The Open Fen 7th March 2015

Although it was very sunny, there was a cool wind blowing from the South and this deterred any butterflies from basking on the quarry face. There were

several **Brimstones** flying around but they preferred to pause on the South-facing slope at the North end of the reserve, which is sheltered by a belt of trees.



Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 7th March 2015 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/750s@f/9.5 ISO400

In that area, there is an open patch of Primroses but these have only just started to come into flower and, though I waited patiently in the area for some time, no butterflies came to nectar.



Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 7th March 2015 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/1000s@f/8 ISO400

There were also several clumps of Snowdrops and the first few Daffodils were in flower.

As well as the Brimstones, I also saw one **Red Admiral** and one **Small Tortoiseshell** but neither of these was prepared to pause for a photo.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-15 06:08 AM GMT

I am very envious of your tally reaching three already Mike 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 20-Mar-15 09:34 PM GMT

The weather locally was excellent for viewing the eclipse this morning. There was a thin blanket of cloud, acting as a filter, so that it was easy to take photographs. I made an animation of the progress of the eclipse between 9am and 9:45.



Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 20-Mar-15 10:04 PM GMT

Hi! Mike, after seeing your photo I'm a bit ashamed to put my posting up, love the animation Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 21-Mar-15 01:04 AM GMT

Nothing wrong with your photos, Goldie – the important thing is to have watched it!

The animation was made by using software called 'Ulead GIF Animator 2.0', which I downloaded from the web. I think it shows well how the moon is moving from right to left across the face of the sun.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 21-Mar-15 01:52 AM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

The weather locally was excellent for viewing the eclipse this morning. There was a thin blanket of cloud, acting as a filter, so that it was easy to take photographs. I made an animation of the progress of the eclipse between 9am and 9:45.

[attachment=0:40j83ao4]Eclipse_Anim2.gif[/attachment:40j83ao4]
Mike

Thanks Mike – nice GIF! The light here went from murky, to even more murky! But sufficient enough for the birds to know the difference – and for us to experience the humbling experience that we live on a mere dot 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 21-Mar-15 02:01 AM GMT

That's an excellent sequence, Mike.

I had hoped that the moon passing the sun would have been visible to the naked eye but the sun remained too bright. Just shows what a difference having good equipment/skills can make.

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 21-Mar-15 03:01 AM GMT

Absolutely brilliant Mike,

Today was my 6th partial solar eclipse but have ever seen a total. Plenty of total lunar eclipses though, Next one September.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 21-Mar-15 04:35 AM GMT

Thank you for the nice comments – I'm pleased you enjoyed the animation 😊

After the eclipse, the clouds swiftly evaporated and a warm Spring day ensued. So, in the afternoon, I paid a visit to my favourite local reserve. The BBOWT reserve at Dry Sandford Pit is very small but contains a remarkable variety of habitats:



The left-hand photo shows the open fen, with the honey-coloured sandstone cliffs from the old quarry, beyond. This is a sun-trap much favoured by butterflies and other insects, while the fen contains several species of orchids and other rare plants. In the past, I have seen Crayfish here but, unfortunately, not for several years now.

The other photo shows the Sandford Brook that flows through the reserve – a haunt of Kingfishers and I once surprised a Heron here. I'm not sure which of us was the more startled, when he suddenly rose into the air – all legs and neck!

Today, I thought I was going to draw a complete blank, butterfly-wise, but, on my third circuit, I spotted a Comma basking rather inconspicuously on the sandstone cliff. As soon as I spotted it, another appeared and they promptly engaged in aerial combat. The first one soon settled again, in a similar place, but was very flighty, being disturbed by every passing insect. Eventually, he rested long enough for my first photo:



Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon – 20th March 2015 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens + 1.4X TC – 1/1000s@f/6.7 ISO800

I always find that I need to 'get my eye in' at the beginning of each season and also get used to taking close-up photos again. This time, I had forgotten to bring my trusty monopod and was forced into larger apertures than were desirable from a depth-of-field point of view. Later, I decided to remove the 1.4X teleconverter, which improved my success rate as, even in good sunlight, it's hard to keep a 420mm lens steady. I found the other combatant, basking lower down on a flatter area of ground. He showed more 'battle scars' than the first example:



Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 20th March 2015 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens - 1/2000s@f/6.7 ISO800

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 21-Mar-15 04:41 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

Great sequence of the eclipse and nice photos of the Commas 😊

I know what you mean about 'getting your eye in' at the start of the season. For me it is with following of the movement of the butterflies in flight and marking where they settle so that I can sneak up on them.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 21-Mar-15 06:47 AM GMT

Thanks Neil. I'm hoping that this on/off Spring will settle down soon and then everything will start happening at once! Best to be prepared.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Hulme, 21-Mar-15 07:22 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

WOW! That eclipse sequence is terrific. Down here in Sunny (cloudy) Worthing it got noticeably colder, but then again it often does! You were clearly in the right place at the right time, and clearly made the most of the opportunity.

BWs, Neil

Re: MikeOxon

by John W, 21-Mar-15 08:52 AM GMT

Hi Mike, fabulous eclipse photos, and nice Commas too.

I saw the eclipse too though cloud in Brighton but the photo I got on my phone left a lot to be desired!

Cheers

John

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 22-Mar-15 12:30 AM GMT

Great Comma's Mike, got my first shots of Butterflies this afternoon in my back Garden, I'm so pleased 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 22-Mar-15 06:28 AM GMT

Great Commas and eclipse shots Mike 🙌👍 I managed to get some good views using a cardboard tube and also used a pair of welding masks (👁️)

literally) but now compared to your shots.

Have a goodun

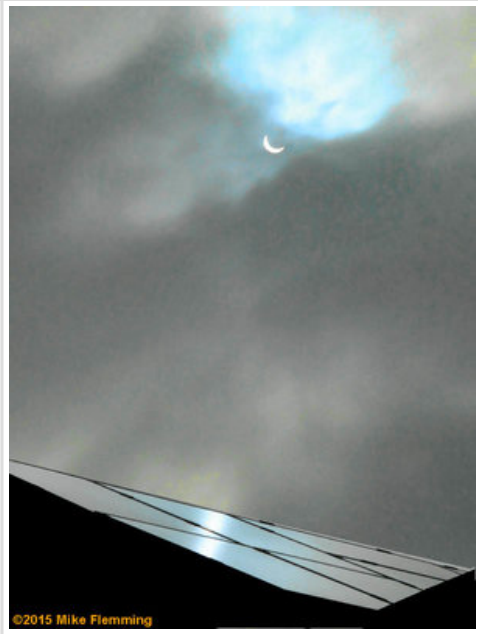
Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 22-Mar-15 08:37 AM GMT

After such a warm day on Friday, it was back to cold and dull on Saturday – Spring on hold again!

Definitely no butterflies, so here's another eclipse picture – I rather like the juxtaposition between the sun and the solar panels on a neighbour's roof!



Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 22-Mar-15 05:53 PM GMT

Great photo Mike, It's a lovely day here again hope it is where you are so I'm off again looking for the other early BF, now I've seen some I can't wait to see more (it's an addiction) 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 22-Mar-15 09:48 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie, though I feel that the photo only makes sense if you know what's happening!

I was trying to make it look 'different' from a moonlight shot! The camera was really struggling and set an exposure of 1/2,000s@f/8 (ISO160), to cope with the brightness of the sun, even through cloud. I had to lighten the rest of the photo rather a lot and also added a lot of saturation to get the blue-ness back in the sky.

The sun is back again today but the air is still cold. I saw the first **Brimstone** to visit my garden, but it wasn't stopping for a photo.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Apr-15 06:47 AM GMT

Well over a year has passed since I started this diary on 10th March 2014 but the new season only just seems to have started in earnest, after a somewhat shaky start.

2014 proved an interesting year for me, as I attempted new photographic techniques, such as photographing sparring Speckled Woods, and I also learned to use a Lumix FZ200 camera as a light-weight alternative to my DSLR.

I did say, in my very first entry, that posting yet more photos of well-known butterflies has a declining appeal, so I shall try to avoid simply producing a repeat of last year's diary! Hopefully, I shall have some new experiences during the coming year and look forward to documenting those. At the moment, though, I seem to be going through that re-learning phase that always happens when bright, contrasty sunshine re-appears. I really should have read my own advice from last year – "The bright sun on the rock made exposure difficult, so I was using spot metering for many of my shots, I find that most species are very easily disturbed at this time of year, so I used a telephoto lens rather than attempting to get close enough for macro shots."

Through not taking my own advice, my first crop of photos from Dry Sandford Pit has been disappointing, with very over-exposed shots of a strongly

marked **Green-veined White** and rather routine shots of **Brimstone**, **Comma** and **Peacock** that are virtually indistinguishable from those I took last year. I find it interesting to observe, however, how each new season's butterflies seem to find exactly the same locations along the sandstone cliffs, on which to bask in the Spring sunshine.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 15-Apr-15 07:07 PM GMT

At last! Some really warm, sunny days. Yesterday afternoon (14th April) I took a walk onto the Downs above the village of Aston Upthorpe.

The 'walk in' is along a deeply-rutted track through woodland and, with almost every step, another **Peacock** rose up from basking on the dry earth of the path. There was still water in the hollows and I spotted this **Comma**, collecting moisture in one of these damp patches. I like the subtle colouring of the underside, especially those 'mouldy' spots which must be very off-putting to any bird looking for prey.



Aston Upthorpe Down, Oxon - 14th April 2015 Nikon D300s with 300mm lens - 1/500s@f/11 ISO400

Further up, the path opens out onto Downland and here, later in the year is a great spot for many butterfly species. I had hope the first Skippers might be out but not quite yet. A rather wonderful 'secret valley' opens to one side, known locally as the 'Juniper Valley'. The area has notable botanical interest and is also a sun-trap favoured by butterflies and by migrant birds, on passage.



The 'Juniper Valley', Oxon - 14th April 2015 Lumix FZ200 (f=14mm) - 1/1600s@f/5 ISO160

There were large patches of Bugle in flower and it was not long before I was able to photograph a **Brimstone** enjoying the nectar. **Brimstones** and **Peacocks** were, by far, the most abundant butterflies, with a few **Commas** mixed in, and I saw just one **Small Tortoiseshell**.



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Aston Upthorpe Down, Oxon - 14th April 2015 Nikon D300s with 300mm lens - 1/250s@f/8 ISO400

The song of Chiffchaffs had accompanied me through the woods and, now, above the open ground, Skylarks were singing, invisibly, from high above. A search with binoculars found one individual and I even managed a distant photo of a bird in full song. I also became aware of some dark coloured birds skulking amongst the the Juniper trees. At last, after some careful stalking, I managed to get a close view of a Ring Ouzel, pausing on its passage to the Northern moors. Out of about 20 shots, this was the only good one as they were keeping in the deep shade, making for difficult exposures against the bright light beyond.



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Aston Upthorpe Down, Oxon - 14th April 2015 Nikon D300s with 300mm lens + 1.4X TC - 1/250s@f/5.6 ISO400

I hope that this very enjoyable walk will prove to be the first of many in the coming season.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-15 06:30 AM GMT

Great stuff Mike. I haven't seen a Ring Ouzel for a few years now, they're great birds and that shot shows all teh diagnostic features nicely 😊🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 16-Apr-15 09:28 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel - I was very pleased to get a reasonably close sighting of these elusive birds.

Just seen the first **Holly Blue** in my garden, as well as both male and female **Brimstones** passing through.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-15 04:29 AM GMT

Hi! Mike, still to capture a Brimstone on camera, I saw them at Gaits Barrow last week but they didn't stop long enough for shots.

I've never seen a Ring Ouzel, I've never heard of them before I'm sorry to say 😞 I'll get my bird book out and read up on them now, Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 17-Apr-15 07:11 AM GMT

"Goldie M" wrote:

I've never seen a Ring Ouzel,

You live in the right part of the country for them! They are summer visitors to the fells and high moors. I often used to see them when walking in the Lake District. They are rather like hoarse-voiced Blackbirds 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-15 10:04 PM GMT

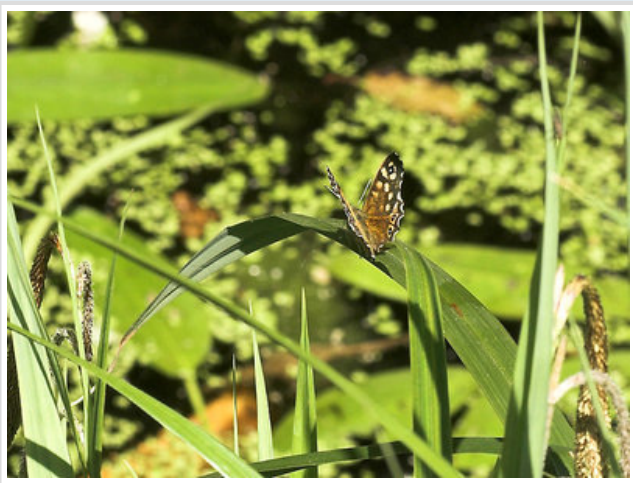
I didn't know that Mike I'll keep a look out now 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 26-Apr-15 04:45 AM GMT

I seem to have dropped behind the curve a little, this year, judging by all the species reports in the April sightings thread.

In my garden, **Brimstones** have been passing through regularly, as well as **Peacocks** and a few **Whites**. I keep seeing **Holly Blues**, when looking out through the windows, but they have a trick of disappearing whenever I go outside, so I've only managed a few 'record' shots. I was pleased to see a **Speckled Wood** that had found a good vantage point, overlooking my garden pond. It made frequent sallies after passing insects but kept returning to the same location.



garden, Abingdon - 23rd April 2015 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400

I paid a visit to **Aston Rowant NNR** on 24th April but saw very few butterflies, although I was fortunate to spot this **Green Hairstreak**, egg-laying on the slope. She was moving rapidly from one location to another and I took several shots with my 300mm lens before attempting to move closer for a macro shot. Unfortunately, I moved a little too quickly and she zoomed away out of view.



Aston Rowant NNR – 24th April 2015 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens – 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400

We now seem to be entering a spell of cooler, wetter weather, so it may be a few days before I go back to the Downs, to look for Dingy and Grizzled Skippers.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-15 05:00 AM GMT

An egg-laying Greenstreak 🍷 Times running out and I'm still knocking plaster off the walls ahhhhh!
Great shot by the way 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 26-Apr-15 05:30 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I had thought my visit was going to draw a complete blank until I saw the Green H moving over the slope. I hadn't realised what she was doing until I looked at the photos!

Can anyone identify the plant? I gather that Green H has the widest range of foodplants of any British species.

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 26-Apr-15 05:34 AM GMT

Great work, Mike! I don't think I've observed an egg-laying green hairstreak before.

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 26-Apr-15 06:20 AM GMT

Me neither. I've often seen them alight on the plant in question but I haven't seen any actively laying before.

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 26-Apr-15 10:23 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

An egg-laying Greenstreak 🍷 Times running out and I'm still knocking plaster off the walls ahhhhh!
Great shot by the way 😊

I know what you mean, Wurzel! I've been in south-east Asia this past week and next (Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia) ... and am missing home tremendously. At least some Plain Tiger larvae have dulled the pain!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by Vince Massimo, 26-Apr-15 10:53 PM GMT

Hi Mike, I think the LHP in this case is Common Rock Rose.

Vince

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 27-Apr-15 12:21 AM GMT

Thanks, Vince – that would have been my guess but, while familiar enough with the flowers, I wasn't so sure of the leaves and my books weren't very helpful.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 27-Apr-15 02:35 AM GMT

How on earth did I miss that smashing shot of the Ring Ouzel Mike?! I must pay more attention. I have yet to see one although I have tried. That's a great shot of the egg laying GH too. I have a few shots of them laying on various plants but not as clear as yours– something to aspire to 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 27-Apr-15 03:09 AM GMT

Thank you Pauline. It's very easy to miss things, once they've scrolled off the front page list on this site. I shall let you off from writing 'I must pay more attention' 100 times 😊

The 300mm lens on my Nikon is excellent for capturing these events, without having to approach too closely. As I mentioned in my original post, I failed with the macro lens because I inadvertently disturbed her – something I dislike doing.

At first, I felt it was 'cheating' to use a long tele lens but I've noticed that many of the shots taken on bridge cameras are taken towards the long end of the zoom. There's a lot to be said for standing back a bit, to avoid disturbing the butterfly, though it's not always possible, especially when vegetation gets in the way.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 01-May-15 12:58 AM GMT

Almost exactly a year ago, I wrote in this diary that I had bought a Lumix FZ200 camera as a lightweight companion to my hefty Nikon DSLR. There is no doubt that the FZ-series are excellent cameras, as evidenced by the many photos made using them that appear on this site, but the laws of physics set limits on what the small sensor can achieve. On the other hand, the electronic viewfinder demonstrated to me how a digital camera can dispense with the bulky and heavy mechanism associated with the mirror box of a DSLR.

So, I am now starting out on a new trial, with a mirror-less camera in the shape of an Olympus OM-D E-M5. I chose this model, not just for its small size and low weight but also for its ruggedised weather-proof construction, which is important for some of my other, non-butterfly, photographic activities.

A very significant difference is that the OM-D sensor has an area of 225 sq.mm, against only 28 sq.mm for the FZ200. The Olympus sensor even outperforms that in my ageing Nikon D300s, thanks to advances in technology, according to DxOmark tests: see

<http://www.dxomark.com/Cameras/Compare/... 614#tabs-1>

I've read several excellent reviews of the Olympus, so am hoping it will live up to my expectations. I bought mine as a kit with three lenses, which altogether weigh about 1kg, against 7.1 kg for my Nikon kit. Perhaps a photo is the best way to show the dramatic difference in size between the two cameras!



After a couple of days of initial familiarisation – and this is a rather complex camera, with almost every aspect of its operation 'customisable' through menu functions – I took it, yesterday (**April 29th**) on my first trip, with a hope of seeing butterflies, to the 'Juniper Valley' that I've mentioned in earlier diary entries.

On the 'walk in' I saw my first **Orange Tip** of this year as he hurried past me along the path in relentless search for females! I was disappointed not to find any 'dingies' or 'grizzlies' in their favourite spots but my wife's sharp eyes spotted a **Green Hairstreak** for me to get some practice with the OM-D.

I used the 40-150 lens (80-300, 35mm equivalent), so that I could 'keep my distance,' and took a collection of shots as it moved from one flower head to another. One feature on the camera that I liked was the easy access to the exposure compensation function, with direct viewing of its effect in the electronic finder. This allowed me to compensate for the brilliant iridescence of the wings as they shone in the bright sunshine.



Aston Upton Down - 29th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/2000s@f/11 ISO800



Aston Upton Down - 29th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/2500s@f/11 ISO800

There were also several Pyralid moths flying, so I took this shot of *Pyrausta nigrata* with the Olympus



Aston Upton Down - 29th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/640s@f/9 ISO800

While walking back to the car, I saw a rather battered **Green-veined White**. By then, I was using my Nikon, as I had been photographing some birds in

flight, but I show this shot to demonstrate the advantages of spot metering, when photographing white butterflies. The indicated exposure in 'matrix' mode was 1/1000s @ f/8, whereas the spot meter, trained on the butterfly, indicated 1/3000 @ f/9.5, which has kept the detail in the wing veins.



Aston Upton Down - 29th May 2015 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/3000s@f/9.5 ISO800

I have a lot to learn about the OM-D but my first impressions are that it can do an excellent job at a fraction of the weight and size of the Nikon.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Mikhail, 01-May-15 03:40 AM GMT

Delighted to see that you have joined the mirrorless brigade. These little Olympus cameras are real gems. I look forward to seeing more of your results. I cannot recommend too highly the Olympus 60mm Macro (35mm equivalent 120 mm). I would have preferred a **slightly** longer focal length, but I have had good results with it. Check out my Flickr photostream for insect and reptile photos taken from May 2013 onwards with this lens on an EM-5 and later an EM-1, which is even nicer.

M.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 01-May-15 03:50 AM GMT

Thank you Mikhail. Since taking those shots, I've been trying my 90mm Tamron macro on the OM-D and first results, on flowers in the garden, look excellent. It's great being able to attach lenses via a Micro4/3 adapter and, for macro, I use manual focus anyway. I suspect that the 5-axis stabilisation helps as well.

The E-M1 does look attractive for the phase-detect AF but reports seem to suggest that this facility needs 4/3 rather than Micro4/3 lenses. Have you done bird-in-flight photos?

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Mikhail, 01-May-15 05:42 AM GMT

No, I haven't tried birds in flight. I always used to manually focus in close-up photography, but now at nearly 79 and with early stage cataracts, I find it preferable to auto focus. I find the contrast detect auto focus in these cameras to be very fast and unfailingly accurate, and with the help of the excellent image stabilisation, my success rate has increased over what I could achieve with a conventional DSLR.

M.

Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-15 05:15 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

I followed your experiences with the FZ200 with interest as I was going to replace my battered FZ150 with one last year. In the end I carried on with the 150 for the rest of the season and have just recently bought the FZ200.

"MikeOxon" wrote:

...At first, I felt it was 'cheating' to use a long tele lens but I've noticed that many of the shots taken on bridge cameras are taken towards the long end of the zoom. There's a lot to be said for standing back a bit, to avoid disturbing the butterfly, though it's not always possible, especially when vegetation gets in the way...

For a number of reasons most of my butterflying is done during the afternoon and I take most of my photos using the long end of the zoom range for the simple reason that getting closer can be difficult when the butterflies are usually at their most active at this time. It reduces the frustration levels somewhat 😊

Looking forward to reading your experience with your new Olympus.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 02-May-15 07:58 PM GMT

Thank you Neil. I saw your comment in Pauline's diary about the differences in using the FZ200. I hope that you get to grips with it soon. I feel sure that you will appreciate the 'faster' lens but do take care over depth of field, when taking advantage of the wide aperture at the tele end!

The Olympus represents a much bigger change but I have been getting some excellent results on flowers in the garden, when using it with my Tamron 90mm macro. As in the case of my Nikon, I can see that the images will benefit from 'RAW' processing, but the Olympus software seems rather slow, when processing RAW images I used to use the brilliant Pixmantec Rawshooter software, which is fast and very intuitive, when working with my Nikon images, but it cannot 'read' those from the Olympus. I shall give the new 'Lightroom 6' a trial – yet another learning curve 😊



Nuneham Courtenay Arboretum – 28th April 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 12-50 lens – 1/125s@f/7.1 ISO800

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 03-May-15 08:19 PM GMT

Hi! Mike, I found that although I use exposure compensation my pictures are still too Bright, so I've been interested in what you said to Pauline, I'll a just even lower and see what results I get when the weather is really sunny 😊

I also find that I'm missing sharpness in my photos, I'd be pleased for some advice on that. 😊

I wondered also if I'm in the right metre setting, I keep it usually in evaluative metre, but there's also Partial metering and centre weighted on my camera which is a Canon 1100 , I saw the difference your metering did with the Green Hair Streak and it made me wonder if I was in the right setting , I also noticed my photos of the Green Veined White didn't show detail too much, it seems I've a lot to learn Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 04-May-15 02:06 AM GMT

I'll PM you with my thoughts, Goldie.

Re: MikeOxon

by jonhd, 04-May-15 07:53 AM GMT

Hi Mike (I guess this topic – discussion of MFT camera merits/de-merits – should really go in the Photography forum...).

I've been contemplating MFT, too. Currently have ageing (like me!) Nikon D90 + loads of lenses, and FZ200.

– DSLR + suitable lens is now, for me, too heavy to lug around (although the D5500 is pretty light...).

– FZ200 – PQ not up to snuff with heavy cropping.

Quite taken with the Sony a6000 (E-mount, I think), but also interested in Olympus (esp. the 5-axis in-camera stabilisation). One question – you've recently purchased, but (guessing) didn't go for the latest Mk. II version of the OM-D E-M5. Any regrets (going for the Mk. I)? Am assuming you went for something like the Travel kit bundle – http://www.amazon.co.uk/Olympus-Kit-M-Z..._00BGO0GUI/ – as being fantastic "bang for the bucks"...

PM, if you prefer (and have the time).

Cheers, Jon

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 04-May-15 07:21 PM GMT

Hi Jon,

Sounds like you are thinking along exactly the same lines as myself! Yes, i did buy the 'travel kit' but, in addition, my wife has a PEN with 17mm 'pancake', so I have a 'back-up' body when travelling. It's too early for me to make sensible comments on performance in the field but the weather-proofing of the E-M5 is very important to me. Many of the new features of the Mk II seem to be aimed at video users or are gimmicks but I do like the idea of the fully rotate-able screen. The 'package deal' price was attractive enough to sway me 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by jonhd, 05-May-15 04:21 AM GMT

Thanks Mike - helpful, as ever!

A fully-articulated screen (as on the FZ200, too!) would be a big boon for me (I use it when using close-up lenses / Raynox DCR-150)... But, MkII E-M5 (plus lenses) out of the question financially, for now. Was also a trifle put-off by this review [http://cameraergonomics.blogspot.com.au ... eview.html](http://cameraergonomics.blogspot.com.au...eview.html) (wrt to the complex menus).

Think I'll keep looking / reading reviews / prevaricating 😊

Jon

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-May-15 07:26 AM GMT

I decided to visit my local Duke site, today (**4th May**), to see if any were around but, despite it being quite sunny, there was a cold breeze and the area seemed to be a 'butterfly-free zone'.

Eventually, I found a single **Peacock**, cowering deep in the grass, and a **Burnet Companion** moth, which gave me a chance to try out my Tamron 90mm macro lens with the Olympus OM-D. I appreciated the feature whereby this camera can provide a magnified image in the viewfinder, when using manual-focus lenses.



Lambourn Downs - 4th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/160s@f9.5 ISO400

After this rather disappointing start, I received a text message from my son that he was heading for **Lough Down** (near Streatley), so I met him there. Again, there were very few butterflies to be seen on the slope but, up near the car-park, were several **Orange Tips**, **Brimstones**, and **Holly Blues**. I was especially pleased to see the Orange Tips, as I had not taken any photos of them so far this year.



Lough Down - 4th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/500s@f/8 ISO400



Lough Down - 4th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/800s@f/10 ISO400

We then spotted a mating pair, being harassed by a second male, and I managed a collection of shots of the encounter.



Lough Down - 4th May 2015

Eventually the intruder left the pair in peace and I took a few more shots, all with the 40-150 zoom lens at its longest setting.



Lough Down - 4th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/1000s@f/11 ISO400

The lens is a good performer, even though it is considered a 'budget' lens by Olympus, and I was able to make a crop of this head-on close-up. It looks slightly strange, as the antennae are different colours and slightly offset. Unfortunately, I didn't study this butterfly more closely at the time but now wonder if it might have been a bilateral gynandromorph.



Lough Down - 4th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/1000s@f/11 ISO400

Even more unfortunately, I next learned, the hard way, that battery life on the Olympus is much less than on my Nikon. I had just fitted my Tamron macro lens for more close-ups, when I got the dreaded 'Battery Low' message, so closing play for the day! Next task is to buy some spare batteries 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by trevor, 05-May-15 03:29 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

I would imagine the images of the Orange Tip pair, with intruder, more than made up for the lack of Dukes. Superb stuff !

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: MikeOxon

by jonhd, 05-May-15 04:45 PM GMT

Yes, smashing OT pics, Mike. How much of a crop is that pair at "full zoom"? Worth getting a suitable +1 dioptre close-up lens (assuming the 40-150 is

front-threaded)?

Jon

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-May-15 07:42 PM GMT

Thank you for your comments, Trevor and Jon. I am very pleased with the performance of the OM-D, so far, especially since I am still at the 'fingers and thumbs' stage. I shall have to watch out for the battery life, though, which was very frustrating when I had such amenable subjects 😊

The mating pair is essentially a vertical crop from a horizontal original. The 40-150 has a 58mm filter thread and, since Olympus charge a ridiculous £60 for their MCON-01 close-up lens, which is only a single element, I shall try my current Hoya +1 dioptre lens some time.

The link about camera ergonomics was very interesting also, Jon. A different 'take' on reviewing cameras. I enjoyed a nostalgic read of his comments on the Pentax Spotmatic – surely one of the all-time greats, which I have seen referred to as the "SLR Leica".

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

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

Great photos Mike, I did manage the Duke yesterday after the cold wind dropped the temp went high and I tried the lower exposure to get some shots of him, some seemed okay but the Duke kept going into the shadier places once he stated to fly. Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 12-May-15 07:45 AM GMT

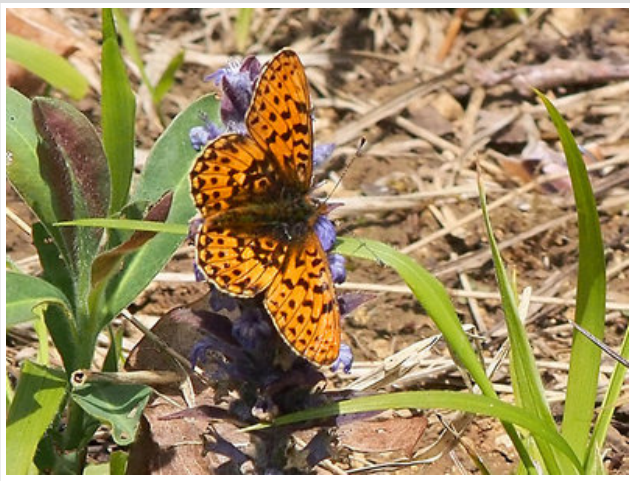
Today's forecast (11th May) was a little mis-leading – in my region it was supposed to be very warm and sunny, though possibly with more cloud increasing from the West. So, I decided to set out for the Cirencester area, to look for Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. It was indeed bright and sunny when I set out, at about 9:30, but cloud thickened during my journey and, when I reached Cirencester, it was *raining* 😞

I had a quick look at Hailey Wood, to check that the habitat was looking in good condition, and then, noticing that the sky looked clearer to the west, headed on towards **Rodborough Common**. By the time I got there, the sun was shining and I had a very pleasant walk photographing Early Purple Orchids, before heading for one of the **Duke of Burgundy** locations. At first, I thought I was out of luck but then I spotted a lone individual, basking on a leaf in the increasingly warm sun:



Rodborough Common – 11th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

With the weather now much more promising, I headed back to Hailey Wood and soon saw my first Pearl-bordered Fritillary. I have noticed that several dark specimens have been seen this year and this one was no exception:



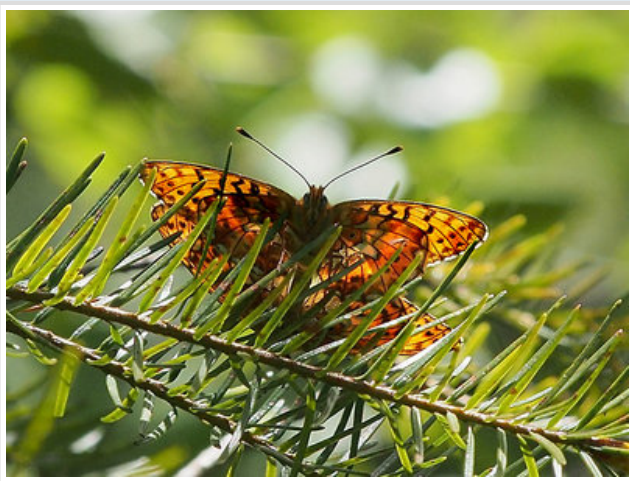
Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 11th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

I nearly trod an another, which was on the ground, but, fortunately, it only moved a short distance, before settling again and giving me the opportunity to take some underwing views:



Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 11th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/640s@f/8 ISO400

A little later, I spotted a mating pair in a very inaccessible location in (I think) a Spruce tree. I managed an against-the-light shot, through the intervening branches:



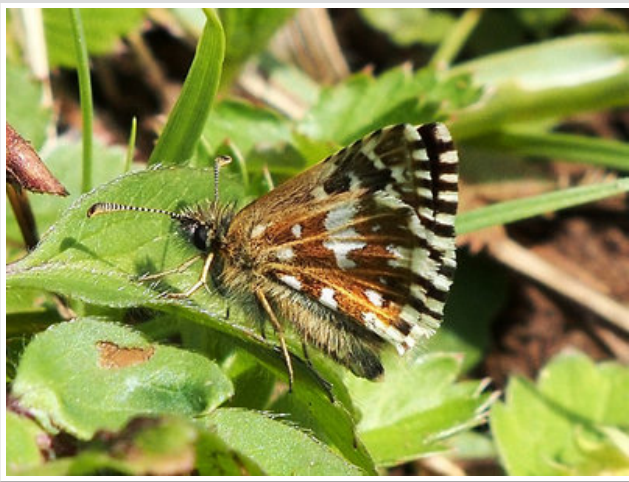
Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 11th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

Last but not least, I managed to capture the view I really wanted, of a PBF nectaring on a Bluebell:



Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 11th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/640s@f/9 ISO400

Apart from the PBFs, I saw a few **Green-veined Whites**, a single **Peacock**, and a couple of **Grizzled Skippers**:



Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 11th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

Finally, not a butterfly, but a moth that sometimes confuses observers because of its brilliant colour and day-flying habit - a Cinnabar moth:



Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 11th May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

In the end, it was a very satisfying day, despite an un-promising start, and I was very pleased with the light weight of my new Olympus outfit, which also gave a good performance.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 12-May-15 02:12 PM GMT

Very unusual shot of the mating Pearls Mike - the 'stained glass' pose is sure to be admired by Wurzel - and that Cinnabar moth shot is stunning, very vibrant. You clearly made a good choice with your new camera.

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 12-May-15 10:06 PM GMT

Nearly 40 years ago I lived in Winchcombe in the Cotswolds.

In those long-gone days. PB Frit was not difficult to find in the Cotswolds. Localities included Guiting Wood with an especially good colony near Hilcot (about 5 kms to the south of Andoversford) at SO997153. I didn't explore as much as I should have done – I would find a colony and stick with that. The OS map shows extensive woodland in that Hilcot area which is within 10 kms of the known colony in Hailey Wood. I wouldn't mind betting that PBF still lurks in some undiscovered clearing. Withington and Chedworth Woods are obvious places to look (along the dismantled rail perhaps?).

The entire area certainly looks promising on Google Earth.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by Willow, 12-May-15 11:54 PM GMT

You should be well pleased with your new Olympus Mike, those shots look very promising and once your over the 'fingers and thumbs' stage there'll be no holding you, looking forward to seeing lots more 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-May-15 12:24 AM GMT

Many thanks for the various comments. I suspect, Jack, that there are indeed many butterfly colonies away from the well-known sites. As you suggest, Google Earth can be invaluable for spotting likely places – it led me directly to the right area of Hailey Wood, for example. PBF is especially difficult, because of its need for constant renewal of its habitat, but coppicing is being practised again on several estates.

So far, I am very pleased with the Olympus and very much appreciate its light weight. The electronic viewfinder seems more 'natural' than that on the FZ200; it's easy to forget that it's not a DSLR! The way it can be set to magnify the view automatically, when using the manual focus ring on a lens, is also a great aid to achieving accurate focus. The 'budget' 40–150mm lens is amazingly versatile and I find myself using it for most of the time. I'm sure that the 12–50 macro will also prove useful but it's difficult to make a close approach to these very flighty Spring species. Even the mating pair of PBFs moved off rapidly, when someone else accidentally brushed a branch of the tree – I was glad I had got my initial 'grab shot'.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 13-May-15 01:53 AM GMT

Your Olympus OM-D E-M5 is certainly giving splendid results and a most worthwhile depth of field in the macro shots. I could be tempted myself. If..... the house sale here on Mull goes well – and there are promising signs – then there should be some cash left over when we downsize. Maybe, just maybe, there might be a few quid spare. Priority will be a convertable Mini Stella craves (I can't say I wouldn't enjoy that in the less wet climate of the Moray Firth coast). I might replace (or have in addition to) my 3+ year old Lumix. *It would be either a new camera or a camera equipped drone (which it has to be said, i would be terrified of losing so more likely get a static camera).*

So your views please Mike on your Olympus, especially the tilting screen and the dynamic range it gives. Which lens option for mainly landscape? PM or email if you prefer.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 13-May-15 04:19 AM GMT

Glad you finally got your Duke Mike, great photos with your new Camera and you've got one up on me with the Pearls, wasted journey yesterday looking for them, what's most annoying is some ones been to Warton Craig today and seen some 😞 Don't you just hate that when it happens, Ah! well I'll press on regardless till the next nice day Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-May-15 05:13 AM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. I'm always pleased to see PBF because it is a species that used to be found on a lot more sites, locally. I hope that, now we have a better understanding of its habitat needs, we shall see it again in Oxon before too long 😊

I'll PM you about the camera, Jack.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

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

On Saturday (23rd May) my son joined me for a joint visit to the **Strawberry Banks** reserve of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. My first visit was last year (see viewtopic.php?f=29&t=7459&start=60#p84647) when I was delighted to find several Lesser Butterfly Orchids (*Platanthera bifolia*), as well as good numbers of Marsh Fritillaries. This return visit proved equally successful – excellent weather with plentiful orchids and butterflies.

I decided to trust to using the Olympus OM-D and left my heavy Nikon kit behind. Last year, I had found it quite a struggle, climbing over the stiles at the end of the day, but no problems with the lightweight kit! Although I still have a few minor irritations with handling the Olympus, it is proving to be an excellent performer. I took several shots with my trusty old Tamron 90mm macro but the results showed that the Olympus 12-50 Macro is more than a match, within its magnification range, especially in terms of image contrast.

Quite a few visitors were enjoying the spectacle of huge numbers of **Marsh Fritillaries** skimming over the slopes, along with many other species, including **Dingy Skipper**, **Green Hairstreak**, **Common Blue**, and **Peacock**. At one moment a long line of Marsh Fritillaries and Peacocks were chasing each other across the slope!



Strawberry Banks, Glos.– 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens – 1/320s@f/6.3 ISO400



Strawberry Banks, Glos.– 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens – 1/400s@f/6.3 ISO400



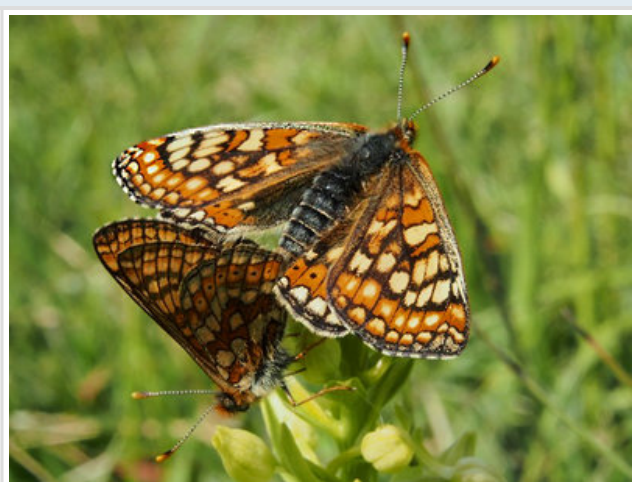
Strawberry Banks, Glos.- 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/1000s@f/10 ISO400

The Olympus 12-50mm lens proved extremely versatile. When I found a mating pair of **Marsh Fritillaries** on a **Lesser Butterfly Orchid**, I experimented for some time with various different camera settings. Apart from 'regular' macro shots, I also used the wide angle end of the zoom, to set both the butterflies and plants into the context of the site:



Strawberry Banks, Glos.- 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 12-50mm lens - 1/320s@f/7.1 ISO400

The same lens, in macro mode, captured a more detailed view of the mating pair:



Strawberry Banks, Glos.- 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 12-50mm Macro lens - 1/400s@f/10 ISO400

It seems a pity that the Marsh Fritillaries are so small, as most of their delicate patterning can only be seen in photos or through binoculars. Visually, they are quite similar to the **Small Heaths**, which were also plentiful:



Strawberry Banks, Glos.- 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/320s@f/14 ISO400

The Marshies themselves were very variable; the following example shows a dark band across the trailing edge of the hind-wing:



Strawberry Banks, Glos.- 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 12-50mm lens - 1/125s@f/7.1 ISO400

There were also large numbers of a small white moth, busily laying eggs. Are these Grass Rivulet (*Perizoma albulata*)? Visually, they appeared almost pure white. Unfortunately, my shot of ovipositing was none too sharp but the following was taken a moment later:



Strawberry Banks, Glos.- 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/250s@f/5.6 ISO400

A more spectacular moth find was this Eyed Hawk-moth (*Smerinthus ocellata*), looking exactly like a dead leaf as it roosted in the grass:



Strawberry Banks, Glos.- 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 12-50mm Macro lens - 1/320s@f/10 ISO400

A short visit to **Hailey Wood**, near Cirencester, showed that the **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** were still active. Whereas, on my previous visit, they were busily seeking mates, they were now more concerned with nectaring from the many Bugle flowers.



Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 23rd May 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO400

All in all, an excellent day's butterflying in good weather and delightful surroundings.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 25-May-15 11:57 PM GMT

Great shots Mike of the Marsh Frits, I've still to see the Pearl BF 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 26-May-15 02:11 AM GMT

Thank you, Goldie - I'm pleased you enjoyed the photos. Alas, PBF has disappeared from so many sites, although it seems to be holding on better in Scotland. On the other hand, its 'Small' cousin seems to be faring better, all up the West coast.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 26-May-15 05:49 AM GMT

Intersting Marshie aberrant Mike 😊 Pauline was right about the stained glass Pearls - love that shot and a definite in the "I wish I'd taken that" category



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 26-May-15 05:51 AM GMT

One of the most attractive Marsh Fritillary aberrations I've ever seen, Mike.

Great find.

Re: MikeOxon

by William, 26-May-15 05:53 AM GMT

Great stuff Mike, that Marsh Fritillary and Lesser Butterfly Orchid combination is wonderful – two of my favourite things in one photo!

BWs,

William

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 26-May-15 04:54 PM GMT

Many thanks for the comments and I'm pleased to share the results of a very enjoyable day's butterflying 😊

I didn't mention that my son spotted a mason bee (*Osmia bicolor*), which you can read about at <http://www.wired.com/2014/04/adorable-b...il-shells/>

We watched her for some time, collecting dried grasses to 'thatch' over her snail-shell nest. My son has posted a short video online at <https://youtu.be/E82cedVap4o>

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 01-Jun-15 11:28 PM GMT

For various reasons, I have not been able to get out into the field much recently but I have been enjoying reading other people's posts. In particular, I joined in a discussion about Small Blue aberrations, in **Pauline's** PD, not that I have any specialist knowledge in the field.

What seems remarkable to me is the constancy of the complex patterns on the wings of most butterfly species. As is so often the case, we learn a little about the mechanisms that control these patterns when things go wrong. So, spots can turn into lines, if the regulating genes fail to 'turn off' at the correct time during the growth of the wing.



Common Blue aberration Lough Down Streatley – Sept.1998

Nevertheless, it seems extraordinary to me that evolutionary selection pressures have resulted in the precisely repeated patterns on, say, the wings of the Small Tortoiseshell

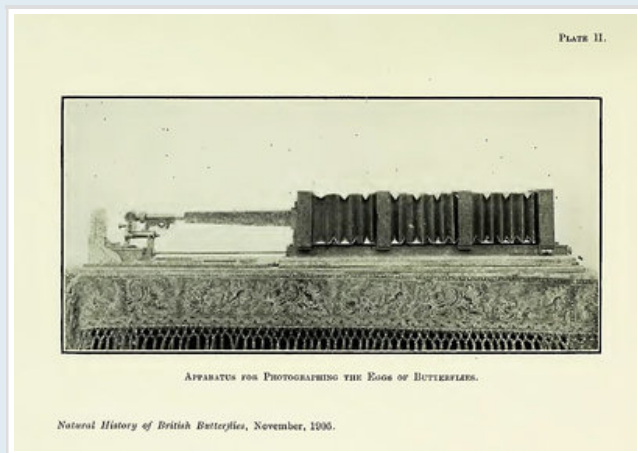
I have often noticed the word (Tutt) appearing after many named aberrations, so decided to find out a little about him. James William Tutt (1858–1911) was Headmaster of various schools in East London and a Fellow of the Entomological Society. He appears to have been a 'difficult' character, since he often 'fell out' with his fellow entomologists. Like many schoolmasters, it seems that he was better at dispensing information than in listening to the opinions of others. He had a prodigious memory and poured his knowledge into the multiple volumes of his 'Natural History of the British Lepidoptera' (along with many other books).

Along with a great many 'out-of-copyright' books, these volumes can be downloaded, in various formats, from 'The Internet Archive' <https://archive.org/>. When using this invaluable resource, I select 'advanced search' and then type in whatever information I have, in the appropriate boxes, and see what comes out!

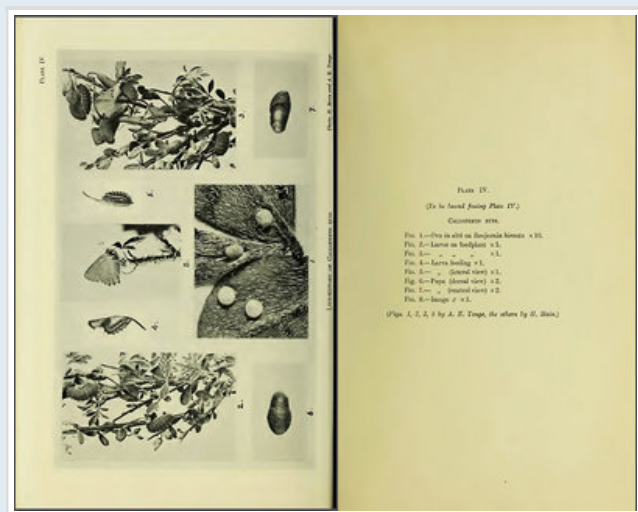
'Tutt' and 'Lepidoptera' bring up a long list of titles, which are not easy to sort out, as the filenames do not correspond to the volume numbers, but I eventually downloaded all the published volumes. Vols. 6 and 7 were never produced and vols. 8 – 10, which cover the butterflies, are sometimes

referred to as vols.1 – 3 of British Butterflies, with an additional vol.4, produced posthumously by George Wheeler from notes left by Tutt.

One aspect that appealed me, in particular, was his interest in photography. He describes in great detail how he constructed a special camera to photograph butterfly eggs. This used a microscope (without eyepiece) coupled through a series of bellows to a half-plate camera back. I was amused by his description of the difficulty of focussing the microscope "as the distance from the ground glass was too great for my arm". He then describes how he made an arrangement of pulleys and elastic cords, to act as a remote control, so that he could focus while his head was under the black cloth – clearly, a very resourceful character!



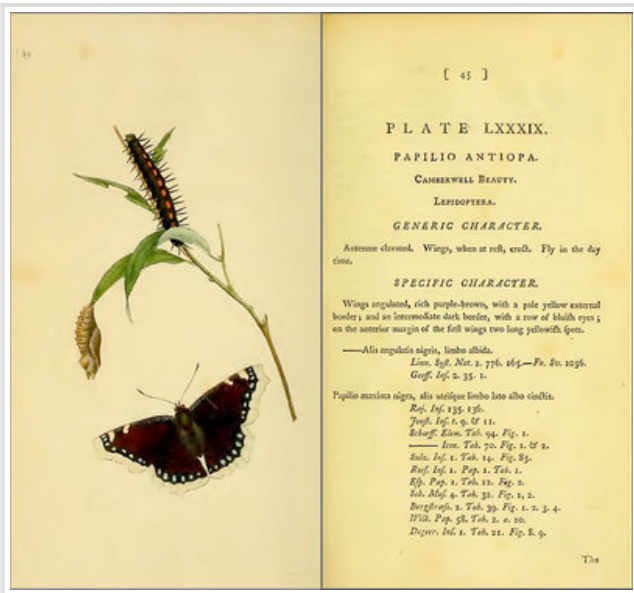
I suspect his books must have been among the first to show butterflies in their natural environment. He must have been very frustrated that colour photography was not available! As an example, the following plate of the Green Hairstreak is from 'Lepidoptera' vol.9:



Green Hairstreak Butterflies

Previously, I have used the Internet Archive to find other 'classic' works. Sadly, although Moses Harris 'Aurelian' is there, it only has the uncoloured engravings. A modern facsimile of this work, with coloured illustrations, is however available for around £15, and it is wonderful to browse through and admire the skill of the early illustrators.

Another work that I have downloaded is Edward Donovan's 'Natural History of British Insects'. The cover of the first volume states 'In Ten Volumes' but it was a work that grew in the making and there are 16 volumes in all, with beautiful illustrations, such as this Camberwell Beauty:



Camberwell Beauty

So, I have found plenty to keep me interested and almost look forward to rainy days, so that I can enjoy looking at more of these remarkable works 😊
Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 01-Jun-15 11:45 PM GMT

Hi Mike – plenty more on the references page, should you get bored 😊

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/references.php>

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 02-Jun-15 01:15 AM GMT

Hi! Mike, I hope your various reasons are not from poor health, I've had a sample of that recently 😊

Your last posting made very interesting reading Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 02-Jun-15 01:20 AM GMT

Hi Goldie – Thank you for your concern but it's OK – I'm fine but have had a number of other activities to attend to recently.

Hope your holiday in The Broads is a success – I must update my Swallowtail pics sometime, too 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 02-Jun-15 01:22 AM GMT

Thanks Pete – lots of bedtime reading, then 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 02-Jun-15 01:29 AM GMT

Mike

As is so often the case, we learn a little about the mechanisms that control these patterns when things go wrong. So, spots can turn into lines, if the regulating genes fail to 'turn off' at the correct time during the growth of the wing.

Entomologists often treasure such genetic abnormalities as being attractive yet some genetic problems in humans (eg cystic fibrosis or Huntington's) cause great distress.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by peterc, 02-Jun-15 01:52 AM GMT

Interesting stuff, Mike.

Tomorrow seems like a good day for reading unless it's fine at Headingley (cricket) 😊

ATB

Peter

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 02-Jun-15 02:46 AM GMT

Indeed, Jack. I'm also uncomfortable about the behaviour of some twitchers, who harass poor lost birds to get their 'ticks'. In the case of humans, even if we have identified the causes as genetic, there are ethical problems concerning what we do about them.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-Jun-15 07:03 AM GMT

With a really warm sunny day, today (4th June), I set out for **Lough Down**, above Streatley, Berks, confidently expecting to get photos and views of Adonis Blues. Alas, I was to be disappointed. This has been a good site for many years but the grasses have been allowed to grow much longer and the path edges, which had previously provided good egg-laying sites, were all overgrown.

On my way to the former 'Adonis' area from the car-park, I paused near a **Small Blue** site and several of these feisty butterflies were flying!



Lough Down, Streatley - 4th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens - 1/1600s @ f/11 ISO400



Lough Down, Streatley – 4th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/800s @ f/9 ISO400



Lough Down, Streatley – 4th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/800s @ f/9 ISO400

In the field, they can all look like females, since the scatter of blue scales on the males easily get 'lost' against the dark background. I particularly like the way these scales sparkle in the sun in my 'head-on' shot.

After taking these photos, I moved on to the open slope, usually well-populated with blues, but today it looked more like a butterfly-free zone. The occasional **Brimstone** flew by and then, at last, I saw a flash of brilliant blue – surely an **Adonis**? – but it disappeared as rapidly as it appeared. An extended search only revealed a few bright male **Common Blues** and some darker, blue female **Common Blues** (most females seem to be blue this year). I began to doubt my initial sighting, even though it had seemed to have that electric brilliance. Other people I met had not seen any **Adonis** either, although some of this species had been seen at the nearby 'Holies' site.

In some compensation, clear skies gave a good view of Saturn, low in the sky to the South towards midnight. The planet itself is surprisingly bright, so the following photo is a composite, made up of a short exposure of the planet itself, pasted over a longer exposure to show the moon Titan and a few neighbouring stars.



Abingdon, Oxon – 3rd June 2015 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC – 1/60s (Saturn) & 1/2s : f/5.6 ISO 1000

Since it is clear again tonight, I shall try for some more shots.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 05-Jun-15 07:06 AM GMT

That's a great astronomical image, Mike.

Titan is ridiculously bright given how much smaller it is than its parent planet.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-Jun-15 08:13 AM GMT

Thank you David. No luck tonight, as it has clouded over locally. Titan is very bright, due to its cloud cover but, as I explained in the post, I have enhanced the brightness, relative to the planet, by giving extra exposure. I always feel a buzz, seeing Saturn's rings through a 'scope – one of those remarkable sights that no-one knew about for thousands of years!

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 06-Jun-15 08:11 AM GMT

Having 'dipped' on the Adonis Blue at Lough Down yesterday, I decided to return today (**5th June**) to have a look at '**The Holies**' which is a National Trust site, a little to the South of Streatley. There is a small car park on the A329 at SU596798, from where it is a steep climb up to the earthwork known as Grim's Ditch. Here the turf is short, with plenty of Horseshoe Vetch, along with many other characteristic chalk-downland flowers.

Although it was mainly sunny, with some scattered cloud, there was a stiff cool breeze, when I first arrived, and the butterflies were keeping close to the ground. At this stage I saw my first **Painted Lady** this year (breaking a year-long drought for me), although only as a rapid fly-past. There were several **Common Blues** and a few day-flying moths, including *Pyrausta purpuralis* and some very bright Burnet Companions (*Euclidia glyphica*)



'The Holies' (NT), Streatley – 5th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/400s @ f/7.1 ISO400

As the afternoon wore on, the wind dropped and the temperature rose, and soon I saw the flash of electric blue that I had been hoping for, in the area of the earthwork. I followed several individuals and it soon became apparent that most were very worn, although the brilliant blue still shone brightly in the sunlight.

They might have been rather battered, with virtually non-existent fringes, but the males were very active in their pursuit of females and I observed plenty of courtship activity.



'The Holies' (NT), Streatley - 5th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/800s @ f/10 ISO400

I also began to realise that there was something unusual about many of the individuals - the blue was brilliant but rather pale and, when I got a close view, there was a distinct line of dark spots along the trailing edge of the wings.



'The Holies' (NT), Streatley - 5th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/640s @ f/8 ISO400

They reminded me very much of Chalkhill Blues and, after some reading on the site, I think they may be the hybrids, known as X *Polonis*. Perhaps some of the experts could comment on my photos, please.



'The Holies' (NT), Streatley - 5th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/800s @ f/10 ISO400



'The Holies' (NT), Streatley - 5th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/800s @ f/9 ISO400

Meanwhile, the females were busy egg-laying on the Horseshoe Vetch:



'The Holies' (NT), Streatley - 5th June 2015 Olympus OM-D E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/640s @ f/6.3 ISO400

So, after disappointment yesterday, I felt this had been a particularly interesting afternoon 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 06-Jun-15 02:08 PM GMT

At first glance I really thought they were Chalkhills Mike. What a great find! I shall be very interested to read what the experts have to say.

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 06-Jun-15 08:23 PM GMT

Those "Adonis Blues hybrids" - if that is what they are- are stunning. You say Mike that many were of this type. Majority or just a sizeable minority? I wonder if these breed true? Is this an isolated colony remote from others? In other words, might you have possibly been witnessing the evolution of a new species *Polyommatus flemmingi*?

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 06-Jun-15 09:52 PM GMT

Thank you, Jack. I think the name '**Polonus**' has already been 'bagged' 😊 When I wrote 'many', I meant 'many of my sightings' but, since they were all dashing around, it's hard to decide how many different individuals were present.

From what I have read, the hybrids are usually sterile, so there's little chance of an ongoing population. It is also curious that, despite Chalkhills only having a late emergence, the hybrids usually appear in the Spring brood of Adonis.

On the subject of unusual sightings, I have had a few more visits from a white Starling (probably one of last year's brood), as recorded since 2008 - see <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/WStarling.htm>

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-15 05:22 AM GMT

Interesting aberrations Mike. I'm not sure about *Polonus* as I don't too much about them – I do seem to recall seeing a similar *Adonis* a few years back and thought it was the aberrant 'scalens'?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 09-Jun-15 02:43 AM GMT

Thanks for looking in, Wurzel. I've only read a few descriptions and had hoped one of our entomologists might have a look. I've seen *Adonis* with some degree of spotting before, but never to this extent.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by William, 09-Jun-15 02:47 AM GMT

Those putative *polonus* are lovely butterflies, Mike – look forward to seeing what the experts have to say 😊

BWs,

William

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 09-Jun-15 05:17 AM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

I also began to realise that there was something unusual about many of the individuals – the blue was brilliant but rather pale and, when I got a close view, there was a distinct line of dark spots along the trailing edge of the wings.

Hi Mike – *polonus* is defined (in Goodson and Read) as:

"Male of a tint half way between *bellargus* [*Adonis*] and *coridon* [Chalk Hill]". The definition makes no mention of spotting or dark markings. Given the state of the individual, I think it would be difficult to claim this as *polonus*, given the natural fading that occurs. However, I still think it's aberrant, based on the markings. Given the number of *bellargus* abs, I'm not sure which it is!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 09-Jun-15 06:43 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

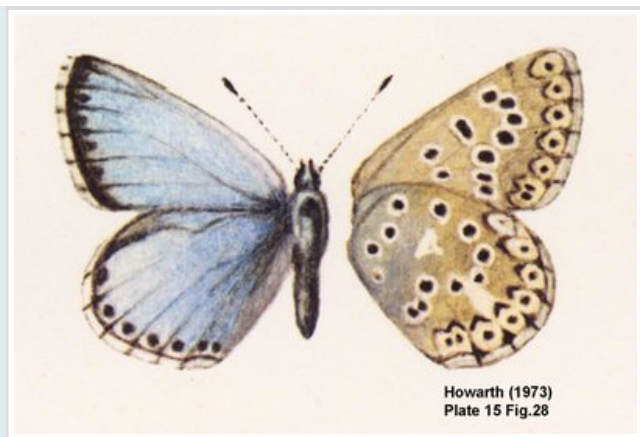
Given the number of *bellargus* abs, I'm not sure which it is!

Thanks for responding Pete. My interest started from your description on the species pages of this site : "..... It is well worth looking out for this hybrid at sites where both species fly together. *Polonus* is encountered within the spring brood of *Adonis* Blue."

A Google search unearthed various illustrations, all of which showed the spots on the hind wings, and I found more description at <http://www.d-e-zimmer.de/eGuide/Lep2.1-Po-Py.htm> where there is discussion as to whether *polonus* is a 'true' species or a hybrid. I found more about this in a paper "*Bad species*" by Descimon & Mallet <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/taxome/jim/pap/descimon&mallet09%20print.pdf>, who state "*L. × polonus* (Zeller 1845), formerly mistaken as a good species from Poland and later recognized as a hybrid (Tutt 1910). These hybrids occur wherever the parent species fly together, although their frequency varies widely. *Lysandra coridon* is univoltine and flies around August, while *L. bellargus* is bivoltine and flies in May and September; the hybrid flies in late June."

This last reference implies that the hybrids are not that uncommon at appropriate locations and it is, perhaps, significant that the specimens I saw were quite fresh, whereas *bellargus* at the same site were very worn.

My best 'lead' came from Howarth's "*South's British Butterflies*" (1973), which states "Male specimens that are intermediate in colour between *bellargus* and *coridon* are thought to be natural hybrids between these two species, as apparently they only occur in localities where these two butterflies are present. A specimen of this rare butterfly known as *polonus* Zeller is figured on Plate 15, 28"



It's important to know that these hybrids are **male** and that my photographed specimen revealed his interest in the female *bellargus* that were present! Many of the *bellargus* aberrations are females, which frequently show blue uppersides with marginal spots. These can all be ruled out.

I guess that this is one of those cases where a scientific study requires a net and a killing jar, which I did not happen to have with me 😊

Last but not least, however, I spotted the following at <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/old%20sightings/may2010.html> - "I must report an exciting find on Mill Hill, back on 19th May. I noticed that one of the many Adonis Blue males flitting across the lower slopes looked a little different, and I immediately sensed that this was something special. As I clambered up to it, in a state of excitement, I strongly suspected (later confirmed by expert opinion) that this was *Polyommatus coridon* ab. *polonus* (Zeller, 1845), which in fact is not an aberration of the Chalkhill Blue at all! 'Pollonus' is the rare hybrid between the Adonis Blue and Chalkhill Blue, and more aptly attributed the label *Polyommatus bellargus x coridon* - for me, a bit of a 'mythical beast'. It clearly has characteristics of the males of both species. Although I didn't get a shot of the underside, this was very pale and more akin to the underside of a male Chalkhill Blue. Happy Days! (Neil Hulme)"

I'd try a PM to Neil, to see if his 'expert opinion' could be brought to bear, but he seems to have disabled personal messaging 😞 Perhaps, if anyone's in touch with him, they could point him in my direction?

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Willow, 09-Jun-15 10:49 PM GMT

Most interesting Mike, your research makes for some informative reading. I'm sure Neil will eventually catch up with this post and present his well considered opinion 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 09-Jun-15 11:11 PM GMT

Thank you Bill. Now I've started looking, I keep finding more information (assuming that I'm on the right track!).

For example, in <http://biostor.org/reference/116974.text>, I've just read a more complete description of *polonus*: "Generally speaking, the colour of the upper wing surface is intermediate between *bellargus* and *coridon*, and is often described as similar to that of *Agrodiaetus damon* Schiff., with a more or less well-marked greenish tinge. There is a dark marginal border of variable width and a number of pre-marginal dots of variable size, more or less merged with the dark border. The underside may be more similar to *bellargus* (*polonus*, *calydonius*) or to *coridon* (*hafneri*, *samsoni*).

As a retired research scientist (though not a biologist), I find it hard to let go of these things 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 10-Jun-15 12:11 AM GMT

Hi Mike - some further thoughts:

"MikeOxon" wrote:

This last reference implies that the hybrids are not that uncommon at appropriate locations

I can't believe this to be true - otherwise we'd have a lot more examples than we currently do! I know of only 2 confirmed *polonus* in recent years - Neil's being one of them.

"MikeOxon" wrote:

my photographed specimen revealed his interest in the female *bellargus* that were present!

So how many individuals did you photograph – one or several? Also – if the male is *bellargus*, it's not surprising he's interested in the female 😊

"MikeOxon" wrote:

Many of the *bellargus* aberrations are females, which frequently show blue uppersides with marginal spots. These can all be ruled out.

Of the 141 *bellargus* abs, at least 100 of those apply to males (at first glance). *ab. puncta* is defined as: "Male with a row of well-defined little black spots in the margins of the hindwings upperside".

In terms of "tint", I believe that the following photos are of the same individual, but the tint is very different – so hard to be conclusive on this basis.



Cheers,

– Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 10-Jun-15 12:13 AM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

Thank you Bill. Now I've started looking, I keep finding more information (assuming that I'm on the right track!).

For example, in <http://biostor.org/reference/116974.text>, I've just read a more complete description of *polonus*: "Generally speaking, the colour of the upper wing surface is intermediate between *bellargus* and *coridon*, and is often described as similar to that of *Agrodiaetus damon* Schiff., with a more or less well-marked greenish tinge. There is a dark marginal border of variable width and a number of pre-marginal dots of variable size, more or less merged with the dark border. The underside may be more similar to *bellargus* (*polonus*, *calydonius*) or to *coridon* (*hafneri*, *samsoni*).

As a retired research scientist (though not a biologist), I find it hard to let go of these things 😊

Mike

Very interesting, Mike – and certainly fits your individual in terms of the submarginal border and spots. However, I'm not sure if descriptions can be extended in this manner without creating a new ab. 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 10-Jun-15 05:42 AM GMT

I was reminded of this ab. seen a couple of years ago (unnamed Common Blue ab.) that looks similar to yours, Mike. The mystery thickens!



Cheers,

– Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Jun-15 05:58 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

I was reminded of this ab. seen a couple of years ago (unnamed Common Blue ab.) that looks similar to yours, Mike.

That's remarkable – do you know where it was taken? Strange things seem to be happening in many places. I recall that **nomad** reported what looked like a Silver-studded Blue from Lough Down, last year <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?t=7747&start=10000>

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 11-Jun-15 06:18 AM GMT

Hi Mike – I believe that individual was taken at Magdalen Hill Down, in Hampshire.

Since we've corresponded privately on this subject, I hope you don't mind me "polluting" your diary with additional items we've found; this is one of the more interesting threads (well, for me, anyway!) I've participated in!

First off, while the definition of *polonus* is based primarily on the ground colour (and a nice rendition can be found at <http://www.biologie.uni-erlangen.de/mpp.old/Schmetterlinge/1-tagfalter/pages/Lycaenidae/P-bellargus-x-coridon.html>), the formal definition does, indeed, mention spotting also. The formal definition (Zeller, 1845) can be found at <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/111853#page/357/mode/1up>.

I'm no German scholar, but Google Translate does, indeed, imply that spotting is mentioned.

Over and out!

– Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 12-Jun-15 03:09 AM GMT

Pete, you are always welcome to 'pollute' my diary. I'm pleased that you find it of interest.

I was holding back a bit from publicly writing loads of speculation, only to find it was all wrong! I got your PM and have sent the German to a linguist friend, so will forward it to you, when available. I had a go at the Latin myself but am getting that checked as well 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 12-Jun-15 03:35 AM GMT

Yes, the spotting is mentioned in the German and the Latin. I won't translate the German here, as it's long and Mike has already sent it to an expert, but the brief Latin description (as I'm sure Mike will agree) runs:

"Wings silver-blue, with white fringe hairs alternating with black; the margin of the forewings more broadly black; on the hindwings above, a series of black spots (lit. 'pimples'), beneath, (a series of) reddish spots before the hind margin. Male. Female unknown".

I decided to keep an eye open for *polonus* after Neil brought it to my attention but I have yet to see one in the flesh.

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 12-Jun-15 06:02 AM GMT

Thank you for commenting, Guy. I'm afraid it didn't occur to me to send the German to you but I think I have it in hand. My Latin translation agreed closely with yours. From all that I have now read, my specimens do seem to correspond with the formal description of *polonus*. I suppose the other question is "what else could they be?" One of the references I gave earlier (<http://biostor.org/reference/116974.text>) seems to imply that various forms (abs) should actually be regarded as *polonus* hybrids. I'm still hoping to hear from Neil 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 12-Jun-15 02:35 PM GMT

That Common Blue ab



Very pale. Could that be a hybrid between Common and Chalk-hill Blue? After all both species are now considered to be in the same genus *Polyommatus*.

Maybe Chalk-hill Blues will hybridise with several *Polyommatus* species. I wonder if there is any evidence of hybridising with other *Polyommatus* on the Continent?

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Hulme, 12-Jun-15 05:34 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Pete and Mark Colvin have brought this interesting topic to my attention and I will definitely get round to replying in time. My new job is keeping me so busy in the earlier stages that, when added to my continuing work as a volunteer for other species, I'm currently having to borrow time from a parallel universe. Things will settle down to a more manageable pace once HMS *Fritillaries for the Future* has left port heading in the right direction.

I have disabled my PM service for a while. This is because I have endeavoured to reply to butterfly queries within 24 hours for at least the last ten years, so a lack of response for many weeks would likely send out the wrong signal. I feel it's better to prevent questions being asked at the moment, than being apparently unwilling to respond. I hope that makes sense?

Best Wishes, Neil

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 12-Jun-15 07:24 PM GMT

Learned articles about *Polyommatus* hybrids.

<http://images.peabody.yale.edu/lepsoc/j... Downey.pdf>

<http://www.researchgate.net/publication... aenidae%29>

<http://biostor.org/reference/116974>

and doubtless many more with a web search.

So my suggestion about possible *coridon* x *icarus* is not totally absurd.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-Jun-15 05:39 AM GMT

Thank you, Neil. I understand the pressure you are under 😊

Thank you, Jack. I think it is becoming apparent that, whereas hybridisation has long been recognised as common in the plant world, it is only since the application of DNA analysis that it has been seen as widespread in the animal kingdom as well.

The expansion of our understanding of the natural world through DNA analysis can, currently, only be achieved in the laboratory. This is one example of the need for ongoing collection of specimens, within the context of scientific study, as described in Mark Colvin's article in *Dispar* – <http://www.dispar.org/reference.php?id=92>

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-Jun-15 02:20 AM GMT

I have just returned from a short trip to **Exmoor**, looking for the **Heath Fritillary**. I am very grateful to **William**, whose local knowledge save me a lot of searching time. I had also read a lot about the 'ticks' problem on Exmoor, so decided to adopt full **PPE** (Personal Protective Equipment), comprising 'NosiLife' treated shirt and trousers, with overlapping 'NosiLife' socks and boots recently sprayed with permethrin. I am pleased to report having no problems at all – I suspect the blighters ran the proverbial mile, when they saw me coming! [note that permethrin is considered to be a far more effective tick repellent than DEET]

The forecast for **16th June** was good, although there was a little more cloud than I expected, initially. We (my wife and I) went straight to the **Haddon Hill** site and soon found ourselves surrounded by good numbers of Heath Fritillaries, some basking on the bracken and others nectaring, obligingly posing for both open and closed wing photos.



Haddon Hill, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/400s@f/7.1 ISO400

Previously I had only watched this species at East Blean Wood in Kent, so it was interesting to compare and contrast the sites. The epithet 'Heath' seems to apply more accurately to Exmoor but there were many similarities in the bracken filled clearings on the edge of woodland, liberally sprinkled with Cow Wheat flowers. Another similarity seemed to be that the Heath Frits were virtually a 'mono-culture' in their chosen location.



Haddon Hill, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-P1 with 17 mm lens – 1/250s@f/5.6 ISO200

At first, the butterflies seemed somewhat sparser than in Kent but, soon, I began to see small groups – in one case, a three-some spent some time pursuing each other, close around me, as though I were some sort of roundabout! Although these were too close and too fast for photos, I did get some other shots of group interactions:

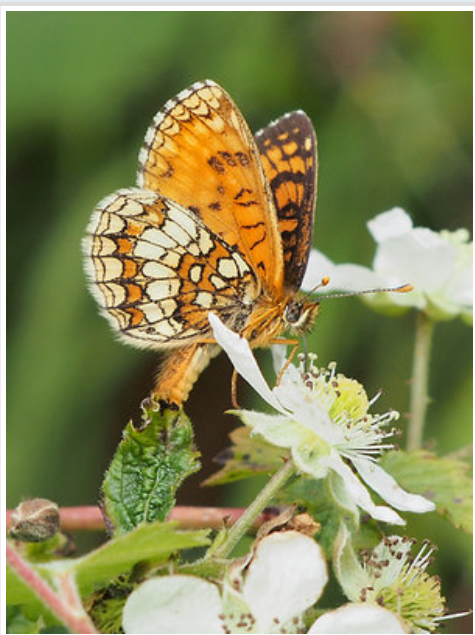


Haddon Hill, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/1000s@f/5.6 ISO400



Haddon Hill, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO400

I should have done more reading before my trip as a subsequent read of *Thomas & Lewington* explained how the females often lay their eggs on the underside of bracken leaves and it is up to the caterpillars to find their way to nearby Cow Wheat plants. I suspect that the following photo may show egg-laying, while the butterfly is simultaneously nectaring!



Haddon Hill, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/320s@f/8 ISO400

William had accurately predicted that I would see **Green Hairstreak** and Large Skippers, on the walk-in to the HF hot-spot, and the heath was being grazed by Exmoor ponies, with their 'mealy' muzzles in evidence.



Haddon Hill, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

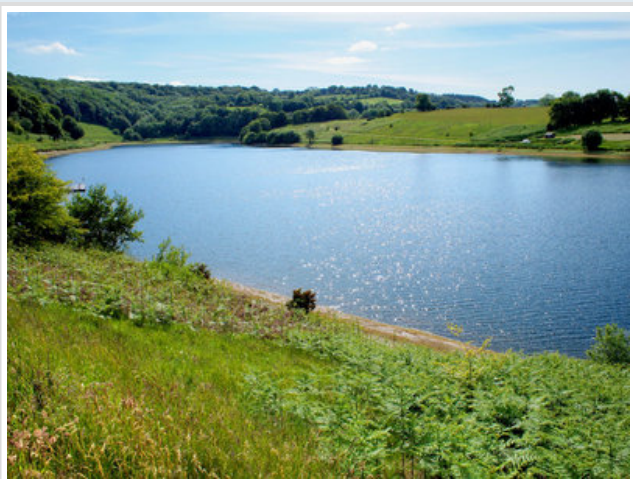
After a very satisfying visit to this site, we travelled down the hill and parked by the church in Upton, in order to visit the BC reserve known as **Haddon Moor**. We were enthusiastically greeted by a couple of ponies at the gate and then started to make a circuit around the reserve. The clouds had built up quite considerably by this time, and there was no sign of any butterflies on the wing, but this was compensated by a fine display of Heath-spotted orchids and one very robust specimen of a Southern Marsh Orchid



Haddon Moor reserve, Exmoor – 16th June 2015

Eventually, in one of the patches of sunshine, we spotted a couple of **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** on the wing, though these disappeared instantly, when the next cloud moved in. This behaviour remained characteristic of our visit and I managed no more than a couple of record shots of this species, although there were clearly several individuals present (c 10?), judging by the brief bursts of activity during sunny intervals.

Our next stop was the car-park near the dam at **Clatworth Reservoir** where, again thanks to William's advice, we quickly found the **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** 'hot-spot' down the path towards the fly-fishing centre.



The butterflies were certainly abundant here, but photographing them was another matter altogether! They behaved like perpetual-motion machines, constantly skimming over the grass in an unending search for females. Sometimes, they would investigate a spot for a few moments, without ever actually landing. On the odd occasion, when one did pause, it was immediately 'dive-bombed' by another individual and forced to continue its relentless search. I wonder if this is a selection process, to ensure that only the fittest males finally reach a lurking female? As time wore on, I began to despair of getting any photos, except for one extremely worn specimen that seemed ready to give up the game of chase. There were several **Large Skippers**, which were a little easier to photograph, as well as many bright male **Common Blues**: After my recent observations on 'spotted' Adonis Blues, I noticed some spots on the wings of this male Common Blue.



Clatworthy Reservoir, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO400



Clatworthy Reservoir, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

As the afternoon wore on, the chase did seem to slow down a little and we found a **Large Skipper** and an **SPB Frit** rather surprisingly co-existing on a thistle. The extraordinary agility with which the butterfly could direct its proboscis deep into individual florets on the thistle flower was fascinating to watch. It still proved difficult to get an underside view of the Fritillary, which I find the clearest distinction between the two Pearl-bordered species



Clatworthy Reservoir, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/9 ISO400



Clatworthy Reservoir, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/9 ISO400



Clatworthy Reservoir, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/9 ISO400

One specimen of SPBF was paler coloured and had very lightly spotted markings on its upper wings:



Clatworthy Reservoir, Exmoor – 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

We finished our day with a drive over the moors around Dunkery Beacon before dropping down into Porlock and then following the main roads back to Taunton, where we stayed overnight. From the viewpoint near Dunkery, we could see bracken burning on one of the hill sides, which is, apparently, an important component of conservation for Heath Fritillaries.

The following day (17th June) started dully overcast, with a little drizzle, so we decided to head up the coast and take a walk along the ridge at Sand Point. Inland, the clouds looked very heavy and rain-filled but it was a lot brighter out to sea and, eventually, a few shafts of sun managed to break through. The wind remained quite strong and there was very little hope of seeing any butterflies, although I did spot one **Common Blue**, well hunkered down in the grass, just moving around a little, as though flight might soon be a possibility!



Sand Point - 17th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens - 1/320s@f/6.3 ISO400

Apart from that, the only other species I saw was a few **Speckled Wood** individuals in the woods alongside the path from the car-park. The absence of butterflies was compensated by the remarkable flora long the rocky spur and also by the number of nesting birds, including many Whitethroats and Linnets, amongst others.

Throughout the trip, my Olympus OM-D performed very well and, although I used my Tamron macro lens occasionally, I found that the 40-150mm Zuiko zoom proved very versatile as a 'butterfly' lens. Rather than changing lenses, I also carried an Olympus Pen, with a 17 mm lens, which I used for general and habitat shots.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 19-Jun-15 04:49 AM GMT

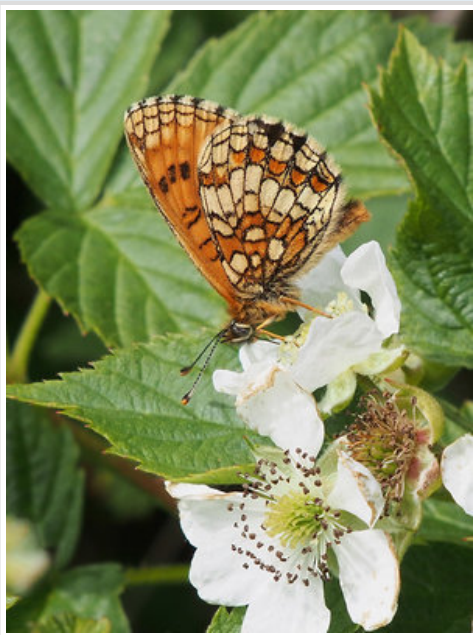
Hi! Mike love the two some of Skipper and SPBF great photo, I only wish I could find a SPBF here, I'd no luck with the Pearl hope fully I may see the SPBF yet 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-Jun-15 05:26 PM GMT

Glad you like it, Goldie. Those SPBFs were being really difficult (for photography), so I was very pleased when my wife spotted that one nectaring, a little away from the main 'herd'. The Skipper was an unexpected bonus 😊

Another Heath Fritillary underside that I meant to attach before; it has larger than usual dark patches on the underwings:



Haddon Hill, Exmoor - 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 19-Jun-15 06:46 PM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

Another Heath Fritillary underside that I meant to attach before; it has larger than usual dark patches on the underwings ...

If you mean the marginal markings, are they not the (particularly dark) upperside showing through tears in the wing edge?

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

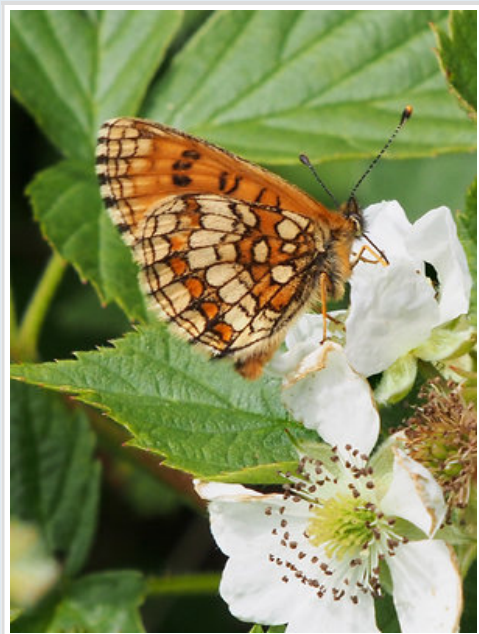
by MikeOxon, 19-Jun-15 10:34 PM GMT

I now think you're right Guy, though it's hard to tell exactly what belongs where even in a detail enlargement; the marked bit of fringe seems to be showing through a tear.



detail

Also, I've been looking through my pics and I think the following is the opposite side of the same butterfly, which looks normal



Haddon Hill, Exmoor - 16th June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 20-Jun-15 08:49 PM GMT

Hi Mike, Although I read it regularly I have been very remiss in not commenting on your diary for a while (not on or off line 😊) especially as you have

been posting some wonderful images, in particular the Heath Frits. I can only put it down to the hassle here of having to have my house re-wired and losing pc connection frequently 😞

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 20-Jun-15 09:27 PM GMT

Mike:

Also, I've been looking through my pics and I think the following is the opposite side of the same butterfly, which looks normal

With a bit of PhotoShopping, you could make BOTH sides look normal 😏 And while you're about it, why not *bokeh*? 😊

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 20-Jun-15 11:36 PM GMT

Thank you for 'looking in' **Pauline**. I'm sure that many people enjoy reading posts without commenting (I know that I do). I've been enjoying all your posts about earlier stages; something that I've not got to grips with, yet.

I know that you know that I like playing with Photoshop, **Jack** and, sometimes, there is a place for the sort of modification you suggest. I would clean those photos up a lot, if I wanted them as pictures for the wall, for example. On the whole, though, I'm happy to show the butterflies as I find them (though I sometimes remove a particularly irritating bit of vegetation).

There is a danger in starting to see 'aberrations' everywhere and I'm pleased that Guy **Padfield** led me to looking a bit more closely at the image that, at first glance, looked unusual. It also showed me the detail that is present in my Olympus images, even though I'm only using their 'budget' 40-150 mm lens. I know **Gruditch** doesn't worry about the weight 😊 but I'm very grateful for its relative absence in my Olympus kit, compared with my Nikon. I'm even finding advantages in the electronic viewfinder, in that it shows very clearly when exposure compensation is needed.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 20-Jun-15 11:50 PM GMT

I know that you know that....

That's blatant plagiarism 😏

From the Goon Show 1957: Neddy Seagood: *"Little does he know that I know that he knows that...."*

(If that's lost on you youngsters, I can only express my condolences for what you missed).

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 21-Jun-15 12:21 AM GMT

"**Jack Harrison**" wrote:

I know that you know that....

That's blatant plagiarism 😏

I know that too 😊

I've just edited some previous posts since I kept referring to my Olympus 40-150 mm lens as a 70-150 - I had one of those once, a very long time ago!

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 01:10 AM GMT

Very comprehensive and most enjoyable report and images from Haddon Hill, Mike 😊 Hope your happy with the Olympus set up, much lighter than your D300 rig eh! 😊

Bill 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 23-Jun-15 07:30 AM GMT

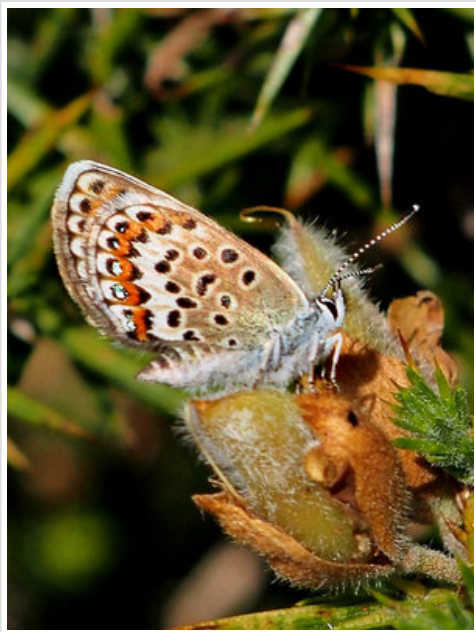
Yesterday's weather (21st June) turned out considerably better than the local forecast, so I took the opportunity for a walk on **Silchester Common** in search of **Silver-studded Blues**.

These butterflies tend to occupy quite small territories within the area of the common but once one of these has been found, the butterflies are locally very abundant. One of the first specimens I spotted was a very small female, which I initially thought to be a Brown Argus:



Silchester Common - 21st June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/640s@f/7.1 ISO400

It was already quite late in the afternoon and the low sun was spotlighting the wings of the butterflies. I have never seen the underwing studs shining so brightly before, fully justifying the name 'silver-studded':



Silchester Common - 21st June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/2000s@f/7.1 ISO400

I spotted an almost copper-coloured female just before a couple of males also spotted her, although I think the one on the right in the first of the following photos is probably a Common Blue! The Silver-studded male indulged in some impressive aerobatics, which induced considerable wing fluttering by the female. Unfortunately, all this display did not result in a consummation.



I photographed another pair engaged in what looked like serious discussion:



Silchester Common - 21st June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/1600s@f/7.1 ISO400

Finally, I show one of the males, with its characteristic leaden blue colour:



Silchester Common - 21st June 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/1000s@f/8 ISO400

Today (22nd June), I was pleased to get another opportunity to photograph a white Starling in my garden. I believe that this bird is one of the two white offspring raised by the white bird I have been watching since 2008 (you can read the history at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/WStarling.htm>):



garden, Abingdon – 22nd June 2015 Nikon D300s with 70–300mm lens – 1/180s@f/5.6 ISO800

Mike

[edited to correct weblink]

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 23-Jun-15 02:24 PM GMT

Brilliant shot and great news 🍷🍷 – the Starling, naturally. I was going to ask you the other day but assumed you would let us know if you'd seen them 😊. Interesting that you too have seen a really small SSB Mike. Yes, Brown Argus size is about right for the ones at Bramshott too. 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 25-Jun-15 01:20 AM GMT

Thank you, Pauline – I knew you would like to know about the Starling.

Yesterday (23rd June), I paid my, now annual, pilgrimage to **Daneway Banks**, Glos. for the Large Blue. I confess to mixed feelings about the increased popularity of this site, although I must also admit that these feelings are mainly due to selfishness on my part. In earlier years, I have enjoyed the tranquillity of having this marvellous site almost to myself. This year, on a mid-week morning, I almost had to join a queue to watch the best butterflies. It is good to see that most people appeared really interested in these butterflies and I hope that now the site has been acquired by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust it will be well-managed, to ensure the continuing success of its varied wildlife. It is not only a great place to see the Large Blue but has many other natural treasures, all set in wonderful Cotswold scenery.



Daneway House from the Reserve

Within minutes of arrival, I had seen four butterfly species: **Large Skipper**, **Marbled White**, **Meadow Brown**, and **Small Tortoiseshell**, soon followed by **Ringlet** and **Green Hairstreak**. The carpet of wild flowers is beautiful, with a good sprinkling of Common Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids. The Large Blue proved slightly more elusive and, compared with my previous visits, seemed to have moved up the hillside, to the area around the dew pond. I was initially mis-led by a very dark blue female **Common Blue** – this blue form seems to be the norm for females this year!



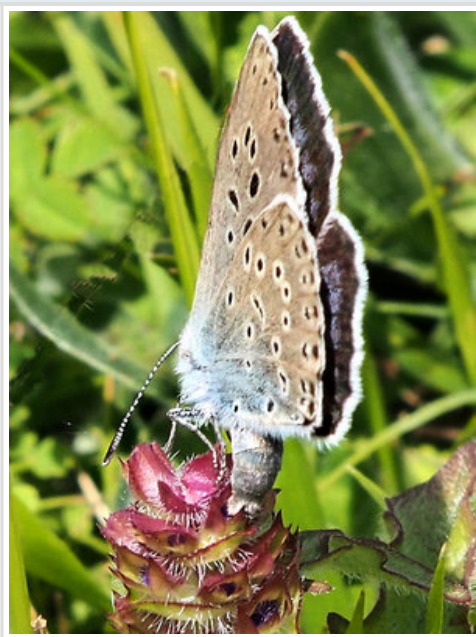
Daneway Banks, Glos.- 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO400

But soon I was seeing good numbers of **Large Blues** in the higher parts of the reserve. I followed one particular female for some time as she moved from one Thyme plant to another seeking places to lay her eggs. Her investigation of each plant was very thorough, involving much pirouetting around a flower head before deciding on the optimum spot. Then, wings spread and off to the next flower head! I've tried to capture her routine in the following animation, made from about a dozen individual photos. For anyone interested in the process that I use for making an animation, I have written a short article about it on my website - see <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/animation.html>.



Large Blue on Thyme [GiF animation]

Below, I include a full resolution shot showing the actual ovipositing, after she had selected her favoured spot on the flower head. While she was busy egg-laying, she was repeatedly hassled by other Large Blues - presumably males - and at one time, three were all vying for her attention, even though she was clearly not interested. I was concentrating too much on following her egg-laying activity, to get photos of these encounters, but it was a great pleasure to see several of these beautiful insects all flying together.



Daneway Banks, Glos.- 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

Following all her hard work, she then flew to some Marjoram to enjoy nectaring for a while, although I believe that Large Blues also sometimes lay on Marjoram as well as on Thyme.



Daneway Banks, Glos. - 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

The following photo includes other wild flowers, such as Eyebright (at lower left):



Daneway Banks, Glos. - 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

As luck would have it, the only shot I got of fully-spread wings was as she took off from one site, to fly to another, and the result is none too sharp but it shows the fore-wing markings, which clearly distinguish this species from other British Blues.



Daneway Banks, Glos. - 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/800s@f/10 ISO400

Although the blue colour usually looks quite dark, it can catch the sun to give a much brighter appearance.



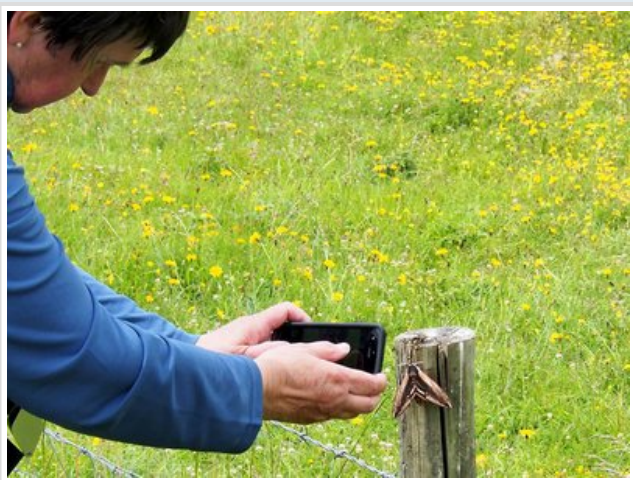
Daneway Banks, Glos.- 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/800s@f/10 ISO400

The survival of the Large Blues is dependent on maintaining the colony of *Myrmica sabuleti* ants on this site. For anyone who hasn't read it, I strongly recommend Jeremy Thomas' account in '*The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland*' by **Thomas & Lewington**, which describes the remarkable research project that led to successful re-introduction at several former sites. Unfortunately, there are still quite a few selfish collectors, trying to undo all the hard work that has been done.



Daneway Banks, Glos.- 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/640s@f/10 ISO400

As it happened, the focus of attention of some of the visitors was taken away from the Blues by a very large and spectacular **Privet Hawk Moth**, roosting on one of the fence posts. I illustrate the size of this remarkable insect by showing it alongside my wife's iPhone



Daneway Banks, Glos.- 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/160s@f/11 ISO400

The amazing technology incorporated into the iPhone's tiny camera provided an image not far short of that taken on my Olympus!



Daneway Banks, Glos.- 23rd June 2015 Olympus E-M5 - 1/320s@f/5.6 ISO400

Mike
Edited to include link to my website

Re: MikeOxon

by Willow, 25-Jun-15 04:53 AM GMT

Super report and good images to support it Mike...now why didn't that superb Privet Hawkmoth put in an appearance when I was there last week 😞
such fantastic insects!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 25-Jun-15 05:41 AM GMT

Interesting to note that, like me, you found most of the Large Blues at higher elevation on the site.

Is this down to climatic conditions (e.g, light winds) or could it be that they are not yet tempted to disperse because their favoured bloom, Marjoram, is largely yet to flower?

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 25-Jun-15 05:55 AM GMT

Thank you Bill and David. It's always nice to know when people have enjoyed my writing 😊

Only time will tell the answer to your question, David, but I suspect that your guess about the Marjoram carries some weight. I was once told that the 'traditional' site was at the far Northern end of the upper level so, perhaps, the 'new-comers' are gradually returning to the old habit.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jun-15 05:56 AM GMT

Great report from Daneway Banks Mike, a site I have yet to visit and will probably not get chance this year before the Large Blues are over so reading reports like yours is the next best thing 😊

I love the Privet Hawk Moth, I have not seen one of these for a few years now. One of the species that I reared through a few time when I was much younger. Some of my Dads mates knew about my interest at the time and used to bring me any unusual caterpillars that they found in their gardens and I acquired a few Hawk Moth larvae of various species this way, usually Elephant Hawk but occasionally Poplar, Eyed and Privet Hawks.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 26-Jun-15 02:16 AM GMT

Thank you, Neil. It's a pity that so many of our moths are rarely seen because they fly at night. The Hawk Moths, in particular, are really spectacular and surprisingly common, though it's a matter of luck to find them in the daytime. I've been lucky to come across all those you mention during recent trips.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 26-Jun-15 02:40 AM GMT

May I tell a gruesome story?

In my very young days, I used to catch butterflies and sometimes moths, kill them by squeezing the thorax and then sticking pins through them. Before Gruditch gets too excited, I have to say that this was quite normal in the 1940s.

I caught a Poplar Hawk, squeezed it and I thought I had killed it. Pin was stuck through it and it was put on the setting board. It wasn't quite as dead as I had thought and proceeded to lay large numbers of eggs.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 26-Jun-15 06:43 PM GMT

I believe an insects nervous system is more 'distributed' than ours – a bit like 'fly by wire' – so I expect it was just the egg-laying 'motors' that were still working.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 04-Jul-15 05:45 AM GMT

We had a somewhat frustrating short trip to South Wales, hoping to see the High Brown Fritillaries at the **Alun Valley** site. The forecast for Thursday (**2nd July**) was for rain in the morning, followed by a sunny afternoon, so we set off with the aim of having lunch near Bridgend, followed by an afternoon's butterflying.

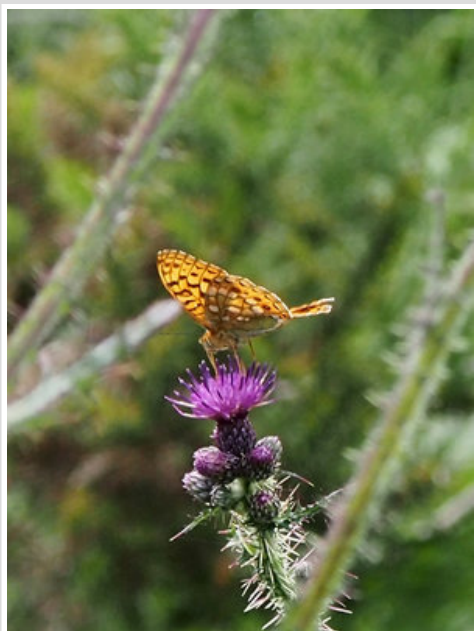
In the event, the rain was still coming down like stair-rods at 3pm, so we decided, instead, to take a walk around old haunts in the waterfall country along the southern edge of the Brecon Beacons. At least, the River Mellte provided good views of Dippers – a favourite bird of mountain streams – and, as evening approached, the sun broke through, with splendid mountain and valley views.

The following day (**3rd July**) started warm and sunny, although there were warnings of heavy downpours for the afternoon. One hurdle to overcome was that the direct route to Castle Down was closed at the railway bridge near Ewenny, so we had to make a detour via Ogmoor-by-Sea! Eventually, we set foot on the Down, to be surrounded by clouds of Meadow Browns and, very soon, Fritillaries started whizzing by!

Many of the Dark Green Fritillaries were looking quite faded, whereas there were some much brighter-looking High Browns. I soon found that this was by no means an infallible guide and, because both species were extremely mobile, getting photographic evidence was, to say the least, difficult!

My wife established a 'base camp' near the Eastern end of the path across the Down, where there are large areas of brambles, which I hoped would be attractive nectaring spots. I spent some time fruitlessly chasing butterflies for photographs and, of course, when I returned to base, my wife reported that a High Brown had been happily nectaring on a thistle, close by her, for several minutes.

I decided to stay near the patch of thistles and eventually another **High Brown Fritillary** arrived and even showed its characteristic underside, though only from a distance



Castle Down, Bridgend – 3rd July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens – 1/400s@f/6.3 ISO400

It did come to one of the nearer thistles, where my photo shows the indented shape of the edge of the forewing, which usually separates this species from the Dark Green, although it is not always easy to be sure.



Castle Down, Bridgend – 3rd July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO400

As the afternoon wore on, the cloud was thickening and we thought that the forecast rain was probably on the way, so we made our way back westwards, along the path towards the slope down to the road. Although less sunny, it was still very warm and the Fritillaries continued their rapid patrols, with only the briefest stops for nectar.

Near the top of the descent back towards the road, there is another large area of brambles, which were regularly being visited – sometimes two or three Fritillaries chasing each other around a small area of bushes. It seemed that most of those at this location were **Dark Green Fritillaries**, as shown below:



Castle Down, Bridgend – 3rd July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO400

The green undersides contrasted with the much browner bodies of the High Browns photographed earlier:



Castle Down, Bridgend – 3rd July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/400s@f/6.3 ISO400

Apart from these two species, there were several much smaller and slower-flying **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries**, which occasionally basked on bare ground amongst the bracken.



Castle Down, Bridgend - 3rd July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO400

In fact, golden brown colours seemed to be the rule, with huge numbers of **Large Skippers**, **Small Heaths**, and **Meadow Browns**. Some darker brown **Ringlets** were fluttering around the bracken and a few **Small Tortoiseshells** basked amongst the flowers.



Castle Down, Bridgend - 3rd July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/640s@f/8 ISO400

So, while I broke my 'duck' in terms of digital images of HBF, I didn't manage anything to rival my old film images, taken many years ago at Arnside Knott. The forecast rain never did materialise and we had a sunny drive back home, along the M4.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 04-Jul-15 04:12 PM GMT

Your frustration comes over well Mike.

If it makes you feel any better, despite several [admittedly half-hearted] attempts, I have not see a Small PB Fritillary this year despite the fact that it is widespread on Mull.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by Willow, 04-Jul-15 06:56 PM GMT

Good to note you 'nailed' your target species Mike, **High Brown Fritillary** can be frenetic in the heat, at least Old Castle Down is fairly open for the chase 🤪😄 so unlike the other private parts of the Alun Valley where the species flies 😞

That ruddy bridge work at Ewenny has gone on for an eternity and it should have been completed by the high summer tourist season...or at the very least the HBF season 🙄

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-15 07:08 PM GMT

Hi! Mike, I know about frustration, I felt it when trying to get decent shots of the Large Heath, at least you got some lovely shots of the High Brown's which is what you went for. Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 04-Jul-15 09:46 PM GMT

Thank you all for your comments. It was a reminder that the large fritillaries are always difficult, with photography needing a fair dose of luck, so I was very pleased to be able to get a confirmatory underwing shot of an HBF. I never trust myself with in-flight and topside views alone.

I am very fortunate to have several good film images of HBF that I took at Arnside Knott, back in July 1996 – one day, perhaps, I shall get some digital equivalents 😊



Arnside Knott – 21st July 1996 Pentax K1000 with Fuji film

Amongst the unhelpful factors yesterday was a lot of very noisy shooting from the nearby firing range – it was unpleasant but a relief to know that they were not firing at me – unlike those poor people caught up in the cross-fire in so many parts of the world.

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 05-Jul-15 01:05 AM GMT

it {shooting in South Wales} was unpleasant but a relief to know that they were not firing at me

That's confidence Mike bach 😊

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-Jul-15 01:23 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

it {shooting in South Wales} was unpleasant but a relief to know that they were not firing at me

That's confidence Mike bach 😊

Contrary to some rumours, I have always found the locals in Wales very warm and friendly to visitors 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 05-Jul-15 01:29 AM GMT

Contrary to some rumours, I have always found the locals in Wales very warm and friendly to visitors 😊

That is also true of 99.9% of Scots.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-Jul-15 05:31 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

That is also true of 99.9% of Scots.

excellent news – and, so that they don't feel left out, I'm sure that this is also true of the Irish. I regret that I've not visited that beautiful island yet.

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 05-Jul-15 03:56 PM GMT

Mike said about Ireland:

I regret that I've not visited that beautiful island yet.

Now we have an excellent fully furnished "holiday home" there going cheap – well almost prepared to give it away to avoid council tax, water bills, etc.

My biggest gripe about Ireland is that you can't buy **corned beef**. So I would give the country only 4 stars for that reason.

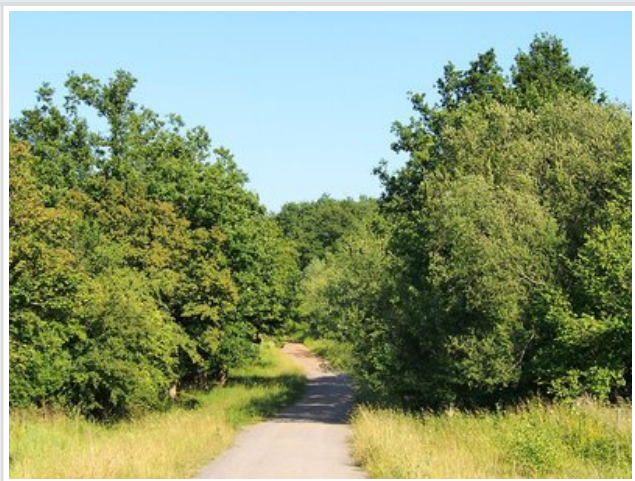
Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Jul-15 02:29 AM GMT

Some people might think that unavailability of corned beef would improve the rating, Jack 😊

Yesterday (**9th July**), we took a pleasant afternoon stroll along the main ride from the car-park in **Bernwood Forest**. In my opinion, Bernwood has improved considerably in recent years, following the removal of a lot of conifer plantations, although I doubt we shall see a return to the glorious days of Pearl-bordered and Marsh Fritillaries any time soon! Other species, including Purple Emperor and Black Hairstreak have, however, been doing well in recent years.



Bernwood Forest, Main Ride – 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50mm zoom – 1/500s@f/9 ISO400

When we arrived, at a little before 4pm, it was still very hot under bright sun, with no appreciable wind. Very sensibly, many of the butterflies and other inhabitants of the wood seemed to be taking a siesta, although it wasn't long before we saw our first **Silver-washed Fritillary**, taking moisture from some shaded leaves:



Bernwood Forest, Oxon – 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm zoom – 1/400s@f/6.3 ISO400

Otherwise, the grassy verges were full of slowly meandering Ringlets, many of which seemed unusually small – almost hairstreak-sized. In contrast, some newly-emerged **Small Skippers** were 'skipping' about in typical fashion, together with several of their **Large** relatives – both shown below:



Bernwood Forest, Oxon – 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm zoom

A short distance along the ride, there is a major 'cross-roads', with a small pond. This had attracted both Emperor and Broad-bodied Chaser dragonflies and then I noticed that there were quite a few **Small Skippers** probing the muddy edges of the pool, for moisture:



Bernwood Forest, Oxon – 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm zoom – 1/640s@f/8 ISO400

From here, there is a stretch of the main ride that I have often found good for both Purple Emperors and Hairstreaks but they were keeping well out of sight on this occasion, apart from the occasional flash of silver high in the tree-tops and a 'possible' rather distant PE (also high). We continued to a clump of thistles, opposite a log pile, which, as usual, was proving a magnet to several species, including **Silver washed Fritillaries**, Commas, and both Large and Small Skippers – quite a preponderance of orange colour and also much sparring between the species!



Bernwood Forest, Oxon - 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm zoom - 1/640s@f/9 ISO400

At last, the day started to cool down a little, but many butterflies were still keeping close to the damp grasses along the verges, where I photographed this **Marbled White**:



Bernwood Forest, Oxon - 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm zoom - 1/640s@f/8 ISO400

and then spotted a mating pair of **Ringlets**, fairly well-concealed amongst the grass stems:



Bernwood Forest, Oxon - 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm zoom - 1/160s@f/9 ISO400

Since my previous SWF shots had been females, I was pleased to spot a male quietly nectaring under the eaves of the wood.



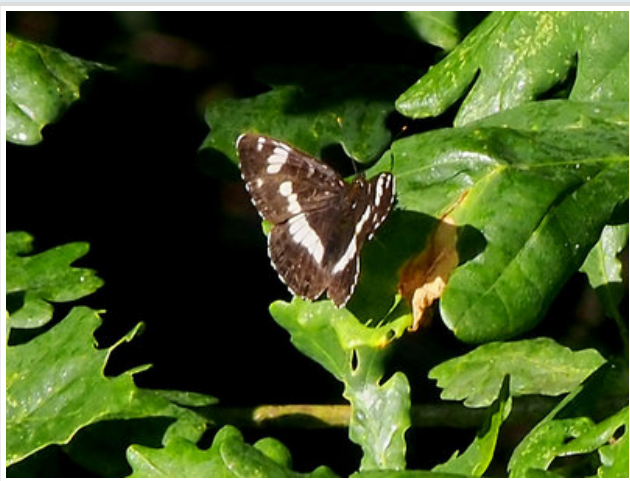
Bernwood Forest, Oxon – 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm zoom – 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

As we came to within about 100 m of the car-park again, I noticed several **Purple Hairstreaks** looping around a clump of Oak trees. They did not deign to descend but I noticed, when looking through binoculars, that one male was basking with open wings, so I took a few long-distance photos. They are not good enough to stand on their own but a short animation shows the purple colouration well. It was curious that three bright spots seemed to appear when the wings were raised, though not visible in other positions. I thought it was an interesting example of how artefacts from light reflection can look like aberrant markings! (*They're not just from the camera but were clearly visible through binoculars, too*)



Bernwood Forest, Oxon – 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm zoom – GIF animation

At the same location, I had one of those 'PE moments' that turned out to be a **White Admiral**. It only paused briefly, before moving on to a bramble patch nearby. Although I went to look, I didn't manage to spot it, before accidentally disturbing it and sending it off again, along the ride.



Bernwood Forest, Oxon – 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm zoom – 1/640s@f/8 ISO400

Finally, I spotted something small and dark on the ride, in light that was now fading rapidly. It was a grounded **Purple Hairstreak** and, although it didn't open its wings, it gave plenty of opportunity to examine the finely-detailed undersides. In fact, it had a badly damaged forewing on one side, which allowed the purple to show through (it was a male) and made a few desperate struggles to take of from the ride, without success. We picked it up and placed it on a moist oak-leaf, where it settled down to roost but I doubt it had much chance of survival in that condition.



Bernwood Forest, Oxon - 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50 macro lens - 1/30s@f/10 ISO1000

Overall, nothing very spectacular but a very enjoyable afternoon's butterflying, with plenty of other wildlife to see as well. At one point, I spotted this somewhat bedraggled **Chiffchaff**, still calling loudly from high branches:



Bernwood Forest, Oxon - 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm zoom - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 12-Jul-15 03:24 AM GMT

I think every thing you saw was spectacular Mike, and fantastic shots too 🍷🍷 I've not seen a PH yet and none of the others this year either, I hope my luck changes next week when I go to Fermyn Woods but the way it's been going lately !!!!! Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 12-Jul-15 03:41 AM GMT

Wonderful shots there Mike - Summer butterflies at their best (apart from the poor PH but great shot anyway). What a smashing place that looks 😊

Re: MikeOxon

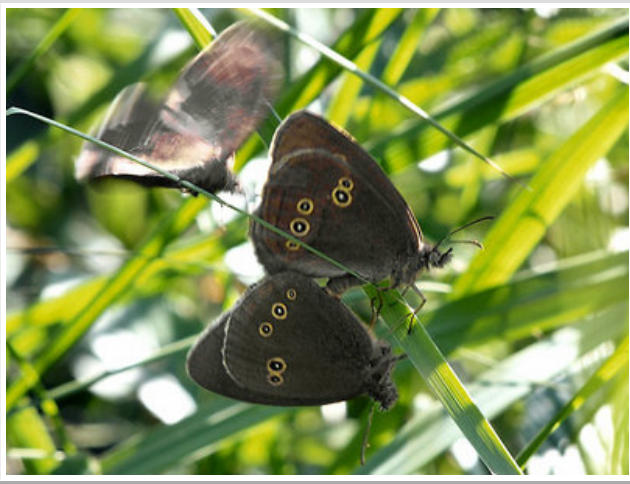
by MikeOxon, 12-Jul-15 04:32 AM GMT

Many thanks for your comments, **Goldie** and **Pauline**.

Bernwood is actually a complex of woods just North of Oxford. I usually park in the Oakley Wood Car park at **SP 612118**. Before WW2, it was a famous butterfly site, much visited by Oxford academics and students, but a large part was felled and replaced with conifers, during and after the war. It is now being restored to its former conditions, with Oak and Hazel planting. The Purple Emperor population has increased in recent years and it is also a good site for Black Hairstreak.

I've been enjoying watching these woods improve over many years, though I may also have taken one of the last photos of a Marsh Fritillary there, back in 1983.

Those **Ringlets** were not left to mate in peace but were frequently investigated by others (presumably males), as shown below:



Bernwood Forest – 9th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/160s@f/9 ISO400

Unfortunately, my shutter speed was too slow to 'freeze' the intruder.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-15 01:02 AM GMT

Cracking Purp Mike, I haven't seen one down low for almost here years now 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-Jul-15 01:42 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cracking Purp Mike, I haven't seen one down low for almost here years now

On a couple of occasions, I've found them low down quite late in the day but it's largely a matter of luck, I think.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-Jul-15 01:54 AM GMT

Since it's pouring with rain at present, I thought I'd spend a few moments describing my experiences so far with the **Olympus OM-D E-M5** camera.

For most users, I would probably recommend the cheaper (and newer) E-M10 model, which has some useful updates, although it lacks some of the more advanced features. For me, the weather-proofing of the E-M5 was an important factor but probably not for most butterfly photographers.

The E-M10 has a pop-up flash, whereas my E-M5 has a tiny clip-on flash, which is a pain to set up! I have bought a small Meike MK300 flash (only £33 from Amazon) as a more convenient unit, when needed in the field. I also have a flash extension lead, which is useful to provide off-camera flash, when photographing flowers, etc.

The OM-D is by no means a cheap camera and it does have a good quality feel in the hand. It's a complex beast, however, and I have had some problems in configuring it to my taste. I found a very helpful 'user guide' at <http://www.dpreview.com/articles/9115179666/user-guide-getting-the-most-out-of-the-olympus-e-m5>, although I had to gain some familiarity with the camera before I could understand their recommendations! At first, the camera seemed to have a mind of its own but I have gradually managed to tame its autofocus settings and have re-programmed many of the buttons, to reduce the likelihood of inadvertently getting into strange modes!

If anyone is interested, my current set-up is shown below:



I have come to like the electronic viewfinder very much indeed. It is well-sized and very responsive; indeed, it's easy to forget that this camera is not a DSLR! One great feature is that it can be set to highlight any over- or under-exposed areas, which makes exposure compensation very easy to apply and ensures optimum exposure for the actual subject. For me, this feature alone gives the camera a real edge over a DSLR. I show the effect below (photographed off the rear screen but the viewfinder does the same and looks better) Typically, the thresholds where these warnings appear are adjustable!



I have now gained sufficient confidence in this camera, to pick it up in preference to my Nikon D300s. The performance of the 4/3 sensor is at least as good as the (older) Nikon APS-size sensor and the M-Zuiko lenses I have are all excellent. The autofocus may only be contrast-detection but it is very quick, although not really able to track fast-moving subjects, which the Nikon, with a good AFS lens, can.

I bought my camera as a kit, with 12-50, 45 f/1.8, and 40-150 mm lenses. Unfortunately, my 12-50 lens proved to be faulty, in that the focus sometimes failed to link to the zoom function. It had to be returned to Olympus for repair and, after a major electronics transplant (AF motor, iris control, and main circuit board), it now seems fine. It is a very complex design, with 'fly by wire' controls, which are intended for video users, but it does provide superb macro images, when used in the special 43 mm macro mode. (similar in effect to a 90 mm lens on full-frame)

The 40-150 lens is simply stunning, despite being a 'budget' model in the Olympus range. I tend to use it most of the time and it has provided me with some really nice butterfly images – remembering that its field of view is equivalent to 80-300 mm on a full-frame 35 mm camera. Olympus do not provide a hood as standard, so I've added a JJC 'clone' as a more reasonably-priced option. (Olympus add-ons do seem to be over-priced)

I have not made much use of the 'fast' 45 mm lens yet but it should come into its own in low-light conditions and it is reported to have superb optical performance.

For my purposes, the small size and low weight, coupled with a ruggedised body, are very welcome. There is not the range of lenses available as with, say, a Canon, but the main requirements are covered and a 300 mm f/4 prime is reputed to be in the pipeline – at a price! My next decision will be whether to maintain my Nikon system as well or commit entirely to Olympus!

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 01-Aug-15 06:57 AM GMT

After a cold, wet spell, more like March than July, the sun finally broke through, yesterday (**30th July**). I decided to see what might be flying at **Aston Rowant NNR**.



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/9 ISO400

I had hope to find Silver-spotted Skippers but, as luck would have it, a patch of cloud persisted in covering the sun for most of the afternoon, and a cold wind blew across the slope.

On the other hand, the cool conditions meant that the **Chalkhill Blues** were keeping close to the ground and resting with their wings fully spread. One had found some rabbit droppings that were, perhaps, a source of a little warmth as well as salts:



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO800

Others found some warmth retained by the many stones scattered over the slope:



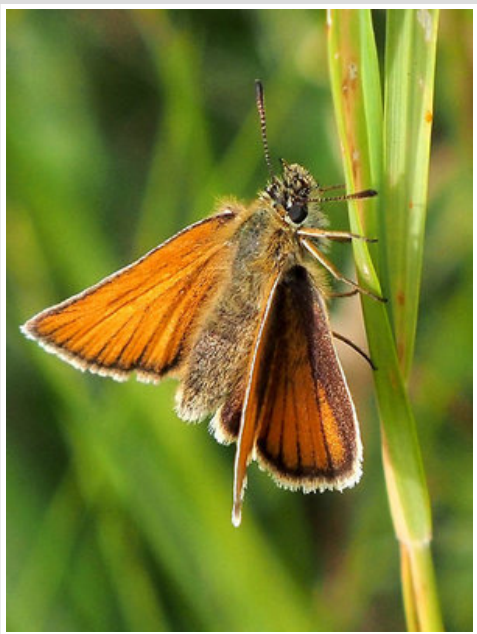
Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/400s@f/8 ISO400

Although I found several males, I only managed to find a single female, also keeping low amongst the stones:



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

While I had no luck with Silver-spotted Skippers (apart from one possible fly-by), there were lots of **Small Skippers** nectaring on the patches of Marjoram along the top of the slope. I spent some time watching them and also looking out for any Essex that might be amongst them. The majority were females and demonstrated how difficult it can be to separate these two species. Many Small Skippers have very dark ends to their antennae but the tip is chisel-shaped, with a light orange area on the underside, whereas the Essex have completely black rounded tips. All the individuals I saw were Small Skippers:



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO400

A direct head-on view was sufficient to show that this was not an Essex girl!



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/9 ISO800

I was impressed by the adroitness with which these Skippers could steer their probosces into the florets of the Marjoram plants, as shown by the following photos:



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO800



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO800



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/9 ISO400

By the time I left, many butterflies were starting to roost, including this Meadow Brown, showing beautiful marbled patterning on the underside:



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO400

Other species seen included Brimstone, Large White, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, and Gatekeeper
Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 01-Aug-15 04:02 PM GMT

Pity about the lack of SSS Mike but you got some smashing shots especially the SS. I always think they are such charismatic and photogenic little butterflies 😊😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 01-Aug-15 10:49 PM GMT

Yesterday, **31st July**, was significantly warmer locally, although cloud was still quite persistent locally. I wanted to try to see a rather rare bird, which I had never seen before – a Red-backed Shrike – that has been in an area of the Oxon Downs for several days.

The wheat fields along either side of the Ridgeway are looking very ripe and ready for harvesting but are also a butterfly-free area, so I knew there would be little chance of making this a dual-purpose trip.



Ridgeway nr. Blewbury, Oxon – 31st July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12–50 mm lens – 1/1250s@f/11 ISO400

The good news is that I did succeed in finding my quarry (a female **Red-backed Shrike**):



Ridgeway nr. Blewbury, Oxon – 31st July 2015 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC – 1/1000s@f/5.6 ISO400

Meanwhile, back at home, there were several butterflies visiting my garden. **Holly Blues** seem to have been constant visitors since April, with no noticeable gap between the broods. On the other hand, they have proved very difficult to photograph, with a preference for only pausing high in the trees. I happened to spot one low down while I was photographing flowers and then managed clumsily to brush the branch on which it was sitting, so that it resumed its continuous patrol:



garden, Abingdon – 31st July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50 mm lens – 1/160s@f/6 ISO400

A **Speckled Wood** was more amenable since, as is usual for this species, it kept returning to the same spot after each of its frequent sallies:



garden, Abingdon – 31st July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50 mm lens – 1/500s@f/10 ISO400

The Climbing Nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum ciliatum*) in the garden were proving irresistible to Whites, so I took the opportunity to photograph this female **Small White**, resting after a bout of egg-laying.



garden, Abingdon – 30th July 2015 Nikon D300s with 70–300 mm lens – 1/500s@f/16 ISO400

Whites seem to be under-represented in photographs, partly because they are quite difficult to photograph well. I find that my Olympus helps a lot because of the over-exposure warnings displayed in the viewfinder (described in an earlier post) In fact, I am finding the E-M5 to be an excellent butterfly camera, partly because of this feature and also through the provision to show a magnified image in the finder, when using manual focus.

For comparison, I photographed a female **Large White** during my recent visit to Aston Rowant. These two species are not always easy to separate (and I hope I'm right with these!) but I think the key is in the black tips to the fore wings – more black round to the trailing edge in the Large.



Aston Rowant NNR – 30th July 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO400

My visit to the Downs was not completely butterfly-free, as I photographed a **Gatekeeper** in the overgrown 'garden' around the former Field Studies centre at Churn.



Ridgeway nr. Blewbury, Oxon – 31st July 2015 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC – 1/180s@f/5.6 ISO400

Back to cool and cloudy here, today.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-15 06:38 AM GMT

Great reports recently Mike, especially good seeing the Red-backed Shrike – they're so common on the continent I don't know what they don't like about it over here 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 02-Aug-15 07:43 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. I've been fascinated by the RB Shrike since reading about the 'butcher bird' as a child. I gather there are signs that it may be re-establishing itself in the south-west, possibly as a result of climate warming.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-Aug-15 06:35 AM GMT

Today (**4th August**) was cloudy, cool, and with a strong wind blowing – clearly not butterflying weather. I remembered that, at around this time last year, I found several Frog Orchids at the western end of the Aston Rowant NNR, on **Bald Hill**, so decided to brave the weather conditions and look for some flowers.



Bald Hill, Oxon – 4th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/1000s@f/5.6 ISO400

Well, things don't always turn out as expected and, despite a thorough combing of the slope, I only managed to find a single Frog Orchid flower-spike, which was not a very photogenic specimen. Other chalk-downland plants were plentiful, with this Vipers Bugloss adding welcome colour on such a dull, grey day:



Bald Hill, Oxon – 4th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/640s@f/5.6 ISO400

On the other hand, it wasn't long before something small and brown zipped past me, hugging the hillside as it flew. Then I saw another and managed to keep my eyes on it until it settled – a **Silver-spotted Skipper**, also braving the conditions!



Bald Hill, Oxon - 4th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

I was pleased to get a record as it rested for a while before rapidly skimming further up the slope. In these conditions, I was not trying to get nice clean backgrounds, etc. but was just happy to record their presence!

I found it was remarkable how difficult these little butterflies were to follow by eye – sometimes one seemed to disappear in mid-air, right in front of me. Even if I did manage to follow one until it landed, it was then very difficult to find on the ground, with almost perfect camouflage blending into the mixed colours on the slope. My wife spotted the next one and, even with her pointing to the spot, it took a while to see it for myself!



Bald Hill, Oxon - 4th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

Her sharp eyes also spotted a Field Grasshopper, settled well down below a cluster of low shrubs:



Bald Hill, Oxon - 4th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/400s@f/5.6 ISO1250

With the wind gusting quite strongly, landings were clearly rather difficult for the Skippers and this one looks far from composed – I suspect it was simply glad to be down!



Bald Hill, Oxon - 4th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/320s@f/6.3 ISO400

I watched another individual attempting to nectar from Scabious flowers but, although it flew to several plants in succession, it never succeeded in making a successful touch-down. Success could only be achieved by finding a well-sheltered spot, down in the undergrowth:



Bald Hill, Oxon - 4th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/320s@f/7.1 ISO400

A few other butterflies were also seen, including Meadow Brown and Small Heath but, surprisingly, no Small Skippers although these had been fairly abundant on the other side of the M40, a few days earlier.

Overall, I enjoyed a surprisingly successful visit, under rather extreme butterflying conditions 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 05-Aug-15 04:46 PM GMT

Great shots of the SSS Mike in challenging weather conditions. I know just how hard it is! 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-Aug-15 07:14 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline. I'm intrigued by the little 'devil's horns' on the heads of these Skippers - I wonder what sensors they carry?

Re: MikeOxon

by bugboy, 05-Aug-15 07:30 PM GMT

I had a similar day yesterday Mike, chasing SSS in rather windy and challenging conditions, good fun though. I've always assumed those 'devil horns' are the tips of the palpi poking up through their fuzzy faces.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 06-Aug-15 12:35 AM GMT

Good fun indeed, Bugboy! I have rarely returned from a butterflying trip feeling in need of warming up. I'm sure you are right about the horns - they seemed particularly prominent in some of my pics.

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-15 06:52 AM GMT

Great Silver-spots Mike 😊 I've seen them twice so far this year and the first time the weather was pretty grim yet there they were despite all the books saying how they'll only come out in warm conditions (normally above 20), just goes to show that if you get out the butterflies will be there waiting 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 06-Aug-15 07:39 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. It's always tempting to think the butterflies 'de-materialise' in bad weather but, of course, they are lurking somewhere 😊 I found the first one by accidentally disturbing it, while hunting for orchids, but there were possibly hundreds hidden on the slope.

I continue to be very pleased with my Olympus E-M5, which did a good job in the trying conditions. The magnifying viewfinder was very useful for ensuring accurate focus when the butterfly was deep in the undergrowth.

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 06-Aug-15 08:38 PM GMT

Hi! Mike, great shots of the SSS, I'm trying to catch up on Posts, our holiday as been very active so far 😊

I've been to Temple Ewell near Dover about three times now, twice the weather has been very windy although sunny and no sign yet of them are the Adonis I'll give it another try tomorrow and then I'm afraid it will be home on Sunday so I'm hoping they'll be out. Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 06-Aug-15 09:57 PM GMT

Good luck, Goldie - weather is supposed to be improving.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 07-Aug-15 07:05 PM GMT

At last, some really hot sunshine for a visit to the Roman road leading onto **Otmoor** from the village of Beckley, north of Oxford.



Roman Road, Otmoor - 6th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50 mm lens - 1/500s@f/9 ISO500

This track is always a sheltered sun-trap, which attracts a wide range of butterflies and dragonflies, as well as birds in the surrounding hedgerows that provide a local name of 'warbler alley'. There's plenty of Blackthorn, which also makes this an excellent place to find **Brown Hairstreak**, although its always a matter of luck as to whether they'll stay high in the Ash trees or nectar on the Knapweed. On this occasion, I was lucky and soon spotted this individual avidly feeding at the edge of the ride:



Roman Road, Otmoor – 6th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/400s@f/11 ISO800

There was plenty of evidence, from the beaten down vegetation in several locations, that many other people had been searching for these butterflies but, on a mid-week afternoon I was fortunate to have the place almost to myself. Just one other couple were enjoying the wildlife on such a pleasant afternoon, so I took the opportunity to mention this website to them.

Whenever I'm hunting for Brown Hairstreaks, there always seem to be plenty of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns to act as decoys. I sometimes wonder if these should be renamed as False BH. I simply search all the flower heads until one of the many browns turns out to be the one I want! I felt like calling to this Brown Hairstreak "**Look behind you...**"



Roman Road, Otmoor – 6th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

But, in fact, there were plenty of flowers to go around and the Meadow Browns were peacefully co-existing:



Roman Road, Otmoor – 6th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/320s@f/10 ISO800

There were many other butterflies to be seen, including Brimstones, Large and Small Whites, and **Green-veined Whites**:



Roman Road, Otmoor – 6th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/400s@f/6.3 ISO400

I saw very few skippers but contorting myself into the positions needed to see the underside of the antennae confirmed that this was an **Essex Skipper**:



Roman Road, Otmoor – 6th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/800s@f/10 ISO800

Vanessids included Peacocks and Commas, while a smaller bright flash of orange turned out to be a **Small Copper**:



Roman Road, Otmoor – 6th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/320s@f/11 ISO500

Several **Common Blues** were flying and, as I have found at several locations this year, there seemed to be plenty of very blue females:



Roman Road, Otmoor – 6th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/11 ISO500

As well as the butterflies, there were plenty of small birds, mainly keeping well hidden, while the Dragonflies included Ruddy and Common Darters, Southern Hawker, and Brown Hawker.

It looks as though there might now be a few days of good butterflying weather. 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 08-Aug-15 04:01 AM GMT

No luck today at Temple Ewell with the SSS or Adonis, still i can't Grumble seen loads of butterflies whilst in Kent. Lots of Common Blues here Mike , love your photo of the CB lets hope the weather keeps up .Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 09-Aug-15 11:00 PM GMT



Old Winchester Hill – 8th August 2015

Yesterday (**8th August**) was not supposed to be a butterflying trip, as my wife wanted to visit the 'Hampshire Carnivorous Plants' nursery in Lower Upham. Following the visit, I realised that **Old Winchester Hill** was nearby, so we decided to take a walk around the old hill fort, after a very enjoyable lunch in the garden of 'The Shoe' pub in Exton.



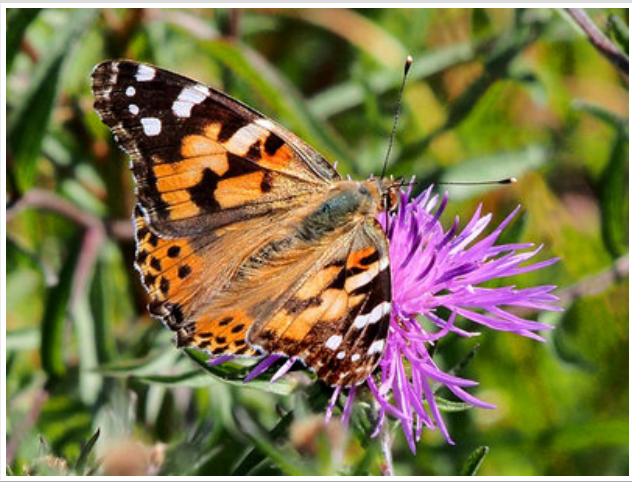
Old Winchester Hill – 8th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/640s@f/11 ISO500

Chalk-hill Blues were abundant on the flower-filled slopes, although the two I photographed were indulging in their passion for less 'agreeable' sources of nourishment:



Old Winchester Hill – 8th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/1600s@f/11 ISO500

I was especially pleased to find **Painted Ladies** skimming across the top of the hill and one paused for a few photographs This broke a photographic 'drought' of two years for me with this species.



Old Winchester Hill – 8th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/1000s@f/10 ISO500

I always think that the underside is especially attractive but, on this occasion, I was only allowed brief glimpses, since the wings were spread flat for most of the time, while the insect was feeding:



Old Winchester Hill – 8th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO500

I have remarked before on the amazing agility with which butterflies can direct their probosces into the nectar-bearing florets, illustrated by the following photo:



Old Winchester Hill – 8th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens (cropped) – 1/800s@f/9 ISO500

There were also the usual hordes of Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers while, at the start of the steep steps down from the summit, there were many **Small Skippers** alongside the path.



Old Winchester Hill – 8th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO500

My last photo from a brilliantly sunny afternoon is of a **Red Admiral** by the path just before we reached the car-park:



Old Winchester Hill – 8th August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO500

I have become rather 'attached' to my Olympus OM-D E-M5 camera, especially with its very versatile 40–150 mm lens, and I find the viewfinder display of under/over exposure very useful, as an aid to accurate exposure of the subject. Unfortunately, despite having been repaired by Olympus once, I am still having problems with the 12–50 mm lens. Does any one else here have any experience of this lens?

Mike

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 10-Aug-15 01:43 AM GMT

You chose well for lunch Mike – last time I was there the food was delicious, much to the disappointment of the ducks 😊 Some nice shots too especially the Painted Lady 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Aug-15 05:17 AM GMT

Thank you Pauline – and thanks to the 'Good Pub Guide' too 😊 I was pleased to get good views of the Painted Lady, since I didn't see any at all, last year. We used to visit Old Winchester Hill quite often, when we lived on the South coast, but I don't recall Chalkhill Blues being as abundant, back then (1970s). Other things have changed as well – the pub we used to visit is now an Indian Take-away.

Re: MikeOxon

by Paul Harfield, 10-Aug-15 05:51 AM GMT

Hi Mike

Just catching up with your Diary. Very envious of your lovely Brown Hairstreaks 😊 I spent several hours looking for them today with very little to show for it photographically 😊 Lower Upham is just around the corner from me, but I have never heard of the Carnivorous Plants Nursery. Just goes to show how easy it is to miss what is on your own doorstep 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Aug-15 06:01 AM GMT

"jackz432r" wrote:

...I have never heard of the Carnivorous Plants Nursery...

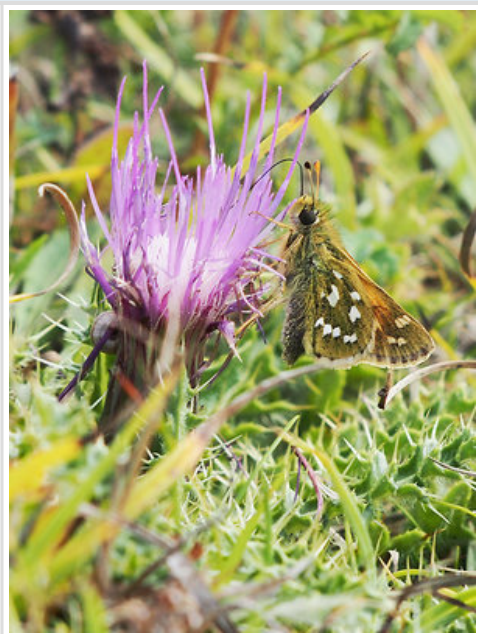
The nursery is not generally open, except by appointment. The owner, Matthew, has 17 Chelsea Gold medals to his name! see <http://www.hantsflytrap.com/>

The Brown Hairstreaks are always 'will it / won't it'. A couple of years ago, I went with a non-butterflying friend and there seemed to be a BH sitting on almost every flower head – I was trying to convey how extraordinary that was. Last year, they stayed high in an Ash tree and, this year, I only saw a couple low down. But then, another day might be quite different.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 24-Aug-15 01:14 AM GMT

After the heat of mid-day yesterday (22nd August), we decided to re-visit Bald Hill, at the SW end of the **Aston Rowant NNR**, when the afternoon started to cool a little. When we arrived, there was quite a cold Easterly wind blowing across the slope and, as on my previous visit, few butterflies were to be seen flying openly across the slope. It was quite late in the afternoon, when the wind dropped and the sun was still shining, that I began to realise, however, that **Silver-spotted Skippers** were still abundant. They were keeping close to the ground and especially enjoying the Dwarf Thistles that dot the slope. My photo illustrates the very prickly nature of the vegetation, which makes getting down low to take photos a rather painful experience!



Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/500@f/7.1 ISO400

The most abundant butterfly species, by far, both on the open slope and the hedgerow that runs along the top, was the **Meadow Brown** and I had plenty of opportunities to observe the variability of this species. The mating pair shown below, were still very flighty, despite being coupled together, and I had to stalk them very carefully to avoid alarming them. I've never noticed before that rather elegant 'deckled edge' to the trailing edge of the hindwings



Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR - 22nd August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens - 1/500@f/8 ISO400

The next example has rich colouring, with prominent eye-spots and a hint of a double pupil:



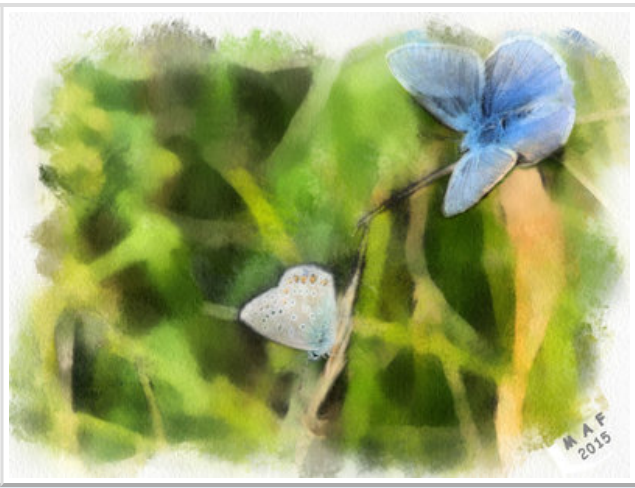
Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR - 22nd August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens - 1/500@f/7.1 ISO400

Whereas this one was much paler, with almost vestigial eye-spots:



Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR - 22nd August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens - 1/250@f/5.6 ISO400

I often notice how an area that seems rather barren at first, begins to reveal far more species, as one 'gets one's eye in'. In this case, I was soon seeing **Chalkhill Blues**, although most were in very worn condition, and **Common Blues**. One very small example (more like a Small Blue in size), turned out to be a very blue female Common Blue and, when she was pursued by a normal-sized male, she seemed only about half his size in linear dimensions. Unfortunately, I was unable to get photos of the pursuit but have attempted to illustrate their relative appearance with the aid of the Dynamic Auto Painter software and some separate images.



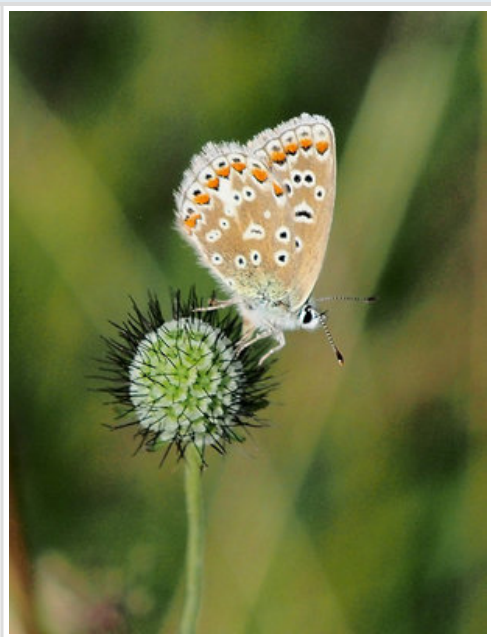
Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd August 2015 DAP image from photographs

and a 'straight' photo of the very small female **Common Blue** on her own:



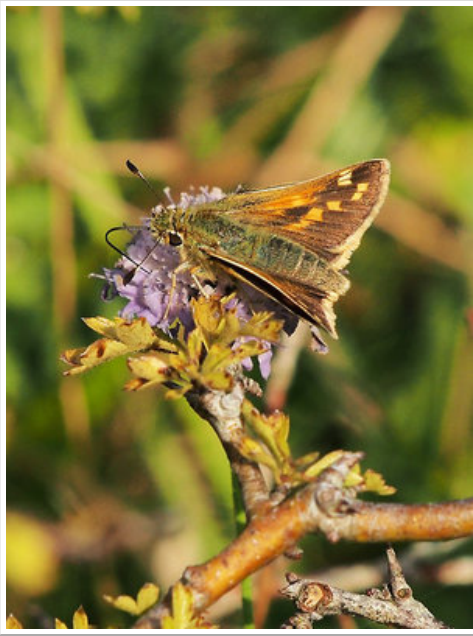
Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/640@f/8 ISO400

Another **Common Blue** chose a particularly spiky perch on which to pose (*can anyone identify the plant for me, please*):



Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/500@f/8 ISO400

A few years ago, **Pauline** noticed that the antennae of Large Skippers are differently coloured between the two sexes. Several of my photos (including the one above) show a bright yellow/orange underside to the antenna tips of **Silver-spotted Skippers**, whereas the female shown below appeared to have completely dark antennae tips



Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR - 22nd August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens - 1/800@f/10 ISO400

I haven't yet examined enough photos to know whether this distinction holds for most SSS but this is the time of year to start checking.

I mentioned before the spiky nature of the vegetation on chalk downland, which makes getting down for photos distinctly uncomfortable. I came across this rather attractive group of Carline Thistles, which looks particularly dry and spiny, even though the flowers are actually quite fresh:



Bald Hill, Aston Rowant NNR - 22nd August 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50 mm lens - 1/160@f/7.1 ISO400

Mike

ps I mentioned in earlier posts that I was having difficult with my Olympus 12-50 mm lens. WEX Photographic have now replaced this lens under warranty

Re: MikeOxon

by bugboy, 24-Aug-15 04:07 AM GMT

I know what you mean about the spikey nature of downland, if it's not a Carline Thistle I'm sitting on it's a Stemless Thistle or a stunted, heavily grazed Hawthorn!

Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-15 04:07 AM GMT

Hi Mike, just catching up on your diary, some great reports and photos in your last few posts.

"MikeOxon" wrote:

... My photo illustrates the very prickly nature of the vegetation, which makes getting down low to take photos a rather painful experience!...

I know exactly what you mean, I found that out myself when I was there the other week. I thought that Bald Hill was definitely 'spikier' than Beacon Hill on the North side.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 29-Aug-15 04:36 AM GMT

MikeOxon wrote:

... My photo illustrates the very prickly nature of the vegetation, which makes getting down low to take photos a rather painful experience!...

Reply Neil Freeman:

I know exactly what you mean, I found that out myself when I was there the other week. I thought that Bald Hill was definitely 'spikier' than Beacon Hill on the North side.

Ah! I seem to recall Mike that you once said you didn't need an articulated screen. 😊

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 29-Aug-15 04:56 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

.....I seem to recall Mike that you once said you didn't need an articulated screen. Jack

If I said that, it was in younger, more supple days – I've used a right-angle finder on a DSLR for years and the tilt screen on my Olympus is very useful! Even when looking down onto the screen, however, I still need to put a hand down to steady myself and that's when the spiny plants make their attack 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-15 06:26 AM GMT

Lovely Silver-spot shtos Mike, especially the first one, it's a classic 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-Aug-15 08:07 AM GMT

Pleased you liked it, Wurzel. It makes it worth suffering all the prickly vegetation 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 31-Aug-15 03:02 PM GMT

That's a great shot of the Meadow Brown with the Brown Hairstreak Mike. Not sure how I missed it earlier 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-Aug-15 08:59 PM GMT

Thanks for looking in, Pauline. i always like to try and show something a bit 'different' 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 02-Sep-15 12:03 AM GMT

Just catching up a bit Mike, I think that first shot of the Skipper is great, 👍 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 07-Sep-15 08:33 PM GMT

After a long period of both dull and wet weather, yesterday (6th September) dawned bright and sunny, though with a distinctly autumnal chill in the air. By lunchtime, it was warming up fast, so I decided to look for Adonis Blues at **Aston Rowant NNR**.



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/640@f/10 ISO400

There were few butterflies to be seen at first; the banks of Marjoram with their attendant hordes of Small Skippers were gone and I had walked some distance along the path before seeing my first Chalkhill Blue. The slope above the M40 was warming up, though, and soon I was seeing Silver-spotted Skippers and plenty of Meadow Browns enjoying the sunshine.

This **Silver-spotted Skipper** was literally winding itself around the flower to find all the nectar in this Dwarf Thistle



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/800@f/9 ISO400

I continued towards the South-facing slopes of Beacon Hill, towards the NW end of the reserve, and there, on the short-cropped turf, were the **Adonis Blues** that I had come to see.



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/1000@f/10 ISO400

In many cases, the distinctive chequered fringes were already well worn but there was no mistaking the iridescent blue colour of the top surfaces of the males. The slope was well-carpeted with chalk downland flowers, of which the abundant Eyebright flowers were proving particular favourites:



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/1000@f/10 ISO400

As a striking colour-contrast to the blues, some very bright male **Brimstones** were also visiting the flowers, which included the local Chiltern Gentians.



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/500@f/8 ISO400

A smaller 'blue' turned out to be a very fresh **Brown Argus**, with a beautiful purple sheen across its rich chocolate upper wings.



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/800@f/10 ISO400

I was interested to look at the **female blues** to see if I could distinguish between Adonis and Chalkhill Blues. The simple answer is that I could not be sure but there were considerable variations. Some of the first examples that I saw, at the car-park end of the slope were almost certainly Chalkhills (since I did not see any Adonis males in this area). Many were very faded, although some still showed red lunules along the wing edges.



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/640@f/9 ISO400



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/1250@f/11 ISO400

Towards Beacon Hill, where the Adonis males were more plentiful, there were several much fresher looking females and, although these showed little sign of blue scales around the red lunules, I suspect that these were more likely to be Adonis



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/800@f/10 ISO400



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/1000@f/11 ISO400

I would not, however, like to make any firm diagnosis of any of these females. I also noticed that the male Adonis looked very different from the probable *Polonus* forms that I had seen amongst the Spring brood at The Holies, discussed at <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=7459&start=340#p99137>. There was no sign of the prominent spotting on the wings, which I had observed on those specimens.

The approach of Autumn was very obvious from the clusters of large fungi on the slopes and the profusion of red berries, shining in the afternoon sun. There are probably not many good butterflying days left now before the season closes.



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/640@f/10 ISO400

One last photo, however, before I finish this entry. I had left my wife sitting on the slope, while I went in search of Adonis Blues. When I returned, she said that she had seen no blues where she was. Right on cue, the most perfect Adonis I had seen, with chequered fringes intact, settled just in front of her!



Aston Rowant NNR, Oxon – 6th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/1000@f/10 ISO400

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by millerd, 08-Sep-15 06:37 AM GMT

Lovely images from Aston Rowant, Mike. I must make it up there once more this season if I can, before the Adonis disappear.

Dave

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-15 09:48 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the Adonis Mike, at least the Butterflies are still about, I didn't realise the Adonis and the Silver Spotted Skipper stayed into September. Some times the books tell you this but when you look for them they've gone, I suppose it depends on the weather as well Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 08-Sep-15 10:42 PM GMT

I didn't realise the Adonis and the Silver Spotted Skipper stayed into September

In the 1970s, it was hardly worth looking for SSS before early September. Dates for SSS have come forward by at least a month in the past 40 years. I'm less familiar with Adonis Blue in the 1970s but I am sure second brood peaked then in September.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 09-Sep-15 03:19 AM GMT

Thank you for commenting **Dave**, **Goldie** and **Jack**.

I agree with you, Jack, about the timing of these late-season butterflies. I always used to think of Silver-spotted Skippers as real 'tail enders' and it seemed all wrong to find them on the slope at Aston Rowant in mid-July, last year.

I also recall that Adonis Blue was a real rarity in Oxfordshire in the early 80s, with a small colony on the Downs near Streatley. The site at Lough Down was managed specially for this species and numbers increased steadily but, unfortunately, this year, the site has become rather overgrown and I saw none in the Spring. On the other hand, they are now thriving at a number of other sites in the County, including good numbers at Beacon Hill on Aston Rowant NNR.

There is no doubt that there have been many changes in the fortunes of our butterflies over the last 40 years or so but it has not all been losses!

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 09-Sep-15 03:40 AM GMT

Hi! Mike, Jack, I suppose it's because of Global Warming, I'm no expert but it seems when I was younger we seemed to get lots of snow in the winter time then, I had a great time sledging down the steep moors 😊

Living in the North we always seemed to get lots of snow, not now though, it goes mad at times, perhaps the odd Winter but then it's back to rain again. I suppose the Butterflies have adjusted to the seasons, I wish I could. 😊 Having said that it seems Scotland got loads of snow last year, you can't win. Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 09-Sep-15 04:37 AM GMT

Mike:

There is no doubt that there have been many changes in the fortunes of our butterflies over the last 40 years or so but it has not all been losses!

I have some old distribution maps dating from the 1970s shows Peacock to be absent from north Scotland except for a small cluster in the Aberdeen area. When I lived near Aberdeen in the 1980s, Peacock certainly wasn't common and I can recall only one sighting. The Moray Firth (where I now live) was a Peacock blank on those 1970 maps. Now, they are in the same sort of numbers as in S.England with a nearby buddleia having three or more at any one time.

Bear in mind though that it has been suggested that a more frequent extra brood of the Wall Brown might be the reason for its decline in that the offspring of the third brood have insufficient time to develop adequately before winter sets in.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by Dan Ransley, 09-Sep-15 11:51 PM GMT

Hello Mike,

Lovely photo's, as always! It was a pleasure to meet you at Aston Rowant last weekend – thank you again for taking the time to speak to me, and for sharing your extensive knowledge. I hope you enjoyed the day as much as I did!

All the best,
Dan

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Sep-15 01:28 AM GMT

Good to meet you too, Dan, and I've also enjoyed browsing your flickr stream – some splendid photos there 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Sep-15 02:24 AM GMT



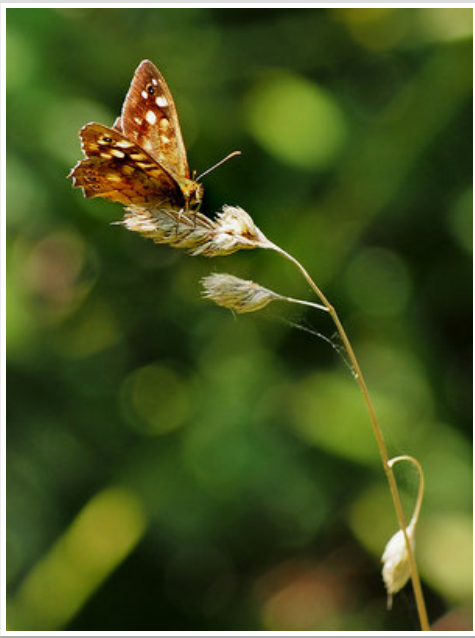
Otmoor, Oxon – 7th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

There was quite an Autumnal feel to my visit to **Otmoor** on Monday (7th September). I had gone for the possibility of a Clouded Yellow, which I found on the moor last year, or of a late Brown Hairstreak. In the event, I saw neither, though there was the following notice board by the path on the RSPB reserve:



Otmoor, Oxon – 7th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/640s@f/9 ISO400

Along the Roman Road, many **Speckled Woods** were actively defending their perches and sallying forth after many passing insects:



Otmoor, Oxon - 7th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/250s@f/5.6 ISO400

Dragonflies were plentiful, especially Common Darters and Southern Hawkers and I spotted one Beautiful Demoiselle, living up to its name (although this is male!)



Otmoor, Oxon - 7th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO400

Other butterfly species included **Meadow Browns**, a single bright **Comma** and several **Small Whites**. Once again, I appreciated the facility to judge exposure of the whites, by means of the viewfinder indications in my Olympus E-M5:



Otmoor, Oxon - 7th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/1000s@f/10 ISO400



Otmoor, Oxon - 7th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/800s@f/10 ISO400

A flock of Siskins was exploring the seed heads along the sides of the path, though these were very flighty and did not hang around for photos - another sign of Autumn. The Blackthorn bushes were looking in good condition, hopefully harbouring plenty of Brown Hairstreak eggs in anticipation of the next season.



Otmoor, Oxon - 7th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/200s@f/5.6 ISO400

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-15 05:12 AM GMT

That is a cracking Specklie shot Mike, I love the composition 😊👍 I know what you mean about the Silver-Spots and I've only been butterflying for about 5 years. I started off waiting until the end of August to go and see them at Stockbridge whereas this year I went and saw them in July 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 10-Sep-15 05:54 AM GMT

That blackthorn is positively laden with fruit, Mike. Any sloe gatherers should take note and get themselves down there!

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Sep-15 06:38 AM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. Having been accused of crimes against photography in another thread, I thought I'd better try harder 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Sep-15 06:39 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

That blackthorn is positively laden with fruit, Mike. Any sloe gatherers should take note and get themselves down there!

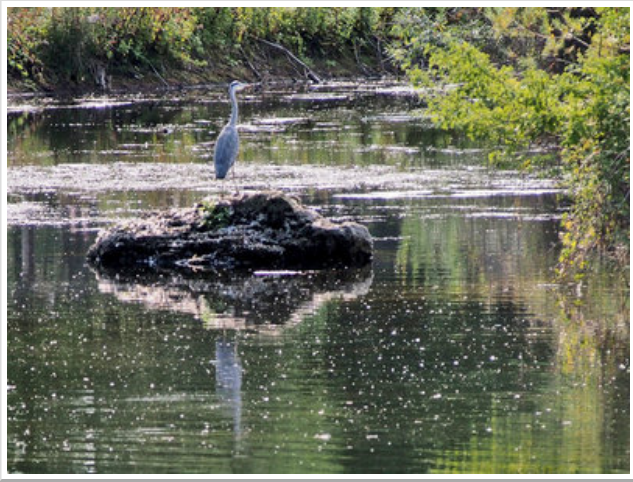
Indeed, David – the sloe gin should be good this year 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Sep-15 09:38 PM GMT

A short walk in warm sunshine around the **Radley Gravel Pit** lakes, close to my home, found large numbers of active Common Blues but very few other butterfly species, apart from an occasional White. Last year, I had found several Clouded Yellows there, but the habitat has changed considerably in just one year.

The site was formerly used for ash disposal from the now-closed Didcot power station but is now re-generating. The area that was open scrub is now a young Birch forest, full of tall saplings. Many of the lakes have been filled in but Thrupp Lake survives and is now a nature reserve managed by the [Earth Trust](http://www.earthtrust.org.uk/:3j71kawt) [[url=http://www.earthtrust.org.uk/:3j71kawt](http://www.earthtrust.org.uk/:3j71kawt)]



RadleyGP, Oxon – 10th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/400s@f/6.3 ISO400

Amongst the **Common Blues**, I noticed a very small female, about the size of a Small Blue, similar to one I had seen previously at Aston Rowant. She was busy laying, expertly finding the food-plant, despite the absence of any of the characteristic birds-foot trefoil flowers.



RadleyGP, Oxon – 10th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO400



RadleyGP, Oxon - 10th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/800s@f/9 ISO400

Most of the males were fairly battered but enjoying the late-flowering Michaelmas Daisies in between basking on the warm stones of the path.



RadleyGP, Oxon - 10th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/800s@f/10 ISO400



RadleyGP, Oxon - 10th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 lens - 1/1250s@f/11 ISO400

Although it was still warm in the sun, there was little doubt that the butterfly season is nearing its end.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 12-Sep-15 03:56 AM GMT

Nice shots Mike, I particularly like the Heron in the stream they always look so majestic Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 12-Sep-15 04:42 AM GMT

Thank you, Goldie. I often see Gulls or Ducks standing on that rock but this was the first time I had seen a Heron there, standing so majestically.
Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 14-Sep-15 11:24 PM GMT

With cool, wet, and windy weather forecast for the coming week, it seems a good time to take stock of my 2015 butterflying trips.

Last year, I photographed my first Clouded Yellows on 28th October, so there is still the possibility of future additions to this year's list! I find that, at present, I have photographed a total of 43 species this year, which I find surprisingly many, since I only made a couple of 'special' trips – to Exmoor for the Heath Fritillary and to South Wales for the High Brown Fritillary. All the others were at sites that I visit fairly regularly, across the counties of central Southern England. To my shame, I did not record either the local speciality Black Hairstreak or the Purple Emperor during 2015.

If any of our photographic records survive into future centuries, I feel that they will convey a very false impression of the relative abundance of our various species. I suspect that I am like many other people in that I fill my memory cards with images of the scarcer species, while paying relatively little attention to the familiar ones. Looking through my images taken this year, I find, for example that I have 63 photos of Heath Fritillaries but only 2 of Large Whites.

The following images are grouped according to the dates on which I first photographed each species. In several cases, I took better photos later in the season but I have kept this set as a 'diary record' and will probably turn to other photos when the annual 'favourite photos' thread starts over the Winter period. So, here is my 'butterfly year', encapsulated in 43 images:



Brimstone, Comma, Peacock, Green Hairstreak, Holly Blue, Small Copper, Orange Tip, Duke of Burgundy, Pearl-bordered Frit.



Grizzled Skipper, Green-veined White, Common Blue, Small Heath, Marsh Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Small Blue, Adonis Blue (Polonus), Heath Fritillary



Small PB Frit., Silver-studded Blue, Marbled White, Large Blue, Dark Green Frit.,Meadow Brown Sm.Tortoiseshell, High Brown Frit.,Small Skipper



Silver-washed Frit.,Large Skipper, Ringlet, White Admiral, Purple H'streak, Small White Chalkhill Blue, Large White, Speckled Wood



Gatekeeper, Silver-spotted Skipper, Brown Hairstreak, Essex Skipper, Brown Argus, Painted Lady, Red Admiral

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by peterc, 14-Sep-15 11:44 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

That is an impressive list and group of photos - well done. I am nowhere near your total - have to try harder next year 😊

ATB

Peter

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 14-Sep-15 11:56 PM GMT

Thank you Peter. Of course, a lot depends on where you live and radius of action. I feel fortunate to have both Bernwood Forest and the Chilterns in easy reach, so a good number of species are readily available, with just a little diary planning 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 15-Sep-15 12:19 AM GMT

That's a lot of Butterflies Mike, 😊 like you say it depends on where you live, your so lucky to live so near such a great place, I've not seen the PearlB Frit or the SPB this year and I can usually photograph them, the awful weather we've had up here hasn't helped.

I was lucky with the Empress though but I was so excited at seeing her that I didn't remember to change the camera's setting's, she was in the Ferns and it was dark so my photos weren't too good, so like you I'm determined to look for the PE next year, maybe next time I'll do better. Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 15-Sep-15 08:14 PM GMT

Thank you, **Goldie**. I think I should plan a trip Northward next year, to fill in a few 'digital' gaps, since there are several species there that I have only recorded on film.

For the sake of completeness, my 'missing' mainland species from this year's list (barring occasional migrants) are: *Chequered Skipper*, *Lulworth Skipper*, *Swallowtail*, *Clouded Yellow*, *Wood White*, *Black Hairstreak*, *White-letter Hairstreak*, *Northern Brown Argus*, *Purple Emperor*, *Glanville Fritillary*, *Wall Brown*, *Mountain Ringlet*, *Large Heath*, *Grayling*, *Scotch Argus*.

Looking at that list now, I realise that a little extra effort could easily have added 6 species, without having to travel far afield. One trip I must make one day is to cross the Irish Sea for a *Cryptic Wood White*. And then there are all the 'occasionals' such as *Monarch*, *Camberwell Beauty*, *Long-tailed Blue*, etc..... Still plenty to look for 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 16-Sep-15 06:27 AM GMT

Nice 'almost' end of the year round up Mike 😊 Better start getting those faves ready – about a month til kick off 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by millerd, 16-Sep-15 07:44 AM GMT

That's a lovely round-up of your year, Mike – nicely presented as an album too. 😊 Thanks, by the way for mentioning Beacon Hill at Aston Rowant in your diary earlier – well worth a wander the other day. 😊 Finally, I did a double-take with your heron photo – it looks for all the world as if it's perched on a crocodile's head... Maybe I should get new glasses. 😊

All the best,

Dave

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 16-Sep-15 08:13 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

.....I did a double-take with your heron photo – it looks for all the world as if it's perched on a crocodile's head.....

You never know what lies deep in the lakes of darkest Oxfordshire 😊

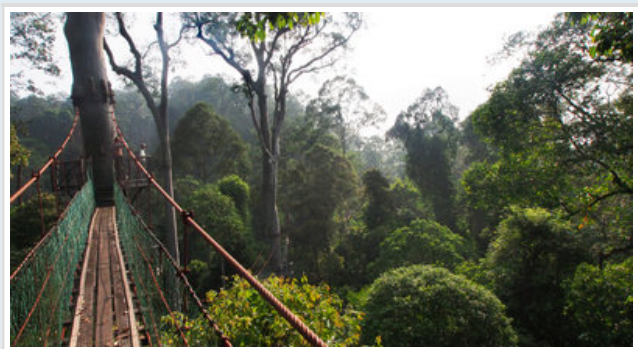
Thank you for commenting, Wurzel and Dave. I enjoy keeping this diary and find it makes interesting reading at the end of the season and also sets some targets for next year. I keep copies of my entries in pdf format and, even without the intervening comments, it adds up to over 100 A4 pages – an enjoyable read over the dark Winter months.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 03-Nov-15 01:22 AM GMT

The gap since my previous diary entry is explained by the fact that I have spent a month in S.E.Asia – Sabah (North Borneo) and Singapore. It will take some time to absorb all the experiences, not to mention sorting out several thousand photos. All my 'identifications' below are from my reading of "A Naturalist's Guide to the Butterflies of Peninsular Malaysia" and I will welcome any corrections



Early Morning on the Canopy Walk at Danum Valley, Sabah

Natural history TV shows can give the impression that the wildlife in the rainforest is all lined up, ready to be photographed, but that is far from the case. Although there is a huge diversity of species, individuals can be spread quite thinly and are also masters at concealing themselves amongst the rampant vegetation. In the case of butterflies, photography proved to be quite difficult until I developed a feel for their behaviour.

Whereas in Britain, butterflies seem to have an obvious purpose – either hunting for nectar or chasing females – tropical butterflies just seem to be constantly on the move, like perpetual motion machines. During the day, nectaring stops are often extremely brief – just a momentary 'brush' against a flower – so, despite many species being large and colourful, photography remains a serious challenge.

There is also very little seasonal variation at the equator, so there is no equivalent to the flight times of specific species. The most significant factor is altitude and my first stay was at the Kinabalu National Park, which lies in montane forest up to about 2000m (6000ft) altitude. Butterflies were not abundant here but I was somewhat amused, in view of the excitement being caused by the appearance of Long-tailed Blues in Kent at the time I left, to find that a vaguely similar-looking species was especially abundant on the flowers surrounding our accommodation, not far from the Park HQ. These were actually, I believe, Plains Cupids – *Chilades pandava*:



Kinabalu NP, Sabah – 27th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO640

After visiting several other areas, including the Orang Utan rehabilitation centre at Sepilok, I eventually reached the remarkable Rainforest Lodge in the Danum Valley, right in the heart of the finest area of lowland forest in Sabah. This is an extraordinary place – a very comfortable collection of individual chalets set in clearings around a central lodge, which provides excellent bar and restaurant facilities – all about 80km from the nearest town, along a narrow dirt track!

A large flowering shrub adjacent to the lodge, with the added advantage that it could be viewed from a cool and shady verandah, proved a magnet to butterflies, including that 'iconic' species, Rajah Brooke's Birdwing – *Trogonoptera brookiana*. I had already seen this species several times at Kinabalu, where it frequented the mountain streams, but none had paused long enough for a reasonable photograph. Here, I was fortunate to find a female, nectaring just a few feet in front of my camera, though it never actually stopped beating its wings while feeding:



Danum Valley, Sabah – 8th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/1600s@f/5.6 ISO1000

Another species that frequented the same flowering shrub was the Great Orange Tip – *Hebomoia glaucippe* – rather larger and more strikingly marked than our version:



Danum Valley, Sabah – 8th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/800s@f/6.3 ISO500

I was fortunate to have the services of one of the Danum guides (Theodore Dennis), who was interested in butterflies and accompanied me on an early-morning walk along one of the tracks. Just before dawn, as the mist cleared from the tall trees and the Gibbons ceased singing, was a good time to catch the butterflies lingering on flowers, before starting their frenetic daytime activity.

The following group includes a Banded Yeoman – *Cirrochroa emalia* – in the foreground and, possibly, a Vagrant – *Vagrans sinha* – amongst others in the background:



Danum Valley, Sabah – 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/640s@f/9 ISO500

A particularly spectacular find was the Malayan Lacewing – *Cethosia hysia* – vivid red-orange on the upperside, with a complex, colourful pattern below:



Danum Valley, Sabah – 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/250s@f/7.1 ISO500

I also felt particularly fortunate to find a magnificent specimen of a Clipper – *Parthenos Sylvia* – (a familiar tropical butterfly-house species) enjoying fruits that were somewhat reminiscent of blackberries For once I had an individual that was happy to stay on one place, while I concentrated on getting some reasonable photos!



Danum Valley, Sabah – 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO500



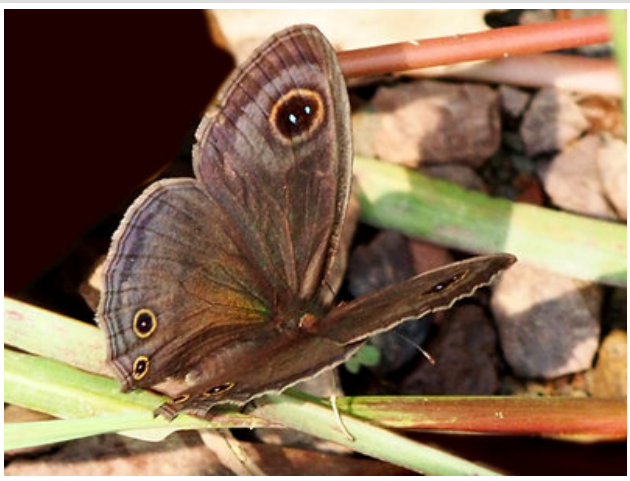
Danum Valley, Sabah – 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO500

I could fill several pages with Skippers, Whites and Yellows, and loads of Browns, with seemingly endless variations of rings and eye-spots, but will rein myself in, since this is a UK Butterflies site, after all! Here are a couple of species with an iridescence that rivals any Purple Emperor. I believe that the first is a Royal Assyrian – *Terinos terpander* – and the second a Striped Blue Crow – *Euploea mulciber*. Neither was being very co-operative over photography:



Danum Valley, Sabah – 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/320s@f/5.6 ISO500

And one of the many Browns and Ringlets which also shows a degree of iridescent colour. I believe that this is a Common Three Ring – *Ypthima pandocus* – (having also viewed the underside):



Danum Valley, Sabah – 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/500s@f/8 ISO500

Finally, an insect that looks a bit like a Skipper, at first glance, but is clearly nothing to do with Lepidoptera. I'd be grateful if anyone can point me in the right direction for an ID:



Danum Valley, Sabah – 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12–50mm macro lens – 1/320s@f/8 ISO500

My Olympus camera performed splendidly throughout, proving itself fully capable of withstanding the harsh conditions and having an uncanny ability to focus on small birds deep within foliage. With its 45mm f/1.8 lens and excellent performance at high ISO ratings, it also captured many night-time photos of rare mammals, such as the Western Tarsier, during 'spotlighting' walks.

In fact, I was so pleased with the camera that I have now replaced it with the E-M1 model, which, as **Mikhail** commented earlier in my diary, is even

nicer. The E-M1 adds phase-detection AF, for tracking moving subjects, and, with the latest firmware, can do automatic stacking of macro shots, when using the M-Zuiko 60mm macro lens. I am looking forwards to testing its capabilities in the next season.

EDIT – amended *Cirrochroa orissa* to *C.emalia*, as pointed out by **Padfield**, below
Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by bugboy, 03-Nov-15 02:16 AM GMT

Looks like you had a great time out there, I for one wouldn't mind at all seeing a few more tropical species, particularly now we are at the end of our own season.

As for the final insect, it looks to me a lot like a member of the true bugs, Hemiptera. Possibly of the genus *Ricania* sp.

Edit just found this <http://spinelesswonders.smugmug.com/key.../i-qt2nFjv>

Re: MikeOxon

by Mark Colvin, 03-Nov-15 02:44 AM GMT

Hi Mike.

I agree, your 'bug' is most likely to be a member of the family Ricaniidae – Planthoppers. I don't know the exact species.

I'm looking forward to seeing the pictures from the rest of your trip.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 03-Nov-15 04:23 AM GMT

Brilliant butterflies, Mike! How wonderful to see Rajah Brooke's birdwing – just the name is exotic. And *Chilades pandava* brings back very good memories to me.

I would suggest your *Cirrochroa* is *emalea*, rather than *orissa*. I also think your *Terinos terpander* is actually a female *T. clarissa* (hindwing caudate at v. 4).

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 03-Nov-15 04:46 AM GMT

Hi! Mike what a fantastic holiday you had, your photos are fantastic please show us more I think the Lace wing is superb, Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 03-Nov-15 04:49 AM GMT

Sounds like a fantastic trip Mike and some great photos 🍷 😊

It is good to see those exotics photographed in their natural surroundings.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 03-Nov-15 06:46 AM GMT

Some fantastic images there Mike 😊 I wouldn't know where to start with so much variety present 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 03-Nov-15 06:59 AM GMT

It must have been almost 'overload' for you, Mike.

Some stunning specimens there.

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 03-Nov-15 07:16 PM GMT

Many thanks for the ID info, **Bugboy** and **Mark** – yet another fascinating group of insects to explore!

Thank you also for the corrections, **Guy** – I shall post a few more examples soon, in the hope that you will provide similar guidance. Unfortunately, there is no guide to Borneo butterflies currently in print, though Pemberley are taking pre-orders for one.

You are quite right about 'overload', **David**, and it's not just butterflies either! Getting to grips with all those mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, weird and wonderful insects, including that fascinating group: phasmids, will keep me occupied for a long time to come. In fact, I wrote my diary entry as a break from working through all my photos – it was nice to 'cherry pick' a few of the more spectacular butterflies! (which was how I chose to start, **Wurzel**)

It is certainly a great experience to see all these 'exotics' in their natural surroundings, **Neil**, although, at first, you do have to keep reminding yourself that it is not a zoo or a wildlife park but really is the natural environment! And, in all the flood of new experiences, one must not forget the flora – starting with the spectacular size of the giant forest trees and then their dense clothing of vines, epiphytes, and so one, down to the fabulous orchids in all shapes and sizes. (Driving home from Heathrow along the M40, the local trees looked more like Bonsai, in comparison!)

I've not yet decided how to share some of my experiences on the web, **Goldie**, but will let you all know when I put something up, somewhere 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 04-Nov-15 04:38 AM GMT

I look forward to more, Mike.

As to books, I think that little field guide to Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand is excellent (I wrote a review of it here: <http://www.dispar.org/reference.php?id=51>). If the forthcoming guide to Borneo is as good it will be an excellent addition to the library. I also have several more comprehensive volumes dealing with the region. I bought a copy of the 2nd edition of Pisuth Ek-Amnuay's *Butterflies of Thailand* as soon as it came out. This is now out of print but Pemberley Books still has copies in stock (<http://www.pemberleybooks.com/product/butterflies-of-thailand/23574/>). It's a really excellent book, illustrating all of the nearly 1300 species found in Thailand and therefore covering much of the rest of the region pretty well, apart from endemic island species and subspecies. D'Abrera's *Butterflies of the Oriental Region* fills in those gaps. The taxonomy is out of date, but that's what the internet is for!

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 06-Nov-15 08:11 PM GMT

In my previous entry, I mentioned how tropical butterflies just seem to be constantly on the move, like perpetual motion machines. During the day, they rarely actually land to feed but take nectar in a brief pass over a flower, with wings still beating.

I spent some time, one afternoon, watching a flowering shrub just below the verandah at the Danum Valley Rainforest Lodge and managed to catch some of the action – I believe these are Black and White Helen – *Papilio nephelus*:



Danum Valley, Sabah – 10th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens – 1/1000s@f/10 ISO1000



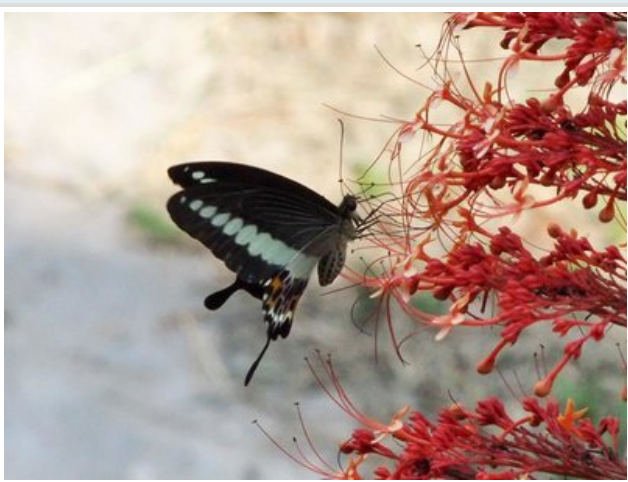
Danum Valley, Sabah - 10th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/1000s@f/10 ISO1000

Sometimes the results could look almost surreal - it's quite hard to work out exactly how the wings are arranged in the following shot:



Danum Valley, Sabah - 10th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/1600s@f/11 ISO1000

And here are a couple more - this time Banded Swallowtail - *Papilio demolion*:



Danum Valley, Sabah - 10th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/2500s@f/11 ISO1000



Danum Valley, Sabah – 10th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150mm lens – 1/2500s@f/11 ISO1000

I suppose that a Hummingbird Hawkmoth is the species most likely to be seen behaving in this manner in the UK.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by FISHiEE, 07–Nov–15 01:43 AM GMT

Yes I've seen this in several species in Africa. Mostly swallowtail species I think. I've watched European Swallowtails doing this in the south of France also quite often, so maybe it's a swallowtail thing. Makes photography challenging!

I've don't know if the British swallowtail does this much. Of the few I've seen I've not seen them do this.

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 07–Nov–15 02:28 AM GMT

Yes, definitely a *Papilio* thing. I'm impressed with your pictures, Mike. The fast shutter speed has frozen the forewings, which the butterflies use to keep themselves aloft as they tiptoe over the flowers. Slower speeds usually show the hindwings well, with blurry, see-through forewings.

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 07–Nov–15 07:43 PM GMT

Thank you Guy. Again, the Olympus proved an excellent tool for the job, with its very rapid operation. Unlike an SLR, there is no mirror lag when you press the shutter, which is speeded up to 1/4000s (1/8000s on the E-M1). The light was very strong when I took those photos but the high-ISO capability was still useful, since I could use a fairly small aperture, to help keep these rapidly moving creatures in focus!

I think these photos illustrate one essential difference between butterflies and moths. The fore and hind wings in most moths are coupled by means a small spine on the hind wing, called the *frenulum*, which hooks into a loop on the forewing, called the *retinaculum*. Butterflies do not have this coupling but rely on a degree of overlap between the wings, which keeps them beating in phase. It does, however, give the forewings some independence, as shown in some of these photos.

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 08–Nov–15 08:15 PM GMT

Beautiful photos Mike, I particularly like the colour of the flower's they make the Butterfly look surreal (dream like) what a lovely Butterfly, please keep posting more photos Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 08–Nov–15 09:50 PM GMT

Thank you **Goldie**. I confess I don't know what the plant is – perhaps someone here can enlighten me?

[EDIT] after some Googling, I now know that the shrub is *Clerodendrum paniculatum* (pagoda flower)

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 09–Nov–15 06:17 AM GMT

Stunning images of Mike 😊 The 'enforced in flight shots' really add to the feeling conveyed by the images 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: MikeOxon

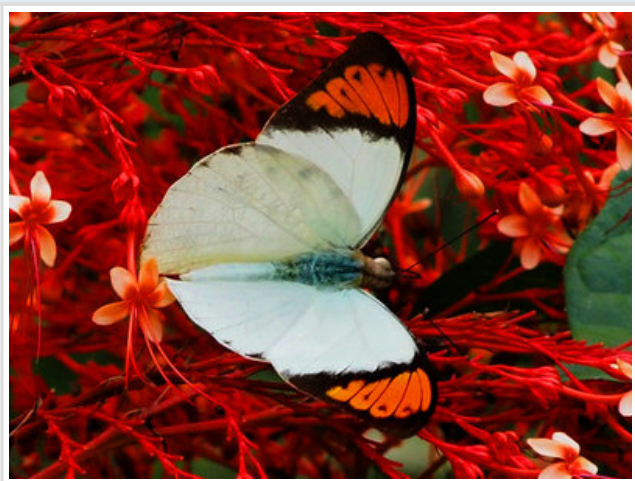
by MikeOxon, 11-Nov-15 11:07 PM GMT

In view of the continuing dull weather, it is rather pleasant to have some 'exotic' butterfly photos to work on! I'm sure that Guy is correct in stating that feeding on the wing is a *Papilio* 'thing', although they are not the only group to do it. The following photo shows a Great Orange Tip *Hebomoia glaucippe* approaching flowers with its proboscis 'at the ready':



Danum Valley, Sabah - 10th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/1000s@f/10 ISO1000

Although this species was also willing to feed in a more 'relaxed' manner:



Danum Valley, Sabah - 10th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/640s@f/9 ISO1000

I have a copy of 'A Naturalists Guide to the Butterflies of Borneo' on pre-order from Pemberley Books and hope that this will help me to identify the various species in my photos. In the meantime, I have been browsing the web and found some useful sites, such as <http://www.butterflycircle.com/checklist/> which has loads of photos and species descriptions. I also found a PDF Catalogue of Swallowtail Butterflies at BORNEENSIS at <http://www.bbec.sabah.gov.my/overall/bbec24/twentyfour.pdf> which has been very helpful in separating similar species.

I had been feeling quite pleased with my little collection of photos, until I read the following, under 'Butterflies Habitats' in the BORNEENSIS catalogue: "In Sabah, Mount Kinabalu recorded an outstanding 625 species of butterflies within its boundaries making it one of the highly diverse areas on butterflies' sake. The number recorded there are higher than the whole of Europe whose species numbers are the pathetic 365 species." I wonder what adjective they might have chosen for our British list?

Anyway, the Catalogue enabled me to identify the following photo as a 'Striped Jay' *Graphium bathycles* :



Danum Valley, Sabah - 10th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens - 1/1600s@f/11 ISO1000

I can't help feeling that the underside looks as though it has been coloured by a child's crayons!

Now, back to the gloom and more photo-sorting.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 11-Nov-15 11:37 PM GMT

...Europe who species numbers at the pathetic 365 species." I wonder what adjective they might have chosen for our British list?

I wonder if SNP realises that with independence, the national list would only be in the 30s.

Memo to Pete: what are you plans in the event of Scottish independence? This could hardly continue as "UK Butterflies".

That "Striped Jay" is a quite amazing looking butterfly.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 12-Nov-15 12:57 AM GMT

Hi! Mike, the Striped Jay reminds me of a rainbow, with it's fantastic colours, lovely photos, keep them coming Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 13-Nov-15 06:43 AM GMT

More great stuff Mike, and certainly nice to see something so bright during such a gloomy time of year 😊 I can see what you mean about the Striped Jay, it looks like they've 'gone outside the lines' 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

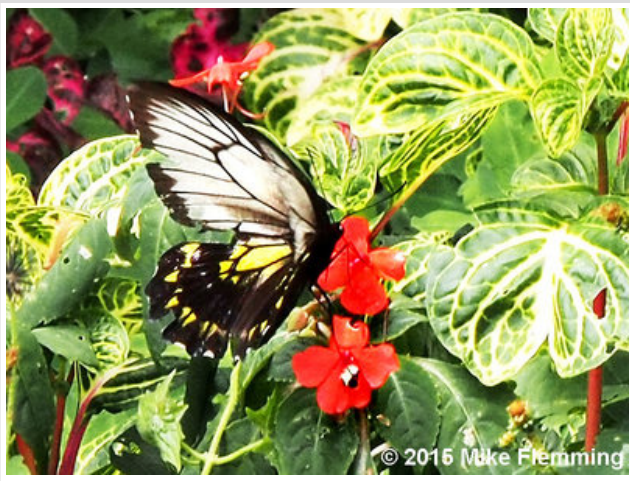
Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-Nov-15 07:43 PM GMT

I'm still working through all my photos from Sabah and Singapore but the end is now in sight! The next task will be to make a selection of the natural history highlights, which I shall place on my website.

While looking through my butterfly photos, I was delighted to find that I have photos of a Borneo endemic species (i.e. only found in Borneo), illustrated in the museum catalogue at <http://www.bbec.sabah.gov.my/overall/bbec24/twentyfour.pdf>

My photos show a female Borneo birdwing *Troides andromache*



Kinabalu NP, Sabah – 27th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO640

This species is on the IUCN Red List, where it is described as 'near threatened', mainly as a result of destruction of habitat. It occurs on Mt Kinabalu at altitudes between 1,000m and 2,000m above sea level.

I found my example alongside the main road, close to the entrance to the Kinabalu National Park, at an altitude of 1,520m (about 5,000 feet). At this altitude, conditions are much cooler than in the lowlands, such that wearing a light fleece is welcome in the evenings!



Kinabalu NP, Sabah – 27th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150mm lens – 1/1250s@f/6.3 ISO640

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 14-Nov-15 01:11 AM GMT

What a great sighting, Mike. I suppose endemics are to be expected when you visit islands, but that has to be one of the coolest.

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 14-Nov-15 07:06 PM GMT

That was a nice surprise for you Mike, a rare Butterfly find 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 17-Nov-15 06:06 AM GMT

You must have done a fair bit of research, Mike, to find out which species were rare and which were common amongst that maelstrom?

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 17-Nov-15 07:54 AM GMT

Hi David. While I was out there I simply followed a policy of "if it moves, photograph it"! I'm now trying to figure out what everything was, mainly with the help of the internet, until the promised book on Borneo butterflies is published. It'll take some time and then there are all the mammals, birds, reptiles, etc., etc - not to mention the plants, where I'm not even going to try 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 17-Nov-15 09:42 PM GMT

Sounds like a trip to the Library is also on the cards Mike Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 18-Nov-15 07:01 PM GMT

Several trips, I expect, Goldie!

I'm almost at the end of sorting my photos. It's taken around a day to sort each day's photos, so it's a bit like doubling the length of the holiday! I'm really enjoying re-living the trip through the photos and I expect the research on them all will take me right through until the next butterfly season.

Quite a nice way to spend the Winter 😊

Mike

p.s. hope you are not suffering from the floods – we had a brief power-cut yesterday, which stopped my photo editing for a while.

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 18-Nov-15 10:07 PM GMT

Awful here at present Mike, yellow warning out for the wind and even snow forecast for weekend I think 😞 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 18-Nov-15 10:54 PM GMT

Oh you poor dears with your weather 😊 .



Looking over my back fence a few moments ago.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-Nov-15 03:29 AM GMT

Looks great, Jack. I expect the snow will be up to near the top of the photo frame soon 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 19-Nov-15 03:53 AM GMT

m

Looks great, Jack. I expect the snow will be up to near the top of the photo frame soon 😊

Not that direction (north west towards the coast) but have provisional plans to go in the opposite direction on Sunday to Tomintoul in the mountains [for lunch] after the snow.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 19-Nov-15 04:25 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Oh you poor dears with your weather 😊 .

You'll pay for that remark next summer, Jack. 😊😡

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-Nov-15 06:09 AM GMT

Today, I finished the initial sorting of my photos from SE Asia – cropping, adjusting colour balance, etc – the next task will be select some that will show highlights of the trip.

My last few photos were taken at Singapore (Changi) airport, which must rate as one of the most remarkable airports in the world for its architecture and the internal gardens:



Singapore Airport – 16th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 17mm lens – 1/15s@f/4.2 ISO 400

I doubt whether there are many other airports with their own Butterfly Garden, in which to relieve some of the tedium, while waiting for the gate to open.



Singapore Airport – 16th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50mm lens – 1/20s@f/6.1 ISO 400

Unfortunately, our flight left in the middle of the night, so no butterflies were flying (the area is naturally lit, so was completely dark) but we did see a couple of recently emerged adults inside the rearing cages.



Singapore Airport – 16th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12–50mm lens – 1/60s@f/6.3 ISO 400 (with flash)

Well worth a visit if you are passing that way 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 20–Nov–15 02:48 AM GMT

Fancy that, an Air port with a Butterfly garden, it must be the only one Mike, may be other Air ports will take an hint 😊 Great if your traveling with children, great way to keep them amused 😊

I landed at Hong Kong air port a few years ago and got a taxi into the town, what an idiot I was when I found out I could have walked in 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 20–Nov–15 07:39 AM GMT

It must have been a while ago, Goldie – the airport at Hong Kong is now on a separate man-made island and certainly not in walking distance!!! I think the old Kai Tak was considered too noisy and crowded.

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 20–Nov–15 06:26 PM GMT

It was years ago Mike, I was with my Husband who was working in the Philippines at the time when we got a telegram to say my daughter had given birth to a boy, I'd promised to go back (she was three weeks early) for the birth to help out, so I don't forget that episode in a hurry 😊 I'd to leave my Husband who'd to finish the job he'd started, I put down in Hong Kong with a few hours to play with before taking off again so I went in and bought her one of those lovely silk Silk Dressing Gowns they make there for a surprise 😊

when I look back now I remember the crowds and colourful streets, I also wonder where my confidence has disappeared to, it didn't bother me then to go in there on my own, now I'd think twice about it 😊

My Grandson is now one of three, (he was the first) and finished University a couple of years ago so yes it was quite some time ago 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 22–Nov–15 06:34 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Oh you poor dears with your weather

Brilliant sunshine here, today! How's it looking your end, Jack?

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 22–Nov–15 03:14 PM GMT

Brilliant sunshine here, today! How's it looking your end, Jack?

Becoming a bit of a mutual wind up this. You know full well that we had a miserable day on Saturday. 😊

Braving the mountains today on what should be a fine winter's day. Well I don't mean actually climbing UP mountains but driving through the snowy hills via Grantown-on-Spey to have lunch in Tomintoul (1,130 feet above sea level).

Assuming it is as scenic as anticipated, snow pictures later in my diary.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 28-Nov-15 05:12 AM GMT

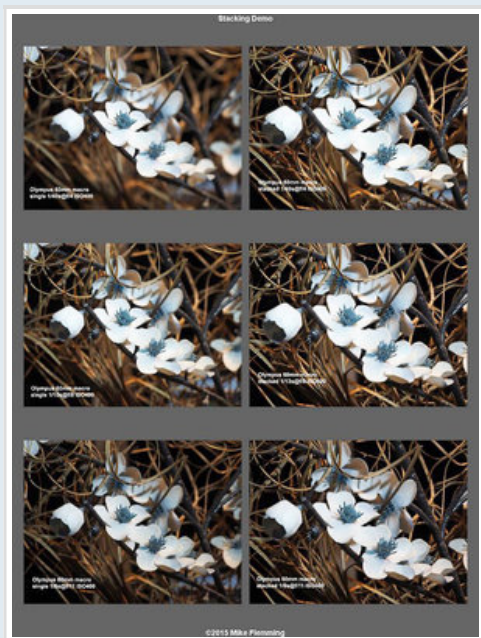
I have written before about how pleased I was with the performance of my Olympus OM-D E-M5 on my recent trip to SE Asia. In fact, it led to me replacing the camera with the 'flagship' E-M1 model!

The only irritations I had from the E-M5 were associated with its 'compact-like' control layout, with tiny buttons that were too easily operated by mistake! The E-M1 has a much more robust control layout, at the expense of being a little larger overall.

Another 'carrot' that led me to the E-M1 was the promise of a firmware update, which offered some interesting new features. This update to Firmware Version 4.0 was released yesterday, so I have spent some time today exploring the macro 'stacking' facility. When used with the 60 mm macro lens, this feature enables the camera to take a series of photos at slightly different distance settings and then blends them together into a single 'stacked' image. Documentation of the new features is sparse but I managed to track down a manual (in English) on the Olympus Japanese website at http://www.olympus.co.jp/en/support/imgs/digicamera/download/manual/omd/man_em1_ver4_e.pdf. No doubt this information will appear on the Global sites in the near future.

Operation of the 'stacking' facility is quite simple: select [Bracketing] in 'Shooting menu 2' and then select [Focus BKT] and [Focus Stacking]. When used in this mode, the camera takes 8 photos automatically, varying the focus position between each shot. The camera then processes the individual photos into a single 'stacked' image.

In the absence of any butterflies at this time of year, I practised on some (artificial) flowers, taking photos at a range of apertures both with and without the 'stacking' feature (*click on the image to enlarge*):



Comparison of Stacked Images using Olympus E-M1 with v.4 firmware and 60 mm macro lens

The left-hand column shows single exposures at a range of apertures [f/4, f/8 and f/11], while on the right are 'stacked' images at the same apertures.

The results show how the stacking has produced an in-focus image over a considerable range of distances from the camera. Even at f/4 aperture, all the flowers in the spray appear to be 'in focus'. The only adjustment in the camera is a slider control to set the size of the individual focus steps, which will need more practice to find the optimum setting for any given aperture. I used the widest step setting and, at f/4, there is a noticeable rise and fall in definition between the individual focus steps but this becomes smooth by f/8.

The new firmware brings other benefits, including an option for completely silent operation, by means of an electronic shutter. Since the camera can also be operated by wifi from a smartphone, this opens up the possibility of setting up the camera in the garden and controlling it by watching the screen on my iPad indoors! Since there will be no sound, it should be possible to take repeated shots of the birds in my garden.

Lots of new things to try in the coming year 😊

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 28-Nov-15 02:30 PM GMT

Very clever Mike, but you'll no doubt p*** off Gruditch with in-focus backgrounds.

I haven't yet successfully managed [out-of-camera] software for stacking. Registax seemed very confusing. Any suggestions as to the easiest software?

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by Pete Eeles, 28-Nov-15 07:34 PM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

I haven't yet successfully managed [out-of-camera] software for stacking. Registax seemed very confusing. Any suggestions as to the easiest software?

I use Zerene Stacker. It's easy to use, but it ain't cheap 😞

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 28-Nov-15 08:26 PM GMT

As you know, Jack, I don't do competitions and Gary (Gruditch) is too good a photographer to need electronic aids like this!! His website at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gruditch/> is always worth a look when in need of inspiration 😊

I am interested in the stacking mainly for flower photography, where it's difficult to keep all those stamens and petals and sepals in focus at the same time. I did a few more tests yesterday evening and the in-camera software is clever enough to correct inevitable small movements when taking hand-held shots.

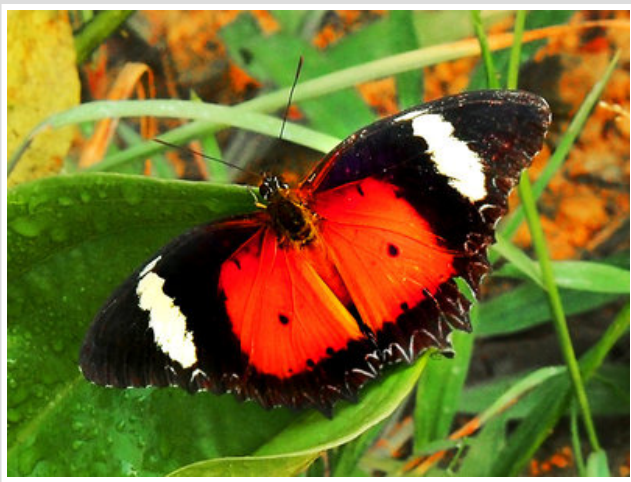
I'm afraid I can't help over software (which is why I was so pleased to find the in-camera solution). Photoshop (full version) can do stacking and there is an add-on called Elements+ that can add it to some versions of PSE. There's an article about stacking at <http://www.dpreview.com/articles/571797...hotography>.

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 15-Dec-15 08:17 PM GMT

It's almost a month since I last posted some tropical butterflies from my Borneo trip so, perhaps, a few more will help ward off the winter blues!



Cethosia hypsea - Malayan Lacewing Danum Valley, Sabah - 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50 mm lens - 1/250s@f/7.1 ISO500

I've been spending quite a lot of time sorting all my photos and making some PowerPoint shows to inflict on family and friends. I've also been learning how insular my approach to butterflies has been, limiting myself to a mere 58 or so British species - all of which are fairly readily distinguishable from one another.

In Borneo there are, apparently, 625 species within the Kinabalu National Park alone and, as I examined my photos, I soon came to realise that many of those similar-looking yellows, browns, etc. were, in fact, different species. Again, while 'common' names might be adequate for our tiny British list, it is quite an achievement to get identification of these tropical butterflies down to the Generic level, while pinpointing a species from a photograph alone may just not be possible.

The publication date of the forthcoming Borneo guidebook has been pushed back to next February, so I have been turning to other sources of information. As an example of the 'paper chase' involved, see the following photo, which has some resemblance to our Gatekeeper, suggesting that I started by looking at the 'Browns' (*Satyrinae*)



Mycalesis marginata Kinabalu NP, Sabah – 27th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/640s@f/8 ISO640

My little guide to the Butterflies of Peninsula Malaysia has photos of several potential candidates called 'Bush-Browns', in the genus *Mycalesis*, but it only shows underside views. So I put 'Mycalesis Borneo' into Google images and scanned through until I saw a likely image in a blog, labelled '*Mycalesis marginata*?' (a species not in my book). I narrowed my image search to this species and one of the images shown was a plate from an old book with the intriguing title 'RHOPALOCERA EXOTICA' by H Grose Smith & W F Kirby (1887–1892).

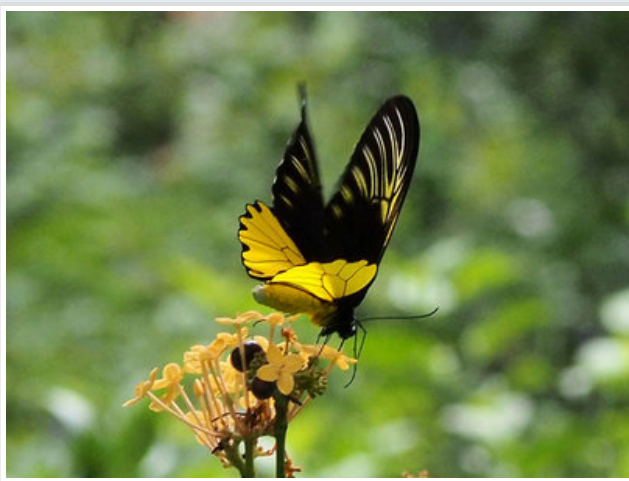
Next, I turned to that treasure trove of 'out of copyright' books: the [url=https://archive.org/:289vr1ya]Internet Archive[/url:289vr1ya], from where I could download all three volumes and read a detailed species description, which seemed to fit very well. Later, I found that I also had some photos of the underside of the same species, taken on a different day:



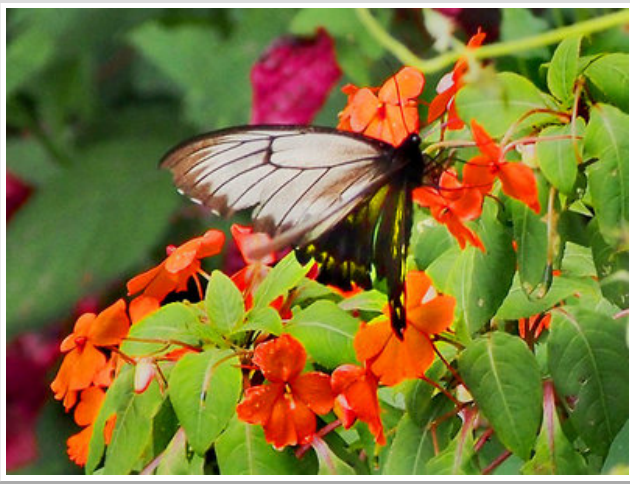
Mycalesis marginata Kinabalu NP, Sabah – 28th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/8 ISO640

The pattern of eyespots on the underside matches the description in the above book. This search took most of an afternoon and I have 242 butterfly photos to work through, so it might take a little time 😊

I have photographed several large yellow Swallowtails and had thought, at the time, that they were all the same but they are not! To finish this post with some nice bright colours, here are examples of the three species involved:



Troides amphrysus Poring, Sabah – 29th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/400s@f/6.3 ISO1000



Troides andromache Kinabalu NP, Sabah – 27th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/1250s@f/6.3 ISO640



Troides helena Poring, Sabah – 29th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 12-50 mm lens – 1/160s@f/8 ISO1000

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 16-Dec-15 12:33 AM GMT

Beautiful Butterflies Mike, I thought at first you'd been to a Butterfly house until I started to read your post 😊

You must have had a brilliant holiday just photographing these Tropical Butterflies, your research also sounds like it's going to keep you very busy for a while as well Goldie 😊

Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 16-Dec-15 01:43 AM GMT

....Gary (Gruditch) is too good a photographer to need electronic aids like this!! His website at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gruditch/> is always worth a look when in need of inspiration 😊

I agree that he is so damn good as to be irritating. I suggested to Gary some while ago that he should turn professional. But no – he didn't think that was the right way to go.

Jack

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-Dec-15 03:31 AM GMT

I'm continuing to fill these dark, if mild, Winter days with trying to identify all my butterfly photos from Sabah. Luckily, out of my 242 photos, a lot are multiple shots of the same species, so I'm now down to a mere 73, still to be identified!

I am very grateful to Guy Padfield, who has provided helpful suggestions. I have found it to be an interesting task, trying to get to grips with a vastly more complex problem than sorting my British butterfly photos. Indeed, choosing a 'favourite' for the weekly series of posts has provided some light relief from the bigger task 😊

In one of my earlier posts, Guy corrected my identification of a 'Yeoman' and, with a little more experience, I think I have found shots of both the species involved, taken at different locations – shown below:

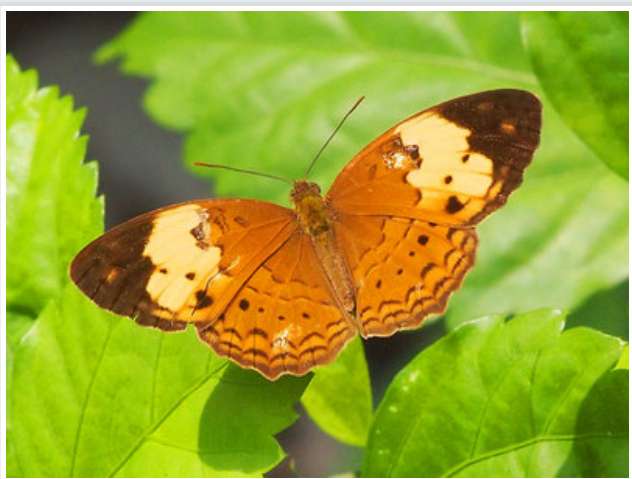


Cirrochroa emalea (Malayan Yeoman) Danum Valley, Sabah – 7th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO1000



Cirrochroa orissa (Common Yeoman) Kinabalu NP, Sabah – 30th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/500@f/7.1 ISO400

C. orissa has a much brighter bar on the forewing, whereas *C. emalea* has a prominent small white patch near the leading edge of the hind-wing. Here is one with a similar colour scheme but from a different Genus – note the different shape of the forewing:

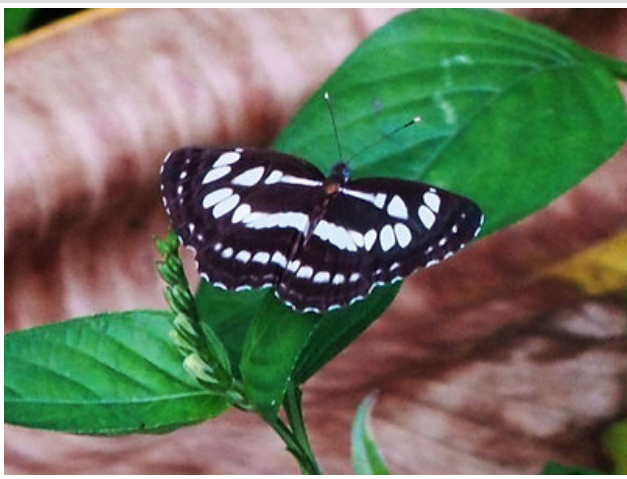


Cupha erymanthis (Rustic) Poring, Sabah – 29th September 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/1000@f/11 ISO1000

Natural selection, in such a rich environment, provides all sorts of puzzles for the observer, such as mimicry, where one species acquires an advantage by deceiving a predator that it is a different distasteful species. Two more near 'look-alikes' are:



Athyma pravara (Lance Sergeant) Danum Valley, Sabah – 9th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/400s@f/7.1 ISO500



Neptis hylas (Common Sailor) Sepilok, Sabah – 2nd October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/7.1 ISO1000

I find it interesting that that the white band, formed by scales on the wing, is replicated across the top of the body of *A.pravara*. There are also coloured markings on the body that I thought, at first, were photographic artefacts but can be seen clearly in other photos on the web!

Another example of natural selection affording protection is provided by one of my photos of a 'Great Mormon'. There should be a red patch on the end of the hind wing but it appears to have successfully attracted a bird-strike, well away from more critical parts of the butterfly!



Papilio memnon (Great Mormon) Danum Valley, Sabah – 7th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40–150 mm lens – 1/800s@f/9 ISO1000

As before, I welcome any corrections to my identifications – it's all a fascinating learning experience for me 😊 Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 19-Dec-15 05:48 AM GMT

More fantastic stuff, Mike. I'm really enjoying these tropical pictures. I agree, it is amazing how common patterns recur even in quite unrelated butterflies.

More please! 😊

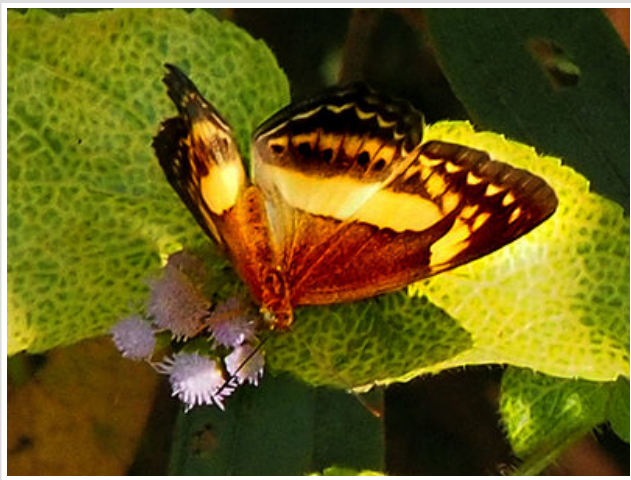
Guy

Re: MikeOxon

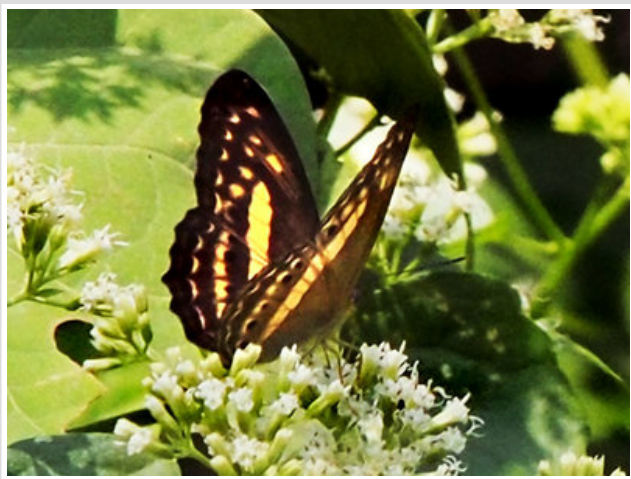
by MikeOxon, 19-Dec-15 09:17 PM GMT

Guy, I'm amazed you found time to post here, yesterday, with a Berger's on your doorstep 😊 Hope you have another exciting day, today.

In response to your plea for more, here's a couple continuing the chocolate & cream theme. I feel that these should be easy to identify but, so far, I'm drawing a blank in my books and on the web.



Danum Valley, Sabah – 7th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/1000s@f/10 ISO1000



Danum Valley, Sabah – 7th October 2015 Olympus E-M5 with 40-150 mm lens – 1/500s@f/8 ISO1000

Any suggestions for ID will be gratefully received EDIT – *Algia fasciata* see below

Mike

Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 19-Dec-15 11:53 PM GMT

Hi Mike. Despite their seemingly quite different colours, I think these are both *Paduca fasciata* (= *Algia fasciata* – *Algia* seems to be the current name). Unless I'm wrong, it shows how deceptive photos can be, taken under different lighting conditions.

Guy

Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 20-Dec-15 01:00 AM GMT

Thank you once more, Guy. It is interesting that this didn't appear in my, admittedly, rather simple books or from searches such as 'brown, yellow, butterfly, borneo'.

Now you have put me on track, I can see it at <http://www.ifoundbutterflies.org/#/sp/2099/Algia-fasciata>. From the illustrations there, I suspect my upper photo is female and the lower, male – the forewing markings are different. The underside in my photo looks much darker than in the reference but, as you say, photos can be very deceptive, especially when comparing well-lit upper surfaces with underwings in shadow.

I've also found another interesting set of books on the [url=https://archive.org/:17d5is4r]Internet Archive[/url:17d5is4r] – Frederick Moore's *Lepidopera Indica* (in several volumes).

It's very tempting to send you all my remaining pics 😊 but I shall continue trying to track things down, because I'm sure I learn quite a bit from doing so.

Mike