

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 24-Jan-15 10:25 PM GMT

If butterflies are your main hobby then Winter presents a challenge, especially if you're a fidget like me.

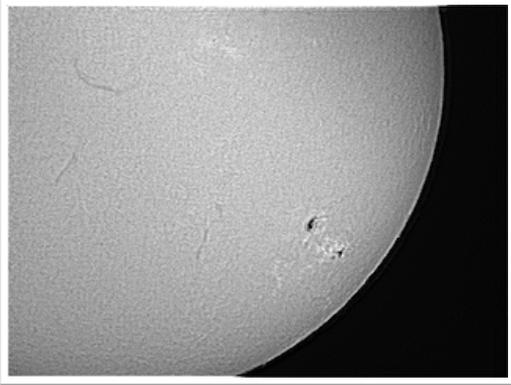
To keep myself busy while the butterflies are away I take an interest in Astronomy and in particular, the Sun.

I have a special telescope that allows me to look at the sun safely (in something called "Hydrogen Alpha") and I amuse myself whenever the Sun appears by gazing at it through the scope and sketching the sunspots and other exciting features.

Our nearest star really does put on an incredible show. No two days are alike. You can watch the sunspots or dramatic scenes when for example the Sun throws out huge fountains of plasma into space (the experts call these "Prominences").

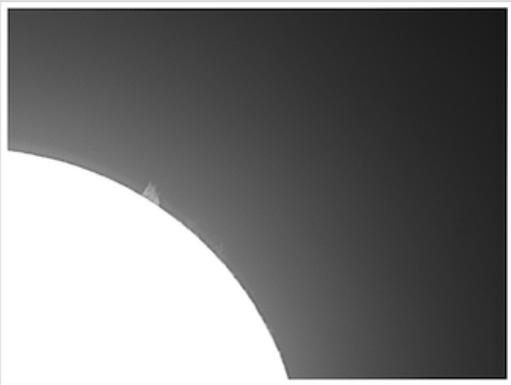
It's all very exciting.

Anyway, I've just treated myself to a special camera that I can fit onto my telescope and today when the Sun came out I was able to use it for the very first time



The camera takes black and white video footage which can then be made into a single photograph. I don't have PhotoShop so can't colour in the photographs but here you can see a very rough photograph of a group of sunspots on the face of today's Sun. The hair-like lines are "Filaments".

And here is a lovely prominence



On the scale of these photos the Earth would be about the size of a full stop.

So these are my very first efforts at Astrophotography. I haven't a clue what I'm doing as will be obvious to anyone who knows about this subject but it's a start and I hope you've found it interesting.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 25-Jan-15 06:05 AM GMT

Nice to see you back, Hoggers.

Keep the astronomical images coming. I'm confident that many of us on here have an interest in such celestial phenomena and you're quite right – when winter takes hold we all need to source an alternative outlet for our underlying passion.

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 25-Jan-15 06:16 AM GMT

Yes, definitely keep them coming. I went online to see what kind of telescope you might have – it's a great instrument. I've only ever cast images of the sun onto card to look at sunspots and you can't see anything like the detail or texture you achieve by viewing directly.

I hope you don't mind my reminding any readers of your diary that they should never, ever, attempt to view the sun through an optical instrument that isn't specifically designed for this (and undamaged)! 😊

Guy

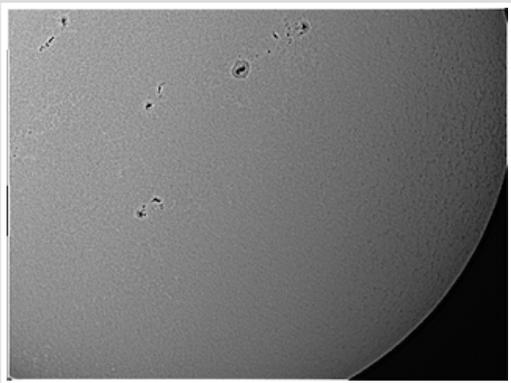
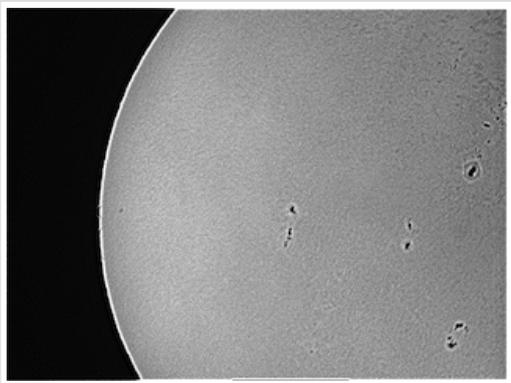
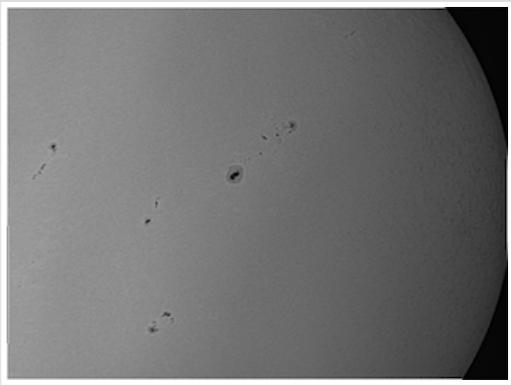
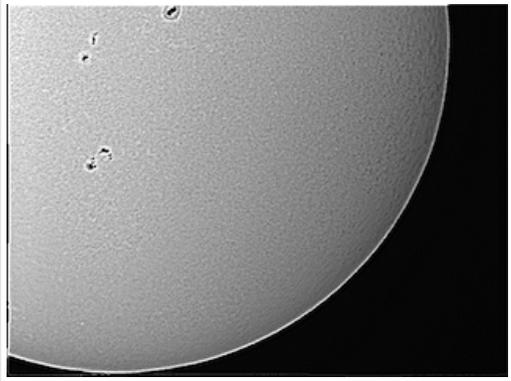
Re: Hoggers

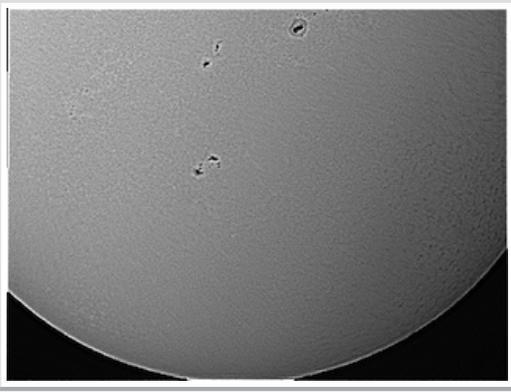
by Hoggers, 27-Jan-15 09:20 PM GMT

I think "sun spotting" and butterflying go very nicely together! I often take my scope with me, get a look at what's going on up there then set off to chase butterflies.

If you're interested in looking at the sun I recommend you first read Lee Macdonald's "How to Observe the Sun Safely" which does exactly what it says on the packet!

There was just enough clear sky this morning for me to get a view of the sun. I was delighted to see how it had changed since I saw it last on Saturday as today there were many more sunspots





The sunspot with a distinct umbra and an extensive penumbra that you see in the photos was of particular interest to me.

I can never shake the feeling of wonder when I remember the scale of what I'm looking at: those sunspots are roughly the size of the Earth!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 28-Jan-15 02:25 AM GMT

Nice to see a fair few sunspots, Hoggers. They usually mean warmer summer weather, don't they?

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Jan-15 05:09 AM GMT

Here's hoping David!!

Re: Hoggers

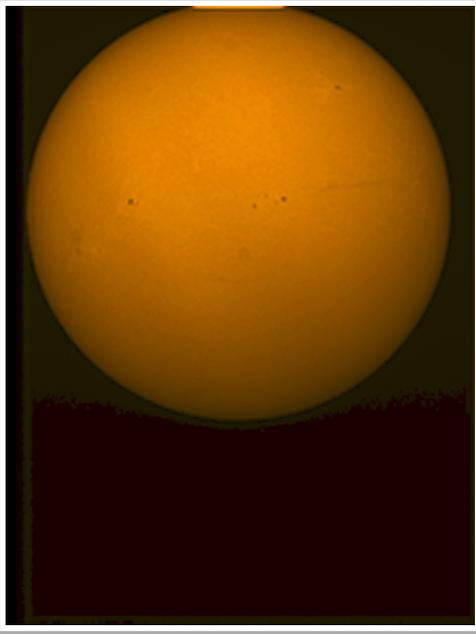
by Hoggers, 07-Feb-15 11:10 PM GMT

Cold though it is down here in Kent I've come across a few signs of Spring : there was a Chaffinch singing in Canterbury one morning this week and today I saw a clump of Snowdrops just about to come into flower.

Yesterday we had a bitterly cold wind but the sun was out and I managed to get a couple of photographs



You can see a few sunspots and also a gigantic filament running from near centre of the disc to the edge at about 3pm



If only we could feel some of that heat!

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 07-Feb-15 11:31 PM GMT

Hi! Hogger's we've had the Sun out every day up here in the north I even got some washing out on the line yesterday and got it partly dry 😊 Must say though it makes a change after all that snow we had.

Your photos of the Sun makes it look like a very large Orange, it must be difficult to film, I've never managed the Sun yet, I have enough trouble filming night scenes, plus a very big warning on my camera not to focus in to the Sun 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Feb-15 01:16 AM GMT

Hi Goldie, it was a bit like that here yesterday – lots of sunshine but absolutely perishing!

All the photos I take of the sun are in black and white but I found something on my laptop that let's me add colour and that's why the end result looks like a Big Orange!

I'm still learning how to use the new camera and I've the distinct feeling it's going to be a long process...

I certainly miss the butterflies!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 08-Feb-15 03:56 AM GMT

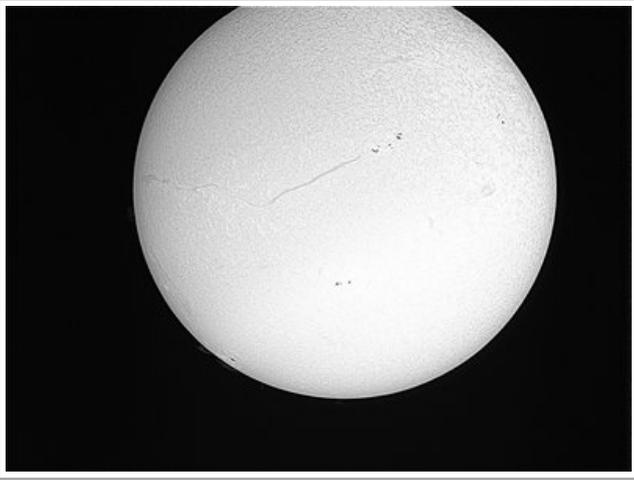
You'll soon get lots of practise with your camera Hogger's Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

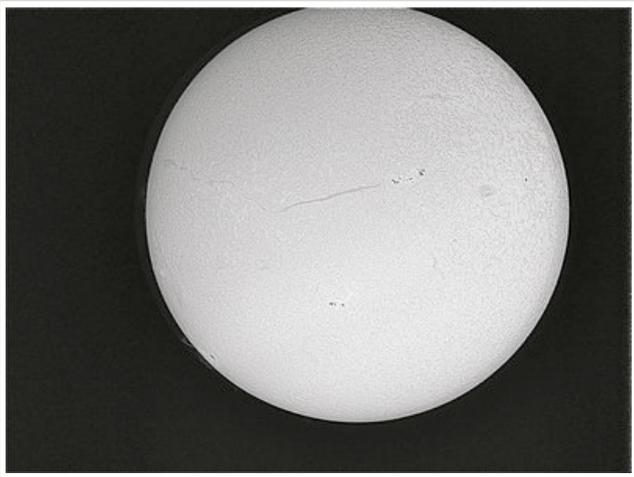
by Hoggers, 08-Feb-15 10:05 PM GMT

Plenty of sunshine today and not so cold as of late.

I took a few photos of the sun this morning

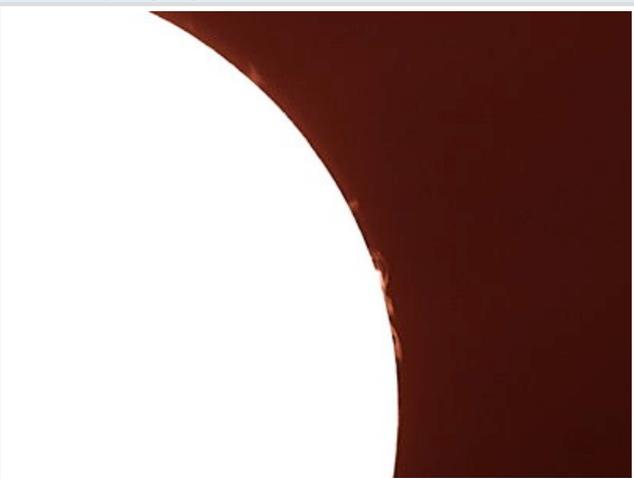


The filament that you can see snaking across the disc is arousing a great deal of interest amongst experts who study the sun. It appears to be a single structure and is clearly massive



There is speculation that if it collapses it will give rise to enormous Earth-bound flares.

There were plenty of prominences too



Back on Planet Earth I was pleased to see some of my Crocuses are just coming into flower.

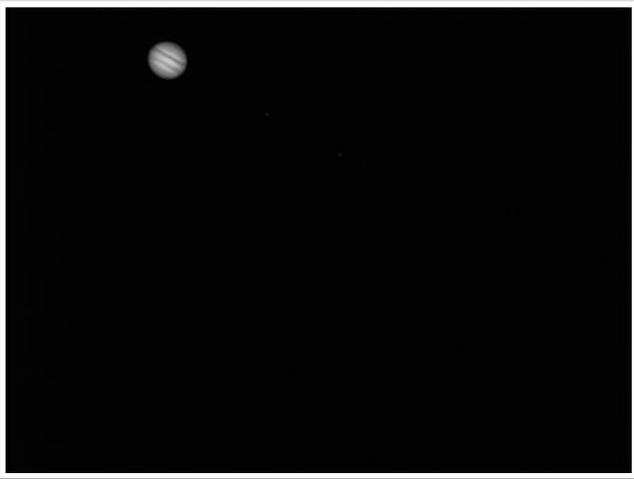
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 09-Feb-15 04:16 AM GMT

Tonight I nipped out into the garden to get a look at Jupiter which is very bright in the sky right now



My camera is in mono which doesn't do Jupiter justice but these give an idea of what it looks like (the tiny white pin pricks just visible are three of its moons)



This Universe of ours is a fascinating place.

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 09-Feb-15 04:23 AM GMT

Those are exceptional pictures of Jupiter. I'm not quite sure what setup you have (no exif data in the pictures) but it would obviously produce excellent images of Saturn and I'm very much looking forward to that!!

Guy

EDIT: I checked on Stellarium and the red spot should be in the broadening of the dark band near the bottom of your first picture (assuming the picture is telescope-inverted). When it's more central, it should be easily visible.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 09-Feb-15 05:52 AM GMT

Agreed. Those are quite phenomenal images of this planet taken from so far away. Excellent stuff.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 09-Feb-15 08:28 PM GMT

Fantastic Shots Hoggers you must have a great camera Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 12-Feb-15 11:54 PM GMT

I took the dog up to the woods today. We came across a few clumps of Snowdrops but also a good number of brilliant Winter Aconite. I took a few photographs with my mobile phone



I seem to recall reading somewhere that the Aconite will only open its flowers if the temperature gets above 4C but even when closed they make for a lovely sight on a dull February day.

We also flushed a couple of Woodcocks. A most mysterious bird. Seldom seen (although a friend of mine swears that he saw one at London Bridge Station one morning!) Quiet and unobtrusive except during the mating season when the males go a-roding, flying in circles around woodland clearings whilst making the most comical, often rude noises. Those warm summer nights seem a long way off!

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 13-Feb-15 03:18 AM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

We also flushed a couple of Woodcocks. A most mysterious bird. Seldom seen (although a friend of mine swears that he saw one at London Bridge Station one morning!)

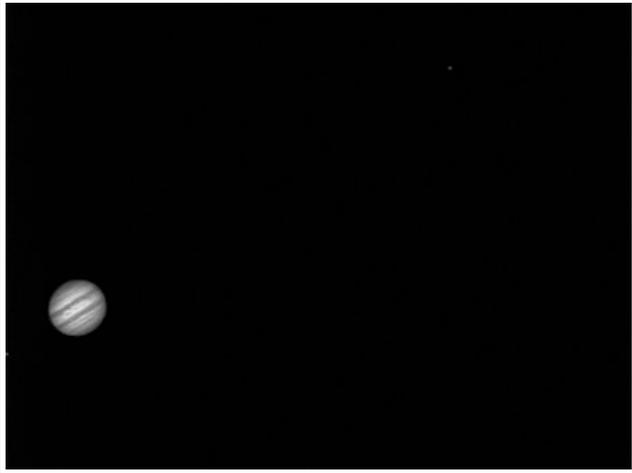
Not as unlikely as it may sound, they aren't very good with directions and apparently navigate at night using river courses. I've flushed the occasional one in my local patch, on the river Lea only 6 miles from where it meets the Thames. I think they may also get roads and rivers mixed up in wet weather ...(although I may also have just made this fact up in my head...)

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 15-Feb-15 04:49 AM GMT

I once found a Water Rail sitting outside of "Blockbusters" in Ashford. This was a good few years ago. It had probably flown into the window. It was stunned but otherwise none the worse for its experience so I picked it up and walked it down East Hill and put it on the river bank. It was a Saturday night and I'd had a few and that's probably why some birdwatching friends of mine (who, I might add, have never managed to see one of these secretive birds) still disbelieve me to this day.

Jupiter was out and looking splendid tonight. I got a couple of photographs before the clouds rolled in



You can see a few of its moons



Plenty of my Crocuses are now in flower and I heard a Mistle Thrush singing this morning.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 15-Feb-15 11:28 PM GMT

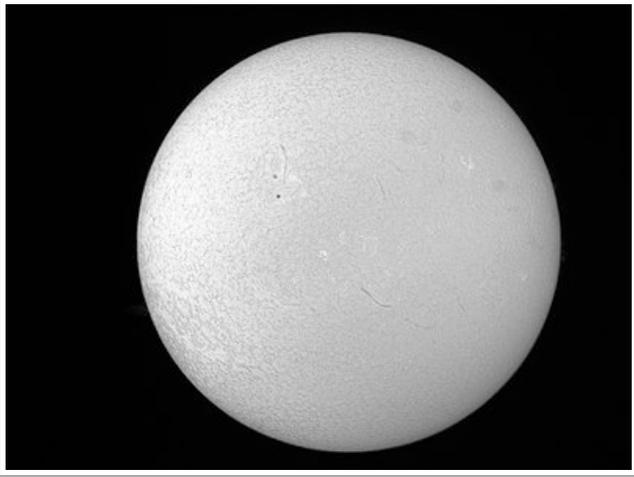
Today felt like Spring had sprung, the air was mild and there was plenty of warm sunshine. I walked up to the woods which have been rather quiet of late but this morning many of the birds were singing including Chaffinch, Song Thrush, Dunnock, Great Tit, Blue Tit, a drumming Greater Spotted Woodpecker, a cackling Green Woodpecker and on my route home across the fields I heard my first Skylark of the year.

As the sky was clear I took a look at the sun



(Colour added..!)

There were just a couple of sunspots

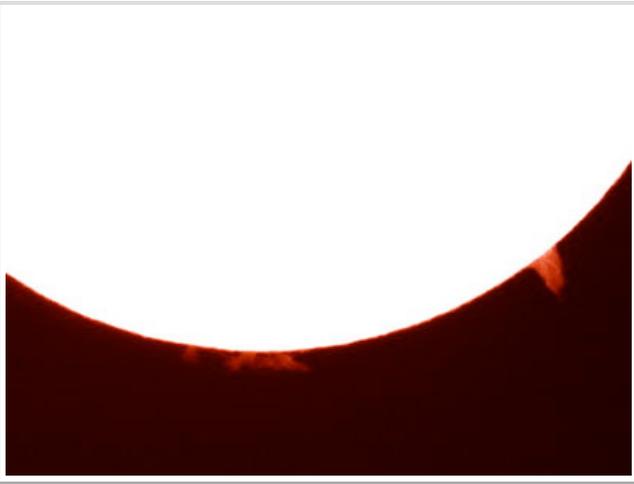


and as you can see, a number of filaments snaking across its face.

But there were also some dramatic prominences



Great fountains of plasma thrown out into space. Spectacular!

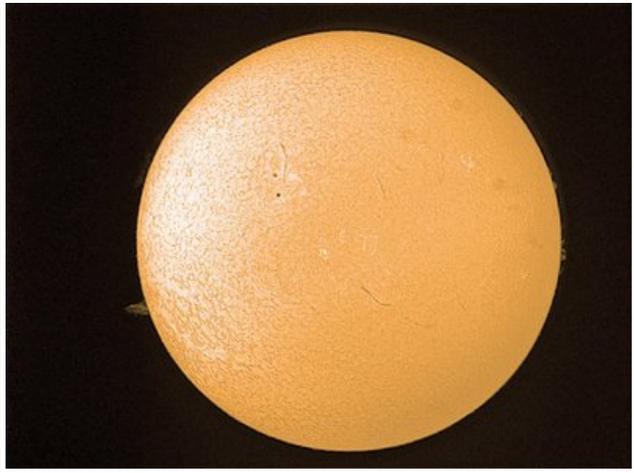


Back on Earth I saw some insect activity for the first time this year in the form of some tiny, near invisible Lacewing-type creatures one of which landed on my cheek.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Feb-15 12:10 AM GMT

I managed to add some colour to an image of the sun taken on sunday, and by adjusting it I was also able to bring out the prominences



I've a lot to learn.

Today I took a few snaps



Only a couple of sunspots



Here's a closer look



Last night I heard frogs croaking in my pond for the first time this year. If it stays mild I hope to see plenty of spawn.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Feb-15 10:36 PM GMT

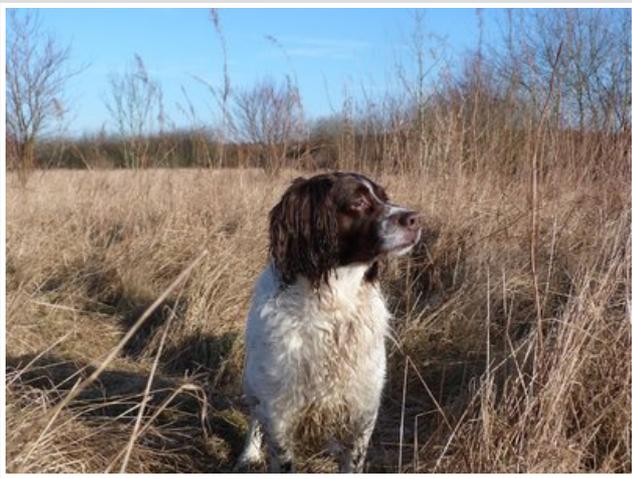
It was so warm and sunny this morning that I thought I was in with a chance of seeing my first butterfly of 2015. I set off with the dog



and for the first time this year I took my camera with me.

Alas, no butterflies for me today (although I had a number of false sightings when mistaking small birds like Wrens and Goldcrests for awakened Peacocks and Red Admirals!)

We did see Common Snipe and a Jack Snipe much to the delight of Monty



And I enjoyed listening to a charm of Goldfinches twittering away in the bushes



In the wood we saw catkins



and then found the Winter Aconite



(I never manage to time my visits for when the petals are open!) I love the Elizabethan ruff below the flower

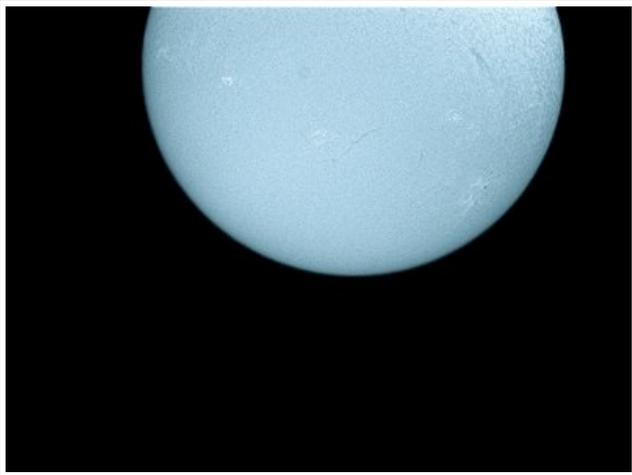


I read in today's paper that Lesser Celandines are out in flower in some areas but I've yet to see one.

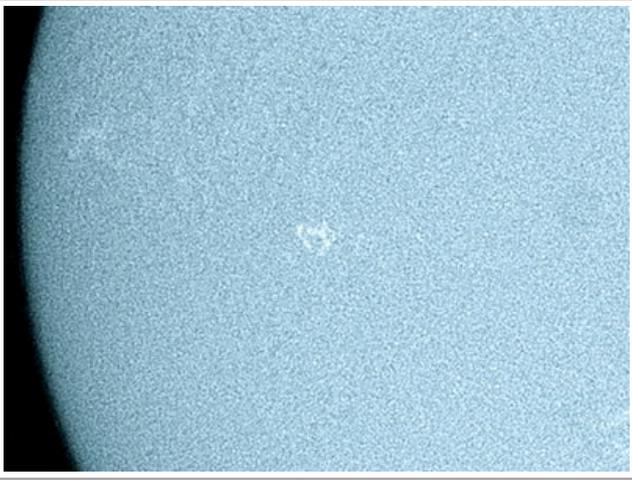
Back home I got out my scope and took a look at our nearest star



What really caught my eye today was a dazzling white spot shining with diamond-like brilliance. I've tinkered with the colour of this photo to highlight it



And here it is after cropping



It really stood out. I seem to remember reading that these areas often change into sunspots over time



Re: Hoggers

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

Awesome pictures of mighty Phoebus, Hoggers! Please keep them coming.

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Feb-15 08:59 PM GMT

Thanks Guy, I'm glad you enjoy them. It's giving me something to do while I wait for the butterflies to return.

Down here in Kent we're now under a thick blanket of grey cloud but the sky was clear earlier this morning so I took a couple of photos of the sun.

Here's one in mono



And another which I've coloured in



Rather galling to think of that lovely big warm Orange up there now glowing away while beneath this cloud all is cold and grey!

Anyone who's interested (and can get a clear sky above them) should look WSW shortly after sunset. They will see the most beautiful sight of Venus and Mars close together (closest on February 21st). On 20th they'll be joined by the crescent Moon.

It's a great way to end the day.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Feb-15 03:41 AM GMT

Looking out of my bedroom window this evening (and just before the clouds rolled in!) I could see the waxing crescent Moon, Venus and Mars



Venus is quite brilliant, the brightest of all the planets while Mars is for the time being much less obvious



You can just make Mars out in my poor photographs just above and slightly to the right of Venus.

A gorgeous sight



Re: Hoggers

by David M, 22-Feb-15 06:12 AM GMT

I didn't realise these two planets were so close in the sky right now, Hoggers.

I must take a look the next time we get a clear night.

Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 22-Feb-15 06:21 AM GMT

Tonight and tomorrow they dance together but they will start pulling apart again by 23rd Feb.

Snow-filled skies ruled out my seeing any planets today and will probably do so again tomorrow. 😞

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Feb-15 10:41 PM GMT

Venus and Mars made for an interesting combination! It was a beautiful sight, David, and no need for any optical equipment other than the naked eye. Unfortunately I didn't have long to enjoy it as it clouded over. By the time the sky had cleared both planets had dropped out of view. If you get a clear sky look WSW shortly after sunset.

We had sunshine earlier today. Very little in the way of sunspots, just a few very small ones, and some filaments



But nonetheless some spectacular prominences to be seen



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 24-Feb-15 07:42 PM GMT

My first Lepidopteran of the Year!



He was rather drowsily making his way across my garden. I took a photo then set him down roughly where I guessed he was heading. Some variety of moth?

My Crocuses are coming out



A cheery sight.

I took a quick look at the sun



Very quiet at the moment.

Mind you, the fact that I could actually SEE the sun must be a good thing!

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 25-Feb-15 02:25 AM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

My first Lepidopteran of the Year![attachment=3:uui9rdt0]P1060436.JPG[/attachment:uui9rdt0]

He was rather drowsily making his way across my garden. I took a photo then set him down roughly where I guessed he was heading. Some variety of moth?

I believe what you have there is a Ruby Tiger moth cat. which coincidentally was also my first Lepidopteran of the year only the other day! (pic in my pd). Rather enjoying your sun pictures as well, fascinating details you are getting 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 25-Feb-15 05:00 AM GMT

Cheers Buggy and thanks for the ID – it wasn't a warm day so I was very surprised to see it walking across the garden!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Mar-15 12:32 AM GMT

I saw my first butterfly of the season today! A Peacock. It flew quickly past me as I worked in the garden this afternoon then disappeared on the strong breeze.

Off the ground at last!

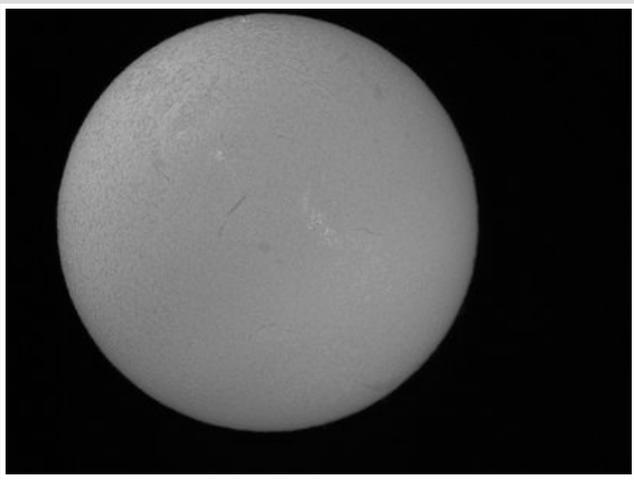
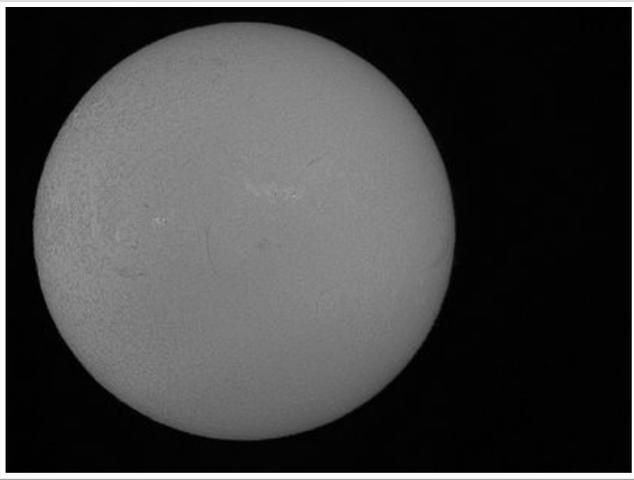
I then went for a walk by the river hoping to see more butterflies but had no luck.

On thursday I heard a Chiffchaff singing in Canterbury. I'd guess it wasn't a Spring migrant but rather an over-wintering bird.

It was good to hear its cheery song. Our great poet Edward Thomas once wrote that "every note of a Chiffchaff's song is a nail in Winter's coffin".

I'll drink to that!

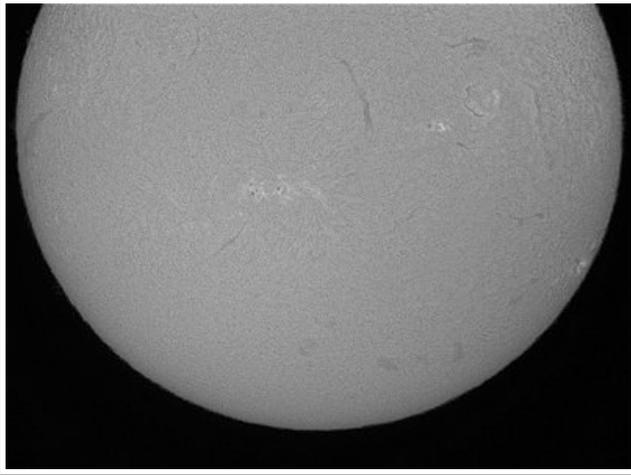
The sun was very active today



Many filaments and some growing sunspots. Here's a photo I've added colour to



And here's a closer look at some of the activity going on up there



It certainly looks very turbulent. Perhaps brewing up for a nice hot Summer?!

Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 02-Mar-15 04:05 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

I have been experimenting with my latest camera, and partially inspired by your stunning celestial images, I zoomed in on the Moon on a bright afternoon last week. With no extra lenses or tripod, I was completely taken aback when one of the images was clear enough to show some of the Moon's impact craters. 😊 .

I hope you have not started me off with another hobby, I have too many already 😊 .

Very best wishes ,
TREVOR

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 02-Mar-15 04:24 AM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

It certainly looks very turbulent. Perhaps brewing up for a nice hot Summer?!

The effects may arrive sooner than that, Hoggers!

According to the weekly weather forecast, we're all in for a dose of mid to high teen temperatures by the end of this coming week!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Mar-15 05:20 AM GMT

Hi Trevor, you sound a bit like me - there aren't many things I'm NOT interested in! I always thought Astronomy was a rather cold subject, I've always concentrated on living things, but somehow I got curious about the Sun. That was my introduction to Astronomy and I've never regretted the time (and inevitably) money spent enjoying it.

I looked on a " Space Weather " website David and it warned that those sunspots are a high risk of producing Earth-bound flares!

With today bringing my first butterfly of the year it looks like things are heating up!

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 02-Mar-15 05:51 AM GMT

I take it you are looking forward to the partial eclipse on 20th of this month, Hoggers. Partial, but quite a deep one apparently. I'm looking forward to your photos, and any more tips you have for safe observation.

Dave

Re: Hoggers

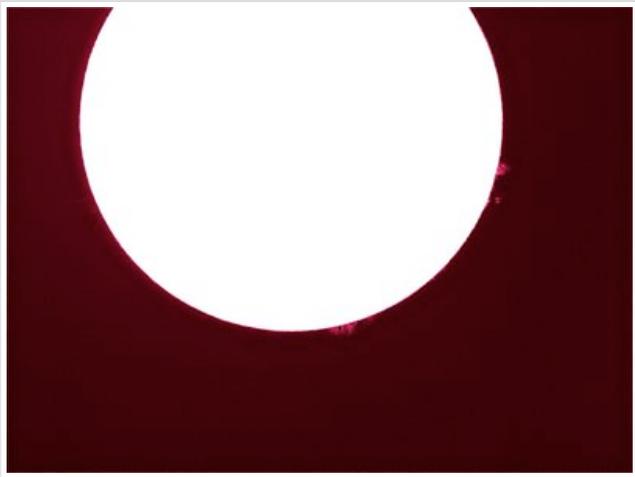
by Hoggers, 05-Mar-15 11:52 PM GMT

I am indeed looking forwards to the eclipse, Dave, I may even get the day off work!

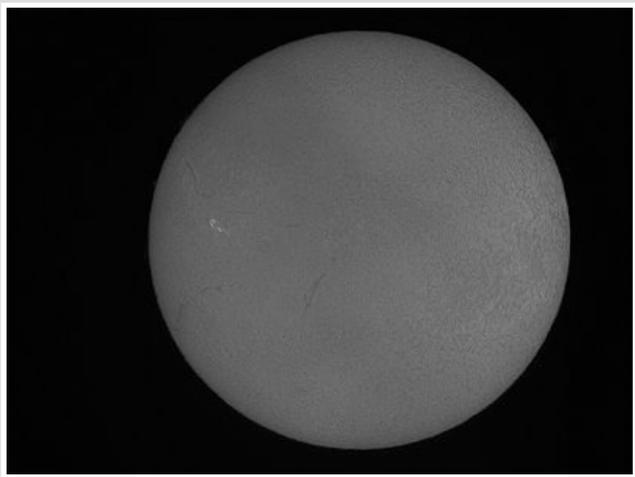
As for safe observation the pin hole method is ideal. For further tips there are two excellent Astronomy magazines currently in the shops both of which go into considerable detail about how to watch and photograph the eclipse (with one you even get a free pair of "solar specs"!)

I got home from work early today and spent a couple of hours in the garden. Lots of Crocuses now and a few Daffs. No butterflies alas but I did see a Bumblebee.

I took a look at the sun. There were some spectacular prominences on view. I hope this poor photo gives an idea of what could be seen



Here's a view of the whole disc, firstly in mono



The bright white patch was particularly noticeable and so too the snake-like filaments.

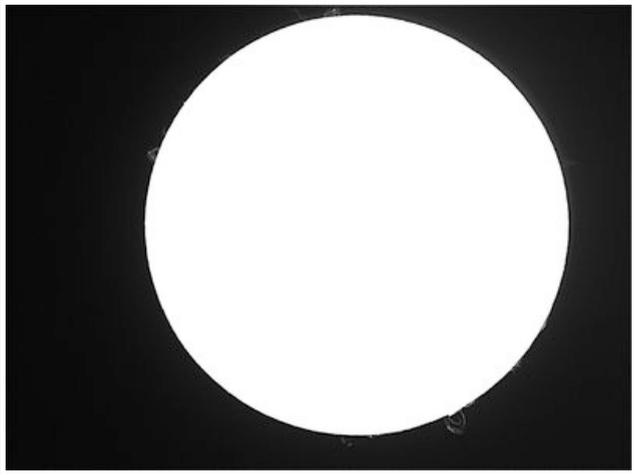
And a couple I've added colour to



Re: Hoggers

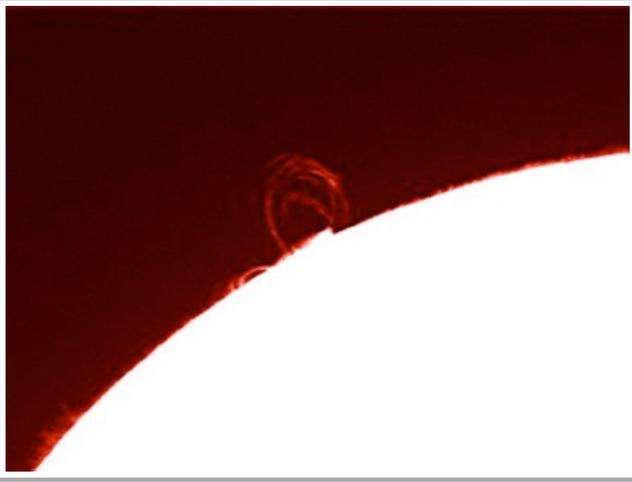
by Hoggers, 06-Mar-15 09:34 PM GMT

A wonderful surprise awaited me when I took a look at the sun this morning: a superb arching prominence



(I have to turn the exposure right up in order to image the prominences which is why there's a white disc.)

Here's the best close-up I can get with my equipment

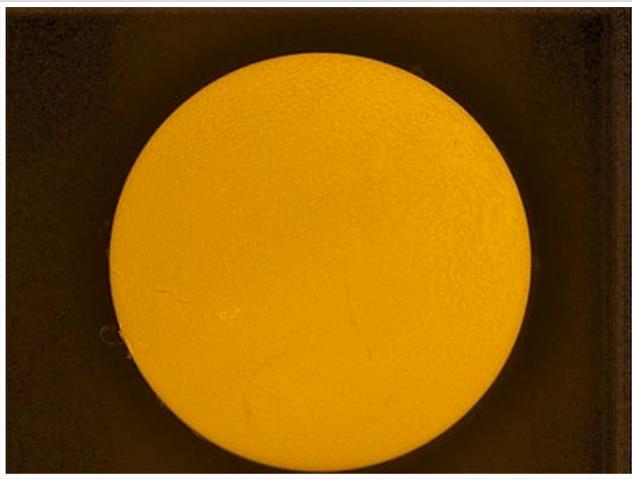


I've added a little colour.

When I see this in Hydrogen-Alpha through my 'scope it's glorious, like lava from a volcano.

The earth would easily pass through that archway! There were several other proms on display as you can see.

And here's the full disc coloured in with the main prominence just about on show



Back on Planet Earth, there's lots of Froggy Activity in my pond, particularly at night, but no spawn as yet.

There's a good forecast for tomorrow so I'm hoping to see a butterfly or two.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Mar-15 11:53 PM GMT

Well, the Met Office forecast was spot on: we had a gorgeous day. But sadly my own forecast of seeing a butterfly or two was wide of the mark!

Two hours patrolling the riverbank (normally a dead cert for Small Tortoiseshells) and a visit to three locations in a near-by wood where I expected Peacocks, Commas and Brimstones all came to nothing.

Not a flutter!

We looked everywhere



No luck!

But on such a lovely day it was good fun to be out of the house.

So I settled for a look at the sun – no difficulty finding that at least!

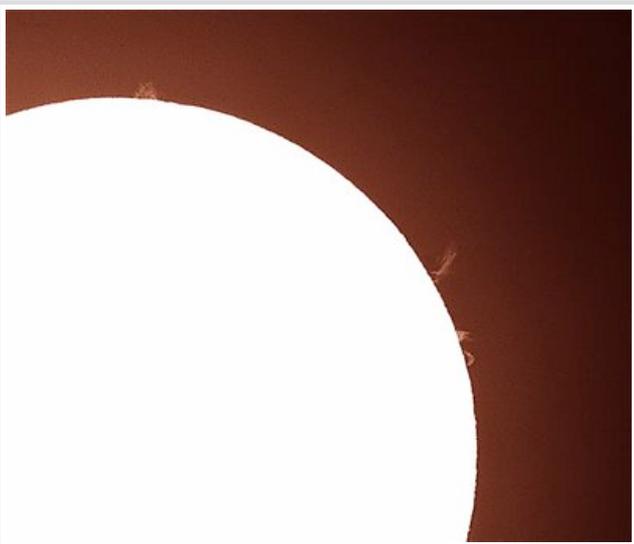
A large sun spot is just coming into view



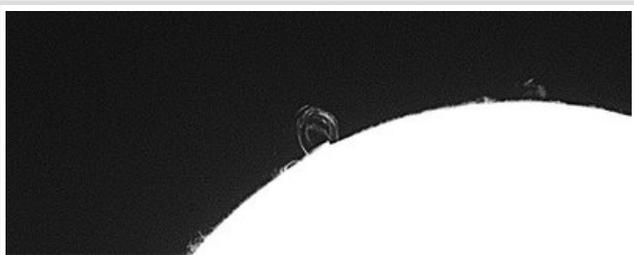
Apparently it is already responsible for radio blackouts in Indonesia



And there were some nice proms



Though they were not quite so loopy yesterday!



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Mar-15 10:26 PM GMT

I heard my first Yellowhammer singing this morning as I walked the dogs.

Plenty of fine warm sunshine today. My Crocuses are blooming and the Daffs aren't far behind



While working in the garden I saw three kinds of Bee



I think this one's a Buff-tailed Bumblebee.

Not sure about this one



But this one is, I think, a Tree Bee



It was good to see them back again.

This attractive Picture-winged fly waved at me



My Basset was enjoying the sunshine



And then at long last we had a visit from a Small Tortoiseshell



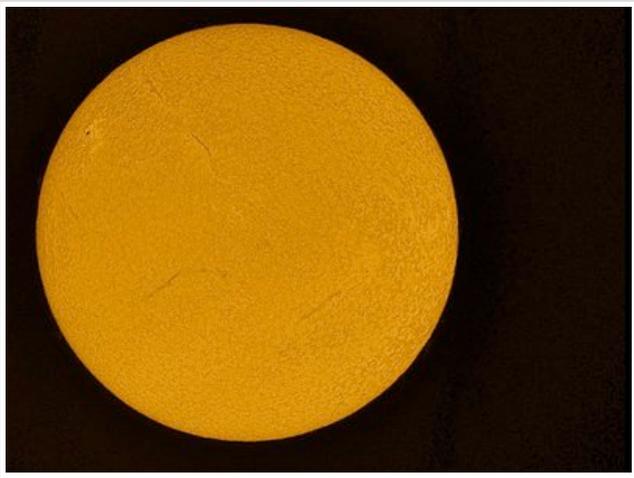
I sure am glad I planted those Crocuses



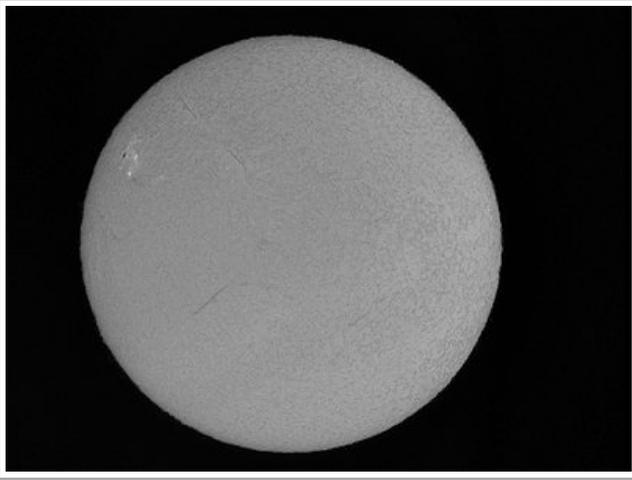
I saw three in all.

Later on my first Brimstone of the year was seen flying across the A2070 (I didn't see whether it got to the other side!)

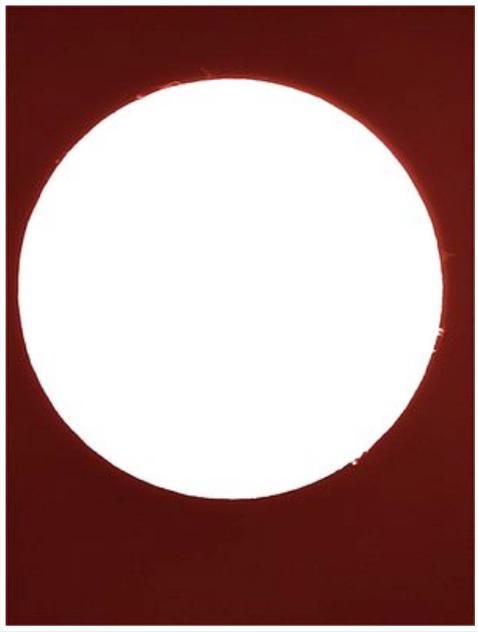
As for the sun that was shining down on us, this is how it looked



The sunspot was flaring still as you can see in the mono image



And there were a number of fine prominences



Shine on, Big Orange!



Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 09-Mar-15 08:07 AM GMT

Nice pics of our star, and the Small Tortoiseshells and others in your garden 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 10-Mar-15 12:22 AM GMT

Thanks Maximus, it was great to see so much activity in the garden.

Even more activity went on during the hours of darkness because when I looked in two of my ponds this morning I found lots of frog's spawn



These are the two ponds I put in a couple of years ago so I'm especially pleased that they've quickly become established



My main pond was installed about 30 years ago. No spawn has appeared in it so far this year but I've seen frogs in it recently so hopefully they'll get down to business soon.

Watching spawn turn into tadpoles and then into little frogs is a marvellous past-time and very much part of my year



It wouldn't be Spring without it!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 10-Mar-15 07:14 AM GMT

Great to see the frog spawn Hoggers – looks like spring is definitely here. That is indeed a Tree Bee 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Mar-15 11:27 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I think I've now got more than my fair share of frog's spawn, the ponds are full of it!

An early finish at work and the sun was shining! Perfect!

Out with the dogs I saw some Lesser Celandines and a few Blackthorns just coming into flower. Skylarks singing from up high.

A sudden dark flitter caught my eye



One of two Small Tortoiseshells that I saw on my walk

Back home I noticed this rather pale chap



He was gently croaking surrounded by great gloops of spawn



Looking further up the garden I found this glorious Peacock sunning itself on the fence



What a beauty



As I stood gazing at the Crocuses and Daffodils I spied another butterfly close to where I'd seen the Peacock. This time I could see it was flapping wildly and all did not seem to be well. I stepped closer and found it was in fact a Small Tortoiseshell caught in what looked like a disused old spider's web



I know that professional photographers have a (fairly) strict code of non-interference but I'm not a professional (!) and so immediately determined to free the butterfly.

However, to my horror I saw that the web was very much occupied



And she looked hungry . The spider was quickly bearing down on the snared butterfly so it was a race between us as to who could get there first.

Alas, the spider won and I could only stand by as it grappled at close quarters with the panic stricken butterfly.

What a waste, I thought! Months of hibernation all for nothing!

But then to my surprise I saw that the Tortoiseshell was not giving up the struggle but fighting furiously and in no way subdued. It beat its wings with great energy and after a few seconds I saw the spider give up and move away!

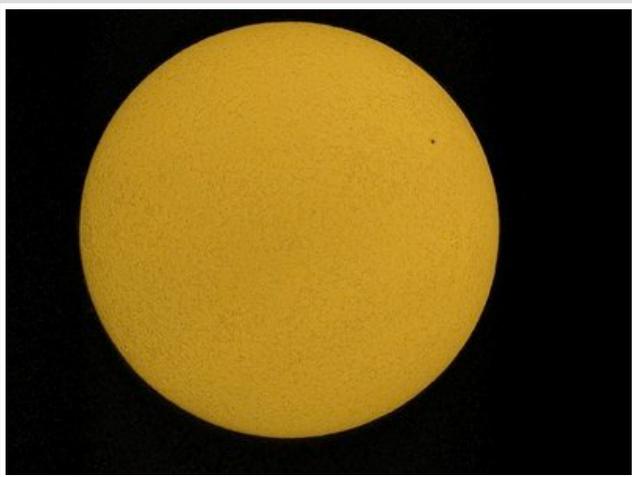
The Tortoiseshell was now pulling at a single strand of webbing



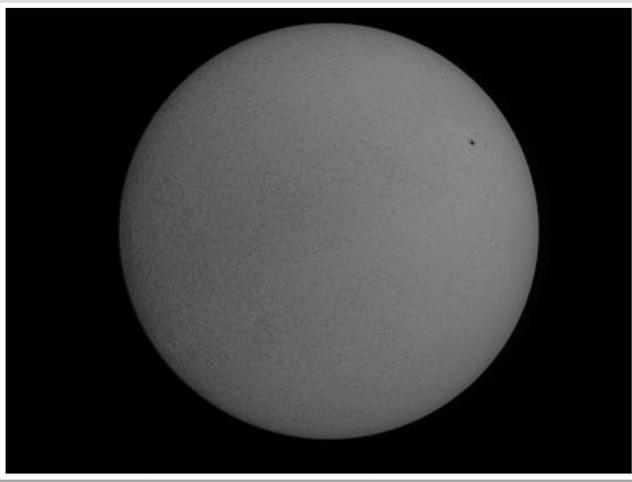
And then it was free. What a relief! Maybe the butterfly fought so hard that the spider couldn't get in a position to sink in its fangs?

I like a happy ending and as for the spider, well, I'm sure there are plenty of Dipterian flies for it to eat.

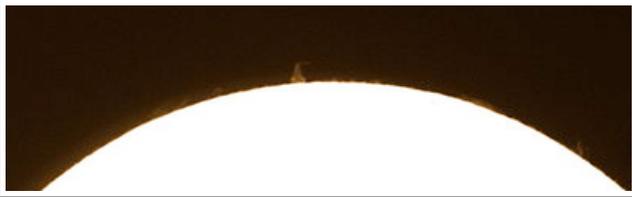
Gazing placidly down upon this and all the other dramas that make up this world of ours was the sun



The mono pictures show more detail



Plenty of dramatic prominences to be seen



As for friday's eclipse, I'm nearly ready. I've booked the day off work.
Now all I've got to do is invent something that will clear a sky of clouds...

Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 18-Mar-15 03:00 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Can we rely on you for some images of the eclipse this week? (hope it's not too cloudy).
I note that we both saw our first Peacock today!, and pristine specimens as well.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 18-Mar-15 08:03 AM GMT

Very nice photos, Hoggers, the Peacock in particular 😊 Hope you get some good shots of the solar eclipse on Friday 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Mar-15 01:26 AM GMT

Many thanks for the comments. It was wonderful to see a Peacock again and in such fine condition too.

While I'm not making the trip to the Faroe Islands on Friday morning where they'll be treated to a total eclipse, I will be stationed in my back garden in Kent awaiting an 85% partial eclipse.

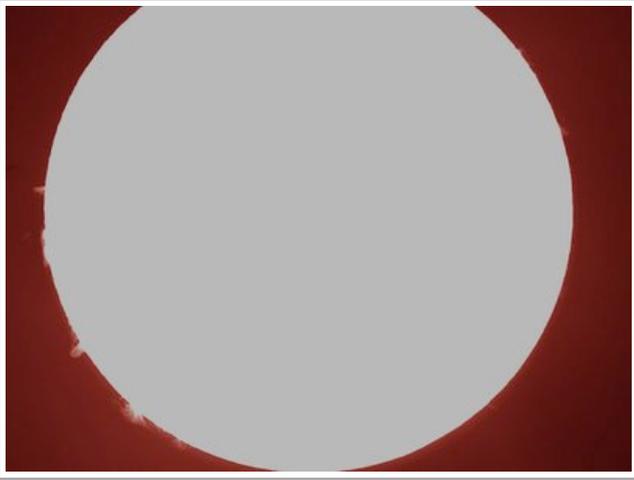
Alas, the forecast isn't promising and I although some determined souls charter aeroplanes to get above the cloudy stuff and track the eclipse that way, I'll be down on the ground praying for a chink in the clouds.

But it's still an event even if clouds spoil the view. Back in 1999 during the last eclipse I was out over the fields and it was just magical. The birds began calling and swooping about as if evening had come and it was time to go to roost. The temperature dropped and the quality of the darkness that fell was unlike that experienced every evening at sunset.

So plenty to enjoy (and it'll be a day off work for me as well!!!)

Plenty of cloud today but by the time I got home the sky had cleared giving me a view of the sun.

I was treated to a spectacular show of titanic prominences flaring out into space



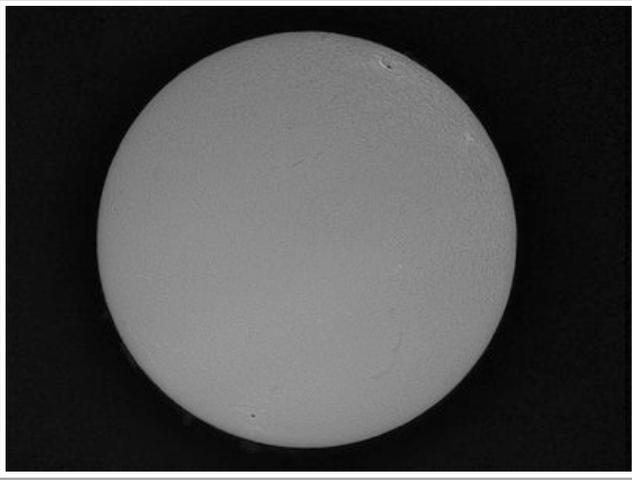
Even my basic equipment gives some idea of it



Here's the full disc with added colour



And in monochrome



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 20-Mar-15 01:14 AM GMT

I'm looking forward to your photo's of the eclipse Hoggers, not sure We'll get to see it here in the North if the weather changes Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 20-Mar-15 01:51 AM GMT

"Goldie M" wrote:

I'm looking forward to your photo's of the eclipse Hoggers..

Me too. I just hope the forecast is accurate.

Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 20-Mar-15 03:51 PM GMT

GOOD LUCK!! 😊

TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 20-Mar-15 08:48 PM GMT

Many thanks for all the good wishes but sadly this is the view I had from my garden throughout the eclipse



All dressed up and nowhere to go!



Despite all our preparations!



The cloud was so thick I couldn't even tell where the sun was let alone see it!

Still, it was interesting. As maximum approached I saw small charms of Goldfinches and Greenfinches gathering. A Blackbird began to sing out a few strains of song and was joined by my garden Robin. Most noticeably, the Collard Doves and Wood pigeons all stopped calling about 10 minutes before the eclipse was at its maximum here and remained silent for twenty minutes afterwards before cooing again.

Although I couldn't see the eclipse for myself I'd recorded the "Stargazers Eclipse Special" on BBC One (and there's a second episode tonight on BBC Two) and so I've seen some of the footage which was spectacular, particularly from an aeroplane above the Faroe Islands.

Wonderful!

Roll on 2026!

Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 20-Mar-15 09:08 PM GMT

Never mind, nice try!
TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 21-Mar-15 01:54 AM GMT

So sad for you, Hoggers, especially given your preparation.

By contrast, skies were clear all day here in Swansea, though I must say I was a tad disappointed by the spectacle.

Although the eclipse was 87%, it was almost impossible to see the disc of the moon covering the sun as the sun remained so bright.

It was spooky how dark it got though, and the birds all fell silent too.

Temperatures dropped noticeably as well.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 21-Mar-15 04:36 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Sorry the weather didn't work out for you. It was quite good here in the midlands with just a thin high overcast at peak time. I was at work but managed to catch a few minutes and watched it through some borrowed welding goggles. Without them it was still too bright to see anything happening although

it did go a bit darker and everything seemed to go quiet for a few minutes.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Mar-15 06:44 PM GMT

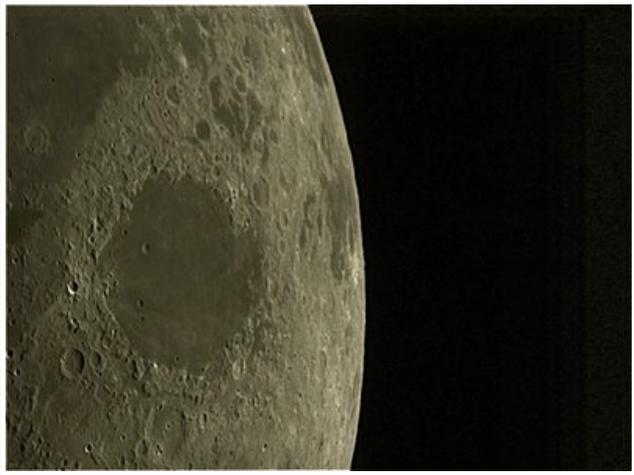
I was disappointed to miss the eclipse but I may now have a good excuse to visit Indonesia next year and America the year after so that I can see their total eclipses...! Worth a try..

No sun here today just wind and rain, but last night I had a go at photographing the moon.

I attached my mono ccd camera to my telescope at lowest magnification and here's the result



A fascinating landscape (or rather " moonscape")



I could easily imagine exploring it on foot



There's a full moon early next month so if the sky's clear I will have another go.

Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 27-Mar-15 02:31 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

I would like to congratulate you for those magnificent images of the Moon, the detail is incredible. Is it possible for you to get close ups of some the features on the surface, eg. craters , mountains etc.?. Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 27-Mar-15 02:40 AM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

There's a full moon early next month so if the sky's clear I will have another go.

Shall look forward to that, Hoggers. Those latest images are astoundingly good.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Mar-15 03:47 AM GMT

Many thanks for your kind comments. It was my first attempt at imaging the moon and it says far more about the technology involved than anything I did that they came out so well.

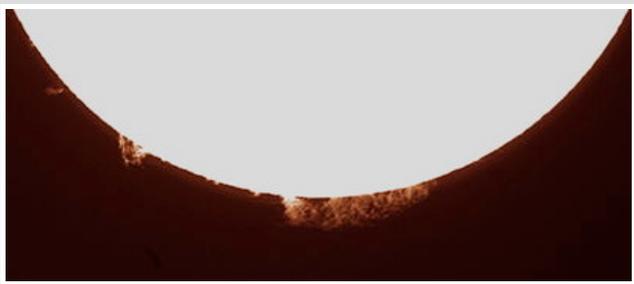
I believe I can get closer in if I use my Barlow lens so I'll give it a try next time.

Who knows, I may see a Clanger!

I got a look at the sun today during some gaps in the cloud



There were some magnificent prominences on display

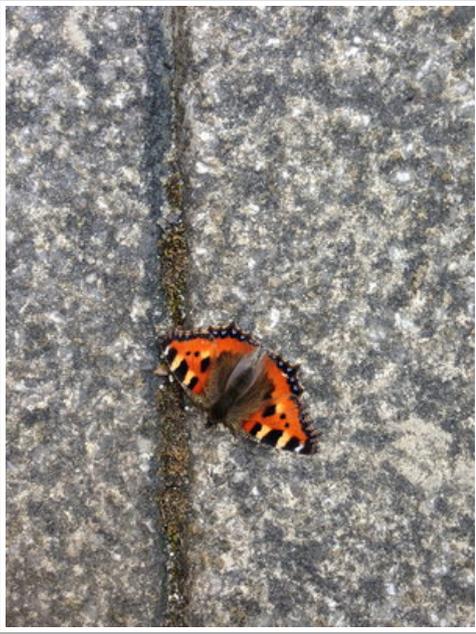


When you remember the scale that's involved it's truly astounding.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Mar-15 12:34 AM GMT

Leaving work earlier this afternoon I almost stepped on this Small Tortoiseshell



He looked bright enough but was immobile and clearly in a dangerous position so I moved him to a sunnier spot to hopefully warm up. Once home I went for a wander around the garden and was soon joined by a Peacock enjoying my Crocuses



An unfamiliar snatch of bird song caught my ear and I looked up to see a Canary perched on my roof!

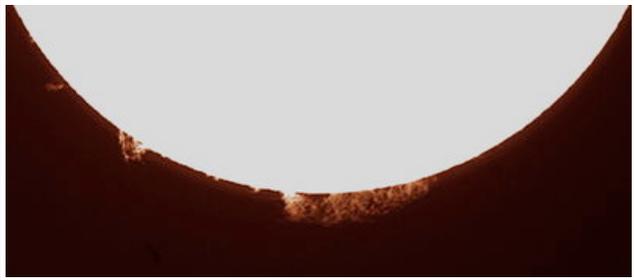


I was interested to see that he has a ring on his leg which I suppose means he's someone's pet

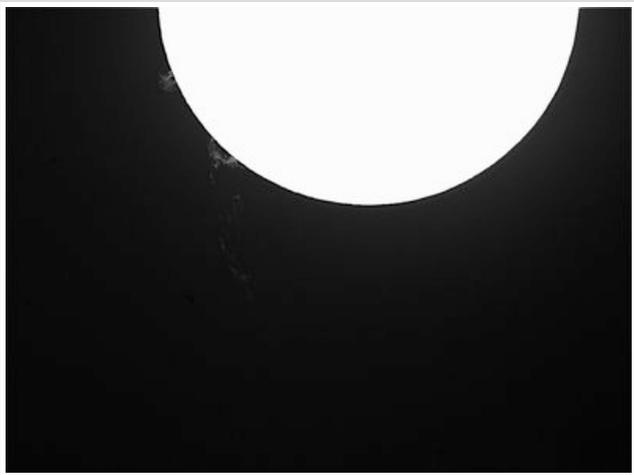


He flew off soon afterwards. I doubt he'll survive for long on his own.

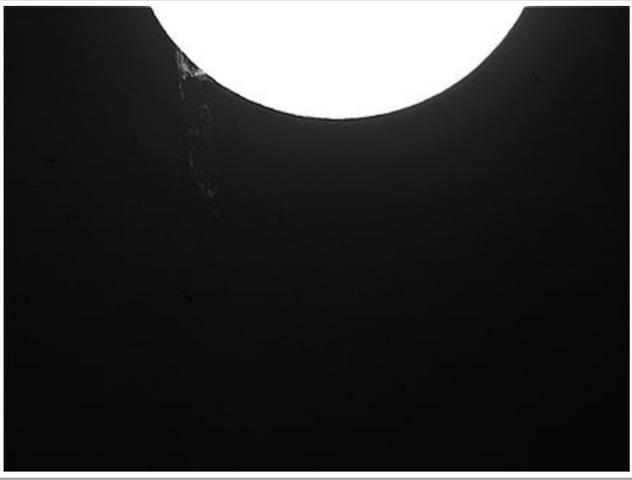
So often when I look at the sun I get a surprise. Today was no exception. If you remember the hedge-like prominence visible yesterday



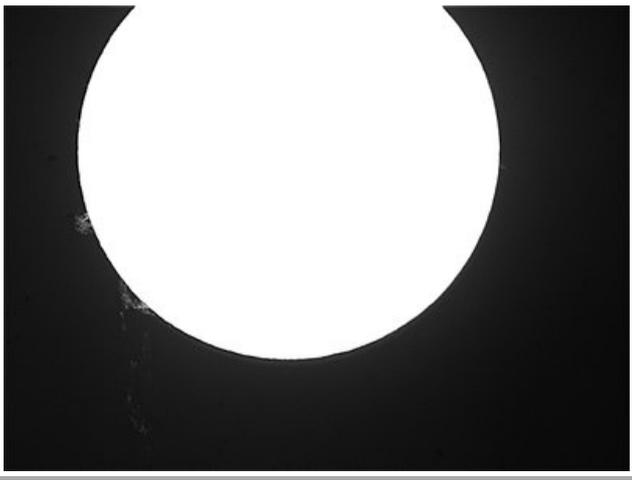
Well today it appears to have launched itself off in to space



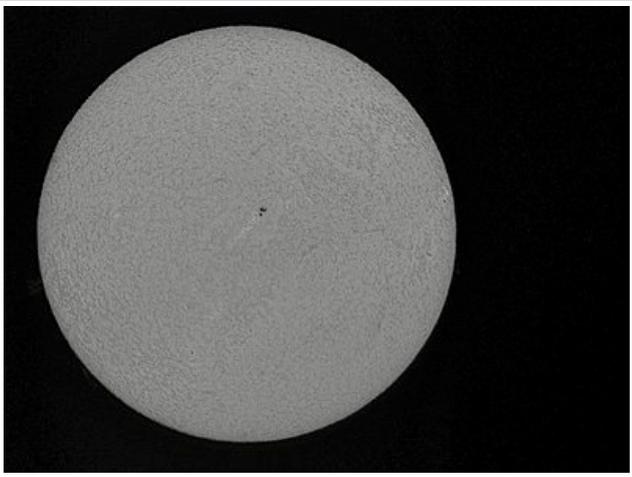
Extending for hundreds of thousands of miles



Stunning



And here's a quick look at the full disc



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Apr-15 02:12 AM GMT

I saw my first Swallow of the Summer yesterday, all on its own, hawking for flies above a lake in Ashford on a cold and dismal morning.

On my walk that day I also came across a dead Barn Owl, just lying in the grass by the river. I was very sad to see it.

The Froggy mating season seems to be over for another year. Every night from 16th February right up until 30th March I'd hear them croaking and splashing about in the garden pond and this was a typical scene



I guess it's the female in the middle. She's gone a funny colour



Maybe they're squeezing her too hard?

But now the croaking and other goings on have stopped. There's lots of spawn, some of which has already developed into wriggling Taddies.

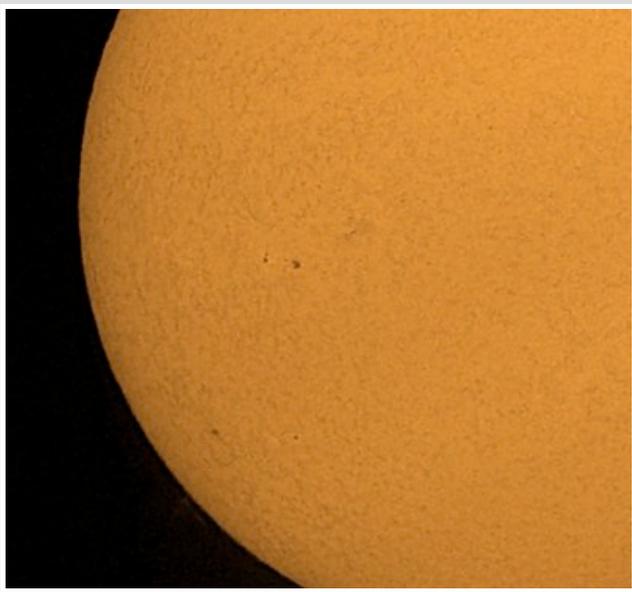
I was all day today in the garden. No butterflies alas, but I was happy to see a Bee-Fly on my Wallflowers

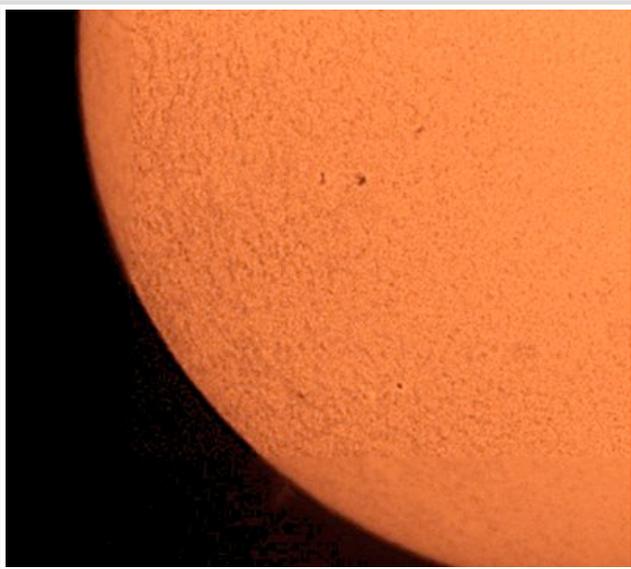
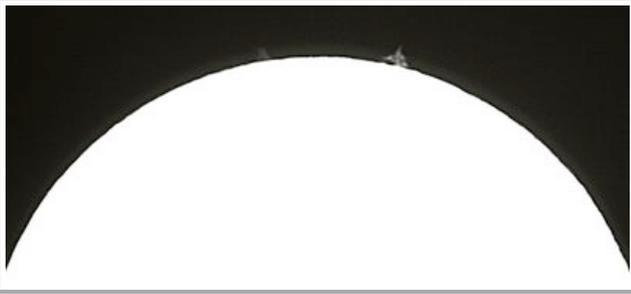




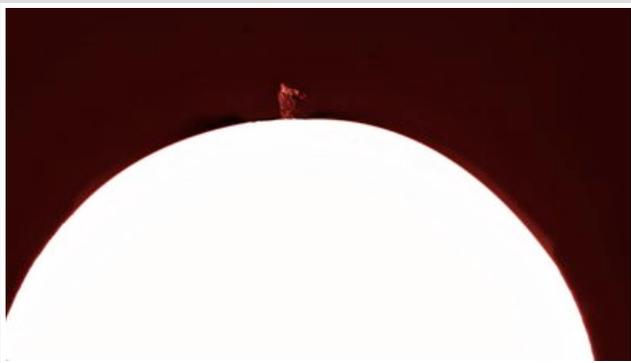
A pair of Buzzards circled above my house while I did the gardening. It's the first time I've seen this bird in central Ashford.

I got out my sun scope and took a look





And here's a towering prominence from a couple of days ago



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Apr-15 12:26 AM GMT

I felt rather left out over the Easter Holiday. Unlike many other parts of the UK the weather here wasn't up to much. It was generally cloudy and rather chilly. I didn't see a single butterfly. And naturally enough today I went back to work and out came the sun!

Luckily, I managed to finish early. On my drive home I was buzzed by a Peacock and spotted two Brimstones along the way.

Once home I grabbed the dog and set off for a walk along the riverbank. There we soon came upon Small Tortoiseshells



Including a courting pair



We saw 9 in all



And 3 Peacocks

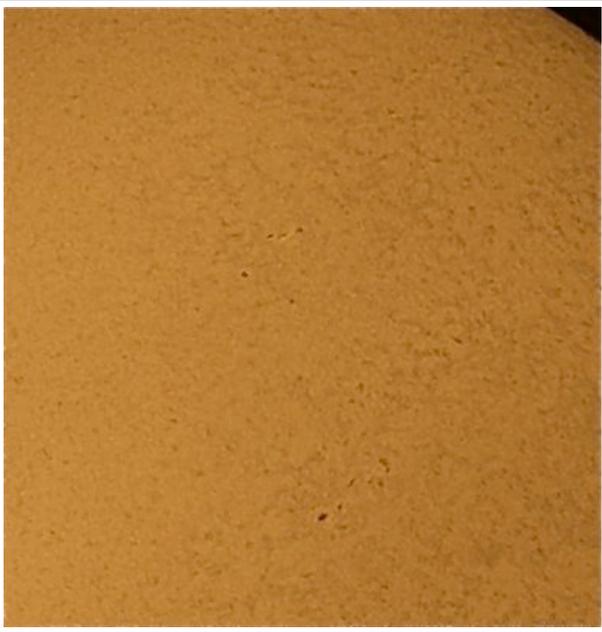


It was good to go out for a walk and find butterflies without having to try.

When we got back I took a look at the sun



Here's a closer look at a group of sunspots



And some prominences



Also, yesterday (dull though it was) I heard my first Blackcaps of the year.

Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 08-Apr-15 02:34 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,
Around here

Hi Hoggers,

Around here (Hailsham) Commas are the most plentiful Butterfly at the moment.
Though on my travels I have seen more Peacocks than anything else.

Looking forward to your posts.
TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 08-Apr-15 02:38 AM GMT

Apologies Hoggers , pressed a wrong button !
TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Apr-15 11:20 PM GMT

Hi Trevor, I usually have a Comma in my garden but haven't seen one so far this year. I think things down here are a little behind at the moment. For example, on April 5th last year I had a Holly Blue and an Orange Tip in the garden! So far this year I've seen only Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks.

Talking of Peacocks this fine looking specimen was sunbathing on the garden fence today



But despite appearances there was something wrong with this individual. It flew in a weak and erratic manner then crash landed in the grass and was struggling to get airborne so I scooped it up



and put it in a safe place

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-15 06:10 AM GMT

It certainly looks alright Hoggers – has any further light be shed on why it's flight was so unsteady – could it have been too cool? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 15-Apr-15 01:38 AM GMT

A beautiful day down here in Kent. On my drive to work (my car telling me it was 23C outside!) I saw three whites (GV or Small) and in my garden I saw my first Comma and best of all, a Holly Blue!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Apr-15 10:59 PM GMT

About 12 days ago when the weather seemed perfect I took a walk around Dungeness looking out for Small Coppers. I didn't find any.

Today was sunny, about 12C but with a strong and clod wind blowing.

Nonetheless, I thought it was worth going back for another try. I'm glad I did

They're back!





The wind kept them low down so there's more of pebble than Copper in my photos



And relocating them in the wind after they've gone for a quick foray wasn't easy



I've got to brush up on my Copper Hunting Skills



But such a pleasure to see them again. In all I found 8 one of which was a member of the Small Copper Blue Badge Club



(SCBBC for short)

Welcome back!

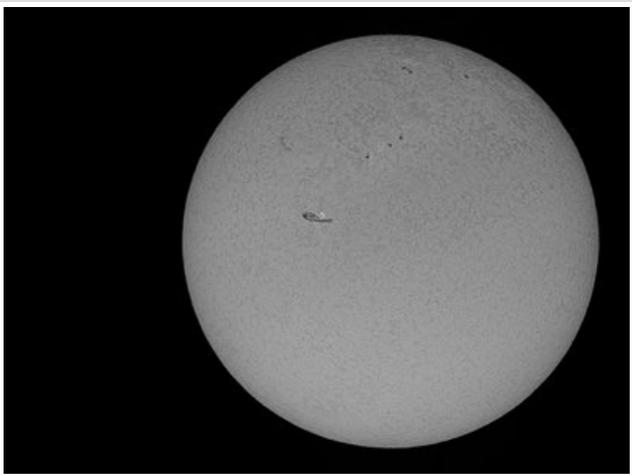


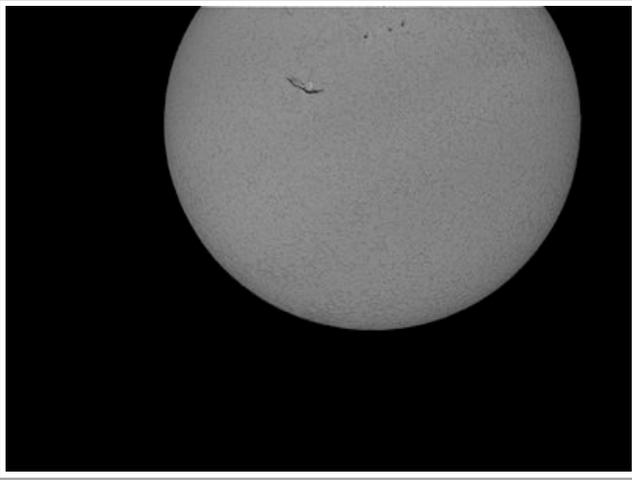


Here's to a long and productive 2015

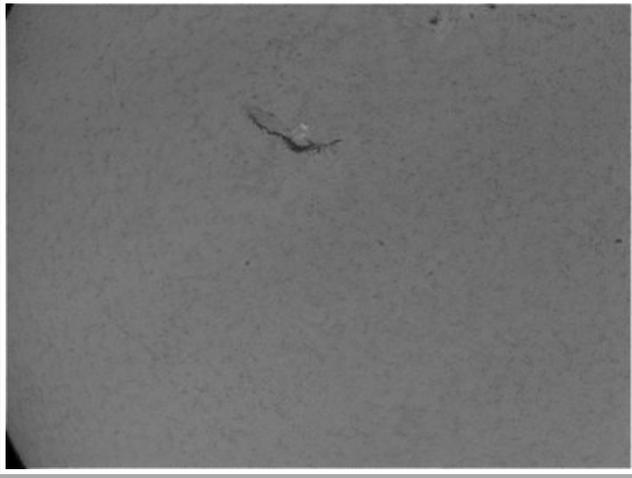


And here's a few images of something most peculiar that appeared on the sun this week





What looks like a vast bottomless chasm was in fact a huge flare with an ejection of matter heading right for us



Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-15 05:57 AM GMT

Cracking shots Hoggers 🍷 Now you've got your first Small Copper it feels like the season has started proper 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 19-Apr-15 06:00 AM GMT

You really **do** have a thing for Small Coppers, Hoggers.

Excellent images of a lovely butterfly.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-15 10:25 PM GMT

Great photos of the Copper Hoggers, hope I can do the same soon 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 19-Apr-15 10:42 PM GMT

I wondered how long it would be before you posted the first Dungeness Small Copper... 😊 All the bits of the jigsaw are coming together! Great selection of photos.

Dave

Re: Hoggers

by Butterflysaurus rex, 20-Apr-15 06:51 AM GMT

Goodness me Hoggers you've taken some cracking photos recently! Some of them have been out of this world "literally"..... I'll get me coat. 😊

I would love to see some Small Coppers, it feels like an age since I last saw one.

ATB

James

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 20-Apr-15 10:42 PM GMT

Many thanks for your kind comments. Of all the butterflies that share this island of ours the Small Copper is the one that delights me the most and I hope I get to see lots and lots of them!

Ever the optimist, I planted Sorrel a couple of years ago and now have a nice little patch of it so maybe I'll get a special Coppery visitor one day?

A butterfly that I am lucky enough to have in the garden is the Holly Blue and today when I got home I found one.

Very fidgety



But this individual was showing particular interest in one flower bed that had just been "watered" by my Spaniel





So I managed to get closer than usual



Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-15 03:26 AM GMT

Ah yes! Hoggers and his Small Coppers, great photos and good to see them 😊

Nice Holly Blue as well.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Apr-15 12:23 AM GMT

My Uncle Roy is visiting from Canada for a couple of weeks. He keeps talking about Monarch butterflies so I said we've got something rather more exciting over here and arranged to meet up with him, Brother Hoggles and Dad at Dungeness this morning.

The sun was out and so were the Coppers



Only a few of the Blackthorns are in flower at the moment but those that were had attracted the butterflies



I do so enjoy seeing them in amongst the flowers





How well they blend in with the surroundings though



We saw 15 Small Coppers in total



Three had just the tiniest touches of blue to the hind wings



I didn't find any today that had clear blue badges

These two chaps were uncomfortable neighbours



They provided us with a great deal of entertainment as they battled against one another



They were having a right barney



We also saw Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks, a Small White and a Green-veined White.

It was a great day out with the Small Coppers



Which we rounded off with a visit to The Britannia!

Re: Hoppers

by Goldie M, 22-Apr-15 06:28 AM GMT

Lovely Coppers Hoppers, can't wait to see them Goldie 😊

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 23-Apr-15 11:58 PM GMT

Hi Goldie I hope the Coppers come out for you soon.

I just had time to grab my camera to snap my first Orange Tip of the year as it visited my garden this morning



What a treat to have one in the garden again



I've got a lot of Garlic Mustard just coming in to flower so hopefully the Orange Tips will keep on coming



I also saw my first Speckled Wood of the year, again in the garden but he wouldn't stop for a photo!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Apr-15 12:18 AM GMT

Today has been dull and drizzly but Spring is very much in the air: I heard my first Cuckoo!

Our Blue Tits have returned and yesterday evening as the female settled down for the night I had a glimpse of what looked like a clutch of 8 eggs.

A Blackbird has built itself a nest in the garden but in a very exposed situation and just a couple of feet above the ground. Yesterday while the female was away I saw that there are 2 eggs.

We'll keep an eye on it.

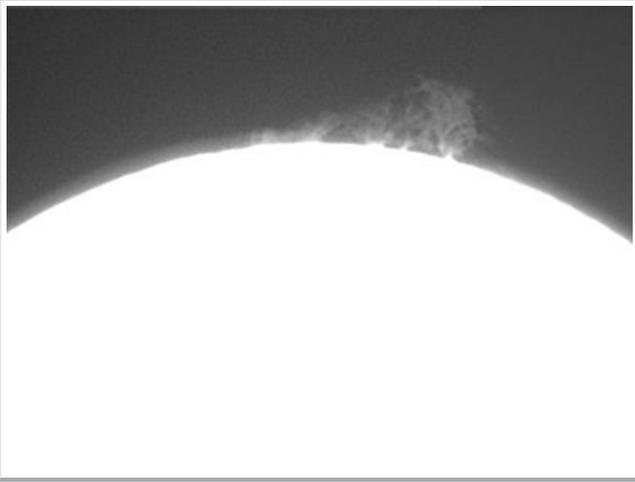
It was very warm and bright yesterday afternoon and for a time there were no less than 4 Holly Blues in the garden



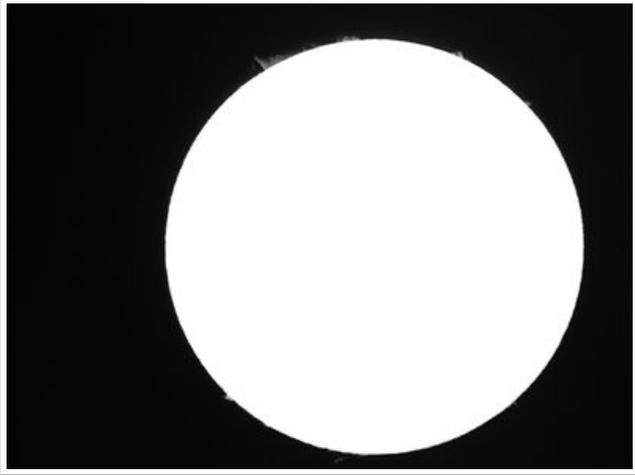
two Small Whites and a passing Orange Tip.

The sun has showed some very dramatic prominences over the last few days. Here's an image I took on 23rd April





Yesterday I could see that the forest-like proms had changed shape



Here's a view of the full disc showing sun spots, filaments and prominences



And a close up of a spotty region



Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-15 05:32 AM GMT

Great couple of reports Hoggers 😊 Did Uncle Roy think that Small Coppers rivalled Monarchs? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-15 05:42 PM GMT

Lovely Shots of the OT and HB Hoggers Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 03-May-15 12:43 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, the Small Coppers won him over in no time at all and now they're his Number One butterfly!

(And quite right too)

Hi Goldie thanks for your comments. I hope the weather is better for butterflies where you are than it is down here today!

No chance of seeing any today as it's so cool and dull so I went up to the woods to see the Bluebells before they're over for another year





A treat for the eye and for the nose as well



The air was sweet with their perfume



Blackcaps and Nightingales were singing



Some Speckled Woods would have been nice but all in all we had a good walk



Sadly, the Holiday forecast doesn't look up to much but maybe the sun will get through if even for a little time and get the butterflies out before we all have to go back to work.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 03-May-15 02:00 AM GMT

Lovely images, Hoggers.

One of the finest treats the British countryside can offer.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-May-15 11:57 PM GMT

A Small White flew past me as I walked the dogs at 7 this morning.

I thought "That's a good sign!"

By 9 I was down at Dungeness on a Small Copper Hunt: and there were plenty to keep me occupied!





I kept a careful note as I went along, doing my best to avoid double counting



And also tried to record the Blue Badge Holders amongst them



One of which was this lovely chap with a pale forewing (a variation I come across now and again)





Out in "The Desert" I came across 4 Grizzled Skippers



and also 2 Large Whites and my first Red Admiral of the season.

There were plenty more Coppers too!





Enjoying the sunshine





When I got home I added up my Small Copper Tally for the day : 99 !!

If I'd known when I was there that I needed only one more to reach a hundred I'm sure I could have found it!



8 of these had blue badges (at least to some extent, some having just a tiny amount of blue while others wore full regalia)

A cracking day out!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 05-May-15 07:54 PM GMT

When I set out on my walk this morning it was blowing a gale and looked ready to pour hard so I decided not to take my camera with me. But by the time I'd reached the fields the clouds had broken and it became warm quickly. It was then that I saw a little butterfly battling against the wind before crash landing into the long grass. I couldn't guess what it might be so I went over to have a look and saw to my delight that it was a Green Hairstreak. I had no idea they were present in this area. When it moved to a bush I took a quick snap with my mobile phone



Looking further I saw a GH flitting about but whether it was the same one I'd seen earlier I could not say.

On a calmer day I will go back and make a good search (and I'll take my camera!)

The Small Copper I found at Dungeness yesterday



reminded me of another I found there last September



(And about a week afterwards I found this one but I'm not sure whether it was the same butterfly that had sustained some injury in the meantime, or a different individual



)
It's a small sample size but I wonder if the fact that all have pale **right** forewings indicates a genetic cause rather than accident or pathology?

I will be keeping my eyes open for Small Coppers showing this kind of variation and if anyone out there is lucky enough to find one I'd be delighted to hear from them.

Re: Hoggers

by keving, 05-May-15 11:00 PM GMT

Hoggers,

Liked the photos of the Small Coppers (saw my first of the year at the weekend). Great photos too of the bluebells.

Regards Kev

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 05-May-15 11:36 PM GMT

Hi Kev, I wish I could add "Scratch and Sniff" photos of the bluebells, the scent was gorgeous!

I was very happy to find a female Orange Tip in my garden this afternoon



It was hanging on for dear life in the gale to the Garlic Mustard that I've planted especially for it



And a Green-veined White was sheltering near-by



I also saw a Peacock, a Large White and a Holly Blue in the garden.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 06-May-15 03:56 AM GMT

Fantastic photos Hoggers , all of them, I love the Small Coppers I've not seen them here yet, pity I can't get down to Kent now for the Grizzled Skippers, not got them yetGoldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-15 04:13 AM GMT

Fantastic Small Coppers Hoggers, they are not out yet around my patch so until they are I will just have to feast my eyes on yours 😊

Good find with the Green Hairstreak, an often overlooked and under recorded species.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 06-May-15 05:33 AM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

I wish I could add "Scratch and Sniff" photos of the bluebells, the scent was gorgeous!

This, believe it or not, was on Radio 2's Simon Mayo show this afternoon....how intoxicating the scent of a bluebell wood can be.

They broke it down into various components. Those I can remember were Lemon Grass, Mango, Ginger and Lychee.

Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 09-May-15 06:23 AM GMT

Hi ,Hoggers,

Great Small Copper shots as usual, you may want to take a look at the incredible shot taken in the Dungeness bird obs garden ,on the recent sitings page.(Dunge bird obs website)

Regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 10-May-15 02:07 AM GMT

Hello, thank you for all your comments (and yes, Allan I had seen the marvellous photo of the flowers smothered in Dungeness Small Coppers! Wonderful!)

I spent a couple of hours there this afternoon. It was warm and sunny but blowing a gale. So windy that the Coppers were mostly keeping their heads down so I had to work harder to find them



I counted 34 today

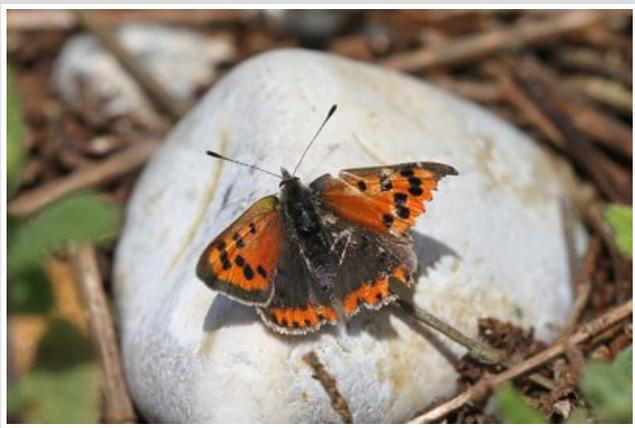




Including a couple of fully qualified Blue Badge Holders



Some already quite bashed about



Had it not been so blowy I've no doubt I would have seen many more, but that just gives me a reason to go back



Not that I need a reason!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 10-May-15 09:59 PM GMT

A few days ago I came across Green Hairstreaks on a patch of land where I've walked for years. I'd no idea they were there. That day was very windy and I decided to go back when it was a bit calmer in the hope of establishing how many butterflies are living there.

This is how the area looks



The kind of terrain that Shakespeare described as "Bosky".

When I got closer to the bushes I immediately found a Green Hairstreak



Over the next hour I counted 9 individuals



Some were leaning against the sun



Others were chasing each other in furious little dog-fights or just watching the world go by





This one imitated a Praying Mantis



It's very satisfying to have found a healthy colony of this delightful little butterfly right on my doorstep but a bit embarrassing to admit that I've probably been walking right past them for years!



Is it my imagination or is he smiling at me?

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 11-May-15 01:45 AM GMT

What a lucky find for you Hoggers, I've been to the same place for Hair Streaks now for three years so from now on you should be seeing them every year, lovely photos as well Goldie 😊

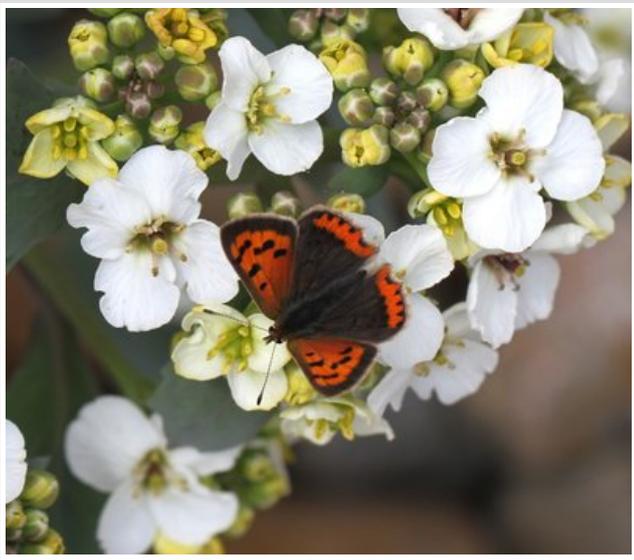
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 16-May-15 11:39 PM GMT

I will certainly be keeping an eye on the Green Hairstreaks, Goldie. What a stroke of luck having them so close to home!

I went to Dungeness this morning. Rather cloudy at first but the sun came out and so did the Small Coppers





I had three new species for me this year too: Small Heath



Brown Argus



And Common Blue



There were several Grizzled Skippers in the trapping area and one in the moat



I saw 77 Small Coppers on my walk



Looking lovely in amongst the flowers



Or perched on a pebble



Re: Hoggers

by Padfield, 17-May-15 01:14 AM GMT

Lovely butterflies Hoggers – and a brilliant all-blue female common blue in your last set – but lovely pictures of your dog in the bluebell woods too (several posts ago)! 😊 He looks very serious and obedient, looking to you for his next instruction. I have to say, those pictures made me smile.

Guy

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-15 07:09 PM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Really jealous of all your Small Coppers 🍷 😊. They are just getting started around my patch but I would never see them in the numbers that you do, five or six in one spot is a good count for me.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-May-15 10:57 PM GMT

Hello Guy, thanks for your comments. He's one of the most patient dogs I've ever known but when I'm stalking (and inevitably flushing!) a butterfly I sometimes look up and see him gazing at me as if to say "Come On!! Let's Go!!"

Mind you, let loose in a meadow he's great at getting the butterflies up as he whizzes about trashing that tail of his.

Hi Neil, thanks for your comment. Dungeness is simply amazing for Small Coppers. It has just their kind of arid terrain, there's Sorrel everywhere and of course it is a protected nature reserve. I don't know if there's anywhere in the country that can beat it!

I've been doing my best to provide accurate counts of what I see but I cover only a small part of the estate on any one walk so I guess there are many more there.

Today I returned to my newly discovered Green Hairstreak colony



My aim was to get as accurate count as I possibly could



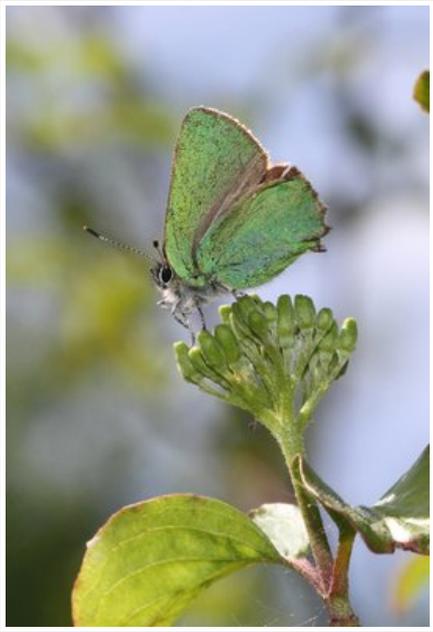
Conditions were good, it was warm, sunny and with only a light breeze



I had the chance to watch them engage in ferocious little dog-fights after which they'd return to their watching posts



Over about 1 1/2 hours I counted 17



I also saw 2 Peacocks, a Large White and a male Orange Tip.

The area was also patrolled by this female Broad-bodied Chaser



I hope she wasn't eating my Green Hairstreaks!



Re: Hoppers

by Goldie M, 18-May-15 01:11 AM GMT

Lovely Hair Streaks Hoppers, I wish I could visit there right now out of this cold wind Goldie 😊

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 22-May-15 11:41 PM GMT

Small Copper numbers have fallen at Dungeness and those remaining are showing signs of having lived hard but active lives





Life's tough down there and it's not only the elements that they have to contend with



Quite what finished this one off I do not know



I wasn't sure whether this one was worn or had been paler to begin with





On my walk this morning I saw only 29 Small Coppers but by no means all were on their uppers







And I was treated to some ferocious little battles



While the Small Coppers fade away for now Brown Argus, Small Heaths and Common Blues grow stronger





I also saw my first Painted Lady



Another good day with the Small Coppers



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-May-15 10:09 PM GMT

The weather here is dull and drizzly. No earthquakes here last night!

I spent the morning digging a "Hedgehog Tunnel" at the top of the garden so now they can easily get in from the field and out again. The trend for high solid fences rather than hedgerows between gardens is thought to be having a harmful effect on Hedgehog numbers as they can't move about freely to forage. Thus "The Tunnel"!

On my walk with the dogs I came across what I think is a Drake Mackerel



Such a handsome insect



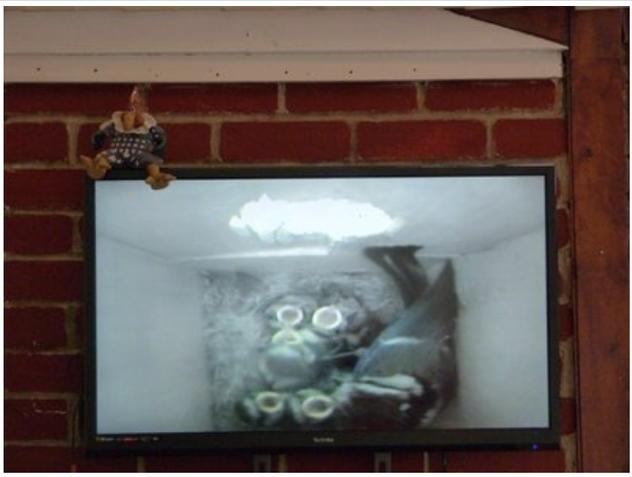
We went up to the woods but the Bluebells are now over. I found this photograph on my camera taken a fortnight ago which I'll post as a final memory of how wonderful they were



With no chance of a butterfly today I thought I'd give an update on my Blue Tits



They've done really well this year



Past two years all they've managed to raise was one or two but this time you can see there are six very healthy looking chicks almost ready to venture out into the world



I do hope this weather improves for the rest of the Bank Holiday!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 24-May-15 11:22 PM GMT

After yesterday's miserable weather, a single male Orange Tip fluttering about in my garden this morning seemed like a good omen for a butterfly trip further afield.

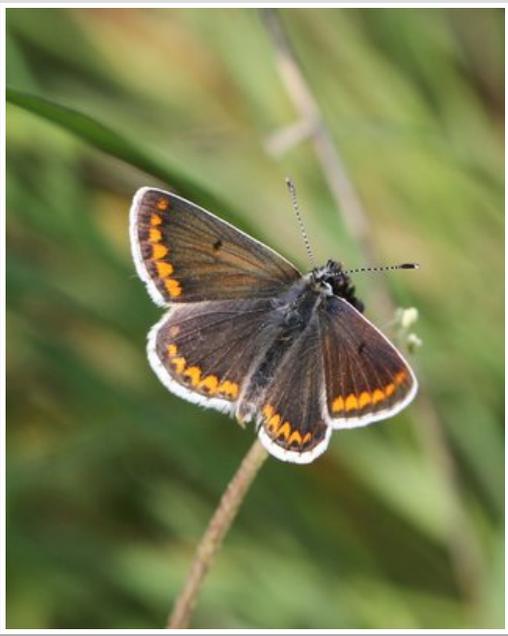
First cloud quickly evaporated and by the time I'd reached Dungeness we had glorious warm sunshine with very little wind.

The estate is now a blaze of colour as much of the Valerian and Sea Kale is in flower with Viper's Bugloss joining in too. There's also some Ragwort and that's where I saw my first Small Copper



But their numbers are now very modest. The first brood must be all but over. Common Blues, Small Heaths and Brown Argus have come to the fore





I also saw Large and Small Whites and this faded Painted Lady



Although I'm eagerly awaiting the second brood of Coppers I have no intention of ignoring those of the pioneering first brood





I saw only 16 today but they kept me entertained. I sat down to have my lunch and watch a pair of neighbouring males. Over the course of around 15 minutes I saw them engage in 8 furious dog fights, some of which lasted near on a 30 - 45 seconds a time



So there was plenty to see



Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 25-May-15 05:04 AM GMT

It would seem that every time you go out your tripping over Small Coppers , yet so far this year i have only seen one !. The habitat at Dungeness must be just perfect for them.

Keep 'em coming,
TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 26-May-15 12:28 AM GMT

I love the Small Coppers on the white flowers Hoggers, it sets them off beautifully and yes I finally found some 😊 also the young chicks look great, keep us informed on their progress will you. Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-May-15 10:32 PM GMT

All 7 Blue Tit chicks left the box this morning and are now dotted around the garden being fussed over by the parents. This is the third year in a row that we've had Blue Tits nesting with us and up til now the best they've managed is to raise 2 chicks so conditions must have been just right for them.

I've been confined to barracks today but I spotted my second Red Admiral of the year in my garden Jungle





Two Small Whites



A tired looking Holly Blue made a fleeting visit



And I had a brief glimpse of a Speckled Wood.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 31-May-15 09:01 PM GMT

Hi! Hoggers we don't seem to get Red Admiral's here until August/Sept they must work their way here slowly 😊
Glad the young chicks are out and about, we've got young Starlings and young Black Birds in our Garden, the starling young still expecting Mum to feed them Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Willow, 01-Jun-15 12:08 AM GMT

Lots of enjoyable images Hoggers, your certainly getting a good range of species 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-Jun-15 11:14 PM GMT

Today we had lashings of sunshine, not of rain(!), so I took your advice Bill and set off to find a few local butterflies that I haven't managed to catch up with so far this season.

First, Kingsdown near Deal and the Small Blue



I've seen 50+ at this site but today found only 8



I've left it rather late



This magnificent Red Admiral dwarfed the Small Blues



Hopefully he's on his way up to you Goldie!

Then to Samphire Ho where I got a nice surprise when the first butterfly I saw turned out to be a Clouded Yellow



He led me a merry dance



But when he took a quick break I got close enough for a snap



Second on my list: Wall



Almost as elusive as the Clouded Yellow but I managed to get close to one for a second or two!



Last target for the day was the Adonis Blue





Some were worn and battered



But such a gorgeous butterfly!



A successful day out



Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 05-Jun-15 12:56 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,
You had a similar day to me today, with a wonderful selection of species to be seen.
I almost felt as though i was in Hoggersland today as i at last found some Small Coppers,
at most locations visited they have been notable by their absence.
Excellent images in your diary.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by kevlings, 05-Jun-15 03:50 AM GMT

Enjoying your recent photos Hoggers. Your cup runneth over at the moment with some cracking species.

Regards Kev

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 05-Jun-15 06:46 AM GMT

Cracking report Hoggers, great to see you got all your targets, great shots especially the final Small Blue 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Jun-15 10:52 PM GMT

Thanks for your kind comments, they are much appreciated.

I live in central Ashford (Kent) and whilst out with the dogs this morning I was buzzed by a Painted Lady. Time : 07.15 !

"Good sign" I thought.

By 10am I was at Dungeness : more Painted Ladies in amongst the gorgeous flowers



I saw 8 there during the course of my walk



There were Hummingbird Hawk Moths, quite a lot of them!



I saw 6

Bearing in mind I also saw 2 Red Admirals it looks like there's some migration going on.

I was on the look out for Small Coppers as I wondered if any of the first generation were still around. Throughout my whole walk I managed to find just the one



So I think it's reasonable to conclude that the first brood are over now.

Looking at my records for this year I can plot the progress of this first brood at Dungeness:

8th April - None

18th April - 8

21st April - 15

4th May - 99

9th May - 33 (but on a very windy day)

16th May - 77

22nd May - 29

24th May - 16

6th June - 1

Roll on the second brood!

But while I'm waiting for them there's plenty to see. Small Heaths



Brown Argus





Common Blues



Which included a smashing blue female



In fact, I haven't seen a brown female so far this year



I was delighted to find her.

But for me today was about another lady, the Painted Lady and the beautiful flowers of Dungeness



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Jun-15 09:53 PM GMT

East Blean Woods for me this bright, warm, sunny Sunday morning.

Plant the Cow Wheat



And they will come





Difficult to say how many I saw during my visit



But easily 20 +





Often I'd focus on one



and another would drop in



One of the things I most like about Heath Fritillaries is the way they'll break a flight with a graceful glide. Such an attractive butterfly



And I was glad to see at least 6 other butterfly enthusiasts who were there to enjoy the fritillaries too. I think everyone went away very happy indeed.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-15 05:47 AM GMT

Heaths are my main target species this year – but the Kent sightings page isn't that forthcoming so I read your post with mixed emotions – I was glad that I got confirmation that they're out 😊, obvious envy for your great shots of a species I'd love to see 🍷, and growing anticipation about next Sunday 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 09-Jun-15 12:50 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I've got everything crossed for you for next Sunday! If the weather is kind you will have no trouble finding plenty of them

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 09-Jun-15 01:17 AM GMT

Great pictures of those Heaths. I've got a trip planned next tuesday, weather permitting. Your pictures have got me chomping at the bit to see them now 😊

Re: Hoggers

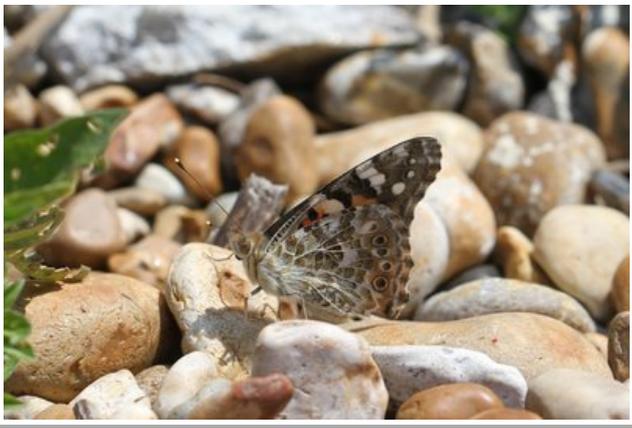
by Hoggers, 14-Jun-15 11:24 PM GMT

Good luck Buggy: a fine day will reap rewards!

Dungeness was bathed in brilliant hot sunshine this morning. I straightaway saw Hummingbird Hawk Moths and Painted Ladies



I found 9 of the latter during my visit



Good numbers of Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshells, Brown Argus, Large Whites, Common Blues



and Small Heaths

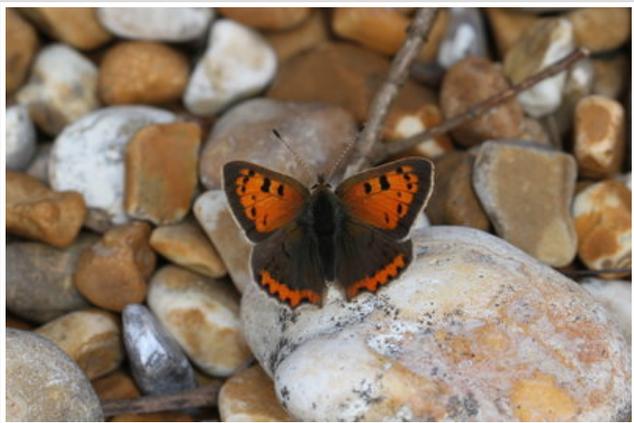


I was pleased to find my first Small Skipper





I always hope to see a Small Copper or two when I visit Dungeness and although we're not yet into the second brood I thought I might be lucky and come across a lingering remnant of the first. So I had a delightful surprise when I found this fine fellow



Brand spanking new and hot off the press and sporting a very pretty, delicate wing pattern



He had set up his patch and was vigilantly seeing off all intruders



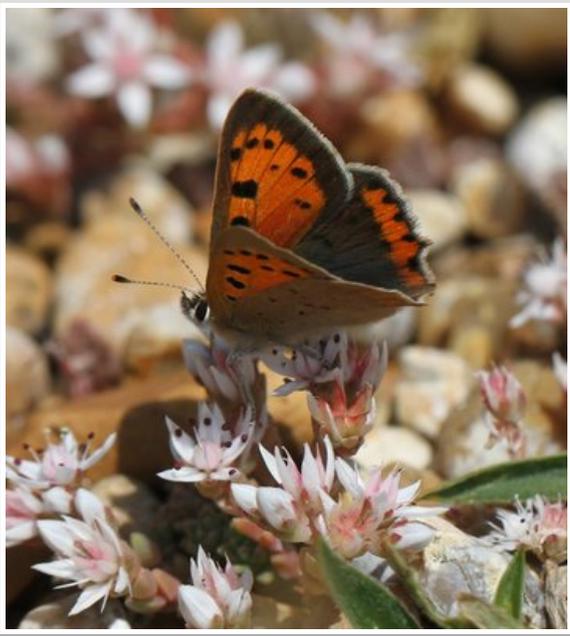
I followed him on a number of his patrols



and enjoyed an acrobatic display



After which he'd refuel



before resuming his post



And I was further surprised to see two more Coppers on my walk, both fresh





So it looks like the second brood of this impetuous creature has begun!
What a super little butterfly!



Re: Hoggers

by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-Jun-15 04:36 AM GMT

I like your acrobatic Small Copper photo Hoggers, it appears to be doing the splits! No doubt all the other Coppers asked it why it was "walking funny"

afterwards. 🤪😄

ATB

James

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jun-15 05:09 AM GMT

Here we go, Hoggers Small Coppers are out again 😄😄 Still got first brood ones around here and I wouldn't expect to see second brood locally for some weeks yet.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Jun-15 12:17 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments, chaps!

One Small Copper that I saw last sunday seemed to have a very fixed territory. I had the chance to go back today and I was most interested to see if he was still there.

He'd favoured the shingle patch to the left of my hat and jacket in this photo



And he was there today!

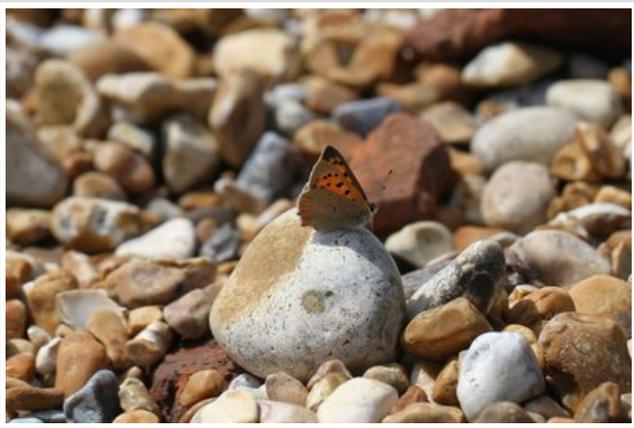


I decided to sit myself down and see what he got up to. Between 1013 and 1138 I kept as close an eye on him as I could.

The shingle patch was his preferred spot. I saw him launch himself on 26 missions from this patch. He never roosted except on the shingle, and mostly low down



but sometimes picking a slightly raised vantage point



These pebbles, heated in the sun, radiated a strong heat.

All of his missions were patrols and explorations. Although flies and bees would intrude upon his domain he let them pass unmolested. But from past experience I doubt he'd have been so understanding had another butterfly come through!

On three occasions he made longer flights going slightly further afield and each time he would take an interest in grass



And Sorrel



which he would appear to investigate by pattering his feet against the stalks very fast



He would then always return to the shingle patch



I didn't see him nectar once. But although he most certainly was active there were two rest periods when he simply sat quietly for 10 minutes on one occasion and for 15 minutes on the second.

I'm going to post this entry now because it's my second attempt after twice losing everything I'd written!

Fingers crossed!!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Jun-15 12:39 AM GMT

Today's report continued..(I hope!!!)

(I don't know the reason but now every time I try to post an entry I am sure to have it erased mysteriously and so have to do it all over again, so I rush to get it done before losing it!! Very Frustrating!!!)

After my time with this one Small Copper



I managed to find two more although they were far apart from each other





Small Skippers



7 Painted Ladies





My first Meadow Brown (it flew away before I could photograph it !)

Common Blues, Small Heaths, Brown Argus and this gorgeous Small Tortoiseshell



There may not be many Small Coppers out just yet but the few that are provide a great deal of pleasure



Re: Hoggers

by Willow, 17-Jun-15 09:12 PM GMT

Your giving me the vague impression that you might just like **Small Copper** Hoggers... 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 18-Jun-15 02:45 AM GMT

I've only seen a handful of Small Coppers this year 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-15 02:55 AM GMT

Fantastic shots Of the coppers Hoggers, I can't wait to visit Dungeness which I hope to do in August hope I see some of your lovely Coppers then Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 18-Jun-15 05:15 AM GMT

Hi Buggy - The Doctor prescribes a visit to Dungeness for you!

Goldie, come down in August and you'll see plenty!

Bill : me interested in Small Coppers?!? ME??.....Just a bit!!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggars

by Paul Harfield, 21-Jun-15 08:05 AM GMT

Hi Hoggars

I have not seen any Small Coppers at all so far this year 😞 So I thought I would visit your diary pages for a fix 😊 As I expected, a generous helping of Small Coppers were found therein 😊

Interesting report on the behaviour as well, fantastic 😊 I feel almost satisfied now

Re: Hoggars

by Hoggars, 21-Jun-15 11:07 PM GMT

Hi Jack I'm glad you enjoy the Small Coppers I put on here. I often worry that my preoccupation with them makes for a rather dull diary for others to read. I tend to overload it with Small Coppers! But I'm sorry to hear that you haven't seen a single one yet: are they usually so hard to come by in your neck of the woods?

As for down here, the second brood is now well under way



Last tuesday I struggled to find three



Today I easily counted 26



And as you can see, they're already looking ahead to a third brood!





I found this pair already in cop so missed the courtship. I sat down and waited for the uncoupling



and after 10 minutes they simply walked away from each other



remained close by for 2 minutes





and then went their separate ways.

I saw one individual act in exactly the same way as the butterfly I spent the afternoon with earlier this week, ie, it would launch itself, settle very briefly on Sorrel, patter against it with its feet



then return to its perch



I wonder if it is in some way "tasting" its food plant, or detecting whether a female has been present?

I will just post this now in case I lose it all somewhere in the InterWeb ether!

Fingers crossed!

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-15 11:24 PM GMT

Great shots once again Hogger's, roll on August 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 21-Jun-15 11:40 PM GMT

Today's entry continued! (I'm having "Internet Dis - connection Problems" !)

Returning to Dungeness I was most interested to see whether the Small Copper I'd spent the morning with last tuesday would still be on his patch.

Alas, he was not. No sign of him. But two newcomers had taken his place!



I felt sad that he wasn't there. Maybe he just moved on?

The two Small Coppers now using his patch were highly combative. I watched them engage in fast and furious dog fights, often soaring 12 -15 feet high locked in battle. Quite spectacular.

Later I found another pair of feuding neighbours and attempted to get some photographs





Most exciting!

But how innocent they otherwise look



All that I saw today were very fresh individuals and at times I had the impression that they were emerging around me



In addition to the Small Coppers there were many Small Heaths as well, and Small Skippers, and Small Tortoiseshells: small but beautiful



Re: Hoggers

by Willow, 21-Jun-15 11:46 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

I'm glad you enjoy the Small Coppers I put on here. I often worry that my preoccupation with them makes for a rather dull diary for others to read

Dull diary 🙄 never Hoggers, thoroughly enjoyed every time I catch up...and your acknowledged here on UKB's as an authority on Small Coppers 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 21-Jun-15 11:59 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie - I'm looking forward to your photos!

Bill, during the Long-Tailed Blue invasion I was described (tongue firmly in cheek, I might add!) as the UK's Leading Authority on copulating LTBs (I'd somehow managed to stumble on two mating pairs..) so to now have the further accolade of UKB's Authority on Small Coppers is an honour indeed!

If only my knowledge matched my enthusiasm!!

Best Wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Jun-15 11:04 PM GMT

This is the only Large Skipper I've seen this year



Are they scarce this year or just running late?

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 24-Jun-15 04:36 AM GMT

Definitely running late in my part of the world. Today was the first day I've seen them in any numbers at all. Just odd singletons up to today.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-15 06:34 AM GMT

Fantastic Coppers as always Hoggers 😊 You're even sneaking in a few shots of other species 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 24-Jun-15 07:25 AM GMT

I'm amazed how Small Coppers never seem to disappear from your neck of the woods, Hoggers.

Personally, I haven't seen one for nearly a month but yours seem to keep going regardless.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 24-Jun-15 11:46 PM GMT

Many thanks for your kind comments. The Coppers do seem to be continuously present at Dungeness from April until October/November although numbers fluctuate of course.

I had today off work so with the sun shining I headed back to Dungeness to see some more and immediately found a mating pair

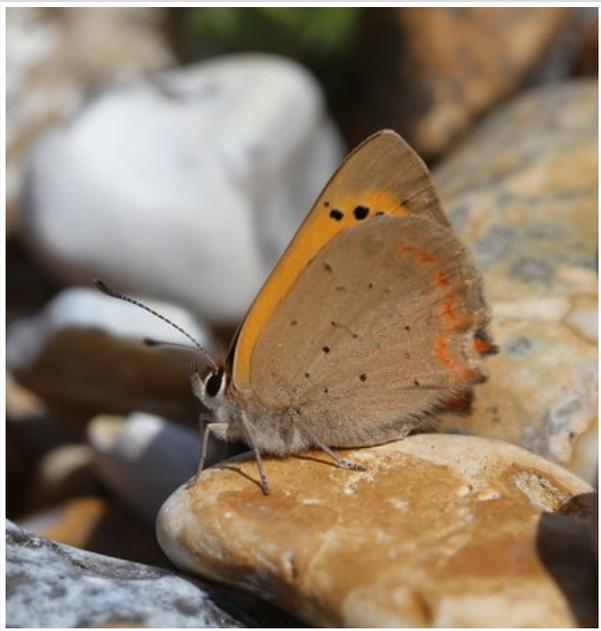


As well as getting a photo



or two!









I mostly like to watch them and see what they get up to. Well, today I was treated to a couple of interesting examples of Small Copper behaviour. The first was watching a female deal with the unwanted attentions of an amorous male.

I saw the female quickly walking along with the male toddling along close behind



She would vigorously shake her wings at him and then adopt a pose that if it reminded me of anything it like a displaying Turkey! You can hopefully get an idea of what I mean from this next photo



And she assumed this pose on a number of occasions throughout the pursuit



Which ended with her flying to a bush and disappearing inside leaving the male on his own



The other way Small Coppers behave is to have punch-ups



And it's these I enjoy the most!





Re: Hoggers

by David M, 25-Jun-15 02:29 AM GMT

Great sequence, Hoggers. Your first specimen is striking because it is so dark – very like the ones I see in France.

Love the aerial skirmish photos – that's no mean feat to pull off with such a small insect.

Re: Hoggers

by Willow, 25-Jun-15 04:36 AM GMT

Superb images of your small friends Hoggers – I'm sure they do as you request 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 26-Jun-15 04:58 AM GMT

Hi ,Hoggers.

Fantastic Small Copper shots as usual Hoggers ,particularly liked your second shot ,Have a look on "Cockayne" ,I wonder if that's Ab: Magnipuncta 'if not it's very similar,i had a few visits for the First brood,seeing your pictures makes me keen for a weekend trip.

Regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Jun-15 05:50 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments,much appreciated as always.

Hi Allan, I counted 43 there yesterday so you'll have no difficulty finding them this weekend. And thanks for reminding me about the Cockayne Collection – the one I saw certainly does look like the specimen shown. That's one of the attractions of Small Coppers: there's such a variation in wing markings.

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Jun-15 11:12 PM GMT

I spent a couple of hours wandering around Dungeness this morning. The weather was fabulous, the flowers were fabulous and the Small Coppers were even better than Fabulous!





I saw 43 on wednesday



Today I counted 81





There were even some other butterflies about!



And in addition to the Brown Argus I saw my first Marbled White of the season.

But I must admit to being distracted from these other butterflies



I watched two affrays





And again saw a female adopt a displaying Turkey pose when rebuffing a male



But mostly I was able to enjoy Small Coppers perching





And nectaring





Another grand day with the Small Coppers



A Fair Cop(per)!



Re: Hoggers

by Willow, 04-Jul-15 07:57 PM GMT

I do believe spending lots of time with a particular species is the only way to find out more, now that might sound obvious, but how many of us do that, not too many, we're all busy trying to pack in as many species as possible into our all too brief butterfly season...so good on you Hoggers for your concentrated efforts with the delightful **Small Copper** 😊

BW's 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-Jul-15 11:58 PM GMT

How very kind of you, Bill, and much appreciated.

And it just so happens that this very morning...



I couldn't resist a visit to see my favourite butterfly



I'd been itching to go back to Dungeness all week whilst at work, so when Saturday came off I went



There were Large and Small Whites everywhere and Small Coppers aplenty



I counted 118 of them including this interesting individual



I wish I had managed better and unobstructed photos of him



But when he flew up I couldn't find him again



But you can see how different his markings are.

Some have reduced wing marks and are to my eye very attractive for it



And look at this brave little warrior

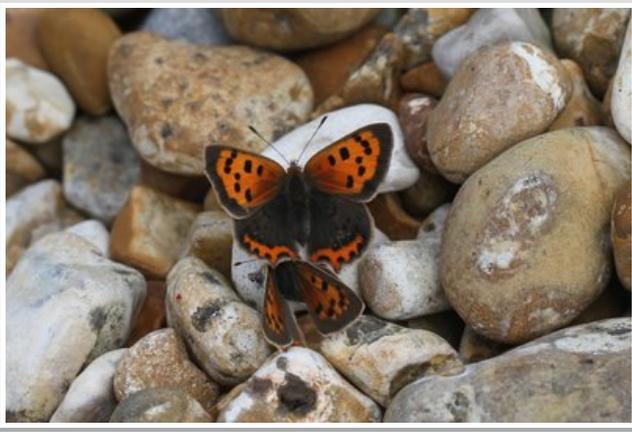


He's had a fight with a bird and survived!

I was keen to see some Small Copper behaviour and luckily came upon to examples of males courting reluctant females.

Here you see our Romeo and Juliet





He was constantly bending his abdomen in an attempt to mate. They flew off so I didn't see whether he was successful. I noted that she did NOT behave in the way I've seen other females refuse males, ie, by walking away and posing like a Turkey displaying its wings.

However, this morning I later found a male who was courting TWO females



One of these ladies DID adopt the Turkey pose, walked away then flew off. The other female did NOT act in this way and I thought they were going to mate



Again you can see him raising his abdomen in an attempt to mate. Which again I missed (if it happened at all!) because they went whizzing off.
They are fascinating and beautiful creatures



Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 05-Jul-15 06:27 AM GMT

I didn't know this many Small Coppers even existed! 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 05-Jul-15 10:37 PM GMT

118 was a good total, Buggy, but there were certainly many more – I covered only a small part of the territory!

Rained out today! I know it's good for the garden but surely it could have fallen overnight? Or on a weekday when I'm at work?

I was over the fields with the hounds at 7 this morning ahead of the rain and although cloudy it was very warm.

We saw many Meadow Browns stirred up out of the tall grass as we crossed the meadows. Up at the wood it was very quiet.

Has anyone–else noticed the lack of Willow Warblers this year? I haven't heard a single one. Chiff–Chaffs, yes ; but no Willow Warblers.

Maybe it's just down here in Kent that they've been scarce this year?

I will not usually permit any butterfly that isn't a Small Copper to appear in my diary but a wet Sunday has tipped the balance in favour of another species, an Essex Skipper, my first of the season, which I bumped into on my early morning walk



And the first Marbled White on my patch this year also gets a mention due to rain having stopped play



They are smart butterflies but I can't help somehow thinking that as a species they could do with something extra? Maybe a dash of coppery tint..? Just to add a little dash of class?

Rainy Sunday thoughts.. but worth considering...

It was nice over the fields this morning before the rains came down



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-15 09:37 PM GMT

I love all your photos Hogger's ,you've wet my appetite for Kent but I can't get there until the first week in August worse luck.Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 08-Jul-15 08:39 AM GMT

Has anyone—else noticed the lack of Willow Warblers this year? I haven't heard a single one. Chiff–Chaffs, yes ; but no Willow Warblers.

I've heard a fair few in my travels this year

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-15 04:58 AM GMT

I thought you could just about get away with Essex Skippers as they're 'golden' but the Marbled White is definitely pushing it Hoggers 😊Great photos btw 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jul-15 05:42 AM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

I didn't know this many Small Coppers even existed! 😊

Nor me...

I love reading your diary Hoggers and seeing all those Small Coppers, especially the behaviour shots 😊

I can't agree with you about the Marbled Whites lacking something though 😊 They are my wives and sons favourite butterflies, they both say it is because of the simple contrast of black and white.

Cheers,
Neil

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 09-Jul-15 06:01 AM GMT

Staggering numbers of Small Coppers – more than I've seen in my life, I should think. I reckon all those from round here have migrated south–east... great shots of what they get up to, as well. 😊

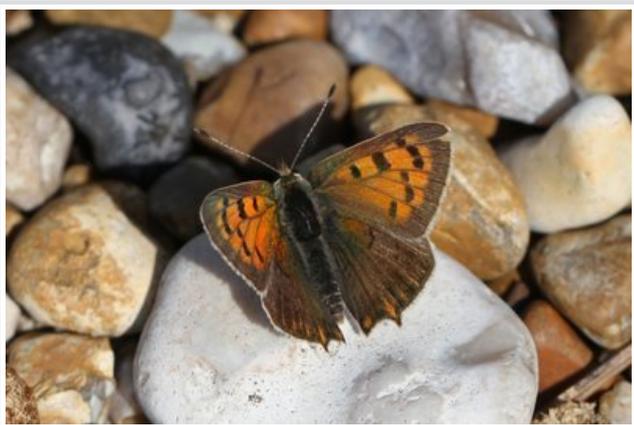
Dave

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 09-Jul-15 08:54 PM GMT

Hello and thanks for your kind comments, they are greatly appreciated.

I made my way down to Dungeness today and began counting Small Coppers! I reached 86 with no trouble but when I came across number 87 my mind went BLANK



A radiata!



This is only the second I've ever found



He was very pugnacious indeed and would do battle with just about anything that moved. I noticed that he had a very settled territory and would always return to roughly the exact same place. Indeed, I left him for 90 minutes and when I came back he was there still.

I'd like others to go and see him but I'm wary of collectors so what I did was to go and find the Observatory Warden, David (who as some of you might know is a very nice man indeed) and I introduced him to radiata, so if anyone wants to see the butterfly they only have to ask David



I've lots more to report but as I'm experiencing Internet Dis-connection Syndrome again I'd better post this now before I lose it all!

But I'm delighted to have found such a fascinating and rewarding butterfly



Fan-Copper-Tastic!



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 09-Jul-15 11:03 PM GMT

Today's entry continued:

I noticed a few of this second brood now looking tired



But this is not surprising given how very active the males are: I began watching them at 8am and by 9am I'd seen battle after battle with Coppers taking on Meadow Browns, Small and Large Whites, Small Tortoiseshells and Small Skippers (as well as other Coppers!) So if they're like this early in the morning it's easy to see how they become battered.

But most are in good condition. I found a nice dusky individual



And this brilliant jewel

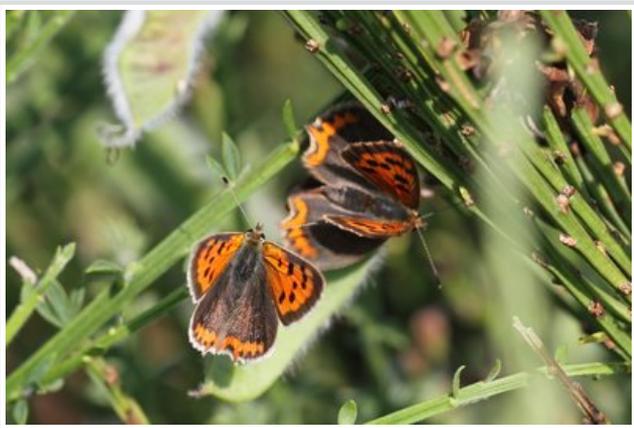


As well as many others

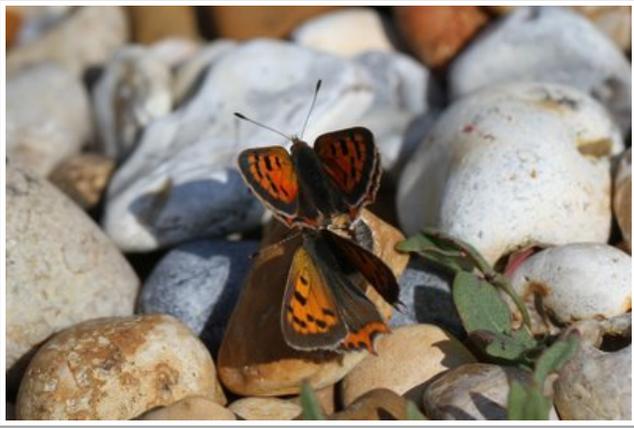




I got to see a number of courtships and I think I've finally figured out what goes on. The male approaches the female from behind. If she isn't interested she will flutter her hind wings rapidly whilst keeping her fore wings together held straight up. This is the "Displaying Turkey" pose that I've mentioned before. It's as if she is wafting some kind of chemical equivalent of The Cold Shoulder at the male because when she does this he will almost always simply stop and turn his attentions elsewhere. I've now seen this many times. Today I watched it on 5 separate occasions, as here (sorry for rubbish photos)



However, sometimes the female does not flutter her hind wings at the male: she just sits still and on these occasions matters proceeds further





Fascinating to watch.

I managed to find a Copper I'd seen five days ago, still on the same patch but now rather more knocked about (I'm able to identify him because of his unusual hind wing orange bar)



So he at least has maintained the same territory for at least 5 days.

Wonderful creatures



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 09-Jul-15 11:14 PM GMT

Today's entry continued further!

I forgot to mention that I also found this Brown Argus at Dungeness today (yes, I do sometimes look at other butterflies!!)



It's almost got a white spot on the wings!



Re: Hoggars

by Allan.W., 10-Jul-15 01:58 AM GMT

Nice one Hoggars !!

Well found! (re- Radiata) and a good point made concerning collectors, never really thought about this before.....food for thought!

I've got the week off next week ,so shall hopefully be trying for Purple Emperor, and of course a few hours at Dungeness, never know I may get lucky againheres hoping! Regards Allan W.

Re: Hoggars

by Hoggars, 10-Jul-15 05:08 AM GMT

Thanks Allan, send me a message if you'd like directions on where to find the radiata (I know you're not a collector!)

And good luck with PE !

Cheers

Hoggars

Re: Hoggars

by Hoggars, 10-Jul-15 11:28 PM GMT

Today I went a part of Dungeness that I've rarely visited but have had in mind for some time as potentially a prime Small Copper habitat: Dengemarsh.

I drove part way down Dengemarsh Road, parked then slowly made my way down to the sea, investigating the ditches and verges. It's a fascinating place



And sure enough it has its population of Small Coppers



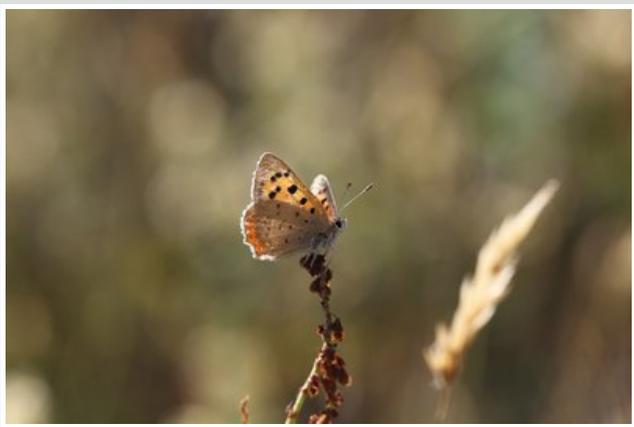


I found them in little pockets of 2-3 individuals or in singles occupying large areas of territory





I counted 51 Small Coppers there today





Much of my time was spent following females (as in my hobby, so in my life..!)



This lady was carefully investigating the very tiniest of young Sorrel leaves and then bringing down her abdomen onto them



This plant was rejected after much investigation but then she moved on to what looked to me to be a most unpromising stub of a plant and there she laid a single egg



Well done, you!



Lots of Dragonflies about in this location and I saw many Meadow Browns, Small and Large Whites and a single Clouded Yellow passed through but I was most pleased to have spent more time with the Small Coppers



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-Jul-15 11:28 PM GMT

My plan today was to brave "The Desert of Dungeness".

But before venturing out into that Forbidden Zone I dropped in on radiata



He was exactly where I left him on Thursday. It appears that some male Small Coppers (of which this radiata is one) show very set territorial behaviour, sticking to one defined location for many days, whilst other males are more mobile and wander about from brief territory to the next.

Today I noticed that there's been a changing of the guard in that now female Small Coppers are far more in evidence than before, often more than males, and that now although I saw a few testosterone fuelled skirmishes





I saw far more examples of males pursuing females or of egg-laying females. I guess this signals the latter stages of the brood.

Here's a typical pursuit and you will see the uninterested female shaking her hind wings and strutting along ahead of the luckless male like an inflated Turkey





As for "The Desert"



I counted 126 Small Coppers and saw many egg-laying females. Here's a closer look at the terrain



with Sorrel leaves poking up through the lichen and a female toddling along over it.

Then either laying eggs or going through the motions



The landscape looks so forbidding you can easily wonder how anything could survive out there, but Small Coppers evidently do!





Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-Jul-15 11:46 PM GMT

Feeling somewhat singed and parched after my adventures in "The Desert" and in need of greenery and cool shade I stopped off on my way home at Orlestone Forest where I saw many Ringlets and also my first White Admirals of the season



Such a contrast to Small Coppers!

And I enjoyed watching them flying together, showing a delicacy quite alien to my Dungeness friends. I tried taking some snaps – they're awful, but I like them because the White Admirals seem to become more impressionistic creatures of light and air than of substance





But of substance they most certainly are, as this individual, which had found a nice pile of poo, clearly demonstrates





Not quite Fairy Spirits after all!



Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 12-Jul-15 02:02 AM GMT

Hello again Hoggers,

We were at Dunge ourselves today, and I think I saw you yomping across the desert, from the road you parked up and just went!, I was going to call out but you'd gone, we found the Radiata in the moat (without asking Dave Walker, I like a challenge!), I just do not know how you manage an open wing shot when they shut their wings almost as soon as they land, what with that and the wind! as you say a very pugnacious individual, striking out at anything that flew by, including Large Whites, many others about as well + several Brown Argus Regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 12-Jul-15 05:35 AM GMT

I was probably in a hurry to get myself a drink after 3 hours chasing Small Coppers in The Desert!

I'm glad you found the radiata, Allan, it's a very special butterfly

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-15 01:06 AM GMT

Great shots of the radiata Hoggers 🍷 But what's all this...posting shots of White Admirals 😳 I must have been heat stroke 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 14-Jul-15 05:08 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, that radiata was very special, only the second I've ever found.

As for the appearance of White Admirals in my diary, it was just a phase I was going through - I'll be back to normal soon...!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 16-Jul-15 11:49 PM GMT

This morning at Dungeness started off rather dull but soon the sun was getting past the clouds and out came the Small Coppers



Although some are now very tired looking most are in their prime



I was delighted to come upon this beautifully marked female



with her lovely big paint brush dabs



Indeed we are at that stage of the brood when it's the females you notice the most. Here's a gorgeous blue badge female



She'd found a rather inaccessible place to rest and I had a difficult time trying to get in position to take a photo without disturbing her

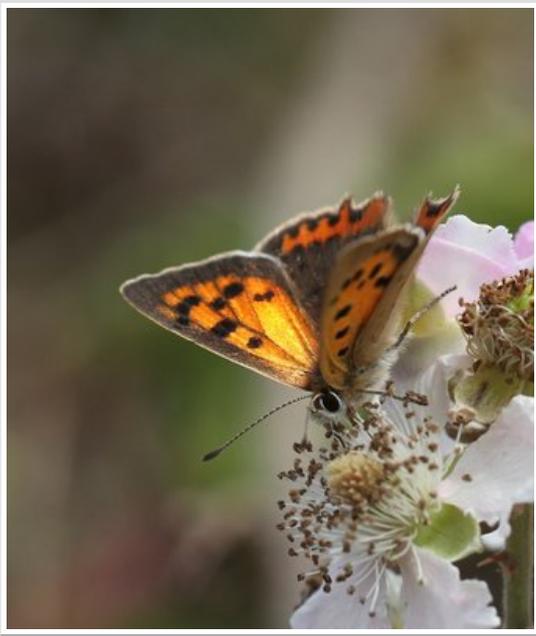


There were quite a few blue badgers about



They are always a treat to see.

On my walk I counted 105 Small Coppers



Lots of punch ups between the males and other butterflies





And talking of other butterflies I saw 4 Painted Ladies, 2 Common Blues and 12 Brown Argus.

What I was most interested to see was some Small Copper behaviour.

There are many females about so I got to see them brushing off the attentions of males



It's when the female adopts the strutting Turkey pose, quivering her hind wings while keeping her fore wings straight up, that the male gets the message that he is not wanted





Most males then seem to suddenly freeze as if completely non-plussed. They will sit motionless for some time and then just as suddenly they'll resume their frenetic activities.

A fascinating little butterfly



Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 17-Jul-15 02:48 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,
Your beautifully marked female is Ab; Extensa I think ? Regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Jul-15 05:10 AM GMT

I think you're right, Allan! The specimens on the Cockayne website certainly look very much like it
Thanks for the ID
Best wishes
Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 18-Jul-15 12:48 AM GMT

Your dedication to Small Coppers as paid off, you've got an ab 😊 I should be in Kent next weekend for two weeks so I'll try to visit Dungeness, with my family, hope the Small Coppers may still be there. Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Jul-15 01:14 AM GMT

They certainly will be, Goldie! I'm sure you will see plenty. I'm always delighted to stumble upon the odd ab here and there but the "ordinary" ones keep me entertained, especially watching what they get up to!

I'm looking forward to seeing how you get on butterflying in Kent
Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Jul-15 01:22 AM GMT

Before taking my usual walk at Dungeness this morning I stopped off in nearby Greatstone to investigate some likely Small Copper haunts



It wasn't long before I started to find them



They were far more thinly spread than, for example, by the Observatory but I'd soon counted 18



and had watched a female crawling around looking for a suitable Sorrel leaf on which to lay her eggs.

I then made my way to Dungeness where the first butterfly to make itself known to me was a Painted Lady



During my visit I saw six of them and all were in beautiful condition.

I resumed my Copper Hunt



and brought my total for today up to 86.

I sat down to have my lunch beside one Copper in particular



I'd noticed that he had a very well defined territory so over my marmite and banana sandwiches I watched him. He strongly favoured the pebbles as his watch point and from here he launched his attacks upon every butterfly that came past. As there were many Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Skippers this meant that he was very busy indeed!

Now and again he'd flit up to a near by grass stalk



or other plant and perch there waiting for an intruder



But I got the impression that he preferred to be lower down on the pebbles as the breeze meant his high perches were unstable!



So active was he that I decided to test him: I took a piece of crust from my sandwich whilst he sat on a pebble and gently lobbed it over his head. Sure enough, he flew up to intercept it!

What's not to love about Small Coppers?!



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Jul-15 11:38 PM GMT

My plan for today was to look for Small Coppers in part of the Dungeness Desert that I have not visited so far this year.

I made my way out to the proud memorial for two Polish spitfire pilots who gave their lives for us in the Battle of Britain



Brave men.

From there I went into the Forbidden Zone



I don't think much can live out there but Small Coppers certainly do. Here's a photo to show their world

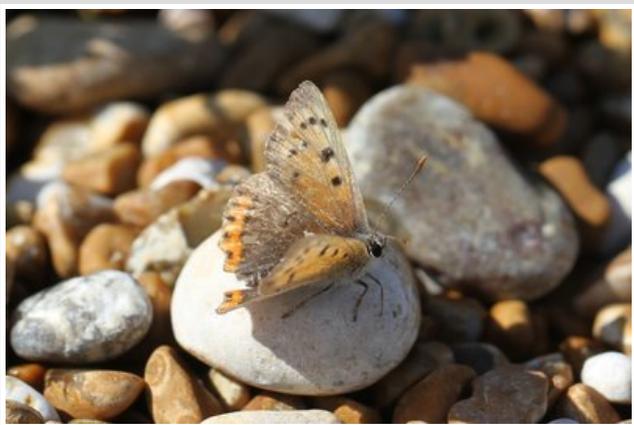


Dungeness is basically a dune system of pebbles held together by lichen and (what's good for the Coppers) Sorrel



It's a tough environment for anything (including butterfly enthusiasts!) but then perhaps Small Coppers really don't need very much to thrive.

I noticed an increasing number of worn individuals





But many still in fine fettle





I watched several males either unsuccessfully pursuing females or launching themselves up from their pebble watch towers and striking out at any intruder



Ever vigilant



And today I saw two males perform a little exercise that I've seen others carry out in the past: they will flit up to a grass stalk or some other kind of plant then slowly walk down it head first whilst quickly patting their feet against the stem



They seem to be investigating the plant as if for signs of females. They'll then return to standing guard



My Small Copper tally for today was 119.

I also saw 8/9 Painted Ladies all in tiptop condition as well as several Brown Argus.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 20-Jul-15 12:39 AM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

My Small Copper tally for today was 119.



That's amazing, Hoggers. I doubt I've ever seen even a fifth of that in a single place on one day.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 21-Jul-15 01:16 AM GMT

119 Small Coppers and that was just in part of a very big area, David.

I've been trying over the season to visit as much of Dungeness , Dengemarsh and Greatstone as I can and it's clear that there are very many Small Coppers here indeed!

Hoggers.

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 21-Jul-15 01:29 AM GMT

I think the entire UK population has migrated to you this summer. I've seen 2 this year which is the worst for me in recorded history! I'd never see as many as you but I should be into double figures well before now! 30 or 40 in a season would be a good year for me.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-15 06:03 AM GMT

That is a fantastic number of Small Coppers Hoggers 🤔🌿 – any ideas on why the habitat there is so good for them?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-15 08:55 PM GMT

I was wondering about their environment too like Wurzel, in your photo's it looks like there's not much there, is it just the Lichen they like Hoggers,? What other Butterflies are there, I know you love the Coppers but if I get the family to go I may have to put a show on if you know what i mean 😊 Goldie 🐛

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 21-Jul-15 10:22 PM GMT

Hi Goldie and Wurzel, it looks more like the surface of the moon than Kent but when you get there and look carefully it's a carpet of Sorrel. The Sorrel grows small, perhaps as a result of the environment (nothing grows very big there) but it pokes up through the pebbles and lichen just enough for the females to lay their eggs on.

So what with there being lots of the Copper's food plant and the fact that it's a nature reserve , the Coppers do well (and I think Coppers prefer rather barren places anyway).

There are other butterflies : Painted Ladies, Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admirals, Brown Argus, Common Blues, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, Whites and often Clouded Yellows, so plenty to see – as if Small Coppers aren't enough!!!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Jul-15 10:48 PM GMT

I went out with the dogs this afternoon and came across the Ghost of a Painted Lady



The Painted Ladies I've seen recently at Dungeness have all been fresh and in perfect condition but this one looks older and as if it's been in the wars



Still able to fly but with far less strength.

Up until today my garden Buddlias have been very quiet with visits from only Large Whites but today I counted 8 fresh Peacocks, 3 fresh Red Admirals and a fine Comma. No Small Tortoiseshells as yet.

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-15 06:02 AM GMT

That is one hell of a battered butterfly Hoggers I'm surprised it could still fly 🤪 Cheers for the info about the Small Coppers habitat, you're right they do seem to like slightly barren areas.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Willow, 24-Jul-15 06:33 PM GMT

Looks like it's flown through a war zone Hoggers 😬 ...get back to the safety of **Small Coppers** 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 26-Jul-15 12:35 AM GMT

Dungeness isn't so safe, Bill, as you will see!

When I got there today I began counting Small Coppers





What I noticed was how many more of them were now in poor condition compared with last week





And when I came upon this poor chap I admit to having a tear in my eye



Still able to fly but only just.

It's the females that are in best condition. However, although I saw a few skirmishes between the males I did not today see any females egg-laying or brushing off unwanted males.

Most of the Small Skippers and Small Heaths have gone but there are now many Brown Argus and Common Blues



I also saw 8-10 Painted Ladies today.

There were still Coppers in good condition to be found





I counted 88







Including a couple of fine Blue Badge Holders





So although I feel the second brood here is moving towards its end stages there's lots for the Copper-Head to enjoy



Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 30-Jul-15 12:14 AM GMT

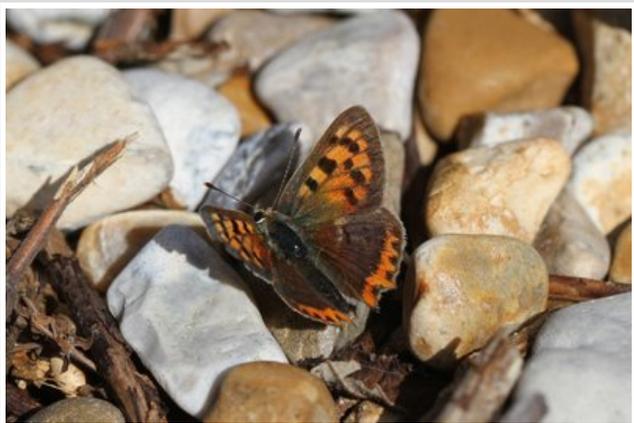
Out over the fields at 7 this morning I was delighted to find a Small Copper. I took a snap of him on my phone

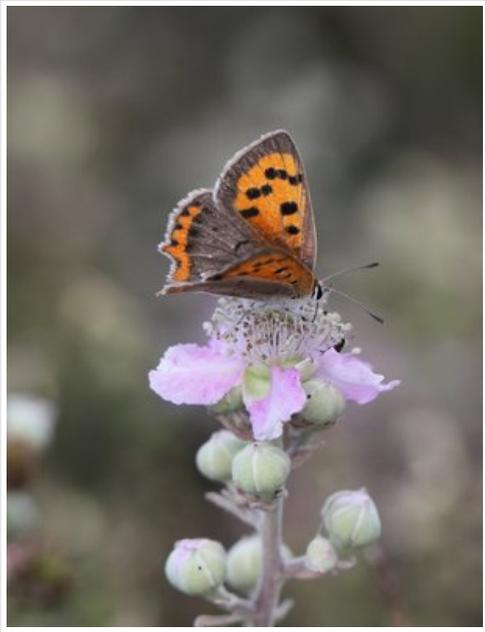


He's the first Copper I've seen here and I can only think he's one of those males that wanders about rather than sticking to a set territory.

A lovely way to start the day!

Later on I visited Dungeness and took my usual walk





Numbers are down and many are in poor condition



I counted 44 today



The males are still up for a fight. I watched two battle it out but I'm not sure you'd call this one the Victor!



(He managed to sort his wings out after a bit of shuffling about)

I did find one freshly minted Copper



He had a lovely duskiness about him



My most interesting find was this one with only minimal markings





I wish I'd met him in his younger days!



So with their numbers falling rapidly these look like the last stages of the second brood here at Dungeness, but still plenty to see and admire



Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 30-Jul-15 02:13 AM GMT

Nice one Hoggers!

"Obliterata" ? I found one about 25 years ago in Longrope ,I have a poor picture, but very similar, if not Obliterata, very close regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-Jul-15 05:08 AM GMT

Cheers Allan and thanks yet again for the ID - "obliterata" certainly sums it up (and could even describe many of those other Small Coppers that look like they're falling apart!!)

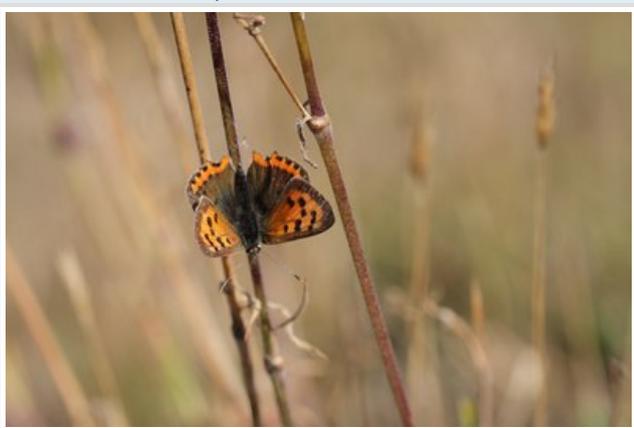
Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 31-Jul-15 02:25 AM GMT

I went back to Dungeness this morning and spent a few hours with the Small Coppers. Over the last few months I've been making an effort to watch Small Coppers as much as I can in the hope that I'd get to know them better. One aspect of Small Copper behaviour that I've noticed is how they will interrupt their normal pursuits (perching on the look out for females and giving chase) to go for a wander. They will fly up to the top of a grass stalk or Sorrel plant and rather than just perch there, they descend head first whilst tapping with their feet. It's something I love to watch and today I saw two males behave in this way







I came across one rather battered male



He had set up a territory so I sat down (for what turned out to be nearly one and a half hours !) to watch him.

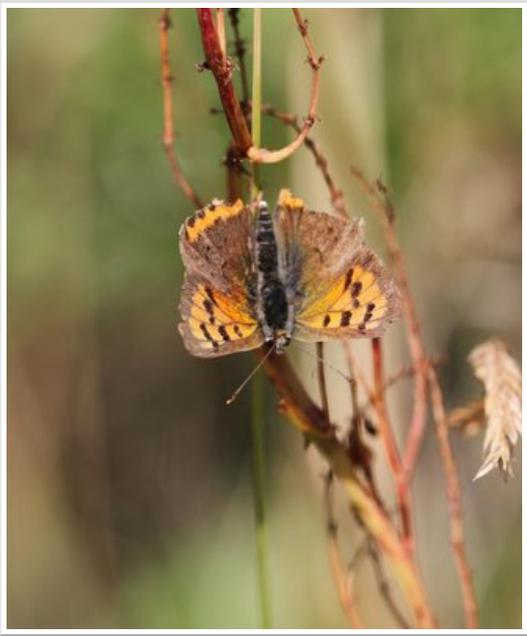
Base of operations was the little patch of pebbles in front of the bush



He intercepted almost every butterfly that came past. With Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers the chase would be over within seconds. But I saw Small Coppers come through on two occasions and here the chase was prolonged and they would fly out of my view. One of these Coppers was flying about 5 feet over his head but he still raced up to it.

He too would break off to go Sorrel Stalk Walking





Whilst away on such an expedition a Brown Argus moved in on his patch



For the next 40 minutes I watched them duel it out. On occasions both were jointly occupying the patch, seeing off other butterflies. The two battled frequently. My Small Copper disappeared at one point and I thought the Argus had won. I should have had more faith. My Small Copper returned



And after a deal more dancing between them the Argus finally departed!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-15 06:20 AM GMT

Nice to hear that the Copper won out in the end against Bad Attitude 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Aug-15 01:29 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I had no idea that Brown Argus are territorial until I watched what happened yesterday. There's something new to be learned every day!

14 Peacocks on my Buddleia this afternoon (one landed on my Basset Hound..!), 3 Commas and a Red Admiral.

Still no Small Tortoiseshells in my garden.

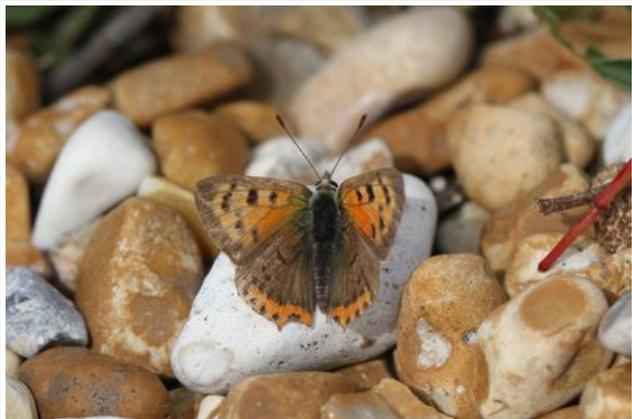
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Aug-15 11:04 PM GMT

It's "Last Orders Please!" for the second generation of Small Coppers at Dungeness



Not all are quite such phantoms of their former selves but overall their appearance is that of a defeated army

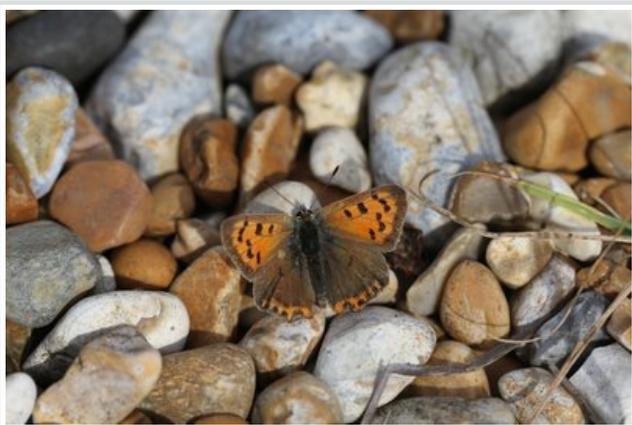




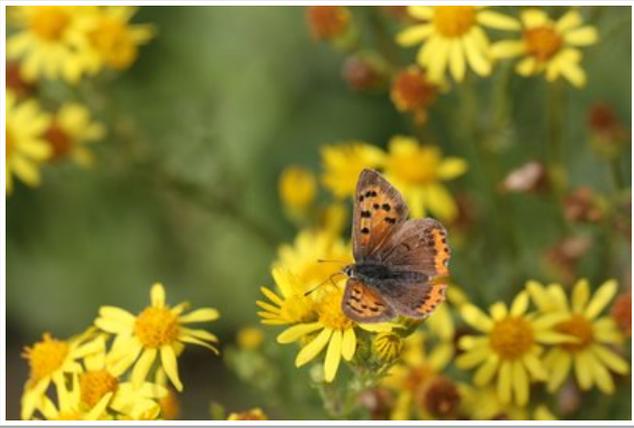
This last pictured Copper is the one I spent a couple of hours watching on thursday



Still vigilantly patrolling his patch but I could tell his condition had declined even in so short a time and he lacked the vim and verve that I saw then. In fact I've noticed with some surprise just how quickly the curtain is ringing down on this brood: last Saturday I counted 88, on thursday it was 44 but today only 21







I was delighted to see a male doing the "feet patter dance"





He isn't simply walking down the stem: as he goes along he very quickly pats his feet against the stalk as if testing it





He does this on several grass stalks within a few feet of his main perch and then returns to his watching perch.

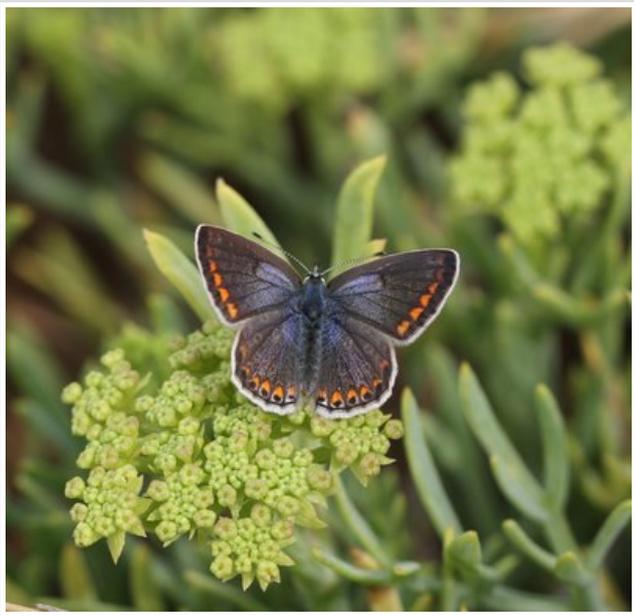
Tired though they may be there's a great deal to see and enjoy



But that's when you can catch up with them!



Plenty of Common Blues about



But it's the Small Coppers that I admire the most.

Wonderful butterflies



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 02-Aug-15 10:39 PM GMT

Blue Moon..



Over the fields early this morning



Best time of the day!

Most of my Buddleia is in full bloom now and when I walk up the garden it's a case of having to dodge the low flying Peacocks





I counted 23 this afternoon.

One Red Admiral keeping cool in the shade



Also two Commas





The scent of Buddleia is so strong it almost makes you feel light-headed.
I also saw a Holly Blue today and yesterday a Painted Lady in the garden.
But no sign of any Small Tortoiseshells.

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 09-Aug-15 03:20 AM GMT

The number of Small Coppers at Dungeness has been in decline since 25th July when I counted 88. On 29th July I found 44 and on 1st August only 21. I expected to find only a handful of them today and that they'd all be bashed about. To my surprise however, I counted more than last time, 29 in all, and most in fact were very fresh indeed







I did find some worn individuals



But the majority were fiddle fit



I followed a female as she ambled about and for the first time saw her adopt the "Turkey" posture whilst fluttering her hind wings even though the only male in the vicinity was me! I've never seen that before.

I watched another female act in this manner in order to dissuade a lusty male. Whilst displaying she made her way deep into a bramble bush



The male gave up and departed. About 2 minutes later the female emerged from the bush and began to bask in the sunshine



I watched her and to my great surprise she began fluttering her hind wings as if a male Copper was pressing his attentions on her. But I was the only male in the immediate area! Perhaps I need to change my deodorant..?

I also saw a male flying from one plant to another and perform the "foot tapping" dance





So the Small Copper season is far from over





Thank Goodness!



Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 09-Aug-15 10:49 PM GMT

It's nice to be over the fields early at this time of the year. If I'm lucky I'll find butterflies just as they're waking up. First a Common Blue





Too early for it to open its wings but just starting to warm in the sunshine.

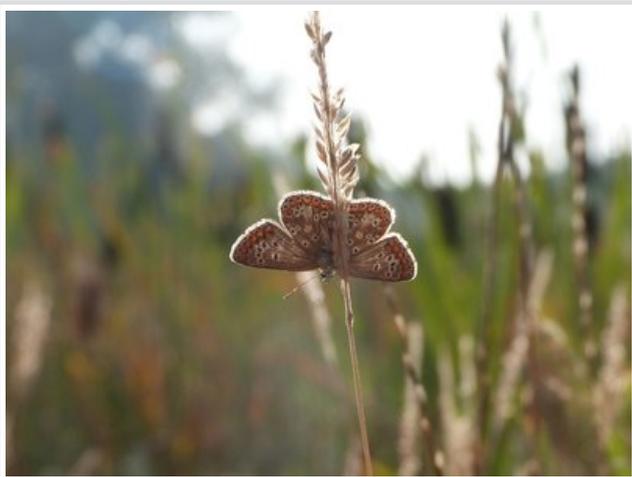
Then I found one of the last of the Skippers



I disturbed a Meadow Brown which was able to fly away before I could take a photo despite the early hour (about 6.30) but I then chanced upon a Brown Argus. It was roosting with wings tight shut but just as I knelt down to take a picture it suddenly snapped them open



He looked very attractive from the other side too



It was so quiet and peaceful there



I keep a note of the butterflies that visit my garden. The Peacocks which were seen in numbers (some days 20+) have now disappeared.

But rather worryingly, I still have yet to see a Small Tortoiseshell in my garden. This time in 2013 I was counting 9 of them on the Buddleia, and last year 22 ! But none at all this year. I truly hope that they start appearing soon!

In yesterday's entry I forgot to mention that while at Dungeness I saw 2 Painted Ladies, a Hummingbird Hawk Moth and a Clouded Yellow.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-15 06:13 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Second brood Small Coppers and summer Peacocks have only started showing up around my local patch this past week or so. We would normally be later than you are in the south-east but this year things are even later.

cheers,

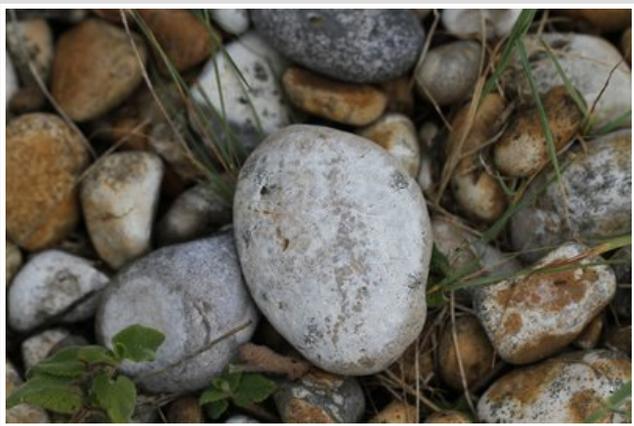
Neil

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 15-Aug-15 11:29 PM GMT

The Small Coppers of Dungeness may be getting themselves a new landlord soon as the estate is up for sale for £1.5million.

I'd gladly accept the job but sadly this is about all I could afford



They seem unperturbed



On my walk this morning I came across a few lingerers from the second brood



But of the 21 Coppers that I saw most were fresh







I found one that sadly had distorted wings



Although it was still able to fly



I have not noticed as sharp a break as between the first and second broods this year so I'm not sure whether these newly minted Coppers are late second or early third



Conditions for me today were warm but mostly dull so I suspect there were more of them about than I could see





Here's hoping the new owner looks after his most important tenants



Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 16-Aug-15 01:23 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Those new Coppers certainly look very bright. I'm hoping to take my two year old Grandson on the RH&D Railway soon, so i'll take the camera. Small Coppers are not that plentiful around here.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 16-Aug-15 02:50 AM GMT

Hi! Hogger's one place we didn't get to was Dungeness, sorry to say, I'd love to have seen the small Coppers, I couldn't persuade everyone to go, looks like I'll have to visit Southport on Tuesday it's suppose to be a nice day and hope they're there, lovely shots by the way Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 16-Aug-15 08:51 PM GMT

Hi Trevor, I love the RH&DR! What a marvellous day out and some Small Coppers waiting for you at journey's end!

Hi Goldie, maybe you'll visit Dungeness the next time you're on holiday in Kent but I hope you find some Coppers nearer to home.

I was walking the dogs this morning over the fields, 6.45, and look what I found



Just opening his wings in the early sunshine



He's only the 2nd Copper I've found on my patch this year



What a way to start the day!





Duly inspired I headed down to Dungeness



Much sunnier than yesterday. I found a few blue badgers





Of the 25 Small Coppers I saw today only 7 were tatty, so I think the 3rd brood has indeed begun





I saw 1 Painted Lady, some Hummingbird Hawk moths and a Clouded Yellow



I had a snack whilst watching a male Copper



He went through the usual perch selection procedures



And when I saw him land head downwards on a grass stalk I guessed correctly that he would go on to investigate a number of near-by plants whilst doing the "feet tapping" dance. I've now seen many of the males do this but I haven't a clue why they're doing it!

Plenty more to discover about this wonderful creature



Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 20-Aug-15 02:36 AM GMT

At last! A Small Tortoiseshell on my Buddleia today!

But just the one.

I'm not sure whether they're just late or if it's a poor year for them.

On another subject, I've still got tadpoles in my pond! Most turned into froglets in June.

Re: Hoggars

by David M, 20-Aug-15 02:43 AM GMT

Tortoiseshells are usually pretty common in my 'neck' but I've thus far seen very few second brood individuals. Hope that changes soon!

Re: Hoggars

by Maximus, 20-Aug-15 05:53 AM GMT

Hoggers, we've still got tadpoles in our pond too 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 21-Aug-15 09:10 PM GMT

Just spotted your Coppers Hogger's and they look Great, love the Clouded Yellow on the flower, I like to see butterflies on Flower heads Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Aug-15 10:54 PM GMT

The Coppers of Dungeness were red hot today



Highly active and difficult to keep up with!

Numbers are on the up: I counted 42 today







So hot out there I felt in danger of melting





I saw 7 Painted Ladies and a Clouded Yellow in amongst the Small Coppers. I liked this minimally marked individual



And before retreating from the glare of the sun I sat down just to watch the Coppers at play





Wonderful!



Re: Hoppers

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-15 07:00 AM GMT

Cracking Small Coppers as always Hoppers, especially the minimally marked one as you said 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Aug-15 11:32 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, much appreciated.

When I got to Dungeness this morning it was very warm and stuffy but dull with none of the brightness of yesterday to get butterflies up out of their roosts.

Luckily for me the sun eventually came out strong, and when the sun comes out so do my favourite butterflies



Amongst them was this one, a fresh blue badger but with less colour to the forewings than usual





I knew that rain was on its way so instead of doing a Copper Count I decided to do a Copper Watch.

I found a male



And sat down to see what he got up to.

The answer was soon clear : he got up to a lot! He had fight after fight with another male



Sometimes they'd break off for a rest but soon got at it again



They twice flew out of my view but would return separately then start fighting again. I got the strong impression that a battle for territory was going on



In the end only the Copper I'd found to begin with returned from one of these punch ups



So he held on to his territory and the other male moved on.

I was delighted to see my favourite Small Copper behaviour: the Stem Walk





The male will suddenly leave his perch and visit several near-by plants, walk down them head first whilst quickly tapping his feet against the stem. They then return to the perch.

I've seen many males do this. If anyone reading this knows why they do it, or has a theory, I would love to hear from them!

The sun didn't last, it grew dull again but I'd seen some great things and counted 22 Coppers including these two (one of which has a lovely hindwing orange bar)





I wonder: is it me watching them, or them watching me?



Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-15 12:59 AM GMT

More Coppertastic stuff Hoggers, I love that last one...watching me, watching you 😊

Cheers,

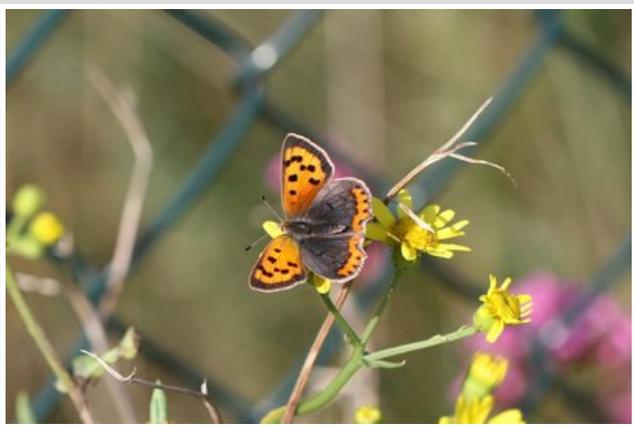
Neil

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 29-Aug-15 12:37 AM GMT

Hello Neil, I'm glad you enjoy my Small Coppers!

Today was a wonderful day for a Copper Hunt after a week of torrential rain and cool temperatures. In fact it's been so miserable I feared that when I got to Dungeness I wouldn't find any Small Coppers at all. I need not have worried



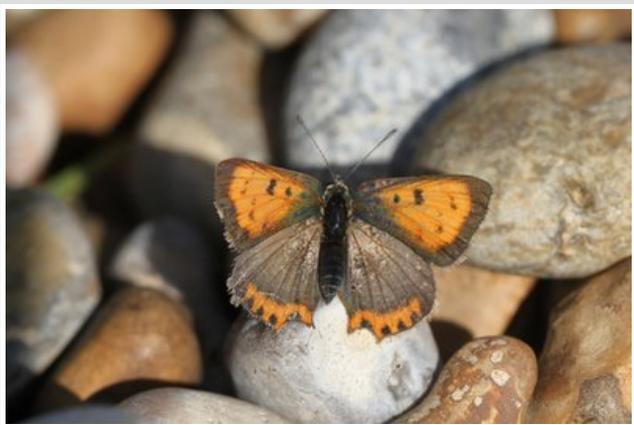


Some very very Coppery indeed





But what to make of this greasy moth-like Copper?



If she's worn, the wearing looks uniform



I found a mating pair



He looks most pleased



This male, however, was given the brush off

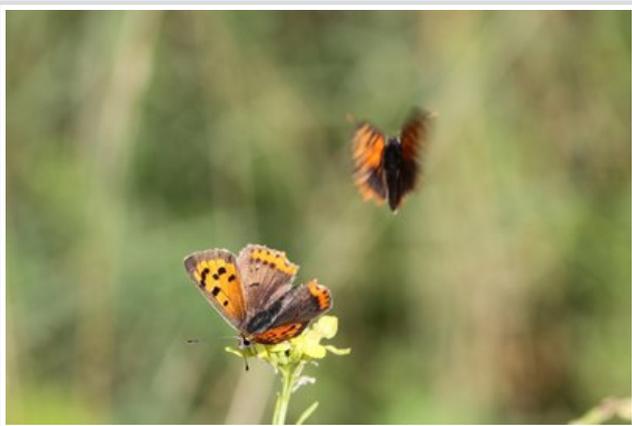


(you can see the female fluttering her hind wings whilst raising her fore wings – I wonder if it's her behaviour that sends him the cold shoulder message, or whether she's wafting a chemical signal at him?)

I watched perching males



And the inevitable punch-ups





I had lunch with a male Copper. His territory was a small patch of shingle surrounded by brambles



And like other males that I've observed he would suddenly break off from watching to investigate plants growing close by. However, there was no grass or other tall and slender plant to hand, only brambles, so he didn't do the "heads down stem walk", but simply flitted from one thorny bramble to the next.

I counted 68 Small Coppers today



Also saw several Painted Ladies, Red Admirals and a couple of Small Tortoiseshells



Not many of them about this year.

It was good to be amongst the Coppers again



Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 29-Aug-15 04:56 AM GMT

Hi ,Hoggers,

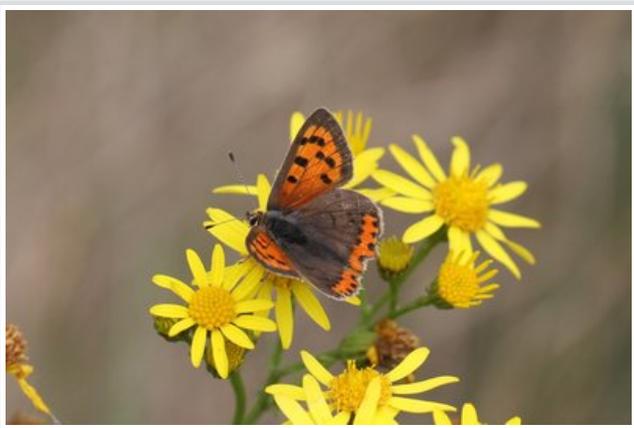
Obliterata ,again ,I reckon, loved to have seen it when fresh !,i wonder what caused the greasy appearance? and a pair ,something I,d really like to find! never seen a pair I,ve also noticed the "heads down,walk down the grasstalk,and must admit I find that a bit baffling as well ,you,ve got some new additions to the Dungie insect regulars ,namely Sickle bearing bush cricket,and Italian Tree Cricket,so you may stumble across these,on one of your jaunts! great observations and pictures as usual. Regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-Aug-15 12:14 AM GMT

Hello Allan, I've seen many males do it (but never a female). If all males do it then surely it has a purpose. I've not found it mentioned in Thomas and Lewington.

This afternoon I visited a different part of the Dungeness area, Denge Quarry. Plenty of Coppery habitat and so I wasn't surprised to find Small Coppers!





Sprinkled more thinly than in the Power Station area but nonetheless very much in residence



Also a fresh Brown Argus



And a fly by Clouded Yellow



The terrain near the quarry is typically sparse, but I noticed that the recent rains have benefited the Sorrel, which is growing very green and lush.

I watched this chap



give himself a wash and brush up



I saw 16 Small Coppers around the quarry



So well worth a visit



Re: Hoppers

by Allan.W., 30-Aug-15 02:02 AM GMT

Hello again Hoppers,

We were at Dungeness today, and amazingly the second Copper we came across, was your ab; from yesterday! not a similar one, but the same one, right down to the scratch marks on the hindwing, we saw about 20 Coppers in all, including a couple of blue spots, still good numbers of Common Blue, one

or two faded Brown Argus, Painted Ladies, Small Tortoiseshells, various Whites, and a few weather-beaten Meadow Browns including a pair, glad you had some joy at Denge Quarry, must say I'm not familiar with this spot. Regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoggers

by Paul Harfield, 30-Aug-15 07:07 AM GMT

Hi Hoggars

Just having a top up of Small Coppers 😊

I have still only seen a grand total of 3 this year 😊, all of which were this month and each in a different location.

Could you please send a few over this way 😊

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 30-Aug-15 07:13 AM GMT

Fresh Brown Argus at this time of year is highly notable, Hoggars!

Re: Hoggars

by Hoggars, 30-Aug-15 11:33 PM GMT

Allan, Denge Quarry is just along that road which turns left shortly before the right turn onto Dungeness Road. The land all around it is open to the public.

All the Brown Argus I've seen for the last couple of weeks have been on their last legs so I was very surprised to find a fresh one yesterday, David.

Jack, I'm sending you a Small Copper



First Class, naturally!

Last Sunday I spent some time watching a male Small Copper at Dungeness. Today I thought I'd go back to see if he was still there



He was! Very much more battered than when last we met but still occupying the exact same spot



So he's held that territory for at least 7 days.

(Incidentally, you can see in the photos just how lush the Sorrel looks right now: tender and juicy for all those lucky Small Copper caterpillars!)

I get the feeling that female Small Coppers have a tough time of it once mated dealing with unwanted males. It must be very draining and because the female often retreats deep into the brambles and other vegetation, the cause of wing damage etc.

I saw several females today having to deal with this problem



I've now become used to the females behaviour on these occasions; fluttering her hindwings horizontally whilst holding both forewings vertically upwards (reminding me of a displaying turkey!)



The males nearly always seem to simply switch off when confronted by such a display: they may pursue briefly but then will freeze allowing the female to toddle away and then the male will fly off, leaving the female in peace



I counted 47 Coppers on my walk today







Including a lovely blue badger



Although some have become worn to a degree, most are fresh



And enjoying the return of the fine weather



Re: Hoppers

by Goldie M, 31-Aug-15 09:06 PM GMT

Hi! Hoppers I'm still enjoying your Coppers, no sign of them here yet, good job I saw them earlier in the Year at Southport.Goldie 😊

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 02-Sep-15 11:32 PM GMT

Hello Goldie, glad you like the Small Coppers! And I hope you get some near to you soon.

I spent a pleasant couple of hours this morning chasing Coppers at Dungeness. Although glorious fresh butterflies are still to be found



(and I particularly liked this chap with blue badges and a lovely round black spot on his wings



)

The number of worn individuals is definitely on the up



Which leads me to wonder just how much longer this generation will last.

I watched a female sunbathing when she surprised me by exuding a milky blob from her abdomen before immediately flying off. It's not something I've seen before.

This female went into her "cold shoulder" routine even though the near-by male was intent on nectaring and had paid her no attention whatsoever



You can see her adopting the "Turkey Strut" pose in this next photo



Blackberries serve as wonderful perches for the posing males



But this female was imbibing from them





I also watched a male fly from blackberry to blackberry, tapping his feet quickly against each one (reminiscent of the "stalk walk" behaviour I've seen before).

I counted 40 Small Coppers today





Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 03-Sep-15 12:31 AM GMT

Absolutely beautiful Butterflies Hoggers, especially those on the berries wether their a bit worn or not 😊
Did your flowers you bought last year produce any Butterflies for you 🤔 I hope so Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 03-Sep-15 01:13 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie. My Wallflowers are still going strong but the Black Eyed Susans didn't survive I'm afraid. Plenty of Buddlias but so quiet this year! Hardly any Small Tortoiseshells. I keep waiting for them to appear but it's getting late!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 03-Sep-15 01:24 AM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Plenty of Buddlias but so quiet this year! Hardly any Small Tortoiseshells. I keep waiting for them to appear but it's getting late!

I was thinking likewise till last weekend, Hoggers, when I found 3 dozen Torties on a large patch of creeping thistles in Pembroke. By now, thistles have usually gone over, but we're a little behind where we were last year, so I wonder if the vanessids are still able to find sufficient nectar-bearing plants in wild areas rather than having to come to gardens to look for them?

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-15 06:02 AM GMT

Lovely Coppers as always Hoggers 😊🍷 Larkhill still has Blues showing well so I'm still awaiting the final brood of Coppers as they're usually out after the Adonis 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-Sep-15 12:49 AM GMT

Hello Wurzel! I look forward to your Small Coppers! I'm intrigued to see if you saw any on your holiday!

After reading your comment David, I decided that when I went out today I would count the Small Tortoiseshells (in addition to the Coppers , of course!) and I saw 10 in the Dungeness area, so I think you are spot on (as usual!)

I first visited Dengemarsh Road where despite often cloudy and rather cool conditions I managed to find 9 Small Coppers



Positively glowing in the gloom!

And a fine Blue Badger too



I seem to find more Blue Badgers in the later broods



Good numbers of Common Blues down there too

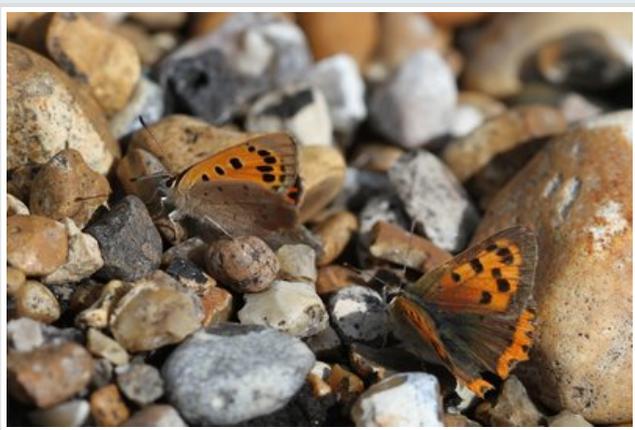
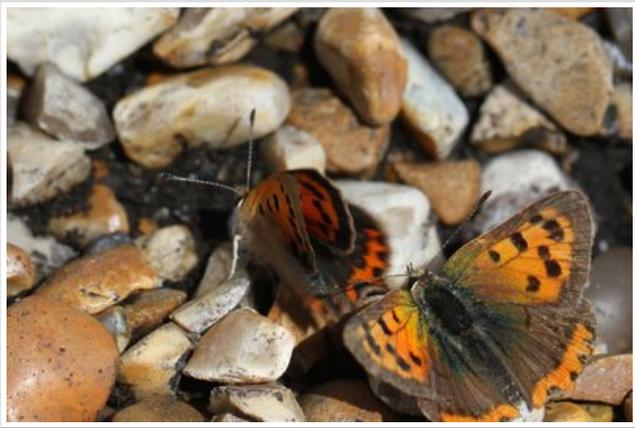


The cloud broke up and it became very warm so I headed for Dungeness itself. I counted 8 Painted Ladies, 2 Hummingbird Hawk Moths and 29 Small Coppers





I'm very interested in how Small Coppers behave and today I was treated to a fine display of how the mated females deal with undesirable males



This male obviously hadn't read the manual on how to behave and ignored her display of protest



You can see him still trying to bend round his abdomen towards her, but he eventually got the message and left her alone.
What tough lives these little creatures live!



The Brambles take a toll.

But they never fail to delight



Such energy and character!



I wish the Summer would never end!

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 04-Sep-15 03:45 AM GMT

Lovely Small Coppers as always, Hoggers 😊 hope that they become more widespread again in 2016.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 04-Sep-15 11:29 PM GMT

Thanks Maximus for your kind comment and I echo your hope for next year: so many on this forum have had a poor 2015 for Coppers so they deserve a better 2016!

Well, this is the last day of my break.

I very nearly didn't go out today: firstly, I had to take the Basset Hound to have his nails done at the vets (don't ask..!)and secondly it was cold and cloudy to begin with.

But around 1130 the sun was peeping through so I decided to nip down to Dungeness in the hope that it would stay sunny enough for me to find a Copper or two.

And although there was a great deal of cloud about when I reached Dungeness there were blue patches too and I soon began seeing Small Coppers

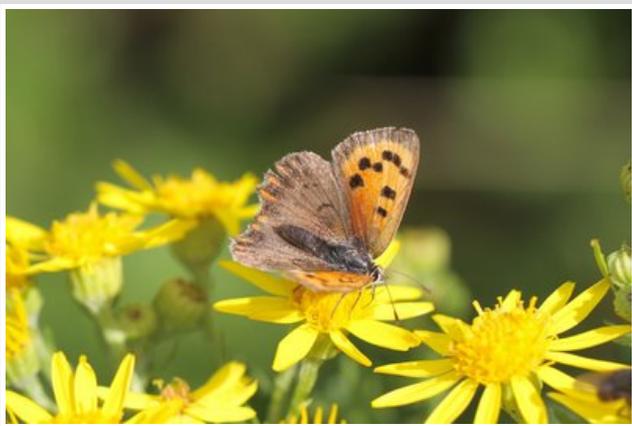




I sat down by some Ragwort to watch a couple of fresh Coppers nectar



When a rather tatty Copper joined them. I took a closer look and to my astonishment discovered that it was a *radiata*





This is now the third *radiata* that I've been fortunate enough to find at Dungeness



So in addition to its many other rarities it seem that Dungeness can also boast of having a *radiata* gene in its Small Copper population



As I took my photos the *radiata* surprised me by flitting up and alighting on my right index finger, where it perched for at least 2 minutes. Such a privilege!

I now consider myself to be an Honorary Small Copper!

Alas, my weather window had closed. Heavy black cloud rolled in and it suddenly grew dark and cold. The *radiata* went to roost



And I headed for home feeling very glad indeed that I'd chosen to go out butterflying amongst the Small Coppers



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 05-Sep-15 04:10 AM GMT

Lovely butterflies once more Hogger's, I'm like you I love the Small Copper's, no sign of them here, they weren't even at Southport in the Dunes where I thought I might see them. Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 06-Sep-15 11:52 PM GMT

Brother Hoggles is very much interested in old busses and coaches and so we went along today to the Vintage Bus and Coach Rally at the New Romney station of the RH&DR



The destination of this bus caught my eye



So leaving my brother to his diesel engines and open toppers

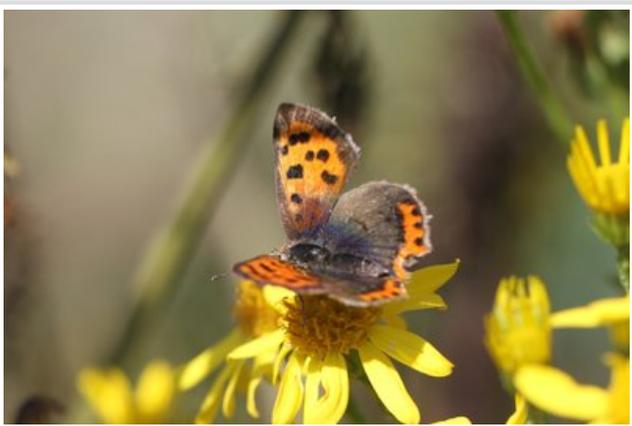


I took a bone rattling ride to Small Copper Central





This boldly marked male took my eye



While some are now faded



(though always feisty!) many are in fine condition



I watched a female deal with an unwanted male



And during this failed courtship i saw him quickly extrude something from the tip of his abdomen before just as quickly replacing it



I'm far to bashful to enquire exactly what he was up to and the female was unimpressed too, as you can see from this bad photo she adopted the "Cold Shoulder" posture whilst fluttering her hindwings



I had however noticed that she was in possession of a magnificent set of blue badges and so after having got rid of one attentive male she quickly gained another, me, trying to get a photo!



Whilst in the observatory moat I had the pleasure of bumping into AllanW and his wife both of whom were on a Copper Hunt. It was great to meet you both and to talk "all things Copper"! Happy hunting and do stay in touch.

Both Allan and I are of the opinion that blue badgers show more in the latter Copper generations



Quite why this is so we don't know!

It was good to out in some sunshine with the Small Coppers and their admirers



Although next time I'll take my car (I don't think my spine could take another jolting ride on one of those vintage contraptions..!)



Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 07-Sep-15 01:54 AM GMT

Hi,Hoggers

Likewise Hoggers it was very nice to meet you today as well, we managed 25 Coppers today,but unfortunately not the Radiata or that superb "blue badge" individual,what a cracker !! but we did see about 4 other lesser individuals ,saw a couple in Birchett later on and surprisingly a Clouded yellow as well ,but the best was an abberant Speckled wood . Regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Sep-15 12:12 AM GMT

After an early finish at work and with the sun shining brightly I went straight down to Dungeness to do a Copper Head Count



Females are particularly noticeable at this stage in the brood



And here's the best photo I've yet managed to take of a female adopting the "Turkey Strut" posture to ward off a lusty male



I've noticed how resting females react when they sense other butterflies close-by: she may be sitting quietly in the sun with wings open



but the moment another butterfly passes over her head she will close her wings whilst sitting very still. When all's clear she will resume sunbathing.

I saw several males posing and duelling



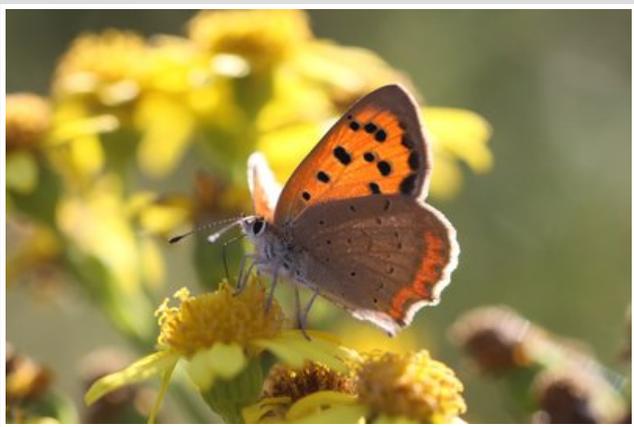
and chasing about



I spent nearly two hours out in The Desert. Here there be Coppers (though more thinly spread than in the moat)



And I sat and watched them in the sunshine

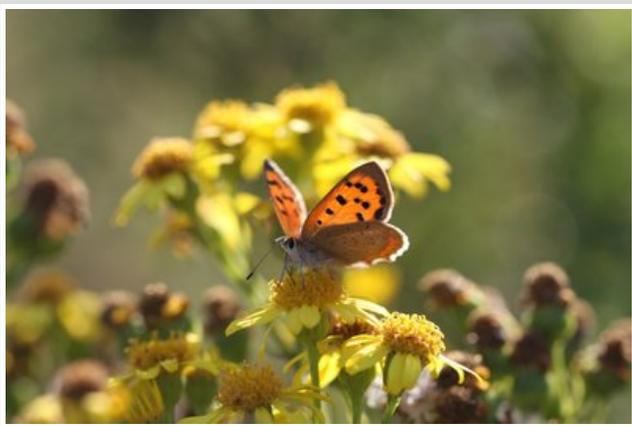




More Small Coppers around the RH&DR Station. Just as "Winston Churchill" rolled up to the platform I was snapping butterflies



My total Copper Count for today was 55



And overall they're in good condition. Not bad for September.

Re: Hoppers

by Jamie Burston, 08-Sep-15 05:12 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers, I just wanted to say how incredible your observations are, your insight into the Small Coppers lives is truly remarkable. I thoroughly enjoy every update as I continue to gain a greater sense of the species. The "Turkey Strut" photo is brilliant 😊 I take my butterfly hat off to you 😊 All the best, Jamie

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 08-Sep-15 05:30 AM GMT

I'm constantly amazed by how some Coppers seem faded yet others look fresh. It's almost as if there are two broods overlapping at every time just like Speckled Woods.

Perhaps the milder coastal climate plays tricks with this species' life-cycle?

Re: Hoggers

by trevor, 08-Sep-15 06:17 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Your brother shows remarkably good taste posing on the top deck of that ex Portsmouth Corporation Leyland open topper, a very fine way to have your bones shaken !. Also some very fine ' blue badges ' too.

TREVOR.

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 08-Sep-15 06:23 AM GMT

Another splendid selection of Small Coppers, and the latest Blue Badge holder is a corker. 😊 There seems to be no real break in their season down there, just a gentle waxing and waning. What an amazing place to have within reach.

Dave

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-15 09:56 PM GMT

Hi! Hogger's that Blue Badge is great, I think you've got all the Copper's down there, lovely shots of them Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 08-Sep-15 10:53 PM GMT

I'm very grateful to all of you for posting such supportive comments, you are very kind indeed.

Jamie, I started this year knowing nothing about Small Coppers and have worked my way up from there. Now I at least know something of how they lead their lives and I'm so glad that you have enjoyed following my learning curve. I must say that the hours I've spent with the Small Coppers of Dungeness have provided me with my best ever experience with the natural world.

After work today I visited the common land that lies between the entrance to the Dungeness estate and Denge Quarry. I've not yet looked here for Small Coppers and I was delighted to come upon them almost from the word go





I counted 16 in all





You can imagine how sad I felt to come upon this poor female



When she saw me she made an attempt to hide which brought a tear to my eye



The wind buffeted her into movement and I could see just how badly deformed her wings were



I felt bad walking away from her.

To cheer myself up I located a male holding territory. Here he is



And his patch is the roughly circular area in this photo



I watched him for about an hour. He left this patch only twice and then only briefly. He flew up to investigate a Hoverfly and a Small White. But most of the time he nectared



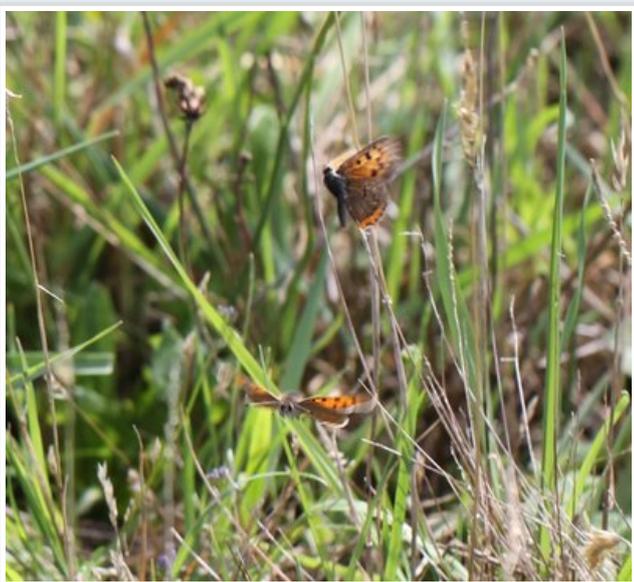
favouring these small blue flowers



Now and again he'd make quick flights of inspection around his patch



And he certainly needed his strength because I saw him engage in lengthy aerial displays with two other Coppers





Very exciting to watch!

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 09-Sep-15 04:09 AM GMT

Hi! Hogger's, master of all he surveyed that one 😊 Sorry about the one with deformed wings, it's so upsetting when you can't help them . Glad you keep finding them, lovely shots, Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 09-Sep-15 05:10 AM GMT

He certainly was, Goldie! Great fun to watch too!

It was upsetting to see that poor female: she'll never fly!
And when she tried to hide from me my heart went out to her!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

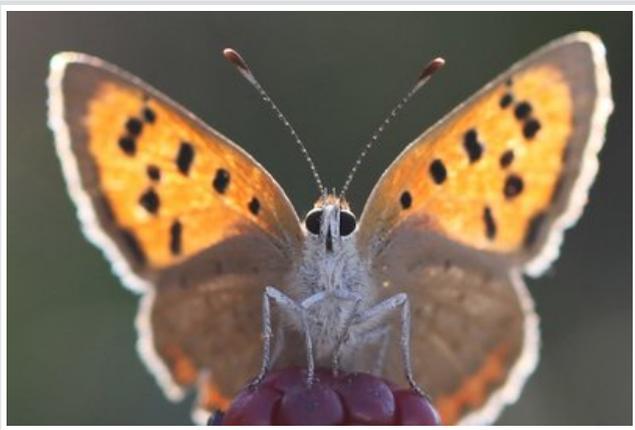
by David M, 10-Sep-15 06:18 AM GMT

Always sad when you see a butterfly destined never to take to the air.

She may well have a productive future though. Males will undoubtedly find her and her lack of airborne powers won't stop her laying fertile eggs!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-Sep-15 12:09 AM GMT



He's thinking "You're not back here again, are you Hoggers?"

I'm afraid so



It's that stage in the brood when it's the females that you notice



This stunning lady is like so many other females at this time of year in having gorgeous blue badges. I may be going mad but I really do think that blue badges are far more frequent in the latter brood at Dungeness and particularly amongst the females.

And David, your last comment came to mind when I had the enormous pleasure today of watching a female lay an egg





I'd been following her as she trundled through the vegetation. She practised egg laying on several occasions before producing the one you see in the photos (I need glasses for reading and the egg was so small I had huge problems seeing it!)

Although there are fresh males about



this next picture gives a rough comparison of the respective conditions of males(on the right) and females now



(I think he's saying "You're not coming up here unless you give me a kiss")

I watched one male with no less than four females all on bramble flowers. None were interested in him. He pursued one in particular. She gave him the brush off in the usual way and he desisted. However, only 30 seconds later she ventured close to him again and he went after her but very quickly broke off. I thought that he must have remembered her and knew she wasn't receptive. But only a minute or so later she again came close to him and he then pursued her with great persistence. She only got away from him by crawling deep into the brambles where he did not follow.

I noticed one female at the start of my walk and she was still on exactly the same bush when I returned 2 hours later



I rarely come upon the same Small Copper on my return visits. Although some males will hold a territory for days on end (my best record is 7 days) I get the feeling that at this site they're a bit like tea leaves swirling about in a tea pot. So when today I re-found the obliterated (first seen 28th August) I wasn't surprised that it was in a totally different part of the site





And when I swapped notes with Allan last Sunday it became clear that the radiata I found last year had travelled a considerable distance (within the site) in the days that past before he came across it. So they do shift about.

Today I found 55 Small Coppers





Jewels amongst the Blackberries



As active as ever



In Coming!

And always stunning





I also saw a Clouded Yellow



Re: Hoggers

by David M, 11-Sep-15 05:35 AM GMT

Lovely in-flight image of the Copper, Hoggers.

I'm not so jealous of your Clouded Yellow now as I saw my first UK specimen today. Maybe the recent south-easterlies have brought a few over?

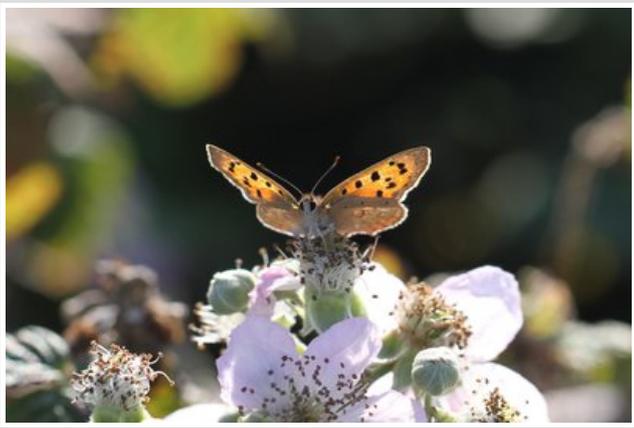
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-Sep-15 10:56 PM GMT

This Ragwort in the moat at Dungeness was the centre of Small Copper activities today



At one point this morning I watched 6 Coppers on and around the flowers

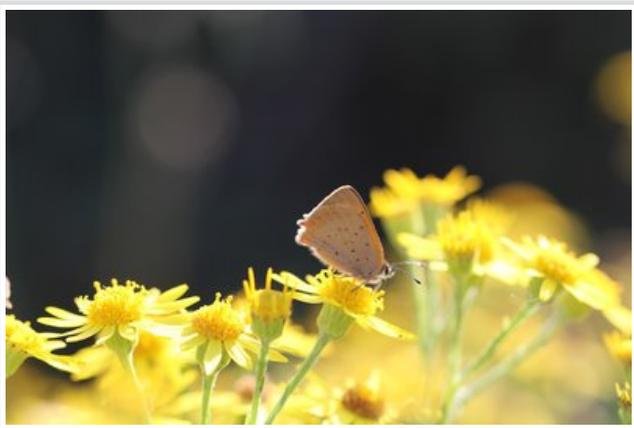
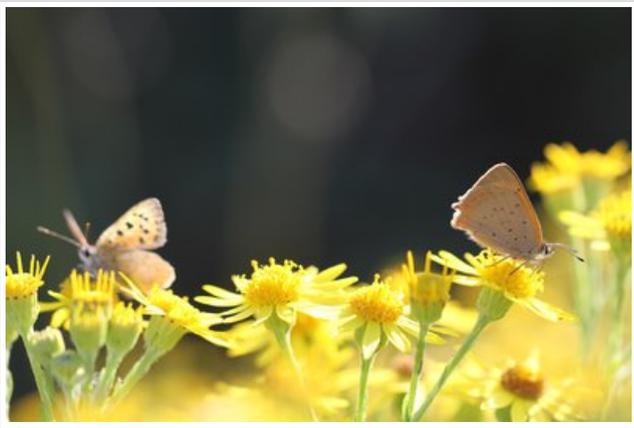
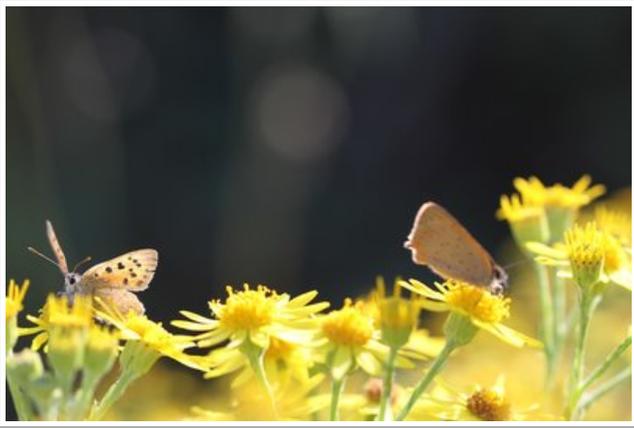


Four were males and I'd watch them joust for nectaring rights. A male ignored a Small White but jumped up to intercept two Meadow Browns!

A female appeared at a time when the Ragwort was quiet and she began nectaring



One of the males returned. He seemed not to have noticed her and immediately began to nectar. She, however, instantly reacted to his arrival by snapping shut her wings and freezing



After a little time, when she had not been molested at all, she opened up her wings and began to nectar again



Her behaviour was in keeping with other (mated) females that I've seen: they have a definite instinct to conceal themselves and keep a low profile. But it wasn't long before she was noticed



There then began a prolonged pursuit that it seemed no amount of "Turkey Strutting" on her part could put to an end





Here she is deep in the bush



It was only when she crawled deep into the dark recesses of the brambles that the male gave up, not liking the dark, and came out leaving her alone. The chase began at 10.01. The male left the brambles at 10.08. It was not until 10.17 that the female emerged from there.

Next I came upon a mating pair



I watched as the female began pushing at the male with both her back legs whilst at the same time heaving herself forwards





As if she wanted to free herself from him



But that didn't happen. I first saw them coupled at 1101am and they remained joined until 11.22.

But at 1111am this fellow appeared



And he soon homed in on the Coppers



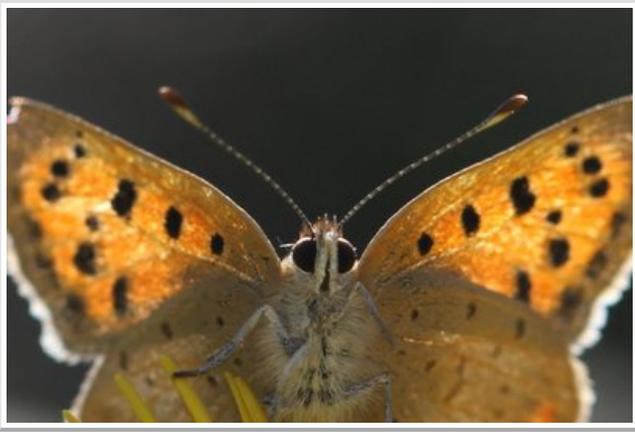
I was desperately worried that he would attack them (it was a jumping spider) so I intervened and frightened him off!

At 1122 and for no apparent reason the pair flew off and I lost them



Another fascinating day among the Small Coppers





Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 12-Sep-15 02:14 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Some nice images as usual, the in flight closed wing shot is brilliant, as is the egg picture, and yet another pair! I'm envious, never been lucky enough to find a pair, depending on the weather I can see a trip to the shingle is on for this weekend, I'd really like to find a nicely marked "Blue Badge" before the seasons up. Was the Obliterata

anywhere near the triangle where I saw it, you did well to re-find that one!! Some really interesting observations as well!! Regards Allan.W.

ps; its just come to me where I recognize your Brother from, did he used to work in the toolshop in the High street??

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 12-Sep-15 03:32 AM GMT

What can I say Hogger's, it's like sitting in on a fairy story 😊 Fantastic photos of beautiful Butterflies and the berries add to the magic 😊 I love the close ups and well done chasing that horrible critter a way, keep them coming Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 12-Sep-15 05:08 AM GMT

Hi Allan, the Obliterata was in the garden of the last cottage by the Observatory so it had travelled quite a way (for a Copper!)

Yes, my brother was at Straws Tools for 22 years then he went to work one day and was told he was redundant..

Good luck finding a nice a Blue Badger!

Goldie, thanks so much for your comments and I'm glad you approve of my chasing that spider away!

The Coppers wouldn't have stood a chance!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-15 04:49 AM GMT

Some cracking shots Hoggers; the blue 'huge' badgers, obliterated and the stunning close ups 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 16-Sep-15 02:29 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I've certainly been lucky with the Small Coppers this year!

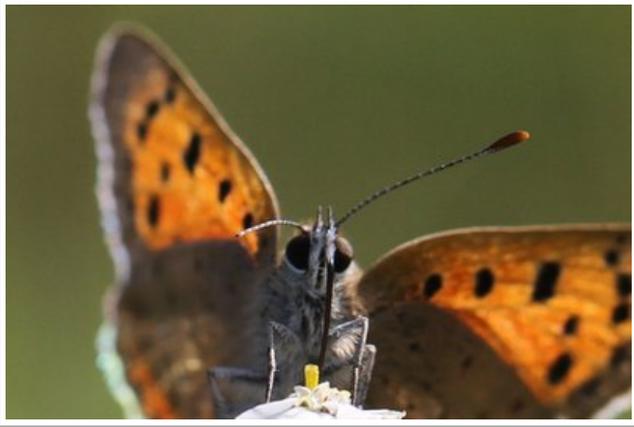
Today after work I headed down to Dungeness. It was blowing a gale and now and again the heavens would open but in between the rain when the sun came out it was glorious.

Because it was so windy I didn't expect to see many Small Coppers so I decided that I'd spend most of my time just watching one, if I could find him!

Fortunately I came across this male



Poor chap had had the end of his antenna knocked off



But it didn't appear to trouble him at all and he was busy flitting from one flower



To another



To another



All within a modest area. He was greatly concerned with nectaring and I can only suppose he was making the most of the sunshine after at least two days of inclement weather.

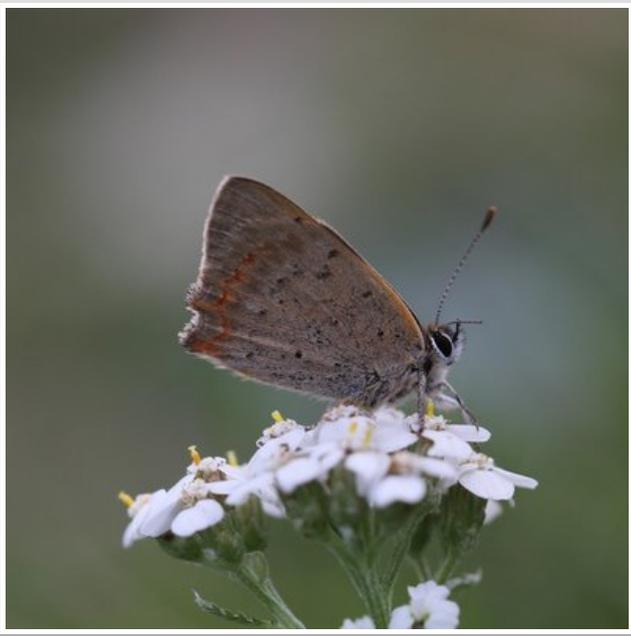
In between visiting flowers he would perch alertly on the ground on the watch out for other Coppers. But it was so windy no other butterflies were on the wing (although I did see him launch himself at a passing Bumblebee!)

In fact I saw only 9 Small Coppers this afternoon and notably all were males. So intent are they on manning their perches in the hope of finding a female that they will carry out their duties despite high winds. I've no doubt that the females were safely hidden away out of the wind.

He was nectaring when a black cloud blotted out the sun and it began to rain. I wondered if he would seek shelter but he did not, he closed up his wings and sat it out



You can see how dark it became



After the rain had stopped, the sun came out and he resumed nectaring



I do so admire the wavy orange line on the hind wing, it always reminds me of a pencil shaving



So not many Coppers today but to be honest, one's enough



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 19-Sep-15 01:48 AM GMT

Glad your still finding these lovely Butterflies Hoggers and great photos too Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Sep-15 11:04 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, what a blessing it is to still find these wonderful butterflies just as Summer is packing her bags to leave!

On Wednesday of this week I bent down to pick up a newspaper and my back "went"..

Holy Moly, but it HURT!

I've never experienced pain quiet like it and I'm still struggling to believe that I could cause so much damage to myself by doing something so simple and everyday.

Luckily for me things are getting back to normal and I'm now able to walk again. When the sun came out this morning I was keen as ever to get down to Dungeness to see some Small Coppers and fortunately both my Dad and my brother were able to come along with me just in case my spine locked up somewhere out in the shingle.

The Coppers are still very much present. I liked the hindwing pattern on this female





Some battered individuals



This one looks how my back feels



But most in very fine condition





Females dozing in the sunshine



Less lucky females being chased up hill and down dale by lusty males



Enjoying the last of the flowers



I came across this unusual bird



I'm not sure but think it's a young Pied Flycatcher.

Painted Ladies and Small Tortoiseshells were there too



As well as Small Heaths, Large and Small Whites and a Meadow Brown.

I saw 33 Small Coppers today



Did me the power of good!

Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 20-Sep-15 02:44 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Didn't see you at Dungie today ,like you say ,still plenty to see,i'll have to wade through my shots later.Yes, Pied Fly on the fence,some of the birders would have liked to find thatnice one, we saw about 25 Coppers in all, one or two beauties,and Hoggers ,a pair ,at last !! oh and a single Cloudie.
Regards Allan.W,

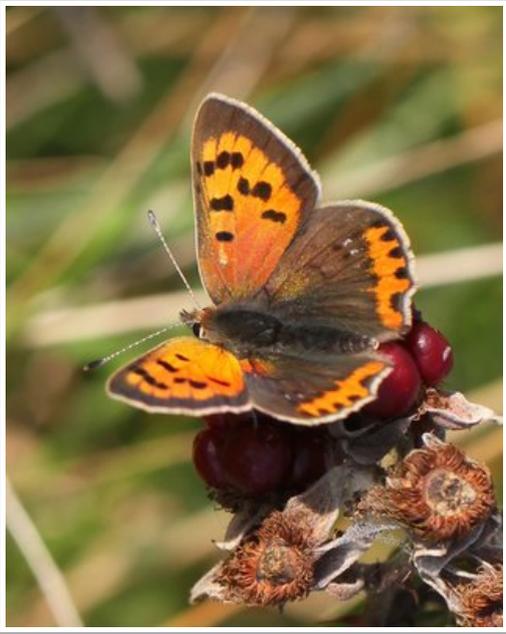
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 20-Sep-15 10:44 PM GMT

Hello Allan, thanks for confirming the identity of the Pied Flycatcher. It's not a bird that I'm familiar with (I think the last one I saw was when I went on holiday to Wales about 20 years ago!)

Well, it seemed like Spring had returned to Dungeness this morning. Not only was it the most gorgeous of days but there has been a fresh emergence of Small Coppers





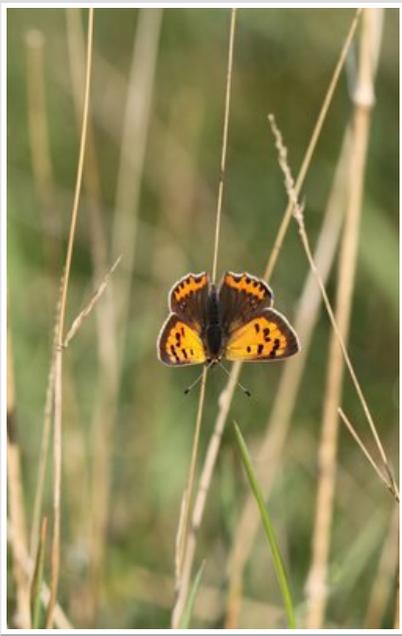




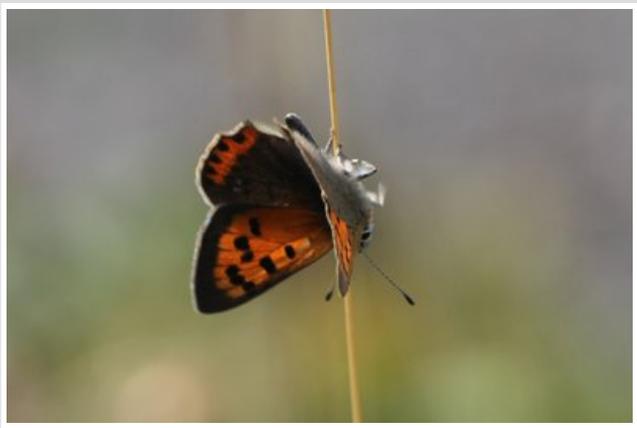
These must be true third brooders. Of the 33 Coppers I saw today (curiously I saw 33 yesterday – but not the same ones!) most were fresh. I can only think that after days of foul weather they have emerged this weekend because of the sunshine.

I sat watching a male and he did the "Stalk Dance" for me





Look how quickly he is pattering his feet



Such a delight to witness and a complete mystery as to just why they're doing it!



Until this morning I'd never seen a Holly Blue and a Small Copper sharing the same flower



I liked this Copper with the wide orange hindwing band (something I come across now and again)

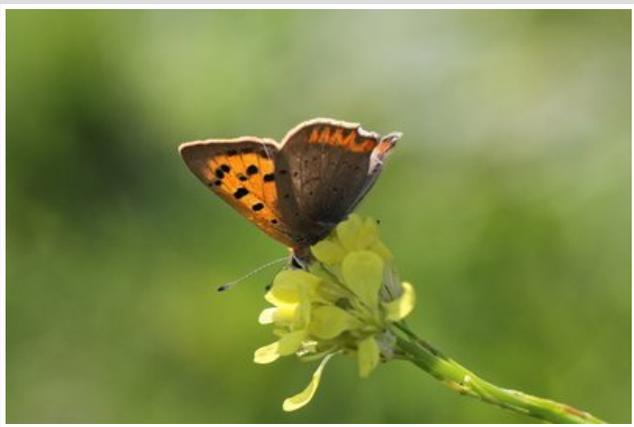


Plenty of action around the Ragwort





But it is so wonderful to be finding fresh butterflies





Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 23-Sep-15 04:12 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers,

Your Pied Fly on the fence, might not be..... to me it does look like a Pied Fly, but I noticed today on the Dungeness website that an Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax*) sp; has appeared near the fishing boats this is a new one to me! I haven't seen any pics as yet, I think it was found around 11 am today, and if it stays will probably become a mass twitch (god forbid !!) there's a chance that you may have found it first !! you could send your pic to Dave Walker for a look. Regards Allan.W.

Re: Hoggers

by Butterfysaurus rex, 23-Sep-15 05:15 AM GMT

I agree with Allan Hoggers, it looks like a female Pied Flycatcher to me as well. I had a look in my small library of bird books and it looks like the Alder Flycatcher has two very pronounced white bands on its wing whereas the Pied only has the one.

There's no doubt about it, you are the undisputed Small Copper King on UKB Hoggers. I've often thought about following a species very closely for a year. You've shown how rewarding such an endeavour can be. 😊

ATB

James

Re: Hoggers

by CJB, 23-Sep-15 05:41 PM GMT

Good morning Hoggers,

I believe it is an Acadian Flycatcher, because it is all over the RareBird Alert website:

[http://www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/RealData ... me=&sort=4](http://www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/RealData...me=&sort=4)

Twitchers are descending on your patch as I type..... I hope the coppers are bracing themselves.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Sep-15 10:45 PM GMT

Hello! Well, how very exciting! The best identification I could manage was "unusual bird" so if it does turn out to be an Arcadian Flycatcher then I've learnt something new!

By strange coincidence I went down to Dungeness today before having read your comments and I saw a high number of birdwatchers wandering about. I wondered what they were looking for..!

It was sunny there but with a cold breeze at first. Fortunately it wasn't long before I came across my first Coppers





And to my great surprise I found my third radiata of 2015



She just wouldn't pose nicely for me unfortunately



But you can see the wonderful tail markings



So if I've discovered anything at all this year it is that there's a radiata gene in the Dungeness Small Copper population. She was quite damaged and this photo shows a very curious pattern of damage on her wings



Another damaged female caught my eye



With those bold wing markings I do wish I'd seen her when she was pristine!

I watched another female feeding off the blackberries



Then as I walked back I had the additional good fortune to bump into our very own Maximus and his wife on a Copper Hunt of their own. It was lovely to meet you both and I hope you found some nice Coppers!





Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 24-Sep-15 12:24 AM GMT

Lovely Coppers again Hoggers, I've not seen any here yet but they've been seen by others so if we get a nice weekend maybe I'll see some yet, the Butterflies seem to be late coming out here so fingers crossed Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Allan.W., 24-Sep-15 04:00 AM GMT

Blimey Hoggers not another one !! brilliant, it shows time and dedication in the field, pays off,thoroughly deserved,another great find ! Back to the bird Having seen the pics of the Flycatcher,i,m now pretty sure your bird was a Pied,as you(and Butterflysaurus Rex) thought and not the one every ones travelling to see,(well everyone but me) ,if we visit Dungeness this weekend we'll still be looking for the Coppers !! Regards Allan .W.

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 24-Sep-15 05:11 AM GMT

I guess with a density as high as your spot, abs would be comparatively common. Looks like that *Radiata* is also a member of the blue badge gang by a few scales 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Paul Harfield, 24-Sep-15 07:55 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers

Lovely selection of Small Coppers as usual 😊 You will be pleased to hear I have notched up my 4th of the year 😊 I think your special delivery must have got lost in the post 😊

Re: Hoggers

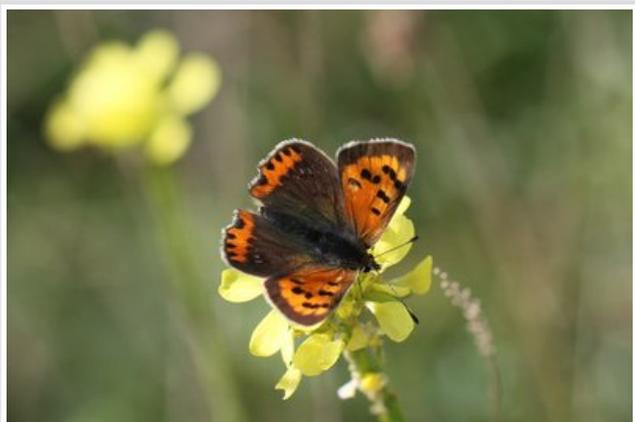
by Hoggers, 25-Sep-15 11:53 PM GMT

I saw in your diary that you'd had some success with the Coppers, Jack : let's hope 2016 yields up rather more!

Hi Allan and Buggy, I couldn't believe it: three radiata this year! All in the moat which as you know has a concentration of Coppers, almost a little environment all of its own. But this was my first female radiata and you're right, there is a bit of blue there too!

Thanks Goldie, I've got my fingers crossed for you!

Today I went down to Dungeness straight after work. I quickly found a male that I'd watched last sunday, still on his same patch





He kept a close eye on me



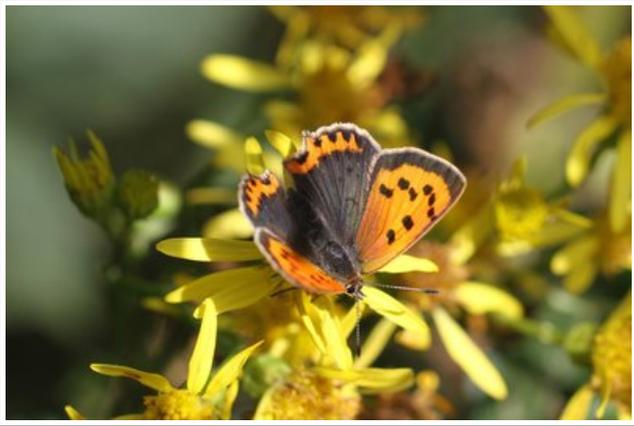
And had a wash and brush up



before returning to his watch



Although I counted only 18 Small Coppers today most were in excellent condition





so they are still emerging.

But despite the new arrivals there's a distinct autumnal feeling



Others not so pristine



but full of life



Would you believe that this one



(half rather than a full Copper!) was flying about and I even saw him chase off a Painted Lady!

Little Beauties



Just bursting with character



Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 26-Sep-15 03:39 AM GMT

Lovely photos of Small Coppers as always, Hoggers. It was great to meet you at Dungeness too, and yes we saw some beautiful Small Coppers. Thank you for kindly pointing us in the right direction for the radiata.

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 26-Sep-15 04:35 AM GMT

Only 18...that's more than I have seen all year.

Great photos as usual Hoggers, I love the face on close ups 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Sep-15 11:29 PM GMT

Hi Neil, I often look at the Small Coppers and wonder just what they are thinking



Today I headed down to Dungeness with the intention of re-finding two male Small Coppers that I've previously noted as having very definite territories.

I wanted to see if they were still there and if so, to check up on them.

First port of call was close to the last cottage on the way down to the Observatory. Sure enough, there he was



using exactly the same little patch of shingle as his main perching place as when I first found him 6 days ago. I think he had either emerged on that day or possibly the day before (judging by his condition) and so I was pleased to see how well he looked this morning.

When you consider that the adult Copper is expected to live no longer than 3 weeks, he's kept to this one patch for roughly a third of his life expectancy.

Next I headed out into the Desert where I was over the moon to discover another male that I'd located 6 days ago was alive and well and in precisely the same territory as when I found him



I later came across a very fresh Copper and sat down to watch



He was in an area of the Desert where there's no grass whatsoever, just ankle snagging Brambles. He used an exposed patch of shingle as his main launching pad. I saw him fly up, alight on a Bramble leaf and begin to rapidly tap his feet on the leaf surface



and I soon realised that he was carrying out the "stalk dance" but because there was no grass for him to perform it on he was making do with Brambles!





Why are they doing this? It is purposeful behaviour so there must be a reason.

I like to think that just like a Tiger in the jungle, the male Small Copper is scent marking his Kingdom!



I found 20 Small Coppers in the Desert





Elsewhere, a Brown Argus (big surprise!)



Painted Ladies



Common Blues



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 27-Sep-15 02:37 AM GMT

Hi! Hoggers, I just love your closeups of the Copper, he does seem to be watching you 😊 I wish you could send some of them North 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Sep-15 11:19 PM GMT

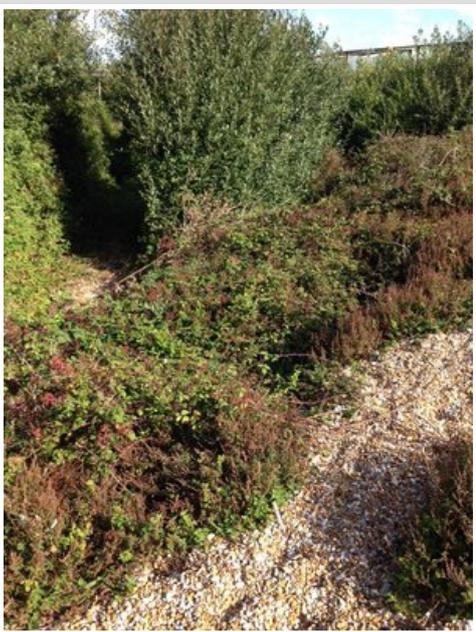
Hi Goldie, thanks for your kind comments - I've got my fingers crossed for you!

It was "A Tale of Two Coppers" at Dungeness this morning.

I looked in on this chap



He had as his territory this Bramble patch



Where he seemed very much at home



But at 1016 a Young Pretender suddenly appeared



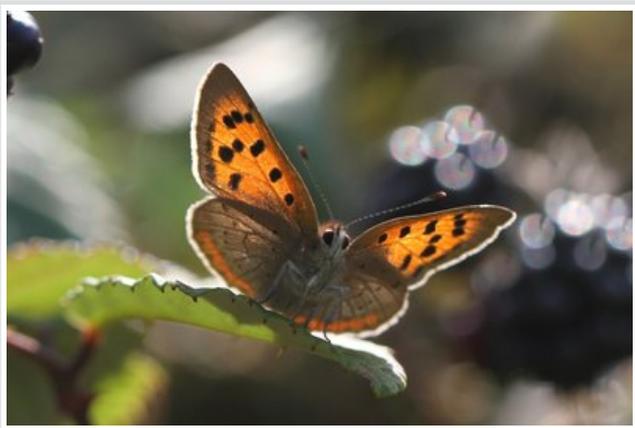
And looked to be making himself too comfortable



So it wasn't long before sparks began to fly



Time and time again these swashbuckling Coppers would engage in ferocious and lengthy aerial displays, high and low (in fact I twice saw the younger force the older male down onto the pebbles where he'd sit awhile before returning to the Brambles). Both would resume perching on the blackberries





And once settled close by each other



only to start squabbling again.

Between 1016 and 1100 I counted no less than 28 punch-ups between these two, after the last of which only the younger male returned





He settled in to his new territory



Nectared for the first time



And at 1120 I watched him do the "Stem Dance" routine (but as there was no grass to perform on he went tap-dancing across the Bramble leaves and Blackberries!)

At 1145am I had to go. I saw no sign of the older male.

Before heading home I checked in on another male that I've been watching



Still on his patch after 7 days!

Today I saw only 15 Small Coppers but many that I found were clearly very fresh indeed.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Oct-15 11:24 PM GMT

Last Sunday I watched a young Small Copper oust an older Small Copper from his territory. Today I returned to find the younger male was still in possession of the Bramble patch



Although the sun was shining it was very windy but the male sat prominently up on the bush ignoring the buffeting winds



I saw him fly several times around his territory to check if any intruders or females had appeared, always returning to the same watch point



During this routine instead of checking the area he went on a "stalk dance", only as there's no grass he made do by tap-dancing over the Bramble leaves and spiralling down on this plant whilst quickly tapping his feet





From the helpful replies I received to my question in the "General" forum as to whether butterflies have "scent" receptors in their feet I can only conclude that the male Copper is regularly testing his immediate environment



But what for? Perhaps for signs of females in the area? I don't know.

Blow though it was I managed to find a few more Coppers





It's wonderful to see such bright young things so late in the season

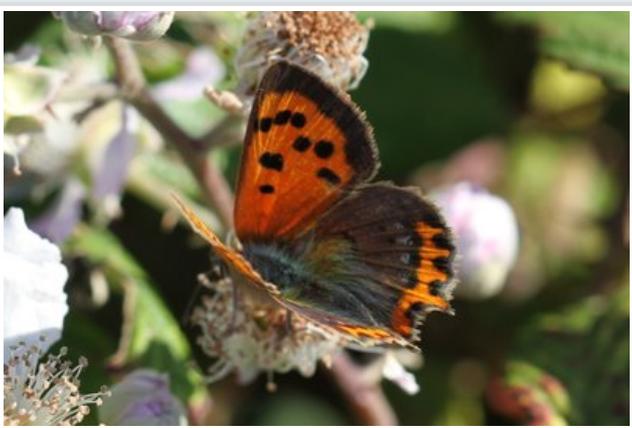




I saw a female rebuffing a lusty male



And came across a lovely blue badger



I saw 14 Small Coppers today
There's still life in the season!



Re: Hoppers

by Goldie M, 03-Oct-15 03:18 AM GMT

Fantastic shots Hogger's , I do envy you your Copper's 🍷🍷 Still no sign them here in spite of the weather being so nice, I think it's going to be next year now before we see them here. 😞 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 03-Oct-15 11:53 PM GMT

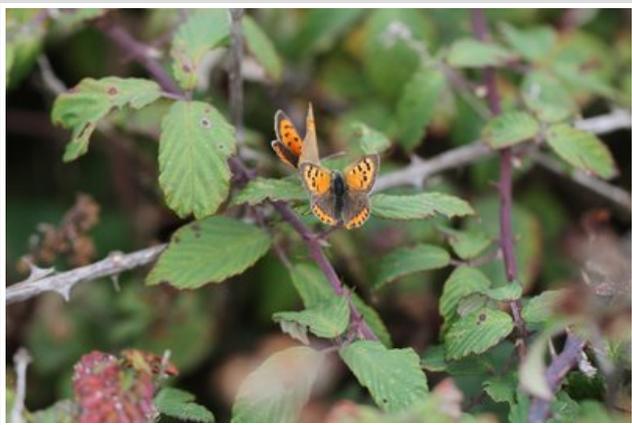
Cheers Goldie - If you don't find any Coppers then do come and visit Dungeness next year!

I was treated to some very interesting examples of female Small Copper behaviour today.

Firstly, here's a female warding off the attentions of a male



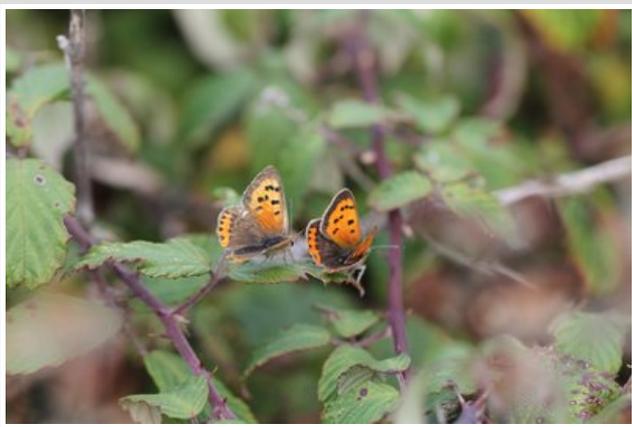
You can see her walking (not flying) away from him



Then doing the "Turkey Strut"



Waving her hind wings at him



This male got the message and simply stopped, allowing her to walk away into the bush

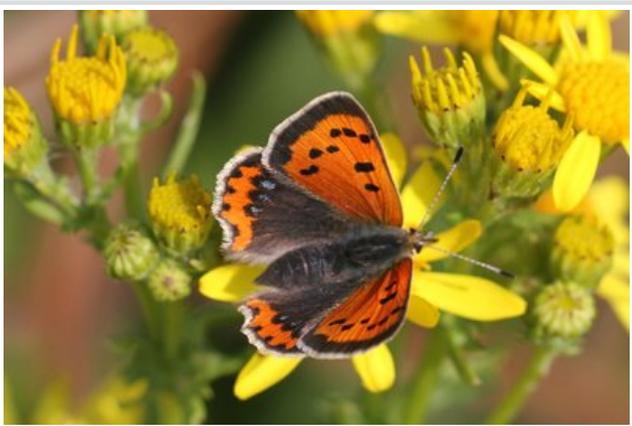


I find it fascinating to watch.

Secondly, here's a beautiful and fresh lady that I found today



with gorgeous blue badges



She was quietly nectaring



when a male flew in, right above her, landing nearby but not in any way paying her attention.

Her instant reaction as he flew in was to snap shut her wings and freeze



And she remained this way for 5 seconds before resuming her business



I have now witnessed females do this on several occasions





Although this female was very fresh there's a definite tang of Autumn in the air



Still some lovely butterflies to see though



And there's a beauty in even the most tattered of Coppers



I counted 21 today



Re: Hoppers

by Goldie M, 04-Oct-15 05:46 PM GMT

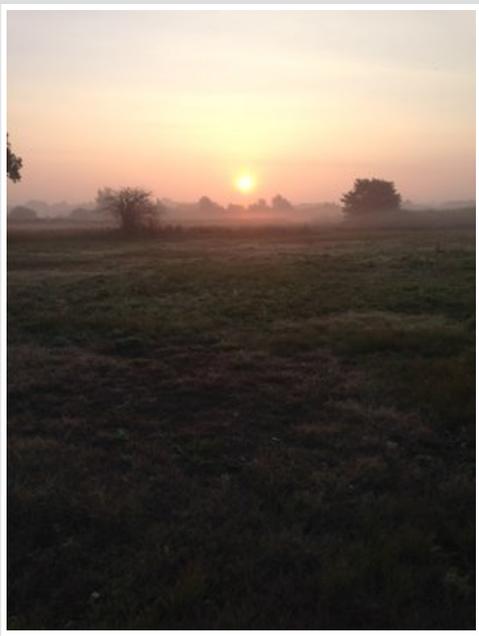
Beautiful photos Hopper's, I love the shots of them on the Berries, I never get tired of looking at them Goldie 😊

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 04-Oct-15 10:54 PM GMT

I love to see them perched on the blackberries too, Goldie, they look like something out of 'A Midsummer's Night Dream'!

Glorious sunrise today



Once the temperature had risen I headed down to Dungeness. Firstly I checked on the young male that I watched evicting an older Copper from his patch



Still there after 7 days



I then ventured out into "The Desert". I wanted to see whether a male Copper I found on 20th September was still on his patch. I had my fingers crossed! The longest I've recorded a male keep to a set territory is 7 days, so I really had my hopes up for this one.

And when I got there



I found him!!!!



He may not look very special



But he's special to me!



He's been at this same site for at least 14 days. His favourite roosting place is next to my hat (in the photo!) and unlike other males that I've watched this year his patch is large, I've seen him range about the whole area in the photo.

I read in Frohawk that a Small Copper adult is expected to live for 3 weeks, so this chap has spent at least 2/3rds of his life on the same patch.

I hope I'm not giving a false impression. Although some male Coppers do stick to a single territory for many days, lots do not. All seem to be territorial but there are males that move on (perhaps due to their disposition or to outside factors).

I saw quite a few punch-ups today. These two were unhappy neighbours



Constantly in dispute





As were others that I watched today



I don't know if they do much damage to each other in these contests, I doubt it unless it's accidental.

They have their quieter moments



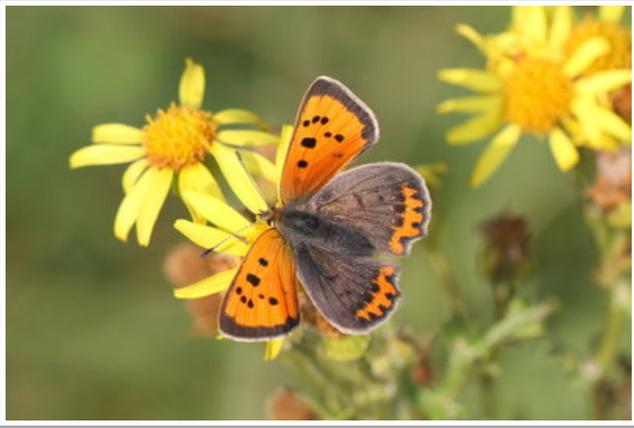
Males seem to be active before females in the mornings. As the morning went on I saw females appear. This one came out from within the bush and began to bask in the sun



I was delighted to find this beauty







So it's still very Coppersy





I did find one NCCFO (Non Copper Coloured Flying Object)



Very Late!

But still plenty of Coppers to keep me entertained



Re: Hoppers

by Goldie M, 05-Oct-15 01:40 AM GMT

Fantastic Hogger's just wished I lived nearer I'm still on the look out but nothing so far Goldie 😊

Re: Hoppers

by Neil Freeman, 05-Oct-15 04:13 AM GMT

I really enjoy reading your reports on the Small Coppers Hoppers, great observations accompanied by smashing photos 😊

Be interesting to see how long they hang on for down there.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoppers

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-15 04:51 AM GMT

More cracking Coppers Hoggers 😊 I still haven't seen any third generation Coppers at my usual sites – do you think I've missed them or are they still to come?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 05-Oct-15 11:50 PM GMT

Hi, many thanks for all of your generous comments. It's a feature of this wonderful UKButterflies website that absolute novices like myself will receive a warm welcome and encouragement for their efforts to learn about butterflies, so thank you very much indeed.

As for the remaining Small Copper season, in past years I've found them right up to the end of October and even into November, so the best of luck to you all!

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by peterc, 06-Oct-15 12:00 AM GMT

You're being modest, Hoggars. You don't sound like an absolute novice to me 😊. Some super shots of the coppers and long may they continue flying.

ATB

Peter

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 07-Oct-15 01:42 AM GMT

Some fascinating observations Hoggars, particularly that male who's retained his territory for 2 weeks. Is that patch of raised ground south facing? If it is my guess would be it's warmer micro climate makes well worth holding on to, especially at this time of year with the weaker sun.

Re: Hoggers

by Maximus, 07-Oct-15 04:20 AM GMT

Brilliant observations of the Small Coppers, Hoggars, and lovely shots of them too.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 07-Oct-15 05:21 AM GMT

Thanks for all of your kind comments.

The Small Coppers have repaid me for all the time I've spent watching them many times over. They are fascinating creatures and there's so much more to learn,

Best wishes,

Hoggers.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 07-Oct-15 05:25 AM GMT

Here's hoping for a November Small Copper in 2015, Hoggars! It was 20c when I drove home in Swansea this afternoon and the last couple of weeks (bar yesterday) have been pretty good.

Should give this species a chance to continue flying for a while yet.

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 07-Oct-15 07:27 AM GMT

I hope they go on and on for you, Hoggars. 😊 I did a complete double-take with that NCCFO, by the way – brilliant to sneak that one in! 😊 But yes, a very late Brown Argus. An isolated third brood individual?

Dave

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 08-Oct-15 12:14 AM GMT

Hi Dave, that NCCFO surprised me too! You never know what might turn up when you go butterflying!

Buggy, I think you're right about that Copper's patch. It certainly is a sun trap and he's got a good supply of nectar from various flowers growing there. When I get the chance I'll look in on him again and report back.

I'll have to check my records but I think the latest I've ever found Small Coppers at Dungeness is the second week in November, so hopefully there's plenty of life left in the season

Best Wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 10-Oct-15 12:00 AM GMT

Such a gorgeous October day: no wind and constant warm sunshine. Just perfect for me to check in on the Small Coppers of Dungeness!

Firstly, I just couldn't wait to find out if the male Copper I featured in last Sunday's report was still on his patch



My best record for a male holding a territory was 7 days until I checked in on him on Sunday when that record was broken and a new high of 14 days set.

So with hope and trepidation in my heart I scrunched across "The Desert" to his patch...and there he was!!!



I was delighted! This chap has stayed in this same place for at least 19 days



(And you're right Buggy, it is south facing.)

When I first found him and sat down to watch it was 20th September and he looked 1 or 2 days old (guessing by his condition).

19 days later he is there still!

Chuffed with that result I wandered off and soon began finding Small Coppers



As you can see, some at least are in fine condition







Although the males are now rather tired



This female had a lovely wide hind wing orange band



(a feature I come across now and again)

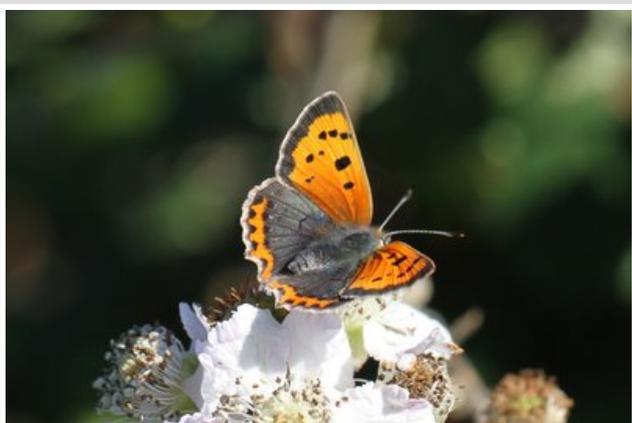
I watched duelling males





Little sparks of Copper.

I saw 21 Small Coppers today



Re: Hoggers

by jens, 10-Oct-15 12:25 AM GMT

We`ll have to christen you the "Copper-king" !. Your reports of finding Small Coppers and your photos are a joy to read and see.

Jenks.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 10-Oct-15 07:29 PM GMT

Lovely Coppers once again Hogger's, I never get tired of seeing them 😊

I can't understand why we've not had Copper's here, the weathers been lovely and we've had lots of other Butterflies, I've been to quite a few places recently where I've seen them before but no luck, my thinking now is the bad weather we had May, June, July up here was to blame, Oh! well, I'll just have to wait until next year. Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 10-Oct-15 11:59 PM GMT

Thanks Jenks, I'm glad you enjoy my diary but rather than a Copper King I see myself very much as one of their loyal subjects!

What a shame, Goldie! I'm spoilt of course as I can visit Dungeness and I tend to forget that other enthusiasts like yourself have struggled to find any Coppers at all this year!

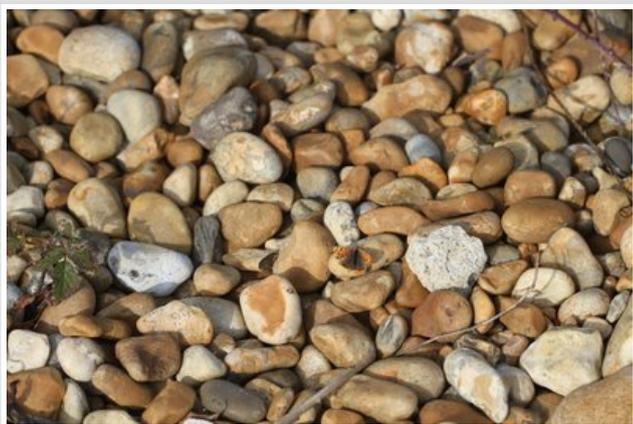
Not so nice today, cloudy and windy, but I decided to look in on the male Copper that I've been keeping an eye on over the last 3 weeks.

Here's another view of his territory



A south facing sun trap which, as I noticed today, is largely sheltered from the wind.

He perches on pebbles in a shingle patch to the right of the brambles as you look at the above photo



There he has good all-round vision and the pebbles hold the warmth of the sun



He has held this territory now for at least 20 days!



I watched him for 2 hours this morning. He would shift about the patch, changing his pebble perch on a number of occasions. He also would fly on regular trips around his territory on the look out for other Coppers, and always return to the favoured shingle to perch.

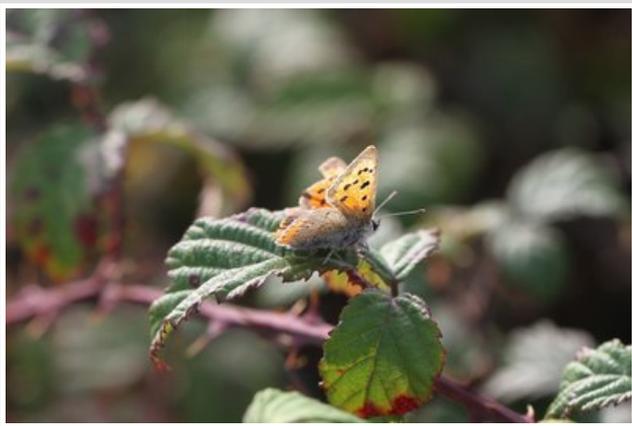
In between these reconnaissance flights he did the "Stalk Dance" although for him this was mainly a Tap Dance across the Brambles.

This is the sort of pattern of event:

- 1049 - Stalk Dance
- 1057 - Stalk Dance
- 1101 - Reccy
- 1104 - Reccy
- 1108 - Reccy
- 1111 - Stem Dance

Perching on the shingle in between.

He examined a great many of the plants and leaves on his patch



Even bare Bramble stems







Quickly tapping his feet against the plant surface.

He flew about 40 feet from his pebble perch to Stem Dance down some grass!



And he took an interest in many kinds of plant



It is fascinating to watch



I recently read that Red Admirals "taste" sugar with their feet so I think Small Coppers must have similar chemical detectors in their feet. But quite what they are testing for I haven't a clue!

I saw 14 Small Coppers today



But of them all it is this chap that's my favourite



He's rather battered but he has kept hold of his own domain now for at least 20 days and I think that's great!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-15 04:32 AM GMT

20 days seems a long time for a Small Copper to hold onto a territory for, if you named him did you chose Arnie 😊? How long do Coppers usually last?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 11-Oct-15 06:17 PM GMT

Hi! Hogger's the Coppers are looking a bit worn now, they've had a good run down there though.

I did see Copper's in May in the Dunes at Southport, I got some shots, I could kick myself now though I should have gone back there a few times if has you've described they can stay in the same area for so long, I'll remember that for next year Hogger's ,so you've taught me some thing through your posts 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 11-Oct-15 08:11 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel and Goldie, it's one of the questions I've tried to answer this year through watching Small Coppers: on average, how long do the males hold a territory?

I do not have access to a University Library and I am sure many other people have looked into this question(I'd love to hear from any of them by the way!) but the only reference I've found is in Frowhawk's "The Complete Book of British Butterflies" 1934 at page 260 where the Great Man writes "I have observed the same marked specimen, which frequented a certain spot for about two weeks and which, when first seen, was somewhat worn, apparently having been on the wing for four or five days".

Now my usual record for a male holding the same territory is 7 days. I recorded one individual that stayed for at least 14 days. But my winner by far is the chap I featured yesterday. I found him on 20th September when he was fresh so had emerged that day (or at most the day before). And he's still there after 20 days!

But I have to point out that all my observations are made at Dungeness where there are broadly speaking two Copper Habitats, namely, Coppers in the Moat and Coppers not in the Moat!

At the peak of the first and second broods you'll easily find 100+ Coppers in the moat. It's like Piccadilly Circus.

But elsewhere, particularly in The Desert (where my third brood long stayer is) the number of Coppers is smaller and they are more widely distributed.

So competition for territory for my chap must have been far less intense than for a first or second brood male in the Observatory Moat.

Maybe that's why he has held on for so long, but I like to side with you, Wurzel, and think of him as a really Tough Little Guy!



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 14-Oct-15 03:00 AM GMT

Hi! Hogger's your Butterfly is definitely tough, has the Red Admiral's are in my garden at present 😊 This morning we had a touch of frost and it was cold, has soon as the Sun came out though so did they 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Oct-15 12:17 AM GMT

We haven't yet had a frost down here in Kent, Goldie, but the weather has been pretty unpleasant and certainly no good for butterflies.

And today began damp and dull too, but by 11-ish showed signs of brightening up, so I chanced a visit to Dungeness.

At first it was cloudy (although mild and calm) but soon the sun made itself felt and out came the Coppers



I was delighted to find five Blue Badgers and also to see that most were in such beautiful condition





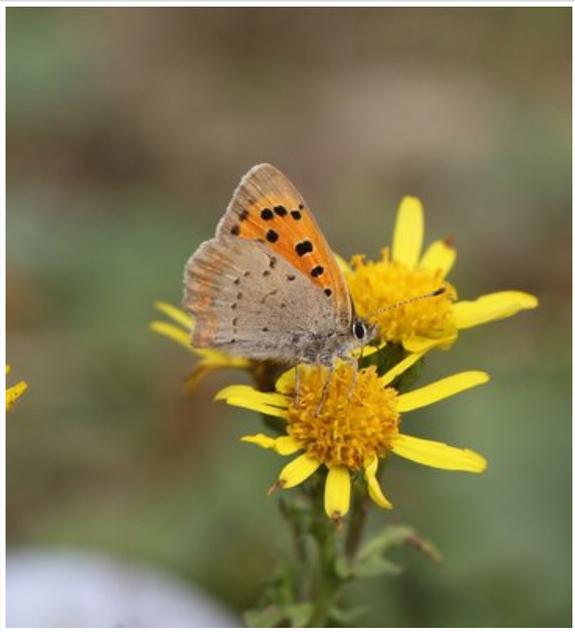
This female in particular caught my eye



Something about the hind wing rays with their blue badges made her particularly memorable



Sunshine at first



Then it grew cloudy and the Coppers went quiet



But watching one that had shut up its wings like this I noticed that it was far from asleep and would gradually shift its position in line with where the sun was hiding behind the clouds until eventually the cloud lightened, the sun became stronger and the butterfly was able to feel the full benefit of it



They are clearly highly sensitive to warmth from the sun.

I saw 16 Small Coppers today.

I then made my way across The Desert to the patch where my long staying Small Copper had been living. I fortified myself against what I felt would be the inevitable disappointment of finding him gone but to my amazement he was still there!



Today he perched on Bramble leaves and not on the pebbles. I put my hand down on to the pebbles and they were cold, not having had sufficient chance to heat up in the sun today. So he sat on the leaves



I can hardly believe that he is 28 days old (at least) and has spent all that time here guarding the same patch



What wonderful creatures they are!

NCCFO were a Brown Argus, Red Admiral, Larger White, Small Heaths and a very late Meadow Brown!

Good to see you again, Allan, hope you saw plenty of Coppers!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 19-Oct-15 03:41 AM GMT

Given the condition of some of those specimens, Hoggers, I'd say that bar a frost or two you'll still be seeing them in November!

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-15 04:10 AM GMT

More lovely Coppers Hoggers, especially the blue badgers 😊🇬🇧 I missed the third brood this year, hat is if they were even here, I suspect they packed their bags and headed over to Hogger World 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 19-Oct-15 06:16 AM GMT

Lovely to keep seeing them, Hoggers, especially as some still seem pretty new. And the veteran, too – I had no idea they could live so long! 😊

Dave

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 19-Oct-15 10:28 PM GMT

WOW! Hogger's, still seeing some lovely Copper's, keep them coming Goldie 😊

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 20-Oct-15 11:01 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments, they are much appreciated.

I finished work early today and what with the sun shining I could think of nothing better than to nip down to Dungeness and chase a few Coppers



It's interesting: I saw 14 Small Coppers in total today, nine females and five males. All of the females were overall in very good condition indeed







and busy nectaring.

One female



I found today in exactly the same place as when I first found her two days ago.

Another female was trundling through the Sorrel going through the motions of egg laying (although not actually laying)





and I noticed that she was using her antennae literally as feelers, dropping them down and (from what I could see) gently tapping them against the leaf surface



This is something I have not noticed before.

As for the males, the situation is not so healthy





Of the five I saw only one was in really good nick



I went out to find my long staying Copper: he's still alive and kicking and master of his domain



I seem to remember reading that Small Coppers live for about 3 weeks. Well, Old Methuselah is at least 30 days old!



And I think he looks good enough to go on for some time yet!

As far as Non Copper Coloured Flying Objects are concerned, I saw a Large White, a Red Admiral, a fairly good looking Brown Argus



(sorry about the poor photo) and a lovely Clouded Yellow



But it's Old Methuselah that impresses me the most: I wonder just how much longer he's going to last?!



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 21-Oct-15 12:08 AM GMT

Hi! Hogger's you'll be sorry when he's gone I can tell Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 21-Oct-15 12:38 AM GMT

"Goldie M" wrote:

Hi! Hogger's you'll be sorry when he's gone I can tell Goldie 😊

But He'll live for eternity in Small Copper mythology 😊

Re: Hoggers

by essexbuzzard, 22-Oct-15 06:40 AM GMT

Given the cold,gloomy week we've just had,i'm amazed there are any butterflies still going at all! An astonishing report and great pictures,dare i say it,the cold weather has perhaps helped yor male live longer? As he is not active every day.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 22-Oct-15 11:38 PM GMT

Thank you for the interest you have shown in my Small Coppers!

What started with my trying to find out how long a male Copper will (on average) hold a territory, now, by pure chance, has shed some light on the question as to how long they live!

At long last I've found the reference to their longevity that had stuck in my mind: it's in "Looking at Butterflies" by L.Hugh Newman, page 89, where he writes " Length of life: 16 - 21 days".

Old Methuselah has clearly got that beat (and barring accident or a sudden onset of Winter, I think he's got plenty more in the tank!)

I think you've got a point there, EssexB: these cool days may indeed be helping him.

But now I'm wondering if he is exceptional. I've seen many males at the end of the season that look like ghosts of Small Coppers, so worn as to be transparent, and after finding Methuselah I'm asking myself whether they too were over a month old.

At any rate, I will certainly be keeping a keen eye on him!

On another Coppery subject, I've finally found what I believe is a mention of the "Stalk Dance" that I've featured so often in my diary.

Page 106 of Thomas and Lewington has this in relation to male Coppers : "It is sometimes said that he marks his territory with scent.."

There's no explanation of exactly why this is "sometimes said" so I'm guessing, but I can only think it refers to other people having seen the "Stalk Dance".

By the bye, Thomas doesn't agree with the theory saying "I have yet to find any evidence of it".

Anyway, I managed to find a Copper of my own today!



Glowing in the gloom in the field where I walk my dogs



I managed to snap her with my mobile phone



Enough to cheer anyone up on a damp October day!

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 23-Oct-15 01:10 AM GMT

Let's hope Methusaleh makes it to November, Hoggers.

Great to have so many Small Coppers that you can undertake such research. I doubt I've seen more than two dozen all year.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 23-Oct-15 02:04 AM GMT

That's exactly it, David – lots of Small Coppers at Dungeness so I've tried to take advantage of it.

I just wish I had more time to study them!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 25-Oct-15 10:06 PM GMT

Five days ago I saw 14 Small Coppers at Dungeness, 9 of them females in fine glossy copper condition.

This morning I was able to find only 4 Small Coppers



None in great condition



It started off cold but warmed up to about 13C (according to my car dashboard)but even so the Coppers I saw seemed sluggish



I walked out to check on Old Methuselah: no sign. The place was empty without him.

But, looking on the positive side, he has left a legacy: he proves that male Small Coppers can live for at least 30 days in the field and that they can keep to the same territory for all that time



Remarkable!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Oct-15 10:28 PM GMT

I headed down to Dungeness this morning arriving about 1130. It was comfortably warm with hazy sunshine. The first butterfly I came across was a NCCFO



Unfortunately he flew off before I could get closer



But after a deal of searching I found my first Copper



I saw her first last sunday and today she was in exactly the same area



And I thought that was going to be it for today as it was very quiet and all the flowers had a deserted look about them but luck was with me and I found this female sunning herself on the Brambles



I confess to feeling some surprise at how very quickly the Small Copper population here has declined



Only a week ago I had no difficulty in finding them and they were in superb condition (which gave me some hope that I'd be finding them right into November), yet today I managed to find only two



Always good to see though



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 27-Oct-15 10:38 PM GMT

Lovely to see your Copper's Hogger's but the Clouded Yellow is a good find as well Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 28-Oct-15 03:42 AM GMT

Wow! That spot truly is a playground for butterflies, Hoggers.

I wish I had a site like it near to where I live. 🍷

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 01-Nov-15 12:44 AM GMT

With the dramatic reduction in Small Copper numbers at Dungeness that I've noticed since 20th October I had little expectation of finding any there today, despite the warm and sunny conditions.

I think that the five day stretch of damp and dull days that began on 21st October killed most of them off (including dear Methuselah) even though there wasn't a frost.

Most were killed off, but not all!

I first came across the female that I've noted since 25th October



Only this time I found that she'd moved further around The Moat



But then I found a male that I'd recorded there on 20th October



Holding exactly the same territory (11 days) and still able to fly even with the wing damage you see in the photo.

These two were the only Coppers I came across today.

But an NCCFO caught my eye



Probably the same male I first saw in The Moat on 20th





Handsome chap!



Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 02-Nov-15 11:47 PM GMT

Any LTB's in Kent Hoggers 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 03-Nov-15 01:31 AM GMT

Hi Goldie, I must admit that I haven't looked!

If it's not Copper coloured it doesn't seem to register on my Butterfly Radar !!!

But I seem to remember someone spotting one at Dungeness a few weeks ago (I think I was counting Coppers at the time....!!)

Not to worry : I think Small Coppers are much more exciting !!

Best wishes,

Hoggers.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 03-Nov-15 04:56 AM GMT

I must say I love your attitude Hoggers, 😊 what's more important than the Butterfly you love to photograph Goldie 😊 PS if you find any more please post them 😊

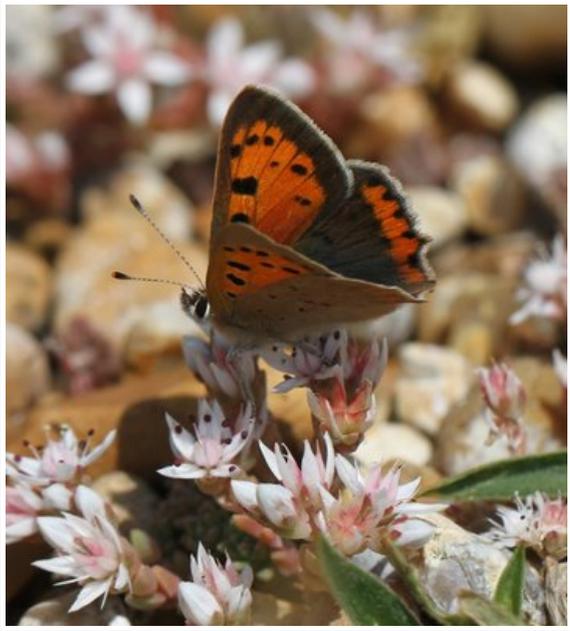
Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 21-Nov-15 11:10 PM GMT

I don't suppose I'll see a Small Copper again until next April



Five months without my favourite butterfly!



But they say that absence makes the heart grow fonder!



As anyone who has been kind enough to read my diary will know, I have devoted my every butterflying hour (and a good many hours that I was supposed to be doing other things!) to watching the Small Coppers of Dungeness



I made 58 visits to Dungeness between April and October, each of about 3 hours' duration. I loved every minute



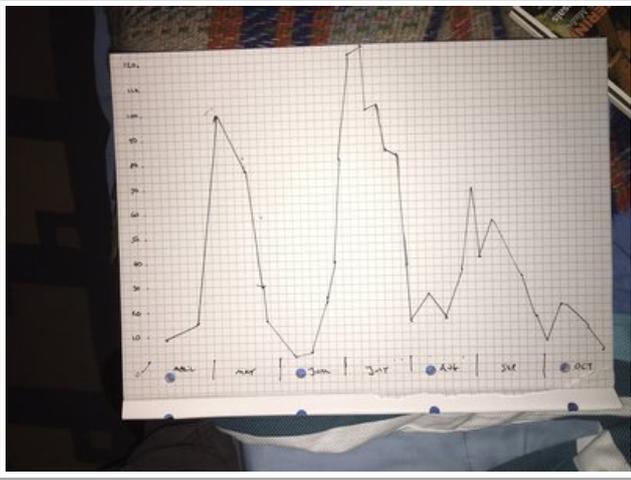
It has been my most rewarding involvement with the natural world



During the SCOffs (Small Copper Off Season) I thought I'd collect together some of my observations



For my first post I decided to say something about the Small Copper population at Dungeness 2015 and so for the first time since I was at school (many years ago!) I drew up a graph of all my "Copper Head Counts"



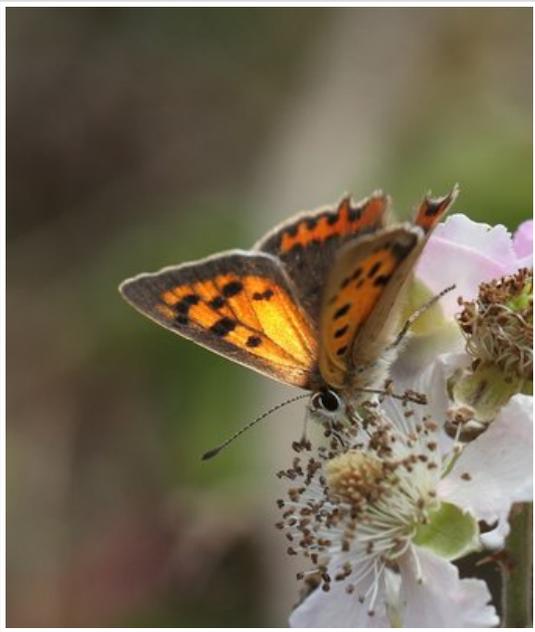
Rough though it undoubtedly is I think you can see a number of things:

- Highest numbers in early May (254) and July (873)
- A pattern of sharp rises and very sharp falls in numbers
- A definite break between the first and second broods but thereafter a continuous, healthy presence right up until the end of the year

In all I counted 2029 Small Coppers at Dungeness



They are very widespread. I made a conscious effort to explore not only the well known "hot spots" (such as the Moat) but also the whole of the "Desert", Dengemarsh and also land adjoining the Dungeness estate itself – and I found Small Coppers



They move around the site like tea leaves in a tea pot



And as for aberrations, there are plenty of Blue Badgers



(mostly in the latter brood), *extensa*



obliterata



and most excitingly, I discovered that *radiata* is a feature of the Dungeness Small Copper population



(I found three this year).

So overall, a happy picture of a very healthy Small Copper population at Dungeness



Are there any sites to rival it?



My main interest is in how Small Coppers behave. That's what I spent most of my time observing. I saw some remarkable things!



And that's what I will cover next time!



All the best,
Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 22-Nov-15 02:44 AM GMT

Looking forward to your next posts. I'm sure our collective heads will be able to come up with many theories to any questions your observations throw up 😊

It's lovely how data becomes crystal clear by making a graph from it! 3 clear broods and a small 4th from the looks of things 😊

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 22-Nov-15 05:29 AM GMT

Some great stats there, Hoggers, and I never tire of seeing that *radiata*.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 22-Nov-15 06:37 PM GMT

Hogger's, you've just brightened an other wise miserable day with some fantastic shots, I'll make it a must when I come down to Kent next yearGoldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 25-Nov-15 02:21 AM GMT

Thank you so much for your kind comments – much appreciated!

One thing I did know before embarking on this year's study of Small Coppers was that the males are territorial. I'd seen it in action for myself many times: the male launching aerial interceptions from a favoured perch (at Dungeness this is usually a pebble), having a punch-up and then returning to the same perch or another close by.

My plan for learning about Small Coppers was simple: find a male and watch him!

(Not the most sophisticated method in scientific history but one simple enough for me to conduct!)

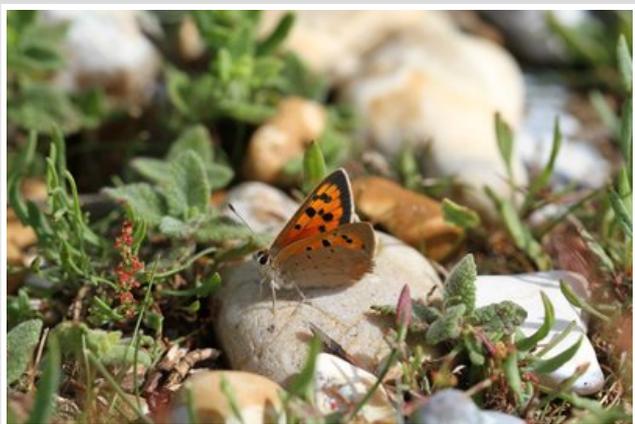
And so I visited Dungeness, located a male and sat down to watch what he got up to



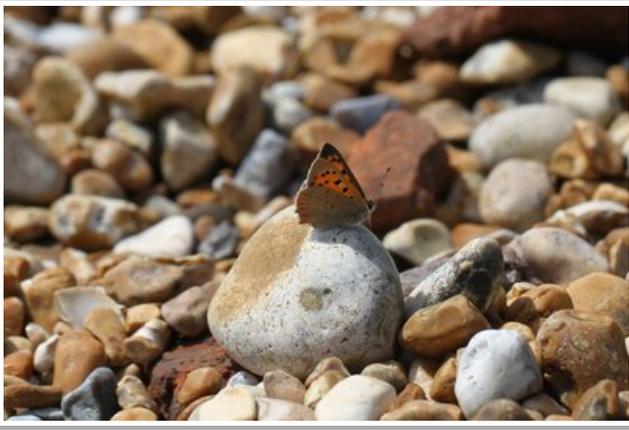
Up until that day all I'd ever done was find a butterfly, try to get a photo and then move on, so this was the first time in my life that I had set out to actually watch a butterfly for more than a few moments and try to learn about its life and habits.

I had no idea on that first day that when I sat down to watch I'd see something that would not only fill me with delight but also cause me months of puzzlement!

To begin with, I noticed that my male Copper did not perch on plants but rather on the pebbles.

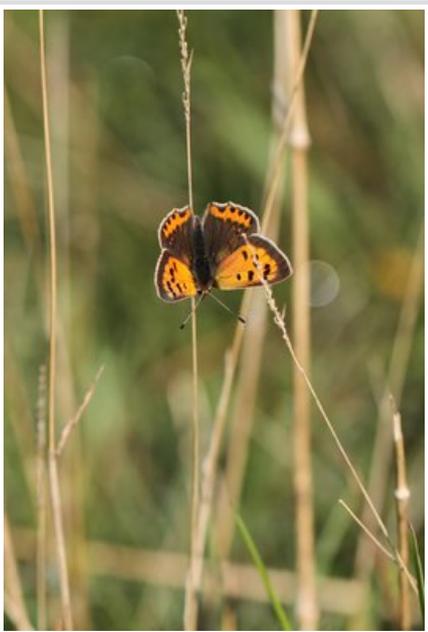


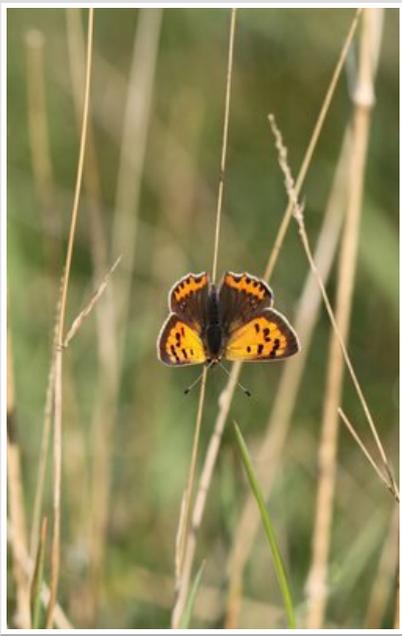
Dungeness has quite a few pebbles! They soak up the heat (you have only to put your hand down to feel how warm they get). Dungeness is also a breezy place as well as being rather bare. So I suppose the pebbles provide a warm, calm and stable place to perch, with excellent all round visibility.



I watched my male make frequent fast flights, criss-crossing his Patch then returning to his perch. I would suppose these to be reccy flights, and that he's checking on what's about.

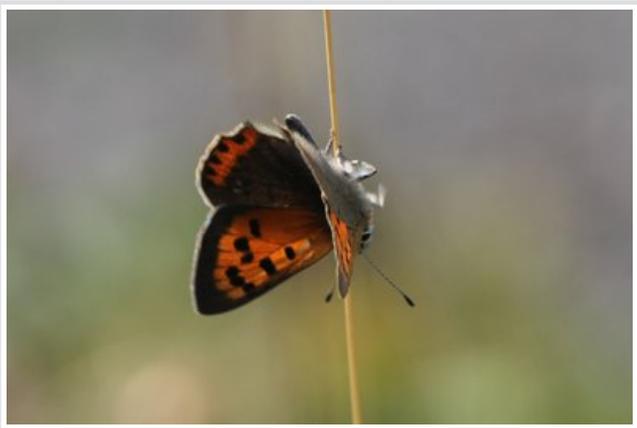
But then, instead of doing a reccy, my male Copper flew to a near-by grass, alighted at the top and then walked down the stem, head first, until he got close to the bottom, when he then flew to another grass a few feet away and repeated this procedure.





And he did so again, then again, visiting a mix of grass and Sorrel plants dotted around his Patch before finally flying back to his favoured perch.

I did my best to follow him and I noticed that as he walked down the plant he was very quickly tapping his feet against the surface. He was not simply walking down the stem, he was tap dancing!



Sometimes leading to confusion!



I later discovered that this Tap Dancing behaviour was not a one off. I've seen it duplicated by many male Small Coppers. It is in fact a set part of the male's behavioural routine.

I have yet to see a female act in this way.

I once saw a young male evict an older male from his territory. Once the younger male had sole possession he began doing the tap dance routine around his new patch (he had not done this before getting rid of the older male).

So what's it all about?!

Why do they do it?

I wish I knew!



Small Coppers like to keep their secrets!

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 25-Nov-15 03:10 AM GMT

Lovely shots Hogger's I hope you find out some day, Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Neil Freeman, 25-Nov-15 04:23 AM GMT

Great report Hoggers and interesting observations. Around my way the males use the more usual positions on flower or grass heads to launch themselves from and return to, often having two or three favourite perches within their territory. I guess that is because we don't have the pebbles that you do down there.

I share your fascination with this species and often just sit and watch their antics. Over the past few years I have seen males do the 'walking down the grass stems' thing a number of times but going by your reports this year you seem to have observed it happening a lot more down there than I have seen around here, possibly because you have seen so many more Small Coppers 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 25-Nov-15 04:54 AM GMT

Great observations, Hoggers. I must similarly pay more attention to my colonies on the Welsh coast. I wonder if they too prefer pebbles?

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggars, 26-Nov-15 02:55 AM GMT

So far as perch selection is concerned, the Dungeness Small Coppers do, of course, make use of plants



But mostly take up station on a pebble



I remember visiting Methuselah and being surprised that he was not sitting on a pebble (his usual place) but on a bramble leaf. I touched the pebbles and discovered them to be "stone" cold as there had been little sunshine that day.

In relation to their tap dancing, I can put it into the context of the butterfly's routine. On 16th June I watched a male from 1013 to 1140. In that time he flew 14 reccy flights around his patch and 4 tap dancing sessions. On 10th October I watched a male from 1039 until 1147: he flew 4 reccys and performed 4 tap dances!

These curious tap dances feature in the male Small Coppers routine throughout the day. They will tap dance down living grasses and other plants as well as on dead and dried woody plants



Delightful to watch





I believe it to be purposeful behaviour. At first I thought the males might be marking their territories but that now strikes me as unnecessary because they so actively patrol their patches and see off all intruders!

Then I wondered whether they might be trying to detect females, but now I don't really subscribe to that theory either!

They are certainly investigating their immediate environments, perhaps sensing chemicals on the plant surfaces?

It greatly interested me when I saw the recent winner of a territory immediately begin tap dancing on various plants in and around his newly won patch: was he somehow reinforcing his new territory in his mind?

I'm no scientist! I just don't know what to make of it!

To conclude this part of my notes I should say that at Dungeness there are areas where there's little in the way of grass. Small Copper males in these barren places will still do the tap dance, but they do so over leaves (usually Brambles down here), without performing the "head first" downwards acrobatics seen in the photos I've posted.

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 26-Nov-15 06:37 AM GMT

The tap dancing behaviour does sound like some kind of scent marking in the way you describe it. Do you know whether they go about this behaviour on stems along the outskirts of their territory, which would lead me to think they are marking out the boundaries, or does their choice seem more random?

Alternatively perhaps its akin to some kind of dance to attract a female? Movement making them more obvious to a passing female and the fact that he's moving around in a rather obvious fashion perhaps showing off his virility in the same way as many bird displays?

just thinking out loud 🤔

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 26-Nov-15 07:58 PM GMT

Hi Buggy, thank you for taking the time to think about this and for coming up with some ideas. As you know, I've often made general pleas for theories or references in the literature to help explain this behaviour – all contributions most gratefully received!

I haven't noticed them concentrating on the boundaries of their territories, it looks pretty random, but maybe next year I should pay more careful attention to the matter that you raise.

I think the most important aspects of this behaviour are –

1. It is carried out regularly throughout the Copper's day
2. It involves them very quickly tapping plant surfaces with their feet
3. I've never seen a female act in this way
4. I've never seen a male "tap dance" on anything other than a plant, ie, never on a pebble or stone or anything–else. Always a plant, but not always a living plant, ie, I've seen them "tap dance" over dead wood and dried up grass stalks.

If anyone out there can join the dots for me I promise I will spend all Christmas drinking to their health!



Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 27-Nov-15 07:32 AM GMT

Unfortunately I can't join any dots for you Hoggers, and also unfortunately I can only mark your graph as a 1/4 according to the AQA GCSE ISA Markscheme, but on the plus side great shots and some really interesting behavioural observations, I'll keep my eye open for similar behaviours next year.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 27-Nov-15 05:07 PM GMT

Dear Wurzel (or should I say " Sir"...?!) all I can say in my defence is that I didn't have a ruler to draw my graph and so I had to use a CD case instead.

But I think next time I will ask a 6 year old to help me out...!

I hope you get the chance to watch Small Coppers next season. The more of us that carry out these observations the more we will learn (and the more new questions will arise too!)

Best wishes,

Hoggers (Form 2C)

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Nov-15 08:40 PM GMT

One aspect of Small Copper life that interested me was how long the males will hold on to a territory



I made a good many visits to Dungeness through the 2015 season and was able to keep an eye on a number of territory holding males



I quickly realised that there are two Small Copper Worlds at Dungeness: there's the Moat which has a very high population of Coppers in a relatively small and discrete area; and there's The Desert, a very large, sprawling pebble dune system, where the Coppers are more thinly distributed



My longest record for a male holding the same patch in The Moat was 11 days



Second longest was 7 days



Both of these males were from the third brood, in which Copper numbers are much lower than in the early broods.

In those early broods I recorded males holding territories in the Moat for only 2 to 3 days (competition being so much greater at these times)



I only managed to monitor 2 males that were living out in The Desert
One held on to his patch for 5 days



The other one, however, turned out to be very special indeed and he ended up blowing all my previous records to smithereens!



I found him on 20th September and I visited him thereafter on 26th September, 4th October, 9th October, 10th October,



18th October



and finally on 20th October



30 days holding the same territory!

So I named him Methuselah because not only had he shown me how long a male Copper can hold a territory, he'd also shown me how long a male Small Copper can live



Re: Hoppers

by Wurzel, 30-Nov-15 04:22 AM GMT

Another interesting report Hoppers – was there any correlation between how long the males held their territories and how many times they mated? I've had the graph moderated and due to 'improvised ruler useage' I can award you an extra 2 marks 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoppers

by Hoppers, 05-Dec-15 10:08 PM GMT

Those extra two marks make all the difference to me, Wurzel – If only my other teachers had been so understanding!

Unfortunately, I'm afraid I cannot answer your question but you've certainly given me an idea for next season's project (if I can get the time off work!)

Whilst talking of Small Coppers and their territories I thought I'd look over my notebook on the subject.

I guess most of us have seen Small Coppers having a punch up



Always an exciting spectacle



Such speed and agility



I've attempted to photograph these swashbuckling males



Rather blurred but I hope the pictures convey some of the thrill of these high speed dust ups



Whizzing about hot on the heels of the intruder, flying high and low



Flashing like swords brandished in the sun!



Do they intend each other harm?

I don't think so. I've no doubt that damage may result from some of these confrontations (especially at Dungeness where so much activity takes place in and around the brambles) but I cannot think their object is to do harm

It's surely a contest of agility and endurance.

On 27th September this year I got to witness a territorial invasion.

I'd been watching an older male on his patch



He was behaving in the usual way, making quick reccy flights around his domain, performing the mysterious tap dances, nectaring etc
When a much younger male appeared on the scene



The two quickly engaged. The bouts were often lengthy (up to a minutes' duration), high and low. I saw the older male rest twice, down on the pebbles, before flying up to the brambles where the younger male waited



In a 45 minute period I counted 28 clashes, after the last of which the older male did not return (and in fact I recorded the younger as holding on to this territory for the next 5 days)



Most confrontations that I've seen have been briefer affairs in which the intruder has moved on after only a short skirmish with the current territory holder. I'm certainly of the opinion that some male Coppers have a wandering spirit and prefer to be on the move rather than setting up a patch for any

length of time.

Fascinating creatures



On a completely different tack, I've got Daffodil, Crocus and Lesser Celandine leaves poking up in my garden and this morning I watched a tadpole swimming about in the pond!

Re: Hoggers

by millerd, 06-Dec-15 12:48 AM GMT

Those action shots really do convey the energy of the skirmishes – better than a video would in that the latter would just have coppery streaks whereas you can see the individuals here getting stuck in! Brilliant stuff. 😊

I also love the last shot with him surveying his domain from the blackberry.

Dave

Re: Hoggers

by Wurzel, 06-Dec-15 07:19 AM GMT

Those action sequence shots are great Hoggers and that final shot is a peach 😊🍑

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 06-Dec-15 09:03 PM GMT

That final shot is brilliant Hogger's and I love the skirmish shots they're great. Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 07-Dec-15 01:55 AM GMT

Cheers guys, after winning the Bramble patch he spent a lot of time posing and looking pleased with himself.

A Small Copper perched on a Blackberry is irresistible!

Best wishes,

Hoggers.

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 08-Dec-15 02:02 AM GMT

Great sequence again, Hoggers, and yes, that final image is to die for.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 12-Dec-15 07:50 PM GMT

Thanks for the positive comments, much appreciated.

My aim in these off-season posts has been to open my 2015 notebook and share my observations of Small Copper behaviour. Up until now I've reported on what I've seen the males getting up to so now I'd like to turn to the ladies



I'll begin with what I regard as the most entertaining aspect of female Small Copper behaviour: The Brush Off

Anyone kind enough to have read my diary will now be well aware that Dungeness has a large population of Small Coppers! This presents an enviable opportunity for anyone interested to watch and learn about the UK's most beautiful butterfly



This year I've done as much as I could to do just that



And I've tried to share as much as I've seen and learned but always with the caveat that I am not a scientist, I have no entomological qualifications and, in short, I'm just a beginner (so if I've got anything wrong, my apologies!)

Anyone interested in seeing any of the behaviour that I've reported need only visit Dungeness on a nice day in season. I have now had the enormous pleasure of watching many female Small Coppers giving unwanted male Small Coppers The Brush Off!

The first thing you'll see is the female walking across the pebbles or over the Brambles, with a lusty male toddling along behind her





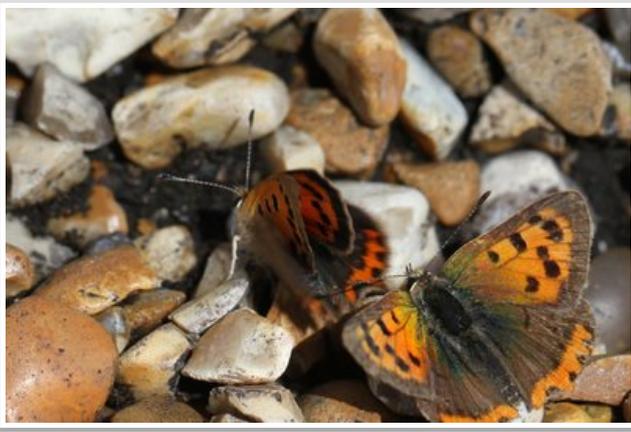
Then, if she doesn't like the look of him, she'll go straight into "The Turkey Strut"



Lowering her hind wings, fluttering them quickly, whilst holding her fore wings straight up



She'll usually do this whilst walking away from the male although sometimes I've seen her stand still whilst displaying



This behaviour almost always has an immediate effect on the male : he simply freezes. It's as if an "Off" switch has been thrown in his brain. And it is while he is in this curiously stunned condition that the female will move away and make good her escape. The male will then reactivate and go about his business.

But it does not always work quite so effectively. I have seen some males that do not get the message (so to speak) and persist in their attentions, making a through nuisance of themselves. I remember watching one male harass a female, totally ignoring her Brush Off display. She only got away from him by crawling deep into a Bramble where he would not follow and she hid there for 10 minutes before emerging.

But in my experience that sort of thing is the exception – more often than not the male will desist.

I wonder is it the physical display itself that dissuades the male or is she perhaps wafting a chemical signal at him (which may explain those occasion where I've seen males not respond to the Turkey Strut, ie, she may be running low her supply of the particular chemical)?

I think I'd be impressed with any female that put on a Turkey Strut with me



Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 12-Dec-15 08:10 PM GMT

Another very fascinating post Hoggers 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 12-Dec-15 08:12 PM GMT

Great observations Hogger's, they never seem to stay long enough for me to observe them in detail, I no sooner take a photo and they fly off. In the Dunes at Southport I've seen them two years on the trot now in the same place, so going off what you've said this could be a regular site for them, I must try next year to go there again and spend more time with them, I'll also make it a must when I visit Kent to go to Dungeness your Small Copper's seem to be more abundant there .Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 12-Dec-15 09:05 PM GMT

Fascinating stuff, Hoggers. As you say, it helps that Dungeness has such a strong population so that this behaviour becomes easier to observe.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 13-Dec-15 06:38 PM GMT

Many thanks for the comments, it's always good to hear from fellow Copper Heads!

As a brief follow on to my last post I'd like to mention a feature of Small Copper behaviour that I've noticed this year and it's the instinct the females have to make themselves inconspicuous when they sense other butterflies are close by.

Female Coppers love to sit on a leaf and bask in the sun for long periods



I was watching one when a Meadow Brown flew directly over her head: her instant reaction was to shut her wings and she remained that way for a time, only re-opening her wings when there was nothing to disturb her.

I once found a female which was unable to fly due to a deformity of her wings. When she became aware of my presence she concealed herself behind a plant stalk and hid there.

The best example I've got of this behaviour was whilst watching a female nectaring on some Ragwort



A male Copper flew in and settled on the same flower head. He paid her no attention at all. But as he flew in her instant reaction was to shut her wings and sit still for 5 seconds



Nothing bothered her, she reopened her wings and resumed nectaring



I've also seen females climb down into the dark shadows of Bramble bushes to get away from males (the males do not seem to like to leave the sunshine)

So it does seem to be a feature of the female Copper's behaviour although I'd guess it is strongest in those females that have already mated

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 16-Dec-15 05:44 AM GMT

Hoggers, you need to write a scientific paper on Small Coppers!! Your observations are enlightening me and I will remain mindful of them when encountering this species in the future.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 17-Dec-15 12:48 AM GMT

That's very kind of you to say, David, thank you. I hope you and many others here will get the opportunity to watch Small Coppers next year.

While I carried out my own observation of them I also noticed other butterflies (Small Heaths and Brown Argus for example) doing interesting things, so there's plenty of scope to see something you've never seen before.

As for my writing a scientific paper - you've seen my graph !

But I have sent a short letter to "Atropos" magazine describing how male Small Coppers "tap dance" as part of their daily routine and asking if any of the readers know why they do it. The editor replied that it was interesting and they hoped to publish it in the next edition once it had been looked at by a

butterfly expert—so I hope to get an answer fairly soon!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 18-Dec-15 10:34 PM GMT

I always feel an enormous pleasure whenever I find a mating pair of Small Coppers



Given the size of the Dungeness population and the many hours I've spent there watching Small Coppers it is interesting to note how rarely I come across them (only four times this year)



How they end up that way is itself an interesting topic: just what does Small Copper courtship amount to?

My previous posts have shown how non-receptive females deal with undesired males, ie, The Turkey Strut. No mating takes place and the butterflies go their separate ways.

But here's an example of a female who when approached by a male did NOT go into Turkey Strut mode





The males gymnastic efforts however went unrewarded as she flew off with him in pursuit. I could not re-find them and so do not know whether they successfully coupled.

However, here's another similar situation where again the female did not do the Turkey Strut





where matters progressed further.

I had not seen any chase prior to this behaviour but there might very well have been.

When I come across a mated pair I take a note of how long they remain coupled while I'm there. These two were already together when I found them



and remained joined for 10 minutes thereafter



when they simply walked away from each other and went their separate ways



Another pair that I found this year



remained coupled for 22 minutes when, for no reason apparent to me, they took off as one and flew away





This took me completely by surprise and in my clumsy efforts to chase after them I stumbled and fell, grazing my chin on the pebbles. At my age I really should know better..

But in observing these two I noticed the female repeatedly pushing against the male with her hind legs whilst at the same time heaving herself forwards (as if she were attempting to disconnect herself from him). The male did nothing despite her continual efforts.

And this put me in mind of a pair I photographed in 2014



You can see the female pushing with her hind leg, just as the female in the above photographs taken this year.

And if you look at the pair on the Ragwort (below) you can see she is also giving him a shove with her hind legs.

So this behaviour of the female when mated whereby she will push against the male seems to be established.

I wonder why she's doing it?

The more I watch Small Coppers, the more questions I ask!

Nonetheless, a mating pair is a lovely sight



And a sign that all's right with the Small Copper World



Re: Hoggers

by David M, 19-Dec-15 02:05 AM GMT

More illuminating stuff, Hoggers. I intend to keep an eye out next year to see if any other species indulge in this practice. The obvious assumption is that she's trying to tell him that his work is done!!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 19-Dec-15 03:54 PM GMT

I think that's right, David. It's the female Copper that first senses when the "job's done" and she then lets the male know that it's time to go.

I've seen pairs coupled for at least 10-22 minutes, during which time they must be vulnerable and so the female's practical turn of mind makes as much sense in the Small Copper world as it does in our own

Re: Hoggers

by David M, 20-Dec-15 05:58 AM GMT

The word 'vulnerable' is important here, Hoggers. Why are they mating on exposed stonework? They have no cover whatsoever. I saw Mountain Ringlets doing this in the Alps last July, which was why I was able to locate and photograph them. Doesn't seem to make any sense.

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 28-Dec-15 06:29 PM GMT

I've all but finished emptying my 2015 Small Copper notebook. I learned a lot this year. I managed to throw some light on a few questions that I'd asked myself before the season began, for example, how long will a male hold a territory and just what do Small Coppers do all day?

I had a few surprises along the way, ie, in the past I'd seen male Small Coppers doing acrobatics down grass stems (the "tap dance") but I had never really thought about it. This year I discovered that it is not just one off behaviour but is in fact a set behavioural routine carried out by the males. I always assumed that the lifespan of an adult Copper was very brief, I'd guess 2 weeks at the most, but then I found a male that lived for at least 30 days. I also for the first time observed the curious display that females exhibit when trying to shake off the attentions of amorous males (the "turkey strut").

Practically everything I learned gave rise to further questions: why do males "tap dance"? Is it the female's "Turkey Strut" display that dissuades the male or is she wafting a chemical "Stop" signal at him? And so on... So plenty more to discover. I'd like to carry out more observations of male territory holding but I work full time and from the look of my 2016 diary I'll be lucky to get half the hours I had this year to watch Small Coppers.

Anyway, one thing I'd never seen before this year was egg-laying. I quickly discovered, however, that female Coppers intent on egg-laying are very easy to spot. You will see her trundling across the ground paying careful attention to the Sorrel. She will occasionally fly, low, but not far, before continuing her investigations and will be very approachable. So different is this behaviour from that of the males that you can easily identify a female from a distance. Get up close and you'll see her lower her antennae and tap them against the Sorrel leaf. Often she will go through the motions of laying but not deposit anything



But if you're lucky you'll see her lay one of her beautiful eggs





Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 29-Dec-15 10:49 PM GMT

Hi! Hogger's I'd a great Christmas in Kent but the weather followed us down there, it was mild but boy was it windy, one day out of the week, maybe two were reasonable, hope it's better this Summer,
Happy New Year Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-Dec-15 02:19 AM GMT

Hi Goldie, Happy New Year and best wishes for a Copper-Tastic 2016 !!

Re: Hoggers

by Hoggers, 30-Dec-15 07:29 PM GMT

I took a walk around Dungeness yesterday



Between showers it felt so warm I half expected to see a Small Copper!



The place feels empty without them but it was good to stretch my legs and get some fresh air after being confined to barracks over Christmas



I counted 4 tadpoles in the pond this morning and here are a few photos from the garden today: my first Crocus



Primrose



And I think this Daffodil will open tomorrow





Here's a couple of photos I found on the memory card taken earlier this month



I thought I'd found my first ever December butterfly clinging to the front of the house
But it turned out to be a tuft of moss!



Re: Hoggers

by David M, 31-Dec-15 04:45 AM GMT

It's incredibly unseasonal isn't it, Hoggers? I went to the local shops in Killay tonight and the daffodils have started to flower in the ornamental beds!!
One hopes normal service can be resumed soon with a few frosty nights.

Re: Hoggers

by Goldie M, 31-Dec-15 11:11 PM GMT

Hi! Hogger's, no flowers here, a brief glimpse of the Sun this morning then back to the usual, roll on Kent next year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Hoggers

by bugboy, 01-Jan-16 02:21 AM GMT

Hi Hoggers, hope you had a good Christmas.

I was randomly mulling over the whole male 'stem dance' thing at work today and the more I thought about it the more I concluded it must be some kind of display. I'll try and go through my train of thought as logically as possible.

Firstly we have to assume nothing in nature is done by accident, there's always a reason. Secondly we can assume that ultimately, the sole purpose for a butterfly's existence is to procreate.

In order to procreate butterflies have to have energy which they get from A) the surrounding temperature and B) food. The stem dance doesn't seem to facilitate either of these. They also need to evade predation and on the odd occasion I have seen it (just not often enough to realise it's a 'thing' that is done regularly) the stem dance seems to draw attention to them rather than conceal them so it must have some other advantage.

From your observations it's only the males which do this and since they are a territorial species as opposed to a wanderer (such as a Brimstone) then they need to get the females to come to them. One way would obviously be to have a territory that females would naturally frequent, be it having a good nectar supply, or well sheltered from inclement weather. Another way would be to advertise your presence, which this stem dance could potentially do. It would be interesting to know what they look like with the ability to see UV light, perhaps they are showing off something in the patterning which we are blind to? It's just a theory but I think it fits all the available evidence.

I hope you can follow my train of thought there.

Anyway happy new year and hope to see lots more Coppers next year!